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~~THE~~ IDEAS OF HISTORY  
IN <sup>the</sup> ~~Literature~~ HISTORICAL NARRATIVES  
OF EARLY MEDIAEVAL INDIA

By

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P I T A R A U    V A N D E

THE IDEA OF HISTORY  
IN EARLY MEDIAEVAL INDIA

"In any age of any society the study of history, like other social activities, is governed by the dominant tendencies of the time and the place."

A. Toynbee, Study of History, Vol. I. p.1.

"In some subsequent age the critical scholar in accordance with his own theoretical judgments selects from bygone contemporary observations. We thus arrive at 'pure history', according to the faith of the school of history prevalent in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This notion of historians, of history devoid of aesthetic prejudice, of history devoid of any reliance on metaphysical principles and cosmological generalizations, is a figment of the imagination."

A.N. Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, p.12

## A B S T R A C T

(Ch. 1)

In order to give dimension to the historical writings of the Early Mediaeval Period, the origin, development and standardisation of the tradition of itihāsa, through the various forms of gāthā, nārāśamsī, ākhyāna and Purāna are studied from the Early Vedic Age to the advent of the Early Mediaeval. The rôle of the Bṛigvāṅgirases and the sūtras in the development of Vāṁśa composition is assessed and explained. The chapter is rounded off by a discussion on the characteristics and patterns of the mediaeval historical narratives, and the philosophy of time in the Early Mediaeval Age.

(Ch. 2)

Since the misconception that the Harshacharita is fragmentary has distorted the vision of modern historians, a fresh approach towards the problem of its historical content is suggested. After studying the formative influences of the Bṛigvāṅgiras ancestry of Bāna, the works of the itihāsa tradition, the Ratnāvalī and the Brihatkathā on the Harshacharita, an attempt is made to understand the methods of historical organization and inference implied in the narrative. An analysis of the theme shows that in the Harshacharita,

besides the central story, there is another tale which emerges from discrepancies, the refractory snippets of the central theme. The author holds that both stories should be taken into account when reconstructing history from the Harshacharita.

(Ch. 3)

The Vikramāñkadevacharita shows how the poet-historians became the instruments of princely propaganda and how Bilhana, taking the rôle of a defence counsel, distorted historical facts. The distortion further enables us to perceive the drama of a clash of ideas, and the tricks and side-steppings which the historian employed to gain his end - the plea of the defence counsel. A comparison with the Harshacharita helps us to appreciate the technique of these artistically designed narratives.

(Ch. 4)

The unpublished biography of Vikramāditya VI by his royal son Someśvara III Bhūlokanalla further carries the tradition of the Mid-land school of itihāsa and evinces the process which under the influence of the transcendental world-view of the agamas culminated into the 'divinization' of history.

(Ch. 5)

Here, we attempt to study the process of the transfigura-

tion of the popular tradition of itihāsa into the imperial school of Chāhamāna history. The Prithvirāja-Vijaya illustrates how the Vamśa tradition which sent out several offshoots in India, Ceylon, Burma and South East Asia, developed in the mediaeval courts under the influence of poets; how the tales of mystery are the expression of the trend of rationalisation, which worked within the theoretical framework enshrined in the scriptures; and lastly how the anachronistic representation of contemporary persons in the form of the heroes of olden days brought about the 'Rāmayanization' of historical thought.

(Ch. 6)

"The subjugation of the ancient kingdom of historical thought by the modern Industrialism of Western life", to quote Toynbee, resulted in mechanical histories of mediaeval India, manufactured or semi-manufactured by the 'assemblage' of raw-materials like inscriptions, coins and documents. An attempt is, therefore, made to assess the possibility of reconstructing history by the study of the mediaeval historical works in the light of the dominant trends of the mediaeval age.

#### Appendix:

A study of the rôle of imagination in reconstructing history, and of the development of historical myths.

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## P R E F A C E

In order to experience the life of a sensuous man, so the legend goes, the soul of Śāṅkarāchārya once entered into the dead body of Amaruka, the amorous king who had composed the lyrical Sataka. Naturally, the resurrected Amaruka behaved neither like his old self nor as a mystic yogi. It was a sorry spectacle of a dispassionate ascetic, mimicking the amorous dalliances of royal romance. Recently some such thing has happened when, having studied the historical works of Bāṇa, Bilhana and others, the scholars tried to infuse modern concepts into the dead world of mediaeval times. This reconstruction is the resurrected Amaruka, in entirety neither the Mediaeval nor the Modern, but, like the black and white elements of the Spotted Brahma of Rāmānuja, each negating the existence of the other.

The present work is attempted with the intention of seeing whether, when the Śāṅkarāchārya of the legend returns to his old self, it is possible for him to know the dead Amaruka without jumping into his skin; whether it is a feasible proposition to reconstruct the mediaeval edifice without using present day material in the form of 20th century concepts.

When, on the basis of the present study, we ventured to reply to the above question affirmatively, a none too sympathetic friend pointed out, with a bantering smile, that even if it is tentatively admitted that we can really know the past from its vestiges, literary and otherwise, our work, which is simply an introduction to the critique of some aspects of Hindu historiography, based on merely six historical narratives of the Early Mediaeval Age, does not as yet entitle us to answer the question. We frankly plead guilty to the charge that our study is restricted to a few of the Mediaeval historians. However, in order to avoid the pseudoscopic vision, which a person writing on a mere fragment of so vast a subject as Indian history is likely to have, in the first chapter we have tried to cover the period of a millennium and a half, from the Early Vedic age to the advent of the Early Mediaeval. But here, our efforts are mainly directed at making the rays emitted from ancient traditions converge into a tiny image which could be fused with the central figure of the Mediaeval, giving the latter a correct stereoscopic depth vision. Fortunately for us, the continuity of the Bhṛigvāṅgiras school of historiography through the ages, enabled us to link the

early historiographical traditions with those of the Mediaeval age. Bāna is not only the first historical writer of this age but he also represents the highest water-mark of the ancient historiography of the Bhṛigvāṅgirases. With the single exception of Kalhana, who like the Morning star could outdare the Sun of modern historical writings, other mediaeval writers generally adhered to the beaten track. Thus this study, though it mainly deals with only six writers, presents a representative selection of the schools of Hindu historiography. Like the moving lamp of Kālidāsa's imagery, the study sheds light only on the royal highway - there are indeed many byways and more alleys, which, for the exigency of time and space, have been left out. None the less, it is hoped that the conclusion would not be vitiated by this omission. The observation of the critic mentioned above is, therefore, correct, but may not be cogent.

The following chapters, then, attempt at revealing the mediaeval methods of historical organization and inference, based upon the concepts of the past, expressed or implied in the historical narratives. An appendix, which is certainly not an unnecessary appendage here, is added to show how, besides throwing light on the historical

mentality of the mediaeval India, this study of historiography may suggest new ways for reconstructing the history of the past.

Here, we have deliberately avoided discussing the views contained in propositions such as 'the ancient Indians lacked historical sense', 'the supreme lesson of Santa-rasa smothered their biographical interest', 'Hinduism and Buddhism refused to attach real importance to the facts of history', etc. Like all half-truths, these are false. They mainly arose from a 19th century image of India in which she was represented as having "let the legions thunder past and plunged in thought again". Born in the ignorance of the Romantic age, they may be allowed to die unseen.

I am grateful to Dr. J. G. de Casparis for his kindness in going through many of the chapters of my thesis. Words fail me to express the deep sense of obligation which I owe to my supervisor Professor A. L. Basham, but for whom I could not have completed the work here and now. How I wish I could have stayed longer to drink deep at this noble fountain of learning. May this humble pushpāñjali of his student be acceptable to

the Achārya:

yesḥāṁ śīla-śruta-guṇa-kathā prasṛitā sadbudheshu  
Chhātraughena dīśi dīśi hathāt tanvatā yadyaśāṁsi

Yair AJIVAKA-jīvanāṁ viśaditām samgrān̄thitā bhāsvarā  
CHĀŚCHARYĀNCHITA-BHARATIYA-MAHIMA prāchīna-kālānvitā  
Teshāṁ Bhārata-bhārati-nidhi-vidāṁ samprāpya nirdesānam  
Granthasya kshamatāṁ gataḥ virachane tān sādaram naumyahaṁ

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## A B B R E V I A T I O N S

As. Res.	Asiatic Researches
ABORI	Annals of The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute
Ait	Aitareya
AIHT	Ancient Indian Historical Traditions by F.E. Pargiter
AV	Atharva-veda
BKI	Bombay Karnatak Inscriptions
BORI	Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute
Br.	Brāhmaṇa
BVB	Bharatya Vidya Bhavan
Chh. Up.	Chhandogya Upanishad
CII	Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum
CTHC	The Harshacharita translated by Cowell and Thomas.
DKD	Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts by J.F. Fleet
EC	Epigraphia Carnatica
EHD	Early History of Deccan Ed. by G. Yazdani
EI	Epigraphia Indica
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
GOS	Gaekwad's Oriental Series
GPM	The Gotra-Pravana-Mañjari, Ed. and tr. by Prof. J. Brough

HC	Harshacharita ed. by A.A. Fuehrer
HIL	History of Indian Literature by M. Winternitz
HOS	Harvard Oriental Series
HSL	History of Sanskrit Literature
HSCL	History of Sanskrit (Classical) literature
IA	Indian Antiquary
IB	Inscriptions of Bengal, Vol. III, by N.G. Majumdar.
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
JBORS	Journal of Bihar Orissa Research Society
JRAS	Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland
JRASB	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal
JUB	Journal of the University of Bombay
NSC	Navasāhasāṅkacharita
NSP	Nirnaya Sagar Press
PV	Prithvīrāja-Vijaya
QJMS	Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society
RV	Rigveda
SA	Sāṅkhāyana Āranyaka
Śam	Śamhitā
SB	Satapatha Brāhmaṇa

SBE	Sacred Books of the East
SI	Selection Inscriptions, Vol. I by D.C. Sircar
SII	South Indian Inscriptions
SJGM	Singhi Jain Granth Mala
Taitt	Taittiriya
VA	Vikramāṅkābhuyudaya
VDC	Vikramāṅkadevacharita
VS	Vikrama Samvata
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesselschaft.

## CHAPTER I

1

### THE BEGINNINGS OF INDIAN HISTORICAL TRADITIONS

#### Rise of the Historical Tradition

Stray verses, celebrating martial exploits and munificence of kings, constitute the earliest known form of historical literature in India. The Rigveda explicitly makes a reference to royal eulogies as a form of composition especially popular amongst kings.<sup>1</sup> Short metrical accounts of royal liberality (dānasutis), which are inserted into the religious hymns of the Rigveda, are the surviving fragments of this class of literature. Some of the divine eulogies were evidently based on royal eulogies.<sup>2</sup> But it is strange that there is hardly any royal eulogy in complete form in this collection of more than 1,000 hymns. This fact is all the more intriguing when we find almost complete poems in praise of priests.<sup>3</sup> As a few verses eulogising kings of this time

- 
1. Rājanah na praśastibhiḥ somāsaḥ gobhiḥ añjate yajñah na sampaṭha dhatribhiḥ. IX. 10, 3.
  2. For example, RV, VII, 6. where epithets 'high imperial ruler' (verse 1) 'blessed sovereign of the earth' (verse, 2) are given to Indra and Agni, and their heroic deeds - the destruction of the forts etc., - are described.
  3. RV, VII, 33 is a uniform sūkta of the Vasishtha family. Geldner (Deutsche Studien, II, 129 ff) thinks that originally it formed a part of the akhyāna of the Vasishtha family. III. 33 is a similar hymn of the Viśvāmitras.

are anonymously quoted in the Brāhmaṇa literature,<sup>1</sup> the conclusion becomes almost irresistible that royal eulogies were composed during this period ~~at~~ although the Rigveda, which mainly contains poems of religious significance and content, did not include them in complete and original form. The bulk of this eulogistic and historical poetry seems to have continued as a floating mass of literature, the existence of which is attested by sporadic references in the Vedic literature to gāthā and nārāśamsī - both literary genres of a historical nature, which did not belong to the ritualistic tradition but which, being provided with a ritualistic setting, were included in it for religious purposes. That they were engrafted on the ritualistic tradition is clear from the fact that they were not accorded full religious status. Gāthās and nārāśamsīs were sharply distinguished from religious songs. They were regarded as the products of mere human beings,<sup>2</sup> and as such much less sacrosanct than the ṛiks, which were looked upon as divine, revealed and sacred. The Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa

1. The gāthās about Marutta Āvikshitā, Kariyya Pāñchāla, in Ait. Br. VIII, 21; SB., XIII, 5,4,6; see also the lists of kings consecrated to the Great Consecration of Indra (Ait. Br. VIII, 21-23) and of those who performed horse-sacrifice (SB., XIII, 5,4, 1 ff).
2. Ait. Br. VII, 18. (Keith, p.309). Kāt. Srau. Sū, XV, 156; Viśvarūpa on Yājñavalkya I. 45.

further describes gāthā-nārāśamsī as the baser kind of brahma<sup>1</sup> and condemns the acceptance of gifts from one who recites them.<sup>2</sup> Gāthā and nārāśamsī are generally classed with itihāsa and purāna<sup>3</sup> and this descloses their affiliation with the historical tradition. Moreover, the few examples of gāthā and nārāśamsī, which are preserved in Vedic literature, clearly display their historical nature.<sup>4</sup> This is also indicated by the injunction that, on the occasion of horse-sacrifice, the kshatriya lute-player should sing the gāthas celebrating the heroic deeds of the sacrificer.<sup>5</sup>

Further, the later tradition embodied in the Nirukta and the Brihaddevatā contains references to itihāsa and ākhyāna in the Rigveda.<sup>6</sup> Explaining a verse of the tenth mandala, Yāska remarks that it is a mixture of rik, gāthā and itihāsa.<sup>7</sup> The Brihaddevatā quotes the views of Bhāguri,

1. I, 3, 2, 6. The Kāthaka samihitā (XIV, 5) asserts that both Gāthā and nārāśamsī are false. cp. Ait. Aranyaka, II, 3, 6 and SB. I, 1, 1, 4.

2. I, 3, 2, 7.

3. AV, XV, 5, 11-12; SB, XI, 5, 6, 8: Tait Ar., II, 9-11,

4. See supradfn. 1.

5. Kātyayana S.S., XX, 2, 7.

6. Niruktā, II, 10, 24, X, 26, XII, 10, Brihaddevatā, III, 156, IV, 46, VII, 153; VI, 107; 109;

7. IV, 6.

Yāskal<sup>1</sup> and Saunaka<sup>2</sup> who regard various verses of the Rigveda as alluding to itihāsa. Sakatāyana describes one complete hymn (X, 192) as itihāsa-sūktā.<sup>3</sup> Likewise the Nirukta and the Brihaddevata detect allusions to ākhyānas in the hymns of the Rigveda.<sup>4</sup> Even if this evidence of the later period is discounted, the references in the Rigveda itself to royal eulogies, gāthās and nārāśamsis strongly suggest the existence of an oral tradition of historical compositions which sometimes influenced the fixed and written religious tradition.

It seems that in the beginning the historical tradition, of which royal eulogies, gāthās and nārāśamsis were the parts, was not separate from the ritualistic tradition. Both were developed by the members of the priestly class. The Vāsishthas and the Bṛīgvāngirases, who were responsible for the development of historical tradition, played a vital role in the growth of sacred tradition also.<sup>5</sup> The Rigveda, a religious book par excellence, often breathes the countrly atmosphere<sup>6</sup> and contains elements of secular literature.<sup>7</sup>

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1. VI, 107.

2. VII, 163.

3. Brihaddevata, VIII, 11; see also VI, 107.

4. Nirukta V, 21; XI, 19:25:34:XII, 41, X, 10: Brihaddevata I, 53, 36:VII, 84.

5. See infra, pp. 15 ff.

6. Geldner, Vedische studien II, 154. Also Pischel, ibid, p. 120.

7. See Brihaddevata, I, 30 ff.

Royal eulogies and other historical compositions were utilised in the performance of religious rituals. Later, however, primarily for religious purposes, those poems which had a religious bearing were selected from the composite lore and collected as the RigVeda. Naturally, when its literary form and wordings were unalterably fixed, and when constant usage over a considerable time gave it a sanctity, the religious book came to be regarded as revealed, and the secular poetry was kept scrupulously separate. Thus two traditions started. From time to time, attempts were made to bring the historical tradition into the religious fold. The historical compositions were described as itihāsa-veda in the Brahmanas and the Upanishads<sup>1</sup>. But they could never get the full status of religious works. Though influenced by the religious tradition and in turn influencing it, the historical tradition existed separately.

#### Forms of Historical Composition.

The oral tradition of history, at least from the later Vedic age, had five distinct forms - gāthā, nārāśanī, ākhyāna, itihāsa and purāna. From the early Vedic age, we have indisputable evidence only for gāthā and nārāśanī.

1. SB, XIII, 4, 3, 12: Chh. Up. VII, 1, 2. See also the Arthaśāstra, I, 3:

Originally the word gāthā simply meant a song, but gradually it came to indicate a distinct genre of literary composition.<sup>1</sup> As nārāśamsī-gāthā, it consisted of those songs which celebrated the heroic deeds of ancient rulers and sages.<sup>2</sup> Allied with it were the Indra-gāthas<sup>3</sup> and the Yajñā-gāthas<sup>4</sup>, which respectively recounted the glorious acts of Indra and the performance of the sacrifices in the past.

The word gāthā occurs only in the later strata of the Rigveda<sup>5</sup>, where it is especially associated with the Kānva priests of the Bṛigvāngiras group<sup>6</sup>. It was also connected with the Visvāmitras, though it is not certain whether that family and an ancestor of Visvāmitra were named Gāthin because of their association with this form of literature. Further, the late occurrence of the word need not necessarily be construed to indicate that it came into existence later, especially as a Rigvedic hymn makes reference to an ancient gāthā.<sup>7</sup>

The word nārāśamsa with which nārāśanīśī is connected, occurs in the Rigveda in different forms and contexts.<sup>8</sup> As

1. Vedic Index, I, p. 224.

2. Ibid., s.v. Nārāśamsī.

3. Ait. Br, XXX, 6; see also RV, VIII, 32, 1.

4. Ibid., XXXIX, 7.

5. JAOS, XVII, p. 65.

6. VIII, 32, 1 explicitly states that the Kānvās composed gāthas see also VIII, 2, 38 and I, 43, 4 both these verses are from the Kānva hymns.

7. IX, 99, 4; Like Nārāśamsī (Martin Haug, Sacred Language, Writings and Religion of the Pārasis, 1907, p. 274), the word gātha is Indo-Iranian (Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, S.V. gāthā).

8. IX., 86, 42; X, 64, 3. II, 34, 6; [cp. the Avestan word Nairyosānha] etc.

early as the Vedic age, it had developed various shades of meaning.<sup>1</sup> Derivatively it means 'the praise of men' generally in the sense of 'praises celebrating men'.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes it also meant 'the praises composed by men'.<sup>3</sup> Other meanings of the word developed out of this central concept - the praises celebrating men - , and were, in fact, its extensions. Thus, the nārāśamsa is intricately interwoven with the cult of the deceased fathers<sup>4</sup> - where it meant 'the cups full of soma, dedicated to fathers',<sup>5</sup> the fire of the fathers,<sup>6</sup> and the fathers themselves.<sup>7</sup> Here the concept of the praise of men grew into the praise of deceased men and the term was further transferred to the deceased men themselves and also to things and ideas associated with them.

Secondly, these human eulogies were personified in the form of a fire-god named Narāśamsa who is described as a kavi<sup>8</sup> having a tongue of honey.<sup>9</sup> In this capacity, he is naturally associated with Brahmanaspati,<sup>10</sup> the god of Brahman or religious utterances.

Narāśamīśi, properly an adjective from narāśamīsa,

1. Nirukta, viii, 6 where the views of Sakapūni and Katthakya are quoted. Brihaddevata III, 2-3; and fn. below
2. Yena narāḥ prasasyante sa nārāśamīso mantrah. Nirukta, IX, 9.
3. Supra fn. 1; Oldenberg H. Vedische Untersuchungen ZDMG, LIV, pp. 49-57.
4. RV, X, 57, 3; Hillebrandt, Vedische Mythologie, II, 98 ff.
5. Ait. Br. II, 24;
6. Hillebrandt, op.cit.
7. Vaj. Sami, VIII, 58.
8. RV, V, 5.2.
9. Ibid, I, 13, 3. ( X, 72, 2.)
10. Ibid, I, 18; X, 182.

appears as a substantive once in the Rigveda, along with gāthās and raibhīs (religious songs), and means a form of composition.<sup>1</sup> Later, however, it was regarded as a kind of gāthā.

In spite of the trend towards the segregation of religious and historical traditions, gāthās and nārāsanisīs were assimilated and utilized in religious literature and rituals. Thus, gāthā along with itihāsa and purāna were included in the list of works for daily recitation.<sup>2</sup> They were sung on such occasions as weddings.<sup>3</sup> At the time of celebrating the horse-sacrifice, they were composed and recited for a year. On the day when the horse was let loose, it is enjoined that one brāhmaṇa lute-player should sing three self-composed gāthās in praise of the royal sacrificer making special references to his liberality. On the same day, one kshatriya lute-player was to sing three gāthās composed by him on the heroic achievements and martial exploits of the king.<sup>4</sup> For one full year the musicians sing the praise of the sacrificer, and of ancient kings and gods. Likewise on the occasion of the śimantonnayana (hair-parting) ceremony, lute players were to sing the eulogies of the reigning king, valiant heroes and soma.<sup>5</sup>

1. X, 85, 6.

2. SB., XI, 5, 6, 8; Gopatha Br., I, 21; Taitt. Aranyaka, II, 9-11; etc.

3. Maitrāyanī Sanihitā, III, 7, 3.

4. SB., XIII, 4, 2, 8-11; Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra, XX, 2, 7-8.

5. Āśvalāyana Grihyasūtra, I, 14, 6-7.

The gāthās about Janamejaya Pārikshita,<sup>1</sup> Marutta Aikshvāka,<sup>2</sup> Kravya Pāñchāla<sup>3</sup> and Bharata, the son of Duḥshanta<sup>4</sup> are found in the Brahmanas. Similarly the sūtras preserve a series of ten nārāśanīsīs which are to be recited in a cycle of ten days.<sup>5</sup>

Akhyānas or narratives were probably already in existence in the Vedic period. According to the Nirukta and the Brihaddevatā, several hymns of the Rigveda allude to ākhyānas.<sup>6</sup> The ākhyānas of Sunahsepa and Purūravas seem to have been based either on the Rigvedic hymns<sup>7</sup> or on some ancient tradition which is reflected in these hymns. However it is not certain that these hymns, which are in the form of dialogues, are the fragments of dramatic ākhyānas. The dramatic quality of hymns is incontestible but whether they are the actual dialogues of a drama is doubtful. They may, nevertheless, indicate the existence of a semi-dramatic and semi-epic ākhyāna literature which, as we shall see, was the source of later historical dramas and epics.

The Brahmana literature refers to many ākhyānas such as Devāsuram in which the war between gods and demons was narrated.<sup>8</sup>

1. Ait. Br., VIII, 21, SB, XIII, 5,4,2.

2. Ait. Br., VIII, 21, SB, XIII, 5,4,6.

3. SB, XIII, 5,4, 7-8.

4. Ait. Br., VIII, 23; SB, XIII, 5,4, 11 ff.

5. Āśvalayana Grihyasūtra, I, 14, 6-7.

6. Supra, p. fn. 6

7. Winternitz: History of Sanskrit Literature, I, pp. 105 ff. for various theories in this connection see E. Sieg: Itihāsa in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, VII, pp. 460 ff.

8. SB, XI, 1,6,9.

The Pāriplavāni consisted of a series of ten ākhyānas which were repeated in a cycle throughout the year when the sacrificial horse was permitted to roam at large.<sup>1</sup> The existence of a class of literary men who specialised in ākhyāna literature indicates the growth and importance of ākhyānas.<sup>2</sup> The Nirukta also mentions the ākhyānas and a group of literary men who knew them.<sup>3</sup>

In general, ākhyāna means a historical narrative. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa<sup>4</sup> distinguishes ākhyāna from itihāsa and this distinction was maintained later in the Nirukta school. Nevertheless the ākhyānas were gradually assimilated in the itihāsa-purāna tradition.

Writers of the Nirukta school find references to itihāsa even in the Rigvedic hymns.<sup>5</sup> But in any case, as a work of historical nature, itihāsa had come into existence by the later Vedic age, as it is mentioned in the Atharvaveda<sup>6</sup> and the Brāhmaṇas.<sup>7</sup> Derivatively it means 'verily thus it happened'. In its broader sense, which developed later, it includes all forms of historical compositions.<sup>8</sup> But the earlier and

1. Ibid, XIII, 4, 3, 15.

2. Ait Br., III, 25. 1

3. XI, 19.

4. SB, XI, 1, 6, 9.

5. Supra pp. 3-4.

6. XV, 6, 4.

7. SB, XIII, 4, 3, 12, 13; XI, 5, 6, 8; 7, 9; Jaiminiya, 1, 53; Gopatha, I, 21; Tait. Aranyaka, II, 9-11; Brihadāraṇyaka II, 4, 10; IV, 1, 2; etc.

8. Arthaśāstra, I, IV.

narrower meaning was ancient events (pura-vritta). The Nirukta implies<sup>1</sup> this and the Brihaddevata<sup>2</sup> explicitly states it.

The word Purāna is a more comprehensive term. It is properly an adjective but as a substantive it occurs as early as the Atharvaveda where in one passage it definitely means 'ancient lore'.<sup>3</sup> In the same book, it figures twice in the sense of a sacred composition, once with rik, yajuh and saman<sup>4</sup> and again with itihāsa, gāthā and nārāśamī.<sup>5</sup> As works of sacred studies, purāna and itihāsa occur together in the Brahmanas, the Āranyakas and the Upanishads<sup>6</sup> and sometimes they are joined together in a dvandva compound which indicates their close association and affinity. In the Atharvaveda, the Brahmanas and the early Upanishads, they are mentioned in the singular. These stray and incidental references indicate that itihāsa and purāna were two allied classes of work with similar contents.

Such components of oral tradition were characterised by the fluidity of their contents, and constant revision.

1. X, 26. After giving mythological and metaphysical explanations on RV, X, 82, 2, which respectively take Viśvakarmā as a god and 'the creative and penetrating faculties of mind' Yāska proceeds to say "here they tell an itihāsa: Viśvakarmā, the son of Bhuvana, once performed a sarvamedha sacrifice. See also XII, 10.
2. IV, 46 and Macdonell's note on it.
3. XI, 10, 7.
4. XI, 7, 24.
5. XV, 6, 4.
6. Supra<sup>10</sup> fn.7

Sometimes the smaller units of gāthā and nārāśamsī were welded together, while at others they were inserted in itihāsa and purāna. Thus, the akhyāna of Sunahṣepa comprised as many <sup>as</sup> <sub>100</sub> gāthās.<sup>1</sup> The Mahābhārata, which is the representative work of the itihāsa tradition, contains many of these gāthās which are generally introduced with a set formula: "and thus on this topic, those who know the Purānic lore sing this gāthā".<sup>2</sup> Likewise the Rāmāyana, another work of the itihāsa group, preserves several gāthās.<sup>3</sup> Lastly the gāthā is one of the three constituent elements of the Purānas.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly the akhyānas were absorbed in itihāsa and purāna. The Mahābhārata not only contains numerous akhyānas, but the work itself is described as a great akhyāna.<sup>5</sup> That the akhyāna works were sometimes inserted in the Mahābhārata en bloc is conclusively proved by the fact that the Adiparvan contains both the parts of the Yāyātika with the original titles Pūrva-yāyāta and Uttara-yāyāta.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, Vālmīki wove the Rāmāyana out of the material gathered from the gāthās and the akhyānas relating the greatness of Rāma.<sup>7</sup> Further, the akhyānas and supplementary akhyānas formed two of the three constituents of the Purānas.<sup>8</sup> They were collated and system-

1. Ait. Br. I, 13-18. Satagathāni Saunahṣepakhyānam.

2. I, 121, 13; VII, 67, 14 etc.

3. See infra, p.32.

4. Vishnu, III, 6.15.

5. I, 1,16. (B.O.R.I, Edition).

6. See V.S. Agrawal, Pāṇini, (Hindi edition) Benares, V.S. 2012, pp.231-232

7. See infra p.21

8. Vishnu, III, 6.15.

atised in the framework of vaniṣṭa and were utilised as vāñ-  
śānucharita.

This unceasing centripetal process which seems to have started early and which worked throughout this period when the tradition had not received a fixed literary form, ultimately created the two massive traditions of itihāsa and purāna.

#### Development of Historical Tradition

Towards the concluding phase of the later Vedic period, the literature of the itihāsa - purāna tradition grew considerably. That itihāsa and purāna, the two amorphous masses of oral tradition, crystallized into several works, is attested by the Taittirīya Aranyaka, a later passage of which thrice mentions itihāsa and purāna in the plural.<sup>1</sup> The vaniṣṭa which became a characteristic feature of the Purānas, developed during this period<sup>2</sup> and its inclusion in the Purānas considerably swelled them. The Bharata saga and probably the gāthās which celebrated the glorious deeds of ■ Aikshvāku Rāma also came into existence.<sup>3</sup> The grammatical tradition vouches for the luxuriant growth of ākhyāna works. It not only mentions this literary genre but also names specific works of this category. Kātyāyana refers to the

1. II, 9; 10; 11.

2. See infra, p.26

3. See infra, p.11

Daivāsurani<sup>1</sup> which is evidently identical with the Devāsura-  
ākhyāna of the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa. Patañjali names three  
ākhyānas - the Yavakṛitiča, the Praiyāngavika and the Yayātika.<sup>2</sup>  
Elsewhere he says that the work embodying the ākhyāna of  
Yayāti was divided into two parts called Pūrvayayāta and  
Uttarayayāta.<sup>3</sup>

Lastly, ākhyāyikā, a form associated with ākhyāna, assumed its literary shape during this period. The earliest reference to the word ākhyāyikā is in the Taittirīya Aranyaka, where it denotes a story illustrating some moral precept.<sup>4</sup> The Vṛittiikāra used it in the same sense when he stated that some passages in the Brāhmaṇas are anecdotal (ākhyāyikā-svarūpa).<sup>5</sup> But Kātyāyana takes it as a form of historical composition allied to ākhyāna, itihasa and purāna. Patañjali gives the names of three ākhyāyikās - the Vāsavadattā, the Sumanottarā and the Bhaimarathi.<sup>6</sup> Ākhyāyikā was always considered a form of historical composition.<sup>7</sup>

This efflorescence of the historical tradition was due

1. Vārttika on the Ashtādhyāyi, IV, 3, 88.

2. IV. 2.60.

3. On VI, 2, 103.

4. I, 6.

5. IV, 2, 60.

6. The Arthaśāstra (I, IV) regards ākhyāyikā as a constituent part of itihasa. Bāna (Kādambarī, Pūrvabhāga, N.S.P., p.7) classed ākhyāyikā with ākhyānaka, itihasa and purāna. The writers on Sahitya-Sastra maintained that the subject matter of ākhyāyikā should be the actual events.

7. See infra, pp.57 ff. Winternitz (JRAS, 1903) thinks that the verse of the Mahābhārata (§1138) which refers to kathā and ākhyāyikā is a later interpolation. But see the Rāmāyaṇa, I. 87.

to the growing influence of the Bhrigvāngirases over it.

#### The Bhrigvāngirases and the Historical Tradition

In the Rigveda, the priest-poet is variously mentioned as kāru and kirin from skri to commemorate, kavi from ku to speak, and rishi from rish to flow or utter streams of songs. The Kāru was a professional man.<sup>1</sup> He was attached to the royal household and lived amongst the retainers.<sup>2</sup> During this period, poetry was especially associated with the priestly class,<sup>3</sup> although persons in aristocratic circles may also have shown their poetic talents. Usually the royal priest was also the poet-laureate. On various occasions he had to compose eulogies for his royal patron.<sup>4</sup>

Broadly speaking, there were three main clans of priests in the Vedic age. The Vāsishthas and the Viśvāmitras were the priests of the Bharata kings.<sup>5</sup> The Kāṇvas were associated with the Yadus,<sup>6</sup> Parāśavas<sup>7</sup> and Purus.<sup>8</sup> Bhāradvāja was the

1. IX, 112, 3. Vedic Index, I. 150.

2. Vedic Index, loc.cit.

3. Geldner: Vedische Studien, II, p.153.

4. "Wo es anging, war der Purohita eines Fürsten wohl zugleich sein Hofpoet, der nicht allein als Baṛde in den mehr weltlichen gathāḥ und nārāśanisyah den Ruhm und die Freigebigkeit seines Herrn besang, sondern auch sein geistlicher dichter war, als purohita des kultus, als Brahman auf Wunsch und Bestellung des Königlichen Yajamāna für die Opferfeier ein neues Sūktam zu liefern hatte." Geldner, Vedische Studien, II. pp.153-154.

5. See Emra pp. 16 ff.

6. RV, VIII, 4, 7.

7. RV, VIII, 6.

8. RV, VIII, 19, 36.

priest of Divodāsa<sup>1</sup> but later the Bhāradvājas were connected with the Sriñjayas,<sup>2</sup> the allies of the Bharatas. Amongst minor lines, the Kavashas appear as priests of the Kurus,<sup>3</sup> whereas the Bhṛigus are mentioned along with the Druhyus and were probably the priests of the Mānavas.<sup>4</sup>

The earlier stage of the historical tradition of the Bharatas was developed under Bhāradvāja<sup>5</sup> and Viśvāmitra.<sup>6</sup> Later, however, the family of Vasishtha exercised a dominating influence over it to the exclusion of the descendants of Viśvāmitra, who might have had some connections with the dynasty. In several hymns, Vasishtha celebrated the heroic deeds of Sudās.<sup>7</sup> Parāsara and Satayātu of this family of Vasishtha were also associated with the Bharata king.<sup>8</sup> The former was either a son or more probably a grand-son while the latter was perhaps a brother of Vasishtha.<sup>9</sup> Śakti the son of Vasishtha, is mentioned in latter Vedic literature<sup>10</sup>. The name of Vyāsa, the

1. Pañchavimśa Br., XV, 3,7; see also Kāthaka Samhita, XXI, 10, where Bhāradvaja is said to have given Pratardana the kingdom RV, VI, 47, 24; the Brihaddevatā, V, 124, ff.

2. Sāṅkhayana Śrauta Sūtra, XVI, II, II, see also infra<sup>b.17</sup> fnn.384-107.

3. See A.D.Pusalkar, Kuru Sravana in Studies in Epics and Purāṇas in India, 1955, B.V.B. Bombay.

4. RV, VIII, 3,9; 6,18; 102,4; for the mānavas: "With this great anointing of Indra, Chyavana Bhārgava anointed Saryāta Mānava" Ait.Br. VIII, 21-22.

5. The Pañchavimśa Br. XV, 3,7; RV, I, 116,8; VI, 16,5. Bharadvājāya grīnate. VI, 31,4. see also Kāthaka Sanihita, XXI, 10.

6. RV, III, 33.

7. RV, VII, 18.

8. RV, VII, 18,21.

9. Nirukta VI, 30; Geldner, Vedische Studien, 2,132.

10. Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa, II, 390 (JAOS. XVIII, 47).

descendant of Parāśara occurs in the Taittiriya Aranyaka<sup>1</sup> and the Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa.<sup>2</sup> Up to Parāśara, the connection of the Vāśishthas with the Bharata family is beyond any doubt. In the tradition Vyāsa, the descendant of Parāśara, is credited with the systematisation of the Bharata saga. As observed earlier, royal eulogies were not generally incorporated in the Rigveda. They existed as a floating mass of literature and gave rise to the Bharata saga to which Vyāsa seems to have given a literary garb. However, after the merging of the Bharatas and the Kuru-Pāñchālas, the influence of the Vāśishthas naturally declined and ultimately their hold on historical traditions passed on to other families of priests.

Bharadvāja was the priest of Divodāsa of the Bharata family. But at the time of Sudās the Bhāradvājas were connected not with the Bharatas, but with their allies, the Sriñjayas. Pāyu Bhāradvāja had Aśvattha Sriñjaya as his patron.<sup>3</sup> In the Brihaddevatā, he is credited with assisting Prastoka, another king of the same family.<sup>4</sup> The Kānya was also an important priestly family. Vatsa Kānya celebrates in a hymn Tirindira of the Parśu family.<sup>5</sup> The tradition also supports this association as the Sāṅkhayana Srauta Sūtra mentions Vatsa

1. I, 9, 2.

2. III, 9, 8.

3. RV. VI, 47, 24;

4. V, 124 ff. See also the battle hymn, RV, VI, 75.

5. RV, VIII, 46.

as the priest of the Pārasava king Tirindira.<sup>1</sup> He was also connected with the Puru king Trasadasyu<sup>2</sup>, and with the Yadus, and Turvasas<sup>3</sup>. Sobhari, another member of the family, received the royal patronage of Trasadasyu, the son of Purukutsa.<sup>4</sup>

The later strata of the Rigveda clearly indicate the growing influence of the Kāṇvas over historical traditions. The eighth book ascribed to them is characterized by rare metres like pragātha and unusual contents - the majority of the dānastutis are in it. As we have seen, the Kāṇvas were especially connected with the gāthas. Later traditions group these families under the Angirases<sup>5</sup> and this is supported by several references to the Angirases in the Rigvedic hymns composed by the Kāṇvas and the Bhāradvājas.<sup>6</sup> Undoubtedly, the Bṛigus are associated with this priestly culture-complex.

In the later Vedic Age, the families of the Angirasas, the Atharvanas and the Bṛigus merged to form a powerful Bṛigvāngiras group. The fusion of these three families was an event of considerable importance to Indian historiography. The process of integration had started in the Vedic age. The

1. XVI, 32, 20.

2. RV, VIII, 8, 8 and 21; 3. RV, VIII, 6,46; VIII, 9,14.

4. RV, VIII, 9,36.

5. Vāyu P., II, 4,97-98; 106;

6. RV, I, 45 which is a sūkta of the kāṇva family (see V.5) mentions Angirasas in the verse 3. See also RV, VI, 2,10; 16,11;

three families are mentioned together in the Rigveda<sup>1</sup> or the Bhrigus are mentioned along with either the Atharvans<sup>2</sup> or the Angirases.<sup>3</sup> Further, the Atharvaveda is called alternatively the text of the Atharvāṅgirases and that of the Bhrigvāṅgirases.<sup>4</sup> "This inter-relation of three names continues in the Yajus and the Brāhmaṇa texts, but in such a way that the juxtaposition of Bhrigu and Angiras becomes exceedingly frequent broaching in fact complete synonymy. The latter is reached in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa where the sage Chyavana is designated either as a Bhārgava or as an Angirasa".<sup>5</sup> Similarly Dadhyāñch is sometimes called Atharvan and at others Angirasa.<sup>6</sup> Further evidence for the fusion of three families is found in the Mahābhārata.<sup>7</sup>

This composite family is very intimately connected with the itihāsa - purāṇa tradition. According to the Chhāndogya Upanishad, the Atharvaveda, a text of this family, stands in the same relation to the itihāsa-purāṇa, as the rik to the Rigveda, the Yajus to the Yajurveda and the Sāman to the Sāmaveda.<sup>8</sup>

1. X, 14,6.

2. X, 92, 10.

3. VIII, 43, 13.

4. The Bhrigvāṅgirasah as the name of the Atharvaveda occurs in the Vaitana Sūtra, 1.5; Gopatha Br. I, 1,39; 2,18; III, 1.2, 4 etc. the general term is the Atharvāṅgirasah.

5. M. Bloomfield: The Hymns of the Atharvaveda, SBE, XLIII, p. xxvii.

6. Tait Sami, V, 1,4,4; Pañchavimśa Br. XII, 8.6.

7. "The Authorship of the Mahābhārata", ABORI XXIV, pp. 71 ff.

8. Chh. Up., III, 3,4.

More explicitly, the same work adds, "the Atharvāṅgirases are the bees, the itihāsa-purāna is the flower".<sup>1</sup>

The Mahābhārata, which developed out of the Bharata saga, is definitely the work of the Bhṛigvāṅgirases. After analysing the Bhārgava legends, in the Mahābhārata, Sukthankar concludes, "In the first place, we have very definite evidence of the fact that our epic (scil. the Mahābhārata) has been consciously and deliberately expanded at least in one instance: the surreptitious addition of a branch of Bhārgava legends to the Kuru-Pāndava epic in the shape of the so-called Pauloma-parvan in the Adi which is evidently made up of Bhārgava legends and has not even the remotest intrinsic connection with the story of the epic. Then ... tendentious "Bhṛiguization" of older legends. And, last but not the least, we must take account of the very important fact that the kulapati Saunaka himself, before whom the Mahābhārata is stated to have been recited by the Sūta Ugraśravas was also a Bhārgava! .. There should be therefore, in my opinion, no hesitation in concluding that in our version of the Mahābhārata, there is a conscious - nay deliberate - weaving together or rather stitching together of the Bhārata legends with the Bhārgava myths."<sup>2</sup>

1. Ibid, III, 4.1 See also III, 4.2 "Those very hymns of the Atharvāṅgirases brooded over the Itihāsa-purāna".
2. The Bhṛigus and the Bhārata; A Text-historical Study, Critical Studies in the Mahābhārata, (V.S. Sukthankar Memorial Edition) p.280.

Equally clear is the evidence for the fact that the tradition of the Rāmāyana was developed by the Bṝhīgvaṅgirases. The Harivamīśa states that the paurānikas sang the gāthās celebrating the greatness of Rāma.<sup>1</sup> The Sāntiparvan further adds that the gāthās were developed into an ākhyāna by the Bhārgavas.<sup>2</sup> The internal evidence of the Rāmāyana indicates that its nucleus was formed by an ākhyāna of the Aikshvāku family.<sup>3</sup> Valmiki who wove the epic out of it was a Bhārgava - the descendant of Chyavana.<sup>4</sup> The members of the Bṝhīgvaṅgiras family play an important role in the story of the Rāmāyana. Legends about Bhāradvāja Angirasa, Saṁvartta, Chyavana, Uṣanas, Jamadagni and others are narrated at several places in the epic.<sup>5</sup> This leaves but little doubt that the Bṝhīgvaṅgirases developed the saga of Rāma, composed the Rāmāyana, and introduced their own legends in it.

The contribution of the Bṝhīgvaṅgirases to the development of the Puranic lore is considerable. Besides an enormous mass of the Bhārgava legends scattered in various Purānas, the tradition of the Puranic transmission indicates the vital role which they played in the growth and propagation of Puranic

1. XLI, 49.

2. LVI, 40.

3. I, 5, 3;

4. His Bhārgava lineage is mentioned in the Rāmāyana, VII, 94, 26. The Buddhacharita, I, 43, Sāntiparvan, 56, 40, Matsya Purāna, XII, 51.

5. N.J.Shende: The Authorship of the Rāmāyana, JUB, XII, pt.II, pp. 19 ff.

literature. According to the Vishnu, the Purāna was originally composed by the Rishi and was transmitted to Parāsara through Ribhu, Priyavrata, Bhāguri and the Bhārgava sages such as Dadhīchi, Sārasvata, Bṛigu, Vatṣa and others.<sup>1</sup> The Mārkandeya is reported to have been learnt originally by Chyavana, the Bhārgava, who declared to Daksha, from whom Mārkandeya the Bhārgava learnt it.<sup>2</sup>

Not only the itihāsas and the Purānas, but other historical compositions - the ākhyāna and the ākhyāyikā - also bear the impress of the Bṛigvāṅgirases. The Mahābhāshya and the Kāśikā speak of an ākhyāna on Bhargava Rāma, the favourite hero of the Bṛigvāṅgirases.<sup>3</sup> Early ākhyāyikās are unfortunately lost to us, and not much is known about them from incidental references in other works. But if, in their absence, the evidence of the Harshacharita, the earliest known example of ākhyāyikā, is taken into consideration, it will demonstrate in very clear terms the influence of the Bhārgavas on this historical genre.<sup>4</sup>

These different lines of evidence will indicate the amazing hold of the Bṛigvāṅgirases over historical traditions, at least from the later Vedic period.

1. VI, 8, 43-49; Wilson: Collected Works, Vol. V, 250-51.

2. XLIV, 20-25 (Bibliothica Indica Series) C. 1862.

3. On the Ashtādhyāyi, VI, 2, 103; for the Kāśikā, Ed. by Bāl Sastri, 1898, Benares, p. 561.

4. See infra pp. 51-60

### The Sūtas and the Vanīśa Literature

Besides the Bhṛigvāngirases, the institution of the Sūtas was another factor in the development of the historical traditions. The word sūta occurs in the Yajurveda,<sup>1</sup> the Atharvaveda,<sup>2</sup> [the] Samīhitās<sup>3</sup> and the Brāhmaṇas.<sup>4</sup> The Yajurveda associates him with song,<sup>5</sup> and the Brāhmaṇas declare him to be inviolate.<sup>6</sup> In the former, the sūta appears in collocation with the Māgadha.<sup>7</sup> All these facts indicate that, in the later Vedic period, the word sūta meant a minstrel or a bard.<sup>8</sup>

The word sūta is of doubtful origin. Scholars connect it with su to consecrate.<sup>9</sup> But it might have been derived from su to impel.<sup>10</sup> According to the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, the king in the course of the Rājasūya sacrifice "goes to the house of the sūta, and prepares a barley pap for Varuna; for sūta is the impellent of gods; therefore it is for Varuna".<sup>11</sup>

1. XXX, 6.

2. III, 5, 7.

3. Tait. Sāmī, I, 8, 9, 1. Maitrā Sāmī (Rājasūya) II, 6, 5, 1. Kāthaka Sāmī, XV, 4; XVII, 12, XXVIII, 3.

4. Tait. Br. I, 7, 3, 19. SB., V, 3, 1, 5; 4, 4, 17-18.

5. The text as given in Weber's edition is "nṛittāya Sūtāni, gitāya sailūshāni" but the Taitt. Br. III, 4, 2, 1 quotes it as gitāya Sūtāni nṛittāya Sailūshāni". The second reading is correct as in the Sanskrit literature, Sailūsha (a dancer) is always associated with dancing and never with singing.

6. Sūtāyahantvāya, Kāthaka, XVII, 12.

7. XXX, 5-7.

8. Vedic Index, II, p. 462.

9. Weber: Indische Studien, 17, 200; Vedic Index II, p. 463.

10. Heesterman, The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration, p. 72.

11. SB., V, 3, 1, 5.

The way in which the sūta impelled kings may be known from a significant passage of the Kāthaka Samhitā:

"By (the celebration) of the midday pressing and with the power endowed to him by Marut, Indra killed Vṛitra .... It (scil. the Marutvatiya verse) strengthens the sacrificer and kills Vṛitra .... With the first Marutvatiya, he (the sacrificer or Indra) raises the thunderbolt, with the second he hurls and with the third he lays (the enemy) low .. Wishing to kill Vṛitra, Indra gave gifts to the gods [so that they might come with full vigour for his assistance]. He killed Vṛitra with (the help of the gods and) the marutvatiya hymns .. Therefore the king wins the battle with (the help of) the threefold (recitation) of the Gāyatrī by the sūtas and the gramanis.<sup>1"</sup>

The passage indicates firstly that the sūtas and the gramanis used to recite the Gāyatrī and other verses and secondly that their recitation was supposed to have the effect of giving energy to the king and thus impelling him to defeat his enemies. However at an earlier time this function was discharged by priests. Explaining the significance of an unusual hymn in the Rigveda,<sup>2</sup> the Brihaddevata<sup>3</sup> narrates a story. Asked by his father, Pāyu Bhāradvāja consecrated the

1. Kāthaka Sāmī, XXVIII, 3.

2. VIII, 75.

3. V, 124-138.

kings Prastoka Sriñjaya and Abhyāvarti Chāyamāna by the hymn in question, with the result that they scored a victory over their adversaries. Thus the evidence of the Kāthaka-Samhitā is important as it evinces the process through which a branch of the priestly class crystallized into the group of the Sūtas. This close association of the Sūtas and the priestly class is further indicated by a late but safe tradition. The Baudhāyana Srauta Sūtra mentions Sūta<sup>1</sup> and Sauti<sup>2</sup> as gotras respectively under the Bhāradvajas of the Āngirasa group and under the Kas्यapas. Apastamba likewise lists sūta<sup>3</sup> under the kevalāngirasa group. Further in the tradition, sūta is described as a brāhmaṇa<sup>4</sup> and as a venerable sage, well-versed in the Vedic lore.

The sūta was one of the most important court-officials in the later Vedic age. He was one of the eight vīras.<sup>5</sup> As a ratnīnī, he could exert much influence in the kingdom.<sup>6</sup> The ceremony of "passing down the sword" indicates that in rank he was immediately below the priest and the members of the royal family. Like grāmāṇī, sūta was merely a functional designation<sup>7</sup>

1. Brough, J. The Gotra Pravara Mañjari, Cambridge, 1953, p.113.

2. Ibid, p.162.

3. Ibid, p.130.

4. Vayu Purāna, I, 33-38. Pusalkar: The Brāhmaṇa and the Kshatriya Tradition, Prof. Hiriyinna Commemoration Volume, Mysore, 1952, pp. 151-52; Diskalkar, IHQ, VIII, 760.

5. Pañchavimśa Brāhmaṇa, IX, 1,4.

6. AV, III, 5,7; Tait.Br., IV, 5,2,1 etc.

7. SB, V, 4,4,17-18.

and did not denote caste.

The Yajurveda associates the Sūtas with songs, which in the light of the close connection of sūtas and kings, are to be interpreted as songs celebrating kings. The Rigveda contains some such songs - the gāthās a variety of which was called anuvamīṣyā in the Mahābhārata<sup>1</sup> as it gives a genealogy. In the tradition the sūtas are credited with the composition and preservation of royal genealogy and the line of priestly succession (yamīṣa).<sup>2</sup> The yanīṣa literature dealing with priests had come into existence in the later Vedic period. The Vanīṣa-Brahmana belonging to the Sāmaveda gives the succession of teachers from Kaśyapa to Vaiśrava.<sup>3</sup> The Jaimini-Upanishad-Brahmana,<sup>4</sup> the Satapatha<sup>5</sup> and the Brihadāraṇyaka<sup>6</sup> contain various lists of sages arranged in order of succession which in the texts are specifically termed yamīṣa. Now, the existence of the priestly yamīṣa in the sacredotal literature, the references to the Sūtas, who in the tradition are credited with the preservation of royal and priestly genealogies, coupled with the facts that there existed a category

1. III, 88, 5.

2. Vāyupurāna, I, 31-32; Padma Purāna, V, 1, 27-28; see also Pargiter. AHT, p.15.

3. Max Müller, History of Sanskrit Literature, pp.233-234.

4. III, 40-42 and IV, 16-17.

5. X, 6,5,9.

6. IV, 3,14.

of historical composition known as the Purāṇas, and that the royal genealogies of very early times are preserved - though not accurately - in the Puranic tradition, create very strong grounds for supposing that the royal genealogies also existed during this period.

The Sutas, who were royal officers mostly drawn from the Bṛigvāṅgiras families, composed the yamśas of various dynasties. Handled by the Bṛigvāṅgirases and other members of the Brāhmaṇa caste, the vanīṣa became a representative form of historical composition. The stray historical works which were collated and systematised within the framework of vanīṣa constituted the category of vanīṣānucharita. The ancient lore with different branches of cosmogony, combined with the vanīṣa and the varīṣānucharita constituted the five characteristic features (lakshanas) of the Puranic lore.

The experts on genealogical literature continued to write yamśas up to the fourth century A.D. when, for reasons explained later, the composition of yamśas in the Purāṇas suddenly stopped although the Puranic lore continued to grow.

### Historical Tradition Standardised

[B.C. 400 - A.D. 400]

This oral tradition, which flourished from the Early Vedic Age as a floating mass of experiences, history and legends, and which began to become formalised in the concluding phase of the Later Vedic Age, assumed a fixed literary form between B.C. 400 and A.D. 400. One of the factors which contributed to the standardisation of this tradition was the impact of the Saka Völkerwanderung. Toynbee is, therefore, only partially correct. "When a demand for 'heroic poetry' arises among barbarian conquerors who settle down to live off their conquests as a ruling caste" he states, "this demand can be satisfied in either one of two alternative ways. Either the barbarians can produce minstrels of their own to celebrate their own deeds in their own languages, or they call upon the subject population to supply them the spiritual commodity of 'heroic poetry'. . . When the Śakas felt a need for heroic poetry they addressed themselves to the Indic people".<sup>1</sup> But the major reasons for such developments in India were the decline of ritualistic tradition, and the rise of unorthodox royal families of the Nandas and the Mauryas, followed by the upsurge

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1. Study of History Vol. V, Annex II to V.C. (i) (C) 3, p.605.

of the Āgamic sects and the new orthodox powers of the Sātavāhanas, the Sungas and the Kāṇvas. In the beginning, forces of reformation pushed the ritualistic tradition in the background but later a movement of counter-reformation brought back the old religion in considerably modified form. The itihāsa tradition which comprised the second order of religious literature, therefore, came to the forefront. Thus under the religious urge, the itihāsa-purāna literature was given the fixed literary form. Religion standardised the itihāsa tradition but it also destroyed the historical character of the tradition by inundating it with the accounts of practices and philosophies of various cults.

#### Traditions of Vanīśa

The vanīśa literature however did not cease to exist. Besides giving rise to a simple oral tradition of bards, through adaptations and embellishments it assumed four forms. The Buddhist tradition of vanīśa which started a few centuries before the Christian era, and in which the Rājavamīśa of the Mahāvastu<sup>1</sup> and the Buddhavamīśa of the Suttapitaka<sup>2</sup> were com-

1. E.Senart, Le Mahāvastu, Paris, 1882, pp.338-355. Tr. by I.J. Jones, M.A., London, 1949, Vol.I, pp.285 ff.
2. The Minor Anthologies of the Pāli Canon, SBB, IX.

posed, continued through the Simhala-atthakathā, the Dīpavāṇīsa, the Mahāvāṇīsa<sup>1</sup> and other similar works. To popularise their religion, the Jainas also adopted the tradition. The Harivāṇīsa, the Rāmāyana and other historical and quasi-historical works of itihāsa traditions were written in a Jaina frame-work.<sup>2</sup> The third tradition was developed in the royal secretariat and court. At least from Mauryan times, royal archives were organised and maintained. Besides several other documents, the archives kept the records of "the history of customs, professions, and transactions of countries, villages, families and corporations; the gains in the form of gifts to the king's courtiers .., the gains of the wives and sons of the king" and above all of "the treaties with, issues of ultimatum to, and payments of tribute from or to, friendly or inimical kings."<sup>3</sup> Hiuen Tsang also notes, "As to their archives and records there are separate custodians of these. The official annals and state-papers are called collectively ni-lo-pi-tu (or ch'a); in these good and bad are recorded, and instances of public

1. The Dīpavāṇīsa and Mahāvāṇīsa and Their Historical Development in Ceylon, by Wilhelm Geiger, Tr. by E.I. Coomaswamy, Colombo, 1908. Also, A.K. Warder: The Pali Canon and Its' Commentary as an Historical Record, Historians of India Pakistan and Ceylon, London, 1961, pp.44-56; and L.S. Perera, The Pali Chronicle of Ceylon, in the same book pp.29-32.
2. Wenternitz, M., History of Indian Literature, Calcutta, 1933, II, 486-88. For example see Ravishena, Padmapurāna, Banaras, 1958, I, 51. IkshvācuprabhratInāncha varisānām guna-kirtanam, and also Chapter V.
3. Arthaśāstra, II, 25. Tr. by R. Shamsastri, Bangalore, 1915.

calamity and good fortune are set forth in detail."<sup>1</sup>

Alberuni probably refers to the archives of the Sāhī kings of Kabul when he notes a tradition that "the pedigree of this royal family, written in silk, exists in the fortress of Nagarkot."<sup>2</sup> Further, there are quite a few incidental references to the yamīsa in the injunctions of the dharma-sastra writers regarding the drafting of royal edicts.

Kautilya in the chapter on the royal charters enjoins on the writer of records to mention the name, yamīsa and titles of the king who issues the edict.<sup>3</sup> Yājñavalkya says, "while executing a deed of land-grant, the king should issue a permanent edict bearing his signature, name and yamīsyā<sup>4</sup> (ancestors)." According to Brīhaspati and Vyāsa, the royal genealogy (termed respectively yamīsa and yamīśānupūrvī) should be recorded in the charter of a land-grant.<sup>5</sup> Probably because of their containing this royal genealogy, inscriptions are sometimes called pūrvā<sup>6</sup> (past history). These injunctions

1. Yuan Chwang's Travels in India. Ed. by T. Watters, London, 1904, Vol. I, p.154. See also Samuel Beal, Siyuki, London, N. p. 178.

2. Edward C. Sachau: Alberuni's India, London, 1888, Vol.II, pp. 10-11.

3. L, 28, (Trivendrum) p. 168.

4. Achāra, 318-320.

5. Brīhaspati Smṛiti, GOS, - Baroda, p. 62.

6. Bīch.Cchhabra, Pūrvā meaning Prasasti, Sarūpa-bhāratī, Hoshapur(V.V.R.I) 1954  
pp. 14-24

necessarily indicate the existence of royal genealogy in state archives.

But these archival records have not come down to us in original and complete form. The vamīśavalis preserved in some outlying provinces may be regarded as greatly modified versions of the vamīśa lore.<sup>1</sup> Royal epigraphs on the other hand represent it in fragmentary and sometimes in condensed form.

Besides throwing several offshoots in India, Ceylon and Burma, and in royal courts, monasteries and temples, the vamīśa mainly branched off into classical literature and developed under the influence of Clio and Caliope. In integral form it blossomed into full vamīśa works - the Raghuvamīśa and the Harivamīśa being the earliest available specimens in classical sanskrit literature. The Aśmakavamīśa<sup>2</sup> is now lost as also the Sasivanīśa<sup>3</sup> and the Nripāli<sup>4</sup> of Kshemendra, the Pārthivāvalī<sup>5</sup> of Hesarāja, the eleven

1. For example Nepāla-Vamīśavali, analysis of which may be seen in Luciana Petech, Mediaeval History of Nepal, Roma, 1958, pp. 5, ff; JBORS, XXVIII, 1942, 24-42.

2. This work is mentioned by Bhāmaha in his Kavyalankāra, I, 34.

3. The Kavikanthabharana of Kshemendra preserves several verses from this work. See illustrations of 'samasta-sakta-vyāpi', and prakhyatavrittigati in sarga III, and 'arthavaimalya' and 'desaparichaya' in sarga IV.

4. Rajatarangini, I, 13.

5. Ibid, I, 17.

rājakathās<sup>1</sup> (royal chronicles) mentioned by Kalhana, and the Gāndorīnsa-kula prasasti of Harsha.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, the Mūshikavamīśa of Atula<sup>3</sup> and the Rashtrandhvamīśa of Rudra<sup>4</sup> have been preserved. The Rājataranginīs of Kalhana and his successors also belong to this class.

Another current of this epic tradition of vamīśa divided itself into various streamlets forming different categories of ornate epics - the charita and others.

1. Rājatarangini, I, 14.
2. The name of this work is mentioned in the Naishadhiya-charita, VII, 110, see also A.N. Jani, A Critical Study of Sriharsha, Baroda, 1957, 110-11, IA, XLII, 83, 84.
3. Travancore Archaeological Series, II, 87-113.
4. Edited by E. Krishnamāchārya, G.O.S., Baroda, 1917.

### The Rise of Historical Narratives

The second stage of historical tradition, developed in the milieu of royal courts, is represented by historical epics, generally called charitas or biographies, composed in the Early Medieval period. The history of biographical writing in India may be traced to the Buddhacharita and further to the Rāmayana<sup>1</sup> and the ākhyānas of the Vedic literature. But never before the Early Mediaeval age, were attempts made at the writing of the biographies of intimately known contemporary kings. It seems that Bāṇabhatta in the first quarter of the 7th century initiated the series of such biographies by writing the Harshacharita. If earlier texts of this kind existed, we have no evidence of them.

The transformation of the historical tradition of itihāsa and purāna into these royal biographies is largely due to the change in the position of the Bṛhgavāngirases. In the Early Mediaeval Age when the heroic tradition of history changed into the courtly one, the wandering sūtas and the Bṛhgavāngirases were replaced by salaried court poets and Sāndhivigrahikas who were either themselves Bṛhgavāngirases or were closely associated with them.

1. In Rāmayana I, 31 Brahmā requests Vālmiki: Rāmasya charitani kṛtsnaini kuru rishi-sattama. See also Rāmayana IV. 1.

The Bhṛigvāṅgirases received royal patronage in various kingdoms much before the beginning of the early mediaeval age. In eastern and central India, they obtained sasanas from Bhūlunda, the king of Valkha in Khandesh<sup>1</sup> (357 A.D.), Subandhu, the king of Mahishmatī (417 A.D.),<sup>2</sup> Vyāghrasena, the Traikūtaka king<sup>3</sup> (490 A.D.), Dadda II, the Gurjara king,<sup>4</sup> and numerous other rulers in these regions.<sup>5</sup> The donees of the Madhupban<sup>6</sup> and Banskhera<sup>7</sup> plates of Harsha were also the Bhārgava and Āngirasabrahmaṇas.

Gradually, the influence of these brāhmaṇas increased. Under Yuvarājadeva I, the Kalachuri king of Tripuri, Bhāk Miśra, an Āngirasabrahmaṇa of the Bhāradvāja gotra, wielded unusual influence on the Chedi kingdom and administration. He was the Prime Minister of the Kalachuri king.<sup>8</sup> In the Viddhasalabhañjikā, Rājaśekhara represented this remarkable personality as Bhāgurāyana, the counsellor of the royal hero Karpūravarsha, to be identified with Yuvarājadeva Keyūravarsha.<sup>9</sup> It is

1. Indore Plate of Bhulunda, CII, IV, p.9.
2. Barwani Plate of Subandhu, ibid, p.18.
3. Surat Plates of Vyāghrasena, ibid, p.27.
4. Kaira Plates of Dadda II, Year 385, ibid, p.70. Sankheda Plates of Dadda II, ibid, p.77.
5. Bagumra Plates of Allasakti, ibid, p.119. Nasik Plates of Dharāśraya-Jayasiṁha, ibid, p.130.
6. EI, I, p.73 (Sāvarni-Bhārgava);
7. Ibid, IV, p.211 (a Bhārdvāja brāhmaṇa)
8. Karitalali Stone Ins. of Lakshmanarāja II, v.6, CII, IV, p.189.
9. ibid, LXXXI.

stated in the Kāritalai inscription that Bhāk Miśra was venerated by kings, and that guided by him Yuvarājadeva I attained prosperity.<sup>1</sup> Someśvara, the son of Bhāk Miśra was held by Lakshmanarāja II in even higher esteem. That he enjoyed rare distinction and unique honour is known from the fact that the king Lakshmanarāja II deemed it as his privilege "to put his shoulder to the palanquin of Someśvara when one of the bearers stumbled through fatigue".<sup>2</sup>

Nāmadeva, a brāhmaṇa of the Bhāradvāja gotra, was the family priest of Jājalladeva II, the Kalachuri king of Kośala, and is celebrated in the Amoda plates.<sup>3</sup> The feet of Dāmodara, the Bhārgava brāhmaṇa of the Sāvarni gotra, were worshipped by kings.<sup>4</sup> An ancient stone image of this celebrity has been discovered by Dr. Hirralal<sup>5</sup> and this fact bears witness to the great influence which he wielded in Mahākośala.

Bhatta Yaśodhara, an Āngirasa brāhmaṇa of the Bhāradvāja gotra from the famous settlement of Takārī, was in the charge of justice in the Chandella administration and was probably the royal priest under Dhāriga.<sup>6</sup>

1. Verse, 6.

2. ibid, v.17.

3. ibid, p.531.

4. ibid, p.531, verse 14;

5. ibid, p.529.

6. Khajuraho ins. No.4, verse 56, EI, I, p.146. As a brāhmaṇa donee from Dhakāri (mistake for Takārī), Yośodhara figures in the Nanyaura Plate of Dhanga, LR, XVI, p.204.

Another personage from the Āngirasi settlement of Takārī, was Sādhārana, the minister of Mahāśivagupta II Janamejaya. He is described as having pleased his royal master by reciting various akhyānakas.<sup>1</sup>

Bhatta Bhavadeva, the Sāndhivigrahika Under Harivarman, the king of Eastern Bengal, was a Bhārgava of the Sāvarṇi gotra.<sup>2</sup> His ancestors obtained a sāsana from an unnamed king of Gaūḍa.<sup>3</sup> His grandfather Ārideva served as a sāndhivigrahika in Vaṅga.<sup>4</sup> That the brāhmaṇas of this group continued to enjoy royal patronage under Bhojavarmaṇ, is known from the Belwa plates.<sup>5</sup> Another famous writer of Bengal, Halāyudha, belonged to the Vatṣa gotra of the Bhārgavas. In his early years, he was a rāja-pandita, in youth a mahāmātya under Lakshmanasena, and in mature years a dharmādhikārī.<sup>6</sup>

The influence of the Bṛigvāṅgirases on the Chāhamāna territory is evidenced by the Lalitavigharāja<sup>7</sup> of Someśvara.

1. EI, III, p.349, LL. 37-42; ibid, VIII, p.143; ibid, XXIII, p.253, LL. 46-48 and p.249.

2. Bhuvaneśvara Ins. of Bhatta Bhavadeva, 1B, p.33, v.3 and 16.

3. Ibid, v.7.

4. Ibid, v.9.

5. 1B, p.21 LL. 43-45.

6. History of Bengal, Dacca, 1943, Vol. II, p.355

7. Prof. F. Kielhorn, Sanskrit Plays Partly Preserved as Inscriptions at Ajmere, 1A, XX, 1891, pp. 201 ff; Beruchstücke ichscher Sihauspiele Inschriften Zu Ajmere, Göttinger Festschrift, 1901.

With ardent admiration and profound respect, the poet introduced in his play the traveller Subhānanda. The king Vigraharāja IV "deemed the sight of such a scholar as the fruition of his accumulated merits".<sup>1</sup> We are told that Subhananda hailed from Takārī, a peerless abode of the brāhmaṇas versed in all branches of learning, and a place visited by scholars from far and wide. It was this settlement where scholars used to tell stories which perforce brought tears to eyes".<sup>2</sup>

This brāhmaṇa settlement of Takārī had become very famous in the 10th-11th centuries. Several epigraphs mention the brāhmaṇas of Takārī, who migrated to Orissa, Bengal, the Chandella kingdom, Mālavā, Karnātaka and Assam and obtained royal patronage.<sup>3</sup> Curiously enough, except one<sup>4</sup> all the

1. 1A, XX,

2. ibid, XX, p.

3. (1) Māndhātā Plates of Devapāla, EI, 110.

(2) Silimpur ins. of Jayapāla, ibid, XIII, 290.

(3) Katak Plates of Mahāśivagupta, L.33, ibid, III, 348.

(4) Katak Plates of Mahābhavagupta, ibid, III, 350.

(5) Kollagallu ins. of khottiga, ibid, XXI, 26.

(6) Naryaura Plates of Devapāla and Jayavarman, ibid, IX, 103.

(7) Rajim Plates of Tīvaraadeva, L.23, CII, III, 295.

(8) Amoda Plates of Prithvīdeva II, ibid, IV, 475.

(9) BAS, Plates of Dhanga, 1A, XVI, 201

(10) Kalas Budrukha Plates of Bhillama III, ibid, XVII, 121

(11) Banda District Plates of Madanavarman, ibid, XVI, 208

See also Kāmarūpasāsanāvalī, 155; 1A, XLVIII, 208; LX, 14.

4. CIT, IV, 475.

brāhmaṇas from Takārī, mentioned in these plates as the recipients of royal gifts, belonged to the Āṅgirasa group with Bhāradvāja as their gotra, and Āṅgirasa, Brīhaspati and Bhāradvāja as their pravaras. The Silimpur inscription underlines this characteristic when ~~sit~~ records, "Of those who had their birth in the family of the Āṅgirasas .., and who could excel in declaring a common lineage with Bhāradvāja, dwelt in by families held in esteem by Aryas, was a place Takārī within the limits of Srāvasti."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the introduction of Subhānanda, the Brāhmaṇa from the Tarkārī settlement of the Āṅgirases, in the Lalitavigharāja, and the depiction of the profound respect of Vigraharāja IV towards him, indicate the influence of Āṅgirasa brāhmaṇas in the Chāhamāna territory. Further, Kadambavāsa, the minister under Somesvara and Prithvirāja III, belonged to the Dadhīcha stock,<sup>2</sup> which as we shall see, was connected with the Bhārgavas.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the Bhṛigvāngirases who had previously subsisted mainly on the tribal economy of the brāhmaṇa villages, now in the early Mediaeval age entered the royal courts based on the feudal or imperial economy. This change in economy replaced in part the traditionally sacred fidelity to the tribe by

1. EI, XIII, p.290, verse 2.

2. The Prithvirāja Raso invariably mentions him as Dahiyā Kaimāsa.

3. See infra, pp. 51-53

personal relationship between king or feudal chief and courtiers. Consequently, the tribe in general sank into insignificance and king emerged as a single important factor conditioning the body-politic. Thus, the courtly school of history, nourished under the traditions and influence of the later Bṝigvāṅgirases, was centred round the personality of the royal hero, in contradistinction to the vaniṣa, composed by earlier Bṝigvāṅgirases who subsisted on the natural economy of the tribal type.

Secondly, here for the first time, historiography was based on court organization in which the prince, the poet, the courtier and the chronicler worked in unison. Of several reasons for this cohesion, one which is very important for the study of historiography is the Bṝigvāṅgiras element which brought the prince and the poet much closer. Even in earlier stages, the Bṝigvāṅgirases largely influenced the composition of heroic poetry on historical themes. But then they composed the vaniṣas mainly of the Ikshvākus, the Aillas, the Bharatas and others - the dynasties which flourished in the distant past. Now, in the Early Mediaeval Age, the brahma-kshatra families with supposed or genuine affiliations with the Bṝigvāṅgirases established kingdoms in several parts of the country. The Vākātakas belonged to the Vishnuvriddha<sup>1</sup> and the Kadambas to

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1. For the gotra of the Vākātakas see Basim Plates of Vindhyaśakti II, SI, p.407 LL.2-3.

the Hārita group<sup>1</sup> - both under the Āngirasas family.<sup>2</sup> Some of the ruling families of the Chālukyas associated themselves with the Hāritas,<sup>3</sup> whereas others claimed a connection with the Bhāradvājas<sup>4</sup> of the Āngirasa group. The Chāhamānas and the Dādhīchas were respectively Bhārgavas<sup>5</sup> and Sārasvatas. This group-affiliation brought further integration of the prince and the poet.

These two facts account for the rise of royal biographies from material culled from the *vāniṣa* lore. The continuation of the Bṛigvāṅgirases as the writers of historical works from the Vedic age to the Mediaeval period, and the change in their economic status are very important for explaining several features of Indian historiography. The change in economic status at once accounts for three important developments in the history of Indian historical writing - the discontinuation of the composition of *vāniṣa* in the Purāṇas after the 4th century A.D., the introduction of the Puranic element in the writings of *vāniṣa* by royal officers and poets of the early mediaeval age, and the rise of the historical narratives. The continuation

1. Infra, pp. 195 and 204

2. Kūrma P. I, 20, 25-8; Linga P. I, 65, 39-43; Vāyu P. 88, 71-9; Vishnu P. IV, 3, 2-3.

3. DKD, 278a, 339, Hy.Ar. Series, No. 8, pp. 9, 17; etc. SII, I, 58 fn. 1.

4. A.R., the M.A.D. 1935, p. 117; EI, I, 257, verse 33.

5. See infra pp. 51-54, 191

on the other hand sheds light on the curious phenomenon of Indian historiography - the persistence of historical traditions of the hoary past manifested variously in later epics in the form of mythology as an attempt of later dynasties to associate themselves with the ancient lines of the Aikshvākus and the Ailas, and a nostalgia towards the distant past expressed in the anachonistic representation of contemporary rulers in the roles of ancient heroes such as Rāma,<sup>1</sup> the Aikshvāku, and Bhīma the Pāndava.<sup>2</sup>

1. See infra, p.233

2. For example, Ranna's; Gadāyuddha. "With regard to his other work, the Gadāyuddha, Ranna says that in admiration of the valour, liberality and other virtues of the king Taila's son Satyāśraya, he took him for his hero and identifying him with the Pāndava prince Bhīma, composed the poem". IA, XL, 41.

### Historical Narratives: Pattern and Chronology

Thus for the first time in the early mediaeval age, historiography was based on court organization, having a real unity between prince, poet, courtier and chronicler. Naturally, therefore, the historical tradition assumed a new complexion. It became an effective medium of expression for courtly culture, an organ for princely propaganda and an instrument for the propagation of new social values - of chivalry, heroism and loyalty. It accordingly framed new literary conventions, novel devices of narratives and a different symbolism.

Firstly, the theme of historical narratives was limited only to some aspects of the life of the king. Therefore the broad meaning of itihāsa that it comprised 'ancient events' arranged in the form of a story to illustrate the truths of the moral, aesthetic, wordly and spiritual spheres,<sup>1</sup> was narrowed down to an account of events culminating in the achievement of royal glory by king. Because of the romantic

1. See supra, pp.10-11 for the concept of itihāsa in the Nirukta and the Arthaśāstra. The Mīmāṃsakas considered ancient events as arthavada i.e. illustrations of Vedic precepts on rituals and social and moral institutions. (Sābara Bhāṣya on the Mīmāṃsa Sūtras, 2.1.33, Calcutta, 1873 p.127). So also Nyāya (The Vatsayana Bhāṣya on the Nyāya Sūtras 2.1.64). The Taittiriya Aranyaka mentions aitihya as one of the four means of attaining knowledge. (Keith, The Philosophy and Religion of the Vedas, H.O.S., p.482). The Mahabharata implies the broader meaning of itihāsa in (I.10-14) "the meritorious tales collected in the Purāṇas filled with the precepts of duty and profit, the acts of princes and great-souled seers, See also Seig, ERE, VII, p.460. See also Jinasena, Ādiprāṇa, I, 24-25. Sixth definition Seig, ERE, VII, p.460. See also Jinasena, Ādiprāṇa, I, 24-25. Sixth definition of itihāsa is: Dharma-Artha-Kāma-mokha-mupadeśa-samanvaya. Purva-Vṛittani kathayuktam itihāsa pracharakshate.

spirit of the age, the ornate style of the epic, and the tradition of the Rāmāyana and the Brihatkathā, the poet-historians represented the abstract idea of royal glory in the form of a beautiful princess symbolising the goddess of Royal Fortune (rājya-srī), whose love the king wins after overcoming insurmountable difficulties. The idea is implicit in the story of the Rāmāyana where immediately after liberating Sītā from the thralldom of Rāvana, Rāma becomes the king of Kośala. The Brihatkathā gives an elaborate treatment of this motif. It was predicted that the husband of Madanamañjukā would be the emperor of the Vidyādhara. The prince Naravāhanadatta thwarted the obstructive designs of his adversaries, married Madanamañjukā and became the emperor. From the fourth century A.D., this motif of royal glory became prevalent. In different forms, it occurs in the Raghuvarṇśa,<sup>1</sup> the Ratnāvalī,<sup>2</sup> the Balabharata<sup>3</sup> and numerous other<sup>4</sup> historical works. Inscriptions of the Guptas,<sup>5</sup> the Pālas,<sup>6</sup> the Pratihāras,<sup>7</sup> the Rāshtrakūṭas<sup>8</sup> and others<sup>9</sup> make

1. Padmā padmātapatrena bheje sāmrājyadīkshitamī, IV, 5.

2. See infra, p.

3. Prologue, (N.S. Edition)

4. NSC, I, 59; VDC, III, 2; IX, 151 etc.

5. Junagarh Ins. of Skandagupta, SI, p.301, verse 5.

6. EI, IV, p.248, verse 4;

7. EI, XVIII, verse 18, p.109.

8. EI, VI, verse 3, p.243.

9. IA, VI, p.210, L.5; ibid, IX, p.34; EI, XI, p.17 L.4; etc.

frequent use of this motif. Writers on Sāhitya-sāstra also recognise it and enjoin that the abduction of a girl and her union with the hero should be described in a historical prose-narrative (ākhyāyikā).<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, in these historical narratives, the process of the achievement of royal glory by the king is invariably developed in five stages of the beginning (prārambha), the efforts (prayatna), the hope of achieving the end (prāptyāsa), the certainty of achievement (niyatāpti) and the achievement (phalāgama). These stages supply an ordered sequence in the story. The use of chronology in terms of ordered sequence of actions rather than in the framework of dates and years is a characteristic of Indian thought.

In ancient India, time was generally viewed in terms of the sequence of actions. The Sāṅkhayana Aranyaka<sup>2</sup> states that time unites procession (gati) recession (nivṛiti) and stasis (sthiti) and by this it unites the whole universe. According to Bhārtrihari, 'Kāla, which is the string-puller (sūtradhāra) in the puppet-show of this world, brings about an ordered sequence in the world by means of his permissive (abhyanjña) and preventive (pratibandha) powers. In the absence of the

1. Kanyāharana-samigrāma-vipralambhodayānyitā. Bhāmaha, Kāvya-lamkāra, I, 27.

2. SA, 7.

preventive power of Time, there would be neither a sequence, nor progression nor regression. All actions would be simultaneous and absolute chaos would reign. A seed, a sprout, a stem and a stalk - all would emerge and exist simultaneously. Therefore all objects having an origination, must have Kāla as an additional contributory cause for ordered sequence.<sup>1</sup>

This sequential form of time in place of the chronological was due to the principle of causality and theories of change which developed in early times. Reality (satyani), according to major schools of philosophy, was of two kinds - the absolute reality which is beyond changes, and the relative reality of 'name and shape' (nāma-rūpa) which is always in a state of flux. History is concerned with the second category of reality. The changes in the relative reality are to be understood in terms of cause and effect. The theory of causality which is variously developed in Vedānta, Sāṃkhya and Nyaya schools as vivarta, parināma and ārambha, forms the bed-rock of metaphysics in orthodox schools of philosophy. In view of these theories, the development of a thing is judged against the prior and posterior forms, that is to say, in a sequence of changes. Evidently, in this framework, the chronological form of time as dates and years would have been meaningless.

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1. Vākyapadiya, III, 9, 4-5, see also the commentary of Helārāja on above.

## Chapter II

### The Harshacharita

#### A Fresh Approach.

History means both past events and their records. In the second sense, history is a conceptual integration of past events in the framework of time and space - the filtering of the past actuality into an intelligible whole through the idealising process which happens in the mind of the historian. It is, in essence, an abstraction of actuality for the sake of its integration with human culture in terms of sequential time. Annals and chronicles integrate this actuality at a lower level while history does it at much deeper ones. The closer the integration of actuality with cultural tradition, the greater will be the abstraction and the higher the historical form.

Therefore, a study of the actuality from a historical record is a complicated process. It requires an appreciation of the nature and form of the idealising agents - a penetration into the mental recess of the historian, his spiritual make-up and ideal mould.

Unfortunately the Harshacharita was discovered and studied at the time when the literary antiquarianism was transforming itself into an archaeological discipline and

positive philosophy was influencing the orientalists in India, with the result that they neglected to study the idealising process and contented themselves with the externalities of the narrative. This, however, vitiated their whole approach. Thus, for example, it was thought that the Harshacharita is fragmentary<sup>1</sup> simply because it does not deal with the complete life of Harsha and abruptly (?) stops after the meeting of Harsha with Rājyaśrī. An investigation into the purpose and form of the narrative would have at once indicated that the poet-historian had all along been working to achieve this end - the meeting of the king with Rājyaśrī. Moreover, there is definite evidence that the Harshacharita is a complete and finished product of art. Bāna never intended to write further than this stage. In the epic style, he states that the complete life of Harsha was "beyond the comprehension of the omniscient, beyond the capacity of the god of speech, and beyond the strength of the goddess of eloquence"<sup>2</sup> and therefore, he would attempt only a part of it.

1. Keith, HSL, 314; De and Dasgupta, HCSL, 229; Cowell and Thomas, HC, (Preface) XI, Krishnamacharya, HCSL, 446.
2. Harshacharita, Ed. by A.A. Führer, Ph.D., M.A., BSP, Bombay, 1909, p. 140.

Further, in accordance with the technique of Indian dramas, this part was organically designed, falling into five well-defined stages<sup>1</sup> of the Beginning, the Efforts, the Hope of Achieving the End, the Certainty of Success and the End. Since the last stage of the End is reached with the recovery of Rājyaśrī - the royal glory, the story is complete.<sup>2</sup>

The completion is also indicated in the last paragraph which assumes the form of a benediction:-

"At the close of the evening-tide, the moon was brought to the King as a respectful offering by the Night, as if it were the impersonated Glory of his Race - bringing him the stamp of the primeval King on the silver patent of his sovereignty or the Goddess of Fortune<sup>3</sup> conducting a messenger from the White Dvīpa to animate him to the conquest of all the seven Dvīpas. "<sup>4</sup>

Lastly - and this is conclusive - , the autobiography of Bāna, in which the story of Harsha's life is emboxed, is

1. See infra, pp. 75 ff.

2. See infra, p. 76.

3. Cowell and Thomas translate the word ayati as future. But see the commentary of Sāṅkara- ayatyagami-Subha-daivena.

4. HC, III, p. 342; CTHC, p. 260.

resumed in the concluding portion of the Harshacharita. There are two stories in the narrative - the account of Bāna and his ancestry, and the history of Harsha. The first was abruptly interrupted by Syāmala who requested Bāna to narrate the glorious deeds of Harsha<sup>1</sup> and thus furnished an excuse to Bāna for emboxing the royal biography in the story of his own life. However, towards the conclusion of the book, the thread of the first story is resumed with the statement that "And there, even when I<sup>2</sup> was relating to my friends this story which ends with the recovery of Rājyaśrī, the sun also crossed the sky."<sup>3</sup> The reversion to the initial story, which is pursued to the end, is a definite indication that the book is complete.

The misconception, that the Harshacharita is fragmentary, distorted the vision of the historians. It prevented them from studying it as a complete whole, organically designed and artistically composed with some specific purpose. They therefore missed the idea which gave meaning to the whole

1. HC, III, pp. 139-140; CTHC, 74-77.

2. Scil., Bāna.

3. HC, VIII p. 340; CTHC, 258. The sentence in the text is: tatra cha Rajyasri-vyatikara-katham kathayata-eva pranayibhyo ravirapi tatra gagana-talam. The translation of Cowell and Thomas is: "As he was relating there to his friends the story of the recovery Rājyaśrī, the sun completed his journey through the heavens." The word kathayataḥ in the passage does not necessarily imply third person. Moreover, in this translation, the significance of tatra cha, vyatikara and eva has been lost.

narrative and which, like a subterranean current, existed hidden always beneath the narrative. Like children picking pebbles from the sea-shore, they contented themselves with the extracting of facts from various places in the narrative on no basis other than their predilections. This 'pick and choose' method, however, involved two-fold distortion. First, the facts were torn out of the context supplied by Bāna and secondly, they were given an arbitrary subjective setting by historians.

Now, therefore, what is needed is a fresh approach directed towards the reconstruction of the actuality of Harsha's life from the Harshacharita, after studying the formative power of the idealizing agents through the form of the narrative, the cultural outfit of the author and the moulding influences of the tradition on him.

#### Ancestry of Bāna and Historical Traditions.

In the style of ancient historians, Bāna tells us of the origin of the Vātsyāyana line of the Bhārgava brāhmaṇas to which he belonged. Shorn of all epic details, the account in the Harshacharita shows that Sārasvata was the son of Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning, by Dadhicha - a prince born of a Kshatriya princess and the brāhmaṇa sage

Chyavana. Dadhīcha had a brāhmaṇa brother whose wife Akshamālā gave birth to a son Vatsa. When Sarasvatī finally departed for her heavenly abode, Akshamālā brought up both the children - Sarasvata and Vatsa. The former eventually retired to the forest while the latter became the progenitor of the Vatsyayana brāhmaṇas.<sup>1</sup> The development and significance of this story of Dadhīcha and Sarasvatī would be discussed later.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, clear that the story was meant to indicate that Bāna was a Vatsyayana brāhmaṇa of the Bhārgava lineage with Dadhīcha-Sarasvatī associations.

That such brāhmaṇas existed in the 7th century is known from inscriptions. The Dadhimātā temple inscription<sup>3</sup> composed in Jodhpur about a decade before the Harshacharita was written, mentions Dadhyā brāhmaṇas, to be identified with the Dādhicha brāhmaṇas of the region,<sup>4</sup> who have six sub-castes - Dādhicha, Sarasvata, Gauda, Gurjara, Pārikha and Sikkhāvala.<sup>5</sup> The inscription gives a list of fourteen brāhmaṇas, all of whom belonged to Vatsa gotra.

1. HC, I pp. 11-60; CTHC, 4-31.

2. See infra, pp. 60-61.

3. Dadhimata ins. of the time of Drulhana, Gupta Sam.289, EI, XI, 299.

4. Ibid, p. 300.

5. Sherring, M.A., Hindu Tribes and Castes, Vol.I, p.69.

These Dādhicha brāhmaṇas still trace their origin to the sage Dadhīcha. According to a tradition current amongst them, Dadhīcha, the son of Atharvāna, married Vedavatī, who gave birth to a posthumous child Pippalāda. The latter had twelve sons, Vatsa being one of them.<sup>1</sup> The tradition differs from the account given in the Harshacharita only on one important point that in the former Dadhīcha is mentioned as the son of Atharvāna whereas in the latter he is the son of Chyavāna. However this confusion of patronymics may be traced back to the Vedic period. While the Vedic tradition<sup>2</sup> generally mentions Dadhīcha with the patronymic of Atharvāna, the Pañchevimsa<sup>3</sup> regards him as the descendant of Chyavāna. Baudhāyana lists the Dādhīchas under the Bṛigus.<sup>4</sup> In short, like Bāna, these Dādhīchas belong to the Vatsa gotra, the Bhārgava lineage and the Sārasvata group. The inscription of the Dadhimātā temple further indicates their existence in Rajathan during 7th century A.D.

As a Vatsa of the Bhārgava lineage, Bāna must have had the five pravaras<sup>5</sup> of Bhārgava, Chyavāna, Āpnūvāna, Aurva

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1. Dadhiche (sic)-vamsa-varnana: Chunnilalji Borāvāda, sam.1988, Ajmer. See also Dadhicha Jayanti ke Utsava ka Vivarana, Jodhpur, 1925. Dadhicha Conference Pushkara ka Vivarana, Ajmer, 1925; Sherring M.A., Hindu Tribes and Castes, London, 1872, Vol.I, p.69.
  2. RV, I, 117, 22; 116, 12; 80, 16; VI, 16, 14; SB IV, 1, 5, 18.
  3. GPM, 79 n.17 but see Panchavimsa Br. XII, 8, 6.
  4. Ibid, 79.
  5. Ibid, p. 31.

and Jāmadagnya. Brāhmaṇas of this group inhabited Eastern India in fairly large numbers during the early mediaeval period. As many as five inscriptions of the Senas from Vijayasena (c. 1095-1158) to Viśvarūpasena and the copper-plate of Nayapāla, the king of Kāmarūpa,<sup>1</sup> make a reference to them.

These Vatsyāyanas belonged to that composite family of the Bṛigvāngiras whose history we have traced from the later Vedic period. In the Harshacharita, Bāṇa's cousin Syāmala states, with a sense of pride in his Bhārgava lineage; "Who could be without a curiosity regarding the story of Harsha's life - a second Mahābhārata? Let our Bṛigu race become even purer by the purificatory hearing of his deeds."<sup>2</sup> Dadhīcha, the ancestor of Bāṇa, is introduced as "the pride of the Bṛigu race, and the externalized life of Chyavana".<sup>3</sup> In the tradition, Dadhīcha is described as a Bhārgava, an Atharvana and also as an Āngirasa. Bandhayana mentions the Dadhīchas under the Bṛigus.<sup>4</sup> The Rigveda and the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, associated Dadhīcha with the Atharvana lineage.<sup>5</sup> In some hymns of the Rigveda<sup>6</sup> and in the

1. Barrackpur Plates of Vijayasena, IB, 63; Govindpur Plates of Lakshmanasena, ibid, 96; Madanpur Plates of Keśavasena, ibid, 125; Madanpada Plates of Viśvarūpa, ibid, 137, 147; Irida Plates of Nayapāla, EI, XXII, 151.
2. HC, III p. 140; CTHC, 76-77.
3. HC, I, pp. 41-42; CTHC, 20.
4. GPM, 79 n.17.
5. RV, I, 116, 12; 117, 22; SB. IV, I, 5, 18; 14, 1. etc.
6. I, 139, 9.

Pāñchavimśa<sup>1</sup> Brahmana, he is called an Āngirasa. In the Mahābhārata, he is represented both as an Āngirasa and as a Bhārgava.

As we have seen, this fused family was very intimately connected with the itihāsa-purāna tradition. The Bhārgavas and probably the Dādhīchas had preserved this association during the times of Bāna also. A verse of the Dadhimatā inscription of the Dādhīchas is found in the Devī-māhatmya of the Markandeya Purāna.<sup>2</sup> This is rather strange. No other inscription of the period quotes this verse or, as a matter of fact, any verse of similar nature. Therefore, this unique reference may indicate the association of the Dādhīchas and the Devī-māhatmya of the Markandeya Purāna. The four cousins of Bāna were described as "versed in the acts of all monarchs and sages of Purāna, inspired in the mind by the Mahābhārata, and acquainted with the entire history (itihāsa)".<sup>3</sup> The reference to the recitation of the Vāyu Purāna by Sudrishti as a usual occurrence indicates the Puranic influence in the daily round of Bāna's family.<sup>4</sup>

The second important characteristic of the Bhārgava family which continued to the Early Mediaeval period is its

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1. XII, 8, 6. See also Tait. Sam., V, 1, 4, 4.

2. Cp. LL.11-12, EI, XI, 304 and the Devimāhatmya, XI, 10.

3. HC, III, p. 133.

4. HC, III, pp. 131-132.

specialisation in dharmaśāstra and nīti (polity).<sup>1</sup> The Manusmṛiti is a Bhārgava text.<sup>2</sup> Chapters on dharmaśāstra and polity in the Mahābhārata are supposed to be the compositions of the Bhārgavas.<sup>3</sup> In the tenth and eleventh centuries, Bhārgava brāhmaṇas such as Īśānadeva and Viśvarūpa were appointed as the reciters of moral codes (nīti-pāthaka) by the Senas of Bengal.<sup>4</sup>

The family tradition of the Bhārgavas had very strongly influenced Bāna in his composition of the Harshacharita.<sup>5</sup> Syāmala describes the Harshacharita as a second Mahābhārata,<sup>6</sup> whereas the minstrel Suchibāna equates it with the Vayupurāna.<sup>7</sup> An elaborate Mahābhārata setting, provided to the Harshacharita,<sup>8</sup> and the story of Dadhīcha and Sarasvatī<sup>9</sup> clearly demonstrate the formative influence of the itihāsa-purāna tradition on the Harshacharita. The poet-historian himself admits the fact when he praises "only those poets who embracing all narratives fill the world like the Bharata story".<sup>10</sup> The second characteristic of the Bhārgava family - its association with polity - , is well reflected in the long speeches of Simhanāda and Skandagupta on polity and royal behaviour.<sup>11</sup>

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1. Sukthankar, V.S., Critical Studies in the Mahābhārata, 280ff.
  2. Ibid.
  3. Sukthankar, op.cit., p. 335.
  4. HC, p. 140.
  5. HC, p. 132.
  6. Infra p.59 .
  7. Infra, pp.60-61.
  8. HC, Intr. verse 10.
  9. Ibid, pp. 259-262; 267-271.

The Harshacharita and the Itihāsa-Purāna Tradition

I

Bāna describes the Harshacharita as an Akhyāyika<sup>1</sup> in contradistinction to his other work Kādambarī, which is expressly called a kathā or prose-romance.<sup>2</sup> One main difference between akhyāyika and kathā is that the former is based on an actual biography (svacheshtita-vritta) whereas the latter is a fictitious tale.<sup>3</sup> This distinction is important as the classification of forms on the basis of the historical nature of the theme or otherwise exists only in case of the gadya-kāvya (prose compositions). It further assumes significance when we note that Bāna himself classes akhyāyika not with poetic compositions such as epics and romances but with such mythologico-historical forms of writing as akhyāna, itihāsa and purāna.<sup>4</sup> The Mahābhāshya also groups these four genres together.<sup>5</sup> The statement of Kautilya is more definite, as it explicitly mentions akhyāyika along with purāna, itivritta etc., as a constituent part of itihāsa.<sup>6</sup>

1. HC, (Introduction) Verse, 19.
2. Kādambarī (Introduction) verse 20.
3. Bhamaha, Kavyalankara, I, 25-29; See, The Akhyāyika and the Kathā in classical Sanskrit, in Some Problems of Sanskrit Poetics, Calcutta, 1959, pp. 65-80.
4. Kādambarī (the meeting of Chandrapīda and his mother) Agrawala, V.S., Kādambarī, p. 13.
5. IV. 2. 60.
6. I, 5.

The word ākhyāyika occurs in the works of the Vedic exegesis. The Vṛittikāra, (who was either Varshagupta or Bandhayana) regards ākhyāyika and the statements with the particle 'iti' (as in itihāsa), as some of the characteristics of the Brahmana literature.<sup>1</sup> Sabara<sup>2</sup> cites an example of ākhyāyika from the Taittiriya Aranyanka.<sup>3</sup> The word ākhyāyika itself occurs in the above-mentioned work in connection with an anecdote introduced in the text to explain the injunction that a student and a learned teacher should not quarrel with each other.<sup>4</sup> But these ākhyāyikas are different in literary form and style from the Harshacharita. They are simple anecdotes drawn from the tradition. Still in view of the fact that the Brahmanas, especially in those parts which are meant to explain the ritualistic precepts of the Vedas, contain elements of the itihāsa-purāna tradition, these references are important as they associate ākhyāyika with this mythologico-historical tradition.

This tradition of the Bṛigvāṅgirases had a formative influence on the Bhārgava author of the Harshacharita. To Bāna, the Mahābhārata, a representative work of the itihāsa

1. See Sabara Bhashya on the Mimamsā-sūtras, I, 1.22. Calcutta, Bibliothica Edition, p. 127.

2. Ibid, 127;

3. I. 10. 2.

4. I, 63.

tradition, was an ideal composition.<sup>1</sup> He consciously imitated its style. The Mahābhārata opens with an account of the Bhārgava lineage at the instance of the kulapati Saunaka. The Harshacharita, likewise, starts with the history of the Bhārgava-Vātsyāyanas. Ugraśravas, the sūta, had come from the sacred site of Samantapañchaka (Kurukshetra) to Naimisha forest, where he recited the Mahābhārata. Before starting the account of Harsha's life, Bāna makes a significant allusion to Samantapañchaka in his description of "the sun sinking in the mass of the evening glow like Bhārgava Rāma in the great pool of blood at Samantapañchaka."<sup>2</sup> The narration of the Mahābhārata was started by Ugraśravas at the request of certain sages headed by Saunaka. Similarly in the Harshacharita, Bāna recounts the heroic deeds of Harsha at the instance of Śyāmala in the circle of kinsmen. The prose-romances and epics of the Early Mediaeval period immediately start with the description of the capital city, country or the hero. Therefore, this method of introducing the narrative by a dialogue in the Harshacharita bespeaks of the influence of the Mahābhārata. Above all, the fact that in the epilogue

1. HC, Introduction, verse 9.

2. HC, p. 141, CTHC, 77.

of his work, Bāna represents his cousin Syāmala as having described the Harshacharita as a second Mahābhārata,<sup>1</sup> discloses the intention of the author of taking the latter as the model for his work.

Further, the story of Dadhīcha and Sarasvatī, as told in the Harshacharita, is framed after the ancient ākhyāna of Purūravas and Urvāsi. The Rigveda contains some elements of the story of Urvāsi, a nymph, who lived on earth as a wife of the king Purūravas, till she became pregnant and then she vanished "like the first of dawns".<sup>2</sup> The story is told with some variations in the Satapatha  
Brāhmaṇa,<sup>3</sup> and Vishnu and Matrya-Purāṇas.<sup>4</sup> According to  
3                  4                  5  
the last named work, Purūravas vanquished the demon Kesiṇ and liberated from him the nymphs Chitralekhā and Urvāsi. Indra once arranged the representation of a drama Lakshmi-Svayamvara under the direction of the sage Bharata, in which Urvāsi filled the rôle of Lakshmi. But so greatly was she charmed by the handsome Purūravas, that she forgot her rôle and so incurred the displeasure of Bharata. He thereupon

1. HC, p. 140.

2. X, 95.

3. XI, 5, 1, 1. Cf. III, 4, 1, 22; Also Kathaka Sam., VIII, 10.

4. IV, 4, 34-93.

5. XXIV, 24ff; Anandaśrama, Poona Ed., 1907, p. 43. See also Bhāga-Purāṇa, IX, 14, 15-49; Vā. 91, 1-52.

cursed her to be transformed into a creeper. In the Vikramorvāsiyamī, Kalidasa introduced a few changes. According to this, the sage cursed Urvāśī that she would no longer find any place in heaven as she had violated his instructions. Indra, however, modified the curse and addressing her said, "I should favour in this matter the royal sage (scil. Purūravas) with whom you are so attached. You unite with him, as you desire, until he chances to behold the child who will be heir to him."<sup>1</sup>

The story of Dadhīcha and Sarasvatī is found neither in the Vedic nor in the Purānic literature. The Talavakāra Brahmana, however, mentions that the sage Chyavana, the father of Dadhīcha, lived on the banks of the Sarasvatī.<sup>2</sup> The Mahābhārata contains a story that the sage Dadhīcha was performing austerities on the banks of the Sarasvatī when Indra sent a charming nymph Abambushā to lure him away from the austerities. While offering a libation of water to the gods, the excited sage impregnated the Sarasvatī who gave birth to a child Sarasvata.<sup>3</sup> The story is considerably changed in the Harshacharita. Firstly, the sage appears as

1. N.S.P., Bombay Ed., 1942, Act. III, p. 103.

2. The Jaimini-Upanishad-Brahmana, 186; JAOS, XVI, 251, also XI, p. CXLV.

3. Salyaparvan, (Sarasvataparvan), Southern recension, XLVI 4-14; Northern recensions, Chapter LI and LII.

a kshatriya prince and the river is transformed into the goddess. Secondly, the descent of Sarasvatī from heaven to earth is represented as caused by the displeasure of Durvāsas who cursed her to be banished for ever from her heavenly abode. Brahma, however, modified the curse so that it was to last only until Sarasvatī should behold the lotus-face of the her child.

The love of a divine lady for a mortal king, the banishment from heaven due to the curse of a sage, and the curtailment of the period of the curse till the birth of a child, are remarkable points of similarity between the two stories of Pururavas and Urvasī, and Dadhīcha and Sarasvatī.

### The Ratnavali and the Harshacharita

#### II

The itihasa-purana tradition was transmitted through the recitation of akhyanas and kindred forms of narrative on religious and popular occasions. The recitation was generally accompanied by music and mime. The Pariplava akhyana was perhaps scenically represented at the time of horse-sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> That the sutas, who were the traditional

1. Seig, E., ERE, VII, 460.

custodians of the itiḥāsa tradition, came to be associated with dancing, is known from an emended reading of a passage in the Yajurveda.<sup>1</sup> A Sānchi bas-relief represents a group of reciters, who in the course of recitation dance and indicate the sentiments of the characters through gestures and mimes. The Mahābhāshya mentions reciters (grānthakas) who divided themselves into two groups, evidently for representing the two sets of characters in the story.<sup>2</sup> Bāna makes a reference to 'pantomimic recitation' (utsāha).<sup>3</sup> Further, the dramas and itiḥāsa were so closely associated that some literary critics even in the Early Mediaeval Age regarded them as similar ways of acquiring knowledge of the past.<sup>4</sup>

This close relation of dramaturgy and histrionics with itiḥāsa influenced the nature of ākhyāyikā. The Kamasūtra mentions a literary genre - Natakākhyāyikā, a dramatised prose-narrative.<sup>5</sup> It was not merely recited or read but staged, because the Kamasūtra considers its

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1. Nrittaya sūtani gitaya sailuśham, Yajurveda, XXX.6. But contra gīlāya sūtāni, nrīttaya sailuśham Tait.Br.III, 4,2. See supra, p.23,fn.5.
  2. III.1.26. for interpretation see De and Dasgupta, HCSL, 644.
  3. 'udīryamāna-gītyadhrabhuṭa-padopachārat-kāvyamapyutsāha iti' Sankara on HC, Intr., vsse XVIII.
  4. Daśarūpaka, I, 6. sarcastically refers to such scholars as persons 'who have averted their faces from pleasure.'
  5. Kamasūtra, I, 3.16.

proper appreciation by seeing (darsana) as a mark of culture. Naturally, therefore, the Harshacharita shows some dramatic features.

Thus, the Harshacharita opens with a description of the academic assembly (vidyāgoshthī) of Brahmā, where Sarasvatī, the Goddess of Learning, was cursed by Durvāsas. Brahmā thereupon "uplifting his form, which wore the sacrificial thread as though his birth from the lotus had left a fibre (mrināla-sūtra) about him", spoke with a voice which "echoed through the spheres like a drum heralding with honour the departure of Sarasvatī."<sup>1</sup>

As dramas were staged in celebrated assemblies<sup>2</sup> and started with a prologue which consisted in a dialogue between the stage-manager (sūtradhāra) and an actress<sup>3</sup> or one of his assistants, hinting at the incidents of the drama, followed by music (sangītakāmī)<sup>4</sup>, the above description, which makes a reference to an assembly, to Brahmā with a sūtra,<sup>5</sup> Brahmā's dialogue with Sarasvatī, and to the auspicious notes of music, closely resemble the beginning of a drama.

1. HC, p.18, CTHC, p.7-8.

2. parishad apyesha guna-grahini, (Ratnāvallī, epilogue verses; Priyadarśikā, epilogue, verse 3).

3. Daśarupaka, III, 8.

4. Sangitakamanushthāmi, Mudrārakshasa, prologue; See also prologues of the Ratnāvallī and the Sakuntalā.

5. The word means both a fibre and a cord; here it evidently suggests a 'sūtradhāra'.

The Harshacharita<sup>1</sup> concludes with a benediction to the reigning king which is very similar to the Bharatavākyā (the benedictory conclusion) of a conventional drama. Not only do the beginning and epilogue show dramatic features, but the ~~the~~ development<sup>of theme</sup> also show the influence of dramas and dramaturgy.

The influence of the Vikramorvasiyani on the composition of the story of Dadhīcha and Sarasvatī has been noted above. The story of Harsha's deeds was likewise modelled on the Ratnāvalī.

The Ratnāvalī<sup>2</sup> is one of the three dramas written by Harshavardhana, the royal hero of Bāna's prose-narrative. This short comedy describes the achievement of universal sovereignty by King Udayana with the help of incalculable workings of fate and the planned efforts of his minister Yaugandharāyana.<sup>3</sup> It was prophesied by a sage of miraculous powers that whoever married the princess Ratnāvalī, would attain universal sovereignty. However,

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1. HC, pp. 342-43.

2. Ed. K.P.Parab, NSP, Bombay, 1895.

3. Prārambhe'smin-svāmino vriddhi-hetau,  
Devenettham datta-hastavalambe.

#### Ratnāvalī, I, 7.

The word vriddhi is interpreted by Dhanañjaya in his Avaloka commentary as 'the attainment of success, which consists in king's obtaining universal sovereignty through his marriage with Ratnāvalī. Daśarūpaka, I, 33, Hass, p.11.

Vāsavadattā was the chief-queen of Udayana and, therefore, the marriage of Ratnāvallī with the latter could not be accomplished as the Simhala king did not want his daughter to be a rival co-wife of his niece Vāsavadattā. Without apprising the king of his plan, Yaugandharāyana spread the rumour that Vāsavadattā was burnt alive, and then renewed the request of marriage. The Simhala princess was sent by a ship which was unfortunately wrecked. Ratnāvallī was, however, rescued and employed incognito as a maid to Vāsavadattā, and in that capacity the latter won the sisterly affection of the queen and eventually also the love of Udayana. Ratnāvallī was thus married to the Vatsa king, who consequently became a universal monarch.

The Harshacharita, likewise, aims at describing the achievement of universal sovereignty by Harsha. It is first indicated by the blessings of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Fortune, to Pushyabhūti that one of his descendants, Harshavardhana, would be a universal suzerain whose "fly-whisk would be waved by the goddess herself."<sup>1</sup> This is repeated by the royal astrologer at the time of Harsha's birth<sup>2</sup> and by the king Prabhākara in his death-bed speech.<sup>3</sup>

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1. HC, p. 169.
  2. Ibid, p. 184.
  3. Ibid, p. 220.

The conclusion of the Harshacharita also makes a reference to it.

Secondly, the supernatural factor in the form of blessings for the achievement of universal suzerainty is also common to both texts. It was prophesied by a sage of miraculous powers that Ratnāvalī would be the consort of a universal monarch, while in the Harshacharita Pushyabhūti received a boon from Lakshmi that he would be an ancestor of a universal ruler.

In both cases, the universal sovereignty was connected with the king's meeting with a damsel - in the comedy, Udayana meets his betrothed consort Ratnāvalī and in the prose-narrative, Rājyaśrī was ultimately restored to her brother Harsha. Ratnāvalī, because of the prophecy of the siddha, and Rājyaśrī nominally - as the word Rājya-śrī means 'the goddess of fortune manifested in sovereignty' - and also actually, because the throne of Kanauj was obtained by Harsha through his sister, the widowed queen of Kanauj, brought suzerainty respectively to Udayana and Harsha.

As if not satisfied with the veiled allusion to the comedy, Bāna records the present of a ratnāvalī the jewelled (ratna) necklace (ekaavali) by Divākara to Harsha after his meeting with Rājyaśrī.<sup>1</sup> To make the allusion

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1. Jewelled (HC, VIII, verse 2, p.309) necklace (ekāvalī p.335) See also Chapter V, verse.3.

still clearer, he describes the jewelled necklace as 'a banner, which announces the coming of embodied Imperial power' and as 'a svayamvara garland of the goddess of universal fortune (bhuvanaśrī)'.<sup>1</sup>

The basic philosophy of both the works is also the same. The stage-manager in the prologue of the comedy says:-

"Fate brings the loved one, and quickly restores him even from a different isle, or from the mid-ocean, nay even from the end of the quarters."<sup>2</sup> This evidently alludes to the incident of the comedy in which the Simhala princess Ratnavalli was separated from her relations because of the ship-wreck but was eventually rescued and restored to her betrothed lover. The initial action of fate which consists in the ship-wreck and the throwing of the princess into a sea of troubles is indicated in an āryā of the sixth chapter of the Harshacharita:<sup>3</sup>

"Like a (stormy) wind upsetting a ship, fate overwhelms even a man whose virtues are sung in distant isles and who has obtained the best of a collection of jewels."

The ultimate working of fate in the restoration of Ratnavalli is perhaps alluded to in two āryās of the eighth chapter of the Harshacharita.

1. Ibid, p. 334.

2. Ratnavalli, I.6.

3. VI, verse 3. p. 254.

"By fate all desired things are produced for the fortunate. Who in the world would not be pleased by the association of a learned man, the prosperity attendant on meeting a kinsman loved and lost and the present of a costly jewel?".<sup>1</sup>

The last verse mentions the present of a jewel - ratna, mentioned subsequently in the prose as a necklace - ekāvalī -, thus making an explicit and clear reference to Ratnāvalli. The verse in the fifth chapter also alludes to the name of the Simhala princess in the form of a mass (rāsi = avalī) of jewels (ratna) in the context of a ship-wreck.<sup>2</sup> Further, "the prosperity attendant on the restoration of a loved and lost kinsman" has a bearing on the stories both of the Ratnāvalli and the Harshacharita. Lastly the reference to the ship-wreck in the āryā leaves no doubt that Bāna is alluding to the Ratnāvalli, a comedy composed by his royal patron.

Moreover, sovereignty could be achieved through the mysterious workings of fate. Vāsavadattā, the chief consort of Udayana, was an impediment on the path of his

1. VIII, verse 2, p. 309; see also verse 1.

2. Dvīpopāgata-gunamapi samupārjita-ratna-rāsi-sāramapi.  
Potāṁ pavana iva vidhiḥ purushamakānde nipatayati.

his attaining universal suzerainty through his marriage with Ratnāvalī. Likewise, Harsha could not become a king in the life-time of his brother Rājya. The ship-wreck which compelled Ratnāvalī to work as a maid and win the affection of the royal couple ultimately helped Yaugandharāyana in his plan of uniting in marriage Udayana and Ratnāvalī. Similarly, the seemingly distressing circumstances in which Rājyavardhana and Grahavarman were killed, eventually paved the way for Harsha to become the ruler both of Thanesar and Kanauj.

So similar are the themes and there are such parallels in their development that one can hardly escape the conclusion that Bāna wrote the life of Harsha on the model of his hero's comedy - the Ratnāvalī.

### III

#### Ancient Fiction and the Harshacharita

Besides dramas and dramaturgy, the sisterly form of kathā, also influenced ākhyāyikā.

Broadly speaking, there were two types of fiction - first, a simple story as found in the anecdotal literature of the Brahmanas, the Buddhist avadānas and folk-tales, and secondly, literary stories with long and sonorous compounds,

and conventional descriptions of seasons, countries, lakes etc. The Harshacharita shows both these traits. Besides, the art of emboxing inset stories, which is a feature of the katha literature, was adroitly utilized by Bāna to give the biography of his royal patron in the framework of his own history.

Further, the themes of both the works of Bāna show the influences of early fiction. That he was deeply indebted to the Brihatkathā for the theme of the Kādambarī, is recognised by modern as well as ancient authors.<sup>1</sup> The episode of Pushyabhūti and Lakshmi in the Harshacharita, is likewise an adaptation of the initial and final stories of the cycle of Vampire Legends.<sup>2</sup> Probably, these legends were originally separate.<sup>3</sup> They were, however, merged in the Kashmir recension of the Brihatkathā as both Kshemendra and Somadeva include them in their summaries of this work of Gunādhya. The Brhatkathāmañjarī and the Kathasaritsāgara narrate with slight variations the story of an ascetic who tried to propitiate a vampire in order to attain the lordship

1. Nalachampu, I, 14., De and Dasgupta, HSL, pp. 230-31.
2. Kathasaritsāgara, Ed. Durgadas and Parab, NSP, Bombay, 1889, X, 3. Brihatkathāmañjarī, Ed. Sivadatta and Parab, NSP, Bombay, 1901, XVI, 185f.
3. For the views of Hertel and Edgerton, HSL, p. 421, n., and Emeneau: Kshemendra as Kavi, JAOS, LIII, 1933, p. 127.

over Vidyādharaś. As this required the help of a warrior, he approached the king Trivikramasena of Pratishthāna and presented to him for years on end, gems concealed in fruits. Out of gratitude, therefore, the king agreed to help the ascetic. On the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight, wearing black apparel and holding a sword, the king went to the cemetery and proceeded towards south to bring the dead body hanging in a tree. To his surprise, however, a vampire who, had already taken possession of corpse, revealed to the king that the evil ascetic would cut off the head of the king and present it to the Vetalā at the end of the rite. So, when the rite was over, under the instructions of the vampire, the king outwitted the ascetic and put him to death. Gods appeared on the spot, presented a sword to the king and blessed him that he would be a paramount ruler.

Both the Pushyabhūti episode and the Vampire legend centre round the story of the propitiation of a vampire by an ascetic. Further, in both the stories the rite of vampire-propitiation required the help of a warrior king. Even the minor details such as the precious presents to the king by the ascetic, the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight for the Vetalā-rite, the black apparel of the king and the present of a sword, and the blessings for paramount rulership

to the king, are also similar in both the narratives.

### Events and Characters

To the writers of itihāsa tradition, history was not just a meaningless succession of events. War and strife, political discord and courtly intrigue were thought to be the superficial expression of life, below which lay the fascinating drama of man's fulfilment of the sovereign purpose of human existence. Itihāsa tried to grasp this inner story and to understand the meaning of events in terms of the four-fold aim of life.<sup>1</sup> It is this aim (phala) which gives meaning to the whole sequence of events and brings about unity in historical narrative.

In narratives, the achievement of the aim (phalāgama) by the hero is always described at the end. It would appear to us that notionally the end is the poet-historian's starting-point from which he works the story back to the beginning. In this reverse process, his endeavour is not so much to develop gradually the consequences of a given initial situation as to arrange

1. See supra, p. 43 and fn.1

antecedent events in such a way that they necessarily culminate into the known outcome. Further, since a man can hardly grasp and describe life in all its multifarious aspects, the historian selects only that series of events through which he can explain the end in question. In this process of selection, he abstracts life and throws the material extracted from it in the crucible of his logic in order to construct an intelligible piece of historical narrative. Though the historian preserves the chronological framework, the arrangement of events in a early medieval Indian historical narrative thus shows a logical development rather than a historical one. This logical development of theme is shown in five stages - the first the Beginning, the last the End, and the three intervening stages the Efforts, the Hope of Success and the Certainty, which tell the tale of human efforts directed towards the end, through the turmoils of Time and under the dictates of Fate.

The accession of Harsha to the thrones of Thanesar and Kanauj is the end (phala) in the Harshacharita. Conditioned by it, Bāna was obliged to present the antecedent events in a way which would make the accession of Harsha or, in the then current idiom of itihāsa, the meeting of Harsha with the goddess of Royal Fortune, appear inevitable and intelligible in terms of the mediaeval philosophy. The

story begins (prārambha) at the time of the dynast Pushyabhūti when the goddess of Royal Fortune gave him her blessings and prophesied that he would initiate a line in which an imperial ruler Harsha would flourish, over whom she herself would wave the flywhisk.<sup>1</sup> Against the background of the Vetāla-legend of the Brihatkathā, this Pushyabhūti episode heralds the birth of Harsha as a universal suzerain. The story reaches the second stage of the Efforts when, pleased by his devotions, Sūrya blessed Prabhākara with two sons, and the royal astrologer announced that one of them, Harsha, would be an imperial ruler.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, the story of the Harshacharita moves parallel to that of the Ratnāvalī. Adopting the symbolism of the latter, Bāna made Rājyaśrī fill the dual rôle of a tender but unfortunate princess married to the Maukhārī crown-prince Grahavarman, and of symbolically representing the royal glory inherent in a monarch. In the second capacity, she plays the same part as the Simhala princess in the Ratnāvalī. In this comedy, the third stage of the Hope is reached when, hearing the rumour that Vāsavadattā was burnt alive, the Simhala king accepts the proposal of Yaugandharāyana for

1. HC, p. 169.

2. Ibid, p. 184. For the influence of the Ratnāvalī on ancient historical tradition of Java see Dr. F. D. K. Bosch, The Old Javanese Bathing-place, Galatunda, Selected Studies in Indonesian Archaeology, Hague, 1961, pp. 88 ff. I am indebted to Dr. J. G. de Casparis for this reference.

the marriage of Ratnāvalī and Udayana. But the ship carrying Ratnāvalī from Simhala to India is wrecked in mid-ocean. Correspondingly in the Harshacharita the death of Prabhākara followed by the murder of Grahavarman and Rājya form the Hope of Harsha's rulership over both kingdoms. The occupation of Kanauj by the Gaudas and the imprisonment of Rājyaśrī are the two obstacles. The recovery of the Simhala princess by Yaugandharāyana in the Ratnāvalī and the news that Rājyaśrī was liberated in the Harshacharita constitute the feature known as Certainty. As the Ratnāvalī ends with the marriage of Udayana and Ratnāvalī,<sup>1</sup> so the meeting of Harsha and Rājyaśrī and the gift of the jewelled necklace (ratna-avali) to Harsha by Divākara indicate the phalāgama in the Harshacharita.

The five stages in the Harshacharita are the Pushyabhūti episode (Beginning), the birth of Harsha (Efforts), the death of Prabhākara followed by the murder of Grahavarman and Rājya (Hope), the liberation of Rājyaśrī (Certainty) and lastly the meeting of Harsha with Rājyaśrī (the Achievement of the Aim). The first two stages - the Beginning and the Efforts - cover the uneventful part of the story whereas the last three - the Hope, the Certainty and the End - tell an

1. The avoloka commentary on the Daśarūpaka, I, 33.

an exciting tale unusually full of stirring events. In the early part, therefore, the story sluggishly meanders through the thickets of lengthy descriptions, but from the middle it suddenly bursts into great speed, compelling the author to telescope events by skipping over intervening happenings. Since Time is utilised in the sequential aspect and not in the chronological, this creates an impression that the whole series of events from the death of Prabhākara to the meeting of Harsha with Rājyaśrī happened in only a few days.

Further, in the reverse process of constructing the history of the past, the concern of the historian is not so much to bring out the consequences which would inevitably follow if a person with certain given qualities were placed in the initial situation as to divine in his characters those qualities which make the known outcome appear rational and inevitable. Therefore, besides conditioning the treatment of antecedent events, the end (phalāgama) also influences the characterization. There is, however, nothing strange in this reverse process. History is a review of the past. Naturally therefore, historians tend to bring out the significance of great occurrences on the basis of their outcome and retrospectively read the importance of grand characters in the light

reflected on them by their glorious achievements.

An analysis of the main characters will reveal that Bāna intended to explain the accession of Harsha by emphasizing those traits in them which made this outcome appear natural, noble and inevitable. Thus, the only important characteristic in the dynast Pushyabhūti, as described by Bāna, is his steadfast devotion to Śiva, which eventually bore fruit in his getting a boon from Lakshmi that Harsha would enjoy imperial status. Except in the introduction, where his martial exploits are recounted, Prabhākara is described only as a very kind father who considered the fulfilment of the aim of his life to have been achieved in the birth of Harsha on whom his "sovereignty, succession, happiness and life depended."<sup>1</sup>

His love for Harsha is vividly described at the time of his last illness. "As soon as the king perceived his darling son while still at some distance, swayed even in that extremity by overpowering affection, he ran forward in spirit to meet him, and putting out his arms, half rose from the couch, calling to him 'come to me, come to me' ". In tear-choked accents he could find strength only to say "You are the fruit of stainless deeds, stored up (by me) in many another life. You bear marks declaring the sovereignty

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1. HC, p. 220.

of the four oceans, one and all, to be almost in your grasp." He significantly adds, "To such as you, who are born through the merits of a whole people, fathers are merely expedients to bring them into being."<sup>1</sup>

The life of Rājya is likewise reoriented, and so his personality is considerably overshadowed by that of his brother. In building up the greatness of Harsha, Bāna was obliged to minimise the importance of Rājya. No special attention is paid to the birth of the first, the greatly longed for child, whereas the event of Harsha's birth is described as celebrated with great pomp and show. An astrologer is introduced into the story to predict the future greatness of the child, which naturally reflected adversely on Rājya. The dying father is said to have stated that his "sovereignty and succession" depended on him, but he did not even once mention the name of his eldest son, the crown-prince.

The account of Rājya's battles against the Mālava forces, and his treacherous murder by the Gauda king are stated only in the form of short messages received by Harsha. As the purpose of the prose kāvya is better served by the delineation of pathos than by an objective narration of the events resulting in the death of Rājya, we get a graphic description of the emotional unrest

created in the mind of Harsha rather than a chronicle of military and diplomatic import. In the narrative, Rājya dies unseen, unhonoured and almost unsung.

But it is the character of Rājyaśrī which most suffers diminution. Her symbolic significance overwhelms her historical personality. The tender Maukhari queen is well-nigh lost in the goddess of Royal Fortune. At some places, she is described as 'the Fortune inherent in a monarch', and at others her name is used suggestively to indicate her symbolic significance. Thus, in the statement of the priest Gambhīra that "Rājyaśrī has at length united the two brilliant lines of Pushyabhūti and Mukhara",<sup>1</sup> the word Rājyaśrī is evidently used in both its meanings, and is so explained by the commentator Śānikara. "As now our father is dead" Harsha mused, "Rājyaśrī should flee to a hermitage."<sup>2</sup> Though, here the word rājaśrī primarily means 'royal fortune', the passage also alludes to the impending doom of the princess Rājyaśrī, who is described as having taken shelter in the hermitage of Divākara. Towards the conclusion of the narrative, there is a very significant reference to "the

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1. HC, p. 206.

2. Ibid, p. 236.

bringing of a silvery seal of sovereignty by rājasrī to Harsha."<sup>1</sup> As we have seen elsewhere, Rājyaśrī in the Harshacharita plays the same rôle as Ratnāvali in Harsha's comedy and Madanamañjukā in the Brihatkathā.

Thus Bāna has organized the complete scheme of events from the angle of Harsha, his central figure. Harsha is represented as an ideal monarch, a devout son, a loving brother and a noble master. Bāna's ideal of a monarch, which may be known from his descriptions of Śūdraka and Tārapīda in the Kadambārī, finds its full realization in Harsha. But it is not in the delineation of Harsha as a ruler but in the discerning of those qualities which made him one, that the main endeavour of Bāna lies. The most portentous quality, according to him, was that the rājyaśrī, which characterizes a monarch, inhered in Harsha. The central theme of the work is intended to prove and illustrate this divine characteristic. Harsha, on his part, was unwilling to accept the royal status but "he was embraced by the goddess of Royal Fortune, who took him in her arms, and seizing him by all the royal marks on his limbs forced him, however reluctant, to mount the throne."<sup>2</sup> Caught in the whirlpool of circumstances,

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1. Ibid., p. 342.

2. Ibid., p. 111.

Harsha was forcibly driven to royal status. He however, did not think highly of such a position and prized brotherly affection much more. In fact, Bāna described a noble though unusual struggle between the two brothers, not because they wanted the throne of Thanesar for themselves but because, having resolved to become hermits, each of them wanted the other to mount the throne. When Rājya, the rightful heir, offered "the cares of sovereignty - a gift not high-esteemed" to his younger brother, the latter, although he did not openly remonstrate, thought it an atrocious act to accept it. To Harsha, it was "like bidding a Vedic brāhmaṇa drink wine, a faithful servant outrage his master, a good man have dealings with low, a chaste wife forget her honour."<sup>1</sup> He could not entertain the thought of ruling the earth on Rājya's going to the hermitage, and was prepared to act as "Sumitrā's son Lakshmaṇa, in following the train of his elder brother in silence."<sup>2</sup>

Harsha displayed a rare affection for Rājyasrī also. He himself described it in touching words, "I have only one sister left, who is the sole link that keeps up my life, now that I have lost all my beloved kindred."

1. Ibid., p. 249.

2. loc.cit., p. 250.

And so when, in the course of his expedition to punish the Gaudas, he learnt that Rājyaśrī had taken refuge in the Vindhya forest, where all traces of her were lost, he immediately changed his plans. Leaving Bhandi in charge of the expedition, he himself started out on her search. Eventually he found her just as she was mounting her funeral pyre. So pathetic was her condition, that the affectionate brother could not but think it his paramount duty to console, comfort and look after her. "My sister, so young, so tried by adversity, must be cherished by me for a while, even if it involves the neglect of all my royal duties."<sup>1</sup>

In the world of the times where jealousy, greed and ambition rent the soul, a patricidal war generally preceded the attainment of rulership. But Bāna discovered those unusual qualities in Harsha which not only resolve the conflict between brotherly affection and the accession to the throne but which, in fact, make the former serve as an additional fillip to the latter.

The treacherous murder of Rājya on the one side added a pathetic touch to the theme of brotherly affection, but on the other it aroused a fiery martial spirit in Harsha

1. Ibid, p.339.

to wreak vengeance on the miscreants. He told Simhanāda, "My mind brimming with passion, has no room for complying with the observances of mourning. Nay, so long as this vile outcaste of a Gauda king, this world-condemned miscreant, who deserved to be pounded, survives like a cruel thorn in my heart, I am ashamed to cry out helplessly with dry lips like a hermaphrodite."<sup>1</sup> With this, he caused a proclamation to be written announcing his intention of the world-conquest. Thus, Harsha's brotherly affection did not in any way conflict with his attainment of imperial status, but on the other hand, it gave an impetus to it. Likewise when leaving Bhāndī in charge of such an important expedition, Harsha proceeded in person to search for his younger sister in the Vindhya forest, he not only acted as an affectionate brother but also as an astute politician. For, at that juncture, the cooperation of Rājyaśrī was of great importance to Harsha. It was only through the widowed queen, that he could hope to win over the Maukhari nobles and set aside the contending claims of the kinsmen of Grahavarman.

This is the central story. Its analysis has afforded us a glimpse into the various grooves of the mould

1. Ibid., p. 263.

which shaped the entire series of events into an intricate pattern. Indeed the Harshacharita is not merely a chronicle of events. In accordance with the canons of itihāsa, it narrates the different happenings in the life of Harsha, synthesized and integrated into a scheme which makes them intelligible only in the context of Harsha's accession to throne, symbolically represented by his meeting with Rājyaśrī. Artistically composed on the pattern of heroic historiography, where the hero appears <sup>as</sup> <sub>an</sub> ideal man with a flawless character, it gives history as viewed by the Bhārgava historian through his mediaeval spectacles. Rightly it is adjudged by a contemporary Bhārgava as a second Mahābhārata, composed to make the holy race of the Bṛigus all the more holy by the purificatory rite of its hearing.<sup>1</sup>

Broadly speaking, it is well-knit, compact and homogeneous. Nevertheless, there are a few loose ends in it - the anomalous fragments, that are neither integrated with the core of the story nor required by it. They are more or less the refractory snippets of the central story, loosely strung into it. For example, the speech of Rājya immediately after the death of Prabhākara in no way contributes

1. Ibid., p. 14.

to the development of the theme. By striking a discordant note, on the other hand, it seriously affects the uniform nature of the story.

This is the only occasion when Rājya occupies the centre of the stage. After his victorious march against the Hūnas, he returns to the capital to find his father dead. With "long white bandages bound about arrow-wounds received in battle" and with his "form dotted with side-glances from the approaching Royal Glory",<sup>1</sup> he in a full length darbar addresses himself thus to Harsha: "My dear brother, your situation invites instructions from your elders. Even as a boy, you held fast to our father's habits of thought." But then, instead of giving instructions to Harsha, he proceeds to confess in a plaintive mood, "It is some cowardice or womanishness which has rendered me subject to the flame of filial grief....All my manhood is melted like a thing of lac by a mighty flame of pain....At the idea of sovereignty, my eyes grow disordered, like the partridge's at poison." Exhibiting thus an abnormal state of mind, he concludes, "My mind seeks to avoid glory...Therefore, do you receive from my hands, the cares of sovereignty, a gift not high-esteemed indeed, and

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1. Ibid., p.245.

reft of the joy of the youth. Dismissing all the sports of youth, deliver your bosom like Vishnu to the embraces of Glory." So speaking, he takes his scimitar from the hand of his sword-bearer and flings it on the earth. This renunciation of the throne and worldly life is not described as a fleeting idea or a diplomatic gesture. It is intended to be taken as a firm resolve because "the weeping keeper of the Robes came forward and provided the bark dresses of the hermit to Rājya, as previously ordered."<sup>1</sup>

Suddenly, however, the scene changes and we find pathos melting before the fiery sentiments of fury and heroism. A distinguished servant of Rājyaśrī precipitates himself into the audience and utters with an effort, "My lord, on the very day on which his Majesty Grahavarman was by the wicked lord of Mālava cut off from the living along with his noble deeds, the princess Rājyaśrī has been confined like a brigand's wife with a pair of iron fetters kissing her feet, and cast into prison at Kānyakubja." "That Mālavas should maltreat the race of Pushyabhūtis!" exclaimed Rājya. He then told Harsha, "My pain has

1. Ibid, pp. 246-248.

vanished before a more vehement passion. Let all the kings and elephants stay with you. Only Bhandi must follow me." So speaking, he ordered the marching drum to sound instantly.<sup>1</sup>

The sudden resolve to give up his claim to the throne in order to lead the life of a hermit and the equally sudden determination to abandon the idea of renunciation in order to launch an attack on the evil Mālava king, are described in the story to depict the quick and noble reactions of Rājya to the fast changing circumstances. But the artificiality of the idea of renouncing the throne becomes manifest in the forebodings of Harsha immediately after Prabhākara's death. Harsha is said to have mused, "Pray heaven that my brother, when he learns of our father's death, may not after a bath of tears assume two robes of bark or seek a hermitage as a royal sage...Never may indifference due to the transitoriness of things lead him to slight the advances of sovereign glory."<sup>2</sup>

Further, on the throne being offered by Rājya to Harsha in the presence of noblemen and feudatory kings,

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1. Ibid., pp. 252-253.
  2. Ibid., p. 240.

it is strange that such a pious and dutiful man as Harsha did not openly protest against the atrocious proposal. Even when the Keeper of Robes provided bark robes to Rājya, Harsha stood silent and downcast, reflecting on the demerits of kingship and examining the motives of Rājya in making the royal offer. He mused "Has my lord become angry with me, on receiving some vile hint from some envious wretch? Is this a mental aberration born of grief?"<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the speech of Prabhākara from his death-bed can in no way be made to square with the central story that Rājya, who had the title to the throne of Thanesar, wanted to give up his claims in favour of Harsha, although no pressure, political or otherwise was exerted on him. Before departing for the next world, Prabhākara is described as having said to Harsha, "To declare that the earth is yours is a vain repetition, when your bodily marks proclaim a universal emperor's dignity. To bid you take to yourself glory is almost contradictory, when glory has herself adopted you. 'Succeed to this world' is a command too mean for an intending conqueror to both worlds. 'Appropriate my treasure' is a grant of little

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1. Ibid, p. 248-249.

service to one whose sole craving is for the accumulation of fame spotless as moonlight. 'Make prize of the feudatory kings' is almost meaningless, when your virtues have made prize of all beings. 'Accept the burden of royalty' is an injunction misbecoming one accustomed to support the burden of the three worlds. 'Protect the people' is but reiteration, when the sky has your long arm for its bar."<sup>1</sup>

This speech of Prabhākara, if it means anything at all, means that he wanted Harsha to succeed him on the throne. In this context, his earlier speech may also be recalled in which he says to Harsha, "Upon you, my happiness, my sovereignty, my succession and my life are set, and as mine, so those of all my people."<sup>2</sup>

It is not a little curious that these anomalous fragments are not isolated and unconnected with each other. When taken together, they form an intelligible pattern.

The speech of Prabhākara which suggests that he proclaimed Harsha to be his successor fits in well with the speech of Rājya, who refused to be anointed and expressed his willingness to accept Harsha as the ruler.

1. Ibid, p.233.
2. Ibid, p.220.

The silent acquiescence of Harsha to the proposal of Rājya completes a fairly coherent and intelligible picture.

The story which emerges from these discrepancies naturally runs in the opposite direction, cutting across the central tale of the Harshacharita at its vital point. If the latter portrays the noble character of Harsha with such an exuberance of pious and affectionate colours that it assumes an aerial nebulosity, the former casts dark shadows of doubt about his intentions towards Rājya. If the central story suggests that there was a noble struggle between Rājya and Harsha, both of whom wanted the other to ascend the throne, the tale of anomalous fragments may be construed to indicate that attempts were made to enthrone Harsha by superseding Rājya.

What is the significance of these discrepancies? Are they the unwelcome and unforeseen outcome of an ambitious desire of Bāna to formulate the history and personality of Harsha on so noble a design that a little slip in the construction reflected more adversely on Harsha than he actually deserved? Or alternatively, can they be interpreted as merely the refractory snippets of the central theme which defied all the attempts of the historian to harmonise them with the rest? The evidence, however, scanty and inconclusive is in the favour of the second alternative.

Throughout the narrative, Bāna seems to have waged a running fight against Rājya. One can understand the limitations of the author who ignored the early life of Rājya but who painted the birth and early childhood of Harsha in gay and gladdening colours. One can even bring oneself to believe in the correctness of the account of the overpowering affection of Prabhākara towards Harsha, to the exclusion of Rājya. But the author outsteps all bounds, when he neglects to mention the accession of Rājya to the throne of Thanesar. The little epigraphic evidence gives a clear verdict against this part of Bāna's story.

Anyway, in order to construct a stereoscopic version of this drama, one has to understand the implications of both the central tale and the story of discrepancies.

## CHAPTER IV

The Vikramāṅkadevacharita of Bilhaṇa

In the colourful township of Khonamukha (modern Khonmuh<sup>1</sup>  $75.1^{\circ}$  W.  $34.3^{\circ}$  N.) which is situated at the foot of the snow-capped Himalayas and surrounded by saffron fields of pink hue on one side and green vine-yards on the other, Bilhaṇa was born in c.1040. His father Jyeshṭha-kalaśa belonged to a family of the mid-land brāhmaṇas,<sup>2</sup> who quite a few centuries before immigrated to this "coquettishly embellished bosom of the snowy mountain". Bilhaṇa does not explicitly mention their sub-caste. But since all the brāhmaṇas of the Kāśmiraka division consider themselves a branch of the Sārasvatas,<sup>3</sup> and since in his autobiographical sketch, Bilhaṇa pays a glowing tribute to the Sārasvatas<sup>4</sup> of his homeland, it is all but certain that he himself was a Sārasvata of Kauśika gotra.<sup>5</sup>

1. VDC, XVIII, 72; Rājataranginī I. 90; Printed editions of VDC spell the word as Khonamukha but contra Rājataranginī which mentions it as Khonamusha. See Buehler, Detailed Report of Tour in Search of Sanskrit MSS., (JBBRAS) 1877, Bombay, p.6; Stein: Translation of Kalhana's Rājataranginī, I, 16 n. II, 458.
2. VDC, XVIII, 73. Gopāditya who is described as having brought these brāhmaṇas from mid-land was an ancient king of the Gonandīya dynasty (Rājat. ii, 145)
3. Buehler's Report, p.19.
4. VDC, XVIII, 6, Karnasundari, I, 10.
5. VDC, XVIII, 73.

In the Early Mediaeval period, there were, broadly speaking, three classes of brāhmaṇas in Kashmir. The first and politically the most influential class comprised those scholars and poets who were either attached to the royal court or assigned administrative duties. Kalhana picturesquely describes these scholarly brāhmaṇas "who were granted great fortunes and high honours and who used to go to the court of Avantivarman (855/6 - 883), in vehicles worthy of kings."<sup>1</sup> Not only the greatest Kashmirian philosopher of all ages, Ānandavardhana, but also such famous poets as Muktakāra, Ratnakara and Sivasvāmin adorned the royal court in the second half of the ninth century.<sup>2</sup> Maṅkha, who flourished immediately after Bilhana, was the minister of War and Peace under Jayapīda<sup>3</sup> (1128-40). His one brother Alamkāra<sup>4</sup> was the superintendent of the Great Treasury, while another brother, Śringāra, was a judge.<sup>5</sup> The contemporary designations of administrative posts such as adhikarana-dvija, āsthāna-dvija and āsthāna-bhatta<sup>6</sup> indicate the association of the brāhmaṇas with the administration. The second class consisted of the priests of temples and holy places, who had their separate corporations (parishads).<sup>7</sup>

1. Rājat, V. 33.

2. Ibid, V. 30-35.

3. Rajat. VIII, 3354.

4. Rajat, VIII, 2423; 2557, 2618, 2671 etc. See also VIII, 3353 where Kalhana mentions Maṅkha as his brother. Srikanthacharita, iii, 56-62; XXV, 35-61. See Buchler's Report, p.52.

5. Rājat, VIII, 2422; Srikanthacharita, iii, 45-51.

6. Rajat, VIII, 1620. VII, 85-86.

7. Ibid, I, 87; V, 171.

Lastly, there were brāhmaṇas of agrahāra settlements who were mainly devoted to the cultivation of learning and the performance of rituals. The family of Bilhana belonged to the last class. Khonamukha<sup>a</sup> was an ancient agrahāra settlement, established, according to a tradition, by the legendary king Khagendra.<sup>1</sup> The ancestors of Bilhana were pious agnihotrins. His father was a grammarian of some distinction,<sup>2</sup> and his brothers poets of considerable talent.<sup>3</sup> He himself is described as having studied in his home-town all the sāstras, notably grammar, poetics and the Vedas with their ancillary disciplines.<sup>4</sup> Since his childhood days, however, he had a flair for writing poetry. The jingle of Sarasvati's bangles echoed in the expressions of the precocious child.

During the last half of the 11th century, peace in Kashmir was rudely disturbed, firstly by a series of reckless invasions of the neighbouring kingdoms by Ananta, and then by interminable quarrels between royal fathers and sons. Thus, finding no chance of receiving royal patronage in Kashmir, in the early years of his youth Bilhana left his native land after, but not long after, 1063<sup>5</sup> in search of fame and fortune.

1. Rājatā, I. 90.

2. VDC, XVIII, 79.

3. Ibid, XVIII, 84-85.

4. Ibid, XVIII, 81-82.

5. Bilhana left Kashmir in the reign-period of Kalasa who became king in 1063.

Travelling south-east he reached Mathurā, where he successfully tried his mettle in discussions against scholars of the region. At Vrindāvana, hallowed with the divinely sweet memories of Rādhā and Kṛishṇa, he stayed for some time. Then, passing by Kanauj, he went to Prayāga and Vārāṇasi. It was probably at the last place that he met Lakshmi-Karṇa, the king of Dāhala. At Karṇa's jewelled palace, Bilhāra won fresh laurels by defeating the poet Gaṅgādhara. But still he failed to find royal patronage and before 1073<sup>1</sup> he left Dāhala. By passing Dhārā, he reached Somnath. Then he again made a bid to secure a place in the Chaulukya court as a poet. In c.1073<sup>2</sup>, he composed the Karṇa-sundari, in which he described the romantic episode of the marriage of Karṇa Chaulukya (1066/67 - 93) with a Silāhāra princess. But, frustrated and bitterly disappointed,<sup>3</sup> he resumed his southward march, visiting courts and holy places. On his way back from Rāmeśvara, at long last fortune smiled on him at the Chālukya capital Kalyāṇa, where Vikramāditya appointed him Vidyāpati.

Kashmir had a very strong tradition of itihāsa. But

1. Because the earliest known date of Yaśah karna, the successor of Lakshmi-karṇa is 1073 (EI, XII, p.206; but contra, CII, IV, 291 but see ibid, intr. CII).
2. A.K. Majumdar, Chaulukyas of Gujarat, p.63.
3. His disappointment is evident from his vehement condemnation of Gujarati manners (VDC, XVIII, 97) and from the fact that in his autobiographical sketch, he did not care to mention his association with the Chalukyan court.

it seems that the works of itihāsa in Kashmir - the books of Chhavillakāra and Padmamihira, the Pārthivāvalī of Helārāja and the Nripāvalī of Kshemendra - were in the nature of the chronicles and king-lists. Indeed, they were a continuation of the yāma tradition and were considerably different in style from the mid-land school of itihāsa, started by Bāṇa. Bilhana does not evince any influence of the Kashmir tradition. Both his available works were composed in the mid-land style of historical narratives.

#### Bilhana as a Defence Counsel

The ancient itihāsa-ākhyāna tradition assumed a different complexion when it was brought to the service of the new warrior class of the Rajputs, which was extremely conscious of its position and duties. As the novus homo over-emphasizes his position in order to compensate for his inferiority, the newly arisen aristocracy tended to identify itself with the best traditions of ancient kshatriya order. In historiography, this tendency is reflected in the anachronistic representation of contemporary Rajput princes in the role of olden heroes of ancient aristocracies.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the Kannada

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1. See also the Prithvirāja-vijaya which mentions Prithviraja III Chāhamāna as the incarnation of the Ikshvāku king Rāma. Hemachandra also represents Siddharāja, the Solāṅki ruler as Rāma before whom Vibhishana, the king of Lankā, appeared and disclosed that the latter was his servant in his previous birth. (DV, XV, vv. 56-57; Chaulukyas of Gujrat, 409)

poet Ranna portrayed his patron Satyāśraya Chālukya (A.D. 997-A.D. 1008) in the rôle of Bhīma, the Pāṇḍava hero. Someśvara I Āhavamalla was celebrated as Rāma in historical narratives (ākhyāyikās), tales and dramas.<sup>1</sup> The same tendency is reflected in inscriptions, where Vikramāditya VI, the patron of Bilhana, was styled 'Chālukya Rāma'.<sup>2</sup> Bilhana, who hailed from Kashmir, adopted in the earlier part of the epic the direct method of historical narration, as employed in the mediaeval chronicles of Kashmir.<sup>3</sup> But even here, as elsewhere in the mediaeval epics of the country, we find a self-conscious attempt of the new nobility to do something extraordinary and unnatural, to distinguish itself from the rest of its kind and to align itself to the heroic tradition of yore. This nostalgic tendency towards the sentimental heroism and chivalry of ancient times, found its expression in Bilhana who gave an unreal personality to his hero by describing in epic style the digvijaya<sup>4</sup> of Vikrama and his selection in the svayamvara<sup>5</sup> of fair Chandralekhā to the bitter disappointment of rival kings.

1. ākhyāyikā-simni kathādbhuteshu yah sargabandhe daśarūpake cha pavitra-charitrataya kavindrairaropito Rama ivadvitiyah VDC. I, 88.
2. EI, XV, 349, v.20, EC. VII. Sk. 297. See also VDC III, v.62, 77,
3. He, however, adopts the usual pattern of a king's marriage with the princess destined to be the consort of an imperial suzerain in his drama Karna-Sundari composed by him at Anahilapātaka during the reign of the Solariki ruler Karna I.
4. see infra pp.124-134
5. see infra pp.127-131

Secondly, the culture during this period was immensely influenced by the court organization. There was an intrinsic unity between princes, pontiffs, dharmaśāstra writers, poets, bards and courtiers. We have seen elsewhere, how the religious pontiffs assumed the imperial designation of 'the great king, the king of kings, Paramabhattaraka'. In several royal courts, the tradition of accepting Hindu ascetics as spiritual preceptors continued for centuries in uninterrupted successions, the disciple of the former preceptor invariably taking the place of his master.<sup>1</sup> Lakshmidhara (c.A.D. 1100), the author of the famous Kṛitya Kalpataru, a digest of dharmaśāstra, was the minister for war and peace in the court of Gavindachandra Gahadavāla. Vijñāneśvara, the foremost commentator on the Yajñavalkya Smṛiti, was a minister of Vikramāditya VI. Vallāla of the Sena dynasty and Aparāṅka of Silāhāra house were royal authors who made significant contributions to dharmaśāstra; there were numerous others whom it is needless to mention. Bards are met in almost all courts,<sup>2</sup> and poets had become necessary members of even the modest courts of feudatories and petty chieftains.

V.S.Patik,  
1. Saiva Cults in Northern India, Vārānasi, 1960, pp.46-50  
2. VDC, XVIII, v.107.

These scholars and poets of the court, praised their royal patrons and justified their actions. Princes were the source of their inspiration and the basis of their existence. In turn, the poets became the instruments of princely propaganda. With unblushing frankness, Bilhana in the last verse but one of the Vikramānkadevacharita advises kings to cultivate friendship with poets, as unsullied fame could emerge only through their favour. "When pleased" he adds, "they composed a long biography of virtuous Rāma and when angered they brought Rāvana, the conqueror of the three worlds, to ridicule".<sup>1</sup> "If Rāvana has faded into insignificance and Rāma is exalted in glory, it is because of Vālmīki who composed the life of Rāma."<sup>2</sup> Not only the poet Bilhana but also his contemporary, the most prominent dharmaśāstra writer of the early mediaeval period Vijñāneśvara praises, the king Vikramāditya VI in spite of his faults: "On the surface of the earth, there was not, there is not, and there will not be, a town like Kalyāna; never was a monarch like the prosperous Vikramānka seen or heard of;" and in the true spirit of the age he praises himself: "and

1. VDC, XVIII, v.107.

2. Ibid, I, v.27, see also I, 26; XVIII, 106.

what is more - Vijñanesvara, the Pandita, does not bear any comparison with any other. May this triad which is a celestial creeper exist to the end of the Kalpa."<sup>1</sup> Likewise Someśvara Bhaṭṭa, a learned and eminent Rigvedi Brāhmaṇa of the Mauna gotra holding the post of a dharmaśāstra-kārin or chief superintendent of religious affairs and later on raised to the rank of High Minister with all the tokens of royalty, sets up an inscription which defends the fratricidal action of Vikramāditya VI. The inscription records that the kingdom enjoyed by Someśvara II Bhuvanaikamalla was given to him by his father Someśvara I and that he at first followed the right course, which inspired dread in hostile kings and gave delight to his adherents. "But later on" the inscription proceeds to tell us", Someśvara II Bhuvanaikamalla became neglectful of his subjects' burdens because of his being infatuated by pride, and therefore his younger brother, who was righteous of soul, put him under restraint."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the court-poet Bilhaṇa, although he hailed from Kashmir, did not share the concept of a chronicler's duty with the Kashmirian poets, especially Kalhaṇa for whom the judge who extols virtues and condemns vices was the ideal.<sup>3</sup>

1. Mitāksharā

2. EI, XV, 349.

3. Rājat, I, 7.

Because of his association with the court he evidently takes the role of a defence counsel and, as we shall see, there was a reason for him to assume it.

The Vikramāṅkadevacharita was composed when Kalaśa (1080-1088) was ruling in Kashmir and Harsha, his son and successor, was merely a prince.<sup>1</sup> The last important incident mentioned by Bilhana in his royal biography is the chastisement of Jayasimha II, the recalcitrant heir-apparent, by the king Vikramāditya VI.<sup>2</sup> As Harsha succeeded Kalaśa in A.D. 1089<sup>3</sup> and the last date known of Jayasimha as the heir-apparent is December 25, 1082,<sup>4</sup> the work must have been composed between 1083-1089.

This period marks a turning point in the career of Vikramāditya VI. The removal of Jayasimha II from the position of heir-apparent in 1082 - is the final act of the plan of Vikramāditya VI which started with the latter's attainment of the status of a heir-apparent with the help of the Cholas in 1068. Subsequent events - the unlawful usurpation of the Chālukyas throne, the imprisonment (and probably the execution) of the elder brother Someśvara II Bhuvanaikamalla, and lastly

1. VDC, XVIII, v.64.

2. Ibid, canto XIV - XV.

3. Rajat, VII, 723.

4. BKI, I, ptII, No. 127, p.146.

the declaration of Jayasimha as persona non grata to secure the throne for his son Mallikārjuna, were the acts which made the position of Vikramāditya VI strong and secure, but which reflected adversely on him as a man. Thereafter, however, Vikramāditya VI reigned peacefully. He patronized art, poetry and religion.

Bilhana as the court-poet had the responsibility of defending the course of action taken by the king, in order to convince the educated elite of his righteousness and to mobilise public opinion in favour of the reigning monarch. Bilhana was eminently successful in his work of removing the blots from the fame of Vikrama which comes to us so resoundingly through the Vikramānka deracharita.

Stray attempts to justify the action of Vikrama, were made by panegyrists in inscriptions. Bilhana, however, constructs a detailed and forceful plea in his patron's defence, which may be analysed in four sections representing the four stages in its development:-

1. That Vikramāditya was destined by fate to succeed his father on the Chālukya throne,
2. that Vikramāditya was favoured and selected by his father <sup>the former</sup> for succession but magnanimously declined the offer;
3. that Vikramāditya had to dethrone the cruel and vicious Somesvara II for the general weal and welfare and to save

- the fair fame of the Chālukyas from being sullied by his atrocious acts;
4. that Vikrama reluctantly ascended the throne under the express command of Siva, who appeared before him in a dream.

#### Pre-ordination for Kingship

To represent that Vikramāditya VI was pre-ordained by destiny to be a powerful ruler, Bilhana weaves a story. According to him, Somesvara I Āhavamalla was tormented by a keen desire to obtain a son. The goddess of the Royal Fortune (Sri) of the Chālukyas, who had come to him in direct succession from his ancestors, was often fluttering like a bird on the mast of a ship sailing in the mid-ocean, for want of one under whom she could take repose after him.<sup>1</sup> He, therefore, left the state to the care of ministers and retired with his wife to a Siva temple, where they slept on the bare ground, performed severe austerities and gave themselves up to devotional practices. One day when the king was offering morning prayers he heard a divine voice: "O King! your wife shall give birth to three sons. The first and the last will be born by virtue of my meritorious works, but the second will come to thee by my favour alone. He shall surpass in valour

1. VDC, II, 31.

and virtues all the princes of olden times and like Rāma,  
shall bring back the goddess of royal glory from beyond the  
seas."<sup>1</sup>

In due course, the first son was born, but the king was not satisfied. Remembering the prediction of the heavenly voice, he anxiously waited for the birth of his second son. At last the queen again became pale. In the expectation of the eagerly desired son blessed by Lord Śiva, the king did all that he could do. He showered wealth on the Brahmanas and made several thank-offerings. The queen had strange cravings which presaged the future greatness of the child. In a very auspicious hour and under an extraordinarily favourable conjunction of planets, Vikrama was born. Flowers fell from the sky. Indra's drum resounded.<sup>2</sup>

Facts gleamed from inscriptions, however, give the lie to the plea of Bilhana. The whole episode of Someśvara I Āhavamalla's penances and the consequent birth of the three sons is a figment of poetic imagination. As early as December 24, 1049, Mahāmandaleśvara Someśvara II Bhuvanaikamalla was a governor of Belvola and Purigere divisions - a position he held at least up to 1054,<sup>3</sup> and in 1055 Vikramāditya VI was

1. VDC, Canto II.

2. Ibd, II, 59-91.

3. EI. XVI. 53 f; BKI. I. 84, 90.

in charge of Gangavādi.<sup>1</sup> Still earlier, a Chola inscription set up in the 27th regnal year of Rājādhīrāja (1045) makes a reference to Vikki (i.e. Vikramāditya VI), the brave warrior who fled away when the irresistible Chola forces advanced and vanquished the Chālukya army.<sup>2</sup> Vikramāditya VI and his brother Someśvara II, therefore, must have been born before 1030, more than decade before Someśvara I Āhavamalla ascended the Chālukyan throne in 1042. This fictitious episode was obviously introduced by the poet to present his hero Vikramāditya VI as specially favoured by Lord Siva to succeed Someśvara I. Similar stories are found in the Harshacharita<sup>3</sup> and Dvayāśraya<sup>4</sup> where Harsha and Siddharāja are described as born from the blessings respectively of Sūrya and Lakshmi.

#### Offer of Heir-apparency and its Refusal

Bilhana next introduces the story of Vikrama's magnanimous refusal of the status of heir-apparent offered by Someśvara I Āhavamalla. According to Bilhana, Āhavamalla thought of designating the more valiant and virtuous, but unfortunately the younger, son Vikramāditya as his heir-

1. EI, XIII, 168 ff.

2. EHD, 334-335; SII, III, p.56.

3. HCCcanto, IV.

4. DV X, vv. 1-90.

apparent. The latter, however, politely yet firmly declined the offer. Neither Siva's blessings nor astrologers' predictions could induce him to accept the status of an heir-apparent, which rightly belonged to his elder brother. And so Someśvara II Bhuvanaikamalla was eventually anointed as a yuvarāja, but the burden of duties and responsibilities rested on the shoulders of Vikramāditya VI.<sup>1</sup>

It is very difficult to check the historicity of the episode. In favour of Bilhana's account may be cited those Chola records which, though they make several references to the valiant Vikramāditya VI as fighting against the Cholas in the lifetime of his father,<sup>2</sup> do not at all mention Someśvara II as participating in the Chola-Chālukya wars. But this may be due to the fact that Vikramāditya VI was a governor of Gangavādi - an area subjected to constant military pressure by Chola forces, whereas Someśvara II, being heir-apparent, was assigned the governorship of Belvola-Purigere provinces - far away from the Chola borders.

On the other hand, inscriptional data recording the administrative assignments to princes during the reign-period of Someśvara I Āhavamalla, cast grave doubts on Bilhana's

1. VDC, III, 27-IV, 1.

2. SII, III, p.37.

account. Thus, Mahāmāndaleśvara Sobhanarasa was governing the provinces of Belvola-Puligere with the status of a Yuvarāja and the title of the 'Lord of Veṅgi' in 1044.<sup>1</sup> Someśvara II succeeded him as an heir-apparent and a governor of Belvola-Puligere in 1049.<sup>2</sup> At that time, Vikramāditya VI was not holding any important administrative post. He was assigned the responsible office of the governorship of Gangavādi and Banavāsi six years later in 1055.<sup>3</sup> Two years later Nolambavādi was added to the list of provinces under his jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup>

Further, inscriptions of Vikramāditya VI, which denounce Someśvara II and justify the former in his usurpation of the throne,<sup>5</sup> make no reference to this offer of heir-apparency - a very important argument for justifying supersession.

Bühler may, therefore, be right in his view that 'this part of the narrative of Vikrama's life, also, which strongly puts forward his fitness for the throne and his generosity to the less able Someśvara, looks as if it had been touched up in order to whitewash Vikrama's character and to blacken that of his enemy.'<sup>6</sup> In this connection one

1. EC, VII, S. 323.

2. EI, XVI, 53 f.; BKI, I. I. 84 and 90.

3. EI, XIII, 168 f.; BK. 69 of 1936; SII. IX. I. 118; EC, VII, Sk. 83, 152.

4. EHD1355

5. EI, XVI, 349 and

6. VDC, Intr. 31 n.

may recall here the death-bed speech of Someśvara I Āhavamalla which expressly attributes the bestowal of heir-apparency on Someśvara to the laudable generosity of Vikramāditya VI. The dying king addresses the ministers saying:<sup>1</sup>

'I can boast of a son like Rāma, mighty with the sword and bow,  
 'Vikramānka famed for conquest, over himself and o'er the foe:  
 'Who has freely to his brother yielded up Kalyāṇa's throne,  
 'Made Someśvara bear the burden which my feeble hands disown."

#### Wickedness of Someśvara II Bhuvanaikamalla

Further, Bilhāṇa recounts the atrocious acts of Someśvara II, who threatened the life of Vikramāditya VI. After the accession of Someśvara II, both brothers lived for some time in concord and happiness. Although superior in virtues, Vikramāditya recognised Someśvara II as the chief of the house. He made over to the king the spoils he had won in the wars. But Someśvara II, after he had enjoyed sovereignty for some time, fell into evil courses. He alienated all good persons by his suspicious, cruel and avaricious nature. Kissed by the she-goblin of kingship, he

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1. IA, V, pp. 326-332.

hankered after the blood of all persons indiscriminately. With prosperity lost, the Royal Glory of the Chālukyas under him appeared like a married lady in the garb of a widow, with the fluttering tresses of her hair tonsured, even in the lifetime of her husband.<sup>1</sup> The fair fame of the Chālu-kyas was sullied.

Vikramāditya VI, therefore, left the capital and went to the south with his younger brother Jayasimha. On his southward march, he received tribute from Jayakesin of Koṅkāna and an unnamed lord of Alūpa. The Chola king, fearing an attack from him, hastened with a proposal of friendship cemented by matrimonial alliance. But to save face, however, the Chola monarch stipulated that the marriage should be performed on the banks of the Tungabhadrā in the heart of the Chālukya territory.

After some time, the Chola king, the father-in-law, expired and Vikramāditya VI went to quell the rebellion and to place his wife's brother on the Chola throne. But when, after a month's stay at Kāñchi, he returned back to the Tungabhadrā, he learnt that his brother-in-law had lost his life in a rebellion and that Rājiga Chola, the ruler of

1. VDC, IV, 97-113.

Vēngi, had usurped the throne. Vikramāditya marched towards the Chola kingdom in order to chastise the usurper. The latter, made common cause with Someśvara II who saw in this alliance an opportunity to harm his younger brother. The prospect of a fratricidal war distressed the virtuous Vikramāditya, and therefore he sent friendly messages to his brother for reconciliation. Someśvara II pretended to accept the advances of his younger brother only in order to strike a decisive blow at an opportune time. When Vikramāditya VI learnt of these treacherous designs, he felt reluctant but, at the express command of Śiva who appeared in dreams, he proceeded and gave a fierce battle. The Chola king fled away and Someśvara II was put in prison.<sup>1</sup>

Now, the allegations that Someśvara II was cruel, avaricious and treacherous, that he neglected his duties towards the people, and that he unnecessarily harboured evil designs against his younger brother Vikramāditya VI, can hardly be upheld. Inscriptions of the reign of Someśvara II, pay a high tribute to his noble character. "With the accession of Someśvara II", an inscription states, "victory was brought to dharma, religious associations to the good, the earth was made happy and the kṛita age appeared to have dawned."<sup>2</sup>

1. VDC, canto 3 W. 27-77; cantos IV - VI  
2. EC, VII, I, 102.

Even most of the records belonging to the reign of Vikramāditya VI extol Someśvara Bhuvanaikamalla's rule and conduct. As late as 1114, an inscription from Shikarpur records that the rule of Someśvara II was "praised by all the world."<sup>1</sup> An epigraph of Permādideva I, the Sinda feudatory chief of Vikramāditya VI runs as follows: "After that king, his son Someśvara - who was ardently devoted to sovereignty, who was well capable of sustaining the burden of earth, who was celebrated for his statesmanship which was illumined by the wisdom of a tortoise, united with the four means of attaining success, and who was formidable by reason of being endowed with fierce valour- was glorious under the name of Bhuvanaikamalla, being the best among celebrated men and heroes."<sup>2</sup> That he repaired some of the ravages wrought by the Chola invasion to the temples of Belvola, is known from the inscriptions of Annigere and Gavawad.<sup>3</sup> He was even

1. EC, VII, I, p.104.

2. JBRAS, XI, 231.

3. EI, XV. 337 f; 347-48.

"dear to the world of poets."<sup>1</sup>

On the fratricidal war, epigraphical data give a clear verdict against Vikramāditya VI.<sup>2</sup> There is definite evidence that Vikramāditya VI, who was assigned the very responsible office of the governorship of Gangavādi,<sup>3</sup> with the highest rank in kingdom only below the king, fomented internal dissensions and invited foreign invasion. Some time between August 15, 1068 A.D. and December 24, 1069 A.D., Vikramāditya VI formed an alliance with the sworn enemy of the house, Vīra Rājendra Chola, and instigated him to invade Chālukya territory. The Chola king is reported to have invested

<sup>1</sup> EC. XI Dg. 1.

<sup>2</sup>. Allegations against the dethroned king by the accusing usurper should be accepted only with reservations. Sometimes even later rulers who usurp the throne of rightful kings, cited earlier cases to justify their own acts and in doing so they [REDACTED] give a twist to earlier historical facts. The case of the deposition of Govinda II is quite instructive. It was regularly cited by later rulers in the Rāshtrakūṭa history and so the case gradually developed. Dhruva in his lifetime never openly stated that he superseded his elder brother. A record of the last year of his reign contains a statement that Dhruva out of regard for elders assumed the burden of administration as the earlier ruler, who failed to give a lead, was deserted by his feudatory allies and thus the very existence of the house of the Rāshtrakūṭas was threatened. (EI, IX, 1934) Govinda III who had superseded his elder brother, in the very first year of his reign came out with the statement that Dhruva had superseded (by dethroning) Govinda II but thereby Dhruva did not incur any sin as Govinda II was a wicked ruler associated with vicious persons. (IA, IV, 65) The case further developed after a century and a half. Amoghavarsha II and Krishna III had dethroned the licentious ruler, Govinda IV, who is reported to have committed incest. Krishna III for the first time records that Govinda II was deposed as "sensual pleasures had made him careless of the kingdom [and thus] he allowed his position as a sovereign insecure." (JBBRAS, XVIII, v.11) In the accusation of Govinda II, Krishna III probably

Vikramāditya VI with the necklet (Kanthika) of rulership over Rattapadi.<sup>1</sup> For sometime he assumed independence and issued royal edicts with imperial titles. With Jayasimha III,<sup>2</sup> the governor of Nolamba-Sindavādi and the feudatory chieftains - Jayakesin I of Goa,<sup>3</sup> Seupachandra II the Yādava ruler,<sup>4</sup> Ereyanga Hoysāla<sup>5</sup> and probably Rāya Pāndya<sup>6</sup> - he formed an internal group against the king. Probably in 1071, he tried to sabotage the Chālukyan administration.<sup>7</sup> Thus, he almost forced his elder brother to form an alliance with Kulottunga Chola which ultimately resulted in the dethronement of Somesvara II.

Footnote 1 continued from previous page

justifies the dethronement of the immoral Govinda IV. The allegation of "sensual pleasures" and "the consequent weakening of the Rāshtrakūṭa power" is certainly true in the case of Govinda IV but ~~is~~ unwarranted in the case of Govinda II. (see also Karahad CP of Karka, IA, XII, 263 ff. L.8)

2. Ibid, VII, Sk. 136.

1. EI, XXV, 265.

2. EHD, I, 310 ff. EC, VII, Sk. 136; SII, IX, I, 114, 115

3. Narendra Inscription, EI, III, 298 ff.

4. Introduction to Memādri's Vratakhandā, v.29, BG, I, II, 271.

5. EC, V, Ar. 102.

6. SII, IX, 140.

7. EHD, I, 310 ff.

Commands of Siva

Lastly, Bilhana brings in the divine agency of Siva's commands to defend his patron from the charge of violating the principle of primogeniture. When the prospect of a fratricidal war had made Vikramāditya VI reluctant to encounter the combined army of the Cholas and the Chālukyas, Bilhana narrates, that Siva appeared before Vikramāditya VI in a dream and commanded him, "O child! You are my virtuous incarnation and, therefore, it is surprising that you are having such mental oscillation. Don't you remember that you are born to destroy evil doers? By annihilating the enemies, therefore, may your strung bow be a cause of jubilation for the whole world."<sup>1</sup>

Later again, the heavenly voice of Siva angrily<sup>2</sup> commanded Vikrama to keep Someśvara II in prison.

1. VDC, VI, 62 - 65.
2. Ibid, VI, 93.

### Significance of the Defence Plea

In order to justify the course of action taken by his patron, Bilhana advances the plea of the unseen cause in the form of pre-ordination by the will of God, and of the current political conventions. Actions in the past life bear fruition in the form of destiny, which conditions the circumstances, determines happiness and misery in the present life, and, in this way, fetters human freedom of action. According to the *Mimāmsakas*, human actions create a desert (*apūrva*), which in due course, bears fruit without any external agency. But the followers of the *Nyāya* and *Vaiśeshika* schools believe that god in the form of *Īśvara-siva* dispenses the fruits of actions.<sup>1</sup>

They also believe in the pre-ordination of the course of human life through divine grace. Thus, according to a contemporary inscription, set up by a logician of the *Saiva Siddhānta* school, it is through the grace of God that a man obtains birth in a royal family, worldly pleasures, learning, right thinking, beautiful physique and victories

1. *Kusumāñjali*, I, 4; S.C. Vidyabhushan, A History of Indian Logic, Calcutta, 1921, p. 143.

in war.<sup>1</sup> Further, in this period, kings were regarded as divine, and gods were invested with kingship. A tradition runs that Solāṅkī chief had given the whole of the Mālava province as a present to the god Mahākāleśvara of Ujjain.<sup>2</sup> Avantivarman of the Mattamayūra region, and a Kalachuri king of Dāhala presented their kingdoms to the pontiffs of Saiva Siddhānta school.<sup>3</sup> In Kalachuri inscriptions, a Saiva ascetic is styled "King, the Great King of Kings, Lord Vāmadeva."<sup>4</sup> Lastly, the idea gained currency that for the fulfilment of a specific purpose, some of the divine powers of Śiva manifest themselves in a man. An inscription from Somanātha-Prabhāsa describes Viśveśvara-rāshī as the partial incarnation of Lord Śiva.<sup>5</sup>

Using these ideas of the Saivas - the preordination of the course of human life through the grace of Śiva, the divinity of kings, the partial incarnation of Śiva, and divine instructions received in dreams -, Bilhana makes out that Lord Śiva in his infinite grace preordained

1. EI, I, 261, verse 75.

2. Prabandhachintāmani, p.11.

3. EI, I, 355, v.13; JAHRS, IV, 147 ff.

4. EI, II, 305 ff; XII, 210; XXXI, 116; IA, XVII, 246 ff.  
See also JUPHS, 1952, 227 but contra M.M.V.V.Mirashi,  
CII, IV, p.1ntc., Lxviii. and fn.1.

5. Bhavanagar Inscriptions, 209-10, vv. 18-19.

Vikramāditya VI to become a mighty ruler for destroying evil doers. On the same basis, he further develops the theme to show that Vikramāditya received instructions from Siva for proceeding against his elder brother in battle, and violating the principle of primogeniture by dethroning the elder brother and ascending the Chālukyan throne. The divine causation in the form of pre-ordination, the divine character as a partial incarnation, and the divine commands to action, place the hero and his deeds high above human criticism and censure.

In support of his case, Bilhana further brings in the current political conventions - the wish of the ruling father, and the wickedness of Somesvara II.

Earlier works - the two great epics,<sup>1</sup> the Niruktā<sup>2</sup> and the Arthaśāstra<sup>3</sup> - , maintained that except under a crisis, the law of primogeniture was inviolable. Some mediaeval texts, however, regard it as merely recommendatory. In the Kṛitya-kalpataru, Lakshmidhara (C.lllO), the Gahadavāla minister for peace and war, implies that for the succession to the throne, a younger but more qualified son should be preferred to an unmeritious,

1. Rāmāyaṇa, II, 110, 36; Mahābhārata, I, 85, 22.

2. II, 10

3. XII, 1, 17.

though elder one.<sup>1</sup> Having recourse to this discretionary power, mediaeval kings sometimes set aside the law of primogeniture and anointed younger sons as yuvarāja.

Overriding the claim of the eldest son, Dhruva Rāshtrakūṭa had invested his third son Govinda with the necklace of heir-apparency. But this unusual practice met with popular discontent and Dhruva had to abdicate the throne in order to set the new government of Govinda III secure in the saddle.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, even in the mediaeval period, the supersession of the eldest brother was generally disliked. "Never was the eldest brother overriden" in the ideal state portrayed by Bāṇa in the Kadambari.<sup>3</sup> For Bilhana, the supersession was a glaring violation of customary laws and it necessarily entailed sin.<sup>4</sup> His ideal was Bharata who firmly declined the offer of the throne which rightfully belonged to his elder brother Rāma.<sup>5</sup> That such feelings were commonly shared by people at large is known from the Silāpattikāram, which describes the story of the Chera prince Ilānko vādigal, who thought it easier to

1. Rājadharmakānda, Intr. p. 28.

2. Yazdani, Early History of Deccan, I, 265.

3. p. 56; see also Rajanilli-ratnakara, p.70.

4. VDC, III, v.36.

5. Ibid, III, v. 40.

renounce all the comforts of the worldly life by becoming a monk than to commit the sin of usurping the elder brother's throne.

Thus, an offer of the throne made by the royal father to his younger son, although refused at the time, later furnishes a plausible excuse for the legitimate supersession of the elder brother. Its refusal, however, lends a halo of epic magnanimity to the personality of the hero.

The main contention of Bilhana rests on the diabolical character of Someśvara II. From very early times, kings were believed as being composed of divine elements. The concept assumed a constitutional significance, when some ancient writers discriminated between good and bad kings, and maintained that virtuous kings were divine, where vicious kings who oppress the subjects and cause the loss of dharma, are made up of the parts of demons. Bilhana further develops this view. According to him, it is the she-goblin of Royal Fortune, and not Lakshmi, the Goddess of Royal Glory, that attends a vicious king.<sup>1</sup> And here, Bilhana finds the justification for the dethronement of Someśvara II. The virtuous ruler Vikramāditya, in whom,

1. VDC, IV, v. 105.

Lakshmi, the goddess of Royal Fortune, inhered, deserved respect due to a divine personality, whereas Somesvara II, the vicious king, attended by the she-goblin of kingship, merited dethronement and destruction.

#### Unprincipled Wrangling

The only other political episode dealt in detail by Bilhana is the suppression of the rebellious younger brother Jayasimha. In his account of the struggle, Bilhana tries to show the kind and considerate nature of Vikrama in contrast with the rash haughty and ungrateful disposition of his younger brother. 'A confidential adviser once approached Vikrama in privacy and exhorted him to exert vigilant supervision over the administration. He informed him of the treasonable intentions of Jayasimha, the governor of Vanavasa, who was filling his coffers by oppressing the subjects, raising the strength of his army and making overtures to enemies of the state - the Chola king and the turbulent forest tribes. It was further reported that he would soon march, in defiance of the emperor Vikrama, to the Krishnaveni. The considerate Vikrama, however, sent spies to ascertain the real state of affairs,

and they came in due course and confirmed the report. Dismayed by the prospect of another fraternal war, Vikrama sent friendly messages in order to affect reconciliation with his recalcitrant brother, but mistaking them as the signs of weakness, Jayasimha turned them down. Eventually, the latter advanced towards the Krishnā, where other feudatory kings joined him. Vikrama marched in self-defence and in spite of initial reverses, routed the rebels and with a large quantity of booty, seized the harem of Jayasimha, who was captured on his flight in the jungles.<sup>1</sup>

Archaeological data, however, do not give such a simple picture. Jayasimha, who was a trusted, loyal and active companion of Vikramāditya, helped the latter in his struggle against the elder brother. He was a governor of Taradavādi under his father.<sup>2</sup> In the regime of his eldest brother, Trailokyamalla-Nolamba-Pallava-Permaḍi Jayasimhadeva was ruling over Kogali five hundred, Kadambalige thousand and Ballakunde three hundred on May 19, 1068, and over Nolambavādi thirty-two thousand and Sindavādi thousand on August 15, 1068 A.D., holding the

1. VDC, XIV - XV

2. BG, I, II, 44 n.

third rank in the kingdom, below only the King, Someśvara II and Vikramāditya VI.<sup>1</sup> But some time after the last date, he relinquished the high position and went with Vikrama to the south.<sup>2</sup> After the accession of the latter to the throne of Kalyāṇī, Jayasimha was assigned the governorship of Banavāsi with the status of an heir-apparent.<sup>3</sup> A record of Jayasimha dated 1080, proudly describes him as "an abode of modesty, a cherished companion of Vikramāditya's heart, a beloved younger brother who, having won over King Chālukya-Rāma, had mounted up and gained his affection"<sup>4</sup>. It was "through the aid of Nolamba (Jayasimha)" that "the seven Konkanas became like the bracelet of the emperor Vikramāditya VI"<sup>5</sup>. Because of him "Dāhala was smoking, Lāla was trying to enter the forest, the Cholas tried to run south of Lankā, thinking that he will be angry, Konkana filled with anxiety."<sup>6</sup> After the king, he was thus, the most influential man in the Chālukyan territory. But suddenly, a few days before December 25, 1082, he was removed from the office of heir-apparent and the prince Mallikārūna, the eldest son of

1. EC., vii, Sk.136; SII, IX, I,114; 115;

2. EC., XI, Dg.1; VDC, V,v.1; [REDACTED].

3. BK, 237 of 1928-9; BKI, 143; BK. No. 128 of 1926-27.

4. EC.,VII, Sk,297.

5. Ibid, Sk, 107.

6. EC., VII, Sk, 297.

Vikrama by the crowned queen, was appointed as yuvārāja.<sup>1</sup> Naturally enough, this degradation and the consequent humiliation would have goaded Jayasimha to rebel against his brother. The vapid homilies of Bilhana merely bring into high relief the earlier life of Vikrama when he rebelled and dethroned his elder brother Somesvara II. Although both Vikrama and Jayasimha tread the same path - Vikrama had but little justification and Jayasimha had sufficient cause - , the former is exalted and the latter is condemned. The advocacy of Bilhana here stoops to unprincipled disputation. He had, indeed, an unfortunate concept of his duty as a court-poet to justify all acts of his patron, so that "the unsullied fame of his patron may spring from his composition" - "śuddhā kīrtīr sphurati bhavatām nūna-metatprasādat."

#### The Attainment of Chakravartin Status

After Bāna, the concept of a chakravartin becomes the central theme of the mid-land school of historiography, from which gradually arose two literary motifs - first, the

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1. BKI., Intr., and No. 127.; EI, XXVIII, 33.

winning of the hand of a princess, destined to be the consort of an imperial suzerain, and second, the union of the king with the goddess of royal fortune, Lakshmi. The idea of a chakravartin, which first occurs in the Brāhmaṇa literature<sup>1</sup> and later becomes the recurrent theme in the Purāṇas, epics and classical literature, was intricately woven into the politico-religious texture of the mediaeval life. According to the Purāṇas, chakravartins are born in each age as partial manifestations of Lord Vishnu. They are characterized by four of the six divine powers of Vishnu - the strength, dharma, happiness and wealth, by virtue of which, they succeed better than even the sages in establishing social order and bringing about happiness in society.<sup>2</sup> In the early mediaeval age, Jain scholars, court poets and court annalists further popularised the idea of chakravartin. In their charitas and Purāṇas, dealing with sixty-three excellent men (sarvakā-purusha), Jain writers gave detailed accounts of the lives of several legendary, semi-legendary and historical suzerains.<sup>3</sup> Some of them

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1. Sāmavidhāna-Brāhmaṇa, III, 5,2.

2. Vayu Purana, XLVII, 72-76.

3. For a critical summary see Winternitz, HIL, II, 497ff.

even wove into their accounts the romantic episodes of these kings in the land of the Vidyādhara.

In literature and inscriptions, the abstract idea of the royal glory of the chakravartins, the partial incarnations of Vishnu, is represented as the goddess of Royal Fortune Lakshmi. When the rise in royal status is obtained through the defeat of a rival, the victorious king is represented as the Mandara Mountain to seize forcibly the Lakshmi of the defeated king from the ocean of the hostile forces. Sometimes the motif is further elaborated, and the marriage ceremony of Lakshmi as a punarbhū (woman marrying a second time) with the victorious king is described. Thus, the Radhanpur Copper Plate states that the Rāshtrakūṭa king had captured by force the Royal Fortune of the Chālukyas like the Mandara Mountain which drew forth Lakshmi from the ocean.<sup>1</sup> Visaladeva Vāghela is represented in a record as Lord Vishnu, who obtained the Lakshmi of the Karnatas.<sup>2</sup> The Pratihāra king Bhoja is described as having married to the Royal Fortune of the Pālas, in accordance with the sacred injunctions enshrined in scriptures.<sup>3</sup>

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1. EI, VI, 243 verse 3; for a similar idea, see Raghuvamśa III, 56.
  2. IA, VI, 210; or without any reference to the Mandara mountain as in VDC, I, 115.
  3. EI, XVIII, 109, verse 18.

The general form of the motif, however, is 'the selection of the king by the goddess of Royal Fortune in a svayamvara'. The Junagadh inscription of Skandagupta records that after discarding other royal rivals, Lakshmi had selected him as her consort.<sup>1</sup> The same sentiment is expressed by Bāṇa, who mentions that of her own accord, Lakshmi stayed with the king Tārāpiḍa, despising the happiness of her home in the breast of Nārāyaṇa.<sup>2</sup> Rājaśekhara uses the motif in his description of the Pratihāra king Mahipāla "who was the lover of Lakshmi selected in a svayamvara".<sup>3</sup> "The Rājyaśrī came of her own accord and loved the Silāhāra king."<sup>4</sup> "Sindhurāja was chosen (yrita) by Lakshmi herself (svayam) in the battlefield."<sup>5</sup> In a cognate motif, the royal glory is represented as a beautiful princess, sometimes described as belonging to the Vidyādhara lineage, whose love the king wins after surmounting countless hazards. Within the coordinates of these two motifs, the theme of the midland school of history generally meanders.

1. CII, III, p. 59, line 5.

2. Kadambarī, pūrvabhāga, Poona 1951, p.54.

3. Balabharata, prologue, .

4. IA, IX, 34.

5. Navasāhasrākacharita, I, 59.

In his earlier work Karnasundari, Bilhana adopts the second motif, and describes the marriage of the Chaulukya king Karna with a Vidyādhara princess. Explaining the significance of the motif he says, "Karna, the full moon for the ocean of the Chaulukyas, attains the status of an emperor, by marrying the beautiful daughter of a Vidyādhara."<sup>1</sup> In the Vikramāṅkadevacharita, however, he fuses both the motifs and describes the selection of his hero Vikramāditya VI in a svayamvara by the Vidyādhara princess Chandralekha, who, in this work, symbolises the goddess of Royal Fortune. Concluding his description of the svayamvara ceremony, Bilhana says, "Vikrama, the lord of Kuntala, shone with added effulgence, as if the royal fortune of all other kings (nikhila-nripati-Lakshmyā) was transmitted to him through his union with the Vidyādhara princess."<sup>2</sup>

In his graphic but conventional account of the svayamvara of Chandralekhā, Bilhana who "traversed the path leading to the Muse of Kālidāsa",<sup>3</sup> tried to emulate the latter. According to Bilhana, immediately after his accession to the Chālukyan throne, Vikrama learnt about the

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1. Karnasundari, Ed. by Durgaprasad and K.P.Pareb, Bombay, 1932, I, 13, pp. 3-4.

2. IX, 151.

3. Karnasundari, epilogue, p. 56.

ceremony of Chandralekhā, the Vidyādhara princess of Karahāṭa. The princess was a rare beauty, and Vikrama fell in love with her. The Chālukyan spy brought the news that Chandralekhā bore deep love towards him and that the Vidyādhara king would have gladly offered the hand of his daughter to Vikrama but for the fear of the refusal by the latter. He had, however, organised the svayamvara by the command of Siva, who appeared before him in a dream. The king Vikrama thereupon proceeded to the capital of Karahāṭa on fleet horses. The princess was brought by a matron before the kings of Ayodhyā, Chedi, Kānyakubja, the region watered by the Chambala, Kālañjara, Gwalior, Mālava, the Gurjjara country, the Pāndyas and the Cholas, all of whom she rejected. Eventually she came before Vikrama and placed the nuptial wreath round his neck. The choice was applauded by the matron and the damsels of the city. The rival kings wanted to obstruct the ceremony of marriage but were frightened away by the might of Vikrama.<sup>1</sup>

The princess Chandralekhā figures in several Chālukya inscriptions as the favourite queen (piriy-arasi) of Vikrama and the mother of Jayakarṇa, Someśvara III and Tailapa III.<sup>2</sup> The Rajatarangini recounts among many follies

1. VDC, Sarga IX.

2. Carn. Desa Ins. Vol. I, pp. 415, 422; EHD, p. 369; EI, XXVIII, p. 32 and fn. 4 and 6.

of the Kashmirian king Harsha, his ill-conceived plan of attacking the Chālukyan territory to possess the beautiful Chandralekhā, with whom he fell in love through seeing her portrait.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the marriage of the Vidyādhara princess of Karahāṭa with Vikramāditya is undoubtedly a historical fact. But the svayamvara ceremony, as described by Bilhana, does not seem to be historical. The queen Chandralekhā had at least three sons - Jayakarna, Someśvara III and Tailapa III.<sup>2</sup> Her second son, Mahāmandaleśvara Someśvaradeva was ruling Banavāsi 12,000 in 1089,<sup>3</sup> and still earlier in 1083 he was a governor of Kisukad 70, Bāgādage 70 and Naręyangala<sup>4</sup> 12. Since he was younger than his co-uterine brother Jayakarna, the marriage of Vikrama with Chandralekhā must have taken place much earlier than 1076, when Vikrama was anointed as a king, and probably earlier than 1068, when Someśvara II ascended the throne.

The Vidyādhara king is to be identified with the Silāhāra king of the Karahāṭaka branch, ruling over the districts of Kolhapur, Miraj and Karhad. Marasimha<sup>5</sup> was probably, and Gandarāditya<sup>6</sup> was definitely a feudatory chief

1. VI, 179

2. EI, XXVI, p.32 and fn.6.

3. BK, 66 of 1934-35, AR., SIE, 1934-35, p.153.

4. BK, 2 of 1927-28, AR., SIE, 1927-28, p. 20.

5. IA, V, 321.

6. G.H.Khare, Sources of Mediaeval History of the Deccan, Vol. I, p.37ff.

of the Chālukyas. The mighty kings of far off Kālañjara, Kānyakubja, Chedi, Pāndya and Chola regions would hardly have come to a svayamvara at the invitation of a feudatory chieftain of so humble a status. Thus, in order to indicate the paramount position which his hero attained later in life, Bilhana seems to have exalted an ordinary marriage of the Mahāmandaleśvara Vikrama with the daughter of a feudatory chieftain to their union in a grand ceremony of svayamvara.

This concept of a chakravartin, a magnet ever pulling at the minds of the contemporary historians, gradually became a political feature of the mediaeval formalism, mechanically splashed in historical works. Court annalists recounted the military achievements of their kings, after the conventional digvijayas of ancient chakravartins. Thus, the Rāshtrakūta chronicler describes Krishna III as a mighty king ruling over the chakravarti-kshetra - the territory bounded by the Himalayas in the north, the Arabian sea in the west, the Ceylon in the south, and the Bay of Bengal in the east.<sup>1</sup> The elephantry of Pāla kings is described as having roamed in the distant parts of the country from the Himalayas to the Malaya mountains (Travancore hills), and from the Marwar region to the extreme eastern states. Such conventional exploits are attributed to Vigrahapāla II, Rājyapāla II and Mahipāla.<sup>2</sup> In the same vein, the Kalachuri

1. EI, IV, pp. 284-285.

2. Ibid, XXIX, 7: for similar other accounts of Pāla digvijayas, see D.C.Sircar, Digvijaya of King Chandra of the Mehrauli Pillar Inscription, JRASBL, V, 407, ff.

chronicler describes the conquests of Yuvarājadeva II.<sup>1</sup>

The court poets of this age also advanced such fantastic claims on behalf of their royal patrons. Rājaśekhara praises Yuvarājadeva II as a chakravartin ruler of the Kalachuri family, having suzerainty over vast dominions from the source of the Gangā in the north to the Tāmbraparnī in the south and from the lord of the Narmadā (i.e. the Arabian sea) to the north of the Milky ocean (?).<sup>2</sup> Historical narratives,<sup>3</sup> epics<sup>4</sup> and prose romances<sup>5</sup> are full of such extravagant accounts of royal conquests.

It is, therefore, small wonder that Bilhana also describes the digvijaya of Vikrama in a conventional manner. As it is prescribed in dharmaśastras, and described in prose-romances, immediately after resuming the duties of a de facto heir apparent, Vikrama started on a digvijaya. Accompanied by elephantry, when he, the Rāma of the Chālukya family, reached the shores of the (western) ocean, the latter betrayed signs of fear. Elephants of his army destroyed the sandal-wood trees of the Malaya mountain. The Chola ruler, who was driven away from his territory, could only

1. CII, IV, p. 218, verse 27;

2. Viddhasalabhañjikā, IV, verse 29.

3. HC, p. 263.

4. Raghuvamśa, canto 4, Sisupālavadha II, 5.

5. Yasastilakachampu, Kavyamala series, N.S.P., Bombay 1916, p. 221.

of Virarājendra, the Chola king, refers to a war with the Chālukyas in 1063. A year later, Vikkalana is described as fighting with the Cholas at Kūdala Sangamam.<sup>1</sup> There is sufficient evidence also for the important role he played in establishing the Paramāra ruler Jayasimha firmly on the throne, after routing the allied forces of the Chedis and Chaulukyas.<sup>2</sup> The Kalingattuparani makes it probable that on the eve of his father's death in 1088, Vikrama was waging war against Chakrakūṭa and Vengi rulers.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, in order to lend his hero the halo of a traditional chakravartin, Bilhana had recourse to the conventional devices of digvijaya and svayamvara. Nevertheless, within this artificial framework, he portrayed actual history. Leaving for a while the literary elements and poetic embellishments, we find that motivated by a nostalgic tendency towards the past, these mediaeval historians tried to understand the contemporary history with the help of ancient forms and ideas. Here, in their attempts to study the present in the light of the past, they offer a striking contrast to those modern historians who tend to study the past with direct and perpetual reference to the present.

1. SII, III, p.37.

2. D. C. Ganguly, History of Paramāra Dynasty, 123f.

3. Early History of Deccan, I, pp.344-345

### Conclusion

Following the latter day tradition of itihāsa, Bilhana wove the facts of history into an intelligible fabric on a traditional pattern. This naturally involved an oversimplification of facts and an over-dramatisation of historical story. Further, his purpose in composing the chronicle was "to furnish a drink of immortality to his patron's body of fame" which would otherwise have perished "with the sound of the drum which proclaims the hour of the man's departure".<sup>1</sup> Adopting this attitude, he did not merely chronicle facts, but, having visualised the course of history from his own angle, he pronounced his verdict in favour of his patron. Secondly, the ~~entire~~<sup>theocentric</sup> view of life, inculcated by the āgamas in the Early Mediaeval Age, had thrown the whole course of human history out of historical focus. The Vedas and the āgamas were the two main fountain-springs of brahmanical thought. Throughout the ancient period, these two streams ran parallel, influencing each other. Centuries before Bilhana came on the stage, the āgamic sects, with their emphasis on devotion to God, had pushed the Vedic tradition, centred round human actions done in accordance with the injunctions of the Vedas, into a

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1. VDC. XVIII, 106.

subsidiary position. The transcendental world-view and the theory of the grace of God<sup>1</sup> had reorientated the earlier tradition of itihāsa by modifying its fundamental concepts. The child of his age, Bilhana shows all these āgamic tendencies. "The consequence of this is" to quote a statement of Collingwood about European historiography, "that when mediaeval historiography is looked at from the point of view of a merely scholarly historian, the kind of historian who cares for nothing except accuracy in facts, it seems not only unsatisfactory but deliberately and repulsively wrong-headed; and the nineteenth century historians, who did in general take a merely scholarly view of the nature of history, regarded it with extreme lack of sympathy".<sup>2</sup> This, of course, strikingly applies verbatim to the Vikramāṅkadeva-charita. But Collingwood further adds, "Nowadays, when we are less obsessed by the demand for critical accuracy and more interested in interpreting facts, we can look at it with a more friendly eye."<sup>3</sup> This is true indeed in the case of the modern historians of the mediaeval Europe. But unfortunately, Bilhana still

1. Infra pp.162-165

2. R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, Oxford, 1961, p.56.

3. Ibid, p.56.

stands as an outcaste on the fringe of habitation, craving for the permission of merely scholarly historians to join the company of historical writers. With their ideas of rationalism and historical criticism, the latter, however, regard him as an absolute alien and stubbornly refuse to have any dealings with him,<sup>1</sup> who had his queer ideas of the divine interventions in the course of human history. But to neglect him simply because his ideas are very different from those of modern historians, is to regard the modern age as absolute, with reference to which other ages are to be understood. This palpably unhistorical attitude can be changed, and the true significance of Bilhana's work can be grasped only when 'a more friendly eye' cares to look at him.

However, we do not propose that the Vikramāṅkadevacharita be considered a historical treatise in the modern sense of the term, or that it is permissible for a modern historian to commit the mistakes which vitiate the historical works of the mediaeval times. But we certainly take the liberty of suggesting that if we do not want to reduce the mediaeval history into a mere chronicle of events, a rope of sand

1. For example the statement of Prof. K.Nilakanta Sastri, "The principle adopted in this work is not to accept as history any statement of Bilhana which is not clearly corroborated by other evidence" EHD. I, 345 n.

instead of a historical wreath with the events strung on the thread of ideas, we shall have to study the events and facts in the context of the cultural complex of the mediaeval historians, and to understand sympathetically their ideas, however antiquated they may be.

Thus, with the help of inscriptions, we can check the way in which Bilhana distorted historical facts. This distortion, however, is as much historical as the facts themselves. Through distortion we perceive the drama of a clash of ideas, the tricks of side-stepping which the historian employed to gain his end, the plea of the defence counsel. The Vikramāṅkadeva-charita should neither be studied as an authentic source of historical facts, nor be rejected as a poetic fabrication. It is to be taken as a statement of the accused who advances what is known in Hindu jurisprudence as a special plea (pratyavaskanda),<sup>1</sup> or in modern terminology, a bonafide claim of right made in good faith. Evidently here, the essence of the work lies in its emphasis on contexts, motives and interpretations.

Further, there is an unusual similarity between the present epic and the Harshacharita. Bāṇa symbolically

1. Where the defendant, accepting as correct the matters or facts set out by the plaintiff, raises a plea to justify the action of the accused. See P.V. Kane, History of Dharma Śāstra, III, 301.

represented Hasha as a chakravartin through his meeting with Rājya-śrī - his sister and alternatively the goddess of royal fortune - and through the receiving of "a jewelled necklace (ratnāvalī) as a present from the Buddhist monk Divākaramitra. The symbolism was partly based on the meaning of the word. Rājyaśrī, and partly on the story of Ratnāvalī in the play of that name. Bilhana employs the same motif - and describes the marriage of Vikrama with the Vidyādhara princess. Besides the general outline, the details and the plea justifying the actions of the royal patron are also similar. As there is sufficient epigraphical data for checking the account of Bilhana, a critically comparative study of the two works may furnish clues for weeding the fictitious and conventional elements out of the Harshacharita and reconstructing the life of Harsha, for which there is little reliable information.

There is one more important feature of these mediaeval works on which we would like to touch before we leave Bilhana. These works show a very strong tendency of nostalgia towards past, expressed in the anachronistic representation of contemporary kings in the role of the heroes of the bygone ages. Satyāśraya Chālukya is portrayed as Bhīma the Pāṇḍava, Someśvara I, Vikramāditya VI, Siddharāja Chaulukya,<sup>1</sup> Prithvīrāja III and others as Rāma the Aikshvāku, Kadambavāsa as Hanumān,

1. Supra, p. 97n.

and Bhuvanaikamalla as Garuda.<sup>1</sup> The same process is seen when the mediaeval kings are decked out with all the glories of ancient chakravartins, by making them perform extensive digvijayas, and win their brides in svayamvara, or when the mediaeval dynasties such as the Chāhamānas and the Chālukyas are given the pedigree of solar kshatriyas, supposed to have flourished in hoary antiquity. Pre-occupied with our concepts, we may tend to observe that the self-understanding of the mediaeval culture was predominantly mythological and that these writers indulged in simple myth-making. A deeper analysis, however, may reveal the mediaeval trend of rationalisation<sup>2</sup> operating within the framework of an ideal system, enshrined in scriptures. It is not mere myth-making but the conditioning of the present by the ancient norms and ideas, the interpretation of the present in the light of the past. This pseudoscopic vision, in which the past, with reference to which the present is seen, looms large, characterizes all the mediaeval writers of the Mid-land school of history. It offers a striking contrast to some of the modern historians of ancient India, who project the present on to the past<sup>3</sup>

1. Infra pp. 223-233.

2. Infra pp. 250-254, 283 ff.

3. Modern Historians of Ancient India, Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, pp. 288-290; Modern Muslim Historical Writing on Mediaeval Muslim India, ibid, p. 307.

not only by seeking modern concepts in ancient times,  
nor even only by finding the institutions of recent growth  
in olden times, but also by organizing ex cathedra the past  
history from the view-point of the present, and applying  
modern values in their judgments on ancient people.

## CHAPTER VI

The Vikramāñkābhuyudaya of Someśvara III, Bhūlokamalla

The only historian of royal blood in ancient India was Someśvaradeva III, Bhūlokamalla, the Chālukya king of Kalyāṇī, and the son and successor of Vikramāditya VI, known in history as a mighty warrior but in tradition as a great patron of poets and scholars, such as Bilhapa and Vijñāneśvara. Someśvara III is known to fame as an author of the Mānasollāsa,<sup>1</sup> an encyclopaedic work on royal duties and pleasures, completed on Friday, the 22nd March 1129.<sup>2</sup> But he had also written a biography of his father, entitled the Vikramāñkābhuyudaya, an incomplete manuscript of which, though discovered at Patan before 1925,<sup>3</sup> has not yet attracted the attention of historians. Our study of

1. Mānasollāsa, Ed. by Gajanan K. Shrigondekar, M.A., G.O.S. Baroda, 1925, 1939.
2. This is known from the verses 61-64 of the second chapter (p.34). But see contra the view of the editor that the work was composed in 1131. This is however wrong. The saumya saṁvatsara in the southern cycle of the Jovian year started in 1129. Further, the work was completed on the first day of the month of chaitra which was Friday. It was in 1129 that the first day of chaitra was Friday. In 1131 it was Monday. See Svami Kannu Pillai, Indian Ephemeris, III, p.260.
3. First mentioned by Shrigendekar in 1925 (Mānasollāsa, Vol.I, Introduction, p.III). M.L. Nagar, Vikramankadeva-charita, Vārāṇasi, 1943, Introduction, p.40; L.B.Gandhi and C.P. Dalal, A Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Jain Bhandars at Pattan, 1937, Baroda, G.O.S. pp. 80-81. The description of the manuscript given in this catalogue is however incorrect.

the text is based on a photostat copy of this unique manuscript.<sup>1</sup>

The incomplete manuscript contains only three chapters. The colophons at the end of the first two, describe the work as a mahākāvya or an epic. But since, with the exception of a few verses sprinkled in each of the chapters, it is composed mainly in prose on the life-story of a historical personage, it may well be described as an ākhyāyika or historical prose-narrative. The conclusion is further reinforced by the fact that in treatment and development of the plot,<sup>and</sup> style and diction, it emulates the famous ākhyāyika of Bāna. However, during this period, the distinction between mahākāvya, ākhyāyika and kathā was almost obliterated in Sāṃskrit probably because of the influence of the literary conventions of the Prākrit and Apabhraṃśa writings.<sup>2</sup>

The first chapter, which opens with benedictory verses, gives a graphic description of the geography and the people of Karnātaka. The second dwells at length

1. We are thankful to Shri Muni Punya Vijayaji, Jaina Upāśnaya, Lunsavada, and Pt. Dalasukhabhai Malavaniya, Director, Bhāratīya Samskruti Vidyābhavana, Ahmedabad for making a photostat copy of the manuscript available to us. The ms. which is in a fairly good condition, contains 80 leaves written on both sides.
2. Svayambhu describes his epic Paumachariya as "Rāma-kahā" (Paumachariya, I,2). The title of Dhanapāla's epic is "Bhavisayatta-kahā". The Jasahara-chariu (I,1) and the Paumasiri chariu (I,1) call themselves dhamma-kahā.

over the splendour of Kalyāna, the capital of Kuntala, founded by Someśvara I Āhavamalla. The last and the biggest is devoted to the history of the Chālukya house from the beginning to the anointment of Vikramāditya VI as an heir-apparent and his expedition for world-wide conquest. It opens with a genealogical account of the Chālukyas.

After the famous Kshatriya monarchs from Pūruravas to Kshemaka, sixty-one princes of the solar dynasty ruled over Ayodhyā, followed by Satyāśraya, also known as Vishṇuvardhana, whose name was borne by his descendants as a dynastic appellation. He had the insignia of conch, discuss and primeval boar. His two banners of white and black colours, represented respectively the white and black waters of the Gāngā and the Yamunā. The crest of the peacock-tail adorned his royal umbrella and fly-whisk. Since he obtained blessings from various gods at the Chālukya mountain, he was also known as Chālukya.

The genealogy then runs further listing the names of the Chālukyan kings of Vātāpi down to Kirthivarmman II, whose uncle Bhīmaparākrama initiated the line of the later Chālukyas, in which Vikramāditya IV flourished. He was married to the princess Bonthā of the Chedi family, ruling over the Pāriyātra. During his reign-period, the gods in the heaven assembled, and with Śiva as their leader approached

the Lord Vishnu reclining on his serpent couch, and informed him of the atrocities perpetrated on the earth, by demons who assumed human form. After a moment's reflection, Yogeśvara-Vishnu announced that he was well aware of the Rāshtrakūṭa demons who on the earth were obstructing religious performances, and that to annihilate the vicious though valiant rākshasas, he would soon incarnate himself as the son of Vikramāditya IV through the Chedi princess Bonthā-devī. Meanwhile, in a dream Vikramāditya IV saw Lord Vishnu sitting on his lap, and was delighted at the prospect of having the Lord as his son. Bearing the divine marks of conch, discus and lotus on his hands and feet, Tailapa II was born to the Chedi princess in due course of time. He exterminated the line of the wicked Rāshtrakūṭas and retrieved the fallen fortunes of the Chālukya family. Later on, Someśvara I Āhavamalla ascended the throne. He made the sinful lord of Kāñchi bathe in the waters of his sword. But in spite of the martial glory and royal splendour, Someśvara was tormented by his desire of having a worthy son and successor. Once in a dream he saw his ancestors, clad in the charming dresses and adorned with jewelled ornaments, requesting him to pay

off the debts that he owed to them by having a son.

The king thereupon worshipped Siva with all the pomp and splendour. Once at the close of night, Siva appeared in the form of an ascetic and told him that as a result of his devotions he would have a son. Siva, however, added a dismal note by saying that since at the time of the worship, the mind of the king harboured those propensities which are the characteristics of the rajas, the son thus born to him would have the elements of rajas and tamas pre-eminent in his personality. Dismayed at the prospect of having an evil-minded son, the king proceeded to the religious site of Sri-saila, where freed from all the wicked and mundane thoughts, he worshipped the god Mallikarjuna. When the king thus passed there quite a few days in deep devotions, one morning he heard a divine voice which suddenly stopped after intimating that Lord Vishnu would be born to him as his son. The greedy king, however, lingered on for some time with the hope of having one more son. Then, in response to his desire, he again heard the voice of some invisible god who told him thus: "When churned excessively, even the pure and serene Ocean of Milk produced poison. No wonder then, that the benevolent grace of God, when goaded by your insatiable desire, further grants you a son full of wicked proclivities.

After some time, the queen Bāchalā bore the first son. During pregnancy, she exhibited a cruel and wicked turn of mind. She punished her friends for no fault of theirs. She preferred to stay in the dark and dingy underground chambers. She cut the trees of her pleasure-garden which she had herself reared. She fed the crows and neglected the parrots, swans and pigeons. She took a morbid interest in cocks and boars being trampled under the feet of the rutting elephants. Realising that the evil disposition of the pregnant queen presaged the birth of a vicious child, the king became despondent. In an inauspicious moment, when not a single planet was in ascendance, the queen gave birth to her first child. The king as a matter of duty arranged to perform the rituals, attendant on the birth of a child, and gave him a meaningless name Soim. As was expected, the child from his boyhood, demonstrated his evil nature through cruel and mean actions. The king could take solace only from the hope of having a second son. After some time, in an auspicious moment the queen again came in the family way. The queen at this time had virtuous, benevolent and valorous cravings. Discarding all the robes kept in the royal store, she draped herself in yellow garments, adorned her head with the golden

tiara, expressed her interest in arms and missiles, requested her husband to proceed on conquest, and took delight in elephant-fights in the royal arena. Eventually, as Rāma was born to Kauśalyā, a son was born to her in the morning of the bright fortnight, during an auspicious asterism when all the planets were in ascendance. The birth was celebrated with all the royal pomp and show. Astrologers predicted that the new-born son would be a ruler of the whole earth, and that he would excel Sagara, Nala, Nahusha, Ambarīsha, Māndhātā and Rāmachandra. As the child was an incarnation of Trivikrama-Vishnu, he was named as Vikramāditya. All the domestic rituals were duly performed. In the eleventh year, Rudra Miśra, the royal chaplain, performed the upanayana ceremony of the child and on the fourth day of the ceremony, when samāvartana was over, the boy was handed over to teachers for training in various branches of learning. After his education was completed, the ceremony of binding the dagger at his belt (kshurikā-bandha) was performed. In the sixteenth year, the prince was anointed as heir-apparent. The king then ordered the astrologers to fix an auspicious moment for his favourite prince to start on a world-conquering expedition, and commanded his prime-minister to remove all

inauspicious things and persons from the route of the prince's march. The astrologers eventually decided upon the Vijayādaśamī, the tenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Āśvina, about an hour before sunrise when Jupiter was in Leo, the Sun in Virgo (in the second house), Saturn and Mars in Capricorn (in the sixth house), Mercury and Venus in favourable dispositions and the Moon in Aquarius (in the seventh house) as the right moment for the start of digvijaya. The king directed his commander-in-chief to wait in readiness for the march with his army of elephants, horses, chariots, foot-soldiers, and hereditary-, mercenary-, guild-, forest-, and allied forces. Princes, mahāmandaleśvaras, sāmantās and others were likewise instructed to await the hour of the march. The Brāhmaṇas and the ladies on that day.....

Here the manuscript abruptly stops, leaving the last sentence unfinished.

Save the Harshacharita of Bāṇa, this Vikramāṅkabhyudaya is the only historical prose-narrative of ancient India available to us, and hence its discovery is of more than usual interest to the study of the historical literary writings inasmuch as by comparison with the earlier ākhyāyikā, it affords an opportunity of discovering patterns,

motifs and devices - the way through which the objective facts of history are moulded into a literary story. In the case of the Vikramāñkābhyañdaya, there is an additional advantage as the authentic information on the life of Vikramāditya VI, the hero of the prose-narrative, is available from inscriptions containing much historical detail, which in the case of the few inscriptions which mention Harsha, celebrated in the Harshacharita, is sadly lacking. Thus, the historicity of two devices, which Bhūlokamalla employs to bring into high relief the divine character of hero as contrasted with the almost diabolical nature of his rivals - Someśvara II and Jayasimha, can be investigated and checked by means of inscriptions, and thus the purpose and significance of these devices can well be studied.

According to Bhūlokamalla, as a result of his penance and devotions, Someśvara I Ahavamalla obtained three sons from Siva. The eldest was an outcome of the rajas element, which had manifested itself as arrogance in Someśvara at the time of his devotions. As once the deadly and black poison <sup>had</sup> emerged ~~from~~ the shining, white and invigorating Ocean of Milk, so the wicked Jayasimha came out of the benevolent grace of God, when goaded ever and anon by the king's insatiable desire, a component element of

tamas. Consequently, Jayasimha partook of the evil nature of tamas. High above and quite apart from these two was the personality of Vikramāditya VI. At the request of Siva, the Lord Vishnu had incarnated himself as Vikramāditya.

We have already investigated the story of the king's devotions and the consequent birth of sons to him, and found that it cannot stand the test of a historical scrutiny.<sup>1</sup> This theme of a king's doing penance in order to obtain a son was quite common in the literary works of the mediaeval period, and is generally introduced to indicate the hero's future greatness - and the pre-ordination of his enthronement.<sup>2</sup> But, unlike Bhūlokamalla, other writers did not utilize it to depict the rivals in evil colours. Thus Bāna does not indicate any basic meanness grounded in the nature of Rājya, consequent upon any divine decree. Likewise Bilhana simply states that Somesvara II and Jayasimha were born to Somesvara I Ahavamalla in accordance with the deserts of his deeds, whereas the lord Siva was pleased to grant the boon that a pious son, Vikramāditya would be born to him. Bhūlokamalla, however, not only invests his hero with divinity but also attributes the demoniac nature of his hero's rivals to providential degree. The wickedness of Somesvara II is

1. Supra, pp. 105-106.  
2. Supra, pp. 106 ff.

further emphasized by the cruel and mean cravings of the queen at the time of the first pregnancy, and his wicked and ignoble activities during his boyhood.

Even more significant is the omission, and sometimes the purposeful distortion, of certain facts relevant to the history of Someśvara II. Thus, Bhūlokamalla gives an explanation, however unconvincing, for the fact that the birth of Somesvara was not duly celebrated, although hilarious and maddening festivities marked the birth of his junior, co-uterine brother Vikramāditya VI. One may even prevail upon oneself to accept the reason advanced for the neglect in the upbringing of the wicked Soim to whom no meaningful name could be given. But Bhūlokamalla outsteps all bounds, when he omits to mention the fact that Someśvara II was anointed to heir-apparency. On the other hand, he makes a claim, which neither inscriptions nor even the panegyric account of Bilhana bear out, that Vikramāditya VI was invested with heir-apparency in his sixteenth year. Although the later part of the story is lost to us, the trend of the narrative, neglecting the life and rôle of Someśvara II, strongly suggests that the complete text omitted to mention his reign, as it fails to mention his heir-apparency. It is however strange that the inscriptions of the period of the royal author, Bhūlokamalla,

make a clear mention of Someśvara II as a ruler. This queer feature is observed in the Harshacharita also. Bāna telescoped the events by skipping over several uncomfortable facts, including the accession of Rājya to the throne of Sthānviśvara, although royal epigraphs of the times of Bāna represent Rājya as the royal predecessor of Harsha.<sup>1</sup>

The explanation of this strange feature is to be found in the nature of the historical prose-narratives and in the form of the popular entertainment known as the pāthakāmī or recitation, through which these prose-narratives reached the people at large.

We have seen above that the itihāsa-purāṇa tradition was transmitted through recitation accompanied by music and mime, and that a form of itihāsa, namely the ākhyāyikā-or illustration (arthavāda) of religious precepts (vidhi)-gradually assumed a literary garb and, through nātakākhyāyikā, developed into historical prose narratives, the earliest example of which is the Harshacharita.<sup>2</sup> It has also been pointed out that the historical prose-narrative is an attempt to engraft contemporary royal history upon the popular ancient itihāsa tradition. The contemporaneity of events appealed to the general people and the ancient itihāsa-tradition carried the religious sanction with it. Justifying the composition

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1. Supra, pp. 77, 92.

2. Supra, pp. 58, 63.

of the Prabandha-chintāmani, Merutunga, who flourished a little later than Bhūlokamalla, says "the ancient kathās and Purānas do not delight the heart of the learned so much as the episodes of persons nearer our times,"<sup>1</sup> and so he commends the narration of contemporary events to illustrate religious maxims. In course of religious discourses, these prabandhas were narrated at popular gatherings. The Harshacharita was narrated by Bāna in a circle of his kinsmen much as the Vāyupurāna was recited by Sudrīshṭi in the same group.<sup>2</sup> Bāna's work was composed as a new Bharata story to be recited in general assemblies for their edification.<sup>3</sup> The recitation of the Gaudavaho, an account of which is given in the text itself, resembles the pāthakams prevalent in Kerala at present.<sup>4</sup> Unlike Icelandic sagas, these works were thus meant not for merely private readings, but for recitation in popular gatherings and, therefore, the ruling dynasties and their court-circles took special care

1. I, 6.

2. HC., 132.

3. Ibid, 140.

4. Bodhāyana, BhagavajyuktIyani, p. XVII, Pāthakam, IHQ, III, 659-662; Recitation, The Cultural Heritage of India, III, pp. 504 ff; Vākpati, Gaudavaho, verses 805-856.

Trichur, 1925

to avoid all uncomfortable facts which might prejudice the subjects against them.

In the case of the Vikramāṅkabhyudaya there seems to be an additional reason for suppressing certain facts. The famous Vaishnava philosopher Rāmānuja, regarded in the tradition as an incarnation of Sesha, who wielded considerable influence upon people, was persecuted by the Cholas.<sup>1</sup> He therefore took shelter in the Hoysāls territory and initiated Bitti-deva, later known by the Vaishnava name<sup>2</sup> Vishnuvardhana, into his faith. The biographies of Rāmānuja, professedly belonging to contemporary times, mention an upheaval following the religious persecution which ultimately resulted into the extinction of the direct line of the Cholas.<sup>3</sup> As the popular rebellion and the consequent death of Adhirājendra, the last Chola ruler in the direct line of succession from Vijayālaya, are mentioned in the Vikramāṅkadeva-charita<sup>4</sup> and the Kalingattuparani,<sup>5</sup> some historians are inclined to identify the Chola persecutor with Adhirājendra, the

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1. The Cholas, 295-296.
  2. Dr. Derret however (The Hoysalas, Oxford, 1957, p.222) challenges the view that Bitti-deva assumed Vaishnava name after his conversion to Vaishnavism by Rāmānuja.
  3. Govindāchāryasvāmin, The Life of Rāmānuja, Madras, 1906, p. 170ff; S.K. Aiyangar, Ancient India, pp. 150, 207; The Cholas, p. 300 fn. 43, and pp. 295-296.
  4. VDC, VI, 26.
  5. The Cholas, p. 296.

ally and brother-in-law of Vikramāditya VI.

Further Vishnuvardhana Hoysāla, the first decade of whose reign had been uneventful, embarked on an ambitious plan of the conquest of the neighbouring kingdoms immediately after his Vaishnava initiation in 1116. In the year of his conversion, his general Gangarāja succeeded in capturing Talkad and a little later gave a knock-out blow to the Cholas.<sup>1</sup> Shortly afterwards, Vishnuvardhana attacked the Pandyas of Nolaambavādi and stormed the fortress of Uchchangi.<sup>2</sup> In 1117, he raided the Chālukyan territories.<sup>3</sup> In the fourth regnal year of Bhūlokanamalla, he besieged Hangal and beheaded the Kadamba ruler Taila II "a great favourite of his lord" Bhūlokanamalla.<sup>4</sup> By 1136, he destroyed Mānasa root and branch, annexed Banavāsi 12000, pursued Jayakesī II of Goa, and gained possession of Palasige 12000.<sup>5</sup> Next year he crossed the Tungabhadrā and laid siege to Hangal.<sup>6</sup> Thus, he successfully measured swords with the imperial powers of the Cholas and the Chālukyas.

Although such ceaseless jockeying for imperial position was the common note of medieval heroism, and love

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1. Rice, Mysore and Coorg, p. 93 and n; The Cholas, II, p.42.
  2. EC, VI, CM.99, Rice, op.cit, p. 100
  3. Mysore Arch. Survey, 1912, p. 40. See also DkD, 453,497.
  4. EC, XII. Gb.34.
  5. EC, V, Belur 17; ibid, Bi, 93.
  6. EC, V, Bl, 202.

for military glory in itself constituted a sufficient motive for it, in view of the fact that, in the very first year of his Vaishnava initiation,<sup>1</sup> he was described as the eleventh incarnation of Vishnu and later on as the lord born to destroy dānūjas (demons),<sup>2</sup> the religious factor also seems to have played its rôle by adding a spur to the incessant warfares which marked his reign after 1116, as contrasted with the peaceful decade at its beginning.

The danger from Vishnuvardhana was realised by Bhūlokamalla quite early in his reign. In its third year he set out on a digvijaya and pitched his camp at Hullinīyatīrtha on the Varadā,<sup>3</sup> probably with the intention of curbing the strong and aggressive Hoysāla feudatory.

It is not, therefore, impossible that the Chālukyan court as a counter-move represented Vikramāditya VI as an incarnation of Vishnu, shorn of all human faults and frailties. The episode of Someśvara II, which adversely reflects upon the character of Vikramāditya VI, was thus judiciously avoided. Such omissions and distortions,

1. EC, VI, Hn. 58; EC, V, I, Bl. 58.

2. B. Srikanthaiya, The Hoysāla Empire, QJMS, VII, p. 304.

3. EC, VII, Sk. 100; EHD, 370.

which rarely occur in official records such as inscriptions and rājavalis, are frequently made in literary works under the pretext of poetic license. Thus, Harsha, the patron of Bāna, introduced substantial modifications in the story of Udayana as current in his age and ingeniously offered the raison d'être for it in the Priyadarśikā by introducing a scene in which the story of Vāsavadattā's love and marriage with Udayana, as adapted for the stage by Sāṅkrityāyanī, an aged confidante of the queen, was enacted before Vāsavadattā herself. The immodest alterations raised the anger of the Vatsa queen and she intended to leave the theatre out of exasperation when the former informed her that a playwright has poetic license to take liberties with a historical theme which, of necessity, should be modified for being moulded into a literary story.<sup>1</sup>

So in the Vikramāñkabhyudaya the rule of Someśvara II was completely overlooked in order to build up the flawless divinity of Vikramāditya VI and thus the war against the Hoysālas was waged on 'the home front' by publishing propaganda in favour of the divine rule of the Chālukyas.

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1. Priyadarśikā, Ed. N.G.Suri, Poona, 1928, Act III. See D.C.Ganguly, History of the Paramāra Dynasty, p. 284, for the Tilakamahājari of Dhanapala.

The Personality of Vikramāditya VI and Mediaeval  
Formalism.

The portrait of Vikrama is drawn in formal colours. The account of his early life - his birth at the time when all planets were in the ascendant, the prediction of astrologers that he would excel the great Chakravartins kings of ancient times such as Sagara, Nahasha, Nala, Ambarīsha, Māndhātā and Rāmachandra, his striking precocity in learning and the greatness exhibited by him in his boyhood - , is almost an adaptation of Bāna's description of Harsha in his early days. After the ceremony of the Kshurikā-bandha, it is stated that Vikrama was anointed as heir-apparent and that preparations were made for his starting on digvijaya in the early hours of the Vijayadasāmi, the tenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Aśvina. The author has taken care to describe the dispositions of the planets in the zodiac at the time of the military expedition. Thus, Jupiter was in Leo, the Sun in Virgo (in the second house), Saturn and Mars in Capricorn (in the sixth house). Mercury and Venus in favourable dispositions - and the Moon in Aquarius (in the seventh house) at the time of the start.

Since Bilhana explicitly states that Somesvara II and not Vikramāditya VI was anointed as heir-apparent, the

entire story of the investiture of Vikrama is a later concoction. The story of his digvijaya is likewise unhistorical. The planetary conjunction at the time of digvijaya as mentioned by Bhūlokamalla never occurred in the life-time of Someśvara I. The nearest date in the century when the majority of planets occupied the stated dispositions in the zodiac was 19th September, 1078 A.D.,<sup>1</sup> more than seven years after the self-immolation of Someśvara I in the Tungabhadrā.

In fact, Bhūlokamalla has given us a formal picture of the ideal king of mediaeval Hindu polity rather than a real account of Vikrama's life. The author was himself a typical representative of the formal and orthodox king of mediaeval period. In spite of his mediocrity, he represented himself as a great king in the line of ancient Chakravartis. An inscription of his reign describes him thus: "To Permādideva, like the Sun from the Eastern mountain, bright with the effulgence of widespread glory, was born the king Soma. When he was born, forthwith affliction was born to the lines of hostile kings; great love for him was born throughout the Kuntala country; to the ever celebrated Bhāratī, a companion

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1. We are thankful to Padma-bhūshana, Shri Sūrya Narayan Vyāsa, the Astrologer Royal, for confirming the conclusion of my calculation.

was born.\* What king could be compared to him? When he was yet a boy, he wanted the jewels in the crowns of hostile kings and the jewels on the temples of their elephants to bind on the string round his waist. As soon as he began to walk, the hostile kings began to walk away into forests.<sup>1</sup> A carpet-knight as he was, he marched on the formal digvijaya in his third regnal year, the auspicious moment for the start of which was fixed by the astrologer Nannaya more than two years before, on the occasion of his accession to the Chālukyan throne. He set out and encamped "in peace and wisdom" at Hulliniya-tirtha, probably to encounter the feudatory Hoysāla chief Vishnuvardhana. This was probably his only military venture and still, like his celebrated father, he conformed to the tradition of great kings, by founding an era which could not survive even him.

In fact, this formal attitude towards life was the characteristic feature of the court culture of the new warrior class of the Rajputs. As they were not directly related to the ancient aristocracies, out of their sense of inferiority, they tended to adopt, with zeal of new members of the privileged group, all the

1. EC, VII, I, Sk. 100.

traditions of ancient orders of the Kshatriyas, in form but not in spirit.<sup>1</sup> Further the rise of the powerful merchant class concomitant with the new urban economy, made the ruling class all the more conscious of their powers and privileges, with the result that an emphasis was laid on the form and conventions of the court culture. The mediaeval formalism was projected by the erudite author, Bhūlokamalla, himself steeped in the conventions of the age, on to the life of Vikrama by the fictitious story of his digvijaya.

Transcendental World-view and Divinization  
of History.

The early mediaeval period was an age of great disintegration and partial rebirth. Chakravartin kings passed away to give place to regional rulers. The varnāśrama organization of yore disintegrated and re-modelled itself in the narrow ramifications of regional castes and sub-castes. The Vedic tradition declined in force and influence. There was a slow yet sure decay of the traditional order which generated a sense of frustration

1. Supra, pp. 97-98.

in the higher strata of society. Smr̄itīs, Purāṇas, Āgamas, literature and inscriptions declared the present as the evil age "which was the ravisher of good behaviour....; when kings adopted reprehensible courses of conduct", and when, in short, all kinds of wicked deeds were perpetrated.<sup>1</sup>

The psychology of the times was therefore marked by unrelieved pessimism. The transitoriness of the world frequently recurs in inscriptions of this period. An epigraph, as early as 684 A.D., exhorts wise men to perform religious deeds because "life of mankind is as unstable as the drops of water on the blade of grass; this youth of men is as frivolous as the leaves of tremulous reeds, and prosperity is as transitory as the splendour of light in the rays of the autumnal moon."<sup>2</sup> It is customary in the copper plate inscriptions of several dynasties to emphasize the momentariness of the world.<sup>3</sup>

Besides this depiction of the transitoriness, unhappiness and wickedness of the world in high relief, very fascinating pictures of heavenly pleasures were drawn. Epigraphs generally dilate upon descriptions of heaven. "There are golden palaces to reside in; desires are satisfied

1. D.C.Sircar, Select Inscriptions, Vol. I, pp. 393 ff.

2. Nagar Ins. of Guhila, Bharata-Kaumudi, p. 272 ff.

3. For example, see EI, XX, p. 127.

by mere willing; celestial nymphs and gandharvas are ready to wait upon a religious person in heaven."<sup>1</sup> Thus to a man in general, this life was a dreary journey and unmixed happiness lay only beyond the vale of tears.

This otherworldly tendency was further accentuated by the Āgamic theory of the grace of God as opposed to the Mimāṃsaka principle of the regular fruition of Karma. This naturally undermined the confidence of man in himself and his actions. He relied heavily on the blessings of God, who was the protector of the three worlds, king of the universe<sup>2</sup> and bestower of bliss. Worldly pelf, prosperity and kingdoms were surrendered unto Him. He was worshipped in truly royal fashion. In mythologies, He was conceived as the supreme king. The amorous dalliances of Vishnu and Siva were described in literature and inscriptions on the lines of the pleasure-sports of the kings.<sup>3</sup> Worldly kings, on the other hand, were conceived as divine. The apotheosis of kings - a feature of the Hindu polity which developed much earlier -, was in full vogue during this period. Gods were thus kingly, monarchs

1. Ibid, XX, p. 131.

2. IA, XVIII, p. 210 ff.

3. IB, p. 305.

divine, and men tended to be otherworldly in their attitude.

These trends of mediaeval thought brought about the divinization of history. Bhūlokamalla represented the royal heroes - Tailapa II and Vikramāditya VI - as the formal incarnations of Vishnu, appearing on earth to destroy demons, and thus made the political arena into a play-ground of divine and demoniac forces. Being harassed by the diabolical practices of the Rāshtrakūṭas, who were demons in human form, the gods assembled in the heaven and headed by Siva approached Lord Vishnu with a request to destroy the turbulent demons. Vishnu, therefore, incarnated himself as Tailapa II and curbed the evil Rāshtrakūṭas. Similarly Vishnu appeared on earth again as Vikramāditya VI and put a stop to the evil practices of devils. Thus, itihāsa, which in the beginning was an account of past events recorded to illustrate the right course of conduct, under the influences of mediaeval thought, eventually sank into a story of divine victory over the demoniac forces.

## CHAPTER V

The Prithvirāja-VijayaJayānaka

Once again, we find a Kashmirian biographer recounting tales of a contemporary king in the traditional style. The court-poet who sang the gallant deeds of the Chāhamāna ruler in the Prithvirāja-Vijaya, was, like Bilhana, a native of Kashmir. Although the Ms. of the poem does not mention his name, the suggestion that it was Jayānaka is almost certain.<sup>1</sup> Because of the fragmentary character of the Ms., one third of the epic is lost to us, but the trend in the first, eleventh and twelfth cantos of this incompletely known work, clearly indicates that it was written to laud the victory of Prithvirāja III Chāhamāna over Muizz al-Dīn Muhammad of Ghor, and to celebrate the marriage of the former with a lady born on the banks of the Gaṅgā. The poem was therefore composed sometime between the two battles of Tarain - the first in 1191 when the Chāhamānas scored a glorious victory over the Muslim invader, and the second in 1193<sup>2</sup> when the gallant Prithvirāja met his

1. Har Bilas Sarda, The Prithvirāja-Vijaya, JRAS, 1913, p.261.
2. The Prithvirāja Vijaya, Ed. by Gauri Shankar Hirachand Ojha, Ajmer, 1941, Introduction, p.2.

doom. This inference is corroborated by the fact that the verses of this poem were quoted by Jayaratha<sup>1</sup> who flourished in Kashmir in c.1200.

If we can believe the testimony of the Prithvirājā-Vijaya,<sup>2</sup> Jayānaka came from Kashmir to the Chāhamāna court sometime before the first battle of Tarain. He was honoured by the king and held in esteem by the royal bard Prithvī-bhaṭa and other officials. He describes himself as "a scholar, poet, and ascetic of deep erudition in the āgamic and Vedic lores."<sup>3</sup> The poem discloses his intimate knowledge of astrology, grammar and logic. It contains a clear allusion to the Kadambari<sup>4</sup> of Bāṇa, though implicit references to other works such as the Kiratārjunīya<sup>5</sup> and the Raghuvamśa may also be detected. It is however the Rāmāyana which exerted the main formative influence on the poem.

In the prologue to his epic, the poet praises Vālmīki together with Vyāsa and Bhāsa,<sup>6</sup> probably to conform to the long-standing convention of literary works. Later however he again makes a mention of the Ādi-kavi<sup>7</sup> in a way which

1. Ibid, introduction, p.2 and fn. 3 and 4.

2. Ibid, canto XII, 55-73.

3. Ibid, XII, 63.

4. Ibid, IV, 14.

5. Ibid, IV, 2.

6. Ibid, I, 2-6.

7. Ibid, I, 31.

suggests his intention of imitating the celebrated poet. He frequently alludes to the characters and incidents of the Rāmāyana, and the story of Rāma is twice narrated in detail. But it is not in these references nor even in the story of Rāma twice inserted in the text, but in the structure and spirit of the poem that the real impress of the Rāmāyana is seen. The entire Prithvīrājā-Vijaya seems to breathe its influence.

The author, who introduces himself in the later part of the epic as a character of the story, gives a short account of himself. It is said that he was born in the line of the sage Upamanyu and that he was nourished with motherly solicitude by Sāradā, the name by which Sarasvatī the goddess of learning was known in Kashmir. Once, pleased by his devotion, we are told, the goddess gave her blessings and announced that after six lives of constant devotion to her he would share the pleasure of singing the glories of Hari, incarnated in human form as Prithvīrāja.<sup>1</sup>

This rhapsodic account betrays an attempt on the part of the author to recreate himself after the image of Vālmīki. Like the latter who, as the tradition goes,<sup>2</sup> was commissioned

1. Ibid, XII, 64-73.

2. Rāmāyana I, 2, vv. 30-37.

by Brahmā to compose the biography of Rāma, Jayānaka represents himself as having had the blessings of Sāradā in his pious task of celebrating the life of Prithvīrāja in a poem.

#### The Composition of the Prithvīrāja-Vijaya

In the Prithvīrāja-Vijaya, Jayānaka adroitly blends the history of the Chāhamānas with diverse elements of Puranic legends and tales of mystery. The story of Rāma is used as an archetype for the biography of Prithvīrāja. It furthers the theme and forms the background against which the life of Prithvīrāja is presented. The Puranic legends and the tales of mystery serve two purposes. First, they are used as tissues that knit the sprawling history of the Chāhamānas into firm structural units. They thus provide unity to the quadruple construction of the Chāhamāna history which comprises the legendary account of the origin of the Chāhamānas, the story of Vāsudeva, the first Chāhamāna ruler of Sākambhari, the genealogy of his dynasty, and the biography of Prithvīrāja. Secondly, they dovetail together the two independent stories of Rāma and Prithvīrāja to form an entity. There is however a general unity in the epic as all its constituent elements are harmoniously tuned to the sovereign purpose of the poet, to present Prithvīrāja in the role of Rāma.

The Drigin and the Rise of the Vijaya Epics.

Born with epics, nurtured with logoi, developed through a sense of curiosity, the Greco-Roman tradition of history, which grew out of the Genealogies, flourished in the peripatetic school. Its Indian counterpart, however, followed a different course. In the beginning, the vamśa literature flowed along with the heroic poetry, but when the Bṛ̥givāṅgirases, who had previously subsisted on the tribal economy, became the members of the court organization, the Vamśa literature gradually merged in the epic tradition. But as the traditional institution of bards, still aligned in the tribal manner with the socio-political structure of the ruling families continued, the composition of vamśa did not altogether cease to exist. It went on meandering at the popular level. The bureaucratic tradition of history in archives which kept the records of the dynasty as a whole, also preserved the vamśa history at the governmental level. Under the court influence, the latter, of course, gradually shaped itself in accordance with the norms of the imperial school.

Even in these ornate epics, the vamśa element was not totally effaced. It was simply subordinated to the imperial. Tell-tale references to these epics by their authors still betray their origin. Bāṇabhaṭṭa intended to write the Harshacharita as a biography of Harsha with "an account of

his ancestors from the beginning of the family (pūrva-purushavamśa)".<sup>1</sup> The Vikramāṅka devacharita describes itself as 'a necklace made out of jewels in the form of glorious deeds performed by the royal members of the Chālukya family'.<sup>2</sup> Other works of the category also retained vamśa in varying measures. Padmagupta incidentally inserted a short Paramāra-vamśa in the middle of his story, when Ramāṅgada introduced his royal master to the fictitious sage Vainku.<sup>3</sup> Somesvara wove the story of Vikramāditya VI in such a way that he could include most of the Chālukya-vamśa in it. The extant portion of his work appears as an elucidation of the vamśa preserved in the royal archives of the Chālukyas. It contains all the features of the vamśa - the description of the janapada and the capital city, and the rājavati with elaborate titles (virudas). To fit in with the idealised portrait of Vikramāditya VI, Somesvara has of course added quite a few imaginative touches here and there. Jayānaka devoted in his epic as many as four chapters to the vamśa of the Chāhamānas.<sup>4</sup>

The source of the vamśa section of these epics was mainly the historical records kept in the offices of the

1. III, pp. 139-140.

2. I, 30.

3. XI, 71-90.

4. Cantos IV - VIII

Sāndhivigrahikas. Genealogical accounts in the Harshacharita, the Navasāhasāṅkacharita and the Vikramāṅka-devacharita are similar in contents to those in the royal charters respectively of the Vardhanas, the Paramāras and the Chālukyas of Kalyāṇi. Further, Jayānaka, who elaborately treats the ancient Chāhamāna history, gives such minor details that one is led to suppose that he was writing on the basis of an already existing vāṁśa. The presence of various historical traditions in Chāhamāna territory even before the composition of the Prithvīrājaviṁśatī and the remarkable concordance of the facts recorded in the Bijolia inscription and those in the Prithvīrājaviṁśatī make this view almost certain.

Of the various types of historical epics, the vijayas (victory) come nearest to the heroic tradition of the itihāsa-purāṇa literature. With all the poetic embellishments and literary conventions, they describe some remarkable victory of the hero over a notable adversary.

Although stray references to wars are found in the Rigvedic poems,<sup>1</sup> and the one which refers to the battle of ten kings under the specific name of dāśarājña is charged with picturesque details of the warriors - 'the white-robed Tritsus, with braided hair'<sup>2</sup> - they are hymns of prayer and praise and

1. I, 53, VI, 18, IX, 61; VI, 27; VII, 18; 33; 83.

2. VII, 83, 8.

not heroic tales of war. The Devāsurāṇī of the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa<sup>1</sup> is now lost to us, but the name indicates that it was an ākhyāna based on some mythological story relating the strife of gods and demons. Thus unfortunately no heroic tale of war of the Vedic age exists in its original form. Nevertheless, the war-lauds and the tales of battles were popular with the kings and nobles of the age. In the sacred literature, not only do we find incidental references to wars and warriors, their ambitions and feelings, - of course, in religious and ritualistic settings - but also sacred injunctions which attest to popularity of the heroic poetry. For instance, on the occasion of the aśvamedha sacrifice, the kshatriya lute player was enjoined to sing the glory of the sacrificer with accounts of wars fought and the victories won by him. The nucleus of the Bharata saga was a tale of war. As Lévi thinks and Nilakanṭha states, it was perhaps significantly named Jaya.<sup>2</sup> "The interesting tales of wars and toils" and "the stories heroic deeds of former times" were popular with many a Mahabharata hero.<sup>3</sup>

However, the earliest literary epic of this type of

1. Supra, pp. 94f.

2. Sylvain Lévi, Tato Jayamudiravet, ABORI, I, pp. 13-20.

3. I, 222, 29; XIV, 15, 5-7; N.K. Siddhant, Heroic Age of India, 1929, Oxford, p.58.

which we have some evidence is the Pāṭalavijaya or the Jambavati-vijaya, now lost but ascribed in tradition to Pāṇini, sometimes identified with the famous grammarian of that name.<sup>1</sup> The Yudhisthira-vijaya of Vāsudeva (9th century) is based upon the story of the Mahābhārata.<sup>2</sup> The Haravijaya composed by Ratnākara, a Kashmirian poet (10th century), tells in fifty cantos the story of the conquest of demons by Siva.<sup>3</sup>

Contemporary wars also attracted the attention of poet-historians. Besides inscriptions, which give short and sketchy, though sometimes vivid descriptions of such wars, there were historical works, systematically narrating accounts of sanguine warfare but orchestrated with the rhetoric and poetic conventions of the age. They sometimes afford glimpses into the psychology of warring chiefs and generally furnish in an indirect manner information on the social or socio-religious factors leading to wars. The first available work of this kind is the Gaudavaho of Vākpati (8th century), who eulogises the various victories of Yaśovarmadeva of Kanauj.<sup>4</sup> The Bhuvanābhyudaya, now lost, was an epic composed by Sankuka (8th century) in Kashmir.<sup>5</sup> It describes 'the terrible battle

1. M. Krishnamachariar, History of Classical Sanskrit Literature, 84-85 but contra, JBFRAS, XVI, 344.
2. Ed. by Sivadatta and K.P. Parab (Kavyamālā, LX) Bombay, 1930.
3. Ed. by Durgaprasad and K.P. Parab, NSP, Bombay, 1890.
4. Ed. by S.P. Pandit, Sanskrit and Prakrit Series, XXXIV, Bombay, 1887.
5. Kalhana, Rājatarangini, IV, 704-705.

between the regents Mamma and Utpala. The expedition of Tailapa II, the Chālukyan king of Kalyāni, against Mūlarāja Solānki was the theme of a historical epic written by Padmagupta (10th century).<sup>1</sup> The work has not been recovered, though tradition has bequeathed a few stray verses in the form of quotations.

The convention of writing epics on the theme of wars, continued still later. The Gadyakarnāmrita (13th century) deals with the ninety days' battle at Srīraṅgam between Narasiṁha II, son of Tribhuvanemalla Viśaballāla of the Ḫyāsāla dynasty, and the combined forces of the Pāṇḍyas, the Pallavas and others.<sup>2</sup> In the Madhurā-vijaya (14th century) the queen Gaṅgādevī has left for us the story of the conquest and capture of Madurai by her husband Kumāra Kampana.<sup>3</sup>

Some of the Vijaya epics of the early Mediaeval age, however, incorporated the features of the Charita and became very similar to the latter. Thus, the Prithvīrāja-vijaya is not merely a vijaya epic dealing with the war and ultimate triumph of Prithvīrāja III. It also fully partakes of the nature of a charita, in treating the biography of the hero

1. See Subhāshitāvalī of Vallabhadeva, ed. by Peterson and Durga Prasad, Bombay, 1836, pp. 51-53 for some of the verses from this work.

2. Krishnamachariar, op.cit., p.477.

3. Ed. by S. Thiruvenkatachari, Annamalai University, 1957.

from his birth, though it must have evidently culminated in his glorious triumph over Muizz al-Dīn Muhammad of Ghor in 1181 at Tarain. Likewise it incorporates the characteristics of the vāṁśa epic also.

#### Traditions of Historical Writings

##### under the Chāhamānas

Although much is lost beyond any hope of recovery, the remaining literature is sufficient to indicate that there was a strong tradition of historical writing in the kingdom of Śākambhari under the Chāhamānas even before the composition of the Prithvirāja-Vijaya. We may not here take into account the Gujrat chronicles such as the Dvayāśraya-Kāvya of Hemachandra, and a long series of biographies of Kumārapāla composed later, which touch on Chāhamāna history incidentally and from the view-points of Solāmkīs of Gujrat. Even the irretrievably lost Arnavavarnana of Sriharsha may not have been a historical work on the Chāhamāna king Arṇorāja, as Bhandarkar contends.<sup>1</sup> But the fragmentary Ajmer inscription belonging probably to the period of Vigraharāja IV should

1. IA, XLII, p.84 but contra, Aufrecht, Catalogus Catalogorum, I, p.31; Krāshnamachariar, op.cit. p.181, A.N. Jani, A Critical Study of Sri Harsha's Naishadhiya Charita, pp. 110-111.

reasonably be regarded as part of an introduction to some historical epic dealing with the achievements of some Chāhamāna king, possibly the contemporary ruler Vigraharāja IV.<sup>1</sup> To the same period again belongs the historical play the Lalita-Vigraharāja.<sup>2</sup> This was written by Somadeva to commemorate the victory of Vigraharāja IV over a Muslim invader to be identified with the Ghazanavite Amir Khusrau Shāh (1153-1160).<sup>3</sup> The internal evidence of the Prithvīrāja-Vijaya also bears out the fact that a powerful tradition of historical works existed in the territory. This age, characterized by martial spirit and chivalry, naturally saw the springtide efflorescence of the bardic lore. The royal bard Prithvī-bhata was evidently a historical figure, though his identification with Chanda baliddaya, the dvāra-bhata of Prithvīrāja III may be doubted. He is described in the Prithvīrāja-Vijaya as an expounder of hundreds of 'itihāsa' episodes, and his speech is characterized as 'purified' due to his training in 'itihāsa'. The Bisala deo-Raso of Narapati Nālha<sup>4</sup> composed on the theme of Vigraharāja III or IV may be a later fabrication, and so also some of the recensions of the

1. EI, XXIX pp. 180 ff.

2. IA, XX, 201 ff; Kielhorn, Bruchstücke indischer Sihauspiele (Inscriptions zu Azmere, 1901) JRAS, 1902, pp. 439 f.

3. Dasharath Sharma op.cit., p.61 and fn.34.

4. Ibid, p.339.

Prithvirāja-Raso. But it can hardly be denied that Chanda Baliddaya, who is mentioned in the Purātana-Prabandha-Samgraha, was also a historical figure and that he composed a work on the life of Prithvirāja III.<sup>1</sup>

Kadambavāsa, the chief minister of Prithvirāja III is described as sabhā-vyāsa. Since he was commissioned to preside over a scholarly debate between two Jain pontiffs Padmaprabha and Jinapati Suri, he must have been a scholar of some distinction. He belonged to the stock of Dāhimas which had carved out small principalities in some parts of Rājasthan and which was very closely related to the Dādhicha brāhmaṇas who, as we have seen were associated with the Bhārgavas.

#### The Lalita-Vigraharāja and the Prithvirāja-Vijaya

The pattern of the love-story in the Prithvirāja-vijaya is traditional and seems to have been borrowed from the Lalita-Vigraharāja. This incompletely discovered drama on the life of Vigraharāja IV opens with a dialogue between the royal hero and the vidusaka in which the former describes the charms of a beautiful maiden seen by him in a dream. The king, of course, had fallen headlong in love and was pining

1. Ed. by Jinavijaya Muni, SJGM., introduction, pp. 9 f.

for her. Suddenly Subhanauda, a scholar from the famous Tarkkāri settlement of the Brāhmaṇas in the Madhyadeśa, appears on the stage. The scholar vividly describes and later on portrays the figure of Desaladevī, a princess of uncommon beauty, in whom the king discovers the lady of his dream. Curiously enough, Desaladevī, the daughter of the prince Vasautapāla, was also in love with the king Vigraharāja IV. She managed to send her confidante Saśiprabhā to ascertain the feelings of Vigraharāja towards her. Through Saśiprabhā, the king was apprised of the tender feelings of Desaladevī, but he could do no more than send his friend Kalyāṇavatī to the princess with the message that his march against the Turushkas, a battle against whom appeared to be impending, would soon give him an opportunity of joining her. Here the play breaks off and later on the operations against the mlechchhas are described. Although the play is not complete and the available portion does not mention the result of this trial of strength between the Muslims and the Chāhamāṇas, the trend of the play and the literary convention of the historical works of the time, make it almost certain that Vigraharāja IV was described as having defeated the Turushkas and married the princess Desaladevī.

Jayānaka, as we shall see, adopts the same pattern.

Prithvirāja III as depicted in the twelfth canto as languishing in love for Tilottamā, the divine damsel, when Jayānaka, a poet-scholar gifted with mystic powers, appeared and informed the minister Kadambavāsa and the royal bard Prithvībhāṭa, that out of love for Prithvirāja-Rama, Tilottamā had incarnated herself on the banks of the Gangā. Linked up with it, is again the story of a war between Prithvirāja III and Muizz al Dīn Muhammad of Gher.

#### The Chāhamana Culture-Complex and The Historical Works

Besides resemblance in the development of theme, both the Lalita-Vigraharāja and the Prithvirāja-vijaya display similar socio-political trends governing the ideas of historical development of the age. Vigraharāja IV, the patron of Soma-deva, was the first Chāhamāna ruler of Śākambhāri to conquer the northern region, including Delhi - the threshold of India. Having placed himself at the entrance to Madhyadeśa from the northwest, he had to assume the onerous responsibility of meeting the challenges so persistently thrown out by the seemingly interminable chain of Muslim invaders.<sup>1</sup> This menace from the north-west, though it was not fully realized, was dimly seen by him and his successors. The psychology

1. Purātana-prabandha-saṁgraha, p.88.

and the motives of Muslim invaders are described and explained by nearly contemporary muslim historians. These two Chāhamāna works served as the Hindu counterpart of Muslim chronicles and give us in their own way, the earliest reactions of the indigenous people against Muslim invaders.

The infiltration of foreigners into India was not a new story. Since second century B.C. it was treated more-or-less as a socio-religious problem. The disintegration of indigenous political structure and the concomitant decline of the traditional religions through the onslaught of the foreigners, initially evoked the idea of regress with the attendant inert pessimism and frustration, followed by a cohesion of indigenous elements united on the basis of socio-religious consciousness.

After the disintegration of the Gupta empire, the early mediaeval age was ushered in against the dark and sombre background of the Kali-age, described in inscriptions, Purānas, later Smritis and Agamas. The theory of Kali age exerted considerable influence on the development of mediaeval culture. Pictures of the Kali age portrayed in terrifying colours are given in several Purānas.<sup>1</sup> Obviously they contain several

1. Vāyu, Ch. 58 and 99; Matṣya, 144; Kūrma I, 30. Vishnu, VI, 1-2; Bhāgavata XII, 2 etc. See R.C. Hazra, Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, Dacca, 1940, pp. 207, 217. See also D.R. Patil, The Cultural History from Vāyu Purāna, Poona, 1946, p.200.

strata belonging to different periods. The later Smritis<sup>1</sup> also dilate upon the evil propensities and customs of Kali. With the help of inscriptions, the socio-religious and political context of these descriptions in the works of the mediaeval period may be studied. The Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman dated in 532 informs us of "the age which is the ravisher of good behaviour" when "kings adopted reprehensible course of conduct" and consequently when "the earth was afflicted by kings; who manifested pride, who were cruel through want of training, who from moha transgressed the path of good conduct, and who were destitute of virtuous delights."<sup>2</sup> Similarly other inscriptions record with a note of dissatisfaction and distress that "virtuous conduct has to bow low before the full grown kali"<sup>3</sup> and that "the earth like a broken boat, being shaken in the storms of Kali, was sinking below in the invisible ocean of nether regions."<sup>4</sup> Besides these general statements, inscription record the extirpation of varṇāśrama, decrease in the popularity of Vedic rites and lastly the transgression of the right course of conduct. The

1. Parāśara, I, 17, Brihatpārāśara, I, 33-34; Kapila Samhita, vv. 4, 17-18; Smriti-samdarbha, pp. 2529-2530.
2. D.C. Sircar, Select Inscriptions, Vol. I, p.393.
3. E.I. XIV, 117.
4. E.I. XIV, 115.

figure of the quadruped dharma reduced to the straits of a lame person with one leg was the natural corollary which developed gradually during this period.<sup>1</sup>

The Mandasor inscription, alluding to the rival king Mihirakula by name, very strongly suggests that "by other kings who adopted a reprehensible course of conduct" the poet meant the Hūna potentates and similar other outlandish kings. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa after mentioning kings of the Gupta dynasty in general, describes the barbarous chiefs bereft of spiritual glow (brahma-varchasva) who would rule over the banks of the Sindhu, the Chandrabhāgā valley, Kānti and Kashmir.<sup>2</sup> Coins and inscriptions of Toramāṇa testify to his rule over Uttar Pradesh, Rājasthān, the Punjab and Kashmir. According to the Kuvalayamālā, he lived at Pawaya on the banks of the Chandrabhāgā.<sup>3</sup> Therefore it seems that in the portions of the Purāṇas dealing with post-Gupta history, the mlechchhas recorded as ruling at the advent of the kali age were the Hūnas and kindred outlandish kings.

The disintegration of the Gupta empire and the decline in the Vedico-āgamic religious order, brought about a sense

1. IB, III, p.48 v.24; EI, I, p.219.

2. XII, I, 39.

3. JBORS, XIV, 28 ff.

of frustration in society which such Empire-builders as Harsha, Yaśodharman and others tried to check. Bāṇa saw in the reign of his patron, the return of the good old age of Krita.<sup>1</sup> The panegyrist of Yaśodharman, as also some of the other eulogists, speak in the same vein.

After nearly 200 years of freedom from serious attack the Muslims followed the Hūṇas. They were treated just as one tribe of the mlechchhas in the long series of the invading foreigners. The Lalita-Vigraharāja refers to their destructive, iconoclastic and sacrilegous activities - the desecration of holy places, destruction of temples and the oppression of persons belonging to Hindu religion - in the same manner as the Purāṇa writers recorded the barbarous acts of the Hūṇas. The solution proposed by the historian of the age is contained in the Delhi-Siwalik Pillar inscription of Vigraharāja IV which says, "by repeatedly exterminating the mlechchhas, having once more made Āryāvarta what its name signifies i.e. the land of the Āryas, - victorious is the lord Visaladeva, the ruler of Sākambhari."<sup>2</sup>

The Prithviraja-vijaya draws the problem in a much higher relief. It dramatically starts with the dialogue of Brahmā and Viṣṇu in which the former gives an account of the

1. HC, III, 139-140; See also Select Inscriptions, pp.279, 420-21.

2. IA, XIX, 1890, 215, inscription C, verse 1.

atrocities perpetrated by the mlechchhas in the holy land of Pushkara and makes a fervent appeal to Vishnu to incarnate himself in order to destroy the mlechchhas and restore the pristine purity of the sacred land. The temples were desecrated by the armies of the mlechchhas, the holy water of the lake at Pushkara polluted by mlechchha women, and the people following the traditional good path oppressed by barbarians. In response to this, Vishnu created a hero Chāhamāna as the Sūtradhāra or stage-manager to complete the preliminaries of the drama of the extirpation of the mlechchhas by Prithvīrāja III, the incarnation of Vishnu-Rāma.<sup>1</sup>

The Prithvīrāja-vijaya in fact becomes the story of religious disorder created by the mlechchhas and the restoration of traditional good faith by the Chāhamāna hero. The theory of the incarnation of God for the elimination of evil-doers, further lends it a complexion of mystery play and the identification of Prithvīrāja III with Rāma and of the mlechchhas with the demon-followers of Rāvana completes the Rāmāyanization of history. Of course, this trend of Rāmāyanization is just a part of the divinization of the historical process [redacted] - a feature noted earlier - and was due to the transcendental world-view of the mediaeval age.

In short, both these works devote themselves to a

1. I, 37-77.

contemporary problem, though in their understanding and exposition of it, they give evidence of the great influence of the itihāsa-purāna tradition. Further, Somadeva, Jayānaka and the writer of the fragmentary Kāvya-inscription<sup>1</sup> discovered at Ajmer, laid the foundation of an imperial tradition of Chāhamāna history and thus attempted to improve, improvise and standardise - though in a way distort - the bardic stories and the popular tradition which existed before them.

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1. EI, XXIX, 178 ff.

The Tradition of Imperial History and the Origin  
of the Chāhamānas.

A simple, matter-of-fact and direct tradition in popular writings on the Chāhamāna history gradually became transfigured into ornate and embellished compositions, decked out with all the literary and mythological artifices.

Nowhere is this process better displayed than in the writings on the origin and rise of the dynasty. The distant past partly obliterated from the memory of the people and only dimly known to the poet-historian himself, naturally afforded an opportunity to the Muse for an imaginative flutter. Here, the poet was comparatively free from historical bondage and could provide with ease an imperical setting to the dynasty of his royal patrons.

There are two accounts of the origin of the Chāhamānas. The popular tradition preserved in a private record at Bijolia, attempts to trace their origin from Sāmanta, a vipra belonging to Vatsa gotra and living at Ahichchhatrapura in Ananta (a tract near Haras in Shekhavati.)<sup>1</sup> This tradition continues in the Jodhpur branch of the Chāhamānas. The Sundha hill inscription of the time of Chāchigadeva

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1. EI, XXVI, pp. 84 ff; verse 12.

(1261-1281), the Chāhamāna king of Jalore, (Jodhpur) dated in 1262, states that the hero Chāhamāna sprang up from an eye of the sage Vatsa.<sup>1</sup> The Devra branch also adhered to it. The Abu inscription of Luntigadeva dated V.S. 1377 significantly records "Formerly, the illustrious families of the Sun and the moon were eminent upon earth. On their extermination, the sage Vachchha, through fear of crime, meditated profoundly. From his meditation in holy combination with the moon, there appeared on earth the hero Chāhamāna, who destroyed the demons and pleased the sage Vatsa. Being a disciple of Vatsa, he was known as Vātsya."<sup>2</sup> A late Hindi work, Kyām-Khān-Raso, which recounts the history of the Qiwām Khani, closely associated with the Chāhamānas, reiterates the tradition.<sup>3</sup>

The account of the solar origin of the line occurs for the first time in the Ajmer stone inscription, probably of the time of Vigraharaṇa IV.<sup>4</sup> In the line initiated by the Sun, the inscription reads, such universal monarchs as Ikshvāku and Rāma flourished and in due course of time they were followed by Chāhamāna who, like the full-moon, whitened

1. Ibid, IX, p. 74 verse 4.

2. Asiatic Researches, XVI, p. 285.

3. Dasharath Sharma, op.cit. p. 13.

4. EI, XXIX, pp. 178 ff. verse 37.

the whole universe by his fame." As we have noted, the inscription is in a highly embellished style and its nature makes it obvious that it formed part of an introduction to a historical epic dealing with the achievements of some Chāhamāna hero. The inscription is evidently a royal record composed by an unknown court-poet.

The account of solar origin is found further in the Badla inscription of Prithvīraja III dated in 1177-78 A.D., which states that "a hero named Chāhamāna emanated from the sun."<sup>1</sup>

The Prithvīraja-vijaya develops this tradition with all mythological details. The moment Brahmā concluded his report of the atrocities perpetrated by the Muslims, a fiery column (āgneya-linga) shot forth from the sun - the right eye of Vishnu - and descended down on the earth. It assumed the form of a man wearing a necklace of pearls decked with an emerald in the centre, crown and armlets. He excelled other sons of the god Sūrya - Manu, Sāvarni-Sanischara, Yama, Revanta and others. From the initial letters of the chāpa (bow) which he held in hand, Hari, the god, whom he constantly kept in his mind, Māna (self-

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1. Badla inscription of Prithvīraja III; 11, 2-3, Dasharath Sharma, op.cit., p. 94.

confidence) in his own strength and the naya or the polity which characterised his ministers, he was called Chāhamāna. The hero found<sup>ed</sup> a new dynasty.<sup>1</sup>

As the genealogical accounts of the Ikshvākus, preserved in the Purāṇas, were widely known, Jayānaka could not engraft the hero Chāhamāna directly on the Ikshvāku line. Basing<sup>his</sup> argument on the theory of the four yugas revolving in a cyclic motion, he advanced the view that the same Ikshvāku line which flourished in the krita age, was rejuvenated in Kali by Chāhamāna. To complete the entire gamut of mythology, he states that in the krita age the Ikshvākus had three pravaras, but with the advent of Chāhamāna they came to possess the four pravaras of Rāma, Ikshvāku, Raghu and Chāhamāna.<sup>2</sup>

As seen elsewhere, the process of standardization necessitated the formation of a new layer of mythology and this we find in historical novels and inscriptions of the early mediaeval period.<sup>3</sup> This layer rests upon numerous mythologico-historical strata contained in the itihāsa-purāṇa tradition and Vedic literature. In the early centuries of the age under review, the emergence of new

1. I, 75-76; II, 1-43.

2. II, 71.

3. Infra, pp. 283ff.

dynasties was explained on the basis of the brahma-kshatra theory. The origin of the Pallavas, the Kadambas, the Paramāras, the Senas and some of the ruling dynasties of South East Asia, is associated with this brahma-kshatra theory in one way or the other.<sup>1</sup> Later on, however, in the records of some of these dynasties a tendency to align them with ancient lines of the kshatriyas, and not to acknowledge the brahmanical connection, is clearly perceptible. Thus, after the Pratihāras had attained imperial status, they suppressed brahmanical associations in their records and flaunted instead their Ikshvāku origin.<sup>2</sup> The Chāhamāna records reveal the same tendency. The popular tradition, which explains their origin on the basis of the brahma-kshatra theory, seems to be earlier, though it is found for the first time in the Bijolia inscription set up by a Jain monk during the reign-period of Someśvara (c.1070-1078). After Vigraharāja IV conquered Delhi and attained imperial status, the court-poets who tried to build an imperial tradition of the Chāhamāna history, came out with this new-fangled theory of their solar origin.

The story as given in the Prithvirāja-vijaya is the first attempt at the formation of this new mythology and is

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1. Infra, pp. 282 ff.

2. Infra, pp. 282-283.

therefore rather crude. The premise that the hero Chāhamāha emanated from the sun and therefore was the direct offspring of the sun like Revanta and Yama does not in any way warrant the conclusion that he was a descendant of king Ikshvāku, the grandson of Sūrya through Manu. Nor does the fact that the Ikshvākus, the Kshatriyas of the solar origin, flourished in the Krita age - long before the Chāhamānas with their professed lineage - , make the latter descendants of the former. Further the epigraphical evidence as also the living traditions of the Chāhamāna families, make them out as of Vatsa gotra and thus directly contradict the statement of the court-poet that the Chāhamānas had the four pravaras of Rāma, Ikshvāka, Raghu and Chāhamāna. In fact, Chāhamāna was never considered as a pravara and does not figure in the pravara lists.

Here the difference between the modern historian with his technique of scientific enquiry and the mediaeval poet-historian of the Age of Faith, steeped in the tradition of Vedico-āgamic culture, based upon the intrinsic authoritativeness of the revealed word, becomes manifest. Jayānaka did not care to remove the mythological accretion from historical core - a problem which, in fact, would have

been for a modern historian the starting point of his investigation. But the distinction between history and mythology was not clearly realized in that age. Mediaeval man believed mythological stories as historically true. Sankarāchārya, who flourished a few centuries before Jayānaka, discusses the authoritativeness of the itihāsa-Purāna tradition and the historicity of mythological stories narrated in it. He observes, "One who admits the authoritativeness of the spiritual word has no right to deny that the shape of Indra, and the other gods, is such as we understand it from the mantras and arthavāda which possess authoritative power, are capable of describing real personality of the gods. Itihāsa and Purānas can besides, be considered as based on perception also. For what is not accessible to our perception may have been within the sphere of the perception of people in ancient times. Smṛiti also declares that Vyāsa and others conversed with gods face to face. A person maintaining that the people of ancient times were no more able to converse with the gods than people at present, would thereby deny (the incontestable) variety of the world. He might as well maintain that because there is at present no prince ruling over the whole earth, there were no such princes in former times - a position by which the scriptural injunction

of the rājasūya sacrifice would be stultified.....The general result is that we have the right to conceive the gods as possessing personal existence on the ground of mantras, arthavādas, itihāsas, purānas and ordinarily prevailing ideas.<sup>1</sup> Like the mīmāṃsakas, Jayānaka tried to give a consistent and intelligent explanation of mythology in the context of the Chāhamāna history. He was interested in reconciling the claims of the Chāhamānas - a dynasty of the Kali age - to solar lineage with the ancient tradition which described the solar dynasty of the Ikshvākus as having flourished in Krīta.

Besides, this new mythology served two purposes. The first, which is connected with the theme of the poem, is that the poet made an all-out attempt to represent Prīthvīraja III as Rāma, and in order to create the semblance of identity, the co-relation of the Ikshvākus with the Chāhamānas was useful. The second - and this is general and more important - is that out of a sub-conscious feeling of inferiority, the newly born aristocracies wished themselves to be haloed in the romantic and respectable aura of the ancient Kshatriya order.

This further leads us to an important change in ancient

1. Saṃkara Bhāṣya on the Vedānta Sūtra, I, 3, 33.

historiography. The Bhṛigvāṅgiras group of brāhmaṇas were intimately connected with the itihasa-purāna tradition. The emergence of new ruling dynasties having a professed connection with them, indicated their further hold on the body-politic in general and historiography in particular. But gradually, these royal families concealed their brahmanical association. The Vēkāṭakas who had flourished earlier called themselves throughout Vishnuvriddhas and never disowned their brahmanical origin. But although the earlier Kadambas styled themselves 'Hārītiputra' and claimed brahmanical origin, the later rulers of the dynasty attributed the rise of the family to Trilochana Kadamba who is said to have sprung from a drop of sweat that fell to the earth near the roots of a Kadamba tree from the forehead of the god Siva.<sup>1</sup> The Chālukyas in spite of their constant epithet 'Hārītiputra' incongruously traced their lineage back to the Ikshvākus.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the Chāhamānas tried to discredit the fact known to the popular tradition that they belonged to Vatsa gotra, and started to popularise their solar origin.

~ This was possible only when the Bhṛigvāṅgiras tradition had loosened its grip over historiography. Epigraphs,

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1. Infra pp. 204 ff.

2. Infra pp. 282 ff.

however, supply evidence that they received royal patronage in various parts of the country, composed royal eulogies, and occupied the office of "the expounder of texts on traditional polity." Still it seems that they were overwhelmed by the court culture, dominated at this time by reckless heroism and gallant chivalry, and therefore they could not but let the brahmanical tradition sink into insignificance. Many of them were relegated to the minor jobs such as the recitation of the Mahābhārata and similar texts of religious and political import. Further, the court-poet and the court-bard, with their different conventions and ideals, gave a new turn to the composition of history. The bardic love couched in local dialects and expressing popular heroism specially appealed to that influential section of the court which understood the flash of swords better than the illumination of the traditional lore. It therefore promoted the tradition of historical writing in the direct and forciful style of heroic poetry, though in a eulogistic vein and with a marked emphasis on chivalry. The court-poet allegedly played the tune chosen by the king and his entourage. This court-history changes dramatically both in background and colour with the varying

fortunes of the ruling family. After the attainment of imperial status, royal houses wished themselves to be portrayed with all the imperial awe and grandeur, and the poet versed in the classics lent them the complexion of classical emperors. The new mythology was the creation of the court-poets and rests upon the earlier stratum of Vatsa origin. The change further marks the point where the earlier historical tradition develops into the imperial school of Chāhamāna history. It not only carried the legacy of myth-making but also further augmented it by literary devices. The imperial history, as we shall see, was different from the traditional chronicles, not so much in spirit as in form.

Literary and Mythological Devices of the Imperial Tradition:

The Story of Vāsudeva

Epic writings on the rise of the dynasty clearly evince the conventions and motifs of mediaeval historical works through which the imperial tradition transformed ancient accounts and bardic lores to suit the taste of the nobility and to glorify the ruling dynasty. The Bijolia inscription, which enshrines the earlier tradition, describes Sāmanta, the Brāhmaṇa chief of Ananta, as the founder of the Śākambhari branch.<sup>1</sup> The Prithvīrāja-vijaya, the Prabandha-kośa<sup>2</sup> (v.s.1405), the Hammira-Maha<sup>3</sup>-Kāvya (c.1315 A.D.) and the Surjanacharita<sup>4</sup> (c. 16th century A.D.) attribute the rise of the family to his predecessor Vāsudeva. The account of Vāsudeva as given in the Prithvīrāja-vijaya is considerably different from those of the two later epics, the Hammira-Mahākāvya and the Surjanacharita. Both of them describe the dynast as Vasudeva Dīkshita. The appellation dīkshita is rather curious. At least from the tenth century A.D. it occurs as a surname of brāhmaṇas. According to Sabarasvāmin, only a person who performed the dīkshaniya-ishti could bear the distinctive title of dīkshita.<sup>5</sup>

1. EI, XXIX, pp. 179 ff.

2. Ed. by Jinavijaya Muni, SJGM. VI, 1935. Appendix II, pp. 133-134.

3. Ed. by Nilkanth Janardan Kirtane, Bombay, 1879, Canto I, 27.

4. Ed. by J.B. Chaudhuri, Calcutta, 1951. I, v.9.

5. On the Jaimini-Sūtra V. 3, 31.

The scriptures prescribe a rigid set of rules for regulating his conduct in socio-religious matters. This brahmanical and ritualistic epithet fits well with the earlier tradition of the Bijolia record, which regards Sāmanta, a descendant of Vāsudeva, as a chief belonging to the caste of Brāhmaṇa. There is no ostensible motive - poetical or political - for the deliberate insertion of the surname in these epics. It is therefore likely that they followed some earlier tradition in describing him as dīkṣhita.

The account of Vāsudeva in the Prithvirāja-vijaya assumes the form of a tale in which supernatural characters figure and mysterious occurrences happen. It is said that Vāsudeva, the founder of the Śākambhari branch of the Chāhamānas, constructed a mansion in the heart of a forest. Once, returning from a hunting expedition, he entered into it and found a divine person sleeping on his bed. A magic pill which, suddenly slipping from his mouth, rolled down to the feet of Vāsudeva, revealed him to be a Vidyādhara. When he awoke, the Vidyādhara became disconsolate at the loss of his magic pill, which gave him the power to fly in the air. Vāsudeva, however, returned his pill. With the intention of doing a good turn for this favour, the Vidyādhara asked Vāsudeva to send his army back to his capital, to plant his lance on the ground at sunset, and to ride away in the

direction of his capital without ever looking back. He then rode away at full speed, but suddenly, hearing the rippling sound of waves, he looked back to find a stream of water surging from the earth behind him. The Vidyādhara appeared again, and addressing him said, "Like a lover who imprints nail-marks on the body of his consort in a love-frolic, you planted the lance on the earth. This amorous overture made the earth perspire and thus created the salt-lake which will be protected by Āśāpuri (the tutelary goddess of the Chāhamānas) and Sākambhari (the goddess named after Sakambhara, the father of the Vidyādhara)." He added that the lake would always be in the possession of the king Vāsudeva and his descendants.<sup>1</sup>

This account in fact contains two inter-linked stories of the favour of the Vidyādhara and the formation of the salt-lake. Vidyādhara tales were very popular during this period. To introduce historical episodes in the garb of such stories was quite a common practice - a literary convention of the age, almost always followed by poet-historians intent on glorifying the families of their patrons. Bāna, Padmagupta and Bilhana inserted such tales in their epics. It is, however, after the model of the Pushyabhūti episode of the Harshacharita,

1. Canto IV.

that Jayānaka fashioned this tale of mystery. In an attempt to assist a Pāśupata ascetic who later on attained the status of a Vidyādhara, the king Pushyabhūti destroyed Śrikanṭha, the nāga, who held sway over the Śrikanṭha territory. Vāsudeva, likewise, obtained the favour of a Vidyādhara and thus became the ruler over Śākambhari, named after Śakambhara, the father of the Vidyādhara. As in the Harshacharita, the name of the janapada Śrikanṭha was traced to the nāga of that name, so also in the Prithvirāja-vijaya, an attempt is made to connect Śākambhari with a legendary supernatural being Śakambhara. The Pushyabhūti episode differs from the Vidyādhara story of the Prithvirāja-vijaya in one insignificant respect that in the place of the sleeping Vidyādhara, it tells the uncanny tale of Vetalā-rites. But the purpose, technique and spirit of both stories are similar.

The second part of the story of Vasudeva, which relates to the formation of the lake, is based upon a folk-tale formula consisting in the blessing bestowed on a hero who is promised that he will rule over a certain area encompassed by him on horse-back in a limited period. That this folk-tale formula was known in Rājasthan much before the composition of the Prithvirāja-vijaya, is evidenced by the Sevadi inscription of the Chāhamāna Ratnapāla, dated in

1115 A.D. Giving an account of the Gundakūr̄chchā settlement, the inscription relates the following story. In the beginning of the Kali age, Jājūka, the king of Kānyakubja donated to a Brāhmaṇa, named Govinda, the whole tract of land which he could encircle by riding over it in the fourth prahara of a day.<sup>1</sup> A similar tradition is associated with the formation of the Sākambhari kingdom in bardic tales and epics. According to the short recension of the Prithvīrāja Raso, Māṇikyarāja was the founder of the Sākambhari branch of the Chāhamānas.<sup>2</sup> Tod in 1823 recorded a tradition about Māṇikyarāja as known from bardic annals. "Manik Rai fled, pursued by his foe, the goddess Sākambhari appeared to him and bade him establish himself in the spot where she manifested herself, guaranteeing to him the possession of all the ground he could encompass with his horse on that day, but commanded him not to look back until he had returned to the spot where he left her. He commenced the circuit with what he deemed his steed could accomplish, but forgetting the injunction, he was surprised to see the whole space covered as with a sheet. This was the desiccated sirr, a salt lake, which

1. Sevadi Copper Plates of Chāhamāna Ratnapāla V.S. 1176, E.I. XI, p.311, LL. 34-36.
2. Prithvīrāja Raso Kā Laghutama Rūpāntara, Rājasthāna Bhāratī, April 1954, I, p.12. In all the four recensions of the Raso, Māṇikyarāja is mentioned as the dynast.

he named after his patroness Sākambhari, whose statue still exists on a small island in the lake now corrupted to Sāmbhara."<sup>1</sup> This tradition recurs in the latest recension of the Prithvirāja Raso, where the goddess Sākambhari is replaced by the god Sakambhara.<sup>2</sup>

The bardic tradition is simply the folk-tale formula applied to the foundation of the Chāhamāna kingdom. But the Vāsudeva episode, although it is based on the same bed-rock, modifies it in order to dovetail it with the Vidyādhara story. But the modification was not thorough and complete and therefore the incongruous vestiges lay embedded in the revised version. Thus, the king did not make the circuit but rode straight away to the capital. Nor was the salt-lake formed owing to the king's violation of the injunction that he should ride away without ever looking back. On the other hand, the moment Vāsudeva planted his lance, the salt water gushed up and the lake was created out of the perspiration of the earth. Curiously enough, even then Jayānaka mentions the injunction of never looking back while riding away to the capital, and its violation by the king. In the bardic story, it was significant because the violation of the divine injunction

1. Tod's Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, Ed. by W. Crooke, Oxford, 1920, Vol. III, 1449.
2. Nagari Pracharini Sabha Edition, Samaya 57, vv. 211-213. p. 1493.

transformed the land into a lake, but in the Vāsudeva episode it is not only superfluous but confusing.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the structure and treatment of the Vāsudeva episode indicate that the bardic tale was known to Jayānaka and that he embellished it by introducing the Vidyādhara story and other ornate features of the epic.

This tale of Vāsudeva, like the earlier one of the hero Chāhamāna, attempts to give a rational though mythological interpretation of the racial or regional appellations of the family. Such explanations are found in the Purāṇas and were quite common in the historical writings of the period. For example, the name Kadamba is explained in a series of legends, contained in inscriptions. Sometimes the Kadambas are said to have derived their descent from the four-armed and three-eyed god Kadamba, who sprang into existence from a drop of sweat that fell from the forehead of Śiva whereas on other occasions, the founder of the line Mayūraśarmman also styled Mayuravarmman, is described as having born under a kadamba tree.<sup>2</sup>

The tale of Vasudeva and the Vidyādhara Sakambhara is a similar attempt. It is fabricated to explain the clan-designation Sākambhari of the Chāhamānas.

<sup>1</sup> George M. Moraes, The Kadamba-Kula, pp. 6-8

<sup>2</sup> In fact Jayānaka fused here two motifs - the first, the folk-tale formula of encompassing a particular area on horse-back within a specified time, and the second, "the lance-water motif" which explains the creation of a water-reservoir or a spring on the basis of a thrust of a trident, by a divine, a semi-divine or a person with supernatural powers. For the second motif see an interesting article by Dr. J. D. K. Bosch, Guru, Trident and Spring, Selected Studies in Indonesian Archaeology, Haarlem, 1961, pp. 156-170.

Sākambhari as the name of a goddess occurs as early as circa 5th century A.D. in the Devi-Māhātmya of the Mārkandeya Purāna.<sup>1</sup> Much earlier in the Atharvaveda, the word 'Sakambhara' occurs as the name of a region, or people inhabiting the region near Bactria.<sup>2</sup> Sometime in the course of their history, the Chāhamānas came to be associated with it and the connection lingered on in the form of the clan-name, the tutelary goddess Sākambhari and even the patron god of the Chāhamānas named Sakambhara in the Prithvirāja Rāso.

1 Infra pp. 246 ff

2 Infra p. 247 fn.

Traditions of the Chāhamāna

Vamśa.

The material for Chāhamāna vamśa is richer than for many of the royal dynasties of ancient times. This gives it an additional advantage as a source for the study of the poetic workings of the vamśa lore. There are six accounts of the Chāhamāna genealogy; two inscriptions discovered at Haras in Shekhavati<sup>1</sup> (973 A.D.) and Bijolia<sup>2</sup>, the three epics, the Prithvirāja-vijaya, the Hammīra-mahākāvya<sup>3</sup> and the Sūrajana-charita,<sup>4</sup> and the Prabandha-kosā<sup>5</sup> give the list of Chāhamāna rulers in part or full. The three epics mark the three later stages in the writing of the Chāhamāna history. The Prithvirāja-vijaya was written in the heyday of the Chāhamāna rule under Prithvirāja III. The Hammīra-mahākāvya is the product of the fourteenth century when the embers of the Chāhamāna heroism, though fast dying, could still warm a poet to the noble theme of their struggle against the alien power. The Sūrajanacharita

1. EI, II, pp. 120ff, vv. 13-26.

2. Ibid, XXVI. 103 vv. 12-26.

3. Cantos I-II.

4. Cantos I-XII.

5. Appendix - II, pp. 133-134.

was composed in the 16th century, when the early tradition of Chāhamāna history was considerably distorted. The Sūrajanacharita could correctly trace the genealogy only up to Vigraharāja II (973 A.D.), and the Hammīra-mahākāvya to Guvāka II (c. 875 A.D.),<sup>1</sup> whereas the Prithvirājavijaya gives an accurate account of kings from Sāmanta, the feudatory chieftain of Ananta in c. 675 A.D. This evidently shows that an accurate list of kings was kept under the Chāhamānas and that it was known to Jayānaka. But due to political vicissitudes, it was lost, leaving only wrong, distorted and fragmentary sources to later writers. That the complete list was unavailable after the Muslim conquest of Ajmer is further evidenced by the nature of the Chāhamāna genealogy compiled in the fifth decade of the thirteenth century A.D., which is now preserved as a sequel to the Prabandha-kośa. This is framed by joining two fragmentary lists. The first runs from Vāsudeva to Durlabharāja and then, leaving five generations, the second continues from Vākpatirāja (incorrectly spelt in the ms. as Vatsarāja) to Jaitrasimha.

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1. See the comparative table showing different traditions of the Chāmāna genealogy in JRAS, 1913, p. 265.

Thus with the destruction of the Chāhamāna house of Ajmer and later that of Ranthambhor, the historical traditions of the Chāhamānas were partially lost and in due course of time they got distorted. Even with the help of the remaining aitihya,<sup>1</sup> Nayachandra in the fourteenth century could not give a correct list as Jayānaka had done two centuries earlier.

Two twelfth century accounts of the Chāhamāna genealogy, those in the Prithvīrāja-vijaya and the Bijolia inscription, are complete and accurate. The names of kings and their succession are substantially the same. These two records however belong to two different traditions. The Prithvīrāja-Vijaya is an epic composed by the court poet to please his royal master, whereas the Bijolia inscription was written by a Jaina monk Gunabhadra to commemorate the erection of a Jaina temple by a devout Jaina named Lolārka.<sup>2</sup> The first is a work of the imperial and poetic tradition of the Chāhamāna history, while the second is a private record of the Jaina tradition.

In the Chāhamāna territory, the monastic traditions

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1. Hammira Mahā-Kavya, I, 13.  
2. EI, XXVI, 84.

of the Jainas had come under the heavy influence of the court, at least from the times of Prithvirāja I, who had a golden cupola put on a Jaina temple at Ranthambhor.<sup>1</sup> Ajayarāja presented a golden kalāsa to the temple of Pārvanātha at Ajmer.<sup>2</sup> Arnorāja patronised the Jaina scholar Dharmaghosha, and Vigraharāja IV constructed a Jaina monastery in the capital. Someśvara sanctioned the grant of a village to a Jaina temple.<sup>3</sup> Further, the Chāhamāna ministers presided over learned debates between Jaina scholars held in the royal court. In one of these debates, Prithvirāja III gave his verdict in favour of Jinadatta Sūri against Padmaprabha and presented a jayapatra (certificate of victory) to the former.<sup>4</sup> Ajayarāja also acted as a judge in a religious debate between Dharmaghṛsha and Guṇachandra.

The rapprochement between the court and monastic traditions resulted in historical writing by the Jainas at three different levels. The upper section of the Jainas, steeped in the classical traditions of Sanskrit literature, followed the lead of the court poet and joined the imperial school of Chāhamāna history. The Hammīra Mahākāvya by the

1. Dasharath Sharma op.cit., p.38.

2. Ibid, p.41.

3. Ibid, p.227.

4. Ibid, p. 72.

Jaina Sūri Nayachandra is a historical epic orchestrated with the usual conventions of the imperial school.

Secondly, the wandering Jaina priests composed prabandhas or the historical anecdotes about the Chāhamāna rulers, which were narrated in congregations with a view to convince them of the magnificence and might of the Jaina religion.<sup>1</sup> The third section is more important and we shall discuss the compositions of this school a little later. It is here, as in the yagantes of mediaeval Europe, that a current of monastic tradition was fused with the plebian tradition of the bards.<sup>2</sup> The Jaina monks of this group, like bards, compiled the genealogies of the reigning kings and composed the khyātas or the chronicles of the state, reign after reign.

The Bijolia inscription is definitely based on Jaina tradition but as the latter is of mixed character, being constituted by three distinct currents, it is difficult to single out its source without critical examination of the vamśa in the Bijolia inscription.

In this epigraph the history of the Chāhamānas of the

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1. G. Buehler, The Life of Hemachandra, SJGM, pp. 2-3.
  2. L.P.Tessitori, Bardic and Historical Survey of Rajputana, Appendix I, JASB, NS, XV, 1919, pp. 5-79.

Sākambhari branch from their origin to Ajayarāja is given in just three verses.<sup>1</sup> The theme is developed in three parts - the preface, the origin of the Sākambhari branch and the rājavalli. The structure of the composition is uneven and disjointed as its three parts are not smoothly interlinked but imposed one over the other without proper reconciliation. To elucidate the point, we give below the translation of the verse, which describes the origin of the Sākambhari branch of the Chāhamānas:-

"Wearing (?) the drapery of rippling (waves) of pure water over a beautiful, clear and highly shining body, bent with the burden of breasts heavy like high mountains, Sākambharā (sic) was born [even after him] from Vishṇu like the mother [of the Chāhamānas]."<sup>2</sup>

As a prelude to the origin of the Sākambhari branch of the Chāhamānas, the poet Gunabhadra describes here the creation of the Sākambhari lake. But the phrase 'even

1. vv. 12-14.

2. Lāvanya-nirmmala-mahojj(jj)valitāngā-yashti  
Rachchhochchhalachchhuchhipayah paridhāna-dhātri  
Uttunga-parvvata-payodhara-bhārabhugnā  
Sākambharājani janīva tato'pi Vishnoh.

after him' (tatopi), which should normally refer to some person mentioned previously, becomes unintelligible as nobody in the preceding verse could be denoted by it. Further, the word janīva (like the mother) hangs unconnected, and the phrase "of the Śākambhari branch of the Chāhamānas" had to be added for its proper understanding. Lastly, after describing the creation of the Śākambhari lake as the mother (of the Śākambhari branch of the Chāhamānas) by Vishnu-Vāsudeva, the poet immediately proceeds to tell about Sāmanta, the Brāhmaṇa noble of Ahichchhatra, and leaves it to the imagination of readers to forge the link between Vāsudeva of the Chāhamāna family and Sāmanta the Brāhmaṇa of Vatsa gotra. Likewise no attempt is made to associate the Chāhamāna family with Vishnu-Vāsudeva who created the Salt lake. The three parts of the composition are quite separate and unconnected. This may indicate that they represent three different layers of tradition from earlier writings on Chāhamāna history, and if so, they should be studied separately to understand their affiliations.

#### The Preface

The prefatory verse runs as follows:-

"The royal family (vamśa) of the Chāhamānas is unique (apūrvā) - although it possesses an ancestry (pūrvā) - ,

because it is free from idiocy and blemishes, and is meritorious, strong and unsubmissive and is neither split (bhinna) nor inferior (aṅga) whereas an ordinary bamboo tree (vamśa) is rooted in the earth and is split, subdivided, full of holes, fruitless and weak."<sup>1</sup>

With the help of the figure of speech vijatireka, based on double meanings of the word vamśa - a bamboo tree and a family -, the poet praises in general the royal family of the Chāhamānas. This stereotyped and conventional device was evolved by royal genealogists and poets in the early mediaeval period. It does not occur in early inscriptions, although it figures frequently in historical narratives and inscriptions of the early Mediaeval age. A Chāhamāna grant from Nadal introduces the genealogy by the verse: "Like a bamboo tree, which though uncovered by the foliage, resounds with the chirpings of birds that cluster around it, the vamśa of the Chāhamānas is surrounded by brāhmaṇas and is prosperous."<sup>2</sup>

1. Sri-Chāhamāna-kshiti-rāja-vamśah  
paurvo'pyapūrvvoni(na)jadāvanaddhah  
Bhinno na chāṅgo na cha randhrayukte  
no nih phalah sārayuto nato no.

Verse 10.

2. Dasharath Sharma, op.cit., p. 188.

Almost identical is the language of the verses prefaced to the Chandella genealogy in the Khajūraho inscription of Dhangadeva<sup>1</sup> and the eulogy of Bhatta Bhavadeva in the Bhuvanesvara inscription.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes this idea is elaborated with the help of a poetic convention (kavisamaya) that jewels come out of a bamboo tree when, at the time of the svāti constellation, a drop of rain-water falls on the latter. Thus, Padmagupta introduces the Paramāra genealogy in the Navasāhasāṅkacharita by stating, "As jewels which come out of a bamboo-tree make it swell, so the kings who succeeded (the eponymous hero) Paramāra brought distinction to the line founded by him."<sup>3</sup> Such verses are found in other historical narratives,<sup>4</sup> as also in the inscriptions of the Chedis,<sup>5</sup> the Chandellas,<sup>6</sup> the Chaulukyas<sup>7</sup> and others. Jayanaka in his highly suggestive style commences his account of the Chāhamāna genealogy with the verse: "A clump of bamboo trees does not lend so much charm to the forest as do the jewels which come out of it. So the world went on prospering even after the death of Chāhamāna."<sup>8</sup>

1. EI, II, 137, v.11.

2. IB<sup>2</sup>, III, 33 v.4.

3. Canto XI, 75.

4. VDC, I, 60.

5. CII, IV, p. 259, v.4;

6. EI, I, p. 140, v. 14.

7. Ibid, I, 296, v.4.

8. II, 70.

Thus, in historical narratives and inscriptions, the mediaeval genealogists of the imperial school generally followed this device and its occurrence in the Bijolia inscription indicates their influence on the poet Gunabhadra.

#### The Creation of the Salt Lake

The preface is followed by the story of Vāsudeva who is credited with the creation of the salt lake. There are three versions of this story. The epics of the 14th and the 16th century represent the dynast as Vāsudeva Dīkshita who carved out a small principality in the region of Śakambhari.<sup>1</sup>

Then there is the bardic story that the dynast of the Chāhamānas obtained a boon from the goddess Śakambhari that he would rule over the area which he could encompass on horse-back in one day, but as he failed to follow her instructions, the area was converted into a lake.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly in the Prithvirāja Vijaya, we get the embellished story in which Vāsudeva is described as having been blessed by a Vidyādhara, instead of the goddess Śakambhari of the bardic tale. The earth, out of love towards Vāsudeva, perspired and consequently the salt lake was formed.<sup>3</sup> In

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1. Hammīra-Mahākāvya, I, 27; Surjanacharita, I, 9-19.

2. Annals and Antiquities of Rājasthān, III, p. 1449.

3. Canto IV. For "the lance-water motif" see infra, p. 204 fn. 1.

this version, after stripping the bardic story of its folk-tale formula, Jayānaka presented it in a mythological setting and embellished it with the conventions of contemporary narrative literature.

The story in the Bijolia record is evidently more developed than the first version found in the later epics. The bardic tale explains the association of Vāsudeva on the basis of the folk-tale formula, while the Bijolia record gives a mythological interpretation by identifying Vāsudēva with Vishnu on the strength of the synonymity of the two words. Thus, the present record marks that stage where, although the imperial tradition had modified and adapted the bardic tale, it had not so far embellished the story with the tale of mystery.

#### The Genealogy.

The third part consists of what is known as rājavalli, or the string of royal names. Here kings from Sāmanta to Ajayadeva are treated in just two and a half verses. The history of the same period is detailed in one complete canto of the Prithvirāja Vijaya. This is, however, quite natural, as an epigraph set up to commemorate the construction of a religious edifice would necessarily deal but briefly with the

earlier history of the ruling dynasty. But what is unusual in the genealogy as obtained from the inscription is its treatment. Up to Ajayarāja it is given in the form of a string of names arranged more or less as mnemonics:-

viprah śrī Vatsa-gotre bhūdahichchhatrapure purā  
Sāmantonantasāmantah pūrnattalle Nripastathā. 12.

TasmāchchhriJayarāja-Vigrahanā<sup>tp</sup>au Śrīchandra-Gopendrakau.

Tasmāddurlabhadgūvakau Śaśinrapo Gūvaka-Sachchandanau

SrimadvappayarājaVimdhyanripati ŚrīŚimharādVigraha

SrimaddurlabhaGūmdu-Vakpatinripah Śrī Viryarāmonujah. 13.

[Chāmundo]'vanipo'pi cha rāṇakavarah Śrī Simghaṭo Dūsalā

Stadbhrātātha tatopi Viṣala-nripah Śrī-Rājadevī-priyah.

Prithvirāja-nripo'tha tattanubhu(bha) vo Rāsalladevī-

vibhu -

statputro' jāyadeva ityavanipah Samalladevī-patiḥ. 14.

In character, these pithy verses closely resemble the abridged versions of the Jaina Gurvāvalīs, which contain just the names of Jaina teachers whose history is discussed in some detail in larger versions known as Brihadgurvāvalīs.<sup>1</sup>

Further, they resemble the verses in the Dīpavāma, termed memory verses by Geiger.<sup>2</sup> They contain merely strings of

1. Kharatara-Jachchha-Brihad-gurvāvalī, Ed. by Muni Jinavijaya, SJGM, 42, 1956, Bombay, introduction 1-3.
2. Wilhelm Geiger, The Dīpavāma and Mahāvāma and Their Historical Development in Ceylon, tr. by E.M.Coomaraswamy, Colombo, 1908, p.8.

names which indicate the main points in stories. Their elucidations are found in the Mahāvamśa, the Thūpavamśa and elsewhere.

The rājavalis also had two versions - one short and the other elaborate. In connection with the vamśavalis of Nepal, Petech notes, "A vamśavali is primarily what its name indicates: a string of generations, i.e., a genealogical list, which in its simplest form gives merely the names of rulers with the duration of their reigns in years and months. This elementary scheme is then variated (sic) by the addition of dates and of short titles relating the chief events. These additions may become more and more elaborate till the whole assumes the shape of a chronicle, or even of annals; this development occurs quite early."<sup>1</sup> Tessitori who studied the prose chronicles of Rājasthan came to the same conclusion. According to him the prose chronicles are of two categories - the pīdhivāvalis or the genealogies and the khyāta or chronicles proper. The pīdhivāvali which means a "string of generations" is generally in the form of a list of bare names without dates, whereas the khyāta or chronicle proper give in chronological order, reign after reign, the history of a Rājput state, always

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1. Luciano Petech, Mediaeval History of Nepal, Roma, 1958, p.5.

keeping the rulers in prominent view.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, the rājavalli of the Bijolia inscription is identical with the pīdhiyavalli of the prose chronicles of Rājasthan and with the Nepal vamsavalli in its simplest form.

While examining the question of the authorship of the pīdhiyavallis in Rājasthan, Tessitori remarked, "Anyhow, it is certain that as far as the rāthoras are concerned they had also one or more Jaina Jatis (sic.) who kept regular records of the family, and the Jatis (sic.) are possibly entitled to some credit."<sup>2</sup> The Jaina monks kept the genealogical records not only of the rāthoras but also of their forerunners in Rājasthan, the Chāhamānas, as is evidenced by the 'Chāhamāna-vamsa' appended to the several manuscripts of the Prabandha-kosa of Rājaśekhara.<sup>3</sup>

The crude and mnemonic form of these two and a half verses, prosaic though versified, of the Bijolia record may further be associated (as Geiger has done in the case of memory verses in Pāli)<sup>4</sup> with the oral tradition of the vamsa lore. In order to hold the theme in readiness, the reciter used to memorise the main points of the recitation arranged in the form of memory verses which, when occasion

1. JASB, N.S., XV, 1919, pp. 1919, pp. 19-20.

2. loc.cit., pp. 23-24.

3. Geiger, op.cit., pp. 10 ff.

4. Tessitori, op.cit., p. 21 and n.

demanded, could be developed with the help of an elaborate version. The bare pedigree was, of course, preserved by memory. Even to this day, Rajput and Jats know their pedigrees by heart.<sup>1</sup> However, we do not suggest that this part of the inscription is directly based on an oral tradition, but that the poet Gunabhadra probably made use of a written record, which on its part bore the stamp of an oral tradition. In fact all bardic records show this characteristic. According to Forbes, the bards of western India recorded in their vahīs (registers) accounts which are not intelligible without oral explanations, and it was indeed the bard's practice to interpose the recitation of family histories recorded in their vahīs with extempore explanations and amplifications.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the rājavallī of the Bijolia inscription seems to have been based on the third current of Jaina tradition in which, like bards, the Jaina monks compiled the vamsā or to use the term current in Rājasthan pīdhiyavalīs, of the reigning kings and composed the khyātas.

In short, the preface and 'the story of Vāsudeva' bear

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1. Tessitori, op.cit., p. 21 and n.

2. A.K.Forbes, Ras Mālā, ed. by H.G.Rawlinson, London, 1924, Vol.II, p.265.

the impress of the imperial school of Chāhamāna history, whereas the rājāvali represents its pure and simple tradition.

#### The Vamśa in the Prithvirāja-Vijaya

After the rājāvali in the form of a string of royal names up to Ajayarāja, the account in the Bijolia inscription tends to become elaborate. In essentials, it resembles the Nepalese chronicles as described by Petech or rather the khyātas of Rājasthan, though in much shorter form. The absence of hyperbolic expressions, exaggerated accounts of royal conquests and chivalric, dramatic and poetic embellishments, distinguishes it from the royal prasastis of contemporary kingdoms. Indeed, this chronicle of later Chāhamāna kings in the Bijolia inscription represents the simple tradition of Chāhamāna history carried on by Jaina monks in the royal service, as does its earlier part the rājāvali.

The inscription recounts several important political engagements of the Chāhamāna rulers. The subjugation of Chāchiga, Sindhula and Yaśorāja by Ajayarāja;<sup>1</sup> the conquest of Vārapa (Bulandsahar, U.P.) and Mālavā by Arnorāja;<sup>2</sup> and the defeat of the rulers of the Bhādānakas, Jāvālipura, Pallikā, Nadal and Delhi by Vigraharāja IV<sup>3</sup> are briefly enumerated. The account of the same period in the Prithvirāja-Vijaya is ten times as long, but still few of these facts,

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1. Verse 15.

2. Verse 17.

3. Verse 19.

so important for political history, are given by Jayānaka. Besides an eloquent and embellished description of prosperity under the Chāhamānas, the poet treats at great length of the foundation of Ajmer by Ajayarāja,<sup>1</sup> the issue of a new series of coins by him,<sup>2</sup> the fortification of Pushkara by Arṇorāja<sup>3</sup> and the crushing defeat he inflicted over the Muslim forces.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, the narrative of Guṇabhadra is centred round political history. On the other hand, Jayānaka was more interested in events relevant to the story of Rāma-Prithvīrāja and in things of courtly interest.

This tendency is reflected also in the earlier part of the vamsa in the epic. The struggle of Prithvīrāja III with the Muslims and his rivalry with the Solankis of Gujrat had heightened the interest of the contemporary courtiers and nobility in the earlier Chāhamāna engagements with these powers. Excepting therefore those events which had a bearing upon these conflicts, Jayānaka rarely evinced any interest in political incidents. Horses, swords and popular rumours such as that the queen Rudrāṇī had mystic powers<sup>5</sup> and that Prithvīrāja I was seen to have assumed a four-

1. PV, canto V, 192.

2. Ibid, V, 88-90.

3. Ibid, V, 193.

4. VI, 1-20.

5. Ibid, V, 37-39.

handed form, indicating that he was an incarnation of a divine elephant,<sup>1</sup> mainly occupied his attention. He quotes a verse, presumably written on the sword of Vigraharāja I,<sup>2</sup> and praises the sword used by Durlabharāja I but does not care to give the context of the notable success achieved by the latter in Bengal, probably under the banner of his Pratihāra overlord.

In fine, the popular Jaina tradition emphasized the political aspect and was transmitted in simple and direct language. The yamīsa composition in the epic was, however, dominated by courtly interest and the glorification of the royal hero. Further, history is here viewed as a number of different and disjointed events arranged within the framework of genealogy. No pattern or story is forced on it. On the other hand, the account of the life of Prithvīrāja is unfolded in the form of a story in certain well-defined stages and adroitly designed on the basis of an archetype.

#### The Story of Prithvīrāja

The anachronistic representation of contemporary kings as ancient heroes, especially as Rāma-Dāśarathī, -

1. Ibid, V, 80.
2. That the verse 10 of the fifth canto is a quotation, is explicitly stated by Jayānaka in the following verse - 'iti stūtāni kavi-varaih'. The verse belongs to the chitra class and was composed for being inscribed on the sword. Jonarāja in his commentary states 'khadgādi-sāmnivesa-hetuh'.

an important trend in the Mediaeval historiography - culminates in the story of Prithvirāja. The poet starts the work with the professed intention of writing a biography of Prithvirāga III, who "assumed the body of Rāma in order to furnish a novel yet noble theme for poets to expatiate on and to establish a standard of heroism for kings to emulate."<sup>1</sup> This idea runs throughout the length and breadth of the poem which reveals a constant, consistent and elaborate attempt to represent the Chāhamāna king and his associates as Rāma and his companions.

The foundation of this anachronistic form of the story is laid in the epic, when Vishnu, at the request of Brahmā, introduces the hero, Chāhamāna, as a director of the play (sūtradhāra) to prepare the stage for his incarnation as Prithvirāja III, for the purpose of destroying the mlechchhas.<sup>2</sup> It further develops when the astrologer is described as having predicted that Rāma would incarnate himself as a son of Somesvara to complete his mission which he could only partially accomplish in the Tretā age.<sup>3</sup> An inset story is emboxed at this juncture to underline the idea of incarnation. When Jayasimha Siddharāja, the Solanki ruler, expressed his doubts about the future incarnation of Rāma as his great-grandson

1. PV, I, 33.

2. I, 75.

3. VI, 35.

through his daughter Kāñchanadevī, the astrologer said that in the previous birth, Jayasimha himself was a lion who guarded the hilly residence of Siva-Parvati, and who was cursed by Parvati to lead the life of a king on the earth till he was convinced that Rāma would be born again<sup>1</sup>. The astrologers story brought conviction to the hesitating king and he proceeded to the Sphatikāchala Mountain to perform austerities.<sup>2</sup>

Further, the horoscope of the moment when Prithvirāja was conceived by his mother Karpūradevī was cast, and is described after the horoscope of Rāma as given in the Rāmāyana. Kauśalyā is described as having given birth to Rāma, when the Sun, the Moon, Saturn, Jupiter and Venus were respectively in the signs of Aries, Taurus, Libra, Cancer and Pisces.<sup>3</sup> Except for the position of Saturn, which is placed in its own house of Aquarius and not in Libra, the house of its exaltation, all other planets are similarly located in the horoscope of Prithvirāja's conception.<sup>4</sup> There is however an inconsistency in the latter. It records that Prithvirāja was born on the 12th day of the month of Jyeshṭha.<sup>5</sup>

1. VII, 1-8.

2. VII, 9-10.

3. For a discussion on the horoscope of Rāma, see S.K.Pillai, Indian Ephemeris, I, 112-13.

4. VII, 23-28.

5. VII, 50.

Naturally, he must have been conceived sometime in the month of Srāvana or Bhādrapada. But the sun never occupies the sign of Aries during these months.<sup>1</sup> The inconsistency in the horoscope of Prithvirāja and the similarity of planetary dispositions in the horoscopes of Rāma and Prithvirāja, expose the fictional character of the latter.

The poet constantly keeps the dual rôle of Prithvirāja in view and makes frequent statements about his divine incarnation. Thus the name of Rāma, when uttered incidentally by nurses, revived the sweet memories of his previous birth in the mind of the child Prithvirāja when for the sake of warding off evils, a necklace containing the effigies of ten incarnations was placed round the neck of Prithvirāja in his early age, he became conscious of his duties and obligations as an incarnation of Rāma. The ocean was afraid of Prithvirāja because in his previous birth as Rāma, he had pierced the ocean with three fiery shafts and therefore the latter, in the reign-period of Prithvirāja, gave just sufficient water to the clouds to rain lest a heavy down-pour may destroy the crops.

In order to cast the complete biography of Prithvirāja in the mould of the Rāmāyana and to lend his hero the glory

1. See also infra pp. 239 and fn.

of Rāma in his multifareous aspects, the poet portrayed the royal ministers - Kadambavāsa and Bhuvanaikamalla respectively as Hanuman and Garuḍa, the mythical bird used by Viṣṇu as a conveyance.

Kadambavāsa, the poet informs us, was popularly known as Hanumān.<sup>1</sup> Like a monkey, he had a tawny complexion, and, like Hanumān, his body of fame went across the oceans. He still had the bright effulgence which he had acquired from the rays emitted from the crowns of Arjuna, when, in his previous birth as Hanumān, he adorned the banner of the Pāndava prince by his presence.<sup>2</sup> He also retained within him the fire with which he had burnt the city of Rāvaṇa. The shining radiance of Kadambavāsa, which, as Hanumān, he had obtained from the Sun and the Moon, who hurled their bright-shafts at him when he leapt up to seize them increased the more, the longer <sup>he</sup> served Prithvirāja, the best in the house of the Solar and Lunar Kshatriyas.<sup>3</sup>

Employing the double entendre, the favourite device of the poets of the mediaeval period, Jayānaka represented the Chāhamāna minister Bhuvanaikamalla as Garuḍa. "Through his power of destroying the Nāgas (i.e. the Nāga tribe or

1. IX, 38.

2. IX, 39-40

3. IX, 43.

alternatively the serpents)" the poet says, "Bhuvanaikamalla has manifestly identified himself with Garuda". He further adds, "It seems that Garuda has adopted the human form by discarding his golden wings (alternatively the greed for gold)".<sup>1</sup> The author then proceeds to describe the glorious and benevolent rule of Prithvirāja-Rāma with the help of Kadambavāsa, Hanumān and Bhuvanaikamalla Garuda.

Next, the poet took the crucial step of identifying the spouse of Prithvirāja with Sītā. But as the story enters this stage, which is vitally important for understanding the significance of the whole, the Ms. suddenly breaks off. Still a study of the structure of the story and the pattern of its development may reveal some of the poetic devices employed by the author to associate the consort of Prithvirāja with the queen of Rāma.

In conformity with the literary conventions of Sanskrit epics, the complete Prithvirāja-Vijaya must have had at least eighteen cantos, but the only Ms. of the work known to be in existence, contains merely eleven chapters in entirety with a part of the twelfth. Thus, at least one third of the story is lost.

In the eleventh canto, the poet introduces a new

1. IX, 88.

character, Tilottamā - the celestial nymph. When the news of a war between the Gurjjaras and the mlechchhas reached the Chāhamāna court, Kadambavāsa advised the king not to interfere in this mutually destructive war between his two rivals. In support of his policy, he related the story of Tilattamā who lured the two demons brothers Sunda and Upasunda and thus brought about their destruction by playing one against the other. Meanwhile an emissary came from the court of the Solankīs and informed Prithvīrāja of the Gurjara victory over the mlechchhas. This gave a further opportunity for developing the theme. Taking the cue from Kadambavāsa, the royal bard Prithvībhāṭa pointed out that the goddess of Royal Fortune, like Tilottamā, had purposely drawn both the rivals of Prithvīrāja - the Gurjara potentate and the Muslim governor into a deadly combat. Elucidating his point, the bard mentioned that Tilottamā alone could be compared with Rāma and that she had once played the role of Sītā, the incarnation of Lakshmī.<sup>1</sup> This naturally led to an interlude in which the story of Rāma was pictorially represented and poetically narrated by the bard. After Prithvīrāja as Rāma had killed Rāvana, it is said, the drama of Rāma's life was enacted in the divine assembly. Tilottamā, filling the role

1. XI, 19-24.

of Sītā, excited love in the heart of Rāma, and in turn herself fell in love with him. Since then, it is stated, she was nourishing in her bosom an intense love for the aikshvāku king. In the royal picture-gallery, Prithvirāja too saw the portrait of Tilottamā in the rôle of Sītā, and the feelings of old love immediately revived and overpowered him.

The next canto begins with the description of the debilitating effects of love-fever on Prithvirāja. This made Kadambavāsa and Prithvibhāta repent of the mistake of narrating before the king the episode of Tilottamā.

But fortunately a stranger recited a verse which purports to say that nothing in this world is impossible to achieve for those who dare and act, since the earth could be recovered from the depths of the ocean, Sītā was obtained from the bowels of the earth and Draupadī was procured from within the flames of fire.<sup>1</sup> The verse mysteriously brought relief to the love-lorn king. On making enquiries, the stranger who recited the verse, turned out to be Jayānaka, a poet, scholar and ascetic from Kashmir.

He then disclosed that Tilottamā had already taken birth somewhere on the banks of the Gangā and that she was

1. XII, 56.

pining for love of Prithvīrāja, although her hand has been promised to another suitor. The poet thus deftly weaves the story of Tilottamā in the biography of Prithvīrāja.

The almost forced introduction of the story of Tilottamā, the elaborate and far-fetched attempt to compare, associate and identify her with the goddess of Royal Fortune and Sītā, the description of the ardent love between her and Prithvīrāja, and lastly her identification with a lady born on the banks of the Gangā leave no doubt that the union of Prithvīrāja with the lady of the Gangetic plains was the ultimate end of this poem.

Further, the frequently repeated statement that Prithvīrāja was born as an incarnation of Rāma to fulfil his mission of annihilating the mlechchhas, the description of Rāma's victory over Rāvana in the eleventh canto, probably as a background for the forthcoming events, and the introduction of the incident of the Gurjara-Muslim struggle in which Muizz al-dīn mmaid Ghori is represented to have the design of capturing the goddess of Royal Fortune, clearly indicate that the poet had described the victory of Prithvīrāja over ~~Muizz al-dīn~~ the Ghori king.

The story is based upon the same old formula of the Brihakatha - the attainment of universal suzerainty by the hero through his union with the heroine, who symbolises the

Regna Fortuna, after the defeat or destruction of a formidable enemy. It incidentally coincides with the happenings in the life of Rāma, who killed the wicked demon Rāvana, obtained reunion with Sītā and became a Chakravartin king.

The theme is evidently developed in the five conventional stages. "The beginning" consists in introducing the hero Chāhamāna as a stage manager. The stage of "the effort" is reached when the astrologer predicts the incarnation of Rāma as a son of Someśvara and Prithvīrāja was conceived at a moment which indicated his greatness equal to that of Rāma. The extinction of the collateral line and the accession of Someśvara and later on of Prithvīrāja to the throne of Śakambhari, mark the stage of "the possibility of success". And when the story is entering the fourth stage of "the certainty of success" the Ms. suddenly breaks off.

Now, the two important events, which must have been recounted in the last part of the epic, are the victory of Prithvīrāja over the Muslim invader Muizz al-Dīn Muhammad Ghori and the union of the former with the lady of the Gangetic plains. Since both the Brihatkathā formula and the story of the Rāmā�ana, the archetype of the present epic, place the union of the hero with the heroine later than the defeat of the formidable rival playing the part of a villain, the victory

of Prithvīrāja over the Ghori must have comprised the fourth stage of "the certainty of success" and the union of Prithvīrāja with his unknown consort as "the attainment of success".

Thus restored, the poem reveals the heroine as an extraordinary amalgam of Sītā, the goddess of royal fortune, Tilottamā, and the lady of the Gangetic region. As the goddess of royal fortune and Tilottamā are merely links, the heroine in reality has only two capacities - the symbolic as Sīta, and the historical as the unknown spouse of Prithvīrāja.

Though not exactly of Rāvana, in the preserved portion of the epic, Muizz al-Dīn Muhammad Ghori is assigned the character of a demon-king, since his soldiers and associates are described as demons in human form.

Thus, besides the usual roles, Prithvīrāja, Kadambavāsa, Bhuvanaikamalla, Jayānaka, the lady of the Gangetic plains, and Muizz al-Dīn Muhammad Ghori play the parts of Rāma, Hanumān, Garuḍa, Vālmīki, Sīta-Tilottamā and the demon chief Rāvana.

## CHAPTER VI

History in Historical Narratives

The study of history from historical works of ancient times simultaneously involves two processes - the understanding of the historian's idea of history in the ontological perspective of the ancient world in which he lived and from which his ideas derived their contents, and its translation according to the current concepts and terminology. The modern concept of history is essentially European, - rooted in the Greco-Christian tradition and developed in the hot house of the 18th century European Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> Therefore in the case of an historical work composed in ancient Europe, the process is complicated but not difficult. It can be done by studying the different stages in the development of historical ideas, understanding ancient writings in their correct contexts and then interpreting them in modern terms.

But a similar study of historical works composed in ancient India presents a baffling problem. Itihāsa, originated and grew in the context of ancient Indian

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1. Collingwood, The Idea of History, parts I-III.

civilization, which was very much different from the European, and in the process it developed a character of its own. The modern concept of history, imported to India in the recent past when archaeological discoveries and positivist philosophy were influencing its nature,<sup>1</sup> has no alignment

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1. The early period, marked in general with the trend of literary antiquarianism, and started by Sir William Jones, was more favourable to the historical narratives. In the Tenth Anniversary Discourse on Asiatic History, Civil and Military, (As.Res.IV, 1797, 1-17), Sir William discussed the importance of the Purāṇas in reconstructing the history of ancient India. He was followed by Captain Francis Wilford (As.Res. V, 1797, pp. 241-296) and H.H. Wilson (Select specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus, 1827, subsequently published in 1835. Vol.II 127-136.) who tried to reconstruct the Mauryan history from a later work, the Mudrā-Rākshasa. But unfortunately, during this period only one historical narrative, the Rājatarangini, was known from abridged translations and summaries in Persian. The first work of this type discovered by modern scholars was the Harshacharita. In 1859, FitzEdward Hall announced the discovery of the three MSS. of the HC in his edition of the Vasavadatta (Calcutta, Preface, p.12). Two years later, Bhau Daji discovered another Ms. (JBBRAS, X, 38-45). The HC was first published with arbitrary emendations and corrupt readings by Jibanananda in 1876 (Calcutta) and thereafter in 1878 (Kashmir) and 1892 (Bombay) E.B.Cowell published its translation in 1897. The historicity of the events described in the HC was discussed by Hall (op.cit, pp. 16-17) in 1859 and by Max Mueller (IA, XII, p. 253) in 1883. The treatment, however, changed with the discovery of copper plates of Harsha, edited by G.Buehler in EI, I, 1892, pp. 67ff; IV, 1896-97 p. 208ff.

with itihāsa. It marks a complete break with past traditions. It is not therefore possible to move backwards, tracing the successive stages in the evolution of historical ideas, and understanding the ancient historical texts in the perspective of the ancient world-view, and in the context of itihāsa. To augment the difficulty the modern historian is disinclined to accept the forms of ancient Indian itihāsa as historical. Conditioned by the language and ideas of modern historiography, historians viewed them rather as the monsters of the fable, who callously tortured and disfigured the fairy princesses of history, and from whose clutches the historians as gallant knights were duty-bound to liberate them; at the best these texts were thought to be full of irrational accretions which should be removed before the pure gold of history could be seen.

In fact, the modern historian of ancient India unceremoniously discarded the ancient forms and ideas of itihāsa. Sometimes he unwittingly threw away the baby with the bath-water by completely rejecting the testimony of ancient historical works, but generally, suppressing the subjective element enshrined in forms and ideas, he studied these works as a numistatist examines an ancient coin or

as an archaeologist subjects to his investigation a pot-sherd discovered in surface exploration, and not excavated from the trench in the sequence of layers. Thereby, he discarded a useful line of investigation and imposed unnecessary restrictions on his activity. Divesting his sources from their contexts and thus blocking the way of investigation into the development and meaning of their setting, he was constrained to judge them only by the criteria accepted in philology or general exegesis. Naturally therefore he was led to form such a theory as that the Chāhamānas were solar kshatriyas who adopted the Vatsa gotra of their priest,<sup>1</sup> and thus reconciled two contrary statements, found in the works belonging to two different traditions. By overlooking the historical process involved in the growth of traditions, here the historian not only came to a wrong conclusion but also missed the significance of the mythology evolved by the imperialist historians of the mediaeval age. Likewise arguments, based on statistical grounds, enumerating the authorities in favour of a theory, were advanced without taking into

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1. C.V.Vaidya, History of Mediaeval India, II, pp.50ff; G.H.Ojha, History of Rajputana; I, pp. 347ff.

consideration that all these authorities belong to one single school and therefore mere abundance of testimony will not bring credibility. The majority of ancient authors writing on the Chāhamānas mention the solar origin of the dynasty, but they all belong to the imperial school of the Chāhājanā history. Evidence from the Ajmer Prasasti,<sup>1</sup> the Prithvirāja-Vijaya,<sup>2</sup> the Hammira-Mahakavya<sup>3</sup> and the Bedla inscription<sup>4</sup> does not necessarily weigh heavier than that from the Bijolia inscription. Again, without reference to the history of the traditions, the general rule of interpretation that the earlier the source the more authentic it is does not yield valid conclusions. For instance, the Prithvirāja-Vijaya gives an embellished account of Vasudeva, the dynast of the Chāhamānas. With the destruction of the Ajmer house of the Chāhamānas, this part of the imperial tradition vanished, giving place to a popular tradition in later epics, the Hammira-Mahakavya and the Surjana-charita. Thus what is written about Vasudeva in the Prithvirāja-

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1. EI, XXIX, 180, vv. 34-37.

2. Cantos I and II.

3. I, 14ff.

4. Dasharatha Sharma, Early Chauhan Dynasties, Delhi, 1959, p.94, verse 2.

Vijaya cannot be considered more authentic than what is obtained from later sources.

Lastly, the modern historian is apt to forget that these historical epics are deliberately artistic and organically designed and, therefore, in order to reconstruct history, data from them cannot indiscriminately be torn out of their context. For example, the horoscope of Prithvirāja IV, as given in the Prithvirāja-Vijaya,<sup>1</sup> is modelled after that of Rāma, and is just a part of the story deliberately constructed by the poet to show that Prithvirāja III was the incarnation of Rāma. The astronomical data given in this context cannot therefore be used to determine the date of his birth.<sup>2</sup>

Even working within this limited scope, the cautious historian may sometimes come to a correct conclusion, but always by having recourse to the techniques of disciplines other than the historical. Thus, against the theory of the solar origin of the Chāhamānas, which endeavoured to make a

1. VII, 23-28. see supra.pp.223-234.

2. But contra, Dasharath Sharma, op.cit., p. 72 and fn. According to Jyotishāchārya Padmabhūshana Surya Narayan Vyas (loc.cit.fn.2) the planetary positions as mentioned by Jayānaka indicate the Vikrama year 1222. With due regard to the Astrologer Royal, we would like to submit that on the first day of the solar year 1165=1222V.S., the geocentric latitude of Saturn was 267.8° and therefore Saturn could not have been in Aquarius during the Vikrama year 1222. See also Rājasthāni, II, pp. 1-3; for a similar attempt to determine the date of Harsha's birth, see JBBRAS, XXIV, 253-54.

facile reconciliation of two contrary statements, it was pointed out that Śāmanta was a brāhmaṇa and therefore, unlike a kshatriya, he was under no necessity to adopt the gotra of his priest.<sup>1</sup> But here both sides base their arguments on the exegetical principles of mīmāṃsā.

Besides these shortcomings in methodology, the modern historian suffers serious handicaps in the realms of higher criticism as well. In interpretation of the data from historical works, he tries to determine the prejudices and predilections of authors - court-poets, religious teachers and foreign travellers - , which mechanically splashed in colour at several places in their compositions. But obsessed by his initial inhibition, he rarely admits that ancient Indians could write history with any idea or purpose or in a distinctive form. Thus these mediaeval writings have not been adequately studied with reference to the moulds in which the material has been cast in order to give it a shape which was intelligible, interesting and useful to the contemporaries of the author. So the modern student has either rejected all that was expressed in the alien form or indiscriminately extracted material from it.

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1. Dasharath Sharma, op.cit. p. 10 fn. 30.

Thus, the complete story from the death of Prabhākara to the meeting of Harsha with Rājyaśrī is torn out of its context, and utilised, without proper processing, for reconstructing a very complicated episode of Harsha's history. To begin with, the meeting of Rājyaśrī with Harsha is not merely a happy union of the fugitive dowager queen with her royal brother. In view of the long-standing convention of itihāsa works, which represent the goddess of royalty as a princess, and her meeting with the king as symbolic of his attainment of the imperial position, the statement of Bāna that "Rājyaśrī brought a silvery stamp of sovereignty", the intricate weaving of the whole episode with the gift of the ratnavalli to Harsha, and lastly the stage of phalāgama in the narrative, there is little doubt that this meeting of Harsha with Rājyaśrī is also symbolic. Not only Bāna, but the earlier writer Gunādhya and the later biographers, Padmagupta, Bihhana and others followed this convention in their works. In the case of Vikramāditya VI, it can be definitely shown that he married Chandralekhā when he was merely a governor but the exigency of the convention led Bilhana to describe the wedding much later in the life of Vikramāditya VI and to state that the union of the hero with the heroine Chandralekhā symbolised the heroine's achievement of the imperial status.<sup>1</sup> It is

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1. supra pp. 228-231.

therefore strange that the historians, who rejected lock, stock and barrel Bilhana's account of the svayamvara of Chandralekhā, have swallowed hook, line and sinker the episode of Rājyaśrī and Harsha.

Then, by neglecting the study of the idealising process which transmutes facts into an intelligible pattern, the historians have missed the significance of the story of the discrepancies - the death-bed speech of Prabhākara, the announcement of Rājya in darbar, and the musings of Harsha-, which in fact is more important than even the central theme for reconstructing history. This resulted in the blurring of the perspective of the later history. The mysterious conditions under which Rājya was murdered, the testimony of Hsian Tsāng and the epigraphic evidence do not neatly harmonise with the earlier picture drawn by historians on the basis of the Harshacharita.

For a while, let us compare the Harshacharita of Bāna and the Vikramāñkadevacharita of Bilhana. There is a striking similarity between these two works. Like Vikramāditya VI, Harsha, the second son of Prabhākara, was represented as pre-ordained by destiny to succeed his father on the throne and to surpass in glory the famous emperors of olden times. The dynast Pushyabhūti was blessed

by Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune, that he would initiate a line in which an emperor of great fame, Harsha, would be born. Similarly Somesvara I Ahavamalla received a blessing from the lord Siva that the latter would incarnate himself as his second son, who would excel all the emperors of the past in virtues and valour. It is stated that even before the birth of Harsha and Vikrama, their royal fathers, respectively Prabhakara and Somesvara II, knew about the future greatness of their second sons and therefore, in preference to the first, they showered all their affection on them. The prediction of astrologers and the auspicious events at the time of their birth, prognosticating their glorious future, were described in the narrative to emphasize that they were destined to be great rulers.

The similarity in the two accounts continues still further. Bilhana introduces the story of Vikrama's refusal of the status of heir-apparent. In the Harshacharita, Bana does not expressly record any offer of the throne by the royal father to his second son, but the two speeches of Prabhakara addressed to Harsha, on whom his "sovereignty and succession" depended, create an impression that he wanted Harsha to ascend the throne of Sthanvisvara after him. The offer in clear terms, however, came later - from the rightful claimant of the throne - Rajya, the elder brother. But Harsha had resolved to decline

the preposterous offer when the course of events took a sudden turn.

Lastly, both Harsha and Vikramāditya VI, although at first they declined the offer of the throne, later reluctantly became the rulers respectively of Thanesar and Kalyāna.

In spite of this similarity in themes and their treatment, the two works were handled differently by modern historians. Since there was an abundance of epigraphic data on Chālukyan history, the testimony of Bilhaṇa was ignored, and in the absence of inscriptional material on the history of the Vardhanas the evidence of the Harshacharita was utilised largely as Bāna deposed it. Because the old fashioned historians did not have any further effective criterion to check and verify Bāna's account, they could do nothing but select material from the Harshacharita and try to draw a consistent picture from it. But once we accept that the mediaeval historians had some specific idea of history, and that they composed their works with certain motives, a study of their compositions with reference to their ideas, an investigation into the process of transmutation of facts, becomes possible. This new attitude supplies us with a means to raise the veil of mystery a little. The Vikramāṅkadevacharita becomes a defence plea and takes us to the public forum of ancient Karnātaka where the followers of Vikrama and the partisans of

Someśvara II made allegations and counter-allegations against each other. At the same time, this approach furnishes an additional standard to judge the authenticity of accounts which, added to the internal examination of texts, and general principles of coherence, consistency and possibility, may help the historians where they have no other clue to clutch at. Thus studied in the light of the ideas and the treatment of history, as revealed through a critical and comparative study of the Harshacharita and the Vikramāñkadevacharita, the story of the discrepancies in the former work may reveal something which has as yet eluded the grasp of the historian.

Events develop in close juxtaposition and with constant interactions of ideas. The proper significance of events can be read through the associated scheme of ideas. The historical process running through constant changes in events and ideas, reveals itself clearly to a man who travels backwards through the ages and notices the ever-changing panorama from different angles, adjusted in accordance with the various stages in his journey. Here the modern man travelling through time is benefited by the ideas of history held by ancient authors, as they are verily the angles <sup>through</sup> in which those events were viewed in contemporary times. To him, they serve as valuable guides in his exploration of the strange land of the past.

As the modern historian of ancient India unfortunately takes no note of such ancient ideas and forms, and so he is compelled to see the past panorama from his modern angle and ex cathedra organize the past events in his own scheme without their proper processing. It is agreed that ancient ideas and forms sound exotic to him and that they are unhistorical by all standards of modern historical science. But, this is precisely the reason why he should take special care to understand them, lest he should fail in his calling as an interpreter of the past to the present. His total rejection of ancient forms and ideas is not only a glaring confession of his inability as a historian but it is also the throwing away of the most useful evidence. For example, the modern historian had completely rejected the story of Vasudeva. On the other hand, a study in the historical mentality of these mediaeval authors affords an interesting clue to the fact that the story gives a rational interpretation of racial and regional appellations of the Chāhamāna family. It is designed to explain the clan-designation Sakambhari. This word occurs as the name of a goddess as early as circa 5th century A.D. in the Devi Mahatmya of the Mārkandeya Purāna.<sup>1</sup> Much earlier in

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1. Canto XCII, v.44. The name of the goddess also occurs in the Aranyakaparvan (B.O.R.I), ch.82, V.11.

the Atharvaveda,<sup>1</sup> the word Śakambhara figures in the sense of a region or people inhabiting the area near Bactria.

Sometime in the course of their history, the Chāhamānas came to be associated with it and the connection lingered on in the form of the clan-name, the tutelary goddess Śakambhari and even the patron god of the Chāhamānas named Śakambhara in the Prithvirāja Raso.<sup>2</sup>

Similar explanations of family names are found in the Purānas and were quite common in the historical writings of the period. The name Kadamba, for instance, is explained in a series of legends, contained in inscriptions. Sometimes the Kadambas are said to have derived their descent from the four-armed and three-eyed Kadamba, who sprang into existence from a drop of sweat that fell from the forehead of Śiva<sup>3</sup> whereas on other occasions, the founder of the line Mayūra-varmman, is described as having been born under a Kadamba tree.<sup>4</sup>

This trend of the rational and mythological explanation as opposed to the historical, stems from two sources - the metaphysical and mythological schools of the etymologists,

1. V, 22.4. but see contra Whiteney, Atharvaveda (HOS,VI), p.259, Bloomfield, Hymns of the Atharvaveda (SBE.XLII) p.445.

2. Nagari Pracharini sabha Edition, Samaya LVII, p. 1493,vv. 211-13.

3. EC, VII, Sk. 117.

4. Ibid, XI, Dg.35.

and the simple and naive stories of the folk tradition. The historical etymologists (noted in the Nirukta as aitihāsikas) explained names and events mentioned in the Vedas on the basis of historical tradition of the itihasa-purāna, philosophers (adhyātmika) preferred their metaphysical interpretations based indirectly on the derivation of words, and the mythologists (adhidaivikas) found in them allusions to gods and their activities.<sup>1</sup> Mythological and metaphysical interpretations were accepted later in the itihasa-purāna tradition especially in those cases for which there was no historical tradition to fall back upon. A similar process of simplification of ancient historical names and events is observed in folk-traditions. This device came in handy to poet-historians who deftly utilised it for explaining the significance of things and names, long forgotten, and to edify their royal patrons.

Thus, the tale of Vasudeva which associates him in various ways with Sakambhara and Sakambhari is not just a legend. It is the mediaeval way of explaining the clan-designation and certainly it expresses the trend of rationalisation.

The later part of the same story gives a further clinch

1. Nirukta, X, 26.

to the idea. In order to account for the rise of *Vasudeva* as a ruler, Jayanaka introduces the story of a *Vidyādhara*, his blessings to *Vasudeva* and the amorous affection of the earth towards the latter. The mediaeval man of course believed in these demi-gods called *Vidyādhara*, and in the miraculous power of their blessings. Further the rigid application of the law of causality had driven the mediaeval philosophers to recognise the category of unseen causes (adhishta), where the seen causes failed to explain a phenomenon. In this frame of mind, Jayanaka's was the only intelligible explanation of the rise to power of the dynasty. Historians of the time veered round to this supernatural causation so much that it was crystallized into a literary idiom. The Brihatkatha, as preserved in later recensions, contains a cycle of stories spun around a nucleus which describes *Naravāhanadatta*, the son of Udayana, as having enjoyed the imperial suzerainty as a consequence of his marriage with a *Vidyādhara* princess. The biography of Harsha starts with a story in which *Pushyabhūti* helps an ascetic to attain the status of a *Vidyādhara*, and in the process obtains the blessings of *Lakshmi*. *Bilhana* and *Padmagupta* tell similar tales of *Vidyādhara*s and their help to *Vikramāditya* and *Navasāhasrāṅka* in wearing the purple robe of sovereignty.

Accustomed to explain the rise of a new power on the basis

of socio-political conditions and economic factors, the modern historian is bound to reject this explanation as puerile, unintelligible and unhistorical. To the mediaeval man, the theory of Jayānaka would have carried more conviction than the learned theses on socio-political conditions produced by the modern historian.

Viewed further in this context, Jayānaka's account of the origin of the Chāhamānas deepens the issue. Taking the cue from early historians whose existence is evidenced by the Ajmer Prasasti, Jayānaka built up the story of the descent of the Chāhamāna from Sūrya and thus established his connection with the Ikshvākus of solar origin. Such myth-making is perceptible in several inscriptions and epics of the mediaeval period, and rests on numerous mythologico-historical strata in the itihāsa-purāna tradition, Vedic literature and elsewhere. This mediaeval superstructure is however not mythological in the strict sense. Like the varna-samkara and vrātya theories propounded in the centuries preceding the Christian era, the mythological explanation for the kshatriya status of the Chāhamānas are <sup>on</sup> <sub>A</sub> ultimate analysis depends on a legal fiction invented for the sake of understanding the social process of standardisation. As the royal function of governing the people was the special duty (guna-dharma) of the kshatriyas, the social laws of the age required all the rulers to be

kshatriyas. In the beginning of the early mediaeval age, the *brāhmaṇa* dynasties of the Pallavas, the Kadambas, the Paramāras, the Senas and others described themselves as brahmanical Kshatriyas (brahma-kshatra). When the rigour in the process of standardisation increased, *brāhmaṇa* dynasties suppressed their brahmanical origin and connected themselves in many ways with the Kshatriyas of yore. For this of course, mythological explanations were given. In such <sup>*an*</sup> explanations, based on a legal fiction, the explicator is believed to be real whereas the explicand is always problematic and the connection between the explicator and the explicand is invariably ideal and never historical. Thus, the Kshatriya status of the Ikshvākus was believed in the tradition to be real, that of the Chāhamānas was the point at issue and the relation between the Chāmanas and the Ikshvākus through Sūrya was ideal and not historical. But here the trend of rationalization asserted itself and the mediaeval historian failed to note this distinction between the ideal and the historical. Therefore Jayānaka made out a consistent and intelligent case for this ideal connection. He tried to reconcile the claims of the Chāhamānas - a dynasty of the Kali age - to the solar lineage, with the ancient tradition which described the solar dynasty of the Ikshvākus as having flourised in the age of Kali. And so he described the descent of the Chāhamānas from Sūrya

and made a reference to the four gotras of the Chāhamānas — Ikshvāku, Raghu, Rāma and Chāhamāna.

This trend of rationalization operated within the framework of an ideal system as revealed in the Vedas, the Āgamas and other authorities. To a mediaeval man in India, the world and the ever-flowing stream of events were intelligible only with reference to this system, and therefore they understood historical changes in terms of the re-arrangement of the ideas within the same system.

Like the story of the origin, where historical changes in society were considered, the life of Prithvīrāja III is viewed with the ideal system of social process but within the framework of chronology, formalized into a set pattern. It is unfolded in the five stages of the beginning, the effort, the possibility of success, certainty of success, the attainment of the result. These stages are however worked out from the philosophy of time as developed by the Hindus during this period. Since a man is regarded as a member of the society, these stages in his life are oriented towards and directed by that ideal system of social process. The war that Prithvīrāja III waged against the Muslims was for the preservation of the social order. Not only Jayānaka, but also the author of the Lalitavigraharāja,<sup>1</sup> consider these Hindu-Muslim wars as attempts to maintain the traditional

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1. IA, XX, 201 ff.

social order and to check the forces of disintegration released by the invading Muslims. The inscription set up by Viśaladeva bears repetition: "Frequently exterminating the Mlechchhas, having once more made Āryavarta what its name signifies - Victorious is the lord Viśaladeva, the ruler of Śakambhari."<sup>1</sup>

The scheme becomes more complex when Jayānaka looks back to the past in order to understand the workings of the social process and the causes of the disintegration of society and the restoration of the social order. It is said that Rāma in the hoary past effectively checked the forces of disintegration set in motion by the demoniac Rāvana. So the mediaeval historian expected the drama to repeat itself when Prithvirāja III tried to defeat the Muslim invader Muizz al-Dīn Muhammad of Ghor.

There is a marked difference between the attitude of the modern historian with his exuberance of historical consciousness and the mediaeval writer living in an ideal world and steeped in the tradition of Vedico-Āgamic culture based upon the intrinsic authority of the revealed word. In the idealist view of the mediaeval man, inquiry does not take the historical

1. Delhi-Siwalik Pillar inscription (c) of Viśaladeva, IA, XIX, p. 215, verse 1.

direction but only the ideal, evidence is not derived from a reliable source of information but from authority, and validity does not lie so much in concurrence with the objective phenomenon as in logical consistency within the system.

In spite of its defects from the modern historical viewpoint, this mediaeval treatment has one great advantage. Here history is presented not as a graphic chart of the development of events but as a detailed map in which the events are located with reference to contemporary values. We do not simply get a narration of events but their interpretations according to the culture of the time. These interpretations may appear grotesque to the modern historian as history viewed from the modern angle would have been to the mediaeval man. If in his puckish humour Chronos could have placed the writings of modern historians before mediaeval thinkers, one wonders whether they would not have declared them to be sacrilegious, unintelligible and unhistorical. It will be readily agreed that both these viewpoints represent the historical mentality of the respective ages and that neither of them is final. They are the different stages in the evolution of historical ideas. Is it, therefore, historical to call these mediaeval explanations unhistorical in absolute sense?

Appendix

Imagination, which transforms musty parchments into a living panorama of past, is the magic wand of the historian. Without it, he is a mere chronicler, his works are only bloodless and lifeless charts, which map the dead bones of the past but which fail to recapture the world of earlier days, bustling with activity, and inhabited by men having ambitions, desires, fears and hesitations. However, this imagination is always controlled by the evidence in his possession. It plays within the framework of information, gleaned by the historian from his sources. Like the seshavad inference of the mediaeval logicians of India, it fills the gap between two points on the basis of their invariable concomitance. But once it outsteps its own jurisdiction, like Frankenstein's monster, imagination is sure to destroy its master, the historian.

In the following two examples, one coming from the mediaeval age and the other from modern times, we find the unbridled imagination destroying the fabric of history. Creating a dream-pageant, the first has watered down the elements of reality by the use of symbolism. In the second, the historians have extracted a few facts from their sources,

and reconstructed their picture with the colours of their imagination, without caring for what the sources in entirety have to say.

### I UNDER THE SHADOW OF A SYMBOLIST

The Navasāhasāṅkacharita,<sup>1</sup> a tenth century epic composed by the Paramāra court poet, Padmagupta, best illustrates the way in which, under the influence of the Jain tradition, poets inducted the elements of fiction into historical works, deflecting the current of ancient itihāsa from its simple course of matter-of-fact history. Bāṇa undoubtedly imposed a pattern of his own on the historical theme of Harsha's life, but all the characters in the Harshacharita are human. In this biography of Sindhurāja, however, Padmagupta goes far beyond Bāṇa, and steps into the realms of fiction, where he introduces his historical characters in the garb of animals and supernatural beings. Nevertheless, the element of fiction here is restricted to the presentation of facts and characters, and it does not reduce the work to a mere fantasy by conjuring invented characters and giving purely imaginary accounts of events.

1. The Navasāhasāṅkacharita, Ed. by V.S. Islampurkar, Bombay, 1895.

It is likely a richly embroidered but semi-transparent curtain which heightens the effects of the picture it covers, but when removed discloses the reality. And therefore it is materially different from the legendary accounts of the Purāṇas and the early Greek epics, where in the words of Grote "the curtain is ~~drawn~~ the picture" and "that curtain conceals nothing behind and cannot by any ingenuity be withdrawn".<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Navasāhasāṅkacharita shows us the picture, though it is distorted by a sort of literary cubism, as well as the lapidery frame of the author, built out of the common stock of beliefs and symbolism, expressing the ways of historical thinking and feeling.

The decorative super-structure of fiction is raised on the basis of conventions, beliefs and archetypal characters, found in the popular works especially those of the Kathā form. To preach their religious tenets to a wide audience, the Jains composed several kathās in Sanskrit, Jain Mahārāshṭrī and Apabhramṣa. The Paramāra court, to which Padmagupta belonged, was under the influence of Jain scholars. Mahāsena, who composed the Pradyumnaśāṅkacharita, is described as having been worshipped by Muñja, the predecessor of Sindhurāja.

1. Grote, History of Greece, I, 294.

Dhanapāla, the writer of the Tilakamañjari, flourished a little later. Prabhāchandra and Sāntishepa were patronized by Bhoja. Sallakhana, the minister of Arjunadeva, was probably the father of Aśādhara, the Jain scholar.<sup>1</sup> The influence of the symbolism, conventions and form of the kathā seems to have percolated into the Paramāra tradition of history through Jain scholars.

Sāhitya-sāstra recognises three types of kathā - human, divine and mixed. The Nisītha-chūrṇi,<sup>2</sup> a Jain work of c.6th century, classes the Naravāhanadattakathā as human, and distinguishes it from the divine and mixed stories of Magadhasenā and Tarangavatī. In the Samaraīchchakahā<sup>3</sup> and the Upamitibhavaprapañchakathā,<sup>4</sup> Haribhadrasūri and Siddharshi respectively further discuss these three classes of story. The story of the mixed type with both human and divine characters became so popular in the early centuries of this era that Ānandavardhana had to deprecate the composition of historical works in the mixed style which introduces divine characters along with human. "Not that we dislike an ex-

1. Nāthuram Premi, Jaina Sāhitya aur Itihāsa, p.275.

2. A.M. Ghatge, Narrative Literature in Jain Mahārāshtrē, ABORI, XVI, pp. 26-44.

3. Ed. by Jacobi, Samaraīchchakahā, Calcutta, 1926, pp. 2-3.

4. pp. 4-5.

aggeration in the description of the royal might" the literary critic of Kashmir says, "but on the grounds of impropriety we certainly disapprove of introducing divine characters in historical works dealing with events concerning men."<sup>1</sup> In spite of this serious stricture, the popularity of historical works of the mixed type did not decline. In his Sringāra-Prakāśa,<sup>2</sup> the Paramāra king Bhoja approvingly mentions the Lilāvati of Kutūhala.

The Navasāhasāṅkacharita very clearly shows how the tradition of itihāsa in the Paramāra region changed under the influence of the kathā literature in general, and the Lilāvai kathā in particular. Since the story of the Lilāvati centres round the Sātavāhana king Hāla, and evinces several features of the Brihatkathā, it seems that the nucleus of the former is derived from the same culture complex which gave rise to the Brihatkathā cycle of legends. In any case, the similarity between the two works can hardly be disputed.

The Lilāvai describes the marriage of Hāla with the simhala princess Lilāvati, who had two friends, Mahanumatī, the daughter of a Yaksha king, and Kuvalayamālā, the Vidyādhara

1. Dhvanyāloka, III.

2. XI, also see A.N. Upadhye, The Lilāvati, S.J.G.M., Introduction, p.72.

princess. Once, Mādhavānila, the consort of Mahānumati, was forcibly seized and carried away by the Nāgas to their underground abode of Pātāla. Through a cave near the Godāvarī, Hāla entered the subterranean region, killed a ferocious lion, who was guarding it, and liberated the Siddha prince Mādhavānila. With the help of an ascetic, he also killed Bhishanānana, a demon king of the Godāvarī region, who had imprisoned the lover of Kuvalayamālā. Thus, having brought about the union of the friends of Līlavatī and their lovers, Hāla eventually won the hand of the charming heroine, who was determined not to marry till her friends had also married.

The story may well be compared with that of the Navasāhasāṅkacharita, of which a summary is given below. While hunting on the slopes on the Vindhya mountains, Sindhurāja wounded a spotted antelope with an arrow inscribed with his name. The king, although he failed to chase the deer, managed to seize, from the beak of a royal swan, a necklace on which the name of Saśiprabhā was incised. Meanwhile the wounded deer reached the Nāga princess Saśiprabhā, who extracted the arrow and read the name Sindhurāja inscribed on it. Each reading the other's name, Sindhurāja and Saśiprabhā fell in love. A friend of Saśiprabhā, by name

Pātālā, disclosed to the Mālava prince Sindhurāja that Saśiprabhā was the daughter of the Nāga king Saṅkhapāla. In order to meet the Nāga princess, the love-sick prince at once proceeded to the banks of the Narmadā. But when he was engaged in conversation with her she was suddenly carried away by the invisible Nāgas to their capital Bhogavati. Poor Sindhurāja flung himself into the stream with the intention of following his beloved. He entered the cave leading to the nether regions, braved many a hazard, and by his might drove away a lion and an elephant who were guarding the passage. Then his family deity Narmadā appeared and told him the way to obtain the Nāga damsel. Astrologers had predicted at the birth of Saśiprabhā, (thus the king learnt from the deity) that she would be the consort of a paramount ruler of the human world, who would bring about the complete destruction of the demon-king Vajrāñkuśa, a mighty enemy of the Nāgas. Her father Saṅkhapāla had accordingly announced that the suitor of the princess should bring the golden lotuses from a pond in the pleasure-garden of Ratnavatī, the capital of Vajrāñkuśa. That city was about fifty gavyūtis from the place where they stood, and could be reached through the hermitage of the sage Vañku. The king trudged on his way in search of the princess. On his way he met Saśikhandā, who

had been transformed into a monkey through a curse, but who was in fact a Vidyādhara king. The latter brought his forces to help Sindhurāja in his difficult expedition against Vajrāṅkuśa. On crossing the Gaṅgā, the Nāga army, under the leadership of the prince Chandrachūḍa, came and joined them. The allied forces assaulted the fort of Ratnavatī, and, after a fierce fight, Vajrāṅkuśa was killed. Ratnachūḍa the Nāga prince was appointed as the governor of the province. Golden lotuses were plucked and presented to Saśiprabhā, who, at long last, was united with Sindhurāja.

Unlike a realistic chiaroscuro of history, in which facts are not allowed to fade away into fiction, the Līlāvai and the Navasāhasāṅkacharita unfold the elusive unreality of a dream-pageant, in which historical personalities appear with mythical masks, intermingle with supernatural beings, Nāgas, Vidyādharas and Asuras, and love and live for fairy damsels. Beside this supernatural element, both works show similarity in details. The entering into the subterranean region by Hāla and Sindhurāja, their braving the attendant hazards of a ferocious lion and a rutting elephant, and liberating a king; the help of an ascetic, and the destruction of a demon-chief before winning the hand of the princess, are striking points of similarity between the Prākrit novel and the Sanskrit epic.

However, in spite of this fictional garb of the divya-mānushi novel, the Paramāra story has definitely a historical basis. Tear off their mythical masks and you will find all these figures who on the stage strut about as supernatural beings to be perfectly human and historical. The Vidyādharas, the Nāgas and the Rākshasas, who are brought into the story to lend the halo of a supernatural grandeur to a perfectly historical incident, are, in fact, historical people having mythical or tribal associations with superhuman beings.

This unusual use of symbolism to portray historical personages in mythical colours was possible not only because in contemporary times it existed in the kathā literature, and in Prākrit-Apabhramśa tradition and folk-lore but also because it was widely known and readily understood.

#### The Influence of the Jain tradition of Itihāsa

From the beginning of the Early Mediaeval Age, the Jains tried to change and adapt the brahmanical Purāṇas, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata. In the story of the Rāmāyana, they made various changes. According to them, Rāvana was not a man-eating demon, as the brahmanical tradition represents him, nor was Sugrīva a monkey. Both belonged to the Vidyādhara stock which had two families, the

Demon and the Monkey. Rāvana was a Vidyādhara of the Demon family whereas Sugrīva and other monkey-chiefs belonged to the Monkey branch.<sup>1</sup> The latter were not beasts, but men. They were described as monkeys simply because they had the emblem of a monkey on their badges, archways and banners. Continuing the argument they say that their designation monkey is just a figurative form of expression, based upon the principle of association (sāhacharya). As by the use of synecdoche, the word 'lance' is made to indicate a person having a lance, so a person with the crest of a monkey is idiomatically described as a monkey.<sup>2</sup>

In the Jain literature, the Vidyādhara stories were at the height of their popularity during A.D. 600-1200. The Pāumachariya, the Padmacharita, the Uttamapurāṇa and numerous other Jain works tell various tales of the Vidyādharas. Their influence was particularly strong in the central coastal region of the Bombay state. Here, the royal families of the Silāhāras ruling at Goa, Kolhāpur and Thānā regarded themselves as the descendants of the Vidyādharas. In their documents, they proudly blaze abroad their Vidyādhara

1. Vimala, Pāumachariu, III, 144 ff; V, 13 ff; Ravishena, Padmapurāṇa, Kasi, 1958, Vol. I, Canto V, 377 ff; Canto VI, 189-91; Gunabhadra, Uttarapurāṇa, Indore, V.S. 1975, Parvan 68, 256-257; 391 ff. Winternitz, HIL, II, p.491. Also see IHQ, I, 1925, pp. 779 ff; V, 1929, pp. 281 ff.
2. Padmapurāṇa, VI, 212-214.

lineage, going back to the famous Jīmutavāhana,<sup>1</sup> who is mentioned as having given up his life in order to save a serpent from the attack of Garuda. The Silāhāra ruler Aparājita Mṛikāṅka is described in a copper plate as a Vidyādhara by nature.<sup>2</sup> That these families belonged to the Vidyādhara stock was a widely current belief. It is mentioned in the Karakandachariu,<sup>3</sup> the Udayasundarikathā,<sup>4</sup> the Vikramāṅkadeva-charita,<sup>5</sup> the Karnasundari<sup>6</sup> and other works.

Of these families, the south Silāhāras of Goa called themselves "the best of Simhala kings"<sup>7</sup>. Others also recognised this claim. Referring to the defeat of an unidentified king of Goa, the Kadamba chroniclers record, "the lord of Lāṅkā was subdued by the Kadamba ruler though the latter did not have the bridge to his aid, nor the siege of a fortress, nor the efforts of the leaders of the monkey troops, nor even the energy of the son of Vasumitra."<sup>8</sup> The South Silāhāra kings

1. IA, IX, p.33, lines 3-7; EI, III, p.299.

2. IA, IX, p.33.

3. Karakandachariu, Ed. by H.L. Jain, Karanjā, 1934.

4. The Udayasundarikathā, G.O.S.

5. Chandralekha described as a Vidyādhara princess belonged to the family of the Silāhāras of Karahāṭa. VDC, Sarga IX.

6. I, 13.

7. EI, III, p.299.

8. JBBRAS, IX, p.272.

were thus popularly conceived as the rulers of Simhala, and by implication, as belonging to the demon branch of the Vidyādharas.

Relying on this belief, widely current in the cultural zone of Gujrat, Mālava and the Central Bombay, Padmagupta represented the Vidyādhara king Rattarāja of the South Silāhāra dynasty as the demon Vajrāṅkuśa, and the Vidyādhara ruler Aparājita Mrigāṅka of the Northern Silāhāra family as a Vidyādhara in the form of a monkey and with the name of Saśikhaṇḍa. This name is significant as it is almost synonymous with Mrigāṅka, both referring to the moon.

Like the Vidyādharas, the Nāgas are celebrated in the mediaeval kathā literature of the Jains. The Nāyakumāracharitīs<sup>1</sup> of Pushpadanta and Māṇikkarāja, and the Uttarapurāṇa, of Gunabhadra contain Nāga legends. Moreover, several tribes of Central and Eastern Bombay and Northern Mysore identified themselves with the Nāgas. The Kadambas claimed to have descended from the Nāgas.<sup>2</sup> The Señdrakas called themselves "bhujāṅgānvaya" (belonging to the line of serpents)<sup>3</sup>, and the Senavīras carried serpent banners (phanidhvaja).<sup>4</sup> The Nāgas

1. Ed. by Dr. H.L. Jain, Karanja, Berar, 1933.

2. IA, VII, p.34.

3. Fleet, Sanskrit and Old Canarese Inscriptions, IA, VII, p.110.

4. Fleet, The Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Bombay, 1896. p.299 fn.4; EC, VI, Cm, 95.

of Bastar were the "Lord of Bhogavati", the mythological capital of the Nāga king Vāsuki in the nether regions.<sup>1</sup> The Sindas of Karnātaka belonged to the Nāga race.<sup>2</sup> They carried the hooded serpent banner (nāga-dhvaja) and had the hereditary title of Bhogavati-puravareśvara "the supreme lord of Bhogavati." Kings of another branch called themselves "the supreme lords of Karahāta" and carried a blue banner.

Padmagupta again relying on the dual associations of these Nāgas, the mythological and the historical, portrayed the historical Nāgas in supernatural colours. The Nāgas of the Navasāhasāṅkacharita were the Sindā kings of the Nāga stock.

Not only does the fertile imagination of Padmagupta transform historical persons into supernatural beings, but it also gives a fictional garb to historical incidents. The episode of the Vidyādhara Saśikhaṇḍa is fairly illustrative in this respect. Relating his own story, Saśikhaṇḍa says, "Once a rumour was spread that a representation of Viṣhṇu made of sapphire had risen out of the sea. The curious women of the town streamed out to see the wonder. My wife, overcome by curiosity, persuaded me to accompany her. So I

1. EI, XI, 60-65.

2. EC, VII, HI, 20, 53; IX, p.15.

leapt up with her into the air. Immediately the sea presented itself to our gaze. While I hovered over the sea on the blue cloudway, the diadem of my wife fell into the sea, and a great wave drew me into the depths of the nether world."<sup>1</sup> The same incident is recorded by the contemporary kannada poet Ranna in his Gadāyuddha. Satyāśraya, the Chālukya king, routed the Silāhāra ruler of Koṅkana. "When Aparājita (scil. the Saśikhaṇḍa of the Navasāhasāṅkacharita) fled and entered the sea, Satyāśraya desisted from slaying him, since it is not consistent with true valour to kill men who enter water ... Hemmed in by ocean on one side and the sea of Satyāśraya's army on the other, Aparājita trembled like an insect."<sup>2</sup>

Saśikhaṇḍa continues his story. "As I wandered about, I saw a maiden, who wore my wife's jewel. As she did not part with it in spite of my repeated entreaties, I wrenched it from her neck." In a direct manner the same episode is recorded in the Kadamba<sup>3</sup> documents where they state that Gūhalladeva II, the Kadamba contemporary of Aparājita Mrigāṅka annihilated the wicked and cruel enemies of his crown and seized their riches and innumerable jewels." Likewise, the

1. Navasāhasāṅkacharita XIII, 33-53.

2. IA, XL, 1911, pp. 41 ff.

3. G.M. Moraes, Kadamba Kula, Bombay, 1931, p.171.

matrimonial alliance of the Paramāras and the Sindās is represented as a romantic adventure of Sindhurāja with a Nāga damsel Saśiprabhā whose second name was Āśugā, a very strange name, almost unique in Sanskrit literature. In all probabilities, it is a sanskritized form of a Canarese word 'achchuga' meaning beloved.

Thus in the Navasāhasāṅkacharita, we find the Mediaeval world itself rising from the limbo of oblivion and telling its story in its own characteristically symbolic language. It is true that the account is draped in contemporary concepts and common beliefs, and the excessive use of symbolism has deprived the history some of its particularity and obscured its meaning. Fortunately other mediaeval historians of India did not follow the example of the Paramara court-historian.

## II THE AGNI-KULA LEGEND: THE MEDIAEVAL AND THE MODERN MYTHS.

No theme is more rewarding for the study of the historical thought and methods of the mediaeval India than the Agni-kula legend, the sphinx of Indian history, which has made the historians wander in the marshy fields of speculation

for more than 1000 years. It first occurs in the 10th century A.D., and since then the historians have tried to solve its mystery without any success. After the Navasā-hasāṅkacharita,<sup>1</sup> the legend recurs in the Tilakamañjari of Dhanapāla, several Paramāra inscriptions, the documents of the Chāhamānas, the Prithvīrāja-Raso of Chanda Bardai and innumerable bardic chronicles. In the first quarter of the 17th century it was again revived by Muhnot Naiṣī,<sup>2</sup> the Abul Fazl of Rājasthān and in the first quarter of the 19th, Sūrajamala<sup>3</sup> Mishran, the greatest Hindu historian of his time wielded his facile pen over it. After him, the theme was dragged into the political arena, and a royal fight was waged between the Nationalist historians, who felt indignant at their past glory being sullied and took up cudgels to defend the honour of the Rajput ancestry, and the British historians who, probably because of an unconscious urge to prove that the earlier rulers of India were foreigners like themselves, tried to interpret the legend as indicative of the foreign origin of the Rajputs.

All writers belonging to the Rajasthan school of

1. XI, 64-71.

2. I, p. 19 Nāgari Prakārī Sabhā Edition, Banaras.

3. Vāniśa-Bhāskara, pp. 515

history Surajmal Mishran, M.M. Gaurishankar Hirachand Ojha, Devi Prasad, Bisheswar Nath Reu, Jagdish Singh Gahalot and Dr. Mathuradal Sharma either bypassed or explained away the Agni-kula legend, and emphasised instead the tradition of the solar origin of the Rajputs. True to the Indian spirit of itihāsa, some of them even tried to reconcile both the traditions by maintaining the identity of Agni and Sūrya. But none of them squarely faced the Agni-kula myth and attempted to give its explanation. On the other hand, the gallant knights of modern scholarship, Col. James Tod, William Crooke, Vincent Smith, D.R. Bhandarkar and others tilted at a desolate medieval windmill with shining lances of modern steel. Thus, referring to the story of the Agni-kula, Tod says,

"The period of the grand convocation of gods on Mount Abu, to regenerate the warrior race of Hind, and to incite them against the infidel races who had spread over the land is dated so far back as the opening of the second age of the Hindus: A point which we shall not dispute ... Let us here pause for a moment before we proceed with the chronicle, and inquire who were these warriors, thus regenerated to fight the battles of Brahmanism, and brought within the pale of their faith. They must have been either the aboriginal debased classes, raised to moral importance by the ministers of the pervading religion, or foreign races who had obtained a footing amongst them. The contrasted physical appearance will decide the question. The aborigines are dark, dimunitive, and ill-favoured;

the Agni-kulas are of good stature, and fair, with prominent features, like those of the Parthian kings. The ideas which pervade their martial poetry are such as held by the Scythians in distant ages, and which Brahmanism has failed to eradicate; while the tumuli, containing ashes and arms, discovered throughout India, especially in the south about Gaulkunda, where the Chauhans held sway, indicate the nomadic warrior of the north as the proselyte of Mount Abu".<sup>1</sup>

The ethnological similarities of the Agni-kula races to the Parthians, who a millennium before merged in Hindu society without leaving for historians their anthropological indices; the comparison of Rajput poetry with the non-existent scythian literature; and, last but not the least, the association of the megalithic tombs of South India with the Scythians and the Chauhans; - in those early days, how easily a great scholar could pack so many false theories into one paragraph. In Tod's arguments, one can clearly detect an echo of the crude ideas of cultural anthropology connected with the dilettante antiquarianism of the 19th century Europe, again: the modern soul in a mediaeval body.

After Tod, Vincent Smith records his impressions,

"A familiar legend appearing in the Chand Raisā and other later documents in various forms groups together four Rajput clans - the Pawār (Paramāra), Parihāra (Pratihāra), Chauhān (Chāhumāna), and Solankī or Chaulukya - as being Agni-kula, or 'fire-born', originating from a sacrificial fire-pit at Mount Ābū in Southern

1. Lieut. Col. James Tod, Annals and Antiquities of Rājasthan, Oxford, 1920, Vol. III, pp. 1444-45.

Rājputānā. The myth seems to express the historical truths that the four clans named are related, and all arose in Southern Rājputānā; and further, as Mr. Crooke justly observes, it 'represents a rite of purgation by fire, the scene of which was in Sothern Rājputana, whereby the impurity of the foreigners was removed and they became fitted to enter the Hindu caste system.'<sup>1</sup>

This historian formulated his theory without substantiating the basic assumption that the story of the fire-pit indicated the rite of purgation.

Neither the Rājasthān school nor the imperialist historians recognised the simple facts that to attack a legend simply because it is a legend is as uncritical as to believe it credulously, and that only after having studied its development through the ages can a scholar hope to learn anything from it. Like an onion, the truth in the Agnikula legend is wrapped up in numerous covers which should be peeled off to get at the core.

This mysterious legend first occurs in the Navasā-hasāṅkacharita. Introducing his royal master Sindhurāja to the sage Vaṅku, Ramāṅgada says, "At the Arbuda Mountain, there was a hermitage of Vasishṭha where Viśvāmitra came and forcibly seized the desire-yielding cow. To repel the aggression of Viśvāmitra, the sage threw an oblation into

1. Vincent A. Smith, The Early History of India, Oxford, 1924, p. 428.

the fire in accompaniment of the incantation formula. From fire sprang up a man, wearing a golden crown and armour, and holding a bow. Since, vanquishing the enemy, he brought back the cow, Vasishtha gave him the significant name Paramāra, meaning "the slayer of enemies". In due course, Sindhurāja flourished in the line initiated by Paramāra.<sup>1</sup>

After the Navasāhasāñkacharita, the Tilakamāñjari<sup>2</sup> and several Paramāra inscriptions<sup>3</sup> allude to the legend - the earliest epigraphic reference to it being in the Vasanta-gadh inscription of Pūrpapāla dated A.D. 1049.<sup>4</sup> Earlier Paramāra inscriptions do not mention this story. Nor do they allude to the eponymous hero, Paramāra. In all probability, therefore, the story was framed by Padmagupta to explain the clan name Paramāra.

This mythological story, like many others in the historical novels and inscriptions of the age regarding the origins of the Rājput dynasties, is a superscription over several mythological layers found in the Purāṇas and epics. It is however difficult to know after the passage of time whether the underlying layers of the Puranic mythology bear

1. XI, 64-71.

2. I, 39.

3. EI, IX, 13; IA, 155; IA, 1914, XLIII, 193 n; EI, II, 183, etc.

4. EI, IX, p.13 verse 3.

any basic relation to the novelistic super-structure or merely serve as a ground which though basically unconnected, provides opportunities for imagination to build its own edifice. Thus the conflict of Viśvamitra and Vasishtha and the consequent creation of the tribes of the Sakas, Yavanas, Pahlavas and Pāradas are narrated in the Mahābhārata<sup>1</sup> and the Rāmāyana<sup>2</sup>, in the form of an elaborate legend which in fact began to develop in the Vedic period. The story as given in the Rāmāyana states that King Viśvāmitra once came to the hermitage of Vasishtha where he was hospitably entertained. The wonderous cow of Vasishtha, which supplied all the dainties of the feast, excited covetousness in the heart of the Gādhi king Viśvāmitra who first offered a hundred thousand common cows in exchange but later, when this price was refused, proceeded to remove the cow by force. The cow, however, bellowed aloud, intimating to Vasishtha that "the strength of the Brāhmaṇa is superior to that of the Kshatriyas and therefore he should resist this wanton aggression of Viśvāmitra." She then created hundreds of Pahlavas who destroyed the entire host of Viśvāmitra, but were slain by Him in their turn. Next Sakas and Yavanas, were called into

1. Vana, Ch. 82.

2. Ramayana, Bālakānda, Chapters 54-56.

existence, and consumed the king's soldiers, but were later destroyed by Viśvāmitra. Then a hundred sons of the king armed with various weapons attacked Vaśiṣṭha with great fury, but they were all consumed to ashes by the blast from the mouth of the sage. Utterly vanquished, Viśvāmitra betook himself to austerities and thereby obtained a vision of Mahādeva, who revealed to him the science of arms in all its branches and gave him the celestial weapons. Thus armed, Viśvāmitra burnt the hermitage of Vasishṭha and launched his fiery missiles on the sage. They were, however, quenched by the brahma-danda i.e. the staff of the Brāhmaṇa. All the celestial missiles - the noose of Brahmā, Kāla and Varuṇa, the discus of Vishṇu and the trident of Śiva were hurled at Vasishṭha, but with no effect. Finally, to the intense consternation of all gods, Viśvāmitra shot the Brahmastra, but this too proved ineffectual. Vasishṭha then assumed a direful appearance: "Jets of fire mingled with smoke darted from the pores of his body: the brahmanical mace blazed in his hand like a smokeless mundane conflagration or a second sceptre of Yama." Being appeased by the munis, who proclaimed his superiority over his rival, the sage stayed his vengeance and Viśvāmitra exclaimed with a groan, "Shame on a kshattriya's The prowess of Brahma's might alone is strength."<sup>1</sup>

1. Rāmāyana, I, 56, 19 ff.

According to Pargiter,<sup>1</sup> two traditions have been confused in this story of the Rāmāyana. Devarāj Vasishṭha was the priest of Ayodhyā in the reigns of Trayyārūpa and Satyavrata. Satyavrata-Triśanku was banished by his father and was kept in exile by Vasishṭha. Viśvāmitra however championed the cause of Satyavrata-Triśanku and restored him to his paternal kingdom. In gratitude, therefore, Satyavrata appointed Viśvāmitra as the priest of the Ikshvākus in Ayodhyā. Vasishṭha, thus deprived of kingdom and priesthood, bore a deadly enmity towards Viśvāmitra.

The other tradition is that of Atharvanidhi Vasishṭha who flourished after a few generations in the reign-period of Bāhu, who was driven away from his kingdom by the Haihaya-Tālajanghas and the tribes of Sakas, Yavanas, Kambojas, Yavanas, Pāradas and Pahlavas. Later on, Sagara, the son of Bāhu, regained his kingdom and routed the invaders. He was determined to exterminate the Pāradas, the Pahlavas, the Yavanas and the Sakas but Atharvanidhi Vasishṭha intervened and made him spare them. This Atharvanidhi Vasishṭha "is confused with Devarāja Vasishṭha in brahmanical tales, and thus his connexion with the sakas and other tribes led to the

1. JRAS, 1919, pp. 355 ff; Ancient Indian Historical Traditions, p. 206 ff.

absurd detail in the fables about the contest between Vasishtha and Viśvāmitra, that Vasishtha's cow created all those and other tribes to fight against Visvāmitra". Besides these two traditions, some other elements have also been fused, of which the symbolism of the Brahmanical cow - 'Brahmagavi' is pertinent to the subject. Brahma-gavi denotes 'the wealth of a brahmana'. Several stories of the seizure of cows of the brahmanas with disastrous results have been told in the Atharvaveda<sup>1</sup> and elsewhere. The 'brahma-gavi' of Vasishtha is described in the Purānas as having been seized by Satyavrata-Triśanku to feed the family of Viśvamitra. When the latter had retired to Sāgarānupa country for austerities. The idea developed in the Rāmāyana as the forcible seizure of Vasishtha's cow by Viśvāmitra. It probably indicates that the priesthood of the Ikshvāku dynasty was taken away from Vasishtha and that Viśvāmitra was invested with it. Thus, in earlier stages of the legend, the cow was in no way connected with the creation of the Sakas, the Yavanas and others.

The legend, as we find it in the Rāmāyana, must have been developed by the third century A.D., and thus it was current for about seven centuries before Padmagupta seized it.

1. V, 18. See also R.B. Pandey, The Brahma-gavi and the Vaitahavyas in the Atharvaveda and the Purānas, Bhārati, Vol. I, pp. 1-8.

During this period, it was, by and large, used for explaining the change of Viśvāmitra's caste and to show the brahmanical superiority over the kshatriyas, but was not utilised to account for the origin of the non-aryan tribes of the Sakas and others. For this purpose, the Vrātya theory as propounded by Manu,<sup>1</sup> held the field. It does not therefore, seem probable that by utilising the Rāmāyana legend, Padmagupta intended to indicate that the Paramāras were non-aryans like the Pahlavas, the Sakas and the Yavanas who emanated from the wonder-working cow of Vasishtha. Moreover, these non-aryan people by the eleventh century A.D. were completely merged in the Leviathan of Indian society and were almost indistinguishable from other people of the country. Further, theoretically they were held in low esteem as degraded kshatriyas,<sup>2</sup> and so Padmagupta, who was out to laud the Paramāras, would not have presented his patrons in such unsavoury light.

Evidently, the motive of Padmagupta was to explain the origin of the Paramāras. Such mythological interpretations of the origins of a clan or caste were a part of the mediaeval trend of the systematisation of the Varnāśrama organisation. From the sixth-seventh century A.D., there had been constant attempts to bring order in the Varna institution which had

1. X, 43-44; for other references see Kane, History of Dharmaśastra, Vol. I, pt. II, p.96.

2. Manu Smriti, X, 43-44.

become loose because of the influx of the foreign tribes and the rise of the āgamic and other religious sects. Thus the royal epigraphs of the early Mediaeval India bestow high praises on kings who tried to re-establish the religious duties of the different castes and stages of life. The inscription of Samikshobha (A.D. 529) describes him as "engaged in the establishment of varna and āśrama.<sup>1</sup> Avantivarman, the Maukhari chief is mentioned as Vishṇu, the wielder of discus, to set up the institutions of caste and āśrama. Similarly, Bhāskara-varman, the king of Kāmarūpa, is said to have been created by Brahmā for the specific purpose of laying down afresh the rules and regulations of varṇa and āśrama, which were then uprooted.<sup>2</sup> Even the Buddhist king Dharmapāla is eulogised in Pāla records as a righteous king who "had established the people of different varṇas in their respective duties."<sup>3</sup> Chapters dealing with the duties of various castes were added in several Purāṇas during this period.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, many later smṛitis ascribed to this age dilate over this topic. Thus, inscriptions and sacred literature indicate the attempts of smārta sectaries to systematise the order of

1. D.C. Sircar, Select Inscriptions, Vol. I, p.375.

2. Kāmarūpasāsanavali, pp. 15-16.

3. EI, XVIII, p.305.

4. For example the Pārāśara Smṛiti, Ch. VI; the Brahma Khanda of the Padmapurāṇa. See Hazra, Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, pp. 115 ff.

varna.

It was probably because of this movement that several practices prevalent in society were taken note of, and brought into conformity with principles enunciated in the scriptures. Of this the brahma-kshatra is a fair instance. The Guhilas and the Senas in Northern India were described in inscriptions as brahma-kshatras.<sup>1</sup> Some of the dynasties of the South as also of the South East Asia were mentioned as belonging to the family of brahma-kshatras.<sup>2</sup> It is sometimes explained as the name of a family in which both the Kshatriyas and the brāhmaṇas flourished. There is however sufficient evidence to indicate that this caste was formed by brāhmaṇas who discarded their priestly profession for martial pursuits. The Tālagunda inscription, which mentions that the ancestors of Mayūravarman exchanged the ladles of sacrifice for swords and bows, bears out the inference.<sup>3</sup> The fact that the brahma-kshatra family of the Guhilas is said to have originated from Guhadatta, a mahideva (which generally means a brāhmaṇa) and vipra-kula-nandana, who had emigrated from Ānandapura, corroborates<sup>4</sup> it. Likewise, the Bijolian inscription of the

1. Inscriptions of Bengal, III, p.46, verse 15; p.111, p.44 fn.3; PTOC, II, pp. 343 ff; EC, VII, Shikarpur, 109, 110, 130; See also IA, XL, pp. 35 ff. The Pingalasūtra-vṛitti of Halayudha quoted by M.M.G.H. Ojha, Udaypur Rajya Kā Itihāsa, p.79.
2. R.C. Majumdar, Champā (Inscriptions), pp.10, 45.
3. Select Inscriptions, p.451.
4. For an elaborate discussion on the subject see D.R.Bhandarkar, Guhilots, JASB, V, No.6. pp. 167-187.

time of Someśvara Chāhamāna, states that the Chāhamānas are the descendants of Sāmanta, a vipra from Ahichchhatrā.<sup>1</sup> Thus, it seems that those brāhmaṇas who did not follow the duties prescribed to them in the scriptures, and were engaged in the martial pursuits of Kshatriyas, were relegated to the lower caste and were termed brahma-kshatras.

Some brahma-kshatra dynasties frankly admitted the fact that their ancestors preferred the more lucrative and adventurous profession of the kshatriyas to the nobler yet less splendid duties of the priestly class, whereas others concocted stories to explain the change. The Jodhpur inscription of the Pratihāra Bauka, explicitly recorded that the kshatriya Pratihāras were descended from Brāhmaṇa Harichaudra.<sup>2</sup> There is nothing improbable in the Pratihāras being brāhmaṇas. In fact, the Pratihāra or the Pratihārī were the designations of a priestly group. The Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa in a allegorical passage mentions "Austere fervour was the house-holder; prayer itself was the brahmā priest, truth was the hotā ... the past was the prastotdri and the future was their pratihārī priest."<sup>3</sup> According to the Harivamśa,

1. EI, XXVI, p.103 ff. Verse 12.

2. EI, XVIII, p.95 verse 5.

3. Taitt. Br. III, 12, 9, 2.

these pratihārī priests came out of the belly of the Purusha.<sup>1</sup>

But the imperial dynasty of the Pratihāras explained the clan name Pratihāra by connecting it with Lakshmana, who acted as a chamberlain for his brother Rāma<sup>2</sup> and thus related the dynasty with the Ikshvākus of Ayodhyā.

The mediaeval trend of the systematisation of varnas, was preceded by the two-pronged social process of standardisation which consisted firstly in the acculturation or, to be more specific, in the Samiskritisation of the foreign elements, their accomodation with the Samiskrit elements and finally their absorption in society and secondly in standardising the social institutions of the Aryan society in accordance with the norms of the sacred scriptures. This process of standardisation started quite early in history and lasted to the advent of the mediaeval age. It resulted in the formation of a bewildering mass of conflicting mythological legends contained in the Purānas. Thus, the process of acculturation is reflected in the mythological sphere by stories connecting the non-Aryan or semi-Aryan tribes with the Vedic sages. The Bhāradrājas, the Ātreyas, the Hāritas and others are mentioned

1. Hariyamśa, Bhavishyaparvan, Ch. 10, v.8.

2. EI, XVIII, p.107 verse 3.

in the list of fierce mlechchha people along with the barbarous tribes of the north and north-west.<sup>1</sup>

For the other process of standardisation, we may again take the example of the Pratihāra Brāhmaṇas. The Purāṇas have devised a suitable ancestry for them. It is stated that Priyavrata the son of Svāyambhuva Manu, married the daughter of the Prajāpati Karḍama from whom he got Agnidhra. His descendants were Nābhi, Rishabha and Bharata. The last named king was of religious disposition and was reborn as a brāhmaṇa. He was succeeded by Sumati, Parameshtī, Pratihārtre, Prātihārtri, Udgītha, Prastotra etc. The story clearly evinces an attempt to relate the priestly groups of Agnidhra, Pratihārtri, Udgītha and Prastotri with the Bharatas and the Karḍamas.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, broadly speaking, the process of standardisation resulted in a mass of Purāṇic mythology and the movement of systematisation of varnas in the early mediaeval period is reflected in several legends found in mediaeval inscriptions and historical novels of the mediaeval age.

#### The Agni-Kula legend and the origin of Paramāras.

The brahma-kshatra theory current during the process of

1. Mahābhārata, Bhīṣmaparvan, VI, 9. 68-69; Vāmana Purāṇa, XIII, 40-42; S.B. Chaudhari, The Ethnic Settlements in Ancient India, p.134.
2. For example, Vishnu Purāṇa, Tr. by W.H. Wilson, Vol.II, pp.107 ff.

systematisation of varnas in the mediaeval period was utilized to explain the origin of the Paramāras also. Thus, Halāyudha, the court-poet of Vākpati-Muñja, describes his royal patron as brahma-kshatra,<sup>1</sup> which indicates that the Paramāras were regarded as the kshatriya descendants of the brāhmaṇas, before Padmagupta devised the Agni-kula legend in the Navasāhesāṅkacharita.

The epic of the court-poet Padmagupta represents the uppermost layer of the Paramāra mythology. Though this Agni-Kula legend is the development of the Rāmāyana story of the wonderous cow, mythologically the two seem to be unconnected. Early mythological layers of the Agni-kula legend lay elsewhere.

The poet introduced three new elements - the Agni-kunda, the Arbuda mountain and the Paramāras and thus transformed the Rāmāyana story into the Agni-kula legend. The Arbuda mountain is of course associated with Vasishtha in the Mahābhārata<sup>2</sup> and the Arbuda-khanda of the Skanda-purāna,<sup>3</sup> but neither of the works mention any agni-kunda at the mountain, although the Arbuda-khanda recounts several stories connected with the mountain and describes all the religious places there.

1. Pīmgalā Sūtra Vṛitti, as quoted by M.M.G.H. Ojha in his Udayapur Ka Itihasa, p.79.
2. Mahābhārata, Āranyaka (critical Ed. Poona), Ch. 80, vv. 74-75.
3. Arbuda, Prabhāsa-Khanda Ch. I-III.

There are however a few tribes, which in the early centuries of the Christian era, were connected with Agni. The Agnidhras are mentioned in the Purānas as inhabiting the northern zone with the Trigartas, the Saīandhavas and the Dāśerakas.<sup>1</sup> According to the Mārkandeya<sup>2</sup> and the Vishnu<sup>3</sup>, Agnidhra was the son of Priyavrata through Kāmyā, the daughter of Karddama. The dynasty, it is stated, developed into a family of Brāhmaṇas. But the Agnidhras, though their name indicates their relation with fire, are not mythologically connected with Agni.

The Āgneyas are, however, described as descended from Agni. A late tradition in the Anusāsana parvan<sup>4</sup> narrates a tale of the Āgneya Sudarśana, who though born on the bank of the Narmmadā, performed austerities at Kurukshetra. The Bhāgavata-Purāna<sup>5</sup> closely links up the Āgneya Sudarśana with the Dhārṣṭakas - a brahma-kshatra people, who, according to other sources,<sup>6</sup> belonged to the kshatriya clan inhabiting the Bāhlīka country. The Rāmayana<sup>7</sup> also alludes to a sage called Āgneya Salyakartana who dwelt at Kurukshetra. The Vanaparvan<sup>8</sup> mentions the Āgneyas along with the Bhadras, the

1. Mārkandeya, Canto LVIII, verses 43-44.

2. Ibid, Canto LIII.

3. II, Ch.I, verses 5-12.

4. Mahābhārata, Anusāsana, II, 4-58.

5. Bhagavata, IX, 2, 17-18.

6. Pargiter, Ancient Indian Historical traditions, p.256.

7. Rāmayana, II, Ch. 73, 3 ff.

8. Mahabharata, III, 253, 19-20.

Patritikas, the Mālavas and the Dāserakas. Thus, the Agneyas are placed in several districts from Kurukshetra to the Narmmadā.

Likewise the Bhāgavata Purāna,<sup>1</sup> composed in circa seventh century states that in the line of Narishyanta, Agni himself was born as the sage Agniveśya, who belonged to the family of the Jātukarṇyas and after him the whole dynasty developed into the family of the Agniveśya brāhmaṇas. In the grammatical tradition, the Agnivesyas are compounded together with the Dāserakas. Thus in a sūtra which permits the collocation of kindred gotras, the Jainendra-Vyākaraṇa<sup>2</sup> composed by Devanandi in c.550-600 A.D., frames the compound 'agniveśa-dāserakāḥ'. The Kāśikā<sup>3</sup> a mediaeval work of grammar, also mentions it. The Dāserakas, however, belonged to the Vasishtha family. The Apastamba Srauta Sūtra<sup>4</sup> and the Matsya-Purāṇa<sup>5</sup> list them under the Vāsishthas. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa also places the Agniveśa brāhmaṇas under the Jātukarṇyas, who have Vasishtha gotra. Lastly, the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa<sup>6</sup> in both of its lists of teachers, groups Agniveśa with Kaundinya, the latter belong to the Vasishtha<sup>7</sup> family. Thus,

1. IX, 2, 21-22.

2. Devanandi, Jainendra-Vyākaraṇa, Kasi, 1956, I, 4, 140 (p.85)

3. Ed. by Bāla sastri, Kasi, 1898, II, 4. 68.

4. J. Brough, The Early Brahmanical System of Gotra and Pravara, p. 178.

5. Ibid, p.184.

6. XIV, 5, 5, 20-21; 7,3,26.

7. Brough, op.cit. p.180.

there can hardly be any reasonable doubt that the Agniveśas had Vasishtha gotra.

The Dāśerakas were a tribe. The word gana is almost always added to their name in the Purāṇas<sup>1</sup> and the Mahābhārata. The geographical chapter of the Purāṇas and the Vanaparvan mention them along with the Mālavas, whereas the Udyogaparvan<sup>2</sup> speaks of them in the collocation of the Dāśarpas and the Prabhadrás. Rājaśekhara<sup>3</sup> (10th century A.D.) places them between Surāshtra and Trāvana, while Hemachandra in his lexicon treats Dāśeraka and the māravas (the inhabitants of maru-bhūmi) as synonyms.<sup>4</sup> Hence if the sūtra of the grammatical tradition of the early mediaeval period, grouping together the two kindred gotras of the Dāśrakas and the Agniveśas can be taken to indicate their geographical contiguity, it may be stated that the Agniveśas were inhabiting the eastern zone somewhere between Dāśarpa and the Marubhumi.

Thus, before the advent of the early mediaeval period, there was a group of agni-kula families of the brāhmaṇas. The group had certain marked cultural characteristics. All the three families comprising the group are connected with Agni.

1. Markandeya, LVII, 40. for other references see Pargiter, Markandeya Purāṇa, p.321 n.

2. Chap. I. 47.

3. Kavyamīmāṃsā, (G.O.S.) Baroda, 1934, Ch. XVII, p.94.

4. For references see Dasharatha Sharma, Dēśeraka Janapada, Rājasthāna Bhāratī, January, 1956 pp. 49-51.

The Āgneyas and the Agniveśas are specifically stated to have originated from Agni. Negatively, none of them is linked up with the solar and lunar kshatriyas. Secondly the group consisted of the brahma-kshatra people. The Agnidhras belonged to the line of the kshatriya king Priyavrata, which later on merged into a family of the brāhmaṇas. The Āgneya brāhmaṇas also descended from a kshatriya dynasty. Similarly, the Agniveśas are related to the kshatriya line of Narishyanta, which developed into the brāhmaṇa family. Lastly, the whole group was inhabiting the eastern zone in c. sixth century A.D.

It is curious to note that the Paramāras also share these characteristics. They are recorded as having originated from Agni and as having belonged to the brahma-kshatra caste of Vahni-vamśa. Further, they inhabited the area associated with Agni-kula. Lastly, like the Agniveśya brāhmaṇas they had the gotra of Vasishtha. Although, the conclusive evidence for identifying the Paramāras with Agniveśas is lacking, the gotra, area of habitation, the caste and mythological traditions make it all but certain.

It finds further support from a confused tradition recorded in the Nagpur inscription of the Mālava kings. It states that Rājyavardhana, Viśāla, Dhrammadhrik, Satyaketu and Prithu<sup>k</sup>īrti flourished in the Paramāra line.<sup>1</sup> The

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1. EI, II, p.183, verse 4.

Vishnu Purāna<sup>1</sup> makes out Rājyavardhana and Viśāla to be the descendants of Narīshyanta, the son of Marutta. A late tradition in the Bhāgavata Purāna<sup>2</sup>, however, describes the Agniveśa brāhmaṇas as the progeny of Narīshyanta. It is true that the Narīshyanta of the Bhāgavata Purāna is the son of Manu whereas Narīshyanta described in the Vishnu Purāna as the ancestor of Rājyavardhana is described as the son of Marutta in the line of Nābhāga. But the view of Pargiter<sup>3</sup> seems to be right that the late Bhāgavata Purāna has confused the Narīshyanta of the Nābhāga line with the Narīshyanta, son of Manu. It is corroborated by facts that the name of Narīshyanta has been left out by the Bhāgavata Purāna from the list of kings in the line of Nābhāga and that all the earlier Purānas either do not list the names of the descendants of Narīshyanta, the son of Manu, or merely mention the Sakas as his progeny.

Thus, two traditions seem to have been current in circa seventh century A.D. According to one, the line of Narīshyanta developed into the family of Agniveśa brāhmaṇas whereas the other mentioned the Vaiśāli kings as his descendants. The second tradition is found in earlier Purānas and is consistently

1. IV, I, 34-50.

2. IX, 2, 21-22.

3. Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, p.256, and fn.8.

copied by later compositions. The first occurs only in one late Purāna and there too in a confused manner. Still, this indicates that in c. seventh century A.D., the origin both of the Agniveśas and the Vaiśāli kings was traced to Nari-shyanta. The Vaiśāli kings are again linked up with the Paramāras in a Paramāra record and thus the tradition, although confused, supplies the corroborative evidence for identifying the Paramāras with Agniveśas.

Analysis thus reveals that the Agni-kunda story of the Navasāhasāṅka-charita is only the uppermost layer of the tradition of the Paramāra origin and that Agni-kunda story rests on the Agni-kula mythology of the Purānas and epics. The founder of the family in the Agni-kula mythology is represented as the god Agni in the form of a sage who, in the Agni-kunda story of the Navasāhasāṅkacharita, is transformed into the sacred fire (Agni) of the sacrificial pit. Since Agniveśa brāhmaṇas belonged to the Vasishtha family, Agni in the Agni-kunda (fire-pit) is said to have been enkindled by the sage Vasishtha and as the Arbuda mountain was associated both with Vasishtha and the earlier Paramāras, the fire-pit is located there.

There are still earlier layers. The Agnikula group in the Purāpas is related to the Balhika culture-complex.

The Agnidhras are said to have descended from the daughter of the Prajāpati Karddama sometimes styled the king of Vāhlī.<sup>1</sup> According to H.C. Raychaudhari, Karddama was the name of the ruling family of Bactria which took its name from the river Karddama.<sup>2</sup> This river has been now correctly identified with the Zarafshan which flows through Bokhara. Similarly, the Āgneyas were connected with the Dhārṣṭakas,<sup>3</sup> and ancient Kshatriya clan which once inhabited Bactria. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa,<sup>4</sup> the epics<sup>5</sup> and the Purāṇas<sup>6</sup> contain quite a few mythological stories about these Bactrian aryans, an analysis of which is here uncalled for.

#### The Development of the Agni-Kunda story

After the Navasāhasāṅkacharita, the Tilakamañjari and numerous Paramāra inscriptions allude to the Agni-Kunda legend. The later recensions of the Prithī-rāja Raso<sup>7</sup> further develops it. According to it 'Viśvāmitra, Gautama, Agastya and other sages began a great sacrifice on Mount Ābu. Demons showered down flesh, blood, bones, wine and many other impure things. Tormented by this desecration, Vasishtha

1. Mārkandeya Purāṇa, Ch. LIII.
2. The Karddamaka kings, IHQ, IX, 37-39; The Political History of Ancient India, p.256.
3. Ancient Indian Historical Traditions, p.256.
4. SB, XII, 9, 3, 3.
5. IHQ, IX, 37 ff; Sabhaparvan, II, 27, 22.
6. Mārkandeya Purāṇa, Ch. LII. S.B. Chaudhuri, Ethnic Settlements in Ancient India, 1955, p.110.
7. Pt. I, pp. 45-51.

created from the agni-kunda three warriors, Pratihāra, Chaulukya and Paramāra, but none of these succeeded in vanquishing the rākshasas. Vasishtha, therefore, dug a new pit, and as a result of oblations poured into it, there issued forth a four-armed figure, of lofty stature, red-coloured, red-faced, and bearing weapons in all his hands. The sages named him Chāhuvāna. With the assistance of Āśāpuri, the warrior defeated the daityas and drove them back to nether regions." The story is retold by several late mediaeval writers, such as Mūṭā Nainasi and Abul Fazl, and by modern chroniclers like Suryamalīya Mishran and Jodharāja.

However, none of the early records of the Pratihāras, the Solankīs and the Chāhamānas, utilized this legend for explaining the origin of these dynasties.

In fine, the Agni-kula legend represents two myths - the Modern and the Mediaeval. The modern myth arose from the efforts of the scholars to interpret a mediaeval myth in terms of modern concepts, whereas the mediaeval represents the processes of the standardisation and systematisation of the stratified society of the times.

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