

# THE ECONOMIC HISTORY OF ANCIENT INDIA

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# The Economic History Of Ancient India

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Pratice

***Dedicated***

**To**

**the sacred memory**

**of**

**the late Sir AshuTosh Mukherji**

**in humble appreciation**

**of**

**all that he has done**

**for**

**the cause of**

**Ancient Indian History and Culture.**

## Preface

At the beginning of the session 1922-23 I delivered a series of lectures on the "Economic History of Ancient India" to the students of the Kalikātā Vidyāpith. The Vidyāpith is now no more and therefore as a token of my humble connection with that noble institution I now publish these lectures.

In doing so, I have necessarily to make some additions and alterations but these have not modified the general scope and plan of the lectures. I have avoided on principle all theoretical disquisitions throughout this work. It has been my aim rather simply to present the facts in a connected manner with a view to illustrate, as far as possible, the gradual development of the economic conditions from the earliest times. I have always indicated the sources of my information in order that my conclusions may be tested with reference to the authorisation which they are based.

A few words must be said regarding the dates of the various literary authorities which have supplied the materials for this work. I have avoided, as far as possible, all discussions about them in the body of the book, as that would have disturbed the harmony of the subject matter dealt therein. As will be noticed I have principally relied upon two classes of works, Brahmanical and Buddhist. The principal Brahmanical texts, besides the Samhitās and the Brāhmanas are the Dharma sūtras and the Dharmasāstras. Of the Samhitās the Rīg-Veda is undoubtedly the oldest and marks an epoch by itself. Its age was subjected to a searching and exhaustive scrutiny by Prof.

Winternitz whose views have nowadays to be accepted. Says he "It seems more probable that the initial date falls in the third rather than in the second millenium" (*Geschichte Indischer Litteratur*, Part I. p. 258). Definitely later in date are the rest of the Vedas, the Brāhmanas and the Upanishads for which also no specific dates can be proposed which command general acceptance but they may be roughly placed in a period beginning from the middle of the second millenium down to the 7th century B. C. As regards the relative chronology of the Dharma-sūtras and Dharma-śāstras, I have been guided by the opinions of Jolly. I differ from him only about the date of Manusmṛiti, the composition of which I have placed on the authority of Bühler between second century B. C. and second century A. D. (*S. B. E.* Vol. XXV. p. CXVII). Jolly's views may be summed up in the following tabular form :—

	Texts arranged in alphabetical order.	Probable date.	Reference to "Recht und Sitte."
Dharma-Sūtras	Āpasthamba	4th or 5th Cent. B.C.	page 3
	Baudhyāyana	5th or 6th Cent. B.C.	page 4
	Gautama	Do.	pages 5-6
	Vasistha	4th or 5th Cent. B.C.	page 7
Dharma-Śāstras	Bṛhaspati	6th or 7th Cent. A.D.	page 27
	Katyāyana	Do.	page 28
	Manu-Smṛiti	Not later than 2nd or 3rd Cent. A.D.	page 16
	Nārada	C. 500 A.D.	page 32
	Vishnu-Smṛiti	Not earlier than 3rd Cent. A.D.	page 7
	Yājñavalkya	4th Cent. A.D.	page 21

Of the other Brahmanical texts, the kernel of the Rāmāyana was composed before 500 B. C. although the most recent



portions were not probably added till the 2nd cent. B. C. and later (Macdonell, *Hist. of Sans. Lit.* p. 309) while the Mahābhārata, very much in its present form existed at about 350 A. D. (Macdonell, *Hist. of Sans. Lit.* p. 207) ; Buhler places it between 300-500 A. D. (Buhler and Kriste. *Contribution to the History of the Mahābhārata*). As regards the date of Pāṇini I accept the views of Dr. R. G. Bhāṇḍārkar who places him in the 7th century B. C. (Bombay Gazetteer 1896, Vol. I. Part II. p. 141).

The Arthasāstra has been referred by competent critics to the time of Chandragupta Maurya (320 B. C.) [Jolly's article in *Z. D. M. G.* Vol. 67, pp. 49-96 ; R. Shyam Sastri's *Arthasāstra* pp. V.—XXV].

The allusions which the jātakas stories in Buddhist literature contain to social and economic conditions have been referred by Fick to the time of Buddha and by Rhys Davids even to an anterior period [Fick, pp. VI-VII ; *Buddhist India*, p. 207.] On the authority of these two scholars I have assumed 7th and 6th centuries B. C. to be the period represented by the jātakas. The canonical Buddhist texts like the Vinaya and the Sutta Pitakas have been referred by Oldenburg and Rhys Davids to about 4th century B. C. (*S. B. E.* Vol. XIII. p. XIII ; *Ibid.* Vol. XI. p. X.)

I beg to point out that I have utilised the researches of Professor Zimmer, Macdonell and Keith, Drs. Fick and Rhys Davids and Professor Hopkins who have dealt with the economic data on the basis respectively of the Vedas, the Jātakas and the Epics. I am no less indebted to the researches of Mr. Rhys Davids and Drs. Rādhā Kumud Mukerji, Ramesh Chandra Mazumdar and D. R. Bhāṇḍārkar.

My thanks are due to my friend Babu Rākhohari Chatterji, M. A. who has taken infinite pains in supplying me with books

and journals whenever required and to His Honour Lieutenant-General Sir Kaiser Shum Shere Jung Bahādur Rānā K. B. E. and Major Shivapratap Thāpa B. Sc., Asst. Director of Public Instruction, Nepal, for their kind encouragement and sympathy which it is alike my pleasure and duty to gratefully acknowledge.

The method of transliteration followed in this work is substantially that of the Indian Antiquary.

Tribhuban Chandra College, }  
Nepal, }  
The 18th October 1924 }

*Santhosh Kumar Das*



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Yaska.  
Yājñabalkya.  
Z. D. M. G
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## ABBREVIATIONS

- Beal.=Buddhist Records of the Western World, by Beal.  
C. V.=Chullavāgga (of Vinaya Pitaka).  
E. H. I.=Early History of India by V. A. Smith.  
Ep. Ind.=Epigraphia Indica.  
Fick.=Die Sociale Gliederung Im Nordostlichen Indien Zu  
Buddha's Zeit by Richard Fick, Kiel, 1897.  
Ind. Ant.=Indian Antiquary.  
Ind. Stud.=Indische Studien.  
Ins.=Inscriptions.  
Jāt.=Jātakā.  
Lud.=Lunder's List of Brahmi Inscriptions in Epigraphia  
Indica, Vol. X, Appendix.  
Mbh.=Mahābhārata.  
Manu.=Manu Samhita.  
Nār.=Nārada Samhita.  
Rig.—Rig Veda.  
S. B. E.=Sacred Books of the East Series.  
Viram.=Virāmitrodaya Edited by Jivānanda Vidyāsāgar.  
Vin.=Vinaya Pitaka.  
Watters.=Travels of Hiuen Tsang by Watters.
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