CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF FOLK LITERATURE OF V. JISHALI
2.00 Historical background:

Vaishali has a prominent place in the ancient history of India. Its aryisation took place prior to that of Magadh. It was first developed as a centre of agriculture and commerce. Its forests attracted the 'sannyasis' and religious preachers. Here a novel principle was applied in the field of administration. The Vrijjis or the Lechchavis introduced such a form of democracy here that it was more famous than any other form of democracy in ancient India. During the sixth century B.C. and the first part of the fifth century B.C. a religious revolution took place here which exerted influence far and wide. Varchaman Bahabir, the twenty sixth and last partankar of Jainism was born in a place Khatwarya Kundpur which is very near to Vaishali. The capital of Vrijjis was a very favourite place for Sautama and he visited this place several times. During this period many other religious preachers and travellers visited this place. So, Vaishali was a centre of political and religious discourses during this period.
It is therefore seen that the historical background of Vaishali is quite extensive and great.

2.1 Basis of the nomenclature of Vaishali:

In ancient literature two names viz., Vishal puri and Vaishali were used for this city. Two reasons have been advanced on the naming of this city. First, this city was established by a king named Vishal. This is found in the Ramayana and in many Puranas. Secondly due to environmental changes it had to make 'Vishal' i.e., had to make 'wider' than before. It has been referred to in the Buddhist literatures. In both the cases the basis of the name Vaishali is the term 'Vishal' from which comes 'Vishala' and then Vaishali. Adding to these, there may be another basis of the name. It may also be derived either from the term 'Visha' or 'Vaishya' because historically the name of Vaishali was associated with agriculture and animal husbandry. In the

1. Vaishali Mahotsav Smarika, 1990
2. Vaishali Digdarshan, Jagadish Ch. athur.
Ahabhārata (9: 38.4.21 & 13.25.44) there is a reference to a river named Vishal which flows towards this city. Most probably it might be another cause for naming the city. Our assumption is that the term 'Jhala' which has been included in Vishal or Vaishali is quite meaningful. There was a forest named 'Gosingsalwan' in Vaishali; and there was a forest of 'Jhal' tree in the Himalayas nearby. The river Jaudak which flows by the side of Vaishali was also known as the 'Jhalagram' as it flows through a village named 'Jhalagram'. The term 'Jhal' has another meaning viz. 'a wall'. From the Jatakas (Lom Hans Jatak, No. 94 and Japapana Jatak No. 149) we come to know that there were three walls around Vaishali and the distance from one wall to another was one 'Gavut'. So it might be a wall with 'Vaishala'.

In the conclusion, we can say that the name Vaishali came from the name of the king 'Vishal'. This may be regarded as definite one from the historical point of view, description of which is found in the Jatapatha Brahmana, the Bhagavat Purana and the Ramayana.

2.2 Historical basis:

The bases of the history of Vaishali are four:

1) the records;

2) the coins;

iii) the ancient memories
and iv) the rock inscriptions.

In all of them, the materials of the history of this place are scattered. It is necessary that all these scattered materials should be collected and serialised. The Licchavis of Vaishali migrated to Nepal and reigned therein up to 879 B.C. Chinese and Tibetan travellers began to come to this place also. According to Pragjyotis, as many as 94 generations of Aryan Kings ruled over this place from the days of Vaivasvat. Manu to the Mahabharat wars, which was fought about 950 B.C. Therefore, it is necessary that one must keep this in mind while discussing about the time and determining of the age. On this basis we can the history of Vaishali as follows:

I) From the establishment of Janapada up to the coming of kinship (i.e., from the coming of the Aryans up to their 64th generation);

II) the Dark age (From the 65th generation of the Aryans up to 725 B.C.);

III) The Urijji-Sangh; the period of prosperous democracy (About 725 B.C. to 454 B.C.);

IV) Domination of Magadha (From 454 B.C. to 140 B.C.);

V) Resurrection of the Licchavis (From 140 B.C. to about 319 A.D.)
VI) Provincial Capital of the Gupta empire (From 319 A.D. to 600 A.D.);
VII) The Gupta period (From 600 A.D. to 1324 A.D.);
VIII) The Turk-Afghan period (From 1324 A.D. to 1529 A.D.).

The above classification of the period of history of Vaishali may be regarded as the proper one.

2.3 Area of Vaishali:

Vaishali was situated towards the east of the river Gaudak, a tributary of the river Ganga, the ancient of which was the 'Sadanira'. It covered a huge area consisted of the present Vaishali, Muzzafarpur, Sitamarhi, East and West Champaran districts of Bihar and the terrain area (the Valley) of Nepal. But it would be wrong to presume that the boundary of Vaishali was quite fixed one, as the boundary was changing and a changed one in different ages of history. The capital of this historically famous kingdom Vaishali was located in Basad and its surrounding villages of present Vaishali.

Of these places Basad, Chakramdas and Kamman Chapra are situated in the Vaishali district while Bania, Kahuwa and Vasukund are in the Muzzafarpur district. The river Gaudak flows a few kilometres to the west, and the district Jharsha is situated in its other bank. The towns of Vaishali Hazipur and Muzzafarpur are situated at a distance of 37 kilometres from each other. Muzzafarpur is situated towards the north,
2.4 Past history of Vaishali:

During the Rig Vedic period the inhabitance of the Aryans was limited to the 'Panch Nad' areas. In succeeding periods they began to expand their territory towards the east. According to the Jatpatha Brahmana a king named Videhmithi ruled over a kingdom on the bank of river Saraswati. Following the Agni-Vaishananav the King Videhmithi went up to the 'Badanira' (present Saudak) and on the eastern bank of this river he established a new kingdom with name Videh or Mithila. Afterwards this kingdom was divided into two - East Videh and West Videh. The West Videh came to be known as Vaishali by the name of king Vishal.

According to the Shrimadbhagwat, Canto IX, of the ten sons of Vaivasvat Manu and his wife Shraddha one was Ikshaku and the second was Lista. King Vishal was a descendant of Lista. From the same lineage of Lista the following kings viz., Bhalandan, Baraspriti, Pranshu, Promoti, Khanit, Chakshush, Vivishati, Nambha, Khaninatra, Karandham, Abyxit, Makhat, Dam, Rajyavardhana, Sudhriti, Nar, Vandhuman, Segwan, Bandhu, Trin-Windu, and his wife Alabusha, Vishal, Hemchandra, Lhumracha, Janyam, Krishwangsa and his brother Sahadev, Vomdutt Sumati and Janmejoy ruled over this kingdom. The 28th king of
this line was contemporary of king Dasarath and when Rama went to Janakpur to attend the Swayamvara of Sita, he took rest as the guest of Sumati.

After Sumati and Janmejoya, the history of Vaishali remained unknown for several centuries. Then again Vaishali came to light during the 725 B.C. to 484 B.C. when the Vrijjis established democratic rule there. The present Champaran, Kuzzahfarpur and the terrain of Nepal were under the kingdom of the Vrijjis. Of the different nationalities like the Ugra, the Bhoja, the Ixaku, the Kauravas and the Licchavis the last named one was the chief nationality.

In the central administration of the Vrijjis, there were the posts of Raja (Hastrapati), Up- raja (Up-Hstra-pati), Senapati and Bhandaris. The name of the Central legislature was the Sanstha and the total number of its membership was 7707.

The main cause of development of the then Vaishali was the "Sat Aparihasin Dhamma" i.e., seven principles against destruction. These principles were:

1) The people of Vaishali should do everything according to the decision of the majority in the Sabha;

   11) This decision was final and everybody had to obey it;

   11] Nobody could do anything against the law of Vaishali;
IV) The government showed respect to the old and care was taken for them;

V) There was no oppression on the womenfolk and daughters;

VI) The government honoured the 'Chaityon' (places of deity) and did not take away the property etc. donated to them; and,

VII) The Dharmaacharyyas were looked after and care was taken so that these people could roam happily in the country.

In Vaishali, Judiciary was organised in seven stages—from the lowest to the highest one; like the Vinischay, Mahamatya, the Vyabeharik, the vyadhar, the Astakulik, the Senapati, the Up-raja, and the Raja. First of all the Vinischay mahamatya went through the charges against the alleged criminals. If and when the commission of the crime had been established, the criminal was produced before higher authorities of law step by step and finally the case was heard and tried by the Raja (i.e., the king). In any stage the criminal might be set free by the concerned authority. If in the last stage i.e., before the king, the crime was established, punishment was prescribed according to the law book — the 'Pravati Rustaka'. This Rustaka prescribed different punishment for different crimes. 4

2.4.1 The Vedic period:

The name 'Videh' was used for the region lying to the east of the Gaudak and the north of the Janga rivers in the Vedic and folk literatures. During the Vedic period this kingdom was divided into two — Vaishali and Videh; and then came to be known as the East and West Videh. Kaushal was situated towards its west. According to the Satpatha Brahmana, the river Sadanira, which may be identified as the present Gaudak, was flowing in between Kaushal and Videh. In the same Vedic literature, the Satpatha Brahmana there is a description of the Aryans coming for the first time to this Vaishali-Videh region, which had taken place when the Aryans came to the east of the Sadanira from the Saraswati region of Vidarbha-Lalav provinces. The original history of Vaishali can be had from the epical Puranic literature and historical puranic literature. The history of kings of Vaishali is available in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and in the seven Puranas like the Vishnu, the Garuda, the Vayu, the Bhagawat, the Brahmand, the Linga and the Markendiya Puranas. In the last named Purana there is a description of 16 kings only upto Rajya Vardhana, but there were more kings of the lineage. The list of kings in Vaishali is as follows:

5. Satpatha Brahmana Purana
6. Itihas Purana
Vishala, son of Trinavindu and his fairy like queen Alambusha established Vishal or Vaishali. Therefore, the name of this place was given after the name of the king; because this name was not found beforehand.⁷

According to Dr. Purushottam Lal, this king (no. 23 in the above list) stated above neither ruled over the Saptasindhu nor in Vaishali nor it was a fact that Vishal was the first king of the Vaishali region who established the kingdom of Vaishali or Vishala. To him, the predecessors of Bhagirath ruled in the north-eastern region and when he the river Ganga he conquered the region and renamed Ganga as the Bhagirathi. He established his capital at Ayodhya on the bank of the river Sarju. Even if we support that Vishal is the person who established monarchy in Vaishali,

⁷. According to the great antiquarian scholar, F.E. Pargiter.
we must say that this monarchy was weak one and after ten generation it broke away. History is silent about what happened to this monarchy after Sumati.

2.4.2 The Ramayana Period:

According to the Ramayana king Sumati was a contemporary to king Dasaratha, king Kaushala and Raja Siradhwaj Janak, king of Videh. When Ram and Laxman went to Vaishali with Viswanitra, Sumati welcomed them; and they spent a night there. Then in the next day they proceed to Mithila, capital of Videha to attend the 'Swayambar' of Sita, daughter of Janak where Ram had to take part.

2.4.3 The Mahabharat Period:

According to Pargitor from Vaivaswat Manu to the Mahabharat was 94 generations of Aryan kings ruled here. What is found in the Mahabharata and in the seven Puranas like the Vishnu, the Garuda, the Vayu, the Bhagwat, the Brahman, the Linga, and the Markendeya about the history of Vaishali is very meagre. It is necessary that further research should be made in this regard.

8. Vaishali Digdarshan, Dr. Puroshottam Lal.
2.4.4 The Buddhist Period:

During this period, Vaishali was buzzing with the holy messages of Lord Buddha (567 B.C. - 487 B.C.) and Lord Mahavir (561 B.C. - 490 B.C.). Siddhartha Gautama of the Shakya dynasty of Kapilavastu left his home and family and was in search of wisdom. He went to Bodh Gaya via Vaishali and at the age of 35, he attained divine wisdom. He organised his "Sangh" on the then prevalent democratic principles of the Vrijji Sangh or the Licchavii Gana of Vaishali. He visited Vaishali several times and rendered his advice at Kutagarshala many times. Most probably wrote his 5th and 45 principles here in Vaishali. He also framed some rules on 'Vinay' (Humility). The Vixuni Gana (i.e., Nunhood) was also established here in Vaishali first. Many people both men and women, were converted to Buddhism. So, the name Vaishali is quite familiar in the Buddhist literature.

During this period the famous singer Amrapali of Vaishali came to the feet of Lord Buddha and attained peace.

It was in Vaishali that Lord Buddha declared on a full-moon day in the month of Magha that he would attain 'Nirvan' after next three months. After residing for eight months in Vaishali he glanced over the city for the last time and left it. He presented his 'Vixa-Patra' to the sorrowful Licchavis who followed him and advised them to
return home. He attained his 'Nirvana' in a full-moon day of Vaishakha (487 B.C.) in the town of Kushi. His worldly remains were divided into eight parts of which one part was presented to the Licchavis of Vaishali, who constructed one 'stupa' over the bones of the Lord and offered puja there. In an excavation in the year 1958 the bones of Lord Buddha were found there and are preserved carefully now.

2.4.5 Mahavir Tirthankara:

Parshwanath, the 23rd Tirthankara of the Jains was born at Varanasi. His ideas began to spread in all directions and gradually they reached Vaishali. It proves that the parents of Mahavir were the followers of Parshwanath. Nimi who was earlier to Karal Jairam (725 B.C.), King of the Janak dynasty, who was described as the follower of Parshwanath ideologies in Jain Literature. As Nimi ruled over Videh in the last days of Parshwanath (death 740 B.C.) he might have received the 'Dixa' directly from Parshwanath and not from any disciple of him:

"Vite Varsh Vahut Samjhe To Koye Dhai Hazar Es Uharti par Tirthankar Ka Hua Tabhi Avtar Xatri Vansh Ke The We Unka Uttam Kashyap Gotra Jhan Agni Se Tapkar We Hogoye Agni Ke Hotra.

... ... ... ... ... ...
Vaishali Ke Ganadhyax Chetak Ki Woh Prabin, Se Shadi Kar
During this period the Licchavis established themselves very firmly. It was regarded honourable to establish marital relationship with them. Under such circumstances, Chandra Gupta I, a prince of the Gupta dynasty married a Licchavi princess Kumar Devi by name in the beginning of the 4th century A.D. It is said that Chandra Gupta I received Vaishali as a dowry as the name Licchavis was not found in Bihar after that incident. Of course the Licchavis ruled in Nepal upto 879 A.D. There are two evidences relating this marriage of Chandra Gupta I:

1) In the coins of Chandra Gupta I, the names of Chandra Gupta and Shrikumar Devi were engraved on one side and the word "Lichchevayah" on the other;

ii) In the records of the Guptas Samudra Gupta, son of Chandra Gupta I was described as the grandson of the Licchavi daughter and it was regarded as a term of honour.

The coins of the Gupta age which were discovered in the excavation here becomes the important source of history of Vaishali. There are brief records on these coins. The name 'Teer mukti' for North Bihar first began during the Gupta age. During this period Vaishali was made the capital of Teer mukti province. Both the names Teer mukti and Vaishali are available on the coins. In this period Vaishali was the chief centre of arts and knowledge. The economic life here was also quite developed one. People of different religious faith lived together happily. In the Vaishali Museum some nude idols are kept which were most probably of the Jains. One such Jain idol was found in a well in Bahibharpur village under Sakara thana which has been kept in the Chandanpatti museum now. After the discovery of these Jain images, it becomes evident that during the Gupta period, Jainism flourished in the Vaishali Region. The image of Chowmukhi Mahadeo which is discovered in Kama Chapra Village at the outskirt, of Basad belongs to

the Gupta period because a gold coin of Chandra Gupta II (Vikramaditya) was discovered beneath it and below the image there are the writing in Sanskrit in Gupta script which are fading out now. Most probably at the end of the Gupta period a large section of Licchavis when found that their glory had been fade up left Vaishali for Nepal and established a kingdom there. Now their form of government turned into monarchy from democracy. This glorious dynasty came to an end in 879 A.D.

2.4.7 The Harshavardhan period:

At the beginning of the 7th century A.D., Vaishali came under the rule of Harshavardhana (606-647 A.D.) the king of Thaneswar Kannauja. When the famous Chinese traveller Hsiian Tsang (629-645 A.D.) arrived at Vaishali he found it decaying. The Sangharam which was prevalent for several hundred years was also came to an end. He wrote about the people: It is the evidence that there were several Jain people in Vaishali. Therefore it is clear that Vaishali was not provincial capital now and that with the decay of Pataliputra and Shravasti, trade and commerce also came to a stand still. After the death of Harshavardhana Suzerainty of Tibet was spread over Tirhut and Nepal. The Chinese traveller Hsiian Tsang visited Vaishali and paid his respect to it.
2.4.6 The Mughal period:

In 1324 A.D. Tirhut came under the Delhi Sultanate as a result of the aggression of Sultan Giasuddin Toghloque of Delhi. Giasuddin and his successor Firoz Shah Toghloque handed over the administration of Tirhut to Kameswar Thakur. So came the Thakur/Aurangeswar dynasty into being. During this time the ruler of Bengal Hazl Ilius Shah attacked Tirhut and brought Hazipur under his rule. He established the town of Hazipur (1345-1358 A.D.) and constructed one fort there. The name Hazipur came from him.

Firoz Shah Toghloque, Sultan of Delhi defeated Hazl Ilius Shah on November 8, 1353 A.D. Hazl Ilius submitted to the Sultan and Hazipur was placed under Delhi. Towards the last part of the 14th century A.D., the kings of Jaunpur kept Bihar and Tirhut under them for about a century. In the beginning of the 15th century (1418 A.D.) the Sultan of Delhi Badshah Hussain Shah attacked Shivali Singh, king of Tirhut whether Shivali Singh was dead in the war or fled away is not known. History is also silent about it. Hussain Shah made settlement with Lachmikia, wife of Shivali Singh but his son Nashrat Shah (1518-1532) who was the Nawab of Bengal attacked Tirhut continuously. At last he occupied Hazipur in 1540 and appointed his son-in-law Makdam Alam as the kiledar of Hazipur. But Makdam Alam rose Shah and joined hands with Shershah of Sasaran. Hazipur became one of the strongholds
of Shershah. Mirza Hindal attacked Hazipur at the instance of emperor Humayun (1547) and Shershah paid taxes to the emperor and made treaty with him. With the coming of Muslim rule, Mosques began to be constructed and names of places began to be changed. Some of the towns turned into forests. In 1495 when the Muslim saint Muhammad Faizullah breathed his last his body was put in a grave at a high place of Basad and a fair takes place near his grave on the Ram Navami Days every year. He had three sons — Sheikh Mukhdam Owais, Sheikh Abdur Rahman and Sheikh Abdul Fatah Hedayatulla Sarmast and they were placed in three regions respectively at Basad (in Vaishali district), Saraiyaganj (in Muzaffarpur) and at Tangol (a part of Hazipur). Shah Ali, son of Mukhdam Owais, was placed at Jandaha (another district of Vaishali). These Muslim 'Fakirs' were very influential in those days. Now Vaishali becomes a history and being abandoned and neglected, it becomes a material for antiquarian research.

2.4.9 Modern period:

Nawab Ali Bardikhan was dead in 1753 A.D. After him Sirajuddaula, Kirzafar and Mir Kasem became nawabs. After the battle of Plassey (1757) the influence of the East India Company began to grow more and more. In 1760, the emperor of Delhi, Shah Alam attacked Bihar to do away with the influence of the Company. The administrator of Burnea
Swadim Hussain started his journey to help the emperor; but he was defeated by Captain Nix at Hazipur. In 1763, Mir Kasim with help of Sultan Shah Alam of Delhi and Suja of Ayodhya attacked the East India Company; but the English won in the battle of Buxor. Shah Alam was compelled to surrender the Dewani of Bengal, Bihar (along with Tirhut) and Orissa to the Company (August 15, 1765 A.D.). In 1782 Francis Grand was appointed the first Collector of Tirhut. During 1790-1793, Lord Cornwallis introduced permanent settlement there. During 1840-45 A.D., the first revenue survey was conducted in Tirhut. In 1858 along with other parts of India, Tirhut was handed over to the British Crown by the Company; and in 1865 Hazipur Sub-division was established.

From the beginning of the present century; the district of Vaishali took active parts in the freedom struggle of India. In 1920, a Gandhi Ashram was established and a Sub-division Congress Committee was formed in Hazipur. Mahatma Gandhi visited Hazipur in 1925. The volunteers of the Congress tried to take away mailbags from the Railway wagons on 15.8.1931. The national flag was hoisted on the Lalkpur Police Outpost on 15.8.1942 and on the Mahuar Police Outpost on 17.8.1942 and on the same day about 100 convicts broke away Hazipur jail. The British government imposed a collective fine of 4s. 10,000/- on the people of Hazipur. The people of Vaishali had to suffer a lot for
independence and democracy. And finally on August 15, 1947 India achieved independence.

2.5 Social Background:

There are enough evidences that the 'Varnashram' system prevailed in Aryavarta, the inhabitance of the Aryans since the Vedic days. At the beginning the cultural matters of the country were under the control of the Brahmins while the political one was under the Kshatriyas. Gradually the Kshatriyas also began to exert influence over the cultural fields also. As a result there was a clash between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas for superiority; for example we find the description of clashes between Jasistha and Vishwamitra in the Brahmand Puran, between Parashuram and the Kshatriyas in the Brahmavalvarta Puran and between Dadhichi and Kshuveyu in the Shiv Puran.

The illiterate, ignorant and uncultured poor people of the eastern provinces due to their ignorance and being apart from high society mitigated their cultural thirst by offering sacrifice to ghosts and spirits. During the Gupta era a revision was in the Varnashram system for the upliftment of these ignorant masses. The institution of Puja, Sacrifice etc. were revised and rearranged and Sanskrit was established anew. The religious scriptures had their new editions; the

11. From Umashankar Lixit's Collection.
the Manusmrity was adjusted with the then society and revision was also made in the Yajnavalka, the Narada and the Brihaspati Smritis. So, although Varnashram system was reintroduced in the Gupta era yet it was made on a new basis. It was now transformed into Caste system, originally in the Ashrams there were married ones but later due to the Vairagya Pradhan system of religion (i.e., religion based abandonment of worldly materials) the Brahmins became more influential and many people began to accept 'Vairagya'.

The Mahayan section of Buddhists, due to its growing popularity began to give birth to a new consciousness among the people. The new generation being disgusted with the Varnashram system began to join hands with this new consciousness. The Brahmins now gave a new and higher status to the Sudras so that they might be of help for them in the Brahman-Kshatriya clashes. 12

But the religion of the common masses remained as eternal as before and several sections like the Vaishnavites, the Shaivites and the Shaktas began to flourish. So also the importance of the Gand other Holy places remained unchanged; and the protection of cows, the shraddha ceremonies and other Vratoparvas etc. were performed as before; and they become the conventional ceremonies for all. The Vedas remained as the source and the basis for all but the common

12. Vajjikaushal, Munishwar Ray 'Munish'.
people began to sing the praises of Satya Narayan in lieu of all other puja and sacrifices.

Here the social system was very much developed and improved. All problems were solved by the people unitedly and through discussions in the 'Sangsthagars' is public places; and the administration was also carried in this manner. This was a holy place where there was the 'Ganga' for democracy which in course of time disappeared and now again it reappeared in every village in the manner in which the internal water of the earth came out through wells and ponds. The social system of Vaishali was very well-organised. The Sabha was generally summoned where all the members took part and solutions were arrived at through the opinion of all. Everything here was performed according to rules and regulations. Old people were respected and young were protected and nourished carefully. Due respect was shown to girls and ladies here. People took it as their duty to uphold the prestige of the women. Religious places were looked after and the government defrayed the expenses of these religious places. The Vajj's took proper case of the Sadhus, Mahantas and the pilgrimages who visited Vaishali. In this manner, the social background of Vaishali which was based on seven basic principles, was quite rich and very powerful.

13. Vaishali Lila, ed. Dr. Yagendra Mishra.
2.5.1 **The Social Structure:**

Vaishali is the mother of democracy as the first democratic society of the world was constituted here. As we believe, democracy was established here about 725 B.C. while a revolution took place in Videh, democracy was established in Vaishali at that time. Then a new dynasty took over the administration of Videh. The Licchavis were the found of this democratic society; and later it came to be known as the Licchavi Sangha.

These Sanghas of Vaishali were famous for their democratic principles. Justice was rendered to all categories of people here. The Raja, the Up-ruja, the Senapati and the Bhada Garik were in the central executive. A Samiti was established with nine 'Ganarayyas' and this samity looked after the administration. The central legislature was known as the Sangstha and the place of its meeting was the 'Sangstha-Gar'. The total membership of the Sangstha was 7707. The members of the Sangstha were known as the 'Raja' and up-ruja, one commander and one Bhadagarik was allotted to him. The coronation ceremony was to be held for each member of the Sangstha. For this purpose some special 'Coronation tanks' were to be dug for the purpose. It was believed that without such special tanks the Coronation of the kings was not complete and people other than the Licchavis were not allowed to take
bath in these tanks.\textsuperscript{14} The Lacchavi's love for justice was quite popular one; and the courts were established one after another. Therefore, there was equal justice to all.

Mahavir for whom non-violence is the basic principle once said, "Welfare is possible only through non-violence. One, who let others live will live."\textsuperscript{15} The supersending of others' life force is the supersending of our own. Bhagwan Mahavir established equality and co-ordinated all philosophical theories by rejecting the luxurious systems and inequalities in the society. In this way an organised and democratic society was formed in Vaishali.

\textbf{2.5.2 Relationship among different communities:}

Vaishali was the meeting ground of all sections of Hindus like the Buddhists, the Jains etc. There was no clashes among the different communities here. In the same manner Vaishali was a place of unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Majhar of Aulia Al-rahmat Sheikh Kazim Faizullah Sutteri, who inherited from the great Sufi Saint of the 15th century Muhammad Sufi, is also situated here. Sheikh Suttari was born in 1434 at Maner. He visited Mandu (situated in Madhya Pradesh) on foot and became the disciple of the famous Saint Abul Sattari there. After returning from

\textsuperscript{14} Vaishali Ka Ganatantry, Dr. Yogendra Mishra.
\textsuperscript{15} Mahavir Ki Sandeshwan, Dr. Shriranjan Surideva.
there he began to preach in Vaishali. He died here in Vai-
shali in 1495 A.D. He was buried in ancient Buddhist Stups; 
and it came to be known as the Dargah of Keresji. There is
a grave of a Buddhist monk near by and its pujari is des-
cended from the dynasty of one Kedar Chanbe, a Brahmin by
birth and the Majhar has been looked after by the people
descended from the dynasty of Ramjan Shah. Every year dur-
ing the time of the Ram Navami, a big fair has been orga-
nised which is known as the Vaman Fair. Prayers are arranged
by several lakhs of people both Hindus and Muslims together
for three days and it is a rare example of Hindu-Muslim
unity and unity of all religious.6 During this time res-
pectful affection is shown also to other smaller sections
of different communities. A clear indication of communal
harmony is found during this Vaishali Mahotsava. It is
common custom there to bestow special responsibilities on
the Harijans and fishermen in this ceremony. The fishermen
should lead the procession with a flag of the ceremony in
their hand and to fetch a potful of holy water from the
Abhishek Puskarini to be kept on the dais of the ceremony.
The opening song of the ceremony is also to be sung by fisher-
men. Their colourful dress becomes more colourful along with
their heartful delight.7 It is the symbol of unity and equa-
lity between high and low caste people.

6. Vaishali Ki Samajwadi Sanskriti, Nagendra Prasad Sinha,
7. Vaishali Digdarshan, Jagadish Ch. Rathur.
2.5.3 Social Customs:

The social customs of the district of Vaishali are almost similar to those of ancient ones. Even today, a girl here is regarded as a burden of the family and the birth of a girl is not celebrated. The marriage of the girls is also arranged at minor ages. The system of 'Dwaragamana' after marriages is also in vogue till now like before. The systems like the dowry and the Dhuachut are also prevalent here in this district. The faith on 'Dev-Devta' and other blind faiths are also here. People take it to be their prestige to keep the females in the purdah. But with the extension of education, these social evils began to decrease gradually. Formerly intercaste marriages were also regarded by the people here as evil.

2.5.4 Customs of purification:

The consecration or purification brings forth development of the power of human body, mind and actions. The purification one of these powers influences the purification of the other; and character is built on the basis of such purifications. This consecration is the gift of education. For this reason during the old days children of Vaishali were sent to the Ashrams of the Gurus and they were reformed through the education of the Gurus there and were made able citizens. Kings had to undergo educational
reformations after bathing in the Puskarini. The Brahmins were required in all the purification ceremonies right from the birth of a child to its death. Purifications is related equally to the development of actions and psychology. As a result, with physical consecration comes mental or psychological development i.e., one can attain the Sat, the Chit and the Anand along with purification of the body.

Purification prevailed in Vaishali in its direct and indirect forms. The primary purifications, which were in use in ancient Vaishali were, the Jana (birth), the Mundan (shaving of the Head), the Yajnopavit (inventure of the sacred thread), the Vivah (marriage), the Gawana (ceremony of taking the pride to her husband's house for the first time after marriage) and the Mrityu (death). These are also in use in the present Hindu society of Vaishali in each and every district.

2.5.5. Social Relationship:

Lord Mahavir spoke of the unity of the whole mankind as a bond of social relationship. He said, "Nobody belongs to any caste from the time of his birth. One’s caste is ascertained only through one’s action. The caste of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra are not according to birth but according to their performance of action." All creatures

18. Mahavir Ke Sandesh Vani, Dr. Shriranjan Suridev.
whether they are as small as insects or like men are all equal in their existence. The solution of all problems like poverty, casteism and communalism including problems of behaviour and character are indicated clearly in the message of Lord Mahavir. He wants to say that it is impossible to know the society without knowing oneself. So Mahavir spent his whole life in the realisation of 'self' and in establishing the social values. He, therefore, gave a social status to the society downtrodden, which gave birth to the idea of self respect in them. He tried to translate his advice into action in his own life.

The social relationship in ancient Vaishali was quite cordial. Everybody shares others in their distress and happiness equally. The advice of Mahavir had deep influence over all sections of the people of the society. As a result the social relationship was of high standard.

2.5.6 Social system:

The social system of Vaishali Janapada was of high standard. All classes of people of the society enjoyed equal rights. The king did not do any injustice to any class of the society. The seven questions put to Anand by Lord Buddha and the answers to them from Anand reflected the social system and the system of justice of Vaishali Janapada in old days. To make social justice secured and successful
and to show that there was unity in diversity, all the different sections of people in Vaishali tried their best. The Sutra Kritang (2:1:13) a Jain literature made reference to different castes of people serially in the following groups — the Ugra, the Bhoja, the Zixak, the Jnattri, the Kaurav and the Licchavis. They were described as residents of the same region and the same country. It rather proved that the social relationship among the different castes was quite cordial. Lord Buddha was also the supporter of freedom and self-sufficiency of the individual but the society was superior to the individual for him. As democracy in Vaishali was world famous, he believed that to achieve the social goal, it is necessary that one should abandon one's individual good. It is believed that the first ray of democracy came from Vaishali. So, it can be safely concluded that the social system of Vaishali was quite high in which each individual received religious, political and social justice and due to this successful social system all the people lived happily and peacefully.

2.6 Religious background:

All the problems which troubles the society now can easily be solved through religion. Religion gives us power to fight against all unquiet circumstances of the society. Therefore whatever is expected in human life can be achieved through knowledge of religion and its practice without
Religion the attainment of happiness would be impossible, culture and civilization would disappear, there would be an environment of struggle in the society and the society would be the target of destruction. Hence the whole society might be uprooted. The Indians are fortunate that they have inherited a very high religion. They have firm faith in their religion and express it through their dealings and customs.

Due to religion in India, dynasty, caste, community and religious faith do not stand in the way of human relationship. Religion is our life blood and therefore secularism has deep root in India. Religion is not confined and limited to individuals. It is the symbol of world unity and unity of the mankind. It is customary for Indian religions to respect Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavir, which became rather a tradition for the Hindus. Religion is a means to realise eternal happiness. Happiness consists in the realisation of man and therefore, human quality refers to good qualities.

Religion teaches us only to give something and not to take anything in return. This idea of giving is 'Tyaga' (abandonment) and this abandonment is the basis of religion. In almost all religious, the soul of them is situated

19. Dharm Ka Gunbodh, Dr. Nawal Kishore Kishra.
in the heart of abandonment. This abandonment means the giving up of worldly desires. So, we find that religion establishes an empire of generosity. Religion is meant for making a man happy. A happy life is possible only through development of character.

2.6.1 The Antiquity of different Religions:

There are several religions in India which may be regarded sub-sections of Hinduism. They are the Shaivism, the Shakta, the Buddhism, the Jainism and the Vaishnavism.

2.6.2 The Shalvites:

Shaivism is regarded as one of the oldest religions of India. The Shalvites worship Lord Shiva only. They worship only the Lord i.e., Lord Shiva. To them Lord Shiva is the creator and the destructor of this world. The Sakas regarded Lord Shiva as their tutelary deity. Although the Sakas were converted later yet their priests worshipped Mahadev or Lord Shiva. Therefore Shaivism can be regarded as one of the oldest religions of India.

2.6.3 The Shakta:

The term 'Shakta' has been derived from Shakti. The Shakti is the symbol of Goddess Durga. Goddess Durga has been regarded as the superiormost of all gods and goddesses
"Jagati Palan-Janam-Maran Tatha Hari Birinchi Mahesh Sekhar Chuvyaman Pade." But in the Shakta religion Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are all worshipped. Even today in Mithila the Shaktas keep the shaligram and the image of Lord Shiva in their houses. Basically the Shaiva and the Shakta religions are one and the same. Tulsidasjee in his 'Ramcharit Manas' made Rama worship Shiva and vice versa, and thereby he wanted to create an atmosphere of union of both the cults.


In this way the Shaiva and the Shakta Cults going to be united because both of them are related to antiquity and eternity.

2.6.4 The Buddhism:

Lord Buddha was born in 563 B.C. His name was Siddhartha during his childhood and was also known as Gautam since after the death of his mother, his step mother 'Gautami' brought him up. He was married at an early age of 18 with

20. Ram Charit Manas (Lanka Kand), Tulsidas.
a beautiful princess Yasodhara. But he developed the idea of 'Sannyasa' i.e., abandonment of worldly materials gradually and after the birth of his son, he was afraid of deep involvement in the worldly things. He then stealthily left the place for acquirement of 'Jnana'. Then, he with his five followers after moving to several places, settled down at the bank of the river Naranjana and concentrated in deep meditation. But he could not acquire knowledge and therefore, he left for Gaya. He then again engaged himself in 'Tapasya' under a 'Bata Vrix'. Now divine 'Jnana' revealed to him. He then came to be known as the Buddha, which means the wise. He acquired this 'Jnana' or wisdom at the age of 35. The tree under which he acquired 'Jnana' came to be known as the 'Buddhi Vrix'.

Lord Buddha gave his first sermon at Sarnath to his five followers. These five followers became his disciple immediately and they came to be known as the 'Pancha Vaggiya'. Then the number of followers rose to 60, he organised a Sangha. Gradually the Sangha became so popular that everyone who was converted to Buddhism had to utter:

"Buddhang Sharang Gocchami,
Sanghang Sharanang Gocchami,
Bhammang Sharanang Gocchami."

After the conquest of Kalinga emperor Ashoka accepted Buddhism and made it state religion. He also engaged his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra for the propagation of Buddhism in Shri-Lanka. Lord Buddha passed away in 483 B.C.
at the age of 80. He spent his last 45 years in propagating his religion. Today there are few Buddhists in India but they are numerous in countries like Shri-Lanka, Myanmar, Tibet, China etc. So Buddhism may said to have lost its ground in its original homeland i.e., India.

2.6.5 The Jainism:

Jainism is another most ancient religion of the world. According to the Jains, Lord Mahavir is the 24th and last Tirthankara and prior to him came Vrishabhdev or Adinath to this world. In this manner prior to Lord Mahavir came 23 Tirthankaras to the world. But only two Tirthankaras are known to the world, they are Parshvanath and Mahavir. Both of them abandoned all worldly things, and engaged themselves in deep 'Tapasya'. They have four basic principles:

I) Ahimsa (non-violence);
II) Satya (Truthfulness);
III) Asteya (non-stealing); and
IV) Aparigraha (non-possession).

Lord Mahavir was born about 599 B.C. at Kundugram near Vaishali in a 'Xatriya' family. His father was Siddhartha, a man from the Kashyap Gotra, and his mother was from Videh and her name was Videhdatta. She had two other names viz., Trishala and Priyakarini. She was the sister of Licchavi king Chetak and from Basistha Gotra.
There are two opposite views about the marital status of Lord Mahavir. According to the Digambara section, Mahavir was a lifelong 'Brahmachari' while to the Swetambara section he was married to a princess of the Kaundinya Gotra named Yasoda and they had one daughter named Anojja. It is believed that he left home with the permission of his wife at the age of 29 and accepted Sannyasa. He went to a place named Khandwan where he put off all his ornaments under an 'Ashok' tree and was fasting for two and half days. He then shaved his head and became a fullfledged 'Vixu'. He then gave up all his clothes and with a Vixa-patra at his hand began roaming from place to place. He engaged himself in 'Tapesya' for twelve years. On the thirteenth year the 'Kaivalya Jnana' revealed to him under a shala tree by the bank of the river Rijjupalika near a village named Jrimbhika. He then came to be known as 'Tirthankara Mahavir. He preached his ideas and ideology in different places like Magadh, Anga, Mithila, Kaushal etc. for about 30 years after his acquirement of Jnana. The basic principles of his religion are:

1) Not to believe in the existence of God;

ii) To believe in the existence and immorality of the soul; and

iii) To perform the Panch Mahavratas -
   a) Ahimsa;
   b) Triratna;
   c) Samyak Jnana;
In course of time the Jainism was divided into two sections — the Swetambaras and the Digambaras of which the former group use white cloth and the latter use no cloth and worship nude image of Mahavir. There is no other difference between them. But the rules of the Swetambara section are simple while those of the Digambara are quite rigid ones. According to the Digambara section so long as a woman cannot release from the bindings of Karma, she can never born as a man. But the other section does not believe in it. There are people of Jain religion scattered over whole of India; but they are found in huge numbers particularly in Karwar and Rajasthan.

2.6.6 The Vaishnavism:

During the 6th and the 7th centuries A.D., the worshipping of Lord Vishnu came into being in the Deccan. Ramanujacharyya was born in 1017 A.D. in the dynasty of priests of Shrirangam. He was a great scholar in Sanskrit. He wrote the Commentation on the Brahma Sutra from the Vaishnavite point of view and introduced the 'Vishistadwaita Ved'. Ramanuja had to leave Shrirangam because the Chola king did not

11. Bharat Bhum Ki Etihas, Shiv Narayan Singhsana, p. 46
appreciate his ideas and began to torture the Vaishnavas there. After him another new section based on the Mahajan Commentary came into being. During this time the Muslims ruled in the Northern India and tortured the Hindus. In the meantime several Vaishnavite sections came into being.

2.7 Cultural background:

The Indian Culture is a religion based culture. Since very ancient days there has been an uninterrupted relationship between religion and culture in India; and the Indian people have great faith in this culture. The faith of Indian people in their own culture gave birth to a great civilisation and since ancient times, this culture have been carrying a message of spirituality, peace, forebearance and love to the world. We have named our traditional culture after our religion Hinduism as the Hindu Culture since several centuries back and it becomes the life blood for all the Indian. Indian Rishis and Maharshis believe that all-round development of India is possible only through this tradition and culture based on religion. As such one is expected to follow their religious tradition which is natural for and inherited by us, for one's cultural development in India.

Since the days of the first Vaishali Mahotsav importance has been laid to democratic convocations and care had been taken to cherish and protect folk culture and to
encourage the folk-artists so that they may realise the pride of their own culture and be proud of their expression of own emotions. For the development of folk culture some 'Lokotsav kala' ceremonies were arranged frequently in addition to the Vaishali Mahotsav when folk singers of Vaishali could take part in the competitions. Out of 80 villages some four villages were selected where once in a month a convention for folk music could be arranged. In the 'Lokotsav kala' several items like matters related to seasons, agriculture etc. and light dramatic performances, and such conventions represented the folk culture of Vaishali district. Below we refer to a song relating to folk culture of Vaishali:

"Vaishali Ke Subhdin Aaj Firse
Aayal Sakhia,
Chalchal Vaishali Aaj Darasan
Karela Sakhia,
Varas Bital Aaj Subh Din Aayal,
Vaishali Ke Jas Jag Mein Chayal
Sab Nagarike Sirtaz Fir Se Dekhab Sakhia.
Mahavir Jee Enhe Janamlan
Buddha Tathagat Kuchh Di Baolan
Puny Bhumi Ke Darsan Aaj Firse
Karab Sakhia,
Hajtantra Se Duniya Dakhel²²
...
...
Naman Karun Kai Uns Dharti Ko
Jiski Dhul Bani Chandan Hai,

Of all local organisations, the Fisherman's organisation is the leading organisation, which was encouraged and praised first in 1948 by N.D.J. Rao, the then Deputy Divisional Officer of the Mahotsav. It is found that all styles of folksongs of North Bihar are represented in the Mahotsav and Vaishali remains as the focal point of folk culture.

2.7.1 The Mahotsav:

In 1942, the Hazipur Division under which Vaishali and villages near by also came, took very active part in the

Freedom movement in India. When in 1944, the idea of celebrating the Vaishali Mahotsav to the mind of the Deputy Divisional Officer, Mr. Jagadish Chandra Mathur, then the condition was quite difficult and troublesome one. With much difficulty and troubles the Mahotsav began on March 31, 1943 at 8 O'clock in the morning with games and sports of students and village people. Games and sports were held in ancient style and began with the blowing of Conch-shells. Mr. Justice Bhubaneswar Prasad Singh, who was a Justice of the Patna High Court and later became a Justice of the Supreme Court, was also present in the ceremony. The ceremony was quite attractive for the people. On April 10, 1946, the Mahotsav was held for the 2nd time. In this ceremony, a special agenda was fixed for women for the first time. Some local leaders were invited to the ceremony and classical dance was also performed in it. The president of this ceremony was the famous historian, Joychandra Vidyalankarjee.

The third Mahotsav was held on April 14, 1947. In this Mahotsav the Jain people were requested to accept Vaishali as the birth place of Mahavir and renamed the district of Basad as Vaishali. In this way this Mahotsav has been celebrated on the birth day of Lord Mahavir (Chaitra, 13). This ceremony commemorates the memories of Lord Mahavir, Lord Buddha and the ancient Licchavi democracy. It was also symbolises the seven democratic principles of the Vrijji Sangh viz., the Constitutional system, unity, primacy of
laws, respect to old generation, respect and security to women, preservation of religious places, religious co-existence and the resurrection of Vaishali. The remnants does not remain as remnants only; it spreads the light around now.

Now this Mahotsav attains its highest success. Every year this ceremony has been celebrated with three days' programme in which both the govt. official and local people join hands. A souvenir is also published as a part of the celebrations. So, this Mahotsav turns into a public fair now-a-days and thousands of people take part in it.

2.7.2 Folk-culture:

The people here in Vaishali are all simple and their behaviour is quite friendly to others. All are religious minded. In those days the area was about five thousand square miles. The soil was very fertile and mangoes and bananas were found in abundance here. People cultivate these fruits with care and interest. The pronunciations of the people of this locality are very distinct and clear. They have great regard for religion and knowledge. People of different faiths live together and unitedly. Here there is no reknown University yet people from different parts of the world visit here in search of knowledge. In old days great sages like Sanak, Sanand, Sanat Kumar, Narad and others
said to have visited this place. The society here was with high culture and was proud of being an ideal society. Lord Rama and Lord Buddha were highly satisfied with the behaviour of the people and praised them highly.

People of this locality use plain and single dresses. In times of any festival they also use colourful dresses.

Below we refer to a song related to their dress:

--- "Nile Nile basan Pahiri Ke Licchaviya,
Ugrinya Mein Nile Nile Chhodva Charhi Aye,
Hariol Lal rang basan Pahiri Ke,
Ugrirlya Mein Ohi Rang Chodkar Charhi Aayol,
Ujjar majith Aur Sowarn Rang Basan
Ugriya Mein Ohi Rang Chodva Charhi Ayo."\(^{24}\)

When Lord Buddha arrived there, he stayed in a garden at Amrapali; and the next day he accepted the invitation of a prostitute to take food with her. The Licchavis then came to know that Lord Buddha was coming to Vaishali and stayed at a garden of Amrapali. The Licchavi rulers, on hearing this, came to Amrapali in their colourful dresses. These high classes dresses proved their high culture. These people upheld Karma (i.e., Action) on equal footings with Dharma (i.e., Religion). The womenfolk here are not only well-versed in arts but also adept in safeguarding their motherland and they donot lag behind in sacrificing their

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24. Vaishali Leela, Jadish Chandra Mathur, p. 73
lives for the motherland when required. During the time of Mahavir the Licchavis in Vaishali established democratic system for the first time in human history, where nobody came to the throne through hereditary rights, on the other-hand a representative selected by the people became the king here.

2.7.3 **Traditional Gods and Goddesses:**

In the kingdom of Vaishali there were worshipping of local gods and goddesses like those of the Vedas and of ancient India. These gods were worshipped with all pomp and gorgeousness by them in their traditional ways. Of these local deities, Vasawan, Bakhtaur, Rahbaba, Yogibaba, Karikh, Kalang, Mahkar, Ganinath, Niranjan, Sakha Shambunath, Trilokinath, Kewal Singh, Koilabir, Garaibabir, Kali, Bannic, Budiya mayee, Gahil, Vishtara, Shitala and Naina are reknowned ones. Although the people of this locality were very much in the national stream yet they donot disregard their local deities. Here gods and goddesses can be classified into the following categories :-

1) The traditional Vedic gods and goddesses:

In this category came Barham, Mahkar, Budiyamayee, Jalkumari, Nadi Devi, Suraj Jalpa etc.
ii) Ancient deities:
Parvati, Laxmi-Bishnu, Ram-Sita, Radha-Krishna, Bhim, Tulsi, Bura, Kaali, Hanuman etc. come under this category.

iii) Local deities:
As stated above there are some local deities over and above the Vedic and other deities. They are Vasawan, Bakhtaur, Ganinath, Khoma Sati, Kewal Singh Koilabir, Gindi, Gahil, Naina, Yogin Din bhadri, Karikh, Sankha and Shalunath.

There are some local deities which are of national character i.e., they are also found in other parts of India. But the worshipping of them here is done in a local process. For example, Vasawan who descended from the Yadav dynasty is not only worshipped by the Yadav caste people but he is worshipped by other caste also. In this way some of the local deities of Vaishali have been recognised by the people of the whole country.25

They are as follows:
Yadav — Lork, Basawan, Bakhtaur, Sarothi and Vrijabhar
Mallah — Amar Sing and Natuwa Dayal Sing
Kanu — Ganinath
Teli — Manasa Ram
Dusadh — Sales.

25. Vajjikancharal, Bhuniwar Ram Manish, p. 28
Most of these folk-gods and goddesses emerged from some low status and rose to the status of deities by virtue of their noble and miraculous performances. In their traditional stories generally certain ideals are reflected. These ideals are secularism, communal harmony, intercaste marriages, welfare of the people etc. and the like. The ideals of these folk gods and goddesses if presented to the present society, could have been beneficial for the mass people and could give a new harmonious life for the new generation.

2.7.4 Different platforms:

The cultural activities of Vaishali are represented in different stages and platforms. Of all the cultural functions the Vaishali Leela is very important one. Open stages are used for its performances. There is a special method of presenting this Leela. There is a deem light on the stage and flash light is thrown on the 'kathavasak', and sometimes on the singers and when required the whole stage is illuminated. They also use a number of microphones. The 'Leela' will go on and the 'kathavasak' will utter the speeches and the characters will express them through their gestures and postures. The 'Leela' is performed within one day.

Besides these 'Leela's, platforms are raised and decorated for different ceremonies; and flashes of Vaishali are
presented in the Mahotsav. Although the present generation 
is always after 'modernisations' yet the folk culture of 
Vaishali touches the heart of the mass people and it stands 
victoriously. In Vaishali where there is a mixture of folk-
drama, folksongs and ceremonies of the Vajjis and the Vai-
shalite people join together.

Finally we can conclude that the region of Vaishali, 
which has been divided into several parts now had a great 
tradition and history of her own. The great names of Lord 
Buddha and Lord Mahavir are also associated with her. It 
is a region full of colourful tradition and culture. But at 
the same time it is the best example of 'unity in diversity.'