

## Chota Nagpur - An Untold History: A Socio-Historical Analysis

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### Abstract

It is customary with historians to divide the history of a country into the historic and the pre historic periods. The historic period of India has been dated to be the seventh century B.C. by Dr. V. Smith, apparently rejecting the earlier events on the ground that no fixed dates can be assigned to them. On the same principle, the historical period of Chota Nagpur will be dated from the later part of the 16th century A.D., when in the 30<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Emperor Akbar's reign, i.e., 1585 A.D. a detachment was sent to Chota Nagpur under Shahbaz Khan Kambu; while the excessively date-minded scholars would prefer to begin regular history of this plateau from the year 1765, when the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was conferred upon the East India Company. Indus Valley and Chotanagpur: Sir John Marshall, while dealing with the extent of the Indus civilization eastward does not seem to have taken into his consideration the pre-historic relics of Chota Nagpur, discovered between the years 1915 and 1920, and published in the *Journal of the B and O Research Society* by Rai Bahadur Roy. The late learned Director-General of Archaeology in India, however, admits that no effort has yet been made to trace the Indus valley civilization eastward. Nevertheless, the learned Archaeologist frankly recognizes that "it is difficult to believe that while the Punjab and Sind were in possession of this highly advanced culture, the valleys of the Jamuna and the Ganges, of the Narmada and Tapti could have been far behind them". Yet here in the Gangetic valley, Sir John stops and does not condescend to come down a little to the south to this plateau to find in this country more implements that he could expect. It may not seem to be a startling revelation to the readers to assume that the pre-munda traditional people, the asuras of chota Nagpur belong to the same race as the "Proto-Mediterraneans," and of the same type of culture as that of the indus valley, through in a miniature scale. In fact, if we compare the sites and the finds, unearthed at Mahenjodaro and at Harappa with those in Chota Nagpur, we cannot fail to be impressed with the idea that the pre-Munda Asuras might represent the same age and culture of people, or, as some advocates of the theory of migration would prefer to think an earlier batch of immigrants to chota Nagpur.

**Keywords:** Social History; Nagpur; Archeology; Indus Valley

### Introduction

Broadly speaking, therefore, the points of resemblance, between the finds in the Indus valley and those in Chota Nagpur are so striking and important that we may not be without reason to suppose that Chota Nagpur plateau passed the stage of chalcolithic culture during the days of the pre munda asuras [1-6]. The evidence of the chalcolithic stage of culture in Chota Nagpur has been furnished by a fairly decent collection of copper artefacts, varying in shapes and sizes, specimens of which may be examined in provincial museum at Patna. They comprise copper ornaments of various patterns, copper and bronze vessels and plates, toys and magical figures both of men and animals. In all the districts of Chota Nagpur and particularly at Ranchi, Palamau and Manbhum, copper artefacts especially axe-heads have been found. The specimens of copper axes from the Basia thana of the Ranchi district and from Hanu, a village in the district of Palamau were sent in 1915 to Coggin Brown of the Geological Survey of India, who reported that they belonged to the period of transition to the copper age from the later Neolithic age; or, in other words the chalcolithic stage of culture [7]. The prehistoric pre munda traditional asuras of chota Nagpur represent thus the chalcolithic men and the protected sites yet unexplored in the plateau may be said to represent the chalcolithic sites. Instead, however of designating the civilization that flourished in the Indus valley as the chalcolithic civilization, it may not be inappropriate to name it the oldest Indian civilization that we as yet know of. Thus as to antiquity, the hitherto neglected plateau of Chota Nagpur may claim to be recognized along with Persia, mesopotamis, Egypt and the indus valley; and the tract must henceforth be regarded as belonging to the Adi-Bharat or proto indian group of civilization and culture.

It cannot, however, be stated with any degree of certainty as to whether the descendants of the people who lived in the indus valley

region in the chalcolithic age were pushed eastwards into the central plateau of Chota Nagpur by the Aryans of other invaders or whether the same type of civilization flourished at the same time both in the indus valley and in the plateau of is presumed that no immigration of the descendants of the indus valley people into chota Nagpur had ever taken place. Surrounded, as the plateau is on all sides by almost impenetrable chains of wooded mountains affording a few dangerous narrow passes or no door at all in ancient times to the region, it seems extremely difficult to believe that a section of a highly civilized people of the indus valley should have ever cared to migrate for occupation to the central plateau of chota Nagpur, instead of settling permanently in the Gangetic valley, which at that age must have afforded ample room for settlement without denying. Rather affirming the unity of man, the writer is disposed to establish that no immigration of the chalcolithic people into this country had ever taken place. This fact is corroborated by the absence of any tradition in the country and supported by the physical characteristics of plateau, which, in very ancient times could open no door to outsiders. We may also suppose that the civilization of the pre munda times in chota Nagpur was hamogenous, developing independently, and that its primitive culture belongs to the proto Indian or adi bharat age.

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Our knowledge about ancient routes of migration before the Greek and Chinese travelers is so hazy that nothing definite can be ascertained regarding the routes, taken by the different immigrants. We do not however assert that no migration had taken place, nor that the mundas and their various congeners were autochthoos to chota Nagpur.

The Buddhist missionaries who travelled through steep mountains passes to Nepal did not come to the plateau of chota Nagpur, because most probably of the inaccessible nature of the country [8]. Even so late as the fourth century of the Christian era, fahien who went upto Gaya dared not proceed further south to the chota Nagpur plateau where the timid traveler remarked lions, tigers and wolves roam freely. Nor did Hien Tsang bare come to this country, although he passed through the borders of chota Nagpur. It would therefore appear highly improbable that the descendants of the indus valley, who flourished, according to modern scholars not latter that three millennia B.C., should have cared to come through difficult mountain passes to this infertile hilly country leaving the more fertile gangetic valley where besides greater natural advantages, there was ample room for settlement.

### Theory of Internal Causes

There is indeed a closer parallelism between the sites and archaeological finds in chota Nagpur and those in the Indus valley that has hitherto been suspected. The culture of an age, pertaining to it or yogadharma, like pure water is without colour; it only receives colour from the country where it growa. The striking coincidence in the finds in chota Nagpur, as in the other places may not be accidental, due to the migration of some section of the Indus valley people, but on the other hand, it may be quite natural for man is the same in the same age, though only in different climes. We may thus assume that there are in every Yuga or age a few seed plots of culture, whence, in later times, owing to pressure of population or other causes the migration of the people might have taken place. The idea that about five thousand years ago, a branch of the Indus valley people could penetrate into the mountain recesses of Chota Nagpur seems to be crumbling down under the shock of more scientific research and criticism. Each of the tracts therefore namely, Egypt, Babylon, Mesopotamia, Persia, Greece, the Indus valley and the central plateau of Chota Nagpur might be assumed to be ancient seed plot of proto world civilization, we have as ye been able to discover. Such a theory does not in the least discard or disproves the theory of migration, which must have begun with the facilities of communication. Rather it discards the theory of indebtedness, and endorses Barnett's theory of internal causes which appears to be more plausible. A continuation of such ideas about mutual indebtedness and culture superiority would not only frustrate further peace and unity of man but retain in the blood stream of humanity the poison that will result in still more communal and culture warfare.

We may assume that there is a cultural unity of man in diversity and the diverse local cultures acting and reacting upon one another. It is not astonishing, therefore, that certain elements of the indus valley civilization are to be met with in the Chota Nagpur region in the forms of beliefs, cult forms and art forms, just in the same way as various aspects of the culture of Chota Nagpur are found to have actually taken shape in the Indus valley civilization. Conversely, instead of interpreting the Chota Nagpur finds in the lights of the Indus valley discoveries, the basic civilization implements, relics and culture of Chota Nagpur may furnish a key to the understanding of many of the objects found among the relics in the Indus valley. The claim of the Chota Nagpur finds is

<sup>1</sup>Sir John Marshall-Mahenjo-daro and the Indus Valley Civilisation, Vol. 1, pp. 95-96  
<sup>2</sup>J.A.S.B. 1888, Vol. LXII

<sup>3</sup>J.B.O.R.S. Vol. part II, pp. 229-53

prior to those of the Indus valley. The first recorded discovery of the pre-historic implements in the Ranchi district in the proceedings of the Asiatic society of Bengal in 1870 [9]. The next discovery was by W.H.P. Driver at Ranchi His finds<sup>2</sup> included stone arrow heads, polished celts, stone polishers, worked cores, flakes and stone heads.

Never did the scholars then imagine that similar finds would be discovered also in the Indus valley. These pioneer discoveries had undoubtedly thrown a flood of light on the dim past of chota Nagpur, and announced to the archaeologists of the world that chota Nagpur was one of the important places for pre historic exploration. But for over several scores of years nothing seemed to have been done to discover other implements, till 1915, when about 45 stone implements of various shapes and sizes, were unearthed. These along with other subsequent discoveries, numbering more than 200 are lying in the museum at Patna, where for years they have been on exhibition<sup>3</sup>. These artifacts give an undoubted evidence of the cultural status of chota Nagpur in the ancient history of the world. The partial archaeological excavations that have as yet been carried out go to prove that chota Nagpur has been the home of man from time immemorial and that it is one of the cradles of ancient human civilization.

The history of a country should properly open with an intensive study of its prehistoric man and his culture is necessarily meagre and hazy. But in practice, history makes nominal or perfunctory references to this very important anthropological side of ancient history. The investigation of diverse primitive culture in diverse ages and climes is primarily calculated to realize the truth that all humanity has originated from one and the same source, is inspired by the same current of thought, working towards the same goal, and submitting to the ideas of the time or yugadharma. In this conception of the unity in diversity there will be the sense of universal kinship with man in every clime and in every level of culture. Otherwise the forest would be liable to be lost in the trees.

According to the eminent climatologist, Ellsworth Huntington all the countries were at one time connected together climatically. If this theory has any value, it furnishes an explanation of how the ancient countries might have a cultural unity.

Local peculiarities of culture due to climatic variation are natural enough. Thus in respect of antiquities of act, agriculture, food, dress, domesticated animals, hair and head dress, personal ornaments, weapons, household implements, statuettes, script, habits and civilization the two contemporary seedplots of culture may have some difference, in details. But this should not disqualify the one less advanced from belonging to the same age of culture. On the same ground the "Asura"antiquities of chota Nagpur maybelong to same age and to the same stage of culture as the chalcolithic age and the Indus valley civilization, unearthed at Mahenjo daro, Harappa and the neighbouring sites.

Facts and figures are not everything; they need to be effectively interpreted, in the broad angle of vision. The few prehistoric Asura sites that have been partially explored furnish us a key to the better understanding of the Indus valley civilization. Brodly speaking therefore, the two ancient tracts of Adi Bharat culture resemble in an astonishing manner, in respect of religious beliefs and philosophical ideas. The primitive animistic belief, the worship of stone, trees, animals and the idea of metempsychosis are the same. The difference as to the kind of the trees, names of animals, the varieties of rock must be considered insignificant, because the fundamental idea was the same.

Every climatic region has its own trees, animals and rocks peculiar

to its own. While, therefore, rhinoceros, tigers and elephants could be found in the Indus valley, the lion who prefers a dry zone is conspicuous by its absence there. The animal totems in Chota Nagpur consists of those animals which can be found in the plateau and from which various endogamous totemistic groups have originated. The totemistic names are from those animals generally found in this tract, such as karkha (the cow), Tirki (a mouse), lakra (the tiger), Kindu (the saur fish), Toppo (a small bird), kerketta (the quail), Khalkho (a fish), Ekka (the tortoise), Gidhi (the eagle), Tiga (the field mouse), Kiss (the pig), Alia (the dog), Hartu (the monkey), Chigalo (the jackal), Tetenga (the lizard), Dhidma (a bird), Dunduhaka (the eal), lapoung (a small bird), and Ham (white ants). The names of rhinoceros, elephants and lions cannot be expected in this valley.

As with the names of animals so with the names of trees. Some trees are considered sacred in both the areas, and the tree is worshipped in two forms, namely the worship of the tree itself in its natural form and the worship of the treespirit. The idea that every tree or plant has a personality and soul of its own is the same in both the areas. The names of trees, which are quite natural, are only those that grow in this plateau, namely the Sal, which is associated with the great festival, the Sarhul, Udbaru (the Kusum tree), lojo (the tamarind), Bari (the ficus Judica), Magdi (the mahua tree), kisskichal Lugum, Bakhta, and Kujur which are minor jungly trees and creepers, not to be found elsewhere., in short, the belief in metempsychosis and in after life among the prehistoric Asuras is proved from the Urns, discovered from the Asura grave yards at village Buruma, near Thana Khunti and at other places, the contents of which include food, drink and light to illuminate the journey of the dead to the spirit world. In the two villages of Garhatoli, thana Bero, and Namkum, near Ranchi some Siva Lingams with yoni encircling them have been discovered, although the small area could not as yet produce such a large number of female figurines of terracotta siva, as described by Sir John Marshall [10].

In general, the plan, the sites and the materials of construction the two tracts, on effective interpretation would appear to be almost similar. The prehistoric building sites in Chota Nagpur are situated always on some elevated plateau by the side of a stream, just as the chalcolithic sites in the Indus valley are generally situated always on some elevated plateau by the side of a stream, just as the chalcolithic sites in the Indus valley are generally situated in isolated parts of Sindh. The plan of the rooms in both the places is almost the same, with only this difference that the rooms in Asura sites in Chotanagpur are smaller, being generally from ten to twelve feet in length and six to eight feet in breadth. The sizes of bricks used in the two lands are almost the same. A comparison<sup>4</sup> of the kilm-burnt bricks and stone slabs in the Asura sites in Chotanagpur with those in the Indus valley sites, would seem to indicate that the sizes of bricks and stone slabs in the Asura sites in Chota Nagpur with those in the Indus valley sites, would seem to indicate that the sizes of bricks in the Indus valley varied from 9.5 × 4.35 × 2 20.25 × 10.50 × 3.50 and that the common size was 11 by 5.5 by 2.25 inches; whereas, each brick of the Asura buildings measures on an average about 17 inches in length, 10 inches in breadth and 3 inches in thickness. The features, described by Mackay, namely bath-room, erection of artificial platforms for foundation, presence of wells, drains, the "L" shaped bricks etc. must be considered minor and peculiar to the artistic tastes of the people of the Indus valley.

We may thus conclude that the points of resemblance in the most fundamental features are more remarkable than a little difference in minor points of details. What really the prehistoric sites of Chota

Nagpur have not yet been able to show are the artefacts of gold and silver, figures in Yogic postures and the picture signs for writing. But it may be argued that there are still innumerable probable sites to be examined, and as long as these sites remain unexplored we are not in a position to acknowledge the total absence of a few creatures that distinguish the culture of the Indus valley from that of Chota Nagpur. Comparing a great people with a small, we may suppose that the unique opportunities for development of the contemporary culture in the Indus valley, which was the meeting ground of other ancient seed plots of prehistoric civilizations, were completely absent in Chota Nagpur. Truly, the writer of the article on "Caste Race and Religion in India" remarks, "the two cultures have a family likeness although the difference between them is as great as between an illiterate urchin brought up in rude surroundings and a highly cultured big brother accomplished in various arts and sciences in more than one celebrated foreign university where intimate contact with diverse peoples of diverse cultures has further improved his culture to an extraordinary degree [11]. But both the makers of the Indus valley civilization and the prehistoric Asuras of Chota Nagpur would appear to belong to the Mediterranean race to which, again, the Dravidians of the southern India may be included, in respect of racial and cultural affinities. The copper stone or chalcolithic age intervenes between the Neolithic and the copper age, and although we have unearthed only a few artefacts of the palaeolithic or the Old Stone Age, we have no less than two hundred stone implements of the Neolithic age and about the same number of finds belonging to the copper age. The Neolithics comprise hand axes, bone shaped stone hammers, spear heads, chisels of many shapes and sizes, flakes, cores, medium sized triangular polished celts. These artefacts speak for themselves; they are the imperishable proofs of the most ancient history of Chota Nagpur. We are in possession of a large number of imperishable materials. Which furnish unmistakable evidence of the existence of the copper age in Chota Nagpur? The most important copper artefacts, lying in the Patna museum consist of wheels, chains, anklets, bracelets, and vessels. Only one on stand. 'Handi' (jars), axe heads; and the bronze implements include ear rings, cups, dishes, bells, bracelets, and anklets. Besides, these there have been discovered more than a dozen earthen ware urns, resembling in size and design the similar find in the Indus valley which contained traces of bones, presumably the post cremation burials. Fortunately, we are in a position to show many iron implements such as bracelets, rings, arrow heads, and other miscellaneous finds. They are now in the Patna museum.

With those available prehistoric materials, which were so long considered to be inadequate to determine a stage in the process of the evolution of human culture, it has now become possible to ascertain their connection with the Indus valley civilization. The archaeological finds of the new Stone Age and of the copper age establish the existence of the intervening age, namely the copper stone or the chalcolithic age. It thus appears certain, as supported by archaeological discoveries, though as yet incomplete, that Chota Nagpur has been the home of primitive man and that no less progress in material civilization was made by its people that it has hitherto been supposed. Knowing, therefore, that yugadharma or ideas of basic civilization are common throughout the age, we would be far from the truth, if we fail to recognize that the civilization or culture of Chota Nagpur is not an integral part of the whole.

The importance of exploration and study of all classes of ancient remains can hardly be exaggerated, for no scientific scheme of antiquarian work is otherwise possible. Since 1878, when steps were taken for the preservation of the national antiquities and works of art during the viceroyalty of Lord Lytton, and the opening of the

<sup>4</sup>The Sizes of bricks in Marshall-Indus Valley civilization vol. 1, p. 267. The Sizes of bricks and stone slabs published by Rai Bahadur Roy in the Journal of B and O.R.

Archaeological Department of Govt. in 1895, by Lord Curzon, a new era may be said to have dawned for Indian archaeology [12]. Of the total number of monuments protected by the Central Govt. in India, i.e., 2662, the share of the province of Bihar is between 50 and 60, and Chota Nagpur none at all. The most outstanding example of preservation in the whole of Bihar is probably the famous Buddhist site of Nalanda, which only 25 years ago was but a name. When perhaps the scheme for the exploration of some of the prehistoric sites in Chota Nagpur was under consideration of Govt, the axe of retrenchment was unfortunately laid on the Archaeological Department by the Inchcape Committee that sat in 1923, to reduce the grant to seven lakhs only. The next Retrenchment Committee of 1931 reduced the grant further on this head. It is however hoped that adequate funds will be forthcoming, not only for the preservation of India's precious heritage, but for the excavation of at least some of the many prehistoric sites in Chota Nagpur, when we will be better able to ascertain a place for this region among the ancient countries of the world.

Nothing definite is known about the history of this region and its people, till we come to the invasion of the land by the Muhammadans. There is thus a vast blank in the history of Chota Nagpur. The prehistoric asuras and the non-Aryan mundas and oraons, having a non-literary language have left no old literatures behind them to allow us to form an idea as to their doings in this period. Archaeological evidence of the land ends with the Asura sites; and except perhaps the sepulchral stones, put up on the mortal remains of their dead, we have no other architectural remains to study the history of the succeeding periods. The contemporary Aryan records, the Vedas, the Epics, and the Purans, the Sanskrit literature, the European and Chinese travelers do not give us any definite information about the history of this region or its people. The incidental dim light which they throw is too hazy and is mostly of the nature of speculation. In these pages, we propose to examine the indications made by the above undoubted sources for our prehistoric knowledge of ancient Indian History.

### The Vedas

First come the Vedas, which make mention of some ancient non-Aryan tribes and races. The Rigvedic Aryans had nothing but contemptuous and vindictive epithets to indicate the non-Aryan aboriginal population of India, to which, we presume the aborigines of Chota Nagpur may have been included in their wide deotation. They were termed to mention a few of them: Krishnagarbha<sup>5</sup> (Black-born) the dusky brood), Anasa<sup>6</sup> (nooseless). Sisnadeva<sup>7</sup> (lascivious), Simyn<sup>8</sup> (destroyer), Kravyada<sup>9</sup>(eater of raw flesh), Kimidina (treacherous and malevolent being)<sup>10</sup>, Yatudhana<sup>11</sup> (rakshas, as explained by Sayan), Abratam<sup>12</sup> (riteless), Muradeva<sup>13</sup> (worshiper of mad gods), Brainhavis<sup>14</sup> (hater of Brahmins), Dasas<sup>15</sup> (slaves or servants) & Dasyus<sup>16</sup>(robbers). Not are the Rigvedic Aryans less sparing in their contempt and hatred, when describing the physical features of the non-Aryan primitive aborigines, as a whole, where ever they may be, whether on the banks of the Indus or on the banks of the Ganges, or in any hills and jungles in India. The hymns [13-19] describe them as "Twacham Krishnam"

<sup>5</sup>Rigveda I.101

<sup>6</sup>Rigveda V.10.29

<sup>7</sup>Rigveda VII. 5, 21 & X.99.3

<sup>8</sup>Rigveda I.100, 18 & VII.18.5

<sup>9</sup>Rigveda X.87.2

<sup>10</sup>Rigveda X.37.24

<sup>11</sup>Rigveda X.87 & I, 121, 13 & 1, 33, 5, 6

<sup>12</sup> Rigveda I.33

<sup>13</sup>Rigveda VII.104.55

<sup>14</sup>Rigveda III.31.17

<sup>15</sup>Rigveda I.32.II.1.104.2.VI.10.20

<sup>16</sup>Rigveda 33.4.3-18.VI-1.12.V-31.7.VI-1.4 etc.

(Black skinned), 'Ghore chakshas' (fierce eyes). Visipra deformed nose) and Mridhravach (imperfect speech).

### Names of Aboriginal warriors

The Rigveda contains numerous allusions to the interminable hostilities and bloody wars against the non-Aryan chiefs. The names of many despised aboriginal warriors are frequently to be met with. It appears, naturally enough, that the Aryans made little modification of the non-Aryan names, in order to suit them for use in their sacred hymns, and freely admitted some non-Aryan vocabularies into their sacred literature. In the Rigveda there are passages where the aboriginal people are called 'Muras' explained as 'foolish ones' which may be the Sanskritised transformation of Mundas. The term 'Mura' is even now used in calling an aboriginal people of the district of Manbhum, who are supposed to be a branch of the Mundas of Ranchi. Similarly the names of the Dasa and Dasyus, the mention of which can be found in the Rigveda may seem to be Sanskritised form of the names which can be traced to the present aboriginal totemistic 'kilms'(Septs). Roy has considered it worth while to attempt at speculative identification of some of the names which are still in use in Chota Nagpur. Thus, the name of a Basa Sambara, son of Kulitara, of whom mention has been made in the Rigveda, has been identified with the name of Sumer, a name still in use among the Mundas of Chota Nagpur. Another name Kunran, mentioned in the Rigveda has been sought to be identified with a namesake of kuar Munda of these days. The Rigvedic name of Dasyu Ahisuva might be a Hinduised form of the name of Asiba, a very common name among the Mundas of the district of Ranchi. Similarly, the names of Asura Bala, Karanhu, Parnaya, may be identified with the modern aboriginal names of Balia Munda, Kalang and Parna or Parhu Munda, and even the very form Karanjua Munda is not unknown to the people of Chota Nagpur. Other examples may be the Rigvedic names of Kuyava, the opponent of young kutsa, son of Arijuni, mentioned in the Rigveda Dasyu Danu Dasyu Byansa, Asura Ongha, who may bear resemblance to modern names<sup>17</sup>. Thus kuyava may perhaps be the transformation of the Munda name of Kuba, vangrida may be traced to the Munda name of Bangra; Danu and other analogous names, such as Dana, Danu and Dandu are also met with among the modern aboriginal people of Chota Nagpur, other names, occurring in the Vedas, namely Dasoni, Tarukshu, Namuchi, Chamuri, Vangrid, and Krishna may in the same way be identified, even though the identifications are not free from usual defects of surmise and speculative farfetchedness.

The only historical value of such philological speculations lies in the traditions of the aboriginals who have faint recollections of their former occupation of the north-eastern parts of India. Archaeology, an important hand-maid of history, furnishes but a faint light on the proposition that the aboriginals of Chota Nagpur may have in the remote past had their ancient residence in the Punjab. The only historical or quasi-historical evidence that may be put forward in support of the surmise is the connection of the name of kulinda with the names of the kolerian aborigines. It would however; appear that there are various readings of the name. The parasar sanhita that makes a distinction between the tribe and the country calls the tribe by the name of Kuninda and the country by the name 'Kauninda.' The Vishnu puran has 'Kuninda.' "General Cunningham who located Kulinda-Des or Laulinda between the Beas and the Tons thinks that these people may be connected with the Mundas of eastern India<sup>18</sup>. This does not at all conclusively prove the former occupation of the aborigines of this plateau in the Punjab, though it may not be improbable. We only take our stand on the debatable borderland between fact and theory.

The ancient sacred book mentions the hundred ancient cities of the

Dasyu leader Sambara, the hundred cities of Vangrita and the ninety-nine cities of the Dasyu leader Pipru. There are some passages which show that the wealth, the power and the forts of the Dayu were envied by the Aryans. The wealth of Dasa Kuyava, an aboriginal robber, who dwelt on the banks of four small streams, called the Sifa, the Anhasi, the kuslisi, and the Virapathi, none of whose courses can now be identified, except perhaps the Julisi, which is identified by Nando Lal Dey<sup>19</sup> with kulnta or the district of kulu in the upper valley of the Beas river which has been mentioned along with the name of Krishna meaning black-complexioned, another mighty warrior. One or two passages may deserve translation and quotation:

*"The fleet of Krishna lived on the banks of the Ansumatio River with ten thousand troops. Indra of his own wisdom became cognizant of this lud-yelling chief. He destroyed the marauding host for the benefit of man".*

Indra said *"I have seen the fleet of Krishna. He is lurking in the hidden region near the Ansumati like the sun in the cloud". O maruts, I desire you to engage in fight, and to destroy him.*

Never for a moment had the Aryan Risis, the composers of the hymns of the Vedas, imagined that the shouts and yells of the aborigines formed a language of their own. The Vedic poets seem to have studiously ignored the culture, the wealth, the prowess and the language of the non-Aryan tribes who offered stubborn resistance to hold their own against the encroaching invaders. The picture one can draw from the study of the Vedic hymns is one of contemptuous and studied difference to the non-Aryan culture. The Vedic bards, therefore, may be anything but partial and vindictive, so far at least as their delineation of the non-Aryan culture is concerned. No credit seems to have ever been given in any of innumerable hymns to the contribution of the non-Aryan people to Indian civilization. Their forts, their religion, their rites, their fighting capacity, their society, their agriculture and trade, their architecture have been slighted or ignored.

### Pre-Aryan civilization

The excavation in the Indus valley has supplied demonstrative proofs of the high stage of culture attained by the non-Aryan people, long before the Aryans appeared on the scene. On the other hand, the barbarian Dasa, were skilful metal workers, with a plentiful supply of gold, silver and copper lead, too and tin were in use, but the latter only as an alloy in the making of bronze. With spinning and weaving they were thoroughly conversant. Their weapons of war and of chase were the bows and the arrows, spears, axes, daggers and maces. The Aryans, during the Vedic times in the Punjab did not know of more weapons of war than these. Their domestic vessels, ornaments made of precious metals, sometimes of gold, of faience, ivory carnelian and other stones show unmistakable signs of the high degree of culture of the Pre-Aryan people about four millennia B.C. But in the vedas the non-Aryan primitive people have been mentioned to be either exterminated, or retreated before hills and fastnesses. They were gradually described as having adopted the Aryan religion and their rites and even their language. The art of civilized life they learnt from the Aryans and settled down in Aryan villages as Dasas, to minister to the wants of their masters.

Such being the attitude of the Vedic people towards the non-Aryan, we can expect no real history from their enemies. The facts are too imperfect to allow us to draw any conclusion. Various hypotheses may be framed and sought to be proved by plausible evidence. But the only objection is that other conflicting hypotheses may be found equally plausible. One instance of such hypotheses, is the terrible battle between the Bharat king Sudas, of the Tritsu Family and several non-Aryan tribes. This battle is generally known as the "battle of the ten kings" and the names of the kings<sup>20</sup> are mentioned<sup>21</sup>.

It is not easy to determine whether these are the names of kings or of tribes or whether some of these are the names of non-aryan tribes. At least the two of the three tribes, the Ajas (goats), the Sigrus (horse-radisha), who had fought for king Bheda against Sudas, were probably the totemistic non-Aryans. It would be a mere hypothesis to suppose that the Mundari tradition refers to this battle.

A similar hypothesis may be put forward from the story of Jayari, a son of Nahusa, one of the great progenitors of human race. The story runs that the four brothers, Pandya, Kerala, Kola and Chola divided India amongst themselves and that northern India fell to the share of Kola, whose descendants are the modern Kols, the generic name for the aboriginals of Chota Nagpur. Some would like to go much farther than this and to assert that the whole of India was known by the name of Kolara, the land of the Kols. Such hypotheses contradict each in the absence of proper historical verifications.

No non-Aryan tribe appears to play a great figure in the Vedas. A great confusion prevails in the attempt at identification, for some would see tribes in Nahus, Tugrya and Vetasu, while the later two are supposed by some to be families rather than tribes. "The only people named which can plausibly be deemed to have been Dasas are the Simyus, who are mentioned among the foes of Sudas in the battle of the ten kings. And who are elsewhere classed with Dayus, the Kikatas with their leader Pramaganda, and perhaps the Ajas, Yakshus and Sigrus<sup>22</sup>. It thus appears that the Rigveda has mentioned, besides, the five rivers in the Punjab of which, again Parushni (the modern Ravi), on whose banks the famous "Battle of the ten kings fought, the names of the Saraswati, the Jamuna, which is thrice mentioned. The Gangas is only once alluded to, or once named in connection with the people on its valley. The absence of the names of the Vindya hills and the Narmada River suggests the inference that the south was still outside the pale of Aryan colonization.

The Kikatas<sup>23</sup> mentioned along with the names of the Dayus against whom Sudas fought his 'Battle of the ten kings' have often been supposed to refer to the aborigines, the Kols of Chota Nagpur. According to some<sup>24</sup> the verse refers to the then non-Aryan tribes of Kosala or Oudh. Others, again, who read in 'Kikata with Magadh, the ancient name of Bihar, Dr. Muir in his original Sanskrit Texts<sup>25</sup>. Quotes a passage to show that the Aryans, at a very early period had come in contact with the people of Kikata? In the commentary it is explained that Kikata was a country inhabited by a people who were non-Aryans. The commentator Sayan definitely identifies its people with the Kols, the generic name of the aboriginals of Chota Nagpur. Referring to Kikata Rigveda says<sup>26</sup>, "*what are the cows doing among the Kikatas? They yield no milk for ablutions and they heat no fire.*" And the people of kikata, being destitute of faith say, "*What fruit will result from sacrifices, claims, or oblations? Rather eat and drink, for there is no other world than this*". This is a doctrine, like that of Muni Charbak, to which the kols decidedly subscribe. The learned commentator of the Rigvedas further explains that the Kikatas were the people who lived in Magadh or Bihar, and that the dominant

<sup>17</sup>Rigveda. i.2.74.130. Rigveda V-6.45.8.32. Rigveda VII-2. 104. Rigveda-VIII. 3-6

<sup>18</sup>Cunningham's Arch. Dept-XIV.p.128

<sup>19</sup>Geographical Dictionary-p.44. Also Cunningham-pp.162-63

<sup>20</sup>Rigveda VII-18

<sup>21</sup>The Alinas (perhaps from the north-east of Kafiristan), The Pakthas (The Afgan Pakhthun), the Bhalanses (probably connected with the Bolan Pass, the Sivas (near the Indus)), the Vishaninus; the Anus (whose priests were the famous family of the Bhrgus); the Druhyns; the Turvasas and Yadus; and the Purus.

<sup>22</sup>Cam. History India-Vol. I, pp. 84-85

<sup>23</sup>Rigveda III. 14.53.

race among them were the Cheros, who were expelled by the Savaras in or about 421 of the Salivahan era, or 500 A.D.

But scanty as is our information regarding the progress of the Aryan towards the Gangetic valley, we are not in a position to endorse definitely the above hypothesis, in view of the statement in the later Samhisa, the Brahmins, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads which distinctly state that the people of Magadh were still outside the pale of Aryanism. "If as has been suggested, the Kikatas of the Rigvedas were really located in Magadh, the dislike of the country goes back to the Rigveda were really located in Magadh, the dislike of the country goes back to the Rigveda itself<sup>27</sup>". The reason would not be far to seek. The predominance of the aboriginal people here being apparent, the Aryanisation must have been most imperfect, and this explains why Magadh, of all places, became favourable to the growth and development of Buddhism, an anti-vedic movement.

The history of a country is primarily the history of its people. Whether immigrants or autochthones. It is too much to expect the mention of the name of this plateau in the Vedas, when even the whole of the Gangetic plain could not be completely Aryanised, even during the post vedic or the earlier Epic period, and the vedas make absolutely no allusion to the plateau of Chota Nagpur, for in fact this was not known by this name. But it may be pointed out that the name 'Kol' occurs in the Vedic literature and in the Mahabharat. The kols are a collection of aboriginals, whose original condition in ancient times may have been that of wandering tribes, roaming throughout northern India, till at last they found safe homes in the hilly tracts of Chota Nagpur, the Santhal Pargans, the Central provinces and the hills of Orissa. That there is a philological and ethnological affinity between the Kols, as described in the ancient Hindu literature and the aborigines of Chota Nagpur, we have no reason to doubt. The traditions of the Mundas and the Oraons of Chota Nagpur agree in the main with the legends in the vedas. Even in the Rigveda we hear of Nahus, in whom some have seen a tribe.

The legend which has received and unexpected confirmation states how Yayati, a son of Nahus made a division of his empire among his five sons, and how after ten generations India was divided among four brothers, namely, Pandya, Krala, Kola, and Chola. It is said that Northern India fell to the share of Kola, whose descendants are the aborigines of Chota Nagpur. The Puran confirm the above legend. In the Markandeya Puran, the Aryan princes Suratha is said to have been defeated by some non-Aryan unclean tribe who have been called 'Kolabidhansinah', the slayers of pigs, or pig-eaters. Some authorities, Herr Jellinghans and others, would like to refer the expression to the Kolerian tribes who eat pigs. Which are considered unclean by the Hindus. The faint references from the Vedas go to trace the history of the Kolerian tribes who inhabit at the present day the plateau of Chota Nagpur.

## The Epics

### The Ramayan

Some reference may be hoped to be found in the itihās of the Hindus, the Ramayan and the Mahabharata. The two epics of the Aryans are generally considered by scholars to be poems of no historical value, because of the supposition that they describe characters that are different from bonafide men and mention some habits and customs of several aboriginal tribes who cannot be identified with those found in

India of today. Prof. Macdonell has remarked that the Deccan which was the scene of the Ramayan is a region haunted by the monsters and fabulous beings with which an Indian imagination would people an unknown land<sup>28</sup>.

The orthodox section of the Hindus who refuse to be convinced by such arguments still believes that these "Monsters and fabulous beings" had real existence in flesh and blood. Just as the epithets given to the aboriginal tribes by the vedas may be identified with the tribes still found in the hills and jungles of India, so an attempt at identification of the so called fabulous beings mentioned in the Ramayana may in the light of ethnology transform themselves into real men. The non-Aryan aboriginal tribes in the Deccan have been variously called in the epic of the Ramayana, such as the Rakshasa, the Vanaras, and the Nishads etc. Ramdas, in a paper before the All India Oriental Conference at its third session at Madras, on the 24<sup>th</sup> December, 1924, published in *Man in India*, tried to prove, and perhaps successfully that the Rakshasas, bears, and the Vanaras, named in the Ramayana were not real giants bears and monkeys but were really the names of primitive tribes of India, whose habits, customs and dress may on scrutiny resemble many hilly aboriginal tribes of the present times, although some types of the tribes must have been by now almost extinct, like the monkey-catching Birhores of Chota Nagpur. Such tribes represent the early stage of human progress as that ascribed to them by the vedas and the Epics, who may be called "Purbadebah"... to distinguish them from the 'Deba', because the latter inhabited the country before the advent of the Aryans. A study of the real meaning of each word used in the Ramayana to denote these men may confirm the view that the members of the army of Ram were human beings and not monkeys or giants or bears as are generally found in the forest of India. The word vanar, for example occurs in the Ramayan not less than 1080 times, which signifies a forester and not a monkey. It is derived from 'Bana', a wood and 'isa'to pay and not from 'Ba' implying, resemblance and 'Nara' a man. The significance is intimated by the explanatory compounds. Such as "Banacharin, Banouksa, Banarabanagochara". Which mean dwellers of forest. In the same way the word "Hari" which is used 540 times in Valmiki's Ramayan is sought to be explained by 'Banachari' and other compounds so that it might not be misunderstood for a monkey. What might really mislead many to understand the Vanaras to be monkeys is the presence of a tail. But it may be pointed out that tails are not natural, but are artificial.

The tail is not a limb of the body, but an important ornament. Vibheeshana says; Kapinikila Langulami Mistani bhabati bhushanam" meaning that the tails of 'Kapias' (Monkeys) are but ornaments. Even now, the custom of wearing the ornament of a tail prevails among the Savaras, of the Ganjam district. About the Savaras, Thurston, in his Castes and Tribes of South India says "A tribe of Savaras is called Arsi or Arisi, which means a monkey in Savar language." their Oriya neighbours call them "Lambo Lanjiya" or long-tailed, which is the Oriya translation of the Savara word "Arsi". It is apparent that this tribe got the name from its peculiarity in the dress of wearing a long piece of cloth hanging down from behind the buttock. It is no wonder therefore that when the Savara "Arisi" is translated into the Oriya "Lambo Lanjiya" (Long-tailed) even in modern times, the poet Valmiki would translate the tail wearing Vanaras into Sanskrit Kapi or monkeys.

It may also be pointed out that the Padma Puran of the jains makes no mention of the tails of the Vanaras. It may be argued that as the scenes of the Ramayana were confined to the extreme south the non-Aryan aborigines of the Deccan can have no ethnological resemblance with the aborigines of the north, and the Kiskindhya, which is situated far in the south, was the headquarters of the Vanaras. Various attempts

<sup>24</sup>R.T.H. Griggs-Rigveda, Vol. I, p. 374

<sup>25</sup>J.Moir-Original Sanskrit Texts (1884) Vol. II. P. 362

<sup>26</sup>Rigveda III. PP. 14, 53

<sup>27</sup>Cambridge History of India, Vol. I, p. 123

<sup>28</sup>Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. II, p. 238

have been made to locate this place. It has been identified with a small hamlet in the suburb of Bijanuggar, about a mile easterly from Nimbapur, where "lies an oval-shaped heap of calcareous scoria, partially covered by grass and other vegetation. The Brahmins aver it to be the ashes of the bones of the giants walli or Bali, an impious tyrant slain here by Rama on his expedition to Lanka<sup>29</sup> but De, in his Geographical Dictionary places kiskindhya, a little towards the north, and says, that the places is still called by its old name. According to him,<sup>30</sup> "It is a small hamlet situated on the north bank of the river Tungabhadra near Anagandi, about sixty miles to north of Bellar. About two miles to the south west of kiskindhya is the Pampa hill, where Hanuman was born. Rama killed Bali the brother of Sugriva, and gave the kingdom of kiskindhya to the latter". but Ramdas<sup>31</sup> pushes it further towards the north and place it in the tract north of the Vindya mountains and south of the Ganges. If the later location of Kiskindhya be accepted it may give us ground for conjecture that the vanara of the Ramayana are akin to Savaras. Garrick<sup>32</sup>, an Assistant to Sir Alexander Cunningham relates a tradition that in the Satya Yuga, the Savaras were predominant in Northern India [13]. And on the authority of General Cunningham, Roystates, "the name Savaras was in all probability a generic name for the different divisions of the kols, including the Kurkus and the Bhils in the west<sup>33</sup> and the Santhals, and the Bhuinyas, the Mundas and the Hos; the Bhuiyas, and the Jnangs in the east" [14]. Many learned ethnologists have engaged themselves in various speculations as to the identity of the Savaras with the different Kolerian tribes. In the census of 1872, the Bendkors, who now live about the Thakurani Hill, on the border of the tributary state of Keonjor and Singhbhum, were shown as savaras. A branch of the kol race, in the north most districts of Madras and Orissa call themselves Savaras.

It has sometimes been supposed that they lived at Bhojpur and drove out the Cheros to Palamau, although there is another tradition that states that it was not the Savaras, but a tribe of the Hurihobans who expelled the Cheros from Sahabad.

The attempt at identification of the Sasvaras, a general term to denote the aboriginal elements in India, according to Roy with the Vanaras of the Ramayan rests on two grounds, viz, the disputed location of Kiskindhya to the north of the Vindhas, and the custom of weaving a tail among the tribes akin to the Savars [15]. The grounds do not seem to be convincing, rather too hazy and far fetched to satisfy modern critics. On the evidence that the chief seat of the Vanaras was Kiskindhya. Even supposing that the Vanaras were not monkeys but a wild Dravidian tribe of the jungle and the term "Savaras" implies the same sense as the terms 'Kol' and 'Dhangars' used by the Europeans, to denote the aboriginals as a whole, we do not get any indication as to what particular tribe of the aborigines of Chota Nagpur may be referred to here.

A definite venture has been made by Roy, who thinks that the Oranons, a Dravidians aboriginal tribe<sup>34</sup> of Chota Nagpur formed part of the Vanaras army that rendered help to the Aryan hero Ram in his wars against the non-Aryan king Ravana of Lankas.

The learned author supports his theory by referring to the similarity in the habits and customs of the Vanaras as depicted in the Kiskindhya kanda of the Ramayan, with those of the Oraons of Chota Nagpur at the present day. Linguistically, a connection has been traced between the

kurukha and other Dravidian languages of Southern India. The oraons who prefer to call themselves Kurukha and not-Oraons- the name given to them by the Hindus, indignantly reject the name 'Dhangar' given to them by the Europeans. Even Col. Dalton observes, in his Ethnology of Bengl that the Kurukha or Oraons of Chota Nagpur are best known in many parts of India as "Dhangars" [16]. And that all the allied tribes whose language is the same as the Kurukh have been described as "Dhangri" by Dr. Grierson [17]. In further support of his suggestions that the Oraons of Chota Nagpur, before their migration to this plateau formed a part of the aboriginal army of Ram, it has been pointed out that there are to be found some Oraons who have as their tribal totems monkeys [18], and who do not kill or even injure a monkey.

The theory requires us to believe that the localities of the Vanaras whose descendants are the present Oraons of Chota Nagpur formerly extended from the Tungabhadra to the north of Vindhya mountains and that after a long course of wanderings through hills, forests and settled countries, they entered Chota Nagpur as an advanced refined agricultural tribe of the Dravidian race. But the first notice of the Oraons is in the Sahabad District in Bihar; and while we have partially succeeded in tracing the migration of the Mundas through various places marked by archaeological finds such as sculpchral mounds and ruined mud-forts, we have evidence whatsoever of any kind, except vague tradition to identify any place of former occupation by the oranons, except perhaps Rohtasgarh. It is of course possible to extract from the Ramayan more materials though mostly fragmentary than we could expect to show that there may be some more flimsy fanciful points of ethnological and philological resemblance between the Vanaras and the kurukh or Oraons of chota Nagpur. But the points of resemblance are not so important as to convince the proof minded. Readers, after such a long distance of time, when the oraons of chota Nagpur constitute by themselves a separate group, rather a kin more to the Pre Dravidian Mundas of chota Nagpur, than the aborigines of the Deccan.

The only traditional account about the age of the Ramayan in this area is in the district of Singhbhum. There is a village named Jaintgarh, 36 miles south of Chaibasa. About 4 miles to the west of Jaintgarh, there is a bathing ghat on the Baitarani, popularly called "Ramtirtha". The people of the locality assert that Ram Chandra, on his way to Ceylon to rescue Sita from the demon Ravan, halted here. Whatever might have been the truth, it has been acted upon as such; and on the Ramnavami day the Hindus go to the place for a religious bath.

## The Mahabharat

We turn to the Mahabharat, where we expect more definite indications of the country and the people of Chota Nagpur, whose chief scenes were in northern India. Here we notice that the vindictive and contemptuous expression used in the Vedas and in the Ramayan to denote the non-Aryans or Pre-Aryan races are absent in the Mahabharat. A gradual appreciation of the culture and the excellent traits of the character of these people are clearly manifest. They are generally described under the terms "Kiratah".

"Parbatyah", "Kollagirinivasinah", meaning the hunters, the hill-men and kols, the dwellers of the hills, whose service the Kurus and Pandus required in the Great kurukshetra war.

In the Udyoga parba, mention is made of various chiefs and people of India, who were visited by the messengers of the pandavas, requesting each of them to assist them with men in their war against the Kouravas. The hill-tracts must have been the only field for recruitment of soldiers, especially at the aged when archery was the chief strength of the army. The hill tribes were recruited not only by the pandavas but

<sup>29</sup>Journal A.S. Bengal. Vol. XIV.p.519

<sup>30</sup>Nando Lal De-Geographical Dictionary of Ancient & Mediaeval India. Pp. 41-42

<sup>31</sup>Man in India, 1925, Vol. V.p.51

<sup>32</sup>Arch. Report, Vol.XIX, pp. 40-42

<sup>33</sup>S.C. Roy-The Mundas and Their Country, p.62 also Arch. Report Vol. XVII p.139

<sup>34</sup>The Oraons-pp.19-27

by the other combatant- the kouravas, who had eleven "Akshauhini", as compared with the pandavas who had only seven. We find reference to the aboriginal soldiers in the Kourava army. And the Aswamedha parba tell us that in the Kurukshetra War all classes of people took part the hunters, the Yavanas Mlechehas and the Aryas. Sixty five names of kings and tribes are mentioned in the Udyoga Parba<sup>35</sup>. The list gives the name of Ekalabba, an aboriginal chief, all hill-chiefs (no. 42), and unconquered hunters. The same parba tells us that Jagatsen, son of Jarasindhu, king of Magadh, helped the Pandavas with one Akshauhini<sup>36</sup> (battalion), which consisted of 109350 foot, 20807 chariots, the same number of elephants, 65600 horse- the traditional 'chaturanga' or four-bodied army of the ancient Indian kings. Truly pargiter<sup>37</sup> observes that these are impossible numbers, even including camp followers. Another reckoning is given, where it is stated that the term 'Akshauhini' was commonly used as more or less synonymous with the names for smaller bodies of troops<sup>38</sup>.

In the days of the Mahabharat, Giribrajapura, modern Rajgir, or Rajagriha of the Buddhist annals was the capital of Jarasindhu, king of Magadh, who was killed by Bhim, the second of the five pandavas. The abode of Jarasindhu was kusagarapura, a small village in the district of 'Patna', which it is difficult to identify. The kingdom of Magadh does not seem to have included Anga, the country about Bhagalpur, which in the days of the Bharat was the kingdom of Karna<sup>39</sup>. Videha, or Mithila, modern Tirhut, the kingdom of Raja Janak was bounded on the north by the Himalayas and on the south by the Ganges. General Cunningham identifies the city with Janakpur now, a small village near the Nepal border. That a separate expedition had to be sent against this state, during the Aswamedhic period, shows that it was not a part of the kingdom of Magadha.

On the authority of the Jatakas, Prof. Rhys Davides, while, enumerating the 'Sorasha Janapadas' or sixteen states, in Or the time of Buddha says that Anga-Magadha, though conterminous were separate states as Magadha could not raise 109350 foot, without recruiting them from the hardy and warlike aboriginal tribes, who now inhabit the plateau of Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas, even if Anga was a part of Magadh. It was, moreover, the age of archery and aboriginals were experts in bows and arrows, which they have preserved, even upto the present day. Just as, at the present time soldiers are recruited from the Gurkhas and the Sikhs, so the army in those days must have been chiefly raised from the hardy aboriginal tribes, who are now scattered throughout the hills in the south and south-east.

### Countries, mountains and rivers in the age of the Mahabharat

In the Vishma Parba, Sanjoy, speaking to Dhritrashtra gives

<sup>35</sup> Ibid Chap III, pp. 593-594.

<sup>36</sup> One pathi consists of a chariot, one elephant, 5 foot and 3 horses. <sup>37</sup> J.R.A.As. 1908, p.312.

<sup>38</sup> The Mahabharata-Cal-Edition (1834) V 5264-7.

3 Pathis make a Sonamukh.

3 Sonamukhs make a Gulma.

3 Gulma make a Gan.

3 Gans make a Bahini.

3 Bahinis make a prithana.

3 Prithanas make a Anikini.

10 Anikinis make a Akhouhini (Adiparba Cha. P. 8).

<sup>39</sup> The name 'Anga' occurs several times in the Mahabharat. The Sava Parba (44.9) Anga and Banga are shown as forming one kingdom. The Adi Parba (ch. IX, 4179) tells us that the kingdom was named after its king Anga (meaning body) of the Love-god Kam, who was consumed here. The Sava Parba (XXIX-1090-3) makes it an appendage of Magadh in the time of Jarasindhu, and on (44.9) mentions it along with Banga as one kingdom. Mr. Pargiter follow-mentions it along with Banga as one kingdom. Mr. Pargiter following the lines indicated by General Cunningham, identifies Anga of the Epic period with the modern district of Bhagalpur and Monghyr.

<sup>40</sup> S.M. Mazumdar's Editor-750

a general description of India- its long lists of countries, nations, mountains and rivers. The narrator mentions the names of 156 rivers and of 151 janapadas (states) in the north and 82 janapadas in the south, giving a total of 238 states into which the whole of India was then divided. In our present state of the knowledge of ancient geography, we cannot identify all the places mentioned in the list. The bard mentioned only seven chief mountains of India, but remarked that there are many other small unknown mountains where small men dwell. In the course of the description, the narrator began from Kurupanchal and proceeding to the east, mentioned the names of Tamralipti (Tamluk, Midnapore). Udra (Orissa) Videha and ended with the names of the Kiratahs (Hunters), the barbarians (meaning aborigines) and the Parbatiyah (Hill men). In Cunningham's ancient Geography of India<sup>40</sup>, edited by Majumdar, the Kiratas or Kirrhadia of Ptolemy have been shown to be Mongoloid tribes, living in the east side of the Vindhya.

In the ancient map of the Epic period drawn by Nundo La De, the Mundas have been shown to be living on the eastern side of the Riksha Mountain, but the Mundas were as we have discussed before belonged to the Pre-Dravidian or Proto-Austraoid race, and not Mongoloids. Moreover, in the Banaparba, the fight between Arjun and the Kirat (Lord Siva in disguise) refers to a place on the Himalayas. The Kirats in these parts might be Mongoloids, but those in the Vindhyas must be, in all probability the Dravidians or the branch of the Dravidina Oraons<sup>39</sup>. The name 'Anga' occurs several times in the Mahabharat. The Sava Parba (44.9) Anga and Banga are shown as forming one kingdom. The Adi Parba (ch. IX, 4179) tells us that the kingdom was named after its king Anga (meaning body) of the Love-god Kam, who was consumed here. The Sava Parba (XXIX-1090-3) makes it an appendage of Magadh in the time of Jarasindhu, and on (44.9) mentions it along with Banga as one kingdom. Mr. Pargiter follow-mentions it along with Banga as one kingdom. Mr. Pargiter following the lines indicated by General Cunningham identifies Anga of the Epic period with the modern district of Bhagalpur and Monghyr.

We may, however, suppose that the topographical survey which was meant to be exhaustive and included the whole of India, consisting of 233 states, must have taken into account the aborigines of Chota Nagpur and the Sanghal Parganas, under the general names of barbarians, hill-men and the like. Another reference is furnished by the Digvijay Parba where we are told that the Pandavas conquered the world then known to them, meaning the whole of India. The conquests of Arjun, the third Pandavas included all kings and tribes near the Vindhya. So that if the aborigines of Chota Nagpur were immigrants and not autochthones to the land they occupy, it may be conjectured that they must have been conquered had they been living there during the days of the Mahabharat, the inference may receive further confirmation in the account that says that Arjun received money and valuables from many hills-chiefs, forest tribes, robbers, and wandering peoples, whom he defeated in fair battles. The mention of the conquest of the tribes on the sides of the Riksha Hill shows that the Pre-Dravidian Mundas of the Dravidian Oraons who were living on the east of the hill must have been defeated by invincible Arjun.

The same parba tells us that the conquests of Bhim the second pandava comprised Kosala, Ajodhya, Benares, Videha (Tirhut), and the king of the Mallas, whose kingdom was named Mallabhum which was probably used in an extensive sense to include the whole of the modern districts of Bankura, Burdwan, part of the Santhal Parganas, Midnapur and Manbhum, which again appears to have included a part of the district of Ranchi.

In the course of his victorious campaign, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pandava, starting from videha is said to have proceeded towards Giribraja (Rajgir, Patna),

where he consoled the son of Jarasindhu, whom he killed in battle. Thence he advanced towards Mundagiri (modern Monghry) whose king was killed by him, having defeated the kings of Banga (Bengal) Tamralipti (Midnapore) and other kings in vicinity, Bhim returned to his headquarters. Before he left these parts of the country, the Bharat says that the defeated seven different tribes of Kirats (hunters or wandering people). Some of the tribes may include the aboriginal tribes who now inhabit Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas, whence the fifth Pandava, Sahadeb having crossed the Vindhya went down to the extreme south and defeated the Pandyas, the Keralas, the Andhras, the Kalingas, the Udras, the Ustras and even the Vanaras, apparently a tribe of Kishkindha, it may not be unreasonable to suppose that the aborigines of Chota Nagpur and their congeners must have felt the weight of the Pandava arms.

The Sava Parba furnishes us with a list of kings and peoples who came with their presents to Emperor Yudhistir. Besides the Chinese, the Sakas, the Oriya, there came the hill men of the Himalayas and other barbarians, and the dwellers of the forests. In the same Parba reference has been made to the kings of Sindhu, Kalinga, Ceylon, Kashmir and to peoples from Paundra (north Bengal), Banga (Bengal Proper), the Mlechhas on the sea-coasts and the people from the hills. It is difficult not to suppose that the aboriginal tribes, now inhabiting Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas who are so very fond of witnessing the ceremonies of the Hindus did not go to see the grand 'Yogna' (ceremony), in which all the people of India were invited.

The expression Arjunanirjita-dharani<sup>41</sup> meaning that part or parts of the country which was left unconquered by Arjun has often been interpreted to comprise the plateau of Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas, because these two tracts are not directly named in the Mahabharat.

But we have at least one definite passage in the Aswamedhic Parba, where the expression "Kolla-girinibasi" meaning the 'Kolas' living in the hills occurs. Now the term, 'Kol' ethnologically is the generic name for all the aborigines of Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas. We have yet another allusion to this country in the Santi-Parba, where Lord Sri Krishna, while at Magadh with Bhim and Arjun to kill Jarasindhu says: "Look at the kingdom of Magadha, look at the five hills, viz. Baihar, Baraha, Brishava, Risigiri, and Chaitaka, that conjointly seem to be defending the capital Giribraja." It was the ancient 'asram' (hermitage) of Risi Goutam, where kings from Anga, Banga and other places came to pay their respects to the Risi. Look also at the millions of hills that are the homes of Sasthika and Maninag." Now the name of Maninag occurs in the list of 77 'nags' (serpents), mentioned in the Adi Parba and the name Sasthika appears in the Udyoga Parba, as one of the many species of serpents. It may thus appear that during the age of the Mahabharat, not only were the people known as the hunter's hill-men, barbarians and Kols, but their country was known as the land of the 'Naga' or serpents. This finds an unexpected support from a Munda legend that tells us that when they migrated to this land they found that the Asuras had already preceded them and that the land of their adoption was infested with large and venomous cobras (nags). It will, therefore, not seem to be improbable that the name 'Nagpur' to this land may have been derived either from the name of the 'Nags' (serpents) or from the serpent (Nag) - worshipping Nagbansi immigrants to this land. It may also be inferred that, if the aboriginals were immigrants they did not come to live in this plateau in the age of the Mahabharat.

And if we accept the Calcutta edition (1834) of the Mahabharat used by Pargiter, in his learned article on "The Nations the Pandavas

and Kouravas, we get definite mention of India at the Battle between Mundas, the Pundras (or Pundras), Tamraloptikas, Utkalas and Maladas [19].

### The date and authenticity of the Bharat

Great interest is shown over the question of the date and the authenticity of the Bharat. Divergent views are expressed by scholars. Rao Bahadur Vaidya fixes the date at about 3100 B.C. others would assign a much later date, ranging from B.C. 1700 to A.D. 200 or 300. Viewed in the light of the recent excavations in the Indus Valley, whose age has been determined by scholars to be not earlier than 3250 B.C. and later than 2750 B.C., the age of the Bharat must be assigned a much later date than the Indus-valley or the Chalcolithic age. The learned scholar, Dr. Roy Chowdhury, in his political History of Ancient India has tried to establish on the examination of the Mahabharat (Maushal Parba). The Vanu and the Vishnu Puran and the Mahavansa that the accession of Parikshit took place about the middle of the fourteenth century B.C. we may therefore be not far from the truth, if we suppose that the age of the Mahabharat belongs to the period not later than 1500 B.C. to 1400 B.C. and that the date of its composition may belong to a little later period, and as the Mahabharat makes no mention of the Buddhistic age, it must have been written before 600 B.C.

Without entering into the controversy regarding the authenticity of Mahabharat as a source of true history it would be sufficient to hold that it is an encyclopaedia of all valuable information, about the past as well as about the time to which it relates, traditional, religious and historical, all combined into one. And, as is the characteristic of our Sastras, even the universally accepted scientific truths are displayed in the light of mythological and divine order, because, unlike the materialistic west such statements appeal most to the imagination of the spiritually minded Hindus. It would, however, be wrong to suppose, on that ground that the events and characters in the Bharat are fictitious and that, like Homer's Iliad and Milton's Paradise Lost, this fountain head of historical literature gives us the conception of an epic poem only. Unlike the European epics, it forms an encyclopaedia of the accumulated knowledge of the past, interwoven with the present. Prof. Hopkins who seems to have ignored the distinction lying between the religious traditional element of the Mahabharat and the historical matter lays down, in his "The Great Epic of India" [20], the following principal strata, viz. 1. a collection of Bharat lays in honour of the Kauravas, 2. A Mahabharat tale, 3. Pandavas the heroes, 4. Krishna, a demi god, gradually becoming the all-God and 5. The introduction and later books added. It is one of the characteristic defects of modern critics of the epic that they do not ascertain their historical value by separating the mythical from the historical in this great store-house of the ancient Hindus. Undoubtedly, it is the only source of information for the Pre-Buddhistic period. The fact seems certain which modern critics have perhaps totally ignored that the Mahabharat is "a combination of matter, partly epic, partly pedagogic and partly narrative or historical. The genealogies and the religious didactic parts are not necessarily later in date, but they are later additions to the original material."

Nevertheless, the most difficult question that confronts us today is whether the geography and the ethnology of the earliest bards are the same as those of our present recession of the poem. We have no definite proofs of identification, and consequently we must here judge by probabilities. Dr. Grierson holds that while the latter wider geographical knowledge, they left the actual countries and nations or tribes known to the bards untouched. The learned doctor further thinks that the original poets could have no better knowledge of the localities and tribes of eastern India, beyond Anga, that anything but barbarous

<sup>41</sup>Ibid Aswamedhic Parba p.1871

and that any reference to settled kingdoms and tribes must be ascribed to later writers. We have observed before that the historical value of the Ramayan to the historians of Chota Nagpur consists in their being able to identify the vanaras (Monkeys) and giants with some tribes speaking an alien tongue. Fortunately, the Mahabharat does not contain any such contemptuous expressions to denote the various nations and tribes, other than their own who took part in the great kurukshetra war. In the Vedas, a sharp distinction is always drawn between "Sunvanti" and "Asunvants", the former meaning the orthodox pressures of soma and the latter, the unfaithful who do not worship Indra and who do not press Soma. During the age of the Ramayan the nations and tribes of India were branded as monkeys, bears giants etc; but during the Bharat age, we notice a gradual appreciation of the culture and language of the primitive peoples of India. We have no right to assume that the "asunvants" or barbarians whose speech was unintelligible to the Bharatas were necessarily non-Aryans. On the other hand, there were Aryans on the banks of the Ravi and of the Jamuna in the days of Sudas [21]. According to the Satapath Brahman, he who speaks on unintelligent speech is a Mleccha or barbarian, but in the preceding verse the Asuras who had been there are represented as speaking a Prakrit of Eastern India.

We may now summarise our foregoing observations. Perhaps, our search for materials from the Bharat has not been wholly in vain. The great Kurukshetra war, like the Wars of the Roses in England was primarily a war between the Kurus and the Pandavas, the two great rival noble families, contesting for supremacy but, unlike the wars of the Roses, in which the common people took no part, there was scarcely a nation or tribe that did not choose a side in the Great Epic War. It may seem beyond doubt, as Pargiter observes that the nations on either side were not of the same stock. The geographical distribution of the hosts shows that the division of the contending parties may be broadly said to be south Madhyadesh and panchala against the rest of India. The modern division of Chota Nagpur falls under the countries and races in eastern India, according to Pargiter (vide Cano LVII, Markandeya Puran). In the list of petty tribes who accompanied the kings from Eastern India the learned author says that Vangas accompanied Karna and that with them went contingents from Paundras (Which is known in the accompanying map of the Article as situated to the south of Magadh), Tamraliptikas (people from Tamralipti or modern Tamluk, in the district of midnapore), Utkalas (Orissa), Mundas and Maladas which might be another reading of "Malavartikas" meaning Manbhum, a district in Chota Nagpur Division. If it is argued that Pargiter used a later edition of the Mahabharat (Calcutta Edition of 1834), we find in the Sanskrit edition of Kumbhakarna and in the Bengali edition of Kali prasanna Sinha, which edition the writer has extensively used, the clear mention of the 'Parbatiya's' (hillmen), 'Kollyagiri-nibasina' (the kols who dwell in the hills), and 'Kiratas' (hunters), who may include the different aboriginal tribes who now inhabit the plateau of Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas. The more convincing reason would appear to be our observation that Jarasandha of Magadh, who supplied to the Pandava army one 'Akhouhini' could not have raised such a vast contingent, unless it was raised chiefly from the prolific aborigines of the neighbourhood. And if we accept the theory that the aborigines dwelt in Kikata (Magadh) upto the rise of Buddhism, the inclusion of the ancestors of the present aborigines of Chota Nagpur into the contingent supplied by the king of Magadh may be said to be fairly established. Even though the tract has been generally supposed to be the country where the Pandavas did not visit at all, there have been discovered five stone figures of men at a place, three miles north-west of Ghatsila, in the district of Singhbhum, they have been believed to

be the images of the five pandavas, and the place is therefore named panchapandabs. It may not be unlikely that the pandava brothers, either during the period of igcognitio or during their 'Dwigivijay' might have come to the district of Singhbhum.

### Chota Nagpur in the pouranic division

The well-known nine-divisions (nabakhaa) of India recorded in the Purans were intended to include all parts of India. These divisions have been quoted by Sir Alexander Cunningham, in his Ancient Geography by the Muhammadan Geographer Alberuni, and also by the astronomer Bhaskaracharya. The names of the "nabakhandas" occur in the Vishu Puran, the Matsya Puran and in the Markandeya Puran but it is worth noting that the reading in each gives the names of eight, although nine divisions are mentioned. "Indradwipah Kasheruman tamrabarno Savantiman Nagadwipastatha Saumyo gandharbastatha, barunah"

The nine 'dwipas' or divisions are: 1. Indra 2. Kaseruman 3. Tamrabarna, but the Matsya Puran (chap. 114 verse 8) reads it Tamraparni 4. Govastiman 5. Nag 6. Saumya 7. Gandharba and 8. Barunah. It must be noted here that the word "Dwipa" does not mean an island, but is used in the sense in which grammarian Panini used it, namely "dwip" puls "ap", meaning land having water on two of its sides.

Eminent geographers, however, express wide difference of opinion with regard to the location of these division. Sir Alexander Cunningham locates 'Indra-dwipa' as the eastern division of India. While Alberuni would like to place it in the middle. The former places kaseru-man in the north, but the latter authority puts it in the east. The learned Muhammadan geographer locates Tamrabarna in the south-east, Gavastiman in the south, and the Naga-dwipa in the south-west. According to Sir Alexander, the tract of Chota Nagpur may be included in Indra-dwipa. Mazumdar, in an article contributed to the journal of the Bihar & Orissa Research Society, while offering some suggestions regarding the location of the eight divisions, has rightly pointed out that the nine divisions does not mean so many provinces, but they are meant to be nine broad geographical divisions of Bharatbarsa or Great India. In the midst of so much divergence of opinion, it may not be safe to place Chota Nagpur either in Cunningham's Indra-dwipa or in Alberuni's Kaseruman. Let us now try to ascertain what the ninth division is and where it can be place, Sir Alexander makes 'Kumarika' his ninth; and Alberuni who does not mention the eight divisions, perhaps makes Nagara samvritta'his ninth. But none of these names appear in any of the eighteen puran. It was Raj Sekhara, who in his Kavyamimansa first suggested that the ninth name might be Kumar [22]. It has also been suggested that Alberuni's 'nagarasamvrita' might be a corruption of "Sagara-Samvrita", meaning "Seagirt" instead of these conjectures which are undoubtedly of late growth we may find an explanation in the original Purans themselves. For in the Matsya-Puran the ninth is named 'Bharat'. In the Markandeya Puran, these are a definite mention of 'Bharat' as the ninth division, which has sea on either side and has an area of 1,000 Yojans in the north and south.

"Ayanthu nabamashesham dwipah Sagarasambritah, Yojananam Sahasram bai dwipayam dakshinottarat."

The next verse gives the boundary of this ninth division. "Purbe kirata asante paschime Yabanastatha. Brahmanah Kshatriya baisyah Sudrashantah sthitha dwija."

Meaning: The Kirathas (hunting tribes) live to the eastern most tract of this ninth division, Yavanas live to the west and in the middle live the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas and the Sudras. It may seem absurd to name the ninth division of 'Bharatbarsha' Bharat, which

may mean that the whole is equal to its part. But the reconciliation of these two apparently absurd names may not be difficult if we take 'Bharat-barsha' or the puranic expression of 'Jambudwip' in a wider sense to mean the whole of India and Kumari of Rajsekhar or 'Nagarsamvrita' of Alberuni as equivalent to 'Bharat' as the name of the ninth division of the Purans. From the geographical boundary of the ninth division, indicated in the Purans, the 'kiratas' a non-Aryan aboriginal hill-tribe of whose mention has been made in the Mahabharat would appear to be living, outside the pale of Aryanism in the further east. This probable location receives confirmation from Ptolemy who while describing India beyond the Ganges, places the country of the Kiratas to the east of the ninth division. The extent of this division from west to east would thus comprise the whole of modern India from Afganistan to the eastern limit of Assam. The length from the north to the south has been stated by the Purans to be 1,000 Yojans, or more than 7000 English miles, taking 7 miles as the minimum computation for a Yojan. But the length of modern India from Kashmir to Ceylon is scarcely over 1840 miles. Thus either the extent, north and south, is to be further extended to the country beyond the Himalayas or the statement of the Ppuran is to be taken as improbable. In any case, the boundaries of the ninth division correspond with the modern Indian peninsula, or Bharatbarsh. The other eight 'dwipas' or division must therefore mean islands or countries that encircle the Indian peninsula. The ninemonic list of nine divisions of India, which are alluded to by the Bhubanakos section of the Markandeya, the Matsya and the Vayu Purans, as well as by Bhaskaracharya and the Mahabharat are ultimately reduced to five, namely 'Madhyades', or 'Majjimadesa' of early pali texts (central India), 'Udichaya' (Northern India), Prachya (eastern India), 'Dakshinapath' (Deccan), and Aparanta (western India). The later Chinese also appear to have accepted the same divisions of India. Pargiter who in his annotation of the Markandeya Puran has followed the same five divisions of India makes 'Prachya' or Eastern India comprise a vast territory, including Assam and Bengal proper, the whole of the delta of the Ganges together with Sambalpur, Orissa and Ganjam. In this eastern division of India we may include our plateau of Chota Nagpur.

### Mountains, rivers and countries

The purans give us lists of mountains, rivers, countries and tribes, which the ubiquitous purans mean to be comprehensive and exhaustive. We proceed with the hope that the country and the people whose history we profess to deal with at this remote period may have been included in the lists. It is a pity that no competent research scholar has hitherto turned his attention to identify any of the places mentioned in the puranic lists with one in modern Chota Nagpur.

**Mountains:** The Matsya, the Brahananda, the Vishu and the Markandeya purans mention seven chief mountains of Bharat barsha, namely the Mahendra, the Malaya, the Sajhya, the Saktiman, the Riksha, the Vindhya and the paripatra, which can be fairly identified.

It appears therefore from the examination of the location of the chief mountains that the Chota Nagpur hills might have been included in either of the two of the seven chief mountains, namely the vindya and the Riksha, on the east side of which lived the Mundas and their allied tribes. Again, the same Markandeya Puran tells us that there are thousands and thousands of high hills in the vicinity of these chief seven mountains. Among the thousands of high hills, mentioned in the purans, no geographer can fail to miss the loftiest summits in the range of hills in Chota Nagpur, whose heights vary from 2434 to 3621 ft. above the sea level. While Rajgir hill in Bihar seldom exceeds 1000ft. and the

highest hill in the Santhal parganas is never more than 2000 ft. above the sea level. "The Kaimur Hills", south of the district of Sahabad is a branch of the Great Vindhya range, and though scattered, the Chota Nagpur hills may be said geographically to be in continuation of the Vindhya.

There is an actual mention of 22 hills, though none of the Sanskritised names can be identified, except three that tempt us to attempt at identification. They are Mandar (no. 3 in the list), Naga-giri (no. 10), and 'Kore-parvat' (no. 22). The first hill might refer to Mandara-giri- the hill in the district of Bhagalpur, whose sanctity has been described in the Skanda puran. It may not be improbable that 'Mandar' (no. 3 in the list), Naga-giri (no. 10) and 'kore-parvat' (no. 22). The first hill might refer to Mandara-giri- the hill in the district of Bhagalpur, whose sanctity has been described in the Skanda puran. It may not be improbable that 'Mandar' is the same as Mount Maleus of Pliny, which the aborigines of Chota Nagpur claim to be the place of their ancient occupation. Similarly, the name 'Naga-giri' meaning the hill in the Naga country might refer to the hills in Chota Nagpur, which was called after the name of the nagas. Pargiter, however, thinks that these mountains may be placed in the Nag country, near Nagpur in the central provinces (vide Pargiter's Markandeya puran Canto LVI). If Nagpur (or Burra Nagpur) in the central provinces claims the Naga-giri hills, as belonging to it exclusively at least the hill 'kore-parvat' (the 22<sup>nd</sup> hill in the list) must belong exclusively to Chota Nagpur, the primitive home of the kols. Nevertheless, one has to admit that the extremely laborious and perhaps fruitless task of identifying these Sanskritised names with the present colloquial names is more or less of the nature of a conjecture, after such a long distance of time has been negligently allowed to lapse.

**Rivers:** we have noticed that in the Vishva parva of the Mahabharat, Sanjaya has mentioned the names of 156 rivers and of 151 Janapadas in northern India. The Matsya and the Markandeya purans enumerate almost the equal number of rivers, as also almost the same names. The difficulty of identification of those rivers remains the same, although the purans classify them according to their sources, and only those rivers are mentioned, that take their rise from the following mountains: the Himalayas, the Paripatra, the Chitrakuta, the Riksha, the Vindhya, the Malaya, the Mahendra, the Suktiman and the Sajhya. We have thus the keys, but we do not know that locks they would fit. Geographically, the list is suggestive. We know that the Chota Nagpur hills are the sources of many rivers, such as the Subarnarekha, the Damodar, the Rupnarayan, the Barakar, the Ajoy, the Karmanasa (from the Kaimur hills, 18 miles west of Rohtasgarh), and most of them empty their waters into the Ganges. There is the actual mention of the river Baitarini, as one of the 13 rivers that rises from the foot of the Vindhya (vide Matsya Puran, chap. 114, verse 27). Similar references have been made in the Markandeya Puran (chap. 67 verses 19-20), where along with the Baitarini, the river "Antasira" (meaning, having an under current) is named. It may be conjectured that the river may refer to the sacred river "Fal-goo", in the Gaya district, which contains water under its sand.

The next verse says that there are besides thousands of rivers that flow only in the rainy season, which may refer to the hilly rivers in Chota Nagpur. "Anyah Sahasraschoktah Kshudranadyo dwijottama. Prabhit-kalabahah santi sadakalabahascha yah.

It may thus follow that as to remaining rivers that rise from the Chota Nagpur hills they might have been indicated by the fact that some of these rivers fall into the Ganges. The difficulty of identifying the highly Sanskritised names of rivers with the popular present local

names after they have passed through various stages of transformation is so great that scholars have given up the attempt altogether in despair. It must be admitted that even, when such a famous river as the Ganges was variously called, viz, the Mahabhadra, Fo-shinx (by Hien Tsang) and the Hypobarus (by Pliny). It is quite likely that the exhaustive list of rivers must contain at least some of the important rivers that take their rise in the Chota Nagpur plateau. And although the course of rivers in the plains has received complete transformation, it is not generally the case at the source.

The Brahmanda Puran gives description of five contries (Anga-dwip, Jaba-dwip, Malaya-dwip, Sankha-dwip, kush-dwip, and Baraha-dwip), of which the description of Anga –dwip might be satisfied in the Chota Nagpur plateau. As to the fourth, viz. Sankha-dwip, it is definitely said that a river of the name of Sankha rises from the neighbouring hills, near which lies the Kingdom of the Naga kingh, and where are to be found mines of precious stones,. The direction, the position and the description in these verses might give us reasonable grounds of conjecture that the river might refer to the Sankh that taking its rise from the North-west of the district of Ranchi flows through the plains of Barwe and forms the boundary between Ranchi and Jashpur state. The possession of diamonds by the local chief, the reference of which can be had from the diary of Emperor Jahangir and the local tradition that the river Sankh contains diamonds go to substatlte our conjecture. The writer wants this to be clearly understood that he does not put forward a well-defined theory, but only thinks that it offers a line of enquiry which is worth following up.

**Chief people:** The purans contain very little reference to the political condition of India, and the nine Puranic divisions of India are more geographical and less ethnical that political? As to the nine broad divisions of India, there is no divergence of opinion among authorities. In fact, the Brihat-Samhita of Parasara, the Chinese records, and the Kabya-Mimansa all agree in the five broad divisions in the Purans namely the Central (Madhyadesa), North (Udaichya), East (Prachya), South (Dakshinapath), west (Aparanta). To these five divisions, common to all authorities, the purans add three more, namely the dwellers on the Vindhya, on the Himalayas and on the north-west frontiers. The Markandeya puran (canto LVII after describing the nine divisions, seven principal mountains and the names of 22 hills, chief rivers with their sources, proceeds to name the chief peoples or countries arranging them according to the main natural divisions of India, namely, the Central (Madhyadesha) the north, the border (Aparanta), the outside (Bahairadeshaja) the south (Dakshinapath), the west, the western most (Paschatya). Besides the countries, lying on the back of the vindhya, and the tribes living under the foot of the other hills, and naming the different sects of the kiratas (or hunting class). The only possible divisions under which chota Nagpur or its neighbourhood might be included are a) "Bahairadesaja" (verse 38-39), b) the different sects of the hunting class (verse 40). C) Hillment (verse 56-57), and d) the east (prachya). While we cannot identify any of the highly sankritised names under the last three divisions, we are in a position to identify some of the "janapadas" or states) lying to the east of Bharatbarsha. There are mention of 19 states of which pragiyotish is without doubt Assam, and Uttar-Brahma is Upper Burma, Mudakara-or Mudgaraka is Monghyr, are easily identified. The eighth in the list reads the Mana-vartikas, although the Mahabharat reads Manbarjakas, which appears from the context to be the people meant here. Pargiter thinks that Man-Vartikas or kalvarnikas<sup>42</sup> might refer to Manbhumi, a district of Chota Nagpur Division. The state No. 14 in the list is called madra, which name, pargiter thinks to be impossible, because the Vayu Puran reads Mundas instead and the Brahmanda puran reads pundra. There

are various spellings in the Mahabharat, such as pundra, paundrika (in the Bhishma and shava parvas). The country of the pundras is often identified with Maldah, some parts of Purnea and parts of Dinajpur and Rajsahi. Sometimes a distinction is made between the pundras and the paundras, the latter being linked with the Udras, Utkalas, Makala, Kallings and Andhras<sup>43</sup>. Pargiter identifies the country of the paundras with the modern Santhal Parganas, Birbhum and the northern portion of the Hazaribagh district. Another state is Malla, but the Vayu puran and the Brahmanda Puran reads it Salla which according to pargiter is erroneous. Now mal and malla are almost synonymous expressions and pargiter rightly suggests that the mallas appear to be the males (properly mals) and mal paharias who now inhabit the Rajmahal hills and the Ramgarh hills, in the Hazaribagh district of Chota Nagpur Division.

The eastern division of the purans would thus seem to comprise the whole of the tract from prayag (Allahabad to Assam, including the Delta of the Ganges, and from the south of the kingdom of Magadh to Udra (Orissa). Including the modern districts of Sambalpur and Ganjam. It is likely therefore that it included also the tract, now called chota Nagpur division, although the indication is far from being definite, possibly because this tract was then not well known or what is more probable that we are not in a position to identify the names given in the puranic lists which appear to be exhaustive and quite suggestive with the present names. On the authority of the purans, we may infer that manvartikas and the mallas enjoyed the status of independent people, if pargiter's identification of Manvartikas with the modern district of Manbhumi, and of Malla, with the Rajmahal and the Ramgarh hills, in the district of modern hazaribagh, be taken as correct.

The purans that pretend to record the doings of all the peoples and tribes of Bharatbarsha have very little or almost nothing to say about the aborigines of Chota Nagpur and the Santhal Parganas. The Vishnu puran, in course of its enumeration of the names of kings and dynasties from Brihabraja down to the coming of the kaliyug says that the Tukhara kings would be followed by thirteen Mundas. Another reference is furnished by the Brahananda puran, where it is said that the dynasty of the Kols would rule for one hundred years after the Biri dynasty. These are mere faint indications to the people and country of Chota Nagpur, and we have to be satisfied with these meagre references.

### Buddhistic period

We turn now to the Buddhistic period. The advent of Buddha is heralded by the Agni Puran (chap. XVI), which says that the 'devas' (gods) being oppressed by the Asuras approached God for redress. Buddha is said to have been born in consequence; and with his birth the Kaliyuga according to the Purans began, because the former rose as a protest against the Vedic rites and practices. Again, the Bhagwata Puran says "when the kali age has begun, a person named Buddha, son of Anjana will be born among the Kiktas, in order to delude the asurs".

Opinions are conflicting as to the time in which Gautam flourished. Various dates have been assigned, viz. 542 B.C., 582 B.C. and in the history of Sahabad at six or seven centuries before the Christian era. The date of birth Of Buddha has been provisionally fixed to be about the year 483 B.C. by Rhys Davids, although in general opinion of modern European scholars, the sixth century B.C. has been assumed to be the period of Buddha's activities. The Buddhistic literatures unfortunately were devoted so much to ethical and philosophical ideas that they slurred over the historical events before their own time. Yet there are here and there some references which gives us inkling into the political

<sup>42</sup>Brahmanda Puran Canto II. Verse 56, Reads

<sup>43</sup>Vide S.N.Majumdar p.724

condition of northern India. Occasionally and incidently there is some mention of a few pre Buddhistic states and dynasties. Prof. Rhys Davids was the first to discover the existence of "Sorasajanadas" or sixteen states in Northern India, in or about the time of the rise of Buddhism, by his patient study of the Anguttara Nikaya, the Mahavastu and the Vinay texts. The list is as follows:

1. Anga, 2. Magadh, 3. Kasi, 4. Kosala, 5. Vajji, 6. Malls, 7. Cheti, 8. Vamsa, 9. Kuru, 10. Panchala, 11. Maccha, 12. Surasena, 13. Assaka, 14. Avanti, 15. Gandhara and 16. Kamboja.

It is important to notice that the sixteen names which are not all the names of states but of people or tribes and more tribal than geographical seem to comprise almost the whole of northern India, from Afganistan to the borders of Bengal. But it appears that this political system was only temporary and that by the time Buddha lived and preached, only four out of the sixteen states remained. The process of centralization of power must have been at work, resulting in the formation of a strong imperialistic government under the Mauryas. The above list of the sixteen states, which is generally supposed to indicate the authentic political division of India during the pre-Buddhistic literatures, except the mere mention of "Dakshinapath" are absolutely silent about the states, south of the Vindhya, although the earlier literatures the Epics, the Purans, provide us with intimate knowledge of the extreme southern states. The extent of the territories thus defined by the sixteen states is bounded on the west by Gandhara (no. 15 in the list), on the east by the country of the Vajjians and of the Mallas, whose territory, according to the Chinese pilgrims was on the mountain, slopes to the east or as others say to the south of Sakyas and to the north or east of the Vajjians.

A careful analysis of the extent of each of the sixteen states will reveal the fact that the province of Bihar which now includes the plateau of Chota Nagpur consisted of several small states, namely, Kosala (north Bihar), Magadh (South Bihar consisting of Patna and Gaya) and Anga (East Bihar, comprising modern Bhagalpur and Monghyr). It would also appear that about the time of the rise of Buddhism Magadh was bounded on the north by the Ganges, on the west by the Sone, on the east by Anga and the river Champa separated the two states and on the south by the Vindhya mountains. The southern boundary is indefinite and vague. It is extremely doubtful that at the time, when the Magadhans did not incorporate Anga and Kosala they would penetrate into the dense forest reaching to the plateau of Chota Nagpur<sup>44</sup>.

We may thus conclude that upto the end of seventh century of Christian era, the Magadhans had no hold upon Chota Nagpur and that consequently the aborigine who, if they were then living in this plateau enjoyed perfect immunity from foreign attacks.

The Buddhistic literatures that deal primarily with the ideas and doctrines of the time give us very little matter about the political condition except the list of sixteen states. It is mainly from the Brahmanic literature that we have to draw knowledge about the politics of the time. The Rigveda makes no mention of Magadh. Apparently, it was then outside the pale of Aryan Civilization. It is only in the Atharvaveda that Magadh is mentioned along with Anga. The probable inference seems to be mentioned along with Anga. The probable inference seems to be the imperfect Aryanisation of Magadh & the predominance of the aboriginal elements in that part of the country. Magadh came to prominence during the later epic period, when the Punjab, the chief scenes of the Vedic people, gradually receded into insignificance and new places in the further east received special attention. The places that received prominence at this state were: Kosala, (roughly modern Oudh), Videha (Tirhut or North Bihar), Magadh (South Bihar), and Anga (East Bihar).

The Aitareya Brahman mentions the names of some outcast tribes lying to the south of Magadh. They are the Pundras, identified by Pargiter with the aborigines of Chota Nagpur, the Mutibas the Ppulindas and the Savaras, now living on the Madras frontier near Orissa, in whose language one can easily trace Munda origin. Before the rise in political importance of Magadh under its king Bimbisara in Buddha's time, the aboriginal elements were predominant in these parts. From a hymn in the Atharva Veda, Charpentier and Keith opine that the Vratyas, a nomad tribe who spoke a Prakrit tongue, were probably dwellers in Aya puran. Prof. Rapson thinks that the king of the five kingdoms of Deya Vanga (Birbhum, Murshidabad, Burdwan and Nadia) and Pundra. Sulima (Bankura and Midnapore) and Kalinga (Orissa) belong to the family of Anu, one of the five tribes mentioned on several occasions in the Rigveda against whom Sudas, the Bharat king fought his famous "Battle of the Ten Kings". If from the foregoing considerations we have been able to establish the historical fact that the various aboriginal tribes, being pushed from the west by the ever encroaching Aryans, lives in the Gangetic plain known to the Vedic people as Kikata before dominated Magadh about the time of Jarasandha, we may agree with Col. Dalton<sup>45</sup> Col Dalton - Ethnology of Bengal, p. 163 that the Kols, the generic name for the aborigines of Chota Nagpur, were the earlier settlers in the Gangetic valley and that they had attained some advance in civilization before they migrated or were dislodged.

Up to the rise of Buddhism the whole country of Kikata or Magadh must have belonged in sovereignty to the different tribes of the aborigines, namely the Cheros, the Mundas, and the Soyras, of whose mention has been found. It may be urged that there is no such good remnant to the Kol Empire in Bihar, if the Kols were the pre-dominant tribes in the Gangetic plain for a considerable extent of time. Capt. Malony records a Ceylonese tradition to show that in Magadh where Goutam was born the art of writing was unknown (cf. Asiatic Researches. Hamilton). It has also been pointed out that the Bodhi Gaya Sculptures<sup>46</sup> Col. Dalton Ethnology of Bengal, p. 163 display more turaman or Kol features than Aryan. And the two rude stone circles near the foot of the 'Pret-Sila' have been locally attributed to the Kols<sup>47</sup> Roy-Mundas & their country, p.104.. It is not altogether right to say that stone buildings and stone architecture began with Asoka, as the stone structure at Rajgir (Bihar) known as 'Jarasandha-ki-baithak' was certainly anterior to Asoka (vide Fergusson's History of Indian and Eastern Architecture). The learned archaeologist and Rajendra Lal Mitra attribute the structure to Assyrian origin, but certainly before Asoka. The Assyrians have been proved to be the same as the Asuras mentioned in the Vedas.

Other ruins in North Bihar comprise two pyramid-shaped mounds, situated at village Digha Dabaoli, about 33 miles north of Chhara, ruins of a large mound of brick at Kasturia a village 16 miles to the east of Motihar, a ruined fort at Sahegarh, 18 miles north -west of Muzaffarpur, an ancient mound at Jouri Din, a village about 12 miles from Hajipur. Local traditions attribute these to the Kol Rajas of old. Much more traces of the aboriginal remnants can be found along the boundary line between Bihar and Chota Nagpur in the district of Gaya. Extensive mounds of ruins covered with broken bricks are still to be found in the village of Pali, 13 miles to the north west of Gaya, and similar mud forts and mound at village, Chirkawan and Punawa, nor far from Gaya, bear testimony to the former occupation of the Kols. "in the wilder parts of Bihar", remarks, truly Peppe, in the Asiatic Society Journal Bengal, "in parganas Japla, Balamja, Sirris, kutumda, and also in Sherghati, the found scattered over the country leaves little doubt of their Kolerian origin, to which local tradition assigns them".

<sup>44</sup>Cambridge History of India-Vol. 1 p.182

<sup>45</sup>Col. Dalton-Ethnology of Bengal, p.163

## Migration due to Buddhistic Doctrines

If these facts are held as established than we may conclude that the whole country of Bihar belonged in sovereignty to the various tribes or clans of the aborigines. Why did they then leave the country? The reason is to be sought in religious and political changes-rather more religious than political. The rise of Buddhism in Bihar was an acid test to the aborigines, who were not prepared to accept the Buddhistic doctrine of "Ahinsa" or non-slaughter. They rejected the tenets of Buddha and preferred to migrate to the south in the valleys of Chota Nagpur, where they could with impunity worship the "bongas" with fowl, drink and sacrifices, just in the same way as the puritans under Elizabeth and Protestants under Mary would rather leave their home than conform the religious changes in which they had no faith.

## Political causes

Political grounds were another cause of the migration of the aborigines to the south. It has now been proved beyond doubt that democratic forms of Government existed in India, before the rise of Buddhism. Prof. Rhys Davids first indicated and Jaysawal in the pages of the *Modern Review* worked out in some greater details the existence of some republican states in India, from the reference in Atharvaveda, in Panini's celebrated treaties of Grammar, and in Mahaparinirbansutta. The existence of republican or democratic states in India in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. has now received general acceptance. Ten such states have been referred to by Buddhistic authors as existing at the time of Goutam Buddha. It is on record that some Buddhists of Northern India, who went to the south for trade, being asked how their country was governed replied that some countries were governed by "ganas" or representative assemblies and some by kings.

Prof. Rhys Davids, in his *Buddhist India*, mentions a number of republican states from his exhaustive study of the oldest Pali records as follows:

1. The Sakiyas, capital Kapilvastu.
2. The Bulis, capital Allakappa.
3. The Kalamas, capital Kesaputta.
4. The Bhaggas, capital on Sumsumara Hill.
5. The Koliyas, capital Ramagama.
6. The Mallas, capital Pava.
7. The Mallas, capital Kusinara.
8. The Moriyas, capital Pipphalivana.
9. The Videha, capital Mithila.
10. The Lichchavis, capital vaishali.
- 11.-15. Some unidentified tribes mentioned by Megasthenes.

It would appear from the account of Megasthenes that the above clans, (Crindle Ancient India as described by Megasthenes, p.144) lived in the country "east of Kosala between the mountains and the Ganges"; and according to Dr. Law, who holds that the puranic nine divisions, which by the Buddhistic period were reduced to five, the above ten clans might have occupied the whole country under the division, Majjimadesa of early Pali texts, or central or Mid-India of the Chinese. As the Majjimadesa comprised the whole of the Gangetic provinces from Thneswar to the head of the Delta, and from the Himalayas to

the banks of the Narmada, the whole of the tract, now known as Chota Nagpur must have been included in this division.

Except for some detailed account about the Sakiya clan, to which Goutam is believed to have belonged and to a lesser extent about the Lichchavis, we possess practically little or no account of the other clans. The possible clans in the list that might have occupied this tract may seem to be the Mallas and the Koliyas.

**Mallas:** The Mallas of the list, who had their capitals at pava and Kusinara, might refer to the Mallas, who later on migrated to the south and south east and settled in the modern districts of Bankura, Panchet (Manbhum), Birbhum and Midnapore, known for a long time as Malladesh or Mallabhum, after the Mallas who might have migrated to these parts. The clan known as Koliyas, having their capital at Ramagama may refer to the Koles of Chota Nagpur, a genetic name for all the aborigines of the plateau. The Digha Nikaya (II-pp 260-262) supports our conjecture, where it gives the origin of the Kols. The story in brief is that: A king named Ram, a saint and farmer king of Benaras, being deprived of his property by his relatives came to live in forest with his family. In the same forest, the eldest of the five daughters of a king named Okkak also lived, being driven out by her relatives, here this lady met with Ram, who is said to have built a town by rooting out a 'Kola' (meaning in Sanskrit plum), tree, for which the town got the name of kolenagar, after the name of the tree or Ramnagar, after the name of its founder Ram. The descendants of the king are known as 'Koles'.

The Mahavastu and the Jatakas, make the 'Koles' descendants of a saint named Kole, and mention about a struggle between the Sakiyas and the Koles, which was ultimately compromised by Lord Buddha, (vide Cowell Jatakas). Dr. Law, in an article published in the 'Bharatbarsha' a Bengali magazine of great repute, has tried to ascertain the geographical portion of about 70 names of towns or cities, mentioned in the Buddhist and pali literatures. In our present stage of Geographical knowledge of ancient places, it seems extremely difficult to accept all his identifications. Some of his identifications, however, namely Halliddabasan, which is no. 25 of his list, has been supposed to be a village in the country of the Koliyas, where the learned Doctor states that Lord Buddha lived. He locates this place to the east of the country of the Sakiyas and makes Ramgam its capital. It is difficult to say whether this Ramgam is the same as Ramnagar or Kolenagar, of the tradition referred to above. The learned Doctor further states that the Rohini River which flows through Ramgam separated the Sakiya countries from those of the Koliyas. Unless the Rohini means the Damodar, which it is difficult to believe his Ramgam cannot mean Ramnagar or Kolenagar.

The identification of Pundravardhan with the modern Santal Parganas, Birbhum and the portion north of the modern district of Hazaribagh seems to be approximately correct, as the place has also been mentioned in the Mahabharat, in connection with Banga, and occasionally with Udra, Utakal, Mekhala, Kalinga and Andhra. Pargiter's identification of the place is almost the same.

Tradition and literature tell us more about the Sakiyas and less about the Koliyas. But from what little account is available, two things become clear to us. In the first place, the Sakiyas were related to the Koliyas and secondly, the administrative system of government of the Sakiyas, which was republican in character, resembled the democratic system of the aboriginals, who now inhabit this plateau. It will therefore appear that the Sakiyas and the Koliyas were of the same stock, and that like the Angles and the Saxons, who brought with them the germs of democratic institutions from the territory between the Elbe and Rhine, the aborigines of Chota Nagpur during their period of

<sup>46</sup>Col. Dalton-Ethnology of Bengal, p.163

<sup>47</sup>S.C. Roy-Mundas and their country, p.104

residence in the countries between the Himalayas and the Ganges developed the democratic ideas of their institutions in their new land of adoption. The rise of centralized power under the Mauryas necessarily meant the gradual disappearance of the republican clans or states in to which the whole of northern India was then studied with. The idea of the government by one man was repugnant to the aborigines who would rather prefer to live in the less fertile tract of Chota Nagpur than submitting to the will of one man. It would also appear that the aborigines of Chota Nagpur totally rejected the Buddhist principle of "Anarambho Bhutanam" or non injury to animal life, and repaired to these mountain fastnesses. This will further explain the fact that, while the Rock edicts of Asoka can be traced in the North-west Frontier province in the extreme west, in Kashmir, in Nepal, and in Mysore, except the extreme south, where the Cholas, the Pandayas, the Keralas were belligerent states, the plateau of Chota Nagpur is conspicuous by the absence of any edict of Asoka.

### Chota Nagpur Under the Mauryas

Chandragupta, the founder of the Maurya dynasty, who wielded unquestioned authority, must have suppressed the various republican states and established himself as an undisputed supreme lord of at least the whole of Northern India. The account of his reign has been left by Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to his court. From the fragments of his accounts collected and edited by Mc. Crindle, it appears that the Greek ambassador, in course of his description speaks about certain clans or tribes who were contemporaries of Chandra Gupta Maurya. The western Archaeologists have indulged in idle speculation of identifying some of these clans with those mentioned in the Purans. Megasthenes has mentioned the names of many tribes, inhabiting the region from the Himalayas upto the western bank of the Ganges. All attempts at identifications have so far failed.

One instance among many, may be cited here, as asserting the different speculations of the identification of the 'Bhors' different names in different places, and were variously called, as 'Bors', 'Bhowris', 'Barrias', 'Bortiyas', 'Baoris', and 'Bharais'. They have been supposed to be spread over the whole territories from the middle of Bengal to Assam and had once lived in the 'doab'.

### Megasthenes "Kolubi"

It is similarly a matter of dispute whether the "Kolubi" mentioned by Megasthenes may mean the kols of Chota Nagpur. Some identify the 'Kolubi' with the 'kolhut', which name is often met with in the Ramayana, the varaha puran and the Mudra-Rakshas. When Hien Tsang, visited India in the seventh century of the Christian era, the Koluts, who are mentioned by him "keulto" preserved still their tribal existence. Col. Wilkin locates for them the tract north east of modern Gorakhpur and North West of the district of Saran.

Megasthenes "Mundes": Megasthenes mentions another tribe under the name of the "Mundes" or "Mandai" according to whom some lived in the south east of Ajmir. It is impossible to determine under what name this tribe is at present known Col. Wilkin has arrived at the conclusion that the 'Mandes' or 'Mandai' tribes lived in the modern Gangpur state on the Brahmani to the south-west of modern Chota Nagpur. Prof. Lasen, however fixes their ancient abode near Sonepur in Singhbhum; but Col. Wilkin commenting on this, says that the above tract was the habitat of the Savaras, or Souris or Sabaris, as mentioned in the Purans. General Cunningham suggests, perhaps rightly, that Mundes of Megasthenes may be the same as the Mondes and Suari of Pliny, who in a passage mentions "Mandei" and "Malli", as occupying the country between Kalinga and the Ganges. Majumdar, supporting

Cunningham states that the names "Maddei" and "Malli" mentioned by Pliny in another passage may be intended for the celebrated Mount Manda, situated on the south of the district of Bhagalpur.

Vague and disputed as these identifications certainly are we are warned against making any definite conclusions regarding clans during the period of the Maurya rule. The absence of any of the innumerable Rock Edicts of Asoka is an unmistakable historical fact that the tract of Chota Nagpur was completely outside the pale of Buddhism. Politically therefore these democratic, hunting-loving aboriginal clans did not feel the weight of the Maurya arms; and there is no evidence of any kind, external or internal to show that the region whose history we are studying was ever included in the vast Maurya empire, although its extent, during Asoka's time has been roughly stated to be from the foot of the Himalayas down to the extreme south, except for a few states that retained their independence.

It seems, indeed remarkable that the Mauryas who occupied Kashmir and Nepal<sup>48</sup> Stein-Ancient Geography of Kashmir J.A.S.B. Part I (1899) and Kalhans Rajatarangini [23] and built stupas there had absolutely nothing to do with the plateau of Chota Nagpur. Let us now examine whether this tract was included in any of the five provinces into which the whole of the vast empire of Asoka was divided for administrative purposes. From the Arthashastra and the account of Megasthenes which agree with the inscriptions of Asoka, it appears that the vast empire of Asoka was divided into five provinces namely Takshasila, Ujjani, Tosali, Subarnagiri and Magadh. Of these, the first included the Punjab and Kashmir, the second Malwa, Gujrat and Saurashtra, the third, the territories to the south thus leaving Subarnagiri and Magadh undefined., we have no grounds to believe that the country, south of Magadh was under the direct administration of the central Government of Patliputra, for in that case some mention should have been found. Besides, these five administrative divisions, we can learn about some more minor divisions from the Dhoulis and Jugarh Rock inscriptions, but none of these from their Geographical positions can possibly include the modern tract of Chota Nagpur.

The only possible division therefore that may include our region is subarnagiri, which according to Dr. Bulheris situated in the hilly tracts of the Western Ghats. Even if this identification is right it does not conclusively prove that it included the adjoining territories of Chota Nagpur.

Another reference furnished by the Buddhist literatures, and corroborated by the existence of 22 stupas noticed by Fa-Hien but since extinct is about Tamralipti, a flourishing port of that time under the sway of the Mauryas. We may feel assured that the kingdom of Tamralipti did not include Chota Nagpur. The only possible tract of the modern division of Chota Nagpur that might have commercial relations with that city or kingdom was the Dhalbhum subdivision of the Singhbhum district, where Roman coins, like those found at Tamralipti or Tamluk (Midnapur) have been discovered. We may be justified in holding that like the unhistorical claim of the inclusion of Assam and Burma within the Maurya Empire, the Chota Nagpur tract has been supposed rather than actually included within the Empire of Asoka.

### Jainism and Chota Nagpur

Buddhism, as we have just discussed made absolutely no impression on this country, which is characterized by the total absence of any Buddhist monument throughout. With the case of Jainism, however, it was different. Jainism made a profound impression in modern Chota Nagpur division particularly in the districts of Hazaribagh, Singhbhum and Manbhum, ruined Jain temples, ultimately transformed into Jain Vaishavite temples can be traced in abundance in these districts.

The Jain temple at the Parasnath hil in the district of Hazaribagh, which is the only outstanding piece of Jain architecture in the whole of Northern India gives us an idea of the culture, the appreciation of beauty art and architecture and the religious zeal of the Jains. Some tanks, in the district of Singhbhum generally attributed to the Saraks, a lay Jain sect, can be discovered in Singhbhum, though not so numerous and grand as the expensive Ranakala tanks at panhala, described in the Kolhapur Gazetteer. Innumerable ruined, Jaintemples that can be found in the district of Manbhum [24].

While Buddhism as a religion is gradually disappearing from India, Jainism is not an antiquated, obsolete and dying religion, but is still a living force. It has maintained itself throughout the ages and proclaims the universalism under the banner of 'Ahinsa' and as such it has made a happy compromise with Vaisnabism, a sect of Hinduism with which it has no cause of quarrel or disputes.

History tells us that Jainism owing to its rivalry with Buddhism that had already made firm hold in Magadh could not flourish there and hence while during the twelve years of famine that devastated Magadh, the larger stream of Jains migrated to the south, a smaller section of them might have found it convenient to come down to the south in the Chota Nagpur plateau and practice their tenets in the solitary tract between the parasnath hill and the modern Jharia coal fields which were then uninhabited and lonely places. For all great men are lonely men, to who silence in the soul conceals a great reserve of power.

Chota Nagpur may thus claim to be a place of ancient Jain sanctity. The extensive sites, covering some miles, now known as the Jharia coal fields, and the Bagda pargana, in the district of Manbhum contain innumerable broken temples, statues and other relics of the Jains. The special sanctity is centered round the temple of Parasnath in the district of Hazaribagh. Where the people believe the twenty third Tirthankara parsva attained his nirvana on this Hill. This claim has not yet been corroborated by authentic facts of history. It may be worth mentioning that the image of parasnath, cut out of a beautiful piece of black marble has nothing of the workmanship displayed in the two Jain images. Santinath and parasvanatha exhibited in the lord Irwin Agricultural Museum at Kolhapur, which are undoubtedly the rarest pieces of workmanship in stone. The buildings about the parasnath hill also, do not seem to belong to the same age and to the same style of architecture found in the south the stronghold of Jainism in India, and this fact has been borne by the archaeological department that failed to find anything of special archaeological interest. The characteristics of the Jain temples have been exhaustively explained by Prof. Kundandar in an article on Jain Antiquities in the Kolhapur estate, published in the Jain Hindu Journal, 'Bir', [25]. The image and buildings at parashnath have nothing of these features.

### Latdesa

Nevertheless, the two districts of the Chota Nagpur division, namely Hazaribagh and Manbhum may claim and not without historical foundation the honour of Lord Mahabir's later scenes. According to the Digambara tradition, Mahabir renounced the world at the age of 30 and began to roam about far and wide. In the course of his wanderings, he is said to have appeared before the barbarians, who lived at latdesa, where he is said to have been attacked murderously by thieves. The place was bounded on the east by the Ganges, and on the west its boundary extended to the western limits of the districts of Manbhum and Singhbhum and on the south it was bounded by the ocean.

<sup>48</sup>Stein-Ancient Geography of Kashmir J.A.S.B. Part I (1899) and Kalhanas Rajatarangini.... Vol. I

### Jrambhikagrama

From Rajgirh, Lord Mahabir is said to have come to Jrambhikagrama (in B.C. 510) where he attained his Jainhood. Jharia, a town in the district of Manbhum, famous in India for its excellent coal fields has been identified by some with Jrambhikagrama of the Jain tradition. This claim might not be unfounded, because in the first place the mountainous tract between the parasnath hill and the deserted adjoining tract, now called Jharia must be suitable place for meditation. Secondly, no other place has yet been identified with the Jrambhikagrama of tradition.

Moreover, the tract now known as the Jharia coal fields, comprising katras and nowagarh, just adjoining the parasnath hill is the only place in the whole of the Chota Nagpur division, where one can trace numerous ruined Jain temples. In plan design ornamentation, sculpture, beauty and workmanship they would prove to be of the same age and of the same school of architecture as those in Udaipur (Central India) and in Kolhapur state, described in the Jain journal referred to above. The identification of the locality may therefore seem to be probable. But the definite identification of Jrambhikagrama of Jain tradition with modern Jharia would certainly appear to be very daring and fantastic. Rather, the village katras which was the former head quarters, according to local tradition of the Jharia state, and in the neighbourhood of which at least two dozen ruined Jain temples can be found, has a better claim than Jharia, except that the latter has a similarity in name.

In the existing condition, the identification is more or less of the nature of speculation. Nevertheless, the foregoing considerations point to the unquestionable fact that in the north east and south eastern portion of the Chota Nagpur division people were profoundly impressed by the teachings and demonstrative asceticisms of the Jains, although it cannot be denied that most of the Jains of this region were later immigrants. The writer begs to disclaim in the most distinct manner the slightest pretensions to give a character of definite or conclusive proof to the above inference of deductions, particularly with regard to the location of the ancient places.

### From the death of Asoka upto the rise of Guptas

We have observed before that although the extent of the empire of Asoka has been roughly stated to be from the foot of the Himalayas down to the river Pennar, on which the town of Nellore stands, the absence of any monuments of Asoka in any part of modern Chota Nagpur may give us grounds of inference that the integrity of this tract was never interfered with. The absence of any local traditions which are the only unwritten documents for the history of the region may confirm our supposition. And, if it is argued that his vast empire was conquered. Not by physical force but by "Dharma", it makes us all the more certain that his hold on this tract must have been extremely precarious, because the aborigines rejected in toto the tenets of Buddhism.

The period of eight centuries that intervened between the death of Asoka and the rise of imperial Guptas is practically a blank in the history of Chota Nagpur, so far at least as the external evidences are concerned. None of the weak successors of Asoka possessed that religious inspiration of their great ancestor, and many of them changed their religions. While some became Jains, others adopted Brahmanism. Indian empires have always owed their greatness to "Dharma" or religious and moral principles: and when that religious faith was gone under the later Mauryas, the Sungas, the Kanvas and the Andhras, the natural political consequences followed. The outlying provinces stepped out of control and the once vast empire of Magadh was reduced to pataliputra and a few districts about the city. It is natural to infer that this tract maintained its integrity during this period of general disintegration.

**Kanishka:** The next great emperor to wield power and influence was the Kushan king Kanishka, who may be said to be the second edition of Asoka zeal for Buddhism. But he had Purushpur, modern Peshawar, as his capital and his conquests were confined to Kashmir, Yarkhand, Khotan and Khasgarh. We may rather concede that his empire might have extended up to Mesopotamia in the west; but we have no grounds for accepting the theory but his dominion extended over Bihar, although the biographers of Kanishka assert that his empire included the whole of northern India, as far as south as the Vindhya. That his empire did not include Chota Nagpur seems almost pretty certain. It is also doubtful whether he conquered Pataliputra or Magadh. The fact that Kanishka and Aswaghosha were contemporaries and that the great Buddhist made liberal gifts to the buildings at Nalanda does not conclusively prove that he held his sway over Magadh.

**From the Guptas to Harsh:** After the death of Kanishka, the political horizon of India was enveloped in darkness. But, after the darkness we find light again an evolution in Indian political institutions under the imperial Guptas, in the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era. Once more Magadh came out to prominence, after an eclipse of eight centuries and Pataliputra assumed the role of the imperial capital of Northern India under Emperor Samudra Gupta who at once entered upon a career of Universal conquest of "Digvijay" like an Alexander, a Caesar or a Napoleon.

His campaigns have been classified by his poet Laurets Harisen, under four heads, namely, his southern expedition, the conquest of nine kings of Aryavarta, or the Gangetic plain, and the two other campaigns against the rulers and chiefs of forest tribes and republics. The account of court historians like that of Abul Fazal appears to be more literary than historical or even geographical as a classification of the various conquests of his master. Dr. Smith infers that the great invader marched from his capital through "Chutia Nagpur"<sup>49</sup> Smith, *Early History of India* pp 300, and that he subdued all the chiefs of the forest countries that at present constitute the tributary states of Orissa and the more backward parts of the central provinces. Presumably, read with the extent of Samudra Gupta's Empire, the learned historian means through not explicitly, that the backward forest chiefs of Chota Nagpur might have shared the same fate along with other chiefs.

Let us examine whether any of the nine kings of Aryavarta, which according to Rajsekhar includes the whole of India even the extreme south east may refer to Chota Nagpur. The Allahabad posthumous inscriptions (Line 21) give the nine names as follows: Rudradeva, Matila, Nagdetta, Chaudravarman, Ganapati Naga, Nagsena, Achyuta, Nandin and Balavarman. The same line mentions "Paricharabikrita sarbatekkikarajasya" meaning that all other kings of Aryavarta as also the hill chief acknowledge the emperor's sovereignty, it is extremely difficult to identify the chiefs or the countries over which they ruled.

Of these, Ganapati Naga and Nandi may probably appear to be of the Nag family of central India. But it is equally difficult to establish any connection between these Nags and the Nagbansi who rose to be rulers of these areas. Dr. Ray Chaudhury seems to have made a definite venture, when he identifies Chandravarman with the king of that name who was a ruler of Pakharna, mentioned in the Susunia (Bankura district) inscription. The learned scholar identifies Pakharna with a village of that name, on the Damodar, some 25 miles east of the Susunia Hill, in the district of Bankura. None of these names would thus appear to refer to the chiefs of Chota Nagpur, unless we can show that either Ganapati Nag or Nandi ruled over any of the tracts in Chota Nagpur.

<sup>49</sup>V.A. Smith, *Early History of India* page 300

The other names of countries and of chiefs are mentioned in lines 199 and 22 of Allahabad inscription. But none of these, on examination can refer to Chota Nagpur. This leaves us to consider only line 23 of the inscription, which reads: - "Daiba putra-Shahi-Shahanusahi-Saka-Murundau Saihalakadebhisha" - means that the Daibputras, the Sahis, the Shahanusahis and sent presents. But the lines that follow, namely 24 to 33 give us an exaggerated account of the character of Samudra Gupta who was equal to Indra, Kubera and Brahma (line 26) and a god in man (line 28). The name 'Murunda' is significant as it may mean the Mundas of Chota Nagpur. But as has already been discussed in the midst of so much divergence of opinion among scholars, it is difficult to take the view of Cunningham that the Mundas of Megasthenes is the same as the Mandai and Malli of Pliny and the same as the Murundas of the Allahabad inscription. Nor can we take as definite the view of Col. Wilkin and Prof. Lassen. The former locates it as a tribe belonging to the modern Jharkhand state, south west of modern Chota Nagpur; and the latter assigns to the tribe, the territory between Sonapur and Singhbhum. Even if we allow a benefit of doubtful sovereignty, we may certainly hold that the semblance of dependence, if this country was at all subjected to must have been shaken off under the successors of Samudra Gupta and that the internal democratic institutions of the aborigines of this plateau were never intermeddled with, as would be evident from the absence of any local annals and the high order of democratic ideas that prevailed in these tracts about this time.

**Harsh:** We are thrown to darkness of the deficiency of materials for the sixth century of the Christian era, not only for the history of Chota Nagpur but also for the history of India in general. Till we come to the seventh when Harshvardhan a chief of Thaneshwar the last great Hindu Emperor of Northern India was able to attain for the last time the political unity of Northern India. He entered into a career of conquest, and his empire is said to have included the whole of Aryavarta, his expedition towards the south having been checked by Pulakesin II, and the most powerful Chalukya king of the time. During his thirty five years of rule, he is described as having ruled the vast territory from modern Lahore up to Kamrup or Assam and from the Himalayas up to the Vindhya. From this indefinite boundary in the south, we are not justified, in the absence of any other authentic evidence in holding that the hilly tracts, called Chota Nagpur were ruled over by Harshvardhan.

**General disintegration:** The death of Harsha was the signal of the disintegration and dismemberment of the political unity of India. From the seventh up to the twelfth century of the Christian era, therefore, the history of India is necessarily reduced to the History of the various local states into which the whole of India was then divided. The period that followed witnessed the formation of myriads of states, both in the north and in the south, and the effort to achieve hegemony gradually led to the operation of centripetal tendencies. The destiny of India for several centuries remained in the hands of five chief nationalities, namely, the Pals and Sens of Bengal (730-1200) the Gurjara Pratiharas (816-1194), the Rastrakutas (750-973) the Cholas (850-1310) and the kingdom of Kashmir (650-1399). While we possess comparatively tolerable history of most of the important provinces and kingdoms, we have no history yet written about this very interesting region of Chota Nagpur and its people who were perhaps the last to test the weight of Moslem arms. Thus, when the Gurjara and Pratiharas submitted to the Mammadans in 1194 A.D. the Sens of Bengal in 1200, the Hoysalas Yadavas and the Cholas in 1310, Kashmir in 1339, the States of Chota Nagpur enjoyed total immunity from Moslem attack till the thirtieth regnal year of Emperor Akbar, i.e., in 1585 A.D.

## Conclusion

During all this period of the struggle for independence from foreign rule throughout the various states in India, Chota Nagpur was able to maintain unimpaired its ancient institutions and could successfully keep of the onslaughts of the Moslem, even in their palmy days.

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