CHAPTER EIGHT
THE EMERGENCE OF MALWA AND ITS URBAN CENTRES: A VIEW FROM LITERATURE

Introduction

In the preceding chapters we have tried to understand the process of urbanisation in Malwa through archaeological sources. We followed the process of the slow birth of agriculture. It gave us an idea of the long-term processes of change and continuity. Post processual archaeology puts greater emphasis on studying the symbolic and cognitive life of ancient people. Some of that was attempted on the basis of the study of the Sanchi evidence. In the present chapter we shall look at references in literature to this area to get an idea of the construction of the personality of Malwa.

The identification of various place names of ancient India with modern places attracted such great historians as Sir Alexander Cunningham in the late nineteenth century. He travelled tirelessly through the length and breadth of India and tried to identify the route taken by the Chinese traveller Xuan Zang. He identified the Mahajanapadas and cities of ancient India. His studies laid the foundation of studies of regions in ancient India (Cunningham (1871) 1989:51-52). Unfortunately, this kind of scholarship which combines a study of literary references with field work has not been followed afterwards. Scholars like B. C. Law collected literary data on various places in ancient India (Law 1976). This tradition has been followed by a host of publications broadly under the rubric of historical geography. Some scholars even moved into the prehistory of the formation of regional
identities. Attempts have been made to co-relate some archaeological finds with some tribal groups mentioned in the early literature (Lal 1955, Sharma 1983. Thapar 1978). Such attempts have not found favour in the academic community because a set of pots and pans cannot define a culture. In ethnographic literature one finds several groups using similar kinds of pottery. We shall therefore not try to find archaeological co-relations. We shall try instead to understand literary perceptions about peoples and places in the Malwa area. Our evidence is varied. The dates of composition of the texts range from the 7th - 6th century B.C. to the 6th - 7th century of the Christian era. This was the period which witnessed some spectacular leaps in the process of evolution of urban society in the Malwa area.

There has been some discussion on the origin of the word Malwa. The early Brahmanical literature refers to the Malwa area as Avanti. Avanti is not mentioned in the Vedic literature (Jain 1972: 87). It is mentioned in the epic literature, parts of which might date back to 1000 - 700 B.C. This area is increasingly referred to as Malwa after the fifth century A.D. We are not clear about the process of change of the name of this area from...
Avanti to Malwa. It is believed that this shift in the name has something to do with the emigration of the Malava tribe from Rajasthan (ibid. 1). However, we do not have concrete proof of this shift of population. Some scholars believe that the Aulikaras ruling from Dasapura (modern Mandasor) from the fourth century onwards belonged to the Malava lineage. It was under their influence that this area came to be known as Malwa.

II

He banished Yadu to the South/West (Mahabharata Adiparva VII.80).

The tract of land lying to the south of the Ganges and to the north of the Godavari is known as the Dakṣinapatha. (Suttanipata, prologue of Book V) quoted in Law)

Epic literature associates the Avanti region with the Yādavas. That is why early references to the Yādavas might give us clues about conditions in Avanti before the sixth century B.C. A Mahābhārata story refers to the banishment of Yadu to the South/west. Let us try to understand the meaning of 'South' in the kernel of the epic literature. This literature is roughly co-terminus with the later Vedic texts. It was composed in the same area as the later Vedic literature.

The later Vedic texts consisting of the collection of Yajus and Atharvan, the Brahmanas and the Upaniṣadas were composed in the land of the Kuru-Pancalas (Mc. Donnell and Keith 1912 1,165-69). This was the period of the formation of the Janapadas. Agricultural communities became more powerful and visible. Their notions of attachment to particular geographical tracts became the dominant form of identity. In the Mahābhārata, the famous story of the Kuru king, Yayati banishing his sons to different directions and installing Puru in the 'Middle country' shows clear notions of territoriality.
This story assumes that the Kuru-Pancala region was the 'Middle country'. Thus was invented the idea of the "Madhya desa" (middle country). What constituted the 'Middle country'? Texts like the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and Gopatha Brāhmaṇa refer to the notion of the 'Middle country'. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa regards the Kuru-Pancala and Vasa-Usinara area as the 'Middle country' (Kane 1965 ii:641). The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa regards the language of the inhabitants of Kuru-Pancal area as the best (Kane 1963 i:107). This will correspond to modern Kuruksetra, Delhi, Meerut and some areas further east. The Taittiriya Aranyakas points out that Kurukṣetra was bounded on the south by the Khāndava, on the north by Turghna and on the west by Parinah (Law 1976:101). The famous Mahābhārata story about the founding of Indraprastha by burning the Khāndavaprashta gives us some idea about the southern limits of Kurukṣetra in the time of the Brāhmaṇas. The authors of these texts obviously believed that they were the most cultured and civilized people in the world, and they lived in the middle of the world. These examples also show that the 'Middle country' was seen as different from other areas because people spoke a 'better' language. Part of it was called the Brahmarśidesa where "the conduct of the four classes... and the intermediary classes, handed down for generations, is called the conduct of good people" (Manusmriti 2.17). What we are suggesting is that 'Middle country' is a cultural construct with physical dimensions. This explains why Buddhist texts have a different notion of the area covered by the 'Middle country'. They locate the 'Middle country' in the middle Ganga valley (Law 1976:13).

The early Brahmanical texts also differ as to their exact definitions of the 'Middle country'. Since the 'Middle country' shifted its location in the minds of the people, so did 'South' or 'East'. What needs to be emphasised is that 'South' or 'East' was as much a
cultural construct as the 'Middle country'. Although there are variations in the accounts of the physical space covered by the Madhyadesa, the cultural definition remains the same in the Brahmanical texts. This would mean that entities like Dakṣinapatha were physical as well as cultural entities. Variations in the placement of the Dakṣinapatha found in the ancient texts suggest to us a dynamic notion of cultural influences. The boundaries of the Madhyadesa and the Dakṣinapatha changed over a period of time. While we have greater clarity about the integration of eastern areas like Bihar and Bengal into the Brahmanical ideology (Law 1976:12), we lack such clarity about the south. The 'Middle country' was the area of "Good conduct." In the age of the Brāhmaṇas it would probably mean following the rules of caste and observing various rituals. By the same logic, one can assume that those who did not live in the 'Middle country' spoke 'crude' languages, did not follow the rules of caste, nor performed Brahmanical rituals. While we have greater clarity about the integration of eastern areas like Bihar and Bengal into the Brahmanical ideology (Law 1976:12), we lack such clarity about the southward expansion of Brahmanism. Since Avanti was located to the south of the 'Middle country' we shall presently concentrate on understanding the 'South'. The present evidence indicates that the banishment of Yadu to the south would simply mean areas to the south of Delhi. This idea is supported by a reference in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa to the defeat of the Sātvatas by the Bharatas. The Brāhmaṇa texts locate the Bharatas in the area of Sarasvati, Yamuna and Ganga (Raychaudhuri 1996:125). The association of Yādavas with Mathura which

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2 That 'South' indicated a cultural unit can be deduced from the fact that there are references to southern script, southern hero (Nayaka), and southern language (Bohlingk and Roth 1990: 484, 486, 581). At least one ancient text seems to use 'South' and Dravidian kinship interchangeably. The Kāmasutra says that a person should marry his maternal uncle's daughter in the Southern countries (Kishore :115).
was to the south of the Kuru-Pancala area would attest to a similar tradition. The story of his expulsion means that the people living to the south of Delhi did not follow Brahmanical customs.

The Brahmana texts mention the people of the 'South'. They include the Sātvatas governed by the Bhoja kings and their kinsmen (Raychaudhuri 1958:59). The Bhojas and Sātvatas were famous Yādava lineages. We know that these Yādava lineages were located in Mathura. Thus, Mathura was part of the 'South' in the Brahmanical conception of the later Vedic period. However, at some point in the later Vedic times Mathura was integrated in the 'Middle country'. We can make this inference because the Manusmṛti considers the Surasena territory (areas around Mathura) as part of the Brahmarṣidesa, which was a shade less pure than the Kuru-Pancala area. This probably, explains the role of the Yādavas in the Maḥābhārata who shuttle between a marginal presence and a central role. Mathura and the areas south of it are noticed in the Maḥābhārata and the Pauranika literature. Many early texts indicate that it was considered an area on the margins of the heartland of Brahmanism. We are not concerned with the banishment of Yadu per se, rather we are trying to construct the image of the south and the Avanti region in the minds of the people of the Kuru country before the sixth century B.C.

III

Yadu’s realm lay in the country watered by the rivers Chambal, Betwa and Ken (Pargiter 1962:259).

The early Brahmanical literature associated the Yādavas with areas like Mathura, Avanti, Saurashtra and Vidarbha. Yadavas are frequently mentioned in the later Vedic works like the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa and the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. They are mentioned even
in the Rg Veda. They participated in the Battle of Ten Kings (Raychaudhuri 1972:124-26). They are also mentioned in the Purānas. Kṛśna, the great Pauranic deity, was born as a Yadu prince. Many Yadava dynasties emerged in the historical period. Obviously, the Aryan tribe of the Yadus who fought in the battle of the "ten kings" and the Yadava dynasties which emerged in Central India and Maharashtra thousands of years later, were not the same people. Most of our information about the Yadus comes from the Mahābhārata, the Ṣaṁhitās, with the Bhāgavata and Viṣṇu Purānas. These texts were composed in the middle of the first millennium. The fact that the Yādavas are frequently mentioned, in the Vedic literature, indicates that some of the information provided in these texts dates back to the 800 - 700 B.C.

The Purāṇas are believed to be collations of popular lore which emerged in the later Vedic period. In their extant form the Purāṇas were written down from the Gupta period onwards. The epics and Purāṇas are the products of a cumulative process of accretion of the oral tradition. This oral tradition is meant to affirm the convictions and values of a society. It constitutes what has been called "Charters of legitimacy" for social institutions and actions, meant to validate traditional customs, beliefs and attitudes (Kirk 1970). The emergence of the heroic saga in the epic literature is symptomatic of the emergence of a new value system, i.e., egalitarian societies giving way to societies commanded by heroes towering above the common mass. This new genre of literature emerges when society can no longer contain the tensions of the emergent social structure. In other words the epic literature justifies the power of a small group and convinces the ruled of their fate.3 That is why it has been said that oral tradition believes in the 'Great

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3 Very little work has been done on the Indian epic literature with this kind of
man's theory of history where historical events are ascribed to the deeds of great people (Vansina 1985:108). The epics and Puranas were part of an oral tradition which was put down in writing in a later period. These texts are concerned both with the past, and the composer's present of the composers (Vansina 1985:108). Many additions and deletions were made before they were written down. So, we find descriptions of simple tribal societies and complex urban formations in the same text. Any attempt to present a synchronic picture of a society reflected in these texts will be misleading. We shall try to use some of the material from the Puranas to understand the process of change in the Malwa region. Although the choice of contexts will be arbitrary and shall assume a uniform development in time and space, it will be done with the help of anthropological literature. We believe that if we succeed in reconstructing some of the components of the social structure, it might give us some idea of the other parts. This is because various levels of socio-cultural integration show a complementarity.

The Harivamśa says that the Yādavas conquered territories extending from Anarta (Modern Kathiawar and portions of Malwa) to Mathura (Harivamsa 5+). There are references to Mahismant, a member of the Haihaya segment of the Yādavas, as having founded the city of Mahismati. In another instance, Kartavirya Arjuna is credited with the theoretical perspective. We can cite Iravati Karve (1969) as the most significant study of this genre. The study looks at the Mahābhārata story as signifying the end of an era. The new era signified the end of an equalitarian social system and the emergence of a state society.

4 The Bhāgavata Purāṇa says 'In former times, Surasena the chief of the Yadu clan ruled over the territories of Mathura and while he was residing in the city it became the metropolis of all the kings of the Yadava dynasty.' Bhāgavata Purāṇa X.11, Translated by G.V. Tagore 1976. Similar references associating the Yādava clans with Mathura and areas to the south west are to be found in Viṣṇu-Purāṇa V.23. Translated by H.H. Wilson 1972, Harivamśa II.56., Gita Press, Mahābhārata II.14. Translated by Ganguli, K.M.
conquest of Karkotaka Naga and the establishment of Mahismati (Smith, Morton 1973:26-27). In yet another place, the Puranas mention that the Nagas gave their daughter Narmada in marriage to the king of Ayodhya. One of the sons of Talajangha was Avanti after whom this area was named (ibid 27). Similarly, the Ghata Jataka records the tradition of the Yadavas staying in Mathura and Dvaravati (Chatterjee 1972). At the end of the Musalaparva in the Mahabharata, Arjuna is shown as establishing the son of Krtavarma in the city of Mrttikavati, the son of Yuyudhana on the banks of Sarasvati, and the son of Aniruddha in Indraprastha (Mahabharata XVI.7). The city of Mrttikavati was located in Anarta which has been identified with Kathiawar and parts of Malwa (Bajpai 1967). All these references indicate that the earliest Indian literature associates the Avanti (Malwa) region with the Yadavas. Various other regions have also been associated with the Yadavas. They included Kathiawar, Deccan and the Banas valley (Thapar 1978).

The areas of Mathura, Banas valley and Gujarat and parts of the Malwa plateau are areas deficient in rainfall. The natural vegetation in this entire belt consists of dry thorny bushes. However, there are small pockets of fertile agricultural land in places like Mathura and the Kathiawar peninsula. This area is ideal for sheep-goat and cattle farming. Pastoral nomadism would be an ideal form of adaptation in this area. Kosambi has talked about the importance of the Delhi-Mathura-Meerut triangle in the later Vedic period. It was surrounded by desert on one side and thick Gangetic forests on the other. There was competition for control over small agricultural tracts among the Aryan lineages (Kosambi 1977:84-87). Such a situation is ideal for the growth of segmentary lineages. It has been

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5 Excavation and dating of the earliest habitation layers in Mathura show a date going back to the 10th-9th century B.C. See Indian Archaeology: A Review - 1954-55, 261.
called a means of intrusion and competition in an already occupied territory (Sehlins 1961). The structure of Yadava lineages indicates that they were segmentary lineage groups.

We shall briefly review various social customs and practices of the Yadavas. We shall study their attitude towards property, gift exchange, kinship, marriage, succession, and inheritance. This might give us some idea of the social developments in the Malwa region immediately preceding the emergence of state society.

**Polity of the Yadavas**

The Yadavas have been cursed by Yayati that they cannot become kings (Mahabharata II.14).

The Mahabharata, Puranas, Astadhyayi and the Arthasastra inform us that the Yadavas did not have a monarchical government (Jayaswal 1943:36-37, Majumdar 1969). In the Sabha parva of the Mahabharata, the Dasarnas are specifically called 'kingless' (Majumdar 1969). When Yudhishthira paid homage to Krsna in the Rajasuya sacrifice, Sisupalagava objected to it saying that he was not a king. The Yadavas had been cursed by Yayati that they could not become kings (ibid.). In the Harivamsa, during Rukmini's Svayamvara, questions arose regarding Krsna's right to occupy a throne as he was not a king (ibid.).

1973-74, 1974-75, 1975-76, 1976-77. Also see Makkhan Lal 'The date of Painted Grey Ware Culture: A Review' Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute, Vol 39, 1980. He gives 790 B.C., 750 B.C., 810 B.C., as calibrated dates for pd. II in Mathura. Thus, period I can be dated about 100 years earlier.
The Mahābhārata refers to the Andhaka-Vṛṣṇis as a Samgha, and Kṛṣṇa as a Samgha chief (Raychaudhuri 1996:126). Similarly, the Jaina Harivamsa refers to Kṛṣṇa as sitting in council chamber with his kinsmen and councillors (B.B. Majumdar 1969:153).

On the authority of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, Jayaswal asserts that the Sātvatas practised Bhaujya type of consecration, and their rulers were called Bhojas (Jayaswal 1943:36-37). In the Mahābhārata, the Bhojas are described as one of the constituents of the Vṛṣṇi Samgha. Kamsa is said to have oppressed Bhojas, Rājanyas and old people (Mahabharata II.14). This indicates that there were three distinct categories of people who participated in taking decisions about the group. Bhojas, as has been said, were a ruling group. The Rājanyas were a distinct category of people. Prof. Jayaswal has explained this word on the authority of Kāśika. Explaining a sutra of Pāṇini it says that Rājanyas were members of the consecrated families of the Kṣatriyas. All Kṣatriyas were not Rājanyas. The Kāśika clearly states that though the Dvaipyas and Haimyas were staying with the Andhaka-Vṛṣṇis they could not be called Rājanyas. Jayaswal believed that the passage meant "Leaders of families consecrated to rulership". However, we find examples in which many members of Kṛṣṇa's family participated in the assembly (Mahābhārata I.213). It seems that the sutra simply meant "members of the family consecrated to rulership" (Majumdar 1969).

The Andhaka - Vṛṣṇi samgha had 18 groups of people as its members (ibid.). The Kāśika cites the example of Sini, Vasudeva, Caitraka and Svāphālka as Rājanyas. The dynastic list provided by the Purāṇas is full of repetitions. However, for the Andhaka-Vṛṣṇis, they give us the lineages of four groups: Satrajita and Prasena belonging to the Sini lineage, Akrura to the Svāphālka, Vasudeva and Kṛtvarma to the Chaitraka and,
Sātyaki belonging to another Sini lineage (ibid.). Ugrasena is believed to be in the direct line of Andhaka. The Harivamsa gives a slightly different list and repeats the pattern of presenting the pedigree of the leaders mentioned above. The lineages of Kukuras, Madhus, Dasārhas, Arhas etc. who have been mentioned separately did not have any particular leader (Bhagavata Purana I.11). Similarly, the Gopas who paid homage to Kamsa and lived in the same area as the Andhaka-Vrsnis, did not exercise political authority. They clearly seem to have been pastoral nomadic communities who took their decisions separately. Surprisingly enough, at the end of the internecine war among the Yādavas, the princes who became kings were the son of Aniruddha, the son of Krśvarma and the son of Sātyaki (Mahābhārata XVI.7). Thus, only the lineages of Vasudeva and Sini survived. This clearly demonstrates a process of centralisation in the Yadu lineages, the end product of which was the establishment of monarchy.

A striking feature of the dynastic list of the Andhaka - Vrsnis is the mention of the names of all the sons. They seem to be ruling simultaneously over different areas. Succession is not according to the law of primogeniture. For example, seven sons of Sātvata are mentioned. Out of them Mahābhoja, Andhaka, Vṛṣni and Devavrddha were founders of lineages (Bhagavata Purana IX.24). In the Nārada Kṛśna dialogue in the Santi Parva of the Mahābhārata, Nārada mentions Kṛśna, Babhru and Ugrasena as kings (Majumdar 1969). The Jain work Antagadadasao refers to ten principal Dasārhas headed by Samudravijaya and to five Mahāvīras led by Baladeva (Agrawal 1996:442). The Yādavas used to meet in an assembly called Sudharmā Sabha which had a thousand members.

6In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa X.5 the Gopas are shown paying tribute to Kamsa in the form of Ghee, curd, milk etc. In section X.2 they unanimously decide to go to Vīrāvasthāvanna.
thrones (Mahābhārata 1.212). Clearly, a large number of people participated in the assembly. In his conversation with Nārada, Kṛṣṇa complained bitterly about the hostile attitude and harsh speeches of his kinsmen. Nārada advises him to be more tolerant and to win them over by tact and liberality (Majumdar 1969). As mentioned earlier, after the internecine war among the Yādavas, three princes were installed as kings. When Yudhishṭhira performed the Rājasūya sacrifice, the Yādavas were represented by Kṛṣṇa, Pradyumna, Sāmba, Yuyudhāna, Śātyaki, Akrūra, Kṛtvarma and Ugrasena rather than by one leader. Even at as crucial a time as the Mahābhārata war, Kṛṣṇa and Śātyaki sided with the Pāṇḍavas, Kṛtvarma fought for the Kauravas and Balarāma remained neutral. Obviously, the Yādavas lacked a centralizing authority.

We shall briefly discuss the functions of the Andhaka - Vṛṣṇi assembly. In the Syamantaka jewel episode, Kṛṣṇa brought back the jewels from Jāmbavaṇa and gave it to Satrajīta in the presence of the people in the assembly (Harivamsa II.101-102, Bhāgavata X.56-57). It was a place where spoils of war were shared. Immense wealth was distributed by Kṛṣṇa to his kinsmen in the assembly (Harivamsa II.100-102, Bhāgavata X.56-57).

Interestingly, assembly was also the place where people played various games. In the assembly Kṛṣṇa played dice (Bhāgavata X.67), and a game called Gola with mates like Śātyaki (Harivamsa III.111). Important issues affecting the future of the lineage were discussed in the assembly. When Kṛṣṇa wanted the Yadus to migrate to Kuṣasthali, the

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7 Most of the scholars who have studied the Andhaka - Vṛṣṇi polity have focussed on the study of their assembly and declared that they had a "Republican Constitution" (Jayaswal 1943, Mishra 1976, Majumdar 1969). Most of the writings have repeated Jayaswal’s assertion. Jayaswal who systematically studied the non monarchical polities was swayed by the desire to prove that the Indians had democratic polities similar to those of modern Britain in ancient India.
matter was discussed in the assembly (ibid. II.56). There was a discussion of the strategy against Jarāsandha in the assembly (Bhāgavata Purāṇa X.71). The messengers of Paundra-Vasudeva arrived in the assembly and demanded war or submission from Kṛṣṇa (ibid. X.66). However, the assembly could be convened to settle matters relating to marriage too. When Arjuna abducted Subhadra, soldiers complained to the Sebhāpāla who started beating the war drums. The Bhojas, Andhakas and Vṛṣnis assembled there and Baladeva made a fiery speech pleading for revenge. Kṛṣṇa pacified them (Mahābhārata 1.212-213).

A study of the attitude of the Yādavas to gift giving gives us interesting insights into their attitude towards property. Cows, gold, honey and garments constituted the major forms of gift among the Yādavas (Bhāgavata Purāṇa X.5-45).8 For the marriage of Kṛṣṇa's sister, Subhadra, the gifts consisted of gold, cows, mares, mules, elephants and clothes (Mahābhārata 1.213.40-50).

In the narrative section of all the epics land is completely absent as an item of gift. Food items like rice are mentioned once or twice. In the Visnu Purāṇa, Kṛṣṇa tells his people that they possessed neither fields nor houses; they wandered about with their wagons and cattle, so to them cows and mountains were their deities. Some of these stories are related to the close relationship between the Yādavas and the Āhiras. The

8 We can give the following examples of gift giving - "At Kṛṣṇa's birth, Vasudeva was overcome with delight and gave 1000 cows as gift to Brahmans" (Bhāgavata Purāṇa). "Nanda gave a gift of cows, seven mountain-like heaps of sesame seeds covered with a stream of precious stones" (ibid. X.5). "At the Ambikāvana fair they donated cows, gold, garments, honey, sweetmeats etc. to Brahmans" (ibid. X.34). "Akrura used to give cows as gift everyday."(ibid. X.38). "Akrura was presented a cow by Balarāma when he went to meet them in Vraja."(ibid.). "Vasudeva gave a gift of cows with their calves, decorated with gold chains and other ornaments covered with silk clothes."(ibid. X.45).
Abhiras, a pastoral nomadic group occupied the area from Mathura to Anupa and Anarta (Jaiswal 1981:83). To us it indicates an agro-pastoral economy. Whenever Krsna's adversaries got an opportunity, they mocked him by calling him a cow-herder. Krsna and Balarama spent their childhood among cow herders. This close relationship with the Gopas shows that at least some of the Yādava groups were pastoral-nomadic. The close relations between the Gopas, a pastoral nomadic community, and the Yādavas also indicates a similarity in the social structure of the two group.

The political structure and their attitudes towards property indicate a segmentary lineage system. Sahlins believes that such social structures emerge in an inter tribal situation when there is considerable pressure on a limited area of land. Its main thrust is predatory organisation. Segmentary lineages are economically more backward than chiefdoms. This form of organisation is typically suited to tribes which are agro pastoralists and not advanced agriculturists (Sahlins 1961).

Krsna and Ugrasena are repeatedly mentioned as kings of the Bhojas, Kukkuras and Andhakas, and not as kings of a particular territory. 9 State signifies the establishment of society as a territory as opposed to kinship entities under lineage chiefs in tribal societies. The Frankish invaders in medieval Europe used first the term "King of Franks"; this later changed into "King of France" (Sahlins 1968). In the Krsna-Narada dialogue, Nārada says, "O Krsna! the Yādavas, Kukkuras, Bhajas and Andhaka - Vṛsnis with their people and rulers depend upon you" (Mahābhārata XI1.81). This indicates that the 'rulers' of various clans retained considerable autonomy. Similarly, Kamsa was called a tyrant not

9 Mahābhārata 1.229 Ugrasena is mentioned as king of Vṛsnis. Similarly, Krsna is mentioned as the chief of the Yādavas in the Nārada-Krsna Dialogue in the Śāntiparvā of the Māhābhārata. There are a number of such instances.
because of any misrule but because he "persecuted his relatives and gained ascendancy
over them all. The wretch began to oppress the Rājanyas, old people and the Bhojas"
(Mahābhārata II.14). When Kamsa did not succeed in killing Kṛṣṇa, he called a meeting
not of his ministers but of his kinsmen. When Kamsa inveighed against Vasudeva,
Andhaka denounced him for disrespect to an elder and said "You who bear animosity with
your own kinsmen, have turned away from king's duty. Due to your misdeeds, this Yadu
clan has been cut of its roots. Now only Kṛṣṇa will assemble all the kinsmen and bring
amity among them" (ibid. II.23). Kṛṣṇa says that he did service to his kinsmen by killing
Kamsa and Sunāman (ibid XII.81-82). The wars fought by the Yādava chiefs are not for
territorial gain; rather, they are for bride capture, or caused by personal animosity.

Alliances are along kinship lines.

Our analysis indicates that the political organisation of the Yādava clans was
different from that of the dominant north Indian groups of the Bharatas and Kurus in the
later Vedic period. Yayāti's curse that the Yādavas could not become kings reinforces our
contention that the Yādavas did not have a monarchical form of government. What is
equally significant is that it was regarded as a curse by the dominant Brahmanical
tradition. The Mahābhārata shows that dominant lineages like the Kurus and Panchalas
had a more unitary political structure with well defined rules of succession. Heads of
lineages were more like the kings of the historical period. They could garner vast
resources to perform large sacrifices which presume considerable concentration of power.

The Purana tradition shows the gradual breakdown of the more egalitarian pre-
monarchical tradition of the Yādavas. Like all the songs of the heroic ages battles are used
for the glorification of heroes. In the innumerable battles which the Andhaka-Vrsnis
fought, the presence or absence of an army was immaterial to the outcome of the war. It was a few heroes like Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and Pradyumna who decided the outcome of the war. This shows that the old egalitarian structure had given way to new kinds of polities emphasising the valour of a few people-a feature present in chiefships and early states. In the Harivamsa, Kṛṣṇa is shown as bringing spoils of war to the assembly of the Yādavas. Meanwhile, Nārada, sent by Indra, gave a long discourse on the glorious deeds of Kṛṣṇa. Then Kṛṣṇa distributed the spoils among his kinsmen (Harivamsa II.101-102). Does it not sound like some chieftain collecting 'Funds of power'? 

IV

There are certain indications that some of the groups referred to as Yādavas might have represented non-Aryan communities

Kṛṣṇa said that at Kuṣasthali there were 18,000 thousand warrior Kṣatriyas in his family and they were Vrātas (Mahābhārata II.14). Majumdar, on the authority of Kāśīka and the Mahābhāṣya says that Vrātas belonged to many races and communities. They did not follow any specific profession. They lived by loot and plunder. The Andhaka - Vṛṣṇis too were called Vrātyas in the Drona Parva (Majumdar1969). Agrawal on the authority of Sayana says that Vrātas and Vṛātyas were the same. He further shows that the Vṛātyastoma ritual was meant to convert the non-Aryan population and the people who lived by plunder (Agrawal1953:441-42). MacDonnell and Keith believe that the Vṛātyas were Aryans outside the sphere of Brahmin culture (Vedic index.II). This shows that the Yādavas were not fully within the ambit of Brahmanical culture. The Haihayas, one of the Yādava groups located in Malwa, are called Asuras (Jain1972:94). The third century B.C. Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra says that people of Avanti are not pure Aryans.
In the Rājāśūya ceremony of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the Cedi ruler Sisurāla accused Kṛṣṇa of not belonging to any caste (Bhāgavata Purāṇa X,74). Kṛṣṇa is said to have been defeated by the Aryan god Indra in the Rg veda (Kosambi 1977:115).

This fact acquires added significance when we remember the intense rivalry between Kṛṣṇa and Indra in the Paurānic literature. Similarly, drinking has been called one of the four great sins in the Sruti literature (Kane 1966:1024-25). It was regularly indulged in by the Yādava. Balarāma is repeatedly mentioned as getting drunk and eating the meat of buffaloes (Dutt 1945). Also, Balarāma is a Nāga deity which might indicate his pre-Aryan linkages. Even in the time of Samudragupta’s conquest this area was ruled by Nāga kings. This again connects the people of this area to non-Brahmanical traditions.

Buddhist text refers to Gujarat as one of the Panca-Dravida lands (Thapar 1978). In one instance the Yādava lineage is mentioned as descended from the demon Madhu. His son Lavana, a fearful demon was killed by Satruughna (Smith Morton 1973:27). One of the important clans of the Yādavas were called Madhus. Similarly, the Andhakas were a Yādava clan but literature also refers to Andhaka as a demon (Bohtlingk and Roth). This again indicates linkages with the indigenous population.

There is an interesting contrast between the marriage practices of the Yādavas and the Aryans. The Yādavas practised cross-cousin marriage which is prohibited in the Indo-Aryan kinship system. Besides they practised Sagotra marriage (Vasudeva - Devaki and

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10 Kṛṣṇa’s marriage to Mitravrinda, Bhadrā and Laksmaṇa (The Bhāgavata Purāṇa X,50, X,83) are examples of cross-cousin marriage. Trautmann (1974) has argued that Kṛṣṇa’s marriage with his cousins is mentioned only in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa which was compiled in South India. That is why the Dravidian kinship pattern crept into the text. However, some of these marriages are mentioned in the Harivamsa, Brahmānda, Brahma, Vāyu and Matsya Purāṇas (B B Majumdar 1969: 126). Not all of these Purāṇas were composed in South. Pradyumna the son of Kṛṣṇa and Rukminī, married his maternal
Krsna - Satyabhāmā). A Brahmana named Brahmadatta married most of his 500 daughters to Yadu princes (Dutt 1945). Most of the marriages of the important Yadu heroes were in the form of "Bride capture". Kṛṣṇa's marriage with Rukmini (Bhāgavata Purāṇa X.50), Mitravinda (ibid.), Bhadra (ibid. X.83) Laksmanā (ibid.), Satyā (ibid.) were by bride capture. The same is true of the marriages of Pradyumna-Rukmanāvati (ibid. X.50) and Sāmba-Laksmanā (ibid. X.59). When Kṛṣṇa comes to know of Arjuna's attraction for his sister, he, instead of marrying them in a regular Aryan fashion, advises Arjuna to abduct her (Bhāgavata Purāṇa X.83). Obviously, bride capture was a normal practice among the Yādavas of Kṛṣṇa's clan. It is possible that Bhāsa's plays about the abduction of princess Vāsavadattā of Ujjayini reflect the practice of the earlier times. The practice of bride capture is found in many pre-state societies. Its primary function is regulation of the sex-
cousin and their son Aniruddha married the daughter of his maternal uncle. Even Subhadrā's marriage with Arjuna was a cross-cousin marriage. (Jaiswal 1981:68). Furthermore, areas like Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat still have mixed marriage system i.e. Dravidian and Aryan systems (Karve 1968:165-166). Similarly, Bhāsa's play Avimaraka narrates the love story of a prince with his cousin. The setting is the city of a Yādava king near Mathura. Obviously, all these references cannot be attributed to the accident of the compilation of the texts in the 'South'. Curiously, the marriage practices mentioned in the classical literature, too, seem to be different. Mālavika's marriage to Agnimitra in Kalidasa's Mālavikāgnimitra, the marriages of Carudatta and Vasantasena and Radanikā and Sarvilaka in Sudraka's Mrčchakatikām did not require Brahmanical rituals. The setting of all these marriages is Malwa.
ratio of a particular group. It is not an approved form of marriage in state societies. Since civilized societies are relatively large, covering an extensive territory under a single government, adjustment to population imbalance can be done within this unit itself (Vayda 1968).
The Aryans were a patriarchal community. Jaiswal has drawn attention to strong matrilineal influences in the Krṣṇa cult. She has pointed out that the cult of the goddess Ekaṇāṁśa, the sister of Baladeva and Krṣṇa, represents an older matrilineal sub-stratum. The Vṛṣṇis worshipped her (Jaiswal 1981:68). In the Mahābhārata she is identified with Kuṇu, a dark goddess (ibid.). Early Indian iconography presented her as a black goddess flanked by Krṣṇa and Baladeva (ibid.69). Similarly, the oldest textual reference to the Krṣṇa Gopala legend, the Pali Ghata Jātaka mentions Aṉjana-devī (meaning, the dark goddess). She is the older sister of Krṣṇa - Baladeva and the Braja-bhūmi belongs to her (Vaudeville 1999:147). Epithets like Yoġṇidrā, Kāli and Durgā-Kāṭāyānī are used for Krṣṇa's sister in different Purāṇas. Many such textual references have convinced Vaudeville that long before the emergence of the Krṣṇa Gopāl cult, there was a dominant mother goddess cult in this area (ibid.152). The word Vṛndāvana itself means "forest of the group goddess". Kosambi with his classic insight pointed out that Krṣṇa's 16,108 wives represented mother goddesses and the dark god's marriages were a vital step in assimilating the patriarchal Aryans with the matriarchal pre-Aryans. The divine marriages represented human unions (Kosambi1977:116). At some stage Krṣṇa was appropriated by the dominant north Indian tradition and made a vehicle of transformation of the same area.

In the course of a few generations a people who were considered heathens became a respectable community with a prestigious pedigree. It seems that most of the Yādava lineages were disparate groups on the margins of the Brahmanical heartland in the later Vedic period. By bestowing Yādava ancestry Brahmanism integrated these groups into the dominant north Indian culture. As pointed out earlier, such processes of
integration located particular communities within the caste hierarchy in the later period. That the Yādava groups were integrated in a lineage structure is perhaps related to the inchoate state of caste formations in the later Vedic period. Possibly, state-like formations which would bifurcate society along caste lines had not emerged till this period.

Our discussion about the Yādava clans indicates that an agro-pastoral society was being transformed into a more stratified society. Intermittent wars and plunder brought more power to the chiefs. War booty generated new patterns of patron-client relationship among the leaders and their followers. Kinship ties were established among the ruling groups. The larger the network of these ties, the higher the prestige and greater the capacity to cushion economic or political crises. A capacity to tide over such difficulties with the help of powerful kinsmen further enhanced the chief’s power. The movement towards the Malwa region by the agro-pastoral Yādavas from the drier northern regions might have triggered an increase in the productivity of labour. This migration in war-like conditions might have intensified the pattern of concentration of power in the hands of the Yādava chieftains. Availability of pastures in abundance around agricultural villages might lead to a sedentarization of the people. The incessant wars indicated the crisis of the old structure. Already, only a few consecrated families had access to political power. The groups of Dvaipyas and Haimyas were staying with the Andhaka - Vrsnis but did not enjoy any political power (Majumdar 1969). The maintenance of genealogy itself became important as a result of the emergence of private property and various other rights, whose legitimacy could be proved through high ancestry. It has been shown that groups like the Sātavatas were placed in the Śūdra caste by the Manusmṛti (Thapar 1978). Similarly, they are mentioned as Śankīrṇa Jātī in many instances. This indicates the integration of the clan.
group into the caste structure. The bestowal of Kṣatriya status on some of the groups was a recognition of their political power (Thapar 1978). The Mahābhārata war has symbolic value for the makers of genealogies, since, its end saw the emergence of a full fledged monarchical system. This is clear from the shift in the genealogical record from lists of lineages to that of the kings, dynasties, and regnal years of individual kings (Thapar 1978). The Mahābhārata war was fought not for cows or gold but for territory. In the Malwa area, the switchover to agricultural activity by the agro-pastoral groups might have engendered new problems. Fixed residence and large groupings might have led to new forms of order and dispute. Co-operation might have been required for defensive purposes because the agricultural communities could not have simply melted away under threat from other communities. This is because agriculture requires long term investment. There is accumulation of property in the form of farming implements, durable dwellings and surplus crops. The right to rule which was firmly established after the Mahābhārata war meant the right to enforce law and order, and the right to collect taxes (Thapar 1978). It was this pattern of emergence of the ruling groups sanctified by Brahmanical rituals and enriched by spoils of war, against the background of an agricultural economy, that characterised the succeeding phase.

While we do believe that there was some immigration to the Malwa area, the

11 Here we are not concerned with the actual scale or occurrence of the war but with the popular memory about it. Morton Smith (1973) dates the war to 975 B.C. This fits in with our period of change in the Malwa region. It has been pointed out by Romila Thapar (1978) that the genealogical list given after the Mahābhārata war has a futuristic form. To the composers of the Mahābhārata, the past denoted the period before the war. This period is succeeded by stories of kings and their successors. This points to the early historical period. This evidence too will put the Mahābhārata war anywhere between the 10th and seventh century B.C.
identification of these regions with the home of the Yādavas is more a result of the process of Sanskritisation and state formation. Probably, the process of legitimisation and Sanskritisation was at work even in the later Vedic times which brought diverse people within the fold of the dominant north Indian Brahmanical culture. While the later-day processes of the spread of Brahmanical culture emphasised the caste identity of a group, the earlier phases would associate the group with the pre-caste, clan identities of the Vedic age. This simply indicates that lineages from larger areas were crowding the canvas of the bards and Brahmins. They had to find geneological connections and legitimacy for the emerging power structures.

When the Brahmanical tradition of the Madhyadeśa invented the idea of the "South", it had the concrete example of the Yādava lineages. These people were scarcely interested in agriculture. They did not even have 'kings'. What was worse, they did not follow the rules of caste, and married their own cousins. Worse still, they worshipped dark female goddesses. No wonder they were destroyed by the curse of a Brahmana (Raychaudhuri 1996: 127).

However, many early medieval dynasties of south India claimed Yādava descent. The dynamics of the formation of the Yādava identity needs to be understood in a specific historical and geographical context.

The process of acquiring higher status by the chieftains in modern times has been discussed in many anthropological studies especially (Surajit Sinha 1962). In ancient India we have examples of the Indo-Greek king Menander being called a Kṣatriya by the Buddhist work Milindapanho. Similarly, the Saka king Rudradaman declares that he was 'resorted to by all castes and chosen their lord to protect them.' In the same inscription he refers to his marital ties with the Satavahana kings who were Brahmins (Ray et al 2000: 327). The same king who was protecting the castes was also breaking the caste rules. The relationship between caste and power is complex. We believe that such processes of the acquisition of higher status can be projected back to the early historic phase.
And what is Aryavarta? It is the area east of the Adarsa, west of Kālakavana, south of the Himavant and north of the Pariyātra (Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya 2.4.10.)

Malwa emerges from the mists of the pre-historic past with Pradyota14 as its king and Avanti as its name. Pradyota's other name was Mahasena which obviously refers to his ability to maintain a large army. He was at war with the monarchs of Vatsa and Magadha. His capital was Ujjayini. The word Ujjayinī means "possessed of victory". Understood in the archaeological context of its sudden emergence and fortification, its military connotation is obvious.

The presence of humbler habitations outside the fortification (Jain1972:123) together with the Buddhist Jātaka story about the presence of Cāndālas on the outskirts of the city, speaks of a new power structure. The Cāndālas in this case spoke a language incomprehensible to the Brahmans and other civilized people (Jātaka no.498). Even in this period Avanti was bracketed with Aśmaka of the Daksinapatha. Pāṇini, the grammarian who lived in the sixth-fifth century B.C., mentioned three pairs of Janapadas. Not all of them were geographically contiguous (Agrawal1996:74). The pairing of Avanti and Aśmaka, whose boundaries were not contiguous was probably related to the cultural homogeneity between these regions. Our evidence in the discussions on the kinship system

14 The Puranas associate the Haihaya branch of the Yādavas with Avanti. They mention five branches of the Haihayas, namely Viśhotras, Bhōjas, Avantis, Kūndikeras or Ṭundrikas and the Tālajanghas. When the Viśhotras and Avantis passed away, an Amatya minister named Pulika is said to have killed his master and installed his son Pradyota as king (Raychaudhuri1996:131). The account seems to indicate that various parts of Avanti were controlled by Yādava chieftains. In continuation of the history of the Yādava clan, a process of consolidation of power in fewer hands is discernible. This process culminated in the emergence of monarchy under Pradyota.
of the Yādavas and the analysis of the Sanchi inscriptions indicates the presence of a strong Dravidian influence in this area. The bracketing of Avanti with Asmaka probably refers to this perception of similarity between these Janapadas.

The country between the Himalayas and the Vindhya mountains, to the east of the 'Disappearance' and to the west of Prayāga, is known as the Middle Country (Manusmriti, 2.21).

The quotation from the Manusmriti indicates that by second century B.C. the Malwa area had been integrated into the 'Middle Country'. It had become part of the Brahmanical heartland. It was no longer considered a distant border area sometimes bracketed with the Dakṣinapatha. After the second century B.C. most of the literature refers to Narmada or the Vindhya mountains as the border between the 'Middle country' and 'South' (Law 1977:12). Although in the ritual sense this area became the part of the Brahmanical heartland (Middle country), in many other spheres of culture it continued to exhibit ambiguities of the earlier period. The creation of the identity of Malwa can be traced through literature.

In Bhāsa’s play Svapnavāsavadattam the heroine Vāsavadattā is described as dressed like a woman of Avanti (Devadhar 1962:1). Obviously, the people of Avanti were believed to have a distinct dress. In the Brhat Samhita of Varāhamihira datable to the sixth century, human beings are astrologically classified into the following categories - Hamsa, Sasa, Rucaka, Bhadra, and Mālavya. There are supposedly distinct differences in the characteristics, actions, nature, physical features of these people (Brhat Samhita 68/2-26).

In the Nātya Sāstra of Bharata Muni datable to anywhere between 200 B.C to A.D. 300 (Pande 1991:3), people inhabiting different regions of India are described. There

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is a four fold division of India. Avanti forms one of the divisions distinguished in terms of
dress, speech and manners (ibid. 64). Avanti had a special form of dramatic performance
named after it (ibid. 68). What interests us in these schemes of classification is the
emergence of Avanti with a distinctive personality of its own. It is not the personality of
the Madhyadesa in terms of speech, dress, mode of life and even looks. We get a clear
idea about these distinctive qualities in Kavyamimansa of Ràjasekhara. He says that the
people of Avanti, Pariyatra and Dasapura use Bhûtabhása (Saraswat 1964: 126). He also
states that the dress, speech and behaviour of the men of the Pancaladesa and women of
Daksinadesa are admirable. Avantidesa to him represents a mixture of these two.
Similarly, the dance, song and music of Avantidesa show characteristics of both the North
and the South (chap. III). Even more interesting is the fact that in the style of composition
of poetry, Avanti is bracketed with the South (Saraswat 1965: 32). This is in keeping with
our understanding that it was the Malwa area which formed the boundary between the
Aryan and Dravidian kinship systems.

VI

Avanti was often paired with Ākara from the early centuries of the Christian era.
Ākara has been identified with areas around Vidisa. In the subsequent period Avanti and
Ākara merged to create the identity of Malwa. In this section we shall briefly trace the
history of the Vidisa area which is known as eastern Malwa. Vidisa had a long pre-historic
settlement. It has yielded evidence of occupation in the Maiwa culture phase. In the early
literary references this area is called the Daśārṇa Mahājanapada (Law 1976: 314). It is
mentioned in the Vārttika and Mahābhārata.

Vaidisās according to the Purāṇas, were the people of Vidisa (Bhattacharyya
Kalidasa mentions Vidisa his Meghdutam. Situated on the river Vetravati, it was the capital of the Dasarna country. The Dasarna area was known as Akara in the second century A.D. Inscriptions pair it with Avanti showing the close relationship between the two areas. The Kaumasutra and the Natyasatra speak of this area as Malwa. Thus, from the third - fourth century this area was called Malwa (ibid. 195). The word Malwa was applied for Dasarna and Avanti together from about the seventh century. Both these places are called Malwa by the seventh century writer Banabhatta (Jain 1972:11).

Buddhist legends say that Asoka, as the Mauryan viceroy of Avanti halted in Vidisa on his way to Ujjain (Law 1976:339). His intimate link with Vidisa is clear from his inscription in Sanchi. According to Kalidasa's Malavikagnimitram, Pusyamitra Sunga's son Agnimitra ruled from Vidisa as his father's viceroy. In the first century B.C., king Bhagabhadra, also believed to be a Sunga monarch, received the Greek ambassador Heliodoros in Vidisa. Heliodoros who calls himself a Bhagavata, erected a column in honour of Vasudeva (Law 1976:338). A Sunga king Bhagavata, is said to have built a Vishnu temple at Vidisa. Possibly, the later Sungas ruled from Vidisa (Bhattacharyya 1977:196). The Gupta king Samudragupta conquered this area which is associated with groups like Sanakarnikas and Kakas (Raychaudhuri 1996:482). Some inscriptions at the nearby Udayagiri and Sanchi show that Chandragupta Vikramaditya used Vidisa as a base for his celebrated campaign against the Sakas (ibid.490).

Compared to Ujjayini, Vidisa was not an important political centre. Except for the brief interlude when the Sunga monarchs might have ruled from here, it was a minor political centre. The near absence of political authorities in the list of donors at Sanchi also
reflects the character of the city. Politically, it was a minor appendage in the scheme of monarchs ruling from Pātaliputra. Vidisa probably provided the shortest route to the emperors from the east who wanted to conquer Avanti and areas to the South. That also is why its name burnt bright for an instant each during the visits of potentates in the Mauryan, Sunga and Gupta times, to be forgotten again. Thus, the waxing and waning of the empires of the east determined the political fortunes of Vidisa.

The Puranas associate the Mālavas, Mekalas, Karushas, Utkalas and Nisādhas with this area (Law 1976:314). Some of these associations may owe to the fact that different areas have been called Dāsartha by these texts (ibid.). We know that during Samudragupta's conquest, the area of Vidisa was beyond the pale of Āryāvarta and possibly ruled by some non-monarchical group called the Kākas. Its neighbours were forest kingdoms (Raychaudhuri 1996:480). The association of such groups with the Vidisa area shows the presence of strong non-Brahmanical traditions in this area.

While caravans from the east converged on Vidisa, we do not know of kings and armies of Vidisa conquering kingdoms. Part of the explanation of the political fortunes of Vidisa is located in its historical geography. It was flanked by forest kingdoms (Allahabad Prāṣālī of Samudragupta) and the Vindhya forests so vividly described by Harṣacarita (Agrawal 2000:183). The Vidisa area was surrounded by the dense Bhesakala forest (Eggermont 1966). Vidisa was located on the Kāntāra patha (Agrawal 1996:233) i.e. a trade route passing through dense forests (Monier Williams). A study of the physical geography of this area shows that the black soil extends in a ribbon pattern from the Ujjain to the Vidisa area. Vidisa lacks a large agricultural hinterland.

The glory of Vidisa lay in successful exploitation of opportunities offered by its
location along a famous trade route. It figures prominently in the descriptions of trade routes going South (Bhattacharyya 1977:195). Buddha-gosa calls it Vessanagara which is probably derived from Vaisyanagara (the city of the Vaisyas). According to the Pali legend of Asoka, the way from Pataliputra to Ujjain lay through the town of Vidisa (Law 1976:336). It was located in a central position between the western sea coast and Pālīputra, and between Srāvasti and Pratisthāna (ibid 337). Coins of Vidisa had their distinctive marks. They were in circulation from the fourth century B.C. The importance of its trading community is clear from the fact that Devī, the wife of Asoka, is described as the daughter of a merchant. In the Garuḍa Purāṇa, a ghost from Vidisa identifies himself as a Vaiśya (Garuḍa Purana:857). According to a Jātaka, Daśārṇa was famous for its art of making swords (Law 1976:314). Karpāsigrāma, a settlement in Akara, was famous for its cotton cloth. Similarly, the Periplus knew it for ivory, a fact supported by the donation of a beautiful gateway at Sanchi (Law 1976:314). Thus, we can identify at least three items of trade from Vidisa i.e. cotton, swords and ivory.

Vidisa was an important centre of Buddhism. Asoka's wife Devī belonged to Vidisa and is said to have built the Vedisāgiri Mahāvihara which has been identified with Sanchi (Law 1976 314) In Vidisa was also a monastery called Hatthalakarama. Vidisa is well known for the Stūpas in the surrounding areas. Apart from Sānchi, Stūpas have been discovered at Sonari, Satadhara, Bhojpur and Andher. Donors from Vidisa are mentioned in votive inscriptions at the Buddhist centres of Sanchi. The ivory carvers of Vidisa too donated part of a gateway at Sanchi. Donors from Vidisa are mentioned in Bharhut.

Heliodorus, the Greek, constructed a pillar in praise of Vāsudeva showing its
importance as a centre for Vaisnavism. There is a reference to a Siva temple in Vidisa too (Law 1976:336). This place was called Bhaillasvamin after a sun temple in the early medieval period. The Skanda Purana refers to Vidisa as a holy place. The Garudapuran describes it as a city full of wealth and happiness, surrounded by villages and countries of all sorts, and abounding in gems. It was an abode of many religions (Garuda Purana 857).

Vidisa was a famous city in the early historic period. However, compared to Ujjayini, literary references to it are scanty. Vidisa provided a setting for the romance of Agnimitra and Mālavikā in Kalidasa's Mālvikāgnimitra. The entire play is confined to the palace and its gardens which seem to have been elaborate affairs complete with dungeons too! The king's victories over neighbouring monarchs is also alluded to. However, it is politics all the way. The city is no more than the king's home and political epicentre. Vidisa is mentioned in Banabhatta's Kādambari too. But the descriptions are confined to the palace and court of the king. Thus, the kind of graphic descriptions available for Ujjain are not available for Vidisa.

Our brief survey of the history of Vidisha shows that it had three names - the first one was related to a group of people called Daśānas. The second one, namely Besnagara, was derived from Vaisyanagara. It was related to the prominence of Vaisyas. The third name, Bhilsa, is related to the temple of Bhaillasvamin. While the first name related to the ethnic group which controlled this area, the second is related to the economic dominance of the trading caste. The name Bhaillasvamin is derived from a religious cult. This shows the decline of ethnic identity and economic fortunes and the emergence of regional religious identity.

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A discussion of the image of cities in ancient India (Chattopadhyaya 1997) tries to understand the way cities were visualised by writers in ancient India. In this discussion, many texts of ancient India have been used. We shall confine our discussion to Ujjayini. The Arthasastra and Milindapanho dated roughly to the early centuries before the Christian era, have some description on the founding of a city (ibid.). What is important from our point of view is the centrality of political authority in the creation of a city. The Arthasastra being a normative text naturally places king and political power at the hub of urban activity. The same may hold true for Milindapanho. However, a text like the Mahabhashya, datable to the second century B.C. can give us it will give a more realistic picture since the references to settlements in this text are incidental to Patanjali’s concern of illustrating rules of Sanskrit grammar. We are using his descriptions because there is a strong tradition associating him with Gonarda in the Malwa region. These descriptions have been ably gleaned by scholars like Agrawal (1953) and Agnihotri (1963). Illustrating one formula, Patanjali declares that there is no difference between a village and a city. The functions performed in cities are also performed in villages and what is banned in villages is not permitted in cities either (Agnihotri 1963: 115). In another instance he differentiates between towns and villages by saying that cities are larger in size, and people of many castes live therein (ibid.). He associates moats, city-walls and palaces with cities. Cities had two kinds of residential buildings i.e., palaces (Prasada) and normal households (Griha). One entered a house but climbed into a Prasada (Agnihotri 1963: 189). These buildings bring out class and status differences in the city. Patanjali also makes incidental references to various other buildings associated with cities. They are the king’s palace.
court, treasure-house, play-house, granary, tax collection centres, a place for supplying
drinks, and the market. The collage of images of the city found in Patanjali matches the
details of Sanchi - moat, city walls, palaces dominate the Sanchi cityscape. This
presentation is fixated on political power as the hub of the city space. All the references
are to buildings built by the political authority. Patanjali also mentions that the gates of the
city should be named after the city towards which each opens (a tradition which continued
into the medieval period). Thus, the city gates spoke of the presence of other cities. The
domination of the image of town over country is complete in Patanjali's mind. Ignoring
mountains, holy rivers and villages he suggests naming a gate after a distant city.

Patanjali's image of the city is distinctly different from those found in books like
Silappadikāram or Pādatāditakam, where the images of heterogeneity and convergence
predominate (Chattopadhyaya 1997). These texts are not concerned with the normative
order of Brahmanism (ibid.). Similarly, political power seems to be marginal to their
concerns. We get fascinating descriptions of the city of Ujjaiyinī laced with hyperboles and
literary conventions in the texts belonging to the fifth - sixth century. We simply intend
to discover the "structural relations and their entailments in the details of experience"
(ibid.). We shall sum up with a discussion on the images of Ujjaiyinī found in the
Mricchakatika of Südrika, Kādambari of Bānabhaṭṭa and Pādatāditakam of Syāmilaka.
These texts belong to roughly the same time bracket i.e. fifth to the seventh centuries of
the Christian era.

We quote from Kādambari-

There is in the country of Avanti a city called Ujjaiyinī which excels in
splendour the world of gods... It is (so holy that it is) as if it were the birth
place of the Krita age. It is as if it were a second Earth created suitable for
residence by the divine Siva... It is surrounded by an encircling ditch full
of water. It is surrounded by a circular rampart. It is decked with long, big market roads. In them exposed (for sale) heaps of conches, oyster-shells, pearls, corals, and emerald gems. It is decked with picture galleries. Its squares are decked with sacred shrines. It is decked with suburbs, in which there are reservoirs of water. In which there is (always) darkness on account of the presence of green gardens. In it is publically announced the worship of the God of Love. In that city the sins of the people are all wiped off by the noise of the (sacred) studies which are always carried on there. There the intoxicated peacocks, ardently engaged in dancing and having their plumages unfurled to a circle, set up a loud tumult with their cries, in houses furnished with water fountains in which there is the deep rumbling of clouds in the form of the dull sound of the drums (beaten therein during music practice). The city is inhabited by pleasure loving people. Like the moon in the matted hair of Siva, they possess wealth in crores. Like the law codes called Smritis, they cause to be built public halls, caravansarais, wells, public places for drinking water, gardens, temples, bridges, and mechanical contrivances (like water-wheels etc.). Like the mountain Mandāra they wear upon their persons all the choice jewels. They have a special knowledge of (i.e., are experts in the chief points) of all the arts. Their dress is brilliant and they learn all the dialects (prevailing in all parts of the country) and they know all the alphabets. The city has large colonies of cowherds occupying all its parts in all directions. It is full of thousands of sacred temples. It exhibits in its gambling saloons the throws of golden dice. It gives delight to large crowds of gallants. It is charming on account of the various sports of children. In that city the divine Sun daily appears. His horses turn their mouths downwards, being attracted by the very melodious sounds of the singing of ladies practising music on the terraces of lofty mansions. In that city, the auspicious songs, sung at dawn by numerous caged parrots and starlings (mainas) awakened at the close of the night, are rendered vain on account of the jingling sound of the ornament of the ladies. In that city there was examination of Varna (testing of colour), but only in the case of gold (and not of the castes of the people) (Translation, Kane: 67-74).

This description can be garnished with details from other texts. It begins with an architectural presentation of the city. Having described the parapet and defences of the city Bānabhatta takes us to the Mahāvipānipatha which is believed to have divided the city into many parts (Agrawal 1958: 59). The fact that Bānabhatta takes us to the Mahāvipānipatha rather than the Rājapatha possibly speaks of a shift in perspective by his
times. The literal meaning of the word is 'path through the market'. The window-shoppers' description of the wealth of the city shows the power of merchant-class. This is followed by a description of sacred shrines and suburbs watered by beautiful ponds and gardens. This architectural presentation is followed by a description of the animate world of people engaged in festivities, gambling in saloons, worshipping Mahākāla and Kāmadeva, engaging in chanting sacred incantations, frolicking in the waters of the river Śipra, donating money for building public halls, places for drinking water, temples etc. Their speech is agreeable and they are familiar with diverse scripts and dialects. They dress brilliantly and are familiar with all the arts. The melodious songs of the singers are specially mentioned.

The text shows a distinct shift from Patañjali's notion of urban space. The attention of the writers is no longer rivetted on the king, palace and royal officials. Banabhatta chooses to describe the rows of shops along the Mahāvīnaṇḍa rather than talk about the king's way (Rājpatha). The city does not have a single focus. It is no longer constituted by the presence of a king or a central ritual centre, but is rather a hub of secular activity, of movement (Chattopadhyaya: 1997).

The descriptions detailing the grand layout and law-abiding citizenry of the city are punctuated by some interesting snippets in contemporary plays. Bṛhas in Pratijñā Yaugandharāyana refers to drain-water clogging the highway. Similarly, the play Mricchakatika refers to the narrow streets of Ujjain with hardly enough space for two carriages to move abreast. Shops were built close to each other with only narrow lanes between them. Street dogs surviving on leftovers from the shops lived in these lanes. Streets were not lighted and darkness was home to all kinds of characters, good and bad.
Obviously, the playwrights and poets blinded by the splendour of Ujjain have glossed over such details. We get incidental references to them in contemporary texts. Bānabhatta describing Harsha's victory march from his capital gives a description of the broken mud huts of the poor who run for their lives (Agrawal 2000:148). Slavery was a normal practice and beggars were also present in the city. Apart from the worship of Mahākāla and Kāmadeva, malignant female spirits were also worshipped. Miscarriage of justice and political revolution formed the backdrop of Mricchakatika (Mukherjee 1945).

VIII

It was in the dense, crowded world of Ujjain that the traditions we associate with Malwa were formed. The cultural universe of ancient Malwa was created in the music, dance and songs of Ujjain. After all, the people of Ujjain were “…brave, still they bend to others…their speech is agreeable…handsome… They have a special knowledge of (i.e., are experts in the chief points) of all the arts. They are liberal, they are clever, and their speech is always accompanied with a smile. They are skilled in (carrying on) jocular conversation, Their dress is brilliant… They show that they are familiar with the science of dramaturgy.” (Kane 69-70).

Texts of the early centuries of the Christian era tend to define the identity of Malwa increasingly by Ujjain. In the play Svapnavāsavadattam, Pradyota is interchangeably mentioned as the king of Avanti and Ujjain (Devadhar 1963:42, 69). From the fourth - fifth century onwards, texts like the Bhagavati Purāṇa call Avanti a city (Law

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15 The conditions of the poorer sections of the city are little understood. If descriptions from the medieval period can provide any clue to ancient India, here is what Das Gupta has to say about Surat: "The majority of townsmen built neither in stone nor in brick, but put together shacks made of bamboo. Such shacks tended to sprout more easily in suburbs, the sociology of which is a little obscure." (Das Gupta, A. 1979)
1976:160). The Skanda Purāṇa refers to Avanti as a holy city (ibid.). A perusal of the Avantikhandha in the Skanda Purāṇa indicates that Avanti had become a byword for Ujjaiyinī. Almost all the holy places mentioned in the text are located in the city of Ujjaiyinī. Obviously, Ujjain had captured the imagination of the writers and holy men to such an extent that it could be used as a substitute for Avanti. As pointed out earlier the images of Avanti are increasingly the images Ujjain. Ujjain almost means Avanti.

Ujjain emerged as a political centre in the sixth century B.C. Over a period of time it became a key point in the network of trade with the western world. In the next stage, it was not only a political and economic centre but also the cultural capital of that part of the world. No wonder writers beginning with Bhāsa chose it as the setting for their plays. Kalidasa's Cloud-messenger gloried in the charms of this city. The process of urbanisation had created such visible and centralised institutions for the display of power that a small geographical space became a substitute for a Mahājanapada. This process of centralisation is visible in the sphere of sacred space as well as in the field of economy and polity. There are references to kings from various parts of the country making Ujjain their home. "Ujjaiyinī was the home of men who were leaders" (Kane 70). Agrawal believes that Banabhatta is referring to leaders of Nigamas, Sreṇis, Puga, Pasanda and other urban associations (Agrawal 1958:59). A passage from Pādatāḍitakaṁ gives us a clue to the meaning of this passage - "By the coming here of kings by hundreds from hills, from islands and from seacoasts, and their settling down in different parts of the city, the people learn here, as it were, in the same place the strange and manifold story of the creation of Brahmā" (Ghosh 1975:115). Obviously, the city attracted not only merchants but adventurers, chieftains and kings too. The presence of chieftains and kings is related to
a transfer of surplus from their respective principalities in the form of taxes and tributes. The urban centre was truly cosmopolitan, with people using the languages and scripts of distant areas like Rome, Persia and China (Agrawal 1958:59). After all, the Vita in Pādatāditaṅkaṁ avoids talking to one of the prostitutes because he could not follow her Yavana language (Motichandra 1959:240). It was the walls of the city which provided a safe sanctuary to Sakas, Yavanas, Tuṣāras, Pārsikas, Kirātas, Kalingas, Vangas, Māgadhas, Angas, Mahiṣakas, Colas, Pandyas and Keralas (Ghosh 1975:115). It was in this world that super-rich courtesans like Vasantasena of the Mrīchakatika lived in a mansion divided into seven sections. From the 'wattle and daub' towns of the Buddha's time we have progressed to centralised and prosperous centres like Ujjain. The Ujjain of the fifth century A.D. is unlike any city of the sixth century B.C. It is much more heterogeneous and prosperous.

There has been some discussion about urbanisation as a process being simply a reflection of more fundamental processes like social stratification and state formation. We feel that Mumford's comment that cities acted as containers of social change, is appropriate (Mumford 1960). It was a space which provided opportunity for various kinds of development in the fields of economy, culture and polity. The protected space of the city had an autonomy of its own. Its citizenry could evolve ways of centralising power - economic, religious and political - over a period of time. Thus, a city like Ujjain could become so powerful as to become a substitute for the personality of a large region like Avanti. It had a dress, a language, a particular way of dancing and singing and a particular way of performing plays.

The increasing centralisation and prosperity of cities like Ujjain gave some
playwrights the confidence to mock the powerful Brahmanical order. The central problem of the play Pādatāditakam, is the search for expiation for an Arya who has been kicked on his forehead by a courtesan. The Dharmasastras, believed to resolve all existential problems, do not seem to have a clue to resolving this crisis. The Brahman texts do not provide any solution. It is a specific urban community consisting of people of diverse castes and groups which finds solution to the problem (Chattopadhyaya 1997). The irreverent wooings of men and women in the Chaturbhani (Motichandra 1959) could not have been possible in the sixth century B.C.