The period of Ancient Indian history stretching from about 650 A.D. to 1206 A.D., when the curtain was rung down on Hindu India with the elevation of Qutb-ud-din Aibek to the throne of Delhi, is characterised as the early mediaeval period. This period is marked not only by political vicissitudes presenting a panorama of the rise of many a dynasty but is distinctive in the field of religious resurgence surcharging the land with the cult of devotion (bhakti-mārga). The Vedic pantheon and the sacrificial form of worship receded into the background and belief in the worship of a personal god became pronounced. There was a spectacular movement from the abstract to the concrete. Devotion to personal deities, of whom the most prominent were Viṣṇu, Śiva and Śakti, became the distinctive feature of the religious life of the period. The images of the deities were installed in temples and elaborate ceremonies were evolved for their worship. Sects and sub-sects of the votaries emerged to further the cause of their beliefs and practices. The Purāṇas were the gospels of the new cult, known as the Brāhmaṇical or Purāṇic Hinduism, but they did not reflect the whole of it. The sectarian works, like the Vaiṣṇava Saṁhitās, the Śaiva Āgamas and the Śākta Tantras, were produced to serve as manuals for the sectarians. Religious practices such as sacred baths, observance of fasts and bestowing of gifts, particularly on the Brāhmaṇas and the temples, were prescribed by the literature of the time and the cult of the tīrthas (sacred places) became popular. Belief in destiny, karma, punarjanma (transmigration of the soul) and muktī (or mokṣa, salvation) was the inextricable feature of the religion of the period. The age-old belief in the efficacy of incantations, omens, portents, and imprecations did not die out.

The cult of devotion had such a wide appeal that Jainism and Buddhism also developed theistic tendencies not unlike the Brāhmaṇical religion. The images of the Jinas and the Buddhas came to be worshipped in temples with devotional songs, accompanied by rites and ceremonies. The Mahāyāna school of Buddhism developed esoteric practices which were common with the Brāhmaṇical tāntrism. The period is marked by a spirit of religious toleration in spite of the rise of different sects.

As the early mediaeval period has its pronounced features of religious beliefs and practices, a comprehensive study of them is necessary to present an image of a facet of the cultural life of the time. So far no work exclusively on religious beliefs and practices of the early mediaeval period...
has been produced. Generally the religious condition of the time has been treated in works on dynastic history as an adjunct to the principal study. An independent work on the subject is just what is required. An historical study of religious beliefs and practices of North India during this age, as contemplated in the present monograph, is a type of its own. This study is to describe all historical evidence concerning divine worship and to give details of religious beliefs and practices obtaining in the period.

My study has been based on the close examination of the Purāṇas, the Dharmaśāstras with their commentaries, the bhāṣyas (commentaries) of Śaṅkarācārya and Kauṇḍinya, the sectarian literature, the digests like the Jñānārṇava of Śubhacandra, Kṛtyakalpataru of Lakṣmīdharā, Dānasāgara and Adbhutasāgara of Vallālasena and Caturvarga-cintāmaṇi of Hemādri, the historical and biographical literature like the Rājatarangini of Kalhaṇa, Navasaḥasāṅkacarita of Padmagupta alias Parimala, Dvīṣṭrayayamahākāvya of Hemacandra, Kumārapāla-pratibodha of Somaprabha, Prabhāvacakarita of Prabhācandra, Pythvīrajavijaya of Jayānaka and Rāmacarita of Saṃdhīyākara Nandī, the campūs (romances) like the Yaśastilaka of Somadeva, with its commentary by Śrutasāgara, Kuvalayamālā of Udyotana and Samarāiccakahā of Haribhadra, the plays like the Mālatimādhava of Bhavabhūti, Bālabhāra-ta, Bālarāmāyaṇa, Karpūramaṇjari and Viddhaśālabhaṇjikā of Rājaśekhara, Caṇḍakausika of Kṛṣṇiśvara, Prabhodhacandrodaya of Kṛṣṇa Miśra and Moharājaparājaya of Yaśaḍpāla, the lyrics like the Gītagovinda of Jayadeva, the epigraphs of the contemporary dynasties of the Sendrakas, the early Cālukyas of Gujarāt, the Gurjara-Pratihāras, the Kalacuris, the Candellas, the Paramāras, the Cāhamānas, the Kacchapaghātās, the Guhilaputras, the Caulukyas of Anahilapāṭaka, the Rāṣṭrakūta, the Pālas, the Senas and the Gahaḍavālas throwing light on the subject, the icons and religious monuments of the time and accounts of the Chinese and the Arab travellers who visited India during the early mediaeval period.

The Purāṇas represent the principle of love for and devotion to personal gods. They are the basis of the new trends of religious beliefs and practices of the age. The Dharmaśāstras seem to have exercised considerable influence over the period. The Manu-smṛti, though composed much earlier than our period, was in use as is borne out by the epigraphs. The Prince of Wales Museum plates of the (K.) year 427 and the Navsari plates of the (K.) year 456, state that Dadda III, the Gurjara-Pratihāra ruler of Bṛhgučaccha, had studied the sacred treatise composed by the great sage Manu (mahāmuni Manu-praṇīta pravacanādhigama . . .). Besides, Medhāti-
thi wrote his commentary on the *Manu-smṛti* sometime in the ninth century A.D. The *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*, likewise, was a subject of commentary. Viśvarūpa, in the first half of the ninth century A.D., Viṣṇāneśvara, in the last quarter of the eleventh century A.D., and Aparārka, in the first half of the twelfth century A.D., wrote commentaries on the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*. The commentary of Viṣṇāneśvara, known as the *Mitākṣara* (*Ṛju-mitākṣara*), commands respect even today. Some of the *Smṛtis* like those of Yama, Atri and Devala were written during our period. The *Devala-smṛti* was composed sometime in the eighth century A.D. That the *Smṛtis* had their influence on the age can be further brought out by such references in the epigraphs as the one in the Karitalai stone inscription of Kalacuri Lakṣmaṇarāja I, of the (K.) year 593, which states about a saintly person that his mind was devoted to the observance of the rules of conduct laid down in the *Śruti* and *Smṛti*, and the other in the Bilaigarh plates of Kalacuri Prthvīdeva II of the (K.) year 896, which says of one Dehuka that he had an intellect 'proficient in *Vedāntic* principles and matchlessly radiant with regard to *Smṛtis*.'

The bhāsyas reflect on religious principles and the sectarian literature yields valuable information with regard to the mode of worship. The *Jñānārṇava* of Subhacandra, who may be assigned to about the eleventh century A.D., is an authoritative work on yoga. The *Kṛtyakalpataru* of Lakṣmīdhara, who was the *Mahāsāṃhīvigrāhika* (chief minister for peace and war) of the Gahaḍavāla king Govindacandra (whose first known date is 1114 A.D.), refers to dāna (gifts), tīrtha and mokṣa. The *Dānasāgara* of Vallālasena, composed in Ś.S. 1091, is a comprehensive digest on dāna. His *Adbhutasāgara* is an extensive work on omens and portents, their effects, and means of averting them. It was begun in Ś.S. 1089, and appears to have been completed by his son Lakṣmaṇasena. The *Caturvargacintāmaṇi* of Hemādri is a work of the second half of the thirteenth century A.D. It deals with dāna, vrata (fasts) and prāyaścitta (atonement). Though not a work of our period, it has been used to supplement the information by a comparative study. The historical and biographical works throw light on the religious activities of the rulers, state officials and individuals. The *Yaśastilaka* of Somadeva was composed in 959 A.D. at Gāṇgadhārā, the capital of the Cāluṣyas of Lemulavāḍa. It is not only a Jaina romance in Saṃskṛt but a learned compendium of Jaina and non-Jaina philosophical and religious doctrines. The *Kuvalayamālā* of Udyotana and the *Samarāic-cakahā* of Haribhadra are romances in Prākṛt, reflecting on Jaina ethics and religious discipline. They were composed in the eighth century A.D. Of the plays, the *Mālatīmādhava* of Bhavabhūti is of the eighth century A.D.
The compositions of Rājaśekhara may be assigned to the end of the ninth and the early part of the tenth century A.D., as he lived in the court of Pratihāra Mahendrapāla I (c. 890-907 A.D.) and his son Mahipāla I (c. 913-43 A.D.). The Caṇḍakauśika was composed in the first half of the tenth century A.D., and the Prabodhacandrodāya is a work of about 1065 A.D. Yaśāhpāla was a contemporary of the Caulukya king Ajayapāla (c. 1173-76 A.D.) of Anahilapāṭaka and his allegorical play Moharājaparājaya must have been written about the same time. We get glimpses of the religious condition of the age in these plays, as some of them refer to the practices of the Kāpālikas and the Kaulas. The Moharājaparājaya describes the conversion of Caulukya Kumārapāla (c. 1144-73 A.D.) of Anahilapāṭaka to Jainism. There are references to the Kāpālikas too. The Gitagovinda of Jayadeva, who was a court-poet of Lākšmanaśena of Bengal, is not only a great composition of lyrics, but is also a great work of Vaiṣṇavism. Jayadeva emphasises the praise and worship of Kṛṣṇa.

The epigraphs of our period bear eloquent testimony to the popularity of the Purāṇic deities. Many of them open with a salutation to one or the other deity and some of them invoke the blessings of more than one deity. They record objects of gift, procedure of bestowing gifts, the names of the Brāhmaṇa recipients with their gotras and schools to which they belonged, and the purpose for which grants were made. Construction of temples or their renovation, installation of images, and gifts made to the temples for their maintenance and for public works are also registered in them. They are by all means indispensable sources of information to construct the religious history of the time. The icons bear out the forms in which the gods and goddesses were worshipped. The concept of the Purāṇas and the sectarian literature was translated into practice through the icons. The temples speak of the religious activities.

The accounts of the Chinese travellers, I-tsing, Sheng-chi and Ou-k'ong, reflect on the condition of Buddhism in India. I-tsing came to India in the third quarter of the seventh century A.D. and Sheng-chi was in India about the same time. Ou-k'ong was in Kāśmira in between 759 and 763 A.D.

The Arab travellers, of whom Alberuni is prominent, have left accounts which give considerable information about the religious beliefs and practices of the people. Alberuni, who wrote his Kitab-ul-Hind in Arabic (translated in English by Sachau under the title ‘Alberuni’s India’) in 1030 A.D., had acquired information about the different aspects of Indian life by studying the Indian literature and establishing contacts with the people through his visit. His observations supplement the study made through indigenous sources.
In addition to the original sources, I have made use of modern works for which I express my deep sense of gratitude to their authors. The extent to which they have been used is apparent from the foot-notes.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not offer my respectful thanks to my examiners, of whom two were foreign savants, Dr. A. L. Basham, Professor and Head of the Department of Asian Civilizations, the Australian National University, Canberra, and Dr. H. Bechert, D.Litt., Professor of Indology, University of Göttingen, West Germany, whose considerate opinion and suggestions have been of great value to me. To Professor Basham, I am particularly indebted for writing a Foreword to this book.

In conclusion, I may add that the present work was prepared by me independently.

Āśvina, Vijaya-daśamī, V.S. 2025

V. B. Mishra

1st October, 1968