PREFACE

The period under study witnessed the decline of the Imperial Guptas, the rise and fall of the Later Guptas of Magadha, the Naukharis, the Vardhanas or Pushpaduttis, the Arab invasion of Sindh, adventurous careers of Yashovarman of Kanauj and Lalitaditya of Kashmir and the ultimate rise to power of the Pālas, the Gurjara-Pratihāras and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. After the downfall of the Gupta empire, a large number of independent and semi-independent States sprang up like mushrooms and each coveted supremacy over the other, but actually there was no permanent power to rule over them. Subsequently, the days of Harsha witnessed the neplus ultra of its glory. But his death was followed by the fragmentation of his empire and fissiparous forces once again made their appearance.

This period is a great landmark, for it manifests the end of ancient India and the early phase of medieval India. The feudal tendency took its fuller shape, though it is difficult to accord a definite time or period to its origin. Our aim has been to make an objective study of the economic life in the background of certain social and religious forces which were behind certain changes. Unfortunately, the material is scattered and has been collected from certain works which have not been written from economic viewpoint. Sometime there is frustration due to lack of data but it is partly overcome with the information which
is received indirectly from certain sources and hence it is corroborated. Since the literary works are mostly courtly in nature, the references to common people are sketchy and inadequate. Certain works are based on old mythical themes such as the plays of Harsha, Bhavabhūti and the Gaudvaho etc. However, on being investigated carefully, they also provide interesting information of at least some aspects of contemporary life. These pieces of evidence become reliable only if they are examined and evaluated thoroughly.

To reconstruct the economic history, besides contemporary sources we have to consult the relevant records of an earlier or later periods also. The Arthashastra was written much earlier, but its recommendations continue to have its bearing on our period. Similarly, the Nītisāra was written slightly earlier, and its usefulness continues to be there. Naturally, they have been used extensively. The recommendations of earlier Smīritis, especially Manu, too, help us in making comparisons of certain terms.

The secular literature: the Harsha-charita, the Kādambarī, the Pārvatī Parinaya and the Caṇḍīśataka of Bāṇa; the Priyadarśikā, the Ratnāvalī and the Nāgānanda of Harsha; the Daśakumāracharita, the Kāvyedārśa of Daṇḍin; the Mahāvīrcharita, the Uttararāmcharita and the Mālatīmādhava of Bhavabhūti; the Śiśupālavadha of
Magha; the Kirātārjunīya of Bhāravi; the Śatakās of Mayūra and Bhartṛhari; Samarāicca-kahe of Haribhadra; and the lawbooks: the Kātyāyana Smrī (6th century A.D.), the commentary of Asahāya on Nārada Smrī (8th century A.D.), the commentary of Bhāruci on the Manu Smrī (8th century A.D.) have been utilized. Some of the important Purāṇas like Matsya Purāṇa, Mārkandeya Purāṇa, Mīlamata Purāṇa, Padma Purāṇa compiled before and during our period are also helpful. In the field of technical literature, the astrological and astronomical works of Varāhamihira (6th century A.D.) and Aṣṭānga Sāmṛta of Vāgbhaṭa (7th century A.D.) have also been used. These works also supplement our knowledge in many ways.

Beside this, certain later works such as Rājataraṅgini of Kalhaṇa; the Kāvyamāhāsa of Rājaśekhra and the Jaina works, the Lappabhaṭṭīṣūrīcarita of Mānkiya Sūri, the Prabhāvakacarita of Prabhācandra Sūri have also been used for making comparative study.

Foreign accounts left by the travellers who had visited India, contain valuable information regarding the economic life. The works of Cosmas Indicopleustes (the Christian Topography, 6th century A.D.), Hiuen-tsang, I-tsing (both of 7th century A.D.) and the memoirs of Hui-ch'ao, Korean Buddhist itinerant are very useful.
The coins are less in number, but they provide a glimpse into some important facets of economic life of that time. Valuable pieces of art are also utilised for this purpose. They held appreciation of industrial attainments in this sector and the various modes of work in vogue.

Certain important contemporary inscriptions which also record the grants of land, and other relevant information about economic life are: Banskhera and Madhuban copper-plates of the years 22 and 25 (623 and 631 A.D.) of Harsha, his Sonpat seal, the Nirmanḍ copper-plate of Mahāsāṃanta and Māhārāja Samudrasena (7th century A.D.), the spurious Nālandā and Gaya copper-plate inscriptions of Samudragupta (7th century A.D.). The inscriptions supply some data about the land and agrarian system, revenue system, trade and commerce and corporate life. Another merit of inscriptions is that their texts are free from variant readings and are not liable to modification, like those of literary works, which were copied and re-copied by people in later times.

I can hardly put into words my feelings, sense of gratitude and indebtedness to my esteemed guide, Dr. J.K. Sharma, Reader, Department of History, Panjab University, Chandigarh, who has very cheerfully guided me whenever I approached him. Indeed he is the inspiration behind this whole work, and I shall ever remain indebted to him for his expert guidance.
I am also thankful to the Libraries of Panjab University, Chandigarh, Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Indian Council of Historical Research and Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi. I am indebted to Mr. Raj Kumar librarian, Government College, Sector 40, Chandigarh, who placed many books at my disposal. I am also thankful to the authors whose works I have consulted.

I ever remain indebted to my loving daughter Isha to whom I could not pay proper attention at her early stage. I am greatly indebted to my husband and parents for their encouragement and aspiration.

Finally, my compliments are due to Shri Anil Kumar Jindal who gave the present shape to the thesis by typing it beautifully with deep interest and great care.

Chandigarh, April 12, 1939.

NINA GUPTA