The subject matter of this work is that part of Indian history which includes her culture as influenced by the foreign invasions from the 6th Century B.C. to the end of the sixth Century A.D. This period of one thousand and two hundred years covers the Persian and Greek invasions by Alexander the Great and Seleucus Nikator and those by Indo-Greeks and Parthians, the Sakas and Kushanas and lastly the havoc caused by the fierce Hunas.

Politically the scope of this book ends just before the birth of King Harsha Vardhan. The general political, social or/and economic history of Indian sub-continent, without any reference to invasions, is not within the purview of the task on hand.

The history of the foreign invasions of India is a history of the people's criminal disunion and continued discord the like of which is not found anywhere else in the world history. What these invasions failed to teach India was a lesson of unity and common cause.

It appears that India has been invaded since the time immemorial. In how many waves the Aryans came to India in the hoary past or how the invasions of Greek Heracles and Semiramis, Queen of Syria took place and with what results, we have no definite history about them.

The Achaemenians occupied large tracts of India on the Indus, but though there must have been a massive invasion, they did not attack India in the modern sense of the term. The Persians occupied the areas just on the East of their empire, leaving the whole of the remaining country practically untouched. Invasion by Alexander
was a different one. He invaded Persia from a far-away Greece and overran most of the North-West of India. Had he continued eastwards, he would have covered the entire north India and so was the invasion by his general Seleucus. The advent of Seleucus can be taken as the continuation of the Greek invasion of India because his purpose was to recover the territories previously occupied by his master, two decades earlier. The Indo-Greeks migrated into India for establishing their rule there and their dominions continued to exist in the north-western parts of India for two centuries. When we consider the love of invaders like Bactrians, Sakas or Kushanas for the Indian culture – religion and language of the land of their adoption, it would look a little odd to look upon their rule as len. Whatever social break-downs Indians suffered during these pasted invasions, they contained the seeds of a great renewal literature, religion and art. India was compensated in the field of culture what she lost in the field of battle. The scales of war tilted in favour of destruction during the invasions when we come to the Huns. They caused much more damage to the Indian culture and the people as mentioned above.

Leaving the time of actual hostilities and movement of armies, throughout the period India experienced general prosperity. Agriculture advanced. Industry flourished. Inland and foreign trade developed. Foreign contacts brought much gain to India, contributed a greater knowledge of India in other lands, such as Greece, Rome and the Far-East. Communications developed as new roads took shape. Cities grew bigger on the sea coast of India and became cosmopolitan. The natural economy was replaced gradually by money economy due to large scale issue of coins.
Upto the time of the Imperial Guptas, there was a remarkable output of noble architectural monuments and figural and decorative sculpture, but the process was reversed thereafter. With a short breathing period India was subjected to destructive invasion by the Hunas. The Muslim invasion destroyed what India built during the first millennium. The process of destruction which was started by the Hunas in the sixth century was halted after a thousand years when the country came to be ruled by the Britishers.

After the first Greek invasion, the expansion and consolidation of the Mauryan empire dominates the scene for a century and the cherished dream of ancient Indian polity of universal monarchy (Sampoorna Rajya) becomes a reality. Chandragupta faces a foreign invasion by Seleucus and repulses the attack successfully. For the first time in the recorded History of India what a universal empire can achieve in such a short time, comes to the notice of the people. The towering personality of Asoka then occupies a central place. Not only the foreign invasions ceased, but Asoka's missionaries went to other countries for effecting religious conquests. Such religious activity and cultural spread was not witnessed till Kushan King Kanishka came to rule over India. In between came the invader from Bactria and Parthia, then Sakas from Central Asia. The Kusanas built up a dominion which lasted for a very long time and stretched from Central Asia to the heart of India. The downfall of the Kushan empire was brought about by a resurgence of indigenous rule in the third century and the petty states paved the way for the united Gupta empire in the following century.
South India remained almost untouched by these foreign invasions till the Sakas found an easy access through Sindh and Gujarat to Maharashtra. The Satavahanas had to wage a long and exhausting war with the Saka Satrapas of western India. The Sakas were also the first to establish a long lasting Kingdom in the Deccan. Their domination was ended by the rising power of the Guptas in the fourth century A.D. The power of the Guptas was in turn destroyed by the invasion of the Hunas who caused damage and destruction unequalled by any of the invaders before them. It can be well said that the cultural impact percolated to the south very slowly and gradually. Therefore, in the scheme of things, the North occupies a dominant place in the following discussions, in accordance with the events of history. However, where the evidence required, South India has not been neglected. It only occupies a secondary place owing to the nature of the events. Therefore, India with reference to foreign invasions up to the Huna may be taken generally as the plains of the Indus and the Ganges.

The period covered by this inquiry also requires some explanation. It begins with sixth century B.C. and ends with sixth century A.D. This period of 1200 years has been selected with some definite purpose and can be explained with the help of historical certainty and historical continuity. We know that with the advent of sixth century before Christ we tread on a firmer ground of history. Prior to this time, we don't have documented history, it is mixed with proto-history or tradition and sometime with myth. The Indian history sees the light of the day from the 6th century B.C. In regard to foreign invasions also we have no definite information prior to this time. There have been invasions or immigrations in force in the India in the past, but the historical evidence has not yet been sifted from the mass of tradition and myth. The Aryans came to India in force. The Greek Herakles and Dionysos are said to have attacked the Indian land. The Syrian Queen Semiramis also came to subjugate this country. All these subjects being highly controversial could not be included for this research. From the sixth century B.C. Indian chronology becomes less controversial and though
there are some differences of opinion among scholars for this period also yet the general agreement on the sequence of events has been reached and our history walks on a more solid ground. Similarly the inquiry closes with sixth century A.D. which can be explained with the fact of historical continuity. India continued to suffer from foreign invasions upto the twentieth century. The Muslim invasions started in the beginning of the eighth century and those of the European powers started from the seventeenth century.

The process of change and cultural impact of Islam that started with the invasion by Mohammed-Bin-Kasim continues further and that process has not come to a halt as in case of the other invasions so is the case with the invasion of Christian powers. History can be written when the event is over. It does not make a final history if written during the continuity of the event. For this reason the foreign invasions that took place after the Huns have been excluded from the scope of this work.

The inquiry is concerned with the aspect of the foreign influence that is related to the invasions and the regimes and normal influence due to peaceful contact has not been discussed in detail, only passing references have been made to present a complete picture. But wherever there was peaceful influence in continuation of an armed invasion, that has been included for the purposes of discussions for its exclusion would have meant a distorted picture. Secondly it would not be possible to distinguish as to which impact was peaceful and which was brought about by the armed invasion. Then the pragmatic approach was to include all such influences which were either brought about by invasions or otherwise.
As regards the definition of 'culture' and 'Indian culture', it may be mentioned that culture has been briefly defined in the Introductory Chapter. Culture is, in fact, the practice of manners and the art of living of a people. It is the sum total of a people's institutions, customs and arts. Many books have been written by various authors on the Indian culture and their views as a whole is a part of this work. However, there are only few scholars who have considered the aspect of foreign cultures influencing the Indian culture. If we scrutinise the history of foreign invasions of India and their total impact, it would appear that it is difficult to describe the Indian Culture without referring to its foreign elements.

It is true that these foreign elements have, over a period of time, become one with the Indians to such an extent that they do not think of the contribution of, say Persian, Greek and Roman cultures, or how the Gaks and Mughals made their remarkable contribution to the Indian culture. Even the name of this country 'India' owes its origin to the foreigners. In the matter of language and literature, art and architecture, food and dress, music and entertainment, there is an unescapable touch of foreigners. It is impossible to think of Indian culture minus the contribution by the foreigners.

It is also true that the whole range of such an influence could not possibly be covered for obvious reasons. We would never know the quantum of evidence of impact, or the relevant material destroyed by these invasions. Further there is immense evidence still lying hidden under the surface of the earth. Secondly it should be remembered that history can never be written fully. The same is applicable to this subject. It is impossible to do full justice to the subject on which sufficient material is not available. Therefore, an humble attempt has been made to analyse the impact of the invasions on the Indian Culture without boasting that every thing has been covered and discussed. In carefully examining the mass of historical evidence, some conclusions have been drawn which to the best of my knowledge and belief have been suggested here for the first time. They have been enumerated in the statement of Original Findings.