

India Through Chinese Eyes

Sir William Meyer Endowment Lectures

SURENDERNATH SEN

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PREFACE

I have attempted a brief resume of what the Chinese pilgrims wrote about contemporary India. I do not read Chinese, nor am I conversant with the Buddhist lores in which the pilgrims were so keenly interested. My compilation has no pretension to learning. I have simply collected such scraps of information as I could from standard translations, classified them subject-wise and arranged them chronologically with such comments as appeared relevant to me. It is purely a layman's work meant for the average reader who is not interested in technicalities. In view of the present amity between India and China I felt a popular work likely to revive the memory of past contacts even slightly would not be altogether useless. That is why I selected the Chinese pilgrims as the subject of my discourse when the Vice-Chancellor and the Syndicate of the University of Madras did me the honour of inviting me to deliver the Sir William Meyer endowment lectures for 1952-53.

I am under special obligations to Professor Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, the well-known Indologist, who not only lent me all the rare publications I needed from his personal library for an indefinite period but also went through my manuscript and offered ~~valuable~~ suggestions. My thanks go to Dr. Radhagovinda Basak, Professor Sashibhusan Das Gupta and Shri Benoyendramohan Chaudhuri who also took the trouble of reading my manuscript. Sri Nalini Nath Das Gupta very kindly corrected the proofs, and the equally tedious work of compiling the index was undertaken by Sri Arun Das Gupta, to both

of whom I am greatly indebted. Lastly I must record my obligations to the authorities of the Madras University but for whose patronage this work would not have been undertaken at all.

I regret I could not follow a uniform method in transliterating Chinese proper names due to my ignorance of the language. I could not see these lectures through the press earlier on account of heavy preoccupations.

6, Ekdalia Place,
Calcutta - 19.
April 4, 1956.

SURENDRA NATH SEN.

OF THE PILGRIMS

“It is nearly seven hundred years ago that the noble doctrine of the Buddha first passed into the East (China)”, wrote I-tsing sometimes in the nineties of the seventh century A.D.¹ He was not far from correct. In 67 A.D. two Buddhist monks from India, Kaśyapa Mātaṅga and Dharmarakṣa, brought the gospel of the Buddha to the Chinese court, but that was not the first contact between the two countries, for the missionary had his forerunner in the more enterprising merchant. As early as 126 B.C. Chang K’ien, a Chinese diplomat who spent more than a decade in the lands of the western barbarians, reported to his imperial master that he had found goods of Western Chinese origin in Central Asian markets.² According to his information, these goods had been imported there by Indian merchants. They obviously travelled to the South-western provinces of China through Assam. The report roused Chinese interest in the lands of the west and went a long way to opening the northern route to India. With the mission of Dharmarakṣa and Kaśyapa Mātaṅga opened a new era of Indo-Chinese friendship and cultural co-operation. “Indian Bhikshus came to China one after another”, as I-tsing observes, “and the Chinese priests of the time being, crowded together before them, and received instruction from them. There were some who went to India

¹ Takakusu, p. 23.

² Bagchi, *India and China*, p. 5. Prof. Goodrich suggests that Chinese contact with India dates back to the first millenium B.C. *A Short History of the Chinese People*, pp. 26-27. As early as the fourth century B.C. a few Sanskrit words had found their way to China.

themselves and witnessed the proper practice there.”³ Thus began a two way traffic in which the best spirits of the two countries participated. Among the Indian scholars who travelled to China were such eminent monks as Kumārajīva, and Paramārtha⁴; of the Chinese savants who made their pilgrimage to the Buddhist holy places in India the most well-known were Fa-Hian, Hiuen-tsang, and I-tsing. But there were many others who preceded and followed them. According to Prof. Liang-Chi-Chao, no less than one hundred and sixty-nine pilgrims set out for India during the six hundred years between the third and the eighth centuries of the Christian era.⁵ All of them are not known by name, some of the pilgrims had to return home without accomplishing their self-imposed task, others succumbed to the rigours of the road, a few preferred to spend their remaining years in the land of the Buddha, and the rest studied the sacred texts and went back to China, rich in learning and strong in faith, to serve the Church to which they had dedicated themselves.

The way was long. It had its perils, it had its terrors. The route lay across barren deserts. Not a blade of grass relieved the wearied eyes of the forlorn traveller, not a bird appeared in the sky above, nor a beast was seen on the earth below to cheer his drooping spirit. The burning sun glared at the blazing sands in the daytime, the mocking stars blinked at the gloomy expanse at night, and goblin fires

³ Takakusu, p. 23.

⁴ Kumārajīva worked in China from 401 to 412 of the Christian era. The son of an Indian father and Kuchean mother, he is credited with the translation of 106 works into Chinese. Paramārtha, a native of Ujjayinī, reached China in 546 A.D. by sea, and translated 70 works into Chinese and wrote a life of Vasubandhu.

⁵ Chia-Luen-Lo, *Chinese Sources for Indian History*, in *The Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission*, 1948.

and phantom figures chased each other to the horror of the unhappy pilgrim. Strong winds blew sands into his eyes and nostrils and obliterated the faint track he was to follow. Only bleaching bones of dead horses and camels, the dread relics of a lost caravan, served as the signposts and warnings to the bold intruder. In the lakes by the road dwelt dragons, venomous and vindictive, that caused rains and storms, and robbers and highway-men lurked in the forests and mountain gorges. There were snowclad mountains where blinding blizzards raged throughout the year, and deep ravines could be negotiated only by swinging suspension bridges that lent but uncertain foothold to all but the most wary and the most watchful. It needed an uncommonly bold spirit and an exceptionally strong physique to face and survive the natural perils and the supernatural terrors of the long way that led to India. No wonder that though many left for the holy land few were destined to reach the journey's end, and fewer still had the double blessing of returning home. Naturally most of the pilgrims were monks, though occasionally a few laymen found their way to India in the course of their official business.

It will be a mistake to think that all the Chinese travellers followed the land route through the deserts and the mountains of Central Asia. Some of them found the Assam-Burma route more convenient, others came by the Tibet way, some, specially the merchants, preferred the high road of the southern seas and disembarked at the flourishing port of Tāmralipti, then a famous centre of Buddhist learning. But the sea had its perils as well ; it had its typhoons and pirate ships and sometimes the blind superstitions of terror-struck traders sought a Jona in a heretic monk when the boat leaked and the storm raged

high. Fa-Hian experienced the rigours of the Central Asian route and the perils of the sea for he travelled by land to India and returned home by sea *via* Ceylon and Java.

Of Fa-Hian's early life, we know next to nothing. It is said that his family surname was Kung and he hailed from the Shan-hsi region. His parents dedicated him to the Church while yet a little child, as his three elder brothers had all died young. Then followed a serious illness and the future Master of the Law was removed to a monastery. He refused to return home after his recovery, and even his father's death did not shake his resolution though he was a boy of ten at the time. When his mother also passed away he had none to call him back to the worldly life. This is all that a sixth century Chinese work, *Memoirs of Eminent Monks*,⁵ has to tell us about the first great scholar who penetrated into the land of the Brāhmaṇas.⁶

Fa-Hian was at Chang-gan, a fully ordained monk, when he resolved to visit India. "Deploring the mutilated and imperfect state of the collection of the *Books of Discipline* . . . (he entered into an engagement with Hwuy-king, Tao-ching, Hwuy-ying and Hwuy-wei that they should go to India and seek for the Disciplinary Rules."⁷ It is to be noted that two centuries and seventy-two years later I-tsing also sailed for India in quest of the *Vinaya* texts. To a monk the rules or laws of Discipline were no less important than the cardinal doctrines of his faith. As I-tsing complained—"Books on the *Vinaya* were gradually enlarged, but became obscure". . . . "It is difficult to gain a knowledge of the *Vinaya* after it has been handled by

⁵ Legge, p. 1.

⁷ Legge, pp. 9-10.

many men on account of some misinterpretations handed down, the disciplinary rules have suffered, and errors constantly repeated have become customs which are contrary to the original principles".⁸ So the more serious of the monks wanted to go to the fountain head of the original texts instead of relying on inaccurate translations and unintelligent commentaries. Urged by this pious desire Fa-Hian and his friends left Chang-gan. (On the way at Chang-yih they met another party of five, Che-yen, Hwuy-keen, Sang-shao, Pao-yun and Sang-king, also bound for India) possibly under a similar inspiration.⁹ It could not be an accident that two groups of five monks, unknown to one another, should simultaneously set out on the same mission. Obviously the spirit of reform was in the air.¹⁰ Together they journeyed to Tun-hwang, recently the Eldorado of the Central Asian explorer. Here the two parties separated and Fa-Hian entered the dreaded desert "in which there are many evil demons and hot winds". "Travellers who encounter them perish all to a man", Fa-Hian adds. "There is not a bird to be seen in the air above, nor an animal on the ground below. Though you look all round most earnestly to find where you can cross, you know not where to make your choice, the only mark and indication being the dry bones of the dead."¹¹ Thanks to the equipment, munificently supplied by the Prefect of Tun-hwang, the party crossed the desert in safety and reached the kingdom of Shen-shen. It is not necessary to

⁸ Takakusu, p. 16 and p. 18.

⁹ Legge, p. 11.

¹⁰ Dr. Bagchi refers to a movement initiated by Tao-ngan with a view to promoting a critical examination of Chinese translations and interpretation of Buddhist doctrines. *India and China*, pp. 60-61.

¹¹ Legge, p. 12.

follow their foot-steps from Shen Shen, the modern Lob-Nor area, to the banks of the Indus through Kara Shahr (Wu-e), Khotan, Karghalik, Kashgarh and Darel ; but (we cannot leave Khotan and Kashgarh, two important outposts of ancient Indian civilisation and culture, without a passing notice.)

According to a tradition preserved by Hiuen-tsang, Khotan was founded by one of Aśoka's sons, but the royal family also claimed divine descent. Sir Aurel Stein quotes a Tibetan legend which confirms this tradition.¹² The princes of this house bore Indian names like Vijayavīrya, Vijayajaya and Vijaya Sambhava. Kharoṣṭhi documents, unearthed at Niya and its neighbourhood, leave no doubt that an Indian language, closely allied to Prākṛt, was used for administrative purposes throughout the Khotan region about the middle of the third century A.D. Later Buddhism brought Sanskrit with it which was in vogue at the time of Fa-Hian's visit, and the manuscript finds show that the Brāhmī script was introduced with some local variations. The official documents were in Sanskrit and started with *Mahānubhava Mahārāj Lihati*—so writes the high minded great king. The Khotan rulers used the Sanskrit titles of *Mahārāya*, *Mahārāja* and *Devaputra* and in the official documents discovered in this region we come across Indian personal names like Bhīma, Baṅgasena, Nandasena, Sāmasena, Sitaka and Upajīva. Among official titles occur such familiar designations, as *Divira* (clerk), *Cara* or *Caraka* (secret agent), *Lekha-haraka* (Letter carriers) and *Dūtīya* (envoys). For these details we are indebted to western archaeologists of our own times,¹³ but (Fa-Hian has

¹² Hwui-li, p. 203. Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, pp. 152 and 160, pp. 223-230.

¹³ Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, pp. 163, 366.

left an eye-witness's account of a magnificent image procession, a ceremony which survives in this country even today. While Hwuy-king and two others left for Kashgarh, Fa-Hian and the others waited at Khotan for three months more to see the procession. "There are in this country great monasteries not counting the smaller ones" writes the pilgrim.) "Beginning on the first day of the fourth month, they sweep and water the streets inside the city, making a grand display in the lanes and by-ways. Over the city gate they pitch a large tent, grandly adorned in all possible ways in which the king and queen with their ladies, brilliantly arrayed, take up their residence (for the time). The monks of the Gomati monastery, being Mahāyāna students, and held in great reverence by the king, took precedence of all the others in the procession. At a distance of three or four *le* from the city, they made a four-wheeled image car, more than thirty cubits high, which looked like the great hall (of a monastery) moving along. The seven precious substances were grandly displayed about it, with silken streamers and canopies hanging all around. The (chief) image stood in the middle of the car, with two Bodhisattvas in attendance on it, while devas were made to follow in waiting, all brilliantly carved in gold and silver, and hanging in the air. When (the car) was a hundred paces from the gate, the king put off his crown of state, changed his dress for a fresh suit, and with bare feet, carrying in his hands, flowers and incense, and with two rows of attending followers, went out at the gate to meet the image; and, with his head and face (bowed to the ground) he did homage at his feet, and then scattered the flowers and burnt the incense. When the image was entering the gate, the queen and the brilliant ladies with

her in the gallery above scattered far and wide all kinds of flowers, which floated about and fell promiscuously to the ground. In this way everything was done to promote the dignity of the occasion. The carriages of the monasteries were all different, and each one had its own day for the procession. (The ceremony) began on the first day of the fourth month, and ended on the fourteenth, after which the king and queen returned to the palace.”¹⁴ There is no doubt that like the state religion, official language and the current script, the ceremony of taking out images in procession in richly decorated cars also came from India)

(At Kashgarh the two parties met again and witnessed another Indian ceremony, the *Pañca Pariṣad* or the *Mokṣa Pariṣad* as it was variously styled. Writes Fa-Hian, “It happened that the king of the country was then holding pañcha-parishad, that is, in Chinese, the great quinquennial assembly. When this is to be held the king requests the presence of the Śramanas from all quarters (of his kingdom). They come (as if) in clouds ; and when they are all assembled, their place of session is grandly decorated. Silken streamers and canopies are hung out in it, and water lilies in gold and silver are made and fixed up behind the places where (the chief of them) are to sit. When clean mats have been spread, and they are all seated, the king and his ministers present their offerings according to rule and law. (The assembly takes place), in the first, second, or third month, for the most part in spring. After the king has held the assembly, he further exhorts the ministers to make other and special offerings. The doing of this extends over one, two, three, five, or even seven days ; and when all is finished, he takes his own riding-horse, saddles, bridles,

¹⁴ Legge, pp. 18-19.

and waits on him himself,¹⁵ while he makes the noblest and most important minister of the kingdom mount him. Then, taking fine white woolen cloth, all sorts of precious things, and articles which the Śramanas require, he distributes them among them, uttering vows at the same time along with all his ministers; and when the distribution has taken place, he again redeems whatever he wishes from the monks."¹⁶ Aśoka is alleged to have made a gift of *Jambūdvīpa* to the monks on three several occasions and to have thrice redeemed it in the approved manner. Harṣavardhana of Kanauj, Śilāditya of Mālava and his nephew Dhruvasena II were also known to have held such *Mokṣa Pariṣads* at regular intervals for the benefit of the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas alike.¹⁷

We cannot leave Kashgarh without paying our homage to some of the relics of the Buddha. Over a tooth of the Buddha the local people had reared a *stūpa* with which were connected more than a thousand monks of the Hīnayāna school. More precious than the tooth relic was a stone vessel of variegated colour which the Buddha was said to have used as a spittoon while alive. Fa-Hian does not mention Buddha's begging bowl, but both the Indian monk Kumārajīva, who visited Kashgarh about 400 A.D.

¹⁵ Legge notes that the text here is obscure and has perplexed all translators. Does the horse here represent Kaṇṭaka, Buddha's favourite mount? One wonders whether it was intended to dramatise Buddha's *mahābhiniṣkramaṇa*.

¹⁶ Legge, pp. 22-23.

¹⁷ For an account of Harṣavardhana's *Mokṣa-pariṣad* at Prayāga see Hwui-li, pp. 183-187. Śilāditya of Mālava used to convoke such a *Pariṣad* every year, (Beal, Vol. II, p. 261) and the practice was continued by his nephew Dhruvasena II, T'u-lu-h'o-po-tu of the pilgrim. Beal, Vol. II, p. 267. The King of Bamian, in modern Afghanistan, who claimed descent from the Śākya, also used to hold such charitable assemblies. Beal, Vol. I, pp. 51-52.

and the Chinese monk Ching-meng, who came there in 404 A.D. refer to it. Kumārajīva placed on his head the bowl, which was believed to have the miraculous power of changing its weight. Ching-meng also testified to the same miracle for he too handled the sacred vessel.¹⁸

Fa-Hian's travels in India proper began with Woo-chang or Udyāna. He treats the kingdom as a part of northern India though it lay on the western side of the Indus. It is extremely doubtful whether the Buddha ever went beyond the geographical limits of the modern states of Bihār and Uttara Pradeśa, but tradition credited him with aerial voyages to trans-Indus regions and Ceylon.¹⁹ In the kingdom of Udyāna he left his footprints, and many places in the north western frontier of India were closely associated with his previous lives, particularly with the incidents of the Śibi, the Vyāghrī and the Viśvantara Jātakas. The region was also rich in relics, for not only could one see in these districts Buddha's begging bowl, his peuter staff and *Saṅghāṭi* robe, but they could witness also the miraculous properties of his skullbone and tooth. Moreover the Tathāgata had left in the caves of the wicked Nāga Gopāla his living shadow which was visible "with his complexion of gold and his characteristic marks" only

¹⁸ Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, p. 67.

¹⁹ Spence Hardy, *A Manual of Buddhism*, pp. 212-215. According to Ceylonese traditions Buddha paid no less than three visits to the island, the first journey was made in the ninth month after enlightenment, the second and the third in the fifth and the eighth years respectively of the Buddhahood. Ma-huan, the Chinese sailor, has preserved a tradition that on one of the return journeys Buddha halted in the Nicobar islands. Fa-Hian says that Buddha went to Udyāna and left his foot prints there (Legge, p. 29). Hiuen-tsang also refers to these foot prints. Watters, Vol. I, p. 231. Also see Sir Aurel Stein, *Archaeological Tour in Upper Swat*, pp. 55-56, 59-61, and Petech, *Northern India According to the Shui-Ching-Chu*, p. 19. About Buddha's visit to Khotan see Beal, Vol. II, p. 313.

to the pious and the pure-minded. The sceptic was denied the blessed vision and artists employed by neighbouring princes tried in vain to copy it. It was also honestly believed that the thousand Buddhas must all leave their shadows here. Fa-Hian and his friends, therefore, visited Suvāstu, Puruṣapura, Hidda and Nagara or Jalalabad. Pao-yun, Sang-king and Hwuy-tah^{19a} turned homewards from Puruṣapura but sad bereavements awaited Fa-Hian. At Nagara (Jalalabad) Hwuy-ying suddenly fell ill and he breathed his last in the monastery of Buddha's begging bowl at Puruṣapura, where his friend and fellow-traveller Tao-ching had evidently brought him. Accompanied by Tao-ching and Hwuy-king, Fa-Hian next ascended the little snowy mountains (probably Safed Koh on the way to Kohat pass) where "snow lies accumulated both winter and summer. In the north (side) of the mountains, in the shade they suddenly encountered a cold wind which made them shiver and become unable to speak. Hwuy-king could not go any farther. A white froth came from his mouth, and he said to Fa-hien, 'I cannot live any longer. Do you immediately go away that we do not all die here ;' and with these words he died. Fa-hien stroked the corpse and cried out piteously—Our original plan has failed—it is fate. What can we do?"²⁰ The two survivors crossed the range and ultimately reached Bannu. It may be mentioned here that Tao-ching, now the only companion of our pilgrim, later decided to stay in India and Fa-Hian was the only one of the original five who left Chang-gan in 399 A.D. to reach the Chinese shores fifteen years later.

^{19a} Hwuy-tah is introduced for the first time in Chapter XII. (Legge, p. 36). It is not clear when he joined the party.

²⁰ Legge, pp. 40-41.

After visiting Bhida in the Punjab where they were treated with kindness and consideration by their brothers in faith the two travellers turned their steps towards Mathurā. They passed on their way numerous monasteries "with a multitude of monks" and followed the course of Poo-nā or Yamunā river. At Mathurā, Fa-Hian saw *stūpas* raised in honour of the three principal disciples of the Buddha viz., Sāriputra, Maudgalāyana, Ānanda and his son Rāhula ; *stūpas* had also been raised there in honour of the *Abhidharma*, the *Vinaya* and the *Sūtras*. Southeast from Mathurā, eighteen *yojanas* away, lay the kingdom of Saṅkāśya where the Buddha alighted from *Trayastrimśa* heaven after an absence of three months. The seven topmost steps of the ladders by which he descended in the company of Indra and Brahmā still continued to be visible.²¹ *Stūpas* marked the places where three past Buddhas had once sat and walked, and nearby was a monastery which had a white eared dragon or *nāga* for its *dānapati* or benefactor.²² From Saṅkāśya Fa-hian went to Kānya-kubja and thence to Sāketa where the Buddha's *danta kāṣṭha* or tooth brush wood had miraculously come to life and taken root.²³ The next place of visit was Śrāvastī, once the proud capital of Prasenajit, king of Kośala and Buddha's friend and contemporary. Here was Jetavana hallowed by Buddha's memory. "When Fi-hien and Tao-ching first arrived at the Jetavana monastery, and thought how the World-honoured One had formerly resided there for twenty five years, painful reflections arose in their minds." They thought of those

²¹ Legge, pp. 47-50.

²² Legge, p. 52.

²³ Legge, pp. 54-55.

friends who had gone back, they thought of those who had passed away, as they looked upon the place where Buddha once lived now un-occupied by him. The resident monks enquired about their country and were surprised to learn that they came from the land of Han, for never in their experience had they seen "men of Han followers of our system arrive here." About a mile from the monastery was a bamboo grove of miraculous origin. Here five hundred blind men had regained their sight through the mercy of the Buddha, and when in their delight they threw away their staves they all took root in testimony to the supernatural power of the Enlightened One. Here also the evil-minded /Cañcamāna or Ciñci, who falsely traduced Buddha, was exposed by Śakra, and the pit through which she went alive into hell was still to be seen. A mile from Śrāvastī stood a *stūpa* where Buddha met Virūdhaka when the latter was on his way to the Śākya kingdom.²⁴ Before they went to Kapilāvastu, the two pilgrims visited the birth places of three previous Buddhas, Kaśyapa, Krakucchanda and Kanakamuni.

Kapilāvastu was in ruins, though every place associated with Buddha was still recognised. From Kapilāvastu, the garden of Lumbinī, where Gautama was born, was not far off, and from the place of Buddha's nativity the pilgrims proceeded to Rāmagrāma, once the seat of Koliya power, and until recently an uninhabited desolation, with none but wild elephants to attend the *stūpa*, which the Koliyas had reverently raised over their share of the relics after Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. A śrāmaṇera later discovered the *stūpa* by accident and attached himself to the holy place.²⁵

²⁴ Legge, pp. 62-63.

²⁵ Legge, pp. 69-70.

Twenty *yojanas* to the east of the deserted Koliya capital was the little Malla town of Kuśīnagara, where the Enlightened One attained his *parinirvāṇa*. In between were two other holy cities, the place where Buddha bade farewell to Chandaka, and where the mortal remains of the Tathāgata was cremated after the *parinirvāṇa*.

From Kuśīnagara Fa-Hian went east to Vaiśālī, once famous as the capital of the Licchavis. Here lived in Buddha's time Ambapāli, the Mary Magdalene of the Buddhists, and less than a mile from the town was a *stūpa* that commemorated the legend of the thousand sons and their mother. It was by the side of this *stūpa* that Māra got from Buddha a promise to pass away in three months' time. The pilgrims next crossed the Ganges on their way to Pāṭaliputra. The law of Buddha was already on the decline in the city of Aśoka, though Fa-Hian does not specifically say so. He mentions a holy man whom the ruling king greatly revered,²⁶ and goes on to observe that "By means of this one man the Law of Buddha was widely made known, and the followers of other doctrines did not find it in their power to persecute the body of monks in any way." Evidently the Buddhists feared persecution by non-Buddhists, and the royal favourite of Mahāyāna persuasion was a source of protection to them. The two pilgrims had yet to visit three of the most important places associated with the Enlightened One,—Gayā where he attained enlightenment, Vārāṇasī where he first set the wheel of law in motion, and Rājagṛha, particularly the Gṛdhrakūṭa hill, where the Buddha spent so many years and preached so often. Fa-Hian was deeply moved when

²⁶ His name was Rādhā-svāmī and he was a Brāhmaṇa by birth. Legge, p. 78.

he worshipped at the Gṛdhrakūṭa hill. "In the New City Fa-hien bought incense (sticks), flowers, oil and lamps, and hired two bhikshus, long resident (at the place), to carry them (to the peak). When he himself got to it, he made his offerings with the flowers and incense, and lighted the lamps when the darkness began to come on. He felt melancholy, but restrained his tears and said, 'Here Buddha delivered the *Śūrāṅgama (Sūtra)*'. I, Fa-hien, was born when I could not meet with Buddha ; and now I only see the footprints which he has left, and the place where he lived, and nothing more.' With this, in front of the rock cavern, he chanted the *Śūrāṅgama Sūtra*, remained there over the night, and then returned towards the New City."²⁷

Having thus visited the principal holy places of his faith, Fa-Hian returned to Pāṭaliputra and devoted himself to the mission that had brought him so far. His main object was to collect complete sets of *Vinaya* texts. The Buddhist church was then divided into many sects and sub-sects and each of the eighteen schools had its own rules of discipline. The texts, however, were orally transmitted from teacher to pupil, and were not ordinarily available in writing. In a Mahāyāna monastery he discovered a copy of the Mahāsāṅghika *Vinaya* and erroneously accepted them as the original rules compiled in Buddha's lifetime. His next lucky find was a transcript of the Sarvāstivāda²⁹ rules in six or seven thousand *gāthās*. These were of special importance to him as the general mass of Chinese Buddhists subscribed to Sarvāstivāda creeds. These also

²⁷ Legge, pp. 83-84.

²⁸ Legge, p. 98. Fa-Hian was told that the original copy was preserved in the Jetavana Vihāra.

²⁹ Legge, p. 99.

used to be orally transmitted from scholar to scholar. He also obtained texts of the *Samyuktābhīdharmahr̥daya Śāstra*, *Parinirvāṇa Vaiṣṭhīya Sūtra* and *Mahāsāṅghika Abhidharma*. To transcribe them was no easy task, for it demanded a thorough knowledge of Sanskrit language and literature. Fa-Hian, therefore, spent three years at Pāṭaliputra learning Sanskrit and writing out the *Vinaya* texts. When his pious labours at Pāṭaliputra were over he turned eastward once again. This time his destination was the far-famed port of Tāmralipti where he spent another two years “writing out his Sūtras and drawing pictures of images.” He embarked at Tāmralipti for Ceylon and reached that island after a voyage of fourteen days. In Ceylon also Fa-Hian spent a couple of years visiting holy places and seats of Buddhist learning, for the monks of that island were well known for their piety and erudition. His luck did not fail him here and “he succeeded in getting a copy of the Vinayapiṭaka of the Mahīśāsakāḥ school, the Dīrghāgama and Samyuktāgama (Sūtras) and Samyukta Sañchaya piṭaka”,³⁰ all Sanskrit works unknown in the land of Han. Happy in his finds Fa-Hian was now anxious to take home his sacred treasures. He was, moreover, feeling exceedingly home sick. “Several years had now elapsed since Fa-hien left the land of Han ; the men with whom he had been in intercourse had all been of regions strange to him ; his eyes had not rested on an old and familiar hill or river, plant or tree : his fellow-travellers, moreover, had been separated from him, some by death, and others flowing off in different directions ; no face or shadow was now with him but his own, and a constant sadness was in his heart. Suddenly (one day), when by

³⁰ Legge, p. 111.

the side of this image of jade³¹ he saw a merchant presenting as his offering a fan of white silk ; and the tears of sorrow involuntarily filled his eyes and fell down.”³² Nothing to detain him in Ceylon any longer, Fa-Hian, took a boat for Java which carried two hundred passengers. The vessel, however, sprang a leak and the alarmed passengers threw overboard all their bulky goods. Fa-Hian was afraid that his manuscripts might attract the attention of the frightened merchants and earnestly prayed to Avalokiteśvara to save his valuable collection. The prayer was heard and though foul weather continued for days, the leak was ultimately located and repaired. In Java Fa-Hian had to wait for five months for a China-bound boat. Again the ship was overtaken by a violent storm and the superstitious Brāhmaṇa passengers attributed their misfortune to the inauspicious presence of the ill-omened *bhikṣu*. But for the intervention of a kind hearted merchant he might have been left in a desert island to die of hunger and thirst ; the pious pilgrim and his sacred treasures were not yet safe, for the ship went out of its course, provision ran short and drinking water had to be strictly rationed. But good luck prevailed once again and the boat reached the coast of Ts'ing-Chow. At Ts'ing-Chow the weary pilgrim was warmly welcomed by the hospitable Prefect. Back to his native land, Fa-Hian was anxious to hurry to Chang-gan but he had to go to Nanking first where his manuscripts and drawings were exhibited.

“After Fa-hien set out from Chang-gan it took him

³¹ An image of Buddha in green jade in the Abhayagiri monastery. Legge, p. 102.

³² Legge, pp. 102-103, Legge suggests that the merchant in question was a Chinese and the fan also came from China.

years to reach Central India. Stoppages there extended over (other) six years ; and on his return it took him three years to reach Ts'ing-Chow." But the journey's end did not bring rest and relaxation and it certainly did not mean a life of ease and indolence. The texts so laboriously collected and so carefully transcribed were unintelligible to his countrymen. Their message must be brought home to them. His last days were employed in the translation of the Sanskrit texts. In this task he found a competent collaborator in the Indian Śramaṇa Buddhahadra. Thus Indian scholarship was yoked with Chinese piety in spreading the gospel of the Buddha in the lands of the east. But before he could accomplish all that he wanted Fa-Hian was granted the bliss of *nirvāṇa* at the ripe old age of eighty-eight in the monastery of Sin at King-Chow.

The necessity of textual examination of Buddhist sacred works which brought Fa-Hian to India inspired other monks of his generation. One of them, Che-mong and his party suffered terribly in their journey across the Pamirs but they ultimately entered Kashmir and visited Buddhist holy places in northern India. Che-mong also collected Buddhist texts and wrote an account of his Indian travels which has been lost.³³ Lost also is the account of Fa-yong who left for India by the Central Asian route in 420 A.D., learnt Sanskrit, studied Buddhist texts and returned home by sea.³⁴ The labours of these learned monks at last brought home to the authorities of the state the supreme need of collecting and collating old texts and an imperial decree sent Tao-pu with a staff of ten scribes on this mission. He left for India by sea and

³³ Bagchi, *India and China*, p. 65.

³⁴ Bagchi, *India and China*, pp. 65-66.

died of a ship-wreck without achieving anything.³⁵ The next official attempt was not made until the second decade of the next century.

II

In 518 A.D. the dowager empress of the Wei dynasty sent Sung-yun of Tun-hwang and Bhikṣu Hwei-sang to obtain Buddhist books and to offer presents at Buddhist shrines. They left the capital and after crossing the "drifting sands" took the Shen Shen, Cher chen, Khotan and Yarkand route, reached the Tsung-ling or Onion mountains, and through Kafirstan and Bolor entered Udyāna by suspension bridges. "These are suspended in the air for the purpose of crossing (over the mountain chasms). On looking downwards no bottom can be perceived; there is nothing on the side to grasp in case of a slip, but in a moment the body is hurled down 10,000 fathoms. On this account, travellers will not cross over in case of high winds."³⁶

Sung-yun's pilgrimage and explorations were confined mainly to Udyāna, Gāndhāra and the neighbouring regions, and were not extended to North India proper. We come across in his account also the same Jātaka stories, *stūpas* and relics to which Fa-Hian had referred. Hwei-sang seemed to have been particularly impressed by the miracles worked at a stone tower near Kaṇiṣka's pagoda at Peshwar and attributed it to the king of the Śibis of the Jātaka fame. He presented to this tower a tall flag, the sole remnant of two thousand streamers which the empress, the princess and the dukes had given him for such

³⁵ Bagchi, *India and China*, p. 66.

³⁶ Beal, Vol. I, p. XCIII.

purpose. Sung-yun allotted to the Kaṇiṣka pagoda two servants in perpetuity to sweep and water it. The *Bhikṣu* spent two years in Udyāna, which had earned an unenviable reputation as 'a land of sorcerers. Before they left for home Sung-yun and Hwei-sang collected one hundred and seventy volumes of Buddhist texts, all standard works of the Mahāyāna school.³⁷

III

The seventh century was the golden age of the Chinese pilgrims in India as the seventeenth was that of the western travellers. It was the age of Hiuen-tsang, Wang-hiuen-tse and I-tsing. Besides them came many others whose records unfortunately have been lost. I-tsing mentions no less than thirty two by name and several others whose names were not known to him.^{37a} It is true that all of them were not Chinese by origin, but whichever might have been the country of their birth, Korea, Tibet, Samarkand or Indo-China, they were Chinese by education and culture, and had been inspired by the example of earlier Chinese monks. At least seven of them had been to Nālandā and many more knew enough Sanskrit to study the *Vinaya* and other works in original.³⁸

³⁷ Beal, Vol. I, p. LXXIV.

^{37a} Hwui-li, pp. XXVII-XXXVI. Of these the most remarkable is Śramaṇa Hiuen-chiu who visited India thrice and collected for his sovereign a number of medicinal herbs from South India. He was familiar with the Nepal-Tibet route and spent several years at Nālandā. During his third visit he probably met Wang-hiuen-tse in North India.

³⁸ Hiuen-chiu, Taou-hi, known also as Śrīdeva, Aryavarman a Korean, Hwui-meh, also a Korean, Buddhadharmā of the Tokhāra country whom I-tsing met at Nālandā, Taou-sing and Tang, who returned to China with the envoy Wang-hiuen-tse.

Some of them visited India more than once but their fame had been eclipsed by that of the prince of pilgrims—the famous Master of the Law—Hiuen-tsang.

Hiuen-tsang came of an old aristocratic family. His great grandfather was Prefect of Shang-tang; his grandfather, the founder of the family fortunes, was president of the Imperial College and had been granted the revenue of a town for his subsistence; the father, however, had no taste for public life and preferred a quiet corner of his library to the noisy atmosphere of a magistrate's office. Hiuen-tsang inherited his scholarly habits. When other children played and gambled and crowded after street musicians in their unsophisticated glee, Hiuen poured over old classics and tried to model his conduct on that of the ancient sages.³⁹ His father belonged to the old faith of the country, but his second brother had accepted Buddha's religion and renounced the world. It was his influence that attracted the future Master of the Law first to Buddhistic studies and then to the monastic life.

He entered a convent quite early in his youth and earned a stipend to which young people of his age were not eligible. Endowed with a phenomenal memory, he soon made himself familiar with the sacred writings of the Mahāyāna school. "By hearing a book only once, he understood it thoroughly, and after a second reading he needed no further instructions, but remembered it throughout."⁴⁰ At the age of thirteen he expounded the most abstruse doctrines with a perspicuity that commanded the admiring attention of his elders.

Not content with what he had already learnt, he

visited in turn all the noted savants of his time and diligently studied with them until they had nothing more to teach him. If he aspired to scholarly fame it was already his, but he sought something more important, more essential, a perfect knowledge of the Buddha's teachings. Puzzled by the inconsistencies that the sacred works offered, troubled by the conflict between principles and practice, Hiuen-tsang decided to emulate the example of the illustrious Fa-Hian and to go to the land of the Brāhmaṇas to seek for the Law. But the times had changed ; Fa-Hian had with him four other monks inspired by the same ideal, Che-mong led a party of twenty pilgrims, Sung-yun had Hwei-sang to share with him the pleasures and perils of the road ; but Hiuen-tsang had to pursue his solitary course, all alone, for, the crossing of the western frontier had been interdicted by an imperial decree, and the barrier was closely watched by vigilant soldiers. Beyond the barriers stood no less than five watch towers garrisoned by wary archers ready to shoot the trespasser at sight. This was not all, the area was absolutely barren and provided no shade for the weary and no water for the thirsty. But Hiuen-tsang resolved to go west at any cost and defy men and nature in his search for the truth. He was twenty-six at the time.

If circumstances were so adverse there was no lack of friends and well-wishers among the officials to sustain him in his pious resolve. His plans to go west was no secret. At Kwa-chow, when spies came with a royal mandate to stop the monk, the friendly governor took Hiuen-tsang into his confidence, tore the paper into pieces and urged him to go in all haste. He persuaded a foreigner to serve as his guide, and at his instance exchanged his horse with

a sorry nag that had crossed the desert before. The exchange proved providential, but the guide deserted him near the first tower, and worse still, an arrow warned him that his presence in the forbidden area was a secret no longer. The captain of the guards, however, proved sympathetic, and advised him how to reach the fourth tower. There his movements were detected for a second time, but again the commanding officer and his men proved friendly and he was permitted to enter the desert unmolested. Here one misfortune followed another ; first he missed the spring where he was to replenish his water supply, next by a misadventure he tilted the water-bottle while drinking from it and lost every drop of the precious liquid that it contained, and to complete his miseries he lost his way in that trackless expanse. For a moment his courage failed him and he thought of turning back, but he recalled his vow never to take a step eastward if he failed to reach India ; so he invoked the help of his patron Bodhisattva and turned northwest. "At this time (as he looked) in the four directions, the view was boundless ; there were no traces either of man and horse, and in the night the demons and goblins raised firelights as many as the stars ; in the day-time the driving wind blew the sand before it as in the season of rain. But notwithstanding all this his heart was unaffected by fear ; but he suffered from want of water, and was so parched with thirst that he could no longer go forward. Thus for four nights and five days not a drop of water had he to wet his throat or mouth, his stomach was racked with a burning heat, and he was well-nigh thoroughly exhausted. And now not being able to advance he lay down to rest on the sands, invoking *Kwan-Yin* without intermission, although worn

out with sufferings".⁴¹ But his troubles were soon to be over. Unknown to him he and his horse had blundered in the right direction and reached the verge of an unknown oasis. In the middle of the fifth night a refreshing breeze suddenly blew, as if in response to his earnest prayer, and revived the waning strength and drooping spirit of the man and the beast. The horse was strong enough to stand up again, and soothed by the fresh breeze, the pilgrim once more recovered the use of his eyes. But he did not try to move and lay still and slept for a while. His sleep was disturbed by a dream and he once more mounted his

⁴¹ Hwui-li, pp. 22-23. Earlier (p. 18) Hwui-li thus describes the terror of the desert. "Alone and deserted he traversed the sandy waste; his only means of observing the way being heaps of bones and the horse-dung. . . . He suddenly saw a body of troops. . . . Sometimes they advanced sometimes they halted And now the appearance of camels and horses, and the glittering of standards and lances met his view; then suddenly fresh forms and figures changing into a thousand shapes appeared, sometimes at an immense distance and then close at hand, and then they dissolved into nothing Again he heard in the void sounds of voices." About six hundred years later, Marco Polo referred to the phantom figures and ethereal voice that travellers saw and heard in the Lob Nor desert: "Not a thing to eat is to be found on it," he says. "In some 28 places altogether you will find good water, but in no great quantity;" "Beasts there are none; for there is nought for them to eat. But there is a marvellous thing related of this Desert, which is that when travellers were on the move by night, and one of them chanced to lag behind or to fall asleep or the like, when he tries to gain his company again he will hear spirits talking and will suppose them to be his comrades. Even in the day time one hears those spirits talking." *The Book of Marco Polo*, ed Yule, (London, 1871), Vol. I, pp. 180-181. Sir Aurel Stein also testifies to the trustworthiness of Hiuen-tsang. He writes from his own experience "Totally devoid of water or shelter of any sort, this long march is attended with risks both on account of the great summer heat here experienced and the icy north-east gales to which it is exposed in the winter and spring. Carcasses of transport animals mark the route all the way from K'u shui; nor are losses of human lives unknown here." Stein, *The Desert Crossing of Hsüag-Tsang*, 630 A.D., in *The Geographical Journal*, Nov. 1919, p. 273.

horse and urged it forward. The horse did not obey its rider long and took its own course, and Hiuen-tsang was delighted to find himself before long in "acres of green grass" where he let his horse loose. "About ten paces off he came to a pool of water, sweet and bright as a mirror", and "he drank without stint and so his body and vital power were restored once more, and both man and horse obtained refreshment and ease". The devout biographer, to whom we are indebted for these details, assures us that "this water and grass were not natural supplies" but had been provided by the loving pity of the Bodhisattva. The sceptic, however, may be permitted to attribute to the natural instincts of the horse, that had crossed the desert before, the unexpected relief but for which Hiuen-tsang might have shared the fate of other daring travellers who never saw the desert's end.

The worst part of the journey over, the weary pilgrim dragged his tired limbs to a temple where he found three Chinese priests none of whom had hoped to meet one of their countrymen again. At Kau-chang, modern Turfan, king Khio-wen-t'ai received the pilgrim with open arms. Royal kindness, however, proved as unwelcome to the India-bound monk as the dangers he had so recently experienced, for the king and the queen wanted him to stay with them for ever, and were prepared to use other methods if friendly persuasion failed. But, Hiuen-tsang was adamant, and abstained from food and drink until the king reluctantly yielded to his persistence. At the king's request Hiuen-tsang agreed to stay at Turfan a month longer and preached to his court and people. When the parting day arrived, the king not only gave him twenty-four letters of introduction, but presented him such

articles of clothing as the cold of the route ahead demanded, besides a hundred ounces of gold, three myriads of silver pieces, five hundred rolls of satin and taffeta, thirty horses and twenty-four servants. Moreover, he commissioned one of his trusted officers to conduct Hiuen-tsang to the court of the Sh'eh-hu-Khan, whose eldest son and heir apparent had married the king's sister. On his way Hiuen-tsang passed through Karashahr, the black city, whose climate had earned it the unenviable name of O-Ki-ni or Agni, Kuchih (Ku-che) "where quinquennial Buddhist assemblies were held" and "all the monasteries made processions with their images of the Buddha"; the Ling-shan mountains with perpetual snow and icy winds, lake Issik-kul, where "fish and dragons lived pell mell in deep azure water," to Su-she, Water City, where the pilgrim met the Sh'eh-hu-Khan. The Khan was on a hunting expedition and urged the pilgrim to stay there for a while. Formerly a fire-worshipper, he was converted by Hiuen-tsang, and naturally requested the monk to stay with him. But the pilgrim was not to be deviated from his resolve and the Khan presented him "a complete set of vestments in red satin, and fifty pieces of silk and personally escorted him to a distance of two miles." The pilgrim next proceeded through the Iron gates, a narrow cleft to the west of Derbent that now goes by the name of Buzghala Khana, and Tu-ho-lo (Badakshan) to Kunduz, the head quarters of the eldest son of the Sh'eh-hu-Khan and brother-in-law of the king of Turfan. The prince was then ill, but the king's letter assured the pilgrim of a warm welcome and generous hospitality. It is interesting to note that the monk met here a Brāhmaṇa necromancer who had come to cure the ailing prince by his charms. Whatever

efficacy his incantations might have against the natural distemper of his patient, they were of no avail against poison administered by the young queen at the instigation of her wicked lover.⁴²

The new prince, guilty of murder and incest as he was, did not lack in respect for the Chinese Śramaṇa. At his request Hiuen-tsang visited Balkh. Though a dependency of Kunduz, Balkh was then known as "Little Rājagrha", on account of the sacred relics it possessed and the erudition and piety of the resident monks. Hiuen-tsang saw here the Buddha's water pot, his sweeping broom of *Kuśa* grass with a jewelled handle and a tooth of the Buddha one inch long and 8/10th of an inch broad.⁴³ On the six festival days these relics were exhibited to the assembled lay and clerical worshippers and "might emit a brilliant light moved by the thorough sincerity of a worshipper". The *Nava-Saṅghārāma* of Balkh was often robbed on account of its wealth of precious gems, but recently a covetous Turk had not only been foiled in his sacrilegious intention but had paid with his life for his contemplated sin, as he incurred the wrath of Vaiśravaṇa-deva, the guardian of the establishment. At this monastery Hiuen-tsang met a learned monk named, Prjñākara, from the Cheka country, with whom he studied *Abhidharma* and *Vibhāṣā* for a month. Two of the resident monks, Dharmapriya and Dharmakara, were well-versed in the three *piṭakas* of the Hīnayāna school like Prajñākara, and were greatly honoured for their erudition. In this region, in Buddha's time, lived two merchants, Trapuṣa and Bhallika, who had offered the Enlightened One some

⁴² Hwui-li, pp. 47-48.

⁴³ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 108-109.

parched grain and honey and received from him some hair and nail parings over which, on their return home, they built two *stūpas* according to the direction of the great master himself.

Our pilgrim, accompanied by Prajñākara, next entered the Great Snowy Mountain. He had experienced the terrors of the desert soon after crossing the frontiers of China. He was now to face the perils of the alpine climate. "Wind and snow alternate incessantly, and at mid-summer it is still cold. Piled up snow fills the valleys and the mountain tracks are hard to follow. There are gods of the mountains and impish sprites which in their anger send forth monstrous apparitions, and the mountains are infested by troops of robbers who make murder their occupation". The snowy range, however, was safely crossed and the intrepid monk entered the kingdom of Bamian in modern Afghanistan. The king, according to a current legend, was of Śākya descent, and there were three gigantic figures of the Buddha, two standing and one reclining, in the environs of the capital.⁴⁴ Near the reclining figure, which according to Hiuen-tsang exceeded 1000 feet in length, the king used to hold a *Mokṣa Pariṣad*, when he used to give away everything he possessed, not excluding the queen, and his ministers later redeemed the valuables from the monks.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ The standing figures are still extant. The reclining figure does not exist any longer. The bigger of the two is one hundred and seventy-five feet in height, the smaller measures a hundred and twenty feet. They are not completely carved. "Only the armature, a rough approximation of the body and head, was actually cut from the sandstone cliff. Over this the features and folds of the drapery were modelled in mud mixed with chopped straw with a final coating of lime plaster to serve as a base of polychroming and gilding". Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India*, pp. 104-105.

⁴⁵ Watters, Vol. I, p. 119; Beal, Vol. I, p. 52.

About forty miles from Bamian was a monastery which had a tooth each of the Buddha, of a Pratyeka Buddha and a Cakravartī king.⁴⁶ Among its treasured possessions were also the iron dish and the clerical robes of a mythical saint Śāṅakavāsa.⁴⁷ It was believed that the Kāśāya garments of Śāṅakavāsa would last as long as the Buddha's law prevailed, "after the destruction of the law his garment also would perish." "At the present time", Hiuen-tsang observes, "it is a little fading, for faith also is small at this time".

On his way to Kapiśa the pilgrim encountered a snow storm and lost his way, but some hunters put him back on the road and he reached the capital in safety. Here he spent the monsoon recess in a monastery built by some Chinese princes, held as hostages by Kaṇiṣka.⁴⁸ The founder had buried under the image of Vaiśravaṇadeva, a treasure for the future repair of the Vihāra. Lately a wicked king had tried to remove the hoard, but when his men started digging at the foot of the image the inanimate figure of a parrot on the god's crown began to scream and flap its wings. The king and his troops were frightened away but the monastery badly needed repairs and the resident monks were short of funds. They requested the Master of the Law to intercede with the god and secure his permission to dig out the treasure. Hiuen-tsang offered his personal assurance that he would see that the funds were used for their legitimate purpose. This time the

⁴⁶ Beal, Vol. I, p. 52.

⁴⁷ Beal, Vol. I, p. 53.

Watters, Vol. I, p. 120.

⁴⁸ Beal, Vol. I, pp. 56-59

Hwui-li, pp. 54-56.

diggers were not interrupted and “at the depth of seven or eight feet they came to a great copper vessel, which contained several hundred cathies of gold and several scores of pearls”. The king of Kapiśa “made every year a silver image of Buddha 18 feet high, and at the Moksha-parishad he gave liberally to the needy and to widows and widowers”. Here Hiuen-tsang and Prajñākara parted company, while the latter returned to Balkh the former turned towards Lamghan, which he places within the boundary of India.

Hiuen-tsang travelled through the first three frontier or border kingdoms, as he styles them, but neither Lamghan nor Nagarahāra (Jallalabad) was independent. These two principalities were dependencies of Kapiśa at the time. He not only visited all the holy sites at which Fa-Hian had worshipped two centuries earlier but went to other places associated with the Buddha’s previous lives. For instance, he visited the place where the Buddha in a former birth as Brāhmaṇa Sumedha covered a muddy patch on the road with his deer skin robe and later spread his long hair over it for Dīpaṅkara Buddha to walk over.^{48a} At Hidda he saw one of Buddha’s eyeballs as large as an *āmra* fruit. The size of the eyeball should not cause any surprise if we remember that Buddha was a person of gigantic proportion, being eighteen feet tall, according to one account, and twenty-seven, according to another.⁴⁹ Anxious to have a forecast of his future the pilgrim got an impression of the miraculous skull bone of the Buddha which differed in different cases. For Hiuen-tsang it depicted the Bodhi tree, a rare phenomenon, as the attend-

^{48a} Beal, Vol. I, p. 92.

⁴⁹ Spence Hardy, *A Manual of Buddhism*, p. 377.

ing Brāhmaṇa asserted, which indicated the attainment of a "portion of true wisdom".⁵⁰

The most important of the three border kingdoms was Gāndhāra which was once ruled by Kaṇiṣka. Among the great scholars this country had produced were Nārāyaṇa-deva, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Dharmatrāta, Manohṛta and Pārśvika. At Puruṣapura, the capital city, the pilgrim saw a white stone image of Buddha that used to circumambulate Kaṇiṣka's *stūpa*.⁵¹ The pilgrim next journeyed to Udyāna which once had 1400 Saṅghārāmas with 18000 priests, but now they were deserted and depopulated. In this country lived in ancient times Kṣānti Ṛṣi, who allowed himself to be cruelly dismembered by an angry prince without losing his equanimity of mind, and king Maitrīvala who fed hungry Yakṣas with fresh meat and blood cut out of his own body.⁵² From Udyāna the pilgrim travelled to Kashmir through Darel, Taxila and Siṃhapur (Ketas).

Kashmir was a land of erudite scholars, and Hiuent-sang's interest was not limited to the *Vinaya* texts or Mahāyāna philosophy alone. His fame had already preceded him and the priests had been forewarned in a dream of his arrival. The king's mother and younger brother went as far as the frontiers to welcome the famous monk and the king himself entertained him at the palace. Twenty scribes were appointed to cōpy sacred books for him, and five servants were assigned to him for his personal service.⁵³ The pilgrim spent two years in Kashmir assi-

⁵⁰ Beal, Vol. I, p. 96.

Hwui-li, p. 39.

⁵¹ Beal, Vol. I, p. 103.

⁵² Hwui-li, pp. 65-66.

⁵³ Hwui-li, pp. 68-69

duously studying different branches of Buddhist philosophy and theology. Nor was he indifferent to secular learning, for he took lessons in *Hetu Vidyā* or Logic. His first teacher was an old man of seventy, who was inspired with a new enthusiasm, despite the weight of his years, by the all-embracing intellect of the student. "Before noon he explained *Koṣa shastra*. After noon he explained the *Niyāya-anusārā shāstra*—after the first watch of the night he explained the *Hētuvidyā shāstra*."⁵⁴ In these discussions other scholars of note eagerly participated. There were six such men who had attained exceptional distinction in the special branches of their choice—Viśuddhasimha and Jinabandhu of the Mahāyāna school, Sugatamitra and Vasumitra of the Sarvāstivādin school, and Sūryadeva and Jinatrāta of the Mahāsāṅghika school.

From Kashmir Hiuen-tsang set out for Jalandhar *via* Punch, Rajauri, Cheh-ka (which had at one time Śākala or Sialkot for its capital), Chiniyāri (Cinabhukti, the winter residence of Kaṇiṣka's Chinese hostages) and Tāmasa-vana. The journey was not without adventure and profit. While passing through a Palāśa forest, after leaving Sialkot, the party encountered a band of highwaymen, who despoiled them of all their worldly possessions and would have murdered them but for the timely intervention of the people of a neighbouring village.⁵⁵ In a mango grove by the high road to Cinabhukti that passed through the kingdom of Cheh-ka (Takka) lived a Brāhmaṇa, who according to the pilgrim was no less than seven centuries old but looked like a young man of thirty. He was well-versed not only in the Vedas but also in the Buddhist sacred

⁵⁴ Hwui-li, p. 70.

⁵⁵ Hwui-li, p. 74.

lores. Hiuen-tsang broke his journey here for a month and studied some of the works of Āryadeva, the famous disciple of Nāgārjuna, with the erudite Brāhmaṇa.⁵⁶ At Cīnabhukti the pilgrim spent fourteen months in a convent studying *Abhidharma-śāstra*, *Abhidharma-prakaraṇa-śāsana-śāstra* and *Nyāyadvāra-tarka-śāstra* with a famous savant, Vinita-prabha, who had himself composed commentaries on *Pañcaskandha-śāstra* and *Vidyāmātrasiddhi Tridaśa-śāstra*.⁵⁷ At Jalandhar again he had to stay for four months, as he met here another scholar of great eminence, Candravarmā, who had thoroughly mastered the *Tripiṭakas*. With him Hiuen-tsang read *Prakaraṇa-pāda-vibhāṣā-śāstra*.

From Jalandhar he struck first north-east, then south and finally south-west to Pāriyātra or Bairāt in modern Rajasthan, a distance of approximately four hundred miles by road. From Bairāt he went to Mathurā to the east, and found that the *stūpas* raised in honour of the great Buddhist saints, mentioned by Fa-Hian, were still extant. He did not proceed north or east from Mathurā, but turned north-west to Sthāneśvara “surrounded for 200 li by a district called the place of Religious Merit”, where in the days of yore, a great battle was fought between two rival kings. Hiuen-tsang had evidently heard of the Kuru-Pāṇḍava war that was waged in the neighbourhood of the city and the *Dharma-sūtra*, that urged people to “go into battle and die fighting”, may safely be identified with the *Gītā*, though the pilgrim heard only a garbled version of the doctrine of *Karma* expounded by Kṛṣṇa at Kurukṣetra.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Hwui-li, pp. 74-76.

⁵⁷ Hwui-li, p. 76.

⁵⁸ Watters, pp. 314-316.

He next refers to the sacred rivers, Yamunā and Gaṅgā, the former flowed through the kingdom of Srughna, the latter formed its eastern boundary. "Accumulated sins were effaced by a bath" in the Ganges, according to popular faith which still prevails, and Hiuen-tsang tells us how Āryadeva, the famous disciple of Nāgārjuna, demonstrated the absurdity of this belief. In the kingdom of Srughna lived Jayagupta, a famous scholar of his time, and the pilgrim spent the cold season and half of the following spring studying the Vibhāṣā of the Sautrāntika school. Travelling through Matipura, Mayūra, Brahma-pura, Goviṣāṇa, Ahicchatra and Vīrāsana, or the modern districts of Rohilkhand, Bareilly and Etah, the pilgrim arrived at Kapitha or Saṅkāśya, but the triple stairs, by which Buddha had descended from heaven after preaching to his mother, were no longer to be seen: brick and stone copies had been made in their stead and stone images of Buddha, Śakra and Brahmā had been placed thereon in commemoration of the event. From Saṅkāśya Hiuen-tsang went to Kanauj, the capital of his future friend and patron Harṣavardhana. He does not appear to have met the king on this occasion though he spent three months at Bhadravihāra studying Buddhādāsa's work on Vibhāṣā with Vīryasēna, a learned monk of the place. From Kanauj Hiuen-tsang proceeded to Ayodhyā through Navadevakula, a city near which five hundred hungry Yakṣas had attained salvation. Ayodhyā is an important place of Hindu pilgrimage as the birth-place of the epic hero Rāma; to a devout Buddhist it was equally sacred on account of its association with Aśaṅga and Vasubandhu, both of whom had been allotted the status of Bōdhisattvas or potential Buddhas by the time of Hiuen-tsang's visit. The pilgrim next pro-

ceeded to Prayāga by way of Ayomukhi, and sailed down the Ganges in a passenger boat. But like the Palāśa forest on the way to Jalandhar, the Aśoka forest that lined the banks of the river harboured pitiless robbers. Ten pirate boats suddenly came out of their hiding place and pounced upon the helpless passengers. While the rest were allowed to leave with their lives, the comely features of the Chinese monk marked him for a suitable sacrifice to Durgā, the patron goddess of the pirates. Neither his own expostulations nor the importunities of his fellow passengers could shake the gangsters from their fell purpose and they went on with their preparations. At the last moment, when the monk had already been placed on the sacrificial altar, the sky was suddenly overcast with rolling clouds and a furious tempest blew whipping the trees and lashing the river. The robbers in their fright took it as an evil portent, and not only released their victims but restored all the looted property to their rightful owners.⁵⁹

In a *Campaka* grove at Prayāga the Buddha had once worsted his religious opponents in a controversy, and the traveller mentions a wide spreading tree where non-Buddhist pilgrims used to commit suicide.⁶⁰ He also refers to the extensive plain by the confluence of the two rivers which became famous as the field of Great Beneficence, as charitable offerings were made there by pious people from ancient times. From Prayāga the pilgrim went to Kauśāmbī through a forest infested by elephants and other wild beasts. At Kauśāmbī, he saw a sandalwood image of the Buddha carved out by a contemporary artist, who had been transported to heaven, where the Buddha was then residing, by the spiritual

⁵⁹ Hwui-li, pp. 86-89.

⁶⁰ Beal, Vol. I, p. 232.

power of Maudgalāyana, at the request of king Udayana. When the Buddha returned, this image went out to meet him. From Kauśambī Hiuen-tsang proceeded to the heart of the Buddha land, Śrāvastī, Kapilāvastu, Rāmagrāma, Kuśīnagara, Benares and Vaiśālī. The Buddhist antiquities and sacred sites with which these places abounded need not detain us here. Suffice it to say that most of these places were de-populated at the time of Hiuen-tsang's visit, and Benares was associated not only with the Śākya prince but also with some of his previous lives, as he had been born here as a deer king, a courteous bird and a six-tusked elephant. Traditional sites of Buddha's early exploits were still identified with confidence, and *stūpas* and images were pointed out as indubitable evidence in support, if any evidence was at all needed to convince the devout visitors. Having completed his pilgrimage to the places of the Buddha's birth, death and first conversion, Hiuen-tsang turned his steps to the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment in the kingdom of Magadha. He first went to the capital city of Kusumapura, better known as Pāṭaliputra, and saw the ruins of Kukkuṭārāma, built by Aśoka. From Pāṭaliputra he went to Mahābodhi, after visiting the Tilodaka convent, where many learned monks then resided. At Mahābodhi he worshipped the sacred Bodhi tree, which had survived many sacrilegious assaults, and the Vajrāsana, where all the thousand Buddhas of the *Bhadra Kalpa* have attained their enlightenment.

After spending nine days of devotion at Bodh Gayā the Chinese savant set out for the Monastery of Nālandā. Four of the principal priests came to escort their honoured guest while he was still a long way from the monastery, and two hundred priests and numerous lay patrons joined the party

when he reached the farm house which stood in the native village of Maudgalāyana. When he arrived at the monastery he was welcomed by the entire community and was offered a seat of honour by the side of the Sthavira. Then the gong was sounded to announce his admission to the convent with all the privileges it had to confer, and twenty of the most learned scholars were deputed to conduct him to the head of the foundation, the famous Śīlabhadra, whom the congregation did not venture to call by his name, but in its extreme veneration invariably referred to as the treasure of the good law.^{60a} After the usual courtesies had been exchanged, Hiuen-tsang told the great teacher that he had come all the way from China to take lessons in the principles of the *Yoga-Śāstra*. To his surprise the Chinese student found that his visit was not unexpected. For twenty years the Indian scholar had suffered from virulent attacks of colic, and unable to bear the excruciating pain any longer, he had decided to get rid of the torture by starving himself to death. Then one night three Bodhisattvas, Mañjuśrī, Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara appeared to him in a dream, and Mañjuśrī, their spokesman, pointed out to him the futility of his decision. "The body" he said, "is born to suffering; they do not say we should hate and cast away the body". "If you loathe your body there will be no cessation to your sufferings." "You should rely on our words, and exhibit abroad the true law, the *Yoga-śāstra* and the rest, for the benefit of those who have not yet heard it. Your body will thus by degrees become easy and you will suffer no further pain." Having thus admonished him the Bodhisattva specially referred to a monk from China who desired to study with Śīlabhadra and urged him to instruct

^{60a} Saddharmapiṭaka. Hwui-li, pp. 105-106.

the Chinese student carefully.⁶¹ Śīlabhadra promised to obey and from that moment his sufferings came to an end.

Hiuen-tsang then took his residence in the College of Bālāditya-rājā with Buddhabhadra, a nephew and pupil of Śīlabhadra. After a week he removed to another dwelling to the north of the residence of the saintly Dharmapāla. "Each day he received 120 Jambiras, 20 *pūga*-nuts, 20 *nutmegs*, an ounce of Camphor and a measure of Mahāśāli-rice" which is reserved specially for kings and monks of great religious distinction. This was not all. He had in addition a monthly ration of oil and a daily ration of butter and other necessaries. An *upāsaka* and a Brāhmaṇa were told off to wait on him and accompany him with a riding elephant.⁶²

After visiting Rājagṛha, the former capital of Magadha, (where Buddha spent many years at Kalanda Veṇuvana and Gṛdhrakūṭa) and other holy places in the neighbourhood, Hiuen-tsang returned to Nālandā and he studied *Yogaśāstra*, *Nyāyānuśāra-śāstra*, *Prajñāmūla-śāstra-ṭīkā*,^{62a} *Śabda-vidyā* and *Hetu-vidyā*. He must have been particularly interested in Sanskrit grammar, for he not only refers to a Brāhmaṇa grammarian of the town of Sālātura in Gāndhāra, Pāṇinī by name, and to the later abridgements of his work, but goes on to discuss many details that to him appeared as its special features. He had previously studied the *Koṣa*, *Vibhāṣā* and *Ṣaṭpadābhidharma* in Kashmir but he revised them once again and discussed the doubtful points with the Nālandā teachers. During the period of his residence at this great seat of learning he not only examined

⁶¹ Hwui-li, pp. 107-108.

⁶² Hwui-li, pp. 109-110.

^{62a} Beal's rendering of the Chinese title is Pranyamula. Dr. R. G. Basak's suggested reading has been accepted here.

the huge collection of Buddhist texts available there but also studied the sacred books of the Brāhmaṇas.⁶³

From Nālandā our pilgrim journeyed to the country of the golden mountain, Hiraṇya Parvata, the modern district of Monghyr, associated with the legend of Śrutavimśatikotī. A small hill in this region bore the traces of Buddha's water jar, the impression being more than an inch in depth and an eight-whirled flower in shape. Hiuen-tsang remained in this region for one year and studied *Vibhāṣā* and *Nyāyānusāra-sāstra* with the eminent scholars Tathāgata gupta and Kṣāntisimha.⁶⁴

From Monghyr he went to Campā, Bhāgalpur of today, and thence, by the way of Kajaṅgala, he made a round of Puṇḍravardhana, Karṇasuvārṇa, Samataṭa and Tāmralipti, the seventh century constituents of modern Bengal. Whether he visited Kāmarūpa at this time is not quite clear, for Hwui-li seems to suggest that the invitation from Bhāṣkaravarman came much later. From Tamluk (Tāmralipti) the pilgrim wended his way to Kāñcīpura, the capital of Drāviḍa country, through Orissa, Ganjam, Kaliṅga, Dakṣiṇa Kośala, Andhra, Dhanakaṭaka (modern Bezwada) and the Cola land. The journey was interrupted both in South Kośala, for more than a month, where the pilgrim worked with a Brāhmaṇa scholar of the locality, and at Dhanakaṭaka where he studied texts of the Mahāsāṅghika school for several months with two scholars named Subhūti and Sūrya.⁶⁵ Kāñcīpura was the birthplace of Dharmapāla, the predecessor and teacher of Śīlabhadra at Nālandā. Here he encountered a band of

⁶³ Hwui-li, p. 121.

⁶⁴ Hwui-li, p. 127.

⁶⁵ Hwui-li, p. 137.

Ceylonese monks whom anarchy and famine, following the death of their king, had driven to the hospitable shores of India.⁶⁶ The monks of Ceylon were well-known for their proficiency in the *Yoga śāstra* and *Tripitāka* of the Sthavira school, but the Chinese pilgrim was disappointed with the emigrants, for they could not answer his questions and explain his difficulties more satisfactorily than the abbot of Nālandā.

Hiuen-tsang did not personally visit the Pāṇḍya kingdom. He crossed the Deccan plateau "through a dense forest infested by troops of murderous highway-men" and reached Koṅkanapura where he saw Buddha's tiara which was exhibited on festival days. He also worshipped a sandalwood image of Maitreya, attributed to the Arhat Śrutavimśatikoṭi, who attained his *nirvāṇa* in this kingdom. Further north-west lay the kingdom of Mahārāṣṭra, the home of a warlike people then ruled by the brave king Pu-lo-ki-she, who foiled the ambitious design of Harṣavardhana to subjugate the Deccan. The pilgrim refers to a Saṅghārāma that stretched along the face of rocks on the eastern frontier of the country. "On the four sides of the *Vihāra* on the stone walls, are painted different scenes in the life of Tathagata." This rock cut monastery, with scenes from Buddha's life depicted on its walls, is probably the famous cave temple of Ajantā, and if so, this is probably the earliest reference to that wonderful monument of Buddhist sculpture and painting.⁶⁷

The pilgrim then crossed the Narmadā and travelled

⁶⁶ Hwui-li, pp. 139-140.

⁶⁷ Some scholars are inclined to identify this *Vihāra* with the Kanheri caves near Bombay. But Kanheri lacks the stone elephant mentioned by the Chinese monk. The Kanheri reliefs, moreover, depict the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas rather than different scenes in their lives.

to Bharoch, an ancient port, where the people derived their livelihood from the sea. To the north-west of Bharoch lay the Mālava country, which shared with Magadha the reputation of being the region “where learning was most esteemed”. From Mālava Hiuen-tsang went to Valabhi, through A-t’a-li and K’-i-ta and thence to Surāṣṭra and Gurjara. From Gurjara he turned south-east to Ujjain and travelled via Maṇḍaleśvara on the Narmadā to Sind. After visiting Multān where he saw the magnificent Sūrya temple that survived till the Muslim days,⁶⁸ he went to Parvata where the Master of the Law stopped for two years and studied *Mūlābhidharma-śāstra*, the *Saddharma-saṃparigraha-śāstra* and the *Parīkṣā-satya-śāstra*, as received in the Sammitīya School.

Having thus completed the circuit round the entire sub-continent, with the exception of the extreme south and the Himalayan state of Nepal, Hiuen-tsang once again returned to Nālandā where he had found his intellectual peers.

His stay at Nālandā was not to be long. The keen thirst for knowledge, that had brought him over the dreaded desert and snow-capped mountains so far away from his country, did not permit any rest or relaxation. He heard of a great scholar of Sarvāstivādin school, Prajñābhadrā, and set out for the Tilodaka monastery, three *yojanas* to the west of Nālandā. Prajñābhadrā was well-versed not only in the three *piṭakas* but also in *Śabda-vidyā* and *Hetu-vidyā*, the secular sciences of grammar and

⁶⁸ Al-Idrisi described the temple and the idol it housed in detail. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its Own Historians*, Vol. I, pp. 82-83. Al-Biruni also wrote of the Āditya image, a wooden affair covered with red cordova leather, which drew a large number of pilgrims to Multan, *Albiruni's India*, Vol. I, p. 116.

logic. Hiuen-tsang, therefore, spent two months in scholarly discussion with him. He next called on Jayasena, a layman of Kṣatriya caste, who lived on the Yaṣṭi-vana hill. He was a man of encyclopaedic learning and had studied the four Vedas besides astronomy, geography, medicine, magic (which formed part of the medical science) and arithmetic. Among his teachers were Bhadraruci, Sthiramati and Śīlabhadra with whom he had studied such subjects of secular and religious interest as *Hetu-vidyā*, *Śabda-vidyā* and *Yoga*. In him Hiuen-tsang found a kindred spirit, for though a householder, Jayasena spurned wealth and honour, and had refused an offer of a princely estate consisting of twenty large towns made by two successive princes. Hiuen-tsang seems to have made another pilgrimage to Gayā in the company of Jayasena. While there, logic once got better of their faith but faith was ultimately reinforced. A number of bone and flesh relics of unusual size were exhibited and both the monk and the lay professor became sceptic about their character, but lo! the relic tower was illuminated by a many-hued light which flooded heaven and earth, and a subtle perfume pervaded the precincts, and all doubts were effectively removed.⁶⁹ The pilgrim lived with Jayasena for a period of two years "and studied a treatise on the difficulties of the *Vidyā-mātra-siddhi* and other *śāstras* and he also discussed some difficult passages in the *Yoga* and *Hetu-vidyā śāstras* which had so long puzzled him."⁷⁰

Back to Nālandā again, Hiuen-tsang was asked by Śīlabhadra to address the congregation and to expound to his audience some of the Mahāyāna texts. At this time

⁶⁹ Hwui-li, pp. 156-157.

⁷⁰ Hwui-li, p. 154.

a monk named Simharaśmi was discoursing on *Prajñā-mūlāsāstra* and *Śata-śāstra* and his comments tended to belittle the principles of the *Yoga*. Hiuen-tsang refuted the arguments of Simharaśmi in a treatise of 3000 verses and presented it to Śīlabhadra and the scholars of Nālandā.⁷¹

While with Jayasena at Yaṣṭi-vana, Mañjuśrī had warned the pilgrim in a dream of Silāditya Rājā's death in ten years' time and the consequent anarchy and disorder. Hiuen-tsang was, therefore, anxious to return home, but unforeseen circumstances detained him at Nālandā and imposed on him another journey to the easternmost regions of India. Harṣavardhana had reduced the kingdom of Konyodha (Ganjam) and was passing through Orissa on his way back. Orissa was then a stronghold of the Hīnayāna monks and the report of Harṣavardhana's patronage of Nālandā, where the Mahāyānists predominated, had already reached them. Moreover a south Indian scholar, Prajñāgupta, had composed a treatise of 700 *ślokas* to refute Mahāyāna doctrines. The Hīnayānists of Orissa, therefore, demanded that the king should arrange a public debate and discussion so that the Mahāyānist errors might once for all be exposed. To them the Mahāyāna heresy was as revolting as the *Kāpālika* creed, and insinuated that the king might as well build a *Kāpālika* temple at Nālandā instead of the magnificent Vihāra of brass he had reared there. The king at once accepted their challenge and agreed to arrange for a public discussion. He immediately sent a messenger to Nālandā requesting Śīlabhadra to nominate four eminent scholars to participate in the debate. Śīlabhadra's choice fell on Sāgaramati, Prajñāraśmi, Simharaśmi and Hiuen-tsang. But the

⁷¹ Hwui-li, pp. 157-158.

journey to Orissa was postponed, as a subsequent message from the king directed the delegation to wait.⁷² Meanwhile, the reputation of the Chinese Master of the Law rose higher, for he completely silenced a proud Brāhmaṇa scholar who had challenged the monks of Nālandā to a public debate on a subject of his own choice.⁷³ In this discussion Hiuen-tsang gave evidence of his uncommon proficiency in different branches of Hindu philosophy, particularly *Sāṅkhya* and *Vaiśeṣika*. The Brāhmaṇa had forfeited his head by the terms of his challenge but Hiuen-tsang was satisfied with a public confession of his errors. The pilgrim was now preparing for his journey to Orissa and had actually obtained a copy of Prajñāgupta's treatise with a view to detecting its weak points and inconsistencies, but he had to go to Kāmarūpa instead, for an invitation had come from Bhāṣkaravarman, to whom the vanquished Brāhmaṇa, now an admiring disciple, had reported the uncommon erudition and spiritual attainments of the Chinese savant.

The invitation came at an inopportune moment, but the pilgrim had been forewarned of it, not by a Bodhisattva, but by a naked Jaina anchorite. The *nirgranthas* were in those days credited with unfailing skill in divination, and the pilgrim was anxious to know whether he would be able to return home with the large number of images and sacred books he had collected. The anchorite assured him of a safe return as Harṣa and Bhāṣkaravarman would supply him with escorts. Hiuen-tsang was as yet unacquainted with these kings but the diviner confidently asserted that Bhāṣkaravarman's messengers were already on their way

⁷² Hwui-li, pp. 159-161.

⁷³ Hwui-li, pp. 161-165.

and Harṣa's invitation would soon follow. Two days later the messengers from Kāmarūpa arrived but Śīlabhadra was reluctant to send his guest with them while he was being expected by Harṣavardhana. But Bhāṣkara would not accept a denial, if persuasion failed he threatened to come to Nālandā at the head of his army. So Hiuen-tsang had to go to Kāmarūpa where he was royally entertained for a month.⁷⁴ It appears that a Chinese musical composition, "music of Chin-wang's victory", had at this time gained considerable popularity in some parts of India. The Hindu prince made enquiries about the hero, and the pilgrim confirmed that the song praised the excellent qualities of his sovereign.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, Harṣavardhana was getting impatient and was positively annoyed when he heard that the Chinese Master of the Law was staying with Bhāṣkara-varman. Harṣa at once demanded his return and the ruler of Kāmarūpa had to obey. He personally escorted Hiuen-tsang and sailed up the Ganges with his fleet of 30,000 boats. Harṣa also proceeded eastwards at the head of his troops. The two parties met at Kajaṅgala where a temporary encampment had been formed. Before the Chinese monk could be formally presented, Harṣa paid him an unexpected visit at an unusual hour. The king wanted to see his treatise in defence of Mahāyāna doctrines which was forthwith produced. It was then decided that a great assembly would be called at Kanauj to settle this long standing controversy. The assembly was attended not only by a large number of Buddhist scholars from all parts of India but also by learned Brāhmaṇas, besides eighteen princes and numerous high-

⁷⁴ Hwui-li, pp. 169-171.

⁷⁵ Beal, Vol. II, p. 198.

Watters, Vol. I, pp. 349-350.

ranking officials. Hiuen-tsang's thesis was presented to this congregation of scholars by another monk of Nālandā and the Master staked his head in its defence, probably in accordance with the current practice. None, however, came forward to dispute his arguments and the Mahāyāna doctrines stood vindicated. At first the Hīnayānists were greatly chagrined at their discomfiture and a plot against Hiuen-tsang's life was rumoured. A strong proclamation of the king, however, brought the disgruntled doctrinaires to their senses and the Hīnayānists conferred on their opponent the title of *Mokṣadeva*, while the Mahāyānists honoured him with the no less respectful appellation of *Mahāyānadeva*.⁷⁶ Thus the Indian career of the great Chinese pilgrim was crowned with an intellectual triumph unrivalled in his days.

Harṣa's *Mokṣa-pariṣad* at Prayāga was due to be celebrated shortly, and *Mahāyānadeva* decided to witness it before he left for his native land. So he proceeded to the confluence of the two holy streams at Allahabad in the company of his royal patron, and after the festivities were over bade him goodbye. Harṣa wanted to load him with rich presents but the pilgrim would not accept any thing of value, and took from the king of Kāmarūpa only a skin cape, to protect himself against rain. Harṣa confided the pilgrim to the care of Udhita, ruler of Jalandhar, and provided him with 3,000 gold and 10,000 silver pieces to defray the expenses of the journey. The king personally escorted him to a distance of two miles but this was not the final parting. Three days later he overtook the party and commissioned four of his ministers⁷⁷ to join the escort and pro-

⁷⁶ Hwui-li, p. 181.

⁷⁷ Mo-ho-ta-lo has been equated with Mahataras by Beal. It sounds more like Mahattara which may mean officials of superior rank. I wonder whether it could be Mahāmātra?

vided them with letters of introduction to the princes through whose territories they were to pass. The journey was slow and leisurely as the pilgrim did not like to pass any holy place without worshipping there. Nor was he prepared to miss any opportunity of discussing unsolved theological problems with fellow students on the way. Udhita accompanied him as far as his capital city of Jalandhara where the pilgrim halted for a month. He passed through Simhapur to Taxila, where he received an invitation from his old friend, the king of Kashmir to visit him once again ; but he was unable to go as he had heavily laden elephants with him. While crossing the Indus the boat carrying the manuscripts and images capsized and fifty manuscripts were lost. The pilgrim himself safely crossed the river on an elephant and was received by the king of Kapiśa in person. Here he halted for fifty days and the king of Kashmir came to bid him farewell. The king of Kapiśa escorted him as far as the borders of Lamghan where the heir apparent came in advance to receive him. At the capital of Lamghan Hiuen-tsang attended the *Mokṣa-Mahādāna* ceremony which the king celebrated for seventy-five days. From Lamghan the pilgrim proceeded to Bannu where he broke his journey for fifteen days, and thus ended Hiuen-tsang's travels in India.

The rest of the journey need not detain us. Suffice it to say that it was not without its rigours and risks for, he had to cross the snowy mountains and encountered a band of robbers in the Tangi-tar gorge near Kashgar, if Sir Aurel Stein's identification is correct.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Stein observes, "He probably made his way over the Chichiklik and on towards Wu-sha and Kashgar in the autumn. At that season none of

Hiuen-tsang had left China surreptitiously, spies had hounded his steps from one frontier town to another, whizzing arrows had warned him of imperial displeasure near every watch tower, but a warm welcome awaited him on his return. The authorities willingly ignored his technical delinquency in view of his glorious achievements, for he had brought with him an invaluable treasure which gold could not buy and steel could not win.

When Hiuen-tsang arrived at Sigan-fu in the spring of 645 A.D. he had with him besides gold, silver and sandal wood images of the Buddha, no less than six hundred fifty-seven volumes of manuscripts, a unique collection that comprised the sacred texts of the Sthavira, Sammitīya, Mahīśāsaka, Sarvāstivādin, Kaśyapīya and Dharmagupta schools and works on such secular subjects as *Śabda-vidyā* and *Hetu-vidyā*. The rest of his life was devoted to the supreme task of rendering the Sanskrit texts, he had collected, into Chinese. But he was not alone in his pious labours. He found willing collaborators in Indian and Chinese monks. Nor was imperial patronage lacking, for a syndicate of scholars had been commissioned to co-operate with Hiuen-tsang in the difficult work of translation.⁷⁹ When the great scholar passed away in 664 A.D., nineteen years after his return home, "he had finished the translation of seventy-four distinct works in 1335 chapters".⁸⁰

Wang-hiuen-tse is mentioned by name in Hui-Li's '*Life of Hiuen-tsang*', but finds no place in I-tsing's list, for he was an officer of the state and not a monk. Unlike the

the streams encountered on the road would be likely to hold sufficient water to prove dangerous to elephants except the Tangi-tar stream." *Serindia*, Vol. I, p. 79.

⁷⁹ Watters, Vol. I, p. 12.

⁸⁰ Hwui-li, p. 217.

pilgrims he was not pre-occupied with religious dogma or theological difficulties. He visited India four times and had the unique experience of leading a military expedition against Magadha.⁸¹ Unfortunately his memoir has been lost, but a few fragments have been preserved by Tao-chen in his famous encyclopedia of Buddhism. These fragments have been collected, translated and annotated by Sylvain Lévi ;⁸² and few as they are, they are invaluable to students of Indian history, for Wang-hiuen-tse not only participated in the political troubles that followed the death of Harṣa, but also supplied a fixed point in the Gupta chronology, as he referred to the embassy that Meghavarna, king of Ceylon, sent to the court of the great Samudragupta.⁸³

Wang-hiuen-tse first came to India as a member of the embassy headed by Li-I-piao to the court of Kanauj in 643 A.D. They had been commissioned to escort home a Brāhmaṇa envoy, who had doubtless visited the Chinese emperor on behalf of the Indian king. They resided fairly long in India but they were not occupied with their political mission all the time. Early in 645 A.D. Wang and his colleagues visited Rājagrha, climbed the Gṛdhrakūṭa and left an inscription there. Fifteen days later they were at Mahābodhi,

⁸¹ Lévi, *J. A.*, 1900, March-April, pp. 300-301.

Bagchi, *India and China*, pp. 74-75.

⁸² *J. A.*, 1900, March-April, pp. 297-341 ; May-June, pp. 401-468.

⁸³ Wang-hiuen-tse mentions the king of Chen-tzen (Ceylon) named Chi-mi-kai-po-mo (Shri Meghavarman) who sent Mahānāman and Upa to Mahābodhi. Later he sent some presents to king San-meou-to-lo-kiu-to (Samudragupta) with a view to obtaining permission to build a monastery for Ceylonese monks. *J. A.*, March-April, 1900, pp. 316-317. Lévi observes that while Hiuen-tsang has given a vague legend about the foundation of the Ceylonese monastery near the Bodhi tree, Wang-hiuen-tse is more precise. He gives the names of the kings and the names suggest a date. *J. A.*, May-June, 1900, p. 401.

where another inscription was left to commemorate their visit. The original inscriptions, however, still remain untraced, and it is not possible to say whether they have survived the sun and rains of thirteen centuries. The embassy returned to China in 646 through Nepal where Li-I-piao enjoyed the hospitality of King Narendradeva. The same year Wang-hiuen-tse was sent on another mission to Magadha. But the friendly Harṣa had passed away in the meantime and his throne had been usurped by one of the ministers, O-lo-na-choen (Arjuna or Aruṇāśva?). The usurper had no good feeling for the Chinese; the small party of thirty escorts was massacred, their camp was plundered, but the ambassador succeeded in effecting his escape under the cover of night. He found willing allies in his old friends, Narendradeva of Nepal and Tsrong-tsan-gampo, the famous king of Tibet, who was related by marriage with the imperial family of China. Wang-hiuen-tse returned with an army of 12,000 Tibetan soldiers and 7,000 Nepalese horsemen, captured the capital city after three days' fighting and carried the usurper to China as a prisoner in 648 A.D. This account is corroborated by the official *History of the Tang*.⁸⁴

In 657 A.D. an imperial edict again sent Wang-hiuen-tse to the countries of the west. He was particularly charged to present a *kāṣāya* to the Buddha and to

⁸⁴ Dr. R. C. Majumdar questions the accuracy of the current version of Wang-hiuen-tse's Magadha expedition. The official account recorded in the *History of the Tang* was obviously based on the ambassador's report who might have exaggerated his own part in Tsrong-tsan-gampo's Indian campaign. The Indian king, who was taken prisoner to China, was probably the ruler of Tirabhukti and Wang-hiuen-tse did not fight in the neighbourhood of Magadha but somewhere in Assam. In any case the Tibetan or Chinese expedition did not affect the general course of Indian history. *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. XIX, pp. 37-44.

make offerings at Buddhist holy places. He again travelled by way of Nepal and in 660 A.D. we find him in the Mahābodhi convent where he was received with all honours by the Vihārasvāmin Śīlanāga. In 661 A.D. he was in Kapiśa on his way home. He came to India in 664 A.D. for the fourth time to take to China Śramaṇa Hiuen-chiu, who occupies the place of honour in I-ting's list. The sramaṇa had visited India more than once and returned to China with the ambassador through Nepal and Tibet. While the ambassador remained at home to write his memoirs of Indian travels, the śramaṇa was sent back to collect rare medicines for the emperor. He spent several years in South India in quest of medicinal herbs but could not return to China with his collection as "he found the way through Nepal blocked by Tibetan hordes and the road through Kapisā in the hands of the Arabs". The rest of his years, were, therefore, spent in the land of the Buddha. We may here take a passing notice of a nephew of Wang-hiuen-tse, Tche-hong, who, doubtless inspired by the example of his illustrious uncle, made a pilgrimage to India. He travelled by sea *via* Śrīvijaya, Ceylon and Harikela and lived eight years in Central India. He visited the Buddhist holy places and studied the sacred texts at Nālandā.⁸⁴ Among other pilgrims who worked at Nālandā were Taou-hi, Āryavarman, Hwui-nieh and Buddha-dharma;⁸⁵ but the most famous of Hiuen-ting's successors at the University was I-ting, who ranks only next to the great Master of the Law.

I-ting was born in 635 A.D. in the province of Chi-li. His education began when he was a boy of seven under

⁸⁴ Lévi, J. A., March-April of 1900, p. 305.

⁸⁵ Hwui-li, pp. XXIX-XXX.

two distinguished teachers, Shan-yu and Hui-hsi. Shan-yu was a man of wide intellectual interest. As I-tsing tells us, "He was equally learned in both Confucianism and Buddhism" and "well versed in the sciences of Astronomy, Geography and Mathematics". His knowledge of Chinese language was really profound and he used to say "there is no character in Chinese which I do not know". He read through the *Parinirvāṇa-sūtra* in a single day and was a man of simple habits. Shan-yu was absolutely free from that vanity which often mars erudition, and one year before his death, he destroyed all his writings with his own hand. The other teacher, Hui-hsi, devoted himself exclusively to the study of *Vinaya*. His favourite book was *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, which he used to read once every day for more than sixty years. Shan-yu died when his pupil was only twelve but he left a permanent impress on the boy's mind. Hui-hsi gave his whole-hearted approval when I-tsing sought his advice about his projected voyage to India.⁸⁶

I-tsing had entered the order when he was fourteen but could not be ordained, according to the Buddhist rules, before he was twenty. Two years earlier he had formed the intention of travelling to India. Nineteen years elapsed before this holy resolution could be implemented.

During this interval he dilligently devoted himself to the study of religious works and, inspired by the example of Fa-Hian and Hiuen-tsang, prepared himself for the search, acquisition and examination of Sanskrit Buddhist texts in India.

I-tsing expected the company and co-operation of three other monks, Chu-i, Hung-i, and Hiuen-k'ei in his projected

⁸⁶ Takakusu, pp. 198-211.

journey, but at the last moment something or other kept them back, and in 671 A.D. at the age of thirty-seven he boarded at Canton a Persian boat, bound for Śrīvijaya, with a young student, Shan-hing. Shan-hing had to return from Sumātrā owing to ill health^{86a} and I-tsing pursued his journey alone. The boat reached its destination after a voyage of twenty days. Śrīvijaya was then a great centre of Buddhist learning. So I-tsing remained there for six months learning Sanskrit grammar. He found a patron in the ruling prince whose ships trafficked between his own ports and eastern India. I-tsing next travelled to the coastal region where he spent two months, and then embarked for Tāmralipti in one of the king's ships. He passed on his way the country of the naked people, the Nicobar Islands of today.⁸⁷ The coast was lined by cocoa-nut and areca-nut groves, and the men went absolutely naked while the women were content with some sort of leaf apron. They visited the ship in their little boats and brought cocoa-nuts, bananas and articles made of bamboo and rattan for bartering them for *Lohā* (iron), which they highly prized. The use of a Sanskrit word for iron proves, beyond doubt, that these primitive people were accustomed to trade with merchants of Indian origin. A fortnight's voyage from the

^{86a} Chavannes, *Memoire Compose a l'epoque de la grande dynastie Tang sur les religieux eminents qui allirent Chercher la loi dans les pays d'occident*, p. 126, quoted by Takakusu, p. XXVII.

⁸⁷ Takakusu, p. XXX. I-tsing says that "The men are entirely naked, while the women veil their person with some leaves." When Marco Polo visited the island of "Necuveran" the natives used "to go all naked, both men and women", and did "not use the slightest covering of any kind." *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, ed., Yule, Vol. II, p. 248. Ma-huan has preserved a tradition that the islanders were doomed to go naked as they had robbed Buddha of his robes. *Journal of the China Branch Royal Asiatic Society*. Vol. XX, pp. 209-226; Vol. XXI, pp. 38-42.

country of the naked people brought I-tsing to Tāmralipti, modern Tamruk, a great emporium of trade and the port of embarkation both for Ceylon and for countries of the east.

I-tsing arrived at Tāmralipti in 673 A.D. Here he met a pupil of Hiuen-tsang, Ta-ch'eng-teng, a widely travelled monk, who had visited Siam, Ceylon and South India before he took up his residence at the eastern port. I-tsing stayed with him for several months and, doubtless, found in him an excellent guide for his Sanskrit studies, for Teng was well-versed in that language. The two monks then set out for the Buddhist holy placés. The road was infested with robbers and it was unsafe to travel except in big parties. I-tsing tells us that "many hundreds of merchants came with them" and at one time there were twenty monks from Nālandā in their party. But "I-tsing was attacked by an illness of the season" and one day lagged behind in a defile about ten days' journey from the Mahābodhi monastery. Try as he might he could not overtake the main party, and about sunset fell into the hands of some brigands, who stripped him of his upper garment first and under garment next, not sparing even the straps and girdles. The monk had previously heard that the robbers generally sacrificed men of fair complexion to their gods, and in fear of life, he besmeared his body with mud.⁸⁸ However, he succeeded in reaching the village where his fellow travellers were anxiously waiting for him in the second watch of night. A few days later they reached Nālandā, and thence went to Rājagrha where he worshipped at the Gṛdhrakūṭa mountain. At Mahābodhi he presented a

⁸⁸ Takakusu, pp. XXXI-XXXII.

kāṣāya robe to the image of Tathāgata, and offered other gifts and prayers on behalf of his friends. He next visited Vimalakīrti's house at Vaiśālī and thence went to Kuśīnagara. Here in the Parinirvāṇa-Vihāra Ta-ch'eng-teng died. Before he returned to Nālandā, I-tsing visited the deer-park at Benares and Kukkūṭapādagiri near Gayā. He spent the next ten years at Nālandā where he met another pilgrim from his country, Wu-hing. Though mainly interested in the *Vinaya* works, I-tsing also studied Sanskrit works on medicine, though he never practised as a physician. "He collected 400 Sanskrit texts amounting to 500,000 shlokas". His labours completed, I-tsing again set out for Tāmralipti with a view to embarking for Śrīvijaya but again encountered a band of robbers on the way.⁸⁹ He managed to escape with his life and reached Tāmralipti without any further misadventure.

I-tsing intended to stay for a few years at Śrīvijaya and work there with the local monks who were as learned and pious as their brethren in India. But one day when he went on board a trading ship, to send a letter to friends in China, it unexpectedly set sail and conveyed him back to his native country. All his manuscript treasures were left behind, and he was anxious to return to Śrīvijaya. But he was already past fifty, and discretion demanded that he should take with him a competent scholar to ensure the safe transport of his collection in case of his death. He found such a scholar in Cheng-ku, who had devoted many years to the study of the *Vinaya* doctrine. With him I-tsing again sailed for Śrīvijaya in 689 A.D. There he met Ta-tsin with whom he sent some of his translations and the

⁸⁹ Takakusu, p. XXXIII.

memoir to China in 692 A.D. Two years later (695) I-tsing himself returned to his native land after an absence of twenty-five years. The rest of his days were spent in interpreting and translating the texts he had brought with him. With the help of nine Indian monks he completed fifty-six translations in 230 volumes before he passed away in 713 A.D.⁹⁰

IV.

The only pilgrim of note of the next century was Wu-k'ong.⁹¹ He did not come to India in search of the Law but as a member of a political mission. China had established political relations with Udyāna, Kapiśa, Chitral and Kashmir and Chinese missions were often sent to these kingdoms. Wu-k'ong was on the staff of one such friendly mission. Born in 730, he left China in 751 and returned home, after a prolonged absence of four decades in India and Central Asia in 790 of the Christian era. He renounced the world while in Kapiśa and became a śramaṇa in 757 A.D. He visited the eight principal Buddhist *stūpas* and spent three years at Nālandā. "During his peregrinations he visited all the sacred sites and he did not find the least difference between what he saw and what Hiuen-tsang said." Meagre as his itinerary is, it is not without interest, as Sylvain Lévi observes, and our gallery of Chinese pilgrims will remain incomplete without a miniature of Wu-k'ong.

⁹⁰ Takakusu, pp. XXXVII-XXXVIII.

⁹¹ Lévi, *J. A.*, 1895 (Sept.-Oct.), pp. 341-384.

Bagchi, *India and China*, p. 78.

V.

Even after the eighth century the Chinese pilgrims continued to visit India in large numbers. By the middle of the eleventh century, however, the overland route through Central Asia fell under Muslim control and Muslim rule was established in the Punjab and the north-western regions of India. This finally put an end to the pious visits that Chinese Buddhists had been paying to the land of the Buddha since the second century of the Christian era. The last pilgrims, however, have left inscribed records of their visit to Mahābodhi, and five Chinese inscriptions, discovered at Gayā, date from *Circa.* 990 to 1032 A.D. and bear the names of Che-Yi (c. 990), K'o-yun (1022), Yi-ts'ing and Shao-lin (1022) and Huai-wen (1033). Huai-wen was sent to Bodh Gayā by the dowager empress and emperor of China to erect two votive *stūpas* on their behalf.⁹²

The cessation of pilgrimage did not mean cessation of Chinese interest in India. The closing of the land route imposed the travellers' task on the sailor. In 1403 the Emperor Iyung-lo sent a mission to Bengal and two years later he commissioned Tcheng-huo to explore the southern seas with a fleet of sixty-two sails.⁹³ Ma-huan, a Chinese Muslim, was appointed an interpreter to Tcheng-huo. He has left an account of the customs and institutions of contemporary Bengal in his *Scenes Beyond the Seas*.⁹⁴ A

⁹² Bagchi, *India and China*, p. 79.

⁹³ Lévi, *J. A.*, 1900, May-June, p. 430.

⁹⁴ Lévi, *J. A.*, 1900, May-June, pp. 430-431. Chia-Luen Lo, *Chinese Sources for India History* in the *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission*, 1948. Some chapters of Ma-huan's *Yin-Yieh-Shen-Lan* have been translated by Mr. G. Phillips in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1895, pp. 523-535 and the *Journal of the China Branch of R. A.S.*,

Chinese fleet, commanded by Cheng-ho, paid a friendly visit to the Malabar coast.⁹⁵ Thus the old interest, inspired by religious fraternity was sustained even when the law of Buddha was forgotten in the land of its origin.

Vols. XX and XXI. The greater part of Ma-huan's account of Bengal (Mr. Phillips' English rendering) has been reproduced by N. K. Bhattasali in his *Coins and Chronology of the Early Independent Sultans of Bengal*, pp. 169-172. Ma-huan says that one could sail from Sumātrā to Chittagong and then reach Sonārgāon in small boats by river. From Sonārgāon to the kingdom of Bengal one had to travel overland by thirty-five stages. The Chinese sailor referred to the prosperous silk and cotton industries as well as the maritime trade of the country people, the climate and the currency. Among the fruits mentioned by Ma-huan were bananas, pomegranates, mangoes and jackfruits. There were sugar and sugarcane also. A popular amusement noticed by the Chinese sailor reminds one of the gladiator show of Rome. A man and his wife used to go about the city with a tame tiger in chains and the man fought the beast in the public thoroughfares without any untoward result.

⁹⁵ Chia-Luen-Lo. *op. cit.*

OF THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE

Fa-Hian has not much to say about the country and its people. He gives only a short account of the administrative institutions to which we shall refer later. Hiuen-tsang is, however, not so reticent. He devotes one chapter entirely to the country and its people, their habits and customs, dress and food, trade and commerce, mineral and agricultural products of the land and its fauna and flora. I-tsing is more concerned with the human rather than with the animal or plant population.

According to Hiuen-tsang, the Chinese knew the country variously as *T'ien-chu*, *Shen-tu* and *Hien-tou* but the current pronunciation In-tu¹ was more correct. "In Chinese", he adds, "the name signifies the Moon", and goes on to explain that "probably India was likened to the moon as [since the sun of the Buddha set] it has had a succession of holy and wise men to teach the people and exercise rule as the moon shed its bright influences,—on this account the country has been called Yin-tu."² I-tsing, however, was definite that the natives knew their country either as *Ārya-deśa*, the noble region, or *Madhya-deśa*, the middle land, "for it is the centre of a hundred myriads of countries" and the Turks and the Mongols "alone called the Noble Land 'Hindu'." The country, as a whole, was also known as "*Brahma-rāṣṭra*, the Kingdom of

¹ Watters, Vol. I, p. 131.

Beal, Vol. I, p. 68.

² Watters, Vol. I, p. 138.

Brāhmaṇas".³ In this opinion the two pilgrims are at one. Hiuen-tsang also agrees that "the people generally speak of India as the country of the Brahmanas" "though they also give their countries different names according to the districts they inhabited". Fa-Hian refers to India as Jambu-dvīpa) and this name occurs also in the accounts of Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing.^{3a}

The country was divided into five main regions, and the pilgrims frequently refer to the five Indies. It is bounded on the north by the snowy mountains and by the sea on the other three sides. Broad in its northern part and narrow in the south, India has the shape of a half-moon and has a circuit of 90,000 *li* or 18,000 miles.⁴ The entire country consisted of more than seventy kingdoms, according to Hiuen-tsang. He actually mentions eighty-two, two of which, Ceylon and Persia, were outside its geographical limits, but it will be a mistake to suppose that they were all independent political units or sovereign states. Lan-po or Lamghan, Nagarahāra, the Jalalabad region of today, and Bannu were dependencies of Kapiśa. Similarly Taxila, Simhapur, Urasa, Punch and Rajaori were all under the government of Kashmir. Nor can we treat Kānyakubja and Magadha as two separate kingdoms when Harṣavardhana was styled as *Sakalottarāpatheśvara* or the sovereign of the entire north. He had his capital at the city of Kanauj and the Chinese knew him as the king of Magadha. Fa-Hian makes a distinction between a king-

³ Takakusu, p. 118.

Watters, Vol. I, p. 140.

^{3a} Legge, p. 34.

Beal, Vol. II, p. 192.

⁴ Beal, Vol. I, p. 70.

dom and a country. Thus we read of the kingdoms of Woo-chang (Udyāna) and Puruṣapura and the countries of So-ho-to (Swat) and Gāndhāra, while Kapilāvastu, Kuśīnagara and Gayā are specifically styled as cities.⁵ We also read, in his pages, of the city of Śrāvastī in the kingdom of Kośala, the town of Pāṭaliputra in the kingdom of Magadha and the city of Vārāṇasī in the kingdom of Kāśī. Whether the distinction was deliberately made we do not know for certain, for Fa-Hian counts Rāmagrāma as a kingdom.⁶ It is doubtful whether this small tribal state had retained its independence when the imperial Guptas were at the height of their power. Hiuen-tsang makes two distinct kingdoms of Vaiśālī and Vṛjji, if the identification of Fo-li-shi with Vṛjji holds good. Probably his "kingdoms" were only administrative units irrespective of their independent or sovereign status. It is interesting to note that Fa-Hian treats the Dakṣiṇa as a single "country",⁷ but he seems to have used the term in a regional sense. Hiuen-tsang includes Nepal, then a subordinate ally of China, in India. Another of Hiuen-tsang's Indian kingdoms, Lang-Kie-lo, was subject to Persia.⁸

Hiuen-tsang makes a sweeping generalisation when he says that "the seasons are particularly hot ; the land is well watered and humid, the north is a continuation of mountains and hills, the ground being dry and salt. On the east there are valleys and plains, which being well watered and cultivated, are fruitful and productive. The southern district is wooded and herbaceous, the western

⁵ Legge, pp. 28, 33, 30, 31, 64, 70, 87.

⁶ Legge, p. 68.

⁷ Legge, p. 96.

⁸ Beal, Vol. II, p. 277.

parts are stony and barren. Such is the general account of this country.”⁹ But when he goes from the general to the particular he is more accurate and dependable. Thus we read of Udyāna “that cold and heat are agreeably tempered”, Bolor is always cold, the climate of Taxila is agreeably temperate, Kashmir again is cold and stern, Śākala, or the Sialkot region, is very warm.¹⁰ What holds good of the climate also holds good of the soil. Thus the soil of Dhanakaṭaka (Bezwada) is rich and fertile, the Cola land is a succession of marshes and jungle, Drāviḍa is fertile and well-cultivated and produces abundance of grain, the soil of Sindh is suitable for cereals, while that of Surāṣṭra is impregnated with salt.¹¹

From the soil let us pass on to the plant life it sustains. We must not forget that the Chinese pilgrims were students of theology and not men of science. Hiuen-tsang tried to give a general account of India and he frankly confesses that “it is impossible to enumerate all the kinds of fruit”. But he specially mentions the mango, the tamarind, the *madhūka*, the *badara* (jujube) the *kaṭṭhā* or wood-apple, the *āmlā* or myrobalan, the *tinduka* or Diospyros, the *udumbara* or *Ficus glomarata*, the *moṅgā* or plantain, the *nārikela* or cocoa-nut and *panasa* or jack-fruit. These were the fruits held most in esteem among the inhabitants. Pears, peaches, apricots and grapes were planted here and there in Kashmir and the neighbouring frontier states. Pomegranates and sweet oranges were grown all over the country.¹²

⁹ Beal, Vol. I, p. 70.

¹⁰ Beal, Vol. I, pp. 126, 135, 137, 148, 166.

¹¹ Beal, Vol. II, pp. 221, 227, 229, 272, 269.

¹² Watters; Vol. I, pp. 177-178.

It is to be noted that mango occupies the place of honour in Hiuen-tsang's list and *panasa* is at the bottom. Mango was as common in India in the seventh century as it is today. We come across frequent references to mango-groves by the roadside and in the environs of the cities in Hiuen-tsang's account.¹³ But he says that "Vaiśālī mangoes were much prized" and in Mathurā "mango trees were grown in orchards at the homesteads of the people, there were two kinds of this fruit, one small and becoming yellow when ripe, and the other large and remaining green." While the European travellers of a later age described the cocoa-nut at length, Hiuen-tsang casually mentions it in connection with Kāmarūpa, though the palm specially thrives near the sea coast. The pilgrim, however, describes the jackfruit in great details, probably because his countrymen were not familiar with it. The fruit grew in abundance in Puṇḍravardhana and Kāmarūpa. The pilgrim tells us that "the *Panasa* fruit, though plentiful, is highly esteemed. The fruit is as large as a pumpkin. When it is ripe it is of a yellowish-red colour. When divided, it has in the middle many tens of little fruits of the size of a pigeon's egg; breaking these, there comes forth a juice of yellowish-red colour and of delicious flavour. The fruit sometimes collects on the tree-branches as other clustering fruits, but sometimes at the tree-roots, as in the case of the earth-growing *fu-ling*."¹⁴ I-tsing says "that Haritaka (yellow myrobalan) is abundant in India" and he extols its medicinal properties in no uncertain terms. "If one bite a piece of Haritaka everyday and swallow its juice one's whole life will be free from

¹³ Beal, Vol I, p. 226.

¹⁴ Beal, Vol. II, p. 194.

disease.”¹⁵ Though it is not specifically included in his list Hiuen-tsang refers to the palm tree in the course of his narrative. He mentions “a wood of tala trees thirty li in circuit” in Koṅkanapura and Fa-Hian calls it a Patra tree because its broad leaves were used for writing purposes. I-tsing informs us that Kuṅkuma and assafoetida were “abundant in the western limit of India”.^{15a} Hiuen-tsang mentions two aromatic plants that grew in Ata-li and further suggests that the cultivation of saffron was not limited to Kashmir, as at present, but this valuable crocus was grown in Udyāna or Swat valley also, where grape was found in abundance.¹⁶

Flowering trees and shrubs are casually mentioned by name and not included in Hiuen-tsang’s list of plants. It was in a Palāśa forest that Hiuen-tsang was attacked by a band of robbers, and Aśoka groves offered a hiding place for the pirate fleet in the Ganges. He found the streets of Rājagrha lined by Kanaka trees whose “flower exhales a delicious perfume and their colour is of a bright golden hue”.¹⁷ These golden flowers cannot possibly be identified with the Palāśa for they were fragrant and bloomed all

¹⁵ Takakusu, p. 134.

^{15a} Takakusu, pp. 128-129.

¹⁶ Beal, Vol. II, p. 265.

Watters, Vol. I, p. 225.

Beal’s rendering is different,—“The earth is favourable to the cultivation of the scented (shrub) called Yo-Kim (*turmeric*)” Vol. I, p. 120. Watters mentions saffron and does not consider it necessary to discuss the point. In Akbar’s time the cultivation of saffron was limited to Panapur (near Srinagar) and Paraspur in Kashmir. For a description of the flower and an account of its cultivation see *Ain-I-Akbari*, W. Blochmann, pp. 89-90, Jarrett, Vol. II, pp. 358-359. Saffron is also cultivated in Spain, France, Italy, Sicily, and Persia.

¹⁷ Beal, Vol. II, p. 150.

through the year. We come across another Indian flowering tree, the Pāṭali, in connection with legends relating to the origin of Pāṭaliputra. Watters identifies it with Trumpet flower, *Bignonia Suaveolens* of the Botanists. Elsewhere we read of a Campaka grove at Prayāga.¹⁸ Hiuen-tsang saw in Magadha a large tank thirty *li* in circuit with "lotus flowers of the four colours".¹⁹

The pilgrims were evidently not interested in hard timber or big trees but no Buddhist visiting Kuśīnagara could help mentioning the śāla grove where Buddha attained his *Parinirvāṇa* nor could they ignore the Bodhi tree and the Ajapāla Nyagrodha or goat-herd's banyan tree of Gayā and the "sun diverting" *jambu* tree of Kapilāvastu. Hiuen-tsang has referred to the immortal banyan of Prayāga, but two trees, of which he heard but did not see, are of special interest to us.

Hiuen-tsang did not visit the Mālkuṭa country or the kingdom of the Pāṇdyas, but while in Drāviḍa he heard of the sandal, the pseudo-sandal and the camphor trees of the Malaya mountains. The story of people distinguishing the real sandal tree from its spurious neighbours by the presence of serpents need not be seriously treated, but Garcia-da-Orta, a sixteenth century Portuguese writer, asserted that white sandal was not indigenous in India and came from Timor and the neighbouring islands, while red sandals, which are not sandals at all and lack the fragrance and medicinal properties of the genuine article, were alone available in the country.²⁰ His statement has been

¹⁸ Beal, Vol. I, p. 231.

¹⁹ Watters, Vol. II, pp. 176-177.

²⁰ Garcia-da-Orta, *Coloquios dos Simples e Drogas da India*, Vol. II, pp. 281-282; Beal, Vol. II, p. 232 translates the passage as follows: "Here is found the white sandal-wood tree and the *Chandaneva* tree. These two

accepted by some modern Botanists in the absence of any earlier foreign notice of the plant though there are numerous references to the fragrant (therefore, white) sandal in Sanskrit literature. Hiuen-tsang's account, though based on hearsay, should settle the controversy once for all. All the three pilgrims mention a very rare and highly prized variety, the *Gośira Candana* or cow's head sandal. It is doubtful whether any such variety really existed. Hiuen-tsang's account of the *Karpūra* tree is worth quoting here. "The tree from which *Kie-pu-lo* (*Karpūra*) scent is procured, is in trunks like the pine, but different leaves, flowers and fruit. When the tree is first cut down and sappy, it has no smell ; but when the wood gets dry, it forms into veins and splits ; then in the middle is the scent, in appearance like mica, of the colour of frozen snow."²¹

Of food crops, he says, "there is much rice and wheat

are much alike, and the latter can only be distinguished by going in the height of summer to the top of some hill, and then looking at a distance great serpents may be seen entwining it: Thus it is known. Its wood is naturally cold, and therefore serpents twine round it. After having noted the tree, they shot an arrow into it to mark it. In the winter after the snakes have gone, the tree is cut down." Abu-l-Fazl did not know the indigenous plant. He writes, "The tree grows in China. During the present reign it has been successfully planted in India. There are three kinds, the white, the yellow, the red." Blochmann, *Ain-i-Akbari*, p. 87. Abu-l-Fazl, however, does not say in which part of India Akbar introduced the tree.

²¹ Beal, Vol. II, p. 232. Common camphor comes today mostly from China, Japan, Formosa, Borneo and the neighbouring islands. Garcia da Orta mentions camphor from China, Borneo and the islands of the Malay Archipelago. He knew that it was the product of a big tree but did not know how it was manufactured. The Indian plant was obviously unknown to him. *Colloquio*, Vol. I, pp. 151-162. Abu-l-Fazl, however, says, "The *Camphor tree* is a large tree growing in the ghauts of Hindustan and in China." He heard the story that this tree was also identified by the presence of snakes around its trunk during the summer and marked by arrows. Blochmann, *Ain-i-Akbari*, p. 83.

and ginger, mustard, melons, pumpkins, Kunda (olibanum tree) are also cultivated. Onions and garlic are little used and people who eat them are ostracised.”²² We are told elsewhere that sugarcane grew in abundance in Lamghan and Kauśāmbī, while barley was cultivated in Bundelkhand, and Sindh produced millet. The Punjab, Kashmir, the trans-Indus region, the modern Uttara Pradeśa and Andhra were rich in cereals, and beans formed one of the staple products of Avanda and Bundelkhand.²³ The cultivation of rice and wheat was naturally more widely distributed. A special variety of late rice was grown in the Sialkot area,²⁴ while Pāriyātra had a species that ripened in sixty days only.²⁵ The famous Mahāsāli rice was not found outside Magadha. “There is an unusual sort of rice grown here”, says Hiuent-sang, “the grains of which are large and scented and of an exquisite taste. It is specially remarkable for its shining colour. It is commonly called ‘the rice for the use of the great’ ” because it was specially reserved for royalty and persons of uncommon sanctity.²⁶ Pāriyātra specialised in late wheat, and winter wheat was cultivated in Malwa. The soil of Broach was brackish by nature, but its lack of agricultural products was compensated by commerce in salt, but salt of different kinds were found in greater quantities in Sindh. “They find here a great quantity of salt,” Hiuent-sang informs us, “which is red like cinnabar ; also white salt, black salt and rock salt. In different places, both far and near, this salt is used for medicine”.²⁷ “Live stocks

²² Waters, Vol. I, p. 178.

²³ Beal, Vol. I, pp. 90, 91, 98, 148, 175-176, 183, 235 ; Vol. II, pp. 217, 271, 272, 280.

²⁴ Waters, Vol. I, p. 286.

²⁵ Beal, Vol. I, p. 179.

²⁶ Beal, Vol. II, p. 82.

²⁷ Beal, Vol. II, p. 272.

were raised in Sindh and O-tien-po-chilo." Sindh was "suitable for the breeding of oxen, sheep, camels, mules and other kinds of beasts".²⁸ O-tien-po-chilo bred asses besides cattle, sheep and camels.²⁹ A fine breed of horse was found in Kashmir which the Chinese styled as "dragon stock horse",³⁰ and Nepal had its yaks.³¹

The north-western region of India was rich in minerals. Gold was found in Udyāna, Kuluta and Takka ; Udyāna and Takka produced iron ; Kuluta and Takka had silver, while copper was mined in Takka and Kuluta.³² Drāviḍa was rich in precious gems, and Kuluta in crystal. Hiuen-tsang concludes his account of the mineral wealth of India, thus, "Gold, silver, tin-shih (bronze?) white jade and crystal lenses are products of the country which are very abundant. Rare precious substances of various kinds from the sea-ports are bartered for merchandise."³³

Of wild and domestic animals whose flesh is forbidden as food Hiuen-tsang mentions oxen, asses, elephants, horses, pigs, dogs, foxes, wolves, lions, monkeys and apes.³⁴ Sheep and camels, we have already come across among the livestock raised in Sindh, and the inclusion of venison among legitimate viands connotes the existence of deer. The forest near Kuśīnagara was infested with wild oxen and wild elephants. Elephants were also found in the jungles of Bhagalpur and Monghyr, and Hwui-li says that expert catchers regularly went about trapping these useful animals

²⁸ Beal, Vol. II, p. 272.

²⁹ Beal, Vol. II, p. 276.

³⁰ Watters, Vol. I, p. 261.

³¹ Beal, Vol. II, p. 80.

³² Watters, Vol. I, pp. 225, 286, 298.

³³ Watters, Vol. I, p. 178.

³⁴ Watters, Vol. I, p. 178.

which were not only used in the army but also employed in drawing carriages. In the jungles of Bihar were also found rhinoceros, wolves and black leopards.³⁵

It is not easy to identify the wild oxen of Kuśīnagara. They may belong to one of the two species still extant in Indian jungles. Lions were once numerous in North India and black panthers do not form a distinct species. Rhinoceros no longer survives near Bhagalpur. Strangely, however, the king of the Indian forests, the tiger, finds no mention anywhere except in connection with the *Vyāghrī Jātaka*, but there also one cannot say for certain whether the famished animal, fed by the Bodhisattva with his own blood and flesh, was a tigress or a she-panther or a female tiger cat. Monkeys and elephants find a prominent place in Buddhist legends, for the Buddha had been often born as a monkey or an elephant in his previous lives. Buddhist imagination has endowed these animals with uncommon intelligence, piety and devotion to their religious duties. Some of them highly venerated the Buddha and worshipped him like his human devotees. Hiuen-tsang refers to the *Markaṭa hrada* of Vaiśālī, "which was dug by a band of monkeys for Buddha's use."³⁶ We are also told of monkeys and mountain stags that came to bathe at the holy confluence at Prayāga and some of these pious animals went so far as to starve themselves to death at that sacred site in order to improve their lot in the next world.³⁷ These stories naturally remind us of Sir William Roe's Christian ape.³⁸

Hiuen-tsang has preserved for us two remarkable stories

³⁵ Hwui-li, p. 128.

³⁶ Watters, Vol. II, p. 65.

³⁷ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 364-65.

Beal, Vol. I, p. 234.

³⁸ Foster, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe*, p. 280.

of the elephant's regard for Buddhist relics and shrines. The Koliyas of Rāmagrāma had reared a *stūpa* over their share of the relics, but in course of time the country was deserted and the precincts of the *stūpa* ran wild. As there was none to attend the relic *stūpa*, a herd of wild elephants took upon themselves the pious duty of watering and cleaning the place and offering wild flowers at the shrine.³⁹ A tooth relic, once worshipped in Kashmir and later acquired by Harṣa, had also been preserved by the veneration of elephants. A *bhikṣu* of Kashmir once encountered in a forest a herd of trumpeting elephants. In his fright he climbed up a tree but the elephants brought water in their trunks, wetted the roots of the tree that sheltered the fugitive, and uprooted it with their tusks. They did not, however, hurt the frightened monk but gently lifted him on the back of one of them and carried him to the middle of the forest where he found a sick elephant suffering from swollen foot. The *bhikṣu* removed from the affected leg a splinter of bamboo, washed and dressed the wound to the great relief of the afflicted animal. Next morning the elephants brought for the *bhikṣu* a number of wild fruits and when his hunger was appeased, the sick elephant, evidently the lord of the herd, presented him with a golden casket. The herd then conveyed him to the spot where they had originally picked him, and the *bhikṣu* returned to Kashmir with the precious gift. When the casket was opened he found in it a tooth of the Buddha. How the elephants came by this sacred relic the story does not explain.⁴⁰

Popular imagination had peopled our forests and hills,

³⁹ Beal, Vol. II, pp. 27-28. Legge, p. 69.

⁴⁰ Hwui-li, pp. 181-183.

rocks and mountains, lakes and rivers with supernatural beings of all sorts. In the country of Campā there was an *Asura* cave which a cowherd once entered in pursuit of his cattle. There he ate a miraculous fruit which made his body swell so enormously that he could not get out of the cavern. All attempts to dig him out failed and his body was petrified in course of time. This story is related not only by Hiuen-tsang but also by his contemporary Wang-hiuen-tse, though they differ in minor details.⁴¹ The *Asuras* were not the only evil beings that inhabited the country-side but there were *Yakṣas* and *Nāgas*. The *Nāgas* of the Buddhist legends were not the common reptiles we know. They were ill-tempered by nature and could assume the shape of any animal at will. Their usual abode were lakes and rivers, and many of them did not lack in kindness and devotion to the Enlightened One, though some of the wicked ones had to be subjugated by the supernatural power of the Buddha. There was *Nāga* Mucilinda, near Gayā, who enfolded the body of the Tathāgata, then lost in meditation, in his coils to protect him from rain and sun. It is true that *Nāgas* like Gopāla and Elāpatra⁴² were not of this class, for

⁴¹ Hwui-li, pp. 129-131. Wang-hiuen-tse places his *Asura* cave in Central India and according to his account the man was still alive but was not released from his rocky prison as the king was afraid of letting out a person of such prodigious strength.

Lévi, J. A., March-April of 1900, pp. 311-312.

⁴² Gopāla was in his previous birth a cowherd. It was his duty to provide the king with milk and cream. He was once severely reprimanded for his negligence and committed suicide after a fervent prayer at a *stūpa* that he might be re-born as a vicious *nāga*. He was later converted by the Buddha. Beal, Vol. I, pp. 93-94. Elāpatra lived in the Taxila region. He was originally a pious monk. One day he went out to beg in prohibited hours and was in consequence upbraided by laymen. This angered him so much that he broke the branches of *elā* trees that grew around his cottage. When Kaśyapa Buddha tried to bring the angry monk to reason, he was discourteous to

in their vindictive design, while human beings, they had deliberately sought a *Nāga* birth. They were, however, ultimately saved by the mercy of the Buddha. Fa-Hian and Hiuen-tsang heard of a white-eared *Nāga* that served as a *dānapati* or benefactor of a monastery.⁴³ Hiuen-tsang writes of another nameless *Nāga* that saved the Rāmagrāma relic *stūpa* from being demolished.⁴⁴ We have already seen that a herd of wild elephants had attached itself to this *stūpa*. The *Nāga*, we are speaking of, lived in the tank nearby and used to assume a human form and circumambulate the *stūpa* in the manner of a pious devotee. When the emperor Aśoka resolved to collect all the relics from the original eight *stūpas* which enshrined them, and distribute them among 84,000 new *stūpas* he had planned to construct, he visited Rāmagrāma after demolishing the other seven. When his men were about to pull down the Rāmagrāma *stūpa* the *Nāga* approached the emperor in the form of a Brāhmaṇa and persuaded him to visit his residence under water. When the emperor was convinced that he did not possess the resources of the *Nāga* and could not expect to provide for the worship of the relics in the same manner as this pious creature, he desisted from his design and the *stūpa*, the only one of the original eight, was spared. Hiuen-tsang cites epigraphical evidence in support of his story and assures us that, "At the spot where the dragon came out of the lake is an inscription to the above effect."

We have done with the domestic animals that our seventh century ancestors bred, the wild beasts that in-

him. He was for these two offences born as a hideous *nāga* with seven heads from each of which grew an *elā* tree. Watters, Vol. I, pp. 241-242.

⁴³ Legge, p. 52.*

⁴⁴ Beal, Vol. II, pp. 26-27.

habited our forests, the supernatural beings, good or bad, who tenanted our tanks and streams ; we may now turn to the common man whom the pilgrims met. Hiuen-tsang was aware that the people of different parts of India differed in their habits, customs and physical features. We are told that “the people of Kashmir wear serge and cotton and they were volatile and timid, good looking but deceitful and were fond of learning.”⁴⁵ The people of Kāmarūpa, on the other hand, were honest, and they were short of stature and dark of complexion.⁴⁶ The Andhras were impulsive and fierce,⁴⁷ while Karṇasuvārṇa was inhabited by honest and amiable people devoted to learning. The palm of bravery goes to the seventh century Marāṭhā, who, tall of stature, stern of demeanour, un-forgiving as a foe, grateful as a friend, boldly rushed to battle determined to win or die.⁴⁸ Unaccustomed to turn their back in the battle-field they presented their defeated generals with women’s garb, a humiliation worse than death. Bharoch people were mean and deceitful⁴⁹ and the traders of Atali cared more for wealth than for moral worth.⁵⁰ In the marshy region of Sindh the pilgrim found a Buddhist community of cattle breeders, who assumed the garb of a *bhikṣu* and shaved their heads though they were family men.⁵¹ These people were ferocious by nature and had gone back to the murderous ways of their ancestors. The people of Udyāna were given to sorcery and their skill in black magic earned them an

⁴⁵ Watters, Vol. I, p. 261.

⁴⁶ Watters, Vol. II, p. 136.

⁴⁷ Beal, Vol. II, p. 217.

⁴⁸ Beal, Vol. II, p. 256.

⁴⁹ Watters, Vol. II, p. 241.

⁵⁰ Watters, Vol. II, p. 244.

⁵¹ Watters, Vol. II, p. 252.

unenviable reputation among their neighbours.⁵² Even twelve hundred years back diverse sorts went to the making of the Indian people.

If people of different regions differed so widely in their character and disposition there was a remarkable uniformity in their clothes and dress. Only in the cold regions of North India did they affect close-fitting jackets like the Tartars, in the rest of the country tailored clothes were practically unknown. "The men wind a strip of cloth round the waist and up to the armpits and leave the right shoulder bare. The women wear a long robe which covers both shoulders and falls down loose."⁵³ Even today this description holds good of the unsophisticated village folk. Multi-coloured stuff was out of fashion and everybody went in white. According to I-tsing, common people alone had one piece of linen but laymen of higher classes wore two pieces of soft white cloths. These were eight feet in length and were simply put around the waist to cover the lower part.⁵⁴ Silk, calico, woolen and cotton fabrics were used by people according to their means. The rich citizens of Kanauj went about in silk, we are told. The silk was known as *Kauṣeya*. *Kṣauma* was a kind of linen made of flax or hemp ; woolen stuffs went by the name of *Kambala*, a word with which we are still familiar, while a superior kind of woolen wrap made of the soft hair of a wild animal was called *Ho-la-li*.⁵⁵ The Buddhist monks were differently

⁵² Watters, Vol. I, p. 225.

⁵³ Watters, Vol. I, p. 148.

⁵⁴ Takakusu, p. 67.

⁵⁵ Watters, Vol. I, p. 148.

Sākala produced "a very fine white gauze or muslin capable of being dyed ; it was soft and transparent like the fleecy vapours of dawn". Watters, Vol. I, p. 287.

garbed, but for the present we shall limit ourselves to the non-Buddhist laymen and anchorites. |“The garbs of the non-Buddhist (religieux) are varied and extra-ordinary”, says Hiuen-tsang. “Some wear peacocks’ tails ; some adorn themselves with a necklace of skulls ; some are quite naked ; some cover the body with grass or boards, some pull out their hair and clip their moustaches, some mat their side-hair and make a top-knot coil. Their clothing is not fixed and the colour varies.”⁵⁶ Though the description is meagre, by all standards, it is not impossible to identify some of these sectarians. Those who affected peacock’s tails were probably of *Vaiṣṇava* persuasion ; the wearers of skull necklaces were undoubtedly *Śāktas* of the extreme *Kāpālika* school ; those who preferred to go naked were *Nirgranthas* or *Digambara Jainas* ; those who pulled out their hair also belonged to the Jaina sect and those who mat their hair belonged to the sect known as *Jaṭīlas* to Buddha and his contemporaries. No wonder that the colour of the garb varied with different sects. The *Śvetāmbara Jainas* were always clad in white, while the *Kāpālikas* would prefer red and the *Pāsūpatas* might choose an ochre coloured cloth and rub their body with ashes.

If ascetics and anchorites differed from the common people in their garb and attirements, so did royalty and aristocracy. “The dress and ornaments of the grandees”, Hiuen-tsang tells us, “are very extra-ordinary. Garlands and tiaras with precious stones are their head adornments, and their bodies are adorned with rings, bracelets and necklaces. Wealthy mercantile people have only bracelets.”⁵⁷ Shoes were not much in use and most people went barefoot,

⁵⁶ Watters, Vol. I, p. 148.

⁵⁷ Watters, Vol. I, p. 151.

but if I-tsing is to be credited, the Buddhist monk never travelled without his umbrella. The umbrella was of bamboo, reed or rattan wicker work and the cover was varnished with lacquer. Unlike the wicker work head gear used by peasants in some parts of India as a protection against sun and rain, the seventh century umbrella had a handle like its modern counterpart, but it could not be closed and folded when not in use.⁵⁸

No foreigner spending any length of time in India could fail to take notice of the caste system. Hiuen-tsang observes, "There are four orders of hereditary clan distinctions. The first is that of the Brāhmins or 'purely living', these keep their principles and live continently, strictly observing ceremonial purity. The second order is that of the Kshatriyas, the race of kings, this order has held sovereignty for many generations and its aims are benevolence and mercy. The third order is that of the Vaiśyas or class of traders who barter commodities and pursue gain far and near. The fourth class is that of the Śūdras or agriculturists; these toil at cultivating the soil and are industrious at sowing and reaping." He further adds that none can marry outside his or her own caste or within the prohibited degree. Women can marry only once. There are mixed castes and clans too numerous to be described.⁵⁹

But the caste system had also undergone some changes and modifications by the time of Hiuen-tsang's visit. Originally agriculture was the legitimate profession of the Vaiśya, but the Vaiśya probably gave up farming in course of time under Buddhist influence. As I-tsing observes, it was customary in his time "to regard traders as more

⁵⁸ Takakusu, p. 74.

⁵⁹ Watters, Vol. I, p. 168.

honourable than farmers, this is because agriculture injures the life of many insects."⁶⁰ But it will be a mistake to think that each caste rigidly adhered to its traditional duties. Hiuen-tsang in his general account of the caste system probably followed the text-book rather than his personal experience. It was no longer the exclusive right of the Kṣatriyas to rule. As the pilgrim himself tells us, the kings of Matipur and Sindh were of Śūdra stock, the rulers of Kāmarūpa, Ujjain and Jajhoti were Brāhmaṇas by caste, Harṣa himself was a Vaiśya and so was the king of Pāriyātra in modern Rajasthan.⁶¹ "The Brahmana" as I-tsing informs us, was "still regarded throughout the five parts of India as the most honourable caste," but he did not always disdain to take to cultivation as an honest means of livelihood. When Hiuen-tsang and his fellow travellers were running before a band of robbers for dear life they came across "a Brahman at work ploughing the land."⁶² It is also worth noticing that a Brāhmaṇa had the custody of the Buddha's skull bone at Hidda.⁶³ Is it legitimate to suggest that the process of assimilation and adjustment was already far in progress and the Buddhists no longer considered it unusual for a Brāhmaṇa to be placed in charge of a Buddhist shrine or holy relic? The caste rules with regard to inter-marriage, it appears, had been relaxed where royalties were concerned, as Hiuen-tsang himself tells us that the Vaiśya Harṣavardhana had a Kṣatriya for his son-in-law in Dhruvasena II (Hiuen-tsang's Dhruvabhaṭa) of Valabhi.

⁶⁰ Takakusu, p. 189.

⁶¹ Beal, Vol. I, pp. 179, 190, 209; Vol. II, pp. 196, 271, 272.

⁶² Hwui-li, p. 73.

⁶³ Hwui-li, p. 59.

The caste system, however, put cruel restrictions on some of the outcastes or untouchables. We learn from Hiuen-tsang that butchers, fishermen, public performers, executioners and scavengers were compelled to live outside the city or village wall. Their dwelling houses were marked by a distinguishing sign and when they entered the hamlets they had to sneak along the left side of the road.⁶⁴ I-tsing says that scavengers had to warn passers-by of their presence by striking sticks, and if anyone by some mischance touched one of them he had to wash himself and his garments.⁶⁵ I-tsing never visited the South, his comments, therefore, apply to North India. Two centuries earlier Fa-Hian found the Caṇḍālas suffering from the same disabilities. "Throughout the whole country", he says, "the people do not kill any living creature, nor drink intoxicating liquor, nor eat onions and garlic. The only exception is that of the Caṇḍālas. That is the name for those who are (held to be) wicked men, and live apart from others. When they enter the gate of a city or a market-place, they strike a piece of wood to make themselves known, so that men know and avoid them, and do not come into contract with them."⁶⁶ It is a bare statement of fact and none of the three pilgrims has any comment to offer. One wonders whether the extreme regard for animal life had anything to do with the exclusion of the Caṇḍāla from the village and the town, for he was a professional hunter and fisherman.

Towns and villages were enclosed by high walls. The thoroughfares within were narrow, and shops and stalls

⁶⁴ Watters, Vol. I, p. 147.

⁶⁵ Takakusu, p. 139.

⁶⁶ Legge, p. 43.

ranged on either side of the high road. The dwelling houses had wattled bamboos or wooden fencing around them. The halls had wooden rooms plastered with *cūṇam* with tiled roofs. The houses were high and built either of boards or bricks and were thatched with grass. The walls were whitewashed with *cūṇam* and the floors were besmeared with cowdung.⁶⁷ Our domestic architecture has not undergone much change in the rural area since Hiuen-tsang penned these lines thirteen hundred years ago. We find a reference to door-keys in I-tsing's narrative, but it is not certain whether they were used in big monasteries alone.⁶⁸ I-tsing also says that apartments were not spacious in India. The monk's cells, that have survived at Kanheri and Nālandā fully support this statement and it is not likely that small householders could afford to go for much bigger rooms. The furniture were naturally few. Small mats and wooden seats were known. Hiuen-tsang refers to corded benches which were in universal use.⁶⁹ One wonders whether the modern *charpoy*, so common in North India, is the lineal descendant of Hiuen-tsang's corded bench. I-tsing mentions leather bedding among the possible properties of a deceased monk, and we do not know whether it was commonly used by the ordinary people. But the pillow stuffed with cotton or other soft materials was in common use. "In the ten islands of the Southern Sea, as well as in the five divisions of India, people do not use wooden pillows to raise the head. It is only China that has this custom. The pillow covers are made almost the same way through-

⁶⁷ Watters, Vol. I, p. 147.

⁶⁸ Takakusu, p. 190.

⁶⁹ Watters, Vol. I, p. 147.

out the West. The material is silk or linen ; the colour varies according to one's liking. It is sewed in a square bag one cubit long and half cubit wide. The pillow is stuffed with any suitable home products, such as wool, hemp-scrap, the pollen of *Typha-latifolia*, the catkins of the willow, cotton reed, *Tecoma grandiflora*, soft leaves, dry moths, the ear shell (*Haliotis*) hemp or beans ; it is made high or low according to the cold or warm season, the object being to get comfort and to rest one's body."⁷⁰ A few earthenware pots, wooden dishes, metal utensils and a copper jar, for storing water, and an earthen one, for drinking water, probably completed the poor man's household goods, while the rich man had dishes of the precious metals, gold and silver.

Poorly furnished though the houses might be, their dwellers were marked for their cleanliness. Early in the morning they carefully cleaned their teeth and tongue with a piece of tooth wood (*danta kāṣṭha*) and thoroughly rinsed their mouth. Some went further and washed their nostrils by drawing in a quantity of water. According to I-tsing, this was the means of securing a long life adopted by Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna.⁷¹ No one could even offer salutation to senior persons without first going through this hygienic routine.⁷² Though a bath after a meal was forbidden, a bath before it was obligatory. At mealtime people sat either on mats or on small wooden seats with legs crossed, at an interval of one cubit from each other to avoid physical contact. Food was served on the ground cleaned with cowdung and eaten with the right hand

⁷⁰ Takakusu, pp. 112-113.

⁷¹ Takakusu, pp. 34-35.

⁷² Takakusu, pp. 33, 90.

without a spoon or chopstick. Only one plate was used on which the different dishes were served, but the food left over was thrown away and was never served to another person. Nor was uncooked fish or vegetable ever eaten. It is needless to add that this interdiction of *ucchiṣṭa*, or food left over by a person, still prevails. Hiuen-tsang states, and his statement is confirmed by I-tsing, that "those utensils which are of pottery or wood must be thrown away after use and those which are of gold, silver, copper or iron get another polishing."⁷³ I-tsing adds that porcelain and lacquer works were not originally known in India and wooden articles were scarcely even employed as eating utensils, but they might be used only once if new.⁷⁴ After every meal the Indians used to wash their mouth and hands and clean their teeth and tongue elaborately with tooth wood, and they did not come into contact with each other until they had thus purified their body. Thorough washing and cleansing were demanded after a call of nature had been attended to. It is doubtful whether the common folk "could smear their bodies with scented unguents such as sandal and saffrons" on such occasions, but the practice of rubbing the hands and feet with balls of earth, that I-tsing noticed, still survives.^{74a} Those who failed to observe these rules of cleanliness were held in contempt. I-tsing informs us that "once upon a time when the Mongolians of the North sent men to India, the messengers were despised and ridiculed, as they did not wash themselves after evacuation, and preserved their food in a tray. This was not all; they were scorned and spoken ill of, as

⁷³ Watters, Vol. I, p. 152.

⁷⁴ Takakusu, p. 36.

^{74a} Takakusu, pp. 91-93.

they sat together at a meal, with their feet straight out, and touching one another's, and they did not keep out of the neighbourhood of pigs and dogs, and did not use a tooth-brush."⁷⁵

We learn something about the staple food of the country from I-tsing. "In the north, wheat-flour is abundant ; in the western district, baked flour (rice or barley) is used above all ; in Magadha (in Central India) wheat-flour is scarce, but rice is plentiful ; and the southern frontier and the eastern border-land have similar products to those of Magadha."⁷⁶ "Ghee, oil, milk and cream are found everywhere. Such things as cakes and fruit are so abundant that it is difficult to enumerate them here Millet is rare ; There are sweet melons ; sugar canes and tubers are abundant, but edible mallows are very scarce."⁷⁷ People of the east and south still subsist on rice, and people of the north prefer wheat, while both rice and barley are favoured in the west. In their food habit the Indian people have proved as conservative as in their social customs.

At an ordinary meal little pieces of ginger and a spoonful of salt were served first. Then followed some gruel made of dried rice and bean soup with hot butter to be mixed with the principal article of food with the fingers. Last came cakes, fruits, ghee and sugar.⁷⁸ Cold water was served both in the winter and the summer to quench the thirst.

A ceremonial feast was preceded by songs and music

⁷⁵ Takakusu, p. 26.

⁷⁶ Takakusu, pp. 43-44.

⁷⁷ Takakusu, p. 44.

⁷⁸ Takakusu, pp. 39-40.

after an adoration of the Buddha if the host happened to be a Buddhist. *Pañcabhojanīyas* and *Pañcakhādanīyas* with appropriate drinks were served on such occasions. Custom demanded that a superabundance of every dish should be provided. A common householder would offer each of his guests food and condiments sufficient for three, while a really wealthy family would serve ten men's ration to one. The guest was at liberty to carry away the surplus if he so liked, and this practice, which I-tsing noticed at Tāmralipti, survived to our own times in Bengal. The *Pañcabhojanīyas*, according to I-tsing, consisted of (1) rice, (2) a boiled mixture of barley and peas, (3) baked corn flour, (4) meat and (5) cakes. The *Pañcakhādanīyam*, food to be chewed, were (1) roots ; (2) stalks ; (3) leaves ; (4) flowers ; and (5) fruits.⁷⁹ It is to be noted that milk and milk preparations were not included in either of the two groups, and while we come across meat as one of the *bhojanīyas*, fish is entirely omitted. We must not forget that the list was compiled by a Buddhist monk who lived mostly at Nālandā and might not have any experience of a feast at a Hindu house. As raw vegetables were not eaten, roots, stalks, leaves and flowers, four of the five *khādanīyas*, were doubtless cooked vegetables.⁸⁰

Intoxicating drinks are mentioned by Fa-Hian but he adds that none but the Caṇḍālas indulge in them. Hiuen-tsang, however, not only refers to strong drinks of different kinds but asserts that the higher castes had their distinctive wines and beverages. Thus, "the wines from the vine and sugar-cane are the drink of the Kshatriyas, the Vaiśyas drink a strong distilled spirit ; the Buddhist monks and

⁷⁹ Takakusu, p. 43.

⁸⁰ Takakusu, p. 137.

Brāhmins drink syrup of grapes and of sugar-cane, the low mixed castes are without any distinguishing drink.”⁸¹ I-tsing, while discussing the rules relating to physical impurity contracted through eating and drinking, refers to syrup, water, tea and honey-water.⁸² When tea was first introduced into India, we do not know. European travellers found it in popular use in Western India in the seventeenth century.⁸³ From seventeenth to the seventh century, is a far cry. It may, therefore, be objected that a casual reference to tea by a Chinese traveller, who was expounding the *Vinaya* rules to the monks of his own country, does not necessarily prove that tea was drunk in India in his days. But the contact between India and China dates back to the 2nd Century B.C. and a large number of Indian monks had travelled to China and many Chinese pilgrims had visited India in the meantime. Is it possible that they had not introduced their favourite beverage to the country where many of them spent long years? I-tsing states later that tea was also good for cold and during the twenty years since he left his native country, tea and yinseng decoction was the only medicament he used and he had hardly any serious illness.⁸⁴ It is hardly possible that he left China with twenty years’ supply of tea with him. The question is, if tea was known in India as early as the seventh century, why was the common people unfamiliar with it till the latter half of the twentieth? Was its use confined to the Buddhist

⁸¹ Watters, Vol. I, p. 178.

⁸² Takakusu, pp. 90-125.

⁸³ Sen, *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, pp. XLIII-XLIV.

⁸⁴ Takakusu, p. 135.

Ma-huan observes that tea was unknown in Bengal in his time. (J. R. A. S., 1895, p. 531) and that is why visitors were offered betel nuts.

monasteries and did it disappear from India with Buddhism?

According to I-tsing eight kinds of syrup were offered to the guests in Indian monasteries. As Buddhist monks were debarred from solid food, after mid-day the monasteries probably specialised in a variety of delicious drinks with which they could entertain a late-comer after the prohibited hours. But it is unlikely that the use of these syrups should be confined to the monks alone and unknown to the more well-to-do class of the laity. According to one account, these syrups were made of *Koca*, *Mocā*, *Kolaka*, *Aśvattha*, *Uḍumbara*, *Parūṣaka*, *Mṛdvikā* and *Kharjura*; according to another, *Ambapāna*, *Jambuḥpāna*, *Madhuḥpāna* and *Sālu-kaḥpāna* were also known. Takakusu identifies *Koca* with *Tanduliya*. Is it *Cephalandra Indica*, Marāṭhi *teṇḍuli* and Bengali *telākucā*? Buddhaghōṣa says that it is *aṭṭhika kadālī*, a kind of banana;^{84a} if Buddhaghōṣa's explanation is correct both *Koca* and *Moca pānam* were banana syrups made of two different species of plantain. It has been suggested that *Koca* may be identified with cocoa-nut. It will be really surprising that in a country like India, where this fruit is so common, the Buddhist monks did not use it in their preparation of permissible drinks. *Kulaka* fruit, says Takakusu, was like a sour date. *Aśvattha* and *Udumbara* do not offer any difficulty. Both are figs, only the *Udumbara* fruit is much larger than the *Aśvattha* berry. A cold drink from the *Udumbara* figs is still prepared in Bengal. *Parūṣaka* is according to dictionaries identical with Bengali *Paruṣa phala* and Hindi *Pharūsā*. *Mṛdvikā* is grape, and *Kharjurapāna* was doubtless derived from the common

^{84a} In Bengal* a sweet drink is made of a peculiar species of plantain which has numerous stones.

Indian date that grows wild in the countryside. One feels tempted to enquire whether *Kharjurapāna* was the fresh unfermented juice rather than a syrup made of the fruit, and in that case, if *Koca* is to be identified with cocoa-nut, *Kocapāna* may be the familiar drink known as *Nirā*. *Ambapāna* and *Jambupāna* must be diluted juice of mango and rose-apple, while *Madhupāna* was honey-water. *Śāluka* is the root of the water-lily. It is still roasted for eating, but how a drink could be decocted from it I cannot guess.

Of the diversions of the people the three famous pilgrims, Fa-Hian, Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing have nothing to say. But Wang-hiuen-tse came across skilful jugglers who excited the admiration of European travellers one thousand years later. Five Brāhmaṇas, skilled in the occult science, once visited the Chinese metropolis. They could cut their tongues, bring out their entrails and run on a rope. When Wang-hiuen-tse visited India (656-661 A.D.) as His Chinese Majesty's envoy, the emperor of the West gave a party in his honour where a troupe of jugglers entertained him by rising in the air, running on a rope and walking on a cord in wooden sandals. One woman in particular could play simultaneously with three weapons, a sword, a knife and a cavalry lance, while balancing herself on the rope. Ma-huan mentions tiger shows in the public thoroughfares of Bengal but that was centuries later. The big cat is no more to be seen in our city streets, its place has been taken by small monkeys and tame bears.

From the common food and drink of the country let us turn to the administration. Fa-Hian found the administration mild and the people happy. "They have not to register their households or attend to any magistrate and their rules; only those who cultivate the royal land have

to pay (a portion of) the grain from it. If they want to go, they go, if they want to stay they stay."^{84b} What he probably means is that no poll tax was levied or collected and no registration of household was, therefore, called for. Peasants who cultivated the king's demesne land had to pay a share of the produce as rent, but they were not permanently attached to the land, and could stay or leave as they liked. The criminal laws were lenient and heavy or light fine was the penalty according to the gravity of the offence. In cases of active treason the right hand of the offender was cut off. Capital punishment, it is to be inferred, was unknown. The king's bodyguards and attendants all had their salaries. Fa-Hian's account is meagre indeed, but Hiuen-tsang did not prove much more informative.

"As the government is honestly administered and the people live together on good terms the criminal class" we are told "is small. The statute law is sometimes violated and plots made against the sovereign; when the crime is brought to light the offender is imprisoned for life; he does not suffer any corporal punishment, but alive or dead he is not treated as a member of the community. For offences against social morality, and disloyal and unfilial conduct, the punishment is to cut off the nose, or an ear or a hand or a foot or to banish the offender to another country or into the wilderness. Other offences can be atoned by a money payment."⁸⁵ Thus we see that the mutineer who

^{84b} Legge, pp. 42-43.

⁸⁵ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 171-172. Sung-yun, writing of Udyāna, also says that capital punishment was unknown and when necessary ordeals were resorted to. "Supposing a man has committed a murder, they do not suffer him to be killed; they only banish him to the desert mountains. In investi-

was mutilated in the fifth century, was condemned to a civil death in the seventh; for minor offences the penalty continued to be fine, and for the more serious violation of social morality the punishment was expulsion from the country. I-tsing confirms this statement when he says, "In India, those who have been condemned as lowest criminals have their body besmeared with dung and are forcibly driven out to a wilderness being excluded from the society of men".⁸⁶ Wang-hiuen-tse also testifies to punishment by mutilation. Besides the removal of a hand and foot he mentions extraction of eyes also as a penalty.⁸⁷

The accused was not subjected to physical torture to extract a confession. When proof was lacking, he was interrogated, and if he denied the charges, ordeals were resorted to. Hiuen-tsang mentions four different ordeals by which the guilt or the innocence of an accused person could be determined. "These are by water, by fire, by weighing, and by poison. In the water ordeal the accused is put in one sack and a stone in another, then the two sacks are connected and thrown in a deep stream; if the sack containing the stone floats, and the other sinks, the man's guilt is proven. The fire ordeal requires the accused to kneel and tread on hot iron, to take it in his hand and lick it; if he is innocent he is not hurt, but he is burnt if he is guilty. In the weighing ordeal the accused is weighed against a stone, and if the latter is the lighter the charge is false, if otherwise it is true. The poison ordeal requires that the right hand leg of a ram be cut off, and according

gating doubtful cases, they rely on the pure or foul effect of drastic medicine." Beal, Vol. I, p. XCIV.

⁸⁶ Takakusu, p. 139.

⁸⁷ Lévi, J. A., March-April of 1900, p. 328.

to the portion assigned to the accused to eat, poisons are put into the leg, and if the man is innocent he survives, and if not the poison takes effect.”⁸⁸ Wang-hiuen-tse’s account of the ordeal by weighing is slightly different but more sensible. The Chinese envoy says that in Magadha an accused person cannot be belaboured by a birch, but recourse is had to a marvellous method of weighing. He is first weighed against certain articles, and then a tablet containing the charges against him is attached to his nape, and he is again weighed against the very articles which had previously been the counterpoise and a tablet of the same weight as his.^{88a} If he is innocent he proves lighter. If he is culpable the counterpoise is lighter. All the four ordeals mentioned by Hiuen-tsang can be traced to very ancient times as they had the sanction of the most popular of Hindu law givers like Manu, Yājñavalkya, Nārada and Bṛhaspati, and trial by ordeal survived in India till the close of the eighteenth century.

The main stay of the royal power was the army which consisted of infantry, cavalry, chariotry and elephantry, the traditional quadruple limbs of a military force (*caturaṅga bala*). The fighting elephant was protected with a coat of mail and its tusks were armed with sharp implements. In the Moghul days the elephants carried heavy chains and sabres. The king of Kāmarūpa had twenty thousand fighting elephants in his army. The commander-in-chief rode an elephant in the battle field. The chariot was drawn by four horses and armed footmen marched on either side. For defence they carried shields, their arms of offence being sword and sabre, spear and lances, bow and arrow, javelins

⁸⁸ Watters, Vol. I, p. 172.

^{88a} Lévi, J. A., March-April of 1900, p. 328.

and battle axes, halberds and various kinds of slings. The men of the army were professional soldiers and fighting was their hereditary profession. The army marched to the music of battle drums, and troops were skilful in their arms.⁸⁹ The navy is not mentioned in this connection, but we read in Hwui-li's *Life of Kumāra Rājā's* fleet of 30,000 boats which was doubtless used for defence and offence in the big rivers of his kingdom.⁹⁰

The sinews of war came mainly from the royal demesne. Taxation was light, and as in Fa-Hian's days, households were not registered. Tradesmen paid some light duties at ferries and barriers, and the king's tenants paid one-sixth of the produce as rent. Forced labour was practically unknown. The king's demesne was divided into four parts: the income of one part went to the maintenance of the administration and state worship; the principal ministers and state officials were assigned land out of the second, for they were not paid in cash; the income from the third was spent in patronage of learning and that from the last quarter in charity.⁹¹

It is interesting to note that the archives and official records had their special custodians. The records included also official annals and they were collectively styled as *nīla pīta*, blue and yellow. Were yellow palm leaves secured by blue ribbons? One wonders whether blue tape was less obstructive than the red!⁹²

From the living let us turn to the dead. The body was either cremated or thrown into water or cast away in the

⁸⁹ Watters, Vol. I, p. 171.

⁹⁰ Hwui-li, p. 172.

⁹¹ Watters, Vol. I, p. 176.

⁹² Watters, Vol. I, p. 154.

woods. But old people sometimes got tired of their mortal existence and took formal leave of their relatives and deliberately drowned themselves in the holy Ganges in order to secure ever-lasting weal in the life after. The Chinese pilgrims noticed one custom relating to death which still holds good. "No one goes to take food in a family afflicted by death", and those who attend a funeral are regarded as unclean, they all wash outside the city wall before entering the city. But when the king dies his heir is enthroned before the funeral rites are performed.⁹³

Hiuen-tsang left the country with a happy impression about its people: "They are of hasty and irresolute temperaments but of pure moral principles. They will not take anything wrongfully, and they yield more than fairness requires. They fear the retribution for sins in other lives and make light of what conduct produces in this life. They do not practice deceit and they keep their sworn obligations."

OF SCHOLARS, POETS AND PHILOSOPHERS.

The three Chinese travellers were all scholars. They were inspired as much by intellectual yearnings as by piety in their journey to India. It is but natural that we should come across in their works numerous references to old masters and contemporary scholars of eminence. But the earliest author whom, Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing mention, was not a Buddhist philosopher but a Brāhmaṇa grammarian. According to I-tsing, "Pāṇini" was a "very learned scholar of old, who is said to have been inspired and assisted by Maheśvara-deva, and endowed with three eyes."¹ Hiuen-tsang had been to Pāṇini's native village which still exists under a different name. He says, a journey of four miles from Udbhāṇḍapura brought one to Sha-lo-tu-lo city, the birth-place of the Ṛṣi Pāṇini, who composed a treatise on etymology. Grammar was a science of divine origin, and the earliest models were supplied by Brahmā and Indra, but students found it difficult to master their principles. Then appeared Pāṇini, a man of great erudition, who set upon himself the task of removing the existing irregularities and systematising the rules of Sanskrit grammar. He secured the help of the god Śiva and produced a work which met with the approval of the contemporary king "who decreed that it should be studied all over the country" and offered a reward of one thousand gold coins to every one who could memorise the entire work. Such is the story of Pāṇini and his work as Hiuen-tsang knew it.² In his

¹ Takakusu, p. 172.

² Beal, Vol. I, pp. 114-115.

Watters, Vol. I, pp. 221-224.

time the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* was transmitted orally from teacher to pupil and written texts were extremely rare.

Of Pāṇini our knowledge is extremely limited even today. Hiuen-tsang was right when he says that Pāṇini was born at Śālātura, for he is known as Śālāturiya ; the tradition that he had secured the help of Śiva still survives, for some of his *sūtras* are styled as Śiva *sūtras* ; Patañjali calls him Dākṣīputra, so Dākṣī appears to have been the name of Pāṇini's mother. As Pāṇini is credited to have supplanted the *Aindra* school, an earlier school, doubtless, it claimed the god Indra for its founder.²

According to *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* and Tibetan traditions, quoted by Dr. Nalinaksha Dutt, Pāṇini, though a Brāhmaṇa by birth, was a Buddhist by inclination. He attained his grammatical skill, not through the grace of the Hindu god Śiva, but by the favour of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, and he is credited to have ultimately attained *śrāvaka bodhi*.³ Hiuen-tsang heard a story that goes a long way to prove that in the seventh century Buddhist eyes Pāṇini was no better than a common heretic, and all his strivings after secular learning proved of little avail in his succeeding birth. At Śālātura the pilgrim saw a *stūpa* that commemorated the conversion of one of Pāṇini's disciples by a Buddhist *Arhat*. Five centuries after Buddha's death the *Arhat* arrived at the village in course of his apostolic journey and found a Brāhmaṇa teacher chastising a young pupil for his deficiency in grammar. The *Arhat* informed the teacher that this dull

² Belvalkar, *An Account of the Different Existing Systems of Sanskrit Grammar*, p. 19. Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 425-426. Pāṇini's date is uncertain, Keith suggests 4th Century B.C.

³ Dutt, *Early Monastic Buddhism*, Vol. II, p. 26.

boy was Pāṇini Ṛṣi in his previous life and had gone down in the scale of intelligence as he had devoted all his energy to the acquisition of worldly knowledge. Owing to some good *karma*, however, he was born in a Brāhmaṇa family. The *Arhat* himself was one of the five hundred bats who preferred to be roasted to death in a decayed tree rather than be deprived of the delight of listening to the recitation of *Abhidharma*.⁴

Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* was then taught in every Buddhist school. He was styled as a Ṛṣi, but in the seventh century, when Buddhism was on its decline, even sober scholars could not persuade themselves that scholarly labours, such as Pāṇini's, could be of any spiritual merit.

Let us now turn to the Buddhist masters whom the pious pilgrims really venerated. To Hiuen-tsang, Aśvaghoṣa, Deva, Nāgārjuna, and Kumāralāta were the "four suns illuminating the world."⁵ I-tsing also mentions Nāgārjuna, Deva and Aśvaghoṣa as the most eminent exponents of Buddhism in Jambudvīpa of an early age.⁶ But Hiuen-tsang has nothing but a silly story to tell about Aśvaghoṣa and "the demon eloquent Brāhmaṇa." This Brāhmaṇa lived at Pāṭaliputra, all alone in a hut, and was in league with the evil spirits. With their help he attained the reputation of a great scholar and controversialist. But Aśvaghoṣa, whose "knowledge embraced all things and whose spiritual attainments extended over the three articles", rightly suspected that the Brāhmaṇa's skill as a debater was due to the help of his evil allies. An interview with the Brāhmaṇa convinced the great savant that his

⁴ Beal, Vol. I, pp. 115-117.

⁵ Watters, Vol. I, p. 245.

⁶ Takakusu, p. 181.

suspicion was well-founded. Aśvaghōṣa then went to the king and requested him to arrange a public discussion. He enunciated some of the subtlest principles of Buddhism and the Brāhmaṇa promptly replied. Aśvaghōṣa then demanded that he should repeat his discourse once again, but as expected the Brāhmaṇa failed to do so. Aśvaghōṣa jeered at his opponent and removed the covering that screened the Brāhmaṇa's face and everybody was satisfied that all his learning and polemical skill were derived from undesirable sources.^{6a}

I-tsing refers to the great epic on which Aśvaghōṣa's poetic fame so firmly rests. We learn from him that Aśvaghōṣa wrote some poetical songs and the *Sūtrālaṅkāra śāstra*. "He also composed the *Buddhacarita-kāvya* (or verses of the Buddha's career). This extensive work, if translated, would consist of more than ten volumes. It relates the Tathāgata's chief doctrines and works during his life, from the period when he was still in the royal palace till his last hour under the avenue of Sāla trees—thus all the events are told in a poem."⁷ This poem, we are told, was popular all over India and the islands of the southern sea. But this great work was known in Chinese and Tibetan translation only until the Sanskrit text was discovered late in the last century. Only eighteen out of the original twenty-eight cantos have come down to us in Sanskrit. Of these again the first thirteen alone are authentic, the rest being the work of Amṛtānanda.⁸

A musician and a bard, Aśvaghōṣa was a Brāhmaṇa by birth. Three cities, Sāketa, Benares and Pāṭaliputra

^{6a} Beal, Vol. II, pp. 100-101.

⁷ Takakusu, pp. 165-166.

⁸ Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 259.

compete for the honour of his birthplace^{8a} and he was converted either by Pārśva or his disciple Puṇyayaśa. If the current tradition is correct, Aśvaghōṣa, was the court poet of Kaṇiṣka and a contemporary of Caraka. He enjoyed the reputation of an erudite scholar. His Tibetan biographer says, "there was no question which he would not have solved, no imputation he would not have rejected, he overcame his opponents as frequently as a strong wind breaks rotten trees."⁹

Besides *Buddhacarita*, Aśvaghōṣa had to his credit another great poetical work, *Saundarānanda Kāvya*. Some fragments of a drama *Sāri-putra-prakarana*, attributed to Aśvaghōṣa, have come down to us. Winternitz counts Aśvaghōṣa "as one of the most prominent poets of Sanskrit literature, as the most important predecessor of Kālidāsa and as the creator of epic, dramatic and lyrical compositions."

Of Aśvaghōṣa's two senior contemporaries, Pārśva does not find any place in the pages of I-tsing, and Mātrceta is not mentioned by Hiuen-tsang. It is difficult to treat with credulity the story of Pārśva as it has been transmitted by Hiuen-tsang. In the third tier of high halls of the

^{8a} Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 257. Keith says, "From the Colophons of his own works we learn that his mother was named Suvarnakshi and that his home was Sāketa." *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 55.

⁹ Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 257.

Even if we accept the current legend the date of Aśvaghōṣa cannot be ascertained until that of Kaṇiṣka is satisfactorily settled. Keith writes—"The wide culture of the writer (Aśvaghōṣa) displays itself in his allusion to the Bharatan epic and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the Sāṅkhya and the Vaiśeshika philosophies, and Jain tenets, while in the tales he exhibits himself as a fervent believer in the doctrine of the saving power of worship of the Buddha." *A History of Sanskrit Literature*", p. 56.

Kaṇiṣka *Vihāra* was the chamber once occupied by the venerable Pārśva: it was in ruins but was marked off. This Pārśva was originally a Brāhmaṇa teacher, and he remained such until he was eighty years old. Then he became converted to Buddhism and received ordination. The city boys hereupon jeered at him as an old and feeble man, and reproached him with wishing to lead an idle life, unable to fulfil the duties of a monk in practising absorbed meditation and reciting the sacred scriptures. Stung by these reproaches the old man withdrew to seclusion and made a vow not to lay his side on his mat until he had mastered the canon, and had attained full spiritual perfection and powers. At the end of three years he had completely succeeded, and people out of respect called him *Reverend Side* (or *Ribs*) "because he had not laid his *side* on his mat for so long a time."¹⁰ The story was probably suggested by the name of the famous monk.

Pārśva is reputed to have been the *guru* of Kaṇiṣka and it was he who persuaded the great king to convene the Buddhist council over which Vasumitra presided.

Tradition makes of Mātr̥ceta another contemporary of Kaṇiṣka. He was too old to visit the court when the royal invitation arrived and sent a metrical epistle called *Mahārāja Kaṇiṣkalekha* in eighty-five verses. The original Sanskrit text has been lost but the Tibetan translation has survived. In it the poet solicits the king to excuse his failure to come on account of age and infirmity, and implores him to give up the chase and spare the animals of the forest.¹¹

¹⁰ Watters, Vol. I, p. 208.

¹¹ Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 270. Tāranātha asserted that Mātr̥ceta was another name of Aśvagoṣa but I-tsing mentions

Like Aśvaghōṣa and Pārśva, Māṛceta was also a Brāhmaṇa by birth. He did not forsake the faith of his fathers until late in life when he came to hear of Buddha's prophesy. One day Buddha and his disciples were wandering about in a wood. A nightingale saw the Enlightened One, majestic as a gold mountain, and burst into exquisite melody in the excess of its delight. Buddha turned to his disciples and said, "after my nirvāṇa, this bird will be born as a man, he will be called Māṛceta and he will extol my virtues in true appreciation." Māṛceta's poetical talents had so long been employed in the adoration of his patron deity Maheśvara-deva, it was now engaged in belauding the Buddha. He composed two famous hymns, one in four hundred and the second in one hundred and fifty verses—the *Catur-śataka stotra* and *Śatapañcāśatikā stotra*. Fragments of both of these two hymns have been discovered at Turfan. I-tsing translated the shorter hymn into Chinese while in residence at Nālandā, and a Tokharian version is also known. In his time the two hymns of Māṛceta had gained immense popularity among Buddhists of all persuasions. "These charming compositions", says I-tsing, "are equal in beauty to the heavenly flowers, and the high principles which they contain rival in dignity the lofty peaks of a mountain. Consequently in India, all who compose hymns imitate his style, considering him the father of literature. Even men like Bodhisattvas Asaṅga and Vasubandhu admired him greatly. Throughout India everyone who becomes a monk is taught Māṛceta's two hymns as soon as he can recite the five and ten precepts.

them as two distinct persons. Keith, however, does not dismiss Tāranātha's identification as altogether impossible. *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 64.

This course is adopted by both the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna schools." He goes on to add, "there are many who have written commentaries on them, nor are the imitations of them few. Bodhisattva Jina himself composed such an imitation. He added one verse before each of the one hundred and fifty verses, so that they became altogether three hundred verses, called the 'Mixed' hymns. A celebrated priest of the deer-park, Śākyadeva by name, again added one verse to each of Jina's and consequently they amounted to four hundred and fifty verses called the 'Doubly Mixed' hymns."¹²

A junior contemporary of Aśvaghōṣa was Kumāralāta, the real author of *Sūtrālaṅkāra*, which is sometimes wrongly attributed to the more famous author of *Buddhacarita*. This work was translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva about 405 A.D. From a few fragments of the Sanskrit texts found among the Turfan manuscripts we come to learn that its original title was *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā* or *Kalpanālaṅkṛtikā*. According to Hiuen-tsang, Kumāralāta or Kumāra-labdha came from Taxila and became a śramaṇa. He was taken by force to the Kabandha country where the king built a magnificent monastery for him. Some of his treatises were written in a monastery near the "Headgiving Stūpa" of Taxila which had fallen into ruins at the time of Hiuen-tsang's visit.¹³ Kumāralāta's works were then widely known and read, and according to Hiuen-tsang, he was the founder of the Sautrāntika school. Winternitz, however, objects that in the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā*,

¹² Takakusu, pp. 156-158.

¹³ Beal, Vol. I, p. 139.

Hwui li, p. 67.

Watters, Vol. I, p. 245.

which is a collection of pious legends, "the masters of the Sarvāstivādins are honoured" and "many of the stories are taken from the canon of Sarvāstivādins." In two of his narratives Kumāralāta mentions Kaṇiṣka as a king of the past, this reasonably fixes the upper limit of his date.¹⁴

Hiuen-tsang mentions a Bodhisattva of Kaṇiṣka's time, Vasumitra, by name. According to Buddhist tradition he was destined to succeed Maitreya as Simhacandra Buddha. He was at first excluded from the great council convened by Kaṇiṣka, as he had not yet attained the status of an *Arhat*. But as a future Buddha and the prospective successor of Maitreya he did not care for *Arhathood*, though he could obtain that degree of perfection within the short space of time that a ball of wool thrown above would take to fall to the ground. Forthwith he threw a ball, which, however, was held aloft by the *devas* who urged him not to care for "the petty fruit" The miracle, however, convinced the *Arhats* of Vasumitra's spiritual superiority and he was not only admitted to the council but was invited to preside over it. This council composed under Vasumitra's guidance "100,000 stanzas of *Uṇḍeśa śāstras*, explanatory of the canonical *sūtras*, 100,000 stanzas of *Vinaya-vibhāṣā-śāstras* explanatory of the *Vinaya*, and 100,000 stanzas of *Abhidharma-vibhāṣā-śāstras* explanatory of the *Abhidharma*." These authoritative treatises, when completed, were inscribed on copper plates, enclosed in stone boxes and finally deposited in a *stūpa*, built for the purpose, at the instance of king Kaṇiṣka.

¹⁴ Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 267. Keith does not rule out the possible existence of a Sanskrit work entitled *Sutrā-lāṅkāra* as distinct from the original of the Chinese translation so long attributed to Aśvaghōṣa. *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. VIII.

Hiuen-tsang identifies this Vasumitra with a disciple of Buddha, of the same name, but the story is undoubtedly apocryphal, as in part it is an imitation of a legend connected with Ānanda and the first Buddhist council held at Rājagṛha. The pilgrim, however, mentions another Vasumitra, who lived and worked at Puṣkarāvātī, modern Charsada, and wrote *Abhidharma-prakaraṇa-pāda-śāstra* and *Abhidharma-dhātukāyapāda-śāstra*. Unlike the potential Buddha, this Vasumitra was a historical person.¹⁵

Let us now turn to another luminary of the Mahāyāna school whose personality is deeply shrouded in myths and legends. Hiuen-tsang credited Nāgārjuna with the knowledge of "the secret of life" which enabled him to prolong his own and his royal patron's life for centuries, and alchemy which enabled him to convert rocks into lumps of gold when the king stood badly in need of funds for the construction of a rock-cut monastery for the residence of the sage. Nāgārjuna used to live in the suburbs of the capital of Southern Kośala, then ruled by a Śātavāhana king. The young heir apparent got tired of waiting for his father's death, and was probably contemplating patricide, when his mother advised him to approach Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva on whose life depended that of the king. Nāgārjuna then volunteered his death and cut his throat with a dry blade of grass.¹⁶ Some speculations have been made about the identity of Nāgārjuna's royal patron, and Winternitz suggested that Gautamīputra Yajñaśrī, who reigned from 166-196 A.D., might be the prince in ques-

¹⁵ For the story of Bodhisattva Vasumitra and Kaṇiṣka's council see Watters, Vol. I, pp. 270-271; for the author pp. 273-275, also Beal, Vol. I, pp. 151-156.

¹⁶ Beal, Vol. II, pp. 212-214.

tion, but it is futile to attempt any identification until Nāgārjuna's date has been satisfactorily fixed.¹⁷

According to other legends, Nāgārjuna was a Brāhmaṇa of Vidarbha, and was learned not only in the *Vedas* but in all the known sciences. Above all, he was a master of the black art and he knew how to render himself invisible. With three of his friends he trespassed into the royal harem, where they were all apprehended. The three friends were put to death but Nāgārjuna's life was spared when he took a vow of becoming a monk. He completed the study of the three *Piṭakas* in ninety days and obtained the *Mahāyāna-sūtras* from an old monk in the Himalayas. His name probably gave origin to the legends relating to his association with the *Nāgas*. According to one story, he got a commentary on the *Mahāyāna-sūtra*, from a *Nāga* king ; according to another, a *Nāga* presented him with a string of pearls which served as a potent antidote against snake venom. So many works on such diverse subjects have at different dates been ascribed to him that there is no doubt that popular admiration put no limit to his encyclopaedic knowledge.¹⁸

The most popular work of Nāgārjuna is *Suḥr̥llekha*, a metrical epistle on the model of Māṭṛceta, which he dedicated to his royal friend. It enjoyed wide popularity

¹⁷ Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 348.

¹⁸ Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, pp. 342-344. Wang-hiuen-tse ascribes to Nāgārjuna several hundreds of *stūpas*. The most remarkable was one that the Bodhisattva received from a *nāga* and was enshrined in a bigger *stūpa* raised on the sea-coast about one hundred *li* to the east of king Prasenajit's capital. According to the story heard by the Chinese envoy, five hundred years after the *Parinirvāna* Nāgārjuna entered the sea with a view to converting the *nāga* king residing there. The grateful *nāga* presented to him a small *stūpa* encrusted with jewels. Lévi, *J.A.* March-April of 1900, pp. 323-324.

among the Buddhists in I-tsing's time. "In India students learn this epistle in verse early in the course of instruction but the most devout make it their special object of study throughout their lives."¹⁹ Impressed by its literary excellence I-tsing rendered *Suḥrillekha* into Chinese and sent it home with his version of Mātr̥ceta's hymn from Śrīvijaya.

Though he cannot be regarded as the founder of the Mahāyāna school the honour of being the first great exponent of Mādhyamika doctrine of Śūnya goes to Nāgārjuna. He is the author of *Mādhyamika-Kārikā*, a work of four-hundred verses, to which he himself contributed a commentary called *Akutobhaya*. The commentary exists only in its Tibetan version, the Sanskrit original being lost. Nāgārjuna denies that there is anything absolutely positive or absolutely negative and emphasises the importance of relativity. Among his other philosophical works we may mention here *Yuktiśatikā*, *Śūnyatā Saptati*, *Pratītya-samutpādaḥṛdaya*, and a work on logic *Vigraha-vyavartanī*. He also wrote commentaries of *Prajñā-Pāramitā Sūtra Śāstra* and *Daśa-bhūmi-vibhāṣā-śāstra*. In the seventh century Nāgārjuna was regarded as a potential Buddha.

The most famous of Nāgārjuna's disciples was Āryadeva, also known as Kāṇadeva or one-eyed Deva and Nīlanetra, the man with blue eyes. He came from Ceylon. As usual, Hiuen-tsang gives only a few stories that he found current about him. When he first sought an interview with Nāgārjuna there was a contest of wit between the two. Nāgārjuna filled his bowl with water and sent it to his visitor. Deva on his turn quietly dropped a needle

¹⁹ Takakusu, p. 162 and p. 166.

in the bowl and returned it. The stranger was immediately admitted to the presence of the great sage and subsequently became the ablest exponent of his philosophy. The meaning of the bowlful of water and the needle in it is thus explained: the bowl filled with water to the brim signified Nāgārjuna's omniscience and the needle typified Deva's penetrative intellect.²⁰

We read of a *stūpa* raised at Pāṭaliputra to commemorate Deva's triumph over the *Tīrthikas* in a theological controversy. Previously when Buddhist scholarship was on its wane the *Tīrthikas* had scored a victory over the Buddhist monks, and as a result, the monks lost the right of calling public meetings for religious debate by sounding their gong. After twelve years Deva decided to challenge the heretics to a fresh debate, but the heretics, forewarned of his intention, had taken steps to bar the admission of all strange monks to the town. Deva, however, managed to enter the city in the guise of a hay-cutter and spent the night in the gong tower. Early in the morning he sounded the gong and thereby demanded a public debate. The debate lasted for twelve days and the *Tīrthikas* were utterly confounded. The king and his ministers were greatly pleased and raised this sacred structure as a memorial.²¹

Another story relates how he discomfited an *Arhat*, Uttara, of the Cola country, who was at first reluctant to extend to his adversary the ordinary courtesy of offering a seat. Unable to answer his question Uttara transported himself to Maitreya's heaven, but Deva had no difficulty in

²⁰ Hwui-li, p. 135.

Beal, Vol. II, pp. 210-212.

²¹ Watters, Vol. II, pp. 100-101; Beal, Vol. II, pp. 96-99.

detecting his source of information.²² These stories are of little historical value except as evidences of the high reputation that Deva enjoyed as a scholar and controversialist. But the story of Deva and the pilgrims of Gaṅgādvāra is probably not without a basis of fact. As the pilgrims were offering oblations to their departed ancestor, Deva, like Cārvāka in the popular story, began to throw water in the direction of his native country, Ceylon. When ridiculed for his strange conduct, he silenced the pilgrims by enquiring why his living relatives could not benefit from his offerings if they could reach deceased sinners in the other world.²³ In the *Citta-viśuddhi-prakarana*, attributed to Deva, which has come to us in fragments only, he ridicules ceremonial baths in the Ganges in the same manner. "If salvation could be attained by means of Ganges water, then fishermen would all attain salvation and more particularly the fishes which are in the Ganges day and night."²⁴

The most well-known of Deva's works in *Chatuḥśataka*, a work of 400 *Kārikās*, in which he defends his master's doctrines against other Buddhist schools. This work is also known as *Śata Śāstra* and it was written, according to Hiuen-tsang, at Prayāga.²⁵

In real life Bhāvaviveka or Bhavya was an erudite interpreter of Nāgārjuna and Deva's philosophy, and his works were important enough to be translated into Tibetan and Chinese. According to the reports Hiuen-tsang heard, Bhāvaviveka is still alive and awaits in an *Asura* cave near

²² Beal, Vol. II, pp. 227-228.

Watters, Vol. II, pp. 224-225.

²³ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 320-321.

²⁴ Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 351.

²⁵ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 361-362.

Hwui li, p. 90.

Dhanakaṭaka (modern Bezvada) the advent of the next Buddha, Maitreya. Though outwardly a student of Kapila (*Sāṅkhya* philosophy), he was in reality an adherent of Nāgārjuna's school. He heard of the missionary activities of Dharmapāla in Magadha, and like a medieval knight sallied forth at the head of his disciples to tilt his intellectual lance at him. By the time he reached Pāṭali-putra Dharmapāla had moved on to Mahābodhi. In any case he refused to have anything to do with theological controversies and politely declined Bhavya's challenge. The disappointed scholar returned home and resumed his life of prayer and study. Convinced that none but Maitreya could solve his difficulties he began to recite *Hṛdaya dhāraṇi* before the image of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara without taking any food and drink. After three years the Bodhisattva appeared before Bhavya and enquired about the object of his austerities. He replied that he wanted to live till Maitreya came. The Bodhisattva advised him to go to Dhanakaṭaka, where in a cavern to the south of the city dwelt Vajrapāṇi and propitiate him. For three years he assiduously recited the *Vajrapāṇi dhāraṇi* in that cave and the god told him that there was an *Asura's* palace in the mountain where he might wait for the advent of Maitreya. He was instructed as to the rites to be performed and the formula to be recited that would cleave the mountain open. He followed Vajrapāṇi's instructions to the minutest detail and knocked at the rock when it revealed a deep and wide recess. Reluctant to enjoy the benefits of his austerities alone, Bhāvaviveka invited the local people to join him in his adventures and share with him the bliss of beholding in their present life the Buddha of a future age. But only half a dozen men had the daring

to follow him, and as he stepped in, the rocky walls closed behind. The story is certainly more entertaining than Bhāvaviveka's commentaries.²⁶

No less entertaining is the Chinese account of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, the great masters of the *Yogācāra Vijñānavāda* school. The two brothers hailed from Gāndhāra and lived and worked at different times in different parts of North India. Hiuen-tsang saw at Puruṣapura the old house, to the east of Pārśva's chamber, where Vasubandhu lived and wrote his famous work *Abhidharma Kośa*.²⁷ He seems to have lived for some time at Śākala where he wrote according to Hiuen-tsang, his *Paramārthasatya Śāstra*,²⁸ a work that cannot be traced now. Both the brothers spent a considerable part of their lives at Ayodhyā, where they were held in great esteem by the reigning king, and there apparently they died. They appear to have lived and worked at Kauśāmbī also.

These details may or may not be correct, but there is nothing extraordinary in them. According to Paramārtha, the sixth-century biographer of Vasubandhu, the two brothers were Brāhmaṇas by birth, and belonged to the Kauśika family. Both of them had originally been of Hīnayāna persuasion, but Asaṅga could not comprehend the Hīnayāna doctrine of vacuum. He was about to put an end to his life when the *Arhat* Piṇḍola hurried from far-off Pūrva-Videha to instruct him. Under Piṇḍola's guidance he mastered the Hīnayāna doctrines but they

²⁶ Beal, Vol. II, pp. 223-227.

²⁷ Beal, Vol. I, p. 105; Hiuen-tsang adds that a commemorative tablet marked the place.

²⁸ Beal, Vol. I, p. 172. Watters points out that Julien's restoration of the Sanskrit title is based on conjecture. Vol. I, p. 291.

gave him no satisfaction. By his supernatural power he ascended to Maitreya's heaven and was initiated in the Mahāyāna tenets by him. The more colourful Tibetan legends say that Asaṅga had earned the favour of Maitreya by an act of self-sacrifice similar to that of the Bodhisattva in the *Vyāghrī Jātaka*. According to this story, Asaṅga came across a bitch in extreme agony of pain near Ajantā. Its festering sores were being knawed on by living vermins. He cut off a piece of flesh from his own body to feed the vermins and to relieve the suffering beast, and lo! the beast and the vermins vanished into thin air, and Asaṅga found himself face to face with Maitreya. Maitreya asked him to catch hold of his robe and, thus supported, Asaṅga was carried to the heavenly abode of the Bodhisattva and studied all the Mahāyāna texts there. According to Hiuen-tsang's information, Asaṅga used to visit Maitreya nightly from his chambers at Puruṣapura, but unable to make the doctrine intelligible to his less gifted audience he invited Maitreya to address them. Maitreya consented, but none but Asaṅga could follow his discourse. Asaṅga, therefore, devoted his nights to listening to the Bodhisattva's teachings and his days to their interpretation for the benefit of his fellow-men.^{28a} Meanwhile, his younger brother Vasubandhu had attained the foremost rank among the Hīnayāna masters. Asaṅga sent for him and pointed out his errors. In his remorse Vasubandhu offered to cut off the tongue that had so long preached heresy, but at his brother's behest desisted from doing so, and devoted the rest of his years to the propagation of Mahāyāna faith.

^{28a} Sylvain Lévi, *Asaṅga, Mahāyāna Sūtrālaṅkāra*. (Paris 1911), Vol. II, Introduction, pp. 1-6. Lévi assigns Asaṅga to the first half of the fifth century A.D.

According to one version, the two brothers met at Ayodhyā and not at Puruṣapura.

Another story goes that Asaṅga, Vasubandhu and a monk called Buddha-siṃha entered into a pact that the first of them to die would visit the survivors. Buddha-siṃha died first but nothing was heard from him. Vasubandhu passed away next, and no message came from him either, until the heretics began to insinuate that both of them had gone to an undesirable place. Then Vasubandhu descended to his brother's Ayodhyā residence in the form of a Deva Ṛṣi and assured him that Buddha-siṃha and he were in Maitreya's paradise. Hiuen-tsang saw the old foundation of the house when he visited Ayodhyā.²⁹

Winternitz thinks that there is some substratum of fact behind the Maitreya and Asaṅga legends. He suggests that the Maitreya of these stories "was a historical person, Maitreya-nātha, the teacher of Asaṅga and the real founder of the *Yogācāra* school" and *Abhisamayālaṅkāra Kārikās* are the work of Maitreya-nātha.^{29a} Asaṅga's works have survived in their Chinese versions only. *Mahāyāna-saṃparigraha* was translated by Paramārtha (563 A.D.), *Prakaraṇa Āryavaca* and *Mahāyānābhidharma-saṅgati śāstra* were translated by Hiuen-tsang and a commentary on *Vajracchedikā* was translated by Dharmagupta (590-616 A.D.).³⁰

Vasubandhu's famous *Abhidharma Kośa* is treated as an authoritative work by the Hīnayānists and Mahāyānists alike. But unfortunately the Sanskrit original is lost,

²⁹ Beal, Vol. I, pp. 226-227.

^{29a} Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, pp. 352-353.

³⁰ Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 355.

though it is available in Chinese and Tibetan translations. Parmārtha rendered it into Chinese between 563 and 567 A.D. ; a second translation was made by Hiuen-tsang himself. Vasubandhu wrote a commentary not only on his own *Abhidharma Koṣa* but on several Mahāyāna sūtras as well, viz., *the Avataṃsaka, the Nirvāṇa, the Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, the Prajñā-Pāramitā, the Vimālakīrti* and the *Śrī Mālā simhanandā*, besides compiling among other Mahāyāna śāstras, *Vijñāna-mātrā siddhi* and *Mahāyāna Saṃparigraha Vyākhyā*.

Hiuen-tsang associates Manoratha and Saṅghabhadra with Vasubandhu. Manoratha was the teacher of Vasubandhu and a close neighbour of his at Puruṣapura. We are told that Manoratha lived in a monastery about fifty paces to the south of Vasubandhu's house and he wrote a treatise on *Vibhāṣā*. The story of Monoratha's rivalry with king Vikramāditya and his death, as related by Hiuen-tsang, is fantastic in all conscience. Vikramāditya, it is said, celebrated his subjugation of India by unprecedented largesses. At first he gave away five lakhs of gold coins in charity, and later doubled that amount at the suggestion of his minister. Once when he lost the track of a wild boar while on a hunting excursion, he gave a rustic who put him on its trace a rich reward of a lakh of gold coins. The king was later chagrined to hear that Manoratha had given his barber the identical sum for shaving his head. The king grew jealous of the monk's fame and determined to humiliate him. He called an assembly of one hundred scholars to discuss the true nature and function of the senses of perception, about which, he contended, there was no consistent theory, and summoned Manoratha to the debate. Manoratha easily disposed of

ninety-nine of his rivals. While expounding his thesis to the last of them Manoratha started with the expression "fire and smoke". The king and the assembled scholars at once raised a cry that Manoratha had reversed the natural order of things, as smoke always precedes fire and never follows it. Manoratha tried to explain his position but was given no chance. Perceiving that he had stepped into a trap deliberately laid for him Manoratha bit out his tongue and died. Before his death, however, he managed to send an account of what had happened to Vasubandhu, his pupil. Vasubandhu set out for Śrāvastī, Vikramāditya's capital, to vindicate the reputation of his master. The king died soon afterwards and was succeeded by his son who was favourably disposed towards the Buddhists. At Vasubandhu's request he convened the old assembly once again and the pupil upheld the thesis of his master.³²

I-tsing mentions Saṅghabhadra with Asaṅga, Vasubandhu and Bhāvaviveka as one of the famous scholars of the middle ages.³³ Hiuen-tsang translated his *Nyāyānusāra Śāstra* into Chinese and his works were remembered centuries later as Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla refer to them. He belonged to Kashmir and died in a monastery at Matipur. Saṅghabhadra spent twelve years in a critical examination of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharma Kośa* and then wrote a treatise to refute its conclusions under the

³¹ J. Takakusu, *A Study of Paramārtha's Life of Vasubandhu, Date of Vasubandhu. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1905, pp. 33-53. According to Takakusu, Vasubandhu lived from 420 to 500 A.D. as one of his works was translated by Ratnamati into Chinese in 508 A.D. Keith makes him a contemporary of Samudragupta and Candragupta II. *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 75.

³² Beal, Vol. I, pp. 105-109.

³³ Takakusu, p. 181.

provocative title of *Bud-hail*, for his work was to serve as hailstones for Vasubandhu's *Koṣa* or buds. Vasubandhu was then in Śākala country and Saṅghabhadra proceeded with his pupils to meet him, no doubt, with a view to provoking a debate. Vasubandhu left Śākala for Matipur and Matipur for Central India, unwilling to meet the Kashmir monk, for he was obviously apprehending a defeat. To his pupils, however, he said that his was a strategic retreat, for he was trying to draw Saṅghabhadra to Central India where the Buddhist *Pandits* would make short shrift of him. When Saṅghabhadra reached Matipur he found that Vasubandhu had already left. He could not pursue his famous adversary further, for at Matipur he breathed his last. Before his death he apparently repented his efforts to humiliate the famous scholar and wrote a humble letter of apology and asked his pupils to take his manuscript with the letter to Vasubandhu. Vasubandhu, now that the author was dead, approved of the work, which he found merited study, as it expounded the doctrines of those he revered. But he changed the title of Saṅghabhadra's treatise which was henceforth known as *Nyāyānusāra Śāstra*. The story deserves little credit but it goes to indicate that Saṅghabhadra was a junior contemporary of Vasubandhu, for he was still striving after fame when *Abhidharma Koṣa* had already attained wide popularity.³⁴

Among scholars of more recent date, I-tsing gives the first place to Diñnāga also known as Jina.³⁵ We have already seen that the great logician tried his hand at devo-

³⁴ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 325-327.

Hwui-li, pp. 79-81.

³⁵ Takakusu, p. 181.

tional verses also, for he had added one-hundred and fifty verses to Mātṛceta's hymn. According to Hiuen-tsang, Diñnāga lived on a lonely hill near Veṅgi, the capital of the Andhra country, where he composed one of his treatises on logic. The principles of logic were first enunciated and systematically arranged by Buddha himself, but confusion followed his *Parinirvāna*. Students found it difficult to master this science and Diñnāga made it his task to restore it to its proper position. Lost in meditation, he unconsciously produced a brilliant light which attracted the notice of the king, and he urged upon the monk to attain *Arhathood*. The scholar was about to yield, when the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī appeared before him and advised him to resume his scholarly pursuits. It may be noted that Diñnāga was a potential Buddha in the eyes of seventh century Buddhists of India and China, so he lost nothing by giving up his efforts to achieve the much lower status of an *Arhat*. Hiuen-tsang tells us that Diñnāga spent sometimes at Ācāra's monastery at Ajantā.³⁶ I-tsing says that it was incumbent on every monk who aspired to distinguish himself in the study of logic to read eight of Diñnāga's works.³⁷ According to Tibetan legends, Diñnāga was a Drāviḍa Brāhmaṇa from Kāñcīpura, and well-versed in orthodox learning. He joined the Hīnayāna brotherhood but was expelled by his teacher. He spent a few years at Nālandā where he rose to fame for his skill in debate. He then decided to compile a treatise on logic and was encouraged by Mañjuśrī in his resolution.

³⁶ Watters, Vol. II, p. 240.

Beal, Vol. II, pp. 218-220.

³⁷ Takakusu, p. 186.

Diñnāga was a contemporary of Kālidāsa, whose verses he did not admire.

Winternitz says that “the greatest and most independent thinker among the successors of Vasubandhu is Diñnāga, the founder of Buddhist logic and one of the foremost figures in the history of Indian Philosophy”. He was a voluminous writer, but of his numerous works only the *Nyāyapraveśa* has survived in Sanskrit.^{37a} Three of his eight works on logic, mentioned by I-tsing, cannot be traced in Chinese translation either, though many survive in their Tibetan versions.

Hiuen-tsang mentions six famous scholars from Gāndhāra. Of these we have already met Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Monoratha and Pārśva. Of Nārāyaṇdeva we know nothing. Dharmatrāta or Dharmatāra was, according to Tāranātha, a contemporary of Kaṇiṣka and, therefore, of Aśvaghoṣa and Pārśva. Hiuen-tsang makes of him a resident of Puṣkarāvātī, where he wrote a treatise on *Abhidharma*. Kamalaśīla refers to him in the eighth century A.D. Some fragments of a Sanskrit anthology compiled by Dharmatāra have been discovered in Central Asia.³⁸

Before passing to the scholars who were not far removed from I-tsing in time we may take a casual notice of Īsvara, Skandhila, Pūrṇa, Bodhila, Kātyāyana, Śrīlabdha, Devaśarman, Gopa, Jinaputra, Bhadraruci and Guṇaprabha. Guṇaprabha, according to Hiuen-tsang, was an intellectual

^{37a} Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, pp. 362-363. Keith refers to a controversy about the authorship of the *Nyāyapraveśa*, which in his opinion has not been conclusively settled. *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. XXII. While Winternitz places Diñnāga in the fifth century A.D., Keith opines that he lived probably before A.D. 400; p. 484.

³⁸ Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. II, pp. 237 and 374.

prodigy and a voluminous writer. Originally of Mahāyāna persuasion, he changed his views and wrote several treatises to refute Mahāyāna doctrine and to defend Hīnayāna tenets. Anxious to resolve some of the doubts that still perplexed him he approached an *Arhat*, Devasena by name, and through his supernatural powers was transported to Maitreya's heaven. But as an ordained *bhikṣu* he refused to make his obeisance to the Bodhisattva, for, technically he was still a layman. Devasena thereupon refused to take him to Maitreya any more, and Guṇaprabha died without attaining *Arhathood* on account of his conceit. Hiuen-tsang saw the monastery in which Guṇaprabha lived and wrote at four or five *li*, or about a mile, to the south of the capital of Matipur.³⁹ Guṇaprabha and Bhadraruci were ordained in Parvata and were probably natives of that region.⁴⁰

Bhadraruci was a consummate logician and well-versed in the sacred works of the Hindus. According to the story preserved by Hiuen-tsang, he humiliated a Brāhmaṇa of Malwa in a public controversy. It appears from other stories of such debates that defeat in such cases involved more than moral and intellectual humiliation. But Bhadraruci spared the Brāhmaṇa from grosser penalties which the king was prepared to inflict, but the Brāhmaṇa, in his vanity, showered wild abuses on Mahāyāna doctrines and their saintly professors, and went down to hell through a pit, which was still to be seen in Hiuen-tsang's days, and the torrents of summer and autumn could not fill its bottomless depth.⁴¹

³⁹ Watters, Vol. II, pp. 322-323.

⁴⁰ Beal, Vol. II, p. 275.

⁴¹ Beal, Vol. II, pp. 262-265.

Jinaputra was a professor of the *Yogācāra* school. He lived in a monastery of the Parvata country and there wrote a commentary on a part of *Yogācāra-bhūmi śāstra* of Asaṅga, or Maitreya-nātha, if Winternitz is right.⁴² This commentary was translated into Chinese by Hiuen-tsang himself.

Gopa and Devaśarman both belonged to Viśoka. Gopa, Hiuen-tsang says, wrote a treatise on the essential realities of Buddhism but nothing is known about the author and his work.⁴³ Devaśarman's *Abhidharma Vijñānakāya-pāda* is available in Hiuen-tsang's translation.⁴⁴ Śrīlabdha, who composed *Sautrāntika Vibhāṣā śāstra* at Ayodhyā, was probably a Kashmirian. Kātyāyana of Tamasāvana is probably to be identified with Kātyāyanīputra, whose *Abhidharma-jñāna-prasthāna-śāstra* has been twice translated into Chinese.⁴⁵ Nothing is known of Pūrṇa and Bodhila, except that the former wrote on *Vibhāṣā* and the latter was a Mahāsāṅghika monk of Kashmir. Not so obscure was Skandhila, a Kashmirian, as the two preceding monks. He wrote an introduction to the study of *Abhidharma*. It enjoyed enough importance in the seventh century, to be translated by Hiuen-tsang.⁴⁶ Of Īśvara again we know nothing, except that Hiuen-tsang associates him with the Puṣkarāvātī region and ascribes to him a treatise on *Abhidharma*.

Before dealing with the scholars who brought fame to the University of Nālandā, where both Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing resided, we may take note of two royal authors

⁴² Watters, Vol. II, pp. 255-256.

⁴³ Watters, Vol. I, p. 373.

⁴⁴ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 373-374.

⁴⁵ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 294-295.

⁴⁶ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 280-281.

they mention. Hiuen-tsang says that king Amśuvarman of Nepal wrote a grammar,⁴⁷ and I-tsing refers to only one of Harṣavardhana's dramas, *Nāgānanda*, which had the Bodhisattva Jimūtavāhana for its hero. "This version was set to music. The king had it performed by a band accompanied by dancing and acting and thus popularised it in his time."⁴⁸

Among the eminent scholars of Nālandā Hiuen-tsang mentions Dharmapāla, Candrapāla, Guṇamati, Sthiramati, Prabhāmitra, Jñānacandra and Śīlabhadra. Some of these names also occur in I-tsing's list of great scholars "of late years", in which we find also the names of Dharmakīrti, Simhacandra, Prajñāgupta, Guṇaprabha and Jinaprabha. We have already come across another Prajñāgupta, a contemporary of Hiuen-tsang, whose thesis the Chinese Master of the Law refuted with success, and another Guṇaprabha, that proud monk, who was discourteous to Maitreya. I-tsing informs us, "Dharma Kīrti made a further improvement in Logic, Guṇaprabha popularised for a second time *the study* of the Vinaya-piṭaka, Guṇamati devoted himself to the school of Dhyāna and Prajñāgupta fully expounded the true doctrine by refuting all antagonistic views." There were more than one Guṇamati and Sthiramati, but Hiuen-tsang associated two monks of these names with Valabhi. Guṇamati and Sthiramati of Nālandā may, therefore, be identified with the monks mentioned in one of the Valabhi inscriptions. Candrapāla, Prabhāmitra, Jñānacandra and Simhacandra were undoubtedly known to their contemporaries as men of exceptional learning,

⁴⁷ Beal, Vol. II, p. 81.

⁴⁸ Takakusu, pp. 163-164.

but very likely they excelled as teachers rather than as authors, and if they left any written works they cannot be traced now. Jinaprabha is probably the same monk with whom Hiuen-tsang afterwards corresponded. Dharmapāla and Śīlabhadra, however, held the foremost ranks among the scholars of their time. Śīlabhadra was the Abbot of Nālandā when Hiuen-tsang joined the university, and Dharmapāla, his teacher, preceded him in that high office.

Dharmapāla came from Kāñcīpura in Drāviḍa. His father was a high official and the learning of the future Abbot gained him such a fame that the king chose him for his son-in-law. The youngman, however, had already made up his mind to renounce the world and the night before the wedding he miraculously disappeared. Moved by his prayers, Buddha himself had transported him to a mountain monastery far from the capital. The next morning the resident monks found him asleep in the great hall and admitted him to the brotherhood when they heard his story. He later travelled north and confounded the non-Buddhists and vindicated his faith in a public discussion at Kāśapura. We next find him at Viśoka where he held a seven days' discussion with the Hīnayāna masters and utterly defeated them. While at Nālandā, a Brāhmaṇa came from South India and challenged him, but this time he was spared the troubles of a prolonged debate ; for the challenge was accepted on his behalf by his worthy disciple, Śīlabhadra. We have seen in the story of Bhāvaviveka that in his later years Dharmapāla had realised the futility of useless debates and idle controversies, and devoted himself to self-improvement.

Dharmapāla wrote on etymology, logic and Buddhist metaphysics.⁴⁹

His disciple Śīlabhadra came of the royal family of Samataṭa. He travelled to Nālandā and attached himself to Dharmapāla. His scholarly fame soon spread over India and extended to foreign countries. As we have seen, he achieved a notable victory over the South Indian Brāhmaṇa who had challenged his master. The king offered him the rent of a town in appreciation of his high scholarship and polemical gift, but Śīlabhadra declined the estate, as a monk should not accept anything in excess of his daily needs. But the king pressed and the rents went to the endowment of a monastery. He was at the height of his reputation when Hiuen-tsang came to Nālandā. Hwui-li says, "there are 1,000 men who can explain twenty collections of Sūtras and Sāstras ; 500 who can explain thirty collections, and perhaps ten men, including the Master of the Law, who can explain fifty collections. Śīlabhadra alone has studied and understood the whole number."⁵⁰ This venerable scholar passed away soon after Hiuen-tsang's return home. In a letter addressed to Jñānaprabha in 654 A.D. Hiuen-tsang wrote "I learnt from an ambassador who recently came back from India that the great teacher Śīlabhadra is no more in this world. On getting this news, I was overwhelmed with sorrow that knew no bounds. Alas the boat of the sea of suffering has foundered, the eye of men and gods has closed."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Beal, Vol. II, pp. 110-112, 229-230.

Watters, Vol. II, pp. 226-228.

⁵⁰ Hwui-li, p. 112.

⁵¹ Bagchi, *India and China*, p. 82.

With this tribute from one great scholar to another, from a pupil to a master, from a Chinese to an Indian, let us close this account of the self-less monks who sacrificed everything, we prize, in their quest for truth.

EDUCATION

Education was a subject of primary interest to the Chinese pilgrims, for many of them joined the University of Nālandā and everyone of them had to take lessons in Sanskrit as a matter of necessity. We are told that a Chinese monk, Wong-ho, had to return home, as he could not master this difficult tongue. The pilgrims, therefore, had to make themselves familiar not only with the language of the learned, but also with the current script and the standard dialect of the country. The current script was undoubtedly a descendant of *Brāhmī*, for we learn from Hiuen-tsang that the Indian system of writing was a device of the god Brahmā's. The standard dialect was that spoken by the people of middle India and their expression and pronunciation served as a pattern for others.¹

There were five recognised departments of knowledge ; (1) *Śabda Vidyā* or *Vyākaraṇa*, as I-tsing explains, (2) *Śilpsthāna Vidyā*, arts and mechanics in which Hiuen-tsang also includes astrology, (3) *Cikitsā Vidyā* or medical sciences, which not only embraced surgery and medicine but charms and magic as well, (4) *Hetu Vidyā* or logic and (5) *Adhyātma-Vidyā* or philosophy and metaphysics. Of these grammar and logic, it appears, were considered of primary importance, as all students started with grammar and had to learn the rudiments of logic before they could proceed to other subjects.

Hiuen-tsang tells us that children took lessons in the

¹ Watter, Vol. I, pp. 152-153.

treatises of these five departments when they were seven.² I-tsing is on the other hand definite that they learnt their first primer when they were six and finished it in six months' time.³ The difference is perhaps more apparent than real if the first primer introduced them to the alphabet alone which consisted, according to I-tsing, forty-nine, and according to Hiuen-tsang, forty-seven, letters.⁴

About the title and character of this primer there is considerable confusion. Hiuen-tsang suggests that the children start with the "twelve chapters" and are subsequently introduced to one of the five sciences or branches of learning. Watters is of opinion that this book of twelve chapters is identical with I-tsing's *Si-tan-Chang* or *Siddham-Chang*, which children of six read. Beal suggests that the Sanskrit synonym for *Si-tan-Chang* should be *Siddha Vastu*. Takakusu contends that it stands for *Siddhirastu*, an invocation for success with which Sanskrit works usually begin.⁵ But *Siddhirastu* cannot be the title of a book or manual. Irrespective of the title the question that we have to answer is—was it an ordinary spelling book with which children begin their school education even today, or was it an elementary grammar which deals with the letters of the alphabet, their classification, combination etc? I-tsing says, "there are forty-nine letters (of the alphabet) which are combined with one another and arranged in eighteen sections; the total number of syllables is more than 10,000 or more than 200 ślokas." Immediately after completing this primer the young learner is introduced to Pāṇini's

² Watters, Vol. I, pp. 154-155.

³ Takakusu, p. 172.

⁴ Takakusu, p. 171.

Watters, Vol. I, p. 152.

⁵ Takakusu, p. 170.

Aṣṭādhyāyī. But it appears doubtful that a child should be expected to study Pāṇini without some preliminary preparation of a simpler grammar. If this is conceded, I should venture to suggest that *Kātantra* was the grammar in question. As Weber points out, this grammar was meant for those who wished to approach Sanskrit through *Prākṛt*. It was meant to satisfy a real popular need as was the intention of the compiler, for he aspired to serve the demands of the less intelligent, less industrious, and students whose main interest lay elsewhere :

“*Chāndasā svalpamatayaḥ śāstrāntare ratāśca ye*
Īśvarāḥ vyādhiniratā stathālasayayutāśca ye
Vaṇika śasyādisamsaktā lokayātrādiṣu sthitāḥ
Teṣāṃ kṣipra prabodārthaṃ anekārthaṃ Kalāpakam.

The *Kātantra* had only 855 *sūtras* as against Pāṇini's four thousand,⁶ and its first *sūtra* starts with *Siddha varṇa* which probably suggested the title *Siddham Chang*. Moreover it is probably a work of Buddhist origin.

Whatever might have been the nature and title of the first book the beginner was expected to master, he was helped in his task by the teacher with sympathy and patience. Hiuen-tsang pays a high compliment to Indian teachers which deserves quotation here: “These teachers explain the general meaning [to their disciples] and teach them the minutiae ; they rouse them to activity and skilfully win them to progress ; they instruct the inert and

⁶ Belvalkar, *An Account of the Different Existing Systems of Sanskrit Grammar*, p. 87. The *Kātantra* otherwise known as *Kaumāra* or *Kalāpa* probably dates back to the third century A.D. (Winternitz quoted by Keith). It was particularly popular in Kashmir and Bengal, and fragments have been discovered in Central Asia. As it was translated into Tibetan this grammar must have been used in that country also. Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 431.

sharpen the dull. When disciples, intelligent and acute, are addicted to idle shirking, the teachers doggedly persevere repeating instruction, until their training is finished.”⁷ From the story of the dull boy and the Brāhmaṇa teacher of Śālātura, as told by Hiuen-tsang, we have reason to believe that sometimes the teacher lost his patience and the rod played, as now, no mean part as an apparatus of instruction.

It is common knowledge that students in India were encouraged in all ages to cultivate their memory. Nor could they do anything else in the absence of written texts. If any corroboration of this well known fact is needed, it comes from I-tsing. He says, “In India there are two traditional ways by which one can attain to great intellectual power. Firstly, by repeatedly committing to memory the intellect is developed ; secondly, the alphabet fixes one’s ideas. By this way, after a practice of ten days or a month, a student feels his thoughts rise like a fountain, and can commit to memory whatever he has once heard.”⁸ Fa-Hian also unconsciously testifies to the phenomenal memory of Indian students when he says that sacred texts were transmitted from scholar to scholar and were seldom available in writing.⁹

Yet writing materials must have been in some demand. They were needed by new authors and some scholars who wanted to transcribe a few works, they had not been able to memorise, for future study. The most popular of the local materials was the common palm-leaf

⁷ Watters, Vol. I, p. 160.

⁸ Takakusu. pp. 182-183. I-tsing says that some Brāhmaṇas could commit to memory as many as 100,000 verses.

⁹ Legge, p. 98.

and palm-leaf manuscripts found their way not only to the learned centres of Central Asia but to China, thanks to the zeal of the pilgrims. While describing a big *tāla* forest covering an area of six miles to the north of the capital of Koṅkanapura, Hiuen-tsang writes, “the leaves (*of this tree*) are long and broad, their colour shining and glistening. In all the countries of India these leaves are everywhere used for writing on.”¹⁰ Two centuries earlier Fa-Hian had spent two busy years at Tāmralipti, writing out *sūtras* and drawing pictures of images. For writing he must have used palm leaves, and for drawing pictures the same material may have been utilised, as beautifully illuminated palm leaf manuscripts of the Pāla period have come down to us. It appears that silk and paper were also used for this purpose. I-tsing refers to the Indian custom of worshipping the impress of Buddha’s image taken on silk or paper.¹¹ It is, therefore, likely that paper was also used for writing during the seventh century, for the supply was not inconsiderable from the standard of those days, as old paper was, according to I-tsing, used in the latrine and also in the manufacture of umbrellas.¹² When Hiuen-tsang took leave of Harṣa, on his way back to China, the emperor gave him letters of introduction to the princes through whose territories he was to pass. These letters were written, according to Hwui-li, “on fine cotton stuff and sealed them with red wax.” In Central Asia official documents were written on wooden tablets and pieces of leather were sometimes used for writing purposes. So far no inscribed wooden tablet or leather

¹⁰ Beal, Vol. II, p. 255.

¹¹ Takakusu, p. 150.

¹² Takakusu, pp. 74, 92.

pieces with writings have been discovered in India. Hiuen-tsang says that Kaṇiṣka inscribed the entire work compiled by the Buddhist council on sheets of metal. We are familiar with donatory grants inscribed on copper plates but no literary work thus inscribed has come down to us though extensive poems of a later age inscribed on stone are known.

After six months' schooling the student began the study of grammar proper and there even the Buddhist could not dispense with Pāṇini's great work. Hiuen-tsang says that there were some abridgements of Pāṇini: "Lately a Brahman of South India, at the request of a king of South India reduced them (Panini's 8000 ślokas further) to 2500 ślokas."¹³ This abridgement enjoyed great popularity in the frontier states but failed to replace Pāṇini in India proper. The pilgrim also refers to a concise grammar of 1000 ślokas only.¹⁴ Neither the abridgement made by the unnamed South Indian scholar nor the shorter grammar of 1000 ślokas can be identified today. Needless to say that Pāṇini still held the field when Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing learnt Sanskrit. Both of them were so impressed by the special features of Sanskrit grammar that Hiuen-tsang took the trouble of declining the verb "to be" (*Bhū*) in its present tense and both the pilgrims went so far as to illustrate the rules relating to three numbers and seven case-endings for the benefit of their countrymen.¹⁵

It does not appear that I-tsing included in what, he styles as the *Sūtras*, *Dhātupāṭha* and *Uṇādi*. By the *Sūtra*

¹³ Hwui-li, p. 122.

¹⁴ Hwui-li, p. 122.

¹⁵ Hwui-li, pp. 123-124.

Takakusu, pp. 173-174.

he probably meant *Aṣṭādhyāyī* proper, for he refers to the book on *Dhātu* as a separate work, which he says consists of 1,000 ślokas, and treats particularly of grammatical roots, and which was as useful as the *Sūtra*, previously mentioned.¹⁶ Hiuen-tsang also mentions a treatise called *Aṣṭa-Dhātu* in 800 ślokas. Are we to infer that the *Dhātupāṭha*, which the seventh century students studied, was not the one that Pāṇini added to his *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, and the work of another grammarian? We next read of the 'Book on the Three Khilas'. "Khila", I-tsing explains, "means 'waste land', so called because this (part of grammar) may be likened to the way in which the farmer prepares his fields for corn. It may be called a book on the three pieces of waste land (1) *Aṣṭadhātu* consists of 1000 ślokas, (2) *Wen-chá* (*Maṇḍa* or *Muṇḍa*) also consists of 1000 ślokas and (3) *Uṇādi* too consists of 1000 ślokas."¹⁷ Pāṇini also had his *Dhātupāṭha*, *Gaṇapāṭha* and *Uṇādi sūtras*, though, if Goldstücker is right, it is doubtful whether the whole of the *Uṇādi* is Pāṇini's work. It may not be unreasonable to hold that the whole of Pāṇini's work had to be read, but the student started with the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, then proceeded to *Dhātupāṭha* and lastly to the three *Khilas*. "Boys begin to learn the book of the three *Khilas* when they are ten years old, and understand them thoroughly after three years' diligent study."¹⁸

After completing the text of Pāṇini the student was introduced to the *Kāśikā Vṛtti* or the *Vṛtti-sūtra*, as I-tsing calls it, of Jayāditya. Jayāditya was a Buddhist and I-tsing highly lauds his ability, understanding and literary power.

¹⁶ Takakusu, p. 172.

¹⁷ Takakusu, pp. 172-173.

¹⁸ Takakusu, p. 175.

He had passed away about thirty years before the pilgrim wrote his narrative.¹⁹ But the whole of the commentary as it has come down to us was not Jayāditya's work. As Dr. Belvalkar says, "The concurrent testimony of manuscripts from all parts of India assigns to Jayāditya the authorship of the first five chapters of it, while the last three belong to Vāmana".²⁰ As I-tsing wrote shortly after Jayāditya's death, Vāmana's chapters probably were yet to be written. Obviously the merit of Jayāditya's commentary was recognised shortly after it came into circulation particularly in Buddhist schools and seminaries. "Boys of fifteen *begin to study this commentary*, and understand it after five years," I-tsing informs us.²¹ So every student had to study grammar for nearly thirteen years and this seems to have completed their preliminary course.

After mastering Jayāditya's commentary they could either divert to other branches of study or further specialise in the science of grammar. Those who preferred the latter course then took up Patañjali's *Cūrṇi*, which, according to I-tsing, "is a commentary on the *Vṛitti sūtra* containing 24,000 ślokas." It "cites the former Sūtras (of Pāṇini) explaining the obscure points (lit. 'piercing the skin') and analysing the principles contained in it, and it illustrates the latter commentary (Vṛitti) clearing up many difficulties (lit. removing and breaking the hair and beard of corn)."²² I-tsing's note explains why Patañjali's *Mahā-*

¹⁹ Takakusu, p. 176.

²⁰ Belvalkar, *An Account of the Different Existing Systems of Sanskrit Grammar*, p. 36. It is to be noted that though I-tsing highly extols Jayāditya's erudition and piety he does not mention Vāmana at all.

²¹ Takakusu, p. 175.

²² Takakusu, p. 178.

bhāṣya is called *Cūrṇi* and why the great commentator is styled as *Cūrṇikṛt*, but it leads to one insoluble difficulty. Patañjali is, by common consent, assigned to the second century B.C. and was believed to be a contemporary of Puṣyamitra Suṅga. Jayāditya, according to I-tsing himself, belonged to the seventh century A.D. How could Patañjali then comment on Jayāditya's work? It is difficult to believe that by I-tsing's time some other grammarian had already commented on *Kāśikā vṛtti* on the basis of *Mahābhāṣya*. If Jayāditya was a senior contemporary of I-tsing's, the interval was too short for such an explanation.

Advanced scholars, we are told, learn *Mahābhāṣya* in three years, or in other words, the student was twenty-six by the time he finished Patañjali, but his education was not yet completed, for he had next to read and master Bhartrhari's commentary on Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*. So the study of Pāṇini and his commentators alone took many more years than a student of to-day is excepted to spend at school and the university. I-tsing also mentions Bhartrhari's *Vākyapaḍīya* apart from what he calls *Bhartrhari Śāstra*.²³

Those who wanted to pursue a different course learnt composition in prose and verse and devoted themselves to *Hetu Vidyā* and *Abhidharma* if they happened to be Buddhists. The Brāhmaṇas studied the *Vedas*. In the case of the Buddhist students probably Mātṛceta's Hymn,

²³ Takakusu, pp. 178-180. "Bhartrhari died about 651 A.D. His commentary is all but lost. His *Vākya-paḍīya*, in three books of verse, deals with quotations of the philosophy of speech." Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 429. I-tsing mentions another grammatical work of Bhartrhari's which he called *Pei-na* to which Dharmapāla contributed a commentary. Nothing however is known about it.

Nāgārjuna's *Suḥr̥llekha* and Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddha Carita* and Candradāsa's metrical account of Bodhisattva Viśvantara and his deeds were assiduously studied. The students of logic had to read Nāgārjuna's *Nyāya-dvāratarka-śāstra*, which I-tsing later translated into Chinese. *Jātaka-mālā*, by Ārya-Śūra, was a favourite work of study.²⁴ Verses from this work have been found inscribed in the Ajantā caves in the illustrations of Buddha's birth stories. An erudite Buddhist priest was expected to be conversant with the works of Aśaṅga, Vasubandhu and Diñnāga, besides different treatises on *Abhidharma* and *Āgamas*.^{24a}

The Buddhists gave a finishing touch to their education by going through a two or three years' course at Nālandā or Valabhī, the Oxford and Cambridge of seventh century India. Though we do not know much about the university of Valabhī, Nālandā catered for non-Buddhists as well. Though a stronghold of the Mahāyānists, Nālandā provided instruction in the texts of all the eighteen Buddhist schools, besides the Vedas, *Hetu Vidyā*, *Śabda Vidyā*, *Cikitsā Vidyā*, magic and the *Sāṅkhya*.²⁵

I-tsing's detailed account, however, leaves some puzzling gaps. Students were expected to begin the study of *Kāśikā vṛtti* at fifteen, they had already mastered the three *Khilas* by the time they were thirteen. How were they employed during the interval? They could not

²⁴ Takakusu, pp. 162-165, 176-177. I-tsing does not mention Ārya-Śūra by name, but his work had attained wide popularity among the Buddhists and his is doubtless the work referred to by the pilgrim. Keith suggests that Ārya-Śūra wrote either in the third or more probably in the fourth century A.D. as one of his works was translated into Chinese in 434 A.D. Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 68. Ārya-Śūra's *Jātaka-mālā* contains thirty-five of Buddha's birth stories.

^{24a} Takakusu, pp. 186-187.

²⁵ Hwui-li, p. 112.

possibly have a long vacation of two years. Were they expected to go over their old lessons once again and revise Pāṇini, or did they study some literary works or memorise the lexicon, a practice not unknown today.²⁶ In any case we are not told how long the lessons in the *Vedas* lasted, though we learn that a student did not usually enter into the next stage of his life till he was thirty. Hiuen-tsang does not appear to have been accurately informed about the *Vedas*, for he omits from his list the first and the most important of the *Vedas*, the *R̥k*, and includes instead the *Āyurveda* which is really an adjunct of the *Atharva-Veda*.²⁷ This confusion is difficult to explain, particularly on the part of a scholar of Hiuen-tsang's erudition, as the *Vedas* were taught at Nālandā.

I-tsing has left an interesting account of the Hindu system of medicine. He himself studied the subject while in India and was familiar with the eight branches or limbs (*aṅga*) in which the science was divided. According to Suśruta, these were (1) Surgery (*Śalya*), (2) treatment of diseases of head (*Śālakya*), (3) treatment of ordinary diseases (*Kāya-cikitsā*), (4) the process of counteracting the influences of evil spirits (*Bhūta-vidyā*), (5) treatment of child diseases (*Kumāra-bhr̥tya*), (6) anti-dotes to poison (*Agada-tantra*), (7) the science of rejuvenating the body (*Rasāyana*) and (8) the science of acquiring sex strength (*Vāñkaraṇa*).²⁸ *Śalya* and *Śālakya* have been also differentiated as major and minor operations in which the knife and the needle

²⁶ When the study of a particular *śāstra* is forbidden on any account the students in Bengal *Catuṣpāṭhīs* are permitted to utilise their enforced leisure in memorising *Amarakoṣa*.

²⁷ Watters, Vol. I, p. 159.

²⁸ Takakusu, pp. 222-223; Das Gupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 276.

respectively were used. According to I-tsing, "the first treats of all kinds of sores ; the second, of acupuncture for any disease above the neck ; the third, of the diseases of the body ; the fourth, of demoniac disease ; the fifth, of the Agada medicine (*i.e.*, antidote); the sixth, of the diseases of children ; the seventh, of the means of lengthening one's life ; the eighth, of the methods of invigorating the legs and body."²⁹ I-tsing's classification of the eight limbs (*Aṣṭāṅga*) of the medical science agrees substantially with the traditional sub-divisions of Suśruta, for I-tsing notes that sores may be outward or inward and an inward sore would naturally demand a major operation with a knife. His sense of decorum would not permit I-tsing to explain unambiguously what *Vāṅkaraṇa* stood for.

It should not surprise us that magic and exorcism (*Bhūtavidyā*) should form a vital branch of medical studies, for according to Hindu belief, disease might originate from physical and moral reasons and might be caused by evil spirits as well. The normal longevity of a man could conceivably be reduced by some sinful actions. Against illness caused by moral lapses ordinary medicines would be of no use, and that is why penance in some cases was believed to serve as medicine. The intervention of evil spirits as a source of physical distemper is still accepted as a recognised fact in our countryside, and the patient cannot be cured unless the malignant spirit is successfully exorcised. This belief was by no means confined to India but prevailed in other countries as well. But the Hindu physician seriously believed that a medicinal herb or even a pill could be endowed with special potency by help of

²⁹ Takakusu, pp. 127-128.

magic. Caraka directs that the herbs should be plucked according to the proper rites (*yathā vidhi*) and Cakrapāṇi-Datta explains that the appropriate method would be to worship gods and perform auspicious rites before medicinal herbs are collected (*maṅgala-devatārcanādi-pūrvakam*). A common *āmalaka* could be imbued with immortalising properties if it was plucked at a specified time by a person who had observed the necessary rules.³⁰ This belief in the potency of magic against evil spirits and natural maladies explains its inclusion in the medical curricula.

I-tsing was not quite right when he said that originally separate volumes or works were devoted to each of these eight branches of medical science. But it is true that in the early days no single treatise dealt with the octopartite science as a whole. The pilgrim adds—"lately a man epitomized them and made them into one bundle. All physicians in the five parts of India practise according to *this book*."³¹ I-tsing's omission of the name of the author and the title of the treatise has, however, led to a controversy. The pilgrim's description of the compendium naturally reminds us of the elder Vāgbhaṭa's *Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgraha*, which still retains its popularity among *Āyurvedic* practitioners. Vāgbhaṭa is regarded as one of the principal authorities along with Caraka and Suśruta, and Hoernle is inclined to assign him to the earlier decades of the seventh century and identify him with the nameless author of I-tsing's account. "Seeing that Vagbhata I's compendium bears that precise name of Epitome (or summary, *sangraha*) of the octopartite science the conclu-

³⁰ Das Gupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 294.

³¹ Takakusu, p. 128.

sion seems warranted that I-tsing was referring to that summary.³²

Prof. Jean Filliozat, however, suggests that *Yogaśataka* was the compendium to which I-tsing really referred. *Yogaśataka* also treats with the eight traditional branches and has a supplementary chapter called *Uttara-tantra*, besides chapters on *Kāya-cikitsā*, *Śālakya-tantra*, *Śalya-tantra*, *Viṣa-tantra*, *Bhūta-vidyā*, *Kumāra-tantra*, *Rasāyanatantra* and *Vājñikaraṇa-tantra*. Both *Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgraha* and *Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya Saṁhitā* quote some verses from *Yogaśataka* and were, therefore, of a later date. He seems to argue that the earlier work must have been referred to by the Chinese pilgrim and assigns *Yogaśataka* to the first half of the seventh century on that account.³³

But I-tsing alludes to the popularity that the nameless compendium enjoyed among the practising physicians all over India. While Vāgbhaṭa's *Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgraha* is a work of recognised popularity, *Yogaśataka* has practically been forgotten today, and there is no evidence that it was better known in the seventh century. Moreover, it is popularly attributed to Nāgārjuna. Nāgārjuna is said to have revised the text of Suśruta and added to it the supplement known as *Uttara-tantra*. He is also credited with the authorship of some works on black magic and alchemy. Filliozat naturally postulates more than one Nagārjuna,

³² Hoernle, *Studies in the Medicine of Ancient India*, p. 10. Keith also subscribes to this view. *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 510.

³³ Filliozat, *La Doctrine Classique de la Médecine Indienne*, p. 10. Also see *L'Inde Classique, Manuel des Études Indiennes* by Louis Renou and Jean Filliozat, p. 157. Three pages of a manuscript of *Yoga śataka* with a Kuchian version of the text have been discovered in Central Asia by Pelliot. Manuscripts of this work have been found also in Nepal and different parts of India. The authorship is sometimes attributed to Vararuci the grammarian.

but is it likely that a devout Buddhist like I-tsing should omit to mention Nāgārjuna, whom he venerated as a Bodhisattva, by name, if he was really referring to a work believed to be his? We have seen that he specifically mentions Nāgārjuna's *Nyāyadvāra tarka-śāstra* among the text books of logic, though he is silent about other works prescribed for that subject. Even if we concede that Vāgbhāṭa was posterior in date to the author of the *Yogaśataka* there is no reason to believe that it was in popular use in I-tsing's time.

I-tsing has some general observation on common maladies and their origin. He says that "Generally speaking, a disease which has befallen the body arises from too much eating, but it is sometimes brought about by much labour, or by eating again before the former food has been digested."³⁴ The common remedy was fasting to give the over-loaded stomach a rest. Hiuen-tsang says that medicine is taken only if the patient does not recover after seven days of fasting.³⁵ Cholera moribus was as dreaded then, as it is today, and I-tsing says that poor people could not afford to pay for its costly remedies, one of which used to be imported from Syria. The patient was cauterised sometimes and we learn from European travellers that this treatment was not unknown in Western India during the seventeenth century. It is still practised in the countryside by physicians who follow the old method. I-tsing was familiar with the Hindu theory that all sicknesses can be classified into three categories—disease caused by the air (*vāyu* or *vāta*), distemper due to biles (*pitta*) and illness arising from excess of phlegm (*kapha*) and he firmly

³⁴ Takakusu, p. 129.

³⁵ Watters, Vol. I, p. 174.

believed that abstention from food would usually bring relief in most cases. He prescribes a pill made of *haritaka*, ginger and *guda* as a common specific for general complaints,³⁶ and advises people to observe the general rules of hygiene.

The medical profession was held in high esteem, for the physicians did not injure life, and they gave relief to others as well as benefit themselves. I-tsing informs us that a good physician "never failed to live" "by the official pay".³⁷ What he means by "the official pay", an annuity from the king or a prescribed rate of fees, remains obscure.

Before we finally take leave of the physicians and their noble profession we may take a passing notice of some filthy medicine used, mostly, by monks which I-tsing classified and condemns as *Pūti mūtra* or *Pūti-mūtra Bhaiṣajya*. The cow's dung and urine were prescribed by *Āyurveda* and permitted as a remedy for certain distempers by the *Vinaya* rules, but I-tsing condemns as disgusting such putrid preparations as went by the name of "Dragon Decoction" in China. Cow's urine is still used for local application and fomentation in cases of enlarged liver. Alfred Von le Coq found in Central Asia a strange method of curing sore backs of local horses.^{37a} I-tsing particularly objects to disagreeable treatment when agreeable remedies were available. The Indian system of medicine sometimes

³⁶ Takakusu, p. 134.

³⁷ Takakusu, p. 128.

^{37a} "They apply to the sore the innocuous urine of some little boy about seven years old, and lo and behold! the wound is healed. But it is absolutely essential to procure the remedy from a boy only, and from one of tender age, too", le Coq, *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan*, p. 111.

approved of things abhorrent or obnoxious to modern taste.^{37b}

Let us return to the student again. At thirty he was considered mature enough to face the struggles of existence. Leaving the cloistered shelter of the university he proceeded to the royal court and there gave demonstrations of his learning and debating skill. Here he encountered scholars of recognised merit and had to match his wit against theirs. If he rendered a good account of himself his future was made. He either got a lucrative appointment that suited his attainments or was rewarded with rent-free estates. But all students did not care for wealth and honour, they preferred to continue their scholarly pursuits and engaged themselves in teaching. Their merit also came to be recognised in course of time and their piety and learning secured a higher reward in public approbation than those of their worldly confreres.³⁸ It is to be noted that every student made a present to his teacher (*dakṣiṇā*) as a token of his respect and gratitude after leaving the university.

The university was a monastic establishment. In Buddha's time the University of Taxila had earned a well-deserved fame as a great centre of medical studies, one of its most eminent *alumni* being Jīvaka, Buddha's friend and physician. (When Fa-Hian visited Taxila the university was a thing of the forgotten past. To him it was a holy place where Buddha had in a previous birth cut off his head.) In Hiuen-tsang's time Taxila had completely

^{37b} A patient was, for instance, sometimes given fresh cow's urine to drink. Pigeon's droppings were applied over heat boils.

³⁸ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 160-161.

Takakusu, p. 177.

lost its past eminence. The monasteries then in ruins and mostly deserted, sheltered a few monks of the Mahāyāna persuasion. The greatest centre of learning in the seventh century was Nālandā. Fa-Hian passed through the village of Nāla, then noted as the birth place of Sāriputra, but the many-storied monasteries that were to attract students from all the Buddhist countries of Asia were yet to be built.³⁹ In the seventh century A.D. the university was visited not only by Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing but also by Hiuen-chiu, Taou-hi, Āryavarman, a Korean, Buddhadharma of the Tokhara country and Ta-cheng-teng, a pupil of Hiuen-tsang.⁴⁰

The university was not built in a day. Successive kings extended their patronage to it and generations of scholarly monks built up a tradition of learning and discipline, until the little village, which passed almost unnoticed in the fifth century, became the greatest university in Buddhadom in the seventh. Hiuen-tsang would endow it with a high antiquity and trace its history back to the days of the Tathāgata himself. The university itself, according to him, could claim seven centuries of academic life, having been founded by a king of Magadha, called Śakrāditya, shortly after Buddha's *nirvāṇa*.⁴¹ Pleasantly situated in a mango park, interspersed with lovely tanks growing beautiful blue lotus, with banks lined by gold-hued *kanaka* flowers, it was an ideal place for quiet study and deep meditation. So king Śakrāditya built a convent here, and, no doubt, endowed it with rent-free villages. The good work was continued by his son,

³⁹ Legge, p. 81.

⁴⁰ See F.N. 38, Lecture I.

⁴¹ Hwui-li, p. 110.

Buddhagupta, who built another monastery to the south of his father's. To the east of Buddhagupta's college, his son and successor, Tathāgatagupta, constructed another. The family tradition was maintained when a fourth monastery was added by Bālāditya, fourth in succession to Śakrāditya. We have already seen that Hiuen-tsang had been assigned a room in Bālāditya's college on his first arrival at Nālandā. In emulation of his fathers and forefathers, Vajra, son of Bālāditya, built another monastery; and then either this line of pious kings died out or their zeal for Buddha's faith sadly waned and the next patron was a nameless king from mid-India who also added a large monastery.⁴² Thus six ruling princes munificently gave to Nālandā all that wealth could provide and piety dictate. But the flow of royal benefaction did not cease with them. In Hiuen-tsang's time Harṣa built here a temple with walls ensheathed in plates of brass, the shining gold of which must have flashed against the deep red of the *kanaka* flowers.⁴³

The old monasteries were enclosed by a high brick wall. The Chinese traveller, impressed with the grandeur of these magnificent assemblage, wrote, "One gate opens into the great college, from which are separated eight other halls, standing in the middle (*of the Saṅghārāma*). The richly adorned towers, and the fairy-like turrets, like pointed hill-tops, are congregated together. The observatories seem to be lost in the vapours (*of the morning*), and the upper rooms tower above the clouds. From the windows one may see how the winds and clouds (*produce*

⁴² Hwui-li, p. 111.

⁴³ Hwui-li, p. 159.

new forms), and above the soaring eaves the conjunctions of the sun and moon (*may be observed*).⁴⁴

In the outside courts were built four-storied quarters for the resident monks. "The stages", we are told, "have dragon-projections and coloured eaves, the pearl-red pillars, carved and ornamented, the richly adorned balustrades, and the roofs covered with tiles that reflect the light in a thousand shades, these things add to the beauty of the scene."⁴⁵

Here lived in I-tsing's time more than three thousand priests.^{45a} Theirs was not a life of ease and comfort though they had not to worry about their daily bread. The university was well-endowed and enjoyed the revenue of 100 villages, according to Hiuen-tsang, two hundred, according to I-tsing.⁴⁶ The tenants of these villages supplied the daily needs of the monks, and loads of rice, butter and milk poured in every morning. It was a job for the *Karmadānas* or bursars to run these huge establishments. Everyone had his assigned duties and every one had to go through the routines of a Buddhist monk's life. There was ceremonial bath of the sacred images, there was ceremonial chanting of hymns, the personal needs of the teachers had to be attended to, even dinner was a ritual.

It was only advanced students who went to Nālandā for what, in modern parlance, may be called post-graduate studies. But while many sought the privilege of admission only a few were selected. "Only those who were deeply

⁴⁴ Hwui-li, p. 111.

⁴⁵ Hwui-li, pp. 111-112.

^{45a} The resident priests and students numbered ten thousand according to Hiuen-tsang. Hwui-li, p. 112.

⁴⁶ Hwui-li, p. 112.

Takakusu, pp. 65, 154.

versed in old and modern learning are admitted", Hiuent-sang tells us, "two or three out of ten succeeding."⁴⁷ Admission was by no means restricted to monks or Buddhists alone. As we have seen, instruction was provided in non-religious and non-Buddhist subject. But no drone had any place in this busy hive. The brethren were ever engaged in scholarly pursuits, discussing difficult problems and obscure points, and those who were not interested in these abstruse technicalities found themselves severely left alone. Nālandā enjoyed such a high reputation for scholarship that many unworthy aspirants to honour would falsely claim association with the university and try to pass for one of its past *alumni*.⁴⁸

Women, however, had no place in the university. They could, literally speaking, cross its portals but could not take their residence there. Ānanda had, with difficulty, persuaded Buddha to admit women to the order, but his law did not permit a mixed establishment of monks and nuns. A monk could see a woman and speak to her outside his room, in the court and the corridor of a monastery, but further freedom was not allowed. We learn from I-tsing that a monk was expelled from the Varāha monastery of Tāmralipti for the simple indiscretion of sending some rice to a tenant's wife.⁴⁹ He extols the example of Rāhulamitra, a young monk of the same monastery, who, since his ordination, had spoken face to face to no woman but his mother and sister. Discipline, we are told, was more strict at Nālandā. But despite this impediment, some women were known to have excelled in

⁴⁷ Watters, Vol. II, p. 165.

⁴⁸ Watters, Vol. II, p. 165.

⁴⁹ Takakusu, p. 63.

learning. Hiuen-tsang refers to the exceptional intellectual attainments of Rājyaśrī, the widowed sister of the emperor Harṣavardhana.⁵⁰ She was deeply learned in the sacred writings of the Sammitīya school.

We wish the Chinese pilgrims had something more to say about education in general and women's education in particular, but they recorded only what, in their opinion, would be of interest and profit to their countrymen. They did not write for Indians.

⁵⁰ Hwui-li, p. 176.

KINGS AND CHRONOLOGY

The credulity of our pilgrims knew no bounds where sacred legends were concerned. They sadly lacked that saving scepticism which leads to sifting and assessment of evidence. Their facts were, therefore, shaky and their chronology uncertain. Aśoka, according to them, was a great grandson of Bimbisāra and built some of his *stūpas* a century after the *nirvāṇa*. The imperial Guptas, if Śakrāditya and his immediate successors belonged to that dynasty and were historical personages, flourished not long after the Enlightened One's passing away.

It should not be forgotten that Fa-Hian, Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing did not essay a chronicle of the countries they visited but they sometimes referred to past rulers in connection with places associated with the Buddha and his disciples. Four of his contemporaries naturally figured in their accounts. Bimbisāra had his capital at the old city of Kuśāgārapura and built a causeway "to get to the Buddha". "It was about four *li* long by ten paces wide, formed by cutting through banks of rock and filling up valleys, piling up stones boring through precipices, and making a succession of steps."¹ The king was probably an enthusiastic road maker for he had constructed another that led to the top of a ridge near Yaṣṭi-vana where the Buddha preached to men and gods for two or three months.²

The old capital of Magadha, however, had many thatched cottages which easily caught fire and the city suffered so much from conflagrations that the king decided

¹ Watters, Vol. II, p. 148.

² Watters, Vol. II, p. 146.

that the victim of such accidents should thenceforth be expelled from the city and banished to the cemetery area. As luck would have it, the next building to suffer was his own palace and, according to the decree, Bimbisāra himself had to withdraw to the cremation grounds outside the city walls. When the king of Vaiśālī came to hear of it he decided to make a surprise attack on the lonely place but the king and his ministers forestalled their enemy by fortifying the new palace and in course of time a new city rose in its neighbourhood which came to be known as Rājagrha.

Bimbisāra's son Ajātaśatru was originally a disciple of Devadatta and had once tried to kill Buddha by setting on him an intoxicated elephant. The attempt failed and the prince ultimately transferred his allegiance to the Tathāgata. After the *Parinirvāṇa* he got a share of the holy relics over which he reared a splendid *stūpa*. He also figures in the story of Ānanda's death near Vaiśālī.

Prasenajit of Kośala was born the same day as the Buddha. He sought the hand of a Śākya princess but the proud kinsmen of Gautama considered it as a misalliance. Afraid, however, of alienating so powerful a king they had recourse to a mean trick. A natural daughter of one of their head men by a slave girl was sent to Prasenajit and he made her his chief queen. Of her was, in due course, born prince Virūḍhaka. The youth paid a visit to his mother's native town but was treated with extreme contumely by the arrogant Śākyas as a person of mean origin. When Virūḍhaka came to the throne of Kośala he led an expedition against Kapilāvastu to avenge the wrongs his family had suffered at the hands of the Śākyas, but the Buddha persuaded him to turn back. Buddha's intervention, however, offered the doomed tribe a very brief respite

and Virūdhaka set out for the Śākya country once again. The Śākyas were for a second time saved by the prowess of four of their youths who met and repulsed the mighty host of Kośala. But they were banished from their country for their pains, as they had offended the sense of propriety of their fellow citizens by committing violence against human lives and shedding human blood. They migrated west and north and founded the ruling dynasties of Udyāna, Bāmiyan, Himatala and Shang-mi. With none to offer any effective resistance Virūdhaka made short work of the Śākyas, their city was razed to the ground, their maidens were carried away as slaves and the rest of the people, 99,900,000 in number, were cruelly massacred. Thus were Buddha's people destroyed root and branch by "the low son of a slave girl". But Virūdhaka did not survive his triumph long. The ladies of his harem perished by fire while in a barge but the "king went alive through blazes into the hell of unremitting torture." Thus was Buddha's prophesy literally fulfilled.

Another contemporary of the Buddha was king Udayana of Kauśāmbī, the favourite hero of Bhāsa and Śrī Harṣa, with whom lovely princesses were wont to fall in passionate love on first sight. When Buddha ascended to the Trayastriṃśa heaven, Udayana unable to bear the absence of the Enlightened One persuaded Maudgalaputra to transport an artist there by his supernatural powers. The artist made a sandal-wood image of the Buddha sixty feet in height. When Buddha descended to earth near Saṅkāśya the image went out to welcome him. Buddhist piety liked to think that this contemporary image served as a model for all later likenesses. It is also believed that no earthly power could remove this miraculous image

from its place. Hiuen-tsang asserts that it later made an aerial voyage to a town in Khotan which was subsequently buried in sands because the local people paid scant respect to this divine image.

A junior contemporary and kinsman of Buddha was Uttarasena, king of Udyāna, who doubtless belonged to the world of myths and legends, notwithstanding Hiuen-tsang's testimony to the contrary. One of the Śākya youngmen who had been banished from their ancestral home for the unpardonable offence of fighting Virūdhaka travelled north-west and fell in love with a Nāga maiden who reciprocated his affection. The youngman did not apparently repent his bloody deeds and killed the reigning king of Udyāna and usurped his throne. Uttarasena was the offspring of this romantic union between a human being and a damsel of the lakes and streams. Uttarasena, as a near kinsman, obtained a share of the sacred relics after the Buddha's *Parinirvāṇa*. He placed it on a white elephant which died of exhaustion after reaching its destination and was petrified on the spot. The inquisitive industry of Sir Aurel Stein has discovered a rock formation that resembles the foreparts of an elephant near Barikot on the left bank of the Swat river.³ Doubtless the rock suggested the legend.

Next in point of time came the Nandas but they were not Buddhists. Hiuen-tsang made a casual reference to a Nanda king for he had heard of his fabulous wealth. Five of the relic *stūpas* were mistaken by "people of little faith" "for the five treasures of king Nanda's seven precious substances."⁴

³ *Serindia*, Vol. I, p. 15.

⁴ Watters, Vol. II, p. 96.

The first two emperors of the Maurya dynasty went unnoticed by the Chinese pilgrims, but Aśoka, the great protagonist of their faith, could not be so casually dismissed. For the history of his time they depended mainly on the *avadāna* literature, and such stories as they have handed down to us can hardly claim a place in sober history. I-tsing heard that the advent of this pious monarch had been prophesied by the Buddha. "King Bimbisāra once saw in a dream that a piece of cloth was torn, and a gold stick broken, both into eighteen fragments. Being frightened he asked the Buddha the reason. In reply, the Buddha said: 'More than a hundred years after my attainment of Nirvāṇa, there will arise a king, named Aśoka, who will rule over the whole of Jambudwīpa. At the time, my teaching *handed down* by several Bhikshus will be split into eighteen schools, all agreeing, however, in the end, that is to say, all attaining the goal of Final Liberation (Moksha). The dream foretells this, O King, you need not be afraid!'"⁵ Buddhist traditions attributed Aśoka's greatness to a pious act of his done long before the advent of Gautama Buddha. Fa-Hian tells us, "When king Aśoka, in a former birth, was a little boy and playing on the road, he met Kaśyapa Buddha walking. (The stranger) begged food, and the boy pleasantly took a handful of earth and gave it to him. The Buddha took the earth, and returned it to the ground on which he was walking; but because of this (the boy) received the recompense of becoming a king of the iron wheel, to rule over Jambudwīpa."⁶ Conversant as they were with the events of his previous lives, the pilgrims did not realise that

⁵ Takakusu, pp. 13-14

⁶ Legge, p. 90.

Aśoka did not rule over the whole of Jambudvīpa, nor did they know that he was not a scion of the house of Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru. "One hundred years after the Nirvāṇa", says Hwui-li, no doubt on the strength of what he had heard from his master Hiuen-tsang, "there was a king called Aśoka, the great grandson of Bimbisāra rāja; he transferred his court from Rajagriha to this place." (Pāṭaliputra).⁷ The emperor seems to have enjoyed the reputation of being charitably disposed even in his unregenerate days for he is credited to have made a gift of the city of Rājagrha to the Brāhmaṇas and when Hiuen-tsang visited the place it was tenanted by Brāhmaṇas alone.⁸

Before his conversion Aśoka used to give free indulgence to his inhuman instincts and both Fa-Hian and Hiuen-tsang believed that his morbid imagination led him to have a hell (*naraka*) of his own creation at Pāṭaliputra. "Once when he was making a judicial tour of inspection of Jambudwīpa," Fa-Hian tells us, "he saw between the iron circuit of two hills, a naraka, for the punishment of wicked men. Having thereupon asked his minister what sort of a thing it was, they replied 'It belongs to Yama, the king of demons, for punishing wicked people'. The king thought within himself: '(Even) the king of demons is able to make a naraka in which to deal with wicked men, why should not I, who am the lord of men, make a naraka in which to deal with wicked men?' He forthwith asked his ministers who could make for him a naraka and preside over the punishment of wicked people in it." The emperor made his hell as attractive as he could with

⁷ Hwui-li, p. 101.

⁸ Watters, Vol. II, p. 162.

beautiful gardens and lovely tanks and found a monster of cruelty to preside over the tortures to which every visitor was to be subjected. In Yama's hell only wicked people met with their mete but in Aśoka's hell no distinction was made of virtue and vice and all comers were punished irrespective of their merits. This inequity would have continued for the rest of the reign but for the intervention of a Bhikṣu. Not only was the hell demolished but the emperor, its author, became a devout Buddhist and devoted the rest of his life to the service of men and other living beings. Both the pilgrims assure us that a pillar marked the site of Aśoka's *naraka* at Pāṭaliputra when they visited the city. Hiuen-tsang claims to have seen a second site of probably another *naraka* in another part of the country. Obviously such archaeological evidence did not fail to convince them.

But his conversion did not bring him unmixed bliss. Struck with remorse for his past deeds he betook himself everyday to a lonely spot and spent hours under a *patra* (palm) tree meditating over his errors and the eightfold ways of salvation. The queen had the tree cut down as she did not like this change in the king. But the tree was copiously watered and in due course it not only revived but grew to a height of 100 cubits. It was still alive when Fa-Hian visited India six hundred years later.*

After his conversion Aśoka is reported to have made a gift of his empire on three several occasions and the Chinese pilgrims found epigraphical evidence in favour of this statement also. Fa-Hian saw "a stone pillar, fourteen or fifteen cubits in circumference, and more than thirty

* Legge, pp. 90-92.

cubits high, on which there is an inscription, saying Aśoka gave the Jambudvīpa to the general body of all the monks, and then redeemed it from them with money. This he did three times.”¹⁰ Hwui-li also says that to the north of the *Vihāra* with Buddha’s footprints at Pāṭaliputra there “is a stone column about thirty feet high ; on this pillar is written a record that Aśoka-rāja three times gave the whole of Jambudvīpa in charity to Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha, and three times bought back his inheritance (*i.e. his empire*) with jewels and treasure.”¹¹ We do not know whether in the days of the imperial Guptas and in Harṣavardhana’s times scholars were still familiar with the Maurya script but in any case the pillar seems to have shared the fate of the column marking the site of Aśoka’s *naraka* and still remains to be discovered.

The unbounded philanthropy of Aśoka proved a heavy drain on the public purse and a *stūpa* which Hiuen-tsang saw near Kukkuṭārāma, a monastic establishment that profited largely from the emperor’s charity, demonstrated to what extremes Aśoka could be transported by his liberality and religious zeal. The emperor had grown old and infirm and during a long illness all powers had gradually passed into the hands of his ministers. Convinced that his end was near Aśoka wanted to give away all his jewels and valuables, but the ministers would not permit such waste of public funds. The emperor sent half of everything he got daily to the monks of the Kukkuṭārāma. At last his ration was reduced to an *āmalaka* and he put away half of it. “Holding the fruit in his hand he said with a sigh to his minister, ‘Who now

¹⁰ Legge, p. 80.

¹¹ Hwui-li, p. 102.

is lord of Jambudvīpa? The minister replied, 'Only your majesty'. The king answered 'Not so! I am no longer lord; for I have only this half fruit to call my own!' He, then commanded half the *āmalaka* to be sent to the monks with the following message "He who was formerly lord of Jambudvīpa, but now is master of only this half Āmla fruit, bows down before the priests. I pray you receive this very last offering. All that I have is gone and lost, only this half fruit remains as my last possession. Pity the poverty of the offering, and grant that it may increase the seeds of his religious merit." The merit acquired by this gift prolonged the life of the emperor and he recovered. Over the seeds of the fruit was a *stūpa* erected in due course to commemorate the event.¹² The story has been told, as Watters observes, in several Buddhist treatises but Fa-Hian did not notice the *stūpa* when he visited Pāṭaliputra.

Aśoka was a great builder. Not only did he construct huge palaces and monasteries in the capital city but he raised no less than 84000 *stūpas* in different parts of his empire. Anxious to propagate Buddha's faith all over the country he opened seven of the eight *stūpas*, in which Buddha's *śarīra* or relics were enshrined and had them deposited in the newly raised *stūpas* so that their supernatural influence might effect what the labours of his missionaries could not accomplish. It is, of course, impossible to build so many *stūpas* in the life time of a single monarch even with the resources of a mighty empire, but Aśoka had at his command the willing services of spirits and supernatural beings like the Yakṣas and with

¹² Beal, Vol. II, pp. 95-96; Watters, Vol. II, pp. 99-100.

their help he achieved what was admittedly beyond human competence. If Fa-Hian is to be credited, he once employed these genii for preparing a cave dwelling for the use of his brother in the metropolitan city. This brother had become an *Arhat* and had selected Gṛdhrakūṭa hill for his residence. "The King who sincerely revered him, wished and begged him (to come and live) in his family, where he could supply all his wants. The other, however, through his delight in the stillness of the mountain, was unwilling to accept the invitation, on which the king said to him, 'Only accept my invitation. I will make a hill for you inside the city'. Accordingly, he provided the materials of a feast, called to him the spirits, and announced to them, 'To-morrow you will all receive my invitation ; but as there are no mats for you to sit on, let each one bring (his own seat)'. Next day the spirits came, each one bringing with him a great rock (like) a wall, four or five spaces square, (for a seat). When their sitting was over, the king made them form a hill with the large stones piled one on another, and also at the foot of the hill, with five large square stones, to make an apartment, which might be more than thirty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and more than ten cubits high."¹³ Whether the spirit-made artificial cave survived to the days of Fa-Hian we do not know.

For his excavations, however, Aśoka employed human labour. When Buddha descended from the Trayastriṃśa heaven attended by Brahmā and Śakra three series of steps made of precious metals and crystal miraculously appeared for their use. All but seven steps disappeared

¹³ Legge, pp. 77-78.

after the descent was completed. "Afterwards king Aśoka, wishing to know where their ends rested, sent men to dig and see. They went down to the yellow springs without reaching the bottoms of the steps, and from this the king received an increase to his reverence and faith, and built a vihāra over the steps, with a standing image, sixteen cubits in height, right over the middle flight. Behind the vihāra he erected a stone pillar, about fifty cubits high, with a lion on top of it."¹⁴ Hiuen-tsang also testifies that "By the side of these (image and vihāra) was an Aśoka stone-pillar of a lustrous violet colour and very hard with a crouching lion on the top facing the stairs; quaintly carved figures were on each side of the pillar, and according to one's bad or good deserts figures appeared to him in the pillar."¹⁵

We wish the pilgrims had taken greater notice of Asoka's pillars and inscriptions. Fa-Hian visited Lumbinī but he does not mention the pillar that the pious emperor set up there to commemorate the pilgrimage he had made to Buddha's birthplace. Hiuen-tsang, however, mentions some pillars which have not survived to our times. He saw two Aśokan pillars near Jetavana at Śrāvastī. "At the east gate of the Jetavana monastery were two stone pillars, one on each side of the entrance; these, which were 70 feet high, had been erected by king Aśoka; the pillar on the left side was surmounted by a sculptured wheel and that on the right side by an ox."¹⁶ Aśoka erected a pillar about ten miles (50 *li*) to the south of Kapilāvastu to mark the birthplace of Krakucchanda, an earlier Buddha. This

¹⁴ Legge, pp. 49-50.

¹⁵ Watters, Vol. I, p. 334.

¹⁶ Watters, Vol. I, p. 383.

pillar was thirty feet in height and had a stone lion on the capital. At Kuśīnagara the Master of the Law noticed two pillars, one on the site of Buddha's *Parinirvāṇa* in the Śāla forest and the other at the place where eight different claimants demanded a share of the relics. Hiuen-tsang observed that on the first pillar "were recorded the circumstances of the Buddha's decease, but the day and the month were not given." The second pillar recorded how eight kings came with their armies after Buddha's cremation and how the relics were divided by an honest Brāhmaṇa. Another pillar, fifty feet high and surmounted by a lion, stood near the *markata* (monkey) tank at Vaiśālī. We have already mentioned two inscribed pillars one of which record that "Aśoka, strong in faith, had thrice given Jambudvīpa as a religious offering to the Buddhist order, and thrice redeemed it with his own precious substances." The inscription was much injured when Hiuen-tsang saw it. The second pillar was seen by Fa-Hian also. It marked the site of Aśoka's hell, and if the dimensions given by Fa-Hian are correct, it differed greatly in shape from the others we know. Another stone column fifty feet high with the figure of an elephant on its top was erected near the Karaṇḍa tank at Rājagṛha. The inscription on this pillar referred to the circumstances under which the neighbouring *stūpa* was built.¹⁷ Yet another inscribed pillar was seen at Mahāsāra which has been identified with Massar in the Arah district. It was surmounted by a lion and recorded the story of the conversion of man-eating Yakṣas by Buddha. Hiuen-tsang adds that the site of Kaśyapa Buddha's meditation was also marked

¹⁷ Watters, Vol. II, pp. 5, 28, 42, 60, 65, 93 and 162.

by a stone pillar but he does not tell us whether this pillar also was ascribed to Aśoka.

Unlike Fa-Hian, Hiuen-tsang did notice the Rummindei pillar which marked the Buddha's birth place in the Lumbinī garden. According to him, the pillar had a stone horse on the top and it was damaged in the middle by lightning before the visit of the pilgrim. Dr. Fuhrer re-discovered it in 1896. The Chinese pilgrim says nothing about the inscription which says that Aśoka visited the place in the twentieth year of his coronation.¹⁸

In 1895 Fuhrer found two pieces of an Aśokan pillar near Nigālī-Sāgar tank. This was doubtless the stone pillar with a lion capital which Hiuen-tsang saw near the *stūpa* of Kanakamuni Buddha. The inscription, however, does not record the circumstances of Kanakamuni's *nirvāṇa* as the Chinese pilgrim suggested.¹⁹ Hiuen-tsang mentions "a pillar of polished green stone, clear and lustrous as a mirror in which the reflection of the Buddha was constantly visible", on the west side of the Po-lo-na (Varuṇā) river. This must be the Sāranātha pillar we know.²⁰ The pilgrims do not refer to any of Aśoka's rock or minor rock edicts, probably they had no occasion to visit the sites ; but Hiuen-tsang saw many *stūpas* attributed to the great emperor.

The pilgrims were naturally interested in the history of their church and Hiuen-tsang refers to a schism led by Mahādeva during the reign of Aśoka. The emperor at first was inclined to put to death all the schismatics and invited the *Arhats* and laymen to the banks of the Ganges

¹⁸ Watters, Vol. II, p. 14 ; Sen, *Aśoka* (Bengali), p. 21.

¹⁹ Watters, Vol. II, pp. 5-6 ; Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

²⁰ Watters, Vol. II, p. 48 ; Beal, Vol. II, p. 45.

with a view to drowning them. The *Arhats*, however, by their superior knowledge became aware of his fell design and five hundred of them made an aerial voyage to Kashmir where they settled. Aśoka later saw his error and tried to persuade them to come back but they could not be induced to put their trust in the emperor. The story does no credit to Aśoka either as a ruler or as a man of religion.

Fa-Hian and Hiuen-tsang had both something to say about Aśoka's family. We have already seen how Aśoka provided his brother, whose name Fa-Hian omits to mention, with a cave-dwelling inside the city of Patna. Hiuen-tsang informs us that the saintly brother was no other than Mahendra who later carried the message of the Buddha to Ceylon. Like many other saints Mahendra had a shady past and in the wildness of his youth he had practically transgressed all the laws of the land. Love as he did his brother, Aśoka could not ignore public opinion which demanded the life of the prince. The emperor had at last to convey his decision to his brother but he granted him a week's respite. The repentance of the erring prince was so genuine and his remorse so great that in that brief interval there occurred a complete spiritual regeneration and he attained the status of an *Arhat*.

Of Aśoka's sons one founded the ruling dynasty of Khotan, and another, Dharmavivardhana, governed Gāndhāra.²¹ Dharmavivardhana is often identified with Kunāla whose tragic story is too well known to be repeated here. Mention is made also of a grandson who ruled the empire on behalf of Aśoka during his prolonged illness.

²¹ Legge, pp. 31-32.

Of Tīvara, Aśoka's son, and his mother, Kāruvākī, the Chinese pilgrims apparently knew nothing.

Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing refer to a king of South India, So-to-pho-han-na by name. We know nothing about him except that he was the friend and patron of Nāgārjuna and it was to him that the *Suḥr̥llekha* was addressed. He was obviously a prince of the powerful Śātavāhana dynasty.²²

We next come to another royal patron of Buddhism, Kaṇiṣka, whose person has been deeply enshrouded in legends by the veneration of an admiring posterity. He befriended many Buddhist philosophers and poets and convened the great council which examined the current doctrines and tried to settle all controversial points. In many respects the Kaṇiṣka legends resemble those of Aśoka, for his advent was also predicted by the Enlightened One. While seated under a spreading Pippal tree at Peshawar with his face to the south, Buddha told Ānanda —“Four hundred years after my decease a sovereign will reign, by name Kaṇiṣka, who to the south of this will raise a tope in which he will collect many of my flesh and bone relics.” Exactly four centuries after Buddha had passed away, as the Sung pilgrim tells us, a king of that name brought the whole of Jambudvīpa under his sway but he had no reverence for Buddha or his faith. One day when he was out hunting, a white hare crossed his way and the chase led the king to the very spot which Buddha had pointed out to his disciple as the future site of Kaṇiṣka's *stūpa*. “Here among the trees the king discovered a cowherd boy with a small tope three feet high

²² Takakusu, p. 159; Hwui-li, p. xx.

he had made. 'What is this you have made?' asked the king. The boy replied telling the Buddha's prophecy, and informing Kaṇiṣka that he was the king of the prophecy, adding that he had come to set in motion the fulfilment of the prophecy." The king was immediately converted and he built a magnificent *stūpa* over sacred relics on the spot indicated. But the miracle did not end here. "Trusting to his own great merits, he set about building a great tope round the site of the boy's small tope, which was to be concealed and suppressed by the great tope." But behold! as the king's *stūpa* rose higher and higher the boy's *stūpa* also grew in height and it could not be concealed or suppressed. The king went on building tier above tier until the lofty head of that stupendous structure rose full four hundred feet high and the boy's *stūpa* was no longer to be seen. The king felt satisfied and embellished his *stūpa* with gilt disks and other ornaments but his triumph was to prove short lived. "When he proceeded to offer solemn worship", "the small tope appeared with one half of it out side-ways under the south east corner of the great base. The king now lost patience and threw the thing up. So (the small tope) remained as it was (*i.e.*, did not all come through the wall) with one half of it visible in the stone base below the second stage, and another small tope took its place at the original site." The king at last felt convinced that he was witnessing a supernatural manifestation and confessed his errors. Hiuent-sang informs us that "The Buddha predicted that when this tope had been seven times burned and seven times rebuilt, his religion would come to an end." Prior to his visit it had been thrice burnt and thrice rebuilt, when

Hiuen-tsang arrived at Peshwar he found that the holy *stūpa* had been burnt for a fourth time.²³

Kaṇiṣka's *stūpa* is no fiction. It now lies buried under the mounds of *Śāhji-kā-dherā* and a relic casket, with a small portrait statue of the Kuṣāṇa ruler on the lid, has been unearthed there. But the whole of Jambudvīpa never acknowledged his suzerainty though Kaṇiṣka's empire stretched as far east as Benaras. The story of Buddha's prediction naturally found ready credence with the devout and they found nothing incredible in the legend of the tiny *stūpa* always rearing its impudent head over that of its gigantic rival, for its architect was a divine agent. Fa-Hian tells us that the little cow-herd was no less a personage than Śakra, king of the immortals.^{23a} Despite Hiuen-tsang's assertion that Kaṇiṣka flourished four centuries after Buddha, Kuṣāṇa chronology still continues to be a subject of controversy for, the pilgrim with equal assurance states elsewhere that he lived five hundred years after the *nirvāṇa*.²⁴

If Aśoka had encountered a *nāga* in his quest for Buddha's relics, Kaṇiṣka had also come across one of evil disposition in a lake on the snowy mountains. This *nāga* was a *Śramṇera* in his previous life and had conceived a bitter hatred for the *nāga* king of the neighbouring lake. He prayed hard that he should be a *nāga* in his subsequent birth. As soon as his desire was fulfilled he killed the *nāga* king and made himself the leader of the *nāga* community. He used to do immense damage to the local people by causing heavy rains and raising severe storms

²³ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 203-205.

^{23a} Legge, pp. 33-34.

²⁴ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 222-224.

When Kaṇiṣka heard of his misdeeds he resolved to convert the wicked *nāga* by returning good for the evil. On the shores of the lake the king started building a *vihāra* and a *stūpa* so that the *nāga's* heart might improve. But no sooner were these sacred edifices raised than the wicked being demolished them. Foiled in his pious intention the king proceeded to the lake, where the *nāga* dwelt, at the head of his army. The *nāga* approached the king in the guise of an old Brāhmaṇa and solicited him to desist from his vain efforts. When the king declined, he returned to his watery abode and caused, as was his wont, rains and storms. Kaṇiṣka was not in the least dismayed. He fervently appealed to Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha for support and lo! blazing fire burst from his shoulders. The *nāga*, now thoroughly frightened, offered to come to terms with the king, and it was decided that in future whenever rain clouds were perceived in the sky the monks of the *vihāra* should ring their bells and the *nāga*, mindful of his undertaking, would instantly desist from any mischief. Hiuen-tsang fully believed in the story which he has handed down in testimony to the great spiritual merits of the Kuṣāṇa monarch.²⁵

But it will be unfair to suggest that the pilgrims retailed myths and legends alone. It was to them that we are indebted for an account of a Chinese prince who came to Kaṇiṣka's court as a hostage. "When Kanishka reigned in Gandhara his power reached the neighbouring States and his influence extended to distant regions. As he kept order by military rule over a wide territory reaching to the east of the Tsung-Ling, a tributary state of China to the

²⁵ Watters, Vol. I, p. 127 ; Beal, Vol. I, pp 63-66.

west of the Yellow River through fear of the king's power sent him (princes as) hostages. On the arrival of the hostages Kanishka treated them with great courtesy and provided them with different residences according to the seasons."²⁶ But the account is not quite free from confusion. Hwui-li suggests that only one prince, and not princes, was at Kanishka's court. While according to the *Si-yu-Ki*, the princes in question belonged to a Chinese feudatory state, Hwui-li says that Hiuen-tsang was told by his hosts, the priests of the *Sha-lo-Kia* temple, that it was built "by the son of the Han emperor when held as an hostage."²⁷

We have referred earlier to Hiuen-tsang's account of the great Buddhist council convened by Kanishka and presided by Vasumitra and the pilgrims had nothing more of any importance to say about the mighty king who, in the Buddhist estimation, was second to Aśoka only in his devotion to their faith.

From Kanishka to the imperial Guptas is a far cry but proximity in time does not necessarily minimise confusion. It is indeed more difficult, if not altogether impossible, to disentangle facts from fiction when we examine the pilgrims' references to Gupta kings and their deeds. Fa-Hian visited India when the imperial Guptas were at the height of their power but he does not mention the contemporary king even by name. I-tsing refers to Śrīgupta who flourished five hundred years before him. Referring to the ruins of a temple (named China temple) he observes "Tradition says that formerly a Mahārāja called Śrīgupta built this temple for the use of Chinese priests. He was prompted to do so by the arrival of about twenty priests of the country

²⁶ Watters, Vol. I, p. 124.

²⁷ Hwui-li, p. 54.

who had travelled from Sz'chuen to the Mahabodhi Temple to pay their worship. Being impressed by their pious demeanour, he gave them the land and the revenues of about twenty villages as an endowment. This occurred some 500 years ago."²⁸ I-tsing wrote towards the close of the seventh century of the Christian era and Śrīgupta, therefore, should be ascribed to the second century A.D., a date obviously too early for a Gupta ruler. This chronological puzzle is further complicated when we come to the story of king Vikramāditya of Śrāvastī and the contemporary Buddhist savant Manoratha. Manoratha, says Hiuen-tsang, lived one thousand years after Buddha, or according to his own previous calculations, six hundred years after Kaṇiṣka. On the other hand Śakrāditya is credited to have built the earliest monastery at Nālandā shortly after Buddha's decease, that is, several centuries before Christ ; but Bālāditya, his great grandson, defeated Mihiragula, the Hūṇa king, whom Sung-yun met early in the sixth century and Yaśodharman defeated sometimes before 533-534 A.D. On the other hand I-tsing is certainly right in referring to Ādityasena, a Later Gupta king, as a contemporary when he says that "Recently, a king called Sun-Army (*Aditya sena*) built by the side of the old temple another, which is now newly finished."²⁹ One may be permitted to conclude that the pilgrims correctly recorded contemporary events, but whenever they wrote about old temples and monasteries, they confidently reproduced the current stories about their origin without taking any trouble to ascertain dates and facts.

In the writings of the pilgrims we come across

²⁸ Hwui-li, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

²⁹ Hwui-li, p. xxxvi.

several kings who have been commonly allotted to the Gupta list, Śrīgupta, Śakrāditya, Buddhagupta, Tathāgatagupta, Bālāditya, Vajra, Vikramāditya and Ādityasena. The last one was undoubtedly a genuine historical person. There were also more than one Gupta emperor with the title of Vikramāditya and Bālāditya, but the other names are not to be found either in the Paurāṇic or inscriptional lists. Nor has any coin bearing the name of Śakrāditya, Buddhagupta, Tathāgatagupta and Vajra been so far discovered. It should also be noted that these are purely Buddhist personal names which hardly fit in the extant Gupta genealogy, for the Gupta royal names are invariably Hindu in character. It is, therefore, difficult to hazard any guess about the time and identity of these kings, for they might have been fictitious persons for all we know. Narasimhagupta who had the sobriquet (*viruda*) of Bālāditya was a contemporary of Mihiragula but the Bālāditya who built a college at Nālandā embraced Buddhism, and the rules of seniority were revised to gratify his *amour propre*, but there is no evidence that Narasimhagupta ever renounced the faith of his fathers. The Vikramāditya of the Manoratha story had his capital at Śrāvasti and was obviously hostile to Buddha's faith. The Gupta emperors were great patrons of learning and some of them might have extended their benefaction to the University of Nālandā. It is, however, clear that the university had not been in existence in the days of Candragupta II Vikramāditya, for Fa-Hian found no learned institution there though he had visited the village. We may for good reason, therefore, abstain from speculation about these kings of doubtful historicity.

Mihiragula was, however, a historical person and the

contemporary account of Sung-yun of that ill-mannered, ill-favoured barbarian warrior is not without interest. Early in 520 A.D. Sung-yun entered the country then under Mihiragula's rule. The king was extremely cruel and a worshipper of demons. He had no faith in Buddha and persecuted the Buddhists. "The king has 700 war-elephants, each of which carries ten men armed with sword and spear, while the elephants are armed with swords attached to their trunks with which to fight when at close quarters. The king continually abode with his troops on the frontier, and never returned to his kingdom, in consequence of which old men had to labour and the common people were oppressed. Sung-yun repaired to the royal camp to deliver his credentials. The king was very rough with him, and failed to salute him. He sat still while receiving the letters. Sung-yun perceived that these remote barbarians were unfit for exercising public duties, and that their arrogance refused to be checked. The king now sent for interpreters, and addressed Sung-yun as follows: 'Has your worship not suffered much inconvenience in traversing all these countries and encountering so many dangers on the road?' Sung-yun replied, 'We have been sent by our royal mistress to search for works of the great translation through distant regions. It is true the difficulties of the road are great, yet we cannot (*dare not*) say we are fatigued; but your majesty and your forces (*three armies*), as you sojourn here on the frontier of your kingdom, enduring all the changes of heat and cold, are not you also nearly worn out?' " Sung-yun then taxed the king with his bad manners as he read diplomatic papers sitting. The king far from being non-plussed calmly replied that if he had met the Wei king in person he would certainly offer

him the usual courtesies, but there was nothing wrong in reading his letter sitting as people did not rise to receive letters from their parents.³⁰

Hiuen-tsang also refers to the cruelty of Mihiragula but he says that the king was not unfavourably inclined towards Buddhism at first and he persecuted the Buddhist church subsequently because some monks had offended him by sending a quondam menial to explain the tenets of their religion to him. "Some centuries previously a king named Mo-hi-lo-ku-lo (Mahirakula) who had his seat of government at this city, (Sākala) ruled over the Indians. He was a bold intrepid man of great ability and all the neighbouring states were his vassals. Wishing to apply his leisure to the study of Buddhism, he ordered the clergy of the country to recommend a Brother of eminent merit to be his teacher. But the clergy found difficulty in obeying the command, the apathetic among them not seeking notoriety, and those of great learning and high intelligence, fearing stern majesty. Now at this time there was an old servant of the king's household who had been a monk for a long time. Being clear and elegant in discourse and glib in talking, this man was selected by the congregation of Brethren to comply with the royal summons. This insulting procedure enraged the king who forthwith ordered the utter extermination of the Buddhist church throughout all his dominions."³¹

Next follows the account of his war with Bālāditya, king of Magadha. Bālāditya, it appears from Hiuen-tsang's report, was one of the feudatories of the Hūṇa king but rebelled against him when the persecution of the Buddhists

³⁰ Beal, Vol. I, pp. C-CI.

³¹ Watters, Vol. I, p. 288.

began. Mihiragula, therefore, marched against him at the head of his army but the king of Magadha prudently retired to the islands of the sea beyond the reach of the Hūṇas. Mihiragula left his troops under the command of his brother and followed his enemy to his island retreat. Bālāditya had the advantage of the terrain and not only defeated Mihiragula but took him prisoner. While produced before the victor Mihiragula refused to uncover his face though repeatedly ordered to do so and was sentenced to death. Bālāditya's mother, a wise lady of kind disposition, intervened and interviewed the prisoner in person. She told him that his days were not yet over and he should reform his ways.

Free once again, Mihiragula proceeded to Kashmir and made himself ruler of that kingdom. But his ways he did not mend. "He renewed his project of exterminating Buddhism, and with this view he caused the demolition of 1600 topes and monasteries, and put to death nine koṭis of lay adherents of Buddhism. His career was cut short by his sudden death, and the air was darkened, and the earth quaked, and fierce wind rushed forth as he went down to the Hell of unceasing torment." The stories heard by the Chinese pilgrims might have a substratum of facts but they certainly flavour of fairy tales.³²

We must not run away with the idea that we may ignore the Chinese sources even for the Gupta period. For, it is from Hiuen-tsang that we learn that a *vihāra* at Mahābodhi (Gayā) was built by a former king of Ceylon for the benefit of his countrymen, and Wang-hiuen-tse informs us that the king in question was Meghavarna

³² Watters, Vol. I, p. 289; Beal, Vol. I, pp. 167-172.

and his Indian contemporary was the great Gupta emperor Samudragupta.

We are on surer grounds when we come to the contemporaries and near contemporaries of Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing, though the supernatural element is not lacking in the story of Śaśānka king of Karnaśuvarṇa and Harṣa-vardhana the overlord of Northern India. It was Avalokiteśvara who had predicted that Harṣa was destined to "raise Buddhism from the ruin in which it had been brought by the king of Karnaśuvarṇa."³³ He had moreover a personal wrong to avenge, for Śaśānka had something to do with the death of Harṣa's elder brother. If the pilgrims are to be credited Śaśānka had committed grievous sacrileges against the holiest objects of the Buddhist veneration. Aśoka had removed to his capital a stone bearing the footprints of the Tathāgata; Śaśānka tried in vain to efface the foot marks, but failing in his evil design he caused the sacred stone to be thrown into the river. A miracle, however, happened and the stone returned to its original place with the footprint intact. Śaśānka further tried to remove an image of Buddha, made by Maitreya Bodhisattva himself, from its temple and replace it by one of Śiva. Nor did he spare the Bodhi tree under which the Tathagāta had attained enlightenment. "In recent times", says Hiuen-tsang, Śaśānka, the enemy and oppressor of Buddhism, cut down the Bodhi-tree, destroyed the roots down to the water, and burned what remained. A few months afterwards Pūrṇavarmā, the last descendant of Aśoka on the throne of Magadha, by pious efforts brought the tree back to life and in one night it became about ten

³³ Watters, Vol. I, p. 343.

feet high.”³⁴ Pūrṇavarmā also built a protecting wall, 24 feet high, around the tree. It is, however, interesting to note that Aśoka also in his days of unbelief had tried to destroy the tree. He had cut the roots, the trunk, the branches and piled the leaves with them, and set fire to the heap, but no sooner had the smoke cleared than a double tree sprung through the flame. The miracle converted Aśoka and he was redeemed,³⁵ but a dire end was in store for Śaśānka. His body was covered with a pestering sore and the enemy of the Buddha and the Buddhists died a horrible death.

Harṣa was fortunate in his literary friends, Bāṇa and Hiuen-tsang. But for them the great qualities of head and heart with which he was richly endowed might still remain un-noticed. We do not know much about his more powerful rival Pulakeśin II of Mahārāṣṭra and the Pallava prince Narasiṃhavarman who subsequently vanquished the Cālukya warrior, and our knowledge of the Puṣyabhūti potentate might remain as incomplete but for the literary efforts of his talented admirers. Harṣa came to the throne under circumstances of extraordinary difficulty. (His brother-in-law Grahavarman of Kanauj was dead, his sister Rājyaśrī was a refugee in the forests of the Vindhyas, his elder brother Rājyavardhana had been murdered by Śaśānka, “a persecutor of Buddhism.” “Hereupon the statesmen of Kanauj, on the advice of their leading man Bāni (or Vāni), invited Harshavardhana, the younger brother of the murdered king to become their sovereign. The prince modestly made excuses, and seemed unwilling to comply with their request. When the

³⁴ Watters, Vol. II, p. 115.

³⁵ Beal, Vol. II, p. 117.

ministers of state pressed Harshavardhana to succeed his brother and avenge his murder, . . the prince determined to take the advice of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. . . . An image of the Bodhisattva, which had made many spiritual manifestations, stood in a grove of this district near the Ganges. To this he repaired ; and after due fasting and prayer, he stated his case to the Bodhisattva. An answer was graciously given which told the prince that it was his good karma to become king, and that he should, accordingly, accept the offered sovereignty and afterwards make himself a great kingdom." He was, however, warned not to occupy the throne, nor to assume royal titles, so Harṣa took charge of the government with the title of Rājaputra.³⁶ Henceforth he was known as Śilāditya.

Bāṇa says that his first task was to rescue his widowed sister but Hiuen-tsang says nothing about his meeting with Rājyaśrī and proceeds to give an account of his conquests. "He got together a great army, and set out to avenge his brother's murder and to reduce the neighbouring countries to subjection. Proceeding eastwards he invaded the states which had refused allegiance, and waged incessant warfare until in six years he had *fought* the Five Indias Then having enlarged his territory he increased his army, bringing the elephant corps upto 60,000 and the cavalry to 10,000 and reigned in peace for thirty years without raising a weapon. He was just in his administration, and punctillious in the discharge of his duties. He forgot sleep and food in his devotion to good works."³⁷ Before we recount these good works we may

³⁶ Watters, Vol. I, p. 343.

³⁷ Watters, Vol. I, pp. 343-344.

take note of two of his warlike expeditions of which Hiuen-tsang wrote. Late in his reign, probably long after the first six years of incessant warfare, Harṣa invaded Kanyodha (modern Ganjam) on the shores of the Bay of Bengal, and his victorious progress across the Vindhya was successfully checked by the Cālukya king Pulakeśin II. "Relying on the strength of his heroes and elephants the king treated neighbouring countries with contempt. He was a Kshatriya by birth, and his name was *Pu-lo-ki-shé* The benevolent sway of this king reached far and wide, and his vassals served him with perfect loyalty. The great king Śilāditya at this time was invading east and west, and countries far and near were giving in allegiance to him, but *Mo-ha-la-ch's* refused to become subject to him."³⁸ Thus did the Chinese friend of Harṣa pay his tribute of encomium to the prowess of his Cālukya rival without specifically saying that Harṣa's arms had met in the south a serious reverse.

Harṣa's meritorious acts were many. He divided his day into three periods, only one of which was spent in attending to mundane matters while the remaining two were devoted to spiritual improvement. He prohibited animal food and animal killing throughout his kingdom. But it will be wrong to suppose that he neglected his kingly duties. He worked so hard that he found the day too brief and he widely toured his wide territories, being ever on the move except during the four months of the monsoon. While on march "he was always accompanied by several hundred persons with golden drums, who beat one stroke for every step taken, they called these 'music-

³⁸ Watters, Vol. II, p. 239.

pace-drums'. Śiladitya alone used this method—other kings were not permitted to adopt it.”³⁹ Thatched cottages were made for the king's use at the halting places where he spent the night. These temporary huts were destroyed when he left. But for the ordinary travellers Harṣa had made many rest houses. Like Aśoka he delighted in building *stūpas* and embellishing monasteries. As we have seen earlier he had built a splendid *vihāra* at the university town of Nālandā. Every year he assembled Buddhist monks for examination and discussion and rewarded or punished them according to their merits or demerits. He found no offence in mere lack of learning, though there was no greater patron of letters than Harṣa, but moral delinquencies he could not tolerate. “Those who neglected the ceremonial observances of the Order, and whose immoral conduct was notorious, were banished from his presence and from the country.”⁴⁰ Hiuen-tsang, however, makes one glaring omission; nowhere does he refer to Harṣa's notable achievements in *belles-lettres*. I-tsing was familiar with one of his dramas, *Nāgānanda*. “King Śilāditya versified the story of the Bodhisattva Jimūta-vāhana (Ch. ‘Cloud-borne’), who surrendered himself in place of a Nāga. This version was set to music.”⁴¹

Harṣa convened for six times *Mahā Mokṣa Pariṣad*, a quinquennial convocation, at which the accumulated wealth of the preceding quinquennium was spent in charity. The last *pariṣad* was attended by Hiuen-tsang. The king also held a grand assembly of princes, priests and scholars at the capital city of Kanauj to honour the

³⁹ Hwui-li, p. 173.

⁴⁰ Watters, Vol. I, p. 344.

⁴¹ Takakusu, pp. 163-164.

Chinese Master of the Law and to vindicate the Mahāyāna doctrine. No less than eighteen ruling princes from five regions of India, three thousand Buddhist monks well versed in the doctrines of the two vehicles, three thousand Brāhmaṇa and Jaina scholars and one thousand learned men from the University of Nālandā with myriads of their retainers came to Kanauj to attend the Assembly. Indeed the concourse was so great that it resembled the winter clouds and the drops of rain that fall from them.⁴²

Two thatched halls, spacious enough to accommodate one thousand visitors each, had, in anticipation of the Assembly, been constructed. There a golden image of the Buddha was conducted on the back of an elephant in a solemn procession. Śilāditya and his friend Kumāra Rājā of Kāmarūpa marched on either side of the image with a white *chauri* in their hands in the guise of Śakra and Brahmā respectively. Two elephants laden with flowers and jewells accompanied them and at every step flowers were scattered. After the image was ceremoniously installed in the Hall the eighteen princes, one thousand Buddhist monks, five hundred learned Brāhmaṇas and Jainas and two hundred high dignitaries of the state were admitted there and food was served to all present. The king then “presented as an offering to Buddha a golden dish, a golden cup, seven golden ewers, one golden staff, three thousand gold pieces, and three thousand vestments of superior cotton stuff.” Harṣa then seated the Master of the Law on a jewelled couch as the Lord of discussion and he propounded his thesis to the assembled scholars, Buddhists and non-Buddhists. But none could find any

⁴² Hwui-li, p. 177.

flaw in it and so the Assembly came to a happy ending. Harṣa offered Hiuen-tsang in recognition of his great erudition 10,000 pieces of gold, 30,000 pieces of silver, 1,000 garments of superior cotton, but rich as the gift was, the Chinese monk declined to accept it. Despite his strong objection the victorious scholar was paraded in triumph on the back of an elephant according to the custom of the country.

From Kanauj the party travelled to "the Grand Arena of Largesse" at Prayāga. Here the king gave away all he had except arms and military stores. "Yuan-chuang here tells us, the king went on to bestow gifts on the resident Buddhist Brethren, next on the assembled congregation, next on those who were conspicuous for great abilities and extensive learning, next on retired scholars and recluses of other religions and lastly on the kinless poor."⁴³ Just as Harṣa's largesse was not limited to Buddhists alone so the Hindu gods also claimed his devotion, though Buddha had precedence over them. On the first day Buddha was worshipped by the king at the holy confluence of the Ganges and Jumna. On the second day offering was made to Ītīya Deva and on the third Śīva (Īśvara Deva) had his share of the king's offerings.⁴⁴

Of the eighteen princes present at the Kanauj Assembly two are mentioned by name. Bhāṣkaravarmā or Kumāra Rājā, the friend and subordinate ally of Harṣa, ruled over Kāmarūpa. He fought against their common enemy Śaśānka of Bengal and had a mighty army of 20,000 elephants and a fleet of 30,000 battle ships or, to be more accurate, armed boats. He made his journey by

⁴³ Watters, Vol. I, p. 364.

⁴⁴ Hwui-li, p. 186.

the river route with his guest Hiuen-tsang and was very inquisitive about things Chinese though he was not a Buddhist. Bhāṣkarvarman's ancestors came to power about the middle of the 5th century A.D., and not a thousand years before the pilgrim's visit. It is also doubtful whether he was a Brāhmaṇa by caste. He was twelfth in descent from Puṣyavarman, the founder of the dynasty, and "sent abundant supplies of cattle, horses and accoutrements" for the joint Tibetan and Nepalese force that Wang-hiuen-tse led against Arjuna or Arunāśva.

Dhruvabhaṭa, king of Valabhī, may be identified with Dhruvasena II. He married Harṣa's daughter and evidently acknowledged his overlordship. "He is of lively and hasty disposition", says Hiuen-tsang who knew him personally, "his wisdom and statecraft are shallow. Quite recently, he has attached himself sincerely to faith in the three 'precious ones'. Yearly he summons a great assembly, and for seven days gives away most valuable gems, exquisite meats, and on the priests he bestows in charity the three garments and medicaments, or their equivalent in value, and precious articles made of rare and costly gems of the seven sorts. Having given these in charity, he redeems them at twice their price, he reverences those who are noted for their wisdom. The great priests who come from distant regions he particularly honours and respects."⁴⁵

The pilgrim is more eloquent in his praises of Dhruvasena's uncle Śilāditya, king of Mālava, "who ruled sixty years earlier" and was therefore a near-contemporary. Hiuen-tsang heard that he was "a man of eminent wisdom and great learning; his skill in literature was profound.

⁴⁵ Beal, Vol. II, pp. 267-268.

He cherished and protected the four kinds of creatures and deeply respected the three treasures. From the time of his birth to his last hour his face never crimsoned with anger, nor did his hands ever injured a living thing. His elephants and horses drank water that had been strained, after which he gave it them, lest any creature living in the water should be injured. Such were his love and humanity. During the fifty years and more of his reign, the wild beasts became familiar with men, and the people did not injure or slay them."⁴⁶ These are high encomiums indeed, and Śilāditya must have been an exceptionally good king even if the necessary allowance is made for exaggeration, for he is described as a *Dharmarāja* in *Mañju-Śrī-Mūla-Kalpa*.⁴⁷ He built a beautiful *vihāra* near his palace and convoked every year the *Mahā Mokṣa pariṣad* where unstinted charity was practised. It should be noted that Śilāditya did not pass away sixty years before Hiuen-tsang's visit, for one of his copper plate inscriptions is dated 611 A.D.⁴⁸ Of his eleven known grants no less than five went to Brāhmaṇas and their temples. But of the seven extant grants of Dhruvasena II, only two were in favour of the *vihāras*. Obviously these Maitraka rulers were catholic in their religious endowments.

I-tsing says that "*Seng-chi*, a priest and companion of the former (Ling-wan), went to India by the southern sea-route and arrived at *Samotata*. The king of that country, named Rājabhata (or *patu*) a *Upāsaka*, greatly revered the three objects of worship and devoted himself to his

⁴⁶ Beal, Vol. II, p. 261.

⁴⁷ Virji, *Ancient History of Saurashtra*, p. 62.

⁴⁸ Virji, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

religious duties.”⁴⁹ In connection with the villages granted to the China temple by Śrīgupta, I-tsing observes, “The land has now reverted to the king of Eastern India, whose name is *Devavarma*, but he is said to be willing to give back the temple-land and the endowment in case any priests come from China.”⁵⁰ These two kings of Buddhist persuasion have been identified with Devakhaḍga and his heir-apparent Rājārāja or Rājarāja-Bhaṭa. They are, therefore, historical persons of whom we know next to nothing.⁵¹

Two contemporary kings who remain unnamed in Hiuen-tsang’s account were those of Kashmir and Kiu-che-lo. The king of Kashmir deputed his mother and brother to welcome the learned monk and to escort him to his capital from the frontier of his state. Hiuen-tsang spent several fruitful months in his kingdom and the king took the trouble of making a long journey⁵² to bid him farewell when he was on his way home. It is, therefore, really strange that neither Hiuen-tsang nor Hwui-li cared to mention his name, though the feudatory ruler of Jalandhara, Udhita, who accompanied the monk from Kanauj to his own capital is accorded that honour. The ruler of Kashmir was probably so anxious to please the pilgrim because the political relations between China and his state were more intimate than any other Indian kingdom except Nepal. The king in question was Durlabhavardhana, founder of the Karkoṭa dynasty.

The king of Kiu-che-lo, says Hiuen-tsang, “is of Kshatriya caste. He is just twenty years old, he is distin-

⁴⁹ Hwui-li, pp. xl-xli.

⁵⁰ Hwui-li, p. xxvii.

⁵¹ Majumdar, *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, pp. 86-87.

⁵² Hwui-li, p. 192.

guished for wisdom and he is courageous. He is a deep believer in the law of Buddha, and highly honours men of distinguished ability." If the country is correctly identified with Gurjjara the king was Ḍoḍḍa II.

For the student of Indian history the pilgrims' accounts are sources of unequal value. They revelled in legends and miracles but were not without useful information. If their accounts of ancient kings are wrong, their description of the country and its people, their manners and mode of living, their habits and customs, is not inaccurate. Occasionally they furnish interesting information not otherwise available. Can we ignore the importance of the synchronism of Meghavarna and Samudragupta which forms the sheet-anchor of Gupta chronology? Wang-hiuen-tse's brief campaign after Harṣa's death was completely forgotten in India. An account has been preserved in the Chinese annals. The pilgrims sometimes unconsciously throw unexpected light on the general condition of the country. 'Under the imperial Guptas the country was more efficiently policed and Fa-Hian encountered no thieves or highwaymen during his long travels in India. Hiuen-tsang, however, was twice robbed, and I-tsing met brigands both on his way to and back from Mahābodhi. Tang was attacked by robbers at the mouth of the river near Tāmralipti and barely escaped with his life. Obviously the peace of the king's road was not so well maintained during the days of Harṣavardhana as in those of Candragupta Vikramāditya.

All fictitious tales retold by the pilgrims are not quite useless. They may be of some interest to the anthropologist though they are not of the remotest use to the historian. Here is a story to the point.

A princess of South India was once returning home after a formal visit to her fiancée. On the way her attendants met a huge lion and ran away in fright leaving the princess alone. The lion instead of killing her carried the girl to his lair where they lived together for many years. In course of time she bore the lion a boy and a girl who had inherited their mother's form and father's temper. When the boy came to a man's estate he asked his mother how she, a human being, came to consort with a wild beast. When the mother told her story the youth contrived their escape and the party reached the princess's old country. Her father was dead, his line also had died out and a new king was ruling there. So the princess did not reveal her identity to anybody. The lion meanwhile keenly felt the loss and came to that very locality in search of his mate and children. In his rage he used to kill and maul every one he met and thus became a terror to the people of that part. The king announced a reward for killing the beast and the youth set out on the mission. The lion recognised his son and in his tenderness had no thought of defence when the youth stabbed him to his heart. The king later came to learn this strange story, and while he gave the promised reward he decided that so unnatural a son should have no place in his kingdom. He munificently provided for the mother but placed the son and the daughter each on a floating raft. The man ultimately reached Ceylon and gave the name of Simhala, as he was born of a lion or Simha, to the island. The girl floated as far as the Persian coasts and had a number of women children by the demons of that country. This is the origin of the Country of the Western Women.⁵³ The

⁵³ Beal, Vol. II, pp. 236-240.

belief was widespread all over the world, and it survived to comparatively recent times, that human beings sometimes interbred with other animals. The Greek counterpart of the lion legend will be found in that of Pasiphae and the bull. In the country of the women we find a replica of the land of the Amazons. This is not the place to pursue this subject further.

Another story told by Hiuen-stang may be of greater interest to anthropologists. It happened in the country of Campā which corresponds to the modern Bhagalpur area. "At the beginning of this kalpa, he relates, when men were homeless savages, a goddess came down from Heaven, and after bathing in the Ganges became pregnant."⁵⁴ Malinowski found that the primitive people of South Sea islands, among whom he worked, had no conception of physical paternity. They also believed that their women conceived when they bathed in the sea. It will be too much to suggest that the idea travelled from the Pacific to India or vice-versa, primitive mind worked sometimes in the same way in widely separate areas.

We may now bid adieu to the pious pilgrims. They were esteemable people, entertaining but devout, credulous but observant, indulgent but uncompromising. Their writings point to a significant moral—"Even a saint is not more reliable than his sources".

⁵⁴ Watters, Vol. II, p. 181.

APPENDIX A

MA-TWAN-LIN

Ma-twan-lin was not a pilgrim and had no occasion to visit India. Nor did he know any of the Indian languages. A historian, he industriously brought together such information about the country as he came across in the writings of Chinese scholars. Ma-twan-lin's authorities, however, could not claim a first-hand knowledge of India and its people and the value of his compilation naturally varies according to that of his sources. The famous French savant Stanislas Julien translated extracts from Ma-twan-lin into French and published them in *Journal Asiatique* in 1847. An English version of the French article appeared in the *Indian Antiquary* in 1880.

Ma-twan-lin says that China first came into contact with India in the time of the late Hans and he refers to Chang-Kien's mission to Central Asia. Like our pilgrims he discusses the different names by which the country was known and the five regions into which it was divided. According to him, the Vulture mountain (Gṛdhrakūṭa) derived its name from its peak which "resembles the *Tsieu* bird (vulture)". The emperor Wu-ti made several unsuccessful attempts to send missions to India but Ho-ti (89-105 A.D.) received tribute from that country several times. Emperor Ming-ti (58 to 76 A.D.) dreamt of a tall gold complexioned man "from whose head a flame of fire issued" and was told by his officers that it was Fo (Buddha). After this Buddhism slowly spread in China. During the third century of the Christian era Fan-Chen,

king of Siam, sent an embassy to India. In 428 A.D. Candrapriya, an Indian king, sent an ambassador with a letter to emperor Wen-ti. The ambassador presented the emperor "a ring set with diamonds, a bracelet of pure gold, along with other valuable articles, and two parrots, one red and the other white." In 466 A.D. the same king sent an embassy to emperor Ming-ti. In 502 A.D. king Gputa of India, sent a letter and some presents consisting of perfumes and cotton stuffs to emperor Wu-ti. An Indian ambassador presented a well trained horse to emperor Siuen-wu of the later Wei dynasty (500-504 A.D.).

We next read of the famous Śilāditya. During the Tang period serious disturbances broke out in India. "King Shi-lo-y-to (Śilāditya) raised a great army, and fought with irresistible valour. The men neither took off their own armour nor the elephants their housings. He punished the kings of four parts of India, so that they with their faces turned towards the north acknowledged his superiority." Ma-twan-lin refers to Hiuen-tsang's visit to Śilāditya, and adds that he assumed the title of the King of Magadha in 641 A.D. and sent an embassy to China. The Chinese emperor in his turn sent a mission to Śilāditya's court and we are told, "The king then went out, and bending on his knees thus received the imperial decree and placed it on his head." Next came the embassy of Li-i which was received with still greater honour. "Great officers went before him, outside the town, and the inhabitants of the capital and the neighbouring towns flocked out to see him and burn perfumes on his path. Śilāditya came himself at the head of his ministers, and received the imperial decree with his face turned to the east." Nor is Ma-twan-lin silent about Wang-hiuen-tse and his cam-

paign against Aruṇāśva. Kumārarājā of Kāmarūpa sent the Chinese envoy "thirty thousand oxen and horses, and provisions for all his army; to which he added bows, scimitars, and collars of great value."

About this time Indian necromancers seem to have enjoyed great reputation in China for their magical powers. Ma-twan-lin mentions two by name. Na-lo-mi-po-so-mei (Nārada devasvāmin) and Lu-kia-y-to (Lokāditya). The former claimed the power of conferring immortality and persuaded the emperor Tai-tsung to send emissaries to India to collect medicinal herbs. Lokāditya obtained an interview with emperor Kao-tsung "by aid of his knowledge of magic". In 668 A.D. all the kings of the five regions of India are alleged to have gone to China to pay their homage to the emperor. In 713-714 A.D. an envoy came from South India to seek military aid against the Arabs. Mention is made in this connection of "a bird which could speak and whose plumage was of five colours." Towards the close of the seventh century A.D., "Kings of India ceased to come to court". But Buddhist monks continued to visit China as before. The last notice of such visits runs as follows: "In the first month of the third year of the *King-yei* period (1034 A.D.), nine monks, namely Shen-ching (*i.e.*, he who has a good reputation Suyasas?) etc., came to give the emperor some Buddhist books and relics of Buddha, and also a little statue of Tongya-pu-sa (*i.e.*, Bodhisattva with copper teeth (Tāmradantabodhisattva?). The emperor gave them pieces of silk."

Ma-twan-lin does not fail to supply topographical information about India. Of the rivers he mentions the Ganges, the Indus and its tributaries of the Punjab. Of

the kingdoms of the north-west Udyāna, Gāndhāra, Lamghan and Gajna are noted. Among other Indian states we come across Kānyakubja, Malwa, Lāra, Surāṣṭra and Koṅkanapura. We are further told that “the journey from Northern to Central India occupies a hundred and twenty days.” “From Surāṣṭra to the Western Sea is a journey of eleven days.” “It generally takes three months to taravel from Central to Southern India.” Koṅkanapura was a day’s journey from the sea.

The Indians, we are told, used to trade with the Roman empire in the west, and Siam and Tonquin in the east. They did not keep any ledger and payment was made with Cowrie shells. The king and his ministers were richly dressed in brocades but the common people went barefooted in white. They had a written language and used “the characters invented by the god Fan” (Brahmā). The Indians particularly excelled in astronomy and magical sciences. “The Indians all study an elementary book called *Si-ta-chang* (the *Siddha*, a kind of primer) and write memoranda upon leaves called *pei-to-ye*” (palm leaves). Female musicians and jugglers were engaged in the houses of the wealthy for their entertainment and women used to wear necklaces of gold, silver and pearls.

Of the mineral products of India Ma-twan-lin makes special mention of a rare kind of mica, violet in colour, which could be “split into leaves as thin as grasshopper’s wing, and which laid on the top of one another resemble gauze several times folded.” He refers to a kind of diamond “which fire cannot dissolve and which can cut jade.” “One may obtain also articles made of tortoise-shell, gold, copper, iron and tin, textures of thread of gold, and carpets of cotton, perfumes extracted from *Chen-tan*

(Candana) tree, and the *Yo-kin* plant; sugar-cane and other products; crystallised sugar, pepper, ginger and black salt."

Of the animals of India Ma-twan-lin mentions lions, sables, leopards, rats, camels, rhinoceros and elephants. The list cannot be exhaustive and it is not clear what Indian animal was called sable by Chinese writers. The common black buck is very probably meant. Of food grains mention is made of rice of which there were four crops in the year and a cereal called *mo-to-tho* (maṭṭa?).

Julien warns us that many of the Indian words in Ma-twan-lin's text were disfigured beyond recognition first by the original writers and subsequently by various editors.

The Chinese writers, quoted by Ma-twan-lin, have made a special reference to Yu-chi domination over India and observed that the indigenous people were not so strong as the Yu-chi.

APPENDIX B

SOME CHINESE PILGRIMS.

Louis Renou and Jean Filliozat give a descriptive list of Chinese pilgrims in their *L'Inde Classique*. Among the fourth century monks they mention T'an-mong who visited Rājagṛha about 395 A.D. after a long journey that took him to the confines of the Byzantine empire. He returned to China through Dardistan. We have already mentioned Che-mong, Fa-yong and Fa-Hian's companion, Pao-yun. Each of them left an account of his travels, some small fragments of which have come down to us. Thirty years after the return of I-tsing a Korean monk, Howui-chao by name, came to India by the sea-route. He returned to China about 729 A.D. through Central Asia and wrote an *Account of a Journey to the Five Indies*. A fragment of this work was discovered at Tun Hwang in 1908. It contains an itinerary from Kuśinagara to Agni or Karashahr through Magadha and North West India. Howui-chao's account is full of ethnographic, political, religious and linguistic interest though his information is not always accurate.

APPENDIX C

A HERETIC ATTEMPTS HARṢA'S LIFE.

Hiuen-tsang mentions a murderous attack on Harṣa by a heretic, probably a Brāhmaṇa, assassin. When the charitable assembly at Prayāga was about to conclude the pavilion suddenly caught fire. But after an earnest prayer the king rushed headlong towards the burning gate and the fire, as if by a miracle, was extinguished. The king afterwards mounted the great *stūpa*. As he was descending the steps, "suddenly a heretic (*or*, a strange man), knife in hand, rushed on the king. The king startled at the sudden attack, stepped back a few steps up the stairs, and then bending himself down he seized the man, in order to deliver him to the magistrates." The assembled princes demanded his immediate execution but Śilāditya commanded them not to kill the man. The Brāhmaṇas confessed that "jealous of the Śramans, whom the king had revered and exceedingly honoured, they had caused the precious tower to catch fire by means of burning arrows, and they hoped that in escaping from the fire the crowd would disperse in confusion, and at such a moment they purposed to assassinate the king." The chief of the conspirators was punished and five hundred Brāhmaṇas were banished to the frontiers of India. (Beal, Vol. I, pp. 219-221).

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