

CHAPTER XV.

SOCIAL DATA.

The study of society is of great interest to a student of the cultural history of a country. It enables us to understand human life in all its aspects. One, therefore, takes into consideration the study of various topics such as institutions of class, occupations, customs, condition of women, marriage, food, dress, social habits etc.

The poem supplies us considerable information regarding society.

Structure of Society.

Classes: The society was composed of four traditional Varnas or classes, viz., Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra (II. 47). There are several references to the first three Varnas in the poem. The poet refers to Kṣatriyas in many places, to Brāhmaṇas in XIV. 20-24; 33-38, to Vaiśyas in III. 76; V. 24; IX. 32; X. 38; XII. 26 and Śūdras (V. 67 and the general reference is made to them in II. 47). The poet mentions, probably the fifth class, viz. mountaineers also (XII. 51) who lived outside the fold of the society and away from the centres of civilization following their traditional vocations.

Marriage: It was one of the Samskāras and hence a necessary rite. Every religious rite was to be performed jointly with the wife. Thus marriage was meant for the accomplishment of an end which was the performance of the social and religious duty

in company. This is learnt from the mention of the presence of the wife of Yudhisthira at the Rājasūya sacrifice and the performance of some religious rite by her in connection with that sacrifice (XIV. 22).

Departure of the bride: We have a stanza which describes the feelings of a father at the time of the departure of his daughter for her husband's home (IV. 47), reminding us of the scene in the fourth Act of Kālidāsa's Sākuntala.

The types of marriage: Māgha has an occasion to refer to only one of the eight forms of marriage viz. Rākṣasa. We are told that Kṛṣṇa carried away Rukminī (II. 38) and Śiśupāla carried away the wife of Babhru (II. 40).

Polygamy: It appears that people, in general, wedded one wife, but polygamy was not unknown. The nobles and the rich men had more than one wife (VIII. 36-44). Hence it is natural that the co-wives could not see eye to eye with one another (VII. 45, 51, 53, 57-59; VIII. 36-44; X. 27, 28, 35, 45, 46). It can be safely inferred from such a situation that the homes must have been the scenes of intrigues. The transgressions, on the part of husbands, were not uncommon (XI. 31-34, 37). Sometimes the husbands did receive punishment for such transgressions (VII. 52). In certain cases of this type, the domestic peace was about to be disturbed, but the timely reconciliation, made through the mediatory efforts of female friends saved the crises. The offended wives were reconciled and won over by

by these resourceful female friends who made them forgive the faults of their husbands (VII. 7-11).

Condition of women: It appears that women were not confined within the four walls of their homes. They enjoyed, to a considerable degree, the freedom of movement. Even the ladies of harem accompanied their men in military expeditions as already noticed elsewhere. We have a reference to women enjoying bath in a river publicly (VIII. 16-71) which indicates that women were not prevented from appearing in public. They attended the religious ceremonies like Rājasūya and performed certain ceremonies connected with it (XIV. 22). In certain cases, they kept watch over their sown fields of rice where they sang songs merrily (VI. 49; XII. 42, 43). This shows that they were not restricted to go out on business.

But this may not be interpreted to mean that they moved about in society with complete freedom. Modesty was considered a capital virtue among women (II. 44). We have a reference to veiled faces of women (V. 17). ^{There} ~~They~~ were careful attempts to prevent men from seeing the faces of royal ladies. They put on veils on their faces when they moved out of their houses (V. 17). This reference clearly shows that the custom of Purdah was in vogue in the days of Māgha - particularly among the women the women of royal class.

Uncharitable remarks about women were again not wanting. Balabhadra says in this connection that women are the great root of the tree of enmity that takes very firm root (II. 38).

Widows and the Custom of Satī: That widows formed a section of the society be inferred from three references in the poem. The widows did not put on ornaments and made no personal decorations like the drawing of designs on their cheeks (XVI. 77). They wept and were objects of pity when their husbands were killed or dead (XVI. 85). In one stanza, Māgha refers to the remarriage of a widow under certain circumstances (XVI. 81). If a young lady marrying an old man unable to enjoy her becomes a widow in a short period after her marriage, she is allowed to re-marry (XVI. 81).¹ Māgha is here supported by the authority of the Manu Smṛti.

The custom of Satī or the wife of a deceased husband immolating herself to death on the funeral pyre of her husband has been referred by the poet at several places in the poem. The poet tells us that a woman immolated herself with the idea of obtaining the same husband in her next birth (I. 72; IX. 13). The wives of the soldiers killed in action fearlessly met death on the funeral pyres (XV. 93). A wife unable to brook separation from her husband killed in action immediately followed him (XVIII. 60). The poet appears to believe that the intense love of a wife for her husband unites her with him in heaven (XVIII. 61).

Food and Drinks

Food: Māgha refers to the following items of food: Kalama or rice (VI. 49, XII. 42, 43), sweet-balls (V. 51), milk (XII. 40)

1. IX. 176.

and its various preparations like butter (XI. 8), curds (XI.8; VI. 35), clarified butter (XIV. 25) and butter-milk called 'arista' (XVIII. 77); honey (XII. 54) and spices like cloves (III. 81), betel-leaves (VIII. 70; IX. 65) and betel-nuts (III.81).

Items: Cereals: Rice must have been the staple food in the days of Māgha. Sugarcane (V. 50) produced 'guda'(tricle) and sugar. There might have been various sweet preparations from sugar like sweet-balls which were also given to elephants (V.51).

Preparations of milk: We learn from the poem that there was enormous wealth of cows as can be inferred from the mention of number of cowherds (XII. 38-41). These cows supplied the people with milk, butter, clarified butter, curds and butter-milk. The poet mentions a special kind of preparation of butter-milk called 'arista' (XVIII. 77) which cured indigestion, whetted appetite and imparted refreshing effect. Honey was another item of food which was also used in the reception of a guest known as madhuparka and arghya (I. 14). The poet mentions a number of flowers in the VIth canto. These attracted swarms of sucking bees yielding much honey which must have been freely used as a part of daily meals and in religious rites.

Meat: Though Māgha does not mention meat as one of the items of food, its use can be inferred from the fact that the extensive hunting in which the ksatriyas indulged did not waste life for nothing. It may be assumed that the meat of the hunted prey like a deer or a boar must have been eaten as a common

practice by ksatriyas. There is a reference to the roasting of flesh in XVIII. 76 but it does not help us in any way in coming to a definite conclusion.

Spices: The poet mentions cloves (III. 81). The practice of chewing betel-leaves is referred to in VIII. 70, IX. 65; and X. 26.

Categories of food: From the items referred to above, we can make out the categories of food as follows: (i) things to be chewed and then eaten (bhakṣya) like sweet-balls, (ii) things to be eaten without chewing (bhojya) like rice, and (iii) things to be drunk (peya) like milk, wine etc.

Drink: Drinking of wine seems to be a common habit of people. That the nobles as well as their ladies indulged in drink is quite evident from the Xth canto. It was used ~~as~~ as an intoxicant in love sports (X) as well as in war. The kings drank it in company of their queens before setting out for a battle (XV. 80). In love sports, it was a common practice that men drank wine which was scented with the fragrance of the mouths of their beloveds (II. 20; X. 7). Men, in turn, gave mouthfuls of wine to their beloveds (X. 23). This practice of drinking wine was not the monopoly of nobles and their ladies but even cowherds living in villages indulged in this luxury (XII. 38).

Māgha almost exhausts the Sanskrit synonyms for wine. The words for wine used in the poem are aireya (XI. 51), anutarsā(X.2),

āsava (VI. 77; XV. 81; XVI. 12), hālā (X. 21), kādambara (IV.66), kapīsa (XII. 38), madhu (X. 3, 6, 7, 14, 15, 22, 29), madirā (II. 16, 20; X. 24), madya (X. 17, 27), parisnuta (X. 5), śidhu (IX. 87), saraka (X. 12, 20), surā (VIII. 52; X. 1, 23, 28; XVI. 12) and vārunī (X. 19). This may refer to the different varieties of wine. There is a reference to the three kinds of preparation of wine, viz., (1) extracted from cocoanuts (āsava),⁽²⁾ prepared from the juice of sugarcane (śidhu) and (3) extracted from kadamba flowers (kādambara).

It was rendered fragrant by placing lotuses (VIII. 52; X. 1; XV. 81) or tender mango-blossoms (X. 3) in the vessels containing it. we have references to the golden drinking peg (caṣaka) in X. 4, 24 and XI. 51.

The effect of drunkenness on ladies was manifold in the beauty produced by rolling red eyes (II. 16; X. 19, 25), in the meaningless expressions and slipping garments at every step (X. 16), in cutting mutual jokes (X. 12), in throwing bashfulness overboard (X. 17, 18, 20, 22, 30), in the satisfaction of all the five senses (X. 3) and in the intense desire for sexual sports (X. 25).

It may be observed that mostly the royal classes and the nobility indulged in drinking wine, but the Brahmins always abstained from it.

Dress, Ornaments and Toilet.

Dress: Poets, popular philosophers, novelists and other observers of society were much interested in costume worn by people. It was at a later stage that the costume arrested the attention of the students of history and civilization.

Kālidāsa, the national poet of India, enunciates the purpose of dress, particularly of ladies, when he says that the reason why the females dress up is that they may be appreciated by their lovers.¹ The poet Māgha almost echoes the same sentiment in XI.33 where he says that the lovers beautify their persons with a view to securing the appreciation of their sweet-hearts. In the description of the city of Dvārakā and its ladies, he points out how the fitness of the garments put on their breasts by the ladies allowed the breasts to be seen clearly (III. 56).

The dress of the people of the age under discussion depended to a large extent on several factors such as the climate of the country, its products of industry and the nature of its customs. The costume, then, was national and characteristic.

Thomas Carlyle is perfectly right when he remarks that society is based on cloth- an opinion which naturally reminds us of Shakespeare's wellknown statement 'the apparel oft proclaims the man'.²

1. Kumāra, VII. 22 (स्त्रीणां स्त्रियालोनुपुलो हि वेषः ।).

2. Hamlet, I, 3, 70.

As rightly pointed out by Dr.G.S.Ghurye¹ that the 'Pravṛttis' are, according to the opinion of Rājasekhara, the styles of dress and ornamentation, which his imaginary Sāhityavidyāvadhū (science of Poetics in the form of a lady), put on to attract the equally imaginary kāvyapurusa (soul of Poetry in the form of a gentleman). She followed him over a large part of India trying to win him for herself and finally succeeded in inducing him to marry her in Banaras. The style of dress and ornamentation adopted by the imaginary lady differed in different regions. Thus Rājasekhara mentions the style of dress prevalent in and peculiar to the different regions of India in the first quarter of the tenth century A.D.

'Avantī Pravṛtti' mentioned by Rājasekhara in the style of dress prevailing in Surāstra, Arbuda, Avantī, Mālava, Vidiśā, Bhṛgukaccha etc. Thus it is the central and western manner of dressing. It may be presumed that the apparel in the western region worn in the days of Māgha remained almost unchanged in the days of Rājasekhara and that the information given by Rājasekhara is reliable; yet this reference is unable to throw any light on the apparel belonging to the region and the age under discussion, because Rājasekhara does not mention the specific characteristics of the style of dress. Hence Śisupālavadhā is, probably, the only source which enables us to form some idea about the costume in the days of Māgha.

1. Indian Costume, B'bay, 1951., p.244.

Dress of women: The articles of dress put on by women were generally three in number as is gathered from the poem. They were the upper garment (VII. 32, 34, 40; VIII. 30, 69; XI. 52; XIII. 36), the bodice (V. 23; XII. 20; XV. 84) and the lower garment (IX. 75; X. 83; XIII. 32). The veil was also used on certain occasions (V. 17).

The Upper Garment: Magha gives the description of the upper garment put on by ladies in VII. 32 where one of the ladies of Kṛṣṇa's household engaged in sportive activities on the Raivataka mountain, standing in front of her lover put ^{out} ~~xx~~ one of her hands to gather flowers. In doing this, she exposed the nail-marks she bore on the beautiful region of her arm-pit. She at once tried to cover that part of her body by drawing over it with the other hand the upper garment which made the garment very tight over her breasts. Mallinātha rightly explains 'amsuka' as 'uttariya'. The other reference also speaks of the slipping off of the garment covering the breasts (VII. 34). This upper garment was put on in such a way that one end of it could float and flutter in the air without displaying it totally from the body (XIII.36). There are two other references in the poem (VII. 40; VIII. 69) which speak of the partial exposure of the region of the arm-pit when a lady was engaged in tying up her hair in a knot.

The upper garment of ladies was often of orange colour while that of the male was of a white colour (XI. 52). The ladies generally preferred an orange-coloured garment for sportive occasions (VIII. 30).

Bodice: Kurpāsaka (V. 23); Kancuka (XII. 20) and Vārabāna (XV. 84).

Māgha speaks of the bodices worn by ladies and which became very tight on account of perspiration (V. 23). These bodices were moving up and down due to the movements of the breasts of ladies caused by the gait of horses the ladies were riding (XII. 20). The ladies of warriors setting out for a battle gave such a close embrace to their lords that their bodices were torn in the act (XV. 84).

The Lower Garment: Ambara, Amsuka, Cela (VIII. 59), Dukūla (X. 73), Kauśeya (VIII. 6), Kṣauma (X. 83).

We have several references to ambara and amsuka in the poem . Ambara is referred to in I. 20; IX. 7; XI. 21; XIII. 31, 32, 44; XVI. 71, 76 while amsuka is referred to in VIII. 46, 62; IX. 84; XII. 59; XIII. 31; XV. 92.

Māgha makes a distinct reference to both the lower and upper garments put on by ladies in XIII. 32. Dr. Ghurye¹ rightly observes in this connection that "it is clear from this that there was some difference between the two garments to render their interchange fairly ludicrous, though at the same time the garments were similar enough to lead a lady in excitement to interchange them in wearing and to cover the parts to be covered even with this interchange."

1. Ind. Cos. p. 271

It appears that the lower garment of ladies was worn in a way which made it necessary for it to be kept in a position by fastenings which were not strong enough to stand the strain of hurry and excitement (IX. 75).

That 'Nivi' was the knot of the lower garment worn by women which held it in the proper place becomes clear from the statements about it in VIII. 6; IX. 75, 84; X. 45, 60-64; XI. 51; XIII. 31, 44.

Dress of Men: It consisted of four articles viz. the turban (XX. 48), the upper garment (II. 19; VIII. 5; XI. 52), the lower garment (XV. 57) and the occasional scarf (XVII. 6).

The Upper Garment: Māgha describes how some lovers walked with their beloveds, warding off the rays of the sun from them by holding their upper garments to serve the purpose of umbrellas over their heads (VIII. 5). While describing Balarāma, he mentions his dark-blue upper garment (II. 19). At other place (XI. 52), he mentions the interchange of ~~the~~ upper garment of a lover and his beloved.

The Lower Garment: Though we have only one reference in the poem to this article of male dress, it is clear and unmistakable. While describing the anger of kings allied to Śiśupāla at the insult done to them by Bhīṣma in the assembly, the poet refers to the anger of a king named Vasu who, desiring to strike the opponents, put forward his leg and stretched his hands and

walked forward in excitement. In this act, his lower garment slipped off partially and consequently the king could not move as his leg got entangled in it (XV. 57).

The head or turban: It was a headgear encircling the head and binding the locks of hair of men (XX. 48).

The scarf: It was a piece of fine cloth worn by men while appearing in public. It was worn on the shoulders and allowed to fall so that its two ends remained hanging on both the sides.

Māgha, while describing the anger of kings allied to Kṛṣṇa, refers to the anger of king Yudhājit who fanned his perspiring face due to anger with the end of his scarf (XVII.6).

Modern scholars divide the dress into two classifications: (1) Gravitational which depends on the natural fall of the materials made into garments and (2) anatomic which irrespective of the natural fall is based on cutting and shaping the garments to the lines of the body. According to Dr.G.S.Ghurye the Indian Costume does not readily fall into a distinct class. It is partly gravitational and partly anatomic (in the case of both male and female). But this may not be true of the age under discussion as Hiuen Tsang makes the following observation. "The inner clothing and the outward attire of the people have no tailoring."¹

Ornaments:

1. Watters, OYC; Vol.I. p.150.

Ornaments: The poet mentions the following ornaments worn by ladies for decoration. They are kundala, ear-rings (VI. 27); Hāra, necklaces (VII. 17; VIII. 9, 51, 53; IX. 44; X. 74; XIII. 8; XVI. 84; XVIII. 68); Mekhalā, girdle (VI. 6, 14; VII. 5, 17; VIII. 45; IX. 45, 74, 82; X. 62, 76, 77, 85; XIII. 32, 34; XVI. 76, 84); Valaya, bracelets (VII. 45; VIII. 34; X. 43, 62; XIII. 32, XVI. 77); Nūpura, anklets (VII. 18, X. 76; XIII. 34) and Hamsaka (VII. 23).

The ornaments put on by men were Kundala (III. 5), Hāra (III. 10), Angada, armlets (III. 6; XV. 7; XVII. 3), Valaya (III. 7) and Ūrmikā, ring (XVII. 8).

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Hiuen Tsang thus speaks of the ornaments of the people. "The ornaments of the kings and the grandees are very extraordinary. Garlands and tiaras of precious stones are their head ornaments and their bodies are adorned with rings, bracelets and necklaces. Wealthy mercantile people have only bracelets."

Toilet: Articles of toilet: Among the articles of toilet may be mentioned flowers of innumerable variety, garland, perfumes, odoriferous powders, collyrium, ointments and pastes, the lac-dye for the feet, a sort of lip-stick and fragrant substances used to perfume the body and mouth.

Flower: It was one of the chief articles of toilet. The poet makes a number of references to flowers. Men and women wore garlands of flowers long enough to reach their knees. We have

1. Watters; OYC., Vol.I, p.51.

references to ear-rings made of flowers (VIII. 52, 54; XIII.32) worn in the place of usual ones made of gold. Women played with lotuses in their hands (VII. 18). Flowers decked the hair in profusion (V. 19; IX. 28; XII. 75).

Cosmetics: Several cosmetics were used both by men and women. Various kinds of ~~unguents~~ unguents were used (VI. 24; VIII. 51; IX. 7, 24, 28; XII. 14; XVI. 84). Of these, the most commonly used were prepared with saffron, musk and sandal (IX. 7; XVI. 24; XVI. 84). Haricandana was a yellow pigment (VIII. 51). A paste was prepared from kāleya (XII. 14) & The saffron and Lodhra powders were used by women to beautify the complexions. The women applied Lodhra powder on their cheeks (IX. 46) and the saffron one on their cheeks (VII. 63), on their breasts (IX. 7; XX.3) and on their bodies (XI. 55; XII. 14). ~~and~~ Men also sometimes applied it on their chests (XVIII. 68) and bodies (XVII. 14). The women painted their cheeks with various foliage patterns (VIII. 56, 59, 61; X. 78, 84; XI. 30; XVI. 77). This painting as a whole was known as Viśeṣaka (X. 84) which was an ornamental arrangement of dots of different colours on the face. The Viśeṣaka otherwise known as Bhakti (X. 84) was mainly a beautiful arrangement of little dots of saffron. This arrangement when made in the form of leaves was called Patralekhā or Citraka (VIII. 56, 59, 61; X.78; X. 30; XVI. 77). The women applied lac-dye, alaktaka or yāvaka to their lips (VIII. 55; IX. 46; X. 9, 26; XVI. 84) and dyed their feet with it (VII. 6, 67; XIII. 33). The betel leaves were chewed and several kinds of scents were used (VIII. 70; IX.65;

VIII. 30). The use of mirror is mentioned in the poem at two places (IX. 53, 73).

Social Habits.

Entertainment of Guests: When a guest arrived, he was treated with due honour. The host went out a few steps (IV. 68; VIII. 14), and in special cases, a long way (XIII. 2) and welcomed him with arghya (I. 14; VIII. 14), smile and other gestures indicating his great joy at his arrival (VIII. 14). The ladies received and honoured the guest with ^{fine} grains of rice (lājakusuma, XIII. 37). When an old friend arrived as guest, he was received with proper respect. The drums were beaten welcoming the royal guests (XIII. 2). There was the custom of smelling the guest's head by the host (XIII. 12). The host acted even as a charioteer out of great love and respect for the distinguished visitor (XIII. 19). He was entertained with sweet music and graceful dancing by dancing girls (XIII. 66). The festival was celebrated to mark the arrival of the distinguished royal visitor (XIII. 67). It appears that the person of a guest was considered sacred as no injury was done to him even for his gross misbehaviour like abusing and insulting the host (XV. 68).

We gather from the poem a few customs pertaining to social etiquette. The elders were held in high esteem and men of good breeding like Yudhishthira sought their advice on important matters, even though they knew the course to be followed (XIV. 54). Vinaya or discipline was considered an essential virtue and even the king

and his younger brothers showed great modesty in the presence of a distinguished guest (XIII. 24). Honouring an undeserving person in the presence of a deserving one was considered the insult of the deserving one (XV. 34). Planting of foot on somebody's head was the highest humiliation (XV. 46).

Sports and Pastimes: The poem enables us to form a fairly good idea of the sports and pastimes prevalent in those days. The royal class indulged in the hunting of lions (V. 12) and hare (V. 25). The hunters attracted the deer with the notes of music (VI.9). The hunting expedition must have been long and hard as can be inferred from the mention of foaming horses returning from hunting (V. 53). We have references to bulls butting against a river-bank (V. 63; XII. 74).

The ladies played with balls which rebounded with the strokes of hands (VII. 15) and lotuses (VII. 18; VIII. 64).

Sometimes men and women went out on long excursions to forests and enjoyed themselves under shady trees (VII). The joyous ladies plucked flowers there and utilized them for their toilet (VII. 33, 35, 47-49). Sporting in waters was highly popular and both men and women enjoyed it (VIII). They employed golden syringes for throwing coloured water on one another (VIII. 30). Sometimes dust too was raised by way of joke (VI. 52). The vernal festival was celebrated with great ~~ak~~ eclat by men and women. Kāmadeva was the presiding deity of this festival (VI. 19). People also celebrated such festivals on special occasions like the arrival of a distinguished royal guest to their city (VIII. 67).

The story-telling was another recreation particularly for the village-folk who gathered together sitting in a circular way and telling a listening to stories pertaining to Kṛṣṇa (XII. 38). Several references to the drama noted elsewhere in this work point to the existence of a theatre which must have satisfied the cultivated taste of the people. Music and dancing provided recreation to the tired guests (XIII. 66).

Customs: There was a custom of releasing all prisoners at the time of the birth of a prince (X. 51). Those old men who were unable to perform their daily duties committed suicide by letting themselves fall from a sacred mountain. Such a death was exonerated (IV. 23). There is a veiled reference to the custom of putting deposit (IV. 34). The custom of taking and fulfilling oath is referred to in XII. 74. The ~~when~~ abandonment of one's own preceptor can be done under certain circumstances (XII. 56). There appears to be the custom of preserving wealth for use when fallen on 'evil days' (XVIII. 31).

Beliefs and Superstitions: The people had a blind faith in various beliefs and superstitions which is a common feature of all early and mediaeval society. It was an established belief that a serpent could be reduced to a helpless condition and made a prisoner within a charmed circle by serpent-charmers (II. 88). The people believed in magicians who by the power of magic represented unreal things as real (XV. 25). It was believed that the ladies could be completely won over by the power of certain spells (X.37;XIX. 84).

The Abhicāramantra was believed to be productive of the expected result of killing a person (VII. 58). The mark of a disc in the palm was considered lucky (XII. 3). There was a deep-rooted belief in fatalism. The poet informs us that the strenuous efforts of mankind becomes futile when Fate is adverse (IX. 6). It was believed that the clouds roared when they came in the vicinity of the jewels on the hoods of the cobras, and the Vaidūrya sprouts shoot forth when the clouds roared (XIII. 58). The people believed that the application of Siddhāñjana made their eye-sight strong (IX. 21). There was a strange belief that fire was produced on the tongue of a weeping jackal (XVIII. 76). The people also believed in the existence of Vetāla, a kind of ghost (XX. 60).

That the society was largely dominated by superstitions is proved by the large number of things tabooed as evil if seen or done at the time of the departure of a warrior for battle. The falling of a bowl filled with wine was considered inauspicious (XV. 81). Sneezing meant that the man concerned would fail in his mission (XV. 91). A wife's looking at the feet of her husband about to start, was a sign of coming evil (XV. 86). The falling of tears from the eyes of the wives of men about to start (XV. 83, 90, 95), their showing signs of distress (XV. 82, 96) and slipping of bracelets from their hands (XV. 85) were signs of evil. The chirping of a bird called Pīṅgala was regarded as an ill-omen by travellers (XVI. 19).

Fine Arts.

Poetry: A very considerable progress was made in this direction also. People enjoyed and appreciated fine arts like poetry, drama, music, dancing and painting. Magha is of the opinion that the excellence of poetry depends upon the judicious use of the elaborate style (ojas) or the light style (prasāda) according to the sentiments and emotions expressed (II. 83). Both the word and its sense together constitute the body of poetry (II. 86). He further explains that the evanescent emotions (sañcāribhāvas) act as feeders to the prevailing sentiment (sthāyibhāva) and strengthen it in various ways (II. 87). The characteristics of good poetry are also referred to in XII. 35. The early hours of morning are very much helpful in composing poetry (XI. 6). A Mahākāvya in which various bandhas like Sarva-tobhadra, Śakra, Gomūtrikā etc. is difficult to be understood by an ordinary man (XIX. 41).

Drama: The several references (II.8; X. 82; XIV. 50, 53; XX. 44) to drama in the poem indicate that it was one of the popular means of recreation. The characteristics of a good play are mentioned by Māgha. It should be pleasing with Sanskrit and Prākṛta languages. There should be no mixing up of characters and places and it should have the purity of the prevailing sentiment (XIV. 50). Its acts should be expansive in the beginning but contracting gradually (XX. 44). The prologue is an introduction to the plot of a play (II. 8). At one place, the poet

speaks of the mundane existence as a drama (XIV. 53). People enjoyed plays (X. 82).

Music: Music appears to be divided under two heads, viz; war music and music in the times of peace. We have already mentioned the war music elsewhere in this thesis. The music in the times of peace is again divided under two heads, viz, the popular and the technical. The popular music was cultivated by women. They sang charming light songs while watching standing crops of rice (VI. 49; XII. 43). The technical music is mentioned in (I. 10; XI. 1, 10). The courtesans were employed to sing and dance in the royal court (XIII. 66). Of the musical instruments played in the times of peace, Vīṇā (I. 10; VI. 9; X. 64; XI. 10) and Mrdanga (XI. 2) were popular.

Dancing: It appears that the art of dancing, like the art of music, was kept alive by professional courtesans. They were employed as dancing girls at the royal court as mentioned above (XIII. 66). Dancing of ladies is also referred to in IX. 79.

Painting: We have a few references to painting in the poem. We learn of the walls of palaces and houses being decorated with paintings (II. 67; III. 46). The pictures of the weapons of war were drawn on the bodies of the elephants (XVII. 69). There are three more references to the painting (III. 50; IV. 53; XIII. 47).

Sculpture: It appears from a solitary reference (XX.20) that sculpture was not unknown in those days. The word 'ālikhita' meaning 'carved out' is used in this verse. It is known from other sources that it was well-developed even before Māgha.

Architecture: We can have a fairly good idea of a city of those days mainly from the description of the city of Dwārakā given by the poet in canto III (33-62). This description, though highly poetical, helps us in forming an idea about the plan and design of a city.

It appears that some consideration was given to the selection of the site of a city. Dwārakā was situated on the sea-shore (III. 36, 37, 40). The city-walls surrounded it (III. 37). The royal highway, which crossed it, was straight, free from mud, long, having entry and exit and free from any other obstacle (III. 51). The high mansions were situated on both the sides. This is inferred from the mention of the ladies of Indraprastha welcoming Kṛṣṇa with grains of rice (lājakusuma). These ladies performed this ceremony from the terraces or windows of their mansions (III. 37). This act is possible only if the mansions were situated on both the sides of the highway. The busy market place was situated in the centre of the city (III. 38). The city contained a fairly large number of big palatial houses (III.51).

Oratory: It appears to be an age of intellectual discussions in which the learned and the eloquent participated and others must have carefully listened to such enlightened discussions with great interest. We have several allusions to this in the poem.

The eloquence of a clever orator strikes dumb even good speakers and make his supporters, dull though they be, very good speakers (II. 25). But even an eloquent speaker must be well-versed in the subject, otherwise, as the poet warns us, the speech of an orator who has not carefully studied the subject would fall flat (II. 27). The poet gives us an excellent pen-picture of two debaters advancing arguments and counter-arguments in XX. 11. The authorities quoted by one eloquent combatant were refuted by his opponent by presenting counter-authorities (XX. 18).

All these must have educated the people to no small extent.

Morals: Morality of the people was not entirely unquestionable. We have several references to prostitutes in the poem (IX. 10; XIX. 61; VIII. 67; XI. 20; V. 27). Some of these prostitutes provided luxury to kings (XI. 20), others to soldiers (V. 27) and common men who could afford to pay their fees (IX. 10; XIX. 61). They tried to attract passionate men with the 'tricks of their trade' (XIX. 61) and parted company with their victims the moment they were rendered penniless (IX. 10; XIX. 61).

The Abhisārikās repaired to the places of their lovers under cover of darkness (IX. 21, 22). Thus it appears that prostitution was a popular system and the love by the Abhisārikās was appreciated by the people.

The existence in society of the married men maintaining illegal relations with others' wives (XI. 65; XV. 63), clever but

morally law seducing even faithful and chaste wives (XVIII. 19) and the vulgar (V. 38; IV. 48) sufficiently indicate that the people in the days of Magha were not immune from human weakness.

The unscrupulous merchants gathered profit by practising fraud in weights and measurements of commodities (XI. 38; IX. 32). ? The thieves also practised the same art of cheating others (XVI. 52) and quickly hid themselves after stealing somebody's wealth (XIX. 111). One of the ways of detecting crime was the tracing of the foot-impressions of the thieves (IX. 70).

Nevertheless the society was mostly composed of righteous people who followed the path of righteousness (III. 57). There were chaste wives who remained faithful to their husbands (I. 72; IX. 13, 17) and those who scrupulously observed certain vows when their husbands were away (XIV. 30). The widows willingly followed their husbands by consigning themselves to fire out of excessive love they cherished^h for them. There were Brahmins who always maintained sacred fire in their houses (XI. 41) and the ascetics rapt in meditation (XI. 42). The warriors fought honouring the warrior's code.

Even the sages tried to set the social wrong right as is exemplified in the case of the sage Nārada successfully persuading Kṛṣṇa to eradicate the evil-doer. The wrong was punished and justice was done.

Economic Condition.

General Wealth: The prosperous condition in which the people lived is revealed by the poem. As Māgha mostly refers to

the rich section of the society in the poem, his description cannot be taken as the reflection of the state of common people. Yet the following evidence of opulence and plenty is available from the poem. The poet mentions the palatial mansions, priceless jewels, golden ornaments, precious stones, invaluable silken garments, flourishing trade, thriving arts and crafts, rich harvest of rice, various kinds of wine and the wealth of elephants, horses, cows, oxen, mules and camels.

The main source of wealth as mentioned in Śisūpālavadha were agriculture, trade and commerce and the ocean producing pearls, corals, conches and shells. We shall take them up in due order.

Agriculture: There are references to two cereal crops in the poem, viz; paddy (VI. 49; XII. 42, 43) and sugar-cane (V. 50). It appears that the ~~winter~~ winter crop of paddy was ready for harvest in the month of December. This is inferred from the fact that the month of December (Mārgaśīrṣa) was generally recommended for long marches. Kṛṣṇa's army was going on a long march and when it happened to pass by the paddy-fields, it was ready for harvest and the attentive women were carefully protecting it (XII. 42, 43).

There are passing references to the method of agriculture. The ground was ploughed and levelled for carrying on agricultural operations (XII. 21). When a seed is planted and carefully watered, it develops and turns into a fruit (XIV. 34). A farmer intending to

winnow grain keeps everything ready and waits for favourable wind (XIV. 7). Merry songs were sung by women keeping watch on the standing paddy crops (XII. 43; VI. 49). The cattle-rearing was allied to agriculture. It appears that a large number of cows were kept and looked after by cowherds. We have references to cowherds (XII. 38), their wives (XII. 39) and milking of cows (XII. 40, 41). The bee-rearing industry also must have been thriving side by side. We have references to honey used in the reception of a guest (I. 14) and as one of the ingredients arghya (I. 14). Besides, the poet mentions a number of flowers in the VIth Canto. These flowers attracted large swarms of sucking bees. The poet speaks of honey-combs in XII. 54.

Trade and Commerce: Trade and commerce was in a flourishing condition. There were general merchants who dealt in the necessities of life (IX. 32; X. 38; XIII. 15). Some of them were cunning and had no scruples in cheating customers as has been already pointed out (IX. 32; X. 38). Then there were merchants who accompanied the marching army (V. 24; XII. 26). Some of the merchants specialised in dealing one commodity only e.g. wine-dealers (XII. 26) and jewellers (IV. 11). There were tradesmen who made sea-voyages and loaded and unloaded their ships in different countries (III. 76). There must have been two trade-routes, those of the land and the sea. It appears that there existed sea-borne trade with Arabia^{from}/the mention of the Arabian horses in the poem (V. 10).

Weights and Measures and Coins:

Such a flourishing state of trade and commerce presupposes weights and measures and coins. The poet refers to weighing in balances (X. 38). A reference¹ is also made to Prastha, a kind of measurement for grains (IV. 11). It was a measure equal to thirty two 'palas'. Māna (X. 38) is also a measure. It appears that certain things were weighed and sold while certain others were measured and sold.

It is extremely surprising that the poet nowhere refers to coins in the whole of the poem. But its existence can be easily inferred from the flourishing trade and advanced society. Moreover, it is a known fact that the Guptas struck gold coins of both types, the Dīnāras and the Suvarnas.¹ These coins were long current in India. The same authority informs us that the silver coinage of the Guptas had already started with the overthrow of the Western Satrapas by Candragupta II and the copper currency also existed.² We can say on the authority of Fahien³ that the cowries were a common sight in the market place. As Māgha belongs to post-Gupta period, it is easy to see that the golden, silver and copper coins must have been current in his time though he does not mention any of them in the poem.

1. Brown: Coins of India, p. 45.

2. Ibid; pp. 46-47.

3. Fahien: Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms, Trans. by James Legge. Please see under Madyadesa.

Means of Transport: We may discuss the means of transport under trade and commerce. The sea-borne trade was carried on with ships (III. 76). People also used boats for crossing rivers (XII. 71, 76). The beasts of burden like camels, oxen, donkeys and mules must have been employed for the land-borne trade. The carts were also used for the same purpose. (XII. 19). The horses and the elephants were used for riding purposes. The chariots were also used, though sparingly, as one of the means of transport.

Marine and other products: The ocean yielded precious gems, ratnāni (III. 36, 39), pearls, mauktikāni (III. 73), conch-shells (III. 37), shells (XI. 42) and corals (I. 9). Over and above these, the sea yielded cocoanuts, cloves and green nuts (III. 81).

The poet also mentions precious stones like Mahānīla or sapphire (I. 16; III. 11; IV. 26), Marakata or emerald (III. 48; IV. 24), Sphaṭika or crystals (III. 47), Vaidūrya or lapis lazuli (III. 45) and the sun and the moon stones (III. 44; IV. 58).

Arts and Crafts: Various allusions to arts and crafts in the poem prove the existence of different skilled artisans in the society. We are told that gold was tested in fire or on touch-stone (XI. 43, 55 ; XX. 68). It was heated (I. 20; IX. 9; XI. 55; XX. 53) and turned into liquid (XX. 61). The ornaments of gold were fashioned and then polished (III. 6). Moreover we have several references in the poem showing that the ornaments of

various kinds and designs were worn in abundance. It appears from all this that the master goldsmiths must have exhibited their great skill in fashioning them. Then there were those skilled artisans who worked on jewels. They knew very well that the wet jewels were dim and had no glitter on them. They should be dried up in the sun for getting glitter on them (III. 39).

As pointed out elsewhere in this work, we have references to various weapons of war and musical instruments. The fashioning of these must have been the work of specialists trained in the art for generations. We have a reference to polishing of sword (XX. 75) where we are told that a sword should first be heated and then dipped in water. This removes all spots on it, cleans and polishes it.

The carpenters fashioned carts (XII. 19), boats (XII. 71, 76), wooden figures of ladies (IX. 35) and accompanied army on a campaign and repaired broken chariots (XII. 25).

The weavers wove embroidered Sāris which were beautified with diverse patterns and which were soft to touch but firm in texture (II. 74). Dyeing was well-known and practised. We have references to the coloured upper garments of women (XI. 52; VIII. 30) and to dyeing of the same (XVIII. 69). The different colours were mixed and the result was an altogether new colour (XIII. 52; XX. 56). Sewing is referred to in XVIII. 29.

Besides, there were metal workers who worked on various metals. Over and above the precious metals like gold, the poet refers to copper (XX. 45).

Wine-making must have been a paying concern in those days as it was very popular and a large section of society was attached to it. As already pointed out, the poem refers to three kinds of preparation of wine, viz, (1) extracted from the coconuts (2) prepared from the juice of sugar-cane and (3) extracted from flowers like Kadamba.

Thus we see that the useful arts and crafts were pursued and goldsmiths~~sm~~ artists working on jewels and precious stones, those fashioning weapons of war, those fashioning instruments of music, carpenters, weavers, dyers, tailors and wine-makers followed their respective specialised callings. The professions appear to be hereditary.