APPENDIX I

PRAYAJA IN LITERATURE AND INSCRIPTIONS.
THE VEDIC AGE

In ancient Indian literature and tradition the three words 'Prayāga' 'Saṅgama' and 'Triveni' are almost synonyms. These invariably denote the confluence of the holy rivers Gaṅgā, Yamanā and Saraswati which is now invisible. The three rivers are mentioned for the first time in a Rājvedic hymn. This hymn contains the names of some Indian rivers. It may be noted that in the list priority is given to the Gaṅgā, Yamanā and Saraswati.

श्रम ने गये यहू वर्णवाति खुली कोंम स्वर्णा वस्त्रपथया
श्रम ने यमने विश्वासाशीर्षी गंगुस्थाया अष्टशुष्कमया ॥

(श्रवणेद ३.७५.२)

'O Gaṅgā, Yamanā, Saraswati, Sutwari, (Satlaj) Parusnī (Hāvī), Asinī (Chenab) along with the Maruvāravānā (a tributary named Maruvāravānā, between the Chenab and Jhelam, to the west of Chenab), Vītastā (Jhelam), Būsomā (Bohān) and the Arjīkiyā, you share my prayer and listen to it.'

Even if this collective reference of these three rivers (Gaṅgā, Yamanā and Saraswati) in this Rājvedic hymn is not accepted to denote the confluence of the holy rivers at Prayāga, there is another evidence in a Khila verse of the Rājveda (X-75, 5) to prove the fact.

सिद्धार्थानि हरे संगेत तत्राप्स्तासो विश्वसनानि
ये वव विश्वसनानि धीराई नासो ष्णतवं भवेते ॥

(कृप्याग्रिहित ३.९५.४)
'Where the fair and dark rivers commingle, bathing
there people mount up to heaven, and those wise persons who
cast off their body there, attain to Immortality' (1).

The evidence cited above is indicative of the supreme
and sacred importance of the confluence of the rivers during
the later phase of the Vedic period. It also shows that the
area adjoining the holy confluence had become a prominent
centre of Vedic religion. According to the Satapatha Brähmana
the Bharata kings offered ablutions at the junction of the
Gangā and the Yamunā.

16. Rāmāyana.

Prayāga and the holy confluence are mentioned in certain
passages of Rāmāyana relating to the route followed by Rāma,
Lakṣmana and Sītā to Chitrakūta after crossing the Gangā at
Śringavarapura. They passed through a dense forest towards the
confluence of the rivers Gangā and Yamunā. In the route,
Śri Rāma Chandra pointed to Lakshmana Prayāga full of smoke
which arose from the Yajñas being performed at the hermitage of
riṣi Bharadvāja. The sound of the mingling of the twin rivers
makes him realize that they were close to the holy confluence.
The passages giving above facts run as follows :-

यत्र नागीरथि गंगा यमुनाभिपक्षति ।
प्रयगुस्तं देस्युद्धव विग्राहूः सुहंदन् ॥
These passages from Vālmiki’s Rāmāyana confirm that Prayāga, which was near the holy confluence, was inhabited by saints and recluses who kept themselves engaged in performance of the various Yajñās and austerities. There is another reference to this spot in the Rāmāyana when Bharata stayed at the hermitage of rishi Bharadwaja on his way to Chitrakūta to plead to his brother to return to Ayodhya. A third reference of this place occurs in the Yudhāna Kāma at the return of Ārī Rāma - Ghanīra from Lāṅka.

The word Prayāga occurs at several places in the Mahābhārata. According to a verse of Vanaparva, Brahma performed many Yajñās at this place. Being a spot of Plentiful Yajñās it came to be known as Prayāga.
In another verse of the Vana-parava Prayāga is called
the greatest of all the births and also the best and meritorious one in the three worlds.

तत्त: पुरस्य नाम द्रुमलांकेस्वराः प्रारत ||
पुराणं सौरस्यद्वैयो पुव्रः स्थितिकं स्वप्ने ||

(वन ५०, २५,७४)

The verse eighteen of the Sace Parva refers to the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna as a celebrated spot in the whole world and also holy, good and a place where the rishis had performed Yajñas earlier.

विविधादनं भश्चर्चें पुराणं पतनमु सम् ||
गंगा सहस्त्वं वैस्तन: स्थः संपत्ते विश्वमु ||

(वन ५०, २५,७५)

The Adiparva says that Prayāga was the birth place of Soma Varuṇa and Prajapati (४).

In Manu-Māli

Describing the boundaries of the Mahādāsa (middle country) Manu places Prayāga on its extreme eastern side.

फलं द्रुमलांकेस्वरस्य द्रुमाविध्युतस्तादयः
प्राप्तवेष्य पुराणे पतनमु मयेः स: वृक्षसिंहः ||

(पाल २,२४)
The land between the Himalayas in the north and the Vindhyas in the south, Vinasams (3) in the west and Prayaga in the east, is said to be the Madhyadesa'.

THE PURANAS

According to Matsya Purana the area of Prayaga Mahiala or Kshetra was covered by 20 Kosas (40 Miles)(4). The Kurma-purana mentions Prayaga Kshetra to be six thousand bows in extent (5).

In another place the same Purana attributes Prayaga to be the territory of Brahma extending upto five Yojanas (6). According to the Swarga Kanda of Padma Purana the extent of the 'Prayaga Kshetra' was five Yojanas and six Kosas (7). The same purana at another place says that 'Prayaga Kshetra' was one and a half Yojana in length and breadth with six boundaries (8). According to Yuan-Chwang Prayaga was twenty li (about 4 miles) in circuit. The chinese traveller probably meant the inhabited part of Prayaga Kshetra.

According to the Matsya Purana the land between rivers Ganga and the Yamuna represented the thigh of earth. This region is 'Prayaga' the most celebrated one in all the three worlds(9). 'Prayaga' is also said in the Matsya (10) and the Agnipuranas (11) as the Vedi (altar) of Prajapati. The Vamana purana holds Prayaga to be the Madhya Vedi out of five sacrificial Vedies (altars) of Brahma (12). The Kurma also calls 'Prayaga' as the Kshetra of Prajapati'.

The Agni Purāṇa while referring to the three sacred places (Haridwar, Ganges, Sagar and Prayāga) says that it was rather difficult to reach the Ganges of all these places:

सर्वं मुलम गंगा तिर्थस्थानेनुष्ठुलम।
गंगातारे पूर्वगे ज गंगा सागर संमने ॥

(भ्रम, ३०-२)

The Matsya Purāṇa enjoins the learned people to worship Prayāga as Tiratharāja.

तथा सर्वं लोकोऽपि पूर्वगे पूजयेदुरुपः।
पूजयेति तीरथराजस्तत्तद्वेष युधिष्ठिरा ॥

(मल्लय, ४०, २५)

It is said that Brahmā performed numerous sacrifices here for the resurrection of the Vedas. Therefore, each step in the land of Prayāga was sacred and bore the merits of Asvamedha sacrifice.

'पूजयेति तदुपूजयेति: पदे पदे '॥

(पर्व, पुं, ३०, ५)

Another verse of the Matsya mentions that Prayāga stretched from Pratiṣṭhāna to Vasuki Hrida and extended further up to Kambala, Asvatara and Bahumūlaka Nāgas.

आ पूर्वगे प्रतिस्थानायामप्राप्ता वासुकेष्वत्तु॥
कं-कलास्वते नागः नागः स्वननस्ताकः ॥

(पर्व, ५४, ४)
The Vāsuki dhāra of the above verse may be identified with the temple of modern Nāgavāsuki located on the northern fringe of the town of Allahabad. The Vāsuki area formed the northern boundary of Prayāga and Pratiṣṭhāna (close to the village of modern old Jhūsi) (14) situated on the left bank of the Jāmghā was the eastern most limit of the locality. On the western fringes on the bank of Yamunā there were two tīrthas called kambala and asvatara Nāgas. Probably, bhumūlaka, a third tīrtha, was on the southern direction of Prayāga can be identified, but nothing as yet is known about the site of (14a) kambala, asvatara and sanamūlaka pāgā. Vīrakṣṇiṇīya also refers to these three Nāgas of Prayāga.

The Vīyu Purāṇa also mentions Prayāga along with important Janapadas (Great states) like Sāket and Makkhā which formed part of the Gupta empire.

नूर्यान्त प्रयाणं व सातें मण्डपांतः ।
स्त्रात largest लखनऊ पीकर्ते गुप्तबंबन्धः ।
( वायु ४४, ३३ )

Again according to Matsya Purāṇa Yamunā, the daughter of Nārīya, which was venerated by all the tīrthas, had appeared at Prayāga and met the Jāmghā and thus formed the holy confluence

In the Raghuvaṇa, Kālidāsa, gives a vivid description of the holy confluence of the Jāmghā and the Yamunā. Śrī Rāma while returning from Lanka on the Puṣpaka vimūla viewed the
confluence from the sky and pointed out to Sītā how beautiful the sight of the river was:

काश्मिरः काशि कालिन्दी सितारामी यज्ञावासातिविदा।
बन्यः सितपथ्यानां न्यायेऽर्ततियान्तरेऽव। ॥ ॥
कार्यतः सितपथ्यानां कालिन्दी सितपथ्यानां न्यायेऽर्ततियान्तरेऽव। ॥ ॥
बन्यः कालिन्दिरुद्दर्पवा पुष्पः पुष्पवन्दनं कैल्पकः ॥ ॥
कार्यतः पुष्पः सितपथ्यानां सन्तोषितानां विलीने । सकाली कूलव।
बन्यः पुष्पः सर्वकौशलं रोदित्वावलोचनं पुष्पः ॥ ॥
कार्यतः पुष्पः सितपथ्यानां सन्तोषितानां विलीने । सकाली कूलव।
बन्यः सन्तोषितानां विचारहितानां सन्तोषितानां सर्वकौशलं रोदित्वावलोचनं पुष्पः ॥ ॥
सन्तोषितानां विचारहितानां सन्तोषितानां सर्वकौशलं रोदित्वावलोचनं पुष्पः ॥ ॥

Behold, O with faultless limbs; how the Gangā which, with its current broken by the waves of Yamāna, appears at one place like a necklace full of pearls, interwoven with emeralds covering them with splendour, at another place like a garland of white lattices, the interval of which is set with blue ones. At some place, it looks like a row of birds foam of Mānasalaku, coming in contact with the ground, having dark grey wings, at another place it appears like a piece of ground decorated with white samal, and having ornamental leaves pointed with black samal. Somewhere, it appears like the splendour of the moon variegated by darknes lying in the shade, at other it looks like a white streak of autumnal cloud through the openings in which the surface of the sky is a little discernible and at
some other places it looks like the body of Śiva, adorned with ashes and adorned with black snakes' (16).

In the Vikramorvaśīyaṁ, a Sāmākrit drama, composed by Kāliyāsa, an indirect reference to the confluence of Gaṅgā and Yamunā is found in the dialogue between king Pururavā and Chitralekha: Pururavā says to Chitralekha:

न तथा नन्दयक्ष या स्वयं विरुक्ता तथा
संगमे कुष्ठ पूर्वेष कुला गंगा विना

(विनयोऽ २१ २४)

"Your presence does not please me in the absence of her (Urvāśī) as the river Yamunā (does not please one) without Gaṅgā at the confluence;"

Panini IN INSCRIPTIONS

The Ahirnäd stone inscription of Māityasena mentions that Kumāragupta (C. 550 A.D.) of the later Gupta dynasty, great grand father of Māihavagupta, the friend of Harṣavardhana, entered into a fire of cow dung cakes, 'as into water,' at Prayāga, when the sun was in Bhāna or Bhana rāśi (Scorpio); i.e. in the solar month of Fausā.

"शरीरं वत्सत्व घरो य: पुष्पगतोऽधै      त्र्य-पुष्पीवर्करीषारङ्गी माण: स: पुष्पगत:।"

"who, following the vow of heroism and truth, went to Prayāga in Bhana and entered into a fire of cow dung cakes, as
into water, (after) being worshipped with flowers (18).

Another inscription of c. 1003 A.D. inscribed on a
slab in the Jain temple at Khajuraho, describes that the
Chaniella king Shānga entered the water of the confluence
at Prayāga at the age of over 100 years contemplating on Śiva
and thus 'leaving his body, entered in beatitude'.

'रीतित्वा दिशातिमयक्षणं सर्वनामसंतानन्वयति,
तीर्थे तस्माद ज्ञितं कार्यं पूर्व्यपूर्वमिलयति:।
राख्यं पुष्टं लोकन भूस्वयं व्यायनु जपनु बान्विते -
कालिच्योऽसलिले क्लैवर परित्यागादागाम्यवृक्षम्।।

After protecting this earth, with the sea as her girdle,
which knew rule of non-else, and after living for one hundred
autumns and more, Śrī Shānga, the lord of the earth, closing
his eyes and meditating in his heart on Śiva and muttering -
his name obtained salvation through leaving his body in the
water of the Gangā and Yamuna (19).'

The Kalchuri inscriptions state that the Kalchuri king
Gangavādeva (c. 1040 A.D.) got himself released in the company
of one hundred sages at the foot of Akshayavata at Prayāga(20).

(६) कुलिस (श) पानो वैसिद्धां वर्तकीयितिस्वदपं स्यां
गणेय देवः ।।

(७) स्वाय इशासन गौरिर (त्र) सरवकुमारित्व हति पूब्दः ।
य (स्माद) कपादप (वग्ग) ।

(८) मिच्छन हु (हृद)ल (।)(हृद स्वर्भि)। तां व(व) नार र ।।
प्रायोहेपुण्यव वत्त पूल न्यास (श) व (व) न्यो सार्वसे
वृत्त्वगिपिसुसुषु कम् ॥
The inscription of Karkasuvāravara (c. 794 A.D.) also mentions Śāstrakāta king Śrīruva Śārāvarṣa to have committed suicide at Prajāga. The Baroda copper plate of Karkasuvāravara says, Śrīruva obtaining from his enemies, at the confluence of the Gaṅgā and the Yamānā of Śāsteśa waves, the status of an overlords, attained at the same time the high region of Śiva as a direct mark as it were (of his elevated condition) (21).

Madanamall inscription of Karkasuvārana also refers to Prajāga, where a chandella brāhmaṇa minister Ananta drowned himself at the confluence (22).

Some of the inscriptions of fifth century record that Prajāga was a sacred place where kings of Deccan came on pilgrimage and bestowed gifts on brāhmans there (23).

An admonitory formula in old kannarese language, which usually occurs in inscriptions of this period from Dharwar area indicate that Prajāga was regarded as one of the three, four, five or seven holiest cities of the country. Following inscriptions: (24) five different forms of the formulas referred to above.

1- Morītāsi inscription of Vikramśaitya VI,1124 A.D.
2- Nirgali inscription of Someśvara I.
3- Narsimhachar inscription of the time of Someśvara I.

Some inscriptions mention it with Vārāhiṇi and Puri. The Cintura Prasasti of Śrīnāgadaevā records the visit of ascetics to Prajāga (25).
The Rithpur copper plate of Bhattabharmman refers to Prayāga as Prajāpati Kshetra.

Inscription of Visvarūpa-sena also refers to the performance of sacrifices by the lotus born brahman on the bank of Trivenī-
tīrōtakṣaṇa 

In the Kāmaūli plate of Jayacandra, Jaṅgāditya and Arilo-
chnana, two shrines at Prayāga have been mentioned.

In spite of the inscription the sculptural representation of the confluence of Gaṅga and the Yaumānī at Prayāga is also found. It is depicted as the meeting of the two river goddesses in anthropomorphically form in the ādivarān image at Udayagiri.

Sūila Am. EXPLAINED BY FOREIGN TRAVELLERS.

Yuan-Chwang was the first foreign traveller who visited Prayāga and mentioned it in his travel records. He visited India in the first half of the seventh century when Harsavarman, the king of Harṣuṣ, reigned and dominated almost the whole of Northern India. During the course of his itinerary, the pilgrim visited Prayāga twice. His first visit to Prayāga was, after Nyamakha, from where he travelled 700 li to reach this town. Second time he came to this place in the company of Harṣa on the occasion of the quinquennial assembly held at Prayāga.
While travelling towards south-east from nyomukha, the pilgrim records that after a journey of 700 li (about 240 miles) crossing to the south of the Ganges and the north of the Jamuna, he came to the "Po-lo-yau-ka (Prayâga) country." He goes on to state that the Prayâga country was 5000 li (about 1000 miles) in circuit, and the capital above 20 li (about 4 miles) in circuit. This place which apparently had the same name, he places at the junction of two rivers (viz- Ganges and Yamuna). He praises the country, the climate and the people of this place (28).

Yuan-Chhwang further informs us that in Prayâga there were only two Buddhist establishments where in lived, only a few Brothers, belonging to Hinayâna order. There were some hundreds of Deva temples and the majority of the inhabitants were non-Buddhists (29). The information given by the pilgrim, as recorded above, indicates that Prayâga was essentially a renowned centre of the traditional Vedic religion at the time of his visit. By 'Deva Temples' he definitely means the religious edifices belonging to the different forms or sects of Vedic-Purânic religion.

The pilgrim again states: 'In a champaka grove to the south-west of the capital was an old Ashoka tope to mark the spot at which the Buddha once overcame his religious opponents.' Beside it, were located the tope of the Buddha's hair-nail relic and an exercise ground. Near the relic tope was one old monastery in which Deva Pusa composed the 'Kuang-pai-lun' for the refutation of the Hinayanists and the conquest of the Tirthikas (30).
Next Yuan-chwang describes a celebrated Deva temple with a 'widespreading umbrageous tree' in front of it. The devotees committed suicide jumping from the tree inorder to obtain eternal happiness in heaven. Cunningham has no doubt in identifying it with the well known akshyavata. He remarks, 'there can be little doubt that the famous tree here described by the pilgrim is the well known akshaya bat or 'undecaying banyan tree,' which is still an object of worship at Allahabad.' This tree according to the pilgrim was the dwelling place of an 'anthropophagous' demon. The tree was surrounded with human bones, the remains of pilgrims, who had sacrificed their lives before the temple, a custom which had been observed from time immemorial (31).

The famous tree described by the Chinese pilgrim is, no doubt the well known akshaya bat or 'shadowless banyan tree,' which even now is 'an object of worship at Allahabad. This tree is said to be situated in one of the corners of an underground pillared court covered at the top. This pillared court, at present, is known to the people by the name of patalpurki temple. It is situated underground inside the Allahabad Fort due north from the Asokan pillar. But neither this temple nor the log of the banyan tree planted there in can be identified with any amount of certainty with those described by the Chinese pilgrim in the seventh century A.D. The antiquity of this temple cannot go beyond the reign of Akbar. Originally, both the tree and temple must be standing on the natural ground level. The change in their location might have taken place later on. The log of the banyan tree, in worship, today, cannot be called to be the original one.
Further Yuan-Chwang, mentions one more important event concerning Prayāga in his accounts. He records that emperor Harsha visited Prayāga after every five years of his reign. He stayed here for one month and bestowed gifts and charity lavishly on people of different religious sects and also to the poor and the infirm. This great fair according to him was held at the confluence of the rivers where there was a sunny plain about 10 li (2 miles) wide covered with white sand. It is a known fact that the Kumbha and Maha Kumbha fairs are still held on the same site mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim.

After Yuan-Chwang another foreign traveller, who mentioned Prayāga in his travel records, was alberuni. He came in India in 1012 A.D. with the army of Mahmud of Ghazni. He mentions the 'tree of Prayāga' while giving distances between different places falling in the way from Kanauj to Prayāga and Vārānasī. He says, "A person going from Kanauj towards south, through the land lying in between the rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā, will pass through the following well known cities: - Jaymān, 12 farsakh, 4 miles) Brijmāl 8 farsakhs, 'tree of Prayāga' or the confluence of Jaunā (Yamunā) and Gaṅgā 12 farsakhs.' In his description the traveller confuses Prayāga with the tree itself. He further narrates, 'at the junction of the two rivers, Yamunā and Gaṅgā, there is a great tree called 'Prayāga', a tree of the species called 'Vata'. It is peculiar to this kind of tree that its branches send forth two species of twigs, some directed upwards as in the case of other trees, and others directed downwards like roots but
without leaves. If such a twig enters into the soil, it is like a supporting column to the branch whence it has grown. Nature has arranged on purpose since the branches of this tree are of an enormous extent and require support. Here the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas are in the habit of committing suicide by climbing up the tree and throwing themselves into the Ganga (32).

**Akṣhayavata and Its Adulteria.**

In the Vedic literature no mention is discernible about the existence of any banyan tree at Prayâga and its worship by the people in any form. The Râmâyana of Vâlmiki refers to two banyan trees in the vicinity of Prayâga, one standing on the southern bank of the river Ganga facing Srîngaverapura and the other on the southern bank of Yamuna, on the route to Chitrakûta. The first is simply called a 'Nyagrodha' and 'Mahâvriksha' while the second tree is named 'bhâma Nyagrodha'. None of these two trees is called aksavyavata in this great epic, nor does any reference occur in the Râmâyana to the akâshayavata at Prayâga. Under the tree facing Srîngaverapura across the Ganga, Râma along with Sîtâ and Lakshamanâ spent one night and there after proceeded towards the hermitage of rishi Bharadvâja, through a thick forest. The relevant verses describing the tree and their stay there at night are as follows:

संयामन्वास्य परिष्कारम्
रामो रघुत्रं रेष्ठा हितो वर्षाव लक्षमणः ||
न नस्तत्र सुखायो नारिकूरे नवरिखलाम्
न्याग्रिथे सुहवनः क्या भ्रमाते वनवत्सलो ||

(वायु ५५,१,३३)
This tree might have been situated at a considerable distance from Prayāga, because Rāma had to walk through an extensive forest to reach the hermitage of riṣī Bharadvāja. The Rāmāyaṇa makes a reference to another banyan tree when riṣī Bharadvāja tells Rāma the way to Chitrakūta.

In these verses Bharadvāja has directed Rāma to go to the tree and also told him that Sītā should worship it with folded hands. Only after doing this it was to be decided whether to stay there or to leave the place. Here is the first reference to the worship of a Vata at Prayāga.

According to the instructions of riṣī Bharadvāja, Rāma, along with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa crossed the river Yamūṇā and reached the Śyāma Nyagrodha referred to above. There, Sītā made circumambulation of the wide spreading dark banyan tree, whose leaves were green giving cool pleasing shade. She prayed to it with folded hands to get the vows of her husband fulfilled and entreat-
ted it to enable her to see her mother-in-laws Kausalyā and Sumitrā again.

तेषुर्ते प्रज्वलित्वस्वं पुष्याय यमुनाणाम्।
स्यां नागोक्ष्येतु: श्रीति श्रीराजश्च। (वहीं 14-24)

स्यांम मुपायङ्गैः श्रीदेवी चाणक्यवत्।
नमस्तेस्तु महापुरा पारयेन्ये पतिक्रमः। (वहीं 15, 25)

श्रीस्वयं पैव परवेयु। सुमित्रांग यस्तल्ली।
हति श्रीता-चाणक्यद्वा पदोप्पल्लमार्गिणी।।(सहीं, संस्कृत)

These are the only references in the Rāmāyana to the worship of the 'Skyāma Nyagrodha' standing on the southern bank of the Yamunā. It also shows that there did not exist any banyan tree at the confluence of the two rivers at that time. Had there been any such tree at the Saṅgama it must have been referred to by the sage poet.

The Mahābhārata also does not mention the existence of the Akshayavata or a banyan tree at the confluence of the two holy rivers in Prayāga. It describes the sub-tīrthas of Prayāga in the Vanaparva but does not say anything about the existence of this tree here. The Āranyaka parva (Tīrtha Yātrā-Parva) of the Mahābhārata refers to the existence of Akshaya-vata at Gayā in the following verses:

ततोऽनाध्या क्षायां बुन्दारी निरोद्धर्म:।
वस्मेकवार्यति गमनाधिव नारस॥
The Anusāsana parva of this epic also mentions an Akṣyavata at Gaya:

राज्यव्यर्थ वल्लक पुष्पा: यवेकोणिप मयां व्रत ।
भवयो गुप्तो लोकोपत्त यज्ञो वर: ।। (यजुर्वेद २८-९१)

The Āranyakaparva of the Mahābhārata while describing the Great Deluge, refers to a 'Nyagrodha' and a little child resting comfortably on a gorgeous coumth on one of its extended branches. At the time of the Dissolution of the Universe (Pralaya) the great sage Markandeya while searching for a refuge walking on unending sheet of water saw the divine child. The verses relating the story run as follows:

तत: क्याचित्पयामि तत्स्मिन लस्के संपले ।
गतं गुम्बानां वे विशारं पुष्पीपेते ।।
शालायं तथाकुस्मय विस्तीर्णायायं गताचे ।
परं पुष्पीपाल विभासार्थ संस्थाने ॥
उपर्युपर्य महाराज पूर्णोन्नु ह्रदशास्मि ।
पुनः पुष्पिन्तः लालं पस्यामि भारत ॥।

(यजुर्वेद २८-९१,२२ और ८१)
The site of this huge 'Nyagrodha' mentioned in the Mahabharata has been left unspecified. It is traditionally believed that the Akshayavata at Prayaga is imperishable and everlasting. Therefore, this huge Nyagrodha may be taken to exist at Prayaga even at the time of the Pralaya. But it is merely a conjecture. There is found no mention of the presence of Akshayavata at the confluence of the two holy rivers in any of the two great epics.

Again, the illustrious sanskrit poet Kalidasa also does not mention the Akshayavata at the confluence of the rivers at Prayaga. He mentions a Shyamavata, the Shyama Nyagrada of Valmiki's Ramayana situated on the southern bank of the river Yamuna. The following verse of the Raghavamsha describes the said tree as under -

र्वया पुरस्तापुष्पावलिको यः सोऽयं कटः स्याम छात वृक्षः।
रामाक्रिष्णिनागाभि गातद्रान्त सप्तवर्षा। फलितो विमृद्धि ॥

(रू २३.२३)

Here, Rama is reported as saying to Sita, 'This is the same banyan tree known by the name of Shyama, whose help was solicited by you on some former occasion. Covered with fruits it appears like a heap of emeralds mixed with rubies.' (33).
Bhavabhūti (8th century A.D.) mentions the same Shyāmavata in his Uttara Rāma Charita, standing on the southern bank of the river Yamunā enroute to Chitrakūta. Lakshamana is reported as saying to Rāma:

"कपकशी परदायाकुदिताः श्रयामशायाः निलास्वति कामिनीदेशत: धामोनाय "(का-१)

"This is the dark banyan tree on the bank of the Kālindī by the side of the road leading to Chitrakūta to which our attention was drawn by the sage Bharadvāja."

Another reference to the 'Shyāmavata' is found in a Sanskrit drama 'Anartha Rāghava' by poet Murāri (C.1050-1135AD).

श्यामोनाय वत्: श्रीयुतः इतस्याद्वृत्ते मवत: ||
श्यामवश्याकस्तः: परंपौरिन्तिनिष्पद्यते ॥

All these references to the 'Shyāmavata' at Prayāga indicate that it was worshipped and that it had gained certain amount of religious significance.

Bhavabhūti and about four hundred years after him Murāri have given the name of the banyan tree, at the southern bank of Yamunā, as 'Shyāmavata' in their respective dramas. They have not made any reference to the Akshayavatā at the confluence of the holy rivers while on the other hand, the
Chinese pilgrim visited Prayāga in the 7th century A.D. and recorded the existence of a 'wide spreading umbrageous tree' 'before a Deva Temple' at the confluence of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā. The Arab writer Alberūnī also describes the tree of Prayāga at the same site. Both the travellers have recorded the custom of committing suicide by jumping from the tree. These records of the foreign travellers prove beyond doubt that the site of the Akshayavata at the confluence had gained considerable religious importance during these centuries. The reason as to why Kālidāsa, Bhavabhutī and other poets did not mention the Akshayavata at Prayāga seems to have been that they had taken the theme of their works from the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki and the mention of the banyan tree at the Sangama was not quite relevant to the story of Rāma narrated by them.

The Akshayavata at Gayā mentioned in the Mahābhārata somehow in later times lost its importance and the Akshayavata at Prayāga gained the upper hand, at least, from Gupta period onwards. The Purāṇas highly eulogise the importance of the Vata at Prayāga and refer to the act of self immolation under this tree. It is believed that this tree does not perish even at the time of the dissolution of the universe. The Matsya-Purāṇa says, "The man who destroys his body near this tree goes straight to the region of Śiva (34)."

The Kūrma Purāṇa also supports the same view in the
following verse:

वषषुमये स्वागतिक यक्तु प्राणस्यार्थके पु:।
सङ्केतकानाविकुः सूढ़ालोकं एव गत्वति।

(युध्य. 3. 24)

"One who abandons his life beneath this Vata tree, by his own efforts, he goes to the abode of Rudra, having crossed all other regions."

The Brahma Purāṇa testifies the above views and says:

प्रायामकुट सालग्रासु पल्लवे करोति यः।
स्वयं वेग विना ज्ञान कामप्राप्ते महीपति।।
हल्लाण्ड्रुपुष्पकालोकानु नात्मानो योत्तथाकात्नु।
महापाप रिश्यः समीपित्यान प्रेमानुमसु।।

(युध्य. 3. 25)

"The person who dies here by jumping from the branch of this Vata at Prayāga attains the highest regions and does not become guilty of suicide after death."

The Agni Purāṇa says that a person who ends his life at the foot of the Vata tree near the Sangama attains the region of Viṣṇu:

वषषुमये कंदारिव पुरो विषण्वूरीं वृक्षे।।

(यजुर्वेद 3. 2)

These evidences show that the worship of the Śvēmā

Nyāgrodha of the Rāmāyana of Vālmiki by Sītā was the
beginning of the Vātā worship at Prayāga. This Practice later on continued at the confluence when a new tree sprang up there and the former became extinct. This probably occurred in the Gupta period which can be adduced from the fact that the tree at the confluence finds mention in the Purāṇas and other contemporary literature. This tree is referred to in the records of a few other Muslim writers, such as Rashīduddīn (35) (later part of the 13th century A.D. or early part of the 14th century A.D.) and Abdul Kādir (36) (16th century A.D.). Tiefenthaler, an European traveller, in the middle of the eighteenth century A.D. describes it to be a leafless tree. After the eighteenth century A.D. no trace of a banyan tree is traced at the Sangama. Only a stump of a banyan tree is now found in one of the corners of the Pāṭālpurī temple. The following remarks of Śrī Śhīva Nath Katju in this regard are worth notice:—

"The Akṣhayabata is an object of great sanctity for the Hindus all over India. Its antiquity is undoubted. The question of its location, if it still exists, has always excited curiosity.... I have heard ever since my childhood that the present stūpa of a tree shown in the Pāṭālpurī temple with in the fort area was a fake log and the real tree still existed somewhere south of the site of the temple which was within an area where the British did not permit any Indian to go. This story about the imitation log in the Pāṭālpurī temple was widely
believed...... When the country became free in 1947, the citizens of Allahabad hoped to get access to the real Akshavabata. The people believed that the Akshavabata, as the name implies, means the undying Vata. The tree still existed somewhere which could not be located (38).

Shri Katju pursued the matter with the help of some of the military officers of the fort. In the beginning he could not succeed in his mission. Later on he contacted some of the Jogis of the temple, took them into confidence and at last he got the clue to the location of the Akshavabata which he believes to be the "real one. In this connection he says," One afternoon one of the Jogis took me to the Yamuna side of the fort and pointed to a lotus embossed on one of the stone slabs of the rampart wall and said that according to the traditional lore the real Akshavatā should be near it. This was the information he said, that had come down to the Jogis for generations." He further elaborates," The site was just opposite a temple of Mahadeva on the other side of the Yamuna. The top of a tree inside the fort near the lotus mark was visible from the river bank (39)." (PL.XXXXIII.)

On July 28, 1950 with the help of the fort officials he was able to reach the tree and having a look on it he arrived at the following conclusion," The look and the appearance of the tree and the evidence that I have gathered so far all point
out that this is the remnant of the sacred Akshayavat". His opinion may be taken as correct, because the present tree stands at a place which is quite close to the confluence of the two rivers. Alberūnī, Rashīuddīn and Abdul Kādir also located the tree close to the bank of the river Gaṅgā. A slight change in the location of the present tree may be due to the change of the course of the river Gaṅgā which some times flows quite close to the fort.

**ORIGIN OF THE NAME OF PRAYĀGA**

It has been pointed out earlier that Prayāga flourished as a centre of Vedic religion and culture in the later Vedic and onwards. The Yajñas had a prominent place in the Vedic religion. As Prayāga was the centre of a great number of Yajñas, it was named Prayāga (प्रयाग). The Śabda Kalpdruma (P. 287) interprets it as "पृष्ठिन्य यागिते यथा" i.e. a place of immense Yajñas. The Vana Parva of Mahābhārata also gives the same interpretation in its following verse:—

।

यायायकू पुरात्तम पूर्वक दिता यह !
पृष्ठिन्यं विस्वातं समवादु भूत सवर्त !

(सव ५० ५७, २२)

"As Brahmā performed several Yajñas previously at this place, therefore, O! Noble Bharata, it is celebrated as Prayāga".
The Brahma Purāṇa also says "पृथक्ष्यत्वप्रयागोसो द (रा) which denotes the same meaning as given above. Another verse of the Mahābhārata says:

रषा यज्ञ पूर्वसि देवानायपिनिपुिता ।
तस्तद्वर्त्त्वापि महत्वायत पारत ॥

(वन 99 ऋ 85, सौ 82)

"This is a land of Yajñas sanctified by the gods and the gifts of even small amount made here becomes great".

In the Rāmāyana of Vālmiki 'Prayāga' is spoken of as a place of excellent smokes. Rāma looks at the excellent clouds of smoke arising out of sacrificial rituals performed by the rishis at 'Prayāga'. The verse reads as follows:

प्रयागानित: पश्च सौमित्रे घुमुक्षमू ।
रन्नेनस्वत: केदु यज्ञे साम्भास्वते पूर्वन: ॥

(वन २९, २८)

All these references show that Prayāga had been a site of Yajñas par excellence in the ancient times and hence the name 'Prayāga'.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

The Asokan pillar in the Prayāga town is the only example of an early date worth notice. The University of Allahabad has recently conducted some exploration work in the city under
Prof. G.R. Sharma resulting in the discovery of certain sites of early habitation (40). The Draupadighat is the one site which is reported to have yielded the evidence of extensive habitation. Several terracotta ringwells (41) and a few burnt brick walls (42) were noticed in a 15 meter high section cut by Ganga. On the mound Northern Black Polished ware, along with red ware, reported to have been collected. A few potsherds assignable to a date prior to that of the Northern Black Polished ware, were also found.

The second site explored is near Tej Bahadur Sapru Hospital. This mound has yielded pottery similar to the first site.

The third site, Salori, has yielded Northern Black polished ware and a sturdy black on red ware.

The fourth site, Bharadwaja Asrama, is six meter in height. The surface exploration here yielded pottery in the form of bowls, sprinklers etc. which can be assigned to the Kushana period.

Dariabad & Mirapur, the fifth site, situated on the left bank of the Yamuna yielded N.B.P. Sherds and red and Grey wares.

At present, on all the ancient sites, reported above stand a large number of residential houses and other buildings.
No ancient structures nor any antiquities worth mention have come to light during the excavation of their foundations. The only exception is the discovery of a small terracotta head of a human figure from the foundation of the house of Sri Ajit-Kumar, an Advocate of Tagore Town (43). The head belongs to 3rd century B.C. and is now preserved in the Allahabad Museum. It is surprising that the ancient mounds have not yielded any such antiquity while from a site once forming the part of the river bed this piece of antiquity sprang up.

A third notable antiquity from this city is a rare image of Trivikrama (44). It was acquired for the Allahabad Museum from Baghara close to the Prayaga railway station. It is badly damaged and belongs to C. 10 the century A.D.

A Fuhrer refers to a mutilated life size statue of a horse (45) sculptured in white sandstone, which was exhumed from a field near the village of Dalelganj, a quarter of a mile to the west of the fort. Here, by Dalelganj Fuhrer probably meant the village named Dalel-Ka-Pura because there is no village of the name of Dalelganj in the area pointed by him. He further says that the upper part of the body of the horse was incised with a large number of symbols, such as the Swastika, the Srivatsa and the Nandyavarta marks. Whereabouts of this mutilated horse are not known at present.

On the basis of available literary and archaeological evidences mentioned above we may arrive at a conclusion that
Prayaga flourished as a prominent centre of religion and culture in ancient times. It was not known as a political centre. In epics and the puranas this place always was known as the place of austereties (सपोषमूलिः), tirtharāja (the king of tirthas) and a land of Yajñas (यज्ञमूलिः). Yuan-Chwang also refers to hundreds of Deva Temples, an umbrageous tree and some Buddhist Monuments. The Muslim writer Alberūnī did not mention Prayaga as a city but described the 'tree of Prayaga' of the species called Vata and the custom of suicide associated to it. It shows that the place had become known as the site of salvation and a prominent place of pilgrimage. In one of the Puranic verses seven holy cities of India are enumerated as the bestowers of salvation. In that verse Prayaga does not find any mention. The verse reads as under (47):-

<om padma pada, Kamā Kāmī Kānūkā>
Pūri haraṇī-tām sarvah tāmāvāyaśa

Even in the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki Prayaga is known neither as a city nor the mention of any specific habitation is found there in. After crossing the Ganges at Sringeraverapura Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmana, walked through a dense forest towards the confluence of the holy rivers and reaches the hermitage of Rishi Bharadvāja, who asked them to reside comfortably in his hermitage situated in seclusion on the beautiful and holy confluence of
the two rivers:


caksāsā vibitrīṇayaṁ mahānī vai samāgai
cakṣvah samāhite bhāgavatasya mahāmukhau

(amb 44-22)

"This confluence of two great rivers is peaceful, and secluded, holy and beautiful. You stay here comfortably. The above statement of riṣi Bharadwaja does not give any indication of the existence of a regular habitation there. As such it would not be wrong to assume that Prayāga did not develop into a town of any significance before the Muslim advent. It remained essentially the abode of saints and a renowned centre of the Vedic religion. No remains of monuments mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim in the 7th century A.D. have been traced so far. Except the Asokan pillar, other relics of architecture and art are conspicuous by their absence.

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FOOT NOTES


3- The Vinaśana referred by Manu here has been identified with the place where the river Saraswati is said to have disappeared in the desert. According to Trikāmaśeṣa, it is same as Kurukshetra (कुरुक्षेत्र) See: Sircar D.C. 'Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India.' P. 241.

4- Matsya-Purāṇa: Adhyāya 108, v.9, 'पंक्तिश्च विस्तीर्णः: प्रयागस्थः प्रवेल्क्ष्यं ये जाना—8 miles.'

5- Kurma-Purāṇa: Uttrārdha Adhyāya 36.

6- Ibid: Adhyāya 34 and 36.

7- Padma-Purāṇa: Swarga Kāśa, Adhyāya, 57.

8- Ibid: Adhyāya 58.


11- Atri-Purāṇa: Adhyāya 111.

12- Vāmaṇa-Purāṇa: Adhyāya 32.


14- There are at present two localities in Jhūsi. The locality on the left side of the N.E.Railway is called Mai Jhūsi (New Jhūsi) and on the right Purāṇi Jhūsi (Old Jhusi).

14- See: Rahula Sankritayana and Jagdish Kashyapa: Dīrgha Nīkāya (Hindi) P. 179.
15.- The location of Pratishthana and Samudrakupa is mentioned in the following verse of Matsya Purana.

यूथ पायें तु मनाया सिट्टु लोकेश्वर मारत ।
युन्म के सामु क्षत्रिय धर्म व विकृतम् ।। (२४-२५)

16.- Translation by U.M. Roy, Studies in Ancient Indian History and culture, PP. 203-209.


20.- See: Jabalpur copper plate Inscription of Yasah Karnadeva' in 'A study of ancient Indian Inscription', P. 195, by Vasudeva Upadhyaya, also E.I. Vol. II, PP. 1 to 7; and also Khairah plates of the same rulers (Kalchuri samvat 823=1073 A.D. in E.I. Vol. XII, page 211.

21.- यी युनान गो तरंग । युनान गो तरंग न वेयाया
सासाथ्याचंतकं चौकपं तात्राचं फिक्ससू ।
वेदानात बृहसपीती बोधि द्विगुणसिद्धैरे,
व्यासस्तम बृह बृह बृह बृह बृह बृह बृह बृह बृह बृह बृह बृह ॥

22- See: J.A. Vol. I, p. 200-1


25- E.I., I., p. 166.


27- E.I., XIV, p. 310.


29- Ibid.


31- Ibid.


36- Ibid, P. 196.
38- Katju S.N., 'Story of the Eternal Tree of Creation, Published in 'The Leader' Kumbha supplement, Feb. 1954.
39- Ibid.
40- See Indian Archaeology - A Review - 1960-61, P. 33
41- Ibid - Pl. LIIIA.
42- Ibid - Pl. LIIIB.
43- See Allahabad Museum Terracotta Register No. 4015.
44- See No. 245 of the sculpture Register of Allahabad Museum.
45- See A Fuhrer, Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions, PP. 130.
46- There is a figure of horse in the state Museum Lucknow in Pinkstone. It has no symbols on its body at all. It is said to be the horse of Samudragupta's Horse sacrifice (?)
47- This verse is found in the Brahmanda purana IV, 40-91, Garuda Purana - Preta Kanda - Chapt. 38, V. 5-8; twice in the Kashikhand of Skanda Purana 6-68, 23-7. This information is quoted in D.C. Sircar's book, Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, P. 225.
APPENDIX - 2

THE LIST OF LOCAL RULERS OF THE DISTRICT

Following names of the rulers of the district are known from coins, seals, sealings and inscriptions:


NAMES OF LOCAL RULERS:

APPENDIX - 3

LIST OF INSCRIPTIONS FOUND IN THE DISTRICT

1- Six Pillar Edicts on the Asokan Pillar inside the Allahabad Fort.
2- Queen’s Edict inscribed on the Asokan Pillar at Allahabad.
3- Kausambi Edict on the above mentioned Asokan Pillar.
4- Two Pabhosa cave inscriptions of Aśājñhasena of about 1st century B.C.
5- Pañchamukha Sivalinga inscription of Nāgasrī from Bhita.
6- Fragmentary Rail Pillar Inscription from Kausāmbi with Pusasa Thabho Jhama.
7- Brāhmi Inscription of the house holder Gotiputa (Gauptiputra) from Kausāmbi.
8- Brick inscription of Agnimitra from Kausāmbi.
9- Inscription of Jethamitra from Kausāmbi.
10- Inscription mentioning the name of Varunamitra from Kausāmbi.
11- Ayāgapatta inscription of Rāja Siyamitra’s Reign of the year 12 from Kausāmbi.
12- Inscription of Rāja Rajamitra of the year of 26 from Kausāmbi.
13- Brāhmi Inscription of certain Bhagawata Brāhmana from Kausāmbi.
14- Inscription of the region of Kaniska of the year 2 from Kausāmbi.
15. Inscription of Kaniska in the Museum of Allahabad University.

16. A Brāhmi Inscription of Kāshiputra Mūlayasa from Kausāmbī.

17. A yūpa inscription in the Allahabad Museum.

18. A Fragmentary Brāhmi inscription from Bhītā.

19. Ayāgapatta inscription from Ghoṣitārāma monastery of Kausāmbī.

20. Gīṇja hill painted inscription of Maharaja Bhīmasena of the year 52.

21. Inscription of Bhadramagha from Kausāmbī of the year 83.

22. Inscription of Bhadramagha from Kausāmbī of the year 83.

23. One Fragmentary undated inscription of Bhadramagha from Kausāmbī.

24. Inscription of Bhadramagha from Kausāmbī of the year 83.

25. Inscription of Bhadramagha from Kausāmbī of the year 83.

26. Inscription of Bhairamagha from Kausāmbī of the year 86.

27. Inscription of Bhairamagha from Kausāmbī of the year 87.

28. Inscription of Bhadramagha from Kausāmbī of the year 87.

29. A Fragmentary Inscription of 2nd-3rd century A.D.

30. Inscription of the reign of Sivamagha.

31. The inscription of Mahārāja Vaiśravaṇa of the year 107.

32. Fragmentary inscription giving names like Bhadrabala Vaiśravaṇa and Indrādeva.

33. Fragmentary inscription of Pothamitra.

34. Inscription of Mahārāja Bhīmvarman of the year 122.
35- Inscription of the Reign of Maharaja Bhimavarman from Kausambi of the year 130.

36- Kosan inscription of the Reign of Bhimavarman of the year 139.

37- Inscription of Amatya Sālakāyana from Kausambi.

38- Fragmentary Brick inscription of Amatya Asvaghoṣa.

39- An inscription from Bhita referring the installation of a Buddha image by Aryantadi, a Bankers wife.

40- Inscription of Sākya Bhikshu Bodhivarman from Bhita.

41- Inscription relating to religious gift made by an unknown person from Bhita.

42- Inscription of Samudragupta on the Asokan Pillar at Allahabad.

43- Garhawa stone inscription of Chandragupta II of the C.E. 88.

44- Garhwa stone inscription of Kumāragupta I.

45- The inscription of the Reign of Kumāragupta I of the C.E. 98.

46- Mankuwar stone Image inscription of Kumāragupta I the year 129.

47- Sāripur inscription of Kumāragupta I.

48- Garhawa inscription of the Gupta period. Probably of the reign of Kumāragupta I.

49- Garhawa stone inscription—The year 148.

50- Deoriya stone Image inscription of Sākya Bhikshu Bodhivarman.
51- A Damaged Fragmentary inscription from Kausāmbī G.S. 125.

52- Inscription of śīvarādhāra.

53- Inscription of Shri Śloka Chaukṣha.

54- Inscription of Śiva Chaukṣha.

55- Buddhist inscription from Karā.

56- Rock inscription from Deoriya.

57- Another Fragmentary inscription from the vicinity of Deoriya.

58- Inscription mentioning the date Samvat 901 Aśādha-vādi.

59- Inscriptions of Jogi Jwalāṇiya on the pedestals of the Images of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva at Garhawā.

60- Goharāvā plate of Karṇadeva- V.S. 1047.

61- Copper plate Grant of Trilochanapāla of V.S. 1084.

62- Karā stone inscription of Yaśapāla of V.S. 1093.

63- Mehavāḍa stone inscription of Reign of Jayashāndra - V.S. 1245.