CHAPTER - 6
CHANGES IN MYTH AND POPULAR CULTURE DURING THE INTERREGNUM
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The story of Videgha Mahthav, as mentioned earlier, mentions the Aryan penetration into eastern India. Discovery of material remains in the middle Gangetic basin also highlights the expansion of Aryan settlements in new areas, which led to interaction and mixing with new tribes. Although this interaction and mixing between different ethnic elements was a continuous process attempts were made to extend its frontiers by absorbing forest-living aborigines in it. It is frequently recommended that the dasyus living in the forest should be treated with restraint and honour. It is argued that even the dasyus, conscience revolts against act of cruelty perpetuated by others. The other reason given for adopting a conciliatory attitude towards them is that they can easily raise an army through their fierce activities. The king is advised to give the dasyus gifts and to

1. Mbh. Shanti Parva.131.11.
2. Ibid.10.
treat them with respect, non-violence⁴ etc. Thus, while dealing with the aboriginal tribes and the dasyus a well thought out mechanism of acculturation was evolved. The story of a dasyu nishada chief called kapavya in the Mahabharata says that despite born as a nishada from Kshatriya the chief was called an observe of duties of a kshatriya.⁵ He achieved the desired end even while leading the life of dasyu⁶ on account of his missionary activities.⁷ Thousands of dasyu villagers approached kapavya and appealed to him to become their village headman. The said, "with the consent of us all you become our chief village headman." Whatever you will ask us to do we will do that accordingly. You protect us justly like parents.⁸ Kapavya accepted this responsibility and imparted a number of instructions to his people.

He requested his people not to kill women,

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3. Ibid. 14.
4. Mbh. Shanti Parva.131.3.
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid.11.
8. Ibid.12.
cowards, children and ascetics or to sezie women forcibly. He further asks his people to protect interest of cows and brahmanas and even to fight for their sake.\(^9\) While respecting the interests of peasants he also requests not to disturb ploughing operations.\(^{10}\)

This story and several other statements found in the opics underlines the process of acculturation responsible for assimilating aboriginal people of the brahmanical social order based on plough-using agriculture. It is significant that the tribal people are asked not only to protect the brahamans, who were the ritualistic and ideological leaders of the society, but are also asked to protect cattle, so essential for agriculture. This process of acculturation facilitated certain elements of Aryan myth and culture to be adopted by the non-Vedic tribes and vice-versa. Hence, this was an important phase of enrichment of myth and culture as

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9. Ibid. 133.13.
10. Ibid. 14.
various factors come to play an important role here. Beside, changes in material culture and social realm, as seen in earlier chapter, also had a say in the change of mythology and culture during the post-Vedic period. Changes in political status of kshatriya and economic status of vaishya set new forces of change in motion. Hence, freedom of religious speculation, of which we get the first fruits in the earlier Upanishads, was the special characteristic of the period under review. It was the main pre-occupation of men who belonged to the last two ashramas or stages of life formulated in the brahmanical scriptures.

Changes appeared even at the level of knowledge and intuition, which is explicitly and implicitly perceptible in the teachings of the Upanishads. Being a class of literature independent of the Vedic hymns and the Brahmanas, the Upanishads mark certain advancement on the Vedas as they shifted the center from the outer to the inner world, a protest against the

externalism of the Vedic practices and indifference to the sacredness of Vedas. Thus, the Upanishads turned to explore the depths of the inner world, i.e. realization of self. The Upanishads emphasized that not the so-called gods but the true living God, the Atman, has to be worshipped. The inner immortal self and the great cosmic power are one and the same. Brahman is the Atman and Atman is the Brahman. The one supreme power through which all things have been brought into being is one with the innermost self in each man’s heart. The Upanishads do not uphold the theory of grace in the same spirit as the Vedas do. We do not have appeals to the Vedic gods who were the sources of material prosperity for increase of happiness, but only prayers for deliverance from sorrow.

The uselessness of rituals and sacrifices in the backdrop of surplus agricultural production and growing importance of cattle was duly recognised by the Upanishads.

God is to be honoured by spiritual worship and not by external ceremony we can’t save ourselves by praising gods nor impress them by sacrifices. The authors of Upanishads had a sufficient sense to know that their protection would become ineffective if it should demand a revolution in things. They, therefore, ask only for a change in the spirit. They reinterpret sacrifices and allegorise them. In some passages\textsuperscript{15}, we are asked to meditate on the horse-sacrifice. This meditative effort helps us to realize the meaning of the sacrifice and it is said to be quite as valuable as making a sacrifice. Life itself is regarded as a sacrifice. In this regard, self discipline generosity, straightforwardness, ahimsa and truth in speech are payments and the bathe of purification. When the sacrifice is over there is death.\textsuperscript{16} Sometimes, we are told that the sacrifices are necessary for the higher path. Nobody can tread the higher road without fulfilling the requirements of the lower. Sacrifices are necessary for the unenlightened,

\textsuperscript{15} Br.Up. I.1,2  
\textsuperscript{16} Chhandogya Up. III
though, they alone will not do. They give us admissions to the world of fathers, which, after a temporary sojourn in the moon leads back to a new earthly existence. Ceremonialism is contrasted with spiritual worship. There are occasions when the sacrificial and priestly religion strikes them as superficial and they give vent to all their irony. They describe a procession of the priests each holding the fail of the other in front and saying, "Om! Let us eat. Om, let us drink...... etc." Thus, the rigid ritual of the Brahmanas which gave little comfort to the weak heart of man, was held in check in Upanishads.

Upanishadic contempt against established practices is further seen in their unfavourable attitude to the sacredness of Vedas. Like the rationalistic thinker of a later day they adopted a double attitude towards Vedic authority. They considered the Veda to be of supernatural origin, as when they say,

18. Ibid I.12.4.5.
"Just as when a fire is laid with damp wood, clouds of smoke spread all round, so in truth from this great has been breathed forth the *Rigveda, Samveda, Yajurveda*, the hymns of the *Atharvans* and the *Angirasas* the narratives, the histories, the sciences, the mystical problems, the poems the proverbs and the expositions—all these have been breathed from him. It is also recognized that the Vedic knowledge is much inferior to the true divine insight and will not liberate us. *Narada* himself admits that he knows only the *mantras* and sacred books but not the self. Further distinction is established between the higher and lower knowledge, it is the higher knowledge by which the indestructible *Brahmana* is apprehended.

The *Upanishads* also sought unity in the backdrop of confused ferment of vedic devotion. Although the conception of a single

19. *Br.Up. II.4.10*
20. *Chhandogya Up. V. 3.10; Br.Up. III.5; IV.4.21. VI.2.1*
21. *Chhandogya Up. VII.2*
22. *Munduka Up. I. 1.4-5; Maitrayana Up. VI. 21*
central power had been actually formulated, as mentioned earlier in some Vedic hymns, the Upanishads carried out this tendency with much fervor. The Upanishads recognised only one spiritual, almighty, infinite, eternal, incomprehensible, self-existent, the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world.\textsuperscript{23} He is light, lord and life of the universe, one without a second, and the sole object of worship and adoration. Yajnavalkya says that there is only one god.\textsuperscript{24} Regarding the query as to whichever god is great, he further replies that these gods are but the chief manifestation of the highest, the immortal, the incorporeal Brahman. In fact, Brahman is all this and a man may meditate on, worship or discard also those which are its manifestation.\textsuperscript{25} The polytheistic conception was given a new connotation as many gods were subordinated to the one.\textsuperscript{26} Brahmana came to regulate everything and without his support, Agni cannot burn a blade of grass, Vayu cannot

\begin{footnotes}
\item[23] Radhakrishnan- op. cit, p.144.
\item[26] Radhakrishnan- op. cit., p. 144.
\end{footnotes}
blow a whisp of straw. Thus, it is for fear of this, Brahman, that fire burns, sun shines and winds, clouds and death perform their office. Sometimes, many gods are made parts of one whole.

It is regarding their quest for oneness that the Upanishads frequently talk of Brahman and Atman, the cosmic and the physical principles. They are looked upon as identical, Brahman is Atman\(^{27}\), "He who is this Brahman in man, and who is that in the sun, those are one\(^{28}\). The transcendent conception of God held in the RV is here transformed into an immanent one. The Upanishads take us to the central reality which is infinite existence (sat), absolute truth (chit) and pure delight (anand). The prayer of every human heart is "Lead me from the unreal to the real, lead me from darkness to light, lead me from death to immortality.\(^{29}\)"

Although the Upanishadic quest for

28. Tait. Up. II.8; III.10; Chhandogya Up. III. 13.7; 14.2.4; Br.Up. V.5.2.
29. asatoama sadgamaya, tamso ma jyotirgamaya, mrityorma amrita gamaya (Br.Up. I.3.27).
knowledge was short of escapism from the
complexity of the Vedic religion, the lofty
idealism of Upanishads did not realize itself
as popular movement. The sacrificial religion
was still the dominating force. The lower
religion, dominated by priest, prevailed with
much of superstition. 30 The conservatism of
religious institutions and aloofness from the
common people was not good for the socio-cultural
life. In fact, we find contradictory notions
permeating every walk of life. In religion,
there was vedic polytheism and sacrifices
tempered by Upanishadic monism and spiritual
life. In social matters, there was caste, the
rigours of which were mitigated by the catholic
spirit of universalism. In eschatology, there
was the conception of rebirth mixed up with
ideals of hell. The chaos of the brahmanical
religion, with all its conflicting theories
soon reached a climax in the Buddhist period.
It was in this background that there emerged
different religious sects which influenced the
currents of myth and culture.

Among brahmanical gods, Vishnu's position improved from obscurity to a god of eminence. Hence, this period is regarded as the embryonic stage of Vaishnavism. The germ of Vishnu's later greatness and of sectarian vaishnavism, is traceable even in the RV, were Vishnu is regarded as protector of embryo and in his invocation with other duties to promote conception.  

31. He also represents swift motion and an ordainer.  

32. He, however, remains a minor god. In the later Samhitas and the Brahmans, however, he assumed importance and prominence.  

33. His three strides come to envelop the whole world. In the later Vedic texts, he came to be associated more with sacrifice than with devotion and grace. Hence, it is difficult to assert, in the present state of our knowledge that Vaishnavism, as a theistic sectarian religion flourished in the Vedic age.  

34. It is a moot point whether bhakti, as a religious but
it certainly played no dominant role. Bhandarkar thinks that the germ of the bhakti doctrine is to be found in the *Upanishad* idea of upasana\textsuperscript{35} or fervent meditation which cannot but magnify the thing mediated upon and give it a glorious form so as to excite love and admiration. He also points out to the *Br.Up.* in which the *Atman* (Soul) is regarded as dearer than a son, wealth and everything else. This makes the nearest approach to *bhakti*, with the substitution of the impersonal *Atman* for a personal god.

The earliest reference to devotion to, and worship of a personal god, out of which *Vaishnavism* arose, may be traced to the *Ashtadhyayi* of *Panini* (5\textsuperscript{th} Century BC) which offers the rule for the formation of the word 'Vasudevaka' in the sense of "a person whose object of *Bhakti* is *Vasudeva*". It is difficult to find traces of *bhakti* here, but that *vasudeva* was the object of such devotion, at least, as early as the fourth cent. B.C., is proved by

\textsuperscript{35} R.G. Bhandharker-*Vaishnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious systems, Delhi, 2001 (Reprint), p. 102.
the statement of Megathenes that the Sourasenoi ie. People of the Mathura region, held Herakles in special honour; for there is no doubt that Herakles was the Greek analogue of vasudeva Krishna. The historrical character of vasudeva as the son of Vasudeva of vrishni (also known as Satavata)\textsuperscript{36} sect of the famous yadu or yadava clan cannot be doubted. Vasudeva Krishna of this clan made significant achievement.\textsuperscript{37} krishna was probably a vedic rishi the composer of the hymn seventy four of the eighth mandala. The author of anukramani calls him as Angiras or descendane of Angiras. In the Brahmana\textsuperscript{38} same Krishna Angiras is mentioned. The name Krishna as the son of Devaki occurs in the chhandogya Up.\textsuperscript{39} The worship of Vasudeva further proved by krishna’s statement that “he who possesses knowledge gives himself upto me, believing vasudeva” to be all\textsuperscript{40}. All these evidences suggest that Vasudeva Krishna of the yadava

\textsuperscript{36} R.C. Majumdar (ed)- History And Culture of The Indian people, vol.1, 297ff.
\textsuperscript{37} Adiparvan(mbh) 218.12.
\textsuperscript{38} kaushitaki Br. XXX.9.
\textsuperscript{39} III.17.
\textsuperscript{40} Bhagvad Geeta. VII.19.
clan was the leader of a religious movement and who came to be deified and styled Bhagavat. The age when Vasudeva Krishna flourished cannot be determined with certainty. The reference in the Chhandogya Up.\textsuperscript{41} Seems to point to a date i.e. the 6\textsuperscript{th} or 7\textsuperscript{th} cent. B.C. The Jain tradition, making Vasudeva Krishna a contemporary of the Tirhankara Arishtanemi, who preceded Parshvanath, supports the date suggested by the Chhandogya Up.

The identification of Vasudeva Krishna with the Vedic deity marked to first stage of evolution of vaishnavism. This was accompanied by the time the Bhagvadgeeta was composed and henceforth the Vasudeva cult or Bhagavata religion was also known as Vaishnav dharma.\textsuperscript{42} Another step towards the evolution of vaishnavism was taken when Vasudeva Krishna Vishnu became identified with deified sage (or hero) named Narayana. In fact, the dominance of Vishnu element in vaishnavism was a later

\textsuperscript{41} III.17.
\textsuperscript{42} R.C.majumdar-History And Culture of Indian people, vol.II, p.485.
development, in the beginning Narayana element was very dominant.\textsuperscript{43} Narayana is a non-vedic deity mentioned for the first time in two passages of the Brahmana.\textsuperscript{44} Superiority of Narayana in Sh.Br. is also seen when it is stated that by performing the pancharatra sattra or the five-day sacrifice, Narayana gained superiority over all beings and became identical with all beings. Thus, by the composition of Sh.Br. Narayana was a deity of considerable significance.\textsuperscript{45} According to some scholars Narayana was a deity of Dravidian origin \textsuperscript{46} which is difficult to accept as it suffers from several ambiguities.\textsuperscript{47} In fact, the conception of Narayana as a powerful god embodying the whole universe is a logical development from the earlier meaning denoting the dwelling place or a resort of a collection of men. The concept of a universal form of god

\begin{itemize}
\item S.Jayaswal- The Origin And Development of Vaishnavism, Delhi, 1967, p. 32.
\item Sh.Br. XII.3.4.1F; XII. 6.1F.
\item Sh.Br. XII.6.2.12; SBE vol. XLIV, p. 410.
\item S.Jayaswal, op. cit., pp.33-34.
\end{itemize}
(vishvarupa or viratarupa) popularized by Gita is originally associated with Narayan\textsuperscript{48}. A prototype of this cosmic god has been found by D.D. Kosambi in the Aranyaka parva of Mahabharata.\textsuperscript{49}

The earliest evidence regarding the identification of Narayan with Vishnu is probably to be traced in the Baudhayana Dharmasutra. The tenth prapathaka of the Taittiriya Aranyaka regards Narayana, Vasudeva and Vishnu as one and the same deity. Here Narayana appears also as Hari and as the deity eternal, supreme and lord." But this part of the work is admitted by a later addition and may be considerably later than the Baudhayana Dhramasutra. Several sections of the Mahabharta support the conception of Narayana as found in the Taittiriya Aranyaka; some passages of the Mahabharata call Narayana an ancient rishi who was the sum of dharma and was associated with another's rishi named Nara. According to the

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid, p. 36.
late Narayania section of Shantiparvan, Narayana, the eternal and the universal soul, was born as the son of Dharma in the quadruple form of Nara, Narayana, Hari and Krishna. It also describes the white people of the white island, on the northern shores of the milk Ocean, worshippers of the Narayana, originally known as pancharatrikas, later mixed up with the Bhagvatas worshipping Vasudeva according to the vidhi of the Satavata people. 50

An intriguing aspect of the study of vaishnavism is its so-called relationship with Christianly Weber, one of the protagonists of the theory of similarly between cult of Krishna and Christianity, came to the conclusion that many of the legends of Krishna saga and the doctrine of devotion were borrowed from Christianity. He was supported in his argument by Hopkins52 who saw resemblance of early vaishnavism with Christianity 53 but hardly found any favour.

50. R.C. Majumdar, History and Culture of Indian people vol.II, p. 437.
51. Weber- An Investigation Into The origin of Festival of Krisna Janmastami; “Indian Antiquary, 1874 pp.21-25; 47.52.
52. Hopkins, op. cit., p. 430.
with recent historians, Roychoudhari points to Narayana’s solar associations and compares Narayana in the Sveta-Dvipa of the white Islanders with the Rigvedic Vishnu, an aspect of the sun; in his highest station seen only by the suras. Similarly, R.G. Bhandarkar opines that Naryana has a cosmic character and is not a historical or mythological individual. He interprets the word Narayana as the resting place or god of Nara or a collection of Naras. Thus, the attempt to link certain elements of vaishnavism to Christianity has been refuted by scholars.

Shaivism came to acquire many new features during the post-vedic period. Although the origin of Shaivism may be traced, as mentioned earlier, to the concept of Rudra in the RV\(^5^4\) it is not unlikely that it was current among the non-Aryans in the pre-Vedic period. But, whatever may be his origin, the god gradually rose into great prominence. Rudra, who was merely a protector of cattle\(^5^5\) or dispeller

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54. R.C. Majumdar- Ancient India, Delhi, 1977, pp. 171-176.
55. RV. I. 114.9.
of diseases and possessing qualities of a physician, came to acquire a much more developed form in the Satarudriya. His benignant form is distinguished from its opposite the malignant. The term Rudra came to acquire wider character and was called the lord of the quarter. He is called kapardin or the wearer of matted hair. The names Sarva (arrow-wielder) and Bhava also came to be used and when his wrathful nature thoroughly appeared, he became Shambhu or benignant, Shankara or beneficent, and shiva or auspicious. In AV the concept of Rudra is further developed and he is elevated to a higher platform, seven names are given to him. Bhava and Sarva now came to represent two distinct deities and are spoken of ruling (isathe) over two-footed and four-footed beings. In the Sh.Br. and Kaushitaki Br further development is seen as

Rudra is mentioned as the son of Usas; and

56. RV. VII. 46.2.
57. RV. II. 33.4, 46.3.
59. R.G.Bhandarkar- op. cit. p. 103.
60. AV. IV. 28.1.
61. VI. 1.3.7.
62. VI. 1.9.
after he was born, praJapati gave him, as he grew up, eight names, seven of which are the same as given in the AV while the eighth was Ashani or the thunder bolt. Of these eight names, four—Rudra, Sarva ugra and Ashani are indicative of the destructive energy and the other four viz. Bhava, Pashupati, Mahadeva and Ishan of its benignant counterpart. It appears that the destructive aspect of this god was never forgotten. Hence, we find mention of a sacrifice called shulagava mentioned in most of Grhyasutras. A bull is sacrificed to Rudra to appease him.

The Shvetashvatara Up. and Atharvasiras Up. contain the next important stage of the development of the Rudra-Siva sects. It does not appear to be composed in sectarian spirit. The elevated notions about the nature of god and his relations to man and the world, which had been reached in the time of early Upanishads, have been disentangled from their connection

64. Apastamba Grihyasutra. IV.9.
with the impersonal Brahman and transferred to the God, who at the time, when the Upanishads were written, acquired a living and active personality in the minds of the people. This god was Rudra-Siva, who, as we have seen, had by the time of AV, attained to the dignity of the supreme god. Rudra alone is regarded as the cause of production and growth.\textsuperscript{65} There is only one Rudra who rules this world by his ruling powers, who is the innermost soul of all man who contacts everything on the final day, and creating all beings, protects them\textsuperscript{66}. Being omnipresent, he has his eyes everwere.\textsuperscript{67} This echoes the idea of the RV.\textsuperscript{68} The fourth chapter of the said Upanishad expresses the desire that he, who himself being without form, creates many forms with a certain purpose in whom in the end as well as in the beginning, the universe exists, may endow the adorers with a holy will then follows the identification of this suprema soul with fire, sun, wind,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[65] Shvetashvatra Up. III.1.
\item[66] Ibid. III.2.
\item[67] Ibid. III.3.
\item[68] RV. X. 81.3.
\end{footnotes}
moon and a variety of other objects. It is said that when there was simple darkness and no day or light, no entity or nonentity, Siva alone existed. He was the one unchangeable thing and he was the bright light of the sun and from him sprang all intelligence. We find similar idea present in the RV.

In the kena Upanishad, we find for the first time mention of Uma. She is called Haimavati, or the daughter of Himavat. However, she is not the wife of Shiva in the kena Upanishad which was probably a later development. The magnanimity of Siva further developed in the Athrvasiras Up. appertaining to Rudra. Although being a much later work, it presents Shiva before us in the form of a deity encompassing everything. When approached by the gods Rudra says that he alone is the supreme. He says that he is in all the quarters, he is Gayatri, man, woman etc. interestingly, when Rudra was invisible to them they praising said "He who

69. Shvetashvatara Up. IV. 2.4
70. RV. X. 129
71. R.G. Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 111
is Rudra is Bhagvat and who also is Brahmadeva, a bow to him.” Here the epithet ‘Bhagvat’ applied to Rudra is notion of bhakti element in Siva worship. It may be presumed here that during the composition of Shevatshvatara Up. Rudra Shiva was alone in the filed as supreme god and the element of bhakti was directed towards him and hence the term ‘bhagwat’ also came to be applied for Rudra. We also have the mention of omkarmantra and even smearing of body with ashes for the devotees of Pashupati. These features became very popular during the later period.

While the prajapati occupied the topmost position during the period of the Brahmanas, he now came to be known as Brahman(Brahma) the impersonal absolute of the Upanishadic era. However, when the post-Brahmanical age of rationalism was ushered in and the cult of sacrifice fell into comparative disuse, the worship of Prajapati gradually declined. But the theist coined a new name for

72. Ibid
him and called him Brahma, first of the later Hindu Trinity. In the Buddhistic nikayas, it is this personal Brahma of the popular religion that is pictured, attacked and ridiculed. In fact, his unity is not recognised, any Brahmas with different appellations are mentioned and their inferiority to Buddha in wisdom is preached to lower them in the estimation of the people.

The pre-eminence of the Vedic Indra declined during this period. In the Kalpasutra, he is described as enjoying divine pleasure in heaven in the company of various gods and queens. Indramaha was the most prominent among all other mahas in ancient days. The festival of Indra was celebrated with great pomp and show. In Buddhist literature, he is mentioned by various names such as Sakka Vasava, Maghava and so on. Residing in Tavatimsa heaven, he is also described for descending to this world for helping the virtuous and punishing evil-doers.

73. Mahavagga I. 5.4; Dighanikaya. I. 244; Samyutta nikaya I.219; Anguttara nikaya. II. 21.
74. I.13.
75. Jat. II. 312.
Due to utmost significance given to the sacrifice, Agni acquired an important position. The Grihyasutras and the Dharmasutras prescribe a number of domestic sacrifices for which Agni is needed. However, the Buddhist writers\(^6\) ridiculed Agni worship probably due to the association of fire with yajna which involves slaughter of living beings.

The one god who neither rose to the supreme position nor ever altogether lost his popularity is Surya.\(^7\) Although his references are found in the Vedic hymns, the tradition of sun-worship got several modifications.

Apart from these male deities, female deities too are referred to in the brahmanical literature and the kalpasutra.\(^8\) Shri or Lakshmi was an important goddess in this regard. In Buddhist literature, she is referred to as the daughter of Shakra while Sh. Br. describes her as issuing out of Prajapati

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76. Sutta Nipata. III.7.21.  
77. R.C. Majumdar- History And Culture of Indian People, vol. II, p. 465.  
78. SBE, XXII, p. 232.
when he was practising austerities to bring forth the world of living things. A Siridevi or Lakkhi is described in the *Siri-kalakanni-Jataka* as the daughter of Dhritarashtra, the regent of the eastern quarter. Ajja and kottakiriya were two different forms of the goddess Durga who is called Chandiya. The Acharanga refers to the worship of Chandiya with the sacrifice of goats buffaloes and human beings to please an inferior type of god.\(^{80}\)

Besides, we find the worship of lokapalas and yakshas in the Brahmanical, the Jaina and the Buddhist sources. While the lokapalas were deities of different direction the yakshas were a supernatural being. In the sixth century B.C., the worship of yakshas or Takkhas became very popular and so every important city had its own shrine dedicated to the yaksha. The cult of naga-worship which has a non-Aryan origin and traced back to the Indus Valley Civilization\(^{81}\) found mention in the

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79. III. 262
81. R.C.Majumdar- History And Culture of Indian People, vol.II, p. 472.
Yajurveda. Such a practice was prevalent in the land of the Panchalas.\(^{82}\) In the Atharvaveda and the later samhitās nagaś appear as semi-divine beings, and in the Grihyasūtras, naga called for the first time by this name and supposed to belong to earth, sky and heaven as also the quarters receives adoration and worship. The naga was regarded sometimes as the spirit of a departed ancestor and sometimes a guardian of treasures in later times. Thus, not only Shaivism but Vaishnavism, Buddhism and even Jainism had to admit the serpent in a subordinate capacity in their own religious systems. Buddha received the homage of muchilinda and Elapattra while Parshvanath had a serpent as his special symbol. Shiva, Durga and even Ganesh and Surya wear snakes. Hence, the Buddhist sources\(^{83}\) as well as the Grihyasūtras\(^{84}\) refer to offerings made to the nagaś.

Frequent depiction of devotees worshiping trees on the Indus valley seals

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82. Ibid.
83. Jat-I. 498.
84. SBE, XXIX, pp. 128-29; 201.02; 328.30.
suggests that tree-worship was a non-Aryan object of worship. However, this practice of worship of vriksha-chaityas and sthala-vrikhas continued with unabated ardour in some form or other from that time. By the side of the tree cult, the worship of siddhas, sadyas, gandharvas and such other minor deities was also prevalent. The rivers also began to be venerated in large numbers and sacred streams, with tirthas or sacred spots on their banks are a distinct feature of the Mahavrata.

Above passage, thus, make it clear that once the hold of Vedic cult lost its grip and later the formalism of the Brahmanas and the abstruse speculation of the Upanishad failed to satisfy the common man, the more earnest and devout souls sought comfort in bhakti to a personal god, while a bolder but not always more intellectual section sought out a saint or a religious reformer. But, minor divinities continued. The most important religious phenomena were, however, the rise into prominence of the two major gods-Vishnu
and Shiva. This period was also characterized by virtual disappearance, towards its close, of Indra and Prajapati.

Among the sects which passed a serious challenge before the Vedic myth and culture, Buddhism and Jainism became very important. Buddhism which owed its origin to Gautama alias Siddhartha was born at Lumbinivana in c.563 BC. His father Shuddhodana was the chief of Shakya clan with its capital at Kapilavastu. The Lalitvistara gives a legendary account of his schooling and of his extraordinary proficiency in archery. The idea of renunciation, according to later texts, came into his mind from seeing four persons at different stages. In the early texts, like the Sutta Nipata, it is simply stated that looking at the miseries of the world, he embraced the life of a wandering hermit at the age of twenty-nine. Passing through a number of villages, Gautama, at last, reached the place where he stayed at hermitage of the teacher, Arada Kalam,

who is said to have espoused the Sankhya school of philosophy. Not satisfied with him, Gautama went to another teacher, Rudraka Ramputra and from there to Uruvila, where he took his seat under a pipal tree, where he was offered milk by Sujata. After spending seven weeks in medication, under the pipal tree, he finally realized the Truth. He thus, became the Buddha. From there, he went to his five brahmana companions who were then residing at Sarnath and delivered before them his first sermon metaphorically represented in the Buddhist literature as “Turning the wheel of the Law”. With them, he went to Banaras and converted yasa, a rich setthi’s son and a number of his friends. From Banaras, he went to Rajagriha spending the second, third and fourth vassas. Buddhism found its full flourishment in Kosala with the support of the king Prasenjit and Anathapindika. Buddha, in order to propagate his message, also went to Kapilvastu, Vaishali and Veranja (Mathura). He made his last journey

87. Majjhima Nikaya I. 164f.
to Malla's capital Kushinara where he gave up his body after a fatal illness and attained **parinirvana** at the age of eighty.

The earliest available source of our knowledge of the Buddha's teaching is the **pali pitaka** which consists of the five **nikayas** viz, **Digha, Majjhima, Samyutta, Anguttara** and **khuddaka**. However, as many alterations and additions were made in it from time to time, it is difficult to segregate original teachings of the Buddha.

**Buddhism** was originally a moral code\(^8\) rather than a metaphysical or religious system. The **Buddha** instructed his followers to pursue practical methods in order to arrive at the Truth. For the removal of ignorance, thirst, attachment etc. For instance, he advocated the four **Arya-Satyas** viz. 1) that worldly existence is full of misery (**dhukkha**) 2) that thirst, attachments etc. are the causes of worldly existence 3) that worldly existence can be ended (**nirodha**) by the destruction of thirst

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\(^8\) R. C. Majumdar, *History And Culture of Indian People*, vol. II, p. 872.
etc. the path is the well known Eightfold way viz. right speech, right action, right means of livelihood, right exertion, right mindedness, right meditation, right resolution of right point of view. The first three practices lead to physical control (shīla), the second three to mental control (chīṭta) and the last two to intellectual development. \(^{89}\)

The exposition of the Eightfold path is said to be Buddha’s first discourse. It is also widely known as the middle path (Madhyama pratipat) as it keeps clear of the two extreme ways of life, one being that of ease and luxury and the other of rigorous asceticism.

The second discourse, which is said to have been delivered by Buddha, strikes the keynote of his teachings, viz. that the fine constituents which make a being are without a self (anatma), impermanent (anitya) and not desirable (dukkha). He, who realises the absence of soul or substance in the constituents, knows that he does not exist as an individual and as

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\(^{89}\) Dīgha Nikāya. II., p. 123.
such there can be no relationship between himself and the object around him. There is nothing in this world to make him happy or sad and so he is free, he is an arhat (perfect).

Above accounts make it clear that the metaphysical element did not play a prominent part in the earlier phases of Buddhism. Moreover, Buddhism did not make a very sharp break from the teachings of the Upanishads. Significantly, while the fundamental teachings of the main Upanishads were tacility accepted by the early Buddhishts, they held contemptuous views regarding brahmanism. The Vedas have been repeatedly referred to in the nayakas as compositions of certain rishis, but the vedic belief of union with Brahaman by means of good works or performance of sacrifices was rejected as misleading and baseless. Buddhism criticizes the belief that merit or happiness can be obtained by means of animal sacrifices such as the ashvamedha, purashamedha or vajapeya. Moreover, the Brahmanical claim

90. R. C. Majumdar, History And Culture of Indian People, vol. II, p. 873.
of superiously in caste was challenged, but, the caste system was tacility admitted with the provision of the kshatriyas being superior to the brahmanas. Yet, despite such dichotomy in Buddhism, it was able to pose a serious challenge to existing anomaly in socio-cultural realm.

Another important sect posing a serious challenge to the brahmanical religion was Jainism. According to Jain tradition, there were twenty-four tirthankaras. Of these, however, the first twenty-two seem to be completely mythical and have no historical foundation. Regarding the authenticity of the last two—Parshva and Mahavira—the case, however, is different. All the Jain traditions that report of them, is quite probable. Jacobi tried to prove that Parshva was a historical personality. In a Jain literature, it is said that Parshva was the son of king Ashvasena of Banaras. We are told that he had enunciated

92. SBE XIV, pp. XX-XXIII.
93. Kalpasutra. 149, 155.
four vows, viz. that life should not be taken, no falsehood spoken, nothing should be received which is not freely given, and non-attachment should be practised. This last may have reference to celibacy and not the vow of non-possession as made out by later tradition. Thus, some kind of Jain faith existed before Mahavira and teachings were based on it.

Born in a suburb of Vaishali called Kundagram Mahavira belonged to the Naya clan known as Nata in Pali and Jnatri in Sanskrit tradition emphasises the importance of Mahavira’s noble birth and tells of the transference of his embryo from the womb of the brahmana lady Devananda, wife of Rishabha, to that of Trishala. It is difficult to ascertain how old this belief is, but the canon makes Mahavira speak Devananda as his mother. Mahavira is also given a number of epithets like Nayaputta i.e. scion of Naya clan, kasava on account of his gotra vasaliya after his place of birth and vedehadinna after his native country.  

94. SBE, XXII, pp. 80, 248.
give embarrassments to his parents, Mahavira became a monk only after their death and with the permission of his elder brother, Nandivardhan. At the age of thirty, he left home in the beginning of winter. After thirteen months he discarded his clothing in winter and became naked.95 Thereafter, even when he used his robe he used it only in winter.96 After a period of two years and two months, he decided on a wondering mode of existence, which lasted for twelve years. He is said to have achieved omniscience under a shala tree at the end of twelve years of austerity on the bank of river Rijupalika. Henceforth he entered on his career as a religious teacher.

One important event in the life of Mahavira was this meeting with Gosala Makhaliputra, the head of the Ajivika sect, who is said to have become pupil of former. However, due to certain difference he is said to have left the company of Mahavira. However,

95. Acharanga Sutra 1.8.1.3.
96. Ibid 1.8.1.1.
it is remarkable that account of Mahavira’s sadhana given in the Acharanga and kalpsutras do not bring in Makhaliputra to form an episode but only Bhagvatisutra and Uvasagadasao mention this. 97

As a religious teacher Mahavira wandered for eight months of the year and spent the four months of the rainy season at places like Champa, Vaishali, Rajagriha, Sravasti etc. At the age of seventy-two, he died in a place called Majjhima Pava 98 identified as modern Pavapuri in the Patna district. We are told that on the night of his death the kings of the two clans—the Mallas and the Lichchhavis celebrated the lamp festival in his honour.

It is difficult to find a sequence in the Jain doctrines as the writing in which these dogmas and teaching are preserved have suffered many vicissitudes and it is often difficult to separate the old from the new in the Jain canon. Jacobi 99 has convincingly demonstrated how all the references to both

97. K.C. Jain, Lord Mahavira And His Times, Delhi, 1974
98. Kalpasutra.128.
99. SBE, XLV.
Jain philosophical tenets and religious practices in the Pali texts fully agree with the teaching of the Jain canon and present day practices of the community, which means that little changes has taken place in the Jain religion in the course of centuries. Most of the features of Jainism suggestive of its primitiveness may be regarded as received by Mahavira as they already existed. However, what he did, was in all likelihood, the codification of an unsystematic mass of beliefs into a set of rigid rules of conduct for monks and laymen. A decided inclination towards enumeration and classification may be attributed to him. The Jain canonical works regard niravana as ultimate object. This nirvana consist of the attainment of peace and Infinite Bliss.\textsuperscript{100} It is a state of perfection which is obtained by putting an end to the stream of existence. Right Faith, Right Knowledge and Right conduct are three essential points of Jainism.\textsuperscript{101}. Without right faith, there is no right knowledge, without right knowledge,

\textsuperscript{100} Sutrakritanga I.11.11.
\textsuperscript{101} Uttaradhyayana XXII, 81-84.
there is no virtuous conduct, without virtues these is no deliverance and without deliverance there is no perfection.\textsuperscript{102} The doctrine of syadvad has been regarded by some as agnostic or metaphysical nihilistic view. But, it was not so. Jainism has a theory of reality also. Its logic was a subtle and disguised protest against the dogmatism of the Vedas, and not intended to deny all reality.

In Jainism, there is no God or creator and man's emancipation from suffering does not depend upon the mercy of any such being. By living austere life of purity and virtues, he can escape the ills of life. Jainism was, thus, a moral code rather than a religion. It recognized no supreme being nor there was a galaxy of deified men who had been spiritually great. Every soul possessed the potentiality of becoming as great as they besides it was not opposed to the theory of caste. Thus, it was more accumulating to Hinduism than the other heterodox systems.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid, XXVIII.30.
The *Samannaphala sutta* and the *Brahmjala sutta* in the *DighaNikaya* of the Buddhists mention about sixty-three different philosophical schools—probably all of them non-brahmana, existing at the time of the Buddha. In the sutrakritanga, Bhagvati etc. of the Jainas, we find a large number of such heretical schools.

From the Jain and Buddhist records it is clear that Purana Kassapa was an old experienced and respectable teacher. He was the exponent of the no-action theory (Akriyavada). According to this theory, man is an irresponsible agent, because his action brings neither any merit nor any demerit. Most probably, Kassapa was, as argued by B.M.Baruna, an advocate of the theory that the soul was passive, that no action could affect it, and that it was beyond good and bad. Kassapa is said to be an upholder of 'no cause' theory. It is reported in the word of Buddha that no hetu

103. *Samanna; Dighanikaya*, l.47.
104. B.M.Barua, *A History of Pre-Buddhistic Indian Philosophy*, (Reprint) 1981, Dehi, pp.69-70
(cause) and non Pachchaya (conditions) are accepted by Purana Kassapa as instrumental in either defiling a person or purifying him.\textsuperscript{105} Kassapa’s theory was also based on introspective knowledge as he has been described as one always in possession of nanadassana (introspective knowledge) while walking or staying etc. and that he perceived the finite world through infinite knowledge.\textsuperscript{106} A.L.Basham\textsuperscript{107} tries to prove that Purana, a heretical leader of long standing, who maintained a fatalistic doctrine with tendencies to antinomianism came in contact with Makkhali Gosala and accepted his six fold classification of man.\textsuperscript{108}

Pakudha kachchhayana was an elder contemporary of Buddha. As he has not any record of his own we depend on other sources to get information about his views. In the Prasnophanishad, in answer to Katyayana’s question to Pippalada as to the roots of things he was told that the roots were

\textsuperscript{105} Samyutta Nikaya.III. p. 69.
\textsuperscript{106} Anguttarnikaya IV. p. 428.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
the matter (Rayi) and spirit (Pran). In the Buddhist Samanna Palla-sutta\textsuperscript{109} kachchayana’s philosophy is described as the doctrine of seven categories (satta-kaya-vad). According to this view, seven things are neither made nor commanded to be made. The four elements—earth, water, fire and air—and ease and pain and soul as the seventh element are never created. Like Kassapa, kachchayana denied not the appearance but reality of action and also asserted that soul was really untouched by change. It appears from the fragments of both the Sutrakrittanga and the Samanna Phala-Sutta that the term Eternalism\textsuperscript{110} was strictly applied by Mahavir and Buddha to the doctrine of Kachchayana. They also regarded his views as a doctrine of non-action. Owing to his distinct views about Kachchayana, he has been compared with Empedocles.\textsuperscript{111}

Ajita Keshakambalin, said to be the historical founder of Indian Materialism, was held in great esteem by the people of his

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{109} Digha Nikaya, I., p. 57.
  \item \textsuperscript{110} Digha Nikaya, I. 13-17.
  \item \textsuperscript{111} B.M.Barua, op. cit. pp. 284-285.
\end{itemize}
time. There are two aspects of his philosophy-negative and positive. Ajita was antinomian in ethics. It is remarkable that this categorical assertions are all negative in form. According to him, there is no merit in sacrifice or offering, no resultant fruit form good and evil deeds. There is no afterlife and no existence of individuality after death. Ajita's doctrine was described by Mahavira and Buddha as *Tam-Jiva-Tam-Sarīra-Vada* in contradiction to the doctrine of the soul being distinct from the body. Ajita was not so much against the dogmas of the Brahmanic faith as against the doctrine of Kachchayana- who made a hard and fast distinction between the body and the soul. According to Mahavira, by denying future life, Ajita taught men to kill, burn destroy and enjoy all the pleasures of life. But, the truth appears otherwise as he taught us to believe rather in life than in death.

Sanjaya Belatthiputta often identified with *Parivrajaka* Sanjaya, presented views which were a blend of skepticism on the one hand and primitive stage of criticism of
knowledge on the other. The Jainas mention the
theory of Ajnananavada or Agnosticism of which
Sanjaya Belatthiputta seems to be the chief
advocate. Buddhism regards the doctrine of
Sanjaya as neither a doctrine of acceptance
nor a doctrine of denial. Followers of Sanjaya
are known as Aviruddhakas.\textsuperscript{112} Sanjaya has rightly
been regarded as a true precursor of Mahavira\textsuperscript{113}
who propounded and of Buddha who advocated a
critical method of investigation.

Mahavira’s contemporary and the
leader of a great religious movement was Makhali
Gosala who seems to have been preceded by Nanda
Vachcha and Kisa Samkichcha. From the account
of the \textit{Bhagavati Sutra},\textsuperscript{114} it is known that
Gosala became a disciple of Mahavira. Contrary
to Jaina account, H.Jacobi\textsuperscript{115} and B.M.Barua are
of the view that Mahavira remained a disciple
of Gosala for sometime.\textsuperscript{116} Afterwards, Gosala
parted company with Mahavira on account of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[112.] B. M. Barua, op. cit. p. 327.
\item[113.] K. C. Jain, op. cit. p. 164.
\item[114.] \textit{Bhagvati Sutra}. XV.1.
\item[115.] SBE. XLV., P. XXX.
\item[116.] B. M. Barua, op. cit., pp. 300.
\end{footnotes}
doctrinal differences and went to Shravasti where he spent sixteen years as a religious leader of the Ajivika sect. Gosala considered men bound to the cycle of rebirth by a force-karma or niyati over which he had no control. He also classified human beings into six abhijatis\(^\text{117}\) (groups) according to their psychic colour. Both the Buddhists and the Jainas regarded the Ajivikas as a moralists and proceeded to condemn them as immoral in practice. On the evidences of Jain scriptures, A.F.R. Hoernle\(^\text{118}\) accuses Gosala of hypocrisy and incontinence. B.M. Barua,\(^\text{119}\) on the other hand, considers these strictures merely sectarian. According to him, Gosala's theory of Parinamavada seeks to establish, even with the help of its totalistic creed, a moral government of law in the universe where nothing is dead, where everything happens by chance and where all that is and all that happens and is experienced are ultimately fixed as it were by a pre-determined law of nature. He also says

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that the duty of man as the highest of beings is to conduct himself according to law and to act and behave in a manner that does not induce him to trespass upon the rights of others. ¹²⁰ This fatalistic creed, which is a logical outcome of Parinamavada, confirms the popular Indian belief that action has its rewards and retribution and that heaven and hell are the inevitable consequences hereafter of merits and demerits of this life.

Thus, the material theory had a good deal to do with the repudiation of the old religion of custom and magic. It signified the declaration of the spiritual independence of the individual and the rejection of the principle of authority. However, many of the taboos and dogmatism still continued to influence the socio-religious life of the common man and even religious institutions. ¹²¹

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¹²¹ N. N. Bhattacharya, op. cit., pp. 76-77.