CHAPTER IV

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE

In the Middle Ages man's world outlook manifested itself in his religious beliefs. In India religion played a very important role. The period in question was marked by a decline of Buddhism and the onset of an age predominated by Hinduism. Scholars fail to agree as to the reasons behind this phenomenon. Some hold that Buddhism in India was linked with the domination of the Kshatriyas who stood at the head of large empires. Others consider that Buddhism, given its widely ramified system of monasteries and pilgrims, was not in a position to adapt itself to the more enclosed economic structure of the early medieval period. At any rate the last resurgence of Buddhism in the form of the Mahāyana\(^1\) teaching took place in Harsha's empire, when the university at Nālandā attracted thousands of students from various Buddhist countries. Buddhism was also championed by the Pala dynasty in Bengal. A considerable section of the population there adhered to Buddhist beliefs as late as the 12th century.

A grant of Kumaradevi\(^2\), the queen of Govindachandra Gāhaḍavāla, records the construction of a vihāra at Sarnath. The Bodh-Gaya inscription\(^3\) of Jayachandra Gāhaḍavāla opens with an invocation to Bodhisattva Likesvara, Ekajata (Tārā), Srighana (Buddha), and the monk Śrimitra who has been described as the diksa-guru of the king. The inscription records the erection of a

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large cave (guhā) at Jayapura for the monks. Another inscription
records the erection of a convent for Buddhist ascetics at
Sravasti by one Vidyadhāra in 1219 A.D. The Kasia stone inscription
(12th century) of the Kalacuris of Gorakhpur (U.P.) contains the
adoration to Buddha and Tara, along with Shankara and Pārvati and
records the erection of a brick shrine in which a large black stone
image of Buddha was originally enshrined.

Statues of Buddha, Bodhisattva, Avalokitesvara and Tara
have been recovered from Mahoba, which shows that Buddhism
lingered on in that region in the 11th-12th centuries. The Malhar stone inscription (A.D. 1167-68) of the Kalacuris of central India
refers to a Saiva ascetic as having drunk like Agastya the "Baudha
Ocean difficult to be restrained". Another Kalcuri inscription (1148 A.D.) discovered near Bilaspur refers to the poet who composed
the record as having mastered the Agamas of the Buddhists and
others. This indicates that in central India also Buddhism
continued to exist in some form or the other.

Later Buddhism had some hold in Kashmir and in
north-eastern India in the eleventh and the twelfth centuries.
However, in the twelfth century the Senas of Bengal were the
champions of Brāhmanical orthodoxy, and this was bound to create an
unfavourable atmosphere for Buddhism in their kingdom.

3. K.N.Dikshit, A.S.I., No. 8, PP. 1, 2, 3; Plates Ia, Ib and Ic.
The worship of Yoginis appears to have become common in the monastery of Jetavana\(^1\) (Sravasti) also, which was one of the celebrated centres of Buddhism. Even now the place is known as "Joginibharia", or the "Witche's Mound"\(^2\). A large number of Tantric images belonging to the 11th and 12th centuries have been recovered from Bihar and Bengal\(^3\). The main off-shoots of later Buddhism were Vajrayāna, Sahajayāna\(^4\) and Kalchakrayāna\(^5\). The last, which arose about the 10th century, represented a significant school of Tantric Buddhism within the fold of Vajrayāna. Its hold increased from the 11th century onward. However, its influence was greater in Bengal, Magadha, South Bihar and Kashmir, and later on it spread to Nepal also\(^6\). A large number of images of the deities of the Kalchakrayāna as well as the Vajrayāna pantheon were fashioned for worship in temples\(^7\). Coming to the impact of Buddhism in rural areas of the period under review, we find some land grants referring to certain Buddhist temples or monasteries existing in the rural areas. The Ashrafpur Plates Devakhadu\(^8\) indicate that there were four big and small Buddhist monasteries (Vihāravihārika\(\mathrm{catu}\)ṣṭayā) under the charge of Acharya Saṃghamitra\(\) in the locality now a village of Asharafpur in the district of Dacca (East Bengal)\(^9\). The Tarapandighi grant of Lākṣāmaṇasena shows that a Buddhist temple marked the eastern boundary of velahisti in

\(^1\) A Fuhrer, *Archaeological Survey*, Lists, N.W. Provinces and Oudh, P. 309.

\(^2\) Ibid, P. 309.

\(^3\) R.D. Banerji, *Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture*, P. 100

\(^4\) infra.


\(^6\) The struggle for Empire, P. 413.

\(^7\) Ibid, P. 413.

\(^8\) M.A.S.B., I, No. 6, PP. 85-91.
Varendri (North Bengal). The Sunderban Plate of Dommanapāla monastery existing outside the village of Vdhāmāhīthā in Pūrvakhāṭika (Perhaps of the Vardhamāna bhūkti).

Buddhist monasteries were engaged in assigning land and bulls to the tillers of the soil and in return they received one-sixth of the produce which shows us of their position and interfered in the lives of common village folk. Lands were donated to the Buddhist monasteries by various kings and lords of our period. Plate A states that a total of 9 Pāṭakas and dronas of land was donated to a Buddhist monastery; and Plate B speaks of the donation of a total of 6 Pāṭakas and 10 dronas of land. Govinda Chandradeva (1114-1154 A.D.) assigned several villages for the support of the Buddhist monasteries living in Vihāra of Jetabana.

Same was the case of Chandela kings who granted five plaughs of land to Buddha's temple and also to Baudh vihāra near Kampilya (Dist. Furukhabad, U.P.), another Hindu ruler donated land to Buddhist community settled there for the purpose of worship and repair of temples.

Some villages had the brahmanical and Buddhist shrines but it appears that the villagers generally worshipped their deity (kuladevā), the presiding deity of the village (grāmādevatā), the field deity (Kṣetrapāla) and some local divinities. The expression

1. E.I., XII, No. 3.
3. Takakusu, P.61.
8. E.I., Vol. XX, P. 129.
ratnatrayarajasambhogavarjjitah mentioned in the grant may indicate that the donee was to enjoy all the benefits except the revenue meant for the maintenance of the Buddhist order (ratnatraya) and the royal household. Probably the revenues earmarked for the Buddhist order and the royal household were to be paid in this case not to the donee but to the donor.

The decline of Buddhism was due to the lack of royal patronage, its internal feuds, its loose organisation, its unsound relationship with the deity, growth of tantric tendencies and rejuvenation of the rival system of Hinduism which sought to assimilate Buddhism. But the most important factor that contributed to the demise of Buddhism was its elitist and urban approach. It had already proved that Buddhism was an elitist and urban religion:

Cause for its decline. Buddhism failed to become a national religion of the country. The majority of Buddhism was concentrated only among the elites and in an urban region. Its tentacles failed to reach the far off villages, "where the maximum population thrived, as it does even now". Dr. K. T. S. Sarao observes that Buddhism was rather a trendy faith popular primarily with royalty, business magnates and bureaucrats.

Historically with the fall of Palas in Bengal, Buddhism had to face bad days. There were Hindu revival in succeeding age.

The Senas were followers of Brahmanical culture and vedic rites and hence they showed no favour to the early popular faith, i.e., Buddhism. Even, the principle of Ahimsa preached by the Buddha was not adhered by the Buddhists. The difference between their sayings and doings was too much to be ignored. Hiuen Tsang also testifies to the drinking of beverages by the people in general including even the Buddhist monks. Drinking was considered sinful in the principles preached by the great Buddha.

The ascendancy of Brahmanical culture during Sena period clearly points out the decline of Buddhism and we can say that Brahmanism influenced the people of Bengal (a centre of Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna). On account of growing supremacy of the faith Brahmanical dieties were incorporated into tantric pantheon. The Purānic gods namely Ganapati and Saraswati got a place in Buddhism (Vajrayāna). The Sādhanā or Ganapati agrees with the representation of Ganesha of Hindu Pantheon. Many such images have been found in Bengal.

Finally, the turkish invasions led to the destruction of the celebrated Buddhist monasteries of Magadha and Bengal. So most of the Buddhist schools fled to Tibet and Nepal.

Jainism received a new impetus under the Solanki and Chāhāmana rulers of this age and was flourishing in Gujarat and

5. Sadhanamāla A. 328.
6. E.I., School of Medieval Sculpture, Pl. LX.
Rajasthan. King Kumarapala of Gujarat was very much inclined towards this faith who is said to have built a famous temple called Kumara-vihāra at Somanāth-pattan at the request of Hemchandra Suri. The Chālukya minister Udayana had founded earlier a temple at Karnavati. Vagbhatta, another office of Kumarapala, erected a Jain temple on the Satrunjaya hills in A.D.1164-65, and his brother Amrabhatta built another at Broach. Many other temples were built at Girnar, Satrunjaya, Khambayat or Stambhatirtha, Anahilavada and Dhandhuka. Under the influence of Jainism, Kumarapālā issued an edict of non-slaughter of animals which was enforced even by his sāmantas.

The Bijolia rock inscription (1170 A.D.) of the Chāhāmanas of Javalipura (Mewar) records the salutation to Parsvanatha and other Jain divinities and the grant of a village to the "self-existent Parsvanatha". A number of inscriptions of the 12th century, belonging to the Chāhāmanas of Naddula, record grants made for the worship and maintenance of the temples of Mahavira, Neminatha, Adinatha and Santinatha.

Jainism was widely prevalent in Malwa, although it was in the coastal regions that it had become the mass religion. Remains of Jainism pertaining to the 12th century were found in Uttar Pradesh also. Thus, a figure (1159 A.D.) of Rishabhanatha, the first

Tirthāṅkāra or pontiff of the Jain pantheon, was recovered at Hardwar. The remaining 23 Tirthāṅkāras, along with Yaksas and Yaksinis, are represented on the recessed corners. Asai Kheri (in Etawah district of U.P.) appears to have been an important centre of Jainism, where statues of Tirthankaras, dated Vikram Samvat 1014, 1018, 1205, 1221, 1223 and 1230 have been discovered. They are now in the Lucknow museum. At Deogarh in the Lalitpur district of U.P. there is a group of Jain temples ranging from A.D.862 to 1164. Statues of Tirthankaras, dated Vikram Samvat 1112, 1124, 1125, 1133 and 1182 have been excavated at Sahet-Mahet, which reveal the existence of Jainism at Sravasti. Ahicchatra continued to be a sacred place of the Jains ever since the Gupta period.

In Bengal, however, Jain sculptures are comparatively rare. In Kashmir also Jainism had very little influence. The Srinagar museum possesses only one crude brass statue of Parsvanatha, belonging to the first decade of the 13th century.

The progress of Jainism was largely associated with Gujarat, Rajasthan and the other regions with the growth of the middle class of the Vaishya merchants and traders. There appear to be two main reasons why they were attracted to this faith. First, its emphasis on ahimsa attracted them because mercantile and commercial activities generally go hand in hand with peace.

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2. A Fuhrer, op. cit., P. 89.
3. Ibid., P. 308.
4. Ibid., P. 28-29.
Secondly, it allotted them a high rank in society, which they lacked in the orthodox social system. Thus, Jainism was spreading in this period in different parts of Northern India mainly with the development of trade activities\(^1\).

The contribution of the Jains to literature and learning was significant. It was the religious duty of a well-to-do Jain to get books copied out and to distribute them among saints and scholars. The services of the Jains to the Apabhramsha literature and language, which were close to the life of the people, were invaluable\(^2\). The Jain teachers and scholars - Jinadatta Suri, Haribhadra Suri, Salibhadra Suri, Somaprabha Suri, Hemchandra Suri, etc. - wrote in Apabhramsha also in the 12th century. Jainism contributed a great deal to Indian architecture\(^3\), and the perfection achieved by the Jains in this sphere is remarkable. The city of temples on the Satrunjaya hills stands as a visible monument of the same. In the art of painting also the Jains exciled from the 10th-11th to the 15th century\(^4\), which can be seen in the paintings on manuscripts preserved in the Jain libraries.

Of the neo-Hinduism, Śaivism appears to have been prevalent in all parts of India in the period 700-1200. King Siddharaja of Gujarat, who was inclined towards Jainism, built a temple of Gananatha\(^5\) also. In the Veraval Prāśasti\(^6\) Kumarapāla,

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4. Ibid, P. 4-5.  
whose name has generally been associated with Jainism is praised as Mahesvara-nrapagranth and is credited with having the temple of Somanatha repaired and granting a village to it. He donated another village to a Saiva temple at Chittorgadh after worshipping the god Samiddesvara (Siva).

The Chāhāmanas were also greatly inclined towards Saivism. The Ajmer stone inscription (1153 A.D.) of Vigraharañjadeva contains a long prasasti to Siva and his consort Parvati. Suhavadevi, the queen of Prthviraja (II) Chāhāmana, made endowments to the god Suhavasvarā. The Dohad stone inscription (1172 A.D.) refers to the construction of a monastery for the Kapalika ascetics by one Bhattaraka Prabhasavasi near the temple of Nityapramoditadeva. This temple was erected by a samanta of Prthviraja in 1169 A.D.

The official title of the Gahadavals of Kannauj was paramamaheśvara (the devout worshipper of Śiva). But an inscription of Govindachandra Gahadavala shows that he transferred a piece of land belonging to a Saiva ascetic to a brahman. This, however, does not mean that he was disinclined towards Saivism. A temple was erected in the 12th century by the head of a Śaiva matha in the Badaun district of U.P. which was later on demolished by Iltutmish.

2. I.A., XX, PP> 201 ff.
Saivism flourished under the Chandellas also. A number of inscriptions of the 12th century mention grants and donations made to the famous Nilkantha temple situated within the fort of Kalinjar. In central India, however, Saivism had the greatest hold under the Kalachuris of Tripuri. The Koni inscription (1148 A.D.) recovered from Bilaspur shows that a mandapas in addition to a five shrined temple of Śiva. Saivism had a considerable hold under the Paramāras of Malwa also in that age.

The Pālā and Sena inscriptions of Bengal contain several references to the worship of Śiva. The worship of the Ardhanarīsvara form of Śiva which arose in the early Middle Ages, became prevalent in course of time throughout India. During this period we notice a remarkable activity of Saiva ascetics who used to roam about the country, and owing to their outstanding ascetic achievements were placed incharge of monasteries built by kings, officials and private individuals.

The Baduan inscription also speaks of some Saiva ascetics at length. One of them named Varmaśiva came to Badaun from the Deccan and was placed incharge of a matha built by Rulha, a divira minister of the king of Badaun. The Bilhari and the Gurgi inscriptions reveal the history of the Śaiva monks who flourished in central India under the Kalachuris of Tripuri up to the 12th century.

1. Archaeological Survey Reports by Cunningham, P. 34, Plato-X B.
2. Memories of the ASI, No. 24, PP. 110ff.
4. G. Sivaramamurti, Ancient India, No. 6, 1950, P. 56.
5. E.I., I, P. 64.
The fourfold division of the Saiva sects - Saiva, Pasupata, Kapalika and Kalamukha - is found in Yamunacharya's Agamapramanya and Ramanuja's Sribhasya. But there were other sects and subsects also. As revealed by the epigraphic sources, the chief of sect of the Saivas, which was prevalent over the greater part of Northern India, was the Pasupata sect. The Pasupata way was characterised by some fantastic and wild practices, including the speaking and doing of some apparently absurd things.

In the 10th century Somadeva had spoken of two broad divisions of Saivism - dakshina-marga and vama-marga. The latter included the grosser form of Saivism, i.e. Tantricism and appears to have been mainly represented by the Kapalikas, Kalamukhas and the Kaulas. The Saiva sects, especially the Kapalikas and the Pasupatas, appears to have disregarded the caste system in admitting people to their orders. But the inscriptions recording religious donations and the erection of temples and monasteries clearly reveal that the Pasupata school had become associated with the ruling class.

However, we also find evidence of some currents of Saivism more associated with the plebs including the lower

3. For the Philosophy of the system see Sarva-darsana sangraha, Poona edition, PP. 161-173.
classes. The last verse of the Tripuradaha of Vatsaraja, the court poet of the Chandellas, states that the furious rage of Siva was set against the caste system and was making the untouchables, touchables.

Then we have Vaishnavism. During our period we do not get as many epigraphic references to Vaishnava temples as to Saiva ones. During the reign of Kumarapala a rana granted some land for the expenses of the worship of the god Goga (Yoga) - Narayana. A stone inscription (1162 A.D.) of the Jhamvaria refers to donations made to the temple of Vāsudevā. A fragmentary inscription (Vikram Samvat 1241) reveals that Jayachandra Gāhaḍavāla also erected a temple of Vishnu. The Khajuraho group of temples includes some Viṣṇu temples. In the Ajmer stone inscription (12th century) the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu are enumerated as below: Kurma, Mina, Kola (Varaha), Nrusimha, Vamana, Jamadagnya (Parashurama), Dasasyantakrt (Dasarathi Rama), Krishna, Buddha and Kalkin. The same list is given in the Dasayattaracharita. The number of avatāras came to be recognised as ten by the 12th century, but the same list of the ten avatars was not accepted everywhere.

In this period a great effort was made to have a synthesis between Saivism and Vaishnavism. In the 12th century, a temple of Yoga (Siva) - Narayana (Viṣṇu) was erected. An image,
housed in the Jodhpur Museum, appears to have been made under Jain influence and represents an attempt at synthesising Jainism, Vaishnavism, Saivism and Buddhism. The epigraphic evidence reveals the existence of the temple of Tripurusadeva in Rajasthan, in which Brahma, Vishnu and Siva appear to have been worshipped as the three aspects of a single divinity.

Another such attempt at bringing about a synthesis of the god-concepts of Siva and Vishnu may be found in the Deopara inscription of Vijayasena of Bengal. He built the temple of Pradyamnesvara and placed in it an idol in which Siva and Vishnu were combined. Two Harihara images of Bengal represent Siva and Durga on one side, and Vishnu with Lakshmi on the other. Saivism was the most popular in the rural areas of the period under review. One simple reason of it could be that Saivism suited to the religious requirements and faiths of the local people. Villagers were essentially religious and generally they worshipped their family deity (Kuldevta), the grāmadevata and kṣetrapāla (field deity) along with these local divinities; worship of Siva and snake was also popular. The Harsacarit shows Bana, offering worship to lord Siva just before started for the court of Harsha and paying homage to his family dieties (kuladevatās). A good number of

1. Ratna Chandra Agarwal, Sammelana-Patrika, Point 41, No.1, P.101.
5. Saduktikarnamrta, 2. 174. 4 and 5.
6. K.P., VV.133, 139, 177, 179, 227 and 243.
7. Devadevasya virupaksasya.... vidhaya paramaya bhaktya pujam. H.C., P.56.
Shiva temples out of the one thousand built by king Nārāyaṇapāla of Bengal, as his Bhagalpur plate indicates¹, may have been constructed in the villages of Bihar and Bengal. The Govindpur Coper-plate of Laksmansena mentions a small temple situated on the southern border of the village of Viddarasasana in the Vetadda Caturaka in Pascimakhatika of the vardhamana bhukti². The Bhatela plate of Govindakesavadeva of Assam (11-12 century A.D.) informs us about a Siva temple in the village of Bhatapada or Bhattapataka, now called Bhatera³.

The discovery of a few images with minor inscriptions in the rural areas of Bihar and Bengal also throws some light on the nature of village dieties. The huge image of dancing Śiva (10th century A.D.) was taken out from a pond with an inscription on its pedestal in village Bharella under the Badkamta police station in the district of Tippera, perhaps, in all probability in the local village⁴.

After going through the details about the discovery of the four images found at Sanokhar, Bharella, Baghaura and Betha lead us to the conclusion that in each case the temple was accompanied with a tank or pond in which people took bath and then offered worship. It seems that the images were thrown into the tanks in order to avoid humiliation at the hands of invaders.

The worship of Śiva on a large scale is also indicative of non-Aryan influence in the rural area. This non-Aryan diet was

³E.I., XIX, NO.49 11.25-27 and 29.
worshipped even by the orthodox Brāhmanas living in the villages. It was perhaps the wide popularity of Śiva worship among the local people of Bihar and Bengal that compelled Nāryānapāla to build one thousand Śiva temples. The popularity of Śiva worship in Assam could be assumed by the fact that most land grants of that area refer to Śiva or Śiva worship in one way or the other. It is true that some villages had temples of brāhmanic deities, such as Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Gaṇeśha, etc. and some had Buddhist vihārās, but the most popular shrines of the villagers in general were those of Śiva and some local deities. This fact is further strengthened by the fact that Śiva temples (known as Śivalaya in the villages) do exist in most of the villages of Haryana and Delhi as has been surveyed /observed by the Researcher.

TRADITIONS AND BELIEFS

Villagers, though generally poor, were of religious nature. Due to their blind faith in their respective religions, some superstitious beliefs were practised by the village people. Superstition seems to be a salient feature of the early medieval village.

In Hinduism there is a large number of sects and trends, which differ as regards both the god selected from the extensive Hindu pantheon that the faithful might venerate, as well as the religious rites and customs observed. However, certain customs and ideas are common to all Hindus. They attach great importance to the concept of virtue or duty (dharma), that consists in the steadfast and unswerving execution on caste obligations. Thus for
the higher castes Dharma involves just administration or courageous
behaviour on the battle field, and for the lower ones conscientious
execution of their traditional occupation and respect to be shown
to persons of elevated origin. Hinduism instils the idea that the
division of society into castes has been predestined, that all
castes are essential and that the position of each individual in
the caste structure has been determined by his behaviour in the life
that preceded his current one. Man's soul does not die but after
the death of his body it transmigrates to another being; if a man
has led a virtuous life, then after his rebirth his caste status
will have been enhanced. If, on the other hand, he has led a
corrupt life, then he might be reborn as an untouchable or even as
some loathsome animal. Hence everything appears just, for even if
a good man suffers all kinds of misfortune, this is seen as
punishment for misdemeanours in a past existence.

Common to all Hindus was the concept of ahimsa, namely
the idea that one should avoid inflicting harm on any living
creature, and also the homage paid to a number of animals - in
particular the cow that is worshipped by all Hindus. The rituals
performed at various occasions through man's life, from the cradle
to the grave, were also a shared tradition even though the details
of these rituals might vary. All Hindus had to make some animal
sacrifices, but mostly just offerings of flowers and incense;
all were called upon to make offerings within their particular means
to the Brahmans, and the temples and all revered as holy men
various hermits, ascetics, wandering preachers, etc. All Hindus
also viewed as obligatory the performance of caste rituals and the
observance of caste prohibitions, indeed these were seen as no less important than the worship of the divinities.

A popular belief of the people was the doctrine of incarnation which can be traced back to ancient times. In a verse of the Bhagawad Gita we find the resolve of Vishnu to incarnate himself from age to age for the protection and preservation of the virtuous and the destruction of the wicked. The theory of avataravada (incarnation), thus, symbolised religious and social hope and aspiration, and it was popularised by the Purāṇas. But the lists of the avatars of Vishnu as given in the Mahabharata and the Purāṇas, as the Harivamsa, Matsya, Varaha, Agni and Bhagavata, vary to a considerable extent. In fact the conception of avatars passed through many stages of development. However, by the 12th century the ten avatars as given in the Varaha and the Agni found almost general recognition.

The popularity of avataravada in the Middle Ages may be said to have got some social significance. It was in the background of the Bhakti Movement which gained momentum in the 12th century and which, by installing Krishna and Rama in the centre of religious life was destined to acquire a democratic character and a sweeping force in the later Middle Ages. Further, it was working for cohesion and synthesis in so far as Buddha was also included in the list of avatars.

1. Bhagawad gita, IV, 8.
Then, we have the worship of the Varaha form of Vishnu which became popular in the 7th-8th centuries A.D. It is amply borne out by the figures and other representations discovered in the Badami caves, Mahabalipuram, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Orissa, Bengal, Bihar and U.P. In northern India, however, we find the zoomorphic representation of the deity. Bhoja Pratihara had assumed the title Adivaraha and issued coins bearing the figure of this incarnation of Vishnu.

As revealed by the Ahar inscription a temple of Adivaraha existed near Udaipur as early as the 10th century. The Khajuraho-group of the Chandella temples includes a temple of Adivaraha also. Images of Adivaraha, belonging to the 12th century, have been recovered from Jhansi district and from Chandpur, half way between Dudhai and Deogarh.

In the 11th-12th centuries, the Krishna cult and the Rama cult became popular. The evidence from Mathura, Mandor, Paharpur and Badami-Pattadakal reveals that the representation of the stories of Krishna in sculpture was common in the Kushana, Gupta, pre-Pala and Chalukyan periods. Scenes from Krishna's life are depicted in the Jain temple (c. 1231 A.D.) of Luna Vasahi (Mt. Abu in Rajasthan). The Rajatarangini refers to a temple of Krishna in

1.G. Sivaramamurti, Ancient India, No. 6, January 1950, P. 42; HD Sankalia, Archaeology of Gujarat, Bombay, 1941, PP. 150-151.
2.G. Sivaramamurti, op. cit.
Kashmir. In the 12th century the devotional worship of Krishna was popularized by Jayadeva and Nimbarka in their own ways.

In the temple of Sita-Ramaji in the Etawaha district of U.P., there are records of many pilgrims, and the earliest of them belongs to 1169 A.D. The temple itself as suggested by A Fuhrer was erected after 1000 A.D. The Khajuraho group of temples consists of a temple of Rama-Lakshmana also. A Chandella inscription of 1288 A.D. invokes Rama. All these evidence goes to show that the cult of Rama was fairly well known in the 11th and 12th centuries. The occurrence of the figure of Hanuman on some coins of the Kalachuris of Ratnapur and the Chandellas is significant in this context.

Again, in our period we can also observe the Sakta-Tantric currents. Scholars like Conze and Bhattacharya think that the Tantric tendency originated from Buddhism in which it was present in some form or the other from the very beginning. And by the 12th century, the older religious systems also had become considerably affected by these tendencies. The sweep of tantric influences may be gathered from the widespread belief in mantras. The author of the Naisadhiyacharita extolled the efficacy of the Sarasvatimandra and king Kumarapala of Gujarata is

1. Raj. ,VIII, 3368.
2. A Fuhrer, op.cit., P.89.
6. B.Bhattacharya, Two Vajravana Works, Introduction, P.X.
is said to have had a great belief in the Jain namaskaramantra which, as he thought, brought him success everywhere. The volume and significance of tantric literature may be inferred from the division of the revealed literature (sruti) by Kulluka Bhatta into two parts: the Vedic and the Tantric.

A varied mass of literature, both Hindu and Buddhist, is found on the Tantra. As we gather from certain sources the hold of the Tantra was considerable in our period, and a large number of such works appear to have existed. Tantricism may be said to be both a philosophy and a religion. Saktivada forms the corner-stone of the philosophy of the Tantras both Hindu and Buddhist. Thus, the Kashmir Śaivite Tantricism centres around the conception of Sakti as the inherent nature and power of manifestation of the Supreme Lord Śiva. The activities of Sakti, the Primordial Female Energy, underlie the variegated forms and phenomena of the universe. It is through these forms that man can ascend and find his consumation with the Universal Principle. The highest reality has been conceived of as the union of the Primal Male and Female Principles. In the Buddhist tantra Upaya and Prajna correspond to the principles of Śiva and Śkati respectively.

The Tantric religion aims at the idea that for most people spiritual effort must take the form of action in the shape of worship which gradually leads to knowledge. The emphasis on

1. Kulluka on Manu, II, I
2. Ibid.
3. S.B. Dasgupta, Evolution of Mother Worship in India in Great Women of India
japa, and sabda, or mantra may be said to be the hallmark of the tantra. The aim of the Tantra is to attain siddhi enlightenment, health, wealth and power. It recognises adhikarabheda also.

The tantrics also developed the cult of Tara (Goddess). The archaeological and epigraphic evidence reveals that by the 8th century Tara had become a favourite deity not only of the Buddhists but of the Hindus also, and between the 8th and the 12th centuries she acquired considerable popularity throughout India. During this period many temples were dedicated to her and she also became a popular household deity. By the 12th century Tara had been included in the Jain pantheon. An inscription (1096 A.D.) of the Western Chālukyā Tribhuvanamalla Vikramaditya VI reveals that this goddess was believed to help her devotees by warding off the dangers from kings, local assembly, lion, wild elephants, serpents, fire, wind, thieves, ghosts, etc.

In our period 650-1206 people believed in worshipping the ascetics and Śādhus, both male and female. The Dvayasaraya Mahakavya of Hemchandra refers to female ascetics. In the Sandesarasaka of Abdul Rahman we find mention of Kapalini. Ksemendra in his Samayamatrka refers to a Buddhist nun also. There was a remarkable growth of the orders of ascetics and mendicants in the Middle Ages in India.

These Śādhus were assembled at pilgrim centres and, therefore, people resorted to pilgrimages - sacred rivers, pools, sarovars, mountains, shrines and temples. In the 12th century Lakshmīdhārā designated the 8th book of his digest Kṛtyakalpataru as Tirth-vivechana-kanda which gives the description of numerous tirthas all over India. It is the first systematic treatment of the institution of pilgrimage, which was dealt with only unsystematically in the epic and Purānic literature and was hardly noticed in the law-books. It was believed that pilgrimage undertaken with faith and piety destroyed sins and led to moral elevation and even salvation. The common people, Alberuni says, took tirthas only on trust without any enquiry into their significance.

Tirthas attracted large number of pilgrims and had become the vital sports of Indian culture. This can be inferred from the fact that the traditions of the 12th century associate the rise of the two most famous royal dynasties of northern India: the Gahadavala and the Chahamana - with the holy cause of the protection of tirthas from the Muslim invaders. The fundamental cultural unity of this vast subcontinent was reflected in the gatherings of people from the different regions at the tirthas like Prayaga, Gaya, Pushkar and Somnath. Alberuni says that the Hindus went up to Kashmir on pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage appears to have been open not only to the

dvijas but also the Sudras and Chandalas. It was a general maxim that the rules of untouchability were suspended at the tirthas and also during the course of journeys undertaken to reach them. It is obvious that pilgrimage tended to level down the social difference and caste exclusiveness of Hindu society. It was thus instrumental in bringing about social and cultural contacts among the people of different regions and in keeping up a religious and moral tone in society. Along with the common superstitions, some agricultural superstitions were their in existence in village settlement. Agriculture was the main source of living of the majority of the village population. Cowdung was prohibited on Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday as it was to be harmful for cows. A lamp was lighted so that the presence of the goddess of wealth could be felt. To make the cows immune from diseases, they were branded with hot iron on the first day of kartika. White bulls were left free to ploughing. Falling of bull at the time of ploughing, the farmer was sure to die of fever. A pregnant woman was not permitted to touch the stored seeds.

We cannot say anything precisely about the origin of such superstitions, some of which may have some element of reality based on observation, but it seems that many of these beliefs which were prevalent in the rural areas in medieval period were due to

2. K.P., V. 94.
3. Ibid, V. 95.
4. Ibid, VV. 103104.
5. Ibid, V. 141.
7. Ibid, VV. 161,162.
people's blind faith in religion and its religious tendencies. Some of the superstitions and beliefs and cattle wealth pertaining to agriculture are still prevalent with agricultural communities in the village, for example, a day after Diwali a deity, made out of cowdung is worshipped with the hope that God will not only protect but will also increase their cattle wealth. This ritual is known as Govardhan puja.

RITUALS

Along with these traditions and beliefs some rituals were also performed by the village people during the period under review (650 - 1205 A.D.). Rituals covered birth, first hair cutting, puberty, marriage, pilgrimages and death. On the 21st day of the birth the name giving ceremony, was performed, attended by distribution of sweets. The priest or an astrologer would draw up the horoscope at birth. On the 6th day of the birth, the Chhatti ceremony was performed after which the mother was free to move about. The sacred-thread ceremony for the boys was held before they attained puberty. A Muslim boy was circumcised any time between the age of two and ten. Among the Hindus, the girls first menstruation was attended by special worship, songs and dances. Ears and noses were bored before the age of puberty. Most marriages were arranged. When the engagement was fixed (rokanā), the girls father would present some cash and commodities. The wedding party would reach the bride's place on the day fixed by the priests. The major rite was the bride's place on the day fixed by the priests.

1. Manu - Chapter II, Line 25
2. Ibid - Chapter II, Line 36
The major rite was the bride and the groom going round fire seven times followed by kanya daan (the girl being given away) and gau daan (cow to be gifted to the priest). Death is attended by rituals involving pinda. The dead children were either buried or consigned to the running river. Hindu adults were cremated while Muslims were buried. On the 3rd day, the first purificatory rites took place, followed by the thirteenth day ceremony when food and water was offered to the soul of the deceased and near relations had a hair-cut and bath.

Fast, tonsure, pitrupuja and gifts were the main pilgrimage rituals. In the 12th century we find Lakshmidhara simplifying tirtha-rutuals by making fasting optional, omitting tonsure altogether, explaining pitru-puja as an obligation only of the rich, allowing the performance, in a single day, of as many shradhs as may be required at a tirtha. He regarded devotion and purity of mind more important than the rituals and ceremonies. Later authorities like Viramitrodava (17th century) not only resisted these liberalizing views but also denied the absence of untouchability in a tirtha-yatra.

But fasts and tonsure, as Alberuni points out, much have been a common practice in our period also. According to the traveller, a pilgrim worshipped in a tirtha, the idol, made presents to it, recited many hymns and prayers, fasted, gave alms to the Brahmans, the priests and others, and shaved off the hair of

1. Ibid - Chapter III, Line 27
his head and beard. The practice of making gifts at the tirthas was observed not only by the common people but also by the kings.

The custom of self-immolation at sacred places like the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna appears to have been prevalent in quite early ages. According to Hiuen Tsang, there was a belief that a person who jumped from the sacred banyan tree into the river below and so ended his life found his way to heaven.

Among the rites of the manes, the Anvastaka was marked by the use of wine which is symbolic of fertility. The untying of the hair of the birde at the marriage-rutual, and the symbolic parting of the wife's hair by her husband has a long tradition. The hair of a woman had, thus, a very close association with not only the existence of her husband but also with his special privilege. It is this background that, most probably, stands at the basis of the custom of removing the hair of the widow, for where marriage of widows is forbidden, hair did not have any significance for her, in the total absence of her husband. The custom of mukta-veni is thus supposed to be the forerunner of the custom of total removal of hair in the case of the woman.

Again, most of the Indian rituals are associated with the symbolism of the numbers three and seven. The figure 7 indicated totality for the ancient people; it does it even today. But more...
importantly, there is the figure three, two units of which plus one 
\((6 + 1)\) gave the concept of seven. The concept of three appears
to have arisen from the three words (trilok): earth, mid-region
and sky.

Finally, with some rituals, dice or gambling was
associated e.g. Dipavali and the belief was and is even now that
one who wins will have a victorious new year.

GODS AND DEITIES

As we have seen, in our period, in North India, the
dominant faith was Brāhmanism or Paurānic Hinduism. The princes
and the common folk alike honoured and worshipped the Brāhmanical
gods and goddesses. Among those the most prominent were Vishnu and
Siva who were known by a number of other names also. The pantheon
further included Brāhma, Sūrya, Vinayaka or Gaṇesh, Kumara Skanda,
Swami-Mahasena or Kartikeya, Indra, Agni, Yama, Varuna, Marut and
goddesses like the divine mothers (mattrkas), Bhagvati or Dūrgā, Sri
(Lākṣmī) besides a host of minor deities. Many of them still
command popular allegiance and thus modern Hinduism may be said to
have taken shape by this period.

In many cases members of the same royal family paid
homage to different gods. We learn that Govindachandra Gāhādavāla
and Rajaraja Chola - I and Kulottunga - I granted villages to
Buddhist vihāras. This must have doubtless promoted a spirit of

1.Dange, op.cit., PP.66-67
2.Ibid, P.75
3.Thus Vishnu was called Vasudeva, Chakradhara, Govinda, Narayana,
Gadadhara, Madhava, Janardhana etc., other names of Siva were
Sambhu, Hara, Mahadeva, Bhutapati, Pasupati, Maheswara,
Tripurantaka, etc.
toleration and concord among the votaries of the various competing sects. Persecution and sectarian animosity, therefore, were not much in evidence then. The Cholas and other rulers of the South were tolerant of all creeds and Vaishnava Alvars and Śaiva Nāyanmārs were free to preach and propagate their doctrines. These religious teachers infused new life and vitality in the current beliefs and practices by their precept and example. South India produced during this period such towering personalities as Kumarila, Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and Madhvacharya who have left an indelible impress on Hindu religion and philosophy, even in the North, by their moral fervour and intellectual grandeur.

Lastly, it may be noted that Vedic sacrifices do not appear to have been in vogue then. In the inscriptions of the Rashtrakutas, however, there are references to the performance of Hiranyagarbha ceremony and tuladanás. A Chola inscription of the time of Rajadhirājā I (c. 1044-52 A.D.) also contains a solitary allusion to the Asvamedha. Probably greater stress now began to be laid on dāna (gifts) than on Yajnas (sacrifices) with their intricate and cumbersome details. On the other hand, Alberuni says: "The sacrifices differ in duration, so that only he could perform certain of them who lives a very long life; and such long lives do no longer occur in this our age. Therefore, most of them have been abolished, and only few of them remain and are practised now-a-days".  

The most popular objects of worship were Viṣṇu and Śiva.

Linked with the cult of Siva is the worship of his spouse, known in various parts of the country as Kali, Uma, Parvati, Shakti. Kali was represented as a fierce goddess demanding bloody sacrifices, while Uma and Parvati were seen as a tender mother. It is clear that the traditions of many different cults were drawn together and fused in this image.

The worship of Shakti evolved. Shakti was also perceived of as the emanation of the might of Siva and the veneration of Shakti was associated with Tantrism. From the sixth century onwards the idea of Bhakti was gaining ground in Southern India. This concept implied an overwhelming love of god before which ritual, asceticism and Brāhmaṇ orthodoxy pale in significance. In the 12th century, Basava, the founder of the Lingayata sect linked together the concept of Bhakti with Tantrism, and repudiated such an essential principle of Hinduism as the caste system. He emphasized not so much observance of ritual as the need to love Siva, while at the same time accepting the merit of asceticism. In the 12th and 13th centuries the followers of Basava openly opposed official Hinduism and Jainism.

Between the 7th and 9th centuries the Vaisṇavites also came under the influence of this new concept, and later it was propagated by the Bhaktas in Bengal. In so far as the Bhaktas (the followers of Bhakti) rejected the ritual aspect of Hinduism and the exclusive position of the Brāhmaṇas, the propagation of the Bhakti concept began to contain a note of social protest.

Laxmi, Sarasvati, Gauri and Uma ever since been the chief
Hindu goddesses. Invocations to Uma¹, Gauri² and Sarasvati³ are found in a number of inscriptions ranging from the 10th to the 12th centuries. But there were no independent cults of these deities. We find epigraphic references to Ambika and Ambadevi also. The image of the former was installed near a temple of Sambhu, built by a rich merchant in A.D. 1218 in the modern town of Charwa (district Hoshangabad⁴). The Jagat stone inscription of the Guhilaputras (Mewar) refers to the gift of a swarna-kalasha to a temple of Ambadevi⁵. The cult of the snake-goddess Manasa had obtained a footing in Bengal and some other regions during the 11th and 12th centuries.

The tradition of sun-worship had been continuing from quite early ages. The Patan grant (1199 A.D.) of Chalukya Bhimadeva II refers to a donation of land made to the temple of god Analesvara. A sun-temple is also mentioned in a grant (11 A.D.) of the Gāhādavālas of Kannauj⁶. At Multan also there existed a famous sun-temple but there, the image was destroyed by the Muslims in the 11th century⁷.

Among the minor gods mention may be made of Ganesh, Kartikeya and Brahma. It was about the 6th century that the worship of Gaṇapati-Vinayaka was introduced⁸. Images of Skanda or

⁴.IA,XX,PP.310-312.Ambika also came into the Jain fold (Dasaratha Sharma, Early Chauhan Dynasties, P.234.
Kartikeya have been found at Khajuraho. His worship was extensively practised in ancient India, but during the post-Gupta period it tended to be completely merged with that of Siva in northern India\(^1\), with the result that separate shrines were seldom dedicated to him. The independent worship of Brahma was popular in Rajasthan\(^2\). Some temples of Brahma, especially that of Puskara existed there and a number of his images have been found at different places in that region.

The rules given in the Vishnudharamaottara, Agni Purāṇa, Silparatna, Rupamandāna and Sadhanamālā for the construction of the images of the nine grahas, and the evidence of sculpture indicate that their worship was also widely popular in different parts of India. The Navagrahas were worshipped for health, prosperity, ample rains, success over enemies, long life, etc. Their worship was closely connected with the growing popularity of astrology. Due to this blind faith in these religious sects, the rural people of North India during the early medieval period (650-1205 A.D.) could be taken as evident to the fact that every village had a female presiding deity enshrined in a hut of straw or a cave. Candikā, Cāmunḍā, Kātyānī, Kālikā or Dūrga were the names given to her\(^3\). The Khalimpur plate of Dharmapālā refers to a small temple (devakulika) of Kadambari on the northern border of the village krauncasvabhra. Moreover, the cultivators worshipped Prthivi and showed respect to Śūkra and Parāśāra\(^4\) at the time of the first

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4. K.P., VV.131, 133, 139, 177, 227 and 243.
ploughing of the field, sowing of the seeds, and storing of grain.

FESTIVALS

Celebration of festivals (Utsavas) and the observance of vartas are primarily communal functions since the ancient times. As they express major trends and trends in our popular religious culture. The revolution may indicate rise and fall of various socio-religious tendencies where as their analysis may unfold different elements of socio-religious complex. The brāhmaṇical religious culture of early medieval period was chiefly derived from the vedic traditions. In our general contexts of religious conditions, and analysis and evolution of vows and festivals may indicate the particular popular trends. These festivals and vows are mentioned and described in scriptures, inscriptions and classical literature. Scriptures generally present an ideal picture and literature gives us the best modified portrayal on the other hand inscriptions give us real picture in a reliable frame of time and space.

Rituals and festivals were the most common form of enjoyment and mirth in the village. The calendar of a village was full of rituals and festivals throughout the year. Most of the festivals were of the agamic origin but later on accepted in the smarta fold also. Some of the common festivals were, Chaitra Purna, Pavitraka Purna, Damanaka Purna, Katha yatra, Krishna Janmashtmi, Shiva Ratri, Deepotsava (Deepavali), Dūrga Pūja, Holi, Makar Saḥkrānti, Ratha Saptami, Ram Navami and Parvata Yatra. Some "vratas" were also celebrated just like festivals. These festivals have been referred to in the inscriptions as the proper occasions
of gifts. On particular "parvas" people observed fast and worshipped the particular deities (Rama, Siva etc.) The people were forced to maintain purity of heart and purity of action. The most important ceremony or festival was known as Rathayātrā or Devayātrā¹ of the deity in the early medieval period. Good many epigraphs of different dynasties recorded the grant to meet the expenses of this festive occasion (ceremony) which was very popular in Rajputana (Rajasthan) and neighbouring regions. Fa-hien (4th century A.D.) stated that Pataliputra celebrated Rathayātrā where Buddha icon was carried out.

In the Chāhamāna record we have a lengthy description of the procession of deity (Devayātrā) commencing on a particular occasion. The epigraph says² that the people of the province participated in this celebration and courtesans attached to the temple of gods also attended Devayatra with fine dress and music. Another document from Marwar mentions the festival of Rathyātrā during 12th century A.D.³ The second epigraph records the grant of four villages⁴ for the particular celebration called Parvayātrā near Puskar Tirtha. The deity was taken out from the temple and was placed in a chariot for the yatra procession Anjaneri plate from Madhya Pradesh tells us that people paid a silver coin on such occasions.⁵ Hence it was famous and recorded as "Ratha or Deva Yātrā" in different inscriptions.

⁵C.I.I., Vol. IV, P. 150.
In Rajaputana it was so popular that Jains took out their deities in the similar procession. In Lalrai grant of the Chahamana family, it is stated that some barely corn were gifted for celebrating that festive work, devayātrā of santinath\(^1\) in the year 1170 A.D. Similar cash donation is recorded out of 40 Dramma deposited for the festival of the deity\(^2\).

The study of the royal grants points out that the Hindu function of Devayātrā was most pompous and attractive, hence, it influenced the people of other faiths. Jains living in Rajaputana changed their mind and initiated similar procession (as they called it) for their deities.

12 months of the Hindu year based on the lunar calendar are named after that star during whose ascendancy the full moon of that month occurs. The full moon day of chaitra month, that is, the purnima during the ascendancy of the chaitra star was particular sacred to the chaitra Guptas, the recording angles of the Hindu Pantheon. A special worship was offered to these celinestical representatives of the God of death and an offering of spiced rice is prepared and later distributed as prasad or holy sacrament\(^3\). Deepavali means a "row of lights" it falls on the last two days of the dark half of Kārtik\(^4\) (Oct.-Nov.). There are various alleged origins attribution to this festival. Some hold that they celebrated the marriages of Lakṣmi with Vishnu. In Bengal the festival is dedicated to the worship of Kali. It also

4. Ibid., Vol. XI, P. 55.
commemorates that blessed day on which the triumphant lord Rama returned to Ayodhya after defeating Rāvana. On this day also Krishna killed the demon Narakasura.

Durgā Puja was observed twice a year. Once in the month of Chaitra and then in Aswayuja. It lasted for nine days in honour of the nine manifestations of Dūrga. The Kālikā Purāṇa and Kālaviveka refer to a religious function called Sabarotsava observed on the occasion of the Durgā Puja on the tenth, the last day of the celebration. When the goddess was given a hearty send off and when people indulged in all sorts of rivalries, such as drumming, dancing, throwing dust and mud and hurling abuses on one another, shouting vulgar words and singing songs expressive of the male and female genital organs and demonstrating even sexual actions. The Kālikā Purāṇa states that even married and unmarried girls and prostitutes took part in this farewell function and the Kālaviveka observes that the people after being clad in leaves and smeared over with mud like the Sabaras indulged in such marry making.

Thus Sabarotsava appears to be primarily associated with a festivity of the aborigines when they do not seem to have observed the restrictions imposed on sexual life by brāhmaṇical society. The aboriginal tribes of Chotanagpur still celebrate such a festival after their winter harvest. It is called Maghi Parob.

1. Kālikā Purāṇa, 63, P.18-23.
2. Kālaviveka, P. 514.
5. Honeton, Bihar the Heart of India, 1949, P.139.
Holi festival of the Hindus celebrated at the end of Phalgun these days is clearly a sophisticated version of the above noted aboriginal festival. Holākā was a festival of the easterners according to Jumūtavāhana¹. The word holaka suggests that it had some connection with hala (plough) or hālika (ploughman) and it may have been originally a religious ritual or festival of the farmers. The word holi seems to be a derivative of this holākā. The Kālviveka refers to a ritual called Vahnutsava (fire festival) celebrated on the 12th day of the bright half or the full moon day of the month of Māgha (Jan-Feb)². As fire is very useful to the poor farmers in winter for warming themselves up, this fire festival may have been especially popular among them. It was perhaps on this very occasion, or may be in continuation of it, that holaka was also celebrated and the farmers out of joy and happiness with their granaries full after winter harvest may have given themselves up to singing, dancing, mirth and hilerity.

The joy and pleasure expressed by the farmers and villagers by singing songs at the top of their voice on the occasion of the modern holi festival seems to be a continuation of the old practice. No other festival makes the farmers so much hilarious and joyful. Thus, holākā in all probability was celebrated at the end of Māgha, and like modern it seems to have been associated with the burning of fire.

The legends of the swing performance (dola-lila) and the

¹. Kālviveka, P. 185.
². Ibid, P. 190.
mock fight associated with Rādhā and Kṛiṣṇa together with the legend of the burning of the demoness holīkā seem to have been introduced later perhaps at the end of the 12th century A.D. or afterwards as parts of the holi festival.

Now-a-days holi is celebrated at the end of Phālguna. This shows that holaka, which was celebrated at the end of Magha, was shifted onward by one month, this may have been done to associate it with the Phaggu festival, which was perhaps more or less similar to holākā and was observed, as its name suggests, in Phālguna (Feb-March) in other parts of India.

Goparva (festival meant for cows) was also an important annual events in the village. It was observed on the first day of Kārtika called hagudapratipat. On this occasion the cowhorns, adorned with ornaments and marks of saffron and sandal paste, raising their sticks or clubs in their hands, singing songs and playing on musical instruments, decorated the chief bull with cloth etc., and took it round the village. This was done to avert any misfortune that might befall cattle. Moreover, on this very day cows were worshipped, a Śyāma creeper (a particular type of climbing plant) was tied on their horns and turmeric mixed with oil was applied on them. Furthermore, they were marked with hot iron and a portion of their hairs on tails and ears was cut off. This was supposed to make them immune from various diseases for one year.

2. Hemcandra Calls it spring festival (Phāggu Vasantotsava), Desinamamālā, P. 179.
The Sanskrit word Shankaramana means "to begin to move" the days on which the sun begins to move Northwards is called "Makara Saṅkrānti". It usually falls in the middle of January. Among the Tamilians in South India, this festival is called the Pongal. To many people, especially the Tamilians, the Makar Saṅkrānti ushered in the new year. The newly harvested corn is cooked for the first time on that day. Joyous festivities mark the celebration in every home, servants, farmers, and the poor are fed and clothed and given presents of money. On the next day the cow, which is regarded as the symbol of the holy mother is worshipped. Then there is feeding of birds and animals.

"Ratha Saptami" fell on the 7th day of the bright fortnight of the month of margaseersh (Dec-Jan) sun is worshipped, fast is kept and a bath had to be taken at the time of sunrise in pure water like river the Ganga.

Krishna Janmashtami is the birth day of Krishna. It falls on the 8th day of the dark half of the month of Bhadrapada (Aug-Sept). 24 hour fast is observed which was broken at midnight. According to the 'Kamauli' copper plate inscription of Jayachandra is celebrated along with Krishna's birth day.

Ram Navami or the birth day of Ram falls on the 9th day of the bright fortnight of the month of Chaitra (March-April). Ayodhya is the main centre of celebration (near Faizabad in U.P.).

Ekādasi falls in the month of Margaseersha (Dec-Jan) fast is observed on all Ekādasi twice a day. "Sivaratri" was the another festival celebrated during the early medieval period on this fast is observed and the God Shiva is worshipped. According to Chāhamāna record that nobody was allowed to kill any animal on this day.

At the time of eclipse, people took bath in the sacred river. They gave donation i.e. cows, money and gold to the poor, the brāhmanas and sādhus. And people kept total fast during the time of eclipses and after the eclipse they cleansed their houses and day to day item and finally took a bath before they started cooking. And this custom of celebrating eclipses is still very much in existence in our today's villages.

Along with all these festivals, the Kālaviveka refers to certain important festivals such as dasahara held on the tenth day of the bright half of jyaistha. Sakrotthāna or Šakrostava held in Bhādra, durgoṣṭava held in Āśvina, Kojāgara or Kaumudi held on the Āśvina Pūrṇīma and Sukharātri, dīpamālikā, bhrātrdvitīyā and devotthāna held in Kartika. It also mentions the celebration of Viṣṇuṣamatra (Mesa-Saṃkrānti) in Chaitra or

3. Devalasasriti, 26, Brihatayana, 2.4.
5. Ibid., PP.294-299.
6. Ibid., PP.192 and 299.
7. Ibid., P. 511-520.
8. Ibid., P. 403
9. Ibid., P. 403-404.
10. Ibid, P. 325.
11. Ibid., PP.405-406.
12. Ibid., PP.52, 123, 192, 196, 197, 208, 221-223, 231,232, 236, 237 and 238.
Vaisākha and aksayatṛtiyā on the third day of the bright half of Vaisākha\(^1\). These two holy days are also referred to in certain land grants of our period\(^2\). Although we do not get any direct reference to the observance of all the above named festivals of the Kālaviveka in villages. Yet their celebration in the villages of North India in modern times may be taken as an indication of their continuation from early medieval days. The above mentioned festivals and vows are communal functions. They were and they are celebrated by one and all throughout in our culture and tradition. But literary and epigraphic records show that there were some festivals which were celebrated by the local people only during the period 650-1206 A.D. in Northern India or we can say that these festivals were "village festivals."

Agriculture being the pivot of the rural economy. Every activity was focused on cultivation. Due to religious nature of the rural people. Some religious rites were performed from the first driving of the plough to the harvesting of crops like offering worship to the god\(^3\) addressing of mantra\(^4\), offering a feast of ghee and payasa\(^5\) were some of the agricultural ceremonies performed through out the year by the rural people.

The cultivators started their major agricultural operations after performing certain religious rites. On the occasion of the first driving of the plough (halaprasarana) an

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3. K.P., V. 133.
4. Ibid., VV. 135-140.
5. Ibid., VV. 177-181.
ideal cultivator first took bath and wore a pair of white clothes and then duly offered worship to the earth, planets, prthu and prajapati with sandal paste and flowers. Afterwards he circumambulated the fire and made liberal gifts (dakṣiṇa) perhaps to the priest. He also applied honey on the tip of the plough-share, touched it with gold and finally drove the plough towards the left side of the field. It is laid down that after recalling to mind vāsava (Indra), Šukra, Parāśara, etc., and offering worship to fire, brahmaṇa and god the first driving ceremony of the plough should be performed. Further, the cultivator with his face towards the north, should make an offering of milk mixed with white flowers and curd to the lord of saci, i.e. Indra and pray to him for timely and sufficient should invoke Indra for making the crops free from troubles. Then, an offering (naivedya) and a lamp of ghee must be offered to the wind god (marut) for a rich harvest. At the end a mantra should be addressed to the earth requesting her to grant the desired fruit perhaps with respect to field crops. The sowing of seeds was also accompanied with rituals. The cultivator, meditating upon Indra on an auspicious day, sowed three handfuls of seeds moistened or sprinkled with cold water. Then, with a pitcher in hand facing the east he prayed to the earth for the sprouting up of all crops, for timely rain, and for the grant of wealth, paddy and prosperity. After the sowing of seeds in the field was over, farmers were

1.K.P., VV.130-132.
2.Ibid., VV.133.
3.Ibid., V. 135-140.
offered a sumptuous feast of ghee and payasa. This was believed to make agriculture free from troubles. We are not sure whether this ceremony, described in the krsiparasara, was observed by all cultivators, but it does indicate the ritualising of agriculture in early medieval times.

Another ceremony called muṣṭigrahaṇa was held in the month of Āgrahāyaṇa (Nov-Dec). In it the farmer worshipped the paddy plants on an auspicious day with sandal paste, flowers, offerings (naivedya) and incense reaped two and a half handfuls of crops in the north-eastern corner of the field, silently carried them home on his head without touching anything anywhere and finally walking seven steps in the main room placed them towards the east.

Pusyayātrā was another important agricultural ceremony. It was celebrated on an auspicious day in Pausa (December-January) before paddy was harvested. The cultivators gathered together near a field, prepared vegetarian and non-vegetarian food of the best quality consisting of payasa, milk, curd, ghee, vegetables, fish, meat other platable matters mixed with asafoetida and black pepper fruits, roots, sweetmeats, cakes and beverages and serving it on plantain leaves enjoyed a feast. Then, washing their hands and mouth they besmeared one another with sandalpaste, catuḥsama (a kind of unguent) and perfumed oil, put on new clothes, fed one another with high class betel-leaves perfumed with camphor, adorned themselves with flowers, offered salutation to Indra and

2. Ibid., VV. 206-209.
entertained themselves by singing, dancing and playing on musical instruments. After that all looked at the sun with folded hands and recited an incantation of four verses, which signified that the performance of pusyaṭṭra might lead to the destruction of all sorts of opponents, to the increase of paddy, cows, wealth and fame, to the well being of wife and son and to the enhancement of royal honour. Then all retired in happiness to their respective houses and did not take meal again to that day.¹

Our survey of festivals and vows shows that village life was not dry and dull. It had its own charm and almost every month of the year was associated with one festival or the other. The villagers, in general, were social in outlook and took part in various festivals with interest and enthusiasm.

The period under review was most famous period in the history of Buddhism as well as Brāhmaṇism, popularly known as Hinduism. In the field of religion it was the period of Tantra and Mantra which effected the life of the people in the rural society to a great extent. Like today villagers during early medieval period also generally worshipped their family deity (Kuldevatā). (The remanicient of worship of Kuldevatā are clearly visible in the villages of today). The presiding deity of the village (grāmadevata), the field deity (kṣetrapāla). Each village had a presiding deity enshrined in hut or a cave under a grove. Worship of Śiva was popular among the villagers. Snake worship was also an important feature of village life in northern India. Worship of

¹K.P., Vv. 221-233.
these deities reflects strong pre-Aryan and aboriginal influence. Although some villages had temples of brāhmaṇic deities, such as Ganesha, Surya, Vishnu, etc. and certain Buddhist monasteries were also found in the rural settlements, but the main feature of worship during this period was the influence of non-Aryans on rural worship.

Rituals and festivals were very common in villages. Certain religious rites were performed on the occasion of the first driving of the ploughs. Some ceremonies were observed on the Kārtika Saṅkrānti day. Reaping of a few handfuls of crops (mustigrahana) in the month of Agrahayana (Nov.-Dec.) was also associated with rituals; and before the actual harvest of the paddy a celebration was held in Pauṣa (Dec.-Jan.) in which farmers enjoyed a feast and entertained themselves with music and dance. This was called Pusyayātra (modern pusabhatta - a sort of picnic). The Dūrgā Puja celebration was marked by some vulgar activities. People threw dust and mud over one another and indulged in obscene songs and provocative dances. This was known as Śābarotsava, primarily a non-Aryan festivity. Now-a-days holi celebration is associated with all such vulgarities. But we do not know when these features were incorporated into the holi celebration. The life of the people seems to have been peaceful and simple. They observed a number of fasts and festivals. Though festivals were mainly of a religious character, some of them provided occasions of marry making. As regards food and drinks, one may generally say that meat eating was not popular. The cow's flesh was strictly forbidden. Drinking was not unknown. We have references to
moderate drinking.

All these festivities together with such amusements and sports as hunting, bull fighting, story telling, recitation of the puranas, taming of pet birds and animals, music, dance and certain indoor and outdoor games provided much diversion to the people, and rural life was not always dry and dull.