

Later on the sense of the word expanded to cover all the tribes living in the Punjab. It is interesting to note that the Māhābhārata sometimes uses the terms Vāhika, Madra, Jartika, Āraṭṭa and Pañcanada synonymously. It appears that the lands of these tribes which lived close to one another became in course of time moulded into a big kingdom under the powerful kings of Śākala (Sialkot). As Vāhika was beyond Kurukshetra and, therefore, outside the boundary of Brahmāvarta, its analogical connection with the word 'bahis' may have been another cause of the expansion of its geographical sense.<sup>533</sup> This is also reflected in the Vārttikas of Katyāyana who derives the word 'Vāhika' from 'vahis' or 'bahis', meaning 'outside' (the pale of Āryandom).<sup>534</sup>

Some scholars<sup>535</sup> rely on the description of the Bāhlikas as the offspring of two Piśācas, *Bahi* and *Hika*, as given in the Mahābhārata. Buddha Prakash holds that fresh stream of the Bactrian people which swooped over the Punjab came to be known as Bāhlikas; their name which became a general designation for the people of Punjab was later corrupted as Vāhika.<sup>536</sup> But we have already shown that the two were separate entities.

We know that the Vāhikas were the people living within the boundaries of the five rivers including the sixth Sindhu (Indus),<sup>537</sup> but according to the Meharaulī Pillar Inscription Candragupta conquered Vāhlikas after crossing the seven mouths of the (river) Indus (sapta mukhāni sindhoḥ).<sup>538</sup> So Vāhlika of our inscription is certainly Balkh in the extreme north of Afghanistan.<sup>539</sup> Bajpai<sup>540</sup> opposes it on the ground that Candragupta could not have gone to so far off a place as Bactria which is situated across the Hindukush and rejects the older contention of scholars that the Kuṣāṇas were ruling in Bactria during king Candra's campaign and that he crossed the Hindukush to crush them.

But the view of Bajpai is not tenable since it is clear from the lines in our inscription<sup>541</sup> that king Candra had conquered the Vāhlikas after crossing the seven mouths of the river Indus.

So far as the literary evidence is concerned we find that Bāhlika is the name of a people in the Atharvaveda;<sup>542</sup> here