

C H A P T E R I I

Political History from 6th Century A. D. to

9th Century A. D.

The territories of early Bengal became an integral part of the Gupta empire. But it would not be proper to say that the people of Bengal submitted to the mighty Gupta emperors rather meekly. At least, we have one instance to show that the people of Bengal rose like one man and gave stiff resistance to the invading forces under King Chandra, though ultimately they were beaten.

In view of the inevitable chaos that followed the dismemberment of the Gupta empire, the people of Bengal for the first time emerged into the limelight of political history of India and carved out independent principalities.

The downfall of the Guptas marked the breaking up of northern India into a number of small states. Saurāstracame under the domination of the Maitrakas of Valavi. Thānesvara was taken over by the Pushyabhūtis, while the Maukhauris held sway in Kanauj. Yāsodharman, a military adventurer, attempted to set up an ephemeral empire in central India, Rajputana and other parts of the Punjab¹.

Magadha and Malwa passed under the sway of the Later Guptas who may have been an offshoot of the Imperial Guptas, but as yet we have no positive evidence in support of this view. Bengal also took advantage of the political situation to shake off the foreign yoke and two powerful independent Kingdoms, viz. Vaṅga and Gauda were established there in the sixth and seventh Century A. D.²

South-eastern Bengal i.e. the South-Eastern region of modern Bangladesh i.e. the area lying between the Padmā and the Yamunā is denoted by the term South eastern Bengal. This area was known at different times as Vaṅga, Samatata or Harikela. Though it is difficult to ascertain the exact location of these ancient geographical names, it is fairly certain that all of them may well be grouped under one common name Vaṅga ('Bang' of the Muslim historians)³ Vaṅga was able to preserve an independent status throughout centuries. During the period from the decline of the Guptas to the rise of the Senas, this part of Bengal was never amalgamated with north and western Bengal, inspite of repeated attempts to this effect. The discovery of the archaeological

remains at Maināmatī which have thrown immense light on the history of this part of Bengal and in fact changed the course of the history of the deltaic Bengal⁴. We have already analysed the forces which shaped the characteristics of the people of the area under review in general. Here we are inclined to examine more closely the factors that helped to maintain the political and cultural identity of the people of Vaṅga-Samatata region for centuries inspite of the presence of strong centralised administration of the Pālas and the Senas. This has rightly been examined in a recent publication, " with the hilly and jungle terrain on the east and north, the turbulent sea and swampy forest in the south, the very big and erosion prone rivers in the centre and west, it is subject to severe natural hazards like flood and cyclones. Hazardous life and the pressure of population have made the people of deltaic Bengal much more individualistic, emotional, willing to migrate and face hardship, more rough in speech, but warm at heart, more aggressive but easily mollified and more ready to revolt against authority and yet appreciative of generous gesture than some of their neighbours"⁵. A large number of leaders of thought and action, rebels and militants and fighters for nationalism came from this region.⁶

Independent Vānga Kingdoms

The first independent Kingdom that came into existence in Bengal on the ruins of the Gupta empire appears to have comprised originally the Eastern and Southern Bengal and southern part of western Bengal.

Two of its important provinces administered by Governors of Vardhamānabhukti and Navyāvakaśikā roughly corresponding to respectively western and southern Bengal⁷.

Five inscriptions discovered at Koṭālipādā in the district of Faridpur and one in the Burdwan district as well as the discovery of coins reveal the existence of three independent rulers of this region bearing Mahārājādhirāja titled named Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samāchāradeva⁸. According to N. K. Bhattasali they were probably related to one another and they set up a dynasty that took the place of the Guptas in Eastern India⁹. It seems likely that these rulers were ruling over Samatata with full and independent powers exercising over adjoining regions like Vārakamaṇḍala and also having feudatory chiefs under them¹⁰.

It is interesting to note that Gopachandra and other two kings ruled from the place wherefrom Vainya Gupta also had done years before them. It has been held that after the downfall of the imperial Gupta dynasty, central Bengal (the portion known by name Karnasuvarna) and North Bengal were assimilated with the Kingdom of the later Gupta dynasty of Magadha till the rise of Śaśāṅka.

The title of Mahārājādhirāja assumed by the rulers following Vainya Gupta ruling earlier in the same region as noticed above clearly indicates the imperial authority of the Guptas ceased to exist over this region. The issue of gold coins by Samāchāradeva supports the viewⁿ. The Mallasarul inscription indicates the rule of Mahārājādhirāja Gopachandra in the Vardhamāna bhukti.

Hoernle at first suggested that Dharmāditya was identical with Samudra Gupta¹², but later on with Yaśodharman¹³ who took the title of Vishnu Gupta when he became emperor and was apparently known popularly as Vikramāditya. He was revered as an ideally upright and just monarch and was popularly known as Dharmāditya who

ascended the throne on 529-30 A. D.

Hoernle places Gopachandra's accession in 568 A.D and accordingly his Faridpur place (dated 19th year) was engraved in 586 A.D. Hoernle identified the emperor Gopachandra with Prince Govichandra (= Gopichandra) who is mentioned in a certain confused tradition cited by Tārānāth in his 'Tibetan history of Buddhism in India'. It has been suggested by Tārānāth that Govichandra was a grandson of Bālāditya and was the son of the last Gupta emperor Kumāragupta II whom Yaśodharman displaced. This has led Pargiter to believe that Govichandra alias Gopachandra while reigning over this extreme eastern province never hesitated to assume the imperial title of Mahārājādhirāja¹⁴. But it seems however, almost improbable to draw any serious chronological conclusion from the muddled account of early history preserved in tradition. On the other hand we know from Sārnāth inscription that Kumāra Gupta II's reign came to an end between 473 A.D. - 476 A.D. It was, therefore, impossible for his son to ascend the throne in 568 A.D. and rule for a period of 18 years¹⁵.

A connection between the old Kingdom of Vainya Gupta and the new Kingdoms of the independent Vaṅga Kings

appears to be established by the facts that one Mahārājā Vijayasena was probably a Vassal chief both of Vainya Gupta and of Gopachandra. Vijayasena is the Dūtaka of the Gunāighar grant and is described as "Mahāpratīhāra-Mahāpilupati-Pañchādhikarāna-Uparika and Mahārājā Śrī Mahāsāmanta¹⁶. In the Mallasarul inscription Vijayasena is called Mahārājā, but he uses his own seal. The identity of the person of this name serving under these two Kings cannot be definitely proved, but it is generally accepted by the scholars, who believe that there was no gap between the reigns of Vainya Gupta and Gopachandra. It may further be suggested that Vijayasena who ruled over Vardhamāna bhukti under Gopachandra, possibly also held the same office under Vainya Gupta, and hence, Vainya Gupta ^{had} ruled over Eastern Southern and Western Bengal as well.

The Faridpur copper plate of Gopachandra records the grant of land in Dandabhukti which, therefore, formed a part of his dominion. The Dandabhukti - mandala has been identified by scholars with the marchland between Orissa and Bengal, corresponding to southern and south-western part of the Midnapore district. This

name has probably been preserved in modern Danton, not very far from the Suvarnarekhā river¹⁷.

There is no uniformity among scholars regarding the relationship of the Kings Dharmāditya, Gopachandra and Samāchāradeva and their chronological sequence. Pargiter held that Dharmāditya was earlier than Gopachandra. His view is based on some factors. Firstly, the use of earlier and later form ^{of} 'Ya' in the respective plates of Dharmāditya and Gopachandra and secondly, the additional epithet Pratītadharmā Śīla applied to the land measurer Śivachandra in the plate of Gopachandra¹⁸. A. H. Dani supports the contention of Pargiter, when he holds that Palaeographically the inscriptions of Dharmāditya shows earlier form. The difference can be marked not only in the form of Ya , but also in the form of a , tha , dha , pa , la and ha . But the Mallasarul plate mention the name of Māhārājā Vijayasena who is identified with his namesake mentioned in the Gunaighar plate of Vainya Gupta. Hence Dharmāditya should be taken to be the successor of Gopachandra, though Palaeographically the plate of Dharmāditya appears to be earlier than Gopachandra. A. H. Dani, however adds that by about this time greater change had already taken place in the forms of the letters in the neighbouring province of Bihar as

attested by the inscription of the Magadha Maukharis. As the same change was to affect Bengal, it is hard to be dogmatic as to the exact time when the change actually started. We must allow a margin for the transition period in which the new and old forms were used simultaneously, some preferring the new and the others the old. The lesson is that Palaeography is of little help in settling the question of succession of rulers when only a short duration of rule is involved¹⁹.

R. C. Majumdar has also the same view. He states that Palaeography cannot be safe basis for settling chronology of kings of short period, say, less than a century. This is clearly indicated by the fact that in the Mallasarul copper plate of Gopachandra, the earliest of the three Kings, forms of 'Ya' noted by pargiter has been exclusively used, while the first plate of Dharmāditya shows a distinctly later form of 'Sā'. The addition of the epithet of Śivachandra may no doubt be explained by his attainment of seniority in service. It may also be argued that the epithets were done away with after Śivachandra had been sufficiently

long in service when his name was too well known to require any testimonials. On the other hand, if Gopachandra ruled after Dharmāditya, we have to assume that Vijayasena served as governor under Vainya Gupta, Dharmāditya, Gopachandra and other Kings. But at the present state of our knowledge, it is difficult to make this postulation. Moreover, the name of Vijayasena is not referred to as Governor in any other records of other Kings. Hence, like R. C. Majumdar we also believe that Gopachandra preceded Dharmāditya.

The relationship between the three Kings is shrouded in obscurity. The scholars are also not unanimous on this point. The inscriptional sources do not definitely point out their blood connection, if any. But on the basis of information about some officials engaged in similar types of jobs under different Kings, it may be possible to infer that there was no great interval between them, and they might have possibly ruled in succession. As for example, Uparika Nāgadeva and another officer Jyeshtha-Kāyastha Nayasena who had the opportunity of serving under both Dharmāditya and Gopachandra might be connecting link between the two Kings. The two Kings, therefore, appear

to have been related in point of time. The assistance of Sivachandra was utilised in connection with the measurement of land - during the rules of Dharmāditya and Gopachandra²¹. But it may be noted here that same set of officials working under succeeding Kings do not definitely indicate the blood relationship among them. As for example, Mahārājā Vijayasena of Guṇaighar inscription of Vainya Gupta was the same person as appeared in the Mallasarul inscription of Gopachandra though the Kings do not appear to have been closely related.

Inspite of these difficulties, it may be presumed that the change of Kings might have caused change of officials unless they were closely related, though it might not have been an usual practice. It may be that Gopachandra and Dharmāditya were closely related probably because they retained the service of the same officials like Nāgadeva, Nayasena and Sivachandra. It is possible that the assignments of the officials could have been altered unless Gopachandra and Dharmāditya were not related to one another. Though we do not have any

definite proof in support of their relationship, we cannot altogether brush aside such an argument as figment of imagination.

The Ghugrahati copper plate of Samāchāradeva refers to the rule of Maharājādhirāja Samāchāradeva. It was issued in the 14th year of his reign. In that year Jīvadatta was the viceroy or Governor in Navyāvakāśikā which appears to have been divisional headquarter. The district officer in the district of Vārakamandala approved by Jivadatta was Pavitruka. The later was assisted in his administration by district court presided over by Dāmuka. The affairs of the village or locality to which this refers were in the joint care of a number of Elders (^{Vishaya} Mahattarāh). Other men of experience in the village had also a say in village affairs. These represented the villagers and like Panchāyets of the present day, transacted the ordinary Civil and Criminal affairs of the State²².

N. K. Bhattasali also refers to two gold coins of Samacharadeva, one of them being Rājalīta type found near Mahammadpur in Jessore district of Bengal along with a

gold coin śaśāṅka and another being the gold coin of the light weight "Imitation Gupta" type²³. Besides, the Ghagrahati copper plate inscription of Samāchāradeva has been discovered not far from the find spot of one of those coins (Rājālī(ā type) and the lettering of whose name as written on his copper plate, closely agrees to the lettering on these coins²⁴. The inference derived from the legends of the gold coin of Samāchāradeva is that Sāmāchāradeva was vassal of śaśāṅka²⁵. It rests upon the doubtful reading 'Śrī Narendravinata' on the reverse. Smith said that the three letters following Narendra 'look like Vinata' but Allan read the legend as Narendrāditya²⁶ and the legend on the reverse of the other type of coins Samāchāradeva has been read with certainty by both Smith and Allan as Narendrāditya²⁷.

R. D. Banerjee read the legend in both the cases as Narendravinata and held that it can not be anything else. But the reading Narendrāditya seems to be preferable and we may reasonably hold that Samāchāradeva assumed the title Narendrāditya in imitation of the Gupta Kings. R. C. Majumdar held that if Narendravinata is correct, its interpretation as "fully subdued or obedient to Narendra" and the identification of Narendra

with Śaśāṅka of extremely doubtful character. On the contrary the evidences in the inscription of Samāchāradeva is a definite proof of the independent status of Samāchāradeva.²⁸

Some conclusion may carefully be drawn from the observation of the coin of Samāchāradeva as held by N. K. Bhattasali²⁹. Firstly, Allan attributes the 'Archer type' of coin of Samāchāradeva to a period earlier than that of Śaśāṅka and from the replacing the Garuda standard of the Gupta by the bull standard on the coin, infers that the coin was of a devout Saiva. Secondly, the King was certainly not of the Gupta lineage but had been a successor of the Guptas in the dominion where the Guptas had once held away. Thirdly, Samāchāradeva must, on palaeographic ground, be placed earlier than Śaśāṅka whose immediate successors in Eastern India were first Harsha and then Ādityasena and his descendants. Fourthly, he was a devout Saiva. The continuance of bull symbol by Śaśāṅka makes it almost certain that Samāchāradeva was a predecessor of Śaśāṅka.

Thus from the foregoing discussion, it appears that Gopachandra, who probably founded the independent Kingdom,

must have flourished not later than the second quarter of the 6th Century A.D. (within a generation of Vainyagupta, for as we have found above Mahārājā Vijayasena was a Vassal chief of both). On a modern estimate R.C. Majumdar puts the total reign period of all the rulers of Vaṅga-Samatata (Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samāchāradeva) to fifty years. They reigned possibly between 525 A. D. - 575 A.D. with the margin of a few years both at the beginning and at the end. From the epigraphic evidences, it appears that there was a free, strong and stable Government in Bengal which brought peace and prosperity to the people.

Regarding the decline of the independent Kingdoms and the time when it took place nothing is known for certain. The circumstances responsible for the expiration of Samāchāradeva's authority are unknown, but the Mahākūṭa pillar inscription³⁰ dated in the fifth year of the reign of the western Chālukya King Ranavikrānta (C. 601 - 602 A.D.) records that Kīrtivarman I defeated the Kings of Vaṅga, Aṅga, Kalinga, Vattūra and Magadha. If it is true that the Chālukya King successfully invaded Vaṅga, it may have seriously affected the fortunes of Samāchāradeva which ultimately led to the break up of the Kingdom of Vaṅga³¹.

Before concluding the discussion on the few above mentioned rulers of Southeastern Bengal we have to bear in mind the existence of a few more rulers known from the gold coins issued by them and found mostly in different parts of eastern Bengal and sometimes along with the coins of Śaśāṅka and Samāchāradeva. One of such type bears rude copy of Gupta coin of 'Archer type' and the name of the king possibly Prithuvīra, Prithujavīra or Prithuvīraja^{31a}. The legend of the second type of coin has been read as Sudhanyā or Sudhanyāditya^{31b}. In the recent time the legend Sudhanyāditya has been read as Vasuvarman, possibly of the dynasty of the Khadgas^{31c}.

Bhadra dynasty in Eastern Bengal

On the basis of some sources of information we may probably assume that there flourished in Eastern Bengal some Kings whose names end in Bhadra. Hiuentasang states that Śīlbhadra, the famous Buddhist teacher who flourished in the first half of the 7th Century A.D. belonged to the Brāhmanical royal family of Samatata³². According to D. C. Sircar³³ 'Śīlbhadra' is a Buddhist name of the Principal which he adopted at the time of conversion to Buddhism. Hence, it would be wrong to assume the existence

of the Brāhmaṇa royal family or Samatāṭa ending in -
 bhadra. But as to the existence of the " bhadra"
 royal family it may, however be pointed out that
 in V. 868 of the Sanskrit text of the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa
 it is stated that there would be a King whose initial
 is Svāda, but in the Tibetan Text of the same book the
 name is Rājabhadrā. The family is placed before Gopāla I
 of the pāla dynasty. On the other hand Gopāla I's wife
 Deddadevī is spoken of a Guhya Kapateh bhadreva bhadrātmajā
 in the Khalimpur plate of Dharmapāla. According to Keilhorn,
 the above passage indicates that Deddadevī, the mother of
 Dharmapāla, was the daughter of a Bhadra King³⁴. A. K. Maitra
 rejected the view on the ground that there was the reference
 only of a purāṇic mythology without having any historical
 basis³⁵. But if we agree with the explanation, the ex-
 pression 'Bhadrātmajā becomes redundant because to compare
 Deddadevī with Bhadrā, wife of Kuvera, the expression
Guhya Kapeti Bhadreva is sufficient. Hence, Keilhorn's
 explanation that Deddadevī was the daughter of one Bhadra
 King stands to reason³⁶. There is also reference to a
 Vassal chief named Jyesthabhadra in the Nidhanpur copper
 plate of Bhāskaravarman³⁷. A vassal chief named Nārāyaṇabhadra
 is found in the Vappaghoshavāta grant of Jayanāga³⁸.

From all these sources, it is evident that there existed a line of Kings in Eastern Bengal whose names ended with 'Bhadra'. But there is a possibility according to which the Bhadra Kings may be identified with the Khadgas of Samatata³⁹. N. K. Bhattasali remarks that Śīlabhadra was probably a Khadga. But Bhattasali does not try to solve the difficulty arising out of Yuan-Chwang's statement that Śīlabhadra was a scion of the Brāhmanical royal family while the Khadgas were professedly Buddhists⁴⁰.

P. L. Paul⁴¹ was of opinion that the family was originally known as Khadga and when the name and fame of Śīlabhadra, a member of this family was fully established in the Buddhist world, the family came to be known as Bhadra and so Rājabhata has been described as Rājabhadra in some records. P. L. Paul makes no reference to this view in his later^{publication}⁴². In a recent article D. C. Sircar suggests that the Brahmana royal family to which Śīlabhadra belonged might be the Rāta royal family^{42a}.

The most reasonable explanation is that the Bhadra dynasty flourished in Samatata almost simultaneously with the Khadgas and Rātas.

The Dynasty of Lokanātha :

Between Harsha's death, which broke up his vast empire in Northern India and the rise of the Khadga dynasty in East Bengal, we come across another line of feudatory chiefs that came into the limelight of history with its dynastic title Nātha. The earlier ruler of the dynasty appears to have acknowledged suzerainty to some rulers mentioned in the Faridpur grant or to the Later Gupta dynasty of Magadha⁴³.

The Tippera copper plate grant of Lokānatha supplies us with the history of the Nātha family of Samatata Trippera. The rulers are known to be the followers of Śaivism. The name of the first King whose name though not clear, but it ends Nātha. He assumed the paramount title of adhimahārāja or Mahārājādhirāja. We do not know, however, when he asserted his independence. It is possible that he adopted defiant attitude towards any of the sovereigns of the Faridpur plates⁴⁴, though we do not have any conclusive evidence in this regard.

The second King of this dynasty was Śrīnātha who was a hero and known in history for valour in battle.

But very little is known about him. His son Bhavanātha had religious bent of mind and gave up royalty in favour of his brother's son whose name is not mentioned. The next King was Lokanātha, the donor of the grant. Lokanātha has been supposed to be a son of Bhavanātha's brother and ^{not of} Bhavanātha.

There is a controversy among scholars regarding the data of Tippera grant and the time of the rise of Lokanātha to prominence in history. The copper plate grant of Lokanātha bears a date. R. G. Basak read it as 44 at first. But just before the letters signifying 44 the word adhika occurs and D. R. Bhandarkar suggested the date as 144 while R. G. Basak revised his earlier stand and read it as 344 and referred it as Gupta era, i.e. equivalent to 663 - 64 A. D. D. C. Sircar also is of the opinion that the Tippera record may be dated, on the basis of palaeography, in the Gupta year 344 corresponding to 664 A. D.⁴⁶

D. C. Sircar also believes that Śrīdhāraṇarāt^u of the Kailān grant was more or less a contemporary of Lokanātha of the Tippera grant and of the Khadga Kings⁴⁷. The inscription of Lokanātha and Kailān plate of Śrīdhāraṇarāta fall in the first half of the 7th Century A.D.⁴⁸

If we accept the above dating of the Tippera plate, it may be held reasonably that Lokanātha was a feudatory of the Khadga dynasty and it is evident from the epigraphs of the Khadgas that Jātakhadga defeated his enemies and Devakhadga had a number of feudal rulers under him. But there is doubt among scholars whether the Khadgas exercised supremacy over Lokanātha. According to D. C. Sircar, the Rātas of Samatata and the Khadgas of Vaṅga were originally feudatories of the Gauda King and they became semi-independent after Gauda had been temporarily subdued by the Kings of Kanauj and Kāmarūpa in the second quarter of the 7th Century A.D.^{48a}

There are some information about the achievements of Lokanātha. It has been described that he was a very able King⁴⁹ and "his soldiers depended for victory on their own swords and on the intellect of his ministers"⁵⁰. He had a fine cavalry. It has been referred to in the verse 7 that a large number of soldiers of the paramount sovereign (parameśvara) was seriously defeated in the battle, but it is not known for certain with whom the paramount fought and defeated. According to D. C. Sircar, the verses 7 to 9 of the Tippera grant indicate that Jayatūṅgavarsha and Jivadhāraṇa were two refractory

feudatories of the Parameśvara who was probably the ruler of 'Gauda' of whom Lokanātha was a faithful subordinate. That Jayatuṅgavarṣa was defeated by Lokanātha on behalf of his master who next sent him against Jīvadhārana of the Rāta family and that although Jīvadhārana could not be completely subdued, he had to placate Lokanātha and probably also the Parameśvara by surrendering a territory and by the payment of a large sum of money or by an offer of his acceptance of a subsidiary alliance with the Parameśvara.

There is a controversy among scholars as to who was the Parameśvara ? R. G. Basak held that the Parameśvara of Verse 7 and the 'nripa' Jīvadhārana of verse 9 cannot be the same person and we should not think that Jīvadhārana was defeated in a conflict with Lokanātha. Regarding the identity of Jayatuṅgavarṣa, it has been held by R.G.Basak that the Rāstrakūṭa Kings of the Medieval ages used various birudas like avaloka, Tuṅga, Varsha and Vallabha. Fleet informs us that other families also adopted those birudas as a result of matrimonial alliances. He refers to one Jaytuṅgasimha of Kamā country, but he belonged to a later age⁵¹. Dr. R. C. Majumdar regards Jayatuṅgavarṣa as a title rather than a proper name⁵².

It may be suggested that Ādityasena of the Later Gupta dynasty appears to have been ruling over Eastern India after Harsha's death. It is not unlikely that Lokanātha who has been styled as nripa and Kumārāmātya was a feudatory chief in East Bengal under Ādityasena of Magadha. We come across 'Kumārāmātya' which was a technically official title used during and after the Gupta period, not only with regard to ministers, but also with regard to feudatory chiefs.⁵³ If we accept the hypothesis of the discontinuation of the rule of the imperial monarchs of the Faridpur plates in East Bengal during Harsha's reign or after his death, it is most likely that Lokanātha owed his allegiance to Ādityasena and the paramēśvara was Lokanātha's own liegeland⁵⁴. D. C. Sircar holds that the Paramēśvara was probably the imperial ruler of Gauda.

Lokanātha has been described as Karana by caste. He was born of his mother named Gotradevī who was the daughter of Keśava mentioned as a parāśava by caste. The great grandfather and the grandfather of his mother are called dvijavarah and dvijasattamah respectively but his mother's father is described as Parāśava. So we see that the first few ancestors (both paternal and maternal

of Lokanātha were Brāhmaṇa. His maternal grandfather had not been of pure Brāhmaṇa origin, since it may be inferred that his Brāhmaṇa father married a Śūdra, his mother and he was, therefore, known to have been a Parāśava. The anuloma form of marriage in Hindu society was prevalent in the 7th Century A.D. as is evident from the fact that Bānabaṭṭa's orthodox father Chitrabhānu of the orthodox Brāhmaṇa caste married a Śūdra and had two sons Parāśava by caste.⁵⁵ We may now imagine that the social status of a Parāśava in the 7th Century A.D. was not at all low, otherwise Keśava could not have exercised the function of an army officer and held in high esteem.

There is also reference to the age of anarchy (mātsyanyāna) in Bengal that took place between the death of Harsha and the rise of the Pāla Kingdom in the 8th Century A.D. We do not find even a latent allusion to Buddhism although the Pāla Kings themselves were Saugatas. From the account of the Chinese Pilgrim Hiuentasang, we learn that during this time he could find no sign of Buddhism in Kāmarūpa.⁵⁶ We cannot possibly connect the plate with any of the Kāmarūpa Kings of that time. It is learnt that the ancestors of Lokanātha were devotees of Śankara and that his Brāhmaṇa mahāsāmanta Pradosh-asarman (the grantee) wished to set up an image of Ananta-Nārāyaṇa.

The existence of Brāhmanic influence in Eastern India at the time can rightly be inferred also from the mention of the sacred fire, Purāṇic deities, Brāhmanas versed in the four Vedas in this inscription⁵⁷.

The Dynasty of the Rātas in Samatata :

It is possible to discern the history of a new dynasty styled as the Rātas, from the newly discovered Kailān copper plate from a village South-west of Comillā and 13 miles west of the Iālmāi Railway Station⁵⁸. The copper plate was issued in the eighth regnal year of King Śrīdhārana of Samatata or the Tippera-Noakhāli region of the south-east Bengal. The time of the grant may be determined by considering the Palaeography as there is no mention of any date of known era with the help the meticulous observation of the letter of the Kailān inscription with those of the records of the time of Śaśānka, Lokanātha, Devakhadga and Rājarāja of the so called Khadga dynasty and the Pāla King Dharmapāla show that Śrīdhārana ruled sometime between the days of Śaśānka (600 - 25 A.D.) and those of Dharmapāla (769 - 315 A.D.) and that he was more or less of contemporary of Lokanātha of the Tippera grant and of the Khadga Kings.

The inscriptions of the Khadgas are now generally assigned the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th Century A.D. and Lokanātha's Tippera grant is usually assigned to the middle of the 7th Century A.D.⁵⁹ As Lokanātha was a contemporary of Jīvadhāraṇa, the father of Śrīdhāraṇarāta of the Rāta dynasty, the Kailān grant of Śrīdhāraṇa may be placed rightly little later than the Tippera grant of Lokanātha. So it would be judicious to place the grant on the ground of Palaeography to about the second half of the same century. It has been held by D.C.Sircar that it is reasonable to assign the reign of Jīvadhāraṇa's son Śrīdhāraṇa roughly to the third or fourth quarter of the same Century⁶⁰.

This copper plate grant of the feudatory King Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta who calls himself Samatateśvara was issued from a place named Devaparvata. The adoration of God Hari in first verse of the grant indicates that the Rātas were devout Vaishnavas and the verse 13 of the grant declares Śrīdhāraṇa as a Parama-Vaishnava. Two other members of the family were the King's father Jīvadhāraṇa Rāta and the Yuvārāja Baladhāraṇa Rāta. The King Jīvadhāraṇa has been mentioned in the Tippera grant of Lokanātha. All these would show that Jīvadhāraṇa, Śrīdhāraṇa & Baladhāraṇa belonged to the Rāta dynasty⁶¹.

Reference has been made to Devaparvata, a provincial headquarter which is said to have been encircled by the river Kshīrodā "as if by a moat". According to N. K. Bhattasali the river Kshīrodā is the modern Khīra or Khirna, a dried up river course still traceable as branching off from the Gomati just west of the town of Comillā. It flows by the eastern side of the Maināmatī hills and skirts the southern end of the hills near Chandimura peak, where another branch of the river meets if flowing by the western side of the hill. The river thus surrounds the southern end of the Maināmatī hills where the ancient hill fort Devaparvata seems to have been situated.

Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta has been styled as Samatatesvara but is not endowed with any other imperial titles. On the other hand the significant epithet 'Prāpta-Pāñcha mahāśabda' bestowed on Śrīdhāraṇa indicates his feudatory position. Whatever may have been the significance of the feudatory title in regard to south east Bengal, there is no doubt that Śrīdhāraṇa was at least theoretically a feudatory of some other monarch, but in reality he enjoyed the power of a sovereign ruler. It seems that his adhirājya or sovereignty had probably reached to him from his father which is indicated in the passage in line 'Pitrāsvayam arpitādhirājyā'. It has been held from the

absence of the name of the overlord in the charter that Śrīdhāraṇa was actually almost an independent ruler since the days of his father Jīvadhāraṇa. We do not come across any earlier member of the Rāta family other than Jīvadhāraṇa. King Jīvadhāraṇa is not endowed with an imperial title and he is originally known as Samatatesvara and 'Pratāp-opanata-sāmanta-Chakra'. He was probably a semi-independent feudatory like his son Śrīdhāraṇa. Though the Rātas were defacto independent rulers de jure they acknowledged allegiance to an old and established imperial family for a considerably long period of time⁶². The position is comparable with that of the Nawabwazir of Oudh after the decline of the Timurid imperial house of Delhi⁶³.

There is no unanimity regarding the identity of the overlord of the Rātas. We should take into account the claim of Śaśāṅka of Gauḍa, that of Bhāskara-Varmana of Kāmarūpa and that of the Khadgas of the Vaṅga country. The Khadgas probably came to power in the first half of the 7th Century almost simultaneously with the Rātas and under the same political condition. It is assumed that the Rātas and the Khadgas were feudatories of a great power whose fall in the first half of

the 7th Century A.D. gave them opportunity to rise to power. It has been supposed that the Rātas of Samatata and the Khadgas of Vaṅga were really feudatories of the Gauda King, but as noticed above, they began ruling semi-independently after Gauda had been temporarily defeated by the Kings of Kanauj and Kāmarūpa in the second quarter of the 7th Century A.D.⁶⁴. It would appear from the foregoing discussion that the Rātas in Samatata and the Khadga Kings Deva-Khadga and his son Rājarāja or Rājadhirāja all flourished about the second half of the 7th Century A.D.⁶⁵

King Śrīdhāraṇa who was the follower of the Bhāgavata form of Vaishnavism disliked the destruction of living beings which was not approved by the śāstras and granted life to thousands of creatures. These probably suggest as D.C.Sircar holds that the Vaishnava King was averse to the slaughter of animals in connection with the worship of deities⁶⁶. He was a poet and the composer of excellent sweet songs. We are unlucky as none of his writings come down to us. He was also very learned in Sabdavidyā (grammar and lexicography) and in the other sciences and arts. Above all, King Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta is said to have been cordial to his subjects (Piteva Pālayitā). His relation with the Yuvaraja who is styled as "Prāpta-pañcha-mahāśabda-Śrī-Baladhāraṇa-rāta-Bhāttarakasya" is not

definitely known. But from the references to his father and grandfather it may be inferred that he was the son of the reigning King. He is primarily held to be a student of Śabdavidyā and secondarily of the science of taming and managing elephants and horses. The love of the Rātas for grammar and lexicography seems to have been due to their love of literature. They were not only Patrons of learning but were learned men themselves.⁶⁷

We come across from the grant that the Mahāsāndhi-vigrahika (minister for war and peace) Jayanātha approached King Śrīdhārana for the grant of a piece of land which he desired to dedicate to Bhagavat Tathāgataratna (Buddha) or Ratnatraya (the Buddhist trinity of Buddha, Dharma and Samgha). He also wanted the worship of the Buddha, the reading and writing of Buddhist religious texts and the provision of food, clothing and others. His another purpose was to distribute lands among a number of learned Brāhmanas for their performance of their pañchamahājña. Śrīdhārana was pleased to accept the prayer of Jayanātha and granted 25 Patekas for distribution.

The Rātas of Samatata cherished the spirit of religious toleration. At a time when the Brāhmanical and Buddhist

Philosophers were bent upon refuting one another's views, the life of ordinary men appears to have been marked by absolute religious toleration and the Buddhist laymen were gradually nearing absorption into Brahmanical society.⁶⁸

The Khadga Dynasty of Vaṅga-Samatata :

A line of Kings belonging to the Khadga dynasty seems to have cropped up in the political scene of East Bengal between the interval after Harsha's death and the rise of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal, i.e. the period between 650 - 750 A.D. It is possible to cull information about the history of this dynasty somewhat definitely from the two copper plates discovered along with a Chaitya about 80 years ago near a tank at Ashrafpur about 30 miles north west of Dacca⁶⁹. The third inscription of the dynasty is engraved on a Śarvānī image dedicated by Queen Prabhāvatī discovered in or near a village called Deulbādi situated about 14 miles outh of Comillā in the district of Tippera⁷⁰.

The date of the Khadga Kings of Samatata can only be determined by a study of the Palaeography in the Ashrafpur plates⁷¹. There are divergences of opinion among scholars

about the date of the inscriptions. According to G.M. Iashkar who edited these plates, suggests on palaeographic considerations that these the inscriptions may be dated to be 8th or 9th Century A.D. R.D. Banerjee assigned it to the 9th or 10th Century A.D.⁷³ R. C. Majumdar holds that the dynasty established its supremacy almost immediately after Harsha's time⁷⁴. R. G. Basak also supports the view⁷⁵. N.K. Bhattasali believes that the Khadga inscriptions^{may} be assigned to the beginning of the 8th Century A.D.

The script of the Ashrafpur plates and the Deulbādi image inscriptions bear close resemblance to those of the Apshad inscription of Ādityasena and Deo-Baranārka inscription of Jīvitagupta II of the later Gupta dynasty and Khālimpur plate. From a comparative study of the Khālimpur and Ashrafpur plates, it is evident that the scribe of latter was not an expert in his art like that of the former and the letters have not been so finely incised and nicely arranged. and that led some scholars to assign it to 10th Century A.D. So from the comparative study of the above inscriptions, the Ashrafpur plates may be rightly placed to the latter half of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th Century A.D.⁷⁶

The inscriptions of the Khadgas show that they ruled

From the two Ashrafpur copper plates of Devakhadga and Rajaraja respectively, we know the names of the Kings like Khadgodyama, Jatakhadga, Devakhadga and Rajaraja. The plate of Rajaraja mentions the name of Udirana Khadga as belonging to the royal family⁷⁸. We do not know anything about the predecessors of Khadgodyama and successors of Rajaraja. We are not in a position to say whether Udirana was an ancestor of Devakhadga⁷⁹.

The extent of the sway of these Kings is not known, but the absence of the titles of Paramount power such as 'Paramabhattaraka' Paramesvara indicates that they were feudatory Kings. Khadgodyama is called 'nripadhiraja' in the Deulbari inscription of this queen. We know that the Ratas who were 'Prapta - Panchamahasabda', (i.e. feudatories) also refers to their 'adhirajya' and 'samanta Chakra'. Devakhadga's seal attached to the Ashrafpur grant does not prove anything as we have records with seals of subordinate rulers (cf the Mallasarul grant). It would be judicious to assume that the Khadgas were semi-independent feudatories like their contemporaries, the Ratas of Samatata. On the other hand the Ashrafpur grant of Rajaraja speaks of a piece of land previously granted by the 'Brihat Paramesvara'

(literally the great master) which appears to indicate a monarch to whom they possibly owed their nominal allegiance³⁰. It appears that the extension of authority of Kāmarūpa rulers over south east Bengal did not last long. Its King Bhāshkaravarman in alliance with Harsha undoubtedly achieved some victory over Gauda, but the authority seems to have ended with his death.³¹ It may be that the authority of Gauda which suffered a setback for a short time was re-established. There are evidences to show that the Gaudas became powerful enough to repulse the later Guptas from Magadha³². The above consideration shows that they were the feudatories of the Gauda King but they started ruling semi-independently after the temporary fall of the Gauda authority caused by the attack of the Kings of Kanauj and Kāmarūpa in the second quarter of the 7th Century A.D.³³

The Khadgas were Buddhist and pursued a policy of toleration towards other religions sects. The word - nripādhirāja (overlord of rulers) in the Sarvānī image inscription ascribed to Khadgodyama indicates that he for the first time in his dynasty made successful attempt to establish his sway in East Bengal. The second King Jātakhadga, son of Khadgodyama is described as " having annihilated his enemies by means of his prowess just as

wind destroys a straw, an elephant a number of horses".

The third King Devakhadga who was the donor of the grant is stated in the image inscription as 'dānapatiḥ (as maker of donation) 'Jitārikhadgaḥ (i.e. possessing a sword which could subdue his foes). The Kingdom of Devakhadga was marked by peace and happiness. He is said to have subdued his enemies and had under him a large number of feudatories. It appears that the Rātas originally ruling in Samatāṭa, seem to have been defeated by the Khadga King Devakhadga. The above conclusion may be made from the information that Ashrafpur copper plate grants of King Devakhadga were issued from the royal residence at Karmānta which may have been the capital of the Khadgas. D. C. Sircar, however, on the authority of the Kailān copper plate of Śrīdhāraṇarātā of Samatāṭa suggests that about the middle of the seventh Century when the Khadgas were ruling the Dacca region of Vaṅga, the Rātas were holding sway over samatāṭa and very soon Devakhadga subdued the Ratas and annexed Samatāṭa⁸⁴. The rise of the first King Khadgodiyama in the first quarter of the 7th Century A.D. Coincides with the end of the reign of King Samāchāradeva of Vaṅga Samatāṭa belonging to a Brāhmanical family. The account of Hiuentasang also corroborates the existence of a Brāhmanical dynasty in Samatāṭa. The Mahākūṭa pillar

inscription⁸⁵ of the western Chālukyan King Raṇavikrānta (C. 601 - 02 A.D.) records that Kīrtivarman I defeated Kings of Vaṅga, Aṅga, Kalinga, Vathīra and Magadha. If it is true that the Chalukya King successfully invaded Vaṅga, it might have damaged the career of Samāchāradeva which was soon taken advantage by Khadgodyama⁸⁶. The chronology of the Khadga Kings as reconstructed by D. C. Sircar is as follows. Khadgodyama (615 - 35), Jātakhadga (635 - 55), Devakhadga (655 - 75), Rājarāja or Rājarājabhaṭṭa (675 - 700)⁸⁷.

The Chinese pilgrim I-tsing visited ^{India} about the last quarter of the 7th Century A.D. It is learnt from his description that fifty six Chinese Buddhist pilgrim came to India in the second half of the same century and one of them Sheng-Chi found Rājabhaṭṭa ruling over Samatata⁸⁸. Scholars are inclined to identify Rājabhaṭṭa with King Rājarāja or Rājarājabhaṭṭa, son of Devakhadga⁸⁹. It is apparent from the suggestion that according to I-Tsing, King Rājabhaṭṭa of Samatata was a great patron of Buddhism. More than 4000 Buddhist monks are said to have been living in the capital of Samatata and enjoying royal patronage during his rule,

though only a few years before Sheng-Chi and I-tsing, Hiuentang found only 2000 Buddhist monks in Samatata. Rājabhāṭṭa's munificence towards the cause of Buddhism is apparent in his grant of land as a crown prince. Hence, there is no wonder that he would continue his charity even after coming to the throne⁹⁰. It is learnt from I-tsing that a certain Buddhist temple was situated 40 Yojanas (about 240 miles) east of Nālandā⁹¹ was originally founded by Śrīgupta, and when I-tsing visited the country the area formed a part of the dominion of Devavarman, the King of eastern India⁹². This Devavarman has been identified with Devagupta of the Later Gupta dynasty of Magadha⁹³. It may be mentioned that the temple was undoubtedly situated in Malda (Pundravardhana), and not in Magadha, the home territory of the Later Guptas, which is placed by I-tsing in Mid India⁹⁴ and not in Eastern India. Thus R. C. Majumdar holds that Devavarman may more reasonably be identified with Devakhadga⁹⁵. But others locate the Chīnavihāra somewhere about Māldā district of Bengal and there is no proof of the extension of Khadga rule over the Māldā region⁹⁶.

The fact that the name of Khadga sounds un-Indian and that a caste of that name can be traced in Nepal has

led R. C. Majumdar to presume that the Khadgas may be identified with the Khadgas whose existence may be traced as early as the 14th Century A.D. and the dynasty of the Khadgas came to east Bengal in the train of the Tibetans and the Nepalese invasions during the troublesome days that followed the death of Harshavardhana⁹⁷. But it must be said that there is no proof to connect the Khadga dynasty with Nepāl⁹⁸.

The dynasty of the Khadgas is remembered for its religious toleration. The Deulbādi Sarvānī image inscription of Deva-Khadga's queen Prabhāvatī informs that she caused the image Sarvānī to be covered with gold leaves out of veneration for the Goddess. The Khadgas were all devout Buddhists, but at the same time they did not feel it irreligious in any way to pay reverence to a Goddess who must have belonged to the Brāhmanical ^{sect}. All these clearly show that we must revise our idea of the Buddhists and the Hindus of ancient days as two communities shut up in watertight compartments⁹⁹.

The circumstances that led to the decline of the Khadgas after Rājabhatta are at present wrapped in

obscurity. Very little is known regarding the state of Karmānta after the fall of the Khadgas by the Deulbādi (Comilla) inscription¹⁰⁰. According to the tradition recorded by the Tibetan monk Tārānāth the Chandra dynasty was ruling in Vaṅga as early as the middle of the 7th Century A.D. and its last two rulers Govichandra and Ialitachandra reigned during the last part of the 8th Century A.D. It is probable that Govichandra subdued the Khadgas and established the supremacy of the Chandra dynasty¹⁰¹. On the other hand Mr. Phayore has recorded another tradition according to which Maha-t-aiṅg-tsandra who was the first king of the Ārākānese Chandra dynasty, ascended the throne in 733 A.D. If we accept the tradition it is possible that the Chandra dynasty supplanted the Khadgas in Eastern Bengal, and in that case the descendants of Rājabhaṭṭa continued to reign for 100 years more in Karmānta and swept away by the Chandra Kings of Ārākān by the end of the 8th Century A.D.¹⁰²

On the basis of the statement of Tārānātha, it may be inferred that Yaśovarman invaded Vaṅga and it is, perhaps likely that the Vaṅga King opposing Yaśovarman was a Khadga King who possessed a strong army including elephant forces at his command.¹⁰³ The people

had patriotic spirit and the victory of Yaśovarman broke the heart of the people of Vaṅga and made them extremely unhappy¹⁰⁴. The supremacy of Yaśovarman over Vaṅga was however shortlived.

Again, the copper plate inscription of King Bhavadeva of the Deva dynasty shows that the Khadgas could not retain their hold on the heart of the Samatata country for a long time and that they were driven out by the Devas of Samatata sometime about the beginning of the 3th Century A.D. The Khadga power in Vaṅga collapsed as a result of the invasion of Yaśovarman of Kanauj in the second quarter of the same Century A.D.¹⁰⁵ It paved the way for the establishment of the power of Gopāla sometime about the middle of the 3th Century A.D. It is not definitely known when exactly the Samatata was annexed to the empire of the Pālas¹⁰⁶. We know from sources how the Pālas flourished first in Vaṅga¹⁰⁷. According to Tibetan tradition Gopāla was originally King of Bhaṅgāla (i.e. Vaṅgāla) and later on he conquered the the neighbouring Kingdom of Samatata¹⁰⁸.

The Deva Dynasty of Samatata :

and Bhavadeva which have been excavated at Śālvan Vihāra, unveil the history of a new dynasty called the Devas in Samatata¹⁰⁷. Two of these plates of King Śrī Anantadeva and Bhavadeva have been found in the Iālmāi-Maināmatī ridge near Comillā of which one of the Maināmatī plates is in bad condition and could not be deciphered¹¹⁰.

At present we know very little about the four deva rulers. It appears from the Maināmatī plates that Śrī-Śāntideva was the first ruler of the dynasty and of whom very little is known from other sources¹¹¹. It is evident from the Asiatic Society Plate of Bhavadeva that Vīradeva was the first King of his time. The verse 2 of the Bhavadeva plate describes how King Vīradeva resembled Achyuta, i.e. Vishnu in the matter of subduing enemies. The next verse introduces as with Viradeva's son Āanandadeva and his achievements have been described in verses 4 - 5. The verse 10 describes the achievements of King Bhavadeva who was the son and successor of Āanandadeva. Many of the passages describing Āanandadeva and Bhavadeva cannot be deciphered properly. The portion which have been deciphered do not offer any detail history of the dynasty¹¹². Thus from the three inscriptions we come across names of

four generation of rulers -

Śrī Śāntideva

Śrī Vīradeva

Śrī Ānandadeva

Śrī Bhavadeva¹¹³

The King Bhavadeva has been described as a Parama Saugata. An interesting epithat 'Abhinava-mrigāṅka' which has been suggested by the legend 'Śrī Abhinavamrigāṅka' on the seal attached to the Bhavadeva plate was probably Viruda of King Bhavadeva who issued the grant. All the Kings of the dynasty appears to have independent status which is evident from the imperial title of 'Parameśvara, Paramabhaṭṭāraka, Mahārājādhirāja'.

It is very difficult to determine the date of the plates as none of the plates do clearly indicate the ruling tenure of the dynasty. D. C. Sircar holds that they may be placed, on the ground of palaeography to the 3th Century A.D.¹¹⁴ On the basis of careful comparison of the character of the letters with those of the Tippera plate of Lokanātha¹¹⁵, the Kailān plate of Śrīdhāranarāta,¹¹⁶

the inscriptions of the Khadga Kings,¹¹⁷ the inscriptions of Dharmapāla¹¹⁸ and his immediate successors, it may be inferred that Bhavadeva grant may be placed to a date later than that of Lokanātha, Śrīdhāraṇarāta and the Khadga Kings Deva Khadga and Rājarāja. They all flourished in the latter half of the 7th Century A.D. and Bhavadeva grant may be placed to a date of the early Pālas. On the basis of the arguments of S. N. Chakraborty about the Development of the Bengali Alphabet¹¹⁹, the inscription of Bhavadeva which employs the third and fourth transitional forms of (𑂣) the present inscription may be placed to a date later than the middle of the 9th Century A.D. But the theory is refuted on the ground that the Kailān grant of Śrīdhārana used the similar form of (𑂣) but he belonged to the latter half of the 7th Century A.D.¹²⁰

According to F. A. Khan, the Devas flourished not long after the Khadgas and on the ground of close resemblance of the Maināmatī plate scripts with the Later Gupta scripts, the Devas may be assigned to a time between the last part of the 7th and the middle of the 8th Centuries¹²¹. The 'imitation Gupta' gold coins issued by Kings of the Deva dynasty appear to be the 8th Century A.D.

A. H. Dani holds that on Palaeographic ground the Maināmatī

plates may be compared with the Khālimpur plate of Dharmapāla¹²². Thus on the basis of Palaeography, it would be more reasonable to place the Bhavadeva plates to the 2nd half of the 3th Century and D.C.Sircar is inclined to support the view.¹²³

Now a question naturally comes to our mind as to how did the dynasty capture political power and how long they asserted this hold. We know that the Khadgas of Vaṅga with their headquarter in the present Dacca district and the Rātas of Samatata with their headquarter at Devaparvata owing allegiance to the King of Gauda, began to rule semi-independently when the power of Gauda declined as a result of the invasions of Harshavardhana of Kanauj and Bhāshkaravarman of Kāmarūpa. It is learnt that the Rātas of Samatata and the Khadgas of Vaṅga asserted their independence in the second half of the 7th Century A.D. and shortly after that the heart of Samatata was captured by the Khadgas as is evident from the description of the Chinese pilgrim I-tsing who found Samatata under the rule of the Khadga dynasty. The Khadgas could but retain their hold for a long time as they were driven out by the Devas sometime about the beginning of the 8th Century A.D.¹²⁴

It is not possible at present to determine the exact period of their rule and it seems that they were contemporaries of the early Pālas. The length of the reign of four Deva rulers cannot be ascertained definitely with the help of sources at our possession at present. A period of about 50 to 60 years may tentatively be assigned to them and they might have ruled in South-Eastern Bengal during the time from 750 - 800 A.D.¹²⁵

There is very little information available to us from the three copper plates to ascertain the extent of the empire of the Devas. He had probably headquarters in the Comilla region but appear to have held sway over the Samatata (Noakhāli - Tippera region) which have been indicated by the possession of Peranātana Viṣaya mentioned also in the Ashrafpur plates of the Khadgas and the ^{Vishaya} Guptinātāna in Samatata found in the Kailān grant of Śrīdhāraṇarāta. It has been suggested that Devaparavata was the Capital of the ruling family. The description of Devaparvata reminds us of similar description of the city in the Kailān grant of Śrīdhāraṇarāta, the King of Samatata. The river Kshīrodā encircled the city of Devaparvata, according to the Kailān inscription, is also mentioned in the present inscription as the holy river Kshīrodā on the bank

of which the city of Devaparvata was lying. We have come to know that the huge monastic establishment with a very large tank near Kotila Mura site (in the Maināmatī hills) which is called Ānanda Kājā's palace apparently bears the name of the third ruler of the Deva dynasty¹²⁶. Regarding the decline of the Deva dynasty, very little information has been supplied by the copper plate grant of Anantadeva and Bhavadeva. We are to depend completely on our assumption. It is learnt that the Khadga power collapsed as a result of the invasion of Yaśovarman of Kanauj in the second quarter of the 3th Century, thus paving the way for the establishment of the power of Gopāla I in Vaṅga about the middle of the 3th Century A.D. We do not know definitely when actually Samatata was annexed to the rising empire of the Pālas, but it was possibly conquered by Gopala I¹²⁷. It is now generally believed that Gopāla I, the founder of the Pāla dynasty consolidated his position over the whole of Bengal and his son and successor could not have carried on victorious campaigns upto Punjab unless he had inherited from his father at least the consolidated Kingdom of Bengal¹²⁸. According to Tibetan source Gopāla I was originally the King of Bhaṅgāla country no doubt indicating Vaṅga and it may be suggested that it was he who

conquered the Samatata country defeating the Devas. So the conclusion is that the rule of the dynasty came to an end not long after the rule of Bhavadeva who issued the charter and the Samatata country passed to the Pālas.

The Dynasty of Kāntideva in Harikela :

An inscription of Kāntideva belonging to the 9th Century A.D. and discovered somewhere at Chittagong has brought to light the history of a new dynasty in Harikela¹²⁹. The inscription being edited by D.C.Bhattacharyya and J. N. Sikdar¹³⁰ is not available to us and some historical facts have not been dealt here. D.C.Bhattacharyya and J.N.Sikdar hold that the Chittagong inscription may be placed earlier than the Ghosrāwa inscription of Devapāla.¹³¹ and the dynasty may be assigned to 750 - 850 A.D.¹³². But the view has been rejected by R.C.Majumdar who on Palaeographic consideration has assigned the plate to the 9th Century A.D.¹³³ D. C. Sircar on the other hand holds that on Palaeographic grounds the Chittagong plate may be placed to the 8th or the 9th Century A.D.

The inscription informs us of three generations of Buddhist family. The first name is Bhadradata or Bhadradata.

He was a devout Buddhist and defeated his enemies. His son was Dhanadatta who was a Brāhmanical Hindu though he is wrongly believed to have been a Buddhist. He married Vindurati who was a devotee of Śiva and a daughter of a great King. The issue of the marriage was Kantideva who has been styled as Paramasaugata, Paramesvara and Mahārājādhirāja. It is possible as suggested by R. C. Majumdar in his History of Ancient Bengal that he gave up his family surname Datta after possibly inheriting his maternal grandfather Bhavadeva's Kingdom of Devaparvata. It is evident that neither his father nor his grandfather was a King and he might have inherited his throne from his maternal grandfather or carved out independent Kingdom for himself. Kāntideva's maternal grandfather has been identified with Bhavadeva of the Asiatic Society plate or with the latter's immediate successor and it appears that Kāntideva was originally of a ruling family of Harikela or Sylhet region, but he inherited a big Kingdom in South-East Bengal from his maternal grandfather who was a ruler of Samatata.¹³⁴

It has been learnt from the Kāntideva's plate that his Kingdom was situated in the South-Eastern Bengal.

The charter was issued from the city of Vardhamānapura and addressed to the future rulers of Harikela maṇḍala. The term Harikela maṇḍala in the Kāntideva plate has directed D.C. Bhattacharyya and J.N.Sikdar to think that he was only a local chief of a small territory (Maṇḍala) which subsequently developed during the supremacy of the Chandra dynasty and lent its name to the whole of East Bengal¹³⁵. But the above view has been refuted by R. C. Majumdar that maṇḍala does not definitely denote a small territory. The term also denoted big Kingdom as evident from the expression 'Gauḍa maṇḍala'¹³⁶ and 'Varendrīmaṇḍala'¹³⁷. Therefore, as R.C.Majumdar refers, the Harikela maṇḍala may denote Southern and Eastern Bengal and there is possibility of the conquest of Vardhamānapura by a Vaṅga King. Itsing states that Harikela was the eastern limit of Eastern India¹³⁸. According to Chinese map Harikela comprises the coastal region between Samatata and Orissa. The lexicographer Hemachandra is of the opinion that Harikela may be identified with Vaṅga.¹³⁹ In the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa, Vaṅga, Samatata and Harikela are mentioned as distinct localities¹⁴⁰. According to two manuscripts preserved in the Dacca University Library, Harikela, a variant of Harikala is synonymous with Sylhet.¹⁴¹

It may be assumed, therefore, that like many other geographical terms Harikela was used both in broader as a synonym of Vaṅga and in a shorter sense to denote various parts of it.

The Kingdom over which Kāntideva ruled must be located in Vaṅga though its exact position is difficult to determine. Another name what is found in the Kāntideva grant is Vardhamānapura, a well known city in West Bengal which gave the name Vardhamānabhukti to a territorial division in West Bengal.

Thus it is evident from the above information, as suggested by R. C. Majumdar, that Kāntideva was probably the ruler of Vaṅga and had conquered a portion of West Bengal right upto Burdwan. Of course this is a tentative theory based on insufficient data available at present. There is no doubt that Vardhamānapura was probably the capital of Kāntideva and it was situated somewhere in the eastern and South-Eastern Bengal, although, it is sometimes suggested, without any justification whatsoever that it is no other than the present Burdwan in South West Bengal.

Now regarding the decline of the dynasty very little information has been supplied by some of the authors.

have to depend purely on assumption. According to D. C. Sircar, after the rule of the Deva dynasty, its dominion passed to the Chandras about the end of the 9th Century A.D. It is known from sources that the Chandras of Rohitagiri, establishing themselves in Chandradvīpa in the Buckerganj region of Southern Bengal, flourished about the middle of the 10th Century A.D. Its first King Trailokyachandra claimed to be the mainstay of the fortune of the King of Harikela, that is to say, a feudatory of Harikela King. Trailokyachandra's description as " ādhāro - Harikela-rāja-Kakuda-cchatra-smitānaḥ-Śriyāḥ " may be compared with 'Vaṅgi-Chālukya-rājyamūla-Stambha' an epithet of the feudatories of the Eastern Chālukyas¹⁴².

It may be assumed that Trailokyachandra was a feudatory of the dynasty of Harikela Kings represented by Kantideva. Whether this overlord was Kāntideva or one of his immediate successor cannot be definitely determined. It is well known that his son Śrīchandra who was called (Parameśvara, Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja, ruled over wide region of East Bengal including Vikramapura region as an independent King. Thus the Harikela Kingdom possibly including Vaṅga and Samatata or at least a major

part of it passed to the Chandras¹⁴³. So it may be assumed that the power of the dynasty of Kāntideva of Harikela collapsed as a result of the upheaval of the power of the Chandras in Vaṅga-Samatata.

Independent Kingdom of Jayanāga of Gauda

The death of Śaśāṅka was followed by the great political disaster in Gauda. It, not only, shattered Śaśāṅka's dream of stable Gauda empire, but also his Kingdom along with the Capital City Karṇa-Suvarṇa passed into the hands of Bhāskaravarman, the King of Kāmarūpa. The factors leading to the downfall are not known and very few facts of this dark period are available to us from different sources. From the accounts of Hiuen-tsang, we come across four Kingdoms in Bengal proper (Pundravardhana, Karnasuvarṇa, Samatata and Tāmralipti)¹⁴⁴. But the silence of Hiuen-tsang about the political condition and the ruling Kings of these Kingdoms, though he mentioned the Capital of each of these Kingdoms, has led some scholars to think that the Kingdoms passed into the hands of Harshavardhana. The view has been rejected by some scholars¹⁴⁵. But R. G. Basak

repeated the same and improved upon it by saying that these countries passed into the hands of Harsha and Bhaskaravarman¹⁴⁶. But it is probable that the death of Śaśāṅka delinked the North and West Bengal and within a few years both these Kingdoms were usurped by Bhaskaravarman and it has been confirmed by the fact that he made a grant from Karṇa-Suvarṇa, the Capital of Gauda¹⁴⁷. This may probably be confirmed by Beal's account on the life of Hiuen-tsan̄d.¹⁴⁸

Hence from the sources available to us, it may be inferred that the death of Śaśāṅka was marked by the disruption and disintegration of the empire and different petty States asserted their independence as a consequence of the absence of strong authority in Centre and that offered opportunity to Bhāskarvarman and Harsha to swoop down upon the region and control it. The political chaos of this region has been described, to some extent, to the Buddhist work 'Ārya-ma-njuśrī-mūlakalpa'. It has been stated, "After the death of Soma, the Gauda Political System (Gauḍa-tantra) was reduced to mutual distrust, raised weapons and mutual

Jealousy - one King for a week ; another for a month ;
 then a republican constitution - such will be the daily
 (condition) of the country on the bank of the Ganges
 where houses were built on the ruins of monasteries.
 Thereafter Somā's (Sasāñka's) son Mānava will last for
 8 months 5½ days".¹⁴⁹

The Ārya-mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa in the following
 passage refers to a King Jayanāga of Gauda. K.P.Jayaswal
 reads Nāgarāja in place of Nāgarāja¹⁵⁰ and takes Nāgarāja
 to be the name of the King and regards him as belonging
 to the Bhārasiva dynasty¹⁵¹. According to R. G. Basak,
 it will not be out of place to connect Sasāñka with
 another King of Karnasuvarṇa named Jayanāga whose Vappa-
ghoshavāṭa grant was published by Barnet¹⁵². The epigraph,
 written in the character of the wellformed upright Gupta
 type prevailing in the later half of the 6th Century A.D
 informs that Jayanāga came into prominence in the second
 half of the 6th Century A.D. The title Mahārājādhirāja
 assumed by Jayanāga of the Vappaghosavāṭa grant indicates
 that Jayanāga was an independent King. He was also styled
 as Paramabhāgavata. The seal of the plate contains in an

effaced condition the standing figure of Lakshmi or Sri with two elephants making Kumbhabhisheka. But in the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa, we find a clear mention not only of a Gauda King of the name of Jayanāga ruling at such a time, but also the name of a city called Udumbara over which Jayanāga's Sāmanta Nārāyana bhadra was administering. It has been stated in the work that there was a Gauda King whose name began with 'Jaya' and ended with 'Nāga'. It is obvious that Jayanāga referred to in the Vappaghoshavāṭa as ruling Karnasuvarṇa, is described as a Gauda King in this Buddhist treatise just as Śaśāṅka is described by the Chinese traveller as King of Karnasuvarṇa. They have, both, been at the same time described by Bāna and the author of the Buddhist work as a King of Gauda.¹⁵³ The date of Jayanāga cannot be ascertained with precision, but judging from his coins and inscription, he may be placed within the period from 550 - 650 A.D.¹⁵⁴ The alphabets of the inscriptions seem to be earlier than those used in the Ganjām plate of Mādhavarāja of 619 A.D. and in the Nidhanpur plate of Bhāskaravarman.¹⁵⁵ On the basis of the tradition recorded in the Ārya-mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa,

we may assume that when the anarchy and confusion caused by the invasion of Bhaskaravarman ended and the attempt of a son of Śaśāṅka to ascend the throne ended in vein, the Kingdom passed into the hands of Jayanāga. According to R.G.Basak, the Mañjuśrī mūlakalpa makes Jayanāga almost a successor of Śaśāṅka, but in our opinion, he and his son preceded Śaśāṅka as Kings of Karnasuvarna¹⁵⁶. But Basak gives no reason and in absence of more reliable sources of information, it is better to accept the tradition recorded in the Buddhist work. Basak refers to a son of Jayanāga, but Ārya-mañjuśrīmūlakalpa refers to a son of Śaśāṅka and not of Jayanāga. It is just possible that Jayanāga ruled after the death of Śaśāṅka and before the conquest of Karnasuvarna by Bhāskaravarman. It is difficult to say anything definitely on the chronological position of these two Kings from Palaeographical consideration as the interval between them appears to be very short¹⁵⁷. We may glean some information about Jayanāga from some coins which closely resembles that of Śaśāṅka. The coins bear on the obverse the abbreviated name 'Jaya' and on the reverse a seated Lakṣmī with an elephant sprinkling water on her¹⁵⁸. Some of the places referred in the Vappaghoshavāta grant have been identified differently

by different scholars. Karṇasuvarṇa, the ancient Capital of Gauda has been identified by H. Beveridge with Raṅgamāti near Murshidabad¹⁵⁹. On the basis of the observation of S. K. Chatterjee, Lionel D. Barnett identifies the following places. The Gāṅginika of the inscription seems to be the river Jalaṅgī, a branch of the Padmā or the Ganges which unites with Bhāgirathī near Nadiyā. Vappaghoshavāta would be likely village name in Southern Murshidabad and Nadiyā where there was much cattle breeding¹⁶⁰. So it is confirmed from the above that he ruled over Birbhum and Murshidabad district, but the extent of his Kingdom or any other detail of his reign is not known to us.

We know nothing about any other member of the royal family and what happened after the downfall of Jayanāga . We know only that there was political chaos and confusion in Eastern India for more than a Century after that caused by the death of Harsha, the usurpation of his Kingdom by his minister and the strange military adventures of the Chinese envoy Wang-Hiuen-tse.

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