There are many gaps in our knowledge of the Kusāna period. For example we know very little about the first two rulers, i.e. of Kadphises group. We are not sure of their relationship with Kaniska and his successors. The personality of Sotermebas remains a mystery. What blood relationship Kaniska had with his successors is not known with any amount of certainty. The question of eras used by the Kusāna rulers still remains unsettled. Later Kusānas continue to remain a question mark. The nationality of the Kusānas and their duration of rule are also points of controversy among the scholars. Therefore, the period continues to offer a challenge to the scholars for testing their faculties and capacity for hard work. The present work is a modest attempt at solving some of these problems.

The present contribution attempts to study the inscriptions of Kusāna period. The Kusānas originally ruled over one of the five principalities of the Ta-Yue-Chi, who had earlier migrated from China to Ta-hia in about the period 140-135 B.C. The work undertakes to study, among various things, the history, religion and other aspects of the Kusānas. Besides reexamining the inscriptions of the
period, the coinage and the contemporary literature - Indian as well as foreign - have also been sifted for the purpose. Eventually, I had to disagree to places with the views held previously. Elsewhere, I found one of the several views held to be more logical and acceptable. In such cases, I have faithfully reproduced arguments advanced in support of each view citing my reasons for accepting one of them. In course of redéciphering the text of the inscriptions, I have, in a few cases noted in footnotes, ventured to suggest improved readings.

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The inscriptions of the Kusâna period are mostly dedicatory. Both the Buddha and Jain images have been dedicated, besides a few Naga images. These point to the religious beliefs of the people.

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter is introductory and it deals with the original home and migration of the Yue-chi, their division into five principalities. The chapters II-III describe the career, inscriptions and coins of the Kadphises group. Chapter IV deals with Soter megas, a nameless king. Chapter V presents Kaniska, his date, his inscriptions and coins. Chapters VI-VII give an account of the successors of Kaniska. Chapter VIII describes the integration of the empire and the Later Kusânas. Chapter IX concludes the general conditions of the Kusâna period.

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