

the Licchavi Mahānāma, seeing that a band of young Licchavis who had been out hunting were gathered round the Buddha, is represented as saying, "They (i.e. the Licchavis) will become Vajjians, they will become Vajjians (*bhavissanti Vajji bhavissanti Vajji*)" ! This possibly only means that there was great hope of these Licchavi young men becoming true Vajjians, practising the seven conditions of welfare taught by the Buddha, conditions which endured their prosperity, and leading a more cultured life. Thus the Vajji appears to be a more dignified term. It might have originally been given to the tribe which inhabited what is known as *Vajjirāṭṭha* (*Vṛji-rāṣṭra*), i.e., the Vajjian country, in Buddhist literature. Later a separation seems to have taken place among the Vajjis and Licchavis, because the Arthaśāstra (XI. I) mentions the Licchavika and the Vṛjika as two distinct republics.<sup>208</sup>

The clan of the Licchavis figures very prominently in the annals of early Buddhism. Buddhaghoṣa, the celebrated Pali commentator has the following story<sup>209</sup> : The chief queen of the king of Benaras, at the time of her child-birth delivered lump of flesh, 'of the colour of lac and of bandhu and Jivaka flowers'. Fearing the displeasure of the king if he should hear of this, the other queens put the lump of flesh into a casket marked with royal seal and placed it on the flowing waters of the Ganges. The casket was discovered by an ascetic, and taken by him to his hermitage, where he cared for the lump of flesh. After the lapse of some time, the lump broke up into two pieces of flesh, which gradually assumed shape, till finally one of them became a boy resplendent like gold, and the other a girl. Whatever entered the stomach of these two infants looked as if put into a vessel of precious transparent stone (*maṇi*) so that they seemed to have no skin (*Nicchavi*). Others said : 'the two were attached to each other by their skin (*līna-chavi*) as if they had been sewn together'; so that these infants came to be designated 'Licchavis'. We are further told that on coming of age the boy and the girl were married to each other and from this brother and sister union sprang the race of the Licchavis<sup>210</sup>

The origin of the Licchavis has been a matter of great controversy. They have been represented as Scythians, Kolarians, Tibetans and Persians by different authorities.<sup>211</sup>