

Chapter: 2

Society and Economy

2.1. Society

The history of a particular part of land will be incomplete unless the social history of the region is un-delineated. Society helps the evolution and upbringing of the people of that part of territory. The working spirits, division of people on caste or community line with impact upon economic growth, productivity- both agrarian and industrial, interaction among different sections of the people of that particular part of the territory and with the people of wider region- all depend upon the stability, virility and mobility of the society. A rigorous or orthodox society hardly allows mobility of human being and the society is forced to be confined to constriction in various aspects. It generates a sort of stoicism. The efficacy and resilience of society is impeded if the society persists upon confinement. All these are the special features of the social system. The society in early Bengal was never static and that was why social harmony had never faced any predicament. The society of early Bengal has always adjusted itself with the diversified forces and this has led to the emergence of a sort of social fabric that seems to be the bedrock of broadness in outlook of the Bengali people and hence, prosperity of the region. All these are to be kept in mind before analysing the social system in Bengal. The various factors in the society in early Bengal have to be taken into account. Unity in diversity has been reflected all along despite with certain aberrations at times.

2.1.1. Caste System¹

The caste system is the foundation of the Indian social structure. It is well-known that Indian society was based on the Brāhmaṇical caste order, which appeared in Indian history due to the advent and assimilation of the Aryans in the Indian Society. There were mainly four *varṇas*, namely Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya,

Vaiśya and Śūdra. We do not get any reference to the existence of four *varṇas* in the earliest texts except in the *Puruṣa sūkta*.² It is generally acknowledged that the *Puruṣasūkta* is a relatively late hymn in the *Ṛigveda*.

Although there were basically four *varṇas*, we know of the presence of many castes in ancient Indian society and the number of sub-castes is increasing every day.³ Bengal is no exception to this. The caste system appeared in the history of Bengal at an early stage. For century after century, pre-Aryan and non-Aryan culture and observances mingled with and were assimilated into the framework and standards of the caste system. Hence, to narrate the history of the social order of ancient Bengal is to tell the story of caste patterns. But this division into various castes, sub-castes and hybrids was not of one kind at all times throughout India, nor is it now. It is also notable that no literature is found prior to the 11th century highlighting the caste system in Bengal. However, after the 11th century, Bengali *Smṛti* and *Purāṇic* writers deliberately started to fit the social structure of Bengal into the fourfold caste division that existed in other parts of India, according to the framework and rationale of the more ancient Brahmanical *Smṛiti*.⁴ But long before this effort, Aryan influence in Bengal had already escalated. Along with it the framework and rationale of the caste system gained recognition too. Thus, the story of the patterns of caste in Bengal is, in fact, to the process of the Aryanisation of the region.

The early process of Aryanisation began in Bengal can be gleaned from various literary sources such as *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Purāṇas* and *Smṛti* and *Sūtra* works. The second stage of Bengal's caste development began with further Aryanisation under the Gupta rule in northern Vaṅga and elsewhere in Bengal. From this time right up to the end of the 13th century, many elements in the history of caste structures were to be reflected in the numerous inscriptions of the region. At least two later *Purāṇa*- the *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa* and the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*, the *Vallālacharita* of Gopālabhaṭṭa and Ānandabhaṭṭa, and the

genealogical works of Bengal. give some picture of the caste structure in the last stage of the Hindu era. *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa* ⁵ represents the peculiar feature of the social system of Bengal. It has divided the non-Brāhmaṇa people of Bengal into thirty-six castes and all of them are described as the Śūdras. This is an important feature of the caste system of Bengal and it reflects striking difference between the society of Bengal and the society of the rest of North India. The castes (non-Brāhmaṇa) that appeared in Bengal are classified as *uttama*, *madhyama* and *adhama saṅkaras*, all having the status of Śūdra. Thus the *uttama saṅkaras* comprised of

1. The Karaṇas or Kāyasthas (expert in civil service and in writing. They became *sat-śūdras*)
2. The Ambaṣṭhas or Vaidya (expert in medical science)
3. Ugra (warriors)
4. Māgadha
5. Gāndhika Vaṇika (Trader in spies), the modern Gandhavaṇika
6. Kaṁsa Vaṇikas- braziers
7. Śāmkhikas or Śāmkhakāras or Śānkha Vaṇikas (Workers and dealers in conch-shells)
8. Kumbhakāras (Potters)
9. Tantuvāyas (Weaver)
10. Karmakāras (Blacksmith)
11. Gopas (Milkman)
12. Dāsas (Cultivator)
13. Nāpitas (Barber)
14. Modakas (Sweet meat makers)
15. Bārujīvīs or Bāruī (growers of betel-leaves)
16. Mālākāras (Gardners)
17. Tailikas or Taulikas (Trader of betel-nut)

18. Sūtas (bard or carpenter?)
19. Rājaputra (Rājput?)
20. Tāmbalis or Tāmalīs (Betel-leaf sellers)

The twelve-sub-castes of the madhyama saṅkaras are

1. Takṣaṇas (Wood-cutters)
2. Rajakas (Washer-man)
3. Svarṇakāras (Goldsmiths and makers of ornaments)
4. Suvarṇavaṇikas (Traders in Gold)
5. Ābhīras or Āhīras (Cowherds)
6. Tailakāras (Oilmen)
7. Dhīvaras (Fisherman)
8. Śauṇḍikas (Wine-sellers)
9. Naṭas (Dancers and Musicians)
10. Savakas, Sarakas or Savaras (Hunters)
11. Śekhāras (Florists)
12. Jālikas (Fisherman)

The nine castes of the bottom or *adhama* level were untouchable and were not placed within the Brahmanical caste system. They are:

1. Malegrahis or Malegrhis (the clowns of Vaṅga)
2. Gṛihīs
3. Kuravas (occupation not known)
4. Chaṇḍalas (Executioners)
5. Baruras (Field labourers)
6. Charmakāras (Tanners)
7. Gaṭṭajīvīs (The keepers of ferry stations. Perhaps they were the modern Pāṭanīs or ferrymen)
8. Dolābāhīs (Palanquin bearers, perhaps the modern Duliya or Dules)

9. Mallas (may be the modern Mālos or fishermen)

The above division into three classes is said to be based on following principles viz. 1) a person whose father and mother belongs to four primitive castes, is regarded as *uttama saṅkara*, 2) one whose mother belongs to one of the four primitive castes, but whose father belongs to a caste of *uttama saṅkara*, is called *madhyama saṅkara*, 3) and one whose parents belong to any mixed caste is degraded to the position of *adhama-saṅkara*. These three general principles mainly divided the society of Bengal into three groups. It should be mentioned that occupation does not play any role in deciding one's group. Another significant point is that the total number of these mixed castes mentioned in the *Purāṇa* is 36, though actually forty-one are enumerated. It is possible that five of the above must therefore have been added to the list later. Similar details of the caste structure are found in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*.⁶ Here all the mixed or hybrid sub-castes are divided into the two categories: *sat* and *asat-śūdras*. The division is based on the right to offer water to a Brāhmaṇa. *Sat-śūdras* are the higher category, able to offer water to the Brāhmaṇas; *asat-sudras* were not able to offer water to the Brāhmaṇas. It is noteworthy that the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* refers to the Vaidyas and Ambaṣṭhas as separate sub-castes and gives different accounts of their origins. It lists:

1. Karaṇas
2. Ambaṣṭhas (issue of a Brāhmaṇ father and a Vaiśya mother)
3. Vaidyas (the original one was the son of Aśvinikumāra, one of the physicians of heaven, and a Brāhmaṇ mother; their profession was medicine)
4. Gopas
5. Nāpitas
6. Bhillas
7. Modakas

8. Kūbaras (nothing is known of them)
9. Tāmbulīs
10. Svarṇakāras (as a result of Brāhmaṇa's curse they became fallen and were regarded as *asat-śūdras*)
11. Mālākāras
12. Karmakāras
13. Śāṅkhakāras
14. Kuvindakas (Weavers)
15. Kumbhakāras
16. Kaṁsakāras
17. Sūtradhāras
18. Citrakāras
19. Svarṇakāras

The fallen castes and those of *asat-śūdra* status are:

20. Aṭṭālikākāras (builders)
21. Koṭakas (builders of houses)
22. Tīvaras (hunters)
23. Tailakāras
24. Leṭṣ (Soldiers)
25. Mallas
26. Charmakāras
27. Śūṇḍī (wine merchants)
28. Pauṇḍrakas (or Podas?)
29. Māmsacchedas (Butchers)
30. Rājaputras
31. Kaivartas (Fishermen)
32. Rajakas
33. Kauyālis (Herdsman)

34. Gaṅgāputras (Cremators)
35. Yuṅgis (Weavers)
36. Āgarīs (may be these were the Ugras of the *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa*, or the modern Āgurīs)

Those castes belonging to the low-born or untouchable level are listed thus: Vyādhas (hunters), Bharas (occupation unknown), Kāpālis (workers in crafts and agriculture), Kols (an aboriginal community), Hāḍḍis or Hāris (scavengers), Doms (cremators), Jolās (weavers), Bagatitas or Bāgdis (profession was fishing, palanquin bearing and field laboring), Sarakas, Vyālagrahis (perhaps they were the Malegrahis of the *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa*), Chaṇḍālas and others.

There are similarities between the two *Purāṇas* related to the status and classification of different castes. The castes placed in the *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa* in the list of *uttama saṅkara* have been placed in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* as *sat-śūdras*. The only exception is that Magadha, Gandhavaṇika, Taulikas or Tailikas, Dāsas, Bārujīvīs, Sūtas are excluded from the list of the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*. In lieu of this exemption, we find the inclusion of Bhilla, Kubara and Vaidya. Besides this, the Rājaputra has not been mentioned in the list of the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*. There is also a close resemblance between the list of *madhyam saṅkara* of the former and the *asat-śūdra* of the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*. The only difference is that Ābhīras, Naṭas, Sabakas, Śekharas and Jalikas of the *Bṛihaddharma Purāṇa* have not been given place in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* and we find Aṭṭālikākāras, Koṭakas, Leṭas, Mallas, Charmakāras, Pauṇḍraka, Māmsachchedas, Kaivartas, Gaṅgāputras, Yuṅgis, Āgarīs, Kauyālīs, etc. in the *asat-śūdra* group and among them Malla and Charmakāra have been placed in the list of *adhama saṅkara* of *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa*. In the *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa*, we find the names of Dhīvara and Jālika associated with fish trade, but in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*, we find the name of the Kaivarta caste in the

context of fish trade. According to Bhaṭṭabhavadeva, the Kaivartas belonged to *adhama saṅkara*.

The first caste, Brāhmaṇa, obviously played a dominant part in the history of ancient Bengal. They were required to devote themselves to the sacrificial rituals conducted by the ordinary men or by the royal household. They were respected by the people as they followed a strict code of life. The professions of the Brāhmaṇas in ancient Bengal as found in the inscriptions and literature were to perform sacrificial rites, to act as priests of others and to learn and teach the sacred text. They generally led simple and peaceful lives and the ideal of plain living and high thinking was actually followed by most of them. Their income came from sacrifices and religious rites officiated by them as priests.⁷ Epigraphic records from the 8th to the 12th century A.D. refer to the settlement of Brāhmaṇas hailing from different countries. In the course of time, the Brāhmaṇas in Bengal were divided into various sub-castes or branches such as Rāḍhīya, Varendra, Vaidika and Śākadvīpī etc.

The Karaṇas had been the most important caste in ancient Bengal. The people of this caste used to assume high offices in the royal house. There are a lot of controversies among scholars about the origin of this caste. According to *Kulajis*, the Kāyasthas of Bengal were descended from the five attendants of the five Brāhmaṇas who came to Bengal in response to an invitation by king Ādiśūra. D.R. Bhandarkar and others⁸ suggest that the Kāyasthas were descended from Nāgara Brāhmaṇas who had a large settlement in Bengal long before the 8th century A.D. It should be noted that they held a more important position in the management of the state than the Brāhmaṇas up to the 7th Century A.D. Sometimes they played an important role in the society as physicians, as is evident from the example of one Karaṇa-Kāyastha who was the author of the *Śabda-Pradīpa* and who served as court physician of both Rāmapāla and Govindachandra.⁹

The Vaidya also appears to have formed an important caste in ancient Bengal. The term 'Vaidya' originally denotes the important profession of a physician. From the social history of Sena dynasty, it is learnt that Vaidya was one of the influential caste in the society. The Bhāterā Copper-plate Grant of Īśānadeva¹⁰ mentions his minister (Paṭṭanika) Vanamāli Kera as *vaidya vaṁśa pradīpa* (excellent light in the race of Vaidyas). So, it can be presumed that before the close of the Hindu period, the Vaidyas who took the profession of medicine had long been recognized as a distinct social unit in Vaṅga. *Uśanas Smṛiti*¹¹ refers to this caste as Bhiṣhak (physician). We also get the information from Kulaji that Ādiśūra belonged to both Ambaṣṭha and Vaidya castes. It is known from the social history of the Sena dynasty that Vaidya was one of the mighty castes in the society. It is explicitly stated that Umāpatidhara, an eminent court poet of Lakṣmaṇasena and also the composer of Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena was the Viji or the first founder of the Dhārā family of the Vaidyas of Bengal.¹² Dvayī or Dhoyī (also called Dhuyī) has been also referred to as the Viji of Saktṛ Gotra of the Vaidyas.¹³ Thus we can easily conclude that Vaidyas were in high position in the state.

The discussion will remain incomplete if we do not highlight another important caste named Kaivarta. The Kaivarta assumed importance during the Pāla rule. It is known that the caste originated from the union of a Kṣatriya male and a Vaiśya female.¹⁴ We find in the *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa* the names of Dhīvara and Jālika attached with fish trade, but in the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* we find that the Kaivartas were associated with fish trade. They are sometimes described as *chāṣhī*. It is recorded in the *Vallālacharita* that Vallālasena improved the position of Kaivartas and made them clean caste.¹⁵ Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva refers to them as one of the seven *antyajas* or low castes.¹⁶

Apart from what has been said the inscriptions of Bengal also mention other lower castes such as Chāṭa, Bhāṭa, Meda, Andhra, and Chāṇḍālas. They were also engaged in their respective professions. They are also referred to by the Smṛti writers and the Epics.

2.1.2. The position of women

The status of women was an important aspect in the social history of ancient Bengal. But we cannot draw a complete picture of women's social life and position from the epigraphic sources. It is necessary to study the literary documents in order to get a complete and perfect picture of the social status of women of that period. The ancient texts- law books, poetry, and others, have no consensus over the question of the position of women in the society. Therefore, it is difficult to draw an accurate picture. Their status has been a matter of improvement and modification. They faced ups and down, but these ups and downs have helped very little to bring a basic change in their condition. Reforms from age to age have tried to determine a specific position in their lives, but despite their honest efforts, it remained a baffling problem to adjust theories with practice.

Generally, the birth of a girl child is considered to be an unwelcome event. India is no exception to the notion. In the *Atharvaveda*, rituals were performed to ensure the birth of a son.¹⁷ Contrary to it, however, the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣada* enjoins certain rituals in order to ensure the birth of a scholarly daughter.¹⁸ In the early Vedic and Vedic period, only tribal needs would have prompted the desire for the birth of a girl child. From the later Vedic period onwards, literature appears to be inclined more towards opposing gender equality. A rapid shift from *upanayaṇa* to *vivāh saṁskāra* was noticed from 7th century onwards. The basic factor responsible behind the preference for male children seems to be ancestor worship, which was to be performed by the sons

only.¹⁹ Interestingly, in most of the inscriptions of the early medieval period, the name of the mother appears only if she has given birth to a male child, whether she belonged to the royal class or to the common class. Later, various other factors like more economic responsibility in a girl's marriage, prohibition on remarriage of a widow and strict widowhood penance etc. accelerated this process.²⁰ K.M. Panikkar has cited the breakdown of social institutions, the upsetting of traditional political structures, the vast migration of people and the economic depression.²¹ Vijaya Ramaswamy advocated two primary factors behind the social exploitation of women. First was lack of education, and the second, economic dependence.²²

Vātsyāyaṇa²³ describes in his *Kāmasūtra* that the women of Gauḍa were famous for being soft and scurrilous, sweet-spoken, happy, loving and dedicated to the maintenance of their beauty and charms. He also highlights the beauty of men. Some of comments of Vātsyāyaṇa indicate that the women of harem of Vaṅga were not used to coming out independently. They talked the outsiders from behind the curtain.²⁴ Perhaps women were not barred from learning. Theoretically, it can be assumed that the position of women in the society was high, but at the same time, it can be assumed that she was not independent and was a subservient member of her father's and her husband's family. It is stated in the *Mahābhārata*²⁵ that a woman should never be independent. She should be protected in childhood by her father, in her youth she should live under the protection of her husband and in her old age her son should look after her. Manu and the early *Dharmasāstras* also uphold the same notion. *Baudhāyana*²⁶ says that a woman is not fit for independence. Vaśiṣṭha²⁷, like his predecessors, promotes complete dependence of women and according to him, a woman is not independent, and man is her lord. The highest compliment of women's lives is in the joint family in doing the housework, and keeping the home in order.²⁸ It has been prescribed that she should control the expenses of the family, keep the

house and hearth clean and be economical in habits. It has been stated by the ancient law-givers that women should be emphasized and treated properly. Manu says, "Where women are honoured, there the Gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields any rewards."²⁹ To some extent, the position of women was much higher in Bengal in the initial stage. Bharati Ray clearly has analyzed the position of women in Bengal. "The presiding Bengali deity, Kālī, the mother Goddess, standing on the prostrate figure of Śiva, her husband, symbolizes as clearly as any such symbolism can ever do, the domination of female principle over the male principle. Perhaps historically this is related to the attempt to preserve the India of the mother Goddess against the Aryan consequence with their father Gods and their semi cultural logic. In the struggle for hegemony, the mother Goddess had managed to retain her primacy, at least in Bengal. A mother, therefore, connotes a position of supremacy in the Bengali Hindu Psyche as well as family life."³⁰

The existence of the *devadāsī* system³¹ proves the low moral status of the people of Bengal. The *devadāsī* system existed in Bengal now looked down upon. The inscription of Deopārā states that "King Vijayasena gave one hundred beautiful female (attendants)" whose bodies were raised by ornaments for *Pradyumneśvara* (Śiva). The author of *Pavanadūta* also mentions *devadāsīs* or the girls of the temple for Śiva. The practice of offering *devdāsīs* to the temples is now prevalent only in south Malabar and nearby region.³² Thus it is inferred that the kings of Sena Varman probably brought this custom from south India. A dancing girl named Kamalā working in a temple in Puṇḍravardhana in the 8th century is mentioned in *Rājtarāṅginī*, thereby proving that this system was practiced in different parts of Bengal.³³ Although these girls were dedicated to the temple, their predicament was not better than that of the general courtesan. The lower standard of morality is proven more by the practice of keeping women

slaves referred to by Jimūtavāhana and these women were preserved for enjoyment.³⁴ So women were not better than the products of enjoyment.

Yet, women in Bengal did enjoy some privileges and rights, and their husbands, sons and other relatives had to rely on their feeling of duty and love. The birth of a daughter was equally entertained like that of male child. A daughter was also regarded as the object of glory, much like a son to the family. Due to her adorable traits, the purity and integrity of her character, she was an object of joy to her parents as well as her husband. Polygamy³⁵ was prevalent in different parts of the wealthy society. The kings generally considered it a privilege to have a crowded hārem. The royal family, high officials and rich people married more than one wife. Vātsyāyana said that the wealthy people generally had a tendency to plural spouses. The Moṅghyr Copper-plate refers to polygamy.³⁶ The Bāṅgarh Copper-plate of Mahīpāla I³⁷ also testifies to the prevalence of polygamy. It appears from the plate that an ideal wife tried to win the heart of her husband through the magic power of her warmer attraction without incurring the displeasure of her co-wife.

Ancient lawgivers have mentioned that an ideal woman should be an ideal housewife. The married woman should use the mark of vermillion on her forehead as a means of dedication to her husband. But there were instances of women who used to go out to earn money by means of spinning, weaving and other mechanical arts.³⁸ Occasionally employers bribed the workers' wives to persuade them to send their husbands or other members to the work.³⁹ It shows that the wives of Vaiśya and Śūdra men had an active role in the business of their husbands. An example of some improvement in their position is that they had absolute right over *strīdhana*.⁴⁰ They could manage it anyway they liked.⁴¹ But women were considered inappropriate for all responsible work. It was believed that they were unable to perform the difficult tasks of the administration.⁴²

In Bengal, after the death of their husbands, they had to avoid all kinds of luxury and sensational food, such as meat, fishes etc.⁴³ The position of the widows in the society was not at all encouraging. They were looked upon as inauspicious and were rarely allowed to take part in various rites and occasions. It seems that people encouraged them to immolate themselves at the funeral pyres of their husbands. The *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa* mentions that a devoted wife should follow her husband in death.⁴⁴ By doing so, she saves him from great sins. So it is clear that the *satī* tradition was prevalent in Bengal from the early times.

Despite such strict restrictions, there are some examples that show that women often enjoyed a lot of independence. In ancient India, women did not have the freedom to move, but they freely carried out the activities inside and outside the home. Women held a very respectable position in the society. Normally the position of women was happy. They, no doubt, enjoyed freedom to have light and air, the two blessings of God. Although the society was patriarchal in nature, the women seem to have cooperated with the males in the smooth running of the family. They played an important role in assisting their husbands in every work of life and all possible social affairs.

From the description of the Dhoyī, it is seen that in Vijayapura, the capital city of Lakṣmaṇasena, women hardly used *pardāh* and the *pardāh* system was not in vogue.⁴⁵ Another example of the improvement of women's position in the Sena-Varmana era was the inclusion of the queen in the land grant chart. It certainly indicates the superior position of women of Bengal at that time.⁴⁶ The elevation of the position of the Rājñī in the Sena-Varmana period, is known from the inscriptions, and is perhaps due to the dignity of women of South India from where the Senas came. The Rāmapāla Copper-plate⁴⁷ states that Queen Śrīkāñchana was to king Trailokyachandra what Śachī was to Indra, Gaurī to Hara and Śrī to Hari. Similarly, the Naihāti Copper-plate of Vallālasena⁴⁸ compares Vilāsadevī, the queen of Vijāyasena, with Lakṣhmī and Gaurī. Another example

may be cited from Rāmgūñj Copper-plate Inscription of Īśvaraghoṣa,⁴⁹ Sadbhāvā, the wife of Dhavalaghoṣa and the mother of Īśvaraghoṣa is described in the same manner. Sadbhāva is described here as a second Bhavānī (wife of Śiva) and also as Sītā, wife of Rāma, Padmā, the wife of Viṣṇu.

2.1.3. Education and Learning

The origin of education may be traced to the earliest Vedic times. The study of the Vedas was the primary duty of every twice-born person. In the *Manusmṛiti* it is enjoined that the whole Veda together with secret doctrines was to be learnt by every *Dvijāti* (twice-born).⁵⁰ While referring to a Vedic text, the *Mahābhāṣya*⁵¹ suggests that a Brāhmaṇa should study Dharma and Veda with its six *Aṅgas* without any desire for reward. The epigraphic and literary sources furnish details about education and learning in ancient Bengal. Fa-hien also gives a vivid account of the education system in Bengal. It is known from his writings that Tāmralipta was a famous centre of learning. All the branches of *śāstras* were taught here.⁵² The city was a centre of Buddhist learning also. *Gauḍīrīti* was one of the principal styles of poetic composition, the other being Vaidharbhī. In order to compose the poems, these items were essential in ancient days of Bengal. It has derived its name from the place of its origin and Daṇḍin calls it Paurastya i.e., eastern. We may assume that it had its origin in Bengal. The inscriptions found outside Bengal written in Gauḍī style prove that it was used not only in the land of its origin or eastern India, but even outside of Bengal. The poetry portion of Nidhānpur Plates of Bhāskaravarmana,⁵³ the Tippera Plate of Loknātha and the Pāla and Sena Inscription were written in the style which was evidently suited for the *praśastis*.

Education played a very important role in the social set up of the people in the ancient days of Bengal. The Brāhmaṇas were the chief custodians of Hindu learning. In the Gunāighar Copper-plate Inscription of Vainya Gupta,⁵⁴ it is stated

that there was an educationist named Āchārya Śāntideva who was a Buddhist scholar. The Faridpur Copper-plate Inscription of Dharmāditya⁵⁵ reveals the fact that Chandrasvāmin was well-versed in the six *Vedaṅgas*. The inscription further states that the feudal chiefs were also masters in *śāstric* knowledge. Another Brāhmaṇa named Somasvāmin affiliated to Vājasaneyā school of the Vedas was meritorious. Vatsasvāmin was also a learned Brāhmaṇa.⁵⁶

The glory of the Pāla period with regard to education is reflected in the proficiency of people of that time in the various branches. Men of letters exhibited vigorous and creative spirit. The inscriptions of the Pāla period throw considerable light on the importance of education at that period. In the Khālimpur Copper-plate Inscription of Dharmapāla,⁵⁷ it is affirmed that Dayitaviṣṇu who was born in this family, was a master of all types of learning. It may be stated in this connection that all sorts of sastric knowledge were considered to be essential to rule over the country. From the Tibetan accounts, we can have an idea of the monastery at Vikramaśīlā.⁵⁸ It was founded by Dharmapāla, who bore the title Vikramaśīlā. It is also stated that in his time the head of the *vihāra* was Buddha-jñāna-pāda. The Mahābodhi Inscription⁵⁹ of the time of Dharmapāla is an interesting one in respect of education. The word *snātaka* is used in the inscriptions to denote a man who has acquired knowledge in the Vedas and has been permitted by teachers to enter into the second stage of life. The Moṅghyr Copper-plate Inscription of Devapāladeva⁶⁰ informs us that the kings as well as priests were highly proficient in all branches of knowledge. During the Pāla rule the Buddhist *vihāras* were prominent due to the congregation of higher studies. The Pālas were Buddhists and played an important part in the growth of the University of Nālandā. The Nālandā Grant of Devapāla⁶¹ records that king Bālaputradeva of Suvarṇadvīpa and Yavadvīpa was attracted by the manifold excellence of Nālandā and built a monastery in Nalanda, which was the assembly of monks of various good qualities. This proves that it was a famous

seat of learning and its glory was not only confined to the borders of India, but spread outside. The Goṣarawa Inscription of Devapāla⁶² also furnishes some interesting information. The pattern of education during the time of Devapāla was Buddhistic. The inscription further refers to a meritorious notable Brāhmaṇ Indragupta by name, who had a son, who had studied all the Vedas. He had also acquired mastery over all the branches of knowledge.

The Gaya Stone Pillar Inscription⁶³ compares Śūdraka to Bṛihaspati (God of learning) for the astonishing qualities of his mastery over the different branches of learning. It also informs us that his son Viśvāditya, also possessed all the virtues required of an adept in fine arts. In the Garuḍa Pillar Inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla,⁶⁴ it is stated that Brāhmaṇa Darbhapāṇi was well-versed in the four *Vedas*. The inscription states that the entire ocean of learning of the four *Vedas* was assimilated by Kedāramiśra, heir of Darbhapāṇi, during his boyhood. Kedāramiśra was a master of Vedic literatures. The inscription further states that Guravamiśra,⁶⁵ minister of Nārāyaṇapāla was proficient in many subjects viz., in astrology, astronomy and in the *Vedas*. The Bhāgalpur Copper-plate Inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla⁶⁶ also states that king Nārāyaṇapāla was a vastly learned man and he attracted men of letters through his good speech.

The Bāṅgarh Copper-plate Inscription of Mahīpāla I provides us with the information that the Brāhmaṇas were granted land to meet their daily needs. They were well-versed in Mimāṃsā, Vyākaraṇa, Tarkasaṁgraha. This indicates that highly educated Brāhmaṇs were also the recipients of valuable gifts from the royal palace at that time in Bengal. In the sixth year of the reign of Mahīpāla, the *Aṣṭa-Sāhasrikā-Prajñā-Pāramitā* was copied by one Kalyāṇamitra.⁶⁷

The Sena period is called a golden age of Sanskrit literature in Bengal. The Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena⁶⁸ indicates that the poet Umāpatidhara was a jewel to the Sena dynasty. The Mādhāinagar Copper-plate of Lakṣmaṇasena informs us that Vallālasena was the foremost of all scholars at that time. It was

Vallālasena who wrote *Dānasāgara* and *Adbhutasāgara*.⁶⁹ It may be stated that Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa was the preceptor of Vallālasena and composed two works on rituals, namely, *Śuddhi-viveka* and *Hāralatā*. It may be assumed that education had flourished in this period on a large scale.

We may refer to Jayadeva, who was one of the court poets in the royal palace of Lakṣmaṇasena. He was one of the jewels during Lakṣmaṇasena. The other jewels were Umāpati, Śaraṇa, Govardhana, Dhoḃī, etc. The Calcutta Sāhitya Parisat Copper-plate of Viśvarūpasena⁷⁰ informs us that the king was a patron of learning. This inscription further states that Halāyudha was a reputed scholar enjoying royal patronage for his scholarly aptitude. The *Brāhmaṇasarvasva* is the best known of all his works. It deals with the daily rites and periodical *āchāras* for Brāhmaṇas.

Bengal was famous for its contribution to *Smṛiti* and ritualistic literature. In ancient Bengal, the importance of medical science was recognised highly. Āyurveda (or the science of Longevity) was called an *Upa-veda*. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang tells us that great stress was laid on it in the Nālandā monastery.⁷¹ Chakrapāṇidaṭṭa was an established physician in Bengal. His father Nārāyaṇa was an officer (*pātra*) and superintendent of the culinary department (*rasavatyadhikarin*) of the Pāla king Nayapāla. Chakrapāṇi was also a prolific medical writer. His famous work, *Chikitsā-saṁgraha*, was meant for medical practitioners only. His *Dravya-guṇa-saṁgraha* is a glossary of medical drugs and *Śabda-Chandrikā* is a vocabulary of vegetables and minerals.⁷²

Thus from the above discussion of education it is clearly evident that the education and learning gradually progressed with the march of time and flourished in different parts of Bengal due to royal patronage. The study of Sanskrit was encouraged by the rulers of Bengal. The poets, writers, scholars were versed in Sanskrit language and adorned the courts of rulers in ancient Bengal.

2.1.4. Food and Drink

In Bengal there were favourite natural conditions for production of various types of agricultural food crops like paddy, barley, fruits, vegetables, pulses, spices and varied other things. The early inhabitants of Bengal used to remain satisfied due to the abundance of agricultural crops produced in the region. It is very difficult to draw a comprehensive account of food habit of the people of ancient Bengal. But references scattered in early Bengal literature corroborate the epigraphic data and thus give us a fair idea in this regard. Besides these, the evidence furnished by some interesting terracotta plaques discovered in the course of excavations at Pāhārpur, Maināmati etc and the testimony of some interesting images of male and female Hindu deities also supply us with some reliable data with regard to the use of food in ancient Bengal. We may assume in this connection that there might have been variations of foodstuff and drinks. Yet a comprehensive idea may be gathered from the study of the dietary systems of the different parts of Bengal.

Paddy (*dhānya*) was the most important food grain cultivated in ancient Bengal. Grains of rice seem to have been husked out from paddy by hurling on it a kind of heavy pestle with the help of one's hands. Then the boiled rice must have been the most commonly used. So the staple food of the rich and the poor in their everyday life was paddy or rice. Chakradatta mentions in his treatises the name of several kinds of paddy like Rakta Śāli, Śaṣṭika, Nīvāra and Śyāmā, Śūka-dhānya, Samī-dhānya, Vṛhi-dhānya etc. Rice mixed with pulses was prepared and called *khichurī*. Pāyasa or *paramānna* which was prepared by boiling rice in milk was used as food by the people of ancient Bengal. Wheat and barley were the crops next to rice produced.

Food grains were also supplemented by *māṣa*, *mudga* and *tila*. *Māṣaka* or *māṣa* is the name which denotes a class of kidney bean.⁷³ *Mudga* is the name

commonly applied to a class of pulse known as the green grain. Tila is the name commonly given to sesamum seeds. We may refer also to the common food grains as used by the people of ancient Bengal in a verse written by the poet in the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*. A careful study of Chakradatta's *Chikitsā Saṁgraha* reveals that the boiled juice of pulses like *mudga*, *masura* etc. were used as medicated diet by some people suffering from certain ailments.

In ancient Bengal, the housewife used to cook their daily food with pot herbs (*śāka*).⁷⁴ The leaves, branches, flowers and fruits of the *alabu* creeper are even now used as common vegetables for making different kinds of curry in the kitchen of Bengal. The people of Bengal used as their diet many edible fruits (*phala*), esculent (*mūla*), edible pot herbs, molasses (*guḍa*), crushed powder of fried gram (*caṇaka*). Food grains were supplemented by vegetables. It was one of the principal items of food in the people of Bengal. *Paṭala*, *vārtāku*, *mūlaka* (*radish*), *kāravellaka* (*karelā* or *karalā*), *karkoṭaka* (*kakrole*) are some vegetable mentioned in early Bengali literary works.

Among the fruits, *āmra* or mango and *panasa* or jackfruit was the main available in Bengal. Besides it, *nārikela* or coconut, betel, *guvaka* were found in Bengal. The medical book of ancient Bengal prescribes many fruits like *kadali*, *tala*, *nārikela* and more.⁷⁵ Mango was a delicious fruit for the poor and the rich alike in ancient Bengal. Jackfruit seems to have been a common and favourite fruit in ancient Bengal. The green jackfruit was used as popular vegetable to prepare a kind of curry and the ripe version was considered pleasing to our taste and quite satisfactory for appeasing our appetite. Another common fruit was the date and liquid juice was highly valued. Various kinds of jams and jellies were also prepared from mango in ancient Bengal.⁷⁶ The book also prescribes the usefulness of various leaves, roots, barks, flowers, etc. as food for the treatment of various diseases.⁷⁷ Milk and its products played a dominant part in ordinary diet.⁷⁸ In this connection, the wide use of sweets in the ancient days of Bengal

may also be mentioned. The ancient literatures and the early inscriptions refer to natural cow's milk and goat's milk. It appears from the literatures that condensed boiled-milk, the cream of the boiled milk and the by-products of milk curd, whey, casein, butter and clarified butter etc. were used as food by the people in ancient Bengal.⁷⁹

The fish (Plate-1/1) and meat were popular food found from the inscriptions and early literature of Bengal. Fish and meat were not usually eaten by Brāhmaṇas outside Bengal. But that practice was common in ancient Bengal. The *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa*⁸⁰ recommends that a Brāhmaṇa partakes of cooked fish like *rohita*, *śaphara* or *śapharī*, *śakula(śola)* and other kinds of fish which were white and had scales. Sarvānanda in his *Ṭīkāsarvasva*⁸¹ refers to the name of certain kinds of fish which were used as food by the people of ancient Bengal. Thus we find the names of *rohita*, *mādgura*, *śola*, *rājīva*, *śakula*, *śaphari*, *nalamīna* and *śriṅgi*. The commentator further mentions the word *badiśa* meaning the fish hook used for catching fish by angles.⁸² The *iliśa(hilsa)* was largely consumed in Bengal, and the people used its fat for various purposes. The terracotta plaque found at Pāhārpur-Maināmati also represents how fishes were cut into pieces, and made ready for cooking.⁸³ The people, especially the Brāhmiṇs, were not allowed to take whatever fish they liked. They had to avoid those fishes which had ugly forms, or had head like snakes, or lived in holes.⁸⁴ Though the eating of rotten fish was forbidden, people took dried fish. The people of Bengal liked eating dried fish, as it is known from the Sarvānanda.⁸⁵

The use of meat is also mentioned in the terracotta plaques discovered in Bengal. As regards meat, the flesh of deer and goat were most popular. The fowlers and hunters are mentioned in the terracotta plaques at Pāhārpur. There is no doubt that the fowlers and hunters belonging to the Śabara, Pulinda and Niṣāda tribes lived by consuming the cooked and roasted fish, birds and animals. The *Smṛitis* do not recommend the flesh of snails, crabs, fowls, cranes, ducks,

datyuha birds, camels, boars, cows, etc. The hare, the godhā, the porcupine and the tortoise were the nailed animals that were eaten by the people of Bengal.⁸⁶ But in no case was the taking of raw or dried meat permissible. This description enumerates various kinds of food and drinks offers to guests by rich people in the ancient Hindu society of Bengal.

Like the eating of meat, the drinking of wine was also prevalent in ancient days of Bengal. As regards intoxicating drink, the spirituous liquor made by distillation of rice, molasses, flower and honey were in common use. The early *Charyāpadas* refer to drinking at liquor shop. It is also stated that there were many ale-houses in ancient Bengal. People addicted to wine seem to have visited such ale-houses. Sarvānanda refers to *panīyaśālā* and *gāñja* in his commentary *Ṭīkāsarvasava*.⁸⁷ The term *pāniyaśālā* was probably used to denote shops selling various kinds of drink such as hot drink, cold or intoxicating drink. Besides wine, opium and leaves of hemp (*bhāñg*) were used as intoxicants by some of the people of that time. The *nārikela* was regarded as one of the best kinds of edible fruit. The practice of chewing betel leaves along with betel nuts and a small quantity of dissolved liquid lime especially after meals seems to have been well known in ancient Bengal.

It was ordained that a man should first partake of food and drink which are bitter in taste, and should finish his meal by consuming food and drinks which are essentially sweet in taste. This practice is followed by the people of Bengal even now.

2.1.5. Dress and Ornaments

Next to food, clothing is the greatest necessity of life. Bengal achieved great fame in textile industry since ancient times, for its various kinds of fabrics. These are: 1) white and soft fabric (*dukūla*)⁸⁸ manufactured in the country Vaṅga (*vaṅgaka*) 2) black fabric as soft as the surface of a gem, manufactured in Puṇḍra

3) *kṣauma* manufactured in Puṇḍra (North Bengal) 4) *patrorṇa* of Puṇḍra 5) *kārpāsika*. The use of silk and linen cotton fabrics were known since the earliest period in Bengal. Vaṅga and Puṇḍra were renowned for different classes of *dukūla*.

Sanskrit literature mentions various kinds of attire used by the people of the period. The pieces of cloth a man put would put on were generally three in number. His head would be covered with a turban and he wore two pieces of clothes namely *uttariya* or upper garment and *antariya* or the lower garment. Women also used three pieces of clothes as their dress. The upper garment called bodice (*kūrpāsakah*), the lower garment called *nīvī* (under-garment) and the shawl called *nīvībandha*. Dress and garments also varied according to weather. Thus, in the summer season people used to put on clothes suitable for relief from the scorching heat of the sun. In the winter, heavy attire made of wool or silk wool was a favourite costume of the people.

Silken garment was used in ancient days of Bengal. In the Bāṅgarh Copper-plate Inscription of Mahīpāla,⁸⁹ it is stated that Gopāla wore silken garments with lusts of numerous gems. So clothes of variegated colours white, red, blue, saffron, black were worn by the people of ancient Bengal. From the Deopārā Inscription,⁹⁰ we learn that the king Vijayasena offered silken garments of variegated colours to the naked deity lord Siva.

It is also remarkable that from the data of the inscriptions we learn that ladies were very much interested in decorating themselves. Flowers were used as fashions in Bengal. In the Bhāgalpur Copper-plate Inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla,⁹¹ it is stated that women used to decorate themselves from the head to other parts of the body with flower. It may be stated that the ladies used toilet and after toilet they used to bathe in the large tanks excavated by the kings of Bengal in ancient times. After bathing, camphor was often used for anointing the body.⁹²

We have also a reference to the use of sandal powder. Married women painted their forehead with a mark of vermilion.

From the study of the Pāhārpur sculptures, we can have an idea about the dress of both men and women in ancient Bengal. Men used to wear *dhoti*, shorter and narrower than the one used at present in Bengal. The women wore *śāḍīs* that reached the ankle. They used clothes like blouses to cover their breasts. Women sometimes wore scarf. Dancing girls used to wear long tight *pājāma* up to heels. They also used to hang long scarf over their shoulders. Both men and women used to wear ornaments. Women used hair oils. They used to wear apply *kājal* (collyrium) on foreheads and eyes. The *dhoti* and *śāḍīs* worn by men or women were embroidered by various patterns.

The dress of the ascetics was quite different from that of the ordinary people. They put on saffron clothes. An ascetic or a Yogī used to shave his head, wear *kuṇḍalas* or ear-rings of copper, rub his body with ashes, put on a rag, carry a beggars' knapsack, a dry pumpkin gourd and a stick. The most significant mark of a *yogī* or *yoginī* was the use of *kuṇḍala*. The merchant communities as well as the upper classes Hindus used rich garments. Their usual costume was a *dhoti*, *chāddar* and *pāgri*. The dress of a warrior consisted of an armour, a helmet, a pair of trousers, and a belt with jingling bells.

People from ancient times were excessively fond of embellishing their bodies with various kinds of ornaments worn on different parts of the body. The expression *alaṅkāra*, *ābharaṇa*, *bhūṣaṇa* and *vibhūṣana* found in the ancient Sanskrit literatures indicate undoubtedly that the people used to adorn themselves with ornaments. The *Śukranītisāra*⁹³ informs us that the making of ornaments with gold and other metals was considered as a special art. Men and women used large varieties of ornaments in ancient times. In this connection, the Chinese traveller Hiuen-Tsang⁹⁴ mentions that the women of Bengal wore ear rings of precious stones set in gold. They had pendants on their neck, gold

bracelets on their wrists and ankles. In ancient Bengal, men and women used to wear a single bangle on each hand. The figures of Viṣṇu and Garuda in the Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa sculpture excavated at Basta in Dhaka district indicate wearing bangles with appendages.⁹⁵

Śiromaṇi or crest jewel was usually worn by kings. In the Khālimpur Copper-plate of Dharmapāla,⁹⁶ it is stated that king Gopāla shone like a sun on account of the mass of glittering rays issuing from his head jewel. It is evident from the Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena that Hemantasena⁹⁷ was the crest jewel of the dynasty. There he bore on his head the dust of feet of the moon-crested God and the subjects of his kingdom were very happy to have him as a king. Mukuṭa or crown studded with gems of various shades and diamonds was worn by kings. Sometimes, it was displayed on the images of Gods. Sometimes, deities were decorated by ornaments, as evidenced by many inscriptions of Bengal. In the Mādhāinagar Copper-plate of Lakṣmaṇasena it is found that Siva was decorated with crest ornaments.

The ornaments worn by men and women, like their dresses, were very similar. The Pāhārpur Plates⁹⁸ also give us an account of the use of ornaments. Many amorous couples depicted in Pāhārpur seem to have been habituated to use ornaments. They wear big earrings, two lines of necklaces, armlets, bracelets, elaborate girdles and anklets.

The *Rāmācharita*⁹⁹ also refers to the use of ornaments by the people of Bengal of that period. It refers to various kinds of ornaments made of diamonds, *lapis lazule*, pearls, emeralds, rubies and sapphires. The simplicity of ordinary women with respect to wearing ornament is also corroborated by the contemporary texts. The ordinary women and even respectable ladies of the highest Brāhmaṇ caste probably used ear-rings made of green palm leaves. Dhoyī in his *Pavanadūta* clearly refers to the use of ear-ring made of green palm leave along with other kinds of ornaments.¹⁰⁰

The literary evidence indicates that men used leather shoes and wooden foot-wears, and carried umbrellas and bamboo-sticks. The Charmakāras are known to have made these at the outskirts of the town or village fulfilling the demand for leather works. The leather industry, therefore, may have flourished to a sizeable amount in ancient Bengal. The bedstead, mirror, and lock with keys are referred to in the early *Charyāpadas*. Various kinds of household furniture, made of gold with fine artistic designs, are mentioned in the *Rāmācharita*. Terracotta bowls, vases and pitchers, of which there is a variety, and earthenware, of all kinds and various types, are represented in sculptures.

2.1.6. Leisure and Entertainment

Since the beginning of creation, people have found ways and means of amusing themselves. Man is a social being, and his purpose is to share his joys and sorrows with his fellow creatures as well as sorrows. The people of ancient times were delighted by the beauty of nature, seasonal changes, a good harvest, etc. A large number of people both male and female assembled in social gatherings in connection with various competitions connected with versification, fine arts, singing, and painting.¹⁰¹ The assembled people sometimes indulged in humour and sports. It must be mentioned that the outdoor games were mostly played in the courtyards, gardens, fields, tanks and rivers. In the public club houses, the indoor games particularly games like chess and dice were played.

The early inscriptions of Bengal are virtually silent about indoor-games sports and pastimes. A little bit of stray information, however, is available in this regard. The early literature, such as the *Charyāpadas*, contains a fair amount of information. In the terracotta plaques of Pāhārpur or Maināmati, there is also some valuable information on this topic. Dice and chess were very popular among indoor-games.¹⁰² In ancient Bengal, a miniature diagram of a chess board has been discovered at Maināmati in the district of Tipperah in eastern Bengal. In the

Charyāpada there is a reference to a chess board in a *Charyā* song.¹⁰³ The chess board is said to contain sixty four square compartments. The small figures of elephants, boats, horses etc. made of wood were used at the time of playing chess. It should be noted that people assembled in the gatherings for religious purposes were involved in such games.

The inscriptions and literature of Bengal deal with indoor-games, physical exercises, riding, wrestling, hunting, etc. In the Maināmati and Pāhārpur plaques, many sculptural traits are found to prove their existence. Again warriors equipped with different weapons of war, archers and men fighting with tigers are represented in plaques of Maināmati. It is stated in the Kailān Inscription of Śrīdharana-Rāta,¹⁰⁴ that Śrīdharana, king of Samataṭa, had a muscular physique as a result of regular physical exercises.

Among the outdoor games, horse or elephant riding were common in ancient Bengal. Sarvānanda refers to five different types of horse-races such as *para*, *vīrava*, *hredu*, *paulina* and *māṛjā*.¹⁰⁵ Riding on buffaloes was also a common practice with the people of Bengal. In the *Rāmācharita* of Sandhyākaranandī, it is stated that some of the soldiers of the Kaivarta leader Bhīma used to fight against the soldiers of Rāmapāla by riding on buffaloes. Lāṭhi play or demonstration of the use of *lāṭhi* or stick normally made of wood or bamboo was a favourite pastime. Vātsyāyana refers to wrestling matches. In the Mahābodhi Inscription, the work Malla indicates a *Boxer*.¹⁰⁶ The excavation at Pāhārpur¹⁰⁷ also proves that men favoured wrestling and acrobatics. Sometimes, battle is represented as nothing but sports in the inscriptions. Thus the Belāva Copper-plate of Bhojavarman¹⁰⁸ states about Jatavarmana that battle is nothing but a sport to him. This inscription¹⁰⁹ further informs that Lord Krishna sported with hundreds of milk maids.

Hunting was a common and most favourite game among the kings, vassal princes, chieftains, nobles and landlords. They hunted wild animals such as

elephants by using clever traps. Tribes of ancient Bengal such as Pulinda, Śabara, Niṣāda and Chaṇḍāla were hunters by profession. Fishing also seems have been one of the pastimes of ancient Bengal. Rowing was probably one of the physical exercises among some men and women in ancient Bengal. In the Kāmauli Copper-plate Inscription of Vaidyadeva,¹¹⁰ it is stated that the boatmen or mariners of Vaidyadeva were in a pleasurable mood after conquering the southern Bengal in naval war. The Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena states that in the sports of conquest of the western dominion, Vijayasena advanced along the course of the Ganges with his naval fleet.¹¹¹ Thus, naval fleet was highly helpful in ancient days for leading conquests.

In the Khālimpur Copper-plate Inscription of Dharmapāla,¹¹² it is stated that the most illustrious Mahārājādhirāja Dhamapāla used to hear his own praises from the lips of the parrots. In ancient Bengal, the kings or wealthy persons used to keep parrots or other birds which could reproduce human voice. In this inscription, we find also the playful children used to sing in the courtyard in favour of king Dharmapāla at the time of playing. So, it seems that children also took active parts in games and sports.

Betting seems to have been a sport prevalent in Bengal as stated by Sarvānanda in his Ṭīkāsarvasva. Snake charming was also a type of game. The people watched with interest and pleasure the snake charming feats showed by snake-charmers, who were known as Vādiyā (i.e. *bede*). They used to beg money by displaying their games with snakes.

Vātsyāyana in his *Kāmasūtra* also describes some of the sports enjoyed by girls.¹¹³ They sometimes played with dice or cards. They also sometimes built small houses of earth and of wood. Some physical exercises for girls are also mentioned in his book such as the games of hide and seek, spinning round holding each other's outstretched arms, blind man's buff, etc. In this connection, it may be stated that these games, which were prevalent in ancient Bengal are

even now found among boys and girls. Kanduka play is an old game referred to by Bhāsa. In the *Daśakumāracharita* written by Daṇḍin there is also a reference to such a game. It was a play with a ball. The commentator of the *Kāmasūtra* illustrates the pastime of *kadamba yuddha*.¹¹⁴ In the commentary, it is mentioned that instead of soft balls of *kadamba* flowers, the people of northern Bengal used sticks and stone. It may be assumed that something like modern hockey game might have been played by the people in ancient Bengal with sticks and stones.

The game of swinging or *dolākrīdā* was another favourite game of the ladies of ancient Bengal. Dhoyī in his *Pavanadūta* states that in the capital city of Lakṣmaṇasena, there were pleasant parks, where young women used to amuse themselves by swinging to and fro in swinging boxes.¹¹⁵ Picnic in the garden was one of the favourite pastimes of ancient Bengal. It was a popular pastime referred to by Vātsyāyaṇa again and again.¹¹⁶ Dhoyī in his *Pavanadūta* draws the attention of the people to the fact that the playful women of the Suhma country would amuse themselves by indulging in swimming and some other kinds of aquatic sports (*jala-keṭī*). Gardening was also a favourite pastime of the people of Bengal as mentioned by Dhoyī. People in those days planted the trees and creepers in the courtyard of every house to beautify the houses.

Apart from the above mentioned description of sports and pastimes-singing, dancing and playing of musical instruments seem to have been common pastime among men and women in ancient Bengal and Assam. The Edilpur Copper-Plate Inscription of Keśavasena¹¹⁷ bears the testimony to the facts that kings and wealthy persons would amuse themselves by watching the dances of the well-dressed courtesans in the evening. The Deopāra Inscription of Vijayasena¹¹⁸ reveals a dancing damsel. It is stated that the temple of God Pradyuneśvara was provided with 100 beautiful damsels. So, *devadāsīs* were engaged in temples to take part in such entertaining festivals. The Bhuvaneśwar Inscription of Bhaṭṭabhavadēva¹¹⁹ informs us that king Bhavadēva provided for

the temple of the deity Harimedhas one hundred damsels. The poet Jayadeva and his wife Padmāvati were noted for their musical talents at the court of Lakṣmaṇasena. From the above description, therefore, it is evident that games and other pastimes continued in Bengal from the very remotest time to modern age.

However, from the description given above it is evident that these could be afforded of one who had plenty of leisure to enjoy and an ample fortune to provide for the means of enjoyments.

2.1.7. Manners and Customs

Manners are a valuable index of the mental and moral tone of the society in any age. It usually covers various forms of action. On the other hand, customs control every phase of man's mental and moral activities. The two are complementary to each other. The epigraphic materials with the help of earliest Bengali literature have thrown much light on the prevailing manners and customs as a whole.

Bestowal of dowries at the time of marriage was the prevailing custom in ancient Bengal. The Tipperah Copper-plate Grant of Lokanātha¹²⁰ in or about the middle of the 7th century A.D. furnishes us with evidence in support of the custom of inter-caste marriage, but this was not a regular custom among the aristocratic people. There was a curious custom of giving away a younger sister of the bride to the bridegroom as a part of dowry. In ancient Bengal as is evident from the inscriptions, there was the custom of selling land.¹²¹ Sometimes, lands were given as free gifts according to the principle of *nīvīdharmā* (religious impulsion) or as being not transferable in the future to Brāhmaṇas, temples, etc. in ancient Bengal and Assam. Ceremonies connected with birth appear to be a social custom in ancient Bengal. It was the custom to offer land grant in the so called ceremony. The gift of a golden horse to the Brāhmaṇas during a solar eclipse was another

custom that persisted in ancient Bengal. Considering the social customs from the religious point of view, it may be stated that religious gift either in the form of land or anything else, on auspicious days like the eleventh lunar day (*ekādaśī*) or on the last day of the month (*saṁkrānti*) was considered to be meritorious. Further it may be stated that charity during a lunar or a solar eclipse was also thought to be efficacious. Similar instances of ancient custom are also found from the Kāmāuli Copper-plate Inscription of Vaidyadeva. It records the gift of land made during the last day of the month of Vaiśākha on an auspicious eleventh lunar day.¹²²

The custom of listening to the recitation of the epics was observed by the people of ancient Bengal. To receive the guest was also one of the social customs of ancient society of Bengal.¹²³ There was a custom of ancient people of Bengal to hear their own praises even from the lips of parrots or other kinds of birds. The most reliable pet in ancient Bengal was the dog. The domestic dogs also served the purpose of keeping a watch over the house.

Another peculiar custom in ancient Bengal was listening to the songs describing the glories of some of the popular Pāla kings of Bengal like Mahīpāla. It is said that Rāmapāla was so fond of justice that he impaled his only son to death as the latter committed a wrongful act against a woman. There was also the custom of electing a king in order to save the country from danger during dire necessity.¹²⁴

We also know that the temple girls who served as *devadāsīs*, had been recruited from various castes, and some of them belonged to respectable families. It was also a custom of ancient days that a pregnant woman used to take a vow to dedicate her child to the service of a temple, if turned out to be female.¹²⁵

It seems that kings and well-to-do people in Bengal would thus amuse themselves in the evening by watching the dance of the courtesans. The

inscription of Āssam bears the evidence of the existence of well-dressed courtesans.¹²⁶ There were numerous accomplished prostitutes (*vārārāmāh*) who were adept in both vocal and instrumental music and in dancing. Numerous terracotta plaques discovered at Maināmati and Pāhārpur and many stone and metal images found in Bengal also prove beyond doubt that dancing and vocal and instrumental music were cultivated in ancient Bengal during the reign of Pāla and Sena kings of Bengal and Bihar. There was also socio-religious custom in ancient Bengal. The worship of Goddess Dūrgā was in vogue and very popular among the Bengalese. Kālipūjā, Bhraṭṛi-dvitīyā, Sarasvatī *pūjā* were also very famous in Bengal.

2.1.8. Conveyances

Like now days, conveyance used to be the lifeline of society in those days too. There were bullock cart, horse, carriage, elephants and boats for communication. The cart of the bullock was used even for the bridal procession and its shape did not change completely from the modern type.¹²⁷ Horses,¹²⁸ carriages and elephants were probably meant for the wealthy and elite. Elephants, both elements of war and sign of aristocratic conveyance, were known in Bengal from very early times.¹²⁹ The Bengali *Charyāpadas* refer to the capture of camels by means of snares.¹³⁰ In a country covered with a network of rivers, those were the main ways to carry boats. The early *Charyāpadas* often refer to boats including sea-going vessels.¹³¹ Ferry boats were also in use, and had to be paid for by means of cowries.¹³²

2.1.9. Luxury and Immorality

Bengal was primarily a rural country and a beautiful description of its countryside is given in the book of *Rāmacharita*.¹³³ But in ancient times, there were also many cities and important commercial centres, which were famous for

wealth and luxury. The contemporary poets give us a vivid picture of the wealthy cities of ancient Bengal, namely Rāmāvati and Vijayapura, the capital cities of the Pālas and the Senas respectively. All these cities were the homes of all shades of peoples including all ages and countries. Luxuries were manifested in handsome fabrics, jewellery, palace buildings, expensive furniture and rich festivals. The abundance of food supply and the invited guests were the main features of these festivals in modern Bengal.

Wealth, luxury and extravagance are not compatible with a strict code of morality. Literary and epigraphic sources testify to the immorality and sensual excesses in ancient Bengal. Dhoyī implies that these were not only tolerated, but regarded as a part of normal social life.

2.2. Economy

2.2.1. Agriculture

Wealth is the cornerstone of society and the determinant of its structure. It is indispensable for the welfare of both the individual and the community. The sources available for the reconstruction of economic history of Bengal in ancient times are extremely meagre. So, the writing of economic history of Bengal is a very difficult task. Yet a large number of inscriptions, belonging to the Gupta and post-Gupta periods highlight the economy of Bengal. From the sources, it comes out that agriculture has been given a place of pride in the early literatures, which may be applied for time being. It shared the major source of economy; although there were other sectors, such as animal husbandry, industry, trade and commerce.

From the records, we derive some information about agriculture. The ecological factors prevailing in a region play an important role in determining the economic life of the people in that particular area. The region of Bengal with its distinct geographical divisions is endowed with a natural favourable

environment, which constituted the economic life of early Bengal. Rivers, mountains, forest gave the area an advantage geographical location. The Gaṅgā and its tributaries make its soil fertile resulting huge agricultural production. The easy connectivity through the river channels also gave a chance to transit its surplus to deficit areas. Naturally, trade and commerce evolved, and it brought prosperity and happiness throughout Bengal.

The beginning of agriculture and the cultivation of soil as a means of food started back in the pre-historic times. The land of Bengal is nurtured by rivers; the land is low, and the rainfall is conducive to cultivation. From the beginning the three main rivers, such as Gaṅgā, Yamuna, Brahmaputra, and its tributaries provided the area a rich layer of silt and adequate accounts of organic material, which were necessary for farming. The excavations carried on Bāṅgarh reveals the cultivation of agricultural products that was prevalent in early Bengal. The Mahāsthān Inscription¹³⁴ clearly testifies to the fact that Bengal had enormous production, which created a surplus. The surplus production was stored in a store house or granary (*koṣṭhāgāra*) excavated at Puṇḍranagara to the people afflicted by an emergency situation (*atīyāyika*). The granary must have administered by the state officials.¹³⁵ The crops stored, such as paddy (*dhānya*), sesame (*tila*), mustard seeds (*sarshapa*) are revealed from the excavations. Among all, paddies must have played an important role in agriculture. It is the staple food of Bengalese since the beginning even still now. The *Rāmācharita* also mentions 'paddy plants of various kinds' produced in Varendrī. The inscriptions of Sena kings mention smooth fields growing excellent paddy, and myriads of villages, consisting of land growing paddy in excessive quantities.¹³⁶ The procedure of rice cultivation is also known from the *Raghuvamśa*.¹³⁷ It talks about how while conquering the kingdom of Vaṅga, Raghu uprooted and replanted them like rice plants. Rice was sown in three different ways- by broadcast, by drill, and by transplantation from a seed-bed where it had been broadcast sown earlier. Of

these, the third method is, as a rule, the least risky, and the most profitable. It was known and practised in this province at least as early as the fifth century A.D. The different methods of reaping and threshing also appear to have been similar to those prevailing at present. Apart from these, there were other various crops grown in Bengal during the period. Barley (*yava*), pulses, such as split peas (*kalāi*) and kidney beans (*mug*), maize and mustard are mentioned in the sayings of Khaṇā.¹³⁸ Mustard is mentioned in the Vappaghosavāṭa Grant of Jayanāga¹³⁹ which speaks of *sarsapa-yānaka* (mustard channel) in the Audambarika *viśhaya* of Karṇasuvārṇa. Khaṇā advises sowing *kalāi* and *mug* in the same field followed by the production of mustard.¹⁴⁰ Maize was another crop sown in Bengal and sold at a high price.

Along with cereals, a number of vegetables and fruits were cultivated in Bengal. The vegetables are brinjal, long gourd, radish, arum, trichsanthes, dioeca (*paṭal*), chilli, turmeric etc.¹⁴¹ Fruits grown in the region are mango (*āmra*), bread fruit (*panasa*), pomegranate (*dālimba*), plantain, basia latifolia (*madhuka*), date (*khajura*), ditron (*vija*), figs (*parkati*), tamarind, coconut etc. The Pāla and Sena inscriptions often mention the cultivation of mango and breadfruit.¹⁴² Hiuen-Tsang also refers to the abundant production of *panasa* in Puṇḍravardhana and elaborates a list of fruit which was highly esteemed.¹⁴³ The reference of pomegranates (*dālimba*) has been found from the Govindapur Copper-plate of Lakṣmaṇasena¹⁴⁴ and the Calcutta Sāhityaṇṇasād.¹⁴⁵ The Pāhārpur terracotta plaques¹⁴⁶ frequently depict the plantain tree (Plate-1/2) and the same image is also found in the Chaṇḍī image of the Rajshahi museum.¹⁴⁷ The tree was very popular during the time and every house had some plantain trees. They were not only valued for their delicious fruits, but were useful in many other ways. Instead of soap, the ancient Bengalees used the ashes of bark of plantain trees. Moreover, the plant was used in religious and festive occasions by the Hindus. It seems that people got used to deriving great benefits from these trees. The

Khālimpur Copper-plate¹⁴⁸ refers to *vija* (citron), *khajura* (date) and the Kotālipaḍa Plate of Dharmāditya¹⁴⁹ mention *parkati*. The *Rāmācharita*¹⁵⁰ and the copper plate of Īśvaraghoṣa¹⁵¹ refer to *madhuka* grown in Puṇḍravardhana.

Coconut (*nārikela*) started growing in Bengal widely from 8th century A.D. onwards, especially in the district near the sea and on saline soil. Yet, some amount of coconut was grown in Northern Bengal. *Rāmācharita* refers to Varendra as the favourable soil for the production of coconut.¹⁵² The ripe nuts are delicious to eat while green coconut also supplied a favourite drink. The main commercial products obtained from the tree were oil and fibre.

Areca (*guvaka*) was another product grown in Bengal. The Ashrafpur Copper-plate,¹⁵³ Belāva Cooper-plate of Bhojavarman,¹⁵⁴ Bārrāckpur Copper-plate of Vijayasena¹⁵⁵ and *Rāmācharita*¹⁵⁶ mention its cultivation. It was a commercial item which brought an enormous wealth to Bengal. The Calcutta Sāhitya Parisad Copper-plate of Viśvarūpasena¹⁵⁷ refers to land extensively for producing areca. The records of the Chandras and the Varmans also mention its cultivation. The lucrative trade of areca and coconut had been carried on in a large part of eastern Bengal as it is evident from the *Manasāmaṅgala*¹⁵⁸ and *Chaṇḍīmaṅgala kāvyas*.¹⁵⁹ The state derived considerable revenue from these two items.

Betel-vines were also cultivated in the form of plantations called *barajas* and the cultivators got very much economic prosperity from the item.¹⁶⁰ It was cultivated mainly in eastern Bengal under the hands of a class of people named as Bārai or Bārujivī. Due to its exorbitant price, Bengal, being the source of the major share of its production, must have derived great profits from this trade.

In ancient Bengal cotton was cultivated widely in the region. The Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena refers to the fact that seeds of cotton production were well-known to the common villagers.¹⁶¹ The cultivation of cotton is also testified to by the early *Charyāpadas*. Mārco Polo speaks of people who derived great wealth from the cultivation of cotton.¹⁶²

We also come across references to the cultivation of jute. There is mention of *paṭ-śāḍi* from the medieval Bengali literature. In Sanskrit, *paṭṭa-Vastra* indicates woven silk. It is, therefore, possible that there had been some amount of silk produced in parts of North Bengal. But the term in modern Bengali denotes jute.

Rāmacharita made reference to different varieties of excellent flowers grown in Bengal. These are Aśoka, Keśara, Madhuka, Kanaka, Ketaka, Mālati, Nagaleesara, and lotus.¹⁶³ Medicinal fruits such as āmlaka, śrīphala, haritaki, etc. were also grown in Bengal. Bamboo is another significant product, and it was used for construction of houses and manufacturing of household articles such as baskets, sun-shads, winnowing baskets, mats, fan etc.¹⁶⁴ It was also used for fencing the house and field.

After agriculture, animal husbandry occupied the second position in the occupational ladder. Animals were used for ploughing, transportation, and various dairy products. They were also sources of meat. In ancient India, the number of cattle measured one's wealth. The milch cow was often gifted to religious institutions and Brāhmaṇas for gaining religious merit. The cow was regarded as a sacred animal. Mārco Polo¹⁶⁵ observes that "the people of Bengal has oxen as tall as elephants, but not so big. They live on flesh and milk and rice". Other domestic animals used to be kept by the Bengalees were buffaloes, goats, sheep, cows, oxen, horses, elephants, camel etc.¹⁶⁶ The buffaloes were used as conveyance. In rural areas or areas of uneven road the main medium of transport was carts drawn by buffaloes or oxen. The term *go-ratha* has been found in the second grant of Dharmāditya.¹⁶⁷ The horses mainly brought from central Asia were used for the purpose of warfare. It was considered as a kind of luxury used by the well-to-do class in Bengal. Elephants also were used for the purpose of war. It was also a medium of conveyance in Bengal from the very early period. It was applied for doing some kind of heavy work. Apart from these, the elephant

was also used in the time of hunting and riding by the rich. The handicrafts of ivory extracted from elephants were also in great demand in the market. The *dantakāras* were engaged in this profitable industry.¹⁶⁸ The camels were prevalent in ancient Bengal, as is proven by the different sources. The *Charyāpadas* refer to camels.¹⁶⁹ The camels were not indigenous; they were possibly brought into Bengal from the west.

The other animals depicted in the Pāhārpur and Maināmati sculptures are goats, sheep, deer, monkeys, boar, jackals, lions, tigers, hare, tortoise, mongoose, mice, lizards, etc. Excavations conducted in Pāhārpur reveals the existence of rhinoceros in ancient Bengal.¹⁷⁰ The rhinoceros were valuable, as it is evident from the writings of Sulaiman and Masudi that fashionable and costly girdles were made of the horns of the rhinoceros.¹⁷¹ The plaques of Pāhārpur terracotta also depict various birds, such as geese, ducks, peacocks and parrots etc.¹⁷²

Fish was a dietary item found in ancient Bengal and even Brāhmaṇas were permitted to eat such items.¹⁷³ The *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa* mentions three kinds of fish, such as *rohita*, *sakula*, and *śaphara*.¹⁷⁴ *Iliśa* is mentioned in Jimūtavāhaṇa's account as a common food enjoyed the people of ancient Bengal. Some dried fish were also very popular among the poor people, as is claimed by Sarvānanda.¹⁷⁵ It is quite reasonable to think that fishery constituted an important occupation among the large section of people.

The sugar-cane was significant product in ancient Bengal. The *Rāmacharita* refers to the cultivation of sugarcane plant in Varendrī.¹⁷⁶ It is known from the sources that the best quality of sugarcane was produced in Puṇḍra and the crop was named Pauṇḍraka after the producing region. Besides sugar-cane, contemporary records mention a variety of other crops grown in different parts of Bengal, such as malabathrum and spikenard, as mentioned in *Periplus*.¹⁷⁷ The country produced enormous production that it needed to be exported.

2.2.2. Arts and Crafts

Although agriculture formed the predominant feature of Bengal's economy, a number of crafts and industries were developed at a very early period and played an important role in the lives of the people. The most noteworthy among these seem to have been textiles, sugar, metal-work, stone-work, wood-work and pottery etc.

All the evidences related to ancient history, supplies the information about industries. There were four varieties of textile commodity, which were manufactured viz. *kṣauma*, *dukūla*, *patrorṇa* and *kārpāsika*. The first two were varieties of linen, the third was a kind of silk, and *kārpāsika* was cotton. All these were produced in various parts of India, but Vaṅga and other regions of Bengal produced these in enormous quantities. Among the textiles, *muslin* had a great demand in foreign markets. It was a variety of cotton. *Periplus* bears witness to the fact that *muslins* of the finest sort were exported from Bengal.

Another industry which seems to have made considerable headway, was sugar. Bengal was probably one of the earliest homes of sugarcane cultivation. Pauṇḍraka produced enormous sugar for the purpose of export. Salt was a product manufactured from infiltrated sea water or subsoil brine. Pottery appears to have been practised on an extensive scale. A variety of potteries, such as jars, spotted vases or *loṭās*, cooking utensils, dishes, ink wells, lamps, saucers, *hāṇḍi*, inkpots and lamps are discovered from excavation at Pāhārpur assigned to 8th or 9th century A.D. The rich men and royal men who had sufficient money used the metallic items. It is stated in the *Tābāqat-i-Nāsiri*¹⁷⁸ that Lakṣmaṇasena dined from gold and silver plates. Jewellery, too, provided occupation to a considerable group of metal workers. The Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena¹⁷⁹ mentions precious stones, necklaces, ear-rings, anklets, garlands and golden bracelets made of various metals. The Vallānsena's Naihāṭi Inscription mentions the the

temple girls, the women of the royal household and maidservants adorned themselves with various valuable ornaments.¹⁸⁰

Apart from these, a large number of agricultural implements were made of metal. Iron, bronze, silver, copper, brass, tin were among the metals that were used. Stone and wood were two other industries during the period under survey. The craftsmen made various inscriptions by engraving the stone. Alongside stone carving, wood carving and carpentry also appear to have been practised on an extensive scale, although owing to the perishable nature of wood only a few architectural specimens of wood-carving of the pre-Muhammadan period have come down to us. It is evident that the wood worker built houses and temples and also manufactured household furniture, boats, ships, and wheeled carriages.

The numerous terracotta plaques found at Pāhārpur, Mahāsthān, Sābhār, and such places also bear witness to the extensiveness of the art of ceramics. From the edict of Govindakeśava¹⁸¹ found at Bhātera, it appears that ivory craft was also prevalent. Besides, building of boats and ship certainly had a special place. In the Gunāighar Inscription of Vainyagupta,¹⁸² there is a reference to a harbour, and in the second edict of Dharmāditya,¹⁸³ the word *naṣṣandaka* perhaps means 'port', 'harbour' or 'dock'. From all of this, it can be understood that the construction of all manners of river boats and ocean going ship was indeed a thriving craft and trade in ancient Bengal.

We are completely in the dark about the nature and organisation of industrial labour. But some details in the inscriptions assigned to the 5th and the 6th century speak of trade and trade-guilds.¹⁸⁴ From them we may glean that the guild president, the chief merchant, and the chief craftsman overwhelmed in the local administration.

2.2.3. Trade and Commerce

The main channel of the distribution of industrial products is trade. Being a high fertile land, Bengal produced enormous agricultural and industrial productions resulting surplus production. Perhaps most of the surplus production was handed over to traders and merchants in the city, and then it was exported to other parts of the country or other countries. In Bengal, the prevalence trade and commerce is established by the indigenous and foreign literatures since time immemorial. The factors behind the exportation of merchandises in Bengal were the enormous surplus production which was also qualitative in nature. Thus it created a heavy demand in nearby markets and also foreign markets. The other factor is the unrivalled facilities for movement afforded by the sea coast and river systems of the province. After meeting the local demand, the surplus production was transported to nearby areas, and also to foreign markets. The *Periplus* bears testimony to the fact that as early as the 1st century A.D., raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloth came into Bengal from China and were exported, in turn, to Tamil land via the Ganges. The trade in salt too was very lucrative. Certainly, there was a thriving internal trade in both fresh and dried fish. Bhavadeva Bhaṭṭa speaks of the various kinds of fish, including dried fish. Both fresh and dried fish were edible and so were articles of trade and commerce. Bengal produced enormous betel-nut, betel-vines, coconut etc. that created a demand in nearby areas. The trade in bay leaves and pepper had also been popular during this time and undoubtedly this was a very prosperous trade too. The same has been said for cotton and other textiles, and it can be seen from all the sources that the textile crafts and their trade were very old. Trade between Gauḍa and Gujrat is hinted at in Vidyapati's *Puruṣa Parīkṣā*. The chief route of internal trade was probably waterways of the province and sometimes the roadways. This happened as waterways were safer than roadways. The itineraries of Fā-hien and Hiuen-Tsang point to the existence of such land routes connecting some of the important cities

of the province. One of these was the route which connected Puṇḍravardhana with Kāmarūpa.

The external trade was also carried on by the waterways. The commodities exported consist of malabathrum, Gangetic spikenard, pearls, and muslins of the finest sorts. They were all shipped from a market town called Gaṅge. Tāmralipta, a port lying on the Rupnarayan River played a vital role exporting the commodities abroad. From very ancient times, Kāmarūpa was noted for her textiles, sandal and *agaru*, and it seem likely that these were taken to the main centres of business in northern India along this highway. This route extended further into China through the hills of Assam or Manipur and upper Burma.

2.2.4. Means of Exchange

Coinage as a medium of exchange is indicative of economic advancement. In facilitating trade and commerce, there must have been a developed of currency system. The use of coinage in Bengal can be traced from the pre-Christian era. But it is very difficult to make a comprehensive history of coinage due to paucity of evidence. In the Mahāsthān Inscription, we note the usage of a coin called the *gaṇḍaka* and *kakanika*. There were gold coins namely as *caltis* and *kallais* referred to by *Periplus*. These were in circulation in the great business centres. The finds of punch-marked metal pieces and cast copper coins indicate the existence of currency system in ancient Bengal a few centuries before the Christian era. The Gupta period saw the existence of flourishing trade and commerce in Puṇḍravardhana. The period also marked the circulation of both gold and silver coins. The gold and silver coins were called *dinārs* and *rūpaka* respectively. But surprisingly, the widespread use of gold and silver coins of the Gupta era almost vanished from the 7th century A.D. onwards, though there were some sort of silver coins in south-eastern Bengal. Of course, *cowrie* shells were in

use as the smallest unit of currency throughout the period in question. In the period of feudal economy, the smallest unit kept the economy in motion. The use of *cowries* as medium was there in the rural areas even in the late 19th century A.D., even afterwards in some places. Cowries were then imported from Maldives in exchange of other items.

¹ The word 'caste' is of Portuguese origin and is used in Europe to designate the different tribes or classes into which the people of India are divided. The Sanskrit word *varṇa* means colour. It was probably first coined to designate the difference of colour between Aryans and the indigenous people. Later it grew into a regular caste system.

² In the hymn, it is laid down that Brāhmaṇas originated from the mouth of an Ādi Puruṣa(Brahmā), the Kṣatriya from his arms, and the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras from his knees and feet respectively. This is a clear indication of their hierarchy. Traditionally the duties of Brāhmaṇas consisted of studying, teaching, sacrificing, officiating during the sacrifices and associated functions. They were respected by the people as they had to follow a strict code of life. *Puruṣasūkta*, X. 9, 12.

The Kṣatriyas come to the next order and their assigned responsibilities included protection of the country from internal and external attack. They were also expected to participate in the administrative work of the country. *Manu Smṛiti*, I, 89.

The Vaiśyas followed the Kṣatriyas in social order. The functions given to them included studying, performance of sacrifices, making gifts, agriculture, cattle rearing, usury and trade. They accounted for the largest number of land holdings during the times of the *mahājanapadas*. They were exploited by the upper two higher *varṇas* and thus their position was not much better than that of the Śūdras, the lower caste. *Arthaśāstra*, 1.3.7; *Manu Smṛiti*, X, 79.

Śūdras belonged to the lowest rung of social ladder in ancient times. Their very existence is for providing services to the upper classes (*varṇas*) such is the claim of the texts. They worked as artisans, agricultural labourers and farmers. Education and religious activities were forbidden for them. They might be 'expelled at will' and 'slain at pleasure' at the time of performing their duties.

³ Anthropologists believe that this multiplicity happened due to many factors. Firstly, the emergence of various functional groups that achieved hereditary character and followed the

law of instinct and rebellion. Secondly, in the Brahmanical society, racial castes emerged through the intrusion of tribal groups. Thirdly, the emergence of sectarian castes and the factor of migration and cross breeding, etc., added to their number. Yajñavalkya found the presence of three reasons; occupational castes, tribal castes and cross-breeds. The Brāhmaṇical jurists invented the theory of Anuloma and Pratiloma sons or *jātis* to adjust these factors Chattopadhyaya, S., *Social Life in Ancient India in the Background of the Yajñavalkya-Smṛiti*, Calcutta, Academic Publishers, 1965, pp. 13ff.

⁴ Hood, John, W., (tr.), *History of the Bengali people, Translated from the original Bengali Bāṅgālir Itihas of Niharranjan Ray*, Kolkata: Orient Blackswan, 1994, p. 161.

⁵ II, XIII- XIV; Sastri, H. P., (ed.), *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa*, Calcutta, 1897.

⁶ Vidyasagara Jivanananda(ed.), *Brama-vaivarta Purāṇa*, Part-I, *Brāhma Khaṇḍa*, Ch. X.VV, pp. 16-21, 90-137.

⁷ Mukherji, R.R., and S.K. Maity., 'Mānhāli Copper-plate Grant of Madanpāla', *Corpus of Bengal Inscriptions*, Calcutta: Firma, K.L .Mukhopadhyay, 1967, p. 209-218; Mukherji, R.R., and S.K. Maity., 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijaysena', p. 244-257.

⁸ Bhandarkar, D.R., 'The Nāgara Brāhmaṇas and the Bengal Kāyasthas', *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. LXI, 1932, p. 41, 61; Ghosh, J.C., 'Grant of Bhāskara Varman of Kāmarūpa and the Nāgara Brāhmaṇa', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. VI, 1930, p. 60ff.

⁹ Eggeling, J., *Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Library of the India Office*, London, 1887; Majumdar, R.C., (ed.), *History of Bengal*, Vol. I, Dacca: University of Dacca, 1943, p. 585.

¹⁰ Gupta, K., 'The Bhātera Copper-plate Grant of Īsanadeva', *Copper-plate of Sylhet*, Vol. I, Sylhet: Lipika Enterprises, 1967, p. 184.

¹¹ *Uśanas*, V. 26.

¹² *Chandraprabha*, p. 21.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 213.

¹⁴ *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*, Brahma Khaṇḍa, X, III.

¹⁵ The author of *Vallālacharita* narrates a story about Vallālasena's encounter with a business merchant Vallavānanda who belonged to the Suvarṇavaṇika community. Vallālasena became angry as Vallavānanda could not comply with the king's request and denoted him to the lower social status of a Śūdra and upgraded the position of the Kaivartas. Cf. Chatterjee, Bhaskar, *The Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Vol. L, 1988, p-169

¹⁶ Cf. *Veda-Vyāśa*, 1. 12-13; Tripathi, R.P., *Social and Religious Aspects in Bengal Inscriptions*, Calcutta: Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., 1987, p. 17.

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- ¹⁷ *Atharvaveda*, II,V, 23, V. 3; Satvalekar, Damodar., and Udayveer Shastri,(tr.), *Atharvaveda kā Subodh Bhāṣya*, Swadhyaya Mandal, Pardi, 1985, p. 98.
- ¹⁸ *Bṛihadāraṇyakapaniṣada*, IV, 4.17; Roer, E., (tr.), *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣhad*, rpt., New Delhi: Nag Publishers,1979, p. 444.
- ¹⁹ Altekar, A.S, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1938, reprint 1978, p. 4.
- ²⁰ Verma, Anjali, *Women and Society in Early Medieval India Re-Interpreting Epigraphs*, London: Routledge & Co., 2019, p. 24.
- ²¹ Panikkar, K.M., 'The Middle Period', in Tara Ali Beg (ed.), *Women of India*, New Delhi: Publication Division, 1959, p-9.
- ²² Ramaswamy, Vijaya, 'Anklets on the Feet: Women Saints in Medieval Society', *Indian Historical Review*, Vol. 17, No.1-2, 1990-91, p-66.
- ²³ Vātsyāṇa, *The Kāmasūtra*, VI. 5.33.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, V. 6. 41.
- ²⁵ *Mahābhārata*, 46, 14, and 20, 21.
- ²⁶ *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, II 2. 3. 45.
- ²⁷ Vasiṣṭha, *Dharmasūtra*, V. I.
- ²⁸ Chattapadhaya, S, *op.cit*, pp- 106-112.
- ²⁹ *Manu*, III, 56.
- ³⁰ Roy, Bharati., 'Bengali Women and Politics of Joint Family', *Economic and Political Weekly* , Vol. 26, No-52, 1991, p. 3015-3019; Ghosh, G.G., and A. Datta., 'The Decline in the Status of Women in Early Medieval Bengal-A Raison D'etre of the of the Success of Turkish Onslaught', *Journal of The Institute of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXIV,No-2,2007, p. 63.
- ³¹ Devadāsī, which literally means 'female slaves of the deity', were a specialised group of women who dedicated themselves to the deities of a temple. Leslie Orr identifies them as a socially distinct category of 'devotee of God' (*tevaraṭiyār*), 'daughter of God' (*tevaṇār makal*) and 'woman of the temple' (*taliyilār, patiyilār*). During the early medieval period, they were the main beneficiary of royal patronage. Their names appear in many inscriptions. Besides being associated with the temple, they seem to have been involved in land transaction. Orr, Leslie C., *Donors, Devotees, and Daughters of God; Temple Women in Medieval Tamil Nadu*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, p. 37; Verma, Anjali, *op.cit*, p. 222.
- ³² Girindra Mohon Sarkar, *The History of Bengal*, p. 51.
- ³³ *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, IV, 269.

³⁴ *Dāyabhāga*, 149.

³⁵ In Bengal polygamy was prevalent due to the evils of *kulinism*. It was in vogue only among the highest class of Brāhmaṇas in Bengal as classified by Vallālsena. They used to pursue polygamy. But we should not be carried away, however, by the notion that marrying many wives was either very common or was not looked down upon. Kane, P.V., *History of Dharmasāstra, (Ancient and Medieval Religion and Civil Law, Vol. II, Part. I, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1941, p. 553.*

³⁶ Mukherji, R.R., and S.K. Maity., 'The Moṅghyr Copper plate', p. 114-130.

³⁷ Mukherji, R.R., and S.K. Maity., 'The Bāṅgarh Copper-plate of Mahīpāla', p. 197-207.

³⁸ Colebrook, H.T., (tr.), *Dāyabhāga of Jimūtavāhaṇa*, Calcutta, 1810, p. 85.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 105.

⁴⁰ 'Strīdhana' literally means 'woman's property'. The word also derived from the concept of bride price. Generally, the land was given in the form of dowry items, and it was considered *strīdhana*. Manu gives a comprehensive description of *strīdhana*. According to him, that which is given over the nuptial fire (*adhyāgnī*), that which is given in the bridal procession (*adhyāvahanikā*), that (which is) received from brother, mother and father, (all this) is called the six-fold property of woman. Manu, IX, 194; Burnell, A.C. and E.W. Hopkins, 2nd edn., New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1971, p. 279.

Yājñavalkya has also given a similar enumeration, but added to the list the compensation which is given to a superseded wife (*adhivedanika*). The text of Yājñavalkya says that what was given to a woman by father, brother, mother or her husband or received by her at the nuptial fire as presented on her suppression (*adhivedanika*) and the like (*ādi*), is the woman's property. Yājñavalkya, II, 143-44; Pandeya, Umesh Chandra and Narain Mishra, (tr.), *Yājñavalkya Smṛiti*, 7th edn., Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Bhawan, 2003, p. 301-02.

⁴¹ Varma Anjali, *op.cit*, p. 206.

⁴² Mukherjee Sandhya, *Some Aspects of Social Life in Ancient India 325 B.C-A.D 200*, Allahabad, 1976, pp. 124 ff.

⁴³ *Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa*, II. 8.11.

⁴⁴ II. 8. 8-10.

⁴⁵ Cf. R.C. Majumdar. (ed.), *op.cit*, p. 609.

⁴⁶ Majumdar, B.P., *Socio-Economic History of Northern India (1030-1194)*, Calcutta, 1960, p. 140.

⁴⁷ Mukherji, R.R., and S.K. Maity., 'The Rāmapāla Copper-plate of Śrīchandra', p. 227.

⁴⁸ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'The Naihāti Copper-plate of Vallālsena', p. 266.

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- ⁴⁹ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity, 'Rāmgūñj Copper-plate Inscription of Ísvaraghoṣa', p. 365.
- ⁵⁰ Manu, II, 165.
- ⁵¹ Kielhorn, F., (ed.), *Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣhya of Patañjali*, Vol. I, Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1880, p-1; Kane, P.V., *op.cit.*, p. 327.
- ⁵² Mookherjee, R.K., *Ancient Indian Education*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1969, p. 496.
- ⁵³ Bhattacharya, P., 'Nidhānpur Copper-plates of Bhāskaravarman', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XII, 1913-14, pp. 73-74; Bhattacharya, P., 'Two Lost Plates of Nidhānpur Copper-plates of Bhāskaravarman', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XIX, 1927-28, pp. 118-120; Bhattacharya, P., 'A Third Lost Plate of the Nidhānpur Plates of Bhāskaravarman', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XIX, pp. 247; Basak, R.G., 'Tipperah Copper-plate Grant of Loknātha: the 44th year', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XIV, 1919-1920, p. 306-309.
- ⁵⁴ Mukherji, R.R., and S.K., Maity, 'The Gunāighar Copper-plate Inscription of Vainya Gupta G.E. 188 (=507 AD)', p. 65.
- ⁵⁵ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'The Faridpur Copper-plate Inscription of Dharmāditya', p. 80.
- ⁵⁶ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity, 'Mallāsarul Copper-plate Inscription of Vijayasena of the time of Gopachandra: Regnal year 3', p. 38.
- ⁵⁷ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity, 'Khālimpur Copper-plate Inscription of Dharmapāla', p. 96.
- ⁵⁸ During the reign of Nayapāla it may be stated that the central hall had six gates which opened into six colleges. Each college had one hundred students and eight professors. The portraits of Nāgārjuna, and Atīśa Dīpaṅkara adorned the main entrance and the subjects taught emphatically, were grammar, theology and philosophy. But the most important subject that was taught and gained recognition was Tāntricism. Vikramaśīla's fame rests mainly on producing Tāntrika scholars. It may be mentioned in this connection that the titles of the Buddhist scholars were generally Āchārya, Mahāchārya, Upādhyāya, Mahopādhyāya, Paṇḍita, Mahāpaṇḍita and Bhikṣu.

It is known that there were 108 professors at the time of Dīpaṅkara. Each of the six gates had a gate-keeper and only erudite scholars were appointed as gate-keepers. In this period students seeking admission to this University were put to a test before one of the gate-keepers, who were equivalent to the heads of the departments of modern universities. A Board consisting of eminent professors supervised affairs of the university and issued instructions to the professors. Paul, P.L., *Early History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Calcutta: The Indian Research Institute, 1940, p. 27.

- ⁵⁹ Mukherji, R.R., and S.K. Maity., 'Mahābodhi Inscription of the time of Dharmapāla', p. 112.

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- ⁶⁰ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Moñghyr Copper-plate grant of Devapala', p. 119.
- ⁶¹ Sastri Hirananda., 'The Nālandā copper plate of Devapāladeva', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XVII, 1923-24, pp. 310-327.
- ⁶² Mukherji, R.R. and S.K. Maity, 'Ghoṣṛavan Rock Inscription of the Time of Devapāla: Viradeva Praśasti', pp. 131-140; Maitra, A.K., *Gauḍalekhamālā*, Rājshāhi: Varendra Research Society, 1319 (B.S.), p. 46-50.
- ⁶³ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Gayā Stone Pillar Inscription of the time of Nārāyaṇapāla', p. 43.
- ⁶⁴ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Garuḍa Pillar Inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla', p. 151.
- ⁶⁵ Guravamiśra was a versatile genius and was renowned for the treasures of speech, scholarship in the Vedas; supreme devotion to statecraft, relation with a family shining in splendour due to proficiency in Vedic precepts, love for speaking highly of the great and profound knowledge of astrology. It is also stated in the inscription that due to his good qualities King Nārāyaṇapāla obtained equal favour from both the Goddess of fortune and the Goddess of learning. Giving up their respective hostilities, the two resided together as friends in the place of Nārāyaṇapāla millionaire and a scholar.
- The Brāhmaṇa minister Guravamiśra was also a great debater and his arguments were nothing but the constant application of different sciences before the assemblage of learned persons. At the same time he was a brave fighter. The title of Kaliyuga-Vālmīki was rightly conferred on him. *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity, 'Bhāgalpur Copper-plate Inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla', p. 166.
- ⁶⁷ Bengal, Cat. of Bd Sans.MS, Cambridge University Library, p. 101.
- ⁶⁸ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena', p. 258.
- ⁶⁹ The *Dānasāgara* deals with various kinds of gifts and ceremonies connected therewith. The *Adbhutasāgara* deals with omens and portents. Paul, P.L., *op.cit*, p. 8.
- ⁷⁰ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity, 'Calcutta Sāhitya Parisat Copper-plate of Viśvarūpasena', p. 327.
- ⁷¹ Beal, Samuel,(tr.),*Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World, Translated from the Chinese of Hiuen-Tsang(A.D.629)*, Vol. I, London: Kegan Paul Trench Trubner & Co Ltd., 1906, pp. 77-79; Beal Samuel, *The Life of Hiuen Tsiang by the Shaman Hwui Li: With an Introduction containing an Account of the works of I-tsing*, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1911, p. 112.
- ⁷² Paul, P. L., *op.cit*, p. 6.

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- ⁷³ Masaka or *masa* is the name which denotes a class of kidney Bean. *Mudga* is the name commonly applied to a class of pulse known as the green grain. Tila is the name commonly given to Sesamum seeds.
- ⁷⁴ The word *śaka* was generally used to denote the leaves and tender slender branches of some edible plants and creepers. It also indicates 'Pot herb'. Śākapatra or leaves to edible pot herbs and some common vegetable, which were used for making curry, sauces and vegetable soup in the kitchen in ancient Bengal, are mentioned in one of the verses of Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena. Mukherji, R. R., & S.K. Maity, 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena', p. 248.
- ⁷⁵ Vidyasagara, Jivananda, (ed.), *Chikitsā Saṁgraha* of Hindu Medicine by Chakrapānidatta, Calcutta: Saraswati Press, 1888, p. 48.
- ⁷⁶ Tripathi, R.P., *op.cit*, 1987, p. 85.
- ⁷⁷ Vidyasagar, Jivananda (ed.), *op.cit*, p. 48.
- ⁷⁸ Chakravarty, T.N., *Food and Drink in Ancient Bengal*, Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1957, p. 35.
- ⁷⁹ Gupta Umesh Chandra, *Vaidyaka Śabdāsindhu*, Varanasi: Chhaukhamba Oientalia, 4th Edition, 1999, p. 964
- ⁸⁰ II. 5. 44-46.
- ⁸¹ Sastri, T. Ganapati, (ed.), *The Namaliṅganusasanas* of Amara Siṁha with the commentary of Sarvānanda, Trivandrum, Part. I, 1914, pp. 188-194. The author also refers to his commentary the name of Timi or whale, which is described as being a gigantic fish found in the deep water of the ocean.
- ⁸² *Ibid*, p. 186.
- ⁸³ Dikshit, K.N., 'Excavation at Pāhārpur, Bengal', *Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 55, Delhi, 1938, Chap.5, pp. 65, Plate. XLIX f.
- ⁸⁴ Vidyaratna, Girish Chandra, (ed.), *Prāyaschitta-Prakaraṇa of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva*, Rajshahi: Varendra Research Society, p. 67.
- ⁸⁵ Sarvānanda, 'Ṭikāsarvasva', *Sāhitya Parishat Patrikā* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1326 (B.S.), pp. 86.
- ⁸⁶ Vidyaratna Girish Chandra. (ed.), *op.cit*, p. 66ff.
- ⁸⁷ T. Ganapati Sastri., (ed.), *op.cit*, Part-II, Second Khaṇḍa, 1915, pp. 28-29.
- ⁸⁸ As for the etymology of the word *dukūla*, V.S. Agarwala suggests that that the word *kūla* in primitive language probably signified cloth and as it came to the market in two folds. Thus it was called *dukūla*. Agarwala, V.S., *Nāgrī Prachāriṇī Patrikā*, Vol. LVII, No. 4, p. 113. Kṣauma and *dukūla* were stated as synonymous terms. *Dukūla* clothes were made from the cotton

produced in Gauḍa. The great poet Kālidāsa also refers to this *dukūla* clothes at the time of describing the dress.

- ⁸⁹ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Bāṅgaḍa Copper-plate Inscription of Mahīpāla I (988-1023 AD), p. 205.
- ⁹⁰ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena', p. 249.
- ⁹¹ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Bhāgalpur Copper-plate Inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla', p. 167.
- ⁹² Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Mānahāli Copper-plate Grant of Madanpāladeva', p. 214.
- ⁹³ Sarkar, B. K. (tr.), *The Sacred Books of the Hindus: Śukranītisāra*, Vol. II, Allahabad, pp. 846-848.
- ⁹⁴ Beal Samuel.(tr.), *op.cit*, Vol. I, p. 124.
- ⁹⁵ Bhattasali, N. K., *Iconography of Buddhist and Brāhmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, Dacca: Dacca Museum Committee, 1929, p. XXXIV.
- ⁹⁶ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Khālimpur Coppe-plate Inscription of Dharmapāla', p. 102.
- ⁹⁷ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena', p. 246; Kielhorn, F., 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. I, 1892, pp. 316-318; Majumdar, N.G., 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena', *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. III, Rajshahi: The Varendra Research Society, 1929, p. 46.
- ⁹⁸ Dikshit, K.N. & R. Bahadur, 'Excavations at Pāhārpur, Bengal', Pl -LXII.
- ⁹⁹ *Rāmācharitam*, Chapter-III, Verse 33.
- ¹⁰⁰ Cf. Tripathi, R. P., *op.cit*, p. 119.
- ¹⁰¹ Chakladar, H.C., *Social Life of Ancient India*, 2nd Edition, Calcutta, 1914, pp. 164-167.
- ¹⁰² Sastri, MM. Haraprasad, (ed.), *Bauddha Gān O Dohā (in Bengali)*, Calcutta: Vaṅgiya Sāhitya Parishat, 1323(B.S.), pp. 45-46.
- ¹⁰³ Sastri, H.P.,(ed.), *Charyācharya Viniśchaya*, Calcutta, 2nd Ed. 1956, p. 22.
- ¹⁰⁴ Sircar, D.C., 'The Kailān Copper-plate Inscription of King Śrīdharanarāta of Samataṭa', *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXIII, 1947, pp. 221-241; Bhattasali, N.K., 'The New Kailān Plate of Śrīdharana Rāta', *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXIII(3), 1943, pp. 169-171.
- ¹⁰⁵ Para is a kind of horse race, which is swift and uniform in the nature of movement. Vīrava is a sort of bridled movement with steadiness in motion. Hredu indicates a kind of circular motion in a curved or round about was Paulina indicates flight to a distance in a straight way. Mārja indicates a hurdle race where galloping horses run with long jumps.
- ¹⁰⁶ Mukherji, R.R., and S.K. Maity., 'Mahābodhi Inscription of the time of Dharmapāla', p. 112.
- ¹⁰⁷ Dikshit, K.N. & R. Bahadur, *op.cit*, Pl, XXVIII (b), XLII (e).
- ¹⁰⁸ Mukherji, R.R., and S.K. Maity., 'Belāva Copper-plate of Bhojavarmān(12th Century)', p. 236.

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- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁰ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Kāmāuli Copper-plate grant of Vaidyadeva', p. 381.
- ¹¹¹ Mukherjee, R.R. and Maity, R.K., 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena', p. 248.
- ¹¹² Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Khālimpur Copper-plate Inscription of Dharmapāla', pp. 95-109.
- ¹¹³ *Kāmasūtra*, III. (iii) Sutra 5-7, p. 201.
- ¹¹⁴ *The Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana* tr. From the Sanskrit by the Hindu Kama Society, Benares: The Society of the Friends of India, 1883, p. 20; Chakladar, H.C., *Studies in Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra*, Greater India Society Publication No.3, 1929, p. 77.
- ¹¹⁵ cf. Tripathi, R. K., *op.cit*, p. 135.
- ¹¹⁶ Chakladar, H.C., *op.cit*, p. 118.
- ¹¹⁷ Mukherji, R.R., and S.K. Maity., 'Edilpur Copper-plate of Keśavasena', p. 33.
- ¹¹⁸ Mukherjee, RR. and S.K. Maity., 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena', p. 249.
- ¹¹⁹ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Bhuvaneswar Inscription of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, p. 353.
- ¹²⁰ Basak, R.G., 'The Tipperah Copper-plate Grant of Lokanātha', pp. 301ff.
- ¹²¹ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Baigrām Copper-plate Inscription of the Gupta Year 128 (448 AD), p-53; 'Pāhārpur Copper-plate Inscription of the Gupta Year 159 (479 AD)', pp. 53-57.
- ¹²² Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Kāmāuli Copper-plate Grant of Vaidyadeva', p. 376.
- ¹²³ Sarma, Pandit Ramavatara, (ed.), *Saduktikarnamṛta of Śrīdharadāsa*, Lahore, 1933, p. 303.
- ¹²⁴ *Mātsya-nyāyamapihitum Prakṛtibhirlakṣmyāh....bhāraśriyā*. It reads that Gopāla I, the founder of Pāla dynasty of Bengal was placed on the throne by the people of Bengal where there was anarchy or Mātsyanyāya. Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Khālimpur Copper-plate Inscription of Dharmapāla', p. 96.
- ¹²⁵ Mukherjee, R.R. and S.K. Maity., 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena', p. 249.
- ¹²⁶ Bhattacharya Padmanath(ed.), *Kāmarūpa Śāsanāvali*, p.64.
- ¹²⁷ Majumdar, N.G., 'Naihāṭi Copper-plate Grant of Vallālasena', p. 78.
- ¹²⁸ Majumdar, R.C., (ed.), *op.cit*, p-619.
- ¹²⁹ Mukherjee, R.R., and S.K.Maity, 'Kāmāuli Copper-plate Grant of Vaidyadeva', p. 381.
- ¹³⁰ Sastri, MM. Haraprasad, (ed.), *op.cit*, p. 33.
- ¹³¹ Majumdar, R.C., (ed.), *op.cit*, p. 619.
- ¹³² *Ibid*, p. 13.
- ¹³³ Majumdar, R.C., R.G. Basak, Banerjee, N.G. Banerjee (eds.), *Rāmācharita of Sandhyākaranandī*, Rajshahi: Varendra Research Society, Vol. III, VV, 1939, p. 5-28.

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- ¹³⁴ Bhandarkar, D .R., 'Mauryan Brāhmī Inscription of Mahāsthān', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XXI, p. 83f; Barua, B.M., 'The Old Brāhmī Inscription of Mahāsthān', *Indian Historical Quaterly*, Vol. X, 1934, p. 57f.
- ¹³⁵ Chakrabarty Ranabir, 'Economic Life: Agrarian and Non-Agrarian Pursuits', in A.M. Chowdhury and Ranabir Chakravarti (ed.), *History of Bangladesh*, Vol. II, Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2018, p. 120.
- ¹³⁶ Majumdar, N.G., 'Anuliya Copper-plate of Lakṣmaṇasena', p. 89-90; 'Edilpur Copper-plate of Keśavasena', p. 129.
- ¹³⁷ *Raghuvamśa*, IV.37.
- ¹³⁸ Dasgupta, T.C., *Aspects of Bengali Society from Old Bengali Literature*, Calcutta, University of Calcutta, 1935, p. 241-242.
- ¹³⁹ Barnett Lionel, D., 'Vappaghoshavāṭa grant of Jayanāga', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XVIII, 1983, p. 60.
- ¹⁴⁰ Dasgupta, T.C., *op.cit*, p. 242.
- ¹⁴¹ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁴² Maitreya, A.K., *Gauḍalekhamālā*, pp. 9,33,55; Majumdar, N.G., 'Belāva Copper-plate of Bhojavarmana', p. 24, 'Bārrāckpur Copper-plate of Vijayasena', p. 66
- ¹⁴³ Beal Samuel, (tr.), *op.cit*, 1906, p. 194.
- ¹⁴⁴ Majumdar, N.G., 'Govindapur Copper-plate of Lakṣmaṇasena', p. 97.
- ¹⁴⁵ Majumdar, N.G., 'Translation of Calcutta Sāhitya Parishat Copper-plate of Viśvarūpasena, p.178; Mukherjee, R.R., & S.K. Maity, 'Calcutta Sāhitya-Parisat Copper-plate of Viśvarūpasena', p. 21-332.
- ¹⁴⁶ Dikshit, K.N. & R. Bahadur, *op.cit*, Plates-IV a.
- ¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, Plate-LX XVII, p-181; Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), *The History of Bengal*, p. 451.
- ¹⁴⁸ Maitreya, A.K., *op.cit*, p. 9.
- ¹⁴⁹ Pargiter, F.E., 'Three Copper-plates Grants from East Bengal', *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXXIX, 1910, pp. 193-200
- ¹⁵⁰ *Rāmācharita*, III, 2, p. 94.
- ¹⁵¹ Majumdar, N.G., 'Rāmgāñj copper plate of Īśvaraghoṣa', p. 154.
- ¹⁵² *Rāmācharita*, III, Verse.1- p. 3.
- ¹⁵³ Laskar, G.M., 'Ashrafpur Copper-plate grants of Devakhaḍga', *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. I (6), 1907, p. 85.
- ¹⁵⁴ Majumdar, N.G., 'Belāva Copper-plate of Bhojavarman', p. 244.

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- ¹⁵⁵ Majumdar, N.G., 'Bārrāckpur Copper-plate of Vijayasena', p. 66.
- ¹⁵⁶ *Rāmācharita*, III, Verse-19, p. 93.
- ¹⁵⁷ Majumdar, N.G., 'Translation of Calcutta Sāhitya Parishat Copper-plate of Viśvarūpasena', p. 178; Mukherjee, R.R., and S. K. Maity, 'Calcutta Sāhitya-Parishat Copper-plate of Viśvarūpasena', p. 321-332.
- ¹⁵⁸ Chakravartty, D., *op.cit.*, pp. 38-90.
- ¹⁵⁹ Sen, D.C., C.C. Vandopadhyaya, & H. Vasu, (eds.), *Kavikañkan Chaṇḍi*, Calcutta, 1926, p. 191.
- ¹⁶⁰ Majumdar, N.G., 'Calcutta Sāhitya Parishat Copper-plate of Viśvarūpasena', p.141, 178,180.
- ¹⁶¹ Majumdar, N.G., 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena', p. 48.
- ¹⁶² Yule, Henry. (tr. & ed.), *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, Vol. II*, London, John Murray,1873, p. 78-79.
- ¹⁶³ *Rāmācharita*, III, Verses.20, 21, p. 93-95.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, V.17, p. 92; Dasgupta, T.C., *op.cit.*, p. 237.
- ¹⁶⁵ Yule, Henry, (tr. & ed.), *op.cit.*, p.78-79.
- ¹⁶⁶ Majumdar, N.G., 'Belāva Copper-plate of Bhojavarman',p-14;'Bārrāckpur Copper-plate of Vijayasena', p. 66.
- ¹⁶⁷ Pargiter, F.E., 'Second grant of the time of Dharmāditya', p. 200.
- ¹⁶⁸ Gupta, K.M., 'The Bhāterā Copper-plate Inscription of Govinda Keśavadeva (c. 1049 AD)', p. 82, 86.
- ¹⁶⁹ Sastri, MM Haraprasad, *op.cit.*, p. 33.
- ¹⁷⁰ Dikshit, K.N. & R. Bahadur, *op.cit.*, plate-XL, f. 4; Majumdar, N.G., 'Belāva Copper-plate of Bhojavarman', p. 14, 'Bārrāckpur Copper-plate of Vijayasena', p. 66.
- ¹⁷¹ Elliot and Dowson (eds.), *History of India As Told by its Own Historians- The Muhammadan Period*, Vol. I, London: Trubner & Co., 1867, p. 5, 20.
- ¹⁷² *Ibid*, Vol. 55, Pl. LIV, a. c.d. etc. XLII ff.
- ¹⁷³ Vidyaratna, Girish Chandra, *op.cit.*, p. 67.
- ¹⁷⁴ Sastri, H.P., (ed.), *op.cit.*, II.5. p. 44-46.
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- ¹⁷⁶ *Rāmācharita*. V. 17. b, p. 71.
- ¹⁷⁷ Schoff, W.H., (tr.), *op.cit.*, p.17.
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- ¹⁷⁹ Kielhorn, F., 'Deopārā Stone Inscription of Vijayasena', *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. I, 1802, pp. 305-315; Majumdar, N.G., 'Deopārā Inscription of Vijayasena', p.28; Metcalfe, C.T., 'On the Sena

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