According to Manomohan Ghosh, the language of the Dhruva songs recorded in the Natya Shastra as examples of Prakrit songs lie midway between the late Prakrit of the classical dramas and that of Ashva Ghosh's plays. This is another piece of evidence that supports our view that Indian dramatic tradition as propounded in the Natya Shastra actually came to its prime much later than Ashva Ghosh's and Ashva Ghosh was in all likelihood its founder. The stage in the beginning was the compound of the Buddhist temple of the Mahayana school that took its birth in the Panjab in the days of Kanishka. The initiation in this area of a new cult must have evoked great missionary enthusiasm and one could visualise the yoking of the popular drama in a minor way into the service of this newly founded religious school at earlier stages, before a studied and conscious attempt was made by Ashva Ghosh to turn it into an elevated instrument of propagation. Of course the popular drama the Thamriga, Viyayoga, the Dima and Samvikar types of which mention has been made in the last chapter, would have continued and remained in vogue in the post-Ashva Ghosh times also as an accompanying phenomenon on a lower level so as to claim the attention of the author of Natya Shastra but it is expected that these forms of drama gradually lost their appeal and deteriorated progressively in the level of their performances till at last they ceased to be felt as mentionable phenomenon. Ghosh enumerates them as types of Roopak with their descriptions, but later commentators of this treatise and authors of books on dramatic art have not been able to
offer examples which they have generally done in the case of other types and their sub-divisions. One would also like to agree with the suggestion that Ashva Ghosha had his followers who wrote and practised Buddhist drama but none is known. We know of none other belonging to the Saka and Pahlava times who wrote dramas in the Panjab. It seems that due to the general state of uncertainty and unsettlement in the areas that followed the Huna incursions accompanied by changes or political scene that came next, the budding drama of the Panjab became an early and a serious casualty.

It was not in the destiny of Panjab to remain united and peaceful for long and the Kushan empire found itself in jeopardy after Kanishka and by the 3rd century. Bactriana, Kabul and Gandhara part of the Panjab were the only areas left with the Kushan dynasty and these too fell to the Sasanians not very long after.

The 3rd century of India is obscure to the historian and what happened to the Kushans in these years is not known. The dawn of the 4th century saw the emergence of a new powerful dynasty in Maghada known as Gupta dynasty founded by another Chander Gupta (320 A.D.) His successor Samudra Gupta (330-400) was a great conqueror whose dominions embraced the whole of Ganga basin but Panjab remained outside his imperial sway. According to Luniya in the Gupta period there were two types of states, I. Describing the extent of his empire MR. V.A. Smith says that "the dominion under the direct government of Samudra Gupta in the middle of the 4th century thus comprised all the most populous and fertile countries of Northern India. It extended from the Brahmaputra to the East of Jumna and the Chambal in the west and from the foot of the Himalayas in the North to the Marmada in the South." C.P. Singh: Bhatta Imperial Guptas (Surjeet Book Dept. Delhi (1962) P.192.
monarchical and non-monarchical or republican. The chief among the republics were Madras in the central Panjáb, the Kunindas in the Kangra valley and the Yaudheyas in the south-eastern Panjáb while it is known that Gupta imperialism had not interfered with the autonomy of the republics. Sakas ruled in the North-West of India with whom Samudra Gupta had good relations and a good part of Panjáb, as noted above was still republican. Then came Chander Gupta who conquered more lands including Malva, Gujarát and Saurashtra and Saka dynasty of Ujjain was uprooted and replaced by him. It was in the Bikand Gupta reign that Huna came down upon India and one of them Turman reached as far down as the land of Malvas while his son Mahirá Guía established himself in the Panjáb, making Sakla (Sialkot) his capital. These barbarians carried fire and sword wherever they went and Panjáb suffered most at their hands. They established themselves in the Panjáb and harrassed the Guptas.

"..." Impera upatas recounts following independent states on the eve of the rise of the Imperial Guptas (P.146).

1. The Arjumanyas. 2. The Malavas. 3. The Kunindas. 4. Kulata. 5. Audumbaras. 6. The Madrañas. 7. The Licchhavis. 8. The Sibis. 9. The Yaudheyas. These were republican in character and at least the Arjumanyas, the Malavas, the Kunindas, Kulata, Audumbaras, Madrañas, the Sibis, the Yaudheyas fell within the bounds of greater Panjáb. Thus Panjáb continued to be the home of war-like republicans over long stretches of time and vouchsafed to the province its predominantly republican character. G. C. 2. "The empire directly administered by him thus comprised the whole of Northern India excluding Western Panjáb."

C. P. Singh's Atlantis: Imperial Guptas, P.139.

3. "The North-West of India had suffered severely. The last of the Huns, driven out of Bactariana by the Huna and confined to Gandhara in the reign of Kidara were compelled to leave Gandhara about 472 and shut themselves up in Gilgit in the hope that the hurricanes would blow over. The Huns did indeed retreat in the middle of the 5th century and the Kushans recovered part of Gandhara which they kept until the 9th century."

Haasson- Oowal, Grabowska and Stern, Ancient Indian and Indian Civilization, P.302.
The Imperial Gupta forces under Sikand Gupta kept a constant vigil to meet the challenge of the Hunas who frequently raided Indian border posts. They had been successful in establishing their way in some of the border provinces (such as Afghanistan and Panjab).

**Punjab without Drama.**

2 Coming to Drama, the name of Bhasa is mentioned after Ashva Ghosha as the forerunner of the classical theatre. It is stipulated that Bhasa lived a century before 3 Kalidasa and a century and a half after Ashva Ghosha. Sjivai Levi is of the view that the author of Marichchhakatika, King Shudrika came after Kalidasa and not earlier, as is generally thought but nothing much is known about the writer of this non-conformist Drama, by some held to be the 4 nearest in spirit to the Greek comedy. It is not also definitely known to which particular place or territory or times he belonged. Kalidasa, by universal consent, is the crowning glory of the classical Sanskrit Drama who belonged to a period definitely later than ashva Ghosha. One thing can be asserted with good certainty that neither Kalidasa nor any one of his known successors of the classical school, upto any times of Harsha Varman belonged to the Panjab. The Panjab during all this time saw no peace and had a disturbed political career. We have already alluded to this situation resulting in the disappearance of higher Drama in these districts. Northern and Central India had a common 5. 6. There is a controversy about the authorship of plays ascribed to Bhasa as these plays were found in the manuscript form with a professional player of Kerala and is perhaps a case of forgery. Time and place of Bhasa remains uncertain ad. Basalkar in his work Bhasa- Study places Bhasa in the 5th or fourth century B.C. whereas B.C. Dikshitar has tried to prove that Bhasa was a predecessor of Kautilya. Luniya places him in the same rule. O.S.

3. Manomohan Ghosh's Introduction to his Translation of Natya Shastra.

4. I am tempted to postulate that the author of Marichchhakati Shudrika was a Panjabi chieftain belonging to the tribe of Kshudrikas, mentioned by the Greek chronicles and this may explain its spiritual kinship with the Greek comedy. O.S.
ly long spell of tranquility and therefore saw within it the dramatic art rising to its peak or glory. When Hunas came to the traditional Panjab with its peculiar culture, it met its doom at their hands and the land was torn to shreds physically as well as spiritually, with the result that the very fabric of its social and community life was destroyed. The Buddhist temples were everywhere in ruins and the Gandhara school of sculpture closed its portals for good. The Panjab lost its famed seat of learning, the Taxila University, which was steadily on the decline for sometimes as a result of barbaric actions of the Hunas.

Thus Panjab once again, because of the compulsion of history became largely different from the rest of the India. While Gupta age in Indian History saw the ascendancy of the Brahmans and the Dharma Shastra orthodoxy and the vast of caste system, Panjab for the most part was, during these days, the hunting ground of alien clans who had scant respect for these strictly Indian religio-social ideals and practices. The sterile, typed caste system of the Gupta period and the establishment of the Imperial peace in their dominion contributed towards the advent of the acting profession, Drama seeing classes developed stage and produced the dramatist of the calibre of Kalidas. Panjab was just like their border state, much like a buffer in which high turbulence prevailed. It was disturbed and afflicted and in it, "Fahien has described Malanda University as the greatest seat of learning in India, Taxila does not compare with it at all. He says that at Malinda there were about 16 hundred students. It is important to note that unlike the present times the Indians did not go abroad to get higher learning. People from different nationalities came to Malinda and the admission was very hard to have." Singh Bhata: The Imperial Guptas : P.218.
could not follow peace time pursuits.

**KING HARSHA OF STHANESWARA.**

The theatrical arts declined and finally disappeared during all these upheavals, out of this prevailing chaos a power arose at Sthaneswara (modern Thanesar in the Panjab) where Prabhakar Varahana ruled in the beginning of the seventh century and was succeeded by his son Harsha Varahana in 604 or 605. Harsha was a dramatist and the authorship of three plays is ascribed to him. But we have to remember this about Harsha Varahana that he shifted his capital from Sthaneswara to Kannauj very early, not many years after his accession to the throne. Then, he is known to have written his plays when he had ruled for 30 years and when he was firmly settled in Kannauj, for that matter, outside the Panjab, for decades. Thirdly and this is important, the whole of Panjab was never under his sway. Rather, the western borders of his empire did not get beyond Beas. Thus his rule extended only to the eastern borders of the Panjab in his west while it extended far off in the eastern and southern directions. This was precisely the reason why he shifted his capital from Sthaneswara to Kannauj. Sthaneswara itself was perhaps not regarded as falling within the Panjab in those days (as is the case at present). Most probably Harsha wrote his plays at Kannauj where he had his place and court and not at Thanesar and even if this may not be proved Thanesar itself was not much of a Panjab city in Harsha’s days when only a fringe of Panjab proper was ruled.

In three ps ys whose an e c p a sc e d to p
Harsha are Ratnavali, Priyadarshika and Nagananda. - G.S.
by him. We will be missing perspective if we insist on proclaiming his plays the product of the Panjab.

The Stage in the Province of drama that set in as a result of the devastation caused by the Huna movement and the sacking of Taxila University as a result, persisted all along during the succeeding centuries, every following influence contributing itself towards accelerating the process. Sanskrit learning remained at the lowest ebb. Even the resurgent Sanskrit drama in the rest of India and the presence of great playwrights and their works from the times of Kalidas up to the end of the 12th century in that apart of the country, failed to infect the Panjab with any spirit of enthusiasm for Drama, with the result that Panjab found itself strangely denuded of its dramatic legacy and did not count anywhere when the rest of northern India presented a contrasting picture and cherished and practised the art that has secured a fame for India in the history of world Drama.

Thus the centre of culture now shifted away from Panjab and this happened when literary drama had not

1. B.K. Luniya in his Evolution of Indian Cultural and Kalidas, Vishak Datta, and Shudrik, all in the Gupta period (P.349) but the same author in the same book has the following to say about Vishak Datta: "The saint Sthrameshti and eminent scholar Bharata Pal adorned it (i.e. Malinda University) Bharavi, Kumar Dasa (of Janki harn) and Danidham among the poets and Vishak Datta and perhaps the author of -Ramudhi Mahoutava among the dramatists lived in the sixth century." G.S.
as yet struck root in the Panjab soil. It forsook it not to make any early return. Whatever drama was in India it was now outside the boundaries of the Panjab.

Bhavabhooty, the great age of dramatic literature may be considered to have come to a close. Raj Shekhar of Kannauj at the beginning of 10th century wrote a drama 'Karpur Manjiri' in Prakrita but it has no action indicative of the divorce which had come about by the time between the Drama and the stage, Ananda Vardhana of the 19th century alludes to a composition named Maha Matik. (The Great Drama) but this composition is very near an epic. Then came the Bhagti cult and the custom of performing Gopala Kilichandriki (Moonlight of the Herdmen's Game) came into vogue. Dita Gobind, a lyrical drama of Jai Deva is not a play for acting. Prabodha Chandodya an allegorical drama belongs to the 12th century and there are some other dramati works known to have been written in still later times. O.S.