



Sandrokottos seems to have been an able general, and no doubt spent much of his time with his army. Megasthenes describes his camp, which consisted of four hundred thousand men, and was yet maintained in good order and discipline. No useless or disorderly multitudes were tolerated. Theft was so rare amongst the troops, that the value of the articles stolen on any single day never exceeded two hundred drachmas. When the Raja sat as judge, he remained in the court the whole day, and allowed nothing to interrupt him. As regards his religious worship no further details are furnished; the reference, however, to his going out to sacrifice to the gods, proves that at this period, at any rate, the state religion was Brahmanical, whatever might have been the individual belief of Sandrokottos. The royal hunting expeditions are described at considerable length. The Raja went out with a crowd of women, who in their turn were surrounded on all sides by a number of spearmen; whilst drums and gongs were beaten in front, probably to warn off all intruders. The road was guarded with ropes, and every stranger who passed within the ropes, whether man or woman, was put to death. So long as the Raja hunted within the enclosures, he discharged his arrows from a high seat, whilst two or three armed women stood near him. When, however, he hunted in the open plain he discharged his arrows from an elephant, whilst his women accompanied him in chariots, or on horses and elephants. On these occasions all the women were provided with arms, as though they were going on a military expedition.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Strabo, India, sect. 55. In the Hindú drama of Sakúntalá, Raja Dushy-





## CHAPTER IV.

Hindú banquets.

Of the inner life of the palace nothing more is recorded. One statement, however, has been preserved which seems to indicate that the ambassador was familiar with one phase of old Hindú life. He says that it was the custom at banquets to place a table, like a side-board, before each individual. A golden dish full of boiled rice was then placed on each table; after which different sorts of meat dressed in the Indian style were served up to the several guests.<sup>47</sup> In the present day a Hindú host will entertain his European guests in accordance with their own customs; but there is no reason to doubt that in the third century before Christ, Indian curries were served up much after the fashion described by Megasthenes.

Difference of civilization in the Punjab and Hindustan.

The civilization which prevailed in the great Gangetic empire of Sandrokkottos was essentially different from that of the Punjab kingdom under Porus. The people were strictly divided into castes and hereditary professions. Again, the army was not composed of contributions from feudatory princes, but was a vast standing camp, maintained solely at the charge of the king. The government was not administered by feudal or vassal chieftains, under a suzerain or lord-paramount; but by a network of officials which spread over the entire empire. The Raja, as already seen, was an irresponsible and all-powerful despot, bearing a closer resemblance to a Tartar monarch, like Chenghiz or Timour, than to a Rajpoot suzerain like Porus.

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anta is represented as being attended in the chase by Yavana women, with bows in their hands, and wearing garlands of wild flowers. Professor Monier Williams's translation, Act II. Scene 1.

<sup>47</sup> Megasthenes in Athenæus, Book IV. c. 39.





But before entering more minutely into these marks of difference, it will be necessary to indicate the social structure and political administration of the great Gangetic empire. CHAPTER IV.

The mass of the population, and the main support of the state, consisted of the husbandmen or cultivators, who answered to the modern Ryots. These cultivators were servants of the Raja. In other words, the Raja was not merely the sovereign of his dominions, but the actual proprietor of the land in the European sense of the word; and the Ryots cultivated this land as labourers, and received a share of the produce as wages. Thus a large proportion of the produce of the empire was stored up every year in the royal granaries, and partly sold to the trading and manufacturing classes, and partly devoted to the maintenance of the army and civil administration.<sup>48</sup> Meantime the Ryots were apparently happy and contented. "They are," says Megasthenes, "a most mild and gentle people. They never resort to the cities either to transact business, or to take a part in public tumults. They are exempted from all military service, and pursue their labours free from all alarm. Indeed it often happens that at the same time, and in the same part of the country, the army is engaged in fighting the enemy, whilst the husbandmen are sowing and ploughing in the utmost security."<sup>49</sup> Ryots or cultivators.

The second important class, which also contributed to the support of the state, was composed of the traders and artisans. All the members of this Traders and artisans.

<sup>48</sup> This process of storing up the grain must have checked famine.

<sup>49</sup> Megasthenes in Strabo, India, sect. 40. He states that the Ryot's share was only one-fourth. This must be a mistake.





CHAPTER IV. class carried on their several avocations under a system of official surveillance; as a tax was levied on every sale, and a stated service was required from every artisan. This was not in accordance with the European idea that tradesmen and mechanics should contribute to the support of the state in return for the protection they received; but originated in the Asiatic idea, that they should pay their lord and master, either in money or service, for the privilege of pursuing their several avocations within his dominions. The manufacturers of arms and builders of ships came under a different category. They were employed solely by the Raja, and worked for no one else; and they were paid for their services both in money and produce. The arms thus manufactured were stored up in the royal magazines; and were supplied to the soldiers by the commander-in-chief as occasion required, and returned to the magazines when the expedition was over. The ships that were constructed by the royal ship-builders were in like manner placed in the charge of the admiral of the royal navy, who hired them out to any merchant who might require shipping for the purposes of traffic.<sup>50</sup>

Army.

3 The third class consisted of the soldiers, who formed a standing army supported by the king. When not engaged on active service, they are said to have spent their time in idleness and drinking. But they were always ready to start on an expedition; for they had only to attend in person, and were furnished with all that was required through-

<sup>50</sup> Megasthenes in Strabo, India, sect. 46. The present Burmese government is of a somewhat similar character. The king has on occasions sought to be the only trader and manufacturer in his dominions.





out the campaign. Horses and elephants were returned to the royal stables after every expedition. Every elephant carried four men on his back; the driver and three archers. Every chariot carried three men; the driver, and two fighting men. These chariots were only drawn by horses on the field of battle. On the march they were drawn by oxen, whilst the horses were led by a halter, so that their spirit might not be damped, or their legs chafed and inflamed, before going into action.<sup>51</sup>

The fourth class was composed of the so-called philosophers, some of whom were gymno-sophistæ, or "naked philosophers." Under this general head of philosophers are evidently included both Bráhmans and Buddhist monks; and the notices which have been recorded by Megasthenes, although somewhat confused, are worthy of particular consideration. "The philosophers," says Megasthenes, "are the smallest in number of all the castes, but they are the highest in rank. They are sometimes engaged by private persons to perform sacrifices and other public rites. But they are also employed by the Raja in a public capacity, to collect any useful information which may tend to the improvement of the earth, or of the animals who live upon the earth, or conduce to the advantage of the state. At the beginning of every new year they attend the king at the gate, and form what is called the Great Assembly; and those who have made any discoveries, and committed them to writing, are expected on such occasions to declare them publicly. Those whose observations are found to be correct

4  
Sages or philosophers.

The Great Assembly.

<sup>51</sup> Megasthenes in Strabo, India, sects. 47, 52.





CHAPTER IV. are exempted for life from all contributions or tribute. But those whose observations are found to be incorrect, are prohibited, after the third attempt, from publishing any further information."<sup>52</sup>

Reign of Sandrokottos: a transition period.

The foregoing account of the Great Assembly throws a further light upon the new forms of religious thought, which were slowly fermenting on the banks of the Ganges. It was a transition period between the age of animal sacrifice and the age of benevolence and humanity. The Raja still offered sacrifice, and indulged in the pleasures of the chase; and no doubt continued to eat flesh meat, dressed in the fashion which Megasthenes has described. But he was already being brought under the influence of the reforming spirit of the age. He utilized the philosophers, or learned class, by engaging them in the work of experiment and observation, with the view of ascertaining what would improve the productions of the earth, and especially the condition of animals, for whom all believers in the metempsychosis had a tender regard. At the same time the philosophers were also to ascertain what would tend to the advantage of the government. Such were the matters which were publicly declared and discussed in the presence of the Raja, at the Great Assembly which was held at the commencement of every new year.

Division of the philosophers into Bráhmans and Germanes (Srámans).

The philosophers were divided by Megasthenes into two distinct communities, the Bráhmans and the Germanes (or Srámans), which will be found hereafter to correspond to the Bráhman sages and the Buddhist monks. But he seems to intimate that both classes were alike employed upon the public

<sup>52</sup> Megasthenes in Strabo, India, sect. 39.





duty of developing the resources of the country, and improving the condition of animals. Indeed it may be inferred from his observations that neither Bráhmans nor Srámans were at this period devoted so entirely to religious study and contemplation as the later literature of both communities would seem to imply. Strangely enough he preferred the Bráhmans to the Srámans; but upon this point it will be better to submit his views in full.

“The Bráhmans,” says Megasthenes, “are held in higher repute than the Germanes, because they are better agreed as to their opinions. From their earliest infancy they pass under the charge of a succession of guardians and preceptors suitable to their advancing years. They dwell in a grove in the front of the city, within an enclosure of moderate size. There they live on frugal fare, abstain from all animal food, and lead lives of celibacy. They spend their time in grave discourse, and are ready to converse with all who listen with respect; but should any one interrupt the discourse by speaking, coughing, or any other noise, he is at once expelled from their society on the ground that he cannot maintain sufficient self-control. After the expiration of thirty-seven years, a Bráhman is permitted to return to secular life, to wear fine robes and gold rings, and to marry as many wives as he pleases.<sup>53</sup> But such Bráhmans do not teach their philosophy to their wives, lest the women should become depraved, and divulge things which ought to be concealed.<sup>54</sup>

Life of the  
Bráhman sages.

“The Bráhmans chiefly discourse respecting

<sup>53</sup> This is certainly opposed to the division of the life of a Bráhman into four ages, as laid down by Manu. See *ante*, p. 86.

<sup>54</sup> Megasthenes in Strabo, India, sect. 59.





## CHAPTER IV.

Dogma of the  
metempsy-  
chosis.

death. They believe that death to them is only a birth into a real and happy life. They discipline themselves to prepare for death. They teach that ideas of happiness or misery are only illusions of the imagination, inasmuch as the same circumstances will affect the same individual sometimes with joy and at other times with sorrow.<sup>55</sup>

Doctrine of the  
supreme spirit.

"In some of their speculations regarding physical phenomena, the Bráhmans display a childish simplicity. At the same time they hold several of the same doctrines which are current among the Greeks. They teach that the world is generated and destructible, and of a spherical figure; and that the god who made it, and governs it, also pervades the whole of it. They believe that the earth is situated in the centre of the universe, and that water was the chief element in its formation. They have peculiar ideas of the soul, and the principle of generation. They also invent fables, after the manner of Plato, respecting the immortality of the soul and the punishment in Hades.<sup>56</sup>

Question of  
self-destruction.

"These philosophers do not maintain the dogma of self-destruction. On the contrary, they consider that those who commit this act are fool-hardy. Those who are severe by nature will wound themselves, or cast themselves down precipices. Those who are impatient of pain drown themselves. Those who are of ardent tempers throw themselves into the fire. Kalanos belonged to this last class; he had no control over himself, and was a slave to the table of Alexander."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Megasthenes in Strabo, India, sect. 59.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Megasthenes in Strabo, India, sect. 68. The remarks of Megasthenes with reference to the suicide of Kalanos are very obscure. He evidently failed to





The remarks of Megasthenes respecting the Bráhmans are valuable as the impartial description furnished by a competent eye-witness. He considered that they occupied a higher position than the other philosophers, apparently because they were comparatively free from those sectarian and schismatic disputes which were agitating the Buddhist communities. The Greek ambassador admired the Brahmanical philosophy, which was in accordance with the systems taught in the schools of Pythagoras and Sokrates; but he was sufficiently imbued with the free-thinking spirit of the age, to deride their religious views as regards a future state, as being based upon fables rather than upon experience.

Greek opinions  
of the Bráhmans.

As regards the Germanes [or Buddhist monks<sup>58</sup>], Megasthenes seems to have derived his information from their opponents. He speaks of them as being of inferior repute to the Bráhmans. The most honourable were a class of hermits who dwelt in the forests, and subsisted on leaves and wild fruits. They abstained from wine, and led lives of celibacy.

Greek opinions  
of the Buddhist  
monks.

apprehend the ideas which prompted the recreant old Bráhman to commit such horrible self-martyrdom. According to the Vedic idea Fire was a deity who purified and refined; it was also a divine messenger, who carried the sacrifice to the gods. Kalanos had forfeited his position in the eyes of his fellow Bráhmans. He had lost caste by following Alexander out of Indian territory. He was seventy-three years of age when he was attacked by disease for the first time. Death by fire relieved him from all the terrors of pain and old age, and purified his soul from every sin, and carried it away to the abode of the gods.

In the Rámáyana a story is told of a sage, named Sarabhanga, who committed a similar act of self-martyrdom, which enabled him to throw off his mortal body as a serpent casts its slough, and to assume the form of perpetual youth. History, vol. ii., Rámáyana, chap. 15.

<sup>58</sup> It is a disputed point whether the Germanes or Srámanas were Buddhists or Jains. The point is of little consequence in dealing with broad currents of religious thought. The Jains were originally a sect of Buddhists. Their chief saint Parísnath flourished B.C. 200. They have twenty-four saints; the Buddhists have only seven Buddhas in the present universe. The Jains have caste; the Buddhists none. Both ignore deity.





CHAPTER IV. The Raja was accustomed to consult them by means of messengers. Next in estimation was a class of physicians, who were engaged in the study of the nature of man. They lived frugally on rice and meal, which were freely supplied by the masses.<sup>59</sup> It will be seen hereafter that these physicians played an important part in the practical system of Buddhism which finds expression in the edicts of Asoka.

The four great castes of the Hindú people have now been brought under review; namely,—husbandmen, tradesmen, soldiers, and philosophers. Generally speaking, they correspond to the four castes of Brahmanical law; namely,—Súdras, Vaisyas, Kshatriyas, and Bráhmans. But Megasthenes distributes the people of India into seven castes, by adding three other classes which, however, are not castes properly so called; namely,—shepherds, inspectors, and officers of state.<sup>60</sup>

Three extra  
castes described  
by Megasthenes.

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<sup>59</sup> Megasthenes in Strabo, India, sect. 60. Kleitarchos, who accompanied Alexander to the Punjab, furnishes accounts of a class of philosophers whom he calls Pramnæ (Kleitarchos in Strabo, India, sect. 70, 71). He speaks of them as a contentious class who opposed the Bráhmans, and derided them for occupying themselves with the study of physiology and astronomy. These Pramnæ are sometimes identified with the Buddhists, but if so they could scarcely have been the hermits who lived in remote forests, nor the physicians who studied the nature of man. Possibly they may have been ordinary Buddhist monks, who scorned all pursuits excepting those connected with religion.

<sup>60</sup> It appears strange that Megasthenes should have divided the people of India into seven castes. Practically the number of castes in India is endless; every little trade and profession forming a hereditary caste of its own, out of which its members may not marry. But all these nondescript castes are supposed to be included in one or other of the four great castes, or are referred to the pariah or out-caste population.

Herodotus, however (ii. 91), had divided the people of Egypt into seven castes; namely,—priests, soldiers, herdsmen, swineherds, tradesmen, interpreters, and steersmen; and Megasthenes may therefore have taken it for granted that there were seven castes in India. It is a curious fact that from the time of Alexander's expedition to a comparatively recent date, geographers and others have continually drawn analogies between Egypt and India. Egypt was watered by the Nile; India was watered by the Indus. The Nile produced crocodiles; the





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Shepherds and hunters.

The shepherds included hunters, and were certainly not a caste of Hindús. They were nomades dwelling in tents, and were probably of Tartar origin. Their avocations were precisely those which a Brahmanical people, who revolted at the idea of slaughter, or even of trading in animals, would naturally leave as a monopoly in the hands of foreigners. The regular occupation of these shepherds was breeding cattle, and selling or letting out beasts of burden; and no other class in the kingdom was allowed to engage in this cattle trade. They also gained a subsistence by hunting. They were employed by the king to destroy the wild animals and birds which infested the sown fields; and for this public duty they received an allowance of corn from the royal granaries.<sup>61</sup> The inspectors and officers of state must in like manner be excluded from the number of hereditary castes. They were merely individuals, some of whom were Bráhmans, who were selected to fill particular and responsible posts.<sup>62</sup>

The internal administration of the Gangetic kingdom was conducted by inspectors, who seem to have also acted as magistrates. Some were ap-  
Inspectors.

Indus produced alligators. The Nile had a delta; so had the Indus. Beans grew in Egypt, and beans grew in the Punjab. The same animals were to be found in Egypt and India. The people of Ethiopia were darker complexioned than the people of Egypt; and the people of southern India were darker complexioned than the people of northern India. Sometimes the analogy failed. The hair of the Ethiopians was crisp and woolly; that of the southern Hindús was straight and glossy. Strabo ascribed this to difference of climate; the atmosphere of southern India being more humid than that of Ethiopia. The humid climate, however, only prevailed on the western coast of Malabar; Strabo knew nothing of the eastern coast of Coromandel, where the air is singularly dry.

Strabo divides the people of Egypt into three castes only; namely, husbandmen, soldiers, and priests. Egypt, sect. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Megasthenes in Strabo, India, sect. 41.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. sect. 49. The shepherds corresponded to the Chandálas. See *infra*, chap. v.





CHAPTER IV. pointed to the city, some to the camp, and some to the districts or provinces. Their duty as inspectors was to collect full information respecting every movement that was going on, and to send private reports to the king. Their duty as magistrates combined the ordinary routine of the executive, with other measures of supervision and surveillance which are of an essentially oriental character.<sup>63</sup>

System of espionage.

The duties of inspection may be summed up in the one word "espionage." The inspectors comprised the best and most faithful servants of the government; but they were little more than spies and informers. The public women, as in most Asiatic cities, furnished the best information; and thus the metropolitan inspectors employed the city courtezans, whilst the army inspectors employed the female camp followers. In all Asiatic states the work of espionage forms an important element in the administration. It is not perhaps so necessary in principalities where political or feudal ties have any existence, such as in the older Rajpoot kingdoms. But the majority of Asiatic principalities are mere congeries of villages and families, which may be strong as separate and individual communities, but have never been wielded together into a single nationality, bound together by a common sense of mutual interests or patriotic sentiments. Under such circumstances the most searching system of espionage is necessary to guard against sudden outbreaks, mutinies, or revolutions which at any moment might overturn a throne; and it was not confined to bazaars and camps, but often pene-

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<sup>63</sup> Megasthenes in Strabo, India, sect. 50.





trated into the inner domestic life of citizens and soldiers.<sup>64</sup> CHAPTER IV.

The duties of the inspectors, as magistrates and executive officers, implied a strict surveillance over all the manufactures and commerce of the kingdom; ostensibly perhaps to ensure good workmanship, and prevent fraud; but in reality for the purpose of levying a tax, amounting to one-tenth of the price of every article.

Surveillance  
of trade and  
manufactures.

The inspectors, or magistrates of the city, were formed into six divisions, each of which consisted of five officials. One division maintained a close supervision over the working of all arts and manufactures. A second division presided over the sale of all such articles, to prevent old goods from being sold as new ones. A third division presided over all sales and exchanges in produce. This division apparently comprised royal brokers, who received the produce from the royal granaries, after the payment of the share to the cultivators; and then supplied it to the retailers in the bazaars, and maintained a supervision over the trade. They took charge of the measures that were employed, and allowed no one individual to deal in various kinds of articles, unless he paid double rates of taxation on all his

Duties of the  
six divisions of  
city inspectors.

<sup>64</sup> In the present day this system of espionage is not a political necessity in the states which are included within the limits of the British Indian empire; because the feudatory princes are more or less guaranteed against war and rebellion by the strong arm of the paramount power. But in a native state, like upper Burma, which has not as yet been brought under the system of subsidiary alliances, and which has been the theatre of plots, insurrections, and revolutions for centuries, a system of espionage is naturally extended over the whole kingdom, and bears a strong resemblance to that which prevailed in the old Gangetic empire. A chronic terror pervades the court and palace at Mandalay, corresponding to that which pervaded the court and palace at Patali-putra. The king never ventures out of his palace for years at a time, lest in his absence a rebellion should break out within the palace walls, and a recreant prince should obtain possession of the throne.





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sales. A fourth division collected the tax for the king, which, as already stated, amounted to one-tenth of the price of the article sold; and any attempt at fraud in the payment of this tax was punished by death. A fifth division registered all births and deaths, with every particular of time and place, for the twofold object of levying a tax, and punishing any concealment. A sixth division entertained all strangers or foreigners, who came as envoys or might possibly be spies.<sup>65</sup> They furnished such visitors with suitable lodgings, and appointed attendants ostensibly to wait upon them, but really to observe their mode of life and duly report their actions. If one of the strangers happened to fall sick, this division of magistrates took special care of him; and if he died they buried him, and took charge of his property.<sup>66</sup>

Collective  
duties of city  
inspectors.

In addition to these special duties appertaining to each division, the city magistrates performed other duties in their collective capacity. They took charge of the markets, harbours, and temples; they repaired all public works when necessary; and they fixed the prices of all articles and commodities that were sold in the shops and bazaars.<sup>67</sup>

Army inspect-  
ors.

The army inspectors, or magistrates, were in like manner formed into six divisions, each of which consisted of five persons. One division was asso-

<sup>65</sup> In the modern administration of upper Burma royal officers perform duties very similar to those described by Megasthenes. Some officials under the Kampat Woon-gye are in charge of manufactures; others act as royal brokers for the sale of produce; whilst an official, known as the Kulla Woon, is especially appointed to receive and entertain strangers. In former days, a tax amounting to one-tenth of the price of the article was levied on all goods imported by sea in the Burman dominions. F. Sangermano's description of the Burman empire.

<sup>66</sup> Strabo, *India*, sect. 51.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*





ciated with the chief superintendent of the royal CHAPTER IV.  
navy, and made all the necessary arrangement for  
water transport. A second division was associated  
with the officer in charge of the bullock trains, and  
made similar arrangement for the land transport of  
military engines, arms, commissariat for men and  
beasts, and other necessities for the army. This  
division also furnished army attendants, such as  
grooms, mechanists, and beaters of drums and gongs;  
for they despatched foragers for grass by the sound of  
the gong. The third division had charge of what  
was necessary for the infantry. A fourth division  
had charge of what was necessary for the cavalry.  
A fifth division took care of the chariots. A sixth  
division saw after the elephants.<sup>68</sup>

The duties of the inspectors, or magistrates, in the District inspect-  
ors.  
districts are but slightly touched upon. The Greek  
ambassador probably found more difficulty in collect-  
ing information from the provinces, than in obtaining  
it at the capital. Some of the district officers had  
charge of the rivers, and measured the land, as was  
done in Egypt. In other words, they observed the  
effect of the yearly inundations during the rainy  
season. Others inspected the great tanks or reser-  
voirs, from which water was distributed by canals;  
so that all might have an equal share in the irriga-  
tion.<sup>69</sup> Others, again, superintended the shepherds  
and hunters, and rewarded those who kept the fields  
clear of birds and vermin, whilst punishing those  
who neglected their duties. They collected the

<sup>68</sup> Strabo, India, sect. 52.

<sup>69</sup> This observation seems to militate against a previous statement that all the  
land belonged to the king as sole proprietor. But seeing that the cultivators  
received a share of the produce as wages, it may be supposed that they were  
personally interested in the yearly out-turn of grain.





CHAPTER IV. taxes, and superintended all the various work-people who were engaged in connection with the land, such as wood-cutters, carpenters, workers in brass, and miners generally. They also superintended the public roads, and placed pillars at intervals of every ten stadia, or about a mile and a quarter, to indicate the by-ways and distances.<sup>70</sup>

**Officers of state.** The so-called seventh caste, including officers of state, must be dismissed with a bare notice. Megasthenes merely states that the seventh caste consisted of counsellors and assessors of the king; and that to these persons belonged the offices of state, the tribunals of justice, and the whole administration of affairs.<sup>71</sup>

**Administration of the Gangetic empire compared with that of Burma.**

The administration of the Gangetic empire thus described by Megasthenes, bears a remarkable resemblance to the native administration of the existing kingdom of upper Burma, or Ava. In both cases there is an entire absence of either an aristocratic element, or a popular one. The administration is composed of mere officials, whose title and position wholly depend upon the will of the sovereign. In Burma it is a mere bureaucracy without any hereditary influence or political training. Every official is profoundly obsequious to the reigning sovereign, whether he be the rightful prince or a usurper; and consequently revolutionary attempts to subvert a king are of comparatively frequent occurrence, as, if successful, they neither affect the administration nor the masses of the population.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Strabo, India, sect. 50.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 49.

<sup>72</sup> Perhaps the best published account of Burma and its constitution is to be found in Father Sangermano's description of the Burmese empire, printed at Rome, in 1833, for the Oriental Translation Society. The Father spent twenty-six years





But notwithstanding the apparent defects in the administration of the Gangetic empire, it seems to have been adapted to the people of the country. It was an irresponsible despotism, but of a paternal character; and it was feared and obeyed by a population, who have hitherto been supposed to be as unfitted as children for the exercise of any political independence, or share in the administration outside their own village or family community. It has already been seen that Megasthenes praises the cultivators, who formed the bulk of the population, as being the most gentle and contented in the world. He even expatiates on the orderly conduct of the camp, and the absence of the crime of theft, in a standing army of four hundred thousand men. Of the people of India generally, he says that they are happy because of the simplicity of their manners and their frugal mode of life. They had but one extravagance, and that was a love of ornament which to this day is a characteristic of all classes of the community. They never drank wine, excepting at sacrifices.<sup>73</sup> Their or-

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in Burma, and the author has been enabled to test his information, and supplement it with additional notes, during a voyage from Rangoon via Ava, Amarapura, and Mandalay, to the remote town of Bhamo, on the frontier of Burma towards China, a distance of some thousand miles up the river Irrawaddy.

The general resemblance between the courts of Patali-putra and Mandalay is so striking that it is easy to conjecture that the court in which king Sandro-kottos sat as judge was the Hlot-dau, the Luttó of Sangermano, in which the king occupied the principal seat, and the ministers sat as counsellors or assessors.

The Hlot-dau, or supreme council of Ava, exercises all the powers of a senate, a high court, and a cabinet. Its functions are legislative, judicial, and executive. As a senate, it might veto any act or order of the king. As a high court of civil and criminal justice, it tries all important cases, and is the highest court of appeal. As a cabinet, it exercises all the powers of government; and every order of the king is issued by the Hlot-dau in the name of the ministers of whom the court is composed. In the present day, however, it is the shadow without the substance of a constitution.

<sup>73</sup> This wine was probably the soma juice of the Vedic hymns.





CHAPTER IV. dinary beverage was made from rice. Their food consisted of what he calls rice-pottage, which no doubt corresponded to rice and curry. Their laws were so simple that they had few lawsuits, and none whatever in the case of pledges and deposits. They required neither witnesses nor seals, but made their deposits and confided in one another. Even their houses and property were unguarded. Megasthenes adds that they had no written laws, and were even ignorant of writing, and regulated everything by memory. This statement must be accepted with some reservation. The Bráhmans certainly possessed a sacred literature, but they would never have produced their books to the Greek ambassador; and if questioned concerning them, would have denied their existence, as the easiest way of escaping from the difficulty. Indeed Nearchos, who accompanied Alexander to the Punjab, distinctly states that the people wrote letters upon cloth, which was smoothed for the purpose by being well beaten.<sup>74</sup>

Authenticity of  
the Greek pic-  
tures of ancient  
India.

The pictures of ancient India, which are thus furnished by the Greeks, are valuable as much for their realism as for their authenticity. They utterly invalidate the gross exaggerations of the Sanskrit epics, whilst clearing away much of the haze which surrounds the legendary life of Sákyá Muni. They do not exhibit an advanced stage of civilization, like that which will hereafter be found reflected in the Hindú drama; and indeed it may be inferred that as yet the Hindú drama had no existence, for no mention is made of theatrical entertainments

<sup>74</sup> Nearchos in Strabo, India, sect. 67.





of any kind. Again, the court of Sandrokottos was not a centre of literary culture, like the courts of the later Hindú sovereigns; for Megasthenes makes no allusion to wits or philosophers, poets or story-tellers, displaying their talents or accomplishments under the patronage of a munificent Raja. On the contrary, the royal residence at Patali-putra was a mere fortified palace in which the Raja dwelt in strict seclusion, surrounded only by women; and the chief pleasure in which he indulged outside his palace was that of hunting in the company of armed females. Strabo considered that these royal excursions resembled the joyous processions of the worshippers of Dionysos; but in reality they were simply hunting expeditions, in which the Raja was protected by a body-guard of amazons. The so-called literati or philosophers of ancient India, are described as mere religious recluses, dwelling in groves outside the cities, where they taught a strange metaphysical religion, and practised still stranger rites and austerities.

The information supplied by Megasthenes as regards the agricultural class, who are represented by the modern Ryots, is more pleasing, but equally realistic. As already seen, the husbandmen were the main support of the government and the vast standing army; but their condition could have been little better than that of serfs, who cultivated the whole area of arable land as the royal domain, and received a share of the harvest for their maintenance.<sup>75</sup> They were, however, happy

Review of the  
Greek accounts  
of the Ryots.

<sup>75</sup> The evidence of the Greek ambassador as to the respective shares of the Raja and the Ryot is deserving of consideration. He says that the share of the cultivator was only one-fourth; consequently the royal share must have been three-fourths. According to the concurrent testimony of the sacred books of





CHAPTER IV. and contented. It may therefore be inferred that they were not exposed to unnecessary interference, so long as they did their duty to the land. They were simple in their wants, and probably domestic in their lives. They knew nothing of politics; and they took no part in rebellions or revolutions. From time immemorial they had doubtless been brought up in the hereditary belief that all the land belonged to the Raja, that they were his servants, and that their primary duty was to cultivate the soil for his benefit; and this humble status they appear to have accepted with that blind ignorance which often constitutes material happiness. When the harvest was abundant, their share sufficed for all their wants; and in exceptional times of drought or famine, it is only natural to suppose, that as servants of the Raja, they could be supplied with food from the royal granaries, in the same way that the elephants and horses of the Raja received their daily rations. They married wives, and they became fathers of families; and if a great part of their time was devoted to labour in the fields, they doubtless had their times of holiday, and celebrated the same festivals which they still observe. Under such circumstances they would decorate themselves, and indeed the whole village, with garlands of flowers, not forgetting the trees, the temples, and the images of the gods; and then with the aid of some Bráhma-man they would offer their little sacrifices, and feast on such simple delicacies as their wives could pre-

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the Bráhmans, and the narratives of the two Chinese pilgrims Fah-Hian and Hiouen-Thsang, the Raja only received one-sixth of the produce. Perhaps the Raja received three-fourths of the produce from his own special demesnes, which were cultivated by serfs; and one-sixth of the produce of all the lands throughout his empire, which were cultivated by the Ryots.





pare. Such scenes of rural life are not unknown to modern India, although they are often alloyed by superstitious fear or priestly rapacity. But the Indian Ryots had one advantage over the agricultural population of almost every other country. They were not liable to military conscription. Indeed at no period of history do they seem to have been forced from their homes, and compelled to serve in the armies of the state. Megasthenes describes the soldier class as already forming an army of four hundred thousand men; and according to his account the Ryots were always regarded as non-combatants. Hostile armies might be fighting in their neighbourhood, but the Ryots went on ploughing and sowing, utterly regardless, and perhaps unconscious, of the work of slaughter that was going on around.<sup>76</sup>

Megasthenes furnishes no information respecting the traders and artisans, excepting that they were subjected to an official supervision which seems to have amounted to oppression. Indeed such a system had a tendency to fetter all trade, whilst opening every avenue to corruption. But it is quite in accordance with Asiatic ideas. Indeed to this day the Hindús have proved themselves patient under every interference and exaction, provided only that nothing is done contrary to custom. It is the novelty of a measure which excites their suspicion and alarm, and occasionally drives them to acts of resistance or turbulence. It is therefore easy to

Character of the supervision over trades and artisans.

<sup>76</sup> Megasthenes must have been all the more surprised at this immunity of the Indian cultivators, because during the Peloponnesian war hostilities generally commenced with the destruction of the standing corn of the enemy. But in the primitive religions of the Hindús, in which the earth was especially deified as the goddess of fecundity, such a proceeding would probably have been regarded as a species of sacrilege.





CHAPTER IV. infer that traders and artisans were reconciled to a system of supervision and extortion, under which perhaps they could in their turn purchase permission to charge a higher price or dispose of an inferior article.

Reticence of  
Megasthenes as  
regards politics  
and religion.

Upon some points Megasthenes is strangely reticent. Thus he only describes the external machinery of civil and military administration, and furnishes no information as regards politics or wars. Possibly he may have been deterred by diplomatic considerations from dwelling upon such topics; or he may have assumed that they would prove of but little interest in the western centres of Greek civilization. The religion of the Hindús seems scarcely to have excited his curiosity. Had Herodotus travelled in India, as he travelled in Egypt, he would no doubt have minutely described the several deities, with their temples and forms of worship; but he flourished in an earlier age, when religion was still the foundation of all intellectual culture. Megasthenes, on the contrary, was apparently imbued with the materialism of a later and rationalistic age, when reverence for popular deities was dying out in Hellas, and the Hindú sacrifices to their barbarian gods would be regarded with a pitying smile. Megasthenes certainly expresses the opinion that the Bráhmans were in better repute than the Srámans, but he does not appear to have compared their dogmas. He simply saw that the Bráhmans agreed in their opinions, whilst the Srámans were always wrangling.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>77</sup> This opinion of Megasthenes as regards the contentious character of the Buddhist monks is of more value than might be expected. Notwithstanding the superiority of their moral tenets, they are a most disputatious set; and unless kept within the strict area of orthodoxy by superior ecclesiastical authority, are prone to fall into heresy. Such was their character in the latter days of Sákya Muni, and such is their present character on the banks of the Irrawaddy.





It seems somewhat extraordinary that neither the Greeks nor the Romans knew anything of Bengal. They had acquired a certain stock of information respecting the Punjab, and the Gangetic valley as far as Patna, or Patali-putra, but they had never made their way through Bengal as far as the mouths of the Ganges. They had some knowledge of the western coast of India from the mouths of the Indus to the island of Ceylon;<sup>78</sup> but the eastern coast of Coromandel, and indeed the whole of the Bay of Bengal, was utterly unknown. Strabo, who flourished at the commencement of the Christian era, was conscious of this want of information. The Indian trade was carried on from Alexandria, viâ the river Nile and old Suez canal, as far as the western shores of India; but, as Strabo himself says, very few of the merchants from Egypt ever succeeded in reaching the Ganges; and those who did were so ignorant, as to be quite unqualified to furnish an account of the places they had visited.<sup>79</sup>

CHAPTER IV.  
Greek ignorance  
of Bengal.

<sup>78</sup> Strabo, India, sects. 14, 15.

<sup>79</sup> Strabo, India, sect. 4. The yearly voyages undertaken by the Roman merchants between Egypt and western India are sufficiently described by Pliny (vi. 26). The voyage out lasted about seventy days; that is, thirty days from Egypt to Ocelis, the modern Gehla, on the south-western corner of Arabia; and forty days from Ocelis to Muziris, probably the modern Mangalore, on the western coast of India. The Indian Ocean was at this period infested by pirates, who seem to have had strongholds on the Malibar coast, especially in the neighbourhood of Muziris. Accordingly every Roman ship carried a company of archers on board. Muziris was also undesirable on account of the distance from the roadstead to the port, which rendered it necessary to carry all cargoes for loading and discharging on board canoes. Barace, possibly the modern Baroche, was thus considered a more convenient port. It is said to have been situated in the kingdom of Pandya or Pandion. The pepper of Cothinara, probably the modern Cochin, was brought to Barace in canoes.

Two important marts on the western coast are also mentioned by Ptolemy, namely, Plithana and Tagara. Plithana has been identified with Paitan, on the river Godavari, the capital of Sâlivâhana, whose era, corresponding to A.D. 77, is still maintained throughout the Dekhan. The name of Tagara still lingers in that of Deoghur, the later capital of Maharashtra, at present known as Dowlatabad.





## CHAPTER IV.

Embassy of  
Pandion or  
Porus to Augustus  
Cæsar.

One authentic story has been preserved of an embassy sent by an Indian prince, named Pandion or Porus, which is invested with historic interest. This Porus was probably a representative of the same old family of Puru, to which the former Porus belonged who had been defeated by Alexander some three centuries previously.<sup>80</sup> It is easy to conceive that rumours of the victory at Actium, the conquest of Egypt, and the greatness of imperial Rome, would reach the shores of western India, and inspire a powerful Raja, like Porus, with a desire, not unknown amongst Asiatic princes, to secure a powerful ally from the western world.<sup>81</sup> Porus sent

<sup>80</sup> A dynasty of Rajas, known as the Pandyan dynasty, appears to have reigned over a kingdom also called Pandya, which formerly occupied the whole of the south-eastern quarter of the Peninsula, and had its capital at the town of Madura. It has accordingly been conjectured that it was one of these Pandya Rajas who sent the embassy to Augustus. It seems almost impossible that any Indian sovereign in such a remote quarter, could either hope for an alliance with the Roman emperor, or even suppose that Augustus could desire to march a Roman army through his dominions. On the other hand, the tradition of the invasion of Alexander the Great would still be preserved in the Punjab; and the reigning Porus might readily arrive at the conclusion that Augustus Cæsar was another Alexander. Moreover it will be seen hereafter that the embassy was accompanied by a priest, either a Brâhman or a Srâman, from Baroche on the western coast at the mouth of the Nerbudda. Such a man might easily have found his way to the Punjab; but it would have been hard for him to have reached Madura.

It is not, however, impossible that an ancient empire, extending over an undefined region in the west and south, may have been nominally ruled by Pandya Rajas, who were representatives of the house of Porus or Pandion, and had some connection with the Pândavas mentioned in the Mahâ Bhârata. Both Arrian and Pliny have preserved traditions of such a Pandyan empire. Herakles is said to have had an only daughter, named Pandæa, whom he subsequently married, and thus became the father of a race of Pandya sovereigns. Arrian also states that Herakles gave Pandæa a kingdom bearing her name (India, chaps. viii. and ix.). Pliny adds that this is the only kingdom throughout India which is ruled by women (vi. 23); but that there are kings of other nations, who were descended from Pandæa. Traces of this Amazonian empire are undoubtedly to be found amongst the Malabars on the western coast to this day (see History, vol. i., part ii., Mahâ Bhârata, chap. xvi., note 17). Colonel Tod has pointed out an analogy in the legend of the birth of Pându (compare Rajasthan, vol. i., page 30).

<sup>81</sup> This passion of eastern princes to form remote alliances under certain circum-





a letter to Augustus Cæsar, stating that he was sovereign over six hundred Rajas, and earnestly desired the friendship of the Roman emperor; and that he would permit a Roman army to march through his dominions and render assistance in any expedition that was just. This letter was written in Greek upon a skin, and contained the names of the ambassadors who were sent with it; from which it appeared that on reaching Roman territory they had all died excepting three. The presents consisted of a man born without arms, some large snakes, one serpent ten cubits long, a river tortoise three cubits long, and a so-called partridge said to be larger than a vulture. The servants of the embassy included eight men who appeared naked with girdles round their waists,<sup>82</sup> and were fragrant with perfumes. A holy man, either a Bráhmaṇ or a Srámaṇ, accompanied the embassy. Nothing further is known of this extraordinary mission, excepting that the letter and presents were duly made over to the Roman authorities. The holy man proceeded to Athens, probably from a natural curiosity to learn something of Greek philosophy. His conduct there must have created a profound sensation amongst the sages of the aca-

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stances amounts almost to a political instinct. It is generally developed by immediate danger, an utter ignorance of European power, and an overweening sense of their own importance. Thus in the sixteenth century one Indian prince sent an embassy to the Great Turk to assist him against the Portuguese. In the last century Tippoo Sultan of Mysore opened up negotiations with the first Napoleon in the hope of obtaining assistance against the English. In our own time Théodore of Abyssinia, the present king of Burma, and the Panthay Sultan of Talifoo, have each sought to form alliances with European powers. Still more strangely Florus mentions (iv. 12) that ambassadors from China came to Augustus Cæsar.

<sup>82</sup> This was the cord worn by the three highest castes, viz. Bráhmans, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas. See History, vol. ii., pages 529, 545.





## CHAPTER IV.

Suicide of an  
Indian sage.

demy. He declared that as his life had been hitherto one of unvaried success, he intended to escape from existence in order to avoid unexpected calamity. The idea had been familiar to the Greeks since the days of Crœsus and Periander, but they must have been surprised at seeing it realized in fact. The Indian sage prepared a pyre, and then naked, anointed, with his girdle round his waist, and a smile upon his countenance, he leaped upon the pile and perished in the flames.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Strabo, India, sect. 73. The following inscription is said to have been set up over the tomb of the Hindú philosopher:—"Zarmano-chegas, an Indian, a native of Bargosa, having immortalized himself according to the custom of his country, here lies."

The name "Zarmano," seems to imply that he was one of the Germanes, or Srámans. Dion Cassius (ix.) calls him Zarmanus. The word "Chegas" has been identified with Sheik. Bargosa is apparently a corruption of Barygaza, the modern Baroche.





## CHAPTER V.

BUDDHIST INDIA. B.C. 300 TO A.D. 645.

THE annals of Buddhist India open up an entirely new field of historical research. They comprise two distinct classes of records, illustrating two distinct forms of religious thought. The first and most authentic are the rock and pillar edicts of Raja Priyadarsi, who is generally identified with the celebrated Asoka, the reputed grandson of Sandrokkotos. These edicts were promulgated in the third century before the Christian era, and are an expression of that pure system of moral teaching which has been described as the religion of the many. The second class of records have no such claims to contemporary authority, and are consequently more open to question. They consist of Buddhist chronicles of the Rajas of Magadha, which were compiled in the fourth or fifth centuries after the Christian era, or at least seven centuries after the promulgation of the edicts of Priyadarsi. They are the expression of that monastic teaching which was embraced only by the wise and thoughtful few.<sup>1</sup>

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Two classes of Buddhist records: the edicts and the chronicles.

<sup>1</sup> There is a third class of records which are of greater value than either the edicts or the chronicles, but it belongs to a later date. It consists of the travels of the Chinese pilgrims, Fah-Hian and Hiouen-Tsang, who respectively resided several years in India in the fifth and seventh centuries of the Christian era. The narratives of their travels have been translated into French by M.M.





## CHAPTER V.

Religion of the heart, and religion of the intellect.

This twofold character of Buddhism has been fully indicated in dealing with the legend of the life of Gótama Buddha. The religion of the heart was for the many; the religion of the intellect was for the few. The religion of the heart was one of humanity, in which the affections were recognized as the necessary part of existence, and the duties of the affections were broadly laid down in the five commandments, and expanded into a full system of morality in thought, word, and deed. This religion recommended itself not merely to the heart, but to the natural sense of justice which prevails amongst the masses, by teaching that virtue would be rewarded and vice would be punished in a future state of existence, either within the pale of animated being, or in some remote heaven or hell under the sway of gods or demons. But this popular religion is only dimly expressed in the legend of the life of Gótama Buddha. Indeed the legend was compiled in an age of intellectual monasticism, when the trans-migrations of the soul were regarded as a hopeless chain of miserable existences, and when it was assumed that the one object of mankind was to escape from the universe of existence, whether on earth or in heaven. Accordingly the four great truths, known as the law of the wheel, and the four ways of deliverance, by which man could attain Nirvána, were declared to be the only real wisdom; and the ideal of a perfect life was that of the monastery, where the soul abstracted itself from all humanity and existence, until it was freed from every tie of affection or

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Abel-Rémusat and Stanislas St Julien. They will be brought under review in the after-part of the present chapter.





desire, and sunk for ever into eternal rest or annihilation. Thus the religion of the heart finds expression in the edicts of Priyadarsi; whilst the religion of the monastery finds expression in the later Buddhist chronicles of the Rajas of Magadha.

But although an interval of seven centuries intervenes between the promulgation of the ancient edicts and the compilation of the later chronicles, it by no means follows that the two religions should be referred to two widely different epochs. On the contrary, it has already been seen in the preceding chapter, that in the third century before the Christian era, Buddhist celibates under the name of Germanes or Srámanas<sup>2</sup> had already made their appearance in the empire of Sandrokkottos on the Ganges. Indeed celibacy similar to that of the monastery seems to have existed in India from time immemorial. In its first form it was the revolt of the intellect against the popular idea of deity and the lower instincts of humanity; and it appears to have subsequently diverged into the two currents of religious thought known as Brahmanism and Buddhism. But the Bráhmans formed part of a hereditary caste of priests, who married and became fathers, and maintained caste distinctions, and were even employed at the public and private sacrifices to the gods. The Srámanas were more strictly monastic, but at the same time apparently more philanthropic and more practical. They rejected the caste system by declaring that men of all castes were equally subject to the

Antiquity of  
celibacy in  
India.

<sup>2</sup> The term is indiscriminately spelt Germanes, Srámanes, Sarmanas, and Srámanas. In Tamil the term Sarmanauls is used. In the Mahawanso, the Buddhist monk is known as a Sámānaro, the Pali form of the Sanskrit Srámana. There is some doubt as to whether the word refers to Buddhists or Jains; but it was certainly applied to monks as distinct from priests or Bráhmans.





CHAPTER V. miseries of existence. They thus abstracted themselves from humanity without necessarily losing their sympathies for humanity. By regarding all men as equal from a religious point of view, they seem to have imbibed sentiments of universal brotherhood and benevolence, which could not be developed under Brahmanism, nor indeed under a caste system of any kind. One important class of Srámans lived in strict seclusion in the forests after the manner of Brahmanical hermits; and like the higher order of Bráhmans, these Srámans were selfishly engaged in contemplations and austerities for their own individual well-being. But still many of the Srámans were devoting their lives to that practical philanthropy which springs from the larger development of the affections. Megasthenes describes a class of medical Srámans who were benevolently engaged in curing the diseases of their fellow-creatures; and so far were they from practising for the sake of gain, that they were content to live frugally on such rice and meal as the public might choose to give them, and which every one was ready to offer. Megasthenes also describes a class of missionary Srámans, who were occupied in promoting the religious welfare of the masses, by inculcating ideas respecting hell or Hades, which in their opinion tended to the spread of piety and sanctity. It has also been seen that the researches and discoveries of all natural philosophers were discussed in the presence of the Raja, at what has already been described as the Great Assembly, which was held at the commencement of every new year. It is therefore apparent, from the impartial testimony of the Greek ambassador, that three hundred years before the Christian era the





spirit of practical benevolence was already at work among the Sráman monks, and had probably been at work from an immemorial antiquity. CHAPTER V.

A new and unexpected light is thrown upon this movement by the discovery of the rock and pillar edicts of Raja Priyadarsi. Discovery of the edicts of Priyadarsi. Megasthenes only saw the surface of missionary operations, which he could scarcely be expected to appreciate at their right value. Indeed he seems to describe the labours of the itinerant doctors and teachers with all the covert contempt which a cultured Greek would feel as regards the philanthropic labours of Indian barbarians. But the edicts by which Raja Priyadarsi explained his measures and promulgated his views, furnish a much deeper insight into a religious revolution, which was calculated to regenerate the Indian world. Indeed these edicts are amongst the most interesting relics in the religious history of man. They also serve to indicate the extent of the Indian empire of Priyadarsi, for they are to be found in such widely separated localities as Guzerat in western India, Behar and Cuttack in eastern India, as well as in Allahabad, Delhi, and Affghanistan.

The edicts of Priyadarsi inculcate goodness, virtue, kindness, and religion, as summed up in the one emphatic term Dharma. Conception of Dharma as distinct from monasticism. This conception of Dharma is free from every monastic element. There is no warring against the affections under the monastic plea of quenching the fire of the passions. There is no trace of that ascetic spirit which would take away all the poetry of life, and deprive youth of all its pleasures and beauty of all its charms. There are no sentimental sorrowings over the miseries and illusions of existence, no yearnings for a life of celi-





CHAPTER V. bacy and seclusion, no taste for metaphysical speculations, and no morbid aspirations after Nirvána. Dharma might be almost defined as a religion without a creed and without a theology; for it indicates the simple belief that by acts of goodness and kindness all human beings may promote their own happiness both in this life, and in the life hereafter, without any reference whatever either to worship or deity. Moreover, Dharma cannot be positively identified with Buddhism, although the Buddhist monks of a later age applied the name of Dharma to their own law. The edicts refer to both Bráhmans and Sráhmans, and to the respect due to both classes of holy men, but that is all. There is one solitary edict in which Priyadarsi recognizes the religion of Gótama Buddha, and refers to the law and assembly at Magadha; and this edict will be brought under consideration hereafter. But with this single exception, the edicts of Priyadarsi contain no allusion whatever to Buddha, either as a teacher or an apostle, or by any of his names; and consequently they do not express the formula of the Buddhist faith:—"I take refuge in Buddha, the Law, and the Assembly." They teach Dharma, and Dharma alone.<sup>3</sup>

The edicts of Priyadarsi promulgate Dharma in

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<sup>3</sup> The edicts of Raja Priyadarsi were originally translated by the late Mr James Prinsep, and his version was subsequently revised by Professor H. H. Wilson, in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, vol. xii., article v., on the "Rock Inscriptions of Kapur di Giri, Dhauli, and Girnar." Compare also vol. viii., article xv. The versions of Professor Wilson are no doubt the more accurate transliterations, and are accordingly printed in parallel columns with those of Mr Prinsep in the Appendix to the present volume. It will be seen that in the original renderings of Mr Prinsep there is a greater depth of religious feeling, and a keener sympathy with the natural piety which finds expression in the edicts, than is displayed in the severer versions of Professor Wilson.





the form of certain precepts of morality, which lie at the root of that religion of the heart which is developed by the affections. They inculcate dutiful service to father and mother; kindness and help to all kinsfolk, neighbours, and acquaintance; filial veneration to spiritual pastors; reverence and almsgiving to Bráhmans and Srámans; respect and obedience to masters; kindly consideration towards servants and dependents; frugality and temperance for the sake of increasing the ability to be kind and benevolent; abstinence from all evil speaking and slandering; and last, though not least, a tender regard for the whole animal creation. These edicts are not, however, confined to the promulgation of duties. Some of them specify the measures which were carried out by the Raja for the promotion of the welfare of his subjects. Others, again, are a vindication of his policy, and throw considerable light upon his reign and character. The edicts may therefore be regarded from three different points of view; as conveying his ideas of religious duty; as indicating the progress of his administration; and as illustrating his personal history.

The edicts which refer to religion or duty scarcely call for comment. They commend themselves to the judgment of all men. They express the universal religion of humanity. The duties they enunciate are taught by every creed; by Christians and Jews, as well as by Buddhists, Bráhmans, and Musulmans. They are enforced in the edicts by the simple plea that their fulfilment will ensure happiness both in this world and in the next. In some edicts the idea of happiness in the next life is associ-





**CHAPTER V.** ated with a conception of heaven. Otherwise there is no allusion to that succession of future lives which finds expression in the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul. Still less is there any allusion to that ultimatum of monastic teaching,—eternal rest and annihilation in Nirvána.

Expression of duties in the edicts.

The general character of the edicts which enforce the fulfilment of duty may be gathered from the following paraphrase:—"Men celebrate a variety of festivals; on recovery from sickness, on marriage, on the birth of a son, and on commencing a journey. But such festivals bear no fruit. The great festival of all is duty;—the pious devotion of children to their parents, the respect of servants to masters, the kindness of masters to slaves and dependents, generous help to friends and kinsfolk, alms-giving to Bráhmans and Srámans, and a tender regard for all living creatures. This is the festival that brings forth fruits, for by so doing men may attain heaven."<sup>4</sup>

Measures of Raja Priyadarsi.

The edicts which refer to the administration of Raja Priyadarsi had three main objects in view. First, the abolition of the slaughter of animals, whether for food or sacrifice. Secondly, the establishment of medical dispensaries throughout the empire. Thirdly, the introduction of a state system of instruction in moral conduct.

Prohibition of the slaughter of animals.

Kindness to animals is an important element in the religion of the edicts. It was perhaps the development of that deeply-rooted belief in the metempsychosis, which fondly imagines that every living thing is animated by a soul that once was

<sup>4</sup> See Tablets ix. and xi. in Appendix I.