PREFACE
In the annals of ancient Indian history the role played by the imperial dynasties like the Mauryas, Kushāṇas and Guptas in the North and the Śātavāhanas, Vākāṭakas and Cholas in the South has been a favourite subject of discussion amongst scholars and researchers alike. As a result an enormous mass of literature has accumulated on these topics, much of which is repetition. To a lesser extent, dynasties like the Śūṅga, Kaṇva, Pushyabhūti, Maukharī, Chālukya and the Rajput dynasties of the early medieval period have attracted the attention of the scholars. However, the history of the lesser known but equally important peoples and dynasties like the Yaudheyaṇas, the Nāgas, the kings of Uchchakalpa and the Parivṛṣṭakas of Čāhala has been relegated to the secondary position and no comprehensive work has appeared on these. To this category belongs the name of the Aulikaras of Western Malwa who played an important role in the history of the 5th and 6th centuries and rose to the imperial heights when the Sun was setting on the Imperial Guptas. The epigraphic evidence has revealed their decisive victories over the Hūṇa conquerors – Toramāṇa and Mihirakula. As such they were instrumental in pushing back the barbarian Hūṇas
from the heart of India and saving the country at a critical juncture. Their achievements have been recorded in about a dozen inscriptions belonging to the Aulikara rulers or their subordinates that form almost our sole source of information about them. Though small in number these inscriptions are a mine of information about every aspect of the history and culture of the rulers to whom they belong. Besides the political history of the period, they provide a vivid picture of the development of art and literature, religion and socio-economic structure of the society and to some extent the administrative set up of the Aulikaras.

Picking up this subject from the writings of the stalwarts like John Faithful Fleet, D. R. Bhandarkar, V. V. Mirashi, R. C. Majumdar, Jagannath Agrawal, D. C. Sircar, Dashrath Sharma, K. D. Bajpai and others that lay scattered in various journals and corpuses of inscriptions, studying it afresh in the light of the original sources, evaluating, analysing and updating in the light of recent discoveries we have been able to present this piece of research. The result of our labour is satisfying for us in the sense that we have been able to present the entire material about the Aulikaras at one place in a
systematic manner and with several new interpretations and additions.

To name a few, the geography of the region having bearing on the Aulikara history as also the sources have been dwelt upon in the first chapter to provide the material concerned to the readers at one place. Enumerating the history of the house of Jayavarman and Bandhuvarman we have discussed afresh the question of their relationship with the imperial Guptas especially in the light of Bhandarkar’s interpretation of Simha-vikrānta-gāmi. Likewise, the problem of Mahārāja Prabhākara of the Mandsaur inscription of the year 524 and that of Mahārāja Gauri of the Chhoti Sadri inscription of M. S. 547 have been seen from a new angle. Gauri’s overlord Ādityavardhana has been identified with Prakāṣadharman of the Risthal Stone inscription for the first time with the help of our supervisor Dr. Ashvini Agrawal. In the third chapter a connected history of the second house of the Aulikaras to which Yaśodharman Vishṇuvarddhana belonged has been presented afresh in a detailed manner. The administrative system of the Aulikaras, religion, social and economic life, art and architecture of the period has been discussed in detail, probably for the first time. A detailed discussion
on the epigraphical data supported by literary evidence has provided what is lacked in the form of structural remains to throw light on the architecture of the period. The care has been taken to dwell upon whatever little we have of the structural remains such as the Śiva temple at Darra and a toraṇa from Khilichipur. Likewise all examples of sculptures worthy of note have been included in the work to make it as complete as possible.

It now remains my bounden duty to express my gratitude to all those who have been instrumental, directly or indirectly, in completion of my work. My foremost thoughts go to the memory of the late Professor Jagannath Agrawal who initiated me into the field of research by suggesting this topic and briefing me about its importance and the way to tackle it. I wish he could see the completion of this work in his lifetime. My head is humbly bowed in his memory. The late Prof. K. D. Bajpai, with whom I corresponded in the initial stages of my work, not only encouraged me to go ahead but also made valuable suggestion regarding the bibliography. To him and all the other scholars who previously set the path by their discoveries and writings for further work on this topic I shall always remain indebted. Prof. Ajay Mitra Shastri, Formerly Professor &
Head, Dept. of A. I. H. C. & Archaeology, Nagpur University, Nagpur very kindly provided some references which were not easily available here. I am grateful to him for his help and encouragement.

The onus of guiding this work by discussing several vexed problems of methodology, interpretation, presentation and new material fell upon my supervisor Dr. Ashvini Agrawal, formerly Chairman, Dept. of Ancient Indian History, Culture & Archaeology, Panjab University, Chandigarh. Without his active help at every step it would not have been possible to complete this work. It is therefore no mere formality when I say that he has been a true friend, philosopher and guide to me in every sense of the word.

For my colleagues and teachers in the Department, Prof. S. N. Chopra, Dr. S. Kumar, the present Chairman of the Department and Shri D. K. Handa, I have a special word of thanks for their help in various ways during the period of my research. They provided me facilities for the work and helped by discussing various problems whenever I approached them. Mr. Sandhir Sharma tackled the problems of typing the script of the thesis with his master handling of the computer. To him I express my hearty thanks. During the long sittings at the residence of my supervisor to discuss several
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