History of Minor dynasties in Early Bengal : Studies in Socio-political cultural history

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Certified that the thesis entitled History of Minor dynasties of Early Bengal : Studies in Socio-political Cultural History has been prepared by Sri Gour Chandra Ghosh, Lecturer in History, Islampur College, North Dinajpur under my supervision and in accordance with the regulation of North Bengal University. The thesis embodies the result of his investigation conducted during the period he worked as a Ph.D. research scholar.

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P r e f a c e

History of Minor dynasties in early Bengal has been overshadowed by the rising of Śaśāṅka and prominent dynasties of the Pālas and the Senas, yet they played significant part in shaping the history of early Bengal. No consistent attempt has yet been made by scholars to work out a detailed history of the minor dynasties of that time, though they made stray and brief references to them while writing the History of Bengal. The idea of doing research on this aspect of history occured to me with the intention of filling up the gap in the historical study of the region.

This work was started and completed under the guidance of my teacher Dr. Pranab Kumar Bhattacharyya, Jadunath Sarkar Professor of History, North Bengal University. He had all along been a source of encouragement to me, going through the whole manuscript with meticulous care and offering important suggestions from time to time while the work was in progress and without whose help and guidance the present work would not have been completed. To him I acknowledge my sincerest gratitude.

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C o n t e n t s

System of Transliteration

VOWELS

Short : a, i, u, e, o

Long : ā, ī, ū, au, ṛi

CONSONENTS

Ka, Kha, ga, gha, ṅa

cha, chha, ja, jha, ña

ṭa, ṭha, ḍa, ḍha, ṇa

ta, tha, da, dha, na

pa, pha, ba, bha, ma

ya, ra, la, va, śa, sha, sa, ha

Anusvāra = ṁ

Visaraga = ḥ

Chandravindu = m̐

Abbreviations used here

Ep. Ind (E.I.) = Epigraphia Indica

IHQ = Indian Historical Quarterly

JASB = Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal

JAS(L) = Journal of the Asiatic Society (Letters)

CHAPTER - I.

INTRODUCTION

The different areas of early Bengal, covering an area of 80,000 square miles[1] with an immense source of alluvial deposit between the Tipparā hills in the East, the Shillong plateau and Nepalese Terai in the North and the high lands of the Rajmahal and Chhotanagpur in the West, with the Janapadas of Gauḍa - Puṇḍra - Varendra - Rāḍhā - Sumha - Tāmralipti - Samataṭa - Vaṅga - Vaṅgāla - Harikela watered by the Bhāgīrathī - Karatoyā - Brāhmaputra - Padmā - Meghnā and many other tributories[2], played a very significant part in moulding the history of ancient India.

On the basis of information it has been possible to locate the principal divisions of early Bengal. Accordingly four political and cultural regions have been identified, each of which had distinct character of its own. The different areas (Janapadas) of early Bengal came to be known after the names of the original inhabitants. For example, the Puṇḍras exercises control over the regions lying between the North of the Ganges and the West of the Brahamaputra. The area was known as Puṇḍravardhana. The Sumhas or the Rāḍhās inhabited the area lying to the western part of the Ganges. It was known

as ancient Rādhā. The vaṅgas inhabited the area lying between the Bhāgīrathī in the West, the Padmā, the lower Brahamaputra and the Meghnā in the east corresponding to the ancient Kingdom of Veṅga, possibly Gangaridai of the classical writers. The poet Kālidāsa places the Vaṅgas amidst the stream of the Ganges. In some Jaina works the region to the west of the Bhāgīrathī such as Tamluk, is included in Vaṅga. But Vaṅga proper was restricted to the Eastern part of the Gangetic delta.

In the east of the Meghnā lie the ancient Kingdom of Samataṭa corresponding to modern Chittagong divisions. The territory was mentioned the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta and others records. The Brihat-Saṁhitā, a work of the 6th Century A.D. distinguishes it from Vaṅga which has been supported by the narrative of Hiuen-Tsang in the next Century where he describes it as a low and moist country on the sea side that lay to the South of Kāmarūpa which has been identified with Badkāmtā in the district of Tippera lying 12 miles west of Comilla.

Later on, another political sub-region called Gauḍa, lying in the Hooghly-Bhāgīrathī zone and inhabited by a section of people called the Gauḍas, came into existence in early Bengal.

The city of Gaudapura has been mentioned by Pānini and Gauda as the name of a country occured in the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya and other sanskrit works. In the Brihat-Saṁhitā Gauda territory is distinguished from Pundra (North Bengal) and Tāmralipata as well as from Vaṅga and Samaṭata.

Human life in the Delta has been deeply influencedbv the rivers like the Brahmaputra, the Gaṅgā and the Meghnā had played significant part in the field of the agrarian production of the area. Besides renewing the fields, the rivers carry an immense number of fish which provide a ready source of food for the delta dwellers. The network of tributories also provides a ready made system of interconnecting waterways for easy communication and economical transportation.[4] The rivers have been of strategic importance as is attested by the establishment of principal political centres, beside the rivers commanding access to the different geographic areas of the delta. The area being girdled by numerous unsurmountable rivers made the region inaccessible as well as inadmissible to foreign invaders. Hence a sense of gregariousness was fostered in the nature of the people. Prolonged rainy season and frequent flood made the area impassable and the people indomitable who could successfully resist foreign aggression and whenever opportunity came they rose

in rebellion. Moreover the alluvial soil of the regions resulted in the huge agrarian production. The warmhumid climate, in conjunction with the fartility of the land, made the region an extraordinary productive agricultural land which was capable of supporting a large surplus consuming class. Over and above the gulf region of the South-Eastern part of Bengal and so many nevigable rivers with natural ports fostered the trade and commerce of the area. These enriched the economic condition and this economic self-sufficiency gave birth to the sprit of political self-sufficiency of the area.

In the Vedic Age the different areas were not included within the frontier of Aryandom. The Aiteraya Brāhmaṇa refers to the Pundras as robbers (Dashyus) living beyond the pale of Aryan civilization[5]. In the Aitareya Āraṇyaka, there is the earliest mention of Vaṅga[6]. Baudhāyana in the Dharmasūtra regarded the Puṇdras and the Vaṅgas as impure. But the areas did not remain outside the Aryan influences for long time. The Rāmayāṇa mentions the Vangas as people entering into political relation with the Kshatriya patricians of Ayodhyā (Ramayana 11.10.37). The Mahābhārata describes the compaigns of Karṇa, Vāsudeva and Bhīma in Bengal. Karṇa is said to have defeated the Kings of the Puṇdras, the Vaṅgas and Sumhas

and constituted Vaṅga and Aṅga into one Vishaya[7]. In the Vānaparva section of the Mahābhārata, the river Karatoya flowing by the Puṇḍravardhana is regarded as a holy river. This reference to Bengal in the epics shows its inclusion within the folds of the Aryan India. The Āchāraṅga-Sutta describes the Rādhās and the Vaṅgas as the Aryans[8], The Buddhist canonical work Saṁyuttanikāya as well as the introduction of Telapatta Jātaka speaks of the Buddha's visit to a locality called Dasaka or Saketa in the Sumha country in the South west of Bengal[9] which is equivalent to Rādhā. Classical historians like curtius, plutarch Solonius and Diodorus took notice of the people living in the eastern India as the people of Gangaridai who had apparently mobilised their military strength in anticipation of a possible invasion of Alexander[10].

In the Delta during the third century B.C, the Mauryas exercised political control over parts of Bengal is evidenced by the discovery of the Mahāsthān inscription in Puṇḍravardhana. From the archaeological excavations at Mahāsthān, many Mauryan coin (Punch-marked) and other artifacts in the 4th or 3rd centuries B.C. have been discovered. The outline of the ancient city of Puṇḍranagar can now be traced with certain degree of accuracy. The discovery of another early epigraph from the deltaic region of Bengal (cf Siluā in the Noākhāli district of Bangladesh of the Second Century B.C.) may be mentioned here. 10 a

It has rightly been suggested that Aryanism spread in Vaṅga through the territory of the Puṇḍras. It appears that the northern & later on Southern areas of Bengal became stronghold of Aryan culture[10b].

After the decline of the Maurya Empire, a number of smaller and shorter lived empires exercised control in the central ganges valley and might have dominated parts of the Delta. The remains of the Suṅgas and the Kushāṇas have been recovered from the Delta. It has not been possible to find out the nature of political control over the area and, if so, for how long.

The political history of Bengal from the close of the third Century A.D. to the beginning of the fourth century A.D. presents an interesting picture of the gradual expansion of the Gupta empire in the province right from Śrī Gupta who built the Mṛīgāsthāpana stūpa at Varendra. The process of the extension of the authority of the Guptas was further aggravated during the reigns of Samundragupta, Chandragupta and Skandagupta. The Damodarpur copper plate of Budha Gupta indicates that Northern Bengal formed an integral part of his empire. From a border territory(Pratyanta) under Samudragupta, Samatata came under the direct rule of the

Guptas in 607-08 A.D. under Vaieys Gupta, a scion of the imperial Gupta family.

The fall of the Gupta empire was marked by the rise of petty independent states in several parts of North India. The feudal rulers of Bengal also took the advantage of the political situation to shake off the foreign yoke and the powerful independent Kingdoms viz ; Vaṅga and Gauḍa came into existence in the 6th Century A.D. From the 6th to the 9th Century A.D. several other independent minor dynasties came into existence. Here we are inclined to confine ourselves to the study of the minor dynasties and not directly with the well known rulers like Gauḍādhīpa Śaśāṅka, and those of the pālas and the Sena dynasties. From the available epigraphic and numismatic sources it appears that during the period from the 6th Century A.D. to the 9th Century A.D. Samāchāradeva, Gopachandra and Dharmāditya,[11] the Rātas,[12] the Nāthas[13], the Khaḍgas[14] and the Devas[15] came into existence in Vaṅga-Samataṭa and the dynasty of Jayanāga in Gauḍa.

The emergence of the Pālas in 750 A.D. curbed the powers of the minor independent dynasties and a sort of obstacle was set in force in the field of the rising of minor dynasties. During the time of the decline of the Pālas in the reigns of Gopālā II and his son Vigrahapāla II there emerged a number

of petty independent Kingdoms. From the 10th Century A.D. to12th Century A.D. the dynasties of the Chandras[16] and the Varmans[17] came into prominance in Vaṅga Samatata in the Lālmāi Maināmati Cultural regions. The Kambojas[18], a hill tribe of the North had earlier captured the Northern and Western Bengal. During the disintegrating phase of the Pāla Empire under Mahīpāla II there took place a rebellion of the feudatories under Divya, a leader of the Kaivarta class and curved out an independent territory in Varendra in the last part of the 11th Century A.D. In the Rāḍha subregions, the dynasty of Śūras came into existence at the same period which assumed prominence over Dakṣhin Rāḍha[19]. In the Rāḍha region sometime the 12th Century A.D., a section of Gopa or Kāyastha feudal chiefs known as the Ghoshas[20] emerged into the limelight of history.

A long time after, during the 13th Century, a few small independent states also came into existence in some parts of early Bengal. The dynasty of the Devas[21] became prominent in Tippera, Noakhali and Chittagong regions during the decadant stages of the Senas. The Maināmatī copper plate of Raṇavaṅkamalla Harikāladeva[22] unveils history of a new dynasty of Paṭṭikera. Thus from the available epigraphic and other sources of information

it is not altogether impossible to sort out some detailed account of the history of the minor dynasties of Bengal stretching from the 6th Century A.D. to the 13th Century A.D. A number of scholars while writing the History of Bengal made stray reference to the minor dynasties as addendum. Among them mention may be made of the works of such eminent historians like R.C.Majumder, History of Bengal, Vol.I; N.R.Roy, Bāngālīr Itihās, Ādiparva(Bengali), D.C.Sircar, Pāl-Sen-yuger Vaṁsānucharit, Pālpūrva-Yuger Vaṁśānucharit, Śilālekh O Tāmrasāsanādir Prasaṅga (Bengali), H.C.Roy, Dynastic History of North India , Vol. I, R. P. Chanda, Gandarājamālā (Bengali), A. K. Maitreya, Gandalekhamālā(Bengali), Fall of the Pāla Empire, N. N. Vasu, Vaṅger Jātiya Itihās, N. G. Majumdar, Inscriptions of Bengal, Vol. III, R. G. Basak, A History of North Eastern India, A. M. Choudhury, Dynastic History of Bengal, Sahanara Hussain, Everyday Life of the Pālas and many other books and Journals have thrown immense light on the subject. But no serious attempt has so far been made to work out a comprehensive history of the Minor dynasties and their role in the making of the composite history of Bengal in the early centuries. As a result of the emergence of Śaśāṅka and the prominent dynasties of the Pālas and the Senas, the role of the minor dynasties has been overshadolved.

Hence we intend to make up the lacuna in the historical study of the region with the help of available sources.

Besides coins and monuments which are lying scattered in the different parts of the regions with which we are concerned, a large number of inscriptions came to our great assistance. The inscriptions are noticed and recorded by many scholars like A. K. Maitreya, N. G. Majumder, D. C. Sircar and A. H. Dani. Recently R. R. Mukherjee and S. K. Maiti have compiled the inscriptions of Bengal. But more recent discoveries in mid-Bengal and the deltaic region of Bengal (Bangladesh) awaits fresh interpretation. These materials undoubtedly are to be taken into consideration.

The literary sources, however, shed welcome light to the various Socio-religious problems of the regions, particularly in the context of the social tension that we visualise in the outbreak of the Kaivarta rebellion, are mostly available from the 11th and 12th Century A.D. onwards. Among these we may mention Bṛihadharmapurāṇa, Brahma-Vaivartapurāṇa, Rāmacharit, Dāyabhāga of Jīmūtavāhana, Chhāndoga Karmānushṭhān-paddhati of Bhaṭṭabhavadeva, Mīmāṁsāsarvasva of Halāyūdha etc.

For the convenience of study we have divided the work into several chapters in addition to the present one where we have attempted to outline the historical geography, and the

background of the rise of independent Kingdoms in early Bengal.

In the next chapter followed a discussion on the minor independent dynasties that flourished during the period from the 6th Century A.D. to the 9th Century A.D. These include the rules of Vaṅga Kings like Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samāchāradeva who emerged in the political scene in post-Gupta epoch. The rise of the Rātas, the Nāthas, the Khaḍgas, and the Devas in Samataṭa and the Nāga dynasty in Gauḍa have also been taken into consideration in this Chapter.

In the Third we are mainly concerned with the dynasties flourished during the 10th to 11th Century A.D. we have discussed in details the history of the emergence of the rule of the Kambojas and the Kaivartas in Varendra and the Chandras in Vaṅga-Samataṭa. The historical background of the dynasties their political activities, conquest of territories and other factors have been treated with special emphasis.

In the Fourth we have dealt with the emergence of minor dynasties which flourished from the 12th to 13th Century A.D. This includes the study of the dynasties like the Varman, the Devas and Raṇavaṅkamalla in Vaṅga-Samataṭa and

the Ghoshas in Rāḍhā. The factors facilitating their emergence and other relevant matters have been discussed here.

In the Fifth we deal with the Socio-Economic position of the people of that time. The Socio-economic interactions among different rulers, their economic resources, condition of agriculture, industry, trade and commerce, medium of exchange, presence of gold coins in the delta and its impact have been dealt with.

In the last Chapter we intend to study the religious condition of that time. The position of Buddhism, the influence of Brāhmanical Hinduism, Tāntricism and the subsequent decline of Buddhism have been narrated here in some detail.

A discussion on the problem of currency during the period of our study has also been incorporated in the appendix. A map and a few relevant plates have also been appended at the end.

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CHAPTER II

Political History from 6th Century A. D. to 9th Century A. D.

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

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

The downfall of the Guptas marked the breaking up of northern India into a number of small states. Saurāstra came under the domination of the Maitrakas of Valavi. Thāneśvara was taken over by the Pushyabhūtis, while the Maukhauris held sway in Kanauj. Yaśodharman, a military adventurer, attempted to set up an ephemeral empire in central India, Rajputana and other parts of the Punjab[1].

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

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

remains at Maināmatī which have thrown immense light on the history of this part of Bengal and in fact changed the course of the history of the deltaic Bengal[4]. We have already analysed the forces which shaped the characteristics of the people of the area under review in general. Here we are inclined to examine more closely the factors that helped to maintain the political and cultural identity of the people of Vaṅga-Samataṭa region for centuries inspite of the presence of strong centralised administration of the Pālas and the Senas. This has rightly been examined in a recent publication, " with the hilly and jungle terrain on the east and north, the turbulent sea and swampy forest in the south, the very big and erosion prone rivers in the centre and west, it is subject to severe natural hazards like flood and cyclones. Hazardous life and the pressure of population have made the people of deltaic Bengal much more individualistic, emotional, willing to migrate and face hardship, more rough in speech, but warm at heart, more aggressive but easily mollified and more ready to revolt against authority and yet appreciative of generous gesture than some of their neighbours"[5]. A large number of leaders of thought and action, rebels and militants and fighters for nationalism came from this region.[6]

Independent Vānga Kingdoms

The first independent Kingdom that came into existence in Bengal on the ruins of the Gupta empire appears to have comprised originally the Eastern and Southern Bengal and southern part of western Bengal. Two of its important provinces administered by Governors of Vardhamānabhukti and Navyāvakāśikā roughly corresponding to respectively western and sourhern Bengal[7].

Five inscription discovered at Koṭālipāḍā in the district of Faridpur and one in the Burdwan district as well as the discovery of coins reveal the existence of three independent rulers of this region bearing Mahārājādhirāja titled named Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samāchāradeva[8]. According to N. K. Bhattaṣhali they were probably related to one another and they set up a dynasty that took the place of the Guptas in Eastern India[9]. It seems likely that these rulers were rulling over Samataṭa with full and independent powers exercising over adjoining regions like Vārakamaṇḍala and also having feudatory chiefs under them[10].

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

The title of Mahārājādhirāja assumed by the rulers following Vainya Gupta ruling earlier in the same region as noticed above clearly indicates the imperial authority of the Guptas ceased to exist over this region. The issue of gold coins by Samāchāradeva supports the view[11]. The Mallasarul inscription indicates the rule of Mahārājādhirāja Gopachandra in the Vardhamāna bhukti.

Hoernle at first suggested that Dharmāditya was identical with Samudra Gupta[12], but later on with Yaśodharman[13] who took the title of Vishṇu Gupta when he became emperor and was apparently known popularly as Vikramāditya. He was reverenced as an ideally upright and just monarch and was popularly known as Dharmāditya who

ascended the throne on 529-30 A. D.

Hoernle places Gopachandra's accession in 568 A.D and accordingly his Faridpur place (dated 19th year) was engraved in 586 A.D. Hoernle identified the emperor Gopachandra with Prince Govichandra (= Gopichandra) who is mentioned in a certain confused tradition cited by Tārānāth in his 'Tibetan history of Buddhism in India'. It has been suggested by Tārānāth that Govichandra was a grandson of Bālāditya and was the son of the Last Gupta emperor Kumāragupta II whom Yaśodharman displaced. This has led Pargiter to believe that Govichandra alias Gopachandra while reigning over this extreme eastern province never hesitated to assume the imperial title of Mahārājādhirāja[14]. But it seems however, almost improbable to draw any serious chronological conclusion from the muddled account of early history preserved in tradition. On the other hand we know from Sārnāth inscription that Kumāra Gupta II's reign came to an end between 473 A.D. - 476 A.D. It was, therefore, impossible for his son to ascend the throne in 568 A.D. and rule for a period of 18 years[15].

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

appears to be established by the facts that one Mahārājā Vijayasena was probably a Vassal chief both of Vainya Gupta and of Gopachandra. Vijayasena is the Dūtaka of the Gunāighar grant and is described as "Mahāpratīhāra-Mahāpilupati-Pañchādhikarana-Uparika and Mahārājā Śrī Mahāsāmanta[16]. In the Mallasarul inscription Vijayasena is called Mahārājā, but he uses his own seal. The identity of the person of this name serving under these two Kings cannot be definitely proved, but it is generally accepted by the scholars, who believe that there was no gap between the reigns of Vainya Gupta and Gopachandra. It may further be suggested that Vijayasena who ruled over Vardhamāna bhukti under Gopachandra, possibly also held the same office under Vainya Gupta, and hence, Vainya Gupta had ruled over Eastern Southern and Western Bengal as well.

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

name has probably been preserved in modern Danton, not very far from the Suvarṇarekhā river[17].

There is no uniformity among scholars regarding the relationship of the Kings Dharmāditya, Gopachandra and Samāchāradeva and their chronological sequence. Pargiter held that Dharmāditya was earlier than Gopachandra. His view is based on some factors. Firstly, the use of earlier and later form 'Ya' in the respective plates of Dharmāditya and Gopachandra and secondly, the additional epithet Pratītadharma Śīla applied to the land measurer Śivachandra in the plate of Gopachandra[18]. A. H. Dani supports the contention of Pargiter, when he holds that Palaeographically the inscriptions of Dharmāditya shows earlier form. The difference can be marked not only in the form of Ya , but also in the form of a , tha , dha , pa , la and ha . But the Mallasarul plate mention the name of Māhārājā Vijayasena who is identified with his namesake mentioned in the Gunaighar plate of Vainya Gupta. Hence Dharmāditya should be taken to be the successor of Gopachandra, though Palaeographically the plate of Dharmāditya appears to be earlier than Gopachandra. A. H. Dani, however adds that by about this time greater change had already taken place in the forms of the letters in the neighbouring province of Bihar as

attested by the inscription of the Magadha Maukharis. As the same change was to affect Bengal, it is hard to be dogmatic as to the exact time when the change actually started. We must allow a margin for the transition period in which the new and old forms were used simultaneously, some preferring the new and the others the old. The lesson is that Palaeography is of little help in settling the question of succession of rulers when only a short duration of rule is involved[19].

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

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

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

to have been related in point of time. The assistance of Śivachandra was utilised in connection with the measurement of land - during the rules of Dharmāditya and Gopachandra[21]. But it may be noted here that same set of officials working under succeeding Kings do not definitely indicate the blood relationship among them. As for example, Mahārājā Vijayasena of Gunaighar inscription of Vainya Gupta was the same person as appeared in the Mallasarul inscription of Gopachandra though the Kings do not appear to have been closely related.

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

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

The Ghugrahati copper plate of Samāchāradeva refers to the rule of Maharājādhirāja Samāchāradeva. It was issued in the 14th year of his reign. In that year Jīvadatta was the viceroy or Governor in Navyāvakāśikā which appears to have been divisional headquarter. The district officer in the district of Vārakamandala approved by Jivadatta was Pavittruka. The later was assisted in his administration by district court presided over by Dāmuka. The affairs of the village or locality to which this refers were in the joint care of a number of Elders (Vishaya Mahattarāh). Other men of experience in the village had also a say in village affairs. These represented the villagers and like Panchāyets of the present day, transacted the ordinary Civil and Criminal affairs of the State[22].

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

gold coin Śaśāṅka and another being the gold coin of the light weight "Imitation Gupta" type[23]. Besides, the Ghagrahati copper place inscription of Samāchāradeva has been discovered not far from the find spot of one of those coins (Rājalīlā type) and the lettering of whose name as written on his copper plate, closely agrees to the lettering on these coins[24]. The inference derived from the legends of the gold coin of Samāchāradeva is that Sāmachāradeva was vassal of Śaśāṅka[25]. It rests upon the doubtful reading 'Śrī Narendravinata' on the reverse. Smith said that the three letters following Narendra 'look like Vinata' but Allan read the legend as Narendrāditya[26] and the legend on the reverse of the other type of coins Samāchāradeva has been read with certainty by both Smith and Allan as Narendrāditya[27]. R. D. Banerjee read the legend in both the cases as Narendravinata and held that it can not be anything else. But the reading Narendrāditya seems to be preferable and we may reasonably hold that Samāchāradeva assumed the title Narendrāditya in imitation of the Gupta Kings. R. C. Majumdar held that if Narendravinata is correct, its interpretation as "fully subdued or obedient to Narendra" and the identification of Narendra

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

Some conclusion may carefully be drawn from the observation of the coin of Samāchāradeva as held by N. K. Bhattasali[29]. Firstly, Allan attributes the 'Archer type' of coin of Samāchāradeva to a period earlier than that of Śaśāṅka and from the replacing the Garuḍa standard of the Gupta by the bull standard on the coin, infers that the coin was of a devout Śaiva. Secondly, the King was certainly not of the Gupta lineage but had been a successor of the Guptas in the dominion where the Guptas had once held away. Thirdly, Samāchāradeva must, on palaeographic ground, be placed earlier than Śaśāṅka whose immediate successors in Eastern India were first Harsha and then Ādityasena and his descendants. Fourthly, he was a devout Śaiva. The continuance of bull symbol by by Śaśāṅka makes it almost certain that Samāchāradeva was a predecessor of Śaśāṅka.

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

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

Regarding the decline of the independent Kingdoms and the time when it took place nothing is known for certain. The circumstances responsible for the expiration of Samāchāradeva's authority are unknown, but the Mahākūṭa pillar inscription [30] dated in the fifth year of the reign of the western Chālukya King Raṇavikrānta (C. 601 - 602 A.D.) records that Kīrtivarman I defeated the Kings of Vaṅga, Aṅga, Kalinga, Vattūra and Magadha. If it is true that the Chālukya King successfully invaded Vaṅga, it may have seriously affected the fortunes of Samāchāradeva which ultimately led to the break up of the Kingdom of Vaṅga[31].

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

Bhadra dynasty in Eastern Bengal

On the basis of some sources of information we may probably assume that there flourished in Eastern Bengal some Kings whose names end in Bhadra. Hiuentsang states that Śīlbhadra, the famous Buddhist teacher who flourished in the first half of the 7th Century A.D. belonged to the Brāhmanical royal family of Samataṭa[32]. According to D. C. Sircar[33] 'Śīlbhadra' is a Buddhist name of the Principal which he adopted at the time of conversion to Buddhism. Hence, it would be wrong to assume the existence

of the Brāhmaṇa royal family or Samataṭa ending in - bhadra. But as to the existence of the " bhadra" royal family it may, however be pointed out that in V. 868 of the Sanskrit text of the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa it is stated that there would be a King whose initial is Svāda, but in the Tibetan Text of the same book the name is Rājabhadra. The family is placed before Gopāla I of the pāla dynasty. On the other hand Gopāla I's wife Deddadevī is spoken of a Guhya Kapateḥ bhadreva bhadrātmajā in the Khalimpur plate of Dharmapāla. According to Keilhorn, the above passage indicates that Deddadevī, the mother of Dharmapāla, was the daughter of a Bhadra King[34]. A. K. Maitra rejected the view on the ground that there was the reference only of a purāṇic mythology without having any historical basis[35]. But if we agree with the explanation, the expression 'Bhadrātmajā becomes redundant because to compare Deddadevī with Bhadrā, wife of Kuvera, the expression Guhya Kapeti Bhadreva is sufficient. Hence, Keilhorn's explanation that Deddadevī was the daughter of one Bhadra King stands to reason[36]. There is also reference to a Vassal chief named Jyesṭhabhadra in the Nidhanpur copper plate of Bhāskaravarman[37]. A vassal chief named Nārāyaṇabhadra is found in the Vappaghoshavāta grant of Jayanāga[38].

From all these sources, it is evident that there existed a line of Kings in Eastern Bengal whose names ended with 'Bhadra'. But there is a possibility according to which the Bhadra Kings may be identified with the Khaḍgas of Samataṭa[39]. N. K. Bhattasali remarks that Śīlabhadra was probably a Khadga. But Bhattasali does not try to solve the difficulty arising out of Yuan-Chwang's statement that Śīlabhadra was a scion of the Brāhmaṇical royal family while the Khaḍgas were professedly Buddhists[40].

P. L. Paul[41] was of opinion that the family was originally known as Khaḍga and when the name and fame of Śīlabhadra, a member of this family was fully established in the Buddhist world, the family came to be known as Bhadra and so Rājabhaṭa has been described as Rājabhadra in some records. P. L. Paul makes no reference to this view in his later publication[42]. In a recent article D. C. Sircar suggests that the Brahmana royal family to which Śīlabhadra belonged might be the Rāta royal family[42a].

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

The Dynasty of Lokanātha :

Between Harsha's death, which broke up his vast empire in Northern India and the rise of the Khaḍga dynasty in East Bengal, we come across another line of feudatory chiefs that came into the limelight of history with its dynastic title Nātha. The earlier ruler of the dynasty appears to have acknowledged suzerainty to some rulers mentioned in the Faridpur grant or to the Later Gupta dynasty of Magadha[43].

The Tippera copper plate grant of Lokānatha supplies us with the history of the Nātha family of Samataṭa Trippera. The rulers are known to be the followers of Śaivism. The name of the first King whose name though not clear, but it ends Nātha. He assumed the paramount title of adhimahārāja or Mahārājādhirāja. We do not know, however, when he asserted his independence. It is possible that he adopted defiant attitude towards any of the sovereigns of the Faridpur plates[44], though we do not have any conclusive evidence in this regard.

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

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

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

D. C. Sircar also believes that Śrīdhāraṇarāt of the Kailān grant was more or less a contemporary of Lokanātha of the Tippera grant and of the Khaḍga Kings[47]. The inscription of Lokanātha and Kailān plate of Śrīdhāraṇarāta fall in the first half of the 7th Century A.D.[48]

If we accept the above dating of the Tippera plate, it may be held reasonably that Lokanātha was a feudatory of the Khaḍga dynasty and it is evident from the epigraphs of the Khaḍgas that Jātakhaḍga defeated his enemies and Devakhaḍga had a member of feudal rulers under him. But there is doubt among scholars whether the Khaḍgas exercised supremacy over Lokanātha. According to D. C. Sircar, the Rātas of Samataṭa and the Khaḍgas of Vaṅga were originally feudatories of the Gauḍa King and they became semiindependent after Gauḍa had been temporarily subdued by the Kings of Kanauj and Kāmarūpa in the second quarter of the 7th Century A.D.[48a]

There are some information about the achievements of Lokanātha. It has been described that he was a very able King[49] and "his soldiers depended for victory on their own swords and on the intellect of his ministers"[50]. He had a fine cavalry. It has been referred to in the verse 7 that a large number of soldiers of the paramount severeign (parameśvara) was seriously defeated in the battle, but it is not known for certain with whom the paramount fought and defeated. According to D. C. Sircar, the verses 7 to 9 of the Tippera grant indicate that Jayatuṅgavarsha and Jivadhāraṇa were two refractory

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

There is a controversy among scholars as to who was the Paramesvara ? R. G. Basak held that the Paramesvara of Verse 7 and the 'nṛipa' Jīvadhāraṇa of verse 9 cannot be the same person and we should not think that Jīvadhāraṇa was defeated in a conflict with Lokanātha. Regarding the identity of Jayatuṅgavarsha, it has been held by R.G.Basak that the Rāstrakūṭa Kings of the Medieval ages used various birudas like avaloka, Tuṅga, Varsha and Vallabha. Fleet informs us that other families also adopted those birudas as a result of matrimonial alliances. He refers to one Jaytuṅgasiṁha of Kamā country, but he belonged to a later age[51]. Dr. R. C. Majumdar regards Jayatuṅgavarsha as a title rather than a proper name[52].

It may be suggested that Ādityasena of the Later Gupta dynasty appears to have been ruling over Eastern India after Harṣa's death. It is not unlikely that Lokanātha who has been styled as nṛipa and Kumārāmātya was a feudatory chief in East Bengal under Ādityasena of Magadha. We come across 'Kumāramātya' which was a technically official title used during and after the Gupta period, not only with regard to ministers, but also with regard to feudatory chiefs.[53] If we accept the hypothesis of the discontinuation of the rule of the imperial monarchs of the Faridpur plates in East Bengal during Harsha's reign or after his death, it is most likely that Lokanātha owed his allegiance to Ādityasena and the paramesvara was Lokanātha's own liegelord[54]. D. C. Sircar holds that the Paramesvara was probably the imperial ruler of Gauḍa.

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

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

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

The existence of Brāhmaṇic influence in Eastern India at the time can rightly be inferred also from the mention of the sacred fire, Pauṛāṇic deities, Brāhmaṇas versed in the four Vedas in this inscription[57].

The Dynasty of the Rātas in Samataṭa :

It is possible to discern the history of a new dynasty styled as the Rātas, from the newly discovered Kailān copper plate from a village South-west of Comillā and 13 miles west of the Iālmāi Railway Station[58]. The copper plate was issued in the eighth regnal year of King Śrīdhāraṇa of Samataṭa or the Tippera-Noakhāli region of the south-east Bengal. The time of the grant may be determined by considering the Palaeography as there is no mention of any date of known era with the help the meticulous observation of the letter of the Kailān inscription with those of the records of the time of Śaśāṅka, Lokanātha, Devakhaḍga and Rājarāja of the so called Khaḍga dynasty and the Pāla King Dharmapāla show that Śrīdhāraṇa ruled sometime between the days of Śaśāṅka (600 - 25 A.D.) and those of Dharmapāla (769 - 815 A.D.) and that he was more or less of contemporary of Lokanātha of the Tippera grant and of the Khaḍga Kings.

The inscriptions of the Khadgas are now generally assigned the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th Century A.D. and Lokanātha's Tippera grant is usually assigned to the middle of the 7th Century A.D.[59] As Lokanātha was a contemporary of Jīvadhāraṇa, the father of Srīdhāraṇarāta of the Rāta dynasty, the Kailān grant of Srīdhāraṇa may be placed rightly little later than the Tippera grant of Lokanātha. So it would be judicious to place the grant on the ground of Palaeography to about the second half of the same century. It has been held by D.C.Sircar that it is reasonable to assign the reign of Jīvadhāraṇa's son Srīdhāraṇa roughly to the third or fourth quarter of the same Century[60].

This copper plate grant of the feudatory King Srīdhāraṇa Rāta who calls himself Samataṭeśvara was issued from a place named Devaparvata. The adoration of God Hari in first verse of the grant indicates that the Rātas were devout Vaishṇavas and the verse 13 of the grant declares Srīdhāraṇa as a Parama-Vaishṇava. Two other members of the family were the King's father Jīvadhāraṇa Rāta and the Yuvāraja Baladhāraṇa Rāta. The King Jīvadhāraṇa has been mentioned in the Tippera grant of Lokanātha. All these would show that Jīvadhāraṇa, Śrīdhāraṇa & Baladhāraṇa belonged to the Rāta dynasty[61].

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

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

absence of the name of the overlord in the charter that Śrīdhāraṇa was actually almost an independent ruler since the days of his father Jīvadhāraṇa. We do not come across any earlier member of the Rāta family other than Jīvadhāraṇa. King Jīvadhāraṇa is not endowed with an imperial title and he is originally known as Samatatesvara and 'Pratāp-opanata-sāmanta-Chakra'. He was probably a semi-independent feudatory like his son Śrīdhāraṇa. Though the Rātas were defacto independent rulers dejure they acknowledged allegiance to an old and established imperial family for a considerably long period of time[62]. The position is comparable with that of the Nawabwazir of Oudh after the decline of the Timurid imperial house of Delhi[63].

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

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

King Śrīdhāraṇa who was the follower of the Bhāgavata form of Vaishṇavism disliked the destruction of living beings which was not approved by the Śāstras and granted life to thousands of creatures. These probably suggest as D.C.Sircar holds that the Vaishṇava King was a verse to the slaughter of animals in connection with the worship of deities[66]. He was a poet and the composer of excellent sweet songs. We are unlucky as none of his writings come down to us. He was also very learned in Śabdavidyā (grammar and lexicography) and in the other sciences and arts. Above all, King Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta is said to have been cordial to his subjects (Piteva Pālayitā). His relation with the Yuvaraja who is styled as "Prāpta-pañcha-mahāśabda-Śrī-Baladhāraṇa-rāta-Bhāṭṭārakasya" is not

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

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

The Rātas of Samataṭa cherished the spirit of religious toleration. At a time when the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist

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

The Khaḍga Dynasty of Vaṅga-Samataṭa :

A line of Kings belonging to the Khaḍga dynasty seems to have cropped up in the political scene of East Bengal between the interval after Harsha's death and the rise of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal, i.e. the period between 650 - 750 A.D. It is possible to cull information about the history of this dynasty somewhat definitely from the two copper plates discovered along with a Chaitya about 80 years ago near a tank at Ashrafpur about 30 miles north west of Dacca[69]. The third inscription of the dynasty is engraved on a Śarvāṇī image dedicated by Queen Prabhāvatī discovered in or near a village called Deulbāḍi situated about 14 miles outh of Comillā in the district of Tippera[70].

The date of the Khaḍga Kings of Samataṭa can only be determined by a study of the Palaeography in the Ashrafpur plates[71]. There are divergences of opinion among scholars

about the date of the inscriptions. According to G.M.Lashkar who edited these plates, suggests on palaeographic considerations that these the inscriptions may be dated to be 8th or 9th Century A.D. R.D.Banerjee assigned it to the 9th or 10th Century A.D.[73] R. C. Majumdar holds that the dynasty established its supremacy almost immediately after Harsha's time[74]. R. G. Basak also supports the view[75]. N.K.Bhattasali believes that the Khadga inscriptions may be assigned to the beginning of the 8th Century A.D.

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

The inscriptions of the Khadgas show that they ruled

From the two Ashrafpur copper plates of Devakhaḍga and Rajaraja respectively, we know the names of the Kings like Khaḍgodyama, Jāṭakhaḍga, Devakhaḍga and Rājarāja. The plate of Rājarāja mentions the name of Udiraṇa Khaḍga as belonging to the royal family[78]. We do not know anything about the predecessors of Khaḍgodyama and successors of Rājarāja. We are not in a position to say whether Udiraṇa was an ancestor of Devakhaḍga[79].

The extent of the sway of these Kings is not known, but the absence of the titles of Paramount power such as 'Paramabhaṭṭāraka' Parameśvara indicates that they were feudatory Kings. Khaḍgodyama is called 'nṛipādhirāja' in the Deulbāri inscription of this queen. We know that the Rātas who were 'Prāpta - Pañchamahāśabda' , (i.e. feudatories) also refers to their 'ādhirājya' and 'sāmanta Chakra'. Devakhaḍga's seal attached to the Ashrafpur grant does not prove anything as we have records with seals of subordinate rulers (cf the Mallasarul grant). It would be judicious to assume that the Khaḍgas were semi-independent feudatories like their contemporaries, the Rātas of Samataṭa. On the other hand the Ashrafpur grant of Rājarāja speaks of a piece of land previously granted by the 'Bṛihat Parameśvara'

(literally the great master) which appears to indicate a monarch to whom they possibly owed their nominal allegiance[80]. It appears that the extension of authority of Kāmarūpa rulers over south east Bengal did not last long. Its King Bhāshkaravarman in alliance with Harsha undoubtedly achieved some victory over Gauḍa, but the authority seems to have ended with his death.[81] It may be that the authority of Gauḍa which suffered a setback for a short time was re-established. There are evidences to show that the Gauḍas became powerful enough to repulse the later Guptas from Magadha[82]. The above consideration shows that they were the feudatories of the Gauḍa King but they started ruling semi-independently after the temporary fall of the Gauḍa authority caused by the attack of the Kings of Kanauj and Kāmarūpa in the second quarter of the 7th Century A.D.[83]

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

wind destroys a straw, an elephant a number of horses". The third King Devakhaḍga who was the donor of the grant is stated in the image inscription as 'dānapatiḥ (as maker of donation) 'Jitārikhaḍgaḥ (i.e. possessing a sword which could subdue his foes). The Kingdom of Devakhaḍga was marked by peace and happiness. He is said to have subdued his enemies and had under him a large number of feudatories. It appears that the Rātas originally ruling in Samataṭa, seem to have been defeated by the Khaḍga King Devakhaḍga. The above con-clusion may be made from the information that Ashrafpur copper plate grants of King Devakhaḍga were issued from the royal residence at Karmānta which may have been the capital of the Khaḍgas. D. C. Sircar, however, on the authority of the Kailān copper plate of Śrīdhāraṇarātā of Samataṭa suggests that about the middle of the seventh Century when the Khaḍgas were ruling the Dacca region of Vaṅga, the Rātas were holding sway over samataṭa and very soon Devakhaḍga subdued the Ratas and annexed Samataṭa[84]. The rise of the first King Khaḍgodyama in the first quarter of the 7th Century A.D. Coincides with the end of the reign of King Samāchāradeva of Vaṅga Samataṭa belonging to a Brāhmaṇical family. The account of Hiuentsang also corroborates the existence of a Brāhmaṇical dynasty in Samataṭa. The Mahākūṭa pillar

inscription[85] of the western Chālukyan King Raṇavikrānta (C. 601 - 02 A.D.) records that Kīrtivarman I defeated Kings of Vaṅga, Aṅga, Kalinga, Vathīra and Magadha. If it is true that the Chalukya King successfully invaded Vaṅga, it might have damaged the career of Samāchāradeva which was soon taken advantage by Khaḍgodyama[86]. The chronology of the Khaḍga Kings as reconstructed by D. C. Sircar is as follows. Khaḍgodyama(615 - 35),Jātakhaḍga (635 - 55), Devakhaḍga (655 - 75), Rājarāja or Rājarājabhaṭṭa (675 - 700)[87].

The Chinese pilgrim It-Sing visited India about the last quarter of the 7th Century A.D. It is learnt from his description that fifty six Chinese Buddhist pilgrim came to India in the second half of the same century and one of them Sheng-Chi found Rājabhaṭṭa ruling over Samataṭa[88]. Scholars are inclined to identify Rājabhaṭa with King Rājarāja or Rājarājabhaṭa, son of Devakhaḍga[89]. It is apparent from the suggestion that according to I-Tsing, King Rājabhaṭa of Samataṭa was a great patron of Buddhism. More than 4000 Buddhist monks are said to have been living in the capital of Samataṭa and enjoying royal patronage during his rule,

though only a few years before Sheng-Chi and I-tsing, Hiuentsng found only 2000 Buddhist monks in Samatata. Rājabhatta's munificence towards the cause of Buddhism is apparent in his grant of land as a crown prince. Hence, there is no wonder that he would continue his charity even after coming to the throne[90]. It is learnt from I-tsing that a certain Buddhist temple was situated 40 Yojanas (about 240 miles) east of Nālandā[91] was originally founded by Śrīgupta, and when I-tsing visited the country the area formed a part of the dominion of Devavarman, the King of eastern India[92]. This Devavarman has been identified with Devagupta of the later Gupta dynasty of Magadha[93]. It may be mentioned that the temple was undoubtedly situated in Malda (Pundravardhana), and not in Magadha, the home territory of the later Guptas, which is placed by I-tsing in Mid India[94] and not in Eastern India. Thus R. C. Majumdar holds that Devavarman may more reasonably be identified with Devakhadga[95]. But others locate the Chīnavihāra somewhere about Māldā district of Bengal and there is no proof of the extension of Khadga rule over the Māldā region[96].

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

led R. C. Majumdar to presume that the Khaḍgas may be identified with the Khaḍgas whose existence may be traced as early as the 14th Century A.D. and the dynasty of the Khaḍgas came to east Bengal in the train of the Tibetans and the Nepalese invasions during the troublesome days that followed the death of Harshavardhana[97]. But it must be said that there is no proof to connect the Khaḍga dynasty with Nepāl[98].

The dynasty of the Khaḍgas is remembered for its religious toleration. The Deulbāḍi Sarvāṇī image inscription of Deva-Khaḍga's queen Prabhāvatī informs that she caused the image Sarvāṇī to be covered with gold leaves out of veneraion for the Goddess. The Khaḍgas were all devout Buddhists, but at the same time they did not feel it irreligious in any way to pay reverence to a Goddess who must have belonged to the Brāhmanical sect. All these clearly show that we must revise our idea of the Buddhists and the Hindus of ancient days as two communities shut up in watertight compartments[99].

The circumstances that led to the decline of the Khaḍgas after Rājabhaṭṭa are at present wrapped in

obscurity. Very little is known regarding the state of Karmānta after the fall of the Khaḍgas by the Deulbāḍi (Comilla) inscription[100]. According to the tradition recorded by the Tibetan monk Tārānāth the Chandra dynasty was ruling in Vaṅga as early as the middle of the 7th Century A.D. and its last two rulers Govichandra and Lalitachandra reigned during the last part of the 8th Century A.D. It is probable that Govichandra subdued the Khaḍgas and established the supremacy of the Chandra dynasty[101]. On the other hand Mr. Phayore has recorded another tradition according to which Maha-t-aing-tsandra who was the first king of the Ārākānese Chandra dynasty, ascended the throne in 788 A.D. If we accept the tradition it is possible that the Chandra dynasty supplanted the Khaḍgas in Eastern Bengal, and in that case the descendants of Rājabhaṭṭa continued to reign for 100 years more in Karmānta and swept away by the Chandra Kings of Ārākān by the end of the 8th Century A.D.[102]

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

had patriotic spirit and the victory of Yaśovarman broke the heart of the people of Vaṅga and made them extremely unhappy[104]. The supremacy of Yaśovarman over Vaṅga was however shortlived.

Again, the copper plate inscription of King Bhavadeva of the Deva dynasty shows that the Khaḍgas could not retain their hold on the heart of the Samataṭa country for a long time and that they were driven out by the Devas of Samataṭa sometime about the beginning of the 8th Century A.D. The Khaḍga power in Vaṅga collapsed as a result of the invasion of Yaśovarman of Kanauj in the second quarter of the same Century A.D.[105] It paved the way for the establishment of the power of Gopāla sometime about the middle of the 8th Century A.D. It is not definitely known when exactly the Samataṭa was annexed to the empire of the Pālas[106]. We know from sources how the Pālas flourished first in Vaṅga[107]. According to Tibetan tradition Gopāla was originally King of Bhaṅgāla (i.e. Vaṅgāla) and later on he conquerred the the neighbouring Kingdom of Samataṭa[108].

The Deva Dynasty of Samataṭa :

The three plates of the 8th Century A.D. of Anantadeva

and Bhavadeva which have been excavated at Śālvan Vihāra, unveil the history of a new dynasty called the Devas in Samatata[107]. Two of these plates of King Śrī Anantadeva and Bhavadeva have been found in the Lālmāi-Maināmatī ridge near Comillā of which one of the Maināmatī plates is in bad condition and could not be deciphered[110].

At present we know very little about the four deva rulers. It appears from the Maināmatī plates that Śrī-Śāntideva was the first ruler of the dynasty and of whom very little is known from other sources[111]. It is evident from the Asiatic Society Plate of Bhavadeva that Vīradeva was the first King of his time. The verse 2 of the Bhavadeva plate describes how King Vīradeva resembled Achyuta, i.e. Vishnu in the matter of subduing enemies. The next verse introduces as with Viradeva's son Āanandadeva and his achievements have been described in verses 4 - 5. The verse 10 describes the achievements of King Bhavadeva who was the son and successor of Āanandadeva. Many of the passages describing Āanandadeva and Bhavadeva cannot be deciphered properly. The portion which have been deciphered do not offer any detail history of the dynasty[112]. Thus from the three inscriptions we come across names of

four generation of rulers -

Śrī Śāntideva

Śrī Vīradeva

Śrī Ānandadeva

Śrī Bhavadeva[113]

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

It is very difficult to determine the date of the plates as none of the plates do clearly indicate the ruling tenure of the dynasty. D. C. Sircar holds that they may be placed, on the ground of palaeography to the 8th Century A.D.[114] On the basis of careful comparison of the character of the letters with those of the Tippera plate of Lokanātha[115], the Kailān plate of Śrīdhāraṇarāta,[116]

the inscriptions of the Khaḍga Kings,[117] the inscriptions of Dharmapāla[118] and his immediate successors, it may be inferred that Bhavadeva grant may be placed to a date later than that of Lokanātha, Śrīdhāraṇarāta and the Khaḍga Kings Deva Khaḍga and Rājarāja. They all flourished in the latter half of the 7th Century A.D. and Bhavadeva grant may be placed to a date of the early Pālas. On the basis of the arguments of S. N. Chakraborty about the Development of the Bengali Alphabet[119], the inscription of Bhavadeva which employs the third and fourth transitional forms of (ś) the present inscription may be placed to a date later than the middle of the 9th Century A.D. But the theory is refuted on the ground that the Kailān grant of Śrīdhāraṇa used the similar form of (ś) but he belonged to the latter half of the 7th Century A.D.[120]

According to F. A. Khan, the Devas flourished not long after the Khaḍgas and on the ground of close resemblance of the Maināmatī plate scripts with the Later Gupta scripts, the Devas may be assigned to a time between the last part of the 7th and the middle of the 8th Centuries[121]. The 'imitation Gupta' gold coins issued by Kings of the Deva dynasty appear to be the 8th Century A.D. A. H. Dani holds that on Palaeographic ground the Maināmatī

plates may be compared with the Khālimpur plate of Dharmapāla[122]. Thus on the basis of Palaeography, it would be more reasonable to place the Bhavadeva plates to the 2nd half of the 8th Century and D.C.Sircar is inclined to support the view.[123]

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

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

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

of which the city of Devaparvata way lying. We have come to know that the huge monastic establishment with a very large tank near Kotila Mura site (in the Maināmatī hills) which is called Ānanda Rājā's palace apparently bears the name of the third ruler of the Deva dynasty[126]. Regarding the decline of the Deva dynasty, very little information have been supplied by the copper plate grant of Anantadeva and Bhavadeva. We are to depend completely on our assumption. It is learnt that the Khaḍga power collapsed as a result of the invasion of Yaśovarman of Kanauj in the second quarter of the 8th Century, thus paving the way for the establishment of the power of Gopāla I in Vaṅga about the middle of the 8th Century A.D. We do not know definitely when actually Samataṭa was annexed to rising empire of the Pālas, but it was possibly conquerred by Gopala I[127]. It is now generally believed that Gopāla I, the founder of the Pāla dynasty consolidated his position over the whole of Bengal and his son and successor could not have carried on victorious campaigns upto Punjab unless he had inherited from his father at least the consolidated Kingdom of Bengal[128]. According to Tibetan source Gopāla I was originally the King of Bhaṅgāla country no doubt indicating Vaṅga and it may be suggested that it was he who

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

The Dynasty of Kāntideva in Harikela :

An inscription of Kāntideva belonging to the 9th Century A.D. and discovered somewhere at Chittagong has brought to light the history of a new dynasty in Harikela[129]. The inscription being edited by D.C.Bhattacharyya and J. N. Sikdar[130] is not available to us and some historical facts have not been dealt here. D.C.Bhattacharyya and J.N.Sikdar hold that the Chittagong inscription may be placed earlier than the Ghosrāwa inscription of Devapāla.[131] and the dynasty may be assigned to 750 - 850 A.D.[132]. But the view has been rejected by R.C.Majumdar who on Palaeographic consideration has assigned the plate to the 9th Century A.D.[133] D. C. Sircar on the other hand holds that on Palaeographic grounds the Chittagong plate may be placed to the 8th or the 9th Century A.D.

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

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

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

The charter was issued from the city of Vardhamānapura and addressed to the future rulers of Harikela maṇḍala. The term Harikela maṇḍala in the Kāntideva plate has directed D.C. Bhattacharyya and J.N.Sikdar to think that he was only a local chief of a small territory (Maṇḍala) which subsequently developed during the supremacy of the Chandra dynasty and lent its name to the whole of East Bengal[135]. But the above view has been refuted by R. C. Majumdar that maṇḍala does not definitely denote a small territory. The term also denoted big Kingdom as evident from the expression 'Gauda maṇḍala'[136] and 'Varendrīmaṇḍala'[137]. Therefore, as R.C.Majumdar refers, the Harikela maṇḍala may denote Southern and Eastern Bengal and there is possibility of the conquest of Vardhamānapura by a Vaṅga King. Itsing states that Harikela was the eastern limit of Eastern India[138]. According to Chinese map Harikela comprises the coastal region between Samataṭa and Orissa. The Lexicographer Hemachandra is of the opinion that Harikela may be identified with Vaṅga.[139] In the Maṅjuśrīmūlakalpa, Vaṅga, Samataṭa and Harikela are mentioned as distinct localities[140]. According to two manuscripts preserved in the Dacca University Library, Harikela, a variant of Harikala is synonymous with Sylhet.[141]

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

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

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

Now regarding the decline of the dynasty very little

have to depend purely on assumption. According to D. C. Sircar, after the rule of the Deva dynasty, its dominion passed to the Chandras about the end of the 9th Century A.D. It is known from sources that the Chandras of Rohitagiri, establishing themselves in Chandradvīpa in the Buckerganj region of Southern Bengal, flourished about the middle of the 10th Century A.D. Its first King Trailokyachandra claimed to be the mainstay of the fortune of the King of Harikela, that is to say, a feudatory of Harikela King. Trailokyachandra's description as " ādhāro - Harikela-rāja-Kakuda-cchatra-smitānaṁ-Śriyāṁ' may be compared with 'Vaṅgi-Chālukya-rājyamūla-Stambha' an epithet of the feudatories of the Eastern Chālukyas[142].

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

part of it passed to the Chandras[143]. So it may be assumed that the power of the dynasty of Kāntideva of Harikela collapsed as a result of the upheaval of the power of the Chandras in Vaṅga-Samataṭa.

Independent Kingdom of Jayanāga of Gauḍa

The death of Śaśāṅka was followed by the great political disaster in Gauḍa. It, not only, shattered Śaśāṅka's dream of stable Gauḍa empire, but also his Kingdom along with the Capital City Karṇa-Suvarṇa passed into the hands of Bhāskaravarman, the King of Kāmarūpa. The factors leading to the downfall are not known and very few facts of this dark period are available to us from different sources. From the accounts of Hiuen-tsang, we come across four Kingdoms in Bengal proper(Puṇḍravardhana, Karṇasuvarṇa, Samataṭa and Tāmralipti)[144]. But the silence of Hiuen-tsānd about the political condition and the ruling Kings of these Kingdoms, though he mentioned the Capital of each of these Kingdoms, has led some scholars to think that the Kingdoms passed into the hands of Harshavardhana. The view has been rejected by some scholars[145]. But R. G. Basak

repeated the same and improved upon it by saying that these countries passed into the hands of Harsha and Bhaskaravarman[146]. But is probable that the death of Śaśāṅka delinked the North and West Bengal and within a few years both these Kingdoms were usurped by Bhaskaravarman and it has been confirmed by the fact that he made a grant from Karṇa-Suvarṇa, the Capital of Gauḍa[147]. This may probably be confirmed by Beal's account on the life of Hiuen-tsānd.[148]

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

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

The Ārya-mañjuśrī-mūlakalpa in the following passage refers to a King Jayanāga of Gauḍa. K.P.Jayaswal reads Nāgarāja in place of Nāgarāja[150] and takes Nāgarāja to be the name of the King and regards him as belonging to the Bhāraśiva dynasty[151]. According to R. G. Basak, it will not be out of place to connect Śaśāṅka with another King of Karṇasuvarṇa named Jayanāga whose Vappaghoshavāṭa grant was published by Barnet[152]. The epigraph, written in the character of the wellformed upright Gupta type prevailing in the later half of the 6th Century A.D informs that Jayanāga came into prominence in the second half of the 6th Century A.D. The title Mahārājādhirāja assumed by Jayanāga of the Vappaghosavāṭa grant indicates that Jayanāga was an independent King.He was also styled as Paramabhāgavata. The seal of the plate contains in an

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

we may assume that when the anarchy and confusion caused by the invasion of Bhaskaravarman ended and the attempt of a son of Śaśāṅka to ascend the throne ended in vein, the Kingdom passed into the hands of Jayanāga. According to R.G.Basak, the Mañjuśrī mūlakalpa makes Jayanāga almost a successor of Śaśāṅka, but in our opinion, he and his son preceded Śaśāṅka as Kings of Karṇasuvarṇa[156]. But Basak gives no reason and in absence of more reliable sources of information, it is better to accept the tradition recorded in the Buddhist work. Basak refers to a son of Jayanāga,but Ārya-mañjuśrīmūlakalpa refers to a son of Śaśāṅka and not of Jayanāga. It is just possible that Jayanāga ruled after the death of Śaśāṅka and before the conquest of Karṇasuvarṇa by Bhāskaravarman. It is difficult to say anything definitely on the chronological position of these two Kings from Palaeographical consideration as the interval between them appears to be very short[157]. We may glean some information about Jayanāga from some coins which closely resembles that of Śaśāṅka. The coins bear on the obverse the abbreviated name 'Jaya' and on the reverse a seated Lakshmī with an elephant sprinkling water on her[158]. Some of the places referred in the Vappaghoshavāṭa grant have been identified differently

by different scholars. Karṇasuvarṇa, the ancient Capital of Gauḍa has been identified by H. Beveridge with Raṅgamāṭi near Murshidabad[159]. On the basis of the observation of S. K. Chatterjee, Lionel D. Barnett identifies the following places. The Gāṅginika of the inscription seems to be the river Jalaṅgī, a branch of the Padmā or the Ganges which unites with Bhāgirathī near Nadiyā. Vappaghoshavāta would be likely village name in Southern Murshidabad and Nadiyā where there was much cattle breeding[160]. So it is confirmed from the above that he ruled over Birbhum and Murshidabad district, but the extent of his Kingdom or any other detail of his reign is not known to us.

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

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Chapter - III

Political History from 10th Century A. D. to 11th Century A. D.

The glory and brilliance of the Pāla empire which reached its Zenith during the rule of Devapāla whose suzerainty was acknowledged over a considerable part of Northern India from Kāmarūpa to the territories of the Hūṇa - Kambojas, perhaps even to the southern most extremity of India, did not last long. The rule of his successors Vigrahapāla, Nārāyaṇapāla, Rājyapāla, Gopāla II and Vigrahapala II comprising the period from C 847 A.D. - C 977 A.D. was marked by the steady decline and disintegration of the Pāla empire and the advantage was taken over by the Pāla chieftains who unfurled the flag of independence in different parts of Bengal in view of the decadance of the Pāla empire, the pace of which was infact hastened during the reign of Nārāyaṇapāla. The Rāṣṭrakūṭa Kings Amoghavarsha and Kṛishṇa III also succeeded in defeating the power of Gauḍa, Vaṅga, Aṅga and Magadha[1].

The decline of the Gurjara - Pratīhāra empire also provided opportunity to the powers like the Kalachuris and the Chandellas to rise to power which upset the political

stability of Northern India. The Pālas had to bear the brunt of the attack and almost reeled beneath the staggering blows of these and other powers[2]. The Chandella King Yaśovarman appears to have made successful attack against the Gauḍas[3] and his son Dhaṅga claims to have imprisoned the queens of Rāḍha and Aṅga[4]. Though the claims are sometimes exaggerated, there remains little doubt in our mind about the weakness and helplessness of the Pāla authority resulting in the emergence of several minor independent dynasties in different parts of Bengal.

The Kambojas

The Kamboja usurpation was the first blow to the Pāla empire which led them to give up their hold upon their paternal territory of Varendrī and it gave the Kambojas the opportunity to assume the title of Gauḍapati, the position which was held by the Pāla emperors for several generations as indications of their paramount authority.

Now question naturally comes to our mind. Firstly, who were the Kambojas ? Secondly, How did they come into prominence ? In the inscriptions of Aśoka, a Kamboja

country is mentioned along with 'Yona' which lay on the North-Western frontier of India. The Kambojas were mentioned with the Yavanas and they spoke a language partly Indo - Aryan and partly Iranian[5]. Their country had great reputation for horses to which there are allusions in the Mahābhārata and in the Buddhist literature. This reputation must have reached even far off Eastern India as is evident from the references to the Kamboja horses of Devapāla in his Mongyr and Nālandā grants. The context of the passage where it occurs as well as its association with horses would seem to indicate that the composer of the inscription was referring to the Kambojas who are coupled with the Gāndhāras and placed somewhere near Āfgāṇisthān[6]. N. G. Majumdar has pointed " If horses could be brought to Bengal from the North-Western frontier of India during the Pāla period, it is not unreasonable to suppose that for trade and other purposes, some advanturers could also have found their way into their province"[7]. According to Foucher, Nepalese tradition applied the name Kamboja-deśa to Tibet[8]. It has been supposed by R. P. Chanda that the Kamboja Gaudapati probably came from Tibet, Bhutan or some other Himalayan country at the head of a Mongolian horde who are now represented by Koch and the Paliyās of Northern

Bengal, also known as Rājabaṅśis[9].

In the Tibetan work ' Pag-sam-jon-Zang' there are references to both the Kambojas and eastern one is identified as hailing Lusai Hill tract between Burma and Bengal[10]. But the work is of later time and there is nothing to show of the existence of the dynasty in the North-Eastern frontier in the 10th Century A.D. It is likely that there was a Gāndhāra and possibly also a Kamboja as well on the North-Eastern frontier of India near the regions known as Yunnan and Szechwan".

It is known that these conquerers of North Bengal might have come from that direction. 'The history of the Brahmaputra Valley' tells us more than one Mongoloid invasions on its North-Eastern frontier and the extension of the power of some of these conquerers to the West beyond the Karatoyā was not impossible. The Nidhanpur copper plate supplies us with the information of the conquest of part of North Bengal by the Kāmarūpa King Bhāskaravarman[12].

It is evident from some sources that the Tibetan Kings like Khrisrong-Idebtsan (C 755 A.D. - C 797 A.D)

invaded India and Mutigbtsanpo (C 804 A.D. - C 815 A.D) defeated Dharmapāla and Ral-pa-chan possibly advanced as far as Gaṅgāsāgara[13].

One Kamboja clan had shown a spirit of restlessness against the neighbour during the reign of Devapāla who defeated and crushed their power for sometime. But the lesson was forgotten during the decadance of the Pāla authority and the Kambojas entering North Bengal found themselves strong enough to proclaim the mastery of Gauḍa[14].

Mahīpala in his copper plate grant claims to have recovered the territory occupied by some intruders from his forefathers. This paternal territory(rājyam pitraṁ) has been identified by some scholars on the strength of the evidence of Sandhyākara Nandī who describes Varendrī as Janaka - Bhu in his Rāmacharita[15]. But North Bengal was under the control of the Pālas not of the Kambojas at that time. Again, the ancestral homeland of the Pālas was Vaṅgāla not North Bengal. It is known that the Kambojas during the rule of Mahīpāla I (C 977 A.D. - C 1027 A.D) were ruling over a small principality of

of South - Western Bengal and it is not known whether Mahīpāla supplanted them from that region as there are some evidences to show of their rule in the South-Western Bengal after him. Two images erected during the 3rd or 4th regnal year of Mahīpāla have been found in Bāghāura and Nārāyaṇapur villages in the district of Comilla lying within the territory of the Chandras. So it may be inferred that Mahīpāla probably succeeded in forcing the Chandras to acknowledge his suzerainty. The contemporary Chandra King Laḍaha Chandra might have gone on pilgrimage to Prayāga and Vārānasī crossing the territory of Mahīpāla I as subserviently[16].

The Dinajpur plate of records the construction of a Śiva temple by a King of Gauḍa of the Kamboja family. There are differences of opinion among scholars about the meaning of the compound Kuñjaraghaṭāvarshena inscribed in it[17]. Rajendralal Mitra refers it to a Chronogram in the sense of Śaka 888 (966 A.D)"[18]. Bhandarkar considers it as an adjunct to the subject 'Gauḍapati' meaning " he who pours with an array of elephants"[19]. This compound may also be taken to imply that the Gauḍapati is very fortunate and rich, being sprinkled with the water from the pots held by Lakshmī's elephants.[20]

There is no unanimity of opinion among scholars about the date of the inscription. According to R.P. Chanda, the editor of the Dinajpur pillar inscription, this plate is to be placed from palaeographic considerations between the Bādāl pillar inscription and the Deopārā praśasti of Vijayasena and more accurately between Bāngaḍ plate or in the 10th Century A.D.[21]

There are some evidences in support of the view that the Kambojas flourished in the North Bengal or Varendrī in the early part of the 10th Century A.D. The Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra informs us of the attack of the city by Trailokyachandra in about C 920 A.D, by the Gauḍapati Kuñjaraghaṭāvarsha. So it may be assumed that Kuñjaraghaṭāvarsha might have flourished in North Bengal sometime about C 915 A.D. - C 925 A.D.[22]

The discovery of a copper plate at Irdā[23] enables us to form a correct estimate of the nature and effect of the Kamboja usurpation. The Irdā plate issued by Nayapāla belonging to the family of Rājyapāla is of

great historical importance. Rājyapāla has been described as Saugata while his son and successor Nārāyaṇapāla has been described as a devotee of Vāsudeva. They all assumed the full imperial titles like Parameśvara, Paramabhaṭṭāraka and Mahārājādhirāja. The Irdā plate records the grant of land in the Daṇḍabhuktimaṇḍala within the Vardhamānabhukti[24]. Daṇḍabhukti has been rightly identified by R.D.Banerjee with Midnapore and Balasore districts[25]. The Kamboja King of Gauḍa of the Dinajpur plate and the princes of the Irdā plate represent one and the same family. From this source, it is evident that the Kambojas seized not only North Bengal, but also the South-Western portion of the province including the Vardhāmanabhukti. They had their Capital at Priyaṅgu which is still unidentified.[26]

The Kambojas succeeded in Bengal due to several factors. It may be due to the possible superiority in the use of horse in battle. On the other hand, the Chandra and Pāla Kings were Buddhists while the Kambojas were generally held to be the devotee of Hindu Gods Vishṇu and Śiva. Probably the Buddhist creed, professed by the Pālas and the Chandras, was declining in Gauḍa where the

Kambojas might have been welcomed in consideration of their attachment to Brāhmaṇical religion.[27]

It has been explained that the Kamboja usurpation of the 10th Century A.D. was a revolt of a feudal chief of high official and R.C.Majumdar holds "it is not necessary to presume an invasion of the Kamboja tribe as is generally done". That the enrolment of the foreigners in the service of the Pālas is proved by the existence of officials like Mālava-Khaśa-Hūṇa-Kulika-Karṇāṭa in the service of the Pālas. The Kambojas might have been employed in the military service and raised their heads at an opportune movement as Divya did in later time. It may be mentioned in this connection that the Abyssynian chiefs in the 15th Century usurped the throne of Bengal. On the whole as R.C.Majumdar points out " we must admit that the rule of a Kamboja chief in Bengal may indicate, equally well, either an invasion of Bengal by the Kamboja tribe or the successful revolt of local chief or official in Bengal belonging to that tribe".[28]

Regarding the decline of the Kambojas we have very little evidence with us. It is probable that Rājyapāla,

the son and successor of Nārāyaṇapāla, succeeded in recovering Varendrī or North Bengal from the clutches of the Kambojas. It is also evident from the inscription of Rājyapāla discovered somewhere in the Rajasahi district that Rājyapāla pulled out the Kambojas from North Bengal. On the other hand, the Kamboja Kings succeeded by Kuñjaraghaṭāvar-sha, did not claim to be Gauḍeśvara though the contemporary Kāmarūpa King Ratnapāla described Rājyapāla as the lord of Gauḍa. The Kāmrūpa King claims to have defeated the Gauḍapati Rājyapāla near the river Gaṅgā.[29] Again the Bhaturiya inscription of Rājyapāla represents him as a vanquisher of many enemies" including the Chinas and in Indian tradition China often means Tibet and Mahāchina China".[30] The China enemies of Rājyapāla were none but the Kamboja enemies of Devapāla[30a].

It has been a tendency among scholars to identify the Rājyapāla both of the Pāla dynasty and of the Irdā plate of the Kambojas on several grounds. Firstly, both bear the same name and both had their queen named Bhāgyadevī and the Kamboja rulers Rājyapāla, Nārāyaṇapāla and Nayapāla appear to have assumed the names of their Pāla name-sakes.

But the identification on this basis seems to be baseless. This kind of borrowed names would appear to suggest intermarriages between the two families. The case of Kamboja Rājyapāla and his queen Bhāgyadevī both having the names of the Pāla King Rājyapāla reminds us of the Kāmarūpa King Samudravarman and his queen Dattadevī having borrowed the names of the Gupta emperor Samudragupta and his queen Dattadevī. Samudra Varman was named after his father's overlord or his maternal grandfather. A similar relationship might have existed between Kamboja Rājyapāla and Pāla Rājyapāla. Thus the Kamboja Kings of Priyaṅgu might have been subordinate - of the Palas inspite of their imperial titles.[31] Secondly, both are mentioned as Paramasaugata and both assumed the same imperial titles. But the argument against this is that the assumption of similar titles cannot in any way prove the identification. The Chandra rulers of South-Eastern Bengal also took similar titles. Thirdly, a mother's tribal name is sometimes applied to the name of her children and 'Kamboja - Vaṁśa - tilaka' has been taken to mean that the mother of the Pāla Rājyapāla belonged to a Kamboja family. But we do not have any reference to any matrimonial connection with the Kambojas[32] and hence

D. C. Sircar's theory that Pāla Rājyapāla was connected with the Kambojas through his mother's side cannot be accepted without any positive evidence. On the other hand, Rājyapāla of this record has the epithet 'Kamboja-Vaṁśa-tilaka (as ornament of the Kamboja clan). In the Rāmacharita of Sandhyākara Nandī, the Pālas are styled to have descended from the 'Samudrakula' and in the Kamauli grant they are represented as belonging to solar race. But nowhere the Kamboja origin has been attributed to the Pālas. The son & successor of Rajyapala of the Pāla dynasty was Gopala II whose name appears in the Bāngaḍ, Āmgāchi and Manahali plates. The Kings Nārāyaṇapāla and Nayapāla are the sons and successors of the Kamboja Rājyapāla. In case the Pālas are proved to be identical with the Kambojas, there would then be no necessary for assuming that in the 10th Century A.D. a part of the Pāla territory was lost to the Kambojas. But it has not been unanimously accepted by scholars.[33]

The Chandra dynasty of South-Eastern Bengal

During the period of Pala decline several semi-independent powers came into prominence in Bengal. The most important among them were the Chandras and the Varmans.

The history of the Chandras was not fully known to us owing to the dearth of source materials. The three copper plates recently excavated from Maināmatī(two of Ladahachandra and one of Govindachandra), the Dacca copper plate of Kalyāṇachandra and the Paschimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra have brought to light the continuous rule of this dynasty spreading over a period of about a Century and a quarter. We are now able to ascertain the correct genealogy and correct order of succession of the Chandra rulers. Incidentally after the discovery of image inscription of Govindachandra[34] and Maināmatī plates of Laḍaha-chandra[35], it has been now possible to connect them with the Chandra dynasty.

With the help of the newly discovered copper plates A.H.Dani[36] furnished the genealogical list of the Chandra dynasty as follows : -

Pūrṇachandra

Suvarṇachandra

Trailokyachandra

Śrī Chandra

Kalyāṇachandra

Laḍahachandra

Govindachandra.

We are also able to assign the maximum reigning period of Kings right from Śrīchandra as follows : 37

Śrī Chandra : 46 Years (cf Madanpur plate)

Kalyāṇachandra : 24 Years (cf Dacca plate)

Laḍahachandra : 18 Years (cf Bharella image inscription.)

Govindachandra : 23 Years (cf Pāikpārā image inscription.)

We are, thus, able to establish a continuous rule of the dynasty of about one hundred and fifty years, if we assign the reign period of 25 years to Trailokya-Chandra who is seemed to be the first sovereign of the dynasty. The Tirumalai inscription of Rājendra Chola informs us that one Govindachandra, undoubtedly the Govindachandra of the Chandra dynasty, had been ruling in C 1021 - 24 A.D. The Tirumalai inscription[38] also informs us that Mahīpāla I of the Pāla dynasty, defeated by Rājendrachola of the Chola dynasty, was a contemporary of Govindachandra. The evidence of Śabdapradīpa, a medical treatise, would be of much help of us in this respect. The author's father Bhadrēśvara and Bhadrēśvara's father Devagana were serving during the reigns of King Rāmapāla and Govindachandra respectively.[39] Hence there was probably a

a gap of one generation between Govindachandra and the Pāla ruler Rāmapāla. If the calculation is accepted, then it appears that the years 1021 - 24 may be placed at the beginning of the reign of Govindachandra & thus the reign period of Govindachandra may be assigned between 1020 - 30 A.D. and counting backward it appears that King Ladahachandra ruled in the period from 1000 - 1020 A.D, Kalyāṇchandra from 975 - 1000 A.D, Śrīchandra from 930 - 975 A.D. and Trailokyachandra who raised his position from a feudatory to independent King, may be placed between 900 - 930 A.D.[40] On the other hand, the Dacca plate of Kalyāṇachandra informs that Śrīchandra helped Gopāla II, the Pāla King in regaining power. It has been stated in lines 16 - 17 of the Dacca plate:-

"Prithvīpāla - bhya - Pramārjana - Vidhāvārdrh Kathorakama.
Govardhanonmathane mahotsava - Guru - Gopāla Saṁropane"[41]

Gopāla II might have ruled from 952 - 969 A.D. and Śrīchandra might have ruled almost contemporaneously. The dating of the Chandra rulers with the help of sources mentioned above is also supported by the Palaeography. Thus the reigning period may be placed to the 10th and the 11th Centuries A.D. The comparative study of the

Palaeography of Rāmapāla grant of Śrīchandra with those of the Bhāgalpur plate of Nārāyaṇapāla [42], Bāngaḍ grant Mahīpāla I of the end of the 10th and the early 11th Cemtury, the Velāva grant of Bhojavarman of the 11th and early 12th Century A.D. had led R.D.Banerjee to conclude that the Belāva grant of Bhojavarman was slightly earlier than the Rāmapāla grant of Śrīchandra which is earlier than the Bāngaḍ grant of Mahīpāla and the Rāmapāla grant of Śrīchandra is either contemporary or slightly later than the Bhāgalpur grant of Nārāyaṇapāla[43]. Thus we may reasonably conclude that Chandra dynasty flourished in the South-Eastern Bengal in the beginning of 10th Century A.D. and it lasted upto the middle of the 11th Century A.D.

It has been supposed that the Chandras of South-Eastern Bengal were probably connected with the Chandras of Ārākān. According to Burmese Chronicles, the Shans invaded Ārākān in the 10th Century A.D. and North Ārākān was conquered by the Burmese King Aniruddha. It has been inferred that the Chandra King were ousted by the Burmese King and a branch of them settled at Paṭṭikerā (Tippera dist) and founded a new Kingdom there. It has been held by Syed Murtaza Ali that

" the Ārākānese Chandras" reduced Harikela first by ousting the descendants of Kāntideva. Later they transferred their Capital to Paṭṭikerā reducing the area. Finally they occupied Dacca district and had their seat of Government at Vikramapura which was the Capital during the time of their greatest glory".[44] The extension of over Chittagong region[45] in the 9th Century A.D. leads us to support the eastern region of the family of Śrīchandra. The extension of Chandra power from Harikela to Chandradvīpa and to Vaṅga also strengthen the view of their eastern origin[46]. The records reveal the existence of a line of Kings of Vikramapura in Eastern Bengal in the period from 950 - 1050 A.D. It is not unlikely that the Chandra Kings of Ārākān were related to the Chandras of South-Eastern Bengal[47]. Bhattasali has pointed out the outlandish character of the name Laḍaha Chandra and inclines to the conclusion that he may have belonged to the Ārākānese branch. The discovery of coins very much similar to those of Arakan and terracota plaqes with representation of Ārākānese and Burmese men and women at Maināmatī strongly support the connection between Ārākān and Tippera. The Maināmatī copper plate of Raṇavaṅkamalla of 1219 - 20 A.D also referes to the Burmese connection with that region[48].

There is a similarity of eight coins found at Sylhet with those of the Chandra rulers of Ārākān[49]". This attribution will explain the distribution of this coinage throughout South-east Bengal. This may also throw some light on the vexed problem of the origin of the Chandra rulers. At least the coins connect the Chandra rulers of the two dynasties[50].

So it is apparent that the Chandras of South-Eastern Bengal were probably connected with the Chandra of Ārākān. The only definite evidence is the similarity of coins. But there are other evidences which also do not rule out the possibility of the connection.

Regarding the original homeland of the Chandras, there is a controversy among scholars. The Rāmapāla copper plate[51], the Dhulla plate[52] and the Madanpur copper plate[53] of Śrīchandra informs us that they had been originally the rulers of Rohitagiri. R. D. Banerjee[54] and N. G. Majumdar[55] have identified Rohitagiri with Rātāsgarh in the Shahabad district of Bihar and therefore support the outlandish origin of the Chandras. B. C. Sen also supports the external origin of the Chandras[56]. N. K. Bhattasali on the other hand identified it in the Lālmāi

hills in the Comilla district[57]. But D. C. Sircar refutes the view of N.K.Bhattasali on the ground that the modification of Lālmāṭi to Lālmāi seems to be philologically improbable. In any case, the verse under study mentioning Lālmāi as Lālambi shows that Bhattasali's suggestion is wrong and that it offers no challenge to the identification of Rohitagiri with Rohtāsgarh[58]. But other than the similarity sound and sense, there are hardly any evidence to connect Rohitagiri of the Chandra plates with Rotāsgarh of Bihar. On the other hand, it goes against the theory that the Chandras were at first feudatory or ally of the King of Harikela[59]. So it would be more logical to identify Rohitagiri somewhere about Chandradvīpa and Harikela where Trailokyachandra and his forefathers acted as feudal lords. Haridas Mitra has located it in Rāṅgāmāṭi in the Chittagong Hill tracts.[60] But in view of the discovery of many other inscriptions at Maināmatī in the Lālmāi hills, the antiquity of the place cannot be questioned anywhere and it adds support to the identification of the place with Rohitagiri.

We know very little about the first two rulers of the dynasty. They were probably feudatory chiefs. It is evident from the Madanpur plate of Śrīchandra that the first nobleman of the dynasty named Pūrṇachandra was a man of much importance whose name could be " read on the pedestal of the images and

on (stone) pillars of victory and copper plates in which new epigraphs were inscribed[62]. It is possible to assume that he behaved like an independent in his own land, though he was not declared as a formal King. His son Suvarṇachandra was endowed with high qualities[63]. He was known in the world as Buddha. So it is evident that he was the first in the dynasty to embrace Buddhism. He is not described in the inscription as having ruled as a King. His son and successor Trailokyachandra was the first sovereign of the dynasty and he assumed the title of Mahārājādhirāja which is mentioned in all records as far available. He ruled from Vikramapura as the Capital of the Kingdom.

Trailokyachandra has been described in the Verse 5 of Kedarpur plate as having conquered the earth bounded by four oceans. "Trailokyachandra laid the foundation of the greatness of his family"[64]. The position of Trailokyachandra is stated in verse 5 of the Madanpur plate as follows : " ādhāro - Harikelarāja-(Ka) Kuda - cchatra - smitānāṁ - śriyāṁ" which has been differently enumerated by different scholars. R. G. Basak states that he was at first a King of Chandradrīpa and later became " the repository of the fortune (Goddess) whose smile was the

white umbrella, the symbol of the royalty of the King of Harikela". The net result of the political achievements of Trailokyachandra was that he was at first a King of Chandradvīpa, but later became the ruler of Harikela. The line has been differently enumerated by N. G. Majumdar who translates the verse as " the support of the fortune Goddess (of other Kings) smiling, at (Joyful on account of) the umbrella which was the royal insignia of the King of Harikela"[65]. If we accept this account without any doubt, it appears that Trailokyachandra was both the defacto and dejure King of Harikela. But the account of R.G.Basak leads us to a different conclusion and indicates that Trailokyachandra was the defacto, if not the dejure ruler of Harikela. D. C. Sircar is of the opinion that he was not a King of Harikela, but was the ruler of Chandradvīpa (modern Bukherganj Dist.) owing allegiance to or allied with the King of the country of Harikela. Trailokyachandra who flourished about the middle of the 10th Century A.D. perhaps owed allegiance to the line of Harikela Kings represented by Kāntideva about whom we have already discussed[66].

Śrīchandra was the first independent ruler of the dynasty to throw off the yoke of Harikela King and extended

the Chandra power over wide area of South-Eastern Bengal[67]. The fact that Trailokyachandra was the defacto ruler of Harikela is more acceptable than views of N.G.Majumdar and R.C.Majumdar[68]. So more reasonable opinion is that Trailokyachandra inherited his feudatory position from his father and later accumulated strength and became the mainstay of Harikela King. It was he who extended his influence over Chandradvīpa and supplanted the Harikela King[69]. It is known from the Dacca plate of Kalyāṇachandra that the Gujara-Pratīhāra King Mahendrapāla (885 - 908 A.D) conquered at least South Bihar and North Bengal from the Pāla King Nārāyaṇapala (854 - 910 A.D) during the time of Trailokyachandra. It had made the position of Nārāyaṇapāla very much precarious. It is possible that Trailokyachandra sided with Mahendrápala against Nārāyaṇapāla and succeeded in annexing wide areas of East Bengal to his original territory of Chandradvīpa in Buckergunge region[70]. But the theory is not accepted today after the discovery of an inscription by G. Bhattacharjee of Barlin Museum. The inscription is now at Malda Museum. Mahendrapāla has been identified with a King of the Pala dynasty[70a].

Now a problem naturally comes to our mind as to who was the first independent ruler of the Chandra dynasty.

According to D. C. Sircar, Trailokyachandra was a feudatory ruler and the first independent ruler of the dynasty was Śrīchandra because the latter was adorned with various high sounding titles like 'Parameśvara, Paramabhaṭṭāraka and Mahārājādhirāja and that Trailokyachandra was not given with all those high sounding titles except 'Mahārājādhirāja'. But a close observation of the Chandra plates reveals the fact that the ruling King was endowed with full regal titles and his father was given the titles of 'Mahārājādhirāja. In the Dacca plate of Kalyāṇachandra, Śrīchandra was given only the title of Mahārājādhirāja, while Kalyāṇachandra was given the full regnal titles. In the Mainamati plates of Laḍahachandra, his father is simply described as 'Mahārājādhirāja'. So the most justifiable explanation is that Trailokyachandra was at first a feudatory and gradually increased his power and assumed sovereignty by supplanting the Harikela King. Thus Trailokyachandra added Chandradvīpa and Harikela to his paternal Kingdom and felt justified in assuming the title of Mahārājādhirāja.[71]

Regarding the exploits of Trailokyachandra informations have been supplied by different epigraphic sources of his

successors though none of his own inscription has been deciphered so far. In the verse 6 of the Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra, it is stated that Trailokyachandra being desirous of conquering the earth bounded by the four oceans, destroyed his enemies by his sword[72]. The verse 7 of the plate gives valuable information about the exploits of Trailokyachandra in the Samatata country with its capital at Devaparvata. The verse is as follows :

"Kshīrodām - anu Devaparvata iti Śrīmad-tad-etat-Puram
Yatr = āgantu - Janasya - Vismaya - rasaḥ Kamboja - Vārtt -
ādbhitaiḥ
Lālambi - Vanaṃ - atravāṭika - Śatair = Anvishya siddh -
Aushadhi Vyāhārā itiha Śrutās = Samatatan = nirjjitya
yat Sainikaiḥ"

It gives some important information about the conquest of Trailokyachandra, Firstly, it informs that Trailokyachandra conquerred Samataṭa country (present Tippera-Noakhali region). Secondly, Devaparvata lying on the bank of Kshīrodā river was the Capital of the Samataṭa country which is also supported by the evidence of the Kaitān inscription of Śrīdhāraṇarātā[73]. Thirdly, the city of Devaparvata appears to have been ravaged

by the Kambojas shortly before the Chandra invasion of Samatata[74]. Kamalakanta Gupta Choudhury enumerated the Paśchimbhāg plate and the exploits of Trailokyachandra in a different way and there is exaggaration in his statement about the conquest of Trailokyachandra. He stated that the victorious army of Trailokyachandra " entered the village of hilly countries, drank from the tunnel like rivers in the table-land of the Vindhya Hills and ultimately reached the place where roaring currents of the Kāverī were throwing down the stones from the peak of the Malaya Hills (South India)"[75]. But D.C.Sircar has expressed doubt on the historical basis of the above statement. The Kāverī rising from the western Ghats and running through the Coimbatore, Salem, Tiruchirappalli and Tañjaur district of Tamilnadu falls to the Bay of Bengal. According to the Purāṇas it rises not from Malaya[76]. The village referred in the verse is in Vaṅga country and the Suruṅganadī following through the Vindhyan region is not known from any other sources. It seems that the curds of Vaṅga, in which the division (Bhāga) of Vikramapura (Dacca Dist.) was situated according to early medieval records, had a name in Chandradvīpa (Buckergunge dist.) which was Trailokyachandra's original

dominions".[77]

In the Maināmatī plate of Ladahachandra, it has been stated that under Trailokyachandra Vaṅga was rising in in prosperity[78]. His military achievements have been elaborated in the Dacca copper plate of his grandson Kalyāṇachandra that if, Trailokyachandra had not seen jewels in the clasped hands of the Gaudas, they were imprisoned and if they did not bow to the ground to show respect to him, they were slain with raised swords.[79] Trailokyachandra was probably successful during the weak succession of either Rājyapāla or Gopāla II of the Pāla dynasty. Now if we reject the eulogistic opinion in different plates about the conquest of Trailokyachandra, it would be the most reasonable explanation that Trailokyachandra had stronghold in the Devaparvata area and he established his sway in the whole of the Samatata area & at that time the news of the Kambojas capturing power in Northern and Western Bengal was heard and were defeated by Trailokyachandra[80].

Trailokyachandra was succeeded by his son Śrīchandra. Like his father he was also an independent King and assumed the title of 'Parameśvara, Paramabhaṭṭāraka - Mahārājādhirāja'.

Regarding his military achievements, the Maināmatī plate of Ladahachandra states that his military achievements brought tears to the eyes of the queens of the King of Prāgjyotisha (Assam) and wiped away the smiles of the queens of Gauda King. This refers to Śrīchandra's claim to have defeated the Kings of Bengal & Assam, no doubt of the Pāla and the Mleccha dynasties[81]. It has also been confirmed by the Paśchimbhāg plate of Śrīchandra. The verse 12 of the plate informs us that the forces of Śrīchandra entered the woodlands near Lohitya in the course of the conquest of the Kāmrūpa country. The description of Kamarupa with its pigeons, monkeys, plantain trees, deers and blackaloe-woods as given in the verse indicates that the composer was familiar with the country. The importance of the verse lies in the fact that it indicates and invasion of Kāmarūpa by Śrīchandra which is not recorded in any of his grants though the Paśchimbhāg plate is one his earliest grants[82]. It has been elaborated in the Paśchimbhāg plate that Śrīchandra's army had a desire to conquer 'Uttarapatha' and there are the mention of the name of two rivers in the course of the description of the conquest. These are the chitraśilā which is mentioned in the Mahābhārata and the Puṣpabhadrā mentioned in the Bhāgavata Purāna. The

Pushpabhadrā is a small stream of the north of the Brahmaputra near Gauhati[83]. It is known that Uttarpatha was the name of the northern part of India including the Himālayān region. The author of the inscription seems to locate the Kāmarūpa country in Uttarapatha. This has been accepted by the Mahābhārata and Raghuvaṁśa of Kālidāsa, but the Purāṇas and other works of later time like Rājaśekhara's Kāvyamīmāṁsā place Kāmarūpa or Prāgjyotisha in the Eastern division[84]. So it confirms Śrīchandra's conquest of Kāmarūpa.

In the Dacca copper plate of Kalyāṇachandra, it has been stated "He was moist (soft) in the act of washing away the fear of Pṛthivīpāla, was hard enterprising in the churning of Govarṇna (earth and the water), was great in the great festivity of re-instating Gopāla, was a protector of sacrifices (vows) in returning the Pāla queen, who was defeated at ease and captured and whose arm was the universal support of various receptacle of various sentiments"[85]. It is apparent that he wiped away the obstacle created by Pṛthivīpāla against Gopāla and helped Gopāla to restore the throne. It is possible that Gopāla and Pṛthivīpāla were brothers and they fought for the Pāla Kingdom which was saved by Śrīchandra. This is an important information about the

Pālachandra relation during that time. It has been explained by A. H. Dani and D. C. Sircar that the ruler of Gauḍa defeated by Śrīchandra was the Pāla King. But the Pālachandra friendly relation has been affirmed by the Dacca copper plate of Kalyāṇachandra. The reasonable argument is that the Kambojas were ruling over North and West Bengal during the 10th Century A.D. and they were called as the 'Lords of Gauḍa'. That the Chandras fought with the Kambojas and not with the Pālas is supported by the fact that Śrīchandra restored Gopāla to his throne. This Gopāla was undoubtedly Gopāla II of the Pāla dynasty who ruled from 940 - 960 A.D and was contemporary of Śrīchandra. It has also been suggested by some that Śrīchandra himself defeated the Pāla King and then restored him to power[86].

The Sylhet plate of Śrīchandra refers to his exploits in other regions also. He is stated to have defeated the Utkalas, the Hūṇas and the Yavanas. It is difficult to determine Śrīchandra's influence over them. It may be an exaggeration and may be an echo of Bādāl pillar inscription of Devapāla[87].

The land grant in the Puṇḍravardhana-bhukti, seems to indicate the temporary occupation of a part of North

by Śrīchandra. The possibility is that the territories were lost by the Pālas during the temporary disaster of the dynasty in the rule of Nārāyaṇapāla towards the end of the 9th Century and the beginning of the 10th Century A.D. Obviously the successors of Nārāyaṇapāla stroke hard to restore the lost territory. So it may be assumed that there was a prolonged struggle between the Pālas, Kambojas and the Chandras and as a consequence to this the territories probably changed hands.

Now a point naturally comes to our mind as to what were the factors that facilitated the rise of the Chandras. It has been suggested by R.C.Majumdar that the invasion of Kalachuri King Kokkala in Bengal precipitated the rise of the Chandra as an independent power. The King Yuvarāja of the Kalachuri dynasty who flourished in the mid-tenth Century invaded Gauḍa and defeated probably King Gopala II of the Pāla dynasty[88]. The unfinished condition of Kedārpur plate of Śrīchandra may suggest possibly the cessation of Śrīchandra's authority in Puṇḍravardhana which might have fallen in the hands of the Kambojas. The authority of the Chandras was confined to Eastern Bengal. It also appears that

the Chandras about the mid-tenth Century A.D. had some trouble with the Chedi King Lakshmaṇarāja who was the son and successor of Yuvarāja who is stated in the Goharwa plate of Karṇadeva as Vaṅgāla - bhaṅganipuṇa(one who showed skill in disrupting the Vaṅgālas)[89]. The Pālas were probably enjoying subordinate or insignificant position. The Centre of gravity seems to have been shifted from Gauḍa to the Vaṅgala territory where the Chandras had been ruling and there is no evidence to show that Lakshmaṇarāja annexed the territory[90].

Śrīchandra was succeeded by his son Kalyāṇachandra. He has been described in the verse 7 of the Maināmatī plate of Laḍahachandra as " pure or purifying like water of the Ganges". In the verse 8 of the same plate, it has been stated that Kalyāṇachandra caused sorrow to the Mleccha and Gauḍa women. It thus indicates his success against the Mleccha King of Prāgjyotiṣa and the Pāla King of Gauḍa. All the more, it suggests, as D.C.Sircar informs, that Kalyāṇachandra obtained successes over the rulers of Bengal and Assam during the reign of his father as the leader of the latter's forces.[91] The above statement about the achievements of Kalyāṇachandra has been supported by the Maināmatī plate

of Govindachandra. Its 7th verse refers to his fight against the Mlecchas and it is said that he made the river Lohitya redoubled by the tears dropping from the eyes of the Mleccha ladies. It has also been stated in the verse that Kalyāṇachandra was successful in a battle against the King of Gauḍa[92]. The above statement has enough significance regarding the military achievements of Kalyāṇachandra. It refers to the Mlecchas who were associated with the Lohitya (Brahmaputra river).

From the above it appears that Kalyāṇachandra had extended his power from Kāmarūpa and in the Deltaic region of Bengal. Regarding the identification of the Mlecchas, some scholars are of the opinion that an invasion had taken place from the side of Bihar and it was duly repulsed by Kalyāṇachandra.[93] Thus it seems that he also saved the further humiliation of the Pālas and the Pāla King became subordinate to him. The successful expedition to the Brahmaputra delta also indicates the importance of the Chandras in Eastern India.

Now there is a controversy among the scholars about the identification of the Gauḍa ruler. There may be some possibiliti

During the temporary decline of Pāla empire, at the time of Vigrahapāla II and his immediate predecessor Gopāla II, the Pāla empire was invaded by the Kambojas, Chandellas and the Kalachuris. It may be that during the time of the decline of the Pāla empire, the ruler of the neighbouring territory ventured to establish its sway over the Pālas. On the other hand, it may be that the Gauḍa King defeated by Kalyāṇachandra was the Kamboja ruler because he was the Kamboja ruler because he was a contemporary of Kamboja Gauḍapati who was trying to establish his sway in Western Bengal. But in the absence of name of the Gauḍa King in the Chandra records, we are not in a position to come to a definite conclusion, It may also be that, he liked his father, helped the Pālas in regaining their hold by defeating the Kambojaś. What may be inferred from the above information is that the political exegencies prompted the Chandras to keep friendship with their neighbours and the religions uniformity of the two families helped them to come closer[94].

We know very little about the other factors of the reign of Kalyāṇachandra. He is said to be "equal to Bali in liberality. Rāma in prowess and equal to Yudhisṭhira in truthfulness". All that we may assume is that Chandra

Kingdom continued to enjoy prosperity during his reign. He ruled for 24 years as is evident from his record.

Kalyānachandra was succeeded by his son Ladahachandra. Before the discovery of the Maināmatī plates of Ladahachandra and Govinda Chandra, the order of succession to the Chandra throne could not be rightly established. The Palaeographic study of the Bhārella Narttesvara image inscription of Ladahachandra placed his reign period in the second half of the 10th Century A.D.[95] On the basis of this R.C. Majumdar placed him before Srīchandra[96] while B. C. Sen placed him after Srīchandra. But the Maināmatī plates of the two Kings discovered later on has correctly settled the genealogy of the two Kings and they have been rightly placed after Srīchandra.

The two copper plates of Ladahachandra refer only to his religious activities and do not indicate anything about his military activities. It is inferred that the Chandra empire was firmly settled and that is why he devoted himself to peaceful religious activities. Ladahachandra has been described in the verse 12 of the Maināmatī plate that he was master of all the sciences and he had under his control the Goddess Saraswatī, Laksmī and the

whole earth. In the verse 13 of the plate he has been described as the Lord of the entire earth bounded by the ocean and he was the master of all the Vidyās or sciences. Laḍahachandra visited Vārāṇasī and took baths in the Ganges and offered tarpana to his ancestors and gift of gold to numerous Brāhmaṇas. It has also been described that he also made pilgrimage to Prayāga and made gifts to the Brāhmaṇas. It is interesting to point out that though he was a Buddhist, he paid immense importance to his bath in the river Ganges at Benāras and it was possible for him to go to Benaras crossing the Pāla territory because the Pālas as pointed out by Dr. D.C.Sircar, considered the Chandras as subservient friend (Anugata Mitra). His grant of land in the name of Vāsudeva reflects his bent on other religions sects. His reign period may be between 1000 - 1020 A.D. and his rule for twenty years is evident from the Maināmatī records.

Laḍahachandra was succeeded by his son Govindachandra. His name is referred in the Tirumalai inscription of Rājendrachola as the King of Vaṅgāladeśa and he was defeated by the Chola King[97]. His name is also referred in the work Śabdapradīpa. The Betkā and Kulkuḍi image inscription of him also refer to his rule in Vaṅgāla[98]. His connection with

Chandra dynasty has been established by the newly discovered Maināmatī copper plate[99]. So it can be definitely stated that Govindachandra was a King of the Chandra dynasty.

In his Maināmatī plate it has been elaborated that he learnt very well and in his choldhood within a few days, he became wellversed in all the sciences, arts including the sciences of dealing with elephants, horses and chariots.

The Maināmatī plates of the last two Kings are of great importance. It has been assumed from the visit of Ladahachandra to Vārāṇasī and Prayāga at a time when Mahīpāla I of Gauḍa was in possession of the wide areas of Bengal, Bihar and the Eastern part of U.P, that the Chandra King was the subordinate ally of the Pāla King. Another important information is that the Chandras of South-East Bengal adopted Buddhism and the Kings assumed the title 'Paramasaugata'. The Maināmatī plates of the last two rulers of the dynasty inform us that the last two members of the dynasty repudiated Buddhism and they granted land in favour of a Vaishṇavite or Śaivite deity in the name of 'Vāsudeva-Bhaṭṭāraka' or 'Śiva-Bhaṭṭāraka',although these two Kings are also conventionally called 'Paramasaugata, their documents make it clear that they adopted Purānic Hinduism

Govindachandra of the Chandra dynasty has been identified by some scholars with Govindachandra or Gopichandra of Bengal Ballads.[100] It is very difficult to ascertain definitely the date of these ballads and it is possible that these were compiled later time probably in the 17th or the 18th Century A.D. So the authenticity of those ballads is questioned. The Bengal ballads inform that King Govichandra left Kingship and assumed the life of an ascetic[101]. The genealogy of Govichandra of the Bengal ballads is not similar to that of Govindachandra. Govichandra of the Bengal ballads was the daughter's son of Tilakachandra, the King of Meherkul which is still a Pargana in the Tippera district. The genealogy of Govindachandra of the Chandra dynasty is quite different from the genealogy of Gopichandra of the Bengal ballads. N. K. Bhattasali has suggested that Ladahachandra of the Bharella Narttesvara image inscription may have been the father of Tilakachandra[102]. But except the similarity of name the two persons cannot be definitely identified. Muhammad Shahidullah placed Gopichandra between 675 - 700 A.D. and identified him with the King Govichandra of the Chandra dynasty before the rise of the Pālas.[103] But the epigraphical study prove that they were placed in the 10th

and 11th Century A.D.

The foreign invasion precipitated the downfall of the Chandra empire. The Tirumalai inscription of Rājendra Chola informs that Govindachandra of Vaṅgāla was defeated by the Chola King and Govindachandra fled from the battle field. But there is no concrete evidence to suggest that this defeat had any permanent effect on the Chandra empire. It may be assumed that this invasion had given a shattering blow to the Chandra rule. The invasion of the Kalachuri King Karṇa is said to have given a death blow to the power of the dynasty. Karṇa is said to have achieved a decisive victory over the King of the Eastern country[104] who probably lost his life in the decisive battle. In both the cases the adversary seems to be Govindachandra or his successor of the Chandra dynasty. It then appears that the Chandra Kingdom was finally destroyed by the invasion of Karṇa. The power vacuum in Vaṅga-Samatāṭa was filled up by the rise of another small power called Varmans in that region.

The Kaivarta rebellion

Varendrī under the Kaivarta Chiefs :

The successful revolt of Divya, a Kaivarta chief against the Pala King Mahīpāla II and the consequent

establishment of a dynasty, Kaivarta by caste, on the throne of the Pālas in Northern Bengal during the second part of the 11th Century A.D, is one of the most interesting and significant events of the history of Bengal. The fact is referred to in the Belāva copper plate of Bhojavarman, Kamauli copper plate of Vaidyadeva and the Manahali copper plate of Madanapala, but the detailed information of the episode is given in the Rāmacharita of Sandhyākara Nandī.

The main theme of the Rāmacharita is the rebellion of the feudatories against Mahīpāla II in 1070 - 71 A.D. The assassination of Mahīpāla II led to the establishment of the Kaivarta rule in Varendrī under Divya. The reconquest of Varendrī by Rāmapāla (1072 - 1126) successor of Mahīpāla II has been narrated to great details by Sandhyākara Nandī. The Kamauli plate of Vaidyadeva[105] says that Rāmapāla killed Bhīma and recovered the paternal land which has been termed as Janakabhū very much similar to the recovery of Janaka's daughter Sītā by Rāma. The verse 15 of the Manhali copper plate of Madanapala explains the anxiety of Rāmapāla, because of the serious attack of the Kaivarta King on the Pāla territory. According to Rāmacharita, Varendrī was occupied

by Divya[106], and elsewhere ' the enemy is stated to have occupied a large part of the Kingdom (bhuyaḥ Bhūmaṇḍalam) after having killed Mahīpāla II who was called the best of the Kings (nṛipatiśreshṭha).

The revolt in North Bengal of the Kaivartas during the reign of Mahīpāla II and the rule of Divya and his two successors indicate the importance of the Kaivarta caste to which they belonged. According to Amarakosha, the Kaivartas include both Dāsa and Dhīvara. The evidences of the Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa, Manu and the Jatakas also indicate that the Kaivartas were from ancient times divided into two sections, the cultivators and fishermen[106a]. Both of them form important sections of the Hindu Society even today. There are many Zamindars and substantial landholders among them. This position is fully in keeping with the part played by them during the Pāla rule.

Regarding the genesis of the revolt we are to depend mainly on the Rāmacharita. In the introduction to the Rāmacharita published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, M. M. Haraprasad Sastri has propounded that "Mahīpāla by his impolitic acts, incurred the displeasure of the subjects

and that specially 'the Kaivartas were smarting under his oppression' and this ultimately led to the rebellion and his defeat and death".[107] Sandhyākara Nandī was the Court poet of Rāmapāla whom Mahīpāla had thrown in prison on the plea of the supposed engagement in conspiracy. Hence, it is possible to have an unprejudiced and impartial account of either Mahīpāla II or of Divya the Kaivartta.

H. P. Sastri has probably based his theory on the commentery of the Rāmacharita about Mahīpāla II who has been describes as durnayabhāja (one who is inclined to imprudent conduct)[108] anītikārambharata (inclined to pursue impoetic methods)[109] Kuṭṭima Kaṭhora (hard as a solid stone) Chitrakūṭa (given to wonderful tricks),[110] bhūtānayātrānayukta (determined not to protect truth and polity)[111] and nikṛiti-prayukta (resorting to acts of fraudulence).[112] All those accusations clearly prove that Sandhyākara Nandī had in him hatred for Mahīpāla II because of his ill treatment for Rāmapāla, the hero of Rāmacharita. But the epithats rājapravara and its commentary 'rājapravarin nṛipatiśreshthaṁ Mahīpālaṁ" of the Rāmacharita clearly indicate that he has also been called as excellent among Kings and it demonstrates that the oppressions of Mahīpāla were not probably the real cause of

the revolt. According to R.C.Majumdar[113], there may be two specific charges against Mahīpāla II. Firstly, he imprisoned his two brothers Rāmapāla and Sūrapāla as he was instigated to this ill-conceived act by false reports sedulously propagated by wiked people, to the effect that Rāmapāla, being an able and popular prince was scheming to usurp the throne. His bad company was also a source of danger to his Kingdom. Had there been any charge against Rāmapāla and Sūrapāla that they were in intrigue against the sovereign, it ought to have been properly inquired and the King should not have taken such a drastic action against him on hearsay evidence. In this respect he was impolitic.[114] But the statement that Rāmapāla was a clean man having no intention to usurp the throne can not be totally accepted. During the decadant period of the Pālas, there was every possibility of dynastic trouble aggravating the ambition of younger brother. There are sufficient evidences in history where the younger brother usurped the throne by overthrowing the rule of the elder brother. Sandhyākaranandī was the Court poet of Rāmapāla and so it may be natural that he tried to suppress the real intention of Rāmapāla. Inspite of all these, the charge against Rāmapāla has been refuted by R. C. Majumdar on two grounds. In the first place, the success of the revolt did not lead to the placement of

Rāmapāla to the thrown. Secondly, the revolt and the consequent loss of Varendrī caused immense mental pain to Ramapala. A charge against Mahīpāla II was that he had an unwise passion for fighting (Yuddha Vyasanā)[116] and disregarding the advice of his wise and experienced ministers, he led a feeble illequipped force against the powerful army of the Sāmantas or feudatories (milit-ananta-Sāmanta Chakra),[117] But the author has not categorically mentioned the advice given by the ministers and the part played by Divya, a high official of Māhipāla II, might have evoked a sort of suspicions. So by paying no heed to the counsels of the higher officials he probably acted rightly. Above all, it is not possible from the brief and so called references in the Rāmacharita to form an accurate idea either of the reign or of the character of Mahīpāla II. So it is not evident that the wicked and oppressive policy of Mahīpāla was the direct or indirect cause of the revolt.[118] All popular uprisings lead to the presumption of guilt on the part of the ruling King. But inspite of all these, there is no ground to suppose that Mahīpāla's mischieveous acts were the causes of the outbreak.

The Rāmacharita expresses Rāmapāla as 'sarvasammata' which probably means 'accepted by all' and A.K.Maitreya has

concluded on this basis that Rāmapāla was the elected King and Mahīpāla claimed the throne by law of Primogeniture and this was the cause of the revolt.[119] But the crucial point is that if this was the real case, why did the people not elect Rāmapāla. If Rāmapāla was chosen by the people why after the death of Mahīpāla II, the Kaivarta chief occupied the throne ? All these questions were not answered by A. K. Maitreya.[120] The main point is that Mahīpāla was of suspicious nature and distracted from the right course of action and followed the impolitic method by imprisoning his two brothers who would have stood by him in time of danger.[120a] The President of 'Divya Smriti Utsab' Raibahadur Ramaprasad Chandra has concluded that Divya was chosen by Sāmantas in the last half of the 11th Century A.D. and this election was very much similar to the election of Gopāla I by 'Ananta-Sāmanta-Chakra' in the last part of the 8th Century A.D. But the critical study of the two incidents makes it clear that they are not at all similar in nature. The King elected by the rebels cannot be the same thing. On the other hand, the election in latter case is not supported by evidence. The rebels only accepted his leadership and their activities

were not confined to their fight against Mahīpāla II under the platform of Divya. On the contrary, the election in the former case led to the extension of a weak power in Bengal from a small principality to an empire of almost the whole of Āryāvarta and in the latter case the well built pāla empire became the subject of disintegration and thereby invited foreign aggressors to trample upon it. So the two incidents cannot be the same in any respect.[121]

A. K. Maitreya's view is that Divvoka like Gopāla I was the chosen of the people and that the common people had a great share in determining the succession to the Pāla throne and that the mainstay of the Pāla authority was the popular support which was lost as a result of the Mahīpāla's coming to power. This view has been supported by Jadunath Sarkar also.[122] This view has been shared by 'All Bengal Māhiṣya Students Union' who held that Divya was elected King by the people of Bengal. But R. C. Majumdar has put forward some soubt on the authenticity of the election of Divya as King. There is no mention of this incident in the Rāmacharita and the time when the election actually took place. Whether it was before the struggle between Mahīpāla

II and Divya or after we do not know for certain. According to R. C. Majumdar, if the election had taken place later why should not the struggle of the subjects against the existing King be termed as 'revolt' ? Secondly, if the election had taken place earlier, this type of the election of King is abnormal, ominous and cannot be taken for granted without sufficient evidences.[123]

The genesis of the revolt would better be sought in the real condition of the Pāla empire. The revolt of the feudatories was not unnatural. The relation between the Sāmanta and King depended mainly on their respective strengths. The feudal lords paid tribute so long as the King was powerful and the weakness of the suzerain on the other hand inspired the feudatories to shake off the authority of the sovereign.[124] In history there are many evidences which prove the serious degeneration of the central authority caused by misrule, mischievous domestic cliques and other factors which inspired the ambition of the provincial governors or other high officials leading to utter dismemberment of the existing rule and the rising of local powers to eminence. Divya was not an ordinary Kaivarta in an humble station of life whom the people satisfied with leadership raised to honour.[125] So the revolt of Divya was,

perhaps, the effect of the weakness of the central authority and the general tendency of disintegration in different parts of the empire. Mahīpāla could not tackle the situation dexterously and he was not endowed with the qualities to manage the situation correctly. But it cannot at all be accepted that he was a bad King and he was specially responsible for the downfall of the empire. It should be probably accepted, as R. C. Majumdar held that Mahīpāla was perhaps a victim to circumstances over which he had no control and that as a King he was 'more sinned against sinning'.[126] The revolt of Divya in Varendra like the revolt of Yakṣapāla in Gayā was undoubtedly prompted by the decline of the Pāla dynasty.' The revolt of Divya was thus not a mere solitary episode but a sign of the times and may be looked upon not so much as the cause, but the consequence of the collapse of the authority of the Pālas.[127] According to a scholar Buddhism was antagonistic to the practice of the fishing craft which formed the occupation of the Kaivartas who suffered from social disadvantage under the regime of the Buddhist Pālas[128] and this social humiliation led the Kaivartas to the path of rebellion. There is hardly any trace of the disadvantages of this clan because of their fishing craft in the Rāmacharita. On the contrary, the Buddhist Pālas were very much liberal in their religious outlook and that is evident from the epigraph

sources which point out the distribution of lands for the different religion community. Moreover Buddhism at that time incorporated many elements from Hinduism and there was hardly any differences between Buddhism and Brāhmaṇical Hinduism.

Now from the foregoing discussion, it appears more likely that Divya was a rebel and the whole episode was more probably a rebellion. He took advantage of the degeneration of the central authority, dissentions among the royal members to kill his master and it was an event which was neither unusual nor unnatural at that time. There is a controversy regarding the character of the revolt. Rāmacharita expressed the revolt as 'anīkaṃ dharmaviplavaṃ'[129] and the world anīkam has been expressed by the commentator as ' alakshmīkaṃ' meaning unfortunate but the commentator is silent about the meaning of the word 'dharmaviplavaṃ'. Some scholars including R. C. Majumdar have termed it as a civil revolution. But the confusion arises regarding the meaning of the word 'dharmaviplavaṃ' because the whole affair seems to indicate that there was very little 'dharma' or sense of duty in the activities of Divya and it seems that Divya violated the duty or deviated from the right path. Divya

occupied Rāmapāla's ancestral land (Janaka-bhū) Varendrī. It has been described in the Rāmacharita that Divya was a bhṛitya who rose to high position, but he acted like a dasyu and like one who was inclined to observe fraudulent practice as a vow (upādhi-vratī). The word Dasyu applied to Divya appears to be correct because the word generally means robber. As Divya robbed the Pāla Kings of the land of Varendrī, the poet seems to have applied correctly the word to the work of Divya. The commentator expressed it as " dasyunāśatrunā tadbhāvāpannatvāt avaśya Karttavyatayā ārabdhaṁ Kammavvataṁ Chadmani Vratī."[130]

The interpretation of the epithet 'upādhi-vratī' has been differently put forward by scholars. The commentary explains 'Vrata' as some action which is obligatory and the commentary seems to express 'plea, pretext, fraud, dishonesty, trick' by the work upādhi'. The reference to the fraudulent act of Divya shows that he pretended to be loyal to his master Mahīpāla II, but was in reality conspiring with the rebels to get the throne and finally joined hands with the rebels openly.[131]

N. K. Bhattasali has pointed out that the commentary of the Rāmacharita seems to incidate that Divya probably began

the action as a matter of duty with ulterior motive in mind and when Mahipala II fought with Divya he found the combined army of the feudatories with the latter[132]. It, therefore, seems more likely that the revolt broke out at first in favour of Rāmapāla because of Mahīpāla's mischieveous rule, but subsequently Divyoka fished in the troubled water. If of-ten happens that revolution breaks out with certain end in view but is exploited by ambitions and designing men for their personal ends[133]. Divyo managed to act secretly. In this respect his work was different from other Sāmantas who accumulated strength for open combat. It is evident that Divya carried out his policy without giving a warning to his lord. It happens to be quite likely that Divya belonged to the Sāmanta Chakra and was instrumental in bringing down Mahīpāla II. He remained on the royal side upto the death of Mahīpāla II and after his death, Divya took over Varendrī and declared him independent. So in no way the word 'dharmaviplavaṁ' can be associated with the whole task.

Regarding the another characteristic of the revolt, it may be inferred with sufficient basis that it was, like other revolts, a sort of uprising of some subjects who were tyrannised by the oppressive rule of Mahīpāla II. It was probably the quality of Divya that raised him to the status of leader of the movement. But it does not prove that Divya

was the elected King. On the other hand there is no evidence to prove that all the people joined the rebellion. Some joined the rebellion and some acted against it and joined hands with the King as it often happens. The view of MM H.P.Sastri cannot be accepted that only the Kaivarta clan joined the rebellion. The most reasonable view, as propounded by R. C. Majumdar, is that the leadership was given to this community and so the revolt is named after the name of the community like the Watt Taylor rebellion in England and Habsi rebellion in Bengal.[134] Some scholars hold that the revolt of the Kaivartas was nothing but the reaction of peasants to assert their land rights. The Kaivartas were deprived of plots of land given as service tenures and subjected to heavy taxes (Rāmacharita II 40). The fact that the naked soldiers fought with bows and arrows riding buffaloes shows that they were ordinary peasants (Rāmacharita II 39 - 42). Probably it was a revolt of the peasants against the Pālas who made a common cause with their vassals against the Kaivartas.[134a]

According to some, the election of Divya is the story of the establishment of democracy by the people of Bengal. But it has been stated in the Rāmacharita that Divya was succeeded by Bhīma as the King of Varendrī. Hence there is no evidence in support of the view that the whole thing led to the

establishment of democracy. After the revolt Divya assumed Kingship. So the above view is baseless.

So it would not be probably right to call it a popular uprising. What is more probable is that it was the revolt of some opportunists who tried to take advantage of the weakness of the Pāla empire to attain their end. It would not probably be reasonable to think that there was popular consciousness among the people of that time and the people did not dare to raise their voice against King who was held in high esteem in the society and his position was almost equal to God and it seems likely that they held it inauspicious to go against the King and they were supposed to abide by the orders of the King whether it was beneficial or harmful. Hence there was nothing popular in the revolt and it was purely the revolt of some self-interested Sāmantas.

Regarding the consequence of the rebellion and the subsequent establishment of the rule of the Kaivartas very little information is found in the Rāmacharita. It appears that the revolution was followed by the establishment of a protectorate and Varendrī came under the protection of Divya his brother Rudeka and his brother's son Bhīma in succession.[135] How long Varendrī was under the possession of the Kaivartas

nothing is known for certain. Regarding the character of the occupation, we are supplied with some materials in the Rāmacharita. According to a verse in the Rāmacharita[136] the occupation of Varendrī was very much similar to the capativity of Sītā. The verse informs that Sītā was excellent (Vara) in beauty (adhikkyaya) became rakshanīyā of the fierce Rāvana. The verse also points out that Varendrī became rakshnīyā of Bhīma. According to commentary of the Rāmacharita the word 'rakshanīyā' suggests the nature of the occupation in both cases.

It appears that neither Divya nor his brother Rudeka assumed the title of King. They had been leaders and continued to be known by their ordinary names'.'Bhīma appears to have been called a Rājā, and the Rāmacharita alludes to it. But the royal grant of Vaidyadeva shows that Bhīma was also called a leader (nāyaka).[137] The three rulers of the dynasty ruled Varendrī in succession. The peace and prosperity of the rule of Bhīma in Varendrī has been highly praised in the work ' Rāmacharita which was written by a Pāla partisan. It has been informed that the whole world enjoyed peace and 'prosperity in plenty.[138] R. C. Majumdar held that Bhīma imposed cruel taxation upon people.[139] However the explanation of the text seems to be wrong. Bhīma was a devotee of Śiva and Pārvatī. Divya ensured the security of Varendrī and due to this Rāmapāla's attempt to recover Varendri proved futile[140] and Divya denied

even to invade Rāmapāla's territory. It proves that Divya was an able and powerful ruler.[141] According to A.K.Maitreya, Jātavarman came into conflict with Divya of the Kaivarta dynasty and the power of the latter was put to shame by the former.[142] But it is impossible to come to a definite conclusion from this source that the two independent Kingdoms Vaṅga and Varendrī were inimical to each other.

Rāmapāla had remorses for the loss of Varendrī and he was so unhappy that he could not be happy becoming the lord of the earth.[143] Rāmapāla then attempted to win over a number of chiefs and then ventured to make them ready to fight for him against the Kaivartas and this finally became successful.[144] Rāmapāla won over the circle of feudatories by making presents of land and enormous wealth. It is evident from the list of feudatories that most of them flowershed in South-west Bengal and the adjoining regions of Bihar and some of them rebelled against Mahīpāla II. The greatest helpers of Rāmapāla in his war with Bhīma, the Kaivarta lord, were his maternal uncle Rāshṭrakūta Mahana and the latter's son Mahāmaṇḍalika Kanhura and Suvarṇa and brother's son Mahāpratīhāra Śivarāja who were all his relatives on the mother's side This Śivarāja led some forces across the Ganges and devastated

Varendrī [145] apparently meaning certain frontier areas of Bhīma's Kingdom. A terrible fight ensued between Rāmapāla's army that crossed the river from the Southern bank and reached the Northern bank in a fleet of boat, and Bhīma, the Kaivarta leader.[146] The consequence of the fight was the imprisonment of Bhīma owing to bad luck when he was fighting from his elephant's back.[147] The Kaivarta forces fled and the captured King and queen were treated with consideration.[148] A Bengal writer narrated that Bhīma committed suicide when all hopes of his success ended in disdain. R. D. Banerjee held that Hari was killed along with Bhīma.[149] It has been stated in Kamauli grant of Vaiddyadeva that Bhīma had been killed by Rāmapāla.

The Śūra dynasty of Dakshiṇa-Rāḍha.

As to the historical basis of a dynasty with the title of Śūra several facts may be cited and on the basis of which alone an account of the dynasty may be prepared. The name of Raṇaśūra is found in the Tirumalai inscription of Rajendra Chola as the ruler of Dakshiṇa-Rāḍha and it is stated in the inscription that the Chola ruler defeated Raṇaśūra.[150] In the commentary of the Rāmacharita[151] there occurs the name

of Rāmapāla in his venture to defeat Bhima, the Kaivarta King. In an inscription of the time of Gopāla III, there was a man named Damasura. The inscription was found at Manda in the Rājshāhi district.[152] The authenticity of a line of rulers bearing the names ending in Śūra is further proved by the Barrackpur grant of Vijayasena which informs us that Vijayasena married Vilāsadevī, a daughter of the Śūra family.[153] In the Naihati grant of Vallālasena, it has been informed that the predecessors of Vijayasena were the ornaments of the Radha country. It has been inferred that a line of Kings really existed in Western Bengal who were known as the Śūras. Unfortunately we do not know anything about the exact relationship between Raṇaśūra and Mahīpāla of Tirumalai grant. But from the Tirumalai inscription he appears to have been quite independent of the Pāla Kings.

It appears from the above discussion that there appeared one Śūra family, though nothing is known definitely of the extent of their territory and their political status. The evidence of the Tirumalai plate and the Rāmacharita would indicate that they became powerful during the rule of the weak Pāla Kings, but were forced to accept the position of Sāmantas when there was a strong Pāla King.

The history of the Śūra family is hardly available from sources other than that of the Tirumalai plate (1023 A.D) and the foundation of the dynasty may, therefore, be assigned to the beginning of the 11th Century A.D. Traditional and historical evidences associate them in the Rāḍha region of Bengal. It may not be improbable that shortly after in invasion of Aṅga and Rāḍha by the Chandella King Dhaṅgadeva, the state of affair in the latter territory became favourable for the foundation of a new dynasty under the Śūras which continued to rule till they were swept away by the Senas.[154]

There is a strong public say of the existence of a King named Ādiśūra who brought Brāhmaṇas from some parts of India. The traces of the Śūra dynasty may be found in a large number of traditions recorded by the writers of genealogical treatises in Bengal which are popularly known as Kulaji granthas. Among the writers who compiled those volumes mention may be made of Harimiśra, Ḍumiśra and Dhrūvānanda. Dhrūvānanda is known to be the highest authority on the subject of the Rāḍhīya Brāhmaṇas.[155] Most of the Kulaji granthas were the works of much later times and most of them were supposed to be compiled during the 15th or 16th Centuries.

Only one or two works are thought to be of much earlier time, but their manuscripts are not available to us. There are certain limitation of the Kulaji granthas. First and foremost among them is that there are no authentic Kulaji texts which can be dated earlier than the latter half of the 15th Century A.D. Most of the literature is in manuscript and that is why the copies of which, are difficult to obtain. Secondly, the Kulaji texts have been tampered with in various ways and there are good grounds to doubt the the genuineness of the many current texts which are attributed to ancient authors.[156]

The sources they produce regarding Ādiśūra who is said to be the founder of the Śūra dynasty are conflicting in many respects and the most crucial question is the date of the King Ādiśūra. According to a text, Ādiśūra came into the political scene of Bengal before the rise of the Pālas. Regarding the date of Ādiśūra, Varendra Kulapanjikā is of the opinion that 'Vedakalambashṭaka-Vimiterāj-Ādiśūra sa cha' which is interpreted as equivalent to 732 A.D.[157] According to another tradition, Ādiśūra defeated the Buddhist Pāla King and began to rule Gauḍa after that. In support of the above view, the scholars quote the following 'Tatr-Ādiśūraḥ-Śūra-Vaṁśa-Siṁho-Vijitya Bandhanṛipa-Pālavaṁsāṁ śaśāsa Gauḍam'[158]

It is evident from the above source that the founder of the dynasty may be placed in the 11th Century A.D. It is based on the enumeration of 'Vedavānāṅka Sāketi-Gauḍe-Viprāḥ-Samāgatāḥ = 1032 A.D. H.P.Sastri interpretes it as equivalent to 732 A.D.[159]

Regarding the family history of Ādiśūra different views have been put forward by different texts. It is known from a tradition that the Śūras came from Darada country.[160] In some other sources he has been identified as the grand father in mother's side of Vallālasena and in others as the 'remote ancestors of Vallālesena'. It is said that he was the ruler of Bengal and Orissa, while others refer him as the ruler of Aṅga, Kaliṅga, Karṇāṭa, Kerala, Kāmarūpa, Saurāṣṭra, Magadha, Mālava and Gurjara. According to some, everything were peaceful as he married the daughter of the Kanauj King while others say that he had to fight with the King of Kanauj. Regarding the Capital of his Kingdom there are contradictory opinions. According to some texts, the Capital of Ādiśūra was in Gauḍa while some others are of the opinion that the Capital was at Vikramapura. Regarding the purpose of his bringing five Brāhmaṇas different views have been put forward. It has been usually held that he brought Brāhmaṇas as well versed in the Vedas and Vedic sacrifices for the performance of religions practices. According to one tradition, the King of Kāśī insulted Ādiśūra for not having Brāhmaṇas versed in Vedic

lores in his dominion. King Ādiśūra defeated him in a battle and brought five Brāhmaṇas.[161]

The extant Kulaji texts preserve tradition that Ādiśūra and other Śūra princes were forced to take shelter in Rāḍha after the establishment of the Buddhist Pāla empire.[162] The mention of the names of Dharmapāla and Raṇaśūra in South-Western Bengal in the Tirumalai inscription prove that the South-Western Bengal was not under the control of Mahīpāla. N. N. Vasu has expressed contradictory opinions about the identity and the date of the King Ādiśūra. The mainstay of his book is to place the bringing of Brāhmaṇas in Bengal and the establishment of the rule of Ādiśūra in 654 or 668 Śaka era. In order to establish the theory he took into account different Kulaji granthas and there appeared gross incongruity in his account. In one occassion he identified Ādiśūra with Bhojadeva. But Ādiśūra who assumed imperial dignity on 644 Śaka era cannot be identified with Bhojadeva. As the Gurjara Pratihara King Bhojadeva came into prominence in the Second half of the 9th Century A.D, he can in no way be identified with Ādiśūra flourished much earlier.[163] It has been inferred that Ādiśūra of Kulaśāstras may identified with Magadhādhirāja Ādisiṁha of Dudhpari rock inscription of the 8th Century A.D.[164]

In another occasion Ādiśūra has been identified with Yaśovarman of Kanauj. The view cannot be historically accepted that Yaśovarman was defeated by the King of Gauḍa. Practically speaking it was only possible to defeat the King of Kanauj Yaśovarman by no other Gauḍa King than Śaśāṅka. Dharmapāla & Devapāla. On the basis of different Kulaji granthas. Ādiśūra cannot be placed in the first half of the 8th Century A.D. & during the tenure of the reign of Yaśovarman, the King of Kanauj.[165]

There are difference of opinion regarding the place wherefrom he brought five Brāhmaṇas. According Harimiśra he brought Brāhmaṇas from the Kolañcha country.[166] This Kolancha country has been usually identified with Kanauj. But nowhere in the ancient literature or in epigraphical sources Kalañcha has been identified with Kanauj. Śivarām Apte in Sanskrit dictionary has identified Kolañcha with the name of the country of the Kaliṅgas Manior Williams in in his large volume of English-Sanskrit dictionary has expressed the fact about the identification that Kolañcha was 'small of Kaling , the Coromondal coast from Cuttack to Madras ; but according to some, this place is in Gangetic Hindusthān with Kanauj for the Capital'.[167] N. N. Vasu has categorically expressed that Kolañcha cannot be equivalent

to Kanauj and so how can the view that Ādiśūra brought Brāhmaṇas from Kanauj be accepted ? But most of the Kulaji granthas are of the opinion that he brought Brāhmaṇas from Kanauj. So it has become very difficult to ascertain the time of Ādiśūra on the basis of conflicting opinions.[168]

The genealogy of the Śūras as furnished by the authors of the Kulaji granthas comprises the following names in order of succession. Ādiśūra, Bhūśūra, Kshitiśūra, Avantiśūra, Dharaṇīśūra, Dharaśūra, Anusura,[169] Adiśūra's grandfather Kaviśūra and his father Mādhavaśūra,[170]. In some of the works two more names are inserted between Dharaśūra and Anuśūra, Viz. Pradymnaśūra and Varendraśūra. A careful observation of the names will make it clear that the same name except the first and the last appears to have been repeated in various forms. In the Āin-i-Ākbarī there are the mention of ten Kings headed by one Ādityaśūra, but the rest of the names do not end with the Śūra title. The opinions of the Kulaji and the Āin-i-Ākbarī are contradictory. The view is not supported by epigraphic sources and both is tradition. On the other hand the view put forward by different traditions regarding the purpose of bringing Brāhmaṇas to Bengal that there was dearth of Brāhmaṇas well versed in Vedic lore and for this the orthodox Hindu customs had fallen into disuse, cannot be

accepted as many passages from the epigraphical records of Bengal in the medieval Bengal may be cited to show the existence of orthodox Brāhmaṇas in the period from 7th to 11th Century A.D., the tentative time of the Śūras.[171] The view of the different Kulaji granthas has been refuted by Narottam Kundu in view of the fact that it has not been supported by any corroborative evidence. He has shown clearly that the story of Ādiśūra in the tradition is a myth and cannot be given historical value.[172] Besides Kulapañjīkas, there is no genuine evidence in favour of the existence of an ancient ruler named Ādiśūra in Bengal. The only Ādiśūra known to the history of Eastern India is mentioned in the Nyāyakaṇika of the Maithil scholar Vāchaspati Miśra as a contemporary of the author. The historical Ādiśūra of Eastern India thus seems to have ruled over parts of Mithilā and contiguous portion of North Bengal as a feudatory of the Pālas about the middle of the 9th Century A.D.[172a]

But the Ādiśūra episode of bringing Brāhmaṇas from the Kolancha country has been doubted by D.C.Sircar on the ground that the Sena King Ballāla is credited in the Kulapañjī works with the institution of Kulinism and there was no popularity of the use of Śaka era before the advent of the Senas. The possibility of the importation of the legend about the

bringing of the U.P. Brāhmaṇas, from South India into Bengal, cannot be altogether impossible. According to the Kargudari inscription of the Hangal Kadambas, the mythical Mayūrvarman came to the South from the Himalayan region and brought 18 Brāhmaṇas from Ahichhatra whom they settled in the Kuntala country.[172b] In the later Pallava inscriptions there are similar tradition of bringing Brāhmaṇas from Ahichhatra. In In the inscription of the Chola King Kulottunga III, there is the mention of the mythical King Arindama who imported Brāhmaṇas from Antarvedī.[172c]

So the theory cannot be brushed aside that the tradition might have been brought in Bengal from South India by the Senas who hailed from Karṇāṭa region and must have patronised the South Indians. The Pālas had matrimonial relations with South India. So the Ādiśūra episode may be a figment of imagination, though it is difficult to determine the contribution of South India in the fabrication of Kulapanjī works.[172d] The genealogy of the Varmanas and the Senas as given in the Kulaji granthas has proved to be false and unreliable. It is not, therefore, safe to construct the dynastic history of the Śūras and not even their genealogy relying on their account.[173]

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Chapter IV

Political History from 12th Century A.D. to 13th Century A.D.

There is no evidence to show the existence of the pāla rule in South-eastern Bengal in the early years. It is evident from the epigraphical sources that South-Eastern Bengal was possibly ruled by independent minor dynasties right from the last part of the Seventh Century A.D. We find that the dynasties of the Rātas, the Khaḍgas, Nāthas, the Devas, the Harikela rulers ruled chronologically in South-Eastern Bengal. They were followed by the Chandras who were at first probably the feudatories of the Harikela rulers and ultimately captured power and held their sway in South-Eastern Bengal from the last quarter of the 9th Century A.D. to 11th Century A.D. If we take into consideration the Bāghaurā and Nārāyaṇapur image inscription of Mahīpāla II as evidence of the existence of the Pāla rule in South-Eastern Bengal, it seems obvious that the Pāla rule spread to that regions between the reign of Mahīpāla I and Mahīpāla II stretching the period from 1043 A.D. - 1075 A.D. The foreign invasions of the Chola King Rājendrachola and the Kalachuri King Karṇa appear to have seriously affected the power and prestige of the Chandra rulers and cleared the way for the establishment of the

Pāla rule in the South-Eastern Bengal for some times at least and during the time of the weakness of the Pāla power as a consequence of the Kaivarta revolt and subsequent establishment of the Kaivarta rule in Northern Bengal in the last quarter of the 11th Century A.D., the Varmans established their sway in the South-Eastern Bengal.

THE VARMANS

There is probably no doubt that the Varmans of East Bengal succeeded the Chandras. Among the valuable sources of information which throw light on the history of the dynasty, mention should be made of the Belāva Copper plate of Bhojavarman[1], the Bhuvaneśvara plate of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva[2], the Vajrayoginī copper plate of Sāmalavarman[3] and the Sāmantasāra copper plate of Harivarman[4]. The Belāva copper plate of Bhojavarman records the purāṇic geneaology of Yadu from Brahmā through Atri, Chandra, Buddha, Purūravas, Āyu, Nahusha and Yayāti. There is also the reference to Hari in the family of Yadu who appeared as Kṛishṇa. The relatives of Hari were the Varmans who dominated Siṁhapura.

The Varmans of South-Eastern Bengal claim to have descended from an offshoot of the Yādava family of Siṁhapura. There is diversity of opinion among the scholars about the identity of the Siṁhapura. R.D. Banerjee has drawn attention to the Praśasti of Lakhāmaṇḍal Which refers to eleven generations of Chandragupta, the Prince of Jalandhara who claims to belong to the Yādavas of Lunar race reigning at Singhapura[5]. This Singhapura is undoubtedly the Seng-ha-po-lo of Yuan Chwang situated to the North side of the salt range in the Punjab[6]. Hultzsch has pointed out a dynasty of Varmans who ruled in Siṁhapura in Eastern India[7]. The Kamarti (Ganjam dist.) plate of Chandravarman and Bṛihatprostha (in Palakonda Tāluka, Vizāgāpaṭam) grant of Umāvarman reveal the existence of a line of Kings in Kaliṅga who resided in Siṁhapura or Sihapura[8]. The character of these plates are early Southern type belonging to the 4th or the 5th Century A.D. According to Hultzsch, this Siṁhapura is, perhaps, identical with the modern Siṅgupuran between Chicacola and Narasannapeta[9]. On the otherhand R.D. Banerjee has identified the place with Sihapura of Mahāvaṁsa which was situated in Lāṭa (Rādha) between Vaṅga and Magadha which is generally identified with Siṅgur in the Hoogly district[10]. But if we analyse the identification critically, it appears that the first is too far away and there is

no evidence to show its existence after the 7th Century A.D.[11]. The third is only known from the legendary account of Vijayasiṁha, contained in Mahāvaṁsa which can hardly be accepted as sober history. The Kingdom of Siṁhapura in Kaliṅga appears to have existed as early as the fifth Century A.D. and as late as the 12th Century A.D. It is known that two Kings of Kaliṅga, Mahārājā Chandravarman and Mahārājā Umāvarman were ruling between 350 - 550 A.D. and they issued grants from Siṁhapura[12]. The identification gains further ground from the fact that the Varman probably came to Bengal in the train of Kalachuri Karṇa's invasion of Vaṅga. It appears from sources that Karṇa's father seems to have attacked South-Eastern Bengal from that region, It is likely that the Varmans accompanied Karṇa and stayed in Bengal and in an opportune moment carved out independent Kingdom for themselves. So the probablity is in favour of the identification of the place with Siṁhapura in Kaliṅga. D.C. Ganguly, however points out that Siṁhapura may be placed somewhere in Eastern Bengal and be even regarded as the Capital of the Varmans. He further adds that there is nothing in the Velāva grant to locate it outside Bengal[13].

The Varmans came into prominence in the political scene of South-east Bengal by supplanting the Chandras in the last part of the 11th Century A.D. When the armies of Rājendrachola led an expedition against Bengal about 1023 A.D. - 1024 A.D.[14], they found on the throne of East Bengal a King called Govindachandra apparently belonging to the Chandra dynasty of Vikramapura. This is supported by a statement in the life of Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna Atīśa, compiled by late Sarat Chandra Das from Tibetan sources[15]. According to this work, Dīpaṅkara was a contemporary of the King Bhū-indra-Chandra of Vaṅgāla. The adult life of Dīpaṅkara as gathered from this source, seems to have fallen between 1000 A.D. to 1022 A.D. and it may be assumed that Bhū-indra-Chandra was the ruler of Vaṅgāla during this period. The Tibetans seem to have referred the Govindachandra as Go-indra-Chandra and substituting 'bhū' for its equivalent 'go', we get the modified Tibetan appellation 'Bhū-indra-Chandra'. Hence the reign of Govindachandra in Vaṅgāla is to be assigned to the last quarter of the 11th Century A.D. But in the next quarter, we find the Varmans established in the same region and issuing copper plate grants from the same capital, as is evident from the Belāva copper plate

and others. Thus the Chandras appear to have been supported in Vaṅga by the Varmans not long after the Chola raids in 1023 - 24 A.D. In connection with this, we have to take note of the Rewa stone inscription[16] of Karṇa dated in the Kalachuri year 800 corresponding to 1048 - 49 A.D. It is indicated in the verse 23 of the record that one of the earliest exploits of Karṇa took place after his accession in 1041 A.D. It has been pointed out that "the ships of the King of Eastern country being driven against the peaks of the mountains of his (Karṇa's) elephants, by the force of the tempest arrogance, cracked and sank into the sea of Karṇa's troops"[17]. V.V. Mirashi has rightly pointed out[18] thatthis records the end of the Chandra line of Kings in Vaṅga where either Govindachandra or his successor came into conflict with the forces of Karṇa and lost his life. His point is that Vajravarman was put on the throne of Vikramapura and Karṇa's daughter Vīraśrī was given in marriage to his son Jātavarman to cement the alliance. N.K. Bhattasali has pointed out that it was Jātavarman who appears to have rendered useful service to Karṇa and so he was put on the throne[19]. As this is the first victory of the reign of Karṇa, so it would not be unreasonable to put it soon after Karṇa's accession in 1041 A.D.

Naturally the date of the fall of the Chandra dynasty and the date of the installation of the Varman family in Vikramapura may thus be put about 1042 A.D. Belāva copper plate grant of Bhojavarma is only the source which providesus with the geneaology of the Kings of the Varman dynasty. The way in which it analyses the conquests of Jātavarman leaves any doubt that it was Jātavarman who laid the foundation of the independent dynasty of the Varmans and his reign marked the epoch of the greatness of his family. Vijravarman, the first ancestor of the dynasty, mentioned in the grant, is not referred as a King but he is praised as a brave warrior, a poet among the poets and a scholar among scholars. R.D. Banerjee has pointed out that Vajravarman was probably the first King who captured Harikela or Chandradvīpa and set up a new Kingdom of his own and his son Jātavarman extended the empire and thereby he may be held as the real founder of the Yādava dynasty[20]. D.C. Ganguly has supported the view and pointed out, on the basis of the verse 6 of the Belāva plate that Vajravarman conquered Eastern Bengal [21]. But there is nothing in the record which can be taken to mean his conquest of Eastern Bengal. In this connection, we may rightly point out that R.D. Banerjee had formerly stated

that there is nothing to show that Vajravarman was a King himself[22].

There are reference to the conquests of Jatavarman in the verse 8 of the Belāva copper plate of Bhojavarman which runs as follows "He spread his paramount sovereignty, by ecclipsing (even) the glory of Pṛithu, son of Vena, marrying Vīraśrī (daughter) of Karṇa, by extending his dominion over the Aṅgas, by humiliating the dignity of Kāmarūpa, by bringing to disgrace the strength of the arms of Divya, by damaging the fortune of Govardhana, and by vesting wealth in Brāhmaṇas versed in the Vedas" [23].

Now the reference to Karṇa whose daughter Vīraśrī was married to Jātavarman and reference also to Divya who was humbled down by Jātavarman enable us to fix the date of Jātavarman with some amount of certainty. It is evident that he was a contemporary of the Kalachuri King Karṇa (1041-70 A.D) and also of Vigrahapāla III (1058 - 75 A.D.) who married another daughter of Karṇa. He was also a contemporary of the Kaivarta chief Divya and of Mahīpāla II (1075 - 1080 A.D.).

So the rise of Jātavarman may be placed some time between 1055 - 1073 A.D.

Among the enemies defeated by Jātavarman, we can easily identify Divya who was the Kaivarta leader and defeated Mahīpāla in a revolt. R.D. Banerjee has analysed that Jātavarman defeated two Kings of the name of Divya and Govardhana and established himself in the Aṅga[24]. But the verse in the Rāmacharit does not mention it. There is a controversy among the scholars about how Jātavarman came into conflict with Divya and subsequently defeated him. Perhaps a reminiscence of the fight between Divya and Jātavarman is preserved in the Nālandā stone inscription. It relates about an ascetic of Somapura (Pāhārpur in Rājshāhi dist.) that "when his house was burning (being) set on fire by the approaching armies of Vaṅgāla, he attached (himself) to the pair of lotus feet of the Buddha (and) went to heaven". It would then appear that Jātavarman invaded Nothern Bengal[26]. The above view has been refuted by the statement of A.K. Maitreya that Divya might have attacked Vaṅga after his occupation of Varendrī and so it might have offered an opportunity to Jātavarman to defeat him in a battle [27].

Now it appears that Jātavarman took full advantage of the anomaly and confusion that arose after the revolt and carved out an independent Kingdom for himself. Regarding the conquest of Aṅga country by Jātavarman which was certainly under the possession of the Pālas, it appears that he fought both the Pālas and Divya and it was by dint of his victory over both that he probably carved out an independent Kingdom for himself in Eastern Bengal. It is also probable that he first set up an independent Kingdom in Eastern Bengal and then turned his arms against them. The Kāmarūpa prince with whom he had entered into struggle, evidently leading to no results, cannot be definitely identified. D.C. Sircar holds that Jātavarman was a close relative of Vigrahapāla III of the Pāla dynasty and probably he was appointed a governor of Aṅga under Vigrahapāla III and it may be that he launched a compaign against Divya as a general of the Pālas[27 a]. According to H.C. Ray, the Kāmarūpa prince may be identified with one of the Predecessors of Vallavadeva whose Assam plates are dated in Saka 1107[28]. The identification of Govardhana whose dignity was crippled by Jātavarman has been given by R.G. Basak. According to him, he may be identified with the father of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, the Prime Minister of Harivarman[29].

The view has been supported by Dr. H.C. Ray and R.D. Banerjee. But there is some difficulties in accepting the view and there is no sound basis of the inference. Mr. Banerjee has also made an alternative suggestion that Govardhana may be the ruler of Kauśāmbī who helped Rāmapāla in his fight against Bhīma and his name, as a result of copyist's mistake, occurs as Dvorapavardhana[30]. Kauśāmbī was the tract east of the Bhāgīrathī on the West and South of modern Calcutta[31]. The Varman Kingdom thus spread upto the Bhāgīrathī in the West, while on its East was the Meghnā.

R.C. Majumdar has pointed out that "It is difficult to believe that Jātāvarman, a petty chief coming from outside, could have undertaken all these military expeditions on his own account". It has been suggested that Jātavarman accompanied the Kalachuri King Karṇa on his Bengal expedition. It would probably be more reasonable to think that he was a follower of both Gāṅgeyadeva and his son Karṇa. R. D. Banerjee has suggested that Vajravarman accompanied one of the foreign conquerers of Bengal, Viz. Rajendra Chola, Jayasiṁha II or Gāṅgeyadeva[32]. P.L. Paul has even identified Jātavarman with the 'illustritious Jata' who is said in the Rewa inscription of Malayasiṁha to have helped Karṇadeva

in vanquishing foes[33]. Gāṅgeya claims to have defeated the rulers of both Aṅga and Utkala and Karṇa is said to have exercised some sorts of supremacy over Gauḍa, Vaṅga and Kaliṅga[34]. According to the Rewa stone inscription, Karṇa achieved complete victory over a King of an Eastern country, probably Vaṅga. If we assume that Jātavarman was the ruler of Siṁhapura in Orissa, it is reasonable to conclude that he might have joined the great Kalachuri rulers in their Eastern expeditions and ultimately carved out an independent Kingdom for himself in Eastern Bengal by supplanting the Chandras[35].

Nothing is known about the length of his reign. There is also a problem about the name of the successor of Jātavarman. According to Belāva copper plate, Sāmalavarman appeared just after him[36]. But the Vajrayoginī plate of Sāmalavarman and the Sāmantasāra plate of Harivarman[37] raise doubts and make it reasonable to conclude that Harivarman, another son of Jātavarman succeeded him on the throne. The Vajrayaginī plate of Sāmalavarman mentions the achievements of Harivarman before those of him. So it may be safely presumed that Harivarman came to power before Sāmalavarman. In spite of the burnt and illegible condition of the

Sāmantasāra plate of Harivarman, it appears that Harivarman should be placed before Sāmalavarman. N.N. Vasu who first edited the plate, informed that it was issued from Vikramapura and belonged to the reign of Parameśvara, Paramavaishṇava, Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahārājadhirājādhirāja Harivarman and his father's name was probably Jyotirvarman[38]. But later on N.N. Vasu changed his reading to Jātavarman. N.K. Bhattasali also reads the name of Harivarman's father Jātavarman[39]. P.L. Paul who also examined the plate supported the view of N.K. Bhattasali[40]. If we accept this, it would then appear that Harivarman and Sāmalavarman were brothers and Harivarman succeeded Jātavarman and Sāmalavarman is to be placed after him.

Now, the absence of the name of Harivarman in the Belāva plate cannot be correctly explained. There is a veiled allusion to Harivarman in the verse 3 of the Belāva plate as stated by R.D. Banerjee and he has cleanly hinted at in the statement that Vīraśrī and Hari many times manifested themselves in person in the dynasty. If it is true then why the scribe of the Belāva plate did not clearly mention the name of Harivarman in correct order of succeession. It may be that the relation between Harivarman and Sāmalavarman was not at all cordial and that might have led the latter's son to omit the name of Harivarman.

The name of Harivarman is also found in the Bhubaneśvara inscription of Bhaṭṭabhavadeva[41] who served as the minister for War and peace. Two Buddhist manuscripts copied respectively in his 19th[42] and the 39th[43] regnal years preserve the name of Harivarman. After the date in the colophon of the manuscript copied in the 39th year there are three verses written in a different hand which inform us that when 46 years of Harivarman's reign had elapsed the manuscript was five times recited in seven years. This shows that Harivarman ruled for at least 46 years. So it may be presumed that Harivarman ascended the throne in 1073 A.D. and ruled upto 1127 A.D.[44].

Harivarman ruled in Eastern Bengal and his capital was at Vikramapura. It may be that Vikramapura was captured from the Chandras, but when it was captured is not known for certain. It is known from the Rāmcharit that the troops of Rāmapāla advanced from the South of the Ganges to the North in order to fight with the Kaivarta Chief Bhīma. If it is so then the South-Eastern Bengal was under the possession of Rāmapāla and it is probably for that reason that the author of Śabdapradīpa held Rāmapāla as 'Vaṅgeśvara'. Again the name Of Hari, the friend of Kaivarta Chief Bhīma, is mentioned in

the Rāmacharit. It may be that he was Harivarman. But the son of Rāmapāla was successful in breaking the ties between Hari and Bhīma and then Rāmapāla entered into friendship with Hari. It is held in the Rāmacharit that a King of the Varman dynasty in the East propiciated the Pāla King in order to achieve his own ends. This King of the Varman dynasty was no other than Harivarman. It may be assumed from the above that Harivarman came into prominence in the political scene of East Bengal taking advantage of the struggle between the Kaivartas and the Pālas[45].

Reference should be made about the conquest of Harivarman. On the basis of the verse 15 of the Bhubaneśvara praśasti of Bhaṭṭabhavadeva, N.G. Majumdar has inferred that either Harivarman or his son made himself the master of Utkala by overthrowing the Nāgavaṁśī Sindas ruling from Bārasūra in Bastār in Central Provinces in the 11th Century A.D.[46]. He further has inferred on the basis of certain verses in the Rāmacharit that Rāmapāla came into conflict with Harivarman or his son somewhere in Orissa[47]. The view that Harivarman or his son ruled in Orissa is practically based on the stone inscription of Bhaṭṭabhavadeva in Orissa.

The above view may be refuted on various grounds.

Firstly, Orissa proper was never ruled by the Nāgavaṁśī rulers[48] and Rāmapāla met a Somavanisī Keśarī ruler in Orissa. Secondly, there is nothing in the record to connect Harivarman and Bhavadeva in Orissa. The inscription was originally fixed on the temple of Ananta - Vāsudeva at Bhuvaneśvara in the Puri district in Orissa and that led the scholars to believe that the pious construction referred in the inscription was located somewhere in the same place. P. Acharya has proved with cogent argument that there is no reason to suppose that the stone slab containing the inscription was ever fixed in any temple there[49]. So on the basis of the explanation of P. Acharya it would be reasonable not to regard Harivarman or his son as the ruler of Orissa until more positive evidences are available to us. Thirdly, the verse in question has been differently enumerated by N.G. Majumdar who held that Nāgas were defeated by Bhavadeva and we may locate their territory near Eastern Bengal and more reasonably identify the Nāgas of the verse with Nāgās of Assam hills[50]. Fourthly, D.C. Bhattacharyya has argued that the verses 26 - 27 of the inscription show that the temple of Bhavadeva on which it was fixed could not be in Rāḍha and suggests that it was possibly at Vikramapura[51].

Now the reign of Harivarman cannot be complete unless a few words are mentioned about Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, the Brāhmaṇa minister of Harivarman who has left a long account of his family consisting of seven generations in the stone incription. The family was settled in the village of Siddhala in Rāḍha. The grand father of Bhavadeva was Ādideva who was the minister of the King of Vaṅga. The name of the King is not mentioned and he has been identified as Jātavarman of the Varman dynasty. Abdul Momin Choudhury held that he was probably the King of the Chandra dynasty. Govardhana, the father of Bhavadeva was a great scholar and warrior and his official position is not known to us. Bhavadeva himself was the Minister for war and peace in the Court of Harivarman. Bhavadeva was remarkable for his personality, statesmanship, scholarship, and for his aptitude in warfare[52].

We hardly know anything about the circumstances which led to the rise of Sāmalavarman, another son of Jātavarman to the throne. The name of Sāmalavarman is preserved in the geneaological account of the Vaidik Brāhmaṇas who are said to have migrated to Bengal from Madhyadeśa during his reign, though according to one version of the story, it occurred during the reign of Harivarman. According to most of the geneaological books of the Vaidika Brāhmaṇas, the first of

their line came to Bengal at the invitation of Sāmalavarman in Śaka 1001 (= 1079 A.D.)[53]. This date is correct within half a Century, as Sāmalavarman can reasonably be placed in the first half of the 12th Century A.D. Sāmalavarman married Trailokyasundari alias Mālavyadevī, who was the daughter of Jagaddevī, son of Paramāra Udauāditya, the King of Mālwa and rival of Kalachuri Karṇa[54].

Sāmalavarman was succeeded by Bhojavarman, his son by his wife Mālavyadevī and the Belāva plate was issued in the 5th year of his reign from Jayaskandhavāra situated at vikramapura. The Belāva plate does not mention any achievements of Bhojavarman.

It has been stated in the Belāva grant that land was granted in the village of Upyalikā belonging to the Kauśāmbī Aṣṭagaccha Khaṇḍala Maṇḍala in Puṇḍrabhukti. The appearance of the name Puṇḍrabhukti does not mean that Nothern Bengal was included within the dominion of the Varmans. According to D.C. Sircar, this Kauśāmbī can hardly be equated with Kauśambā of the Rajshahi district, but Puṇḍrabhukti where the proposed land was granted by Bhojavarman extended to the South-Eastern part of Bengal in 12th Century A.D. R.C. Majumdar has pointed out that it may be more reasonably concluded on the basis of

the sources of information that the Kingdom of the Varmans probably confined to Eastern Bengal with Vikramapura as its Capital[55].

The Varmans were the followers of Vishṇu which is proved by the reference of 'Vishṇu Chakra Mudrā' in line 48 of the Belāva copper plate. They were the staunch supporters of the Vedas and replacement of the Buddhist dynasty of the Chandras by the Orthodox Brāhmaṇical family of the Varmans was fully in keeping with the spirit of the time. It may not be a mere coincidence that the two Buddhist ruling dynasties of Bengal, Viz, the Pālas and the Chandras were overthrown by the Senas and the Varmans who were the followers of the Orthodox Brāhmaṇical faith within a Century.

Regarding the downfall of the Varmans, there is no reference to the ousting of the Varmans from Vaṅga in the inscriptions of the Sena Kings. This is an inexplicable gap in our knowledge of the history of East India of the period. In the Deopārā plate, Vijayasena claims to have conquered or captured quite a number of Kings. The issue of his Barrackpur grant from Vikramapura, the Capital of the Chandra and Varman Kingdons, point to the fact that Vaṅga was also included in his conquests.

In the verse 21 of the Deopārā plate[56] the following Kings are said to have been imprisoned by Vijayasena: Nānya, King of Mithila, 'Vīra, King of Koṭāṭavī, Vardhana, King of Kauśāmbī and Rāghava, identified with the King of Kaliṅga who ruled from 1156 - 1170 A.D. N.N. Vasu doubts the identification[57].

It is held that Vaṅga was snatched from the Varmans and annexed by Vijayasena[58], but the name of Vaṅga King is not referred in the plate of Vijayasena. We may seek a clue to the identification of Rāghava of the Deopārā plate and in case of such identification the mysterious and hitherto unexplained verse 14 of the Belāva plate comes to our help. The difficulty in its proper interpretation lies in the expression of verse which have been read variously[59]. N.K. Bhattasali inclined to read it as 'Śankāsv-a-laṅk-ādhipaḥ' and translated the verse in the way "Oh, fie ! How painful ! The world is bereft of heroes today. Has this trouble of Rākshasas appeared again ? May Alaṅkādhipa (Viz. opposite of Lankādhipa, Rama or Raghava) fare well during His apprehended danger" !

We have to remember that the Pālas had lost complete control over Bengal, South of the Ganges during the period, but they commanded respect as the past emperors East India.

Vijayasena, newly risen to power in Rāḍha, was eager to strike North and East and make himself the undisputed master of Bengal. He had already gathered formidable forces and everybody in Bengal expected that sooner or later the blow would fall. The Belāva plate granted land on the East bank of the Bhāgīrathī[60] and it appears to have been granted at the period of Śaṅkā or apprehended danger. The favour of Rāmapāla of the old imperial line was sought against the formidable force of Vijayasena and Rāghava, probably a scion of the Varman line, appears to have been the leader of the Varman Kingdom of the period. In the verse III of the Belāva plate, it has been stated that Hari manifested many times in the Varman line. The first was Kṛishṇa. The second was Harivarman and the third might be varman chief Rāghava who wielded all power during the period. Vijayasena first attacked on the Kauśāmbī King Govardhana who was probably the Sāmanta of the Varman King and this dragged the Varmans into war with Vijayasena. Rāghava, theleader of the Varmans being defeated, became a prisoner. Thus fell the Kingdom before the onslaught of Vijayasena[61].

THE DEVA DYNASTY

During the period of the decline of the Sena power as a result of the Muslim invasion, a line of Kings of the Deva

dynasty flourished in the political scene of Eastern Bengal. The history of the family is known from the Mehār copper plate[62] the Sobhrampur copper plate[63], the Chittagong copper plate[64] of Dāmodaradeva and the Ādāvādi copper plate[65], the Pākamoḍā copper plate[66] of Daśarathadeva. The family is said to have descended from the moon and was the follower of the Vaishṇava cult which is evident from the representation of Vishṇu or Garuḍa or of Mādhava overpowering Chānūra in the Mehār copper plate of Dāmodaradeva. The Vaishṇava faith of the royal dynasty to which Dāmodara belonged is evident from the name as well as those of his three predecessors[67]. It may be assumed, as N.G. Majumdar held, that the dynasty "professed the Vaishṇava faith like Varmans and the Senas"[68]. The Deva dynasty which we have already discussed flourished in Samataṭa region under Śāntideva in 720 A.D. The dynasty continued till the end of the rule of Kāntideva in 825 A.D. This dynasty was supplanted as noticed earlier by the Chandras of Harikela. After that he have no record to suggest the continuation of Deva line. It is only in the 2nd half of the 12th Century that we come accross of the existence of a group of rulers starting from Purushottama having the Surname of Deva, though all the dynasties bore the title Deva and ruled over the same regions and we feel tempted to bracked them under the same Deva family, we have no sources of information to arrive at any definite conclusion in this respect.

It is possible to form the geneaological list of the dynasty from the sources available to us.

Purushottama
/
Madhumathanadeva[69]
/
Vāsudeva
/
Dāmodaradeva
/ /
Daśarathadeva

It has been stated in the Sobhrampur copper plate that the dynasty sprang from the 'moon' and from whom sprang the line of Purushottama, the first ruler of the Deva family. In the Chittagong plate no phrases are used indicating the kingly position of Purushottama. In the Mehār plate he is introduced as a headman of the Deva family, 'Dev-ānvaya-Grāmaṇī' phrase actually the same as 'Dev-ānvaya-Kamala-Vikāśa-bhāskara' applied to King Daśarathadeva in his Ādābāḍi plate[69 a]. It is not unlikely that from the position of a Grāmaṇī, Purushottama's son Madhusūdana rose to the eminence of a King. Therefore, it is reasonable to hold that Purushottama was only a grāmaṇī and not a ruler. His son Madhumathana is called 'Lord of the earth.' and Deva-Vaṁś-Odadh-Īndū, viz, 'Moon in the ocean of the Deva dynasty' and is credited with having 'snatched away

the wealth of the enemies in war'. These epithets distinctly show that Madhumathana waged successful wars against his contemporaries and carved for himself a principality. He is called 'nṛipati' in the Chittagong plate. His son Vāsudeva is also called 'Lord of the earth' and a great 'archer'. It is evident from the Mehār plate that he was 'versed in all the śāstras and foremost in military skill'. In the Chittagong plate, he is described as one 'whose feet were rubbed with the foreheads of princes bowing down to him in homage'. It is evident that Vāsudeva imposed his authority over the neighbouring chiefs and thus led the way for the rise of Dāmodaradeva, born of his queen Mitrādevī. Dāmodaradeva ascended the throne in 1153 Śaka or 1231 A.D. and in the 1165 Śaka or 1231 A.D, his third (Chittagong) copper plate was issued. He ruled probably from C 1230 = C 1255 A.D.[69 b]. Dāmodara was 'well versed in polity' and bore the title of 'Gajapati'. He is said to have caused 'contraction (or dejection) to the lotus like faces of heroic enemy Kings'. In the Chittagong plate, he is called 'overlord of all Kings' and in verses 4 and 5 of the same plate he is said to have defeated many Kings and brought them under subjection. In the Mehār plate also he bore the title of 'Gajapati' and probably in allusion to it, in verse 6, his 'column of the best

elephants, well equipped in battle array' is highly spoken of. In the Mehār plate he assumes the title of 'Arirāja Chānūra Mādhava'. The editors of the Mehār plate have pointed out that this biruḍa 'cannot but remind us of similar biruḍas assumed by Viśvarūpasena[69 c] in his inscription and applied by them to their predecessors - Vijayasena, Vallālasena and Lakshmaṇasena. Arirāja - Vṛishabha - Śaṅkara, Arirāja - nihśaṅka - śaṅkara, Arirāja - Mādhava - Śaṅkara, Arirāja - Vṛishabhāṅka - śaṅkara and Arirāja - asahya - śaṅkara. The biruḍas with Arirāja' arch enemy' prefixed to them are highly significant when considered together with the additional title 'Garga - Yavanānvaya - Pralay - Kāla - Rudra' assumed by Viśvarūpa. All those biruḍas are suggested of the valourous and terrible struggles against the Muslim aggression in Bengal. Though of the same political significance, the assumption of the titles of Dāmadaradeva suggests that Dāmadaradeva came into conflict with the Sena ruler of Vaṅga and was probably able to win these titles for himself or at any rate Dāmadaradeva considered himself strong enough to assume these titles in opposition to the Senas. But it is surprising to note that Dāmadaradeva adopted these titled in the fourth year of his reign, Viz. in 1234 A.D. while in the Sobhrampur plate, issued in the year 1236 A.D., only the title of 'Gajapati' is retained

and in the Chittagong plate dated 1243 A.D., both these titles are dropped. We do not know for certain whether Dāmadaradeva sustained a set-back towards the close of his reign. The answer cannot be definitely given in the present state of our knowledge. The inscription of Dāmadaradeva does not definitely speak of the any loss of territory[70].

The Chittagong plate of Dāmadaradeva refers to a village called Keṅgapālā which may be identified with the modern Ketaṅgyāpāḍā forming a part of the village of Hāshimpur, P.S. Patiyā and bounded on the North by the Marāchharāpukhariyā which is still the name of a hamlet by the hill side, on the Southern bank of the river Saṅkha. In otherwords the inscription refers to a village in the district of Chittagong and not elsewhere. The Mehār plate records the grant of land in Mehāragrāma which was included in the Paralāyi Vishaya of the Samataṭa maṇḍala lying within the Puṇḍravardhanabhukti. The Mehāragrāma being no other locality than the present village of Mehār, it is easy to determine that Dāmadaradeva's Kingdom extended at least over these districts of Tippera, Noakhali and Chittagong[71].

Now we are to face with a very critical question as

to whether the territory of Damodaradeva or of his three predecessors was confined to the three districts of Chittagong divisions or it was co-extensive with not only the whole of Samaṭaṭa maṇḍala but also with the whole of the Paṇḍravardhana bhukti[71 a], as it was then known. Apart from assuming the title of 'Gajapati' in one plate and 'Sakala - bhupati - Chakravartin' (the lord of all the Kings) in the other, there is no other evidence whatever that Dāmodara or his predecessors were paramount sovereigns. It is not apparent also that they were the Sāmantas under the successor of Lakshmaṇasena who somehow maintained the position as Gauḍeśvara and paramount sovereign within the Paṇḍravardhana bhukti at least for seventeen years after Lakshmaṇasena. It is almost certain that Madhumāthana Madhusūdana ruled at the sometime with two later Sena Kings. But Dāmodaradeva would have usurped all the high sounding titles including Gauḍeśvara, as was done by Daśarathadeva, if Dāmodara or any of his predecessors succeeded in supplanting the Senas within the Paṇḍravardhana bhukti. But Dāmodara assumed 'Arirāja - Chānūra - Mādhava' without the title of Gauḍeśvara. It is worthy of mention that it is in the Mehār plate of Dāmodaradeva that Samaṭaṭa finds mention, perhaps, for the first time as a maṇḍala within the Paṇḍravardhana bhukti and it may be assumed that

it was probably a creation of the Deva family for distinguishing it from Vaṅga apparently a maṇḍala under the rule of the later Senas within the same Paṇḍravardhana bhukti which included in it Vikramapura and Nāvya.

The most reasonable explanation may be that while the Deva Kings were reigning in the Samataṭa maṇḍala of Paṇḍravardhana bhukti, the Senas held supremacy over the region of Vaṅga including Vikramapura and Nāvya and passed as Gaudeśvara within the same bhukti. Their supremacy though disputed could not till then be shaken off. It may be inferred from the above facts that the river Meghnā was the natural boundary between Dāmadara's territory and the dominion of Vaṅga under the later Sena ruler[72].

A difficulty arises regarding the matter whether the early Deva rulers asserted their suzerainty over the whole of the district of Tippera. The position of the Deva rulers in Tipperā has been rendered anomalous by the Maināmatī plate of Raṇavaṅkamalla Harikeladeva issued in the 17th year of his reign which corresponded to the year 1141 Śaka = 1218 A.D. From the information of the length of the service indicated in the Maināmatī plate[73], it may be assumed that

Harikāladeva was not a contemporary of both the father and the grandfather of Dāmodaradeva, he was at least a contemporary of his father Vāśudeva. If he was the first of this family and the principality was included in the Sena Kingdom, it seems that with the fall of the Sena power in Gauḍa, an independent Kingdom arose in Eastern Bengal[74]. From the inclusion of the city of Paṭṭikera with the Maināmatī hillock as its probable natural land mark, it is definite that his principality was situated in the close neighbourhood of the Kingdom of the early Deva rulers and his rule would then seem to have been confined to a small portion of Tipperā.

Now whether the area of Dāmodara's Kingdom, indicated above, included the Kingdom inherited by him or also includes the territory added in his reign, it is difficult to say[75]. An important information may be gleaned from the Pākāmoḍā copper plate of Dāśarathadeva[76] about the conquest of territory by Dāmodaradeva. The verse 4 of the plate informs

"Khyāto Gauḍamahī - mahotsavamayaṁ Chakre
Punaścha Śriya "[77].

The kind Dāmodaradeva performed great festival in Gauḍa by recovering the glory of the country. But Dāmodara did

not claim this achievement in any of his own inscription. So it might have been an achievement of the last part of his reign. It may be inferred from the claim that Dāmodara might have defeated the Gauḍa King of the Sena dynasty and captured their territory. But there is no mention in the grants of the Deva rulers that the Devas defeated the Sena Kings assuming the title of 'Gauḍeśvara'. It may be informed that Dāmodaradeva and his predecessors were the Sāmantas of the Sena rulers and eventually Dāmodaradeva established his sway over the Sena Kingdom. But Dāmodara did not assume the high sounding title of 'Parameśvara - Paramabhaṭṭāraka - Mahārājadhirāja'. It may be presumed from the Ādābāḍi plate that Daśarathadeva established his sway over the Sena King within a very few years of his ascendancy and it was he who assumed the high sounding titles of a lord.

Dāmodaradeva was succeeded by his son Daśarathadeva and the history of his reign is known to us from his Ādābāḍi and Pākamoḍā copper plates. It is evident from the Ādābāḍi plate that he assumed the titles of Parameśvara, Paramabhaṭṭāraka, Mahārājadhirāja Arirāja Danujamādhava. He had also the illustrious titles of Aśvapati, Gajapati, Narapati,

Rājatrayādhipati, Somavaṁśapradīpa Pratipannokarṇṇa, Satyavratagāṅgeya, Saraṇāgalavajrapañjara etc. The epithet Devānvayakamalavikāsabhās-Kara shows that he belonged to the Deva family. The Ādābāḍi plate was issued from the Kingdom of Gauḍa through the grace of Nārayāṇa. According to R.C. Majumdar, there is no doubt that Daśaratha came into possession of the Sena Kingdom in Gauḍa. According to N.K. Bhattasali, this must have happened after the collapse of the Sena power[78].

B.M. Barua and Pulin behari Chakraborty while editing the Mehār plate of Dāmodaradeva have asserted that Dāmodaradeva was called 'Gajapati' only, while in the Ādābāḍi plate Daśarathadeva is honoured with the epithet of 'Aśvapati Gajapati - Narapati - Rājatrādhipati'. In the former, there is epithet indicating the place of which Dāmodara was the King, while in the latter Daśarathadeva boldly claims to have obtained the Kingdom of Gauḍa and issued the charter from Vikramapura, which he could not have done, had he not succeeded the later Senas after their fall or extermination[79]. It may be supposed from the Ādābāḍi copper plate that Daśarathadeva during the time of the very inception of his reign established his sway in the Sena Kingdom and assumed the high sounding titles in imitation of the Sena Kings.

It has been held in the Ādābāḍi plate that he obtained the possession of Gauḍa through the grace of Nārāyaṇa. But we do not know what exactly is meant by the Kingdom of Gauḍa. The Muslim rulers were probably in possession of the Gauḍa Kingdom which practically meant at that time the territory of North and West Bengal and there is no evidence to show that the name was extended to cover Eastern Bengal. It may, therefore, be assumed that Daśarathadeva claims to have conquered a part of West or North Bengal. R.C. Majumdar has pointed out that the claim need not be regarded as a fantastic one, for it is quite likely that an enterprising Hindu ruler of Eastern Bengal led successful operation to the muslim dominion in his neighbourhood. One thing should always be kept in mind that the muslim rulers had to continue several military raids in order to consolidate their hold over the whole of Bengal and there were constant quarrels among the Muslim rulers. Daśarathadeva might have taken advantage of all these to capture a part of Gauḍa[80]. It has been narrated in the Pākāmoḍā plate that all the subjects of the Eastern part became inactive and intimidated as a result of the aggression of the enemy happening due to the evils of the unconcentions King. Later on the King Daśarathadeva put an end to this anarchical condition and peace and prosperity of the

people was regained. The people heaved a sign of relief and devoted themselves to worldly affairs.

It is very difficult to understand the real meaning of the verse. It cannot be definitely pointed out who the unconceptious King was. It cannot be the muslim invasion in the Rādha - Varendrī region during the time of Lakshmaṇasena, because it had taken place earlier. It may be imagined that muslim invaders invaded eastern part of Eastern Bengal due to the lack of sagacity of the last Sena King. Daśarathadeva might have driven out the enemy and that was shy the subjects inclined to him and this paved the way for the establishment of the sway of the Deva dynasty over Sena Kingdom[81].

N.K. Bhattasali gives a brief account of the history of Daśarathadeva. His account, brief as it is, leaves no doubt as to the identity of Danujamādhava Daśarathadeva with Danujamādhava who according to a dynastic account by Harimiśra came into prominence after the Sena rule and with Danuja Rāi, the Rājā of Sonārgāon in Eastern Bengal who according to Zia-ud-din Barni entered into agreement with Ghiasuddin Ballban that he would guard against the escape of rebellions Tughril Khān by water (1283 A.D.)[82] and in that case it may be accepted

that Sonārgāon was the Capital of Daśarathadeva and Sonārgāon probably represented the Capital City of Vikramapura and it is probable that he ruled from C 1255 A.D. to C 1290 A.D.[82 a].

It is quite likely as suggested by P.L. Paul that the conquest of North-Western Bengal by the Muslims and the maintenance of independence by Eastern Bengal in spite of repeated attempts by Muslim conquerers to capture it, suggests one important conclusion. A sudden cavalry raid was sufficient to break the power of the Sena Kings in North-Western Bengal and the whole of it passed into the hands of the Muslims within a short time. But the physical feature of Eastern Bengal prevented such an eventuality. It is the country of big rivers and so cavalry was practically useless. It needed a powerful naval power to conquer this portion of Bengal. A raid might have carried on in certain part, but it could not produce any decisive result. The seeking of the help of Danujamādhava by the Sultan Giyasuddin Balban to prevent the escape of the rebellions governor Tughril Khan by boat clearly explains the weakness of the power in Eastern Bengal - a power strong in every other respect excepting navy. This explains why this part of the country could resist muslim attacks for about a Century while great Kingdoms of Nothern India succumbed to muslim attacks quickly[83].

KINGDOM OF ŚRĪHAṬṬA

From the cescovery of two copper plates at Bhāṭerā about twenty miles away from Sylhet[84], we come across a new line of Kings with the Deva title. The two copper plates gives the geneaology of five Kings.

Navagīrvāṇa alias Kharavāṇa
Gokuladeva
Nārāyaṇadeva
Keśavadeva alias Govinda
Iśānadeva

The names of all the Kings except the first one end in 'deva', make it probable that they belonged to the Deva family[85]. The date of the records cannot be properly read, but on palaeographical ground they can hardly be regarded as earlier than the 13th Century A.D. and may even be somewhat later. The plate I issued by Keśava opens with salutation to Śiva and then gives a geneaology of four Kings who are said to have belonged to the race of moon. The founder was Navagīrvāṇa (the new God) of fierce arrow, of great known the issue of Goddess of Prosperity. His son Gokuladeva claims distinction for being the grand father of Keśava. It is wonderful that the sunlight of his glory caused numbness in inimical Kings (instead of exciting

vivacity as sunlight should). From him descended King Nārāyaṇa His son was Keśavadeva of unmeasured hymn of merit and glory whose feet were decorated with the Jewels of royal crowns, who was the ornament of earthly sovereigns, the destroyer of rival Kings[86]. The two words Keśava and Govinda probably were the names of the same person. The part illustrates that Gobinda was the abode of fame, the asylum of beauty, the dwelling place of all kinds of learning, the shelter of Justice. He was the centre of all light, the source of charity, the home of enjoyment of the jewels of all speech, the store house of goodness and the personification of all good qualities. He protected the land of dependent Kings. This Keśava had whirled his discuss at the enemies. He through his anger brought to an end all children of the race of his antagonists. He brought the earth under one umbrella wishing not to allow the existence of any foreign Kings. He effected the gratification of all well disposed people. He by the play of his sword, brought into subjection all other Kings and came to be regarded as the chief of all Eastern Kings. He granted land for the adoration of a liṅgam of the name of Vaṭeśvara, whose temple stood in Haṭṭapāṭaka (the great fair) probably the Bhāṭarārā bazar of the present day to the extent of 375 plough measures.

The insceiption No. II is a Vaishṇavite record. It gives a list of four Kings who belonged to the Lunar race. The

first King stated in the list was Gokula who is said to have been as munificant as the Kalpa tree. His son was Nārayāṇa. He was followed by Keśavadeva who dedicated a temple of the destroyer of Kaṅśa and performed the rite of weighing himself with gold silver and other articles which he presented to the Brāhmaṇas. His son was Iśānadeva. He erected a lofty temple for the enemy of Madhu Kaitabha, a form of Vishṇu and by the advice of his minister Vanamātikara, a Vaidya by caste and the concurrence of his commander in chief Vīradatta presented two ploughs of land for its support.

It is obvious that the first prince of this plate is the same with the second of the first plate, the next two are likewise the same for there is no reason to doubt that Keśava of the second plate is the alias of Govinda of the first grant and the new name Iśānadeva who issued the plate II is the Fifth from Naragīrvāna.

These Rājās were the sovereigns of Kāchhār and professed to be of the dynasty of Ghaṭotkacha, son of Bhīma, of Hiḍimbā, the daughter of an aboriginal cannibal chief. It is extremely doubtful if the Pāṇḍas ever came so far to the east[86].

THE KINGDOM OF PAṬṬIKERĀ

The traces of the existence of the existence of the Kingdom of Paṭṭikerā may be found as far back as the 11th

Century A.D. The manuscript of Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, preserved in the library of the Cambridge University contains the picture of a sixteen armed Goddess with the label "Pattikeri Chundāvarabhavana Chundā" is the earliest source of its existence. It is evident from this that the image of the Buddhist Goddess Chundā in Pattikerā was widely known in the 11th Century A.D.[87].

It is not at all easy to determine the status of the Kingdom during the Pāla and Sena period. It cannot be properly ascertained whether the extreme districts like Noākhāli and Chittagong were included in the Pāla and Sena Kingdoms. No evidence has yet been discovered to prove the extension of the Sena power in the Chittagong division[88]. The position of the early Devas regarding their sway over the whole of the district of Tipperā is rendered anomalous by the Maināmatī plate of Raṇavaṅkamalla Harikāladeva issued in the 17th year of his reign which corresponded to the year 1141 of the Śaka era (=1218 A.D.)[89]. Harikāladeva came to the throne in 1203-04 A.D. If he was the first of this family and this principality was included in the Sena Kingdom, it seems that with the fall of the Sena power in Gauḍa, an independent Kingdom arose in Eastern Bengal. Harikāladeva Raṇavaṅkamalla who ascended the throne in 1204 and ruled upto 1220 A.D. was undoubtedly an

independent King. As we have seen above there was another independent Deva family very much adjacent to the Kingdom Raṇavaṅkāmalla. It may be surmised that both of them ruling simultaneously, possibly took advantage of the decline of the Sena power and carved out independent Kingdom for themselves.

The copper plate of Raṇavaṅkāmalla found in the neighbourhood of Comillā belonging to the 13th Century A.D. provides us with very important facts of the history of the dynasty. It records the grant of land in favour of a Buddhist monastery built in the city of Paṭṭikerā by Śrī Dhādi-eba, the chief minister of Śrī Harikāladeva in 1220 in the 17th year of his reign[90]. The city of Paṭṭikerā cannot be definitely If the find spot of the plate is in any clue to its location, the Maināmatī hillock probably formed a part of that ancient city and the ruins of a temple on the top of this hillock to the West of the Mahārājā's Bungalow may even point to the small monastery mentioned in the plate.

There is no doubt that this Paṭṭikerā was the Capital of the Kingdom. The City gave the name to an important Parganā in the district of Tipperā still known as Pātikārā or Pāitkārā which extends to the same hills, though the hills themselves now fall under a separate parganā named Meherkula[91]. In older documents of the 18th Century the name of the Parganā occurs

regularly either Pātikerā or Paitkārā leaving no room for any doubt about the identification.

The unnatural character of the three names of the Grantor 'Dhadi-eba', his father 'Hedi-eba' and the writer 'Medinī-eba' belonging to the same family deserves special discussion. In spite of the names being more or less Smkritised by the writer, they clearly denote their foreign origin in the 'unique appellative 'eva' or 'eba' found in all the three names which is unknown to any Indian dialect". It may be that there was Burmese connection with the Kingdom of Pattikerā. We have evidence of a respectable family of Burmese origin which settled and survived in the 13th Century A.D. in the district of Tippera. For 'ba' and 'Ye-ba' seems to be the characteristic of the Burmese language even now[92]. The identification of the Patikkara of the Burmese chronicles with Paṭṭikara of the Tipperā district though put forth in the local history of Tipperā [93] more than 35 years ago attracted the serious attention of the Burmese scholars only recently[94]. The Burmese chronicles contain many references to it[95]. The Kingdom of Anoratha of Pagan who 'made a progress through the Western portion of his dominion as far as Bengal'[96] was bounded on the West by the foreign Kingdom of Pattikerā [97]. The Burmese chronicles narrate the romantic love story between the prince of Pattikerā

and Sweinthi, the daughter of the King Kyanzittha (1086-1112). The Burmese King agreed, his minister disagreed and the prince in languishment committed suicide. It is the subject matter of the Burmese poems and the dramas are staged in Burma at present also with the subject matter of love. The son of Sweinthi Alaungsithu who ascended the throne and ruled upto 1167, married a Paṭṭikerā princess. According to Burmese chronicles Narathu, the son and successor of Alaungsithu, slew with his own hand this princess or Paṭṭikerā, the widow of his father. The Ārākānese chronicles explains it differently. It has been stated that 'a certain King Pattikerā of the Kingdom of Marawa sent his two daughters as presents to the Kings respectively of Ārākān and Tampadīpa. The general of Ārākān sent the latter princess to Pagan with a request to King Narathu to send her to Tampadīpa. Narathu, however, forcibly detained her in seraglio. The princess rebuked Narathu for his disgraceful conduct and the latter forthwith drew his sword and killed her and he was also killed by the King of Pattikerā [98]. How far the above stories may be regarded as historical, it is difficult to say. The above incident took place, according to the latest chronology, in 1189 or 1191 A.D. not more than 15 years before Harikāladeva came to the throne[99]. It is not unlikely, therefore, that King Raṇavaṅkamalla was the immediate successor of the King of Pattikerā who was responsible for the murder of Narathu.

We would like to mention in this connection that in the whole district of Tipperā, there are, at present, about two thousand Buddhists living all in a group of village about 15 miles from Maināmatī[100]. It may be because of the close inter course between Burmā and Tipperā in the 13th Century.

There is ample scope for doubt whether Raṇavaṅkamalla belonged to the old royal family of Paṭṭikerā mentioned in the Burmese chronicles. One Bīradharadeva probably ruled in that region after Raṇavaṅkamalla. He ruled possibly from (1230 A.D. -1250 A.D). He was a Vaishṇava and made gift of land to Laḍahamādhava Vāsudeva in the Bātagaṅga Vishaya in Samataṭa maṇḍala within Puṇḍravardhana Bhukti which is known from his Maināmatī plate engraved in the 15th regnal year[100 a]. After that it was probably amalgamated with the growing Kingdom of the Devas.

DOMMAṆAPĀLA OF RAKSHĀ KĀLĪ (SUNDARBAN)

The reign of Lakshamaṇasena ended in a sea of trouble that overwhelmed his Kingdom. During the time of the decline of the Sena power, one Dommaṇapāla set up an independent Kingdom in the Eastern part of Khāḍi (in Sundarbans) in 1196 A.D.[100 b]. Khāḍi District formed an intergral part of the Sena Kingdom as recorded in the grants of both Vijayasena and Lakshamaṇasena

and the revolution of Dommanapāla is an important indication of the weakness of the authority of Lakshamaṇasena in that region during his old age. D.C. Sircar seems to indicate that Dommaṇapāla was a feudal chief of Lakshamaṇasena. But the whole meaning of the inscription leaves no doubt that Dommanapāla was practically an independant chief [100 c].

It is known from the inscription that Pāla family to which Dommaṇapāla belonged migrated from Ayodhyā [100 d] and took the possession of Pūrva - Khāṭikā either by conquest or by other means. It refers to two rulers. The proper name of first ruler is not clear as it cannot be read in full. The person is styled Parama - Māheśvara, Mahāmāṇḍalika. He was succeed by Dommaṇapāla who is called Mahāsāmantādhipati, Mahārājādhirāja etc.

It is not clear to us whether the family, in any way, was connected with the Pāla rulers of Bengal. It seems that Domnaṇapāla, son of a provincial governor of the Sena, assumed independence and founded a principality in Eastera Khāḍī which which is now represented by the Sundarbans. The subsequent history of the family is unknown.

The dynasty of Iśvaraghosha of Dhekkarī

There is possibly no doubt that the Kalachuri invasion of Karna ravaged the major portion of the Pāla empire and it is probable that the Pāla rulers Nayapāla and Vigrahapāla III were

gradually losing their hold over western Bengal. A chief calling himself Mahāmāṇḍalika Iśvaraghosha issued a land grant in which he assumed the style of an independent King. The grant is not dated, but may be referred to theeleventh Century A.D. about the time of Vigrahapāla III[101]. According to Atul Sur Iśvaraghosha came into prominence in the eleventh Century A.D. and he was a contemporary of Mahīpāla II (977 - 1027) A.D.[102]. A.K. Maitreya has placed it to the 12th Century A.D.

The character of the script of the Rāmganj copper plate, deciphered by A.K. Maitreya, represents a variety of Northern alphabets which is evidently earlier than those used by the Senas and akin to those found in the copper pla tes of the later Pālas, Viz. the Bāngaḍ grant of Mahīpāla I and the Amagachhi grant of Vigrahapāla III[103].

The incription has brought to light the reign of Mahāmāṇḍalika Iśvaraghosha whose geneaology has been given in the first five stanzas of the plate. The record puts forward first of all Dhurtaghosha. His son Bālaghosha was a warrior by profession and his son was Dhavalaghosha. The son of Dhavalaghosha was Iśvaraghosa who was born of Sadhavāvi, the wife of Dhavalaghosha. The grant consisted of a village called Digghāsodikā belonging to Gāllitipyaka vishya of the Piṇolla maṇḍala and was issued by Iśvarghosha from a place called Dhekkarī[104]. MM. H.P. Sastri has pointed out that Devapāla was

the overlord of both Lausena and Icchāighosha of Dharamamangala.[105] But the view of H.P. Sastri has not been sustained by historical evidence as no where in the historical description of the Pālas, the names of the two feudatories Lāusena and Icchāighosha are mentioned. Further more Iśvaraghosha has been placed to about the 11th Century A.D. on the basis of the Palaeography of the inscription. If it is so, then he cannot in any way be placed to the time of Devapāla of the 9th Century A.D. But it cannot be altogether ignosed that Icchāighosha of Dharmamaṅgala was the feudal chief of a Gaudeśvara and ruled in Dhekurgad and the name of the feudal Chief of Dharmamaṅgala is very much similar to that of the Rāmganj copper plate [106]. But it is evident from the copper plate grant that the father of Iśvaraghosha was Dhavala ghosha, but the father of Icchāighosha of Dharamamaṅgala was soma Ghosha. So there is the coubt about the identification of Iśvaraghosha of Rāmganj plate with Icchāighosh of Dharamaṅgala. It is known from Dharmamaṅgala that by the side of the river Ajay, to the East of Kendubilva, there is a Gaḍa named Shyāmarūpa which is a dense forest. According to local tradition it is Dhekkarī or Trishashṭhi Gaḍa the capital Icchāi. In this forest, the delapidated Bhabānī temple is supposed to have been in existence[108]. In the uneven hilly tracts on the border of Western Bengal, in Gaudāndi, within the Parganas of Senapāhadi, there was the capital of Icchāi as is

held by some traditions, because it is mentioned in the Dharmamaṅgala that the capital of Icchāi was surrounded by hills and forests. However, the historical lord of Dhekkarī Iśvaraghosha has been identified as Icchāighosha in the Dharmamaṅgala but nothing more than the above is known from any historical sources. It is very difficult to find any historical basis of the fact that Gauḍeśvara employed a feudal chief to crack down the power and potentiality of another feudal lord. However, it is historically true that during the early years of the Pāla rule, Gauḍeśvara had to be engaged in warfare with the indomitable lord of Rāḍha[109].

The doner of the grant Iśvaraghosh did not assume any of the titles of paramount sovereign. He, indeed, has not even the epithet of a 'King', but it is astonishing that he arrogates to himself the privilege of issuing order to Rājan, Rājanyakas, Rājñīs, Rāṇaka, Rājaputras and so forth who were possibly under his authority. So the title of Mahāmāṇḍalika assumed by Iśvaraghosha can alone be considered to determine his real position. Mr. Maitreya has put forward two important data from Rāmacharita in this connection. In the first place, Dhekkarī the place wherefrom the grant was issued, was the seat of the Sāmantas of the Pālas. In the second place, those Sāmantas were known as maṇḍalādhipati which is the same as māṇḍalika. He concludes that Iśvaraghosha, the Mahāmāṇḍalika,

held the position of a vassal King under the suzerainty of the Pālas[110]. But there is difficulty to ascertain as to who was the overlord of Iśvaraghosa and whether the word Parākramamūla occurring at the top of the plate refers to him or his vassal. The name of the earlier vassal princes of the Pālas is now forthcoming from the Nālandā copper plate of Devapāla. He is Balavarman, a vassal of Devapāla as 'the right hand person of King Devapala'[111]. Elsewhere too the title of Māṇḍalika or Mahāmāṇḍalika is found to have been held by vassal princes and they issued land grants like Iśvaraghosha [112].

The Rāmganj copper plate has brought to light three names of topagraphical interest, viz. Dhekkarī, the river Jatodā and Chandavāra. MM H.P. Sastri and A.K. Maitreya have located Dhekkarī and the river Jatodā near Kātwā in the Burdwan district. But N.N. Vasu has located both of them in the Goālpārā and Kāmarūpa district of Assam[113]. The river is mentioned in the Kālikāpurāṇa as flowing through Kāmarūpa [114]. Chandavāra may be the same as Chandwār near Etewā in U.P. well known from the Mohammedan historians [115].

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59 Originally N.K. Bhattasali read it " Śaṁkāsv = alabdhā dhiyaḥ "(Dacca Review, July, 1912, P 144). Then R.D. Banerjee read it 'Śaṅkāsu labdha (?) dhiyaḥ' (Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1914, P 127). R.G. Basak first read ' Śaṅkāsv = aliṅk - ādhipaḥ ' but subsequently changed the reading to ' Śaṅkāsu laṅkādhipaḥ ' (Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XII, P 40). Basak's translation conveys no meaning. Sten Konow in an editorial note suggests that it is an exhortation to King Bhoja to engage some expedition. However it is undeniable that the passage hints at contemporary political happenings.

60 Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1935, P 83.

61 Epigraphia Indica, XXX, P 262.

62 Epigraphia Indica, XXVII, PP 182 ff.

63 ibid, XXX, PP 184 - 86

64 Inscriptions of Bengal, III, PP 158 - 60.

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66 D.C. Sircar, Opcit, PP 95 ff.

67 Epigraphia Indica, XXVII, P 183.

68 Inscriptions of Bengal, III, P 159.

69 In the Mehār grant the name referred is Madhumathanadeva, but in the Chittagong plate of Dāmodaradeva, the name is given as Madhusūdana. But the reading of the Mehār grant may be accepted as original grant. Chittagong copper plate is missing, Cf R.C. Majumdar, History of Ancient Bengal, P 284 fn I.

69a N.G. Majumdar, Opcit, P 181.

69b D.C. Sircar, Opcit, PP 141 - 42.

69c D.C. Sircar thinks that the name of Kaśavasena has been wrongly read in the Edilpur plate as Keśavasena whereas it was really Veśvarūpasena, engraved after erasing the name of Śūryasena son of Viśvarūpasena. There was no Sena King Keśavasena by name Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XXXIII, PP 315 - 321.

70 Sobhrampur copper plate of Dāmodaradeva, Epigraphia Indica, XXX P 186.

71 Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XXVII, P 185.

71a It is well known that during the age of the Pālas and their contemporaries wide areas of east and south Bengal mere incorporated in the bhukti called Puṇḍravardhana. The chandras who established their Kingdom in the South eastern region of Bengal preferred to use Puṇḍravardhana in their land grants.

In the later Varman and Sena records the jurisdiction of the bhukti extended as far as the bay of Bengal in the south and Tipperā in the east. This territorial expansion was according to some scholars, due to imperial Pāla expansion in the south and south eastern Bengal. D.C. Sircar thus writes "Possibly this was due to the fact that the metropolitan province of the Pāla empire, having its headquarter at a city of Gauda in North Bengal included South easter and Southern Bengal" of M. Bhattacharyya, Puṇḍravardhana in Historical perspective (Un-published Ph.d thesis), RP 14 - 15.

72 ibid, PP 185 - 86.

73 Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. IX, PP 282 ff.

74 P.L. Paul, Opcit, PP 99 - 100.

75 R.C. Majumdar, History of Ancient Bengal, P 276.

76 D.C. Sircar, Śilālekha O Tāmra Śāsanādir Prasaṅga.

77 ibid.

78 N.G. Majumdar, Ādābādi copper plate, Inscriptions of Bengal, Vol. III, PP 181 ff.

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80 History of Ancient Bengal, P 276.

81 D.C. Sircar, Śilālekha O Tāmra Śāsanādir Prasaṅga.

82 Eliot, History of India, Vol. III, P 116.

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83 P.L. Paul, Opcit, P 100

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101 History of Ancient Bengal, P 140

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103 Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XIV, P 324 & Vol. XV, P 293

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C h a p t e r V

Aspects of Social and Economic life of the people of Bengal

SECTION I

Ethnological background

Bengal was inhabited in the primitive times by checkered groups of people of diverse racial groups, of different types of culture and a long time passed before they came into contact with the Aryans. In order to have a clear idea about the social condition of the people of Bengal, it is invariably necessary to discuss briefly the ethnoligical back ground of the people of Bengal.

According to the authropologists, the original inhabitants of Bengal did not belong to the Aryan stock and they have been represented now by the Primitive tribes like the Kolas, Śabaras, Pulindas Hāḍi, Dom, Chaṇḍāla etc. They have been referred to as the Nishādas in the Vedic literature, though some of the scholars have termed them as Austric or Austro - Asiatic. Subsequently two different groups of people settled in Bengal and their language was Dravidian and Tibeto - Burman. A new group of people subse-

quently conquered the land and dominated over all these early settlers. These new groups of people are the forefathers of the high class Hindus of Bengal. The Nishādas over whom the new group of people dominated 'formed the substratum of the population of Bengal and were submerged by new waves of people with a high culture and civilization, so that ultimately they touched only the outer fringe of of society, while the latter formed the basis and foundation'[1]. The ethnic composition of this new group of people is a matter of immense importance in the study of the social condition of Bengal.

Prof. Mahalanobis has enquired into the subject with the help of anthropometic data regarding seven castes of Bengal[2]. Though his anlysis has some limitation as he could take into account only a limited number of castes of Bengal, yet his discussion throws important light on the racial characteristic of the people of Bengal. One of the important informations is that there is closer similarity between the Brāhmaṇas and other castes of Bengal than that exists among the Brāhmaṇas of other states. It proves that the people of Bengal formed a distinct group and never isolated from one another in the State and they did not strictly

observe the rule of interdining and intermarriage which occurred gradually in Bengal. It is evident from the analysis of Prof. Mahalanobis that the upper class people of Bengal formed a homogeneous group quite different from the people of other parts of India. It may be claimed that the high caste Hindus of Bengal formed a distinct racial group which sustained tittle changes in the historic time by contact with the primitive tribes and the immigrants from upper India. According to Late Rama Prasad Chanda, the anthropometric tests prove that the Brāhmaṇas of Bengal 'are more closely related to their non-Brāhmaṇa neighbours than to the Brāhmaṇas of Midland' [3].

According to N.K. Dutta, in the pre-historic times three different races had come to settle in Bengal one after another. First came the Muṇḍas and then came the Dravidian. After then came the Aryan. In Europe we know that the Aryans were of two different types - the long headed in Germany, Scandinavia. England and Italy; and the broad headed in France, Spain, Russia and other slavonic countries. In Asia also, the long headed type is seen in Northern India, while the broad headed is seen in Iran or Persia. It is supposed that while the main branch of the Aryans of the longheaded type

came to India from Central Asia via Afghanistan and developed in Punjab and U.P. what is known as the Vedic Aryans and the other branch of the Aryans came from Iran probably by way of the sea and settled in Maharastra and Bengal [4].

The inference that the Bengalis 'originally came from an ethnic stock that was different from the stock from which the Vedic Aryans originated 'is made from the comparative study of the shape of the skulls. Sri Herbert Risley has pointed out that the round headed clements which preponderate over all ranks of society in Bengal, may be traced its origin to Drāviḍian and Mongoloid admixture [5]. The view has not been accepted by the authropologists and they pointed out his limitations regarding his classification of Indian races, the method of collecting data and arriving conclusion from them [6]. Rai Bahadur R.P. Chanda was the first to oppse the theory of Risley and pointed out that the people of Bengal originated from the Homo-Alpine type, 'a very brachy - cephalic population of Aryans or Indo-European speech living in the prehistoric time in the Pamirs and Tāklāmakān desert' [7]. The above theory is not wholly accepted, as the non-mongolic character of the people of Bengal is now generally agreed. Yet Home-Alpinus origin of the Bengalis is not accepted by all. According Dr. B.S. Guha "The presence of Broad headed skulls

in the early strata of Mahenjo-Daro and Harappa would seem however to militate against this supposition. Recent discoveries ..... have definitely shown the existence of brachycephalic types in Sourth Arabia, of which the 'Omani' displayed Armenoid affinities which according to Keith must have come from Persia and Baluchistan. There seems no reason to think that the Indian Brachy - cephals with definite Armenoid affinities resembling the 'Omani' had a different origin"[8]. On the basis of the analysis of authropometric data collected by H.C. Chakladar, it may be presumed that there were the existence of a predominant Alpine type and an appreciable Mediterranean elements among the Bengalis [9].

So far as Bengal is concerned its racial constitution comprises three distinct elements, Proto-Australoid, Drāviḍian and Alpine [10]. While the Proto - Australoid and Drāviḍian elements are to be seen in the lower castes of Bengal, the higher castes reveal a prodominantly the broad-headed Alpine racial elements. The preponderant element in the higher castes of Bengal is Alpine whereas in Northern India it is Nordic. Thus the Bengalis are racially different from the people of Northern India. Grierson speaks of the language of the'outer Aryans' which contributed to the making of such vernacular language of modern India as Gujrati, Marathi, Oriya, Bengali and Assamese. These languages stand

distinguished from Hindi, Rajasthani etc. of upper India which are derived from the language of the Vedic Aryans. The former group of languages are found in only those areas of India where Alpine racial element is found. Rai Bahadur Ramaprasad Chanda identified the outer Aryans with the Alpine race. Mr. Chakladar has pointed out that the outer Aryans came first and originated the early Vedic culture represented in the Saṁhitās. He also adds that the longheaded branch of the Indo-Europeans drove the more civilized round-heads to the South and East and gradually absorbed Vedic culture of the early settlers [11]. If the theory of the Alpine origin is agreed, then it follows that the Indo - Aryan element in the language of Bengal is a contribution of the Alpine race. One special feature of the language of Bengal is that Austric and Drāvidian words are more commonly used in it than the Indo-Aryan words. Researches of Przyumski, Bloc Levi, Bagchi, Sten Konow and Chatterjee have all brought them out. According to Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa, the people of Bengal spoke a language called Asuri. It is curious that one of the languages of the Munḍa (that is Austric) fairly is still known as Asura. Not only the vocabulary but also the phonetics, morphology and syntax were also influenced by it. The influences of it on toponomy has also been accepted and place

names ending with 'rah','Guri, Jur' are all of non-Aryan origin. The influence of the Austric and Drāvidian speaking people on the material culture of Bengal is also great. The Austric speaking people introduced the art of tilling the soil in Bengal and the fundamental implement used in this connection 'laṅgula' is an Austric word. They also introduced the cultivation of rice, the principal food crop of Bengal [12]. The Austric people also cultivated such other cropes as banana, brinjal, lime, betel leaf, coconut, turmeric, betelnuts etc. and the vernacular words for them are said to be of all Austric origin [13]. Not only the Austric influence, but also there are some Dravidian influence over the people of Bengal. The words like 'Ur', 'Pur' and 'Kut' meaning city are all of Dravidian origin.

One of the specific features of the people of Bengal is that fish is one of the most important items of Bengali diet which is a feature of the Drāvidian and Austric speaking people. Herein also we find a distinct feature of the people of Bengal. Northern Indian Aryans were predominantly meat eating people [14].

It is not possible to discuss the matter in detail and it is not within the purview of our subject as we are to

discuss the socio-economic status of the people of early Bengal. But one thing should be kept in mind in this connection that the Brāhmaṇas and the high castes of Bengal were not descended from the Aryan invaders [15].

Section II

CASTE SYSTEM

The pattern of the social system of reveals striking difference between Bengal and the rest of Northern India. While the rest of Northern India suffered itself to be swamped by the culture of the invading Aryans, the people of Bengal, on the otherhand, maintained their cultural independence upto quite a large period of Indian history. It is learnt from the Vedic literature that the cultural conquest of the Aryans stopped after it reached Vedeha. Beyond Vedeha, the land was said to be in possession of the Prāchyas or Eastermers. The Prāchyas as we have seen, were various tribes such as the Aryans, the Vaṅgas, the Puṇḍras etc. The The social organisation of those people was naturally based on tribal system. This in other word implies that the social organisation of the Prāchyas was different from the rigid four caste social system of the Aryans and so long as the

Prāchyas were not Aryanised, this form of social organisation prevailed in Bengal [16].

Multiplicity of Castes in Bengal

An important feature of social system of Bengal after Aryan contact was the existence of many castes and sub-castes. Though there were originally four Varṇas, we find the presence of numerous castes in ancient Indian society and the number of castes are multiplying everyday [17]. Anthropologists think that this multiplicity is due to several factors. Firstly, the rise of various functional groups that acquired hereditary characters and followed the laws of endogamy and exogamy. Secondly, the rise of race castes occasioned by the entrance of tribal groups in the Brāhmaṇical society. Thirdly, the emergence of sectarian castes and the factor of migration and cross breeding etc. added to their number. The Brāhmaṇical jurists invented the theory of anuloma and pratiloma sons or Jātis to adjust these factors [18]. Yājñavalkya found the presence of three factors; the occupational castes, the tribal castes and the cross-breeds.

The names and number of the castes and sub-castes varied according to time and localities [19]. It has been found

that the names and position of the castes mentioned in the different smṛitis were largely influenced by the then conditions. So we shall have to depend upon the text which particularly belongs to Bengal in order to have a clear idea about the caste pa ttern of Bengal. Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa and the Brahma - Vaivarta Purāṇa may be regarded as such texts, though we cannot deduce information from them without reservation. Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa 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. It has been described in the text that King Veṇa, completely sweeping away the rules of Varṇāśrama, at his own will created a number of mixed castes by compelling the union of males and females of different castes. Herein lies the different between the enumeration of the Smṛitis and the statement of the text regarding the origin of the mixed castes. It has been stated that the different castes of Bengal were not derived from the marriage of males and females of different castes but from the indiscriminate union under the compulsion of the King [20].

The castes derived from the indiscriminate unions may be divided into Uttama, madhyama and adhama Saṅkara with the status of Śūdra.

The names of the different castes and their vocations may be explained as follows : The castes of Uttama Saṅkara are : (I) The Karaṇas who were good scribes and efficient in office work. They became sat - Śūdras. (2) The Ambasṭhas were to study medicinal sciences and to be physicians. So they were called Vaidyas, (3) The Ugras were to follow the vocation of Kshatriya and practise military arts, (4) The Māgadha was made the courthard and carrier of messages, (5) Tantuvāya - weaver, (6) Gandhavaṇik dealer in spices, (7) Nāpita-barber, (8) Gopa - writer, (9) Karmakāra-blacksmith, (10) Ṭaulika - dealer in betelnuts, (11) Kumbhakāra potter, (12) Kaṁsakāra - Brazier, (13) Śaṁkhika - Couch - shell worker, (14) Dāsa - Cultivator, (15) Vārajīvī - betel vine growers, (16) Modaka -sweetment maker, (17) Mālākāra - florist, (18) Śūta - (bard or carpenter ?), (19) Rājaputra (Rājputs ?), (20) Tāmbūli - (betal leaf sellers).

2. Madhyama Saṁkara

(21) Takshaṇ (Carpenter), (22) Rajaka (Washerman), (23) Svarṇakāra (goldsmith), (24) Svrṇavaṇik (trader in bullion)

(25) Ābhīra (cowherd or milkman ?), (26) Tailakāraka (oil man), (27) Dhīvara (fisherman), (28) Śaundika (Vinter), (29) Naṭa (dancer, acrobat or juggler), (30) Śāvāka, Śāraka (Sarāk ?), (31) Śekhara, (32) Jālika (fisherman).

3. Adhama Saṅkaras

(33) Malegrahi (?) (a branch of Mal caste), (34) Kuḍava (Korwa boatman ?), (35) Chaṇḍāla (Chandal), (36) Varuḍa(Baroi), (37) Taksha (Carpenter ?), (38) Charmakāra (leather - worker), (39) Ghaṇṭajīvī or Ghaṭṭajīvī (modern Pātnī caste), (40) Dolāvāhī (Palanquin bearer), (41) Malla (modern Mālo).

In the Brahma - Vaivarta Purāṇa we come across the classification of dirrerent castes and sub-castes. All the castes have been classified into satśūdras and asatśūdras. There is striking similarity between the two purāṇas regarding the status and the classification of different castes. The castes placed in the Bṛihad dharma Purāṇa in the list of Uttama Saṅkara have been placed in the list of the satśūdras. The only exceptions are that Māgadha, Gandhavaṇika, Taulika or Tailika, Dāsa, Bārujīvī and Śūra have been exempted from the list of the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa and in lieu of this we find the inclusion of Bhilla, Kūvera and the Vaidyas.

Beside this the Rājaputra of the former work has not been mentioned in the latter. There is close resemblance between the madhyama saṅkara list of the former and the list of the asatśudras. The only difference is that Ābhīra, Naṭa, Śābāka, Śekhara and Jālika of the Brihaddhama purāṇa have not been given place in the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa and we find attālikākāra, Koṭaka, Leṭa, malla, Charmakāra Parvdraka, māṁsachchheda, Kaivarta, Gaṅgāputra, Yuṅgi, Āgarī etc. in Asat Śudra group and among them Malla and Charmakāra have been placed in the list of adhama Saṅkara of Brihad dharma purāṇa. In the Brihaddharma Purāṇa we find the names of dhīvara and Jālika associated with fish trade, but in the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa we find the name of one caste Kaivarta who used to maintain fish trade. According to Bhaṭṭa bhavadeva the Kaivartas belonged to adhama saṅkara [21].

It appears from the informations furnished by both the Purāṇas that the workers and the businessmen were not elevated to the rank of Uttama saṅkara. Among them mention may be made of Svarṇakāra, Suvarṇavaṇik [21 a], tailakāra, sūtradhara, Śuḍi, Takshan, Dhīvara - Jālika - Kaivarta, attālikākāra, koṭāka etc. They were all derogated to the rank of madhyama saṅkara. The genesis of this may be sought to the primary dependence of the Bengali society upon

agriculture and cottage industry since 7th - 8th Century A.D. and wage earning labour class was gradually losing the social status and the 'intellectual and agricultural class were gradually becoming prominent in the Society'[22].

Position of the Brāhmaṇas

The Brāhmaṇas stood at the top of the social hierarchy. The digests of the eleventh and twelfth centuries A.D. contributed to conservation of social pattern [23]. These digests and law books give us the impression that the Brāhmaṇas were the real leaders of the society. Lakṣmīdhara states that the ideal Brāhmaṇa should be devoted to the Vedic studies, chaste, truthful, serene, afraid of sin and he should practise ahiṁsā, keep burning the sacred fires, scrupulously observe the religion vows, love the cows and be free from greed [24]. Contemporary literature and inscriptions show that the Brāhmaṇas had many sub-sections and they were divided in subsections according to their localities. Bengali Brahmins began to the named according to the grāmis, a practice began in the period between the fifth and seventh centuries A.D. Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva's mother was the daughter of a Vandyaghaṭīya Brāhmaṇa. Anituddha, the guru of Vallālasena was a Champāhaṭṭīya Mahāmahopādhyāya and Vateśvara, the recipient of the Manahali grant of Madanpāla also belonged

to Champāhaṭṭī. The names of other gāmis are referred to in the Ādābādi plate and also to be found in the Saduktikarṇāmrita[25]. Hatāyudha refers to the division of the Rādhiya and Vārendra Brāhmaṇas in his Brāhmaṇasarvasva.

It is found in different Kulapañjikās that Ādisūra and and Ballalasena were associated with the rise of Kulinism in Bengal. But there is no reference of Kulinism in epigraphic records of the Senas. The system of Kulinism, the grades of honour, predominantly affected the Rādīya and Varandra Brāhmaṇa society according to personal qualification. Gradually the system spread in the Vaidya and Kāyastha community [25 a]. We have already seen how the story of Ādisūra was imported into Bengal during the reign of the Senas who appear to have also popularised the system of Kulinism in their Kingdom [25 b].

Beside them, there were the Vaidika Brāhmaṇas. The Kulajis observe that a section of them were descendants of the five Brāhmaṇas brought from Kanauj by the Varman King Sāmalavarman and another section came from the bank of the Sarasvatī and settled in Koṭālipāḍā under the patronage of the King Harivarman. Amongst the Vaidika Brāhmaṇas who came from upper India were known as Pāschātyas and those came from Drāviḍa and Utkala

were known as Dākshinātyas [26]. Among other classes of Brāhmaṇas the Sārasvatas, the Śākadvīpīs, Vyāsa Parāśara, Kauṇḍin-ya, Saptaśatī etc. are referred in the Kulaji texts [26 a].

Regarding the power and position of the Brāhmaṇas Manu observes 'of all the created beings the most excellent are said to be those which are animated ; of the animated, those which subsist by intelligence ; of the intelligence, manking and of men, the Brāhmaṇa' [27]. Being sprung from the superior part (mouth) of Brahmā and as he is the first born, and possesses the Vedas, he is by right the lord of this whole creation [28]. The Brāhmaṇa is a great divinity, just like fire, who is not contaminated even in burial places [29]. An eminent sociologist holds the view [30] that " in the caste system primary emphasis is on status evaluation on ritual plane ..... a Kshatriya Kind may be powerful and Vaiśya trader may be rich, but their ritual status will be rated lower than that of the poorest Brāhmaṇa ". This was undoubtedly a vital basis of the Brāhmaṇas' claim for superiority.

Regarding the occupations of the Brāhmaṇas the ancient lawgivers point out that they being the friends of all the creatures, their means of subsistence should be fair, not causing pain to others. Accordingly, it is laid down that a Brāhmaṇa may

subsist by Ṛita (truth) i.e., gleaning of corn ; Amṛita i.e., unasked gift ; Mṛita (death) i.e., begging; Pramṛita (what causes many death) i.e., agriculture or even by Satyāmṛita (a mixture of truth and falsehood) i.e. trade and money lending but never by Śvavṛitti (a dog's mode of life) i.e. service [31]. The moral restrictions allowing only lean sources of subsistence were bound to make their practical life very hard, compelling them to deviate from the ideals even in normal times [32]. The authors enlisted several means of subsistence to be adopted in distress. As in the past, so during the period under review, the Brāhmaṇas engaged themselves as soldiers. In Bengal, Govardhana, the father of Bhaṭṭabhavadeva was not only a distinguished scholar but also a warrior [33] 'Having increased (both his) land and learning in battle fields and assemblies of hereties (respectively) by feat of his arms and (display) of oratorial skill he justified his name (Govardhana) in a two fold sense' [34]. The earlier dharmaśāstras were not unanimous on the propriety of Brāhmaṇas becoming agriculturist. If a Brāhmaṇa showed kindness to the oxen by neither putting unreasonably heavy load on them nor chastising them, gave them food and water at the proper time he might use them for ploughing and harvesting [35]. The practice of tilling was also recognised by other sources. A Brāhmaṇa was allowed to trade in time of distress. But the ancient law givers like Manu (X 36 - 116) Gautama (VII. 8 - 14) ,

Vasishtha (II. 31), Nārada and Yājñavalkya give a long list of articles which the Brāhmaṇas were not allowed to sell [36]. The land grants to Brāhmaṇa seem to be of immense cultural importance. It created a class of Brāhmaṇa land lords in the period under study and gave them immense economic power. It is stated in the Anuśāsana Parva [37] that peace prevails in the Kingdom if the Brāhmaṇas are pleased by various kinds of gift, respect etc. Vātsyāyana says that blessings of the Brāhmaṇas were regarded as a means to long life.

It appears from the foregoing discussion that the Brāhmaṇas were the most respected caste in society. They were the intellectual caste. The extent of their influence over Kings can be easily measured from the fact that even during the fourteenth Century A.D. the digest makers advised the consultation with the Brāhmaṇas before taking decision. The influence of the Brāhmaṇas on the Buddhist Pāla Kings may be surmised from the fact that Darbhapāṇi served four generations of the Pāla rulers, beginning from Dharmapāla to Nārāyaṇapāla. There could be no greater testimony to the superior authority of the Brāhmaṇa minister Darbhapāṇithan the fact recorded in the Bādālpillar inscription that he kept the emperor Devapāla waiting at his door. We hear of two Brāhmaṇa royal dynasties in Samataṭa in

7th Century A.D. The ascendancy of the Brāhmaṇas increased still further in the time of the Varman and Sena Kings. Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, Halāyudha and Aniruddha Bhaṭṭa had enormous influence on the Kings of the said dynasties.

Position of Kāyastha

Kāyastha : Among other castes, having prominence in the society, mention should be made of the Kāyastha. Probably the first mention of the word occurs in the Yājñavalkya Smṛiti (1.336). There is a lot of controversy among scholars about the origin of this caste, and some has gone to the extent of seeking their foreign origin. As to their function, sources in Bengal state that they worked as Collectors of Revenue, settlement and survey officers, bench - clerks, accountants and auditors, secretaries to the King, particularly as ministers of peace and war (Sāndhivigrahika) and sometimes as Chief administrators of a division. From the inscriptions of Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and of the Prince Vainyagupta in Eastern Bengal and the Khālimpur grant of Dharma-Pāla, it is known that the Kāyasthas formed the majority in the superior cadre of district and divisional officers without whose knowledge and permission no transfer of landed property could take place. One thing should be noted in connection with the power and position of the Kāyasthas in Bengal that

they held more important position in the management of State than the Brāhmaṇas upto the 7th Century A.D. From the nature of the services rendered by this caste it is easily understandable that the Brāhmaṇas and the Kāyasthas held sway in the State in the succeeding periods. Some times they played important roles in the society as physician, as we come across the example of one Karaṇa-Kāyastha who was the author of the Śabda - Pradīpa and who served as court physician both of Ramapāla and Govindrachandra the well known Kings of Bengal [38].

Besides we have instances in which Karaṇa - Kāyastha played significant part in the administration of the Kingdom. The assumption of the office of Mahāsāndhivigrahika by Sandyā - Kara-Nandī born in the family of Karaṇa - Kāyastha in the reign of Rāmapāla is an instance in point.

Vaidya Ambashṭhas

The Vaidya - Asbashṭhas like the Kāyastha does not appear to have formed in important caste in Ancient Bengal. They held the profession of Physician. The Ambashṭhas lived in Western Punjub and are mentioned in the Mahābhārata alongwith the Śivis and Yaudheyas [39]. In the geography of Ptolemy, the

tribe is located the East of the Paropanisadai [40]. Przyluski has shown how various Austro - Asiatic tribes lived in this region [41] and it is not unlikely that the Ambasṭhas also belonged to the same stock. The tribe was gradually coming under the Aryan influence, is proved by the Ambashṭha - sutta in which Ambashṭha is called a Brāhmaṇa while in the Jātakas are also represented as belonging the same caste. Dr. Rai Choudhury points out that "in later times, the Ambashṭhas are found in Sourth-Eastern India near the Mekala range and also in Bihar and Bengal" [42].

The Ambashṭhas have become Kayasthas in Bihar and according to traditions, they have formed in Bengal the communities ofthe Vaidyas and Māhishyas. It is not known whether the Senas of Bengal were absorved in the Kāyastha or the Vaidya community and whether they originally belonged to the Ambashṭha community of South India. It is possible that some Ambashṭha - Vaidyas entered in Bengal in the early medieval period and merged to the class of local physicians and developed Vaidya community [42 a].

The Kaivartas

According to Brahma vaivarta Purāṇa, the Kaivarta caste which assumed importance during the Pāla rule, sprang

from the union of Kshatriya male and vaisya female [43]. Manu also mentioned the Kaivarta caste. Bhatta Bhavadeva also mentions the Kaivarta as one of the seven antyaja or low castes. The Māhishyas of Eastern Bengal, also known as Hālika Dāsa and Parāsara Dāsa are now held to be the same as chasi Kaivartas of Midnapore and other districts of West Bengal. On the other hand, the Dhīvaras or fishermen in East Bengal are known as Kaivarta. The tradition is recorded in the Vallalacharita that Vallālasena improved the status of the Jaivartas and made them clean caste [44].

Rationale of the proliferation of the number of the Sūdras

It is evident from the study of the caste system of Bengal that the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas. as different classes as existed in Northern India, were conspicuous by their absence in Bengal. Now what are the factors that contributed to their absence in Bengal. According to N.K. Dutta firstly, it is because, the non-Aryan communities in Bengal, like the pods, Bāgdis, Chandālas, Kaivarta etc. were too numerous and powerful to be thoroughly subdued and absorbed by the thinning stream of Aryan warriors from the upper Gangetic valley. Secondly, the Rājputs, the Normans of

Medieval India who rose to prominence in almost all parts of Northern and Western India after the Hūṇa cataclysm of the 6th Century A.D. and who are regarded as their forefathers by most of the Kshatriya ruling class in modern India were shut out out from Bengal by the indegenous Pāla Kings for more than four centuries until the sovereignty passed into the hands of the Muslims. Thirdly, Bengal was ever a land of heresy Jainism and Buddhism claimed Bengal as their own. The long rule of the Buddhist Pāla Kings very much loosened the idens of caste and was the principal cause of the abandonment of the Brāhmaṇical thread by those Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas who were associated with the court [45]. But the more reasonable explanation is perhaps to be traced to the extended significance given to the tern Śūdra in the Purāṇa where it denotes not only the members of the fourth castes but also those members of the three higher castes who accepted any of the heretical religions or who were influenced by Tāntric rites. The predominance of Buddhism and Tāntric Śaktism in Bengal, as compared with other parts of India, since the 8th Century A.D. perhaps explains why all the notable castes in Bengal were regarded in the Bṛihad - dharma Purāṇa and other latter texts as Śūdras and the story of Veṇa and Pṛthu might be mere echo of a large

scale reconversion of the Buddhist and Tāntric elements of the population into the orthodox Brāhmaṇical fold.

It would perhaps be wrong to conclude that there were no Kshatriya or Vaiśyas in Bengal, though there is no reliable reference to any Kshatriya or Vaiśya family. But constant reference to Kshatriyas or Vaiśyas are found in the writings of Jīmūtavāhana, Bhabadeva Bhaṭṭa and other writers of sacred laws [46]. Moreover as a result of the decline of Buddhism in Bengal, there started the process of conversion of the Buddhists to Hinduism and the converted section did not get upper strata in the Hindu society and they were all degraded to the status of Sūdras in Bengal. This explains, to a great extent, why all other than the Brāhmaṇas, were regarded as Sūdras in Bengal.

It may be noted with greater certainty that the position of the Śūdras was not so bad during the early period of the Social history of Bengal as we find during the time of the Varmans and the Senas. The reason of this trend may be sought in the liberal attitude ofthe Guptas to other religions sects. While the champions of Buddhism continued

to argue against the birth as the basis of Varṇa, the growth of certain reforming ideologies specially the creed of Vaiṣṇvism, secured a large measure of religions qeuality for the Śūdras. Vaiṣṇavism reached its high watermark in the Gupta period when we find many epigraphic, numismatic and sculptural records testifying to its unparallel influence not only in Northern India but even in parts of Southern and Western India [47].

Other Social Factors.

In the Pāla - Chandra age there was no difference between the Brāhmaṇas and the Buddhists in the social structure. The Buddhists also were guided by Manu. It is inferred from the Buddhist account of Tārānath and other Buddhist works of the Tebetans that between Hinduism based on Varṇāśrama and Buddhism there was no social difference. Those who adopted Buddhism taking the vow of monkism, there was no restriction of Varṇa system, but those Buddhists who were householders used to observe the usual Varṇāśrama system in household affairs. There are evidences of conflict between the Buddhists and the Brāhmaṇas regarding religion and social organisation but there is no evidence that the Buddhists developed a separate

social structure. According to Tārānāth and other Buddhists teachers, Mahāyāna school of Buddhism was being influenced by Tāntricism and there appeared new principles and doctrines in the management of religions rites and other type of religions activities. The Brāhmaṇical religion was deeply influenced and further developed by the impact of Tāntricism and the differences between Hinduism and Buddhism were eliminated in some aspects [48].

The caste system of the Brāhmaṇas was well established during the Pāla - Chandra - Kamboja age and observance of caste system and the preservation of the same were the accepted responsibility of the Buddhist states. The caste system was not so regid and strict during this age as it was in later time. The main reasons for this are that Bengal did not develop its own doctines based on smṛitis. Secondly, all the states and the ruling dysasties were reformers of Buddhism which they professed. Though they were the supporters and preservers of Brāhmaṇical system, the doctines of smṛitis coming from North and South India could not meet their absolute support in Bengal. Thirdly, as the Pālas did not belong to upper class [49], they were not keen to observe the caste system and social and religious rites based on the smṛitis

Fourthly, most of the people of Bengal were outside the sphere of caste system at that time and those who came within the sphere of caste system belonged to the class of people of Pre-aryan culture. They were following the Brāhmanical culture under the economic pressure. It was not easy to knit themselves in the structure of Brāhmanical society and there is no evidence that the Pālas and the Chandras did anything active to that direction. During that time, Bengal maintained connections with other countries with the help of Buddhist religion and commerce to some extent. For this, the outlook of the state was never confined to local sphere. The people of villages and towns did not depend solely on fate. It was during the time of the Senas and Varmans the smritis of middle India and the conservative outlook of the South India were going to deomnate over the outlook and culture of the Society of Bengal gradually. The people of Bengal were gradually becoming dependent upon fate. This dependence on fate and the gloomy outlook of life found support on the contemporary society based on agriculture and land. Moreover the life dependent on agriculture, become conservative and remained self-sufficient within the family, clan and village and the need for broader and variegated outlook of the society was little. It was natural that when

a society which had lost its virility and lapsed into a state of inertia, would give way easily to any foreign invasion.

The Senas and the Varmans settled in Bengal with orthodox Brāhmaṇical culture of South India. The feature that originated during the time of the Varmans developed during the rule of the Senas. The Brāhmaṇical Society became resolute for self preservation and self establishment. Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva was not at all respectful to the Buddhists [50]. During the Sena period this attitude became astute. It is evident from epigraphical sources of the varmans and Senas that in the list of land grants there is not a single inscription regarding gift to the Buddhist monastery, though there was trace of Buddhism at that time as evident from Paṭṭikerā inscription of Raṇavaṅkamalla Harikāla deva (1220 A.D.). There was no sign of any kind of liberalism in the Varmans and Sena rule. The liberal outlook of the Society was no more. On the other hand, the Senas, the Varmans and the Devas developed strict Brāhmaṇical culture of the Vedic Age completely ignoring the glorious liberal outlook of the Pāla Chandra age [51].

The arts, crafts and professions were not hereditary and the different castes normally followed the normal profession

assigned to them. But there was no absolute rigidety or exclusiveness in actual practice. The relaxation continued in early Bengal which is proved by apigraphic and literary references. Even the Brāhmaṇas became soldiers, rulers, administrations, connsellors and followed other vocations. Evidences prove that a Kaivarta served as high royal official. The Karaṇas pracised medicine and military arts, the vaidyas became ministers and the Dāsas served as officials and court poets [52].

The relation between the different castes in early age cannot be clearly defined, but they had not developed into the strictly rigid system as prevailed in the 19th Century A.D. According to classical authors, intercaste marriage was prohibited [53]. Hiuen Tsang states that the members of a caste marry within the caste [54]. These statements no doubt suggest that intercaste marriage was not allowed as is also indicated by the Āpastamba Dharmasūtra, according to which one should marry a girl of the same varṇa. It may however be pointed out that Gautama, Vasiṣṭha, Manu and Yājñavalkya prescribe that a person should by preference marry a girl of his own Varṇa[55].

Although marriage among the members of the same caste was the ordinary rule, intermarriage between a male of a higher

and the female of a lower caste was regarded as valid down to the last days of the Hindu period [56]. It has been supported by the Tippera copper plate of Lokanātha who was called a Karaṇa. In the said inscription the grandfather of Lokanātha's father is described as sprung from the family of the sage Bharadvāja and the great grandfather and grandfather of his mother are in verse 6 called respectively dvija-varaḥ and dvija-sattamaḥ, but his mother's father in the same verse is described as a parāśava. So we see that, although the first few ancestors (both paternal and maternal) of Lokanāth were Brāhmaṇas, his maternal grandfather had not a pure Brāhmaṇa origin, since it may be inferred that his Brāhmaṇa father married a Śūdra wife and he (the issue) was therefore known as parāśava [57]. The facts that Keśava was placed in charge of the army, that he was in touch with the King, and that he was held in high esteem. The fact proves that marriage of a Brāhmaṇa male and Śūdra female was not always even condemned and the issue of the marriage did not occupy a low status.

It is not quite certain whether Loknātha was degraded on account of his mother. That such a marriage between a Brāhmaṇa and a Śūdra continued down to the end of the Hindu period, is proved by the writings of Bhavadeva and Jīmūtavāhana. Jīmūtavāhana says in the Dāyabhāga that though marriage with a Śūdra woman involves degradation and loss of caste, illicit

union with her is reckoned as trivial offence. All these definitely prove the existence of intercaste marriage though they show a growing desire to stop the marriage of a Brāhmaṇa with a Śūdra girl. But there is no doubt that such marriage was regarded asvalid and did actually take place. This is also evident from the statement of Bhavadeva in his Prāyaśchitta-Prakaraṇa [58] about the "accomplished Śūdra wife of a Brāhmaṇa". It appears from the rule of inheritance laid down by Jīmūtavāhana about the Śūdra wife of Brāhmaṇa 'that a woman may be espoused, but may not be ranked as wife as this rank belongs to one who is competent to assist in the performance of religious rites'.

As regards food Bhavadeva quotes older authorities prescribing penance for a Brāhmaṇa eating food touched by a Chāṇḍāla or cooked by antyajas, Chāṇḍālas, Pukkaśas, Kāpālikas and a number of specified low castes such as Naṭa, Nartaka, Takshaṇa, Charmakāra suvarṇakāra, śauṇḍika, Rajaka, Kaivarta and Brāhmaṇas following forbidden vocation [59].

Thus from the careful observation of the social position of that time in Bengal, it appears that the restrictions of intermarriage and interdining was confined to only the

Brāhmaṇas and their relations with other castes, but gradually it was extended not only among other castes but also various branches of the same caste as it was the marked signs of aristocracy. Subsequently marriage was absolutely confined within the narrow fold of one of the numerous subcastes, branches or clans into which a caste was subdivided and inter-dining was similarly restricted. But it was far from being marked by the end of the 12th Century A-D. [60].

SECTION - III

The position of women.

Ancient literature of our country both general legal, lack unanimity of views, regarding the question of the status of women in Society. So ti is rather difficult to draw up an accurate picture of their position in ancient Indian Society. Their status in life has been a subject of amelioration and modification [61]. There have been ups and downs in their social status, but these ups and downs helped very little to bring about a radical change in their status. Reforms from age to age have tried to assign them a definite position of life, but inspite of their honest efforts, it remained a baffling problem to adjust theories with practice.

Manu, one of our chief authorities on the subject, is also a glaring example of inconsistency in the matter. But despite wavering attitude, Manu is very firm about one thing; he could never cherish the idea of women enjoying an independent status in life. According to him a woman has to lead a life of dependence throughout her life, seeking protection of either her father, husband or son [62]. But this hard attitude towards women cannot wholly he ascribed to Manu, because generations of writers before as well as contemporaneous to him, have expressed the same views. It is stated in the Mahābhārata that a women 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 [63]. Thus it is said that never in this world women acquire independence [64] and it is the wish of the Lord Prajāpati that women should never be independent [65]. Early Dharmasūtra writers, Baudhāyana and Vaśishṭha harp on the same notion. Baudhayāna says that a woman is never fit for independence [66]. Vaśishṭha, like his predecessors, enjoins complete dependence of women and according to him" a woman is not independent, the males are her masters" [67]. The highest fulfilment of women's life consists in her being an ideal member of a joint family, in doing the household work and in

keeping the home in order [68].

Inspite of such strict injunctions, there are instances which show that women often enjoyed considerable freedom. Women in ancient India not only had freedom of movement, but they carried on their activities both inside and outside the country. Though from contemporary literature it vecomes clear that women enjoyed some independence in different spheres of life, yet her world rotated round the domestic sphere. It has been enjoined that she should regulate the expenditure of the family, should be careful in keeping the house and hearth clean and be economical in habits. She must cheerfully and cleverly manage her family affairs. The ancient lawgivers put every emphasis on the fact that women should be honoured and properly treated. Manu says "where women are honoured there the Gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields any rewards"[69]. Manu further says that where the female relations live in grief, that family wholly perishes, but where they are not unhappy that family ever prospers [70]. It is interesting to note here that quoting Bandhāyana and Gautama, Laksmīdhara recommends that a son should abandon the father who kills the King, who teaches the Śūdra, who accepts money from Śūdra, for performing his

own sacrifices or sacrifices on behalf of Śūdras, who is guilty of killing embryos, who lives with the lowest classes or who cohabits with a female of low caste, but he should never abandon the mother when she is excommunicated [71].

Side by side these admonitions, we sometimes find a curiously contradictory attitude. The very birth of a female child in the family was viewed with displeasure and concern. Out ancient writers are not in the havit of setting great value on the standard of female morality. They are considered fickle in their nature and frail in their habits. Manu expressly states that it is the nature of women to lead men astray and for that reasons wisemen should never remain unguarded in the company of women. [72] He makes special provisions so that women may be guarded against their evil inclinations. He advises a man to carefully guard his wife in order to preserve the purity and integrity of his family, otherwise she will bring sorrow to two families (her father and her husband) Shahanara Hussain has pointed out certain inert contradictions in the thinking of our Pandit and law-makers. It is no gainsaying the truth that 'women on the one hand were regarded by the Śāstras and tantras as the forms of the mother Goddess, but on the other, were prohibited from performing sacramental rites with sacred texts. A wife could

do no religious acts independantly of her husband or without his consent'[72 a]. Even a social reformer like Buddha had great distaste for women's liberty. Though Buddhism aimed at a casteless society, Prof. Hussain observers that the fate of women was no better. Even after women got permission to enter the order, the rules of their order made the nuns rank lower than the monks [72 b]. The Buddists assigned a distinctly inferior position to the Bhikkhunis because Buddha was of the opinion that their admission to the Buddhist saṁgha was bound to destroy its integrity and purity [73].

The position of women in ancient India has attracted the attention of scholars for a long time. Almost all of them are of the opinion that the position of women deteriorated successively through different times in history [74]. The reasons for the decline of the position of women in ancient India from the period from 1000 B.C. to 500 A.D. have been clearly sorted out by A.S. Altekar. The reasons are - (1) the imposition of Brāhmaṇical austerities on society, (2) foreign invasions of India affecting women's status adversely, (3) the introduction of the non-Aryan wife into the Aryān household, (4) discontinuance of upanayana of girls, (5) Lack of educational facilities for women, (6) the role of the caste system, joint

family system [75]. Sukumari Bhattacharyya has sorted out some other reasons. Firstly, with the growth of personal ownership of wealth after dissolution of the group ownership there grew a sort of surplus wealth of the individual which he wanted to enjoy himself. But his life was limited. He desired that his descendants should inherit his property. To be ensured that his own descendants should inherit his property, he maintained strict vigilence over his wife. He observe strict surveillance over his wife, secluded her who must be very chaste in sex morality and uncontaminated by the touch of other men, Wife must bear his own child only. Secondly, Men in many cases, were interested in Plurality of enjoyment of women and doubted the chastity of women probably [76] in the light of their own characteristic traits of nature. So restrictions were imposed on free movement of women.

It is known from the Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana that the women of Gauḍa were soft, timid, sweet speaking and graceful [77]. The position of women, to some extent, improved in Bengal in early time. The genesis of the improved condition of women in Bengal has been clearly analysed by Bharati Roy. "The dominant mother is a deeply ingrained clutural concept of Bengal, deriving its source, if not from an early matri-

lineal tradition, certainly from the indigenous Pre-Aryan mother Goddess cult. A woman is 'Śakti' (source of power), but it is not women as an epitome of beauty (like the Greek Venus), not as a sex symbol (as in the linga or male sex worship), but only as a mother that a woman is put on a pedestal". "The presiding Bengali diety, Kālī, the mother Goddes, standing on the Prostrate figure of Śiva, her husband symbolises 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" [78].

It appears from the description of Dhoyī that the women of Vijayapura, the capital city of Lukshmaṇasena that the Pardā system was not much in vogue [79]. But Vātsyāyana's statement somewhat contradicts the above view when he speaks that the women of the royal harem of Vaṅga were not accustomed to move out freely and used to speak with the outsiders from behid a curtain [80]. Inspite of serious handicap many women

used to take education Higher education was not so common among them, as Vātsyāyana himself says that women did not ordinarily get any education in the Śāstras but daughters of Kings and nobles as also the Gaṇikās were highly educated. In vātsyāyana's opinion, a knowledge of the Kāmasūtra with its subsidiary sciences would be useful to all women, both high and low, rich and poor. A poor woman who on account of the absence of her husbend finds herself in great distress and difficulty, might earn a decent living even in a foreign country by means of knowledge of these sciences [81]. Dhoyī in his Pavanadūtam also refers to such a practice [82]. Another instance of the improvement of women's position during the Sena - Varman age was the inclusion of the queen in the land grant charted. It indicates certainly an improved position of women in Bengal of that time [83]. In the Sena - Varman period we find the elevations of the status. of Rājñī who held important positions alongwith the other dignatories as it is known from inscriptions. It is perhaps due to the status enjoyed by the women of South India where from the Senas were hailing. In South India the matriarchal system, was in vague among the different ruling families from an early age. In the inscriptions of the period under survey we find the ideal conjugal love amongst divine couples was held up before the people.

The Rāmapāla upper plate states that Queen Śrīkāñchana was to King Trailokychandra was Śachī was to Indra, Gaurī to Hara and Śrī to Hari [84]. Similarly, the Naihati copper plate of Vallālasena comparing Vilāsdevī, queen of Vijayasena, with Lakṣmī and Gourī [85].

From the archaeological evidence and ancient literature it appears that women used to wear Śāḍī something like those worn by modern women. But they did not make upper garments by using a portion of Śāḍī. From archaeological evidence it appears that it was a general custom to expose the upper portion of body of women. They used to wear a kind of dresses something like Kuchbanda or bodice. They also used cloth like that of blouse. Women sometimes used to wear scarfs also. Dancing girls used to wear long tight Pājāmā upto heels. They also used to hang long scarf ever shoulders. Both men and women used to wear ornaments. Ancient Bengali women used oil in hair dreasing. They used to wear tip of Kājal(Collyrium) on foreheads and eyes. Married women used mark of vermilion on forehead [85 a].

Women enjoyed some privileges and loyal rights in Bengal and had to rely mostly upon the natural instinct of

love, affection and sense of duty possessed by their husbands, sons and other relatives. Polygany was prevalent in various parts among the wealthy. The kings generally considered it a privilage to have crowded hārem. Princes, high officials and the rich also married more than one. Vātsyāyana says that the wealthy people had generally a plurality of spouses, who outwardly no doubt, appeared to enjoy many objects of pleasure; but in reality; their conditions was miserable indeed as the husband was but one and the claimants to his affection were many.

Ancient lawgivers have pointed out that an ideal woman should be an ideal housewife, but in Bengal during the period there are instances of the married women going outside to earn money by means of spinning, weaving and some other mechanical arts [86]. Sometimes the employers offered bribes to the wives of labourers in order to induce them to send their huabands or some other members to work [87]. This shown that the wives of the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras took active part in the business of their husbands. But women were considered unfit for all responsible works. It was believed that they were incapable of performing the difficult duties of admistration [88].

Manu is strongly against divorce. He says that

neither by sale nor by repudiation a wife can be released from her husband [89]. According to Medhātithi, a wife sold or repudiated cannot become the legitimate wife of another man [90]. Manu in another place says that the desertion of a guiltless wife is a crime for which a large amount has to be paid as fine [91]. Only in cases where the wife yields herself to gross adultery and unfaithfulness, the husband is authorised to abandon her [92]. Manu also holds the same view. According to Kantilya, if a man apprehending danger from his wife, desires divorce, he shall return to her whatever she has been given on the occasion of marriage [93]. A man and wife are bound to observe mutual fidelity. They are the part of the united whole. The marriage vow is most sacred, transgression from which was is to be meted out with severe punishment. This is the high ideal preached by ancient lawgivers [94]. Most of these prescribe heavy punishment and penances for wives who prove unfaithful to their husbands and are of questionable conducts [95].

In Bengal, after the death of their husbands the the wives had to live in complete chastity and to avoid all kinds of luxury and exciting food such as meat, fish etc [96]. The position of the widows in society was not at all enviable.

They were looked upon as inauspicious and were hardly allowed to take part in different rites and ceremonies. They seem to have been encouraged by the people to immolate themselves in the funeral pyre of their husband. The Dāyabhāga law which permitted even the childless widow to become an heir, was not an unmixed blessing to the weak minded section of the women in Bengal. Social leaders took undue advantage of this grief stricken condition of the widow and stood to gain by her elimination [97]. The Brihaddharmapurāṇa also agrees to the above fact [98]. So it is apparent that the custom of Satī came into vogue in Bengal from fairly early time.

Regarding the right of the widow to inheritproperty the opinion of the scholars differs in ancient time. During the period from 400 - 1000 A.D. the jurists were divided into two schools, the orthodox one embodied by Nārada, Kātyāyana and King Bhoja of Malava not accepted the right of the widow to inherit and the reformist one which was bent upon agitating for the popularisation of its now reforms.

The school of reformers was not prepared to accept any compromise. It insisted that widow's right to inherit the full share should be recognised. It based its case on logic.

Brihaspati pointed out that the Vedas, the Smritis and sages of ancient time have unanimously declared that the husband and the wife are the joint owner of family property and together constitute one legal personality. A man, therefore, cannot be said to be completely dead as long as his wife is alive. How then can property pass on to another in the life time of the widow ?[99] Brihadharma purāṇa points out that the widow can offer funeral oblation to her husband and so she should be allowed to inherit property. Prajāpati lays down that the widow has a natural right to inherit all her husband's property including moveables, immovables, bullion ornament, stores etc. Her right is not the least affected ever if her elderly relations male or female are alive. She will of course, show them proper reverence, but hold property in her own possession. If any male relation obstructs her peaceful enjoyment of the estate, it is the bounden duty of the King to punish him as a thief [100]. These verses have been attributed to Brihaspati in the Dāyabhāga [101]. It is perhaps Jīmūtavāhana who argues the widow's case in the most masterly fashion. There is no authority to hold that the ownership in the husband's property, which the wife acquires at marriage, terminates with the husband's death. How can it be argued that the wife's right is destroyed at the moment she is widowed ? Nor can it be

maintained that she is to utilise just as much of the income as may be necessary for her bare maintenance. Vishnu says that the property of a person dying without sons will first devolve upon the widow and then upon the daughter, parents etc. Now it is admitted that in the above text term property denotes the whole income of the estate, when construed with with all other heirs like the daughter, the brother, parents etc. How then can it have a restricted meaning when it is construed with the widow ?[102] The new school maintained that the widow's right of inheritance was inherent. The only circumstance that could defeat it was unchastity [103].

The society of Bengal at that time lost its vigour, to a great extent as a result of the seximmorality and the evils of tāntric influence. The picture was to some extent different in villages where the people led a simple and balanced life which is evident from the description of Rāmacharita. But the picture was altogether different in the sphere of town culture. The wealth, luxury and extravagance of town are hardly compatible with strict moral sences [104]. The sources of inscriptions and literature prove the immorality and excesses of sensuality in the early Bengal. Kāmasūtra [105] clearly elaborates the clear picture of the laxity in moral codes of

the fashionable young men and women of Gauḍa. Dhoyī the author the Pavana-dūta has gone to the extent that "those were not merely tolerated but regarded as part of normal social life"[106]. This may be confirmed by the fact that the Brāhaṇas could have established illicit relations with the Śūdra women and very little penalty was imposed upon the Brāhmaṇas for this offence. One of the striking feature of the society of Bengal was the practice of hiring courtesans by the wealthy persons. The amorous intrigues of members of the royal harem in Gauḍa and Vaṅga with the Brāhmaṇas, slaves and servants have been clearly enumerated in the Kāmasūtra [107] which testify to the fact that the people of outside Bengal had a very low idea of the moral standard of the people of Bengal.

The low moral standard of the people of Bengal is also proved by existence of the system of Devadāsī. The institution of Devadāsī now looked down upon, was widely prevalent in Bengal. It is stated in the Deopārā inscription that King Vijayasena provided a hundred lovely female (attendants)" whose bodily charms were heightened by ornaments" for the Pradyumneśvara Śiva. Dhoyī, the author of Pavana-dūta also in a verse mentions the Devadāsī or temple girls of Śiva. The custom of dedicating Devadāsī to shrines is only seen now

a dass in the district Southern Mālābar and the regions thereabout [108]. The natural inference from the fact is that most probably the Sena Varman Kings brought this institution from the Southern India. Reference in Rājataraṅgiṇī of a dancing girl Kamalā in a temple at Puṇḍravardhana in 8th Century A.D. infers that the system was in vagne in different parts of Bengal. These dancing girls, though dedicated to the temples, were no better than common courtesan. The low standard of morality is further proved by the practice of keeping female slaves referred by Jīmūtavāhana and these women were kept for enjoyment [109]. So the women were no better than commodities of enjoyment.

The prominence given to the voluptuous practices in the festivals of the period under consideration was not an isolated phenomenon [110]. It was a symptom of the decadent society in which religions practices were vitiated by a frank and unabased addiction to sex. The Tāntrika form of worship became much popular both among the Hindus and the Buddhists in the period. Home of the Hindu tantras prescribe sextual connection as a part of religious ceremony. It is no wonder that by practising this kind of religion the whole of Eastern India lost all vigour and the whole population became corrupted.

Two serious evils which ruined the whole generation of people of Bengal at that time originated from the degraded religions system ; the disintegrating and pernicious caste system and the low standard of morality. All these are the main causes of the total failure of them to resist foreign invasion [111].

Section IV

A g r i c u l t u r e

As in ancient times, agriculture in early Medieval Bengal was regarded as the most honourable occupation of Bengal. In fact the economic system in Bengal has always been based on land tenure [112]. It was always the chief occupation of the bulk of the people. For the masses, land was the sole means of subsistence. It was no longer the vocation exclusively assigned to the Vaiśyas and Śūdras and for-bidden to Brāhmaṇa and Kshatriya. Now all the castes and classes adopted it as a noble and even profitable vacation and enterprise.

Information about the agrarian condition of Bengal in ancient time is scanty. If the Kingdoms of Gangaridei Prasioi were within the territory of Bengal as has been stated by the early classical writers - 'The people who live in the furthest off part are the Gaugarides whose King possesses

1000 horses, 700 elephants and 60000 foot in apparatus of war', and the prosperity of the country was probably due to the flourishing condition of agriculture [113]. The Mahāsthān Brāhmī inscription of the Maurya age mentions Dhānya or paddy, seasamum and mustard seeds [114].

Regarding the ownership of land there are divergences of opinion among different sources. According to one school of thought, represented by Jaimini. Śabara and others, the King or the state was not the owner of all land, but was merely entitled to levy laxes from the holders of land [115]. This school stresses on the idea that the King collects taxes in lieu of protection that is offered by him to his subjects. The second school of thought emphasises on the idea that the King is the lort of the soil (bhūmer = adhipatiṛ - hisah)[116]. But the real nature of the ownership of land by King has been correctly brought out by same scholars, "the rights of the King are a theory, an abstraction ; poetically and politically spaking, he is the lord, the master, the protector of the earth (Pṛithivīpati, bhūmīśvara, bhūmīpa) just as the lord the master, the protector of the people ..... but he is no more the actual proprietor of the soil than of his subjects ; they need not have his permission to buy or sell it or

to give it away"[117]. This has been the nature of the ownership and authority of the King over land.

There is also differences of opinion among the different early Indian authorities about the percentage of King's share from the amount of agrarian products. According to Megāsthenes, the King demanded one-fourth of the produce, but according to other early Indian authorities, it was one-sixth of the produce [118] and this theory has been supported by the fact that the King received one-sixth of the merit for creating rent free holding in favour of Gods and Brāhmaṇas out of State land sold to a party. The fact has a striking support in the Mallasarul plate [119].

Land, being the main instrument of Bengal economy, was the main source of wealth and the chief support of life. Our knowledge about the system of land tenure is incomplete and not clear at all. Most of the copper plates during the Gupta and post Gupta period refer to the sale or gift of waste land for pious purpose. The eagerness of the state to get the uncultivated lands cultivated and to keep fields under cultivation in its own interest is easily intelligible. It was not possible for the state to undertake direct cultivation of all fresh acquired or reclaimed land. On the other hand, on the death

of the tenant it was quite natural his son and grandson to get a lease of the same land successively for lifelong. On the basis of the same enthusiasm, the state allowed a tenant to enjoy a piece of uncultivated land, without paying any taxes, because he had brought tt first under cultivation [120]. It may be presumed that the authority of tax free enjoyment of land in cases was not illogical because the state did not spend any amount for bringing the plot of land under cultivation. Moreover the state was expected to receive taxes on the death of the first tenant and at the time of appearance of the question of re-alloting the plot to his heir [121]. It may be inferred from the records of the copper plate grant that land was gifted away as a revenue free holding according to the principle of bhūmichhidra-nyāya (the maximum of the waste land). This should be taken to mean the cultivation of waste land'. The copper plates of the Gupta and Post Gupta age record the sale of extensive plot of state land in Bengal in favour of the learned pious Brāhmanas or religions institutions as rent free estates. The land was mostly Khila (fallow land which had never been previously cultivated) and aprahata (waste land that had never been previouslu cultivated) categories. The main consideration was in the arranging for cultivation of the fields and development of the area by founding habitations, markets etc. The neighbouring area was sure to develop and it was anticipated

that in the event of the death of the landlord without an heir or when he would commit a crime like rebellion against the state, the whole estate would come to possession of the State [122]. The copper plate grants of the Gupta period prove that these holding were governed by the principle of nīvī-dharma, akshaya-nīvī-dharma or aprada-dharma. It was a peculiar kind of tenure by which the purchaser, or the person of Institution on whose behalf the land was transferred after purchase, had the right of perpetual enjoyment, but not of further alienation by sale or mortgage.

The clauses of Rāmganj copper plate grant of Īswara Ghosha of the Ghosha dynasty of sometime about the 12th Century A.D. include that 'the land is to be exempted from all burdens', that 'is not to be entered by the irregular and regular troops', that 'it is to exempted from all taxes' and that 'it is to last as long as the Sun and the Moon etc. shall endure' in the Traditional manner as the practice we generally come across in the earlier land grants of the Pālas. The cultivators of the land were ordered to pay to the donee the customery Kara or tax and all other revenues [123]. The Rāmpāla copper plate of Śrīchandra [124] and the Belāva copper plate of Bhojavarman [125] mention all the same clauses enjoyed by the donee.

Thus the religious grants of the Pālas and their contemporaies contained more or less the same provision. They were perpetual and hereditory and were not only revenue free, but also carried with them the assignment of royal revenue from the villages. Again the heads of the revenue and other charges imposed upon the villages would seem to have been the same as in earlier times.

During the early period of the history of Bengal agriculture, which was held to be the mainstay of the people of Bengal, was conducted following the courses of great river system which acted as vital furtilising agent of the soil. But there took place a steady increase in the cultivation area with the growth of population due partly to an increase birth rate and partly to immigration. One can easily visualise the extension of the cultivable land in Bengal in the copper plates of the 5th, 6th and 7th Centuries A.D. A careful analysis of the character of the land donated proves the fact that land donated, in most cases were 'aprada', aprahata' and khila (unsettled, uncultivated and fallow). Tippera copper plate of Lokonātha records the grant of a land in a place where deer, buffaloes, boars, tigers, serpents etc. enjoy, according to their will, all pleasure of home life" [126]. These examples show clearly the steady extension of cultivation and rural

settlement. "The pressure of a growing population, the growing desire of priests for materials prosperity and the religious Zeal of the Kings - all served in various ways to organise a widespread attack on some of the 'negative' lands of the province, where settlement and agriculture had at first avoided"[127].

The Brāhmaṇas contributed substantially to the development of agriculture by imparting a deep knowledge of the science to other farmers. Some early medieval beliefs and rituals sponsored by the priests, strangely enough, contributed much to progressive farming. They held that the killing of a cow was as heinous as homicide and this belief served to preserve cattle wealth in the country which was the mainstey of farm operation. Some Brāhmaṇas wellversed in astrology taught the farmers not only the use of plough and manure but imported to them valuable knowledge of the science of agriculture as well as of such related disciplines as soil chemistry and mechanics, hydrology and meteorology and the impact of planet movement. Prognostication about seasons and rains based entirely on astrological and astronomical calculations contributed a good deal to the systematisation and development of the agrarian economy and the prosperity of the period [128].

It may be presumed that the two factors accelerated

the agrarian development of at that time. One was the decline of industry and trade after the 7th Century A.D. Due to the loss of valuable markets, the production of principal commodities and the trade and commerce' in them declined and the bulk of those, engaged in trade and commerce and industry were thrown out of jobs. All were forced to fall back to agriculture, but the theory of decline of trade and commerce in Bengal has been differently interpreted by P.K. Bhattacheryya [128 a]. As a result of urban decay the occupation of artisans were ruralised and they were granted land for their maintenance. The Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra records the gift of land to dancer, two couch-shell blowers, two drum-beaters, five big drum-beaters and eight Kettledrum beaters and groups of servicing clasess comprising four florists, two oilmen, two potters, two carpenters, two mashons, two blacksmiths, eight sweepers [129]. This obviously proves that as a result of decline of trade and industry the artisans had to rush to the rural areas for subsistence [130]. The second factor that aggravated agricultural production was the new democratic legislation, aiming at the establishment of an egalitarian social system without distinctions of caste and colour, also contributed to that end [131].

The revenue collected from the agricultural land

through the heads of territorial units such as Uparika, Vishayapati, Daśagrāmika and Grāmapati. The revenue collected are referred to in general terms as Bhāga, bhoga, Kara, Hiraṇya Uparikara etc. in the land grants [132]. It seems that bhāga was the usual land revenue paid in kind. During the entire Pāla rule this Bhāga formed the main basis of Pāla economy. Bhaga means " the periodic supplies of fruits, firewood, flowers and the like which the villagers had to furnish to the King". Kara means tax in general. Hiraṇya means, as held by U.N.Ghosal, King's share of certain crops paid in cash [133].

Cattle rearing was also emphasised alcngwith agriculture. The expression "triṇa-puti-go-chara-parvanta " mentioned in most of the land grants of the time, suggests that good pasture grounds, which were provided for the cattle, produced various kinds of grass and was located in a corner of the village boundaries.

The cultivation of the land mainly depended on rain water which is evident from the description of Rāmacharita[134]. A number of embankments were built by the minor rulers of that time. BhaṭṭaBhavadeva, the minister of Harivarman caused the excavation of a tank before the temple of Viṣṇu in

Rāḍha. The Bhuvaneśwar inscription claims that "the waterless boundary lands abutting on a village situated in an arid region, has been made by him a reservoir of water which gladdens the soul and mind of the company of tourists sunk in fatigues and whose beds of lotuses have become devoid of bees as they are fascinated by the reflections of its surface of the lotus-faces of beautiful demsels engaged in bath"[135]. Besides canals, lakes, tanks and wells, the practice of accumulating water in reservoirs for purposes of irrigation was also in vogue. The Irdā copper plate of Nayapāladeva refers such a reservoir of water for the purpose of flourish of agriculture.

Regarding the measure of land before the Pregupta age, we have very little information. The inscriptions of the Post-Gupta age throw some light about the measurement of land. These were the Pāṭakas or Bhupāṭakas which were equal to forty droṇas. Excepting pāṭaka and droṇa, other terms used in the later records are ādhaka, unmāna Kāla possibly stood for uncertain equation [136]. The Gupta records generally mention two technical terms, Kulyavāpa and Droṇavāp-a regarding the measurement of land. But the exact equivalent of those in modern time cannot be determined [137]. The actual work of measurement throughout the whole period of the history of Bengal was done by

means nalas or rods varying in length from region to region.

It is not possible to draw up a conclusive picture about the agricultural practice. It appears from the study of the inscriptions that the paddy (dhānya) was cultivated in Bengal from early period. There is the reference to a granary of rice and other grains at Pudaṅgala in the Mahāsthān Brāhmī inscription. The Raghuvaṁśa describing Raghu's conquest of the Vaṅgas, remarks that Raghu uprooted and replanted the Kings like rice plants. The Rāmcharita holds a poetic description about the various products. "(Varandrī) which was (esteemed as) the sparkling crest jewel of the earth because of (the presence of) Lakshmī (beauty) whose lovely form was beheld in the paddy fields of various kinds, which was further spread over by fire bamboo clumps and which had (as additional charm) the sugercane plant that was flourishing excellantly there" [138].

It has been referred in the Sadukti Karṇāmṛita of Śrīdhara that paddy and barley fields lay at the outskirts of the village [139]. In another verse of the same work there are references to some food grains and vegetables [140]. Some inscriptions from Puṇḍravardhana mention (Sāmra-madhūka) [141]. Some other mention Sāmrapanasa. The mango, the madhūka and the

jackfruit or Panasa were common products. Yuan Chwang refers to the abundant growth of jackfruit in Puṇḍravardhana [142]. Guava and coconut (Sa-guvāka-nārikela) were other important agricultural products as mentioned in early inscriptions [143]. Pavanadūta refers that the ladies planted betel trees in the courtyards and watered themselves.

Besides the above, the contemporary records mention a variety of other crops grown in different parts of Bengal. These include malabathrum and spikenard mentioned in the "Periplus of the Erythraean Sea' among the exports of this province [144]. These were of an excellent quality and were grown on an extensive scale in the Eastern Himalayas. Another important crop cultivated in Bengal was mustard. The Vappaghoshavāṭa grant of Jayanāga mentions the existence of mustard channel in Karṇasuvarṇa [145]. The Ashraṭpur grant of Devakhaḍga specifically states that the donee should enjoy the donated land by the cultivation of betel-nuts, palms and coconuts [146].

The foregoing discussion based on literary and epigraphic evidences makes it clear that our survey period (5th Century A.D. to 13th Century A.D.) witnessed so many ups and downs in agricultural development. Owing to some disturbances and regional wars, the economy of the country was rudely

disturbed. The decline in industry and the introduction of the new conceptions leading to the establishment of an egalitarian society, though it shattered the traditional caste-based occupations and associated prejudices, yet it promoted the growth of agriculture. Due to the fertility of the land and the hard la bour farmers put in, food grain production rose unimaginably. The economic condition of the farmers again deteriorated in the 11th and 12th Centuries A.D. which was regarded as the heyday of Indian feudalism, because of excessive taxes imposed on the farmers.

Section - V

I n d u s t r y

Though agriculture played a predominant part in in Bengal's economy, a number of crafts and industries developed at a very early age and played an important part in the life of the people of Bengal. It is evident both from the literary and epigraphic sources that whereas the rural population was mainly dependent on the soil and its produce, the towns, although not probably divorced from agrarian activity, tended to do variety of functions, commercial, industrial, political, judicial and military. It has been described in contemporary

sources that the most distinctive feature of the towns was the comparative richness and luxury [147].

However, it has been assumed by some scholars that Industry was extensively on the decline between the 8th and 12th Centuries A.D. due to some inconveniences. But some industries were reportedly functioning normally and contributed much to the economic growth of Bengal. Sources of the period testify to the technical superiority, manual experience and scientific acumen of the artisans and craftsmen of this period which were all much more advanced in comparison to the ancient Indian epoch. The genesis of the development of industries may be improved condition of the labour class. Since the Gupta period there developed a broad and liberal outlook in the society about the status of working class. The legislators of the period under review realised the dignity of labour. There are some factors that contributed to the improvement of the condition of the labour class. First and foremost among them was the emergence of a new religious movement in northern and eastern India for levelling the social distinctions that set apart the high and low classes since the end of the 8th Century A.D. The movement was led by a Buddhist monk Rāhulabhadra who was a pupil of Haribhadra, a renowned Nālandā scholer and a contemporary of King Dharmapāla (770 - 815 A.D). This movement

of the levellers started by Rāhulabhadra appealed to the common people. It represented a revolution in the fundamental pattern of thought and culture. It was a great blow to religions tradition. The lower classes of people welcomed the revolting movement as it held out promises in the social and economic spheres of life. The demand for labour during the period under discussion when wars were a passion with the King, increased considerably and served to promote the status of the working class. The feudal lords were ever on the lookout for chances of the extension of their territory and of self aggrandisement. A weak ruler anywhere was a signal for aggressive wars and usurpation. This raised the demand of war-like instrument and subsequently heightened the status of the labours. The assimilation of the foreigners in the Hindu society also lowered the gap between the higher and the lower class in the society and thereby upheld the condition of the working class. By complete merger of foreign tribal havits, custom, manners, beliefs and tradition, the age old tradition of us was shattered beyond repair. The egalitarian ideology had so undermined the basic concept of Caste that the people of all tribes became unrestrainedly exogamous in disregard of caste injunctions [148]. As a result of this tribal amalgamation and injection of mixed blood in the veins of high andlow, the very concept of a caste based society disappeared. The rece-ption of foreign culture into the

national life and the resulting syncretism greatly served to promote the status and living condition of the working class. The improvement of the condition of the working class greatly influenced the position of the industry and paved the way for the economic growth of the country.

Among the industries that furnished in Bengal during the period of our study textile industry took the prominent part. Bengal achieved great fame for her textile industry in remote past. During the time of Arthaśāstra [149], it was already a wellestablished industry. Four varieties of the textile commodities produced in early Bengal were Kshauma, dukūla, Patroṇa and Kārpāsika. Kshauma probably denoted linen of coarse quality and its centres of production were Puṇḍravardhana and Benaras. Dukūla was the finer quality of linen and its centres of manufacture were East and North Bengal, both of which were the prominent centres of textile industry from very early times probably before the beginning of the Christian era. The nature of Patroṇa is not known. It was probably wild silk add the centres of its production were Magadha, Puṇḍra and elsewhere. Kārpāsika was the was the cottom fabric and those were manufactured in various parts of India [150].

It is apparent from the early sources that Bengal attained great eminence in textile industry as early as the time

of Kautilya. Subsequent evidences show that she retained eminence in this field down almost to the beginning of the 19th Century. 'The periplus of the Erythraean sea' written by a Greek sailor in the first Century A.D. refers to the Maslin of the finest sort' exported from Bengal. The reputation of Bengal in the field of textile industry is also testified to by the Arab writers. Accordingly to the Arav merchant Sulaiman in the 9th Century A.D. there was 'a stuff made in this country(Ruhmi probably located in Bengal) which is not to be found elsewhere; so fine and delicate is this material that dress made of it may be passed through a signet-ring' - Marco Polo, who visited India in the 13th Century A.D. states that in his time Bengal still plied a lucrative trade in cottom goods[151].

Another important industry that attained importance during the period was sugar. Bengal was probably one of the earliest homes of sugercane cultivation. It has been pointed out by Suśruta that Paundra-kacanes were noted for the yielding of large quantity of suger. Marco Polo witnessed that suger was one of the most important commodities of export from Bengal[152].

Another important industry was the making of salt by means of evaporation either from the infiltrated sea water or from sub-soil brine practised in certain areas. The Irdā copper

plate of Nayapāla of the Kamboja dynasty in the tenth century A.D. records the grant of a village in the Dandabhuktimandala of the Vardhamāna bhukti along with salt pits (lavanākarah)[153]. on the other hand the Rāmapāla copper plate Śrīchandra of the 11th Century A.D. [154] and the Belāva plate of Bhojavarman of 12th Century A.D. [155] records the grant of village in Pundravardhana bhukti 'alongwith salt' (Sa-lavanah). But it should be mentioned in this connection that salt is not mentioned in any of the grants of the Pāla and Sena Kings. It may possibly because that the manufacture of salt though practised in some parts of Bengal from the 10th Century onwards, yet it had not developed into any considerable industry. The large amount of fresh water flowing in the sea from different rivers and the dampness of climate prevented the growth of this industry in Bengal.

The metal work of various kinds must have been known from very early times. The most important function of the blacksmith was the making and the repair of the agricultural implements. The Karmakāra was, according to the Brihad-dharma Purāna, included within the Uttama-saṅkara group. Agriculture being the profession of the majority, the services of the Karmakāra were in great demand. Besides, the royal authority waged incessant warfare, where the Karmakāra played a vital role. Some arrow

heads and spear heads of iron have been unearthered in Pāhārpur excavation [156]. The high standard of metal casting may be seen in the gold plated image of Mañjuśrī from Balaidhan mound near Mahāsthān. It is undoubtedly one of the finest pieces of bronze icons discovered in Northern and Eastern India"[157]. The image has been dated to the Gupta period. The tradition thus was fairly old and was followed by the artists of later period like that of the Pāla- Sena bronzes. The smiths also were making various utensils of metal. They even made water vessels of iron, as mentioned in the Edilpur grant of Viśvarūpa-Sena not of Keśavasena as it was thought earlier [158].

The pottery making was also an important means of subsistence of a group of people of Bengal. The Kumbhakāras also belonged to the Uttamasaṅkara group. Among all the industries pottery was probably the oldest. The earliest of its specimen in Bengal has been excavated in Bāṅgaḍ which represent the Maurya-Suṅga period. Terracotta images of this style have been unearthed from the excavation [159]. The excavation at Mahāsthān also reveals the same tradition. A number of Gupta style pottery has been discovered in its early level [160]. A whole series of terracotta plogues have been found at Pāhārpur. These terracotta plaques made Bengal potters unique in Indian history. According to Niharranjan Ray, every conceivable subject

of ordinary human life finds its place on these plaques. The ordinary people expressed their sorrows, happiness and desire in these plaques. A large number of storage Jars, lotās, cooking utensils, saucers and dishes of the 8th and 9th Century A.D. have been unearthed at Pāhārpur [161]. The making of bricks may also be mentioned here. The inscriptions from the Gupta period onwards show that innumerable Devakulas were built. As there was large scale building activity during the Pāla-Sena period, so quite a good number of people were engaged in brick making and the work of a mason was urgently needed. Some people assumed the profession of Taksan or carpenters who were included within the Madhyama - Sankara group of the Brihad dharma Purāṇa.

Two other categories of craftsmen were the workers in stone and wood. The numerous stone images of the Hindu period of Bengal and the beautifully engraved inscriptions on stone slabs bear eloquent testimony both to the volume and skill of the stone-carvers' profession. The black chloride stone, out of which most of these images were carved, was probably obtained from the Rajmahal Hills and carried in boats to the different centres of the sculplor's art in the Province. Side by side with the stone-carving, wood carving and carpentry also appear to have been practised on an extensive scale. A few evidences of

wood carving are available to us and most of them perished because of the perishable nature of wood. The carpenters seem to have built houses and temples and made household furniture, boats, ship and wheeled carriages.

Jewellery also provided occupation to considerable group of metal workers as it was the fashion of the rich to use gold and silver ornaments made of pearls and precious stones. The Deōparā inscription of Vijayasena mentions "flowers made of precious stones necklaces, ear rings, anklets, garlands and golden bracelets" worn by the wives of the King's servants and the jewellery worn by the temple girls. The Naihati copper plate of Vallālasena refers to necklaces of pearls worn by ladies of royal blood. The Rāmacharita mentions "Jewelled anklet-bells' "charming ornaments set with diamonds, lapis-lazuli, pearls, emeralds, rubies and saphires" [162]. According to Tabaqāt-i-Nāsirī "golden and silver dishes" were used in the palace of Lakshmana sena [163].

Another important industry was ivory making. The Bhāterā plate of Govinda-Keśava mentions ivory workers (dantakāra) by name [164], while the Edilpur plate of Viśvarūpasena refers to palanquins supported by staffs made of elephant's tusk [165]. Reference may be made to the growth of many minor arts, crafts

and professions and mention may be made in this connection of the florists, garland makers, carpenters, mason, painters, braziers, goldsmith, blacksmiths, potters, weavers, oilmen, barbars, cobblers, butchers, distillers of wine etc.

The persons following the same trade or industry grouped themselves into associations which amongst its wider social and religious functions, regulated the economic life of their members and dealt with the people at large on behalf of its members. These associations, which secured social and legal recognition of their status, rights and activities and possessed a true corporate identity, may conveniently and appropriately be termed guilds. The so-called "thirty six" castes of Bengal which must have evolved before the end of the Hindu period, are living testimonies to the industrial and professional organisations known as trade and craft guilds which are referred in the early smṛiti literature. Reference, to the trade and craft guilds in Bengal in the 5th and 6th Centuries A.D. have been made in the Dāmadarapur copper plates of Kumāra Gupta and Budha Gupta of the Later Gupta dynasty. The important position occupied by the nagara Śreshṭhī (Guild president), Prathama Sārthavāha (Chief merchant), Prathama Kulika (the chief artisan) and the Prathama Kāyastha in the local administration prove the fact that the guilds played an important part in

industrial life of Bengal. The nagara śreshṭhin, the most wealthy man of the town, represented perhaps, the rich Urban population and held the position of the president of the town guild of bankers. The Prathama sārthavāba, the chief merchant represented, perhaps, the merchant class or the various trade guilds. The Prathama Kulika, the Chief artisan, represented perhaps, the various artisan classes. The Prathama-Kāyastha, the chief scribe whomight either has represented the Kāyasthas as a class or have been a Government official in the capacity of a Chief Secretary of the present day [166]. The Chief of important guilds commanded great respect and authority in Society. The Deopārā inscription refers to Śūlapāṇi who was the head of artisans of Varendrī. He was so well regarded and respected that by common consent he became Chūḍāmaṇi (crest jewel) amongst varendra's artisans. As he owed his reputation to his perfection as a craftsman, the King honoured him by conferring on him the title of rāṇaka. In classical literature, the word of Chūḍāmaṇi has been used by renowned poets like Kālidās, Harsha etc. to describe persons outstanding in their act or profession. B.P. Majumdar holds that the ruler of the period conferred on Śūlapāṇi the title of rāṇaka [167].

Nevertheless the position of the guilds was not as sound in early medieval India as it had been in the ancient period.

There are some factors that worsened the position of the guilds at that time. Under the unstable political, economic and social condition of that time, it was hardly possible for the corporate bodies to carry on their trade, business and manufacturing work at one place. The prosperity and development of guilds were generally based on trade. But in the period under survey, during the 11th and 12th Centuries in particular, disturbed political condition caused the volume of trade to dominish. The destruction of important markets must have affected output and production in industries involving the principal commodities. The bulk of people, who previously, earned their livelihood through trade and commerce, had to fall back on agriculture, In short, because of internal and external wars and because of a crisis of public confidence in the guilds, the country was under the throes of an economic depression [168].

Section - VI

Trade and Commerce

Trade and commerce formed an important part of the economic life of Bengal since remote past. It has a source of prosperity of Bengal which is attested by the accounts of various ancient sources. Human life in the Delta has been deeply influenced by the rivers and the variations of monsoonal climate.[169] The great rivers of Bengal had played a significant part in the

agrarian production of the area. Besides renewing fields, the rivers carried an immense number of fish which provided a readymade source of food to the Delta dwellers. Moreover the alluvial soil of the region resulted in the huge agrarian production. The warm humid climate, in conjunction with the futility of land, made the region an extra ordinary productive agricultural land capable of supporting a large surplus consuming class. The surplus production caused by the above factors fostered the trade and commerce of the region. Over and above the gulf region of the South-eastern part of Bengal and so also many navigable rivers with natural ports aggravated the trade and commerce facilities of the region. The network of rivers provided a readymade system of interconnecting waterways for easy communications and economical transportation [170]. Similarly the qualitative and quantitative development of Bengal's production accilerated the process of the trade and commerce of the region.

We have dearth of information regarding our inland commerce in the remote past. The inscriptional sources shed little light in that respect. On the other hand the writings of the foreign travellers and historians do not come to our much assistance because the Chief interests of the foreign travellers lay in the foreign trade of the province. The devolopment of foreign trade of which our sources of information

are plenty, asserts the existence of certain amount of internal trade of the region [171]. There are feferences to officials for collecting tolls (Śaulkika) and supervisors of marts and markets (hattapati) and officer incharge of markets, customs, tolls and ferries which indirectly testifies to the existence of brisk nature of internal trade and proves that the state derived from it a considerable revenue. The centres of inland trade were the towns. It has been gleaned from the inscriptional sources of Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samāchāradeva [172] that Navyāvakāśikā was the centre of merchants and businessmen. The inscriptions of Budha Gupta and Kumāragupta also give the similar information about the status of city of Koṭivarṣha [173]. We have references to ships add the dockyards and to custom officers called 'vyāpāra-Kārandaya' or Vyāpārāndya in the two grants of the time of Dharmāditya and Vyāpārāya-viniyukta in the grant of Gopachandra. They were obviously officials in charge of the duty of looking after trade and commerce. The rivers of the province and proximity of the Orissa and Chittagong coasts afforded great facilities for riverine and coastal trade. There can be no doubt that a large number of people were engaged in shipping and the province must have carried on brisk trade and such a department of commerce must have been an important source of revenue. Its duties would have been to levy custom dues on foreign trade and octroi on internal trade. It must have been, as Pargiter has pointed out,

a most luerative office [174]. It is known from the Kathā-saritasāgara that Pundravardhana had a great market place and its streets were lined with shops. Villages were also often centres of trade and business. There are references to hatta or market in the Damadarapur copper plate of Kumāragupta [175] and Hattika in the Khālimpur plate of Dharamapala [176]. The grant of villages with its market place (sa-hatta) [177], shops (hattiya-griha) and big markets (hatta-vara) [178] speaks of the existence of tucretive trade in village in ancient and early medival Bengal. Though the rivers and canals of Bengal were the chief routes of internal trade there were land routes also connecting different parts of the province. These are referred to by foreign travellers like Fa-hien and Hiuen-Tsang and the mention is made of 'rāja-patha' or public highway passing by a village in the Chittagong copper plate of Dāmodaradeva [179].

We have got much more information about the trade of Bengal. The reason is probably that the oversea trade of a large part of North India passed through Bengal and its well known ports were at the mouths of the Ganges. Strabo, the Greek geographer and historian, who wrote his famour 'Geography' between A.D. 17 and 23, refers to the "Ascent of vessels from the sea by the Ganges to Palibothra" [180]. We

further come to know from the Jātaka stories [181] that the merchant took ships at Benāras or lower down at Champā (modern Bhagalpur) and then either made coasting voyage to Ceylon or crossed the Bay of Bengal to Suvarṇaabhūmi. We also learn from the "Periplus of the Erythraean Sea' that Bengal maintained an active oversea trade with South India and Ceylon in the first Century A.D. Articles like malabathrum, Gangetic spikenard, pearls and Muslins of the finest sorts were exported. "These were all shipped from a 'market town called Gange (Probably the same as Tāmralipta)". According to Milinda Pāñhā, the trade was carried on from Vaṅga across the sea to many countries [182]. Among the important ports of ancient Bengal, mention should invariably be made of Tāmralipta. It is hardly necessary to stress the fact that in all periods the city which controlled the mouth of the Ganges was commercially the most important in Eastern India, just as the city which controlled the gates of the Euxine was commercially the most important in Hellas[183].

Now, there is a controvercy among the scholers about the position of trade and commerce in the post-Gupta period. According to the prominent historian R.S. Sharma India, after exhibited the characteristics of feudalism involving

payment of services in land ins tead of coins which developed in an economy marked by the dearth of coins and the absence of trade and commerce [184]. But D.C. Sircar holds that the above theory is incorrect. According to him, there is no evidence of any real dearth of coins in Indian markets during the early and medieval period [185]. Perhaps a standard currency was no longer needed for measuring the prices of commodities in terms of money, for trade by barter or through cowries became usual practice in the country where foreign trade was either non-existent or negligible.

South-East Bengal had altogether a different feature. The regional rulers felt the necessity of maintaining metallic currency obviously for the purpose of catering to the economic needs of the country. The Gupta gold coins discovered alongwith "Imitation type" clearly point to the adequate political and commercial importance of the Maiāmatī - Lālmāi urban centres upto the 8th Century A.D. although no indigenous coins have come to light representing the period between 11th and 12 Centuries A.D. The traces of minted metallic coins in the regions show not only the brisk commercial transaction, but also the continuous supply of gold and silver from abroad. As the Chittagong-Tippera region did not have deposits of gold-silver bearing ore, we are to locate the

sources of the precious metals in Southern China, Burma, Pegu and South-East Asia[186]. The precious metals could come to South-East Bengal if the region was in a position to export commodities needed by the neighbouring countries. It is highly probable that South - East Bengal got gold and silver from Southern China, Pegu and South-East Asia in exchange of textile goods, earthen wares and also perhaps of rice.

In the pre-muslim period Harikela, Samaṭaṭa and Vaṅga formed an economic unit. They maintained communication with different regions of their hinterland along the course of Kshīrodā river which used to encircle Maināmatī in the form of a moat[188]. It is reasonable to hold that Devaparvata and other cultural centres of Maināmatī-Lālmāi region were connected with Chittagong and Ramu near Cox's bazar on the Arakan road by a land route. Chittagong and Ramu whose antiquity is attested by archaeological and literary evidence[189], served in that case as the sea-ports of South-East Bengal. Vikamapura, an administrative capital from the 10th Century to 12th Century A.D.[190], had perhaps some commercial importance indicated by the location on the Dhaleśvarī in Samaṭaṭa maṇḍala is clear from its location near the Kshīrodā and the Gomatī.

The indication of trade that we get from the literary and numismatic sources are not reflected in the epigraphic records of the Devas, the Chandras and the Varmans and it is impossible to determine how far the society was commercialised. The inscriptions do not mention the existence of merchants and skilled artisans whom we frequently noticed in the Gupta land grants. It indicates the importance of land at that time and the feudalistic character of the society. But the feudal economy as indicated by the land grants could hardly preclude the possibility of trade and urban centres supported by a standard currency.

Regarding the trade routes, we have got some information from several sources we are here going to highlight only the main routes. The oversea trade of Bengal from Tāmralipta followed different courses. The first course was along the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal right upto Malay Peninsula and then through the Malay straits to South-East Asia as far as China. The second was the coastal voyage to Palaura near modern chicacole and then right across the Bay of Bengal to the opposite coast. The third route was along the eastern coast of India to Ceylon and then turning north along the western coast to the mouth the Indus and then

upto the ports of Arabia and Eastern Africa [191].

Regarding the land routes which connected the north-eastern, northern and western India with this region we have got some information. One of them connected Bengal with Kāmarūpa and China. Hiuen-Tsang travelled through this route in the 7th Century A.D [192]. This route was continued upto the 9th Century A.D. Another route following the ganges joined the network of highways which converged at Benaras. Merchants travelled from different areas of Bengal to Ayodhyā, Pāṭaliputra etc. through this road. Another important land route passed through the Himalayas across Nepal, Sikkim and Chumbi valley to Tibet and China. Another important land route followed the coast of Kaliṅga and ran upto South Indian peninsula.

Chapter - V

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94 Āpastamba Dharmasūtra, II. 10.27.6

95 Manu, IX. 84.

96 Bṛihad-dharma Purāṇa, II. 8.11

97 A.S. Altekar, Opcit, P 164.

98 Bṛihad-dharma-Purāṇa, II. 8. 8-10.

99 Dāyabhāga, Section XI.

100 Parāśaramādhava Vol. III, P 536.

101 Dāyabhāga, Section XI.

102 Dāyabhāga, Section XI.

103 A.S. Altekar, Opcit, PP 303 - 308.

104 R.C. Majumdar, History of Ancient Bengal, P 464.

105 Kāmasūtra, VI. 49.

106 Dhoyī, Pavana-dūtam, V. 42.

107 Kāmasūtra, V. 6. 38.41.

108 Girindra Mohan Sarkar, The History of Bengal, P 51.

109 Dāvabhāga, 149.

110 B.P. Majumdar, Opcit, P 377.

111 R.C. Majumdar, History of Ancient Bengal, P 468.

112 ibid, P 332.

113 Mandira Bhattacheryya, Pundravardhana in Historical Perspective (unpublished Ph. d. Thesis).

114 ibid, P 155.

115 Kane, History of Dharmaśāstras Vol. II, PP 865 - 66.

116 Manusmṛiti, VIII. 39; Māhabhārata, XII.

117 Mill and Wilson, A History of British India, Vol. I, P 212.

118 D.C. Sircar, Aspects of Early Indian Economic Life, P 10; It was less than one eighth which was a concessional rate according of the Rummindei Pillar inscription of Aśoka. Manusmṛiti prescribes one sixth, one-eighth or one-twelfth as the King's share of the grains (dhānya), though one-sixth was possibly regarded, as normal standard for the staple crops.

119 D.C. Sircar, Select Inscriptions, P 375.

120 Jolly, Hindu Law and Custom (Trans. B.K. Ghosh) PP 196 - 97; the Principle is stated to have been based on the idea that the hunted deer belongs to the person who first hit (Manu, IX. 44).

121 D.C. Sircar, Aspects of Early Indian Economic Life, P 15 ff.

122 ibid, P 17

123 N.G. Majumdar, Opcit, P 149.

124 Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XII, P 136.

125 ibid, P 37.

126 ibid, Vol. XV, 307, 311.

127 R.C. Majumdar, History of Bengal, Vol. I, PP 648 - 49.

128 P.C. Jain, Socio-Economic Exploration of Medieval India, PP 93 - 94.

128a Some scholars believe that there was decline in the process of urbanisation in the whole of Indian sub-continent on the basis of archaeological and numisatic evidence. R.S. Sharma, however, believes that there was a revival of urbanisation in the country from 1000 A.D. onwards probable with the arrival of the Turks, but we have reasons to believe that inspite of the prevailing decay of urbanism as postulated by the scholars, there were signs of brisk commercial activity in the South-Eastern deltaic regions of Bengal. This commercial activity could not grow up in isolation, rather judging by the nature of the volumes of trade and commercial activities and finds of large quantity of coinage of precious metals from the excavated sites of Maināmatī and surrounding ares, it seems to us that the mighty Kingdoms of the Pālas and the senas and others might have played Key role to it, South-Eastern Bengal might have used the Pāla - Sena territories covering almost the whole of Bengal for the purpose of trade

and otherwise it could not have carried on such volume of trade. Cf P.K. Bhattacharyya, "Numismātic Evidence - its relivance in the Socio Economic history of Early Bengal", presidemtial Address, Paśchim-baṅga Itihas Saṁsad, annual Conference held at Uluberia, 1992.

129 K.G. Choudhury "Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Mahārāja Śrichandradeva (10th Century A.D.)" in N.K. Bhattasali Commemoration Volume.

130 R.S. Sharma, The Urban Decay in India, PP 153 ff.

131 P.C. Jain, Opcit, PP 93 ff.

132 History of Bengal, I P 277.

133 U.N. Ghosal, Hindu Revenue System, P.1.

134 Rāmacharitam. III V - 26.

135 N.G. Majumdar, Opcit, P 40.

136 L.D. Barnett, Antiquities of India, P 126. History of Bengal, I. PP 651 ff.

137 The equation of 1 : 8 between a Kulyavāpa and droṇavāpa is confirmed by the Pāhārpur plate according to which four plots of land measuring respectively 4, 4, 2½ and 1½ (= 12 droṇavapas corresponding to an area measuring 1½ Kulyavapas History of Bengal I, P 652.

138 Rāmacharita, III, V. 178.

139 Saduktikarnāmritam II, 165, 5 (ed by Ramavatara Sharma) Lahore 1933, P 176.

140 ibid, II, 177, P 184.

141 Gaudalekhamālā, P 147.

142 Belavo copper plate of Bhojavarman Ep.Ind. XII, PP 37 ff.

143 Watters, Yawan-Chwang's Travel in travel in India, Vol.II, 184.

144 Schoff, Periplus, P 47.

145 Epigraphia 'Indica, XVIII, P 60.

146 Memories of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, I. 90.

147 History of Bengal, I, PP 644 - 45.

148 P.C. Jain, Opcit, Ch. I PP 3 ff.

149 Arthaśāstra of Kautilya (translated by R. Shamasastry, P 93).

150 History of Ancient Bengal, PP 341 ff.

151 History of Bengal I, P 655.

152 Yule, Marco Polo, II. 115.

153 Epigraphia Indica, XXII. 155, 158.

154 N.G. Majumdar, Opcit, P 5.

155 ibid, 21.

156 History of Bengal I, P 657.

157 ibid, P 466.

158 N.G. Majumdar, Opcit, P 128. There was no King Keśavasena by name as proved by D.C. Sircar, See supra ch IV, Note.

159 K.G. Goswami, Excavations at Bengal, Cal.

160 Excavation of Mahasthan, T.N. Ramchandra, Archaeological Survey of India, Report, 1936 - 37.

161 Annual Report of Archaeological Survey of India, Report 1930 - 34.

162 Rāmacharita, III, 33 - 34.

163 The History of Mohammedan India as told by its own Historians, (Ed. by Elliot and Dowson) II, 309.

164 Epigraphia Indica, XXIX, P 287.

165 N.G. Majumdar, Opcit, P 127.

166 Ep. Ind. XV 128; R.G. Basak, Opcit, P 64.

167 B.P. Majumdar, Opcit, P 211.

168 P.C. Jain, Opcit, PP 299 ff.

169 B.M. Morrison, Opcit, P 10.

170 Loc cit.

171 History of Bengal I PP 659 ff.

172 The Faridpur Copper plate of Gopachandra, D.C. Sircar, Select Inscriptions bearing Indian History and Civilization, P 370; Indian Antiqary, 1910, P 20; The Faridpur plate of Dharmāditya, Indian Antiqary, 1910, P 195; The Faridpur plate of Samāchāradeva, unpublished.

173 The Dāmadarpur plate of Kumar Gupta Epigraphia Indica XV, P 130. The Dāmadarpur plate of Budha Gupta, Epigraphia Indica, XV, P 133.

174 Indian Antiquary (1910) P 212.

175 Ep. Ind, XV, P 133.

176 ibid, P 138.

177 ibid, XXII, 150.

178 ibid, XXIX, 277.

179 N.G. Majumdar, Opcit, P 158.

180 Mc Crindle, Ancient India (1901), P 16.

181 Jātāka, IV, 15-17 (No. 442), 159 (No. 466), VI. 34 (no. 539).

182 Cambridge History of India, P 212.

183 History of Bengal, I P 661.

184 R.S. Sharma, Indian feudalism, 1965 PP 58 ff; D.C. Sarcar has pointed out that land lords of ancient and medieval India should not be confused with the feudal barons of Eurepe. The Indian Kings were never the real owners of lands under permanent tenants. Most of the donees were the Brāhmaṇas and the temple authorities. The priestly class was also obviously not suitable for rendering services of feudal type. It is recorded in most of the characters that the donees were exempted from all kinds of obligations. Generally the object of the grant is stated to have been the religious merit and fame of the donor and his parents. The land was not usually granted to the people of the warrior and other classes. The successor of the donee was not required to pay and amount of money or any kind of presents to the King for obtaining the renewal of grant and the records generally state that the land would automatically pass to the donee's heirs. In India the social position of the Brāhmaṇas were exceptionally high and they were never looked upon as King's vassal. But in the feudal system of Europe; the man who held land from another was considered to be dependent and subordinate of the latter.

Land system and feudalism in Ancient India, Ed by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta University, 1966 PP 57 - 62.

185 D.C. Sircar, Aspects of early Indian Economic Life, P 20.

186 Ronald Latham (tr) The Travels of Marco Polo (London, 1959) PP 153, 158.

187 M.R. Tarafdar, Trade and Society in Early Medieval Bengal in Indian Historical Review, Vol. IV.

188 The Kailān Inscription of Śrīdhārana rāta. Indian Historical Quarterly Vol. XXIII, PP 225, 237.

189 M.H. Rashid " The Origin and Early Kingdom of the Chandras of Rahitagiri " Bangladesh Historical Studies, 11,21,23.

190 B.M. Morrison, Opcit, P 57.

191 History of Ancient Bengal, P 346.

192 Beal, Buddhist Records of the Western World, London, 1906, Vol. III, 195.

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Chapter - VI

Religion.

We have already seen earlier [1] that the culture and civilization of the Indo-Aryans reached Bengal quite late. There is no mention of Bengal in the Saṁhitā the Ṛigveda. The Puṇḍras are referred as Dasyus in the Aitareya Brāhmana [1a]. Vaṅgāvagadhā referred in the Aitareya Araṇyaka [2], in despising terms, really meant the Vaṅgas and the Magadhas. It clearly indicates that Bengal was outside the area of Aryan culture even in the later Vedic period. The same feature prevailed even in the Sūtra period. The Baudhāyaṇa Dharma Sūtra [3] prescribed penance for those visiting Puṇḍra and Vaṅga comprising South-East Bengal. The Jaina Āchāraṅga Sūtra describes the people of Rāḍha as barbarous.

We are not going to treat the gradual expansion of Aryan culture in detail. The study of Videgha Māthava in the Śata patha Brāhmaṇa and the like were the stories of Aryan expansion in the Eastern countries [4]. The Jaina Prajñāpanā includes the Vaṅgas and Lāḍhas in the list of Aryan peoples [5]. It has been referred indirectly in the Divyāvadāna that the Jaina religion was established in Puṇḍra or North Bengal in the time

of Aśoka. The first definite evidence of the further progress of Aryan culture towards the east is furnished by the Mahābhārata. In the Mahābhārata, we come across the episode of Paundrakavāsudeva. Devakīputra Vāsudeva Kṛishṇa, the great religious preceptor was challenged by the King of the Puṇḍras and Kirātas. He was, however, defeated by Kṛishṇa [6]. The Mahābhārata also refers to the places of Pilgrimage in Bengal. The Gaṅgā-Sāgara-Saṅgama is referred in connection with the legend of Bhagīratha and the Pilgrimage of Yudhishṭhira. The rivers like the Karotoyā, Lauhitya were considered as sacred and a dip into these rivers was equal to the virtues of performing an Aśvamedha sacrifice [7]. All these indicate that the Aryans had much more intimate contact with Bengal at the time of the Mahābhārata than in the time of the Dharma-sūtras. It has also been indicated that there were powerful states and religions sanctuaries in Bengal which were respected by the Aryans. All these go against the contemptuous references of Bengal in earlier records [8].

Though the precise date of the Aryan contact is difficult to ascertain, yet it has been suggested that this significant change might have taken place between the ages represented by the Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra and the Mahābhārata.

It may, therefore, be reasonably assumed that the first stage of Aryanisation of Eastern India took place between 4th Cenbury B.C. and 4th Century A.D.[9]

With the spread of the Aryan culture the Vedic religions system was also introduced into the region. It is, however, likely that this system became associated with the prevailing forms of religious beliefs and rituals of the people inspite of the initial resistence by the Vedic seers. It was probably due to the intermarriage between the Aryan males and the Non-Aryan females, the speech and the social and religious life of the Aryan people began changing from early time. Attention may be drawn, for example to the borrowing of the cerebral sounds from the Non-Aryan speech, to the gradual amalgamation of the Rigvedic God Rūdra and the pre-Aryan God Śiva-Paśupati and to the germ of theism, a Non-aryan institution later, completely absorbed in Indian religious life [10]. The concept of intense devotion and a sense of absolute surrender to the God, the technical name for which is 'bhakti' explained as 'exceptional attachment to God' may be regarded as an un-Aryan concept gradually adopted by the mixed Aryo-Non-Aryan population [11].

Thus the Vedic religion itself sustained some changes

by coming in contact with the Non-Aryan culture and it resulted in fusion of the two cultures. In course of time, as observed by R.C. Majumdar, the leaders of the Orthodox religion having observed Vaishṇavism and Śaivism proceeded to evolve an altogether new pantheon whose history is told and glories sung in a new literature, the Purāṇas. "These texts, whose number is ever on the increase, now came to forefront and gradually became the principal religious literature of the people at large, in place of the old Vedic Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas"[12].

Brāhmanical religion : The extension of the Vedic civilization in various part of India, which were outside the pale of Vedic culture, is evidenced by the extant epigraphic evidence since the Gupta period. It resulted in the spreading of the Varṇāśrama-dharma. The society was compartmentalised into various varṇas and the Brāhmaṇas were provided with the highest position in the society. The inscriptional sources also refer to the construction of temples for various Brāhmaṇical Gods and permanent endowments were made for defraying expenses of their repair and making provisions for their maintenance [13]. Lands were donated for the settlement of the Brāhmaṇas in the region full of dense forests apparently

in view of reclamation and extension of agricultural land [14]. The supremacy of the Brāhmaṇas was not only in the field of religious function, they were also important factors in administration of the village. The involvement of the Brāhmaṇas in the Local administration is proved by various epigraphic sources [15].

Hence the entire religious environment was completely controlled by the Brāhmaṇas almost in the identical manner as elsewhere in Northern India. It was the Gupta administrative unity which brought the whole of Northern India into one cultural unit and furthered the cause of the Brāhmaṇical religion.

The system of Brāhmaṇical domination in the religions life continued even after the coming of the Pālas, who were Buddhists. There are abundant references to land donation made to the Brāhmaṇas versed in the study of the Vedas, Vedāṅgas, Mīmāṁsā and Vyākaṛṇa and capable of performing Vedic sacrifices [16]. According to the author of the work Haricharita, Dharmapāla granted land to Brāhmaṇas, adept in Vedic studies[17]. In the Khālimpur copper plate of Dharmapāla, Lakshmī, the goddess of fortune has been compared to the line of Dayitavishṇu [18]. In the monohyr copper plate [19] of Devapāla ,

Dharmapāla has been described as putting back the misguided castes to their folds. The tradition continued in later times. Lakshmī, Indra, Vishnu, Śiva were specially favourite with the Pāla-Chandra rulers. In the Rāmpāla inscription of Śrīchandra, his wife Śrīkāñchanā has been compared with "Śachī of Indra, Gourī of Śiva and Lakshmī of Vishṇu"[20]. Similar comparison from the Brāhmaṇical myths and Purāṇic literature has been made in many other Chandra record [21].

Thus it is quite clear that being devotees of Buddha, they were not lagging behind in the general culture of the time which was basically flavoured with the Purāṇic myths. As a result of the influence of the Brāhmaṇical cults some of the Pāla-Chandra rulers became converts to Hindu Worshippers. The Pāla Kings had hereditary Brāhmaṇa ministers and Devapāla's conquests were masterplanned by his minister who unashamedly prided at this [22]. Thus the Purāṇic religion was gaining upperhand even when the royal religion was Buddhism.

The Aryan culture gained much prominence in Bengal in the 11th and 12th Centuries under the patronage of the Varman and Sena Kings. The Bhubaneśvar temple inscription of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva refers to hundred villages as the birth place of Sāvarṇa gotra Brāhmaṇas versed in the Vedic lores [23].

The copper plate of Bhojavarman refers to grant of land in the province of Pundravardhana to Brāhminas who were attached to the studies of the Vedas. It has also been referred in the same Copper plate that the Varmans had the zeal for the three Vedas which are described as the only protection of men (covering the nakedness of men)[24]. The Varmans particularly Sāmalavarmana is credited to have brought Pāśchātya Vaidika Brāhmanas from the west [25]. The Sena monarchs were staunch adherents to the Vedic and Purānic religion. The names of the Vedic Śākhās like Kauthumi, Aśvalāyana, Kānva and Paippalāda are mentioned in the inscriptions of the Sena Kings and Sāmantasena, the founder of the Sena royal family, is called Brahmavādī, who retired in his old age to a hermitage in forests on the banks of the Ganges which were a full of renowned asceties [26].

Thus it is reasonable to think that the revival of the Vedic culture in the Midlands under the Imperial Guptas led to the infiltration of the orthodox vedic culture in Bengal and with the extension of Patronage to such Brāhmanas by the Kings of Bengal, the movement of the Brāhmanas from Midland gathered momemtum from the middle of the 7th to 12th Century A.D.

Now the question comes why the Kings patronised the Brāhmaṇas in this area. The reasons are - (i) aryanisation of Bengal (ii) to preach aryan culture (iii) supporting the royal class by preaching the King as the incarnation of some god himself on earth. The priestly class received generous donation from the rulers as rewards. This resulted in the creation of tax free landed property of the Brāhmaṇas. We have already noticed that the Brāhmaṇas played significant part in reclaiming the lands and also introducing newer techniques in the field of agriculture, which was naturally helpful for sustaining growing population. Our records however, does not give us any indication whether there were any tension between the village people on the one hand and the Brāhmaṇas on the other. But mere silence about this episode in out available record does not preclude the possibility of the existence of such tensions or hostility between the two classes.

In the following pages we seek to present an account of religions and religious ideas with which the rulers of the Minor dynasties were associated. From a careful study of our sources of information it is evident that these rulers were generally the followers of Vaishṇavism, Śaivism, Śaktism and Buddhism.

It is interesting to note in this connection that inspite of great popularity of solar cult i.e. Worship of Sūrya in different parts of Bengal during our period of study, this could not appeal much to the rulers of minor dynasties under discussion. This is because of their devotion or adherence to the worship of principal forms Brāhmaṇical religion or Buddhism. We are here inclined to discuss those religions cults only.

Vaishṇavism : Vishṇu is represented as one of the great Gods in some section of the Ṛigveda . He was not regarded as the greatest God in the early Vedic times. The Ṛigveda conceives Vishṇu as one of the manifestations of the sun [27]. God Vishṇu is noted in the Vedic tradition for his exploits of traversing the whole of the universe with three strides [28]. He, however, had emerged as the most influential member of the Brāhmaṇical triad in the epic and purāṇic periods[29]. "This Vishṇu round whom one of the major Brāhmaṇical cults grew up, was really a result of the syncretism of three God concepts; the man-God Vāsudeva - Kṛishṇa, the Vedic sun God Vishṇu and the cosmic God Nārāyaṇa of the Brāhmaṇas" [30]

The popularity of the cult of Vishṇu has been demonstrated by the discovery of numerous Vishṇu images from all over Bengal. The earliest reference to this cult is found

in short record of three lines engraved on the back wall in a hill named Susunia in Bāṅkurā.
It certainly refers to the dedication of the cave to Chakrasvāmin, i.e. Vishṇu [31]. It was probably an inscription of the 4th Centuary A.D.

Another inscription dated 447-8 A.D. found at Baigrām [32] in the Bogrā district refers to a gift of land for the purpose of making an endowment for defraying the expenses of the "repairs of the temple of Lord Govindasvāmin, when damaged or dilapidated and for the performance of the daily worship with perfumery, incense, lamp and flowers".

A Dāmodarpur inscription [33] of the time of Budha Gupta (477-95 A.D.) speaks of the Gods Śvetavarāhasvāmin and Kokāmukhasvāmin, both representing the Varāha Avatāra. The temples of these Gods stood on the Himavac - Chikhara (Peak of the Himalayas) apparently at Varāhachhatra (Varāha Kshetra) at the junction of the river Kauśikī and Kokā in Nepal [34].
In the fifth Century A.D., an inhabitant of North Bengal seems to have visited Varāha-Kshetra or Kokāmukha tīrtha on pilgrimage and constructed temples for the installation of two deities of the same name near Damodarpur in North Bengal [35].

The Gunaighar inscription of the time of Vainya Gupta of the 6th Century A.D. mentions the name of Pradyumneśvara [36]. The form continued to be popular in the Sena period also when the same form occurs in the Deopārā inscription of Vijayasena [37].

Another trace of the worship of the avatāra of Vishṇu may be found in the Tippera copper plate of Lokanātha [38] in the 7th Century A.D. where Loknātha granted lands, for the temple of Lord Ananta - Nārāyaṇa, in an almost inaccessiple forest region in Tippera district.

The Kṛishṇa cult is supposed to have formed an important element of Vaishṇavism in Bengal as early as the 6th or 7th centuries A.D. Excavation at Pāhārpur unearthed a number of images and the terracottas relating to the life and exploits of Kṛishṇa. It includes such scenes as the lifting of the mountain Govardhana, the deaths of Chānura and mushṭika in wrestling combat with Kṛishṇa and Balarāma, the uprooting of the Arjuna trees and the killing of the demon Keśi [39]. The most interesting among the sculptured scenes at Pāhārpur is the representation of Kṛishṇa engaged intimately with a lady. Some scholars have identified the lady with Rādhā, a very important feature of Bengal Vaishṇavism in later years [40]. But this has

been rejected by some others who think that the Rādhā-Krishna cult developed later on and Jayadeva was the chief architect of it.

The same feature of the patronage to Vaishṇavism by the rulers prevailed from the 8th Century A.D. The Khālimpur inscription of the time of Dharmapāla [41] tells us about the temple of Nanna-Nārāyaṇa. Nanna was probably the name of the person who had installed the image, a very common and popular custom observed throughout India in the early periods. In the names of the Pāla Kings also we come across Vaishṇava influence. Gopāla remained a favourite name among the Pāla rulers, so also Nārāyaṇa, Vigraha, Rāma, Madana etc. This was owing to the close contact between the two religious and Buddha was held as one of the ten avatāras of Vishṇu.

The recently published Maināmatī plate [42] of Ladaha Chandra of the Chandra dynasty proves that owing to the influence of Vaishṇavism he, though a member of the Buddhist royal family repuditated the Buddhist faith of his prececessors and granted land in favour of a Vaishṇava deity in the name of Vāsudeva - Bhattāraka. Lakshmaṇasena and his successor, Viśvarūpa, show special leaning to the Vaishṇavite cult and their inscriptions

begin with the invocation of Nārāyaṇa [43]. The Belāva copper plate [44] of the Varman King Bhojavarman containing a seal with the representation of Vishnu's seal at the top, opening with 'Om Siddhiḥ' and with the Vaishṇavite geneology point to the staunch Vaishṇavite leanings of the family.

The representation of Vishṇu of Garuḍa in the seal of the Mehār copper plates of Dāmodaradeva [45] is certainly symbolical of the Vaishṇavite faith of the King Dāmodara. The Vaishṇavite faith of the royal family to which Dāmodara belonged is evident from his name as well as of his three predecessors. N.G. Majumdar has observed that the dynasty professed the Vaishṇava faith like the Varmans and the Senas [46].

From the foregoing discussion, we may form some idea about some special features of Vaishṇavism in Bengal during the period of our study. It is evident from epigraphic records that six special forms of Vishṇu, Viz, Govindasvāmin, Śveta-varāhasvāmin, Kokāmukha-svāmin, Pradymneśvara, Ananta-Nārāyaṇa and Nanna-Nārāyaṇa were worshipped in Bengal. During the Pre-Chaitanya age the chief object of worship was probably Vishṇu of whom Krishṇa might have been regarded as one on the many incarnations. In the Belāva copper plate of Bhojavarma

mention is made of Śrī Krishṇa who might have been regarded as one of the many incarnations. In the Belāva copper plate of Bhojavarman mention is made of Śrī Krishṇa not only as the Mahābhārata-sūtradhara but also as gopi-śata Kelikāra of Śrīmad-bhāgavata although he is still an incarnation and not the supreme deity himself.

It is probable that Vaishṇava bhakti cult emerged after the advent of the Senas in Bengal. Some are of the opinion that the advent of the Karṇātas in Bengal with the advent of the Chedi prince Karṇadeva introduced the Śrīmad-bhāgavata emotionalism which had its most probable origin in Southern India and it is of much importance that the Senas, who were probably Vaishṇavas, are described in inscriptions as Karṇāta Kshatriya [47].

Another complicted problem is the influence of the Pancharātra system on Bengal Vaishṇavism. In this contest the observation of P.C. Bagchi seems to be very reasonable. According to him, "The Vyūha-Vāda which was the central idea of the Pancharātra is absent from the Bhāgavatism of the Guptas which appears as a syncretism of various Vaishṇavite beliefs which came to stay in the country.

It is this Vaishṇavism which had found its way to Bengal in the Gupta period and had been firmly established in the Pāla period" [48].

Śaivism : Siva, associated not only with the act of saṁhāra (destruction), but also with those of Sṛishṭi (creation), sthiti (preservation), anugraha (favour) and tirobhava (power of concealment), emerged as a sectarian God almost simultaneously with Vaishṇavism round about 4th or 5th Century B.C. Some of the characteristics of Śiva were furnished by the non-vedic peoples as early as the Harappan culture[49].

According to some scholars, Śaivism originated in the east among the Vrātyas or outcastes. But P.C. Bagchi refuted this by stating that it would be unreasonable to think that Śaivism originated in Eastern India among the Vrātyas or outcastes who did not conform to the rules of the orthodox Vedic religion [50].

The deity was represented in the beginning aniconically but later icons developed. The Liṅga form of God however continued to be most popular and slowly came to occupy the sanctum cella of the Śaivite temple [51]. In the Gupta period Śiva became an established diety.

It is learnt from the Damodarpur copper plate of Buddha Gupta that before the end of the 5th Century A.D., Śiva was worshipped in liṅga form even in the most inaccessible parts of Northers Bengal [52]. The cult of Śiva obtained the patronage in Eastern Bengal, for the Gunaighar Grant represents Mahārājā vainyagupta as 'Mahādeva Pādānudhyāta'.

Terracotta liṅgas have been discovered in the Pāhārpur. Saivism also enjoyed the patronage of Śaśāṅka and Bhāshkarvarman in the 7th Century A.D.

With the advent of the liberal Pāla Kings in the political scene, there occurred liberal attitude in the religio-cultural atmosphere and there was practically no obstacle in the field of Śiva and Vishṇu worship. The Bodhgayā inscription of Dharmapāla refers to the installation of fourfaced image of Mahādeva in Gayā [53].

The Pāla power received temporary setback, during the rule of Nārāyaṇapāla (861-916 A.D) by the arrival of the Kambojas. Kuñjaraghaṭāvarsha, a ruler of the Kamboia family, occupied Gauḍa throne and established a Śiva temple at Devīkoṭa[54], Nārāyaṇapāla, being a Paramasaugata, patronised the construction of a "Sahasrāyatana" temple of Śiva Bhaṭṭāraka at Tirubhukti [55].

Rājyapāla, the son and successor of Nārāyaṇapāla, was instrumental in building an enormous Śiva establishment at Brihaddhatta as is evident from the Bhaturiya inscription [56].

The excavation of Bāngaḍ inscription has thrown much light on the religion of the Pāla Kings [57]. The inscription refers to the stupendous Śaiva establishment in honour of Śaivāchārya Indraśiva at Davīkoṭa under the patronage of the King Mahīpāla. According to D.C. Sircar, it appears from the discovery of the plate that Māhipāla probably inclined towards the Śaiva religion [58]. Nayapāla (1027 - 43 A.D.) and his son Vigrahapāla III (1043 - 70 A.D.), inherited the Śaiva religious tradition. It is evident from the Bāngaḍ Praśasti of Nayapāla that Śaivāchārya Sarvaśiva was the 'Guru' of Nayapāla. It may not be wrong to infer from it that Nayapāla was a convert to Śaivism.

The Amgachi inscription of Vigrahapāla III [59] refers probably to temple of Mahākāla, a popular form of Saiva temple, at Brāhmaṇīgrāmamaṇḍala. The Paśchimbhāg copper plate of Śrīchandra [60] (925 - 75 A.D.) also refers to the temple of Mahākāla. So it is evident that Mahākāla was one of the popular from of Śiva worshipped in Bengal during the Pāla-Chandra period.

King Govinda Chandra, (1020 - 55 A.D.) the last King of the Chandra probably repudiated Buddhism and became a Śaiva and made his grant in favour of the dancing form of Śiva called Naṭesvara [61], whose worship might have been popularised in Bengal by the South Indian settlers.

The Sadāśiva image of Śiva is found on the seals of the copper plates of the Sena Kings, such independent figures of the God, representing the description given in the Uttara Kāmikāgama and the Garuda purāṇa [62], are found in karge number. A specimen of this type of sculpture has been preserved in the Indian Museum, bearing the inscription No. B. The sculpture is finely carved specimen of Pāla art. The image of Naṭarāja Śiva, one of the important aspects of the God Śiva has been discovered in Bengal. This type of Śiva worship is supposed to have been brought from Southern India.

Umā-Maheśvara aspect is one of the commonest from of images associated with the Śaiva cult found in Eastern India [63]. The extreme frequency of such images in Eastern India can be explained by the fact that these are the regions where Tāntric cult, originated and developed to a large extent.

There is another variety of Śiva and Śakti merged in one body, the right half being male and the left female. This is the Ardhanārīśvara form of Siva which is comparatively rare in Bengal. The purāpārā image of that type is a fine piece of sculpture of the Pāla age [64].

The terrific aspects of the God Śiva were also iconographically represented. The four armed image of Vaṭuka-Bhairava discovered in the Dinajpur district. The image stands in a Pratyālidha posture on a severed human head [65].

Ś a k t i : The worship of the female principle held as the mother Goddess seems to have existed in some form or other among the people of Indus Valley [66]. Though the vedic seers put more importance to the male deities, they were supposed to have well understood the importance of female energy from very early days. This brought about the creation of such Goddess as Āditi, Ūmā, Pṛithivī, Vāe besides Sarasvatī, Rātri, Dhishanā and few other Goddess whose glory are sung in the Ṛigveda [67]. The Devīmāhātmya section of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa contains the most important elements of the Śākta cult [68]. The devīstutis describe different strands contributed to the growth of the composite cult Goddess. It may be held that the

esoteric tenets of the Śāktas took long time to attain full development and the extant Tāntric texts explaining these doctrines cannot be taken back beyond the early medieval period[69].

R.P. Chandra [70] has suggested that Śaktism originated in the Eastern countries of the outer Aryan belt such as Bengal, North Bihar and Gujrat. He even asserted that the Śakti culture was revealed in Gauḍa. Dr. P.C. Bagchi has refuted this on the ground that "There were mountain Goddesses like Vindyavāsīnī, the vegetation deities like Śākambharī etc., but these did not give rise to Śaktism. The basis of Śaktism was a well-established system of Philosophy like Sāṁkhya in which Prakṛiti and Purusha play the same role as that of the Śakti and Śiva"[71]. He traces the origin of Śakti cult directly from of the Śaiva canon.

The Devīpurāṇa, a text composed about the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th Century A.D. shows that she was worshipped in different forms various Devī temples are mentioned in the Pāla records. It is evident from the study of the siyan inscription [72] that the divine mother in varous forms was already populat in Bengal. The Piṅgalāryādevī is mentioned in the verse 63 of the same inscription. These inscriptions

show that the idea of divine mother was quite a popular feature in Bengal.

Ambikā aspect of the Goddess was one of the popular features of the worship of Śakti during the period of our study. In the Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā[73] and Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa Ambikā appears as the sister of Rudra, but in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka [74], she is known as the consort of the latter. The Brāhma-vaivarta-purāṇa [75] gives a long list of various names of Durgā which includes the name of Ambikā. From the explanations of different texts, it appears that it represented the placid aspect of the Goddess. Among other images of this aspect of the Goddess, the Pāhārpur image of the Goddess Ambikā, with two arms seated in lahitāsana on lotus pedestral, attracts our attention. According to P.K. Bhattacharyya, "the simplicity of the whole composition marks it out as one of the fine specimen of Pāla art (late 10th Century A.D.") [76].

The standing four armed images of the Goddess Pārvatī are very common in eastern India, Particularly in Bengal. Description of some placid aspects of Durgā are found included in the list mentioned in the Prakṛiti-Kāṇḍam of the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa [77]. It is difficult to distinguish one aspect of this class with others, unless the name is written on the pedestal.

All these are the placid aspects of the Durgā images, but the Goddess like her consort Śiva, had her terrific or ugra form. Mythologically, the most important among them is the Mahisāsura - Mardinī images. Among the different varieties of Durgā images, the Mahisāsura - Mardinī type is the most popular Goddess in India and Bengal in particular, from an early time. The earliest reference to the Goddess Durgā (Durgī) occurs in the Taittirīya Ār-ṇyaka in which two other names of the Goddess i.e. Kātyāyanī and Kanyā-Kumārī have been added [78]. The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa describes in a characteristic way how the Goddess came out of the accumulated fury not only of Brahmā, Vishṇu and Śiva, but also of all other Gods when the Gods were defeated by the Buffaloe demon (Mahisāsura) in the initial stage of the rise of the demon [79]. She is represented in icons with 2,4,8,12,16,20 and even 32 hands [80]. Prabhāvati, the queen of Devakhaḍga caused the construction of Sarvāṇī image of eight arms in the 7th Century A.D. A very interesting sculpture with ten armed image of Mahisamardinī, discovered at Sakla (Dacca) with a padestal inscription describing it as 'Śrī-Māsika-Chaṇḍī' represents the character of the 12th Century A.D. [81]. The relief of Nava Durgā from Porsha (Dinajpur) represents an extremely rare type consisting of nine figures of Mahisamardinī, one represented as the central piece with eight other miniatures grouped round it. The central figure

is eighteen armed while the rest are endowed with sixteen arms[82].

B u d d h i s m : The predominance of the Brāhmanical culture brought about wrath among the non-Aryan people. The elaborate system of sacrifice associated with the Brāhmanical religion falled to gratify the religious aspirations of all sections of people. This led to religious speculations of a different type and thinkers like the author of the Mundaka - Upanishad [83] began to question the value and efficacy of sacrifice

It is difficult to ascertain definitely the first entry of Buddhism in Bengal. According to the sanskrit work Vinaya which usually preserves the tradition of Pre-Aśokan times, the Eastern limit of Āryāvarta was upto Pundravardhana [84]. If it is accepted, then it may be assumed that Buddhism had obtained some footing in North Bengal even before the coming of Aśoka to power. The Buddhist canonical work Saṁyuktanikāya as well as the introduction of the Telapatta Jātaka speak even of Buddha's visit to a locality in the Sum-ha country in South-West Bengal. But the life story of Buddha as recorded in the early Buddhist literature indicates that Buddha's activities were limited to North and South Bihar as well as the Eastern part of Uttar Pradesh [85].

Whatever it may be, the gact cannot be denied that Buddhism gained firm hold during the time of Aśoka (269-232 B.C) who was great champion and propagator of Buddhism [86]. According to Hiuen-Tsang, Aśoka built many Buddhist monastaries in different parts of Bengal [87]. The Mahāsthān fragmentary stone inscription of the 3rd Century B.C. clearly indicates that Buddhism was firmly established in Puṇḍra-nagara at that time [83]. Subsequently Vaṅga became famous as one of the centres of Buddhism. This has been proved by the mention of Vaṅga in a list of Buddhist countries found in Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscription the third Century A.D.[89] but the progress of Buddhism in Bengal from the decline of the Manryas and the rise of the Guptas cannot be determined owing to the paucity of materials.

The Chinese Pilgrim I-tsing who travelled in India in 671-95 A.D. saw the ruins of the 'temple of China' which was built up under the patronage of a King Śrī Gupta about 500 years before his visit. It was built up near Mṛigaśikhāvana or Mṛigasthāpana in Varendra (North Bengal) for some Chinese Pilgrims [90]. It may be supposed that the first Gupta King was devoted to Buddhism. The Bhaikṣuki inscription, preserved in Malda Museum, proves that there were foreign monks residing in Varendra [91].

The first definite evidence of the prosperity Buddhism in Bengal is furnished by the accounts of Fa-hien who visited in the first part of the fifth Century A.D. He visited Tāmralipti, the sea port in the South Bengal where he found Buddhism in flourishing condition. There were 22 monasteries with resident monks and Fa-hien stayed there for two years writing out his Sūtras and drawing picture of images [92].

We may form a fairly good idea of the condition of Buddhism in the 7th Century A.D. from the detailed accounts of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang who visited Bengal in about 637 A.D. According to him, there were 20 Buddhist monasteries and above 3000 Brethrens in Puṇḍravardhana, and 30 Buddhist monasteries and above 2000 Brethren in Samaṭata [93]. The biggest of the monasteries was the Po-shi-no monastery [94] where about 700 monks lived and some of them were distinguished in Eastern India. Cunningham had identified the Po-shi-no Vihāra with a site called Bhasuvihara near Mahāsthān in Bogrā [95].

The Chinese pilgrim Sheng-chi, who visited India in the second half of the 7th Century A.D., has left a valuable account of the state of Buddhism in Samaṭata. According to him, the King of the country at that time was Rājabhaṭa who was a devoted worshipper of triratna and played the part of a great

Upāsaka. He used to read hundred thousand ślokas of Mahāprajñā-pāramitāsūtra and there were more than 4000 monks and nuns in Samataṭa at that time [96]. The King Rājarāja belonged to the Khaḍga dynasty of Samataṭa in second half of the 7th Century A.D.

The Chinese accounts undoubtedly prove that Tāmralipti was an important centre of Buddhist studies and Buddhism was in a flourishing condition all over Bengal at least in the seventh Century A.D.

The Kingly house that took up the reins of political control in Bengal was the house of the Palās. It ruled for four hundred years over Bengal and Bihar. The above discussion proves that the establishment of the Buddhist Pāla dynasty in Bengal about the middle of the 8th Century A.D., may not be a fortuitous event, but was facilitated by the growing dominance of Buddhism in this region. The rule of the Pālas saw the heyday of Buddhism, but Buddhism declined and ultimately disappeared from Bengal after them and whereever it remained it changed its basic characteristics.

It may be mentioned here that the Goddess Tārā appears to have been originally worshipped by some aboriginal people probably of Eastern India and was adopted in both the

Brāhmanical and Buddhist pantheons in the early centuries of the Christian era [97].

Among other monarteries, flourished during that time, mention may be made of the Traikūṭaka, Devīkoṭa, Panditā, Sannagara, Phullahari, Paṭṭikeraka, Vikramapurī and Jagaddala. The royal patronage has always been an important factor in the growth of religious sects into importance and Bengal enjoyed it to the full during the period between 750 - 1150 A.D. Not only the Pālas, but even the minor ruling dynasties during the period were ardent followers of Buddhism [98].

It appears from the study of the inscriptional sources that many of the Buddhist and Jaina religious establishments were patronised by the Brāhmanical Hindus and that the Buddhists and Jains were not socially distinct from the ordinary Hindus. It is recorded in Pāhārpur inscription of 479 A.D. that a Brāhmaṇa named Nāthaśarman and his wife Rāmi donated land for Jain monastery [99]. It has been recorded in the Gunaighar grant that a Buddhist monastery was made by a Śaiva King [100]. It has been informed in the kailan inscription [101], of a Vaishṇava King Śrīdhāraṇarāta, that a piece of land was donated to Bhāgavat Tathāgata or Ratna traya (Buddhist trinity of Buddha,

Dharma and Sangha) for the reading and writing of Buddhist religions texts as well as to a number of Brāhmaṇas for the performance of their Pañca-mahāyañja. It appears from the fact noted above that "in the 7th Century A.D. when the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist philosophers were busy in refuting one another's view, the life of the ordinary man was marked by absolute toleration" [102].

The royal family of the Chandras of South-East Bengal adopted Buddhism. The Kings of the dynasty were called Parama-Saugata. The grants of Śrīchandra were made in the name of the Buddha-bhaṭṭāraka [103]. The recently published Maināmati plates [104] of Laḍaha Chandra (1000-20) and Govinda Chandra (1020 - 55 A.D.), however, show that the latest members of the Chandra family repudiated the Buddhist faith and they made grants of land in favour of a Vaishṇavite or Śaivite diety. Laḍaha Chandra's gifts were made in favour of the Vaishṇavite God Laḍahamādhava bhaṭṭāraka installed by and named after himself [105]. Govindachandra made his grant in favour of the dancing from of Śiva called Naṭeśvara [106].

The Bhagalpur plate of the Parama-Saugata Nārāyaṇa-pāla (854 - 908 A.D.) records the gift of a village in favour

of the temple of Śiva-bhaṭṭāraka and the Pāśupatāchārya Parisad in a locality of Kalasapta [107]. This inscriptions appears to indicate a sort of repprochment between Śaivism and Buddhism.

The repprochment between Vaishṇavism and Buddhism is traced in Vajrayogini tortoise shell inscription of the Varman King Sāmalavarman of the 11th Century A.D. It has been described "Namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya / Namo Budhāya // Savasti-niśreyasāy = āstuJino Jinānām " = "Adoration to the Buddha. May the Jina (Buddha) be for the prosperity and salvation "[108].

The Nārāyaṇapur inscription of the time of Mahīpāla I (988 - 1088 A.D.) indicates a sort of merger of the Buddhists in the Hindu community [109]. The above view has also been supported by the Mandhuk inscription [110]. According to the Mandhuk inscription, a merchant named Buddhamitra who was the son of Jambhalamitra of Samataṭa caused the establishment of an image Vināyaka Brāhmaṇical God. This fact seems to indicate that Buddhamitra and Jambhalamitra were Buddhists, but were Hinduised enough to pay homage to the Brāhamaṇical deity or that their family had been Buddhist at an earlier date, although they were themselves followers of the Brāhmaṇical faith [111].

The ordinary Buddhist house holders had perhaps no real touch with the Buddhist philosophers. The Mahāyāna Buddhists worshipped icons quite similar to that of Brāhmaṇical Gods and Goddesses. This might have wiped away gradually the barriers between the two religions. According to D.C. Sircar, "In the early medieval age, Buddhists appear to have been joining the worship of Brāhmaṇical deities and social and religious festivals of the Hindus and were enjoying recitations, on such occasions, of stories from Brāhmaṇical literature alongwith their Hindu neighbours who adopted wholly or partly some Buddhist deities including the Buddha himself and certain Buddhist social and religious festival"[112]. The old Mahāyāna form of Buddhism was transferred into mystic forms known as Vajrayāna and Tantrayāna, more specifically Sahajayāna and Kālachakrayāna. Much of the religious concepts of these sects were adopted by the Tāntrika school and various other religion communities of the Hindus[113]. This led to the ultimate decline of Buddhism in Bengal.

Another contributing factor was the rise of Senas who were the followers of orthodox Brāhamaṇical religion and due to the absence of royal patronage Buddhism lost its importance in Bengal which had been its last refuge. Another important blow was the indirect economic disability produced by the

arrival in Bengal of invading Muslim troops covering off the land, thus rendering popular economic support of the Saṅgha impossible to maintain. Once the critical situation had been reached all the forces detrimental to the survival of Buddhism would have been brought into play. Loss of popular support because of economic shortage denied to the Saṅgha the chance of being popularly maintained [114].

The Pālas advocated a policy of compromise in social and cultural spheres with Brāhmaṇical Hinduism for political and diplomatic reasons. The Senas tried to build up the Society on the basis of rigidity of caste system resulting the decline of the policy of compromise with different religious sects pursued by the Pālas. According to M.R. Tarafdar the excessive dependence upon agriculture and the neglect of trade during that time and the consequent derogation of the position industrial and Business class who were the mainstay of Buddhism, sounded the death knell of Buddhism in Bengal [115].

Conclusion : From the foregoing discussion we may discern certain striking features of religious system in Bengal down to the end of Hindu rule. One of the most significant feature was the importance of Buddhism in Bengal. On the basis of the evidence of Hiuen-Tsang we may assume that

Buddhists and Jainas almost out numbered the followers of the Brāhmanical religion. The Patronage of the Khadgas, Pālas, Chandras, Kāntideva saved that religion from the fate which occurred to it in other parts of India. But all these could not curb the dominance of the Brāhmanical religion inspite of the royal patronage in favour of Buddhism.

Another important feature was the absence of sectarian jealousy among the followers of different creeds. The Catholic attitude of the Buddhist rulers may be cited for example. Some of the Buddhist rulers are given credit in official records for maintaining orthodox social order. Some of rulers built various temples of Śiva and Vishṇu and reverently poured sacrificial water upon their head. Prabhavāti, the queen of Devakhadga, set up the image of Chandī. Chitramatikā, the Chief queen of Madanapāla regarded it meritorious to hear the recital of the Mahābhārata. One of the reasons may be that the royal families of Bengal often sought matrimonial relations with the important Brāhmanical royal families like the Rāshṭrakūṭas, the Kalachuris etc. The religion of the queens influenced the religions lives of Kings of Bengal very often. Another important factor, as assessed by some, may be due to the political necessity rather than to a firm religious conviction [116].

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Appendix

Coinage of Bengal

The significance of the study of coins for the reconstruction of the history of ancient India is well known to the Indologists. A large number of Kings of the country are known only from their coins. Many a historical facts are known from coins. In addition to political history, a series of information on social, religious and economic life as also the polity and administration, palaeography and language, fine arts and geography are also known by coins.[1]

The introduction of minted metallic coins is an important step towards the progress of civilization. Controversy arises as to the first introduction of minted metallic coin in Bengal. The system of barter and also some kind of commodity money could have been employed for economic transaction in the pre-Maurya times in the different areas of Bengal and they were at least partly replaced by coin money with the introduction of Punch-marked silver coins in the territories of Rāḍha and Puṇḍra and the South-Western part of the Vaṅga region probably in the age of the Maurya administration from about the late 4th early 2nd Century B.C. The

The information available to us cannot definitely prove the regular use of coins of this class in other parts of Bengal, though a fair number of coins of that type have been excavated in the Vaṅga and Samataṭa regions of Bengal. It may be conceded that the silver punch-marked coins came into circulation in the Vaṅga and Samataṭa regions by way of trade, but no new coin was minted in those divisions.[2] Recently a hoard of 174 silver punch-marked coins has been found in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal[3] and another hoard of about 600 similar silver pieces have been found in the Comilla district.[3]

In addition to silver punch-marked coins and the circulation of courries in different regions of Bengal, copper punch-marked issues, struck on the weight standard of silver punch-marked pieces (32 ratties or 57.6 grains) were used in the Rāḍha and the Puṇḍra regions of early Bengal.[4]

The cast copper series (based on the weight system of silver punch-marked coins) was introduced in the 2nd Century B.C. in the territorial divisions of Rāḍha and Puṇḍra regions of early Bengal[5] and in the 2nd Century A.D. it became, to some extent, metrologically and typologically, integrated with a copper series based on the imitations of Kushāṇa coins which

found their way to Bengal by way of trade. It has been recently discovered that a powerful class of traders from the North-Western sections of the Indian Sub-continent migrated into the different areas of Bengal, particularly in the Rādha region, during the Kushāṇa Age. This powerful section of traders started their activities in Vaṅga from about the 2nd half of the 1st Century A.D. to about the early 5th Century A.D. During this period a new series of cast copper coins developed which was based on the Kushāṇa coins, but integrating, to some extent, metrologically and typologically, the indigenous cast species.[6]

A few gold coins of the Kushāṇa Kings have been discovered in Bengal, but there is no evidence to show that they were used as medium of exchange within the territories. They might have come by way of trade, along with pilgrims or in the trail of an invading army.[7]

The coinage of Bengal took a turn with the establishment of the Gupta rule in Bengal. It is known from the epigraphic records of the Gupta period that two varieties of coins, namely the Dīnāra (gold coin) and the rūpaka(the silver coin) were widely circulated in different areas of Bengal and the rate of exchange between the Dīnāra and the

Rūpaka coins was 1 : 16.[8]

Now it is not difficult to ascertain the ratio between two metals, if the weight of the gold and silver coins is definitely known. It is known that the exchange relation between the metallic value of dīnāra and rūpaka was 1:4.[9]

However, a question naturally comes to our mind as to the steady fall of the value of gold in relation silver in the 5th Century A.D. It may be due to the sudden stoppage of the importation of silver. This stoppage may be connected with the break-up of the Roman Empire in the 5th Century A.D. The more plausible explanation may be that the dīnāra did not refer to original gold coins of the Gupta monarchs, but rather to these light weight, debased gold coins which were usually described as "Imitation Gupta" coins and which had abundant supply in Bengal after the Gupta rule.[10]

It is said that feudalism involving payment for services in land instead of coins developed in an economy characterised by dearth of coins and absence of trade and commerce and this characteristic was prevalent in India after the fall of Guptas.[11] Some scholars take it otherwise.

According to them, a large number of Kings and other agencies of the post-Gupta age are known to have issued coins which have been found in all parts of the country. It is known from various sources that different gold, silver and copper coins like Purāṇa (called also as Kārshāpaṇa, Dharaṇa, Dramma, Rūpaka and Chūrṇī), Māḍa, Dīnāra, Nishka or Suvarṇa, Viṁśopaka or Vīsā, Kalañja, Accu, Paṇa, Varāha and Cowries were extensively used in various parts of Ancient India during that time.[12] On the other hand during that period, the right of minting money was leased to goldsmith who manufactured coins according to the demand of the traders and bankers who were responsible for deciding whether fresh coins were necessary at any particular time. They had to pay a commission for getting bullion minted into coins.[13] According to Hiuen-tsang, who visited the different parts India in the 7th Century A.D. " Rare precious substances of various kinds from the seaports are bartered for merchandize, but in the commerce of the country gold and silver coins, cowries, and small pearls are the media of exchange."[14]

The immediate successors of Bengal after the fall of the Guptas appear to have adhered to the Gupta gold coins, but silver coins were not unknown. This has been highlighted in the

recent discoveries of silver coins of Śaśāṅka as well as the silvers coins of the rulers ruling in South-Eastern parts of Bengal.[15] The cowries could have continued to be in use in the post-Gupta period and pre-pāla period when gold coins were issued in Gauḍa, Vaṅga[16] and Samataṭa region.[17]

Two coins of King Samāchāradeva are known so far. They are both of gold. One of them, of the Rājalīla type was found near Mahammadpur in Jessore district of Bengal along with a gold coin of Śaśāṅka and another gold coin of the light weight "Imitation Gupta" type as well as silver coins of Chandragupta, Skanda Gupta and Kumāragupta.[18]

A careful study of the two coins convinces any scholar that the name of the King is the same as on both the coins and it cannot be read as anything else than Samāchā and the reading is confirmed when we come across the name of a contemporary King Samāchāradeva whose copper plate inscription was discovered not far from the find spot of one of these coins (Rājalīla coin) and the lettering of whose name as written on his copper plate, closely agrees to the lettering on those coins. The coins may be assigned to Samāchāradeva of Ghugrahāti plate.[19]

Mr. Allan attributes the 'Archar type' coins to a period earlier than that of Śaśāṅka[20] and from the supplanting

of Garuda standard of the Guptas by the bull standard on the coin, surmises that the coin was a devout Śaiva. Samāchāradeva must, on palaeographic grounds, be placed earlier than Śaśāṅka in chronology. It may be assigned that Samāchāradeva was the predecessor of Śaśāṅka in the Kingdom of Gauḍa.[21]

Jaya (nāga) is known to us from some gold coins found in Bengal.[22] Allan suggested that the full name might have been Jayanāga and he may be identified with Mahārājādhirāja-Paramabhāgavata-Śrī-Jayanāga-deva, the donor of the Vappaghoshavāṭa charter issued from Karṇasuvarṇa in the Murshidabad district.[23]

On palaeographic consideration the coins of Jayanāga may be placed between 550 - 650 A.D. It is known from the Mañju-Śrīmūlakalpa that the son of Śaśāṅka had a short reign of 8 months and 5 days and was succeeded by a kind named Nāga. If this Nāga is identified with Jayanāga, the reign of Jayanāga may be placed between 640 - 650 A.D. The Goddess on his coin folds her feet in the same manner that is to be seen in the reverse of the coins of Śaśāṅka. But he was Paramabhāgavata or Vaishṇava and so he discontinued the obverse of Śaśāṅka's coin which showed Śiva standing on

Bull. He replaced it by the well established Archer type. The coins of Jayanāga are heavily adulterated and one of his coins in British Museum, No. 614, which was tested had only 34% of gold.[24]

The gold coins of the Samataṭa region have been wrongly described as imitations of Gupta coins. They really formed an independent coin series.[25] The ardha-śatamāna type of coin was introduced by śaśāṅka in that region, but the said coins bear the devices of the Suvarṇa type of coin (śiva on bull Lakṣhmī seated on lotus). These were struck with the weight standard of 90 grains (ardha-śatamāna). Moreover, the percentage of gold in the metal content of the ardha-śatamāna type of coins is higher than that of the issues of the Suvarṇa type of coins. It appears that śaśāṅka tried to introduce a comparatively purer gold specie, perhaps for their ready acceptance in an area which became important in international trade from about the early 7th Century A.D.[26]

The gold specie adopted new devices in the post-śaśāṅka era, though it continued to follow the weight standard of about 90 grains. The best specimen, now preserved in Indian Museum, displays on the obverse a standing male figure holding a bow and an arrow and on the reverse an eight armed Goddess standing

and holding an elephant headed baby. The latter obviously represents Gan-eśa, the deity must be recognised as Durgā or Sarvāṇī the mother of Ganeśa. She has so far been wrongly identified with the Goddess Kālī or with a Buddhist deity.[27]

It became increasingly corrupt on later issues, so much so that after a certain stage of distortion the figure of Ganeśa disintegrated. The quantity of gold in the metal content of the coins and the quality of minting also deteriorated. During this period some gold coins of the imitation Gupta type have been found in the Bogra district of North Bengal and also in the Jessore, Faridpur, Dacca and Comilla districts of East Bengal and in Sundarban area.[27a] These coins often have barbarous look, though some of them are better manufactured.[28]

"The findspots of the coins as well as their association with those of Samāchāradeva and Śaśāṅka in some finds show that the rulers who issued these crude pieces held sway in Eastern Bengal. They were very considerably influenced by Gupta numismatic traditions, but were not slavishly

following them, as is shown by the eight-armed Goddess on the reverse. In their weight and border of thick dots they imitate the half-śatamāna type of śaśāṅka. We may therefore attribute them to some local rulers in Eastern Bengal who ruled after the death of śaśāṅka. To judge from the uniformity of type, these rulers may well have belonged to the same dynasty.[29]

It has been suggested by D.C. Sircar that about the middle of the Seventh Century, the Khaḍga King Deva-khaḍga ousted the Rātarule from Samataṭa which was then annexed to the Khaḍga Kingdom. It seems that Deva Khaḍga and his son and successor Rājarājabhaṭa ruled practically as independent rulers and it was during their rule that the gold coins of the type were issued.[30] It also appears that the same type of coins continued to be issued during the rule of the successors of the Khaḍgas (the Devas of Devaparvata).[31]

A gold coin of the imitation Gupta type was discovered in course of excavation at Mainmati near Comilla in East Bengal. The gold coin has been assigned to the Deva dynasty because it is said that the legend Baṅgāla Mṛigāṅka is also found on the seal attached to King

Bhavadeva's plate discovered at the Salvan Vihar site on the Maināmatī hill.[32] The excavations at Maināmatī further yielded 52 silver coins (of three denomination), 172 silver coins of the highest of the denominations of the same type, the majority of which bear the legend Paṭikera (known to have been an early Medieval city near the Maināmatī hills).[33] With the end of the rule of Bhavadeva of the Deva dynasty towards the end of the 7th or in the early 8th Century A.D, the gold specie ended in the territories of Samataṭa.[34]

The series was supplanted by a class of silver specie bearing the regional name Paṭṭikeḍa. It was based, typologically and metrologically, on the silver coins of Harikela.[35] Harikela region witnessed, in the 7th and 8th Century A.D, the circulation of a series of highly pure silver coins based, typologically and metrologically, on the coinages of the Chandras of Arakan. A coin of full unit weigh C. 8 gms. a piece of three quarter unit c.6 gms, a specimen of half unit C 4 gms, and a sample of quarter unit C. 2 gms. However the weight standard was changed and the flan was gradually made broader and thinner indicating the transition to second series. Palaeographic features of

the legend (Harikela) on different coins indicate the circulation of series II from the 8th/9th to the 12th/13th Century A.D. when at times parts of Harikela were in the Pāla or Sena Kingdom.[36]

It is known from the available data that a complex system of currency prevailed in the Pāla-Sena age (750 A.D. - 1206 A.D.). Its base was maintained by Kapardakas or cowries. No metallic money was coined in the major portion of the Pāla or Sena Kingdom.[37] However some outside coins could have found their way to the territories of Bengal by way of trade and could have been used according to their intrinsic worth. The same silver coin popular in Northern India during the early medieval period is mentioned as Dramma in the Bodhgayā inscription of Dharmapala (775 - 872 A.D).[38] as Purāṇa in the Bhaturiya inscription of Rajyapāla (917-52 A.D)[39] and as Kārshāpaṇa in the Gayā inscription[40] of Govindapāla, though the last document also records the transaction in which the money was paid in Kapardakas or cowries.[41] But large scale transactions could have been done regularly in units of silver and gold dusts(the former weighing 32 rattis and the latter 80 rattis).[42] Each unit of silver

dust conformed to the weight standard of silver Purāṇa which was equal to 1280 cowries and each unit gold 'dust' conformed to the weight standard of gold suvarṇa which was equivalent to 20480 cowries.[43] Thus "dust" silver and gold money had exchange relations with the cowrie money. On the other hand the units of silver dust (mentioned as Chūrṇī in epigraphs) were exchangeable with the silver coin of Harikela having Purāṇa weight standard. The Mehar plate of Dāmodaradeva of the Śaka era 1156, which equates purāṇa with Chūrṇī, suggests also the use of cowries(regulated numbers of which were equal in value of different fractions of Purāṇa or Chūrṇī).[44] Silver coinage was maintained in Harikela because of the comparatively higher pressure of trade. This area probably had enough quantity of silver imported from outside, but genuine copper do not appear to have been minted in the Zone and period in question. The purpose of using copper coins for carrying on daily transaction of small value was perhaps served by cowries.[45]

Conclusion:

On the basis of above observations, based on the latest researches, it may be suggested that the

different geographical divisions of early Bengal did not have uniform system of coinage. The development of currency in one region did not always lead to the similar development in other regions. Coins played an important role in the economic life of the people of Puṇḍra and Rāḍha regions of early Bengal from the Maurya to the Gupta age. Excavations in those regions clearly suggest that Puṇḍravardhana and Rāḍha regions were more prosperous than other regions from the Maurya to the Gupta age. These regions carried on international trade through the ports of Ganga and Tāmralipta during that period.[46]

The base of currency in all divisions was mainly maintained by cowries which were imported from outside. The intrinsic value of the cowries being incorruptible, they remained as a stable medium of exchange throughout the long period.

During the post Gupta and specially during the Pāla-Sena time coins began to play significant part in the economic life of the people of the Vaṅga, Samaṭaṭa and Harikela regions. However, the importance of the Rāḍha and Puṇḍra regions in the commercial life continued

to about the 7th Century A.D. From about this period Samatata and Harikela regions became gradually more important in respect of internal and international trade. The political and cultural centres of Maināmatī and Lālmāi which had grown into Urban complex, had a considerable volume of trade sustained by a system of a standard monetary system.[46a] But it is hardly probable as P.K. Bhattacharyya has noticed that brisk trade was carried on in the narrow region of South-Eastern Bengal without having any impact over other areas of Bengal. The territories of South-Eastern Bengal might have used other regions of Bengal as hinterhand and that augmented the trade and commerce of the area.[46b]

The problem of trade and currency in early Bengal has a theoretical bearing on the question of feudalism. The continuation of trade and the existence of currency may not at all negate the possibilities of agrarian economic forms. Moreover the kind of commercial activities could hardly originate a process of urbanisation that might bring into being a stable commercialized middle class for profits from trade were either appropriated by foreign merchants or frittered away by feudal lords. Capital formation under these conditions must have been impossible and the ruralisation remained unaffected by trade and money economy.[46b]

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9 It is known from the Baigrām plate that weight of the dīnāra varied from 117.8 to 127.3 grains and that of the rūpaka varied from 22.8 to 36.2 grains. The exchange ratio of the metallic value of Gold & Silver coin may be ascertained by taking the average weight of both Gold and Silver coin (122 grain in case of dīnāra and 30 grain in case of rūpaka). Now

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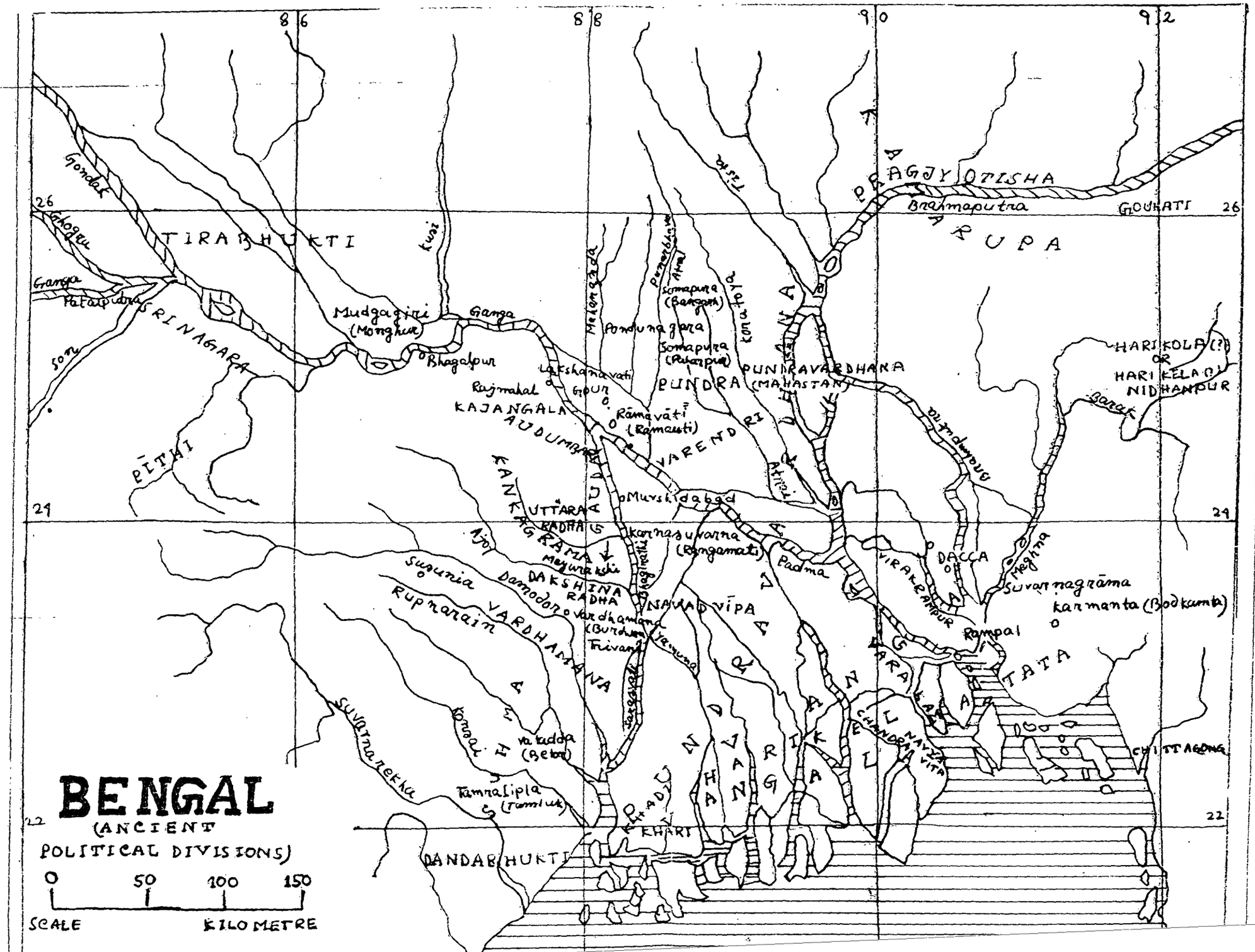
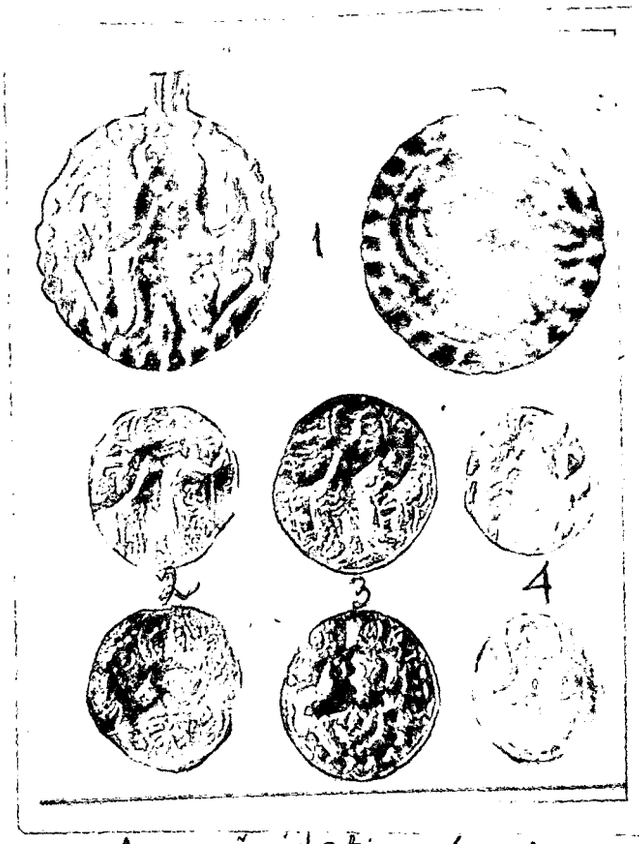

BENGAL
(ANCIENT
POLITICAL DIVISIONS)
0 50 100 150
SCALE KILOMETRE
86
88
90
92
26
29
22
TIRABHUKTI
SRINAGARA
PITHI
Gondak
Ganga
Patalipura
Son
Kosi
Mudgagiri
(Monghyr)
Bhagalpur
Rajmahal
KAJANGALA
Mahananda
Ganga
Lakshmanavati
GAUR
Pandunagara
Somapura
(Bangarh)
Somapura
(Paharpur)
Karatoya
PUNDRA
PUNDRAVARDHANA
(MAHASTAN)
Atrai
Tista
PRAGJYOTISHA
Brahmaputra
GOUHATI
KAMARUPA
HARIKOLA (?)
OR
HARIKELA (?)
NIDHANPUR
Barak
Dhaleshwari
Rāmavāti
(Ramauti)
VARENDRI
UDAKA
Murshidabad
UTTARA RADHA
KANKAGRAMA
Ajoy
Mayurakshi
Kopai
Karnasuvarna
(Rangamati)
Padma
DAKSHINA RADHA
Damodar
Suburnia
Rupnarain
VARDHAMANA
Vardhamana
(Burdwan)
Trivani
Jamuna
NAVADVIPA
Jalangi
Bhagirathi
Hooghly
Tonai
Kakdda
(Betor)
Suvarnarekha
Tamralipta
(Tamluk)
KHARI
DANDABHUKTI
RADHA
SAMATATA
VIRAKHAMPUR
DACCA
Meghna
Suvarnagrāma
Karmanta (Bodkumta)
Rampal
CHANDRA
NAVYA VITA
CHITTAGONG

Pl I



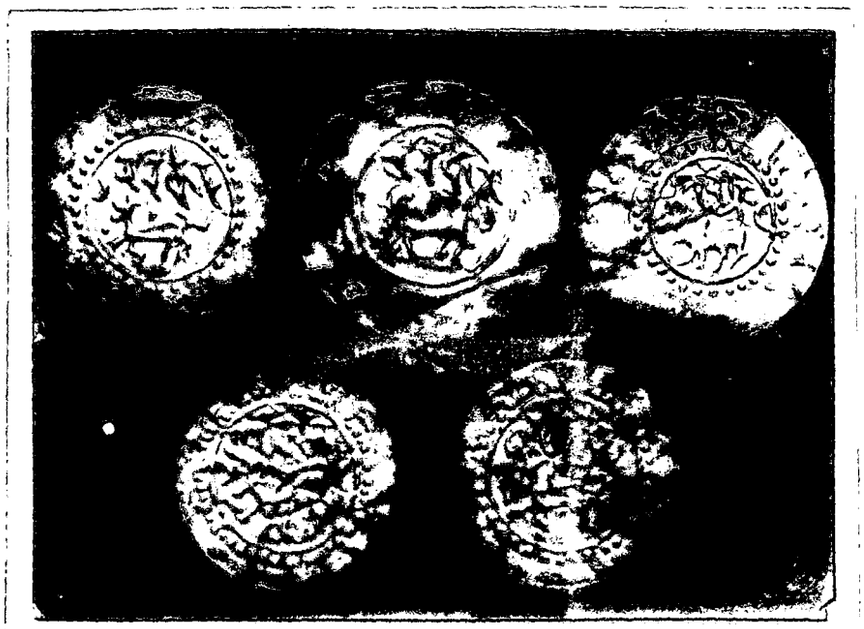
No. 1. An imitation Gupta gold coin from Sundarban of 6th or 7th century A.D

No. 2. An Ascher type debased gold coin of Samāchāradeva

No. 3. An Ascher type debased gold coin, Probably of Samāchāradeva

No. 4. An imitation of Ascher type in debased gold

Pl II



Silver coins of Early Medieval Hari Kela