CHAPTER III

HISTORICITY OF VIKRAMADITYA OF UJJAINI
While the evidences deduced from both the Purāṇas and light archaeology throw on the history of Vidiśā in eastern Mālwa in the early centuries before the Christian era, Indian tradition regarding Vikramāditya, king of Ujjayinī is claimed by some to have revealed the history of western Mālwa in the same period. But the Historicity of Vikramāditya is a question that still awaits final solution. The question may be reopened and examined in the light of the evidences so far discovered.

Kālakāchārya Kathānaka

The Jain text "Kālakāchārya Kathānaka" furnishes us with the fullest account on Vikramāditya of Ujjayinī. It is said that the Jain teacher Kālaka’s sister Saraswati was abducted by Gardabhila, King of Ujjayinī. He then proceeded to 'Sagakula', that is, the 'Kula' of the Śakas. The feudatories (Samanta) were called there 'Śahi' and their overlord 'Śahanu Śahi', i.e. king of kings. Kālaka stayed with one of the Śahis and as this chief together with ninety-five other Śahis fell into disgress with the 'king of kings', Kālaka induced them to accompany him to Hindukadeśa. They crossed the Indus, embarking in ships, proceeded to Kathiwār and divided
that country among themselves. When the autumn case, the acharya led them on to Ujjayini, where Gardabhila was made a prisoner. A 'Śāhi' was established as overking, and in this way the dynasty of the Śaka kings came into being. After sometime (Kālañtareṇa) Vikramāditya, King of Ujjayini, ousted this Śaka dynasty and established his own era. But Vikramāditya's line was uprooted by another Śaka king who established an era of his own when 135 years of the Vikrama era had elapsed.¹

The following points may be deduced from the above account:

1. Gardabhila was a ruler of Ujjayini who abducted the sister of a Jain monk Kālaka;

2. Kālaka, in order to take revenge sought the help of the Śaka chiefs who had been settled in the territory lying on the other side of the Indus;

3. The Śakas, at the next stage ruled for sometime over Kathiwar to increase their power and strength.

4. The Sakas defeated Gardabhila and seized Ujjayini;
5. King named Vikramaditya, having defeated the Sakas, started an era of his own;
6. One thirty five years after 'Vikrama-Samvat', the Sakas again conquered Ujjayini and started an era of their own, that is, Saka era.

'Gathasaptasati' of Hala

It appears from the 'Gathasaptasati', a Prakrt anthology composed by Hala, the Andhra King of Pratisthana, that tradition was current among the poets of the time that there had flourished a ruler named Vikramaditya who was famous for his conquests.

Brhatkatha-Maajari of Kshemendra

Another literary work which bears witness to the existence of Vikramaditya is the 'Brhatkatha' of Gunadhya, written in Paisachi Prakrt. The original text is lost, but the text is represented by two important Sanskrit works, viz. 'the Brhatkathamaajari' of Kshemendra and Katha-Saritsagar' of Somadeva.

2. Hala, Gathasaptasati (Poona, 1956), Sl. 464, P.309.
3. Gunadhya's Brhatkatha, translated into English by Tabard (Bangalore, 1923).
From 'Bṛhatkathāmahājārī' the following facts can be gleaned.

1. Mahendrāditya was the father of Vikramāditya ruling at Ujjayinī;
2. The whole kingdom of Mahendrāditya was harassed by the Mlechhas or foreigners;
3. To save the country from foreign invasion Vikramāditya was born. His proper name was Vikramāditya and his title was Vishamshīla;
4. Vikramāditya destroyed the Mlechhas;
5. The popular religion of the country was Saivism.

Kathāsaritsāgar of Somadeva

The same account is repeated in the 'Kathāsaritsāgar' of Somadeva, narrating the achievements of king Vikramāditya of Ujjayinī.

Jain Paṭṭāvalis

The Jain Paṭṭāvalis, written in Prākṛt, which record the names of rulers of Avantī chronologically, place one

4. Somadeva, Kathāsarit Sāgara (Calcutta, 1884).
Vikramāditya about the middle of the 1st Century B.C. The chronological list of the kings of Avantī is given as follows:

The Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira in 527 B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rulers</th>
<th>Reign Periods</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pālaka</td>
<td>60 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nandas</td>
<td>155 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mauryas</td>
<td>108 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Puṣyamitra</td>
<td>30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Bālamitra - Bhānumitra</td>
<td>60 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Naravāhana</td>
<td>40 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Gardabhila</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Śaka</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

470 years

9. Vikramāditya (527 B.C. - 470 years) of 57 B.C.

Harivamsā

The Harivamsā also refers to the Gardabhila line to which Vikramāditya belonged, according to the tradition. It also records a list of rulers of Ujjayinī chronologically.

The Purāṇas are also not completely silent about the Gardabhilas. While dealing with the history of the Āndhras, the Purāṇas state that "taking their own offshoots there will be six contemporary dynasties of the Āndhras which are listed as follows:"

1. The Āndhra Brāhyas.
2. The ten Ābhīras.
3. The seven (ten) Gardabhilas.
4. The ten Sakas.
5. The eight Yavanas.
6. The fourteen Tukhāras, thirteen Muraṇḍas eighteen Maunas.

Besides this categorical reference to the family of the Gardabhilas, we find also specific reference to Vikramāditya in the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa. The Purāṇa mentions the ruler Vikramāditya thus: he was born to Śaṅkha, king of Avanti, to destroy the Sakas and to establish Aryan religion; he ruled for a long time, made world-conquest and performed Aśvamedha sacrifices.

Another reference to Vikramaditya is found in the 'Kumarakhanda' of Skanda Purana where it is stated that king Vikramaditya flourished three thousand years after the beginning of the Kali Age.

Thus we have both Jain and Brahmanical texts recording the Indian traditions of king Vikramaditya, ruler of Ujjayini, who defeated the Sakas and instituted an era of his own.

Pandey's view

Prof. R.B. Pandey, one of the exponents of the theory of Vikramaditya's historicity, is of opinion that king Vikramaditya belonged to the Malava tribe and Gardabhila sept or clan. According to him, the most direct, persistent and living evidence throwing light on the existence of Vikramaditya is the era founded by him, the Vikram-Samvat. Of all the eras it has shown the greatest vitality of survival and it is the most widely current era in India including the Himalayan states. This alone proves that the era, which has outlived such a longtime and has permeated the entire Hindu life, could not have been started in a void or fiction.


10. The beginning of the Kali age as assumed in the Skanda Purana may not tally with the view which holds that Bharata war about the middle of 10th Century B.C. marks the beginning of the Kali age.

Objections against Pandey's theory

Objections raised against this theory are twofold.\textsuperscript{12} Firstly, the name of Vikramāditya is not associated with the Vikrama era from the time of its foundation and during its early centuries. Secondly, the post Christian era astronomers often refer to the Śaka era rather than the Vikrama Sāmvat to indicate the date of their compositions.

Counter-arguments

The counter-arguments against the above objections require our consideration. Though the Gardabhilas (Vikramāditya is supposed to have belonged to them) defeated the Śakas and conquered Ujjayinī, it was no doubt a success of temporary nature. The Śakas defeated them in no time and ruled at Ujjayinī for about three centuries till the rise of the Guptas. During the Śaka rule at Ujjayinī the Vikrama era of 58 B.C. had already come into vogue. But as this era was associated with the defeat of the Śakas, they did not use it in their records. They preferred to use the era of 78 A.D. that had been initiated by the Kuśāna emperor Kanishka I. Because of the use of this era by the Śakas for a long time it came to be known as the Śaka era. As the Śakas had their

capital at Ujjayini, a great centre of learning and astronomical researches, the astronomers used the official Saka era. In the beginning they did so probably under compulsion. Later on it became fashionable and habitual. The use of the Saka era in the astronomical calculation\textsuperscript{13} may thus be explained.

The truth in the first objection is, however, admitted to some extent. The early inscriptions found at Mālwa, Rajputana and the neighbouring areas disclose that the earliest name of the era was Krta. The inscriptions referred to the Krta era are as follows:

1. The Nandaa sacrificial pillar inscription in Krta era of 282.\textsuperscript{14}

2. The Badwa pillar inscription 295.\textsuperscript{15}

3. The Barnala sacrificial pillar inscription of 284 and 335.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} E.I.,XXVII, PP.252f.
\textsuperscript{15} E.I.,XXIII, P. 42.
\textsuperscript{16} E.I.,XXVI, P.118.
4. The Vijayagadh inscription of 428.\(^{17}\)
5. The Mandasor inscription of 461.\(^{18}\)
6. The Gaṅgadhara inscription of 480.\(^{19}\)
7. The Nagari inscription of 481.\(^{20}\)

From the year 461 to year 936 of the inscriptions the era is called the era of the Mālava republic. The records dated in the Mālava era are the following:

1. The Mandasor inscription of the year 461 referred to the era as both Krta and Mālava.\(^{21}\)

2. The Mandasor inscription of the year 589 referred to the Mālava era.\(^{22}\)

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18. Select Ins., No. 51, P. 337.
21. Select Ins., P. 377
3. The Kanaswa inscription is dated in the year 796 of the Mālava era. 23

4. The Gyaraspur inscription is dated in the Mālava - Kala of 936. 24

From the year 936 i.e. 878 A.D., the era is found associated with the name of king Vikramāditya. 25 It was referred to as Vikrama - Saṃvat or Vikrama era. Prof. Pandey has put forward a suggestion in this connection. 26 Vikramāditya was the leader of a republic but not an absolute monarch. In a republican state, the "gana" is more important than the individual leader, however, powerful he might be. Under the circumstances, the era had to be named after the Mālava Gana. As the era was introduced to commemorate the freedom of the Mālava Republic from the foreign domination of the Sakas, it might be regarded as Kṛta, signifying ushering in of a golden age - an era of peace and prosperity.

24. Bhandarkar list., No. 18.
In the absence of any capable leader of the Malavas, the Sakas were able to re-establish their supremacy over Surashtra, Malwa and Kathiwar regions. Even after they had suffered the loss of Avanti, the Malavas cherished the hope of reviving the Krta Yuga until fifth century. But owing to the disintegration of their power at last they had to give up the idea of restoring the golden age. The name 'Krta' was, therefore, dropped from the era. The name of the Malavas, to which stock Vikramaditya belonged, was associated with the era. It came to be called the 'Malava' era.

Malava era was current in India as long as republican institutions were prevalent. But by the end of 9th and the beginning of 10th Century A.D. republican ideas were totally replaced by absolute monarchies, with all its implications. In the last decade of the 9th Century A.D. the Malava Gana was entirely merged into the luminous personality of king Vikramaditya, whose memory was still enshrined in the popular mind.

Prof. R.B. Pandey has put forward some evidences showing association of Vikramaditya with the Malava republic. Merutungachaarya, in his work "Vicharasreññi" describes the
political history of Visālā or Ujjayini thus: "After the lapse of 470 years from the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra (in 527 B.C.), having uprooted the family of the Śakas, there will be Mālava-raja, namely Vikramāditya". The word "Mālava" is evidently employed here in the sense of the Mālava people or Mālava republic and not in the sense of a locality. The name of the locality is already mentioned as Visālā or Ujjayini. This evidence sets at rest any objection regarding the identification of Vikramāditya with the Mālava-gaṇa-Mukhya responsible for the destruction of the Śakas and the foundation of the Vikrama era.

Another literary document which throws light on the connection of Vikramāditya with a republic is found in an old manuscript 28 in the 'Abhijñāna Śakuntalā' of Kālidāsa dated in the Vikrama era. The words in the extract clearly reveal that the proper name of the patron of Kālidāsa, the author of the drama, was "Vikramāditya". His biruda or title was "Sāhasāṅka". Another important thing to be noted here is that no royal title is prefixed to the proper name of Vikramāditya. The omission of any royal title cannot be due to the want of

28. At the Oriental Conference, Benares, December, 1943 this manuscript was produced by Prof. Pandey, Op.cit., P. 38, fn. 3.
space or to the requirement of a metre, as the passage is in prose and not in verse. Here such omission is significant. Evidently Vikramāditya was a republican leader and no royal title could be associated with him by a contemporary writer like Kalidāsa, who knew the implication of a republican constitution. It should also be observed instead of a royal title a common honorific 'śrī' is attached with his name. Again, the phrase 'Gaṇāśata' (one hundred republics) in the extract supports the deduction that Vikramāditya was a republican leader. On this phrase the word 'Śata' is a round figure and roughly means 'many'. This shows that Vikramāditya was connected with many gaṇas (republics). He was obviously at the head of a confederation of many republics which was organised to drive out the Śakas. 29

Prof. Pandey 30 has further put forward evidences to show that the Mālavas were the originator of the Vikrama era of 58-57 B.C. The Mandasar Inscription dated in the Mālava era of 493 i.e. 436-37 A.D. 31 records the phrase 'Mālavānāṃ gaṇasthiryā', the meaning of which has become a matter of controversy among scholars. 32 It, no doubt, indicates the

association of the Mālavaś with the era of 58-57 B.C. The era which was traditionally handed down by the Mālavaś or which "marks the establishment of a republican constitution of the Mālavaś" was probably founded by this tribe who counted all their record from this era, and by whose name the era also became famous as the 'Mālava era'. The occasion for the institution of an era by the Mālava tribe came when their leader Vikramāditya won victory over the Sakas in the 1st Century B.C.

Further, a study of the findspots of the epigraphic record referred to V.S. 57 B.C. would show that till the 9th Century A.D. all the records were found in Rajputana and Mālwa, where the Mālavaś had settled themselves. The very close and intimate association of the era with the Mālavaś during the first 900 years which is proved both by the dating of the inscriptions referred to and by the geographical limits of their findspots seems to support the Jain tradition that the era was founded by Vikramāditya, King of Mālava.

33. Supra., PP. 340-347.

34. It is important to note that the inscriptions dated in the Kṛta and Mālava era, have been found around Rajputana and Mālwa.

Criticism of Pandey's Theory

The first objection that can be raised against Pandey's theory is that he associates the Gardabhilas of the Indian traditions with the Mālavas. All the indigenous literary texts which record Vikramādiṭṭha tradition refer to him as the leader of the Gardabhilas. No where he is mentioned as the leader of the Mālavas. It should not have been overlooked by the learned scholar who has shown that the Gardabhilas were a branch of the Mālavas as the Sogins were. That the Sogins were a branch of the Mālavas is proved by the epigraphic evidence. But there is little evidence to show that the Gardabhilas were a branch of the Mālavas.

Secondly, the explanation of Prof. Pandey regarding the substitution of the Kṛta era by the 'Mālava era' stands on shaky grounds. In the 5th Century A.D., when the name "Mālava" was associated with the era, the power of the Saka-Kshatrapas, the enemies of the Mālavas had already been destroyed. In spite of the rise and growth of Gupta imperialism, the Mālavas, who paid formal allegiance to the Guptas, were enjoying an independent status. The association of the name of the Mālavas with the
era does not reasonably indicate, as it is suggested by Prof. Pandey, that it was a worse period in comparison with the Kṛta era.

**Sten Konow's Theory**

Sten Konow[^37] has attempted to find out confirmation of the Jain text 'Kālakāchāryakathānaka' in other sources in reconstructing the early history of the Sākas in India. He has referred to a number of Classical authors who speak of the Saka settlement on the Indus delta, being known as 'Indo-Scythia'. According to Ptolemy,[^38] it extended on both sides of the Indus, from the Kabul river to the Arabian Sea. The delta was called Patalene, the country to the north-east of Abiria, and the south-eastern province of Syrasterene i.e. Surāshtra, modern Kathiwar. Also Dionysius speaks about the 'Southern Scythians' as settled on the Indus. In the *Periplus*,[^39] Scythia i.e. Indo-Scythia is spoken of as being under Parthian rule, that is known to have its beginning about 44-45 A.D.

[^37]: Sten Konow, C.I.I. (Calcutta, 1929), Part-II, P.XXIV.
[^38]: Ptolemy, P. 136.
[^39]: Majumdar, ed., Classical Accounts of India (Calcutta,1960), P. 300.
The inference which may be drawn from these sources is that the stronghold of the Scythians was in the Indus country and that the Saka conquest had been effected long before the second half of the 1st Century A.D.

Konow has seen no reason for discarding the account of Jain 'Kālakāchāryakathānaka'. It might be that the Sākas from their settlement in "Indo-Scythia", crossed the Indus and following western coast came to Surāshṭra. Later on, they invaded Ujjainī. The Saka infiltration into the interior of the country through the coastal region may be explained by the fact that there was neither any indigenous nor foreign power to create obstacles on the way of the Sākas. Again, it may be assumed that the rule of Maues in India was preceded by waves of Saka infiltration in India from time to time and that a branch of the Sākas migrated to Kathwar region.

In the absence of any corroborative evidence, it would be hazardous to conclude on the basis of mere literary evidences, that the Sākas had their settlements in Surāshṭra-Kathwar region and further in the Avanti country before the middle of the 1st Century B.C., although its probability cannot be altogether ignored.
Sten Konow's view would have gained much force if, following Bajpai, some of the coins, found at Ujjayinī and Vidiśā could be attributed to the Sākas. These coins bear striking similarity with the local coinage of Ujjayinī. The coin-legends are written in early Brāhmī script which cannot be placed later than the 1st Century B.C. The names read on these coins are Hamugama, Valāka, Mahu, Dāsa and Sama.

According to Bajpai, these are Saka names and throw welcome light on the Saka problem. Having compared these names with those of Saka Chiefs like Ḥagāmaṣa and Ḥagāna, Ghatōka known from the Mathurā inscription and Aduthana known from Junāgadh inscription, Bajpai has little doubt that these five coins were issued by the Sākas who ruled in Mālwa before its occupation by the western Kshatrapas.

But the attribution of the said coins to the Sākas is not beyond doubt. Because, the coin-legends are in Brāhmī script, whereas on the early Saka coins both Greek and Kharoṣṭhī legends are to be found. Brāhmī legends are conspicuous by their absence on early Saka coins.

41. K.C.Jain, Mālwa Through the Ages (Delhi, 1972), P.156.
Objections against the historicity of Vikramāditya

Scholars like D.R. Bhandarkar, Smith, and Kielhorn are of opinion that the earliest king Vikramāditya whose historicity is proved by epigraphic and numismatic evidences is Chandra Gupta II Vikramāditya of the famous Imperial Gupta dynasty, who conquered Western Mālwa, overthrew the Sakas and also made Ujjainī his second capital. Due to the association of Chandra Gupta Vikramāditya with Mālwa, his name was associated with the 'Mālava Saṃvat' of 58-57 B.C. that later on came to be known as Vikram Saṃvat. This view is based on the assumption that Indian tradition regarding Vikramāditya was of late date.

Criticism of the view

The theory mentioned above may be criticised on the following grounds:

Only because Chandra Gupta II Vikramāditya of the Gupta dynasty has left epigraphic and numismatic records of his reign,

42. D.R. Bhandarkar, A peep into the Early History of India, JBBRAS XX, P. 398.


44. J.RAS., 1909, P.433; Kielhorn, Examinations of questions connected with the Vikrama era, I.A., Vol. XX. PP. 124-142.
he may not be regarded the earliest Vikramāditya. No less important should the literary evidences be considered to trace the earliest king of the name Vikramāditya. Many distinguished figures of Indian history (Pre-Asokan) like Chandra Gupta Maurya and his Nand, Śaśiunāga and Haryanka predecessors have left any epigraphic or numismatic record, and they are known only from Buddhist and Jain traditions recorded in the literary texts. But their historicity is not questioned. The name of Vikramāditya of the first Century B.C. is also found recorded in the huge mass of literary texts. Secondly, Chandra Gupta II's victorious military career in Western India marks the final overthrow of the Saka rule in India. Long before this, the Sakas had come to rule in India. It is not unlikely that the Sakas had to be involved in confrontation with some indigenous rulers at the initial stage of their immigration and settlement. The leader of the indigenous local dynasty, standing on the way of the Saka advance, might be Vikramāditya of the Indian tradition, who claims to have defeated the Sakas and started the era of 58-57 B.C.

Further, the records of Chandra Gupta II discovered in Central India, Udaygiri Cave Inscription and Sāñchī Inscription, 45.

45. R.K. Mukherjee, ed., Vikram Volume, Editorial Introduction, P. VIII.
are dated in the Gupta era of 319-20 A.D. If Chandra Gupta patronised the Mālava era in suppession of the Gupta era, he would have been guilty of sullying the sacred bequest of his own ancestors. Thus the belief that he gave his name to the Mālava era is only a gracious assumption.46

Scholars, who have identified Vikramaditya of tradition with Chandra Gupta II Vikramaditya of the Gupta dynasty do not take into account that 'Vikramaditya' was the first name of a king, whereas it was used as a 'viruda' or title by the Gupta emperor Chandra Gupta II. Mr. Harihar Nivas Trivedi47 has adduced the epigraphic evidences to prove the existence of a king named Vikramaditya. The following expressions found in records are brought to notice:

Śrī-mad Vikrama-nṛpa-kāla,
Śrī-nṛpa Vikrama-Saṃvat, Vikrama-Saṃvat,

also

Vikramaditya Kāla (Vasantagadh V.S. 1099).
Śrī Vikramadityatpādita - Saṃvatsara(Navsari V.S. 1131)

47. Harihar Nivas Trivedi, Vikramaditya and the Vikrama era, Vikrama Volume, PP.122-23.
The inscriptions thus explicitly mention that the era (Kāla or Saṁvat) was associated with a king (Nṛipa) named Vikrama and that it was founded (utpādita) by him. 57 B.C. is assumed as the date of the commencement of the era. The Vikrama era, however, finds its earliest mention after a lapse of about 1,000 years from the date of its commencement. 48

The assumption of the title of 'Vikrāmaditya' by the Gupta emperor Chandra Gupta is itself a strong evidence in favour of the historicity of Vikrāmaditya who was famous for his successful resistance against the Śakas. In case of the same credit to a king of much later age, he held the epithet 'Vikrāmaditya', claiming his position equal to that of the earlier king of that name celebrated in the tradition of ancient times.

D.C. Sircar's arguments against the historicity of Vikrāmaditya

Dr. D.C. Sircar has recently questioned the historicity of Vikrāmaditya tradition on the following grounds: 49

1. There is inconsistency in Indian traditions. In the 'Kāthāsaritsāgara', King Vikrāmaditya is sometimes called the ruler of Pātaliputra, sometime of Ujjayinī.

2. The Vikrama legends are of a late date and are in conflict with the known facts of history. The later Śuṅgas and Kāṇvas were ruling over the Mālwa region about the first half of the 1st Century B.C. They were overthrown by the Śatavāhanas. Thus there was hardly any room for a mighty emperor at Ujjayinī in the period concerned.

3. There is no mention of any king of Mālwa or of Magadha, named Vikramaditya, in the Purānic list of rulers of the above regions. Indeed, it is very interesting to note that the "Bhaviṣyānuṅkīrtana" section of the Purāṇas containing the prophetic accounts of the so-called future kings of the Kali Age down to the beginning of the Gupta rule in the 4th Century A.D. is remarkably silent about the great king Vikrama, even though they mention the Śakas, Gardabhilas etc. who are associated in tradition with the said legendary hero.

4. Most of the Indian traditions are of a late date, and the Vikrama legends contained there, may have actually been interpolated in the literary texts during the post-Gupta period. The allusion to Vikramaditya is traded in the 'Gāthāsaptasati' of Hāla ascribed
to a Sātavāhana king named Hāla. Although the date of original 'Sattasai' may go back to the early centuries of the Christian era, there are clear signs of later interpolations in the Prākṛt anthology. Attention may be drawn to the mention in the 'Sattasai' of such words and names as 'horā' (hour), 'Rādhikā' the developed Krishṇa legend 'ahgārakavāra' (Tuesday), 'Gaṇapati and Kāpālika' (a class of Saiva sects). All these terms can hardly be assigned to earlier than the Gupta age, according to H.C. Roychoudhuri.

Dr. Sircar's Theory regarding the origin of the Vikram Samvat of 57 B.C.

Having objected to the historicity of the Vikramaditya tradition, Dr. Sircar has propounded his own theory on the origin of the Vikram-Samvat. According to him, the Kṛta-Mālava-Vikrama-Samvat was originally known as Scytho-Parthian era. For the foundation of this era we should naturally look for a powerful Scytho-Parthian King who began to rule in 58 B.C. Some scholars have suggested the name of Azes I. But the probable identification of the era with the older Scytho-Parthian reckoning renders it untenable in view of the fact that Maues,


the predecessor of Azes I in Indian possession is known from the Taxila Inscription of Paṭika to have been ruling in the year 78 of an era. It is interesting to note in this connection that the earliest local Parthian ruler of East Iran, who is known from his coins to have assumed the Imperial title 'Great King of Kings' was Vonones who must have flourished sometime after the Parthian emperor Mithradates II (123-88 B.C.) as the latter assumed the said title for the first time. Since the name of the month mentioned in Taxila inscription is Graeco-Parthian, it is suggested that the era used in that record is of Parthian origin and that it makes the establishment of new kingdom in east Iran. It is thus quite probable that the first year of the reign of Vonones, the earliest independent Parthian ruler of the East Iran came to be regarded as the beginning of a new reckoning that was instituted to replace the Imperial Parthian era of 248 B.C. As Vonones seems to have flourished shortly after Mithradates II about the middle of the 1st Century B.C. it is not unreasonable to place his accession in 58 B.C. which marks the epoch of the earliest Indian reckoning of a historical character. The use of the era seems to have been introduced in Sindh and adjoining regions by the Saka feudatories of Vonones. The Mālavas, who originally
lived in the Punjab carried its use to Rajasthan and the neighbouring areas with their migration to those countries. Dr. Sircar\(^52\) has further suggested that 'Krita' may be the name of a foreign people which is mentioned in an early medieval inscription.\(^53\)

From the above suggestion it appears that the Mālavas carried the 'Krita' or Scytho-Parthian era to Rajasthan and Malwa from their original settlement in the Punjab. When the name of the Mālava Republic was dimmed and the name 'Mālava' only indicated a particular 'janapada', the era came to be associated with the Mālava country. The whole of the Mālwa region was annexed to the Gupta empire by Chandra Gupta II Vikramāditya who extirpated the Sakas in western India at the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th Century A.D. From this time the Gupta emperor Chandra Gupta became known as Vikramāditya Śakārī, lord of Ujjayinī. This contributed to the growth of Vikramāditya saga. Round him grew up a host of Indian traditions and folk-lore which some of the Indian scholars have used for the purpose of building up a Vikramāditya tradition, according to which Vikramāditya of Ujjayinī started the V.S. of 57 B.C.

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52. Ibid. P. 256.
Criticism of Sircar's View

The theory of Dr. Sircar does not stand beyond dispute. The first argument of Dr. Sircar is with regard to the inconsistency in the stories of Kathāsaritsāgara. But all the stories were not written at the same time. There may be some portions in the Kathāsaritsāgara which were late in date and naturally there may have been confusion between Vikramāditya of Indian traditions and Chandra Gupta II Vikramāditya who had his first capital at Pāṭaliputra. The stories of 'Kathāsarit­sāgara' were taken from 'Bṛhatkathā' of Guṇāḍhya, written in Pāścācī Prākrit. The date of the text is not later than the 1st Century A.D. for its author was a contemporary of the Śatavāhana ruler Hala who ruled probably in the 1st Century A.D. The original text is lost. It is not known whether there is any inconsistency in the original text as we find in Somadeva's 'Kathāsaritsāgara'. Somadeva probably flourished in the 12th Century A.D. when many years elapsed since the traditional date of Vikramāditya. The confusion may have been caused by textual corruption due to copyist's errors.

The second argument put forward by Dr. Sircar is with regard to the chronological position of the Śuṅgas, Kāṇvas and the Śatavāhanas, who ruled over Mālwa, one after another in the 1st Century B.C. But the Purāṇic and the
epigraphic evidences hardly throw any light on the history of Ujjayinī in western Mālwa during the period concerned. The Ujjayinī series of coins assigned to the 3rd and 2nd Century B.C. hardly furnish us with any information regarding the dynasty ruling over Western Mālwa. The Gardabhilas, explicitly referred to in the Purāṇas may have come to power at Ujjayinī sometime before the middle of the 1st Century B.C.

The argument of Dr. Sircar that the Purāṇas do not mention Vikramāditya is difficult to accept. The Purāṇas are not silent about Vikramāditya. 54 The 'Bhaviṣya Purāṇa; the date of which is not known to us, gives a detailed account in four places of the genealogy and exploits of Vikramāditya. 55

Lastly, an objection may be raised against the contention that some of the references in the 'Gāthāsaptāsatī' points to its late date. As it has been pointed out by Bhandarkar, 56 the first mention of Krishṇa and Rādhikā is found in the 'Panča-tantra' which was compiled in the 5th Century A.D. Similarly, the practice of citing week day came into vogue in 9th Century A.D.

54. A.D. Pusalkar, Vikramāditya in the Purāṇas, Bharatīya Vidya, VIII, PP. 129-134.
'Saptasati' was, therefore, compiled at a late date. But a reference to 'Rādhikā' in 'Panchatantra' does not necessarily mean that it should be regarded as the earliest of its kind. A reference to 'Rādhikā' in the 5th Century A.D. only means that her concept had already become popularised by that century. It must have taken centuries to develop the concept to warrant its use by a story writer. Under the circumstances it is not impossible that the cult of 'Rādhā' was current in 1st Century A.D. when the 'Gāthā' was composed. 57

As regards the use of a week day, we find reference to it. in a much older inscription of Śaka Kshatrapa Rudrādāman dated in Śaka year 52 i.e. 130 A.D. We find mention of Thursday in this record.

\[ \text{varṣe dvipaṁchāse 50+2 phāgunu-bahulasā bī guruvāsa (re)} \]

\[ \text{Simhalaputrasa opāsatam gatrasa 11.59.} \]

Hence the mention of 'Rādhikā' and a week-day in the 'Gāthāsaptasati' does not drag down its date to the 6th Century A.D. to suit the theory of Bhandarkar that Vikramāditya, the founder of Vikrama-Samvat was the Gupta King Chandra Gupta II. Vikramāditya.

57. Hāla flourished in the 1st Century A.D. as may be inferred from a study of the Śatavāhana chronology.

In his theory Dr. Sircar has identified Vikrama-Samvat with the Scytho-Parthian era founded by Vonones, the Parthian ruler. Like Prof. Pandey he is also of opinion that the era in its early stage was known as 'Krta', a later on 'Mālava' and still later, when Chandra Gupta II Vikramāditya used the era, it became known as "Vikrama-Saṁvat". But the background behind this change is not reasonably explained by him. He has not clearly stated why it was known as 'Krta' era if Vonones started it. It has also been assumed by Dr. Sircar that Vonones started the new reckoning to commemorate the independence of Drangiana from Parthian domination within a short period after the death of Mithradates II whose latest known date is 88 B.C. But it remains unexplained why Vonones did not initiate the new era since 84 B.C., within the minimum gap of time after the death of Mithradates II. Dr. Sircar seems to have assumed the proposition of Vonones' initiating the Scytho-Parthian era of 58-57 B.C. in order to prepare the background of another assumption of his own that year 78 of Taxila Copper Plate of Patika mentioning the 'Great King Moga' is to be referred to an era beginning in 58-57 B.C. But scholars are far from unanimous regarding the chronologilcal position of Maues.

It remains to be explained why the Mālavas used the 'Kṛta' era of foreign origin, as supposed by Dr. Sircar, in their records even in the 5th Century A.D. when the Gupta era, an indigenous one, was already prevalent. It has been suggested by Dr. Sircar that the Mālavas borrowed the era from foreigners under whose dominance they had to live for sometime. But even if an era was borrowed by the Mālavas, it should have been discontinued by them after the declaration of their independence, which is amply borne out by the coins bearing the legend 'Mālavānām jayaḥ'. If it is accepted that the era of 58 B.C. became known as Vikrama-Saṁvat after being associated with the name of Chandra Gupta II Vikramāditya, it remains to be explained why the era became so named after a few centuries after Chandra Gupta II's reign. In fact, there is a long gap between Chandra Gupta II Vikramāditya's reign period and the 10th Century A.D. when the era came to be called Vikrama-Saṁvat.

It is difficult to settle the dispute regarding the historicity of Vikramāditya. But from the evidences furnished by the traditional accounts as well as the epigraphic sources, the following facts may be gleaned:

1. There was a king named Vikramāditya who defeated the Sākas and ruled at Ujjayinī.
2. Vikramāditya started an era to commemorate his victory against the Sakas.

3. The epigraphs, however, give us to understand the era, started by King Vikramāditya, known in its early stage as 'Kṛta era', later on 'Mālava era' and still later 'Vikrama-Saṃvat'.

4. Literary evidences connect Vikramāditya with the Mālava tribe.

5. The epigraphic records show the Mālava era as the precursor of the Vikrama-Saṃvat.

The term 'Kṛta' has variously been interpreted. But when it is associated with a Saṃvat or era it presumably refers to the 'golden age' or 'Satya Yuga'. The Mālavas might have in their view an age of prosperity and happiness when they referred to the 'Kṛta era'. According to Indian traditions, the concept of the 'Kṛta Yuga' combines in itself a sense of loss of the age of prosperity that is past, and an expectation for the same in future. The Mālavas gradually became so powerful

as to associate their own name with the reckoning. From the 5th Century A.D. onwards the name 'Kṛta' was dropped and the era became known as 'Mālava era'. The use of their own reckoning by the Mālavas in the records, instead of the Gupta era which was prevalent at the time indicates most probably an independent and powerful status of them. It is, however, difficult to explain why the era of 58-57 B.C. was known as Vikrama-Samvat after a long gap of thousand years. Until further evidences are forthcoming it is not possible to explain this long gap. The historicity of Vikramāditya cannot, however, be summarily rejected.