CHAPTER VI

CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE POLITICAL RIVALRIES.
C H A P T E R - VI
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The cultural milieu of Mālwa during the period under study shows the predominance of Buddhism and Brahmānism holding its own position. While the privileged position of the Brāhmanas and the social order prescribed by them tended to have been maintained by the Indian rulers with religious devotion, the same was challenged by the Buddhist faith to which were more inclined the mercantile community as well as the foreign rulers in India.

Mālwa as a Centre of Buddhist culture

Sānchi had become a centre of Buddhist culture during the reign period of Mauryan emperor Aśoka who erected a number of Buddhist stūpas and monasteries at the place. Further additions and reconstructions of the stūpas, made during the succeeding ages, no doubt, provided an indication of the growth of Buddhism. The additions comprised the existing envelope of stone in which the whole body of the original brick stupa was encased; the lofty stone - terrace and two flights of stairs at its base, the stone flagging of the procession path, the three stone balustrades in place of the older fashioned
ones of wood and harmika and umbrella which crowned the whole. 1 Besides these, stūpa 4, 6, pillar 25, Building 40, pillared Mandapa built on the ruins of Apsidal Hall, Building 8, south-retaining wall of the Main Terrace, foundation walls over pavement of west and south-west of Table 18 - all these were constructed during the period posterior to that of the Mauryas. Further splendid construction of the Sāñchī Stūpa which was a marvellous proof of the flourishing condition of Buddhism in Mālwa, were made in the post-Christian era. Thus the four gateways of the Great-Stūpa, the single gateway of the third stūpa, third floor of the temple 18, stūpa 2 and later sculptures on pillars 22 and 27 of ground balustrades - all were constructed during the Sātavāhana rule at Mālwa, as it is suggested by Marshall. 2 The Sāñchī Stūpa was, thus, a symbol of devotion and patronage to Buddhism.

Not only Sāñchī in eastern Mālwa, but also Ujjayinī in Western Mālwa witnessed the rise and growth of Buddhism in the pre-Christian era. Of course, it is true that Buddhism did not gain so much ground in Ujjayinī, as it had acquired in Sāñchī.

2. Ibid. P. 18.
The remains of one huge and two small stupas at Ujjaini are significant archaeological remains of Buddhist culture.

**Buddhist Culture supported by the Mercantile Community**

The rapid progress of Buddhism in Malwa in the Post-Mauryan period is an important social phenomenon. After the break up of the Mauryan empire, the cause of Buddhist saṅgha seems to have been seriously upheld by the mercantile community in Malwa. The merchants had already settled in Malwa, which was rich with trade centres like Vidiśā and Ujjaini. The votive records of Sāncāri record the gifts and donations of 'banker' (Setṭā), 'merchants' (Vaniya), 'foreman of artisans' (āveśāmin), 'weaver' (Sotika), and artisans (Kamika). These occupational epithets, no doubt, represent people belonging to the organisation of trade and industry. The Sāncāri records confirm the inference that can be drawn from the sacred books of the Buddhists that the mercantile community was the chief support of Buddhism.9

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5. Ibid. 269, 320, 355.
6. Ibid. 346.
7. Ibid. 331.
8. Ibid. 181.
The social order based on Brahmical Varṇa-Sramaṇa hardly reserved any privileged position for the Vaiśyas who were supposed to be agriculturists, traders or merchants. In the social structure dominated over by the priestly and the military class, the producers of wealth were relegated to a position where they had to suffer from an inferiority complex. On the other hand, the social order as prescribed in Buddhism granted a respectful position to one and all, irrespective of occupation or livelihood. Logically, the mercantile community was inclined to Buddhism as a comfortable resort.

Kanishka - supporter of Buddhism

The liberalism of the Buddhist faith attracted also the rulers in India. Because, Hindu law-givers could treat them, at best, as degraded Kṣatriyaas. Kanishka, the greatest of the Kuśāna rulers, who spread his suzerainty over Mālwa, was a staunch supporter of Buddhism. Tradition not only represents him as a great patron of the religion but also associates him with a galaxy of Buddhist masters who were responsible for:

10. It were the Greeks who were the first among the foreigners to embrace Buddhist religion, and made dedications and gifts to the Buddhist Stupa at Sāntchi. The Greek King Menander was an avowed supporter of this new faith. But as he did not rule at Mālwa, we do not introduce a discussion on him.
shaping Buddhism of later times. Sākyamuni Buddha makes his first appearance in human figure on the coins of Kaṇiṣṭha. A large number of inscriptions of his reign clearly bear out that his was a period of intense Buddhist activity. A few sculptures in the Kṣāṇa style from Mathura have been discovered at Sānc, one of which bears an inscription of the year 28, in the reign of the Rājātirāja Devaputra Shāhi Vāsishka (identified with Vāsishka, son of Kaṇiṣṭha). The object of the inscription is to record the installation of an image of the Bhāgavata (Sākyamuni) in the Dhrmadeva Vihāra of Madurikā, daughter of Vera. The present record seems to bear witness to the spread of Mahayanism, in which the worship of Lord Buddha was supposed to be the most meritorious act, from Mathura to Mālwa.

Kshaharaṭas adopted Buddhism

The Kshaharāta branch of the Śakas indicate their support for Buddhism. The Nāsik, Karle and Junnar Buddhist Cave Inscriptions of the time of Mahapâna show how enthusiastic

14. Ibid.
the ruler was about Buddhism. Indeed, we have hardly any evidence to suggest that the Kshaharāta ruler extended his patronage to Buddhism from Mālwa, although the internal evidence of the records leave no scope of doubt regarding his hold over Mālwa. It may, however, be suggested that the Buddhist monks settled in Mālwan monasteries were not denied the patronage of the Saka king.

In spite of Buddhism being promoted to an eminent position, Brahmanism could not be wiped out of its existence. The Purānic deities like Śiva-Mahākāla, Skanda-Kārttikeya, Laxmi are found to have appeared as devices on early coinage of Mālwa.

Brahmanism in Mālwa

Śiva probably appears for the first time in an anthropomorphic form on the coins of Ujjayini. The single standing figure on many of those coins may be identified with the deity. The attributes in the hands, viz., a staff in the right hand and vase in the left hand indicate its identity. Again,

15. E.I., VIII, P. 78f.
the head of the deity being adorned with matted hairs in 'jatā-bhāra' manner, confirms the identification.\textsuperscript{17} The three-headed standing figure on the obverse of a third variety of Ujjainī coins carrying identical attributes\textsuperscript{18} may also be identified with Śiva, although Allan suggests identification of the deity with Skanda-Kārttikeya.\textsuperscript{19} The three heads of the figure on some Ujjainī coins have been taken by him to represent partially the six-heads of the latter. But we have six-headed figure of Kārttikeya on indigenous coins and three-headed figure of Śiva is known from Kuśāna coins.\textsuperscript{20} Lakṣmī or Gaja-Lakṣmī, goddess of fortune appears very often on the uninscribed cast coins of Ujjainī.\textsuperscript{21} Lakṣmī is represented as standing (rarely seated), being bathed or sprinkled (abhiṣeka) by two elephants standing on pedestals on either side. On the early


\textsuperscript{18} Allan's Catalogue., P. 250.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} J. N. Banerjea, \textit{The Development Hindu Iconography} (Calcutta, 1955), P. 117.

\textsuperscript{21} Allan's Catalogue., P. 252, Class 2, Vars. P & Q.
coins of Iran we find the lotus as a device. The lotus symbolising the sun and the creative force came to hold an unique position in Hindu mythology. In this connection reference may be made to the so-called 'Taurine symbol' found on the Mālva series of coins. It may have symbolised the sun and the moon represented together, the disc symbolising the former and the latter being symbolised by the crescent attached to it. These coins may be placed in the 3rd-2nd Century B.C. when symbolism was still in practice simultaneously with anthropomorphism. The myths and symbols, thus being represented on the Mālva series of coins, seems to indicate the religious beliefs and practices of some sects among the populations of Mālwa.

Brahmanism in Mālwa seems to have received liberal state patronage in the Śuṅga period. Pushyamitra Śuṅga, the early part of whose career is associated with Mālwa, is known to have revived Vedic Brahmanism by performing two Ashvamedha sacrifices. This is evident from the Ayodhyā Inscription. The Mahābhāṣya

22. Ibid.
of Patañjali states - 'Iha Pushyamitra yājayāmah' - 'here we we perform sacrifices for Pushyamitra'. 27 The performance of Āśvamedha sacrifice by Pushyamitra Śunga is alluded to in the 'Mālavikāgnimitram' of Kālidāsa. 28 The venue of the sacrifice is not exactly known to us. However, the authority of Pushyamitra over Mālwa seems to have a significant bearing on the religion of the country and it was usual in early times.

Brahmanism received patronage from the Śātavāhana rulers who are known to have included Mālwa in their kingdom. Śrī Śātakarni, that is, Śātakarni I performed some sacrifices. This is evident from the Nānāghāt Inscription of Nāganikā, wife of Śrī-Śātakarni. 29 The performance of sacrifices along with an invocation to the Vedic gods like 'Dharma' (Dharma), Ida (Indra), the four Lokapālas like Yama, Varuna, Kubera and Vāsava, 30 as recorded in the above inscriptions shows the Śātavāhanas upheld the cause of Brahmanism, inspite of the spread of Buddhism in western India. Gautamiputra Śātakarni, the greatest Śātavāhana ruler, played a significant

27. I.A., 1872, P. 300.
28. Kālidāsa, Mālavikāgnimitram, Act. V.
29. ASWI., V, PP. 60f.
30. Ibid.
role as a social reformer. It is stated in the Nāsik Buddhist Cave Inscription of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Pulumāyi that Gautamīputra crushed the pride and conceit of the Kṣatriyas, destroyed the Śakas, Yavanas, Pahlavas, rooted out the Kāshaharatas. Having done this he tried to revive the fourfold caste system (chāturvarṇya) and to stop the growth of mixed castes (Vṛṇa-śāmkara).

Line 5 ............... Khatiya-dapa-māna-madanasas
Saka-yavans-Pahlava-nisūdanasa

Line 6 ............... Khakharatā-vasa-nirvasesas-kārasa
Sātavāhanakula-yasa-patithāpana kāpasā
nasas binivatita-chāturvarṇa Saṁkārasa.

Thus, the Sātavāhana monarch is said to have upheld the social order prescribed in Brahminism. Claiming himself to be "eka-bāmbhana", Gautamīputra probably established the pre-dominance of the Brahmanas by curbing the pride of the Kshatriyas and destroying those who were regarded in the Manu-Saṁhitā as "degraded Kshatriyas", that is the Saka-Yavana-Pahlavas. The Śungas despite their staunch support for

31. E.I., VIII., PP.60f.
32. Ibid. Line, 5-6.
Brahmanism, did not stand against the spread of the Buddhist culture. It is not without significance that the main construction of the Sāñchi stūpa was made during the Śiṅga period. The liberal attitude of the Śātavāhana rulers towards Buddhism is evident from the Nāsik Buddhist Cave Inscriptions.

Likewise, the foreign rulers, inspite of their first attraction towards Buddhism, gradually appreciated the Brahmanical religious beliefs. The Beasagar Garuda Pillar Inscription records the erection of a Garudādhwaja in honour of Vāsudeva, the god of gods, by Heliodoros, son of Deen, who came as an ambassador from the Yavana king Antialkidas to the court of King Bhāgabhadra of Vidisa. Greek Heliodoros embraced Vaishnavism and the social values for which the religion stood.

The Kārddamaka branch of the Western Kshatrapa rulers seems to have imbibed the spirit of Indian culture. The Junāgaḍh Inscription of Rudradāman I of the year 72 (i.e. 150 A.D.) seems to be the first record inscribed in classical Sanskrit. Prior to this all the records were used to

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34. E.I., VIII, P. 44f.
be written in Prākrit. Prākrit that was adopted by Aśoka in
the 3rd Century B.C. to impart moral instructions, mainly
based on the teachings of the Buddha, to the common people,
is generally associated with an era of Buddhist culture. On
the other hand, Sanskrit came to be recognised as the medium
of instructions on society, polity, and religion by the
Brahmins. The linguistic approach to the study of the
epigraphic records provides us with a phenomenon of cultural
transition at Ujjayinī under Śaka rule. The numismatic
evidence may be taken into account to show to what extent
the Kārāmallakas gradually Hinduised themselves. The coins of
Chashtana and his successors bear a three-arched symbol
surmounted by a crescent. Scholars like Theobald suggest that
these are reliquaries, one in each chamber of a stūpa. But
as it has been pointed out by Allan, some object being
found in many other combinations where it can hardly be
reliquary, we need not be prevented from identifying this
type as a mountain. According to A. Coomarswamy the coin-
device represents a hill or mountain. In this connection it
is pointed out that the mountain represented by arches (Peaks)

36. Allan’s Catalogue., P. XXIV.
is found in Mesopotamia and throughout the ancient world as well as in later Indian, Central Asian and Chinese art. In the opinion of Dr. J.N. Banerjea, a mountain with a crescent on its top represents 'Giriraja', lord of the mountain, that is Siva Chandrasekha to whom is attributed Chandra or crescent. If we accept this view, it may be suggested that the Saka rulers of Ujjayini had leaning towards Saivism or respected the Saiva faith of people residing in Malwa. The inclination of the Kardamaka towards Rudra-Siva is probably indicated by their personal names like Rudradaman, Rudrasena and Rudrasimha.

The cultural rivalry between the indigenous and foreign rulers, if there had been any, gradually disappeared, most probably, due to the permanent settlement of the foreigners in India. So perfectly Hinduised these alien people were that the indigenous rulers did not hesitate to establish matrimonial alliances with them. This is evident from the Kanheri Cave Inscription, informing us that one

37. A. Coomaraswamy, History of Indian and Indonesian Art (New York, 1965), PP. 44, fn.4.
39. JBBRAS., VOL.V, P.4f.
Vāsiṣṭhīputra Śrī Śātakarni married the daughter of Mahāksha-trapa 'Rudra' identified with Rudrāman of the Kāṛḍdamaka dynasty. It is again learnt from the Nāgārjunīkaṇḍā Inscription 40 that the wife of Vīrapuruṣadatta of Ikṣavāku dynasty was the daughter of a Saka ruler of Ujjayini. These matrimonial alliances were possible in the context of gradual Indianisation of the Sākas, not only at their own initiative but also at a friendly invitation from Indian side.

It is due to the catholicity of the Hindu lawgivers that they devised principles and methods by which alien peoples were allotted a recognised place within the pattern of Indian social structure. Successful attempts were made by them to ignore the non-Indian origin of the foreigners by regarding them as the offspring of inter-caste marriage or as belonging to one of the castes and having lost a status in consequence of heretical tendencies. According to Manu, the Yavanas, Sākas and Pāradas who had been originally Kṣatriyas were degraded to the status of śūdras owing to their non-observance of sacred rites. In such a statement is to be delected

40. E.I., Vol. XX, P. 16f.
41. Manu-Saṁhitā, I, 43-44.
'ex-post-facto' recognition of the foreigners by giving them a place in the 'Chāturvamya' (four caste) system. In the 'Mahābhārata' also they are included in a list of Kshatriya people, who had gradually sunk to the level of Śūdras. In the epic 43 we find Indra prescribing duties, to be performed by the Yavanas, Śakas and other alien peoples, which include the duties of obedience to parents, preceptors, kings and hermits; performance of Vedic rites, digging of wells, making of presents to dvijas (the twice born), truthfulness, purity, peacefulness, maintenance of wives and children and performance of sacrifices in honour of 'pitrīs' (manes) and performance of 'Pāka-yajñas (minor sacrifices). All these indicate that the foreigners were expected to practise the same normal pieties as the Hindus and the latter in return considered them henceforth as belonging to their own social organisation.

The Bhakti cult, flourishing in before and after the Christian era, may have been the prime factor of the early centuries in breaking the barrier between the native and the outsiders. 44 According to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, 45 taking resort to Viṣṇu

43. Ibid. XII, 13-22.
44. Cultural Heritage of India (The Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, 1969), P.612.
45. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, 11.4.18.
and his devotees is enough for the purification of the Kiratas, Yavanas and other persons who were sinful. Previously, of course, the Dharmasūtra of Gautama 46 regarded them as the offspring of a marriage between a Kshatriya and a Śūdra woman. It is stated in the Mahābhāṣya that though the Sakas & Yavanas lived outside the Āryavarta, they were regarded as high class Śūdras eligible to offer sacrifices. 47

**Condition of North-West India after the advent of foreigners**

The advent of the Greeks, Scythians, Parthians and Kusānas seriously damaged the indigenous social order. They imported a mixed culture comprising both Hellenic and Iranian elements to the north-western part of India. The Mahābhārata 48 bears out that the customs and practices of the people living in the land of Five Rivers differed from those prevailing other parts of India. Reference is particularly made to the general immorality and the laxity concerning food and drink that prevailed among the Vāhika and Madraka men and women living outside Āryavarta.

46. Dharmasūtra of Gautama, 1.4.17.
47. Pāṇini, II, 4.10.
48. Mahābhārata, VIII 40, 20-40; 44, 6-44; 45, 5-38.
General condition of the country

The havoc wrought by the settlement of the castless foreigners in Indian society is indicated by a large number of ancient Indian literary texts. The Purāṇas like the Vāyu, 49 Brahmāṇḍa, 50 Matsya, 51 Viṣṇu 52 and Bhāgavata, 53 describe the disturbances created by the outlandish people. They give us the picture of a society in which the people often neglected the caste and āśrama rule and were influenced by the non-Brahmānical and anti-Brahmanical ideas and beliefs. The spread of the heresies affected the member of the four castes and the four stages of life. The people often did not like to observe the rules of castes and discharge the duties enjoined by the Rg, the Śāma and the Yajur-veda. Their mind being always occupied with the thoughts of money, they did not hesitate to adopt unfair means for it. The twice-born gave up the study of the Vedas and performance of sacrifices. Men of all classes pretended to be equal with the Brahmāṇḍas and defined their authority. The Vaiśyas gave up trade and agriculture. In this

49. Vāyu Purāṇa, Ch. 35.
51. Matsya Purāṇa, 144.
52. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, VI, 1.
53. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, XII, 2.
way the pure Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas were almost extinct and the prevailing caste was the Śudra. The Purāṇas further say that in Kali Age the majority of the kings were Śudras. The Yuga Purāṇa Section of the Gārgi-Saṁhitā, in course of giving an account of the invasion of the Yavanas and Śakas, states in the style of prophecy that at the end of the Kali Age all distinctions between the non-Aryans and Aryans, between Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śudras, between orthodoxy and heresy will disappear. It is further said that the foreigner will destroy four castes, by making all the old-established (castes) low placed and the terrible and numerous Śakas will make the population lose their conduct and degraded in their own acts. The Mahābhārata also lets us know that in the age of decadence (Yugakṣaya), Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śudras will disappear and the world became of one caste (ekavaṁśa).

The disintegration of the social fabric was caused by the settlement of the immoral and casteless nomads, the Śakas, Pahlavas and Ābhiras, who having no allegiance to the 'Varnāśramadharma' brought an alien influence upon Indian society. In the context we may appreciate the social reforms

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55. Ibid.
56. Mahābhārata, III, 190, 42.
57. R.C.Hazra, Studies on the Purānic Records, Hindu Rites and Customs (Dacca, 1940), P.208.
of the Śātavāhana king Gautamiputra Śatakarni, referred to above.

The advent of the foreigners created a problem of adjustment between Indian tradition and culture on the one hand and Graeco-Iranian culture on the other. A search for common ground for meeting the two seems to have been honestly attempted by the law-givers. Ultimately it paved the way towards the process of acculturation. 59

The process of acculturation required a long time to be completed. But immediately after the settlement of the foreigners in different parts of India including Mālwa, with their allegiance to Buddhism, the Indian King and community with their beliefs rooted in Brahmānism faced a challenge which may have turned into a cultural rivalry. The 'Kālakā-chārya Kathānaka', however, later in date it might be, records an early tradition of a long-drawn struggle between the Śakas and the indigenous rulers. The Śaka-Śātavāhana and Śaka-Gupta struggle centering round Ujjayini in Mālwa provide a basis of the tradition. Despite the cultural rivalry continuing for centuries, attempts were made simultaneously to forge a compromise leading to a cultural synthesis.