

**A STUDY OF ATTITUDES
TOWARDS MLECCHAS AND OTHER OUTSIDERS
IN NORTHERN INDIA (— c. A.D.600)**

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to elucidate the meaning of the word mleccha in its comprehensive sense and examine how it was applied as a designation for outsiders in the period before c. A.D. 600 in northern India.

The first chapter discusses early Indian society and some of the concepts on which it was founded. The notion of the mleccha was part of the moral and social framework of this society which believed in its inherent cultural superiority. We further discuss the various source materials that have been utilized as far as they bear on our study.

The first outstanding problem, studied in the second chapter, is the origin of the Sanskrit term mleccha and its relation with the Pāli variant milakkha. This chapter is largely concerned with the varied implications of the theories on the etymology of these terms. The theories advocating either an Indo-European or a non-Indo-European origin of mleccha/milakkha produce inconclusive results which prevents us from placing our ideas on the concept of the mleccha on a firm linguistic basis.

The reasons why mleccha first occurred in the context of speech are presented in Chapter III. Both in this chapter and in the next we are concerned with the distinction on the basis of speech and the area of habitation which set the mlecchas apart. The Buddhist, Brāhmanic and Jaina texts all emphasize these differences. At the same time we are able to show that there were changes in the attitudes towards mlecchas. We are, however, unable to define speech or area of habitation as the ultimate reasons for the separate existence of mlecchas in ancient Indian society.

(ii)

In the first half of Chapter V, we discuss the reasons why the mlecchas and outside groups were tolerated on a political level despite the fact that Indian monarchs worked within the brāhmanical system. In the second half of the same chapter we consider the pejorative implications of the cultural discrimination of the mlecchas. However, the basic prejudice against the mlecchas had to be modified in the face of historical changes.

Finally, in Chapters VI and VII, we examine the flexibility in the treatment and categorization of the various outside groups. In Chapter VI the focus is on tribes and indigenous peoples designated as mlecchas. The comparison of the term mleccha with dasyu and with the names of individual tribes such as Kirāta, Niṣāda, and Pulinda, which are often used to denote less developed tribes, is undertaken here. The subsequent chapter surveys the foreigners associated with ancient India as conquerors and rulers and the manner in which the brāhmaṇa literary writers viewed such invasions. The ambiguity in the use of the term mleccha in brāhmanical writing has to be explained in the light of the political and economic status acquired by certain outside groups.

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TABLE OF TRANSLITERATIONArranged in order of Nāgarī Alphabet

अ- <u>a</u> ;	आ- <u>ā</u> ;	इ- <u>i</u> ;	ई- <u>ī</u> ;	उ- <u>u</u> ;	ऊ- <u>ū</u> ;	ऋ- <u>r̥</u> ;
ॠ- <u>ṛ</u> ;	ए- <u>ai</u> ;	औ- <u>o</u> ;	औ- <u>au</u> ;	ः- <u>ḥ</u> ;	ः- <u>ḥ</u> ;	
क- <u>ka</u> ;	ख- <u>kha</u> ;	ग- <u>ga</u> ;	घ- <u>gha</u> ;	ङ- <u>ṅa</u> ;		
च- <u>ca</u> ;	छ- <u>cha</u> ;	ज- <u>ja</u> ;	झ- <u>jha</u> ;	ञ- <u>ña</u> ;		
ट- <u>ṭa</u> ;	ठ- <u>ṭha</u> ;	ड- <u>ḍa</u> ;	ढ- <u>ḍha</u> ;	ण- <u>ṇa</u> ;		
त- <u>ta</u> ;	थ- <u>tha</u> ;	द- <u>da</u> ;	ध- <u>dha</u> ;	न- <u>na</u> ;		
प- <u>pa</u> ;	फ- <u>pha</u> ;	ब- <u>ba</u> ;	भ- <u>bha</u> ;	म- <u>ma</u> ;		
य- <u>ya</u> ;	र- <u>ra</u> ;	ल- <u>la</u> ;	व- <u>va</u> ;			
श- <u>śa</u> ;	ष- <u>ṣa</u> ;	स- <u>sa</u> ;	ह- <u>ha</u> .			

ABBREVIATIONS

Ait. Aranyaka	:	<u>Aitareya Aranyaka</u>
Ait. Br.	:	<u>Aitareya Brāhmaṇa</u>
ABORI	:	<u>Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute</u>
AGI	:	<u>The Ancient Geography of India</u> by A. Cunningham
AI	:	<u>Ancient India</u> , Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India
AIHT	:	<u>Ancient Indian Historical Tradition</u> , by F. E. Pargiter
Ayodh. K.	:	<u>Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa</u>
Ang. N.	:	<u>Anguttara Nikāya</u>
Āpastamba Dhs.	:	<u>Āpastamba Dharmasūtra</u>
A.S.	:	Kauṭilya's <u>Arthaśāstra</u>
Agni P.	:	<u>Agni Purāna</u>
ASIR	:	<u>Archeological Survey of India Review</u>
ASS	:	Anandāśrama Sanskrit Series
AV	:	<u>Atharva Veda</u>
Baudh. Dhs.	:	<u>Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra</u>
Bhāg. P.	:	<u>Bhāgavata Purāna</u>
Bib. Ind.	:	Bibliotheca Indica
Br.	:	<u>Brāhmaṇa</u>
Brhat.	:	<u>Brhatsaṃhitā</u> of Varāhamihira
Brahmāṇḍa P.	:	<u>Brahmāṇḍa Purāna</u>
Br. Up.	:	<u>Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</u>
BORI	:	Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute
BSOAS	:	<u>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</u>
BSS	:	Bombay Sanskrit Series

- C.A.G.I. : Cunningham's Ancient Geography of India
- Chāndogya Up. : Chāndogya Upanisad
- CHI : Cambridge History of India
- C.I.I. : Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum
- Crt. Ed. : Critical edition
- CSSH : Comparative Studies in Society and History
- DED : Dravidian Etymological Dictionary
- DKA : The Purāna Text of the Dynasties of the
Kali Age by F. E. Pargiter
- Dīgha. N. : Dīgha Nikāya
- Dhātup. : Dhātupātha
- EC : Epigraphica Carnatica
- EI : Epigraphica Indica
- Gautama Dhs. : Gautama Dharmasūtra
- GOS : Gaekwad Oriental Series
- Garuda P. : Garuda Purāna
- HD : History of Dharmaśāstra by P. V. Kane
- HIL : History of Indian Literature by
M. Winternitz
- HOS : Harvard Oriental Series
- IA : The Indian Antiquary
- ICHR : Indian Council for Historical Research
- IHQ : Indian Historical Quarterly
- IHR : Indian Historical Review
- Indian Society : (Ed.) R. S. Sharma and V. N. Jha,
Indian Society: Historical Probings --
In memory of D. D. Kosambi, ICHR,
New Delhi, 1974.
- IF : Indogermanische Forschungen
- JA : Journal Asiatique

JATH	:	<u>Journal of Ancient Indian History</u>
JAOS	:	<u>Journal of the American Oriental Society</u>
JASB	:	<u>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal</u>
JASBO	:	<u>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay,</u> formerly <u>JBBRAS</u>
JBBRAS	:	<u>Journal of the Bombay branch of the</u> <u>Royal Asiatic Society, from Vol. 30</u> (1955) known as <u>JASBO</u>
JB(O)RS or JBORS	:	<u>Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research</u> <u>Society</u>
JBRS	:	<u>Journal of the Bihar Research Society</u>
JESHO	:	<u>Journal of the Economic and Social History</u> <u>of the Orient</u>
JIH	:	<u>Journal of Indian History</u>
JRAS	:	<u>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</u>
JUPHS	:	<u>Journal of the Uttar Pradesh Historical</u> <u>Society</u>
Kāṭhaka Sam.	:	<u>Kāṭhaka Saṁhitā</u>
Kauṣītaki Br.	:	<u>Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa</u>
KSS	:	Kāśi Sanskrit Series
Lāṭayāyana S. S.	:	<u>Lāṭayāyana Śrauta Sūtra</u>
Mait. Sam.	:	<u>Maitrayaṇi Saṁhitā</u>
Maj. N.	:	<u>Majjhima Nikāya</u>
Manu	:	<u>Mānava Dharmaśāstra (Manu Smṛti)</u>
Mārka. P.	:	<u>Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna</u>
Matsya P.	:	<u>Matsya Purāna</u>
Mbh.	:	<u>Mahābhārata (Critical Ed.)</u>
Mudrar.	:	<u>Mudrārākṣasa</u>
OI	:	Oriental Institute, Baroda
Pañc. Br.	:	<u>Pañcaviṁśa Brāhmaṇa</u>

PC	:	P. C. Roy's translation of the <u>Mahābhārata</u>
PHAI	:	<u>Political History of Ancient India</u> by H. C. Raychaudhary
PTS	:	Pāli Text Society
Ram.	:	<u>Rāmāyana</u>
R.E.	:	Rock Edict
Ṛg. V.	:	<u>Ṛg Veda</u>
Sat. Br.	:	<u>Satapatha Brāhmaṇa</u>
Sāikh. S. S.	:	<u>Sāikhāyana Śrauta Sūtra</u>
SBE	:	Sacred Books of the East
Sel. Inscr. (Inscrip.)	:	<u>Select Inscriptions</u> by D. C. Sircar
SBH	:	Sacred Books of the Hindus
SBB	:	Sacred Books of the Buddhists
Tait. Br.	:	<u>Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa</u>
Tait. Sam.	:	<u>Taittirīya Saṃhitā</u>
TSS	:	Trivandrum Sanskrit Series
Viṣṇu	:	<u>Viṣṇu Smṛti</u>
Viṣṇu P.	:	<u>Viṣṇu Purāna</u>
Vasiṣṭha Dhs.	:	<u>Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra</u>
Vāmana P.	:	<u>Vāmana Purāna</u>
Vāj. Sam.	:	<u>Vājasenīya Saṃhitā</u>
Vāyu P.	:	<u>Vāyu Purāna</u>
VI	:	<u>Vedic Index</u>
Yaj.	:	<u>Yājñavalkya Smṛti</u>
Yuga P.	:	<u>Yuga Purāna</u>
ZDMG	:	<u>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft</u>

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION BACKGROUND AND SOURCES

The question of the status of aliens or outsiders in any society has raised problems in all ages. The subject is of great contemporary interest as well.

People on lower or, in many cases, simply different levels of social, economic and cultural development are viewed by the so-called 'civilized man' almost invariably with condescension. All over the world and during all ages it is the 'civilized' who set the norms of conduct to distinguish themselves from the others and consequently determine the criteria of accepting or rejecting outsiders.

The image of the 'barbarian' in the history of Europe has been studied at length and with great erudition by Western scholars. The way the antithesis between the 'civilized' and the 'barbarian' in western society was resolved during the ages is a matter of interest to modern thinking.¹ Among the early Greeks the word barbarian βάρβαρος was used for all foreigners and was later adopted by the Romans for all peoples other than those under Graeco-Roman influence and domination. It was also associated with the vices of people, their savage nature, their cruel deeds, their uncouth behaviour and above all, their rude and unintelligible language.² This term was bequeathed to and developed in all subsequent European literatures. A similar problem of the 'barbarian' arose for the Middle Kingdom in China. Here, a tribe called the Hsiung-Nu, who 'knew nothing of propriety and righteousness', troubled the peace of the kingdom.³

1. W. R. Jones, 'The Image of the Barbarian in Medieval Europe', CSSH, Vol. XIII, 1971, pp. 376-407.

2. Ibid., pp. 379-380.

3. B. Watson, (Trans.) Records of the Grand Historian of China translated from Shih Chi of Ssu-ma Chi'ien, New York, 1961-63, Vol. II, p. 155.

A situation of this type existed in India as well. However, the methods employed by both the Greeks and the Chinese to meet this problem do not appear to be appropriate to understand the manner in which the ancient Indians tackled the question of the outsider and the 'barbarian' (mleccha). The present thesis is a study of this subject in the history of India, in particular an attempt to determine how attitudes towards the outsiders evolved from Vedic times to about the sixth century A.D. The scope of the enquiry is limited to northern India. Originally, the ideas and concepts of the ancient Indian peoples evolved in this part of the subcontinent with the Indo-Gangetic plains as its nucleus. However, marked regional variations were clearly distinct in the extreme east and the extreme west. These ideas are studied from seminal beginnings of the Ṛg Vedic period to later developments, including the crystallization of those ideas in the Gupta period. Against this background of general development the attitudes towards mlecchas and other outsiders held by the largely brāhmanical sections of the Indian society, were determined.

This subject has drawn the interest of many scholars, but it has been dealt with in a perfunctory manner and has not been treated in its totality.⁴ In most texts on Indian history, mleccha has been translated as either a foreigner or a barbarian. Vincent Smith,⁵ in his Oxford History of India, has noted: 'everybody else who disregards Hindu dharma is an "outer barbarian" (mlechchha) no matter how exalted his worldly rank or how vast his wealth may be.' This statement

4. The views of scholars on mlecchas are normally expressed in a few lines in the general books on Indian history. Studies on tribes in ancient India and similarly, on the political, social and economic exploits of foreign rulers beginning with the Greeks in second century B.C. to the Hūnas in the sixth century A.D. are, however, detailed and scholarly.

5. V. A. Smith, Oxford History of India, 1919, p. 35.

implies that even with a high political and economic status it was essential to accept the varnāśramadharmā in order not to be called a mleccha. Smith, however, does not specify what kind of peoples were meant by the expression "outer barbarian." A. L. Basham⁶ explains the word mleccha as one which is commonly used for outer barbarians of any race and colour.⁷ Elsewhere he suggests that mlecchas were a class of untouchables and it was conduct, not blood, that gave them this status.⁸ In another definition mlecchas are said to be 'barbarians but Aryan speakers who employed a Prakrit form of speech.'⁹ 'The Niṣādas (were) also known as mlecchas....'¹⁰ According to Burrow mleccha was a designation for non-Aryan tribes¹¹ and according to Derrett 'uninstructed nations' were mleccha.¹²

Modern scholars are unanimous in assigning such foreigners as the Yavanas, Śakas, Pahlavas, Kuṣāṇas, Hūnas and later the Muslims to the status of mlecchas. Foreigners were regarded as impure (mlecchas)¹³ and therefore even travelling to distant lands had to be avoided as this meant mixing with mleccha and non-caste people.¹⁴ In another context Romila Thapar writes: 'the Vedic tradition of Aryan culture had to be preserved from too much contamination with mlecchas --- Shakas, Kushanas and later the Huns.'¹⁵ Kern is of the opinion that

6. A. L. Basham, The Wonder that was India, 1967, p. 145.

7. Ibid., Preface p. vii. He even somewhat jokingly describes himself as a mleccha.

8. Ibid., p. 146.

9. R. C. Majumdar, (Ed.), The Vedic Age, Vol. I, pp. 260-61.

10. Ibid., p. 314.

11. A. L. Basham, (Ed.), Cultural History of India, 1975, T. Burrow, Chapter III, p. 20.

12. Ibid., J. D. M. Derrett, Chapter XI, p. 127.

13. R. Thapar, A History of India, 1969, p. 60. 14. Ibid., p. 150

15. Ibid., p. 184.

'the Yavanas were the foremost, the most dreaded of the Mlechas, so that Yavana and Mlecha became synonymous.'¹⁶ According to D. G. Sircar also, 'the word Yavana was used in medieval Indian literature as a synonym of mlechchha and indicated any foreigner.'¹⁷

Speaking of Hindu scholarship during the Vākāṭaka-Gupta age, A. S. Altekar opines: 'Hindu scholars were keen to ascertain and study the advances made by the savants of other countries. Greeks were no doubt regarded as Mlechchhas but were nevertheless respected as highly as ancient sages for their proficiency in astronomy.'¹⁸ Majumdar, on the other hand, quotes Alberuni to express the narrow exclusiveness of the Hindus — 'All the fanaticism of the Hindus is directed against those who do not belong to them, against all foreigners. They call them Mlechchhas i.e. impure and forbid having any connection with them, be it by intermarriage or any other relationship, or by sitting, eating or drinking with them, because thereby they think they would be polluted....'¹⁹

An article by R. Sengupta is unique in that it propounds the identification of the mlecchas. It gives the impression that mleccha was the Sanskrit name of the Phoenicians who, it is explained, were connected with India in various ways.²⁰ In our opinion, the term mleccha cannot be understood as the designation of one particular

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16. H. Kern, Bṛhatsaṁhitā, 1865, Introduction, p. 32, footnote. R. Thapar, 'The Image of the Barbarian in Early India', CSSH, Vol. XIII, 1971, p. 418 writes: 'For the Indians, the Greeks on every count were mlecchas....' It must, however, be noted that the Greeks also regarded all non-Greeks as barbarians.
17. R. C. Majumdar, (Ed.), The Age of Imperial Unity, 1951, D. G. Sircar, Chapter VII, 'The Yavanas', p. 101. The Age of Imperial Kanauj, Vol. IV, p. 19 — The Gwalior Inscription of Nāgabhaṭa describes the king as having crushed the armies of the mlecchas — in this case the Arabs; pp. 114; 107; 127 — Mleccha lords who settled on the banks of the river Chambal.
18. Majumdar and Altekar, The Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age, 1954, p. 385.
19. R. C. Majumdar, Ancient India, 1952, pp. 499-500.
20. R. Sengupta, 'On the identity of the "Mlechchas"', K.A.N. Sastri: Felicitation Volume, 1971, pp. 180-186.

people and further, it must be taken in a wider cultural context. Though mleccha is today often used and readily accepted as the Hindu appellation for foreigners in general,²¹ it must be underlined that its use in ancient India was far from confined to the description of foreigners only.

There is one aspect of this subject, namely the etymology of the term mleccha, that has been discussed in depth. Various theories are put forward in a series of articles by linguists and other scholars. They suggest varied and interesting propositions for the origin of mleccha/milakkha, though their arguments are inconclusive. The earlier researches (mainly during the period between 1914-1938) by linguists like I. Scheftelowitz, V. Pisani, B. Liebich, M. Mayrhofer and others have concentrated on approximating the term mleccha to hypothetical equivalents in Indo-European languages. More recent enquiries (from the 1960's) led by the Finnish scholars P. Aalto and A. Parpola envisage the probability of a non-Indo-Aryan origin of the terms mleccha and milakkha. These terms are related to the Sumerian name Mel-luh-ha through proto-Dravidian linguistics.²² These are, however, inadequate because they deal with only part of the whole study. They moreover, project and emphasize only the linguistic view of the problem.

The only work that gives an overall picture, in some perspective, is a paper published recently on 'The Image of the Barbarian in Early India' by Romila Thapar.²³ It deals briefly with most aspects of the mlecchas, their relationship with the established society and presents

21. Ninian Smart, 'Where a Professor's Death means freedom for a Day', The Times Higher Education Supplement, Feb. 25th, 1975, p. 11, column 1; A. L. Basham, The Wonder that was India, 1967, p. vii.

22. Citations and views discussed in Chapter II.

23. R. Thapar, 'The image of the Barbarian in Early India', CSSH, Vol. XIII, 1971, pp. 408-436.

a connected account of the notion of the barbarian in India up to the twelfth century A.D.

In our study it has for the first time been attempted to give a total and detailed survey of the relationship of the mlecchas with other outsiders and the attitudes of the established society towards them. In this task we have given keen attention to an interpretative analysis of the individual features involved.

Mlecchas as a reference group comprised not only foreigners from outside the geographical area of the Indian subcontinent but also included any outsiders who did not conform to the values and ideas and, consequently, to the norms of the society accepted by the élite groups.²⁴ The variations and the different perspectives in which they are viewed in the original source material do not help us to present a homogeneous picture of the stages in the development of their status in Indian society. An analysis of the subject, however, reveals that the ideological background against which they were viewed and distinguished from the establishment, though not always in a derogatory manner, remained constant through the ages.

We shall subsequently discuss in detail the basic tenets of the so-called 'establishment' but two fundamental pre-suppositions have to be accepted and need to be emphasized here. Firstly, the whole system of ancient Indian thought and the society based on it were sustained by the acceptance of the idea of Dharma without which it would undoubtedly have collapsed. The permanence of this idea gave significance to the perpetual existence of mlecchas during this phase of Indian history and after, despite the fact that the early rules

24. The attitude of the Buddhists and Jainas towards milakkhas was not essentially different from that of the Brāhmanas but its application for outside groups varied considerably, particularly in the case of the Buddhists.

concerning them in the śāstric texts had outgrown their need and circumstance. Secondly, the ideological background, with its notably theoretical features, is a dominant factor for the study of attitudes towards them as we are essentially concerned with the criteria by which groups were judged as mlecchas and outsiders in the literary sources. These theories made the acceptance of the varṇāśramadharmā a crucial factor in determining whether or not groups of the population were mlecchas, and without its understanding we cannot fully appreciate the attitudes towards mlecchas.

BACKGROUND:

It is now necessary to deliberate upon the conscious principles that motivated the attitudes of people in ancient India within their cultural, temporal and geographical context. This is essential in order that we shall not impose foreign or modern criteria for evaluating their views so that we can understand ancient Indian attitudes towards outsiders and mlecchas from their own angle.

In this regard there is one clear principle running through the different stages of the formation of these views into a well defined pattern of thought. A survey of its origins and initial development will be related. Subsequently, its chief principles will be described. Lastly, the reasons for the varied levels of the established system will be considered.

Both the concept of the mleccha and the word itself occur in the literature of the Indo-Aryan speaking culture.²⁵ It arises out of the

25. The term Indo-Aryan is used instead of Aryan to differentiate the branch that came to India from the Irano-Aryans. And further, it refers to people speaking a language of the Indo-European group and to the literature they produced and does not suggest, in any instance, an ethnically pure Aryan race. Discussed at length by R. Thapar, The Past and Prejudice, Sardar Patel Memorial Lectures, 1972, Lecture, II.

peculiar situation created by the arrival of these erstwhile nomads into northern India. They came into contact with the indigenous population of the subcontinent, possibly, initially with the remaining inhabitants of the Indus cities (3000 B.C.-1700 B.C.) and later, with the authors of the Ochre-Coloured Pottery and Copper Hoard cultures (1400 B.C.-1200 B.C.). It is interesting to note that Piggott regards the arrival of the Aryans in India as 'the arrival of barbarians into a region highly organized into an empire based on a long-established tradition of literate urban culture.'²⁶

On the other hand, judging from the evidence of the R̥g Veda alone, there are indications that the Indo-Aryans had to contend with local barbaric tribes they called Dāsa and Dasyu. The impression given by the hymn writers is that these enemies had to be subdued because they knew no rites or sacrifices, were indifferent to the gods, had no proper laws and so on. These people with their alien culture were thus set apart and the motivation to succeed against them was almost obsessional.

From our point of view, in this context, it must be asserted that the peoples who designated themselves by the term ārya were not an ethnically and politically a homogeneous group. There are accounts of hostility among the various Indo-Aryan tribes themselves in the R̥g Veda.²⁷ These occur in different books of the text but the most significant is the Dāśarājña battle.²⁸ Apart from this, more importantly, there are indications that the Indo-Aryan society right from the beginning was a society composed of different elements. This became

26. S. Piggott, Prehistoric India, 1950, pp. 257-58.

27. R̥g V., VI, 33, 3; VII, 83, 1; X, 69, 6 etc.

28. Battle described in R̥g V. VII, 33, 2-5. It is considered an early event in the collection of R̥g Vedic hymns Vedic Index, I, 356, ft. nt. 4.

a characteristic feature of Brāhmanism throughout its history.

In the earlier period, i.e. the Ṛg Vedic and Atharva Vedic period, it is imperative to emphasize this point as the dominance of the victor, both on the battlefield and in the socio-economic field, led to the initiation of new laws. Kane has discussed and quoted passages that refer to the Āryas as well as the Dasyus as violators of vratas established by the gods.²⁹ Therefore, war songs were addressed to Manyu to invoke his help against two kinds of enemies — Āryas and Dāsas.³⁰ Indra as 'protector of the good' is also asked to fight against both of them.³¹ The compilers of the hymns were most probably supporters of those among the early Indo-Aryan settlers who were ultimately successful in establishing their dominant control over the others. In one instance there is a hint that Indra reconciles the Dāsa and Ārya enemies to his ways.³² In the Atharva Veda one reads the verse: 'Not a Dāsa, not an Ārya, by his might may damage the course I shall establish.'³³ Whether this means the domination of one tribe over several others, one sees in the period of the Vedas and the Saṁhitās, the emergence of a homogeneous society not united by an organized church or by an ethnic similarity, but by the common factor of language.

The outstanding Indo-European features in Ṛg Vedic belief cannot be ignored.³⁴ At the same time we cannot accept the

29. P. V. Kane, HD, Vol. V, pt. 1, pp. 1-21 on the word vrata in the Ṛg Veda.

30. Ṛg V., X, 83, 1; X, 102, 3; Atharva V., IV, 32, 1.

31. Ṛg V., VII, 83, 1 — 'Oh Indra and Varuna! you killed dāsa foes and also ārya foes and helped Sudās with your protection.' Also Ṛg V., VI, 60, 5-6; X, 38, 3.

32. Ṛg V., VI, 22, 10.

33. Atharva V., V, 11, 3 — na me dāso nāryo mahitvā vrataṁ mīmāya yad ahaṁ dhariṣye//3//

34. E. J. Rapson, CHI, Vol. I, 1922, p. 103.

statement: 'as a result of the conquest of the Doab, the Aryan settled down as masters of the non-Aryans.'³⁵ On the basis of linguistic evidence it has been suggested that the movements of people into India was a continuous process for nearly a millennium after 2000 B.C.³⁶ The contention put forth by Pargiter³⁷ that Brāhmanism was a pre-Aryan institution also cannot be fully accepted. There was a skilful, though initially difficult synthesis of the Aryan and pre-Aryan elements. Among the latter were people of the highly sophisticated civilization of the Indus valley and the comparatively simple cultures of the Copper Hoard settlements. It has been ascertained that among the Harappans at least, there existed class divisions.³⁸ Hence, in writing about the early development of caste in India Kosambi has stated: 'though the brāhmana as such was an Indo-European institution, the priestly class of the Aryan conquerors may have been largely recruited from the conquered.'³⁹ It is not the intention here to prove that such a process actually took place. It cannot, however, be overlooked that the intermixture at the level of high castes during the Vedic age is a topic of major importance and has been a matter of great discussion in recent years.⁴⁰ In putting forward the thesis that the lower orders, particularly

35. W. Ruben, 'Outline of the Structure of Ancient Indian Society', in Indian Society, 1974, p. 87.

36. T. Burrow, The Sanskrit Language, 1972, p. 31.

37. F. E. Pargiter, AIHT, pp. 306-308.

38. M. Wheeler, The Indus Civilization and Beyond, 1966, p. 94.

39. D. D. Kosambi, 'Early Stages in the Caste System in Northern India,' JBBRAS, Vol. XXII, 1945, p. 35.

40. M. B. Emeneau, 'Linguistic History of India', Collected Papers, 1967, p. 155ff.

the śūdravarna, was also composed of both Aryan and non-Aryan elements during this period (later Vedic period), R. S. Sharma has aptly observed: 'From the very beginning the slowly emerging groups of warriors and priests co-operated in leading the viś in their fight against the Aryan and non-Aryan peoples. As time passed, the warriors bestowed on the priests generous gifts, and the religious rituals much elaborated, so that the power of the priests who performed them and of the warriors who patronized them was much strengthened as against that of the common people.'⁴¹

Thus, there evolved the firm control of a single powerful group which by a two-way process of the acceptance of new ideas and a re-evaluation of their old ones in the spheres of religion, language and ideology permeated and influenced all ancient Indian thought and moulded social attitudes in general. This system that resulted took shape on Indian soil and reflected a distinctive way of life. It spread into the western Gangetic plain during the period of the Brāhmanas. Its socio-economic structure regulated the division of labour and products and perpetuated a mechanism of the exploitation of the lower orders. Basic values about worship, norms of behaviour and a distinct cosmic view became the cardinal points of a pattern of existence that was to dominate the major part of northern India; signs of which were, in the main discernible by the spread of the Indo-Aryan language.

Such a process developed over several centuries. The individual interpretations of the Veda ultimately led to numerous philosophical schools but all within the major premises of agreement which gave validation to the system of varṇa and jāti and above all, to the

41. R. S. Sharma, Śūdras in Ancient India, 1958, p. 36.

position of the brāhmaṇas. It would be no exaggeration to state that it was brāhmaṇa teaching that penetrated downward through the multifarious peoples of India, establishing a consistent pattern of their domination in most parts of the country from which it became difficult to escape. But, on the whole, large groups of people continued to remain outside their system and lived beyond the borders.⁴² Territorially, Vedic immigrants had continued to expand, principally east, in the Ganges valley and it is possible for us to speculate that people previously inhabiting this area were pushed into regions still unexplored by the Indo-Aryans. The fact that there still existed people who were a potential threat to the ārya value system may be one of the reasons that made traditional writers formalize the concept of the mleccha during the period of the Brāhmaṇas.⁴³

In this complex situation neither ethnic origins nor religious beliefs and rites mattered as reasons for distinguishing, and then discriminating against, those who persisted not to accept the superiority of the dominant culture. In the beginning it was the mispronunciation of words in the performance of rituals, in other words, a linguistic disparity, that called for a basis of distinction. In the period of the Dharmasūtras and early Smṛtis, we have the particular, but definite evolution of the notion that āryas must make conscious efforts to avoid contact with all aspects of the mlecchas because of the latter's non-acceptance of the varṇāśramadharmā and non-performance of certain important brāhmanic rituals. Finally, from the early centuries A.D. the undermining of the spiritual

42. Ait. Br., VII, 18.

43. Śat. Br., III, 2, 1, 24.

authority of the brāhmanas largely determined the discriminatory statements about the mlecchas. These were never made in opposition to the above mentioned linguistic and cultural reasons. Therefore, under no circumstances and during no period were ethnicity or religion factors which determined the existence of mlecchas and outsiders in Indian society.

There was no common 'law' in the modern sense that enforced the rejection of outsiders and mlecchas. The term ārya came to mean, 'a person who was accepted as a better class, follower of the Dharma of varṇa and āśrama....'⁴⁴ The society with its diverse ethnic, religious elements and within it a structure of strong hierarchical groupings, found unity in the idea of Dharma. An evaluation of this notion, which became the most important and central concept of the brāhmanic society, must now be undertaken.

The philosophical beliefs and the entire social framework had been structured upon the realization of dharma. It is important to emphasize here that the realization and practice of it, rather than mere belief in the idea is an outstanding feature of utmost significance. As in any other system its concrete shape and form stemmed from the realization of those people to whom the system belonged. In this way the observed features of the brāhmanic society were related to that revealed knowledge of the Supreme Reality in the Veda. It was believed that the core of this highest experience was implied in the formulations of the practical application of dharma.

The term dharma therefore acquired an omnibus meaning in the course of it being particularized to the specific needs of ritual,

44. A. L. Basham, Studies in Indian History and Culture, 1964, p. 20
The Buddhists emphasized a wider connotation of the use of this term in the moral and ethical context and it was generally accepted to mean 'noble', 'excellent'.

duties, precepts, injunctions and customs. It manifested itself in philosophy, social law, economic ethic and polity. P. V. Kane in the History of the Dharmaśāstra⁴⁵ has described the successive phases in which its meaning was expanded and developed to represent ideas of the established society. Its root is stated as dhr, 'to uphold' and that signifies such actions as 'preserving', 'sustaining' or 'supporting'. In this sense as 'upholder', 'sustainer', it occurs in the Rg Veda.⁴⁶ The firm, durable and stable character of dharma is revealed in this meaning. However, in the Veda there was another term ṛta that stood for 'order' i.e. the regulating principle which ran through the whole realm of creation of both gods and men.⁴⁷

But dharma eventually came to express the natural order of things, conformity with which became the highest duty of all men. It involved man's relationship with man and with the Universe. Āpastamba one of the early sūtrakāras rightly points out that it is best to gather its import from practice as it is difficult to do so otherwise — 'dharma and adharma do not wander about saying "here we are"; nor do the gods nor the manes or the gandharvas declare "this is dharma, this is adharma".'⁴⁸ Nevertheless, with dharma, almost naturally developed the concomitant of its moral import. It seems there was no difficulty in defining this aspect — 'dharma is the mainstay of

45. P. V. Kane, HD, Vol. I, pp. 1-4.

46. Rg V., I, 187, 1.

47. Rg V., I, 65, 2; IV, 3, 9-12; IV, 10, 2; Vāj. Sam., XXXII, 12.

48. Āpastamba Dhs., I, 20, 6 — na dharmādharmāu carata "āvāṃ sva"iti na devagandharvā na pitara ity ācaksate "'yaṃ dharmo 'yaṃ adharma iti"//

the entire moving world. In the world people approach the most ardent follower of dharmā. They shake off sin by dharmā. Everything is established in dharmā. Hence they say dharmā is supreme.⁴⁹ Dharma as the supreme, the eternal i.e. sanātana was perpetuated in the Indian mind and popularized through the Mahābhārata in several passages. One such description which sums up simply the subtleness of this key concept is as follows — 'dharmā is so called because it protects (dhāraṇāt) everything; dharmā maintains everything that has been created. Dharma is thus the very principle which can maintain the universe.'⁵⁰ The concept of dharmā thus widened to envelope the moral and physical world and was indeed meant to be 'created for the well-being of all creation.'⁵¹

This supernatural basis of man's earthly life was defined in relation to his need for the realization of the Supreme Reality. In other words, there was an obligation on his part to submit himself to the laws of the Universe. Dharma in this sense constituted 'a duty'. For ordinary people in their everyday existence this was regulated by the division of the society as a whole into varṇas and each individual's life into āśramas. Men born as members of the brāhmanical order, except sannyāsins, could not escape from the obligations of being born in a certain varṇa or class that was divinely ordained. Correct performance of their respective svadharmas had bearing on their karma or actions which in turn bore fruit in

49. Mahānārāyaṇopaniṣad, 22, 1 — dharmo viśvasya jagataḥ pratiṣṭhā loke dharmisthaṁ prajā upasarṇanti/ dharmena pāpaṁ apanudanti dharme sarvaṁ pratiṣṭhitam/ tasmad dharmāṁ paramāṁ vadanti// Translated by P. H. Prabhu, Hindu Social Organization, 1958, p. 73.

50. Mbh., XII, 109, 59 — dhāraṇād dharmā ityāhur dharmo dhārayate prajāḥ/ yas syād dhāraṇasamyuktas sa dharmā iti niścayaḥ//

51. Mbh., VIII, 69, 57 — prabhavārthaṁ ca bhūtānāṁ dharmapravacanāṁ kṛtam/

the next life.

The aim of all schools of philosophical thought in India was to try and escape from the karmic cycle of Time. But since everybody was not suitably qualified to take to sannyāsa or renouncement they had to resort to the path of family life. In this case the purpose of life was the balanced enjoyment of artha (material gains), kāma (sensual pleasures) and dharma,⁵² which, if properly followed, could lead to mokṣa or release from life. With the pre-supposition that each individual's life emanated from the creative force, the scope and content of the Dharmaśāstra can be understood. They set out to teach the dharmas of the varṇas and āśramas.

The smṛti 'tradition', however, found its sanction from the revealed texts, the śruti. An early elucidation of the respective dharmas of āśramas is found in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. It says: 'there are three branches of dharma, one is (constituted by) sacrifice, study and charity - (i.e. the stage of the householder); the second (is constituted by) austerities (i.e. the stage of being a hermit); and the third is the brahmacārin dwelling in the house of his teacher till the last; all these attain to worlds meritorious men; one who abides firmly in brahman to attain immortality.'⁵³ To these three stages of life, brahmacārya, gṛhastha, vānaprastha was added the fourth, that of the sannyasin and each stage or āśrama was essential as a path towards the region of Brahma.⁵⁴

More important was the discipline of society as a whole. The

52. These three are the natural forces of human nature - Manu, II, 224. The Smṛti also provides that (IV, 3; 15) a person should accumulate wealth only for his need and by action proper for his varṇa or class.

53. P. V. Kane, HD, Vol. I, p. 2. (Trans.) Chāndogya Up., II, 23, 1 -- trayo dharmaskandhā yajño 'dhyayanaṁ dānam iti prathamaḥ tapa eva dvitīyo brahmacāryācāryakulvāsī tritīyo 'tyantam ātmānam ācārya-kule 'vasādayan sarva ete puṇyalokā bhavanti brahmasaṁsthō 'mṛtatvam eti//

54. Mbh., XII, 242-245.

various occupational propensities and natural tendencies of man were revealed to be channeled into activating all sections of society in the R̥g Veda. Prajāpati, the creator brought forth from his limbs the brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra in order to protect the whole Universe.⁵⁵ The whole sūkta is with reference to Puruṣa, the cosmic energy which is itself described as 'this whole universe, whatever has been and whatever shall be.'⁵⁶ With this sanction a great deal of theorizing about the duties and tasks of the four varṇas became an inseparable part of the Dharmaśāstra literature and constantly emphasized the naturally ordained division of society.⁵⁷ By the very nature of their creation therefore, the brāhmaṇas were assigned as controllers of the religious rites and practices, to the teaching of dharma, the kṣatriyas as protectors of the realm, administrators of law, the vaiśyas and śūdras had to perform the duties of engaging in trade and business and acting as agricultural labourers respectively.

The intellectual leadership presented to us in the brāhmanic texts was ostensibly concerned to ensure the stability and strength of both the individual and society as a whole. Ideally the intention was to enlighten the individual, whatever his social status, with the inherent law of his nature i.e. his svadharma. The Bhagavad Gītā is most emphatic about the righteousness of pursuing one's own dharma or vocation in life.⁵⁸ The famous dialogue between Lord Kṛṣṇa and

55. R̥g V., X, 90, 12 — brāhmaṇo'sya mukham āsīd bāhū rājanyah kṛtāh/ ūrū tad asya yad vaiśyah padbhyāṃ śūdro ajāyata// The original hymn was amplified and developed in later Vedic passages as well. — Vāj. Sam., XXXI, 11; Tait. Sam., VII, 1, 4-6; Pañc. Br., VI, 1, 6-11.

56. R̥g V., X, 90, 2 — puruṣa evedaṃ sarvaṃ yad bhūtaṃ yac ca bhavyaṃ/

57. Manu, I, 31; 87; Yaj., I, 10; Baudhāyana Dhs., I, 8, 16; Vasiṣṭha Dhs., II, 1-2.

58. Bhagavad Gītā, XVII, 41-44 — on the four duties of caste which are delineated according to the nature of one's being.

and Arjuna discusses the importance of realizing oneself through the performance of svadharma, however abhorrent it may seem.⁵⁹ But the values of the few were so constituted, and society so graded, that the ascendancy of the brāhmaṇa was not jeopardized. This was done in the name of the integrity of the social structure as well as the desire to prevent the spiritual basis of Dharma from flagging.

To sum up, the esoteric aspect of dharma as a deeply felt and realized experience of the Highest Reality was its true substance. All phenomenal existence was subject to and conditioned by an endless causal part, the dharma of the Universe. The ultimate significance came to the term dharma when it involved the description of the privileges, duties and obligations of an individual. His standard of conduct was judged as that of a person in a particular stage of life and as a member of a particular caste. Both sanātana and svadharmas were expected to work in unison.

We cannot fully understand the entire implications of the working of dharma⁶⁰ unless we briefly review the role of the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas in its formulations. Their rationalizations often impeded its practice. Reinforced with religious and moral sanctions, the social order was visualized as one with the 'natural order' and therefore conformity with it was unavoidable. But the exploitation inherent in this pattern throughout the social, political and economic development of ancient India was maintained by the physical power of the kṣatriya and the theory of the brāhmaṇa's immunities and privileges. The mutual alliance between these two groups strengthened

59. Ibid., III, 35 — śreyān svadharmo viguṇaḥ paramadharmāt svanuṣṭitāt/ svadharme nidhanaṁ śreyāḥ paradharmo bhayāvahaḥ// 'Better a man's duty though ill done, than another's duty well performed; better it is to die in one's own duty - another's duty is fraught with dread.'

60. Detailed debate on the true meaning of Dharma in the Mīmāṃsā sūtras has been summarized by G. N. Jha, Śloka-vārttika, 1900, pp. v-xviii. Is it in sense perception (of the brāhmaṇa) or in action (shown by the brāhmaṇa) that the true meaning of dharma lies?

their positions, and they sought a right to this supremacy in Divine Will and Creation. Brahma and kṣatra, the spiritual and temporal powers respectively were bracketed together as the two dominant forces in the social and political order from Vedic times. It is lengthy and complicated to review in detail the development of these ideas. We can only try to present a summary of these ideas to elucidate the character and doctrine of the upper classes.

In the R̥g Veda brahma and kṣatra occur in the same verse where they probably mean 'prayer' and 'valour' respectively.⁶¹ In later Vedic literature brahma and kṣatra were collectively supposed to stand for the brahmanas and kṣatriyas,⁶² though it has been rightly pointed out: 'it is not the class to which a person belongs that determines the category of his 'strength', rather it is the other way about....the same person, whether brāhmaṇa or kṣatriya may acquire both moral and physical strength.'⁶³ An oft-quoted passage in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad⁶⁴ rationalizes how these two powers both on the conceptual and practical levels crowned the social structure. But ultimately it adds that it is the moral sense of dharma which is established above kṣatra -- '...dharma is the kṣatra of the kṣatra: therefore there is nothing higher than dharma: thenceforth even a weak man rules the strong with the help of dharma as with the help of a king...'⁶⁵ The brahma and kṣatra elements were, however, firmly

61. R̥g V., I, 157, 2 -- asmākaṁ kṣatraṁ ..brahma can also mean 'our power.. devotion.' Athrava V., XV, 10, 3-4; II, 15, 4 -- brahma (sacrament) and kṣatra (dominion) do not entertain fear.

62. Tait. Br., III, 9, 14; II, 7, 18; Kāthopaniṣad, I, 2, 25.

63. D. Devahuti, Harsha A Political Study, 1970, p. 115. Here the cases of the brāhmaṇa like Parśurāma who became a kṣatriya and kṣatriyas like Janaka and Viśvāmitra who became brāhmanas are noted.

64. Brhadāranyaka Up., I, 4, 11-15.

65. U. N. Ghoshal, Indian Political Ideas, 1959, p. 23.

established upon the viś - used in its broad sense for people as a whole.⁶⁶

From the period of the Brāhmaṇas the role of the ksatriyas and their relationship with the brāhmaṇas becomes more precisely defined.⁶⁷ The rājanya, i.e. the ksatriya, was seen as the visible representative of Prajāpati, the creator.⁶⁸ Further, a king who is humble before the brāhmaṇas, it is stated, becomes more powerful than his foes.⁶⁹ It is implied in another passage of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that the brāhmaṇa can do without the ksatriya but not vice versa. It is apparent in these texts that sacrifice was all important for worldly gain and therefore for the performance of sacrifice the priest was indispensable to the sacrificer, often a ksatriya who could afford it.⁷⁰ However, more often it is the mutual relationship of the two groups that is stressed. The combination of the brāhmaṇa and the rājanya is said to be most desirable as it was conducive to the pre-eminence of both.⁷¹ The king was proclaimed the protector of brahma and the protector of dharma.⁷² Above all there was a definite movement to claim for the brāhmaṇa and the ksatriya power, distinguishing

66. Śat. Br., XI, 2, 7, 14-16.

67. U. N. Ghoshal, Hindu Public Life, Vol. I, 1966, pp. 73-80 gives a number of examples to show their mutual antagonism and political alliance.

68. Śat. Br., V, 4, 4, 5.

69. Ibid., V, 4, 4, 15 — ...vai rājā brāhmaṇād abaliyān amitrebhyo vai sa baliyān bhavati...

70. Śat. Br., IV, 1, 4, 6; V, 3, 5-6.

71. Tait. Br., V, 1, 10, 3.

72. Ait. Br., VIII, 3, 12.

them from the vaiśya and the śūdra.⁷³ In concrete terms these ideas were translated by the writers of the sūtras and smṛtis for society to respect.

All brāhmapical literature propagated the virtues of dharma. But of prime importance is to note that brāhmapical logic naturally viewed adharma as a 'fall' from 'proper status'. It had been made apparent, 'that all the panoply of social life can be traced out, regulated, explained as if the Hindu ways were the only natural ones, stemming from the Creator.'⁷⁴ If we accept this premise it makes it easier to understand why those people naturally born outside the pale of these ideas were considered 'unfortunate' because their ways went against the stream of natural existence. To this category were said to belong all outsiders, foreigners, mlecchas. This rather simple division of the differences among people as naturally ordained was, needless to add, only a theoretical and idealistic principle and it was never easy to translate it into practice. It was no doubt an instrument used by brāhmaṇa writers to perpetuate notions of their superiority and ascendancy. Linked with the issue of discriminating against outsiders and mlecchas was the activity of all individuals who indulged in anti-brāhmapical propoganda. This was the second type of adharma and people who indulged in it were sometimes called vr̥ṣalas. Manu describes divine dharma as a bull (vr̥ṣa) and those who did not follow it (alam) were designated by the Gods as vr̥ṣala.⁷⁵ He also declares: 'destroyed, dharma destroys; protected he protects' --

73. Prayers for their protection are found in the Samhitās and Brāhmaṇas -- Vāj. Sam., XVIII, 38-44; Śat. Br., III, 5, 2, 11; etc.

74. J. D. M. Derrett, History of Indian Law (Dharmaśāstra), 1973, p. 20.

75. Manu, VIII, 16.

dharmā eva hato hanti dharmo rakṣati rakṣītaḥ⁷⁶

According to Sharma the term vr̥ṣala was applied indiscriminately by brāhmanas to anybody who went against them and in later times to sūdras who were depicted as anti-brāhmanical.⁷⁷

The existence of a threat to the brāhmanical pattern of authority from various quarters within the country is undeniable. In the traditional writing itself we see this fear expressed in the increasing stress laid on the claim to brāhmaṇa ascendancy often in exaggerated and unrealistic terms. Brāhmanas were fortunate to be able to propogate their cause as they were considered the śiṣṭācāras, 'the learned', in society.⁷⁸ The qualities of the śiṣṭas were explained at length in the Dharmasūtras and these included Vedic learning, saintliness and pure birth. Where no clear rule about dharmā was available their practice and precepts were to be followed.⁷⁹ Manu elucidates this point in the words: 'If it is to be asked how it should be with respect to (points) of dharmā which have not been clearly stated, the answer is that what brāhmanas, who are also śiṣṭas propound should clearly have force. Those brāhmanas are deemed śiṣṭas who, in accordance with dharmā have studied the Vedas with their appendages, who perceive by the senses the revealed texts as reason for distinguishing right and wrong.'⁸⁰

Since the determination of dharmā lay in the hands of the brāhmaṇa authors it was constantly growing to encompass the various

76. Manu, VIII, 15.

77. R. S. Sharma, Sūdras in Ancient India, 1958, pp. 37; 78; 171; 199; 215; 253.

78. K. A. Rangaswami Aiyangar, Rājadharmā, 1941, pp. 156-157.

79. Baudh. Dhs., I, 1, 4-6; Vasiṣṭha Dhs., I, 4-7; Mahābhāṣya, VI, 3, 109.

80. Manu, XII, 108-109.

deeds of man. As the fortunes of Brahmanism oscillated, particularly during the period from 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, it was deployed by them to suit their needs and position. For the upper limit of this phase we have the Dharmasūtra of Vasīṣṭha which formulates in simple terms the features of the dharma common to all people. These include ideas of truthfulness, freedom from anger, perpetuation of family etc.⁸¹ The Viṣṇu Smṛti which is usually assigned to the lower limit of this period adds to the number of things that bind people to dharma. They are obedience to gods and brāhmanas etc.⁸²

These small changes in what the standard of 'good conduct' or 'righteousness' should be are accompanied by a notable increase in passages advocating a high eulogy of brāhmanas — 'Gods are invisible deities, brāhmanas are visible deities; the worlds are supported by brāhmanas; the gods stay in heaven by favour of brāhmanas; words spoken by brāhmanas never come to be untrue.'⁸³ In the Mānavadharmasāstra there is maximum magnification of the brāhmana.⁸⁴ Manu true to his style makes extreme statements — 'whatever wealth exists on this earth - all that belongs to the brāhmana; the brāhmana deserves everything on account of his superiority due to his descent (from the mouth of the Creator).'⁸⁵ The smṛti portions of the Mahābhārata without alterations voice the same notions - 'In this world the brāhmana is the highest being.'⁸⁶

The brāhmanas thus saw several reasons to justify their claim

81. Vasīṣṭha Dhs., IV, 4.

82. Viṣṇu., II, 16-17 — ahiṃsā guruśuśrūṣā tīrthānusaraṇaṃ dayā//16
ārjavaṃ lobhaśūnyatvaṃ devabrāhmanapūjanam/ anabhyasūyā ca
tathā dharmah sāmānya ucyate//17

83. Viṣṇu., XIX, 20-22.

84. Manu, IV, 39; 52; 58; 135-136; 142; 162 etc.

85. Ibid., I, 92-96; 100.

86. Mbh., XII, 56, 22.

to moral ascendancy and thereby to formulate the notions and norms of conduct for society as a whole. P. V. Kane writes: 'It should not be supposed that the brāhmanas inserted these eulogies solely for the purpose of increasing their importance and tightening their hold on the other classes.'⁸⁷ His arguments being that 1) other classes readily accepted these ideas (about the rightful superiority of the brāhmanas) as force was not used to persuade people, 2) there was no military power behind them and 3) in most societies it is only a few who guide the destinies of others.⁸⁸

Firstly, it is wrong to presume that people of the lower orders in ancient India willingly, happily and readily accepted the sometimes very absolute statements, of the brāhmanas as we do not have any evidence of their views on their plight from their own writings. More importantly, as the influence and power of the brāhmanas grew over a period of centuries, simultaneously the imposition of disabilities on the vaiśyas, and significantly those on the śūdras, successively increased. R. S. Sharma in his book on the position of śūdras in ancient India has traced the development of their economic, politico-legal, social and religious disabilities from the establishment of the varṇa society between c. 600 B.C. to c. 300 B.C. to the period of the Guptas in c. 500 A.D. These were greater than any policy of forced military persuasion which would probably have been half as successful, and definitely not permanent. Once the people had been indoctrinated to maintain the essentials of the varṇa system, largely through the theory of karma, it became difficult

87. P. V. Kane, HD, Vol. II, pt. i, p. 136.

88. Ibid., pp. 136-138.

to alter this pattern. For those who desired, irrespective of class, to use it, enhance or maintain their position in society, to change such an exploitative machinery was a disadvantage.⁸⁹ For some of the upper classes, namely the ksatriyas and the rich and prosperous vaiśyas, to denounce the brāhmaṇa and the varṇāśramadharmā would have been against their own interest.

Finally, the third point made by Kane that in most societies a minority lead the others is true. However, it is also true that these élite groups encounter threats to their positions and prestige in the form of internal and external pressures; they compromise by reacting and counteracting to it from their own narrow angle and perspective and, therefore, project attitudes with their own bias. This point is important as later in the thesis it bears upon our basic search for the reasons to explain the varied approaches to the treatment of mlecchas.

Even within brāhmaṇical thinking the ideal state of the varṇāśramadharmā never existed, though it was constantly emphasized and propagated. The theory of the four yugas of the universe, for instance, was an excuse for inability to observe and conform to dharma in its entirety. Another theory which allowed for deviations from the norm of the śāstras was the theory of āpad-dharma; this allowed for occupations and behaviour not normally permitted to a varṇa in times of distress. The most important theory of varṇasaṅkara which allowed for mixture of castes, though one of the main duties of a king was to prevent this happening to an excessive degree. Gautama, the earliest sūtrakāra, establishes: 'on the two (brāhmaṇa

89. R. S. Sharma, Śūdras in Ancient India, 1958, pp. 282-284 --- for reasons why there were no śūdra revolts in ancient India.

and king) depends the prosperity (of men), protection, the prevention of mixture (of varnas) and observance of dharma.⁹⁰ This pre-supposes that mixture of varnas had taken place and was continuing to increase. Theoretically, the castes or jātis were meant to be divisions of the four varnas though modern writings on the history and development of the caste system have shown that the origins of the individual castes were diverse and organic in their growth. We do not intend to discuss the caste system in detail but to simply relate its salient features since any outside or mleccha group had to relate to these, both at the level of distinction and discrimination and later at the level of assimilation.

Dumont has defined caste in the following way with three main characteristics: 'separation in matters of marriage and contact, whether direct or indirect (food); division of labour, each group having, in theory or by tradition, a profession from which their members can depart only within certain limits; and finally hierarchy, which ranks the groups as relatively superior or inferior to one another.'⁹¹ Throughout Indian history each of these aspects remained important though there was social and economic mobility within this structure, determined largely by geographical location, economic pressure and foreign stimulus. Both at the higher and lower level of the hierarchy, the actual functioning of the caste system allowed for outside and mleccha elements to be incorporated. From the śāstra point of view 'the varṇasaṁkara theory provides an example of the brāhmaṇa's capacity to create categories and carry things to their logical conclusion. The theory flourished on congenial soil. It

90. Gautama Dhs., VIII, 1-3 — prasūtirakṣaṇaṁ saṁkaro dharmah/3

91. L. Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus, (English Translation), 1970, p. 21.

helped to further the accommodation of exterior groups into the Aryan order of society, promoted the formation of new castes and was adopted and expanded by future lawgivers.⁹² The dharma, which had ideally suited the brāhmanas and ksatriyas so well, had to be constantly defended and protected by them to maintain their stronghold on society; in their anxiety they frequently had to amend it and add to it.

The notion of dharma, the supreme character of the brāhmana-ksatriya ascendancy and the jāti (caste)-oriented society can be seen as the three most important features of early Brahmanism. They were inter-related in such a way so as to be inseparable from one the other. They lent a solid framework against which changes that the system underwent during the history of northern India before A.D. 600 can be understood. Owing to such extraneous circumstances as the increase in the importance of trade, the rise of commercial and land-owning classes, the growth of urban centres, migrations to and from the country etc., new ways of social thought were introduced. Simultaneously, an atmosphere of varied behaviour followed and this gave rise to intellectual leadership at various levels. This applies not only to the views of different types of brāhmanical writers but also those of the Buddhists and Jainas.

Religious movements in India were always a threat to one or the other group of brāhmana priests. During the largely pastoral and agricultural society of pre-Buddhist times, the study of the Veda and the performance of sacrifice had made indispensable religious duties of the intellectual class of the brāhmanas and those who were

92. V. N. Jha, 'Varṇasaṅkara in the Dharmasūtras, Theory and Practice', JESHO, Vol. XIII, pt. iii, 1970, pp. 287-288

professional priests acquired 'a virtual monopoly over all ritual.'⁹³ The religion of the people at large had become worldly, highly ritualistic and formalistic to the extreme in the period of the Brāhmanas. A growing divergence of ideas about values of life arose among thinkers of the Upaniṣadic period. The asceticism of the Upaniṣads and the esoteric direction of their speculation was a violent reaction to the cult of sacrifice. Such tendencies emphasizing the individual's role in seeking salvation on the one hand, and the materialistic philosophies of the Cārvākas on the other, existed side by side. Religious beliefs on the popular level were also incorporated into the mainstream of brāhmanic thought but blurred to the advantage of the latter. Here, Pande in fact sees two distinct religious and cultural trends in the Vedic period, 'the strictly orthodox and Aryan tradition of the brāhmanas, and on the fringes of their society, the struggling culture of the munis and śramanas, most probably going back to pre-Vedic and pre-Aryan origins.'⁹⁴

The internal pressure on Brahmanism from new philosophical speculation arising from time to time, was resolved by an inherent power of adaptation and flexibility as long as the rejection of the Veda and the caste system was not advocated. This open-minded quality allowed people to pay allegiance to the Veda and yet assign it different levels of authority. In addition, the cultural environment was such that diverse religious ideas could exist simultaneously with no great difficulty. This development crystallized in the growth of sectarian worship in the Purānas and the Purānic brāhmanas established parallel levels of authority. There were advantages to remain within the overall picture of Brahmanism, to be able to continue the

93. D. D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, p. 94.

94. G. C. Pande, Studies in the Origins of Buddhism, 1974, (rpt.), p. 261.

idea of brāhmana superiority and thus be the articulate voice of the majority of people.

There were further those movements like Buddhism, Jainism, Ajīvakism that rejected Brahmanism completely. They created their own social norms and standards of behaviour and began by questioning the validity of the varṇāśramadharmā and did without the authority of the Veda. Buddhism and Jainism arose in the sixth century B.C. in those parts of north-eastern India where the emergent urban economy had created new groups of élite that could not claim social supremacy. A dominant feature of these religious movements was asceticism, but more particularly non-brāhmana asceticism. They vehemently attacked sacrificial practices which directly meant a threat to the position of the brāhmanas. In early Buddhist writing the claim of the brāhmana to social supremacy is also denied several times. However, the Buddha at one point argues that, as regards descent, the kṣatriyas are higher than the brāhmanas.⁹⁵ These two, together with the gahapati (vaiśya) are regarded superior to the Caṇḍālas, Nesādas, Veṇas, Pukkusas and others on the basis of occupation.⁹⁶ Society as a whole continued to cling to the notions of caste. On the other hand, for members of the monastic order, it was endeavoured to remove caste feeling completely.⁹⁷ The Jainas, too, did not, in practice, do away with caste for society as a whole.⁹⁸

The Buddhist and Jaina ideas on polity, on ethics or their religious upheaval, as Ghoshal has pointed out, was not powerful enough to really disrupt the entire concept of social order so

95. Dīgha N., I, 91-99; I, 131. Buddha himself is described of pure lineage up to seven generations. Also Maj. N., II, 128.

96. Maj. N., II, 84; III, 169; 177. 97. Cullavagga, IX, 1, 4.

98. Pannavāṇa, I, 37.

entrenched on the Indian scene.⁹⁹ This is important from our context as the Buddhists did not change the attitude towards mlecchas but they presented a different perspective to the whole issue of foreigners and outsiders in India. The prejudices of the Jainas about outsiders and mlecchas, however, remained almost identical with those found in brāhmanical texts.

Politically, the imperial control of the Maurya period indirectly favoured the brāhmanical society. There was a sense of complete law and order and this exercised an efficient administrative control over all sections of population for the benefit of the State. Though Aśoka patronized Buddhism he did not destroy the institutions of their social system. His Edicts, as much as the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭīliya, projected their own stand point as to method on policy without openly coming into conflict with the Brāhmanic values.

The most important phase, from our point of view, which brought about a distinct change in the development of ideas in regard to mlecchas, was the period between c.200 B.C. to c.A.D. 200. There was far greater pressure on the social order, accompanied as it was by the domination of foreign rulers, rise of sectarian religious movements, all of which had an effect on Smṛti, Purāṇa and Epic writings. This foreign stimulus worked in several ways and both directly and indirectly loosened up the shackles of the varṇa system. The physical impact of these invasions — those of the Indo-Greeks, the Śakas and the Kuṣāṇas — clearly had an effect on parts of northern and western India. A similar impact of the Hūṇa invasions took place later in the fifth century A.D. This obviously brought about changes at the level of élite groups, and directly impinged on the political privileges of the indigenous kings. This fact also

99. U. N. Ghoshal, Political Ideas in Ancient India, 1959, p. 157.

had deeper repercussions in the traditional ancient Indian context, since status according to Brāhmanic view was evaluated in ritual terms as enunciated in religious treatises. Actual status on both the political and economic levels stood in direct opposition to the above view. In theory, this was resolved by grudgingly conferring on the foreign rulers the status of 'fallen kṣatriyas'. In practice the picture of such social stratification could not easily be explained away.¹⁰⁰

Foreign incursions did not only upset the social hierarchy at the top, but in more ways than one disrupted the functioning of the lower orders, as envisaged by the brāhmanas. In the light of the severe punishments that Manu has prescribed for the śūdras, and the descriptions of the Kali Age in the Purānas, R. S. Sharma argues that a problem of socio-economic crisis existed during the post-Mauryan period and this was aggravated by foreign invasions. In his view this resulted in the weakening of the old order of the established society.¹⁰¹

Hazra has pointed out that 'political supremacy of the Śūdras, of the casteless foreign races and the followers of the heresies was detrimental to the interests of the priestly Brāhmanas.'¹⁰² He further describes how brāhmanas had a personal interest in the recovery of their economic and social positions in order to continue their privileges and authority and this was achieved by introducing new and complicated rites and customs.¹⁰³ In our opinion it would

100. R. Thapar, 'Social Mobility in Ancient India with special reference to élite groups', in Indian Society, 1974, pp. 95-106 — has discussed at length these two levels of status and that the separation between these two levels was clearly maintained.

101. R. S. Sharma, Śūdras in Ancient India, 1958, pp. 176-198; pp. 211-18.

102. R. C. Hazra, Studies in Purānic Records, 1936, p. 245.

103. R. C. Hazra, Op. Cit., pp. 241-259.

be pertinent to add that in a similar way the different groups of brāhmanas determined and changed their notions and opinions of mlecchas, and foreigners in general. On the other hand, Aiyangar is of the opinion that, 'the influence and prestige of this body (brāhmanas) was increased, rather than diminished, after every addition of a foreign element to the Indian population, every such foreign race soon proving anxious to obtain the recognition implied by its admission into the Hindu fold through the co-operation of the members of this class. Its influence waxed rather than waned with the rise of non-Hindu or non-Kṣatriya rulers and dynasties. And, the high watermark of its power was — paradoxical as it may appear to say — usually reached after a period of foreign immigration, inroad or conquest....'¹⁰⁴

It is true that the brāhmanas were under pressure during this period in various ways. It is not unlikely that each different group of brāhmanas, whether a ritual priest or a purohita at the royal court or a learned smṛti writer, had to adopt various approaches in order to meet the situation of sustaining themselves, and at the same time, remain within the model provided by the tradition as laid down in the Dharmaśāstra. In a situation where there was no organized church and in view of the vastness of the country, deviations and variations were allowed to exist side by side and were tolerated. This open-mindedness was not too big a price to pay to maintain outwardly a sort of homogeneity and to avoid violent clashes of opinion on the subject of the designation of the term mleccha for foreigners. This was a particularly important consideration in view of the continuation of foreign invasions and migrations to India. Therefore, when statements about mlecchas in literary texts are

104. K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar, Considerations on Some Aspects of Indian Polity, 1935, p. 55.

evaluated the different levels of established opinion has to be taken into account.

The flexibility of usage, and more importantly of practice, that was adopted under socio-economic and political pressures in early Indian tradition, made it possible for ancient law writers to lay down absolute rules of differentiation between mlecchas and non-mlecchas. This flexibility remained a characteristic feature of classifying foreigners and outsiders as mlecchas.

There were perceptible changes on the philosophical level within the literary treatises, as well as economic and political changes in ancient India. But for the purpose of our research, we have delineated two broad phases where emphatic change in the attitude towards mlecchas is apparent. It has been attempted to emphasize these phases in the individual aspects of the study, in the different chapters of the thesis. In the first phase, which roughly covers the period from the Rg Veda to the beginning of a series of foreign invasions in the second century B.C., all forms of internal influences and pressures to the basic tenets of the brāhmanic system did not produce distinct contradictions or challenge the stereo-typed ideas about mlecchas. It must also be emphasized that there is a striking sparseness of references to the term mleccha during this period. In the second phase, from the beginning of the Christian era to the sixth century A.D., political events and external influence in all spheres of activity particularly during the initial stages, brought about a process of immediate change and disrupted old-established positions of authority. In this period also the changes did not directly refute the theoretical principles of Brāhmanic thought, but attitudes towards mlecchas began to be viewed on different levels.

The historical study of the problem of the attitudes towards mlecchas and outsiders may at first glance appear to be a mass of

confused and self-contradictory material. But it has to be recognized that the nature of dharma gives it a stable perspective. As a firm, durable principle the applicability of dharma throughout ancient Indian thought, has given an overall umbrella-cover to all fresh formulations, innovations and adjustments. Since the main concern of the Brāhmanic writers was about the meticulous maintainance of their own system in its essence, the idea of the mleccha was interwoven into this pattern.

We have in the presentation of this thesis attempted to bring forth the basic features of this problem of the mlecchas and outsiders as it had confronted the social system of early Indian society and tried to understand it from the point of view of the ancient Indians, in particular the brāhmanas.

SOURCES:

It has been shown that as early as the beginning of the first millennium B.C. various Indo-Aryan tribes, with some of the indigenous inhabitants may have united into a large cultural and economic force that was successful in superimposing itself over the mass of Indian peoples. Their views and attitudes are available to us mainly from literary sources. In an attempt to present a connected account of their attitudes towards mlecchas one is largely dependent on this type of source material. It has significant limitations and, if blindly followed, hampers the presentation of a proper perspective in the various stages of the development of these ideas.

In studying attitudes, especially those during an ancient period in history, it is unfortunate that we often have at our disposal only the writings of the group in society, whether brāhmanas or kings, which do not necessarily represent the views of all Indians. This

is a major problem with the sources for our study and applies to both literature and inscriptions. The literary sources, mainly religious in character, Brāhmanic, Buddhist and Jaina, reflect their own value system. They seek to establish the supremacy of the brāhmana or of the ksatriya and never give the views of the mlecchas or outsiders or indeed, the views of other classes of society. Inscriptions, too, portray the views of a particular king's court and the brāhmanas he employed. This presumption is implicit in all the sources that have been consulted.

Attitudes reflected in the majority of these ancient works regarding outside groups were broadly consistent, with variations only in detail. But the views in theory, held in most of the Dharmaśāstra works that the religious brāhmanical literature tries to conform to, have to be balanced with non-brāhmanical sources, both literary and non-literary. The use of inscriptional materials, archaeology, and accounts of foreign visitors have been used essentially to give important impressions that ancient Indian society did not function in strict accordance to the rules laid down in the śāstra or, that the views represented in the literature of that period were unanimously accepted.

Since we are largely concerned with literary sources there are considerations of dating texts, or parts of them, of their geographical location and their authorship that require attention. These will be subsequently be examined in brief detail where the views of specialists on the subject will be related. Such an analysis of the source material is of paramount significance as often texts, though they belong to different periods, repeat the same ideas and terminologies which give the impression that there were no changes in the social and moral attitudes of the ancient Indians.

VEDIC TEXTS:

Vedic texts are the backbone of the early history of the ideas of the brāhmapical élite. These consist of four main collections of liturgical texts: the Rg Veda, the Sāma Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda. The last is datable considerably later than the first three. Their importance to all authors of Indian tradition is undeniable as they were considered revealed texts, the śruti, and the basis of dharma is traced back to the Veda as the ultimate authority.

Though there are no references to the mlecchas in them, the two large collections of the Rg Veda and the Atharva Veda have been used to reconstruct the differentiation that existed in early India between those that were represented as members of the 'official' society and those that remained outside it.

The collection of Rg Vedic hymns contains the oldest form of Indian literature and describes conditions of the Punjab. Its compilation is generally considered to have begun around c. 1200 B.C. This date cannot be accepted as absolute for the whole, as the work consists of older and later elements. This is particularly so in the case of books I and especially X which are definitely treated as late ones.¹⁰⁵ The Atharva Veda Saṁhitā, as a whole, is undoubtedly later than the collection of the Rg Veda¹⁰⁶ and was compiled in the land east of the Punjab. In this case, too, because it was compiled over a considerable time it reflects conditions of a number of centuries.

The Saṁhitās were part of śruti, and to each Saṁhitā was attached

105. M. Bloomfield, 'On the Relative Chronology of the Vedic hymns', JAOS, Vol. XXI, pt. ii, pp. 42-49.

106. M. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. I, 1971, p. 127.

a particular school of interpretation. In part, they were guides intended to explain to the brāhmaṇa authorized to officiate, the prescriptions of the ritual act to be performed and its relation to the hymn or formulae that was recited. Their importance for our purposes lies in the fact that practices described here were often invoked as precedents to support some rule in the later śāstras. It cannot be overlooked that the entire basis of discrimination against the mlecchas, in Brāhmanic tradition was based on the fact that the initial differentiation was recorded in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

Besides, the Samhitās, the Brāhmaṇas, the Aranyakas and the Upaniṣads are stores of information about the early legends and speculations that reflect the life and prejudices of the ancient Indian people. The region that is indicated in the Samhitā and Brāhmaṇa texts is the land of the Kurus and the Pañcālas, the region east and north of Delhi. This as well as the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Doab came to be regarded as the home of brāhmanical culture. The period that is generally assigned to this entire literature is from c. 1000 B.C. to c. 600 B.C. but here again, one has to be careful to stratify various phases of social development according to one particular text and also in relation to its co-existence with other texts.

With the Samhitās we have to differentiate between those that belonged to the Black Yajur Veda and those of the White Yajur Veda. The Kāthaka, Maitrāyaṇī and Taittirīya Samhitās, among others belong to the former and are considered earlier than the latter to which belongs the Vājasaneyī Samhitā.¹⁰⁷ The Samhitās usually overlapp with the early Brāhmaṇas.

107. R. S. Sharma, Śūdras in Ancient India, 1958, p. 42.
M. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. I, 1971, p. 170.

The Brāhmanas are all considered pre-Buddhist.¹⁰⁸ Among them the Pañcaviṃśa and the Taittirīya are said to be the oldest, followed by the Śatapatha and Aitareya¹⁰⁹ and finally, the Jaiminīya and Kauṣītaki are considered relatively late.

Most of the early Aranyakas and the Upaniṣads form component parts of the Brāhmana literature. The most important and greater Upaniṣads — the Aitareya, Brhadāraṇyaka, Chāndogya, Taittirīya, Kauṣītaki and Kena — 'undoubtedly represent the earliest stage of development in the literature of the Upaniṣads.¹¹⁰ We are mainly concerned with these. However, the number of Upaniṣads exceeds 200, some of them are pre-Buddhistic but the majority were written after the Buddha.

Max Müller accepted the traditional date of the Buddha's nirvāṇa in 543 B.C., and from this traced back the entire Vedic literature with a span of 200 years for each phase of development.¹¹¹ The period between c. 800 B.C. to c. 600 B.C. is assigned to the late Brāhmanas and early Upaniṣads.¹¹² The period between c. 1000 B.C. to c. 800 B.C. is fixed for the early Brāhmanas and finally, the period between c. 1200 B.C. to c. 1000 B.C. is considered suitable for the Vedic hymns to have been compiled.¹¹³ There has been much discussion on the earlier limits of the Rg Veda leading to dates from c. 1000 B.C. to 2500 B.C. and even as early as c. 3000 B.C. Winternitz criticized Müller's estimate of 200 years for each

108. A. A. Macdonell, A History of Sanskrit Literature, 1900, pp. 202-3

109. A. B. Keith, The Rg Veda Brāhmanas., 1971, p. 42ff. points out that the Aitareya and the Kauṣītaki are pre-Pāṇini and pre-Yāska.

110. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. I, p. 236.

111. M. Müller, The History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, 1859, p. 35

112. M. Müller, The Rg Veda Saṃhitā, Vol. IV, pp. viiff.

113. M. Müller, Op. Cit., 1859, p. 572.

literary epoch as arbitrary; he referred the Vedic poetry to a very great antiquity and suggested that its beginning may have been c. 2000 B.C. or even c. 2500 B.C.¹¹⁴

However, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary we must accept Müller's date of c. 1200 B.C. for the beginning of the Vedic literary tradition, as has been done by most modern scholars. Weber has rightly pointed out that it is futile to attempt to fix any exact date for the Vedic period.¹¹⁵ A characteristic feature of all these texts is that they do not represent one definite period. We can, however, suggest that one phase pre-supposes another and presents the perspective view of the different areas of the Gangetic plains where most of this literature was written.

SŪTRA AND SMṚTI LITERATURE:

Max Müller has assigned the next important phase of brāhmaṇical literature i.e. the sūtras to the period between c. 600 B.C. to c. 200 B.C.¹¹⁶ The epoch of these sūtras — Śrauta, Grhya, Kalpa and Dharma — in the post-Vedic period sees a definite affirmation of the supremacy of the brāhmaṇa class who composed these manuals for the performance of domestic rituals and public ones. Of these the Dharmasūtras detail the general rules of behaviour and are most useful to us, as for the first time we have information about the mlecchas at some length. The principal among these have been ascribed to the period between c. 600 B.C. to c. 300 B.C. by Kane.¹¹⁷ In these lay the foundation for the growth of the science of the Dharmaśāstra.

114. M. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. I, pp. 290-310.

115. A. Weber, A History of Indian Literature, 1914, p. 2.

116. M. Müller, Op. Cit., 1859, pp. 244-45.

117. P. V. Kane, HD, Vol. II, pt. i, p. xi.

and here can be located the notion of smṛti or 'remembered tradition' as opposed to śruti or 'revealed knowledge'. The former, nevertheless, give constant references to its dependence on the latter.

The Dharmasūtra period begins one or two centuries before the rise of Buddhism and is considered to end with the rise of the Dharmaśāstra literature, the didactic treatises of the Mahābhārata and the early Purāṇas, roughly around the first few centuries A.D. Within this large time span the chronology of the important Dharmasūtras has been stratified.¹¹⁸ Gautama is considered unanimously the first sūtrakāra followed by Baudhāyana, Āpastamba and Vasiṣṭha.¹¹⁹ Āpastamba is sometimes regarded as younger than Baudhāyana.¹²⁰ The sūtrakāras almost exclusively refer to Āryāvarta and their rules of Dharma were meant to apply to this region. There are suggestions, however, which point out that Baudhāyana and more so Āpastamba, probably belonged to the south¹²¹ and that the school of Vasiṣṭha flourished in the north-west of India.¹²²

The institutes of Viṣṇu which are often referred to as part of the sūtra literature, are essentially outside this category. Viṣṇu has several characteristics of the Smṛti style and is placed by both Kane and Jolly as late as the third and fourth century

118. Ram Gopal, India of the Vedic Kalpasutras, 1959, pp. 98-100. Excluding the Viṣṇu Dharmasūtra (usually known as a Smṛti), he places the sūtra literature, as a whole between c. 800 B.C. to 500 B.C. (pp. 84-90).

119. S. C. Banerji, Dharmasūtras A Study in their Origin and Development, 1962, pp. 17-28. He does not make any new assertions about the general time span of the sūtras. Ram Gopal, Op. Cit., pp. 82-85.

120. G. Bühler, SBE, Vol. II, p. xxiiff.

121. P. V. Kane, HD, Vol. I, p. 44; Bühler, SBE, Vol. II, p. xxxiff. and Vol. XIV, p. xlii.

122. E. J. Rapson, CHI, Vol. I, pp. 246-50.

A.D.¹²³ They both disagree on the source of Viṣṇu which Kane¹²⁴ rightly stresses is probably Manu as it has several ślokas from it. Jolly believes that both these writers belonged to a common school of thought.

The differences between the Dharmasūtras and Dharmaśāstra need not be emphasized here¹²⁵ as both these type of works agree on their main motive i.e. the elucidation of Dharma.

The Manusmṛti or the Mānavadharmasāstra is the most celebrated work of the Dharmaśāstras. It is generally ascribed to the period between c. 200 B.C. and c. A.D. 200.¹²⁶ The influence of this work which was known to almost all lawgivers, was wide-spread. The brāhmanical view of the social and political order presented by Manu were generally accepted and quoted as the official point of view. On the whole it tends to portray an idealized picture of society in theoretical terms. One can even detect a slight fanaticism in his writing; all indicative of an intention to maintain the privileges of the superior members of the society. The other law books ascribed to the period between c. A.D. 200 to c. A.D. 500 are: the Yājñavalkya Smṛti (c. 100-300 A.D.) which arranges the material from Manu in a concise manner, the Nārada Smṛti (c. 100-400 A.D.), the Bṛhaspati Smṛti (c. 300-500 A.D.) and the Kātyāyana Smṛti (c. 400-600 A.D.).¹²⁷ Material on the mlecchas follows the

123. P. V. Kane, HD, Vol. II, pt. i, p. xi places it between c. 100-300 A.D. J. Jolly, SBE, Vol. VII, p. xxxii.

124. Kane, HD, Vol. pp. 52-56; Jolly, SBE, Vol. VII, pp. xxii-xxvii.

125. There are technical differences in the style of writing and emphasis on the different aspects in both these works which have been discussed by R. Lingat, The Classical Law of India, (Tr. J. D. M. Derrett, 1973), pp. 73-77. He concludes, 'The Dharmaśāstra literature which commences after the era of the sūtras, and came to an end around the ninth century A.D. around which time the earliest surviving commentators probably appeared.'

126. G. Bühler, SBE, Vol. XXV, pp. cxiv-cxviii; K. P. Jayswal, Manu and Yājñavalkya, 1930, pp. 25-32; Kane, HD, Vol. II, p. xi.

127. Kane, HD, Vol. II, p. xi.

pattern of the sūtras which is often reproduced and only sometimes expanded upon. The commentaries on these works do add fresh material but in using them one has to be aware that they were written, at the earliest, after the tenth century A.D.

The Śukranīti has been used and quoted in a few instances (only in chapter V) because it contains certain refreshingly interesting information on the mlecchas. This may be due to the fact that it is a late text. Most scholars use this text for the early Medieval period.¹²⁸ Lallanji Gopal has given strong evidence showing that it is a nineteenth century composition.¹²⁹

THE INDIAN EPICS -- RĀMĀYANA AND MAHĀBHĀRATA:

The Mahābhārata is a much larger epic than the Rāmāyana and definitely less homogeneous. Being very popular, both these epics, during their existence over several centuries, have been redacted a number of times, which has inevitably given rise to various versions of the same text. For our purpose we have used the Critical Editions of the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana¹³⁰ as these have collated some of the important versions.

At the outset we have to bear in mind that the Mahābhārata is distinguished by its allusion to historical and political events in ancient India. On the other hand, the Rāmāyana depicts a highly idealized society with a view to inculcate ideal virtues among the people. They are both equally popular in all regions of India and outside it, and among all classes of people. But from the Mahābhārata we can glean far more information, both of a religious and of a secular nature.

128. Kane, HD, Vol. I, p. 116; Vol. III, p. 121, ft. nt. 162.

129. L. Gopal, 'The Śukranīti - A nineteenth century text', BSOAS, Vol. XXV, pt. iii, pp. 524-556.

130. The Mahābhārata published by BORI, in 19 volumes, Poona, 1933-66.
The Rāmāyana published by OI, in 6 volumes, Baroda, 1960-71

The Mahābhārata describes the family feud between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas to establish the rightful supremacy of the former over the latter. In the process of describing this narrative, the compilers and redactors of this text have supplied information on the ethnography and geography of ancient India. It is often difficult to identify the locations and authenticity of the numerous peoples and places mentioned. Some of these lists must be treated as late interpolations. The didactic portions of the Mahābhārata contained in the Śānti and Anuśāsana Parvans are similar to the material contained in the Smṛtis. Hence, besides the actual narrative, we have lengthy descriptions on a diverse range of topics. It is for this reason that R. S. Sharma writes: 'it is difficult to use the material drawn from the Mahābhārata for one particular period, for its narrative portion looks back to as early as the tenth century B.C. and the didactic and descriptive portions belong to as late as the fourth century A.D.'¹³¹

A detailed stratification of the various portions of the Mahābhārata is a difficult problem. Unfortunately this has not even been attempted fully in the Critical edition.¹³² It is made impossible to reconstruct the chronological development of ideas in the Epic as a whole because of the various layers of interpolations at every stage. Portions of the Mahābhārata have, however, been taken separately and dated accordingly. The most important is the didactic matter, which corroborates, but also gives variants, to the Smṛti literature. This Hopkins considers to have been introduced

131. R. S. Sharma, Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India, 1968, p. 17.

132. F. Edgerton, The Mahābhārata, Cr. Ed., Vol. II, pp. xxvii-xxviii, the Sabhā Parvan is the only one dated and it is considered to be not before the first century B.C.

into the Epic between c. 200 B.C. to c. A.D. 200.¹³³ There are several sections of the Anuśāsana and Śānti Parvans which Hopkins assigns to a still later period; between c. A.D. 200 to c. A.D. 400.¹³⁴ Winternitz has put arguments that show that the Mahābhārata as a whole did not exist before the fourth century B.C. 'Between the fourth century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. the transformation of the epic Mahābhārata into our present compilation took place, probably gradually.'¹³⁵ (p. 475)

The Vālmīki Rāmāyana, on the other hand, is considered to have been compiled definitely in the early centuries A.D.¹³⁶ With the help of archaeological material, H.D. Sankalia has tried to show that a Rāmāyana existed in India from c. 1000 B.C. to c. 800 B.C. The interpolations, in his view took place between the sixth century B.C. to the third century A.D. and which continued even later. These made the Rāmāyana fictional rather than factual in character.¹³⁷ However, the dating of the bulk of the text, as we have it now, is probably first to second century A.D.

The excavations of the sites mentioned in both the Epics in recent years has presented fresh data for their chronological stratification. The sites like Kurukṣetra, Hastināpura, Ahicchatra of the Mahābhārata contain levels that have been described as the Painted Grey Ware. These date as far back as the eleventh century B.C. The association of the original Rāmāyana, reaffirmed by local tradition, is with the Copper Hoard Cultures and their lowest limit

133. W. Hopkins, The Great Epic of India, 1920, pp. 397-98.

134. W. Hopkins, GHI, Vol. I, p. 258.

135. M. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. I, pp. 454-475. 136. Ibid., p. 516.

137. H. D. Sankalia, Ramayana Myth and Reality, 1973, pp. 62-64

is ascribed to the first half of the second millenium B.C. This suggests the antiquity only of the plot of the Rāmāyana over that of the Mahābhārata but more excavations have to be carried out to fix any of these dates definitely.¹³⁸

The dating of material from the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata can, in the present circumstance, only be tentative. But we cannot ignore the geographical, ethnological and sociological and moral milieu in which they were written. To a certain extent they reflect the conditions of the time they came into being. However, because of the varied authorship of these texts over a great period of time we have to be careful in placing too much reliance on their statements.

THE PURĀNAS:

The Purānas contain valuable information on all aspects of Hinduism and from the point of view of the history of religion help us to delineate various phases of its development. We have to be very cautious when they are used to reconstruct historical events. For all intensive purposes, in such cases we cannot solely rely on the information thus available.

All the Purānas are sectarian in character and present in detail the mythology, the types of worship, the ceremonies, the festivals, the spirit of bhakti or devotion to God and the philosophy and ethics of the particular sect they support.¹³⁹ Their sectarian nature becomes more clearly defined in the later Mahāpurānas and Upapurānas, some of the latter were written as recent as the eighteenth

138. Summarized from B. B. Lal, 'Archaeology and the two Indian Epics', ABORI, Vol. LIV, pt. i, 1973, pp. 1-8.

139. J. N. Farquhar, An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, 1920, has dated the religious literature, the Purānas included, according to the development of theism.

and nineteenth centuries A.D.¹⁴⁰ The problem of dating these texts is complicated and difficult especially as parts of them were not written or compiled at one given period. Neither was their writing confined to one part of the subcontinent. Most of them had a particular locale for their compilation but different versions spread over all parts of the country with interpolations added all the time. This feature is clearly apparent in the different MSS of one particular Purāna when it is being edited.

Therefore, it is wrong to view the Purānas as written according to a unified and systematic pattern. The fact that the word Purāna is mentioned in early Brāhmanic texts and that the eighteen Purānas are known in the Mahābhārata¹⁴¹ can lead one to believe that they were of early origin. The Mahābhārata itself was not a homogeneously conceived and written text and further it must be accepted: 'the composition of the Purānas is spread over a long time covering several centuries from the epoch of the Brāhmanas and the Upaniṣads to the age of the Guptas and after.'¹⁴²

Accepting the premise that the kernel of each Purāna may have existed in relatively early times and its contents amplified in the course of centuries, Dikshitar has classified the dates of the five Purānas he has studied solely according to their contents.¹⁴³

140. For the study of Indian mythology the Purānas are indispensable and for this purpose it is possible to postulate several broad divisions of early, late and middle Purānas: Between c. 300 B.C. to c. A.D. 500 are placed the Brahmānda, Mārkandeya, Matsya, Vāyu and Viṣṇu Purānas as early ones. Among the middle Purānas, placed between c. A.D. 500 to c. 1000 A.D., are listed the Kūrma, Līṅga, Vāmana, Varāha, Agni, Bhāgavata, Brahmavaivarta, Saura, Skanda and Devi Purānas — W. D. O'Flaherty, Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva, 1973, p. 14.

141. R. C. Hazra, Purānic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, 1948, pp. 1-4

142. V. R. R. Dikshitar, The Purāna Index, 1951, Vol. I, p. xvi.

143. Ibid., pp. xvi-xxx. They are the Vāyu, the Brahmānda, the Matsya the Viṣṇu and the Bhāgavata Purānas.

Since the Vāyu Purāna is not purely sectarian as some of its religious and philosophical features show, its original is dated in the fifth century B.C. But since, at the same time, it includes the Hūnas in the list of Kali Age dynasties and has certain features on par with the Yājñavalkya Smṛti, it is said to have been enlarged gradually till the fifth century A.D.¹⁴⁴ That there are several parts common to the Brahmāṇḍa and Vāyu Purānas can be explained by the fact that the former borrowed from the latter. Its original compilation is assigned roughly to the fourth century B.C. though a positive date for its present form cannot be deduced.¹⁴⁵ There is also difficulty for the determination of the upper limit for the compilation of the Matsya Purāna. As regards this point Dikshitar concludes that it must undoubtedly be post-Pāṇinian and its development spread over the centuries till c. 320 A.D.¹⁴⁶ The Viṣṇu Purāna, is often considered the work of a single hand and tradition is keen to assign a very high antiquity to it. According to Dikshitar its early composition should be extended from the seventh to the fourth century B.C. and on the basis of Tamil evidence he affirms its antiquity to be higher than at least the second century A.D. The Bhāgavata Purāna which follows the Viṣṇu in major details is assigned to the third century A.D.¹⁴⁷

In the above account there is undue emphasis on the early compilation of these Purānas. For us it is more important to view their age from their present form. An important fact that Dikshitar has not

144. Dikshitar, Op. Cit., pp. xix-xx. Astronomical data places it between c. 204 B.C. to c. A.D. 44.

145. Ibid., p. xxii.

146. Ibid., p. xxiii.

147. Ibid., p. xxvii; p. xxix. As the Viṣṇu Purāna mentions the early Guptas, its date in more or less complete form cannot be earlier than c. A.D. 320.

pointed out in his analysis is that there are certain features in all Purānas that seem to have been copied by one Purāna from another, with only a few changes. These are such features as the geographical lists of rivers, mountains, peoples etc., the chapters on the Kali Age and so on. Therefore, there is a need to date specific portions of the Purāna accounts together, rather than try and prove the precedence of one Purāna over the other. The stratification and consequent dating of the Purānas in this way has been attempted by scholars.

Hazra has adopted the stratification of the content of all Purānas on the basis of rites and customs.¹⁴⁸ Those that he entitles Major Purānas, the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, the Vāyu Purāna, the Brahmānda Purāna, the Viṣṇu Purāna, the Matsya Purāna and the Bhāgavata Purāna are in the main, the ones we have largely used. The Smṛti contents of none of these Purānas can be dated before the Christian era.¹⁴⁹ The chapters dealing with the duties of varṇas and āśramas in the Mārkaṇḍeya, Viṣṇu, Bhāgavata and Bhaviṣya have been assigned roughly to the Gupta period, between c. 300 to c. 400 A.D.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, data on the Kali Age, which is more fully described in the Vāyu, Brahmānda and Matsya Purānas¹⁵¹ have been dated differently. They probably allude to the age between c. 200 B.C. to c. A.D. 200 when the division of varṇas in brāhmanical society was undermined by foreign incursions.¹⁵²

F. E. Pargiter has critically analyzed the so-called historical

148. Hazra, Op. Cit., pp. 8-189.

149. Ibid., p. 5.

150. Ibid., pp. 174; 175; 177; 188.

151. They also occur in the Viṣṇu, Bhāgavata, Garuda and Kūrma Purānas but these, it is generally accepted, were later than those of the above mentioned.

152. Hazra, Op. Cit., pp. 208-210.

sections i.e. the lists of the Kali Age dynasties in the Purāṇas.¹⁵³ In these lists of kings there are some that are well known in history — the Nandas, the Mauryas, the Śuṅgas, the Āndhras and the Guptas. Towards the end of each list is enumerated a series of dynasties of low and mleccha descent. Here are mentioned the Ābhīras, the Gardabhas, the Śakas, the Yavanas, the Tuṣāras, the Hūnas etc. Finally, after these accounts, the description of the Kali Age in general is given. One has to exert great caution in using these lists as purely historical sources.

The origin and development of these lists, as viewed by Pargiter, can be summarized as follows: the Mātsya, Vāyu, and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas got their accounts from the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa, though they existed before it. Pargiter has assumed that the accounts of the north Indian dynasties were, in the course of time, composed in literary Prakrit ślokas and recited by bards.¹⁵⁴ In about the seventh century B.C. they were written down in or near Magadha. The Bhaviṣya rendered this account into Sanskrit in the form of a prophecy. The account of the Āndhras was composed in north India, originally in Kharoṣṭhī script, around the third century A.D.

Revisions of the text were constantly taking place. The Matsya borrowed from the Bhaviṣya in the last quarter of the third century A.D. One manuscript of the Vāyu represents a revision of this text in the first quarter of the fourth century A.D. but was again revised during the second quarter of the fourth century A.D. in the same Purāṇa and was also copied by the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa. A little later, around the end of the fourth century A.D., the Viṣṇu Purāṇa condensed this text into Sanskrit prose. Finally, the Bhāgavata got its

153. F. E. Pargiter, DKA, 1913, (rpt. 1962), Preface.

154. Ibid., pp. xxvi-xxviii.

account from the Viṣṇu and Brahmāṇḍa ones around the eighth or the ninth century A.D.¹⁵⁵

Keith has contested the views of Pargiter, especially concerning the duration of each of the dynasties. The theory that the original of these accounts was written in Prakrit has also been contested.¹⁵⁶ About the latter point Winternitz writes: 'Pargiter gives good reasons for the hypothesis that these sources were written in Prākṛit; but we should not therefore jump to the conclusion that the Purāṇas as a whole were translated from Prākṛit.'¹⁵⁷ D. C. Sircar is inclined to accept the theory of the Prakrit originals as he points out that the geographical sections of the Purāṇas also exhibit Prakrit influences in names like Bhārukaccha, Vedabha etc.¹⁵⁸ Sircar, however, does not agree with Pargiter in that the account of the Andhras of the Deccan should have been written in Kharoṣṭhī as that dynasty had nothing to do with north-west India.¹⁵⁹

The dates that Pargiter has proposed for the lists of Kali Age kings for the various Purāṇas have to be largely accepted though they are only tentative.

Hazra has dated the Yuga dharma (this includes the chapter on the Kali Yuga dharma) chapters of the Purāṇas as follows: The Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa versions are the earliest namely between c. A.D. 200 to c. A.D. 275. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa incorporated it in the last quarter of the third century or the first quarter of the fourth century A.D. and the Kūrma Purāṇa did the same between c. A.D. 700 and c. A.D. 800.¹⁶⁰

155. Pargiter, Op. Cit., pp. v-ix.

156. A. B. Keith, 'The Age of the Purāṇas', JRAS, pt. ii, 1914, p. 1021ff.; 'Dynasties of the Kali Age', JRAS, pt. i, 1915, p. 328ff.

157. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. I, p. 524, ft. nt. 2.

158. D. C. Sircar, Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, 1971, p. 19.

159. Ibid., p. 19.

160. Hazra, Op. Cit., pp. 174-175; 178.

One last topic that is included in all Purānas and has been stratified and dated concerns the chapters on the geography of Bhāratavarṣa. M. R. Singh has attempted to establish the relative chronology of the Purānic accounts on the geography of Bhāratavarṣa. He works on the assumption that the dates assigned to different Purānas do not imply that the geographical accounts of Bhāratavarṣa should also be assigned similar dates.¹⁶¹ His conclusions are as follows: The Mārkaṇḍeya, Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa and Vāmana follow the original draft which seems to have been first compiled in the Matsya Purāna. This original draft belongs to the second century B.C. The version in the Viṣṇu, Kūrma and Brahma Purānas is similar and belongs to the fifth century A.D. The Kūrma Niveśa section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna cannot be assigned to a date earlier than the fourth century A.D. (c. A.D. 400 to c. A.D. 600). The same is true of the geographical section of the Bhīṣma Parvan in the Mahābhārata.¹⁶²

We thus see that it is impossible to fix one absolute date for all the Purānas and it is even difficult to fix one date for the whole extant text of one particular Purāna. One can generalize that most sections of the Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa and Matsya Purānas were completed and revised at a certain given period, between the second and fifth centuries A.D. but this cannot be done with all the Purānas. Above all, it has always to be borne in mind that each Purāna does not necessarily purport the conditions during which it was written.

The date of the Yuga Purāna has not been discussed so far. It is different from the others in that it features only one aspect which the other Purānas also dwell on, namely, the condition of men during the four Yugas — Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali. It is, however,

161. M. R. Singh, 'The Relative Chronology of the Janapada lists of the Purānas', Purāna, Vol. X, 1967, p. 264

162. Ibid., pp. 271ff.

the earliest among the extant works of the Purāṇa type. Kern assigns to the text a date of c. 50 B.C. and considers it contemporaneous with certain portions of the Mahābhārata.¹⁶³ Jayaswal has also dated it in the same century but in the latter half of the first century.¹⁶⁴ The problem about dating this text is to decide whether it could refer to an earlier period even if it was not composed earlier than the first century B.C.

OTHER SANSKRIT LITERATURE:

For most studies on ancient India the Arthaśāstra is an important source. Since 1909, when the existence of this text first came to be known, there has been no agreement on its precise date or authorship. Scholars have tried to date it from the time of Candragupta Maurya to the fourth century A.D. The text is attributed variously to the names Kauṭilya, Cānakya or Viṣṇugupta. R. P. Kangle in a detailed analysis of the work has convincingly ascribed the authorship to Kauṭilya.¹⁶⁵ As to its date, after a critical analysis of what other scholars have written on the subject, he concluded that the text must be assigned to an early period, between c. 250 B.C. to c. A.D. 150.¹⁶⁶

Kane has fixed the date at 300 B.C.¹⁶⁷ T. R. Trautmann¹⁶⁸ on the basis of a statistical analysis of the work has argued that the

163. H. Kern, The Brhatsaṃhitā, Introduction, pp. 39-40.

164. K. P. Jayaswal, 'Historical data in the Garga Saṃhitā and the Brahmin Empire', JBORS, Vol. XIV, 1928, p. 399.

165. R. P. Kangle, The Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra, 1965, pt. III, p. 106.

166. Ibid., p. 99.

167. P. V. Kane, HD, Vol. II, pt. ii, p. xi.

168. T. R. Trautmann, Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra, 1971.

text has no unity of authorship. While Kangle¹⁶⁹ also argues that the Arthaśāstra evolved over a period of time, Trautmann's analysis suggests that there was not one author but several which means that there are as many dates as authors of the text.¹⁷⁰ Since the authors cannot be identified or named he has found it impossible to conclude on one date.¹⁷¹ But on its authorship there is one definite conclusion: 'Kauṭilya cannot have been the author of the Arthaśāstra as a whole; but whether he wrote a part, and if so, which part, we cannot decide without appeal to evidence outside the statistical study.'¹⁷² Therefore, it is important to reconsider and not advocate absolute dates for the Arthaśāstra, either of its complete writing in the Maurya period or in the Gupta period.

Among the works on grammar, the Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini is the oldest and most important of the kind. Pāṇini was a resident of Śalātura near Taxila in northwest India. He is said to pre-suppose other works on grammar which are now lost. Much has been written about fixing the date of the Aṣṭādhyāyī ranging from the eighth century B.C. to c. 350 B.C.¹⁷³ In Renou's opinion Pāṇini belonged to the fourth century B.C.¹⁷⁴ Agrawala concludes that he lived during the fifth century B.C.¹⁷⁵ Several vārttikas have been written

169. R. P. Kangle, Op. Cit., p. 10

170. T. R. Trautmann, Op. Cit., p. 174.

171. A provisional date of c. 250 A.D. has been accepted for the compilation of the text and this is tested against the evidence available from within the text (Trautmann, pp. 176-187).

172. Ibid., p. 175.

173. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. III, pt. ii, pp. 423-424.

174. L. Renou, L'Inde Classique, Tome II, 1520.

175. V. S. Agrawal, India as known to Pāṇini, 1953, p. 475.

to explain the grammatical rules in this work. The most famous is the Mahābhāṣya by Patañjali, who has taken into account the Vārttika of Kātyāyana in order to explain the sūtras of Pāṇini. There is considerable unanimity in regarding that Patañjali lived in the second century B.C., datable around 150 B.C. There is no positive evidence to confirm this date and Winternitz writes, 'in case we assign Pāṇini to the fifth, Kātyāyana to the third and Patañjali to the second century B.C., we have nothing but a "working hypothesis".'¹⁷⁶

Among the works on lexicography the Nirukta of Yāska is the earliest and is placed between c. 700 B.C. to c. 500 B.C.¹⁷⁷ Another important work of the kind written very much later is the Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana of Amarasimha, better known as the Amarakoṣa. It is useful for the definition of words and is assignable to the sixth century A.D.¹⁷⁸

The Brhatsaṁhitā by Varāhamihira is far more important for the geography of Bhāratavarṣa than the Epic and Purānic tradition. This is because its information is assignable to a known period, namely the first half of the sixth century A.D.¹⁷⁹

The Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharatamuni must definitely be placed before the seventh century A.D.¹⁸⁰ M.N. Ghosh, in editing and translating the text, concludes that it is necessary to consider its lower limit to be c. A.D. 300 or at least c. A.D. 400. As far as its upper limit is concerned the date suggested is c. A.D. 200, though tradition and

176. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. III, pt. ii, p. 430.

177. L. Sarup, Nighaṇṭu and Nirukta, 1920, p. 54.

178. Winternitz, Op. Cit., p. 456.

179. H. Kern, The Brhatsaṁhitā of Varāhamihira, 1865, p. 20. The commentary of Bhaṭṭa Utpala on this text is datable in the tenth century A.D. — Winternitz, HIL, Vol. III, pt. ii, p. 659

180. P. V. Kane, HD, Vol. II, pt. ii, p. xi

language take it back to c. 100 B.C.¹⁸¹

Among Classical writers, the works of Kālidāsa are outstanding. Keith suggests that he definitely lived before A.D. 472,¹⁸² though he can broadly be placed between the second and sixth century A.D. according to Dasgupta.¹⁸³ Regarding the Mudrārākṣasa of Viśākhadatta, there is considerable controversy. Dasgupta places him between the fifth and ninth century A.D.¹⁸⁴ The Mudrārākṣasa has been used extensively by us and the views of other scholars on its date have been noted in chapter V. Finally, the Kathāsaritsāgara of Somadeva and the Rājataranṅinī of Kalhaṇa can more precisely be dated. The former is assigned to between 1063-1081 A.D.¹⁸⁵ and latter to 1148-1149 A.D.¹⁸⁶

BUDDHIST AND JAINA LITERATURE:

The greater authenticity of Buddhist literature as compared with Brāhmanic literature, especially of the pre-Mauryan period, is emphasized by several scholars with good reason. Both are in the main religious in nature but the Buddhist ones present a more realistic picture and it is this reason that they have been accepted as more reliable. Another significant fact is that the Pāli Canon is more easily datable.

The Pāli Canon is traditionally associated with the Buddhist Councils at Rājagaha, held immediately after the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha,

181. M. Ghosh, 'The Date of the Bharata Nāṭyaśāstra', Journal of the Department of Letters, University of Calcutta, Vol. XXV, 1934, pp. 50-52.

182. A. B. Keith, History of Sanskrit Literature, 1928, p. 82.

183. S. N. Dasgupta and S. K. De, A History of Sanskrit Literature, Vol. II, p. 124.

184. Ibid., pp. 262-264.

185. A. B. Keith, Op. Cit., p. 281.

186. M. A. Stein, Kalhaṇa's Rājataranṅinī, 1900, Vol. I, p. 6.

and at Vesāli, held a hundreded years later and an important one that was held at Pāṭaliputra under Aśoka. Tradition also has it that it was under king Vaṭṭagāmaṇi of Sri Laṅka that it was committed to writing around 100 B.C.¹⁸⁷ It was written in Pāli, though it is thought that it was compiled by the monks at Pāṭaliputra in an ancient Māgadhī dialect. However, the Tripitaka in its present form is in Pāli.

The Vinaya Piṭaka which contains rules for the monastic community, together with the Suttapiṭaka which is a collection of dialogues to elucidate the points of dhamma, have to be described as pre-Mauryan texts. They belong to the same chronological strata because of the internal unity of the books apparent in the material they provide.¹⁸⁸ G. C. Pande has stratified the Dīgha, Majjhima, Saṅguyutta and Anguttara Nikāyas according to their contents and distinguishes in them early and later portions.¹⁸⁹ He views their growth to reflect conditions between c. 500 B.C. to c. 300 B.C.¹⁹⁰ Positive corroboration for the existence of an early Buddhist Canon in the third century B.C. is given in the inscriptions of Aśoka. The inscriptions on the stupas of Bhārut and Sāñchi ascribed to the second and first centuries B.C. also testify abundantly to the Buddha legends as found in the Pāli Suttas.¹⁹¹ The Abhidhamma Piṭaka.

187. E. W. Adikaram, Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon, 1953, pp. 73-79.

188. Rhys Davids, CHI, Vol. I, pp. 192-197; B.C. Law, History of Pali Literature, i, pp. 30-33.

189. G. C. Pande, Studies in the Origins of Buddhism, (rpt.), 1974, Part I.

190. Ibid., p. 16

191. Winternitz, HII, Vol. II, pp. 16-18. In the edict of Bairāt (Bhābrū) of the year 249 B.C. the king recommends seven texts for the study of monks from Magadha.

presupposes the other Piṭakas and is therefore considered the latest of the Tripitaka.

Reference to parts of the Tripitaka is found in the Milindapañha, a work whose authentic portion belongs to the first century A.D.¹⁹² Among the non-canonical works, the Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvāṃsa occupy an important place. The former is placed between the beginning of the fourth and the first third of the fifth century A.D.¹⁹³ The Mahāvāṃsa is considered somewhat later, a work of the last quarter of the fifth century A.D. or the sixth century A.D.¹⁹⁴

The commentaries on early Pāli Suttas by the celebrated writer Buddhaghosa are said to belong to the fifth century A.D.¹⁹⁵

There are greater chronological uncertainties in the case of the Jaina sources as compared to the Buddhist ones. The Jaina Siddhānta is said to have been written down by Devarddigani in about the fifth or the sixth century A.D.¹⁹⁶ The entire Jaina literature is said to date back to Mahāvīra, and more definitely to the period of Candragupta Maurya by tradition. It, however, underwent considerable change and collectively cannot be said to belong to one particular period.

It is held that the Canonical works of the Jainas were first compiled somewhere towards the end of the fourth or the beginning

192. T. W. Rhys Davids, The Questions of King Milinda, SBE, Vol. XXV, pt. i, Introduction; Winternitz, HIL, Vol. II, p. 175.

193. H. Oldenberg, The Dīpavaṃsa, 1879, pp. 8-9.

194. W. Geiger, The Mahāvāṃsa, 1912, Introduction, p. xii.

195. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. II, pp. 190-92.

196. A. Weber, 'Ueber die Leiligen Schriften der Jaina', Indische Studien, Vol. XVI, 1883, p. 236.
J. C. Jain, Life Depicted in the Jaina Canons, 1947, p. 38.

of the third century B.C.¹⁹⁷ The language used in the early Jaina works is Prakrit - Ardha Māgadhī - and it is only in works written after the sixth century A.D. that Sanskrit is adopted.

The oldest part of the Siddhānta, from the literary and linguistic points of view are considered the Ācārāṅga, Sūtrakṛtāṅga and Uttarādhyaṇa Sūtras.¹⁹⁸ Of these the Ācārāṅga is considered the earliest of the three,¹⁹⁹ though within the text it has an earlier archaic portion and a very late one.²⁰⁰ All three Sūtras, are however, considered later than the Buddhist Tripitaka. Charpentier agrees in the main with Jacobi that 'the oldest portions of the Siddhānta must be fixed during a period lying between the settling of the Tripitaka and our era, roughly between 300 B.C. - 200 B.C.'²⁰¹

The Pannāvaṇā (Prajñāpanā) is the fourth upāṅga and is important from our point of view as it lists āriya and milakkha peoples. It is the only upāṅga to be ascribed to a relatively early period, between c. 200 B.C. to c. A.D. 200.²⁰² The list of foreign and tribal peoples also occurs in other aṅgas and upāṅgas --- in the Bhagavati, the Jambudvīpaprājñāpti, and the Praśnavyākaraṇīni. These lists are said to have been borrowed from brāhmanical literature. Weber has used them to arrive at the date of the redacted Canon which he fixes between the second and the fifth century A.D.²⁰³

197. Jacobi, Gaina Sūtras, SBE, Vol. XXII, Introduction p. xliii.

198. J. C. Jain, Op. Cit., p. 34.

199. J. Charpentier, The Uttarādhyaṇasūtra, 1922, p. 23.

200. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. II, pp. 435-36.

201. J. Charpentier, Op. Cit., p. 26.

202. J. C. Jain, Op. Cit., p. 38.

203. A. Weber, Op. Cit., Vol. XVI, p. 236ff.

There is ultimately no doubt that the form of the Jaina Siddhānta as we have it today dates from 526 A.D. when Devarddigapi wrote it down.²⁰⁴ At this time many interpolations were introduced into the earlier texts discussed above. The commentaries — the Niryuktis and Curnis — on the Jaina texts cannot be dated earlier than the eleventh century A.D.

The lack of definite dates for all literary sources in ancient India is a significant problem but from the review of the subject above we have been able to determine broad phases of the early and late texts.

With the background and sources discussed we now proceed to analyze the different aspects of our study.

204. J. Charpentier, Op. Cit., p. 16.

Chapter II

THE TERM MLECCHA

Barbarians in ancient India were called mleccha. The notion of being a mleccha was introduced in northern India in the literature of the Indo-Aryan speaking tribes when they encountered people having different cultural attributes and values. The foremost aspect of our study is on the word mleccha itself as its occurrence in Sanskrit is not clearly explicable.

Was mleccha originally a Sanskrit word? In the literary source material available to us it first occurs in the Sanskrit language and in a context which denotes their linguistic peculiarity.¹ In Pāli and Prakrit its form is milakkha and milakkhu respectively.² As milakkhuka it is first attested in the Pitaka literature³ of the Buddhists though not in the context of their speech. In both these cases, as well as in other middle and modern Indo-Aryan languages, there exist variations of the word that are explained by linguists with respective etymological rules. These forms have been noted later in the chapter. It is significant to point out right from the beginning the fact that the use of mleccha is first available to us in a Sanskrit text is of no sufficient indication to trace its origin in Vedic and Sanskrit only.

However, irrespective of form, the word is generally translated into English from all languages to mean a barbarian, a foreigner,

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1. Sat. Br., III, 2, 1, 24 -- mleccha in Sanskrit.
 2. Saṃyutta Nikāya, V, 466 -- milakkha in Pāli;
Acāraṅga Sūtra, II, 3, 8 -- milakkhu in Ardha-Māgadhī
 3. Vinaya Piṭaka, III, 28.

a non-Aryan etc. The latter two are generally regarded as secondary meanings.⁴ The meaning of this word can, however, be truly ascertained by drawing upon some of the important references and citations to it in the original texts.

From the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa we get the first impression of brāhmaṇical writers about mlecchas and more specifically about their speech. It is described to be similar to that of the Asuras (in this context they are the enemies of the Devas), and must be avoided as it causes the defeat of a person.⁵ The avoidance of mleccha speech was particularly stressed for the benefit of snātakas⁶ and all brāhmaṇas.⁷ In the former instance because it was an impure act and in the latter case because mleccha words impair the study of grammar. The differentiation of āryas and the mlecchas on the basis of speech remained an important point of separation though it was not necessarily the basis of discrimination as is shown by a passage from the Mānava Dharmasāstra.⁸ Manu emphasizes

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4. O. Böthlingk and R. Roth, Sanskrit Dictionary, (German), 1855, Vol. V, p. 934.
M. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit English Dictionary, 1899, p. 837.
R. C. Childers, Pāli Dictionary, 1875, p. 247.
T. W. Rhys Davids and W. Stede, Pāli English Dictionary, PTS, 1925, p. 157.
Vāchaspatyam, Sanskrit Dictionary, 1962, Vol. VI, p. 4767.
Hindi Śabda Sāgara, 1963, Vol. III, p. 2837.
Shabda Kalpadrum, CSS, 1967, Vol. III, pp. 791-92.
5. Sat. Br., III, 2, 1, 24 — upajigyāsyāṃ sa mlecchas tasmān na brāhmaṇo mlecched asuryā haisā vāg evam... / 'he (who speaks thus) is a mleccha, hence let no brāhmaṇa speak barbarous language.'
6. Gautama Dhs., I, 9, 17 — na mlecchāśucyadharmikais saha sambhāseta // '(the snātaka) shall not converse with mlecchas, impure and wicked men.'
7. Mahābhāṣya, I, 1, 1 — tasmād brāhmaṇena na mlecchitavai nāpabhāṣitavai / ... mlecchā mā bhūmety adhyeyam vyākaraṇam // 'hence no mleccha word is to be pronounced by a brāhmaṇa as it is a corrupt word. In order that we may not become mlecchas grammar is to be studied.'
8. Manu, X, 45 — mukhabāhūrupajjānāṃ ya loke jātyo bahi / mlecchavācas cāryavācaḥ sarve te dasyavaḥ smṛtāḥ // 'All those tribes in this world which are excluded from those born from the mouth, the arms, the thighs and the feet (of Brahma) are called Dasyus, whether they speak the language of the mlecchas or that of the āryas.'

that all tribes, irrespective of whether they spoke ārya or mleccha languages, but since they were not members of the four varṇas, were dasyus. However, the country of the mlecchas is described as one where the system of four varṇas is not established, in the Viṣṇusmṛti⁹ and one where sacrifice is not performed in the Manusmṛti.¹⁰

In the Arthaśāstra the term mleccha is used frequently to describe forest tribes.¹¹ There are passages where they are referred collectively as mlecchajātis.¹² The Amarakośa defines mlecchajātis as the Bhedas, Kirātas, Śabarās and Pulindas.¹³ In the Mudrārākṣasa, Malayaketu is called a mleccha king. His allies are also referred to as mleccha princes.¹⁴ Thus we see that there was a varied use of the term mleccha. Its meaning developed over

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9. Viṣṇusmṛti, LXXXIV, 4 — cāturvarṇyavyavasthānaṃ yasmin deśe na vidyate sa mlecchadeśo vijñeya... / 'those countries where the four varṇas are not known is mlecchadeśa...'
10. Manu, II, 23 — sa jñeyo yajñiyo deśo mlecchadeśas tv atah parah/ '(the land) fit for the performance of sacrifice is different from the country of the mlecchas which is beyond (this land).'
11. A.Ś., VII, 10, 16 — mlecchātavībhir;
XII, 4, 23 — ...mlecchātavika.
12. A.Ś., VII, 14, 27 — ...coraganātavikamlecchajātīnām...;
XIII, 5, 15 — coraprakṛtīnām mlecchajātīnām...; etc.
Passages from the Arthaśāstra discussed in chapter V.
13. Amarakośa, II, 10, 20 — bhedāḥ kirātaśabarapulindā mlecchajātayah//
14. Mudrar ., I, 20 — upalabdhavān asmi pranidhibhyo yathā tasya mleccharājalokasya madhyāt pradhānatamāḥ pañca rājānaḥ... (Cāṇakya speaks) '...I am informed by spies that five kings among the friends of the mleccha king (Malayaketu) are following him with great courage...' If the allusion in this play is to actual events, the mleccha princes were indigenous rulers who were called mleccha because they ruled over kingdoms on the border — Kulūta, Pārsika, Kāśmir, Saindhava. (Discussed in chapter V).
Mleccha was also a term used to describe foreigners like the Yavanas, Bṛhatsaṃhitā, II, 15 — mleccha hi yavanas teṣu...

a period of time but the brāhmanical writers were always definite to identify them as people who did not follow a 'civilized way of life' according to their point of view.

The meaning of milakkha in Buddhist and Jaina texts is similar. In this case the milakkhas followed ways that were not conducive to the attainment of nirvāṇa (Enlightenment). In the Buddhist Nikāyas they are said to live in border (paccantimā) areas and are considered unintelligent and ignorant.¹⁵ In the Vinaya Piṭaka¹⁶ the ariya can disavow his training in the presence of a milakkha. The commentary on this passage explains that the milakkha in this case is the term for non-Aryan (anariya) people, the Andha Damiḷa etc.¹⁷ In Buddhaghosa's commentary on a passage from the Āṅuttara Nikāya, the Damiḷa, Kirāta, Yavana languages are listed as milakkha bhāsās.¹⁸

In the Sūtrakṛtāṅga of the Jainas the ignorance of the milakkhus is similar to that of the heretics who both repeat what the āriyas say without understanding its meaning.¹⁹ The Ācārāṅga Sūtra²⁰ forbids monks and nuns to visit border areas or cross areas where milakkhus, robbers and anāriya peoples live. The Pannavanā, the fourth upāṅga states in the first book, in the section on Man, that there are two groups of peoples, the āriya and the milakkha.²¹

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15. Āṅ. Nikāya, I, 35; Saṃyutta Nikāya, V, 466; etc. — ye paccantimesu janapadesu pacājāyanti aviññātāresu milakkhesu/
16. Vinaya Piṭaka, III, 28.
17. Samantapāsādikā, Vol. I, 255 — milakkhakaṃ nāma yo koci anariyako Andha Damiḷādi/
18. Manorathapūraṇī, Vol. II, 289 — Damiḷakirātayavanādi milakkhānaṃ bhāsā...
19. Sūtrakṛtāṅga, I, 1, 2, 15-16.
20. Ācārāṅga Sūtra, II, 3, 8-9.
21. Pannavanā, I, 37.

Drawing upon the Pannavaṇā and other Jaina texts, the compilers of the Prakrit Proper Names dictionary, have given the meaning of Milakkhu under the heading Anāriyo: 'Anāriyo — one of two kinds of people viz. Aryan and non-Aryan. They are also called milakku.'²² This gives the impression that in the Prakrit language at least, the two terms anāriyo and milakkhu were interchangeable which in fact was not the case. This was not so in Sanskrit or Pāli either and therefore the two words must be understood as separate ones. There further developed other meanings for the terms mleccha/milakkha which apparently have no connexion with the meanings that we have discussed above. From unpublished texts Monier-Williams extracts such meanings as 'a person who lives by agriculture', 'copper', 'vermilion', etc.²³

The Abhidhāna Chintāmaṇi of Hemachandra gives us mleccha and mlecchamukha as two of the twelve names for copper — tāmraṃ.²⁴ It is difficult to trace how such a meaning developed for the word mlecchā. The copper coloured complexion of a certain people described as mlecchas could have led to the use of mlecchamukha as one of the synonyms for tāmraṃ (copper). The former was by no means the only alternative name, and probably not a very popular one. The Nighaṇṭuśeṣa by the same author lists six alternatives by which laśuna (garlic) is known. One of them is mlecchakanda.²⁵ The

22. M. L. Mehta and K. R. Chandra, Prakrit Proper Names, 1972, pt. I, p. 36.

23. M. Monier-Williams, Op. Cit., 1899, p. 837.

24. Abhidhāna Chintāmaṇi, IV, 105-106 — tāmraṃ mlecchamukhaṃ śulvaṃ rakttaṃ dvaṣṭamudumbaram//105 mlecchaśāvarabhedākhyam markatāsyam kanīyasam/ brahmavarddhanam varīṣṭham sīsantu sīsapatrakam//106

25. Nighaṇṭuśeṣa, IV, 338. The same also occurs in the Abhidhāna Chintāmaṇi, IV, 252 — rasono laśuno mlecchakando'riṣṭo mahauśadham mahākandaḥ//338

commentary explains that 'because this root is dear to the mlecchas it is called mlecchakanda (mleccha root).'²⁶ In the Paia-Sadda-Mahannavo, miccha (a Prakrit form of mleccha), is stated to mean 'garlic', and 'onions'.²⁷ This dictionary draws upon texts in the various Prakrit dialects, particularly Ardha Māgadhī. The meaning of milakkha as copper also occurs in Pāli. The Theragāthā has the reference to a banner which was dyed the colour of copper — milakkhurajanam.²⁸

The original meaning of mleccha/milakkha, however, emerges in the sense of 'uncivilized', 'barbaric', or 'uncultured'. This could refer to vāc (speech), bhāṣā (language), deśa (country) or jāti (community). The designation of particular peoples as mleccha changed over the centuries. In this sense its use was not static and varied according to time and place. Mleccha and Milakkha became integral parts of the Sanskrit and Prakrit vocabularies but their etymological origins in these languages is difficult to explain.

The first occurrence of mleccha is in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa where the asura language is attributed to them — whether it is an ill-pronounced language or a foreign one, is a question to be discussed at length later.²⁹ Besides this one occurrence of the word, the Brāhmaṇas do not discuss its etymology though they use the word. The Nirukta of Yāska, which is earlier (500 B.C.-700 B.C.)³⁰ does not

26. Vācānācārya Sri Śrīvāllabhagani's commentary on the Nighaṇṭuśeṣa, IV, 338, Ahmedabad, 1968 — mlecchānām priyaḥ kando mlecchakandaḥ/

27. Sheth, Paia-Sadda-Mahannavo, (Hindi), 1963, 'miccha', p. 689. The different forms of mleccha in Ardha Māgadhī are discussed below.

28. The Thera and Therigāthā, PTS, 1930, verse 965 — milakkhurajanam rattam garahantā sakam dhajam/ tithiyānam dhajam keci dhāressanty avadātakam// K. R. Norman, (Tr.), Theragāthā, PTS, 1969 — 'Finding fault with their own banner which is dyed the colour of copper, some will wear the white banner of the sectarians.'

29. Śat. Br., III, 2, 1, 24. Discussed fully in chapter III.

30. L. Sarup, Nighaṇṭu and Nirukta, 1920, p. 54.

the word either.

To Yāska and other successive Sanskrit grammarians it was an avowed aim to trace every word to an original verbal base, irrespective of the fact that there was no resemblance between the word and its original form. The Pāṇinīya Dhātupāṭha, which is the oldest of all Dhātupāṭhas extant, contains the verbal base of mleccha as mlech³¹ — 'to speak indistinctly'.³² As the meanings of certain nouns are derived from prominent actions connected with them, therefore mlecchas were people who spoke an indistinct speech or foreign language. It has been noticed that the linguistic disparity between the mlecchas and āryas is greatly emphasized more clearly in the earlier literary references than the later ones.

The derivation of mleccha from a dhātu (root) is of no help in any attempt to determine the origin of the word. In his work on The Sanskrit Dhātupāṭhas, G. B. Palsule has remarked: 'The concept of dhātu (for Hindu grammarians) had only a practical use in explaining the language through its analysis without thereby implying that the dhātu afforded the ultimate explanation.'³³ The late appearance of the word mleccha in Vedic literature with no precedent of a likely similar form, and, at a later stage the appearance of the verbal base in Pāṇini is an apt example of the above statement.³⁴

The past participle passive mliṣṭa together with mlecchita, both meaning 'spoken indistinctly or barbarously', are also attributed to

31. O. Böhtlingk, Pāṇini Grammatik, 1887, Dhātup., I, 220; X, 121.

32. M. Monier-Williams, Op. Cit., 1899, p. 837

33. G. B. Palsule, The Sanskrit Dhātupāṭhas, 1961, p. ix.

34. The verbal forms of mleccha are not attested in Sanskrit texts other than grammatical works. The most common form used in all types of Sanskrit literature is mleccha.

Pāṇini.³⁵ Patañjali in his Mahābhāṣya gives us the infinitive form mlecchitavai side by side with apabhāṣitavai.³⁶ Likewise the Dhātupāṭha of Hemachandra lists the participle mliṣṭa and the dhātu mlech, but interestingly gives the forms — mimleccha, memleṣṭi, memleśvaḥ, memleśmaḥ, memlecchavaḥ etc.³⁷ The Mādhaviya Dhātuvṛtti of Sāyaṇa (a 15th century? A.D. text) also states the intensive forms memleśmi, memliśmas, memleṣṭi etc., but in explaining how the dhātu was formed puts mlekṣi as a possible derivative.³⁸ I. Scheftelowitz quotes these forms and uses the evidence of Sāyaṇa to shed light on the hypothetical Old Indian (Vedic) forms of mleccha.³⁹

In Pāli milakkha, milakkhu, milakkhuka, are forms which appear consistently in Buddhist literature. In the Jātakas and the Dīgha Nikāya there occurs the word milāca meaning 'forest dweller' which according to Geiger and Kern is the original variant of milakkha.⁴⁰ The Prakrit forms are more variable. In the Jaina texts, the Older Ardha Māgadhī has milakkhu, milikkha, milikkhu, miliccha, mileccha, miccha while Māhārāṣṭrī has the participle miliṭṭha. The most common form, one which is found in the poetry of nearly all the Prakrit languages — Ardha Māgadhī, Māhārāṣṭrī, Jaina Māhārāṣṭrī, Saurasenī, Apabhraṃśa — is mēccha.⁴¹ The diverse spellings are explained by the variations and exchange of certain consonantal groups or vowel relationships in the different dialects.

35. Aṣṭādhyāyī, VII, 2, 18 — ksubdhasvāntadhvāntalagnamliṣṭviribdhetyādi//

36. Subrahmanya Sāstri, Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya, Vol. I, 1944, p. 25; I, 1, 1.

37. J. Kirste, The Dhātupāṭha of Hemachandra, 1901, I, 119.

38. The Mādhaviya Dhātuvṛtti of Sāyaṇāchārya, KSS, 1934, I, 203.

39. I. Scheftelowitz, 'Kleine Mitteilungen', ZDMG, Vol. 72, 1918, p. 243

40. Jātaka, XIV, 486; XVII, 524.

41. R. Pischel, Comparative Grammar of Prakrit Languages, 1965, para 17.

R. L. Turner in the Comparative Dictionary of Indo-Aryan Languages has given the modern Indo-Aryan forms of the word mleccha — Kāśmīri mīch for 'a non-Hindu', Bengali mech for 'a Tibeto-Burman tribe', Panjābi milech for 'Muslim', 'unclean', 'outcaste', 'wretch', Pahāri mālēch for 'dirty' and Sinhalese malak, maladu, milidu, miliñdu for 'wild savage'.⁴² The existence of such varied forms in Old, Middle and Modern Indo-Aryan languages does not in any way imply a constant change of the meaning of mleccha; though the context in which they were used raises interesting problems.

It is necessary at this point to examine the etymology of the word mleccha. A number of views have been put forward; in fact most of the research carried out on the subject of mlecchas concerns the etymology of the word. Well-known scholars in the field of Indo-European, Indo-Aryan and Dravidian linguistics have made these suggestions and their views cannot be ignored. However, in accepting them one has to be cautious and consider them in the light of corroborative evidence and in the general context. It must be stated at the outset that the nature of the investigation is such that it is doubtful whether any full satisfactory conclusion can be drawn.

'Etymology is a science and should be studied for its own sake...'⁴³ says Yāska. The Sanskrit grammarians do not fully stand by this maxim as far as the etymology of the word mleccha is concerned. They give its root and its meaning but give no hint of its etymon. This leaves ground for the possibility that it was a borrowed word especially as it appears so late in the Vedic literature. Besides the fact that the Dravidian and Muṇḍa families of languages from

42. R. L. Turner, Comparative Dictionary of Indo-Aryan Languages, 1966, 10398.

43. Nirukta, I, 15-17.

which words could be borrowed,⁴⁴ flourished on the subcontinent before the Aryans came to India, and there must also have been much interchange and borrowing among the various dialects of the Indo-Aryan languages themselves. As Louis Renou has remarked: 'Tout comme le Sanskrit Védique, la langue classique a subi des influences populaires....Le vocabulaire ancien s'est enrichi constamment en puisant aux couches sociales inférieures, cela en dépit d'objections éventuelles des grammairiens et des poéticiens.'⁴⁵ It cannot be overlooked that as early as the 5th century B.C., Yāska observed the dialectical differences in the spoken language of his time.⁴⁶

There can be no doubt that the etymology of the Sanskrit word mleccha must be considered in conjunction with the corresponding forms of the word in Prakrit and Pāli, such as milakkha. This complicates matters considerably: must one look for a separate etymon for milakkha or derive it directly from the Sanskrit mleccha in accordance with the method usually followed by Indian grammarians. It may be preferable to look for a separate etymology of milakkha as there are strong reasons to doubt that Sanskrit was always the source of the different Prakrits.

By the term Prakrit the Indian grammarians comprehended a multitude of literary languages which were all based on Sanskrit. It is common to have explanations like: prakṛtiḥ samskr̥tam/ tatra bhavañ tata āgatañ vā prākṛtam/ 'Sanskrit is the natural condition, what is derived from it is called Prakrit.'⁴⁷ Regarding the subject

44. T. Burrow, The Sanskrit Language, 1972, pp. 373-374.

45. J. Wackernagel, Altindische Grammatik, 1957, Introduction générale par Louis Renou, p. 29.

46. Nirukta, II, 2.

47. Hemachandra, I, 1. A. C. Woolner, Introduction to Prakrit, 1928, p. 3 considers this explanation as 'perfectly intelligible even if it be not historically correct.'

objectively and purely from the linguistic point of view, it is the contention of most modern scholars that Prakrit dialects go back to the popular spoken dialects which were never superseded by Sanskrit. It seems quite plausible that the natural development of popular languages was simultaneous and parallel with the development of Sanskrit.⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that Indian inscriptions before the Gupta period use Prakrit in preference to Sanskrit, though the rise of Prakrit as a literary language is later. A suggestion by Pischel is worth noting here - 'all the Prakrit languages have a series of common grammatical and lexical characteristics with the Vedic language and such are significantly missing from Sanskrit.'⁴⁹ Above all prakṛti means 'natural condition', so that its derivation prākṛta should mean 'natural language', while saṁskṛta literally means 'polished', 'made perfect'. This would suggest that the above statement that Sanskrit is the source of Prakrit must be regarded with serious doubt. For this reason it is possible to postulate an independent origin for Prakrit milakka which could, as will be seen below, have been transformed in Sanskrit to mleccha.

Geiger gives a short and seemingly viable proposition of milāca being a variant of milakka and derived through milacca > milaccha.⁵⁰ Kern fully agrees with this theory.⁵¹ The word milāca occurs in the Jātaka stories and its meaning given in the Pāli Text Society Dictionary is 'a wild man of the woods' or 'forest dweller'.⁵² The

48. A. C. Woolner, Op. Cit., p. 3 points out that sometimes an 'Old Indo-Aryan form required to explain a Prākṛit word is not found in Sanskrit at all or only in a late work and obviously borrowed from Prākṛit.'

49. R. Pischel, Op. Cit., para 6, p. 4.

50. W. Geiger, Pāli Literature and Language, (Tr. B.K.Ghosh), 1956, p. 104.

51. H. Kern Toevoegselen op't Woordenboek Van Childers, (N.R. XVI, No. 5), pt. ii, p. 165.

52. Rhys Davids, Pāli English Dictionary, PTS, 1925, p. 157.

word mleccha is also often used in Sanskrit literature as alluding to tribes living in the forests or mountains.⁵³ Geiger gives no reasons, however, for the change of -c- to -cca- and then to -ccha-. According to Wackernagel⁵⁴ Pāli -kkha- is secondary to -ccha- while Pischel⁵⁵ states that variations between -kkha- and -ccha- are quite frequent. If milaccha (there exists a miliccha in Ardha Māgadhī) is the prototype of milakkha, it also explains the so far unclarified dichotomy between Sanskrit mleccha and Pāli milakkha.

I. Scheftelowitz⁵⁶ strongly advocates the complete separation of Pāli milakkha from Sanskrit mleccha, which he attributes to two different but Indo-Aryan word families. Milakkha is related to Old Indian mūrkhā meaning 'fool'. Besides Vedic mūrkhā, it is also related to such Indo-European forms as Lithuanian mūlkis 'fool', mlôcati 'silent', Slavonic mjelcas 'to be silent', Polish milozec 'silent' and so on. The phonological links of milakkha with these Indo-European forms and even with Vedic mūrkhā are complicated. Liebich⁵⁷ in his article firmly criticizes this theory. According to him it is rash to dispute the close relationship of these two words (mleccha and milakkha) as they are used in exactly the same sense in literature; in addition experts like Kuhn, Franke, Stede, Pischel, following the ancient Indian grammarians, have held fast to this belief. Vittore Pisani⁵⁸ in the Indo-Germanische Forschungen finds the view of Scheftelowitz, who connected milakkha with mūrkhā almost

53. Mbh., II, 47, 19-20; II, 48, 7-8; etc.

54. A. Wackernagel, Op. Cit., Vol. I, p. 157.

55. R. Pischel, Op. Cit., para 316-17; para 321.

56. I. Scheftelowitz, 'Kleine Mitteilungen', ZDMG, Vol. 72, 1918, pp. 243-244.

57. B. Liebich, 'Nochmals mleccha', BSOAS, Vol. 8, 1936, p. 626.

58. V. Pisani, 'Kleinere Beiträge', IF, Vol. 57, 1938-40, pp. 56-58.

unbelievable, though he admits that his suggestions for the separation of mleccha and milakkha cannot easily be dismissed.

Both Pisani and Scheftelowitz⁵⁹ trace the origin of mleccha back to the same Indo-European root blaesus and Cymric bloesg; both the words meaning 'stuttering', 'stammering', or 'lispings'. That the Latin blaesus is borrowed from the Greek blax meaning 'feet bent outward', is almost certain according to Pisani while Scheftelowitz rejects this altogether as the meanings of the two are very different.⁶⁰ On the other hand, he himself takes the stand that the present palatal pronunciation of mleccha must go back to an earlier dental one and through a very intricate phonetic change could be derived from Indo-European *mlais-sko; this formation being a precursor of both Latin blaesus and Cymric bloesg. *Mlais-sko is a reconstruction, not available in any recorded text and above all scarcely a pronounceable word. However, in *mlais-sko we see the phonetic change to mleccha more closely linked than between milakkha and mūrka. Pisani retains his views of comparing blaesus and mleccha and then relates them to the Slovenian words mlaskati and mlěskati.

Whatever the etymological links between mleccha/milakkha and blaesus/bloesg, one cannot ignore the striking similarity in the meaning of the four above terms. They are all related to the stotter, stammer, mispronunciation, lisp, etc. of speech.

There is a solid bloc of opinion supported among others by well known scholars like R. Pischel and Sir Harold Bailey that both mleccha and milakkha draw their forms from a common Indo-Aryan original. Pischel's theory is that all the Prakrit, Pāli and Sanskrit representations of the word, both in poetry and prose, are derived from a common

59. Pisani, Op. Cit., p. 56ff.; Scheftelowitz, Op. Cit., p. 243ff.

60. There is a difference of opinion among several Indo-European linguists on this subject.

basic i.e. *mlaska.⁶¹ In reconstructing this hypothetical form he did not explain the process of phonetical change that would have occurred. In another context, however, he has stated that -ska- and -skha- become -kka- in Māgadhī, Ardhamāgadhī and Jaina Māhārāṣṭrī. This view is apparently based on the statements of ancient Indian grammarians on the subject.⁶² The relationship between -kka- and -ccha- is discussed below.

The starting point of Sir Harold Bailey's⁶³ thesis is the form *mleḥṣ or *mliḥṣ. He explains that there is a variation in the Veda between -cch- (-ch-) and -kṣ- (e.g. Atharva Veda parikṣit and variant paricchit). 'Hence' he concludes 'Satapatha Brāhmaṇa mleccha may be traced to older *mleḥṣa. The -kṣ- was replaced by -kka- or by retroflex -ch- or by palatalized -cch- in different dialects.⁶⁴ He does not fail to add that the Vedic sounds -kṣa-, -kṣa-, -khyā- go back to Avestan -xsā-, -kṣ- and can also be expressed in Arabic by the sound -kh-; thus this could prove that mleccha is a foreign word borrowed by Sanskrit.

S. M. Katre,⁶⁵ in explaining the sound -kṣ-, has also taken the examples of milakkha and mleccha. He has used the Sanskrit word mṛkṣayati or mṛakṣayati (from mṛkṣati, meaning 'to speak indistinctly' or 'incorrectly') as the original forms. With dialectic variations these change to mḷkṣati, mḷkṣayati: -ḷ- reduces to -li- in Ardha Māgadhī mlich, and -kṣ- to -cch- or -kka- in Pāli milakkha (through mlakṣa). In agreement with the views of Pischel and Wackernagel

61. R. Pischel, Op. Cit., para 233.

62. R. Pischel, Op. Cit., para 306. (Vararuci, 3, 29, 51; Caṇḍa, 3, 3; Hemachandra, 2, 4, 90). The examples given are skandha > khandha, maskara > makkhara among many others.

63. Sir Harold Bailey, 'Appendix of A Periplus of Magan and Meluhha', BSOAS, Vol. 36, 1973, Appendix, p. 584.

64. Ibid., p. 584.

65. S. M. Katre, 'Sanskrit 'kṣ' in Pāli', JBORS, Vol. 23, 1937, pp. 82-86.

he comments that the sounds -kha- and -cha- alternate in the various Prakrit dialects.

It is essential here to discuss the transition from -kṣa- > -kkha- > -cca- which has been used so often to explain the relationship between mleccha and milakkha. Interestingly Dr. S. R. Banerjee⁶⁶ has written an article on the etymology of the Prakrit words rukḥa and vaccha and with the explanations given therein a parallel could be drawn with the etymology of milakkha and mleccha. A significant point of dissimilarity occurs in drawing such a parallel i.e. rukṣa from which rukḥa is derived occurs in the Rg Veda (vi, iii, 7)⁶⁷ and is not a hypothetical reconstruction. On the other hand, Sir Harold Bailey's reconstruction *mlekṣa does not occur in the Vedas. Vedic Sanskrit -kṣ-, it is explained has an equivalent in Indo-European *-ks- and *-qs-.⁶⁸ The two sounds are retained as distinct ones in Avestan and Old Persian but become one in Sanskrit and again diverge in Middle Indo-Aryan languages.⁶⁸ cf.

Could milakkha (Pāli) then have had quite an independent development? It need not necessarily have any connection with miliccha, miccha, meccha (Prakrit) and mleccha (Sanskrit). This would probably explain the late appearance of the word mleccha in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa as Sanskrit phonetics was now consciously or unconsciously being influenced by Middle Indo-Aryan languages. 'The

66. S. R. Banerjee, 'On the Etymology of Prakrit Rukḥa and Vaccha meaning Tree', Bulletin of the Philological Society of Calcutta, Vol. III, pt. i, 1962, pp. 13-16.

67. Ibid., p. 14.

68. Reproduced from S. R. Banerjee, Op. Cit., p. 14

IE	Sans.	MIA	AV	OP
<u>*ks</u>	<u>ks</u>	<u>och</u>	<u>ś</u>	<u>ś</u>
<u>*qs</u>	<u>ks</u>	<u>kkh</u>	<u>xś</u>	<u>xś</u>

influence of the east is seen in the words of the Yajur, Atharva Vedas and Brāhmaṇas.⁶⁹ S. K. Chatterjee includes mleccha, a corrupt of m̐laiksa, in his list of debased words.⁷⁰ Even in the original sources best speech among men is assigned to people coming from the North,⁷¹ which is contrasted with debased speech of the Vrātyas. The āsuraya or vrātya speech according to Weber⁷² probably refers to 'Prakritic dialectic differences, assimilation of groups of consonants, and similar changes peculiar to Prakrit vernaculars.' There are, however no reasons to believe that Prakrit dialects developed only in eastern India. Their development in western India is also plausible.⁷³

Liebich⁷⁴ has pointed out another equivalent term for mleccha in the R̥g Veda which completely disappears later — m̐dh̐ravāc. The meaning given for it is 'whose speech is defective or faulty'. Monier-Williams⁷⁵ gives the meaning as 'speaking injuriously or contumeliously'. This makes it easier to accept the idea that mleccha had strong Prakrit influences.

The sole emphasis in the preceding few paragraphs has been to establish an Indo-Aryan etymon for the word mleccha and milakkha. Several well known scholars have given separate etymologies for the two words but when the question of connecting them etymologically arises, the usual explanation of milakkha being a variant of mleccha is given.

Much ink has flown on the highly controversial subject of the

69. S. K. Chatterjee, The Origin and Development of the Bengali Vol. I, 1926, p. 44.

70. Ibid., p. 44.

71. Kausītaki Br., VII, 6; Sat. Br., III, 2, 3, 15.

72. A. Weber, The history of Indian Literature, 1914, pp. 67-68.

73. The association of the origin of Prakrit milakkha with a Dravidian substratum is in western India — Discussed below.

74. B. Liebich, Op. Cit. BSOAS, Vol. 8, p. 624.

75. Monier-Williams, Op. Cit., 1899, p. 831.

origin of Prakrit dialects and their relationship to Sanskrit and it seems unnecessary to plunge into that controversy here.

Attention can, however, be drawn to the fact that it is more likely that mleccha is a variant of milakkha. Dr. Banerjee's explanation⁷⁶ shows that change of Indo-European sounds *-ks- and *-qs- in India, from which one can conclude that -cch- in mleccha and -kch- in milakkha are sounds akin more to Middle Indo-Aryan than to Vedic or Sanskrit. Moreover, he says, 'the development of Indo-European *-qs- > Sanskrit -ks- > Middle Indo-Aryan -kch- is due to the orthoepy of this sound on Indian soil.'⁷⁷

The development of Sanskrit has to be seen in connection with that of the various Prakrit dialects. It is unfortunate that the Buddhist writings of Hinayāna Canon and the Aśokan inscriptions are the earliest extant evidence of the latter. This, however, does not rule out the possibility that Sanskrit writings earlier than these texts were influenced by Prakrit and mleccha may be just one of those words to prove this.

More recently, however, attempts have been made by scholars to draw a connection between the Sumerian (?) word Meluhha and the Sanskrit word mleccha. Accepting mleccha to be etymologically derivative from meluhha (how it is not stated), the Finnish study on the 'Decipherment of the Proto-Indian Inscriptions of the Indus Civilization' points out a closer connection between meluhha and Pāli milakkha if the Sumerian cuneiform characters are read with an alternative phonetic value — me-lah-ha instead of me-luh-ha.⁷⁸ Nonetheless,

76. S. R. Banerjee, Op. Cit., p. 14, footnote 11

77. It is impossible to envisage that there was a linguistic vacuum in northern India when the Indo-Aryan language system was introduced. The possibility that the sound -kch- in MIA could have been influenced by proto-Dravidian languages cannot be avoided.

78. Parpola et al., Decipherment of the Proto-Dravidian Inscription of the Indus Valley, No. 1, 1969, p. 50. Discussed below.

any sort of connection between meluhha and mleccha is based on the assumption that the former was a place name identified with northwestern or western India. Further, the identification of meluhha with India, or the similarity of form between the words meluhha and mleccha or milakkha are two subjects of study where no evidence has proved conclusive.

Meluhha as a place name is attested in the Sumerian and Old Akkadian texts. It is almost always mentioned in connection with Mesopotamian trade. The three countries Tilmun, Magan and Meluhha are as a rule cited in this order, pointing to the fact that Meluhha was the most distant of the three. The articles imported from Meluhha were copper, gold, ivory birds, u^u wood identified with ebony and another wood that has been translated as 'sea wood' — its description Hansman fits with the mangrove wood found on the coasts of Sind and eastern Baluchistan.⁷⁹ The problems of identification of this place are numerous and particularly confused as the various occurrences of Meluhha seem to indicate different areas at different periods. We are here concerned with the early Sumerian cuneiform references of the Old Babylonian period as these are the ones that apparently point to western India as Meluhha.

Geographically the Indus Valley civilization was the closest to that of Sumer and thus it would be logical for it to have contact with the latter. Here, more direct archaeological evidence has revealed contact between the two areas via the Persian Gulf. Cultural relations and even an appreciable commerce was postulated between the two civilizations when Indus type seals were found at Ur, Kish, Tell Asmar and other Mesopotamian sites.⁸⁰ Later, a new dimension was

79. J. Hansam, 'A Periplus of Magan and Meluhha', BSOAS, Vol. 36, pt. iii, 1973, p. 560.

80. Sir Mortimer Wheeler, The Indus Valley Civilization and Beyond, 1966, pp. 63-66.

added to the trade relations between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley when a similar type of steatite circular seals were found at Lothal and around the Persian Gulf. With this evidence several scholars⁸¹ of early Middle Eastern Studies agree to regard Meluhha as one area of the Indus civilization but disagree on which part of it should be identified with that name.⁸²

Besides the commodities (listed above) which were exported from Meluhha and also proved to be found in northwestern and western India, the Ur texts specifically mention the 'seafaring country of Meluhha'. Leemans takes up this last point to prove his thesis of Meluhha being the west coast (modern state of Gujarat) of India.⁸³ The excavations at Lothal he says, have shown 'that the people of the Indus (Harappan) civilization were sea-faring.' Further, 'Carbon dating 14 determinations have shown that the dockyard at Lothal has fallen into disuse by c. 1800 B.C. This date agrees with the end of the south Mesopotamian Meluhha trade about the time.'⁸⁴ Gujarat was perhaps the last bulwark of the Indus civilization. The late appearance of the word mleccha in Sanskrit is linked up with J. G. Gadd's assertion that mleccha is of non-Indo-Aryan origin.

The association of meluhha with mleccha is technically not indicative of the foreign origin of the word mleccha itself. A mere hint of the similarity of form of the two words proves nothing. It is also difficult to state whether the first occurrence of mlecchas

81. W. F. Leemans, Foreign Trade in the Old Babylonian Period, 1960; 'Trade Relations of Babylonia', JESHO, Vol. III, 1960, p. 30ff.; 'Old Babylonian Letters and Economic History', JESHO, Vol XI, 1968, pp. 215-226 (Meluhha as western India); J. Hansam, Op. Cit., pp. 554-583 (eastern Baluchistan as Meluhha).

82. Recent archaeological excavations have shown a wide extent of the Indus Valley civilization. M. Wheeler, Op. Cit., 1966, pp. 62-63.

83. Discussed at length by W. F. Leemans, Op. Cit., JESHO, Vol XI, 1968 pp. 215-226.

84. Ibid., pp. 222-223.

in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa referred to the people of Gujarat. In fact, in the same text (Sat. Br., XIII, 8, 15) the easterners are described as asurya and it is asura speech (Sat. Br., III, 2, 1, 24) which the mlecchas are supposed to use.

Comparatively more persuasive is Pentti Aalto's suggestion of connecting milakkha with meluhha. The Finnish team, however, worked on three very general hypotheses by stating: 1) 'the identification of meluhha with India is well-established and is corroborated by its etymological derivative in Sanskrit mleccha..' 2) the bearers of the Indus Valley civilization were most probably Dravidian and that there existed a substratum of proto-Dravidian languages and 3) the cuneiform characters me-luh-ha should be read with an alternative phonetic value me-lah-ha.⁸⁵ The 'so-called' variants of Sanskrit mleccha are the Prakrit forms miliccha, mēccha, miccha and Pāli ones milakkha, milakchu, milukkha. According to these scholars '-khh-' cannot be a derivation from -cch- but must have a different origin.'⁸⁶

The 'different origin' is sought in the Dravidian languages. With the help of the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary (DED)⁸⁷ the first half of the original reconstruction attempted for both meluhha and milakkha is DED 4173 *mē, mēl, mēlu, mēla, mēli, mēlukku which all generally mean 'that which is above; high, superior, good, excellent, fine, western.'⁸⁸ For the second half of the two names the reconstruction DED 8 akam is sought. This means 'house, home, inside, agricultural tract.'⁸⁹ Akam is also attached to the name of the

85. Parpola et al., Op. Cit., No. 3, 1970, p. 37. The me-lāh-ha are a clan from a Dravidian Sindhi tribe known as Mohāna.

86. Ibid., No. 2, 1969, p. 38.

87. T. Burrow and M. B. Emeneau, Dravidian Etymological Dictionary, 1961.

88. Parpola et al., Op. Cit., No. 2, 1969, p. 38.

89. Ibid., No. 3, 1970, p. 37.

ancient country of the Tamils.

I. Mahadevan⁹⁰ has also tried to draw Dravidian parallels in the interpretation of the proto-Indian script of the Indus Valley civilization. Regarding the term mleccha he draws attention to the decipherment of the symbol $\uparrow X$ as *mil-ey. Through this transition of sounds — *mil-ey *mil-ec mleccha — he concludes: 'It now appears from the decipherment of these symbols that mleccha of the Rg Veda were chieftains of the proto-Indian civilization who called themselves *mil-ey (literally 'resplendent') and whose names occupy the bulk of the seal texts.'⁹¹

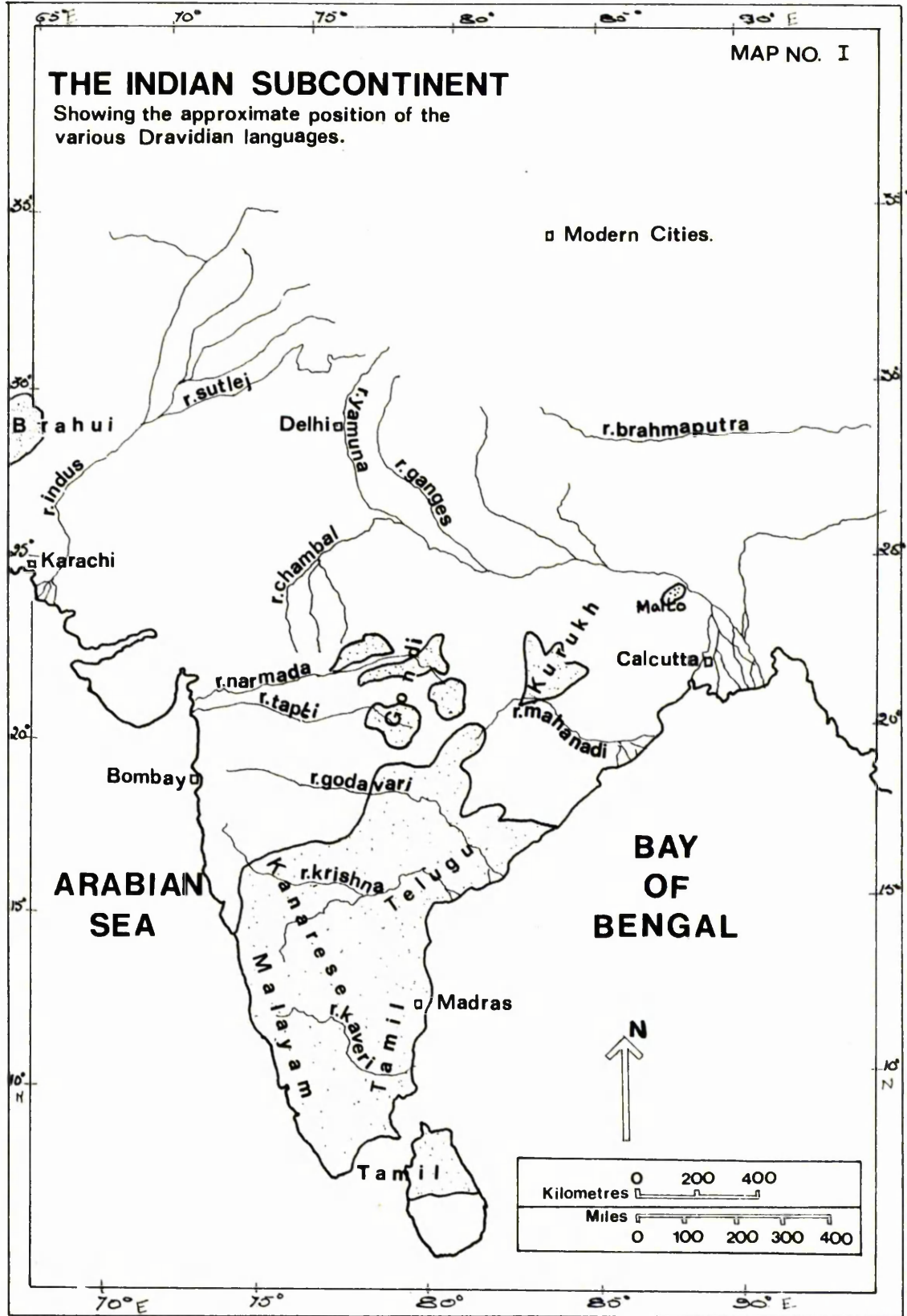
In a recent article Romila Thapar⁹² has tried to add linguistic evidence to the identification of the Sumerian place names. Meluhha is identified with Gujarat, Makan with Sind and Baluchistan and Dilmun as also part of western India. Our concern here is only with the name Meluhha. Her views also point to a probable proto-Dravidian original for it in the form *mēlukku (DED 4173). The root formation is the same as before -mēl but the latter half of the word is suggested to be *ukku indicating direction as in the terms *ten-ukku 'south' (DED 2839) and vaṭ-a-kku 'north' (DED 4267). In Sumerian the sound -kk- could have been transliterated into -hh-, as in her opinion the word Meluhha having no recognizable equivalent meaning in the above language is therefore, non-Sumerian.⁹³ Consequently the connection with mleccha or milakkha follows — 'If Meluhha was derived from mēlukku...it would be interesting to speculate whether this might not also provide the clue to the origin of the word mleccha... In

90. I. Mahadevan, 'Dravidian parallels in Proto-Indian script', Journal of Tamil Studies, Vol. II, pt. i, 1970, pp. 157-276.

91. Ibid., p. 184.

92. R. Thapar, 'A possible identification of Meluhha, Dilmun and Makan', JESHO, Vol XVIII, pp. 1-42. It is pointed out that this article is 'in the nature of a tentative hypothesis and does not yet permit generalizations on a wider scale...'p. 42.

93. Ibid., p. 5 and p. 10.



the relationship of milakkha to mleccha the occurrence of -kkha- is unexplained in most lexicons. Vinaya Pitaka associates milakkha with Andhras and Tamils. Could the original mleccha then have been the proto-Dravidian speakers of Mēlukku/western India who were either mis-pronouncing Sanskrit or were continuing to speak their own language?⁹⁴ In making these assertions Dr. Thapar believes that there must have originally existed a Dravidian language in India and at the time of the Indo-Aryan expansions there was a period of bilingualism.

T. Burrow⁹⁵ has at length discussed the evidence for non-Aryan influences on Sanskrit. There must undoubtedly have been such influences as a number of features are peculiar to Indo-Aryan and absent in other Indo-European languages. There is evidence for Dravidian language specimens in northern India today,⁹⁶ which suggests a larger area covered by these languages in ancient India. The gradual development of Sanskrit must have been in contact with such languages. Thus he wrote: '...and when Sanskrit artificially established by the grammarians, this process was continued in the popular speech to produce first the Middle Indo-Aryan languages and finally the Modern Indo-Aryan ones.'⁹⁷ Such broad generalizations about the history of languages can be made and accepted as a probability as when it comes to specific words more concrete references are necessary. Words without an Indo-European etymology found in Sanskrit vocabulary and also in Dravidian literature can be used as

94. Ibid., p. 10, footnote 34.

95. T. Burrow, The Sanskrit Language, 1972, chapter VIII, p. 374ff.

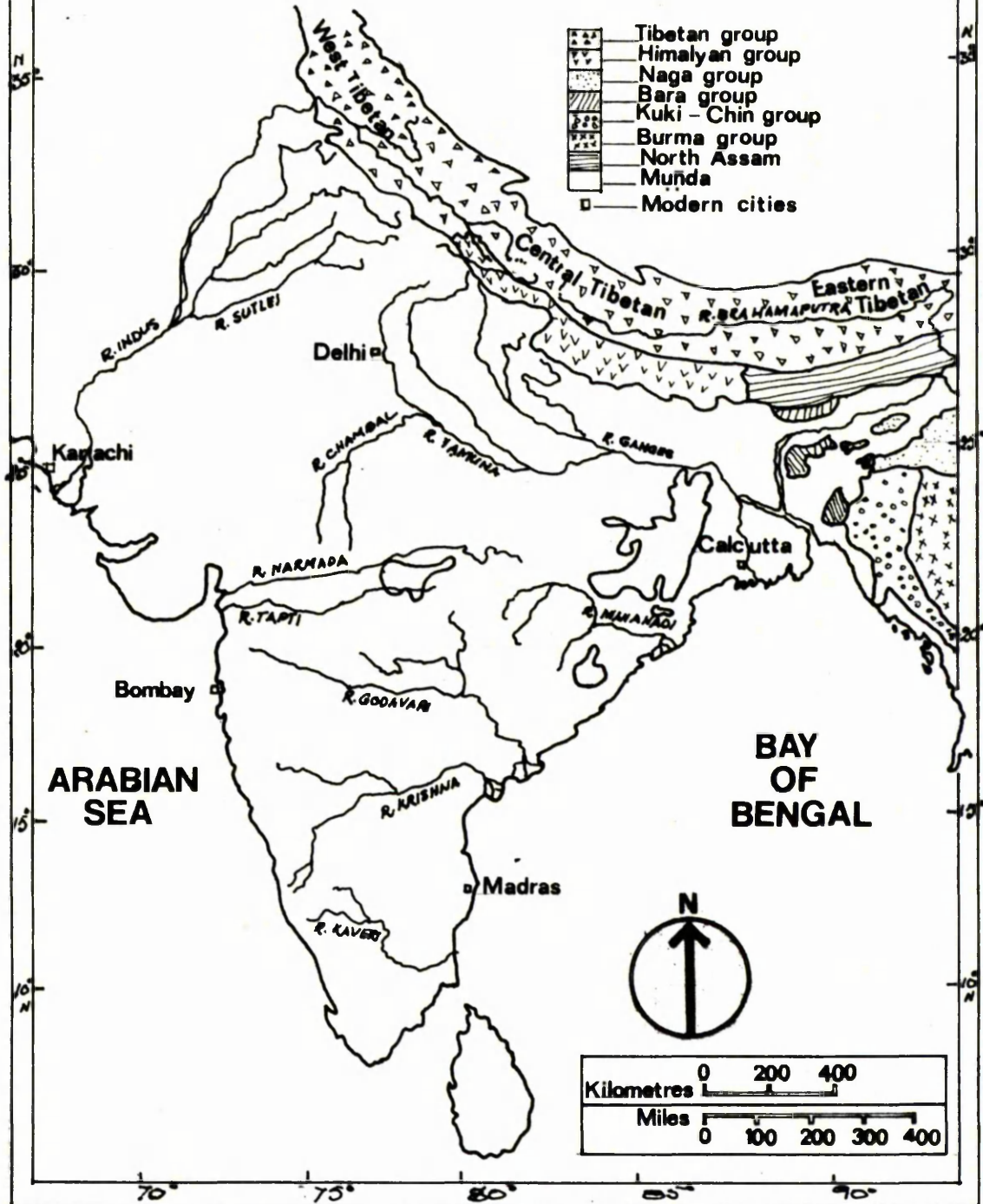
96. G. A. Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India, Volume on Dravidian and Munda Languages. Brahui in north west India, Malto in the Rajmali hills of the Santhal Parganas (p. 427) and Kurukh in the Chota Nagpur plateau (p. 407). See also maps attached.

97. T. Burrow, Op. Cit., p. 373.

MAP NO. II

THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

Showing the approximate positions of the Non-Indo-Aryan languages
 1. Various groups of the Tibeto-Burman sub-family.
 2. The Munda family.



examples to explain the above point. But etymological reconstructions by Pentti Aalto — meluhḥa > melahḥa > melāhha > *mēl-akam > milakkha and by Dr. Thapar — *mēlukku > meluhḥa > *mēlukku > milakkha — cannot be regarded as final. (Perhaps they were not intended to be final). The intermediate forms have not been recorded in any texts. They are theoretical reconstructions from modern Dravidian languages on the assumption that there existed before c. 2000 B.C. a proto-Dravidian language. Even if one accepts their derivation of milakkha, their theory does not explain the etymology of the word mleccha and above all what is the relationship between milakkha and mleccha? It must not be forgotten that if the Dravidian group of languages had spread all over India, there could also have existed other non-Aryan linguistic groups which are now totally extinguished by the gradual Indo-Aryan incursions. Could mleccha and milakkha have been related to similar words in those languages?

The later use of mleccha for some non-Aryan tribes in brāhmanical literature has perhaps proved to be a strong basis for scholars to look for a non-Indo-Aryan etymology for the word mleccha. One such attempt has been made by Robert Shafer⁹⁸ who derives mleccha from proto-Bodish (proto-Tibetan) *mltṣe meaning 'tongue' and Kukish mlei. Without knowing the phonology of Tibeto-Burman languages and their relationship to Sanskrit, it is impossible to totally discredit this derivation. This theory also assumed contact between the Indo-Aryans and Tibetans at a very early stage. But to associate this with the early application of mleccha to non-Aryan tribes of the Assam Hills is working in isolation. Such tribes who lived in the Vindhya, the Teria region of the Himalayas, on the sea-coasts of Western India were also referred to by mleccha at various places in

98. R. Shafer, Ethnography of Ancient India, 1954, p. 23.

the Mahābhārata and the Purānas. Also, the application of the term mleccha from the early centuries A.D. was on a broad socio-cultural scale irrespective of linguistic and ethnic barriers.

A similar attempt, but in this case the identification of mlecchas with a particular group of foreigners, the Phoenicians, has been made by R. Sengupta.⁹⁹ He derives mleccha from Molech or Moloch, a god of the sea-farers, Molech (or Molek) was a fierce, self satisfied masculine god who was opposed to human society and its refinements. His temple was away from the city or village where a sacrifice called molk was performed and the first born child was burnt alive. 'People who worshipped him were called Mlechcha and the word in a course of time became synonymous with barbarians.'¹⁰⁰ He relates this to the Indian context by pointing out that the the Phoenicians came to India. He admits (p. 183) that no historical records prove the exodus of the Phoenicians to India, as they do in North Africa after the Assyrian attacks, but still states: 'Phoenicians are known to have established contacts with India in the beginning of the first millenium B.C.' (p. 182). The reasons he gives for the contacts between the Phoenician traders and the trading ports of India are far-fetched. For example, he assumes that the fame of the Phoenicians as ivory workers in the ancient world should necessarily be associated with the ivory work done in ancient India.¹⁰¹ He, however, insists: 'The Satavahanas, being overlords of western coastal regions, were acquainted with the craftsmanship of the mleccha and yavana ivory carvers. So it was natural for them to rely on the ivory carvers of Vidisa rather than the stone carvers, who had no

99. R. Sengupta, 'On the identity of the "Mlechchas"', K.A.N. Sastri Felicitation Volume, 1971, pp. 180-186.

100. Ibid., p. 181.

101. Ibid., pp. 182-184.

such experience, ...¹⁰² He ends thus, 'So the people of Phoenician were called the Mlechcha.'¹⁰³

The arguments presented by Sengupta cannot be fully accepted. The significant question here is: Did the term mleccha first apply to the Phoenicians and later to all foreigners, just as the term Yavana first applied to the Greeks but from the eleventh century A.D. to Muslims? As to the Greeks we have historical evidence of their coming to India. For the Phoenicians there is no such evidence. Therefore, his identification of the Phoenicians with mlecchas is unconvincing. The Mahābhārata, which he also quotes, gives no hint that the mlecchas of the western sea-coast were foreigners; they could well have been local indigenous tribes. It must be granted, however, that there is some phonetic similarity between the Molech and mleccha but this is insufficient reason for assuming an etymological connection.

K. P. Jayaswal echoes the same theory that mlecchas originally applied to a specific group of foreigners — 'Like Yavana, mleccha is a foreign word, and like Yavana it originally meant a specific foreign people.'¹⁰⁴ His reasons for such a statement are that 1) mleccha is the Sanskrit representation of Hebrew melekh meaning 'king' and 2) the utterance he lavah! he lavah! in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa is a specimen of mleccha language. The cry he lavah is also linked by him to Hebrew ēlōāh (plural ēlōhîm) meaning 'God'. His final conclusion is that: 'The foreign nation intended by the term Mlechchha was thus

102. Ibid., p. 185. He supports this statement by epigraphic evidence from I. Bühler, EL, Vol. II, 1892, p. 92 which cannot be traced to this reference given by him.

103. Ibid., p. 186.

104. K. P. Jayaswal, 'Kleine Mitteilungen', ZDMG, Vol 68, 1914, pp. 719-720.

anyhow connected with the Hebrew.¹⁰⁵

Jayaswal has centered his arguments around the hymn of the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa which means that if we apply the meaning of melekh (king) to this passage, it would be inconsistent in the context. Should mleccha etymologically be a representation of melekh when the meanings of the two words are so different? This reference to mleccha occurs in connection with the struggle between the devas and asuras (gods and demons) when the latter were overpowered by the former. Asura is used for gods in the R̥g Veda and earlier Brāhmaṇas and thus related to Persian ahura (god). If there was any connection with foreigners in this case it was with the Persians and not with one of the Semitic peoples.

On the view that he lavaḥ should have been a specimen of 'mleccha language', Liebich¹⁰⁶ gives convincing criticism. He draws attention to the Mahābhāṣya variation helayo helayo, where the commentator opines that the cry is a deformed form of he'rayo he'rayo (O enemies! O enemies!). K. C. Chatterjee,¹⁰⁷ in his translation of the Mahābhāṣya, explains that the mlecchatva of the asuras consists in their not being able to pronounce -r- and -y- and further adds: 'the change of -r- to -l- and -y- to -v- is not infrequent in Prakrit and Pāli.'¹⁰⁸ This would indicate that he lavaḥ he lavaḥ is not, as Jayaswal said a specimen of 'mleccha language', but a mispronunciation. For this reason Patañjali enjoins brāhmaṇas to learn grammar and thus avoid becoming mleccha.¹⁰⁹

105. Ibid., p. 719 — He further points out that his 'explanation gets historical support by the discovery of the Boghazköi inscription which establishes the fact of contact between the Hindu and Semitic civilizations.' Any contact suggested by this inscription should be with ancient Persian civilization rather than the Semitic one.

106. B. Liebich, ZDMG, Vol. 72, 1918, p. 286.

107. K. C. Chatterjee, Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya, 1957, p. 10. This point is discussed further in chapter III.

108. Ibid. pp. 10-11.

109. Mahābhāṣya, I, 1, 1.

Liebich's¹¹⁰ own opinion is the identification of mleccha with Měch, a non-Aryan people still living in the Terai region partly in Bengal and partly in Bihar. His explanation being that since the word does not occur in the early Vedic literature, one must look for the origin of the name in the east. The form měch is retained in Śaurasenī, is mēccha or měcha in other Prakrits and mleccha in Sanskrit. He feels that he can reinforce his theory by mentioning that similar tribes the Bhilla and Kirāta of the old authors exist today by the same names — the Bhil of the Vindhya and the Kirañti of the Himalaya. The Měch probably got their name from the simplification of the word mleccha which generally applied to all non-Aryan tribes.

Quite distinct from the other theories is one by Alfred Masters.¹¹¹ He suggests the possibility that mleccha is derived from *malepsu meaning 'devotee of darkness', 'obscurity', but does not clarify to which language the word belongs. It could be a Sanskrit compound of mala meaning 'dirt' and īpsu meaning 'desirous of' which when joined according to the rules of sandhi becomes malepsu. However, this meaning 'desirous of dirt' does not agree with what Masters has given for the word. Also this compound does not occur in any modern Sanskrit dictionary. Interesting though this suggestion is, it is even less convincing than the others and cannot therefore be accepted as the original of mleccha.

The original forms of the words mleccha/milakkha cannot be conclusively deduced and therefore it is inappropriate to end the subject on a note of finality. A critical appraisal of some of the above-mentioned views is, however, necessary.

110. B. Liebich, 'Nochmals mleccha', BSOAS, Vol. VIII, 1936, pp. 623-26; ZDMG, Vol. 1918, pp. 286-87.

111. A. Masters, 'The Mysterious Paśāci', JRAS, 1943, p. 34.

Although Sanskrit is in its origin an Indo-European language, this does not necessarily imply that every word in its vocabulary must have an Indo-European etymon. In its evolution on the Indian soil it was influenced by other Indo-Aryan dialects and also by non-Aryan ones which all helped in changing its phonetics and grammar, and modifying its vocabulary.

German philologists like V. Pisani and I. Scheftelowitz have tried etymologically to link mleccha/milakkha with Latin blaesus and Cymric bloesg. What is important here is not how accurate the etymological connection is, (sometimes this is very far-fetched), but it is the similarity of meaning of the two set of words: mleccha/milakkha and blaesus/bloesg. They all refer to incoherent speech irrespective of whether it was a 'stotter' or 'stammer' or merely 'indistinct' speech. Besides the work of German philologists, an Indo-European origin of mleccha/milakkha has been postulated by many other philologists; it is needless to add that these attempts were part of the general emphasis laid on Comparative Indo-European philology in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indo-European etymologies for a majority of Sanskrit words was possible but not for all of them and mleccha was one of these words. The attempted fanciful etymologies for it seem like phonological exercises and are often difficult to accept.

Apparently, mleccha seems to have emerged suddenly in early brāhmanical literature without even the slightest hint of a similar form in Vedic Sanskrit.¹¹² This ambiguity is left unexplained, and mleccha is always given as the seminal form from which other forms were supposed to have been derived. On the contrary, it seems more plausible that mleccha in Sanskrit was adopted from Prakrit either as mleccha itself or derived from meccha or milakkha as -cch- and -kch-

112. The use of the word mṛdhraṇvāc for 'hostile speech' (V, 29, 10) and 'unintelligible speech' (I, 174, 2) is attested in the Rg Veda

interchangeable sounds in Middle Indo-Aryan.

According to Dr. Banerjee (cf. above p.74), -cch- and -kch- are characteristic of Prakrit rather than of Sanskrit, and in the latter are supposed to exist as the sound -kṣ-. Sir Harold Bailey has also shown -cch- (-ch-) as the variant of -kṣ- in Sanskrit when he gives the hypothetical etymon of mleccha as *mlekṣa. The transition of -kṣ- > -cch- > -kch- has been widely explained by ancient Indian grammarians and taken up by modern linguistic and philology experts (Pischel, Wackernagel, Katre etc.). However, what needs to be further looked into, in this context, is to find when the variant -cch- (and not -kch-) became more common and replaced -kṣ- in Sanskrit?

Historically Prakrit and Pāli came to the forefront with the rise of Buddhism and Jainism around the sixth century B.C. They gained the status of being written languages only around the first and second centuries A.D. The existence of Prakrit in the form of Aśokan inscriptions is, however, earlier, in the third century B.C. This should not minimize the influence they most probably exerted on the Sanskrit language which is not clearly seen only because the ancient writers of Sanskrit grammar chose to ignore it and thereby not record it. However, more important are certain peculiar characteristics which are only present in Middle Indo-Aryan dialects and not available in Sanskrit. T. Burrow has pointed out that: 'a fair amount of material exists (in MIA) which cannot be explained out of Sanskrit, Vedic or Classical but only out of equally ancient, but different form of Indo-Aryan...' ¹¹³

Can one then conclude that mleccha of the Satapatha Brāhmana, instead of being transformed to *mlekṣa or any other hypothetical form through a set pattern of phonological rules, was retained in its Prakrit form and continued to be used in this manner by successive

113. T. Burrow, The Sanskrit Language, 1972, p. 45.

Sanskrit writers? The contradiction between -cch- in mleccha (Sanskrit) and -kkh- in milakkha (Pāli) does not remain unexplained, if the theory that both were originally Prakrit forms of the same word, is accepted. Besides, it may not be a coincidence that the utterance of the asuras (he lavah he lavah) in the same verse of the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa (III, 2, 1, 24) is a mispronunciation of Sanskrit he'rayo he'rayo (K. C. Chatterjee's view discussed above). Perhaps it is for this reason that it is dubbed as 'mleccha' and must be avoided by speakers of 'right speech'.¹¹⁴

The non-Aryan etymological origin of mleccha, particularly the Dravidian hypothesis, is based on the actual existence of a proto-Dravidian language. M. B. Emeneau is of the opinion that: 'the Dravidian substratum is easily accessible in its dozen or more living languages and in that a Proto-Dravidian can be worked out...'¹¹⁵ If one accepts this and thereby the technical aspects (i.e. change of sounds etc.) of a proto-Dravidian etymology for mleccha through milakkha, this hypothesis still leaves important questions unanswered.

If these words had been borrowed from a proto-Dravidian language, whom did they apply to in that language? Did they retain the same meaning after having been adopted by the Aryan speaking peoples? The connection of the hypothetical proto-Dravidian reconstruction is made with the place name Meluhha as it occurs in the Sumerian cuneiform records. Further, the argument rests on the presumption that Meluhha was Western India. Milakkha which is derived from Meluhha is said to^{be} the name of the people from this part of the country. The form mleccha which is first recorded in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa.

114. Mleccha speech is a subject for chapter III.

115. M. B. Emeneau, Collected Papers, 1967, p. 160

(III, 2, 1, 24) and the form milakkha first attested in the Vinaya Pitaka (III, 28) do not indicate the geographical locations of the people alluded to by these names. Therefore there is no direct evidence to suggest that the mlecchas and milakkhas were originally people of Western India. There is also no evidence of any similar word in form or meaning in modern Dravidian vocabulary.

One cannot, however, totally dismiss the suggestion brought forth by this hypothesis that the influence of proto-Dravidian sounds into Indo-Aryan took place through Prakrit.

Mleccha and Milakkha were used in all successive Sanskrit and Prakrit literature in these forms and became an integral part of their vocabularies.

Chapter III

THE BASIS OF DISTINCTION : SPEECH

The term mleccha and its Pāli equivalent milakkha, were initially used by the ancient Indians, not as designations for any particular groups of outsiders, but simply to indicate a large reference group identifiable because it did not conform with the 'traditional value system'. It is rather difficult to define the phrase 'traditional value system' but essentially it was the official pattern of social behaviour and its cultural norms that mleccha groups did not abide by. For the majority of ancient Indians these standards were set by the brāhmanical élite who were ultimately in a position to judge when a person or group ceased to be mleccha.

However the Brāhmanic, Buddhist and Jaina views as represented in their mainly religious literature, all show a vehement belief in their own superiority in relation to the mlecchas/milakkhas. This broad assumption is maintained throughout and is a pre-supposition which cannot be ignored from the point of view of our thesis. To suggest that social standards and values did not change in ancient India is undoubtedly wrong. For, on the contrary, the different levels of variations on the basis of which distinction was made between a mleccha and a non-mleccha clearly reflect these changes. This distinction, broadly speaking, was held on three factors: speech, area of habitation and cultural behaviour.¹ Whether these in reality were the main

1. The religious and ethnic attributes of a particular people are rarely stated as the reason for describing them as mlecchas.

reasons for such discrimination, and how far they applied in the case of both foreigners and indigenous peoples, will be the subject for the following two chapters.

A formal classification of mleccha groups stating their hierarchical status and function is absent in both brāhmanical and non-brāhmanical writing. This partly accounts for the ambiguity in the use of mleccha as a designation for particular groups discussed in the final two chapters. Theoretically, however, there was a clear awareness in the same writing that differences in language, area of habitation and general behaviour constituted the criteria in identifying mlecchas. The distinction was never solely manifested in any of these three factors at a given period of time. It can here be oversimplified and suggested that the concept of mleccha was formulated as such that it was meant to admit within the sphere of its use many degrees of variation. In other words, that there was a deliberate policy, particularly by brāhmanical writers, to use mleccha in a vague and general fashion. This is too convenient a solution and not the right one.

The brāhmaṇas in defining their own system were very accurate and definite. In fact, it seems as though they spent all their time ostensibly perfecting the rules by which society ought to function and writing about them. The Dharmaśāstra literature available to us is evidence for this. The same was not done concerning groups they called mlecchas but at the same time, it cannot be said that there was total ignorance about the different cultural attributes of people that existed outside their official system. It was not only brāhmanical jurisprudence, but that of the Buddhists and Jains as well.

which excluded from its purview the laws and social codes prevalent in mleccha society.² Therefore all information about mleccha speech, habitation and behaviour that is available to us is pejorative. We have to consider this material in the light of other information from non-literary and secular literary sources which sets the historical context. Ultimately, the theoretical lines of demarcation between 'Us' and 'Them' in the Dharmaśāstra were in fact confused and blurred by the role of external factors like the acquisition of political and economic power by certain groups, the technological advancement of certain tribes and this in turn led to actual status being opposed to the ritual status. Thus, the apparent ambiguity in the use of the term mleccha can more positively be explained in the light of the changing circumstances in ancient India against which all religious and non-religious literature was compiled.

The earliest distinction made by the Indo-Aryan upholders of the brāhmanical system was a linguistic one. This is recorded in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.³ The distinction based on speech continues to be stressed in later brāhmanical and Jaina works, but significantly, this emphasis is greater in Buddhist writing. However, on the whole it must be remembered that the designation of tribes as mleccha carries a cultural connotation and is not merely based on language.

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2. When one speaks of 'mleccha society' it is not with reference to one large homogeneous system. People who were designated as mleccha came from totally different cultural backgrounds. Some like the Yavanas from highly formalized social systems, and others like the Śabarās, Pulindas who belonged to tribal societies. The only common factor of such diverse groups was their passive existence outside, and sometimes their potential opposition to, the socio-economic power structure of the brāhmanical élite.
 3. Śat. Br., III, 2, 1, 23-24. The Śatapatha is considered one of the latest Brāhmaṇas (M. Winternitz, III, 1971, pp.192-193, ft. 4) It can therefore be placed between 900-600 B.C.

The knowledge of correct speech was crucial to the performance of sacrifice and ritual in the religion of the Brāhmanas. The Śatapatha, like the other Brāhmanas, is a text on the liturgy of sacrifice and is written in Sanskrit. The striking importance which is ascribed to sacrifice cannot be missed in these texts, especially as it becomes the highest aim of existence during this period. Prajāpati, the creator, is the sacrifice,⁴ which therefore literally pervades the universe. Consequently, every single sacrificial act is treated with the greatest precision. Included in these was the proper articulation of words and this was as crucial as the right mantras to be recited for the performance of a particular sacrifice. The best experts of the sacrificial art were undoubtedly the various families of brāhmanas who, placed in a hierarchy⁵ within the Indo-Aryan social system, became the upholders of pure and best speech. As we shall subsequently see there is consistent concern about the speech of the brāhmanas and when we come across an example of barbarian or mleccha speech, it is he who is instructed specifically to avoid it.

But first, it is imperative to have some idea of the importance attached to speech/vāc in Vedic speculation generally. Vāc is represented as the prototype of women and forms the subject of many narratives. The making of articulate speech is ascribed to Indra in the Saṁhitās.⁶ Categories of speech, in a wholly mythological context, are demarcated both in the Brāhmanas and the Saṁhitās.⁷ The four

4. Śat. Br., XIV, 3, 2, 1; III, 6, 3, 1.

5. The brāhmanas are even considered Gods - Taittirīya Sam., I, 7, 3, 1. The latter must be pleased with sacrificial gifts and the former with dakṣiṇā (presents). Śat. Br., II, 2, 2, 6; IV, 3, 4, 4.

6. Taittirīya Sam., VI, 4, 7, 3; Maitrāyaṇī Sam., IV, 5, 8.

7. Kāthaka Sam., XIV, 5; Maitrāyaṇī Sam., I, 11, 5.
Śat. Br., IV, 1, 3, 16.

kinds of speech in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, for instance, were those of men, of animals, of birds and of small creeping things (ksudraṃ srīsrpaṃ) and only the one fourth part of speech which men speak is intelligible.⁸

The best speech among men is attributed to the Kuru-Pañcālas of Panjab and Uttara Pradesh and they are renowned for it ---

pathyayā svastyā prājanāṃs tasmād atro
ttarāhi vāg vadati kurupañcālatrā/ 9

This has been translated by Eggeling as 'speech sounds higher here among the Kuru-Pañcālas'¹⁰ and since Pathya Svasti is in reality speech, through her they recognised the northern region. Elsewhere in the Brāhmaṇas the speech of the northern country is considered to be pure and men go there to study language.¹¹ The northern region, often called Uttarakuru in later brāhmaṇical literature, is described as an ideal place, a type of utopia where people observe all the required ritual and speak the purest language.¹² The Buddhist literature echoes the same description where everything is plentiful and where there is no private property.¹³ Here the point is clearly that men ought to make the effort to learn correct speech and language, though it is doubtful whether people actually went north to study.

There is further the indication that attempts were made by early

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8. Śat. Br., IV, 1, 3, 16.
9. Śat. Br., III, 2, 3, 15. The Kāṇva recension has kurupañcālesu.
10. Roth & Böthlingk, Sanskrit Dictionary, St. Petersburg, 1855, p.894. Instead of 'higher' for uttarāhi here it is taken as 'in the north'.
11. Kausītaki Br., VII, 6 -- pathyā svastih tasmād udīcyāṃ diśi
prajñātatarā vāgudyata udañca u eva vanti vācam śiksitum va
vā tata āgacchati tasya vā śuśrūṣanta/
Ait. Br., VIII, 14, 23.
12. Brahmānda P., II, 19, 24; III, 59, 46; Vāyu P., 91, 7;
Matsya P., 83, 34; 105, 26.
13. Dīgha Nikāya, Āṭṭhāpajjā Sutta, III, p. 199ff. In the Buddhist texts, however, Uttarakuru is a mythical region, situated to the north of Jambudvīpa, and itself also surrounded by oceans. See the refs. in G.P. Malalasekara, Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names, s.v., I, pp. 355 f.

Vedic writers to categorize the various types of speech or language spoken among men. Daivī was divine speech and mānuṣī that of human beings.¹⁴ Characteristically the brāhmaṇa is said to have known both of them.¹⁵ Sāyana in his commentary on this passage in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa¹⁶ explains that speech connected with the devas (devasambandhi) is Sanskrit and that which is connected with men (manuṣyasambandhi) is Bhāṣā. Bhāṣā¹⁷ literally means speech but in this context it seems to be the common or vernacular languages as opposed to Sanskrit. The five Prakrit dialects of Māhārāṣṭrī, Śaurasenī, Māgadhī, Prācyā and Avanti are laid down as the five-fold Bhāṣās by Monier-Williams.¹⁸ According to Eggeling Sāyana suggests a distinction between Sanskrit and Apabhraṃśa.¹⁹ In Keith's opinion it is simply divine speech in opposition to 'ordinary conversation'.²⁰

In the Aitareya Aranyaka²¹ the discrimination between divine and human speech is made with the utterance of the word 'him'. This word is earlier in the same passage identified with the brāhmaṇa and it is also stated that whatever is desired can be obtained by its utterance. But a clear reference to brāhmaṇa speech is noted later in the same text.²² Sāyana interprets this passage as speech associated with the

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14. Śat. Br., VI, 3, 1, 34; Ait. Br., VII, 18, 13;
Ait. Aranyaka, I, 3, 1.
15. Kāthaka Sam., XIV, 5; Maitrāyaṇī Sam., I, 11, 5
16. Sāyana on Śat. Br., VI, 3, 1, 34 -- 'daivam' devasambandhi
vākyaṃ saṃskṛtam 'mānuṣam ca' manuṣyasambandhi bhāṣāmayaṃ ca vākyaṃ
17. The term Apabhraṃśa for Bhāṣā is also used. According to Pischel, Comparative Grammar of Prākṛit Languages, 1957, Introduction, p.2, --- it seems that Apabhraṃśa is used to denote popular languages, both Aryan and non-Aryan.
18. M. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit English Dictionary, 1889, p.755.
19. J. Eggeling, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, SBE, Vol. 41, p.200, ft. nt. 4.
20. A.B. Keith, Aitareya Aranyaka, Oxford, 1909, p.179, ft. nt. 5.
21. Ait. Aranyaka, I, 3, 1.
22. Ait. Aranyaka, I, 5, 2.

Vedas.²³ Another passage which can be quoted from both the Aitareya and the Sāṅkhāyana Aranyakas is one which indicates that there was a limited area where āryā vāc (Aryan speech) was spoken.²⁴ Here again Sāyana renders this speech as associated with the Vedas. Keith disagrees with this interpretation and points out: 'this expression (āryāvācaḥ) may be cited as an early piece of evidence for the existence of several dialects of the early Indian language, which we know must have existed.'²⁵ He considers that the brāhmaṇa speech in the Aitareya Aranyaka, I, 5, 2 must stand in contrast to non-Aryan languages since at that early date (c. 800-700 B.C.) the development of Prakritic forms was not 'so distinct as to render contrast with them natural.'²⁶

Two points must be discussed here. 1) Firstly, there is no doubt that other languages and forms of speech existed simultaneously with Sanskrit; the latter in the form of Vedic Sanskrit is the first language used in early brāhmanical literature. 2) Secondly, there is no definite evidence to show that all ancient Indians before 500 B.C., or even later, spoke or had some knowledge of Sanskrit.²⁷

Regarding the first point recent researches in both Indo-Aryan and non-Indo-Aryan philology have shown that: a) There is positive linguistic evidence to clarify the fact that Indo-Aryan migrations

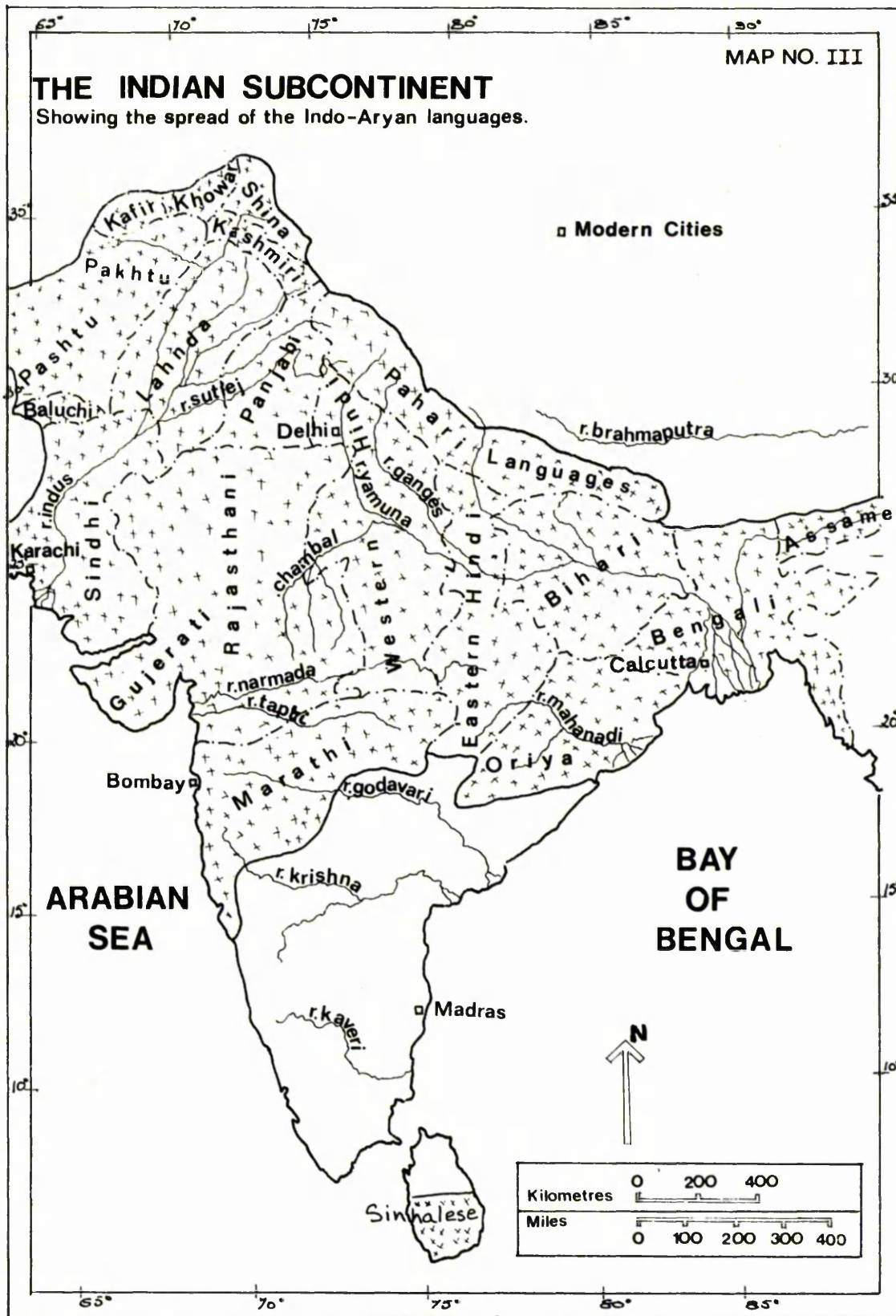
23. Sāyana on Ait. Aranyaka, I, 5, 2.

24. Ait. Aranyaka, III, 2, 5, -- bhūmiprāsya kīrtir bhavati yatra kvā cāryā vāco bhāṣante vidur enam tatra/
Sāṅkh. Aranyaka, VIII, 9, -- yatrā 'ryā vācaḥ vadanti vidur enam tatra/

25. A.B. Keith, Aitareya Aranyaka, 1909, p. 255, ft. nt. 3, Keith rightly points this out and āryā vācaḥ is a reference to Aryan forms of speech or dialects.

26. Ibid, p.196, ft. nt. 19.

27. The knowledge of Sanskrit was not confined to members of the 'Aryan race' only.



took place in successive phases and not in one simultaneous movement. This means that the Aryans came not with a single uniform or standardized speech but rather with a group or groups of dialects spoken by the various 'Aryan' tribes.²⁸ Only one of these dialects or dialect groups is represented in the language of the Veda. b) There was a substratum of Muṇḍa and Dravidian languages in northern India before and after the Indo-Aryans migrated. These indigenous languages of the subcontinent did not only exist but influenced Vedic in a restricted sense and later Classical literature to a larger extent.²⁹

In the second instance, if Sanskrit was not spoken or known by all, we must identify the group or groups that were familiar with its use. Pāṇini in the fifth century B.C. codified the Sanskrit language. His ideas and rules were based on the spoken usage of the educated brāhmanas of his day. Louis Renou basing his statement on Patañjali asserts that brāhmanas, provided they were cultured, were considered custodians of the correct language.³⁰ Winternitz, whose authority was also Patañjali, agrees with this but, using the same source in another instance, adds: 'the sphere of people speaking Sanskrit extended much further ---- to all "educated people"...'³¹

The passages from the Samhitās and the Brāhmanas discussed above, however, leave us in no doubt that their respective authors established for themselves the due superiority of Sanskrit over other forms of speech. With the very early standardization of Sanskrit by the organizers of the Brāhmanic civilization, as compared with middle Indo-Aryan dialects, began the process by which one had

28. S.K. Chatterjee, The Origin and Development of the Bengali language, 1926, p.20; T. Burrow, The Sanskrit Language, 1972 p.32.

29. P.C. Bagchi, Pre-Aryan and Pre-Dravidian in India, 1929; J. Bloch, Ch.II, p.58; T. Burrow, The Sanskrit Language, 1972, p.35.

30. Wackernagel, Altindische Grammatik, 1954, L. Renou, Introduction générale, p.19.

31. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. I, 1970, p. 43.

to rely on the educated brāhmaṇa to acquire its knowledge. They were the select group in society who knew both Sanskrit and Bhāṣā.

Against this background it will thus be possible to evaluate what mleccha or barbarian speech could have meant in the early period. There are three possibilities: 1) a language which was not necessarily alien, but the speech of the person or persons was improper because it was either hostile or vulgar; 2) a language, and here most probably Sanskrit, that was mispronounced and thereby incomprehensible; 3) finally, any foreign tongue which was naturally incomprehensible because it was unintelligible to those who did not understand a particular language.

An example of the first possibility is the use of the word mr̥dhraṇāk, deployed in connexion with hostile speech in the R̥g Veda. There are six occurrences of this word.³² The characteristic feature of its meaning in the different verses and contexts that it occurs is that it was always used by the āryas to describe the speech of their enemies.

Mr̥dhraṇāc qualifies the Dasyus in two places as hostile speakers.³³ On account of their hostility to the āryas, the Pūrus are called mr̥dhraṇācah.³⁴ Further, it is also rendered as injurious speech which wicked people use³⁵ and similarly Vṛtra, the demon, is ascribed with evil speech.³⁶ Finally, Indra humbled tribes whose speech was

32. R̥g Veda, I, 174, 2; V, 29, 10; 32, 8; VII, 6, 3; 18, 13; X, 23, 5.

33. Ibid., V, 29, 10; VII, 6, 3.

34. Ibid., VII, 18, 13.

35. Ibid., X, 23, 5. These wicked people speak in a varied manner with contemptuous cries.

36. Ibid., V, 32, 8. The demon Vṛtra is always portrayed in the R̥g Veda as the arch enemy of Indra, the God who in the Saṃhitās is known to make articulate speech.

unintelligible or hostile.³⁷ This is the only case where one can render mr̥dhraṅvāc as 'unintelligible' speech but Sāyana in his commentary of the same explains it as 'hostile' speech.³⁸ R.S. Sharma rightly points out 'unless the term mr̥dhraṅvācaḥ is taken in the sense of "unintelligible speech", it does not give any evidence of linguistic difference between the Dasyus and Aryans, but only shows that the former hurt the sentiments of the latter by their improper speech.³⁹ The enemies of the āryas could have been both the Indo-Aryan speaking peoples and the indigenous tribes of the subcontinent, perhaps the inhabitants of the urban civilization of the Indus.

Though mr̥dhraṅvāc can more positively be taken to mean hostile speech, the same cannot be said of mleccha speech. The latter is usually translated as barbarian speech but this explains little. The first reference where this speech is indicated as a component in distinguishing the Arya from the 'others' is given in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa. Mleccha speech is synonymous with that of the Asuras and reads as follows:⁴⁰

te 'surā āttavacaso he'lavo he'lava iti vadantaḥ
parābabbhūvaḥ /23/

He'lavo he'lava is the only specimen of Asura/mleccha speech available. The reason given for the utterance of such unintelligible words by the Asuras is their defeat against their enemies, the Devas. Further, the cause of their defeat in this long drawn out struggle with the Devas is that they lost the possession of vāc (speech). The Devas, on the other hand, being more clever and powerful took the possession of vāc by offering her an anustubh verse.

37. R̥g Veda, I, 174, 2.

38. Sāyana on R̥g Veda, I, 174, 2.

39. R.S. Sharma, Sūdras in Ancient India, 1958, p.13.

40. Sat. Br., III, 2, 1, 23.

The following verse⁴¹ is of greater significance in our context.

- 1) It specifies that the words uttered by the Asuras are those spoken by a mleccha and 2) it instructs brāhmanas to avoid mleccha language because when the Asuras used it they were destroyed.

tatraitam api vācam ūduh/ upajīgyāsyām sa mlecchas tasmān
na brāhmano mlecched asuryā haisā vāḡ evam evaiṣa dviṣata
sapatnānām ādatte vācam te 'syāta vacasah parābhavanti
ya evam etad veda//24// 41a

Consequently, the issues that must be considered regarding this passage are first, whether the Deva-Asura struggle can be identified with the actual conflict of the Āryas and their enemies and, more importantly, how far the specimen of mleccha speech can be identified with a particular dialect or language of that time.

The Āryans of the Rg Veda period occasionally portrayed the Asuras as opponents of the Gods but their equals in strength.⁴² It appears also as the epithet of the god Varuna and eventually exclusively has the meaning of 'demon'.⁴³ Banerji-Sastri in a series of articles has tried to establish the historicity of the Asuras, a maritime people, as one of the two forces in the Rg Veda with whom

41. Sat. Br., III, 2, 1, 24.

41a. Ibid, III, 2, 1, 24 -- 'Such was the unintelligible speech they uttered, -- and he (who speaks thus) is a Mleccha. Hence let no brāhmana speak barbarous language, since such is the speech of the Asuras. Thus alone he deprives his spiteful enemies of speech; and whosoever knows this, his enemies, being deprived of speech, is undone.'

42. M. Monier-Williams, The Sanskrit English Dictionary, 1889, p.121 -- Asura is derived from the root Asu literally meaning 'spiritual', 'incorporeal', 'divine'. In the Rg Veda Asura sometimes occurs with the old meaning of 'possessed of wonderful power' or 'god' which the corresponding word Ahura has in the Avesta. (Winternitz, HIL, Vol.I, 1971, p.78).

43. Rg Veda, II, 30, 4; VII, 99, 5 --- Asura, chief of evil spirits, demon. VIII, 96, 9; I, 130, 8 --- Asuras as opponents of Gods. This meaning continues in later Sanskrit. The Asuras are incorporated in Purānic mythology as sons of Diti by Kaśyapa.

the Aryans had to struggle for power.⁴⁴ He begins his investigation by linking Asura with Assyrian Ashur, meaning 'the people of Assyria', 'their city', 'their country' and finally 'a god whom the Assyrians rallied around'. The association of the Asuras with India recedes back to pre-history when they were settled in the Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa region.⁴⁵ Their expansion into India was by sea and even later, in the Rg Veda, they were associated with waterways.⁴⁶ On the Indian subcontinent they would have spread from the north of the Indus and the extreme west to Magadha and further east to Assam, mingled with the non-Aryans of the south and reached Ceylon.⁴⁷ Finally, A. Banerji-Sastri identifies some of the Asuras as those tribes under the Pūru-Bhrgu group who were led by Viśvāmitra and who fought the Aryans under Sudās and Vasiṣṭha.⁴⁸ The former were distinguishable from the Vedic Aryans by (i) their possession of a respected name, (ii) control of waterways and (iii) by the unintelligibility of their speech.⁴⁹

One cannot accept some of the arbitrary conclusions made by Banerji-Sastri or be diverted by them to disprove these points, especially his identification of Asura tribes. The nature of evidence prevents us from arriving at such positive conclusions about the historicity of the Asuras. Besides, in our passage no localization

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44. A. Banerji-Sastri, 'The Asuras in Indo-Iranian Literature', pp.110-139; 'Asura Expansion in India', pp. 243-285; 'Asura Expansion by Sea', pp.334-36; 'Asura Institutions', pp.503-539 all in JB(O)RS, XII, 1926.
45. A. Banerji-Sastri, 'The Asuras in Indo-Iranian Literature', JB(O)RS, XII, 1926, pp. 111-116. The Persians also not only succeeded to the empire of Ashur, but absorbed and cherished it.(p. 116).
46. Ibid., pp. 334-36; p.248.
47. Ibid., pp.246ff. p.245, Some of the Asura merges and disappears in the Dāsa.
48. Ibid., p.248. D.D. Kosambi, Introduction to the Study of Indian History, 1956, p.90 --- the Pūru tribe seems to have been as Aryan as any other. Even though the Pūrus are said to have the hostile speech of enemies (mrdharavācah, Rg Veda, VII, 18, 13) and are elsewhere (Sat. Br., VI, 8, 1, 14) described as Asuras, there is no indication of their non-Aryan status.
49. A. Banerji-Sastri, JB(O)RS, XII, 1926, p.127.

of the Asura-Deva conflict is given and therefore one must be led to conclude that, apparently at least, it is a mythical allusion. Further, taking it in the context of other similar passages where the Devas and Asuras exert themselves to surpass each other by means of sacrifice, it becomes clear that the aim of the author of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa was also to highlight the importance of sacrifice through the possession of an important requirement -- right speech.

The Asuras are not called mlecchas but utter words that are spoken by such people. The verse itself does not indicate even vaguely what kind of mlecchas were alluded to and therefore there are no positive grounds to believe that they were persons of non-Indo-Aryan speech. Like mrdhravāc, it could mean hostile speech since it was uttered by enemies.⁵⁰ However, there is the possibility that it may have referred to a mispronunciation of proper speech⁵¹ which then became barbaric.

This plausibility arises out of Sāyaṇācārya's explanation of the specimen of Asura/mleccha speech he'lavo, he'lava⁵², which, he suggests, stands for he'rayo, he'raya, meaning 'O the (spiteful) enemies.'⁵³ Sāyaṇa also states that the Mahābhāṣya reading of these words is he'lavo, he'lava.⁵⁴ The emphasis here is on the failure to pronounce the sounds -r- and -y- on the part of the mleccha. T. Burrow has pointed out that there are dialectical differences between the

50. A. Hillebrandt, Vedische Mythologie, 1927-29, I, 89, 90.

51. 'Proper speech' was the Sanskrit of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and similar texts.

52. The Mādhyandina recension of the Sat. Br., (Ajmere, 1902), III, 2, 1, 23, has this reading but the Kāṇva recension (Ed. V.S. Gauda and C. Sharma), III, 2, 1, 23 has hailo haila.

53. Sāyaṇa on Sat. Br., III, 2, 1, 23.

54. Ibid.; see also Mahābhāṣya, I, 1, 1. (Kielhorn's Ed.) Patañjali's passage discussed below.

Vedic language of the north-west and the later Classical language of madhyadeśa. 'The most striking' he states 'is that Vedic language turns -l- to -r- whereas the Classical languages, to a large extent preserve the distinction between -r- and -l-'⁵⁵ However, the change of -r- into -l- and -y- to -v- is not infrequent in the Prakrit dialects of Eastern India. This is attested by the inscriptions of Aśoka.⁵⁶ According to Geiger this is very common in many Prakrits and is the rule in Māgadhī.⁵⁷

This explanation has been criticized by some scholars who suggested that it could be a distinct language which the Vedic Aryans did not understand. Since Patañjali's variation he 'layo, he 'laya is the basis for the theory that mleccha speech was a mispronunciation of Sanskrit, and consequently, also the chief cause for its criticism, we must first discuss this passage more closely.

Patañjali sets out to explain te'surāh and in so doing the passage of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa ----

te'surāh te'surā he'layo he'laya, iti kurvantah parābabbhūvuh
tasmād brāhmaṇena na mlecchitavai na apabhāsitavai mleccho
na vā esa yad apaśabdah/ mlecchā mā bhumety adheyam
vyākaraṇam te'surāh// 58

Patañjali's main concern is with the study of grammar which he says is

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55. T. Burrow, The Sanskrit Language, 1972, p.32.
56. J. Bloch, Les Inscriptions d'Aśoka, p.112.
57. W. Geiger, Pāli Literature and Language, Calcutta, 1956, para 44, p.88.
 R. Pischel, Comparative Grammar of Prakrit Languages, Delhi, 1957, para 256, p.182.
58. Mahābhāṣya, I, 1, 1. 'Those asuras pronouncing he 'layah he 'layah were baffled in their attempt. Hence no mleccha word is to be pronounced by a brāhmaṇa; i.e. no word not sanctioned by grammar. In order that we may not become mlecchas (the users of corrupt words) grammar is to be studied.'

essential in order to avoid the usage of mleccha phrases.⁵⁹ The mleccha phrase he 'layo he 'laya, he explains is a corrupt expression ---- apaśabda.⁶⁰ He repeats the statement of the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa that the utterance of he 'layo he 'laya caused the defeat of the Asuras and that brāhmaṇas should not pronounce mleccha words. His reason for the latter injunction is that such words are not sanctioned by grammar. In other words, he used the original passage to express his own ideas.

Thus Banerji-Sastri observes that Patañjali simply seeks to establish the superiority of Sanskrit over an alien language.⁶¹ Danielsson opines that Patañjali failed to understand the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa passage he quoted⁶² and Jayaswal asserts that he evidently lost the tradition and invented a meaning.⁶³ Jayaswal's own opinion is that he'layo he'laya is a specific language of the mlecchas. He, however, works on a completely different assumption: 'Like Yavana, Mleccha is a foreign word, and like Yavana it originally meant a foreign people.' The cry he'layo is the Hebrew representation of élôáh meaning 'god' and mleccha is Sanskrit for melekh, the Hebrew for 'king'.⁶⁴ Jayaswal's ideas are too far-fetched and the meanings he derives for he'layo and mleccha cannot be applicable in the context of the whole passage.

59. Subrahmanya Sastri, Lectures on Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya, Annamalainagar, 1944, I, iv. Mlecchas are users of corrupt words.

60. Mlecchitavai is synonymous with Apabhāṣitavai in this passage.

61. A. Banerji-Sastri, 'The Asuras in Indo-Iranian Literature', JB(O)RS, XII, 1926, P.126.

62. O.A. Danielsson, 'Die Einleitung des Mahābhāṣhya', ZDMG, Vol. 37, 1883, p.23.

63. K.P. Jayaswal, ZDMG, Vol.68, 1914, p.719.

64. Ibid., pp.719-720

In the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, which has the original verse, it is probable that mleccha-vāc could have been a Prakrit dialect.⁶⁵ During the period of the Brāhmaṇas it had not yet acquired the status of a literary language. More important, it was a form of speech which could not be used for ritual purposes and it cannot be overlooked that the emphasis on speech was crucial for the efficiency of ritual hymns. This was the simple reason why the Brāhmanic Aryans who had settled down in the middle Ganges Valley not only noticed the different form of speech of some of the inhabitants but recorded and examined a few words. They did not do the same concerning the appearance and behaviour of the mlecchas, which obviously was not relevant for the sacrificial preparations. The same conclusions cannot, however, be drawn regarding Patañjali's use of the same passage. Patañjali wrote many centuries later; therefore, we must first examine the references to mleccha speech during the intervening period to assess the conditions and background in which he wrote. Changes in the socio-religious sphere and the political set-up gave perspective to the concept of mleccha speech and, above all, the status of a mleccha emerges more as a cultural feature rather than a linguistic fact.

There is no further discussion in the Saṃhitās or the Brāhmaṇas on mleccha vāc or mleccha bhāṣā. We must then consider the brāhmanical literature of the post-Vedic period before the canonization of Sanskrit grammar by Pāṇini.⁶⁶ The Dharmasūtras, on the whole, instruct that the speech of the mlecchas and speaking to mlecchas must be avoided. These

65. A Weber, The History of Indian Literature, London, 1914, pp.67-68. In his opinion 'asuraya' speech probably refers to 'Prakritic dialectic differences, assimilation of groups of consonants and similar changes peculiar to Prakrit vernaculars.'

66. P.V. Kane, History of Dharmasāstra, II, i, p.xi, has assigned the principal Dharmasūtras to the period between 600-300 B.C. A.B. Keith, CHI, I, 1922, p.132. The sūtras show a grammatical freedom otherwise unattested after the period of Pāṇini. (fifth century B.C. according to Agrawala, p.475).

injunctions are later repeated in some of the Smṛtis. Gautama, considered the earliest Dharmasūtra writer, made it a rule for all snātakas to avoid conversing with mlecchas, impure and wicked men.⁶⁷ His commentator Haradatta explains that only a proper conversation with mlecchas is forbidden but enquiries about roads, routes and similar information can be made from them.⁶⁸ If, however, one has already committed the error, then Gautama recommends meditation on virtuous men or, easier still, speaking to a brāhmaṇa.⁶⁹ One presumes that these measures eradicated the bad or evil influence of the mleccha and his speech.

In another context the Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra prohibits the study of a mleccha dialect. Vasiṣṭha is said to have written after Gautama, Apastamba and Baudhāyana and is placed between c. 300-100 B.C. Not learning a language of the mlecchas is a duty and occurs in his chapter on Rules of Conduct. Nothing can save the vile who has strayed from the path of duty.⁷⁰ Both the rules regarding the avoidance and study of mleccha speech, emphasized in the Dharmasūtras, indirectly indicate that people were in fact acting to the contrary. Therefore the Brāhmaṇa authors of these texts needed to reiterate the importance of the purity of speech and the inherent superiority of the Sanskrit language.

One of the sources for Pāṇini writing his grammar around the fifth century B.C., was the language and usage of this brāhmanical élite.

67. Gautama Dhs., I, 9, 17 (SBE, 16), ---
na mlecchāśucyadharmikais saha saṁbhāseta//17

68. Haradatta Mitāksara vṛtti, I, 9, 17, --- saṁśabdaprayogād eva siddhe saagrahanam taih sahaikakāryā bhūtvā saṁbhāsetety evam artham/ tena mārgapraśnātau na doṣah// 17

69. Gautama Dhs., I, 9, 18-19

70. Vasiṣṭha Dhms., VI, 41 --- na mleccha-bhāṣāṁ śikṣet /41/

Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī has the oldest extant Dhātupāṭha that gives the root mlech, 'to speak indistinctly', for the noun mleccha.⁷¹ Thence he formulates the past participle passive mliṣṭa, mlecchita, 'spoken indistinctly'.⁷² Before and during his lifetime, it seems that the most prominent activity connected with mlecchas was their indistinct speech. This original meaning of the word mleccha always remained and further, the verbal forms of mlech introduced by Pāṇini were accepted unaltered by all later grammarians.⁷³

There is so far no indication what the specific character of the mleccha language during that period might have been. But the theory that mleccha vāc continued to mean simply a mispronunciation of 'right speech' cannot be wholly true. Patañjali, thus wrote with this tradition behind him. For anyone to acquire the proper knowledge of Sanskrit the study of elaborate grammatical rules became essential and as noted above, it was amidst this concern that he warns brāhmanas to be aware of mleccha or corrupt expressions.

Besides the brāhmanical tradition, there were other significant developments in the sphere of ideas, literature and language before the beginning of the Christian era which are reflected in the Buddhist and Jaina traditions.

The founders of Buddhism and Jainism in the sixth century B.C. used local dialects of eastern India as vehicles for the propagation of their respective faiths. The existing role of Sanskrit as the language of élite groups continued but, it was Prakrit that first became the language of administration. In the third century B.C. Aśoka had his inscriptions engraved in various local Prakrit dialects

71. O. Böhtlingk, Pāṇini Grammatik, 1887, Dhātupāṭha, I, 220; X, 121.

72. Aṣṭādhyāyī, VII, 2, 18.

73. Dhātupāṭha of Hemachandra, I, 119.

and apparently ignored Sanskrit.⁷⁴ This epigraphical tradition set by him continued for some centuries. The Śātavāhana kings used Prakrit in their inscriptions right up to the third century A.D.⁷⁵ The rise of Middle Indo-Aryan dialects for literary and inscriptional purposes was largely due to the success of Buddhism and Jainism. Their ideas were essentially a threat to the existence of the old brāhmanical order. However, except for a change in perspective, there was no drastic reversal in their attitudes towards mlecchas.

First we consider the Buddhist attitudes towards milakkha speech. The language of the Theravāda Canon, which according to the Sinhalese tradition was written down between the third and the first century B.C., is Pāli.⁷⁶ As a literary language it developed from a mixture of dialects,⁷⁷ possibly also old Māgadhī. Since the Buddha first preached in the vicinity of Magadha he probably used the Māgadhī dialect. We can therefore hardly accept the Pāli term milakkha to be used for people of this region in Buddhist sources.

The first occurrence of milakkha is in the Suttavibhaṅga of the Vinaya Piṭaka.⁷⁸ The passage itself does not tell us much about the term. It states that if an ariya (ariyaka) disavows the training in the presence of a milakkha and the latter does not recognise it then

74. D.C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., I, 1942, 'Inscriptions of the Mauryas', pp.16-79.

75. Ibid., 'Inscriptions of the Śātavāhanas', pp.183-205.

76. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. II, 1971, p.8. It is certain that the Canon was not compiled at once but had a background of several meetings amongst the monks, the most important of which was the Council at Pāṭaliputra.

77. S.K. Chatterjee, The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, 1926, p.55ff.

78. Vinaya P., I, 8, 4, Vol. III, 27-28 --- ... ariyakena milakkhukassa santike sikkham paocakkhāti soca na pativijānāti ...

it is not disavowed.⁷⁹ The implication, however, is that the milakkha cannot understand the language of the ariya. This is explained by Buddhaghosa in his commentary Samantapāsādikā when he elucidates that the term ariyakam is --- nāma ariyavohāro magadhabhāsā ---the 'proper' mode of speech, the language of Magadha. Milakkha in his opinion is the term for un-Ariyan people, the Andha, Damila etc. --- milakkhakam nāma yo koci anariyako Andha-Damilādi.⁸⁰ In another commentary, the Sammohavinodanī on the Vibhaṅga of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka,⁸¹ he establishes the superiority of Magadhabhāsā over the language of the Andhakas, Kirātas, Yonakas, Damilas etc. He further advocates, in the same context, that Magadhabhāsā is the language of the Buddha vacana and therefore also the language of the civilized (ariya). Irrespective of parenthood (mātā Damiḷī, pitā Andhako...), he adds one should strive to learn Magadhabhāsā.

Buddhaghosa, a well known commentator on nearly all the early canonical texts, is said to have written in the fifth century A.D.⁸² There is, however, a difference of opinion as to how far he is reliable in his commentaries as an expounder of the canonical texts.⁸³ His statements on the superiority of Magadhabhāsā seem in conflict with ideas on the use of language in the Nikāyas and other early canonical texts. Lord Buddha has clearly explained that he did not care for mere words as only the meaning was important.⁸⁴ As the Buddhism spread the monks were allowed to learn the doctrine in a version adapted to their own

79. I.B. Horner, The Book of the Discipline, London, 1938, Vol. I, p.47- milakkhuka, a term for the aboriginal inhabitants of India.

80. Samantapāsādikā, I, 8, 4, Vol. I, 255.

81. Sammohavinodanī, Vibhaṅgatthakathā, 388.

82. Winternitz, HIL, Vol., II, p. 190

83. Ibid., pp.204-205; B.C. Law, The Life and Work of Buddhaghosa, 1923; SBE, Vol. 10, i, pp. xii-xxiv.

84. Majjhima N., II, 240.

language, they preached in the various local dialects.⁸⁵ In another text, the Āṅguttara Nikāya, when the eight types of assemblies were being discussed, the Buddha said: 'And before even I had seated myself among them, or spoken to them, or had engaged them in conversation -- whatever their colour, that I became, whatever their language, that became mine ...'⁸⁶

The implication in the Vinaya Piṭaka passage (I, 8, 4) that the milakkhas did not understand the language of the ariya is all we have on the speech differentiation in the early canonical texts. In the Majjhima Nikāya⁸⁷ there is a reference to babbhara which can be translated as people of an unknown tongue or those who mumble in their speech i.e. are not distinct. Yet, when we turn to the Manorathapūraṇī, Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Āṅguttara Nikāya, the Damila, Kirāta, Yavana languages are listed as milakkha bhāsās.⁸⁸ Clearly, language in Buddhist thought never became an important criterion of differentiation since neither birth nor ritual impurity or the area of habitation ever became items of such discrimination. Thus, though the superiority of Magadhabhāsā over milakkha bhāsā was duly established and acknowledged, discrimination was not severe. As we see from the Āṅguttara Nikāya passage (IV, 307), Lord Buddha addressed Kirātas etc. in their own language; a characteristic of most missionary religions. There are no injunctions for monks and nuns to avoid milakkha speech or to preach amongst them. This can be contrasted with brāhmanical Dharmasūtra injunctions discussed above and also with similar instructions in the Jaina sūtras. In this sense there is a basic difference between the Brahmin and Buddhist attitudes.

85. Majjhima N., III, 236; Cullavagga, V, 33.

86. Āṅguttara N., IV, 307 --- yādisako tesam vanno hoti, tādisako mayham vanno hoti, yādisako tesam saro hoti tādisako mayham saro hoti. VIII, vii, 69. Woodward & Hare (Tr.) PTS, Vol. IV, p. 205.

87. Majjhima N., I, 128.

88. Manorathapūraṇī, II, 289 -- Damilakirātayavanādi-milakkhānam bhāsā...

The Jaina canonical writings and their early commentaries were written in Prakrit --- Ardha-Māgadhī and Jaina Māhārāṣṭrī -- apparently a clear sign that they took deliberate care to make their writings accessible to a considerable number of people. The problem about Jaina writing is that even though its tradition goes back to the sixth century B.C., its compilation and redaction dates much later than that of the Buddhists. Devarddigapiṇ, who is responsible for having put the Jaina Canon to a written form is placed around the fifth century A.D. The earliest redaction of these texts according to tradition is ascribed to the reign of Chandragupta Maurya (fourth century B.C.). Hermann Jacobi on the basis of his extensive research on Jaina literature established that the oldest portion of the Siddhānta must be fixed during the period between the compilation of the Tripitāka and the early centuries A.D. i.e. between 300 B.C.-200 A.D.⁸⁹

Mahāvīra preached his religion in Ardha Māgadhī and according to the Samavāyāṅga it was understood by all alike without any distinction whatsoever.⁹⁰ The fourth upāṅga, the Pannāvanā (Prajñāpanā) begins with the section on Man in the first book.⁹¹ The two distinct groups of people mentioned in this section are the āriya and the milakka. Among the former there are six types of āriyas, those mentioned by khetta or region, jāti or caste, kula or family, kamma or trade, bhāsā or language and sippa or handicraft. The bhāsāriyas are those who speak Ardha Māgadhī and know the Brāhmī script.⁹² The names of the milakka peoples are listed but not the language they spoke.

89. H. Jacobi, The Jaina Sūtras, SBE, Vol. 22 & 45, Introduction. J. Charpentier, The Uttarādhyayanāsūtra, 1922, p.26. The importance of the Mathura inscription of the reign of Kaniska which confirms the existence of a strong Svetāmbara community in the first century A.D. (ASIR, Vol. III, plates XIII-XV).

90. Samavāyāṅga, Ahmedabad, Vikram 1994, p.57.

91. Prajñāpanā, Agamodya Samiti, Bombay 1918-19, sūtras 36-37, pp.54-55

92. se kiṃ taṃ bhāsāriya? je naṃ adha magahāe bhāsāe bhāseṃti jattha ya naṃ bhāmbhī livī --- Ibid., 37.

However, it is not surprising that elsewhere the milakkhas are represented as not understanding the language of the āriyas. The Sūtrakṛtāṅga (Sūyagada)⁹³ points this out. It is essentially meant to explain to young monks the failure and hopelessness of heretical doctrines and reminds them of their duty. In the process the ignorance of the milakkhas is compared with that of the heretics and it is stated that just as the former repeats what an āriya says but does not understand the meaning, so also the heretic pretends to possess knowledge but does not know the truth.⁹⁴ There is nevertheless the hint here that a milakka could be instructed in the āriya languages. On the other hand, the Acārāṅga sūtra, a strict code on the ācāra of the monks forbids a monk and a nun to visit places where sounds that cause temptation can be heard; places where there are milakkhas or where borderers meet.⁹⁵

The distinction between āriya 'civilized' and an-āriya 'uncivilized' in Buddhist and Jain writing is thus quite apparent. As far as the difference of speech was concerned, the turning point from the brāhmanical view was that Māgadhī and ArdhaMāgadhī became the language of the 'civilized'.

The brāhmanical literature after the beginning of the Christian era continues to note the difference in mleccha speech but the emphasis on it is considerably less pronounced. The Manusmṛti, compiled in the north and completed around the second century A.D., marks the culmination of all the strands in earlier legal literature. Generally, Manu's formulations are more rigid with an accent on being

93. J.C. Jain, Life Depicted in the Jain Canons, 1947, p.34 — Acārāṅga, Sūtrakṛtāṅga and the Uttarādhyaṇa contain the oldest part of the Canon from the literary and linguistic point of view.

94. Sūtrakṛtāṅga, I, 1, 2, 15-16. milakkhū amilakkhussa jahā vuttāmbhāsae na heuṃ se vijānāi bhāsiam tadanubhāsae/15/

95. Acārāṅga Sūtra, II, 11, 17. ... bahumilakkhūni vā bahu paccantāni..

theoretical. Regardless of this he becomes the chief authority of later smṛtikāras. Manu maintains the difference between āryā vāc and mlecchā vāc but adds a new dimension to this distinction. He clearly states that all those tribes whose origin is other than that described in the puruṣasūkta, irrespective of whether they speak the ārya or the mleccha language, are to be considered dasyus ---

mukhabāhūrupajjānām vā loke jātyo bahi/
mlecchavācas ca āryavācaḥ sarve te dasyavaḥ smṛtāḥ//45//⁹⁶

This suggests that speech no longer remained a crucial factor in determining attitudes or conferring status; to belong to the varṇāśramadharmā became of greater significance.

Commenting on the above passage, Medhātithi defines a language as mleccha which consists of words that either have no meaning or have a wrong meaning or are wrong in form and to this class belong languages of the Śabaras, Kirātas and so forth ---⁹⁷

asad avidyamānārthāsādhu-śabdatayā vāk mleccha ucyate
yathā śabarānām kirātānām anyesām va antyānām..

He further proceeds to explain that āryavāc is refined speech and the language of the inhabitants of Āryāvarta, but only of those who belong to the four varṇas. The others are called Dasyus.⁹⁸ In conclusion he explicitly states that neither habitation or mleccha speech is the ground for regarding groups as dasyus, but it is because of their particular names Barbara etc. that they are so regarded.

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96. Manu, X, 45 - 'All those tribes in this world which are excluded from those born from the mouth, the arms, the thighs and the feet (of Brahma) are called Dasyus, whether they speak the language of the mlecchas or that of the āryas.'
97. Medhātithi on Manu, X, 45 --- 'Language is called mleccha (barbaric) because it consists of words that have no meaning or have the wrong meaning or are wrong in form. To this class belong the languages of such low-born tribes as the Śabara, Kirāta and so forth...'
98. Ibid., --- āryavāca āryāvartanivāsinas te cāturvarṇyād anyajātīyatvena prasiddhās tadā dasyava ucyante/ 'Arya (refined) language is the language of the inhabitants of Āryāvarta. Those persons being other than the four varṇas are called Dasyus' Nandana, on Manu, X, 45, defines āryavāc as sāṃskṛtavāc.

The Viṣṇu Smṛti, also placed in the early centuries A.D., repeats Gautama concerning mleccha speech i.e. snātakas must not speak to mlecchas.⁹⁹ Having spoken to one, which is an impure act, one must sip water. The same is to be done if one has spoken to a Candāla.¹⁰⁰ It is needless to add here that the rigidity of the caste system and increased emphasis on impurity began to become apparent in injunctions regarding mlecchas as well. It was not uncommon for smṛti writers to fall back on the earlier tradition of the sūtras and sometimes repeat statements without changing them. The Bālakrīda of Viśvarūpa on Yājñavalkya¹⁰¹ quotes Bhāradvāja to the effect that one should not study the language of the mlecchas for it is declared in the Brāhmaṇa that mleccha is a corrupt word. This is again in connexion with instructions to initiated students who must speak the truth and use the right words.

Such verses from the Dharmaśāstra, in this case concerning mleccha speech, give a static picture regarding brāhmanical attitudes. It is for this reason that we cannot solely depend on their information. Secondly, it is doubtful whether these strict rules were always followed. In the Mahābhārata the secret escape of the Pāṇḍava brothers from the lac-house is discussed by Yudhiṣṭhira and his uncle Vidura in a mleccha jargon so as to be unintelligible to others.¹⁰² Besides the doubt that everybody, especially political spies and merchants, did not actually speak to mlecchas or learn their language, there is information available from non-Dharmaśāstra brāhmanical literature which shows that there was not only keen awareness among writers in general, about different languages spoken among the people of the subcontinent, but also a discussion of their authority and usages.

99. Viṣṇusmṛti, LXXI, 59.

100. Ibid., XXII, 76.

101. Bālakrīda of Viśvarūpa, II, 15.

102. Mbh., I, 135, 5-6.

The Sanskrit language had to a considerable extent become standardized in the Aṣṭādhyāyī. There was a constant widening of the gap between Classical Sanskrit and the vernacular Prakrits down to the Gupta period. In the process a slow but gradual influence of other languages on them cannot altogether be dismissed.¹⁰³ The rise of Sanskrit over the various Prakrits, which had also become standardized, in the use of literature and inscriptions is marked in the early centuries A.D.¹⁰⁴ However, it is the relation between Sanskrit and Prakrit in Drama which is self indicative of the superiority of the former. The Nāṭyaśāstra in its chapter on the use of language in drama lays down the hierarchy of languages. Its ideas on the subject are not essentially different from the earlier ones. There are four types of languages¹⁰⁵ -- atibhāṣā, āryabhāṣā,¹⁰⁶ jātibhāṣā and yonyantatībhāṣā. The first two, which have been translated as superhuman and noble languages, are ascribed to the Gods and kings respectively. They have qualities of refinement (saṁskāra) and are current in the seven divisions of the world. The last kind is the language of creatures such as animals etc. It is the jātibhāṣā, spoken only in Bhāratavarṣa, which is noted for its various forms and it is also known to contain many words of mleccha origin:

dviividhā jātibhāṣā ca prayoge samudāhṛtā/
mlecchāśabdopacāra ca bhāratam varṣam āśritā//¹⁰⁷

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103. S.K. Chatterjee, Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, p.52; T. Burrow, The Sanskrit Language, p.43.
104. Sircar, Sel. Inscript., 'Junāgarh Rock Inscription of Rudradāman I' pp.169-174. Earlier Śaka inscriptions of Western India were written in Prakrit. The Mahāyāna Buddhists (Āśvaghosa, c.100 A.D.) also began using Sanskrit for the propagation of their faith.
105. Nāṭyaśāstra, (GOS series), XVII, 26-30
106. Abhinavabhāratī, commentary of Abhinavaguptācārya on the Nāṭyaśāstra XVII, 27:- āryabhāṣā means a language in which Vedic words are dominant. --- vaidikaśabdabāhulyād āryabhāṣāto vilakṣanatvam asyā iti aneye/
107. Nāṭyaśāstra, XVII, 29-30. 'The jātibhāṣā (common language), prescribed for use (on the stage) has various forms. It contains words of mleccha origin and is spoken in Bhāratavarṣa only.'

The distinction here is between the speech of ordinary people and that of the nobility and priests.¹⁰⁸ Sanskrit as the name of a language is absent in these passages and further, there is no indication for the suggestion that 'the atibhāsā and āryabhāsā are possibly dialects of pure Indo-Aryan speech.'¹⁰⁹ Similarly the names of mleccha languages from which words were borrowed by the jātibhāsā are not listed. According to S.K. Chatterjee, 'these words seem to have been none other than vocables of the Dravidian and Austric languages. They entered Indo-Aryan pretty early in its history.'¹¹⁰

The various Prakrit dialects are, however, listed. Seven of them called Bhāsā¹¹¹ are considered important and the others are called Vibhāsās and are less important.¹¹² These could all be used in Drama. The only native languages not to be assigned to tribes were those of the Barbaras, Kirātas, Andhras and Dramidas.¹¹³ None of these dialects are in fact designated as mleccha.

That words of mleccha origin were used in common speech is not only evident from the Nāṭyaśāstra, but also from the Śabarabhāṣya on the Pūrvamīmāṃsā sūtras of Jaimini. The sūtra itself states that the usage of words current among Mlecchas is also authoritative.¹¹⁴

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108. It is later stated that the recitation of common language relates to the four castes. XVII, 32.
109. M.N. Ghosh, The Nāṭyaśāstra, Calcutta, 1950, XVIII, 27, ft.nt. 1.
110. S.K.Chatterjee, Op. Cit., 1926, p.42, p.178. It is difficult to ascertain how and when this occurred.
111. Nāṭyaśāstra, XVII, 49 - Māgadhī, Avantī, Prācyā, Śaurasenī, Ardhamāgadhī, Bāhlikā and Dākṣiṇātyā.
112. Ibid., XVII, 50 - The Vibhāsā dialects are the speeches of the Śakāra, Abhīras, Candālas, Śabaras, Dramidas, Odras and the speech of foresters (hīnā vanecarāṇām).
113. Ibid., XVII, 46 - na barbarakirātāndhra-dramilādyāsu jātisu/ nāṭyaprayoge kartavyaṃ pāṭyam bhāṣāsamāśram//
114. Jaimini, I, 3, 6, 10. Scholars suggest different dates for the Pūrvamīmāṃsā Sūtra of Jaimini - Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, II, p. 376 considers the fourth century B.C. as the earliest date; Keith, History of Indian Literature, assigns it to a period not later than c. 200 A.D.; P.V. Kane, 'Gleanings from the Bhāṣya of Śabaras', JBBRAS, Vol. XXVI, pp.83-89 - between c.300 B.C. - c.100 A.D.

Śabara's Bhāṣya on this sūtra¹¹⁵ gives the impression that the commentator was conversant with the life and language of the mlecchas. His main concern is to explain the use of words if people, as the āryas do, take their stand on the scripture. The source of Dharma in the Pūrvamīmāṃsā is the eternal, infallible and self-evident Veda. Hence, śabda or 'word' in the form of a Vedic injunction is alone reliable. In order to justify this he enters into elaborate arguments. He thus gives the example of four words --- pika, nema, sata, tāmarasa -- which are not used by the āryas but are used by the mlecchas and occur in the Veda. In the conclusion of the sūtra, Śabara gives the meaning of these words according to the usage of the mlecchas. They are as follows: pika is 'cuckoo', nema is 'half', tāmarasa is 'lotus' and sata is 'wooden vessel, round in shape with hundred holes'.

The question is raised whether their meaning should be deduced from their etymology,¹¹⁶ commentaries and roots with the help of grammar and lexicons or whether the meaning should be accepted in the sense that they are used by the Mlecchas? The latter possibility is refuted by the Pūrvapakṣa which states that only the usage of the cultured people is valid and not the memory (smṛti) of uncultured (aśiṣṭa) people, because they are not careful with their meanings. Therefore, mleccha words should be understood with the help of grammar, etymology etc. The arguments put forward by the Pūrvapakṣins are

115. Shabara Bhasya, Tr. G.N Jha, Vol.I, 1, 3, 6, 10

116. Pika, nema, sata and tāmarasa are all attested in Sanskrit poetry literature. It is, however, difficult to trace their etymologies. M. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit English Dictionary, 1899, suggests possible derivations for the words nema and tāmarasa. For the former (p.569) the etymology na + ima? is very doubtful and explains little. There are several meanings to the word nema that are listed here. To mean 'half' it occurs in the Nirukta, III, 20. Tāmarasa on the other hand, is said to be derived from (p.442) the root taṃ. Its meaning as 'day-lotus' is again one of many and in this sense it occurs in texts like the Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana and Harivaṃśa. An important meaning of this term is 'copper'. No etymological derivations have been suggested for the words pika and sata. Pika to mean 'cuckoo' (p.624) is said to occur in the Vājasaneyī Sam. and the Gīta Govinda, 11. Sata (p.1137) is described as a 'kind of sacrificial vessel' and is said to occur in the Vāj. Sam. and the Śat. Br.

contended and argued and the Siddhānta ruling that follows is that the four words mentioned above must be understood according to the usage of the mlecchas. The conclusion is arrived at on account of three reasons: 1) Any word that is not incompatible with any authority and comprehensible should be accepted, 2) the mlecchas are more careful and reliable in certain fields of activity. For instance, in the catching and rearing of birds, and 3) where there is no usage of mlecchas or otherwise no guide to the deduction of a meaning, only then should the use of grammar etc. be resorted to. Further, to deduce words from their etymology etc. means that there always remains a certain degree of uncertainty.

This discussion does not show where the mleccha words were used and, since mleccha speaking tribes cannot be confined to any particular region of the subcontinent, we do not know the name of the language from which they were borrowed. Śabara himself was familiar with the whole of India as is evident from his own statements.¹¹⁷ Professor Burrow in his researches on loan-words in Sanskrit shows that the only tangible loans from non-Indo-Aryan that can be taken into account are those from the Muṇḍa and Dravidian languages. He further adds that this influence took place in the north, in the central Gangetic plains and was concentrated at a particular historical period between the late Vedic and the formation of the Classical language.¹¹⁸ It is not the contention here to suggest that the Dravidian languages were considered to be mleccha in the fifth century A.D.

Śabara himself points out that the words pika, nema, sata and tāmarasa occur in the Veda. This is true but since it is difficult

117. Śabara Bhāṣya, VIII, 3, 22 — He was a resident of Vāhlikā; I, 3, 18-19 speaks of the southerners as Dāksinātyas; II, 3, 3 — refers to Andhras who apply the title rājan to a ksatriya; IX, 3, 32 — explicitly states that the word pati is used to indicate 'ownership' throughout the country from the Himālayas to Cape Comorin.

118. T. Burrow, The Sanskrit Language, p.386.

to trace their etymologies it is only possible to suggest: 1) that these words were originally borrowed from a non-Indo-Aryan tongue. Its existence during Śabara's days is difficult to establish. He refers to the usage of words among mlecchas but not to the rules of grammar and etymology in that particular language. It is most likely that writers of Indo-Aryan languages chose not to study any mleccha language, as it meant mixing among mlecchas and were therefore unfamiliar with the grammar of those languages. 2) That these words were in fact Indo-Aryan in origin but because they were used by mlecchas, and not by the āryas, as Śabara has pointed out, their meaning had become distorted. It is perhaps because of this that Śabara was keen to use his own grammatical rules and lexicons to derive their meaning, rather than adopt the meaning that the mlecchas use.

We must conclude that the identification of the mleccha words in the above case with a particular language is impossible. We need to turn to Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa's commentary on Śabara to be able to identify the possible mleccha tongues and also discuss his criticism of the Bhāṣya.

Generally, in the development of the Pūrvamīmāṃsā system Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa is the next important figure after Śabara. Śabara wrote between the second and fifth centuries A.D. while his commentator is said to have flourished about 750 A.D.¹¹⁹ Several other commentaries were written on the Śabara Bhāṣya but Kumāriḷa is considered the most independent and critical of all. From our point of view his Tantravārttika contains passages which disagree and question Śabara's views on the usage of mleccha words.¹²⁰ In the Pūrvapakṣa Kumāriḷa points out that etymological and grammatical bases have more authority than the usage of mlecchas for their words. The former method is well

119. V.S. Garge, Citations in the Śabara Bhāṣya, 1952, p.26; p.9.

120. Tantravārttika, Commentary on Śabara's Bhāṣya, edited by M.N. Jha, 1924, I, iii, 6 (10).

established even though the meaning that the word gets is new, while the second option gives you the old meaning but its origins are faulty. Above all, 'how could words occurring in the Veda be taken in the same sense that is recognised only among Mlecchas? especially when the very sight of a mleccha makes us stop recitation of the Veda. Nor is it allowable for the people of Āryāvarta to have a conversation or consultation with the mleccha; and hence how could we ever come to know the sense in which any word may be current among them?..... And then too, the countries inhabited by mlecchas being innumerable how could one succeed in getting at all their usages?' The second great criticism about the use of words among mlecchas is that they distort the meanings of words they borrow from Sanskrit. This is partly, he says, due to the fact that the mlecchas are found to have no regard for Dharma. Kumārila then takes the example of words from a Drāviḍa language which the Āryas read as their own words with a different meaning and this causes confusion.¹²¹ 'Thus then, when the Ārya stands in need of such groundless assumptions, even in the case of the words current among Drāviḍas how could we ever reasonably deduce Sanskrit words from those current among such distant peoples as the Parsis, the Barbaras, the Yavanas, the Raumakas and the like.' The conclusion of the Pūrvapakṣa is that 'those words of the mlecchas that are accepted (or used) by the Āryas can never fully be trusted in the ascertainment of words or their meanings.'

The Siddhānta reply to this is similar to that of Śabara. Basically those mleccha words whose interpretation is not against the authority of the Veda with regard to Dharma can be accepted. Concerning distorted forms it says that one can hardly discern the real

121. The words he has noted are as follows: The Drāviḍas call rice cor, the Āryas read it as cora and comprehend it as thief. Similarly, atar (road) is understood as atarah (uncrossable), vair (stomach) as vaira (enemy) and pāp (snake) as pāpa (evil).

from the unreal in the various dialects. Another important point is that if they did not accept the meaning of mlecchas about physical objects they would be going against their own theory, that is, 'the eternal signification of eternal words can be ascertained by means of the usages of men' and the mlecchas are also men. This would specially apply to words such as patroma, 'a silken or jute fabric', vāravāna, 'armour' as these articles are produced only in the mleccha countries. And, if the mlecchas did not point out what they meant, one could not comprehend these words. These two are, however, Sanskrit words and are used and understood in the same sense as above.¹²² Finally, the controversy is of the comparative strength of mleccha and ārya usages is settled thus: 'the superior authority of the āryas has been laid down only in matters relating to Dharma directly; as for the ordinary worldly things, such as agriculture and the like all usages are equally authoritative. Consequently, in matters relating to menial service, house building and the like, we can freely admit the superior authority of the mlecchas.'

Neither Śabara or Kumārila expressly state the mleccha languages but their arguments imply that any language other than that of the āryas should be placed in that category. But the controversy is not regarding mleccha languages themselves but in connexion with the Sanskritized versions of the words borrowed from these languages. In the process Kumārila even indicates that the same problem arises when the āryas borrow words from the Drāvīda language of the Yavanas, Raumakas etc. The fact was that Sanskrit during its development before the Classical period did borrow from other languages, among which were those designated as mleccha. In a narrow sense, the concern was mainly with

122. M. Monier-Williams, Op. Cit., 1899, p.581 cites patroma as the name of a people and also to mean silk or a silk garment as it occurs in the Mahābhārata. Vāravāna (p.943) is cited to mean armour, mail as it occurs in the Raghuvamśa.

those words, whether purely mleccha or Sanskritized versions of mleccha words, that expressed ideas against Dharma, and could not be accepted by the authors of the Śabara Bhāṣya and the Tantravārttika.

Essentially, therefore, except for an explicit and often lengthy statement on the use of mleccha words, ultimately ideas on the subject were quite in keeping with the earlier tradition which began with the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa. Irrespective of how important the bad or good influence of mleccha languages was, the distinction between āryavāc and mlecchavāc was always maintained. It would not be unlikely to suggest that in the Vedic period speech differentiation began to express the incomprehension of the language concerned which may have sounded simply a babble of words and therefore was barbaric. But the phrase mleccha-vāc no longer retained this connotation. From a designation for unknown speech it became the term used to indicate any form of speech not like the standard form of speech. This is not only true of the Brāhmanical view but also of the Buddhists and Jainas who used milakkha-bhāṣā as opposed to Magadha-bhāṣā. Consequently, depending on one's point of view, the use of mleccha expressions were 'incorrect' (apaśabda); expressions at variance with 'ordinary expressions.'

The prohibition in the Dharmaśāstra to avoid mleccha languages have to be considered in the light of other similar instructions against mleccha food, habits and country which will be discussed in the following chapter. The Dharmaśāstra shows a rigid and fixed opinion and set standards which were not necessarily followed at large.

Chapter IV

THE BASIS OF DISTINCTION : AREA OF HABITATION
ĀRYĀVARTĀ AS OPPOSED TO MLECCHĀDEŚĀ.

The identification of mleccha groups as marginal components of society as a whole on the basis of the area they inhabited, is the next main topic to be discussed. Differences in habitat set the mlecchas apart, and in the following pages we shall examine in detail this aspect. The injunctions of the law writers for Hindus to avoid mleccha territory and contact with people of mleccha behaviour were essentially pejorative. In this manner we may be able to understand some of the factors which determine the attitudes towards the mleccha in ancient India.

Unlike the emphasis on speech distinction, the emphasis on the area of habitation as a discriminatory factor, has to be considered in connexion with the behaviour and the social status of the mleccha. In the rare cases where and when assimilation was possible, the mleccha had theoretically at least, to respond to three facets of the caste system — varṇa, jāti and geographical location. In highlighting the differences of habitation and behaviour, it will be possible to show how the discrimination against the mleccha ultimately developed into a cultural criterion.

The definition of mlecchadeśa naturally reflected the changing ideas about Āryāvarta so that the definition of which were ārya and which mleccha lands was never permanent. This is also indirectly due to the fact that discrimination on the basis of habitation was not absolute. The only consistent factor in the definition of particular areas as mleccha countries was with regard to regions inhabited by those primitive tribes which over a long period of time did not come under the sway of Brāhmanical, Buddhist or Jaina influence.

Texts like the Purānas or the Brhatsaṁhitā from which much geographical information can be deduced, do not discuss the geography of the Indian subcontinent from the point of mleccha lands as opposed to ārya lands. However, it is first of all essential to have some idea of the traditional definition of Āryāvarta. It must be emphasised from the outset that this was not meant to be the land that was inhabited by the ethnically pure Aryans. Further, its geographical boundaries changed with the expansion of the culture with which the authors of ancient texts identified themselves. Therefore, since the boundaries of the lands inhabited by the āryas were not static, it is not possible to give a definition that is valid for the whole of ancient Indian history.

The concept of Āryāvarta evolved over the centuries beginning with the early Vedic period. One basic presumption that was always attached to this notion was its purity. As Vedic literature refers only to places and areas with which its authors were familiar, these territories were eventually included in Āryāvarta. The Dharmasūtra literature defined its limits and all later texts made further additions. Geographical sections of the Parāśara Tantra, the Brhatsaṁhitā, the Purānas, the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, the Kāvya Mīmāṃsā and other texts do not solely dwell on defining Āryāvarta but deal with Bhāratavarṣa as a whole, roughly equivalent to the Indian subcontinent.

The movements of the Indo-Aryan immigrants into India was from the north-west. In the Ṛg Veda the geographical focus was the sapta sindhu, the land of the seven rivers, more or less corresponding to the Panjab.¹ This is generally considered the centre of activity of the

1. Vedic Index, I, 468 — It is here pointed out that the researches of Hopkins, Pischel and Geldner diminish the importance of the Panjab as the home of the Ṛg Veda and suggests land farther east where most of the hymns must have been composed.

Vedic Aryans mainly because the text itself only mentions the rivers from the Kabul (Kubhā) to the Yamunā and the Gaṅgā.² They described it as sapta sindhava, sometimes to denote a country but usually the seven rivers.³ However, a few centuries later, at the time when the older Brāhmanas were composed, there is no doubt that the Gaṅgā - Yamunā Doab comes into prominence and is the focus of Indo-Aryan activity.

The gradual spread southwards and eastwards is firmly reflected in the Saṁhitās and the Brāhmanas when they refer to peoples of the Kuru-Pañcāla region. Even before that, in the Atharva Veda, a wider geographical outlook is noticeable. In this text there is a reference to such border countries as the Aṅga and Magadha in the east.⁴ However,

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2. Rg Veda, V, 53, 9; (Kubhā, Sindhu); VI, 45, 31 (Gaṅgā); X, 75, 5-6 — The famous river hymn clearly points to the geographical area which embraced the Panjab and the country extending southeastwards to the Ganges. It reads as follows: imaṁ me gaṅge yamune sarasvatī śutudri stomam sacatā puruṣnyā asiktayā marudvrdhe vitastayā ārjikiye sṛṇuhyā suṣomayā/5/ trstāmāyā prathamāṁ yātavē sajuh susartvā rasayā śvetyā tyā tvam sindho kubhayā gomatīm krumuṁ mehatnvā saratham yābhir iyase/6/ This hymn states that the rivers whom the hymn writers ask favour of are the Gaṅgā, Yamunā Śutudri, Paruṣni, Sarasvatī, Asikini, Vitasta, Marudvrdha, Ārjikiyā, Suṣomā, Trstāmā, Rasā, Susartu, Śvetyā, Kubhā, Sindhu, Mehatnu, Krumu and Gomatī. The identification of some of the lesser known rivers in: R.T. H. Griffith, The Hymns of the Rig Veda, Benaras, 1892, Vol.4, pp.251-252 footnotes 5 and 6. But the Gaṅgā and Yamunā are only rarely mentioned in what are usually considered late hymns.
3. Vedic Index, II, 424. Sapta Sindhavaḥ occurs only once as the designation of a definite country in the Rg Veda. It also occurs much later in the Meharauli inscription of King Candra — perhaps to be identified with Candragupta II — Sircar, Sel. Inscr., p. 276.
4. Atharva Veda, V, 22, 14. Book V, adhyāya 22, solely deals with the types of fever (takmān). It originates among the Mūjavants, Balhikas among whom it is asked to persist (verses 5; 7; 8). It is also asked to afflict the wanton śūdra woman (verse 7), foreign people (amun aranam janam verse 12), and finally the Gandhāris, the Mūjavants, the Aṅgas and the Magadhas. gandhāribhyo mūjavadbhyo 'ṅgebhyo magadhebhyah/ praisyan janam iva śevadhīm takmānaṁ pari dadmasi//14//

the greatest attention is given to the central areas of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Doāb, it becomes apparent that the other areas were viewed with this region as the basis. The Kāthaka Saṁhitā speaks of the Kuru-Pañcālas.⁵ Their country and that of the Kośalas, Videhas is mentioned in different contexts in the Satapatha Brāhmana. Besides mentioning that the speech of the Kuru Pañcālas was the best,⁶ preference is given to a certain sacrificial practice that was approved among them.⁷ The Videha country was the easternmost land that was considered pure by the āryas. The story of the eastern boundary of Aryan control is related in the same Brāhmana. King Videgha Māthava carried the sacred fire (Agni) across the Ganges Valley as far as the river Sadānīra. Here he paused as the land east of the river had not been sanctified by Agni and established the Videha people on the other bank.⁸ In the Kausītaki Brāhmana Upaniṣad, Gargya the renowned reader of the Veda, travelled only among the Uśīnaras, the Matsyas, the Kurus, the Pañcālas, the Kāśis and the Videhas, giving the impression that these were centres of intellectual activity.⁹

The Aitareya Brāhmana¹⁰ first contemplates a division of the country according to the people that inhabited particular areas. Here Indra is inaugurated by the deities of the various directions to become Universal ruler. The kings of the western direction (prācīyāṁ diśi), of the southern direction (dakṣiṇāyāṁ diśi), of the eastern direction (prācyāṁ diśi) are first referred to but the names of people

5. Kāthaka Sam., X, 6.

6. Sat. Br., III, 2, 3, 15.

7. Ibid., I, 7, 2, 8. Eggeling (SBE, Vol. 12, pt. I, p. xlii) is of the opinion that part of the text was redacted among the Kuru Pañcālas.

8. Śat. Br., I, 4, 1, 10ff.

9. Kausītaki Br. Up., IV, 1. - .. so 'vasad uśīnareṣu savasan matsyēsu kurupañcāleṣu kāśivideṣv iti.../'

10. Ait. Br., VIII, 14.

who inhabit these areas is omitted. Then follows the description of the inauguration of Indra in the northern direction beyond the Himālayas, which includes the countries of the Uttara Kurus and Uttara Madras --

udīcyāṁ diśi ye ke ca parena himavantaṁ janapadā uttarakurava
uttaramadra iti vairājīyāyaiva te .../11

Finally, the middle region inhabited by the kings of the Kuru Pañcālas Vaśas, and Uśīnaras anointed the king --

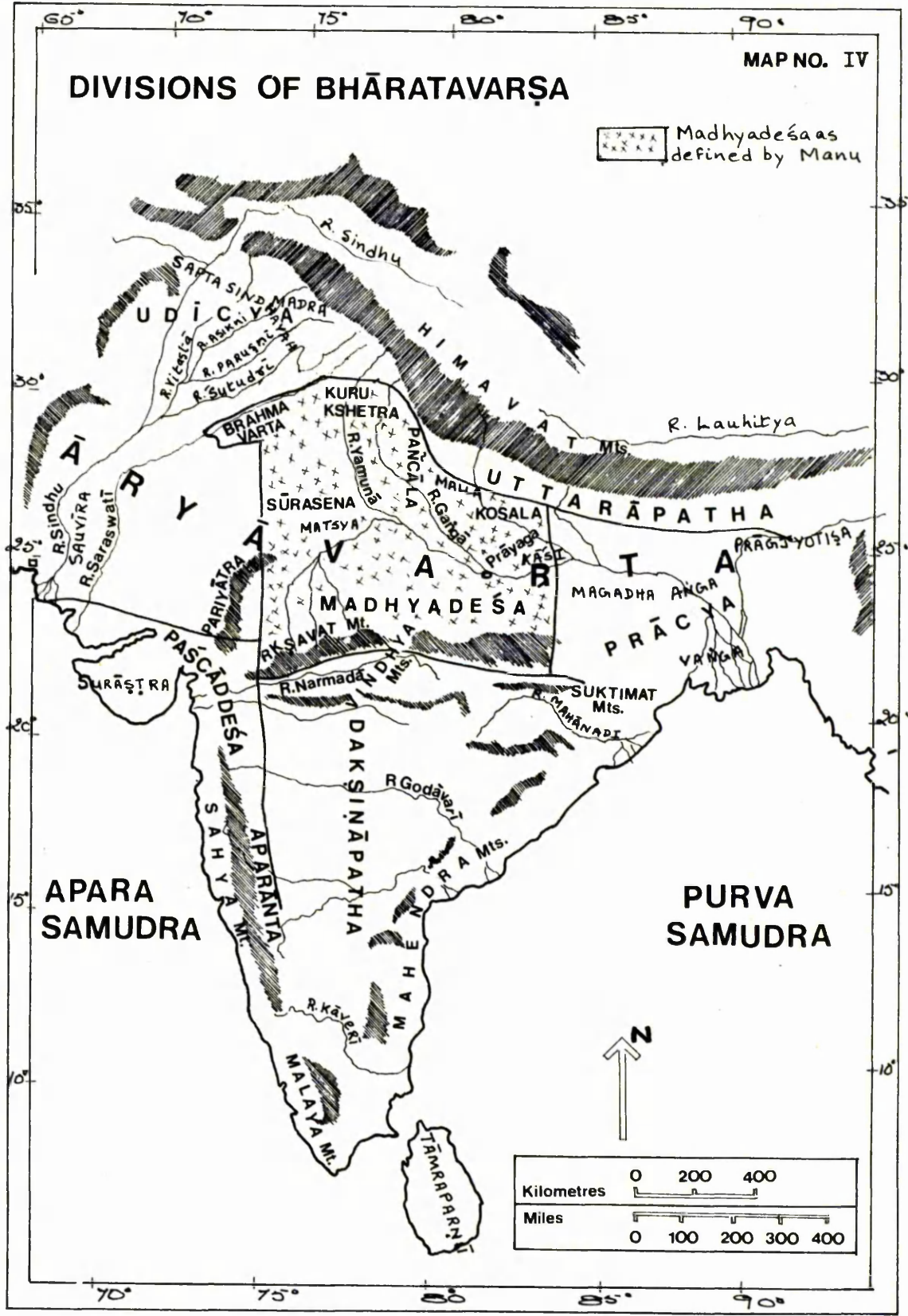
tasmād asyāṁ dhruvāyāṁ madhyamāyāṁ¹² pratiṣṭhāyāṁ diśi ye
ke ca kurupañcālānāṁ rājānaḥ savaśośīnarānām.../

Except for the middle and northern regions, the people of the other three regions are not listed. This may indicate ignorance about those areas during this period. It is essential to emphasize that with the exception of the Rg Veda, all literature of this early period projected the views of the brāhmaṇas of madhyadeśa. The conception of this region expanded gradually and as will consequently be described, became the nucleus of brāhmaṇa activity in the Gangetic plain. The territories of the Kurus, Pañcālas, Kāśis, Videhas always remained part of this area. However, broadly speaking, during this period of the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas, the Gaṅgā-Yamunā Doāb and the plain of Kurukṣetra to the north of Delhi, would roughly correspond to Aryāvarta in its strict sense. It must be added that this was not a political unit, neither was it an ethnic or religious one. But culturally, it can be considered a whole and this aspect becomes more striking when the Dharmasūtras define the limits of Aryāvarta.

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11. Martin Haug, The Aitareya Brahmanam of the Rig Veda, Allahabad, 1922, p. 356 considers vairājyam to mean without king especially when the term janapadā is used instead of rājānaḥ which is used in all other passages of this chapter. A.B. Keith, Rig Veda Brahmanas : The Aitareya and Kausītaki, 1920, p.331, ft.nt., however, considers this wholly inconceivable.
12. Keith, Op. Cit., p.331 translates this as 'in this firm middle established quarter...'

The sacerdotal conception of Aryāvarta cannot be lost sight of in the Dharma literature since it is constantly emphasized. These writers show only a slight divergence of opinion amongst themselves. The standard and often repeated description of Aryāvarta is that this country lies to the east of the region where the river Sarasvatī disappears, to the west of the Black forest (Kālakavana), to the north of the Pāriyātra mountains and to the south of the Himālayas.¹³ In the Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra the rules of conduct that are authoritative in this area prevail elsewhere.¹⁴ Vasīṣṭha has almost the same definition but further adds that acts of spiritual merit and customs that are approved of in this country must be acknowledged everywhere as authoritative, and above all, laws that oppose those of Aryāvarta must not prevail anywhere.¹⁵ Patañjali echoes the same description of Aryāvarta where he points out that the Śakas and Yavanas are people who do not belong to this area.¹⁶ Manu's definition of Aryāvarta is different and will be subsequently discussed in detail, but the

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13. Cunningham's Ancient Geography of India, Calcutta, 1924, p.xli, ft.nt. 1. The identification of Kālakavana, the eastern boundary given in the sūtras, is at Prayāga, which is also the eastern boundary of Madhyadeśa as given by Manu. The Pāriyātra mountains are the western part of the Vindhyas.
14. Baudhāyana Dhs., I, 1, 2, 9 -- prāg adarśanāt pratyak kālakāḍ vanād daksinena himavantam udak pāriyātram etad āryāvartam tasmin yā ācārah sa pramānam/9/
15. Vasīṣṭha Dhs., I, 8-11 -- āryāvartah prāg adarśāt pratyak kālakanād udak pāriyātrād daksinena himavatah/8/ uttarena ca vindhyasya/9/ tasmin deśe ye dharmā ye cācārās te sarvatra pratyetyah/10/ na tv anye pratilomakadharmānam/11/
16. Mahābhāṣya, II, 4, 10 on Pānini's sūtra: sūdrānām aniravasitānām.



boundaries that the sūtras assign to it are identical to the ones he assigns to Madhyadeśa.¹⁷

Thus the territory so far designated as Āryāvarta can be identified as follows: The region where the river Sarasvatī disappears is the Patiāla district in the Panjab. The Pāriyātra mountains belong to the Vindhya range, probably the hills of Mālwā. The Kālakavana is identified with a tract somewhere near Prayāga.¹⁸ This definition not only excludes present-day Bengal but also Bihar; the latter in ancient times included the entire Magadha country. It also excluded the major portion of the land of the R̥g Vedic Aryans.

These areas of exclusion were significant from the brāhmaṇical point of view. The question much canvassed in their works was not simply the territory that should be called Āryāvarta but to consider how far that was a fit habitation for those who followed the Vedic religion and observed the rules and regulations of the caste oriented society. Both Baudhāyana and Vasīṣṭha also give other views that were prevalent at the time about the country that should be described as Āryāvarta. Some declare that it is just the country between the Gaṅgā and Yamunā rivers¹⁹ or, on the other extreme, that it lies to the south of the Himālaya and north of the Vindhya, being limited east and west by the two oceans.²⁰ Most important of all they quote a tradition contained in the Brāhmaṇa of the Bhāllavins, a school of the Sāma Veda. According to this tradition, Āryāvarta is demarcated by the areas where the black antelope grazes. Its wanderings in the west are limited by the Indus (Sindhu) and in the east by the region where the sun rises

17. Manu, II, 21 --- Himavadvindhyayor madhyaṃ yat prāg vinasānād api pratyag eva prayāgāc ca madhyadeśah..../ (discussed below)

18. The Sacred Laws of the Āryas, SBE, Bombay, 1883, pp.2-4, ft.nt. 8.

19. Baudhāyana Dhs., I, 1, 2, 10; Vasīṣṭha Dhs., I, 12.

20. Vasīṣṭha Dhs., I, 9.

(sūryodayana). Spiritual pre-eminence prevails in this entire area.²¹

Manu declares that the areas where the black antelope naturally roams must be considered fit for the performance of sacrifice, whereas any areas different from the above comprise the country of the mlecchas.²² The Smṛti of Yājñavalkya²³ has the same verse and commentator Viśvarūpa quotes the following passage of the Svetāśvataras to explain it: -

'Sacrifice became a black antelope and wandered over the earth, dharma followed in its wanderings.'²⁴

This view of the limits of Āryāvarta was maintained by several late smṛtikāras as well whose authorities were undoubtedly the Mānava Dharmaśāstra and the earlier tradition of the sūtras in general.²⁵

These definitions of Āryāvarta are so vague that no definite conclusion can be drawn regarding the limits of the sacred land from these references. For instance, the point where the sun rises was a matter of guess and varied according to the geographical outlook of the writers, which in turn was conditioned by the area of the country explored. It has been suggested that the black antelope selects for

21. Baudhāyana Dhs., I, 1, 2, 11-12 — athāpy atra bhāllavino gāthām udāharanti/ paścāt sindhur vidharanī sūryasyodayanaṁ purah/ yāvat kṛṣṇā vidhāvanti tāvad dhi brahmavarcasam iti/ Vasīṣṭha Dhs., I, 14-15 — athāpi bhāllavino nidāne gāthām udāharanti/ paścāt sindhur vidhāranī sūryasyodayanaṁ purah/ yāvat kṛṣṇo ['l'bhidhāvati tāvad vai brahmavarcasam iti/

22. Manu, II, 23. (Discussed below).

23. Yaj. Smṛti, I, 2 — yasmin deśe mṛgah kṛṣṇas tasmin dharmān nibodhata that is, 'In the country where there is the black antelope, know the dharmas relating to that.'

24. Viśvarūpa on Yājñavalkya, I, 2. Significance of the black antelope first explained in the Taittirīya Saṁhitā, V, 4, 4, 4.

25. The question of the varṇāśramadharmā and where it must or must not prevail is deeply interwoven with the idea of Āryāvarta as opposed to Mlecchadeśa. It is striking that elaborate rules of exclusion of the Āryas from mleccha areas occur more frequently in later smṛtis, specifically those written after the Manu Smṛti. A detailed study of this point will be given below in the chapter on behaviour — Chapter V

its home only well-cultivated rich plains of India and excludes sandy, mountainous and forested areas and the latter were commonly inhabited by the aboriginal tribes.²⁶ Taken strictly from the śāstric point of view the black antelope must have personified sacrifice which had to be performed on pure land only. This was not the sole criterion that cordoned off mleccha country, but was probably the first one.

Conscious concern about the purity of land is also apparent in early sūtra writing when it refers to people of mixed origin (saṅkīrṇayoni). In the section on the rules and customs of different countries Baudhāyana considers the inhabitants of Avantī, Aṅga, Magadha, Surāṣṭra, Dakṣiṇāpatha, Upāvṛt, Sindhu Sauvīrā to be of mixed origin.^{26a} As for those people who have visited the countries of the Aratṭas, Kāraskaras, Puṇḍras, Sauvīrās, Vaṅgas, Kaliṅgas, Prānūnas, he states that they should offer a Śrautasūtra sacrifice called Punahstoma or a Sarvapṛṣṭhī.²⁷

Taking both these verses together one observes that the lands Baudhāyana excludes from Āryāvarta are the Panjab, Magadha, Aṅga, Vaṅga, Gujarat, Sindh, the lands south of the Vindhya as well as Rajputana and Malwa. These countries are listed in the eastern, western and southern quarters of Bhāratavarsa in texts like the Purāṇas. There is, however, no reference here to these areas as mleccha lands, which is significant. Moreover, the verses occur in a context where the aim of the author was to clarify and strengthen the authority of

26. A.A. Führer, The Sacred Laws of the Āryas, SBE, Bombay 1883, p.3, ft.nt. 13.

K.V. Rangaswami Aiyangar, Rājadharmā, 1914, p. 161 --- suggests that the area where barley and kuśa grass grow is the habitat of the black antelope.

26a. Baudhāyana Dhs., I, 1, 2, 13 — evantayo [']ṅgamagadhāh surāstrā dakṣiṇāpathāh/ upāvṛt sindhusauvīrā ete saṅkīrṇayonayah/13/

27. Ibid., I, 1, 2, 14 — aratṭān kāraskarān puṇḍrān sauvīrān vaṅgakaliṅgān prānūnān iti ca gatvā punastomena yajeta sarvapṛṣṭhayā va/14/

his own rules and popularize the customs of Āryāvarta. Probably with this consideration in mind, this adhyāya begins by pointing out that there is a dispute regarding five practices in the north and the south, among which a few are peculiar to the north and a few to the south. Though Baudhāyana allows in the above case, the custom or rule of a certain country to be authoritative in that area only, he forbids these customs to prevail in any other country.²⁸ Gautama, on the other hand, observes that only those laws of countries, castes and families that did not oppose the smṛti laws were valid.²⁹ Apastamba holds the same view.³⁰ He, however, does not give us any information on the boundaries of Āryāvarta or on the impure lands that must not be visited. As part of the rules for the snātakas he simply advises that they should not visit inferior men nor the countries inhabited by them.³¹

On the whole, in the early Vedic and Dharmasūtra literature the main concern of the texts was on defining the area of habitation of the Aryas with all its concomitants. There is no single reference to mleccha country or behaviour. In the smṛti literature of the early centuries A.D. there is a significant change in attitudes regarding both these aspects. However, before we continue with brāhmanical point of view, we must divert and evaluate the Buddhist and other non-brāhmanical material. The basic line of enquiry will remain, i.e. an attempt will be made to find out whether discrimination of mlecchas on account of their area of habitation existed in such works as well.

28. Baudhāyana Dhs., I, 1, 2, 1-8

29. Gautama Dhs., XI, 19-20.

30. Apastamba Dhs., II, 6, 15, 1.

31. Ibid., I, 11, 32, 18 — ksudrān ksudrācaritān deśān seveta../

According to the Buddhists the most important division of Jambudīpa³² was Majjhimadesa. Its definition was not identical with that of Aryāvarta known to the Dharmasūtra writers, nor was it exactly what the Purāna writers understood by Madhyadeśa. The Vinaya and Sutta Pitakas supply considerable information concerning the Buddhist ideas about Majjhimadesa though there are no lengthy geographical lists in them.

The Vinaya Pitaka in the Mahāvagga, which lays down rules in the border country, also mentions the limits of the area called Majjhimadesa. Beyond the towns of Kajaṅgala and Mahāsālā in the east, the river Salalavatī in the south-east, the town of Setakaṇṇika in the south, the Brāhmaṇa village of Thūna in the west and the mountain range called Usīraddhaja in the north, are the territories which are called border countries. The term used to denote these areas beyond Majjhimadesa was paccantimā janapadā.³³ The reference is in context of the explanation of a rule, the upasampadā or full ordination ceremony which allows the reception of a new member into the Order to take place in border countries before a meeting of four monks and a Chairman who must be a Vinayadhara. The explanation is as follows:³⁴

32. To the Jaina and Brāhmin writers Jambudvīpa (Jambudīpa) was counted as one of the seven dvīpas of which the earth was thought to consist; Bhāratavarsa (Bharahavāsa) was one of the nine or seven countries on this mythical continent (Matsya Purāna, 114, 85, etc.; Jambudīva Pannatti, which is a whole work dealing with a description of Jambudvīpa.) The Buddhist conception of Jambudīpa was narrower and agreed largely with Jaina and Brāhmanic ideas of Bhāratavarsa (Law, India as described in early Buddhist and Jaina texts, 1941, p.1)

33. Vinaya P., Mahāvagga, V, 13, 12; Vol.I, p.197.

34. Ibid., (Tr.) II, 38, — 'In this (rule) the following are the border countries: To the east is the town called Kajaṅgala, beyond that is Mahāsālā. Beyond that are the border countries; on this side of it is in the middle (country). To the south-east is the river Salalavatī. Beyond that are border..... To the south is the town Setakaṇṇika. Beyond that... To the west is the brāhmaṇa village called Thūna. Beyond that ... To the north is the mountain called Usīraddhaja. Beyond that'

Tatr'ime paccantimā janapadā: puratthimāya disāya kajaṅgalan nāma nigamo, tassa pareṇa mahāsālā, tato parā paccantimā janapadā, orato majjhe.
Puratthimadakhināya disāya salalavatī nāma nadī, tato parā paccantimā janapadā, orato majjhe.
Dakkhināya disāya setakannikam nāma nigamo, tato parā paccantimā janapadā, orato majjhe.
Pacchimāya disāya thūnan nāma brāhmanagāmo, tato parā paccantimā janapadā, orato majjhe.
Uttārāya disāya usīraddhajo nāma pabbato, tato parā paccantimā janapadā, orato majjhe.
Anujānāṃ bhikkhave evarūpesu paccantimesu janapadesu vinayadhara pañcamena ganena upasampadam/12/

Oldenberg³⁵ in his introduction assigns this text to about 400 B.C. which may not be accepted as absolute, but the above explanation about the majjhimā and paccantimā janapadās became part tradition and was handed down to different Buddhist schools.³⁶

The Anguttara Nikāya mentions the following sixteen Mahājanapadās among the countries of Jambudīpa: Kāsī, Kosala, Aṅga, Magadha, Vajjī, Malla, Cetī, Vaṃsa, Kuru, Pañcāla, Maccha, Sūrasena, Assaka, Avantī, Gandhāra and Kambojā.³⁷ Malalasekera has observed that the first fourteen can be included in Majjhimadesa and the last two in Uttarāpatha.³⁸ However, the Dīgha Nikāya lists only twelve of the Mahājanapadās and categorically omits the last four — Assaka, Avantī, Gandhāra and Kambojā.³⁹ Most scholars rightly reject the idea that these were political divisions. According to Raychaudhuri they could be regarded as socio-cultural regions, while Rhys Davids states that the main idea in the mind of those who drew up or used the above list

35. H. Oldenberg, The Vinaya Piṭakam, London 1879, Vol. I, p. xxxix.

36. An almost identical description occurs in — Jātaka, I, 49; it occurs even in commentaries — Sumaṅgalavilāsini, II, 429.

37. Anguttara Nikāya, III, 70, 17, Vol. I, p. 213. Also Vol. IV, pp. 252; 256; 260.

38. G.P. Malalasekera, Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names, II, p. 49. In the Purānic divisions of Bhāratavarṣa Assaka, Kambojā, Gandhāra are included in Uttarāpatha and Saurasena and Avantī in Aparānta — Mārkaṇḍeya P., Chp. LVII.

39. Dīgha Nikāya, II, 200.

was still 'tribal and not geographical'.⁴⁰ The definition of Majjhimadesa, discussed above, also carries the implication that it was more or less a culturally homogeneous region vis-à-vis the others. This is clear especially as it is always contrasted with paccantimā janapadā.

The Dharmasūtra texts had described the eastern boundary of Madhyadeśa or Aryāvarta, excluding Bengal and Bihar. The last mentioned areas were, however, of the greatest importance to the Buddhists during the early days of their preachings. The Buddhist writers therefore naturally extended the boundary of Majjhimadesa in the east to include Aṅga and Magadha.⁴¹ The Dīvyāvadāna, a collection of legends preserved in Buddhist Sanskrit, extends it further eastwards so as to include Puṇḍavardhana (north Bengal). The pratyanta or border lands are considered to be situated beyond this area.⁴² Apart from this difference, the passage is almost identical with that occurring in the Vinaya Pīṭaka and runs as follows:⁴³

Pūrvenopāli puṇḍavardhanam nāma nagaran tasya pūrvena
puṇḍakakṣo nāma parvataḥ tataḥ pareṇa pratyantaḥ.⁴⁴
Dakṣiṇena sarāvati nāma nagari, tasyāḥ pareṇa sarāvati
nāma nadi, so'ntaḥ tataḥ pareṇa pratyantaḥ.
Pāścimena sthūnopasthūnakau brāhmanagrāmakau so'ntaḥ
tataḥ pareṇa pratyantaḥ.
Uttarena usīragiriḥ so'ntaḥ tataḥ pareṇa pratyantaḥ/

40. Raychaudhuri, PHAI, p.95ff.
Rhys Davids, Buddhist India, p.23.

41. B.C. Law, India as described in early Texts of Buddhism and Jainism, 1941, p.20, ft. nt. 6 - The town of Kajaṅgala is identical with Ka - Chu - Wen - Kilo of Yuan Chwang which lay at a distance of about 400 li east of Campā. J.C. Jain, Life in the Jain Canons, 1947, p. 295 - Kajaṅgala is identified with Kaṅkajol in Santhal Pargana in Bihar.

42. The word pratyanta could be taken as border areas of eastern India as much as it could of western India.

43. Dīvyāvadāna, I, 21-22. (Cowell's Ed., 1970)

44. Rhys Davids, 'Note on the Middle Country of Ancient India', JRAS, 1904, p.86, (Tr.) — 'To the east, Upāli, is the town called Puṇḍavardhana and to the east of that mountain called Puṇḍakakṣa, beyond that is beyond the border.'

The Pāli list of the six principal cities in the Mahāparinibbāna Suttanta⁴⁵ of Caṃpā, Rājagaha, Sāvattihī, Sāketa, Kosambī and Kāsī confirms the importance given to the eastern region, *i.e.* present Uttara Pradesh and Bihar as centres of Buddhist activity.

The unfamiliarity of the Buddhists, however, is clearly apparent with regard to the western and southern regions. The example of Avantī-dakkhināpatha is discussed at length in the Vinaya Pitaka. The monk Mahākaccāna, a resident of Avantī, desired a change in the Vinaya law because of the particular physical condition of Avantī-dakkhināpatha. The soil in this country was black on the surface, rough and trampled by the feet of cattle.⁴⁶ The Buddha then contrasts the majjhimā janapadā with the paccantimā janapadā and the latter apparently included the region known as avantī-dakkhināpatha.⁴⁷ Finally, however, the Vinaya rule concerning footwear was relaxed for the border countries, where shoes with thick lining could be used.⁴⁸

In another context we are told about a custom observed by the dakkhinā janapadā called dhovana which the Buddha called vulgar and anariya. The dhovana was an ablution which the commentary explains to be a bone-washing ceremony. The dead were buried and afterwards the bones were dug up, dried and washed with ceremonies of lamentation.⁴⁹ The Buddha explains that since this ceremony involved eating, drinking, dancing, singing, playing musical instruments etc., it was not conducive to the attainment of nibbāna.⁵⁰ The passage is as follows:

45. Dīgha Nikāya, II, 147. Most of the important preachings of the Buddha also took place in these towns.

46. Vinaya P., Mahāvagga, V, 13, 4-7; Vol. I, pp. 195-197.

47. Ibid., V, 13, 11-12.

48. Ibid., V, 13, 13.

49. Manorathapūrāṇi, CVII, I, Ang. N., V, p.216.

50. Anguttara Nikāya, CVII, 1, Vol. V, p.216 — (Tr.) F.L. Woodward, The Book of Gradual Sayings, Vol. V, 1936, p. 152 - 'Monks, in the southern district there is an ablution. On that occasion there are food and drink, food soft and hard, syrups and drinks, dancing and singing and music of instruments. But, monks, this is just a wiping, not a wiping out, I declare. For that ablution is low, common, vulgar, unariyan, not bringing profit; it conduces not to ... nibbāna.'

Atthi bhikkhave dakkhinesu janapadesu dhovanam nāma.
Tattha hoti annam pi pānam pi khajjam pi bhojjam pi
leyyam pi peyyam pi naccam pi gītam pi vādītam pi.
Atth'etam bhikkhave dhovanam n'etam natthī ti vadāmi.
Taṅca kho etam bhikkhave hīnam gāmmam pothu, jjanikam
unariyaṃ anattasamhitam na nibbidāya na virāgāya na
nirodhāya na upasamāya na abhiññāya na sambodhāya na
nibbānāya saṃvattati.

Broad regional differences, as manifested in social organisation, are also pointed out; they are not criticised but simply commented upon. In reply to Assalāyana's remark that the brāhmaṇas regard themselves as superior in birth and status, the Buddha denies this claim and tells him of how in the Yona, Kamboja and other outlying regions — yona-kambojesu aññesu ca paccantimesu janapadesu — there are only two vannas, the master and the slave. Here it is possible for the master to become a slave or the slave to become a master.^{51.}

While in some cases, such as in that mentioned above, there is some indication as to what paccanta or outlying region meant; in the majority of passages only the contrast between the majjhima janapada and the paccantimā janapada is emphasised and the ignorance of the people living in the outlying regions is the only additional information available. To be born outside Majjhimadesa is a great disadvantage since then you are not fortunate enough to be able to hear the teachings of the Buddha and even if there is a possibility, the chances are remote.⁵² On the other hand, it is also mentioned that very few beings are reborn in the majjhima-janapadas as compared to the paccanta-janapadas, which abound in unintelligent milakkhas.

51. Majjhima Nikāya, Assalāyana Suttam, Vol. I, p.149.

52. Dhammapadatthakathā, Vol. III, 248, 489.

evam eva kho bhikkhave appakā te sattā ye majjhimesu janapadesu paccājayanti, atha kho ete va sattā bahutarā ye paccantimesu janapadesu pacājayanti aviññātāresu milakkhesu 53

In another context an almost similar passage defines the two janapadas but in this case the nuns and monks, lay disciples male and female, are not allowed to visit the paccantimā janapadā that is the habitation of unintelligent milakkhas ---

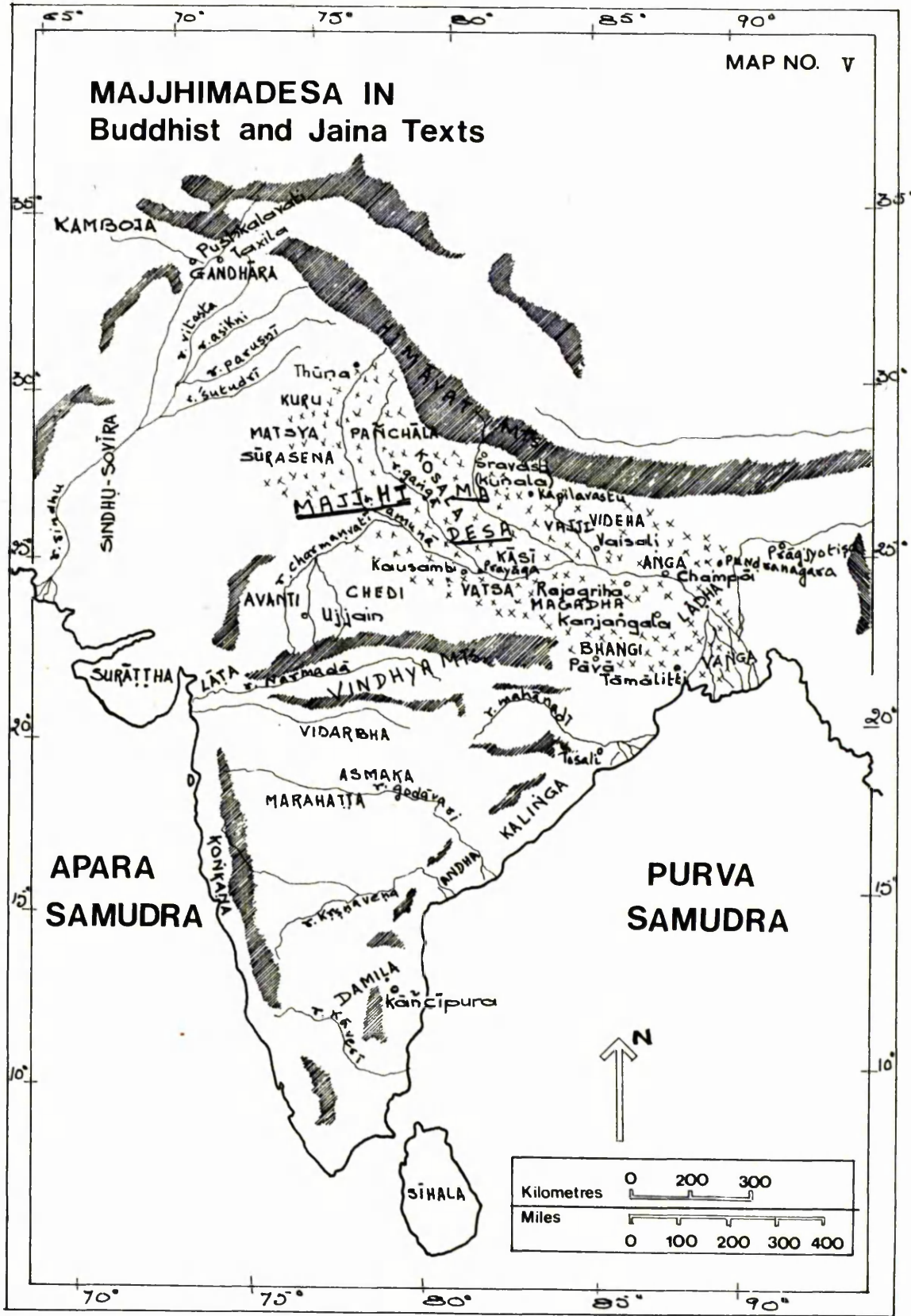
paccantimesu janapadesu paccājāto hoti aviññātāresu milakkhesu yathā natthi gati bhikkhūnam bhikkhunīnam upāsakānam upāsikānam.... 54

The Papañcasūdanī, commentary on the Majjhima Nikāya further informs us that the Buddha never spent a night in the Paccanta janapadā. 55

Lord Buddha travelled in part of the same area which the Brāhmins defined as Āryāvarta and held in special esteem. They, however, differed in their definition of middle country or Majjhimadesa and included in it all those realms that the Buddha visited. The paccantimā janapadāh where the milakkhas lived, probably tribal areas such as the forested regions of the Vindhya, across parts of which Buddhist monks later had to travel. The monks were forbidden to mix with them as these tribesmen followed often a primitive means of livelihood incompatible with the basic Buddhist principles. Buddhism, however, spread among peoples of various cultures; so that it would be wrong to suggest that they regarded all people outside the geographical area of its origin as milakkhas.

The importance of eastern India and the glorification of its

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53. Āṅguttara Nikāya, I, xix, 1-4, Vol. I, p. 35; the same passage occurs again in the Saṃyutta Nikāya, 62, 4, Vol. V, p.466. (Tr.) - F. L. Woodward and Mrs. Rhys Davids, The Book of Kindred Sayings, Vol. V, p. 391, 'Just so, monks, few are those beings that are reborn in the middle districts: more numerous are they that are reborn in the outlying districts, among the unreasoning barbarians.'
54. Āṅguttara Nikāya, VIII, iii, 29, 3, Vol. IV, p.226. Dīgha Nikāya, III, 264.
55. Papañcasūdanī, (2 Vols., Colombo), II, 982.



towns, parks and groves is apparent in early Jaina āgamas as well. The Bhagavatī Sūtra, also called the Vyākhyāprajñapti,⁵⁶ gives a somewhat different list of the sixteen Mahājanapadās. These are Aṅga, Baṅga, Magadha, Malaya, Mālva, Accha, Vaccha, Koccha, Pādha, Lādha, Bajjī, Moli, Kāsī, Kosala, Avaha and Sambhuttara. Some of the names are difficult to identify.⁵⁷ It has been observed by Raychaudhuri that besides Aṅga, Magadha, Vatsa, Vajji, Kāsī and Kosala common to both Buddhist and Jain lists and Mālva of the Bhagavatī which is probably identical with Avantī, the other states are new and indicate 'a knowledge of the far east and far south of India'.⁵⁸ His explanation for this difference is that the Jaina list is later than the Buddhist one. Though one cannot rule out this suggestion, there is also the possibility that the Jainas included in their enumeration only those areas with which they were familiar. The striking omission of Gandhāra and Kamboja shows that the association of the Jainas with the extreme north-western parts of India was totally absent. Lādha or Rādha, the easternmost janapadā according to the Jainas, was a country through which Mahāvīra travelled, but he encountered numerous difficulties here. Gilāya, a mleccha king of Koḍivaṃsa, situated in Lādha country, joined the Jaina order under Mahāvīra in Sāketa.⁵⁹

In the Brhatkalpa Sūtra⁶⁰ Mahāvīra is quoted to have declared that the monks and nuns may wander towards the east as far as Aṅga Magadha, towards the south as far as Kosambī, towards the west as far as Thūnā (west of Sāketa)^{60a} and towards the north as far as Kuṇālā (Sāvattī). This, roughly speaking, coincides with that tract of land

56. Vyākhyāprajñapti, 15.

57. Baṅga (Vaṅga), Vaccha (Vatsa), Pādha (Pāṇḍya or Paṇḍra), Lādha (Lata or Rādha), Bajjī (Vajji).

58. Raychaudhuri, PHAI, p.96.

59. J.C. Jain, Life as Depicted in the Jain Canons, p.256.

60. Brhatkalpa Sūtra, I, 50.

60a. J.C. Jain, Op. Cit., p.343 - It is identified with Thaneshwar (from C.A.G.I., p.xliii, ft. nt. 2).

which includes modern Bihar, eastern Uttara Pradesh and a portion of western Uttara Pradesh. This simply indicated the period of the earliest stage in the propagation of Jainism. The text itself is not one of the oldest Aṅgas.

There is no doubt that the geographical knowledge of the Jaina monks and traders gradually increased, which was an important factor for the spread of their faith. The Ācārāṅga Sūtra, one of the oldest aṅgas, warns monks and nuns that, when on pilgrimage they should avoid roads that cross areas belonging to border peoples, robbers, milakhas and anāriya people ---

se bhikkhū vā bhikkhūṇī gāmanugāmanam dūijjamāne amtarā
se virūvarūvāni paccantikāni dasugāyatanāni milakkhūni
anāriyāni dussamappāni...../

Such people, the passage continues to elaborate, are half-civilised, unconverted people who rise or eat at improper times.⁶¹ However, the main reason why monks and nuns should avoid these areas is that they are unsafe. The Kevalin points out that the ignorant populace might beat, harass, rob them under the impression that they were spies from hostile villages. The concern is also expressed in the following verse that mendicants should likewise not travel through a country not properly governed or where there is a war, as in such areas, too, they can be maltreated.⁶² The commentary⁶³ establishes for us the localization of milakha country in this particular context. It is the country inhabited by the Varvara, Śabara, Pulinda etc. tribes. The commentary was definitely written after the fifth century A.D. and the Jaina faith had by then spread beyond the north eastern original home of its inception.⁶⁴ Their contact with the forest tribes

61. Ācārāṅga Sūtra, II, 3, 8.

62. Ibid., II, 3, 9.

63. Ācārāṅgasūtram with Sanskrit Chāya and Commentary by Atmarāmaji Mahārāja, 2 Vols., Ludhiana, 1963-64, II, 3, 8.

64. J. Charpentier, The Uttarādhyayanasūtra, 1922, p.13 --- A famine broke out during the reign of Candragupta Maurya in Magadha which forced a section of the Jaina community to emigrate to the Karnāṭa country.

of the Vindhya was natural, and their designation as milakkhas was the typical attitude of people from the plains with their norms of settled agricultural and urban life styles.

According to Jaina tradition it was quite late in its history that king Sampai (Samprati), a great patron of Jaina religion, made other countries, besides the sixteen Mahājanapadās mentioned above, suitable for the movement of Jaina monks. The Pannāvaṇā (Prajñāpanā) consequently listed twenty-five and a half countries as those inhabited by the Arya, with their important cities, and fifty-three countries of the milakkhas.⁶⁶ The āriyas who were noted by the country they resided in — the khettāriyas — partly inhabited the territories of the sixteen Mahājanapadās and partly the new countries that were now declared Āriyan.⁶⁷ The addition of Surāṣṭra (Kathiawar) and Sindhu Sovīrā as suitable lands for the preachings of Jaina monks is significant. The former was a centre of trade and commerce, frequented by merchants; a section of the community to whom Jainism appealed most strongly. This area today also is a major centre of the Jains. The inclusion of Sindhu Sovīrā is not so clearly explicable and J.C. Jain quotes Siddhānta texts to the contrary which still forbid monks not to frequent Sindhu territory.⁶⁸ Weber considers these names

66. Prajñāpanā, I, 36-37, pp.54-55. The list of milakkha people appears first followed by that of the āriyas who are divided into six groups based on khetta (country), jāti (caste), bhāsā (language), kula (family), kamma (trade) and sippa (handicraft).

67. The twenty-five and a half Āriyan countries are: Magadha, Auṅga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Kāsī, Kosala, Kuru, Kusattā, Pañcāla, Jaṅgala, Surāṣṭhā Videha, Vaccha, Sandilla, Malaya, Varanā, Dassanna, Cedi, Sindhu Sovīrā, Sūrasena, Bhaṅgi, Purivaṭṭa, Kuṅālā, Lādā, and half of Kegaiaddha (Kekeya). (Cf. Jain, Jain Canon, 1947 — Bṛhatkalpa Bhāṣya, I, 3263ff. — These countries were called Āriyan because great men are said to have attained omniscience and by attending their preaching several more people were enlightened and took to ascetic life.)

68. J.C. Jain, Life as depicted in the Jain Canon, 1947, p.335.

to represent a later stage but to date back to an earlier period.⁶⁹

The upāṅga itself, like most of the Jaina Siddhānta, was redacted and put to writing after the fifth century and therefore, whatever period of Jaina history it tried to represent, it was undoubtedly influenced by the circumstances of the day.⁷⁰ Essentially the Jainas, like the Buddhists, gradually incorporated into their lists of āriya countries areas outside the traditional home of their origin, where they could move without any prerequisites of purification. Above all the universal nature of both these religious systems did not bind them to preach their respective faiths in any limited area. In the case of Jainism this was only true to a limited extent as Jaina ideas in this respect were greatly influenced by the Brahmins.

In returning to consider the Brāhmanical view on the territories that were to be considered ārya and mleccha after Buddhism and Jainism had appeared on the north Indian scene, we have to divide our investigation into two broad sections. First, there is our dependence on śāstra and smṛti literature, which in a way represent the continuation of the Dharmasūtra ideas on the subject, but with significant additions. They largely represent the official and theoretical point of view. Second, geographical divisions of the Indian subcontinent in texts such as the Parāśara Tantra, Brhatsaṁhitā, Purānas, Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata, Kāvya Mīmāṃsā, Amarakoṣa etc., give a different perspective to the idea of mleccha areas. The demarcation of mleccha and ārya territory was not at all rigid and ultimately was not an important criterion for discrimination.

The Mānava Dharmaśāstra⁷¹ presents a summary of the earlier ideas about Āryāvarta, in which there is clearly defined as the country between the Himālalaya and Vindhya mountains with the eastern and western

69. A. Weber, 'Ueber die heiligen Schriften der Jaina', Indische Studien, Vol. XVI, 1883, p.399. (Tr.) —H.W.Smyth, IA, Vol.XIX, p.375)

70. The geographical data and the list of milakkha peoples, in the Jaina is almost identical to similar lists in the Purānas. They will be discussed together consequently.

71. Manu, II, 17-24 - See map no. IV above --p. 133.

oceans on either side. Within Aryāvarta the work distinguishes between various degrees of pure land. The truly pure - sadācāra - country, called Brahmāvarta was that between the holy rivers Sarasvatī and Dr̥ṣadvatī --

sarasvatīdr̥ṣadvatyor devanadyor yad antaram/
taṁ devanirmitaṁ deśam brahmāvarttaṁ pracaksate/17/

It is assigned the absolutely pure status since in this country the separation of the four varṇas in due order has been handed down since time immemorial.⁷² Slightly less faultless was Brahmar̥ṣideśa which comprised the countries of Kurukṣetra, Matsya, Pañcāla and Sūrasena --

kurukṣetraṁ ca matsyāś ca pañcālāḥ sūrasenakāḥ/
eśa brahmar̥ṣideśo vai brahmāvartād anantaraḥ/19/

Brāhmaṇas born in this country and their usages set the standards for all men.⁷³ Next there follows the definition of Madhyadeśa. This is almost identical with what the early brāhmanical writers regarded as Aryāvarta and agrees with part of what the Buddhists considered Majjhimadesa. It was the country situated between the Himālaya and the Vindhya, in the west limited by the Vinaśana and in the east by Prayāga --

himavadvindhyaḥ madhyaṁ yat prāg vinaśanād api/
pratyaḥ eva prayāgāc ca madhyadeśaḥ prakīrtitaḥ/21/

Finally, the last and ostensibly, in comparison, the most inferior was the division called Aryāvarta which was generally all the land between the two mountain ranges of the Himālaya and Vindhya and the eastern and western oceans on either side --

ā samudrāt tu vai pūrvād ā samudrāt tu paścimāt/
tayoḥ evāntaraṁ giriyoḥ āryāvartaṁ vidur budhāḥ/22/

Manu does not end here but for the first time, in the following verse, is defined the country of the mlecchas - Mlecchadeśa in Dharmaśāstra writing. No specification or precise locations of this country is, however, given. Though the definition is vague, it contains

72. Manu, II, 18. Verse 17 hints at its purity by stating that this land was created by the gods.

73. Ibid., II, 20.

important implications. The passage reads as follows:

kr̥ṣṇasāras tu carati mrgo yatra svabhāvataḥ/
sa jñeyo yajñīyo deśo mlecchadeśas tv atah paraḥ/23/

'That land where the black antelope naturally roams, one must know to be fit for the performance of sacrifice; (the tract) different from that (is) the country of the Mlekkhas (barbarians).'⁷⁴ The Dharmasūtras had resorted to a similar reference to the black antelope but only to define the region they called Āryāvarta. In the Mānava Dharmaśāstra Mlecchadeśa is contrasted with the Āryāvarta. The underlying idea is that the border between mleccha and Ārya lands is not a permanent one. In other words, mleccha lands in the past and in the future had been and could be made fit for habitation as long as dharma or sacrifice, symbolised by the black antelope, purified those areas. This becomes a recurring theme in the Smṛti writing of the post-Manu period.^{74a}

The Viṣṇu Smṛti thus states in a positive manner that the mleccha country is one where the system of four varṇas is not established. Āryāvarta is beyond this country ---⁷⁵

cāturvarṇyavyavasthānaḥ yasmin deśe na vidyate
sa mlecchadeśo vijñeya āryāvartas tataḥ paraḥ/4/

That Āryāvarta should have the adjustment of the four varṇas is the import here. Commenting on Gautama's injunction about avoiding speech with mlecchas, Haradatta also makes the point that countries

74. Manu, II, 23 — (Tr.) G. Bühler, Laws of Manu, SBE, Oxford 1886, p.33 .

74a. Viśvarūpa on Yaj., I, 2 explains that sacrifice becomes a black antelope (kr̥ṣṇasāra) and only then can dharma be established in any country. The significance of the black antelope was simply meant to advocate the performance of sacrifice, which in turn purified land and people. Discussed above p. 135.

75. Viṣṇu Smṛti, LXXXIV,4

without the varṇāśramadharmā were inhabited by mlecchas: --- 76

varṇāśramadharmarahite deśe siṃhaladvīpādaḥ ye vasanti
te mlecchāḥ ..

It became difficult for later commentators to maintain these definitions about Āryāvarta and Mlecchadeśa as expediency demanded that 1) justifications be sought to explain the old ideas about mleccha countries in changed political circumstances and 2) concessions be made concerning travel to these areas. Thus on Manu, Medhātithi comments that 'Āryāvarta is so called because Āryas again and again spring up there and even if the mlecchas overrun it from time to time they do not abide there for long' --- 77

āryāvartante tatra punaḥ punar udbhavanty ākramyākramyāpi
na ciram tatra mlecchāḥ sthātaro bhavanti/

This partially contradicts Manu's original explanation that mlecchas only reside outside Āryāvarta. However, concerning those mlecchas that do live outside, Medhātithi observes that a ksatriya king of excellent conduct, if he conquers mlecchas, should establish the four varṇas among them and assign them a similar position as that of caṇḍālas in Āryāvarta. He continues that this country would then be fit for the performance of sacrifice because the earth is not by itself impure but becomes so through contact of impure things or persons. 78

There is no doubt that ultimately the discrimination against

76. Haradatta on Gautama, I, 9, 17. 'Those who live in an area such as the island of Śrī Laṅkā, where varṇāśramadharmā is not observed are mlecchas.'

77. Medhātithi on Manu, II, 22.

78. Ibid., II, 23 --- ...tathā yadi kaścit ksatriyādi jātiyo rājā sādhvāvarano mlecchān parājayeta cāturvarnyam vāsayet mlecchāṃś cāryāvarta iva caṇḍālān vyavasthāpayet so 'pi syād yajñiyah/ yato na bhūmiḥ svato duṣṭā saṃsargād dhi sādusyaty amedhyopahateva/

the mleccha was his inherent impurity and not the area of land he inhabited which, as Medhātithi has indicated, could be purified. At the same time the law books contain deliberate concessions to allow residence in mleccha countries. Apāraka, in discussing what Manu and Viṣṇu had to say about Āryāvarta and Mlecchadeśa, first agrees with them — Mlecchadeśa is where the system of four varṇas and the black deer are not found whereas, the remaining area is Dharmadeśa —⁷⁹

tataś ca yatra cāturvarṇavyavasthā kṛṣṇamṛgaś ca nāsti
sa mlecchadeśah/ tadanyo dharmadeśah/

But he goes on to add that, ideally, one who desires to practise Vedic religion should live in one of the four countries, that is Brahmāvarta and others.⁸⁰ If that is not possible then in a country where there the four varṇas are established and where the black antelope roams about naturally. However, if both of these conditions cannot be satisfied one should dwell in a country where at least one of the two is fulfilled:⁸¹

...tataś ca brahmāvartādi deśacatuṣṭayā lābhe yatra
cāturvarṇyaṁ vyavasthate kṛṣṇamṛgaś ca vicarati tatra
dharmecchubhiḥ sthātvyam/ tadasambhave cāturvarṇavyava-
sthāvati kṛṣṇamṛgayukte vā deśe/

It cannot be ignored that, on the whole, the main concern of the smṛti writers was restricted to the well-being of their own system and of ways and means by which it could be promoted. Demarcation with regard to territory, especially as a basis for distinction between a mleccha and an ārya, was only peripheral.

The marginal role that the area of habitation played in the identification of mlecchas can be further inferred from non-Dharmaśāstra brāhmanical literature and inscriptions. Here we read

79. Apāraka on the Yājñavalkya Smṛti, ASS, 1903, p.5.

80. The four countries mentioned by Manu: Brahmāvarta, Brahmarsideśa, Madhyadeśa, and Āryāvarta.

81. Ibid., p.5

of Bhāratavarṣa as a whole and its various divisions, none of which are indiscriminately called mleccha country. The name Bhāratavarṣa in the form Bharadhavasa first occurs in the Hāthīgumphā inscription of Khāravēla (probably first century B.C.). According to Jayaswal here it is used to indicate the plains of northern India.⁸²

The Purānas,⁸³ however, show a familiarity with the whole of the Indian subcontinent. In a general description of Bhāratavarṣa that occurs at the beginning of their chapters on geography, the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna states that it has the ocean on the east, south and west, and the Himālaya on the north —

etat tu bhārataṁ varṣaṁ catuḥsaṁsthānaśamsthitaṁ/58/
daksināparato hy asya pūrvveṇa ca mahodadhīh/
himāvān uttarenāsya kārmmukasya yathā guṇah/59/ 84

It is doubtful whether political and ethnic unity ever underlay this definition of Bhāratavarṣa. Śabara who is placed not later than the fifth century A.D., in his bhāṣya on Jaimini points out that there was a unity of language and culture from the Himālaya down to Cape Comorin.⁸⁵ The Purānas also systematically divide the whole

82. K.P. Jayaswal, 'The Hāthīgumphā Inscription of Khāravēla', EI, XX, 1912, p.79, line 10:
bharadavasa-pathā(?)nam mah(I)janayam (?)...
kārāpāyati.

83. The geographical tradition that originated from the Vāyu Purāna and that which is represented in the Brhatsaṁhitā are not sharply distinguished, though there are differences between the two versions. The Vāyu and the Brahmānda Purānas are considered the oldest and it is essentially information from the Vāyu that has filtered through to the other Purānas.

84. Mārk. P., LVII, 58-59 -- 'Such is this country Bhārata with the fourfold conformation. On its south and west is the great ocean; the Himavat range stretches along on its north, like the string of a bow.' /59/ (Tr. Fargiter).

85. Śabarabhāṣya, XI, 35; 42.

DIVISIONS OF BHARATAVARSA IN THE PURĀNAS										TABLE NO. I
		Central North	East	South	West	S. E.	N. E.	N. W.		
<u>Purānas</u>	Chapter	<u>Madhya- deśa</u>	<u>Prācya</u>	<u>Dakṣiṇā- pātha</u>	<u>Aparānta</u>	<u>Vindhya- vāsin</u>	<u>Parvatā- śrayināh</u>			
<u>Brahmānda</u>	49. 44ff.	18 coun- tries	18 coun- tries	28 coun- tries	19 coun- tries (A)	20 coun- tries	12 coun- tries			
<u>Vāyu</u>	45. 107ff.	18 coun- tries	18 coun- tries	28 coun- tries	19 coun- tries	20 coun- tries	12 coun- tries			
<u>Matsya</u>	114. 34ff.	18 coun- tries	17 coun- tries	27 coun- tries	7 coun- tries	20 coun- tries	12 coun- tries			
<u>Vāmana</u>	13. 36ff.	11 coun- tries	20 coun- tries	28 coun- tries	18 coun- tries (B)	20 coun- tries	13 coun- tries			
<u>Mārkaṇḍeya</u>	57. 33ff.	10 coun- tries	19 coun- tries (C)	27 coun- tries	19 coun- tries	20 coun- tries	13 coun- tries	22 coun- tries (C)		

(A) Aparānta countries are divided into two parts: 10 under Aparānta and 9 under Samparīta.

(B) The Vāmana designates this division as Pāścīma and not Aparānta.

(C) This includes twenty-two names of the Uttarapāścīma division -- the North-West division.

of Bhāratavarṣa into seven areas.⁸⁶ These divisions are listed as follows: Madhyadeśa, Udīcya, Prācya, Dakṣiṇāpatha, Aparānta, Vindhyavāsins and Parvatāśrayins.⁸⁷

The custom of naming peoples according to the area they inhabited is regularly followed in the Brhatsaṁhitā as well.⁸⁸ In the commentary of Bhattotpala on the same text, verses from Parāśara concerning the geographical divisions of Bhāratavarṣa are cited, which according to Kern must be considered an original chapter of the Parāśara Tantra.⁸⁹ The Jambukhaṇḍavinirmāṇaparvan in the Bhīṣma Parvan of the Mahābhārata⁹⁰ gives the same information about the countries of Bhāratavarṣa and Sañjaya, who describes them to the blind king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, begins by stating how the āryas and mlecchas alike and other races mixed of the two elements drink the waters of the various rivers that flow through the country.⁹¹ The Rāmāyaṇa, too, does not add anything new to the above pattern of dividing the country though, like the other texts, it contains variations of particular names.⁹² Indeed so firm was the idea of these geographical and cultural divisions of Bhāratavarṣa that late Sanskrit texts like the Kāvyaṁimāmsā repeated the material

86. Vāyu P., 33, 61 — tair idam bhāratam varṣam saptakhaṇḍam kṛtam purā repeated identically in the Brahmāṇḍa P., 34, 64. This was the original division of Bhāratavarṣa; later other descriptions were adopted.

87. Vāyu P., 45, 78-137; Brahmāṇḍa P., II, 16, 8-68; Matsya P., 114, 7-57; Mārkaṇḍeya P., 57, 5-57; Viṣṇu P., II, 3, 6-19. There are variations in these Purāna lists concerning the number of countries that should be assigned to each division. (Table attached).

88. Brhatsaṁhitā, XIV, 1-33; XVI, 1-42.

89. H. Kern, The Brhat Saṁhitā of Varāhamihira, Calcutta, 1865, p.32.

90. Mbh., VI, 10, 11-74.

91. Ibid., VI, 10, 12-13 — anye tato 'parijñātā hrasvā hrasvopajīvinah āryā mlecchāś ca kauravya tair miśrāḥ purusā vibho/ nadīḥ pibanti bahulā gaṅgāḥ sindhum sarasvatīm.../

92. Rāmāyaṇa, Kiskindhākāṇḍa, Chp. 40.

unchanged.⁹³ To this list of works must be added the Jaina idea of ancient geography, planned on the Purāna pattern and contained in the sixth upāṅga.⁹⁴

Though the above scheme was the most common way of defining Bhāratavarṣa, there were other less popular and often unusual descriptions of the same. In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, for example, an analogy is drawn with the body of a tortoise facing eastwards.⁹⁵ In all the various descriptions of Bhāratavarṣa the boundaries of the seven geographical divisions are not stated. It is only from the names of the janapadas that are listed under the respective headings of Madhyadeśa, Udīcya, Prācya, Aparānta, Dakṣiṇāpatha and others that one can determine their location. But the overall impression that emerges from these chapters on the so-called geography of ancient India is that this definition of Bhāratavarṣa developed over a period of time. It is further striking to note that ultimately it overshadowed the earlier ideas of Āryāvarta, Brahmāvarta etc. and to a lesser extent Madhyadeśa, as the only centres of importance and brāhmanical activity. This may to a large extent be attributed to the gradual increase of the knowledge of different parts of the subcontinent. As S.B. Chaudhuri has observed — 'Into the territorial area of the different regions, other small and minor ancient and sacred territorial units coalesced and as such ceased to be termed as separate units. Thus Brahmāvarta and Brahmarsideśa lost their identity in the Madhyadeśa, and

93. Kāvyaṃīmāṃsā of Rājaśekhara, (GOS), Chp. 17.

94. The Jambuddivapannatti. For divisions of Bhāratavarṣa - cf. map IV, p. 133.

95. Mārka. P., LVIII, 4-5 --- prāñi mukho bhagavān devah kūrmmarūpī vyavasthitah/ ākramya bhāratañi varṣaṃ navabhedam imam dviija/4/ B.C. Law, Historical Geography of Ancient India, 1954, p.2, ft. nt. 1, considers this description to fit well with the present knowledge of the topography of India. Pargiter (Tr. Mārka. P.), on the other hand, finds such an explanation 'absurd fancy.'

this combined with Prācyā, Praticyā and Udīcyā (Uttarāpatha) become the equivalent of Aryāvarta.⁹⁶ Simultaneously, it can be pointed out that this new outlook also determined the designation of areas or divisions such as Mlecchadesā. There was not one particular large area that thus designated in a general manner, but, on the other hand, it seems that only some of the territories that were inhabited by mleccha peoples were still considered impure.

The next point, therefore, will be to find out, from the same source material, which areas were impure or thought to be impure because they were inhabited by mlecchas. Most of these are general references where identification of the particular group of mlecchas is impossible. Although these seem rather vague indications they suggest that people thus designated were concentrated in certain geographical areas.

In at least three early Purānas, the Brahmānda, Vāyu and Matsya, the mlecchas are regarded as residents of the outskirts of Bhāratavarṣa.⁹⁷ This is followed by the information that the Kirātas and the Yavanas inhabit the eastern and western borders respectively, and that in the centre live the brāhmanas, ksatriyas, vaiśyas and sūdras, each performing their respective duties.⁹⁸

āyatas tu kumārīto gaṅgāyāḥ pravahāvadhīh tiryag ūrdhvaḥ
tu vistīrnah sahasrāṇi daśaiiva tu/10/ dvīpo hy upanivīṣṭo
'yaṁ mlecchair antesu sarvaśah/ yavanās ca kiratās ca
tasyānte pūrvapaścīme/11/ brāhmaṇāḥ ksatriyā vaiśyā madhye
sūdrās ca bhāgaśah.../

96. S.B. Chaudhuri, Ethnic Settlements in Ancient India, 1955, p.8.

97. Brahmānda P., II, 16, 11-12; Vāyu P., 48, 81-82; Matsya P., 114, 10-11.

98. The version of the Matsya Purāna, 114, 10-12. The Brahmānda, II, 11-13 and Vāyu, 48, 81-83, largely agree with this. The Mārkaṇḍeya, LVII, 7-8 and the Viṣṇu Purānas, II, 3, 8, have slightly different versions as they do not mention the mlecchas as inhabitants of the border areas.

This verse may seem to contradict other statements both in the Purānas and Epics where the mlecchas are indicated as being dispersed over nearly all directions of Bhāratavarṣa. However, before one examines the survey of such material, it is worth mentioning that the term mleccha was not used for one homogeneous group of people. Therefore, the geographical location of the various mleccha groups has to be understood with this basic presupposition.

One may begin with the statement in the Mahābhārata that the Āryas and mlecchas alike drink water from the various rivers of Bhāratavarṣa.⁹⁹ These rivers in fact cover the whole of the Indian subcontinent and among the important ones mentioned are the Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sindhu, Sarasvatī, Godāvarī, Narmadā, Kṛṣṇavēṇa, Irāvati, Kāverī among others.¹⁰⁰ This passage would imply that mlecchas were found all over the subcontinent and may perhaps also suggest a period in the history of ancient India when foreign immigration of both rulers and traders' was not uncommon. The Matsya Purāṇa, in a prophecy concerning the Kali age, also remarks that the mlecchas and Āryas will dwell mingled in all janapadas.¹⁰¹

bhaviṣyantīha yavanā dharmatah kāmato 'rthatah/
tair vimīśrā janapadā āryā mlecchās ca sarvaśah..

This verse is immediately preceded by a list of foreign kings in the Kali age and the reference to mlecchas in all janapadas is probably also to foreigners.

99. Mbh. VI, 10, 12-13, Op. Cit., noted above - p. 155.

100. Ibid., VI, 10, 13; 14; 15; 19; etc. Some of the names of these rivers are difficult to identify.

101. Matsya P., 273, 25. 'There will be Yavanas here for the sake of dharma or pleasure or profit. The Āryas and the Mlecchas will live mixed up in all the janapadas (provinces).'

Another enumeration of mleccha countries in the Purānas is different from those discussed above, as it refers to territory outside India. Seven rivers considered holy since they trace their origin from Bindu Sarovara, having pierced through the Himālaya, flow into the Dakṣiṇa Samudra after crossing the mleccha countries of the mountains, viz. Kukur, Randhra, Barbara, Yavana, Khasa, Pulika, Kulattha and Aṅgalokya —

prasūtāḥ sapta nadyastāḥ śubhā bindusarād bhavāḥ
nānādeśān plāvayantyo mlecchaprāyāṃs tu sarvaśaḥ /48/ 102

The Matsya has a fuller version and it continues as follows:

saśailān kukurān raudhrān barbarān yavanān khasān pulikāṃś
ca kulatthāṃś ca aṅgalokyān varāṃś ca yān kṛtva dvidhā himavantaḥ
pravistā dakṣiṇodadhim /44/ 103

The seven rivers that flow through mleccha country in both the Purānas are Nalinī, Hlādinī, and Pāvanī which flow in the east and Sītā, Sindhu and Chaksu which flow in the west. The seventh is the Bhāgīrathī which flows through to the southern waters.¹⁰⁴ S.M. Ali in describing the river system of the Purānas identifies the three rivers that flow to the east as the Yangtse, Mekong and Salween and those to the west as Indus, Shyok and the Yarkand. This whole scene he places north of mount Kailāsa.¹⁰⁵ With this explanation in mind, the mleccha countries of the mountains Kukur, Randhra, Barbara, Yavana, Khasa, Pulika, Kulatthā and Aṅgalokya¹⁰⁶ must also be placed north of the Himālaya range.

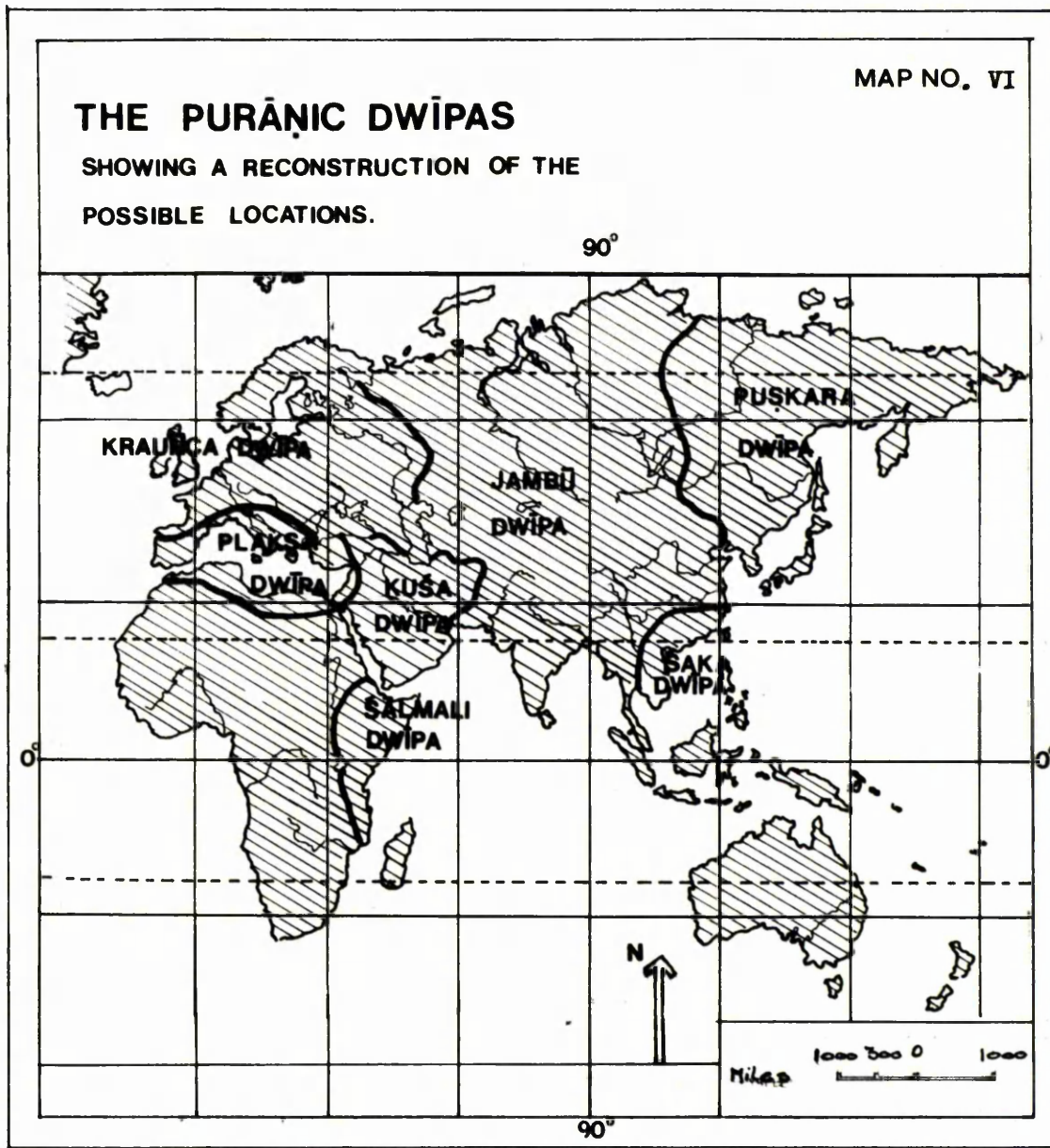
102. Brahmānda P., II, 18, 43.

103. Matsya P., 121, 44.

104. Matsya P., 121, 40-41 --nalini hladini caiva pavani caiva
pracyaga/ sita caksus ca sindhus ca tistras ta vai praticyagah/
saptami tv anuga tasam daksinena bhagiratham/

105. S.M. Ali, The Geography of the Purānas, 1966, pp. 67, 69.
Footnotes to ch. IV, p.201, n.1, n.10.

106. A portion of Jambudvīpa, known as Aṅgadvīpa was inhabited by mlecchas — Vāyu P., 48, 14-15. At the same time it mentions five other dvīpas, Varaha, Kuśa, Śaṅkha, Malaya and Yama also peopled by mlecchas. Ibid. II, 48, 14 ff.



So far we have been able to identify mleccha country with three completely different geographical locations. 1) As border areas of Bhāratavarṣa. 2) As inhabitants of Bhāratavarṣa in certain areas. 3) As the region north of Bhāratavarṣa, but as part of Jambudvīpa (map attached).

It is important in the present context to concentrate on defining mleccha areas within Bhāratavarṣa. The mleccha country is often depicted as situated in mountainous and forested lands. Thus we see in the following passages, that in the Mahābhārata, in particular, the mlecchas are also several times said to inhabit marshy lands on the sea coast.

While repeating the Bhīṣma Parvan statement that both the mlecchas and Āryas drink water from the great rivers of Bhāratavarṣa, the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna adds that mlecchas and Āryas reside in all the lesser and greater mountain ranges of India.¹⁰⁷ The seven important mountain ranges are the Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Śuktimat, Ṛkṣa, Vindhya and Pāripātra. The last two are well known while the others have been identified by Pargiter as follows: Mahendra as the mountain range in north Orissa, Malaya as the southern portion of the western Ghats, Sahya as the northern portion of the western Ghats and Ṛkṣa mountains as those between the Narmadā and Mahānadī rivers. The names of hills listed in the same passage also belong to the Vindhya and adjoining ranges as well as those situated south of the Vindhya.¹⁰⁸ 'By them the people, both mlecchas and Āryas are mingled together according to their divisions'—
tair vimiśrā janapadā mlecchās cāryās ca bhāgaśah/15/109

107. Mārk. P., LVII, 10-16. mahendro malayah sahyah śuktimān rksaparvatah//10 vindhyaś ca pāripātraś ca saptaivātra kulūcalāh/teśāḥ sahasrāśāś cānye bhūdharā ye samīpagaḥ//11// 'The seven mountain ranges in it are the Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Śuktimat, the Rksa mountains and Vindhya and Pāripātra. And there are other hills besides them. Their summits are broad and lofty and are delightful and spacious.'

108. F.E. Pargiter, The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, 1904, pp.284-290. Cf. map p. 133.

109. Mārk. P., LVII, 15.

The mlecchas were therefore various Central Indian tribes whose natural habitat were those areas where they could continue their primitive way of life. A Mahābhārata passage, in which the mythical origin of the Nisādas is told together with that of the wicked tribes that have hills and forests as their abodes and hundreds and thousands of those called mlecchas, also indicates that they live in the Vindhya mountains:—

tasmān niṣādāḥ saṁbhūtā krūrāḥ śailavanāśrayāḥ/
ye cānye vindhyānilayā mlecchāḥ śatasahasraśāḥ //103// 110

There are, however, in the same text other references to mlecchas that come from the high distant mountains of the Himālaya. Here the only information given about them is simply the adjective 'sinful'.¹¹¹ Elsewhere, the mleccha tribes who allied themselves with the Pāṇḍavas dwelt on hills and inaccessible fastnesses but no indication is given in which part of the country they were.¹¹² In the Matsya Purāna a mountain is equated to a lotus flower. The ores in it are the interior of the lotus, the mleccha countries in the impassable mountains are its petals (te durgamāḥ śailacitā mlecchadeśā vikalpitāḥ) and the lowest portion of the lotus are the habitation of the demons, serpents and birds.¹¹³ In a similar way forests are commonly regarded as the habitat of mlecchas. In the description of the Damayantī lost in the forest it is said that forests are swarming with birds of various species and infested by thieves and mleccha tribes (nānāpakṣiganakīrṇaṁ mlecchataskarasevitam).¹¹⁴

110. Mbh., XII, 59, 103.

111. Mbh., VII, 87, 37: mlecchānām pāpakarṭṇām himavaddurgavāsīnām/

112. Mbh., V, 22, 21 — giryāśrayā durganivāsinaś ca yodhāḥ
prthivyām kulajā viśuddhāḥ/ mlecchāś ca nānāyudhavīryavantaḥ
samāgatāḥ pāṇḍavārthe nivīṣṭāḥ//21

113. Matsya P., 169, 10-12.

114. Mbh., III, 61, 2.

The main theme of the Mahābhārata, however, is the story of the great war between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas for the control of Bhāratavarṣa. The mlecchas who were also its inhabitants participated in the battle and were allies of both parties. The Ādi Parvan starts with the greatness of the Bharata race and speaks of how the king's authority extended over the four quarters of the world and also over the lands of the mleccha and Āṭavika tribes (ā mlecchāṭavikān sarvān..).¹¹⁵ This statement is doubtless exaggerated but throughout the Epic a common explanation of the greatness of the Pāṇḍava heroes is the depiction of their strength in their conquest of large territories. Among the chief of their exploits was the subjugation of mleccha tribes.

In their campaigns Sahadeva and Nakula defeated mlecchas who resided on the sea coast.¹¹⁶ At the Rājasūya ceremony of Yudhiṣṭhira, the great warrior Bhāgadatta of Prāgjyotiṣa was accompanied by mleccha tribes inhabiting marshy regions of the sea coast —

prāgjyotiṣāś ca nrpatir bhagadatto mahāyaśāh/
saha sarvaiṣ tathā mlecchāih sāgarān ūpavāsibhiḥ//¹¹⁷

Both these citations are clearly not referring to the same sea coast, as the latter clearly applies to eastern India. There is hardly any definite information about these mleccha tribes that came from the marshy regions of the sea coast. From the tribute that some of these mleccha kings paid in the form of sandalwood, aloe, cloth, gems, pearls, blankets, gold, silver and valuable corals, one gets the impression that

115. Mbh., I, 62, 3-5. This tradition of Bharata occurs in very early texts (Śat. Br., XIII, 5, 4, 11-13) and is repeated elsewhere (Vāyu P., 45, 76; Viṣṇu P., II, 3, 1). Medieval Indian rulers had court brāhmanas as the authors of the royal praśastis whose style was similar and tended to exaggerate the achievements of their patrons.

116. Mbh., II, 28, 44; II, 29, 15 — tataḥ sāgarakuṣiṣṭhān
mlecchān paramadārunan/ pahlavān barbarāṁś caiva tān
sarvān anayad vaśam//

117. Mbh., II, 31, 9-10.

despite their military defeat they enjoyed fairly stable economic conditions and were not simply primitive tribes.¹¹⁸ Mleccha was often used in such a general manner that it also included those mleccha participants at the Rājasūya celebrations that were inhabitants of frontier and forested areas.¹¹⁹

The localization of mleccha tribes or kings in the Mahābhārata is, on the whole, quite imprecise. Besides the type of references discussed above, there are others where only the direction from which they came is indicated. Mleccha kings from the north and east of Bhārata, with preceptors and kings of many countries of the south attended the celebrations at the Kaliṅga capital with Duryodhana.¹²⁰ In the east, while proceeding towards Lohitya,¹²¹ Bhīmasena had conquered several mleccha tribes who showered him with wealth of different kinds.¹²² Nakula, on the other hand, is said to have vanquished the western world teeming with mlecchas:

yah pratiçim diśam cakre vaśe mlecchaganāyutām/
sa tatra nakulo yoddhā citrayodhī vyavasthitah//¹²³

118. Mbh., II, 27, 25-27 -- sa sarvān mlecchanrpatīn sāgara-
dvīpavāsinah/ karam āharayāmāsa ratnāni vividhāni ca//²⁵
candanāguruvastrāni manimuktam anuttamam/
kāñcāñam rajatām vajram vidrumam ca mahādhanam//²⁶
119. Mbh., III, 48, 19 - sāgarānūpagānīs caiva ye ca pattana-
vāsinah/ sīmalān barbarān mlecchān ye ca jāṅgalavāsinah//
120. Mbh., XII, 4, 8 -- ete cānye ca bahavo daksinām diśam
āśritāh/ mlecchācāryās ca rājānah prācyodīcyās ca bhārata//
121. N.L.Dey, Geographical Dictionary, p.115 -- Lohitya, the area around the river Brahmaputra.
122. Mbh., II, 27, 23-24 - suhmānām adhipam caiva ye ca
sāgaravāsinah/ sarvān mlecchaganānīs caiva vijigye
bharatarsabhāh//^{23//}
evam bahū vidhān deśān vijitya pavanātmajah/
vasu tebhya upādāya lauhityam agad balī//^{24//}
123. Mbh., V, 49, 26.

To get an idea of the actual identification of mleccha areas one has to examine lists of peoples that were either associated with or designated as mlecchas.¹²⁴ In the Bhīṣma Parvan certain mleccha-jātis are said to have dwelt in the Yavana, Kāamboja, Dārunā countries -

...uttarās oāpare mlecchā janā bhāratasattama/
yavanās ca śakāambojā dārunā mlecchajātayah//

— and these mlecchas are listed with several other people of the northern and north-western parts of India.¹²⁵ In the Rāmāyana, too, the mlecchas are associated with the north but here Mleccha is perhaps the name of a particular tribe. Sugrīva and his forces are asked to search for Sītā in the eastern, western, southern and northern regions. In the north, lands of the Mlecchas, Pulindas, Sūrasenas, Prasthalās, Bhāratas, Kurus, Madrakas, Kambojas and Yavanas were to be searched and from there the Himavat was to be explored --

tatra mlecchān pulindāś sūrasenāś tathaiiva ca/
prasthalān bhāratāś caiva kurūś ca saha madraih//10//¹²⁶

In the Harivaṁśa the mlecchas are situated in the Himālaya region and listed with the following people of north and north-west India: the Yavanas, Śakas, Daradas, Pāradas, Tuṣāras, Khaśas and Pahlavas

sa vivṛddho yadā rājā yavanānām mahābalaḥ/ tata enām nṛpā
mlecchāḥ saṁsṛityānuyayus tadā//18//
śakās tuṣārā daradāḥ pāradās taṅgaṇāḥ khaśāḥ pahlavāḥ
śataśāś cānye mlecchā haimavatās tathā//19// 127

124. The designation mleccha for tribes is discussed in a separate chapter.

125. Mbh., VI, 10, 63-66.

126. Rāmāyana, IV, 42, 10.

127. Harivaṁśa, 85, 18-19. A similar list of people associated with mlecchas in the north-west is in the Matsya P., 144, 51-58. The Purānas explain that Pracetā was the father of a hundred sons, all of whom ruled as sovereigns in the mleccha country lying in the north — Matsya P., 148, 8-9; Bhāgavata P., IX, 23, 16.

In a completely different type of source it is worth mentioning that Hiuan-tsang noted that all places north of the Lamghan district (north bank of river Kabul, near Peshawar) were described as Mi - li - ku, i.e. frontier or mleccha lands.¹²⁸

The emphasis on northern and north-western India as mleccha country was stronger than on other directions. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that foreign invaders, who penetrated into India in different periods, initially settled down in this area. The Rājatarāṅginī refers to mlecchas who came from the valley adjoining the Himālaya.¹²⁹ However, other western, eastern and southern areas were also classified as mleccha areas. The Brhatsaṃhitā, for instance, gives two references to the word mleccha. The first is with reference to certain lawless mlecchas who had their home in the west:

nirmaryādā mlecchā ye paścimadiksthītās te ca//21//¹³⁰

Elsewhere,¹³¹ another group of mlecchas is mentioned, supposedly from central India. There mleccha occurs between the place names Kāntipur and Saṅkarajāh. The former Cunningham identifies with Kotwal, a place north of Gwalior and the latter he associates with a river called Sank in the Chota Nagpur area. Here mleccha undoubtedly alludes to one of the many primitive tribes that resided in the Vindhya. In one passage in the Kathāsaritsāgara, mlecchas are connected with Sind.¹³³

At this stage it is important to investigate the use of the term pratyanta and its association with mleccha country. Pratyanta literally means 'bordering on', 'adjacent', or 'contiguous'.¹³⁴

128. S. Beal, The Life of Hiuen-Tsang, p.57; Dey, Geographical Dictionary, p.113, identifies Lamghan (Lampakā) to be 20 miles north-west of Jalalabad.

129. Rājatarāṅginī, VIII, 2762-2764.

130. Brhat., XIV, 21.

131. Brhat., XVI, 11.

132. N.L. Dey, Geographical Dictionary, p.89; p.177.

133. Kathāsaritsāgara, (Tawney), I, p.151.

134. M. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit English Dictionary, p.664.

Geographical position apart, pratyanta is treated altogether on a different footing from Aryāvarta in socio-cultural matters in texts belonging to the period after the early centuries A.D. In the Amarakoṣa which gives the Dictionary meaning of the word, it is described as mleccha country:

pratyanto mlecchadeśah syāt/135

Sarbānanda's commentary on this, the Tikāsarvasva, explains that the mlecchadeśa indicates those countries without proper conduct like Kāmarūpa etc.:

bhāratavarṣasyāntadeśah śistācārarahitah
kāmarūpādīḥ mlecchadeśah/ 136

Bhāskaravarman, king of Kāmarūpa, a contemporary of Harṣavardhana was supplanted by another dynasty found by Sālastambha. He was known as a mleccha overlord.¹³⁷ The association of the eastern extremity of India with mlecchas must also be accepted. The views of Amarasimha were endorsed by many late works. One such is the Buddhist chronicle Arya Mañjusrī Mūla Kalpa, which interestingly associates pratyanta with mleccha-deśa but in western India:-

paścimāḥ dīśim^{*} āsrtya rājāno mriyate tadā/
ye 'pi pratyantavāsinyo* mlecchataskarajīvinah// 138

135. Amarakoṣa, II, Bhūmivarga - 6.

136. Nāmaliṅgānusāsana, with commentary Tikāsarvasva of Sarvānanda (Ed. Ganapati Sāstrī), 1914, II, Bhūvarga -6. He also quotes Manu to the effect that where the four varṇas are not established that country is mlecchadeśa.

137. S.K. Chatterjee, Kirāta-jana-kṛti, p.52.

138. Arya Mañjusrī Mūla Kalpa, Ed. Ganapati Sāstrī, 1922, II, p.274. (Tr.) — 'Then (under a certain astrological combination) the Kings who go to the west die; also inhabitants of pratyanta live like the mlecchas and taskaran.'

*In the text the form dīśim for 'direction' is used instead of the more common form dīśam. The use of vāsinyo rather than vāsino would appear to be an error in the text.

The use of terms paścima (western), pratiçya (eastern), udīçya (northern) and dakṣiṇa (southern) in all Sanskrit literary sources raises certain problems. In the first place, mlecchas that were said to reside in any of these directions were, in most cases, not identified by their particular names. Even in cases where mleccha groups were listed with people known to belong to certain definite areas, the Epic and Purānic writers viewed the direction from their own geographical or regional locations, often producing contradictory statements. The use of such general and sometimes vague terminology in such texts causes confusion which then hinders the designation of any particular territory as permanently mleccha. Here, however, a basic question arises: Was any area, however small, forever bound to remain mleccha?

The brief answer to this is in the negative. Mlecchadeśa is a phrase often but not always applied to certain areas. Moreover, it is never used to indicate one large political or even a cultural entity. The opposite of Āryāvarta, Mlecchadeśa occurs particularly in the Dharmaśāstras but, as Āryāvarta did not indicate one and the same area through the ages, the concept of Mlecchadeśa was also subject to change. In the Epics and Purānas mlecchas are said to live in or inhabit (vasanti) certain areas. The definition of these areas differs not only from text to text but even within the same text, and does not strictly conform to the definition of mlecchadeśa as found in the śāstras.

The non-Dharmaśāstra texts constantly emphasize the forest and mountain habitat of these people. From the point of view of the Central Gangetic plains two broad areas would answer these conditions. The Himālayan region, stretching all along the north, had mleccha tribes both in its north-eastern and in its north-western ends alike. Besides being a border area, more importantly, it was originally, and

still is to a large extent, inhabited by Tibeto-Mongoloid peoples whose dissimilarity of language and culture was itself indicative of a difference which set them apart. The other mountainous region was the Vindhyan complex of Central India. Its characteristic was not high mountains but thick forests and also river valleys that gradually opened into the plains. The Chota Nagpur plateau in the east afforded, and still does, an ideal setting for tribal peoples. In the west the Narmadā and Chambal valleys were important openings to the west coast. Migrations to and from the plains was always taking place. This, on the one hand, pushed the tribal societies further inland into their natural habitat and, on the other, opened these areas to outside influence.

There is no doubt that certain parts of the subcontinent had been culturally different from what the brāhmanas envisaged in their texts, but there are no grounds to accept the suggestion that such areas could not have been politically conscious or economically powerful. This will become apparent when we discuss the attitude of ancient Indian rulers to mleccha areas. On the other hand, it was only after the sixth century A.D. that tribal kings from both these regions began to participate in the politics of northern and southern India.

Ultimately, the discrimination against the mleccha on the area which he inhabited rested solely with the Dharmaśāstra writers. This is evident from the elaborate rules they prescribed for people who desired to visit areas which they had dubbed, for their own reasons as mleccha. As we shall see in the following chapter, there was a significant change in their attitudes towards mlecchas in general after the beginning of the Christian era, which is reflected in the manner in which ārya and mleccha areas are separated. The most

important question, however, is to find out how far these injunctions were really applied and limited the movements of the highly conscious āryas who wished to abide by the rules of varṇāśramadharmā. The next chapter will discuss this point, also to see whether there was any political, social and religious discrimination against the mlecchā.

Chapter V

POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DISCRIMINATION OF THE MLECCHAS

The distinction on the basis of speech and territorial habitation has been discussed so far, and it has been pointed out that these factors did not ultimately discriminate against the mleccha. Nevertheless, the distinction between āryabhāṣā and mlecchabhāṣā cannot be ignored or overlooked in a study of the attitudes towards the mlecchas. Though both these distinctions were never rigid or permanent, they were intrinsically related to the brāhmanic ideal to regulate one's life according to the varṇāśramadharmā. The great emphasis laid on this aspect is evident from the fact that all śāstra and smṛti literature with its commentaries restricts itself to describe only the well-being of the four varṇas. Ostensibly, the concern was to maintain the purity of their system. The customs and behaviour of the mlecchas, who remained outside their pattern, were invariably looked upon with distaste.

In this chapter we may discuss the actual nature of the discrimination against the mleccha. In theory, drawing upon data from the śāstras, it is simple to ascribe this differentiation due to cultural reasons as mlecchas were not encompassed in the varṇāśramadharmā. In the latter half of the chapter it is the intention to put forth the thesis that discrimination against the mlecchas was ultimately both cultural and socio-economic. However, firstly, it will be attempted to refute any idea that it was a result of a politically motivated policy initiated by ancient Indian rulers.

The brāhmaṇa advisers who were closely allied with the ksatriyas, and who were basically responsible for the formulation of the Dharma-śāstric injunctions concerning the avoidance of mlecchas in general, do not, in their treatises on Rājadharmā or Rājanīti, advise kings on

the subject of politically discriminating against mlecchas or their territory. On the contrary, we have information from texts such as the Arthaśāstra, the Mahābhārata, and the Mudrārāksasa that mlecchas were sometimes readily accepted as political allies and their abilities similarly exploited. The Dharmaśāstras and Arthaśāstra also advise the king to accept as valid those customs and usages of tribes, families and organisations that do not challenge the smṛti but, in this case, only the brāhmanas could judge the validity of such customs. It may be appropriate at this stage to mention that most ancient Indian kings were actuated by the ideal of the Cakravartin and with that they also applied political expediency which ultimately determined any policy of conquest, pacification or total avoidance of mleccha areas. The evaluation of these policies must therefore be studied partly, though not totally, in a manner independent of the Dharmaśāstra rules for society as a whole to avoid mleccha areas of habitation.

The Cakravartin has been defined as a paramount ruler over a vast territory who did not owe allegiance to any overlord.¹ In the Arthaśāstra, Kauṭilya defines the Cakravarti-kṣetra or the sphere of influence of the Cakravartin as the land which extends north to south from the Himālaya to the seas and measures a thousand yojanas.² This sphere of influence in Purānic terms corresponds to the whole of Bhāratavarṣa³ i.e. the Indian subcontinent. That the territories beyond the borders of India were not included in the Cakravarti-kṣetra

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1. D.C. Sircar, The Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, 1960, p.4.
 2. A.Ś., IX, 1, 17-18. deśah prthivī/17 tasyāṁ himavatsamudrāntaram udīcīnaṁ yojanasahasraparimānaṁ tiryak cakravartikṣetram//18
'The country (of the conqueror) is the earth. The field thereof for the Cakravartin emperor (stretches) from the Himālayas down to the sea, a thousand yojanas from corner to corner.'
 3. H.C. Raychaudhuri, Studies in Indian Antiquities, 1958, pp.75-8. Mārk. P., LVII, 59; Vāyu P., XLV, 75-76. These verses have been discussed Chapter IV, pp. 153-155.

may be due to the fact that the conqueror, according to the śāstra, was expected to establish varnāśrama in the new territory.⁴ 'The establishment of such a social order outside India was perhaps considered impracticable and even undesirable.'⁵ The Greek historian, Arrian has observed: 'On the other hand, a sense of justice, they say, prevented any Indian king from attempting conquest beyond the limits of India.'⁶ Neither the keenness to follow the śāstra nor the sense of justice always prevented Indian kings from attacking areas beyond the borders of India. We have evidence for the eleventh century A.D. when a Hindu king of South India, namely Rājendra Chōla, carried out ambitious overseas campaigns in South East Asia.⁷

There is no doubt that the Cakravarti ideal reflected conventional ideas about an Indian ruler's sphere of influence and, in part it was an ideal that was never achieved, except perhaps by Aśoka. On the other hand, the aspiration of universal conquest is reflected in exaggerated terms in both literary and epigraphical sources. The tradition of Bharata as the conqueror of 'the whole earth'⁸ appears in Vedic literature and is again represented in Purānic legends.⁹ In the Epic story of the Mahābhārata, the Pāṇḍava brothers are similarly said to have conquered the 'whole earth'.¹⁰ Claims such as these in literary

4. A.S., XIII, 4, 62. Discussed below.

5. R.P. Kangle, The Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra, Part III, 1965, p.3.

6. J.W. McGrindle, India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian, 1926, p.209.
K.P. Jayaswal, Hindu Polity, Vol. II, 1924, p.190-191.

7. R.C. Majumdar, (ed) The Struggle for Empire, Ch. X, The Cholas, p.239.

8. The rulership of 'the earth' prthivī that is always contemplated does not imply in any case the conquest of the whole world.

9. Sat. Br., XIII, 5, 4, 11-13; Vāyu P., XLV, 76; Viṣṇu P., II, 3, 1.

10. Mbh., II, 26, 32.

stories, enhancing the fame of the heroes are common.¹¹

Poets and brāhmaṇas at the courts of Indian rulers also often exaggerated the achievements and status of their patrons. In referring to the activities of the Dhamma-Mahāmātras in the Dhauli version of the Fifth Rock-Edict, the emperor Aśoka claims to have employed them throughout the earth — sava puṭhaviyaṃ.¹² In the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. the Gupta emperors held sway over the major part of northern India and both the important and lesser kings of this dynasty claim to have either conquered or ruled over 'the whole earth'. Samudragupta is mentioned as sarvaprthivīvijayajanitodaya.¹³ The minister of Candragupta II, Śāba Virasena, who accompanied the king on the campaign against the Sakas of Malwa according to one of the Udayagiri inscriptions¹⁴, is described as 'seeking to conquer the whole world' (krtsnaprthivījayārtthena)¹⁵. The later Gupta emperors desired the same and used similar epithets to describe themselves.¹⁶

Within Bhāratavarṣa the constant aim of ancient rulers was to claim suzerainty over the whole country, though actually they ruled only part of it. Even so, as D.C. Sircar has aptly summarized:

11. Raghuvamśa, Canto IV.

12. E. Hultzsch, C.I.I., Vol. I, 'Fifth Rock-Edict: Dhauli', p. 87 text line 7. Other versions of the same Edict read sarvatra vijite to indicate 'everywhere within the dominions of Aśoka'. D.C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., 'Fifth Rock-Edict: Mānsehrā version', pp.23-25, text line 7. K.A.N. Sastri (ed) The Mauryas and Sāta-vāhanas, 1957, pp.40-41. Here Aśoka is described as a Cakravartti, ruler of the earth, not by physical might but by moral and spiritual power.

13. D.C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., 'Allahābad Stone Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta', text line 29, p.259.

14. Ibid., 'Udayagiri Cave Inscription of Chandragupta II', ft.nt.5, p.272.

15. J.F. Fleet, C.I.I., Vol.III, 'Udayagiri Cave Inscription of Chandragupta II', text line 7, p.35.

16. D.C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., 'Junāgarh Rock Inscription of Skandagupta', text para.7 — evaṃ sa jītvā prthvīm samagrām ..., p. 301. 'Sārnāth Buddhist Image Inscription of Buddha Gupta', line 1, p.323 — Buddhagupta represented as ruler of the earth.

'All kings, independent or subordinate, were represented as lords of the "soil" also indicating "the earth". But independent monarchs were sometimes represented as the ruler or conqueror of "the whole earth" meaning the conventional Chakravarti-kṣetra bounded by the Himālayas and the three seas This kind of representation of a king as the ruler or conqueror of Chakravarti-kṣetra is conventional and should not be regarded as historical.'¹⁷

Nevertheless, the significant point here is that attempts were always made to carry the idea of universal power into practice and the political aspiration of all rulers was never limited by the Brāhmanic or Buddhist definitions of Aryāvarta or Madhyadeśa, which, inhabited by themselves, were therefore, 'the only pure lands.' Attempts were also made to conquer frontier peoples and forest tribes even though some of these areas were considered mleccha areas in certain brāhmanical texts.¹⁸ Though the ideal of a Cakravartin among ancient Indian rulers tended to disregard the mleccha consciousness mainly owing to personal ambition, these rulers nevertheless, did not overlook the basic difference between the various tribal groups, frontier peoples and the rest of the kingdom.

Before a detailed analysis of this topic it may be proper to note the undercurrents in political thought and the fundamental bases of ancient Indian polity which motivated most ancient Indian monarchs. The Smṛti and Śāstra literature written before the Gupta period on the subject reflect the main concepts and the different political, economic and social changes during the various periods, and show changes of emphasis rather than a shift in values.

The Dharmaśāstra was not known only to the brāhmanas but, in its

17. D.C. Sircar, Indian Epigraphy, Delhi, 1965, p.351.

18. As seen in Chapter IV the mleccha areas were usually the habitat of tribes and border areas.

comprehensive sense, it became the law of the country and ultimately, it was the responsibility of the king or the State to enforce its rules. Briefly, as part of Rājadharmā, the king was expected to apply the principle of dharmā in all matters of public administration like war, defence or taxation, as it applied to the private life of each individual. The secular and religious aspects of the brāhmanic life and activity were inextricably interwoven and therefore, in this sense, ancient Hindu rulers worked within the official brāhmanic system.

We are concerned with discussing in detail only two injunctions in the Dharmaśāstra and the Arthaśāstra which pertain to the duties of kings and have relevance to their application to determine the relationship of their subjects with outsiders and mlecchas. The first is that he is constantly advised to maintain the varnāśramadharmā and the second is his duty to accept as valid the local customs and usages of tribes, castes and independent corporations.

Kauṭilya is most emphatic about the king's basic responsibility to protect the welfare of his subjects, i.e. protect them against enemies and calamities, help the minors, the aged and persons in distress etc.¹⁹ But, in particular, it was the duty of the king to protect by force of law the social order founded on the system of varnas and āśramas.²⁰ Though the Arthaśāstra is often characterized, described as a text with a secular and realistic outlook, it urges the king to maintain the brāhmanical system of social order prevalent during

19. A.Ś., IV, 3, 43; II, 16, 4-6; II, 1, 26.

20. A.Ś., I, 4, 16.

caturvarnāśramo loko rājñā dandena pālitaḥ/
svadharmakarmābhirato vartate svesu vartmasu//16

In this verse the people (loka) with their four varnas and four āśramas if properly governed by the king will adhere to their respective dharmas. In another context (I, 3, 16-17, Tr. Kangle) it is stated: 'The king shall never allow people to swerve from their appointed duties (Dharma): for, whoever upholds his own duty and follows the duties of the castes and orders (varnāśramadharmā) will attain happiness in this world and as well as in the next.'

his time. Furthermore, after conquering the earth, the conqueror is advised to enjoy it by maintaining the social order in conformity with the varnāśramadharmā.²¹ Manu characteristically adds that after a victory gained by the king he should honour righteous brāhmanas and grant them exemptions.²² There is also evidence that brāhmanas were encouraged to settle in new territories and they in turn would become instruments in the spread of the varnāśrama system.²³

This aspect of the king's duty was unquestioned by all smṛtikāras and the later Nitiśāstra continues to echo the same ideas. It is interesting also to mention Śukra's views, as not only his Nitisāra is a late one²⁴ but he often holds views at variance with those held by the śāstras. He reiterates that the king is the 'guardian of good

21. A.Ś., XIII, 4, 62.

jītvā ca pṛthivīm vibhaktavarnāśramān svadharmena bhūñjati/
'Having conquered the earth he should enjoy it by maintaining the varnas and āśramas as his duty.'

22. Manu, VII, 201 -- jītvā sampūjayed devān brāhmanānś caiva dhārmikān/ pradadyāt parihārānś ca khyāpyed abhyāni ca//

'When he has gained victory, let him duly worship the gods and honour righteous brāhmanas, he should grant them immunities and proclaim promises of safety.'

23. There are numerous examples of land grants to brāhmanas especially in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. These were mainly concerned with cultivated lands, though. D.D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, (rpt.), 1975, p.313, pp. 319-20, discusses the role of the brāhmanas as pioneers in the settlement of new territory and adds: 'The systematic use of brahmins as stabilizing factor of the village economy meant the preservation and development of some ritual, which was more imposing for being chanted in Sanskrit, with all the weight of antiquity.' p.279.

24. The date and origin of the Śukranītisāra is problematic. It is usually assigned to the thirteenth century A.D. But according to K.V. Rangaswami Aiyangar, Rājadharmā, 1941, p.56, its composite character has a mixture of archaism in diction and doctrine and it also has relatively modern views. Lallanji Gopal, BSOAS, 'The Śukranīti - a nineteenth century text! Vol. XXV, pt. iii, pp.524-556 has convincingly argued that this is a text that should be assigned to the second half of the nineteenth century.

conduct' and indeed 'the maker of the age'.²⁵ Further he writes:

'Through fear of punishment meted out by the king, each man gets into the habit of following his own dharma.'²⁶ However, Śukra also adds that the brāhmanas, ksatriyas, vaiśyas, śūdras and mlecchas are separated by work and virtue and not by birth:

na jātyā brāhmaṇas cātra ksatriyo vaiśya eva na/
na śūdro na ca vai mleccho bheditā guṇakarmabhih//27

He further suggests elsewhere that soldiers and commanders in the army need not necessarily belong to the ksatriya caste and could be recruited from among the mlecchas as well.²⁸

Undoubtedly, there was no single age when the ideals of the varṇāśramadharmā were fully enforced. It was particularly difficult to do so in times of stress such as during foreign occupations,²⁹ wars and conquests and when new settlements, especially in tribal areas, took place. But, the total disregard for this order, says Kauṭilya, was not to be tolerated as that would lead to varṇasaṃkara which might result in the destruction of society and, by implication, of the State itself.³⁰

25. Sukranīti, I, 22.

ācāraprerako rājā hy etat kālasya kāranam/
yadi kālah pramāṇam hi kasmād dharmo 'sti kartṛsu//22
(Tr. B. N. Sarkar) - 'The king is the guardian of conduct, the maker of the age. If the age or time were the cause (of usages and activities) there could be no virtue in the actors.'

26. Sukranīti, I, 23 - rājadandabhayāl lokah sva svadharmaparo bhavet/

27. Sukranīti, I, 38.

28. Sukranīti, II, 139-140.

śūdrā vā ksatriyā vaiśyā mlecchāḥ saṃkarasambhavāḥ/
senādhipāḥ sainikās ca kāryā rājñā jayārthinā// 140

29. For such times as these the sūtras and smṛtis have sections on āpad dharma, which basically were ways and means by which people, particularly brāhmanas, could perform penance (prāyaścitta). Gautama Dhs., VIII, 1-26; Vasistha Dhs., II, 22-29; Manu, IV, 81-104; Yaj., III, 35-44 etc.

Part II of chapter VIII discusses the brāhmanic reaction to foreign kings as rulers of northern India between the first century B.C. and the second century A.D.

30. A.S., I, 3, 14-15. svadharmah svargāyanantyaaya ca/14

tasyatikrame lokah saṃkarād ucchidyeta/15

'The observance of one's duty leads one to Svarga and infinite Bliss (anantya). When it is violated the world will come to an end owing to confusion of castes and duties.'

Manu describes the destroyer of dharma, in general, as a vr̥ṣala. If dharma is violated then that destroys Manu.³¹ Dharma is described as a bull (vr̥ṣa) and the man who violates it (kurute'lam), the gods consider a vr̥ṣala --

vr̥ṣo hi bhagavān dharmas tasya yah kurute hy 'lam/
vr̥ṣalaṁ taṁ vidur devās tasmād dharmāṁ na lopayet//32

Significantly Manu uses the term vr̥ṣala for certain peoples like the Kāmbojas, Yavanas, Śakas, Pāradas, Pahlavas, Cīnas, Khasas, Kirātas, Dravidas etc. Though they had originally been ksatriyas, they had become vr̥ṣalas because they had neglected the sacred rites and had shown disrespect to the brāhmanas.³³ It would seem that anyone, foreign or indigenous, who was against dharma could be designated a vr̥ṣala. There is no underestimating the fact that in brāhmanic opinion, if the varṇāśramadharmā fell apart, anarchy was said to prevail.³⁴

As early as the time of the Dharmasūtras it was laid down that the customs and usages of other countries, families and castes could be followed, but only if they did not oppose the teaching of the Veda and the Smṛti. According to Gautama the king was to ensure that the

31. Manu, VIII, 15.

32. Manu, VIII, 16. (Tr. SBE) — 'For divine justice (is said to be) a bull (vr̥ṣha); that (man) who violates it (kurute'lam) the gods consider to be (a man despicable like) a Śūdra (vr̥ṣhala); let him, therefore, beware of violating justice.'

33. Manu, X, 43 śanakais tu kriyālopād imāḥ ksatriyajātayah/
vr̥ṣalatvaṁ gatā loke brāhmanadarśanena ca//43

34. Most Purānas in their section on the Kali Age describe this anarchy, but in a prophetic vein, as they bewail about the collapse of varṇāśramadharmā.

35. Apastamba Dhs., II, 6, 15, 1; Baudhāyana Dhs., I, 1, 2, 1-8 --- A particular custom should be practised only in the country for which it is meant. Baudhāyana, however, in the same chapter condemns the peoples of Avantī, Aṅga, Magadha, Surāṣṭra, Dekkhan, Upāvṛt, Sindh and Sauvīrā as those of mixed origin (verse 13) and recommends to those āryas who have visited the countries of Arattas, Kāraskaras, Puṇḍras, Sauvīrās, Vaṅgas, Kalingas, to perform certain sacrifices on return (verse 14).

laws of countries under his control did not oppose sacred authority.³⁶ In the Arthasāstra the State is likewise required to maintain as valid every local usage of country, tribe, guild or village.³⁷ In the same spirit the smṛtis of Manu and Yājñavalkya also point out that local custom can be adopted when it does not go against the śāstra.³⁸ Again it may be noted that it is in the Śukranītisāra where we find a variation of this rule in so far as the king is enjoined to accept the local usages and customs as valid even though they are repugnant to him. First he repeats that the king should perform his duty (dharma) in accordance with the śāstra and by being conversant with the local customs of particular countries, jātis, śrenis, janapadas and families.³⁹ He next lists certain customs such as the following: — in southern countries brāhmanas marry their maternal uncle's daughters, in madhya-deśa the artists and artisans eat cow's flesh, in the northern countries women drink wine etc.⁴⁰ And concludes with the statement: 'These people do not deserve penance and punishment because of these actions.'⁴¹ Since the Śukranīti⁴² is a source that lies outside the period of our study, we need not go into details about these observations. We can only infer from them that the rules of the smṛti were in a gradual state of evolution on account of changes in social and territorial environments.

Kauṭilya, Manu and Śukra, however, all agree in recommending to

36. Gautama Dhs. XI, 20 deśajātikuladharmāś cāmvyair aviruddhāḥ pramānam/
'The laws of countries, castes and families which are not opposed
to (sacred) records (have) also authority.'

37. A.Ś., III, 7, 40
deśasya jātyāḥ saṅghasya dharmo grāmasya vā'pi yah/
ucitas tasya tenaiva dāyadharmāḥ prakalpayet//40

38. Manu, VII, 203; VIII, 41-46; Yaj., I, 342.

39. Śukranīti, IV, v, 45.

40. Ibid., IV, v, 47-49.

41. Ibid., IV, v, 49. anena karmanā naite prayaścittadamārhakāḥ/

42. For date of the Śukranīti see note 24 above.

the conqueror the maintenance of the laws and customs of the conquered state. These injunctions, that have been discussed above, only indicate the problem of regional differences that faced ancient Indian monarchs. There are no such statements in general which advise the king as to whether he should accept the usages and customs of peoples that were dubbed mlecchas. In the absence of any explicit formulation of policy in this regard by the brāhmanas, we have now to turn to material that elucidates political solutions to the problem of mlecchas.

But before we proceed to continue this discussion it is of importance to note that the authority of the brāhmanas and the power of the king were intended to work in unison. Kauṭilya remarks: 'Ksatra, royal power, prospers only if supported by the power of the brāhmana.'⁴³ Generally, there was an alliance and an interdependence between these two élite groups. For instance, the education of princes of the royal house was entrusted to the care of the brāhmanas who were duly patronized and held a position in the court. But with the foreign invasions the relationship between the ksatriya and the brāhmana took a new turn. Further, it could not be expected that all foreign monarchs would guarantee the maintenance of the varnāśramadharmā.⁴⁴

Here, we are not concerned with the problem of whether foreign or indigenous kings protected the social order of varnas and āśramas. On the political scene, they all relied on expediency as a means to deal with new situations that arose concerning all matters of state. This was also true in their relationship with mlecchas.

This has led us to examine the political attitudes towards the mleccha groups in ancient India at the time of the rise of Magadha under the Mauryan rulers in the fourth century B.C. and in the Gupta period

43. A.Ś., I, 9, 11. brāhmanenaidhitāṃ ksatrah mantrimantrābhimantritām/

44. We have evidence only for the case of the Śaka king Rudradāman who is known to have upheld the varnāśramadharmā. — EI., VIII, No.6 'Junāgadhā Inscription of Rudradāman', pp.36-49.

during the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. for two reasons. Firstly, this is because the imperial idea saw its initial expression during the reign of Candragupta Maurya (c. 324-300 B.C.). Secondly, the same idea again sees a manifestation in the Gupta age but under different circumstances. It is important to contrast how a centralized imperial structure dealt with mleccha groups during these stages of historical development and change.

As a result of the exploits of Candragupta, Magadha became the nucleus of the Mauryan empire, expanded under Bindusāra and finally under Aśoka it embraced almost the entire subcontinent as is shown by the situation of his edicts.⁴⁵ The imperial government therefore controlled a large territory that was inhabited by peoples of diverse elements who were socially, economically and religiously at various stages of development.

Traditionally, Kauṭilya, the author of the Arthaśāstra which is the earliest treatise on government and economics, is supposed to have been the advisor of Candragupta Maurya. Not all scholars agree to assign to the text a date of around c. 300 B.C.⁴⁶ However, from the point of view of what the state policy towards mlecchas may have

45. R. Thapar, Aśoka and the Decline of the Mauryas, 1961, Appendix, pp. 228-38.

46. P.V. Kane, History of the Dharmaśāstra, Vol. II, p. xi assigns the date 300 B.C.
R.P. Kangle, The Arthaśāstra, Pt. III, 1965, Chp. IV, p. 59ff., reviews the problem of the date at length. He considers that it is important (p. 10) to note that the text marks a culmination of a long period of speculation on the matter which forms the subject of this śāstra.

A.B. Keith, History of Sanskrit Literature, 1940, pp. 459-461, is typical of the view that proposes the work to be a product of c. A.D. 300 chiefly because the accounts of the Mauryan state as given by Megasthenes in his Indika and by Kauṭilya in the Arthaśāstra do not coincide.

D.D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, 1975 (rpt.), p. 210-212, disagrees with Keith's views firstly by showing that the accounts of Megasthenes and Kauṭilya do tally and secondly, by detailing reasons how society depicted in the Arthaśāstra could not exist in the India of c. A.D. 300.

been, this is the first text we must turn to.

Though Kautilya conforms to certain brāhmanical ideas, he is unique in that he pronounces for the first time the legitimacy of the State to aggrandize almost anything concentrating on military, political and economic means of aggression. Therefore as far as he was concerned every means to maintain the absolute power and strength of a king was regarded as proper. It is from the sixth book onwards that the writer concentrates on military and political methods of aggression which rests on the grounds of expediency alone with no thought given to respect for morality or political ethics.

The king was warned that border areas of the kingdom, where mleccha forest tribes together with bands of robbers were found, were to be that of enemies.⁴⁷

yasyā hi bhūmer bahudurgās coraganair mlecchātavībhir va
nityāvīrahītāḥ pratyantāḥ sā nityāmitrā viparyaye tv
anityāmitrā//16// 48

Here it is specifically indicated that the reference is to land on the frontier (pratyanta) where there are many forts (bahu-durgāḥ).

This can be interpreted as, firstly, that these forts gave shelter to bands or groups of thieves and mleccha forest tribes⁴⁹ or, secondly, that the territory concerned was reputed to be infested with gangs of thieves and mleccha forest tribes and, therefore, forts were built on the border to defend the land. According to the latter interpretation

47. Nitya can be taken to mean 'constant' or 'certain' though Kangle suggests 'permanent' below. In the Rg Veda it meant 'continual', 'perpetual', 'eternal' — M. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit English Dictionary, p.547.

48. A.S., VII, 10, 16. This passage has been translated by Kangle (Pt. II) as follows: 'The land, whose frontiers have many forts (beyond them) are never devoid of robber bands or mleccha forest tribes, is one of permanent enemies; in the reverse case, it is not without permanent enemies.'

49. R. Shamasastri, Arthasāstra, 1915, p.361, in his translation of the same passage, points this out.

there is a certain degree of permanency implied in the habitat of mleccha tribes, though bands of thieves did and could, operate elsewhere. We cannot have a full explanation here, but must understand this passage in the light of other measures given by Kauṭilya for the settlement and pacification of conquered territory.

As part of this policy for the defence and settlement of the countryside, Kauṭilya gives a suggestion that does not completely nullify the second alternative mentioned above. He points out that the king should erect fortresses on the frontiers of his kingdom under the command of frontier chiefs.⁵⁰ The territory between the frontier and the fortresses was to be guarded by trappers (vāgurikas), Śabarās, Pulindas, Caṇḍālas and forest-dwellers (aranyacarā) —

tesām antarāni vāgurikaśabarapulindacaṇḍālāranyacarā rakṣeyuh//6// 51

The term aranyacarā for forest-dwellers is not qualified by the designation mleccha as the term aṭavī is in the earlier passage.⁵² Even if aranyacarā is translated as 'and (other) forest tribes',^{52a} the fact remains that they have not been described as mlecchas in this passage. The contrast between aranyacarā in whatever sense we understand the term, and the wild and savage forest tribes, (āṭavika) well entrenched in jungle fastnesses, who were ostensibly a nuisance to the State, was definite and clear from the political angle. The former were not called mlecchas and as it has been suggested in this verse, could be trusted and allowed to guard the frontier of a particular kingdom.

50. A.S., II, 1, 5.

51. Ibid., II, 1, 6. 'Trappers, Śabarās, Pulindas, Caṇḍālas and forest-dwellers should guard the intervening regions between them.' The Śabarās and Pulindas can be taken as names of specific tribes but in this case could mean hunters.

52. R.P. Kangle, Op. Cit., pt. II, considers mleccha is an adjective to aṭavī, not an independent substantive in VII, 10, 16.

52a. Though ādi is not used.

As far as the Ātavī or Ātavika tribes are concerned, Kauṭilya elsewhere points out that they could be a source of danger to the State. They are said to be well organised and brave, practically autonomous and without scruples in matters of looting and killing.⁵³ This may be one of the reasons why mlecchātavī tribes (VII, 10, 16) were declared to be no less serious than enemies of the State. In a completely different context a forest chieftain is often mentioned as one of those capable of seizing the throne from the ruler.⁵⁴ It is quite clear that the separateness of forest tribes from civilized society is regarded as fundamental. The problem of ātavika or forest tribes occurs again in the Gupta period and will again be discussed.

The term mleccha covers partly these forest tribes though there were mlecchajātis (communities) of various kinds.⁵⁵ As a solution to the threat that mleccha communities or forest tribes created around frontier areas, Kauṭilya advocates that, in conquered territory, the king should cause a change of residence of professional thieves, of mleccha-jātis and of chiefs of forts, country and army.⁵⁶ It was part of a wider policy of settlement and pacification of the new territory so that the ultimate control lay in the hands of the king. In discussing the technique of breaking the saṅghas in Book XI of the Arthaśāstra, D.D. Kosambi observes: '.... tribal life and production - whether Aryan or not - were systematically converted into a caste-

53. A.Ś., VIII, 4, 43.

54. A.Ś., I, 10, 3; XII, 3, 17.

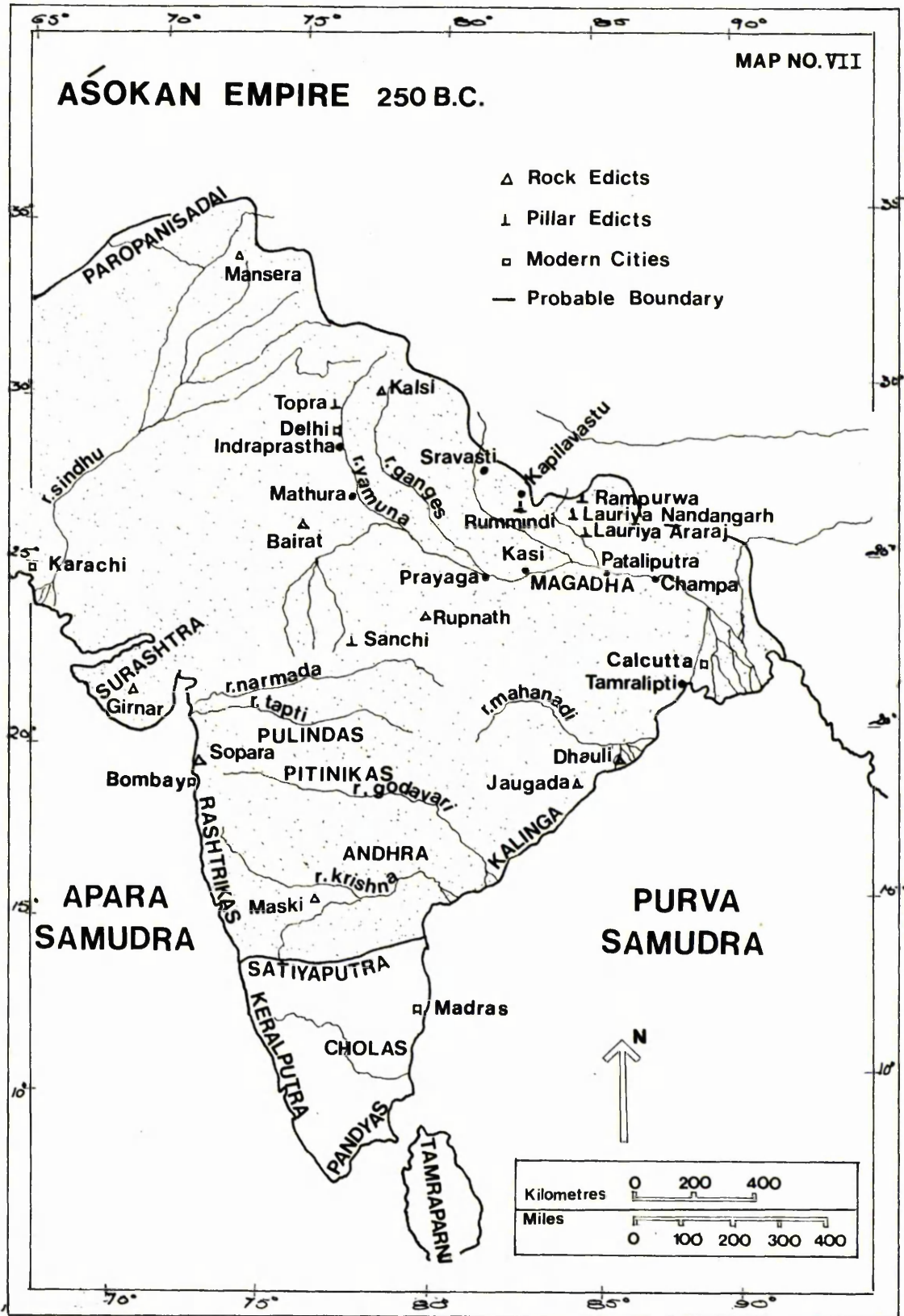
55. A.Ś., I, 12, 21; III, 13, 3; XIII, 5, 15. All these passages refer to the term mlecchajāti instead of simply mlecchas or mlecchātavī.

56. A.Ś., XIII, 5, 15. coraprakṛtīnām mlecchajātīnām ca sthānaviparyāsam anekasthām kārayet durgarāstradandamukhyānām ca//15//
'And he should cause a change of residence not in one place, of those in the habit of robbing and mleccha communities and of chiefs of forts, country and army.'

ASOKAN EMPIRE 250 B.C.

MAP NO. VII

- △ Rock Edicts
- ┆ Pillar Edicts
- Modern Cities
- Probable Boundary



ridden peasantry conditioned not to bear arms, nor to unite in opposition to the state.⁵⁷ As far as mlecchajātis other than forest tribes were concerned, they were also a potential threat to the existing social order outside the control of the brāhmanas and ksatriyas. This becomes more clearly apparent when we discuss the social discrimination of the mleccha.

Kauṭilya's policy towards mlecchas was not followed by all ancient kings. Thus, Aśoka makes a clear distinction between the foreign peoples on his border and the tribes in the interior on the one hand, and his (other) subjects on the other. In Rock-Edict XIII there is a list of the Yonas, Kāmbojas, Nābhakas, Bhojas, Pitinikas, Andhras and Pālidās, who are considered as border people but within the imperial territories.⁵⁸ Normally Aśoka uses vijita, which literally means 'a conquered (territory)', to represent his dominions.⁵⁹ Only once, in referring to the above people is the term rāja-visaya or 'royal territory' used.⁶⁰ There can be no doubt that they were included in his empire. Raychaudhuri considers the above peoples to have enjoyed a status midway between the provinces and the unsubdued borderers.⁶¹

Aśoka, however, evidently draws a further distinction between the peoples who lived around his frontiers and the forest tribes — atavī. As part of a policy to conciliate them, in the same edict a

57. D.D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, 1975 (rpt.), p.215.

58. J. Bloch, Les Inscriptions d'Aśoka, 1950, 'Treizième Édit sur Rocher', text line 30, p.130 and text line 5, p.131.

59. E. Hultzsch, C.I.I., Vol.I, 'Rock Edict II: Kalsi version', text line 4 — savatā vijitasi. R. Basak, Aśokan Inscriptions, 1951 p.7 — sanskritized reading of the same sarvatra vijite.

60. J. Bloch, p.130, rājavisayamhi (Girnar); R. Basak, Op. Cit., p. 71 — rājavisaye (Kalsi).

61. H. Raychaudhuri, PHAI, 1953, p.311.

warning is given to these tribes that even after the remorse suffered from the Kalinga war, the king is still powerful.⁶² Since these lines occur after the description of the suffering experienced at Kalinga, it appears that Aśoka did not want to subdue these forest tribes by force and with bloodshed, but wanted to be firm with them all the same. Similar tribes were mentioned by Kauṭilya enemies of the State and were designated as mlecchas (VII, 10, 16).

In the Second Separate Edict Aśoka makes an appeal to all unconquered peoples on his borders not to fear him and to follow the Dhamma initiated by him.⁶³ In the same edict the Dhamma Mahāmātras are advised to inspire confidence among the borderers and also induce them to practise the principles of morality laid down in his policy of Dhamma. The edict itself was written and erected to remind the officials of the State of their duty.⁶⁴ It would seem that these peoples did not come under the direct administration of the empire as they had not been conquered. They therefore remained distinct and not easy to conform to the manner in which the emperor wished them to behave.

Here we can determine three levels of differentiation. The conquered dominions which included certain frontier peoples, the aṭavi or forest tribes who were difficult to reconcile and administer and the unconquered borderers. For all these people Aśoka's aim was to win over their confidence and spread among them the principles of his Dhamma.

62. J. Bloch, Les inscriptions d'Aśoka, 'Treizième Édit sur Rocher', text lines 5-10, p.129 — yā capi aṭaviyo devānampiyassa vijite hoti... (Girnar version).

D.C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., 'Thirteenth Rock-Edict: Shāhbāzgarhi', p.37. text line 7 ya pi ca aṭavi devānampiyasa vijite bhōti ta pi anuneti apunijapeti.

63. E. Hultzsch, Vol.I, 'Second Separate Rock Edict: Jaugada', text lines 4-5; pp.116-117 — siyā aṁtānaṁ (a)vijitā.

64. Ibid., text lines 13-14.

There is no reference to either the unconquered borders or the atavī (forest) inhabitants as mlecchas. Aśoka took no direct steps to antagonize the brāhmaṇas in any respect. On the other hand, in one of the edicts he proclaims that they should be held in respect.⁶⁵ But in his task to govern an empire with diverse elements he did not have to conform to the traditional society's norms about mlecchas. The word mleccha never appears on any of his edicts and tribes are always mentioned by their names.

The administration of the State, Kauṭilya continually emphasizes, must be controlled with an efficient and centralized machinery. The espionage system occupied an important place as one of the means to achieve this. Kauṭilya based his advice on the brāhmaṇical system but saw no harm in using the various types of mlecchas for political purposes. He recognised, however, the political advantage to be gained from keeping tribes in general contented. They could be used effectively in campaigns and deployed in such a way that would prevent them from resorting to plunder and arson. Secondly, they could be used as spies against the enemy.

The atavībala or troops from forest tribes form one of the six kinds of troops at the disposal of the ruler. Such troops were under the command of their own chieftains and it is recognised that they are likely to be more interested in plunder than fighting. It is further stated that alien troops commanded by an ārya are better than forest troops.⁶⁶ And, if on the path of a particular king's army there was an army of wild tribes then, he should use only his army of wild tribes against them.⁶⁷

65. D.C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., 'Fourth Rock Edict: Girnār Version', text line 6, p.22 — brāhmaṇasramaṇānām saṃpratipattih/

66. A.Ś., IX, 2, 18-20.

67. A.Ś., IX, 2, 7-8.

While it is admitted that a whole army of forest tribes could pose a threat at times, the king is openly advised to secure the help of certain mlecchas for his own personal needs. In cases where the king has become weak, he should, reinforce his troops to secure the services of heroic men from bands, robber groups, mleccha ātavikajātis and secret agents. Their services were to be deployed in inflicting harm upon the enemy —

utsāhahīnah śrenīpravīrapurusānāḥ coraganātavikamleccha-jātināḥ parāpakārināḥ gūdhapurusānāḥ ca yathālābham upacayaḥ kurvīta//27// 68

In another context, on assassinating a weak king it is mlecchas who must carry out the killing. Leaders of mleccha forest troops should take cover in places, ambush and kill the king —

sarvato vā prayātam enaḥ mlecchātavikadandacārināḥ satrāpāśrayaḥ stambhavātāpāśrayā vā hanyuh//23// 69

There are other instances where mlecchas should effectively be used as spies. In one case, in the section on the use of secret practices, the destruction of the enemy troops is justified by the statement that it is 'for the sake of protecting the four varṇas ... against the unrighteous.'⁷⁰ One of the secret methods is that 'approved men and women of mleccha communities, disguised as humpbacks, dwarfs, kirātas, dumb or deaf persons, idiots or blind persons, in an appearance credible as to country, dress, profession, language and birth'

68. A.Ś., VII, 14, 27 'If weak in energy, he should secure the services; as they may be available, of heroic men from bands (guilds), robber groups, ātavika-mleccha-jātis and of secret agents capable of doing harm to enemies.'

69. A.Ś., XII, 4, 23.

70. A.Ś., XIV, 1, 1 — cāturvarṇyanakṣārtham supaniśadikam adharmisthesu prayujīta/

should introduce poison into articles used by the enemy.⁷¹ The ability of the mlecchas to perform such duties was perhaps well known and accepted by the people at large. Mleccha-jātis were also trusted as spies inside the palace of the king —

antargṛhacarās teṣāṃ kubjavāmanapandakāḥ śilpavatyah
striyo mūkāś citrās ca mlecchajātayah//2// 72

The reason that members of the mleccha communities were trusted was perhaps due to their political neutrality. One cannot be totally certain of this. On the other hand, they could have been the only sections of the society willing to do unscrupulous jobs of spying and killing, which often involved impure tasks that members of the caste groups would not perform. It is difficult to verify whether the methods of espionage laid down in the Arthaśāstra were carried out by ancient Indian rulers. All the same the use of such groups was recommended by Kautilya and went totally against Dharmaśāstra injunctions to avoid mlecchas, their speech and areas of habitation and above all, mixing with them. It seems that for political expediency these rules were ignored which gives us a different perspective to the problem of mlecchas and attitudes towards them.

The end of Mauryan rule and the subsequent fragmentation of the subcontinent was complete around 185 B.C. From the second century B.C. different foreign invaders conquered and ruled parts of northern India except Bengal. The Deccan and southern India remained, however, under control of Indian rulers. In the north, political rule was largely connected with events outside India, which meant that till at least the third century A.D. there was no one centralized power that ruled India

71. A.S., XIV, 1, 2, kālakūtādir viśavargah śraddheyadeśaveśa-
śilpabhāsābhiḥjanāpadeśaiḥ kubjavāmanakirātamūkabadhira, jadā-
ndhacchadmabhir mlecchajātiyair abhipretaiḥ strībhiḥ
pumbhiś ca paraśarīropabhogsv avadhātavyah//2//

72. A.S., I, 12, 21. 'The humpbacks, dwarfs, eunuchs, women of accomplishments, the dumb, the various mleccha jātis shall be spies in the house (of the king).'

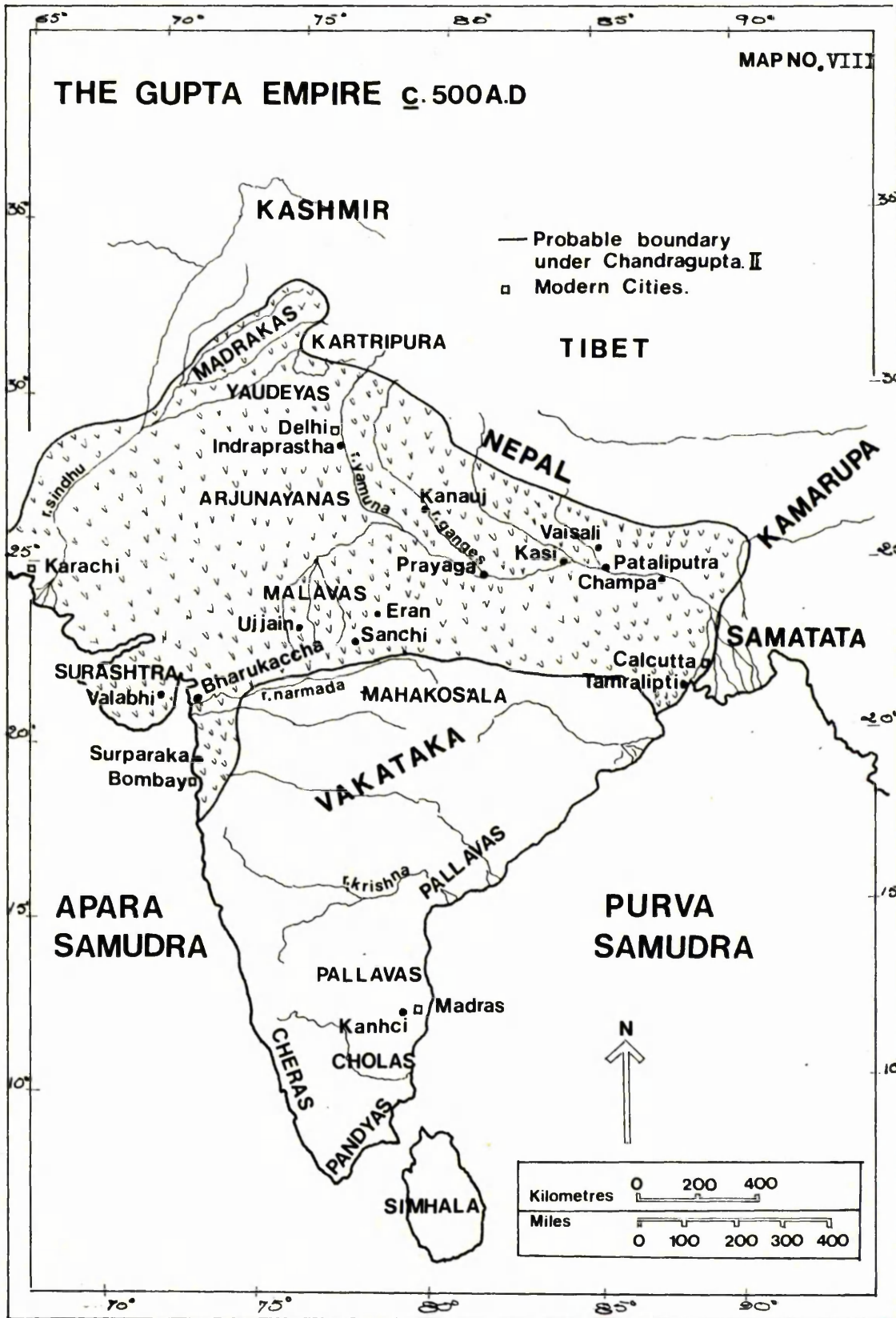
like the Mauryas had done. However, this period is important as it saw the introduction in northern India of new elements with both immediate and lasting effects. Foreign migration in the wake of these invasions greatly increased, while foreign trade reached a climax during this phase of ancient Indian history. On the political scene, though, foreign rulers held sway in several parts of the area. In the second and third centuries we witness the rise of indigenous rule under the Yaudheyas, Kunindas, Kulūtas, Madrakas, Arjunāyas, Mālavas, etc. mainly in the region of Punjab and eastern Rajasthan, between the rivers Indus and Ganges.⁷³ On their coins they are shown to use tribal epithets, sometimes written in Sanskrit.⁷⁴

The political changes in India during this period made it more difficult for the Gupta kings to establish a centralized administration than it had been for the Mauryas. The Allahabad Stone Pillar inscription gives information as to how the tribes and kings of northern and southern India around the middle of the fourth century A.D. were dealt with by Samudragupta. They had all to be defeated or subdued but in different ways.⁷⁵

73. K.A.N. Sastri (ed.) The Comprehensive History of India, Vol.II, The Satavahanas and Mauryas, pp.255-262.

74. J. Allan, B.M. Catalogue of Indian Coins, 1936, Part V, Tribal Coins, p.117ff.
It is of interest to note that among these the Kulutas are frequently referred to as mlecchas in brāhmanical texts - K.K. Dasgupta, A Tribal History of Ancient India, 1974, pp.86-87. A whole chapter in book eight of the Mahābhārata is devoted to deploring the bad habits and behaviour of the people of Punjab, particularly those of the Madrakas (VIII, 30).

75. J.F. Fleet, C.I.I., Vol.III, 1888, 'Allahabad Posthumous Stone Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta', text lines 19 - 24, p.6ff.
Among his exploits related in this praśasti are: 1) he captured and liberated kings of the south - sarvvadaksināpatha rāja-grahana-mokṣānugraha-janita-pratāpa. line 20; 2) he violently exterminated at least nine kings of Aryāvarta - anekāryyāvartta-rāja-prasabhadharanodvṛtta-prabhāva.. line 21; 3) homage and tribute in the form of all kinds of taxes was paid to him by various frontier kings - pratyanta nrpatibhir .. line 22 and finally 4) foreign kings such as the Daivaputra-Shāhi-Shāhānushāhi, the Sakas, the Murundas and the king of Ceylon also paid tribute - line 23.



The problem of the ātavika tribes remained during the Gupta period. In the above inscription Samudragupta is said to have had the kings of the forest countries submit to him —

paricāraṅkṛta sarvvātavika-rājasya.⁷⁶

Here there is a reference to the kings of the ātavikas who, contrary to what we see in the Arthaśāstra, are not qualified as mleccha. D.D. Kosambi has rightly pointed out that the 'food-gathering territory' of the ātavika savages 'shrank under the plough' as 'their chiefs ... turned into kings and began to promote village settlement with plough cultivation and regular taxes.'⁷⁷ Such a process must have taken place among certain tribes, while others were pushed still further into the fastnesses of the Himālaya or the Vindhya regions as a result of the increased area of the food-producing economy of the plains.

The inscription itself gives no hint as to the identification of the ātavika kingdoms. Fleet has pointed out that the Khoh Copper Plate⁷⁸ of Mahārāja Saṁkshobha refers to his ancestor as ruling over his hereditary kingdom of Dābhāla together with eighteen ātavikarājas. This territory must probably be identified with present Bundelkhand and adjoining areas.⁷⁹ This gives us some indication that certain forest tribes had created small pockets of political power in the Vindhyan

76. Ibid., text line 21. He literally made them his servants.

77. D.D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, 1975, p.241.

78. D.C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., 'Khoh Copper Plate Inscription of Saṁkshobha', text line 8 — śata vijayinah sātādśātavo rājyrājyābhyantaram dabhālā rājya manvayāgataṁ samadi...
J.F. Fleet, C.I.I., Vol., III, 'Khoh Copper-Plate Inscription of Mahārāja Saṁkshobha', lines 7-8, p.116 (Tr.) — '... who was victorious in many hundreds of battles, who sought to govern properly the kingdom of Dabhāla which had come (to him) by inheritance, together with (all the country) included in the eighteen forest kingdoms; ..'

79. J.F. Fleet, C.I.I., Vol. III, p.13, foot note 4.

region. After the sixth century A.D. it is this region which played a major role in the politics of Central India.

It is doubtful whether the methods of dealing with tribes as laid down in the Arthaśāstra suited all times. Kautilya's main aim had been to break up the tribal system and thereby lessen their threat. By the Gupta period this threat was replaced by the creation of small tribal kingdoms. A change in the emphasis of attitudes towards them is reflected in the fact that they were now not necessarily called mlecchas. It is, however, well known that forest tribes, some of them savage, have continued their separate existence in India throughout the centuries right down to modern times.

None of the other Gupta emperors refers to the conquest and reconciliation of Āṭavika kingdoms in their inscriptions. But the use of mleccha to describe a country occurs in the Junāgaḥ inscription of Skandagupta. The term mlecchadeśesu is mentioned with reference to the glory of this king, which spread in the countries of the mlecchas as well.⁸⁰ It is difficult to know what is meant by these mlecchas. Perhaps it included the country of the Hūnas outside India proper.

It is inappropriate to conclude with the impression that mleccha was used as a designation only for the uncontrollable wild tribes. Further, it is necessary to eradicate the notion that only foreign peoples were known as mlecchas. In the Mudrārāksasa,⁸¹ a play dealing

80. D.C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., 'Junāgaḥ Rock Inscription of Skandagupta'. text line 4 — yasya ripavo (pi) āmūlabhagnadarpā ni .. (nirvacanā) mlecchadeśesu/

81. Due to the mention of the Śakas and Hūnas in this play, it is dated by scholars during the reign of the Gupta emperor Candragupta II rather than in that of Candragupta Maurya. — K.A.N. Sastri, (ed) The Comprehensive History of India, Vol. II, The Satavahanas and Mauryas, p.4; C.R. Devadhar and V.M. Bedekar, Mudrārāksasam of Viśākadatta, 1948, p.5; G.V. Devasthali, Introduction to the Study of the Mudrārāksasa, 1948, p.139.

with political conspiracy there are a whole series of references to the mleccha allies of Malayaketu who are described as regional kings within the geographical boundaries of India. In Act I Cāṅkya relates how Malayaketu has been angered by the death of his father and to avenge his death and also incited by the offer of the kingdom of the Nandas, he is assisted by a large force of mleccha princes to prepare an attack against Candragupta.⁸² In Act three he repeats this assertion and adds that the enemy is ready for attack on the advice of Rākṣasa —

rākṣasopadeśappravāno mahīyasā mlecchabalena parivṛtaḥ
pitṛvadhāmarsī parvatakaputro malayaketur asmān abhiyoktum udyataḥ⁸³

In the recounting the details of Malayaketu's strength and his allies Cāṅkya in one passage also calls this king a mleccha. He then goes on to narrate that on being informed by spies, he has information on the names of the five kings that will aid him with great courage —

upalabdhavān asmi pranidhibhyo yathā tasya mleccharājaloḥkasya
madhyāt pradhānatamāḥ pañca rājānaḥ ...⁸⁴

The names of these five kings are as follows: Citravarma, king of Kulūta, Siṃhananda, king of Malaya, Puṣkarākṣa of Kāśmīr, Sindhuṣeṇa of Saindhava and Megha of the Pārsikas —

te yathā — kaulūtaś citravarmā malayanarapatih siṃhanādo
kāśmīrah puṣkarākṣah kṣataripumehimā saindhavaḥ sindhusenah/
meghākhyah pañcamo 'smin pṛthuturagabalah pārsikādhirājo...⁸⁵

-
82. Mudrārākṣasa, I, 11 — parvatakaputrena malayaketunā saha sañ-
ghāya tadupagrhitena ca mahatā mahatā mleccharājabalena .../
(Rākṣasa) .. Having allied with Malayaketu, the son of Parvataka
and assisted by a large force of mleccha princes ...
83. Mudraṅ, III, 25 — (Cāṅkya speaks) '...Following the advice of
Rākṣasa, Malayaketu, the son of Parvataka, being angry by the
murder of his father, is ready to attack us with a large force
of mlecchas.'
84. Mudraṅ, I, 20 — (Cāṅkya speaks) '... I am informed by spies that
five kings among the friends of the mleccha king (Malayaketu) ...
are following him with great courage..'
85. Ibid., I, 20. R.D. Karmarkar, Mudrārākṣasa of Viśākadatta, Poona.
1940, I, 20, identifies Kulūta as modern Kulu district in Punjab
(now Himācala Pradesh), south-east of Kashmere and Pārsika as the
Persians on the borders of India and Afghanistan.

Even though in this context these kings are not called mleccha, elsewhere the reference to the mleccha allies of Malayaketu must also allude to these kings. That these were not the only kings who fought on the side of Malayaketu is known from the description of how the armies should march given by Rākṣasa.⁸⁶ Here, there is reference to the Gandhāras and the Yavana chiefs who should be in the central division, the Śaka kings, the Cīnas and Hūnas who should be at the rear and the king of Kulūta and others who should guard the Prince on the march. The importance given to the five kings mentioned above as guards of the Prince himself cannot be overrated.

While not once in the play the side of Candragupta is supported by the mlecchas,⁸⁷ the impression is given that his enemy acquired his strength solely from his alliance with mleccha kings and their armies. Clearly this is due to the prejudice of the author which comes to the forefront at the end of the play where Viṣṇu is said to have taken the form of Candragupta to grant protection to the earth that was troubled by the mlecchas.⁸⁸ With source material such as that of a literary play, it is difficult to relate its contents, particularly in the field of political activities, to actual events that may or may not have taken place. However, the views of the playwright must, to a certain extent, have portrayed the current opinion about securing political alliances with mlecchas. In thus evaluating, it is outstanding

86. Mudrar., V, 11 -- sainyair gāndharair madhyayāne sayavanapatibhiḥ saṁvidheyah prayatnah/

paścāt tisthantu vīrah śakanarapatavah saṁbhṛtāḥ cīnahūnāḥ kaulūtādyas ca śīstah pathī parivṛṇuyād rājalokah kumāram//

87. The forces of Candragupta were, however, supported by such outside elements as the Śakas, Yavanas, Kirātas, Kāmbojas, Pārsīkas, Valhikas and others who guarded the city of Kusumapura -- Mudrar., II, 13.

88. Mudrar., VII, 19.

that in practice no taboos or restrictions seem to have been attached to soliciting help from or concluding alliances with mleccha kings.

If Viśākhadatta was concerned about not associating his hero with mleccha alliances, the authors of the Mahābhārata were not. In several instances in that text it is recognised that mleccha soldiers and kings fought under the banner of both the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas in the Great War. 'Many warriors dwelling in inaccessible hills, several warriors high in lineage and many mleccha peoples wielding weapons of various kinds and showing courage were assembled devoted to the cause of the Pāṇḍavas.'⁸⁹ Again, this time the Pāṇḍava army was protected by Mlecchas among many other peoples.⁹⁰ They fought on the side of the Kauravas as well.⁹¹ Their numbers were great and their support loyal, but they were all killed.⁹² Elsewhere, the Sūta laments the misfortune of the Kauravas with the question -- 'When the Nārāyaṇas have been killed, as also the Gopālas, those troops that were invincible in battle, and many thousands of mlecchas, what can it be but Destiny?'⁹³

A notable feature in the Mahābhārata with reference to the concentration of mleccha troops at the battle of Kurukṣetra is that the contingent of the mlecchas is always represented as a very large one and often, it seems that the numerical superiority is exaggerated only to enhance the bravery and excellent fighting ability of the heroes -- the Pāṇḍavas.⁹⁴

89. Mbh., V, 22, 21 -- giryāśrayā durganivāsināś ca yodhāḥ pṛthivyāṃ kulajā viśuddhāḥ/ mlecchāś ca nānāyudhavīryavantāḥ samāgatāḥ pāṇḍavarthe nivīṣṭāḥ//21

90. Mbh., V, 158, 20. The Kāmbojas, Śakas, Khasas, Salwas, Matsyas, Kurus, Mlecchas, Pulindas, Dravīdas, Andhras and Kāśichis supported them.

91. Mbh., IX, 1, 26.

92. Mbh., IX, 2, 18.

93. Mbh., IX, 2, 36 -- nārāyaṇā hatā yatra gopālā yuddhadurmadāḥ/ mlecchāś ca bahusāhasrāḥ kim anyad bhāgadheyataḥ//36

94. Mbh., VII, 69, 30; Mbh., VII, 95, 36.

The tradition of accepting mlecchas as political allies and mercenary soldiers therefore existed in ancient India. But it is only Sukra, possibly a nineteenth century smṛti writer, who acknowledged that the qualities of a soldier are many though his descent has no importance whatever and even mlecchas are qualified for the job.⁹⁵ It cannot be ignored that political attitudes towards the mlecchas were only partly determined by the brāhmanical attitudes on the subject. The Buddhist and Brāhmanic texts⁹⁶ agree on consistently regarding only those areas as mlecchadeśa or inhabited by mlecchas which geographically were non-agricultural lands, i.e. lands where the primitive occupations of hunting and food-gathering were prevalent. To this extent political theorists like Kauṭilya expressed similar ideas. The Buddhist texts also considered the regions defined as majjhimadesa most conducive to following 'a proper way of life'. The Brāhmanic texts were particularly concerned about the purity of the people who visited mleccha areas. Here, kings, political opportunists and their advisers seemed to ignore the injunctions of the Dharmaśāstras. Firstly, there were no restrictions to the area a monarch might want to conquer except his own limitation. Secondly, the employment of mlecchas as spies in the imperial court or on the battle field meant contact with their speech, behaviour and habits. There was political exploitation of certain mleccha communities, especially those in a less advanced state of development, and therefore, no discrimination as was advocated by the brāhmaṇas in the śāstras.

95. Sukranīti, II, 138-140.

96. Conclusions based on evidence related in Chapter IV.

In the light of the above political attitudes, we can now, by way of contrast, turn to the views held by the brāhmanas as portrayed in the smṛti, itihāsa and purāna literature on mleccha customs, behaviour and ethics. This will add to the reasons for the differentiation between the āryas and the mlecchas and ultimately indicate that the discrimination against the latter was, on the whole, a cultural phenomenon.

The intricate rules of purity and impurity, laws of behaviour, ritual and customs were painstakingly narrated in the śāstra but only for the welfare of the members of the four varnas. In the Sukranītisāra an exception to this is noted where it is stated that the 'dharma of the śāstras binds even the mlecchas.' This statement, however, occurs in the śāstra in the context of a passage on the sources of income which, because they differ according to caste have been fixed by previous ācāryas for the preservation of society. The passage reads as follows:

viditā 'rthāgamah śāstre tathā varnah prthak prthak/
śāsti tac chāstradharmam yan mlecchānām' api tat sadā//293
pūrvācāryais tu kathitam lokānām sthitihetave/ 97

It is most likely that it was only whenever mlecchas were involved in disputes concerning money and income that the śāstra law applied to them, as the property, income etc. of the ārya was also at stake. On the whole, the Dharmaśāstra, Arthaśāstra and brāhmanical jurisprudence in general, excluded the mlecchas from its scope. They also do not bother to note the laws and social codes prevalent in mleccha society or compare them with their own. All information about the cultural behaviour of the mlecchas, their social customs or their economic status is therefore pejorative. There is general unanimity in associating mlecchas with bad conduct, filthy habits and peculiar

97. Sukranīti, IV, v, 293-94. 'In the śāstra the sources of income according to the varnas are known to be various and that Dharma of the śāstras always binds even the mlecchas. These have been fixed by previous ācāryas for the preservation of society.'

customs. A description of the mlecchas in the Mahābhārata sums up, though only apparently, the characteristic apathy and opprobrious attitude of brāhmaṇa writers towards mlecchas: — 'The mlecchas are the dirt of mankind; ...' —

mānusānām malaṃ mlecchā ...⁹⁸

Further in the same chapter it is observed:

mlecchāḥ svasamjñāniyatā nānukta itaro janāḥ —

'The mlecchas are wedded to the creations of their own fancy other people cannot understand.'⁹⁹

For members of the brāhmanical society there was only one aim: 'To live according to the rule of conduct (as laid down in the smṛti) is doubtlessly the highest duty of all men.'¹⁰⁰ Since the inherent sense of superiority and firm belief in their own social laws was the keynote of all śāstras it was essential to further and strengthen these codes. There was the need to do so, if only to maintain the position of the most exclusive group in society: the brāhmaṇas. Thus it was made known that 'These religious acts which men, deeply versed in the knowledge of the three Vedas and acquainted with the sacred law, declare to be lawful (are efficient) for purifying oneself and others.'¹⁰¹ These two tenets were supposed to be acknowledged by all brāhmanic followers and were particularly impressed upon members of the lower orders of society. However, conditions by which mlecchas could be accepted into the brāhmanical society are not specified at all.¹⁰²

98. Mbh., VIII, 30, 70.

99. Mbh., VIII, 30, 80. (Translation P.C. Roy).

100. Vasistha Dhs., VI, 1-2.

101. Vasistha Dhs., I, 16. traividyaṃ vṛddhā yaṃ brūyur dharmam dharmavidō janāḥ/ pāvane pāvane caiva sa dharmo nātra saṃśaya iti//16

102. This does not mean that mlecchas were never assimilated in brāhmanical society.

In all circumstances the mleccha is considered a separate entity. Even in cases where reference is made to the people as a whole, the two groups mentioned distinctly are the āryas on the one hand, and the mlecchas on the other.¹⁰³ The emphatic rejection of the mlecchas as a reference group outside the official pattern of society, as formulated by the ancient authors, did not mean to justify aggression against them. This is an important aspect as almost all references to the mlecchas are given in relation to the rules of exclusion for the ārya. Passive avoidance of mlecchas, their ways and their territories seemed to be the theoretical principle which guided the stereotyped attitudes towards them. But stereotypes are often distorted, and were in this case as well. It is of crucial importance to examine not only the instances but also the reasons for these variations and when they occurred.

There is a significant lack of material on the social and behavioural discrimination of the mlecchas during the centuries B.C. Almost all the references to them in this period are in a linguistic context, namely, the firm injunction, particularly to brāhmanas, to avoid mleccha-vāc.¹⁰⁴ Having discussed these in an earlier chapter, it will suffice here to reiterate that the difference in the speech of the mlecchas was the only feature they wished to notice for their purpose. Their concern was mainly to maintain the exclusiveness of brāhmana

103. Mbh., VI, 41, 103.

104. Sat. Br., III, 2, 1, 23-24 —
This is the first reference to the mlecchas, which is given in the context of their speech; Pāṇini, VII, 2, 18; Dhātupīṭha, I, 220; X, 121, gives the verbal forms of the word mleccha; Gautama Dhs., I, 9, 17 does not allow snētakas to speak to mlecchas; Patañjali, I, 1, 1 repeats the passage from the Sat. Br. to emphasize the importance of learning grammar.

speech in order to create a society dependent solely on their expertise.¹⁰⁵

The socio-economic threat from mleccha groups, both indigenous and foreign, was absent during this period, so that there was no threat to the supremacy of the ksatriya-brāhmana control at the top of the social ladder. It is wrong to suggest that there was no awareness of mleccha customs and behaviour among the authors of the Veda-Saṁhitās and particularly the Dharmasūtras. It is unlikely that later writers of the Epics, Purānas and Smritis all of a sudden became aware of this issue. Even the foreign writer Megasthenes of the third century B.C. observed that the Indians were surrounded by barbarian tribes who differed from the rest of the population.¹⁰⁶ A significant exception among the brāhmanical writers is Kautilya who mentions certain features about the mlecchas which are not repeated elsewhere.

Kautilya forbids the members of the four varnas to sell their offspring but adds that it is not an offence for the mleccha to do so —

mlecchānām adosaḥ prajāṁ vikretum ādhātuṁ vā//3
na tv evāryasyā dāsabhāvaḥ//4 107

The Sūdras were looked upon as part of the ārya community in this case and were therefore clearly distinguished from the mlecchas.¹⁰⁸ There is no reference, however, to the identification of the mlecchas in this instance. Their custom is recorded perhaps because it was quite common and therefore generally known and, more importantly, it was to be made known to the members of the brāhmanical society that they were not to follow it. If they did, they were to pay fines varying according

105. D.D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, 1975, pp.278-280 discusses the role of the Sanskrit language and the brāhmanas in extending the Aryan mode of production into new areas.

106. McCrindle, India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian, pp.20-21.

107. A.S., III, 13, 3-4. 'For the mlecchas it is not an offence to sell offspring or keep it as a pledge. There shall be no slavery for an ārya in any circumstances.'

108. Ibid., III, 13, 1-2. In III, 7, 27 they are considered equal to mixed castes.

to their caste.¹⁰⁹ Kangle believes that mlecchānām would seem to denote foreigners as well as tribals not absorbed in Aryan society.¹¹⁰ It is difficult to ascertain which tribal groups sold their offspring as slaves during the period in which Kautilya wrote. If we accept that he wrote during the Mauryan period or earlier, he could be referring to the system of slavery among the Greeks who in India were known as the Yavanas or Yonas. A Buddhist text, the Majjhima Nikāya of around the same period mentions the custom among the Yonas and Kambojas where an ārya could become a dāsa and vice versa.¹¹¹

Kautilya's injunction, like most brāhmanical ones was meant for the āryas and the mention of the mleccha custom was incidental. Derrett further observes that he probably had Hindus in mind who were willing to buy mleccha offspring.¹¹² Whatever the intentions, the mlecchas are not commended for their behaviour but at the same time they are not spoken of in derogatory terms.

This is not a characteristic of all references to mlecchas in the Arthaśāstra. At least twice they are listed in the same category as thieves and are considered a menace to the State.¹¹³ As spies much sought after, they are listed with humpbacks, dwarfs, eunuchs, women skilled in the arts, the dumb¹¹⁴ and indeed, in another passage, men and women of mlecchajātis were known to be easily disguised as humpbacks, dwarfs, kirātas, dumb and deaf persons, idiots and blind persons.¹¹⁵ In both these instances their abilities were to be deployed against the enemy and for the protection of the king.

109. A.S., III, 13, 1-2.

110. R.P. Kangle, The Kautiliya Arthaśāstra, Pt. II, foot note to III, 13, 3.

111. Majjhima Nikāya, II, 149.

112. J.D.M. Derrett, JESHO, Vol.I, 1957, p.91.

113. A.S., VII, 10, 16; VII, 14, 27; XIII, 5, 15 - These have been discussed fully above.

114. A.S., I, 12, 21.

115. A.S., XIV, 1, 2.

A striking feature in these citations and in some others of the same text is that for the first time there is reference to 'various ¹¹⁶ mleccha-jātis'. Jāti here cannot be taken to mean 'caste' in the sense of hierarchical groupings in the brāhmanical society based on birth. The reference was probably to the different communities of mlecchas that existed in various parts of India who must have been identified by their respective occupations and particularly by their proximity to the settled urban and rural way of life that was considered most conducive to the practice of the varṇāśramadharmā. It is important to note that there is a clear contrast between those mlecchas who were known to belong to groups, probably tribal groups, and therefore collectively called mlecchajātis and those that were simply called mlecchas as in the first verse discussed above (III, 13, 3 - mlecchānām). The latter form could have alluded to foreigners in India who were not necessarily settled in identifiable communities. Finally, it must be recalled that the Arthaśāstra also has the use of mleccha as an adjective for wild tribes - aṭavī.¹¹⁷

Knowledge about the mlecchas was thus not totally absent in brāhmanical circles. As to the fourth and third centuries B.C., we can say that the state indirectly upheld the brāhmanic system even though there is no doubt that Aśoka gave positive patronage to Buddhism. He, however, did not attack the supremacy of the brāhmanas and ksatriyas in any way. On the other hand, a strong and well established government had prevented foreign invasions and Aśoka's policy of Dhamma had kept all elements of the population, including tribesmen, temporarily

116. A.S., VII, 14, 27 (...coraganāṭavikamlecchajātīnām...);
 XIII, 5, 15 (cōraprakrtīnām mlecchajātīnām...);
 XIV, 1, 2 (...mlecchajātīyair abhipretaiḥ strībhiḥ...);
 I, 12, 21 (..mlecchajātayah..).

117. A.S., XII, 4, 23 (mlecchāṭavika); VII, 10, 16 (mlecchāṭavībhīr).

pacified during his reign. The competition from the Buddhists did not affect the broad attitudes towards the mlecchas.

It is several times stated in the Nikāya that the outlying regions of majjhimadesa are inhabited by the unintelligent milakkhas,¹¹⁸ where both monks and lay disciples are forbidden to travel.¹¹⁹ The point that only a few men are reborn in the middle districts while numerous peoples are reborn among the milakkhas is also observed in the early Jaina sūtras in a slightly different manner. The Uttarādhyayana Sūtra notes that 'though one be born as a man, it is a rare chance to be an ārya; for many are the Dasyus and Milakkhus..'^{119a} In the Sūtrakrdāṅga it is implied that the milakkhas are ignorant and unintelligent as they repeat what the āryas have said without understanding its meaning.^{119b} The next sūtra observes: 'So the ignorant, though pretending to possess knowledge, do not know the truth, just as an uninstructed milakkha.'^{119c}

Just as the reforming efforts of Buddhism and Jainism did not bring about any fundamental change in the position of the lower orders of society,¹²⁰ neither did they affect the notion that because certain

118. Āṅg., N., I, 35; Saṃyutta N., V, 466; Dīgha N., III, 264 --
..atha kho ete bahutarā sattā ye paccantimesu janapadesu
paccājāyanti aviññātaresu milakkhesu// '...many are reborn in
 the outlying regions among the unintelligent milakkhas.'

119. Āṅg. N., IV, 226.

119a. Uttarādhyayana Sūtra, X, 16 -- ladhdana vi mānusattanañ āriattañ
punrāvi dullahañ/ bahave dasyū milakkhuyā ...//16//

119b. Sūtrakrdāṅga, I, 1, 2, 15 -- milakkhū amilakkhussa jahā vuttānubhāsae/
na hevañ se vijānā bhāsiañ t'nubhāsae//15// It is also implied
 that the milakkhas had a different language and that they did
 not understand the language of the āryas.

119c. Ibid., I, 1, 2, 16 -- evaman nāniyā nānañ vayanātvāvi sayanā sayanā/
nicchayatthenā na yananti milakkhuvva abohiyā//16//

120. R.S. Sharma, Sūtras in Ancient India, 1958, p.138.

groups followed a different way of life, especially one that was distasteful in their view, they were to be called milakkhas. In Buddhism, however, it was a basic principle that neither caste nor the fact of belonging to a foreign community would be an impediment to anyone who wished to join the Order.

The question of mleccha behaviour began to disturb brāhmana writers to a considerable degree in the early centuries A.D., when it became apparent in their writings. Though the early sūtras and religious literature had not dwelt on the behaviour of the mlecchas, the cultural importance of Sanskrit as a language for ritual purposes and the ritual purity of Āryāvarta were constantly emphasised. But the cultural exclusiveness of the Āryas ultimately rested on the strength of the śiṣṭas.

Āryāvarta was a land of śiṣṭas.¹²¹ By śiṣṭas was meant men of pure birth and, even more important, great learning and almost invariably these were brāhmanas. In all matters of Dharma their practices were to be followed.¹²² The authority of the brāhmanas in Āryāvarta was well entrenched and to a certain degree unquestioned,¹²³ until real decline of this authority set in with the first foreign invasions and settlements in madhyadeśa. The close and convenient alliance between the ksatriyas and brāhmanas was disrupted and replaced by other ruling classes. As a result of these changes the Śāstras advocated strong resistance against foreign influence, in particular by strengthening the rules of exclusion from particular areas for the Ārya and avoidance of contact with certain types of people. Prāyaścitta or expiation became a more popular means of purification.

121. Baudhāyana Dhs., I, 1, 5-6.

122. Baudhāyana Dhs., I, 2, 9-10; Vasiṣṭha Dhs., I, 4-7; Mahābhāṣya, VI, 3, 109.

123. They advised kings to accept as valid usages of other countries, jātis, śrenis, etc. but always emphasized that nothing should oppose the smṛti. (Discussed above).

The Viṣṇusmṛti is the first lawbook to detail the various acts from which an Ārya is excluded in relation to a mleccha. Unlike the Gautama Dharmasūtra¹²⁴ where speaking to a mleccha was forbidden only for the snātaka, Viṣṇu extends it further to all Āryas. A person defiled by such an act is recommended to sip water afterwards.¹²⁵ In the chapter on the duties of householders, and in particular, their eating habits he enjoins that food must not be taken from a 'bad dish' — bhānde bhāvadūsite.

The commentary explains that this is similar to the dishes used by the mlecchas.¹²⁶ But most important of all references to the mlecchas in this Smṛti is a whole section which enumerates all kinds of acts that Āryas are forbidden to carry out amongst mlecchas or in mleccha country. They are as follows:¹²⁷

na mlecchavisaye śrāddhaṃ kuryāt/1/
'He must not offer a śrāddha in a country inhabited by mlecchas.'

na gacchen mlecchaviṣayam/2/
'He must not visit a country inhabited by mlecchas.'¹²⁸

paranipānesv apah pītvā (pītvā?) tat sām̐yam upagacchatīti/3/
'By (constantly) drinking water from (or bathing in) a pool situated in a foreign (barbarous) country, he becomes equal to its inhabitants.'¹²⁹

cāturvarṇyāvyasthānaṃ yasmin deśe na vidyate/
sa mlecchadeśe vijñeya āryāvartas tataḥ paraḥ/4//84//
'Those countries where the four varṇas are not known is mlecchadeśa, the others beyond that are called Āryāvarta.'

All these precepts remain the basis for future smṛtikāras though writers add variations depending on the area and circumstances in which the particular text was written.

124. Gautama Dhs., I, 9, 17.

125. Viṣṇusmṛti, XXII, 75-76.

126. The commentary called Vaijayantī by Nanda Pandita to Viṣṇu LXVIII, 49 — bhāvena cittavṛttiyā dusite mlecchādibhāndasadrśe...

127. Viṣṇusmṛti, LXXXIV, 1-4.

128. The commentary to this verse, LXXXIV, 2 adds that it is not allowed except on pilgrimage — tīrthayātrāṃ vinā mlecchadeśaṃ na gacchet/

129. Julius Jolly, The Institutes of Viṣṇu, SBE, Oxford 1880, Translation LXXXIV, 3.

There are two points that emerge from the injunctions related in the Viṣṇusmṛti. Firstly, the slightest contact with the mleccha in the form of visiting his country or even performing a ceremony in such places was considered undesirable. It was worse to constantly drink water or bathe in such a country as that would equate the person with the mleccha. This thus establishes that the mleccha is impure. But his impurity is worse than that of an untouchable or the śūdra because the mleccha does not acknowledge the system of the four varṇas and thereby the authority of the brāhmanas. This brings us to the second point which is that mleccha groups were identifiable by their non-observance of caste rules and consequently, their behavioural norms in the family and in society were contrary to those laid down in the śāstra. Therefore, any description about the impurity of mlecchas was related to this factor.

We now examine how mleccha behaviour was a threat to established society. It is a permanent feature during the Kali age, though the Purānas and the Mahābhārata speak of it in the future tense. The destruction of the mlecchas, as we shall see, will only come with Kalki but at that point in time, in the distant future, the whole human race is said to be destroyed.

The general increase in mleccha influence which begins in the Purānas with the Kali age, is first recorded in the Yuga Purāna. This initially explains, as do all the other Purānas, the ideal condition of men in the Kṛta Yuga which was followed by the Tretā and Dvāpara Yugas and in each successive age Dharma is reduced.¹³⁰ Bad times befall the country politically, ethically and socially, according to the Yuga

130. Yuga Purāna, (Ed. D.R. Mankad), 1951, text lines 11-75.

Purāna writer, with the invasion of the Yavanas, Pañcālas and Māthuras.¹³¹

The mleccha influence is spread through a king called Amlāṭa who was not only oppressive but who disrupted the social order of castes --

tatah sa mleccha āmlāto raktākso raktavastrabhrt/136
 tato varnās tu caturah sa nrpo nāsayiṣyati/138
 varnānsāvasthitān sarvān krtvā pūrnāvyaṣṭhi(tān)/139
 āmlāto lohitaṅgaś ca vipatsyati sabāṁdhavaḥ/140 132

The association of the mlecchas with the disruption of the varna oriented society is significant and recurs again. Not only did the mlecchas not conform to the rules and regulations of that system but they created a situation whereby the system did not function in accordance with the wishes of the brāhmaṇas. It is for this reason that the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna pronounces that the four castes must be safeguarded according to their respective rules of righteousness and dāśas, mlecchas and others who live in wickedness must be slain.¹³³

In most other Purānas the Kali Yuga sees the final dominance of of mleccha dharma which is in direct opposition to the 'proper way of existence'. The chief features of the former were vice, violence, hatred, falsehood, lack of virtue in women, neglect in the authority of the Smṛti, the study of the Veda and the performance of sacrifice were no longer popular, people were largely impious and addicted to bad custom.¹³⁴ More importantly, there is also the concern that the ksatriyas and vaiśyas were gradually being exterminated, the śūdras befriended the brāhmaṇas and acted their part. We are further informed

131. The deteriorating social and ethical standards in all Purānas are blamed on foreign invasions. The political aspects in these sections on Kali Age have been discussed in Chapter VII.

132. Yuga P., text lines, 136; 138-140 - 'This red-eyed and red-abbired mleccha Amlāṭa .. will destroy the four varnas by making all old-established varnas low placed.'

133. Mārka. P., CXXV, 57 - paripālanīyam akhilaṁ cāturvarṇyaṁ svadharmataḥ/ hantavyā dasyavo mlecchā ye cānye dustacestitāḥ 57

134. These features are listed in a lengthy and repetitive manner in Vāyu P., 58, 30ff; 99, 392-400.

that the śūdras were respected everywhere (śūdrābhivādinās sarve), they propagated the faith of the impious (pāṣaṇḍānām pravartakāḥ) and the brāhmanas, unsupported by the kings, depended on the śūdras for their livelihood.¹³⁵

The early Purānas almost all present similar versions of this calamity and characteristically blame both the āryas and mlecchas for it. The Matsya Purāna, which is supposed to have drawn its material on the Kali Age from both the Brāhmānda and Vāyu Purānas¹³⁶, gives a shorter version which is as follows. It first lists in general the bad conditions of the age such as the presence of disease, sorrow, the failure of rain, prevalence of terror etc. The account also begins with the statement 'the people will steadily deteriorate by adopting a contrary course of life..'

— viparyayena vartante ksayam esyanti vai prajāḥ/¹³⁷

subsequently, 'the contrary course of life' is elucidated. It is:

1) that people will not observe the rules of varṇāśrama and thereby are unrighteous —

varṇāśramaparibhrastā adharmaniratās ca tāḥ/32

2) they will not abide by the observances of religion, of śruti and smṛti and therefore also destroy the varṇāśrama —

śrautasmar̥te'tiśithile nastavarṇāśrame tathā/46

and finally, 3) brāhmanas will be superseded by śūdras in that the latter will recite mantras and the former will be anxious to please them in many ways --

brāhmanāḥ śūdrayonisthāḥ śūdrā vai mantrayonayah//47
upasthāsyaṅti tān viprās tadartham abhilipsavah/48 138

135. Vāyu P., 58, 38-49; Brāhmānda P., II, 31, 39-49.

136. Hazra, Purānic Records., pp.174-75 places the Vāyu and Brāhmānda versions between A.D. 200-275.

137. Matsya P., 273, 26-31.

138. Matsya P., 273, 32; 46-48. 'Brāhmanas will be born of śūdras (or will study under śūdras) and śūdras will be the source of mantras (or take to teaching mantras).'(47) 'Those brāhmanas will adore śūdras anxious to acquire wealth from them (or anxious to get the meaning of mantra from them).'(48)

The Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata Purāṇas in their descriptions of the same add that brāhmanas will be slain under these conditions.¹³⁹

The Mahābhārata in a similar tone of doom bewails that in the Kali Age 'the whole world will be filled with mleccha behaviour and notions, sacrifices will cease, there will be joy nowhere and general rejoicing will disappear.' —

mlecchabhūtaṃ jagatsarvaṃ niskriyaṃ vajñavarjitam/
bhaviṣyati nirānandam anutsavam atho tathā// 140

Prominent among the misdeeds spoken of here are those concerned with brāhmanas and caste system. 1) Brāhmanas will speak disrespectfully of the Vedas —

brāhmanā vedanindakāh/

and 2) there will only be remnants of the brāhmana, ksatriya and vaiśya orders and men will become members of one common order —

brāhmanāḥ ksatriyā vaiśyā na śiṣyanti janādhipa/
ekavarṇas tadā loko bhaviṣyati yugakṣaye// 141

As a result of the earth being full of mlecchas, the brāhmanas, it is also stated, will flee in all directions for fear of the burden of taxes.¹⁴²

It has been suggested that these accounts refer to the period of chaos between the fall of the Mauryas and the rise of the Gupta empire.¹⁴³ Jayaswal even goes to the extent to interpret literally the Purāṇic statements that rulers killed brāhmanas, ruled in terror, exacted unfair taxes etc., to the activities of the Yavana, Śaka and Kuṣāna kings.¹⁴⁴

139. Viṣṇu P., IV, 24, 17ff; Bhāgavata P., XII, 1, 39-49; XII, 2, 12ff.

140. Mbh., III, 188, 29.

141. Mbh., III, 188, 26; 41.

142. Mbh., III, 188, 70 - mahī mlecchasamākrīṇā bhaviṣyati tato'cīrīt/
karabhārabhayād viprā bhajiṣyanti diśo jaśa//70

143. R.S. Sharma, Sūdras in Ancient India, 1958, p.213.

144. K.P. Jayaswal, History of India 150 A.D. - 350 A.D., pp.150-153.

Jayaswal himself creates an exaggerated picture as the common feature of all these accounts¹⁴⁵ is not so much what the mleccha did but the plight of the brāhmanas, the breakdown of the varnāśrama system and how the sūdras were getting out of control. These were views of that group in society who had lost or were about to lose their old privileges, and could do nothing about that except spread doom. Clearly, we cannot accept the above views as those that were generally accepted by all ancient Indians.¹⁴⁶ They, however, had the effect of wrongly perpetuating the notion in Indian tradition that the term mleccha had always denoted actively anti-brāhmanical persons. The descriptions of the Kali Age, R.S. Sharma has rightly pointed out, made ' in the form of complaints ... cannot be brushed aside as figments of imagination. They depict the pitiable plight of the brāhmanas on account of the activities of the Greeks, Śakas and Kuśānas. It is likely that their invasions caused an upheaval among the sūdras who were seething with discontent. Naturally they turned against the brāhmanas who were the authors of discriminatory provisions against them.¹⁴⁷

The fact that the brāhmanas were incapable of reasserting their old rights is evident from the fact that they proposed unlikely and impracticable solutions to the problem of the mlecchas. All Purānas end their sections on the Kali Age with the statement that Viṣṇu in the form of Kalki will destroy the whole race of ksatriyas who are like mlecchas.¹⁴⁸ Only the Vāyu Purāna refers to the exploits of Pramiti

145. The prophetic note and future tense used in these accounts must be ignored as they represent the conditions of their present state.

146. In chapters VI and VII it will be seen how all tribes and foreigners were not called mlecchas and there is a great deal of inconsistency on the matter in all brāhmanical writing.

147. R.S. Sharma, Sūdras in Ancient India, p.214.

148. kalkinā tu hatāh sarve āryā mlecchās ca sarvatah/ Matsya P., 273, 27; Vāyu P., 98, 114; Brahmānda P., II, 18, 43; Bhāgavata P., X, 40, 22.

who raised an army of armed brāhmanas that set out to annihilate the peoples such as vr̥śalas and mlecchas.¹⁴⁹ In the Mahābhārata salutations are accorded to Kalki who, though only in the distant future, will destroy the mlecchas but bring protection to dharma and its re-establishment.¹⁵⁰

The desire for the eradication of the mlecchas did not obviously materialize. The brāhmanas, like all other groups in ancient Indian society, had to accept their presence. Manu, the smṛtikāra par excellence of the period between c. 200 B.C. - c. 200 A.D., makes it clear that he was not merely concerned about mlecchas but also about āryas and indeed all those outside the varṇāśramadharmā.¹⁵¹ However, against this background it is easier to understand why deliberate attempts were made to describe them as impure. Characteristic statements to avoid them and their ways were common but, as we shall next examine, often in the same text, contrary statements occur. These are clear signs of how attitudes, not only to certain powerful outside groups, but to the whole concept of the mleccha changed.

The inherent impurity of the mlecchas was implicit in the fact that they did not perform the śrāddha.¹⁵² This was an important ceremony which required the offering of food and prayers to ancestors by which kin ties and caste status were confirmed. The Matsya Purāna excluded inhabitants of the mleccha country¹⁵³ from being invited to

149. Vāyu P., 58, 88-90.

150. Mbh., Appendix, 12, 7, 19-20 - hanisyati kaler ante mlecchāns turagavāhana/ dharmasamsthāpanārthāyā tasmai kālātmane namah/20. App., 12, 6, 39-40.

151. Manu, X, 43.

152. Mbh., III, 188, 45.

153. P.V. Kane, History of the Dharmasāstra, Vol.I, p.103 quotes the same verse from the Matsya Purāna, but perhaps a different version, which states that it is brāhmanas from the mleccha country who are not allowed to attend the śrāddha feast.

the śrāddha feast.¹⁵⁴ The Vāyu, contrary to the above view, refers to the mlecchas offering oblations to pitrs (i.e. performing śrāddha) along with the four varṇas.¹⁵⁵ The different account in the Vāyu probably alluded to a powerful group of mlecchas that were supported by brāhmanas, as it was impossible to perform a śrāddha without their support.

Exclusive mleccha groups had the support of brāhmanas but this does not apply to all mlecchas. On the other hand, the sectarian spirit of the Purānas applied to everybody. The glories of Kāśī are sung in the Matsya Purāna and here it is stated that brāhmanas, ksatriyas, vaiśyas, sūdras and mlecchas, if they died in that city reached the realm of Śiva and attained salvation.¹⁵⁶ In the same Purāna even a mleccha is said to be moved by compassion at the sight of a woman being burned.¹⁵⁷ Though a mleccha must be killed for protection, he must be judged by his actions. It is related that a person who knows dharma kills mlecchas for the protection of cows, brāhmanas, children, women the old and suffering —

gobrāhmanāhitārtthāya bālastrīrakṣanāya ca/ ¹⁵⁸
vrddhāturaparitrāṇe yo hinasti sa dharmavit/

154. Matsya P., XVI, 16 kṛtaghnān nāstikāns tadvan mlecchadeśanivāsinah/
trīśaṅkur barbaradrāvavitadrayidakoṅkanin//16
varjayet liṅginah sarvān śrāddhakāla viśesatah/
pūrvedyur aparedyur vā vinītātṃā nimantrayet//17

The Brahmānda P., II, 16, 59 declares the country of the Andhras to be unfit for the śrāddha

155. Vāyu P., 63, 110-112. 156. Matsya P., CLXXXI, 19-20.
157. Matsya P., CLXXXVIII, 51.
158. Mbh. Appendix, 12, 12, 15-16.

But, it is added that where there is a sinful brāhmana and a dhārmic and pure mleccha, the latter is to be considered true and honest.

brāhmanah pāpakarmā ca mleccho va dharmikah śucih/
śreyāms tatra bhaven mleccho brāhmanah pāpakm na ca/ 159

Again in the Mahābhārata the mlecchas are noted for keeping the vow of fasts. Yudhiṣṭhira in his conversation with Bhīṣma is unable to give a reason for such an observance among them as he had heard that only brāhmanas and ksatriyas observe the vow of fasts.¹⁶⁰

These passages reflect the variations in attitudes towards mlecchas which is evidence of the flexibility inherent in the historical situation faced by the brāhmanic society. But the persistent prejudice towards outsiders could not be removed altogether and had to be justified —

asaivāsāh prajāyante mlecchās cāpi na saṁsayah/
narāh pāpasamācārā lobhamohasamarvitāh// 108

'Those men that are of sinful conduct and that yield to the influence of cupidity and stupidity without doubt, take birth as mlecchas with whom one must not be associated.' 161

In the next two chapters we proceed to discuss the designation mlecchas for all outsiders, and, in the light of the above discussion the ambiguity in its use will be better understandable.

159. Mbh. Appendix, 12, 12, 17-19.

160. Mbh., XIII, 109, 1-2 sarveṣāṁ eva varṇānāṁ mlecchānāṁ ca pitṛvaha/
upavāse matiriyāṁ kārānāṁ ca na vidmahe//1
brāhmaksatreṇa niyamās *cartavyā iti nah śrutam/
upavāse kathāṁ teṣāṁ kṛtyam asti pitāmaha//2

*There is a variant reading kartavyā

161. Mbh. XIII, 112, 108.

Chapter VI

TRIBES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DESIGNATED

AS MLECCHA

The existence of mlecchas as a large reference group outside the varṇāśrama system was definite in brāhmanical writing. Further, the role and status of the brāhmana was pre-eminently emphasized in the Dharmaśāstra texts. They were also to a large extent responsible for laying down the rules and precepts for the avoidance of mleccha groups, their speech, their habitat and way of life.

The rules for the designation of particular groups of outsiders as mlecchas were, however, absent. This created a situation whereby brāhmanic writers were clear and consistent about the criterion which determined mleccha-hood in theoretical terms, but in the use of the term mleccha as a designation for groups of outsiders there was a certain degree of flexibility. This gave rise to its wide and varied application and one is left the initial impression that the apparent ambiguity in its use was due to the ignorance of literary writers about people who had different cultural attributes. We cannot, however, accept this explanation as there was awareness in all types of brāhmanical writing about both tribal and foreign groups who were known to them by their respective names and sometimes without the designation mleccha. Another point which has to be accepted is that the term was not applied, at any stage, to people belonging to one ethnic, religious or linguistic group.

The emphasis in this chapter is to analyze and understand, in detail, the term mleccha in a wider context along with other allied terms as Dasyu, Kirāta, Śabara, Pulinda and Niṣāda. We begin with a brief review of the initial cultural differentiation on the Indian subcontinent.

Both the concept of mleccha and the word itself occur in the literature belonging to the Indo-Aryan speaking culture.¹ The dating of the Aryan arrival to India has been a subject of great controversy and will continue to be so until fresh and unambiguous evidence is produced. The Rg Veda, the earliest extant text of the Indo-Aryans, has been attributed to about 1500-1200 B.C. The history of Indo-Aryan migration into the subcontinent must be understood in a correct perspective before one is able to evaluate attitudes of the Indo-Aryans towards the original inhabitants. When one speaks of the Indo-Aryan advance into the Gangetic country, it is not simply the migration of certain tribes, but the extension of a certain way of life. Its chief characteristic and organization developed on Indian soil and projected certain basic values. The developments of society between 1500-800 B.C. produced the society reflected in the Dharmasūtras of the fifth to the third century B. C. Later, in the Smṛtis these notions were elaborated and further reinterpreted by the commentators of these texts. The view represented in the Dharmaśāstra influenced other brāhmanical writing throughout the course of ancient Indian history.

Historical studies of India have often taken the coming of the Indo-Aryans as their starting point. This is justifiable in a study on some aspect of the Indo-Aryans themselves, but not when it involves their relationship with people who were clearly

1. In accordance with scholarly practice, 'Indo-Aryan' is used by us to indicate the Indian branch of the Aryan (i.e. Indo-Iranian) sub-group of the Indo-European group of languages. On these and related terms see T. Burrow, 'The Early Aryans', in A. L. Basham, A Cultural History of India, 1975. pp. 20-29.

different from them. Archaeological evidence throws light on the existence of a variety of cultures before and after their coming, the majority of which can definitely be identified as non-Aryan. The earliest of these cultures are pre-Harappan settlements in the upland valleys of Baluchistan and southern Afghanistan. Radio carbon samples from a hearth in its uppermost levels at Killi Ghul Muhammad, a typical site of this culture, has yielded dates of 3688 B.C. and 3712 B.C.² Rana Ghundai, Quetta and Amri are other local cultures of the same type in different regions. Pre-Harappan cultures also extended into Punjab, northern Rajputana and Sind as the famous Sothi cultures of the Sarasvati Valley and these are often called proto-Harappan. What is particularly exciting in these recent excavations is the fact that there is repeated evidence of continuity from pre-Harappan times, proving definitely that the brilliant civilization of the Indus valley did not burst out suddenly at the middle of the third millennium B.C. (c. 2300-1750 B.C.). It had a background of at least five or more centuries when, as far as material culture is concerned, distinctive settlement patterns had been evolved. The Harappan culture itself was not confined to the Indus Valley. It extended as far south as the Narmada (settlement of Bhagatrav) and in the east as far as the upper Ganga-Jamuna Doab (Alamgirpur).

Most interesting of all is the archaeological evidence which shows the existence of post-Harappan cultures flourishing in the Indus and the Ganges Valleys. We need to concentrate here on the Ganges Valley where the bridge between the Harappan and post-Harappan is the Ochre Coloured Culture (c. 1400-1200 B. C.).³ The Ochre

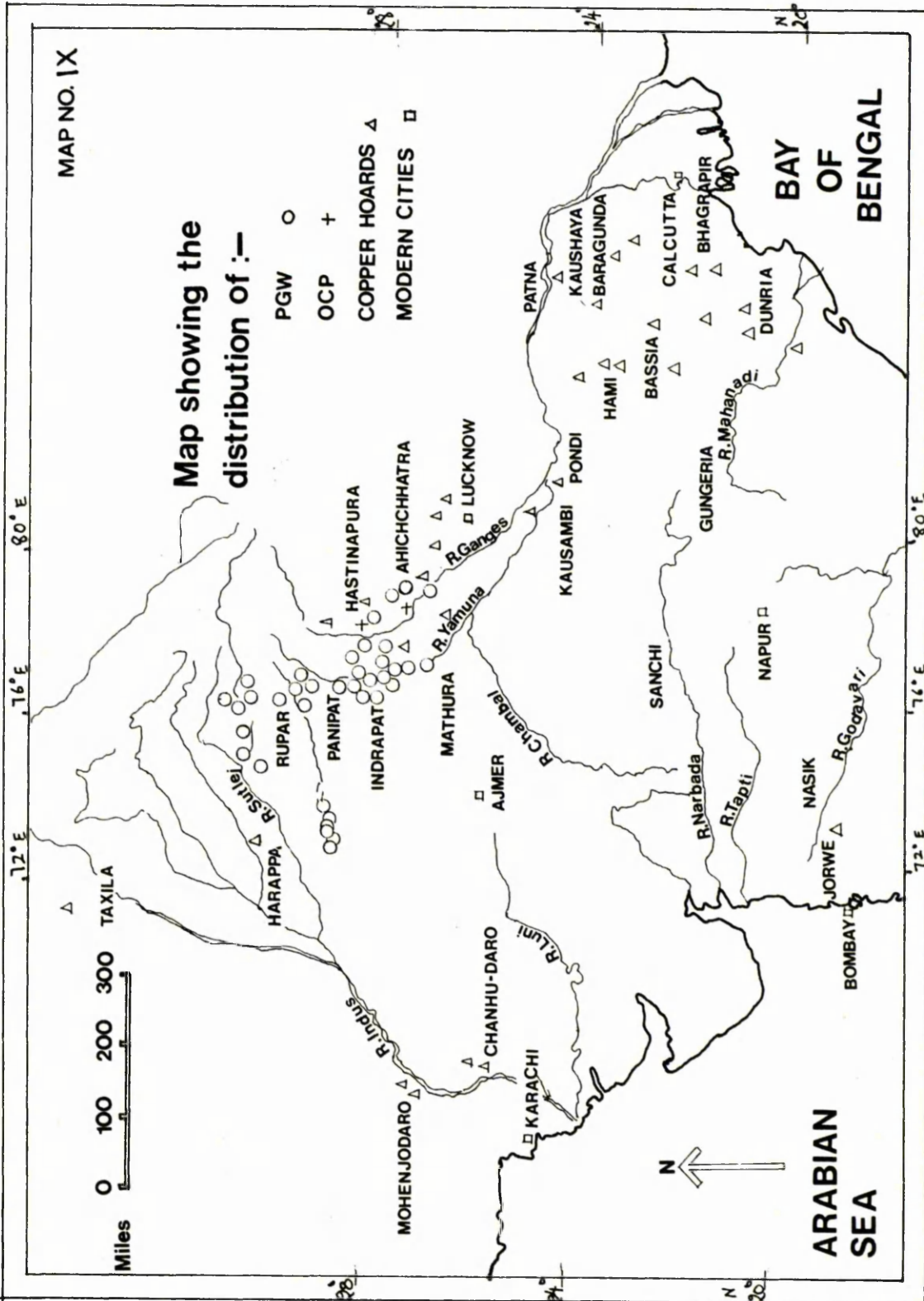
2. B. and R. Allchin, The Birth of Indian Civilization, 1968, p.101.

3. The chronology of these cultures is based on radio-carbon dating which we have not been able to study. Therefore the dates have been quoted from a secondary source. R. Thapar, Presidential Address, IHC, 1969, p. 16.

MAP NO. IX

Map showing the distribution of :-

- PGW ○
- OCP +
- COPPER HOARDS △
- MODERN CITIES □



Coloured Pottery is associated with the Copper Hoard Cultures especially after the excavations at Rupar (Punjab). Remnants of the latter are also found at innumerable sites in the Doab, Bihar and West Bengal. Next in succession are the Painted Grey Ware settlements (c. 1000-400 B.C.). These produced a more sophisticated pottery, and besides copper, the technology included an effective knowledge of iron. The crop pattern comprised a fair share of rice and the culture had the horse among its domesticated animals.⁴ Finally after the Painted Grey Ware came the Northern Black Polished Ware (c. 500-100 B.C.) which is associated with urbanization in the Gangetic Valley and may well be a product of combined Aryan and indigenous cultures.

One conclusion deduced from this survey is that there was no one single dominant culture that existed when the Indo-Aryans settled down in India. Nothing definite has yet emerged about the authorship of these post-Harappan cultures.⁵ B. Heine Geldern writing in 1936 — ('Archaeological traces of Vedic Aryans', Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, IV,)⁶ first identified the Copper Hoards as traces of Indo-Aryan migration. Stuart Piggott⁷ initially agreed with him but later wrote: 'It is tempting to associate this movement with something more than trade, and to see in it the colonization of the Ganges Basin by refugees and displaced persons from the Punjab — the disposition of hoards itself suggests a time of insecurity and economic instability'⁸ Constant findings of more and more copper

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4. B. B. Lal, 'Excavations at Hastinapur', AI, Vols. X-XII, 1954-55, p. 4 — Map for the distribution of Painted Grey Ware.
 5. There is nothing definite about the authorship of the pre-Harappan and Harappan cultures either, and a lot will be revealed on the decipherment of the Indus script.
 6. B. B. Lal, 'The Copper Hoards,' AI, Vol. VII, 1951, p. 31.
 7. S. Piggott, 'Prehistoric Copper Hoards', Antiquity, Vol. LXXII, 1944, pp. 173-183.
 8. S. Piggott, Prehistoric India, 1950, p. 238.

hoards have extended as far east as Bihar and West Bengal.⁹ This has led B. B. Lal to write: 'At present these tracts are known to be chiefly occupied by Muṇḍas, Santhals and other tribes belonging to the proto-Australoid group of Indian population. Can it then be said that the ancestors of these proto-Australoid tribes were responsible for the copper hoards?'¹⁰ There is no positive evidence to answer this question in the affirmative, even though literature is full of references to aboriginal tribes that were encountered by the Indo-Aryans. One argument, Lal himself points out, against this theory is that the cultural equipment of these tribes at present makes one doubt whether 3000 years ago their ancestors were capable of producing these hoards.

The Indo-Aryans have more emphatically been archaeologically identified with the Painted Grey Ware cultures by several scholars.¹¹ Lal bases his arguments mainly on his excavations at Hastināpur, Kurukṣetra, Mathura and other such sites that are mentioned in the Mahābhārata. Moreover, he believes that the Sarasvatī-Dṛṣadvatī Valley, where a considerable number of Painted Grey Ware objects have been found, to be the early home of the Indo-Aryans. Wheeler modifies his theory by adding that there were two waves of Aryan migration.¹² The general broad view following from this theory is that the heirs of these cultures (P. G. W.) were pre-Aryan immigrants because of the

9. B. B. Lal, 'The Copper Hoards', AI, Vol. VII, p. 21 — Map for the distribution of Copper Hoards.

10. Ibid, p. 39.

11. B. B. Lal, 'Excavations at Hastinapur', AI, Vol. X-XII, 1954-56, pp. 5-151; M. Wheeler, Indus Civilization and beyond, 1966, pp. 93-102.

12. This theory was first formulated by Hoernle and further endorsed by Grierson. A. F. R. Hoernle, A Grammar of Eastern Hindi, 1880, pp. xxx-xxxii; G. Grierson, Imperial Gazetteer of India, I, 1907, pp. 357-59.

west Asiatic influences i.e. the horse and the use of iron. Above all the proto-Indian tribes were too primitive to evolve such cultures.

There are several points against this view. Firstly, the two wave theory of Aryan immigration is based on linguistic and philological evidence and philologists do not unanimously agree with it. Secondly, the horse and iron could have been known to the Indians before the Aryans actually migrated. On the other hand, there are other reasons suggested by scholars for the non-Aryan authorship of these cultures. For instance, rice has been found at most sites which indicates that the people of the Upper Gangetic Valley were well acquainted with rice and its uses about 3000 years ago. To quote — 'Here it may be pointed out that the use of husk as binder for mud walls indicated the knowledge of a natural produce which comes to the people when they have used it for a considerable period. It may not, therefore, be mere speculation to draw the conclusion that the people of the upper Gangetic Valley had been using rice long before what the age of Hastinapur indicates.'¹³ Secondly S. R. Das (A Study of the Aryan authorship of Cemetery-H pottery and Painted Grey Ware, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 4-7)¹⁴ mentions passages from the Rg Veda where the Aryan preference for wood in rituals is stated and in the Satapatha Brāhmana associating wheel-made ware with the asuras i.e. non-Aryans. Thus, the Painted Grey Ware cultures possibly may be said to have had a non-Aryan authorship and later began to be associated with Indo-Aryans.

The above discussion may apparently have seemed irrelevant but it has definitely made one hesitant to accept the current

13. B. B. Lal, AI, Vol. XI, 1954, p. 133.

14. Quoted by D. K. Chakrabarti, 'The Aryan Hypothesis in Indian Archaeology', Indian Studies, Vol. XIX, iv, 1968, p. 350.

hypothesis of an 'Aryan invasion' put forward by some scholars.¹⁵

Even if it is conceded that the Rg Veda contains references to an Aryan invasion in the Indus region, this would not apply to other parts of Northern India. However, in the first place the Rg Veda itself gives no clear reference to an invasion and most of the information to support this theory is based on inferences. Secondly, in the Ganges Valley there is no archaeological evidence of people having fled or migrated.

The Indo-Aryan immigrants were united by one important factor: that of language which was derived from the common Indo-European language group. This by no means suggests that they all spoke the same language. Linguistic¹⁶ and literary evidence points to the fact that the Aryas lived in the vicinity of those who spoke an alien language (mr̥dhraṃvāc).¹⁷ In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa¹⁸ those who utter unintelligible words are mlecchas. The question of who the people with an alien and unintelligible language were is, however, difficult to answer.¹⁹ In the Gangetic Valley at least no other language survives today which we can attribute to a particular people of that region. There is no doubt that the Indo-Aryans were successful in spreading their language and propagating their literature in this region. The theory that their success was due to their military superiority is outdated. In fact, the Indo-Aryans themselves were

15. M. Wheeler, The Indus Civilization, 1968, pp. 129-130

16. T. Burrow, The Sanskrit Language, 1975, (rpt.), discusses in detail the Dravidian and non-Aryan influences in Vedic and Classical Sanskrit.

17. Rg Veda, V, 29, 10; I, 174, 2; V, 32, 8; etc.

18. Sat. Br., III, 2, 1, 24.

19. This has been discussed in the chapter dealing with mleccha speech - Chapter III. Cf. map no. III, p. 133 showing the spread of the Indo-Aryan language system in India.

never one united tribal group.²⁰ However, the one thing that all the various Indo-Aryan tribal groups had in common was their socio-economic structure which must have led to a superior mode of production from the one already prevalent on the subcontinent. According to Dr. Thapar, 'their association with iron technology would probably explain why they were so successful in spreading the Indo-Aryan language system through a major part of Northern India'.²¹ As will be discussed in the following pages of this chapter, the forest tribes of both the Himālayan and Vindhyan mountains, formed a major group of people to be designated as mlecchas. Can this be explained only by their primitive means of production?

Against this background, it was not surprising that the authors of the Vedic hymns and the following Brāhmanic literature, should have distinguished between themselves and people unlike themselves. The word mleccha occurs for the first time in the Satapatha Brāhmana²² but it does not naturally follow that the initial distinction dates back to this period. In the Rg Veda it is manifest in the relationship between the Aryas and the Dāsas/Dasyus.

The Rg Veda describes early Aryan tribal life in the Sapta-Sindhu region and from its accounts emerges a fairly clear picture of the situation at the time. It was essentially a non-urban society evolving from a nomadic to a settled agricultural life with a knowledge of both iron and copper technology. It also mentions a series of related tribes speaking a common language, sharing a common religion, and designating themselves by the name Arya, and who were in a

20. A point discussed briefly in the Introduction, Chp. I.

21. R. Thapar, 'Image of the Barbarian in early India', CSSH, Vol. XIII, 1971, pp. 408-409.

22. Sat. Br., III, 2, 1, 24.

permanent state of conflict with a hostile group of people known variously as Dāsa or Dasyu.

One point must be clarified before we discuss the relationship of the dāsa and the dasyu with the āryas. Were the terms dāsa and dasyu alluding to two distinct groups of people or just two words indicating a certain cultural pattern? It would be futile to engage in a lengthy controversy on this subject as ultimately it will still be difficult to establish which people were meant by these terms. Even if one conceded that they were two distinct people, it does not seem that the authors of the Rg Veda differentiated between them. Thus the best solution seems to be to specify in which context each term occurs instead of assuming that they are identical terms.

The implication of dāsa and dasyu being demons or non-human beings may exist in the texts but not all denotations are of this nature. Moreover, there are a fair number of indications to prove that they were a real people. A mention of the physical appearance of the dasyus (anās -- noseless or more probably flat-nosed), occurs in the fifth book.²³ The same verse refers to them as hostile speakers (mr̥dhraṇvāc). Mr̥dhraṇvāc in another context has been rendered as unintelligible speech²⁴ and in another as injurious speech.²⁵ The rendering of anās as 'noseless' according to Keith and Macdonell 'is quite possible, and would accord well with the flat-nosed aborigines of the Dravidian type, whose language still persists among the Brahuis, who are found in the north west.'²⁶ There are scholars who disagree with this view and there is ground to criticize

23. Rg V., V, 29, 10.

24. Rg V., I, 174, 2 -- Indra humbled such tribes.

25. Rg V., V, 32, 8 -- Vr̥tra, the evil-speaking ogre; X, 23, 5 -- for wicked people.

26. Keith and Macdonell, Vedic Index, Vol. I, p. 347.

it as one cannot label any Dravidian types as being flat-nosed.

The second point about the 'hostile enemies' of the Āryas is that they were not a nomadic people but had well established roots in certain regions — one reason why they could effectively fight back the Aryans. Indra cast down the iron forts of the dasyus²⁷ and he wandered about shattering the cities of the dāsas.²⁸ The dāsa-viśah are quite often mentioned, the term could either be translated as 'dāsa tribes' or 'dāsa clans'.²⁹ The dasyu wealth was a great attraction for the Āryas. They begged Indra to help them destroy the wealthy dasyus and elsewhere, in a completely different context, Indra's help is implored to distribute the treasure gathered after demolishing the dāsas.³¹ The wealth of the dasyus and dāsas was considerable but no indication is given of what this wealth might have been. The Rg Veda simply states that the wealth gained was from the mountains and plains.³² Whatever this wealth may have been it was strongly desired by the Aryas.

While the main reason for overpowering these people was the acquisition of material wealth, the impression given by the hymn writers was that they had to be subdued because they were riteless, indifferent to gods, had no proper laws and so on.³³ The dasyus were infidels and lawless from the Aryan point of view, which does necessarily mean that they were demons and uncivilized.

27. Rg Veda, II, 20, 8, — the dāsa forts are mentioned; III, 12, 6; IV, 32, 10.

28. Rg Veda, I, 103, 3.

29. Rg Veda, I, 130, 3; IV, 28, 4; VI, 25, 2. — Griffiths translates viśah as race, which is of course incorrect.

30. Rg Veda, I, 33, 4.

31. Rg Veda, VIII, 40, 6.

32. Rg Veda, X, 69, 6.

33. Rg Veda, X, 22, 8, — a-karman; keeping alien laws; VIII, 70, 11, — a-devaya; indifferent to the gods and also to sacrifice; I, 51, 8, have no laws.

What emerges from this survey is, that the dāsas and dasyus had a distinct way of life, were different from the āryas in colour,³⁴ certainly in language and above all in religion and customs. The āryas themselves contrast the ārya-varṇa with the dāsa-varṇa.³⁵ The early struggle between the two peoples led to the Aryans gaining the upper hand. That all the dāsas and dasyus became slaves or were vanquished is an archaic theory. There are stray references to dāsas being employed by the Aryans,³⁶ but on the whole large groups of people continued to remain outside the ārya system.

The term dasyu continued to be used by later writers of brāhmanic thought not in exactly the same context. In the period of the later Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇa texts, even though the Aryans continued to extend their territory, principally in the east, into the Ganges valley, references to conflicts with the dāsa and dasyu are rare. On the whole, in the Rg Veda, it remained a word to convey the meaning of an outsider and definitely of someone who is held in low esteem. In the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa for the first time it is specified that the dasyus are such people as the Andhras, Śabarās, Puṇḍras, Pulindas, Mutibās and others. This statement is reaffirmed in the Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra.³⁷ These people are called the progeny of the sons of Viśvāmitra who had disobeyed their father. Further, it is said that they lived in large numbers beyond the borders ('the ends of the earth').

34. Rg Veda, 1, 130, 8, — kṛṣṇa-tvac; their black skin is mentioned.

35. Rg Veda, III, 34, 9, — ārya-varṇa; I, 104, 2, — dāsa-varṇa.

36. Rg Veda, X, 62, 10, — Yadu and Turva have two dasas in their service.

37. Ait. Br., VII, 18; Śāṅkh. S. S., XV, 26.

Here it is possible to speculate that sons of the people mentioned above were those encountered by Vedic immigrants who were then pushed back into areas still unexplored by the Vedic settlers. The very fact that they still presented a potential threat to the Aryan value system, made traditional writers formalize the concept of mleccha during this period.³⁸ Later, some of the Indo-Aryans themselves, ostensibly influenced by mleccha ideas and practices were classified as dasyus.

According to Manu's scheme all those tribes not belonging to the four varṇas are dasyus whether they speak the language of the mlecchas or that of the āryas.³⁹ The Dharmasūtras and the earlier Smṛtis do not contain this passage. The commentators of Manu do not all agree on the precise definition of a dasyu. Medhātithi and Kullūka⁴⁰ define the Dasyu as one of the following tribes — Paṇḍrakas, Koḍas, Drāviḍas, Kāmbojas, Yavanas, Śakas, Pāradas, Cīnas, Kirātas and Daradas. These are precisely the tribes and people who are elsewhere in the Purānas and the Mahābhārata⁴¹ listed with the Mlecchas. Nārāyaṇa and Nandana,⁴² on the other hand, classify the dasyu among the fifteen pratiloma castes. Their status in the caste hierarchy is at the lower end. Manu, in another context, refers to the Candālas as dasyus.⁴³

38. The word mleccha occurs in the Sat. Br. for the first time. Sat. Br., III, 2, 1, 24.

39. Manu, X, 45.

40. Medhātithi and Kullūka on Manu, X, 32, — the verse is about a dasyu begetting on a ayogava woman a sairandhra. This verse also occurs in Vasiṣṭha, III, 45; Viṣṇu, XXIII, 50; Yājñavalkya, I, 192.

41. Matsya P., I, 76; CXLIV, 50-58. Mbh. (refers throughout to the Critical Edition), I, 165, 30-38; Mbh., II, 29, 7-15; Mbh., III, 48, 16-22; Mbh., VII, 68, 36-44.

42. Nārāyaṇa and Nandana on Manu, X, 32.

43. Manu, V, 131. (S.B.E. Vol. XXV, p. 192).

All the Dharmasūtras and Smṛtis have long lists of the mixed castes which are called anuloma and pratiloma castes. These chapters on varṇasamkara are highly theoretical. It seems very unlikely that large portions of population should have been the progeny of illegitimate unions as is portrayed by these texts. However, they very clearly reflect what was, in practice, happening on the Indian sub-continent i.e. the intermixture of various peoples. The formulation of such strict rules on maintaining endogamous caste groups by the authors of the Dharmaśāstras was only because they saw the need to strengthen their own position and thereby uphold the rights of the 'twice-born'. For this they had, at least apparently, to reject all outsiders.

The term dasyu can thus in these texts be equated with the term mleccha in the sense that both were applied to outsiders — people who were noticeable for not observing the rites and rituals of the brāhmanical society. Both were also general terms expressing backwardness and inferior status and not names of a particular people. The similarity of the meanings of these two words is, however, limited; it does not imply that the word mleccha replaced dasyu. After the beginning of the Christian era the term dasyu is rarely used in a prominent way. The non-Aryan tribes are referred to in literature by their individual names like Niṣāda, Pulinda, Sabara etc. and not by the terms mleccha, dāsa or dasyu. The term mleccha, however, remained in common usage.

Having discussed the word mleccha and its relationship with the dasyu, it is now imperative to establish its connexion with other allied terms, particularly names of tribes which are often called mleccha. Names of tribes⁴⁴ have been listed with much precision and then qualified by the phrase 'are called mleccha'. The fact, however,

44. Names of tribes along with people who inhabited the fringes of Aryan culture and also people of mixed castes.

is that all tribes were not at all times included in the category of mlecchas. In the following pages an analysis of some of the important individual tribes and people lumped together as mleccha will be made. Here two broad groups can be distinguished. There is a significant category of tribes - Kirāta, Śabara, Pulinda, Niṣāda - who were said to be inhabitants of either the Vindhya or the Himālayan regions. In the second category we discuss briefly the status of the Andhras and the Puṇḍras whose designation as mlecchas is highly questionable.

The Kirātas are a typical example of the first group -- a tribal people living in forests and mountains and designated as mleccha. Kirātas in early mythological stories are described as ugly and obnoxious. Monier-Williams defines them as 'a degraded mountain tribe (inhabiting woods and mountains and living by hunting, having become śūdras by their neglect of all prescribed rites, also regarded as mlecchas;)'.⁴⁵ The St. Petersburg Dictionary adds that they are a 'despised mountain people'.⁴⁶

The above statements are substantiated by early literary references. The Atharva Veda⁴⁷ refers to a Kirāta girl (kairātikā) who 'digs a remedy, with golden shovels, upon the ridges of the mountains'.⁴⁸ The Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā and the Taittirīya Brāhmana,⁴⁹ describing a Puruṣamedha sacrifice, dedicate a Kirāta to the caves

45. Monier-Williams, The Sanskrit English Dictionary, 1889, p. 283 - The meaning is also extended to mean 'pygmy', 'horseman', 'herb', etc.

46. Böthlingk and Roth, Sanskrit Dictionary, 1855, p. 290.

47. Atharva Veda, X, 4, 14.

48. W. D. Whitney, Atharva Veda Saṁhitā, 1905, X, 4, 14, 'khanati bheṣjam'.

49. Vāj. Sam., XXX, 16; Tait. Br., III, 4, 12, 1.

(guhābhyah kirātam ... This can be translated as either a Kirāta to the caves or a Kirāta for the caves). Amidst countless references of this kind there is an interesting one where Kirāta and Akuli appear as two priests opposed to the Gaupāyanas.⁵⁰ This passage does not imply that the Kirātas were assimilated into Hindu society but merely used the word Kirāta as a designation for a hostile priest.⁵¹

Looking at it from a different angle it would not be far-fetched to speculate that these 'hostile priests' were representatives of a power which held some significant economic or political control in the region where the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa was compiled and were therefore able to oppose an important brāhmanical ceremony. One would imagine that such opposition to the 'official system' was not rare, but that the traditional writers consciously or unconsciously failed to note it in their literature. How they reacted to this opposition is not discussed at all, though a deliberate attempt is made to avoid the Kirātas — a people who indulge in bad habits and practise peculiar customs.

However, they must have at some stage been connected with the brahmanical hierarchy as Manu regards them as degraded ksatriyas.⁵² According to Suniti Kumar Chatterjee this has deeper implications namely, '...that they were, to some extent at least, advanced in civilization or military organisation and as such could not be dismissed as utter barbarians.'⁵³ It is true that the Kirātas

50. Pañc. Br., XIII, 12, 5.

51. Keith & Macdonell, Vedic Index, Vol. I.

52. Manu, X, 44.

53. S. K. Chatterjee, 'Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti', JRAS, XVI, 1950, p. 162.

were politically and militarily strong (discussed below) but they were classed as degraded kṣatriyas along with the Yavanas, Śakas, etc. because all of them were non-Hindus.

Before elaborating on the above point, it is essential to settle another issue; that of their original home. The theory that the true Kirātas are to be identified with the Kirāntis living in present-day Nepal is accepted by several scholars. But, there is no such unanimity on this point in the original sources.

That they were originally connected with the forests of eastern India is substantiated by one set of sources. It must be mentioned here that no particular text shows consistency on this point. Bhīmasena in his eastern wanderings conquered seven kings of the Kirātas living around 'Indra mountain'.⁵⁴ The unassailable troops of Bhāgadatta, king of Prāgjyotiṣa in present Assam, was crowded with Cīnas and Kirātas — all looking like figures of gold. At several points in the Mahābhārata the Kirātas are listed with the Cīnas and therefore it may not be unlikely to suggest that this was because of their common Mongolian origin. The eastern home of the Kirātas is further endorsed by statements of the Purānas. 'On the east of Bhārata dwell the Kirātas and on the west the Yavanas', is repeated in most of them.⁵⁵ But nearly every Purāna has a dual identification of the Kirāta country.⁵⁶ The Bṛhatsaṃhitā gives a very vague picture of their location. It ascribes them to the

54. Mbh. II, 27, 13. It is not possible to identify the location of Indra mountain. However, as Bhīmasena is said to have conquered it immediately after Videha, possibly it was in the eastern Vindhya.

55. Mārk. P., LVII, 8; Matsya P., CXIV, 11, Garuḍa P., Chp. 55, p. 139.

56. Mārk. P., LVII, 40, places it as northern country; LVIII, 32; 45; 50; has it as the various parts of the tortoise; Matsya P., CXIV, 56, places it in Madhyadeśa; CXXI, 45, describes Kirāta and Pulinda country watered by the river Ganges which striking against the Vindhya falls into the Hlādinī Ganges.

south-west and north-east divisions of Bhāratavarṣa.⁵⁷ The Mahābhārata when it describes Nakula's southern conquests include that of certain mleccha tribes residing on the sea coast and the Kirātas are one of them.⁵⁸ More positive evidence to their living in the Vindhyan region is given by the Śravana-Belgoḷa inscription of Narasimha II which, though late (10th century A.D.), states that the king broke the power of the Kirātas or mountain tribes in the neighbourhood of the Vindhya mountains.⁵⁹ Thurston gives the names of certain tribes — Bedars, Ekaris among others — who call themselves Kirātas.⁶⁰ A Western Gāṅga king Satyavākya Koṅguavarman is also denoted as the destroyer of the groups of Kirātas living in the Vindhyas.⁶¹

The apparently contradictory statements mentioned above may, in fact, not be contradictory. It is quite unlikely that one single tribe of Kirātas should have migrated over such a large area but, it is possible that the term Kirāta was used in a wider context by the ancient Indian writers.

The name Kirāta in the course of time came to be used as a common noun i.e. to mean a savage, hunter, mountain habitant, etc. In other words, Kirāta was used specifically for people characterized by such livelihoods as hunting and fishing. Kirātas as hunters are referred to as late as the 17th century where eighteen other professional designations are listed.⁶² But the most famous usage

57. Brhatsaṃhitā, XIV, 18.

58. Mbh., II, 29, 7-8.

59. EI, Vol. V, p. 170, 179.

60. E. Thurston, Castes and tribes of Southern India, III, p. 294.

61. B. L. Rice, EC, Vol. II, p. 119.

62. EI, Vol. XX, p. 90, n. 2.

of Kirāta as a primitive hunter and mountaineer is in the Kirātārjunīya story.⁶³ Rönnow and Penzer⁶⁴ go to the extent of suggesting that Śabara, Pulinda, Bhilla, Kirāta were designations of a similar kind applied to primitive tribes. So widely was the term used in this sense that even foreign traveller Alberuni⁶⁵ mentions Kirāta and Pulinda under the definition of 'hunters in the plains, robbers'.

Their physical appearance as portrayed in the Epics also gives the impression that they were forest tribes. The Rāmāyana⁶⁶ describes them as wearing thick top-knots and subsisting on raw flesh. The Mahābhārata,⁶⁷ on the other hand, mentions them attired in skins, eating fruits and roots and living on the northern slopes of the Himālayas. The latter also emphasizes their warlike spirit.

The Kirātas were undoubtedly also the name of a politically important people. Viśākhadatta in his play the Mudrārāksasa brings on the scene the Yavanas and the Kirātas in a manner which clearly indicates that the latter were important enough to play a conspiratorial role. Virādhagupta describes how the city of Kusumapura was blockaded on all sides by the forces of Candragupta led by the Śakas, Yavanas, Kirātas, Kāmbojas, Pārasīkas, Vālhikas and others.⁶⁸

63. Mbh., III, 38-41. At several places in the Mahābhārata P. C. Roy translates Kirāta to mean hunter.

64. K. Rönnow, 'Kirāta — A study on some Ancient Indian Tribes', Le Monde Oriental, XXX, 1936, pp. 90-170. N. M. Penzer, The Ocean Story, Vol. II, pp. 164 ff.

65. Alberuni, Vol. I, p. 262 (Tr. Sachau).

66. Rām., IV, XL, 30.

67. Mbh., II, 48, 7-8.

68. Mudrārāksasa, II, 13.

They are also said to have fought in the Mahābhārata War. At the Rājasūya performed by Yuddhiṣṭhira, their tribute included loads of sandalwood, aloe, heaps of valuable skins and a variety of animals and birds.⁶⁹ The Kirāta kingdom must definitely have been one of the eighteen āṭavika-rājyas. These kingdoms, which are referred to as early as Kauṭilya and repeated in several inscriptions (probably the same as the vana-rāṣṭras of the Brhatsamhitā),⁷⁰ were powerful and important in their own right. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription⁷¹ of Samudragupta also mentions the āṭavika-rājās among his opponents who were temporarily subdued by him. There were also Kirātas in the Himalāyan region, as follows from the fact that their name is mentioned in the Nepal Vaṃśavalis which were of course compiled very late.⁷² This, however, shows that politically the Kirātas had established themselves in that region.

In the Nepal Vaṃśāvalī after a line of legendary kings, the Kirātas are said to have ruled Nepal. This probably gives the impression as though the name Kirāta denoted, in this case only, a single tribe. One such tribe may have existed and today survives in the form of the Kirānti in eastern India. But, when ancient writers referred to the Kirāta generally they must definitely have understood several other tribes. The question is whether Kirāta was a general term applied to tribes in eastern India only or

69. Mbh., II, 47, 12-20.

70. Brhatsamhitā, XLV, 29-30.

71. The Allahabad Stone Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta, C.I.I., Vol. III, No. 1, line 21.

72. B. C. Law, Ancient Indian Tribes, II, 1934, p. 54.

denoted any forest tribes?

It is plausible to conclude that when Kirāta was used in a general context, it applied to any forest tribe. However, when it was applied to a specific tribe, this tribe must have been one of the many tribes, which even today inhabit the north eastern hills of India. The first mentioned use of the term became more frequent both in literature and inscriptions. This suggests that Kirāta gradually acquired a wider connotation namely, as a common noun.

Mleccha and Kirāta are usually listed together as names along with various others. Though they are often not called mlecchas, the attitudes of the traditional writers towards them is not very different. In the Amarakoṣa (5th century A.D.), Kirāta is used synonymously with Śabara, Pulinda and Bheda and called a mleccha jāti.⁷³ These Kirāta were clearly primitive hunters, irrespective of geographical or linguistic location. On the other hand, the Kirātas who are called degraded ksatriyas along with the Yavanas in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra, or the warlike people of the Mahābhārata and the Mudrārākṣasa, may not necessarily have been called mleccha as they formed a distinct category as non-Hindus.

There are two tribes that can definitely be called mleccha tribes. They are the Śabaras and Pulindas. It will be appropriate to discuss them together as they are so often mentioned in the same context. Less frequently the Kirāta and Bhilla are also included with them in a similar category. But, Śabara and Pulinda in particular became generic names for barbarous tribes.

Among the brāhmanical sources the Amarakoṣa,⁷⁴ a lexicon of the fifth century A. D., gives the definition of mleccha jātis

73. Amarakoṣa, II, 10, 20.

74. Ibid.

to be the Beda, Kirāta, Śabara and Pulinda tribes, thus suggesting that the use of these words was synonymous. A similar reference occurs in the Jaina texts⁷⁵ where milakkha is defined as Varavara, Saravara and Pulindra tribes. In the Buddhist texts and particularly in the Mahāvamsa⁷⁶ Pulindas are mentioned as children of the demoness who married prince Vijaya and the region where they lived is now called Śabaragamva. These references will be discussed in detail later, but have initially helped to establish the fact that the names Śabara and Pulinda for some particular reason were inseparable according to ancient religious writers.

In the Aitareya Brāhmana⁷⁷ Śabara and Pulinda along with the Mutibas, Andhras and Puṇḍras, were people who live in large numbers beyond the borders. This is the first reference to them in brāhmanical literature. The Greek writers do not fail to mention them. Megasthenes⁷⁸ mentions several tribes beyond the Indus and among them the Sibrae whom McCrindle identified with the Sauvīras of the Mahābhārata as the latter are always mentioned near the Indus.⁷⁹ Ptolemy gives both the Śabarās and the Pulindas in the Greek forms Sabarai⁸⁰ and Poulindai Agriophagoi⁸¹ respectively.

Cunningham⁸² regarded the Sabarai of Ptolemy and the Sauri

75. Acārāṅga Sūtra, II, 3, 8, — SBE, Vol. 22, ft. nt. 2.

76. Mahāvamsa, VII, 68.

77. Ait. Br., VII, 18; Sāikh. S. S., XV, 26.

78. J. W. McCrindle, Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian, 1926, p. 153.

79. Ibid., p. 153, note 11.

80. J. W. McCrindle, Ancient India as described by Ptolemy, 1885, 80, p. 172.

81. Ptolemy, 64, p. 156.

82. Ptolemy, p. 173.

of Pliny as the same and he identified both as the aboriginal Savaras or Suars, a wild race living in the jungle, whose country spreads as far south as the Pennār river. The Poulindai are equated by McCrindle⁸³ with the Pulinda of Hindu works. The word Agriophagoi attached to Poulindai, he explains, is an epithet that indicates that the Pulinda were a tribe that subsisted on raw flesh, roots and wild fruits.

The mention of the Phyllitai tribe by Ptolemy⁸⁴ is linked by Lassen⁸⁵ with the Bhills — Phyllitai being a transliteration of Bhills with an appended Greek termination. Yule⁸⁶ thinks it not impossible that the Phyllitai represent the Pulinda as the latter in Hindu works indicate a variety of aboriginal races.

All the three names of tribes mentioned above in the Greek sources can be located, generally, south of the Ganges basin, east of the river Indus and in the western part of the Deccan plateau. The food which they were supposed to eat clearly suggests that they were tribes of the forests with primitive means of subsistence. So far, from Greek sources, the Sabaras and Pulindas seem to have been two distinct tribes but with similar attributes.

The Arthaśāstra,⁸⁷ also mentions the Sabaras and Pulindas together as peoples who guard the regions between the frontiers and the interior of the kingdom. The Aśokan Edicts⁸⁸ have the name Pulinda which occurs in different forms in the various versions

83. Ptolemy, p. 157.

84. Ptolemy, 66, p. 159.

85. Ptolemy, p. 160.

86. Ibid.

87. Arthaśāstra, II, 1, 6.

88. C.I.I., I, Inscriptions of Aśoka, R. E. XIII.

of the Rock Edict XIII. It occurs as Palida in the Shābhāzgarhī version,⁸⁹ Pālade in the Kalsi version and finally Pārimāda in the Gimar version.⁹⁰ Bühler⁹¹ reads all these as Pulinda because the Pulindas had been mentioned once before in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (VII, 18) with the Andhras and both these people inhabited the same region i.e. the Vindhya.

The Pulindas are mentioned by Aśoka in connection with the success his policy of Dhammavijaya had achieved amongst his borderers. In Viśākhadatta's play, the Mudrārākṣasa⁹² the Śabarās are mentioned as allies of Malayaketu against Candragupta. Thus, both the Pulindas and the Śabarās were elements to be reckoned with, whether they had to be kept passive through appeasement or used as fighting forces. In the Mahābhārata the army of Vasiṣṭha, created by Nandinī, his wishing cow, consisted of Śabarās and Pulindas among others.⁹³

The most persistent question that has arisen about almost all the tribes discussed so far, has been with regard to their habitation. As some of the literary references will show, the Śabarās and Pulindas are both associated with the central part of India i.e. the Vindhyan region.

89. D. C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., No. 81, R.E. XIII.

90. C.I.I., I, pp. 43-47.

91. G. Bühler, 'Beiträge zur Erklärung der Aśoka - Inschriften', ZDMG, Vol. LX, 1886, p. 138, note 10.

92. Mudrārākṣasa, V, 11, Poona, 1923 — In two other editions of the play (Poona, 1940) and (Varanasi, 1972) the Śabarās replaced by the Magadhas in the list of people.

93. Mbh., I, 165, 30-38.

In the Brhatsamhitā the Śabarās are placed in the aparānta region as those people who are still strong⁹⁴ and the Pulindas as the unsurmountable tribe of the border region (pratyanta).⁹⁵ Both tribes are mentioned together as those destroyed by the Kurus and the Pañcālas.⁹⁶ However, the same author shows considerable inconsistency. At places he couples the Śabarās with the Uḍras, Vaṅgas, Suhmas, Kaliṅgas Bāhlikas, Śakas, Yavanas, Māgadhas, people of Prāgjyotiṣa, Cīnas and Kāmbojas⁹⁷ and in another, speaks of them with the Abhīras, Pahlavas, Mallas, Matsyas and Śakas. Similarly the Pulindas are mentioned with the Niṣādas, Mekalas, Aśmakas, Tripuradeśa, Śāliyutadeśa etc.⁹⁹ and also with the Kirātas, Vitakās, Śailayas, Drāviḍas etc.¹⁰⁰ There is no clarity, as in the Amarakoṣa¹⁰¹ about who the Pulindas and Śabarās were. Since they are linked up with so many different tribes is it possible that the use of the words Pulinda and Śabara was more general in the Brhatsamhitā, rather than as two names for specific tribes?

In their lists of the countries and people of Bhāratavarṣa the Purānas mention the Śabarās and Pulindas. The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna¹⁰² has the Śavarās and the Pulindas as people who dwell in the Dakṣiṇāpātha. The Matsya Purāna¹⁰³ also includes them amongst the southern countries. However, in an earlier passage of the same Purāna, Pulinda is called a janapada of the north.¹⁰⁴ The same is true of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna

94. Brhatsamhitā, IX, 15.

95. Brhat., IX, 17.

96. Brhat., IX, 29.

97. Brhat., XVI, 1.

98. Brhat., V, 38.

99. Brhat., V, 39.

100. Brhat., XVI, 2.

101. Amarakoṣa, II, 10, 20.

102. Mārkaṇḍeya P., LVII, 47.

103. Matsya P., CXIV, 48-49.

104. Matsya P., CXIV, 41.

where Pulindas, in another verse are listed as people of the west.¹⁰⁵ According to Pargiter¹⁰⁶ there appears to have been a northern branch of the Pulindas. Except for these two Purānas none of the others allude to this northern branch of the Pulindas. The Purānic lists of the Vāmana¹⁰⁷ and the Vāyu confirm the statements that the Śabara and the Pulinda are countries of Dakṣiṇāpatha.¹⁰⁸

The Śabara and the Pulinda are not mentioned as often as some of the other tribal people in the Mahābhārata. Only once they are mentioned together.¹⁰⁹ The Pulindas at least occupied the middle portion of the Deccan¹¹⁰ and extended eastwards where they had a great city.¹¹¹

There is little doubt, therefore, that the Śabarās and Pulindas were inhabitants of the forests of the central Vindhya region. About the habitation of the Kirātas and the Niṣādas, one could hardly have reached such a positive conclusion. This brings us to the next important question and that is, were the two terms Śabara and Pulinda applied to specific tribes as tribal names or were they mere designations for forest dwellers? To answer this, one will have to analyse more closely those references to them which imply the latter possibility.

The Mahāvamsa,¹¹² the great chronicle of Ceylon, mentions the Pulinda as the progeny of king Vijaya from his yakkhinī wife and direct descendants of his son and daughter from that wife. Geiger¹¹³

105. Mārk. P., LVII, 50.

106. F. E. Pargiter, The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna, p. 335.

107. Vāmana P., XIII, 48-50.

108. Vāyu P., XLV, 126.

109. Mbh., XII, 14, 8.

110. Mbh., II, 26, 10.

111. Mbh., VI, 10, 60; App. II, 13, 11pr.

112. Mahāvamsa, VII, 68.

113. Geiger, The Mahāvamsa, 1960, p. 60, note 5. Land inland between Colombo, Kalutara, Galle and the mountains is today called Sabaragamuva which Geiger states is from Sanskrit Śabara, a synonym of Pulinda.

gives the explanation of Pulinda as — 'a designation of barbarous tribes, is here evidently of the Waeddas.' What is important here is that the Pulindas are dwellers of the mountains and forests of central Ceylon. Also the yakkhas and the yakkhinīs (yaksas and yaksinīs) are super natural beings living in forested regions and so to establish a more effective connexion of the Waeddas with their habitation they are made descendants of a yakkhinī. Without seeking for a deeper explanation, it is clear that the Pulindas of the Mahāvamsa were forest-dwellers and any tribal connexion between the tribes of the Vindhya and the Waeddas of central Ceylon would indeed be far-fetched.

In the fifth century A.D. the author of the Amarakoṣa¹¹⁴ defined the word mleccha as the Bheda, Kirāta, Śabara and Pulinda tribes. The four names are understood as mlecchajātis in this context and therefore, to a certain degree were synonymous. The reason for all of them being described as such was probably that they were inhabitants of the forests using similar means of production. In his lexicon, Amarasiṃha makes the distinction between the Caṇḍāla and the mlecchajātis. The Caṇḍāla, Plava, Mātaṅga, Divākīrti, Janaṅgama, Niṣāda, Śvapāka, Antevāsī, Pukkasa are given as the various Caṇḍālas¹¹⁵ whereas only four names are given as the mlecchajātis. Both these groups of people are listed in the Sūdravarga of chapter X. A clear distinction was thus maintained between wild tribes and other low castes. This does not suggest the Śabara and Pulinda were two ethnic tribes; on the contrary all those called by these two names were mlecchas. Also there must have definitely existed more tribal names than are mentioned in the Amarakoṣa and it seems that the author categorized most of these under the four names he distinctly mentioned — Bheda, Kirāta,

114. Amarakoṣa, II, 10, 20.

115. Ibid., II, 10, 19.

Sabara, Pulinda.

This brings us to the issue as to whether Sabara and Pulinda could have specific meanings rather than being merely names. The problem is similar to the elucidation of the meaning of the word mleccha which could also have been a tribal name initially but as we have seen, acquired a more general meaning; that of a barbarian, a foreigner, etc.

According to Monier-Williams the word Sabara¹¹⁶ means wicked, malicious, injury and offence. The Pali Text Society dictionary besides giving its meaning as an aboriginal tribe also adds that it means savage.¹¹⁷ A Prakrit dictionary¹¹⁸ calls them barbarians of an Anāriya country.

Pulinda in Monier-Williams' dictionary¹¹⁹ is given as 1) the name of a barbarous tribe and 2) as a barbarian, a mountaineer. Like Sabara, it also signifies an Anāriya people and country in the Prakrit Proper Names dictionary.¹²⁰ Both the words were thus synonyms for barbarian.

Though not very often, Sabara and Pulinda are used to denote occupations. Shamasastri¹²¹ in his translation of the Arthaśāstra understands Sabara as archers and Pulinda as hunters. Both the words are used together with Vāgurikas or trap-keepers, Caṇḍālas and aranyacara or wild tribes; all of whom are to guard the interior of the kingdom between the actual domain of the king and the frontier

116. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit English Dictionary, 1889, p. 1065.

117. Rhys Davids, Pali Text Society Dictionary, 1925, p. 159.

118. Mehta & Chandra, Prakrit Proper Names, Pt. II, p. 754.

119. M-Williams, Op. Cit., p. 638.

120. Mehta & Chandra, Op. Cit., Pt. I, p. 474.

121. A. Ś., II, 1, 46, Mysore, 1923, p. 49.

areas. The context in which they were used seems to suggest that in this case they were used as common nouns to denote occupation, as wild tribes (aranyacara) are also mentioned collectively. Kangle¹²² in his edition simply transliterates these names.

In the Kathāsaritsāgara Pulinda and Śabara are very commonly interchanged as words which sometimes denote a particular people but common nouns at other times. Another striking point in the same text is that the use of the term Bhilla is often substituted for both Pulinda and Śabara as the case may be. The Kathāsaritsāgara consistently regards the Vindhyan hills as the home of the Śabarās, Pulindas and Bhillas.¹²³ The name of a Śavara (=Śabara) chief, at one point in the story, is Pulindaka.¹²⁴ Pulindaka in the earlier part of the story is the king of the Pulindas.¹²⁵ Yet again Pulindaka is the friendly king of the Bhillas,¹²⁶ living in the land of Chedi. The three terms are used together when a hunt is being described¹²⁷ but no other elaboration is given. Also it is very common, in the same text, for the king of the Śavaras to be called a Bhilla or that of the Pulindas to be called a Śavara.¹²⁸

On the whole the text gives the impression that the forests and hills of the Vindhyas were under the powerful control of these tribes and to people who came from the plains, they all looked alike and followed the same religious customs. Perhaps for this reason they were indiscriminately called by any of ^{the} three names. Amongst themselves

122. A. Ś., II, 1, 6.

123. Kathāsaritsāgara, I, VII, 25-26; II, XII, 44-45; II, X, 133-144.

124. Ibid., IV, XXII, 64-65.

125. Ibid., II, XII, 44-45.

126. Ibid., III, XX, 23.

127. Ibid., X, LIX, 43; 44; 50.

128. Ibid., XII, LXXI, 46; XII, CI, 283; 284; 312; 313.

the tribes helped each other¹²⁹ and were not always cruel as is so often portrayed¹³⁰

The Jaina texts do not differ from the Brāhmanical and Buddhist tradition in their attitudes towards the Śabarās and Pulindas. The monks and nuns are forbidden to go through countries of the milakkhas when on pilgrimage.¹³¹ The commentary adds that milakkha means Varvara, Sarvara, Pulindra, etc.¹³² The countries of the milakkhus in this case must also allude to the Vindhyan region.

Thus, there can be no doubt that the Śabarās and Pulindas were designated as mlecchas.

The designation of aboriginal tribes as mleccha was common and seriously intended. But for one such group, the Niṣādas, the application of this designation is complicated. Several references to them, straight through from early Vedic literature, have confused rather than simplified the problem for those writing on them.

Niṣāda, 'seems to denote not so much a particular tribe but to be the general term for a non-Aryan tribe who were not under Aryan control as the Śūdras were....'¹³³ Similarly — 'References to the four varṇas in Vedic literature includes mention of the Niṣāda who appear to have been a non-Aryan tribe who succeeded in remaining outside Aryan control.'¹³⁴ On the other hand, there are opinions to the contrary. For instance — '...the Niṣādas are referred to a number of times and emerge with a full-fledged tribal personality within the

129. Kathāsaritsāgara, XII, CI, 46.

130. Ibid., IV, XXII, 64-65; VI, XXX, 38; I, VII, 25-26.

131. Acārāṅga Sūtra, II, 3, 8.

132. Commentary on the Acārāṅgasūtram, II, 3, 8. (Sanskrit chāya by Atmarāmaji, Ludhiana, 1963-64)

133. Macdonell & Keith, Vedic Index, I, p. 453.

134. R. Thapar, 'The image of the Barbarian in early India', CSSH, Vol. XIII, 1971, p. 422.

Aryan social framework.¹³⁵ The case of the Niṣādas is therefore interesting and needs to be further elucidated.

The first point, whether the Niṣādas were one single ethnic tribe, or a general term used for all aborigines, is similar to the case of the Kirātas, the Śabaras and the Pulindas discussed above. This raises the question as to whether Niṣāda, Śabara, Pulinda, Kirāta can be understood as synonyms and, if not, what kind of difference there was in their status relative to each other as 'outsiders to the varṇa system'? Niṣāda in later references also began to be used as a common noun to denote an occupational caste. Hence, a hunter or a fisherman could be called a Niṣāda even though he did not belong to the tribe by a similar name in both the Dharmaśāstra and non-Dharmaśāstra texts. (Discussed below). Therefore, the case of the Niṣāda is peculiar. They seem to have been both 'outside' and 'inside' the Aryan social system. We start with the premise that being given a low ritual status¹³⁶ does not necessarily mean that they were all incorporated into the hierarchy of the varṇa-jāti system.

The Nirukta,¹³⁷ while explaining the words pañcajana mama hotram juṣadhvam in the Rg Veda X, 53, 4, remarks that according to the Aupamanyava the 'five tribes' are the Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya, Sūdra (as the four varṇas) and the Niṣāda. The word niṣāda in the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā¹³⁸ is explained by the commentator Mahīdhara to indicate the Bhīls, a well known tribe of Central India and the

135. J. N. Jha, 'From tribe to untouchable: The case of the Niṣādas', in Indian Society, 1974, p. 67.

136. Manu, X, 8, etc. (other citations given below).

137. Nirukta, III, 8.

138. Vāj. Sam., XVI, 27.

Vindhyan tracts. The Saṁhitā¹³⁹ further establishes their status as that of a full-fledged tribe when it states that the iṣṭi is to be performed by a Niṣāda chieftain.

Except for Mahīdhara (on the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā), if these early references apply to Niṣādas as a particular tribe, they may suggest their superiority over other indigenous tribes of that period; either as a more technologically advanced one or merely as far as their numerical strength was concerned. On the other hand, there is a possibility that Niṣāda was also a general term used for certain non-Aryan tribes. The citation in the Nirukta is most frequently quoted in support of this. However, evidence from later literature may prove more convincing on this point. At this stage there is not the slightest basis to suggest that they were part of the varṇa hierarchy especially in the period of the R̥g Veda.¹⁴⁰ They are mentioned with the four varṇas in the Nirukta but clearly quite distinct from them, though they could take part in sacrifice.

That the Niṣādas were a settled people is shown by several texts which discuss the Viśvajit sacrifice.¹⁴¹ This sacrifice requires a temporary residence among the Niṣādas. But, it is difficult to define the specific area of their habitat. The majority of references suggest the hills and forests around the Vindhya ranges. The Niṣādas occupied the highlands of Malwa and Central India as noted in the second book of the Mahābhārata,¹⁴² while the third book mentions

139. Tait. Sam., IV, 5, 4, 2; Kāṭhaka Sam., XVII, 13; Mait. Sam., II, 95; Pañc. Br., XVI, 6, 8.

140. R. S. Sharma, Sūdras in Ancient India, 1958, p. 71.

141. Kausītaki Br., XXV, 15; Lāṭayāyana S.S., VIII, 2, 8; (mentions a niṣāda village); Pañc. Br., XVI, 6, 8.

142. Mbh., II, 28, 5-6.

Niṣādarāṣṭra as a region of the Sarasvatī and Western India.¹⁴³

The Niṣādas are a people who live in the Madhyadeśa region (central India) according to the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna.¹⁴⁴ The Brhatsaṁhitā sees Niṣādarāṣṭra to the south east of Madhyadeśa.¹⁴⁵ Most of the other Purānas and the Sānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata regard king Veṇa as the progenitor of the Niṣādas who dwell in the Vindhya mountains.¹⁴⁶

The concentration of the Niṣādas in these regions of Central India may be connected with the movements of the Indo-Aryans both in western and eastern India. It is not unlikely that the former were the first inhabitants of the then thickly forested Gangetic Valley before the Aryans with their superior technology deforested the area. This would also explain the mention of the Niṣādas in early Vedic literature as people whose presence could not be ignored. The majority of the Niṣādas were driven down to the Vindhya tracts where they continued their primitive economies of fishing and hunting. This also seems to suggest rather clearly that Niṣāda was a term applied not to one tribe or group but to several; all of whom had one thing in common — their mode of production and living.

Gradually, it is becoming clearer that the Niṣādas, whether a single tribe or otherwise, were an important force to be reckoned with. Their resistance against the brāhmaṇical system, as well as their later assimilation, seems to follow from their classification as an alien tribe, even of cannibals, by the writers of the Epics and as a low caste by the writers of the Dharmaśāstra.

143. Mbh., III, 130, 4.

144. Mārka. P., LVIII, 18. Pargiter in his translation of the same Purāna considers them specially a forest people and scattered all over northern and central India.

145. B. C. Law, Ancient Indian Tribes, 1934, pp. 61-62.

146. The significance of the Veṇa story and references to it will be discussed below.

There were those Niṣādas who were partly subjugated and then absorbed at the lowest ritual level. As usual, they were given a place in the largely theoretical system of mixed castes. Thus, the Niṣādas became an anuloma caste being the offspring of a brāhmaṇa and his śūdra wife.¹⁴⁷ A difference between the Niṣādas and the Pāraśavas is maintained by some Sūtra and Smṛti writers,¹⁴⁸ while most others consider the two names synonyms. It seems likely that the Pāraśavas were a section of the Niṣāda community. Their occupation is almost always stated as that of fishermen and hunters. Kauṭilya¹⁴⁹ assigns to all the mixed castes of the śūdras. With slight differences of opinion on detail, all the Sāstra writers agree on assigning a low status to them, and according to V. N. Jha '... relegated them in a course of time to the position of untouchables.'¹⁵⁰

It was not uncommon for tribes to form such castes which were brought in relation to the varṇa system — this being the only means of absorbing small independent groups into the mainstream of the 'superior social order.' However, this mechanism was only partially successful. This is known to us from the non-Dharmaśāstra material.

Undoubtedly the Niṣādas continued to form a peripheral culture outside brāhmaṇical dominance, and were looked down upon as vulgar, low and above all as 'uncivilized' by the brāhmaṇas. In other words they were regarded as barbarians or mlecchas.

The well known connection of the Niṣādas with mleccha is established

147. Baudh. Dhs., I, 9, 3; Vasiṣṭha Dhs., XVIII, 8; Manu, X, 8; Yājñavalkya, I, 91; A. Ś., III, 7, 21; Mbh., XI, 48, 5; Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodh. K., 50, 33 mentions Guha, king of the Niṣādas to have belonged to the niṣāda-jāti.

148. Gautama Dhs., IV, 14; Yājñavalkya, I, 91.

149. A. Ś., III, 7, 37.

150. V. N. Jha, Op. Cit., 1974, p. 73.

in more than one Purāna and also in the Mahābhārata, when the story of king Veṇa is related.¹⁵¹ There the mythical origin of the Niṣāda is given as follows: There was chaos on earth because of the evil deeds of king Veṇa. His deeds were evil because he did not follow the rules of the varṇāśramadharmā. The sages therefore, churned his left thigh and from it emerged a man like a charred log with a flat face and extremely short. The brāhmaṇas ordered him to 'sit down' (niṣīda) and thus he became a Niṣāda. According to some versions he became the progenitor of the Niṣādas dwelling in the Vindhya mountains who were known for their wicked deeds. According to the Matsya Purāna he was the ancestor of the Mlecchas.¹⁵² Whether Mleccha or Niṣāda, the progeny of this dark man were fishermen, wild mountain tribes, and all those who delight in adharma; in other words, they were barbarians.

This myth may have been used by the writers of the Purānas to explain the existing situation and justify their own attitudes towards these people. This becomes clear when we notice the same story continues to relate that the right arm of Veṇa was churned to produce the righteous Pr̥thu, who brought law and peace back to the earth. The forest kingdoms — āṭavika rāṣṭra or vana rāṣṭra — of the Vindhya region remained aloof from the correct ritualistic concepts and speech. Politically, when the policy of appeasement failed, these kingdoms were subjugated by force, if only temporarily.¹⁵³

Besides the association with mlecchas, Niṣādas are listed with

151. The story is related in the various Purānas with variations. Brahmānda P., II, 36; 158-173; Brahma P., IV, 60-68; Matsya P., X, 4-10; Viṣṇu P., I, 13, 37; Vāyu P., I, 120-122; Bhāg. P., IV, 14, 42-46; Mbh., XII, 59, 101-103.

152. Matsya P., X, 7.

153. C. I. I., Vol. III, No. 2, 'The Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta', line 21.

with cannibals, Karnaṅpravaras, Kālamukhas, Rākṣasas¹⁵⁴ and also with such people that possess only one leg, eyes on the forehead etc. Yet these peculiar looking tribes are said to have fought on both sides during the Mahābhārata war and brought valuable tribute after the Rājasūya of Yuddhiṣṭhira.¹⁵⁵ As early as the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa they are considered evil-doers and thieves who rob wealthy men in forests.¹⁵⁶

If Niṣāda is a general term applied to people with barbaric occupations, customs and speech, it fits in exactly with the description of a mleccha and sometimes they were even called mleccha. Either the Niṣāda were one of the Mleccha tribes, or merely one of the many terms used to express the fact that there was a category of people who were not Sūdras nor untouchables but reckoned outside the varṇa hierarchy. If the Niṣādas accepted the ways of the brāhmanical society,¹⁵⁷ or in other words 'wished to better their material conditions', they could be included in a low caste. However, this was not true of all mleccha tribes. The Kirātas, for instance, were given the status of vrātya ksatriyas. There is a suggestion by R. S. Sharma that the Niṣādas fell from the status they had enjoyed in the later Vedic society.¹⁵⁸ This can only be accepted if we understand the term Niṣāda in the Vedic texts and in the Epic and Purānic ones to mean the same peoples.

However, it cannot be overlooked that generally, the usage of the terms Kirāta, Śabara, Pulinda, Niṣāda varied over the time span of several centuries in the literary texts. It would be an oversimplification

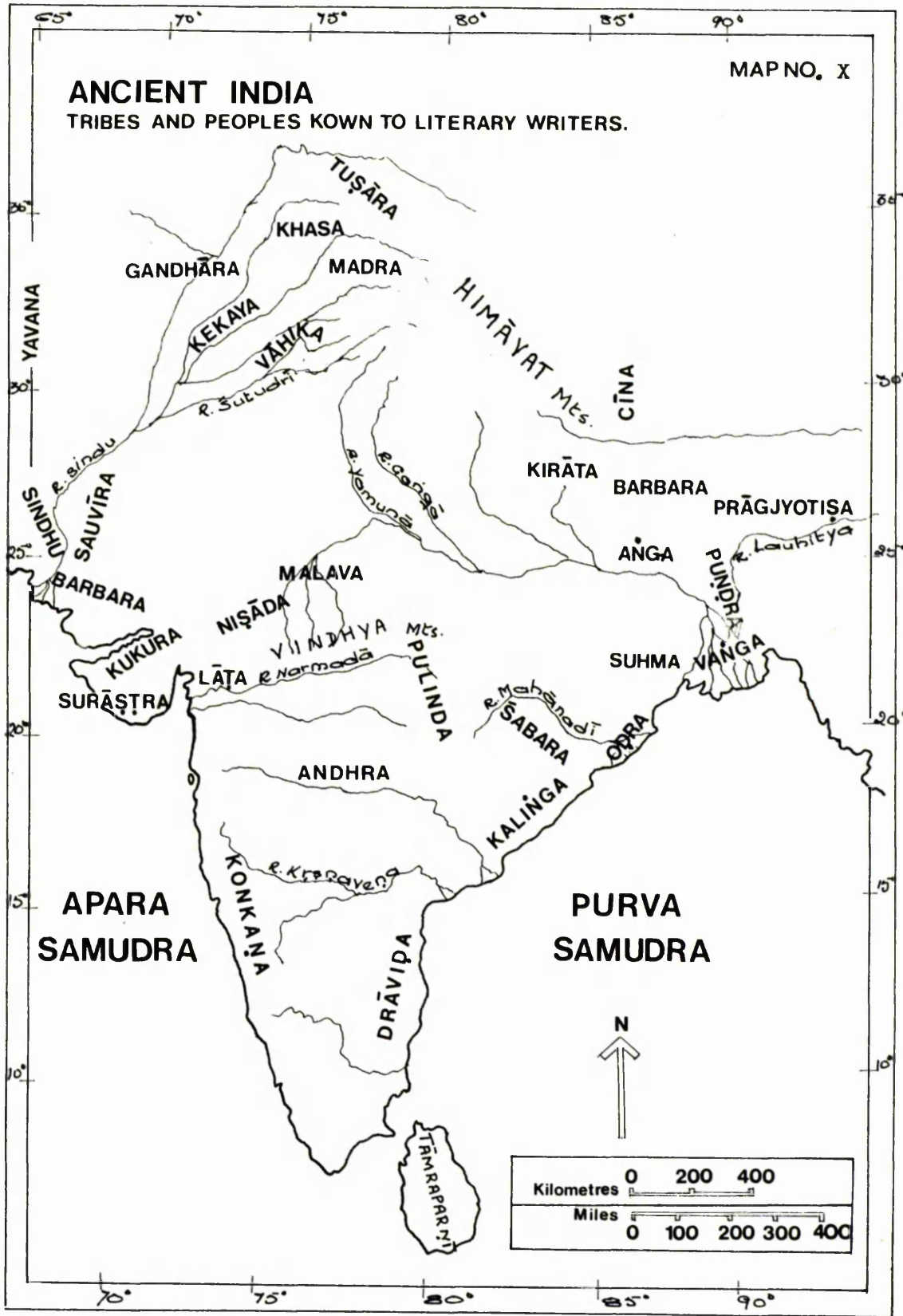
154. Mbh., II, 28, 44-45.

155. Mbh., II, 47, 12-20.

156. Ait. Br., VIII, 2, 7.

157. Aṣṭādhyāyī, IV, 1, 100. The Niṣāda gotra is mentioned in the gaṇapāṭha of Pāṇini though it does not occur in other gotra lists.

158. R. S. Sharma, Op. Cit., 1958, p. 129



to regard them as synonymous terms as they each originally signified the names of particular tribes. There nevertheless developed secondary meanings of these terms which sometimes alluded to the occupations or the way of life of these tribes. We shall subsequently return to a further analysis of these terms when we examine the reasons why ancient literary writers often referred to them collectively as mlecchas.

Those people residing in east, west, south or north-west India — the Andhra, the Puṇḍra, the Aṅga, the Kāmbōja, the Madra, the Sindhu Sauvīrā, the Bāhlika etc. — who were not, or only partly brāhmanized at different stages, or had displeased the brāhmanas, were rather inconsistently designated as mlecchas. We shall first examine the case of the Puṇḍras and Andhras in detail and consequently examine the views of the Brāhmins, Buddhists and Jainas about non-tribal indigenous peoples of the subcontinent.

The Puṇḍra were specifically a definite people. Both literature and inscriptions give a consistent picture of them residing in Eastern India. There is, however, some uncertainty about the precise form of their name. It varies between Puṇḍra, Paṇḍra, Paṇḍrakas or Paṇḍrika. The two most commonly occurring forms are Puṇḍra and Paṇḍra.¹⁵⁹ Pargiter¹⁶⁰ is of the opinion that the two different tribes occupying two different countries. The enumeration of countries and peoples lacks precision in the Epics and Purānas, so that the distinction cannot be pushed any further. In later literary references and epigraphic records the distinction is never maintained. Essentially, Puṇḍras or Paṇḍras are undoubtedly proto-Bengalis of modern Bengal.

In the first reference to Puṇḍras in the Aitareya Brāhmana,

159. Mbh., VI, 10, 49; Manu, X, 44.

160. F. E. Pargiter, 'Ancient Countries in Eastern India', JASB, Vol. LXVI, 1897, p. 85.

Viśvāmitra curses his sons with the progeny of dasyus such as the Andhras, Puṇḍras, Śabarās, Pulindas and Mutības. They are supposed to live in large numbers beyond the borders.¹⁶¹ In the same story, as it is found in the Mahābhārata, the disobedient sons of Viśvāmitra are simply cursed to be dog-eaters and mlecchas. According to Manu the Paṇḍrakas along with other people were originally kṣatriyas but because of their neglect of sacred rites and of brāhmaṇas they were later degraded to the status of sūdras.¹⁶²

While on the one hand the Puṇḍras are listed with people such as the Yavanas, Śakas, Kirātas, Pulindas, Andhras and others of the 'mleccha category', on the other, they are simply mentioned as an eastern people with no derogatory term to qualify their status. Baudhāyana¹⁶³ mentions them with the Sauvīrās, Vaṅgas and Kaliṅgas as peoples of mixed origin. The Mahābhārata¹⁶⁴ adds to this the Kāśis, Kośālas, Karūśas. In the Harivaṁśa, Jarāsadhana, king of Magadha held sway over the Puṇḍras, Vaṅgas, Aṅgas, Kaliṅgas. Describing the exploits of the same king, the Mahābhārata says that he defeated many rulers of the east and north and also certain mleccha tribes.¹⁶⁵ The Purāṇas give the reasons why these peoples were linked together. Puṇḍra, Aṅga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Suhma were the five eponymous sons of king Bali.¹⁶⁶ The Matsya Purāṇa gives a little more precision by adding that they were kṣatriyas. This is similar to the story of foreigners in Indian society being given the status of kṣatriyas in the Purāṇas. (Discussed in chapter VII). The Mahābhārata

161. Ait. Br., VII, 18; Sāṅkh. S. S., XV, 26.

162. Manu, X, 43-44.

163. Baudh. Dhs., I, 1, 2, 14. 164. Mbh., VII, 10, 14-15.

165. Mbh., XII, 4, 7-8; Harivaṁśa, Chp. 116.

166. Brahma P., XIII, 30; Matsya P., XLVIII, 23-25; Agni P., CGLXXVI, 10-11; Viṣṇu P., IV, 18, 1-2; Harivaṁśa, 23, 29.

attributes the names of their dominions to them.¹⁶⁷ The mythical stories of the Epics and the Purānas were in most cases attempts to explain or justify existing conditions at the time when the stories were written. Therefore, it is more likely that because these people were neighbours they had to be grouped together. Pargiter identified Vaṅga as Central Bengal, Puṇḍra as North West Bengal, Suhma as the Hooghly and Midnapur districts and Kaliṅga as Orissa.¹⁶⁸

Fortunately in this case one does not have to rely only on suppositions. Inscriptional evidence attests the existence of Puṇḍravardhana, a very important town of eastern India. As Puṇḍanagala it appears for the first time in a fragmentary Mauryan Brāhmī inscription, palaeographically datable in the third century B.C. and discovered at Mahāsthān, seven miles north of Bogra.¹⁶⁹ The language used in the inscription is Prakrit and scholars have identified the Brāhmī script as belonging to the third century B.C. Though the inscription contains only six lines of writing and is very fragmentary, it proves one point, namely that Puṇḍanagala was already an important centre at that time. Bhandarkar¹⁷⁰ has summed up the context of the inscription as follows: 'It appears that some ruler of the Mauryan period, if not of the Mauryan family, had issued an order to the Mahāmātra stationed at Puṇḍranagar with a view to relieve the distress caused, apparently, by famine to the people called Saṁvaṅgiyas.'

167. Mbh., I, 98, 32. (Star passage *1042 in the Crt. Ed.).

168. F. E. Pargiter, AIHT, p. 272, note 5.

169. D. C. Sircar, Select Inscr., 'Mahāsthān Fragmentary Stone Plaque Inscription', No. 45, pp. 82-83; R. Mukherji & S. K. Maity, Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions, 1967, p. 39; D. R. Bhandarkar, 'Mauryan Brahmi Inscription of Mahāsthān', EI, Vol. XXI, pp. 83-91; B. M. Barua, 'The old Brahmi Inscription of Mahāsthān', IHQ, Vol. X, 1934, pp. 57-66 - (p. 57, Puṇḍanagala = Puṇḍanagala).

170. Bhandarkar, Op. Cit., p. 87.

The Mahāmātra of Puṇḍranagar was entrusted with the execution of this order.'

Puṇḍravardhana, according to Bhandarkar,¹⁷¹ is without doubt modern Mahāsthān, a conclusion which he based on Cunningham's account and that of the Chinese traveller Yuan Chwang. Even if this identification be proved wrong, Puṇḍravardhana is definitely in present Bangladesh. We know from the Aśokan inscriptions that Kalinga was the only remaining kingdom to the east not to be included in the Mauryan dominions. However, no Aśokan inscription has been found in Bengal or Bangladesh. The Mahāsthān inscription proves to some degree that the Puṇḍra country had some connexion with the Maurya empire even though it may not have directly under their control. The alphabet and language of this record are exactly like those of the Aśokan edicts. Therefore, despite the absence of Aśokan inscriptions in the Puṇḍra country there is no reason to conclude that it was not part of the Mauryan empire.

At least two other inscriptions¹⁷² of the early period prove that the Puṇḍras were a recognized people. Both these inscriptions are of the Sāñchi stūpa, and mention simply that inhabitants of Puṇḍravardhana were among those who contributed to the building of the stūpas' railings and toranas. This information definitely indicates that the Puṇḍras were already in the second or first century B.C. sufficiently prosperous to be able to make donations to a foundation that was located far from their country. Puṇḍravardhana, as a bhukti (province), is mentioned in several Gupta inscriptions;¹⁷³ three of which were discovered at Damodarpur in the Dinajpur District of

171. Bhandarkar, Op. Cit., p. 88.

172. EI, Vol. II, 'Inscriptions of the Sāñchi Stupa', No. 1; No. 102, p. 108; No. 217, p. 380.

173. EI, Vol. XV, pp. 130ff. Gupta Eras 124, 163, 224.

Bangladesh. Epigraphic records of the medieval period with particular reference to those of the Pālas and the Senas of Bengal,¹⁷⁴ continue to make frequent mention of the Puṇḍravardhana bhukti. Their centre of activity always remained in eastern India.

In the light of these data it seems surprising that the Puṇḍras should have been held in low esteem by the brāhmanas of madhyadeśa. One probable reason is that their country was part of that territory which in the view of the brāhmaṇa writers, because it was not dominated by them, remained impure and unfit for śrāddha ceremonies. For the same reason the Aṅgas and Kaliṅgas were also shunned for unrighteous behaviour. Pargiter,¹⁷⁵ in his article on 'Ancient Countries in Eastern India', writes: 'Originally these nations did not belong to the Aryan stock; they appear to have been mlecchas. The story of the five brothers (sons of king Bali) no doubt indicate that these nations were brought within the Aryan pale...'

Brāhmanism, thus took a considerable time to spread over Bengal and even longer for it to establish any positive control over that region. Even the inscriptional evidence does not prove that the brāhmanical way of life was prevalent amongst the Puṇḍras in the third century B.C. This must have been another reason why they were called mlecchas till the early centuries A.D.

Puṇḍra, unlike Kirāta, Niṣāda, Śabara or Pulinda, was a term applied only to a specific people living in eastern India, and did not at any stage mean a forest or mountain people. To writers of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa they were said to live in the border areas merely because during that period brāhmanical activity was centred

174. B. C. Law, Ancient Indian Tribes, 1926, pp. 18-19. These grants have not been studied in detail as they are dated later than the period under study.

175. F. E. Pargiter, 'Ancient Countries in Eastern India', JASB, Vol. LXVI, 1897, p. 93.

around the middle Ganges Valley. When the Magadhan region became the centre of empires under the Mauryan rulers, the Pundra country became well known. However, it seems likely that it was only during the Gupta period that the original inhabitants of Bengal (Pundras) became followers of Brāhmanism on a large scale, though they may have known about it earlier. Bhandarkar¹⁷⁶ has reason to believe that it was through Jainism that 'Aryan culture' first disseminated in Ancient Bengal. Their association with mlecchas declined as the varṇāśramadharmā spread gradually over the whole of eastern India.

The religious élite, in this case the Buddhist and Brāhmanic, initially regarded peoples of the south, ^{with} whom they had not had contact, with suspicion. Ignorance about their ways, speech and customs, which were therefore naturally alien to them, were in certain instances dubbed as mleccha/milakkha. In the next few pages we examine the position of the Andhras.

The use of the word Andhra in most of brāhmanic literature is varied and therefore the context in which it is used has to be carefully considered. In Buddhist ^{Literature} it occurs as Andha. Probably keeping this in mind Monier-Williams has also given more than one meaning of the word andhra as follows:¹⁷⁷ 1) name of a people, 2) a man of a low caste who lives by killing game, 3) an Andhra-jāti, 4) the dynasty of Andhras - Andhra bhrtya.

The main issue which confronts us is connected with Andhras as a people or a tribe who were called borderers or listed as mlecchas

176. D. R. Bhandarkar, EI, Vol. XXI, p. 90. It is difficult to ascertain what Bhandarkar meant by 'Aryan culture'. However, the attitude of the Jainas regarding eastern India was quite different from that of the Brāhmins and is discussed below.

177. Monier-Williams, The Sanskrit English Dictionary, 1889, p. 45.

in literary sources. On the other hand, there are a number of Śātavāhana inscriptions which prove the existence of a well-established dynasty, which is often equated with Andhra or Āndhra bhṛtya in the Purānic tradition. The controversy that the Śātavāhana could be part of the Andhra people is impossible to resolve as the inscriptions of the various Śātavāhana kings do not mention the name Andhra at all. In the Dharmasūtra and Smṛti tradition Andhra occurs as the name of a caste.

We begin with the earliest mention of the name Andhra in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.¹⁷⁸ In this context they are borderers (called dasyus) and listed along with the Puṇḍras, Śabarās, Pulindas, and Mutības. The Andhras alluded to in this case are probably a tribe of the Deccan. During the period of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa we do not know the exact limit of Aryan civilization, but one can safely state that it could not have spread beyond the Vindhyā mountains. In the east the Aṅga, Puṇḍra, Vaṅga countries of Bengal remained outside brāhmanic influence at least till the propagation of Buddhism and Jainism in these parts. The hilly tracts and forests of the Vindhyan region remained free from brāhmanical control and even political control of both Hindu and non-Hindu kings for many centuries. But by the second and third centuries B.C. Buddhism had become a popular religion south of the Vindhya as is shown by the Buddhist edifices at Amarāvati.

Next the Andhras are mentioned in the thirteenth and fifth Rock Edicts of Aśoka¹⁷⁹ along with the Pulindas and the Bhojas and Pitinikas as people to whom Aśoka taught the Dhamma so vigorously.

178. Ait. Br., VII, 18; Śākh. S. S., XV, 26.

179. E. Hultzsch, 'Inscriptions of Aśoka', C. I. I., Vol. I, R. E. XIII and R. E. V.

The Bhojas and Pitinikas have been placed on the western border of Aśoka's empire.¹⁸⁰ The Pulindas, as we have seen were a tribe of the western Vindhyan forests in ancient India. The Andhras, though not identified as inhabiting the Kṛṣṇa-Godavari delta in these edicts, were nevertheless part of Aśoka's empire. They are not mentioned with other southern peoples — their Dravidian neighbours — the Coḍas, Pāṇdyas, Keralaputas, Satiyaputas as these were outside his direct administrative control.¹⁸¹

From the middle of the first century B.C. the Śātavāhana dynasty became powerful in the Western Deccan. That they rose to power in the west is concluded from the fact that most of the early Śātavāhana inscriptions are found in the west, in Nanāghāta, Nasik and Karle. Hoards of their coins have also been found in this region. Lastly there is no mention of the early Śātavāhana rulers in the Amarāvati inscriptions.¹⁸² Their political centre was around Paithan in Maharashtra.

It is unlikely that the Śātavāhana kings belonged to the Andhra tribe. According to H. C. Raychaudhuri, 'the name "Andhra" probably came to be applied to the kings in later times when they lost their northern and western possessions and became purely an Andhra power governing the territory at the mouth of the river Kṛṣṇa.'¹⁸³ Gopalachari is of another view.¹⁸⁴ He says: 'Scions of the royal

180. C. I. I., Vol. I, R. E. XIII, pp. 43-47.

181. Ibid., R. E. II.

182. EI., Vol. VIII, has most the the early Śātavāhana inscriptions. E. J. Rapson, Catalogue of the coins of the Andhra dynasty Western Ksatrapas...., 1908.
R. Chanda, 'Some unpublished Amarāvati Inscriptions', EI, Vol. XV, Nos. 4, 5, 6, 10, 19, pp. 258-275.

183. H. C. Raychaudhuri, PHAI, 1953, pp. 412-413.

184. K. Gopalachari, Early History of the Andhra country, 1941, p. 26.

family in Andhradeśa might have passed into service of the Mauryan kings and so have gone to Western Deccan as viceroys, thereby getting the Purānic appellation Andhra bhṛtya.' There are many suggestions to link up the Śātavāhana kings with the Andhras while, on the other hand, Sukthankar¹⁸⁵ is of the opinion that it is conceivable to think that the Śātavāhanas had no connection with the Andhra people and country.

One of the earliest references to a Śātavāhana king is in the Hāthīgūmpha Inscription of Khāravēla.¹⁸⁶ The reference is to the name Sātkaṁbi of the western region where Khāravēla dispatched an army in his second year. Sātakaṁbi could either be the third or the seventh king in the list of Andhra kings of the Matsya Purāna.¹⁸⁷ The Purānas on the whole list thirty Andhra kings who ruled for 300 years.¹⁸⁸ Many of the names of kings in the Purānas are identical with the names of kings called Śātavāhana in the inscriptions. Outside the Purānas there is no independent authority that asserts the Śātavāhana and Andhra connection and even the inscriptions do not mention the name Andhra. What the inscriptions do specify is that Śātavāhana is a family name. We come across the expressions Śātavāhana Kula and Sādavāhana Kule in the Nāsik Cave inscriptions.¹⁸⁹ The Purānas, on the other hand, possibly considering the Śātavāhanas

185. V. S. Sukthankar, 'On the home of the so-called Andhra kings', BORI, Vol. I, pt. i, 1918, p. 41.

186. D. C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., No. 91, p. 207.

187. Matsya P., CCLXXIII, 3-4.

188. Bhāg. P., XII, 1, 22; Vāyu P., XLV, 127; XLVII, 47; Matsya P., CCLXXIII, 1-2; 16-17; 25.

189. EI, Vol. VIII, 'Nasik Cave Inscriptions', No. 2, p. 60; No. 22, p. 93.

as a family name of the Andhras called them by the latter name. They sometimes refer to the Śātavāhanas as Andhra-jāṭiyah (Andhra caste or tribe) and Andhrabhṛtya (Andhra servants). We know that elsewhere, too, Andhra occurs as a tribal name¹⁹⁰ but the Śātavāhanas may not have belonged to this tribe. The Śātavāhanas may well have been ethnically different — at least originally — from the (Telugu speaking) Andhras over which they came to rule at a later stage.

It is important for us to accept the fact that Andhra was first a tribal name and it is in this context that it was used by the writers of Brāhmanical literature. This will partly explain why they were listed with mleccha tribes.

It is also probably due to the tribal connection that Manu mentions the Andhras as hunters.¹⁹¹ Sabara, Pulinda, Kirāta, and Niṣāda are also tribal names associated with hunting and fishing. Of these Niṣāda is the only other tribe that is also the name of a caste. Unlike Niṣāda, Andhra as a caste does not occur in the Sūtra literature. Manu¹⁹² states that a Andhra is the offspring of a Vaidehaka father and a Kārāvāra mother and who dwells outside the village. Meda is another new caste mentioned for the first time in the Manusmṛti.¹⁹³ The two castes Meda and Andhraka occur together again in the Nālandā Copper Plate of Devapāladeva.¹⁹⁴ This Plate lists the people in the service of the royal household and the Andhras and Medas are listed with the Caṇḍālas as the lowest group.

190. Ait. Br., VII, 18; Bhāg. P., II, 4, 18.

191. Manu, X, 48.

192. Manu, X, 36.

193. Manu, X, 48; Monier-Williams, Op. Cit., 1889, p. 795.

194. EI, Vol. XVII, p. 321, lines 32-33.

Andhra as a caste occurs comparatively late in the history of Dharmaśāstra literature. By the early centuries A.D. the brāhmanical way of life must have been well established in the Andhra country. Apastamba, a well accepted authority regarding the performance of sacrifice and duties of the twice born, is said to have been a native of Andhra country.¹⁹⁵ The Andhra caste were clearly not all the people of this country but rather a name of a caste of hunters, irrespective of whether they lived in north or south India.

Thus, the use of the word Andhra as a caste name is distinct and cannot be linked with the Andhra tribe or people. The brāhmanical tradition of the north followed an uncomplimentary attitude towards these Andhras also. The only explanation for this is that the brāhmanas of the north were genuinely ignorant about the south. The Brahmānda Purāna, for instance, declares the Andhra country unfit for śrāddha ceremonies.¹⁹⁶ While on the other hand Apastamba, a law giver of the south, describes the rules and regulations for the performance of the śrāddha and even remarks on the slight difference of customs in the north when performing the śrāddha.¹⁹⁷

The case of the Andhras is similar to that of the Puṇḍras. They stood out as a different people, though not necessarily uncivilized. However, initially they did not fulfil the requirements of being civilized according to the brāhmanical point of view. It was with the spread of the varṇāśramadharmā in these regions that they ceased to be outsiders. The early association of particularly the Andhras with mleccha arose because Andhra in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa was the name

195. G. Bühler, SBE, Vol. II, Introduction, pp. xxxi-xxxvii.

196. Brahmānda P., II, 16, 59; III, 14, 80.

197. Apastamba Dhs., II, 7, 17, 1-25.

of a tribe. As will be seen further, tribal people were and are considered outsiders to the official system.

Irrespective of ethnic origins, religion, speech and customs, names of indigenous peoples known as mlecchas/milakkhas are listed in ancient literary sources. Certain tribal names recur in most lists as contained in the Buddhist Brāhmanic and Jaina texts. There is a striking absence of lists of mleccha/milakkha peoples by name in early source material, as for example in the Buddhist Nikāyas, the Dharmasūtras or in any of the early Jaina Āṅgas. Information about mleccha attributes, is however, not lacking in these texts. At this point it is essential to emphasize that while Brāhmanic and Jaina writers largely agree in the form and content by which they designate tribals and non-tribals as mlecchas, the Buddhist writers differ from them.

In the first place, there are very few references to the designation of peoples as milakkhas in Buddhist sources in general. This may be explained either by their lack of concern for the subject or simply caution. An exception to this rule is the fifth century commentator Buddhaghosa, who in his many commentaries on the Pāli Canon maintains a consistent picture of designating certain peoples as milakkha. In the Samantapāsādikā Buddhaghosa explains that milakkha must be understood as a term for non-Aryan peoples, the Andha Damiḷa etc. — milakkhakam nāma yo koci anariyako andhadamiḷādi.¹⁹⁸ In the Manorathapūranī, his commentary on the Āṅuttara Nikāya the Damiḷa, Kirāta, Yavana etc. languages are called milakkhabhāsās — damiḷa-kirātayavanādi - milakkhānām bhāsā...¹⁹⁹ In yet another commentary, the Samhavinodanī, he establishes the superiority of Magadhabhāsā over the language of the Andhakas, Kirātas, Yonakas, Damiḷas etc., but

198. Samantapāsādikā (on the Vinaya P., I, 8, 4), Vol. I, p. 255.

199. Manorathapūranī, Vol. II, p. 289.

adds that irrespective of parenthood one should strive to learn Magadhabhāsā, the language of Buddha vacana.²⁰⁰

Buddhaghosa in all probability reflected the Buddhist attitudes of his day. There is no doubt that they saw in the Andha (Andhra), Damīla (Tamil), Kirāta, among others,²⁰¹ cultural differences of speech, custom etc. which initially at least, were considered alien and barbaric to them. One cannot, however, overlook the fact that the Buddhist missionary spirit generally permitted milakkha peoples to become Buddhists. The absence of lengthy lists of milakkha peoples in Buddhist literature, unlike those in Brāhmanical literature, is therefore not surprising.

In direct contrast the list of milakkha peoples as they occur in the Jaina Āṅgas and Upāṅgas show similarities with the Brāhmanic tradition of designating peoples as mleccha. Names of non-Aryan peoples occurs in several Āṅgas and Upāṅgas though not always with the designation milakkha.²⁰² They are sometimes preserved in the form of a list of female slaves of these races who worked in the royal households.²⁰³ We shall examine the lists as they occur in the

200. Sammohavinodanī, Vibhaṅgatthakathā, 388.

201. The term ēdi in the above references denotes that there must have been other such people i.e. milakkhas who were not mentioned by name.

202. J. Charpentier, The Uttarādhyayanasūtra, 1922, p. 26 differentiates between two sorts of lists that occur in the Canonical works. He considers the shorter lists that occur in the Bhagavatī and Jñātadharmakathā (fifth and sixth āṅgas) and several of the upāṅgas to be the early ones.

203. Aupapātika, (First upāṅga), para. 53 lists maid servants of the queen as follows; bhūhiṃ khujjāhiṃ chilāhiṃ vāmanihiṃ vadabhihiṃ babbarihiṃ pausiyāhiṃ joniyaṃ palhaviyāhiṃ isiniyāhiṃ chāruṇi-yāhiṃ lāsīyāhiṃ lausiyāhiṃ damilihiṃ siṃhalīhiṃ ārabhiṃ pulindhiṃ pakkanihiṃ bahalihiṃ maruṇḍihiṃ sabarīhiṃ parasīhiṃ nānādesihiṃ/ The same list occurs in Bhagavatī, sūtra, 380, sūtra, 143. The eighth and ninth āṅgas also have the same list of foreign female servants — L. D. Barnett, The Antagada-Dasāo and Anuttaravāyāya-Dasāo, 1907, p. 28.

Praśnavyākaraṇa, the tenth Āṅga and the Prajñāpanā, the fourth Upāṅga as these give the longest lists and the latter at least, clearly states that there are two types of peoples — the āriyas and the milakkhas. The Praśnavyākaraṇa is, however, considered a very late composition mainly because of its style and writing.²⁰⁴ The Prajñāpanā is stated to be the work of Āryā Śyāma, a patriarch who is said to be 'identical with Kālakācārya whom tradition places in the time of Gardabhilla, the father of Vikramāditya.' (between 74-61 B.C.)²⁰⁵ The date given to this upāṅga by Jaina tradition is difficult to accept and in Charpentier's opinion the enumeration of milakkha peoples must date back to the beginning of the Christian era in disagreement with Weber who puts down for them a late date.²⁰⁶ These lists were constantly extended with new names which makes it very difficult to fix their dating definitely.

The list in the Praśnavyākaraṇa²⁰⁷ begins with the question : ima ya bahave milakkhujāti, ke te? - 'there are many milakkhujātis, which are they?' and subsequently, enumerates them as follows:-
Saka (Śaka),²⁰⁸ Javaṇa (Yavana), Sabara (Sabara), Babvara (Barbara), Gāya (Kāya), Muruṇḍa, Uda (Odra), Bhadaḡa (Bhadaka), Tittiya (Tittika), Pakkaṇiya (Pakkanika), Kulakkha (Kulākṣa), Goḡa (Gauḡa), Sīhala (Siḡhala),

204. A. Weber, Indische Studien, Vol. XVI, 1883, pp. 331-332.

205. J. Charpentier, Op. Cit., p. 26.

206. Ibid., p. 27.

207. Praśnavyākaraṇa with Abhayadeva's commentary, (Āgamodaya Samiti), Bombay, 1919, sūtra 4.

208. The forms given within brackets are those available from the commentary of Abhayadeva which was written in Sanskrit.

Pārāsa, Koñca (Kroñca), Amdha, Davila (Drāviḍa), Billala (Bilvala), Pulimda (Pulindra), Arosa (Aroṣa), Ḍoba, Pokkaṇa, Gaṃdhahārāga (Gandhahāraka), Bahaliya (Bahaliḱa), Jalla, Roma, Māsa (Māṣa), Bausa (Bakuṣa), Malaya, Cuñcuma (Cañchuka), Cūliya (Cūlika), Koñkaṇaga (Koñkaṇaka), Meta (Meda), Paṇhava (Panhava), Mālava, Mahura, Abhāsiya (Abhāṣika), Aṇakka, Cīṇa (Cīna), Lahāsiya (Lahāṣika), Khasa, Khāsiya (Khāṣika), Nehura (Nehara), Marahaṭṭha (Mahārāṣṭra), Muṭṭia (Mauṣṭika), Araba, Ḍobilaga (Ḍobilaka), Kuhana, Kekaya, Huna, Romaga (Romaka), Ruru, Maruga (Maruka), Cilāyavisayavāsī (Cilātaviṣayavāsī). The Prajñāpanā,²⁰⁹ in its list of milakkhas cites the same names, often in the same order of succession but with variations that appear in the form of wrong spellings. It begins its account with the statement that Man is divided into two groups: milikkhū and āriyā - ā(ya)riyā ya milikkhū ya, se kiṃ taṃ milikkhū? The question as to who the milikkhūs are is next answered. The milikkhūs peoples are noted as follows:- Saga, Javana, Cilāya, Sabara, Babbara, Muruṇḍa, Uḍḍa, Bhadaḡa, Niṇṇaga, Pakkaṇiyā, Kulakkha, Goḍa, Sihala, Pārāsa, Godhā, Koñca, Damila, Pulimda, Hārosa, Dobava, Gandhāravā, Pahaliya, Ayyala, Roma, Pāsa, Pausā, Malayā, Baṃdhuyā, Sūyali, Koñkaṇa, Gameya, Palhava, Mālava, Maggara, Abhāsiyā, Kaṇavīra, Lhasiya, Khasā, Khasiya, Ṇoha, Ramoḡha, Doṃbilaga, Lausa, Pausa, Kakkeya, Akkhāga, Hūṇa, Romaga, Bharu, Maruya, Cilāya, Viyavāsī. The passage is concluded thus: evamāḍī se 'ttaṃ milakkhū -- 'These and others are called milikkhū'.

It is difficult to identify all these names and some of them such as Doṃbilaga, Ḍoba, Pokkaṇa or Ṇoha and several others lost their original form through carelessness of the various redactors of these texts.²¹⁰ The Sakas, Yavanas, Sabaras, Babbarās, Cilāyas

209. Prajñāpanā, I, 36-37.

210. J. C. Jain, Life as Depicted in the Jain Canons, 1947, in Chapter IV, Geographical Lexicon, has a separate section on non-Aryan countries pp. 358-366. Some of them he has been unable to identify.

(Kirāta),²¹¹ Muruṇḍas, Siṃhalas, Pulindas, Andhras, Draviḍas, Khasas, Bāhlikas, Hūnas and some others occur in both these lists noted above and are easy to identify. The Cīna (for Chinese), Araba (for Arabs), Kuhaṇa (Kuṣāṇa?), Marahaṭṭha (Mahārāṣṭra) are names significantly absent from the Prajñāpanā version and may indicate that it was the earlier list that was later added to. It is, however, accepted that the entire Jaina Canon was put to writing in the fifth century A.D. That its writers were influenced by the Brāhmanic idea of designating particular peoples as mlecchas cannot be ruled out.

In the Mahābhārata, Vasīṣṭha creates a mleccha army to combat the armies of Viśvāmitra. This army consists of the Pahlavas, Śabaras, Sakas, Yavanas, Puṇḍras, Kirātas, Dramidas, Siṃhalas, Barbaras, Daradas, Mlecchas and several other mleccha ganas --- tair viṣṣṭair mahatsainyaṃ nānāmlecchaganais tadā/²¹² Manu in an effort to resolve the conflict between ritual status and actual political status of certain foreign kings, describes some of the above mentioned peoples as vr̥śalas and not mlecchas. These are the Paṇḍrakas, Draviḍas, Kāmbojas, Yavanas, Śakas, Pāradas, Pahlavas, Kirātas, Daradas and Khaśas.²¹³ It is worthy of note that the reason why they were called vr̥śalas is because they disobeyed the injunctions of brāhmanas or showed disrespect towards them.

Therefore, though there were important differences in emphasis between the Buddhist, Jaina and Brāhmanic writers, they agreed on the designation of certain indigenous peoples as mlecchas/milakkhas.

Two points gradually emerge at the end of this chapter. Firstly, the use of the word mleccha for aboriginal tribes (both residing in the

211. Ibid., p. 359.

212. Mbh., I, 165, 35-37.

213. Manu, X, 43-44.

Himālayan regions of the north and the Vindhyan regions of Central India) was a well accepted practice of ancient Indian writers. Its use, on the other hand, for the not or partly brāhmanized peoples of south, east and west India was inconsistent, hesitant and apparently reflected the sheer ignorance of these writers concerning such peoples. This was closely linked with the rise to political and economic power of some of these peoples which consequently made it possible for them to employ brāhmanas and perform sacrifices.

Aboriginals were apparently ostracised because of their backwardness and repulsive habits. It was thus that they were seen uncultured barbarians in almost every aspect of life, without any attempt at an objective analysis. In reality, however, their primitive mode of production hindered the expansion of brāhmanic Hinduism. These pockets of tribal culture remained concentrated, in the main, in the mountainous and forested regions of the Himalayas and the Vindhyas. The fact that these tribes could not follow correct ritual and speech were thus not the only reasons why they were called barbarians. The Buddhist and Jaina sources also call them milakkhas, which only proves the point that the distinction was not religious.

That people such as the Pundras and Andhras were looked upon with a similar attitude can be explained in a different way. Materially these people were not unlike the Aryans themselves nor did they live like savages in the forest. However, these kingdoms formed the border areas away from the nucleus of brāhmanical political and religious power and authority. Language and correct speech were important aspects of the brāhmanical system at any level. More precisely the knowledge of Sanskrit was crucial to being an Ārya and thereby performing the correct ritual. Once this was achieved and the land made pure for the performance of śrāddha ceremonies, these extreme areas ceased to be called mlecchadeśa.

Attempts by the Dharmaśāstra writers to assimilate outsiders, particularly tribes, clearly were no more than an afterthought. Because the Niṣādas, for instance, are mentioned as a low caste, or the Kirātas as degraded kṣatriyas this does not imply that these people then ceased to be called mleccha. It is also difficult to imagine that large sections of the population were the outcome of illicit unions. How long they remained as mlecchas outside the varṇa system depended mainly on the strength of their resistance.

Another striking point emerges and that is that despite the drastic difference of physical appearance, custom, speech etc. of these people they were all listed together as mleccha. This is not difficult to understand and can be explained by the fact that to the brāhmaṇa writers these people were all outside the varṇāśramadharmā. However, some informal hierarchy of mlecchas must have been laid down by the brāhmaṇas and preference was given to those who were most useful to them. This is apparent in the fact that individual tribes and peoples were often distinguished and not always designated as mlecchas.

Chapter VII

FOREIGNERS DESIGNATED AS MLECCHAS.

As the title suggests, the fundamental problem to be discussed in this chapter is to ascertain whether all foreigners in ancient India were regarded as mlecchas. But first, a brief note about the use of the term foreigner in the ancient Indian context and its relation with the term mleccha.

In modern English usage a foreigner is: '1) a person born in another country; an alien, 2) one of another country; an outsider.'¹ The same meaning applies when one speaks of a foreigner in ancient India. However, 'India' is, with reference to the ancient period normally used to include regions beyond the frontiers of the present-day Republic of India. Indeed, today the area, often called the South Asian subcontinent, consists of five completely independent states -- Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The brāhmanical civilization grew up in this subcontinent, bounded along the north by the Himalayas.

The central mass of the Himalayas may have proved impregnable, but contact with areas beyond was always maintained through the mountain passes of the Hindukush and further, for in the north-west no insuperable barrier existed which impeded the flow of trade or of armies between India and the outside world. The river valleys and certain accessible mountain passes at the eastern extremity of the Himalayan range, however, afforded comparatively less easy contact. Thus, the ancient Indians did not live in isolation and in some cases, as in the present context, their history and ideas have to be studied and understood against an Asian background.

1. Little & Onions, The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, p.734.

The term mleccha is in no way synonymous with the word 'foreigner' in the sense of one belonging to areas outside the subcontinent, as it had the connotation of barbarism attached to it. Therefore, also some others who were not foreigners could be designated as mleccha.² Yet, the most common meaning given to mleccha in modern Sanskrit and Pāli dictionaries is that of 'foreigner'.³ 'Foreigner' is never given as the only meaning⁴ and is sometimes stated as the second one⁵; the first one being a barbarian.⁶ In a similar way mleccha is also at present commonly used to designate a 'foreigner' in nearly all the modern Indo-Aryan languages and Tamil as well.⁷

But the problem of the designation of foreigners as mlecchas is more complicated than it seems. There was a considerable amount of difference between what was intended by the Hindu lawgivers and what

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2. The Amarakosa, II, 20, a Sanskrit lexicon, defines mleccha-jātis as the Bēda, Kirāta, Śabara and Pulinda tribes. In the previous chapter we discussed how certain indigenous tribes and inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent were called mlecchas.
 3. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit English Dictionary, 1899, p. 837; Böhtlingk & Roth, Sanskrit Dictionary, 1855, Vol. V, p.934; Davids & Stede, Pāli English Dictionary, 1925, p.157; R.C. Childers, Pāli Dictionary, p.247.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Davids & Stede, Op. Cit., p.157; Childers, Op. Cit., p.247; V.S. Apte, Sanskrit English Dictionary, 1912, p.776.
 6. Sanskrit like most Indian languages has a distinct word in its vocabulary for 'foreigner' — videśī, paradeśī, etc. though these words normally indicate people from other parts of India. Monier-Williams, Op. Cit., p.284. In Hindi it is videśī, in Marathi paradeśacā, in Bengali bideśī etc.
 7. Shyam Sunderdas, Hindi Śabda Sāgara, 1916, Vol. 3, pp.2837-38; S.C. Mitra, Bengali English Dictionary, Calcutta, 1911, p.970; J.T. Molesworth, A Dictionary, Marathi and English, Bombay, 1857, p.672; Bhai Maya Singh, The Punjabi Dictionary, Lahore, 1895, p.711; R.L. Turner, A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language, London, 1931, p.521; B.N. Mehta, The Modern Gujarati English Dictionary, Baroda, 1925, p.1232; Tamil Lexicon, Vol. V, Madras, 1932, p.3206. The word occurs as milēccan and is borrowed from Sanskrit.

actually happened. In many cases Indian literary tradition merely stated the theoretical principle, which in this case implied that all those outside the varṇa system were mlecchas. But this theoretical principle became difficult to observe because of the peculiar circumstances created by those foreigners who not only invaded Aryāvarta but even became its political masters.

The Aryans were originally themselves foreign to the Indian subcontinent, but the concept of mleccha was introduced by them to differentiate their ways from the ways of those whom they considered less civilized.⁸ Since their advent several other types of foreigners have been known to the Indians and during the period before A.D. 600⁹ there were a large number of foreign invasions in northern India: those of the Achaemenids, the Greeks, the Parthians, the Scythians, the Kuṣāṇas and the Huns.

The Sanskrit terms used in ancient Indian writings to designate certain foreign groups that will be discussed in this chapter are Yavana, Śaka, Pahlava, Kuṣāṇa and Hūna, in particular Yavana, Śaka and Hūna, the terms which, in the period before A.D. 600, occur more frequently than the others.

One general point that must be borne in mind about the use of terms such as Yavana or Śaka in Sanskrit texts is that in most instances they were not used to indicate one particular ethnical or racial group. This is clearly apparent from the references to these terms in Epic and Purānic literature. Even if the original meaning of each of these terms was confined to one particular group of foreigners, it is unlikely that it retained its initial meaning for long. The

8. The first extant reference to mleccha is in the Śatapatha Brāhmana III, 2, 1, 24. In this case mleccha speech must be avoided by the Aryas.

9. Foreign invasions of India continued after that date, but for the purpose of this study we are concerned with only those that took place before A.D. 600.

laxity in the use of these terms further creates the problem of identifying the Yavanas, Sakas, Pahlavas etc. with definite types of foreigners who, as we know from other sources, actually came to India. The problem of the identification of groups like the Yavanas or Sakas will, however, remain peripheral since the emphasis in this chapter is on the attitude of the literary élite towards them.

Yavana is the earliest of the above-mentioned terms found in literature to indicate a particular kind of foreigner. The earliest reference is in the Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini.¹⁰ Before discussing the implications of its occurrence in the Aṣṭādhyāyī, it is important to explain why the Sanskrit term Yavana has hitherto been considered the ancient appellation for the Greeks by most scholars. The premise on which most scholars work is that Yavana is a Sanskritized form of Yona, which is derived from Old Persian Yauna.¹¹ Greek Ἴωνες and Hebrew Yāwān¹² are the other forms of this word and they are all taken to mean the same people namely, the Ionians.¹³ Although these terms originally designated the Greek settlers on the west coast of Asia Minor and the adjoining islands there developed secondary meanings.

The Old Persian form Yauna, meaning all kinds of Greeks was used for the first time in the records of Darius and other Achaemenids.¹⁴

10. Aṣṭādhyāyī, IV, 1, 49.

11. R.G. Kent, Old Persian Grammar Texts Lexicon, American Oriental Society, 1950, p.204; C. Bartholomae, Altiranisches Wörterbuch, Strassburg, 1904, p.1231.

12. Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 9, Jerusalem, 1971, 'Javan', 9, 1301. In modern Hebrew the term is Javan which reflects the Hellenic tribal name Ionia (Ἴωνία) and designates the west coast of Asia Minor and the Aegean archipelago.

13. H.G. Liddell & R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, I, Oxford, p.847, Ἴωνία - their country.

14. D.C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., Vol. I, Inscriptions of the Akhaemenians, Nos. 1, 2, 4 & 5; E.J. Rapson, CHI, Vol. I, 1922, p.540.

With evidence from Greek classical sources and numismatics A.K. Narain¹⁵ also shows that the Persians commonly used Yauna for those Greeks who had settled in several cities of Asia Minor long before Alexander of Macedonia came to power. There are traces of it being borrowed by the Indians without any modification.¹⁶ However, the more common and the earliest use of the Sanskritized form Yavana can be traced back to Pāṇini¹⁷ and that of the Prakrit form Yona to the inscriptions of Aśoka¹⁸ and to the Pāli texts.

The etymologies of Sanskrit words given by the Indian grammarians are mainly based on the theory that all words are derived from a verbal root by means of affixes and other processes. Thus attempts to find an etymology of the word yavana, whether initially foreign or Indian, have been made by Indian grammarians. It has been derived from the root yu in three different ways. Firstly, yu means 'keeping away', 'averting' and dveṣo yavana signifies 'removing hostility'.¹⁹ Secondly, from yu meaning 'mixing', 'mingling' it can be implied that the Yavanas were a mixed people.²⁰ Without stating the name of the Sanskrit author R. Mitra has quoted that the Yavanas were 'a mixed race or one in which no distinction of caste is observed' (i.e. yauti miśrayati vā miśrībhavati sarvvatra jātibhedābhāvāt iti yavanah)²¹, which also

15. A.K. Narain, The Indo-Greeks, 1954, pp.2-6.

16. Mbh., XII, 207, 40.

17. Aṣṭādhyāyī, IV, 1, 49.

18. Inscriptions of Aśoka, R.E. II, V, XIII, (C.I.I., Nos. 2, 8, 23).

19. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit English Dictionary, 1899, p.848.

20. Ibid., p. 848.

21. R. Mitra, 'On the supposed identity of the Yavanas...', JASB, XLIII, p.253, ft.nt.*

supports the above derivation. Finally, the same root means 'quick', 'swift',²² which either suggests that the Yavanas were a swift or intrepid race²³ or that they had a quick mode of conveyance.²⁴

One cannot base any arguments on these fanciful etymologies and above all, they do not explain the relation of Yavana with the Old Persian form Yauna. But a closer look at the Pāli and Prakrit forms of the same word may throw light on this aspect. The most common Prakrit form for Yavana is Yona.²⁵ The variation Yonaka is attested in other texts.²⁶ Tarn has suggested a derivation of Yonaka independently of Yona and Yavana, from Greek 'Ἰων' 'kōs'.²⁷ The relation of Yonaka with Yona could be similar to that of Madraka with Madra.²⁸ Yona is closer to the Old Persian form Yauna, which may suggest that Yavana is a secondary Sanskritization of Yona. It is interesting to note that in the Mahābhārata we also find Yauna although normally Yavana is used in this text.²⁹ Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit retains Sanskrit Yavana.³⁰

22. Monier-Williams, p.848.

23. R. Mitra, JASB, XLIII, p.253.

24. A.K. Narain, The Indo-Greeks, Appendix I, p.165.

25. Inscriptions of Aśoka, R. E. II, V, XIII, (C.I.I., Nos.2, 8, 23); Mahāvamsa, XII, 5; XXIX, 39; Dīpavamsa, VIII, 9; Majjhima Nikāya, V, 3, 93.

26. Milindapañha, I, 2 (SBE, Vol. 35); Mahāvamsa, XII, 4; Dīpavamsa, VIII, 7; EI, Vol, VIII, No. 18, 'Nasik Cave Inscriptions', line 1, p.90.

27. W.W. Tarn, Greeks in Bactria and India, 1938, pp. 416-17.

28. Aṣṭādhyāyī, IV, 2, 100. Patañjali's vārttika 2 explains — mādro bhaktir asya mādrau vā bhaktir asya madraka iti eva yathā syāt/

29. Mbh., XII, 200, 40.

30. F. Edgerton, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary, Vol. II, 1953, p.447. He gives the meaning of yavana as 'a barbarian people (Greek or Western)'.

It can thus be postulated that Yona and Yavana may have etymologically developed side by side and had some links with similar forms that were used in West Asia. The connexion of these two words is similar to that of milakkha and mleccha and one cannot conclusively suggest which was the original form. But like mleccha, Yavana is the earliest attested form in Indian literature.³¹

The sūtra of Pāṇini³² which teaches the use of the affix ānuk, gives yavanānī as one of the examples. Kātyāyana's vārttika³³ further explains that in the case of the word yavana the affix is added to indicate handwriting i.e. yavanāllipyānī. Thus yavanānī could indicate 'yavana writing'. Louis Renou in his edition of La Grammaire de Pāṇini has translated yavanah as 'grec' and yavanānī as 'écriture grecque'.³⁴ The important point here is to find out why it should be presumed that the writing referred to by Pāṇini was Greek. Neither he nor any other independent source, direct or circumstantial, gives any hint to the identification of yavanānī with Greek writing during that period.

It is reasonable that Pāṇini knew of some script that was foreign i.e. yavanānī, and not Sanskrit. The people called Yavana must have inhabited some area near his homeland and must have been known well enough to the Indian of his age for him to refer to their writing to explain a grammatical rule. Pāṇini is said to have been an inhabitant of Śalātura which has been identified as a place in the vicinity of

31. Sat. Br., III, 2, 1, 24. (First occurrence of mleccha);
Aṣṭādhyāyī, IV, 1, 49. (First occurrence of Yavana).

32. Aṣṭādhyāyī, IV, 1, 49.

33. Vārttika 3 on Pāṇini IV, 1, 49.

34. Louis Renou, La Grammaire de Pāṇini, 1966, IV, 1, 49.

Taxila.³⁵ like other Indian sources, Pāṇini associated the Yavanas with the Kāambojas.³⁶ A Yona state is mentioned in the Majjhima Nikāya³⁷ as flourishing along with that of the Kāambojas in the time of Buddha. The old Persian inscriptions of around the same period mention the Yauna, Gandhāra and Śaka together more than once.³⁸ This suggests that the Yonas or Yavanas were a frontier people like the Kāambojas and Gandhāras from an early period. At the height of the Achaemenid empire that part of India adjoining Iran had formed an administrative unit of the Persian empire. Greek soldiers and officials constituted an important element in this administration.³⁹ However, these Greeks may have intermarried with the Persians and other local families.⁴⁰ To Pāṇini and the Indians of his day the Yavanas were therefore undoubtedly a foreign people, with some Greek association but permanently settled in the north-west. There is little information available from Pāṇini about his attitude towards the Yavanas.⁴¹

In the Gautama Dhammasūtra Yavana is a mixed caste; the offspring

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35. V.S. Agrawala, India as known to Pāṇini, 1953, pp.9-10. As far as the date of Pāṇini is concerned the majority of scholars agree on placing him in the fifth or fourth century B.C. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. III, 1927, p.42; Keith, A History of Sanskrit Literature, 1928, p.426; Agrawala, Op. Cit., p.475; Rapson, CHI, Vol. I, p.540.
36. Pāṇini Gaṇapāṭha 178 on II, 1, 72.
37. Majjhima Nikāya, II, 149.
38. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., No. 2, 'Persepolis Inscription of Dārayavāsh (Darius c. 522-486 B.C.)', lines 12-13, 18, p.7; No. 5, 'Persepolis Inscription of Khshayārshā (Xerxes c. 486-465)', lines 23, 25-26, p.12; etc.
39. E.J. Rapson, Op. Cit., p.540.
40. A.K. Narain, The Indo-Greeks, 1954, p.5.
41. Although the use of the word Yavana is attested in the fifth or fourth century B.C., it is unlikely that the people it designates were regarded as mlecchas.

of a Sūdra and a Kṣatriya.⁴² Gautama is considered the earliest of all the Dharmasūtras but there is still some controversy on whether this text is to be dated before or after the invasion of Alexander. Thus Bühler argued: 'As there is no historical evidence to show that the Indians became acquainted with the Greeks before the invasion of Alexander in the fourth century B.C., it has been held that the works containing the word Yavana cannot have been composed before 300 B.C.'⁴³ However, Gautama was the earliest of the Dharmasūtra writers and his mention of the Yavanas as a mixed caste and not as mlecchas is significant. Mixed castes as a result of anuloma and pratiloma connections between sūdras and members of the higher varnas 'were nothing more than backward tribes, who were annexed to the four original and recognised varnas by giving them a wholly arbitrary genesis.'⁴⁴ The Yavanas were not a backward tribe but as has been discussed earlier, Greeks who had settled in the north-west of India before the fourth century B.C.. The system of caste hierarchy does not seem to have existed in the community of the Yavanas. The Majjhima Nikāya tells us that among the Yonas, the Kāmbojas and other border people there were only two classes: the āryas and the dāsa.⁴⁵ It is expressly stated in the same Buddhist text that only among the Yonas can an ārya become a dāsa and vice versa. It is unlikely that there was any conscious attempt by Hindu law writers to include all Yavanas in the caste system and the theory that they were all the mixture of Kṣatriya males and Sūdra females is even more far-fetched.⁴⁶

42. Gautama Dhs., IV, 21.

43. G. Bühler, The Sacred Laws of the Āryas, SBE Vol. 2, p. lvi, but, the term Yavana need not necessarily have implied Greeks.

44. R.S. Sharma, Sūdras in Ancient India, 1958, p.119.

45. Majjhima Nikāya, II, 149 yona-kambojesu aññesu ca paccantimesu janapadesu dveva vannā, ayyo c'eva dāso ca; ayyo hatvā dāso hoti, dāso hatvā ayyo hoti.

46. Gautama Dhs., IV, 21; Baudhāyana Dhs., II, 2, 3, 30.

It is plausible to assume that those Yavanas who had migrated further inland into Aryāvarta and lived in the caste-divided society dominated by brāhmanas, had to be accommodated as mixed castes. At a later date (second century B.C.), the Yonas continue to be singled out as a people amidst whom the two classes of brāhmanas and śramanas do not exist.⁴⁷

Although the use of the term Yavana is attested in Indian literature before the Greeks actually invaded India and dominated parts of it politically, it is almost certain that it later became synonymous with Indo-Greek.⁴⁸ The Indo-Greeks do not designate themselves as Yavanas, neither in their coin legends which are in Greek or Prakrit, or in the few inscriptions that can be attributed to them.⁴⁹ Indian literary sources, on the other hand, do not specify the names of any Greek kings whom they call Yavana or Yavanādhipa or Yavanarāja except for the inscription of Rudradāman.⁵⁰ The field is therefore left open to make inferences. Attempts such as the identification of Demetrius (I) with Dattamitra of the Mahābhārata by Tarn⁵¹ or with the word dharmamīta in the Yuga Purāna by Jayaswal⁵² have been made⁵³ but neither is convincing. There is no doubt, however, about the

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47. Hultzsch, C.I.I., Vol. I, R.F. XIII Kalsi version, pp. 44-47. None of the other versions of this edict have these lines in full.
48. A.K. Narain, The Indo-Greeks, 1954, p.1.
49. V.A. Smith, Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum Calcutta, 1906, pp.7-33; Sircar, Sel. Inscr., 'Inscriptions of the Indo-Greeks', pp.99-108.
50. D.C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., 'Junāgarh Rock Inscription of Rudradāman', I, p.171 text line 8, yavanarājena tuṣ[ā]sphenādhistāya
51. W.W. Tarn, 'Demetrius in Sind', JRAS, 1940, p.179.
52. K.P. Jayaswal, 'Historical data in the Garga Saṁhitā and the Brahmin Empire,' JBORS, Vol. XIV, 1928, p.411, Sec. 7, line 40.
53. Narain, The Indo-Greeks, pp.39-44 gives other similar examples.

identification of Menander with Milinda⁵⁴ who has been immortalized in the Pāli work Milindapañha.⁵⁵

However, it must be stated that Yavana did not always indicate the Greeks. It ultimately came to denote any group of people that came from West Asia or the eastern Mediterranean.⁵⁶ Early Tamil literature also speaks of the Yavanas, particularly their settlements in the trading ports of the peninsula. Here, too, they are referred to as mleccha since they spoke a hard and rough language.⁵⁷ Therefore, a significant point that emerges about the Sanskrit use of the term Yavana is the flexibility with which it was deployed. Within the broad sense of its usage it always denoted a foreign people; foreign not necessarily to the subcontinent, but definitely to the brāhmanical system that tried to assign to them the status of a low people and of mlecchas.

The use of other Sanskrit words to denote particular groups of foreigners like Saka, Pahlava and Hūna, was somewhat more specific. The context in which all these names are mentioned is similar and the Sakas and the Pahlavas, in particular, are frequently listed together with the Yavanas.

The Pahlavas are seldom mentioned on their own in ancient Indian texts. Monier-Williams gives the meaning of Pahlava as the name of a

54. Tarn, Greeks in Bactria and India, p.414.

55. Rhys Davids, The Questions of King Milinda, SBE Vols. XXXV & XXXVI, Oxford 1889.

56. Rājatarāṅginī, VIII, 2264 refers to the Yavanas. According to Stein the Yāvanas meant here are undoubtedly the Muhammadans and they served in the Kaśmir army.

57. N. Subramaniam, Pre-Pallava Tamil Index, Madras, 1966, p.716. Here it is noted that Adiyārkkunallār generally designates them 'Miḷēchchar'. Other references given here are Ahanānūra, 149, 9; Manimekalai XIX, 108; etc.

people, either Parthian or Persian.⁵⁸ The Pahlavas have been identified with Indo-Parthians⁵⁹ who held sway over north-west India for more than a century after the collapse of the Bactrian power there and until the invasion of the Scythian tribes. It has been suggested that these kings were originally Scythians who had settled in the Gazani-Kandahar region during the reign of Phraates II and Artabanus II from c. 138-124 B.C.⁶⁰ There is some difficulty in distinguishing between the Saka and Parthian dynasties in India, which arises basically from the identification of their coins.⁶¹ According to Thomas, 'It would seem probable that the tribes from eastern Iran who invaded India included diverse elements mingled indistinguishably together, so that it is not possible to assert that one dynasty is definitely Parthian while another Saka.'⁶² This statement of Thomas may be correct but the Sanskrit writers always maintained a difference between the Sakas and Pahlavas and though the latter, in this sense the Indo-Parthians, acquired political ascendancy only for a short period, they are mentioned as often as the Yavanas and Sakas

58. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit English Dictionary, 1889, p.612.

59. S. Konow, C.I.I., Vol. II, p.xv.

60. Narain, The Indo-Greeks, pp. 140ff.

61. V. Smith, Catalogue of the coins in the Indian Museum Calcutta, 1906, pp.39-62. Elsewhere ('The Indo-Parthian Dynasties', ZDMG, 60, 1906, pp. 49 ff). Smith makes no distinction between the Saka and Pahlava rulers. There is generally some controversy in identifying the coins of the individual Pahlava and Saka rulers of the northern branch. (E.g. Maues, the joint issues of Azes and Azilises). However, unlike Smith other numismatists — P. Gardner, BM Catalogue of the coins of the Greeks and the Scythic Kings of Bactria and India, 1886; E.J. Rapson, Indian Coins, 1898 — assign some coins to the Saka family of northern India and some to the Indo-Parthian dynasty.

62. F.W. Thomas, 'Sakastana', JRAS, 1906, p.215.

by the ancient Indians.⁶³

The name Śaka in Sanskrit was perhaps the Indianization of Old Persian Saka. Information about the latter can be gathered from various Persian, Classical and Chinese sources. Saka was the ancient ethnic designation for not one, but several central Asian tribes. The earliest mention in Classical sources of these tribes, as Σκυθῶται (Scythian), is by Herodotus,⁶⁴ who refers to them as wandering tribes which had no towns.⁶⁵ From the Persian and the Classical sources discussed by F.W. Thomas it follows that the names Saka and Scythian were used to denote the same tribes.⁶⁶ Some of the Old Persian inscriptions of the Achaemenid period enumerate Saka among the peoples included in the empire of Darius and that of his successor Xerxes.⁶⁷ D.C. Sircar has Sanskritized the Old Persian text of these inscriptions and for Saka he transcribes Saka. Both Sircar and Sukumar Sen translate Saka as Scythian.⁶⁸ Further it has been recognised by scholars that Saka is

63. Manu, X, 44; Mbh., I, 165, 34; III, 48, 20; V, 4, 15; XII, 65, 13; Brahmānda P., II, 16, 47-48; II, 31, 73; III, 63, 120, 123; Matsya P., 114, 40-41; 121, 45.

64. Herodotus, — (Tr. G. Rawlinson), I, 104; II, 110; VII, 10 etc.

65. Ibid., IV, 18-20.

66. Thomas, JRAS, 1906, pp. 181 ff.

67. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., No. 1 — Bisutūn (Behistūn) Column (No. 1), Inscription of Dārayava^hush (=Darius, c. 522-486 B.C.), line 16-17, pp. 4-6; No. 2 — Persepolis Inscription (e) of Dārayava^hush (=Darius), line 18, pp. 7-8; No. 4 — Naqsh - i - Rostam Inscription (a) of Dārayava^hush (=Darius), line 28, pp. 10-11; No. — Persepolis Inscription (h) of Khshayārshā (=Xerxes, c. 486-465 B.C.), line 26, pp. 12-14.

68. Sircar, ibid., No. 2 'Persepolis Inscription (e) of Dārayava^hush, lines, 17-19, p.7 — Hiⁿdush Gaⁿdāra Sakā Makā Thātiy Dārayava^hush Khshāyattiya yadiya = Text Sanskritized — p.8 Sindhuh (India = district on the Indus), Gandhārah (Gandaria), Sakāh (Scythians), Makah (Makae) saṁsati Dhārayadvasuh Kṣāyathyah - yadi. S. Sen, Old Persian Inscriptions etc., 1941, Bishtun Inscriptions Column I, lines 15-17, p.6; Persepolis Inscriptions, lines 9-10, p. 94; Naxs - i Rostam Inscriptions, lines 19-20, p.98; Inscriptions of Xerxes, the Daiva Inscriptions, lines 19-20, p.151.

identifiable with the Sai of the Chinese annals.⁶⁹

Unquestionably the Sakas known to the ancient Indians and mentioned by them in their literature originally came from Central Asia. They were a branch of the Scythian horde that inhabited the region north of Bactria. The Saka incursions into India took place over a considerable period of time and were closely linked with tribal movements in Central Asia, particularly with those of the Yüeh-chih. The migrations of the Yüeh-chih are related in the Chinese Annals of the first Han dynasty (T'sien - Han - Shu) and the Annals of the Later Han dynasty (Hou - Han - Shu).⁷⁰

The Yüeh-chih who occupied the territory adjoining the Mongolian provinces of the Hsiung-nu, were defeated by the latter and subsequently had to move westwards. The Hsiao or Little Yüeh-chih moved southwards among the Tibetans while the Ta Yüeh-chih or the main branch continued to move westwards and fell upon the Sakas who then occupied the territory north-east of Sogdiana and Bactria.

The date around which the Yüeh-chih pushed westward and displaced the Sakas is taken to around 165 B.C.⁷¹ But it was only around 145 B.C. that the pressure from these Scythian nomads brought about the decline of Bactria.⁷² Strabo informs us of the tribes that drove the Greeks

69. S. Konow, C.I.I., Vol. II, Introduction p.xvi;
J.M. Rosenfield, The Dynastic Arts of the Kushans, 1967, p.122.

70. Summarized by: S. Chattopadhyaya, Sakas in India, 1955, pp.1-5;
Early History of North India c.200 B.C. - A.D. 650, 1968, pp.60-63.
Also discussed by: Tarn, Op. Cit., pp.232-233; Konow, Op. Cit.,
pp. xvii-xxi; Rosenfield, Op. Cit., pp. 121-122.
Certain passages from the Chinese texts have been translated by
E. Zürcher, 'The Yüeh-chih and Kaniska in the Chinese Sources',
pp.358-370, in Papers on the Date of Kaniska, Ed. A.L. Basham,
Leiden, 1968.

71. E.J. Rapson, CHI, Vol. I, 1922, p. 495;
H.C. Raychaudhuri, PHAI 1953, p.431.

72. S. Chattopadhyaya, History of N. India, 1968, p.60;
Tarn, Greeks in Bactria and India, p.283 regards the Scythian
conquest of Bactria a myth.

out of Bactria: 'The Asii, the Pasiani, the Tochari, and the Sacarauli, who came from the country on the side of the Jaxartes, over against the Sacae and Sogdiani, which country was also in occupation of the Sacae.'⁷³ The Śakas, however, did not remain in Bactria. After Bactria some of them are said to have moved and taken one route leading to Mesopotamia and the other through Herat and Seistan to India.⁷⁴

The Chinese accounts have this to say about the Saka or Sai:- 'Formerly, when the Hsiung-nu had defeated the Great Yüeh-chih, the Yüeh-chih went west and became rulers of Ta-hsia, whereas the Sai King (or: the Sai-wang) went southwards and became ruler(s) of Chi-pin. The Sai race was divided and dispersed and everywhere they formed several kingdoms ...'⁷⁵ Besides stating that the Saiwang occupied Ki-pin, the above passage also clearly points out that the Sai formed several kingdoms. Thus from the outset one has to suggest the possibility of at least two major groups of Śakas that came to India.

Konow has pursued the theory that the word Sai-wang should be interpreted as Śaka Murunda⁷⁶ and the territory of Ki-pin that they occupied should be identified as Kāpiśa.⁷⁷ There has been considerable controversy about the identification of Ki-pin. According to Chattopadhyaya its identification with Kaśmir during the Han period is most plausible and thereby concludes that the Śakas entered through Kaśmir and settled somewhere in the Kaśmir and Punjab region.⁷⁸

73. Strabo, (Tr. Geographica, Hamilton & Falconer) XI, 5, 11-15.

74. Chattopadhyaya, Śakas in India, 1955, p.6.

75. E. Zürcher, Papers on the date of Kaniska, p.363.

76. Konow, C.I.I., Vol. II, pp.xx ff.

77. Konow, EI, No.20 'Taxila Inscription of the year 136', XLV, pp.291-2.

78. Chattopadhyaya, Śakas in India, pp.3-4. E.J. Rapson, CHI, p.563 presents arguments against Ki-pin being Kaśmir and the main reason against the Śakas entering India through this area is that it is physically impossible.

It cannot, however, be positively stated that all the Sakas entered India through Kaśmir. The earliest group of Sakas that became politically important in India⁷⁹ had been closely associated with and culturally influenced by the Parthians.⁸⁰ In their movements further westwards from Bactria, the Sakas had to inevitably encounter the Parthians who then controlled eastern Iran. There were political struggles between the Sakas and the Parthian monarchs before the reign of Mithradates II (128-88 B.C.)⁸¹ and it was he who put an end to the 'struggles between the kings of Parthia and their Scythian subjects',⁸² and also established the Parthian suzerainty over Seistan and Kandahar. From eastern Iran the Sakas migrated to India just after the reign of Mithradates II⁸³ and according to Rapson the Sakas like the Pahlavas came to India through Ariana (west and south Afghanistan and Baluchistan), through the Parthian provinces of Seistan and Arachosia via the Bolan Pass into the country of the lower Indus which was called Indo-Scythia by the Greek geographers and Saka-dvīpa in Indian literature.⁸⁴ By the first century B.C. the Saka hordes had successfully replaced the Bactrian and Parthian rulers in parts of northern India, though they may have been Satraps for some time under the Indo-Parthians.

The Saka political power in India was concentrated in at least three separate regions. In the north-west they settled in Gandhāra, the Swat Valley and Western Punjab and it is in this region that there

79. Very little is known about the political history of the Sai-wang or the Muruṇḍas of Ki-pin.

80. Parthian influence is clearly noticeable in their coins and in India it is difficult to distinguish the two dynasties from their coins (discussed above).

81. N.C. Debevoise, A Political History of Parthia, 1938, p.31, 35-39

82. Rapson, Op. Cit., p.567.

83. Konow, Op. Cit., p.xxxvi.

84. Rapson, Op. Cit., p.564. Thomas disagrees that the Sakas came to India through Kaśmir or through Afghanistan. In his opinion they came through Sindh and the Valley of the Indus. (JRAS, 1906, p.216)

is a difficulty in distinguishing between the Śaka and Pahlava rulers that we have discussed above. The Mathura region was another major centre of Saka dominion, where there is unmistakable evidence to show a well-established dynasty of Śaka ksatrapas who preceeded the Kuṣānas.⁸⁵ There is no information available about the relation of the Śakas who became politically important in Mathura and the Śakas of Taxila.⁸⁶ Though it is difficult to establish how and when the Śakas gained mastery over Mathura, there is little doubt that their power ended with the Kuṣāna of Mathura and eastern India.⁸⁷ Finally, around Malwa and Kathiawar the Śakas, also known as the Western Kṣatrapas, established at least two important dynasties. In this region they held political sway till the fourth century A.D. and were a serious threat to the Śātavāhana power in the Deccan.⁸⁸ Some of the inscriptions of these Śaka rulers present information which entirely contradicts the brāhmanic claim to dubb all Śakas as mlecchas.⁸⁹

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85. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., No. 24, 'Mathura Lion Capital Inscription of the time of Rañjuvula and Sodāsa', pp.112-118; J. Allan, Catalogue of Indian Coins in the British Museum, p.cxv.
86. Tarn, Greeks in Bactria and India, p.325 thinks that they reached Mathura independently of their advance up the Indus and perhaps they came from Malwa. Konow, JIH, 1933, p.23, thinks that the Mathura Śaka chief had to leave Malwa after Vikramāditya asserted his independence in that country.
87. S. Chattopadhyaya, Śakas in India, 1955, p.30.
88. One of the Śātavāhana inscriptions refers to the fact that Siri Sātakaṇi Gautamīputa crushed the pride of the ksatriya and destroyed the Śakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas. — Sircar, Sel. Inscr., No. 86, 'Nasik Cave Inscription of Vasishthīputra Pulumāvi' line 5, p.78; EI, Vol. VII, No.2, p.59ff.
89. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., Inscriptions of the Śakas of Western India, pp.157-182 — they are the earliest to be composed in good literary Sanskrit and in the Junāgadhā inscription of Rudradāmana, the king is said to have prevented the mixing of castes and thereby protected the law of varna. Rapson, Catalogue of Coins..., 1908, p.civ, 'there is no doubt that they were of foreign i.e. non-Indian nationality.'

Among the many references to the Scythians, Herodotus also states that the Persians used Saka in a loose way⁹⁰ to designate all Scythian people. The Indians probably continued to use it in a similar manner and to denote the same people i.e. certain central Asian tribes that came to India, since they do not at any stage specify which group of Sakas they meant. This is an interesting parallel with the Persian use of Yauna for the Greeks settled in the eastern provinces of the Achaemenid empire and the similar early use of Yavana for the same people.

Not surprisingly, in India, the oldest certain mention of the Saka people is in compound with the Yavanas and occurs in the Mahābhāṣya.⁹¹ The sūtra of Pāṇini which Patañjali commentates on is a dvandva compound put in the neuter singular and denotes that the Sūdras are not excluded.⁹² The commentary raises the question as to what the exact meaning of the word niravasita is. The first answer, and the most improbable one, given is that it means 'excluded from i.e. not dwelling in Āryāvarta.'⁹³ Against this it is objected that in that case we should not be able to have the dvandva Śakayavanam since the Śakas and Yavanas live outside Āryāvarta, but, however, we do have such a compound. From this passage we can draw the inference that the Sakas, at the time of Patañjali, i.e. about the middle of the second century B.C.,⁹⁴ were known to live outside Āryāvarta and were

90. Herodotus, VII, 64.

91. Mahābhāṣya, II, 4, 10. In the vārttika on Pāṇini, VI, 2, 94 the compound word Śakandhuh occurs. Its meaning is difficult to ascertain but it is unlikely that in this context Saka refers to the name of a people.

92. Aṣṭādhyāyī, II, 4, 10 — Sūdrāṇām aniravasitānām. Renou in his translation adds: Sūdras not excluded from the society of the high classes — 'Sūdra qui ne sont pas exclus (de la société des classes supérieures).'

93. Patañjali (II, 4, 10) describes Āryāvarta as the region to the east of Adarśa, west of Kālakavana, to the south of the Himālaya and to the north of Pāriyātra, part of the Vindhya in the west.

94. Winternitz, HIL, Vol. III, p.390.

associated with the Yavanas in some way or other. Although only a Yavana invasion of Madhyamikā and Sāketa is mentioned in this text,⁹⁵ the presence of the Śakas, as we have seen, soon became widespread and could not have gone unnoticed by the brāhmaṇa authors of the Epics and Purānas.

Just as the Śakas played a role in the decline of the Greek kingdoms of Bactria and north-west India, the Kuṣāṇas were the political successors of the Śakas in northern India. Therefore one set of foreign rulers was replaced by another which also had central Asian associations. The Kuṣāṇa empire by the time of Kaṇiṣka included a considerable part of India and the two main centres of their power were Peshawar and Mathura.

The Kuṣāṇas entered India through the Kabul valley in the first century A.D. If the term mleccha was meant to be indiscriminately applied to all foreigners that came to India, then apparently, the Kuṣāṇas are a clear exception. The term Kuṣāṇa does not occur in Sanskrit.⁹⁶ The possibility that they were known in Sanskrit literature under a different name cannot be excluded.

The name Kuṣāṇa has been differently interpreted as denoting historically, a race,⁹⁷ a tribe,⁹⁸ a family, or a dynasty.⁹⁹ B.N. Mukherjee presents the etymological evolution of the term Kuṣāṇa in great depth and concludes: 'the name Kushāṇa = Kuei-shuang originally

95. Mahābhāṣya, III, 2, 111. Discussed below.

96. M. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, 1889.

97. J.F. Fleet, 'The name Kushan', JRAS, 1914, i, p.381;
F.W. Thomas, JRAS, 1915, ii, p.532.

98. Konow, C.I.I., Vol. II, i, p.xlvi, xlix.

99. E.J. Rapson, CHI, I, p.525; Konow, EI, Vol. 21, p.59;
Rosenfield, The Dynastic Arts of the Kushanas, p.7 —
It appears on coins as a suffix to the individual king's name
Shaonanoshao Kaneshki Koshano (King of Kings, Kanishka the
Kushan). The same appears on inscriptions as well — Konow,
C.I.I. Vol. II, p.68.

meant a tribe or group, or sect or family of the Yüeh-chih people,¹⁰⁰

The Yüeh-chih migrations westwards led them to settle in Ta-hsia.

The Hou-Han-Shu (118, 9a) continues to describe their conditions:

'Formerly when the Yüeh-chih had been routed by the Hsiung-nu, they moved to Ta-hsia and divided their country into five hsi-hou (yabgu) of Hsiu-mi, Shuang-mi, Kuei-shuang, Hsi-tun and Tu-mi. More than a hundred years later, the yabgu of Kuei-shuang (named) Ch'iu-chiu-ch'üeh attacked and destroyed the (other) yabgu and established himself as (their) king; the kingdom was named Kuei-shuang.¹⁰¹ It was this dominant branch of the Yüeh-chih, the Kuei-shuang or the Kuṣāṇas, that came to India.

Sten Konow has consistently argued that the Kuṣāṇas were of Saka-Iranian origin. He bases his arguments on the grounds that the language used on the Kuṣāṇa coins and inscriptions shows a close affinity with language used by the Śakas. This affinity leads him to suggest that they were a Saka clan or family.¹⁰² La Vallée Poussin, in accordance with the views of Thomas and Grousset, also holds that the Kuṣāṇas were 'Scythians'.¹⁰³ Working on this assumption, could the Sanskrit use of Śaka have been loose enough to include the Kuṣāṇas? But to pursue this thesis there has to be some literary, epigraphic or numismatic evidence that would give even the slightest hint about the Kuṣāṇas in India being known as Śakas.

100. B.N. Mukherjee, Studies in Kushāna Genealogy and Chronology, p.19

101. E. Zürcher, Papers on the date of Kaniska, p.367.

102. Konow's views summarized from -- C.I.I., Vol. II, pp.li-liiii; JIH, 'Notes on Indo-Scythian Chronology', 1933, p. 1ff. Konow (JIH, p.6) identifies the Asiani with the Yüeh-chih and the Tocharians as inhabitants of Bactria before the invasion of the Yüeh-chih of that region.

103. La Vallée Poussin, L'Inde Aux Temps des Mauryas..., p.303, p.308.

On the other hand, Tuṣāra or Tukhāra of the Epic and Purānic texts has been suggested as another appellation for the Kuṣānas in India and this seems to be more plausible. The Tikhāras are identified with the Tokharians or Tocharians, the nomadic conquerors of Bactria. Strabo¹⁰⁴ mentions the Τόχαροι (Tochari) as one of the Saka tribes that drove the Greeks out of Bactria. The reference to the word Tou-ch'u-lo in Chinese texts is further connected with Tochari and Tikhāra by scholars and Sir H.W. Bailey establishes the philological relation between these words.¹⁰⁵

The Indian sources do not give any further details that would help to clarify the identification of the Tocharians or Tikhāras with the Kuṣānas. The Purānic lists indicate that there were fourteen Tuṣāra kings that succeeded the Yavanas¹⁰⁶ and these, according to B.N. Puri, are 'precisely the rulers called Kushāna in inscriptions and coins'.¹⁰⁷ Not only are the Tuṣāra kings mentioned but the Tuṣāras as a people are mentioned almost consistently with the Sakas, Yavanas, Dāradas, Pāradas, Khāśas, Cīnas, Harahūnas etc.¹⁰⁸ and are sometimes called mlecchas.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, it is quite probable that while the Kuṣāna rulers do not use the tribal epithet, the Indian sources continue to name them as Tuṣāras.¹¹⁰

104. Strabo, XI, 5, 15; XI, 8, 2.

105. S. Lévi, 'Notes sur les Indo-Scythes', JA, 1897, IX, p.10 n.1, points out that in the Chinese version of the Bodhisattva-charyyā-nirdeśa the name Yüeh-chih has been substituted by Tou-ch'u-lo. Further, since the Ta-Yüeh-chih is identical to the Tochari of the Classical sources and to the Tikhāra of the Sanskrit ones it should not be surprising that the name Tocharian dynasty does not appear in documents.

B.N. Mukherjee, Kushāna Genealogy and Chronology, p.23, pp.25-26, also suggests the equation Yüeh-chih=Tou-ch'u-lo.

Sir H.W. Bailey, 'Ttagara', BSOAS, VIII, pp.887-890.

106. Matsya P., 273, 19; Vāyu P., 99, 360; Brahmaṇḍa P., III, 74, 172.

107. B.N. Puri, India under the Kushānas, 1965, p.6.

108. Mbh., II, 47, 26; III, 48, 20; etc.; Rāmāyana, Kishk. K., XLIV, 15; Vāyu P., 58, 83; Matsya P., 144, 57; Brahmaṇḍa P., II, 31, 73; Mārkaṇḍeya P., LVII, 39; etc.

109. Harivaṃśa, 85, 19.

110. B.N. Puri, Op. Cit., p.8.

Although it cannot be conclusively established by what name the Kusānas were known in Indian writings, the role that they played in the socio-economic affairs of northern India for at least two centuries could not have been totally ignored by the brāhmanas. By conquering vast parts of the Gangetic valley down to Varānasī or even farther east they had disturbed the orderly existence of every day life. Further, the fact that the Kusāna kings worked essentially in a Buddhist framework, they may have posed a threat to the brāhmanical supremacy. The Indians were too weak to resist this foreign invasion even less than the earlier incursions, and thus ultimately the period of foreign domination was described as one of the evils of the Kali age. ¹¹¹

Remnants of Kusāna power persisted in Gandhāra, Western Punjab and parts of Kāśmir till the middle of the fourth century A.D., ¹¹² while the Śakas who had established a prosperous kingdom in Gujerat and part of Malwa continued to rule till the end of the fourth century A.D. ¹¹³ In the meantime the Gupta Kings succeeded in creating a vast empire from their original nucleus in the Ganges basin. The atmosphere was ideal for the growth of Classical Hinduism though Buddhism and Jainism did not fail to receive the patronage of the Gupta emperors. However, the supremacy of both the new political and the new socio-religious system, did not remain unchallenged. The challenge came in the form of yet another foreign invasion and this time the mlecchas were the Hūnas.

111. Discussed below.

112. Altekar & Majumdar, The Vākātaka-Gupta Age, 1954, pp.16-22 some of the Indian provinces of the Kusānas were conquered by the Sassanians, though the former continued to rule as feudatories under their ascendancy. Later under Kidāra the Kusānas probably expanded their domain into Kāśmir and central Punjab.

113. Chattopadhyaya, Śakas in India, 1955, p.52.

The Hūnas who came to India are known as the Ephthalites or the White Huns. They are often confused with the Hiung-nus but the Chinese writers are always careful to distinguish between the Hiung-nus that quarelled with the Yüeh-chih and compelled them to move towards the west and the Ye-ti-li-do or Yeda i.e. Ephthalites.¹¹⁴

The Hūnas became a factor in Indian history from about the middle of the fifth century A.D. and continued for less than hundred years. The threat of their invasion was felt at the end of the reign of the Gupta emperor Kumāragupta (d. 455 A.D.) but it was in the reign of Skandagupta that serious attempts to forestall these invaders was taken. There are references in the Junāgadha inscription to a struggle with hostile kings including those against the mlecchas whose pride is finally broken.¹¹⁵ This inscription belongs to the early years of Skandagupta's reign.¹¹⁶ Later, in the Bhitari Stone Pillar inscription the serious conflict which he had with the Hūnas is described.¹¹⁷ The war with the mlecchas probably refers to his fight with the Hūnas.¹¹⁸ Allan also thinks that the mlecchas are the Hūnas and that a story in the Kathāsaritsāgara seems to preserve the memory of Skandagupta and his victory over the Hūnas.¹¹⁹ Chattopadhyaya disagrees with the above view; according to him the mlecchas were 'some enemies' whom Skandagupta

114. R. Ghirshmann, Les Chionites-Hephtalites, 1948, pp. 115-119; Chattopadhyaya, History of North India..., 1968, p.231.

115. J.F. Fleet, C.I.I., Vol. III, 1886, 'Junāgadha Rock Inscription of Skandagupta', No. 14, line 4, pp.58-65.

116. Ibid., p.59.

117. J.F. Fleet, Op. Cit., 'Bhitari Stone Inscription', No. 13, line 15, pp.53-56.

118. Majumdar, Vākātaka-Gupta Age, p.163.

119. Allan, Catalogue of Gupta Coins, London 1914, p.xlvi; Kathāsaritsāgara, XVIII, 171 — The mlecchas who inflict even the gods and brāhmanas with oppression.

had to fight with immediately after his father's death. His suggestion is that the battle with these enemies took place somewhere in the Saurashtra region. As to the mlecchas, he suggests that they consisted of different groups, possibly Greeks and Persians, who in later times were denoted by the term Yavana.¹²⁰

The Hūnas, however, are known in literature even before they actually invaded India. In the Mahābhārata the Hūnas are mentioned as an outside people, located to the north along with the Cīnas,¹²¹ with the Ramathas and other kings of the west,¹²² and as mlecchas.¹²³ In the Raghuvamśa, when the details of Raghu's western conquests are described, the Hūnas are placed on the northernmost part of the Indus.¹²⁴ Their country is mentioned in most Purānas.¹²⁵ In the Vāyu Purāna the hill country of the Kirātas is mentioned together with that of the Hūnas while in the Viṣṇu Purāna the Hūnas are among the several people mentioned who drank water from the rivers of Bhāratavarṣa.¹²⁶

It is therefore clear that the Sanskrit terms Yavana, Saka, Pahlava and Hūna refer to foreign groups and their rulers who initially came from outside the Indian subcontinent. By military conquest they established themselves as the political masters of parts of northern and western India, a process which began with Yavana rule in the second century B.C. and continued with brief intervals down to the sixth century A.D. The Śakas and the Kuṣāṇas were the most successful groups,

120. Chattopadhyaya, History of North India..., pp.218-219.

121. Mbh., III, 48, 21; II, 47, 19.

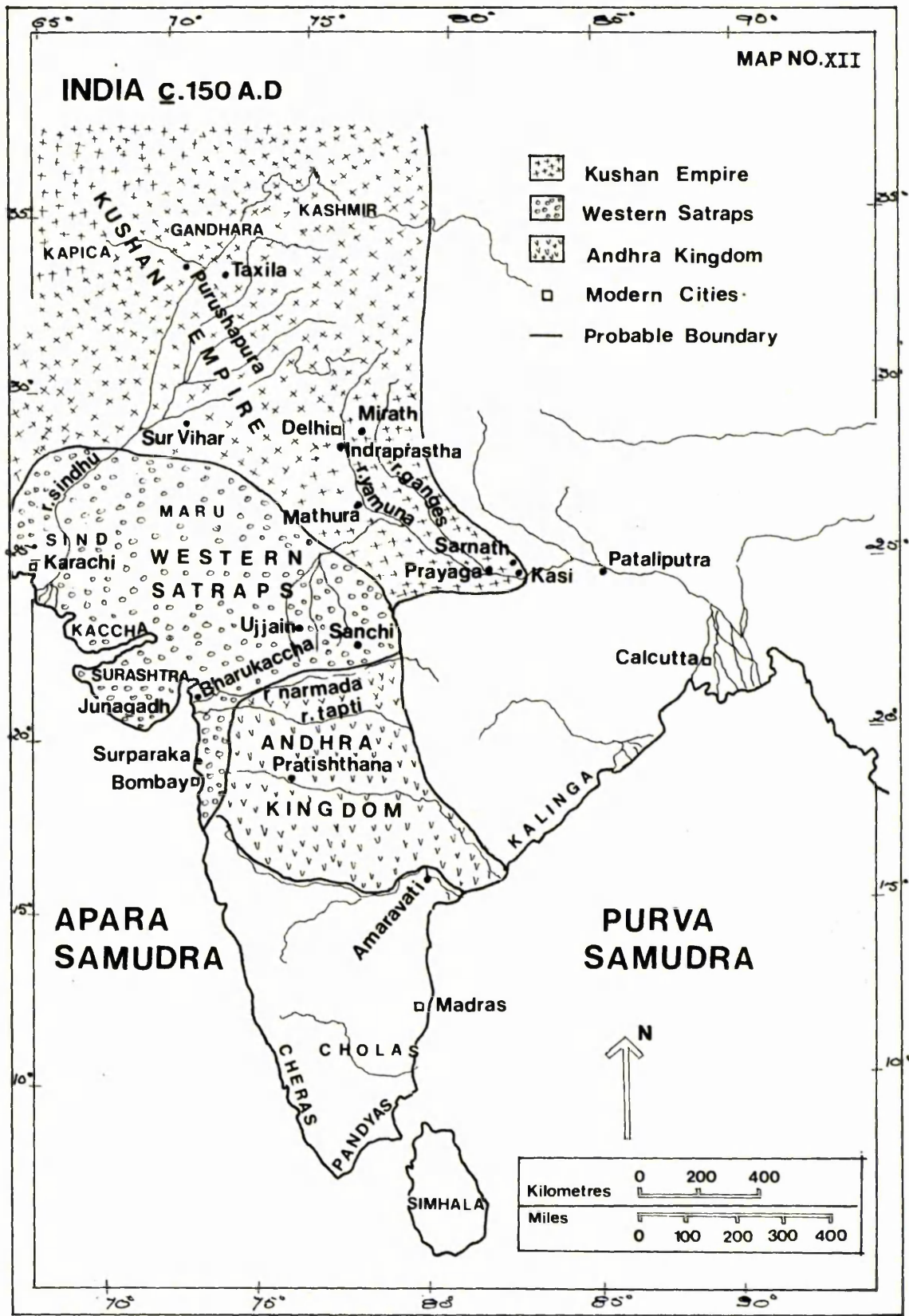
122. Mbh., II, 29, 11.

123. Mbh., VI, 10, 64.

124. Raghuvamśa, IV, 67-68 — their women are pictured as having made their cheeks pale-red.

125. Mārkaṇḍeya P., LVIII, 46.

126. Vāyu P., 45, 136; Viṣṇu P., II, 3, 17.



both in terms of the length of time that they ruled and in so far as they penetrated farthest into the interior of India.

FOREIGNERS IN BRAHMANICAL TRADITION:

It is fortunate that we can reconstruct at least the political history of foreign rulers in India from different sources such as coins, inscriptions and foreign accounts, as the Indian literary tradition has very little to say about it.¹²⁷ On the other hand, information about the migration of foreigners in general, that must have occurred along with, and in the wake of these conquests, is lacking. In the present context we are not concerned merely in evaluating whether foreign kings were regarded as mlecchas but rather, whether all foreigners were thus designated. It must be stated from the outset that brāhmanical literature very rarely refers to the status of the Yavanas, Śakas or Hūnas i.e. whether they were nobles or commoners.

As to the original meaning of the term mleccha there seems little doubt that it was applied to the primitive tribes of the forests and mountains, or simply to people about whom the brāhmanical writers were ignorant. The earliest occurrence of the word is in the Śatapatha Brāhmana¹²⁸ where the mlecchas are looked down upon because of their speech. The unintelligible words he'lavah he'lavah in this passage can either be attributed to people who mispronounce Sanskrit or to those who speak a Prakrit dialect.¹²⁹ It is unlikely that in

127. The Purānas are the only texts that list the number of foreign kings of each dynasty and also the length of time they ruled which in most cases is exaggerated. The Purānic account of these dynasties is discussed below.

128. Śat. Br., III, 2, 1, 24.

129. K.C. Chatterjee, Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya, 1957, pp.10-11.

this text the allusion is to any incomprehensible speech of foreigners.

There is evidence that the Indians of the Vedic and Brahmānic period had had contact with people of foreign countries.¹³⁰ Furthermore, during the reign of Darius (522-486 B.C.) the Persians ruled over the Indus valley region and adjoining areas.¹³¹ The Persians, known as Pahlavas in later Sanskrit literature, are not designated as mlecchas during this period, apparently because they did not interfere with the brāhmanical way of life. But this is a very weak argument because, except for the above-mentioned passage in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa (III, 2, 1, 24), there is no further example of mleccha in the Vedas or Brāhmaṇas. Yavanas are mentioned by Pāṇini in one of his sūtras but not as mlecchas.¹³² In the Gautama Dharmasūtra Yavana is noted as a mixed caste but again not as a mleccha.¹³³ The creation of the image of foreigners as mlecchas i.e. barbarians, thus cannot be attributed to the early authors of the brāhmanical texts.

Alexander's invasion is well-known in ancient Indian history.¹³⁴ The whole of the Achaemenid empire, including its Indian provinces, succumbed to his armies. His campaign meant the end of the Persian ascendancy in the north-west but did not leave any lasting political impression in the form of Greek rule there. More important, it did not affect the social structure of Brahmanism or disturb the supremacy of the brāhmaṇas in Madhyadeśa. Alexander is not mentioned in any literary texts so that it is impossible to ascertain how he or his Greek or Macedonian soldiers were designated.

130. E.J. Rapson, CHI, Vol. I, 1922, pp.319-342.

D.C. Sircar, (Ed) Foreigners in Ancient India..., 1970 contains articles which attempt to show the role played by foreigners in general, throughout ancient India.

131. D.C. Sircar, Sel. Inscr., Chp. I, 'Inscriptions of the Akhaemenians', Nos. 1, 2, 4 & 5.

132. Aṣṭādhyāyī, IV, 1, 49.

133. Gautama Dhs., IV, 21.

134. E.J. Rapson, Op. Cit., Ch. XV.

While the disintegration of Alexander's empire was taking place, in India there emerged an empire which put an effective stop to foreign invasions for some time. The Mauryan kings exchanged envoys with the Seleucid successors of Alexander who ruled over portions of the Achaemenid empire contiguous with India. Mauryan domination was clearly felt in certain portions of Afghanistan and Baluchistan. Aśoka recognised the existence on the northern fringes of his empire as on the southern,¹³⁵ of certain peoples whose independent or semi-independent status did not justify their inclusion into his kingdom. At the same time they were important enough and entitled to be mentioned separately. The Yonas are mentioned again with the Gāndhāras, Kāmbojas, Riṣṭikas, Pateṭikas and other western borderers in another edict where the Mahāmātras are instructed to establish Dhamma among these people.¹³⁶ In the thirteenth Rock Edict the Yonas and Kāmbojas appear as peoples among whom his policy of Dhamma had succeeded. This list continues in the same Edict to include the Yona king Am̐tiyoka and four other kings together with such people as the Cōḍas, Pāṇḍyas, Keralaputras and Satiyaputras.¹³⁷

Yona for Yavana is used consistently in all the three Rock Edicts of Aśoka. However, two of the references are to a Yona king Am̐tiyoka.¹³⁸ The references to Yona in Rock Edicts II, V, XIII, are to a group of people settled in the northwest near the territory of the Kāmbojas and

135. Hultzsch, C.I.I., I, R.E. II, Girnār version, p.2ff; Sircar, Sel. Inscr., R.E. II, Girnār version, No.7, pp.18-19.

136. Hultzsch, C.I.I., I, R.E. V, Girnār pp.8-10; Kalsi pp.32-33; Shāhbāzgarhī pp.55-56; Mānsehra pp.74-75; Sircar, Sel. Inscr., R.E. V, No. 10, Mānsehra version.

137. Hultzsch, C.I.I., I, R.E. XIII, Kalsi p.43 ff; Shāhbāzgarhī p.66ff; Mānsehra p.81 ff.; Sircar, Sel. Inscr., No. 18, Shāhbāzgarhī version p. 35ff.

138. Hultzsch, C.I.I., I, pp.3-4, ft. nt. 11. Am̐tiyoga has been identified with Antiochus II Theos (260-246 B.C.).

the Gāndhāras. But like most other Indian sources Aśoka, too, used the term Yona in a loose way and it is impossible to establish whether by Yona he meant Greeks whose presence dated back to the time of Alexander or those who had settled before him and had become a permanent element in the diverse population of the north-west.

The mention of the Yonas with the Kāmbojas and Gāndhāras agrees with similar lists of people that appear in Sanskrit texts.¹³⁹ But Aśoka does not call any of these foreign peoples mlecchas. The word or its Prakrit equivalent milakka does not occur anywhere in Aśoka's Edicts. His attitude towards them was not different from that adopted towards his southern borderers. Everywhere alike two kinds of medical treatments were to be established (R.E. II) and for the well-being of all of them the law of morality must be spread among them (R.E. V and XIII). In one instance the Yonas are singled out and it is proclaimed that the two classes of brāhmanas and śramanas do not exist among them.¹⁴⁰ Thus, under Aśoka's rule the Yonas were a border people from the political point of view, as geographically they were located beyond his kingdom and could therefore not be brought under the direct administration of his empire.

The Mauryan imperial edifice gradually fell apart after the reign of Aśoka. Beyond the Hindukush, at the same time, the kingdoms of Bactria and Parthia were just beginning to emerge and India was still free from foreign attacks. We are informed by Kalhana¹⁴¹ that a son of Aśoka, named Jalauka, had taken possession of Kaśmir. He is supposed to have crushed a horde of Mlecchas and advanced as far as Kanauj.¹⁴² There is a view that the Mlecchas probably refer to the Bactrian

139. Mbh., XII, 65, 13-14; Manu, X, 43-44.

140. Hultzsch, C.I.I. R.E. XIII Kalsi version, pp.44-47. None of the other versions of this edict have these lines in full.

141. Rājatarāṅginī, I, 107-108.

142. Ibid., I, 115-117.

Greeks'.¹⁴³ Narain is opposed to this view and himself suggests that either Kalhana was attributing a later Indo-Greek invasion to the time of Jalauka or he simply referred to the incursion of some tribes from the borders as a horde of mlecchas.¹⁴⁴ In reconstructing the history of Kaśmir, Kalhana has used the term mleccha several times to describe foreigners especially the Muslims.¹⁴⁵ It is therefore not unlikely that in the above instance, too, he meant foreigners, but wrongly attributed them to the reign of Jalauka since we have evidence that Greek invasions did take place not very much later, probably during the reign of Puṣyamitra Śuṅga.

Though the Śuṅgas controlled key centres of power, their empire was definitely not as large as that of the Mauryas, but even so they could not retain it for long. The performance of two aśvamedha sacrifices¹⁴⁶ by Puṣyamitra was in vain and the Śuṅga empire dwindled within a hundred years. Patañjali, who is generally considered a contemporary of Puṣyamitra Śuṅga (c. 185-150 B.C.), mentions a Yavana invasion which presumably took place during his lifetime. The context in which he relates the invasion is to illustrate the use of the imperfect tense to denote an event that has recently happened. The vārttika further explains that it is also used to indicate an event which is out of sight of the person who is speaking but one which is generally known.¹⁴⁷ 'Arunad Yavanah Sāketam' (the Yavana was besieging Sāketa)

143. R.K. Mookerji, Age of Imperial Unity, p.90.

144. A.K. Narain, The Indo-Greeks, p.9.

145. Rājatarāṅginī, VII, 166-176; VIII, 2760-2764; VIII, 2843, 2892.

146. Mahābhāṣya, III, 2, 123.

147. Louis Renou, La Grammaire de Pāṇini, 1966, III, 2, 111.

and 'Arunad Yavano Madhyamikām' (The Yavana was besieging Madhyamikā) are the two examples that are given.¹⁴⁸ If these are not hypothetical examples one can infer that a Yavana invasion of Sāketa and Madhyamikā occurred in the second century B.C.¹⁴⁹ Like Pāṇini, Patañjali, too, does not refer to the Yavanas as mlecchas. Elsewhere in his Bhāṣya, he states that the Yavanas and Sakas do not live within the confines of what he describes as Aryāvarta.¹⁵⁰

Political events in northern India, particularly after the close of the Maurya period, become confused involving the rule of various foreign rulers. The Indo-Greek invasions were the beginning, followed by those of the Sakas and the Kuṣāṇas. These events undoubtedly changed the political scene as the indigenous kings were replaced by foreign ones, but their effects on the brāhmanical system were also gradually felt. The fact that certain powerful foreign groups existed outside the official social system controlled by the brāhmanas could not be ignored for long by its upholders; later attempts were made to account for their existence.

Sanskrit literary sources rarely give accounts of the actual invasions of the Yavanas, Sakas, Pahlavas or Hūnas. The Yuga Purāṇa section of the Garga Saṁhitā is unique in this respect.¹⁵¹ It describes

148. Mahābhāṣya, III, 2, 111.

149. The value of the examples from the Mahābhāṣya has been disputed by some scholars as these may have been 'standard' examples current in some schools of grammar.

150. Mahābhāṣya, II, 4, 10.

151. The MSS. of the Yuga Purāṇa which have been edited: K.P. Jayaswal, 'Historical data in the Garga Saṁhitā and the Brahmin Empire', JBORS, Vol. XIV, 1928, pp.400-431. D.R. Mankad, 'A critically edited text of the Yuga Purāṇa', JUPHS, Vol. XX, 1947, pp.32-64; D.C. Sircar, 'The account of the Yavanas in the Yuga Purāṇa', JRAS, 1963, pp.7-20; H. Kern, The Brhatsaṁhitā, pp.32-40. The Ms. used by him is now lost.

the Yavana and Saka invasions at some length and mentions a few other foreign invasions.

The Yuga Purāna is the earliest among the extant works of the Purāna type.¹⁵² Kern assigns this text to c. 50 B.C. and considers it contemporaneous with certain portions of the Mahābhārata.¹⁵³ Jayaswal has dated it back to the latter half of the first century B.C.¹⁵⁴ One problem about the dating of this text is to decide whether it could refer to an earlier period even if it was not composed earlier than the first century B.C. Since the language used in the different manuscripts of the Yuga Purāna is often corrupt, there is no unanimity about some of the interpretations. There is for instance, a difference of opinion as to whether the Yavanas attacked Pāṭaliputra (Kusumadhvaḥ, Puspapura) alone after occupying Pañcāla and Mathurā¹⁵⁵ or with the help of the Pañcālas and Māthuras.¹⁵⁶

The account begins with a description of the good life during the first three yugas, followed by vivid details of the evils during the Kali yuga. Foremost among these evils are the foreign invasions, commencing with that of the Yavanas. The latter stayed in Madhyadeśa for a short while as soon a war broke out among them. Before the advent of the first group of Śaka rulers is related, seven powerful rulers of Sāketa are said to have reigned. Next the names of four foreign kings — Amlāṭa, Gopāla (Jayaswal has Gopālobhāma), Pusyaka and Anarāya

152. None of the other Purānas discusses the Yavana and Śaka invasions of India but they do give a list of the foreign dynasties.

153. Kern, Brhatsaṃhitā, Introduction, pp.39-40.

154. Jayaswal, JBORS, XIV, p.399.

155. Kern, Op.Cit., p.37; Sircar, JRAS, 1963, p.17.

156. Jayaswal, JBORS, XIV, p.410; Mankad, JUPHS, XX, p.38.

(Jayaswal has Savila) — are mentioned. According to Jayaswal these are mleccha kings and Greeks.¹⁵⁷ Except for Āmlāṭa who is called a mleccha, there is no indication in the text of the others being called mlecchas or Yavanas.¹⁵⁸ Towards the end of this account there is another mention of the Śaka conquerors.¹⁵⁹

The absence of precise data in the above account makes it difficult to identify these rulers with the Greek and Scythian rulers known to us from numismatic and inscriptional sources. Attempts at identification have, however, been made.¹⁶⁰ But the major significance of this account is that it gives us a fair insight into the sort of attitudes that were held by its authors and the contemporary élite about foreign rulers in general. The description of the Yavana attack on Pāṭaliputra is followed in a prophetic way by a description of the evilness of the Yavanas — 'They will eat up (i.e. oppress) the people (and) will burn (alive) five rulers at Nagara (Pāṭaliputra)'.¹⁶¹ The Śaka kings are described as greedy, very powerful, wicked and sinful.¹⁶² The portrayal of the king named Āmlāṭa is particularly striking — 'the red-eyed foreigner (mleccha) will destroy the four castes by making all old established castes low placed.'¹⁶³ Finally,

157. Jayaswal, JBORS, XIV, p.419.

158. D.R. Mankad, Yuga Purānam, text line 136 —
tataḥ sa mleccha āmlāto raktākṣo raktavastrabhṛt

159. According to Jayaswal (p. 418, 420) the first group of Śakas referred to were those who ruled over Mathura and the latter group are the Śakas of Western India.

160. Sircar, JRAS, 1963, p.13; Jayaswal, JBORS, XIV, pp.415, 416, 418, 420.

161. Sircar, JRAS, 1963, Text and Trans. B, lines 1-2, pp.17-18; Mankad, JUPHS, 1947, Text lines 111-112, p.55, Trans. p.39 — gives another translation for these lines but conveys the same impression that the Yavanas are feared as oppressors.

162. Jayaswal, JBORS, XIV, Section 9, lines 53-57, pp.404, 411.

163. Ibid., Section 11, lines 65, 67-68, p.419.

the second group of Śakas is made responsible for the population losing their conduct and being degraded in their own acts.¹⁶⁴ The rest of the account then describes the evils of the Kali age in general.

The people suffered because these invasions brought in their wake physical disaster and destruction, as wars usually do. But what is more striking are the constant references to the demoralization of the people and the mixture of castes, which clearly reflects the fear among the brāhmaṇa authors that their old established authority was at stake. The presence of foreigners also meant that there were large groups of people outside the caste system.

In the Yuga Purāna the Yavanas and the Śakas are in fact not called mlecchas. However, the early centuries A.D. saw the formulation of a number of mythical stories, narrated in the Epics and the Purānas, which sought to attribute to them Indian origin and in the process called them mlecchas. The Purāna texts, in particular, also present us with a small section on the names of foreign dynasties, as part of the whole account that lists the dynasties which reigned in India during the Kali age. As far as content and new material is concerned this narrative about foreign rulers is almost useless, but from the point of view of the study of brāhmaṇical attitudes it is imperative to discuss its worth.

The Matsya, Vāyu, Brahmānda, Viṣṇu, Bhāgavata, Garuḍa and Bhaviṣya Purānas contain different versions of the account of the dynasties of the Kali age. Of these we will concentrate on those related in the first three since they are not only the earlier ones but also because

164. Ibid., Section 15, lines 106-110.

they give comparatively the most detailed description.¹⁶⁵ The prophetic nature of all these versions cannot be missed but evidently they were not prophecies as the texts were compiled after the events they describe took place¹⁶⁶ and further 'there is no doubt that these accounts have been steadily revised in detail..'¹⁶⁷

Thus it is said that besides the splendid ksatriya stock of the families of Aila and Ikṣvāku, those who shall be kings in the future will be ksatriyas, pāraśavas, śūdras and others who will be foreigners, Andhras, Śakas and Pulindas, Cūlikas and Yavanas, Kaivartas, Abhīras and Śabaras and others who will be of mleccha origin.¹⁶⁸ Detail about these kings is limited and not very reliable. The ten Abhīra kings are said to rule for sixty-seven years, the seven Gardabhins or Gardabhīlas for seventy-two years, the eighteen Śakas¹⁶⁹ for one hundred and eighty-three years, the eight Yavanas for eighty-seven years, the fourteen Tuśāras for seven thousand years,¹⁷⁰ the thirteen Murundas

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165. F.E. Pargiter, The Purāna Texts of the Dynasties of the Kali Age, Oxford 1913, p.v-vi. The Viṣṇu and the Bhāgavata are similar in their accounts and often little more than a string of names (p.vi). The Garuda is even more condensed than the Bhāgavata and therefore a very late version. Finally, there is only one copy of the Bhaviṣya that contains the dynastic matter (the Sri Venkateśavara Ed.) but this account is worthless and dilates on more 'recent' history.
166. Pargiter, DKA, 1913, pp.xxvi-xxviii, assumed that these accounts were composed gradually first in Prakrit that had been recited by bards and minstrels but the Sanskrit forms were given the shape of a prophecy uttered by Vyāsa.
167. Ibid., p.ix.
168. Matsya P., 50, 72-76; Vāyu P., 99, 265-270. These verses do not appear in the other Purānas.
169. The Brahmānda and the Vāyu have 10 Śaka kings.
170. The Matsya has 7000 years, the Vāyu and Brahmānda have 500 years but according to Pargiter 107 and 105 years are meant respectively.

along with low caste men; all of mleccha origin for two hundred years, and finally, the eleven Maunas¹⁷¹ for one hundred and three years.¹⁷²

In the introduction of the section on the Kali age in the Matsya Purāna (50, 72-76), it is stated that those kings who will arise in the future will be ksatriyas, pāraśavas, śūdras and foreigners and the Sanskrit word used for the last group is bahiścara ('outsider') but not mleccha —

ksatrāḥ pāraśavāḥ śūdras tathā 'nye ye bahiścaraḥ (50, 75)

The next line, however, names the Śakas and Yavanas with other people like the Andhras, Pulindas, Cūlikās, Kaivartas, Abhīras and Śabarās and ends with the words 'and others of mleccha origin'—

andhāḥ śakāḥ pulindās ca cūlikā yavanās tathā kaivartābhīraśabarā ye cānye mlecchasaṁbhavāḥ (50, 76)

Here it may be implied that the names of the groups mentioned above and some others not listed, were of mleccha origin. In the Vāyu (99, 265-270) which is the only other Purāna that has this passage, the kings that will arise in the future will be ksatriyas, pāraśavas, śūdras and dvi-jātis —

ksatrāḥ pāraśavāḥ śūdrās tathā ye ca dvi-jātayah (99, 267)

and further continues the list with the Andhras, Śakas, Pulindas, Tūlikas (for Cūlikas), Yavanas, Kaivartas, Abhīras and other mleccha jātis —

andhrāḥ śakāḥ pulindās ca tūlikā yavanaiḥ saha kaivartābhīraśabarā ye cānye mlecchajātayah (99, 268)

171. The Matsya has 19 Hūna kings.

172. Matsya P., 273, 17-24; Vāyu P., 99, 358-365; Brahmānda P., III, 74, 171-179. The dynastic list in the Matsya Purāna ends here with the local and mleccha dynasties (50, 24), and therefore it has been regarded the first compilation. The Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas continue to list dynasties after this period. Brahmānda P., III, 74, 179-200; Vāyu P., 99, 366-388. The Viṣṇu and the Bhāgavata Purānas, however, copy their lists from these two but summarize them.

The Vāyu does not indicate their mleccha origin but simply states that they are mlecchajātis. There is no doubt that foreign peoples and their kings were considered mlecchas but the designation for the latter was sometimes carefully avoided as is evident from other passages in the same texts.

The section on the Kali age which lists the various names of dynasties (listed above) does not mention either the mleccha origin or the mleccha status of any of the following foreign groups: the Yavanas, the Tuṣāras, the Śakas, or the Hūnas. It is only the thirteen Murundas along with low-caste men whose mleccha origin¹⁷³ and status¹⁷⁴ are indicated. Pargiter, however, regards all these as mleccha dynasties,¹⁷⁵ and according to him the brāhmaṇas who revised the accounts in the Vāyu and Brahmānda Purānas during the Gupta period merely revised the language and not the statements because firstly, they had few data for precise calculations¹⁷⁶ and secondly, they had little inclination to alter facts about mleccha or śūdra dynasties. Yet, Pargiter himself points out that in the revised editions of the Purānas,¹⁷⁷ there is an allusion to Nahapāna's successors and this, he rightly suggests, may be due to the fact that these Śakas fostered brāhmanism and Sanskrit learning.¹⁷⁸

The brāhmaṇas were clearly aware of the rule of foreign dynasties but chose to ignore them and sometimes their mleccha origins as it

173. Matsya P., 273, 22.

174. Vāyu P., 99, 363; Brahmānda P., III, 74, 177.

175. Pargiter, DKA, p.xxvi.

176. Ibid. With regards to the Śakas particularly they should have added another period of sixty or seventy years.

177. Vāyu P., 99, 366-372; Brahmānda P., III, 74, 179-185.

178. Pargiter, DKA, p.xxvi, ft. note 2.

suited them. Political expediency may have been one of the reasons for this, as court brāhmanas could not have maintained their position without royal support. But when the foreign rulers adopted brāhmanic ways the question of dubbing them as mlecchas could not arise as then their behaviour could not be considered 'uncivilized'.

It cannot, however, be overlooked that not all foreign kings adopted brāhmanic ways, and even if they did, this happened only after a period of time. Secondly, there is no evidence that foreigners in general, particularly soldiers and merchants, who migrated to India during this period, behaved as the brāhmanas expected them to. Thus the Purānas describe the unsettled conditions of the country between the second and fourth centuries A.D. in rather gloomy and exaggerated terms ---

bhaviṣyantiha yavanā dharmataḥ kāmato 'rthataḥ/
naiva mūrdhābhisiktās te bhaviṣyanti narādhipāḥ//
yugadoṣadurācārā bhaviṣyanti nrpās tu te/
strīnāṃ bālavadhenaiva hatvā cāiva parasparam//
bhokṣyanti kaliṣese tu vasudhāṃ pāṛthivās tathā/
uditōditavaṃśās tē uditāstānitās tathā//
bhaviṣyantiha paryāye kālena pṛthivīksitāḥ/
viḥnās tu bhaviṣyanti dharmataḥ kāmato 'rthataḥ//
tair vimīśrā janapadā āryā mlecchās ca sarvaśah/
viparyayena vartante kṣayam eṣyanti vai prajāḥ// 179

(There will be Yavanas here by reason of religious feeling (Dharma) or ambition or plunder; they will not be kings solemnly anointed, but will follow evil customs by reason of the corruption of the age. Massacring women and children,¹⁸⁰ and killing one another, kings will enjoy the earth at the end of the Kali age. Kings of continual upstart races, falling as soon as they arise, will exist in succession through Fate. They will be destitute of righteousness, affection, and wealth. Mingled with them will be Ārya and Mleccha folk everywhere:¹⁸¹ they prevail in

179. Matsya P., 273, 25-27; Vāyu P., 99, 388-393; Brahmānda P., III, 74, 200-203; Viṣṇu P., IV, 24, 18-19; Bhāgavata P., XII, 1, 41-43. The details in each Purāna differ and the text cited above is the one reconstructed by Pargiter from all the Purānas.

180. The Bhāgavata adds that cattle and brāhmanas were also massacred.

181. The Viṣṇu Purāna adds that these people will be 'audacious through royal support.'

turn; the population will perish.'¹⁸² However gloomy a picture the Purāna writers tried to depict, foreigners and foreign rulers were a social and political reality. Simultaneously, therefore, we have accounts in the form of stories in Indian literature, to explain their existence in India.

One of the most popular of these is that which describes their creation by Nandinī, the magical cow of Vasishtha.¹⁸³ To combat the army of Viśvāmitra who was forcibly taking her away from Vasishtha, Nandinī created a strong mleccha army. These mlecchas in their manifold armours and brandishing arms comprised among others the Yavanas, Śakas and Pahlavas.¹⁸⁴

The gist of the legend is the fight between Viśvāmitra and Vasishtha - the ksatriya and the brāhmana -- and it was the brāhmana who had foreigners to fight for him. Further, it does not appear that it was the object of the account to represent this miraculous creation as the origin of the different tribes and peoples because the description of the way in which they were brought forth is quite incredible.¹⁸⁵ The intention probably was to offer some explanation for the presence of a large army consisting of peoples which already formed different elements of the population and were in particular noted for their military might.

182. Pargiter, DKA, Translation, p.74.

183. Mbh., I, 165, 30-38; Rāmāyana, I, LV, 18-20.

184. The other people created from the magical cow that formed the army of Vasishtha were the Śabaras, the Pundras, the Kirātas, the Dramidas, the Simhalas, the Barbaras, the Dāradas and Mlecchas.

185. Mbh., I, 165, 34-36 -- From her anus she (Vasishtha's cow) created the Pahlavas, the Śabaras and Śakas from her dung, from her urine she created the Yavanas and from her foam she brought forth the Pundras, Kirātas, Dramidas, Simhalas, Barbaras, Dāradas and Mlecchas.

The military capabilities of the Yavanas, Śakas and Pahlavas were well appreciated by both the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, and before the war began the former sent messengers to their friends to collect an army. Among the friends are mentioned the kings of the Śakas, the Pahlavas, the Dāradas and the Kāmbojas.¹⁸⁶ They, however, allied with both the parties.¹⁸⁷ Like most other kings they attended the Rājasūya celebrations of Yudhiṣṭhira and waited at the gates of the city to pay their tribute.¹⁸⁸ In the Mudrārāksasa, Cāṇakya also availed of Śaka and Yavana help in his conspiracy against Malayaketu.¹⁸⁹

There is another explanation for the Indian ancestry of the Yavanas in particular supplied by the Epics and Purānas. They are classed as descendants of Turvaśu, one of the four sons of Yayāti. Turvaśu and his brothers declined to accede to their father's request that they should exchange their condition of youthful vigour for his decrepitude, and were in consequence cursed by him. They were cursed to rule over people such as the Yavanas, Bhojās and Yādavas.¹⁹⁰ In the Rg Veda¹⁹¹ the Yadus and Turvaśas are dubbed as dāsas. According to Chattopadhyaya they were not the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India but came to India after the Vedic people had established themselves.¹⁹²

186. Mbh., V, 4, 15.

187. Mbh., V, 196, 7; VI, 52, 7; VII, 19, 7; VII, 95, 34, 37; 45; etc.

188. Mbh., II, 47, 12-13.

189. Mudrārāksasa, II, 13.

190. Mbh., I, 80, 23-24; Matsya P., 34, 29-30.

191. Rg Veda, X, 62, 10.

192. S. Chattopadhyaya, Racial Affinities of Early North Indian Tribes, 1973, p. 2 — Indra brought the Turvaśas and Yadus from a distant land safely over the sea (Rg Veda, VI, 20, 12).

R. Shafer, taking the etymology of names Yadu, Turvaśa, Anu, Puru and Druhyu, into consideration, concludes that they belonged to hostile tribes who attacked the Aryans.¹⁹³ The Yavanas as the sons of Turvaśu are distinct from the Mlecchas who are the sons of Anu in the Mahābhārata, but both these people were in some ways outside the original Aryan fold. The Yavanas as the descendants of Turvaśu are portrayed as people who had impure practices and precepts, who ate meat, who were sinful and anārya.¹⁹⁴

The allusions to the Yavanas, Śakas, Pahlavas as essential constituents of Indian society is emphasized at greater length in the two accounts that will be discussed next. The first account occurs, with variations in detail, in the Harivaṁśa, the Rāmāyana and in some Purāṇas. The achievements of the Ikṣvāku dynasty were temporarily halted when the kingdom of Bāhu was vanquished by the Haihaya and Tālajaṅgha tribes,¹⁹⁵ assisted by the Śakas, Yavanas, Kāmojas, Pahlavas and Pāradas.¹⁹⁶

Sagara, the son of Bāhu, recovered his kingdom by exterminating the Haihayas and the Tālajaṅghas and would also have destroyed the Śakas, Yavanas, Kāmojas, Pāradas and Pahlavas but these tribes applied to Vasiṣṭha, the family priest of Sagara, for protection. Vasiṣṭha absolved them from the duties of their castes and Sagara contented himself with making the Yavanas shave the upper half of their heads, the Pāradas to wear long hair, the Pahlavas to let their beards grow

193. R. Shafer, Ethnography, in Ancient India, 1953, pp. 17-18.

194. Mbh.— (Tr.) P. C. Roy, Vol. I, p. 179.

195. Viṣṇu P., IV, 3, 26; Brahmāṇḍa P., III, 48, 22-26.

196. The list of people who assisted them varies in each text; Vāyu P., 88, 122, 128, has Pāravas instead of Pāradas; Bhāgavata P., IX, 8, 1-5, lists the Yavanas, Śakas and Barbaras only. Mbh., III, 106, 8.

in obedience to his commands. He also absolved them from the established duties to offer oblations to the fire and to study the Vedas.¹⁹⁷ In this manner, the Viṣṇu Purāna adds, being unable to carry out religious rites and abandoned by the brāhmanas, these different tribes became mlecchas.¹⁹⁸ The Bhāgavata Purāna, which is relatively late (eighth-ninth century A. D.) and sectarian, significantly recasts the story by omitting any reference to the restrictions imposed on the religion of these people but simply refers to their ugly appearance.¹⁹⁹ The account in the Harivaṃśa²⁰⁰ agrees in the main with that of the Purānas, but the author of this text adds that the Śakas, Yavanas, Kāambojas, Pāradas, Pahlavas, Māhiṣikas, Dāravas, Cholas and Keralas had all been kṣatriyas before Sagara acting on Vasīṣṭha's advice deprived them of their social and religious status.²⁰¹

The statement that Sagara barred them from the study of the sacred texts and from enjoying the assistance of brāhmanas implies that they had these privileges before. Therefore, they must have been kṣatriyas when they were defeated by Sagara (Harivaṃśa, X, 44-45). They could not have otherwise claimed the protection of Vasīṣṭha. It is, of course, impossible to accept the historicity of the claim that the Yavanas, Śakas etc. allied with the Haihayas and the Tālaजाण्घas to defeat the Īkṣvākus. However, the Yavanas and Śakas had become kings and controlled northern Indian politics for some time. The brāhmanas in general could not have maintained their positions and privileges intact

197. Vāyu P., 88, 122, 136-143; Brahmāṇḍa P., III, 48, 43-49; III, 63, 119-134.

198. Viṣṇu P., IV, 3, 38-41.

199. Bhāgavata P., IX, 8, 6-10.

200. Harivaṃśa, X, 41-45.

201. Ibid., X, 44-45.

without their patronage. As some of these princes did not, however, live in the manner expected of Hindu rulers, a compromise had to be found. The ingenious solution was to regard these kings as erstwhile ksatriyas who had been degraded. Being originally ksatriyas they could, at least theoretically, become ksatriyas again although, in the eyes of the brāhmanas they may have behaved like mlecchas.

The second and slightly different account that portrays these foreign groups as degraded ksatriyas occurs in the Mānava Dharmaśāstra and in the Anuśāsana parvan of the Mahābhārata. Manu declares that the Kambojas, Yavanas, Śakas, Pāradas, Pahlavas, Cīnas and some other tribes were originally ksatriyas but sank to the position of Sūdras (vr̥salas) because of their neglect of the sacred rites and disrespect to brāhmanas.²⁰² Medhātithi in his bhāṣya explains that these people became 'low born' because in their respective countries one does not meet with any clear division of the four castes and above all they inhabit the borders of Āryāvarta.²⁰³

Clearly, Manu himself was not certain as to what status the foreign rulers should be given. In the very next verse he contradicts himself by stating that all those whose origin is other than that described in the puruṣasūkta are to be regarded as dasyus, irrespective of whether they speak the language of āryas or of the mlecchas.²⁰⁴ Kullūka, another of Manu's commentators, explains this verse in the words: 'All the tribes, which by loss of sacred rites and so forth, have become outcastes from the pale of the four castes, brāhmanas,

202. Manu, X, 43-44. The people mentioned in this verse as vr̥sala are the Paundrakas, Oḍras, Drāviḍas, Kambojas, Yavanas, Śakas, Pāradas, Pahlavas, Cīnas, Kirātas, Dāradas and Khasas.

203. Medhātithi on Manu, X, 44.

204. Manu, X, 45.

ksatriyas, vaiśyas and sūdras, whether they speak the language of the mlecchas or of the āryas, are called dasyus.²⁰⁵

Although Manu is the only Smṛti writer who has this verse, it occurs twice in the Mahābhārata: 'These ksatriya tribes viz. Śakas, Yavanas, Kāmbojas, Drāviḍas, Kalindas, Pulindas, Uśinaras and Māhiṣakas have become vṛśalas from seeing no brāhmanas.'²⁰⁶ The lists of ksatriya-jātis in the Mahābhārata and the Mānava Dharmasāstra vary, but in both cases, the names of foreign peoples are mentioned. However, while in the latter this particular verse occurs in the chapter on mixed castes, in the former it is followed by passages written in glorification of brāhmanas: '...the brāhmanas cannot be conquered by anyone upon earth. The world cannot be ruled in opposition to brāhmanas; ...'²⁰⁷ This may have been meant as a warning to foreign rulers to abide by the caste rules. There is no evidence to the effect that these princes deliberately tried to antagonize the brāhmanas. On the contrary, in the case of the Śakas, we have information that they made conscious attempts to appease them.²⁰⁸ In fact they fitted in comfortably in the caste hierarchy, and, again, in the case of the Śakas of Western India, the kings did their utmost to prevent the mixing of castes and protect the law of varṇa.²⁰⁹

However, it must not be overlooked that such attempts cannot be attributed to all foreign rulers and certainly not to all foreigners. A more important conclusion, however, is the fact that ancient Indian attitudes represented in the literary sources available to us are by no means homogenous and ultimately, it seems that some schools

205. Kullūka on Manu, X, 45.

206. Mbh., XIII, 33, 19-21; Mbh., XIII, 35, 17-18 — here additional tribes have been mentioned the Mekalas, Laṭas, Paundras, Dāradas, Barbaras and Kirātas.

207. Mbh., XIII, 35.

208. E.I., No. 10, 'Nasik Cave Inscription', p. 78 — large donations of cows and villages are made to brāhmanas.

209. E.I., VIII, No. 6, 'Junāgadhā Inscription of Rudradāman', pp. 36-49.

of brāhmaṇas regarded only some foreigners as mlecchas and not others, whereas other schools which seemed to regard all foreigners as mlecchas. We have quoted the above instance mentioned in a Nasik Cave inscription where the king Ṛṣabhadatta gave cows (numbering 300,000) and villages (numbering 16) to the brāhmaṇas. He is also said to have fed thousands of brāhmaṇas all the year around.²¹⁰ Chattopadhyaya raises the question as to whether all these brāhmaṇas were Indians, for the Saka Brāhmaṇas, 'Brakhmanoi Magoi' were already present in the country.²¹¹ His statement finds some support in the Epics and the Purānas, which inform us that among the Sakas²¹² the Magas were the brāhmaṇas, the Māgadhas the kṣatriyas, the Mānasas the vaiśyas and the Mandagas the sūdras.²¹³ The Mahābhārata, a melting pot of the various periods of Indian history, informs us of the operation of the varṇāśramadharmā in Sākadvīpa, which was an ideal place to live in.²¹⁴ Raj Kumar Arora emphasises the fact that the Maga Brāhmaṇas, whom he specifically links with the priestly class of Sākadvīpa, became closely associated with the Bhaviṣya Purāna, in his words: 'They made the Bhaviṣya the the mouth piece and repository of their distinctive ideas and thoughts

210. E.I., VIII, No. 10, p. 78 ff. — Ṛṣabhadatta (Uṣavadāta) was the son of Dīnīka and the son-in-law of Nahapana, the Kṣatriya.

211. S. Chattopadhyaya, Sakas in India, 1955, p. 40.

212. Satya Shraya, The Sakas in India, Lahore, 1947, tries to establish the antiquity of the Sakas in India as inhabitants of Sākadvīpa who were civilized tribes and this explains the references in Manu and the Mahābhārata to their becoming degraded for want of brāhmaṇa preachers pp. 7-8.

213. Viṣṇu P., II, 4, 69, 1; Bhaviṣya P., I, 139, 73-74, the Bhaviṣya names the four classes of Sāka-dvīpa as Maga, Magadha, Gāṇaga and Mandaga.

214. Mbh., VI, 11.

which marked it off from other Purānic compilations.²¹⁵

There are at least three unsolved problems concerning the association of the Śakas, particularly of Western India, with the Maga brāhmanas. Firstly, the latter are stated as the inhabitants of Sākadvīpa, the identification of which has not been unanimously agreed on. Secondly, the period of the migration to India of the Magi priests of ancient Iran, the ancestors of the Maga brāhmanas, has to be determined with greater certainty. Finally, the question remains whether these Maga brāhmanas can legitimately be called the only priests whom the Śakas patronized. Chattopadhyaya is convinced of the last point and even goes so far as to suggest that they were regarded as 'the best of the Brāhmanas by the orthodox Indian society.'²¹⁶ Elsewhere, he himself points out that Ṛṣabhadatta, when, on his pilgrimage to Puṣkara, he gave the brāhmanas three hundred cows and a village, he undoubtedly gave them to Indian brāhmanas.²¹⁷

From our point of view it is immaterial whether the brāhmanas patronized by the Śakas were indigenous or of the kind of the Magas who were initially foreign but later became Indianized. In the Bṛhatsaṃhitā the Śakas are called kings belonging to the mleccha jātis, who are best known in astrological circles of that period for their establishment of an era:²¹⁸

śakā nāma mlecchajātayo rājānas te yasmin kāle
vikramādityadevena vyāpādītāḥ sa kālo loke śaka
iti prasiddhaḥ/

The Bṛhatsaṃhitā has been dated in the fifth century A. D. by Kern²¹⁹

215. R. K. Arora, Historical and Cultural Data from the Bhaviṣya Purāna, 1972, p. 31, p. 21.

216. Chattopadhyaya, Śakas in India, Appendix I, p. 87.

217. Ibid., p. 40.

218. Bṛhatsaṃhitā, VIII, 20, Bhaṭṭa Utpala's commentary. (Benaras Ed.).

219. Kern, Bṛhatsaṃhitā, Introduction, p. 3.

at a time, when the Sakas were well known to have been defeated by the great Hindu monarch Candragupta II.²²⁰ This meant that the supremacy of Sakas in western India had ended by the time Bhaṭṭa Utpala wrote his commentary on the Brhatsaṃhitā (10th century A. D.). This could be a probable reason for Bhaṭṭa Utpala's designation of the Sakas as kings of mleccha-jātis. When, therefore, Alberuni²²¹ alludes to the barbarism of the Sakas and of one Saka in particular, who tyrannized the country and forced the Hindus to consider and represent themselves as Sakas, he, in fact, reflected the views of the Indians with whom he came into contact in the eleventh century A. D. In the above case it was the Saka kings and not the Sakas as a people, that have been designated as mlecchas. Elsewhere in the Brhatsaṃhitā the Yavanas have been described as mlecchas.

This is clearly not a reference to the Yavanas as a politically and economically powerful community, but to the Yavana astrologers who came into contact with Indians of the same profession:

mlecchā hi yavanās teṣu samyak śāstram idaṃ sthitam/
ṛṣivat te 'pi pūjyante kim punar daivavid dvijaḥ/²²²

'The Greeks are mlecchas, amongst them this science is duly established; therefore even they (although mlecchas) are honoured as ṛṣis; how much more (praise is due to an) astrologer who is a brāhmaṇa.'²²³ This verse is interesting as it clearly classes the Yavanas as mlecchas. Varāhamihira calls them mlecchas, but in the same verse praises their system of astrology and honours them as ṛṣis. This is by no means the only place where the intellectual abilities of the Yavanas are noted.

220. Chattopadhyaya, History of North India..., 1968, pp. 204-205.

221. Alberuni, (Tr. Sachau), 1910, Vol. II, Chp. XLIX.

222. Brhatsaṃhitā, II, 15.

223. Ibid., (Kern's edition), p. 35.

In the Mahābhārata the Yavanas are considered omniscient -- sarvajña-yavanāh (the all-knowing yavanas).²²⁴ But the uniqueness of the above verse is that simulaneously they are called mlecchas. This indicates that the term mleccha, when applied to foreigners, may not necessarily have been opprobrious. There is therefore, no doubt that the brāhmaṇical tradition recognized the merits, accomplishments and abilities of these people but designated them as mlecchas all the same.

Throughout the Mahābhārata the Yavanas, Śakas and Pahlavas are associated with mlecchas and tribal peoples of ancient India. They are classed with the Barbaras,²²⁵ the Mlecchas²²⁶ and with mountain tribes.²²⁷ Many mleccha kingdoms — Andhra, Śaka, Pulinda, Yavana, Kāmboja, Auṛṇika, Sūdra, Abhīra — are said to be improperly governed and wholly destined to be sinful and false.²²⁸ In the Śānti Parvan, the Auḍrakas, Utsas, Pulindas, Śabarās, Yaunas, Kāmbojas, Gāndhāras, Kirātas, Barbaras are dubbed as sinful creatures and are characterized by practices similar to those of the Caṇḍālas, ravens and vultures.²²⁹ They are in particular mentioned with the people of the Punjab and the northwest. The Yavanas, Gāndhāras, Cīnas, Barbaras, Śakas, Tuṣaras, Kankas, Pahlavas, Madrakas, Ramaṭhas, Kāmbojas, are expected to perform certain duties,²³⁰ which are different from those performed by the brāhmaṇas, ksatriyas, vaiśyas and sūdras. A rather harsh opinion is entertained by the people of madhyadeśa about the people of Punjab, Sind and Gandhāra, expressed by Karṇa when the Madras, Gāndhāras, Sindhus and Sauvīrās are called mlecchas in their practices and are considered to

224. Mbh., VIII, 45, 36.

225. Mbh., II, 27, 289*- Śakas and Barbaras.

226. Mbh., II, 29, 15 - Pahlavas, Barbaras and those Mlecchas residing on the sea-coast.

227. Mbh., IX, 1, 26-27; IX, 2, 16-18.

228. Mbh., III, 186, 28-30.

229. Mbh., XII, 200, 38-41.

230. Mbh. XII, 65, 13-14.

have a total disregard of duties.²³¹

Geographically, too, the Yavanas, Śakas, Pahlavas are placed in the northwest. This information is supplied by the Purānas and the lists of people given by them in this context are not different from those that occur in the Mahābhārata.²³² In most Purānas the description of the geography of Bhāratavarṣa begins by stating that the Yavanas dwell in the west, the Kirātas in the east and in the centre reside the people belonging to the four varṇas.²³³ The Brhatsaṁhitā also confirms the statements of the Purānas about the habitation of the Yavanas, Śakas and Pahlavas.²³⁴

Most of the references to the Śakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas discussed above suggest that these peoples had become permanent residents of Āryāvarta.²³⁵ It is also clearly apparent that the Yavanas, Śakas and the Pahlavas are mentioned together with indigenous tribes, irrespective of the fact that basic differences of speech, appearance, and behaviour existed between them. One reason for this may have been the fact that neither followed the way of life prescribed by the brāhmanas. They were thus described as mlecchas, so characterized because they were wedded to creations of their own fancy which other people could not understand.²³⁶ 'Other people' in this case were the

231. Mbh., VIII, 27, 73-91; VIII, 30.

232. Mārkaṇḍeya P., LVII, 35-38; Brahmāṇḍa P., II, 16, 46-49; Matsya P., 114, 40-43; Vāmana P., XIII, 37-43; Vāyu P., 45, 115-120.

233. Viṣṇu P., II, 3, 8; Brahmāṇḍa P., II, 16, 11-13; Mārkaṇḍeya P., LVII, 7-8; Matsya P., 114, 9-12; Vāyu P., 45, 81-83. The Vāyu and the Matsya Purānas call both the Kirātas and the Yavanas mlecchas.

234. Brhatsaṁhitā, XIV, 21.

235. Whether the area of habitation was a discriminatory factor for these people to be regarded as mlecchas has been discussed in chapter V.

236. Mbh., VIII, 30, 80.

upholders of the varnāśramadharmā themselves. If and when these people began to abide by the laws of the varṇa oriented society, they were not spoken of in hostile terms or regarded as mlecchas.

Of the Sanskrit names for foreigners that have been discussed, Hūṇa has not appeared in the same contexts as Yavana, Śaka and Pahlava. This is not because the attitudes of the Sanskrit writers towards them were different. As a political force the Hūṇas emerged on the Indian scene only in the fifth century A. D.²³⁷ It was perhaps for the same reason that they are also not mentioned in Manu's list of degraded ksatriyas or in other similar lists.²³⁸ By the time of the Hūṇa invasions India was familiar not only with invasions but with governments under foreign kings. Unlike the Yavanas, Śakas and Pahlavas, there is evidence to show that the Hūṇas were designated as mlecchas immediately after they invaded India.²³⁹ Although the effect of the Hūṇa invasions on the Gupta empire has sometimes been exaggerated, they were partly responsible for its decline. By the end of the fifth century A. D., they attacked again under their chief Toramāṇa and conquered a substantial part of Aryāvarta.²⁴⁰ Toramāṇa's son and successor, Mihirakula, is particularly remembered for his cruelty,²⁴¹ and Hsuan Tsang gives a description of his violence which, it seems, was directed mainly against the Buddhists and the Jains.²⁴² Thus the barbarism of the Hūṇas could not have gone unnoticed by the section

237. Fleet, C.I.I., III, 1886, 'Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription', No. 13, line 15, pp. 55-56.

238. Manu, X, 43-44; Harivaṃśa, X, 41-45, Mbh., I, 165, 30-38; etc. The Manu-smṛti is said to have been compiled by c. A. D. 200 and the Mahābhārata, according to Winternitz, (HIL, I, p.465.) 'cannot have received its present form earlier than the fourth century B.C. or later than the fourth century A. D.'

239. Fleet, Op. Cit., 'Junāgadhā Rock Inscription', No. 14, line 15, pp. 58-65.

240. Ibid., 'Eran Stone Boar Inscription', p. 158.

241. Rājatarāṅginī, I, 306-307.

242. S. Beal, Buddhist Records of the Western World, I, pp. 171 ff.

of the brāhmaṇical community that had continually regarded all outsiders as mlecchas.

Foreign invasions to India before A. D. 600, as we have seen, mainly occurred from the north-west of the subcontinent. This in no way implies that it was only this region on its immediate surroundings that witnessed the reign of foreign rulers and the intermingling of the indigenous conquered subjects with foreign armies and others who migrated in their wake. Though north-western and western India were most exposed to foreign influence and presence, there is no doubt that with the military and political success of such rulers as the Kuṣāṇas and Śakas, these influences spread to most parts of northern and western India. The Indians, the majority of whom were followers of brāhmanism, were not forced to mix with foreign communities but economic expediency like the performance of certain jobs connected with the government and the court or the doing of trade with foreign merchants, required close contacts with them.

The intermingling of the two communities was undoubtedly very common, but the two sections of the brāhmaṇical society that were most disturbed by foreign presence were the brāhmanas and the ksatriyas. This was not because they were the more conservative sections of the society - for when it suited them even they ignored rules laid down by the law-givers or more cleverly made new ones - but because their sanctioned authority was in danger of being weakened. Changes at level of élite groups was brought about by the Yavana, Śaka and Kuṣāṇa invasions. Ritual status sanctioned by the Dharmaśāstras could only be acquired by birth which these rulers did not possess. Their actual status, expressed in terms of political and economic power, stood in direct opposition to the above-mentioned theoretical principle. Ancient Hindu law writers made no attempts to resolve this contradiction and nowhere do they state that acquisition of such

power mitigated the fact of their being mlecchas.

In other texts, however, this confusion was resolved in a different manner, partially through the influence of the political atmosphere. Thereby the term mleccha was applied to foreigners in a vague and ambiguous manner which makes it difficult for us to indiscriminately label all Yavanas, Śakas, Pahlavas, Kuṣāṇas and Hūnas as mlecchas. The common idea that a foreigner was a barbarian because initially his behaviour and particularly his speech were different, applied to ancient India as well. The Brāhmanic propaganda through literature and oral tradition of mythical stories, perpetuated the idea of a foreigner as a mleccha in India. Only they, the Brāhmaṇas, could judge when the speech and behaviour of a foreigner would cease to be regarded as those of a mleccha.

RECAPITULATION AND CONCLUSION

The basic approach in the preceding chapters of our thesis has been to reconstruct the course of development in the attitudes towards mlecchas and outsiders which, in our opinion, evolved as a consequence of the reaction of ancient Indians, predominantly brāhmanas, to safeguard their social system and values. Their views, however, remained fundamentally related to the essence of Dharma.

It must be reasserted that the essence of Dharma was eternal and constituted the only all-important presumption in their outlook and belief. There is no need to re-emphasize that Dharma meant to them conformity with the 'natural order of things'. Therefore, the changes in the attitudes towards mlecchas, irrespective of whether they were forced or intentional, were also considered an integral part of their stand.

In this sense the concept of Dharma gave us a stable viewpoint to evaluate and understand, at least in theoretical terms, the Brāhmanic approach to the problem of the mlecchas. During the course of history different definitions of Dharma as conceived by the Smṛti writers had been accepted in response to the needs of time, place and circumstance. Some flexibility within the concept of Dharma allowed for the imposition of new rules, variations on them, as well as their observance in practice or, if necessary, means of making them inoperative. As a result it was made acceptable to hold different levels of opinion in the treatment accorded to mlecchas and outsiders.

In addition, the compelling forces of political expediency, economic exigencies, foreign invasions, new religious movements directed in determining and shaping, to a very large extent, the attitude of the established society towards outsiders in general and their designation as mlecchas.

Within this approach described above and within the limits of the available sources, mainly religious literature, we began our thesis with the investigation of the beliefs and ideals upon which the Brāhmanic society was founded and its social system constituted. We were able, against this background, to determine the criteria from which the appreciation of the attitudes towards mlecchas and outsiders was made. We also considered it important to establish that the Brāhmanic élite, though Indo-European features predominated, was in all probability affected by pre-existing Indian cultures even at the earliest stages.

Next, from the testimony of all extant religious writings we concluded that there was a broad classification of mleccha groups. They included non-Indo-Aryan tribesmen, foreigners from outside Bhāratavarṣa and all other outsiders who did not conform to the values, ideas and norms of the élite. This was also true of the Buddhists and Jains who had set up their own norms of behaviour according to which they categorized certain groups of peoples as milakkhas.

We further tried to probe into the etymological origins of the terms mleccha/milakkha in the hope that it would throw some light on the subject of relating their original applications to a specific people whose speech marked the initial basis of distinction. The phonetic relationship between these two terms, we postulated, could be related to the influence of a proto-Dravidian substratum on vernacular Prakrits. We were unable to prove conclusively on a definite etymon for mleccha and milakkha. The discussion of their etymology and the various theories put forward to explain it raised the important problem to determine to whom the designation mleccha or milakkha initially applied. This concept undoubtedly originated from the encounter of the Indo-Aryan speaking tribes with peoples of different speech in the Indian subcontinent.

The most immediate issue that we enquired into was, therefore, the speech differentiation between the āryas and those who were described as mlecchas. The Brāhmanic society had excluded mlecchas on account of their speech because it was either indistinct or unintelligible and was not appropriate for ritual purposes. But speech was not the sole consideration for discriminating against mlecchas.

Further, we recognized that habitation, like speech, was also only an indication of the concern felt by the brāhmanas to avoid contact with mleccha areas and inhabit them. Āryāvarta was the most sacred land but was not permanently defined and the definition of mlecchadeśa consequently was relative to its limits. The only areas that were demarcated more or less permanently as mleccha lands were the abodes of forest and hill tribes.

Finally, it has to be reiterated and agreed that distinction on the basis of speech and habitation partly highlighted the cultural hiatus between the āryas and the mlecchas and partly emphasized the means by which the āryas were expected to protect and safeguard the 'purity' of their social system.

We endeavoured not to underestimate the role of speech and habitation in stressing the differences between mlecchas as a reference group and the established society. But nevertheless, it was accepted that these factors were inextricably interwoven with the continuance of the concept of varnāśramadharmā as the foundation of brāhmanical society. We observed that in at least the Dharmaśāstras the acceptance or non-acceptance of the varnāśramadharmā seemed to be crucial in determining mlecchahood. In reality, we found that the overriding concern was to uphold the norms of brāhmanic way of life and these by their very nature meant the maintenance of the ascendancy of the brāhmaṇa and of the ksatriya.

At this juncture we concluded that even in brāhmanical circles the political acceptance of mleccha groups as spies, soldiers or military allies was conceded. This suggested that in actual practice the injunctions in the Dharmaśāstra to avoid mlecchas were not followed to the letter. In spite of the participation of some mlecchas in the politico-economic field the latter were viewed as culturally different and inevitably continued to be looked down upon with distaste. The brāhmanic élite's indoctrination of the belief in their cultural superiority was largely responsible for the prevalence and perpetuation of these prejudices in the Indian mind.

The cultural differentiation shown towards the mlecchas/milakkhas as a reference group on account of their speech, custom, etc. was a persistent feature in the writings of the Buddhists, Jains and Brāhmanas throughout the period we have studied. The use of the terms mleccha/milakkha in the majority of instances, particularly in the centuries B.C., indicated the basis of distinction. In fact, in the period before the second and first century B.C., a tendency was noticed where mleccha as a designation for either tribesmen or for foreigners was not defined.

Attitudes towards any one group of mlecchas was never rigid and static and, as a whole, the designation of outsiders as mlecchas grew slowly and gradually. A precise formulation of when and why certain outside groups were to be described as mlecchas was never laid down as absolute in any period. Therefore, it was difficult to conceive of a consistent idea of the designation of all outsiders as mleccha as one would have expected. It was not possible to suggest that the vagueness of ancient literary writers on the subject was the reason for the ambiguity in the use of mleccha as a designation. On the other hand, there was a shrewd awareness in their writings concerning people with different cultural

attributes who were known by their respective names, though not necessarily with the designation mleccha.

In the chapters on the designation of tribes and foreigners there appeared an apparent contradiction between the theoretical assertions of the Dharmaśāstras on the one hand, and the actual historical situation of the other. In our opinion the process of foreign political domination in parts of India, which began with the rule of the Indo-Greeks in the second century B.C. and continued with brief intervals to the sixth century A.D. significantly disturbed the theoretical criteria for dubbing and rejecting all outsiders as mlecchas.

Earlier, in the evolution of the Brāhmanical system, extraneous pressures, economic, political or religious, undermined the authority and importance of the brāhmaṇa ritual system. For instance, the rise of Buddhism and Jainism (sixth century B.C.), had been a threat to the position of the old-established élite. This had called for changes in the socio-religious field but in the context of our thesis we were not able to discover significantly precise or emphatic change in the attitude towards mlecchas. Foreign invasions and immigrations before the beginning of the Christian era also did not substantially affect the social structure of Brāhmanism and more importantly, did not disturb the supremacy of the brāhmaṇas in madhyadeśa.

Around the early centuries A.D. the momentum of foreign invasions and migrations forced the pace of change and introduced a new dimension in the social thought of Smṛti and Purānic writers about the problem of mlecchas. Powerful foreign groups could not remain outside the official system controlled by brāhmaṇas for long nor could they be ignored. We noticed that the climax of this social consciousness was reached when the brāhmaṇa élite

expressed their readiness to honour and recognize certain foreign and tribal kings and were even prepared to invent new rules and circumvent the existing rules of the Dharmaśāstras to accord them a new social status.

They fabricated new and suitable genealogies in support of their new status. They designated them as vr̥tya ksatriyas. We come across mythical allusions which refer to foreign and tribal elements, who had become politically important, as essential constituents of Indian society. In one myth it is mentioned that Vasīṣṭha, a brāhmaṇa had a mleccha army to fight on his behalf against Viśvāmitra, originally a ksatriya. Again, there is an indication that attitudes towards primitive hill and forest tribes, which had become politically important, also had begun to change.

The changes in the social organization and the manner in which they were affected, introduced a new element in the relationship between certain foreign kings and brāhmanic society. In such cases the permanent confrontation and antagonism between outsiders and the established society was avoided. The problem of conflict between cultural and ethnic groups is a basic human problem. The solution of the problem by the brāhmaṇas ultimately, led to the foundation of a sociological concept, remarkable for its efficacy.

The ancient Smṛti writers do not expressly prescribe any rites for bringing into the Brāhmanic fold a person or persons, however powerful. We can be sceptical, therefore, that, as there was no planned or pre-determined policy in this regard, the changes that were brought about in the attitude towards mlecchas were accidental. Or, we could accept the view that the changes followed a natural course. However, we cannot forget that brāhmanic social system had the elasticity of attitudes inherent in their faith in Dharma. Secondly, it must be appreciated that the brāhmanic élite was acutely aware of the presence of outsiders

and mlecchas and the problem they created. Therefore, we must not assume that they had no well considered approach to the subject.

From the study in our thesis we examined that in the beginning the theoretical assertions of the brāhmanas excluded mlecchas and foreigners from society, and treated all of them as one large reference and marginal group. Later, they adopted only a vacillating attitude when compelled to do so by force of circumstances. There seemed to be an apparent contradiction in their thinking and in their actions in immediate terms. We are of the opinion that the social devices had been positively conceived in terms of a gradual evolution which was mostly concerned with conserving the principles of their ultimate faith in the eternal Dharma that gave it authority. In that process, new ideas or elements were added, fundamentally safeguarding and perpetuating the position and privileges of élite groups.

By the sixth century A.D. a stage was reached in the evolution of social thought with regard to the attitudes towards mlecchas in northern India which presages a situation in which different cultural groups could co-exist. This was a unique contribution in human experience made by the brāhmanic society in ancient India.

The problem of the mlecchas that confronted Brāhmanic society was similar in nature to the problem of the barbarians as faced by the Graeco-Roman civilization and the Chinese civilization in the ancient world. The interaction of cultural groups had been a challenge to other societies as well. The problem also reflects a contemporary concern. The way the Brāhmanic society met the challenge was to seek a solution through the temporizing concept of Dharma which implicitly expects and permits changes in the social institutions and forms according to time (kāla) and place (deśa).

The course that the Brāhmanic society had followed in devising their attitudes towards mlecchas and outsiders was spread over centuries and has left a deep imprint on the history of India.

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