CHAPTER XIV
Religious beliefs and Practices.

Contemporary sources indicate that the religious condition of Northern India during the 7th century A.D. was far from satisfactory. There were various creeds and sects. The spirit of religion had become clouded by meaningless ceremonies and blind faith. Empty discussion replaced sincere devotion. Bana gives us a catalogue of representatives of various religious sects and philosophical schools residing at the hermitage of Divakaramitra in the Vindhyan forests. There were the different sects of Jains, the Arhatas (Digambara) and Svetapatas (Svetambaras); different classes of Brahminical ascetics such as Paturakkhusus (naked ascetics), the Maskarins (Parivrajaka), the Varnins (Brahmacharins), the Bhagavatas and Pancharaktrikas (Vaishnava ascetics), the Saivas and Kesalunshakas (those who rooted out their hair); atheists like the Lokayatikas (Charvakas), philosophers like the Kapilas, Kanadás, Apanisadas (Vedantins) and Aisvarakaranikas (Naiyayikas); experts in law (Dharmastra), linguistics (Sabdika), and the purnikas; experts in rituals (Saptatantvas) and Jains (Buddhists). However the co-existence of these different sects at the same place provides ample proof of the spirit of tolerance of the age. The Buddhists are here called Jains, Jina being a name of Buddha; while
what are now called Jains were known as Ārhatas. The Veāishnava sect of Bhāgavatas was distinguished from that of the Pancharātras, Varnis or Brāhmachāris were different from the Apanishadas and these again from the Maakarīs. It is difficult to find out how exactly these several allied sects and schools differed. We may merely note the existence of differences.

At the camp at Manitora Jain, Ārhat, Pāñcupata, Parāśara and other rājasas were anxious to visit Harsha. Among the friends of Bāna there were Parāśari ascetic Sumati, Jain ascetic Viradeva and Maakari Tamraculaka. Women ascetics belonging to Ārhatas, Kṛṣṇa, Viśravasa, Avalokiteśvara and Virici sects resided in the hermitage of Mahāśvetā. Sālvites, Buddhists and Kasapanakas (Dīgambar Jains) stayed with Sukanāśa, the minister of king Tārāpida. Huien Tsang also notes numerous ascetic sects of the times, which had distinct external marks. He remarks, *some wear peacock's tails. Some adorn themselves with a necklace of skulls (perhaps Kāpālikas); some are quite naked (Nirgranthas); some cover the body with grass or boards; some pull out their hair and clip their moustaches; some mat their side-hair and make a top-knot coil. Their cloth is not fixed and the colour varies.* There were also some who smeared themselves with ashes. There were also the worshippers of Śiva and Sakti, the Kāpālika sect and the devotees of Durgā. The Bhūtas, Nirgranthas, the
Kāpālikas and the Jutikas or Chudinkas (ascetics with matted hair) are all differently arrayed. The Sankhayas and the Vaiśeṣikas belong to opposite camps. The Chudinkas wear garments soiled with filth and eat putrid food. These remarks of the two great authorities of the age testify that there were different religious sects, various philosophical schools and several classes of ascetics in the country in this period and that they lived peacefully, without any friction.

These remarks indicate that Hinduism and Buddhism were divided into a number of sects which were further sub-divided into various branches. Śaivism and Bhāgavatism were the most important sects of Hinduism, which had a number of branches. Śaktism (worship of the goddess) was also prevalent. A number of minor gods and even inanimate objects were continued to be worshipped. According to Abhidharma Buddhism is divided into two main sects (1) Hinayāna and (ii) Mahāyāna, while according to Vinayas it is divided into 18 philosophical schools. Jainism had only two branches (1) Svetāmbar (ascetics wearing white garments) and (ii) Digambara (ascetics going without any garments). Jainism was not yet further sub-divided.

Śaivism appears to have been the most popular religious sect. The Maitrakas of Valabhi, A.Śaivism:

I. Hinduism

I. Śaivism:

Sāṇāika of Bengal, Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa and Sailodbhavas of Orissa.
were all Saivites. Harsha was a devotee of Siva before he became an upasaka of Buddhism. The copper plates of the Maitraka rulers reveal that all of them except two called themselves Parama Mahesvaras. Their royal seal had an emblem of an ox, a vehicle of Siva. Trisula was engraved on their coins. Maitrakas considered themselves the descendants of Mitra, one of the four principal pupils of god Lakulisa, the founder of the Pashupata sect. Sasanka was a staunch Saivite and Huien Tsang informs us that he persecuted the Buddhists. Sasanka's gold seal has an image of Siva with the bull. Bhaskaravarma had vowed that he would not bow his head to any god except Siva. His Mihirasapura plate supports this fact. According to Bana the ancestors of Harsha were followers of Saivism and Tantrism. During the reign of Harsha's father, Siva (Rudra) was worshipped along with other gods in the royal palace. Harsha himself before setting out on his conquests, offered worship to the adorable Nilalohita (Rudra-Siva) with deep devotion. In the dramas Katnvali and Priyadarshika, attributed to Harsha, the benedictory verses mention the chief deities of Brahmanism viz. Siva (also called Sambhu and Hara) and other gods. At the quinquennial assembly of Prayag, Harsha installed the image of Siva on the third day. The above facts show that Harsha did not lose faith in his ancestral religion almost till the end of his reign when he was converted to Buddhism. And again, we should remember that except for the
statement in Harsha-carita we have no other authoritative evidence about Harsha’s conversion to Buddhism. And even if we find, Buddha was by that time included among the incarnations of Viṣṇu.

Hsüen Tsang states that there were several followers of Śaivism (Pāśupata sect) in Jālandhara, Ahikshetra, Kapithā, Kāmākūbra, Benaśāra, Bālāwā, Mahēśvarapura and in the regions of Sindh.29 Bālāwā, Mahēśwarapura and Sindh had numerous Pāśupatas.30 Moreover he mentions that there were hundreds of Deva-Temples at Tekka, Frayāgra, Benaśāra, Kāmūra and Valabhi.31 Naturally most of these temples were dedicated to either Śiva or Viṣṇu, the two chief deities of Brāhmaṇism. According to Hsüen Tsang there were several thousand Pāśupatas or devotees of Brāhmaṇical sects in these cities.32 He noticed a great temple of Śiva at Benaśāra, where there were 10,000 professed adherents of Śiva.32 There was a 100 feet high śīle inspiring majestic statue of the God in metal.33 The temple of Mahākāla at Ujjain was famous all over the country. Bāna often mentions it in his Kādamsbāri.34 Śiva was worshipped almost in every house at Thāneśwar.35 Bāna worshipped the image of Śiva with Panchopachāra ceremony before he set out to Harṣa’s court.36 Savitri worshipped Sivalingam on the bank of the river Sona.37
The above instances suggest that Siva was worshipped in the form of an image or a linga. He was worshipped under various names such as Śiva, Sambhu, Kaheśvara, Ṛāra, Bhadreswar, Amratakeshvara, Kaleswara, Pasupati, Rudra and Kapālikaswar. The first six seem to be the benign forms, while the last four indicate his terrible aspect. Śiva in his terrible form was usually worshipped as Kapālikaswar or Mahākāleśvara. Kapālikas, the worshippers of Kapālikaswar, had strange beliefs. They carried on very fearful practices. They wore garlands of human skulls. They believed in a set of demons who were followers of Mahākāla (Śiva) and who were to be propitiated by human sacrifices or by oblations of the flesh of the dead. Mahākāla along with his lieutenant Vetāla, the chief of demons, was to be propitiated by a sacrifice in fire kindled in the mouth of a corpse on the burial ground. The highest aim of a Kapālika was to obtain the condition of a Vidyādharā, a supposed blessed being in attendance on Śiva. Bāna relates how Puapabhūti, the founder of the Vardhana family at Thāneswar, assisted Bhairavacāryya to become a Vidyādharā and by this he attained eminence as a king. Though such stories may not be factual they testify to the strange superstitions of the Śiva cult which prevailed all over the country. This was a type of Tantric worship which probably first came from the south particularly...
The Andhras formed the chief priests in such rites.\textsuperscript{41}

Closely connected with the worship of Siva, was the worship of Śakti, its sect being named as Śaktism. The

superstitious practices of the allied worship of Chandikā, Durgā or Mahākāli were not much better than those of the worship of Mahākāla and here too the Brāhmanical and the Andhras were the worshippers.

Candrāpida saw a temple of the goddess Candikā in the forest on his way to Ujjain. An old Brāhman was residing at the temple.\textsuperscript{42} The queen of king Sudraka was sometimes sleeping in the temple of Candikā by whom she desired to be blessed with a son.\textsuperscript{43} At the time of the fatal illness of Prabhākaravardhana, an Andhra was trying to propitiate the goddess Candikā with animal sacrifice.\textsuperscript{44}

Propitiating the goddess Durgā (Candikā) with liquor and animal sacrifice seems to have been a common practice. Human sacrifice to the goddess was also not uncommon.

Hu̇n Tsang while sailing from Ayodhyā to Ayomukha, was caught by the pirates who wanted to sacrifice him to the goddess Durgā. He was saved by mere luck.\textsuperscript{45} A Sabar leader named Kātanga always remained wet with the blood of buffaloes as the śrīśūla of Durgā.\textsuperscript{46} He used several weapons to conciliate Durgā with blood.\textsuperscript{47} The Sābaras propitiated the goddess with human flesh also.

An idol of Durgā had a sword (Khadga) in one hand.
It is said that the sword of Durgā was as dreadful as the teeth of the rhinoceros in the forest of the Vindhyas.48

Durgā was also worshipped as a merciful goddess.

The queen Vilāsvati worshipped Durgā with Khira, cakes, corn, flowers, dhupa etc.49 Durgā is considered as the consort of Śiva. She was considered to be capable of destroying sin, bringing about happiness, protection, slaughter of foes, purification and the removal of ignorance.50 She was known by twenty names as Devī, Śivā, Durgā, Pārvatī, Kālī, Ambikā, Kātyāyani, Uma, Himāvatī, Bhavāni, Bhadrakālī, Gaurī, Kṣanā, Candikā, Kalavāṭrī, Āryā, Sarvanī, Rudrāṇi and Others.51 Some copper plates of Maithra rulers reveal the names Kottavī (a dreadful form of Durgā), Pāndurajjā (Āryā Devī) and Sankarikā (feminine of Sankara).52 The names indicate that both sākta and saiva sects were widely spread in Saurashtra and Gujarāt also.

Next to Saivism came Vaishnavism. The Bhāgavata

B. Vaishnavism

a. Literary evidences: Haraka's time. Viṣṇupuruṣa composed about 6th century A.D. and Bhāgavata Purāṇa perhaps of the first half of the seventh century A.D. popularised the worship of Viṣṇu.53 The Viṣṇu Purāṇa declares Viṣṇu to be the highest being and describes divine Kṛṣṇa and his marvellous adventures.54 The Bhāgavata purāṇa contains twelve books of which the tenth devoted to the life of Kṛṣṇa is widely read.55
Bāna mentions Bhāgavatism and praises Viṣṇu along with other gods. He also describes the heroic deeds of Kṛṣṇa as related in the Purāṇas. Hsiian Tsang vaguely refers to hundreds of Deva-temples and thousands of followers of various sects of Brāhmanism. He states that in Tekka, Sthānesvara, Srūghna, Kānuyakubja, Prayāga, Śrāvasti, Benāras, Bengal, Kāmarupa, Malwa, Atali and Valabhi there were hundreds of Deva-temples with thousands of followers of different sects. Some of the temples might have been dedicated to god Viṣṇu and a great number of devotees might have been Vaisnavites.

The Gupta inscriptions and coins of the 5th and 6th century A.D. testify that the Gupta rulers were great champions of Bhāgavatism and many of them adopted the titles of Pārāma Bhāgavatās (great devotees of god Viṣṇu). Their coins also reveal the images of Viṣṇu, Laxmi and their symbols such as conch, disc and lotus. As a result of royal patronage in the Gupta age, Bhāgavatism became a powerful sect. It strengthened its position further during the 7th century A.D., as other evidences suggest. Though most of the Māitrāka rulers were worshippers of god Śiva, Maharāja
Dharasena first, according to his Māliya copper plate (571-72 A.D.) was a Parama Bhāgavata. 61 Dasyatāra Temple at Deogadh in Jhansi district, ascribed to the latter half of the 6th century A.D., represents Viṣṇu reclining on the serpent Ananta with other gods watching. 62 The elegantly carved relief of Nara-Nārāyaṇa at the same temple is also worth nothing. 63 The Sārnāth stone inscription attributed to the 7th century A.D., pertaining to the reign of king Prakataditya tells us that he built a shrine for god Īravīśa viś. Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa. 64 The Aṃhād stone inscription of Ādityāsena (650 A.D.) informs that this ruler built an excellent temple of Viṣṇu. His father Mādhavagupta, an associate of Harṣa, was probably a Vaiṣṇava because he is described in this record as having carried a discus like Viṣṇu in his palm. 65 These instances indicate that both Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva cults were widespread in Northern India in the 7th century A.D. 66

In the hermitage of Divākaramitra Bāna mentions Pancharatrikas and Bhāgavatas along with other religious sects. 67 According to Fuhrer Panchatrikas had special yoga ceremonies and they made idols and constructed temples of Viṣṇu according to their own rules. They were smart vaishnavas and believed in the theory
of incarnations of Viṣṇu. Bhāgavatism became widely prevalent while Pancharātra sect is rarely spoken of. Some very fine sculptures (ascribed to 6th and the 7th century A.D.) depicting the Boar (Varāha), Man-lion (Nrīsinha) and Dwarf incarnations (Vāman) of Viṣṇu are found carved in different parts of the rock cut temples at Udayagiri (Bhopāl region, Badāmi and Pahārpura (southern Bengal). At the village of Kadwār near Somanātha (Saurāṣṭra) there is a Viṣṇu-temple ascribed to 7th century A.D. At present there is an idol of Boar only, but reliefs of the remaining incarnations in the temple suggest that originally there were idols of all the ten incarnations. The fact that Kṛṣṇa is not depicted there possibly indicates that by this time Kṛṣṇa had begun to be worshipped as the chief incarnation. The verse quoted by Cassins hints at the same fact.

The Kṛṣṇa legend seems to have formed an essential element of vaishnavism in Bengal as early as the 6th or 7th century A.D. The most important archaeological evidence is supplied by the sculptures at Pahārpura which represent various incidents from the life of Kṛṣṇa such as his uprooting the twin Arjuna trees, killing the demon Kesin etc. At the famous caves of Alorā ascribed to 8th century A.D. there are reliefs showing the scenes of
Govardhanadharana and Kāliyamardana. Harivansapurāṇa, composed by Jinasenaśūri during the age of the Maitraka rulers in Gujarāt (end of 7th century A.D.) narrated several instances from the childhood of Kṛṣṇa. This suggests that Kṛṣṇa cult was quite popular during the 7th century A.D. Bhāgavat Purāṇa and Bhāgavatism emphasized the devotional and loving aspect of Kṛṣṇa worship. As a result it spread throughout the country. Kālidāsa cult was possibly non-existent in this age. No source of this period refers to it. But the idea was already popular at this time that the earth is Vaishnava or Sakti of Viṣṇu.

This does not prove that worship of Rāma was non-existent. Bhattikāvyā or Rāvaṇavadana a poem composed by Bhatti during the first quarter of the 7th century A.D. during the rule of Ānrasena III, was one of the popular books. It relates the story of Rāma and his various exploits as depicted in the Rāmāyaṇa. But evidences of the age suggest that the main god of vaishnavas was Kṛṣṇa, the chief incarnation of Viṣṇu.

The sun occupied the third place among Hindu gods. Its worship is as ancient as the Rgveda. The Saura sect (sect worshipping the sun) is mentioned in epics, Viṣṇu Purāṇa and
Bhaviṣya Purāṇa. But the sun cult of the 7th century A.D. had little relation with the solar cult of the vedic times. The solar deity of this age was probably brought in by the Scythians to India. Varāhamihira in Brāhmaṇa states that idols of the sun should be set by Nágas. Bhaviṣya-purāṇa states that Nágas, the Persian worshippers of the sun were invited from Persia by Samb, the son of Krīṣṇa. Tāraka, an astrologer who came to the court of Prabhākara-varadhana on the birth of Harsha, was a Bhojaka or Nágas. The Deo-Baranakēl inscription of Jivita Gupta II (later half of the 7th century A.D.) reveals how the Bhojaka Sūrya-mitra was permitted to continue the granting of a village to the sun temple. The above instances clearly show that there was considerable Persian influence on the Sun-cult of this period.

The worship of the sun seems to have been quite common in this age. The worshippers were known as Adityabhaktas (devotees of the Sun). Sonpat copper seal of Harsha describes Harsha and his predecessors as devout worshippers of the Sun. Harsha was a devotee of the Sun, as well as that of Śiva and of Buddha. Bāna states that Prabhākara-varadhana was an ardent Sun-worshipper. He worshipped the Sun deity with proper ceremony. The Maitraka rulers had great devotion for the sun, though they were salvites. The
names of the later Maitraka rulers such as Siladitya, Sinhaditya, Vinayaditya, Bhenuusakti and Adityasakti suggest the influence of the Sun-worship upon the royal family. A grant of Siladitya Bhumaditya (611 A.D.) reveals that land was granted to the Sun temple in the village Bhadraniyaka in Saurashtra. The Malay copper plate of Bharasena II (dated 571-72 A.D.) and Alina copper plate of Siladitya VII (dated 768-67 A.D.) mention Sun worship proving that it was popular between these periods.

At Mulasthānapura (Multan) there was a magnificent temple of the Sun. The image was of gold, ornamented with precious stones. Hiuen Tsang states that it had marvellous powers. There were constantly 1000 pilgrims from various lands offering prayers. He records that at Kānyakubja there were splendid temples of the sun and of Maheśvara and there were several thousand followers. According to Bāna the people of Ujjain were also devotees of the Sun. He also mentions women devotees of the Sun. Dr. Basham rightly observes that in comparison with the sun, the Moon (Candra or Soma) had but slight religious importance, being little more than an emblem of Śiva. (The name Sasāṅka suggests this fact) The Moon had no independent cult but was worshipped as one of the nine planets.
Among other gods Kumāra, Kubera, Kāndeua, Indra, Agni (fire) and Brihaspati were worshipped. Their images in Bengal and other parts of the country, can be traced from the 6th century onwards. Kumāra (Kārtikeya) was a popular deity. Mājātaraśīrṇa mentions a temple of Kārtikeya at Pundravardhana in 8th century A.D. and this pre-supposes his worship in early times. As already noted the worship of goddesses like Durgā, Matrikādevī, Kātyāyanī etc. was common. Ganga, as the river goddess was worshipped by lac of people. Hiuen Tsang notes that Indians considered the water of the Ganga very holy and believed that it was capable of destroying all types of sins. It is to be noted that Gānapati was not a popular deity of the time. His name is not recited at the beginning of the copper plates of this century. The worship of inanimate objects like peepul and other trees continued. Professional tools were also worshipped.

Vedic sacrifices which were revived by Upana rulers, continued in this age. Though Horse and other bloody sacrifices might have been discontinued on account of the Buddhistic tendencies of Bāna who prohibited any type of killing in his empire, ordinary non-violent Agnihotra seems to have survived. Bāna often refers to clouds of smoke rising
religious ceremonies performed by him before starting on the important journey in his life to the court of Emperor Harsha. Bāna believes that every individual should perform Pancha Bhūta, Manusya, Pitrū, Deva and Brahma sacrifices. Bāna’s references indicate that all these types of sacrifices existed in the age. Cows and Brāhmaṇas were worshipped like gods. Giving alms to Brāhmaṇas was considered an act of great piety.

Buddhism in the 7th century A.D., though on the wane, was still represented by as many as eighteen different sects, besides its main division into Mahāyāna and Hinayāna. Hiuen Tsang remarks that the followers of these schools kept themselves isolated and controversies ran high. Each of the 18 schools claimed to have intellectual superiority.

Hiuen Tsang’s definition of Mahāyāna is not clear. According to him Samādhi and prājñā (concentration) and intelligence were the main features of Mahāyāna. I-Tsang’s definition is clear and simple, though not scientific. He remarks, “Those who worship Bodhisatvas and read the text books of Mahāyāna (Mahāyāna sūtras) are called Mahāyānists, and those who do not do these things, are called Hinayānists.” Hiuen Tsang enumerates the following...
(1) Buddhas and Bodhisatvas whose number cannot be counted, are adorned with many virtues. Their idols were established in monasteries and they were worshipped ceremonially.

(II) Mahayānists did not attempt for Arhata (Nirvāṇa - Salvation) as Hinayānists did. They first tried to attain the position of Bodhisatva through devotion, service and obligation and finally aimed to reach the position of Buddha by these means. They did not believe in torturing the body. They encouraged married life. Mahayana thus can be compared to Bhagavatism. The devotion of the Mahayānists to Buddha was somewhat similar to that of the Bāgavatas to Kṛṣṇa.

There were two main schools in Mahayana

- (1) Mādhyamika and (II) Yogācāra.

Nāgārjuna was the renowned scholar of the first school, while Asanga and his younger brother Vasubandhu were renowned priests of Yogācāra (5th century A.D.). Yogācāra is also called Vijnānavāda. Mādhyamika Śūtra written by Nāgārjuna was considered the fundamental work of Mādhyamika school and Yogācāra - Bhūmisāstra written by Asanga was considered the main book of Yogācāra. At Nalanda, Huien Tsang listened to lectures of learned priests at Nalanda on this book. Huien Tsang was an enthusiastic follower of Yogācāra. Hsuan Hung patronised it after coming in contact with Huien Tsang.
Besides these two main sects Huen Tsang mentions 18 schools known as Astādasa Nikāya (अष्टादसानिकाया), which were mainly based on the different text-books of Vinaya literature followed by them. The following are important schools.

It was the most ancient and popular of all schools. Its ancient name was

(1) Sthavira: Theravāda. It spread mainly in the South. According to Huen Tsang there were 20,000 Sthavira monks in ceylon, Gayā, Samatāta, Kālinga, Broach and Saurāshtra had some Sthaviras. I-Tsing supports the statement of Huen Tsang. He notes that Ceylon and South India were the main centres of Sthaviras. Moreover Magadha, Lāṭa and Sindh had also some Sthavira monks. There were practically no Sthaviras in the extreme North. There were three sub-divisions among Sthaviras.

The next important school was Sarvāstivāda.

(2) Sarvāstivadin: Its followers were found mostly in the extreme North viz. in Kāshmira and Mungara. I-Tsing observes that it had a good following in Magadha and mid-India. But Huen Tsang simply mentions extreme North as its main centre. I-Tsing's statement seems to be exaggerated. He did not travel through all the regions of mid-India. Sarvāstivāda had four sub-divisions:

(1) Mūla Sarvāstivāda (original) (2) Dharma Gupta group
The Mahisasaka group and the Kasyapiya group. Its followers were found from Ahikshetra to Karmasuvrana, Lata, Malava and Sindh. The statements of Hiuen Tsang and of I-Tsang are both confirmatory on this point. Magadha and South India had also some followers. Rajastrī followed this school. It was also subdivided into four branches.

One of its branches was known as Lokottaravāda. Hiuen Tsang saw several followers of Lokottaravāda in Baniyana.

I-Tsang states that its followers were found in Magadha and in Mid-India. It was divided into seven branches.

These schools were recognised by the text books of Tripitaka which they studied. I-Tsang observes that the schools had differences of opinions and beliefs on several matters and it was not certain which of these four schools were connected with Mahāyāna and Hinayāna. This is not correct. It is a well-known fact that Sthavira, Sammitiya and Sarvāstavādin belonged to Hinayāna. It seems that in the time of I-Tsang adherents of different schools followed Hinayāna or Mahāyāna according to their desire and the old distinctions might have been forgotten. It is to be noted that all the 18 schools mentioned in the Buddhist works did not actually exist. All the Chinese works do not mention the number 18.
On the strength of the figures given by Hiuen Tsang, Rhys Davids has prepared a list of the total number of monks residing in different monasteries in India including Ceylon. The rough total is about two lacs and twelve thousands. The list given by Dr. R. K. Hooperji is mainly based on that of Rhys Davids, though it is slightly different. The distribution in Northern India as well as in Southern India may be taken to be as follows.

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<td>Northern India</td>
<td>Southern India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Sthavira</td>
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<td>30,000</td>
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<td>2. Sāmājikaśāstra</td>
<td>63,530</td>
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<td>3. Sarvāstivādin</td>
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<td>4. Lokottaravādin</td>
<td>in Bamiyan several thousands.</td>
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<td>5. Hinayāna</td>
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<td>6. Mahāyāna</td>
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Totals of above Hinayāna

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<td>Monks whose sects are not specified.</td>
<td>9,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,21,130</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though Mahāyāna was becoming popular by this time, the above figures indicate that Hinayānists were greater in number.

This survey of Hiuen Tsang does not seem to be quite authentic. He was an enthusiastic Buddhist sojourner. It is probable that he based some of his information about the number of monks and monasteries from hearsay thus bringing in exaggeration. Moreover his constant vagueness about the numerical strength of the monasteries makes it almost conclusive that he was not at all quite sure of what he stated or what he possibly heard. But his narrative gives us, nevertheless an exaggerated yet typical Buddhist view of the condition of the faith as it survived in Northern India in the 1st half of the 7th century A.D. 124

Buddhism as a whole was on the decline in this age. Kapilvastu once a great centre of Buddhism was a deserted place. 125 Kushinagar was also a desolate place. 126 Vaiśāli, Vṛijjī, suffered the same fate. 127 All these places had only a few monks. 128 But Magadha, had several followers of Buddhism, many Deva-Temples and many people of various sects. 129
But in fact the picture was not so gloomy.

The monasteries at Nalanda, Valabhi, Mahabodhi, Tiladha (modern Tillara, west of Nalanda) and Sindh were still flourishing. In Sindh there were about 100 monasteries with 10,000 priests. Kashmir, Kanyakubja and Nalawā had also famous monasteries with several hundred monks. According to Bāṇa the hermitage of Divākaramitra appears to be a typical cosmopolitan monastery with students drawn from almost all the sects.

With the exception of a few, most of the monasteries possessed wealthy donations. There was corruption and degradation. Nattavilāsa, a humorous play written by king Mahendravikrama a contemporary of Harsha gives glimpses of the immoral ways of monks and nuns. Hiuen Tsang records how Harsha banished from his presence and the country those monks whose moral conduct was notorious. I-Tsang mentions strict rules about priests and nuns going to one another. Like other sects of the age Buddhism also had its share of superstitious beliefs. Images of Buddhas and Bodhisatvas were installed in various monasteries. They were worshipped with blind faith and rigid ceremonies as the Hindu gods were adored in the temples. Hiuen Tsang criticising heretics for their superstitions, notes that relics (sariras) possessed wonderful powers and they threw dazzling light at night. Thus blind faith and degradation increased. Moreover, Mimamsakas attacked the Buddhist monks vehemently. It adversely affected Buddhism. Some of the principles of
Buddhism were amalgamated into Hinduism. As a result Buddhism declined. 139

III JAINISM:

Jainism, though well established in the country by this time, had a limited field. It never recovered from the setback it received in the Gupta period when there was a revival of Brähminism. Still it continued to be popular as before, among the middle classes. 140 Huen Tsang observes that monks of both the Śvetāmbar and Digambara sects were to be found near Taxila. The Digambara nirgranth were found in great numbers in Kundranghana and Samasta. 141 The reference to the naked Kaśapaṇka by Bhaṇa and in the Sūtra evidences of the conversion of a poor wretch to Jainism in his Maśakumāra-carita 142 reveal the contempt of the Brähmin writers towards Jain monks.

Criticism:

The survey shows that in the extreme North East in Kapisa Buddhism held sole sway while only Hinduism was prevalent in the extreme North East in Assām. In the rest of the country Hinduism and Buddhism claimed equal adherents with a few exceptions. 144 This is not quite correct. The figures given by Huen Tsang indicate that numerically Hindus were stronger than the Buddhists. The relations between the two groups were amicable on the whole. Both religions were equally idolatrous, 145 but the tolerance of the Gupta age was not maintained. Harsha himself at the assembly of Kanauj exhibited some amount of bigotry and intolerance in contrast with the general tenor of his policy and his wide h
bias against Hinayāna and other religious sects by an angry proclamation that whoever would speak against Hiuen Tsang would have his tongue cut out. This declaration turned the assembly into a mere sectarian one. This exclusive patronage of Buddhism seems to have been only occasional with Harsha. It was not a part of his general policy. In the assembly at Prayāga, which immediately followed that of Kanauj, all people without distinction of class, caste, creed or community enjoyed the king’s liberality. The royal invitation was extended without distinction to all the Śramanās and Brāhmins of the five Indies besides the poor, the orphans and the destitute. According to Hiuen Tsang Śaśāṇa was an incarnation of intolerance. He cut down the Bodhi tree and persecuted Buddhists and destroyed their monasteries. The Pallava king Mahendravikrama persecuted Jains. On the other hand Dhruvasena the second though a Buddhist and Bhāskaravarman though a staunch Śaivite were quite tolerant. We may conclude that on the whole the spirit of tolerance ennobled the religious policy of kings in ancient India.