

Review

Reviewed Work(s): Slavery in Ancient India as Depicted in Pali and Sanskrit Texts by Dev Raj Chanana and J. Filliozat

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of applying such schemes to practical and specific problems of expansion, the analysis developed in the book limits itself to arid formalism, to impressive flourishes of purely academic analysis and sometimes to the statement of self-evident, if not trite, propositions.

PADMA R. DESAI

Slavery in Ancient India as Depicted in Pali and Sanskrit Texts. By Dev Raj Chanana. With a Foreword by J. Filliozat. Pp. xviii + 203. Rs. 10.00. 1960. People's Publishing House, New Delhi.

Earlier in the present century Megasthenes's statement regarding the absence of slavery in ancient India was accepted by patriotic Indians at its face value as a further evidence of the high ethical content of the ancient Indian civilization. If it were still necessary to destroy this myth once and for all, Dr Chanana's scholarly volume will surely do that job. Dr Chanana has in fact done much more: on the basis of a critical analysis of the Pali canonical and secular texts (to which he attaches more importance than to the normative *Dharmasastras* as sources of objective information) as well as the Sastra literature in Sanskrit, he has reconstructed the stages in the evolution of an important socio-economic institution from about the 6th century B.C. to the beginning of the Christian era. Chapters dealing with the data available in the epics and the later Smritis have been added to round off the picture. As Prof Filliozat points out in his preface, the only important source left untackled by the author is the Jaina canonical literature. Originally submitted as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Sorbonne, the work was first published in a French edition which was very well-received. The present English edition is largely revised and a considerable improvement on its French predecessor.

Dr Chanana postulates, on the basis of archaeological evidence, that the institution of slavery goes back to the Indus Valley civilization, but its basic character underwent a change following the Aryan penetration. In the Vedic society slavery became primarily a function of the racial subjugation of one group by another. This racial basis of the institution gradually disappears and there is also a certain improvement in the social status of slaves over a period of time. Dr Chanana identifies the fluctuations in State power as a prime factor in this change—a view which may not be accepted by all. He distinguishes some fifteen different forms of slavery—a distinction based on the manner in which the servile status was acquired—on the basis of textual data. His analysis, however, reaffirms the view that the economic function of slavery in India was only of marginal significance. In limited areas, for brief periods,

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there were exceptions to this rule. The cultivation of landed estates with slave labour by merchant-owners in the Maurya period and the parasitical character of pre-Mauryan oligarchs living off the labour of *dasa-kammakaras* are instances in point. The chief reason for the limited economic function of slavery has been traced by Dr Chanana to the inadequacy of State power which was the chief instrument for the expropriation of the surplus. The emphasis on a politico-administrative factor seems somewhat excessive, specially if one remembers that State power is by no means necessarily the chief instrument for guaranteeing expropriation. The explanation for the peculiar character of slavery in India has perhaps to be sought in sociological forces the nature of which still remains obscure.

T. RAYCHAUDHURI

Fluctuations in Trade, Industry and Finance: A Study of British Economic Development, 1850-1860, By J. R. T. Hughes. 8½" × 5½". Pp. xviii + 344. 45s. 1960. Oxford University Press, London.

Dr Hughes' detailed analysis of a significant decade in the evolution of the British economy, originally written as a doctoral dissertation under the guidance of Professor Habakkuk, is a welcome addition to the growing library of monographic studies on British economic history. Like the works of Rostow and Matthews, from whom the author draws his inspiration, the volume under review "is a combination of applied economics and historical research." The characteristic strength and weaknesses of this very necessary combination, still in the early stages of its growth, are evident in Dr Hughes's undoubtedly competent study. His attempt to describe and analyse the fluctuations in a period of rapid economic growth and extensive technological and institutional changes is based on a mass of statistical data which *inter alia* supplement, for another decade, the detailed information gathered and classified by Gayer, Rostow and Schwarz. These data, covering the major fields of productive enterprise (the author regrets the paucity of data on agriculture and building construction and the complete absence of information regarding the machine tool industry), foreign trade and the monetary system permit, up to a point, a quantification of the fluctuation in stimuli and response. The uneven pattern of fluctuations, particularly the difference in this regard as between various industries—the fact, for instance, that the cotton textile industry remained comparatively unaffected by the 1858 depression—traced by the author is an interesting phenomenon the significance of which may be overrated. The statistical data relating to the volume of output and employment in a particular

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