



# HISTORY *of* INDIA

*Edited by*

*braham*  
*valentine*  
A. V. WILLIAMS JACKSON, Ph. D., LL. D.

Professor of Indo-Iranian Languages in Columbia University

## VOLUME II

*From the Sixth Century B. C. to the Mohammedan  
Conquest, Including the Invasion of  
Alexander the Great*

*By*

VINCENT A. SMITH, M.A., M.R.A.S., F.R.N.S.

Late of the Indian Civil Service, Author of "Asoka, the Buddhist  
Emperor of India"

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cious and trustworthy witness concerning matters which came under his personal observation, and his vivid account of Chandragupta's civil and military administration may be accepted without hesitation as true and accurate. That account, although preserved in a fragmentary form, is so full and detailed that the modern reader is more minutely informed in many respects concerning the institutions of Chandragupta than he is about those of any Indian sovereign until the days of Akbar, the contemporary of Queen Elizabeth.

Pataliputra, the imperial capital, which had been founded in the fifth century B. C., stood in the tongue of land formed by the confluence of the Son with the Ganges, on the northern bank of the former, and a few miles distant from the latter. The site is now occupied by the large native city of Patna and the English civil station of Bankipur, but the rivers changed their courses many centuries ago, and the confluence is at present near the cantonment of Dinapur, about twelve miles above Patna. The ancient city, which lies buried below its modern successor, was, like it, a long, narrow parallelogram, measuring about nine miles in length and a mile and a half in breadth. It was defended by a massive timber palisade, pierced by sixty-four gates, crowned by five hundred and seventy towers, and protected externally by a broad and deep moat, filled from the waters of the Son.

The royal palace, although chiefly constructed of timber, was considered to excel in splendour and magnificence the palaces of Susa and Ekbatana, its gilded pil-



lars being adorned with golden vines and silver birds. The buildings stood in an extensive park, studded with fish-ponds and furnished with a great variety of ornamental trees and shrubs.

Here the imperial court was maintained with barbaric and luxurious ostentation. Basins and goblets of gold, some measuring six feet in width, richly carved tables and chairs of state, vessels of Indian copper set with precious stones, and gorgeous embroidered robes were to be seen in profusion, and contributed to the brilliancy of the public ceremonies. When the king condescended to show himself in public on state occasions, he was carried in a golden palanquin, adorned with tassels of pearls, and was clothed in fine muslin embroidered with purple and gold. When making short journeys, he rode on horseback, but when travelling longer distances he was mounted like a modern raja, on an elephant with golden trappings. Combats of animals were a favourite diversion, as they still are at the courts of native princes, and the king took delight in witnessing the fights of bulls, rams, elephants, rhinoceroses, and other animals. Gladiatorial contests between men were also exhibited. A curious entertainment, which seems not to be known in the present age, was afforded by ox-races, which were made the subject of keen betting, and were watched by the king with the closest interest. The course was one of thirty *stadia*, or six thousand yards, and the race was run with cars, each of which was drawn by a mixed team of horses and oxen, the horses being in the centre, with an ox on



each side. Trotting oxen are still largely used for drawing travelling-carriages in many parts of India, but the breed of racers seems to be extinct.

The principal royal amusement was the chase, which was conducted with great ceremony, the game in an enclosed preserve being driven up to a platform occupied by the king, who shot the animals with arrows; but, if the hunt took place in the open country, he used to ride an elephant. When hunting, he was closely attended by armed female guards, who were obtained by purchase from foreign countries, and formed an indispensable element in the courts of the ancient Indian monarchs. The road for the sovereign's procession was marked off with ropes, which it was death for any one, even a woman, to pass. The institution of the royal hunt was abolished by Chandragupta's grandson, Asoka, in 259 B. C.

As a rule, the king remained within the precincts of the inner palace, under the protection of his Amazonian body-guard, and appeared in public only to hear cases, offer sacrifice, and to go on military or hunting expeditions. Probably he was expected to show himself to his subjects at least once a day, and then to receive petitions and decide disputes in person. Like the modern Indians, Chandragupta took pleasure in massage or friction of the limbs, and custom required that he should indulge in this luxury while giving public audience; four attendants used to massage him with ebony rollers during the time that he was engaged in disposing of cases. In accordance with Persian custom, which had