

## Tribes

After having said a word about the Gaṇa state which some of the following tribes represented, we shall now make a discussion on the names of the tribes occurring in our records :

### I. *Ābhīra* (No. 1, L. 22) :

They were one of the tribes subdued by Samudragupta. *Ābhīras* lived to the north of the Rajaputana desert. We may also think of Abiravan between Herat and Kandahar which may have been the original home of the *Ābhīras*. In the 3rd century A.D. there was an *Ābhīra* kingdom in the north-western Deccan.<sup>21</sup> D.C. Sircar<sup>22</sup> describes *Ābhīra* in singular as a member of the Cowherd Community. The tribe can still be traced in the present *Ahīras*,<sup>23</sup> who in tribal groups, abound largely in the Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Nepal and some portions of Rajasthan. They are a band of simple, sturdy people, mostly cowherds and agriculturists.<sup>24</sup> This tribe<sup>25</sup> is thought to have played a big part in the propagation of the worship of Kṛṣṇa Govinda<sup>26</sup> in his pastoral aspect.

The Mahābhārata<sup>27</sup> places the *Ābhīras* in West Rajasthan 'where the Sarasvatī disappears'.

In the first and second centuries A.D. they are located in the country between the lower Sindhu valley and Kathiawar, as is indicated in the 'Periplus' and in the Geography of Ptolemy.<sup>28</sup> The Periplus calls their country Abiria. *Ābhīra* generals served in the armies of Śaka Kṣatrapas of Western India in the second century A.D. as is known from their inscriptions.<sup>29</sup> They are also mentioned in the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali<sup>30</sup> in association with the Śūdras, the Sodrai of Alexander's time, who lived in northern Sind. Throughout the third century A.D. the *Ābhīras* exercised ruling power in northern Konkan and Mahārāshtra.<sup>31</sup> Vātsyāyana<sup>32</sup> refers to the Harem of the *Ābhīra* kings. The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa<sup>33</sup>