Chapter 3

Social, Cultural and Economic Life

When they immolated Puruṣa, into how many portions did they divide him? What was his mouth called, what his arms, what his thighs, what were his feet called?

His mouth became a Brāhmaṇa, his arms became the Rājanya, his thighs became the Vaiśyas, the Śūdra was born from his feet.

(Ṛgveda 10: 90)

Irawati Karve in her essay “The Kinship Map of India” comments that the institution of caste is one of the three things which are “absolutely necessary for the understanding of any cultural phenomenon in India”. The other factors are “the configuration of the linguistic regions, and the family organization.” Each of these three factors is “intimately bound up with the other two and the three together give meaning and supply basis to all other aspects of Indian culture” (50).

The Varna System

The words varṇa and jāti are often used while discussing caste.

Romila Thapar defines “varṇa as caste in the sense of ritual status, and jāti as caste in the actual status” (Interpreting 12). Kane states that the word varṇa means colour or light in most passages of the Ṛgveda and that though the words brāhmaṇa and kṣatriya occur frequently in the Ṛgveda, “the word varṇa is not used in connection with them” (2: 25). Even in the Puruṣaśūkta
quoted above, (Rg 10: 90) where the words brāhmaṇa, rājanya, vaiśya and śudra occurs the word varṇa is not used. David Ludden feels that the story about the origin of different varṇas “was a recipe for taking the infinite complexity of ancient society and reducing it to a single schematic ideological order in which everyone knew their place” (26). Indian society had clear divisions based on castes even during medieval times. The study of the formation of castes has made “it apparent that caste society does not require the pre-condition of different racial entities, nor the conquest of one by the other” but It requires “the existence of hereditary groups determining marriage relations, which groups are arranged in a hierarchical order and perform services for one another.” Such a hierarchy is dependent “on occupation, on certain beliefs of purity and pollution, and on continued settlement in a particular geographical location.” The formation of a new caste has to be seen in terms of the historical change in a particular region. A tribe incorporated into peasant society could be converted into a caste (Thapar, Interpreting 13). This chapter aims to look at the various castes and their occupations as well as lifestyles as depicted in the Kathāsaritsāgara.

Alberuni writes: “the Hindus call their castes Varna, i.e. colours” and he describes the four castes, as the brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and the śudra but notes that between the vaiśya and śudra “there is no very great distance. Much, however, as these classes differ from each other, they live together in the same towns and villages, mixed together in the same houses
and lodgings” (1: 101). The story in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, where a vaiśya merchant looks after the bṛāhmaṇa children found in the forest is proof to this (OS 4: 222). Alberuni notes that after the śudra follow the people called antyaja. They render various kinds of services but are not reckoned amongst any caste. They are only members following a certain profession. There are eight classes and consist of the fuller, the shoemaker, the juggler, the basket and shield maker, the sailor, the fisherman, the hunter of wild animals and of birds, and the weaver. They freely intermarry with each other. The four castes do not live together with them in one and the same place. These guilds live near the villages and towns of the four castes, but outside them. Alberuni mentions:

The people called Hādi, Ṯoma (Ḍomba), Caṇḍāla, Badhatan are not reckoned amongst any caste or guild. They are occupied with dirty work, like the cleansing of the villages and other services. They are considered as one sole class, and distinguished only by their occupations. In fact, they are considered like illegitimate children; for according to general opinion they descend from a Śudra father and a Brāhmaṇi mother as the children of fornication; therefore they are degraded as outcastes. (1: 101-02)

Kane remarks that all writers on the *Dharmaśāstras* start with the following propositions: first that the four *varṇas* are arranged in descending
scale of social status; second, marriage was permissible between a male of the higher varṇa and female of a lower varṇa and the union of a woman of a higher varṇa with a man of a lower varṇa is not permitted. There is a third proposition advanced by many writers that a man belongs to a particular varṇa or jāti by birth only i.e., if born in lawful wedlock of parents both of whom belong to that varṇa. “This is the view held by all medieval writers and digests and it is expressly said that a man belongs to a caste by birth and no actions of his can alter that fact, that several castes are like species of animals and that caste attaches to the body and not to the soul” (Kane 2:52). What is interesting is that the Kathāsaritsāgara does not believe in the second and the third propositions. We have seen many instances of women marrying a man who belonged to a lower varṇa and actions done in a previous birth are held as its cause but even in the present birth such a union is not looked down upon. There are many stories which hold an individual’s action as the cause of being born in a lower varṇa and it is held that by meritorious actions higher status can be achieved. An example is the case of the caṇḍāla who fasts and is born as a king (OS 3:11). In this context the comment by Arvind Sharma that “when we get to popular folk-litterature of the kind embodied in the Kathasaritsagara that the rigidity of the varna system becomes seriously questionable, at least at some level of society . . .” becomes pertinent (134). Kane observes:
The study (of the Vedas), offering sacrifices and giving gifts are said to be the duties absolutely enjoined on the brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya and vaiśya, while each of these three varṇas has certain peculiar privileges, which are its principal means of livelihood. Teaching Vedas, officiating at sacrifices and receiving gifts are the privileges of the brāhmaṇas; the profession of arms and protection of people are the peculiar privileges of the kṣatriyas; while agriculture, rearing cattle, trade and money-lending are the peculiar privileges of the vaiśyas. (2: 105)

The main castes that we come across in the Kathāsaritsāgara are brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas and merchants. Rajputs, slaves, caṇḍālas and certain other tribes are also mentioned. But caste differences are not very strict. King Bhūnandana of Kaśmīra is praised for upholding “as a spiritual guide the system of the castes and the prescribed stages of life” (OS 6: 107). Only very few places like “the district of Laṭa, . . . where the colors of the castes are not mixed” are mentioned (OS 6: 150). Kādambarī describes King Śudraka’s rule where we find “the mixture of varṇas (colours but) (sic) only in paintings (and no intermixing of castes) (sic)” (Bāna’s 6). This can be taken up as an attempt to conform practice to the ideal, whereas in practice the caste system was quite flexible. There are numerous examples of inter-caste marriages. The function of the brāhmaṇa and the kṣatriya are expressed in the following words: “virtue of a brahman is patience, that of kshatriya is the rescue of the
distressed” (OS 5: 179). Accordingly we see rulers in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* expanding their power through war like Udayana who conquered the mlecchas and the hūṇas (OS 2: 93).

**The Brāhmaṇa**

The order of periods in the life of a brāhmaṇa as mentioned in the stories are that of a “Brahmachārin or unmarried religious student, a Grihastha or householder, Vānaprastha or anchoret, lastly a Bhikshu or beggar” (OS 2: 180). Even *The Niilamata Purāṇa* describes brāhmaṇas as engaged in the study of the Vedas and in performing sacrifices (Kumari 1: 78). They are also frequently mentioned as recipients of gifts (Kumari 1: 80). According to *The Niilamata Purāṇa* the nature of gifts varied according to the religious ceremonies performed in different seasons of the year. Thus clothes, ornaments, jewels, money, shoes, garlands, cows, horses, bulls, cooked food and fruits are given on different days of the year (Kumari 1: 81-82).

Some of the occupations open to brāhmaṇas include priesthood, teaching and taking up service with the king. Some brāhmaṇas lived on presents received for performing inaugurator ceremonies and other functions like the ceremony in honour of Sarasvāti for which they received a sacrificial fee (OS 5: 138; 2: 176; 1: 138). They were ready to perform services for others in return for a fee (OS 1: 162). A brāhmaṇa performs burnt offering for the merchant Dhanadatta to procure a son after a
sacrificial fee is promised (OS 1: 154). This is proof to the fact that a brahmaṇa could perform sacrifices for kṣatriyas as well as merchants. The “emoluments of officiating priests and gifts given by charitably disposed persons must have been fitful and offered only a precarious means of livelihood” remarks Kane (2: 118). In the Kathāsaritsāgara we see a miser withholding half of a brahmaṇa’s usual fee (OS 2: 176).

Another means of livelihood permitted to brahmaṇas was receiving gifts from a worthy or unblemished person. Manu while instructing the householder on means of gaining subsistence, lays down the general rule that when not in distress a brahmaṇa should acquire wealth only just sufficient to maintain himself and his family, and to enable him to perform his religious duties without causing any harm to others or by as little harm to others as possible and without unduly worrying his own body (158). Kings often provided land grants to brahmaṇas (OS 7: 108; 2: 196; 8: 138; 6: 217; 6: 115). Sometimes even entire villages were thus granted (OS 3: 32; 4: 98; 4: 225). We come across a brahmaṇa possessing a hundred villages (OS 6: 4). Some were given gold (OS 3: 163). A king gives a brahmaṇa, villages, gold, umbrella and all kinds of vehicles (OS 3: 73). “The appointed order is that I (King) should give and that he (Braḥman) should receive” (OS 4: 24). In accordance with that a king gives a brahmaṇa “garments, ornaments and villages” (OS 2: 99).
Common people are seen giving cows and other gifts to brāhmaṇas as their fee. Sending garments as present to a priest is also seen (OS 2: 179). Even brāhmaṇas had to give presents to sacrificing brāhmaṇas. One gives another brāhmaṇa “a cow with a sacrificial fee” (OS 4: 24). Another brāhmaṇa receives two cows as donation (OS 5: 107). A king gives his kingdom to a brāhmaṇa (OS 3: 177). We see a brāhmaṇa receiving a fee after a feast (OS 2: 41). A rich brāhmaṇa has a mansion which had cows, buffaloes and horses and he honours others with bath, unguents, robes, ornaments and with various kinds of foods (OS 4: 98). Brāhmaṇas come with water in golden jars during the coronation of kings, says The Nīlamata Purāṇa (Kumari 1: 83). This is found even in the Kathāsaritsāgara during the coronation of Naravāhanadatta (OS 8: 87). Even during special occasions like coronation, the king bestows gold and jewels on the brāhmaṇas and the poor (OS 4: 124). Otherwise we find the brāhmaṇas being the only beneficiary. Great acts of fidelity or bravery are likewise rewarded by the king. The king makes a dependent a feudal chief by giving wealth, villages, elephants, horses, garments and ornaments (OS 4: 172-73). Viśravā is given “a turban of honour, many domains, horses and jewels, elephants and gold” (OS 4: 181). Another king gives a brāhmaṇa a thousand villages, umbrella, elephant and appoints him as the domestic priest (OS 2: 59). Killing a brāhmaṇa is a crime even for semi-divine beings. In one of the stories, a brāhmaṇa who exhumes
a treasure is killed by a *yakṣa*. As a result of this heinous crime the *yakṣa* is born as a mortal (*OS* 3: 133).

Somadeva has no blind veneration for the bṛāhmanas and he presents them as taking up various occupations like agriculture, becoming a husbandsmman (*OS* 2: 99) and even living by begging (*OS* 2: 185; 3: 71). There is even reference to bṛāhmana robbers. The bṛāhmana Vasubhūti is the chief of a gang of robbers and his son also plunders a caravan (*OS* 6: 116). The sons of another bṛāhmana are made keepers of the cows of a rich householder, his wife a servant and himself an attendant (*OS* 3: 71). Kalhaṇa speaks with contempt about the bṛāhmana village astrologer who goes “begging for handfuls of rice” (*Stein* 1: 293).

There are a class of bṛāhmanas called the sacrificing bṛāhmanas who are held in high esteem (*OS* 7: 72). We find some offering *agnihotra* oblations (*OS* 8: 103). The bṛāhmana Agnisvāmin is called a “great maintainer of the sacrificial fire” (*OS* 9: 74). Another bṛāhmana keeps up five fires (*OS* 6: 105). Yajnasoma, a bṛāhmana maintained a sacrificial fire (*OS* 7: 112). The bṛāhmana Yaśaskara “had offered many sacrifices” (*OS* 8: 2).

The bṛāhmanas are the teachers. We come across a bṛāhmana sitting under a Banyan tree and teaching his pupils to recite twelve recensions of the Vedas: two of *Sāmaveda*, two of *Ṛgveda*, seven of *Yajurveda* and one of *Atharvaveda* (*OS* 4: 95). The students held the teacher in high esteem and it
was their duty to serve him. Pupils are seen washing and anointing their teacher’s feet (OS 5: 133).

Though it is held that “gaming and use of arms are not suited to Brāhmans” (OS 3: 13), they appear to have followed the profession of arms from very ancient times. Kauṭilya when laying down directions for the composition of armies quotes the view of the ācāryas that when there are armies composed of bṛāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śudras each preceding one is better for enlistment than each subsequent, but Kauṭilya himself is against this and adds that the enemy may win over the army of the bṛāhmaṇas by prostration before them. “An army of Kṣatriyas well trained in weapons are better, while the army of Vaiśyas and Śuḍras is advantageous in the numerical strength” (Unni 3: 890-91). Kane quotes epigraphical evidences of bṛāhmaṇas who were commanders and founders of royal dynasties. The famous Puṣyamitra was a bṛāhmaṇa and belonged to the Suṅga gotra. He wrested the empire from the last of the Mauryas about 184 BC. His line was followed by Kāṇḍavaṇas, the founder being the minister Vāsudeva, a bṛāhmaṇa, who killed the last Suṅga about 72 BC. The Talagunḍa pillar inscription of Kakusthavarman records that the founder of the Kadambas, Mayūraśarman, was a bṛāhmaṇa. In Maratha history also there were the Peshwas and other bṛāhmaṇas who were warriors and commanders (Kane 2: 123).
Bṛahmaṇa students seem to be proficient in the art of warfare also. The bṛahmaṇa Śridatta “became matchless upon earth in the use of weapons, and in boxing and wrestling (OS 1: 107). A bṛahmaṇa named Vasudatta learns in his youth skill in arms as well as in Vedas (OS 6: 151). Another bṛahmaṇa Śridarśana acquires great skill in the Vedas and other branches of learning and in the use of weapons (OS 6: 105). The bṛahmaṇa Gunaśarman mastered the lore of Vedas and knew Śāstras, the use of weapon and was always in attendance on the King (OS 4: 85). A bṛahmaṇa’s son is taught “the science of missile and hand-to-hand weapons” and at the same time is instructed in all the knowledge (OS 4: 220). Becoming the king’s attendant was another profession open to them. The bṛahmaṇa Aśokadatta is appointed as the king’s personal attendant (OS 2: 200). Bṛahmaṇa Viśavara takes service with the king (OS 6: 192) and bṛahmaṇa Gunaśarman was “always in attendance on the King” (OS 4: 85). Guṇādhya, the bṛahmaṇa lived comfortably “looking after the King’s affairs” and “instructing pupils” (OS 1: 65).

The Kṣatriya

While writing about ancient Indian kingship, J. Gonda observes that the term for a member of the military class, kṣatriya, is said to derive from two components, which together expresses the meanings: "he saves from destruction" and "nobility" (37-38). Alberuni records that “the Kṣatriya reads the Veda and learns it, but does not teach it. He offers to the fire” (2: 136). Regarding the duty of a king the Kathāsaritsāgara says:
A king should first tame and mount the horses of the senses, and should conquer those internal foes, love, anger, avarice and delusion, and should subdue himself as a preparation for subduing other enemies, for how can a man who has not conquered himself, being helpless, conquer others? Then he should procure ministers who, among other good qualities, possess that of being natives of his own country, and a skilful family priest, knowing the *Atharva-veda*, gifted with asceticism.

He should test his ministers with respect to fear, avarice, virtue and passion, by ingenious artifices, and then he should appoint them to appropriate duties, discerning their hearts. He should try their speech, when they are deliberating with one another on affairs, to see if it is truthful, or inspired by malice, spoken out of affection, or connected with selfish objects.

He should be pleased with truth, but should punish untruth as it deserves, and he should continually inquire into the conduct of each of them by means of spies. Thus he should look at business with unhooded eye, and by rooting up opponents, and acquiring a treasure, a force and the other means of success, should establish himself firmly on the throne. Then, equipped with the three powers of courage, kingly authority and counsel, he should be eager to conquer the territory of
others, considering the difference between the power of himself and his foe. He should continually take counsel with advisors, who should be trusty, learned and wise, and should correct with his own intellect the policy determined on by them in all its details. Being versed in the means of success (conciliation, bribery and the others), he should attain for himself security, and he should then employ the six proper courses, of which alliance and war are the chief. (OS 3: 142-43)

The king was the giver of justice. A servant “sits in a dharna” against his master in front of the king who then gives him justice (OS 4: 203). But there are unjust kings like the one who imprisons a merchant out of avarice (OS 5: 199). A king is said to cherish his subjects like a father (OS 3: 2) and he superintended the religion of the people (OS 3: 3). He collected taxes from the merchants. Some kings collected enormous taxes which forced the merchant caravans to take forest routes to evade it (OS 3: 46). But another king takes small duties from merchants (OS 3: 50). A king defends his borders and chastises robbers (OS 3: 49). The king takes a share from a jewel mine (OS 3: 174). In ancient India if any man found a treasure trove he was bound to inform the king of it. Ramprasad Das Gupta while writing about crime and punishment in ancient India notes that in the case of non-Bṛāhmaṇas the king took a share of the treasure discovered, and according to the law giver Viṣṇu a share was given to the bṛāhmaṇas. The finder took
the remaining part. But “if a Brāhmaṇa found such a hidden treasure he got the whole of it; nevertheless he must report the matter to the King. Otherwise he was regarded as a thief and was punished” (229-30). In a story a merchant comes to the king saying that he has discovered a treasure but the king gives it back to him (OS 4: 190). In another story when some villagers kill and eat a buffalo belonging to another, the king restores the price of the buffalo and fines the culprits (OS 5: 118). Book 5 of the Arthaśastra says that “the sons and wives of officers who die while on duty shall get subsistence and wages” (2: 644). Accordingly we see a king supporting his servant’s widow by giving her a quarter of her husband’s salary, as she had no son to support her (OS 6: 119). Another prince is seen building almshouses (OS 8: 126).

The Merchant

Throughout his text Tawney never uses the word vaiśya for a merchant. The word is used only once in the story of Princess Anangaraṇī where a vaiśya who knows “the speech of all beasts and birds” comes to seek her hand (OS 7: 3). According to Alberuni the duty of a vaiśya is “to practise agriculture, to tend the cattle” (2: 136). According to The Nilamata Purāṇa vaiśyas are engaged in cattle rearing, agriculture and trade (Kumari 1: 86). Kauṭīlya treats the merchant with suspicion and the Arthaśastra has a chapter titled “protection against merchants” (2: 542). It even goes on to say that merchants are “thieves though they are not referred to as such” (2:
543). The Kathāsaritsāgara presents a realistic picture of merchants who can roughly be categorised into two kinds, one the ordinary shopkeeper and two, the travelling salesman of goods moving from one city to another making substantial profit. But some of these small merchants had a propensity to work hard and eventually amass great wealth. One rag-to-riches story which occurs in the Kathāsaritsāgara concerns a pauper who heeded a wise trader's advice by picking up a dead mouse as his initial capital. He sold the mouse to another merchant as cat's meat and received two handfuls of gram for it. He invested this primary capital in providing drinking water and gram to woodcutters getting from them pieces of wood in return. By this method he acquired money which he subsequently went on investing in larger businesses until he accumulated so much capital that he was able to become a very wealthy man (OS 1: 62-63).

Money lending was quite a common practice and many rich merchants like Viśākhila are described as lending “capital to poor men of good family” to set them up in businesses of various kinds (OS 1: 62). In some families arrangements were also worked out whereby one brother practised usury while the other engaged himself in trade. As distinguished from the small merchants there were the great merchants. They travelled constantly, leading caravans of as many as five hundred carts at a time, loaded with goods, transporting them across long distances and making enormous profits. Many of these also owned large ships which sailed to
distant lands. Like members of the opulent kṣatriya class some rich merchants are also described as “being endowed with rather flexible marital virtues” (Gokhale, “Merchant” 127). In many cases they are spoken of as forming romantic liaisons with wives of other merchants who were often bored with loneliness occasioned by long absences of their husbands from home for trading trips in distant parts (OS 5: 147). On some occasions, they engaged in seducing other merchants (OS 5: 19) or even servants in their own households. Once even a leper is made the paramour of a merchant’s wife locked in a cellar (OS 5: 149).

The life of rich merchants was characterized by opulence in their residential places, dress, and fondness for the fine arts along with a special liking for the company of the courtesan. A merchant is said to have had many crores (OS 6: 186). The company of the courtesan was an accepted form of diversion for members of the richer classes among whom the merchants seemed to have had the most wealth. The gaṇikā was skilfully trained in the art of bewitching conversation, beguiling gestures and a sexual appeal that fascinated and ensnared her patrons. In one story a merchant is described as being especially apprehensive for his young son. He hired an old and experienced kuṭṭini (“bawd”) to insulate the son against the wiles of the gaṇikā by putting him through a special training course to fortify himself against gaṇikās.
In spite of all this elaborate training the young man fell for a courtesan and gave twenty five lakhs of gold and jewels to the courtesan in two days. In two months he gave her two crores thereby depriving himself of all his capital (*OS 5: 9*). Finally the capital was retrieved by the young merchant only through using the stratagem of a monkey trained to swallow precious objects which he could then disgorge at the *ganikā*’s request. It was this monkey that, in the end, saved the merchant and his son (*OS 5: 5-13*). But there are also stories which show deep and steadfast love between merchants and their wives as was the case with the merchant, Iḷḷaka of Mathurā, and his wife both of whom perished because of insufferable pangs of separation (*OS 2: 9*). The merchants enjoyed great power. There are Instances of deep friendship between princes and sons of merchants (*OS 3: 29*). There were also instances of rich merchants marrying off their daughters to kings and princes (*OS 7: 67; 2: 55*).

The merchant community was also devoted to the worship of certain folk deities. Naming children after a *yakṣa* is also seen (*OS 1: 68*). The *Kathāsaratīṡāgara* refers to the cult of the *yakṣa*, Maṇibhadra, whose shrine was frequented by merchants to obtain various blessings. The story of Śaktimāḷī has the following passage:

In our country within the city, there is the shrine of a powerful Yaksha named Maṇibhadra, established by our ancestors. The people there come and make petitions at this shrine, offering
various gifts, in order to obtain various blessings. Whenever a man is found at night with another man's wife, he is placed with her within the inner chamber of the Yaksha's temple. And in the morning he is taken away from there with the woman to the king's court, and his behaviour being made known, he is punished; such is the custom. Once upon a time in that city a merchant, of the name of Samudradatta, was found by a city guard in the company of another man's wife. So he took him and placed him with the woman in that temple of the Yaksha, fastening the door firmly. (OS 1: 162)

The story then goes on to relate how the accused merchant's wife, Śaktimaṇḍi, went to the yakṣa temple, bribed the priest, went inside the temple where her husband and his lover were detained and substituted herself for the lover, thus saving her husband's honour.

Balakrishna Govind Gokhale is of the opinion that the status of the merchant in India as revealed in “the hieratic literature, the dharmaśāstra-arthaśāstra tradition, and the picture presented by the folk literature and the Buddhist and Jain traditions” shows a discrepancy. The hieratic tradition, he points out, “has a rather low opinion of the merchant and his occupation and views him with feelings of contempt, suspicion and questionable ritual status. No such disability is associated with the status of the merchant, as
least of the setṭhi class, in the folk and heterodox traditions” (“Merchant” 128).

The Rājpūts

The clan of rājpūts are mentioned in several stories in the Kathāsaritsāgara. Rājpūts warriors are held to be wellborn and are famous for their bravery (OS 3: 209). They are seen to be in the service of kings (OS 9: 72; 8: 97; 6: 209; 3: 209; 4: 133; 1: 140; 1: 151; 2: 179). A rājpūt courtier of the King of Benares is mentioned (OS 2: 91). The rājpūt Kṛishṇaśakti, who had been oppressed by the members of his clan enters the service of King Vikramāditya (OS 9: 72). We see a rājpūt mounting a camel (OS 8: 98). Ujjayinī is famous for brave, high born rājpūts (OS 7: 163). A rājpūt rightly named Nirbhaya, is a member of the king’s army (OS 4: 133). A rājpūt of Deccan on account of poverty tears a ragged garment in the presence of the king and becomes his dependent (OS 6: 209). Two rājpūt warriors are seen guarding a point in the fort of the king (OS 1: 151). A rājpūt in the service of the king lived on the proceeds of a village (OS 8: 97). Another rājpūt is seen surrounded by retainers with swords in their hands (OS 1: 140). Kalhaṇa mentions a “host of Rājaputras in service of King Ananta” (1: 297). A popular notion identifies the rājpūts as kṣatriyas but S. V. Ketkar considers such an identification to be “silly” (95). The Kathāsaritsāgara mentions a kṣatriya servant of a king while rājpūts are mentioned separately (OS 4: 195).
Tribes

The tribes mentioned in the stories include śavara, pulinda, bheel, domba, bhilla, mātanga, kiṁata, niśāda, caṇḍāla, and mleccha. Mlecchas were believed to be the incarnation of asurās (*OS* 7: 124). Kane states that according to the *Amarakośa*, kiṁata, śabara and pulinda are subdivisions of mleccha castes (2: 77). Kane writes that mlecchas and persons from certain countries and the countries themselves were regarded as impure (2: 169). But M. A. Stein in his introduction to the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* remarks that the “Mlechchhas (sic) were in all probability mohammedan tribesmen from the Indus valley” (1: 109). Mleccha according to the *Sūtasamhitā* is the offspring of the clandestine union of a bṛāhmaṇa woman and a vaiśya male (Kane 2: 92). Alberuni writes: “All other men except the Caṇḍāla, as far as they are not Hindus, are called mleccha, unclean, all those who kill men and slaughter animals and eat the flesh of cows” (2: 137).

In the *Kathāsaritsāgara* the names pulinda, śavara and bhilla are used for the same tribe (*OS* 6: 67). They hunt animals (*OS* 5: 29; 2: 142). Śavara is an aboriginal tribe like the bhilla, says Kane (2: 96). Śavaras are called “savage” (*OS* 3: 94). They “inhabit the forest” (*OS* 4: 209) and their livelihood is “exhibiting dancing snakes” (*OS* 1:102). The dwelling of a śavara chief had its high walls “covered with the tusks of elephants, adorned with tiger-skins; in which the women had for garments the tails of peacocks, for necklaces strings of gunjā fruit, and for perfume the ichor that flows from the
forehead of elephants” (OS 9: 46). Śavaras and pulindas are always on the lookout of victims for human sacrifice (OS 7: 154). The śavara chieftain offers human sacrifice to Caṇḍikā (OS 4: 217) and the victim is served with garments and food (OS 1: 116) while the pulindas sacrifice humans on the fourteenth day of the month (OS 7: 154). Pulindas according to Kane is a mountain tribe like śavaras and kirātas (2: 88). A pulinda king embraces the prince (OS 7: 156). Mātangas are different from them. They are robbers and bowmen (OS 7: 166). A mātanga king presents a prince with pearls and musk (OS 7: 168). Mātangas are the same as caṇḍālas (OS 8: 120). Kādambaraṇi uses them as synonyms. A caṇḍāla (OS 3: 116) is said to have sprung from a śudra barber and a brāhmaṇa woman (Kane 2: 81). The classical description of a caṇḍāla hamlet is found in Kādambaraṇi. According to Kane, the caṇḍālas were “the lowest in social scale” (2: 45).

Niṣādas are fishermen (OS 2: 191; 5: 27). Tawney defines them as an aboriginal tribe not belonging to the Aryan race (OS 2: 191). According to Kane, niṣādas are offsprings of a brāhmaṇa with a śudra woman (2: 86). Kane records that the Taiṭṭirīya Brāhmaṇa speaks of the kirātas as a non-Aryan aboriginal tribe (2: 42). The kirāta army comes to the aid of a prince in times of difficulty (OS 7: 170). Bheels are said to be brigands (OS 1: 152), and bhillas are robbers (OS 7: 117). Bhilla according to Kane is one of the lowest castes (2: 89). Domba with a drum in hand also robs (OS 1: 157). In Books 5 and 6 of the Rājatarāṅgiṇī dombas are spoken of as untouchables on the
same level as caṇḍālas (Stein 1: 250; 1: 252). The Rājataraṅgini mentions a “Domba singer called Raṅga” (Stein 1: 227). Alberuni writes of a domba who “plays on lute and sing” (1: 102).

But Pulindaka, the king of bhillas aids Udayana during his conquests (OS 2: 89). It can be assumed that these tribesmen lived in forests and lived by hunting and other occupations related to it. But they also plundered the merchant caravans taking forest routes. They have their own kings (OS 6: 36). Whenever called for they were ready to join the army of the rulers.

**Untouchability**

It is held that a man will not be able to purify oneself by “any expiatory ceremony” for eating food from outcaste people (OS 1: 78). But in the story of King Pālaka’s son we see eighteen thousand brāhmaṇas eating a caṇḍāla’s food. King Pālaka’s son wants to get married to mātanga Utpalahasta’s daughter. Her father puts forth the condition that she shall be married only to the man who makes eighteen thousand brāhmaṇas eat in his house. The king agrees to fulfil this condition. The brāhmaṇas, afraid of the royal dictate as well as afraid to touch a caṇḍāla’s food takes refuge in Mahākāla who reveals that he is a vidyādhara born as a caṇḍāla as a result of a curse. So they instruct mātanga Utpalahasta to cook pure food in a place “outside the quarter of the Chaṇḍālas” and eat it (OS 8: 120).

Another interesting instance of having food with a caṇḍāla is seen in the story of Mṛgānkadatta who makes the “king of Mātangas eat in his
presence, though at a little distance from him, during the preparation for war.” The fact is, “it is necessity and place and time that take precedence, not one man of another” (OS 7: 171). The Kājata ranjīṇī speaks of caṇḍāla watchmen “unfit to be touched” (Stein 1: 294). Touching a caṇḍāla or mātanga is pollution (OS 8: 112). In Kādambarī it is held that “touching a chaṇḍāla is a crime” (14). Kane writes that mlecchas and persons from certain countries and the countries themselves were regarded as impure (2: 169).

**Slavery**

Slavery has existed as an important aspect of social and economic life of many nations and India was no exception. But slavery as it existed in the society depicted in the Kathāsaritsāgara was far more humane than those practised by the European nations until it was officially abolished in the nineteenth century. We come across both male as well as female slaves (OS 3: 88). A bṛāhmaṇa had “slaves” (OS 3: 165). According to Manu the greatest duty of a śūdra was to become the servant of a bṛāhmaṇa. In the Kathāsaritsāgara we find that a female slave in a bṛāhmaṇa’s house is married to a hired slave in the house of a merchant. They live in the house of the merchant, build a suitable house, and live on cooked rice brought from the houses of both masters (OS 3: 7). Stein records that it was a practice to pay servants rice in place of money (2: 328). It was possible to release someone from slavery and Garuda releases his mother (OS 2: 151). There are
female slaves in a rich merchant’s house (OS 3: 45). In one story the victorious one makes the defeated one his slave (OS 6: 70). In a story, two brāhmaṇa brothers while dividing the property their father left cut up the only female slave in the household. The king punishes them for this crime with confiscation of their property (OS 5: 114). This proves that even persons responsible for a slave’s death were punished by the state.

Sidney Low in his work Vision of India remarks that the caste system “provides every man with his place, his career, his occupation, his circle of friends. It makes him at the outset a member of a corporate body, . . . The caste organization is to the Hindu his club, his trade union, his benefit society, his philanthropic society” (272- 73). The clear cut divisions of society into the four principal varṇas are not seen in the Kathāsarītśāgarā. Brāhmaṇas and their professions are clearly described while kṣatriyas are also frequently seen. But the term vaśya and śūdra are used only rarely. The stories of merchants are plenty but they are not called vaśyas. Slaves are mentioned in a few places but they are not referred to by the name śūdra though a śūdra weaver is mentioned.

Matters of everyday life like food habits, pastimes, coinage also help in gaining an accurate picture of life of the people. The eating habits of the people are clearly discernible in the stories found in the Kathāsarītśāgarā. It also provides valuable clues regarding the dress and the accessories that the people used.
Food and Drink

“Wine, the essence of love’s life, the ally of merriment” was an integral part of the life of men as well as women (OS 8: 91). It was customary to honour guests with “flesh and spirits distilled from fruits” (OS 7: 171). Wine was served in feasts. In the feast to celebrate Naravāhandatta’s coronation the banquet hall was “crowded with ladies with jugs full of intoxicating liquor” (OS 8: 91). Women also took part in drinking. Kāmasūtra instructs that “during festivals and theatre performances all the women of the seraglio are to be honoured and served with drinks appropriately” (235). The queens of Naravāhanadatta show signs of intoxication like “contracted eyebrows and fiery eyes” and “the period of quarrelling seemed to be settling in”. The hall of feasting was full of various viands (OS 8: 91). It was “strewed with coverlets, abounding in dishes, and hung with curtains and sweets” (OS 8: 92). In Kālidāsa’s Malavikāgnimitram Queen Īravaṇī is shown in “a drunken state” and proclaims that “a state of intoxication in a woman lends her a special charm” (118-19). The same work mentions that sugar candy is used to counteract the inebriation caused by drinking too much hard liquor (129). Drinking wine with the ladies was a way to pass the time. Naravāhandatta drinks wine with his wife in her chamber to the accompaniment of dances and songs of vidyādhara ladies (OS 8: 25; 8: 81). “Wine flaming with rosy glow” was brought “in vessels of gold” by beautiful women (OS 2: 125). Yakṣas were offered “wine, flesh and other dainties” (OS
8: 25). Going to the garden during the spring festival, and drinking wine with wives was also common (OS 7: 10). Drinking wine is found among women of all varṇas (OS 2: 43). A queen as well as an ivory carver’s daughter Padmāvaē, is seen intoxicated by drinking a lot of wine (OS 3: 233; 6: 175). A merchant’s wife is always seen drunk as her husband had gone on a business trip (OS 5: 147). On various occasions Vāsavadattā enjoys drinking bouts with Udayana (OS 3: 107; 3: 135). A king and his wife are seen engaged in a drinking bout for good luck (OS 3: 174). Narāvahanadatta is seen “spending days and nights in drinking and other pleasures with his parents and wives and ministers” (OS 3: 249). Drinking wine and talking seem to be the accepted norm (OS 8: 97). Drinking parties in the company of wives is frequently mentioned (OS 4: 4). Merchant Hiraṇyagupta enjoys drinks with his friend’s wife (OS 4: 159). Even a common man amuses himself with females in the garden in the recreation of drinking (OS 4: 235). There are other drinks which cause intoxication. A drunken villager is intoxicated with the juice of Datura (OS 5: 145; 1: 160). Narāvahanadatta’s minister Marubhūti comes “drunk” and is ridiculed for his “stammering utterance and staggering gait.” He is chastised for “drinking spirits in the morning and for coming drunk in the presence of Prince” (OS 3: 240). A word of caution against the vice of drinking is found in the statement: “Those unfortunate persons, whose intellects are destroyed with the vice of drinking, . . . cannot keep wealth, even if they have obtained it” (OS 5: 4).
Meat was an important item of food and a delicacy (OS 2: 159). It was served during wedding feasts. “Enjoying meat and drink, singing, dancing,” were all part of a wedding (OS 4: 135). Alberuni provides a list of animals usually killed for food:

Sheep, goats, gazelles, hares, rhinoceroses, buffaloes, fish, water and land birds, a sparrows, ring-doves, francolins, doves, peacocks, and other animals which are not loathsome to man or noxious. That which are forbidden are cows, mules, horses, asses, camels, elephants, tame poultry, crows, parrots, nightingales, and all kinds of eggs. (2: 151)

According to The Nīlamata Purāṇa also meat seems to be a popular item of diet (Kumari 1: 119). Different kinds of meat consumed included venison (OS 2: 146; 4: 128), goat’s meat (OS 5: 104), buffalo meat (OS 5: 117) and cow’s meat (OS 8: 140). No sin was attached to eating goat’s meat (OS 5: 104). Cow’s flesh was seen to be eaten by brāhmaṇas on two occasions. Once it was done by sacrificing it as a victim but it is nevertheless a crime (OS 3: 10). On another occasion brāhmaṇa boys kill a cow which was intended for sacrifice and cook its flesh (OS 8: 140). This shows that even brāhmaṇas could eat meat. Kane writes that Apastamba Dharma Sūtra forbids the use of flesh to a teacher of Veda only in some months and that even ascetics could eat flesh (Kane 2: 773). Rgveda has frequent reference to the cooking of the flesh of ox (Kane 2: 772). But during the time of the stories in the Kathāsaritsāgara
it had become a heinous crime. The terrible consequence of eating the cow’s flesh is explained in the story of the vīḍyādhari who, for having bitten off with her teeth some strings to fasten them to a lyre, had fallen into a mortal state and born in the house of a fisherman. “If such a degradation is brought about by touching the mouth with the dry sinew of a cow, much more terrible must be the results of eating cow’s flesh” (OS 2: 230). Killing of cow for its flesh was quite common during Rgvedic times. Kane opines that “the great usefulness of the Cow and the Ox for agricultural purposes, in family economy and as means of exchange must have powerfully contributed to making the cow a divinity” (2: 773). When some villagers killed and ate a buffalo the king restored the price of buffalo to its owner and fined the culprits (OS 5: 117-18). Roasted deer meat is mentioned as a delicacy (OS 6: 97). Alberuni writes that the people drank wine and abstained from eating cow’s meat (1: 180).

Goat’s milk is given to children who are separated from their mother (OS 6: 219; 8: 114). Some brahmanas lived by keeping cows and by drinking its milk (OS 6: 27). Fish though eaten, does not seem to have been very popular. We come across fishermen or nīṣadas eating fish (OS 8: 119; 3: 10). Cuttle-fish bone is mentioned (OS 8: 50). The best possible food, or the food fit for a king is the one “possessing all the six flavours” (OS 5: 114; 6: 218; 4: 32).
According to Stein rice is the “staple produce of the valley” (2: 325). The Niḷamata Purāṇa also states that rice seems to have been the principal food of Kashmiris (Kumari 1: 120). Rice and various dishes made of rice are mentioned. Dish of “rice boiled in milk, with ghee and sugar” (OS 7: 32), rice and milk (OS 5: 145), rice powder (OS 7: 11), cooked rice, white rice (OS 6: 218), flesh cooked with rice (OS 8: 59) are seen. A miserly brāhmaṇa is seen living “on rice in the husk” (OS 3: 118). Milk pudding (OS 5: 166) and cakes made by kneading wheat flour with water (OS 9: 17), cake of flour mixed with molasses (OS 1: 131), a dish of milk, sesame and rice (OS 5: 76) are also seen. Other grains include corn (OS 2: 116), wheat (OS 9: 17) and barley which seems to have been the poor man’s food. A miser and his wife always eat a barley meal without salt (OS 5: 166). A porringer of barley meal and one of water was placed in dungeons (OS 1: 40). Stein comments that salt had always been a “comparatively expensive article in Kaśmir, as it has to be imported from the Panjāb or Laṅkā” (2: 326). Hence it is understandable that the miser decided to have his food without any of it.

Śatapata Brāhmaṇa and Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa advocate a person having two meals a day (Kane 2: 758). In Vātsyayana’s Kāmasūtra also the nāgaraka has his food twice a day, one in the forenoon and one in the evening (101). The diet of the merchant Arthavarman and the merchant Bhogavarman is illustrative of the food habits of the people of the time. Arthavarman gave his kṣatriya guest food with meat-curry and ghee while he ate “barley-meal, with
half a pala of ghee and a little rice, and a small quantity of meat curry”. Usually he eats only a karaṣa of ghee and some barley meal because of weak digestion. At night he offers his guest rice and milk and has only one pala of milk (OS 4: 196) but has a colic attack (OS 4: 197). The merchant Bhogavarman eats “excellent food, drink wine, enjoyed all kinds of viands and wine” (OS 4: 198). Kane writes that the vessels for eating may be of gold, silver, copper, lotus or palaśa leaves (2: 758). Accordingly vessels of gold and copper are mentioned (OS 5: 72).

Vegetables are scarcely mentioned. But this does not mean that they were not eaten. Sesame seeds (OS 5: 68), dish of āmalakas (OS 5: 66), lotus fibers (OS 4: 217; 7: 135), mustard seeds (OS 3: 98), turmeric (OS 8: 18) are mentioned. Usually leaves, fruits and roots are eaten when someone is practicing austerities (OS 1: 79; 8: 43; 4: 243). Ghee was served in a marriage feast which also had flesh and other dainties (OS 3: 71). Pure, sweet, cold water is specially mentioned (OS 6: 118; 6: 141). Sweet meats (OS 1: 69), turmeric (OS 8: 18), rose apple (OS 6: 110), pomegranate (OS 3: 72), mango (OS 7: 67), citron-fruit (OS 4: 169), dates (OS 5: 70), cow’s milk (OS 5: 72), oil (OS 5: 82), wood apple (OS 5: 72), āmalaka fruit (OS 5: 94; 6: 210), uḍumbara fruit (OS 5: 128) are seen.

**Betel Chewing**

To honour someone, garlands and betel, with camphor with five fruits are served (OS 8: 4). Betel is one of the priceless rewards Udayana receives.
when he rescues a snake from a śavara (OS 1: 100). After food, eating “betel-nut, flavoured with five fruits” is seen (OS 7: 74). A gambler anoints himself with sandalwood after bathing and indulges in food and betel (OS 3: 183).

Ludwik Sternbach writes that chewing of betel with camphor is mentioned by “European travellers of medieval and post-medieval times” (“camphor” 442). He is of the opinion that “Betel-chewing, came probably into vogue in India somewhere about the early Gupta period as a result of India’s cultural contacts with Eastern Islands” (“camphor” 443). P. K. Gode has recorded documentary evidence of the use of betel in Sumatra, Java, Maldives, Nicobar Islands and South Arabia. He writes that betel chewing was “probably introduced sometime before or about the beginning of the Christian era in South India and then spread Northwards” and that it was “the result of India’s cultural contact with the Eastern Islands” (14). Sternbach writes that Marco Polo mentions that all people in the Tirunelveli district in Tamil Nadu as well as in the rest of India have the custom of “perpetually keeping in the mouth a certain leaf called tambul, to gratify a certain habit and desire they have, continually chewing it and spitting out the saliva that it excites. The Lords and gentle folks and the King have these leaves prepared with camphor and other aromatic spices and mix it with quick lime” (“camphor” 442). Alberuni records that “the Indians have red teeth in consequence of chewing areca-nuts with betel-leaves and chalk” (1: 180).

King Kanakavarṣa chews betel when he is seen relaxing in the antahpurah (OS
Penzer collects a list of five flavours used in betel chewing from a medical dictionary called *Vaidyaka-śabda-sindhu* as *Karpūra* ("Camphor"), *Kaṅkāla* ("Piper Chaba or Bakek"), *Lavaṅga* ("Cloves"), *Jātiphala* ("Nutmeg") and *Pūga* ("Areca-nut") (*OS* 8: 246-47). Stein says “the import of fresh betel leaves to Kashmir must have been in old days a difficult matter, and the article accordingly an expensive luxury” (*OS* 1: 285). Betel is a luxury (*OS* 6: 174). Vīravara buys clothes, unguents and betel with hundred dinārs everyday (*OS* 6: 192). The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* records:

King Ananta was lavish and fond of the habit of taking betel. Padmaṇaṇa, a foreigner, who supplied betel leaves, was his favourite. This man used to despatch regularly large numbers of glass jars filled with water from Pāpasūdana Tirtha to king Bhoja. This man who sold betel-leaves with Nāgarakhaṇḍa made the king then give up almost the whole revenue of the country. (1: 284)

Betel chewing is an established custom. Penzer concludes that “In no country is betel- chewing only a habit. Propagated largely by the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism, it has at once become something much more important than a mere narcotic” (*OS* 8: 319).

**Costumes and Ornaments**

“Clothes have a language which expresses through its symbolism the subtle working of the collective mind of a nation in its most obscure aspects”
remarks S. N. Dar in the preface to his work *Costumes of India and Pakistan: A Historical and Cultural Study* (viii). The stories offer certain insights about the costumes and coiffure of the time. Alberuni who visited the country about AD 1030, records that “the men wear articles of female dress; they use cosmetics, wear earrings, arm-rings, golden seal-rings on the ring-finger as well as on the toes of their feet” (1: 181). Men as well as women wore ornaments and used unguents to perfume themselves. Men wore ornaments like bracelet on arms and necklace (*OS* 8: 64). They also wore ear rings. A prince asks for a gold pair of ear rings like that of his father (*OS* 2: 113). Another prince is seen wearing a crest jewel on his head and a necklace (*OS* 8: 172). A man wearing diadem and bracelet is armed with a sword (*OS* 2: 170). That masculine ornaments were different from those worn by women is evident in the story of Anangamanjañi who is questioned by her father when he sees her wearing male ornaments (*OS* 6: 126). Śavaras who were forest dwellers were adorned with peacock feathers and elephant’s teeth. They were clothed in tiger’s skins, and lived on flesh of deer (*OS* 7: 167). Affluent men had two garments, an upper as well as a lower garment (*OS* 4: 243; 7: 147), while poor men had to manage with a single garment (*OS* 4: 168). *The Nīlamata Puṇaṇa* also notices the fact that women as well as men had two garments, upper and lower and mentions white as well as coloured clothes. It also mentions woollen and silk clothes (*Kumari* 1: 116-17). A prince is seen wearing dark blue garments (*OS* 6: 37). Hermits are seen wearing the
bark of a tree or the skin of a black antelope (*OS* 8: 104; 7: 135; 2: 176). The dependent of a king is clothed in a garment of leather (*OS* 4: 168). An ascetic had a water vessel in his left hand and in his right hand a rosary of *akṣa* beads by way of a bracelet (*OS* 7: 135). Other articles mentioned in *The Nīlamata Purāṇa* are robes, bed sheets, ear-rings, bracelets, diadems and jewels (*Kumari* 1: 118). Hermits have matted locks (*OS* 8: 104; 7: 135). A bṛahmaṇa youth sported a “budding beard” (*OS* 8: 14). *Asura* Maya wore “a crimson robe” and his “hair gleamed upon his back” (*OS* 4: 17). A man oiled and curled his hair (*OS* 8: 107). A turban was given as a mark of honour (*OS* 4: 181).

Kings are seen anointing their bodies with sandalwood ointment and other fragrant unguents (*OS* 7: 113). *The Nīlamata Purāṇa* notes that people anointed and decorated themselves with unguents and garlands and refers to the applying of sandal paste after bath (*Kumari* 1: 118). An ascetic uses perfumed earth in bathing (*OS* 7: 135). A prince’s body is smeared with musk (*OS* 6: 37). Men are seen wearing garlands, flowers and are anointed with unguents (*OS* 5: 121; 1: 145). An example is Naravāhanadatta’s minister Marubhūti who is seen decorated with flowers and anointed with unguents (*OS* 3: 240). “Yellow sandalwood powder” was used to anoint a man’s body (*OS* 4: 243). Even King Udyana is proficient in the art of weaving unfading garlands and adorning the forehead with marks that never become indistinct
A gambler also anoints himself with sandalwood after bathing (OS 3: 183).

A.S. Altekar shows that “women normally required two garments” (Position 281). Upper garment of women is mentioned (OS 8: 11; 7: 100; 7: 54). A caṇḍāla maiden has an upper garment (OS 8: 111). A woman’s head is adorned with flashing jewels and her white skin like bodice is covered with strings of pearls. She also wears a garland of beautiful flowers (OS 8: 13). A princess is described as having her “forehead ornamented with a patch, beautiful anklets on her feet,” and with “curling hair” (OS 4: 33). Pearls seem to be highly favoured by women. A queen is adorned with many strings of pearls (OS 7: 118). Pearl bead necklace (OS 2: 50), pearls, gems and golden lotuses are mentioned (OS 3: 41). The “tinkling of jewelled ornaments” is heard (OS 6: 29). A bride is veiled (OS 8: 13). Women decorated their ears with lotus ornaments (OS 2: 131; 9: 21). A queen leading an ascetic life is seen wearing a rosary and the skin of a black antelope (OS 8: 47). Hermit girls wear garland of flowers, and a dress of bark (OS 7: 88; 3: 98). A woman perfumed herself with “sandalwood, camphor, black aloes and other splendid scents” (OS 6: 219). A princess’ chamber was “perfumed with aloes and adorned with nosegays of flowers of five hues” (OS 6: 157). Other ornaments include girdles, necklaces, anklets, bracelets (OS 5: 70) and an ornament called Dantapatra or tooth leaf (OS 6: 169). In Kādambarī, the caṇḍāla maiden is described as wearing the Dantapatra ornament in one of
her ears. She also had a tilaka of gorochana and wore a cloak which hung
down to her ankles and a veil of red cloth (12). Precious gems like the moon
stone (OS 3: 53), emerald (OS 6: 73) and blood red jewels are mentioned. A
golden throne has pearls fixed at the end of projecting silver spikes (OS 2:
53). There is a “gem-bestudded couch” (OS 7: 20), and a bed covered with a
quilt of pure white woven silk (OS 6: 128). Silk was highly favoured by
princesses. Anangamanjarī is “white with sandalwood ointment, and
elegantly dressed in a thin garment of silk (OS 7: 99). Other items of clothing
seen are an outer garment (OS 7: 118), a shawl (OS 7: 20) and white
garments (OS 8: 38). Ordinary women must have decorated themselves with
flowers. A wife demands a garland of blue lotuses (OS 5: 120). In
Malavikāgnimitram Mālaviṃśa’s feet are painted with ākṣa juice and she uses
mango blossoms as ear ornament (118; 121). Antimony is used to paint the
eyes (OS 8: 65). Collyrium (OS 1: 69), anklets (OS 4: 204) and leather trunks
for storing clothes (OS 5: 116) are also mentioned. Merchant Sulaiman and
Abu Zaid, Arab travellers of ninth century have mentioned “gold bracelets
with precious stones used by both men and women of India” (Ara 99). But
peculiarly the nose-ring is absent. “It is believed that nose-ring was not
known throughout the whole of the entire Hindu period. It is therefore, very
likely that these have been borrowed from the Muslims” (Ara 101).

The above descriptions regarding the costumes can be corroborated
by the evidence in the Rājatarangini. It describes that King Harṣa “wore
earrings which flashed like the reflected image of the sun; on his round broad
headdress was fixed a high diadem; . . . his bushy beard was hanging down
low . . .” (1: 336). It also mentions a commander-in-chief Madana, dressing
his “hair in braids” and the Prime Minister Jayānanda, wearing “a short coat
of bright colour” (1: 339). During Harṣa’s time (1089-1101) people adorned
themselves with big forehead marks of sandal ointment.

Women wore hair braids into which golden Ketaka leaf
ornaments were woven-wore pendants over forehead marks,
joined corners of their eyes with their ears by a line drawn with
Collyrium, into their ends of their locks which were not veiled,
were turned golden strings; with the hanging down train of
their lower garments they kissed the ground; their breasts were
dressed in jackets which covered (but)(sic) half the length of
their arms, their smiles seemed to spread (the perfume of)(sic)
camphor as they moved about. (1: 340)

Pastimes

The hobbies of Udayana were music, taming wild elephants and
hunting (OS 1: 122). He drank wine, adorned by the reflection of the moon-
faces of fair women and goes to a border district of Magadha for defending it
and for the sake of enjoyment (OS 2: 12). Drinking was a favourite pastime
along with other enjoyments (OS 2: 51). Playing dice was another important
way of entertainment. We see Śiva and his consort playing dice (OS 8: 86).
Hunting animals was a royal pastime and many rulers were addicted to it. An example is King Paṇdu (OS 2: 126). Hunting is recommended to give kings “exercise and excitement”. By this way “malignant wild animals would be depopulated” but it is held that excessive devotion to hunting must be avoided. The king goes with horses, footmen, dogs and various nets for hunting along with elephants and swords (OS 3: 12). Narāvāhanadatta hunts with father and friends (OS 3: 259). Water sports were another source of entertainment (OS 1: 68). Narāvāhanadatta is seen sporting with wives in water (OS 8: 64). A king and queen amuse themselves by picking flowers, water games and splashing games (OS 4: 210). A husband and wife engage in a water splashing match (OS 5: 202). Narāvāhanadatta is seen playing ball (OS 3: 259; 5: 171). A princess amuses herself by swinging (OS 5: 189).

**Dance and Music**

The arts of dance and music were encouraged by the ruling class. Narāvāhanadatta passed his days in “dancing, singing and conversation” (OS 8: 21). Narāvāhanadatta and his father Udayana are accomplished musicians. Princesses were given dancing and singing lessons (OS 3: 140). Kings while away the time listening to songs in women’s apartments (OS 7: 13). Singing and dancing were part of wedding festivities (OS 4: 135; 4: 10). At weddings all women dance to songs (OS 7: 160). Dance is described as “skill in expression of sentiments” (OS 4: 33). Heavenly maiden Rambhā is shown performing a dramatic dance called Śalita (OS 2: 35). It is mentioned in Act 1
of Mālavikāgnimitra that Mālavika is learning the Śalita from guru Gaṇadāsa (92). In a story a daughter comes forward to dance at the behest of her father (OS 4: 33). Princess Hamśavālī is seen dancing before her father to the music of a great tabor (OS 6: 41). This shows that the princesses were not living in seclusion inside the antahpurah. They had the freedom to exhibit their talent before an audience. Another instance of royal ladies dancing is seen during Naravāhandattā’s coronation as crown prince. Queens Kalingasena, Padmāvāti and Vāsavadattā then dance for joy (OS 3: 137).

Women dance and bards sing while celebrating special occasions like the coronation and birth of princes (OS 7: 191; 2: 163). In the feast to honour a prince and princess “śavara women dance delighted” (OS 7: 158). During celebrations the city is decorated with red banners and silken flags (OS 2: 163; 2: 58). Musical instruments mentioned are lyre and flute (OS 2: 43; 3: 139; 7: 18), drums (4: 190), kettledrum (OS 8: 81), tabor (OS 1: 11), castanets (OS 8: 95), cymbals (OS 2: 163), gongs (OS 1: 119). Alberuni records that the cymbals were beaten “with a stick” (1: 180). Pantomimes (OS 4: 34; 8: 80) and dramatic performances are seen in two instances. Bhavananda, a brāhmaṇa gives a “dramatic entertainment” accompanied by a tabor (OS 1: 11). Actor Āsaka exhibits before King Ugrabhaṭa a dramatic piece in which Viṣṇu in the form of a woman, carries off the amrita from the dāityas. In the piece the dancer’s daughter also performs as a character (OS 6: 143).
Festivals

A number of festivals are mentioned in the Kathāsaritsāgara. The festival of springtide had festal rejoicing in the garden (OS 1: 112). Ratnakūta, an island in the middle of the sea celebrated on the twelfth day of the white fortnight of Āshādha a festival of Viṣṇu with a procession (OS 2: 217). Ujjayinī had a festival called giving of waters (OS 8: 106). A holy bathing festival in Lake Śankahṛada is mentioned (OS 8: 7). A festival of winter solstice is also celebrated (OS 8: 12). Penzer identifies this festival as Sankṛānti (OS 8: 19). Celebratory processions (OS 3: 137) as well as idol processions are seen (OS 2: 200).

Spring Festival

From literary evidence it can be surmised that among the various socio-religious festivals celebrated in ancient times the Vasantosava or the spring festival was widespread. Alberuni mentions that on the full moon day of Caitra a feast called Bahand (Vasanta) festival is celebrated and the vernal equinox called vasanta is also celebrated as a festival by the people (2: 179). Vātsyāyana mentions a spring festival (103). The Kathāsaritsāgara refers to the worship of Kāmadeva and records that the spring festival was celebrated in the month of Caitra (OS 8: 98). Pranabananda Jash writes that ancient Indians observed a festival during the spring time “when the gentle and refreshing southern breeze, the sweet song of the cuckoos, the humming of the bees, the bursting into view of buds and blossoms in superb splendour
and beauty make it the gayest and loveliest of all seasons” (102). The play Malavikagnimitram is performed as part of the spring festival (91). In the Kathāsaritsāgara we find people enjoying and celebrating this festival with gaiety and hilarity (OS 5: 199). Women as well as men drank wine during this time. This festival must have been very popular at that time. Its popularity is attested to by the fact that it is mentioned several times in this work. Citizens are seen dancing in honour of spring festival and Naravāhandatta beholds these festivities (OS 4: 188). Women also took an active part in the festival. Thus a princess is seen enjoying in the garden during spring festival (OS 2: 99) whereas another princess goes to the garden in spring to witness a festive procession (OS 7: 40). Kings, princes, ministers and common men could not keep themselves from the festivities (OS 3: 155). Thus King Dharmadhvaja of Ujjayinī went to the palace garden with his wives to amuse himself during the spring festival (OS 7: 10). King Śatavāhana also enjoyed this occasion in the company of his wives in the garden on the banks of the river Godāvaṇī (OS 1: 69). King Vikramāditya, married the princess of Simhala during the spring festival (OS 9: 34). A king celebrated for twelve days the birth of a son (OS 7: 82) and in the festival celebrating Naravāhandatta’s victory “drums were beaten, Vidyādharas danced and people were generally drunk with wine” (OS 8: 72).
Gambling

Gambling is seen among all people irrespective of their castes. We come across brāhmaṇa gamblers (OS 2: 231) as well as kings engaged in gambling (OS 6: 73). It is held that “there is not wealth enough in the whole world to satisfy gamblers” (OS 2: 233). Gamblers are looked upon with distrust. “Recklessness and disregard of all ties are ingrained in the nature of gamblers” (OS 9: 17). Kauṭilya states in Book 3 of Arthaśāstra that “mostly gamblers are deceitful persons (2: 529). Gambling halls are mentioned (OS 6: 114; 6: 150). A king builds an asylum for gamblers to help them as he himself had been afflicted in youth with the vice (OS 6: 115). We also find an invective on gambling which is “without law, without natural affection” and “a cause of misfortune even to royal sages” (OS 4: 242). A young brāhmaṇa ruined by the vice of gambling in early youth leaves his home and country causing his mother to die of grief. His father then abandons the state of the householder (OS 6: 116).

From the stories that we come across in the Kathāsaritśāgara we can gain an idea about the rules and conventions of gambling. Many gamblers use fraudulent methods to win the game but they agree on the rule that what is won in a game need not be returned. Bhīmabhata on reaching the district of Laṭa comes across a hall of gamblers where he sees many fraudulent “dice players clothed in loin rag only” who invites him to play. Bhīmabhata defeated them at dice play, and won from them all the wealth
they had acquired by cheating others. As a generous gesture he gives them back all their wealth. True to the rules of their profession the gamblers refuse to accept the money. But another gambler Akṣakṣapaṇaka says: “it is the definition of gambling that what is won is not returned; but if this gentleman becomes our friend and gives us of his own accord wealth which he has fairly won, why should we not take it?” (OS 6: 151). The gamblers appreciate this and form a friendship with Bṛimabhata. Not only money but even personal freedom is at stake in this game. Akṣakṣapaṇaka had gambled with others on condition that the winner shall make the vanquished his slaves and had won over them. But since then he had been won over by their good qualities and took the name of Akṣakṣapaṇaka which means the dice-mendicant (OS 6: 153).

According to the Kathāsaritsāgara, if a person invited to gamble declares “I sit out of this game” he could not be compelled to play (OS 9: 18). This was the common convention of the gamblers. Another universal rule current among the gamblers was that if a gambler did not object to the dice being thrown, it was tantamount to his acceptance to play. A gambler called Thinṭhakaṟaḷa compelled the deities to pay what they lost in the game on the basis of such an understanding. The deities did not object when he threw the dice after having invited them to play and hence he demands them to pay up the gold that he had won in course of the game. When the deities remain
silent he threatens them with mutilation of limbs until the money is produced and the deities are forced to grant him his wish (OS 9: 18).

Torture is used to extort the money owed by a gambler. A gambler who does not pay the money he has lost is tortured (OS 9: 18). Some gamblers won from Dāgineya, all he possessed by fraudulent play, and then “bound him in order to obtain from him the borrowed money which he had lost in addition”. And as he had nothing, they beat him with sticks and other instruments of torture and later threw him into a well, fearing that, if he lived, he might take vengeance on them (OS 9: 14). Candrasvāmin, a brāhmaṇa addicted to gambling is beaten by the keepers of the gambling hall when he couldn’t pay the money he owed (OS 7: 72). There are evidences of gamblers losing even their clothes. Panduranga Bhatta takes this as an act of submission “which is necessary to make them deprived of everything in their possession” (“Game” 191). In Dhūrtavitasamvāda, Dhūrta is seen as having lost everything in gambling. Like a nude Jain ascetic he is left with nothing except his body (Varadpande 174), another instance of gambler losing clothes. Another gambler takes away even his mother’s clothes (OS 6: 171). Candrasvāmin, a brāhmaṇa addicted to gambling also loses his clothes. (OS 7: 72). The usual lot of the gambler as described in the story of brāhmaṇa Śrīdārsana is as follows: “His arms are his only clothing, the dust is his bed, the cross-roads are his house, ruin is his wife” (OS 6: 106). Śrīdārsana had to remain in the gambling hall without food for three days and is ashamed to go
out as he did not even have a decent garment to wear. A gambler named Devadatta having lost his clothes could not return to his father’s house and takes refuge in a dilapidated temple (OS 2: 231). In the story of Nala two dice in the form of swans deprives him of his upper garment completing his defeat when he leaves with his wife after being defeated by his brother in the game of dice (OS 4: 242).

**Weights, Measures and Coinage**

*Yuga* is used to measure time (OS 7: 163) while distance is measured in *kos* (OS 6: 110; 7: 166) and *yojanas* (OS 7: 88; 8: 55). *Yojana* according to Alberuni is equal to 8 miles or 32000 yards (1: 167). Weight is measured in *bhāras* and *palas* (OS 5: 62). Penzer writes that a *bhāra* is equal to twenty *tulās* (OS 7: 187; 8: 93). Iron balance weighing a thousand *palas* is mentioned. The weight *pala* is “different for different wares in different provinces” writes Alberuni (1: 163) and he says that *bhāra* is equal to 2000 *palas* and is nearly equal to the weight of an Ox (1: 160). Penzer explains that *māsha* and *pana* are ancient native Indian weights and that sixteen *māshas* were equal to one *pana*. “As the *Paṇa* was usually of copper or silver, it seems probable that the gold *māsha* only exists in fiction” (OS 1: 164). Alberuni writes that sixteen *māshas* were equal to one *suvarṇa* and four *suvarṇas* were equal to one *Pala* (1: 167). According to Manu also four *suvarṇas* were equal to one *Pala* (277).
Money

Coins mentioned in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* include gold dinārs (*OS* 7: 81; 7: 80), cowries (*OS* 9: 17), spotted cowries (*OS* 9: 18), dinārs (*OS* 5: 12; 5: 59; 5: 187; 6: 192), panas (*OS* 5: 92; 1: 63; 5: 119), gold pieces (*OS* 7: 37) and gold māshas (*OS* 1: 64). Five hundred gold dinārs is the fee charged by a brāhmaṇa for spending a night with a merchant’s daughter. A courtesan demands a fee of five hundred gold dinārs everyday (*OS* 7: 81; 7: 80). A merchant spends three hundred dinārs for eating and drinking, hundred for betel and other expenses and gives a hundred to a bawd’s mother and a hundred to brāhmaṇas, and gives four hundred to courtesan every day (*OS* 5: 13). Stein remarks that dināra “undoubtedly derived from the denarius of the West, is well known to Sanskrit lexicography as the designation of a gold coin, usually spelt dināra” (2: 308). He feels that it is “a term of general significance, corresponding somewhat to our ‘cash’ or ‘currency’” (2: 309). Kṣemendra also uses dināra in the general sense of money (Stein 2: 313). Kalhaṇa in *Rājatarāṅgini* mentions the price of the “khāri of rice as thirty six dināras in times of great abundance.” Otherwise purchase price of rice was “two hundred dināras” (1: 201). “As everywhere in the world, so also in Kashmir, barter must have been the earliest stage of commercial transactions” (Ray 244). Barter system was practised and ornaments of gold were sold to get money. Kirtisenā exchanges some gold ornaments for money (*OS* 3: 46). A mendicant procures a citron from a man by giving a pair
of garments (OS 4: 171). He goes to the market and by selling one garment he gets meat and drink and tears the other garment to make two of it (OS 4: 172). Rice is also given in place of money. A female slave and her husband who is a hired slave are paid by both masters in rice (OS 3: 7).

Panā was a coin of lesser denomination. In the Kathāsaritsāgara eight cakes are available for a panā (OS 5:116) while a musician is paid two thousand panās (OS 5: 133). Stein notes that the coinage of Kalhaṇa’s times was almost exclusively of copper and that copper coins have been found in excavations (2: 314). Gold coins were rarely found in Kashmir. “There is no evidence that gold coins, any longer, were in actual circulation and from the beginning of the tenth century AD onwards Kashmir had a coinage of copper only” comments Sunil Chandra Ray (247). “The gold coins appear to have been particularly adopted for carrying on trade with foreign countries since foreign merchants usually would not accept anything but gold. The copper coin was presumably the medium of exchange in local transactions” (Ray 245). Stein adds that “the only reference of gold and silver coins in Kaśmir is made in the account of king Harṣa’s reign during 1089 and 1101” (2: 317). In Kashmir too it was a common practice to invest savings in gold and silver ornaments. Book 7 of Rajatarāṅgini mentions that during the reign of Ananta, acquisition of gold was the popular form of investment (1: 286). Ray remarks:
In spite of the circulation of minted metallic coins, it seems unlikely that they reached all corners of the country and were universally used in day to day transactions, as is done in modern economic life. There were other media of exchange which coexisted with minted coins. One of these was cowrie shell. It had been in use in almost all parts of India from a remote period. When metallic coins were not invented, it was presumably the principal medium of exchange in daily transactions. But sometimes it was found to be current side by side with gold, silver and copper coins. (243-44)

Book 7 of Rajataranginī mentions the cowrie as the lowest denomination of the prevailing currency (1: 276). Kṣemendra talks of a miserly trader who in the evening after plundering his customers, is with difficulty induced to give three cowries to his household. He also talks of a close-fisted merchant who sends as his contribution to a dinner party one tōla of oil, two of salt, and two cowries for vegetable (Stein 2: 324). Gambler Ṭhinṭhākaṛāla is given hundred cowries a day by fellow gamblers for subsistence (OS 9: 17). Stein concludes that “a monetary system based on the cowree unit and represented in its main bulk by a copper coinage, becomes far more intelligible if we realize that it was supplemented in all important transactions of public business and private life by the ample stores of another circulating medium, the khāri of rice” (2: 328). Hence “It is highly
probable that dhānya and cowrie-shells were used as a media of exchange from a remote period” (Ray 244).

**Professions**

Various professions taken up by people include that of the cowherd (OS 3: 51), barber (OS 3: 99; 5: 96), hunter (OS 3: 116), female warder guarding female apartments (OS 3: 169; 8: 22), sculptor (OS 3:183), young male superintendent of women’s apartments (OS 3: 219), carpenter (OS 3: 282; 5:108), painter (OS 4: 4), sweeper (OS 4: 6), porter (OS 5: 2), burden carrier (OS 5: 4), goldsmith, cotton grower (OS 5: 70), treasure finder (OS 5: 71), carter who makes the cart balance evenly (OS 5: 97), washerman (OS 5: 99), fowler (OS 6: 18), butcher (OS 6: 56), ivory carver (OS 6: 170), superintendent of treasury (OS 6: 166), story teller (OS 1: 106), husbandsman, agriculturist (OS 2: 99), teacher of dancing (OS 4: 156), professor of singing (OS 6: 41), head police officer (OS 8: 107), city magistrate (OS 1: 118), elephant driver (OS 5: 170), elephant keeper (OS 8:110), fisherman (OS 2:184, 4:161), seller of flesh selling flesh of deer and other animals (OS 4: 233), goldsmiths and other craftsmen (OS 2: 204) and gardeners (OS 2: 200).

**Flora and Fauna**

Animals and birds found in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* are swans, geese (OS 8:134), chātaka, kumudvāṅ (OS 8: 206), śārasa birds (OS 8: 24), large crane (OS 8: 135), lion (OS 7: 111, 7:153), cakravāka bird or brahmany duck and drake
vulture and jackal (OS 2: 60), boar (OS 8: 108), sarabha (OS 3: 259) which is a mythical animal with eight feet (Kane 2: 773), horse (OS 6:145, 2: 12), camel (OS 5: 116). We come across domestic peacocks dancing as the clouds roar (OS 6:37), pet monkey (OS 6: 166), pet parrot- hen maina (OS 6: 186), swans and water cranes sporting in water (OS 6: 28, 7: 134), cuckoo (OS 8: 94, 8: 1), crocodile (OS 7: 150) and rhinoceros (OS 7: 153).

Law and Order

To protect people from the transgressions of the wicked and evil-minded, it is necessary that the king must always punish with an iron hand those who have committed crimes. By punishing the guilty the king effectively deters all such people who would otherwise commit crimes. Ram prasad Das Gupta remarks that the “fundamental idea is to strike terror in the heart of all potential criminals by the example of sure and swift punishment” (14). In modern times “from being an art of unbearable sensations punishment has become an economy of suspended rights” remarks Foucault (Discipline 11).

No one will deny that judged by modern standards the methods of capital punishment in ancient India were cruel and brutal; but they were no more barbarous than those of other ancient and medieval states. Punishments in medieval Germany included branding, cutting off the hand, ears, the tongue, putting out of the eyes, killing by breaking on the wheel, quartering in the crudest manner etc. While in medieval France the criminal men were hanged and the erring women were burned or buried alive or thrown into boiling water. They were also dragged around the locality before being hanged. The conditions in medieval and early modern England or imperial Rome “were no less better” comments Ramprasad Das Gupta (65).

Manu has selected ten places of body where punishment should be inflicted in the case of non- bṛāhmaṇas; but bṛāhmaṇas are to be banished
without inflicting the least hurt. The places are the reproductive organ, the belly, the tongue, the hands, the legs, the eye, the nose, the ears, property or wealth and the whole body (276). Alberuni writes that “the kings do not kill a Brāhman for any crime but mutilate or banish him for very severe crimes. An adulteress is driven out of the husband’s house and banished” (2: 162). The Kathāsaritsāgara shows the robbers being punished with impalement (OS 2: 60). Even a brāhmaṇa is impaled as a thief (OS 1: 111). But sometimes even innocent men were put to death as in the case of the chief magistrate misusing his power and impaling a man out of malice (OS 2: 201). The king orders the execution of a husband who had bitten off his wife’s nose. He is led to the place of execution with drums beating (OS 6: 189). There are other instances of proclamations circulated in the whole of the town with the beating of drums (OS 2: 173). Another king orders the death of a thief with drums being beaten (OS 1: 118; 8: 119). The object of proclamation before inflicting punishment is evidently to deter people by the example of the fate of these offenders.

If a person brought a false accusation against another he was punishable in ancient India says Ramprasad Das Gupta (95). To support this we can quote from the story of the man who was falsely accused of injuring his wife. When the truth of his innocence came to light the king banished the wicked wife after cutting off her ears. He also punishes the father-in-law, an accomplice to her plan by confiscating all his property (OS 6: 189). For
committing the same crime the women received a punishment different from that of men. Manu records that “a just king shall fine and banish men of three lower varṇas who have given false evidence but a bṛāhmaṇa he shall only banish” (275). Accordingly we find the king banishing the bṛāhmaṇas who had falsely reported that Unmadini, the woman he wished to marry had inauspicious marks. Their action had resulted in the king deciding not to marry her (OS 3: 111).

The most common punishment that we come across in ancient law is pecuniary penalty or fines varying from small sums to the confiscation of entire property. For example the king punishes the wicked wife and relations of bṛāhmaṇa Agniśarman by imposing a penalty (OS 9: 77). These fines are to go to the state treasury and not to the injured person. Even the master has the power to impose fine on his servants. Foolish servants who ruined the merchandise are punished with a fine by the merchant, their master (OS 5: 116).

Robbery was a serious offence and was punished with impalement (OS 7: 37; 6: 83). According to Kauṭilya punishment for robbery is to be “proportionate with the crime” (2: 515). Even the suspicion of being a thief was enough to kill a man. In a story the city guards hang a man suspecting him to be a thief (OS 6: 187). The hands and tongue of a cheat was cut off before banishing him (OS 5: 61). But there are kings who gave harsh punishments for minor mistakes. A jealous king orders the execution of a
bṛahmaṇa for the crime of talking to his queen (OS 1: 46). Once even a princess is put in fetters (OS 5: 144). There is only one instance of an eye for an eye variety of justice. A man who took flesh from a kitchen is punished by having five *palas* of flesh cut from his body (OS 5: 93). A king puts a man in prison for theft (OS 5: 163) while another thief is put to death (OS 4: 192). In some cases a thief escapes punishment by the payment of a large sum of money to the king. A śavara chief is made a prisoner for plundering a caravan. He is saved from capital punishment by the payment of a hundred thousand gold pieces (OS 2: 142). Similarly a merchant tries to get a thief pardoned by offering the king ten millions of coins (OS 8: 119).

**Education**

The *Kathāsaritsāgara* reports that Viṣṇudatta, a sixteen year old bṛahmaṇa boy from Antarvedi, that is, the land between the rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā went to Valabhi to acquire learning (OS 3: 93). Hartmut Sgharfe says that Valabhi was “a port city and the capital of a state of some importance”. Guṇamati, after leaving the Nālandā monastery, established at Valabhi a rival sub school of the Yoğācāra philosophy which was continued by his disciple Sthiramati. The monastery complex and the university which had the same name were founded in the middle of the sixth century and was supported by wealthy merchants. He comments that Valabhi, was “not narrowly focused” like Nālandā. Hsuan-tsang also refers to a large monastery, not far from the capital (154). That the appeal of Valabhi was not limited to Buddhists is
proved by the story in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. Radha Kumud Mookerji writes:

“This shows that the dutiful brāhmaṇ father did not consider Benares or Nalanda as suitable for his son’s education and took the risk of sending him onto a distant place like Valabhi for the purpose” (*Ancient* 585).

Rājagriha, Pratishṭhāna, Paṭaliputra were the centres of learning apart from Valabhi. Paṭaliputra is described as the “seat of learning” (*OS* 5: 178). Some brāhmaṇa boys go to Rājagriha to acquire learning and study sciences there (*OS* 1: 18) while some others are seen acquiring knowledge of sciences in Pratishṭhāna (*OS* 1: 79). This does not mean that all brāhmaṇas are learned. An example is Nāgasvāmin, a brāhmaṇ who goes to Paṭaliputra to acquire learning but was so stupid that he couldn’t learn a single syllable (*OS* 8: 54). Another brāhmaṇa also refuses to learn sciences in boyhood (*OS* 3: 241). Students were ready to travel to far off places in pursuit of knowledge. For example two brāhmaṇa brothers set out to a foreign country to study (*OS* 5: 120).