

GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMIC LIFE

A. NATURE OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT

1. Period of Vedic Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanisads (c. 1500-700 B.C.)

In the early Vedic period, that of the *Rg-Veda Samhitā*, the Vedic Aryans, then in occupation of the north-eastern fringe of the Irānian plateau and the land of the five rivers immediately to its east, were divided into a number of tribes (*janas*). The kings were called after their tribes as in the formula of the priests' announcement of the 'royal sacrificer' to the assembled multitude at the ceremony of royal consecration. Afterwards in the period of the *Yajus Samhitās* and the Brāhmaṇas there emerged, at least among the more advanced peoples, a new type of polity, based on the territorial state. In two *Yajur Veda* texts the king is stated to be the ruler of the *viś* (people) as well as of the *rāṣṭra* (kingdom or royal sway). The three technical terms applied to the king's authority were *rājya* (kingdom or ruling power), *rāṣṭra* and above all, *kṣatra* (temporal power) as opposed to *brahma* (spiritual power). Other texts prescribe the performance of sacrifices whose aim was the submission of the people (*viś*) to their ruler, while forbidding ceremonies that could have the contrary result. Reference is made in a few *Atharva Veda* texts to the king's quasi-divinity. But no claim is made for his divine descent, much less for his divinity. On the contrary, the king's descent from Manu (father of the human race according to Vedic cosmogonic ideas) is pointedly mentioned in a prayer on his behalf. The development of the conception of the king's divinity may be traced in the *Yajus Samhitās* and the Brāhmaṇas, especially in connection with their description of the three great ceremonies of royal and imperial consecration, the *Aśvamedha*, the *Vājapeya* and the *Rājasūya*. According to these texts, the king not only shares the world of the gods but also enjoys fellowship or sonship or even identity with Prajāpati, the highest deity of the later Vedic pantheon. This conception, nevertheless, was subject to three important limitations. First, the ruler's affinity with the gods is, according to the views of the authors, a personal distinction acquired by him through his performance of sacrifices. Secondly, the human descent of the king is clearly mentioned in the formula of the king's proclamation to the multitude at the *Rājasūya*. Thirdly, the doctrine of sacrifice in the *Yajus Samhitās* and the Brāhmaṇas meant that it was a way of entering into the godhead and even of controlling the gods.

The gods themselves, it was held, owed their position to the omnipotent sacrifice. From this it followed that the king's divinity, such as it was, was not peculiar to himself but was shared by him with others equally entitled to the performance of the great sacrifices. A unique text of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, however, explains the riddle of "one ruling the many" by the argument that 'he, the Rājanya, is most manifestly of Prajāpati'. Here the king's authority is evidently based upon his divinity without reference to the sacrifice.

The most remarkable feature of the early Vedic polity was the institution of popular assemblies, of which two, namely, the *Sabhā* and the *Samiti* deserve special mention. Amid the obscurity of the texts and their inconclusive interpretations by scholars, we may draw the following general conclusions about the constitution and functions of these bodies: the *Samiti* was the Vedic tribal or folk assembly *par excellence*, which at least occasionally exercised the right of electing the king, while the *Sabhā* was, from the outset, a more limited body with judicial functions. Both the *Samiti* and the *Sabhā* enjoyed the right of debate—a privilege perhaps unknown to the popular assemblies of other ancient peoples. In the later Vedic period, the *Samiti* disappeared as a popular assembly while the *Sabhā* became a narrow body corresponding to the king's privy council and court.

The view that the Vedic kingship was a constitutional monarchy or a public trust, is not warranted by facts. The Vedic king's authority, however, was subject to some important limitations. The old Vedic concept of an omnipotent divine law (*vrāta* or *dhāman*) and custom (*dharma* or *dharman*) must have operated as a moral, though not as a constitutional, check on the king's authority. Moreover, the princes and nobles and the officials called *Sūtas* and *Grāmaṇīs* who are styled king-makers in two *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* texts, together with the popular assemblies, must have collectively exercised a large, although undefined, measure of influence over the king's administration. As regards the influence of the Brāhmaṇas, it is true that a fundamental principle of the Vedic polity is the separation of the temporal power (*kṣatra*) from the spiritual power (*brahma*). Nevertheless, it is probably correct to state that while the Vedic relationship of *brahma* to *kṣatra* anticipated by many centuries the relation between the Church and the State in Europe, the Brahmanical order lacking the strength of organization of the Roman Catholic Church and also its will to power, failed to establish what its counterpart did at some time or other i.e., an effective control over the temporal power. In the office of the *Purohita* or the king's domestic chaplain, the Brāhmaṇas would seem to have found a pillar of their strength, for he was regarded from the first as the necessary adjunct of the king, and in fact was regarded as 'the protector of the realm'. From some later Vedic texts, however, we learn that the *Purohita* could be in danger of losing his position owing to the tyranny or caprice of his patron. We may reasonably infer that such influence as was exercised

by the *Purohita* over the king depended more upon his personality than upon the established law and usage.

2. Pre-Mauryan and Mauryan Periods (c. 700–185 B.C.)

One general characteristic of this period is that the 'territorial state' became the normal type of polity. At the time of the rise of Buddhism a chain of such states extended over the Indo-Gaṅgā plain and the Mālwa tableland. These states, which had a more or less fixed territory and capital, were commemorated in some earlier Buddhist and Jaina canonical texts in a conventional list of sixteen great political organizations (*mahājana-padas*). The states were of two principal types—monarchical and republican. Shortly after the rise of Buddhism, the chief monarchies conquered the smaller kingdoms and republics, and were eventually themselves absorbed in the empire of the Nandas, the predecessors of the Imperial Mauryas.

The pre-Mauryan period marked the first great epoch of organized state administration in Indian history. We may trace this advance in the branches of political, economic and military organization of the state. It will suffice to describe very briefly the first of these branches. One important aspect of state policy was the promotion of public security and welfare. According to the Dharma Sūtras and the *Arthaśāstra*, it is the duty of the king to ensure the security and welfare of the subjects. To begin with, he is charged with the distinctive duty (*dharma*) of protecting all creatures. Not only does the state law contain clauses for the security of the person and property of the subjects, but the king is also made personally responsible for the restoration of the stolen property or its value to the owner. In the Dharma Sūtras the king is the guardian of minors, infants and persons unfit to transact legal business, as well as the custodian of lost and ownerless property. As regards the policy of public welfare, the king in the Dharma Sūtras is required to provide food, shelter and clothing for the needy, especially at his guest-house at the capital.

Kauṭilya lays down a comprehensive programme of state relief against providential calamities which are classified under eight heads, namely, fire, flood, disease and famine, as well as pests like rats, ferocious animals and snakes and even the visitations of demons. A strikingly original feature of the state administration in Kauṭilya's work is its policy of promotion of public health. This involves a ban on unwholesome food and drink and a strict control over physicians in the interest of patients as well as state provision for medical treatment of the afflicted people at the outbreak of diseases and epidemics. Another notable characteristic of administration is illustrated by the measures for protecting the public against the dishonest dealings of artisans and traders. In the Dharma Sūtras, not only are certain classes of persons, including the poor

and the infirm, exempted from taxation, but some select categories are also entitled to state relief.

The above evidence is partly corroborated and partly negated by the stories in the Jātakas, which give us a truer picture of contemporary life. We have stories of kings who sought, in accordance with the ideas and superstitions of the time, to relieve their subjects from the calamities of drought and famine. We are also told how good kings used to construct alms-houses (*dānaśālās*, literally 'halls of charity') at their capitals for the benefit of the public. A few stories tell us how kings strove to promote the welfare of their subjects on canonical lines. On the other hand there are a large number of stories indicating the insecurity of life and property of the subjects under the rule of capricious and tyrannical kings.

An important branch of state administration noticed for the first time in this period relates to the security and progress of the state. In the first place, Kauṭilya mentions measures for securing the king's personal safety, particularly, against the danger of disaffection of princes, for launching mass propaganda through the agency of spies in order to guard against the enemy's intrigues and to seduce the enemy's subjects and for suppressing the enemies of the state. Secondly, he describes measures for planned colonization of waste lands; for acquiring control over military and political groups called *saṅghas*; and those for attainment of the fundamental objective of progress (*vṛddhi*) in the branch of inter-state relations.

The most dominant aspect of society and state in the Dharma Sūtras is the organization of both on the orthodox Brahmanical pattern. In these works, the Brāhmaṇas are given a number of immunities and privileges including exemption from corporal punishment and immunity from taxation, while the Śūdras are subjected to grievous disabilities. The impact of the Brahmanical pattern state, as it may be called, is strongly felt in Kauṭilya's account of state administration. A strong reaction against the Brahmanical social pattern is noticeable in the texts of the early Jaina and Buddhist literature. But we have only passing and scattered references to the influences of this reaction in the branches of law and polity.

We now turn to the second type of polity marking the epoch of the rise of Buddhism. In the records of these and later times, the titles *saṅgha* and *gaṇa* are often applied in a general sense to republican constitutions. In reality, these terms constitute a genus including the species of religious, economic, military and political units. We can distinguish two periods of the rise and fall of republics in the history of the pre-Mauryan age. Sometime before the rise of Jainism and Buddhism, a number of republics, of which the Licchavis and the Mallas were the most important, came into prominence along the middle and upper basin of the Gaṅgā. But in a short

time they were absorbed in the larger kingdoms like Magadha and Kosala. Further, the land of the five rivers was split up after the decline of the Achaemenid power in that area into a number of republics and monarchies, which flourished till they were conquered by Alexander of Macedon. As regards the republics of the first period, we may conclude from a careful study of the relevant texts of the early Buddhist literature that they were ruled by clans of the Kṣatriya caste who formed an aristocracy of birth. Their constitution consisted of a sovereign popular assembly and an elected chief (*Senāpati*) or group of chiefs (*Pāmokkhas* or *Mukhyas*). From the evidence of the most authentic Buddhist canonical texts, the Śākya of Kapilavastu appear to have possessed a hereditary ruler and an assembly of the ruling Kṣatriya caste. This was evidently a mixed constitution of monarchical and aristocratic elements.

In the period immediately preceding the rise of the Mauryas, we can trace two parallel movements in the political history of India. In the Gaṅgā basin and the Mālwa tableland the large states were absorbed into the dominion of the Nandas, which paved the way for the imperial dominion of the Mauryas. On the other hand, the Indus valley, which fell for a time under the yoke of the Achaemenids of Īrān, was split up into a number of independent states, monarchical as well as republican. These flourished till they were overthrown by Alexander.

Our knowledge of the states and governments of the Indus valley on the eve of Alexander's invasion is derived from the first-hand observations of the officers (called Companions) of the great conqueror, which have been preserved in the works of later classical writers. The monarchies were of two types, the normal type ruled by a king, and the unusual type (represented by the solitary example of Patalene in the Sindhu delta) which was ruled by two hereditary kings of different houses holding supreme command in war and a council of elders possessing supreme power. The republics were also of two types, the common type of aristocracies and democracies (peculiar to the Abastinoi). The constitution of the republics comprised a sovereign assembly which had the right of making war and peace and negotiating with foreign powers, a supreme magistrate and probably also a council of advisers or elders. To judge from the testimony even of the hostile Greeks, some of the Indus valley states achieved a high degree of equity and justice in their administration. Such were the kingdoms of the Sophytes in the Salt Range of the Punjab and of the Mousikanos in the lower Indus valley. These states seem likewise to have undertaken new experiments in the branch of general administration. In the kingdom of the Sophytes and the republic of the Abastinoi (Ambaṣṭhas) the Government controlled the upbringing of children so as to weed out the weak and the infirm. A unique feature of the kingdom of the Mousikanos was the absence of slaves.

The liberation of the Indus valley from the Macedonian yoke by Candragupta Maurya, and the completion of political unity of the country under his successors, led to the creation of the first all-India empire with frontiers reaching out almost to its natural boundaries in the east and south and extending beyond the north-west. By the time of Aśoka the empire was divided into four provinces with headquarters at Takṣaśilā, Ujjayinī, Tosali and Suvarṇagiri in North-western, Western, Eastern and Southern India respectively. The home province was under the direct administration of the emperor. The Mauryas attempted to integrate the regions and peoples of their far-flung empire by such measures as the creation of a highly centralized administration under the rule of the emperor and his officials, the appointment of Mauryan princes as viceroys at the head of the provincial administration, the creation of a kind of Koine (lingua franca), the so-called 'Monumental Prākṛt' as the official language of their empire, as well as the adoption of Brāhmī as its official script for the most part, and finally the wise policy of granting autonomy to many dependent peoples. The Mauryas continued the old policy of promotion of public safety and welfare. From the Girnār rock inscription of Rudradāman, the Śaka ruler of Western India in the 2nd century A.D., we learn that a big irrigation lake was constructed in that remote region of the Mauryan empire by the provincial governor under Candragupta Maurya and that it was repaired by the local authority in the reign of Aśoka. The welfare measures of Aśoka after his conversion to Buddhism mark an epoch not only in the history of ancient India, but also of the ancient world. These comprised, first, planting of trees along the roads, digging of wells, and making arrangements for the treatment of men and beasts—this is the earliest reference to state hospitals; secondly, inculcation of virtuous living among the people in accordance with the emperor's Law of Piety; thirdly, similar inculcation of a kind of religious syncretism based on appreciation of the common ethical values of all popular faiths of the time; and fourthly, the protection of animal life. Great care was taken for the maintenance of routes and communications. The rural officials (Agronomoi) of Candragupta Maurya's administration were required, according to Megasthenes, to mark the roads by pillars at regular distances of 10 *stadia*. A 'royal road' connected Puṣkalāvati beyond the Sindhu river with Pāṭaliputra, the imperial capital. It would thus seem that the Indians under Mauryan rule ranked among the great road building nations of the world.

3. Pre-Gupta and Gupta Periods (c. 185 B.C.—A.D. 700)

The break up of the Mauryan empire was followed by the rise of regional powers viz., the Śuṅgas in the Gaṅgā basin, the Sātavāhanas in Western

India, and for a time, the Cetas of the eastern seaboard. To this period we may assign the beginning of the institution of powerful feudatories which was destined to assume dangerous proportions from the late Gupta period onwards. The Śuṅga feudatories occupied a position little short of independence, since they struck coins in their own names and sometimes assumed even royal titles. The great feudatories of the Sātavāhanas ruled as kings over large territories, while others were known by the distinctive titles of *Mahārathis* and *Mahābhōjas*. The pre-Gupta age was likewise a period of barbarian invasions and settlements. During this period, many foreign dynasties—Greek, Śaka, and Parthian—ruled over the Indus valley; a branch of the Śakas ruled Western India; and the Great Kuṣāṇas founded an empire in Northern and Western India. These rulers introduced new royal and administrative titles and principles of state administration after foreign models. What distinguished the Śaka rulers of Western India from other foreign dynasties of this period was the completeness with which they identified themselves with their Indian subjects. They substituted the indigenous Brāhmī for the foreign Kharoṣṭhi in their coin-legends and adopted a largely Sanskritized Prākṛt in place of the old undiluted Prākṛt for their official records. Uṣavadāta, son-in-law of Nahapāna (the greatest ruler of the first satrapy), distributed his charities impartially among the Brāhmaṇa laity and the Buddhist monks, thus assuming the role of the Indian princely patron of learning and piety at its best. Rudradāman, the greatest ruler of the second satrapy, chose to be remembered in his famous Girnār inscription as a model king after Indian standards.

The Guptas founded the first great indigenous empire after the period of barbarian invasions and settlements in Northern and Western India following the collapse of the Imperial Mauryas. They not only reunited the most fertile and prosperous regions under a single rule, but also completed their emancipation from foreign yoke. According to the contemporary Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa-hien, the people in the Gupta dominions enjoyed the blessings of peace and prosperity. Fa-hien begins his account of the 'Middle Kingdom' (Chinese designation of Madhyadeśa comprising the area of the Gupta empire) with the observation that capital punishment was unknown and crimes were punished with fines. He also notes that the revenues of the Gupta empire were mainly derived from the king's share of the agricultural produce. The result of this beneficent administration of the Guptas was evident in the condition of the people. Speaking of the people of the 'Middle Kingdom', Fa-hien states that they were 'numerous and happy'. The Guptas also patronized learning by the construction of more buildings (with endowments for their maintenance) at the great Buddhist monastic university of Nālandā, while their care for public works was shown by their restoration of the famous artificial lake at Girnār during the reign

of Skandagupta. In short, the administration in ancient India was at its best under the Guptas.

The downfall of the Gupta empire was partly due to the invasions of the barbarian Hūṇas under Toramāṇa and his son and successor Mihirakula, and partly, to the assertion of independence by its vassal chiefs. The ascendancy of the feudatories in the history of ancient Indian states dates from the later Gupta period. In contrast to the feudal system of medieval Europe, however, the king was not regarded as the sole owner of the soil and the practice of sub-infeudation did not assume great proportions.

The period of decline and fall of the Gupta empire was marked by the rise of new powers in Northern India, such as the Hūṇa Toramāṇa and his son and successor Mihirakula, Yaśodharman of Mālava, Īśānavarman of the Maukhari dynasty of the modern Uttar Pradesh and Śaśāṅka of Bengal. But none of them succeeded in building up a lasting empire. In the first half of the 7th century, king Harṣavardhana (c. A.D. 606-47) of the house of Thāneśvar and Kannauj emerged as the most powerful ruler in Northern India. The contemporary Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hiuen Tsang gives high praise to Harṣa for his love of justice, his unremitting industry in the discharge of his duties, and his piety and popularity. The king, we are told, undertook incessant tours for the inspection of his dominion, built rest-houses for travellers, and erected *stūpas* and monasteries throughout his kingdom. He distributed all his accumulated treasures among his subjects at the great quinquennial assemblies at Prayāga. We also owe to this illustrious pilgrim a general account of the system of Indian administration at the time of his visit (A.D. 629-45). The ruling class of Kṣatriyas, we read, was guided by the standards of benevolence and mercy, taxation was light, forced labour was used sparingly, and families were not required to be registered. On the other hand, the penal law was marked by a certain degree of harshness in strong contrast to exceptional mildness under the Imperial Guptas.

4. Post-Gupta Period (c. A.D. 700-1200)

In the interval between the death of Harṣa and the Muslim conquest, the stage of North Indian history was dominated by a few ruling houses—the Imperial Pratihāras of Kannauj and their successors, the Gāhaḍavālas of Kannauj, the Kalacuris of Cedi, the Candellas of Jejākabhukti, the Paramāras of Mālava, the Caulukyias of Gujarāt and the Cāhamānas of Śākambharī and Ajmer. To them we owe the institution of the clan-monarchies, which afterwards became the distinctive feature of the polity of the states of Rājputānā. In this type of polity, the king reserved for himself the central part of his kingdom and distributed the rest among

other clan-chiefs. In other respects the Rājput dynasties followed the Gupta pattern of Government. The rulers assumed the usual imperial titles to which a number of other titles—*Aśvapati*, *Gajapati*, *Narapati* and *Rājatrāyādhipati* (lord of horses, elephants, men and three grades of kings) —were added by the Kalacuris and the Gāhaḍavālas. The dominions directly administered by the ruler were split into provinces and their subdivisions; these were administered by appropriate state officers. The villages were administered by traditional headmen. The efficiency of the administration of the Pratihāras is proved by the testimony of an Arab writer, who states that no part of India was more safe from robbers than the Pratihāra dominion. The downfall of the Rājput dynasties was brought about chiefly by the devastating invasions of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghaznī in the first quarter of the 11th century and those of Shihābu'd-dīn Muḥammad Ghurī and his able lieutenant Quṭbu'd-dīn Aibak in the last decade of the 12th and the early years of the 13th centuries. These invasions led to the establishment of the first Muslim empire of Northern India under the Turkish Sulṭāns of Dehli.

In Eastern India the leading powers of this period were the dynasties of the Pālas and their successors, the Senas. The Pāla dynasty had a unique beginning as its founder was chosen by the leading people for the purpose of ending anarchy. This attempt was barren of constitutional results, probably because of the absence of a permanent and regularly constituted council of ministers or similar bodies at the time. In fact, the Pāla administration followed the current pattern of personal rule by a monarch supported by a bureaucracy. A great blow was struck at the power of the Pālas by the successful rising of the Kaivarta chief Divya in North Bengal against the oppressive ruler Mahīpāla I. The final downfall of the dynasty was due to the rise of powerful feudatory families headed by the Senas. The Senas belonged to a family of Brāhmaṇas who had adopted the occupations of Kṣatriyas; they came from the region of Karnāṭaka in the South. The Sena capital in West Bengal (Nadia) was captured and territory in North Bengal was occupied by Muḥammad Bakhtyār, an able adventurer in the service of Aibak.

In the Deccan the leading powers of the post-Gupta period were the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Mānyakheta and their successors the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa. Able and ambitious rulers of these dynasties, like Indra III of the former and Vikramāditya VI of the latter, took a leading part in the struggle for ascendancy among the powers of North and South India. Yet the great feudatories of these dynasties enjoyed a position of semi-independence. They waged war on behalf of the paramount power, assigned taxes and alienated lands on their own authority. The feudatories had often sub-feudatories holding seigniories (*manneyas*) under them, these last being sometimes in possession of the same family for several generations.

The feudatories and even the holders of *manneayas* had sufficient authority to assign lands freely. The bilingual inscriptions of these dynasties in Sanskrit and Kannaḍa testify to their attempt to recognize Kannaḍa as official language while maintaining the age-old position of Sanskrit as the common language of sacred and secular literature throughout India.

During the post-Gupta period the paramount position in South India was held by the Pāṇḍyas and the Coḷas. The strength of their political and military organization is proved by the extensive conquests of their greatest rulers like Rājarāja I and his famous son Rājendra I. They made themselves masters not only of the whole of South India and the territories immediately to its north along the eastern and western sea-boards but also of the Śailendra empire comprising the Malaya Peninsula and Sumatra. The Pāṇḍyas and the Coḷas issued bilingual inscriptions in Sanskrit and Tamil on a wider scale than the contemporary Deccan powers. Thus they sought to reconcile the claims of the regional language with those of the common literary language of the country.

B. ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

1. Period of the Vedic Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanisads (c. 1500-700 B.C.)

The elements of state administration signifying rule by a king with the help of his advisers or assistants may be traced back to the early Vedic period. In *Ṛg-Veda* the king is called *gopā janasya* or protector of the people. This implies that he was charged with the maintenance of law and order. Like his divine prototype Varuṇa, he employed the agency of spies for this purpose. There is no reference in the *Ṛg-Veda* and the *Atharva Veda* to the king's administration of justice. In two passages of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* reference is made to the king's *Jyaiṣṭhya* or lordship and the epithet *Dharmapati* or 'lord of the law' is applied to him. This probably indicates the king's supreme executive authority as well as the supremacy of the king's justice over all other jurisdictions. The king levied contributions (*bali*) on his subjects. These probably consisted of a share of the agricultural produce as also of the livestock of the villagers. To judge from the position of the Vedic Aryans as strangers in the midst of a conquered population, the king must have been the leader of the tribal host in time of war. It is significant that Indra, the most characteristic deity of the Vedic pantheon, is figured essentially as the god of war. The title *Senāni* mentioned in the *Ṛg-Veda* shows that the military administration was separated from the civil even at that time. The Vedic administration was based largely on the household

system. The *Senāni* (commander-in-chief) as well as the *Sūta* (charioteer), *Grāmaṇi* (village headman), *Kṣattr* (chamberlain) and the *Samgrahitr* (treasurer) are included in the list of *Ratnins* (jewel-bearers) at whose residences the king made offerings to various deities at the *Rājasūya*. A hundred selected sons of *Sūtas* and of *Grāmaṇis* are included among the guardians of the sacrificial horse, and one hundred daughters or wives of these officers are mentioned among the attendants of the queen at the *Aśvamedha*. The *Sūta* and the *Grāmaṇi* are included in the texts of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* in the class of non-royal king-makers (*arājāno rājakṛtāḥ*) immediately after the *Rājanyas* or nobles who were the royal king-makers. But we are left completely in the dark about the significance of this description.

2. Pre-Mauryan and Mauryan Periods (c. 700–185 B.C.)

We do not know much about the pre-Mauryan administration. However, in view of what we know of the Mauryan period, it can be surmized that the pre-Mauryan period was marked by the establishment, at least in the politically advanced areas, of a strong centralized administration under the headship of the king. This was based upon the two pillars of administration, a permanent revenue and a standing army. The king, moreover, is described in the records of this period as exercising the supreme executive, judicial and military authority over the kingdom. The creation of a regular administrative service consisting of civil and military officials with more or less well-defined functions is another characteristic of the pre-Mauryan period. The officials are described by such generic terms as *Amātyas* (*Amāccas* in Pāli) and *Mahāmātras* (Pāli *Mahāmāttas*). A complete demarcation between the king's household and general administration is clearly made in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*. But traces of the old Vedic tradition of household administration are still found in the Jātakas. Like the early *Arthaśāstra* writers, Kauṭilya lays down rules for the recruitment of officials and their selection for specialized posts. The state officials along with members of the royal family and household are included by Kauṭilya in the consolidated civil list of the king, which groups them in categories with cash salaries fixed for each grade. In the early Buddhist texts, we are told about various categories of officials, such as those in charge of the army, judicial administration, the king's harem, and superintendence of public works. They even decided questions of royal succession in case of incapacity or minority or default of an heir to the throne. We have stories of individual ministers exercising a commanding influence in affairs of state in spite of the difficulties caused by their capricious masters. Kauṭilya contemplates the king consulting not only his high ministers (*Mantrins*), but in emergencies

his Council of Ministers (*Mantri-pariṣad*) as well. And yet the ministers remain merely the king's advisory body, the decision on affairs of state being left entirely to his discretion. We have not a single instance in the records of this period of the king's decision being opposed or even debated by the ministers. The highest ranks in the official hierarchy are occupied, both in the systematic account of Kauṭilya's *Arthasāstra* and in scattered notices of the Pāli canon and the Jātakas, by the Crown Prince (*Yuvarāja* or *Uparāja*), the king's domestic chaplain (*Purohita*), the military commander (*Senāpati*) and the minister (*Mantrin*).

A striking innovation in state administration during this period was the system of state registers and records as outlined in Kauṭilya's *Arthasāstra*. A state register of various items of the king's internal and foreign administration, we are told, was to be prepared by the officer in charge of the Records and Public Accounts office (*Akṣapaṭalādhyakṣa*). Evidently, in the light of these data the *Samāhartā* (Collector-General) prepared his register of villages recording the revenues and other dues payable by the villagers. A census of the rural area enumerating details of tenements and families was prepared, in the first instance, by the rural *Gopa* or officer in charge of 5 or 10 villages. The urban *Gopa* who held charge of 10, 20, or 40 families similarly prepared for his area a census relating to the number of residents, their names and occupations, and their income and expenditure. It is reasonable to infer that this aspect of the Kauṭilyan state administration reflected the practice of the most advanced states of the time. Another important innovation of this period was the creation of a state postal service consisting of *Dūtas* or messengers, who are included by Kauṭilya in the king's civil list. References are found in the Jātaka stories to female carrier-birds employed by kings for conveying messages. The use of official seals by the king and high officials is attributed to this period.

The pre-Mauryan period is the age of the first system of state law and justice in Indian history. This system is contained in the extant Dharma Sūtras and in the *Arthasāstra* of Kauṭilya, the latter being the only completely preserved specimen of this branch of Indian literature. The state law is derived in the Dharma Sūtras from a two-fold source, namely, the sacred canon (with its auxiliaries) and approved custom. According to the fuller enumeration in Kauṭilya's *Arthasāstra*, the sources of the state law are the sacred canon, current law, usage and reason. The law codes of the Dharma Sūtras and the *Arthasāstra* were considered to be binding on all sections of the Aryan community. References to the laws of particular states have been preserved only in a few scattered passages of the early Buddhist literature. The customs and practices of regions and villages, of castes and families and of functional groups are clearly recognized as authoritative sources of law in the Dharma Sūtras. The king is credited in Kauṭilya's work with the right of issuing executive orders that had the

force of law. But there is no reason to think that this marked a revolutionary step towards royal absolutism since its scope was implicitly or explicitly fixed within well-understood limits.

The beginning of a regular system of state judicial administration may be traced to the pre-Mauryan age. The records of this period recognize the prevalence of the king's justice within his kingdom. The state courts were of two grades: those presided over by the king at his capital and those of the subordinate officers. The king's court was regularly constituted and the Dharma Sūtras state that the king or his substitute was to be assisted by a judge and assessors as well as non-official advisers. Kauṭilya speaks of judges—*Dharmasthas* in the rural areas and *Pauravyavahārikas* in the urban areas. The *Dharmasthas* who sat at the headquarters of 800, 400 and 10 villages might have represented three grades of these officers or acted as itinerant judges at the larger and smaller rural centres. They were required to follow strictly judicial procedure, failing which they were liable to various penalties. Early Buddhist literature mentions a class of judicial officers called by different names (*Viniccayamahāmattas*, *Vohārikamahāmattas* and *Viniccayāmacas*). References are also found in early Buddhist literature to private courts such as the caste councils (*Sabhā* and *Paṇṣad*), the councils of kinsmen (*jñāti*) and the councils of functional groups (*saṅghas*). The caste councils, we are told, decided family disputes, and the other councils probably decided similar internal disputes among their members. An interesting survival of primitive methods of administration of justice is the judgment by ordeal (*divya* or *samaya*) which is referred to in the Dharma Sūtras. But Kauṭilya, significantly enough, is completely silent about it. The evidence of the Pāli Buddhist texts about the tendencies of state justice is self-contradictory. Some passages in the Pāli canon point to the application of the principle of equality of law for all subjects by the state courts, while others show how criminals were shielded from justice by the king and high officials. In the Jātakas, we read in some stories that kings gave judgments after regular judicial trials, while other stories tell us how the kings passed judgment even in cases of capital punishment after summary trials.

The first institution of state police may be traced to the pre-Mauryan period. Its full development is recorded, as usual, in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, while occasional references are found in other sources. Of the two broad divisions of the regular and the secret police known to records of this period, the former consisted, according to Kauṭilya, of three tiers of officials: the *Pradeṣṭā* (rural) or the *Nāgaraka* (urban) at the top, the rural and urban *Sthānikas* in the middle and the rural and urban *Gopas* at the bottom. In the course of his description of the *Pradeṣṭā's* duties, Kauṭilya tells us how an inquest was held in cases of sudden death. This involved a post-mortem examination of the body as well as thorough police investigation of the crime. The use of torture for extorting confes-

sions from suspects whose guilt was established *prima facie* was known. In Kauṭilya's work the secret police is divided into two categories, namely, the peripatetic and the stationary. The secret service men were employed for such varied purposes of general administration as surveillance of the state officials, invigilation of the subjects, suppression of enemies of the state and strengthening of inter-state relations.

Like the institution of the state police that of state jails also begins with the pre-Mauryan period. Stray references to this institution occur in Dharma Sūtras and the Jātakas. A detailed account of jail administration is found in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*.

The earliest system of local government may also be traced to the pre-Mauryan period. The structure of local government consisted of a parallel machinery for the administration of the rural and urban areas. According to *Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra*, state officials (*Adhyakṣas* or *Adhipas*) were to be appointed by the king for towns and villages with well-defined jurisdictions. In *Viṣṇu Smṛti*, we read that a chain of officials is to be placed by the king in charge of 1, 10 and 100 villages as well as of the whole rural area. According to the fuller account of Kauṭilya, three tiers of officials are to be in charge of the rural as well as the urban area. The *Samāhartā* or the *Pradeṣṭā* was in charge of the *janapada* or the rural area, while each of its four divisions was entrusted to a *Sthānika*, and units of 5 or 10 villages were in charge of *Gopas*. Similarly, the *durga* or the fortified town was entrusted to a *Nāgaraka* and each of its four divisions was left in charge of a *Sthānika*, while units of 10, 20 or 40 families were controlled by the *Gopas*. The officers were primarily concerned with the protection of person and property of the subjects. In the passage of *Viṣṇu Smṛti* referred to above, we read how the village chief failing to suppress troubles within the village is to report to the chief of 10 villages, who in similar circumstances is to report to the chief of 100 villages and the latter to the chief of the rural area. Kauṭilya mentions that the chain of rural officials is to be held individually responsible for protection of merchandize of traders within their respective jurisdictions. In the second place, the *Samāhartā* is required to prepare a register of villages within the kingdom with an abstract statement of the revenues and other dues payable by the villages as well as of the remissions enjoyed by them. Thirdly, Kauṭilya requires benches of three *Dharmasthas* to sit at the headquarters of 800, 400 and 10 villages for deciding civil and criminal suits.

The administration of the village is entrusted in the Dharma Sūtras to the headman appointed by the king. In Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, different branches of the village administration are controlled by the headman who may have held his office by hereditary succession subject to confirmation by the king. In one Jātaka story, we hear of village assemblies for the transanction of local business functioning even in frontier villages and hamlets. But another story speaks of the sufferings of a body of public

spirited villagers at the hands of an unscrupulous local chief. The administration of towns is entrusted in Kauṭilya's work to the *Nāgaraka*, who corresponds to the *Nagaraguttika* of the Jātakas. From Kauṭilya's description we learn that he has not only to look after the maintenance of law and order (including the enforcement of curfew regulations), but has also to enforce various building and sanitary regulations and to prepare a census of the citizens.

As regards the contemporary republican constitutions, we learn from a number of references in the Pāli Buddhist texts that the republics were ruled by popular assemblies and elected chiefs. The assemblies consisted of fully qualified members of the ruling aristocracy and their regular meeting place was called the *santhāgāra*. From one story we learn that the assemblies used to discuss momentous issues of state, like surrender to a besieging force, and elected the executive head with complete freedom. From another story (that of Khaṇḍa, chief minister of the king of the Videhas who found asylum at Vaiśālī) in a Buddhist Sanskrit work of the Mūlasarvāstivādin school we learn that the assembly exercised the sovereign right of electing the *Senāpati* or the executive head, while the decrees of the republic were issued jointly in the names of the assembly and the *Senāpati*. We have little direct evidence about the procedure of the republican assemblies. From the much discussed parallel with the well-known procedure of the Buddhist ecclesiastical gatherings we may conclude that official proposals were normally brought forward in the form of resolutions which were declared carried, if there was no opposition. The initiative for bringing forward the proposals, however, must have belonged not to an officer specially selected for the occasion but to the chief magistrate or magistrates, while the methods of settlement of disputes must have differed from those of a gathering of monks.

Passing over the administration of the Nandas about which we know very little and that of the contemporary kingdoms and republics of the Indus valley discussed in the preceding section, we may proceed to the period of their immediate successors, namely the Imperial Mauryas. In accordance with the old Indian tradition, the Mauryas appear to have combined in themselves the headship of the civil and the military administration. To this Aśoka appears to have added the headship of the Buddhist Church, if we are to judge from his decree for the expulsion of schismatic Buddhist monks. Aśoka's assumption of the modest title of *Rājan* in contrast to the imperial titles of his Achaemenid predecessors and Hellenistic contemporaries and his avoidance of claim for divine honours adopted by the latter show that he intended his administration to be essentially Indian. The bureaucratic organization of the preceding period appears to have reached its culmination under Mauryan rule. The creation of a distinct class of officials by Candragupta Maurya is reflected in Megasthenes' reference to the Indian caste of 'councillors and advisers' of the king

and it is called by the generic title of *Mahāmātras* in Aśoka's inscriptions. At the head of the Mauryan bureaucracy stood the council of ministers. Mauryan historical tradition mentions a number of chief ministers, while Aśoka in his inscriptions makes a pointed reference to the Council of Ministers (*Pariṣā*). There seems to be no justification for the far-reaching conclusions of some Indian scholars in recent times that the ministers of Aśoka had the right of discussing and even rejecting the emperor's oral orders, of controlling the state funds and of virtually depriving the ruler of his sovereignty in defence of the constitutional laws of the realm. The *Mahāmātras* are divided in Aśoka's inscriptions into various categories, some of which have more or less their equivalents in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*. Aśoka also created the office of *Dharmamahāmātras* for the enforcement of his law of piety.

The Mauryan period fills a gap between two great epochs of law-making activity in ancient times, namely, that of the principal Dharma Sūtra and of the *Arthaśāstra* codes of state law on the one hand and that of Manu's code on the other. The few references in Megasthenes' work to the penalties for offences current in Candragupta's time breathe the spirit of the penal law of the preceding period. From Pillar Edict IV of Aśoka, we learn that even after his conversion to Buddhism he continued the death penalty for crimes, only softening its rigour by giving the convicts three days' respite before execution. The system of state justice of the preceding period appears to have been continued by the Mauryas. From the *Indica* of Megasthenes we learn that Candragupta himself sat in the court for hearing suits of the public. The old division of urban and rural judiciary was continued in Aśoka's reign. In his Kalinga Rock Edict No. 1, he tells us how he entrusted *Mahāmātras* with the task of invigilation of the town judiciary by means of periodical tours. The few references in the records of the Mauryas point to the continuance of the State police of the preceding period. The branch of regular police is represented by the Indian caste of *Ephors* (inspectors) or *Episkopoi* (over-lookers). Reference to the continuance of the jail administration of the earlier times is found in Pillar Edict V. Here Aśoka mentions that he regularly remitted sentences on each anniversary of his coronation. The *Dharmamahāmātras* are charged in Rock Edict V with the duty of protecting prisoners from molestation and of releasing the deserving ones. These measures reflect the humane spirit of jail administration as outlined in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*.

The successive creation of large provinces was necessitated by the expansion of the Mauryan empire. By Aśoka's time, as already stated, there were four such provinces, namely, the North-western, Western, and Southern Eastern, with their capitals at Takṣaśilā, Ujjayinī, Tosali and Suvarṇagiri respectively. These were ruled by prince-viceroy with the help of local *Mahāmātras*. Officers like the *Yavanarāja* Tuṣāspha and

Puṣyagupta, 'the Vaiśya' held charge of subordinate jurisdictions. The old distinction between the rural and urban administration was continued under the Mauryas. Megasthenes mentions two categories of officials of Candragupta's administration, namely, the *Agronomoi* (market commissioners) and the *Astynomoi* (city commissioners). The *Astynomoi*, according to Megasthenes, were divided into six Boards of five members each, with distinct functions. Of these the Board in charge of the foreign residents is an innovation unknown to Kautilya. Equally original is the co-ordination of the Boards into a corporate body.

3. Pre-Gupta and Gupta Periods (c. 185 B.C.—A.D. 700)

The administration of the Śuṅgas, the heirs to the sovereignty of the Mauryas in the Gaṅgā basin, appears to have been a continuation of their immediate predecessors with a somewhat looser organization than before. Kings were content with the title of *Rājan*. Provinces were governed by prince-viceroy with royal titles, and they were assisted by the traditional Council of Ministers (*Mantri-pariṣad*). The Sātavāhanas, while adopting the old royal title of *Rājan*, sometimes added the title *Svāmin* (lord) brought into vogue by their Śaka contemporaries and rivals. The central administration was run by *Amātyas*, who are known to have been employed in executive and financial offices. Military administration was controlled by officers such as the *Senāgopa* equivalent to the old *Senāpati*. The provinces were divided into districts (*ahāras*) which were ruled by *Amātyas* and the villages were in charge of the *Grāmikas* or traditional headmen. Of the Ceta kings of Kalinga the most important was Khāravela. He assumed lofty titles unknown even to the Imperial Mauryas and aspired to become a *Cakravartin* (world-ruler) over the neighbouring lands.

The rule of the foreign dynasties of the pre-Gupta period is an important episode in the history of ancient Indian administration. Some of the Indo-Greek kings assumed, after the example of the Seleucids of Western Asia, the title of *Basileus Megalou* (Great King) and followed the practice of appointing the heir-apparent as joint-king over the whole realm. They organized their Indian dominions under provincial governors bearing the Greek titles of *Strategus* and *Meridarch*. The Indo-Greek system of administration was followed on the whole by the Śaka and Parthian rulers of Northern India. But they introduced a new title for provincial governors—*Kṣatrapa*. The Kuṣāṇas brought with them an exalted conception of monarchy indicated by the new imperial titles on their coin types. They continued the Śaka system of provincial government under *Mahākṣatrapas* and *Kṣatrapas*, while they introduced two new grades of military (or judicial) officers called *Mahādaṇḍanāyakas* and *Daṇḍanāyakas*. But

the autonomous cities dating from Indo-Greek times ceased to exist under their rule.

The downfall of the Kuṣāṇa empire paved the way for an after-growth of republican freedom in the Punjab and Rājasthān. Three of these republics are known from their inscriptions or coins or both. These are the Kuṇindas of the late 2nd and 3rd century A.D., the Yaudheyas of the late 2nd century A.D., and the Mālavas of the interval between the 2nd and the early 4th centuries A.D.

The period of the Imperial Guptas, the Golden Age of ancient Indian history, was marked by a great exaltation of monarchy. They adopted the imperial title of *Mahārājādhirāja* apparently after the model of the foreign rulers of India. From the time of Candragupta II they are described as "equal to the gods Dhanada (Kubera), Varuṇa, Indra and Antaka (Yama)." Their coin types show the nimbus around the king's head. In a number of North Bengal inscriptions they are given a trilogy of titles (*Paramadaivata Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja*) which with the slight substitution of *Parameśvara* for *Paramadaivata* became the distinctive designation of paramount rulers in later times.

The Guptas created afresh a system of administration on imperial lines after the downfall of the Mauryan empire. The civil administration apparently was in charge of the *Mantri* as before. But the supervision of foreign affairs was made over to a new officer called the *Sandhivigrahika* (literally meaning, the minister for war and peace). A number of offices were created with the prefix *mahān* or great. This indicated an upgrading of the old offices or else the institution of a higher order of the same, evidently in keeping with the imperial organization of the administration. A new class of *Amātyas* called the *Kumārāmātyas* comprised not only the high imperial officers but also the officials on the staff of the emperor and the crown prince and those in charge of districts. Three grades of military commands came into existence, namely, those of *Mahābalādhikṛta*, *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka* and *Senāpati*. The cavalry, the elephant corps and perhaps also the infantry were organized under separate commands.

In the branch of provincial administration the Guptas adopted the older models with changed official nomenclature and some striking innovations. The provinces (*bhuktis*) were governed, as in Aśoka's time, by princes or as in the times of the Sātavāhanas, by state officers (*Uparikas*). The districts (*viṣayas*) were ruled by other officers (*Kumārāmātyas*, *Āyuktakas* or *Viṣayapatis*). In North Bengal and probably also in Bihār, as we learn from the contemporary inscriptions, a Municipal Board (*Adhiṣṭhānādhikaraṇa*) or a District Board (*Viṣayādhikaraṇa*) helped the head of the district or the province, as the case might be, in the disposal of government lands. The Municipal Board consisted of four members, namely, the guild-president (*Nagaraśreṣṭhin*), the chief merchant (*Sārthavāha*), the chief artisan (*Prathamakulika*) and the chief

scribe (*Prathamakāyastha*). This marks a bold attempt to associate popular representatives with local administration.

After the Guptas, in Northern India king Harṣavardhana (c. A.D. 606–47) created a sound and efficient administration of the usual type. He assumed the usual imperial titles and was assisted by the traditional Council of Ministers. The officers of the central government included the Minister of Foreign Affairs (*Mahāsandhivigrahādhikṛta*), the Commander-in-Chief (*Mahābalādhikṛta*), the head of the accounts department (*Mahākṣapaṭalika*), besides others of lesser rank. The kingdom was divided into provinces (*bhuktis*) and districts (*viṣayas*). Village administration appears to have been highly official ridden.

In the Deccan, the administration of the Imperial Cālukyas of Vātāpi (c. A.D. 540–753) was marked by the usual characteristics. The kings assumed the familiar imperial titles, the central government was in charge of officers of the old type including a new officer called *Mahāsandhivigrahika* (Minister of Foreign Affairs), the districts were governed by state officers (*Viṣayapatis*) and the villages were controlled by the headmen (*Grāmakūṭas*) probably in association with the executive body (*Adhikārins*) of the leading householders of the village (*Mahattaras*).

4. Post-Gupta Period (c. A.D. 700–1200)

The administration of the Rājput states of Northern India during this period was of the bureaucratic type known at that time. The kings assumed the customary imperial titles, a number of high civil and military officials like the *Mantri*, *Senāpati*, *Akṣapaṭalika* and *Bhāṇḍāgārika* held charge of the central administration, the provinces and districts called by different names were governed by appropriate officials, and the traditional headmen or the executive body of village elders controlled the administration of the village.

In the Deccan, the Rāṣtrakūṭas of Mānyakheṭa and the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa successively continued the traditional type of administration under the king and various officers of the central government, who were known by old and new titles. The governors of provinces and districts were called by different titles, and they enjoyed a position of high authority and dignity. The towns under Rāṣtrakūṭa rule were in charge of prefects (*Purapatis* or *Nagarapatis*) or sheriffs (*Ur-gāvunḍas*), while the villages were controlled by the headmen (*Grāmakūṭas*) and bodies of elders (*Mahattaras*) or else village assemblies (*Mahājanas*). The corporate bodies mentioned above, enjoyed a large measure of self-government. They attested gifts by private individuals, received assignments of local taxes, and made grants of land for pious purposes.

In South India, the administration of the leading powers of this period,

namely, the Pāṇdyas and the Coḷas, was of the standard type with the king and a bureaucracy of high officials controlling the central government. The later Coḷa and Pāṇḍya kings assumed high imperial titles. Among the latter there was the peculiar institution of joint kings or co-regents. The office of Prime Minister was known to the Pāṇḍya administration, while the Coḷas had instead a body of executive officials (*Udankuṭṭam*), serving as liaison officers between the king and the bureaucracy. The grant of lands by the Coḷa kings for pious and charitable purposes involved a highly complex official procedure under the guidance of a chain of officials. A land revenue survey of the whole kingdom was carried out by the great Coḷa emperor Rājarāja I (A.D. 985–1014), and fresh surveys were undertaken by his successors from time to time. Well organized village assemblies with wide powers of self-government functioned under the rule of the Pāṇdyas and the Coḷas. The village assembly (called *Ur* or *Sabhā*) had an executive body (*Āḷuṅgaṇam*) or various executive committees (*Vāriyams*), the latter being elected by the members according to rules framed by themselves. The assemblies enjoyed such high reputation for integrity and efficiency that they received endowments in cash from kings for pious purposes and were appointed trustees for the proper administration of temple funds. Under Coḷa rule, the assemblies kept their own records of rights and had their own officials for assisting them in their proceedings without sharing in their deliberations. They decided disputes, granted lands, founded and maintained hospitals, took charge of charitable endowments and controlled taxes.

C. TRADE AND COMMERCE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

1. Pre-Historic and Proto-Historic Periods

The beginnings of Indian mercantile activities go back to very early times. The scarlet wares portraying landscape with animals on the frieze found at Kulli bear close similarity with pots found in Elam and Mesopotamia, at Ur and Kish. Further, some stone vessels found in Mesopotamia, at Susa in Elam and at Mari, Khafaje, Lagash, and Adab in Sumer, are identical with those found at Kulli. These point to direct trade contact between India and West Asia in Pre-Sargonic times (c. 2300 B.C.). It is likely that the bulk of this trade was sea-borne. Archaeological explorations carried out so far indicate that the overland trade-route perhaps did not run further west than the eastern border of Irānian Makrān.

An examination of the various stones and metals used in the Harappan culture-sites would indicate that trade and commerce, inland and foreign, overland, riverine and oceanic was the mainstay of the economy of this

civilization. Regarding inland trade, Baluchistān was the source of supply of bitumen, alabaster and probably steatite. Kāthiāwār, Rājasthān and the Deccan provided conch-shells, agates, carnelians, amethysts, jasper, onyx, chalcedony and other stones for beads and also possibly rock crystals. Copper and lead for the smithy were imported from Rājasthān. Regarding foreign trade, Afghānistān, Īrān, East Turkeṣtān, Tibet and even Burma supplied semi-precious stones such as jade, turquoise and lapis lazuli. Haematite or red iron oxide used for colouring materials came perhaps from the islands of the Persian Gulf. The discovery of a number of Harappan engraved seals at different sites of Sumer from the Akkadian times (2300–2000 B.C.) clearly indicates that Harappan merchants had established trade relations with the Sumerian cities. It is likely that they had their own quarters in those towns. A sealing with Indus script, found in Sumer, bears on its back the imprint of coarse cloth. It may be inferred that cotton goods formed an important item of export from India.

There appears to have existed a number of recognized trade-routes which provided caravanserais for night halts by merchants. Small sites like Amilano in Sind might have acted as such. The clay model of a pack-saddle found at Jhukar indicates that pack-horses, apart from camels were used for transport. Numerous models of ox-carts on wheels show their importance for slower and heavier transport. Riverine and oceanic trade was carried on by boats ; representations of these fitted with prow and stern, mast and steersman have been found on a potsherd and on a seal. Suktagen-dor in Southern Baluchistān and Lothāl in Kāthiāwār would seem to have been important ports of call.

2. Period of Vedic Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanisads (c. 1500–700 B.C.)

The *R̥g-Veda* refers to the root *Kri* (to purchase) and to merchants (*vaṇij* or *vaṇija*) and also mentions haggling in the market. The *Atharva Veda* mentions garments (*dūrśa*), coverlets (*pavasta*) and goat-skin (*ajina*) as articles of trade. It also contains prayers to Indra for protection against ill-will, wild beasts and highway robbers. It further mentions sale (*vikraya*), barter (*prapaṇa*) and exchange of merchandise (*pratipaṇa*). Invested capital was called *dhāna*.

It is a moot question whether the Vedic Aryans knew the sea. The *R̥g-Veda* mentions *samudra* which might signify either the lower course of the Sindhu or the sea. The references to Varuṇa's knowledge of the sea-routes (*samudriyaḥ*), Bhujyu's shipwreck and consequent rescue by the Aśvins with a vessel of one hundred oars (*śatāritra*) and the legend of Dīrghatamas, etc., clearly allude to maritime trade. Archaeological evidence of the use of indigo in the clothes of the Egyptian mummies, Indian cedar in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, and Indian teak in the

temple of the Moon-God at Ur perhaps shows the continuity of Indian commercial relations with West Asia even in the post-Harappa period. It may be noted that the Paṇis who constituted the niggardly merchant class in the *Ṛg-Veda* have been identified or associated with the Bekaṇātas (probably Babylonians). So it would appear that foreign merchants had their settlements in India in the *Ṛg-Vedic* period.

3. Pre-Mauryan and Mauryan Periods (c. 700–185 B.C.)

Early Buddhist canonical literature gives a detailed account of commercial activities. The Buddhist texts refer to a few trunk and ancillary trade-routes. The north-south trunk route ran from Sāvatti to Paṭiṭṭhāna (Paithan) with six intermediate halting stations including Māhissatī (Māhiṣmatī), Ujjenī (Ujjain) and Vedisā (Bhilsa). Another route lay from Sāvatti to Rajagaha (Rājgir) across the Gaṅgā north of Vesālī (Vaiśālī), stopping at important towns *en route*, of which mention may be made of Kapilavattu (Kapilavastu), Kuśinārā, Pāvā, Pataliputta (Pāṭaliputra) and Nālandā. It was possibly extended upto Gayā. From this main road branched off roads to connect Paṭiṭṭhāna and Ujjenī with Bharukaccha (Broach, a western seaport) as well as Avantī with Kosala, Vidarbha and Cedi. The southwest-southeast road ran from Tāmralipti to Bharukaccha. The east-west route in pre-Buddhist days connected Magadha with Sauvira upto Roruka situated somewhere on the Gulf of Kutch. It ran from Pāṭaliputra to the mouth of the Sindhu and through Īrān further west.

In pre-Mauryan days there existed the Videha-Gandhāra road connecting Mithilā, Śākala, Takṣaśilā and Puṣkalāvati. The road extended in the south-east from Mithilā to Campā. The southwest-northwest route connected Bharukaccha with Gandhāra upto Puṣkalāvati and continued further to meet Kaśyapapura (in Kashmīr), Paropanisus (Hindu Kush), Kābul and Scythia. The exact course of this route is not known. It is along the east-west route that merchants referred to in the Jātakas frequently travelled. The Campā-Śākala route was used by the *Seṭṭhi* with 500 wagons trailing along the foot of the Himālayas between Pāṭiliputra and Kajaṅgala. Horse-dealers from Uttarāpatha also took this road to come to the market of Vārānasi.

Buddhist texts reveal that merchants (*Sāttavāha*) were organized under a *Jeṭṭhaka* or *Pamukha*. They took their merchandise in caravans (the conventional figure being 500) which were guided by the land pilots (*Thala-niyyāmakas*) and protected by armed bands. From Bharukaccha, Śūrpāraka, and Tāmralipti a number of merchants (the conventional figure being 700) used to charter a ship and set sail for Suvarṇabhūmi. The ship was guided by a pilot (*Jala-niyyāmaka*). The sun and the stars

were means of determining the direction. Birds (*diśākāka*) were employed to find out if land was near.

That trade was quite brisk in the early Buddhist period can be surmized from Jātaka stories of persons becoming rich overnight through speculation.

The exploration of the Sindhu by Scylax of Caryanda in the 5th century B.C. led to the opening of new sea-routes. This might have contributed directly to the opulence of the Indian satrapies of the Achaemenid empire. India's regular contact with the West by overland and oceanic routes began after Alexander's invasion.

The reference by Megasthenes to municipal boards at Pāṭaliputra dealing with foreigners clearly indicates that many Greeks had flocked to the Mauryan capital, evidently for trade. Sweet wine and figs were the two commodities which Bindusāra asked of his Seleucid contemporary. The Ptolemaic rulers tried to promote direct trade by sea between India and Egypt by constructing ports like Berenice and Myos-hormos. But the all-sea route had not become very popular. According to Strabo, in the time of the Ptolemy scarcely anyone would venture on this voyage for commerce with the Indies. Regular maritime contact between India and Egypt began after 23 B.C. Indian traders sailed directly to the Somali ports and appeared in Egypt. An inscription found at Redesiya mentions an Indian merchant Sophon, travelling over the caravan route to Coptos. Towards the close of the 1st century B.C. Indo-Egyptian trade increased in volume. Strabo mentions that from the sea-port of Myos-hormos alone about 120 ships sailed for India in one season. Some of the merchants reached even the mouth of the Gaṅgā.

4. Pre-Gupta and Gupta Periods (c. 185 B.C.–A.D. 700)

From about the middle of the 1st century A.D., direct Indo-Roman overseas trade was further accelerated by the discovery (c. A.D. 45) of the monsoons by the Graeco-Roman sailors—it was till then a closely guarded Arab secret. Later, the consolidation of the empire by the Kuṣāṇa rulers, who exercised suzerainty over extensive parts of the lower Indus valley and Western India either directly or through their satraps, contributed to the development of this trade. The unrest caused by the extensive race movements from the 2nd century B.C. in Central Asia evidently rendered the old silk-route unsafe and Chinese silk trade with the West was carried on through Indian intermediaries. A graphic account of Indo-Roman trade is preserved in *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* written by an anonymous sailor of Alexandria. It describes the Indian ports along with their exports and imports. They are Barbaricum, Barygaza (Broach), Suppara (Sopara), Kalliena (Kalyāṇa), Semylla,

Mandagora, Palaepatmae, Melizeigara, Byzantion, Togarum, Naura, Tyndis, Muziris, Nelcynda, Comari, Colchoi, Poduca, Sopatma, Masalia, and at the mouth of Gaṅgā, a port of the same name. According to the same authority, Indian exports generally consisted of precious and semi-precious stones (diamonds, pearls, sapphires, onyx, sardonyx, agate, carnelian), ivory, cotton cloth called *monakhe* and *sagmatogene*, muslins and mallow cloth, Chinese silk cloth, silk yarn, spices and medicinal products like pepper, nard, spikenard, costus, bdellium, long pepper, and malabathrum. The articles of import at the port of Barygaza included Italian, Laodician and Arabian wines, copper, tin, and lead, coral, topaz, thin clothing, bright coloured girdles, storax, sweet clover, flint glass, realgar, antimony, gold and silver coins as well as costly vessels of silver ; singing boys and beautiful maidens were also brought specially for the king.

That India had a favourable balance of trade with the Roman world in the 1st century A.D. is clear from the introduction of gold coinage by Wima Kadphises. Pliny the Elder (c. 77 A.D.) bewailed that India and other countries of the Orient drained Rome to the extent of 100 million *sesterces* annually. Inscriptions from Western India (c. 2nd century A.D.) mention foreign perfume merchants (*Yavanagandhika*), and it is probable that they had their own quarters in the port towns in Western India. Discovery of Arretine vases of such famous Italian potters as Vivie at Arikamedu-Virapaṭṭaṇam (near Pondicherry) proves that it was from c. A.D. 30 a prosperous South Indian settlement. At Virapaṭṭaṇam there might have been one such factory of Roman merchants. The discovery of a large number of mint-fresh Roman coins issued in the early centuries of the Christian era from extensive regions in South India would show the existence of such mercantile establishments. On the basis of numismatic evidence it has been asserted that this Indo-Roman trade suffered a considerable set back in the days of the Roman Emperor Caracalla (A.D. 217).

The decline of India's trade with Rome was accompanied by the increase of her mercantile relations with the countries of South East Asia. In the early centuries of the Christian era Indian or Indianized states were emerging in Suvarṇabhūmi-Suvarṇadvīpa (Malay Peninsula and Indian Archipelago), Kambuja and Campā (Cambodia and Annam). These indirectly testify to the existence of a numerically strong Indian element in the population of the respective countries. Indians visited these countries primarily for trade. Archaeologically it can be shown that Virapaṭṭaṇam was an *entrepot* for trade between Rome and Thailand and thence Campā and China. Direct Indian contact with China was possibly established at the time of the old Han Dynasty, the annals of which mention a voyage to Huang-che (Kāñcī ?). The discovery of a Chinese coin in Mysore which dubiously bears the date 138 B.C. may also be a proof of maritime

trade between India and China in the 2nd century B.C. The report submitted to the emperor by the Chinese envoy K'ang T'ai (c. A.D. 250) and the frequent visits of Buddhist missionaries to China for proselytization from the beginning of the Christian era also point to the same conclusion. Overland trade between India and China would also seem to have flourished, and the *vihāras* explored by Sir Aurel Stein in Central Asia perhaps acted as caravanserais for night-halts of merchants, besides providing shelter to monks like Hiuen Tsang. India's internal and foreign trade reached great heights in the Gupta period as is evident from numerous literary references as also from the imperial coins. The Chinese pilgrims testify to regular commercial intercourse in the 4th and 7th centuries between Tāmralipti (South Bengal) and Indonesia and Indo-China.

5. Post-Gupta Period (c. A.D. 700-1200)

In the post-Gupta period the sea route to China was quite well known, as is evident from Hiuen Tsang's voyage to China.

In the Deccan, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas must have derived large revenues from the major ports of Broach and Kalyāna as also from the minor ports of Naosari, Sopara, Thana, Saimur, Dabhoi, Jayagad, Devagad and Malvan, which carried on a regular coastal trade. The volume and economic significance of coastal trading will be clear from the Kharepatan Plates of Anantadeva (10th century A.D.) which state that import duty on coastal trade was less than that on foreign trade. But this does not mean that foreign trade had dwindled, since Al-Idrīsī informs us that ships from China and Īrān used to call at Broach regularly. With the decline of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa power, it appears that Īrānian trade was diverted to Cambay, a more northerly port then in possession of the Gurjara-Pratihāras. The principal articles of export appear to have been cotton yarn and cloth, muslins (both rough and fine), hides, perfumes and frankincense, cocoanuts, sandal and teak-wood, and ivory. In all likelihood diamonds formed an item of export, but there was possibly an embargo on the export of bigger diamonds. Imports to ports in Western India remained more or less the same as in the days of the *Periplus*. Marco Polo informs us that Thana imported gold, silver and copper from the West Asia in the 13th century. Import of horses from Arabia was also large.

The inscriptions of the Gurjara-Pratihāras and their feudatories throw interesting light on the mercantile activities of the people. The merchants are described in these inscriptions as *Vyavahārika*. The inscriptions usually mention two classes *Ghoṭaka* (horse-dealers) and *Sārthavāha* (caravan-traders). The Pehoa inscription (A.D. 882) mentions horse-dealers from different countries. For the sale of each animal they agreed to pay a cess of two *dharāṇas* by the dealer and one by the buyer for the benefit of

temples at Kānyakubja, Gotirtha, Bhojapura (near Kannauj) and Pṛthūdaka (Pehoa). Similarly the Atavā (Udaipur) inscription (A.D. 953) refers to visits of merchants from Karnāṭaka, Madhyadeśa, Lāṭa and Ṭakka and the agreements they made to pay a levy on articles of sale. These references prove the corporate character of the mercantile activities. They also point to a brisk highway trade within the country. More important still is the traders' right to levy a cess on all commercial transactions, which were binding even on the state. These prove the large measure of autonomy the merchants enjoyed.

D. GENERAL ECONOMIC CONDITION

1. Pre-Historic and Proto-Historic Periods

Our knowledge of the economic condition of pre-historic India is still very incomplete. The implements and weapons found at different pre-historic regions and sites in Kashmīr, Soan Valley, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarāt indicate that their makers were food-collectors and belonged to the early and late Stone Ages. They used bones and wood along with stones and had no knowledge of metals or of the potter's art.

Some more detailed information may be had from the pre-Mohenjo-daro and pre-Harappa sites in Sind and Baluchistān. The dwellings were those of small village communities. They knew agriculture and made a significant advance in pottery-making. These were polychromed and bore geometric designs, and both black-on-red and buff colours were used.

We are on surer ground when we come to the Indus Civilisation which, as recent excavations conclusively prove, was not confined to the Punjab and Sind only, but spread much further in the north-east (Simla hills), east (Alamgirpur, in Uttar Pradesh) and south and south-west (Tāpti-Narmadā valley). Until the Indus script is deciphered, our knowledge of the Indus Civilisation will remain incomplete, and our conclusions based on archaeological data would at best be surmises. The civilization is known to us only in its mature form, since the remains found in all the strata at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa are of a uniform character.

The Indus Civilization was chalcolithic and urban, as evinced by the remains unearthed at Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Lothāl and other places. Nevertheless, a large number of smaller sites indicate that there were villages upon whose agricultural surplus the towns depended. Among the agricultural products, mention may be made of the bread-wheat, barley, sesame, field-peas and something like the Indian rye. The particular species of cotton grown nowadays was also cultivated, as may be seen from a dyed cotton textile piece tied round a silver vase found at Mohenjo-daro.

The towns had walls all around. The streets were straight and broad and intersected one another at right angles. The excellent sanitation system by underground drainage with brick man-hole covers and soak-pits, the so-called College of Priests, the Pillared Hall, the Great Bath with hydropathic arrangements and the multi-storeyed buildings, testify to a high degree of economic progress and engineering skill. Black-on-red wares bearing naturalistic motifs and animal designs are numerous. Polychrome vases are rare. The potter's kilns were situated outside the city walls ; it is only in the last phase that one of these is found at Mohenjodaro when decadence had gone so far as to result in the slackening of municipal control.

The Indus Civilization was riparian and the rich alluvium carried by the annual flood of the Indus system contributed to the fertility of the soil. The large quantity of wood needed as fuel for the kiln-burnt bricks also indicates that the Indus Civilization sites at that time were covered either by the south-west monsoon or by extensions of the Atlantic cyclones. It is not known whether irrigation was in use.

The complex process of manufacture of the artificial substance called faience was known to the Indus people. They excelled in the art of metallurgy. The metal smiths manufactured weapons and implements in copper and bronze by the technique of casting and forging. The large number of beads and jewellery unearthed from the important Indus sites indicate that this industry also attained a high degree of excellence. Numerous seals of the Indus people have been found at these sites and some have been recovered even from sites in Mesopotamia and Syria. These indicate the prevalence of private property and trade, both inland and foreign.

There appears to have existed in the Mohenjodaro-Harappa area, a strong authoritarian central government which regulated the economic life of the people. The graduated system of weights and measures, the granary at Harappa, and even the uniform size of the bricks through all the phases of this culture scattered over hundreds of kilometres, corroborate this. The two-roomed houses of uniform pattern found both at Mohenjodaro and Harappa very well resemble the slave-village found at Tell el-Amarna, and as such might have been barracks of the workers or residences of slaves.

2. Period of Vedic Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanisads (c. 1500-700 B.C.)

In contrast to the industrial and commercial outlook of the Indus people, the *Rg-Vedic* Aryans were mainly agriculturists. Among the latter, cattle-breeding formed an important occupation, but the agrarian character of their economy can be known from such expressions as *Pañca-kṛṣṭayah* or *Pañca-carṣanayah*, meaning the five *Rg-Vedic* tribes. While private

ownership over homestead (*vāstu*) and arable land (*kṣetra, urvarā*) was recognized, the pasture-land was enjoyed in common. Allusions to strips of land (*khilya*) between two fields, epithets like *Kṣetrasya Pati* or *Urvarā Pati*, and the lady Apālā's prayer to Indra for the fertility of her father Atri's field, indicate private ownership of cultivable land. There is no evidence of royal right over all the land in the kingdom. In fact, the king was entitled only to a part of the produce, and as such was called *balihr̥t* (collector of *bali*). Land was constantly being reclaimed by clearing the forests. Ploughs were drawn by oxen and then seeds were sown. The harvest (*yava*) was reaped with the sickle (*dātra, śṛṇi*), tied in bundles and threshed on the *khala* (threshing floor). Wheat was separated from chaff with the help of a sieve or winnowing fan, and was then measured with a wooden vessel called *ūrdara*. Agriculture depended on the monsoons, but irrigation with water (*khanitrima āpaḥ*) raised by a pulley (*cakra*) was also known. The agricultural products were generally called *yava, dhāna* or *dhānya*.

Of arts and crafts, the Vedic Indians knew carpentry, spinning and weaving, and tanning of hides. Among the workers in wood, the most important was the chariot-maker (*rathakāra*). The progress of the boat-building industry can be judged from such expressions as *śatāritra nau* (100-oared boat). Words like *vāya* (weaver), *tasara* (shuttle), *vasana, vāsas atka, uṣṇīṣa nīvi, paridhāna, sāmulya* (woollen garments), *peśas* (embroidered garments) show that the weavers made different kinds of cloth. The *carmanna* (tanner) made bags and pots of leather to preserve milk, curd and wine. The potter's art was also known. Some archaeologists believe that the Painted Grey Ware recently discovered from various sites in North India was associated with the Vedic Aryans. Distillation of wine (*soma* and *surā*) was also practised.

The *Rg-Vedic* Aryans used gold for ornaments (*niṣka, hiranyapiṇḍa*); *ayas*, which in all likelihood meant copper, was used for making agricultural, household and military equipment like *siprā* (helmet) and *khṛgala* (body armour). Silver and iron were in all probability unknown to them.

Division of labour was only beginning and there was no stigma attached to manual labour. There was no big landed aristocracy and society consisted of small peasant proprietors. On the whole economic life was very simple. Trade and commerce had not yet interested the Aryans. It is, therefore, unlikely that they had a money economy.

In the later Vedic period some significant changes took place. Details of agricultural operations are given—they comprised tilling, sowing of seeds, reaping of the harvest and winnowing. Among agricultural products the *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* mentions wheat, rice (*vrihi*), barley, *māṣa, tila, mudga, khalva, priyaṅgu, anuśyāmaka, nīvāra* and *masūra*. Linen (*kṣauma*) and hemp (*śaṇa*) came to be used for the manufacture of garments. Cotton (*kārpāsa*) is first mentioned by Pāṇini.

In the sphere of metallurgy one significant advance was made with the introduction of iron. The later Vedic texts distinguish between *lohitāyas* and *kṛṣṇāyas*, the latter being synonymous with iron.

With the development of agriculture and progress in the economic condition of the people, towns like Āsandīvant, Paricakrā and others came into existence. People in these towns lived by trade and commerce. In the *Atharva Veda* there are prayers and incantations for security and prosperity in trade.

The emergence of a mercantile community led to the introduction of some sort of a stable medium of exchange. In the *R̥g-Vedic* period the gold *niṣka*, though generally referring to a necklace, was sometimes used for money. *Niṣka* particularly appears to have had a definite weight. In the later Vedic period gold *Kṛṣṇala* and *Śatamāna* came into use. One fourth (*pāda*) of a *Śatamāna* was also known. Pāṇini mentions stamped (*āhata*) coins such as *Kāṁsya*, *Śatamāna*, *Kārṣāpaṇa*, *Paṇa*, *Pāda*, *Niṣka*, *Rūpya*, etc.

3. Pre-Mauryan and Mauryan Periods (c. 700–185 B.C.)

Recent archaeological explorations at Hastināpura, Ujjayinī, and Delhi (Purānā Qilā) indicate that India stepped into what is called the Iron Age in the second half of the 1st millennium B.C. This enabled the people to reclaim more and more land for cultivation by clearing forests. Agriculture was developed both intensively and extensively. Towns multiplied greatly as may be gathered from the early Buddhist canonical literature. In the towns, industries became more localized and specialized and were organized in guilds. The economic prosperity of the time can be guessed from expressions mentioned in the Jātakas like a farmer owning 1000 *karisas* of land or merchantmen-bankers possessing 80 *koṭis* of coins.

The rich farmers were called *Gahapatīs* and *Kuṭumbikas*. They had their land cultivated by hired labourers and even slaves. Irrigation from rivers and canals was practised as before. Fragmentation and subdivision of land were quite common and ordinarily people possessed small plots of land.

The early Buddhist texts mention at least eighteen craft and trade-guilds (*senīs*). These included the carpenters, potters, oil-pressers, garland-makers, stone-cutters, ivory-workers, blacksmiths, and jewellers. Certain crafts were localized. Thus Kāśī became famous for its textile industry (Kāśīvattha). Even in a town, different arts and crafts flourished in different quarters. At Vārāṇasī the ivory-workers (*Dantakāra*) had a street (*vīthi*), and the washermen (*Rañjakāra*) had one at Śrāvastī. There are references to villages of carpenters (*Vaḍḍhakī*), and potters

(*Kumbhakāra*) and smiths (*Kammakāra*) around big towns like Vārāṇasī. The conventional numbers of families residing in these settlements are 500 to 1000. Each guild had a *Jeṭṭhaka* (elder) or *Pamukha* (foreman). We also hear of guilds of caravan-drivers (*Sāttavāha*), a professional caste-like group of the time. We also come across terms like *dhānna-vanijakula* (family of grain merchants) and *pannikā-kula* (family of greengrocers). Traders and artisans were provided with capital by the *mahāseṭṭhis*, *seṭṭhis* and *anuseṭṭhis*. From certain passages the latter communities appear to have been in active business. Joint-stock companies making a profit of 100 per cent or even 300 per cent were not uncommon.

In the Mauryan period, according to Strabo, all land belonged to the king, and peasants, besides paying the land-tax, had to pay tribute. But this is somewhat doubtful. Such distinguishing terms as *svatva*, *svāmitva*, and *bhoga* definitely indicate that private ownership of land was recognized. Grazing ground, however, might still be considered communal. In Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* the king is shown to possess lands of which the net produce was called *Sītā*, and new lands were constantly reclaimed and settled under royal supervision. The *Sītādhyakṣa* had these lands cultivated by sharecroppers under different terms and conditions. The free peasant proprietor was to pay to the king one-sixth (*ṣaḍbhāga*) of the annual produce. The Greek writers appear, however, to mention that the quantity was one-fourth. In the Rummindei Pillar Inscription, Aśoka says that he had reduced the amount of *bhāga* to one-eighth as a concession to the people of the holy birth-place of the Buddha.

That the Mauryas had a strong grip over the economic life of the times is evident from the *Arthaśāstra* as also from the accounts of the classical authors. The *Arthaśāstra* refers to state monopoly of mines (*khani*), and the manufacture of salt and wine. According to Megasthenes, ship-building and manufacture of arms were royal monopolies. Slave labour was employed in the mines and factories. The state was also the biggest trader and made arrangements to check adulteration and false declaration of the quality and quantity of the commodities. The state provided for the correctness of weights and measures, sale by public auction and collection of tolls through officials like the *Paṇyādhyakṣa*, *Mudrādhyakṣa*, *Koṣṭhāgārādhyakṣa*, *Pautavādhyakṣa* and *Śulkādhyaṅga*, all of them working under the *Samāhartā*. Megasthenes also refers to six boards of *Astynomoi*, some of which were entrusted with these duties. The quarrying of stones and manufacture, polishing and erection of the huge monolithic pillars of Aśoka in the widely scattered regions of his empire, indicate the stage of technical progress achieved, and the opulence of the government. Kauṭilya states that construction of dams for purposes of irrigation was a state undertaking. The Girnār Inscription of Mahākṣatrapa Rudradāman also confirms this by stating that the Sudarśana lake was originally constructed by Vaiśya Puṣyagupta, Candragupta

Maurya's governor of Saurāṣṭra. The dam was repaired later by Aśoka's governor Yavanarāja Tuṣāṣpha. It was once more repaired by Rudradāman.

The State derived its revenue from seven main heads (*āya-śarīra*) viz., *durga* (fortified towns), *rāṣṭra* (country side), *khani* (mines), *setu* (buildings and gardens), *vana* (forest), *vraja* (herds of cattle), and *vaṇik-patha* (roads of traffic). These were again subdivided into a large number of heads. Megasthenes states that husbandmen paid taxes and tributes (*bhāga* and *bali*), while shepherds and artisans rendered services to government.

Kauṭilya mentions coins of different denominations, the standard currency being *paṇa*. Earlier, the Achaemenid emperors introduced the silver *sigloi* and possibly the gold *daric*. A large number of punch-marked and cast coins of copper and silver have been discovered, but none can be attributed conclusively to the Mauryan period though such a possibility cannot be altogether ignored. Kauṭilya refers to state officers in charge of coinage, the *suvarṇādhyakṣa*, the *lakṣaṇādhyakṣa* and the *rūpadarśaka* on the one hand, and to coins of gold, silver and copper on the other.

4. Pre-Gupta and Gupta Periods (c. 185 B.C.–A.D. 700)

In the post-Mauryan period, the Sātavāhana inscriptions show that there were in Western India at that time guilds which acted as banks. One inscription states that an oil-pressers' guild (*Tailikanikāya*) received two amounts of money as fixed deposit. For one amount the rate of interest payable was 12 per cent and for the other 9 per cent. The huge sacrificial fees (*dakṣiṇā*) paid after the completion of various Vedic rites by Queen Nāganikā point to a high degree of economic prosperity which must have depended on maritime commerce. The type of Āndhra coins with the figure of a ship on the obverse and the account preserved in *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, all testify to the maritime commerce of the day.

In the early centuries before and after the Christian era the Kuṣāṇa empire touched the fringes of the Roman empire in the west and the 'celestial empire' in the east. Indians acted as the chief intermediaries in the silk trade, besides exporting muslin and spices. Their favourable balance of trade, which Pliny mentions, resulted in the creation of a gold standard in India. Wima Kadphises and his successors issued gold coins, which were in point of shape, size, weight and mineral content exactly similar to Roman *solidus* and *denarius*. People on the Coromandel Coast were engaged in trade with South East Asia. The Jātaka texts, the *Niddeśa*, the *Milinda Pañho*, the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and epigraphic

evidence from South East Asia, point to an increasing Indian mercantile enterprise and subsequent political domination in the region.

The decline of the Kuṣāṇa empire and the Sātavāhana kingdom in the first quarter of the 3rd century A.D. once again let loose the forces of disintegration. Its consequent impact on Indian economy may perhaps be seen in the paucity of Roman gold coins found in India during this period. When the Imperial Guptas established an empire, peace and prosperity returned. The numerous gold, silver and copper coins of the early Guptas found in the different parts of the country are an index to the opulence of the country as a whole. The increase in the weight of their gold coins without debasement further confirms this.

With increasing security of life and property and introduction of a more extensive and intensive cultivation, population multiplied. This meant greater dependence on land. Indeed, land-grants of the period show that agricultural fallow land (*aprada, aprahata*) was not easy to secure. Land-tenure rules in this period, as revealed by the inscriptions and Dharma Śāstras, show that alienation of land was a complicated process. Permission of the village and district authorities was necessary for land transaction in North India in the time of the Guptas; this fact, incidentally, shows that the Gupta emperors claimed some sort of superior right over individual farmers. Providing irrigation water was mostly the responsibility of the State as may be seen from the repairing of the dam of the Sudarśana lake by Paṇḍadatta in Skandagupta's reign. Irrigation wells (*vāpi*) also were dug. Though it is likely that the villages were left to themselves as self-sufficient economic units, the prosperity of the country depended on industrial progress. The high level of excellence in metallurgy in this period can be seen from the rust-proof Mehrauli Iron Pillar of king Candra (Candragupta II?). Industries, as before, were organized under guilds. The Vaiśālī seals refer to the guilds (*nigama, śreṇī*) of bankers (*Śreṣṭhis*), traders (*Sārthavāha*) and artisans (*Kulika*). Specific mention has been made of the guilds of oil pressers (*Tailika*), silk weavers (*Paṭṭavāya-śreṇī*) etc. Each guild had a president called *Prathama* or *Pravara*. Something like a modern chamber of commerce or cartel also existed. There are references to *Śreṣṭhi-kulika-nigama*. These guilds undertook banking operations and accepted donations to be held in perpetuity (*ājasrikam*) on certain conditions which were registered (*nibaddha*). A guild of the town of Ajapūraka thus received a permanent endowment (*akṣayanīvi*). The endowment funds were trust properties and so the principal (*nīvi*) had to be kept intact. Banking operation was undertaken by temple committees as well, such as the *Pañcamāṇḍali* of the Kākanā-daboṭa-mahāvihāra. The importance of the industrial and mercantile communities in the body politic can be seen in the Advisory Council of the District Magistrate (*Viśayapati*).

The sources of revenue during this period were many. Of these, mention

may be made of the *udraṅga* (probably a land-tax), *uparikara* (a tax levied on cultivators who have no proprietary rights on soil), *bhūta* (what is grown), *dhānya*, *hiraṇya*, *bhoga*, and *bhāga* (share of produce). It appears that taxes were levied on salt, sale and purchase, and produce of mines. Forced labour was prevalent (*vaiṣṭika*) and some form of a police-tax (*bhāṭa*, *cāṭa*) was also levied.

5. Post-Gupta Period (c. A.D. 700–1200)

Economic organization in the Gupta period became the pattern for the later period. Very little innovation took place. However, the almost simultaneous decline of the Gupta and Roman empires temporarily affected the fortunes of Indian trade and industry. Post-Gupta coins are few, debased and crude, pointing to great economic decline in the country. New markets were, however, being sought. It is likely that Harṣa's embassies to China were not motivated purely by political reasons. The Pallavas and later the Coḷas in the south maintained active maritime trade relations with South East Asia. The Pālas also did not lag behind, as may be inferred from some Kambuja inscriptions using proto-Bengali script and also from the Nālandā copper plate of year 39 of Devapāla. But from about the middle of the 9th century A.D. Indian merchants faced keen competition from the Arabs who monopolized at least the carrying trade of the Arabian Sea. The Arab merchants Sulaimān and Mas'udī speak highly of the prosperity of the Pāla, Rāṣṭrakūṭa and Gurjara-Pratihāra kingdoms. Another important feature of economic life in the post-Gupta period was the growing tendency towards feudalisation of land. Numerous grants show that lands were allotted to officials as rewards for military service, or as an obligation for such service. Instances of sub-infeudation of land also are not wanting.

Coḷa inscriptions at Ukkal and Uttaramerūr show that the villages were self-sufficient. The village assemblies looked after irrigation and collected revenue from the cultivators for the State. Numerous Coḷa coins of gold and copper have been found. Coḷa inscriptions as well as Chinese annals testify to the extensive maritime activities of the Coḷas. The Coḷa temples and sculptures bear ample testimony to their economic prosperity.