

A HISTORY OF THE IMPERIAL GUPTAS

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FOREWORD

There is a growing literature on the history of the Imperial Guptas and many great scholars, both Indian and foreign, have made valuable contributions to the interpretation of the source materials and the general elucidation of the subject. It is highly creditable to the young author of this work that in spite of this fact he has been able to throw much new and unexpected light on a number of points of great interest and importance. Anyone who reads the preface of this work, in which the author gives a long list of his own original contributions, may feel sceptic about all that he says. But a perusal of the book leaves no doubt that his claims are certainly based on reasonable grounds. In a subject where available materials are scanty, it would be too much to expect definite conclusions acceptable to all. There is, however, no doubt that on quite large number of debatable issues in the history of the Imperial Gupta dynasty, the author has made a new approach and brought a new outlook, and his conclusions are often very plausible and challenge fresh inquiry and re-examination on the part of scholars. This reflects no small credit upon the young author, and I hope his book will receive the serious attention it deserves and provoke fresh discussions on many unsettled problems regarding the Imperial Guptas.

R. C. Majumdar

P R E F A C E

It may be regarded as an overweeningly audacious presumption on my part to attempt on a subject on the various aspects of which such illustrious scholars as Fleet, Hoernle, Smith, Allan, Rapson, Bhandarkar, Banerji, Jayaswal, Burn, Basak, Aiyangar, Dandekar, Mookerji, Majumdar, Mirashi, Raychaudhuri, Altekar, Agrawala, Basham, Sircar and a host of others have written in their books or articles. But, the main question before these scholars has been 'What happened ?' and not 'Why did it happen ?' Their approach, of course is still justified for many periods of ancient Indian history ; but, I feel, now the time has come when we can endeavour to study political events against the background of the various factors and their operation wherever sufficient data are available. The age of the Imperial Guptas studied in the present monograph, is one of those periods which yield copious material in various spheres of life and make the study of the political developments in their proper contexts possible.

The present work is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter I have analyzed the methods and techniques of studying the various types of data for the reconstruction of the Gupta history. In that context I have, perhaps for the first time, drawn attention to the fact that the authors of the early mediaeval inscriptions were greatly influenced by the contemporary ideas of history and the methods of interpretation and inference current in the literary world of the time. Then I have surveyed the approach of the earlier historians of the Gupta history and have explained the necessity of the study of political history of this period against the background of the various factors operating in society.

Chapter II is devoted to the study of the early Gupta age. The problem of the original home of the Imperial Guptas has been studied from an altogether new angle and it has been shown that they originally belonged to the eastern part of the present Uttar Pradesh

with Prayāga as the early centre of their power. The problem has also been discussed in the context of the various factors leading to the rise of this region. The question of the social *milieu* of the Guptas has been studied afresh and it has been shown that the Imperial Guptas most probably belonged to the Brāhmaṇa order. In this context the significance of the popularity of the Vedic-Agamic movement and the predominance of the Brāhmaṇas in the administrative structure and its effects on the Gupta history have also been pointed out. Then, the emergence of the Gupta dynasty as an Imperial power under Chandragupta I is studied in relation to the contemporary political situation and various other factors. In that connection, the history of some of the contemporary powers, specially that of the Vākātakas, has been dealt with. The chapter contains three appendices, the first of which deals with the early chronology of the Gupta dynasty. It has been shown that the Gupta-Lichchhavi alliance was contracted by Ghaṭotkacha, that the Gupta era was founded by Chandragupta II though it was reckoned from the date of the accession of Chandragupta I, and that Samudragupta ascended the throne in c. 350 AD. Appendix II is concerned with the problem of the authenticity of the Nālandā and the Gayā copper plate grants of Samudragupta and Appendix III with the problem of the attribution of the Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type of coins. New solutions of both these problems have been offered.

Chapter III of the book is devoted to the reign of Samudragupta. The revolt of Kācha has been studied against the background of the various pulls and pressures that marked the debut of Samudragupta as an emperor. The conquests of Samudragupta in the different parts of the country have been studied in the context of the various political, geographical, economic and religious factors. Perhaps, it is for the first time that the contribution of religion to the making of political decisions in that age has been determined with some precision. Further, it has also been shown that Samudragupta led more than one expeditions in the South and that the aim of his adventures in that part of the country was the acquisition of

wealth. The evidence of the *Prayāga prasasti* on his relations with the North-Western foreign potentates has been connected with the tribal movements that took place in Bactria and North-Western India in his reign and also with the evidence of the Meharauli pillar inscription. The identity of the king 'Chandra', mentioned in the Meharauli record, has been discussed in Appendix III of this chapter and it has been suggested that he was perhaps no other than Samudragupta himself. Other appendices of this chapter are concerned with the place of Kācha in the Gupta history, the relative chronology of Samudragupta's campaigns, the capital of the Gupta empire, the date and patron of Vasubandhu and the date of Kālidāsa. I have placed the great poet in the later half of the fourth century A. D.

Chapter IV deals with the reigns of Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I. In the reign of Chandragupta II Western India became the major stage of the drama of political history. In that context the problem of Rāmagupta is studied and an entirely new solution based on a new interpretation of the archaeological, numismatic and literary data is proposed. Then the causes of the Śaka war of Chandragupta II are analysed and his relations with the Vākātakas are discussed and put in their proper historical perspective. It has also been shown that the age of Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I was the period of transformation of the Gupta royalty and the repercussions of this change on the political developments have been pointed out. Then, the Gupta invasion of the Deccan towards the close of the reign of Kumāragupta I is studied in the context of the new alignment powers that took place due to the hostility between the Vākātakas and the Guptas.

Chapter V is devoted to the study of the transformation and decline of the Gupta empire in the period from the accession of Skandagupta to the death of Budhagupta. It is shown that the invasion of the Pushyamitras on the Gupta empire and the invasion of the Vākātakas on Malwa were connected events and were the results of the aggressive policy of the Guptas against the Vākātakas in the preceding reign. The Hūṇa invasion has been studied afresh and the nature of Skandagupta's achievements is

more accurately determined. Then the problem of gradual transformation and decline of the empire is taken up and it is shown, perhaps for the first time, that the influence of Buddhism had much to do with the weakening of the central authority in this period. The genesis of the feudo-federal of the empire and its influence on the fortunes of the state are also discussed. In the two appendices of this chapter respectively, the problems of succession immediately after Kumārgupta I and the order of succession after Skandagupta are dealt with. In the later appendix, a new solution of the problem of the place of Bālādityas in the Gupta history is proposed.

Chapter VI deals with the disintegration and collapse of the Gupta empire. In that connection, the invasion of the Hūṇas under Toramāṇa and Mihirakula is studied and given an entirely new treatment. Further, the expansion of the Hūṇa power has been put in its geographical context and the religious aspect of the Gupta-Hūṇa struggle has been analyzed in detail, perhaps for the first time. It has also been shown how the influence of Buddhist ideology and the feudalization of the state structure undermined the central authority and led to the rise of new powers. In that context the history of some of the new powers has been dealt with. In the appendix of this chapter, which deals with the order of succession after the death of Budhagupta, a new solution of the problem of the place of Prakāśāditya in the Gupta history has been suggested.

I have given above only the main points that I have tried to emphasise upon. I would humbly request the readers to consider further my treatment of minor details here and there.

I am painfully aware that inspite of my best efforts and care some misprints have crept into the work and this I crave the indulgence of my readers.

S. R. Goyal

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I consider it a great honour to have an eminent historian like Dr. R. C. Majumdar to write a Foreword for my book. If he agreed to write it inspite of his many occupations, it was only because of his love for the subject.

I offer my most respectful thanks to Prof. A. L. Basham for going through every line of the entire book and suggesting valuable improvements and corrections. I shall utilize them in the second edition of this work.

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S. R. G.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona.
AHD	Ancient History of the Deccan, by G. Jouveau Dubreuil. Pondicherry, 1920.
AIG	Age of the Imperial Guptas, by R. D. Banerji, Benares, 1933.
AI SIHC	Ancient India and South Indian History and Culture, Vol. I, by S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar. Poona, 1941.
AIU	The Age of Imperial Unity, ed. by R. C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalker. Bombay, 1960.
ĀMMK	Ārya Mañjūśrī Mūla Kalpa.
Arch. Sur. West. Ind.	Archaeological Survey of Western India.
ASI,AR	Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Reports.
Aspects	Aspects of Indian History and Civilization, by Buddha Prakash. Agra, 1965.
Bayana Hoard	Catalogue of the Gupta Gold Coins in the Bayana Hoard, by A. S. Altekar. Bombay 1954.
BEFEO	Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient, Hanoi.
BMC, AI	Catalogue of Coins of Ancient India, (in the British Museum), by John Allan. London, 1936.
BMC, GD	Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Śaśāṅka, king of Gauḍa (in the British Museum), by John Allan. London, 1914.
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.
BV	Bhāratīya Vidyā, Bombay.
CA	The Classical Age, ed. by R.C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker. Bombay, 1962.

Coinage	The Coinage of the Gupta Empire, by A. S. Altekar. Varanasi, 1957.
Comp. Hist. Ind.	A Comprehensive History of India, ed. by K. A. N. Shastri, Calcutta, 1957.
C. P.	Copper Plate.
C. P. P.	Copper Plates.
Corpus	Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum.
DKA	The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age, by F. E. Pargiter. Varanasi, 1962.
DKM	Decline of the Kingdom of Magadha, by B. P. Sinha. Patna, 1954.
Eco. Life.	Economic Life of Northern India in the Gupta Period, by S. K. Maity, 1958.
EHD	Early History of the Deccan, by R. G. Bhandarkar. Poona, 1927.
EHI	Early History of India, by V. A. Smith. Oxford, 1957.
EHNI	Early History of North India, by S. Chattopadhyaya. Calcutta, 1958.
EI	Epigraphia Indica.
GE	The Gupta Empire, by R. K. Mookerji. Bombay, 1948.
G. E.	Gupta Era.
Geog. Fact.	Geographical Factors in Indian History, by K. M. Panikkar. Bombay, 1955.
Giles, Travels	The Travels of Fa-hsien, by H. A. Giles. London, 1928.
Hist. Gup.	A History of the Guptas, by R. N. Dandekar. Poona, 1941.
Hist. Ind.	History of India, 150 A. D. to 350 A. D., by K. P. Jayaswal. Lahore, 1933.
Hist. Ind. Pak. Cey.	Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, ed. by C. H. Philips. London, 1961.
HNEI	The History of North-Eastern India, by R. G. Basak. Calcutta, 1934.
IA	Indian Antiquary, Bombay.

IC	Indian Culture, Calcutta.
IHI	An Imperial History of India in a Sanskrit Text, by K. P. Jayaswal. Lahore, 1934.
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta.
IMC	Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum Calcutta, Vol. I, by V. A. Smith. Oxford, 1906.
INC	Indian Numismatic Chronicle, Patna.
Ind. Feud.	Indian Feudalism : c. 300-1200, by R. S. Sharma. Calcutta, 1965.
Ind. Ep.	Indian Epigraphy, by D. C. Sircar. Delhi, 1965.
Ins.	Inscriptions.
Int. Ind. Hist.	An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, by D. D. Kosambi. Bombay, 1956.
Intro.	Introduction.
JA	Journal Asiatique, Paris.
JAHR	Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society, Rajamundry.
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society, New Haven (U. S. A.).
JARS	Journal of the Assam Research Society, Gauhati.
JASB	Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay.
JBORS	Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna.
JBRS	Journal of the Bihar Research Society, Patna.
JGNJRI	Journal of the Ganga Nath Jha Research Institute, Allahabad.
JIH	Journal of Indian History, Trivandrum.
JNSI	Journal of the Numismatic Society of India, Varanasi.
JOI	Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda.

JOR	Journal of the Oriental Research, Madras.
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London.
JRASB(L)	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal : Letters, Calcutta.
JUG	Journal of the University of Gauhati, Gauhati.
JUPHS	Journal of the U. P. Historical Society, Lucknow.
Life	The Life of Hiuen Tsiang, by the Shaman Hwui Li, with an Introduction etc. by Samuel Beal. London, 1914.
Martin	'Coins of the Kidāra Kushāṇas', by M. F. C. Martin in the JRASB(L), III, Numismatic Supplement, XLVII, pp. 23-50.
MA SI	Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India.
Mbh.	Mahābhārata
NHIP	A New History of the Indian People, Vol. VI., ed. by R. C. Majumdar and A. S. Altekar. Lahore, 1946.
Num. Chron. (NC)	Numismatic Chronicle.
Num. Suppl. (NS)	Numismatic Supplement.
P.	Purāṇa.
PHAI	Political History of Ancient India by H. C. Raychaudhuri. Calcutta, 1953.
PIHC	Proceedings of the Indian History Congress.
POC	Proceedings of the All-India Oriental Conference.
Records	Buddhist Records of the Western World (Si-yu-ki), by S. Beal. London, 1906.
RV	Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa.
Ś. E.	Śaka Era.
Sel. Ins.	Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization, Vol. I, ed. by D. C. Sircar. Calcutta, 1942.

SHAIB	Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal, by B. C. Sen. Calcutta, 1942.
Studies	Studies in Indian History and Civilization, by Buddha Prakash. Agra, 1962.
Suc. Sat. Low. Dec.	The Successors of the Sātavāhanas in the Lower Deccan, by D. C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1939.
Travels	On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, by T. Watters. Delhi, 1961.
Vākāṭaka Rājavarṇśa	Vākāṭaka Rājavarṇśa kā Itihāsa tathā Abhilekha (In Hindi), by V. V. Mirashi. Varanasi, 1964.
V. E.	Vikrama Era.
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.

CONTENTS

Foreword	v
Preface	vi
Acknowledgements	x
Abbreviations	xii
CHAPTER I : METHOD AND APPROACH	1—40
Decipherment of Gupta script, 1; Work of the early epigraphists, 3; Achievement of General Cunningham, 4.	
Epigraphic Evidence	6
Nature of epigraphic evidence, 6; Private records, 7; Royal records, 8; Genealogies in the royal records, 9; Literary motifs in the royal epigraphs, 10; Interpretation of the <i>digvijaya prasastis</i> , 11; Palaeographical peculiarities, 15.	
Numismatic Evidence	16
Work of early numismatists, 16; Nature of numismatic evidence, 18; Internal aspects of numismatic evidence, 19; External aspects of numismatic evidence, 22.	
Literary Evidence	23
The <i>vainśa</i> tradition, 23; Methods of the mediaeval court-historians and theologians, 26.	
Changing Attitudes	28
Western historians : early schools, 29; Vincent A. Smith, 31 ; Pan-Aryanism of E. B. Havell, 32; Detached attitude of A. L. Basham, 33; Nationalist historians, 33; School of Bhandarkar, 36.	

Need of a New Approach	37
Definition of political history, 37; Study of political events in their situational contexts, 38.	
CHAPTER II : CENTRAL GAṄGĀ VALLEY	41—121
Original Home of the Guptas	41
Critical analysis of I-tsing's statement, 43; Archaeological data, 44; The Puranic evidence, 50; Location of the Lichchhavi state, 52.	
Factors Leading to the Rise of the Central Gaṅgā Vallay	53
Geo-political factors, 54; Magadha and the Muruṇḍas, 56; Weakness of the tribal states, 60; Brahmanical revival, 62; Area-association of Brahmanical revival, 66; Economic factor, 69.	
Social Milieu of the Guptas	70
Brāhmaṇas as a political force, 70; Various theories regarding the caste of the Guptas, 74; Guptas were Brāhmaṇas, 78.	
Rise of the Gupta Dynasty	81
The first two kings : Gupta and Ghaṭotkacha, 81; Chandragupta I : political circumstances, 85.	
Vākātaka-Bhāraṣiva Entente and its Implications	88
Acquisition of Magadha by the Guptas	94
Economic Aspect of Gupta-Lichchhavi Alliance	98
Conquests of Chandragupta I	99
APPENDICES	
(i) Early Chronology of the Gupta Dynasty	102
(ii) Nālandā and Gayā Records of Samudragupta	111
(iii) Chandragupta I-Kumāradevī Coin-type	115
CHAPTER III : CHAKRAVARTIN OF THE GAṄGĀ VALLEY	122—129

Internal Pulls and Pressures : Revolt of Kācha	122
Problem of succession, 122; Pattern of factional politics in the Gupta court, 122; Socio-economic factors, 123; Religious attitudes of Kācha and Samudragupta, 124.	
Unification of the Gaṅgā Valley	128
The four categories of the vanquished powers, 128; Geo-political factors in Samudragupta's conquests, 132; Religion in Gupta politics, 135; Samudragupta and the Nāgas, 139; Samudragupta and the Vākāṭakas, 141; Conquest of Bengal, 147.	
First Line of Defence : Protected States	152
Factors that determined Samudragupta's attitude towards <i>āṭavika</i> states, <i>pratyanta</i> kingdoms and tribal republics, 152; <i>modus operandi</i> of his policy, 155; Samudragupta and the Varmans of Kāmarūpa, 156; Samudragupta and Varmans of Daśapura, 157.	
Lure of the Deccan	159
Date of the Kaliṅga expedition, 159; Deccan policy of Samudragupta, 160; Geographical difficulties and lure of the Deccan wealth, 161; Number of the southern campaigns, 166.	
Second Line of Defence : North-Western Powers	168
First Hūṇa Invasion, Rise of the Kidāra Ku-shāṇas, 169; Invasion of the Hephthalites, 173 ;Evidence of theAllahabad and Mehauruli inscriptions, 175.	
Trans-oceanic Aspect of the Gupta Politics	180
India's commercial relations with the Far-East, 180; with Ceylon, 181; Correct interpretation of the evidence of the <i>Prayāga prasasti</i> , 182; Samudragupta's diplomatic relations with Ceylon, 183.	

Advent of the Age of Vikramādityaa	184
Character and estimate of Samudragupta, 184; The horse-sacrifice, 186; Revival of the chakravarti ideal, 188.	
APPENDICES	
(i) Place of Kācha in Gupta History	191
(ii) Relative Chronology of Samudragupta's Campaigns	196
(iii) The King 'Chandra' of the Meharauli Iron Pillar Inscription	201
(iv) Capital of the Gupta Empire	210
(v) Vasubandhu and the Guptas	214
(vi) The Date of Kālidāsa	217
CHAPTER IV : THE WESTERN THEATRE	220—261
Pull of the west, 221; Peculiar status of Malwa, 222.	
Rāmagupta and Eastern Malwa	223
The literary evidence, 233; Numismatic evidence and co-relation of the data, 226; Method of the court-historians, 229; Characterization of the hero and the villain, 231; Chandragupta's marriage with Dhruvadevi, 233; Rāmagupta's place in Gupta history, 235.	
The Western Front	237
Extent of the empire of Chandragupta II, 237; Causes of the Śaka-war, 239; Chandragupta II and the Vākātakas, 243; Chandragupta II and the Śakas, 246; Growth of the Vikramāditya legend, 248; Transformation of the Gupta royalty, 250.	
Kumāragupta I and the South	253
The place of Govindagupta in Gupta history, 253; The Deccan campaign, 256; Kumāragupta I, Vākātakas and the Nalas, 257.	

CHAPTER V : TRANSFORMATION AND DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE 262—334

The beginning of a new era, 262; The period of crisis, 263.

Struggle for Succession 266

The role played by the emperor, 266; Legitimacy of Skandagupta's succession, 270; Various pulls and pressures, 272.

Pushyamitra Invasion 273

Identification of the Pushyamitras, 273; Rise of the Pāṇḍava ruler Bharatabala, 275; Vākāṭaka hand in the Pushyamitra invasion, 276.

Second Hūṇa Invasion 277

Geographical factor in the north-western policy, 278; India and Central Asia, 281; Route of the Hūṇa invasion, 284.

Skandagupta and Malwa 286

Turmoil in Malwa, 286; Interpretation of Mandasor inscriptions, 287; Vākāṭaka interference in Malwa, 289.

Transformation and Decline of the Empire : Narasimhagupta I, Kumāragupta II and Budhagupta 290

Estimate of Skandagupta, 290; Influence of the ascetic ideology on the imperial family, 292; Growth of feudo-federal structure, 295; Rise of the Brāhmaṇa feudatories, 299; Increase in the power of hereditary officers, 300.

APPENDICES

(i) Problem of Succession after Kumāragupta I : Skandagupta and His Rivals 304

The problem, 304; Skandagupta and Purugupta, 305; Ghaṭotkachagupta and Samudragupta II(?), 311.

(ii) Immediate Successors of Skandagupta 314,

The problem and the various theories, 314; Coins of Kumāragupta Kramāditya, 318; Coins of Nara Bālāditya, 318; Sarnath inscription of Prakāṣāditya, 320; Literary evidence on Bālādityas, 321; Analysis of the evidence, 323; Nālandā seal of Vishnugupta, 325; Confusion in the *Mañjuśrī Mūla Kalpa*, 326; Criticism of the various theories, 329; Theory of Sinha criticized, 330; Budhagupta, 332.

CHAPTER VI : DISINTEGRATION AND COLLAPSE
OF THE EMPIRE 335—386

Dissensions in the Imperial Family : Chandragupta III and Vainyagupta 335

The Hun Völkerwanderung : Bhānugupta, Prakāśāditya and Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II. 336

Hūṇa conquest of Punjab, 336; of the *antarvedi*, of Malwa, 341; Toramāṇa and Prakāśāditya, 342; Mihirakula and the prosecution of Buddhists, 344; Defeat of Mihirakula, 350.

Collapse of the Empire and the Rise of New Centres of Political Power 353

Successors of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II : Vajra, Kumāragupta III and Vishnugupta, 354; Eastward shift in the centre of the Gupta power, 355; Rise of new powers, 357; Maitrakas of Valabhī, 357; Aulikaras of Malwa, 358; Maukharis of Kanauj, 362; Later Guptas of Magadha, 364; Bengal and Kāmarūpa, 365; Orissa, 367; Collapse of the empire, 367.

APPENDICES

Order of Succession after Budhagupta 370

Immediate successors of Budhagupta, 370;

Evidence of the *Mañjuśrī Mūla Kalpa*, 372;
 Successors of Bhānugupta, 375; Prakāśāditya
 of coins, 376; Evidence of the *Mañjuśrī*
Mūla Kalpa, 379; Narasimhagupta Bālāditya
 II, 381; Vishnugupta, the last emperor and
 the end of Gupta rule in Magadha, 382;
 Date of the end of Gupta rule in Orissa,
 384.

CONCLUSION	387—388
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	389—401
A. Original Sources	389
1. Inscriptions	
2. Coins	
3. Travellers' accounts and foreign works	
4. Indian texts and translations	
B. Histories of the Period	391
C. Other Important Works	392
D. Select Articles	395
E. Important Journals	400
GENEALOGICAL TABLE	402
CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE	403—407
INDEX	408—432

Map : India in the Gupta Age Page xxiv



CHAPTER I

METHOD AND APPROACH

The study of the political history of ancient India in the modern times commenced towards the last quarter of the eighteenth century when, compelled by the administrative exigencies, Warren Hastings, the then Governor General of the British Colonies in India, began to encourage researches into the laws, customs and history of the Indian people. With the arrival of William Jones from England in 1783, and the foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784¹, the stage for the discovery of ancient India was set. Jones very soon fixed the sheet-anchor of Indian history by identifying Chandragupta Maurya of the Indian literary tradition with Sandrocottos of the Classical writers. But, as the efforts of Jones and his colleagues—Charles Wilkins and Henry Colebrook being the most prominent of them—were mainly directed to the study of ancient Indian literature, political history, on which even now only a few reliable ancient works are available, revealed itself very slowly. The greatest handicap which the British scholar-administrators had to face was the inability of the indigenous *panditas* to read the ancient scripts of the country; it rendered the decipherment of the ancient inscriptions and manuscripts impossible. As a matter of fact, Indians had long forgotten the ancient scripts of their country. When Firoz Shah Tughlaq brought the Aśokan pillars from Topra and Meerut to Delhi, he invited a number of

1 Dwarka Nath Tagore, who joined it in 1832, was the first Indian to become its member.

INDIA

GUPTA AGE



Sanskrit scholars to read the edicts inscribed on them, but none of them could decipher their script.¹ Akbar, the Mughal emperor, also tried to get them read, but his inquisitiveness also could not be satisfied.² The attempt of the British scholars and their Indian colleagues to decipher the ancient Indian scripts was, however, more sustained and scientific. In the earlier stages their efforts were met with success only in the sphere of the mediaeval inscriptions which were written in the scripts similar to those of modern vernaculars and were, therefore, easy to decipher. In 1785, Charles Wilkins read the Badal pillar inscription of the Pāla king Nārāyaṇa-pāla found in the Dinajpur District of Bengal³ and Pandit Radhakant Sharma could successfully decipher the Topra-Delhi pillar inscription of the Chāhamāna king Viśāladeva (Vigraharāja IV), dated V. E. 1220 (=1277 A. D.).⁴ But the Nagarjunī and Barabar cave inscriptions of the Maukhari king Anantavarman, though discovered in 1785 by J. H. Harrington, being written in a more archaic script, now called 'the Guptan', successfully defied the ingenuity of these early epigraphists for a pretty long time. However, Charles Wilkins who laboured on them between 1785 and 1789, succeeded in reading almost half of the letters of the Gupta alphabet⁵. But as at that time the attention of the scholars was mainly directed to the study of the ancient literature, the success of Wilkins could not be properly exploited for further progress. However, the decipherment of the Gupta script was resumed in 1834 when Captain Troyer read a part of the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta⁶. But the endeavours of W. H. Mill were attended with greater success⁷. In 1837, he won a fresh laurel when he deciphered Bhitari pillar inscription of Skandagupta⁸. The most notable success, however, was achieved by Princep.

1 Pandey, R. B., *Indian Palaeography*, p. 58.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Asiatic Researches*, II, (1790), p. 167.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

6 *JASB*, III, 1834, p. 119 f.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 257 ff.

8 *Ibid.*, VI, pp. 1 ff.

Not only did he play a major role in the decipherment of the early Brāhmī script, but also successfully read a host of inscriptions of the Gupta period found at Delhi,¹ Kahaum,² Sāñchi³ and Junagadh⁴, as a result of which a table of the Gupta alphabet could be published in 1871.

THE WORK OF THE EARLY EPIGRAPHISTS

The early epigraphists naturally committed numerous errors in their decipherment and interpretation of the Gupta records, and in absence of any independent evidence on the history of this dynasty, literary or otherwise, they had to grope in the dark for a long time in their efforts to locate it in time and space. For example, the lines 25 and 26 of the Allahabad *prasthi* of Samudragupta, one of the earliest Gupta records to be discovered, were translated in 1834 by Troyer as follows :

“Of the great-grandson of *Sri Chandragupta*, the great Raja, of the grandson of the great Raja *Sri Yagnakacha*, of the son of the great Raja (Adhiraja) *Sri Chandragupta*.

Of the son of the daughter of *Lich-ch'ha Vikriti*, of the family of *Mahadivya Kumara*.....of the great Raja, the supreme Raja (Adhiraja) *Sri Samudragupta*”.⁵

Mill corrected the name of the grand-father of Samudragupta to Ghatotkacha,⁶ but was himself responsible for numerous other errors which, for a long time, coloured the vision of those who wrote on the Gupta history. For instance, he translated the line 8 of the same inscription as follows :

“Whose mothers-in-law, formerly proud and addicted to highminded oppressions perpetually, having been by his own arm subdued with the sword of battle (viz. *Sanhāricā* and the rest,.....(line 18).....”.⁷

1 *Ibid.*, VII, p. 629.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 37 f.

3 *Ibid.*, VI, pp. 451 ff.

4 *Ibid.*, VII, pp. 347 ff.

5 *JASB*, III, p. 119 f.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 267.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 262.

and commented that the mothers-in-law of Samudragupta 'appear to have been independent princesses whose daughters were thus won in battle by Samudragupta'.¹ Mill also believed that a royal issue was expected at the date of the inscription. As regards the origin of the Gupta dynasty, he rejected the suggestion of the identity of Chandragupta, the father of Samudragupta, with Chandragupta Maurya on the ground that while the Mauryas were of Śūdra extraction, the house of Samudragupta belonged to the Solar race—an impression which he gathered from the faulty decipherment of the line 30 of the Allahabad record. He, however, examined the possibility of Chandragupta, the father of Samudragupta, having been a scion of the Rāṭhōra, Pratihāra or Chāhamāna dynasty but could not come to a satisfactory conclusion. "Our researches", he remarked, "for the subjects of this inscription in the records of Northern and Central India, seem to be hitherto unsuccessful, notwithstanding the various Chandraguptas that have appeared there. Of the name of Samudragupta, I have not yet seen any trace".²

ACHIEVEMENT OF GENERAL CUNNINGHAM

This was the state of our knowledge of the Gupta history in 1834. But the patient efforts of the epigraphists very soon laid its skeleton bare. An idea about the rapid progress in our knowledge of the Gupta history may be had by a comparison of the notes of Mill published in 1834 the extracts from which we have just given, with the history of the Gupta dynasty in the *Bhilai Topes* of General Cunningham published exactly two decades later. In this work, General Cunningham suggested 319 A. D. as the initial year of the era used in the Gupta inscriptions, published a correct translation of the statement of Alberuni on the problem of the Gupta era, and gave a connected account of the history of the Gupta dynasty. He placed the accession of the king Gupta in 319 A. D.,

1 *Ibid.*, fn.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 343. Mill also believed that the king Dhanañjaya of the Allahabad *prastāvi* belonged to 'the race of Ugrasena, i. e. most probably the celebrated king of Mathura so called, the father of *Cansa*, who was slain by *Crishna*' (*Ibid.*, p. 344).

of Ghatotkacha in 340, of Chandragupta I in 360, of Samudragupta in 380, and of Chandragupta II, Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta respectively in 400, 430 and 440. Further, he tried to reconstruct the history of the imperial Guptas after Skandagupta and, perhaps it was he who for the first time suggested that Lagrāditya (Śakrāditya), Budhagupta, Taktagupta (Tathāgatarāja), Bālāditya and Vajra, known from the Chinese sources, were the successors of Skandagupta and placed them in 452, 480, 510, 540 and 570 respectively. Furthermore, he identified the king Bālāditya of Yuan Chwang with Nara Bālāditya of coins. When we recall that at that time scholars generally believed that the Gupta dynasty ended with Skandagupta, that in 1860 Liston suggested that the power of the Gupta dynasty after Skandagupta was usurped by a family of a minister,¹ that even in 1888 Fleet in his *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III. opined that Budhagupta was not connected with Skandagupta by direct descent² and differentiated the Budhagupta of the Eran inscription from the Buddhagupta of Yuan Chwang,³ and came to the conclusion that Cunningham's suggestion as contained in the *Bhilsa Topes*, on the initial year of the Gupta era, was the correct one,⁴ one cannot but admire the brilliance and the creative imagination of the General. It was really unfortunate that Cunningham himself did not stick to his original views on the Gupta era and accepted the then prevalent notion that the year 319 A. D. marked the extinction of the Gupta rule, and not its commencement.⁵

1 *JASB*, VII, p. 38.

2 *Corpus*, III, p. 7.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 46 fn.

4 *Ibid.*, 38.

5. In 1871 Cunningham ascribed the date of the Kahaum inscription of Skandagupta to the Śaka era on the plea that it would accord best with the generally accepted view that the Gupta dynasty came to an end in 319 A. D. (*ASI, AR*, I, p. 93f.). In 1880, however, he accepted 166-7 A. D. as the initial year of the Gupta era (*ASI, AR*, X, pp. 111 ff.).

EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

NATURE OF EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

The attitude of the 19th century epigraphists was credulous and uncritical. Of course, they tried their best to decipher and translate the ancient documents correctly, but they accepted every piece of information contained in them as historically correct without discounting even the most obvious embellishments. They did not realize that as a source-material the inscriptions belong to the category of written or literary sources and need to be studied with a method different from the one we apply to the archaeological antiquities. The non-literary material, such as the archaeological remains, dug out scientifically or otherwise, is always relatively more simple, straightforward and tangible inasmuch as it directly comes from the past to present, without being contaminated either by the culture of the intervening period, or by the formative influences of literature contemporary to it. Of course, the historian may himself fail to interpret and evaluate it properly, but the evidence itself does not lie. The literary material, such as the *Purāṇas*, epics, historical biographies, dramas of historical genre, foreign accounts, dynastic and regional histories etc., on the other hand, comes to the historian in a finished form. It constitutes direct evidence only of the 'state of mind' of its author or the person who controlled its composition. It is, therefore, only indirectly concerned with the people whose history is to be written and thus is secondary in the sense of a mediate source. It is, no doubt, usually fuller and more revealing than the non-literary material, but the actuality involved in it has to be grasped after weaning away the moulding influence of the author.¹ It is always coloured by the prejudices and predilections of its author, sometimes unconscious which mechanically splash in his writing, but often-times deliberate and wilful. Therefore, in order to understand properly the entire process, the modern historian has to put himself in the place of ancient author, a task which is not always easy.

¹ cf. Narian, A. K., 'Writing a New History of Ancient India,' *Problems of Historical Writing in India*, p.6f.

Epigraphy, though conventionally regarded as a branch of archaeology, is in fact much more closer to the evidence of literary genre. For, the evidence of an epigraph comes to us more or less in a finished form, having a pattern and ready to tell a story. It cannot, therefore, be properly evaluated without taking into consideration the nature and purpose of the document, and the mental outfit, attitude, prejudices and predilections of its author and such contemporary colour which unconsciously spills over into his composition. For, after all, like the authors of the *itiḥāsas*, *ākhyāyikās*, *kāvyas* and other literary works, the authors of the royal documents, especially of the *prastāvis*, were also influenced by the contemporary ideas of history and ways of inference and interpretation.

PRIVATE RECORDS

Ancient Indian epigraphs may broadly be divided into two groups : (i) those incised for private individuals, and (ii) those engraved on behalf of the ruling kings. The documents of the first group usually record the donations in favour of religious establishments or installation of images for worship. In some cases, they mention the king during whose reign the grant was made or the installation took place. Sometimes, eulogistic compositions were also engraved on stone tablets or pillars to commemorate public works like the excavation of a tank or the construction of a temple by a private citizen or a group of people. Such works sometimes mention the ruler of the country and occasionally describe his achievements. Thus, private records often provide valuable material for the reconstruction of the political history of the period. It should, however, be remembered that as these records were not 'official', they were not always drafted with the same care with which 'official' documents were composed. For example, a private citizen felt no hesitation in describing the Gupta emperor as a mere Mahārāja. The use of this title for Kumāragupta I in the Mankuwar Buddhist image inscription led Fleet to conjecture that "it may indicate an actual historical fact, the reduction of Kumāragupta, towards the close of his life, to feudal rank by Pushyamitras and the Hūṇas, whose

attacks on the Gupta power are so pointedly alluded to in the Bhitari inscription of Skandagupta ".¹ But a proper differentiation in the nature of private and official records would make such a conjecture totally unwarranted.

ROYAL RECORDS

The epigraphs of the second group, viz. those incised for the ruling kings may broadly be classified under two categories : (i) *prastastis* or *pūrvās* and (ii) *tāmra śāsanas*. The epigraphs commemorating particular achievements or *kīrti* of a king were called *prastastis* or *pūrvās*.² Kalhaṇa calls them *pratishṭhā śāsanas*. But, in that case, the pure *prastastis* of the type of the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta and the undated Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman, which are entirely devoted to the recitation of the glory and conquests of the kings mentioned in them, will have to be differentiated from the *prastastis* composed on the occasion of the *pratishṭhā* ceremony of the temples, flag-staffs, and such other constructions. The *tāmra śāsanas*, on the other hand, record the grants made in favour of learned Brāhmaṇas, religious institutions or deserving individuals and officials. They are generally engraved on copper plates, and seldom on stone-slabs. Their importance was two-fold : judicial and religious. Whenever two parties differed on the question of the ownership of a piece of land, the copper plates were presented in the law-courts. Therefore, they were prepared in strictly legal language. From the religious point of view also, complete performance of ritualistic formalities was deemed necessary. Hence, gradually more and more emphasis was laid on the strict observance of the rules laid down in the *Dharmaśāstras* regarding the composition of the copper plate grants. Broadly, their contents may be divided into three sections : preamble, notification and conclusion. The preamble generally comprises *maṅgala* or auspicious invocation, the place of issue, the name of the donor with his titles and ances-

1 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 46.

2 *El*, XXX, p. 123 ; *contra*, D. C. Sircar (*Indian Epigraphy*, p. 3, fn. 5) who does not believe that *pūrvā* and *prastasti* are synonyms.

tory, and the address in respect of the grant. The notification consists of specification of the gift, the name of the donee, the occasion and purpose of the grant and the boundaries of the land gifted. Lastly, the conclusion contains an exhortation, the names of the officials responsible for preparation and execution of the document and the date and authentication. All these features however, are not found in the *tāmra śāsanas* of the early period.

PROVENANCE OF THE EPIGRAPHS

The records of a dynasty provide valuable data on its history in more than one way. Firstly, if they are found *in situ*, their provenance will indicate the area over which its rulers held their sway. For example, the Junagadh record of Skandagupta proves, not only by its contents but also by its provenance, that his authority was acknowledged in Surāshṭra. The *tāmra śāsanas*, it is true, sometimes travel away to a region different from the place of their issue, but the inscriptions engraved on stone pillars and stone slabs are usually found not very far removed from their original sites. Even the *tāmra śāsanas* may help us in this respect if the place of their issue (provided it was included in the kingdom of the ruler mentioned in the grant¹) and the village or villages granted could be located with certainty. The point is important because the provenance of the early inscriptions of a family may also indicate the area in which it originated. The find-spot of an inscription of pure *prāśasti* type is of special significance in this respect, since, unlike the *pratishṭhā śāsana*, it is not associated with an area or a place due to the *pratishṭhā* ceremony, but is indicative of the ruler's predilection for that place. In the case of the Gupta dynasty, the original home of which is not definitely mentioned in the available sources, the importance of this line of evidence cannot be over-exaggerated.

GENEALOGIES IN THE ROYAL RECORDS

Secondly, the *prāśastis* and the *tāmra śāsanas* usually provide us information on the genealogy of the kings mentioned in them.

- 1 Sometimes the place from where a grant was issued differed from the place at which it was actually made. e.g. the Rithapur grant of Bhavattavarman was made at Prayāga and issued at Nandivardhana.

A proper appreciation of this fact is highly vital for the history of the Gupta dynasty, because many a problems regarding the place of kings like Rāmagupta would not have arisen if it was properly understood that the inclusion of the names of the ancestors of the donor was necessitated by the religious exigencies which rendered the mention of collaterals unnecessary. We should, therefore, expect to find the name of Rāmagupta either in his own inscriptions or in those of his direct descendants (if there were any) if and when they will come to light, and not in the records of Chandragupta II and his successors. In the light of this fact, the argument that as the name of Rāmagupta is not found mentioned in the Gupta records he should not be assigned a place in the history of the dynasty¹ or that his name was omitted by the Gupta emperors from the genealogy of the dynasty because of his misdeeds², becomes irrelevant.

LITERARY MOTIFS IN THE ROYAL EPIGRAPHS

The most important contribution to the study of the political history of the Gupta period is made by the *pūrvās* or the *prastāsis*, for they contain a comparatively detailed account of the achievements of the kings mentioned in them. They are more developed than the *tāmra śāsanas*, for, unlike the latter, they contain an account of the activities of the ruling king; but their mould is not as extensive as that of the *ākhyāyikās* and other literary works of historical genre. For example, in literature the abstract idea of the royal glory in the form of a beautiful princess symbolizing the goddess of Royal Fortune (*rājya-śrī*) whose love the king wins after overcoming insurmountable difficulties, was very popular in the Gupta and the post-Gupta periods³. From the fourth century A. D. it became widely prevalent. In different forms it occurs in the *Raghuvamśa*, the *Ratnāvalī*, the *Bālabbharata*, the *Harshacharita*, the *Kādambarī* and numerous other works. The authors of the *prastāsis* were also influenced by it, but they used it only as a for-

1 Gokhale, B. G., *Samudragupta and His Times*, p. 101.

2 J.B.R.S., XXXIV, pp. 19 ff.

3 Pathak, V. S., *Ancient Historians of India*, p. 27.

mula. Among the Gupta emperors it is used for the first time for Skandagupta who is described as the one "whom the goddess of fortune and splendour of her own accord selected as her husband, having in succession (and) with judgment skilfully taken into consideration and thought over all the causes of virtues and faults (and) having discarded all (*the other*) sons of kings (*as not coming up to her standard*)".¹ The popularity which this motif acquired may be gauged by the fact that only three decades later, the *Mahārāja* Mātṛivishṇu, a mere feudatory chief of Budhagupta, is found describing himself as the one "who, by the will of (the god) vidhātṛi, was approached (*in marriage choice*) by the goddess of sovereignty, as if by a maiden choosing (*him*) of her own accord (*to be her husband*)".²

INTERPRETATION OF THE DIGVIJAYA PRASASTIS

The fact that the court-poets of the mediaeval period often grossly exaggerated the achievements and status of their patrons, makes it highly difficult to determine the extent of truth in the *digvijaya prasastis* of the Gupta period. Following Majumdar,³ we may divide such records into three categories according to the manner in which the conquests or domains of the kings are described in them. First, there are inscriptions in which we have a general description of the conquest or sway over vast regions indicated by such vague expressions as 'the whole world' or 'extending to the four oceans'. To the second class belong references to the extreme limits of a king's conquests or dominions which correspond to well known rivers, hills, or seas. Thirdly, there are *prasastis* which give a list of the countries or peoples, the conquest of which is attributed to the king of the epigraph.

Now, as regards the description of the first category, in the Gupta period we find it used for Samudragupta and many of his successors. Thus, the prosperity of Samudragupta is mentioned as *sarva-prithvivijaya-janita*.⁴ Then, the minister of Chandragupta II

1 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

3 JIH, XLII, pp. 651 ff.

4 Sircar, D. C., *Sel. Ins.*, p. 259.

who accompanied his royal master to Udayagiri, described the emperor as having the aim of *kr̥tsna-prithvī-jaya*.¹ Skandagupta is also described as the conqueror of the whole earth (*pr̥thvīm samagrām*)², and Budhagupta is represented as the ruler of the earth (*pr̥thvīm praiśāsi*).³ From these instances it is clear that the authors of the Gupta epigraphs generally used the expression 'the whole earth' as a motif signifying the kingdom of an imperial sovereign, though in the later periods it was undoubtedly used to indicate the dominions even of a petty ruler.

The description of the conquests or sway of a king extending up to the extreme limits of the earth is, by its very nature, conventional. As D. C. Sircar has shown, our ancients believed that in order to attain *chakravartitva*, a king must extend his sway over the whole of the *chakravartī-kṣetra* which is described as lying between the Himālayas and the sea (*Himālayādā-samudram*) or as bounded in the south, west and east by the seas and in the north by the Himavat, resembling the string of a bow.⁴ Actually, the conception of a conqueror performing *divijaya*, that is to say conquering the whole of the *chakravartī-kṣetra*, permeates the entire range of our ancient literature. It was bound to find reflection in the Gupta epigraphs as well. The description of Kumāragupta I as the ruler of the whole earth encircled by the four seas and that of Yaśodharman as the conqueror of all the chieftains "from the neighbourhood of the river Lauhitya up to the mountain Mahendra, and from the Himālaya up to the Western Ocean".⁵ evidently belong to this category. It may, however, be noted that such conventional expressions became hopelessly exaggerated only in the post-Gupta period. It is recognised, therefore, that "the earlier the king is, the greater is our reliance in his claims, in spite of the obvious fact that there is always

1 *Ibid.*, p. 272.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 301.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 323.

4 Sircar, D. C., *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, p. 5.

5 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

a considerable amount of exaggeration in the royal *prastis* composed by the court-poets of the Indian monarchs".¹ As a matter of fact, in the Gupta period the description of a king as a ruler of the entire earth became one of those motifs by which the court-poets described the imperial status of their masters. In the post-Gupta period it gradually became a mere ornamental phrase. Thus, in view of the comparative earlier date of the Mandasor inscription, its description of the far-flung conquests of Yaśodharman should not be regarded as completely devoid of truth.

The degree of truth in the epigraphs of the third category has been a matter of keener controversy. Now, it is of course true that in the early mediaeval records of this type we find hopeless exaggerations of the achievements of the king mentioned in them, but as far as such inscriptions of the Gupta period, e. g. the Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta, the Mehrauli record of 'Chandra', the Junagadh *prastis* of Skandagupta etc. are concerned, we do not see any reason to doubt their authenticity. R. C. Majumdar, who puts the Allahabad record among the 'uncorroborated' documents, finds it difficult to understand 'why every statement of Harishena... is treated as a historical fact, while everything stated by Vākpati (*about his master Yaśovarman of Kanauj*) is dismissed as fabulous'² (italicized ours). We do not know what led Majumdar to regard the evidence of the Allahabad *prastis* as 'uncorroborated' and to compare it with Vākpati's description of the achievements of Yaśovarman which he has elsewhere dismissed as 'highly conventional'.³ The claim that Samudragupta conquered a vast empire extending from the Punjab to Bengal is proved by the simple fact that his successors ruled over it. Then, there are his gold coins found throughout this vast area⁴ and the evidence of the *AMMK* according to which he marched up to the gates of Kashmir.⁵

1 Sircar, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

2 *JHI*, XLII, p. 652 f.

3 Majumdar and Pusalker. (ed.), *The Classical Age*, p. 129.

4 Altekar, A.S., *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, p. 40.

5 Jayaswal, K.P., *An Imperial History of India*, p. 48.

As regards the states of the Deccan, the conquest of which is not corroborated by other sources, Harishena does not claim that Samudragupta incorporated the states of that area in his empire. He explicitly states that Samudragupta conquered their rulers and then liberated and reinstated them. Even the reference to the rulers of the North-West and the southern islands is not a mere hyperbole. When interpreted correctly, the claim of Harishena appears to be almost literally correct¹. Further, as pointed out by Majumdar himself, the principle that nothing should be accepted as a historical truth without sufficient evidence does not mean that whatever cannot be regarded as a historical truth for insufficient evidence must be regarded as false and straightaway rejected as of no historical importance. "Such an attitude is particularly unwise in the study of ancient Indian history where the reliable data are so few, and we have to work upon insufficient and doubtful data. Side by side with *certainly* there is such a thing as *probability*, which may turn out to be true or false in the light of new discoveries of facts, and as long as we keep them distinct and do not confuse the one with the other, there is no harm discussing the degree of probability in a view which may not be regarded as certain. One is, therefore, fully justified in formulating a hypothesis which is based on a reasonable inference from known data that we possess, and is not contrary to any known facts. A hypothesis of this type serves the very useful purpose of keeping the doubtful or insufficient data before us so that we may not miss the bearing upon them of any fresh data that may come to our notice. What is wrong is to regard such a hypothesis as an ascertained fact".²

The interpretation of the *digvijaya prasthis* and other documents has suffered a lot from the lack of proper appreciation of the nature of evidence advanced in the support of a particular hypothesis. The difference in the weight of positive, indicative and circumstantial types of evidences is generally overlooked. It is not fully realized that in the field of epigraphic research a positive evidence

¹ *Infra*, Ch. III.

² *JIH*, XLII, p. 658 f.

is comparatively always the best and forms the sheet-anchor of a suggestion. Explanatory argument only explains the absence of a positive evidence in favour of a hypothesis while indicative and circumstantial evidences become important only when positive evidence is altogether lacking. But where positive evidence on a problem is available, all the other types of evidences become less reliable.

PALAEOGRAPHICAL PECULIARITIES

The inscriptions of the Guptas and of their feudatories (except those of the kings of Malwa) are usually found dated in the Gupta era ; but there are a number of records having a bearing on the Gupta history which are dated in the regnal years of the kings mentioned in them. The inscriptions of the Vākātakas are a case in the point. Then there are those records which do not contain any date or are dated in an era the identification of which is not beyond doubt. The probable dates of such records are usually determined with the help of their palaeographical peculiarities and other indications provided by their contents. In this connection it is important to note that palaeographical features can, at the most, suggest a general period of a record, and not its absolute date. Further, they cannot become the sole basis of fixing the date of a record. Actually, the chronology of the evolution of a script itself depends upon those records the dates of which we determine by means other than their palaeographical features. For instance, Fleet and other competent epigraphists placed the records of the Vākātika king Pravarasena II in c. 700 A. D. and opined that there is nothing in the palaeography of his grants to controvert such a conclusion.¹ But now we definitely know that Pravarasena II could not have flourished later than the second quarter of the fifth century A. D. Thus, a modification in the probable dates of those records which are regarded as either contemporary to or earlier or later than the Vākātika grants, has become necessary. Of course, now our knowledge of the evolution of the Gupta script is far more advanced than it was in the days of

¹ Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

Fleet and it is possible to suggest a more accurate date of a record on the basis of its script alone but, even now, it is highly risky to fix the date of any king on the evidence of one or two letters of his records. It should not be forgotten that even in the same record, evidently written or engraved by the same person, shapes of the same letters vary considerably. Consequently, epigraphists usually do not see eye to eye on the question of the dates of such undated records. The Nachne-ki-Talai and Ganj inscriptions of Prithvishena, for instance, are placed by some competent epigraphists in the fourth century A. D.¹ and by other equally competent authorities in the fifth century A. D.² The palaeographical argument, therefore, cannot and should not be regarded as the sole basis of the date of an epigraph ; it should be studied in the context of other lines of evidence.

NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

WORK OF THE EARLY NUMISMATISTS

The study of the Gupta coins started even earlier than that of the inscriptions. The first hoard of the Gupta gold coins, which probably consisted mostly of the issues of the later Gupta emperors, was discovered as early as 1783 at Kalighat,³ ten miles from Calcutta, by a certain Mr. Nab Kishen who seems to have presented about 200 of its coins to Warren Hastings, the then Governor General of India. Hastings sent most of these coins to the Directors of the East India Company in London who presented 24 of them to the British Museum, a nearly equal number to the museum of Mr. Hunter, and some pieces to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and to the Public Library at Cambridge. The rest were eventually melted down. The coins of the British Museum, however, were examined by Mr. R. Payne Knight, a celebrated numismatist in the early decades of the nineteenth century. He could not decipher the legends inscribed on these

1 Sircar, D. C., *CA*, p. 179.

2 Mirashi, V.V., *Studies in Indology*, II, pp. 167 ff.

3 Allan, J., *BMC, GD*, pp. cxxiv ff.

issues but suggested that they were imitations of Greek coins.¹ Marsden, however, in his *Numismata Orientalia*, published in 1823, successfully read the name Chandra and the title Śrī Vikrama. Probably, he was helped by Charles Wilkins who had attained partial success in deciphering an inscription of the Gupta period many years before, though his epigraphic studies were almost ignored.² Marsden hazarded a guess that these coins were issued about the fourth century A. D., though his reasoning was based on the material which would now be rejected outright.

In 1814, the Asiatic Society of Bengal laid the foundations of a museum, where coins were also exhibited. In 1832, H. H. Wilson contributed a paper to the *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. XVII, on the coin-collection of the museum as it stood in that year. The plates which illustrate this paper were drawn by James Prinsep, who was Wilson's assistant in the Calcutta mint. At that stage neither Prinsep nor Wilson could make much of the Gupta coins. On the reverse of a Standard type coin of Samudragupta Wilson recognised *pa ra* and *ka* but he could neither complete the word *parākramah* nor decipher any letter in the legend on the obverse. Similarly, on the reverse of a coin of Prakāśāditya he suggested *Śrī Praki* for Śrī Prakā (śāditya) and thought that the reading might be *Śrī Prakirtti*. At that time nobody except Marsden had realized that the name of the king was written on the obverse in a perpendicular fashion. Within a few years, however, when the study of the Gupta inscriptions was resumed, the decipherment of the legends on the Gupta coins became easier. By 1835, Prinsep had made considerable progress in reading their marginal inscriptions and showed that the Gupta coins followed the pattern of the 'Indo-Scythic' coinage, but were purely Indian in execution.

In the later half of the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth, apart from stray pieces, a number of new hoards of the Gupta gold coins were discovered. Prominent of

1 Quoted by Richard Burn in *Bhārata Kaumudī*, *Studies in Indology in Honour of Dr. R. K. Mookerji*, p. 148.

2 *Supra*, p. 2.

them were those which were found at Bharsar (1851), Jessore (1852), Hugli (1883), Tanda (1885), Kotwa (1885),¹ Basti (1887), Hajipur (1893) and Tekri Debra (1910). Their contents were intensively studied by the leading numismatists of the period and the results of these investigations were summed up by Allan in his famous *Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties*, published in 1914. Several other hoards came to light after the publication of Allan's work—including those found at Kasarva (1914), Mithathal (1915), Sakori (1914), Kumarkhan (1953) and Bayana (1946). The last one is the biggest hoard of the Gupta gold coins discovered so far. Altekar published a separate catalogue of its contents and summed up the knowledge of the Gupta coins to date in his *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, published in 1957.

NATURE OF NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

Coins, as a source-material of history, stand midway between archaeological antiquities and epigraphs. They are by nature antiquities but as they usually contain an inscription and sometimes a date, they are not altogether devoid of the features of epigraphs.² When the Kalighat hoard was discovered, the interest of the scholars was mainly centred on ancient literature. Further, due to the ignorance of the Gupta alphabet, the legends on the Gupta coins could not be read. Therefore, the pieces yielded by this hoard were treated as just antiquities. After the decipherment of the Gupta script, it became possible to connect the kings known from their coins with the kings mentioned in the Gupta records. It made the study of the Gupta coins immensely interesting and highly rewarding. But as at that time Indian numismatics was in its infancy, scholars paid greater attention

1 It is not included in the list of the Gupta hoards given in the *BMC, GD*.

2 As the legends on coins are always very short, it is obviously very difficult to pronounce judgment on the relative chronological position of two coins separated from each other by only a few decades. Hence, palaeographical peculiarities do not help us much in determining the place of an undated coin in a particular coin-series.

to the internal evidence of the coins i.e. the data provided by their types, symbols,¹ inscriptions, fabric, metrology etc. They soon realized that the early Gupta emperors modelled their coinage after the gold coinage of the later imperial Kushāṇas, though very soon the process of Indianization was at work and within a few decades the Gupta coinage had become almost thoroughly Indian in character. It led Allan to postulate the chronology of the early Gupta coins on the basis of the gradual decrease in the foreign influence on them. The hypothesis was basically sound, though too much emphasis on it led at places to quite erroneous conclusions.²

INTERNAL ASPECTS OF THE NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

The internal evidence of a coin-series helps us in the reconstruction of the history of the rulers who issued it in more than one way. The distinctive types issued by a king, for example, may inform us of some important events of his reign not known from other sources (e.g. the *Aśvamedha* type coins of Kumāragupta I), may give a hint to some unusual political developments (e.g. Chandragupta I-Kumāradevi type) or may give an insight into the religious feelings and personal idiosyncracies of the issuer and may, thus, help us to form an idea of the general atmosphere in his court. The types issued by Samudragupta create the impression that his reign was marked by unusual military activity while the types issued by Chandragupta II give the impression that in his reign the atmosphere in the Gupta court had become more sophisticated. Thus, the coin types of a monarch provide a sort of illustrated commentary on his reign.

The Gupta kings, strangely enough, rarely announce their full titles on their coins, though they invariably mention their

1 Symbols on the Gupta coins do not help us much in the reconstruction of the Gupta history, for, 'no symbol can be regarded as peculiar to any king with the only exception of Prakāśāditya' (*Coinage*, p. 289). After making a close and exhaustive study of the symbols found on the Gupta coins Altekar came to the conclusion that they 'do not appear to have any particular significance' (*ibid.*).

2 See App. of Ch. II.

personal epithets (*Birudas*) such as *Parākrama*, *Vikrama*, and *Mahendra*. There are only a few coin-types on which the titles *Mahārājādhirājai*, *Rājādhirāja* or *Rājā* etc. occur. On the other hand, with particular care the Gupta rulers inscribed on their coins legends announcing their meritorious deeds. It presents a glaring contrast to the practice followed by the foreign rulers of India who loved to blazon out on their coins titles indicative of their political status. According to A. K. Narain, it may suggest that "whereas the kings of foreign origin laid emphasis on their material power, and the outward show of regal pomp and grandeur, the Indian kings, who also trumpeted their 'conquest of the whole earth' in inscriptions, preferred on their coins to emphasize their righteous deeds and their belief in the doctrine of *karma*. The 'duty' aspect of kingship was more emphasized than the 'power' aspect".¹

The fabric and style of a coin may be of fine execution or it may be degenerate. Though it is not always safe to make inferences from stylistic variations, it sometimes helps in forming an idea of the political and economic stability in the period and also in determining the sequence of events and ideas. For example, the coinage of the successors of Kumāragupta I reveal a gradual decline in their artistic execution and fineness. It not only indicates the general deterioration in the economic condition of the empire but also helps us in assigning a probable date to a king who is not known from other sources. For, generally speaking the coins of the rude fabric are relatively later than the finely executed types. The inference is strengthened by the history of the metrology of the Gupta gold coins.² The coins of Chandragupta I follow the standard of 121 grains. The same is the case with most of the coins of Samudragupta, though some of them are even lighter and weigh in the vicinity of 115 and 118. The coins of Chandragupta II fellow three weight standards of 121, 124 and 127 grains. Of these, the first one was the most popular. On the other hand, in

1 *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, p. 96.

2 Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 293 ff.

the reign of Kumāragupta I the standard of 127 grains acquired the greatest popularity. Skandagupta gave up all these standards and adopted the standard of 132 grains for his so-called King-and-Lakshmi type¹ and the variety A of the Archer type. For the variety B of the latter he adopted the national *swarna* standard of 144 grains though usually the coins of this type weigh in the vicinity of 141.5 grains only. His successors generally followed the national standard, though with the passage of time, their coins tended to become heavier, so much so that among coins of the emperors who have almost unanimously been placed towards the end of the dynasty some are even four or five grains heavier than the *swarna* standard. Therefore, according to the generally accepted view, heavier coins should usually be regarded as relatively later in date than the lighter ones.

The coins of the later imperial Guptas are more heavily adulterated with alloy than the coins of the early rulers of the dynasty.² Usually, the coins of Chandragupta I have less than 9% of alloy and those of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II 10% to 15%. But the Archer type of coins of Kumāragupta I and the coinage of Skandagupta, Budhagupta, Prakāśāditya, Vainyagupta and Class I of the coins attributed to Narasimhagupta and Kumāragupta Kramāditya contain an alloy ranging nearly between 20% to 30% while the Class II coins of Narasimhagupta and Kumāragupta have as much as 46% of alloy. The metal became still more debased during the reign of Vishnugupta who was probably the last emperor of the

1 Cf. *Infra*, Ch. V.

2 The gold content in the Gupta coins was first investigated by Cunningham (*CMI*, p. 16). His analysis has recently been corrected by the investigations of the British Museum authorities (cf. *JBRS*, XXXIV, p. 24; *JNSI*, XVIII, Pt. II, p. 194; Sinha, *DKM*, appendix 1a, b, c.; Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 241). Seventy-seven coins from the same Museum were tested by S. K. Guha and S. K. Maity (*JNSI*, XVIII, Pt. II, pp. 187 ff.). Maity has also examined nine Gupta gold coins from the Indian Museum, Calcutta (*JNSI*, XXII, pp. 266-68). So, now a fairly accurate picture of the gradual decline in the gold content of the Gupta coinage is available.

dynasty. His coins have only 43% of pure gold. Therefore, it is held that the coin-types of baser metal should be generally regarded as later in date.

It may, however, be remembered that any one of the above characteristics of the gold currency of the imperial Guptas, considered separately, cannot be regarded as the absolute proof of the relative chronological position of the issuer of a particular coin-type. But, if it should appear that a coin-type, studied from all these angles, is relatively earlier or later, it would make a strong *prima facie* case, on purely numismatic grounds, for the indicated chronological position of that type in the series of the Gupta gold coinage.

EXTERNAL ASPECTS OF THE NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

The earlier numismatist did not properly appreciate the value of the external aspects of the evidence of a coin or a coin-hoard. As most of the Gupta coins first collected were found or purchased at Kanauj, it was unhesitatingly concluded that Kanauj was the capital of the Gupta empire. As early as 1834, Mill suggested that "We must look for the subject of the Allahabad inscription, if I mistake not, in a much nearer kingdom, that of Canyācubja or Canouje.....this opinion is confirmed by the coins lately discovered at Canouje, in which we find characters exactly corresponding to those of our inscription—and the same prefix to the king's name on the reverse of the coin, viz. Mahārāja Adhirāja Śrī".¹ It was in 1884, exactly fifty years after the suggestion of Mill, that Smith could explode the myth that the Guptas belonged to Kanauj.²

The error committed by Mill was the result of drawing a conclusion on the basis of insufficient data. For, the find-spot of a few coins, or even of a hoard, is by itself not always reliable evidence on which to base conclusions regarding the kingdom of the striker. But when coins of a particular class turn up year after year at an ancient site, more certain conclusions can be drawn. Similarly, when an area yields hoard after hoard, containing the early coins

1 *JASB*, 1834, p. 267.

2 *Ibid.*, 1884, pp. 148 ff.

of a particular dynasty, and also stray coins of the earliest rulers, that area may be regarded as the early centre of the activities of that royal family. Unfortunately, older numismatists paid sufficient attention neither to the composition nor to the provenance of the hoards of the Gupta gold coins and did not apply the age and area concept to the study of Gupta numismatics. A proper application of this principle is likely to yield very significant results.

LITERARY EVIDENCE

Though the first stage of the Indological studies was dominated by literary antiquarianism, no ancient work containing even an outline of the Gupta history was available to the early scholars. Therefore, when the newly discovered inscriptions and coins revealed the existence of the Gupta dynasty, there was a natural tendency among scholars to reconstruct its history with the help of the oral bardic legends of highly dubious authenticity. For example, in 1873, Col. J. W. Watson¹ published a tradition attributed to the bards of Kathiawad according to which a Gupta king, who reigned between the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā, sent his son Kumārapālagupta to conquer Surāshṭra and placed Chakrapāṇi, the son of Prāṇadatta, to reign as a provincial governor in the city of Wāmanasthalī. After his father, Kumārapālagupta ruled for twenty years and was succeeded by Skandagupta, who was of weak intellect. His *Senāpati* Bhaṭṭāraka, who was of Gehloti race, came to Surāshṭra and after the death of Skandagupta declared himself the king of that region. Thomas was inclined to accept this story for it is in 'accord with the more precise data furnished by inscriptions and coins'.² But, as was shown by Fleet, this tradition was of very recent date—it owed its origin to certain speculations of Bhagwanlal Indraji which found their way to the bards through an educational treatise.³ It furnishes an instance of the hazards involved in reconstructing the history of a dynasty with the help of bardic legends.

1 *IA*, II, p. 313.

2 *Arch. Sur. West. Ind.*, II, p. 30

3 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

So, the earlier scholars had to reconstruct the history of the Guptas wholly with the data furnished by inscriptions and coins. In the more recent years the situation has changed, but not much. Now, we have a number of ancient works in which various Gupta rulers are found mentioned in connection with certain episodes of their respective reigns. But even now no work, with the exception of the *Ārya Mañjūśrī Mūlakaṇṭha*, containing a connected account of the history of the Gupta dynasty is available. It is a rather strange fact the explanation of which is not very easy.

In the pre-Gupta period *vāmśa* was the most popular form of historical composition. It was developed as a part of the Puranic lore and was given a fixed literary form by the Bhṛiguvaṅśirases and the *Sūtras*.¹ After the fourth century A. D. the composition of the *vāmśas* as a part of the *Purāṇas* suddenly stopped though the Puranic lore continued to grow and the *vāmśa* tradition, under other forms, continued to exist. One of these schools, which especially flourished in Kashmir, was directly derived from the old *vāmśa* tradition. Besides throwing several offshoots in India, Burma, and Ceylon, and in royal courts,² monasteries and temples, it branched-off into classical literature and in integral form blossomed into full *vāmśa* works—such as the *Nripāvalī* of Kshemendra, the *Pārthivāvalī* of Helarāja, the eleven *Rājakaṭhās* mentioned by Kalhaṇa and several *Rājatarāṅginīs*. The *Raghuvāmśa* and the *Harivāmśa* are the earliest available specimens of this class.³ The second school, that of the *Prabandhas*, developed in Gajarat under

1 Pathak, V. S., *Ancient Historians of India*, pp. 9 ff.

2 Yuan Chwang noted that the Indian kings had separate custodians of archives and records (Watters, T., *Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, I, 154). Alberuni probably referred to the archives of the Sāhi kings of Kabul when he wrote that "the pedigree of this royal family, written in silk, exists in the fortress of Nagarkot" (Sachau, E. C., *Alberuni's India*, 1880, II, pp. 10-11). The *Dharmaśāstras* also enjoin that royal genealogy (*vāmśa*) should be recorded in the charter of a land grant (cf. *Bṛhaspatismṛiti*, Gaekwad Oriental Series, Baroda, p. 62) assuming thereby that the royal genealogies were kept in the state archives.

3 Pathak, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

the influence of the Jains. In the midland, however, the *vaiṣṇava* tradition gave place to the school of historical epics or narratives generally called the *charitas* or biographies. It developed in the milieu of royal courts and its rise and development was concomitant with the politico-economic changes that took place in the society due to the policy pursued by the Guptas. In the pre-Gupta period, the *Sūtas* and the Bhṛiguvaṅśirases, who were responsible for the development of the Puranic *vaiṣṇava* tradition, subsisted on the tribal structure of the Brāhmaṇa villages. In the Gupta age, as a result of the disintegration of tribal economy and social structure, the *Sūtas* and the Bhṛiguvaṅśirases entered the royal courts which were based the feudal or imperial economy, and assumed the role of salaried court-poets and *sāṁdhivigrahaikas* of the feudal lords or the kings. "This change in economy replaced in part the traditionally sacred fidelity to the tribe by personal relationship between the king or feudal chief and courtiers. Consequently, the tribe sank into insignificance and king emerged as a single important factor conditioning the body-politic".¹ No wonder, therefore, if the historians of the early mediaeval period instead of *vaiṣṇavas*, wrote the biographies of their royal patrons.

From the above discussion it is clear that in the realm of historiography, the Gupta age was the period of transition from the *vaiṣṇava* tradition to the *charita* tradition. It at least partially explains the paucity of literary material on the Gupta dynasty. On the one hand, the Guptas flourished when the age of the Puranic *vaiṣṇava* tradition was almost over; that is why we do not find in the *Purāṇas* a detailed account of their activities. On the other hand, the age of their supremacy ended before the *charita* tradition took a definite shape. Bāṇa is the earliest known author of a *charita* work and by the time he flourished the imperial Guptas were no more and their glory was absorbed in the Vikramāditya legend. Raychaudhuri was substantially correct when he stated that "the legends that grew round Chandragupta Vikramāṅka absorbed a good deal of the achievements of his father who bore the synony-

1 Pathak, *op. cit.*, p. 24 f.

mous title of Parākramāṅka, as otherwise it is difficult to explain the silence of the classical Sanskrit writers in regard to the great Samudragupta.....It is also by no means impossible that some of the activities of the later kings who assumed the proud title of Vikramāditya were likewise incorporated into the earlier Vikrama saga. In short, the *Vikramāditya-charita*, like that of Sālivāhana, sums up the historical and traditional achievements of a dynasty rather than that of one single individual".¹

METHOD OF THE MEDIAEVAL COURT-HISTORIANS AND THEOLOGICIANS

The above discussion does not mean that literature does not give us any help whatever in the reconstruction of the history of the Gupta dynasty. Apart from the *Purāṇas*, which contain a reference to the early Gupta kingdom, there are certain works of historical genre, such as the *Devī Chandragupta*, a drama of *khyāt itivṛtta* category (some fragments of which are now available), the *Raghuvamśa* of Kālidāsa (last quarter of the fourth century A. D.),² which probably contains an echo of the events of the reign of Samudragupta, and the *ĀMMK*, which contains the history of the Gupta dynasty as it was known in c. 700 A.D.,³ are now available. Besides these works, one hears faint echoes of some of the events that took place in the Gupta age, in the Vikramāditya legend as embodied in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī*; but it is almost impossible to be sure as to what these echoes mean. In the case of the *Devī Chandragupta* and the *ĀMMK*, however, the difficulty is that of the method, rather than of the material. As pointed out by V. S. Pathak, the "study of history from historical works of ancient times simultaneously involves two processes—the understanding of the historian's idea of history in the ontological perspective of the ancient world in which he lived and from which his ideas derived their contents, and its translation according to the

1 *Vikrama Volume*, p. 490.

2 See App. vi of Ch. III.

3 It was translated into Tibetan about 1060 A. D. by the Hindu Pandit Kumārakalaśa in collaboration with the Tibetan interpreter Sakya-blo-gros. (Jayaswal, K. P., *An Imperial History of India*, p. 2.).

current concepts and terminology".¹ Unfortunately, the modern historians of ancient India usually do not try to understand the ancient forms and ideas of *itihāsa* and study these works as a numismatist examines an ancient coin or an archaeologist subjects to his investigation a potsherd discovered in surface exploration, and not excavated from the trench in the sequence of layers.² He forgets that the *Devī Chandragutpa*, like the *charita* narratives, was the product of the new court-culture that had imparted a new complexion to the historical tradition, and had given rise to new literary conventions, devices and symbolism. Similarly, the *ĀMMK* was also composed under the impact of a particular philosophy and should, therefore, be studied with that angle in mind. Its material has been put "in the prophetic style in the mouth of the Buddha who undertakes to narrate the future vicissitudes of his Doctrine and Church and in that connection royal history is dealt with".³ Thus, the primary motive of the author of the *ĀMMK* was to narrate the history of Buddhism and the fortunes of the good and wicked kings—those who had shown sympathy with his faith were regarded as good and those who had been hostile to it were condemned as bad. He does not even mention the kings who had been hostile to Buddhism by their proper names and almost invariably translates or otherwise conceals their names.⁴ He 'does not forgive like the modern historian, the wickedness and arbitrariness in kings. He would have thrown into the waste-paper basket all modern histories as so many veiled and covert panegyrics on force and fraud and virtueless greatness. His outlook is different. He emphasizes the relentless law of the avenging principle of Karma, and he follows the rascally kings to their tortures in hell'.⁵ It is quite obvious, therefore, that if a modern historian, instead of following the author of the *ĀMMK* literally, would take the trouble of understanding the

1 Pathak, V. S., *op. cit.*, p. 137.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 138.

3 Jayaswal, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

idea of history against the background of which this work was composed, he would be able to discover several interesting episodes of the political history of ancient India, including of the Gupta period. What is needed is to have a proper grasp of the forms and ideas of history found in the works of the mediaeval poets, court-historians and theologians before we translate them into the language understandable to a modern mind.¹

CHANGING ATTITUDES

As the existence of the Gupta dynasty was for the first time revealed by the epigraphic researches of the second quarter of the 19th century, the early works of the Western scholars dealing with the history of ancient India did not contain any reference to it. As late as 1865, Henry Beveridge in his *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. I, merely referred to Samudragupta as a 'fanatic',

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- 1 Jayaswal tried to reconstruct the history of the early Guptas on the basis of the drama *Kaumudi Mahotsava* (JBORS, XII, pp. 50 ff.; XIX, pp. 113 ff.; *Hist. Ind.*, pp. 113-18). He was supported by D. Sharma (JBORS, XXII, pp. 275 ff.) and Pires (*The Mauekharis*, p. 25). But Winternitz (*Krishna-swami Aiyangar Com. Vol.*, pp. 359-62), K. C. Chattopadhyaya (*IHQ*, XIV, pp. 582 ff.), R. C. Majumdar (*NHIP*, p. 133, fn. 2), R. K. Mookerji (*GE*, p. 14), D. C. Sircar (*JAHRS*, XI, pp. 59 ff.) and many others (*Thomas Com. Vol.* pp. 115 ff.; *IC*, IX, pp. 100 ff.) have rejected the evidence of the work altogether. Actually it has nothing to do with the history of the imperial Guptas. B. Bhattacharya, on the other hand, tried to prove that a passage of the *Bhavisyottara Purāna* contains the history of the Guptas in detail (JBRS, XXX, pp. 1ff.; JGNJRI, I, Pt. 3). The suggestion was accepted by Rama Rao (*JAHRC*, II, 1944) and P. L. Gupta (*JNSI*, V, pp. 33-36). P. L. Gupta tried to co-relate the evidence of the *Kaumudi Mahotsava* with the data of this *Purāna*. At one time even Altekar accepted that there may be some truth in what this *Purāna* states (*JNSI*, V, p. 36, Editorial Note). B. Prakash also had faith in it (*ABORI*, XXVII, pp. 126 ff.). But R. C. Majumdar (*IHQ*, XX, pp. 345 ff.) D. C. Sircar (*JNSI*, VI, pp. 34 ff. and N. N. Das gupta (*IHQ*, XX, p. 351), have proved that this is 'a palpable modern forgery'. Later, P. L. Gupta also declined to accept its testimony (*IHQ*, XXII, p. 60).

who 'removed the seat of government to Kanauj' and established a dynasty 'which is held by those who follow local tradition to have ruled for three or four hundred years'. Clark Marshman, whose work *The History of India*, Vol. I, was published two years later, did not refer to the Guptas at all. The first work of a Western author, in which Gupta history was dealt with in detail was the *Early History of India* by Vincent A. Smith, the first edition of which appeared in 1904.

WESTERN HISTORIANS : EARLY SCHOOLS

But meanwhile, the main features of the approach of the early Western scholars towards the political history of ancient India had crystalized and the attitude of Smith himself was largely conditioned by them. In general, the attitude of scholars of every imperialist country of Europe towards the history of the Oriental peoples was conditioned by their belief in the theory of White Men's Burden and their deep-rooted prejudice against the conquered East. That is why, even the non-British European historians of ancient India were not much different in their attitude from their British counterparts. To quote an example, Christian Lassen, a Norwegian scholar, in his *Indische Alterthumskunde*, the four volumes of which were published between 1847 and 1861, approved of the British rule in India on the basis of his Hegelian presuppositions. He seems to have looked upon the British domination of India as synthesis of the ancient kingdoms of Hindu India, the thesis, and of the oppressive dominance of the Muslims, the anti-thesis.¹ However, it is also true that in every imperialist nation of Europe there emerged a school of historians which was comparatively more sympathetic to the past of the conquered East. This dichotomy in the attitude of the British historians towards ancient Indian history became apparent in the very beginning of the Company's rule in India when we find them divided into two major schools—Romantic and Conservative.² The Romantic

1 *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, pp. 261 ff.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 221 f.

school of historians was headed by Sir William Jones and was later reinforced by Elphinstone, Munroe and Malcolm. These scholars not only knew India and something of its people, but also showed a romantic sympathetic understanding of her history, though they could not overcome their belief in the supremacy of the West over the East. Their attitude found best expression in the *History of Hindu and Muhammadan India* of Elphinstone published in 1841. The historians of the Conservative school, who regarded the attitude of Jones and Elphinstone as unduly tolerant, were themselves divided into two groups : Evangelicals and Rationalists. The Evangelicals, headed by John Shore and Charles Grant urged the application of Christianity and Western education to 'change the hideous state of India society', while the Rationalists, represented by James Mill, the famous Utilitarian philosopher, advocated the use of law and government to achieve that purpose. The view of the Conservative school found best expression in Mill's *History of British India* which was first published in 1818. In the second volume of this work he gave his estimate of ancient Indian history and culture. He ridiculed the hypothesis of 'a high state of civilization in ancient India' propounded by Jones and declared that 'everything we know of the ancient state of Hindustan, conspires to prove that it was rude'.

Of these two schools, the one led by Mill remained more popular among the Britishers throughout the 19th century. The great War of Independence fought in 1857, which was marked by an acute racial bitterness, tended to reinforce it. However, with the emergence of the new Indian middle class preoccupied with politics, and with the growth of Indian nationalism towards the last decades of the 19th century, a new audience with a passionate and vested interest in Indian history appeared. It necessitated a more sympathetic treatment of Indian history. To satisfy this demand the work of Elphinstone reappeared in 1905 and 1911, but due to the latest researches of Sanskritists, numismatists, epigraphists and lay scholars, it had become hopelessly out of date. It was against this background that Smith wrote his famous *Early History of India*, first published in 1904.

VINCENT A. SMITH

In the work of Smith, especially in his treatment of the history of the imperial Guptas, all the earlier shades of opinion converge. His treatment of the Indian civilization, from the Western point of view, was quite sympathetic. In this respect he may be linked with Elphinstone. He seems to have had a great admiration for the India of the Guptas. According to him this country had probably never been governed better 'after the Oriental manner' than under Chandragupta II¹, and the Gupta period was 'a time not unworthy of comparison with the Elizabethan and Stuart periods in England'². Smith was a hero-worshipper as well and had strange fascination for absolute power. He was, therefore, immensely impressed by the domineering personality of Samudragupta. He lionized the Gupta emperor as the 'Indian Napoleon'³ who was 'endowed with no ordinary powers'⁴ and whose southern campaign was simply 'wonderful'⁵.

But above all things Smith was an imperialist, an anglo-phil, and had much in common with the school of Mill. He was obsessed with the idea that the complete political unity of India is only 'a thing of yesterday' and missed no opportunity to justify the British domination of India on the plea that India would become a medley of petty states "if the hand of the benevolent despotism which now holds her in its iron grasp should be withdrawn"⁶. India, for Smith, was very fascinating, but also very strange and frightening. That is why he always tended to exaggerate the ruthlessness and sternness of the ancient Indian kings. Thus, the much admired Samudragupta 'made no scruple about setting his own ruthless boasts of sanguinary wars by the side of the quietist moralizings of him who deemed "the chiefest conquest" to be conquest of piety'.⁷ "It seems", Basham remarks, "that Smith,

1 *EHI*, p. 315.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 322.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 306.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 301.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*, p. 372; cf. also *Oxford History of India*, p. 182.

7 *EHI*, p. 298.

despite his thirty years of service in the I. C. S., never really came to terms with the land or its people. The imaginative and intellectual effort demanded in order to see the world through the eyes of a people not nurtured in a culture based on the Bible and the classics was too much for him, if he ever realized the necessity of such an effort".¹ Very significant in this connection is a passage in his *Early History of India* in which he tries to analyse the motivation of Chandragupta II in launching the expedition against the Śakas : "The motive of an ambitious king in undertaking an aggressive war against a rich neighbour are not far to seek ; but we may feel assured that difference of race, creed, and manners supplied the Gupta monarch with special reasons for desiring to suppress the impure foreign rulers of the west".²

PAN-ARYANISM OF E. B. HAVELL

It is well to remember that Smith had his critics even among Englishmen. Perhaps the most interesting of them was E. B. Havell, whose *History of Aryan Rule in India from the Earliest Times to the Death of Akbar* appeared in 1918. Havell rebuked Smith for his theory that Indians are heirs to untold centuries of 'Oriental Despotism'³. But he himself was the victim of a peculiar philosophy which we may call Pan-Aryanism. According to it, for everything that is good in India, the Aryans were responsible. Even Akbar, the Great Mughal, was an honorary Aryan, because he had Rajput blood in his veins and encouraged the Aryan virtues of tolerance and freedom. No wonder it Havell believed that the "Gupta period politically was an Indo-Aryan revival, for the Guptas were undoubtedly the representatives of the Aryan Kshatriya tradition and champions of the Aryan cause against Āryāvarta's adversaries of Turki, Hun, Dravidian and other alien descent. From the religious point of view it was marked by a Vaishṇava propaganda in which Kṛiṣṇa, the Aryan hero of the Mahābhārata, was put forward as the exponent of Indo-Aryan teaching in opposi-

1 *Hist. Ind. Pak. Cey.*, p. 272.

2 *EHI*, p. 309.

3 Havell, *Aryan Rule in India*, Intro., p. viii.

sion to the Buddhist doctrines, chiefly Mahāyānist, favoured by Āryāvarata's alien enemies".¹

DETACHED ATTITUDE OF A. L. BASHAM

In the period from the publication of Havell's *History of Aryan Rule in India* in 1918 to the publication of A. L. Basham's *The Wonder That Was India* which appeared in 1954, no important work having an account of the political history of the Gupta period was written by any Western author. The work of Basham himself was written in a period when the old imperialistic schools of the British historians had become a thing of the past. Therefore, he has been in a position to look at the history of ancient India in a more detached manner. For example, he has no hesitation to concede that in the age of Chandragupta II "India was perhaps the happiest and most civilized region of the world, for the effete Roman empire was nearing its destruction, and China was passing through a time of troubles between the two great periods of the Hans and the T'angs".² Further, the Allahabad *prasasti* of Samudragupta, which appeared to Smith as 'ruthless boasts of sanguinary wars', strikes Basham 'by its humane urbanity, when compared with many similar panegyrics of the other ancient civilizations'.³

NATIONALIST HISTORIANS

Several Indian scholars, notably Bhagwanlal Indraji, Bhau Daji, and Rajendralal Mitra made valuable contributions to Indological studies in the nineteenth century; but their work mainly consisted in the editing of inscriptions and manuscripts and writing of papers on specialized problems. It was mainly in the twentieth century that the Indian scholars directed their attention to writing the political history of ancient India. They may be broadly divided into two schools : Nationalist and Scientific. This division is however, more or less artificial. In a sense, it may be argued that some sort of nationalist bias it found among all Indian historians and that the same thing may be said, more or less, of historians of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

² Basham, A. L., *The Wonder that was India*, p. 66.

³ *Hist. Ind., Pak and Cey.*, p. 270.

all the countries when they write the history of their own people. As pointed out by Majumdar, nationalist bias "is not necessarily in conflict with a scientific and critical study, and a nationalist historian is not, therefore, necessarily a propagandist or a charlatan".¹

An emphasis on the nationalistic approach towards history on the part of Indian scholars has resulted partly as a reaction against the prejudiced approach of the Western scholars towards India's past and partly due to the influence of the nationalist movement on the Indian historians. From the last decades of the nineteenth century onwards, the glory of India's past was more and more emphasized by nationalists and patriots with a view to encouraging the rising nationalist spirit in the country. It perhaps explains why R. D. Banerji, otherwise quite a sober historian, in his *The Age of the Imperial Guptas* (1933), laid emphasis on his hypothesis that Chandragupta I liberated 'the people of Magadha from the thralldom of the hated Scythian foreigner'² and 'brought independence, self-realization and glory to the people of Northern India',³ against the clear testimony of the Allahabad *prasasti* to the effect that the Gaṅgā basin had become independent long before the rise of the Guptas.⁴

However, the chief representative of the nationalist school of Indian historians was K. P. Jayaswal. His *History of India, A. D. 150 to A. D. 350*, published in 1933, was written to controvert Smith's view that the period between the extinction of the Kushāṇa and the Andhra dynasties and the rise of the imperial Guptas 'is one of the darkest in the whole range of Indian history'. Jayaswal endeavoured to show that the 'history of the Imperial Hindu revival is not to be dated in the fourth century with Samudragupta, not even with the Vākāṭakas nearly a century earlier, but with the Bhāraśivas a century earlier still'. According to him, the work of the libera-

1 *Hist. Ind. Pak. Cey.*, p. 417.

2 *AIG*, p. 3.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

4 *Vide*, Ch. II.

tion of the motherland from the Kushāṇa yoke was started by the Bhārasīvas and completed by the Vākātakas and the Guptas.

The attitude of Jayaswal towards the Gupta history was to a certain extent ambivalent. As a patriot and nationalist he evidently desired to extol the achievements of the Gupta emperors. Of Samudragupta he writes : " It should be noted that he did not over-do militarism. He was fully conscious of the value of the policy of peace ".¹ Further, during the reign of Samudragupta " the psychology of the nation was entirely changed and the outlook became lofty and magnanimous. It was a psychology directly borrowed from the Emperor. The Hindus of his day thought of big undertakings. They contributed high, elegant and magnanimous literature. The literary people became literary Kuberas to their countrymen and literary empire-builders outside India..... Sanskrit became the official language, and it became entirely a new language. Like the Gupta coin and Gupta sculpture, it reproduced the Emperor, it became majestic and musical, as it had never been before and as it never became after again ".² But Jayaswal was also one of those historians who believed that representative democratic institutions existed in ancient India and that the ancient Indian republican states were in fact little different in constitution from the republics of the contemporary West. In order to prove this thesis he had written his famous work *Hindu Polity* in 1918. He was, therefore, very much conscious of the fact that the Guptas were largely responsible for the destruction of these communities. Towards the close of his *History of India* he condemned them for their imperialism. " He (Samudragupta) destroyed the Mālavas and the Yaudheyas, who were the nursery of freedom ; and many others of their class. Once those free communities were wiped out, the recruiting ground for future heroes and patriots and statesmen disappeared.....The life-giving element was gone. The Hindus did not remember the name of Samudra Gupta with any gratitude, and when Alberuni came to India he was told that the Guptas were a wicked people. This is another view of that picture. They

1 Jayaswal, K. P., *Hist. Ind.* p. 204.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 205-6.

were tyrants to Hindu constitutional freedom, though excellent rulers to the individual subject". He, therefore, concluded : " *Let us remember to-day the good deeds of the Guptas and forget their imperialism* ".¹

THE SCHOOL OF BHANDARKAR

But such distinctly biased echoes in the works of Indian historians are quite rare. By and large, they are the followers of the school of R. G. Bhandarkar, the earliest important indigenous historian of ancient history.² Bhandarkar's *A peep into the Early History of India* was first published in 1900 in the *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. In the Introduction of this small volume he summarizes his ideas on the duty of a historian : " In dealing with all these materials ", he wrote, " one should proceed on such principles of evidence as are followed by a judge. One must, in the first place be impartial, with no particular disposition to find in the materials before him some thing that will tend to the glory of his race and country, nor should he have an opposite prejudice against the country or its people. Nothing but dry truth should be his object ; and he should in every case determine the credibility of the witness before him and probability or otherwise of what is stated by him ". Bhandarkar would probably have agreed with Ranke that the task of the historian was to describe the past as it actually was. While Smith had played the role of the prosecuting counsel, and Jayaswal that of the defence counsel, Bhandarkar, in the spirit of a true historian, strove to be an impartial judge. Most of the Indian historians of the Gupta history have followed his advice with varying degrees of success. H. C. Raychaudhuri, R. C. Majumdar, R. G. Basak, S. K. Aiyangar, A. S. Altekar, R. K. Mookerji, D. C. Sircar, R. N. Dandekar, V. V. Mirashi, R. N. Sastri, B. P. Sinha, S. Chattopadhyaya and a host of others, who have written something on the history of the imperial Guptas or other contemporary dynasties have, by and large, confined themselves to the study of facts as they are,

¹ *Ibid*, p. 210-11.

² *Hist. Ind. Pak. Cey.*, p. 280.

without subjecting them to their interpretations in the light of a particular ideology. They differ from each other merely in the degree of reliance which they place in the various types of evidences and the technique to utilize them.

NEED OF A NEW APPROACH

Perhaps no definition of political history is likely to be accepted by all. But generally the view is gaining ground that political history should not be regarded as a mere chronicle of events nor only as an account of kings and important persons, or even 'heroes' who strut about on the stage, attracting the attention of the audience, but who, without the promptings of various influences from Demos and Chronos, invisible to the unwary eye of the spectator, would have failed to fill their roles. It is basically the study of the political aspect of social life, and its focal point is society and not the individual alone. Actually, both of them are woven into a variegated texture by various elements which in the pattern are inextricably joined with each other. In such a view of political history, society "is not merely a picture of still life or a kind of background to the story that is being told—a massive piece of scenery to be described in an introductory chapter or mentioned on occasion in parenthesis. It is an active collaborator in the work of history-making ; and for that very reason it turns out to be at all times an important source of historical explanation"¹. If this view is correct, it would follow that the different aspects of history cannot be studied in isolation from each other but only as facets of an integrated reality. Political history is, thus, a study of political events in their situational contexts, or, the functioning of the centres of political authority with a view to discovering the motivations of political life, and recognising that components of political power have social, economic and religious bases.²

1 Herbert Butterfield, *George III and the Historians*, quoted in *Prob. Ind. Hist. Writ.*, p. 57 f.

2 *Prob. Ind. Hist. Writ.*, p. 68.

It is generally believed that in view of the inadequacy of the source-material, an integrated political history of ancient India cannot be attempted. In 1900 A. D., Bhandarkar opined that nothing but 'dry facts' should be the object of a historian.¹ For him, the main question before the historian of ancient India was 'What happened?', and not 'Why did it happen?' This view is still the dominant one. Writing as late as 1961 Basham advised that the historian of India should continue to work "in an attempt to discover 'what happened', for the history of ancient India is at present so tenuous that it can be fitted into almost any preconcieved pattern"². Most of the Indian historians of ancient India have been unconsciously following the advice of Basham. However, the hazard that the history may be reconstructed *ex cathedra* by forcing facts into a pattern is not peculiar only to ancient Indian history where data are scanty and are liable to be interpreted in ways more than one, but may mark the reconstruction of the history of those countries and ages also which are brimming with relevant data. 'The pigeon-hole histories', the notable among which are the works of Toynbee, may be cited as a case in the point. This hazard in fact emerges not so much from the scarcity of data as from the attitude of the historian. But even if for the sake of argument, we accept the theory of Basham that a factorial study of a period which does not yield sufficient material cannot be done without running the risk of bringing out a preconceived pattern, we would like to state that the data for the Gupta history is ample enough to warrant such an endeavour. A great deal of valuable work has already been done to reconstruct the chronological sequence of the main political events of this period. Though one cannot claim that we now know in detail all the important political events or that their chronology is settled once for all—their generally accepted reconstruction, as well as the modifications suggested in the present work, are all at the most probabilities. From time to time, the discovery of new material necessitates the revision of the prevalent theories. This process perhaps

1 *Collected Works of R. G. Bhandarkar*, I, p. 4.

2 *Hist. Ind. Pak. Cey.*, p. 292.

would never end and a constant review of the available data will always remain imperative. But it is also a fact that now the outline of the main political developments of the Gupta period is known and a fairly reliable chronology may be worked out. Further, these developments may now be studied against the background of the interplay of the various factors operating in society. The study of geo—politics in India is still in its infancy but two valuable works of K. M. Panikkar—*India and the Indian Ocean* (1951) and *Geographical Factors in Indian History* (1955)—and several other works of competent authorities dealing with the various aspects of the influence of geography on Indian history¹, provide the general background and now the influence of the geographical factors on the political developments of a particular epoch may be attempted. Likewise, the influence of economic changes on political developments in ancient India is still a desideratum, though the work of many scholars dealing with the economic history of ancient India in general and that of Maity on the *Economic Life of Northern India in the Gupta Age* in particular make it possible to correlate political events and concomitant economic changes in society and thus, help us to project some of the political developments in their proper economic contexts. On the administrative system of the Guptas, the works of D. D. Kosambi, R. S. Sharma, V. R. R. Dikshitar, U. N. Ghoshal, A. S. Altekar, H. N. Sinha and a host of others throw considerable light, and now the causal relation between the functioning of the feudo-federal structure of the Gupta empire and its political history may easily be studied. As regards religion, it is generally believed that the Guptas followed a policy of religious toleration and almost every book on the Gupta history has a chapter or a section to emphasize this fact. The view is basically sound, though so far nobody has cared to analyse the extent to which religion played a part in the formulation and evolution of the state policies in the Gupta age. We feel that a careful study

1 cf. Subbarao, B., *The Personality of India* (1958); Richards, F. J., 'Geographic Factors in Indian Archaeology', *IA*, LXII, 1933; Vidyalankara, Jayachandra, *Bharatabhūmi aurā Usake Nirvāṇ*, 1931.

of the political events of this period with reference to the religious leanings of those who had a say in the formulation of political policies, would be quite revealing. Similarly, results of the studies of the various scholars—P. V. Kane, A. S. Altekar, and others—in the field of the Gupta social history may be fruitfully utilized to study various political developments in their social contexts. This vast material and the new facts which a patient researcher may happen to discover, we believe, make it quite possible to advance from the stage of discovering only 'dry facts' to the next higher stage of attempting an integrated political history of the Gupta period by studying the political events against the background of the interplay of the various factors operating in society. Of course, we may not be able to discover each and every factor which influenced the shape of a particular event, and sometimes the correlation of the various factors may not be so apparent ; but finality in history is a mirage which no historian seeks to catch, and the study of reality in its integral form and with its innumerable facets is an ideal unknown to historian.



CHAPTER II

CENTRAL GĀṄĀ VALLEY

ORIGINAL HOME OF THE GUPTAS

The political condition of India towards the close of the third and the beginning of the fourth centuries A. D. was pregnant with strong possibilities of the establishment of an empire. In general, India in that period was passing through the same vicissitudes which she experienced in the sixth century B. C. The whole of the sub-continent was divided into a large number of states, some of which were monarchical, others republican. Further, large tracts of the country were in the hands of the foreigners—the north-western regions were being ruled by the Sassanians, Kushāṇas and other Scythian tribes while the western parts were still under the yoke of the Śaka Kshatrapas. In such a condition, the necessity and opportunities of the establishment of a paramount power were quite obvious. In the sixth century B. C. such a situation was exploited by Magadha. According to the most of the scholars, history repeated itself in the fourth century A.D. when the same province produced the empire-builder dynasty of the Guptas.¹

¹ For the chronology of the early rulers of the imperial Gupta dynasty see App. I of this chapter, in which we have given reasons to place the accession of the Mahārājas Gupta and Ghaṭotkacha respectively in c. 295 and c. 300 A. D., the marriage of Chandragupta I with Kumāradevī in c. 305, the birth of Samudragupta in c. 308, and the accession of Chandragupta I and Samudragupta respectively in 319 and c. 350 A. D.

To us it seems very amazing how most of the great authorities on the subject have accepted this idea without properly analysing the evidence in its support¹. The only piece of evidence cited in support of this theory is a statement of I-tsing, the Chinese pilgrim, who travelled in India during the period 671-695 A. D. According to it, a king named Chi-li-ki-to met some Chinese priests at Bodh-Gayā, got a temple built for them close to a sanctuary called Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no and endowed it with 24 villages. Allan proposed the identification of Chi-li-ki-to with Gupta,² the first king of the Gupta dynasty³. Fleet did not accept this suggestion and pointed out that I-tsing places the king Gupta 'five hundred years before his time', whereas the founder of the Gupta dynasty cannot be placed more than four hundred years before he wrote.⁴ Allan did not take it as a serious objection in view of the "lapse of time and the fact that the Chinese pilgrim gives this statement on the authority of a tradition handed down from ancient

1 Allan, *BMC, GD*, (Intro.) p. xiv; Basak, R. G., *IINEI*, p. 6; Aiyangar, S. K., *ASIHIC*, I, p. 180; Banerji, R. D., *AIG*, p. 6; Altekar, *NHIP*, p. 2; Saletore, R. N., *Life in the Gupta Age*, p. 9; Smith, V. A., *EHI*, p. 295; Dandekar, R. N., *Hist. Gupta*, p. 20; Raychaudhuri, H. C., *PHAI*, p. 528; B. P. Sinha suggests that the home of the Guptas may have been near Ayodhyā (*JBORS*, XXXVII, p. 138).

2 Smith believed that the name of the first Gupta king was Śrī Gupta (*JBAS*, LIII, Pt. I, p. 119). On the other hand, Lassen, Fleet (*Corpus*, III, p. 8, fn. 3) and Allan (*BMC, GD*, p. xiv) suggested that his name was merely Gupta. Fleet pointed out that when 'Śrī' was the integral part of a proper name, it was customary to insert the honourific prefix before it. Later, Smith accepted the view of Fleet (*EHI*, p. 296, fn. 1). B. Ch. Chhabra has pointed out that the word 'Gupta' alone as a proper name has been used in the *Vishvasahasranāma* as a synonym of Vishnu (*JNSI*, IX, Pt. II, pp. 137-39).

3 Allan, *op. cit.*, pp. xv-xvi. Dandekar (*Hist. Gupta*, p. 20), Aiyangar (*ASIHIC*, p. 180) and Raychaudhuri (*PHAI*, p. 529) think that Chi-li-ki-to mentioned by I-tsing was a predecessor of the first Gupta king.

4 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 8, fn. 2.

times by old men ". According to him, " the lands of the patron of the Chinese pilgrim must have lain within the Gupta territory—and it is unlikely that we should have had two different rulers of the same name within so brief a period"¹. Most of the scholars hold the same view and have concluded that Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no was situated in the original Gupta kingdom. But the location of this place presents another difficulty. According to one interpretation of the passage concerned, based on its translation given by Beal, it is to be identified with Sarnath² whereas another interpretation based on the translation given by Chavannes would favour its location in the Murshidabad District of West Bengal.³ If we accept the first view, we have to conclude that the original Gupta kingdom was situated in the eastern U. P. and the territory around Sarnath was a part of it ; and if we accept the alternative interpretation we have to admit that the original Gupta kingdom was in Bengal.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF I-TSING'S STATEMENT

To us, both these alternatives appear fallacious. They depend upon the identification of Chi-li-ki-to with the king (Śrī) Gupta, which in its turn depends upon the argument that " it is unlikely that we should have had two different rulers in the same territory of the same name within so brief a period ". But it is not a very sound argument, firstly, because instances could be cited from the Gupta history itself of two Chandraguptas and three Kumāraguptas ruling not far removed from each other. Secondly, the assumption that the Mahārāja Gupta and Chi-li-ki-to ruled over the same

1 Allan, *op. cit.*

2 Agrawal, Jagannath, *IHQ* XXII, pp. 28ff.; Sinha, B. P., *JBR* XXXVII, Pt. 3-4, p. 138.

3 Ganguly, D. C., *IHQ*, XIV, pp. 532 ff.; Majumdar R. C., *NHIP*, pp. 129-30. Altekar (*Bayana Heard*, Intro, p. xi), S. Chattopadhyaya, (*EHNI*, pp. 137-38) and B. G. Gokhale (*Samudra Gupta*, p. 25) believe that the temple was situated in Maldah district of Bengal. Chattopadhyaya and Altekar admit that a part of Magadha was included in the original Gupta state.

territory has so far remained totally unproved. How can one be certain that they ruled over the same territory when the location of the original Gupta kingdom itself is a matter of dispute, and the identification of Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no is not certain? To argue that Chi-li-ki-to and the king Gupta are identical because they ruled over the same territory and then to suggest that the Mahārāja Gupta must have ruled over Sarnath or Murshidabad because Chi-li-ki-to is said to have got a temple built there is, to say the least, extremely illogical. Apparently, the identification of the king Gupta and Chi-li-ki-to itself depends upon the question whether Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no was situated within the original Gupta kingdom or not. We cannot locate the original Gupta kingdom on the assumption that Chi-li-ki-to and the Mahārāja Gupta are the names of the same person.

Thus, the evidence of I-tsing can hardly have any bearing on the problem unless we could independently prove that Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no was situated within the territory ruled over by the first Gupta Mahārāja¹. More important is the fact that even its acceptance does not prove that the king Gupta ruled over Magadha. It has been maintained that as Chi-li-ki-to met the Chinese priests at Bodh-Gayā, Magadha must have been a part of his kingdom. But decidedly it is a very weak basis to build a theory upon. It is a well-known fact that Bodh-Gayā was a great religious centre. It is more reasonable, therefore, to assume that Chi-li-ki-to himself went to that place as a pilgrim.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA

We ourselves have tackled the problem of the original home of the Guptas from an entirely different angle, and our approach has

1 There is a certain amount of loose thinking about the original home of the Guptas. For example Altekar (*Bayana Hoard*, Intro. pp. xi-xii), while discussing this problem first mentions that I-tsing's evidence shows that Chi-li-ki-to or the king Gupta was ruling over Varendra or northern Bengal and in the next sentence concludes that "the patrimony of the Guptas was thus located in the south-east Bihar and included a part of north-western Bengal as well" as if the evidence of I-tsing warrants this assumption.

led us to conclude that they originally belonged to the eastern part of the U. P.¹ It is a well established fact that the early inscriptions and coins of a dynasty are usually found mostly in the region in which it originates. For example, the coins of the early Bactrian Greek rulers such as the Diodotii, Euthydemus and Demetrius I are found in Bactria and adjoining regions only. Similarly, despite the fact that Kanishka I ruled over a large part of the northern India, his inscriptions, 9 out of 12, and most of his gold coins have been yielded by the north-western regions². The Vākāṭaka inscriptions have also been discovered in the heartland of their empire.³ It is true that copper plate grants or the *tāmra śāsanas* sometimes travel away to a region different from the place of their issue or where the grants recorded in them were initially made⁴; but the inscriptions engraved on stone pillars and stone-slabs are usually found not very far removed from their original sites. We, therefore, feel that in the absence of any definite literary evidence on the question of the location of the early state of a dynasty, the indication provided by the find-spots of the early inscriptions, coins and coin-hoards may be regarded as a reliable testimony. In the case of the imperial Gupta dynasty, epigraphic and numismatic data provide us the following facts :

(1) The Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type-coins, the earliest of the Gupta gold coin-series⁵, have been mostly discovered in the eastern U. P. " Their recorded findspots are Mathurā, Ayodhyā, Lucknow, Sitapur, Tanda, Ghazipur and Banaras in U. P. and Bayana in the Bharatpur state⁶." Even Altekar, who is a strong

1 Uttar Pradesh may broadly be divided into two divisions—eastern and western. In this sense the region lying to the east of Lucknow may be called the eastern U. P.

2 *IIIQ*, XXI, Pt. 3, p. 205.

3 Mirashi, *ABORI*, XXXII, pp. 1 ff.

4 Sometimes the place from where a grant was issued differed from the place at which it was actually made. e. g. the Rithapur grant of the Nala king Bhavattavarman was made at Prayāga and issued at Nandivardhana.

5 See *infra*, App. iii of this Chapter.

6 Altekar, A. S., *Coinage*, p. 26.

supporter of the theory of Magadha origin of the Guptas was constrained to remark : " It is rather strange that no finds of his (Chandragupta I's) coins should so far have been recorded in Bihar, the home province of the Gupta empire¹".

(2) As many as fourteen hoards of the Gupta gold coins have been discovered in the eastern U. P. while Bengal and Bihar have yielded only two each. The following chart² of the hoards of the Gupta gold coins is quite revealing and suggestive.

<i>Region</i>	<i>No. of Hoards</i>	<i>Name of the Hoards</i>
Eastern U. P.	14	Bharsar (Banaras), Tanda (Fyzabad), Kotwa (Gorakhpur), Allahabad, Basti, Kasarva (Ballia), Tekri Debra (Mirzapur), Madankola (Jaunpur), Gopalpur (Gorakhpur), Jhusi (Allahabad), Jaunpur, Rapti, Devattha (Ballia), Kusumbhi (Unnao).
Bihar	2	Hazipur, Banka (Bhagalpur)
Bengal	2	Kalighat, Hugli
Punjab	1	Mithathal (Hissar)
Rajasthan	1	Bayana
Madhya Pradesh	3	Pattan (Baitul), Sakori (Damoh), Bamnala (Nimar)
Gujarat	1	Kumarkhan

1 *Ibid.* His remark, however, is not wholly correct, for, one coin of Chandragupta I was yielded by the Hazipur hoard (*ibid.*, p. 308).

2 The chart is based on the lists of the hoards of the Gupta gold coins as given by Altekar in his *Coinage* and the *Bayana Hoard*. The Madankola hoard has been mentioned in the *JNSI*, XXII, p. 261.

(3) A comparative study of the contents of the hoards of the Gupta gold coins¹ found in Bengal, Bihar and the eastern U. P. gives the same indication. The Kalighat hoard found in Bengal 'consisted mostly of the issues of the later Gupta emperors' while the Hugli hoard yielded only one coin of Samudragupta; all the other coins of the latter hoard belonged to Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I. Similar is the story of the two hoards found in Bihar. The Banka hoard found in the Bhagalpur district contained coins of only Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I while the Hazipur hoard has yielded only one coin of Chandragupta I and four of Samudragupta. Its other coins belong to Chandragupta II. The analysis of the hoards found in the eastern U. P. tells a different tale. We have got details of nine hoards found in this region. Out of these, Tanda hoard has yielded coins of only Chandragupta I, Kācha and Samudragupta, Kasarva hoard contained the coins of only Samudragupta and Kācha and the Tekri Debra and Kusumbhi hoards yielded the coins of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I. In the Bharsar hoard, coins of the emperors from Samudragupta to Skandagupta are found along with two coins of Prakāśāditya. In the other hoards, Chandragupta II is the earliest king to be represented, except for the Jhusi hoard the available portion of which has yielded the coins only of Kumāragupta I, though it may have contained issues of earlier kings also. This analysis clearly suggests that the early Gupta kings such as Chandragupta I, Samudragupta and Kācha were connected with the eastern part of the present Uttar Pradesh more than any other region of North India.

(4) Region-wise distribution of the inscription of the early Gupta period points towards the same fact. We have got fifteen inscriptions of the first hundred-fifty years of the Gupta rule (excluding the period of the reign of Gupta and Ghaṭotkacha) from Bengal, Magadha and the eastern Uttar Pradesh. Out of these,

1 Vide *Coinage*, pp. 306 ff. and 356; *Bayana Hoard*, Intro., pp. iv ff.

as many as eight belong to the eastern U. P., two¹ to Magadha and five to Bengal. The inscriptions found in Magadha are the well known Gayā and Nālandā copper plate grants of Samudragupta. Most of the scholars believe that these are not genuine Gupta records.² If it is so, the number of the inscriptions from the so-called home-province of the Guptas issued during the first hundred-fifty years of their rule is reduced to naught. And if they are genuine, or the copies of the genuine records, at least one of them *viz.* the Gayā grant indirectly indicates to the intimate relations of the Guptas with the eastern U. P. because it was issued from Ayodhyā, and not from Gayā or any other place situated in Magadha.

(5) An analysis of the nature of these inscriptions confirms this indication. All the five inscriptions found in Bengal belong to the comparatively later period, *viz.* the reign of Kumāragupta I and are copper plate grants. They record the sale of government lands to various applicants and the government's acceptance of their proposal to create rent-free holdings out of the purchased lands. It merely proves the sway of the Guptas over this province during the reign of this emperor, and in no way indicates that this was their home-province. The case of the inscriptions found in Magadha, if they are to be regarded as genuine or late copies of the genuine records, is similar. On the other hand, the inscriptions found in the eastern U. P. are not only larger in number but also by their nature they indicate the intimate association of the early Gupta kings with this region. Out of the eight records of the early Gupta rulers found in this area, three are inscribed on pillars, three on a stone-slab and two on stone images. Of these, two stone pillar inscriptions *viz.* the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta

1 We have not included the famous Bihar stone pillar inscription of a successor of Kumāragupta I in this list of Magadhan inscription, for, we believe that it belongs to the post-Skandagupta period. Fleet assigned it to Skandagupta (*op. cit.*, pp. 47 ff.). But R. C. Majumdar (*IC*, X, pp. 70 ff.) and B. P. Sinha (*DKM*, pp. 26 ff.) have expressed their disagreement with this view.

2 Cf. *infra*, App. 2.

and the Bhitari pillar inscription of Skandagupta require special mention in this connection. The latter one is a *pratishthā śāsana* and records that Skandagupta installed an image of the god Śārṅgin in the memory of his father and allotted to the idol the village in which the column stands¹. Now, one would hardly expect that Skandagupta chose a region other than the home-province of his dynasty for such a pious act, the aim of which was 'the increase of the religious merit of his father'².

(6) The point is almost conclusively proved by the Allahabad pillar inscription, the earliest and the most important of all the Gupta epigraphs, in which Harishena has given a detailed description of the *digvijaya* of his master. It is an example of pure *prasaṣti* and is 'devoted entirely to a recital of the glory, conquests and descent'³ of the emperor. Now, the provenance of an inscription of this type is always significant, since, unlike the *pratishthā śāsana* it is not associated with an area or a place due to the *pratishthā* ceremony, but is indicative of the ruler's predilection for the place. The other known instance of this type of inscription belonging to the Gupta age, is the famous Mandasor pillar inscription of Yaśodharman. That epigraph is also entirely devoted to the description of 'the king's power and glory'⁴. Now, it is significant that it is found at a place which was obviously the centre of Yaśodharman's power. We do not know any other example of a pure *prasaṣti* type of document of the Gupta age which was inscribed in a region to which the king eulogised in it did not belong. Therefore, the provenance of the Allahabad pillar inscription may be regarded as a strong pointer to the fact that the centre of power of the early Guptas was the Prāyāga region of the modern eastern Uttar Pradesh.⁵ In any case, it cannot be doubted that the epigraphs found

1 Fleet, *Coinage*, III, p. 53.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 146.

5 Here it may be noted that the stone pillar on which the *prasaṣti* of Samudragupta is engraved was not brought to Prayāga from any other place. As it also contains an edict of Aśoka addressed to his officers at Kauśāmbī, the pillar must

in the eastern U. P. are not only much larger in number, they are comparatively older and suggest the connection of the early Gupta kings with this region far more strongly than those found in Magadha or Bengal.

THE PURANIC EVIDENCE

The Puranic evidence is consonant with the numismatic and epigraphic data and confirms our conclusion. The *Vāyu Purāṇa* states that the "kings born of the Gupta race will enjoy all these territories, namely, along the Ganges, Prayāga, Sāketa and the Magadhas".² These territories have rightly been identified as those of Chandragupta I because his two predecessors can hardly be given the credit of ruling over such a large kingdom, and the empire of his successors was definitely far more extensive than this.³

have been in the Prayāga-Kauśāmbī area since the Mauryan period.

1. In this connection the evidence of the spread of Kauśāmbī style of the Gupta script is very interesting. The old palaeographers wrote of a common Gupta alphabet with regional variations. However, according to Dani, who has tackled this problem with a new approach, in the middle of the fourth century A. D. there were several variations in the north Indian script, but "a change was definitely coming towards the close of this century". According to him, gradually the Kauśāmbī style, represented by the Allahabad *prafasti* of Samudragupta became the most popular one. "The earliest evidence is supplied by the Udayagiri cave inscription (Fleet no.6) of Chandragupta II, which is written entirely in the Kauśāmbī style—In the fifth century A. D. the Kauśāmbī style became the predominant system of writing in the Gangetic Valley". (*Indian Palaeography*, p. 100 f.).
2. Pargiter, *DKA*, p. 73.
3. Pargiter, *op. cit.*, Intro., p. xii; Allan, *op. cit.*, p. xix; Basak, *HNEI*, pp. 11-12; Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 531. *Contra*, R. C. Majumdar (*NHIP*, pp. 134-35), and D. C. Ganguly (*IHQ*, XXI, pp. 141 ff.) who do not believe in the testimony of the *Purāṇas*. But R. C. Majumdar contradicts himself in his *Hist. Beng.*, I, p. 70. According to D. Sharma (*IHQ*, XXX, pp. 374 ff.) Devarakshita, Mahendra and Guha mentioned in the *Purāṇas* represent three successive Gupta

The corresponding passage in the *Vishṇu Purāṇa* is slightly, though significantly, different. It reads :

*Anu-Gaṅgā Prayāgāṁ Māgadha Guptāś-cha bhokshyanti.*¹

It has been translated by Majumdar as follows : " the territory along the Ganges (up to) Prayāga will be enjoyed by the people of Magadha and the Guptas ".² This statement obviously implies that the Guptas were different from the Māgadhas or the people of Magadha, though both of them jointly ruled over 'the territory along the Ganges up to Prayāga'. Unfortunately, the implications and importance of this passage have not been properly understood so far. As is generally admitted, the Gupta empire came into existence as the result of the amalgamation of the Gupta and the Lichchhavi states.³ In the light of this fact, the statement of the *Vishṇu Purāṇa* may be interpreted only in one way : the author of this work has referred to the joint-state of the Guptas and the Lichchhavis and has described the latter as the Māgadhas or the people of Magadha.

With the help of the above analysis of the evidence of the *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, we can locate the nucleus of the early Gupta kingdom easily. The passage in question quite evidently implies that Magadha was included in the joint-state of the Māgadhas and the Guptas. It may be inferred, therefore, that 'the territory along the Ganges upto Prayāga' meant the region situated between Magadha and Prayāga. And if Magadha belonged to the Lichchhavis, it may reasonably be surmised that the region west of Magadha extending up to Prayāga in the eastern U. P. was ruled

rulers Chandragupta II, Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta. But the Puranic statements on these rulers are too confused to warrant such a conclusion.

1 *DKA*, p. 53, fn. 8. We have not discussed the evidence of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* because it is decidedly a late work. On the other hand, the *Vāyu* and the *Vishṇu* are generally regarded as the works of the early Gupta period.

2 *NHHP*, p. 134.

3 Aiyangar, S. K., *ASIHIC*, p. 184; Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 30-31; Majumdar, *NHHP*, pp. 128-29; Smith, *EHI*, pp. 294-95.

over by the early Gupta kings.¹ This conclusion is consonant with the facts that at least two hoards of the Gupta gold coins and five out of the eight inscriptions of the early Gupta period including the famous *prasthi* of Samudragupta, have been found crowded at or in the vicinity of Prayāga alone.²

LOCATION OF THE LICHCHHAVI STATE

The above discussion solves also the problem of the location of the Lichchhavi state in the fourth century A. D. In the sixth century B. C. the Lichchhavis ruled over the northern Bihar with Vaiśālī (modern Basarh) as their capital. They were defeated and incorporated in the expanding Magadhan empire by Ajātaśatru ; but they continued to be an important tribe, for, they have been mentioned in the *Arthasāstra* of Kautilya and the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*.³ Further, they established an independent kingdom in Nepal in the beginning of the Christian era.⁴ Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya⁵

1 Wilson in his edition of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* has translated the passage in question differently (p. 385). But the translation of Majumdar, being consonant with the facts mentioned above, appears to be preferable.

2 The suggestion that Prayāga was the centre of the original Gupta state beautifully explains the popularity of the Gaṅgā-Yamunā motif in the Gupta age. Further, it may be noted that the Prayāga region has yielded a large number of Gupta antiquities from sites such as Kauśāmbī (Sharma, R. G., *The Excavations at Kauśāmbī*, 1957-59, p. 16, 23), Bhita (NHIP, p. 428) Gadhwā (*ibid*) and Jhusi. Further, if our conclusion regarding Prayāga region as the original home of the Guptas, is correct, we can identify the first king of the Gupta dynasty with the king Chi-li-ki-to of I-tsing, for, now we know that Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no, where Chi-li-ki-to got a temple built for the Chinese priests, was included in the original Gupta state (provided the translation of Beal is correct). It may be regarded as an additional fact in favour of our suggestion. In case the translation of Chavannes is correct, the identification of Chi-li-ki-to with the first Gupta ruler will have to be rejected.

3 *Mānavadharmaśāstra*, X. 22 (Burnell's trans., p. 308).

4 HNEI, p. 283.

5 EHNI, p. 143.

has opined that Kumāradevi, the queen of Chandragupta I belonged to the Nepali branch of the Lichchhavis. But, as Samudragupta mentions Nepal as one of his subordinate states, it does not appear to be correct. On the other hand, there is some indication to suggest that the Lichchhavis were living in the vicinity of Pāṭaliputra in the beginning of the Christian era. The Paśupati Temple inscription of Jayadeva II of the Lichchhavi dynasty dated in the year 153 states that 23 generations before Jayadeva I, his ancestor Supushpa Lichchhavi was born at Pushpapura which probably refers to the city of Pāṭaliputra.¹ Now, if Fleet's dating of the Nepal epigraphs² is correct, Supushpa flourished in the first century A. D. Though it does not prove that Lichchhavis occupied Pāṭaliputra in that period (as some scholars believe³), it does suggest that they were living and taking an active interest in the city. The evidence of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* cited above proves that ultimately they succeeded in occupying it some time before their chief contracted a matrimonial alliance with the Guptas in the beginning of the fourth century A. D. It seems that Smith was correct when he remarked, though without giving any evidence in his support, that "at the time of this fateful union the Lichchhavis were masters or overlords of the ancient imperial city, and that Chandragupta, by means of his matrimonial alliance, succeeded to the power previously held by his wife's relatives".⁴

FACTORS THAT LED TO THE RISE OF THE CENTRAL GANGA VALLEY

Thus, the Guptas started their career in the eastern U. P. with Prayāga region as the centre of their power. How extensive it was, it cannot be definitely stated, though, almost certainly it included Sarnath in the east. At any rate, we can say that towards the close of the third and the beginning of the fourth century A. D. the

1 Indrajit, No. XV ; Gnoli, No. LXXXVI ; Basak, *HNEI*, pp. 268-69.

2 Fleet, *Corpus*, II, pp. 177 ff.

3 Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 112.

4 *EHI*, p. 295.

eastern U. P. in general and Prayāga region in particular produced a dynasty which was destined to establish an empire in no distant future. Now, what were the factors which led to the rise of this region ?

GEO-POLITICAL FACTORS

In the North-Western region, since c. 500 B. C. Achaemenids, Alexanderian Greeks, Bactrian Greeks, Parthians, Śakas and the Kushāṇas had entered one after another and had created not only political and socio-cultural problems, but had changed the texture of population to a great extent. In the third century A. D. it passed under the hegemony of the Sassanians of Iran, though the Kushāṇas and other Scythian tribes of the Punjab continued to exist under the overlordship of the new power.¹ Such a region, though it continued to be a part of the larger Indian world both culturally and politically, could hardly assume the leadership of national revival. The case of the western India is almost similar, for, it was still in the hands of the Western Kshatrapas. It was the Deccan that offered good prospects of producing an empire-builder dynasty. And actually, even before the Guptas attained imperial dignity, Vākātaka Pravarasena I had almost become successful in making this dream a reality. Apart from a large part of the Deccan, he influenced the political fortunes of a considerable chunks of western and northern India as well.² But it is a patent fact of history that the powers of the Deccan and the Far South always found it difficult to conquer the North. And if, for sometime, they succeeded in the adventure due to their over-whelming military superiority, they could not retain their North Indian possessions for long. In this respect they experienced far greater difficulties than those felt by the northern conquerors in the South. The

1 *NHHP*, Ch. 1.

2 *Infra.*, pp. 87 ff.; *NHHP*, p. 100; Jayaswal, on the other hand, believed that Pravarsena I was the lord paramount of practically whole of India (*Hist. Ind.* pp. 92-94). But the arguments given by him are not sound (vide *NHHP*, p. 101).

failure of the Sātavāhanas, the Chālukyas, the Rāshtrakūṭas and the Marāṭhās are cases in the point. We do not know much about the adventures of the early Vākātakas in the North; but if they made any attempts, they did not and obviously could not succeed. However, their emergence as a strong power prior to the establishment of the Gupta empire was a significant development and was bound to influence the history of the Gupta dynasty considerably.

The only other region which could produce the necessary leadership was the Gaṅgā basin. It may be roughly divided into two divisions: the lower or the eastern division approximately comprising modern Bihar and Bengal and the upper or the western division roughly corresponding to the present Uttar Pradesh. Now, it was Magadha in the lower Gaṅgā basin which had produced the first historical imperial dynasty of India. The causes of the rise of Magadha were mainly the heterodox tradition (which in that period proved to be a source of strength), flexible social structure, strategic advantage over rival powers and, above all, its mineral resources.¹ But by the beginning of the second century B. C. the situation had changed and the menace of the Bactrian Greeks necessitated a shift in the centre of political power.

1 For a detailed analysis of these factors, vide, Raychaudhuri, H. C., *PHAI*, pp. 187-90. But he does not mention the availability of metal, by far the greatest factor that led to the rise of Magadha. "Looking over the traditional capitals one is struck by the solitary occurrence of Rājgir (= *Rājgrha*, 'the king's house') on the other side of the river.... The reason for a capital so far out at the way in what is not the most fertile land becomes clear when it is noted that the Barabar hills contain the northern most known Dhār-wār outcrop, with quickly accessible iron encrustation. Rājgir had the first immediate source of iron at its disposal. Secondly, it is straddle (with Gayā, to which the passage was through denser forest) the main route to India's heaviest deposits of both iron and copper, to the south-east in Dhālbhūm and Singhabhūmi districts." (Kosambi, D. D., *Intro. Ind. Hist.*, p. 147; also see, Subbarao, 'Rise of Magadha in Indian History and Archaeology', *JOI*, X, No. 4, pp. 364 ff.)

Consequently, very soon Vidiśā usurped the glory of Pāṭaliputra¹. The process culminated in the conquest of a large part of the northern India by the Kushāṇas which made Purushapura in the North-West the greatest centre of political power in the country. But, after nearly a century, the beginning of the disintegration of the Kushāṇa empire once again created a political vacuum in the country. By the middle of the third century A. D., a number of independent indigenous powers had come into existence—the Mālavas, the Yaudheyas, the Ārjunāyanas and the Madrakas etc. in the eastern Punjab and Rājaputana, the Nāgas in the western U. P., the Maghas at Kauśāmbī, and a number of small tribal states and forest kingdoms to the south of the Uttar Pradesh.

MAGADHA AND THE MURUNDAS

The fate of Magadha in the post-Kushāṇa period proved to be a little different, for, it was most probably occupied by the Muruṇḍas, perhaps in the middle of the second century A. D. The Muruṇḍas were a tribe of Scythic stock akin to the Kushāṇas and the Śakas but still different from them.² In this connection Levi³ has drawn attention to a Chinese account from which we learn that during the reign of the Wu dynasty (220-77 A. D.) Fan-Chen, the king of Fu-nan (Cambodia) sent his relative Su-Wu as ambassador to the court of the Indian king whose capital has been identified by Bagchi with Pāṭaliputra.⁴ The Indian monarch accorded him a hearty welcome and afterwards sent two men, Cheng-Song and another, with four horses of the Yueh-chi country

1 *PHAI*, p. 369.

2 Although the Muruṇḍas are generally regarded as a separate dynasty of kings who succeeded the Kushāṇas or the Tukhāras (Bagchi, P. C., *India and Central Asia*, p. 133), many scholars like S. Konow consider them identical with the Śakas. Konow explains the word Muruṇḍa as a Śaka word meaning 'lord' or 'svāmi'.

3 Quoted by Allan, *BMC, GD*, Intro., p. xxix.

4 "The description of the city and the palace as given by the Indian ambassadors reminds one of the splendour of Pāṭaliputra". (Bagchi, P. C., *India and Central Asia*, p. 134). See also Cunningham, *Mabābodhi*, quoted in *EHNI*, p. 118.

as presents to Fan-Chen. In Fu-nan Chen-Song met a Chinese officer and on being questioned by him about the Indian customs informed him that in his country the law of the Buddha was in a prosperous state and that the title of the king was Meouloun. Levi has identified Meouloun with Muruṇḍa. It is a very important fact, for, it shows that in the middle of the third century A. D. the Muruṇḍas were ruling over Pāṭaliputra. Perhaps they captured Magadha a century earlier at the time when the Kushāṇas were finding it increasingly difficult to retain their distant possessions and were yielding to the rising power of the Maghas at Kauśāmbī. The *Geographike* (vii, 2.14) of Ptolemy shows that in c. 140 A. D. the Marundas were established in the valley of the 'Sarabos', the Sarayu of the Sanskrit texts. Half a century later Oppien mentions the 'Maruandien' as a Gangetic people.¹ The Jain tradition specifically associates them with Pāṭaliputra. According to the *Pādalipta-prabandha* of the *Prabhāvakacharita*, Pādalipta Sūri cured king Muruṇḍa of Pāṭaliputra of his terrible headache, and converted him to Jainism.² The *Āvasyka Brīhadvṛtti* also refers to a Muruṇḍa king of Pāṭaliputra who sent his ambassador to the king of Purisapura (Peshawar)³. Incidentally, it may be noted that this tradition as well as the Chinese account mentioned above point to the intimate relation between the Muruṇḍas of Pāṭaliputra and the kings of Peshawar. It was but natural, for, after all the Muruṇḍas and the Kushāṇas both belonged to the same Scythian stock.

The history of Magadha of the period immediately preceding the rise of the Guptas as given in the Purāṇas corroborates the above data.⁴ According to the Purāṇas the Muruṇḍas were quite distinct from the Śakas. All these works agree that they followed

1 EHNI, p. 117.

2 Shah, J. C., *Jainism in North India*, p. 194; IC, III, p. 49. According to Jain tradition as recorded in the *Śimhāsana-dvātriṃśikā*, for some time even Kāṇyakubja was in the hands of the Muruṇḍas (Allan, BMC, GD, Intro, p. xxix.)

3 *Malaviya Com. Vol.*, pp. 184.

4 Pargiter, DKA, pp. 44-47 ; 72.

the Tukhāras (Kushānas) and that 13 of their kings ruled in India along with low caste men, all of whom were of Mlechchha origin.¹ Some of these texts contain an account of a certain king Viśvaphāṇi or Viśvaphūrjhi or Viśvasphaṭika. The form of his name shows that he was possibly a foreigner and may thus have belonged to the Muruṇḍa stock. He was probably a eunuch but, like the founder of the Nanda dynasty, he exterminated the old Kshatriya families and brought into existence a new social order by establishing Kaivartas, Paṭus, Pulindas, Mādrakas, Pañchakas and Brāhmaṇas.²

In the light of the evidence given above, certain isolated facts acquire new significance. Firstly, it may be noted that an extremely fragmentary Sanskrit inscription, recently discovered from Mirzapur, now in the Sanskrit University Vārāṇasi refers a certain king Rudradāmaśrī. Palaeographically it can be assigned to 'third-fourth century'.³ The name of this king is clearly Scythian; so, he could have been a Muruṇḍa ruler of the post-Kushāṇa period. Secondly, one of the seals discovered at Vaiśālī by Spooner reveals the existence of a Śaka queen Mahādevī Prabhudāmā. She has been described as the daughter of the Mahākshatrapa Svāmī Rudrasimha and the sister of the Mahākshatrapa Svāmī Rudrasena.⁴ Unfortunately the name of her husband has not been mentioned, but in the light of the facts mentioned above, she appears to have been the queen of a Muruṇḍa ruler of Magadha.⁵

1 Maruṇḍas, Muruṇḍas (*Vāyu P.*); Puruṇḍas, Puranḍas (*Matsya P.*); Suruṇḍas, Guruṇḍas (*Bhāga P.*); Svaruṇḍas (*Brahmaṇḍa P.*); Muṇḍas (*Vishnu P.*).

2 Pargiter, *DKA*, p. 52; 73; Wilson, H. H., *The Vishnu Purāṇa*, p. 384.

3 *Indian Archaeology : A Review*, 1959-60, p. 65.

4 *ASI, AR*, 1913-14, p. 136.

5 Dasharath Sharma (*PIHC*, 1956, pp. 146-8) has conjectured that Prabhudāmā was one of the queens of Samudragupta and was given to him by Rudrasimha II (c. 305-16 A. D.) pursuant to the *kanyopāyanadāna* policy of the emperor. But the son of Rudrasimha II was Yaśodaman II (known

Thus, all the available evidence indicates that in the later half of the second and a good part of the third century A. D. the Murundas were ruling over Magadha and adjoining regions.¹ The date of the end of their rule cannot be determined precisely, but it seems that the Lichchhavis, perhaps towards the close of the third century A. D., had succeeded in overthrowing the hated Scythian yoke, for, as we have seen they were the masters of Magadha when Chandragupta I laid the foundations of his empire.

So, except for the Indus basin, Magadha was the last region of North India to liberate itself from the rule of the foreigners. Apart from this, its poor record as the defender of Āryāvarta in the post-Śuṅga period had further weakened its chances to emerge as the leading power in the fourth century A. D. It could check neither the Āndhras nor the Chedis and nor the Kushāṇas. Therefore, in the beginning of the fourth century A. D., when the Vākātakas had just established themselves as a strong power in the Deccan and were trying to extend their influence in the North as well, the Sassanians had made themselves almost paramount in the North-West, the Western Kshatrapas were yet to be liquidated and the danger of the revival of the Kushāṇa power was not completely over, the initiative to establish a powerful empire in the north could be taken only by the people of the Upper Gaṅgā basin and the powers of this region provided it most effectively. It is against this background that the rise of Mathurā

dates 316-32 A. D.), and not any one having the name Rudrasena (*NHPI*, p. 57). The Rudrasena III whom Sharma identifies with the brother of Prabhudāmā was the son of Rudradāman II, and not of Rudrasimha (*ibid.*, p. 61). To us the suggestion of Altekar (*ibid.*, p. 51) and S. Chattopadhyaya (*EHNI*, p. 126) seems to be correct. They believe that Prabhudāmā was the daughter of Rudrasimha I (c. 181-88 and 191-97 A. D.) and the sister of Rudrasena I (c. 200-222 A. D.).

1 Allan, *BMC, GD*, Intro., p. xxix; Chattopadhyaya, S., *EHNI*, pp. 117 ff. Bagchi also accepts that the Murundas were established in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A. D. with their capital at Pāṭaliputra (*op. cit.*, p. 134).

and Padmāvati under the Nāgas, of Kauśāmbī under the Maghas and of Prayāga under the Guptas as the potential centres of political power in the third-fourth centuries of the Christian era becomes explicable and significant.

WEAKNESS OF THE TRIBAL STATES

The administrative structure of the North Indian states in the beginning of fourth century A. D., reveals certain very interesting features. Firstly, it is to be noted, and it is a very important point, that at that time the upper Gaṅgā basin was divided into a number of small states, but they were *all* monarchical. On the other hand, except for Nepal in the north, it was surrounded on all the three sides by a ring of states which were *almost all* tribal republics.¹ And it needs no arguments to prove that republican form of government is most unsuited for imperialistic career. That was exactly the weakness of the Lichchhavis against Ajātaśatru. They could at the most hope to repulse the invader whenever he came; they could not put an end to the recurring invasions by annexing his kingdom. The very nature of their constitution precluded this possibility. On the other hand, once their resistance failed, their fate was sealed; for, they could be incorporated and merged in the expanding empire. It was what actually happened. In the same way, the tribal republics of the fourth century A. D. could not become imperialist powers. Hence, the initiative had to be taken by the monarchical states of the *antarvedi*.

The weakness of the tribal republics was further accentuated by the fact that they, almost all, were passing through a period of transition. They were realizing that they could not hold their own against the onslaughts of their mighty neighbouring kings. Hence, they were gradually absorbing the elements of monarchical form of government. That is why we find that though the Lich-

1 Authorities on political science generally define republic as a state in which the sovereign power rests not with a single person but in a group of persons more or less numerous. It is in this sense that the *gana* states of ancient India are described as republics. (Altekar, *NHIP*, p. 265, fn. 1).

chhavi relations of Chandragupta I had a republican or tribal constitution (since the word *Lichchhavayaj* occurs on the reverse of his coins), it is almost certain that the father of Kumāradevī was a hereditary chief, for, otherwise how could the son of Kumāradevī inherit the state of his maternal grandfather? ¹ Similarly, the head of the Yaudheya state, though his post was perhaps elective, arrogated the regal title *Mahārāja* along with another title *Mahāsenāpati*. ² The headship of the Sanakānika tribe too had become hereditary and the regal title *Mahārāja* had also been usurped by its rulers ³. Even among the Mālavas, in whom the republican tradition was perhaps the strongest, the leadership had already begun to pass into the hands of persons like Śrī (?) Soma, who claimed that their stock was as respectable as that of the royal family of the Ikshavākus and who hereditarily lead the state armies in times of war and organised civil administration in times of peace. ⁴ This transition from republican form of government to monarchical, was symptomatic of the inner crisis which must have rendered them weaker. It partially explains why the Lichchhavis of Magadha agreed to merge their state with that of the Guptas and why the other tribal republics so readily accepted the suzerainty of Samudragupta.

Another interesting feature of the administrative organisation of some of the tribal republics and a few of the monarchical states was the theocratic element which had crept into them in this period. According to J. N. Banerjea ⁵, the 2nd-3rd century Kuṇinda coins with the legend *Bhagavata* (*b* or *o*) *Chhatreśvara Mahātmanaj* may

1 *NHIP*, pp. 128-29.

2 *Corpus*, III, p. 252.

3 From the Udayagiri cave inscription of Chandragupta II of the year 401 A. D., we learn that the Sanakānika Mahārāja, mentioned in this inscription, was the son of the *Mahārāja* Vishṇudāsa and the grandson of the *Mahārāja* Chhagalaga (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 25).

4 In the Nandsa Yūpa inscription (*EI*, XXVI, pp. 252 ff.) Śrī (?) Soma describes himself as well as his father Jayasoma and grandfather Prabhāgra (?) vardhana as *rājarishis*.

5 Banerjea, J. N., *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 118, fn. 1; *JNSI*, XIII, Pt. I, p. 163, fn. 2; *Comp. Hist. Ind.*, II, pp. 797-98, fn. 7.

mean that "the tribal state of the Kuṇindas at one time was dedicated to the Lord Śiva, and the coins were issued in his names in the capacity of its sovereign ruler".¹ Even the Yaudheyas, it seems, at least in the late second century A.D., had dedicated their state to their spiritual lord Kārttikeya who, thus, became their temporal lord also.² In the light of these facts, the interpretation of Marshall³ of the inscription of the 3rd or 4th century A.D. Bhita sealing becomes interesting. The inscription reads, *Śrī Vindhyabhedamahārājasya Mahēśvara Mahāsenātisṛiṣṭarājyasya Vṛiṣṭh-rajasya Gautamiputrasya*. Marshall interprets it as follows: 'Of the illustrious Mahārāja Gautamiputra Vṛiṣṭhadvaja, the penetrator of the Vindhyas, who had made over his kingdom to the great Lord Kārttikeya'. These facts suggest that many of the states of North India in the pre-Gupta period had acquired a few features of the theocratic states. But as the evidence on this point is rather controversial, we would not like to emphasize on it.

BRAHMANICAL REVIVAL

It is a well-known fact that the establishment of the Gupta empire was accompanied by and connected with the Brahmanical

- 1 There is some controversy on the actual significance of this legend. According to Altekar (*NHIP*, p. 31), and S. Chattopadhyaya (*EHNI*, p. 133) *Chhatreśvara* was the name of a Kuṇinda ruler. Allan left the legend untranslated (*BMC, AI*, p. ciii) which may indicate that he was not sure regarding its exact meaning. D. C. Sircar believes that Chhatra or Chatra was possibly the name of the Kuṇinda capital or its contraction for the purpose of writing (*AIU*, p. 161, fn. 1) while Chakraborty has translated it as "of Almighty Mahādeva, the lord" i. e. the coin dedicated to God Mahēśvara (*Studies in Indian Numismatics*, p. 188).
- 2 Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 142; *Comp. Hist. Ind.* II, pp. 797-98, fn. 7; *JNSI*, XIII, pt. 1, pp. 160 ff. S. Chattopadhyaya follows him closely (*EHNI*, p. 121). As a matter of fact, the exact reading of the legend on the group 3 of the Yaudheya coins, assigned by Allan to late 2nd century A.D., on which this suggestion rests, is rather controversial. For a detailed examination of all these suggestions, vide *JNSI*, XXVII, Pt. II, pp. 132-34).
- 3 *ASIAR*, 1911-12, p. 51.

revival. "The available data show that the Vedic sacrifices were never more popular since the revival of Hinduism than during the 3rd and the 4th centuries."¹ But the main feature of the religious renaissance of this period was the rapprochement between the Vedic and the devotional schools and the gradual triumph of the latter. The Bhāraṣivas performed ten horse-sacrifices, but they constantly carried on their person the emblem of Śiva. The Vākāṭaka emperor Pravarasena I performed a large number of Vedic sacrifices like Bṛihaspatisava, Aśvamedha, Agnishtoma, Āptoryāma, Ukthya and Atirātra, but his successor Rudrasena I was a devotee of Śiva and latter's grandson Rudrasena II was a worshipper of Chakrapāṇi. The Guptas themselves very enthusiastically performed Aśvamedha sacrifices, but at the same time very anxiously proclaimed themselves *Paramabhāgavatas*. However, gradually the Vedic gods and the cult of sacrifice lost popular appeal and Puranic religion got the upper hand.² This trend—the revival of Brahmanism with the rapprochement between the Vedic and the devotional traditions and the gradual though final victory of the latter—is also evidenced by the archaeological data. Commenting on the *Charaṇa* and temple sealings found at various sites, Pathak observes: "Several seals of various temples... have been discovered at Basarh, Bhita, Nalanda and Rajghat, whereas the finds of *Charaṇa* seals are almost negligible. Secondly, temple-seals continue from 3rd-4th century A. D. down to the end of early mediaeval period. The eight Avimukteśvara sealings range from 5th century A. D. to 11th century A. D. But *Charaṇa* seals suddenly stop after the Gupta age. The conclusion is, therefore, irresistible that the *Charaṇa* institution was gradually disappearing while its *āgamic* counterpart, the temple institution, was increasingly gaining popularity".³

The Brahmanical revival had many aspects. Firstly, it was extremely nationalist in character. As it was largely the result

1 NHIP, p. 369.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 371.

3 JNSI, XX, Pt. II, p. 198.

of a reaction against the dominance of the foreigners who were by and large the patrons of heterodox faiths, it was bound to be so. The meaning and significance of this aspect of the movement become apparent if we compare the nature of the Mauryan empire with the character of the Gupta state which was the product of this movement.¹ It has been recognised that the Mauryan government was to a great extent influenced by the Achaemenid and Hellenistic traditions.² There is at least some truth in the remark of Rostovtzeff, the learned historian of Hellenism: "If one believes in the historical character and early date of the kernel of the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya and in the radical centralization of Indian government effected by Chandragupta on "Hellenistic" lines, one may say that Chandragupta did more to Hellenise India than Demetrius and Menander".³ Similarly, in the sphere of art the "sudden introduction of stone on a large scale as a medium was due to Graeco-Persian influence. Like the hall of Pataliputra, these columns owed much to Achaemenid models.... This definite and distinct school of sculpture is to a large though uncertain extent un-Indian, quite distinct from all other Indian work before and after".⁴

In contrast to the Mauryan empire, the Gupta state was almost thoroughly Indian in character. If 'the Mauryan polity with its bureaucratic and pervasive paternalism was an exception to the norm of ancient Indian state',⁵ the Gupta administration was in accordance with the best traditions laid down in the text books on the Hindu polity.⁶ Similarly, the Gupta art was not a mere parenthesis in the development of the indigenous art of India; it was the high watermark of ancient Indian artistic traditions. Even the Buddhist art of this period was free of the foreign influences. As Smith remarks in connection with the Sarnath figure, the Gupta Buddha "is absolutely independent of the Gandhāra

¹ *Comp. Hist. Ind.*, II, p. 54-55.

² *Ibid*, p. 55.

³ *Ibid*, p. 90-91.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 87.

⁵ *CA*, p. 351.

school".¹ It "reveals the fullest fruition of the original Indian genius in carving out a figure in perfect harmony with its spiritual conceptions".² The Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sculpture of this period confirm this conclusion.³

The best illustration of the nationalist orientation of the Gupta culture is provided by the coinage of the imperial Guptas. When the foundations of the empire were laid, the Kushāṇa dress—long tailed coat, trousers and peaked cap—was popular in the higher circles of the Hindu society just as the European dress is popular among the educated classes of modern India even when the country has become independent. Even in the marriage scene depicted on the coins of Chandragupta II-Kumāradevī type, the Gupta emperor is shown as wearing Kushāṇa coat and trousers. He does not discard it even when offering oblations on altar in the Standard type. The goddess on the reverse on the early coins is an exact copy of Ardoxsho; only her name is omitted. Contrary to Hindu canons of propriety, Samudragupta is shown as his own standard-bearer, simply because such was the case with the king on the Kushāṇa coins, which were being imitated by the Gupta mint-masters.⁴ But gradually the king began to be shown in Indian dress, though foreign coat and trousers lingered on for several decades. Ardoxsho was transformed into Durgā or Lakshmi and the Standard type was Indianised by substituting the standard either by the *paraśu* or by the bow.⁵ One can confidently say that the "vast majority of the types of the Gupta emperors are thoroughly national".⁶ Thus, the coinage of the Guptas provide us an illustrative commentary on the contemporary psychology towards the cultural problems of the day and of the nationalist bias of the leaders of society.

1 Smith, V. A., *History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, p. 170.

2 Agrawala, V. S., *NIIP*, p. 448.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 448-52; *Studies in Indian Art*, p. 199 ff.

4 Altekar, A. S., *Coinage*, pp. 15.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

6 *Ibid.*

Apart from being nationalistic, the Brahmanical revival was a great unifying force. In the preceding period Buddhism, after its brilliant legacy of the Mauryan period in the sphere of unification of the country had, under the patronage of the foreigners, played a somewhat reactionary role which hindered the process of integration.¹ In the post-Kushāna period, under the impact of the reviving Brahmanism, the forces of disintegration began to become weaker and once again the idea of 'universal empire' (comprising the whole of the country or the *chakravartī-kṣetra*) became popular. The *Vāyupurāṇa* declared that the "*chakravartins* are born in each age as the essence of Viṣṇu. They have lived in the ages past and will come again in future. In all the three ages—past, present and future—even in the *Tretā* age other *chakravartins* have been and will be born".² A few centuries later Medhātithi, a great commentator on Manu, expressed the idea in this manner: "A king of meritorious conduct could conquer even the land of the *mlecchhas*, establish *chāturvargya* there, assign to the *mlecchhas* a position occupied by the *chāṇḍālas* and render that land as fit for sacrifice as Āryāvarta itself".³ The Gupta emperors, at least of the first five generations, seem to have lived in accordance to this ideal.

AREA-ASSOCIATION OF BRAHMANICAL REVIVAL

Now, we should take up the question of the area-association of the Brahmanical revival, for, generally speaking, one would expect to find that the dynasty which became the spearhead of this movement was produced by the region which was its greatest stronghold. Viewed from this angle, Magadha, which was traditionally a heterodox area, would appear to be the least likely region. Vedic culture penetrated here quite late and failed to make any deep impress on it. That is why in the later Vedic and post-Vedic periods it was the centre of the Vrātya culture.⁴ This

1 C.A., p. ix.

2 *Vāyu Purāṇa*, XLVII. 72-6.

3 Quoted in C.A. p. ix.

4 The name Magadha first appears in the *Atharva-veda* (V.

was the region where the "Brāhmaṇas could associate with the *Vrātyas*, the *Rājanya* could admit the *Sūdra* girl to the harem, the *Vaiśya* and even the *Yavana* could be promoted to gubernatorial office, hereditary rulers of aristocratic lineage could be expelled to make room for the offspring of a *nagara-śobhinī*, and the "royal throne of kings" was not beyond the reach of a barber".¹ It explains why this region repeatedly produced arch-enemies of the Kshatriyas—Jarāsandha of epic legend, Sarva-kshatrāntaka Mahāpadma, the notorious founder of the Nanda dynasty and Viśvaphāṇi who tried to establish barbarians and fishermen etc. in place of the old Kshatriya order. Here, it may be noted that these kings were interested not in the extermination of their contemporary kings; they wanted to uproot the Kshatriya order as such—something which was totally against the *chāturvārṇya* system on which the Aryan society was based.

The heterodox character of Magadha was accentuated by the rise and popularity of Buddhism, Jainism and Ājīvikism. The rulers of the Maurya dynasty proved themselves great patrons of these faiths.² It was one of the causes due to which, during the Brahmanical revival of the Śuṅga age, the centre of political power had to shift to Vidiśā. Even after the decline of the Kushāṇas, Magadha continued to be ruled by the Muṇḍas who, according to the data at our disposal, were the patrons of either Buddhism or Jainism.³ And after the fall of the Muṇḍas, the *Vrātya*

22.14.) where fever is wished away to Gandhāris, Mūjavats, Aṅgas and Magadhas. In the *Vrātya* book of the *Atharva-saṃhitā* (XV. ii. 5) the *Vrātya* is brought into very special relation to the *pūmīchālī* (harlot) and the *Māgadha*. The Brāhmaṇas of Magadha in the Later Vedic period were contemptuously called *Brāhmabandhu* (*Vedic Index*, II, p. 116). According to Oldenberg (*Buddha*, p. 400 fn.) the Vedic dislike of the Māgadhas in early times was due to the fact that the Māgadhas were not wholly Brahmanised.

¹ *PHAI*, p. 189.

² Chandragupta Maurya and Samprati became the champions of Jainism, Aśoka patronised Buddhism while Daśaratha recorded his favour to the Ājīvikas.

³ According to the Chinese record cited by Levi, the law of the Buddha was in a prosperous condition in the king-

Lichchhavis, the traditional champions of Buddhism, became its rulers. In these circumstances, the dynasty which assumed the leadership of the Brahmanical renaissance could have hardly originated in Magadha.

The tale of the North-West is almost similar. It had become associated with Buddhism under the Indo-Greek and the Kushāṇa kings such as Menander and Kanishka I. It was here that the fourth Buddhist Council was convened, the Gandhāra school of Buddhist art originated and flowered and the Mahāyāna acquired popularity. According to a Jain tradition, which possibly refers to the condition of third century A. D., Purisapura (Peshawar) was so full of Buddhist monks that one could not walk on the roads and avoid their sight.¹ These facts make it quite clear that in the 3rd-4th centuries the North-West was mainly a Buddhist culture-area. So, it could also not produce a dynasty which could champion the cause of Brahmanism.

The greatest stronghold of Brahmanism in the post-Kushāṇa period was the upper Gaṅgā basin. It had been the stronghold of the Vedic culture and had become the citadel of Brahmanism even in the post-Mauryan period. It is significant that Pushyamiitra himself originally belonged to Vidiśā, and not to Magadha. So, when a reaction against the Kushāṇas and the Muṛuṇḍas took place, the *antarvedi*, the land of the sacred cities of Ayodhyā, Prayāga, Vārāṇasī and Mathurā, was bound to lead the rest of the northern India. That is why the powerful Nāgas 'who were anointed to sovereignty with the holy water of the Bhāgirathī,' and 'who performed their sacred bath on the completion of their ten Āśvamedhas'² as well as the Guptas who were '*Parvata-bhāgavatas*' and performers of several Āśvamedha sacrifices and

dom of Meou-loun and according to the Jain tradition Pādālipa cured the Muṛuṇḍa king of terrible headache and converted him to Jainism. (*supra*, p. 57).

1 Cf. *Malaviya Com. Vol.*, p. 184 f.

2 *Corpus*, III, p. 245, 236.

who ultimately succeeded in giving concrete shape to the *chakravartī* ideal, belonged to his region.

ECONOMIC FACTOR

From the economic point of view, the upper Gaṅgā basin, especially the region which comprises the eastern part of the present Uttar Pradesh, enjoyed great prosperity in the early Gupta period and in the period immediately preceding it. It can be recalled that as many as fourteen hoards of the Gupta gold coins have been found in this area.¹ This fact has its economic significance as well. After all, this abundance of gold could not have been the result only of successful military raids and tributes paid by the feudatory states. Such a great accumulation of wealth implied industrial progress and favourable balance of trade in the Gupta and pre-Gupta periods. That it is not a mere surmise is proved by the fact that in the Indo-Gangetic basin, the Roman coins of early centuries of the Christian era are found only in the upper Gaṅgā basin, especially in the Prayāga region. The most eloquent testimony to this fact is provided by the archaeological remains. In the words of Rao Bahadur K. N. Dikshit in "the Madhyadeśa, corresponding roughly with the present United Provinces, was situated *the heart of the Gupta empire*—a fact which stimulated the growth of cities and towns to an unprecedented extent. Thus, in each of the provincial centres such as Benaras, Kauśāmbī, Śrāvastī, Ahichchhatrā and Mathurā the new culture manifested itself in an unmistakable manner. Countless mounds and ruined sites scattered all over the province testify to the way in which Gupta culture spread all over the land, as antiquities of this period are the commonest of all those originating from the mounds. It is seldom indeed that a site or settlement founded in an earlier period was abandoned before the Gupta times, and also that a site exhibiting medieval antiquities on the surface, does not go back at least to the Gupta period"² (*italics ours*).

1 *Supra*, p. 46.

2 *NIHP*, p. 427.

SOCIAL *milieu* OF THE GUPTAS

BRAHMANAS AS A POLITICAL FORCE

In the pre-Gupta age, a shift in the centre of political power took place in terms of social groups as well. The most important element of the state-structure was kingship, and significantly enough, in the very beginning of this period we find Manu declaring that "a brāhmaṇa who knows the Veda deserves to be made a king, a commander-in-chief, the wielder of power of punishment".¹ That this new principle was concomitant with an actual change in the nature of kingship becomes clear by the fact that almost all the important indigenous ruling dynasties of the post-Mauryan period belonged to the Brāhmaṇa order. Pushyamitra, the founder of the Śuṅga dynasty, Vasudeva, the first Kaṇva ruler, Simuka the first of the Sātavāhana kings and many others—e. g. the Kadambas and the Vākātakas—were Brāhmaṇas. It is also worthy to note that in most of these cases, it was not found necessary to confer the status of kshatriyas on these rulers.

The rise of the ruling families belonging to the Brāhmaṇa order was a new development for which there is hardly any parallel in the earlier times. In the Vedic period, the Kshatriyas were the custodians of political power and the Brāhmaṇas, though the most respected section of society, were regarded as unsuited for kingship. Thus, we read in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*—"To the king (Rājan) doubtless belongs the *Rājasūya* ; for, offering *Rājsūya* he becomes king, and unsuited for kingship is the Brāhmaṇa".² But in the centuries following the *Nirvāṇa* of the Buddha, there took place a great reaction against the political supremacy of the Kshatriyas. The rise of the Maḡadhan empire coincided with the growth in the popularity of the heterodox faiths. The rulers of Maḡadha and the Kshatriya communities of the various republican tribes became strong champions of the new religions and joined the Buddhist and the Jain *saṃghas* in large numbers. In the north-

1 *Manu*, XII. 100 ; see Kane, *History of Dharmatāstra*, III, p. 39.

2 Egging, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Pt. III, p. 4.

western regions of the country, it was the age of the arrival of the foreign invaders e. g. the Persians, Greeks, Śakas, Pahlavas, Kushāṇas etc. in successive waves. It was difficult to accommodate them within the scheme of the orthodox Vedic society in which they were detested as Mlechchhas. But Buddhism welcomed them in its fold more readily and accorded them the status of the Kshatriyas. All these factors tended to reduce the number of the genuine orthodox Kshatriya families and resulted in the decline of their prestige as the defenders of the ancient Vedic culture. It is against this background that the attempts of the militant section of the Brāhmaṇa order to put itself in place of the Kshatriyas as the custodian of the political power becomes intelligible and significant.

In the post-Mauryan period, a shift in the social centre of political power is evidenced not only by the emergence of the ruling families belonging to the Brāhmaṇa order, but also by the dominance of this section of society at the various other levels of statestructure. Next to the kingship, army was the most important organ of the state. Generally speaking, in ancient India the right to bear arms—to exercise coercive power based on *daṇḍa*—was regarded as the exclusive privilege of the Kshatriyas. But in the post-Mauryan period Manu extended it to the Brāhmaṇas and the Vaiśyas, especially to the former.¹ Kāmaṇḍaka states that the priest, minister and nobles are the principle leaders of the army.² The point becomes significant when we find that in the Mauryan period even Kautilya had expressed a low opinion of the army of the Brāhmaṇas.³ That the Brāhmaṇas used to occupy this important office is rendered clear by the epic story of Droṇa and the historical example of Pushya-

1 *Manu*, VIII. 348.

2 *Kāmaṇḍakanītisāra*, XV. 20. The *Matsya Purāṇa* refers to a king named Pramati, who carved out an empire with the army of the Brāhmaṇas (V. S. Agrawala, *Matsya Purāṇa, a Study*, p. 230). *Agni Purāṇa* (200.1) gives Brāhmaṇas the right to hold the post of the commander-in-chief.

3 *Arthśāstra*, IX. 2.

mitra. As regards the office of minister, Kauṭilya does not mention as to which caste the *amātya* should belong, but Kātyāyana insists that he should be recruited from the Brāhmaṇa order.¹ Vasudeva, the minister of Devabhūti was a Brāhmaṇa, and so was Prithviṣeṇa, the minister of Chandragupta II². Many other examples may easily be cited.

The influence of the Brāhmaṇas may also be seen on the collective institutions such as *parishad*. From the testimony of Manu³ and Yājñavalkya⁴, it appears that in the post-Mauryan period it was supposed to be a body entirely manned by the Brāhmaṇas. Similarly, in the judicial administration, the most important role was played by the Brāhmaṇas. Appointment of the judges was made on the caste basis and, according to Manu⁵ and Yājñavalkya⁶, the first preference was given to the Brāhmaṇas. Viṣṇu (c. 300 A. D.) also states that the administration of justice should be entrusted to the well-instructed Brāhmaṇas, either accompanying the king or alone.⁷

From the above account, it would appear that in the post-Mauryan epoch at the various level of administration, Brāhmaṇas were given the place of honour. The echo of this change may be heard in the contemporary literature and epigraphs. In the *Mahābhārata* which, in the period under review, was thoroughly revised by the Bhārgavas⁸—the most militant section of the Brāhmaṇa society—we find a highly glorified picture of the Brāhmaṇa sages and warriors. They are described as highly arrogant, domineering, unbending and revengeful. The kings of the earth are like vermin before them. The mighty Haihayas

1 Quoted by R. S. Sharma in *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*, p. 190.

2 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 6.

3 *Manu*, XII, 110-4.

4 *Yāj*, 1.9.

5 *Manu*, VIII. 20-21.

6 *Yāj*, II. 3.

7 *Viṣṇu*, III. 72-3.

8 Sukthankar, V. S., *Critical Studies in the Mahābhārata*, pp. 330 ff.

tremble before the infant Aurva, who blinds them by his effulgence, and they have to beg for mercy on their bended knees. King Kusika grovels at the feet of Chyavana and meekly submits to all varieties of indignities. Rāma Jāmadagnya, the Bhārgava hero *parexcellence*, described as a perfect warrior (*sarvaśāstrabhītam varāḥ*), conquers the whole world, alone and unaided. He frees the earth of the burden of the Kshatriyas thrice seven times and makes the gift of the earth to Kaśyapa, his priest, who distributes it among Brāhmaṇas¹. That he was the ideal and a source of inspiration for the Brāhmaṇa rulers of the post-Mauryan period, is proved by the contemporary epigraphs. Take, for example, the case of Gautamiṣuṭra Śātakarṇi, the Śātavāhana emperor. In his Nasik *prasthi* he is called '*Eka-Bambhaṇa*' i. e. the unique Brāhmaṇa, and '*Khātiya-dapa-māna-madana*' i. e. the destroyer of the pride and conceit of the Kshatriyas. The expression *Eka-Bambhaṇa* when read along with the passage *Khātiya-dapa-māna-madana*, leaves no room for doubt that he not only claimed to be a Brāhmaṇa, but a Brāhmaṇa like Parśurāma who humbled the pride of the Kshatriyas. As a matter of fact, the inscription specifically describes him as 'the unique Brāhmaṇa, in prowess equal to Rāma' i. e. Bhārgava Rāma or Paraśu Rāma.²

A more intimate glimpse into the psychology of the militant Brāhmaṇas, which led them to capture political power, is provided by the Talagunda inscription of the Kadamba king Śantivarman.³ From it, we learn that the Kadambas derived their descent from *Hārītī*—a group of the Bhṛigvāṅgirasa family. Mayūrasarman, the founder of the Kadamba dynasty, was a pious Brāhmaṇa devoted to the study of the Vedas and the performance of the Vedic sacrifices. After a good education he went to the capital of the Pallava ruler along with his *guru* Virāsarman to complete his studies. There, he had a quarrel with a mounted guard (*aśvasamsthā*) and in his wrath, he felt : "Alas ! in this age of Kali, Brāhmaṇa-

1 *Ibid.*, p. 327 f.

2 *PHAI*, p. 413 f.

3 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 451 f.

hood is helpless against the Kshatra ; for what can be more pitiful than this, that even after I have given full satisfaction to my *gurus* and studied my *sākhā* with great effort, the realization of my spiritual aim should depend on the king ?" So, he gave up the sacrificial ladle and grasped the shining weapons of war, wishing to conquer the world. May be, the rise of the Vākātakas, who belonged to the Vishṇuvṛiddha *gotra* of the Bhṛigvāṅgīrasa family¹ and other *Brahma-Kshatra* dynasties, took place in the circumstances of similar nature. Against this background of the emergence of militant Brāhmaṇas as the dominating factor at the various levels of administrative structure, the question of the social background of the imperial Guptas, by far the most important result of the Brahmanical revival and the product of a predominantly Brāhmaṇa culture-area, becomes highly significant and interesting.

VARIOUS THEORIES REGARDING THE CASTE OF THE GUPTAS

The Gupta epigraphs do not throw any light on the social background of the Imperial Guptas. However, in her copper plate inscriptions Prabhāvatiguptā, the daughter of Chandragupta II and the wife of the Vākāṭaka Rudrasena II, mentions that she belonged to the Dhāraṇa *gotra*.² Now, as the *gotra* of the husband of Prabhāvatī was Vishṇuvṛiddha, it has been inferred that Dhāraṇa was the *gotra* of the Guptas. It is very significant, for, as pointed out by Dasarath Sharma³ the *Skanda Purāṇa* refers to the Brāhmaṇas of the Dhāraṇa *gotra* living in Dharmāraṇya,⁴ a tract in Mirzapur District of U. P. To us it appears to be a strong proof in favour of our suggestion that the Guptas, who also belonged to the eastern U. P., were Brāhmaṇas by caste.⁵ However Sharma, who for-

1 Pathak, V. S., *Ancient Historians of India*, p. 25.

2 *Sel. Ins.* 413, 416.

3 *Purāṇa*, VII, no. 1, pp. 183-5.

4 *Skanda Purāṇa*, Brahma Khaṇḍa, 35-37.

5 Even before the attention of the scholars was drawn by D. Sharma to the above mentioned passage of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, we had suggested that the Guptas belonged to the Brāhmaṇa order (*Gorakhpur Viśvavidyālaya Patrikā*, 1961).

merly had faith in the Suggestion of Jayaswal¹ that the Guptas belonged to the Jāt clan of the Punjab, now maintains that these rulers were either Kshatriyas or Vaiśyas and believes that they had accepted the Dhāraṇa Brāhmaṇas as their *gurus* and had adopted their *gotra*. But such a conjecture is unnecessary and completely unwarranted. Similarly, the various theories based on the interpretation of the word 'Gupta' do not appear to be very convincing. This word reminded Allan of Chandragupta Maurya, who, according to the learned scholar, "was certainly of low caste origin, as his name would imply, and it is very possible that the history of the rise of the founder of the Gupta dynasty closely resembles that of the great Maurya."² It has also been maintained that according to the *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, the names ending in 'Gupta' are characteristic of the Vaiśya caste;³ so, the imperial Guptas must have belonged to this social order.⁴ But in ancient India, despite the injunction of the *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, the name Gupta had no specific caste association.⁵ For example, Brahmagupta, the

1 Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.* p. 115. ; D. Sharma supported him in *JBORS* XII, p. 108. Raychaudhuri, however, conjectured that the Guptas were descendants of Dhārīṇī, the chief queen of Agnimitra Śuṅga.

2 Allan, *BMC, GD*, Intro., p. xvi.

3 The *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, p. 240. The *Manu Smṛiti* (II. 31-32) also suggests that an *upapada* suggestive of *śarman* (happiness), *rakshā* (protection), *pushti* (prosperity) and *preshtya* (service) should be added to the names of Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras respectively. This soon developed into the prescription of the later authorities to the effect that the words *śarman* or *deva*, *varman* or *trāṭṛ*, *bhūti* or *datta* and *dāsa* should be suffixed to the personal names of the four Varnas respectively.

4 Satyaketu Vidyālakara, *Agravāla Jāti Kā Prāchīna Itihāsa* (in Hindi). He points out that Dhāraṇa is still a well-known gotra among the Agravala community of the Vaiśyas. Altekar (*NHIP*, p. 342, 344), Aiyangar (*AISHC*, p. 180) and V. V. Mirashi (*Vākāṭaka Rājavāṃśa*, p. 56) also believe that the Guptas belonged to the Vaiśya order.

5 According to D. Sharma the word 'Gupta' used in the name of the Gupta emperors is not indicative of their

famous astrologer was almost certainly a Brāhmaṇa,¹ the Gupta kings mentioned in the Panchobh copper plate inscription were Kshatriyas² and the Buddhist monk Upagupta mentioned in the *Divyāvadāna* was a vendor of scents.³ We do not know why the surname Gupta reminded Allan of Chandragupta Maurya (who was himself probably a Kshatriya⁴) and not of his Brāhmaṇa minister Vishnugupta.

The argument that the surname Gupta reveals the social origin of the imperial Guptas has also been utilized by the supporters of the theory that the Guptas belonged to the Kshatriya caste.⁵ It has been pointed out that the six kings mentioned in the Panchobh copper plate inscription, were the descendants of Arjuna. "This leads us to think that the kings of the imperial Gupta line were also of Kshatriya origin"⁶. But we have already seen that the termination Gupta is found in association with the names of all the castes including Brāhmaṇas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras.⁷ So, the

caste. It was the name of the first ruler of the dynasty and was adopted as the surname of the members of his family when it acquired eminence during the reign of Chandragupta I (JBS, XXXIX, p. 265).

1 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 11, fn. 1.

2 JBORS, V, pp. 282 ff.

3 *Divyāvadāna*, ed. Cowell and Neil, pp. 348 ff.

4 PHAI, p. 267 ; Mookerji, R. K., *Chandra Gupta Maurya and His Times*, 1943, pp. 505-15.

5 Ojha, G. S., *Rājaputāne kā Itihāsa* (In Hindi), pp. 113-14; Chattopadhyaya, S., EHNI, p. 140; Mehta, G. P., *Chandra Gupta Vikramāditya* (in Hindi), p. 9, fn. 1; Upadhyaya, V., *Gupta Sāmrajya kā Itihāsa* (in Hindi), I, pp. 28-31.

6 EIINI, p. 140.

7 As a matter of fact, no surname seems to have had any rigid caste affiliation till the end of the Classical period of Indian history. Among the royal families, the word *varman* is for the first time found in the Pallava dynasty of Kañchī although the Pallavas appear to have originally been Brāhmaṇas of the Bhārdvāja gotra (Sircar, D. C., *Soc. Sci. L. Rev. Dec.*, pp. 152-56 ; Jayaswal, K. P., *Hist. Ind.*, p. 92). On the other hand, a Nāgārjuni Koṇḍa inscription refers to a certain Bodhisārman who was a member of merchantile community (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 225, text,

fact that the kings of certain other dynasties having the surname Gupta were Kshatriyas, does not prove that the imperial Guptas also belonged to this caste. Another argument advanced by the supporters of this theory is that the Guttala kings of Dharwar, who claimed to be Kshatriyas have been described as the descendants of Chandragupta Vikramāditya.¹ But little reliance can be placed on such mediaeval traditions. Further, it should not be overlooked that in ancient times, if a non-Kshatriya family assumed the headship of the state, after sometime it usually acquired Kshatriya status.² We, therefore, should concentrate on the contemporary data only.

The most important argument given by the supporters of the Kshatriya origin of the imperial Guptas is based on the analysis of the matrimonial alliances of these kings. It has been argued that in ancient India marriages were arranged generally in accordance with the *anuloma* and *pratiloma* rule. According to it, the marriage of a man of higher *varṇa* with a woman of lower *varṇa* was *anuloma* or permissible while the marriage of a man of lower *varṇa* with a woman of higher *varṇa* was *pratiloma* and was strongly condemned. In the light of this rule, it is said, the matrimonial alliances of the Guptas show that they must have been Kshatriyas, for, otherwise how the proud Lichchhavis could marry

line 2). The Kadambas of the South used both the surnames—*śarman* and *varman*. Kālidāsa, the famous poet, is almost universally believed to have been a Brāhmaṇa, but he had the surname *dāsa*. *Sena* was the surname of the Brāhmaṇa Vākātakas as well as of the Śakas of Western India. The most striking examples are provided by the copper plate grants of Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa in which the Brāhmaṇa donees are found to have generally the names ending in the words *ghosha*, *soma*, *pālita*, *deva*, *kuṇḍa*, *nāga*, *bhūti*, *senā mitra* etc. (*Ind. Ep.* p. 424).

1 *Bombay Gazetteer*, I, ii, p. 578.

2 Pallavas were perhaps originally Brāhmaṇas (Sircar, D. C., *Soc. Sci. Lit. Rev.*, pp. 152-6) though, later on, they came to be regarded as Kshatriyas. Similarly, Vardhanas of Thanesar were perhaps originally Vaiśyas though, later on, they assumed Kshatriya status.

Kumāradevi with Chandragupta I, and how the powerful Nāgas could agree to the marriage of Kubernāgā with Chandragupta II. The marriage of Prabhāvatiguptā with Brāhmaṇa king Rudrasena II also becomes quite explicable, for, according to this rule a Brāhmaṇa was entitled to marry a Kshatriya girl.

The argument is quite forceful. But it is strange to note that so far nobody has bothered to point out that the analysis of the marriage relations of the Guptas makes it equally possible that they belonged to the Brāhmaṇa order. For, if we assume that they were Brāhmaṇa by caste, these marriage alliances remain in the *anuloma* category.

GUPTAS WERE BRAHMANAS

The protagonists of the theory of the Kshatriya origin of the Guptas have not only overlooked the possibility of their having been the members of the Brāhmaṇa caste, they have very conveniently overlooked the evidence in its favour. For, from the Talagunda inscription of the Kadamba king Śāntivarman we learn that Kākutsthavarman, the great grandson of Mayūrasārman, the founder of the dynasty, gave one of his daughters in marriage to a Gupta king.¹ As we have seen, the Kadambas belonged to a Brāhmaṇa family who derived their descent from Hāriti and belonged to the Mānavya *gotra*.² Thus, the indication provided by the rule of *anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriages is in consonance with the fact that the Guptas were a branch of the Dhāraṇa Brāhmaṇas.

It may, however, be objected that the Kadambas may have been forced by the Guptas to agree to this marriage alliance, or that the Kadambas themselves, impressed by the glory of the Guptas, overlooked the Śāstric injunction on this point. This objection involves a doubt in the validity of the argument that the analysis of the marriage relations can give an indication as to which caste the Guptas belonged. Here, it may be pointed out that the rejection of this line of approach is equally fatal to the theory of Kshatriya origin. For, in that case it would become impossible

1 *Sel. Ins.* p. 454.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 451.

to maintain that the Guptas must have been Kshatriyas, otherwise how the proud Nāgas and the Lichchhavis could give their princesses in marriage to them. But the more important question is : can the above mentioned objection against the marriage-alliance argument be sustained ? We do not think so. In this connection we would like to make the following observations :

(i) In the Gupta period *pratiloma* marriages were extremely rare. All the authentic instances of such marriages belonging to this period so far cited by scholars¹ depend upon the presumption that the Guptas were Vaiśyas. We do not mean that *pratiloma* marriages were altogether unknown. We only wish to point out that no authentic instance of a *pratiloma* marriage of this period is on record, though the possibility of some isolated cases may not altogether be ruled out. By way of evidence, we may quote the high authority of Yuan Chwang, an intelligent and impartial observer belonging to a different country and a different faith, who not only refers to the four hereditary castes of Indian society together with their respective occupations, but adds that the members of a caste group marry within the caste.² Therefore, unless we can prove we should not lightly assume that the leaders of society violated Śāstric injunction on this point.

(ii) The suggestion that the Guptas could force the Kadambas to agree to this alliance cannot be sustained because no Gupta emperor after Samudragupta is known to have carried his victorious arms in the Far South. The possibility that the Kadambas, being impressed by the power and glory of the mighty Guptas, themselves violated the law of *anuloma* marriages is highly unlikely. It may be pointed out that the Kadambas were very orthodox Brāhmaṇas. Mayūrasarman, the founder of the dynasty was a Brāhmaṇa of Kautilyan nature. He had exchanged the ladle for the sword with the specific purpose of protecting the Brāhmaṇas

1 Kane, P. V., *History of Dharmasāstra*, II ; pp. 449-50 ; Ghoshal, U. N., *CA*, p. 56, fn. 7 ; 562, fn. 1 ; Altekar A. S., *NIIP*, p. 343 ; Dandekar, R. N., *JIH*, XL, Pt. III, p. 543.
2 Watters, *Travels* I, p. 168.

and the Śāstras.¹ According to mediaeval legends he performed eighteen horse-sacrifices and distributed 144 villages among the Brāhmaṇas². These legends may not be entirely correct, but it is obvious that he was regarded as a very staunch Brāhmaṇa. It may also be noted that in the Talagunda inscription the character and policy of Mayūraśarman has been described with pride. Further, the fact that the Kadambas adopted the title *Dharma Mahārāja* or *Dharma Mahārājādhirāja* may be taken as an indication of their anxiety to establish the traditional *Dharma*. And, lastly, it may be pointed out that the Kadambas gave their daughters in marriage to the princes of Vākātaka,³ Gaṅga⁴ and Bhaṭṭāri⁵ families also. We do not know the social background of the Bhaṭṭāri family but the Vākātakas, and most probably the Gaṅgas⁶ also, were Brāhmaṇas. At any rate, the Kadambas are not known to have given their daughters in marriage to any dynasty of indubitably non-Brāhmaṇa origin. In the light of these facts it is very difficult to assign the marriage of the daughter of Kākutstha-varman with a Gupta king to the category of *pratiloma* marriages.

(iii) The problem may be attacked from another angle as well. If the Guptas were Brāhmaṇas, they themselves must have been reluctant to give their princesses in marriage to the non-Brāhmaṇa bridegrooms. Now, the only Gupta princess, the caste of whose husband is generally known, is Prabhāvatiguptā. She was married to the Brāhmaṇa king Vākātaka Rudrasena II. But apart from this, we know the caste of the husbands of two other Gupta princesses, though, so far, they have remained rather unnoticed. One of them has been mentioned by Paramārtha, a Buddhist scholar, of sixth century A. D. From him we learn that Bālāditya, unquestionably a king of the Gupta dynasty, married his sister to Vasurāta, a Brāhmaṇa by caste.⁷ There is no reason to doubt this piece of

1 *Supra*, p. 33 f.

2 *NIIP*, p. 239.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 240.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 250.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 240-41.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 248.

7 Takakusu, *JRAS*, 1905, pp. 33 ff.

evidence as Paramārtha was a near contemporary of the king Bālāditya. Secondly, according to Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman—Vishṇuvardhana, Bhānuguptā was the wife of a certain Ravikirti, 'evidently a Brāhmaṇa,' who was the grandfather of Dharmadosha, the minister of Yaśodharman¹. The name of Bhānuguptā reminds one of Bhānugupta, the Gupta king mentioned in the Eran inscription of 510 A. D. In the words of Fleet "the coincidence of name and time is such that it is impossible not to imagine some family connection between him and her."² But from our point of view more important is the fact that this Gupta princess was also married to a Brāhmaṇa. Of course, it is true that even if the Guptas are to be regarded as Kshatriyas, these marriages remain within the *anuloma* category. But the fact that we know the caste of the husbands of three Gupta princesses and all of them turn out to be Brāhmaṇas strongly suggests that probably the Guptas themselves belonged to the Brāhmaṇa order.

RISE OF THE GUPTA DYNASTY

So much about the general background against which the imperial Gupta dynasty originated in the eastern part of the upper Gaṅgā basin. About the actual circumstances leading to the establishment of an independent Gupta state at Prayāga, nothing definite can be said. It may, however, be noted that Prayāga was most probably a part of the Magha kingdom of Kauśāmbī. Now, the last known date of the last Magha ruler Bhīmavarman is 139,³ most probably of the Śaka era.⁴ He, therefore, may have ruled upto c. 220 A. D. Numismatic data, however, reveal the

1 Fleet, *Corpus*, p. 156.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 152.

3 J. N. Banerjee and Jagannath differentiate between Bhīmavarman known from the Kosam Buddha image inscription dated 130 and the king of the same name known from the Kosam inscription of the year 139 (*Comp. Hist. Ind.*, p. 261-62). Altekar identifies the two (*NHHP*, p. 45).

4 The identification of the era used in the Magha inscription has been a matter of great controversy. Jayaswal (*Hist. Ind.*, p. 229) held that the dates known from the Magha ins-

names of a few rulers more¹, who may be placed after Bhīmavarman. It appears, therefore, that this series of the rulers of Kauśāmbī came to an end towards the close of the third century A. D. It is precisely the period when the Mahārāja Gupta laid the foundations of his dynasty.² It is also to be noted that the last rulers of Kauśāmbī i.e. Nava and Pushpaśrī, as their names suggest, were most probably not the members of the Magha dynasty. It means that in this period this region was passing through a state of unstability and that the political power was changing hands very rapidly. It is quite possible that the Mahārāja Gupta³

criptions should be referred to the Vākāṭaka era of 248 A. D. N. G. Majumdar (*EI*, XXIV, p. 146) and Krishna Deb (*EI*, XXIV, p. 253) think that these dates should be referred to the Kalachuri era. D. R. Sahnī (*EI*, XVIII, p. 160) refers them to the Gupta era. These views make the Magha kings, at least some of them, contemporaries of the Guptas. But, palaeographically, the Magha inscriptions belong to the post-Kushāṇa and pre-Gupta period. The Maghas do not refer to the Gupta sovereignty and issued their own coinage, a privilege not enjoyed by any Gupta vassal of the central regions of the empire. Further, the transitional character of the language of the Magha inscriptions reveals the tendency towards progressive Sanskritization without total elimination of Prakrit. These facts prove that the Maghas cannot be placed in the Gupta period. Therefore, Marshall (*ASIAR*, 1911-12, p. 417), Konow (*EI*, XXIII, p. 247), Altekar (*NHHP*, p. 41), Motichandra (*JNSI*, II, pp. 95 ff.), Mirashi (*Studies in Indology*, I, pp. 135 ff.), Jagannath and J. N. Banerjea (*Comp. Hist. Ind.*, II, p. 260, fn. 3) have referred the dates of the Magha inscriptions to the Śaka era. This suggestion gives pre-Gupta dates for all the Magha rulers, and explains all the aforesaid features of these inscriptions.

1 *NHHP*, p. 46 ; Bajpai, K. D., *INC*, III, Pt. I, pp. 15 ff.

2 *Infra*, p. 110.

3 It is generally believed that the seal with the legend *Gutasya*, a hybrid form of Sanskrit *Guptasya*, published by Rapson (*JRAS*, 1905, p. 814, Pl. VI. 23) and a clay seal reading *Śrī-r-Guptasya* which was in possession of Hoernle (Allan, *BMC, GD*, Intro., p. xiv) may be ascribed to the first Gupta king. Another seal with the name Śrīgupta inscribed on it, has recently been discovered from Rajghat.

exploited this opportunity and carved out a small kingdom for himself.¹

From the Allahabad *prasthi* of Samudragupta we learn that while the first two kings of the Gupta dynasty, Gupta and Ghatotkacha, were merely Mahārājas, Chandragupta I, the son and successor of Ghatotkacha, adopted the higher title of *Mahārājādhirāja*. According to R. D. Banerji, in the opening decade of the fourth century, the north-eastern India was being ruled by the later Great Kushānas and the ancestors of Chandragupta I, who were 'petty land holders', were subject to their authority".² Jayaswal³ and S. Chattopadhyaya⁴ also believe that the first two members of the Gupta dynasty were only 'feudatory rulers'. To us it

Palaeographically it may be assigned to fourth century A. D. Jagannath Agrawal has also reported the discovery of a clay sealing from Sunet in the Ludhiana District (Punjab) with the legend *Śrī-r-Guptasya* inscribed on it in the script of 4th century A. D. (*JNSI*, XXVII, Pt. I, p. 98 f.) The ascription of all these seals to the first Gupta king is rather problematical. As regards Ghatotkacha, Bloch ascribed to him the seal bearing the inscription *Śrī Ghatotkachaguptasya* found at Vaiśālī (*ASI*, AR 1903-4, p. 102). Smith (*JRAS*, 1905, p. 153) and Basak (*HNEI*, p. 67) accepted this suggestion, but now it has become almost certain that the prince of this seal belonged to the fifth century A. D. (Allan, *BMC*, GD, p. xvi-xvii, Sinha, *DKM*, p. 35; *infra*, Ch. V, App. i).

- 1 Mahārāja Gupta may have started his career as a minister or commander of the rulers of Kausāmbī, for, we find that in ancient India the political structure provided sufficient opportunities of this type to an ambitious administrator or army officer. Pushyamitra, the founder of the Śuṅga dynasty was the commander of the last Maurya; Vasudeva the minister, who engineered the plot which cost the royal debauchee Devabhūti his life, seems to have controlled the state even during the life-time of his master, (*PHAI*, p. 395); the Śaka ruler Śrīdharavarman of Kanakhera and Fran inscriptions (*CA*, p. 47) started his career as a *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka*; Bhaṭārka, the founder of the Maitraka dynasty started his career in a similar fashion.

2 *AIG*, p. 2.

3 *Hist. Ind.*, pp. 117 ff.

4 *EHNI*, p. 141.

appears that these scholars have not understood the real significance of the title *Mahārāja*. It is an indubitable fact that this title was regarded as indicative of independent status, till the adoption of title *Mahārājādhirāja* by the imperial Guptas which imparted it as sense of subordination. The Maghas of Kauśāmbi, the Nāgas of Padmāvati and Mathurā, and the Vākātakas of the Deccan (except Pravarasena I, though he also assumed it along with the title *Samrāt*) were subordinate to none, and yet they were content with the title *Mahārāja* only.¹ The belief of Jayaswal and others in fact rests on their *a priori* assumption that when the Guptas rose to power, Magadha was being ruled by a paramount power identified with the Great Kushānas by Banerji, with the Bhāraśivas (followed by the Vākātakas) by Jayaswal and with the Muruṇḍas by Chattopadhyaya. But, now it is certain that the Kushānas had nothing to do with the Gaṅgā basin in this period and that Pravarasena I was not the lord paramount of almost the whole of India.² Muruṇḍas, no doubt, continued to rule over Magadha for a considerable period, but there is no evidence to suggest that they were influential in the Prayāga region when the foundation of the Gupta dynasty was laid in the closing decade of third century A. D. Perhaps, they had already been replaced as a political force by the Lichchhavis when the Guptas claimed royal status for their family.³

1 Chattopadhyaya insists that in all the Gupta official records independent kings have been described as *Mahārājādhirājas* while the title *Mahārāja* has been given only to subordinate rulers. As such, Gupta and Ghaṭotkacha should be regarded as mere feudatory chiefs (*EHNI*, p. 141). But the use of the title *Rājā* for Samudragupta (*Coinage*, p. 71) and of *Mahārāja* for Vainyagupta (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 331) make this suggestion untenable.

2 Altekar, *NHIP*, p. 101.

3 It may be noted that in the Supia pillar inscription of Skandagupta (*POC*, XII, p. 587) and the Poona and the Rithapur copper plate inscriptions of Prabhāvatiguptā (*Sel. Ins.*, pp. 412, 415) the genealogy of the Gupta dynasty starts with Ghaṭotkacha, and not with Gupta. As the alliance of the Guptas with the Lichchhavis, which paved the way of the greatness of the Gupta dynasty, was con-

POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The rise of the Guptas in the first half of the fourth century A. D. to the rank of an imperial power was not an isolated phenomenon. It was a link in the chain of events that were introducing kaleidoscopic changes in the political map of India. In the first half of the third century A. D., the disintegration of the Kushāṇa empire in the North and of the Sātavāhana empire in the South created a political vacuum in the country. We have already seen that in the Āryāvarta the initiative to fill it up was assumed by the powers of the upper Gaṅgā basin, while in the Deccan it was seized by the Vākātakas.¹ The Vākātakas, were Brāhmaṇas of *Vibhūrriddha* gotra² and Pravarasena I (c. 275- c. 335 A. D.), the son

tracted by Ghaṭotkacha (*infra*, p. 109 f.), a tradition may have developed in which Ghaṭotkacha was regarded as the real *ādirāja* of the dynasty.

- 1 The original home of the Vākātakas is a controversial question. The name of Vindhyaśakti, the first king of the the dynasty, associates him with the Vindhyan region. Jayaswal (*Ilist. Ind.*, pp. 66 ff.) believed that this family arose on the river Kilakila (according to him a small river near Panna) and belonged to the village Bijnaur-Bāgāt in Bundelkhand, while according to D. C. Sircar (*AIU*, p. 218), the Puranic description 'seems to indicate that Vindhyaśakti flourished in East Malwa'. *Contra*, however Mirashi (*ABORI*, XXXII, pp. 1 ff.; *Vākātaka Rājavalīśa*, pp. 12 ff.) and Altekar (*NHIP*, p. 96 f.) who have shown that the Vākātakas originated in the Deccan.
- 2 While editing the Ajanta cave inscription, Bau Daji (*JBBRAS*, VII, p. 69) identified Vindhyaśakti, the first king of the Vākātaka dynasty with the Vindhyaśakti of the *Purāṇas* and suggested that the Vākātakas were Kilakila Yavanas who took lead in the performance of the Vedic sacrifices. Bühler refused to accept this identification. But as shown by Altekar (*NHIP*, p. 96) and Aiyangar (*ASIHIC*, p. 134) the *Purāṇas* simply state that Vindhyaśakti came after the Kilakila kings, and not that he was one of them. It may be noted that Pravarasena I performed, among others, *Brihaspatisava* sacrifice, which was open only to the Brāhmaṇas (*Ilist. Ind.*, p. 66).

of Vindhyaśakti (c. 255- c. 275 A. D.)¹ and the second ruler of the dynasty, was a great champion of the Brahmanical religion. He was the real founder of the Vākātaka empire. He performed four Aśvamedhas and several other Vedic sacrifices such as Vājapeya, Bṛihaspatisava, Agnishtoma, Āptoryāma, Ukthya, Shoḍaśin and Atirātra and assumed the imperial title *saṃrāt*. The details

- 1 The chronology of the Vākātaka dynasty is not yet definitely settled. The theory of Jayaswal (*Hist. Ind.*, pp. 108 ff.) and Pai (*JIH*, XIV, pp. 184 ff.) that the Chedi era, starting in 248-9 A. D. marks the establishment of the Vākātaka power is altogether untenable, for, not a single Vākātaka inscription is dated in this era. The main outlines of the early Vākātaka chronology, however, have been determined by V. A. Smith (*JRAS*, 1914, pp. 317 ff.) and A. S. Altekar (*NHIP*, pp. 94-95) with the help of the known date of Prabhāvatī guptā, the queen of the Vākātaka king Rudrasena II, who was the daughter of the Gupta emperor Chandragupta II (375-c. 414 A. D.). D. C. Sircar (*Suc. Sat. Lov. Dec.*, p. 89, fn. 2) has also pointed out that the *Purāṇas* suggest that the first two rulers of the Vākātaka dynasty flourished earlier than Samudragupta, for, these works, on the one hand, do not speak of any Gupta king by name and refer to the Gupta rule over Prayāga on the Gaṅgā, Sāketa and Magadha only, indicating a date earlier than the subjugation of wide areas of North India by Samudragupta and, on the other, not only do they mention Vindhyaśakti and his son Pravīra (doubtless Pravarasena I) but also refer to the performance of the Vājapeya sacrifice by the latter (*DKA*, p. 50). We may strengthen this argument by pointing out the fact that Bhavanāga, being the father-in-law of Pravarasena's son Gautamīputra, belonged to the generation of the Vākātaka emperor; but he (i.e. Bhavanāga) flourished definitely earlier than Samudragupta, for he does not figure among the kings of Āryāvarta uprooted by the Gupta emperor. Thus, Pravarasena I may also be assigned to a period earlier than Samudragupta. We have therefore, broadly accepted the chronology as suggested by Altekar in *NHIP* (pp. 94-95). The chronological outline of the early period of the Vākātaka history as suggested by R. C. Majumdar (*JRASB*, XII, pp. 117 ff.), D. C. Sircar (*AIU*, p. 219; *CA*, pp. 178 ff.) and V. V. Mirashi (*Vākātaka Rājavalīka*, pp. 7 ff.) is not materially different from it.

of his conquests are not available but it is certain that he established a fairly vast empire 'comprising northern Maharashtra, Berar, Central Provinces (to the south of the Narmadā) and a considerable part of Hyderabad state'.¹ Jayaswal believed that he was the lord paramount of almost the whole of India,² but this view is altogether untenable.³ However, his achievement in uniting a large part of the central Deccan and some of the adjoining regions was fairly-impressive and his assumption of the title *samrāt* quite unprecedented. Never before did an Indian king of the historical period assume this title. It must have, therefore, created quite a sensation in the political circles of the country. His rise was bound to affect the fortunes of the contemporary states, either directly or indirectly. It is significant that in the Śaka kingdom of the western India, Bhartṛidāman, the last member of the house of Chashṭana, which held its sway over Gujarat and Kathiawar for more than 175 years, was succeeded in 304 A. D. by Rudrasimha II who is described as the son of Svāmi Jivadāman, a person mentioned without any royal titles like *rājan* or *kshatrapa*.⁴ Obviously, Rudrasimha II was an upstart. It is also significant that he and his son Yaśodāman II, who succeeded him in 316 and ruled certainly down to 332 A. D., remained content with the lower title Kshatrapa, which at this time denoted a feudatory status. After him there is a gap in the Kshatrapa coinage for 16 years. According to some scholars the Sassanians were responsible for this decline of the Kshatrapa power.⁵ But the Sassanians were not in a position to impose their overlordship on the western Kshatrapas in this period, for, during the short reign of Hormuzd II (303-10 A. D.), they were still reeling under the blows inflicted on them by the Romans during the reign of Narseh (293-303 A. D.) and are not known to have invaded any part of India. The next ruler Shapur II was a baby in arms when he ascended the throne in 310 A. D. Later

1 NHIP, p. 100.

2 *Hist. Ind.*, pp. 82-94.

3 JNSI, V. pp. 111-34 ; NHIP. p.101 f.

4 NHIP, p. 57-58.

5 PHAI, p. 510.

on, he became involved in wars against Rome. Further, it may be pointed out that no Sassanian coins of this period are found in Gujarat and Kathiawar ; nor does the coinage of Rudrasimha II and Yaśodāman II show any Sassanian influence.¹ On the other hand, we find that in the neighbourhood of the Śaka kingdom, Pravarasena I assumed imperial dignity in this very period. He may "well have tried to extend his sphere of influence in the west by supporting the claims of the upstart Rudra-simha II. . . . Imperialism generally tries to extend its sphere of influence in this manner".² This theory gets some support from the discovery of the hoard of Kshatrapa coins at Chhindavara in M. P., in which Yaśodāman II happens to be the last king represented.³ It is quite likely that Rudrasimha II and Yaśodaman II 'were sending occasional tributes to Pravarasena I'.⁴ Thus, the emergence of the Vākātakas as an imperial power appears to have caused considerable disturbance in the Kshatrapa state in the middle of the first decade of the fourth century A. D.

VAKATAKA-BHARASIVA *entente* & ITS IMPLICATIONS

The rise of the Vākātakas influenced the politics of the states of Āryāvarta also. At that time the Bhāraśiva Nāgas of Padmāvati were one of the greatest powers of Āryāvarta. They 'were anointed to sovereignty with the holy water of the Bhāgīrathī which had been obtained by their valour' and had 'performed their sacred bath on the completion of their ten Aśvamedhas'.⁵ It is quite likely that they, for some time in the third century, ruled even over Prayāga and Vārāṇasī. Their greatest ruler was Bhavanāga, who was ruling in c. 305 to c. 340 A. D.⁶ In the beginning of the fourth century A. D., these two great rulers of the country—Pravarasena I and Bhavanāga—became close allies of each other, for, we find

1 NHIP, p. 58.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

3 JRASB (I) *Num. Suppl.*, XLVII, p. 97.

4 NHIP, p. 59.

5 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 245.

6 JNSI, V, pp. 21 ff ; NHIP, p. 38.

that in c. 300 A. D. the daughter of Bhavanāga was married to the Vākāṭaka crown-prince Gautamīputra.¹

The implications of the Bhāraśiva-Vākāṭaka *entente* have not been properly analysed so far, and consequently, the danger which it posed to the security of the neighbouring states has not been realized at all. In this connection the fact that Pravarasena I was succeeded by Rudrasena I, whom the Vākāṭaka inscriptions never fail to mention as the *daubitra* of Bhavanāga, is of great significance. From the *Purāṇas* we learn that Pravarasena I had four sons.² The statement is generally accepted as correct,³ because, the epigraphs reveal the existence of at least one brother of Gautamīputra named Sarvasena who ultimately founded the Vatsagulma branch of the dynasty.⁴ Now, as is well known, Gautamīputra predeceased his father Pravarasena I, for we find that the latter was succeeded by Rudrasena I, the son of Gautamīputra. It is very curious, because after the demise of Gautamīputra Pravarasena I should have been succeeded by the eldest of his remaining three sons, and not by Rudrasena I, the son of Gautamīputra. How and why Rudrasena I succeeded in acquiring the throne to which his uncles had a better claim? No scholar has so far felt the necessity to explain this rather unusual fact.⁵ We, however, feel that its explanation lies in the correct interpretation of the phrase *Bhavanāga daubitra* used for Rudrasena I in the Vākāṭaka epigraphs.

It is generally believed that in the Indian royal genealogies a king is usually found described as the grandson through a daughter of a particular personage only when the maternal grandfather is known to have been a distinguished ruler or happened to have rendered considerable help to his daughter's son.⁶ Recently, however, V. S. Pathak has suggested an entirely new

1 *NHHP*, p. 38.

2 *DKA*, p. 50.

3 Altekar, *NHHP*, p. 102; Sircar, *CA*, p. 177; Mirashi, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

4 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 407.

5 Vide *CA*, p. 178; *NHHP*, p. 102.

6 *NHHP*, pp. 38, 102; *CA*, 178.

approach towards this problem. He has interpreted the occurrence of the term *daubitra* in the royal epigraphs in the light of the evidence of the *Smṛiti* literature. He points out that the *Smṛitis* "sometimes use the word *daubitra* in its technical (sic.) meaning of *putrikā-putra*—one of the twelve kinds of subsidiary sons. Adopted, purchased and *daubitra* sons are *dvāmushyāṇa* i.e. they belong simultaneously to two families of natural father and the maternal grand-father who is considered for all religious purposes as father. Manu says that *daubitra*, in the absence of (natural) son, inherits the whole property and offers *pīṇḍas* both to the natural father and maternal grand-father. Thus he is a *dvāmushyāṇa*—a person having dual parentage".¹ Pathak believes that in the epigraphs, the term *daubitra* has been used in this sense.² This

- 1 *JNSI*, XIX, Pt. II, p. 140-41. According to Altekar, of the 12 subsidiary sons, the *putrikā-putra* or daughter's son was the most popular in the Gupta age (*NHIP*, p. 350).
- 2 It may be noted that the term *daubitra* has not been used in the sense of *putrikā-putra* in all the royal epigraphs. We may distinguish three different contexts in which the maternal grand-father have been mentioned : (i) Inscriptions in which the term *daubitra* has been used to describe the relationship of a king with his maternal grandfather in their *genealogical portions*. The Gupta and the Vākātaka epigraphs referring to Samudragupta and Rudrasena I respectively as the *Licchhavi daubitra* (*Sel Ins.*, p. 259) and *Bhavanāga daubitra* (*ibid.*, p. 420) in their *genealogical portions* are the examples of this category. (ii) Documents which do not contain *genealogical* description but casually use the term *daubitra* for the kings mentioned in them to describe their relationship with their maternal grandfather. The Eran inscription of Goparāja of the year 510 A. D. in which he has been described as *Śarabharāja daubitra* is an example of this type (*ibid.*, p. 336). (iii) Inscriptions which refer to the maternal grandfather of a king in their *genealogical portions*, but without using the term *daubitra* for the latter. The Vākātaka inscriptions which refer to Chandragupta II (*ibid.*, p. 420) and 'the Lord of Kuntala' (Mirashi, *Vākātaka Rājavamsa*, p. 227), as the maternal grand-fathers of Pravarasena II and Prithvishena II respectively are the example of this category. It is quite obvious that the term *daubitra*, in the sense of *putrikā-putra*, a class of subsidiary sons, may have been used in the documents of

suggestion throws a new light on the nature of the Bhāraśiva-Vākāṭaka *entente*. It makes it quite reasonable to believe that in the beginning of the fourth century A. D. Bhavanāga, who did not have a male issue to succeed him, gave his daughter in marriage to Gautamiputra, the Vākāṭaka crown-prince, on the understanding that his (Bhavanāga's) daughter's son will be his subsidiary son of *dauhitra* category. Pravarasena I readily accepted this proposal, for it meant that the son of Gautamiputra, being a *dvāmushyāyana* was to inherit the Vākāṭaka as well as the Bhāraśiva empires. In other words, it meant the amalgamation of these two empires during the reign of the son of Gautamiputra. Pravarasena I did not want the opportunity of the peaceful merger of the two contagious empires¹ under the rulership of his grandson slip away; therefore,

the first category only. Its use in the documents of the second category almost certainly did not involve any right of succession, for, we definitely know that Gopārāja's maternal grandfather Śarabharāja, who may be regarded as identical with the king Śarabha, the founder of the dynasty of the Śarabhapur rulers, had a son named Narendra to rule after him (*NHIP*, p. 86). He had no need to adopt Gopārāja as a subsidiary son of *dauhitra* category. In the records of the third category, maternal grandfathers have been mentioned without the use of the term *dauhitra* for their daughter's sons; these, on the one hand, prove that their daughter's sons were not regarded as their subsidiary sons and, on the other, indicate to some unusual circumstances which, contrary to the general practice, necessitated the mention of the maternal grandfathers. We suggest, therefore, that the theory that "maternal grandfathers are mentioned in royal genealogies only when they happen to have rendered conspicuous help to their daughter's sons" is correct, but it is applicable only to this last category of royal records.

- 1 Many scholars believe that a Śaka king named Śrīdharavarman ruled over Vidiśā-Airikiṇa region in the first half of the fourth century A. D. But the period of this Śaka ruler is not definitely known, for, neither the reading of the date given in his Kanakhera inscription nor the identity of the era used by him is certain. Banerji (*EI*, XVI, p. 230 f.) read it as 201 and N. G. Majumdar (*JASB*, NS, XIX, pp. 327 ff.) as 241 and referred it to the Śaka era while Mirashi

when his son Gautamīputra died a premature death, he nominated Rudrasena I, the son of Gautamīputra and the grandson of Bhavanāga, as his own successor as well. For, had Pravarasena I been succeeded by any one of his remaining three sons, the two empires could not be amalgamated. Here, it may be noted that in the description of the kings of 'Vidiśā etc.' the *Purāṇas*, after referring to Yaśa Nandin, state that "in his line there will be kings and therein he who was a *daubitra*, popularly called Śiśu, became the king at Purikā".¹ After mentioning Śiśu, these works explicitly refer to Pravira or Pravarasena I while the *Vishṇu Purāṇa* expressly connects them together : *Śiśuka-Pravīrau*.² From this rather confused description at least this much becomes clear that the *Purāṇas* were aware of a tradition according to which in one of the Nāga dynasties a king was succeeded by his *daubitra*, and that the latter was probably a minor (*śiśu*) during the life-time of Pravarasena I. Thus, the testimony of the *Purāṇas* is also consonant with the evidence of the Vākāṭaka epigraphs and tends to show that Rudrasena I was regarded as the successor of his maternal grandfather as well.³ Now, how far the plan of Bhavanāga and Pravarasena I succeed is another matter, but the above analysis leaves no room to doubt that their alliance was not an ordinary political friendship ; its aim was far more significant—the ultimate amalgamation of the two empires. As such, it must have been

(*Corpus*, IV, Pt I, p. 14 f.) is of the opinion that the date in question is 102 which should be referred to the Chedi-Kalachuri era. We feel that Śrīdharavarman most probably flourished in the third century before this region was occupied by the Nāgas. Note that according to his Eran inscription Satyanāga, a Nāga warrior, was his *senāpati* and *Ārakshika* (Mirashi, *op. cit.*).

1 Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 15.

2 Pargiter, *DKA*, p. 50, fn. 29.

3 Note that the Balaghat plates of Prithvishena II describe Rudrasena I as '*Bhārasivānām Mahārāja*' (*EI*, IX, p. 270). But it is quite possible that here the engraver forgot to incise the words *Mahārāja-Śrī-Bhavanāga-daubitrasya-Gautamī-putrasya-putrasya-Vākāṭakānām*, after the word *Bhārasivānām*.

regarded as a source of the greatest danger by the contemporary neighbouring states. At least a few echoes of this development plainly, though faintly, resound in the history of the period. For instance, some varieties of the Yaudheya coins (ascribed to third and early fourth centuries A. D. by Allan) have the words *dvi* and *tri* respectively at the end of the legend *Yaudheya-gaṇasya-jayah*.¹ According to Altekar these 'may perhaps refer to the second and third members of the Yaudheya confederation, viz. the Kuṇindas and the Ārjunāyanas'.² It is quite possible that the emergence of this 'loose confederation' was the consequence of the danger posed to the security of these tribes by the alliance and the prospects of the amalgamation of the Vākāṭaka and the Bhāraṣiva empires.

Thus, we find that in the initial years of the fourth century A. D. the emergence of the Vākāṭakas resulted in a swift and sharp change in the pattern of political power in the country. It caused a serious setback to the Kshatrapa power in 304 A. D., resulted in a matrimonial alliance between the Bhāraṣivas and the Vākāṭakas in c. 300 A. D. with an understanding that ultimately the two empires will be amalgamated, and caused the emergence of a loose kind of confederation between the three republican tribes of the Punjab and Rajasthan in the beginning of the fourth century A.D. It was precisely in this period—some time in the first decade of the fourth century A. D.³—that Ghaṭotkacha, the second king of the Gupta dynasty, contracted a matrimonial alliance with his eastern neighbours, the Lichchhavis of Magadha. In the circumstances outlined above, it is only logical to assume that like the republican states of the west, the Guptas and the Lichchhavis also realized the necessity of having a strong state in the middle Gaṅgā basin to effectively meet the menace posed by the Vākāṭaka-Bhāraṣiva *entente*. In other words, the factor that compelled the Guptas and the Lichchhavis to come closer to each other was the chronologically earlier emergence of the Vākāṭakas as an imperial force

1 Allan, *BMC, AI*, p. cxlvii.

2 *NHIP*, p. 32.

3 *Infra*, App. i.

in the Deccan and the resultant changes in the pattern of political power in the country. Further, it may be noted that one of the partners of the new alliance viz. the Guptas were a monarchical state and aspired to achieve imperial dignity themselves. Viewed in this light, the assumption of the title *Mahārājādhirāja* by Chandragupta I may be regarded as a rebuff to the imperialistic ambitions of the Vākātakas and an evidence of his attempt to keep a balance of power between the North and the South. By contracting an alliance with the Lichchhavis on the lines of the recently concluded Vākātakas-Bhāraśivas *entente*, he tried to pay them back in their own coin, and did so quite effectively. After all, the course of events of the history of the two contemporary rulers of India, Pravarasena I in the Deccan and Chandragupta I in the North, both the whom assumed imperial titles and the successors of whom were the adopted sons of *daubitra* category of their respective maternal grandfathers is too similar to be dismissed as a mere coincidence; they must be regarded as inter-related events. And as Pravarasena I (c. 275—c. 335 A. D.) was an elder contemporary of both Ghaṭotkacha (c. 300-319 A. D.) and Chandragupta I (319—c. 350 A. D.), the Gupta-Lichchhavi alliance may be taken as the consequence of the Vākātika-Bhāraśiva *entente*. No wonder if the Vākātakas and the Nāgas loomed so large in the politics of the immediate successors of Chandragupta I.

ACQUISITION OF MAGADHA

The above analysis of the Vākātika-Bhāraśiva alliance not only explains the *raison d'être* of the Gupta-Lichchhavi relationship, it also helps us to understand its exact nature. As is well known, the Guptas were very proud of their alliance with the Lichchhavis. Their royal epigraphs never fail to describe Samudragupta as the *Lichchhavi daubitra* or the grandson of the Lichchhavi(s). They even took the trouble to publicize this relationship by the issuance of a particular class of gold coins which have the names and figures of Chandragupta I and his Lichchhavi wife Kumāradevī on the obverse and the figure of a goddess seated on a lion

along with the legend *Licchbhavayaḥ* on the reverse.¹ As both these sources, viz. the coins and the inscriptions, from which we learn that the Guptas were proud of their association with the Licchhavis, are purely political in nature, it is usually accepted that the advantage which they derived from it was also political

- 1 The question whether the Chandragupta-Kumāradevi type of gold coins were issued by Chandragupta I or his son and successor Samudragupta, is highly controversial (for a detailed discussion see *infra*, Appendix iii). Jayaswal believed that Chandragupta I issued a series of copper coins (those illustrated by Cunningham in *Coins of Ancient India*, p. 81, Pl. VII, 1.2) when he was subordinate to the Bhāraṣīva-Vākāṭaka empire (*Hist. Ind.*, p. 91, fn. 1). But these coins belong to the series of Pañchāla coins. S. K. Aiyangar (*ASIHIC*, p. 183) believed that Chandragupta I signalized his accession to the imperial position by the issue of the Chhatra type of coins which Allan (*BMC, GD*, pp. xxxi-ii) and Altekar (*Coinage*, pp. 127 ff.) have attributed to Chandragupta II as Class I of this type. These coins contain the *biruda* of *Vikramāditya*, the typical title of Chandragupta II; Chandragupta I is not known to have adopted it. Chhabra (*JNSI*, IX, pp. 15 ff.) has assigned the unique Standard type coin of Chandragupta to the first Gupta Mahārājādhirāja. It has been attributed to Chandragupta II by P. L. Gupta (*Ibid.*, p. 146) and Altekar (*Coinage*, pp. 140 ff.). As no other specimen of the Standard type issued by Chandragupta I or his grandson is known so far, this single piece may be assigned to either of them. One can argue that the Standard type was started by Chandragupta I towards the end of his reign, continued by Samudragupta and stopped by Chandragupta II. Contrariwise, it can be maintained that it was Samudragupta who started this type and Chandragupta II, after a brief experiment, stopped it. The main basis of the theory of Chhabra is the absence of the title *Vikrama* on both obverse and reverse for its issuer while, according to him, we find that it has been used on all the coins of Chandragupta II either alone or in conjunction with some other word like *Ajit* or *Śiṃha*. But on one variety of the Archer type and on one coin of the Lion-slayer type of Chandragupta II, it occurs neither on the obverse nor on the reverse (*Coinage*, p. 142). On the other hand, the title *Paramabhāgavata*, found on the reverse of the unique specimen under discussion clearly suggests that it was issued by Chandragupta II and not by Chandragupta I.

in nature.¹ According to Smith,² Aiyangar,³ Altekar,⁴ Majumdar⁵ and many others the alliance of the Guptas with the Lichchhavis resulted in the amalgamation of the two states which enabled Chandragupta I to assume the imperial title *Mahārājadhirāja*.⁶ This view, though basically correct, requires some modification in as much as it is based on the assumption that Kumāradevi was 'the heiress of the territory of the Lichchhavis', 'a queen in her own right'. For, as is well known, in ancient India, daughters did not have immediate right of inheritance (*apratibandhādāya*). If it is so, how could Kumāradevi have been 'a queen in her own right'? The problem, we believe is solved by the interpretation of the term *Licchhavi dauhitra* used for Samudragupta in the Gupta official genealogies in the light of the suggestion of Pathak discussed above. For, it would mean that

1 Allan (*op. cit.*, p. xix) suggested that "the pride of the Guptas in their Lichchhavi blood was probably due rather to the ancient lineage of the Lichchhavis than to any material advantage gained by this alliance". S. Chattopadhyaya (*EHNI*, pp. 143-44) also holds that Kumāradevi "was taken in respect for her being a Lichchhavi by nationality, than for anything else". *Contra*, R. C. Majumdar, *NHIP*, p. 128. Our suggestion that the Guptas themselves belonged to the Brāhmaṇa order renders the theory of Allan and Chattopadhyaya quite untenable.

2 *EHI*, p. 295.

3 *AISIHC*, p. 181 f.

4 *Coinage*, p. 2.

5 *NHIP*, p. 129.

6 According to Allan the 'kingdom of Vaiśālī was one of his (Chandragupta's) earliest conquests; and that his marriage with Kumāradevi was one of the terms of the treaty of peace' (*op. cit.*, p. xix). Basak also believed that Chandragupta I helped his father Ghatotkacha "by making a conquest of the northern state of Vaiśālī and to compel the Lichchhavi chief or chiefs to please him by entering into a *santāna-sandhi*" (*HNEI*, p. 7; cf. *JNSI*, V, p. 40). But the pride which the Guptas have displayed in their Lichchhavi blood clearly suggests that the Lichchhavis were not their conquered subjects (cf. Altekar, *JNSI* V, p. 145; *Bayana Hoard*, p. xliii, fn. 1).

7 Aiyangar, *AISIHC*, p. 181.

8 Altekar, *JRASB* (I), NS, 1937, pp. 105 ff; *Coinage*, pp. 28 ff.

"Samudragupta was a *dvāmushyāyaṇa*. He was a natural son of Chandragupta I and a subsidiary son (of the *daubitra* category) of his maternal grandfather from Kumāradevī, the Lichchhavi princes. He, therefore, introduces himself as *Chandraguptiya Lichchhavidaubitrasya mahādevyām = Kumāradevyām-utpannasya*".¹ If it is so, it may be reasonably assumed that at least technically it was Samudragupta, and not Kumāradevī or, through her, Chandragupta I, who inherited the Lichchhavi state, though it may be conceded that since the father of Kumāradevī did not have a male issue and, obviously, died before the demise of Chandragupta I, the latter may have acquired the *actual control* of the Lichchhavi state long before the accession of Samudragupta. It means that Chandragupta I was not the *de jure* sovereign of the Lichchhavi state. The Guptas acquired *de jure* sovereignty of that kingdom only after the accession of Samudragupta. This appears to be the real reason of the existence of the Lichchhavi state as a distinctly separate entity during the life-time of Chandragupta I, despite the fact that he had become its *de facto* ruler. The statement of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, that the Guptas and the Māgadhas (i.e. the Lichchhavis) will rule over Prayāga and Gayā, also described the state of affairs of the period when the joint-state had virtually come into existence, but the separate entity of the Lichchhavis had not ceased. As we have shown elsewhere, Chandragupta I married Kumāradevī in c. 305 A. D. and ascended the throne after the death of his father Ghaṭotkacha in 319 A. D.² The demise of his father-in-law, who, obviously belonged to the generation of Ghaṭotkacha, must have taken place not very long before or after the latter date. So, not very far removed from this date Chandragupta I acquired factual control of the Lichchhavi state and began to rule over it in the name of his son Samudragupta who was a minor at that time.³

1 JNSI, XIX, pt. II, p. 141.

2 *Infra*, App. i of this Ch.

3 *Ibid.*

ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF GUPTA-LICHCHHAVI ALLIANCE

The sagacity of the Guptas in contracting this alliance with the Lichchhavis cannot be over-estimated. Here, it may be recalled that Ajātasatru, even after a long preparation against this tribe had to fight for more than sixteen years, and succeeded in crushing it only after his minister Vassakāra sowed the seeds of dissension among the Vaiśālīs by this Machiavellian tactics.¹ In the fourth century A. D. the Guptas achieved factual control of a far larger Lichchhavi state by a mere stroke of diplomacy. Apart from the political advantage inherent in the amalgamation of the two states, the acquisition of Magadha provided the rulers and the merchant class what they must have been anxious to achieve, i.e. the control over the precious mines of the southern Bihar. It may be noted that the "Chotanagpur areas are the main source of the metallic ores in northern India and provided most of her gold, copper, iron and mica, especially (*sic.*) the Singhabhum copper belt, which starts from a point about five miles north of Chakradharpur in west, runs through Kharsawan and Seraikela, and enters Dhalbhum between the villages of Keryuadungi and Rangadih, where old and more recent working show three more or less paralld runs of ore. . . . the most important source of gold was in the south-western portion of the *pargana* close to Mayurbhanj border."² This source of untold wealth gave a great impetus and confidence to its owners. That is why all the rising powers of the Gaṅgā basin tried to get control over this region. It may be recalled that even in the beginning of the fifth century B. C. the cause of the outbreak of war between Magadha and Vaiśālī, according to Buddha-ghosha's commentary the *Sumaṅgala Vilāsini*, was the breach of trust on the part of the Lichchhavis in connection with a mine of precious gems.³

The definite archaeological evidence of the date of the working of these mines, however, is provided by coins discovered in a buried

1 *PHAI*, p. 213 f.

2 Maity, S. K., *Eco. Life*, p. 99 f.

3 *PHAI*, p. 211.

clay urn. It leaves "no reason to disbelieve that at least from the Kushāṇa period onwards these mines were exhaustively worked."¹ One can readily imagine that at least a part of the large quantity of gold required for the issuance of the Gupta gold coins came from these mines.² That the Guptas took active interest in the exploitation of the mineral resources of their empire is conclusively proved by the Meharauli iron pillar which contains the famous inscription of the king 'Chandra'. It is over 23 feet high with a diameter of 16.4 inches and is more than six tons in weight. It is a single piece of metal, and, as is generally known, has been exposed to weather for several hundreds of years, and yet it has never rusted. Such a huge non-rusting single-piece iron pillar could not be manufactured in a small private foundry. It must have been manufactured in a large foundry owned most likely by the state or the king³.

CONQUESTS OF CHANDRAGUPTA I

Chandragupta I was not content only with the virtual control over the Lichchhavi state ; he possibly had some specific conquests to his credit. We have seen that his Lichchhavi relations were the rulers of Magadha and the centre of his own paternal kingdom was Prayāga. That is why the *Vishṇu Purāṇa* states that the Guptas and the Māgadhas (i.e. the Lichchhavis) will rule over Prayāga on the Gaṅgā.⁴ But, significantly, the *Vāyu Purāṇa* adds Sāketa in its description of the Gupta kingdom.⁵ Obviously, it should be regarded as later in date than the description of the *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, but definitely earlier than the empire-building

1 Maity, S. K. *op. cit.*, p. 100.

2 The literature of the Gupta period is full of references to mine and precious metals. *Amarakośa* (3.7; 9.91, 99) *Reghuvaṃśa* (III. 18; XVII. 66; XVIII. 22) and *Bṛhat-saṃhitā* (XIX. 4-6; 10-12; 16-18) refer to mines and various metals. The *Periplus* states that there are gold mines in the Gangetic area (Majumdar, *Classical Accounts of India*, p. 308).

3 Maity, *Eco. Life*, p. 102.

4 *Supra*, p. 51.

5 *DKA*, p. 52.

campaigns of Samudragupta. So, it can be reasonably suggested that the author of the *Vāyu Purāṇa* had in his mind either the extent of the empire of Chandragupta I as it was during the latter phase of his life or of Samudragupta as it was in the beginning of his career. To us the first alternative appears to be nearer the truth, for, Samudragupta in his Allahabad pillar inscription does not mention the city of Sāketa or its ruler among his exploits. Therefore, we can assume that the conquest of Sāketa was the achievement of Chandragupta I himself.

Nothing more about the career of Chandragupta I is known.¹ We do not think that he had any other substantial accomplishment to his credit. What he had already done was quite remarkable. He had telescoped the achievements of the several generations of the early Magadhan rulers of pre-Nanda period within his own life-time. When he died the Guptas were the virtual masters of the whole of the central Gaṅgā basin, including modern Bihar and the eastern U. P. Whether he conquered any part of Bengal one cannot say. Perhaps he did not.² The extent of his empire as outlined above is verified by the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta from which we learn that the kings of Āryāvarta uprooted by Samudragupta mostly belonged to Bengal and the

1 The view that Chandragupta I founded the Gupta era, though favoured by a large number of scholars, does not appear to be correct (*infra*, App. i of this chapter). The suggestion that he is identical with the king 'Chandra' of the Meharauli iron pillar inscription (Basak, *IA*, 1919, pp. 98-101; *HNEI*, pp. 13 ff.; Aiyangar, *AISIHC*, pp. 93 ff.; 192 ff.) is also unacceptable (*infra*, Ch. III. App iii). The suggestion that the career of Chandragupta I has been given in the *ĀMMK* (*IIIQ*, XXVII, p. 170) rests on imagination rather than concrete facts, and the view of R. D. Banerji that Chandragupta I was the leader of the war of liberation against the Kushāṇa rule over Magadha (*AIG*, p. 2) is based on the wrong assumption that the Kushāṇas were ruling this part of the country in the middle of the fourth cent. A. D. The evidence of the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta goes against it.

2 *Contra*, Basak *HNEI*, p. 12-13. But he does not give sufficient evidence in support of his contention.

western part of the U. P. and that the kingdom of Nepal in the north and the *ātavika* states of Bundelkhanda in the south accepted his suzerainty¹. It proves that the empire which he inherited from his father comprised Bihar and the eastern part of the U. P. only.

Thus, we conclude that the political advantage of the amalgamation of the Gupta-Lichchhavi states was not the only factor which made the Guptas the most dominant power in North India during the reign of Chandragupta I. It is true that without this achievement, the history of the dynasty would have been very different, but without the external pressure of the Bhāraśiva-Vākāṭaka alliance, the Lichchhavis could not have so readily agreed to merge their state with that of their neighbours. Further, the economic advantages of this alliance should not be altogether neglected. At least, this much cannot be denied that the acquisition of Magadha greatly augmented the economic resources of the Guptas and enabled them to embark on a career of aggrandisement and conquests earlier than it would ^{have} had been possible for them to do had they acquired Magadha by the use of force. Whether or not Chandragupta I conquered Śāketa before he assumed the imperial title, one cannot definitely say. Probably he conquered it towards the close of his reign, though the process of the expansion of the Gupta state towards Śāketa at the cost of the intervening region may have started earlier.

1 *Infra*, Ch. III.

EARLY CHRONOLOGY OF THE GUPTA DYNASTY

When Fleet compiled his *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, the known dates of the Gupta emperors (excluding Budhagupta and Bhānugupta, who were regarded as the local rulers of Malwa) ranged from 82 to 93 for Chandragupta II, 96 to 129 for Kumāragupta¹ and 136 to 146 for Skandagupta. No definite dates of the predecessors of Chandragupta II were known. Fleet gave unquestionable evidence in favour of the identification of the Gupta era mentioned by Alberuni² with the era used in the Gupta inscriptions³ and thus provided a sheet-anchor for the history and chronology of the dynasty⁴. But he could not solve the problem of the origin of the Gupta era satisfactorily.⁵ Since then considerable progress has been made and now we have a far more

1 Then only one Kumāragupta, the father of Skandagupta, was known.

2 Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, II, p. 7.

3 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, Intro. pp. 16 ff. Also see Ojha, *Bhāratīya Prāchīna Līpīmālā*, pp. 174 ff.; Sircar, *D. C., Ind. Ep.*, pp. 284 ff.

4 After Fleet determined the epoch of the Gupta era, several suggestions regarding various other epochs have appeared. But they are not worthy of serious consideration. See *IC*, III, pp. 47 ff.; Dandekar, *Hist. Gnp.*, pp. 10 ff.; Gupta, P. L., *JBRs*, XLIX, pp. 71 ff.

5 Fleet believed that the Guptas borrowed this era from the Lichchhavis of Nepal (*Corpus*, III, pp. 130 ff.) But his argument that the four generations of the Gupta kings, from Chandragupta I to Kumāragupta I, could not have ruled for 129 years and, therefore, Chandragupta I must have ascended the throne appreciably later than 319 A. D. (*ibid.*, p. 132) is not tenable. The Western Chālukya dynasty provides the instance of four generations ruling for about 150 years (D. C. Ganguly in *The Struggle for Empire*, pp. 166 ff.). Further, there is no evidence to show that the Gupta era was in use in Nepal in this early period. Scholars generally do not agree with Fleet on the question of the identification of the era used in the Lichchhavi inscriptions of Nepal (Sircar, *Ind. Ep.*, pp. 287-88).

complete picture of the chronology of the early kings of the dynasty. As early as 1894 Smith reported that Vost's collection contains a silver coin of Kumāragupta I with the date 136 inscribed on it.¹ The existence of this coin has lately been doubted,² but on another silver coin of this ruler, published in 1889, the date is clearly 135.³ It makes it quite certain that he ruled at least up to 454 A. D. Similarly, the so far known latest date for Skandagupta, 148 G.E., was also brought to light by one of his silver coins.⁴ The most notable contribution has, however, been made by epigraphic discoveries. For example, the Mathurā pillar inscription of the G. E. 61 has proved that Chandragupta II was ruling in that year. Further, it mentions that it was the fifth (*pañchame*) year of his reign⁵. It means that Chandragupta II began to rule in 56 G. E. i.e. in 375 A. D. Thus, now the definitely known dates of the early rulers of the dynasty range from 56 to 93 for Chandragupta II, 96 to 135 for Kumāragupta I and 136 to 148 for Skandagupta.

The chronology of the predecessors of Chandragupta II is also far from settled. The date of the establishment of the dynasty is not yet known,⁶ the identity of the founder of the Gupta era is

1 *JASB*, 1894, p. 175.

2 Basham, A. L., *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XVII, p. 367; Gupta P. L., *JIH*, XL, Pt. II, p. 250 and fn. 24a; Altekar does not mention the date 136 amongst the dates of Kumāragupta I known from his coins (*Coinage*, p. 230).

3 *JRAS*, 1889, p. 129; *Coinage*, pp. 230-31, Pl. XVII. 22.

4 *BMC, GD.*, Pl. XXI, 16; *Coinage*, p. 258, Pl. XVIII. 20.

5 According to D. R. Bhandarkar (*EI*, XXI, pp. 1 ff.) the portion of the Mathurā inscription containing the regnal year of Chandragupta II is worn out. Diskalkar restored it as *prathame* (*ABORI*, XVIII, p. 166). But D. C. Sircar is quite certain that the passage in question reads *pañchame* (*HIQ*, XVIII, p. 271; *Sel. Ins.*, p. 270). R. C. Majumdar, (*NHHP*, p. 166) and many others (Raychaudhuri, *PHI*, II, p. 552, fn. 2; Mookerji *GE*, p. 44; Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, p. 167) have accepted his reading.

6 R. K. Mookerji (*GE*, p. 11) and Gokhale (*Samudragupta*, p. 24) have placed the establishment of the Gupta dynasty in c. 240 A. D., Basak (*HNEI*, p. 6) in c. 275 A. D. and Altekar (*Bayana Hoard*, Intro., p. x) and Smith (*EHI*, p. 345) in c. 270 and c. 271 A. D. respectively.

still a debatable question and the initial year of the reign of Samudragupta, variously placed from 319 A. D. to c. 350 A. D.,¹ is yet to be satisfactorily determined. The first known date of the history of the dynasty is 319 A. D., the initial year of the Gupta era.² It is generally believed that the era was founded by Chandragupta I and dates from his accession or the assumption of the imperial title by him.³ But it is by no means certain. The first known date of the Gupta era is the year 56, the date of the accession of Chandragupta II. Now, as pointed out by Raychaudhuri⁴ it cannot be regarded as altogether impossible that the era was found-

1 Relying on the testimony of the Gayā C. P., Dandekar (*Hist. Gupta.*, p. 44) and R. D. Banerji (*AIG.*, p. 8) suggest that Samudragupta was ruling in 328 A. D. Majumdar (*NHIP*, pp. 158 ff.) finds much to support the view that Samudragupta began to rule either in 319 A. D. or c. 350 A. D. The latter date has been accepted by Gokhale (*op. cit.*, p. 32) and Chattopadhyaya (*EHNI*, p. 148) while Sircar (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 254) and Smith (*op. cit.*) are in favour of 330 A. D. A certain amount of loose thinking has also been done on this question. For example, Allan has placed the accession of Chandragupta I in 320 A. D. and holds that he married Kumāradevi after conquering Vaiśālī (*BMC. GD.*, pp. xix-xx) and yet he has placed the accession of Samudragupta in c. 335 A. D. (*ibid.*, p. xxxii) when Samudragupta could not have been more than 14 years old. At one time Raychaudhuri held that Chandragupta I ascended the throne in 320 and strengthened his position by a matrimonial alliance with the Lichchhavis (*PHAI*⁴, p. 445) and yet he accepted the possibility that Samudragupta might have ascended the throne in 325 A. D. (*ibid.*, p. 446). He has clarified his statement in the 6th edition of his work.

2 The Gupta year (expired) commenced either on February 26, 320 A. D. or on December 20, 318 A. D. As we have no knowledge of the day-to-day course of events, the problems of exact chronology do not arise. Therefore, the dates expressed in the Gupta era are generally converted into dates A. D. by the addition of 319 (*EHI*, p. 296 and fn. 2; *JBR.S.*, XLIX, Pt. I-IV, pp. 71 ff.; *JRASB(L)*, VIII, p. 41)

3 Banerji, R. D., *AIG.*, p. 8; Dandekar, *Hist. Gupta.*, p. 16; Basak, *HNEI*, p. 18; Mookerji, *GE*, p. 15f.

4 *PHAI*, p. 530, fn. 2.

ded by either Gupta or Ghaṭotkacha and that the first four or three generations ruled for 56 years. However, as the first two kings of the dynasty, though independent, were rulers of not much importance, it does not appear very plausible to give them the credit of founding an era. But the case of Samudragupta is believed to be altogether different. In the words of R. C. Majumdar, "it is likely that the era dated from the accession of Samudragupta, the greatest of the Gupta emperors. This would be regarded as almost certain if the Nālandā charter of the 5th year be regarded as a genuine grant of Samudragupta, or even a late copy of a genuine grant."¹ For, according to Majumdar, if the Nālandā grant proves to be genuine, we have to accept that Samudragupta was ruling in 324 A. D. It would mean "that three generations of the Gupta rulers reigned for at least 131 years, and there can be hardly any objection to the addition of five years to this total by regarding Samudragupta as the founder of the era."²

The question of the authenticity of the Nālandā and the Gayā C.P.P. of Samudragupta is highly controversial. We believe that they are late copies of the genuine records of Samudragupta in which a few damaged lines of upper portions, containing the genealogy and the epithets of Samudragupta were restored with the help of the similar records of his successors. In other words, except for the genealogical portions, the rest of the contents of the two documents, containing the names of the villages granted and of the donees as well as the dates and the names of the officers may be accepted as genuine.³ But contrary to the contention of R. C. Majumdar, the authenticity of the date of the Nālandā grant does not prove that Samudragupta was ruling in 324 A. D. due to the simple fact that its date cannot be referred to the Gupta era. It is not generally realized that when this grant was issued Chandragupta II was old enough to participate in the administrative work of the empire, for he has been mentioned (according to

¹ *NHIP*, p. 159.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Infra*, App. ii, pp. iii ff.

Sircar as the *dātaka* of the deed)¹ in the last line of this record. Obviously, therefore, he was not less than twenty years of age. But it is almost impossible to hold that Chandragupta II, who ascended the throne in 375 A. D., led a military campaign personally towards the close of his reign, and died in c. 413 A. D., was born in c. 304 A. D. It has, therefore, to be accepted that the dates given in the Nālandā and the Gayā records are the regnal years of Samudragupta, and not his dates in the Gupta era. It is a very interesting fact, for, it shows that Samudragupta did not use the Gupta era in the early years of his reign; instead he mentioned his regnal years. He has not used this era in the Allahabad pillar inscription and also in the available portion of the fragmentary Eran inscription, both engraved towards the close of his reign. It suggests that he did not know anything about this era throughout his life. And if it was so, we have to conclude that the era was founded after his death by his successor Chandragupta II in whose reign it was used for the first time i.e. in the Mathurā inscription of the G.E. 61.² He evidently reckoned it from some earlier important event of the history of his dynasty.³ In this connection it may be pointed out that in the Mathurā inscription, mentioned above, both, the regnal years of Chandragupta II as well as his date in the Gupta era, have been given possibly because the people were as yet not accustomed to the new era. It may also be noted that even after the Gupta era became popular and well-known, the term *rājya samvatsara*, which technically means 'regnal year'

1 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 264, fn. 8.

2 It may be noted that this suggestion will remain uneffected even if the Nālandā and Gayā records are regarded as spurious.

3 Chattopadhyaya, S., *EHNI*, p. 144; Gupta, P. L. *JBR.S.*, XLII, March, '56, pp. 72 ff. and *ibid*, XLIX, Pt I-IV, pp. 74. The retrospective reckoning of eras is not unknown in India. The Buddha, the Mahāvira, and the Vikrama eras originated long after the events which they commemorate. Akbar commenced his Ilahī era in the 29th year of his reign but reckoned it from the date of his accession. In modern times the era of Dayanand, introduced long after his death, was reckoned from his birth.

remained in use in the epigraphs to show that the particular year of the era falls in the reign period of the king.¹ It indicates that in the preceding reigns the custom of giving the regnal year of the ruling king was prevalent. It is what the Gayā and Nālandā records suggest.

The above discussion indirectly helps us in reconstructing the earlier chronology of the Gupta dynasty, for, now we know that Chandragupta II was not less than twenty years old in the fifth regnal year of his father. When was he born? It may be readily conceded that he was not more than forty years old at the time of his accession, for, otherwise his love overtures to and subsequent marriage with Dhruvadevi and his personal participation in his military adventures towards the close of the fourth century A. D. mentioned in the Udayagiri cave inscription of his minister Virasena² will become incongruous and inexplicable. The depiction of his supple and youthful body on his coins also suggests that he was not very old at the time of his accession. Therefore, it appears to us quite reasonable to believe that he was born not earlier than 335 A. D. Perhaps the year of his birth cannot be placed much later than this. For, the marriage of his daughter Prabhāvatiguptā, begotten on his Nāga wife Kuberaṇāgā, with the Vākāṭaka prince Rudrasena II in c. 380 A. D.³ suggests that Prabhāvatī was born shortly before 365 A. D. and that the marriage of Chandragupta II with Kuberaṇāgā took place not later than

1 cf. *Sel. Ins.*, p. 279 (Bilsad inscription—*Śrī Kumāraṇuplasya = abhivardhamāna-vijaya-rājya-samvatsare śaṇṇavate (vatitame)*); also fn.1.

2 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 272.

3 *NHIP*, p. 110. According to a literary tradition, Pravarasena II, the youngest son of the union spent his early youth in pursuits of pleasure as he could rely upon his maternal grandfather Chandragupta II to look after his administration. Therefore, Pravarasena II must have become a major before the death of Chandragupta II in c. 414 A. D. The birth of the former may thus be placed in c. 390 A. D. 'He was at least the second if not the third or fourth child of his parents, and so their marriage may be placed in c. 380 A. D.' (*Ibid.*, fn. 1).

360 A. D. But, if he was of marriageable age in 360 A. D., his birth must have taken place sometime before 340 A. D. Thus, we find that we can place his birth neither much earlier nor much later than 335 A. D. ; and, therefore, it may be regarded as quite near the truth. It is a very significant fact, for, if Chandragupta II was born in c. 335 A. D. and was not less than twenty years old in the fifth regnal year of Samudragupta, as the Nālandā grant suggests, the date of the accession of the latter will fall not earlier than 350 A. D. In case Chandragupta II was more than twenty years when the Nālandā grant was issued, the date of the accession of Samudragupta, will go up accordingly. But in view of his extensive conquests, Samudragupta should be allotted a period of not less than two decades. Therefore, the year 350 A. D. may be regarded as quite near the truth.

However, the suggestion that Samudragupta ascended the throne in c. 350 A. D. does not depend upon the evidence of the Nālandā grant alone. Its correctness is proved by two other entirely different kinds of evidences. Firstly, a study of the relative chronology of the Vākātakas, the Nāgas and the Guptas very strongly suggests that Samudragupta ascended the throne in the middle of the fourth century A. D. It is generally admitted that the Vākātaka emperor Pravarasena I ruled up to c. 335 A. D.¹ As only two kings reigned after his death and the accession of Rudrasena II in c. 385 A. D. (whose marriage with Prabhāvatiguptā provides a fairly reliable date for him), the former event may have taken place somewhat later, and not earlier than 335 A. D. In the house of the Bhāraśiva Nāgas of Padmāvati, Pravarasena's contemporary was Bhāvanāga, the father-in-law of Gautamīputra, the son of Pravarasena I. It is usually believed that Bhāvanāga outlived Pravarasena I and rendered substantial help to Rudrasena I, the grandson and successor of Pravarasena.² Altekar has placed the death of Bhāvanāga in c. 340 A. D.³ Now, it is significant that when Samudragupta

1 *NHIP*, p. 95.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 38 f.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

ascended the throne and launched his famous campaign against the Nāgas, Bhavanāga was already dead, for, it is Nāgasena (who, according to Bāṇa, was the ruler of Padmāvati)¹ and not Bhavanāga who figures among the kings of Āryāvarta who were uprooted by Samudragupta.² It is obvious, therefore, that Samudragupta's early wars should be placed some time after 340 A. D. How much later than this, it is difficult to determine; but in view of the fact that Nāgasena ruled for some time after the death of Bhavanāga and before the invasion of Samudragupta, an interval of a decade or more may easily be postulated. Thus, the relative study of Nāga-Vākāṭaka-Gupta chronology provides a positive indication in favour of 350 A. D. as the probable date of Samudragupta's accession.

Secondly, according to the *ĀMMK* Samudragupta ruled for 22 years and 5 months.³ If it is correct, we have to place the accession of Samudragupta in c. 350 A. D., for, we know that Chandragupta II ascended the throne in 375 A. D. and was possibly preceded by Rāmagupta who ruled only for a short period. Now, we are most certainly not in favour of accepting the evidence of a literary work, however reliable, on its face value. But we do not know why such an evidence be rejected if it is not against any definitely known fact of history and is corroborated by other sources as the present case is.

The above discussion makes it quite clear that Samudragupta ascended the throne most probably in c. 350 A. D. and that Chandragupta II was about fifteen years old at the time of Samudragupta's accession. With the help of these facts we can reconstruct, at least broadly, the chronology of the predecessors of Samudragupta. Now, if Chandragupta II was born in c. 335 A. D. and had an elder brother in Rāmagupta, Samudragupta's marriage could not have taken place much later than 330 A. D. ; and if Samudragupta became of marriageable age in that year, his birth must have taken place not later than the latter half of the first decade of the fourth

1 Bāṇa, *Harshacharita*, Trans., p. 192.

2 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 256 ; *NHIP*, pp. 39, 139.

3 Jayaswal, *IHI*, p.48 f.

century A. D. Consequently, we can assume that the marriage of Chandragupta I with Kumāradevī, the Lichchhavi princess, was celebrated not later than 305 A. D. In other words, this matrimonial alliance was contracted long before the initial year of the Gupta era. It would mean that the event from which the era was reckoned was neither the accession of Samudragupta nor the marriage of Chandragupta I with Kumāradevī. Chandragupta II reckoned it probably from the date of the accession of Chandragupta I the first *Mahārājādhirāja* of the dynasty or from the date of the assumption of the imperial status by the latter. May be, both these events took place simultaneously.

Now, if Chandragupta I ruled from 319 A. D., it may be easily presumed that his father Ghaṭotkacha and grandfather Gupta ruled in the two decades or more preceding his accession. In view of the fact that the four generations, from Chandragupta I to Kumāragupta I, ruled for 135 years, it does not appear probable that the first two kings, Gupta and Ghaṭotkacha, ruled for long periods. We, therefore, suggest that the king Gupta ruled from c. 295 to c. 300 A. D. and his son Ghaṭotkacha from c. 300 to 319 A. D.

NĀLANDĀ AND GAYĀ RECORDS OF SAMUDRAGUPTA

The genuineness of the Nālandā and the Gayā C.P.P. of Samudragupta, dated respectively in the year 5 and 9 is doubted by most of the scholars. The Gayā grant was first to be discovered and Fleet was the first scholar to edit it and declare it as spurious.¹ He pointed out that in this document the epithets of Samudragupta are uniformly in the genitive case while his name is in the nominative, *va* and *ba* have been indiscriminately used, some of the characters are antique while others are comparatively modern, and the script and the metal of the seal and those of the plate differ. He suggested that the seal in all probability is a genuine one of Samudragupta while the inscription itself is spurious. According to him the fabrication was done some where about the beginning of the eighth century, as the opening expression *mahā-nau-hasty-asīva* etc. in line 1 is not found in the inscriptions of earlier period. These arguments are sufficiently weighty.² Therefore, when the Nālandā record of the year 5 was discovered and it was found that almost all the objections raised against the Gayā grant apply *mutatis mutandis* to the new record equally forcefully, it was also declared to be a forged document.³ Further, it was pointed out that the use of the title *Paramabhāgavata* for Samudragupta and the

1 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, pp. 254 ff.

2 R. D. Banerji (*AIIG*, p. 7 f.) and following him Dandekar (*Hist. Gupta*, p. 44), however, did not accept the verdict of Fleet and regarded the Gayā C.P. of Samudragupta as genuine.

3 Ghosh, A., *EI*, XXV, p. 52 f.; Sircar, D. C., *ibid.*, XXVI, p. 135 f.; *Sel. Ins.*, pp. 262 ff.; Shastri, H., *ASIAR*, 1927-28, p. 138. However, Bhandarkar suggested the possibility of this plate being genuine (*Bhandarkar's List*, no. 2075). For a recent attempt to prove this document as genuine see *JBRs*, XLVII, pp. 330-35.

reference to the performance of the horse-sacrifice by him (not mentioned even in the Allahabad pillar inscription) create doubt in the genuineness of both these records. However, as pointed out by R. C. Majumdar,¹ the discovery of the Nālandā grant has rendered it improbable that the two documents are ancient forgeries. It may be noted that palaeographically, the Nālandā grant belongs to the early Gupta period² while the Gayā grant has been assigned to the 6th-7th century by Sircar³ and to the 8th by Fleet⁴. Thus, the two records are separated from each other at least by more than a century. On the other hand, very strong similarities in their language, style and the contents suggest that, if forged, they were prepared by the same person or persons. Significantly enough, even the same executing officer, Gopasvāmin, has been mentioned in both the documents. It raises a very interesting problem. If it is supposed that both the records were forged by the same person, how to explain the difference in their script? And, if they were fabricated by two persons, separated from each other by a century or more, how to explain the similarities in their style, language and contents? Sircar is constrained to remark that the occurrence of the name of Gopasvāmin 'in both the grants may suggest that he is not a fictitious personality'⁵; but if these records were prepared at two different times without the help of the genuine records of Samudragupta, as Sircar suggests,⁶ how could the name of Gopasvāmin, who 'is not a fictitious personality', have occurred in both the records? The only possible explanation is that these documents were prepared at two different times to

1 *IC*, XI, pp. 225 ff.

2 According to Sircar (*op. cit.*, p. 262) the script of the Nālandā C.P. is of about the 5th century A. D.; but some *akṣharas* have later forms." According to R. C. Majumdar (*op. cit.*) the characters of the Gayā plate are comparatively modern than these of the Nālandā grant.

3 *Sel., Ins.*, p. 264.

4 *Corpus*, III, p. 256.

5 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 266, fn. 12.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 262, fn. 4.

replace the genuine records of Samudragupta. R. C. Majumdar¹ has suggested that the available copies are the exact copies of the original documents. We, however, feel that at least the upper portions of the original documents, containing the genealogy and the epithets of Samudragupta, were damaged or destroyed by fire or any other such cause and were restored, apparently with the help of the similar copper plate grants of his successors, which must not have been uncommon in those days. In the case of the Gayā record the original seal (the damaged condition of which points to the correctness of our view) was evidently fused with the new copy. This assumption explains not only the obvious similarities and dissimilarities of the two documents, but also the existence of the old and new characters side by side, the indiscriminate use of *va* and *ba*, the use of the genitive case in the epithet of Samudragupta, the reference to the performance of the *Aśvamedha* (which he could have hardly celebrated before the 5th year of his reign or of the Gupta era)² and the use of the expression of *mabā-nau-basty-aśva* etc. which, incidentally, is found for the first in the Guṇaigar inscription of Vainyagupta of the year 506 A. D.³ As regards the use of the title *Paramabhāgavata* for Samudragupta, it has escaped the attention of the scholars that whether these records are forged or the copies of the genuine records, they almost definitely prove that Samudragupta did assume this title. For, even if these documents are ancient forgeries, it has to be conceded that the forgers copied this portion 'from a record of one of his successors'. But it would imply that *Paramabhāgavata* was one

1 IC, XI, pp. 25 ff. P. L. Gupta follows him closely (*JBRJ*, XLII, March '56, p. 73.), Sohoni has also accepted the two plates as the certified copies of the genuine grants (Quoted in *JBRJ*, XLVII, p. 331).

2 According to R. C. Majumdar (*op. cit.*) the performance of an *Aśvamedha* by Samudragupta in the early part of his life is not ruled out. Note that in the Poonā C.P. of Prabhāvatiguptā, Samudragupta has been called 'a performer of many horse sacrifices' (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 412).

3 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 331.

of the usual titles of Samudragupta and was used at least in some of the genuine records of his successors.¹

It has also been argued by Sircar that the authenticity of the Nālandā grant would suggest that Samudragupta was ruling in 324 A. D. and 'indicate a rather unusually long period for three generations viz. Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I'.² But it is not only unnecessary but also almost impossible to refer the dates given in these records to the Gupta era. It is not generally realized that the last line of the Nālandā grant refers to Kumāra Śrī Chandragupta, who, according to Sircar himself, was probably the *dūtaka* of the deed. Obviously, therefore, at that time Chandragupta II was old enough to participate in the administrative work. It means that he was at least 20 years old when the Nālandā grant was issued. But it is almost impossible to believe that a king who ascended the throne in 375 A. D., participated personally in a military adventure towards the close of the fourth century, died c. 413 A. D. and left a son who ruled after him for at least four decades, was born in c. 304 A. D. It follows, therefore, that the dates given in this grant, and also in the Gayā record, should not be referred to the Gupta era; they should be regarded as the regnal years of Samudragupta. If it is so, the argument of Sircar loses its force.

1 The fact that Samudragupta adopted *Garuḍadhvaja* as the emblem of his dynasty indicates that he was a Vaishnava or Bhāgavata. Shakuntala Rao Shastri draws attention to the fragmentary *Krishṇacharita* attributed to Samudragupta in which he has been called a *Paramabhāgavata* (*IC*, X, pp. 77 ff.). The evidence of this work, however, is not beyond doubt (Jagannath, *ABORI*, XXVI, pp. 313ff.; Sircar, *JNSI*, VI, p. 34).

2 Sircar, *D. C.*, *Set Ins.*, p. 262, fn. 4. It is indeed strange that Sircar finds it difficult to accept the evidence of the Nālandā grant on the ground that its date, if referred to the Gupta era, would suggest that three generations ruled for a period of 131 years; for, he himself has placed the accession of Samudragupta in c. 330 A. D. It reduces the average from 43.66 to 41.66 years which cannot be regarded as very much close to the generally accepted length of average reign period.

CHANDRAGUPTA I - KUMĀRADEVĪ COIN-TYPE

The ChandraguptaI-Kumāradevī type is one of the most interesting types of the Gupta coins. The coins of this type have been discovered mainly from the eastern part of the U. P., the region, over which the early Gupta kings held their sway. According to Altekar their "recorded find spots are Mathurā, Ayodhya, Lucknow Sitapur, Tanda, Ghazipur and Banaras in U. P. and Bayana in the Bharatpur state".¹ On the other hand, the Standard type coins of Samudragupta are found throughout his empire 'from Saharanpur to Calcutta'.² It is a very significant fact, for, it suggestively indicates that the type under discussion was issued when the Gupta kingdom was still confined to the eastern U. P. Had Samudragupta issued it after the issuance of the Standard type, as Allan asks us to believe, one would expect to find the specimens of the former throughout the empire like the coins of the Standard type.

Secondly, as is well known, the majority of the coins of Samudragupta, including those of the Standard type, contain metrical legends on the obverse and the special *biruda* of the issuer on the reverse. But on the Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type of coins no such legends are found. Similar is the case with the *Garudadhvaja*, which is found on the both the Standard and the Archer type coins of Samudragupta (which were by far the most popular and supposedly the earliest of the types issued by him) but are conspicuously absent on the Chandragupta-Kumāradevī types of coins. These facts also suggest that the Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type was issued earlier than the Standard type of Samudragupta .

1 *Coinage*, p. 26 ; however, the remark of Altekar is not wholly correct, for, one coin of this type was yielded by the Hajipur hoard (*Bayana Hoard*, p. viii).

2 *Coinage*, p. 40.

According to Allan, as the late Śaka or Kushāṇa coins were not current in the territory which Samudragupta inherited from his father, we must place the origin of the Gupta coinage during that period of Samudragupta's rule, when the Guptas come into closer contact with the later Great Kushāṇas whose eastern (Punjab) coins they copy.¹ But this argument is hardly convincing, for, the non-availability of the Kushāṇa gold coins from the region where the early Guptas ruled, does not necessarily mean that they were not current in that area during the first half of the fourth century A. D. Roman coins of the early centuries of the Christian era are found in pretty good number in the regions south of the Vindhyas, while they are very rare in the northern part of the country despite the fact that the Roman influence on the Kushāṇa coinage is regarded as something beyond doubt. This fact has been explained on the assumption that in the North, the Roman coins were melted down by the Kushāṇas to mint their own issues, while in the Deccan, where the necessity of the gold currency was not felt, they were usually defaced by an incision and allowed to be used as bullion.² In the same way, it may be assumed that the Guptas melted down the Kushāṇa gold coins available to them in order to use their metal for the issuance of their own currency.

The relatively greater originality of the Chandragupta-Kumāradevi type, so much emphasised by Allan, is more apparent than real. The process of freeing the Gupta coinage from the foreign influence involved gradual replacement of the king's Kushāṇa coat and trousers by the Hindu-dress, the substitution of the standard by the *paraśu* or the bow, the transformation of Ardoxsho into Durgā or Lakshmi and such other changes.³ The introduction of the figure and the name of the queen along with the name of her father's family was an innovation of entirely different type.

1 Allan attributed this type to Samudragupta (*BMC, GD*, Intro., pp. lxiv-viii, lxxiii-iv.) He has been followed, *mutatis mutandis*, by Mookerji (*GE*, p. 30), S. Chattopadhyaya (*EHNI*, p. 143), Sohoni (*JNSI*, XIX, Pt. II, pp. 145 ff.) and Pathak (*ibid*, pp. 135 ff.)

2 Wheeler, M., *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers*, pp. 167 ff.

3 *Coinage*, p. 15 f.

It was unprecedented in the history of the Hindu coinage and remained something quite exceptional in the history of the Gupta numismatic art itself. It must, therefore, have been the result of some other exceptional circumstances, and not of the process of Indianization.¹ Actually, the problem of the Kushāṇa influence on the early Gupta coins is not as simple as Allan asks us to assume; it depended upon more than one factor. Apart from the availability of the Kushāṇa coinage, so much emphasized by him, the temperament of the various rulers, the occasion on which a particular type was issued, political necessities, regional influences and above all the skill and the background of the mint-masters must have played their respective roles in conditioning the extent of the Kushāṇa influence on the various stages of the evolution of the Gupta coinage. Therefore, the assumption that the Kushāṇa influence was constantly on the decline, cannot be accepted without reservations. In the context of the present problem, it may be particularly pointed out that before the empire-building activities of Samudragupta, the direct rule of the Guptas was confined roughly to the eastern part of the U. P. Now, it is certain that the Kushāṇas had ceased to rule over this area at least more than a century before the accession of Samudragupta. Therefore, if he (during the pre-*digvijaya* period of his rule) or his father Chandragupta I intended to issue gold coins, they were bound to rely on the local artists who did not have much experience of minting in gold, but at the same time, were not psychologically bound with the Kushāṇa tradition. They, therefore, could introduce any exceptionally peculiar feature without any hesitation whatever. On the other hand, after the conquests of Samudragupta, the Scythian rulers of the North-West became not only the immediate neighbours of the Gupta emperor, but also his subordinate allies. Obviously, therefore, Samudragupta could, then, import skilled artists from the north-western region to man the growing demands of his mints. But such artists were necessarily bound with the conser-

1 So far as the depiction of a lion on the reverse is concerned Altekar has shown that it was not something quite unknown to the Kushāṇa coinage (*ibid*, p. 31).

vative traditions of the Kushāṇa numismatic art. Therefore, a sudden increase in the Kushāṇa influence on the Gupta coinage in the reign of Samudragupta becomes not only a possibility, but a logical consequence of the expansion of the Gupta empire in the north-western direction.

Thus, we find that there is nothing against the assumption that the Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type-coins were issued before the Standard type coins of Samudragupta. According to Altekar they were issued during the reign of Chandragupta I by the joint-authority of Chandragupta and Kumāradevī, respectively the rulers of the Gupta and the Lichchhavi States.¹ But, as discussed elsewhere, in ancient India a daughter did not have an immediate right of succession (*apratibandhādīya*), even if her father did not have a male issue to succeed him. In the case of Kumāradevī particularly, we have got no evidence to show that she was regarded as the successor of her father. On the other hand, we know that it was probably Samudragupta who, being a *dvayāmushyāyaṇa* i.e. a person having two kinds of parentages natural and subsidiary, inherited the state of the Lichchhavi chief.² At the most it can be assumed that Chandragupta I administered it after the demise of his father-in-law on behalf of his minor son Samudragupta. If it was so, how could Kumāradevī have been a *regina*? And if she was not, how can it be assumed that these

1 *Bayana Hoard*, Intro., pp. xl-xlii; *Coinage*, pp. 26-32; *JRASB*, III, NS, XLVIII, pp. 105-11. Majumdar follows him closely (*NHIP*, p. 128 f.). Scholars of older generation such as Smith (*IMC*, I, Pt. I, p. 95; *IA*, 1902, p. 258, fn. 7; *EHI*, p. 296) and Aiyangar (*ASIHIC*, I, pp. 184 ff.) believed in this theory. On examination of relative gold content of some of the Gupta coins Maity (*Eco. Hist.*, p. 78; *JNSI*, XVIII, pt. II, pp. 187 ff.) has concluded that the Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type was the earliest of the Gupta gold series. But the facts that each type was not limited to a particular time in the reign of a king and that the gold content of the coins of the same type considerably varies, weaken this line of reasoning (cf. Dani, *JNSI*, XX, Pt. I, p. 4f.).

2 *Infra*, p. 96f.

coins were issued by Chandragupta I and Kumāradevī jointly ? Secondly, as noted earlier, the Chandragupta I-Kumāradevī type of coins have been discovered only rarely from Bihar, the region in which the Lichchhavi state was situated. Were these coins the joint-issues of both the Guptas and the Lichchhavis, one would expect them to find in the regions ruled by both of them. Thirdly, it may be very reasonably asked that if the names and figures of Chandragupta I and Kumāradevī on the obverse represent respectively the Guptas and the Lichchhavis the two parties which agreed to merge their states into one, why have only the Lichchhavis been mentioned on the reverse ? If these coins were the joint-issues of the two states, one would expect to find the legend *Guptāh*, on the reverse along with *Lichchhavayah* corresponding to the names of Chandragupta I and Kumāradevī on the obverse. And lastly, it may be pointed out that most likely the Chandragupta-Kumāradevī coins are commemorative medals, for, as shown by Pathak contrary to the time-honoured Indian tradition, on these issues Kumāradevī has been depicted to the right of her husband.¹ It means that the royal couple has been shown in the *Vaivāhika* or *Kalyāṇa Sundra* posture.² V. S. Agrawala has very ingeniously suggested that these coins were issued by the Lichchhavis. According to him, the legend *Lichchhavayah* may be construed as *Lichchhavayah jayanti* i.e. 'the Lichchhavis are victorious.'³ Against this view it has been rightly argued that "find spot, devices, metallurgy, conventions and sequence—in fact all numismatic evidences unequivocally point out that it (Chandragupta-Kumāradevī coin) is a Gupta issue, rather than a Lichchhavi coin".⁴ Further, it may also be noted that such a twist in the meaning of the legend is totally unwarranted. There was nothing in the way of

1 *JNSI*, XIX, Pt. II, pp. 135ff. *Contra*, Dani, A. H., *op. cit.*, p. 5.

2 Sohoni (*JNSI*, XIX, Pt. II, pp. 148 ff.) believes that the composition on the obverse is not a depiction of a marriage, but a farewell of a ruler proceeding to a military campaign. Earlier he offered a different explanation (*JNSI*, V, Pt. I, pp. 37-42).

3 *JNSI*, XVII, Pt. I, pp. 117-9.

4 *JNSI*, XIX, Pt. II, p. 139.

the Lichchhavi mint-masters inscribing the full legend, the idea of which, according to Agrawala, they wanted to convey.

Thus, we are left with only two possible alternatives : these medals were issued either by Chandragupta I or by Samudragupta before the issuance of the Standard type coins. The following facts have led us to conclude that the latter alternative is the correct one :

The Standard type coins were issued quite late in the reign of Samudragupta. As pointed out by Allan, they "bear long legends referring to his conquests, and it is therefore probable that they were not struck at the beginning of his reign; if Chandragupta issued coins it would be remarkable that Samudragupta did not immediately continue their issue".¹ The assumption that Samudragupta issued Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type coins in the early period of his reign does not create such a difficulty.

The greatest hurdle in our suggestion is the absence of any clue to the identity of the commemorator.² To overcome this difficulty Pathak has suggested that the "obverse legends *Chandraguptaḥ* and *Kumāradevī Śrī* and the device of the marriage-scene may together be taken as meaning *Chandraguptasya Kumāradevyām utpannasya* while the reverse legend *Lichchhavayah* in this association may be construed as *Lichchhavinām dauhitṛasya*. Thus, legends and devices are subtle pointers to the identity of the commemorator".³ We, however, feel that such a twist in the meaning of the legends is not altogether necessary. For, as pointed out by Jayaswal 'no Hindu would ever think of celebrating the marriage of his father and mother'.⁴ Is it not, therefore, more reasonable to assume that Samudragupta issued these medals in the name of the Lichchhavis, who were, after all, the co-rulers of the empire ?

1 Allan, *op. cit.*, p. lxvii-viii.

2 Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 28-29.

3 JNSI, XIX, Pt. II, p. 141. Sohoni also opines that "there was enough indication left by Samudragupta on Chandragupta-Kumāradevī coin type to indicate a reference to him, viz. names of his parents and of a community which had helped him." (JNSI, XIX, Pt. II, p. 153.)

4 Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 91, fn.1.

It is quite likely that when his accession was challenged by his rival brothers, he issued these medals in order to publicize the fact that he, being a *divyāmuṣhyāyaṇa*, had a better title to rule over the amalgamated kingdom of the Guptas and the Lichchhavis, which other princes not connected with the Lichchhavis did not have.¹ It also explains why these coins are not found in Bihar, the region in which the Lichchhavi state was situated. For, if they were issued to publicize that he had a better title to rule over the amalgamated kingdom, it was only natural for him to circulate them in the region where the rebellious princes 'of equal birth' could hope to find some support. The Lichchhavi state must have been solidly behind him and, therefore, he did not feel the necessity of circulating such medallic pieces there.

Thus, we conclude that the Chandragupta-Kumāradevi type is the earliest of the Gupta gold coin series and that it was issued not by Chandragupta I but by Samudragupta in the initial years of his reign to show that he, being a *divyāmuṣhyāyaṇa*, had a better claim to the throne than his rival brothers.

1 Pathak, *op. cit.*, p. 141.



CHAPTER III

CHAKRAVARTIN OF THE GĀṄGĀ VALLEY

INTERNAL PULLS AND PRESSURES¹

The merger of the Gupta and the Lichchhavi states made the former by far the greatest power of North India ; but at the same time it created several intricate problems for them. The nature and the traditions of the two states were fundamentally different. The Guptas represented monarchical tradition ; the Lichchhavis still retained some remnants of the republican form of government. The Guptas were the product of a predominantly Brāhmaṇa culture-area ; the Lichchhavis belonged to Magadha, the traditional stronghold of the heterodox faiths, especially Buddhism. The amalgamation of the two states and the resultant inter-action of their different traditions were bound to find reflection in the Gupta court. In such a condition one would expect to find the royal family and the nobility divided into camps with hostile interests. This is precisely what appears to have happened towards the close of the reign of Chandragupta I.

As we have seen, Samudragupta was the subsidiary son of the *daubitra* category of his maternal grandfather. In that capacity he must have been regarded as the inheritor of the Lichchhavi state. That he was a worthy son of his father and enjoyed the

¹ We have examined the various theories regarding the place of Kācha in Gupta history in the App. i of this chapter (pp. 191 ff.) and have come to the conclusion that he was one of the rival brothers of Samudragupta.

affection of his sire cannot be denied. In any case, from the *Prayāga prafasti* it is apparent that Chandragupta I wanted him to succeed to his throne also, probably because his accession meant final amalgamation of the two states. The Lichchhavi group of the nobility, it may be assumed, supported the candidature of Samudragupta, the *daubitra* of their chief. It may be further assumed that many far-sighted nobles of the Gupta state also supported the cause of Samudragupta. They realized that it was in their own interests to maintain their association with the Lichchhavis. Quite possibly, some of them were motivated by the alluring opportunity to exploit the mineral resources of Magadha. In the absence of authentic evidence we would not like to stress this point much, but to us it is difficult to believe that the wealthier section of the nobility and the *śreṣṭhis* of the Gupta state were altogether unaware of the economic advantages which their association with the Lichchhavis offered to them. At any rate, the economic factor must have played some role, at least as an under-current, in crystallizing the loyalty of some of the Gupta nobles to Samudragupta.

But it is also quite evident that many members of the Gupta royal family and a substantial section of the Gupta nobility must have found it difficult to reconcile with the idea of sharing power with the Lichchhavis. It may be recalled that the Guptas most probably belonged to the Brāhmaṇa order and were political and cultural leaders of a predominantly Brāhmaṇa culture-area. Therefore, it is quite possible that the more orthodox of them followed the Brahmanical law-givers, such as Manu, in regarding the Lichchhavis as the descendants of the *Vrātya Kshatriyas*, who, not fulfilling their sacred duties, were excluded from the *Sānitri* and consequently did not belong to the pale of orthodox Brahmanism. No wonder if the orthodox element of the Gupta family and nobility did not like to have the Lichchhavis as the co-rulers of the empire and feared that the accession of Samudragupta as the next emperor will strengthen the hold of the *Vrātyas* on the Gupta court. It found its natural leader in the person of Kācha who was, most likely, one of those princes 'of equal birth' who were feeling dissatisfied with the prospects of the selection of Samudra-

gupta as the next emperor.¹ If such was the alignment of hostile factions, it can be assumed that Kācha was probably not the son of Kumāradevī but of another wife of Chandragupta I. He, therefore, could assume the leadership of the orthodox section of the Gupta nobility against Samudragupta, who was supported by the Lichchhavis and a section of more liberal and far-sighted Gupta nobles. What part did the queen Kumāradevī play in this struggle for power we do not know, but it can be readily admitted that she must have been anxious to see the victory of her son which, incidentally, was also the heart-felt desire of her husband. In any case, towards the close of the reign of Chandragupta I the atmosphere in the court and the capital must have been quite tense and expectant. The question which was agitating the minds of all was : " after the Emperor who ? " To put all the apprehensions and speculations at rest, Chandragupta I announced that he was to be succeeded by Samudragupta. The declaration was well received by the nobles or the *sabhyas* (obviously those who were the supporters of Samudragupta) who were genuinely pleased on the selection of their candidate ; but it was highly resented by the princes ' of equal birth '.²

That the struggle for the throne was the result of deep under-currents, including religious, is indicated though only indirectly, by several other facts. We know that Samudragupta was a great champion of the Hindu revival. He was a Vaishṇava by faith and had selected Garuḍa, the *vāhana* of Viṣṇu as the emblem of his dynasty. His Gayā and Nālandā records, even if spurious, prove that he was known to have assumed the title *Paramabhāgavata*.³ He performed a horse sacrifice of the most orthodox nature. He felt proud in being called ' the supporter of the real truth of the scriptures ' ⁴ and ' the firm rampart of the pale of religion ' ⁵ and on being compared with Brahmanical gods such as

1 *Infra*, App. i, pp. 191 ff.

2 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 11 f.

3 *Supra*, App. ii of Ch. I, p. 113 f.

4 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 6.

5 *Ibid.*

Dhanada, Varuṇa, Indra and Antaka.¹ He was the giver of many hundreds of thousands of cows² evidently to the Brāhmaṇas. He seems to have been the champion of the liberal aspect of the Brahmanical revival and had due respect for the followers of other faiths. For Buddhism especially, he seems to have had a soft corner in his heart. For example, we know that he permitted the king of Ceylon to build a monastery and a rest-house for the Ceylonese pilgrims at Bodh-Gayā.³ Further, he was the patron of Vasubandhu the Elder, the famous Buddhist scholar of his age.⁴ This liberal aspect of his religious policy may have had something to do with the fact that he was connected with the Lichchhavis and Magadha whose association with Buddhism is quite well-known.

On the other hand, there are reasons to believe that Kācha or Bhasma (as he has been called in the *ĀMMK*) was anti-Buddhist in outlook. Firstly, it is significant that the Buddhist author of the *ĀMMK* has denounced the character and policy of Bhasma very vehemently. According to him, Bhasma was of low intelligence (*durmedhabh*) and wicked mind (*durmatib*). He was heartless (*nirghṛiṇin*), 'ever mindful about his own person' and 'unmindful about the hereafter'. "With bad councillor he greatly committed sin. His government (or kingdom) was inundated with carping logicians (*tārṅkikaib*), vile Brahmins".⁵ Obviously, in the eyes of the Buddhist author of the *ĀMMK*, Bhasma followed an anti-Buddhist policy. When we find that anti-Buddhist kings, such as Śaśāṅka and Mihirakula have been denounced by him more or less in an identical language, it becomes rather a certainty.⁶ Further, it may be noted that "all

1 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *JA*, 1900, pp. 316 ff.; 401 ff.; *LA*, 1902, p. 194.

4 *Infra*, App. v. of this chapter.

5 Jayaswal, K. P., *III*, p. 48.

6 According to the author of the *ĀMMK*, Soma (Śaśāṅka) was of wicked intellect (*durmedhabh*) and "angry and greedy evil-doer of false notions and bad opinion" (*III*, pp. 49-50). Similar is the description of Graha (=Mihira-

the haters of Buddhism have their names translated or otherwise concealed in the *ĀMMK*--e.g. Śaśāṅka is Soma, Pushyamiṭra is Gomi ; so Mihira is 'planet' (Graha)".¹ It is significant that in this case also the author of the *ĀMMK* has translated the name of Kācha into Bhasma, indicating thereby that Kācha was a hater of Buddhism.

The evidence of the *ĀMMK* is corroborated, at least partially, by the testimony of Yuan Chwang. According to Yuan Chwang, the king of Śrāvastī "desired to bring public shame on Manoratha. To effect this he called together 100 learned and eminent non-Buddhists to meet Manoratha in discussion. The subject selected for discussion was the nature of the sense-perception about which, the king said, there was such confusion among the various systems that one had no theory in which to put faith. Manoratha had silenced 99 of his opponents and was proceeding to play with the last man on the subject, as he announced it, of "fire and smoke". Hereupon, the king and the non-Buddhists exclaimed that he was wrong in the order of stating his subject for it was a law that smoke preceded fire. Manoratha, disgusted at not being able to get a hearing, bit his tongue, sent an account of the circumstances to his disciple Vasubandhu and died".² Later on, according to Yuan Chwang, this king "lost his kingdom, and was succeeded by a king who showed respect to men of eminence. Then Vasubandhu solicitous for his Master's good name came to this place, induced the king to summon to another discussion the former antagonists of Manoratha, and defeated them all in argument".³

This interesting piece of evidence provides us the following facts about Vasubandhu and his patron, usually identified with Samudragupta :

kula). It has been said that his "kingdom will be full of Brahmins and will be attacked by enemies. This king marked 'Graha' was an erring man and arbitrary ; and without much delay he was struck by enemy and died". (*Ibid.*, p. 65).

¹ *Ibid.*

² Watters, I, *Travels*, p. 212.

³ *Ibid.*

(i) Before the patron of Vasubandhu came to power, there ruled a king whose seat was at Śrāvastī.

(ii) This king did not have any sympathy for the Buddhists. He permitted and joined hands with the anti-Buddhist logicians to insult a Buddhist scholar of repute.

(iii) Later, he 'lost' his kingdom and was succeeded by the patron of Vasubandhu, who permitted Vasubandhu to avenge the insult inflicted on his Master.

From the above account, it may easily be deduced that the predecessor of Samudragupta, who did not feel kindly towards Buddhist scholars and who 'lost' his kingdom to Samudragupta, was no other than Kācha. The testimony of Yuan Chwang, thus, is in perfect consonance with the evidence of the *ĀMMK* and with what we know about the religious outlook of Samudragupta and that of his rival. It may be reasonably assumed, therefore, that Samudragupta and his supporters represented the liberal aspect of Brahmanical revival which was not unsympathetic to other faiths, while Kācha and his partisans had a more conservative and rather intolerant ideology. Samudragupta wanted to cultivate good relations with the Buddhists, Kācha and his supporters were antagonist to them. The attitude of Samudragupta may, very reasonably, be connected with his association with the Lichchhavis and Magadha while the harder approach of Kācha may be regarded as a result of his reaction against the prospects of the predominance of the *Vrātya* Lichchhavis in the Gupta court.

This, we believe, may have been the pattern of interests and attitudes that gave shape and content to the various factions in the Gupta court. The conflict between Kācha and Samudragupta was not only the struggle for power between two individual princes; it was, at least partly, ideological and basically a tussle between factional interests. More was at stake than meets the eye. What was to be decided was not merely the superiority of one prince over the other; the very composite nature of the new empire was threatened and the policy of religious toleration, which characterised the subsequent history of the dynasty and for which its rulers have become so famous, was challenged. Unfortunately,

the details of this mighty struggle are not known. However, as the coins of Kācha have been found mainly from the eastern U. P. (from Ballia, Tanda, Jaunpur etc.), it may be assumed that the revolt against the authority of Samudragupta took place in the central regions of the Gupta state itself. It is in consonance with our suggestion that Kācha received support mainly from the orthodox elements of the Gupta state. It is quite possible that he made Śrāvastī his capital as the evidence of Yuan Chwang seems to imply. However, his success was shortlived, for, according to the *AMMK* he ruled only for three years, a period which is quite in keeping with the fact that his coins are neither copious nor rare.

UNIFICATION OF THE GANGA VALLEY

Samudragupta, who emerged victorious in the struggle for the throne, turned out to be a great conqueror, one of the greatest India has ever produced. The Eran inscription refers to the fact that by him 'the whole tribe of kings upon the earth was overthrown and reduced to the loss of the wealth of their sovereignty',¹ while Harishena, the author of his Allahabad pillar inscription, a document of pure *prastasti* type, describes his fame as 'caused by his conquest of the whole world' and gives him the credit of 'binding together the whole world by means of the amplitude of the vigour of his arm'.² Fortunately, he also gives a detailed account of the conquests of his royal master.³ In the 7th verse

1 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 21.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 8. This document is not posthumous as Fleet wrongly supposed. See Bühler, *JRAS*, 1898, p. 386; Chhabra, *IHQ*, XXIV, Pt. II, pp. 104 ff.

3 Identifications of kings and states mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription have been discussed in detail by Smith (*JRAS*, 1897, pp. 87 ff.), and Raychaudhuri (*PHH*, pp. 534 ff.). Dubreuil's work (*AHD*, pp. 58 ff.) is important for the identification of the southern states only. Majumdar (*NHIP*, pp. 139 ff.; *CA*, pp. 8 ff.) has given a sober picture of the extent Samudragupta's conquests based on the generally accepted views, while Chattopadhyaya (*EHNI*, pp. 149 ff.) has catalogued almost all the suggestions regarding the identifications of the various states

he informs us that by the prowess of his arm, Samudragupta uprooted Achyuta, Nāgasena, and Gaṇapatināga¹ (generally regarded as the rulers of Ahichchhatrā, Padmāvati and Mathurā respectively), caused the capture of the prince of the Kota family (Bulandshahr region)² through his armies and took his pleasure at the city that had the name of 'Pushpa' (probably Kānyakubja in the West U. P.)³. This description is followed by a long list of states, kings and tribes that were conquered and brought under various degrees of subjection. They have been divided into four categories, the first of which includes the twelve states of Dakṣiṇāpatha⁴ with the names of their kings,⁵ who were captured (*grahaṇa*) and then liberated (*mokṣa*) and reinstated (*anugraha*); the second contains

made so far. The views in this text, unless otherwise stated, are mainly based on the writings of these scholars, to which reference may be made for the grounds on which the proposed identifications are made and also for other probable identifications. cf. also the works and articles of Fleet (*JRAS*, 1898, pp. 368 ff.), Allan (*BMC, GD*, Intro. pp. xxi ff.), Aiyangar (*ASIHIC*, I, pp. 218 ff.), Jayaswal (*Hist. Ind.*, pp. 132 ff.), Mookerji (*GE*, pp. 19 ff.), R. Sathianathaiyer (*Studies in the History of Tondamandalam*, pp. 13 ff.) and various other scholars referred in the footnotes.

1 In the 7th verse of Allahabad *prāśasti*, after the names of Achyuta and Nāgasena, there occurs the letter *Ga* and then a lacuna. Now, as the names of Achyuta and Nāgasena have been repeated in the line 21, *Ga* may be supposed to be the first *akṣara* of the name of Gaṇapatināga who also figures in the list of the kings of Āryāvarta given in that line and the "lacuna may be conjecturally filled up by 'Gaṇapatyādin-nripān-saṅgare'". Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, p. 256, fn. 1; also see Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 133.

2 *Infra*, p. 130, fn. 2.

3 *Infra*, p. 140 f.; also see, pp. 210 ff.

4 The term Dakṣiṇāpatha usually denotes the whole of the trans-Vindhyan India extending up to the Setu (Adam's Bridge). Sometimes it is distinguished from the Far South (cf. *PHAI*, p. 85). It is interesting to note that the *Bṛhatasamhitā* (XIV. 13) places Chitrakūṭa in the Dakṣiṇa Division.

5 See p. 164, fn. 4

the names of the eight kings of Āryāvarta¹, who were 'violently exterminated' (*prasaboddharaṇ-odeṛitta*);² the third consists of the rulers of the forest (*āṇavika*) states who were reduced to servitude (*parichāraṇikīṛita*) and the chiefs of the five *pratyanta* or border states³ and nine tribal republics,⁴ who were forced to pay

- 1 In the *Manusmṛitī* (II. 32) Āryāvarta is described as the land between the Himālayas and the Vindhya and between the Western and the Eastern Seas. In the *Bauddhāyana Dharmasūtra*, (I. 1.2.9), the *Vāsisṭha Dharmasūtra* (I. 8) and the *Mahābhāṣya* (II. 4.10) of Patañjali, however, it is described as lying to the east of Ādarśa or Adarśana, to the west of Kālakavana, to the south of the Himālayas and to the north of the Pāriyātra. In the *Prayāga prastuti*, evidently the definition of Manu has been followed.
- 2 Viz. Rudradeva, Matila, Nāgadatta, Chandravarman, Gaṇapatiṇāga, Nāgasena, Achyutanandin, Balavarman. Achyutanandin is, perhaps, one name. He is mentioned as only Achyuta in the 7th verse because of the exigencies of metre. His coins, found at Ahichchhatrā, closely resemble some of the Nāga coins and suggest that he also was a Nāga ruler (*NHIP*, pp. 39-40). Of the remaining rulers of Āryāvarta one must have been identical with the prince of the Kota family who figures in the 7th verse along with Achyuta, Nāgasena and Gaṇapatiṇāga, but is conspicuous by his absence in this list. Jayaswal identified him with Balavarman (*Hist. Ind.*, p. 142). But in view of the fact that he is mentioned with the kings of Mathurā, Padmāvatī and Ahichchhatrā, it is better to identify him with Matila, who is regarded as identical with Mattila mentioned in a seal found in Bulandshahr. The fact that this seal contains the Nāga emblem of couch and serpent shows that probably he was also a Nāga ruler (*IAI*, XVIII, p. 289).
- 3 Viz. Samatata (S. E. Bengal), Davāka (Nowgong District of Assam), Kāmarūpa (Upper Assam), Nepāla (the valley of Nepal) and Karttṛipura (somewhere in Kashmir? *infra*, p. 153 fn. 1).
- 4 Viz. Mālavas (Mewar-Tonk-Kotah region), Arjunāyanas (Delhi-Jaipur-Agra region), Yaudheyas (along both banks of Sutlej on the borders of the Bahawalpur state), Madrakas (Ravi-Chinab Doab), Ābhīras, Prārjunas, Sanakānikas, Kākas and Kharaparikas. The last five of these tribes are generally located in the Vidiśā-Eran region and the adjoining tracts. But the suggestion, though supported by a number of authorities, is difficult to be accepted in its entirety, especially

all kinds of taxes (*sarvakaradāna*), obey his orders (*ājñākarāṇa*) and come to perform obeisance (*pranāmāgamana*) ; and the fourth and the last category consists of the Daivaputrashāhi Shāhānushāhi, Śaka Muṇḍas and the dwellers of Sindhala and 'all the other islands' who pleased the Gupta emperor by offering their own persons for service to him (*ātma nivedana*)¹, bringing presents of maidens (*kanyopāyanadāna*)² and applying for charters bearing the Garuḍa seal for the enjoyment of their own territories

in view of the facts that the Nāgas and possibly the Vākātakas had also something to do with this region in the period under discussion and more reliable evidence is available, at least in cases of some of these tribes, associating them with other parts of the country. For example, the Ābhiras are known to have had several settlements in the region extending from the Punjab in the north to Maharashtra in the south. Their association with the north-western regions is mentioned in the *Māhābhārata*, the *Vāyu* and the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇas* as well in several other texts (Mirashi, *Corpus*, IV, Pt. I, pp. xxxi ff.), while the evidence of the *Geographike* of Ptolemy, the *Periplus* and several Indian works places them in the south-western Rajputana and the south-eastern parts of Sindh. It is possible, therefore, to locate the Ābhiras of the Allahabad pillar inscription either somewhere in the Punjab or in the western India. As regards the Kharaparikas, D. Sharma has shown reasons to believe that they were of Mongol origin (*IHQ*, XXXII, pp. 96 ff.). Katare disagrees with him (*ibid*, XXXVII, Pt. I, p. 81 f.), but his arguments have been effectively answered by Sharma (*ibid*, XXXVIII, pp. 327 ff.). Other tribes of this region may, however, be provisionally placed in the Sāñchi-Airikaṇa region and the adjoining tracts.

1 Fleet (*Corpus*, III, p. 14) and Majumdar (*NHIP*, p. 143) translate it as 'offering oneself as sacrifices'. Perhaps 'offering their own person for service to the emperor' conveys a more accurate sense.

2 This compound literally means 'presenting unmarried daughters and giving them in marriage', but 'it is not easy to distinguish between the two. For, it would be unreasonable to think that the rulers who enjoyed at least some degree of autonomy, would present their daughters for any other purpose than marriage'. (*NHIP*, p. 148).

(*Garutmad-aṅka-sva-vishya-bhukti-jāsana-yāchana*).¹ As regards the principle according to which Harishena has enumerated these states, sufficient attention has not been paid so far. Some scholars believe that he described them geographically, some others feel that he enumerated them in the chronological order of the campaigns launched against them, while there are others who are not so certain and apply both these principles rather indiscriminately to analyse the military activities of the Gupta emperor.² A critical analysis of the data has, however, led us to conclude that Harishena has merely grouped the various states, kings and peoples defeated or subjugated by his master in accordance with the four types of policies adopted towards them and that no relative chronology of the campaigns of Samudragupta can be prepared on the basis of the order of enumeration of the vanquished powers. It is, however, reasonably certain that the campaigns in the various regions of Āryāvarta undertaken with the purpose of the extermination of their kings generally preceded the subjugation of the adjoining territories and that in Āryāvarta, the war against the powers of the western U. P. enumerated in the 7th verse of the *prajāsti* was launched in the beginning of his reign.³

GEO-POLITICAL FACTORS IN SAMUDRAGUPTA'S CONQUESTS

In our country 'the wide inviting alluvial plains, opening on to the main gateways to Western Asia, abut on an older land mass of Peninsular India, cut up into important river basins separated by ridges of hills and forests'.⁴ This feature has divided the

1 Allan, *BMC, GD*, Intro., p. xxv. Some scholars believe that this compound means a two fold request asking for charters (*jāsana-yāchana*) (i) for the use of the gupta coins bearing Garuḍa symbol (*Garutmad-aṅka*) and (ii) for the government of their own territories (*sva-vishya-bhukti*) (JBORS, XVIII, p. 207 f.; XIX, p. 145). But it is not likely. Note that the Standard type coin issued by a Scythian feudatory of Samudragupta does not contain the emblem of Garuḍa on it (*Coinage*, p. 52).

2 *Infra*, App. ii, pp. 196 ff.

3 *Ibid.*

4 Subbarao, B, *The Personality of India*, p. 11.

country into various zones separated from each other by barriers not always easy to cross, and with somewhat distinct personalities of their own. With the passage of time they became local centres of political power or as Subbarao calls them 'Provincial States' within a 'National State'¹, always ready to defy the authority of the central government and almost continuously at war with each other.² In such a condition it was but natural for our political realists like Kautilya³ and Manu⁴ to declare that 'kingdom taking' is the legitimate business and duty of kings. One, therefore, should not wonder if he finds that in his long *prastāvi*, Samudragupta has nowhere given the causes which compelled him to take military actions against his various adversaries.

Secondly, most of the various regions of India are small and, consequently, the states which used to emerge as their political manifestation, were usually very small and weak. Only a few of them could become the territorial bases of large empires. The most important of such exceptional areas is the vast Gaṅgā basin including the Deltaic region of Bengal, 'the core of India from every point of view'⁵. It has been the basis of the entire succession of North Indian empires, including that of the Guptas; and has been a factor of considerable importance in determining their career and course of expansion. For example, the empire-builders, whose source of strength lay in the North-West and who entered the Gaṅgā basin via Indo-Gangetic Divide, such as the Kushāṇas, the Hūṇas, the Vardhanas (who originated in the Divide region itself), the Turks and the Mughals, had to expand towards the eastern provinces while those who originated or started their career in the east, for instance, the Pālas and the British, had to expand towards the west. In the light of this fact it becomes quite obvious that for a conqueror like Samudragupta, whose dynasty

1 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

2 Cf. Majumdar, R. C. & Pusalker, A. D. (Ed.), *The Vedic Age*, p. 101.

3 Shamasastri, *Arthasāstra*, p. 293.

4 See Altekar, *State and Government in Ancient India*, p. 217.

5 Panikkar, K. M., *Geog. Fact.* p. 25.

originated in the eastern part of the upper Gaṅgā basin i.e. in the Prayāga region, and who had Magadha in his control, the most logical directions of enlarging his empire were the south-east (towards the Bengal sea-coast) and the west (along the upper reaches of Yamunā and the Gaṅgā). In other words, it was just natural for him to conquer Bengal and the western U. P., and thus unite the whole of the fertile Gaṅgā basin under one rule.

But why did Samudragupta carry his victorious arm first in the west and not in the south-east i.e. Bengal? The answer to this question is suggested by the contemporary political situation of India. It may be recalled that in the first half of the fourth century A. D. the Nāgas, who held sway over western U. P. and some of the adjoining areas, were, apart from the Guptas, the greatest power of Āryāvarta. As a matter of fact, the factors that led to the rise of the upper Gaṅgā basin, gave initiative for founding an empire in the North to the Guptas and the Nāgas both.¹ The Nāgas were also connected with the Brahmanical revival and the Bhāraṣivas of Padmāvati had performed ten Aśvamedhas which showed their attachment with the new movement. Further, the marriage of the daughter of Bhavanāga with Gautamiputra, the son of the emperor Pravarasena I, had enhanced their prestige. Thus, their position in the politics of the country as well as the location of their territories prove that they, along with their Vākāṭaka allies, constituted the greatest challenge to the rising power of the Guptas. Therefore, in any scheme of the Gupta expansion, the first stage was to be dominated by the struggle against the Nāgas.² But such an eventuality involved a possibility of the escalation of conflict towards the south leading to a war against the Vākāṭakas also. In order to avoid it and save the imperial forces of the difficulties and dangers of fighting simultaneously against two of

1 *Supra*, Ch. II, pp. 55 ff.

2 It is interesting to note that most of the kings, against whom the first campaign was launched, were of Nāga lineage. Nāgasena and Gaṇapati-nāga were obviously Nāgas. Achyuta was, perhaps, also a Nāga as his coin-type suggests (NIIP, pp. 39-40).

their most powerful enemies, a swift military action against the Nāgas was all the more necessary. In other words, the operation of geo-political factors rendered it imperative for Samudragupta to launch his victorious campaigns with an invasion on the Nāga kingdoms of the west.

RELIGION IN GUPTA POLITICS

Another factor that might have played some role, if only as an under-current, in conditioning the approach of the imperial Guptas towards their neighbours, was their religious leanings. It is generally believed that the ancient Indian kings in general and the imperial Guptas in particular, followed a policy of religious toleration.¹ It is quite true and cannot be doubted; but the impression that the political thinking of the Gupta emperors and their approach towards political problems remained completely unaffected by their religious leanings is perhaps not wholly correct. To us it appears a matter of some significance that while almost all the Gupta emperors were *Paramabhāgavatas* or great devotees of Viṣṇu, most of their rivals e.g. the Nāgas, the Vākātakas, the Hūṇas, the Maitrakas and even the king Yaśodharman of Mandasor were staunch Śaivas. But, for the moment, let us concentrate only on their early rivals viz. the Vākātakas and the Bhāraśivas. The Vākātaka kings were usually the devotees of Mahābhairava or Maheśvara,² while the Bhāraśivas were so known on account of their carrying the *Śivaliṅga* on their shoulders. But the point which is more important in this context is their claim that their 'royal line owed its origin to the great satisfaction of Śiva' (*Śiva-sūparitushṭa-samutpādita-rājavamsānām*).³ Similarly, the Vākātakas believed that they

1 Cf. Tripathi, R. S., *PHIC*, 1938, pp. 63 ff.; Goswami, K. G., *HIQ*, XIII, pp. 323 ff.; Altekar, *NHIP*, pp. 364 ff.

2 Pravarasena I, despite the performance of the Vedic sacrifices, constructed a temple of the lord Śiva which became famous by the name of Pravareśvara (Mirashi, *Vākātaka Rajavamsā*, p. 72); Rudrasena I claimed to be a great devotee of Mahābhairava while Prithviṣeṇa I and Pravarasena II are described as the most devout worshippers of the god Maheśvara (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 236 f.).

3 Fleet, *Ibid.*, p. 236.

'possessed the favour of the god Śambhu'.¹ These facts tend to show that the political thinking of these kings was not unconnected with their affiliation with Śaivism. On the other hand, the political ideals of the Guptas had a distinct imprint of Vaiṣṇavism. The *Vāyu Purāṇa*, a work of the early Gupta period, declares that "the *chakravartins* are born in each age as the essence of *Vishṇu*. They have lived in the ages past and will come again in future ... They will enjoy wealth, plenty, *Dharma*, ambition, fame and victory in undisturbed harmony. They will excel the Ṛishis in their power to achieve results, by their lordliness, by providing plenty and by discipline".² On these lines the influence of the Gupta rulers and of their age is quite distinct. Till the beginning of the Gupta epoch, the *chakravartin* ideal was connected mainly with the performance of the various Vedic sacrifices.³ Perhaps, in order to bring it in tune with spirit and polity of his age, the author of the *Vāyu Purāṇa* gave it a Vaiṣṇavite orientation. The most interesting evidence on this point is provided by the Chakravikrama type coins of Chandragupta II.⁴ On its obverse is shown, inside a big *chakra*, a standing two armed male figure conferring three round balls on a haloed royal figure. The reverse shows the figure of Lakṣmī standing on a lotus and the legend *Chakravikrama*. It is unanimously believed that the figure inside the *chakra* represents the *Chakrapurusha* of Viṣṇu who is bestowing on Chandragupta II three symbols of royal power, viz., *prabhuśakti*, *utsāha śakti* and *mantra śakti* i.e. the kingly virtues of authority, energy and counsel⁵. The symbology of this scene becomes clearer in the light of data provided by the *Abirbudhanya Sāmbhitā*, a well-known text of the Pāñcharātra Āgama, which 'on the basis

1 *Ibid.*, p. 237.

2 *Vāyu Purāṇa*, XLVII, 72-76.

3 Kane, P. V. *History of Dharmasāstra*, III, pp. 63 ff.

4 Till recently only one specimen of this type yielded by the Bayana hoard was known. Another specimen reportedly found at Madankola has, however, been recently published (*JNSI*, XXII, pp. 261 ff.)

5 Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 147 ff.; Shivaramamurti, *JNSI*, XIII, Pt. II, pp. 180 ff.; Agrawala, V. S., *JNSI*, XVI, Pt. I pp. 97 ff.

of the internal evidence bearing on the religious conditions portrayed in it should be assigned to the Gupta period'.¹ From it we learn that Vishṇu in the form of *Chakra* was held as the ideal of worship for kings desirous of obtaining universal sovereignty. In the words of Agrawala, it was "a novel and dynamic interpretation compatible with the polity of the times. According to the explanation given in the *Saṃhitā*, the human figure inside the *Chakra* is called *Chakravartī* both by the people and the wisemen. The king who worships him with a devout heart attains to the rank of a *Chakravartī* ruler in a short time. Those who wish a greater glory (*vipulām śriyam*) should worship the *Chakravartī Puruṣa*, but specially is this worship enjoined on kings. It was a new conception by which the Pāñcharātra Bhāgavatas utilized the tenets of their religion in the service of the state and thereby greatly influenced the political thought and ideals of kingly power during that period".² The *Ahīrbudhanya Saṃhitā* clearly states that he who adores the *Chakravartī Puruṣa* becomes a *Sārvabhauma* or universal ruler in this world and also becomes a ruler in the other world. Any one who does not pay homage to this deity cannot attain to royalty.³ It is indeed a welcome addition to our knowledge of the political philosophy of the imperial Guptas.

Thus, we find that the Gupta rulers and their rivals, being the products of different religious traditions, followed different ideals. Now, the question arises how did this difference in their ideals influence, if at all, their mutual relations? In this connection, the history of the Vākāṭaka-Gupta relations provides a very interesting example. The Vākāṭaka rulers, as we have seen, were staunch Śaivas. But Rudrasena II, the son of Prīthvīśeṇa I and the husband of Prabhāvatiguptā, was an exception. He became a devotee of the lord Chakrapāṇi, a form of Vishṇu. He even claimed that he acquired abundance of glory through the favour of his god (*bhagavataś—Chakrapāṇeḥ-prasād-oparajita-Śrī-*

1 Agrawala, *op. cit.*, p. 97

2 *Ibid.*, p. 99 f.

3 *Ibid.*

Samudrayasya).¹ Now, Rudrasena II flourished in a period when the Gupta influence on the Vākātaka court was at its highest. That is why it is commonly believed that Rudrasena's conversion to Bhāgavatism was the result of the influence of his father-in-law, Chandragupta II.² But does this explanation not prove that the Gupta politics was not completely divorced from the personal faith of the emperor? If it can be supposed that Chandragupta II contracted the matrimonial alliance with the Vākātakas with an eye on the Śaka kingdom of western India³—a purely political motive—is it really too much to think that his influence which led Rudrasena II to give up the traditional faith of his family was political in nature? In other words, is it not a case of a weaker partner of the alliance accepting the faith of the senior partner? In this context it is also significant to note that till the conversion of Rudrasena II, the bulk of the state expenditure assigned for religious purposes was utilized in the performance of the Vedic sacrifices. On the other hand, during the period of the ascendancy of Vaishṇavism in the Vākātaka court, the Bhāgavatas became its principle beneficiaries.⁴ It was due to such patronage, rendered possible by the political influence of the Guptas, that in the Gupta age the geographical orbit of Vaishṇavism extended remarkably on all sides.⁵

1 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 237.

2 NHIP, p. 110; Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 99 f.

3 Smith, *JRAS*, 1914, p. 324; *PHAI*, p. 555; *NHIP*, p. 110.

4 Cf. Mirashi, *Vākātaka Rājavamśa*, pp. 72 ff.

5 Note that the rulers of the Varman dynasty of Kāmarūpa, which owed its origin to Samudragupta (*infra*, p. 116), claimed to be staunch Vaishṇavas. According to Yuan Chwang, Bhāskara was descended from Nārāyaṇadeva (Vishṇu) (Watters, *Travels*, II, p. 185 f.). Bāṇa in his *Harshacharita* describes this king as belonging to the Vaishṇava family (*Harshacharita*, pp. 211 ff.). Probably the Varman of Mandasor and the Vishṇu brothers of the Eran inscriptions of 165 G. E., who also owed their royal glory to the Guptas, were Vaishṇavas (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, pp. 76, 90). Were not the Guptas more considerate to the families of Vaishṇava affiliation?

Here, let it be clearly understood that we are not suggesting that the Guptas forcibly imposed their faith upon their contemporaries or fought wars with the specific purpose of enlarging the sphere of influence of their religion. We merely wish to point out that their political ideals were different from their main rivals and that, while dealing with them, they did not cease to think as the devotees of Vashṇu. After all, when Skandagupta declared that he "plucked and utilized the authority of his local representatives, who were so many Garuḍas, and used it as an antidote against the hostile kings, who were so many serpents, lifting up their hoods in pride and arrogance"¹ was he not looking upon his enemies with the eyes of a Vaishṇava? Similarly, when Samudragupta chose Garuḍa, the *vāhana* of Vishṇu and the mythical enemy of the *Nāgas*, as the emblem of his family, was he not betraying the fact that while thinking of his Nāga adversaries his attitude was coloured, however lightly, by his Bhāgavata affiliations?

SAMUDRAGUPTA AND THE NAGAS

The most important factor, however, which led Samudragupta to launch a campaign against the Nāgas was the opportunity provided by the internal disturbances in the Bhāraṣīva and the Vākāṭaka states which followed the deaths of Bhavanāga and Pravarasena I. In the Vākāṭaka family, the uncles of Rudrasena I refused to accept his claim to the throne and at least one of them, Sarvasena, succeeded in carving out a separate kingdom out of the parent empire.² It must have rendered the prospects of the merger of the Bhāraṣīva and the Vākāṭaka kingdoms, dreamt by Bhavanāga and Pravarasena I,³ quite bleak. The hope was completely shattered when, after the death of Bhavanāga, ambitious Nāga princes like Nāgasena, obviously a relation of the former, refused to let Rudrasena I succeed his deceased maternal grandfather, though Rudrasena I was apparently successful in acquiring some slices of the

1 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 62.

2 NHIP, p. 102; according to the *Purāṇas* Pravarasena I had four sons and all of them became kings (DKA, p. 50).

3 *Supra*, Ch. II, pp. 88 ff.

southern parts of the Bhāraśiva state as the continuous use of the *biruda Bhavanāga daubitra* for him in the Vākāṭaka documents and the tradition of the *Putrāgas*, indicate.¹ The Bharasiva-Vākāṭaka *entente* could have hardly survived the strain of these developments.

Following the dictum of Kauṭilya and Maṇu that a ruler desirous of enlarging his kingdom should take an advantage of the weakness of his enemy, Samudragupta exploited this splendid opportunity and launched a vigorous campaign against the Nāgas, so vividly described in the 7th verse of his *prafasti*; though it is also quite possible that they had provided some immediate provocation to him by trying to fish in the troubled water of internal Gupta politics and giving support to the factions hostile to him. The base of his campaign against the kings Nāgasena of Padmāvatī, Gaṇapatiṇāga of Mathurā, Achyuta of Ahichchhatrā and the prince of the Kota family, seems to have been the city of 'Pushpa' where he is said to have taken his pleasure, obviously after the successful completion of the operations. This city is usually identified with Pāṭaliputra,² but Yuan Chwang informs us that Kusumapura or Pushpapura was one of the ancient names of Kānyakubja also.³ The question arises: which of these two cities has been mentioned in the *prafasti*? To us it appears that Harishena has referred to Kānyakubja and not Pāṭaliputra, especially in view of the fact that Ahichchhatrā, Mathurā and Padmāvatī, situated respectively to its north-west, west and south-west were almost equidistant from it, not too far away—hardly 125

1 *Ibid.*

2 The identification of 'Pushpa' with Pāṭaliputra depends upon the assumption that the latter was the capital of the imperial Guptas. But there is absolutely no evidence in favour of such an assumption (*infra*, Appendix IV). It is actually one of the by-products of the generally accepted but altogether erroneous view that the Guptas originally belonged to Magadha (*supra*, Ch. II). Further, even if it is accepted that Pāṭaliputra was the capital of the Gupta empire, its identification with 'Pushpa' of the Allahabad record remains an unproved assumption.

3 Watters, *Travels*, I, p. 341.

to 150 miles in each case. It seems that Samudragupta, to use the terminology of military scientists, operated on inner lines and, by a *blitzkrieg*, swiftly (*kshaṇāt*) exterminated his three Nāga enemies. Further, the context in which Harishena states that Samudragupta caused the capture of the prince of the Kota family by his armies, indicates that while the expedition against Nāgasena, Achyuta and Gaṇapatināga was led by him personally, a division of the imperial army, under the command of one of his generals, was sent to capture the prince of the Kotas.¹ This is the only campaign of Samudragupta, the outlines of which have come down to us ; but it is quite sufficient to show that as a general he had all the ingredients of a Napoleon in him. To a student of art of war his strategy in this campaign reminds of the famous battles of the French Emperor at Austerlitz and Jena.

SAMUDRAGUPTA AND THE VAKATAKAS

After the defeat of the Nāgas, a trial of strength with the Vākātakas became an unavoidable eventuality. The Vākātakas, though a power of the Deccan, were dabbling in the politics of Āryāvarta and Rudrasena I had succeeded in acquiring certain areas to the north of the Vindhya, including perhaps Vidiśā² a fact at which no imperial aspirant of the North could feel very happy. Unfortunately, the details of this struggle are not known, but the available facts are quite interesting. From the Eran inscription of Samudragupta we learn that at some stage of his career he made Eran (ancient Airikiṇa) his direct personal possession—

1 Aiyangar suggested that Achyuta, Nāgasena and Gaṇapatināga attacked Samudragupta in Pāṭaliputra and the new king had to fight in his own capital against the confederacy of kings who challenged his accession (*ASIHIC*, I, p. 218), while Jayaswal believed that at the time of the accession of Samudragupta, the Kotas were ruling at Pāṭaliputra and it was by defeating them that Samudragupta seized the city (*Hist. Ind.*, p. 133). Both these suggestions are apparently based on the *a priori* assumption that Pushpa was identical with Pāṭaliputra and was the capital of the Gupta empire—a view which is, as we have shown elsewhere, quite untenable (*infra*, App. iv).

2 *Supra*, Ch. II, p. 92 f.

which is the real meaning of the term *svabhoga*.¹ It was decidedly a very wise move on his part, for, from the point of view of a ruler of the North, Airikīṇa occupied a very strategic position—both for the defence of the Gaṅgā Valley as well as for exerting pressure on the rulers of the jungle areas of Bundelkhand and of Malwa and the Deccan. It was due to its strategic location that it became the field of several important battles in ancient period.² It is not impossible that Samudragupta also fought a major war of his career in this field. Any way, his conquest of Eran and the expansion of the Gupta power up to the Vindhya during his reign (as proved by the subjugation of the Kākas and some other people who belonged to the Sāñchi region) are patent facts of history and prove that he replaced the Vākātakas as the dominant power in this region. Viewed in this light, the suggestion of Dikshit, Jayaswal, and many others³ that Rudradeva of the Allahabad record is no other than Rudrasena I of the Vākātaka royal house appears to be quite correct. Unfortunately Jayaswal vitiated it greatly by connecting it with his assumptions that Rudrasena's predecessor Pravarasena I was the lord paramount of almost whole of India, that Chandragupta I and Chandasena of the *Kaumudi Mahotsava* were identical, that Chandragupta I was merely a feudatory of the Vākātakas and that Samudragupta also started his career with the same status.⁴ These assumptions were

1 According to Aiyangar, "Anybody who governed a division in which Eran was an important city or even the capital city, with (its) revenues allotted to him as assignment instead of salary, would be entitled to describe it by the term *svabhoga*." (Editorial Comment in *JIH*, XIV, p. 29; cf. Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 141; Sharma, D., *PIHC*, 1956, p. 147; Sharma R. S., *Ind. Feud.*, pp. 17-18.)

2 Cf. Eran pillar inscription of Śaka Mahākshatrpa Śrīdhara-varman (3rd cent. A. D.) which refers to a war fought at Eran (Mirashi, *Corpus* IV, Pt. II, pp. 605 ff.) and the posthumous inscription of Goparāja (510 A. D.) engraved on the same pillar, which mentions the famous battle of Eran in which Goparāja lost his life (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 92).

3 Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, pp. 141 ff.; Mookerji, R. K., *GE*, p. 23. cf. also *ABORI*, IV, pp. 30-40; *IHQ*, I, Pt. II, p. 254.

4 Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.* pp. 80-82.

severely criticised and rightly rejected¹; but the controversy which they started clouded with suspicion the basic suggestion i.e. the identification of Rudrasena I with Rudradeva of the Allahabad record,² which shorn of the prejudices and presumptions of Jayaswal, is quite logical and forceful.³ The argument that Rudrasena I cannot be identified with Rudradeva because the Vākāṅkas were a power of the Deccan does not cut much ice, for, as we have seen the kingdom of Rudrasena I included some territories to the north of the Vindhyas; and Samudragupta, at this stage, was concerned only with former's position as a power of the North. At any rate, the Gupta emperor was evidently not inclined to incorporate in his directly administered empire any territory to the south of the Vindhyas. So, he deprived Rudrasena I of his North Indian possessions only. No wonder, therefore, if Harishena has enumerated the Vākāṅka king among the rulers of Āryāvarta.

The defeat of the Vākāṅkas at the hands of Samudragupta is further proved by the degradation of their political status. It is a well-known fact that after Pravarasena I no other king of the Vākāṅka family assumed the title of *Samrāt*, or any other imperial title.⁴ Altekar thinks that as it was the proper performance of

1 Altekar, *IC*, IX, pp. 99-106; *NHIP*, pp. 103 ff;

2 Raychaudhuri, *PHAI*, p. 533; Sircar, *CA*, p. 178; Mirashi, *Vākāṅka Rājavalīśa*, p. p. 26-27; Sircar has suggested (*PIHC*, 1944, p. 68) the identification of Rudradeva with the Western Kshatrpa Rudradāman II or his son Rudrasena III. But there is no evidence to show that Samudragupta actually ruled over any part of the Śaka state. Others have identified Rudradeva with the king of the same name known from his coins discovered at Kauśāmbī (Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, p. 156, no. 81). But as the Guptas originally belonged to Prayāga region, Kauśāmbī must have been in their hands from the beginnings of their history.

3 The description of Rudrasena as Rudradeva is not a hurdle in the proposed identification. Note that in one document Prithvisena I is described as Prithvirāja (Mirashi, *Vākāṅka Rājavalīśa*, pp. 206, 209). For other examples, see Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 141.

4 J. M. Nanavati has published a copper plate inscription in which the title of *Samrāt* has been given to Rudrasena I

the *Vājapeya* sacrifice which entitled a king to adopt the title of *Samrāt*, Rudrasena I who had not, like Pravarasena I, performed this sacrifice, could not assume that title. But is it really necessary to assume that ancient Indian kings followed Śāstric injunctions in such matters scrupulously, especially when we know that the ancient texts are not unanimous on the connection of a royal title with a particular sacrifice ?¹ Yaśodharman in both of his elaborate *praiśtis* is not mentioned to have celebrated a *Vājapeya*, and yet he claims that in him "the title of *Samrāt* shines more than in any other, like a resplendent jewel set in good gold".²

To justify his view that the non-assumption of the title of *Samrāt* did not involve any change in the status of the Vākātakas, Altekar argues that the title of *Māhārāja*, assumed by the successors

(*JOI*, X, No. 4, p. 408). We brought it to the notice of Dr V. V. Mirashi who, somehow, missed it and failed to incorporate it among the records of the Vākātika dynasty in his recently published works. We also drew his attention to the fact that in this inscription not only the title of *Samrāt* but all the usual epithets of Pravarasena I are given to Rudrasena I and ventured to suggest that this record (of which only the first plate is available and that too without the royal seal) was actually issued during the reign of Rudrasena I or any one of his successor, but by mistake the engraver inscribed the name of Rudrasena I at the place where he should have engraved the name of Pravarasena I. Consequently, he discarded this plate and engraved his document on a new one. The evidence of this plate, therefore, does not prove that Rudrasena I assumed the title of *Samrāt*, as Nanavati suggests. In a letter addressed to us Mirashi admits that the position taken by us is 'quite correct'.

1 According to the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, the title of *Samrāt* could be assumed by the performer of the *Rājasiṃha*. But in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* the importance of the *Rājasiṃha* is limited by lowering it down to the position of an ordinary coronation while the performance of the *Vājapeya* is regarded as necessary for the assumption of the title of *Samrāt* (cf. Law, N. N., *Aspects of Ancient Indian Polity*, pp. 164, ff.; Spellman, *Political Theory of Ancient India*, p. 173).

2 Fleet *Corpus*, III, p. 146.

of Pravarasena I, "did not at this time indicate any subordinate position in the Deccan, as it did in the Punjab. It was used even by independent rulers. . . ." ¹ Quite true, but the title of *Māhārāja* did not indicate imperial status either, which Pravarasena I had claimed for his dynasty. To insist that the Vākātakas were not aware of the difference in mere independence and imperial dignity would be *argumentum beculinum*, especially in view of the fact that not only did the Gupta kings of the North, but also the rulers of the South Indian dynasties, such as the Gaṅgas, Kadambas and the Pallavas recognise this distinction. At the most, it can be maintained that the use of title of the *Mahārāja* by the independent rulers of the Deccan made it psychologically easy for the Vākātakas to reconcile with the degraded position.

According to Altekar "if Rudradeva defeated by Samudragupta had belonged to the Vākātika dynasty,... The Allahabad record would have... described it in several verses or in a string of long compounds, and would certainly not have dismissed it merely in four letters."² But in this epigraph, in each of the four categories, Harisheṇa merely gives the names of the powers which were treated by the emperor in accordance with a particular policy, without giving any indication as to their status. He mentions third rate chieftains of the Deccan with the mighty Pallava rulers, the Bhāraśiva ruler of Padmāvati with several non-entities of the North and the almost insignificant Kākas and the Prārjunas with the powerful Yaudheyas and the Mālavas. In the case of the rulers of the North-West, he mentions neither their names nor their states. In the first part of the document he no doubt devotes a verse to the campaign against the Nāgas—probably because it was the first major adventure of his master—but even here he gives only the names of the kings exterminated, and nothing more about them. We, therefore, see no reason why it should be presumed that Harisheṇa "would have grown eloquent" in referring to the defeat of Rudrasena I.

1 NHIP, p. 106.

2 *Ibid*, p. 104.

Altekar believes that 'if Rudrasena I died at the hands of Samudragupta in the battle of Kauśāmbī, it is extremely unlikely that his son Prīthvishēṇa would have selected, as the bride for his heirapparent, Prabhāvatī, who was the grand-daughter of his enemy who had been instrumental in shortening his father's life'.¹ But the marriage of Prabhāvatī with Rudrasena II took place in c. 380 while the extermination of Rudradeva was an event of the early years of the reign of Samudragupta which commenced in c. 350.² Therefore, the two events were separated from each other by more than two decades. In politics such a period is quite sufficient to heal up the old wounds and create a new atmosphere of cordiality, especially when the initiative for the betterment of mutual relations comes from the more powerful party.

The rejection of the theory of Vākāṭaka-Gupta conflict during the reign of Samudragupta implies that while the Gupta emperor was encircling the Vākāṭaka state by subjugating its northern, eastern and south-eastern neighbours, the Vākāṭaka ruler slept over the new developments and did nothing to ward off the dangers to which his kingdom had been exposed. It also implies that Samudragupta was totally unaware of the dangers to which he was exposing himself by penetrating deep in the South without bringing the Vākāṭakas within the sphere of his influence; for, by virtue of his geographical position the Vākāṭaka ruler could easily cut his lines of supply and communication by moving the Vākāṭaka armies along the lower reaches of the Godavari and trap the Gupta emperor in Andhra, where the imperial armies, encircled by the hostile forces on all sides could be easily crushed. We do not know why we should attribute such naivety to one of the greatest conquerors of ancient India and why the Vākāṭaka ruler be accused of being so incredibly negligent and complacent. We, therefore,

1 *NHIP*, p. 105. Jayaswal believed that Samudragupta exterminated Rudrasena I in a battle fought at Eran (*Hist. Ind.*, p. 140 f.); Altekar has confused it with the battle of Kauśāmbī which, according to Jayaswal, was fought against the Nāgas (*ibid.*, p. 132.)

2 *Supra*, Ch. II, App.i.

feel that the fact that Samudragupta carried his victorious arm at least up to Kāñchī successfully is a strong proof of his earlier success against the Vākāṭaka royal house without which a military adventure in the South could have proved a great disaster.

The trial of strength between the Vākāṭaka and Gupta forces took place probably at Eran,¹ where Samudragupta erected 'some thing or other' mentioned in his epigraph found at this place²—probably the Vishṇu temple the ruins of which are still visible—to mark his success.³ It is quite possible that the Kākas and other tribal people of Vidiśā region hastily changed their allegiance to the Gupta emperor and rendered him some sort of help which earned them semi-independent status in the imperial structure. Further, it was perhaps the presence of the imperial armies in the Sāñchī-Eran region which resulted in the vassalage of the neighbouring forest kingdoms of Bundelkhand. As regards the Vākāṭakas, they lost their North Indian possessions, imperial status and the ruling monarch, who was now succeeded by his son Pṛithviśeṇa I. In the Deccan proper, however, they retained their independence, though it is quite reasonable to assume that they were expected to show an attitude of what we may call 'respectful friendliness' to the Gupta sovereign. Such alliances of rather undefined character are not completely unknown to Indian history. The friendship of Harsha with the kings of Valabhī and Kāmarūpa was of this nature.

CONQUEST OF BENGAL

Some time after his victory over the Nāgas and the Vākāṭakas, Samudragupta paid attention to the south-eastern part of the Gaṅgā basin i.e. modern Bengal. As we have seen, for a power originating in the middle Gaṅgā Valley, geographically Bengal was one of the natural areas of expansion. Apart from that, there was the question of what we may call "the access to the sea". Till now

1 Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 140.

2 Fleet, *Op. cit.*, pp. 18 ff.

3 Cunningham, quoted by Fleet in *Corpus*, III, p. 20 ; Jayaswal, *op. cit.*

the Guptas were a land-locked power. But they could not afford to remain in that condition for long. It was the period when India had brisk commercial relations with the Roman empire, Arabia, Egypt and Persia in the West and China, Indo-China, Burma, Malaya, Ceylon and other islands in the East and the South-East. As a matter of fact, a great deal of nation's prosperity depended upon foreign trade.¹ In the west, besides the overland routes, there was the overseas route which had promoted the development of a large number of ports on the west coast of the country. But the time was not yet ripe for the extension of the Gupta power in that direction ; for a thrust towards the west, without fully consolidating his position in the Gaṅgā Valley, could have proved a disastrous gamble. Samudragupta, therefore, had to put restraint on his ambition and leave the task of bringing some of the western parts within the sphere of Gupta influence to the initiative of his successor. But, meanwhile, he could undertake the project of the conquest of Bengal, which would have completed the unification of the Gaṅgā Valley and, additionally, given him ' a window to the east '.

It is hardly necessary to stress the fact that in all periods of North Indian history, the city which controlled the mouth of the Gaṅgā was commercially the most important, just as the city which controlled the gates of Euxine was commercially the most important in Hellas². Down almost to the end of the Hindu period, Tāmralipti enjoyed this unique position. From this port there was regular sailing of vessels which either proceeded along the coast of Bengal and Burma or crossed the Bay of Bengal and made a direct voyage to Malaya peninsula and then to the East Indies and Indo-China and China beyond it or to Ceylon from where they proceeded to the East Indies or along the western coast of India up to Barygaza and perhaps even beyond it.³ Further, it was connected by land-routes with the principal cities of Bengal and

1 Maity, *Eco. Life*, pp. 128 ff.

2 Majumdar, R. C. (Ed.), *The History of Bengal*, I, p. 661.

3 *AIU*, pp. 653-4.

other parts of eastern India.¹ Because of this happy geographical position at the meeting place of land and water communications, it became the emporium of vast trans-oceanic trade of eastern and central provinces of North India.²

Bengal was connected with the Pacific countries and the various parts of India itself by a number of over land routes. One of these led through the passes of the Himālayas, past Sikkim and Chumbi Valley, to Tibet and China.³ Then, there was the route which connected Puṇḍravardhana with Kāmarūpa (which was noted for her textiles, sandal and *agaru*) and extended eastwards to South China through the hills of Assam and Manipur and Upper

- 1 I-tsing, who landed at Tāmralipti in 673 A. D., says that when he left the sea-port "taking the road which goes straight to west" many hundreds of merchants accompanied him in his journey to Bodh-Gayā. An eighth century inscription (EI, II, p. 345) of a chief named Udayamāna reveals that merchants from such distant places as Ayodhyā used to frequent the port of Tāmralipti for purposes of trade. (Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 663).
- 2 Tāmralipt is referred to in the *Mahāvamśa* (ix. 6., P. T. S. ed.) as Tāmalitta and was perhaps identical with Gange, the great 'market-town', from where, according to the *Periplus*, pearls, muslins of finest sorts and other commodities were shipped to South India and Ceylon. Fa-hsien mentions Tāmralipti as a great emporium of trade and he himself embarked for Ceylon on a big merchant vessel from this port (Giles, *Travels of Fa-hsien*, p. 66). Yuan Chwang notes that "wonderful articles of value and gems are collected here in abundance, and therefore the people of the country in general are very rich" (Beal, *Records*, II, pp. 200-201). According to the *Kaṭhā-sarit-sāgara* Tāmralipta was pre-eminently the home of rich merchants, who carried on overseas trade with such distant countries as Laṅkā (Tawney's trans. VI. 211) and Suvarṇadvīpa (*ibid.*, III. 175) and used to propitiate the sea with jewels and other valuable articles to ensure safe voyages across (*ibid.*, II. 72).
- 3 The *Periplus* bears testimony to the fact that as early as the first century A. D. "raw silk, silk yarn and silk cloth" came into Bengal from China and were re-exported to "Damirica by way of the river Ganges". It is quite possible that much of this stuff came along this line of the route (Majumdar, *op. cit.*).

Burma.¹ It was in use till the ninth century A. D., and was joined by another from Annam. For, the itinerary of Kia-Tan (785-805 A. D.) describes the land route from Tonkin to Magadha which passed through Kāmarūpa, Puṇḍravardhana and Kajaṅgala.² The *Kaṭhā-sarīt-sāgara* also mentions merchants travelling from Puṇḍravardhana to Pāṭaliputra. The route which connected Tāmralipti with Bodh-Gayā has already been noted. Lastly, there was the overland route that ran southwards along the coast of Kalinga to the South Indian peninsula.³

It is quite evident that if Samudragupta, and for that matter any other imperial aspirant of the middle Gaṅgā Valley, was alive to the economic necessities of his empire and wanted to have a share in this flourishing international trade, he could not have delayed for long the conquest of Bengal, including its Deltaic region in which the famous port of Tāmralipti was situated. Of course, there is no direct evidence to prove that Samudragupta did think in these terms and was guided by a desire to impose his protection over the trade routes mentioned above, but the fact that the foreign policy of all the great contemporary empires was conditioned, to a great extent, by the economic considerations, suggests that the Indian emperor who was in constant touch with his foreign counterparts, was also alive to the demands of trade and commerce of his empire. If the contemporary Chinese rulers were trying to keep Central Asia in their control for the sake of trade with the western world, the Iranians and the Kushāṇas were fighting for the control of the 'silk-route' and the Romans were interested in keeping

1 This is testified by the famous report which Chang-Kien, the Chinese ambassador to the Yueh-Chi country, submitted in 126 B. C. When he was in Bactria, he was surprised to find there silk and bamboo which came from the Chinese provinces of Yunnan and Szechwan. On enquiry he was told that these products were carried from South China to Afganistan by caravans across the rich and powerful country of India. (Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 662).

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 662-63.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 663.

the eastern trade routes safe,¹ one wonders why it should be doubted that Samudragupta had the economic interest of his nascent empire in mind when he violently exterminated Nāgadatta who, according to Sircar, was probably the ruler of Puṇḍravardhana region of North Bengal and an ancestor of the viceroys of the later imperial Guptas whose names end in Datta,² and Chandravarman, usually identified with the king Chandravarman of the Susunia inscription of West Bengal. In any case, it is an indubitable fact that Samudragupta succeeded in bringing the greater part of Bengal in his control, for, we know that Samatāṭa (S. E. Bengal), Davāka (in the Nowgong District of Assam) and Kāmarūpa (Upper Assam) were the frontier states of his empire. Further, in case our suggestion regarding his identification with the king 'Chandra' of the Meharauli record is correct,³ it is interesting to note that in this epigraph also he is given the credit of defeating a confederacy of the Vaṅga people. May be, the leader of this revolt, which was crushed by him, was Balavarman who, if his name ending in *Varman* is any indication, might have been a relation of Chandravarman.⁴ If so, he organised this revolt obviously some time after the extermination of his predecessor Chandravarman. Or, was he the predecessor of Chandravarman, and it was the latter who organised the revolt against the establishment of Gupta suzerainty in Bengal? We prefer the second alternative because if Chandravarman led a revolt in Bengal *after* the establishment of the Gupta rule in that region, the 'surprising' influence of the

1 Ghirshman, *Iran*, p. 260.

2 *PIHC*, 1944, p. 78.

3 Vide App. ii of this chapter.

4 The identification of Balavarman of the Allahabad record with the king Balavarman of Kāmarūpa (Vasu, N. N., *Social Hist. of Kāmarūpa*, I, p. 141; Dikshit, K. N., *POC.*, 1920, I, p. cxxiv; Bhattasali, N. K., *IHQ*, XXI, pp. 19 ff.) is altogether untenable (*PHAI*, p. 534; Chaudhury, P. C., *The History of the Civilization of the People of Assam*, p. 143). As Kāmarūpa has been included among the *pratyanta* states, its king could not have been one of those rulers who were exterminated by the Gupta emperor.

Kauśāmbī style on the script of his Susunia inscription¹ becomes explicable.

THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE

Samudragupta's campaign in Āryāvarta made him the master of the whole of the Gaṅgā valley including the territory lying to the east of the river Charmaṇāvatī and extending at least up to Eran in the South. This vast region became the 'core' or the 'heart-land' of the empire. In order to make it safe and secure, Samudragupta encircled it by a ring of tributary states enumerated in the third list in his *prastāvi*. As we have shown elsewhere, it is not necessary to assume that all the states included in this category were subjugated after the formation of the central core²; it is quite possible that the tribal states of the Punjab, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh agreed to gratify his imperious commands sometime after his successful operations against the Nāgas, while the tribal people of Vidiśā and the *āṣavika* rulers realized this necessity when he became firmly entrenched at Airikīṇa. As regards the *pratyanta*³ monarchical states, Samatāṭa, Davāka and Kāmarūpa

1 Dani, *Indian Palaeography*, p. 102.

2 *Infra*, App. ii, pp. 156 ff.

3 The words *Aṃtā* and *Prachāntā* occur in the edicts of Aśoka and represent "the neighbouring and mutually contiguous unconquered or unannexed states, as well as the utmost limit to which Aśoka's *dūtas*, envoys and ambassadors were able to go either to do humanitarian works (R. E. II) or to propagate the noble message of Dhamma (R. E. XIII) or in another sense, the 'borderers, frontagers' (Barua, B. M., *Inscriptions of Aśoka*, Pt. II, p. 230). According to *Rājovāda Jātaka*, however, '*pachchantabhūmi*' is the borderland, outermost zone or frontier region of a kingdom, and *pachchantasīmā* is the boundary between it and the neighbouring kingdom' (*Ibid.*, p. 229). The *Arthaśāstra* (I. 16-12) enjoins the king to place the *antas* in charge of *antapāṇas*. Kālidāsa uses the term *pratyanta* in the sense of a frontier province of a kingdom (*Raghuvamśa*, IV, 26). and the *Amarakośa* in the sense of a mlechchha country. As the rulers of the *pratyanta* states paid all kinds of taxes to Samudragupta, in the Allahabad *prastāvi* the term appears to have been used in the sense in which it occurs in the *Rājovāda Jātaka* and the *Raghuvamśa*.

must have become submissive only after he succeeded in exterminating the rulers of Bengal while the northern states of Nepāla and Karttṛipura¹ might have yielded even earlier, though it is not certain.

The factors which led Samudragupta to adopt a milder policy towards these states are not far to seek. Firstly, the ethnic composition, socio-political traditions and economic system of the tribal state were somewhat different from those of the people of the Gāṅgā Valley. Therefore, their complete absorption in the empire would have created more problems than the new imperial structure could sustain. As regards the *pratyanta* monarchical states, they were perhaps not yet regarded as completely within the pale of Aryan civilization. In the *Amarakośa*, probably a work of the Gupta period, a *pratyanta* state is defined as a *mlecchha* country.²

1 Karttṛipura has been variously identified with Kartarpur in Jalandhar District, the territory of the Katuria or Katyur rāj of Kumaun, Garhwal and Rohil Khand and Kahrur, between Multan and Lohri (*EHI*, 302 fn; *JRAS*, 1898, p. 198; *EI*, XIII, p. 114; *IHQ*, I, p. 257; *PHAI*, p. 544). Powell-Price suggests 'some sort of connection between the Kunindas and the Katyurs' (*JUPHS*, 1945, pp. 217 ff.) But none of these suggestion are regarded as satisfactory (*CA*, p. 8). In this connection it is interesting to note that Yuan Chwang refers to an anti-Buddhist dynasty of 'Kritiya' kings which came into power in Kashmir after Kanishka I, was ousted from the country by Himtāla of Tokhāra country, but succeeded in reinstating itself with the result that at Yuan Chwang's time the country had no faith in Buddhism (Watters, *Travels*, I, pp. 278-79). It is not impossible that Karttṛipura was the capital of this dynasty and the name 'Karttri' has become slightly corrupted in its Chinese rendering. The suggestion gets some confirmation from the statement of the *AMMK* according to which Samudragupta carried his victorious arms up to the gates of Kashmir. (Jayaswal, *IHI*, p. 98). Cf. also the legend according to which Mātṛigupta was appointed viceroy of Kashmir by Vikramāditya (*Rājataranginī*, III). Let us, however, frankly admit that the evidence cited by us do not prove the point conclusively.

2 *Pratyantomlecchhadetah syat*.

If this definition is an indication of the contemporary attitude, it may suggest why a king of Āryāvarta was not interested in incorporating these states in the 'heartland' of his empire. But behind perhaps all these factors was the powerful hand of geography. It is quite remarkable to note that while almost all the states which lost their rulers and were incorporated in the empire, belonged to the Gaṅgā Valley, a region which constitutes the most important *area of attraction* for civilized communities and is not divided into small units by physical barriers—actually it is possible to travel from the Delta to the Divide region without coming across a single hillock—the states enumerated in the third list of the *prasaṣṭi* were mostly, if not all, situated in south-eastern Bengal, Brahmaputra Valley, Marwar, Lower Sindh and the Jungle tracts of Bundelkhand—the regions which, from geographical point of view, fall in the category of the areas of *relative isolation* or *cul-de-sac*.¹ Here one finds a fine co-relation of geography with politics : the areas which presented no geographical barriers and could easily be retained were incorporated in the empire while those which were difficult to conquer and still more difficult to retain were brought within the sphere of Gupta influence, usually without disturbing their existing system of administration and government. The latter policy was more or less analogous with the doctrine of *dharmavijaya* as enunciated in the ancient texts² and it is quite possible that Samudragupta felt that he was treating these states in accordance with the rules of righteous conquest. But does it not prove that the theory of *dharmavijaya* itself was the idealization

1 Subbarao, B., *The Personality of India*, pp. 11 ff.

2 Kauṭilya, *Arthaśāstra*, XII, I, 382. Ancient Indian authorities usually prescribe that the conqueror should not uproot the defeated royal family, although some texts allow him to do so if it is of ignoble birth. (cf. *Arthaśāstra*, VII, 16, 313 ; *Manu*, VII, 202-203 ; *Viṣṇu Dharmasūtra*, III, 42, 47-49 ; III, 30). It shows that in case of *dharmavijaya*, the conquered state usually retained its own king, institutions and organisation of government (Kane, P. V., *History of Dharmasāstra*, III, p. 71).

of the limitations imposed by geography upon ancient Indian conquerors—a case of a virtue made out of necessity? Otherwise, how can it be explained that Samudragupta, who was so magnanimous towards these states, proved himself an *asuravijayin* in the Gaṅgā basin?

The question whether the states enumerated in the third list accepted the overlordship of the Gupta emperor voluntarily or he had to undertake military expeditions against them, has been left unanswered by Harishēṇa. His statement that they gratified the commands of his master 'by giving all kinds of taxes and obeying his orders and coming to perform obeisance' may be subjected to both the interpretations. But, perhaps it is basically wrong to assume that the *modus operandi* of the policy of Samudragupta was the same in the case of such a large number of states. The nature of the challenge which these states threw to his statesmanship must have differed according to the circumstances and conditions in which they were placed and his response must have differed accordingly. In the initial stages of his empire-building activities, when he had yet to emerge as the supreme ruler of Āryāvarta, he must have moved very cautiously. It is quite possible that at that time he tried to cultivate friendship with the tribal peoples of the Punjab and Rajasthan who, being situated beyond the Nāga kingdoms were, according to the *maṇḍala* doctrine of inter-state relations, his natural friends (*mitras*); and later on, when he became undisputed master of Āryāvarta, he reduced his erstwhile friends to the status of his subordinate allies. May be, in some cases he had to exert some pressure to bring these lovers of freedom to their senses, as he might have put it. It is also quite possible that some of the tribal states offered voluntary submission and rendered him some help against the neighbouring kings or against those to whom at that time they were owing their allegiance. The Kākas and other tribes of the Vidiśā won semi-independent status in the imperial organisation, which was not at all commensurate with their power, probably by this policy.

In some of the states of the third category, Samudragupta appears to have followed the policy of setting up his own partisans as their

rulers. For example, Pushyavarman who was, according to the epigraphic and literary records, the first ruler of the 'Varman' family of Kāmarūpa and whose accession is placed about 350 or 355 A. D.,¹ appears to have been 'one of the many petty local chiefs', who 'was placed as the ruler of the whole kingdom by the Gupta emperor'.² The contemporaneity of Pushyavarman with Samudragupta and the subordination of the former to the latter is further proved by the fact that 'Pushyavarman, out of devotion and loyalty to his overlord and patron, named his son and daughter-in-law after the great emperor and empress'.³ An analogous instance is provided by the history of the Gaṅga kings.⁴ From ancient times Kāmarūpa was famous for her textiles, sandal and *agarū*⁵ and the land-routes from South China and Annam passed through it.⁶ Samudragupta evidently realized the economic importance of the region and placed it in charge of one of his loyal feudatory chiefs.⁷

1 Chaudhury, P. C., *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam*, p. 146; Majumdar, R. C., *CA*, p. 89.

2 *CA*, p. 90. It is not necessary to assume, as some scholars have done, that Pushyavarman originally belonged to Central India (Nath R. M., *Background of Assamese Culture*, pp. 32-3) or Punjab (Barua, B. M., *IHQ*, XXIII, pp. 200 ff.). In this connection we may refer to the description of Raghu's *digvijaya* in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* (IV. 81-94) which states that when Raghu crossed the river Lauhitya, the lord of Prāgjyotiṣa began to tremble in fear. The king of Kāmarūpa, who had successfully withstood other conquerors, paid homage to Raghu and worshipped the shadow of his feet with offerings of flowers, consisting of precious stones.

3 *CA*, p. 90.

4 The Gaṅga king Ayyavarman, who was installed on the throne by the Pallava king Simhavarman, named his son Mādhava Simhavarman.

5 *Arthasāstra*, II. 11.

6 *Supra*, p. 109 f.

7 The effective hold of the Guptas on Kāmarūpa is indicated by the currency of the Gupta era in this kingdom for nearly five hundred years. It may be noted that Kālidāsa mentions that Raghu's son Aja selected the king of Kāmarūpa as his best man in his marriage with Indumati.

Samudragupta appears to have helped in the establishment of a royal house at Daśapura also. The four records of the ruling family of this region have disclosed the names of its five kings. The dates of the first two of them viz. Jayavarman and Simhavarman are not known, but as the third and the fourth kings—Naravarman¹ and Viśvavarman²—were ruling respectively in 404 and 423 A. D., the dynasty most probably came into existence about 355 A. D. It was precisely the period when Samudragupta was re-organising the political set up of North India. It, therefore, becomes quite likely that the ruling house of Daśapura owed its origin to Samudragupta. Here it is interesting to note that the hoards of the silver coins of the Western Kshatrapas found at Sarvania (Banswara, Rajasthan),³ Sāñchi,⁴ and Gondarmau (Bhopal)⁵ show that probably the Kshatrapas ceased to exist in those parts of the country by the year 273 Śaka era (=351 A. D.) or immediately after it, for, the latest coins available in the Sarvania hoard is dated 273, in the Sāñchi hoard 272 and in the Gondarmau hoard 270. The combined testimony of the Varman epigraphs and these hoards, thus, indicates that the Varmans replaced the Kshatrapas in Malwa in early years of the reign of Samudragupta, presumably with his help.⁶ A literary tradition affirms that

1 Two stone inscriptions of Naravarman have been found. One was discovered at Mandasor and is dated in the Mālava year 460 (*EI*, XII, p. 315, 321; XIV, p. 371) and the second was found at Bihar Kotra and is dated in the Mālava year 476 (*EI*, XXVI p. 130; *JBORS*, XXIX, p. 127).

2 An inscription of Viśvavarman was found at Gangadhar, near Jhalawar. It is dated in Mālava year 480 (*Fleet, Corpus*, III, p. 72).

3 *ASI, IR*, 1913-14, p. 245.

4 *Catalogue of Sāñchi Archaeological Museum*, pp. 61 ff.

5 *Indian Archaeology—A Review*, 1954-55, p. 63.

6 It is quite possible that Śarva Bhaṭṭāraka, whose coins have been found throughout Surāshṭra and Gujarat and in the north as far as Pushkar near Ajmer, ruled sometime in the period from 351 to 364 A. D. when the fortunes of the Kshatrapas were at a low ebb and they were unable to issue any coins except for some lead pieces (*NHPP*, p. 61). The coins of Śarva resemble those of the Kshatrapas in fabric and type

Chandragupta II appeared at the *Kāṇyakāra* examination before the literateurs of the city of Ujjayinī.¹ If it is a fact, he did so most probably when he was a prince, and not the emperor. It may also be regarded as an indication of the fact that Ujjayinī region of Malwa formed a part of the empire of Samudragupta. Most likely it was included in the subject kingdom of Daśapura.

Against the view that the Varmans owed their origin to Samudragupta, it may be argued that while there is nothing in the records of the Varman kings to show that the first four of them accepted the overlordship of the Guptas, the use of the Mālava era by them goes against such an assumption. It may, however, be remembered that while the use of the Gupta era did indicate, especially during the heyday of the Gupta glory, the acceptance of the suzerainty of the Guptas, the use of a different era did not necessarily mean independence from their authority. It merely proved the popularity of that particular era in the region concerned. It may be noted that even in the inscription of Bandhuvarman² (436 A. D.), the fifth of the Varman rulers of Daśapura, who was definitely subordinate to Kumāragupta I, the Mālava era has been used and not the era of the Guptas. As regards the description of Jayavarman and Śiṃhavarman 'as if they were independent kings', it may be pointed out that the same thing applies to the description of Naravarman and Viśhvarman. But if the Mālavas were a subordinate tribe to the Guptas and if Chandragupta II conquered the Śakas of western India, Daśapura must have been subject to his authority whatever the nature of the description of its ruling chiefs. And, if Naravarman and Viśhvarman, who were the contemporaries of Chandragupta II, were subordinate to the imperial authority, what is there to assume that Jayavarman and Śiṃhavarman, the first

except for the substitution of a trident in place of a hill with crescent. They contain the legend *Rājño Mahāksatarapaḥ Paramādityabhakta Mahāsāmanta Śrī Sarva Bhattāraka* (cf. *IHQ*, IV, pp. 453 ff.; *Bhāratīyā Vidyā*, XVIII, pp. 83 ff.)

1 *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*, p. 55 quoted by Mirashi in *Vākātaka Rājaramā*, p. 78.

2 Mandasor inscription of the Mālava years 493 and 529 (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, pp. 79 ff.; *IC*, III, pp. 379 ff.).

two kings of the dynasty, were independent rulers? We, therefore, regard it a very reasonable assumption that they were also the subordinate allies of the Guptas, and Jayavarman, the first king of the dynasty like Pushyavarman of Kāmarūpa, owed his royal glory to the Gupta emperor.¹

LURE OF THE DECCAN

DATE OF THE KALINGA EXPEDITION

During his career of more than two decades, Samudragupta invaded India south of the Vindhyas perhaps more than once.² The chronology of his southern campaigns is not known, but the date of the expedition sent to Kalinga may, perhaps, be accurately determined. From the *Mahāvamśa* we learn that the Kalinga princess Hemamālā had to fly from her country with the tooth relic of the Buddha in her possession for the safety of the latter because of the invasion of the Yavana Rakta Bāhu. She arrived safely in Ceylon with the precious relic in the 9th year of the reign of the king Śrimeghavarṇa (that is in 361 A. D.)³ who built for the relic a shrine in the Mahāvihāra and instituted an annual festival in its honour.⁴ The pilgrim Fa-hsien who was in Ceylon in the year 412 A. D., has described the annual tooth-festival as he saw it⁵ and has referred to the 'shrine that has been built to receive a tooth of the Buddha.'⁶ Thus, from the Ceylonese tradition we learn that a year or two earlier than 361 A. D., i.e. in c. 359-60 A. D., Kalinga had to face a terrible invasion. In the present state of our knowledge of the history of the period, it is

1 An inscription of the year 428 of an unspecified era (Mālava era ?) found at Bijayagadh mentions Viṣṇuvardhana, a king of the Varika tribe. He is described as the son of Yaśovardhana, grandson of Yaśorāta and great-grandson of Vyāghrarāta. Fleet believed that he was a feudatory of Samudragupta (*Corpus*, III, p. 252 f.).

2 *Infra*, p. 126 f.

3 For the date of Śrimeghavarṇa see Geiger, *Mahāvamśa* Eng. Trans., p. xxxix.

4 Aiyangar, S. K., *ASIHIC*, I, p. 231 f.

5 Giles, H. A., *The Travels of Fa-hsien*, p. 70, f.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

difficult not to identify it with the Kalinga invasion of Samudragupta, which, in any case, must have taken place some years after his accession in c. 350 A. D.¹

DECCAN POLICY OF SAMUDRAGUPTA

The most remarkable fact about the southern adventures of Samudragupta is the policy of the capture and then liberation and reinstatement of the conquered kings. It has led many scholars to believe that the expedition across the Vindhya was in the nature of a *digvijaya* or *Aśvamedha* campaign and, therefore, the question of the capitulation of the conquered territories did not arise². But the suggestion is not tenable. One wonders why only his southern campaign should be regarded as falling in this category; and if it is to be assumed that all of his campaigns were undertaken with this purpose³, one fails to explain why the traditional policy of *dharmavijaya* was not adopted towards all the states he conquered. It is indeed difficult to imagine that a political realist like Samudragupta spent so much energy of his infant empire merely to comply with the Śāstric rules regarding the performance of the *Aśvamedha*. We, therefore, do not think it likely that he undertook his various campaigns with a view to celebrating an *Aśvamedha*; most probably the *Aśvamedha* was performed towards the close of his reign as a fitting symbol to signalize the wonderful results achieved by arduous military campaigns of a long life.⁴

1. The use of the word 'Yavana' for the invader need not trouble us. If his invasion proved to be of a destructive character, the Buddhists would naturally have called him a Yavana. It is also quite possible that the commander of the expedition sent to Kalinga was of Yavana extraction. It may be noted that 'Bāhu' ending names were more popular in Ceylon than in India. It may suggest that the name of the invader has not been correctly handed down to us.

2. Banerji, R. D., *AIG*, p. 18; Heras, H., quoted with approval by Gokhale in his *Samudragupta*, p. 48.

3. Aiyangar, S. K., *ASIHIC*, I., p. 226.

4. cf. *NIIIP*, p. 153.

According to Jayaswal 'Samudragupta's sole objective in the South was the Pallava army' which could become a source of greatest danger to the Gupta kingdom, had the Pallavas from the South and the Vākātakas from Bundelkhand invaded Bihar¹. The theory, however, is completely untenable. It rests upon the unproved assumption that the Pallavas were a junior branch of the Vākātika dynasty. If it was so, one may ask what did the Vākātakas do when the Gupta emperor threatened the security of the Pallava kingdom? The suggestion that Samudragupta 'descended swiftly... straight into Vengi' (which we are asked to believe, was the old capital of the Pallavas,) and then 'hurried back' to his kingdom after accomplishing his aim without giving sufficient time to the Vākātakas to check him² is too naive to be accepted. No conqueror of the North could hope to win over the distant southern powers to his side by such hide and seek methods³.

GEOGRAPHICAL DIFFICULTIES AND LURE OF THE DECCAN WEALTH

Nature has cut the Peninsular India into many small isolated compartments many of them with poor resources and difficulty of communication. In the Deccan proper, due to the spurs running from west to east, in between which flow the rivers Godavari, Krishnā and Kāveri etc., a north to south advance of a large army is almost impossible⁴, an important exception being the

1 Jayaswal, K. P., *Hist. Ind.*, p. 136.

2 Ibid., p. 136 f.

3 From the Muslim sources we learn that the return march of Malik Kāfūr from Madurā to Delhi took six months (K. S. Lal, *History of the Khaljis*, p. 213). It may, therefore, be assumed that the return march of the Gupta army from Pallava kingdom to the imperial capital would have taken about four months and, taking into consideration the time consumed in the conquest of the enemy states, the whole march from and to the capital could not have been of less than a year. Obviously such a campaign could not have been as swift as Jayaswal asks us to assume.

4 Sarkar, J., *Military History of India*, p. 3. A conqueror coming from France encounters the same difficulty in Spain,

eastern coastal belt. In the northern part of the country, cavalry forces can easily sweep—as they have done age after age in the past—from the Khaibar pass via Delhi to Bengal, without meeting with any natural obstacle. Not so in the Deccan; here the national resistance can be, and has often been, more obstinate and successful¹. Consequently, the empire-builders of the Gaṅgā Valley could only rarely establish their authority over it on a secure footing. But at the same time they could hardly resist the temptation of helping themselves with the immense wealth which the people of the South used to accumulate by their maritime trade. The inter-action of these twin factors, geographical difficulties and the lure of the wealth of the southern states, determined their general policy towards the South—the policy of sending plundering expeditions to it without annexing its conquered kingdoms to their empires. In the pre-Christian era, the king Khāravēla of Kalinga claimed to have invaded the Pāṇḍya kingdom in order to bring, among other things, ‘jewels, rubies as well as numerous pearls in hundreds’.² In the later days, ‘the very fine and great pearls’ of the Pāṇḍya kingdom (M’abar of Muslim chroniclers) were referred by Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller who visited India towards the close of the thirteenth century³ and lured Malik Kāfur into that realm only a few years later.

in which Peninsula, exactly like the Deccan, long parallel mountain chains (called *sierras*) run west to east. An army from France after crossing the Pyrenees can reach any city in the south only after painful climbing up and dismounting from several hilly barriers on the way (*ibid*, fn. 1).

1 Cf. Panikkar, K. M., *Geog. Fact.* p. 26 f.

2 *EI*, XX, p. 88.

3 Lal, K. S. *op. cit.*, p. 186. A great many writers and travellers of the mediaeval period such as Vaṣṣāf, Marco Polo, Shihābuddīn Abdul Abbās Ahmad, Amīr Khusrāu, Baranī, Ferishtaḥ and Abdurrajaḥ speak of the enormous wealth of the South Indian kingdoms (*ibid*).

The classic exposition of the attitude of the northern conquerors towards the South is provided by the instructions which, kāfūr, the Khalji general received from his imperial master. Speaking of the treatment to be meted out to the Rāi of Warangal, the Sultan advised his general that if the Rāi consented to surrender his treasures and elephants and also agreed to pay a yearly tribute thereafter, he was not to insist for more, lest the Rāi should be forced into desperate resistance. Further, the imperial commander was advised not to insist that the Rāi should wait on him and in no case was he to bring the Rāi with him to Delhi¹. Many emperors of the North tried to deviate from this policy, but what they earned was their own ruin².

Studied against the background of this historcial experience of the north Indian conquerors, the southern policy of Samudragupta acquires a new meaning. That it was also conditioned by the aforesaid factors, can hardly be doubted. The geographical difficulties could not have been lesser in the fourth century A. D.; actually Fa-hsien, the Chinese pilgrim, who travelled in India from A. D. 399 to 414, testifies that at that time the roads of the Deccan were 'difficult', so much so that he himself went to Ceylon by the sea-route³. But at the same time the lure of the immense wealth which the people of the South had accumulated in the course of centuries was also there. It is significant that in the *Raghurāmīa* of Kālidāsa, who composed this epic probably towards the

1 *Ibid.*, p. 194

2 In the ancient period, the Mauryas tried to incorporate the Deccan in their empire, but succeeded only for a very brief period. In the mediaeval period the Tughluqs made a similar attempt but soon the facts of geography asserted themselves, the upper tableland of the Deccan being organised under the Bahmanī kings and the lower tableland being organised under the Vijayanagar emperors. In the last decade of the 16th century the Mughals, under Akbar, once again tried to make the policy of annexation a success, but over a century later the empire was 'still fighting in the Deccan' (Panikkar, *op. cit.*, p. 27).

3 Giles, H. A., *The Travels of Fa-hsien*, p. 63.

close of the fourth century A. D.¹, the king Raghu, though a *dharmavijayin* in Kalinga, deprives the ruler of the Pāṇdyas of the entire hoard of pearls fished from the Tāmraparṇī and the Indian Ocean² and exacts tribute from the kings of Aparānta³. It is also a very interesting fact that the kingdoms of the South that the Gupta emperor humbled were, almost all, situated in the eastern part of the Peninsula and the Malabar coast⁴—the region from which most of the Roman coins of the first four centuries of the

1 *Infra*, App. vi of this Chapter.

2 *Raghuvamśa*, IV. 50

3 *Ibid.*, IV, 58.

4 An idea of the area covered by the southern expeditions of Samudragupta may be formed by the location of the Deccan states conquered by him. Of them, the location of Kosala (Raipur, Bilaspur and Sambalpur Districts), Pishapura (Pithāpuram in the Godāvari District), Kāñchi (Conjeevaram in the Chingleput District) and Veṅgī (Peddavegi, 7 miles north of Ellore between the Krishṇā and the Godāvari) was never in any doubt and of Palakka (in Nellore District), Eraṇḍapalla (Eraṇḍapali, near Chicacole on the coast of Orissa) and Devarāshṭra (in the Vizagapatam District) has been rendered almost certain by the researches of Smith (*JRAS*, 1905, p. 29) and Dubreuil (*AHD*, pp. 58 ff). Nothing definite is known about Avamukta and Kusthalapura which could lead to their identification. As regards Mahākāntāra, some scholars identify its ruler Vyāghrarāja with the king Vyāghradeva who is mentioned in the Nachne-ki-Talai and Ganj inscription as the feudatory of the Vākātaka ruler Prithviśeṇa, some others identify him with the prince Vyāghra of the Uchchhakalpa dynasty, while many others believe that the prince Vyāghra of the Uchchhakalpa dynasty as well as Vyāghra, the Vākātaka feudatory, both are identical with the king Vyāghra of the Allahabad record. But the king Vyāghradeva of Nachne-ki-Talai and Ganj inscriptions, who was in all probability identical with the Uchchhakalpa Vyāghra, most probably flourished in the fifth century A. D. and was a feudatory of the Vākātaka king Prithviśeṇa II (Mirashi, V. V., *Studies in Indology*, II pp. 167 ff; *infra*, Ch. V). The Vyāghra of Mahākāntāra was perhaps an otherwise unknown king of Orissa who ruled in the Jeypore forest region which is referred to as Mahāvana, a synonym of Mahākāntāra in an old inscription (*NHP*,

Christian era are found¹. It obviously means that these regions had become very wealthy due to the favourable balance of trade with the western countries. Significantly, in the South even the king Raghu of Kālidāsa paid his attention to these regions most. The poet describes the conquest of the area extending from Kalinga to Kerala in as many as 20 verses (*Raghuvamśa*, IV, 38-57) and then sends his hero to Persia after referring to the conquest of the western coast lying to the north of Kerala in merely a couple of verses (IV, 58-59). Taking all these factors into consideration, we have no hesitation in suggesting that the motive which prompted the kings Khāravēla and Alāuddin to send expeditions to the Far South, was in operation in the fourth cen-

p. 146 *JAFIRS*, I, p. 228). As regards Kurāla, Fleet very plausibly suggested that it is a mistake for Kerala, for Kurāla is not known as the name of a country or a city, while Kerala is a quite well-known name of one of regions of the South. "It is quite easy to see how the engraver, or perhaps the writer from whose draft he engraved, formed *kaurālaka* by mistake for *Kairālaka*, through a stroke on the right of the top of the *k* in *kal* and of the *ra*" (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 7, fn. 1.). The suggestion has not found favour with the scholars because it is generally assumed that Harishēṇa has enumerated the states of the South in geographical order and, therefore, the territory in question should be located near Mahākāntāra. But the mention of Kāñchi before Veṅgī, of Palakka before Devarāshṭra and of Piṣṭapura before Eraṇḍapalla prove that their assumption is totally unwarranted and, therefore, the suggestion of Fleet remains yet to be disproved. The evidence of the finds of the Roman coins and of the *Raghuvamśa*, discussed above, gives additional strength to it. On the same count, the identification of Kottūra with Kottūr in the Coimbatore District (*JRAS*, 1897, p. 29) may also be sustained. It may be noted that this district has produced more Roman coins than the whole of the rest of Indian sub-continent put together (Wheeler, *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers*, p. 170.)

- 1 Of the 68 finds, known from the Indian sub-continent, no fewer than 57 come from the south of the Vindhya, and out of these 57, more than 50 are yielded by the eastern coast and Malabar. (Wheeler, *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers*, pp. 164-65 and map; *Ancient India* No. 2, pp. 116 ff.)

tury A. D. as well and that Samudragupta also wanted to help himself with the fabulous wealth of the southern kingdoms. He was shrewd enough to realize that he could not permanently rule over such distant territories. Therefore, after obtaining what he wanted, he showed no hesitation in reinstating the conquered kings in their respective states. His magnanimity towards them was not merely the result of his large-heartedness or his faith in the ideal of *dharmavijaya*; it was also a case of a virtue made out of necessity—the result of his inability to keep the Peninsular states in his control. The instructions which he might have given to the commanders of his southern campaigns must have, in essentials, been similar to those which Malik Kāfur received from his Sultan.

NUMBER OF THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGNS

The above analysis helps us to correct numerous other errors regarding the southern adventures of Samudragupta. For example, it is almost universally believed that the Gupta emperor launched only one campaign in the South.¹ What is the basis of this view we do not know, but there is absolutely nothing in the Allahabad *prasasti* to warrant it. On the other hand, the fact that the powers enumerated in any of the other three lists were subjugated or defeated at different times, makes it quite reasonable to assume that the states enumerated in the list under discussion were also defeated at different times, and not in one campaign. At least, till some evidence to the contrary is available, it appears to be the only reasonable position to take. The conclusion that Samudragupta's motive in undertaking these perilous campaigns was economic in nature gives additional strength to it; for, if the imperial army came back from the South laden with golden booty once, it could be sent to repeat its performance time and again. This is what was done by Khāravela in the pre-Christian era and by the Delhi Sultan & such as Alāuddin in the mediaeval period.

The point under discussion is very significant; it knocks the bottom out of those theories which seek to determine the routes

1 Cf. however, CA, p. 9

of invasion and retreat of the imperial army on the basis of the order of the enumeration of the conquered states. If Samudragupta launched several expeditions to the south of the Vindhyas, it becomes impossible to know which states were humbled in which campaign and, consequently, the routes of his invasions cannot be determined. Supposing, we had at our disposal only a list of the states conquered or plundered by, say, the king Khāra-vela of Kalinga, or Sultan Mahmūd of Ghaznī or Malik Kāfūr, the Khalji general, and no other details about his campaigns, could we justifiably suggest that he defeated these states in one campaign or could we determine the route of that campaign on the basis of the order of the enumeration of the conquered states in the list? Surely, such an attempt would have been regarded as belonging to the realm of pure speculation. Further, it is quite possible that some of the coastal states like Kāñchī and Kerala were invaded directly by the sea route with the help of the imperial navy¹. After all, what is there to postulate that the Gupta conqueror went to these distant states by the troublesome land route? The non-mention of any power in the wide stretches, e.g. between Veṅgi and Palakka and between Kāñchī and Kottūra, indicate that our suggestion is not altogether unreasonable².

It is of course not necessary to assume that Samudragupta led all the southern campaigns personally. Quite likely, most of

1 Cf CA, p. 13 f.

2 J. Dubreuil (*op. cit.*, pp. 60-61) is of the opinion that Samudragupta, who advanced up to the river Krishnā, was opposed by a confederacy of the kings of the eastern Deccan, and on being repulsed abandoned his conquests and returned home. D. C. Sircar has also suggested (*Suc. Sat. Low. Dec.* p. 91) that the reference to the victory in the phrase *aneka-samar-āvāpta-vijaya* (one who attained victory in many battles) used for Hastivarman of the Śālaṅkāyana dynasty includes also his *samara* with Samudragupta, implying thereby that the Gupta invader was defeated by this king. But both these suggestions are gratuitous and are belied by the evidence of the Allahabad *prashasti* itself. It may be noted that Hastivarman does not claim that he achieved victory in *all* of the battles fought by him.

them were led by the imperial commanders and royal princes. It is also quite possible that in some of them his Vākāṭaka ally Prithviśeṇa I also participated. Prithviśeṇa I, though independent, was within the sphere of political influence of the Guptas. Now, it is interesting to note that he is called a *dharmavijayin* in the inscriptions of his successors.¹ As he most likely ruled in the period when Samudragupta is known to have followed the policy of *dharmavijaya* in the South, it becomes a very strong possibility that Prithviśeṇa participated in some of the southern campaigns of the Gupta emperor and, later on, his successors gave their credit to him. History provides numerous such instances.² It may, however, be conceded that the possibility that has achieved some successes independently cannot altogether be ruled out.

THE SECOND LINE OF DEFENCE

The greatest single factor that shaped the North-Western policy of Samudragupta was the pressure of international circumstances. Unfortunately, scholars have only rarely examined the evidence of his Allahabad *prastāvi* as well as the data provided by the Meharauli inscription of 'Chandra' from this angle. They have usually studied the Allahabad record from the view point of the expansion of the Gupta influence in the North-West without asking themselves the question as to why the foreign potentates of this region accepted the overlordship of the Gupta emperor so readily. Similarly, as regards the Meharauli inscription they have mainly concerned themselves with the problem of the identification of the king mentioned in it; they have not tried to find out the causes that prompted him to lead expedition 'across the seven mouths of the river Indus'. These questions, we feel, can be

1 Sircar, D. C., *Sel. Ins.*, p. 420.

2 e.g. Durlabharaṇa I, a feudatory ruler of the Śākambhārī branch of the Chāhamānas is said to have defeated the king of Gauda and to have reached Gaṅgā-sāgara in the course of his conquests. This obviously refers to his participation in the battle between his overlord Vatsarāja of the Pratihāra dynasty and Dharmapāla of Bengal (D. C. Ganguly in *The Age of Imperial Kanauj*, p. 105).

answered only against the background of the contemporary history of Bactria and North-Western India and in the light of the cross-currents of the aims and motives of the various powers interested in the fortunes of these regions.

RISE OF THE KIDARA KUSHANAS

The rise of the Great Kushāṇas in Bactria and the North-Western India in the first century A. D. made these regions the hotbed of international politics. Their empire constituted a double threat to the Parthians of Iran. Economically, the Kushāṇas were, like the Parthians, middlemen in commerce. They controlled the three main stretches of the great silk-road : first, the road of the two seas, the Caspian and the Euxine; secondly, the road which passed through Merv, Hecatompylos and Ecbatana, crossed the Euphrates and so reached the Mediterranean ports; and thirdly, the maritime route between India and the Red Sea which, following the discovery of the monsoons, had become very important. Thus, they were in a position to divert merchandise going to and from the eastern countries, China and India, to roads that avoided Parthian territory and, therefore, posed a great economic challenge to its rulers¹. The political implication of their rise as a major power was also very important for Iran : now instead of having one enemy in the West, she became a central empire sandwiched between Rome and the Kushāṇas. Romans, who were always in active rivalry and often at war with the Parthians and were anxious to safeguard a route along which trade could move between Rome, China and India² were quick to seize the double significance of this empire; and, therefore, sought to enter into direct relation with its rulers. Caught in between these two fires, the early Sassanians, who

1 Wheeler, M., *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers*, pp. 183 ff.; Ghirshman, R. *Iran*, pp. 260 ff.

2 The well-informed Chinese chronicles record that the Roman 'kings always desired to send embassies to China, but An-hsi (Parthians) wished to carry on trade with them in Chinese silks and it is for this reason that they were cut off from communication.' Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

succeeded the Parthians as the imperial rulers of Iran in 224 A. D., made the conquest of the Kushāṇa empire the primary object of their Eastern policy ; and in it they were eminently successful. The first Sassanian emperor Ardashīr (224-41 A. D.) conquered Kushāṇa principalities to the north of the Hindukush, and although Kushāṇa chiefs continued to rule there, they had to accept the overlordship of the Sassanian emperor. His policy was continued by his successors who gradually succeeded in bringing the greater part of the erstwhile Kushāṇa empire within the sphere of their influence¹. Ardashīr I also started the practice of sending the Sassanian crown-prince as governor of Bactria, the home-province of the Kushāṇas. The coins issued by these governors are called Kushano-Sassanian² because their obverse is in imitation of the Sassanian coins and the reverse in that of the Kushāṇa issues. Prof. Herzfeld has divided them into two groups :

(a) Those struck by princes of the Sassanian royal family as viceroys in Bactria. These bear the title *Kushān Shāhānshāh*. According to Herzfeld this series continued to 284 A. D.

(b) The second series, struck by provincial governors, bearing the title *Kushān Shāh*, commenced in 284 A. D. when after the unsuccessful revolt of Hormizd, the brother of Vaharān II, the practice of sending the heir-apparent as Viceroy to Bactria was stopped. According to Herzfeld this series continued to some point in the reign of Shāpur II (309-79 A. D.).

1 *Comp. Hist. Ind.*, II, pp. 250 ff.

2 Cunningham, A., *Later Indo-Scythians*, reprinted from the Numismatic Chronicle, 1893-5; Smith, V. A., *JASB*, LXIII, (1894) pp. 177 ff.; Banerji, R. D., *JASB (NS)*, IV, pp. 81 ff.; Herzfeld, E., *MASt*, No. 38; Kennedy, J., *JRAS*, 1913, pp. 1054 ff.; Martin has brought almost all the numismatic as well as literary and epigraphic evidence together in *JRASB (L)*, III, (NS) XLVII, pp. 23 ff. Most of his conclusions have been accepted *mutatis mutandis* by Ghirshman (*Les Chionite-Hephthalites*, pp. 74 ff.), Majumdar (*CA*, pp. 50 ff.), Altekar (*NHPI*, pp. 16 ff.) Chattopadhyaya (*EHNI*, pp. 210 ff.) and Jaychandra Vidyalkar (*Bhartiya Itihāsa Kā Ummilana*, pp. 212-3).

The Kushano-Sassanian rule in Bactria was put to an end by the invasion of a Central Asian tribe called Jouan-Jouan or the Hiung-nu in the Chinese Annals¹. The *Wei-shu* or the *Annals of the Wei Dynasty* states that when the Ta Yueh-chi, who had for its capital the town of Balkh, were threatened on the north by the the Jouan-Jouan, their king Ki-to-lo raised an army, crossed to the south of the Great Mountains (the Hindukush), and invaded North India, where the five kingdoms to the north of Gandhāra submitted to him. At another place it informs us that Ki-to-lo, having been pursued by the Hiung-nu (Jouan-Jouan ?), retired to the West and ordered his son to establish himself in the town of Peshawar. This expulsion of the Great Kushāṇas from Bactria evidently took place some time after 284 A. D., the initial year of the second series of the Kushano-Sassanian coins.

The occupation of the North-Western India by a branch of the Yueh-chi is also proved by a large number of coins found in this region with the Brāhmī legend '*Kidāra Kushāṇa Shā*'. This ruler has been almost unanimously identified with Ki-to-lo of the Chinese annals². He was placed in the fifth century A. D. by Cunningham, but Martin has brought forth fairly conclusive numismatic evidence to show that Kidāra flourished in the middle of the fourth century A. D.³. Secondly, the Chinese historians including the author of the *Wei-shu* and Ma-twan-lin, definitely state that Ki-to-lo or Kidāra belonged originally to the Great (Ta) Yueh-chi family; but after his expulsion from Bactria his people became famous as the Little (Siao) Yueh-chi⁴. This must have happened approximately before the close of the fourth

1 Martin, pp. 24-26

2 Smith was opposed to the identification of Ki-to-lo of the Chinese annals with the king Kidāra known from the coins and believed that these coins belonged to c. 350 A. D., while Ki-to-lo flourished in the fifth century A. D. (*JASB*. LXIII, pp. 182 ff.). But the literary evidence as put forth by Martin makes it quite clear that Ki-to-lo should be placed in the middle of fourth A. D.

3 Martin, p. 39.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 24-26.

century A. D., because at one place the Chinese annals mention that the merchants from the Little Yueh-chi country introduced great improvements in glass-making in China during the reign of Tai-von (398-409 A. D.).¹ It proves that the establishment of the Little Kushāna dynasty in Gandhāra should be dated prior to 409 A. D. This evidence put forth by Martin, may be confirmed by the fact that Kumārajīva in his Chinese translation of the *Prajñā-Pāramitā* (413 A. D.) mentioned Ta-k'ia-lo, which is the Chinese transcription of Tukhāra and explained it as signifying the Little Yueh-Chi². Further, in his translation of the *Life of Aśvaghoṣa*, completed in 412 A. D., he rendered Tukhāra by the same term.

From the above account it is clear that the Jouan-Jouan invasion of Bactria, which led to the expulsion of Ta-Yueh-chi from there, took place after 284 A. D. and prior to 409 A. D. These wide chronological limits may be further narrowed by the study of contemporary Sassanian history. As pointed out by Martin, Sassanian rule in Bactria could have hardly survived these upheavals. Therefore, one can expect to hear the echoes of these developments in the known history of the Sassanian empire. This hope is fulfilled by Ammianus Marcellinus, an officer in the Roman army who fought against Shāpur II (309-79 A. D.). He states that between 350-58 A. D. Shāpur was engaged in fighting against the Chionites, who had invaded Bactria, and the Euseni, a term which has been recognised as a textual corruption for Cuseni or Kushānas. He also informs us that Shāpur had made peace with them by the year 358 A. D., for both of them were obliged to give him help in the siege of Roman fortress Amida in 359 A. D.³ Further, in a Persepolis inscription of the year 356 A. D., Slock, the High Judge of Kabul, prayed that Shāpur would return to Kabul in safety. Now, as Martin has pointed out, Kabul is an excellent base for operations against Gandhāra. In the light of

1 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

2 Levi, S., *Fragments de Textes Koucheens* (Intro.) pp. 24-25, quoted by B. Prakash in *Studies in Indian History and Civilization*, pp. 373, fn. 35.

3 Martin, p. 30.

these facts we can, for all practical purposes, identify the Chionites with the Jouan-Jouan and can safely assume that the expulsion of the Ta Yueh-chi from Bactria took place in c. 350 A. D. and that by the year 356 A. D. Kidāra had settled down in Gandhāra though within a short while he was forced to accept the overlordship of Shāpur II.

The history of the career of Kidāra can be further reconstructed with the help of his coins and the occasional statements of Chinese and Roman historians. After a careful study of these coins, Martin has arrived at the conclusions that Kidāra started his career as a subordinate under Shāpur II, for, on his earlier coins his bust is represented as facing right, a convention which, according to Herzfeld, was followed by all the feudatories of the Sassanians. Later on, Kidāra became independent as we have his other coins on which his bust is represented as facing left. His successor Piro, on the other hand, started his career as an independent king but, later, had to accept the Sassanian suzerainty. These conclusions are completely in consonance with the literary evidence. As we have seen, from the testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus it appears that the king of the Kushāṇas, i.e. Kidāra, immediately after his settlement in Gandhāra accepted the overlordship of Shāpur II and started his career there as the vassal of the Sassanian emperor. The Armenian historian Faustus of Byzantium shows the other side of the picture when he records that Kushāṇas defeated the Sassanians in 367-8 A. D. twice and on one occasion forced Shapur II to fly from the battle-field¹. In the light of these facts it is only fair to assume that Kidāra became independent sometime after 359 A. D. and prior to 369 A. D.

INVASION OF THE HEPHTHALITES

Thus, we find that during the good part of the reign of Samudragupta (c. 350-375 A. D.) there were three main powers in the North-Western regions : the Sassanians, the Kidāra Kushāṇas and the Chionites or the Jouan-Jouan. The Chionites or the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Jaoun-Jaoun (also called the Hiung-nu in the Chinese annals) were most probably the famous Hephthalite or the White Huns (Hūṇas of the Sanskrit works) who after their occupation of Bactria in c. 350 became a menace both for Iran and India. The fact of their invasion in the fourth century A. D. is conclusively proved by the testimony of the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien, who was in India during 400-11 A. D. He tells us that an Ephthalite king had 'formerly' endeavoured to remove Buddha's begging bowl from Purushapur (Peshawar) but his attempt was foiled by a miraculous exhibition of passive resistance on the part of the relic.¹ It is a positive though generally overlooked evidence for the invasion of the White Huns on Gandhāra prior to the year 400 A.D. and is in complete consonance with the evidence of the *Wei-shu*, Ma-twan-lin and Kumārajīva. It knocks the bottom out of those theories which seek to prove that the Hephthalites entered Bactria only in the fifth century. Due to their pressure, the Kushāṇas, led by Kidāra, were forced to leave their homeland and settle down in Gandhāra. But the Sassanians were not a spent force. By the year 358 A. D., they had imposed their overlordship on both, the Chionites and the Kidāra Kushāṇas and forced them to help him in his war against Rome in the year 359 A. D. But amazingly enough we find that Kidāra, who had recently been defeated by the Hūṇas, was busy in making his position secure in what was comparatively a new country for him, and who having been hammered by Shāpur II was compelled to accept his suzerainty, suddenly became so powerful as to inflict two crushing defeats on his mighty Sassanian overlord in 367-8 A. D. Not only this, when the Central Asian barbarians invaded his new home from Bactria or Vālhika during the last years of his reign, sometime after 367-68 A. D., he was able to meet the aggressors successfully. He had been unable to check the advance of the barbarians when he was in his own homeland Bactria. Therefore, logically the chances of his success in checking their advance in c. 370 A. D., when he was in a comparatively new land must

¹ Giles, H. A., *The Travels of Fa-hsien*, p. 14.

have been more remote. But he achieved success on this occasion as well, for, we know that his successor Piro started his career as an independent king. How can this amazing rise in the power of Kidāra towards the close of the seventh decade of the fourth century A. D. be explained? Martin does not give any answer. We suggest, however, that the Allahabad and Meharauli inscriptions, if studied against this background, provide an explanation of this puzzle.

EVIDENCE OF THE ALLAHABAD INSCRIPTION

According to the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta the Daivaputrashāhi, Shāhānushāhi, Śaka-Muruṇḍas as well as the people of Sindhala and 'other islands', tried to please him by *ātma-nivedana* (personal attendance), *kanyopāyanadāna* (presenting unmarried daughters and giving them in marriage) and *garutmad-aṅka-svavishaya-bhukti-fāsanā-yāchana* (request for charters, bearing the Garuḍa symbol for the enjoyment of their own territories).¹ Of these powers, the Śaka-Muruṇḍas may be identified with some of the smaller Scythian rulers of the Punjab—the Shiladas and the Gaḍaharas of the central Punjab and the Shākas of the western Punjab—whose existence is known from their coins²; for, one of them, a Gaḍahara chief, is known to have issued coins bearing the names of the Gupta emperor and his own tribe or dynasty³. It would be natural to expect these Scythian vassals of the Gupta emperor mentioned in the Allahabad *prastāvi*, and among the foreign potentates enumerated in the record they can be identified only with the Śaka-Muruṇḍas⁴.

Of the rest of the powers enumerated in this list, those mentioned in the compound *Daivaputrashāhi Shāhānushāhi* also belonged to the North-West. But their identification has been a matter of confusion and controversy. Altogether three titles have been used in this expression—*Devaputra*, *Shāhi* and *Shāhānushāhi*. Of

1 *Supra*, p. 91f.

2 *NHIP*, pp. 19 ff.

3 Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 52.

4 cf. Majumdar, *NHIP*, p. 147 f; Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 146.

these the first, *Devaputra*, was the distinctive title of the kings of the family of Kanishka I. In a Chinese text of the third century A.D., cited in a work of the Tang period, it is expressly stated that "the king of the country of Yueh-chi is called the Son of Heaven"¹. The other two titles were also used by the Great Kushāṇas, but were originally Iranian. Iranian governors generally used the title *Shāh* and their emperor assumed the title *Shāhānshāh*. As mentioned earlier, the Sassanian crown-prince, who ruled almost independently in any one of the eastern provinces of the empire, had the privilege of adopting the titles like *Kushāna Shāhānshāh* or *Sakānshāh*. Therefore, it cannot be presumed that the titles *Shāhi* and *Shāhānushāhi* unquestionably denote the princes of Kushāṇa origin. Fleet² spilt up this compound into three parts as if each denotes a separate ruler. Allan³ and Aiyangar⁴ also believed that Harishena referred to three different Kushāṇa kings. But such an interpretation seems to be hardly satisfactory. "It is forgotten", Bhandarkar remarks, "that the initial word is not *Devaputra* but *Daivaputra*, a *taddhita* form, which shows that the term cannot stand by itself and must be taken along with what follows".⁵ Therefore he, and following him R. D. Banerji,⁶ R. C. Majumdar⁷ and H. C. Raychaudhuri⁸ etc. have taken the title *Daivaputra* along with not only *Shāhi* but also with *Shāhānushāhi*, so as to make a full royal insignia of a single Kushāṇa ruler. But this view also, although supported by great authorities, seems to be hardly convincing because there was no Kushāṇa ruler in the third quarter

1 Pelliot, P., *Toung Pao* (1923), p. 123, cited by S. Levi in 'Devaputra', *JA*, (1933), p. 11.

2 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 14.

3 Allan, *BMC, GD.*, p. 26 f.

4 Aiyangar, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

5 *IHQ*, I, p. 259.

6 Banerji, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

7 *NIHP*, p. 147.

8 Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 547. Smith identified him with Grumbates (*JRAS*, 1897, p. 32), the king of the Chionites. But the Classical sources clearly differentiate between the Chionites and the Cuseni or the Kushāṇas.

of the fourth century A. D. who can be given the credit of adopting the grandiloquent title *Daivaputrashāhishāhānushāhi*. Therefore, we are virtually left with only one acceptable alternative : these titles denote two powers *Daivaputrashāhi*, and *Shāhānushāhi*. This suggestion agrees with every known fact of history and is supported by positive and strong circumstantial evidence.

The Kushāṇa contemporary of Samudragupta was Kidāra. He was originally a member of the Great Kushāṇa family. It was after him that his people became famous as the Little Kushāṇas. Therefore, it can be readily admitted that he was known to his contemporaries as a prince of the Devaputra family. But he was not powerful enough to use the title *Shāhānushāhi*. He was merely a *Shāhi*. His coins bearing the legend '*Kidāra Kushāṇa Shā*' prove it. Therefore, he can be easily identified with *Daivaputrashāhi* of the Allahabad pillar inscription. Here it is interesting to note that contrary to the generally accepted view, in the *Prayāga prafasti* the word Devaputra has not been used as a title, for the fact that it has been used in its *tadbhāva* form not merely shows that it must be taken along with the next word '*Shāhi*', it also proves that the compound *Daivaputrashāhi* would mean '*Shāhi, who belonged to (the family of) the Devaputras*'. As regards Kidāra's contemporary *Shāhānushāhi*, he could have been no other than Shāpur II, the Sassanian *Shāhānshāh*. On the basis of this suggestion the course of history of Bactria and North-Western India may be reconstructed as follows :

Kidāra, after having established himself in Gandhāra,¹ evidently at the expense of the Shāka rulers,² approached Samudragupta some time after 359 A. D., sent him presents and professions of allegiance and asked for his help against the Sassanians. Samudragupta, on his part, was very much anxious to extend his sphere of influence beyond the central Punjab where his subordinate allies, the Gadaharas, were ruling.³ He viewed with anxiety the tribal movements which were taking place in that direction and were posing a threat to his newly founded empire. But

1 *Supra*, pp. 131-33

2 *Supra*, p. 135

3 *Ibid.*

he was not only a conqueror, he was a statesman as well. He knew his own limitations and had shown the wisdom of reinstating the conquered princes of the South.¹ He wanted to become involved in a North-Western adventure even less. But, nonetheless, he was anxious to make the frontiers of the empire and the western trade-routes safe and secure.² He therefore, did what was the best under the circumstances : he concluded an alliance with Kidāra and as the stronger member of the partnership gave him help against Shāpur II. His policy was eminently successful and Kidāra defeated the Sassanians twice in 367-68 A. D.³ It may not mean that Shāpur II became a vassal of Kidāra or Samudragupta. But it does mean that the statement of Harishena about the relation of his master with the Sassanian emperor should not be regarded as altogether without foundation.

Kidāra, very soon after the year 367-68 A. D., probably in c. 370 A. D. had to deal with the invasion of the Jouan-Jouan or Hiung-nu or the White Huns from Bactria or Vālhika.⁴ He placed his son in the charge of his capital and went towards west to meet the invaders. This time also, Samudragupta appears to have given substantial help to his Kushāna ally. As a matter of fact, the very success of Kidāra against the Hūṇas, whom he could not check earlier when he was in Bactria, proves that this time he had a powerful ally on his side. Thus, a successful expedition by the Gupta emperor in c. 370 A. D. against the Vālhikas 'across the seven mouths of the river Indus' becomes a very strong possibility. It is one of the reasons which have led us to postulate the identity of the king 'Chandra' with Samudragupta.⁵ It

1 *Supra*, p. 126.

3 *Supra*, p. 133.

2 *Supra*, p. 129.

4 *Supra*, p. 134.

5 *Infra*, App. iii of this Ch. Here it can be objected that Harishena does not refer to the Central Asiatic expedition of Samudragupta. The answer is quite simple. The Allahabad pillar inscription was inscribed sometime after the year 367-68 A. D., when Kidāra defeated the *Sabāhānushāhi* Shāpur II ; it can be approximately dated in that year. On the other hand, the expedition 'across the seven mouths of the river Indus' was carried out after this date.

may, however, be remembered that the history of Bactria and the North-Western India as outlined above does not depend upon the identification of Samudragupta with the king of the Meharauli inscription. For example, if we are to prefer the theory of the identification of Chandragupta II with the king of this record we can presume that it was Chandragupta, the son of the emperor, who was sent as the leader of this expedition.

The history of the North-Western policy of Samudragupta, as reconstructed above is in consonance with some other very interesting facts. Firstly, according to a Roman historian, an Indian Embassy went to Rome in 361 A. D.¹ It had been dispatched from India earlier but could arrive in Rome only in 361 A. D. Viewed in the light of the political condition of India in the middle of fourth century A. D., this fact becomes very significant. As we have seen, before the year 361 A. D. Roman emperor was engaged in a war against the Sassanians. Therefore, if Samudragupta joined hands with Kidāra against Shāpur II, it was but natural for him to try to keep the Persian forces blocked in continued fighting on their western front. So, he may have dispatched an embassy to Rome prior to the year 361 A. D. Secondly, in the light of the political history of Bactria and North-Western India as outlined above, the suggestion that Kālidāsa wrote the description of the *divijaya* of Raghu on the basis of the actual facts provided by the conquests of Samudragupta, assumes greater force.² According to Kālidāsa, Raghu, after the conquest of Triakūṭa in the Deccan, proceeded by the land-route to conquer the Pārasikas and after defeating them vanquished the Hūṇas and thereafter fell upon the Kāmbojas. The Pārasikas of Kālidāsa evidently correspond to the Sassanians. The Hūṇas

Therefore, we find it mentioned in the Meharauli inscription which is a posthumous record of the achievements of Samudragupta, and not in the Allahabad pillar inscription which might have been inscribed before the expedition against the Bactrians was launched.

1 JRAS, XIX, p. 274.

2 *Infra*, App. vi of this Chapter.

have been mentioned by him as living on the banks of the river Vāṅkshu or Oxus. This was exactly the region where they were living in the third quarter of the fourth century A. D. And lastly, the Kāmbojas of the *Raghuvamśa* may be equated with the Kidāra Kushāṇas because, as we have seen, Kidāra conquered not only Gandhāra but also the 'five kingdoms north to it', which were obviously situated in Kāmboja. We would like, however, to emphasise that the description of the North-Western conquests of Raghu merely gives colour to the dry facts known from the epigraphs and coins; it cannot and has not been produced as a proof of the success of the Gupta emperor.

TRANS-OCEANIC ASPECT OF THE GUPTA POLITICS

During the early Gupta period and the preceding centuries, India's volume of trade with Sīṃhala (Ceylon) and the lands of the Pacific region across the Bay of Bengal greatly increased. Situated in the middle of the Indian Ocean to the south of the Indian Peninsula, Ceylon commanded the sea-routes that linked one side of the Ocean with the other. From the account of Cosmos, it appears that it received imports from most of the Indian marts and passed them on to other countries.¹ As such, it was extremely vital to the maritime trade of India. Tāmralipti, the greatest port in Samudragupta's empire had very good commercial relations with Ceylon. Fa-hsien went to this island kingdom on board a large merchant vessel from Tāmralipti.²

Intimate contacts with the states of the Indian Archipelago were also highly valued by the Indian merchants. Firstly, these lands were famous for their spices, minerals, metals, and other agricultural and industrial goods.³ Kālidāsa remembers them particularly for the fragrance of cloves, which was wafted by

1 Maity, *Eco. Life*, p. 130 f.

2 Giles, H. A., *The Travels of Fa-hsien*, p. 66.

3 Cf. the names such as Karpūradvīpa, Nārikeladvīpa, Yavadvīpa, Saṅkhadvīpa, Suvarṇadvīpa, Rupyadvīpa, and Tāmradvīpa etc. that were given to these islands (*JAC*, p. 654).

breezes, coming from the East to the sea-shores of Kalinga.¹ Secondly, India's maritime trade with China, where Indian wares were in great demand during the Gupta age, was possible only via the East Indies. The Chinese chronicle *Sung-Chu*, composed about 500 A.D., states that all the precious things of land and water come from India.² Po-tie (a fine textile, probably muslin) was produced in India and was sent to China from Ho-lo-tan on Jāvā.³ Saffron, produced in Kashmir, was exported to China mainly by the land route, but there are reasons to believe that in the Gupta age it reached that country via Fu-nan as well.⁴ The pepper plant is enumerated in the Chinese chronicles among the products of India, especially Magadha.⁵ Not much is known, however, about the exports of China to India except silk, which was very popular in the ancient world. It had a very good market in India of the Guptas, and Kālidāsa refers to *chināmśuka* as one of the most fashionable textiles among the richer section of society.⁶ From India it flowed on into the Western countries also.⁷

The necessities of this fast developing maritime trade with the East and the South-East, and the resultant widening in the horizon of the contemporary society⁸ gave a trans-oceanic orientation to the political outlook and policies of the early Gupta rulers. The very name of Samudragupta, whether it was given to him by his father or he assumed it in allusion to his conquests⁹ and his description as he 'whose fame was tasted by the waters

1 *Raghuvamśa*, VI. 57.

2 Maity, *op. cit.*, 132.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 132 f.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Kumārasambhava*, VII. 3.

7 Maity, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

8 Cf. e.g. the concepts of *Sapta-sāgara-mahādāna* prescribed for those merchants who returned from their sea-voyages safely (Agrawala, V. S., *The Seven-Sea-Gift in the Matsya Purāṇa*, *Purāṇa*, I, No. 2, pp. 206-12) and *dvīpāntara* (*Raghuvamśa*, VI. 57).

9 Allan, *BMC, GD*, p. xxxiv.

of the four oceans¹ suggest it quite strongly. We have already seen that it was perhaps the necessities of the maritime trade which led him to open a window to the East by the conquest of Bengal where Tāmralipti, the greatest port of northern India was situated. It may even be speculated that by bringing the eastern coastal belt of the South under his influence he hoped to make its ports safe for the merchants of his empire who were interested in the maritime trade with the Pacific world.² It is against the background of all these facts that a reference to Simhala and 'all the other islands in his Prayāga *prastiti* should be studied.

In the Prayāga *prastiti* the people of Simhala and other islands are grouped with the foreign potentates who pleased the Gupta emperor by personal attendance, presenting daughters in marriage and soliciting imperial charters for the enjoyment of their own territories.³ It has been taken to imply that according to Harisheṇa like the rulers of the North-West, they also accepted the suzerainty of his imperial master. It is rightly regarded as something difficult to be accepted. Most of the scholars have, therefore, suggested that it is nothing but a hyperbolic exaggeration on the part of the royal panegyrist, though some of them regard it as the description of the actual state of things.⁴ Majumdar is of the opinion that the claim of Harisheṇa is based on the actual relationship of the Gupta emperor with some of the island rulers, 'the exact nature of which, however, cannot be ascertained'.⁵

To us, it appears that the aforesaid views on the claim of Harisheṇa are based on the wrong interpretation of the relevant passage of the *prastiti*. Most probably, his statement does not imply that *all* the rulers of the North-Western India, Simhala and the islands of the Archipalego adopted *all the three kinds of politics* to please the Gupta emperor. It is impossible, for example, to

1 Fleet, *Corpus*, p. 27.

2 Prakash, B., *Aspects* p. 8, fn. 21.

3 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

4 Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 157.

5 NHIP. p. 151.

maintain that all of these kings presented their daughters in marriage to the emperor or that all of them attended his court in person. The point is significant because it renders it quite unnecessary to assume that all the rulers under discussion solicited the Gupta imperial charters confirming them in the enjoyment of their territories. In other words, it is quite permissible to maintain that the rulers of Sindhala and other islands pleased the emperor only by contracting matrimonial alliance or by attending the imperial court personally. It changes the generally accepted picture of their relation with Samudragupta quite radically, for, matrimonial alliances which they contracted and their personal presence in the court can hardly prove that they became subject to the Gupta overlordship¹; it merely suggests that these island rulers entered diplomatic or friendly relations with the Indian sovereign. It is something which nobody has seriously doubted—especially in view of India's constant and intimate cultural and commercial relations with these inslands in the age of Samudragupta as vouchsafed by the narrative of Fa-hsien and the imprint of the Gupta culture on their colonies and kingdoms. Thus, without assuming that Samudragupta imposed his suzerainty over Sindhala and other islands, we can accept the statement of Harisheṇa in its literal sense. Actually, the facts that nowhere else has Harisheṇa has given a magnified picture of the achievements of Samudragupta and has scrupulously differentiated between the policies which the emperor adopted towards his various adversaries, make it highly unlikely that the poet made an exaggeration in this case.

So far Ceylon is concerned, we fortunately have an independent piece of evidence of its diplomatic relations with Samudragupta. According to a Chinese text, Wang-hiuen-tse's *Hing-Tchoan*, the king Śrimeghavarṇa of Ceylon sent an embassy to the Indian king San-meou-to-lo-kiu-to or Samudragupta asking for his permission to erect a monastery for the Sindhalese pilgrims at Bodh-Gayā.

1 Chandragupta II gave his daughter Prabhāvatī in marriage to Rudrasena II, though the former was certainly more powerful party of the alliance.

The permission was readily granted.¹ By the time Yuan-Chuang, the monastery had developed into a magnificent establishment. Referring to the old history of its foundation Yuan Chwang says that the Ceylonese king 'gave in tribute to the king of India all the jewels of his country'. In the case of the island kingdoms of the East Indies no definite corroborative evidence is available though it is interesting to note that according to *Tantri-kāmandaka*, a Javanese text, the king Aiśvaryapāla of the Ikshvāku race, traced his genealogy to the family of Samudragupta.² Further, we know that many of the Hindu rulers of the regions under discussion tried to maintain some sort of contact with the mother country. A century before Samudragupta, the king of Fu-nan sent an embassy to the king of Pāṭali putra³ and in the early years of the fifth century the king Gaṅgarāja of Champā abdicated the throne in order to spend his last days on the banks of the Gaṅgā in India.⁴ Quite possibly, some of those kings who visited India during the reign of Samudragupta for such purposes utilized the opportunity to visit the court of the great emperor. It may also be pointed out that in the third quarter of the fourth century, the kings of Champā were at war with the Chinese.⁵ It makes it quite reasonable to expect that they welcomed the opportunity of having connections with Samudragupta, the most powerful ruler of India at that time.

THE ADVENT OF THE AGE OF VIKRAMADITYAS

There may be difference of opinion as to whether actors or factors are mainly responsible for determining the course of history, but nobody can deny the powerful influence that at times royal personages have exercised over the destinies of their countrymen. The many-sided genius of Samudragupta provides an excellent

1 *JA*, 1900, pp. 316 ff., 401 ff.; *I-1*, 1902, p. 194.

2 *IHQ*, IX, p. 197 f.

3 *Supra*, Ch. II, p. 56 f.

4 *CA*, p. 646.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 645.

example of such a ruler.¹ In view of his wonderful campaigns, Vincent Smith described him as the 'Indian Napoleon'.² The total extermination of the adversaries in Āryāvarta, a series of expeditions in the Deccan over long distances and through comparatively unknown and inhospitable regions and an expedition 'across the seven mouths of the river Indus', which most probably was undertaken during his reign (whether it was led by Samudragupta personally or by his son Chandragupta II), prove that like Napoleon, Samudragupta also possessed uncommon military skill and masterly powers of design and execution.³ The comparison, however, is apposite in many other respects also. For example, the organisation of the empires of both of them was, at least broadly, similar. The central core of the Napoleonic empire, comprising France and some of the adjacent Dutch, Belgian, German and Italian regions and the Illyrian provinces, was surrounded by a line of protected states including Spain, the Confederation of Rhine, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw and the Kingdoms of Italy and Naples, beyond which were Prussia and the Austrian and Russian empires, the allies of France.⁴ Similar was the organisation of Samudragupta's empire which comprised nearly the whole of the northern India with the exclusion of Sindh, greater part of Kashmir, western Rajasthan and

1 For a detailed analysis of the many-sided genius of Samudragupta, based on the literal interpretation of the evidence of his inscriptions and coin-legends, see R. K. Mookerji *G E*, pp. 37 ff; *IC IX*, pp. 77 ff. Majumdar has given a more balanced and sober interpretation of the same in *NHIP*, pp. 154 ff.

2 *EH*, p. 306.

3 For Samudragupta's skilful strategy in the Nāga war see *supra*, p. 140 f. The military aspect of his character is described in the Allahabad record to which his coins of Archer, Tiger-slayer and Battle-axe types provide illustrative commentary (Āltekar, *Coinage*, pp. 53 ff.). According to Eran inscription (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 20) even the dower of his queen (Dattadevi) was paid by his 'manliness and prowess' (*pauruṣa-parāṅkrama-datta-tulkā*).

4 Fisher, H. A. L., *A History of Europe* (1946), p. 847.

Gujarat together with the highlands of Chhatisgarh, Orissa, large areas of the eastern Deccan, Kerala and also Ceylon and the East Indies across the Ocean. The heartland of this empire including approximately the whole of the modern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal (excluding its south-eastern parts) and greater part of the eastern Malwa, was surrounded by a ring of an almost continuous line of tributary states—five kingdoms on the east and north and nine tribal states and the forest states on the north-west, west and south. Beyond them lay the Śaka and Kushāṇa principalities of the North-West, twelve states of the Deccan and Simhala and other islands across the ocean which were either friendly with or forced to maintain respectful attitude to the emperor. They constituted the second line of defence—the first line being the ring of the tributary states—around the central core of the empire. Thus, the genius of Samudragupta determined the basic character of the imperial structure as well—a strong and powerful nucleus encircled by the gradually widening rings of dependencies, subordinate allies and friendly powers.

Like Napoleon, Samudragupta was also the Child of his Age and was deeply impressed by the thought-currents of his times. His Allahabad *prafasti* clearly demonstrates that he was inspired by the Hindu ideal of *chakravartitva* or universal sovereignty which was very popular in the Gupta age. In practice it usually meant the establishment of one's overlordship over the whole of Bhāratavarsha.¹ It may be regarded as the Indian counterpart of the Commonwealth of the European States which Napoleon wanted to establish under the hegemony of France.² But while the dream of Napoleon was broken in the field of Waterloo, Samudragupta succeeded in translating his ideal into reality and lived to celebrate it by the performance of an *Aśvamedha*.³ According

1 Sircar, D. C., *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, pp. 1 ff.; *supra*, p. 12.

2 Fisher, H. A. L., *op. cit.*, p. 844.

3 The performance of the *Aśvamedh* is not mentioned in the Allahabad record, but in the inscriptions of his successor he is almost invariably called 'the performer of *Chirotsanna*'

to the Gupta epigraphs the Āśvamedha he performed was of elaborate type—which is the real meaning of the term *chirotsanna*¹—and not its abbreviated form which was current in those days. It is generally believed that its celebration took place sometime after the incision of the Allahabad *prasasti*;² but it is quite possible

horse-sacrifice (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 43). Further, his coins of Āśvamedha type are a positive proof of the performance of this sacrifice (Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 61 ff.). The view of Dhavalikar (*JNSI*, XX, Pt ii) that these coins were issued by Chandragupta II to commemorate the Āśvamedha performed by his father is altogether untenable. Another memorial of the event may be the stone figure of the horse with the mutilated inscription—*dda guttassa deya dhanima* incised upon it though the fact that the legend is in Prakrit casts a shadow of doubt (*EHI*, p. 305 and fn. 1). Rapson has also ascribed to Samudragupta the clay seal in the British Museum which shows a horse tied to a post in the upper half and has the legend *Parākrama* in the lower half (*JRAS*, 1901, p. 102, Pl. 3).

1 Scholars generally translate the term *chirotsanna* as 'that had been long in abeyance' (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 44, 54; Majumdar, *NHIP*, p. 153; Raychaudhuri, H. C., *PHAI* p. 548). However, V. S. Pathak, (*JNSI*, XIX, Pt. II, pp. 14 ff.) and Jagannath Agrawal (*Essays Presented to Sir Jadunath Sarkar*, II, pp. 10 ff.) have shown that the term actually means 'elaborate' or 'protracted' and not 'that was long in abeyance'. Cf. also Murthy, S.V.S., *JUG*, XII, pp. 81 ff.

2 Mookerji, R. K., *GE*, p. 30; Majumdar, *NHIP*, p. 153. It is interesting to note that the Poona plates of his granddaughter Prabhāvatiguptā give him the epithet *anekāśvamedhayājīn*. According to D. C. Sircar it is 'hardly credible that Samudragupta performed many Āśvamedhas'. But we do not know why the claim should be regarded as incredible. The argument that as in the Poona plates usual epithets of Samudragupta have been wrongly applied to his son, the use of the epithet *anekāśvamedhayājīn* for the former becomes doubtful (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 412 fn. 4), is not relevant in this case; because, here the author of the document has not applied the title of one king to another by mistake, he has made a positive statement which he could hardly do if he did not have any evidence for it. We suggest that Samudragupta probably performed a few Āśvamedhas of abbreviated form current in that period and latter on,

that the *prāśasti* was composed on the occasion of the performance of the sacrifice, for, one of the features of this sacrifice was 'panegyrics of the sacrificer along with the righteous kings of yore by lute-players including a *Rājanya* who sings to the lute three songs made by himself, "such wars he waged, such battles he won".¹ It is possible, therefore, to assume that the Aśoka pillar on which the *prāśasti* was engraved, was used as an ornamental post in the sacrifice. Incidentally, it may be noted that this suggestion is also in perfect harmony with the fact that Prayāga was the original seat of the Gupta dynasty.

The reign of Samudragupta "marked a distinct revival of the old glory and influence of the Brahmanical religion which had suffered decline since Aśoka made Buddhism the dominant religion of India".² Actually, to a modern student of ancient India Samudragupta appears as the best answer which the Hindu society gave to the Buddhist ideal and example set by Aśoka. The Maurya emperor had evidently aspired to be a *chakravartī dhārmika dharmarāja* who is defined in the *Dīgha Nikāya* as "conquering this earth to its ocean bounds, not by chastising rod, not by the sword, but by righteousness (*dhmma*) and living supreme over it".³ As against it, Samudragupta aspired to be a *chakravartin* in the traditional sense by the dint of his prowess and championed the cause of *dharma*, the 'firm rampart' of which he claimed to be.⁴ Both these great sons of India were *dharmavijayins* but their concepts of *dharmavijaya* differed. Aśoka rather gave an over-emphasis on moral side of religion; the approach

after he had made himself the emperor of almost whole of India, celebrated a *chirotsanna* or elaborate horse sacrifice. His successors gave emphasis on the latter while Prabhāvatī emphasized the celebration of several Aśvamedhas by his grandfather. Probably she believed that the word *aueka* will impress the Vākātakas, who were proud of the four Aśvamedhas of Pravarasena I, more than the word *chirotsanna*.

1 *PIIAI*, p. 171.

2 Majumdar, R. C., *C.A.*, p. 15.

3 Bhandarkar, D. R., *Comp. Hist. Ind.*, II, p. 40.

4 Sircar, D. C., *Sel. Ins.*, p. 256.

of Samudragupta was more balanced. He was not only a fighter and a deeply religious person, he was a great patron of arts and literature as well¹ and had considerable achievements to his own credit in these spheres.² Instead of making the neighbouring kings subordinate to the imperial authority, Aśoka preached to them ethical virtues and practices ; Samudragupta sought to establish a vigorous and resolute government aptly described as *prachanda śāsana*, the imperious commands of which the neighbouring potentates had to satisfy.³ The resultant difference of the two policies is well known. Due to the policy of Aśoka the country 'was lost to nationalism and political greatness', whatever its gains in the sphere of humanitarianism and cosmopolitanism.⁴ His reign marked the beginning of the end of the great empire which the Indian people had established after an effort of centuries. On the other hand, Samudragupta became 'a visible embodiment of the physical and intellectual vigour of the coming age which was largely his own creation'.⁵ He proved to be the real founder of the second great empire of the country and evolved a system which produced a galaxy of emperors, not much less brilliant than him. His usual title was *Parākrama*,⁶ which towards the close of

1 That Samudragupta was a patron of Vasubandhu is now generally admitted (*infra*, App. v of this chapter). We suggest that Kālidāsa, the great poet, also flourished in the second half of the fourth century A. D. and was, probably, patronized by Samudragupta (*infra*, App. vi).

2 A poetical work called *Krishnacharita* attributes itself to Vikramānka Mahārājādhirāja Paramabhāgavata Śrī Samudragupta (IC, X, p. 79). Some scholars believe that it is a confirmation of Harisheṇa's claim that his master was a *Kavirāja*. But the ascription is doubted by competent critics (cf. Jagannath, *ABORI*, XXVI, pp. 313 ff.). Harisheṇa's testimony to Samudragupta's accomplishments in the realm of music is, however, corroborated by the Lyrist type coins of the emperor.

3 Sircar, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

4 Bhandarkar, D. R., *Comp. Hist. Ind.*, II, p. 41.

5 NHIP, p. 158.

6 It was used either alone or in combination with other words such as *Aśvamedha*, and *Vijāghra*.

his reign was changed into *Vikrama*.¹ Later, the title *Vikrama* or *Vikramāditya* was adopted by a number of the Gupta kings, including Chandragupta II and Skandagupta, so that the Age of the Guptas is usually called the Age of the Vikramādityas.² Now, the question whether a king named Vikramāditya flourished in the first century B. C. or not, cannot be definitely answered in the present state of our knowledge, but this much is certain that Samudragupta is the first historical king who is known to have assumed the title of *Vikrama* and that all the elements of the Vikramāditya legend may be traced back in his and his son Chandragupta's personalities and achievements.³

1 This is inferred from the title *Śrī Vikramab* found on one of his coins (*JNSI*, V, p. 136). Some scholars are not inclined to accept the view (Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 44 f.). See, however, *JNSI*, XXVII, Pt. II, pp. 142 ff.

2 Raychaudhuri, H. C., 'Vikramāditya in History and Legend', *Vikrama Volume*, pp. 483 ff.; Majumdar, R. C., *NHHP*, p. 171 f.

3 Raychaudhuri, H. C., *op. cit.*

PLACE OF KĀCHA IN GUPTA HISTORY

The king Kācha is known to us by his coins alone. Till the discovery of the Bayana hoard his coins were known only in the unique Chakradhvaja type and in one variety. The Bayana hoard, however, yielded a solitary coin of a second variety bearing a *Garudadvaja* on the obverse in front of the king.¹ That the issuer of these coins, which are neither copious nor rare,² is to be assigned to the early Gupta period and belonged to the imperial Gupta family,³ can hardly be doubted. His minted issues are found only in the hoards of the Gupta coins and are usually associated with those of Chandragupta I, Samudragupta and Chandragupta II. They are closely similar to the coins of Samudragupta in general appearance, fabric, legend etc. Further, their metrology, which closely follows the 115 and 118 grain standards, proves that their issuer cannot have been later than Chandragupta II when the weight of the Gupta gold coins went up to 124 grains. The composition of the Tanda hoard which consisted of the coins of Chandragupta I, Samudragupta and Kācha, and that of the Ballia hoard in which only the coins of Samudragupta and Kācha were found, indicate the same period. These facts led Allan,⁴ Fleet⁵

1 Altekar, A. S., *Coinage*, p. 87.

2 *Ibid*, p. 78.

3 *Contra*, B. S. Sitholey (*JNSI*, XII, Pt. I, pp. 39 ff.) who believes that Kācha might have been a court-noble or an intriguing minister of Samudragupta. Buddha Prakash (*Aspects*, pp. 80 ff.) suggests that Kācha belonged to that family of rulers whose genealogy is known from an inscription in the cave No. XVII at Ajanta. But both these suggestions are highly conjectural.

4 Allan, *BAIC*, *GD*, Intro., p. xxxii.

5 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 27.

Smith¹ and Raychaudhuri² etc. to suggest that Kācha was perhaps the less formal³ or original name⁴ of Samudragupta. But all these points prove the contemporaneity or near contemporaneity of Kācha and Samudragupta, and not their identity. As pointed out by Altekar, on the coins of the Gupta kings, the personal name of the king is written below the arm; at that place we find the name 'Kācha' on the coins under discussion. Hence, he should be regarded as different from the king whose coins bear the name 'Samudra' below the arm of the king.⁵ Raychaudhuri finds it difficult to believe that the epithet *sarvarājochchhetā* could have been assumed by a Gupta monarch other than the one who is actually credited with the achievement by his Allahabad *prasaśti*⁶. But, apparently, the authors of the Poona and the Rithpur C.I.P. of Prabhāvatiguptā did not feel such hesitation in ascribing this epithet to Chandragupta II.⁷ Even if it is to be assumed that they were not very strict in their description of the Gupta genealogy, it would be regarded as remarkable that in both these documents, separated though they are by at least 20 years, the same mistake has been committed. It may also be noted that Samudragupta himself is not known to have assumed the title *sarvarājochchhetā*; it is found used for him in the records of his successors.

According to D. R. Bhandarkar, Kācha (Gupta) was the name of the elder brother of Chandragupta II⁸; later clerical error transformed it into Rāma. In his later years Altekar also became a great champion of the identity of the Kācha with Rāmagupta and

1 Smith, *JRAS*, 1889, pp. 75-76. Four years later, agreeing with Rapson, he treated Kācha as different from Samudragupta (*ibid*, 1893, p. 25). But some years later he reverted to his old view (*JA*, 1902, p. 259).

2 *PHAI*, p. 533; also see Chittaranjan Ray Chaudhury *IIIQ* XXXV, 1902, p. 259; Mirashi, *JNSI*, XX, p. 90.

3 Fleet, *op. cit.*

4 Allan, *op. cit.*

5 Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 81.

6 Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 533, fn. 2.

7 Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, pp. 412, 16.

8 *Mālarīya Com. Vol.*, p. 189.

tried to prove it on the basis of numismatic evidence¹. But the discovery of the copper coins of Rāmagupta² has rendered this suggestion highly untenable. Further, it is difficult to believe that Rāmagupta had enough achievements to his credit to assume the title *sarvarājocchhetā*.

Thus, Kācha, though a near contemporary of Samudragupta, cannot be placed after the death of the latter. Obviously, therefore, he must have been either a predecessor or a rival of Samudragupta. At one time Prinsep and Thomas were of the opinion that Kācha is identical with Ghaṭotkacha. But since there is little likelihood of the name of Ghaṭotkacha being written as Kācha, nobody takes this suggestion seriously.³ The most plausible solution of this problem seems to be that Kācha was a rebellious brother of Samudragupta who refused to accept the accession of the latter. As pointed out by Heras,⁴ the Allahabad pillar inscription itself indicates such a possibility. From the fourth verse of this record we learn that Samudragupta "was bidden by (his) father,—who exclaiming "Verily (*thou art*) deserving⁵, embraced (*him*) with the hairs of (*his*) body standing erect (*through pleasure*)(and *thus*) indicative of (*his*) sentiments and scanned (*him*)

1 Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 78 ff.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 162 ; *Infra*, p. 216.

3 Fleet *Corpus*, III, p. 27, fn. 4. R. D. Banerji (*AIG* p. 9 f.) believed that Kācha was a brother of Samudragupta who was killed in war against the Kushānas and that the coins under discussion were issued by Samudragupta in the memory of his brother. But the assumption that the Kushānas were ruling over Magadha in 4th century and that Samudragupta ascribed his own achievement viz. the extermination of the hostile kings, to his brother are quite untenable.

4 *ABORI*, IX, pp. 83 ff.

5 On epigraphical and other considerations Chhabra (*IC*, XIV, pp. 141-50) has corrected Fleet's reading of *āryyohi* 'to *ehyehi* and has translated the passage as "come, come—'protect thou the whole earth'". But the second letter of the first word of this verse is neither *ryy* nor *hye* but *rhyo* and, therefore, the word may be restored as *arhyo* which means 'deserving'.

with an eye turning round and round in affection (*and*) laden with tears (*of joy*), (*and*) perceptive of (*his noble*) nature,—(to govern of a surety) the whole world”.¹ This statement of Harishena probably implies that Chandragupta I formally renounced the throne and anointed his son as king.² But, significantly enough, Harishena does not stop here. He adds that when Chandragupta I made the above declaration, Samudragupta was “being looked at (*with envy*) by the faces melancholy (*through the rejection of themselves*), of others of equal birth, while the attendants of the court breathed forth deep sighs (*of happiness*)”.³ This statement clearly indicates that other princes of the royal blood had coveted the throne. Further, in the fragmentary verses 5 and 6 Harishena refers to a war of Samudragupta which was most likely fought against his close relatives; for, phrases such as ‘repentance with minds filled with contentment’ and ‘much clearly displayed pleasure and affection’⁴ used to describe it could have hardly been employed in the case of ordinary enemies. Hence, it has been suggested that the hostility of the princes of equal birth hinted in the 4th verse probably assumed the form of actual rebellion which Harishena had described in the 5th and 6th verses. Viewed in this light, it becomes at least a theoretical possibility that Kācha who, on the basis of purely numismatic evidence appears to have been a near contemporary of Samudragupta, was actually one of the rebellious brothers of the emperor. The evidence of the *ĀMAIK* which most explicitly refers to Bhasma, a brother of Samudraghpta, who is said to have ruled for three years⁵ lends colour to this

1 The translation of Fleet (*Corpus*, III, p. 11 f.) slightly modified.

2 *NHIP*, p. 137; such a possibility is also probably hinted at in the Iran inscription (II 13-14) while in the Rithpur C.P. of Prabhāvatiguptā, the phrase *tatpādaparigrihita* has been used for Samudragupta (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 416).

3 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

5 Jayaswal, *IHI*, p. 48. The reign-period of three years is mentioned in the Tibetan version of the *ĀMAIK*. P. L. Gupta was the first scholar to draw attention to this evi-

possibility¹. Here, it may also be noted that the author of this work has in many cases given the synonyms of the personal names of the king and the word Kācha has, according to lexicographers 'alkaline ashes' or *bhasma* as one of its meanings. Thus, the hypothesis that the initial years of the reign of Samudragupta were disturbed by the revolt of his brothers who were led by Kācha explains all the sources of our information quite satisfactorily.

dence (*JNSI*, V, pp. 33 ff.). He, however, reconstructed the history of Kācha with the help of the *Kaliyugarājavittānta* of the *Bharishyottara Purāṇa* which has been rejected as a 'palpable modern forgery' by competent critics (*supra*, p. 28. fn. 1)

- 1 The account of the reign of Bhasma as given in the *ĀMMK* is somewhat confused. It appears to us that after the verse 704, some verses are missing, for, after this verse the description applies more to Samudragupta than to Bhasma.

RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF SAMUDRAGUPTA'S CAMPAIGNS

The principle according to which Harishēṇa described his master's conquests, has not been worked out properly so far. According to Smith, he described the campaigns of Samudragupta 'geographically'.¹ Jayaswal also believed that the poet-laureate of Samudragupta "divided the conquest and submission of all India into Southern, Northern, Western and North-Western groups, where he was following a geographical plan with accuracy".² But the view is hardly tenable. Had Harishēṇa followed the geographical principle, he would certainly have mentioned Daivaputrashāhi and Shāhānushāhi, the foreign potentates of the North-West, after the republican tribes of the Punjab, Sindhala (Ceylon) after the kingdoms of Dakṣiṇāpatha and the *pratyanta* states of the eastern India viz. Samatāṭa (S. E. Bengal), Davāka (Nowgong District of Assam) and Kāmarūpa (Gauhati region of Upper Assam) after the kings of the western Bengal. On the contrary, he has grouped the rulers of the North-West with the people of Sindhala and 'all the other islands', and the *pratyanta* states of the east with Nepāla (the region lying between the basins of Gandak and Kosi, still known as "the valley of Nepal") and the tribal states which are generally located in the Punjab, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. He has not followed the geographical principle even in the enumeration of the various powers in a particular list. In the first list, for example, he mentions Hastivarman (the Śālaṅkāyana chief) of Veṅgi (modern Peddavegi 7 miles north of Ellore between the Krishṇā and Godāvarī) after Viṣṇugopa (the Pallava ruler) of Kāñchi (Conjeeveram in Chingleput District) though the kingdom of the former was to the north of the Pallava capital, and Kubera, the king of Devarāṣṭra (in the

¹ *EHI*, p. 299.

² Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 135.

Vizagapatam District) after Ugrasena of Palakka (in the Nellore District, south of the Krishnā). Similarly, in the third list he enumerates the tribal states after Nepāla and Karttṛipura, but instead of the Madrakas who, at this time, occupied the territory between the Ravi and the Chinab with their capital at Śākala (modern Sialkot) and were thus closest to these kingdoms, he begins with the Mālavas, who were settled in the Mewar-Tonk-Kotah region, and after listing the Ārjunāyanas whose territory lay within the triangle of Delhi, Ajmer and Agra, the Yaudheyas who possibly lived in the region still known as Johiyabar along both the banks of the Sutlej on the borders of the Bahawalpur state, and the Madrakas, he reverts to the Ābhīras, Kākas, Kharaparikas, Prārajunas and Sanakānikas, all of who are generally located in the region around Vidiśā in Madhya Pradesh, though not with sufficient justification.¹ Even in the list of the kings of Āryāvarta, he mentions Matila (usually identified with a person named Mattila mentioned in a seal found at Bulandshahr in the western U. P.) at the second place, puts Chandravarman (whose identification with the king of the same name mentioned in the Susunia inscription of western Bengal is regarded as almost certain) at the fourth place, and then reverts to Achyuta, Nāgasena and Gaṇapatināga (generally regarded as the rulers of Ahichchhatrā, Padmāvati and Mathurā respectively). This point should be emphasized and remembered, for, a number of suggestions regarding the location of many of the territories which are mentioned in the Allahabad *prasthi* but are otherwise unknown, have been put or rejected on the plea that the territory in question should have been contiguous to the one which has been mentioned before or after it and whose location is known to us.

According to Jouveau Dubreuil and many others, the scheme of the Allahabad *prasthi* is chronological in nature.² Now, it cannot be denied that the enumeration of the kings of Āryāvarta at two places coupled with the fact that the second list of

1 *Supra*, p. 131.

2 Dubreuil, *AlID*, p. 61.

these kings is larger than the first, makes it imperative to believe that Samudragupta led more than one campaigns in this region. But the scheme of the *prāśasti*, if chronologically interpreted, would imply that Samudragupta led two campaigns in the North, one before the expedition to the South and the other after it. Jayaswal,¹ Heras,² Chattopadhyaya³ and Mookerji⁴ subscribe to this view. But the mention of Achyuta, Nāgasena and Gaṇapati-nāga in both the lists of the rulers of Āryāvarta is a great hurdle in the acceptance of this theory. To overcome this difficulty, Heras suggests that in the earlier campaign these kings were merely defeated while in the later they were exterminated. But the use of the word *umṃīlya*, which cannot be taken in the sense of being defeated, in connection with these rulers in the 7th verse itself, goes against this explanation. Further, it is rather difficult to believe that a conqueror of the ability of Samudragupta went deep in the South without fully consolidating his position in the North. Thus, the theory of two campaigns is also not free from difficulties.

To us it appears that the scheme of the Allahabad *prāśasti*, is neither geographical and nor chronological. It is not generally realized that of the two lists of the rulers of Āryāvarta, the first, given in the 7th verse, is not actually a list; it is the description of a campaign. On the other hand, the second list, given in the prose passage, is a mere string of names and is similar in nature to the other three lists given at the same place. The powers enumerated in any one of these four lists have only one thing in common viz. the treatment which they received from the emperor. In other words, after describing the early life and achievements of Samudragupta, including his first major campaign against the Nāgas, Harishena has enumerated the kings, states and tribes who were defeated or subjugated by his master on different occasions and has classified them into four categories in accordance with the policy adopted towards them. The second of his lists con-

1 Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 132.

2 Heras, *ABORI*, IX, p. 88.

3 Chattopadhyaya, S., *EHNI*, p. 149.

4 Mookerji, R. K., *GE*, pp. 19 ff.

tains the names of those rulers who were uprooted by the emperor up to the time of the composition of the *praiastī*. Naturally, therefore, it includes the names of those rulers who were uprooted in his first major campaign as well as those who were exterminated on other occasions. It follows, therefore, that in the North Samudragupta might have fought several campaigns and not merely two.

The above conclusion throws an entirely new light on several aspects of the conquests of Samudragupta. Firstly, if Harishena classified the various states in accordance with the policy adopted towards them and if we find that the kings enumerated in one of these lists were exterminated on different occasions, the view that all the powers enumerated in any one of the other three lists were defeated or subjugated at the same time becomes groundless. For example, contrary to the almost universally accepted view, now it becomes a possibility, if not a certainty, that Samudragupta led more than one expeditions in Dakṣiṇāpatha. Secondly, now there remains no ground for determining the chronological sequence of the subjugation of the various categories of states on the basis of the order in which they have been enumerated. For instance, it is generally believed that it was *after* the extermination of the kings of Āryāvarta that the *pratyanta* states and the tribal republics accepted the suzerainty of Samudragupta. But the preceding discussion makes it quite clear that the various powers enumerated in the third list offered their submission on different occasions, whenever they happened to feel the pressure of the mighty Gupta arm on their borders. Similar must have been the story of the powers enumerated in the other two categories.

It is, however, a matter of common sense and has to be admitted that the subjugation of the *pratyanta* states and the tribal republics of a particular area was rendered possible by the extermination of the rulers of the adjoining regions of Āryāvarta. Similarly, the expression of the submissive attitude by the North-Western powers and the dwellers of 'all the islands' as well as the expedition or expeditions deep in the South must necessarily have been subsequent to the emergence of Samudra-

gupta as the suzerain power in Āryāvarta. We can, therefore, reasonably assume that his campaigns in the various regions of Āryāvarta undertaken with the specific purpose of the extermination of their kings and the incorporation of their kingdoms in the empire, generally preceded the subjugation of the adjoining territories, without committing ourselves to the position that *all* the kings of Āryāvarta were uprooted before the establishment of the Gupta suzerainty in the states enumerated in other categories. And in the North, the campaign against the powers mentioned in the 7th verse was undertaken in the beginning of his reign, that Harisheṇa has definitely stated. That is the maximum that one can deduce about the relative chronology of Samudragupta's campaigns on the basis of the data provided by the Allahabad *prāśasti* itself.

THE KING 'CHANDRA' OF THE MEHARauli IRON PILLAR INSCRIPTION

The identification of the king 'Chandra' mentioned in the Meharauli iron pillar inscription is one of the most debated questions of the Gupta history.¹ He has been identified variously with Chandragupta Maurya by H. C. Seth,² and B. Prasad³, with Kanishka by R. C. Majumdar,⁴ with Chandravarman of Pushkaraṇa by H. P. Shastri,⁵ with the Nāga kings Chandrāmśa and Sadāchandra respectively, by Raychaudhuri⁶ and A. V. Venkatarāma Aiyar⁷ with Devarakshita of the *Purāṇas* by B. C. Sen,⁸ with Chandragupta I by S. K. Aiyangar⁹ and R. G. Basak¹⁰ and

- 1 O. Stein thought that it is impossible to identify this ruler (*NIA*, I, p. 198). Princep allotted the Meharauli inscription to 3rd or 4th century A. D. without suggesting the identification of the king mentioned in it (*JBAS*, III, p. 494). Bhau Daji placed this inscription in the post-Gupta period (*JBBRAS*, X, p. 63). Fergusson assigned it to one of the Chandraguptas of the Gupta dynasty (*History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, p. 508).
- 2 *JIH*, XXVI, pp. 177 ff.
- 3 *PIHC*, VI, pp. 124 ff.
- 4 *JRASB* (L), IX, 1943, pp. 179 ff. Now he appears to be inclined in favour of the theory of the identity of Chandra with Chandragupta II (*Ancient India*, 1952, p. 246; *CA*, pp. 20-21).
- 5 *EI*, XII, pp. 315; His view was supported by Smith (*EHI*, p. 307, fn. 1), R. D. Banerji (*AIG*, p. 10. f.) and Bhattasali (*Dacca Review*, 1920-21, p. 9).
- 6 *PHAI*, p. 481.
- 7 Quoted by S. K. Aiyangar in *ASIHIC*, p. 93.
- 8 *SHAIIB*, pp. 205-7.
- 9 *ASIHIC*, pp. 192 ff.
- 10 *HNEI*, p. 13 ff.; Fleet assigned the Meharauli inscription to Chandragupta I, but he also expressed the possibility of its being one of the younger brothers of Mihirakula (*Corpus*, III, p. 140, fn. 1.; Intro., pp. 12-13).

with Chandragupta II by Hoernle¹, Jayaswal², Sircar³, Altekar⁴ and many others⁵. The last mentioned theory is the most popular one.⁶ But even a cursory examination of the arguments advanced by its supporters would show that the only positive argument in its favour is the similarity of the names of the two kings, and that no achievement of the king mentioned in the Meharauli inscription can be safely ascribed to Chandragupta II. But surely the mere similarity of names cannot be the basis for such an important conclusion.

Broadly speaking, the Meharauli pillar inscription gives us two sets of informations about the king mentioned in it. Firstly, it tells that he was famous by the name Chandra and, secondly, it describes his achievements. Now, almost all the scholars who have tried to find out the solution of this problem have relied more on the first information and have started with the assumption that these achievements should be ascribed to a king whose name was Chandra. Consequently, the claim of nearly every king of ancient India who is known to us by the name Chandra has been championed by this or that scholar. But a very sharp difference of opinion among scholars on this point shows that none of these kings can unhesitatingly be given the credit of these achievements. We feel that so far the problem has been attacked from the wrong

1 *IA*, XXI, pp. 43-44.

2 *JBORS*, XVIII, pp. 31 ff.

3 *JRASB(L)*, V, pp. 413 ff.

4 *NHIP*, p. 21.

5 Agrawal, V. S., *Matsya Purāṇa, a Study*, p. 229; Mookerji, R. K., *GE*, pp. 68 ff.; Dandekar, *Hist. Gupta*, pp. 27-28; Mehtaa, G. P., *Chandragupta Vikramāditya* (in Hindi), p. 58; Kar, R. C., *IHQ*, XXVI, p. 184. Buddha Prakash, *Studies*, p. 326.

6 At one time Smith also believed in this theory (*JRAS*, 1897, pp. 1 ff.) G. R. Sharma, a supporter of this theory, has given a comprehensive analysis and criticism of all the other theories in *IHQ*, XXI, pp. 202 ff. He has convincingly proved that the king mentioned in the Meharauli inscription could not have flourished before the conquests of Samudragupta. We will, therefore, critically examine only the last theory.

end. For, it is not necessary to presume that the king mentioned in this inscription should be known to us by the name 'Chandra'. As pointed out by Fleet the relevant portion of the inscription does not prove that the original name of the king was Chandra. In line 5, he says, "I have arranged my translation according to the order of the words in the text. But, assuming that the composer's arrangement of them was due to metrical exigencies, we might translate— "(and) who, carrying a beauty of countenance like (the beauty of) the full-moon, had (in consequence) the name of Chandra," and thus obtain a hint that the king's original name was not Chandra".¹ Allan also admits : "It is even possible, as suggested by Fleet in an alternative translation in note 2, p. 142, that the king's name was not Chandra and that his name is concealed in a poetical allusion in the words, 'Chandrāhvena samagra-Chandra-sa-dṛśīm', &c. (l.6)...²". In this context it may be recalled that many scholars including Princep,³ believed that the personal name of the king was Dhāva which is engraved in the line 6 of the inscription. This reading, though rejected by Sircar etc⁴, at least shows that it is not safe to assume that the king mentioned in this inscription must be known to us by the name Chandra. He may have gone down in history by some other name, though during his life time he became famous by the name Chandra as well. And if it is so, we feel justified in suggesting that as no king known to us by the name Chandra can be given credit of the achievements mentioned in the inscription, we should reverse the process of our enquiry. Now we should start with the analysis of the facts known about him and try to find out the king who answers the description best, rather than bothering unduly about his name.

1 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 142, fn. 2.

2 Allan, *BMC, GD*, Intro, p. xxxvii.

3 *JBAS*, III (1834), p. 494.

4 Bhau Daji (*JBBRAS*, X, p. 63) and D. C. Sircar (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 277, fn. 3) read *Bhāvena*. Dandekar was tempted to suggest the correction as *Devena* referring to the name of Chandragupta II (*Hist. Gup.*, p. 28). Fleet accepts the reading *dhāvena* but takes it to be a mistake for *bhāvena*.

The inscription supplies us the following facts :

- (i) The king Chandra defeated his enemies in the Vaṅga¹ countries.
- (ii) He crossed 'the seven mouths of the river Indus' and conquered the Vāhlikas.²
- (iii) 'The Southern Ocean was "still" (i. e. at the time of writing the inscription) "perfumed by the breezes of his prowess".'
- (iv) He established sole supreme sovereignty on the earth by the force of his arm.
- (v) He ruled for a long time.
- (vi) He was a Vaishṇava.
- (vii) His fame lingered on the earth even after his death. It shows that the inscription is a posthumous one.³
- (viii) The inscription was engraved somewhere in the early Gupta period, because, according to competent authorities, palaeographically there is a close similarity between the Meha-

1 Kālidāsa places Vaṅgas in between the streams of the Gaṅgā i. e. in the delta of the Gāṅgā (*Raghuvaṃśa*, IV, 36). It possibly comprised a portion of Samatata, a *pratyanta* state owing allegiance to Samudragupta. K. D. Bajpai has placed the Vaṅgas of the Meharauli inscription in the Makran coast of Baluchistan (*Dr. Mirashi Felicitation Volume*, pp. 355 ff.). But there is no evidence to prove that the Guptas had anything to do with the Makran region. It is rather too much to draw such a conclusion on the basis of a solitary verse of the *Mahābhārata* (Sabhāparva, Ch. 47, 9) the reading of which may not be correct.

2 The expression *Sindhorsaptamukhāni* used in the Meharauli inscription can only mean the seven faces or feeders of the river Indus, and most probably denoted, as pointed out by R. C. Majumdar (*op. cit.*) and K. P. Jayaswal (*op. cit.*), the five rivers of the Punjab and the Kabul and Kunar rivers. So far Vāhlikas are concerned, S. K. Aiyangar, R. G. Basak and D. R. Bhandarkar etc. place them in the Punjab on the strength of a verse of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But R. C. Majumdar (*JRASBL*, IX, pp. 179 ff.) and D. C. Sircar (*P. V. Kane Volume*, Art. No. 64) have conclusively shown that Vāhlikas, conquered by Chandra belonged to Bactria.

3 D. R. Bhandarkar (*JAHRS*, X, pp. 88, 137) and D. Sharma (*JIH*, XVI, p. 17; *IC*, V, p. 206) do not believe in the posthumous nature of the inscription.

rauli inscription and the other early Gupta inscriptions.¹ Secondly, Fergusson, drawing attention to the Persian form of the capital of the Meharauli pillar assigned it to the later half of the fourth century A. D.², while K. C. Chattopadhyaya has opined that the author of the Meharauli inscription may be identified with Virasena, alias Śāba of Udayagiri inscription of the time of Chandragupta II.³

The facts noted above make it quite clear that the king mentioned in the Meharauli inscription flourished either in the second half of fourth century or in the beginning of fifth century A. D. and that he was a mighty conqueror and empire-builder and a Vaishṇava by faith. He had acquired sole supreme sovereignty by his own prowess not as a sequel to the power and prestige won by his predecessor. There is only one king who answer this description ; and he is Samudragupta the real founder of the Gupta empire. Those who give this credit to Chandragupta II rely on their imagination too much. Here, an appreciation of the difference between positive and explanatory arguments becomes necessary. It has been said that Chandragupta II might be called an empire-builder because he acquired it by killing his brother Rāmagupta. But this suggestion makes him a fratricide, and not an empire-builder. The strategem of Chandragupta II against the Śaka king, the rival of Rāmagupta, also throws light only on his personal valour and not on his empire-building activities. His only military achievement known to us was the conquest of the Śaka

1 Hoernle (*IA*, 1872, p. 43) assigned this record to c. 410 A. D. and Prinsep allotted it to third or fourth century A. D. According to Fleet its characters, "allowing for the stiffness resulting from engraving in so hard a substance as the iron of this column", approximate in many respects to those of Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta (*Corpus*, III, p. 140), while Dani (*Indian Palaeography*, pp. 144-5) has 'no doubt that the inscription was written in the early fifth century A. D. by a writer from the Middle Ganges Valley'.

2 Fergusson, J., *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, p. 508.

3 Quoted by G. R. Sharma, in *HIQ*, XXI.

kingdom of western India which, incidentally, had become very small by the time he conquered it.¹ Actually it was Samudragupta who uprooted the nine kings of Āryāvarta, defeated twelve kings of the South, forced a host of monarchical states, forest kingdoms and republican tribes to accept his overlordship and overawed several foreign kings as well as the rulers of far distant Ceylon and 'other islands'. Only he, therefore, could claim that he "attained the sole supreme sovereignty in the world by the force of his own arm".

Much has been said in order to show that Chandragupta II might have defeated a confederacy of the kings of Bengal. Some scholars even maintain that since the earliest records of the Gupta kings found in Bengal belong to the reign of Kumāragupta I, this province was conquered not by Samudragupta but by Chandragupta II.² The supporters of this theory have failed to remember that Samatāṭa (S. E. Bengal), Ḍavāka (Dabok in Assam) and Kāmarūpa (Gauhati region of Assam) were the *pratyanta* states of the empire of Samudragupta. It is thus obvious that he conquered the rest of Bengal himself. Chandravarman, one of the kings of North India who were exterminated by Samudragupta, almost certainly belonged to Bengal. Again, from the internal evidence of the Dhanaidaha copper plate inscription of the G. E. 113 and the Damodarpur copper plate inscriptions of the G. E. 124 and 128, it is clear that by the time these grants were issued the Gupta administrative machinery had become firmly established in Bengal. It shows that this province was made an integral part of the empire considerably earlier. At any rate, we do not have any evidence whatsoever to suggest that Chandragupta II had any military achievements to his credit in Bengal, while in the case of Samudragupta we have positive evidence provided by the Allahabad pillar inscription.

Samudragupta had much to do with the North-West and had acquired some influence over the *Daivaputrashāhi Shāhānushāhi*

¹ See *infra*, p. 246 f.

² Kar, R. C., *IHQ*, XXVI, pp. 187 ff.

who ruled over this region. The discovery of a coin of the Standard type bearing his name but issued by a Kushāṇa feudatory is a strong corroborative evidence.¹ Moreover, it appears that he had not only power and ambition to cross the 'seven mouths of the Indus', but was compelled to do so by the force of the circumstances. It was during his reign that the Central Asiatic barbarians, the Jouan Jouan of the Chinese and the Chionites of the Roman writers, invaded Bactria and forced the Great Kushāṇas to migrate to India under the leadership of Kidāra. Later on, in or very shortly after 367 A. D. they crossed the Hindukush and invaded Gandhāra, the new home of the Kidāra Kushāṇas.² Therefore, an expedition by the Gupta emperor in c. 370 to help the Kidarites (who had probably accepted his suzerainty)³ against the invading 'Bactrians' had become a necessity. As a matter of fact, the evidence of the Meharauli inscription is completely in consonance with the contemporary history of Bactria and the evidence furnished by the Allahabad pillar inscription. On the other hand, there is hardly any indication to suggest that Chandragupta II had anything to do with the North-West⁴, what to say of Bactrians in particular.

Chandragupta II had any military success to his credit in the South, is once again a matter for anybody to guess. It is true that his daughter Prabhāvatiguptā was married to Rudrasena II, and that after the premature death of his son-in-law Chandragupta II may have assisted his daughter in the administration of the Vākāṭaka kingdom. It can also be conceded that he sent his court-poet Kālidāsa to educate his grandsons or on a diplomatic mission in the South. But the Meharauli inscription is a factual eulogy of a mighty conqueror. Therefore, the statement that 'the southern ocean is still perfumed with the breezes of his prowess'

1 Altekar, A. S., *Coinage*, p. 52.

2 Martin, *JRASBL*, 1937, Num. Suppl. XLVII, pp. 23 ff.; Chattopadhyaya, S., *EHNI*, pp. 210 ff.; Majumdar, R. C., *CA*, pp. 50 ff.; Altekar, A. S., *NHHP*, pp. 21 ff. *Supra*, pp. 169 ff.

3 *Supra*, pp. 177 ff.

4 *Supra*, p. 239.

cannot be explained away by a reference to Chandragupta's matrimonial alliances or diplomatic activities. On the other hand, it is well-known that Samudragupta carried his victorious arm in the South at least as far as Kāñchi. Allan was right when he remarked that this achievement of the king mentioned in the Meharauli inscription reminds us of Samudragupta, rather than of Chandragupta II.¹

Thus, we find that all the successes of the king Chandra can very safely and easily be ascribed to Samudragupta. In his case, we have got positive evidence of most reliable nature while in the case of Chandragupta II we have to take the help of imagination for, all the available evidence on the life and career of Chandragupta II is silent on these so-called achievements of his. On the other hand, it is an extremely significant fact that his victory over the Śakas, which was certainly his greatest achievement, has not been even hinted at in this document. The conclusion is quite obvious : the achievements of 'Chandra' cannot be assigned to Chandragupta II and the great victory of Chandragupta II cannot be ascribed to 'Chandra'.

All the other facts known about the king 'Chandra' are easily applicable to Samudragupta. That like Chandra he was a Vaishṇava by faith needs no particular mention. It was he who made the *Garuḍadhvaja* the emblem of his family. That he ruled at least for more than two decades is unanimously admitted. Therefore, he satisfies the condition of ruling for a long period also. Thus, all the facts about the king mentioned in the Meharauli inscription coincide with what we know about Samudragupta neatly, squarely and most justifiably. Rather, he is the only king in the whole annals of ancient Indian history who answers the description of the king of this inscription perfectly. Therefore, to us it appears that in the present state of our knowledge the suggestion of his identification with the king mentioned in the Mehrauli inscription should be regarded as at least more probable than any other suggestion proposed so far.

1 Allan, *BMC, GD*, Intro., p. xxxvii.

Our suggestion is remarkably corroborated by Vāmana. According to him Vasubandhu, the famous Buddhist scholar, was the minister of Chandraprakāśa, the son of Chandragupta.¹ Now, if this Vasubandhu flourished in the fourth century A. D.,² we have to take Chandragupta as Chandragupta I and regard Chandraprakāśa as another name of Samudragupta. V. A. Smith³ R. C. Majumdar,⁴ R. K. Mookerji⁵ and V. S. Agrawala⁶ and many others have accepted this possibility. So, here we have an evidence of positive nature which indicates that Samudragupta was known by the name Chandra as well.⁷ It removes the only possible objection which can be raised against our suggestion. We wish to point out, however, that the evidence of Vāmana is merely corroborative. Our suggestion stands quite independent of it.

1 Vāmana, *Kāpyālaṃkārasūtravṛtti*, 3.2.2.

2 *Infra*, pp. 214 ff.

3 *EHI*,³ pp. 328 ff.

4 *NHIP*, p. 155.

5 Mookerji, *GE*, 17.

6 Agrawala, *Matsya Purāṇa, A Study*, p. 229 f.

7 In the Gupta age kings usually had more than one names. Chandragupta II had another name Devagupta, Pravarsena II's original name was Dāmodaragupta, Yaśodharman was known as Vishṇuvardhana and Skandagupta was famous as *vividhākhyā*.

CAPITAL OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

The location of the capitals of the North Indian empires was determined mainly by the region from which they derived their strength and the directions from which they were threatened by internal and external dangers. The capital of the Magadhan empire, the foundations of which were laid by Bimbisāra, was Pāṭaliputra. It continued to enjoy that status till the collapse of the empire in the first century B. C., though due to external pressures and internal pulls, the Mauryas had to establish provincial capitals at Taxila, Ujjayinī, Tosali and Suvarṇagiri¹ and the Śuṅgas had to accord the same status to Vidiśā.² In the age of the Kushāṇas, Purushapura became the imperial capital of the North because its rulers belonged to that region. For them U. P. and Bihar were the outlying provinces of their empire. In the post-Gupta period Thanesar became the nucleus of a powerful kingdom, but at that time the danger from the North-West was not formidable. Hence, the centre of political gravity again shifted somewhat eastwards to Kanauj which became the hub of the political pulls from various directions. However, with the increase in the pressure of the Muslim invaders from the North-West, the importance of Delhi, the gateway to the Gaṅgā Valley increased.³ Actually, for the Muslim emperors of India, who derived their strength from the North-West, Delhi was the only natural seat of administration—a lesson which Mohamṃad Tughluq learnt at a great cost.⁴

Against the background of this historical experience, the problem of the capital of the Gupta empire becomes quite interesting. We have already shown that in the post-Kushāṇa period the centre of

1 *Comp. Hist. Ind.*, II, p. 21.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 100.

3 Cf. Toynbee, A., *Study of History*, I, p. 129.

4 *The Delhi Sultanate* (ed. Majumdar and Pusalker), pp. 66 ff.

the political gravity had shifted to the upper Gaṅgā Valley, roughly modern U. P., its western part being dominated by the Nāgas and the eastern part by the Guptas.¹ It was with the eastern U. P. as his base that Samudragupta launched his victorious campaigns. In the light of these facts one would expect to find that the capital of the Guptas was located somewhere in the eastern part of U. P. The evidence of the *Purāṇas* from which we learn that Prayāga was the nucleus of the original Gupta state,² the incision of the *prastāvi* of Samudragupta on a stone pillar at Prayāga, the discovery of several other early Gupta inscriptions and numerous hoards of coins from this area³, and the possibility of the performance of *Aśvamedha* at Prayāga by Samudragupta⁴ bring out the fact that at least in the early part of their history, the Guptas had their capital at Prayāga. Its location at the confluence of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā, in the centre of the Gaṅgā Valley, from where all the provinces of the empire could be easily controlled, was ideal for this purpose. Later on, however, Ayodhyā was made the formal residence of the emperor, for, Paramārtha, a Buddhist scholar of the Gupta age refers to this city as the capital of Vikramāditya i.e. Skandagupta⁵ who appointed Vasubandhu as the teacher of his crown-prince Bālāditya. It is quite possible that Ayodhyā, the legendary abode of Rāma, the incarnation of Viṣṇu, was accorded this status by Paramabhāgavata Chandragupta II or his father. There were, however, many other provincial capitals including Ujjayinī and Pāṭaliputra, for, certain chiefs of the Kanarese districts who claimed descent from Chandragupta (Vikramāditya), referred to their great ancestor as *Ujjayinīpuravar-ādīśvara*, 'Lord of Ujjain, the best of the cities' as well as *Pāṭalīpuravar-ādīśvara* 'lord of Pāṭali, the best of the cities'.⁶

It is, however, almost universally believed that Pāṭaliputra was the chief metropolis of the Gupta empire. To us it appears to be

1 *Supra*, Ch. II, pp. 53 ff.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 50 f.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

4 *Supra*, Ch. III, p. 188.

5 *Supra*, App. v, p. 215.

6 *PHAI*, p. 556 ; cf. *Katha-sarit-sāgara*, 7.4.3.

a by-product of the equally erroneous view that Magadha was the original home of the imperial Guptas. Pāṭaliputra has been mentioned under its own proper name in the Udayagiri cave inscription of Virasena, a minister of Chandragupta II¹, and the Gadghwa inscription of the time of the same emperor.² But neither of them connect it with him as his capital. On the other hand, the statement of Virasena that he was a *Pāṭaliputrakaḥ* suggests that this city was not the imperial capital of the empire, for, being a minister of the central government, he was supposed to have been officially connected with the imperial capital; there was no necessity for him to describe himself as belonging to it. It means that he has referred to the city to which he belonged in his private capacity, and not to the capital of the empire. A more important reference to Pāṭaliputra is supposed to have occurred in the 7th verse of the Allahabad *prastuti* of Samudragupta under the name of 'Pushpa (pura)'. But as pointed out by Fleet, in ancient times Kanauj was also famous by the name of Pushpapura or Kusumapura.³ Further, as we have shown, the assumption that in this verse Harisheṇa has referred to Kanauj and not Pāṭaliputra makes the import of his statement clearer.⁴ Lastly, even if the 'Pushpa' of Allahabad *prastuti* is to be identified with Pāṭaliputra, it would remain to be proved that it was the capital of Samudragupta, for, his *prastuti* does not refer to it in this capacity.

In this connection some other relevant facts may be noted.

(1) No inscription of the imperial Guptas belonging to the first hundred-fifty years of their rule, has been discovered at or in

1 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 35.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

3 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 5 f.; Yuan Chwang refers to Kanauj by the name of Kusumapura (Watters, *Travels*, p. 341.) According to D. Sharma (*JOI*, XII, pp. 282 ff.) in one of the verses of Āryakṣemiśvara's *Chanda-Kaṇṇika*, there is a reference to Kānyakubja under the name of Kusumapura. Even now Kanauj is the centre of the famous *itr* (Indian scent) industry and is one of the best-known flower-producing areas of India.

4 *Supra*, p. 140 f.

the neighbourhood of Pāṭaliputra. As a matter of fact the first and the last important Gupta document produced by the whole of Bihar is the Bihar stone pillar inscription of a successor of Kumāragupta I.

(2) No specimen of the Chandragupta-Kumāradevi type of coins, the earliest of the series of the Gupta gold coins, has so far been found at Pāṭaliputra.

(3) No hoard of the Gupta gold coins has been yielded by this city.

(4) Further, as pointed out by R. K. Mookerji, the description of Pāṭaliputra as given by the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien who visited it during the reign of Chandragupta II, gives the impression that "Pāṭaliputra did not occupy the same position of importance in the Gupta empire that it had in the Mauryan empire".¹ Actually, Fa-hsien says nothing in detail about the city except to mention a few Buddhist sites in and outside it.² By this time Gaṅgā appears to have shifted its course farther to the north, for Fa-hsien mentions that he had to walk for a *yojana* to reach the city after crossing the Gaṅgā.³

(5) This impression is confirmed and strengthened by the testimony of Yuan Chwang. When this Chinese pilgrim lived in the neighbourhood of this city he found the greater part of the ancient site covered by hundreds of ruins. "The city", he informs us, "had long been a wilderness" save for a walled town near the Gaṅgā with about 1,000 inhabitants.⁴ These facts, of course, do not prove that Pāṭaliputra was not an important city in the fourth-fifth centuries A. D., but they do present a picture of its continuous decline and certainly go against the assumption that it was the nerve-centre of the mighty Gupta empire which had disintegrated only less than a century before the visit of Yuan Chwang.

1 Mookerji, R. K., *GE*, p. 61.

2 cf. Pande M. S., *Historical Geography & Topography of Bihar*, p. 138.

3 Giles, *The Travels of Fa-hsien*, p. 44 f.

4 Watters, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

VASUBANDHU AND THE GUPTAS

The problem of the date of Vasubandhu, the famous Buddhist author and the connected question of the identity of the Gupta sovereigns with whom he had intimate relations, have given occasions to voluminous discussion. According to Noel Peri,¹ Smith,² Macdonell,³ Winternitz,⁴ Majumdar⁵ etc. he flourished in the fourth century A. D., while Takakusu,⁶ Wogihara,⁷ Hoernle⁸ and several others hold that he lived in the fifth century A. D. Recently, Frouwallner⁹ has analysed the arguments advanced by the protagonists of the rival theories and has come to the conclusion that there flourished two scholars of the name of Vasubandhu, the Elder one in the fourth century and the Younger one in the fifth century. The Elder Vasubandhu (c. 320-80-A. D.) was the brother of Asaṅga and belonged to Peshawar. It was he who was the contemporary of Harivarman and whose works were translated by Kumārajīva in 404 and 405 A. D. This Vasubandhu was different from Vasubandhu the Younger, the author of *Abhidharmakosha*, who was the disciple of Buddhāmītra¹⁰ and

1 Peri, Noel, A propos de la Date de Vasubandhu, *BEITO*, 1911, pp. 339 ff.; his arguments have been briefly summarized by Smith in his *EHI*, 3rd ed., pp. 328 ff.

2 *EHI*, 3rd ed., pp. 328 ff.

3 Macdonell, *History of Indian Literature*, 1961, p. 327.

4 Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, II, p. 355 f.

5 *NHIP*, p. 155. Also by Basak, *IINEI*, p. 33; Vidya-bhusan, S. C., *JASB*, 1905, p. 227; Bhattacharya, Binayak-tosh, *Tatvasamgraha*, Intro., pp. 66 ff.

6 Takakusu, J., *JRAS*, 1905, pp. 33 ff.

7 *Ency. Rel. Ethics*, XII, pp. 595-96.

8 *JRAS*, 1909, p. 102; *IA*, 1911, p. 264. Also by K. B. Pathak, *IA*, 1911, p. 170 f.; Allan, *BMC*, *GD*, p. 51 f.

9 Frouwallner, E., *On the Date of the Buddhist Master of Law Vasubandhu*, Rome, 1951.

10 A Buddhist monk Buddhāmītra is mentioned in the Manku-war Buddhist image inscription of the Gupta year 129 (= 448

was appointed, according to Paramārtha, by Vikramāditya, the king of Ayodhyā, the tutor of his crown-prince Bālāditya. According to Frouwallner, Paramārtha, the author of the *Life of Vasubandhu* or his disciples identified these two scholars of the same name by mistake and thus caused this great confusion.

Frouwallner's brilliant suggestion reconciles almost all the apparently contradictory evidences on the question of the date of Vasubandhu. It also helps us in solving the equally puzzling question of the identify of the patrons of these two scholars. Now, from the testimony of Paramārtha it is clear that it was Vasubandhu the Younger, who was patronised by Vikramāditya and Bālāditya. But the half verse cited by Vāmana from a work of possibly Gupta age states that

"This very son of Chandragupta, the young Chandraprakāśa, the patron of men of letters, fortunate in the success of his efforts, has now become king".¹

The commentator explains that the phrase 'patron of men of letters' is an instance of 'allusion', containing a reference to the ministership (*sāchīya*) of Vasubandhu.² It is quite obvious that this Vasubandhu could not have been Vasubandhu the Younger; he, therefore, should have been Vasubandhu the Elder, who flourished in the fourth century A. D. It agrees perfectly well with the suggestion that the Chandragupta, referred to in the above quotation is identical with Chandragupta I the father of Samudragupta. It may be noted that in his *Prayāga prafasti* Samudragupta is described as a great patron of learning.³ Thus,

A. D.). K. B. Pathak identifies him with Buddhamitra, the teacher of Vasubandhu (*IA*, 1912, p. 244).

1 Vāmana, *Kāvyalāmkārasūtravṛtti*, 3.2.2.

2 *Ibid.*; there is some doubt as to the reading of the name of Vasubandhu in this passage. However, Smith, Pathak, Hoernle, Allan and Frouwallner and many others accept the reading Vasubandhu.

3 The tradition regarding the patron of Vasubandhu as recorded by Yuan Chwang is somewhat confused. On different occasions he refers to Vikramāditya and Bālādityarāja, the adversary of Mihirakula, but does not mention either of them as the patron of Vasubandhu. He was

it would appear that the patrons of Vasubandhu the Younger, viz. Vikramāditya and Bālāditya¹, were different from Chandragupta I and his son Samudragupta, the patron of Vasubandhu the Elder. But Paramārtha, who flourished in the sixth century A. D., when the separate personalities of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Skandagupta etc. were gradually being merged in the Vikramāditya legend, naturally found it difficult to distinguish between Samudragupta and Skandagupta, who, according to his knowledge, were not only famous by the same title but had patronized a scholar of the same name of Vasubandhu.

aware of the tradition that the king to whom Vasubandhu came, was a great patron of learning ; but according to him it was this king to whom Vikramāditya had lost his kingdom (Watters, *Travels*, p. 211 f.). It appears that here the legend regarding the victory of Samudragupta, the patron of Vasubandhu, over Kācha, his rival brother, has got mixed up with the legend regarding the patronage of Vasubandhu by Vikramāditya (*supra*, p. 126 f.).

- 1 The kings Vikramāditya and Bālāditya mentioned by Paramārtha have been identified with Skandagupta and Narasimhagupta by Tatakusu, Wogihara, Pathak and Frouwallner (*op. cit.*), with Purugupta and Narasimhagupta Bālāditya by Allan (*op. cit.*) and Sinha (*DKM*, p. 81), with Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I by H. P. Sastri (*JRASB*, 1905, p. 253), and with Chandragupta II and Govindagupta by D. R. Bhandarkar (*IA*, 1911, p. 15) and Saleore (*Life in the Gupta Age*, p. 28).

THE DATE OF KĀLIDĀSA

It is an old suggestion accepted by all those who admit the contemporaneity of Kālidāsa and Chandragupta II¹ that the poet wrote the description of the *digvijaya* of Raghu on the basis of the actual facts of the military achievements of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II, especially of the former. The close resemblance between the careers and achievements of Samudragupta and Raghu warrants this supposition. Like Samudragupta Raghu was selected on account of his ability by his father to succeed him in preference to other princes (RV, IV. 1.). Again, like Samudragupta, Raghu started his military career with the conquest of the neighbouring states (RV, IV. 4) and celebrated its successful completion with the performance of a grand sacrifice (RV, IV, 86). In the East, Samudragupta was content with exacting tribute from the kings of Samatāṭa (South-Eastern Bengal), Davāka (Nowgong district in Assam) and Kāmarūpa (Upper Assam) but violently uprooted the rulers of Western and South-Western Bengal. Similar was the case of Raghu. The kings of Kāmarūpa (RV, IV. 83) and Sumha (RV, IV. 35) readily submitted to him while the *vaṅgas* who proudly fought, had to be smitten (RV, IV. 36).

After the conquest of Bengal, Raghu went to the South. Here it is remarkable to note that Kālidāsa describes the conquest of the region extending from Kalinga to Kerala in detail, in as many as twenty verses (RV, IV. 38-57). But he does not pay much attention to the Western Deccan. He merely refers to the conquest of Aprānta and Trikūṭa in a couple of verses (RV, IV. 58-59). It is quite understandable. Samudragupta, like Raghu, conquered

1 Winternitz, M., *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. III, p. 23; Upadhyaya B. S., *Kālidāsa kṛt Bhārata* (in Hindi), Vol. II, pp. 216 ff.; Mirashi, V. V., *Kālidāsa* (in Hindi), Chapter I; Smith, V. A., *EHI*, p. 321; Macdonell, A. A., *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 274 f.; De. S. C., *Kālidāsa and Vikramāditya*, pp. 474 ff.; Agrawala, V. S., *JUPHS*, XXII, pp. 81 ff.; B. Prakash, *Studies*, pp. 330 ff.

only the kings of the eastern part of the Deccan and of the Far South up to Kerala.¹ He, and for that matter Chandragupta II, had nothing to do with the Western Deccan. But what about Western India? We definitely know that Chandragupta II destroyed the Śaka Satraps of Western India and added the rich provinces of Kathiawar and Northern Gujarat to the empire. His achievement was fairly dazzling and must have made quite an impression on the minds of his contemporaries. That he was remembered as Śakāri is a positive proof of it. But strangely enough, Kālidāsa, who is supposed to have written the account of the *digvijaya* of Raghu on the basis of the actual facts of the military achievements of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II both, is mute on this point. While describing the conquests of Raghu, he merely says that after the victory of Trikūṭa, Raghu proceeded by the land-route to conquer the Pārasikas. He mentions neither the Śakas nor the region over which they ruled. It conclusively proves that if Kālidāsa wrote the account of the *digvijaya* of Raghu on the basis of the actual facts provided by the military achievements of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II, he had completed the composition of the *Raghuvaṃśa* before the conquest of the Western India by Chandragupta II. Now, the Śaka rule in the Western India came to an end towards the close of the reign of Chandragupta II². Therefore, the composition of the *Raghuvaṃśa* may well have been over by c. 400 A. D. It is a very significant clue, because as is generally admitted, the *Raghuvaṃśa* is by far one of the best and most mature works of Kālidāsa. It would mean that the major part of the literary activities of the poet was over by c. 400 A. D. We, therefore, suggest that Kālidāsa flourished in the second half of the fourth century A. D., and not in the first half of fifth century A. D.

The account of the conquest of the North-Western region by Raghu (RV, IV. 60-70) is consonant with and supports our suggestion. According to Kālidāsa, Persia could have been reached by a sea-route, but Raghu discarded it. He went by the land-route

1 *Supra*, p. 164f.

2 *Infra*, pp. 246ff.

and defeated the Persians in a fierce fighting. Thereafter, he moved northwards and vanquished the Hūnas on the banks of the river Oxus. Then came the turn of the Kāmbojas who were unable to resist his valour and accepted his overlordship. This description of the power-alignment in the North-West resembles strikingly the political condition of this region in the third quarter of the fourth century A. D.¹ The contemporaneity of Kālidāsa and Samudragupta has been rendered all the more probable by the fact that the latter assumed the little *Vikrama*, alongwith his usual title *Parākrama*.² Further, it is now generally accepted that the cycles of legends concerning the king Vikramāditya refer not only to Chandragupta II, but to Samudragupta and Skandagupta also.³ If it is so, it may also be easily conceded that the legend that the king Vikramāditya conquered almost the whole of India⁴ refers to Samudragupta, and not to Chandragupta II or Skandagupta. The presence of Kālidāsa in the court of both Samudragupta and Chandragupta II was, perhaps, one of the factors which led to the amalgamation of the achievements of these two kings in the popular memory and gave rise to the Vikramāditya tradition.⁵

1 *Supra*, pp. 173 ff.

2 *JNSI*, V, pl. IXa 7. See *supra*, p. 190.

3 Majumdar, R. C., *NHIP*, pp. 170-71; Raychaudhuri, H. C., *Vikrama Volume* (Scindia Oriental Institute, 1948), pp. 483-511.

4 Pandey, R. B., *Vikramāditya* (in Hindi), p. 99 f.

5 Many scholars who do not believe in the contemporaneity of the Guptas and Kālidāsa point to the fact that in the *śrayaṃvara* of Indumati it is the king of Ayodhyā who wins her hand, and not the ruler Pātaliputra. They conveniently forget that the argument goes against any other theory of the date of Kālidāsa, for Vikramāditya, the patron of Kālidāsa is said to have been the ruler of Ujjayinī and not of Ayodhyā, the capital of Raghu who won the hand of Indumati. We should not forget that Kālidāsa was writing a poem, and not history. However, it may be noted that the Guptas did not belong to Magadha (*supra*, Ch. II) and in the time of Chandragupta II, their capital was probably at Ayodhyā and not at Pātaliputra. (*supra*, App. iv, pp. 210 ff.). Therefore, our suggestion is quite consonant with the data provided by the *Raghuvamśa* on this point.



CHAPTER IV

THE WESTERN THEATRE

After the demise of Samudragupta which took place most likely in the year 375 A. D., the date of the accession of his son and successor Chandragupta II¹, the centre of political gravity shifted towards the west at least for the next three quarters of a century. It was in this direction that Chandragupta II as well as his son Kumāragupta I² had some significant military achievements to their credit. Further, it was Ujjayinī, the chief city of the western Malwa, that became the most important provincial capital of the empire in this period.³ And then, it was in the western provinces of the empire that a number of the royal princes, who were sent there as governors or viceroys, raised banner of revolt against the central authority.⁴ Thus, it would seem that during the reign

1 If Rāmagupta, the elder brother of Chandragupta II, ruled only as a local king of Malwa, the latter must have become the master of the rest of the empire immediately after the death of Samudragupta.

2 *Infra*, pp. 256 ff.

3 Certain chiefs of the Kanarese Districts, who claimed descent from Chandragupta (Vikramāditya) referred to their great ancestor as *Ujjayinī-puravar-ādhiśvara*, 'the lord of Ujjain, the best of the cities.' According to *Kāvya mīmāṃsā*, Sāhasāṅka of Ujjain ordered the exclusive use of Sanskrit in his *harem*. He thus reversed the policy of Ādhyarāja (*PHAI*, p. 556, fn. 12). Then there is the legend which associates the Śakāri Vikramāditya with Ujjain.

4 *Infra*, p. 222 f.

of Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I the western region had become the major stage of the political drama.

PULL OF THE WEST

In a way, such a shift in the centre of political gravity was but natural. It is a well-known fact of Indian history that the geography of the expansion of the North Indian empires, like the migrations of the races, cultures and ideas, usually followed a 'Z' pattern.¹ If the builders of an empire began their career in the North-West, they entered the *antarvedi* via the Divide region and after consolidating their authority up to the Delta of Bengal, entered Malwa from the Central Gaṅgā Valley and occupied Gujarat. About the geography of the Mughal conquest, Panikkar writes : "from Ferganah to Kabul, from Kabul to Agra and with Agra the Gangetic Valley. Under Akbar the empire is consolidated ; Bengal is firmly held : a lightening campaign annexes Gujarat Then begins the struggle....against the Deccan".² The geography of the Gupta empire after the consolidation of the Gaṅgā Valley could not have been very much different. Plundering expeditions of course could be sent to the South when the imperial army was regarded as strong enough to undertake such projects, but the successful implementation of the policy of annexation could hardly defy the general pattern dictated by the geographical factor. No wonder, therefore, if after the death of Samudragupta, who had succeeded in bringing the whole of the Gaṅgā Valley and the major part of the eastern Malwa under his direct control, the expansion of the empire took a westwardly direction and the history of his immediate successors came to be dominated by the events preceding and following this westward expansion.

Rulers of big empires of ancient India such as the Mauryas and the Śuṅgas associated the princes of their families in administration by appointing them as governors or viceroys of the provinces and the subordinate states.³ A similar policy was

1 cf. Subbarao, *Personality of India*, p. 7.

2 Panikkar, K. M., *Geog. Fact*, p. 80.

3 Bhandarkar, D. R., *Comp. Hist. Ind.*, II, pp. 19, 21, 100.

followed by the early Gupta emperors. They usually appointed the princes of the royal family as viceroys or governors of their western provinces, especially Malwa. It appears that in the scheme of the imperial organisation this province was accorded a special status the exact nature of which is difficult to be determined. The process probably started when Samudragupta converted the newly conquered Airikīṇa into his direct personal possession—which is the real meaning of the term *svabhoga*.¹ Further, the findspots of the coins of Rāmagupta suggest that when he declared his independence, he was associated with the eastern Malwa, probably as a governor.² Similarly, a tradition has it that Chandragupta II appeared at the *Kāryakāra* examination before the literateure of Ujjayinī³, indicating thereby that as a prince he was connected with that province, most likely in some administrative capacity. What exactly was the status of these princes in Malwa is not clear, but it is very significant that their appointment did not result in the abolition of the Sanakānika dynasty in the eastern Malwa and of the Varmans in the western Malwa. On the other hand, these local rulers were given a lot of freedom; especially the Varmans enjoyed the privilege of using their own era and the liberty of not referring the name of their overlord in their inscriptions—a right not enjoyed by any other feudatory dynasty of this period.⁵ The presence of the princes of the imperial family in Malwa with some sort of administrative authority could, therefore, imply only one thing: either because of its strategic position or due to the force of the local tradition of tribal autonomy the Gupta emperors

1 Cf. Aiyangar in *JIN*, XIV, p. 29; Jayaswal, *Hist. Ind.*, p. 141; Sharma, D., *PIHC*, 1956, p. 147; Sharma, R. S., *Ind. Feud.*, pp. 17-18, 236.

2 *Infra.*, p. 236.

3 *Kāryamīmāṃsā*, p. 55; quoted by Mirashi in the *Vākātaka Rājavāṃśa*, p. 78.

4 Note that the Sanakānika Mahārāja of the Udayagiri inscription of the Gupta year 82 calls himself the son of the Mahārāja Vishṇudāsa and the grandson of the Mahārāja Chhagalaga (*Sie. Ins.*, p. 271).

5 Cf. *Supra*, pp. 217ff

were compelled to give a special status to this region, though they took the precaution of sending royal princes there to look after the imperial interests. This unusual position of Malwa did not change much even after Chandragupta II had conquered the Śakas and had brought Gujarat under his direct administrative control; for, it seems almost certain that Govindagupta, the son of Chandragupta II, was for sometime the viceroy of the western Malwa, most probably during the life-time of the latter,¹ and Ghaṭotkachagupta, another royal prince, probably a son of Kumāragupta I, was accorded the same status in the eastern Malwa with his headquarters at Tumbavana² in the second quarter of the fifth century. A more or less similar policy was followed by the Sassanian emperors towards Bactria when they sent their crown-prince as the governor of that province in the third century A. D. in order to keep a watch over the local Kushāṇa rulers.³ But to their dismay they found that their prince-viceroy did not hesitate to exploit the opportunity of being saddled with the administration of a frontier province and to jockey for an independent position by raising the banner of revolt against the central authority.⁴ Probably the experience of the Gupta emperors was not much different. At least it is against this background that the problem of the place of the princes like Rāmagupta, Govindagupta and Ghaṭotkachagupta in the history of their dynasty should be studied.

RĀMAGUPTA AND THE EASTERN MALWA

THE LITERARY EVIDENCE

Until about forty years ago, it was unanimously believed that Chandragupta II succeeded his father peacefully with the approval of the latter (*tatparigṛhīta*). Since then, the discovery of a few

1 *Infra*, p.

2 *Infra*, Ch. V, App. i.

3 *Comp. Hist. Ind.*, II, p. 251.

4 e. g. Hormizd, the Sassanian crown-prince, who was the viceroy of Bactria revolted against the imperial authority in 284 A. D. (*Ibid.*).

passages of a lost drama *Devī Chandragupta*,¹ ascribed to Viśākha-deva who is usually identified with Viśākha-datta, the author of the *Mudrā Rākṣasa*,² has thrown a new light on the question. From the available extracts of the drama we learn that

- 1 In October 1923 S. Levi announced the discovery of the *Nāṭya Darpaṇa* of Rāmachandra and Guṇachandra and draw attention to six extracts of the drama *Devī Chandragupta* (*J.A.*, CCIII, pp. 201). The same year three extracts of the drama were published by R. Saraswati from *Śṛigāra rīpakam*, a work attributed to the king Bhoja of Dhārā (*IA*, LII, pp. 181 ff.). In 1936, V. Raghvan published two more passages quoted in Sāgaranandin's *Nāṭaka Lakṣaṇakosha*.
- 2 Viśākha-datta belonged to a family of feudatory chiefs. He is described as the son of the Mahārāja Bhāskaradatta and the grandson of the Sāmanta Vateśvaradatta. Jayaswal (*IA*, XLII, pp. 265-7), Sten Konow (*IA*, XLIII, pp. 66 ff.) Hillebrandt (*ZDMG*, XXXIX, pp. 130 ff.) S. S. Sastri (*IHQ*, VII, pp. 163 ff.), B. Prakash (*Studies*, p. 135 f.) and many others are inclined to regard him as the contemporary of Chandragupta II. S. K. De (*B. C. Law Volume*, I, p. 51) thinks that he belonged to the older group of dramatists. S. Levi (*op. cit.*) places him sometime between the Guptas and Harsha. In the *bharatavākya* of the *Mudrā Rākṣasa* (vii. 21) there is the mention of a king Chandragupta whose kingdom is said to be troubled by Mlechchhas. As a reference to Chandragupta Maurya, who is the subject of the play would be unusual in the *bharatavākya*, he is generally regarded as the patron of Viśākha. But since the readings Dantivarman, Rantivarman and Avantivarman, instead of Chandragupta, are also found, no finality on the identity of this king may be reached. However, the first of these two names cannot be traced any where, and according to Dhruva (quoted by De, *op. cit.*, p. 51) the way in which the king of Kashmir is treated in the play, a reference to Avantivarman of Kashmir in its *bharatavākya* becomes highly unlikely. Further, from Hillebrandt's critical edition of the drama it appears that Avantivarman is a later emendation. Therefore, 'Chandragupta' seems to be the most plausible reading. He is generally identified with Chandragupta II Vikramāditya. In the *bharatavākya* of the *Mudrā Rākṣasa* he is likened with the Boer incarnation of Viṣṇu. The Varāha image of the Udayagiri cave, in which an inscription of the reign of Chandragupta II is found, appears to be the sculptural rendering of this idea.

Rāmagupta, a coward and impotent (*klība*) king, agreed to surrender his queen Dhruvadevi to a Śaka invader in order to satisfy his councillors.¹ But the prince Chandragupta, the younger brother of the king, resolved to go to the enemy's camp in the guise of the queen with a view to killing the hated enemy. As the names of the hero and the heroine of the drama—Chandragupta and Dhruvadevi—are undoubtedly historical, the story tends to show that Chandragupta II, the son of Samudragupta, was preceded on the throne by the latter's elder son Rāmagupta.² The available extracts of the drama do not reveal as to what happened to Rāmagupta and how Chandragupta II managed to acquire the throne and the queen for himself. But the combined testimony of the scattered pieces contained in the *Harshacharita* of Bāṇa, the *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* of Rājaśekhara, the Sanjan and the Cambay and the Sangli copper plates of the Rāshtrakūṭa rulers and Śaṅkarārya's commentary on the *Harshacharita*³ when collected and collated together gives a somewhat flexible outline of the episode. It indicates that Chandragupta's success in killing the Śaka enemy kindled a fire of love for him in the heart of Dhruvadevi and resulted in the estrangement between the two brothers so much so that Chandragupta, being afraid of his elder brother's design on his own life, had to pretend madness. But ultimately, by some means he succeeded in killing Rāmagupta, and not only seized his kingdom but also married his widow. Perhaps such was the end (*phala*) of the drama *Devī Chandragupta* as the tendency of the available extracts suggests. For example, in one extract it is stated that Chandragupta feigned madness presumably to save his own life. It is also quite possible that the story of the prince Barkmaris (Vikramāditya ?) and his royal brother Rawwal

1 *Prakṛitīnām... āśvāsnāya*. Some take it to mean "for satisfying the people."

2 cf. that the Eran inscription of Samudragupta refers to his several sons and grandsons (*See Ins.*, p. 261).

3 For an analysis of the testimony of these references see Altekar, *JBORS*, XIV, pp. 223 ff; cf. also Chattopadhyaya, K. C., *Bhandarkar Comm. Vol.* p. 118 and the works mentioned on page 226 fn. 2.

(Rāmagupta ?) which in all essentials resembles the episode of Rāmagupta and is claimed to have originally been a Hindu tale¹, was based on the theme of the drama *Devī Chandragupta*.

NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE AND CORRELATION OF THE DATA

The question whether the king Rāmagupta of the literary tradition belongs to the realm of imagination or history has been, for the last four decades, a major problem of the Gupta history. Much has been written in favour of and against his historicity². In the recent years, the discovery of some copper coins from Vidiśā-Airikiṇa region bearing the name of Rāmagupta, has given a new dimension to it³. K. D. Bajpai has classified them under

- 1 Elliot and Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians*, I, p. 110 f.
- 2 The first scholar to reconstruct the history of Rāmagupta was R. D. Banerji (Manindranath Nandi Lectures, delivered in Nov. 1924 in the Banaras Hindu University). Altekar (*JBORS*, XIV, pp. 223 ff.; XV, pp. 134 ff.), R. D. Banerji (*AIG*, pp. 26 ff.), Mirashi (*IHQ*, X, p. 48; *IA*, LXII, p. 201), Saletore (*Life in the Gupta Age*, pp. 14 ff.) etc. believe in the historicity of Rāmagupta. D. R. Bhandarkar (*Mālarīya Commemoration Volume*, pp. 189 ff.) suggested that the name Rāma is a copyist's mistake for Kācha while Jayaswal (*JBORS*, XVIII, pp. 17 ff.) believed that Rāmagupta and Kācha were the names of the same person. In his later years Altekar also identified Rāmagupta with the king Kācha (*Supra*, p. 192 f.). According to Heras (*JBR*, XXXIV, pp. 19 ff.) suggested that the name of Rāmagupta was eliminated from the Gupta records because of his infamous conduct. Smith (*EHI*, p. 301) rejected the Rāmagupta tradition as 'scandalous'. Raychaudhuri (*PHAI*, p. 553 fn. 2), Basak (*HNEI*, Intro. p. iii) and many others find it difficult to accept the literary tradition as reliable. K. C. Ojha (*ibid.*, XXXVII, pp. 39 ff.) regards it as a mingling of truth and fancy and Majumdar (*NHPI*, pp. 161 ff.) is of the opinion that the problem cannot be solved until further evidence is available.
- 3 Earlier, some copper coins bearing the legend *Rāmagupta* or *maguta* or *magupta* were published by P. L. Gupta (*JNSI*, XII, pp. 103 ff.), H. V. Trivedi (*ibid.*, pp. 128, ff.), and K. D. Bajpai (*ibid.*, XVIII, pp. 108-9). Since then K. D. Bajpai has published new varieties of the coins of Rāmagupta (*JNSI*, XXIII, pp. 340. ff.) found from the Vidiśā-Airikiṇa region.)

Lion, Garuḍa, Garuḍadhvaja and Border Legend types.¹ The facts that the Rāmagupta of these coins flourished in the Gupta age (as the script of the legends on his coins indicates) and had Garuḍadhvaja as his symbol, strongly suggest that he was a prince of the imperial Gupta family and thus tend to corroborate literary tradition. But the problem of the co-relation of the archaeological and the literary data is not so simple. According to the literary tradition when Rāmagupta agreed to surrender Dhruvadevī to the Śaka invader, Chandragupta II was merely a prince (*kumāra*). This definitely implies that at that time Rāmagupta was an imperial suzerain claiming his sway over the whole of the empire of his father and that Chandragupta II had agreed to the accession of his elder brother acquiescing to play the second fiddle as a prince. Thus, the literary data suggest that Rāmagupta ruled as a full-fledged emperor in between Samudragupta and Chandragupta II. But the archaeological data militate against this conclusion. For, the Gupta epigraphs quite frequently use the phrase *tatparigrīhita* to describe the relationship of Chandragupta II with his father Samudragupta.² It implies a claim on the part of the former to

1 cf. *JIH*, XLII, pt. II, pp. 389. ff.

2 *Sel. Ins.*, pp. 313, 318, 321. Note that Chandragupta II is the only Gupta emperor who felt the necessity of justifying his accession through a reference to the desire of his royal father. All the other Gupta kings who mentioned their fathers in their inscriptions were usually content with the use of the phrase *tatpādānudhyāta* (meditating on the feet) which merely indicates their filial devotion. This phrase was not a technical expression to denote a legal or legitimate right to the throne as many scholars (cf. Sinha, *DKAI*, p. 25) ask us to believe. It was used even by feudatory kings to show their devotion to their overlord. cf. the Udayagiri inscription of the Gupta year 82, which describes the Śanakānika Mahārāja as the *pādānudhyāta* of Chandragupta II (Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, p. 271). On the other hand, Chandragupta II used the phrase *tatparigrīhita* (accepted by him i. e. Samudragupta) evidently in order to show that Samudragupta chose him as his successor out of his many sons. According to Majumdar (*NIIP*, p. 165) and Mookerji (*GE*, p. 45) the acceptance of this view would cut the very root of the theory that Rāmagupta succeeded Samudragupta

the effect that he ascended the throne with the approval of the latter. It renders suspect *Devī Chandragupta's* description of Chandragupta II as merely a *kumāra*. Further, the coins attributed to Rāmagupta are found significantly in the eastern Malwa only, indicating thereby that his authority was confined roughly to that area. It is against his description as the imperial ruler in the *Devī Chandragupta's* and has led scholars such as D. C. Sircar to conclude that the Rāmagupta of these coins was a local ruler of Malwa and not a prince of the imperial Gupta family.¹ But this assumption fails to explain the literary evidence altogether. For, even if it is conceded that the Rāmagupta of the tradition

but, the argument is hardly cogent, for, even if Rāmagupta was the eldest son of Samudragupta, the latter could very well have nominated his younger son Chandragupta II as his successor and Rāmagupta could have revolted against this injustice. Did not Śambha, the eldest son of Dhruva rebel when the latter nominated his third son Govinda III as his successor (Altekar, *Rāshtrakūṭas and their Times*, pp. 59 ff.).

- 1 Sircar, D.C., *JIH*, XL, Pt. III, pp. 533 ff.; Narain, A.K., *JNSI*, IX, pp. 107 ff.; cf. also Nisar Ahmed, *JNSI*, XXV, Pt. I, pp. 106-7; Jai Prakash (*ibid*, pp. 164 ff.; Upendra Thakur, *ibid*, XXVI, pp. 162 ff.; *PIHC*, 1958, pp. 79 ff. Dani (*JNSI*, XXVI, pp. 11 ff.) believes that these coins were issued by Rāmagupta, the son of Samudragupta, who was given the right to issue coins in his own name but lost his life in a war fought against the Śakas, possibly when Samudragupta was still alive. But there is nothing in support of this suggestion. Sircar (*op. cit.*) suggests that Rāmagupta known from his monetary issues 'was a chief who issued coins in imitation of the imperial Gupta money on the decline of the Guptas about the close of the fifth century A. D.' But as is well known, in 484 A. D. the extensive territory between the Yamunā and the Narmadā rivers was ruled over by the Mahārāja Suraśmichandra, a feudatory chief of Budhagupta and that the former had under him a certain Mātrivishṇu, also a Mahārāja, who governed the region round Eran. Later on, the Eran region passed under the hegemony of the Hūṇas. Thus, there is no place for Rāmagupta in the eastern Malwa in or 'about the close of the fifth century A. D.' See Bajpai, *JIH*, XIII, Pt. II, pp. 389 ff.; cf. also Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 164.

was entirely a product of imagination, it has got to be explained as to why and how a tradition in which a certain Gupta king was painted in such sombre colours developed in the Gupta age itself.

METHOD OF THE COURT-HISTORIANS

The problem of Rāmagupta tradition, we feel, can be solved only by the judicious and proper analysis of the ancient method of organizing the historical data through certain well-defined motifs and their method of inferences and interpretations as revealed in such ancient historical works as the *charita*-narratives and the dramas based on the known events (*khyāta itihāsa*). With the avowed purpose of projecting the story in a way which may cast the patron in a favourable role, the court-historians highlighted certain aspects ignoring the others by means of the various devices of side-stepping which transmuted facts into an intelligible pattern leading to the desired conclusion. They were "not so much as to bring out the consequences which would inevitably follow if a person with certain given qualities was placed in the initial situation as to divine in his character those qualities which make the known outcome appear rational and inevitable. Therefore, besides conditioning the treatment of antecedent events, the end (*phalāgama*) also influences the characterization."¹ Nevertheless they left certain refractory snippets or loose ends in the sprawling story, which ultimately give a lie to the central theme, exposing the motive of the authors. The discrepancy, therefore, becomes to the modern historians as important, if not more than the coherent picture. For instance, in his *Harshacharita* Bāṇa, who aimed at describing the achievement of universal sovereignty (*vāṇija-śrī*), personified in latter's sister Rājyaśrī,² not only puts in the mouth of Prabhākara a speech which suggests that the dying king wanted his second son Harsha to succeed him,³ and makes Rājya to

1 Pathak, V. S., *Ancient Historians of India*, p.47.f.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

3 *Harshacharita*, p. 220, 233.

offer the crown to Harsha¹, but also deliberately neglects to mention that Rājya did ascend the throne—a fact which is revealed to us by the epigraphic evidence. Similarly, in his *Vikramāṅkadeva-charita*, Bilhana who wanted to justify the dethronement of Someśvara II Bhuvanaikamalla by Vikramāditya VI, the younger brother of the latter and the patron of the former,² states that Someśvara I Āhavamalla ignored the claim of his eldest son Someśvara II Bhuvanaikamalla and offered his throne to his more virtuous but younger son Vikramāditya VI (which Vikramāditya very magnanimously rejected), a claim which is falsified by the epigraphic evidence³. Someśvara III Bhūlokamalla, the son and successor of Vikramāditya VI and the author of the *Vikramāṅkabhūdaya* goes a step further when he not only omits to mention the fact that Bhuvanaikamalla was invested with heir-apparency by Āhavamalla, but positively

1 *Ibid*, pp. 252–3.

2 In ancient India the principle of primogeniture was the generally accepted law of succession (cf. *Rāmāyaṇa*, II, 110, 36; *Mahābhārata*, I, 85, 22; *Nirukta*, II, 10; *Aśṭaśāstra*, XII, 1, 17) though some mediaeval texts regard it as merely recommendatory (vide Kane, P. V., *History of Dharmasāstra*, III, pp. 41 ff.). However, usually the supersession of the eldest brother was highly disliked. When Yayāti desired to pass over his elder sons because they disobeyed him and wanted to make the younger Puru his successor, the Brāhmaṇas and the citizens protested against it (*Mahābhārata*, I, 85, 22 and 25). Similarly, when Dhruva Dhāravarsha neglecting the claim of his eldest son Stambha invested his own third son Govinda III with the necklet of heir-apparency, there was great popular resentment and Dhruva had to abdicate the throne in order to set the new government of Govinda III secure in the saddle (Altekar, A. S., *The Rāshtrakūṭas and their Times*, pp. 59 ff.).

3 *Ibid*, p. 64. From the epigraphs we learn that Someśvara II was declared heir-apparent in 1049 while Vikramāditya was assigned a responsible office as late as 1055. As the latter ascended the throne in 1076 and ruled for at least 50 years, it is highly unlikely that he had become a major before 1055. Therefore, the story that he was offered heir-apparency earlier than Someśvara II should be regarded as purely a product of Bilhana's imagination.

claims that Vikramāditya VI was appointed as heir-apparent when he (Vikramāditya VI) was only sixteen years old.¹ These discrepancies prove that the authors of these works deliberately suppressed or transmuted those facts which did not fit in with the theme or purpose of their works. In this light the fact that the story of the *Devī Chandragupta* is not consonant with the testimony of the archaeological sources, assumes a new significance and the possibility that Viśākha also suppressed or transmuted those facts which were not in harmony with the purpose of his drama, becomes worthy of serious consideration. It is quite likely that after the demise of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II violated the law of primogeniture and somehow became the master of almost the whole of the empire while Rāmagupta, the elder brother of the latter, who may have been the governor of the eastern Malwa during the life-time of Samudragupta, could impose his authority only on that province; but Viśākha, who wanted to whitewash the misdeed of his master, gave a different colour to the whole episode by showing that Chandragupta II had accepted the accession of Rāmagupta,² and that it was the misdeeds of the latter that forced Chandragupta to capture power in his own hands.

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE HERO AND THE VILLAIN

One of the devices employed by the authors of the *charita*-narratives to justify the violation of the law of primogeniture by the hero of their work, was the portrayal of the benevolent, valorous and virtuous character of the hero in contradistinction to the mean and cruel nature of his rival elder brother. According to Bilhana, his patron Vikramāditya VI was forced to dethrone Someśvara II because the latter, after becoming king, fell into evil

1 Pathak, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

2 The statement of the Gupta epigraphs that Chandragupta II was 'accepted' by Samudragupta is not necessarily against the claim of Viśākha. May be, in the now lost portion of the drama Viśākha had shown that Samudragupta wanted his younger son Chandragupta II to succeed him, but the latter, like Vikramāditya VI of the Chālukya dynasty, very magnanimously declined the offer.

courses and alienated all good persons by his suspicious, cruel and avaricious nature.¹ The allegation can hardly be upheld, for many of the inscriptions of the reign of Someśvara and Vikramāditya VI both, pay a high tribute to Someśvara's noble character.² That a deliberate attempt was made to malign the character of Someśvara II is rendered beyond doubt by the *Vikramāṅkābhya-daya*, composed by Someśvara III Bhūlokamalla, the son and successor of Vikramāditya VI. It attributes the demoniac nature of Someśvara II to providential decree and emphasizes it by describing in detail the cruel and mean cravings of the queen when she was pregnant with the vicious child and the wicked and ignoble activities of the prince during his boyhood.³ This device was used even in the epigraphs. When the Rāshtrakūṭa ruler Govind II was overthrown by his younger brother Dhruva, the latter claimed that he proceeded to fight against his elder brother not so much to gain the throne for himself, as to retain it for the Rāshtrakūṭas.⁴ The later rulers of the dynasty amplified this statement by characterizing Govinda II as a wicked ruler, associated with wicked persons and given to 'sensual pleasures'.⁵ The fact of the matter, however, is that Govinda II, who, far from being a lascivious person was a great warrior and cavalry leader,⁶ had great confidence in Dhruva and had entrusted practically the whole administration in his hands, but the latter abused the confidence reposed in him and tried to exploit it in order to usurp the throne for himself. Govinda II, realising what his brother was aiming at, removed him from the administration and entrusted it to some stranger. It was sufficient excuse for Dhruva to revolt openly, declaring that there was the danger of the Rāshtrakūṭa family itself being ousted from the throne. Two centuries

1 Pathak, V. S., *op. cit.*, p. 66.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 85 ff.

4 *El*, IX, pp. 193 ff.

5 Vide Karhad plates of Krishna III (*El*, IV, pp. 278 ff.) and the Kharda plates of Karka (*IAI*, XII, pp. 263 ff.).

6 *El*, VI, pp. 208 ff.

later Krishṇa III another ruler of the dynasty employed this device to his advantage when he organized a successful revolt against his cousin Govinda IV. He also claimed that the vicious life and lascivious ways of Govinda IV had ruined his constitution, alienated the sympathy of his subjects and feudatories and led to his destruction.¹ The statement, though not altogether unfounded, appears to be highly exaggerated, especially in view of the claim that Amoghavarsha III, the father of Krishṇa and the leader of the revolt, was very reluctant to ascend the throne, and when the feudatories pressed him to accept the crown for the sake of the preservation of the Rāshtrakūṭa glory, he accepted to their request only after consulting an oracle!²

CHANDRAGUPTA'S MARRIAGE WITH DHRUVADEVI

But Chandragupta II had not only violated the law of primogeniture, he had also married the widow of his elder brother murdered by him. The generally accepted view that the marriage of Chandragupta II with the widow of Rāmagupta, if a fact, was against neither social practices nor Śāstric injunctions, is perhaps not entirely correct. As pointed out by Altekar, widow remarriages came 'into disrepute during the period 300 B. C. to 200 A. D'.³ In the *Mahābhārata*, when urged to make peace on the last day of the war Duryodhana says that like a man who is asked to marry a widow, he is disinclined to enjoy the earth denuded by valiant heroes fallen in the battle-field.⁴ Dharmasūtra writers generally place the son of a widow low in their scheme of succession.⁵ Manu lays down that a widow should not even think of remarriage.⁶ Viṣṇu recommends celibacy to the widow.⁷ Nārada⁸ and Parāśara⁹ no doubt allow her to remarry if her hus-

1 Altekar, *op. cit.* p. 107.

2 *op. cit.* p. 108.

3 Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization.*, p. 152.

4 *Mahābhārata*, IX. 31.45.

5 Altekar, *op. cit.*

6 *Manu*, V. 157.

7 Quoted by Altekar, *op. cit.* p. 153.

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*

band was impotent, had expired, or entered a monastery or gone out on a long journey. But significantly enough, both of them quote the same verse on this point which may indicate that they drew upon a common source of an earlier period. Our skepticism gets reinforced by the injunction of Nārada who elsewhere contradicting himself makes monogamy imperative for woman.¹ Further, it may be noted that no other instance belonging to the Gupta period of the remarriage of a widow, except the one under discussion is on record—at least such authorities as Kane and Altekar have not cited any. Furthermore, even if it is conceded that the widow remarriages were prevalent in the Gupta period, the fact that the person whom Dhruvadevi remarried was responsible for the murder of her husband must have been sufficient reason for provoking criticism in society. It is against this background that the emphasis given in the inscriptions of Chandragupta II on his being a *sataputra*² and *Rājādbirājarishi* or saintly sovereign³ in contradistinction to the device employed by Viśākha for maligning the character of his rival Rāmagupta assumes importance. Obviously, the task to which Viśākha addressed himself was more difficult than that of Bilhaṇa who had to whitewash only the crime involved in the violation of the law of primogeniture by Vikramāditya VI. But Viśākha rose to the occasion and put forward an ingenious plea in the defence of Chandragupta II. In his drama he portrayed Rāmagupta not as a cruel, wicked or avaricious person; instead, he made him an impotent and coward husband, who had shamelessly agreed to hand over his queen Dhruvadevi to the enemy king. In contrast to him was Chandragupta II, the hero of the drama who had 'charm and beauty to match (his) youth', a lion 'at the very sight of whom the herds of deers flee away', and the matchless hero who did not hesitate to endanger his own life in order to save the prestige of his dynasty and of the queen. Thus, Viśākha killed two birds with one stone;

1 *Ibid.*

2 *Sel. Ins.* p. 270.

3 *Ibid.* p. 272.

by the skilful characterization of the hero and the villain he furnished a plausible excuse for the legitimate supersession of the latter by the former and also for the spontaneous love of the heroine for the hero ultimately leading to their marriage. Further, if the suggestion that the Arab account of the king Rawwal and his brother Barkamaris was based on the drama *Devī Chandragupta* is correct, it may also be assumed that the story relating to the success of the prince Chandragupta in the *svayamvara* of Dhruvadevī and to the meanness of Rāmagupta who took her from his younger brother was also forwarded by Viśākha as an additional argument to justify the conduct of Chandragupta II.¹

RAMAGUPTA'S PLACE IN GUPTA HISTORY

The above analysis, if correct, lends an altogether new complexion to the problem of Rāmagupta. Now it would appear that

- 1 Another device by which Bilhaṇa sought to justify the supersession of Someśvara II by Vikramāditya IV is the plea of divine pre-ordination and command. According to him the king Someśvara I, tormented by a desire to obtain a son, left his kingdom in care of his ministers, gave himself up to penances and as a result received the boon of three sons, the second of whom Vikramāditya VI, was destined to 'bring back the goddess of royal glory from beyond the seas' (Pathak, *op. cit.* p. 63.). Later on, when the prospects of a fratricidal war made Vikramāditya VI reluctant to fight the combined armies of the Cholas and the Chālukyas, Bilhaṇa narrates, Śiva appeared before Vikramāditya and commanded him : "O Child. You are my virtuous incarnation and, therefore, it is surprising that you are having such mental oscillation. Don't you remember that you are born to destroy the evil doers ? By annihilating the enemies, therefore, may your strung bow be a cause of jubilation for the whole world" (*ibid.*, p. 69). Later again, Śiva angrily ordered him to keep Someśvara II in prison (*ibid.*). Whether Viśākha employed this motif in his drama or not, is not known. However, the Chakravikrama type coins of Chandragupta II (*Coinage*, pp. 145 ff.) depose significant evidence in this connection. It is quite possible that these coins, on the obverse of which he is shown as receiving three symbols of the universal sovereignty from Chakrapurusha, were issued to publicize the idea that he achieved royal status as a result of the divine favour.

the evidence of the *Devi Chandragupta* is not sufficient to establish that Rāmagupta was an impotent and coward ruler; he might have been as normal a person as Someśvara II, the elder brother of Vikramāditya VI was. Whether Samudragupta had greater affection for Chandragupta II is also difficult to state; we have no evidence for it except for the claim of Chandragupta II himself. From the available evidence interpreted in the light of the above discussion it appears that after the death of Samudragupta, his younger son somehow managed to establish his authority over whole of the empire except the eastern part of Malwa where Rāmagupta, the legitimate claimant to the throne, declared his independence. May be Rāmagupta was the governor of that province when Samudragupta died. Finding Chandragupta II secure in the saddle, he quite naturally tried to consolidate his power in this region. It was at this time that his copper coins, now available from Vidishā-Airikiṇa region, were issued. The explanation of the fact that he did not issue any gold coins in his name is very simple : they were not needed in this region where copper currency was popular and sufficient. Even Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I etc.¹ had to succumb to the pressure of numismatic conservatism when

1 It is generally believed that Samudragupta did not issue any copper coins. Banerji, no doubt, refers to two copper coins of this ruler discovered near Kotwa in the Burdwan District of Bengal (*AIG*, p. 214), but their existence is not beyond doubt (*Coinage*, p. 40). R. R. Tripathi (*JNSI*, XXVI, pp. 96-7) has attributed a square copper coin, now in the Allahabad Museum to Samudragupta. K. D. Bajpai (*ibid* XXVII, pp. 191-92) does not agree with this attribution. He, however, refers to a copper coin (*diam.* 2.00 cm.; weight 45.50 grains) of this emperor which is now in the collection of R. K. Sethi of Indore. It is apparently a copy of the gold Archer type coins of Samudragupta (*JII*, XLII, Pt. II, p. 392 fn. 6a) similar to his silver Lyrist coin (*JNSI*, XXI, pp. 191-92) or the copper Archer type coin of Chandragupta II (*Coinage*, pp. 157-8). Rāmagupta on the other hand, issued copper coins in imitation of the preceding local currency of Malwa (vide, Bajpai, *JII*, XLII, Pt. II, pp. 392-3).

they issued in Western India coins in imitation of the Kshatrapa issues. It is also quite possible that Rāmagupta was not in a position of indulging in the luxury of issuing gold currency. He was able to snatch only a small province from his brother and must have been in constant danger of being attacked by the imperial armies from the north-east and by the Śakas from the west. Perhaps the danger of the Śaka invasion materialized first. Chandragupta II exploited this opportunity and quite probably in the name of the security of the Gupta empire invaded and occupied eastern Malwa. In the course of war Rāmagupta was killed. Later on, his widow Dhruvadevī became the consort of the emperor. This reconstruction of the Rāmagupta episode, we feel, explains and reconciles all the available information on the subject and may, therefore, be accepted as the closest approximation to truth.

THE WESTERN FRONT

CHANDRAGUPTA II: EXTENT OF THE EMPIRE

Chandragupta II who emerged victorious in the struggle for the throne, turned out to be a very powerful and able ruler.¹ His reign saw the consolidation and further expansion of the Gupta empire. In the east the frontiers of the empire were kept intact and it is almost certain that Samudravarman (c. 380-405 A. D.)² and Balavarman (c. 405-20 A. D.), the rulers of Kāmarūpa, continued to acknowledge his suzerainty³. In the west, the empire stretched beyond the river Yamunā. Two of his inscriptions found at Mathurā⁴ prove that this city was included in his empire.

- 1 Chandragupta II, who was born of Samudragupta's queen Dattadevī, had a second name Deva and is referred to as Devagupta, Devarāja or Devaśrī also.
- 2 Kālidāsa in his *Raghuvamśa* mentions that Raghu's son Aja selected a king of Kāmarūpa as his best man in the latter's marriage with Indumatī. (Canto VII).
- 3 Choudhury, P. C., *A History of Civilization of the People of Assam*, p. 153; Sircar, D. C., *CA*, p. 90.
- 4 For the undated Mathurā stone inscription of Chandragupta II see Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 25; for the Mathurā pillar inscription of the Gupta year 61 see *EI*, XXI, pp. 1 ff.; *HIQ*, XVIII, pp. 271 ff.; *ABORI*, XVIII, pp. 166 ff.

While editing the Mathurā record of the Gupta year 61 which was executed in the fifth regnal year of Chandragupta II, Bhandarkar suggested that Mathurā and the surrounding region were “wrested from the Kushāṇs *for the first time* by Chandragupta II”¹ (*Italics ours*). It is really curious how Bhandarkar came to this conclusion when we have definite evidence to show that it was Samudragupta who exterminated the Nāga kings of Mathurā and Padmāvati, and imposed his overlordship on the republican tribes of the eastern and central Punjab.² There is absolutely nothing in the inscription in question to show that Chandragupta II claimed any military success in this part of the country.³

In the west of Mathurā, the tribal states which had been subjugated by Samudragupta were gradually merged in the imperial system and thus disappeared altogether from the Indian political scene. Here, it is interesting to note that out of the 1821 gold coins yielded by the Bayana hoard as many as 983 belong to the various types issued by Chandragupta II.⁴ As the coins of this hoard in all probability were originally in circulation in the northern U. P., the south-eastern Punjab and the eastern Rajasthan, it may be regarded as an evidence of the fact that these regions

1 *EI*, XXI, p. 3.

2 *Supra*, pp. 139ff.

3 While commenting on this document Majumdar (*NHIP*, p. 166), obviously under the influence of Bhandarkar's erroneous view, states: “whether it indicates further conquests of Chandragupta II or whether Mathurā had already formed an integral part of the kingdom ruled over by his father, it is difficult to say”. Such equivocal statements as this are bound to create an impression that there are after all some grounds that favour the opinion expressed by Bhandarkar, though they are not adequate enough. Note that in the same work Majumdar himself, apart from locating the kingdom, of Gaṇapatiṇāga, one of the kings uprooted by Samudragupta, at Mathurā has stated that in the west the empire of Samudragupta extended upto the Punjab and probably included its eastern districts between Lahore and Karnal (*Ibid.*, pp. 141, 144).

4 Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 312.

were firmly held by Chandragupta II. A similar indication is provided by some of his Bull type of copper coins found in the south-eastern Punjab. As copper coins usually do not travel long, their discovery in that region would tend to show that it was included in his dominion.¹ As regards the central Punjab, the Scythian rulers of that area probably continued to accept his overlordship, though the evidence at our disposal is slender and doubtful.² Contacts even with the Hindu colonies of the Indian Archipalego, established during the reign of Samudragupta³, were maintained, as the testimony of Fa-hsien regarding intimate cultural relations of India with those states and the discovery of a gold coin of Chandragupta II from the central Java⁴ indicate.

CAUSES OF THE ŚAKA WAR

Chandragupta II not only kept his paternal empire intact, but also added to it the fair provinces of Kathiawar or Surāshṭra and northern Gujarat. Apart from the dictates of geography⁵ which he unconsciously followed, there were several other factors which led him to carry his mighty arm to those regions. For example, it was the conquest of these regions which could give him the

1 *Ibid*, p. 158.

2 In 1890 Rodgers sent a standard type coin of pale gold obtained by him at Haripura in the Punjab to Smith on the obverse of which he and also Smith read the name *Chandra* under the arm of the king. As regards the word written outside the spear, they were not unanimous. Rodgers was inclined to read the word *Shāka* while Smith was in favour of *Gupta*. Thus, there is a bare possibility that a Scythian feudatory of Chandragupta II issued coins in the name of his overlord. Altekar is, however, of the opinion that 'the chance of Smith and Rodgers having mistaken a coin of Bhadra for that of Chandragupta' cannot be excluded. As the coin examined by Rodgers and Smith was not published, the problem cannot be finally settled. (*ibid*, pp. 143 ff.).

3 *Supra*, Ch. III.

4 *Bidragen tot de Tall-laden Valkenkun von Nederlands Inde*, LXXXIX. p. 121.

5 *Supra*, p. 221.

free access to the ports of the western coast and, thus, place him in direct touch with the highly lucrative seaborne commerce with the countries to the west of India¹. Certain ports of the western India such as Barygaza exported to the western countries not only the goods produced in India itself, but also the commodities which reached the Indian markets from further afield, particularly from Central Asia and China.² Taking a cue from Sewell³, Maity has suggested that Indian trade with the West declined in the fourth-fifth centuries⁴. He feels that the declining fortunes of the Indian silk-trade with Rome are reflected in the Mandasor inscription of Kumāragupta and Bandhuvarman. It states that from the Lāṭa Vishaya a guild of the silk-weavers migrated to Daśapura in the western Malwa. The migration, evidently, took place some decades before the building of the Sun temple, at Daśapura in 436 A. D. "If we recall the events in the contemporary West", Maity argues, "it may be suggested that one of the chief causes of the migration to the inland country was the failure of the profitable trade with the West. It may well be that the grim days, in which the Roman empire tottered under the blows of Alaric, were reflected in the fortunes of these silk-weavers⁵". But the suggestion is not entirely correct, for,

1 *CA*, p. 637 f.; *NHIP*, pp. 334 ff.

2 Wheeler, *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers*, p. 164.

3 According to Sewell Indo-Roman trade flourished in the early days of the Roman empire, culminated about the time of Nero who died in 68 A. D. and declined from this time till it almost ceased after Caracalla (217 A. D.). It revived again, though slightly, under the Byzantine emperors (*JRAS*, 1904, pp. 591-637). *Contra*, however, Prialux who came to the conclusion that India's trade with the Western world flourished so much in the fourth century A. D. that "silk, worth in Aurelian time its weight in gold and a luxury of the rich and noble, was 'in the reign of Julian sold at a price which brought it within every man's reach'". (Prialux, *The Indian Travels of Apollonius of Tyna and the Indian Embassies to Rome*, p. 252).

4 Maity, S. K., *Eco. Life.*, pp. 135 ff.

5 Maity, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

there is ample evidence to show that throughout the Gupta period India's trade with the Western countries remained in a flourishing state and the profits of the Indian merchants declined, if at all, only marginally. Note, for example, that Alaric himself, when he spared Rome in 408 A. D., demanded and obtained as a part of ransom 3000 pounds of pepper and 4000 robes of silk¹. It indicates to the huge stocks of these Oriental goods in Rome in that period. Secondly, it should be remembered that very soon after its decline, the place of Rome was taken by Constantinople or Byzantium which was recognised as the seat of the Roman government by Constantine the Great as early as 330 A. D. The upper classes of this city were wealthy and had such habits of luxury which could be satisfied only by the Oriental goods. Incense was badly needed in the ceremonial of the court and the church alike and the requisite spices could be obtained only through Indian and Arab trade.² Byzantine medical treatises, such as that of Symeon Seth, assume that all manners of Indian spices are obtainable in the markets of Byzantium.³ In his Law Digests, Justinian (527-65 A. D.) gives a long list of imported merchandise in connection with his regulations on custom duties.⁴ Among those items there are many which are either specifically stated to be Indian or are probably so. The discovery of the Byzantine coins of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries in the southern, western and the eastern parts of India⁵ prove the reality of these commercial relations. Lastly, it should not be forgotten that the Romans and the Byzantines were not the only Western customers of the Indian goods. Procopius informs us that the monopoly of the silk-trade with the West was in the hands of the Persians, who used to buy it from their Indian neighbours. Considering this difficulty Justinian started negotiations with the Ethiopian king Helles-

1 *JRAS*, 1904, pp. 307 ff. cf. that one of the synonyms of pepper in India was *Yavanapriya*.

2 Maity, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 135.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

5 *JRAS*, 1904, pp. 591-637.

theacus proposing that the Ethiopian traders purchase silk from the Indians and supply it to the Romans. But the scheme did not prove a success for the Persian merchants always established themselves at the harbours where the Indian ships first put in. They used to purchase the entire cargoes before they reached the West.¹ In the light of these facts the contention of Maity that the Indian silk weavers found it expensive to export their products becomes totally untenable.² The migration of the silk weavers of Lāṭa, therefore, must have been the consequence of some other factors, and not of the supposed decline in the trade with the Western countries. It is not impossible that the peace and prosperity of the inland regions and the increasing luxury of their upper classes in the cities like Daśapura made internal markets as profitable as the markets beyond the seas and thus attracted some of the more enterprising silk weavers of Lāṭa to migrate from there to Malwa.

The immediate cause of the westward expansion of the empire may, however, have been the desire of Chandragupta II to put an end to the hated Scythian yoke on the western parts of the country. As observed by Smith "we may feel assured that differences of race, creed, and manners supplied the Gupta monarch with special reason for desiring to suppress the impure foreign rulers of the west".³ A continuous hold over western India for several centuries had lent a halo of importance to these foreign potentates and, despite the fact that their kingdom had by now become very small, they recently had proved their nuisance value when they tried to fish in the troubled waters of the Gupta politics by attacking eastern Malwa, a province of the Gupta empire,

1 Maity, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

2 It is true that in the sixth century Justinian passed a law according to which one pound of silk could not cost more than eight pieces of gold. It must have reduced the profit of the Indian and Persian silk merchants considerably. But it had nothing to do with India's trade with the West in Gupta age.

3 *EIII*, p. 309.

during the period of Rāmagupta's rule¹. In these circumstances, it was quite natural for Chandragupta II to make an attempt at the annihilation of this nuisance for good.

CHANDRAGUPTA II AND THE VAKATAKAS

It is generally believed that Chandragupta II gave his daughter Prabhāvatiguptā in marriage to the Vākātaka crown-prince Rudrasena II, the son of Prīthvīśeṇa I (c. 360-85 A. D.), in order to secure a helpful ally on his southern flank during the campaign against the Śakas.² It is of course, true that "the Vākātaka *Mahārāja* occupied a geographical position in which he could be of much service or disservice to the northern invader of the dominions of the Śaka satraps of Gujarat and Saurāshṭra."³ But we, however, do not think that at this time the Vākātaka royal house was in a position to interfere in the western adventure of the Gupta monarch. Prīthvīśeṇa I, the contemporary Vākātakas ruler was not an ambitious person. He is not known to have acquired any fresh conquests. His description as a *Dharmavijayin* is probably explained by his participation in the Deccan campaigns of Samudragupta.⁴ The conquest of Kuntala referred by Altekar⁵ was the achievement of the Vatsagulma branch of the Vākātaka dynasty,⁶ and not of Prīthvīśeṇa I. According to the inscriptions of his successors, Prīthvīśeṇa I 'behaved like Yudhishṭhira' and was known for an excess of modesty, truthfulness and tenderness⁷. It is the description of a good person and not of a vigorous and ambitious ruler who could think of becoming a source of trouble for the mighty Gupta emperor. Further, it is necessary to remember that according to most of the scholars

1 *Supra*, p. 237.

2 Smith, *JRAS*, 1914, p. 324; cf. Majumdar, *NIHP*, p. 169; Chattopadhyaya, *EFINI*, p. 168; Raychaudhuri, *PIL*, II, p. 554 f.

3 Smith, *op. cit.*

4 *Supra*, Ch. III, p. 168.

5 *NIHP*, p. 110.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

7 Flect, *Corpus*, III. p. 237.

the marriage of Prabhāvatī with Rudrasena II took place in c. 380 or a little later,¹ while the Śaka kingdom was conquered probably towards the close of, the first decade of the fifth century or even later than that.² Thus, these two events were separated from each other by about 20 years, probably a little more but in no case less than a decade. It precludes the possibility of their being connected with each other. It may, however, be admitted that this matrimonial alliance proved to be a great boon to the Gupta empire. From what we know about Prabhāvatī, it appears that she was a lady with strong personality.³ On the other hand, her father-in-law Prithviśeṇa I was, as we just noted, a man of amiable temperament while her husband Rudrasena II was weak enough to succumb to the pressure of his wife and father-in-law even in religious matters. This personality equation proved to be a very important factor, for, it enabled the Guptas to exert some influence on the Vākāṭaka court and its policies.⁴

1 Altekar, *NHIP*, p. 110; Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, p. 168; Smith, *op. cit.*

2 *Infra*, p. 247.

3 Note that after the demise of her husband she somehow succeeded in keeping political power in her own hands though the claim of Vindhyaśakti II, the contemporary ruler of the Basim branch, who was the eldest agnatic male in the Vākāṭaka family, was perhaps stronger. She carried on the administration of the Vākāṭaka state successfully for about twenty years as the regent of her minor sons. Also note that because of her pride in her Gupta lineage she continued to use the cognomen of her father's family even after her marriage and that, contrary to the practice prevalent at that time, her copper plate grants begin with the genealogy of her father's family instead of her husband's. She also probably prevailed upon her husband to give up his ancestral religion, Śaivism and become a Vaishṇava like her (*NHIP*, p. 110, 112).

4 The exact nature and extent of Gupta influence on the Vākāṭaka court is rather difficult to be determined. At one place Altekar opines that the Poona plates of Prabhāvatī 'were drafted by a Gupta officer, imported from Pāṭaliputra' (*NHIP*, p. 112 fn. 1). But at another place of the same work he contradicts himself by stating that the 'Officers who drafted the Vākāṭaka plates during the

Their grip further increased when Rudrasena II died after ruling for a short while only (c. 380-85 A. D.). It was a personal loss to Prabhāvatī and Chandragupta II, but a political gain to the Gupta empire, for, now Prabhāvatī¹, the dowager queen, became the regent of her two minor sons Divākarasena and Dāmodarasena². Her regency was prolonged when Divākarasena, the boy-king,

regency of Prabhāvatiguptā, were bred up in the Deccan tradition' (*ibid.*, p. 106). There is a tradition to the effect that the poem *Setubandha* was composed by the king Pravara-sena of Kuntala and was revised by Kālidāsa. It may indicate that Chandragupta II sent Kālidāsa to educate the Vākāṭaka princes (*ibid.*, p. 112). But some scholars attribute this work to a Kashmirian king of the same name. Pravarasena II's authorship of the *Setubandha* is rendered all the more doubtful by the fact that while the theme of the poem is Vaishṇava, the king was a devotee of Śiva (*CA*, pp. 182 ff.). The tradition as recorded in a verse attributed to the *Kuntalavaradanta* supposedly written by Kālidāsa is too confused to be of much historical importance (*CA*, p. 182 f.).

- 1 There is a tradition in the *Śhāla-māhātmya* of the Śrīśaila hill in Kurnool District according to which princess Chandrāvati, daughter of Chandragupta, conceived a passion for the god on the Śrīśaila and daily offered him a garland of *mallikā* flowers. Altekar (*NHIP*, p. 99.) identifies her with Prabhāvatiguptā. But the identification is untenable in view of the fact that Prabhāvatī was a Vaishṇava, while the god in question is Śiva-Mallikārjuna (*CA*, p. 179, fn. 2). U. P. Shah identifies Prabhāvatī with Vasundharā mentioned in Vrata Kāṇḍa of Lakṣmīdhara's *Kṛtyakalpataru* (*JOL*, V, p. 64. f.).

- 2 "Dāmodara-sena later assumed the coronation name of Pravara-sena at the time of his accession. The expression *Mahārāja-Dāmodara-sena-Pravara-sena-janani* used of Prabhāvatiguptā in the Rithapur plates does not show that she had then two sons living, Dāmodara-sena and Pravara-sena. Had such been the case, the order of the two names in the compound would suggest that Dāmodara-sena was the elder one and the ruling king. The plates however were issued in the 19th regnal year of Pravara-sena and not of Dāmodara-sena. It is, therefore, clear that Dāmodara-sena is identical with Pravara-sena, the latter being his coronation (*abhisheka*) name" (*NHIP*, p. 111, fn. 1). *Contra*, Sircar, *CA*, p. 180, fn. 2. He, however, does not meet the argument of Altekar satisfactorily.

died sometime after the 13th year of her regency.¹ According to Altekar her regency terminated in c. 410 A. D. when Dāmodarasena, her younger son, took up the reigns of administration assuming the coronation name of Pravarasena (II).²

CHANDRAGUPTA II AND THE ŚAKAS

The assumption that Chandragupta II took the trouble of forging a matrimonial alliance with the Vākātakas with an eye on the Śaka kingdom a long time before the actual campaign was launched, is rendered all the more improbable by the fact that in the last quarter of the fourth century A. D. the Śakas were not even a second rate power of the country. Rudrasena III, who ruled from c. 348 to c. 378 A. D., lost his hold over Malwa and Rajasthan in the early years of his reign and was unable to issue any coins, except a few lead pieces, from 351 to 364 A. D.³ During his reign, people were busy in burying their hoards for safety even in the heart of his kingdom⁴. It is, however, quite possible that towards the close of his reign he tried to exploit the situation created by the revolt of Rāmāgupta, but the rise of Chandragupta II and the murder of Rāmāgupta, foiled his scheme⁵. After his death the position of the Śakas deteriorated further. He was succeeded by Simhasena who in turn was succeeded by Rudrasena IV. These two kings ruled for a short while only, for, we find that Rudrasimha III, the son of a certain Satyasimha, was ruling in 388.⁶ It was he or one of his so far unknown successors who was attacked and exterminated by Chandragupta II. The last known date on the Kshatrapa coins is 310 or 31X (Śaka) = 388 + X A. D., while the earliest date on the silver coins of Chandragupta II struck in imitation of the former, is G. E.

1 He was the reigning king when Prabhāvatī issued her Poona plates in the 13th year of her regency.

2 *NHIP*, p. 113.

3 *Supra*, p. 187f.; 157 f.

4 *NHIP*, p. 61.

5 *Supra*, p. 136 f.

6 *NHIP*, p. 62

90 or $90X=409+X$ A. D. Thus, it was during this interval that the Gupta conquest of Saurāshtra and Gujarat took place. However, the fact that the silver coins of Chandragupta are 'very rare'¹ indicates that the campaign was launched only a few years before his death.

The military expedition undertaken by Chandragupta II against the Śakas has probably been alluded to in the contemporary records.² A cave in Udayagiri hill, about two miles to the north-west of Bhilsa, was dedicated to Śambhu by Virasena alias Śāba, a hereditary 'minister of war and peace' of Chandragupt II. It states that Virasena had accompanied his royal master to Udayagiri while the latter was 'seeking to conquer the world'³. It is almost certainly a reference to the Śaka war discussed above. Unfortunately, the inscription is not dated and, therefore, does not help us in fixing the date of the war more accurately. But another inscription, recording some donations to the great Buddhist Vihāra of that place by the imperial general Āmrakārdḍava who is said to have 'acquired banners of victory and fame in many battles', was engraved in the Gupta year 93 (=412-13 A. D.)⁴. Now, if Āmrakārdḍava also visited Sāñchī when the Śaka war was going on or had just finished, we can assume that the Śakas were exterminated in c. 412 A. D. It agrees with the conclusion arrived at with the help of the aforesaid numismatic evidence⁵.

In addition to the records of Virasena and Āmrakārdḍava, we have another inscription from Udayagiri referring to the gift

1 Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 150.

2 Mr. J. Ratnakar describes a stone horse found at Nagawa (Vārāṇasi). The short record on it is read by him as 'Chandragupt' whom he identifies with Chandragupta II (*IHQ*, III, p. 719). Majumdar, however does not agree with the suggested reading (*NHHP*, p. 169. fn. 1).

3 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 35 f.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 31 ff.

5 It is believed that the Lion-slayer type of gold coins of Chandragupta II was probably issued to commemorate the conquest of Gujarat and Saurashtra where lions are available. But it is highly conjectural.

of a Sanakānika Mahārāja, a feudatory of Chandragupta, II, in the year 82 (=401-2 A. D.)¹. R. C. Majumdar has connected this document also with the Śaka war of Chandragupta II and in view of the difference in dates given in this record and that of Āmrakārddeva, has come to the conclusion that Chandragupta II's war against the Śakas was a 'protracted' affair.² But there is absolutely nothing in the record of the Sanakānika Mahārāja to suggest that it was in anyway connected with the war under discussion. The Sanakānika chief was probably the feudatory ruler of the locality and, therefore, his presence at Udayagiri may not be connected with the campaign against the Śakas. We, therefore, find it difficult to understand how do 'these inscriptions show the successive steps in the advance of the Gupta power towards the west'³ and how do they prove that 'the emperor Chandragupta II assembled at or near Vidiśā in East Malwa many of his ministers, generals and feudatories'⁴ in order to win the war against the Śakas. From what we know about the relative strength of the combatants, it would appear that the conquest of the Śakas by the Gupta emperor must have been a relatively easy and, therefore, not a protracted affair.

GROWTH OF THE VIKRAMADITYA LEGEND

Chandragupta II assumed the title *Vikramāditya*, which, along with *Vikrama* and *Vikramānka*, occurs on his coin legends.⁵ Many scholars believe that he is the original of the legendary king Vikramāditya of Ujjayini⁶. Without entering into the question of the historicity of the legendary Vikramāditya, it may be regarded as almost certain that some of the elements of this tradition grew out of or were strengthened by the achievements of Chandragupta II. Among them we may include his victory over the Śakas, his

1 Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, p. 271.

2 NHIP, p. 167.

3 Mookerji, *GE*, p. 47.

4 *PHAI*, p. 555.

5 *Vikrama* is found either by itself or in combination with *Ajita*-, *Simha*- and *Chakra*- etc.

6 R. K. Mookerji in *Vikrama Volume*, p. 323.

association with Ujjayinī¹, the presence of the poet Kālidāsa in his court, and possibly the association with the *Vetāla-sādhana*². May be, in the early mediaeval period, when true facts about him were gradually forgotten, his association with the city of Ujjayinī and the initiation of the Gupta era by him³ gave rise to the myth that the Mālava era, so popular among the Mālava people, was founded by the king 'Vikramāditya' of Ujjayinī.

It is widely believed that Chandragupta II 'emulated his father's military career'.⁴ The facts, however, do not fully warrant such an assumption. It is true that Chandragupta II was an able and energetic ruler, but no military achievement of his, except the conquest of the Śaka territory achieved towards the close of his reign is known with certainty. Fa-hsien who travelled through his wide dominions for more than six years, makes no reference to his military activities.⁵ None of the inscriptions of his reign, except the aforesaid Udayagiri record of Virasena, his 'minister for peace and war', alludes to any military achievement of his. Even if he is to be regarded as identical with the king mentioned in the Meharauli inscription, which is highly doubtful,⁶ it will have to be admitted that his success in the South was confined to matrimonial alliances and diplomatic relations, that the expedition 'across the seven mouths of the river Indus' was undertaken by him during the reign of his father and was the result of the initiative of the latter,⁷ and that the claim referring to the estab-

1 Ujjayinī might have been the base of operations against the Śakas.

2 The story narrated in *Vishamaśāla Lambaka*, has for its hero Vikramāditya, son of Mahendrāditya, who is apparently to be identified with Skandagupta Vikramāditya. But some of the *motifs* such as *strīveśa* and visit to the enemy's own place with a *Vetāla* were probably taken from the cycle of legends associated with Chandragupta II.

3 *Supra*, Ch. II, App. i.

4 *NHIP*, p. 166.

5 For a detailed description of the account of Fa-hsien see Giles, *The Travels of Fa-hsien*.

6 *Supra*, Ch. III, App. iii.

7 *Supra*, Ch. III, p. 138 f.

lishment of 'the sole supreme sovereignty by the prowess of his own arm' is no more than a vain boast, for, the empire was actually founded by Samudragupta and not by him. On the authority of this document, if it belongs to him at all, we can only give him the credit of suppressing a revolt in Bengal. In this connection it may also be noted that he apparently did nothing to carry the policy of annexation pursued in the Gaṅgā Valley by Samudragupta to its logical conclusion by incorporating the Indus basin in his empire. This negligence of his, for which Skandagupta and his successors had to pay so dearly, becomes highly intriguing when we remember that personally he was quite a capable monarch and had enough power and resources to undertake such a project.¹ But evidently he let the opportunity slip from his hands and undertook no programme of expansion for about thirty years after his accession—at least it is what the available evidence suggests. Almost similar was the role played by his son and successor Kumāragupta I.² It clearly indicates to the transformation of the nature and character of the Gupta royalty in the post-Samudragupta period.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE GUPTA ROYALTY

The history of the reign of Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I was greatly influenced by the growth of trade, industries and crafts that followed the establishment of the 'Gupta Peace' from the Hindukush to the Indian Ocean. Gold flowed in the country from all directions and filled the treasury of the rulers and the coffers of the wealthy. The abundance of gold gave birth to the motif of the rain of gold which is so prominent in the literature of

1 V. S. Agrawala (*Matsya Purāṇa, A Study*, pp. 228 ff.) has identified Chandragupta II with king named Pramati mentioned in the *Matsya Purāṇa*, while B. Prakash has found a reference to this Gupta emperor in Persian legends (*Studies*, pp. 271 ff.; cf. also pp. 378 ff. and pp. 390 ff.). But these view are highly conjectural.

2 *Infra*, pp. 253 ff.

the period.¹ This rapid economic growth was concomitant with the urban development. In the literary works of the Gupta period² and sometimes even in the inscriptions³ we find graphic descriptions of the life and conditions of many of the metropolitan centres of the empire viz. Daśapura, Ujjayinī, Mathurā, Padmāvati, Prayāga, Kauśāmbī, Vārāṇasī, Pāṭaliputra etc. The cultural life of these cities was marked by spectacular variety and luxury, colour and gaiety, fashion and taste. They are usually described as full of lofty buildings, crowded bazaars and jamming multitudes and as peopled by rich philanthropists, lovers of arts and crafts, talented and cultivated women and cultured and well-bahaved millionaires. Clubs (*goshthīs*), drinking parties (*āpānakas*), picnics (*yātrās*), festive gatherings (*samājas*) and garden-parties (*udyāna yātrās*) occupied an important place in the life of a wealthy citizen. One of the natural consequences of this increasing degree of luxury in the life of the people was the growth of a pleasure-seeking psychology and ease-loving outlook. In politics it led to several important developments one of which was a softening in the martial fervour of the Gupta emperors. Samudragupta was proud of the fact that his body 'was covered over with all the beauty of the marks of a hundred confused wounds';⁴ Chandra-gupta II, on the other hand, like Govinda IV of the Rāshtrakūṭa

1 Kālidāsa refers to the rain of gold in the treasury of Raghu (*Raghuvamśa*, V. 29). In the *Divyāvadāna* gold is said have rained for one full week in the harem of Māndhātṛi (*Divyāvadāna*, ed. Cowell, pp. 213-14). According to the *Mahābhārata* the inmates of rivers were transmuted into gold as a result of the rain of gold from heavens for one year in the kingdom of Suhotra Vaitithi. On a number of seals of the Gupta period Lakshmi is seen with elephants, attended by two dwarfs, who seem to be pouring out coins from pots in their hands (*ASI, AR*, 1903-4, p. 107). As pointed out by Dikshitar, the motif points to the abundance of wealth in the Gupta period (*Gupta Polity*, p. 157).

2 For references see *PHAI*, p. 556 f. and B. Prakash, *Aspects* pp. 22 ff.

3 Cf. the description of Daśapura in a Mandasor inscription (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, pp. 84 ff).

4 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 256.

dynasty,¹ was proud of his 'beautiful figure' as the legend *rūpākṛitī*, probably a mistake for *rūpākṛitīḥ*, found on a variety of his couch type of gold coins,² suggests. Further, the fact that out of eight types of gold coins of Chandragupta II, only two represent him in his military aspect, indicates the softening in the military fervour since the days of Samudragupta. Even Vasākhadatta makes no bones about the amorous relationship of the prince Chandragupta with a certain Mādhavasenā of unknown identity.³ No wonder if at the advanced age of about 40 years⁴ he fell in love with Dhruvadevī, the wife of his elder brother. Here, it may also be recalled that the reverse of the King and Queen on Couch type of gold coins of Chandragupta II represents what Hoernle described as a drinking scene.⁵ The suggestion of Hoernle may not be correct,⁶ but the depiction of a scene from the informal though private life of the royal couple sitting on the same couch is significant and provides an illustrative commentary on the new trend in the life of the imperial family.⁷

1 Altekar, *The Rāshtrakūṭas and their Times*, p. 106.

2 Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 134. The proper interpretation of the term *rūpākṛitī* is not easy. May be, it is a mistake for *rūpākṛitī* meaning 'successful in dramatic composition' (*ibid.*)

3 Note e.g. how at one place Chandragupta addresses her : "Mādhavasenā darling, kindly let me be roped. O *Kinnarakantī*, let your creeper (*latikā*) like arms rope my neck, let your necklace and breast-ties tie my hands. And O *Jaughasthali-prayanīnī*, let your girdle tie my feet". According to the *Katāsaritsāgara*, a number of princesses were offered to Vikramāditya by the rulers who were defeated by his father. Madanalekhā, the Sinhalese princess, was one of them (Pande, R. B., *Vikramāditya of Ujjayini* p. 91).

4 *Supra*, p. 107 f.

5 Quoted by Altekar in his *Coinage*, p. 139.

6 Altekar suggests that the object in the hands of the king is probably a *sindūrādānī* (*ibid.*, p. 140).

7 The transformation of the character and nature of the Gupta royalty after Samudragupta reminds one of the similar changes that took place in imperial Mughal family in the post-Akbar period. There is even some indication to show that as a result of Chandragupta II's infatuation for her, Dhruvadevī acquired in the imperial administration a place which was more or less similar to that of Nūrjāhān.

KUMARAGUPTA I AND THE SOUTH

The last known date of Chandragupta II is the Gupta year 93 (=412-13 A. D.). He could not have ruled much longer as his son Kumāragupta I, born of the queen Dhruvadevī, was on the throne in the Gupta year 96 (=415-16 A. D.). It is not impossible that Kumāragupta I started his political career as the viceroy or governor of Kathiawar, though the evidence on this point is rather dubious in nature.¹ According to Jagannath and some others,² Kumāragupta I did not inherit the paternal throne peacefully and had to face the opposition of his brother Govindagupta. But the view is hardly tenable. The mention of Dhruva-

the wife of Jahāngīr, in the Mughal administration. Note, for example, the fact that so far Dhruvadevī is the only Gupta queen whose independent seal is available to us. It was discovered from Vaiśālī and describes her as the wife of the Mahārājādhirāja Śrī Chandragupta and the mother of the Mahārāja Śrī Govindagupta (*ASIAR*, 1903-4, p. 107). It has, therefore, been suggested that she personally participated in the administration of that province (*Aiyangar, AISIHC*, I, p. 283). No other Gupta queen is known to have enjoyed such a privilege. Even the fashion in which Jahāngīr, the successor of Akbar, acquired Nūrjahān, the wife of Sher Afgan was *mutatis mutandis* similar to the one which Chandragupta II had adopted in order to get hold of Dhruvadevī, the wife of Rāmāgupta.

- 1 Watson reported a tradition current among the bards of Kathiawar to the effect that Kumāragupta I served as a viceroy of Kathiawar under his father (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 49). The reliability of the tradition has however been questioned by competent authorities (*Ibid.*, p. 50). The suggestion of Smith (*JRAS*, 1889, p. 123) that the Western type of the silver coins of Kumāragupta I with the shorter title *Rājādhirāja* may have been issued by him when he was a viceroy, is altogether untenable. In the Mathurā inscription of the G. E. 61, this title is used for Chandragupta II, even when he was the ruling emperor.
- 2 Jagannath, *IHQ*, XXII, pp. 286 ff. Bhandarkar was the first scholar to suggest this possibility (*IC*, XI, p. 231). Later on, he identified Govindagupta with Kumāragupta I (*EI*, XIX, App. 7). Salletore (*Life in the Gupta Age*, pp. 27 ff.) has identified Govindagupta with Bālāditya

devi as the mother of Govindagupta in her Vaiśālī seal¹ does not necessarily mean that the latter was the eldest son of Chandragupta II. It is quite possible that at the time the seal was issued Dhruva-devi was at Vaiśālī and Govindagupta was the governor of that province.² The Mandasor inscription of the Mālava year 425 (467 A. D.) no doubt states that some time before that date the feudatory kings, deprived of their glory by Govindagupta, touched his feet by their heads. But, as pointed out by D. C. Sircar, cases may be cited in which a subordinate ruler is said to have enjoyed the allegiance of smaller feudatories.³ After all, if Govindagupta was the governor of the Gupta emperor in Malwa, the rulers of that province must have been subject to his authority. The statement of the Mandasor inscription⁴ that Vibudhādhipa (=Indra) became suspicious of the power of Govindagupta hardly proves anything. It was quite a popular motif both in the literary and epigraphic compositions of the Gupta period.⁵ According to Jagannath, Govindagupta was ousted from power by Kumāragupta violently, for, in the Tumain inscription of 435 A. D., the latter 'is described as protecting the earth like a good wife whom he seized by force.' The learned scholar is of the view that in the relevant passage of this epigraph the word *upagubhya* means 'having seized by force.'⁶ Here, we would like to observe that the word *upagubhya* generally means 'to embrace' and this meaning fits in the context of the passage perfectly. We, therefore, feel that while it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Govindagupta ruled as a paramount sovereign, the evidence at our disposal does

of Paramārtha. R. K. Chaudhuri also believes that Govindagupta was an imperial suzerain (*PIHC*, 1960, pp. 50 ff.). Raychaudhuri feels that Kumāragupta I may have had a rival in his brother Govindagupta (*PIIAI*, p. 566, fn. 1).

1 *ASIAR*, 1903-4, p. 107.

2 Aiyangar *ASIHIC*, I, p. 285.

3 *IHQ*, XXIV, pp. 72 ff.

4 *EI*, XXVII, p. 12.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *IHQ*, XXII, p. 289 and fn. 1. *Upagubhya* is from *upa* = *samīpe* and *gub* = *samīvarṇe*.

not warrant such a conclusion at this stage.¹ To us it appears safer to assume that Govindagupta acquired experience of administration at Vaiśālī where his name figures in the seal of mother. Later on, he was most probably transferred to Mandasor to look after the imperial interest in the western Malwa—the greatest trouble-spot of the empire.² Ghaṭotkachagupta, perhaps a son of Kumāragupta I, is also known to have started his career in some administrative capacity at Vaiśālī and was later on transferred to Malwa with his headquarters at Tumbavana, where he revolted some time after the death of Kumāragupta I.³

No less than thirteen records of the reign of Kumāragupta I have come to light, but they do not throw much light on the political events of the period. However, they convey in a general way that, like his father Chandragupta II, Kumāragupta I was also successful in maintaining the paternal empire intact.⁴ The conclusion is supported by the discovery of his coins as far as Ahmadabad, Valabhī, Junagarh, and Morvi etc. in the west.⁵

1 Banerji (*AIG*, p. 51), Sircar (*Op. cit.*), Dandekar (*Hist. Gupta*, p. 120), Majumdar (*NHIP*, p. 174), N. N. Dasgupta (*B. C. Law Vol. I*, p. 622) feel that Govindagupta was a governor of Malwa.

2 A short inscription in the Gupta Brāhmī characters found at Devagadh mentions a certain Bhāgavata Govinda. V. S. Agrawala thinks that he is identical with Govindagupta, the son of Chandragupta II (*Studies in Indian Art*, p. 224 f.).

3 See Ch. V. and App. i.

4 The view of Banerji (*AIG*, p. 40) that Kumāragupta I was a weak ruler is hardly tenable. Kumāragupta was perhaps a peace-loving rather than weak monarch. Fleet believed that the use of the subordinate title *Mahārāja* for Kumāragupta I in the Mankuwar image inscription of the G.E. 129 may indicate a reduction of this ruler to feudal rank (*Corpus*, III, p. 46). But the use of lower titles in such private documents cannot become the basis of so important a conclusion. Cf. that in the Damodarpur CP. of the year 128 he has been given full imperial titles (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 285).

5 Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 216.

The general prosperity of the empire¹ is indicated by the introduction of several new types of gold coins, one of which depicts Kārtikeya riding on his peacock on the reverse and the king feeding a peacock on the obverse.² He introduced silver coinage for the first time in the central provinces of the empire. On his Madhyadeśa type of silver coins Garuḍa was replaced by peacock on the reverse.³ His copper currency is comparatively very scarce but the small silver-plated copper coins found in Kathiawar, which now undoubtedly appear as copper coins, are available in large number.⁴

THE DECCAN CAMPAIGN

Whether Kumāragupta I had any fresh conquest to his credit, is highly controversial. During the reign of his father, the empire had been extended right up to the western ocean. Therefore, in view of the general geographical pattern which the expansion of the empires having their base in the Gaṅgā Valley usually followed,⁵ one would normally expect to find that during the reign of Kumāragupta I (if he made any attempts whatsoever to enlarge his realm) the expansion of the Gupta empire took a southwardly direction. Curiously enough, some indication to that effect are available. The discovery of a big hoard of 1395 silver coins of Kumāragupta at Samand in the Satara District and a small find of

1 During the reign of Kumāragupta I, India's contacts with China became more intimate. A Chinese pilgrim left Ch'ang-ngao with his sixteen friends in 406 and came to India via Central Asia. He passed through U. P. and Bihar and returned to China in 424. In 420 A. D. Fa-yong, resident of Huang-long, came by the land route and returned by sea to Canton. Among other Chinese visitors were Tao-pu, Fa-sheng, Fa-wei, Tao-yo and Tao-t'ai. The view of some scholars, however, that Kumāragupta I sent an embassy to China in 428 (B. Prakash, *Studies*, p. 362 f.) is not correct. The king who sent this embassy was the ruler of Kia-pi-li, a place in Kāmarūpa, and not the emperor of India.

2 *Coinage*, pp. 203 ff.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 229.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

5 *Supra*, p. 221.

his 13 coins from Ellichpur in Berar¹ suggests his influence in those regions.² Further, there is the fact that the size and fabric of the Class III of his silver coins bear considerable resemblance to the coins of the Traikūṭaka dynasty³ which ruled in the middle of the fifth century in the southern Gujarat.⁴ It led Allan to suggest that they were issued when the Guptas superseded the Traikūṭakas in that area.⁵ According to Altekar the suggestion is a 'probable one'.⁶ In the light of these facts it becomes tempting to suggest that the horse-sacrifice, on the occasion of which the Aśvamedha coins of Kumāragupta I were issued,⁷ was performed to celebrate his southern adventure.

The points discussed above assume greater significance in the light of the contemporary history of the Vākāṭaka and in neighbouring kingdoms. In the Vākāṭaka royal house the period of Prabhāvatiguptā's regency came to an end in c. 410 A. D., the approximate date of the accession of her son Pravarasena II.⁸ He ruled for about 30 years, for his Pandhurna grant was issued in his 29th regnal year.⁹ During this reign, Vākāṭaka-Gupta relations continued to be friendly and cordial. His mother who was

1 Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 217.

2 Raychaudhuri (*PHAI*, p. 269 f.) suggested that the title *Vyāghrabala parākrama* used for Kumāragupta I suggests his conquest of the tiger infested territory beyond the Narmadā. Majumdar agrees (*NHIP*, p. 170). Similarly, it has been suggested that the that Rhinoceros-slayer type gold coins of Kumāragupta were issued when he achieved some success against the contemporary kings of Kāmarūpa, for, rhinoceros is an animal which in India is rather peculiar to Assam (*IHQ*, XXXI, No. 2, pp. 175 ff.). *Contra*, however, Sohoni who believes that the Rhinoceros-slayer type coins were issued by Kumāragupta I on the occasion of the *Śrāddha* of his father (*JNSI*, XVIII, Pt. II, pp. 178 ff.). All these suggestions are highly fanciful.

3 *Coinage*, p. 223.

4 *CAI*, p. 192 f.

5 Quoted by Altekar, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Coinage*, pp. 200 ff.

8 *NHIP*, p. 113.

9 Mirashi, *Vākāṭaka Rājaramśai*, p. 211.

alive at least till the 23rd year of his reign,¹ was very proud of her Gupta lineage and, as she had considerable force of personality, her influence must have been a powerful factor in keeping the two states on friendly terms. The fact that Pravarasena II was not an ambitious or war-like person,² worked as a contributory factor in that direction. Throughout his reign he continued to mention the name of his maternal grandfather in the genealogy of his dynasty. But after his death the situation considerably changed. He was succeeded by his son Narendrasena whom the former had married to Ajitabhattachārikā, a princess of Kuntala.³ By this time Kumāragupta I had become quite old and the princes such as Ghaṭotkachagupta, Skandagupta and Purugupta etc. were gradually asserting themselves.⁴ The new developments were bound to effect the relationship of the two royal houses. For Kumāragupta I, Prabhāvatī was his sister ; for princes like Skandagupta, Narendrasena was a distant relation—a son's son of father's sister. The bond of relationship between the two houses had evidently weakened. It is against this background that the evidence indicating the southern adventure of Kumāragupta and the debacle of the Vākātakas during the reign of Narendrasena (c. 440-60 A. D.) should be studied.

According to the Vākāṭaka records Narendrasena had to regain the fortunes of his family and Altekar has shown that the debacle which overwhelmed the Vākātakas temporarily was the invasion

1 *Ibid.*, p. 186. f.

2 More than a dozen copper plate grants of Pravarasena II have been discovered so far, but none of them refers to any military exploit of his.

3 She was probably a daughter of the Kadamba king Kākuts-thavarman who is known to have married his daughters in the Gupta and other royal families (*Vel. Ins.*, p. 454). If it is so, the Gupta prince selected by him may have been one of the sons of Kumāragupta I.

4 Cf. e. g. that Ghaṭotkachagupta is mentioned as a prominent member of the family in the Tumain inscription and Skandagupta was in charge of the military campaigns launched against the enemies of the Guptas towards the close of the reign of Kumāragupta I.

of the Nala king Bhavattavarman.¹ The suggestion is correct as far as it goes, but one wonders if the Nalas, a comparatively small power, were strong enough to succeed 'not only in defeating Narendrasena but also in effectively occupying a part of his kingdom'². We suggest that in this venture, the Nalas were helped by the imperial Guptas and that these powers invaded the Vākāṭaka kingdom simultaneously—the Nalas from the east and the Guptas from the west. The collusion of the Guptas and the Nalas is almost conclusively proved by the Rithpur plates of the Nala king Bhavattavarman³ (a mistake for or Prakritization of Bhavadattavarman). Significantly enough, the grant recorded in this epigraph was issued from Nandivardhana, the capital of the Vākāṭakas, but was actually made by the king at Prayāga, the capital of the Guptas.⁴ It, thus, on the one hand proves the hold of Bhavattavarman over the heart of the Vākāṭaka kingdom, and on the other, points to the nature of his relations with the Guptas. For, the fact that a king of the South who very recently conquered the capital of the Vākāṭakas, the relatives of the Guptas, repaired to Prayāga, the imperial capital, very strongly suggests that the Guptas were cross with the Vākāṭakas and had forged an alliance with the Nalas against them. Here, it is also worthy to note that the grant under discussion was made by Bhavattavarman for his matrimonial happiness, most likely 'on the occasion of his marriage with a princess of the Allahabad region.'⁵ May be, the wife of Bhavattavarman was the daughter of a feudatory chief or some minister or a high officer of the Guptas. In any case, it indicates that the alliance between the Gupta empire and the Nala kingdom was cemented by a matrimonial relationship as well. Bhavattavarman was very grateful for the help he received from the Guptas emperor. As a mark of gratitude, therefore, he may have named one of his sons, Skandavarman, after the Gupta prince

1 *NIHP*, p. 115 f.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

3 *EI*, XIX, pp. 100 ff.

4 *Infra* pp. 210 ff.

5 *CA*, p. 188, fn. 2.

Skandagupta. Against the background of these facts, it also becomes somewhat significant that while Bhavattavarman, a contemporary of Kumāragupta I was a worshipper of Śiva and Kārtikeya, Skandavarman the contemporary of Skandagupta was a Vaishṇava.

Thus, towards the close of the reign of Kumāragupta I, the politics of the Deccan took a dramatic turn. The Vākātakas and the Guptas, who had been on friendly terms since the days of Samudragupta, became hostile to each other and the Guptas made a definite effort to incorporate some parts of the Vākātika kingdom in their empire. In this venture they found an ally in the Nala rulers. The Vākātakas were also not altogether without friends—they had a powerful ally in the Kuntala king who was the father-in-law of Narendrasena. As we will see later on,¹ he gave substantial help to the Vākātakas in their efforts to recover their lost power and glory. But this revival of the Vākātakas took place when Skandagupta had succeeded his father Kumāragupta I on the Gupta throne. We have, therefore, discussed it and other allied problems in the next chapter. Here it may, however, be noted that the new alignment of powers—the Guptas and the Nalas on one side and the Vākātakas and the Kadambas of Kuntala on the other—was a very significant development and influenced the pattern of power-politics of the subsequent period. For the time being, it increased the influence of the Guptas in the Deccan considerably. It is quite possible that the famous *reponse* coins bearing the legends *Śrī Mahendrāditya* and *Kramāditya*² were issued by these Nala kings in the names of their respective suzerains viz. Kumāragupta I Mahendrāditya and Skandagupta Kramāditya. The facts that these *reponse* coins are found in the

1 *Infra*, Ch. V. pp. 258 ff.

2 The coins of Mahendrāditya have been attributed to Kumāragupta I by B. C. Jain (*JNSI*, XXII, pp. 184-7) and A. Ghose (*JASB*, NS, XLVI, No. 332), to the king Mehendra of the Allahabad record by P. L. Mishra (*IHQ*, XXXVII, p. 2), to the kings of the Śūra dynasty by Mirashi (*Studies in Indology*, I, pp. 217, 319) and to some unknown king of some local dynasty in South Kosala by Altekar (*Coinage*, p. 215).

area ruled over by the Nalas, and that the coins which the Nala rulers issued in their own names¹ were also struck *repousse*, are strong arguments in favour of our suggestion. It also explains why the *repousse* coins of Mahendrāditya and Kramāditya are so much different from other Gupta gold coins and why they are not found in the hoards of other Gupta gold coins. The objection that no feudatory of the Guptas is known to have issued his own coins is hardly relevant in the cases of this type. Did not the Kushāṇa feudatories of Samudragupta, for example, issue their own currency with the features of the local Kushāṇa coins, in the name of their overlord²? But the situation changed considerably when towards the close of the reign of Kumāragupta I, a number of calamities poured themselves upon the Gupta empire and Skandagupta had to marshal his whole energies to overcome them. He succeeded in his efforts, but these developments forced the Guptas to abandon their Deccan conquests and enabled Narendrasena not only to retrieve the fortunes of the family by driving the Nala aggressor, who was now left on his own resources, out from his kingdom, but also to avenge the defeat sustained at the hands of his enemies by invading them in their own territories—the Nalas in the South Kosala and the Guptas in Malwa.³

1 *JNSI*, I, pp. 25 ff.

2 *Supra*, Ch. III, p. 175.

3 *Infra*, Ch. V.



CHAPTER V

TRANSFORMATION AND DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE¹

With the southern adventure of Kumāragupta I the age of expansion of the Gupta empire was over. Till now, the Guptas were on the offensive and gradually the boundaries of the empire were enlarging. The successful conclusion of Kumāragupta I's southern campaign could have resulted in the incorporation of a good part of the northern Deccan in their empire. But all of a sudden a number of calamities befell which not only forced them to abandon what they had gained in this campaign, but also reversed the process of the imperial expansion. Though partly due to the power and prestige earned during the last four generations and partly due to the energy and heroic efforts of Skandagupta, they were able to hold their own against these heavy odds for some time, from now onwards they were certainly on the defensive.

¹ For the order of succession after Kumāragupta I, see App. I of this Ch. in which we have shown that the accession of Skandagupta was challenged by Purugupta and Ghatotkachagupta. For the order of succession after Skandagupta, see App. II in which it has been shown that Skandagupta was followed in turn by Narasimhagupta I and Kumāragupta II of the Bhitari seal and the latter by Budhagupta. We have also given reasons to believe that Narasimhagupta (II) and Kumāragupta (III) of the Nālandā seal of Vishnugupta flourished in the sixth century A. D. and were different from the kings of the same names mentioned in the Bhitari seal.

During the reign of Skandagupta¹ they had just enough control over the internal pulls and external pressures which rendered it possible for them to keep the empire intact; but gradually the edge wore down, the inner vitality of the empire decreased and by the close of the reign of Budhagupta the character of the empire became radically different from what it was during the reign of Samudragupta and his immediate successors.

THE PERIOD OF CRISIS

The difficulties which the Guptas had to face towards the close of the reign of Kumāragupta I and in the initial years of the reign of Skandagupta were many and of varied nature. The Bhitari record² of the latter refers to two of his enemies viz. the Pushyamitras³ and the Hūpas. From it, we learn that the Pushyamitras, whom he had to reckon with, were very powerful and had threatened the very existence of the empire. It expressly states that they had accumulated great resources in 'men and money' and in course of fight against them, Skandagupta had to pass a whole night on bare earth. It also states that the heroic achievements of Skandagupta were sung in every region 'by happy men, even down

1 According to the *ĀMMK* he had several names one of which was Devarāja (*IHI*, p. 33).

2 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, pp. 52 ff.

3 Divekar (*ABORI*, I, pp. 99 ff.) proposes to read *yudhy=amitrāms=cha* in place of *Pushyamitrāms=cha* which, if correct, would mean that in this verse the author of the Bhitari record has referred to the hostile chiefs as 'the enemies in war' and not to a particular tribe. Basham (*BSOAS*, XLVII, p. 369) supports him. But the suggestion, though ingenious, can hardly be accepted. According to R. D. Banerji (*AIC*, p. 45) and Jagannath (*IHQ*, XXII, p. 112) the proposed reading is impossible. "I have myself examined the inscription on the original stone, and in my opinion while the first letter may be *pu* or *yu*, the next syllable cannot be *dhyā*. It can only be *p* or *ṣ*. But as *p* makes an impossible word *pupya*, the choice is evidently restricted to *ṣ* and we get *puṣya*" (Jagannath, *op. cit.*). Sohoni's suggestion (quoted in *IHQ*, XXXVII, p. 279 f.) to read *rāshitrāmītrāms=cha labdhvā* instead of *Pushyamitrāms=cha jitrā*, is highly conjectural and has nothing to do with the actual reading of the text.

to the children'.¹ Furthermore, in four successive verses, the author of this document refers no less than three times to the 'ruined fortunes of the Gupta family' and their restoration by Skandagupta. These facts clearly emphasize the serious nature of the catastrophe that was averted by the efforts of Skandagupta.

Apart from the Pushyamitras and the Hūṇas the Bhitari record does not mention any other enemy of Skandagupta by name. In his *Junagadh prastāvi*,² however, a reference is made to his wars against the hostile kings "who were so many serpents lifting their hoods in pride and arrogance", and the Mlechchhas whose pride "was broken down to the very root" and to the fact that "Lakshmi of her own accord selected (him) as her husband...having discarded all the other sons of the king". Now, as the Hūṇas of the Bhitari record were most likely identical with the Mlechchhas of the *Junagadh prastāvi*,³ one can assume that these two documents

1 According to D. Sharma (*PIHC*, 1956, pp. 148 ff.) the phrase 'ākumāram manusyaib' should be translated not only as "by all down to youngsters" but also as "by all up to Kumāragupta I".

2 Fleet, *op. cit.*, pp. 56 ff.

3 Allan (*BMC, GD*, p. xlv), Sircar (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 301, fn. 4) R. B. Pandey (*Historical and Literary Inscriptions*, p. 93 fn. 4), Raychaudhuri (*PHAI*, p. 570) and most of the other scholars identify the Mlechchhas of the Junagadh inscription with the Hūṇas of the Bhitari record. Chattopadhyaya (*EHNI*, p. 180) and a few others do not agree with this view, but they have not given any cogent argument in favour of their skepticism. It is true that the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (II, pp. 93-94; Tawney's edn. Vol. IX) refers to the Mlechchhas, the Pārsikas and the Hūṇas separately, but it is merely one of the examples of the confusion created by the poetical imageries of ancient writers whenever they happened to describe the foreigners. The term *Mlechchha* never carried any fixed meaning and was applied to any and every foreign tribe or race. The statement of R. K. Chaudhuri (*JBR.S.* XLV, p. 117) that "the *Mlechchhas* are specifically mentioned separately in the *Bhitari Pillar Inscription*" is palpably wrong: this document has nothing to record about the Mlechchhas. A recent writer seems to be of the opinion that the Mlechchhas of the Junagadh record should be identified with the Sassanians of Iran and that Skandagupta launched an offensive against them in the lower Indus basin though the

refer to four categories of the enemies who were overcome by Skandagupta :

- (i) The Pushyamitras of the Bhitari record.
- (ii) The hostile kings mentioned in the Junagarh record; their identity is not disclosed.
- (iii) The Hūṇas or the Mlechchhas.
- (iv) The other sons of the emperor.

As regards the chronology of Skandagupta's wars against his enemies, it is certain that some of them raised their heads before the death of Kumāragupta I (c. 454 A. D.),¹ for, in the Bhitari record, it is said that when Skandagupta returned from one of his victorious campaigns, he found the emperor dead and, therefore, he "betook himself to his mother...just as Krishna, when he had slain his enemies betook himself to his mother Devakī".² The

results of this expedition were short-lived (*JNSI*, XXVII, pp. 36 ff.) The theory rests on the slender evidence of the occurrence of fire-alter as the reverse central symbol on some varieties of Skandagupta's silver coins. But as Altekar has pointed out (*Coinage*, p. 254) fire-alter on these coins was probably derived from the 'King-sacrificing-at-alter' type of early Gupta gold coins. Further, we know that Skandagupta appointed Parnadatta as the governor of Surāshtra. But as shown by Charpentier (*JRAS*, 1930, pp. 282-83) Parnadatta and his son his Chakrapālita were most likely Iranians, their names being the Sanskritized forms of the Pahlava names Farnadāta and Chakarapāta. If it was so, the Mlechchhas of the Junagarh record can hardly be identified with the Iranians; for, Skandagupta would not have appointed an Iranian as the governor of Surāshtra if the Iranian emperor was posing a threat to that province, and an Iranian would have hardly described his kinsmen as Mlechchhas in his own record.

1 *Infra*, App. I of this Ch.

2 It is quite likely that the so-called King-and-Lakshmi or the King-and-Queen type of Skandagupta's coins represent the meeting between Skandagupta, who is shown holding bow and arrow, and his mother whose right hand, in some specimens, is in the act of *abhaya mudrā* or *śīrvāda mudrā* and in some specimens holds an unidentifiable object. She is represented in unornamented *ekavenī* coiffure, probably to indicate her widowhood (*JNSI*, XXII, pp. 264 ff.).

upper limit of this troubled period may have been G. I. 138 (= 457 A. D.), for in the Junagadh *prāśasti* dated in that year, Skandagupta's victories over all the aforesaid enemies have been enumerated. The circumstance that only one coin of Kramāditya (either Skandagupta or Ghaṭotkachagupta) is found in the Bayana hoard, also suggests that the Hūṇa invasion, which may have been the cause of its internment, took place either towards the close of the reign of Kumāragupta I himself or in the initial years of the reign of Skandagupta. As all these wars were fought within the brief period of about three years, some of them might have been fought simultaneously, and not necessarily one after another. We, therefore, feel that it will conduce to greater clarity, if we will study them one by one.

STRUGGLE FOR SUCCESSION

One of the greatest problems, which the Guptas, had to face in those years of hectic activities, was the problem of succession. At that time there were several ambitious princes in the imperial family. Skandagupta and Purugupta¹ were two of them. Then,

This suggestion removes most of the difficulties inherent in the theories according to which the figure of the lady on the obverse is that of Lakshmi. (Allan, *BMC*, *GD*, pp. xcvi-c ; Altekar, *Coinage*, pp. 244 ff.) or of the queen of Skandagupta (Smith, *JRAS*, 1889, p. 110 ; *JASB*, 1884, I, 199 ; Jagannath, *JNSI*, VIII, pp. 48 ff.). We may, therefore, call it King-and-Queen-Mother type.

- 1 The correct form of the name of this king has been a matter of some discussion. On the Bhitari seal of Kumāragupta II, Hoernle (*JASB*, LVIII, pp. 90 ff.) read 'Pura'. Fleet (*IA*, XIX, p. 210) and Smith (*IA*, 1902, p. 261, fn. 13) accepted it, though the latter had earlier agreed with Bühler's reading as 'Sthira' (*JASB*, LXIII, p. 166). On the Nālandā seal of Narasimhagupta, however, we have Pūrugupta not Puragupta. Therefore, most of the scholars, including Krishna Deb (*BI*, XXVI, pp. 235 ff.), N. N. Dasgupta (*B. C. Law Vol. I*, p. 618) and R. C. Majumdar (*CA*, p. 29) believe that the name of this king was Pūrugupta, though Krishna Deb is certainly wrong when he asserts that the sign of long *ū* of 'Pū' occurs in the first

there was Ghaṭotkachagupta—probably also a son of Kumāragupta I.¹ According to the law of royal succession, which the ancient Indian rulers generally followed, the eldest son of Kumāragupta I should have succeeded him. But so far, the Guptas had shown scant respect to this principle. It is also not clear whether they regarded the first son begotten on the senior-most queen or the eldest son, even if he happened to be the son of a junior queen, as the legitimate claimant. Perhaps they had not bothered themselves to evolve a specific rule on this point. As regards the Hindu law books, it is nowhere laid down that the son of the chief-queen alone should succeed to the throne.²

In the early days of the empire the nomination by the ruling sovereign was the most important factor. Chandragupta I had nominated Samudragupta as his successor³ and the latter, in his turn, probably expressed his preference for his younger son Chandragupta II, over and above the claim of Rāmagupta, the elder brother of Chandragupta II.⁴ It is not beyond the realm of possibility

line of the Nālandā seal of Vishnugupta. Further, as Sinha has pointed out (*DKM*, p. 3, fn. 8), on the Nālandā seal of Kumāragupta the reading is unmistakably 'Puru' and not 'Pūru'. Cunningham also had long ago, suggested that the reading on the Bhitari seal is 'Puru' (*CMI*, pp. 10, 13). It appears, therefore, that the form 'Puru' was also in use alongwith 'Pūru'. We have adopted the form 'Puru'.

1 *Infra*, Appi. of this Ch.

2 Vide D. Sharma, *PIHC*, 1956, p. 149. Whether the title *Mahādevī* meant 'chief-queen' or not, is itself doubtful. Note that even in the Gupta age the queens of the subordinate kings, such as the wives of the Uchchhakalpa Mahārājas are described as Mahādevīs (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 119). Also note that Chandragupta II's wife Dhruvadevī is styled as Mahādevī in the Bhitari inscription of Skandagupta while the same title has been used for Kubera-nāgā, another wife of Chandragupta II, in the Poona copper plate of Prabhāvatiguptā. Similarly, Nālandā seal of Narasimhagupta shows that he was the son of Purugupta from the Mahādevī Chandradevī, while the seal of Budhagupta from the same site, shows that he was also the son of Purugupta but his mother, though styled as Mahādevī, was certainly different from Chandradevī (cf. *JIH*, XL, p. 243 f.).

3 *Supra*, Ch. III, App. i.

4 *Supra*, Ch. IV.

that towards the close of his reign, Kumāragupta I also expressed his preference for his valliant son Skandagupta, though the evidence on this point is rather inconclusive. In this connection the Apratigha type of coins of the former furnish very interesting evidence. On the obverse of these issues we have three figures. The central one is undoubtedly Kumāragupta I since he is expressly labelled as such. He is shown wearing a *dhōṭī*. His hands are folded at waist and he wears no jewelry on his person. He is flanked on his right by a female with her right hand bent up and raised in the attitude of *vitarka* (argumentation) and on his left by a male, his left hand holding a shield and the right in the *vitarka mudrā*.¹ According to Altekar,² in this scene the emperor

1 *Coinage*, pp. 207 ff.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 209. A number of other explanations of this type have been offered by scholars. Some of those are plausible, some are seemingly far-fetched while others are merely confusing. Until eight more pieces were found in 1946, only one coin of this type was available. Hoernle (*JASB*, 1883, p. 144) thought that it showed Buddha worshipped by two women. Smith (*JRAS*, 1888, p. 107) was of the opinion that the obverse central figure is the king and the two flanking figures are females, the queens of Kumāragupta I. Allan (*BMC, GD*, p. 87, No. 102) read the reverse legend as *Śrī Pratāpab* and opined that the central figure on the obverse 'is Indian in style, while the two others are quite foreign, female figure to right closely resembling Minerva'. Sohoni changed his opinions more than once. In 1943 (*Sachchidananda Sinha Com. Vol.* pp. 177-78) he suggested that the central figure is Kārtikeya who is flanked by his two wives. Lateron, after the discovery of eight more specimens of this type, he concluded that in this scene 'Kumāragupta I's mint-master had referred to Kumāra visiting Kaśyapa and Aditi before setting out to fight Tāraka', a dramatic incident narrated by Kālidāsa in the *Kumāra-sambhava* (*JNSI*, XVIII, pp. 56 ff.). Still later (*ibid.*, XXIII, pp. 345 ff.; *INC*, II, pp. 99 ff.) he suggested that the mint-master intended to show military valour and royal fortune standing personified in front of the king. Some other theories may also be briefly noted. Mirashi (*ibid.*, XI, p. 64; XII, p. 68) is of the opinion that the central figure is of some saint and the other two constitute the royal couple who are consulting the former. Majumdar (*ibid.*, XII, p. 72 f.) reads the name of the king

Kumāragupta I is shown as contemplating renunciation and his queen and crown-prince are trying to dissuade him without success. The suggestion is quite interesting, though it is worthy to note that as these coins were issued during the reign of Kumāragupta I himself, he apparently had not renounced his imperial status altogether. To us it appears that in the closing years of his reign, Kumāragupta I entrusted the government of the empire in the hands of his crown-prince and himself retired to lead a life of religious pursuits. Perhaps something like this was behind the tradition recorded in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* according to which Mahendrāditya, usually identified with Kumāragupta I, nominated his son Vikramāditya who had succeeded in inflicting a crushing defeat on the Mlechchhas as his successor and himself retired to Vārāṇasī.¹ According to the Buddhist work *Chandragarbhapariprichchhā* also, the king Mahendrasena, identified with Kumāragupta I by K. P. Jayaswal, crowned his son Duprasahastha, the conqueror of the Yavanas, Palhikas and Śakunas as his successor and himself retired to lead religious life.² Thus, from the combined testimony of the Apratigha

- as Mihirakula and suggests that the central figure is Śiva and the flanking figures are Nandi and Pārvatī respectively. Sinha (*ibid.*, XVI, p. 214) believes that the obverse scene shows 'the two queens of Kumāragupta in high temper arguing with the king' on the question of abdication. D. C. Sircar (*INC*, II, pp. 206) conjectures that the obverse scene shows Kumāragupta I with 'a male and female friend, probably believed to have been divine personages in disguise', who 'gave him certain objects which ultimately helped him in overpowering his enemies and making himself invincible'. Ajit Ghosh (*JNSI*, XXII, p. 179 f.) thinks that it is a commemorative type issued to testify the valour of Kumāragupta I when he was only a prince. Cf. also B. P. Roy (*JNSI*, XXIV, pp. 164 ff.) who has suggested that the male figure with a shield is Skandagupta placing his claim to the throne on the basis of the services he had rendered to the state. We agree with the view of Altekar because it not only explains the obverse scene satisfactorily, but is also consonant with the literary tradition as recorded in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and the *Chandragarbhapariprichchhā*. See above.

1 Tawney (Penzer) IX, pp. 1 ff.; *BMC, GD*, p. xlix, fn. 1.

2 *IHI*, p. 36 f.

type of coins and the literary tradition it appears that in his old age Kumāragupta I became practically a recluse and the responsibility of administering his vast empire devolved upon the shoulders of one of his sons. The prince who was selected for this favour was apparently no other than Skandagupta, for, the *Kathāsarit-sāgara* refers to him by the name of Vikramāditya, one of the titles adopted by Skandagupta, and gives him the credit of conquering the Mlechchhas, an achievement for which Skandagupta was regarded as the unique hero of the Gupta dynasty.

Many scholars, however believe that Skandagupta had no legitimate right to the throne and Kumāragupta I, even if he had all his affections reserved for the former could not give his throne to him.¹ But the arguments adduced in support of this theory are not conclusive. The view that the phrase *tatpādānudhyāta* was indicative of legal right to the throne and consequently its omission in the Bhitari inscription for Skandagupta suggests that his claim was not legitimate, is not correct. The phrase did not have any constitutional significance. It was used even by the feudatory rulers to express their loyalty towards their overlord.² It is also quite possible that as the author of the Bhitari record switched over from prose to verse at the place where the phrase *tatpādānudhyāta* was to be used for Skandagupta to describe his devotion to his father, he gave its poetical version *pitṛiparigatapādapadmavartī*. P. L. Gupta remarks that this phrase does not convey the sense that Skandagupta was the favourite of Kumāragupta I ; it rather reflects his own anxiety to show that he was very much devoted to his father³. But does not the phrase *tatpādānudhyāta* also suggest the same idea—the devotion of the ruler for which it was used for his predecessor ? It should also not be forgotten that in the Bhitari record the phrase *tatpādānudhyāta* has been used neither for Ghaṭotkacha and nor for Chandragupta I and Samudragupta.

1 Majumdar, R. C., *JASB*, NS, XVII, pp. 249 ff.; *NHIP*, p. 176 f; Sinha *DKM*, pp. 23 ff; Gupta, P. L., *JIH*, XI., pp. 245 ff; *contra*, Raychaudhuri, *PII/II*, pp. 572 ff; Sharma, D., *JIH*, XXXVII, pp. 145 ff.

2 *Supra*, Ch. IV.

3 *JIH*, XL. p. 245.

Would it mean that none of these rulers was the legitimate successor of his father?¹

As regards the status of the mother of Skandagupta, the omission of her name in the genealogical portion of the Bhitari record does not necessarily prove that she was not a Mahādevī. As pointed out by Raychaudhuri, the names of the mothers of the kings were sometimes omitted in the ordinary *prastāsis*, though in the royal seals they were invariably referred even if it meant repetition. In the genealogical portion of the Madhuban and Banskhera plates, the name of Yaśomati as Harsha's mother is not mentioned, but in the Sonapat and Nālandā seals she is mentioned both as the mother of Rājyavardhana and as the mother of Harsha.² The view that the mother of Skandagupta was a concubine of Kumāragupta I and not a full-fledged queen, and that Skandagupta was ashamed of her status³ is altogether baseless. Skandagupta refers to her very proudly in the verse 6 of the Bhitari record.

1 Cf. Mirashi, *Studies in Indology*, II, pp. 255 ff; for a discussion on the correct meaning of the phrase *satpādānudyāta*.

2 PHAI, p. 572 f. Sewell (*Hist. Ins. of South Ind.*, p. 349) and Raychaudhuri (*op. cit.*, p. 573, fn. 3) believe that the name of Skandagupta's mother was Devakī. Sinha (*DKM*, p. 32, fn. 2) suggests that if the story of the Vikramāditya as given in the *Kathāsarisāgara* refers to Skandagupta, the name of his mother may have been Saumyadarśanā. For the view that Skandagupta was the son of Anantadevī, see JBRs, XXXII, p. 182 f. All these suggestions, however, are highly conjectural.

3 P. L. Gupta, *JIH*, XL, p. 247. On the authority of the line 15 of the Bhitari inscription Basham, who believes that Skandagupta's claim to the throne was not legitimate, opines that Skandagupta was the son of a Śūdrā concubine and was raised to the Ārya status by the panegyrics of bards (*BSOAS*, XLVII, p. 368-69). But the suggestion is entirely unwarranted. In this passage the author of the inscription merely refers to the most common place fact that the bards raised Skandagupta to distinction by their songs and praises (*Fleet, Corpus*, III, p. 56). For the views of Bhandarkar and Chhabra on the meaning of this line see *JIH*, XL, pp. 543 ff. In any case, it cannot be construed to mean that Skandagupta was the son of a Śūdrā concubine. (See *JIH*, XLIII, p. 222 f.).

The change-over from prose to verse immediately after the name of Kumāragupta I, which resulted in the poetic rendering of the phrase *śatpādānudyāta* was perhaps also the cause of the omission of her name in the genealogical portion of this record.

Actually, so far as the struggle for the throne among the sons of Kumāragupta I is concerned, the question of the legitimacy of Skandagupta is hardly relevant.¹ For, even if he was not entitled to inherit the empire, he could raise the banner of revolt against the legitimate claimant and could win the ensuing struggle. However, as yet there is nothing to show that his claim was less justified than that of other contenders. He was evidently devoted to and had the blessings of his father—a fact which is also suggested by the installation by him of an image of Sārṅgin in the memory of Kumāragupta I. It also needs no arguments to prove that he must have been the darling of the imperial army. His successive military victories suggest it very strongly. But his rivals were not exactly helpless. Take, for example, Purugupta. In the Bhitari seal of Kumāragupta II he is described as begotten on the Mahādevī Anantadevī. Now, from the Bihar stone pillar inscription² we learn that Kumāragupta I had married the sister of his minister Anantasena. As in that period sisters were usually named after their brothers, it is almost impossible not to imagine that the queen Anantadevī was the sister of Anantasena, the imperial minister.

1 Like the arguments of those who believe that Skandagupta's claim to the throne was not legitimate, the view that the title Kramāditya adopted by Skandagupta proves the legitimacy of his claim (D. Sharma, *JIH*, XXXVII, pp. 145 ff.) is not convincing. According to Sharma, the term *krama* means *pitṛipaitāmahika-rājya* and suggests 'succession to a kingdom by inherited right'. But according to P. L. Gupta (*ibid.*, XL, pp. 247-9) it merely meant 'the kingdom that belonged to father and grandfather' i. e. that had been in the family for generations. Note that the title Kramāditya was also adopted by Ghaṭotkachagupta, a rival of Skandagupta.

2 Fleet assigned this documents to Skandagupta (*Corpus*, III, pp. 47 ff.). But Sinha (*DKM*, pp. 26 ff.) and Majumdar (*IC*, X, pp. 170 ff.) have expressed their disagreement with this view.

If it was so, it may be easily conceded that Purugupta had a powerful section of ministers to support his candidature. Here it may also be noted that after having consolidated his position as the new emperor, Skandagupta was obliged to appoint new 'protectors' in 'all the provinces'.¹ It may indicate that in some of the imperial provinces his accession to the throne was opposed by the higher officer-class. It is quite possible that other contenders such as Ghaṭotkachagupta, who had been the governor of the eastern Malwa, relied mainly on such local support. Thus, it appears that during the last years of the reign of Kumāragupta I pulls from various directions sought to influence the question of succession: the emperor and the army favoured Skandagupta, the queen Anantadevi and a powerful ministerial party supported the cause of Purugupta and in some provinces local officers whetted the ambition of princes such as Ghaṭotkachgupta. In such a condition, dominated by factional power-politics, a close contest for the throne was but inevitable. Fortunately for the empire, Skandagupta, the unique hero of the Gupta dynasty, who had the blessings of his father and the support of the imperial army on his side emerged victorious in it. His rise gave a further lease of life to the empire; the victory of a weaker candidate would have quickened the pace of disintegration.

THE PUSHYAMITRA INVASION

Some of the troubles of Skandagupta were the result of the policies followed during the later years of the reign of Kumāragupta I. As we have seen, Kumāragupta had launched a vigorous campaign against his Vākātaka relations sometime towards the concluding period of his reign which coincided with the early years of the reign of Narendrasena (c. 440-60 A. D.), the son and

1 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 62. "We should not be surprised, if some of Skandagupta's relatives on the maternal side also sided with the pretender, for this would make his comparison with Krishna, who had destroyed his enemies, and of Skandagupta's mother to Devaki a little apter". (*PIHC*, 1956, p. 149); cf. also N. N. Dasgupta, *B. C. Law Vol.*, I, p. 618).

successor of Pravarasena II¹. In this venture, the Guptas had a powerful subordinate ally in the Nala king Bhavattavarman. But from the Vākāṭaka records, it appears that Narendrasena very soon succeeded in retrieving the fallen fortunes of his family. In this attempt, he was substantially helped by his Kadamba relations ; otherwise one cannot explain why Prithvishēṇa II, the son of Narendrasena, should have mentioned his maternal grandfather in the genealogy of his family. Thus, in the middle of the fifth century A. D. two power-blocks—one consisting of the Guptas and the Nalas and the other comprising the Vākāṭakas and the Kadambas crystalized, and dominated the politics of the Deccan.² Against this background the invasion of the Pushyamitras, mentioned in the Bhitari record, assumes a new significance.

The identification and location of the territory of the Pushyamitras of the Bhitari record have been highly controversial issues. But now it is generally recognized that they belonged to the Mekalā region.³ In the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* MSS consulted by Wilson it is stated that the Pushpamitra (according to Wilson a variation of Pushyamitra), Pāṭumitra and others, to the number

1 *Supra*, Ch. IV.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Fleet, *IA*, 1889, p. 228 ; Raychaudhuri, *PHAI*, p. 568 ; Jagannath, *IHQ*, XXII, pp. 112 ff.; U. Thakur, *IHQ*, XXXVII, pp. 279 ff. Smith (*EHI*, p. 326) located them in the North, Hoernle (*JRAS*, 1909, p. 126) identified them with the Maitrakas, R. D. Banerji (*AIG*, p. 46) regarded them as the first wave of the Hūṇas, and N. K. Bhattasali thought that they were the descendants of the king Pushyavarman of Kāmarūpa. For a criticism of all these views see Jagannath, *op. cit.* Jayaswal (*Hindu Polity*, p. 163 f.) located the Pushyamitras in the western Malwa. According to him "there seems to be a strange fatality in the history of the Guptas. They rose to power with the help of a republic ; they abolished ancient republicanism and in turn were shaken off their foundation by a republic. The Pushyamitras, having executed this historical revenge, withdrew in the mystic past". Recently S. Chattopadhyaya (*EIINI*, p. 178 f.) has opined that the Pushyamitras belonged to the Nāga stock. Such conjectures need hardly any comment.

of thirteen, will rule over Mekalā.¹ Commenting on this statement Wilson says : " it seems most correct to separate the thirteen sons or families of the Vindhya princess (sic.) from these Bāhlikas, and them from the Pushyamitras and Paṭumitras, who governed Mekalā, a country on the Narbada ".² A statement of similar import is found in the *Vāyupurāṇa*³ which is generally regarded as one of the oldest and the most reliable of *Purāṇa* texts. It was on the basis of this evidence that Fleet and many others have located the Pushyamitras of the Bhitari inscription ' in central India somewhere in the country along the banks of the Narmadā '. Some scholars have expressed doubt about this suggestion, but the recent epigraphic discoveries have not only given additional support to his theory but have also thrown a new light on the alignment of powers in this area. The most important of these documents is a copper plate grant of the Pāṇḍavavarṃśī king Bharatabala *alias* Indra, discovered at Bamhani in Sohagpur *tahsil* of Rewa in Baghelkhand.⁴ It records the grant of the village Vardhamānaka situated in the Pañchagarta *Vishaya* of Mekalā to Lohita, a Brāhmaṇa of Vatsa *gotra*. Palaeographically, it has been ascribed to the middle of the fifth century A. D. by Chhabra⁵ and Mirashi.⁶ Consequently, the origin of the Pāṇḍava family mentioned in it may be placed in the last quarter of the fourth century A. D. It is true that in this record Jayabala and Vatsrāja, the first two members of the family, have no royal title prefixed to their names, but it was perhaps due to the fact that their description occurs in verse ; the next two kings are described both in prose and verse. In any case, it appears certain that the early rulers of this family were the feudatories of the Guptas. It is

1 *Vishnupurāṇa*, Wilson's Trans., p. 383.

2 *Ibid.* fn. 67.

3 *Pushyamitrā bhaviṣyanti Paṭumitrās trayodaśa*, Pargiter, *DKA*, p. 51.

4 Chhabra, *EI*, XXVII, p. 132 f.; *Bhārata Kaumudī*, I, p. 215 f.

5 *Ibid.*

6 Mirashi, *Studies in Indology*, I, pp. 212 ff. *Contra*, Sircar (*CA*, p. 223) who assigns this record ' to the close of the fifth century or probably to the beginning of the sixth '.

quite possible that during the re-organisation of Baghelkhand, Samudragupta gave a fief of Jayabala, the first member of this family.¹ But the situation changed during the reign of Bharatabala. He is said to have married Lokaprakāśā, the princess of Kosalā. She was probably the daughter of the Śūra king Bhimsena I who, according to Mirashi, was the contemporary of Bharatabala.² In the 11th verse of the Bahmani record, Bharatabala makes a veiled reference to a certain Narendra, who appears to have been his suzerain. Chhabra and Mirashi identify this Narendra with Narendrasena, the contemporary Vākāṭaka ruler. It is not at all impossible, for, from the Balaghat plates of Prithvishēṇa II (c. 460-80 A. D.), the son and successor of Narendrasena, we learn that the commands of the latter were honoured by the rulers of Kosalā, Mekalā and Mālavā³. Thus, the combined testimony of the Bamhani and the Balaghat plates prove it almost conclusively that sometime in the middle of the fifth century A. D. the ruler of Mekalā transferred his allegiance from the Guptas to the Vākāṭakas. From what we know about the history of the contemporary period, it is impossible not to suggest that it must have happened either towards the close of the reign of Kumāragupta I or in the early years of the reign of Skandagupta. It appears that as a reaction against the aggressive policy of the Guptas, which led to the occupation of the Vākāṭaka capital Nandivardhana by Bhavattavarman, the Nala ally of the Guptas,⁴ the Vākāṭaka ruler Narendrasena, soon after recovering the lost ground, launched an offensive against the Guptas when their empire was passing through a period of grave crisis. The Pāṇḍava ruler Bharatabala of Mekalā readily transferred his allegiance to him. Studied against this background, the statement of the Bhitari record that Skandagupta conquered "the Pushyamitras, who had developed

1 Mirashi, *op. cit.*, p. 216; Sircar, *CA*, p. 223.

2 Mirashi, *op. cit.*, p. 217. Sircar (*op. cit.*) feels that Lokaprakāśā was the princess of the Śarabhapuriya family while Chhabra (*op. cit.*) believes that she was born in the family of the Pāṇḍuvainśis of South Kosalā.

3 *FI*, IX, p. 267; *contra*, *CA*, p. 223.

4 *Supra*, pp. 259ff.

great power and wealth, (and) he placed (*his*) left foot on a foot-stool which was the king (*of that tribe himself*)” becomes significant. It is perfectly in consonance with what we know of the history of the Mekalā region to which the Pushyamitras belonged. Apparently, Pushyamitra king of the Bhitari record was no other than the Pāṇḍava ruler of Mekalā, the subordinate ally of Narendrasena Vākātaka and his invasion on the Gupta empire, obviously with the help of the Vākātaka ruler, was a part of the general offensive which Narendrasena had launched against the Guptas.¹

THE SECOND HUNA INVASION

The attitude of the imperial Guptas towards the North-West presents a very interesting problem for the students of their history. It is quite apparent that they had the power and resources to incorporate the Indus basin in their empire ; but they did nothing more than imposing a vague sort of suzerainty over it which did not last very long. Significantly, in the Allahabad record of Samudragupta, Harishena has grouped the powers of this region with the peoples of far distant Ceylon and ‘other islands’.² This attitude was in striking contrast to the policy adopted towards the rulers of the Gaṅgā Valley who were completely exterminated and whose states were incorporated in the empire. The adventure of the king ‘Chandra’ ‘across the seven mouths of the river Indus’ was also merely an expedition against the invading Vālhikas and not a war of conquest.³ Even the later members of the dynasty

1 An indication of the occurrence of serious disorder in this region about the middle of the fifth century is furnished by the Bamnala hoard of the Gupta coins. It was evidently buried towards the close of the reign of Kumāragupta I, as it contained the coins of Samudragupta, Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I only. Besides the coins, it also contained a gold bar (*JNSI*, V, pp. 135 ff.). It was buried obviously on account of the apprehension of some immediate danger. The village Bamnala is 24 miles to the south of Narmadā. Thus, this hoard provides a clear indication of a serious breach of peace in the vicinity of Mekalā in the middle of fifth century A. D. (*IHQ*, XXII, p. 117).

2 *Supra*, Ch. III. p. 175.

3 *Ibid.* p. 178 f.

seem to have singularly failed in evolving a well-defined North-Western policy. Therefore, there is certainly some truth in the accusation of Altekar when he asserts that the Guptas "did not realize the vital necessity of keeping an effective control over the Punjab and the Khyber pass, if the political integrity of the rest of India was to be maintained. The Guptas showed in this respect less political insight than the Mauryas...Had they effectively garrisoned the Khyber pass, the critical battles with the Hūṇas would have been fought beyond the Indus and not in Malwa and Central India".¹

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTOR IN NORTH-WESTERN POLICY

The general attitude of the ancient empire-builders of the Gaṅgā Valley towards the North-West was conditioned by the interplay of several factors. Geographically, the Indus valley is the western horn of what may be called the Fertile Crescent of India, and gives the impression that it is closely connected with the Gaṅgā Valley. But there is another side of this picture also. It may be noted and needs to be emphasized that the Indus river-system is not only unconnected with any other river of North India, but it is even separated from the rest of the country by the vast desert of Thar. The stretch of the territory which connects it with the Gaṅgā Valley viz. the Thanesar-Delhi-Kurukshetra division—roughly the ancient realm of the Kurus—is very narrow and communication through it was rendered difficult in the ancient times by the great forests, such as the Khāṇḍava, Kāmākhyā, Kurujāṅgala and Dvaitavana and also by a large number of small rivers.² These barriers, it seems, rendered the conquest of the Indus basin by the powers of the Gaṅgā Valley quite difficult and made these two regions to appear more distant and remote from each other than they actually were.³ It is a historical fact that

1 NHIP, p. 3. Cf. also Banerji, *AIG*, p. 47 f.

2 Cf. *PHAI*, pp. 21 ff.

3 Speaking about the Gaṅgā basin in his speech, as reported by Curtius, Alexander stated that this region was quite unknown even to the Indians of the North-West (M'Crindle, *Invasion of Alexander*, p. 228). Also note that

with the exception of the Mauryas, almost all the empire-builders of the Gaṅgā Valley—the Nandas, the Śuṅgas, the Nāgas, the Guptas and even the Vardhanas¹—never seriously tried to conquer the region to the west of the Divide. It does not mean that they never took any interest in the political fortunes of the Indus basin; they could not afford to neglect it altogether. Apart from the fact that this region also belonged to the larger Indian world and, therefore, the achievement of universal sovereignty (*chakravartitva*) was regarded as incomplete without establishing some sort of suzerainty over it, they could hardly forget that most of the routes of the Indian trade with the Western countries were controlled by the North-Western powers. Above all, the almost constant influx via the Indus basin of Central and Western Asiatic peoples who quite frequently threatened the security of the *antarvedi* itself, compelled them to take note of the political developments in the Indus basin. But these attractions were not sufficient enough to lure them to undertake wars of conquest in that region. The Vardhanas, though a power of Thanesar, were interested in it only to the extent of sending occasional expeditions against the Hūṇas; the Śuṅgas evinced some interest only when they were threatened by the Bactrian Greeks; even the Mauryan conquest of this region was perhaps the result of the fact that Chandragupta Maurya started his political career there and the invasions of Alexander and Seleucus had rendered its incorporation in the empire necessary. In the early mediaeval period also, the Rajput rulers of the Gaṅgā basin usually evinced interest in the politics of the Indus Valley states only when they were themselves threatened by the invaders coming from that direction. Prithvirāja III, the Chāhamāna king of Delhi, for example, took no notice of the

in the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, the *Valishṭha Dharmasūtra* and the *Alaḥābhāṣya*. Ādarśa or Adarśana i. e. the place where the river Sarasvatī disappears in the sand is mentioned as the Western boundary of Āryāvarta. It is an indication of the attitude of the people of the rest of India towards the Indus basin.

- 1 They originally belonged to the Divide region but became a Gangetic power during the reign of Harsha.

expansion of the Ghūrid kingdom in the Punjab till his own security was threatened and even after achieving victory in the first battle of Tarain he took no suitable steps to oust the Muslims from the Punjab ; he was evidently more interested in the politics of the *antarvedi*.¹

In the light of the above discussion, the attitude of the Guptas towards the Indus Valley becomes intelligible, though not justified. But whatever the causes, the fact remains that the first four generations of the Gupta emperors did not take any steps whatsoever to guard the north-western frontiers of the empire. How strong were the roots of their psychological indifference towards the North West, becomes clear by the fact that Skandagupta himself, who had to taste the bitter fruits of the folly of his predecessors, did nothing to rectify it by taking measures against the possible recurrence of the Hūṇa invasion.²

The Hūṇas now appear for the second time in Indian history, their first invasion being the one which the king 'Chandra' met 'across the seven mouths of the river Indus'.³ Their successive invasions against the Gupta empire present a very interesting pattern of their growing power vis-a-vis the increasing failure of the Guptas to stem their advance in the country. During the closing years of the reign of Samudragupta, the Hūṇas succeeded in occupying Bactria and expelling the Kidāra Kushāṇas from there. But very soon the Guptas took offensive and the king 'Chandra' led a successful expedition against them. In their second attempt, which took place in the initial years of the reign

1 Majumdar and Pusalker (Ed.), *The struggle for Empire*, pp. 109 ff.

2 The comparative indifference of the emperors of the Gaṅgā Valley towards the Indus basin explains as to why they did not appreciate the idea of attempting conquest beyond the limits of India. What to Arrian, a foreigner, appeared to be the result of 'their sense of justice' (M'Crindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, p. 209) was actually the consequence of the impact of the geographical and socio-cultural factors on their political thinking and attitudes.

3 *Supra*, Ch. III, p. 178 f.

of Skandagupta,¹ these barbarians shook the foundations of the empire, though somehow Skandagupta ultimately succeeded in checking the tide of their progress. In their third invasion, however, which they launched in the first decade of the sixth century, the Hūnas were eminently successful, for, then they not only occupied the *antarvedi*, the heart of the empire, but also reduced the Gupta emperor to the status of their vassal.²

INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

The Hūnas were a very powerful and fierce tribe and constituted the greatest danger to the contemporary civilized empires of the world. Their leader Attila, who died in 453 A. D., was able to send equal defiance to the courts of Ravenna and Constantinople.³ Their unbridled passion and fury caused cruel devastations from Indus to the Danube. Skandagupta's success in repulsing such a fierce and powerful people speaks volumes of his bravery and generalship. But it may also be remembered that the Hūnas, who entered India, were merely a wave of the mighty ocean that hit the great Persian and Roman empires. India is situated quite close to Western and Central Asia, and yet it is cut off from those regions by sufficiently powerful barriers of a vast chain of high mountains. "Even the trans-continental communication system of Asia and Europe, connecting China with Europe, leaves India alone. The main route passed across to Hindu-kush and Pamirs through the Valleys of Syr-Darya and Amu-Darya and then from the shores of the Caspian and Azerbaizan to Western Asia. There is a sort of a feeder route (along the Kabul Valley) connecting India, and all these routes met in Bactria and further west".⁴ It was due to the operation of this geographical factor that the Indians escaped the main impacts of the racial and cultural currents

1 Hoernle (*JRAS*, 1909, p. 128) did not believe in the authenticity of the Hūna invasion during the reign of Skandagupta. But this view can hardly be accepted in face of the unimpeachable testimony of the Bhitari record.

2 *Infra*, Ch. VI, pp. 336 ff.

3 *NHHP*, p. 178.

4 Subbarao, *Personality of India*, p. 5.

originating in western and central Asia. They were influenced but usually by only a late and feeble wave of such movements. This phenomenon may be best understood in terms of what the geographers and archaeologists call the *zones and strata* or the *age and area* concept.¹ The application of this theoretical principle in the study of Indian history may provide a better understanding of many cultural movements and political events. For example, it may explain as to why the influence of Achaeminid art and administration is found in India after the collapse of the Achaeminids in Iran itself and why it proved to be so insignificant in the history of our country. In the sphere of political history it may explain as to why the Iranians could never penetrate in India beyond the Indus basin, why the armies of Alexander returned from the Punjab, and why the centre of the activities of the Pahlavas, the Śakas and the Kushānas remained confined mainly to the north-western and western India. Obviously, the waves of these movements which entered India, were comparatively very weak. For them, India was not inaccessible, but it also did not lay on their main route either. Hence, only a part of their main wave could reach the Indus basin and by the time it entered this region, it found itself exhausted. It is against this background that the Hūṇa invasion on India should be studied. Of the two countries, Iran and India, the former had to bear the brunt of the main and almost continuous onrush of the Hūṇas, while the latter escaped with less powerful and only intermittent invasions—just as in the preceding epoch Iran had to suffer the yoke of the Seleucids, the main successors of Alexander while India was threatened (excluding the solitary invasion of Seleucus himself), mainly by the comparatively insignificant Bactrian Greeks, and in the succeeding epoch Iran was occupied by the main wave of the Arab expansion while India was invaded only by a minor Arab expedition sent to conquer Sindh and later by the comparatively weaker Ghaznavids and Ghūrids. It was not only the brave resistance put by the Rajputs but also the operation of the geog-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4 f.; Taylor Griffith (Ed.) *Geography in the Twentieth Century*, p. 447.

raphical factor which made the all-conquering might of Islam to wait for five centuries before it could conquer the Gaṅgā basin. The invasions of the Hūṇas on both of these countries tell the same tale. Since the fourth century A. D., when the Chionites-Hephthalites first appeared on the Iranian scene, the Sassanians had to wage constant wars against them. In the first half of the fourth century A. D. the Chionite-Hephthalites spread along the Oxus and in the Steppes separating the Aral Sea from the Caspian Sea. One of their tribes, the Chōls, settled to the east of the Caspian Sea, another called the Kaśidi reached the region of Herat and a third known as the Zabul reached the area of Ghazani.¹ As a result of their constant pressure, the Kushāṇas, under the leadership of Kidāra, left Bactria and settled down in Gandhāra.² In 356 A. D., Shapur II led a successful expedition against both the Chionites-Hephthalites and the Kushāṇas and forced the Chionite-Hephthalite ruler Grumbates to side with him in the battle of Amida in 359 A. D.³ The successor of Grumbates was most probably Kutulphe who in turn was followed by Hephthal I. According to the *T'ung-tien* of the Chinese writer Tu-Yu, the kingdom of the Hephthalites was established eighty or ninety years prior to the reign of the emperor Wen-Ch'eng (457-465 A. D.) of the Toba Wei dynasty. This shows that the foundations of the Hephthalite kingdom was laid in c. 370 A. D. under Kutulphe or Hephthal.⁴ In the first half of the fifth century this kingdom became a serious menace to the security of the Sassanian empire. Yazdegird I tried to stem their advance but was assassinated at Gurgān, where he had established his military base against the Hephthalites. During the reign of Bahram Gor (421-38 A. D.), the Hephthalites stormed Merv and swarmed on Rai, near the modern city of Tehran. But Bahram inflicted a crushing defeat upon them. His successor Yazdegird II (438-57 A. D.) also succeeded in keeping the

1 Prakash, B., *Studies*, pp. 311 ff.

2 *Supra*, Ch. III, pp. 169 ff.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 174.

4 Cf. Ghirshman, *Les Chionites Hephthalites*, p. 32, quoted in *JBRS*, XLVII, p. 83.

Hephthalites in check in the earlier part of his reign but in 454 A. D. he suffered a heavy defeat at their hands.¹ In comparison to this constant pressure of the Hephthalites on the Sassanian empire the Guptas, after sending an expedition in the fourth century against these invaders from Vāhlika, ruled in perfect peace till the Hephthalites crossed the Indian border in the initial years of the reign of Skandagupta. No wonder, therefore, if the Gupta emperor succeeded in inflicting a crushing defeat on them while Iran was, atleast temporarily, overwhelmed and her king Phiroz lost his life in a war against them in 484 A. D.

We, however, do not mean that Skandagupta's success against the Hūṇas was not significant.² We only wish to point out that it should be studied in its proper historical context and that Skandagupta's achievement, though highly remarkable—especially in view of the fact that he had to face it when the empire had been threatened by several other dangers—should not be over-estimated.³

ROUTE OF THE HUNA INVASION

Many scholars believe that the Hūṇas came in India through the Bolan pass, and that Surāshṭra and Malwa were the first provinces to be exposed to the Hūṇa aggression. It has been pointed out⁴ that the Arab chroniclers identify Zabulistan (which, as its name suggests meant 'the land of Zabuls') with a part of the modern Afganistan. Now, these Zabuls were apparently no other than the Hūṇas. The Kura inscription of Toramāṇa calls him Śāhī Jaūvla.⁵ On some of his silver coins we find this title in the

1 Prakash, B., *op. cit.*, pp. 312 ff.

2 Note that Skandagupta's victory over the barbarians is also mentioned in the legends recorded in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and the *Chandragarbhapariprichchā* (*supra*, p. 269).

3 Some scholars believe that the Jārtas or the Jāts of Sialkot region also inflicted defeat on the Hūṇas (Thakur, *JBR*, XLVII, p. 82; Prakash, B., *op. cit.*, p. 319). They rely on the sentence *ajayaj-jarto-Hūṇan* found in the *Sūtravṛtti* of grammarian Chandragomin (*I.A.*, 1896, p. 105). But in this sentence the word *jarto* may be a copyist's error for *Gupto* (S. K. Belvalkar, *Systems of Sanskrit Grammar*, p. 58).

4 Jagannath, *PIIC*, 1958, p. 160 f.

5 Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, p. 298 f.

variant forms—Jaubla, Jabubla and Jabula.¹ On the Hephthalite coins it occurs in the form of Zabol. The two short inscriptions of Mihirakula, recently discovered in Uruzagan in Afghanistan,² in which this title occurs in a slightly different form, also prove that a section of the Hūṇas, called Jauvla or Jabula, settled down in a part of Afghanistan and gave it the name of Zabulistan. On the basis of these facts it has been argued that as Zabulistan was an early settlement of the Hūṇas to the south of the Hindukush, their wave which became a threat to the security of the Gupta empire during the reign of Skandagupta, must have entered India by the Bolan pass near Quetta³. But the facts at our disposal do not warrant such a conclusion ;⁴ for, it remains to be proved that the Hūṇas who gave the name of Zabulistan to the upper valleys of Helmand and Kandhar were those who invaded India in the middle of the fifth century A. D.⁵

1 *JASB*, 1894, pp. 185 ff.

2 *JRAS*, 1954, pp. 112 ff.

3 *PIHC*, 1958, p. 161.

4 The supporters of the view that Hūṇas invaded Surāshtra and Malwa have not given any other cogent argument in favour of their theory. The argument (D. Sharma, *IC*, III, pp. 379 ff.; Sircar, *Sch. Ins.*, p. 295; Thakur, *JBR.S*, XLVII, pp. 77 ff.) that the verse 36 of the Mandasor inscription of the Mālava years 493 and 529 refers to the destruction by 'other kings' of the Sun-temple built by the guild of the silk-weavers, even if correct, does not prove that the Hūṇas overran Malwa during the reign of Skandagupta or his immediate successors. (Cf. Dandekar, *Hist. Gupta*, pp. 133 ff.). Similarly, there is no evidence to suggest that the anxiety of Skandagupta to appoint a suitable person as the governor of Surāshtra was caused by the invasion of the Hūṇas on that province. In the same inscription he is said to have appointed new governors in 'all' the provinces. The way in which he deliberated on the requisite qualities of a governor for Surāshtra does not prove anything, for, as the inscription in question belongs to the person who was selected for this post, it was but natural for its author to portray him in the best possible colours.

5 The place of Gupta-Hūṇa encounter is not known. The views that it took place on the bank of the Oxus, or the Yamunā or the Sutlej are purely conjectural.

Scholars differ on the question of the extent of the damage caused by the Hūṇa invasion. According to McGovern the Gupta monarch "experienced a long series of defeats which ended in the almost complete destruction of the Gupta empire".¹ R. D. Banerji opined that Skandagupta "lost his life in trying to stem the mighty flood of the third (Hūṇa) invasion."² Smith also believed that in the last years of the reign of Skandagupta there were renewed Hūṇa invasions and that "he was unable to continue the successful resistance which he had offered in the earlier days of his rule, and was forced at last to succumb to the repeated attack of the foreigners".³ But as Sinha⁴ has shown there is really no reason to believe in the repeated and successful (?) invasions of the Hūṇas in the life time of Skandagupta. The sheet-anchor of the theory of more than one invasions was the numismatic argument that heavy weight coins of Skandagupta were debased and, therefore, issued during the later critical years of his reign, and that the factor responsible for this was the strain caused by the repeated invasions of the Hūṇas. But this whole hypothesis has been proved wrong and it has been shown that the heavier coins of Skandagupta do not contain any greater percentage of alloy than that of his lighter variety⁵.

SKANDAGUPTA AND MALWA

In the Vākāṭaka-Gupta struggle, which took place in the initial years of the reign of Skandagupta, Malwa, one of the most

1 McGovern, *The Early Empires of Central Asia*, p. 416.

2 *AIG.* p. 49.

3 *FHI*, p. 328.

4 *DKM*, pp. 56 ff.

5 *Ibid*; *Coinage*, p. 241. Actually there is no evidence whatsoever to show that Skandagupta had to face any invasion of the barbarians other than the one which is mentioned in the Bhitari record and the Junagadh inscription of 457 A. D. Perhaps the Hūṇas invaded India immediately after their smashing victory over Yazdegird II of Iran in 454 A. D. (*supra*, p. 283 f.). The suggestion of Majumdar (*CA*, p. 35) that Skandagupta defeated them about 460 A. D. cannot be accepted.

vulnerable spots of the body-politic of the empire, occupied the centre of the stage. As we have seen, the western part of this province with its capital Daśapura, modern Mandasor, was ruled over by the kings of the Varman family, which probably owed its royal glory to Samudragupta.¹ The rulers of this family enjoyed considerable freedom in the administration of their state, though there is hardly any reason to doubt their subordination to the Gupta emperor.² In any case, it is beyond dispute that Bandhuvārman, the son of Viśhvārman, was subordinate to Kumāragupta I, for, the Mandasor inscription dated in the Mālava years 493 (=436 A. D.) and 529 (=472 A. D.)³, after referring to Kumāragupta as the ruler of the earth, mentions that while Bandhuvārman was ruling over Daśapura, a temple of the Sun-god was built by the guild of the silk-weavers in the year 436 A. D. The main object of the inscription, however, was to record that a part of this temple, which 'in the course of a long time, under other kings' fell into disrepair,⁴ was repaired again by the same guild in 472 A. D. As pointed out by many, under ordinary rules of construction, Kumāragupta should be understood to have been the overlord at the time the record was set up i.e., in 472 A. D.⁵ but most of the scholars have taken the reference to Kumāragupta in

1 *Supra*, Ch. III. pp. 157-9

2 *Ibid.*

3 For a long and protracted controversy over the interpretation of this record see Fleet, *Corpus*, III, pp. 79 ff. Bhandarkar, R. G., *JBBRAS*, XVII, Pt. II, pp. 94 ff.; Shastri, R. V., *JC*, IV, pp. 361 ff.; Diskalkar, D. B., *JBBRAS*, (NS), II, pp. 176 ff.; Mookerji, D. N., *JC*, V, p. 331 f.; Jagannath, *JHI*, XVIII, p. 118 f.; Pishorti, *JC*, VI, pp. 339 ff.; Sharma, D., *JC*, VI, p. 110; Sircar, D. C., *Sel. Ins.*, pp. 288 ff.; Sinha, *DKM*, p. 70; Majumdar, *NIHP*, p. 181 f.

4 D. Sharma has translated this passage differently—'A part of this building was destroyed (damaged) by other kings' and takes it as a reference to the Hūṇa occupation of this region in the reign of Skandagupta. (*JC*, III, p. 379 f.; *supra*, p. 285, fn. 4.)

5 *NIHP*, p. 182; cf. also *JBBRAS*, (NS), II, pp. 176.; Pannalal *Hindustan Review*, 1928, p. 31.

connection with the original construction of the temple.¹ To us, the view that as both the building of the temple and its repairs were completed in the reigns of two kings bearing the name of Kumāragupta (viz. Kumāragupta I the father of Skandagupta and Kumāragupta II of the Sarnath inscription of 473 A. D.), the scribe saved repetition and introduced an element of intelligent imagination by referring to the emperor Kumāragupta only once,² seems to be the most plausible one. In any case, it is almost beyond doubt that the Varman rulers, including Bandhuvvarman, were subordinate to the Guptas and that the western Malwa was a feudatory state of the empire in 472 A. D.³ But at the same time, it cannot be denied that the vague manner in which this record refers to 'other kings' (the plural number denoting at least three) ruling between 436 and 472 A. D., also gives the impression that in this period, Malwa passed through some sort of political trouble or confusion, the exact nature of which is not mentioned in this document.

One of the 'other kings' who ruled over Daśapura in this period of turmoil, was Prabhākara. He is mentioned in the Mandasor inscription of the Mālava year 524 (=467-68 A. D.).⁴ This inscription records the erection of a *stūpa* and an *ārāma* and the excavation of a well by Prabhākara's general Dattabhaṣa, the son of Vāyurakshita who was the general of Govindagupta, the son of the emperor Chandragupta II. Now, as this record does not mention the name of Skandagupta but describes Govindagupta as a great ruler,⁵ it has been surmised by some that Govindagupta rebelled either against his brother Kumāragupta I or the latter's son Skandagupta.⁶ But, as we have already shown, the theory that Govindagupta ever assumed independent status rests upon very dubious

1 Fleet, *op.cit.*, p. 79; cf. also *IC* III, p. 379; IV, p. 110; Salletore, *Life in the Gupta Age*, p. 30.

2 Sinha, *DKM*, p. 70.

3 *NHIP*, p. 182.

4 *El*, XXVII, pp. 12 ff.

5 *Supra*, pp. 253 ff.

6 Banerji, *AIG*, p. 51; Dandekar, *Hist. Gupta*, p. 120; Salletore, *Life in the Gupta Age*, p. 35; Majumdar, *NHIP*, p. 180; Das Gupta, N. N., *B. C. Law Vol.*, I, p. 622.

evidence¹. If he was the governor of Vaiśālī during his father's reign², he must have been more than 80 years old in the year 467-68 A. D. Therefore, it is not very likely that he could raise the banner of revolt after the death of either Kumāragupta I or Skandagupta. Actually, too much has been conjectured on the basis of the omission of the name of Skandagupta in this record. It should be borne in mind that the rulers of Malwa were never very particular in referring to their Gupta overlords in their records. So, the omission of the name of Skandagupta in this record does not necessarily prove that his authority was not acknowledged at the time this record was composed or that Govindagupta had assumed independent status during the reign of the former.

More interesting than the omission of any reference to the Gupta overlord in this record is the mention of Prabhākara, apparently as the ruler of Daśapura. N. P. Chakravarty thinks that Prabhākara was the successor, if not the son of Bandhuvarman³. But to us it appears highly unlikely. Unlike the Varman rulers of Daśapura, he is not called an Aulikara and the familiar name-ending Varman is absent in his name. The Mandasor inscription of the silk-weavers also does not mention any successor of Bandhuvarman. In the light of these facts the statement of this epigraph that Prabhākara destroyed the enemies of the Guptas becomes very significant. It raises a very strong presumption that some time after the year 436 A. D. but before the year 467 A. D. the Varmans fell out with the Guptas but were defeated, and Prabhākara, a strong partisan of the imperial family was appointed as the new viceroy of Daśapura.⁴ To us it appears that at the time when Ghaṭotkachagupta, who was the governor of the eastern Malwa with his headquarters at Tumbavana during the life time of Kumāragupta I, raised the banner of revolt in that region against the accession of Skandagupta, and Narendrasena, the Vākāṭaka ruler, instigated the Pushyamitra king, his subordinate ally, to invade the Gupta

1 *Supra*, pp. 253 ff.

2 *BMC, GD*, p. xi.

3 *EJ*, XXVI, p. 131, fn. 4.

4 *HIQ*, XXII, p. 290.

empire, either Bandhuvarman himself or his so far unknown successor¹ tried to fish in the troubled waters and transferred his allegiance from the Guptas to the Vākātakas ; for, it has been explicitly stated in the Balaghat plates of Prithvisheṇa II that the commands of Narendrasena were obeyed by the rulers of Mālavā, Mekalā and Kosala.² This reconstruction of the history of Malwa of the period under review, we believe, is in consonance with all the known facts, and also explains satisfactorily the allusion to the period of confusion and turmoil in the Mandasor inscription of 436 and 472 A. D. It is also not beyond the bounds of possibility that the reference in the Junagadh *prajāsti* of Skandagupta, to the hostile kings " who were so many serpents lifting their hoods in pride and arrogance " alludes to the rebellious Varmans, aggressive Vākātakas and their supporters. But Skandagupta rose equal to the occasion and with the help of his local representatives, such as Prabhākara, ' who were so many Garuḍas ' ³, he once again established his authority in the restive provinces.

TRANSFORMATION AND DECLINE OF THE EMPIRE

Apart from the early wars of Skandagupta, no other important event of his reign is known. The verses 3 and 7 of his Junagadh record refer to the ' conquest of the whole world ' ⁴, but probably it only means that he had been successful in imposing his sove-

1 Buddha Prakash (*Studies*, p. 404 f.) suggests that the successor of Bandhuvarman was Rudravarman mentioned in the *Pādatāditakam* of Śyāmilaka and the *Mṛicchhakatika* of Śūdraka. He further identified this ruler with the king Rudril known from his copper coins, discovered by H. V. Trivedi from Mandasor.

2 In case it is assumed that Prabhākara was a descendant of Bandhuvarman, it may be supposed that the latter or his successor were defeated by Narendrasena and a protégé of the Vākātakas was put on the Mālava throne, but Prabhākara, one of the descendants of Bandhuvarman, remained loyal to the Gupta cause and ultimately reimposed Gupta supremacy in the province.

3 Fleet, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

4 *Ibid.*

reignty¹ over the whole of the empire of his forefathers stretching from the Himālayas to the Narmadā and from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea.² He apparently did not incorporate any new provinces in the empire. But what he had achieved, was quite remarkable. Within the brief period of not more than three years (454-57 A. D.) he had subdued the rebellious princes of the imperial family, repulsed the fierce Hūṇas and the powerful Pushyamitras (who had the backing of the Vākātakas) and reconquered the lost province of Malwa. These achievements justified the assumption of the title Vikramāditya by him, which we find on his coins along with Kramāditya. The Kahaum pillar inscription of the G. E. 141 (=460 A. D.)³ and the Indor copper plate inscription of the G. E. 146 (=465 A. D.)⁴ speak respectively of his 'tranquil' and 'augmenting victorious' reign. As a ruler he proved himself quite benevolent, virtuous and just. According to the Junagadh inscription "while he, the king is reigning, verily no man among his subjects falls away from religion; (and) there is no one who is distressed in poverty, (or) in misery (or) is avaricious (or) who, worthy of punishment, is over-much put to torture"⁵. The restoration of the ancient embankment of the great water-reservoir on the Girnar hill, which had burst in the very beginning of his reign, was the great achievement that redounds to the credit of his governor Parnadatta and latter's son Chakrapālita, the local magistrate, and proves the soundness of the judgment of the emperor in the selection of his governors.

1 The cycle of legends referring to the *divijaya* of Vikramāditya has apparently nothing to do with Skandagupta. Cf. however, *DKM*, p. 51.

2 His sovereignty over the western provinces is proved by the Junagadh inscription and the silver coins of the Garuda, Alter and Bull types, over the Madhyadeśa by the Kahaum and the Bhitari records and the Indor copper plate inscription (which refers to Śarvanāga as the *riṣhayaapati* of the *antaxvedī*) and the Peacock type of silver coins, and over Bengal by the discovery of his heavy weight gold coins (*JNSI*, VII, pp. 13 ff.) from that region.

3 Fleet, *et. cit.*, p. 67.

4 Fleet, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

5 *Ibid.*, 62.

INFLUENCE OF THE ASCETIC IDEOLOGY

"Thus, Skandagupta was a great conqueror, the liberator of the nation, the restorer of the pride of the imperial Guptas, and above all the fountain-head of a benevolent administration"¹. It was, therefore, in keeping with the facts when he was described as 'resembling the god Śakra'² and, as 'the eminent hero in the lineage of the Guptas'³. But undoubtedly he was the last of the great emperors of his dynasty. After him the power and prestige of the imperial Guptas declined very rapidly. One of the major causes of this decline was the baleful influence of the ascetic ideology on the emperors. As is generally known, the early Gupta emperors were devout Vaishṇavas, and were quite tolerant in their religious outlook. We have seen how their faith had provided them a political philosophy consonant with their imperialistic aspirations.⁴ But in the later phase of the history of the dynasty, it appears that they came under the spell of an ascetic philosophy the influence of which tended to dampen their martial fervour, though officially they continued to profess faith in Vaishṇavism and the policy of religious toleration was never given up. The change in this direction commenced probably in the closing period of Kumāragupta I's reign. As we have shown, the combined testimony of the literary tradition and his Apratigha type of coins, on the obverse of which he is shown in the dress of a monk, strongly suggest that in his old age he practically became a recluse.⁵ In this connection it is interesting to note the term *apratigha*, which occurs on the reverse of the coins of this type, though used in the epics and classical literature in the sense of 'invincible', had a definite Buddhist connotation also. For, in the Mahāyāna, *pratigha* or anger is mentioned as one of the six *kleśas* which cause bondage.⁶ Therefore, in association with the depiction of Kumāra-

1 Sinha, *DKM*, p. 55.

2 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

4 *Supra*, Ch. III, pp. 135 ff.

5 *Supra*, Ch. IV, pp. 267 ff.

6 Hardaval, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine*, p. 109. Cf. also *Coinage*, p. 358.

gupta I on the obverse of these coins in the dress of a monk, the legend *apratigha* strongly suggests that the religion which attracted the attention of the old emperor was Buddhism and that when these coins were issued, he claimed to have become an *apratigha* or 'one who he is above anger'. It is perfectly consonant with what we know about the influence of Buddhism in the Gupta court in this period. From the testimony of Paramārtha, a Buddhist scholar of the Gupta age, we learn that the king Vikramāditya sent his queen with the crown-prince Bālāditya to study under the famous Buddhist scholar Vasubandhu.¹ As we have discussed elsewhere, these rulers were no other than Skandagupta Vikramāditya and his successor Narsinhagupta Bālāditya I, the son of Purugupta.² The influence of Vasubandhu on these rulers proved very consequential. According to Paramārtha, it induced Skandagupta, who had been a patron of the Sāṃkhya philosophy, to take interest in Buddhism. Perhaps it explains why in the *ĀMMK*, a Buddhist work, Skandagupta is described as 'the best, wise and religious king in that low age'.³ As regards Narsinhagupta I, he became a devout Buddhist and according to Paramārtha, on becoming king after the death of Skandagupta, presumably in or shortly after 467 A. D., favoured Vasubandhu with special patronage. But this spell of Buddhism on the emperor did not prove beneficial for the empire, whatever might have been its spiritual advantages to him as an individual. For, from the *ĀMMK* we learn that 'after reigning without a rival and peacefully' he became a Buddhist monk and at the age of 36 years and 1 month committed suicide by *dhyāna*, swooning away.⁴ In view of his age at the time

1 *Supra*, Ch. III, App. v.

2 *Infra*, App. II of this Ch.

3 *III*, p. 33.

4 *Ibid.* Religious suicides were not unknown in Buddhism. See Watters, *Travels*, II, p. 155 f.; also I-tsing, *Records*; cf. that according to the Junagadh inscription of Skandagupta, his father Kumāragupta I "by this own power had attained the position of being a friend of the gods" i.e. died by his own power (*Fleet, op. cit.*, p. 62). Did he also commit religious suicide?

of his death, it may be readily admitted that his son and successor Kumāragupta II (c. 472-75 A. D.), who may be identified with the king Kumāragupta mentioned in the Bhitari seal and the Sarnath inscription of 473 A. D. and Kumāragupta Kramāditya who issued Class I of the Archer type of gold coins,¹ could not have been more than 15 years of age. No wonder, therefore, if Budhagupta, another son of Purugupta, could stage a *coup d'etat* and 'seize' the throne for himself in or shortly before 476 A. D.²

Another proof of the Buddhist leanings of the Gupta emperors under discussion is provided by the growth in the power and influence of the Buddhist institutions in this period. Of course, the later Gupta emperors continued to patronize and grant *agrabāras* to the Brāhmanas, but gradually the share of the Buddhist monasteries perceptibly increased. From the Chinese records we learn that in the period under discussion, Śakrāditya laid the foundations of the famous Buddhist University at Nālandā by building a monastery there. After him, the kings Buddhaguptarāja, Tathāgatarāja, Bālādityarāja, Vajra and a king of Central India extended their patronage to this institution.³ The king Śakrāditya of this list has been identified by Sinha with Kumāragupta II⁴, for, in the above list Buddhagupta is mentioned after Śakrāditya. But as the Chinese records give merely a list of names of those kings who earned the credit of building monasteries at Nālandā, the rulers who had nothing to do with this institution have not been mentioned. Therefore, in view of the facts that 'Śakrāditya' is merely the translation of 'Mahendrāditya', the official title of Kumāragupta I, and that the official title of Kumāragupta II was Kramāditya, it is better to assume that the foundations of this institution were laid by Kumāragupta I himself. It is consonant with what we know about his old-age religious leanings.

After Kumāragupta I, Budhagupta turred out to be a great patron of the Nālandā University. As the word Tathāgata is a synonym of

1 *Infra*, App. II of this Ch.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 DKM, p. 69.

Buddha, it is quite possible that Budhagupta, whom the Chinese records mention as Buddhagupta, built two monasteries at Nālandā which were, due to some confusion, attributed to two different rulers, Buddhagupta and Tathāgatarāja. May be, Budhagupta extended greater patronage to the Buddhist institution in order to enlist in his favour the support of the Buddhists, whose influence in the Gupta court at the time of his accession must have been considerable. At any rate, it is beyond doubt that it was due mainly to the patronage of the later imperial Guptas that the Nālandā *Mahāvihāra* became so famous and wealthy. Yuan Chwang informs us that in his time this convent, which was the most remarkable of the myriads of such institutions in India and housed 10,000 priests and strangers, was maintained out of the revenues of about a hundred villages granted to it.¹ Apparently, most of these villages were endowed to this convent by the later imperial Guptas enumerated by Yuan Chwang himself.

GROWTH OF FEUDO-FEDERAL STRUCTURE

The rise of the Nālandā *Mahāvihāra* and such other institutions to the status of self-supporting economic units was actually one of the incidental results of the feudalization of the state structure brought about partly by the forces which were responsible for the establishment of the empire itself and partly by the administrative organisation evolved by the early Gupta emperors. The process of conquest, by which Samudragupta reduced smaller chiefs to subordination and reinstated them in their positions, provided they paid regular tributes, carried out imperial orders, gave their daughters in marriage and rendered homage to the conqueror, contributed in a large measure to the growth of feudal relations and made the imperial structure feudo-federal in nature. Of course, the term *sāmanta*² is not used for the feudatories of Samudragupta—its earliest use in North India occurs in the Gunaighar inscription of

1 Beal, *Life*, p. 112.

2 For the varying significance of the term *sāmanta*, vide L. Gopal, *JR. IS*, Pt. I and II, April, 1963 ; See also Kosambi, D. D., *Intro. Study. Hist.*, Ch. 9.

Vainyagupta (507 A. D.)¹ and in the Barabar cave inscription of the Maukhari chief Anantavarman, whose father is described as *sāmanta chūḍāmaṇiḥ*²—but the detailed description of the obligations of the *sāmantas* in the *Harshacharita* of Bāṇa leaves no doubt that the feudatories of Samudragupta more or less belonged to the same category³. Significantly enough, the *Prayāga prastasti* refers also to the written charters (*śāsanas*) which were issued by the overlord to his feudatories⁴. But here it is necessary to make a distinction between those states which were forced by hard battle to pay tribute to the emperor and those that yielded of their own accord as a diplomatic measure. In the *Rājasūya* of Yudhishtira, Śiśupāla, while objecting to the offer of first oblation to Krishna, argued : “ We all have not paid tribute to the illustrious son of Kuntī from fear, from desire of gain, or from having won over by conciliation. On the other hand, we have paid him tribute simply because he has been desirous of the imperial dignity from motives of virtue. And yet he insults us in this way.. ”⁵. While this incident cannot be accepted as a historical fact, it certainly points out a varied orchestration in the feudal structure based on hierarchical scheme and provides an interesting insight into the psychology of those vassals who used to yield to the imperial aspirant of their own accord. At any rate, it is quite obvious that the policy followed by the early Gupta emperors gave birth to a class of feudatory rulers, who were quite autonomous in the administration of their kingdoms, subject to certain limitations which were more often than not formal rather than real in character. Apart from the rulers of the *pratyanta* states and the foreign potentates, enumerated in the Allahabad record, we hear of a number of other feudatory rulers of the early period—such as the Sanakānika kings mentioned in the Udayagiri inscription of the G. F. 82^a, the Mahārāja Trikamala, known from a Gayā inscription of the

1 Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, p. 333.

2 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 49.

3 Sharma, R. S., *Ind. Feud.*, pp. 25 ff.

4 Sircar, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

5 *Mahābhārata*, Sabhā P., 26. 6-10.

6 Fleet, *Corpus*, p. 21.

year 64¹, the Mahārājas Svāmīdāsa, Bhulūṇḍa and Rudradāsa who ruled some where in the western part of Central India and issued land grants in the years 67, 107 and 117 respectively², and the Mahārāja Śrī Viśvāmitrasvāmin whose name occurs on a seal found at Besanagar. Gradually the number of such feudatories and the degree of autonomy which they enjoyed increased. Skandagupta no doubt made a heroic effort to reimpose the imperial authority on them, but after his death the ominous signs of the decline in the influence of the emperor became more pronounced. For example, from the Supia inscription of the Gupta year 141 (=460 A. D.)³ we learn that the Rewa region was firmly in the hands of Skandagupta. But from two copper plates found in Allahabad District and Rewa state respectively,⁴ both of the year 158, presumably of the Gupta era, it appears that at that time i. e. in 477 A. D. a certain Mahārāja Lakshmaṇa was ruling over this region with his capital at Jayapura, a place not yet identified. Though this ruler was evidently a subordinate of Budhagupta, he makes reference neither to the emperor and nor to the Gupta sovereignty. The king Subandhu, who issued a land grant from the ancient town of Mahishmati in the year 167,⁵ also does not make any reference to his Gupta overlord though his date, if referred

1 *ASI, AR*, 1922-23, p. 169.

2 *IA*, XVI, p. 98 f.; *EI*, XV, pp. 286 ff. Mirashi (*PHIC*, 1944, pp. 62 ff.) refers these dates to the Chedi-Kalachuri era and suggests that these kings belonged to the same dynasty and were feudatories of the Ābhīras. But as shown by Sircar (*IHQ*, XXII p. 64 f.) while the Ābhira king Īśvarasena is simply called a *Rājan*, the kings Svāmīdāsa etc. adopt the higher title *Mahārāja* and refer to themselves as *Paramabhaṭṭāraka-pādānndhyāla*. As the titles *Paramabhaṭṭāraka* and *Mahārājādhirāja* were popularized by the Guptas, it is safer to refer the dates of the records in question to the Gupta era which would make Svāmīdāsa etc. the feudatories of Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I. Mirashi (*Studies in Indology*, II, pp. 175 ff.) does not agree with these arguments.

3 *POC*, XII, Vol. III, p. 587.

4 *EI*, II, p. 364; *ASI, AR*, 1936-37, p. 88.

5 *EI*, XIX, p. 261.

to the Gupta era, as is generally believed, makes him a contemporary of Budhagupta.¹ The Pāṇduvaṃśī king Udayana, known from a rock inscription at Kālanjar (Banda Dist., U. P.) flourished towards the end of the fifth century.² He also does not refer to his Gupta overlord. Similarly, the Parivrajaka Mahārājas of Bundelkhand, issued land grants without mentioning the name of the reigning Gupta emperor, though they used the phrase *Gupta-nripa-rājya-bhuktāu*.³ Six copper plates of this royal family have so far come to light. They belong to two kings, Hastin⁴ (156-198 i.e. from 475 to 517 A. D.) and Śaṅkshobha (199-209 i.e. from 518 to 528 A. D.).

In the western Malwa, the position was not different. Till recently, we had no records from this region for the period following the Mālava year 529 (= 472 A. D.) when the Sun-temple built by the guild of the silk-weavers was repaired, until 589 (= 532 A. D.), the date of the Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman-Vishṇuvardhana. But the two inscriptions published by D. C. Sircar⁵ have thrown some welcome light on this obscure period. One of them found at Choti Sadari near Neemuch, is dated in the year 547, which in view of its palaeography be referred to the Mālava era. It records the construction of a temple by the king Gauri of the Mānvyāni family and mentions his four predecessors—Pūṇyasoma, Rājyavardhana, Rāshṭra and Yaśogupta, the last being the father of Gauri. The second inscription is fragmentary and

1 *C.I.*, p. 31. Mirashi refers the date of Subandhu to the Kalachuri-Chedi era and regards him as an independent chief in 416-17 A. D. (*Studies in Indology*, II, pp. 262 ff.).

2 *E.I.*, IV, p. 257. According to Mirashi, he was a descendant of the king Bharatabala of Mekalā (*Studies in Indology*, I, pp. 234, ff.).

3 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

4 Some scholars (Rapson, *Indian Coins*, p. 28; P. T. Benerji, *JNSI*, XIII, p. 194) have attributed the coins bearing the legend *Śri Rana Hasti* to the Parivrajaka king Hastin. But it is highly unlikely. D. Sharma (*JNSI*, XVIII, pp. 222-23) and P. L. Gupta (*ibid.*, XX, pp. 188 ff.) attributes them to Vatsarāja Pratihāra who, according to the *Kuvalayamālā* had the title of *Rana Hastin*.

5 *JHQ*, XXXIII, pp. 314 ff.

undated, and was found at Mandasor. It records the excavation of a tank by the same Mahārāja Gauri and mentions his father Yaśogupta, grandfather Rāshṭravardhana and another ruler Ādityavardhana, presumably the immediate overlord of Gauri. Significantly enough, neither of these records refers to the suzerainty of the Guptas which has led some scholars to believe that the king Ādityavardhana was an independent ruler¹. But as we have seen, the rulers of the western Malwa were never very particular in referring to the suzerainty of the Guptas. Further, the fact that the Maitrakas of Valabhi continued to owe their allegiance to the Gupta emperor even in the sixth century, strongly suggests that the rulers of western Malwa, situated as it is to the east of Surāshṭra, had not assumed complete independence in the last quarter of the fifth century A. D. Actually, there is absolutely nothing in the inscriptions of the king Gauri to indicate that he or Ādityavardhana were not within the sphere of Gupta influence, however weak².

RISE OF THE BRAHMANA FEUDATORIES

As we have seen, the Gupta empire was the political aspect of the Brahmanical renaissance of the third-fourth century A. D.³ One of its natural corollary was the rise in the political importance of the Brāhmaṇas. The early Pali texts refer to the villages granted to the Brāhmaṇas by the rulers of Kosala and Magadha, but they do not mention the delegation of administrative rights by the donors. In the Gupta period the rulers not only surrendered police and administrative rights over the lands granted by them, they also gave up control over almost all sources of revenue including pasturage, hides, mines for the production of salt, forced labour and all hidden treasures and deposits.⁴ Commenting on

1 Mirashi, *op. cit.*, I, p. 212.

2 For a discussion on the relation of Ādityavardhana with the Mahārājādhirāja Dravyavardhana mentioned in the *Bṛhatśambitā* of Varāhamihira and the king Yaśodharman-Vishnuvardhana of the Mandasor inscription of 532 A. D. and the allied problems, see. Ch. VI.

3 *Supra*, Ch. II, pp. 62 ff.

4 Sharma, R. S., *Ind. Feud.*, pp. 2 ff.

the term *brahmadeya*, Buddhaghosha, who flourished in the fifth century A. D., states that the *brahmadeya* grant carried with it judicial administrative rights.¹ It was indeed a very significant development. Of the seven organs of the state power mentioned in literature, taxation system and coercive power were rightly regarded as two vital elements. If they are delegated, the state disintegrates. This was actually the position created by the grants made to the Brāhmaṇas. It paved the way for the rise of Brāhmaṇa feudatories who performed administrative functions almost independently. For example, the Parivrājakas of Bundelkhand were the descendants of the 'kingly ascetic' Suśarmaṇa, evidently a Brāhmaṇa, who was a great sage, 'indeed an incarnation of Kapil'.² Similarly, the forefathers of Mātṛivishṇu, who was the *vishayapati* of Fran in 484 A. D., were Brāhmaṇa saints who practiced private study of scriptures and celebrated sacrifices. But Mātṛivishṇu, though merely a *vishayapati* (District Officer) under the Mahārāja Surasimichandra, the governor of the region between the Yamunā and the Narmadā, called himself a Mahārāja and claimed that he was 'approached (*in marriage choice*) by the goddess of sovereignty, as if a maiden choosing (*him*) of her own accord (*as her husband*)', that his fame extended 'upto the borders of four oceans' and that he was 'victorious in battle against many enemies'.³ It is a language which is easily applicable to the great emperors Samudragupta and Skandagupta.

INCREASE IN THE POWER OF HEREDITARY OFFICERS

Whether or not the Guptas made land grants to their officers for their military and administrative services, is not specifically mentioned in the epigraphs. But such a possibility cannot be entirely ruled out.⁴ However, it is certain that with the passage of time more and more imperial and provincial offices became hereditary in character—a feature which further undermined the central

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

² Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁴ For a detailed discussion on this point see R. S. Sharma, *Ind. Feud.*, pp. 7 ff.

authority. The posts of the *bhogika*, *mantrin* and the *sachiva*, who served with the emperor, were usually hereditary ; so was the post of the *amātya*.¹ The surname *datta* of the *uparikas* in charge of the *bhukti* of Puṇḍravardhana in succession, suggests that they probably belonged to the same family. This practice naturally increased their power and prestige. From the Damodarpur copper plate inscriptions we learn that at the time of Kumāragupta I the *uparika* of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* was called simply as Uparika Chirātadatta² in 444-47 A. D., but at the time of Budhagupta the incumbents of this office were known as Uparika Mahārāja Brahmadatta in 482 A. D.,³ and Uparika Mahārāja Jayadatta a few years earlier or later.⁴

In the far western province of Surāshṭra, where Paṇḍadatta was appointed governor by Skandagupta in 455 A. D., the conversion of the office of the governor into a hereditary post, eventually led to the rise of the Maitraka royal family. The founder of this dynasty was Bhaṭārka,⁵ the imperial *Senāpati*, who was appointed governor of this province with Valabhī as his capital sometime before the year 502 A. D., the earliest known date of his family known from a land grant issued by Droṇasimha, the younger son of Bhaṭārka.⁶ It is significant to note that Dharasena, the elder son and successor of Bhaṭārka, like the latter, continued to call himself a *Senāpati*. But the power and prestige gained by this hereditary succession, control over the army by virtue of being

1 Harishena, the author of the *Prayāga prasasti*, was a *Mahā-daṇḍanāyaka* and was the son of the *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka* Dhruvabhūti. The families of Virasena and Prithvishena, the ministers of Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I respectively, were holding ministerial posts for more than one generation. For other instances see, *NHIP*, p. 275.

2 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 285.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 324.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 328.

5 *CA*, p. 61.

6 Due to a faulty translation of the opening passage of the records of the Valabhī kings, it was held for a long time that 'Bhaṭārka successfully fought against the Maitrakas'. Hultzsch was the first scholar to show that Bhaṭārka himself belonged to the Maitraka clan and not that he fought against it (*EI*, III, p. 320).

its commanders and 'the strength of the array of hereditary servants who had been brought about under subjection by splendour and had been acquired by gifts and honourable treatment', made Droṇasiṃha, the younger brother and successor of Dharasena, one of the most important feudatories of the empire, so much so that 'the paramount master in person, the sole lord of the circumference of the territory of the whole earth', obviously the Gupta emperor, took the trouble of installing him in the royalty in a regular ceremony¹ some time towards the close of the fifth or in the early years of the sixth century A. D.

From the above account it is clear that at the time of the death of Budhagupta, the Guptas were still the overlords of almost the whole empire as left by Skandagupta,² though internally it was not

- 1 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 168. There is no reason to believe that Toramāṇa or Mihirakula had anything to do with Surāshtra and were the overlords of the Maitrakas. Virjee's view (*Ancient History of Saurashtra*, p. 27) that Harishena Vākātaka was the overlord of Droṇasiṃha is also untenable. For a discussion on this point, see *IC*, V, p. 409.
- 2 The Uchchhalpa kingdom of Bundelkhand, which was contiguous to the Parivrajaka state, was perhaps an exception. We have seven copper plate grants of the Uchchhalpa dynasty which mention two kings Jayanātha (year 174, 177), his son Śarvanātha (191-214) and the four ancestors of the former. These records do not make any reference to the Gupta sovereignty. It is, of course, no valid reason to doubt their subordination to the Guptas, but in this particular case, there are other reasons to believe that the Uchchhalpas did not acknowledge Gupta overlordship. The dates of Jayanātha, if referred to the Gupta era, will be 493 and 496 A. D. In that case, he may be placed in the period from 485 to 505 A. D. and his father, whose name was Vyāghra, in c. 460-85 A. D. Thus, the Uchchhalpa king Vyāghra becomes a contemporary of Prithviṣeṇa II (c. 460-80 A. D.), the successor of Narendrasena. Now, from the Nacha and Ganj inscriptions, which on palaeographical grounds are referred to the fifth century, we learn that a certain king Vyāghradeva (*supra*, p. 164 fn. 4.) was the feudatory of Prithviṣeṇa Vākātaka. This Vyāghradeva may easily be identified with the king Vyāghra, the father of Jayanātha. Thus, the combined testimony of these documents suggests that in the second half of the fifth century the Uchchhalpas

in the same condition. The power and prestige of the emperors had evidently declined, and their feudatories were gradually becoming more and more autonomous and independent. The governorship in Surāshṭra became hereditary, the kings of Malwa had become almost independent, the Parivrājakas referred to the imperial authority only vaguely and many other feudatory kings did not care to mention it at all. In the days of Skandagupta, Śarvanāga, the officer in charge of the *antarvedi* was merely a *viśhayapati*; in the days of Budhagupta even the *viśhayapati* of Eran, who was himself under the ruler of *antarvedi*, called himself a Mahārāja. The declining power and prestige of the empire are also reflected in the coinage of the period. The gold coins of Skandagupta are comparatively few, relatively debased and mostly belong to the Archer type. But he was able to issue a few coins of other types as well. Further, in his case we know that the cause of the depreciation of money was the financial drain caused by his wars fought for the integrity of the empire. But his immediate successors had no such problems, and yet they were able to issue only a few gold coins of only one type. Further, Skandagupta could issue extensively silver coins of a variety of types while Budhagupta minted silver currency only for the central provinces of the empire and discontinued the type current in Gujarat and Kathiawar. It also constitutes a strong indication of the decline of the imperial authority in those provinces.

owed their allegiance to the Vākātakas (Mirashi, *Studies in Indology*, I, pp. 199 ff.). As regards the identification of the era used in the Uchchhakalpa records, it is necessary to remember that according to the Bhumara boundary pillar inscriptions, the Uchchhakalpa king Śarvanātha was contemporary of the Parivrājaka king Hastin. As shown by Mirashi, this fact positively proves that the era used in the Uchchhakalpa records is identical with the Gupta era (*ibid*). Some scholars, however, believe that the Uchchhakalpas were subordinate to the Parivrājakas themselves. (*IHQ*, XXI, p. 137). But this suggestion is not tenable.

PROBLEM OF SUCCESSION AFTER KUMĀRAGUPTA I : SKANDAGUPTA AND HIS RIVALS

The difficult problem of the genealogy and chronology of the successors of Kumāragupta I has given occasion for voluminous discussions and wide divergence of opinion. When Fleet compiled his *Corpus* in 1888, the genealogy of the dynasty was known up to Skandagupta, though the existence of Budhagupta and Bhānugupta, with their respective dates 165 and 191 revealed by their inscriptions found at Eran, 'coupled with the fact that in the inscriptions of the Privrājaka *Mahārājas*, the Gupta sovereignty is distinctly stated to have continued down to 528 A. D., raised at least a presumption that these two kings were of the Early Gupta lineage'.¹ However, Fleet did not believe that they were direct descendants of Skandagupta. But the situation changed in 1889 when the famous Bhitari seal of Kumāragupta² was published. It omits the name of Skandagupta altogether and, instead, mentions Purugupta as the son of Kumāragupta I and the father of Narasimhagupta and the grandfather of Kumāragupta, the issuer of the seal. Thus, the problem of the relationship of Skandagupta and Purugupta was posed. It became further complicated when, in 1914-15, three new inscriptions—the Sarnath Buddhist image inscription of Kumāragupta of the Gupta year 154,³ the Sarnath Buddhist image inscription of Budhagupta of the Gupta year 157,⁴ and the Damodarpur copper plate inscription of the Gupta year 163⁵ referring to Budhagupta as the imperial ruler came to light. The new evidence suggested that as Budhagupta was ruling in 476 A. D., the Kumāragupta of the Sarnath inscription should be identified with the Kumāragupta of the

1 *Coinage*, III, p. 7.

2 *JASB*, LVIII, Pt. I, p. 84.

3 *ASI, AR*, 1914-15, p. 124.

4 *Ibid*, p. 124-25.

5 *EI*, XV, p. 135 f.

Bhitari seal and that the rule of the three generations—Purugupta, Narasimhagupta and Kumāragupta—should be placed in the short period of 9 years i.e. after the last known date of Skandagupta (467 A. D., known from one of his silver coins) and before 476 A. D., the earliest known date of Budhagupta. It was in these circumstances that Pannalal proposed his famous theory in 1918.¹ Subsequently, several new inscriptions were discovered which made the confusion worse confounded. For example, in 1925 a copper plate inscription found at Gunaighar² in Bengal revealed the existence of a certain Vainya Gupta who, after the discovery of his Nālandā sealing³, had to be accepted as a member of the imperial Gupta dynasty. Further, a fragmentary seal found at Nālandā in 1941,⁴ revealed that a king named Vishnugupta was the son of Kumāragupta and the grandson of Narasimhagupta. It is, therefore, generally believed that this seal carries the genealogy of the Guptas a generation further than the Bhitari seal of Kumāragupta; for, this Vishnugupta appears to have been the great-grandson of Purugupta. The coins of the successors of Kumāragupta I, to some extent, added new facets to this problem; for, they revealed the existence of several new rulers like Ghaṭotkachagupta, Chandragupta III and Prakāśāditya who must be adjusted in the genealogy of the dynasty. Furthermore, the absence of the gold coins of kings like Bhānugupta creates some doubt in their imperial status. But on the whole, the information supplied by the coinage of the later imperial Guptas is consonant with the epigraphic data and helps us in solving at least some of the problems created by the inscriptions. Here we shall devote our attention mainly to the problem of succession immediately after the death of Kumāragupta I.

As noted above, from the Bhitari pillar inscription of Skandagupta⁵ it appears that Skandagupta was the son and successor of

1 *Hindustan Review*, Jan. 1918, pp. 1 ff.

2 *IHQ*, VI, pp. 53 ff.

3 *IHQ*, XIX, p. 275.

4 *IEI*, XXVI, pp. 235 ff.

5 *Fleet, Corpus*, III, p. 52 ff.

Kumāragupta I, while the Bhitari seal of Kumāragupta¹ seems to suggest that Kumāragupta I was succeeded by Purugupta. Now, as the last known date of Kumāragupta I is supposed to be 455 A. D., and Skandagupta is believed to have ruled from 455 to 467 A. D., there is apparently no place for Purugupta in between Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta. To solve this problem Hoernle² and, following him, Bhandarkar³ and Krishna Deva⁴ have suggested that Skandagupta and Purugupta were the names of the same person.⁵ This view rests on the assumption that as both, Skandagupta and Purugupta, have been mentioned as the successors of Kumāragupta I, they must have been identical. But the king-lists found in the Gupta records are not chronological ; they are genealogical. Therefore, it is more natural to assume that Skandagupta and Purugupta were two different sons of Kumāragupta I and both of them ruled either simultaneously or one after another. Basak,⁶ indeed, suggests that after the death of Kumāragupta I the dynasty

1 *JASB*, LVIII, Pt. I, p. 84 ; *Sel. Ins.*, pp. 321-22.

2 *JRAS*, Pt. I, p. 129.

3 *IC*, IX, pp. 231 ff.

4 *El*, XXVI, Pt. V, pp. 235 ff.

5 At one time R. C. Majumdar (*JA*, XLVII, pp. 161 ff. ; *JASB*, NS, XVII, pp. 249 ff.) also had this suspicion. But this view rests upon very weak arguments. Simply because the evidence of Paramārtha and the author of the *AMMK* tends to show that Skandagupta was succeeded by Bālāditya, usually and rightly identified with Narasimhagupta Bālāditya, the son of Purugupta, it does not follow that Skandagupta and Purugupta were identical. As the epigraphs do not reveal the existence of any son of Skandagupta, it is more natural to assume that he was succeeded by his brother or nephew. The small number of coins of Purugupta, if they exist at all (*infra*, p. 310 fn. 1), only indicates that he ruled for a very short period. So far as the use of the phrase *tatpādānudhyāta* in relation to Kumāragupta I by both, Skandagupta and Purugupta, is concerned, it may be remembered that it indicates to the filial devotion of the king for which it is used ; it had nothing to do with his constitutional status. Further, according to R. C. Majumdar himself (*IC*, X, pp. 17 ff.) the Bihar stone pillar inscription, in which it has been supposedly used for Skandagupta, cannot be ascribed to this king safely.

6 Basak, *HNEI*, pp. 62 ff.

was divided into two branches, one consisting of Skandagupta, Kumāragupta II of the Sarnath inscription, Budhagupta and Bhānugupta and the other of Purugupta, Narasimhagupta and Kumāragupta III.¹ He believes that Purugupta and his successors "were allowed by Skandagupta and his successors to enjoy a small kingdom, somewhere in the eastern portion of the Gupta empire, perhaps in South Bihar".² But the Nālandā seal of Budhagupta has almost conclusively proved that he was the son of Purugupta and not a descendant of Skandagupta. Further, it is beyond doubt that Budhagupta ruled over the whole territory extending from Bengal to Malwa while Narasimhagupta, the conqueror of Mihirakula, ruled over a pretty large kingdom extending from

1 Allan (*BMC, GD*, Intro. p. liii) also suggested "the existence of another Gupta line parallel to that whose genealogy is established by the Bhitari seal". At one time Majumdar (*JASB, NS*, XVII, pp. 249 ff.) also had the suspicion that after Kumāragupta I the imperial Gupta dynasty split up into two branches which were later on re-united under Budhagupta. Codrington (*Ancient India from the Earliest Times to the Gupta Rule*, p. 57) also appears to have some faith in this view. Recently Altekar has revived it in a modified form (*Coinage*, Ch. 1.). According to him, Kumāragupta I was succeeded by Skandagupta and Skandagupta by his half brother Purugupta (to whom Altekar ascribes the coins of Prakāśāditya) and Narasimhagupta Bālāditya. After the death of Narasimhagupta, the empire was partitioned between Budhagupta and Kumāragupta II, respectively brother and son of Narsimhagupta. Budhagupta, who got the lion's share of the empire, was succeeded by Bhānugupta who in turn was followed by Bālāditya, the victor of the Hūṇas. In the second branch which ruled over a small dominion in the east Kumāragupta II was followed by Vishnugupta who in turn was succeeded by Vainyagupta. The dynasty came to an end by the year 540 A. D. In the subsequent chapters of his *Coinage*, Altekar has shown his inclination towards several other possibilities regarding the place of various kings known from their coins. However, the reconstruction given in the first chapter of his work may be accepted as the one in which he had greatest faith (vide *Coinage*, p. 269).

2 *HNEL*, p. 63.

Magadha to Bengal. Thus, a partition of the empire after the death of Kumāragupta I cannot be postulated.¹

As a matter of fact, there are only two reasonable alternatives : either Purugupta ruled after the death of Skandagupta or immediately after the death of Kumāragupta I. The first possibility has been accepted by a large number of scholars. But we prefer the later alternative because according to the author of the *ĀṬMAK* and *Paramārtha*, a Buddhist scholar of the Gupta age, Skandagupta was succeeded by Bālāditya, who may be reasonably identified with Narasimhagupta Bālāditya, the son of Purugupta. This tradition may easily be reconciled with the information gathered from coins and inscriptions.² Secondly, if Purugupta ruled for a short period after the death of his father, he must have opposed the succession of Skandagupta. This is precisely what the Junagadh inscription of the latter suggests. According to this document " the goddess of fortune and splendour of her own accord selected (Skanda) as her husband.....having discarded all the other sons of the king as not coming upto her standard ".³ Short of actual description

1 Vide, *DKM*, pp. 4 ff.

2 See App. II of this Ch.

3 *Corpus*, III, p. 62. When the acquisition of or rise in the royal status was obtained through the defeat of a rival or rivals, the victorious king was usually represented as the hero who was selected as husband on her own accord by *rājyaśrī*. Bāna mentions that of her own accord Lakshmi stayed with the king Tārāpīḍa, despising the happiness of her home in the breast of Nārāyaṇa (*Kādambarī*, pūrvabhāga, Poona, 1951, p. 54). Rājasekhara uses the motif in his description of the Pratihāra king Mahipāla " who was the lover of Lakshmi selected in a *svayamvara* " (*Bālabharata*), prologue). " The Rājyaśrī came of her own accord and loved the Silāhāra king " (*IA*, IX, p. 34). " Sindhurāja was choosen by Lakshmi herself in the battlefield " (*Narasāhasāṅkacharita*, I, 59). Raychaudhuri (*PHAI*, p. 575) mentions that Prabhākaravardhana, shortly before his death referred to " Harsha as *svayamvera Śrīgrihita*, though Harsha's devotion to his elder brother is well-known ". But this phrase does not express fully the idea that Lakshmi discarded " all the other sons of the king as not coming upto her standard " (vide, Sinha, *DKM*, pp. 23-24; Pathak, *Ancient Historians of India*, pp. 41 ff.).

of civil war, one cannot expect to find a more explicit reference to the struggle for power which took place after the death of Kumāragupta I.¹

- 1 It is generally believed that the last known date of Kumāragupta I found on one of his silver coins in 136 G. E. (*BMC*, *GD*, p. xlv; *IA*, 1902, p. 266) and that the same is the earliest date for Skandagupta according to the Junagadh rock inscription (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, pp. 62 ff.). But, as pointed out by Basham (*BIOAS*, XVII, p. 367), the unique silver coin of Kumāragupta I, which is said to have the date 136, was last seen more than seventy years ago by Smith (*JASB*, 1894, p. 175) in a private collection and its present whereabouts are totally unknown. He has, therefore, declined to accept its evidence even if it ever existed. Altekar (*Coinage*, p. 230) does not mention the date supplied by it amongst the dates known from the silver coins of Kumāragupta I. P. L. Gupta (*JIH*, XL, Pt. II, pp. 250-51) also refuses to accept its evidence. He reports (*ibid.*, p. 250, fn. 24a) that during his visit to London he had an occasion to see the coin collection of the Late W. Vost in which he noticed a coin of Kumāragupta I, ascribed with the date 136. According to Mr. Gupta most likely Smith referred to this coin. But Mr. Gupta was unable to read the date 136 on it. Now, in case the evidence of this coin is regarded as doubtful, the last known date of Kumāragupta I becomes 135 G. E. (=454 A. D.) known from another silver coin of his (*Coinage*, p. 230). On the other hand, the evidence of Junagadh inscription does not conclusively prove that Skandagupta was ruling in the year 136 G. E. It informs us that the Sudarśana lake burst in 136 G. E. and Chakrapālita' offered sacrifices to gods' in 137 G. E. and got the lake repaired by the year 138 G. E. It, at the most, proves that Skandagupta was ruling in the year 137 G. E. Therefore, the suggestion that Skandagupta ascended the throne immediately after the death of his father, should not be regarded as an established fact and an interval of several months, perhaps of more than one year, between the death of Kumāragupta I and the accession of Skandagupta, in which other ruler or rulers may have intervened, becomes a distinct possibility. It is however, necessary to point out that the theory of a war of succession after Kumāragupta I does not depend upon the acceptance of an interval between the death of Kumāragupta I and the accession of Skandagupta. It is quite possible that Skandagupta began to rule immediately after the death of his father but his accession was challenged by the rival princes.

The identity of all the rivals of Skandagupta is not certain, but Purugupta was almost certainly one of them. Whether he issued gold coins or not, is difficult to state,¹ but the fact, that he

1 According to Allan (*BM.C, GD*, Pl. XXI, 23), a gold coin of the Hoey collection with the legend *Sri Vikramab* on the reverse, belongs to Purugupta. He has read the legend *Pura* on its obverse. Further, he has ascribed three other coins of similar type, but without the legend, *Pura* to Purugupta. R. D. Banerji (*ABORI*, I, Pt. I, p. 75) observed that Rai Bahadur R. K. Jalan of Patna possessed two gold coins on which the name 'Puru' is very distinct. S. K. Saraswati (*IC*, I, p. 692 f.) was the first scholar to challenge this view and to suggest that the coin of the Hoey collection was issued by Budhagupta. Krishna Deb (*EI*, XXVI, Pt. V, pp. 235 ff.) echoes the same opinion and according to D. C. Sircar (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 322, n. 1.) 'Saraswati may be right in reading 'Budha''. R. C. Majumdar (*NHIP*, p. 186, fn. 1) is also inclined to agree with Saraswati though he thinks that the question cannot be finally decided till clear specimens of this type of coins are available. P. L. Gupta has, however, pointed out (*IHQ*, XXVI, p. 255 fn. 5) that two coins of the same type as that of the Hoey collection specimen have the legend 'Budha' clearly written on them, and, as such, the reading of Saraswati is correct. A. K. Narain (*JNSI*, XII, pp. 112-15) and Altekar (*Coinage*, pp. 263 ff.) also believe that the Hoey collection specimen belongs to Budhagupta. Regarding the two coins of the Jalan collection, it has been noted that no such coins are now traceable, and in the absence of their castes or photographs, it is difficult to accept the proposed identification. Further, P. L. Gupta (*op. cit.*) has noticed that on one of the envelopes of the coins in the Jalan collection is written in the green ink the word 'Puraba' with a mark of interrogation. As R. D. Banerji was very fond of green ink and used it all along his life, the word 'Puraba' might have been written by him. It is quite possible that he took 'Pura' as the name of the issuer but could make nothing out of 'ba' and hence put the mark of interrogation. Most probably, he referred to this coin while making the above statement on the coins of 'Pura'. According to Mr. Gupta, what Banerji deciphered as 'Puraba' should be read a 'parahi', a part of the word 'parahitakāri'. If it is so, these coins of the Jalan collection may have been the issues of Budhagupta. It should, however, be remembered that many scholars including Burns (*Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology*,

claimed imperial status, is beyond doubt. In the Bhitari seal, he is explicitly described as a Mahārājādhirāja. The scarcity of his coins (if they exist at all) indicates that he ruled for a very short period. Therefore, unless strong evidence to the contrary is forthcoming, it would be quite reasonable to hold that he was one of those princes who refused to accept Skandagupta's succession to the throne.¹

A second rebellious son of Kumāragupta I may have been Ghaṭotkachagupta. His existence as an imperial ruler is known by his gold coin of the Archer type. Till recently only one specimen of his coins, now in the Leningrad Museum, was available. From it we learn that Ghaṭotkachagupta assumed the title *Kramāditya*.² Recently, Ajit Ghosh has published another specimen of his coins.³ The weight of the coin in the Leningrad Museum is 141.22 grains,⁴

1935, Vol. X, p. 11) Sinha (*op. cit.*, pp. 12 ff.) Jagannath (*Summaries of the papers submitted to the XIII All India Oriental Conference*, Nagapur, 1946, Sec. IX, p. 11) and N. N. Dasgupta (*B. C. Law Volume*, I, p. 618) have not accepted the emendation proposed by Saraswati. Altekar has assigned to Purugupta the coins of Prakāśāditya (*Coinage*, pp. 284-85). At one place Allan also suggested this identification (*BMC, GD*, p. 135), but at p. ciii of his Introduction he left the question open. We have discussed the question of the ascription of the Prakāśāditya coins to Purugupta elsewhere (*infra*, App. of Ch. VI.).

- 1 Another defiant son of Kumāragupta I may have been Samudragupta II. His existence is revealed by only one specimen of his Archer type of coins of relatively crude workmanship and debased metal. It weighs 136 grains; however, as it is clipped, originally it must have weighed a little more than that (*Coinage*, pp. 340-41). Exact purity of its metal is unknown. Altekar thinks that it is "an ancient forgery" (*ibid*). On the other hand, if it is a genuine issue, on the bases of its weight and crude workmanship, its issuer, who assumed the title *Parākrama*, may be assigned to the post-Kumāragupta I period.
- 2 Allan, *BMC, GD*, Intro. p. liv, Pl. XXIV, 3.
- 3 *JNSI*, XXII, pp. 260-61, Pl. IX, 6.
- 4 Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 354. Bloch ascribed the coin of the Leningrad Museum to Ghaṭotkacha, the father of Chandragupta I. But the suggestion is untenable. For, as pointed out by Allan, (*BMC, GD*, pp. liv, civ) this coin has some affinities

while that of the cabinet of Ajit Ghosh is 135.5 grains.¹ The existence of a Gupta prince named Ghaṭotkachagupta in the first half of the fifth century A. D. is also proved by the fragmentary Tumain inscription of the G. E. 116 (435 A. D.) which indicates that he was either a younger brother or a son of Kumāragupta I, most likely the former.² He seems to have been identical with the Ghaṭotkachagupta of the Vaiśālī seal.³ As this seal was found along with the seal of Dhruvadevi, the wife of Chandragupta II, its issuer Ghaṭotkachagupta may be placed in the first quarter of the fifth century A. D. In the light of these facts it is quite reasonable to hold that Ghaṭotkachagupta of the Vaiśālī seal,

with the coinage of the later imperial Gupta rulers ; therefore its issuer cannot be placed earlier than the second half of fifth century A. D. The weight of this coin, as well as that of the Ajit Ghosh cabinet, indubitably prove that Ghaṭotkachagupta must have flourished after Kumāragupta I. Further, it is to be noted that nowhere in the Gupta records the surname ' Gupta ' has been used for the father of Chandragupta I.

- 1 *JNSI*, XXII, pp. 260-61. P. L. Gupta has ascribed the solitary specimen of the Chhatra type of coin with the legend *Kramāditya* on the reverse (but with no name of the king on the obverse) to Ghaṭotkachagupta. There is certainly some force in his argument that Skandagupta did not use the title *Kramāditya* on his coins of the variety A of the Archer type and King-and-Queen-Mother type (*supra*, p. 265 fn.2) which conform to the light weight standard of 132 grains and were issued probably in the early part of his reign. It is only on his heavy weight coins issued late in his life that we find the title *Kramāditya*. Therefore, this solitary specimen of Chhatra type, which weighs only 130 grains and gives the title *Kramāditya* to the issuer, cannot belong to Skandagupta. And, as the only other king who flourished in this period and assumed this title was Ghaṭotkachagupta, the coin should be ascribed to him (*JNSI*, XIV, pp. 99-102). But equally cogent is the objection of Altekar who asks : " could Ghaṭotkachagupta have sufficient time to issue two types ? " (For a detailed criticism of Mr. Gupta's view by Altekar, see *ibid.*; *Coinage*, p. 248). It is really difficult to be certain on this point.

2 *EI*, XXVI, p. 115.

3 *ASIAR*, 1903-04, pp. 102.

the Tumain inscription and the coins was one and the same person, and that he issued the seal sometime in the first quarter of the fifth century A. D., attained fame by his prowess described in the Tumain inscription (435 A. D.) in the second quarter of the same century and ruled sometime after the death of Kumāragupta I. As his coinage is very scarce, he must have ruled for only a very brief period. All these points are in perfect consonance with the fact that the succession of Skandagupta was opposed by several of his brothers. Evidently, Ghaṭotkachagupta may be regarded as one of them. Once D. C. Sircar also opined that " it is not impossible that he was one of the rivals who contended for the throne with Skandagupta ",¹ though later on² he suggested that it is better to place Ghaṭotkachagupta of coins in the last decades of the fifth century and the first half of the sixth century A. D. But he has not given any cogent reason for this suggestion.

1 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 299, fn. 1.

2 *IIIQ*, XXIV, p. 71.

IMMEDIATE SUCCESSORS OF SKANDAGUPTA

The identity of the immediate successor of Skandagupta is one of the most controversial questions of the history of the Gupta dynasty. His last known date is 467 A. D. As no son of his is known so far, it is but reasonable to expect that he was succeeded either by one of his brothers or nephews. It is what the Bhitari seal of Kumāragupta¹ suggests. According to it Kumāragupta, the issuer of the seal was the son of Narasimhagupta and the grandson of Purugupta. According to the natural interpretation of this evidence, Skandagupta, who is known to have ascended the throne almost immediately after the death of his father, must have been succeeded either by Purugupta, his brother, or in case Purugupta was overthrown by him in the struggle for power that took place after the death of Kumāragupta I (as suggested by a number of scholars²), he must have been succeeded by his nephew Narasimhagupta, who, according to the testimony of his coins assumed the title of *Bālāditya*.³ If it was so, it will have to be assumed that Narasimhagupta Bālāditya ruled only for a few years, for, according to a Sarnath inscription Kumāragupta,⁴ (who will have to be identified with the son of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya), was ruling the earth in the year 473 A. D. This Kumāragupta also could have ruled only for a short period because we know that

1 *Sel. Ins.*, pp. 321-22.

2 *DKM*, pp. 41 ff. P. L. Gupta (*JHQ*, XXII, p. 319, fn. 16) has urged that Skandagupta must have been followed by Purugupta otherwise "if Skandagupta succeeded Purugupta after a struggle, he would never let him or his heirs survive to come into power again". But wars of succession in ancient India and elsewhere were quite common and princes who used to become victorious in them did not always follow the policy of exterminating all their rivals along with their descendants.

3 *Coinage*, p. 269.

4 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 320-21.

Budhagupta was already on the throne in the year 476 A. D.¹ This interpretation of the evidence of the Bhitari seal, initially proposed by Pannalal² and supported by a large number of scholars, has been severely criticized by equally competent authorities.³ It has been pointed out, and very rightly, that according to the testimony of Yuan Chwang the king Bālāditya was a contemporary

1 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 323.

2 *Hindustan Review*, Jan. 1918, pp. 1 ff. According to Pannalal Kumāragupta I was immediately succeeded by Skandagupta who was in turn followed by Purugupta, Narsimhagupta and Kumāragupta II of the Bhitari seal (identical with Kumāragupta of the Sarnath inscription of 473 A. D.) and that these three kings ruled in the short period which intervened between 467 A. D., the last known date of Skandagupta and 476 A. D., the first known date of Budhagupta. Pannalal places Prakāśāditya, Dvādaśāditya and Ghaṭotkachagupta also in this short period. Majumdar (*IA*, XI.VII, pp. 161-67; *JASB*, N.S., XVII, pp. 249 ff.) came to the same conclusion independently, though later on he rejected it (*JUPHS*, XVIII, pp. 70-73; *NHIP*, pp. 184 ff.). In the *CA* (pp. 29-45) he seems to be still less certain. However, Smith (*EHI*, p. 329), Raychaudhuri (*PHAI*, pp. 585 ff.), and Dandekar (*Hist. Guj.*, pp. 128-30) have accepted the theory of Pannalal with minor modifications. R. D. Banerji (*AI*, p. 52) has also accepted this theory in general with the modification that it was during the Hūṇa war (?) that Pura (?) gupta set himself up as a rival emperor in Magadha. N. N. Das Gupta (*B. C. Law Volume I*, pp. 617 ff.) suggests that Budhagupta was not a paramount ruler in 157 G. E. because in the Sarnath inscription of this year he has been styled as simply a *Mahārāja*. He became an emperor probably in 163 G. E. (= 482 A. D.) as in the Damodarpur copper plate inscription of this date he has been given paramount titles. "Or, if we cannot subscribe to such a view, we may tentatively shift the reign of Vishnugupta to the period just following the reign of Budhagupta and before that of Vainyagupta". A. Bannerji (*JUPHS*, XVII, Pt. II, p. 35 ff.), on the other hand, has opined that Purugupta died like Azim-us-Shan and was succeeded by Narasimhagupta who himself died for his ambitious brother Budhagupta while Kumāragupta II of the Sarnath inscription of the year 473 A. D., the son of Narasimhagupta, was declared emperor by his followers.

3 *DKAI*, pp. 17 ff.; Mookerji, R. K., *GI*, pp. 104 ff. etc.

and conqueror of the Hūṇa emperor Mihirakula, who cannot be placed before the first quarter of the sixth century A. D. Broadly speaking, two different kinds of suggestions have been proposed to solve this puzzling problem. Many scholars including Raychaudhuri,¹ Jayaswal,² Dandekar³ and Saletore⁴ have assumed that Bhānugupta, known from the Eran inscription of the year 510 A.D.⁵, who may have assumed the title Bālāditya, was the conqueror of Mihirakula. On the other hand, Bhattasali,⁶ Basak,⁷ R. K. Mookerji⁸ and B. P. Sinha⁹ have identified Narasimhagupta, the son of Purugupta with the Bālāditya of Yuan Chwang and have placed him in the beginning of the sixth century A. D. According to Mookerji, Skandagupta was followed by Purugupta (467 A. D.), who in turn was succeeded by his three sons—Kumāragupta II of the Sarnath inscription (473 A. D.), Budhagupta (476 A. D.) and Narasimhagupta Bālāditya (495 A. D.). “If Narasimhagupta came after Budha Gupta”, he argues, “he would be placed in time for contact and conflict with the Hūṇas, as stated by Yuan Chwang”.¹⁰ He differentiates between ‘Kumāragupta II’ of the Sarnath inscription and ‘Kumāragupta III’ of the Bhitari seal who succeeded Narasimhagupta Bālāditya and was succeeded by Vishnugupta of the Nālandā seal. Vainyagupta of the Guṇaighar inscription, according to him, ‘lived in the time of Bālāditya, the Gupta emperor’.¹¹ Sinha¹² has followed Mookerji very closely. As a matter of fact his reconstruction of the genealogy of the later Gupta emperors in general and his suggestion on the place of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya in Gupta history in particular are almost

1 *PIIAI*, p. 596, fn. 2.

2 *IHI*, pp. 47, 53.

3 Dandekar, R. N. *Hist. Gupta*, pp. 130, 152.

4 Saletore, R. N., *The Life in the Gupta Age*, p. 49.

5 *Sel. Ins.*, pp. 335-36.

6 *Dacca Review*, 1920.

7 *IINEI*, pp. 78 ff.

8 *GE*, pp. 105, 108, 122-23.

9 *DKM*, pp. 80 ff.

10 *CE*, p. 105.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

12 *DKM*, pp. 23 ff.

similar, though somewhat more detailed, to what Mookerji has suggested, with the only major difference that he makes Purugupta, the father of Narasimhagupta a rival brother of Skandagupta, and not the successor. He has also refused to identify the Kumāragupta of the Sarnath inscription with the Kumāragupta of the Bhitari seal. For, in that case we will have to believe that three generations—Purugupta, Narasimhagupta and Kumāragupta—ruled in the short interval of 9 years that occurred in between the death of Skandagupta and the occasion of Budhagupta. According to his calculation “if Purugupta succeeded Skandagupta in 467 A. D., as held by scholars, then he (Purugupta) was 57 years old; Narasimhagupta could have been 34 years old in 469 A. D., when he is regarded as having come to the throne; his son Kumāragupta II could not have been more than a boy of thirteen years old in 473 A. D.”¹.

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- 1 *Ibid.*, pp. 17 ff. The objection that kings belonging to three generations cannot be placed in the short period of 9 years has not been properly understood, sometimes even by those who have raised it. Generally they have confused the reign-period of *successive generations* with the duration of the rule of the *successive kings*. For example, the argument of Raychaudhuri (*PHAI*, pp. 591-92) that as six Kashmirian kings are known to have ruled for six years, Purugupta, Narasimhagupta and Kumāragupta of the Bhitari seal may have ruled for 9 years, is not relevant, for, the example quoted is of *successive rulers*, and not of *successive generations*. However, the example, of the Eastern Chālukya dynasty in which Vijyāditya IV, his son Ammarāja I and latter's son, another Vijyāditya, ruled for less than 8 years is relevant, and proves the point. Basak (*HNEI*, p. 81) has dismissed the examples quoted by Raychaudhuri as 'exceptional', as if short reign-periods are unthinkable in the case of the Gupta dynasty. I Sinha (*DKM*, p. 19), on the other hand, regards these analogies as not absolutely relevant for they are 'from small and local kingdoms'. Does he mean that the age-factor operated differently in local and imperial dynasties? He also wants to know the explanation of such short reigns in the Gupta history famous for its long reigns, implying thereby that if the early emperors of the dynasty ruled for long periods, the later emperors must also have enjoyed similarly long reigns. It is, we feel, just contrary to what the concept of average reign-period implies.

The Nālandā seal of Vishnugupta who was, according to him, the son of the Kumāragupta of the Bhitari seal, makes this theory totally untenable for, how a boy of 13 years in 473 A. D. could leave a boy to rule after him before 476 A. D. To solve this problem Sinha, following Mookerji¹ and P. L. Gupta,² has differentiated between the Kumāragupta of the Sarnath inscription and the Kumāragupta of the Bhitari seal and places the latter, alongwith Narasimhagupta Bālāditya, in the sixth century A. D.

COINS OF KUMARAGUPTA KRAMADITYA

That there were two Kumāraguptas besides Kumāragupta I, now cannot be doubted. Allan attributed all such Archer type coins, which cannot be ascribed to Kumāragupta I, to Kumāragupta of the Bhitari seal. But he divided them into two varieties. "Two varieties may be distinguished", he observes, "in the coins of Narasimhagupta and Kumāragupta II; a small number of Class I of good gold with traces of a marginal legend and of a style fairly good for the period, and a Class II of very rude workmanship and base metal, some of which seem never to have had a marginal legend".³ The difference between the two Classes has assumed further significance by the fact that Class I of the coins generally have more than 70% of pure gold while Class II coins are heavily adulterated and have usually 54% pure gold only. On the basis of this fact Sinha has concluded that "the numismatic evidences instead of knowing only one Kumāragupta besides Kumāragupta I prove the existence of two Kumāraguptas who must have been separated from one another by a period of about fifty years".⁴ He is right, but unfortunately he has not applied the same logic in the case of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya.

COINS OF NARA BALADITYA

The coins of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya are also confined only to the Archer type. These are also divisible into two Classes.

1 Mookerji, *GE.*, p. 105.

2 *JNSI*, XII, pp. 1 ff.

3 Allan, *BMC, GD*, Intro., p. civ.

4 *DKM*, p. 68.

As a matter of fact Allan, in his remark quoted above, has described and classified the coins of Narasimhagupta and Kumāragupta both. Sinha has cited the authority of Allan in the case of the coins of Kumāragupta but has very conveniently ignored it in the case of the coinage of Narasimhagupta. Like the Class I coins of Kumāragupta, the Class I coins of Narasimhagupta are of purer metal (more than 70%, in some cases 79%) and their execution is better. They have marginal legend on the obverse with the letters *gre* or *gu* between the feet of the king. Class II coins are of debased metal (with only 54% gold) and crude workmanship. They have no circular legend on the obverse, but the individual letters occur between the feet of the king. The coins of this type from the Kalighat hoard may all have belonged to Class II as none of the Class I coins has so far been traced to this hoard.¹

The great difference between these two Classes of coins bearing the title Bālāditya is extremely significant. It is quite obvious that almost all the arguments on the basis of which Sinha has ascribed the Class I and Class II coins of Kumāragupta respectively to two different kings of the same name, apply equally well in the case of the coins of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya.² It indicates that

1 *Coinage*, pp. 269-70.

2 Altekar, *op. cit.*, It is true that both the Classes of the coins of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya have the individual letters between the feet of the king, while on the Class I coins of Kumāragupta such letters are non-existent, though the letter *go*, *jo* or *ja* occurs on the coins of Class II. But it is not a very important point, for, we do not know exactly when the practice of giving such letters below the feet of the king started. On some of the Archer type of coins of Skandagupta, now in the British Museum, single letters, *ja* or *bha*, appear between the feet of the king. At least on one coin (BMC, GD. No. 419, Pl. XIX, 3) the letter *bha* is quite distinct and on another (*ibid*, No. 417, Pl. XIX, 1) letter *ja* has been read by Allan. According to Altekar also, atleast the reading *bha* on the coin No. 419 is quite possible (*Coinage*, pp. 358-59). Further, it should be remembered that such a practice introduced by a particular king did not become binding on all of his successors. Just as we cannot argue that we should determine the date of the Gupta coins only on the basis of the purity of their

these may also be ascribed to two different kings of the same name separated from each other by 'a period of about fifty years'. Altekar has also accepted the possibility that "Narasimhagupta and Kumāragupta of the relatively purer gold coinage are different from the rulers of the same names who issued coins in baser gold".¹ In the light of these facts, the insistence of Sinha that both these classes should be ascribed to only one Bālāditya viz. Narasimhagupta Bālāditya, son of Purugupta and conqueror of the Hūṇas, becomes highly illogical.

SARNATH INSCRIPTION OF PRAKATADITYA

That there were two kings who assumed the title Bālāditya is convincingly proved by the Sarnath inscription of Prakatāditya.² From this document we learn that Prakatāditya was born in a family in which the king Bālāditya was born and that the former was the son of another Bālāditya by his wife Dhavalā. The inscription is very much broken but the facts mentioned above are indubitably clear from it.³ "The chief interest attaching to this inscrip-

metal (for, a list of Gupta coin-types prepared strictly on the principle of Gresham's Law would make the Archer type of Chandragupta II earlier than the Aśvamedha, the Battle-Axe and the Standard types of Samudragupta; *JNSI*, XVIII, p. 195), similarly we cannot argue that simply because the Class I coins of Narasimhagupta have the letter *ga* or *gre* between the feet of the king, they should be regarded as relatively later than all those coins on which such letters are non-existent, ignoring altogether their metrology, fabric and purity of metal.

¹ Altekar, *Coinage*, p. 266.

² Fleet, *Corpus*, III, pp. 284 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 286. It is true that on palaeographic grounds Fleet assigned this document 'roughly to about the end of the Seventh century A. D.' (*ibid.*, p. 285), but palaeographical test is not always reliable. It may be recalled, for example, that Fleet assigned the epigraphs of the Vākāṭaka kings Pravarasena II and others to the seventh century and believed that "there is nothing in their grants to oppose this result" (*ibid.*, p. 16). But now we definitely know that Pravarasena II ruled in the first half of the fifth century A. D. After all, the chronology of the evolution of scripts itself depends upon and is always subject to the facts provided by the dates of the king mentioned in the inscriptions.

tion", observes Fleet, "consists in its mentioning at least two kings of the name of Bālāditya".¹ Sinha has identified Prakāṣāditya with Prakārākhyā of the *ĀIMK* and Bālāditya, the father of Prakāṣāditya, with Nara Bālāditya of coins and has reconstructed the history of the reign of Narsinhagupta on the basis of these assumptions. But he believed in the existence of only one king who was known by the name of Narasinhagupta and assumed the title *Bālāditya*. Therefore, while accepting the fact that this inscription "alludes to more than one Bālāditya", he has dismissed this very important aspect of the testimony of the document with the remark that "the inscription is too broken to enable us to read a definite account from it or to base thereon a conclusion".² But it is not a correct statement, for the inscription *explicitly refers* to atleast two Bālādityas.³

LITERARY EVIDENCE ON BĀLĀDITYAS

The existence of two kings who assumed the title Bālāditya becomes indubitably clear from the literary sources. Firstly, there is a strong Chinese tradition according to which Bālāditya flourished in the first quarter of the sixth century A. D. In the lists of the patron-kings of the Nālandā Mahāvihāra, the Chinese works *Si-yu-ki*,⁴ 'Life'⁵ and the *Sbe-kia-fang-che*⁶ have unanimously placed Bālāditya before Vajra but definitely after Śakrāditya (Kumāragupta I), Buddhagupta (Budhagupta) and Tathāgatarāja (another name of Budhagupta ?). Secondly, as we have seen, according

1 *Ibid.*, p. 285.

2 Sinha, B. P., *DKM*, p. 94, fn. 5.

3 It may be noted, for what it is worth, that the word Prakāṣāditya has been used in this epigraph as if it was the name of this prince. It is not impossible, for, by the sixth century A. D., names ending with the title *āditya* had become quite common. For example, in that very period we find a king of E. Bengal having the name of Dharmāditya. (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 350).

4 Watters, *Travels*, II, pp. 164-65 ; *Records*, II, p. 168.

5 *Life*, pp. 110-11.

6 Quoted by S. Chattopadhyaya, *EHNI*, p. 183.

7 Vide, *Supra*, Ch. VI A Nālandā stone inscription (*EI*, XX, pp. 43 ff ; *MAI*, No. 66, pp. 73 ff.) of the reign of

to the testimony of Yuan Chwang, the king Bālāditya was the contemporary of Mihirakula.¹ Apparently, therefore, according to the Chinese pilgrim, Bālāditya flourished not earlier than 510 A. D., the approximate date of the Hūṇa invasion under Toramāṇa, the father of Mihirakula. The existence of an earlier Bālāditya, different from the conqueror of Mihirakula, is also indicated by two literary sources. Firstly, from the *ĀMMK* we learn that Samudra was followed by Vikrama who in turn was succeeded by Mahendra, 'S' initialled or Skandagupta, 'Bāla' or Bālāditya and 'Kumāra' or Kumāragupta. Except for the substitution of Pugugupta by Skandagupta, this list is in consonance with the data provided by the Bhitari seal of Kumāragupta. Secondly, as we have seen, in his *Life of Vasubandhu*² Paramārtha, a Buddhist scholar of the first half of the sixth century A. D., mentions that the king Vikramāditya, usually identified with Skandagupta Vikramāditya, entrusted the education of his crown-prince (who might not have been necessarily his son) Bālāditya to Vasubandhu, the great Buddhist teacher of his period. Now, the evidence of Paramārtha cannot be lightly brushed aside. He was a contemporary of the later imperial Guptas themselves, enjoyed their patronage prior to his departure for China and, therefore, must have been quite familiar with Bālāditya, the conqueror of Mihirakula. On the

the king Yaśovarmadeva refers to the construction of a 'great and extraordinary temple' at Nālandā by 'Bālāditya, the great king of irresistible valour'. Hiranand Sastri (*JH*, XX, p. 40) and A. K. Mrittiyunjayan (*IHQ*, VIII, pp. 228, 615) believe that this Yaśovarmadeva and the king Yaśodharman of the Mandasor inscription were identical. (cf. also D. Sharma, *JBRs*, XXIX, p. 127 f.). But Majumdar has shown (*IHQ*, VII, pp. 664 ff.) that the name in the Nālandā inscription is definitely Yaśovarmadeva while Fleet (*Corpus*, III, No. 33, p. 145, fn. 2.) was insistent that the name of the king of Mandasor inscription was Yaśodharman, and not Yaśovarman. As a matter of fact, the assumption of Sastri that Yaśovarmadeva and Bālāditya were contemporaries is not at all tenable (*IHQ*, VII, pp. 664 ff.).

1 *Supra*, p. 315 f.

2 This work has been preserved in Chinese and the substance of it has been published in *JRAS* (1905), pp. 33 ff.

other hand, we definitely know that Vasubandhu, the great Buddhist scholar mentioned by him could not have been a contemporary of the conqueror of Mihirakula. It is true that there is some controversy with regard to the date Vasubandhu, but it is certain that he flourished either in the middle of the fourth century A. D. or in the middle of the fifth, neither earlier nor later.¹ Obviously, therefore, the king Bālāditya who was the contemporary of Vasubandhu must have been different from the king of the same name who humbled the pride of the Hūṇas and was a contemporary of Paramārtha himself.

ANALYSIS OF THE EVIDENCE

The above discussion makes it quite clear that we should distinguish between Narasimhagupta Bālāditya I, the son of Purugupta and the successor of Skandagupta, from Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II, who flourished in the sixth century A. D. and conquered Mihirakula. The numismatic evidence which suggests that the coins attributed to Narasimhagupta Bālāditya were actually issued by the two kings of the same name separated from each other by about half a century, the Sarnath inscription of Prakāṣāditya which explicitly and most definitely mentions two Bālādityas and the literary sources which clearly refer to two kings of the name of Bālāditya prove this point to the hilt. So, we conclude that Narasimhagupta Bālāditya of the Bhitari seal, who succeeded Skandagupta is identical with Nara Bālāditya of Class I coins, Bālāditya of Paramārtha and Bālāditya the Elder of the Sarnath inscription of Prakāṣāditya. The successor of this Narsimhagupta Bālāditya was his son Kumāragupta of the Bhitari seal. We may call him Kumāragupta II. He must obviously be identical with the Kumāragupta of the Sarnath inscription of 473 A. D. To him may be attributed the Class I coins of comparatively purer metal and finer fabric. He ruled for a very short period, for we find that Budhagupta was on the throne in 476 A. D.

Here it may be noted that Narasimhagupta Bālāditya I and Kumāragupta II are connected with each other in point of time

1 *Supra*, Ch. II, App. V, pp. 214 ff.

by the evidence of the Bhitari seal and by the obvious similarities of their coinage. Now, the kings of the same names, who issued Class II coins and whom we may call Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II and Kumāragupta III respectively, may also be connected with each other and with Vishnugupta Chandrāditya on the basis of the numismatic peculiarities of their coinage. Firstly, the coins of all these three rulers are of poorer workmanship as compared with the coins of all the other kings of the dynasty. Secondly, the coins of Narsimhagupta II and Kumāragupta III have only 54% of pure gold while the coins of Vishnugupta are most debased. They have only 43% of pure metal. From both these considerations, these kings should be placed towards the close of the history of the dynasty, for, in the coins of *all the other kings* the gold content is usually more than 70%. That these kings followed each other in very close succession is also indicated by the fact that the Kalighat hoard has brought to light, apart from the coins of Vainyagupta, only the so-called Class II coins of Narasimhagupta and Kumāragupta and those of Vishnugupta Chandrāditya.

On the basis of pure numismatic considerations, once again, we can presume that among these three kings Vishnugupta flourished in the last, for, his coins have only 43% of pure gold and weigh as much as 151 grains, while Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II may be regarded as the earliest, for, his coins are usually several grains lighter than those of Kumāragupta III.

Thus the numismatic data indicates that :

(a) Narasimhagupta I and Kumāragupta II of Class I coins are different from the kings of the same names who issued Class II coins ;

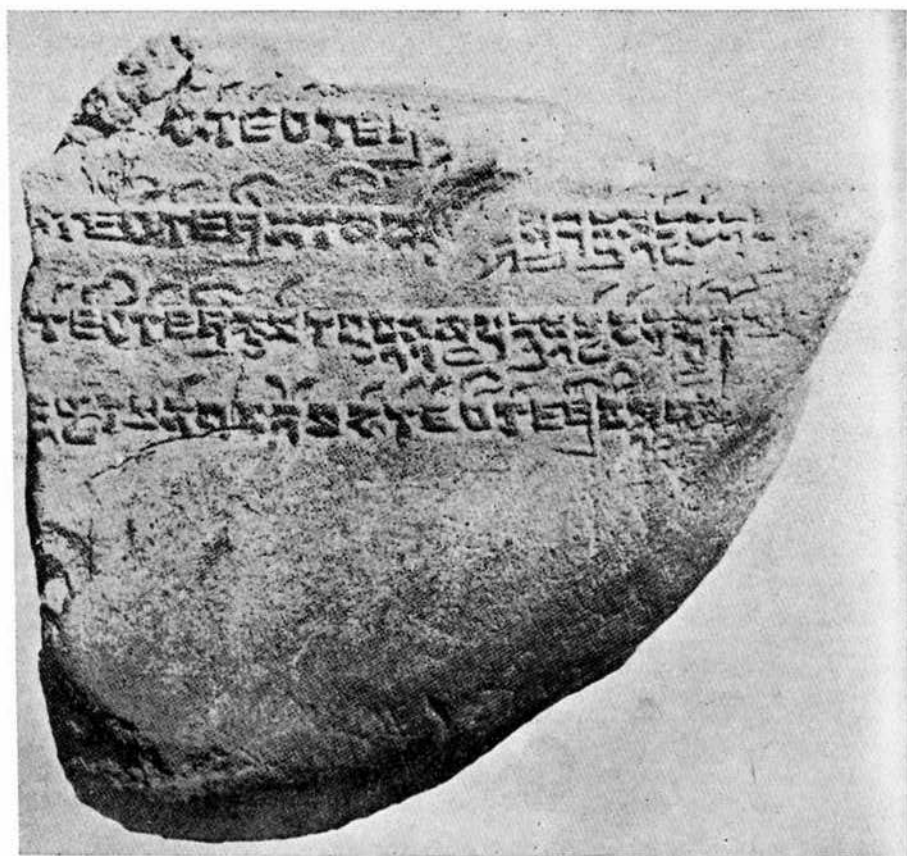
(b) Narasimhagupta II and Kumāragupta III of Class II coins and Vishnugupta Chandrāditya ruled towards the end of the history of the Gupta dynasty ;

(c) and that this second set of kings ruled in the following order :

(i) Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II of Class II coins

(ii) Kumāragupta Kramāditya III of Class II coins

(iii) Vishnugupta Chandrāditya.



Nālandā Seal of Viṣṇugupta

NALANDA SEAL OF VISHNUGUPTA

In the light of the above facts, the Nālandā seal of Vishnugupta¹ becomes extremely significant, for, it informs us that Vishnugupta was the son of Kumāragupta and the grandson of Narasimhagupta. The view that Narasimhagupta of this seal was the son of Purugupta² is not correct. The name of Purugupta has not been mentioned in this epigraph at all. This seal is fragmentary and its portion which contained the names of the predecessors of Narasimhagupta has been lost in the broken part. Krishna Deva believes that the traces of the mātrā *u* of the letter *Pu* are visible in its first line after the word 'Śri'. But the reading of Krishna Deva is not beyond doubt and is based on his *a priori* assumption that the name of the father of Narasimhagupta of this seal was Purugupta. It may be noted that the so-called traces of the mātrā *u* may equally be taken as the remnants of the subscript *ra*. In any case, the generally prevalent notion that the seal in question refers Purugupta is not an unquestionable fact. Therefore, we can assume that Narasimhagupta II, Kumāragupta III and Vishnugupta of coins are identical with the kings known from the Nālandā seal of Vishnugupta.³

1 *EI*, XXVI, pp. 235 ff.

2 Krishna Deva, *EI*, XXVI, p. 236 ; Chattopadhyaya, S., *op. cit.*, p. 188 ; Sinha, B. P., *DKM*, p. 19 ; Majumdar, *NHIP*, p. 184 ; Altekar, A. S., *Coinage*, p. 262 ; however, at one place Altekar accepts the possibility that Narasimhagupta of the Nālandā seal of Vishnugupta was different from Narasimhagupta, the son of Purugupta, implying thereby that the restoration of the name of Purugupta in this seal by Krishna Deva is not unquestionably correct (*ibid.*, p. 267).

3 Hoernle attributed the coins of Vishnugupta Chandrāditya to Vishnuyardhana *alias* Yaśodharman of Malwa, took the reverse legend as Dharmāditya and explained the letter *u* to signify the mint of Ujjain (*JRAS*, 1903) pp. 552-53). Smith, on the other hand, assigned them to Vishnugupta of the Later Gupta dynasty (*IAC*, I, p. 121, fn. 1). Formerly, Altekar also supported this suggestion (*JNSI*, III, pp. 57 ff.). Only Allan rightly assigned them to c. 540 to 560 A. D. and presumed that this Vishnugupta was the successor of Kumāragupta (*BMC*, *GD*, p. 145). Later on, the discovery

Thus, it becomes quite clear that there were *two sets* of the kings named Narasimhagupta and Kumāragupta. The first set ruled after Skandagupta and was apparently followed by Budhagupta in or shortly before 476 A. D. The second set ruled about four or five decades later and was followed by Vishnugupta. Therefore, *the fundamental error committed by the historians so far does not consist in the identification of Kumāragupta of the Bhitari seal with Kumāragupta of the Sarnath inscription. They are identical. The error consists in the identification of Kumāragupta of the Bhitari seal and that of the Sarnath inscription with Kumāragupta of the Nālandā seal of Vishnugupta, the father of the latter.* They were different, because there is absolutely nothing to warrant the assumption that Narasimhagupta II Bālāditya, the grandfather of Vishnugupta was the son of Purugupta. On the other hand, there is ample evidence to suggest that Narasimhagupta, the grandfather of Vishnugupta, must be placed several decades after his namesake who was the son of Purugupta and successor of Skandagupta.

CONFUSION IN THE MANJUSRI MULA KALPA

The fact that there were two sets of the kings named Narasimhagupta Bālāditya and Kumāragupta Kramāditya, confused not only the modern historians but also the author of the *AMMK*.¹ An analysis of the data furnished by him, makes it convincingly clear that, like the modern historians, he also unwittingly identified these two sets of kings. Speaking of 'Bāla' the successor of Skandagupta, he informs us that :

- (a) he was a staunch Buddhist ; that
- (b) he ruled 'peacefully' and 'without a rival' ; that
- (c) he committed suicide at the age of 36 years and 1 month ; and that
- (d) He was an Easterner.

On these points the first and the fourth pre-eminently apply to Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II, the conqueror of Mihirakula and

of the Nālandā seal of Vishnugupta proved that his assumption was perfectly correct.

¹ Jayaswal, *III*, p. 33.

the builder of a monastery at Nālandā. Yuan Chwang describes him as a great champion of Buddhism. Further, by the time he ruled, the Guptas had become more or less an eastern power. But the second and third point do not apply to him at all. It need not be repeated that this Bālāditya had a great opponent in the person of Mihirakula and enjoyed just the reverse of peace. Moreover, if he was the son of Purugupta and grandson of Kumāragupta I, he cannot have been only 36 years of age in the closing years of the first quarter of the sixth century.¹ Incidentally, it should also be noted that Bāla of the *ĀMMK* committed suicide, while the king Bālāditya of Yuan Chwang renounced the world after his victory over the Hūṇas. But these points are in complete consonance with what we know of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya I, the son of Purugupta and successor of Skandagupta. From the Sarnath inscription of the year 473 A. D. we know that Kumāragupta II was ruling in that year. It means that his father Narasimhagupta Bālāditya I must have ruled only for a few years some time in between 467-68 A. D., the last known date of Skandagupta, and 473 A. D. Therefore, the statement of the *ĀMMK* that Bāla committed suicide at the age of 36 years and 1 month, is applicable to him. Further, this Narasimhagupta Bālāditya was apparently the master of practically the whole empire ruled over by his predecessor Skandagupta, for, very soon afterwards Budhagupta found it almost intact. Therefore, to us it appears that when the author of the *ĀMMK* wrote that Bāla ruled 'peacefully' and 'without a rival' and committed suicide at the age of 36 years and 1 month, he referred to Narasimhagupta Bālāditya I, the son of Purugupta; on the other hand, when he wrote that Bāla was a staunch Buddhist and an Easterner he obviously referred to Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II, the conqueror of Mihirakula.² The facts that both

1 As Budhagupta, the son of Purugupta, was ruling in 476 A. D., the latter must have been dead before this date. Therefore, Narasimhagupta, another son of Purugupta must have been at least 50 years old in the closing years of the first quarter of the sixth century A. D.

2 It may be noted that the suggestion that Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II was the conqueror of Mihirakula makes it

the kings (*a*) had the same name, and (*b*) had a son of the name of Kumāragupta to rule after them caused confusion in his mind and he very naturally identified them. Therefore, we conclude that 'Bāla' of *ĀMMK* is a composite personality—a result of the identification of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya I with Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II. We may split it up into 'Bāla (*a*)' and 'Bāla (*b*)'.

The testimony of the *ĀMMK* is in harmony with the epigraphic data in other respects as well. It is quite apparent that if Narasimhagupta I died when he was only 36 years old, his son and successor Kumāragupta II could not have been a boy of more than fifteen years in 473 A. D. It may be recalled that while rejecting the identification of Kumāragupta of the Sarnath inscription with Kumāragupta of the Bhitari seal, Sinha has argued that Narasimhagupta, the son of Purugupta, "could have been 34 years old in 469 A. D. when he is regarded as having come to the throne; his son Kumāragupta II could not have been more than a boy of thirteen years old in 473 A. D., when he came to the throne". He has rejected this possibility because according to him Kumāragupta of the Bhitari seal was the father of Vishnugupta of the Nālandā seal, and, apparently it cannot be maintained that a child of thirteen years, who ascended the throne in 473 A. D., left a son to rule after him before 476 A. D. But, if the Kumāragupta of the Bhitari seal was different from the father of Vishnugupta, as we have shown, the calculation of Sinha, being perfectly sound and consonant with the data of the *ĀMMK*, becomes an argument in favour of our suggestion.

Thus, Kumāragupta II, the son of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya I mentioned in the Bhitari seal and the Sarnath inscription of 473 A. D., ascended the throne as a minor in or shortly before 473 A. D. and ruled only for a few years; for, we find Budhagupta, another son of Purugupta ruling the earth in 476 A. D. This conclusion is indirectly supported by two facts : (*a*) The coins

unnecessary to ascribe the *biruda* of Bālāditya to Bhānugupta, who is not known to have assumed it from any source.

of Kumāragupta II (the so-called Class I coins) are 'very few in number' and suggest that their issuer ruled for a very short period. (b) The *Life* alludes to the 'seizure' of the kingdom by Budhagupta from the hands of his predecessor. It is quite possible that Budhagupta, the younger brother of Narsimhagupta contested the throne after the death of his brother and ultimately succeeded in seizing it from Kumāragupta II, his own nephew in or shortly before 476 A. D.

CRITICISM OF OTHER THEORIES

The order of succession after Skandagupta as proposed above, explains all the information available from various sources. On the other hand, the assumption that the Gupta history knows only one Bālāditya makes one's position extremely illogical and contradictory. For example, in order to prove that Narasimhagupta Bālāditya, the son of Purugupta, flourished in the sixth century, N. K. Bhattasali has suggested that when Kumāragupta I died his son Purugupta was hardly four years old! Therefore, according to this scholar, Kumāragupta I was succeeded by Skandagupta, who, in turn was followed by Kumāragupta II of the Sarnath inscription of 473 A. D., Budhagupta (in 476 A. D.) and Bhānugupta (in 495 A. D.). It was after Bhānugupta that Purugupta ascended the throne to be succeeded by his son Narasimhagupta Bālāditya.¹ It hardly needs to be pointed out that when Kumāragupta I died after ruling for about 40 years he must have been about 80 years old (as his father Chandragupta II had also ruled for about 38 years at least). So, it is difficult to imagine that he had a son of 4 years at the time of his death. In any case, the discovery of the fact that Budhagupta, one of the sons of Purugupta, was ruling in 476 A. D. has rendered this theory altogether unacceptable.

To overcome the difficulty of placing Narasimhagupta Bālāditya, the son of Purugupta, after Skandagupta as well as in the sixth century, S. Chattopadhyaya has suggested that Kumāragupta

¹ *EI*, XVIII, pp. 81 ff.

II of the Sarnath inscription of 473 A. D. was a mere *goptā*, and not a full-fledged emperor. He believes that Skandagupta was succeeded in turn by Purugupta (467 A. D.), Budhagupta (476 A. D.), Vainyagupta, Narasimhagupta Bālāditya, Vajra, Kumāragupta II (the grandson of Purugupta) and Vishnugupta Chandrāditya.¹ But the description of Kumāragupta of the Sarnath inscription as '.....*bhūmim rakṣhati Kumāragupte*.....' does not necessarily mean that he was a mere *goptā*. This description is almost identical with the description of Budhagupta '.....*prithvim Budhagupte praśāsati*.....' found in the Sarnath inscription of 476 A. D. on the basis of which Chattopadhyaya accepts him as a sovereign ruler.

THEORY OF SINHA

In order to identify Narasimhagupta Bālāditya, the son of Purugupta with Bālādityarāja, the conqueror of Mihirakula, Sinha suggests that Purugupta ruled for a short while after the death of Kumāragupta I as a rival of Skandagupta. At that time Narasimhagupta Bālāditya was his crown-prince.² Purugupta, however, was overthrown by Skandagupta who in c. 470, was succeeded by Kumāragupta of the Sarnath inscription. Kumāragupta II in his turn was followed by Budhagupta. It was after the death of Budhagupta in 496 A. D. that Narasimhagupta Bālāditya came to the throne. Sinha gives a rather dramatic picture of his reign.³ He believes that in the beginning of his reign, Narasimhagupta issued Class I coins, patronised Vasubandhu (who died in c. 500 A. D.) and busied himself in building monasteries and organising learned discussions. But the invasion of the Hūnas under Toramāṇa upset every thing. Vainyagupta revolted in the east, and Prakaṣāditya of the Sarnath inscription, the son of Narasimhagupta, enthroned himself as the king of Magadha with the help of Toramāṇa. Narasimhagupta had to go in wilderness, but he continued to issue coins of rude fabric in order to assert the continuity of his sovereignty. After ten years of exile he made peace

1 *EHNI*, pp. 183 ff.

2 *DKM*, pp. 41 ff.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 80 ff.

with Mihirakula, and agreed to pay tribute to him. But, later on, the persecution of Buddhists by the Hūṇa monarch gave him a good excuse to declare his independence. In the ensuing war, fought in c. 520 A. D., Narasimhagupta was victorious. He abdicated in c. 522 A. D. and became a monk. He was succeeded by his son Kumāragupta of the Bhitari seal who in turn was followed by Vishnugupta, the last emperor of the dynasty.

In order to dovetail the historical events connected with two rulers having identical name and title into one individuality, Sinha has constructed a scheme based on a series of rather improbable and at places inconsistent hypotheses. Firstly, as we have seen, he has accepted the evidence of the Sarnath inscription of Prakāṣāditya and on its basis has assumed that Prakāṣāditya was the rebellious son of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya. But he has refused the very clear statement of this document that Bālāditya, the father of Prakāṣāditya was born in a family in which another Bālāditya had flourished. Secondly, he has accepted the existence of two Kumāraguptas, besides Kumāragupta I, on the basis of numismatic evidence alone, but has overlooked the fact that numismatic evidence points to the existence of two Nara Bālāditya also. Thirdly, he believes that Purugupta ruled for a very short period in the year 455 A. D. and remained busy in the war of succession in which, according to Sinha apart from Skandagupta, Ghaṭotkachagupta and Chandragupta III also participated. And yet he suggests that Purugupta found enough time to patronize Sāṃkhya school of philosophy, to become interested in Buddhism, to hold discussions at his court and to send his queen and son to study under the famous teacher Vasubandhu ! Such things do not happen in real life. Further, he assumes that Vasubandhu continued to live after the death of Purugupta in 455 A. D. for about 45 years in order to enjoy the patronage of his pupil Narasimhagupta in c. 496-500 A. D. His view about the age of Narasimhagupta is also difficult to be accepted. Now, assuming that Narasimhagupta was about 20 years old in the year 455 A. D. (he must have been if his father took the trouble to appoint a scholar like Vasubandhu to educate him), he must have been at least 61 years old at the time of his acce-

ssion and about 85 years old in 520 A. D. when, according to Sinha, he personally participated in the Hūṇa war. It is not only highly unusual but also goes against the testimony of the *ĀMAK* also (which Sinha has accepted) according to which Bāla committed suicide at the age of 36 years and 1 month. It may also be noted that according to the evidence furnished by Yuan Chwang, the mother of Bālāditya actively participated in the treatment accorded to Mīhirakula. Now, if Bālāditya was 85 years old, or even more, his mother could have been hardly alive. Even if she was alive, she must have been about 110 years old. It is indeed too much to suggest that such an old lady could interfere in the state affairs so effectively¹.

BUDHAGUPTA

Thus, we conclude that Skandagupta was followed by Narsimhagupta I and the latter by Kumāragupta II of the Bhitari seal and the Sarnath inscription of the year 473 A. D. Kumāragupta II's reign came to an end soon after this date, for from the two identical votive pillar inscriptions found at Sarnath, we learn that Budhagupta was 'ruling the earth' in the current year 157 of the Gupta era². At one time Raychaudhuri suggested that Budhagupta was the son of Kumāragupta I³. The basis of this suggestion was the statement of Yuan Chwang according to which Buddhaguptarāja was the 'son and successor' of Śakrāditya.⁴ Another scholar has thrown a hint that Budhagupta may have been a son of Kumāragupta II of the Sarnath inscription⁵. Allan⁶ suspected that he belonged to a local dynasty of the eastern Malwa. But all these conjectures have been set at rest by the discovery of his Nālandā seal⁷

1 The theory of Sinha has rendered him so much confused that he has even failed to give Prakāśāditya a place in the history of the Gupta dynasty.

2 *ASI, AR*, 1914-15, pp. 124-25.

3 *PHAI* (4th ed.) p. 365; D. C. Sircar echoed the same view (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 323, fn. 1.).

4 *Travels*, II, p. 164; *Records*, II, p. 168.

5 *ASI, AR*, 1914-15, p. 126.

6 *BMC, GD*, p. 153.

7 *MAI*, No. 66, p. 64.

which traces his genealogy from the Mahārāja Gupta and conclusively proves that he belonged to the imperial Gupta family and was the son of Purugupta. "It is true that the vital portion of the legend on the seal which contained the relationship between Purugupta and Budhagupta is irreparably damaged ; but the seal, being elliptical in shape, had shorter lines in the end, and nothing much could have been there between ' *tasya putra* ' (end of the 6th line), and '*Mahāderyām=utpannah*, (the end of the 7th) and *Budhaguptah* (8th line), except the name of the chief-queen of Purugupta (Chandradevī) and the usual imperial titles to Budhagupta."¹ Therefore, now there is no doubt that Budhagupta was the son of Purugupta.

According to N. N. Dasgupta² Budhagupta was not an imperial suzerain in 157 G. E., for, it is in the Damodarpur copper plates of the year 163 G. E. (482 A. D.)³ that he has been given the usual imperial titles for the first time. But the fact that in the Sarnath inscription of the Gupta year 157 (=476 A. D.) he has been given only the title of *Mahārāja* does not mean that in that year he was not the paramount ruler ; for, the use of the phrase " when the earth was being ruled by Budhagupta " very strongly suggests that he was the imperial suzerain even at that time⁴. Samudragupta has been given only the title of *Rāja* on his Tiger-slayer type of coins⁵. In the Mankuwar Buddhist stone image inscription of the G.E. 129⁶, Kumāragupta I is mentioned to as a mere *Mahārāja* though there is no earthly reason to imagin that he was subordinate to somebody in that year, especially when the second Damodarpur

1 DKM, pp. 73-74 ; *MAI*, No. 66, p. 64 ; D. C. Sircar, *IHQ* XIX, pp. 274 ff. ; A. Ghosh, *IHQ*, XX, pp. 119 ff.

2 B. C. Law Volume, I, pp. 617 ff.

3 *EI*, XV, p. 114.

4 *EI*, XVIII, p. 193. His last known date is 175 (=494 A. D.) known from one of his silver coins (*BMC*, CD, p. 153, No. 617). On another silver coin of his, the date 180 was read, but according to Altekar the so-called symbol for 80 is doubtful (*Coinage*, p. 279).

5 *Coinage*, p. 71.

6 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 46.

copper plate inscription dated in the same year gives him full imperial titles.¹

1 The gold coins of Budhagupta are now available, though, for a long time only a few silver pieces of this ruler were known (*Coinage*, p. 275). It was S. K. Saraswati (*IC*, I, p. 692) who first suggested that the Archer type coin in *BMC*, *GD*, Pl. XXI, 23 with the *viruda* *Śrī Vikramah* on the reverse should be attributed to Budhagupta, as the legend under the left arm reads *Budha*, rather than *Pura*. The two new similar coins discovered in 1948, now in the Banaras Hindu University (*Coinage*, p. 277), have proved that Mr. Saraswati was right. The alloy in *BMC*, *GD*, No. 550 was found to be 23% (*DKM*, p. 425). Thus, the coins of Budhagupta are not more impure than those of Skandagupta. Altekar has attributed to him some other Archer type coins, which have the *viruda* *Śrī Vikramah* on the reverse, but give no name of the issuer on the obverse (*Coinage*, p. 276). However, they can be ascribed to Chandragupta III equally well (*Infra*, Ch. VI, App.).



CHAPTER VI

DISINTEGRATION AND COLLAPSE OF THE EMPIRE

DISSENSIONS IN THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

After the death of Budhagupta, which took place immediately after the turn of the century,² the process of the feudalization of the state-structure accelerated and eventually became a serious threat to the very existence of the empire—especially after the third Hūṇa invasion. But, partly due to the influence of the Buddhist ideology which turned away the attention of the Gupta emperors from the conquest of the world and directed it to the cultivation of religious virtues, and partly due to the internal dissensions which led to the murder of the several emperors in quick succession, the imperial family could not meet this challenge successfully. As we have discussed elsewhere, from the combined evidence of the con-

1 For a discussion on the order of succession after Budhagupta see *infra*, App. of this Ch. in which it has been shown that Budhagupta was succeeded in turn by Chandragupta III Vikramāditya, Vainyagupta Dvādaśāditya (507 A. D.), Bhānugupta (510 A. D.), Prakāśāditya, Narasimhagupta II Bālāditya, Vajra, Kumāragupta III Kramāditya and Vishnugupta Chandrāditya. The kings Narasimhagupta II and Kumāragupta III of this list are different from Narasimhagupta I and Kumāragupta II of the Bhitari seal but are identical with the kings of the same name who were respectively the grandfather and father of Vishnugupta of the Nālandā seal.

2 *Infra*, pp. 372 ff.

temporary epigraphs and coins, interpreted in the light of the testimony of the *ĀMMK*, it appears that Budhagupta himself 'surrounded on all sides by enemies, was suppressed and killed'.¹ He was succeeded by Chandragupta III Vikramāditya who was probably the son of the former and was 'severed by weapon'.² Vainyagupta Dvādaśāditya, the son Chandragupta III also 'lived only for a few months' and then was 'severed by weapon'.³ It was against the background of these bloody internal political strifes of the imperial family that the Hūṇas invaded the country for the third time. This invasion was certainly very fierce, and very soon it became apparent that only a ruler of the calibre of Skandagupta could save the situation for the empire. Perhaps Bhānugupta, who is described in the Eran inscription of 510 A. D. as 'the bravest man on the earth' and in the *ĀMMK* as 'a leading king' and 'a popular leader of the Gauḍas', was made of that stuff. But unfortunately for the empire, his early attempts against the Hūṇa invaders did not succeed⁴ and later he was caught by 'a great malady and died of it'.⁵

THE HUNA VOLKERWANDERUNG

In the ancient and mediaeval periods of Indian history, the greatest pressure to which the empires of the Gaṅgā Valley were subjected, came from the North-West. As we have seen, the Indus basin was an area of great attraction for the Central and Western Asiatic tribes who were never slow in exploiting the opportunity provided by the weakness of the Gangetic empires. For example, the decline of the Maurya empire was concomitant with the deep thrust into the heartland of the empire made by the Bactrians, and the Indo-Greeks. The Suṅgas tried to stem the tide of the onrushing foreigners, but neither the glory that was India under Chandragupta Maurya could be incarnated and nor could the entry of the Śakas, Pahalvas and the Kushāṇas be effectively

1 *Infra*, p. 372 ; *IHI*, p. 42.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 See *infra*, p. 343.

5 *IHI*,² p. 42.

stopped. An almost similar situation developed due to what Toynbee calls the 'post-Indic Völkerwanderung',¹ when the Gupta empire was shaken to its roots by the Hūṇas. Their earlier invasions had been successfully repulsed, but this time they succeeded in penetrating into the heart of the Gupta empire and for a time reduced it to a mere vassalage.

The invasion of the Hūṇas followed the same geographical pattern which had been followed by the Indo-Greeks in the post-Maurya period and was to be followed by the Turks at a later date. Like the Indo-Greeks and the Turks, the Hūṇas first consolidated their power in the Punjab. After the defeat sustained at the hands of Skandagupta they had once more turned their attention towards Persia. In 456 A. D. we find Yazdegird II continuing the struggle against them. After his death in 457 A. D., Phiroz became the master of the Sassanian empire, but the Hephthalite king Akun or Akhschounwar defeated him and compelled him to pay tribute. In 484 A. D. Phiroz attacked the Hephthalites, but was defeated and killed. "This success raised the power of the Huns to its greatest height, and towards the close of the fifth century A. D., they ruled over a vast empire with their principal capital at Balkh".² According to Chavannes from the Chinese history it appears that in c. 500 A. D. the Hun empire included Tokharistan, Kabulistan and Zabulistan and that no tract of India proper, except Gandhāra and Chitral, was included in it.³ Sung-Yun, the Chinese traveller, who visited Gandhāra in 520 A. D. states: "This is the country which the Ye-thas destroyed, and afterwards set up a Tch'e-le (a *tegin*, prince or the member of the royal family) to be the king over the country; since which event two generations

1 Toynbee, A., *Study of History*, Vol. 2, (Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 131.

2 *NHIP*, p. 194. According to Smith, however, the 'head-quarters of the horde were at Bamyān in Bādghis near Herāt, and the ancient city of Balkh served as a secondary capital'. (*EHI*, p. 335).

3 Chavannes, *Documents sur les Toukine Occidentaux*, pp. 223 ff.; quoted in *NHIP*, p. 198, fn. 2.

have passed'.¹ From this statement of Sung-Yun it becomes quite clear that the Jaūvla power was extended to Gandhāra two generations before the visit of Sung-Yun in 520 A. D. The king under whom the Hūṇas conquered Gandhāra is not known, but it is quite likely that the king Rāmāṇila known from his coin only was a predecessor of Toramāṇa and responsible for the Hūṇa conquest of Gandhāra. However, the possibility that the former belonged to a family different from that of Toramāṇa, cannot be excluded.

The Hūṇa power in the Punjab was further consolidated by Toramāṇa.² The small copper coins attributed to him "are found

1 Beal, *Records*, I, pp. xv ff.; xcix ff. Beal misunderstood the word *tegin* and rendered it as *Lae-lih*. Sinha (*DKM*, p. 87) and many others took it to be a personal name and suggested that he might have been the father of Toramāṇa, while some have identified him with Lākhaṇa Udyāditya of coins (*JNSI*, IX, p. 15). The correct rendering of the word, however, is *Teh'e-le* which probably meant a 'prince'. Marquart was the first scholar to point it out (Chavannes, *op. cit.*, quoted in *NHIP*, p. 195, fn. 1.)

2 Stein (*IA*, 1905, pp. 73 ff.), Jayaswal (*JBORS*, XVIII, p. 203) and Fleet (*IA*, XV, p. 245) held that Toramāṇa was a Kushāṇa chief. Majumdar (*NHIP*, p. 198) does not rule out this possibility. But the fact that the title 'Jaūvla', which was most likely the name of a branch of the Hephthalite tribe (*supra*, Ch. V.), is used both for Toramāṇa and Mihirakula, makes it almost certain that they were of the Hūṇa extraction. The undated Kura inscription (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 398) refers to Toramāṇa as Rājādhirāja Śāhī Jaūvla. Jayaswal (*JBORS*, XVI, pp. 287 ff.; XVIII, pp. 201 ff.) rightly identified him with Toramāṇa mentioned in the Eran inscription of Dhanyavishṇu (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 396 f.) Bühler (*EI*, p. I 239) doubted their identity, but Cunningham and Smith (*JASB*, 1894, p. 186) had no doubt in it. Diskalkar (*JNSI*, VIII, p. 68), however, differentiates between them. The legend 'Jabula' or 'Jaubla' is also found on the Horseman and the Sassanian types of silver coins of Toramāṇa (*JASB*, 1894, pp. 185 ff.). According to Jayaswal (*op. cit.*) and S. Konow (*IHQ*, XII, pp. 530 ff.) 'Jaūvla' or 'Jaubla' was the title of Toramāṇa. But the use of this title for Mihirakula on the two recently published short inscriptions discovered at Uruzagan (*JRAS*, 1954, pp. 112 ff.) and on the coins of other Hephthalite kings such as Rāmāṇila shows that it was 'a tribal and not a personal

both in the Punjab and in the country between the Sutlej and the Yamunā. The attribution is based on the type of the "*Suu*" with the abbreviated name Tora in large letters".¹ From the Punjab Toramāṇa invaded the Gupta empire. His invasion took place at a time when the imperial family was passing through one of the most critical periods of its history. As we have seen, in the brief interval of about two or three years as many as three emperors had been murdered.² In such a condition Toramāṇa could naturally count upon the help of some disgruntled members of the imperial family. In this connection Indian literature has preserved some very interesting information. For example, from the Jain work *Kuvalayamālā*, composed in 778 A. D., we learn that Toramāṇa (written as Torarāya in one manuscript), who enjoyed the sovereignty of world or Uttarāpatha, lived at Pavvaiyā on the bank of Chandrabhāgā (Chenab). Further, it informs us that Harigupta, who is explicitly mentioned as the scion of the Gupta

title' (Jagannath, *PIHC*, 1958, p. 161). "Among the 'Kušāṇa-Sasanian coins' discussed by Prof. Herrfeld, we find such as are ascribed to different Hephthalite kings and bear the legend *sobo*, *zobol* i.e. *śāha zabol*. And Prof. Juunker discusses some other Hephthalite coins with the legends containing the words *sobo* and *zobolo*". (S. Konow, *IHQ*, XII, p. 532). Konow, therefore, believed that Toramāṇa was a Hūṇa. Also note the fact that two seals bearing the legends *Toramāṇa* and *Hūṇa Rāja* respectively, are found in the same strata in the excavations at Kauśāmbī (Sharma, G. R., *Excavations at Kauśāmbī*, pp. 15-6, 37). It also suggests that Toramāṇa was a Hūṇa.

- 1 *EHNI*, p. 194 ; cf. also Narain, A. K., *JNSI*, XXIV, pp. 41 ff. Two of the coins of Toramāṇa, now in the British Museum, are dated in the year 52. Fleet (*IA*, XVIII, p. 229) took it to be his regnal year. But such a long reign is rather unusual. Therefore, it has been suggested that the date is expressed in a special Hūṇa era of which we do not know when it exactly began (*JASB*, 1894, p. 195; *DKAI*, p. 92). It was quite possible that it was founded in 454 A. D. when the Hūṇas registered their first smashing victory over the Sassanians (*supra*, p. 283f.). If so, these coins would show that Toramāṇa was ruling over the North-Western province in 506 A. D.

- 2 *Supra*, p. 335 f.

family, was the preceptor of Toramāṇa.¹ Among the pupils of Harigupta, the *Kuralayamālā* also mentions Devagupta who is described as a royal sage (*Rājarishi*).² Significantly enough, some of the copper coins collected from Ramnagar and the adjoining area (ancient Pañchāla), reveal the existence of a certain Mahārāja Harigupta who appears to have flourished in c. 500 A. D.³ According to Altekar, the find-spot of these coins "would suggest the possibility of the identity of Harigupta, the adviser of Toramāṇa, with Harigupta of these coins".⁴ If such was the case, we may presume that Harigupta, who may have been a scion of the imperial Gupta family, had established himself in the north Pañchāla⁵ and, due to certain reasons not disclosed to us by our sources, made a common cause with the Hūṇa invader.⁶ The example of Kālaka, a Kshatriya prince, who became a Jain monk and brought the Śakas to invade Gardabhilla, who had ravished Sarasvatī, the sister of the former, is quite well-known.⁷

The further progress of the Hūṇas in the interior of India was conditioned by the geographical factor. From the recent

1 *Tassa guru Harigutto āyario āsi guttaramsao.*

2 Muni Jina Vijaya, *Jaina Sāhitya Samśodhaka*, 1926,; Mehta, N. C., *J.BORS*, XIV, pp. 28 ff.

3 According to Altekar (*Coinage*, p. 319) Harigupta 'could not have flourished later than the first half of the sixth century'.

4 Altekar, *ibid.*

5 The possibility that Harigupta belonged to a local dynasty of the Punjab, cannot be altogether ruled out.

6 'The preceptor may well have been his political adviser rather than spiritual guide (Altekar, *ibid.*).

7 *Vikrama Volume*, pp. 126, 480; Some scholars (*IHQ*, XXXIII, pp. 355 ff.) have expressed doubt in the historicity of the tradition as preserved in the *Kuralayamālā*. It has been argued that the king Torarāya of this work might have been a non-descript rājā. But one of the two MSS of this work give the name as Toramāṇa and on the basis of the fundamental principles of textual criticism, the reading Toramāṇa, being more unusual, should be preferred. There is no need to identify Devagupta of the *Kuralayamālā* with the king Devagupta of Malwa who ruled in the sixth century A. D.

discovery of the two seals of Toramāṇa from Kauśāmbī¹, it appears that he conquered the *antarvedi* at least up to Kauśāmbī. For an invader who swept down on the Gaṅgā Valley from the North-West, it was the only logical direction to take. For him a direct march towards Malwa without establishing firm hold over the *antarvedi*, was neither possible nor desirable. Similarly, from the point of view of the local powers Eran was a natural battlefield, but not for offering first resistance to an invader coming from the Punjab. Therefore, it must be conceded that at least most of the upper Gaṅgā Valley had been conquered by the Hūṇas before they advanced as far south as Eran.

HUNA CONQUEST OF MALWA

The conquest of the Gupta empire by the Hūṇas was facilitated by feudal structure of its administration. It made it easier for the Hūṇa king to enlist the services of the local chiefs in support of his cause. In this connection very interesting light is thrown by the two inscriptions discovered from Eran. As we have seen, the Eran inscription of G. E. 165 (=484 A. D.)² records some pious construction by the Mahārāja Mātṛivishṇu and his younger brother Dhanyavishṇu during the reign of Budhagupta. The second inscription records the construction of a temple by Dhanyavishṇu after the death of his brother (Mātṛivishṇu) in the first year of Rājādhirāja Mahārāja Toramāṇa Śāhi Jaūvla.³ It clearly shows that Dhanyavishṇu, a high official of the empire, did not hesitate to desert the Gupta emperor at this critical juncture and offer his services to the invader. The date of this transfer of allegiance may be closely fixed. It obviously took place some time after 484 A. D. but within a generation after that date. In the light of this fact the Eran posthumous inscription of Goparāja, dated 191 G. E. (= 510 A. D.), which states that the king Bhānugupta, 'the bravest

1 Sharma, G. R., *Excavations of Kauśāmbī*, 1957-59, p. 15 f. One of these seals, is 'counterstruck by the letters To-Ra-Mā-Na and the other with the legend Hūṇa-Rāja evidently referring to the same king.

2 Sircar, *Sel. Ins.*, p. 326 f.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 396 f.

man on the earth' fought a mighty battle at Eran in which his general Goparāja lost his life,¹ becomes significant. Evidently, the battle, mentioned in this document was fought against the Hūṇa invaders—either to check their inroad in the eastern Malwa or to oust them from that region. In the former case Toramāṇa's conquest of the eastern Malwa may be dated in 510 A. D., and in the latter case, sometime before that year. A more definite conclusion on the date when the Hūṇas occupied this region is not possible; but as Toramāṇa must have invaded India proper some time after 500 A. D., (for, till then the Hūṇas were confined to Gandhāra) and must have taken sometime in occupying the Punjab and the U. P., for all practical purposes the year 510 A. D. may be regarded as the initial year of the rule of Toramāṇa in Malwa.

TORAMANA AND PRAKASADITYA

Whether Bhānugupta was successful in the campaign against the Hūṇas, is not mentioned in the posthumous inscription of Goparāja. But had he really achieved such a great victory, it should have been expressly stated in the record while referring to him.² The subsequent events as gathered from the *AMAK* suggest the same thing. From this work we learn that the prince 'Pra', whom we have identified with the king Prakāśāditya of coins, was the son of Bhakārakhya or Bhānugupta and was imprisoned by the king Gopa³ (Goparāja of the Eran inscription).

1 *Ibid.*, p. 335 f.

2 The facts that Mihirakula was ruling over Gwalior region in his fifteenth regnal year and that Yuan Chwang knew a legend according which Bālāditya used to pay tribute to the Hūṇa king (*infra* p. 349) give additional strength to this conclusion. *Contra*, Majumdar who suggests that Bhānugupta inflicted a defeat on Toramāṇa in 510 A. D. (*NHIP*, p. 199). He does not give any reason in support of this conjecture. Bhānugupta probably died of a malady (*IHI*, p. 42) soon after this war.

3 Sinha (*DMK*, p. 94, fn. 1) identifies this Gopa with the king Gopachandra of the Mallasarul grant. But in view of the explicit statement of the Eran inscription regarding the close association of the king Goparāja with Bhānugupta, it is better to regard Goparāja as identical with the king Gopa of the *AMAK*.

presumably on the order of Bhānugupta. Prakāśāditya is said to have remained in prison up to the age of 17 years and was released from it by Hakārākhyā (the Hūṇa = Toramāṇa) who came from the West and occupied the banks of the Gaṅgā up to Tirtha, the city of the Gauḍas. Prakāśāditya entered his camp with a merchant at night, was acknowledged at the dawn by Toramāṇa who then retired to Nandapura (Pāṭaliputra ?) on the Gaṅgā and installed Prakāśāditya as king.¹

From the above account it is clear that Bhānugupta was unable to check the advance of Toramāṇa at Eran, and that the latter occupied almost the whole of the fair valley of the Gaṅgā. In his adventure he was helped by the acute dissensions in the imperial family ; so much so that Prakāśāditya, the son of the Bhānugupta himself made common cause with him and established himself on the throne of his forefathers as the vassal of the Hūṇa king.² But the Hūṇa monarch was not destined to enjoy the fruits of his conquests for long. According to the *ĀMMK* after the installation of Prakāśāditya, he entered Kāśī and fell ill. In that condition he crowned his son Graha, identified with Mihirakula, and died.³ His death may be placed in c. 511-12 A. D.

Toramāṇa was definitely a great conqueror and able diplomat. In a very short period he conquered the major part of the Gupta empire and reduced the emperor to the status of his vassal.⁴ His coins indicate his rule over parts of U, P., Rajputana, Punjab and Kashmir,⁵ and the *ĀMMK* suggests that he carried his victorious

1 *III*, p. 64.

2 The suggestion of Sinha that Toramāṇa encouraged Vainyagupta to assume imperial status (*DKM*, p. 98) has no evidence in its support.

3 *III*, p. 64.

4 The assumption of the titles *Rājādhirāja Mahārāja* (*Sel. Ins.* p. 398) and *Mahārājādhirāja* (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 397) by him shows that he wanted to replace the Hūṇas as the imperial power in North India.

5 *Rājatarāṅginī* refers to a Toramāṇa who flourished long after Mihirakula, about 18 kings intervening between the two. It is hardly consonant with what we know about the Hūṇa king of that name (*CA*, p. 35 f.). For a

arms up to Gauda. In order to weaken the authority of the Gupta emperor, he successfully encouraged the forces of disintegration and took positive steps towards the consolidation of his own power in the central provinces of the empire. Further, he was wise enough not to disturb the existing administrative arrangement and, as the case of Dhanyavishṇu shows, to enlist the services of the ancient official families of the Gupta empire for the benefit of the new administration.

MIHIRAKULA AND THE PERSECUTION OF BUDDHISTS

The foresight, diplomacy and conciliatory attitude of Toramāṇa were completely lacking in his son and successor Mihirakula. According to Yuan Chwang, the contemporary of Mihirakula on the Gupta throne was Bālādityarāja, whom we have identified with Narasimhagupta II, the grandfather and father respectively of Vishṇugupta and Kumāragupta III of the Nālandā seal of Vishṇugupta, Nara Bālāditya of Class II coins, the king Bālāditya who built a monastery at Nālandā in the post-Budhagupta period, and Bālāditya, the father of Prakāśāditya of the Sarnath inscription.¹ He was evidently different from Narasimhagupta I, the son of Purugupta and the father of Kumāragupta II of the Bhitari seal and the Sarnath inscription of 473 A. D. The relation of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II with Prakāśāditya is not known²; but the fact that the former succeeded the latter can hardly be doubted. According to the *AMMK*, Prakāśāditya accepted the overlordship of the Hūṇa monarch, while according to Yuan Chwang Bālāditya, on hearing the cruel persecution of the Buddhists by Mihirakula 'refused to pay tribute'.³ The Chinese sources nowhere indicate as to when Bālāditya started the practice of paying tribute to the Hūṇas. It may, therefore, imply that he inherited this legacy from his predecessor who, in view of the evidence of the *AMMK* may be regarded as identical with Prakāśāditya.

discussion on the identity of Toramāṇa of Kashmir coins see *JNSI*, XIII, pp. 152 ff.; *ibid.*, XXV, pp. 175 ff.

1 *Supra*, Ch. V, App. ii.

2 Cf. A pp. of this Ch.

3 Watters, *Travels*, I, p. 288.

The Gupta-Hūṇa struggle, which took place during the reign of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II was not only a tussle between the indigenous suzerain power which wanted to regain its lost status and the invading foreign tribe which aspired to fill up the vacuum created by the decline of the former, it was also one of those relatively rare instances in Indian history when religion explicitly became the most important of those factors which determined the policies of the rival powers. From the available evidence it appears that like most of the other foreign peoples of the North-West, the Hūṇas under Toramāṇa followed the policy of religious eclecticism, though Toramāṇa himself seems to have showed a soft corner for the heterodox religious faiths. As we have seen, he issued coins bearing the symbol of Sun and permitted Dhanyavishṇu to build a temple of Nārāyaṇa at Eran. His Kura inscription, on the other hand, records the construction of a Buddhist monastery by one Roṣṭa-Siddhavarddhi for the teachers of Mahiśāsaka school and discusses certain Buddhist principles. This document conclusively proves that during the reign of Toramāṇa Buddhism was in a flourishing state in the Punjab. Significantly enough, the *ĀMMK*, in which all the haters of Buddhism are condemned to hell, 'Toramāṇa has a good hereafter' indicating thereby that he was not obnoxious to the Buddhists.¹ His attachment with Jainism as suggested by the testimony of the *Kuralayamālā*, has already been noted. It is true that Buddhist institutions in various cities,² including the Ghoshitārāma Vihāra and some other buildings at Kauśāmbī³ witnessed destruction on an unparalleled scale in this period, but that was probably the work of Mihirakula, who was positively hostile to Buddhism.

As a matter of fact, Mihirakula had himself inherited an interest in the heterodox faiths from his father. According to Yuan Chwang

1 *IHI*, p. 64.

2 Archaeological evidence puts the destruction of the Kasia monastery in the early part of the sixth century (*ASIAR*, 1906-7, p. 50 f.). The monastery of Nālandā also may not have escaped some ravage (*DKM*, p. 107).

3 Sharma, G. R., *Excavations at Kauśāmbī*, p. 37.

"some centuries previously a king named Mo-hi-lo-ku-lo (Mahira-kula=Mihirakula) who had his seat of government at this city (Śākala), ruled over the Indians. He was a bold intrepid man of great ability and all the neighbouring states were his vassals. Wishing to apply his leisure to the study of Buddhism, he ordered the clergy of his country to recommend a Brother of eminent merit to be his teacher.....Now at this time there was an old servant of the king's household who had been a monk for long time... This man was selected by the congregation of Brethren to comply with the royal summons. This insulting procedure enraged the king who forthwith ordered the utter extermination of the Buddhist church throughout all his dominions".¹

That Mihirakula followed an anti-Buddhist policy, is proved by several other sources of information. According to Sung-Yun the 'disposition of this king (i. e. the ruler of Gandhāra in 520 A. D. when the Chinese ambassador visited this region) was cruel and vindictive, and he practiced the most barbarous atrocities. He did not believe in the law of the Buddha, but loved to worship demons.Entirely self-reliant on his own strength, he had entred on a war with the country of Ki-pin (Kashmir), disputing the boundaries of their kingdom, and his troops had been already engaged in it for three years".² From this statement of Sung-Yun

1 Watters, *Travels*, I, p. 288. Many scholars (*NHIP*, p. 197) doubt the credibility of the story of Yuan Chwang about Mihirakula because it places the Hūṇa monarch 'some centuries' before Yuan Chwang came to India. But Yuan Chwang has confused the chronology of Indian rulers at more than one place. e. g. he places Śakrāditya (Kumāragupta I) 700 years before his arrival in India (Beal, *Life*, p. 112, fn. 2). Further, Yuan Chwang himself explicitly states that Mihirakula was defeated and taken prisoner by the king Bālāditya. But the earliest Bālāditya known to Indian history belonged to the third quarter of the fifth century A. D. Therefore, Mihirakula could not have flourished 'several centuries' earlier than Yuan Chwang.

2 Beal, *Records*, I, pp. lxxix ff. The statement of Sung-Yun seems to suggest that Mihirakula was pre-eminently a king of Gandhāra, while, according to the testimony of Yuan Chwang, his capital was Śākala and he was the lord of

it appears that the king of Gandhāra, obviously no other than Mihirakula, followed an anti-Buddhist policy. In connection with Gandhāra Yuan Chwang also had occasion to relate how Mihirakula 'renewed his project of exterminating Buddhism and with this view caused the demolition of 1600 topes and monasteries, and put to death nine koṭis of lay adherents of Buddhism'.¹ The 'worship of demons' by the Hūṇa king mentioned by Sung-Yun probably refers to the Śaiva affiliation of the former for, he is known to have been a staunch devotee of Śiva and demons are associated in the Hindu mythology with the God of Destruction. The Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman-Vishṇuvardhana²

practically whole of North India, his overlordship extending over Magadha as well. The account of Cosmas, surnamed Indicopleustes, an Alexandrine Greek, however, which was probably begun in 535 A. D., though not put in its final form till 547 A. D. (Eng. Trans., by J. W. McCrindle, London 1897, cf. pp. 366, 371-2) throws reconciling light on this point. Thus he says: "Higher up in India, that is farther to the north, are the White Huns. The one called Gollas when going to war takes with him, it is said, no fewer than two thousand elephants and a great force of cavalry. He is the lord of India, and oppressing the people, forces them to pay tribute. The river Phison (identified by Cosmos himself with the Indus) separates all the countries of India from the country of the Huns". Thus the Hūṇa kingdom proper lay to the west of the Indus (cf. Sung-Yun), but Gollas, identified with Mihirakula, had brought a great portion of North India under his suzerainty (cf. Yuan Chwang). Sung-Yun was perhaps more interested in describing the contemporary events viz. the campaign which Mihirakula had launched against Kashmir three years before the arrival of the former. It may explain why Sung-Yun failed to note the extension of the Hūṇa power in India proper. He was, however, aware of the fact that Mihirakula 'continually abode with his troops on the frontier and never returned to his kingdom'. These wars probably included his campaigns in India proper also.

1 Watters, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

2 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 395, fn. 1. According to Bhandarkar the partially broken line 3 of the Gwalior inscription may be restored to mean "who was unbroken in the matter of worshipping" the god Paśupati (quoted in *EHNI*, p. 198).

explicitly states that before the defeat inflicted by Yaśodharman, Mihirakula had never been brought 'into the humility of obeisance to any other save the god Sthāṇu', a form of Śiva. On some of the silver coins of Mihirakula we find the bull or bull-standard, a *triśūla* and the legend *jayati Mihirakula* or *jayati Vṛśabhrāja*.¹ Kalhaṇa also gives him the credit of founding the temple of Mihreśvara and compares him with the God of Destruction himself.²

From the above account it is clear that Mihirakula was a staunch Śaiva and a persecutor of Buddhists. On the other hand, the contemporary Gupta emperor Narasimhagupta II was a devout Buddhist.³ As we have seen, in the post-Kumāragupta I period, the influence of Buddhism on the Gupta royalty had become quite pronounced.⁴ During the reign of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II, it reached at its greatest height and became the most important of those factors which determined the shape of the policies pursued by the emperor. For example, though the empire was passing through a period of great crisis and financial strain, Bālāditya II, either due to his own devotion to the faith or under the pressure of the Buddhist Church, made "the East upto the sea decorated with chaityas" and built over "the whole land with monasteries, orchards, reservoirs, gardens and pavilions".⁵ In the Chinese sources he is remembered as a 'zealous' Buddhist⁶ and the patron of the Nālandā convent.⁷ Thus, the political vision of both Nara-

1 *IMC*, I, p. 236.

2 *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, I, p. 306. K. B. Pathak has identified Mihirakula with Kalkirāja of the Jain tradition (*IA*, 1917, p. 287, *ibid.*, 1918, pp. 16 ff.).

3 Note that in this period, the title *Paramabhāgavata* was no more than a formal epithet of the Gupta emperors. In the Gunaighar inscription (*IHQ*, VI, pp. 45 ff.) Vainyagupta is described as a devotee of Śiva, but in his Nālandā seal (*ALASI*, No. 66, p. 67) he is called a *Paramabhāgavata*.

4 *Supra*, p. .

5 *III*, p. 33.

6 Watters, *Travels*, p. 288.

7 Beal, *Life*, p. 109. The Nālandā inscription of Yaśovarmanadeva (*JL*, XX, pp. 43 ff.) also refers to a 'temple' built by the king Bālāditya at Nālandā.

śinhagupta Bālāditya II and Mihirakula, was coloured by their religious outlook. But while the Śaivite affiliation and the anti-Buddhist bias of Mihirakula made him aggressive, the influence of Buddhist ideology on the Gupta emperor further diminished his martial fervour and love of military adventures. It is true that on hearing the cruel persecution of the Buddhists by Mihirakula, the emperor 'refused to pay tribute'. But the defiant posture he adopted was neither the result of sober considerations of political and military situation and nor its consequences were met with courage and determination. Yuan Chwang, though he obviously had a soft corner for the Gupta emperor, explicitly states that when Mihirakula raised an army to punish this rebellion, "Bālādityarāja, knowing his renown, said to his ministers : I hear that those thieves are coming, and I cannot fight with them ; by the permission of my ministers I will conceal my poor person among the bushes of the morass. Having said this he departed from his palace and wandered through the mountains and deserts. Being very much beloved in his kingdom his followers, who amounted to many myriads, also fled with him and hid themselves in the islands of the sea".¹ It was indeed a far cry from the days when Samudragupta boasted that his 'only ally was the prowess of the strength of his own arm'², Chandragupta II led the campaign against the Śakas personally³ and Skandagupta, while fighting against the enemies of the dynasty, spent a whole night on the bare earth.⁴ It proves how baleful, from the political point of view, the influence of Buddhism on the Gupta royalty proved to be.

1 Beal, *Records*, I, p. 168. Cosmos relates a story current among his people according to which the Hūṇa king, when besieging a city in Central India (Madhyadeśa), made his elephants, horses, and myriads of soldiers drink the water of the protecting moats in order to march dry-foot in the town (*J-I*, XXXIV, pp. 73 ff.). The Jain author Somadeva refers to a tradition that a Hūṇa king conquered Chitrakūṭa (*Bhandarkar Com. Vol.*, p. 216).

2 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 12.

3 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 36.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

DEFEAT OF MIHIRAKULA

However, the struggle against the Hūṇas ended in the discomfiture of Mihirakula. But the credit of this victory goes not to Narasimhagupta, but to the powerful feudatories of the empire. One of them was a Maukhari chief, probably Śśvaravarman ; for, in the Jaunpur stone inscription it is claimed that probably he 'allayed the troubles (*caused*) by the approach of cruel people'.¹ In view of the fact that Śśvaravarman was the predecessor of Śśanavarman (known date 554 A. D.), it may be easily assumed that these 'cruel people' were no other than the Hūṇas. Actually the Aḥśad record of the Later Gupta king Ādityasena explicitly refers to the mighty elephant corps of the Maukharis "which had thrown aloft in the battle the troops of the Hūṇas."² Another chief who came to the rescue of Bālāditya II was probably Yaśodharman of Malwa. According to Yuan Chwang when Mihirakula approached, Bālāditya stationed himself at the narrow passes, whilst his 'light cavalry were out to provoke the enemy to fight.....and took Mihirakula alive as captive'.³ We suggest that the troops who captured the Hūṇa king were probably led by Yaśodharman. To us it appears to be the only possible way to reconcile the conflicting testimonies of Yuan Chwang and the Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman⁴. From the account of the Chinese traveller

1 *Ibid.*, p. 230.

2 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 206. Note that the Maukharis issued coins in imitation of the Hūṇa kings and ruled over territories formally in possession of the Hūṇas (*CA*, p. 39).

3 Beal, *Records*, I, p. 168.

4 Smith (*EHI*, 3rd ed., p. 300) believed that Yaśodharman and Narasimhagupta formed an alliance against Mihirakula. Later on, he (*EHI*, 4th ed., p. 337) came to the conclusion that the native princes formed a confederacy against the Hūṇas under the leadership of Yaśodharman. Allan (*BMC, GD*, p. lix) rightly pointed out that the suggestion of Smith is against both of our authorities, Yuan Chwang and the inscriptions. Fleet (*IA*, 1889, p. 228) opined that Mihirakula was defeated by Bālāditya in the east and Yaśodharman in the west. According to Heras (*IHQ*, III, pp. 1 ff.) and Majumdar (*NHIP*, pp. 199 ff.) Mihirakula was defeated

we learn that Bālāditya wanted to kill Mihirakula, but released him on the intercession of the queen-mother. In the meantime, the brother of Mihirakula had usurped his throne. Mihirakula, therefore, sought and obtained an asylum in Kashmir. Later on, he treacherously killed the king of that region and 'placed himself on the throne'. He next killed the king of Gandhāra and renewed his project of exterminating Buddhism¹. From this account it is clear that the Hūṇa empire in India proper collapsed with the defeat of Mihirakula described by Yuan Chwang. On the other hand, in the Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman it is claimed that respect to his feet was paid even by 'that famous king Mihirakula, whose head had never previously been brought into the humility of obeisance to any other save the god Sthānu'.² It means that Yaśodharman, and not Bālāditya II, was the first person to defeat the Hūṇa monarch. But the assumption that Mihirakula was defeated first by Yaśodharman and later by Bālāditya would imply that Mihirakula reimposed his authority in the interior of India up to Magadha sometime after the collapse of Yaśodharman's power, for, from the Chinese sources we gather that the Gupta-Hūṇa conflict was precipitated by the refusal of the Gupta king to pay tribute to the Hūṇas. But the available evidence does not warrant such a conclusion. We are, therefore, of the opinion that Yaśodharman, as a feudatory chief, helped Narasimhagupta II in latter's war against Mihirakula and was, perhaps, responsible for the capture of the Hūṇa king; later on, when he became an independent sovereign and carried his victorious arms even against the Guptas, he construed his victory over Mihirakula as an independent conquest.³

first by Yaśodharman earlier than his final defeat by Bālāditya. Raychaudhuri (*PILAI*, p. 596, fn. 3) and Sinha (*DKM*, pp. 107 ff.) on the other hand, believe that Bālāditya vanquished Mihirakula earlier in 520 A. D., while Yaśodharman defeated him later in the North.

1 Beal, *Records*, I, pp. 168 ff.

2 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 395, fn. 1.

3 This suggestion was first adumbrated by Hoernle (*J. ASB*, LVIII, Pt. I, p. 96).

The chronology of the Gupta-Hūṇa struggle may be reconstructed only broadly. As we have noted, Mihirakula succeeded Toramāṇa in c. 511-12 A. D. From his Gwalior inscription² we learn that his authority was acknowledged in that region in his fifteenth regnal year i. e. in c. 526-27 A. D. If the suggestion that Yaśodharman participated in the Hūṇa war as a feudatory of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II is correct, it may be assumed that Mihirakula was defeated sometime after 527 A. D. but before 532 A. D. But it is not necessary to hold that Narasimhagupta rebelled against the Hūṇa overlordship after 527 A. D. The revolt might have taken place earlier. From the Betul plates of the year 518 A. D.³ we learn that the Gupta overlordship was accepted in the central India in that year. Significantly enough, from the account of Sung-Yun also we gather that in 520 A. D. Mihirakula was engaged in a war against Kashmir which had already lasted for three years. It is quite possible, therefore, that Narasimhagupta II exploited this opportunity and revolted against the Hūṇa overlordship in c. 517 A. D. and re-established his authority as far as Central India, though the western U. P. and adjoining areas continued to remain under the suzerainty of the Hūṇas. Mihirakula, evidently because of his engagements in the North, could not take any immediate steps against the rebellious Gupta monarch. He launched the punitive expedition in or shortly after 527 A. D. but was singularly defeated. Here it may be noted that the activities of Mihirakula in Kashmir as narrated by Yuan Chwang belong to the period subsequent to his defeat in India, and were different from those described by Sung-Yun which belong to the period of 517-20 A. D. During the visit of Sung-Yun Mihirakula had launched an offensive against Kashmir 'disputing the boundaries of their kingdoms'; in the later period, he sought and obtained asylum in Kashmir and killed its king treacherously. The king of Gandhāra, whom he murdered later on, might have been his own brother who had occupied the

2 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 401.

3 *JJ*, VIII, p. 284.

paternal throne when Mihirakula was serving time in the prison of Bālāditya.¹

COLLAPSE OF THE EMPIRE AND THE RISE OF NEW CENTRES OF POLITICAL POWER

The treatment which Narasimhagupta meted out to Mihirakula proved his inability to take any effective political initiative, and rendered it quite apparent that the imperial family had no heart to revive its past glory. A more vigorous and militant emperor would have tried to convert his victory over his rival into a war of conquest. Bālāditya II, on the other hand, calmly let this opportunity slip from his hands and renouncing the paternal throne, became a monk.² Of course, the reinstatement of the vanquished king was a policy generally followed by the Indian kings, including the great predecessors of Bālāditya II himself. But what he did was not the reinstatement of a feudatory chief; it was letting a blood-thirsty tyrant roam at large. The popular reaction to the policy followed by Narasimhagupta II may be gauged by the story which Yuan Chwang heard about the circumstances leading to the release of Mihirakula by the emperor. According to the Chinese pilgrim the mother of Bālādityarāja bade her son to bring Mihirakula to her presence in her palace, gave a sermon to Mihirakula on the impermanence of worldly things and to her son on the merits of forgiveness and then, skilful as she was in casting horoscopes, foretold that Mihirakula would be a king of a small country. Thereupon, in order to obey his dear mother's command, Bālāditya not only set Mihirakula free but also gave him a young maiden in marriage and sent a guard to escort him from the island.³ This

1 Kalhaṇa refers to Mihirakula as a powerful king of Gandhāra and Kashmir and narrates the stories of his violent disposition and cruelty. But the facts mentioned by him can hardly be reconciled with what we know about the Hūṇa king Mihirakula who was the adversary of Bālāditya II and Yaśodharman (*NHHP*, p. 197).

2 Beal, *Life*, p. 111.

3 *Records*, I, pp. 169 ff.

story may not be correct in entirety, but it does show that in the eyes of the contemporary people, the interests of the empire had no place in the scheme of Narasimhagupta II; they felt that he regarded the empire as merely a means to inculcate religious virtues and could easily subject it to the whims of his aged mother.

SUCCESSORS OF NARASIMHAGUPTA BALADITYA

Vajra, the successor of Bālāditya II, proved no better than the latter. He is known to have built one more monastery at Nālandā and is described by the Chinese as a staunch Buddhist, 'possessed of a heart firm in the faith'.¹ He was obviously not the hero who could resist the mighty arm of Yaśodharman of Malwa.² However, very soon the expansion of the Mālava power was contained, probably by the newly emerging feudatory royal houses, and not by the Guptas. For, from the Jaunpur stone inscription we learn that either Īśvaravarman or his successor, probably Īśānavarman, extinguished a 'spark of fire that had come by the road (from the city of) Dhārā'.³ In view of the fact that this conflict between the Maukhari king and the 'spark from Dhārā' took place sometime in the second quarter of the sixth century, it may be assumed that by the 'spark from Dhārā' the author of the this record pointed to the invasion of Yaśodharman, and that the Maukharis played a prominent role in the war fought against the Mālava adventurer. It was with the help of such feudatories that Kumāragupta III, the son of Narasimhagupta II, and Vishnugupta Chandrāditya, the son and successor of the former and the last known Gupta emperor, maintained themselves on the imperial throne till the middle of the sixth century A. D. Like the most of the later Gupta emperors they were also interested in Buddhism. In 539 A. D., Wu-ti or Hsiao Yen, the first Liang emperor of China and an ardent Buddhist, sent a mission to Magadha for the purpose of collecting original Mahāyāna texts and obtaining the services of a competent scholar to translate them. The king of Magadha,

1 *Records*, II, p. 170.

2 *Infra*, pp. 360 ff.

3 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

probably Kumāragupta III, gladly complied with the wishes of the Chinese emperor and placed the learned Paramārtha at the disposal of the mission.¹

No event of importance of the reigns of Kumāragupta III and Vishnugupta is definitely known. Their coins are available but they merely indicate the dwindling resources of the empire.² It is, however, quite certain that the empire continued to exist, in name at least, till the middle of the sixth century A. D. The fifth Damodarpur copper plate inscription of the year 224 (= 543 A. D.) resembles in content and phraseology the other four plates of the earlier periods found from that place and refers to the Gupta emperor in the usual style.³ But the Amauna (Gayā District) copper plate of the Kumārāmātya-Mahārāja Nandana dated in the (Gupta) year 232 (= 551 A. D.), instead of referring the emperor with the usual titles, mentions Nandana's *guru*. It is quite likely therefore, that by that time the empire had ceased to exist. It, however, appears that some scions of the imperial family succeeded in continuing their sway in Orissa, even after the empire had collapsed in Magadha and Bengal; for, a chief of the name of Prithvivigraha of that province refers to the Gupta rule as late as 569 A. D.⁴

EASTWARD SHIFT IN THE CENTRE OF THE GUPTA POWER

The extent of the Gupta empire after the onslaught of Yaśodharman is very difficult to determine. For, it is not always clear as to when the feudatory rulers and governors of the various provinces declared their independence. It may, however, be noted that gradually the centre of power of the imperial dynasty was

1 *EHI*, p. 331.

2 *Infra*, App. of this Ch.

3 For a discussion on the date and the name of the emperor mentioned in this record; *infra*, App. of this Ch. p. 383.

4 *EI*, X, pp. 49 ff. If the phrase 'meditating on Devaguru' means meditating on king and *guru*, then it may be argued that Deva may as well be the name of the king. Is it possible that this Deva was identical with Rājaputra Deva Bhaṭṭāraka of the fifth Damodarpur copper plate?

5 *Infra*, p. 367; pp. 382 ff.

shifting towards the east—probably because of the pressure of the enemies on the north-western and western frontiers. Till the age of Skandagupta, the Guptas are found mentioned in the literature mainly in connection of the cities like Sāketa, Prayāga, Ayodhyā, Śrāvastī, Kauśāmbī and Ujjayinī. In the sixth century, however, Yuan Chwang refers to Bālāditya as the king of Magadha,¹ and the ruler who was requested by the Chinese emperor to send a learned scholar to China in 539 A. D. is mentioned as the king of the same province.² Further, the *AMMK* describes Bālāditya II as an 'Easterner' and his successor Kumāragupta III as 'the great lord of the Gauḍas'.³ An eastward shift in the centre of the Gupta power is also indicated by the fact that most of the coins of the last two emperors were yielded by the Kalighat hoard (Bengal).⁴ In this connection the fifth Damodarpur copper plate of the year 224 (= 543 A. D.)⁵ throws very interesting light. It shows that at the time when the various provinces of the empire were assuming increasingly greater autonomy, in the Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* the administrative machinery of the days of Budhagupta was still at work. This inscription mentions only one significant change viz. the designation of the Uparika Mahārāja as 'Rājaputra Deva Bhaṭṭāraka'. According to Majumdar, it shows that at that time the son of the emperor was the governor of Puṇḍravardhana.⁶ It also indicates the strong hold of the Gupta emperor over this province in 543 A. D. and gives support to the suggestion that the centre of the Gupta power was gradually shifting eastwards. The same indication is provided by the fact that Samatāṭa or S. E. Bengal, which was a *pratyanta* state in the days of Samudragupta, became an integral part of the empire in the reign of Vainyagupta (known date 507 A. D.) or even earlier,⁷ though the rise of power-

1 Watters, *Travels*, I, p. 288.

2 *EHI*, p. 331.

3 *III*, p. 33.

4 *Coinage*, p. 271.

5 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 331.

6 *NHPI*, p. 216.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 210.

ful local dynasties put an end to the Gupta authority in these regions very soon after the year 507 A. D.

RISE OF NEW POWERS

From the above account, it is clear that the direct authority of the last Gupta emperors was confined mainly to Magadha and parts of Bengal, though even in these regions local feudatory kings, such as the Later Guptas of Magadha, were becoming increasingly powerful. In some of the outlying provinces of the empire however, their suzerainty was still formally recognised. A study of the rise of the new powers in the various provinces against the background of the decline and final collapse of the Gupta empire may, therefore, give an insight into the process of the disintegration of the empire and may also reveal the general pattern according to which the forces of disintegration always overpowered the forces of integration whenever the central authority happened to be weak.

MAITRAKAS OF VALABHI

Of all the states that arose out of the ruins of the Gupta empire the Maitraka kingdom of Valabhi proved to be the most durable. Its extent in the sixth century A. D. is not definitely known, but it may be assumed that as Bhaṭārka, its founder, was the governor of Surāshṭra, it roughly corresponded to that province. As we have seen,¹ Bhaṭārka and his son Dharasena were content with the title of *Senāpati* only; but Droṇasimha, the younger brother and successor of Dharasena was invested with the rank and title of Mahārāja by his (Gupta) overlord.² Droṇasimha was succeeded by the Mahārāja Dhruvasena I³ who was on the throne from at least 525 to 545 A. D. The latter continued to pay at least nominal allegiance to a suzerain, presumably the Gupta emperor. About the Mahārāja Dharapaṭṭa, the younger brother and successor of Dhruvasena I, we do not know anything, as no record of his reign is available. But it is definite that the Mahārāja Guhasena (known

1 *Supra*, Ch. V.

2 *Ibid.*

3 We have got 16 grants of Dhruvasena I. They give him various titles such as *Mahāsāmanta*, *Mahārāja*, *Mahāpratibāra*, *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka*, *Mahākartākrīṭika*.

dates 556 or 559 A. D. to 567 A. D.) the son of Dharapaṭṭa did not use the epithet *paramabhaṭṭarakapadānuḍhyāta* which was used by Dhruvasena I. "This shows that the Maitraka kings no longer paid even nominal allegiance to any overlord, and indirectly confirms the supposition that this overlord was the Gupta emperor, for it is difficult to think of any other who held this position from about A. D. 475 to 550 and then ceased to do so".¹

AULIKARAS OF MALWA

The history of western Malwa after 491 A. D., the date of the Mahārāja Gaurī, the feudatory of Ādityavardhana, becomes once again obscure. From the Vākāṭaka records it appears that Harisheṇa, the ruler of the Vatsagulma branch of the Vākāraka dynasty extended his authority over Gujarat, Malwa, and other countries. As he appears to have flourished towards the close of the fifth and in the beginning of the sixth century, it may be assumed that he invaded these provinces when the Gupta were engaged in the struggle against the Hūṇas. The success of Harisheṇa however, proved to be shortlived, and very soon local powers filled the power-vacuum in these regions. According to Mirashi, the Mahārājādhirāja Dravyavardhana mentioned in the *Bṛhatśaṃhitā* of Varāhamihira was the successor of Ādityavardhana and the predecessor, possibly father, of Yaśodharman-Vishṇuvardhana of the Mandasor inscription of 532 A. D.² Mirashi points out that as Varāhamihira claims to have studied the work of the Mahārājādhirāja Dravyavardhana, the ruler of Ujjayinī,³ the latter must have flourished earlier than the former. Now, we know that Varāhamihira has taken 427 Ś. E. (=505 A. D.) as the initial year

1 CA, p. 62. "Such nominal allegiance, without any reality behind it, is offered usually to an old established dynasty.

A new authority like Yaśodharman could only exact real submission or nothing" (*Ibid.*, p. 42).

2 Mirashi, *Studies in Indology*, I, pp. 211 ff.; Vol. II, pp. 180 ff.

3 D. C. Sircar agrees with him on the chronological order of these rulers, but suggests that their capital was Daśapura and not Ujjayinī (*IIQ*, XXXV, pp. 73 ff.; XXXVI, pp. 192 ff.).

of his calculation in his work *Pañchasiddhāntikā*. It was probably the date of the composition of this work. Therefore, Dravyavardhana, who cannot be placed earlier than the last quarter of the fifth century A. D., may be regarded as the successor of Ādityavardhana and may be assigned the period from 495 to 515 A. D. But, it is not at all necessary to place the date of Varāhamihira in so early a period, for Āmarāja, the commentator of Brahmagupta's *Khaṇḍakhādya* states that Varāhamihira died in Śaka 509 (= 587 A. D.).¹ Further, scholars hold that Varāhamihira quotes Āryabhaṭa,² who was born in 476 A. D. In view of both these facts it is not reasonable to suppose that Varāhamihira composed his work in 505 A. D. It is quite likely that Ś. E. 427 (= 505 A. D.) used for calculations in the *Pañchasiddhāntikā*, was the date of birth of Varāhamihira. Thus, he might have composed his *Bṛīhatsamhitā* in the middle of the fifth century. And if it was so, Mahārājādhirāja Dravyavardhana of Avantī could very well have been a successor, and not a predecessor of Yaśodharman.³

As a matter of fact, it seems more reasonable to assume that Dravyavardhana was a successor of Yaśodharman. As we have just seen, the Maitrakas of Valabhī continued to owe allegiance to a suzerain power right up to the middle of the sixth century. Now, the assumption that the Aulikaras of Malwa became an independent power in the beginning of the sixth century A. D. would render it impossible to believe that the suzerain power of whom the Maitrakas owed their allegiance were the Guptas, for the existence of an independent state in between the Gupta

1 Sengupta, P. C., *Ancient Indian Chronology*, p. 276. *Navadhi-kapañchasiṭasānikhyasāke Varāhamihirāchārya diram gatah* (quoted in *C.I.*, p. 323, fn. 1.). Majumdar regards this passage as of dubious authenticity and suggests that Varāhamihira flourished 'towards the close of the fifth century A. D.' (*ibid.*, p. 323). But, strangely enough, he also maintains that Varāhamihira quotes Āryabhaṭa who was born in 476 A. D. (*ibid.*, p. 322). We do not know how he proposes to reconcile these two positions.

2 Majumdar, *C.I.*, p. 322.

3 Cf. Prakash, B., *Aspects*, pp. 89 ff.

empire and the kingdom of Valabhi would have soon evaporated the sense of loyalty in the Maitrakas towards a power whose authority was more nominal than real. The alternative that the Maitrakas were subject to the authority of the Aulikaras of Malwa, is hardly tenable; for, as pointed out by Majumdar, a new authority like Yaśodharman could 'exact only real submission or nothing'.¹

All that we know of the achievements of Yaśodharman-Vishṇuvardhana by way of military conquests is disclosed by two inscriptions from Mandasor. One of them which mentions him by the names of Yaśodharman and Vishṇuvardhana both, is dated in the Mālava year 589 (= 532 A. D.)² while the other one, found in duplicate, mentions him by the name of Yaśodharman only and does not give any date.³ In neither of these records his genealogy is described though it is said that he spurned the boundaries of his house⁴ and conquered the earth with his own arm.⁵ This clearly suggests that the power and imperial status earned by him was far beyond the ken of his ancestors, who at best might have been the local kings of Malwa. In the inscription of 532 A. D., it is also stated that he belonged to the lineage that had the famous aulikara crest.⁶

1 *CA*, p. 42.

2 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, pp. 150 ff.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 142 ff. The Mandasor inscription of the year 532 A. D. describes Yaśodharman as *Janendra* and Vishṇuvardhana as *Rājādhirāja* and *Paramēśvara* and mentions both of them as great conquerors. In the undated record, Yaśodharman is given the title of *Samrat*. Allan (*BMC*, *GD*, pp. lvii-viii) and Fleet (*op. cit.*, p. 151) differentiated between the two and regarded Yaśodharman as the suzerain of Vishṇuvardhana. But as pointed out by Jayaswal (*IA*, lxi, pp. 145 ff; *III*, p. 41) "how could two persons within very few years acquire sovereignty over the same area and both be emperors"? He, therefore, regarded them as identical. Sircar (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 386, fn. 2) Hoernle (*JRAS*, 1909, I, pp. 89 ff.) and Sinha (*DKM*, p. 118 f.) hold the same view.

4 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 156.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

It may suggest that he was a descendant of the Varman kings of Mandasor who also belonged to the aulikara lineage.¹ The king Ādityavardhana, mentioned in an inscription of the Mahārāja Gauri,² may have been his immediate predecessor. But in the present state of our knowledge all this is no more than pure conjecture.³

The undated Mandasor inscription is a pure *prastāvi* of the type of the Allahabad record of Samudragupta. But unlike the latter, it does not specify the countries conquered by Yaśodharman. Instead, we find only a somewhat vague assertion that he conquered "those countries...which were not enjoyed (*even*) by the Gupta Lords,⁴ and which the command of the chiefs of the Hūṇas... failed to penetrate"; and further, that the chiefs "from the neighbourhood of the (river) Lauhitya up to (the mountain) Mahendra,... (and) from (Himālaya)...up to the Western Ocean⁵", paid respect to his feet. The only specific reference to any conquest is that over Mihirakula discussed above.

As D. C. Sircar⁶ has shown, the account of Yaśodharman's conquests is more or less a conventional one, but at the same time it cannot be denied that 'such a claim, publicly made, must have some basis in fact'.⁷ We need, therefore, hardly doubt that Yaśodharman did achieve some significant success as a conqueror. Probably taking advantage of the weakness of the Guptas and the

1 Vide Bihar Kotra Ins. of Naravarman's time, *EI*, XXVI, p. 139; cf. *NHIP*, p. 202.

2 *Supra*, Ch. v.

3 Jayaswal (*III*, p. 41), following the suggestion of Fleet that the line 6 of the undated record refers to Yaśodharman, opined that Yaśodharman-Vishnūvardhana belonged to Thanesar and was an ancestor of Harsha. But as Keilhorn (*IA*, XVII, pp. 219 ff.) has shown, this passage refers to Mihirakula and not to Yaśodharman.

4 Fleet (*op. cit.*, p. 148) translated '*Guptanāthān*' as 'Lords of the Guptas'. Jayaswal (*III*, pp. 40-41) corrected the translation as the 'Gupta-Lords'.

5 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 147 f.

6 Sircar, *Studies in the Geog. of Aust. and Med. India*, p. 10.

7 *NHIP*, p. 203.

increase in his own power and prestige following the defeat of Mihirakula in which he had played a big role, he made a bold bid for the imperial status. Vajra, the son of Narasimhagupta II, could not resist his onslaught and Yaśodharman carried his victorious arm right up to the banks of the Lauhitya and, therefore, felt justified in assuming the grandiloquent titles of *Samrat*, *Rājā-dhirāja* and *Paramēśvara*.

Yaśodharman's success may not have been as ephemeral as is generally supposed.¹ He was probably succeeded by the Mahārājādhirāja Dravyavardhana who, in any case, cannot be placed later than the middle of the sixth century A. D. The fact that the Guptas were ruling over Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti* in 543 A. D. does not at all prove that the empire of the house of Yaśodharman had collapsed in Malwa itself by that year.²

MAUKHARIS OF KANAUJ

In the Gaṅgā Valley, extending from the Divide region to Bengal, which once constituted the core of the Gupta empire, several important feudal principalities were established. Of these, the Vardhanas of Thanesar did not attain much power and importance till the last quarter of the sixth century, when Prabhākaravardhana claimed imperial status for his family. His three predecessors, who may be placed between c. 500 and c. 580 A. D., probably acknowledged the supremacy either of the Guptas or of the Hūṇas or of both at different times.³ Their neighbours, the Maukharis, however, became powerful comparatively earlier. They were an ancient clan, widespread over North India. Three kings of a Maukhari family, namely Yajñavarman, his son Śārdūlavarman and latter's son Anantavarman, ruled in the neighbourhood of Gayā probably in the first half of the sixth century A. D. They are known from the three inscriptions of Ananta-

1 *Ibid.*, pp. 203, 204.

2 It is quite possible that the king Jishnu known from coins (*JNSI*, XIII, pp. 150, 192) was a successor and descendant of Yaśodharman-Vishṇuvardhana (*ibid.*, XV, pp. 89 ff.).

3 *C.I.*, p. 97.

varman¹, who describes his grandfather as a feudatory chief, evidently of the imperial Guptas.²

Another branch of the Maukharis, which ultimately claimed imperial status, probably had the city of Kanauj as its capital.³ "As all the inscriptions of the family, other than the small seals, and their coins have been found within the limits of U. P., we may regard it roughly as the seat of their power".⁴ Therefore, there can hardly be any doubt that the first three rulers of this family, namely Harivarman, Ādityavarman and Īśvaravarman, who flourished towards the close of the fifth and the first half of the sixth century A. D., were the feudatories of the Guptas. They increased their power and prestige by the policy of matrimonial alliances. Ādityavarman married Harshaguptā, almost certainly the sister of the Later Gupta prince Harshagupta while Īśvaravarman married Upaguptā, most likely the sister of the emperor Viṣṇugupta. Īśvaravarman probably gave substantial help to the Gupta emperor in the Hūṇa war and,⁵ later, played a vital role in the struggle against the 'spark from Dhārā' i. e. Yaśodharman of Malwa.⁶ According to the Haraha inscription, Īśānavarman, the son and successor of Īśvaravarman, increased the prestige of the family further by defeating the Āndhras (probably the Viṣṇukundins),⁷ the Śūlikas⁸ and the Gaudas⁹, assumed the title of *Mahārājādhirāja* and issued coins in his own name. Thus, once again, the upper Gaṅgā Valley became the seat of an empire which, in the seventh century, was inherited and enlarged by Harshavardhana of Thanesar.

1 Fleet, *op. cit.*, pp. 221 ff.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Tripathi, R. S., *History of Kanauj*, p. 24; Sinha, *DKM*, pp. 145 ff.

4 *CA*, p. 68.

5 *Supra* p. 350.

6 *Supra*, p. 354.

7 *PII-II*, p. 602. Note that the Jaunpur inscription also refers to the war fought against the Āndhra king (Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 229.).

8 For the various views on the identification of the Śūlikas, see Chattopadhyaya, *JENIH*, p. 222 f.

9 *Infra*, pp. 365 ff.

LATER GUPTAS OF MAGADHA

The early history of the Later Guptas¹ of Magadha,² who came into prominence due to the same circumstances, is similar in many respects to that of the Maukharis. From the Apsad inscription³ of Ādityasena (7th century) we learn that Kumāragupta, the fourth king of the dynasty, was the contemporary of the fourth Maukhari king Īśānavarman; therefore the first three Later Gupta rulers, viz. Krishṇagupta, Harshagupta and Jivitagupta I may be regarded as contemporaries of the first three Maukhari rulers. It is further confirmed by the fact that second Maukhari king Ādityavarman married Harshaguptā, probably the sister of the second Later Gupta ruler Harshagupta. However, not much is known about the political achievements of Krishṇagupta and Harshagupta. But the third king Jivitagupta I is known to have defeated his enemies whether they stood on the Himālayas or on the seashore.⁴ As Īśānavarman, who might have been a younger contemporary of Jivitagupta I, also claims to have defeated the Gaudas 'who took shelter towards the seashore', it may be argued that both

1 As the first king of this dynasty is simply said to have belonged to a good family (*sadvāṃsah*) and nowhere a connection of his family with the imperial Gupta dynasty is claimed, it is better to regard the Later Gupta family as distinct from the imperial Gupta family (NHIP, p. 208 f.; DKM, p. 132.).

2 The problem of the original home of the Later Gupta kings has been a matter of acute controversy. Fleet (*Corpus*, III, p. 14), R. D. Banerji (*JBORS*, XIV, pp. 254 ff.), Majumdar (NHIP, p. 208 f.), B. P. Sinha (DKM, pp. 130 ff.), Tripathi (*History of Kanauj*, p. 46), B. C. Sen (*SHAIIB*, pp. 263 ff.), Chattopadhyaya (*ELIN*, pp. 202 f.f) believe that the Later Gupta dynasty originated in Magadha. *Contra* D. C. Ganguli (*JBORS*, XIX, p. 402), Mookerji (*ibid.*, XV, p. 251 f.; *Harsha*, pp. 60, 67), Raychaudhuri (*JBORS*, XV, pp. 651 ff.) who believe that the Later Guptas originally belonged to Malwa. We are inclined to agree with the theory of the Magadhan origin of this dynasty, for, otherwise a plausible explanation of Jivitagupta I's exploits on the sea-shore and the Himālayas and Mahāsenagupta's victory over the Kāmarūpa king can hardly be suggested.

3 *Corpus*, III, pp. 290 ff.

4 Fleet, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

Īśānavarman and Jivitagupta I defeated the same enemy. In any case, it cannot be doubted that after the successes of Jivitagupta I, the Later Guptas became very powerful. Probably they came to regard themselves as the residuary legatee of the Gupta empire.¹ Therefore, they could hardly tolerate the assumption of the imperial title by Īśānavarman. Consequently, an appeal to arms became inevitable in which Kumāragupta, the successor of Jivitagupta I, defeated his rival Īśānavarman probably sometime after 554 A. D., and pushed the boundaries of his kingdom up to Prayāga.²

BENGAL AND KĀMARŪPA

As noted above, the imperial Guptas continued to maintain their hold over Northern Bengal, till at least 543 A. D. It came to an end probably under the pressure of the kings of Kāmarūpa. The Badgāngā rock inscription of the G. E. 234³ or 244⁴ (= 553 or 563 A. D.) refers to Śrī Bhūti-varman, an ancestor of Bhāskara-varman, the contemporary of Harsha, as performing an Aśvamedha sacrifice. Further, from the Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskaravarman⁵ we learn that the lands, mentioned in this record were originally granted by Bhūti-varman, but as the charter was lost, Bhāskara regranted them. These lands are located by some in the North Bengal, though some others locate them in the Sylhet region.⁶ At any rate, from this record it is definitely known that Bhūti-varman conquered the whole of Kāmarūpa and had a circle of feudatory rulers under him. It may be regarded, therefore, as quite likely that he exploited the opportunity offered by the decline in the power of the Guptas and conquered parts of North Bengal from them.⁷

As regards the lower Bengal, its eastern part, mentioned under the name of Samatata in the Allahabad *praiśasti* of Samudragupta.

1 NHIP, p. 209.

2 NHIP, p. 207; DKM, p. 168.

3 Bhattasali, *JARS*, VIII, pp. 138-39.

4 Sircar, *IHQ*, XXII, pp. 143 ff.

5 *EI*, XII, pp. 65 ff.; *EI*, XIX, pp. 115 ff.

6 *CA*, p. 91, fn. 3.

7 *IHQ*, XIX, p. 276.

had become an integral part of the Gupta empire by 507 A. D., as the Gunaighar record of Vainyagupta proves. But soon afterwards, a powerful independent kingdom was founded in this region, the rulers¹ of which assumed the title of *Mahārājādhirāja*, issued grants dated in their own regnal years and, at least one of them, issued gold coins. The kingdom was founded, most likely, by the *Mahārājādhirāja* Gopachandra. The Gunaighar inscription of Vainyagupta (507 A. D.) refers to a vassal-chief Mahārāja Vijayasena as the *dātaka* of the grant. Now, from the Mallasarul inscription of Gopachandra, dated in his 3rd regnal year, we learn that he also had a vassal-chief of the name of Mahārāja Vijayasena ruling over Vardhamāna *bhukti*, i. e. Burdwan in W. Bengal. If this Vijayasena is identical with the Vijayasena of the Gunaighar grant², it may be considered as highly probable that sometime after 507 A. D. Gopachandra founded an independent kingdom which included parts of western Bengal as well. He ruled for at least 18 years and was succeeded probably by Dharmāditya, for, a certain *jyeshṭhakāyastha* of the name of Nayasena figures in the grants of Gopachandra and Dharmāditya both. The next king, who may be regarded as the successor of Dharmāditya, was Samāchāradeva. He ruled at least for 14 years and issued gold coins one of which has the legend *Narendrāditya* or *Narendravinita*³ on the reverse.⁴ It is quite likely that the war of Isānavarman

1 The existence of these kings viz. Gopachandra, Dharmāditya and Samāchāradeva, is disclosed by four copper plate inscriptions found in the District of Faridpur and another from the village of Mallasarul (Burdwan District). For these records see Pargiter, *IA*, XXXIX, pp. 193 ff.; Bhattasali, *EI*, XVIII, pp. 74 ff. Banerji (*ASI*, *AR*, 1907-8, p. 256) thinks that the records are spurious. But their genuineness is no longer doubted (*JRAS*, 1912, pp. 710 ff.; *SHAIIB*, pp. 254 ff.).

2 *Contra*, *IC*, VI, pp. 106-7.

3 Only two coins, of the Archer and the Rājilā types, of this king are known. Smith (*IMC*, I, p. 120), Altekar (*Coinage*, p. 327), and R. D. Banerji (*ASI*, *AR*, 1913-14, pp. 259-60) read the reverse legend as *Narendravinita*, while Allan reads it as *Narendrāditya* (*BMC, GD*, p. 149).

4 For a different order of these kings, see *EHNI*, p. 208.

against the Gaudas whom he had forced to take shelter on the sea shore and the victory of Jivitagupta I over the enemies who stood on the sea-shore, refer to the expeditions launched by the Maukharis and the Later Guptas, separately or jointly, against the kings of Bengal discussed above who had declared their independence of the empire and had assumed the imperial title. Probably, the Maukhari and the Later Gupta rulers undertook these campaigns in the name of the Gupta emperor who was their nominal overlord, though their success increased their own power, and not of the emperor.

ORISSA

The history of Orissa after the campaigns of Samudragupta is not definitely known and the question whether or not this region formed an integral part of the Gupta empire in the fourth and the fifth centuries, cannot be answered in the present state of our knowledge.¹ In the sixth century A. D., however, the Gupta influence was definitely felt in this province, for, from the Sumaṇḍala inscription² we learn that the king Prithvivigraha was ruling over Kalinga, in the dominion of the Guptas, in the year 250 (=569 A. D.). It proves that at that time, some unknown scion of the imperial family was recognised as overlord by the Orissan chief, despite the collapse of the empire in the Gaṅgā Valley itself. However, this last remnant of the Gupta power came to an end sometime before the Gupta year 260 (=579 A. D.), for, the Soro plate of Sambhuyasas,³ dated in that year, pointed to the complete independence of Orissa from the suzerainty of the Guptas.⁴

COLLAPSE OF THE EMPIRE

From the above account of the history of the last Gupta emperors and of the various powers that arose out of the ashes of their empire, it is clear that its disintegration followed a definite pattern, not completely unknown to other periods of Indian history. When the Magadhan empire, the foundations of which were laid in the sixth

1 *CA*, p. 92.

2 *EI*, XXVIII, pp. 79 ff.

3 *EI*, XXIII, pp. 201 ff.; XXVIII, p. 83f.

4 Cf. Sircar, *Essays Presented to Sir Jadunath Sarkar*, pp. 342ff., *infra*, pp. 384ff. *contra* Rath, A. K., *IHQ*, XXXVIII, pp. 212ff.

century B. C., disintegrated after the demise of Aśoka, the southern, western and the north-western provinces were first to declare their independence ; so that, towards the close of its history the authority of the emperors became confined to Magadha and the adjoining areas. Similarly, the hold of the last Pāla emperors, whose predecessors had ruled over a far-flung empire, was confined to parts of Magadha and Bengal. The same pattern is unfolded in the disintegration of the Gupta empire. The main, though by no means exclusive factor influencing this peculiar course of events during the disintegration of empires in the Gaṅgā basin emerges primarily from the nature of its geographical position. The great racial movements—in the case of the Gupta empire the dispersal of the Hūnas—after spending much of their momentum in Iran trickled down to India through the North-West and pressurized the empires of the Gaṅgā Valley. It always tended to push the centre of the imperial power from the west to the east. The history of the Mughal empire, which in its latest phase was confined to Delhi and the adjoining areas, reveals a different pattern because it was subjected to severe pressure not only by Ahmad Shāh Abdālī and Nādir Shāh, but also by the English from the east and the Marāṭhās from the south.

The unity of the Gupta empire, which was feudo-federal in nature, was bound to depend heavily upon the personality of the emperor. The early Gupta emperors, up to Skandagupta at least, were sufficiently assertive in their dealings with the provincial governors and viceroys. When the governors of some of the provinces did not see eye to eye with him, Skandagupta replaced them by others, of whose loyalty he was more assured. But since the closing period of the reign of Kumāragupta I, the energy enthused by the Vaiṣṇava ideology of '*chakra*'-*vartitva* gradually ebbed down due to the influence of life-negating and world renouncing esoteric doctrines of the later Buddhism. It eventually, sucked the Gupta emperors dry of their martial fervour and capacity for administering their subordinates with strength and determination.

Thus, we observe that the influence of Buddhism on the Gupta royal family and the external pressure were the main factors which

weakened the hold of the emperors on the imperial provinces. Significantly enough, it was in Malwa, the eternal trouble-spot of the empire, that the first open defiance against the imperial authority was hurled, while it was in the far western province of Surāshṭra that the Maitrakas provided an example of the rise of the descendants of an imperial commander to the status of independent kings. In the Gaṅgā Valley, the heartland of the empire, however, the struggle for power was more acute and took a different shape. Here, the Maukharis of Kanauj and the Later Guptas of Magadha enhanced their prestige by becoming the champions of the imperial cause—very much like the influential feudatories of the later Mughal period who tried to make themselves powerful by keeping the emperors under their thumb. The Maukharis and the Later Guptas both vied with each other in giving help to their nominal overlord against Yaśodharman of Malwa, the Hūṇas, the Gaudas and the rebellious Himālayan tribes. But their aim was not to revitalize the empire ; they wanted to step into the shoes of the Gupta emperor. Consequently, as soon as they felt themselves powerful enough, they refused to accept even the nominal suzerainty of the emperor. This scramble for power in the heartland of the empire provided splendid opportunity to the rulers of other regions also and encouraged them to claim imperial status for themselves. Actually, in this period, the title of *Mahārājādhirāja* or *Rājādhirāja* became almost as common as the title of *Mahārāja* was in the third century A. D. In the sixth century the former title was adopted not only by the Hūṇas, but also by the kings of the lower Bengal, Yaśodharman of Mandasor, the Varmanas of Kāmarūpa, the Maukharis of Kanauj and also by the Vardhanas of Thanesar. The Later Guptas of Magadha and the Maitrakas of Valabhī did not assume it in the sixth century, but they did not lag behind in the struggle for power and fulfilled their imperialistic ambitions a century later. It is against this background that the history of the post-Gupta period in terms of the rise of the various regions of North India and the ultimate victory of Kanauj as the new centre of political power may become intelligible and explicable.

ORDER OF SUCCESSION AFTER BUDHAGUPTA

IMMEDIATE SUCCESSORS OF BUDHAGUPTA

The epigraphic evidence reveals the dates of only two Gupta rulers who flourished after the demise of Budhagupta. They are Vainyagupta and Bhānugupta. The existence of Vainyagupta was disclosed for the first time by a copper plate inscription bearing the legend Mahārāja Śrī Vai (nyagupta) dated in the current Gupta year 188 (=506-7 A. D.).¹ The fact that he had at least two Mahārājas as his subordinate officers indicates that he was a paramount ruler. It was conclusively proved by his Nālandā seal² in which the full imperial title *Mahārājādhirāja* has been given to him. Unfortunately, only a portion of this seal is available to us and the vital portion that gives the names of his ancestors and their queens is lost. But the available portion leaves no doubt that the names of his ancestors ended in 'Gupta'.

The coins of Vainyagupta³ confined only to the Archer type have been recovered from the southern Bengal only.⁴ The alloy

1 *IHQ*, VI, pp. 45 ff.; *Sel. Ins.*, pp. 331 ff.

2 *MAI*, No. 66, p. 67.

3 The coins of Vainyagupta were for a long time mistaken for those of Chandragupta III. It was Rapson who had read the name under the left arm as *Chandra* (*Num. Chron.* 1891, p. 51), but he was not sure about his reading. Allan also remarked that on *BMC, GD*, No. 588 the first latter looked like *ra* and the second one like *tya* (*BMC, GD*, p. liv). But at that time the name of Vainyagupta was not known. When the Gunaighar inscription disclosed his existence, D. C. Ganguli (*IHQ*, IX, p. 784) proposed that these coins should be attributed to this ruler. The suggestion has been accepted by R. C. Majumdar (*IHQ*, IX, p. 989 f.), Burn *Bhārata Kaumudī*, *A Study in Indology in the Honour of R. K. Mookerji*, p. 140), Sinha (*DKM*, p. 97) and Altekar (*Coinage*, pp. 281-2). Allan has also accepted the revised reading (quoted by Sinha, *DKM*, p. 97, fn. 5).

4 *Coinage*, p. 282.

in one of his coins, *BMC, GD*, No. 589, was found to be 27%.¹ From his coins we learn that his title was *Dvādaśāditya*. The circular legend on the obverse is not distinct,² though the letter *bhā* between the feet of the king is quite legible.

Bhānugupta is known from a single inscription found at Eran dated 191 G. E. (= 510 A. D.).³ It describes how a feudatory chief name Goparāja accompanied by 'the mighty king, the glorious Bhānugupta, the bravest man on the earth, equal to Pārtha', fought a famous battle at Eran. According to this record Goparāja died in this struggle and his wife became *sati*. The inscription does not disclose the parentage of Bhānugupta, the identity of his enemies or the result of the battle. But it is clear that he was a Gupta king. According to the Jayaswal⁴ and Raychaudhuri⁵ he was no other than Bālāditya, the conqueror of Mihirakula. But there is absolutely no proof in favour of this suggestion. The existence of Narasimhagupta II Bālāditya makes this theory totally untenable. However, there is nothing against the view that he was the suzerain or the Gupta emperor in 510 A. D.⁶ The absence of imperial titles in the Eran inscription does not prove that he was not an imperial suzerain. We know that Samudragupta has been given only the title of *Rājā* on his Tiger-slayer type of coins,⁷ Kumāragupta I has been given only the title of *Mahārāja* in the Mankuwar stone image inscription⁸ and Vainyagupta has been described by the same title in the Gunaighar copper plate inscription.⁹

1 *DKM*, p. 425.

2 B. N. Mukherjee has described a coin of Vainyagupta preserved in the collection of Mr. Narendra Singh Singhi of Calcutta, on the obverse of which traces of the circular legend are quite visible (*J. N. Banerjee Volume*, 1960, pp. 335-37).

3 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 88. The coins of Bhānugupta are not available.

4 *IHI*, pp. 47, 53.

5 *PIIAI*, p. 596.

6 *NHIP*, p. 190.

7 *Coinage*, p. 71.

8 *Corpus*, III, p. 45.

9 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 331.

The existence of a prince named Chandragupta III is known from the three base metal coins of the *IMC* (No. 30-32) on the obverse of which the name is certainly Chandra not Vainya, and the reverse legend is probably *Śrī Vikramah*.¹ Smith² assigned them, along with the *IMC* No. 33 and 34, which have no names of the king on the obverse, but are otherwise similar to the three coins mentioned above, to Chandragupta II as his posthumous or late provincial issues. R. C. Kar has also urged to regard these coins as the issues of Chandragupta II Vikramāditya.³ But Chandragupta II did not issue any coin in 'gold much alloyed' conforming to the *suvarṇa* standard. Therefore, it is better to assign these coins to another king of the same name who may have flourished in this declining period of the dynasty.⁴ Two similar coins having no name on the obverse weighing 142.7 and 141.4 grains respectively are in the British Museum. Allan has ascribed them along with *IMC*, No. 33 and 34 to Purugupta.⁵ Altekar has attributed them to Budhagupta.⁶ We feel that all these coins with the legend *Śrī Vikramah* on the reverse but no name on the obverse may with equal plausibility be ascribed to Chandragupta III.

EVIDENCE OF THE MANJUSRI MULA KALPA

The evidence of the *AMMK* helps us in giving a coherent picture to the data supplied by the epigraphic and numismatic sources. At one place the author of this work gives us a list of four kings who ruled one after another. They are Deva, Chandra, Dvādaśa and 'Bha' initialled. About Deva it is said that he was "surrounded on all sides by enemies, suppressed and killed". Similarly, Chandra was also "severed by weapon". Same was the fate of his son and successor Dvādaśa, who ruled for a few months only. "While these kings will be engaged in injury, wishing harm

1 *DKM*, p. 39 ; *JNSI*, VII, pp. 13 ff.

2 *IMC*, I, pp. 106-7.

3 *JNSI*, VII, pp. 13 ff.

4 *Ibid.*, XXVII, pp. 177 ff.

5 *BMC*, *GD.*, p. cii. Pl. XXI, 24, 25.

6 *Coinage*, p. 276.

to each other, there will arise at that time 'Bha', a leading king, the popular leader of the Gauḍas, but an invalid. He had a great malady and died of it'.¹

Now, of course it is true that the details as preserved in the *ĀMMK* are not wholly correct, but at the same time the basic facts provided by it cannot be lightly rejected, especially when they are in consonance with the epigraphic and numismatic data. Here, the connecting link between Budhagupta and his successors on the one hand and the kings mentioned in the list of the *ĀMMK* on the other, is provided by Dvādaśa who may be safely identified with Vainyagupta Dvādaśāditya of coins, for, no other king who assumed this title in the period discussed in this work is known. If it is so, Deva may be identified with Budhagupta, Chandra with Chandragupta III and 'Bha' initialled with Bhānugupta of the Eran inscription of 510 A. D. It is true that the author of the *ĀMMK* has given a different name to Budhagupta, but the fact that he has mentioned almost all the Gupta emperors, makes it difficult to imagine that he omitted Budhagupta, who is known to have ruled for about 20 years. May be, the author of this Buddhist work was under the impression that the name of this ruler was Buddhagupta, and so equating 'Buddha' with 'Deva' he mentioned him as Deva, rather than as Budhagupta.

In other respects the evidence furnished by the *ĀMMK* appears to be more or less correct. Its description of swift changes in the dynasty is in harmony with the fact that it was the period when the empire was disintegrating fast and the dynasty was approaching towards its end. It may also be noted that the author of this work makes Vainyagupta a son and successor of 'Chandra' or Chandragupta III. It may be correct. R. C. Majumdar² believes that in the Nālandā seal of Vainyagupta, just before the word *...guptasya* at the place where the name of the father of Vainyagupta was written the traces of a curve open to left at the bottom level of the line are visible. "That leaves no doubt", he opines, "that

1 *III*, p. 42.

2 *IHQ*, XXIV, p. 67.

the name of the father of Vainyagupta ended with a *nkāra*. And, if it is so, this ruler was most probably the son of Purugupta, for, Bhānugupta and Vishnugupta, two other rulers whose names end with *nkāra* flourished after Vainyagupta".¹ But to us it looks very improbable. Even if Vainyagupta was a child, of say five years, when Purugupta was overthrown in the struggle for throne in 455 A. D., the former must have been nearing sixty when he became emperor in 506-7 A. D. It is not impossible, but appears rather improbable. It is quite likely that Vainyagupta was, as the author of the *ĀMMK* states, the son of Chandra or Chandragupta III and what R. C. Majumdar, takes to be the traces of the medial *n* are actually the remnants of the subscript *ra* of the name Chandra ? This suggestion is not against any known fact of history and explains both the sources of information—the Nālandā seal of Vainyagupta as well as the *ĀMMK*.

Thus, Budhagupta was succeeded in turn by Chandragupta III, Vainyagupta and Bhānugupta. The relationship of Budhagupta with Chandragupta III is not known, though it is quite possible that the latter was the son of the former. Chandragupta III was followed by his son Vainyagupta who was ruling towards the close of 507 A. D. and remained in power for a few months only. The accession of Vainyagupta, therefore, may be placed in the beginning of 507 A. D. The scarcity of the coins of Chandragupta III suggests that he also ruled for a short period. So, the death of Budhagupta and the reigns of Chandragupta III and Vainyagupta appear to have taken place in the short period of two or three years i.e. in c. 505-7 A. D. It is significant because it suggests that the invasions of Hūṇas, who occupied Malwa in c. 510 A. D. under the leadership of Toramāṇa, may have started in the last years of the reign of Budhagupta himself. As regards the relationship of Vainyagupta with Bhānugupta, it may be noted that the coins of Vainyagupta have the letter *bhi* between the feet of the king. May be, Bhānugupta was a powerful relation of Vainyagupta who assumed independent status at the cost of his suzerain.

¹ *Ibid.*

SUCCESSORS OF BHANUGUPTA

The basic outline of the genealogy of the Gupta dynasty after the invasion of the Hūṇas is not so vague, though chronological details are still lacking and the solution of certain problems still needs further evidence. The sheet-anchor of the genealogy and chronology of this period is the contemporaneity of Bālāditya II and Mihirakula. Now, Mihirakula certainly ruled before 532 A. D., the date of the Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman and after 510, the date of the Fran inscription of Bhānugupta. Therefore, Bālāditya II may also be placed in this general period. According to the numismatic data the three kings who should be placed towards the close of the dynasty are Narsimhagupta Bālāditya II, Kumāragupta III Kramāditya and Vishṇugupta Chandrāditya. Numismatic evidence suggests that they ruled in the same order¹. The Nālandā seal of Vishṇugupta, in which he has been described as the son of Kumāragupta and the grandson of Narsimhagupta, proves it conclusively. It is in consonance with the evidence furnished by the *ĀMMK* also. We have seen that according to this work 'S' initialled or Skandagupta was followed in turn by Bāla and Kumāra. Kumāra is said to have been succeeded by the illustrious 'U'. We have also seen that these two kings, Bāla and Kumāra of the *ĀMMK* are actually composite personalities, the result of the confusion created by the identification of Narsimhagupta I and Kumāragupta II, the immediate successors of Skandagupta, with Narsimhagupta II and Kumāragupta III, who ruled in the sixth century². We, therefore, split them up into Bāla (a) and Kumāra (a) on the one hand, and Bāla (b) and Kumāra (b) on the other. If our suggestion is correct, it becomes significant that the *ĀMMK* has grouped three kings together—Bāla (b), Kumāra (b) and Śrīmān 'U'. Here Ukāra may be regarded as identical with Vishṇugupta (=Upendra).³ Our suggestion is supported by the additional fact that the *ĀMMK* speaks of the final disintegration

1 *Supra*, Ch. V. App. II.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Sel. Ins.*, p. 337; *PII-II*, p. 591, fn. 2.

(*visleḥa*) of the empire after Ukāra or Vishnugupta.¹ We conclude, therefore, that Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II, who was the conqueror of Mihirakula, ruled sometime in between 510 and 532 A. D., and after the short rule of Vajra, was followed by Kumāragupta III and Vishnugupta Chandrāditya, the last emperors of the dynasty.

But what happened in between 510 A. D., the last known date of Bhānugupta and the accession of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II? Was Narasimhagupta II the direct successor of Bhānugupta? Perhaps not. We believe that in between Bhānugupta and Narasimhagupta II should be placed the controversial figure of Prakāśāditya. The combined testimony of his coins, the author of the *MAHAK* and Yuan Chwang suggests this possibility very strongly.

PRAKASADITYA OF COINS

The king 'Prakāśāditya' is known only from his coins and he issued coins only in gold. His type is original and interesting.² On the obverse it shows the king riding a horse and attacking lion. The Garuḍa standard is seen to the right just above the head of the horse. This position is rather unusual. Under the horse occur the letters *u* or *vn*. On one coin the letter is *ma*.³ The obverse circular legend has not yet been read completely; but it ended with *rijitya rasudbām dirām jayati*. The reverse shows the goddess Lakshmī, her legs peculiarly folded like a pillow. The symbol, which occurs to the left of the goddess is also unusual.⁴ It is found on coins of no other ruler. The reverse legend is *Śrī Prakāśāditya*. All the coins of this ruler confirm to the *suvarṇa* standard; only one piece is known to be weighing only 136 grains (*BMC, GD*, No. 556).

The name of the issuer of these coins is missing from the obverse of all the known specimens. Therefore, his identity has become a matter of great speculation. Pannalal placed him bet-

1 *III*, p. 33; Text, verse 675.

2 *BMC, GD*, 135; *Coinage*, p. 285.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 354.

4 A coin published by J. W. Curtis (*JNSI*, XX, pp. 73-76) bears the late Gupta 'conventional' symbol rather than his 'personal' symbol.

ween Skandagupta and Budhagupta, along with Purugupta, Narasimhagupta, Kumāragupta II, Dvādaśāditya and Ghaṭotkachagupta.¹ A section of numismatists has identified him with Purugupta. Perhaps Hoernle² was the first scholar to suggest this possibility though later on he changed his view and assigned these coins to Yaśodharman.³ Smith⁴ accepted the theory of the identity of Prakāśāditya with Purugupta. Allan on page 135 of his *BMC, GD*, accepted the theory of identity of Prakāśāditya and Purugupta but elsewhere opined that it is "highly impossible that Purugupta was called both Vikramāditya and Prakāśāditya, so that we must attribute these coins to some king.....who must be placed about the end of the fifth century A. D."⁵ Jayaswal⁶ identified Prakāśāditya with Budhagupta. A. Ghosh⁷ and at one time Altekar⁸ accepted this suggestion but in his *Coinage* Altekar reverted to the older theory and accepted the identification of Prakāśāditya with Purugupta.⁹ Sinha, curiously enough, has not given any place to Prakāśāditya in the genealogy and history of the successors of Kumāragupta I as reconstructed in his *Decline of the Kingdom of Magadha*. P. L. Gupta¹⁰ has attributed the coins of Prakāśāditya to Bhānugupta and his suggestion has been supported by J. W. Curtis.¹¹

The coins of Prakāśāditya, like those of Skandagupta, Narasimhagupta I, Kumāragupta II, Budhagupta and Vainyagupta generally have about 70% of pure gold. Therefore, from the point of view of purity of metal, Prakāśāditya may be placed anywhere after Kumāragupta I (who was the last emperor whose coins usually have less than 20% of alloy) but certainly before Narasimhagupta II,

1 *Hindustan Review*, Jan. 1918, pp. 1 ff.

2 *JASB*, LVIII, 1889, pp. 93-94.

3 *JRAS.*, 1905, I, pp. 133-35.

4 *EHI*, p. 329; *IAC*, I, p. 119.

5 *BMC, GD*, Intro. pp. Lii.

6 *HI*, pp. 54-55. The discovery of the coins of Budhagupta (*Coinage*, p. 275) has rendered this theory unacceptable.

7 *HIQ*, XIX, p. 122.

8 cf. *JNSI*, X, p. 78.

9 *Coinage*, pp. 283-85.

10 *JNSI*, XII, pp. 34-35.

11 *Ibid.*, XX, pp. 73 ff.

Kumāragupta III and Vishṇugupta who issued highly adulterated coinage. Altekar believed that this relative purity indicates that Prakāśāditya flourished before Narsimhagupta, Kumāragupta II, Budhagupta and Vainyagupta.¹ But it is not correct. The coins of Prakāśāditya are certainly purer than the coins of Narasimhagupta II, Kumāragupta III and Vishṇugupta, but they are not significantly purer than the coins of Narasimhagupta I, Kumāragupta II, Budhagupta and Vainyagupta. For example, one of his coins published by Curtis has approximately 50% of pure gold 'as determined by a fairly accurate test'.² Similarly, it has been found that two of his coins in the Indian Museum, Calcutta (*IMC*, 3 and 4) have only 64.15% and 71.9% pure gold.³ On the other hand, the coins of Narasimhagupta I (*BMC, GD*, No. 560), Kumāragupta II (*BMC, GD*, No. 571), Budhagupta (*BMC, GD*, No. 550) and Vainyagupta (*BMC, GD*, No. 589) have pure gold to the tune of 71%, 79%, 77% and 73% respectively.⁴ Moreover, it should be remembered that slight difference in the gold content in the coinage of two kings cannot be regarded as a sure indication of their relative chronological position. Therefore, we assert that on the ground of the purity of metal Prakāśāditya may be placed anywhere after Kumāragupta I up to the general period of Vainyagupta (known date 507 A. D.) but certainly before Narasimhagupta II, Kumāragupta III and Vishṇugupta.

Fortunately, a numismatic peculiarity of the coins of Prakāśāditya gives a more precise indication. "The feet of the goddess on the reverse of the coins of Prakāśāditya have been folded one behind the other in such a way as to present a single horizontal pillow-like object".⁵ This peculiarity is to be seen on some coins of Skandagupta, but it is a special feature of the coins of only two kings—Prakāśāditya and Narasimhagupta II.⁶ This fact,

1 *Coinage*, p. 283.

2 *JNSI*, XX, p. 75.

3 *JNSI*, XX, p. 187.

4 *Coinage*, p. 241.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 284.

6 *Coinage*, Pl., XV, 2; *BMC, GD*, Pl. XXII, 10-12.

studied along with the indication provided by the degree of the purity of metal suggests that Prakāśāditya may be regarded as an older contemporary or immediate predecessor of Narasimhagupta II.

EVIDENCE OF THE MANJUSRI MULA KALPA

In the light of this possibility the evidence of the *ĀMMK* becomes very much suggestive. According to it 'Pra', the son of 'Bha' or Bhānugupta (known date 510 A. D.), was born in the eastern countries. On the orders of his father perhaps he was imprisoned by the king Gopa as a boy and remained in prison up to the age of 17 years. Toramāṇa released him from the prison and installed him as king at Kāshī.¹ This literary evidence may easily be co-related with the numismatic evidence and it can be reasonably assumed that Prakāśāditya of coins was no other than the rebellious 'Prakārākhyā', the son of Bhānugupta². This suggestion explains all the known facts quite satisfactorily. For example, the statement that Prakārākhyā became emperor with the help of Toramāṇa is in harmony with the fact that the coins of Prakāśāditya are 'not found in east India'. Their find-spots are Rampur, Shahjahanpur,

1 *IHI*, p. 53 ff.

2 Jayaswal has identified 'Pra' of the *ĀMMK* with Prakāśāditya of the Sarnath inscription. Sinha has accepted this suggestion. But it is inherently impossible, because Prakāśāditya was the son of Bālāditya, and not of Bhānugupta. Sinha contradicts himself when he identifies 'Pra' of the *ĀMMK* with Prakāśāditya and uses the data furnished by the author about the life of this prince but refuses to believe that he was the son of Bhakārākhyā. To solve the problem of the identification of Bhakārākhyā, he considers the possibility of his identity with Vainyagupta, Narasimhagupta and even Bhasma, the brother of Samudragupta. But the obvious possibility of his identification with Bhānugupta, suggested not only by the identity of names but also by the association with Gopa mentioned in both the sources is not even seriously considered by him. To us, it appears very obvious that 'Bha' initialled and Gopa of the *ĀMMK* are identical with Bhānugupta and Goparāja of the Eran inscription of the year 510 A. D. while 'Pra' is Prakāśāditya of coins. He cannot be identified with Prakāśāditya but to the simple reason that Prakāśāditya was the son of Bālāditya, and not of Bhānugupta.

Hardoi, Kanauj and Bharsar¹ (in Banaras District), all situated within the sphere of Hūṇa influence.²

Here it may be objected that Prakāśāditya was the title, not the name of this prince. But it is not a forceful objection, since, the author of the *ĀMMK* has very often mentioned the Gupta emperors by their *āditya* titles only. For example, he mentions Chandragupta II and Kumāragupta I as Vikrama and Mahendra. Secondly, it is to be noted that by the first half of sixth century A. D. the use of the *āditya* titles as proper names had become a well-established practice. The names of Prakāśāditya of the Sarnath inscription³ and Dharmāditya of the Faridpur grant⁴ are cases in the point. Therefore, the possibility of Prakāśāditya itself being the proper name of the king cannot be completely ruled out.

It has been argued that in "the Bharsar hoard, Skandagupta and Prakāśāditya were the latest Gupta emperors; this would show that he came soon after Skandagupta, if he was not his immediate successor".⁵ But it should not be ignored that the entire contents of the Bharsar hoard were never recovered. It consisted of 160 coins but, according to Altekar himself, we have an account of only 32 of them.⁶ So, it is quite probable that some of the missing coins belonged to those Gupta emperors who ruled after Skandagupta and before Prakāśāditya.⁷

1 *Coinage*, p. 283.

2 The coins of Prakāśāditya betray several original and unusual features. Perhaps their explanation lies in the character and nature of the issuer. We know that Prakāśākhyā, even as a child, was restless and rebellious enough to be imprisoned by the order of his father and bold enough to court the help of a foreigner in order to become the master of the empire when he was only 17 years old. Apparently this restless and rebellious nature of the prince has manifested itself in what the numismatists call the 'unusual' and 'original' features of his coins.

3 Fleet, *Corpus*, III, p. 284.

4 Sircar, D. C., *Sel. Ins.*, p. 351.

5 *Coinage*, p. 283.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 306.

7 Much should not be made of the artistic originality of the coinage of Prakāśāditya. As noticed by Allan they are

Thus, the evidence of the *ĀIMAK* connects Prakāśāditya with Bhānugupta while numismatic evidence makes him the predecessor of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II. A comparative study of the evidence of the author of the *ĀIMAK* and the Chinese traveller Yuan Chwang further explains this point. According to the author of the *ĀIMAK*, the Śūdra king (=Toramāṇa) *soon after* the installation of 'Pra' (=Prakāśāditya) fell ill and died after crowning Graha (=Mihirakula) as his own successor. If the Hūṇa occupation of Malwa took place in c. 510 A. D., the death of Toramāṇa may be placed in c. 511-12 A. D. In that year that Mihirakula inherited the legacy of overlordship over the Gupta monarch from his father. On the other hand, Yuan Chwang says that when the king Bālāditya heard the cruel persecution of the Buddhists by Mihirakula, he 'refused to pay tribute to him'. But he does not tell us when the practice of paying tribute to the Hūṇa monarch had started. Rather, the tone of his statement alludes that it was not Bālāditya who had started it. In any case, the assumption that Prakāśāditya started the practice of paying tribute to the Hūṇas and Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II, his successor, after following it for sometime stopped it, is not against what Yuan Chwang says.

NARASIMHAGUPTA BALADITYA II

When did the reign of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II commenced and what was his relationship with Prakāśāditya, one cannot definitely state. However, it is quite tempting to suggest that the former was the father of the latter. For, if it was so, it can be maintained that in the Nālandā seal of Vishnugupta, the so-called traces of the *mātrā ṛi* of the first latter of the name of the father of Narasimhagupta, which Krishna Deva takes to be the remnants of the latter 'Pṛi' of the name of Pūrugupta are really the traces of the subscript *ra* of the first letter of the name of Prakāśāditya. We are inclined to accept it as quite possible, though we would not like

inferior in comparison to the coins of Kumāragupta I and compare favourably only with the coins of Narasimhagupta (*BMC, GD*, Intro., p. lii). He must have had the coins of Narasimhagupta II in mind.

to emphasize on it.¹ In any case it appears certain that Narasimhagupta's reign terminated sometime before 532 A. D., the date of the Mandasari inscription of Yaśodharman. On the other hand, from a Gwalior inscription we learn that Mihirakula ruled for at least 15 years i.e. up to 527 A. D. Further, from the account of Yuan Chwang we gather that after the king Bālāditya, two kings viz. Vajra (probably a son and successor of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II) and a 'king of Central India' (obviously Yaśodharman) built monasteries at Nālandā. It means that before the rise of Yaśodharman which took place before 532 A. D., and after Bālāditya, Vajra also ruled for sometime. Therefore, the defeat of Mihirakula, the termination of the reign of Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II, the short rule of Vajra and the rise of Yaśodharman may be placed between 527 and 532 A. D. It is not impossible, for, the complete absence of the coins and inscriptions of Vajra suggests that he ruled only for a very short period.

THE LAST EMPEROR AND THE END OF GUPTA RULE IN MAGADHA

Altekar was intrigued by the fact that coins of Kumāragupta Kramāditya (while giving this statement, he did not differentiate between Kumāragupta II and III) are found in large numbers. But it is quite natural, for, he and his son Vishnugupta, the last emperor, in themselves ruled for a pretty long period covering about two decades. Either one of them was the *Paramadairata*²

1 A shadow of doubt in this possibility is created by the statement of the *ĀMAIK* that 'Pra' remained in prison up to the age of 17 years (*IHI*, p. 63). How, then, after a few years, he could leave a mature son to rule after him? But it is quite probable that actually 'Pra' remained in prison for 17 years and the author of the *ĀMAIK* did not understand his source of information properly. So, instead of stating that 'Pra' had to remain in prison for a period of 17 years, he wrote that he was released when he was 17 years old. If it is so, 'Pra' could have been the father of Narasimhagupta II.

2 B. P. Sinha is wrong when he says that the title *Prithvipati* has also been used for this unknown emperor (Sinha, *DKM*, p. 124).

and *Paramabhāṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja Śrī...Gupta*,¹ who issued the fifth Damodarpur copper plate inscription of the year 224 G.E. (=543 A. D.).² This inscription also refers to Rājaputra Deva Bhāṭṭāraka³ who was the governor of Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*. The dynasty ceased to exist as the imperial power somewhere in middle of the sixth century A. D., probably in 551 A. D. Raychaudhuri⁴ has drawn our attention to the following Jain tradition recorded in the *Harivaṃśa Purāṇa* of Jinasena which was composed in 783 A. D.⁵ :

- 1 Basak (*EI*, XV, p. 142 f.) and R. D. Banerji (*AIG*, p. 59) restored the name as Bhānugupta, and Dikshit (*EI*, XVII, p. 193 f.), Krishna Sastri, Y. R. Gupte (*JIII*, IV, p. 118), and Bhattasali (*EI*, XVII, p. 84) as Kumāragupta and identified him with Kumāragupta the son of Narasīngha-gupta. Dandekar, on the other hand, restored the name as 'Kumāragupta but identified him with Kumāragupta of the Later Gupta dynasty (*Hist. Gu.*, pp. 170-71). R. C. Majumdar (*History of Bengal*, p. 49) and Raychaudhuri (*PHAI*, pp. 600-1) also accept the possibility that this king belonged to the later Gupta dynasty. But D. C. Sircar regard this view as 'less probable'. He proposes (*Sel. Ins.*, p. 337, fn. 4) the identification of this king with Viṣṇu-gupta, the son of Kumāragupta. Sinha (*DKM*, p. 126) suggests the same thing, but he is wrong when he says that 'Sircar took him to be the later Gupta king, Kumāragupta', (*ibid.*, p. 125). We are inclined to accept the suggestion of Sircar and Sinha in view of the facts that the damaged portion of the plate is sufficient only for a small name like Viṣṇu and that his coins, though heavily debased, are found in very large number and indirectly prove that he ruled for a fairly long period.
- 2 Basak (*EI*, XV, p. 142 f.) has read the date as 214. K. N. Dikshit (*ibid.*, XVII, p. 193 f.) corrected it as 224 which was later on accepted by Basak also (*HNEI*, pp 92-93.)
- 3 According to R. C. Majumdar (*History of Bengal*, p. 15) Rājaputra Deva Bhāṭṭāraka does not mean the son of the emperor, but the son of the local king. D. C. Sircar (*op. cit.*) and Sinha (*DKM*, p. 127, fn. 1; p. 129, fn. 1.) regard him as the 'son of the emperor' and identify him with Deva, the king of Magadha mentioned in the *AMMK* (*III*, V, 676).
- 4 *PHAI*, p. 626 f.
- 5 Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, p. 495.

*Guptānām cha śata-drayam eka-trīṃśadcha varshāṇi kālā-
vidbbirudābritam.....*

According to this tradition the Gupta empire collapsed 231 years after the start of the Gupta era, i.e. in 550-51 A. D. It appears to be quite correct, for, the Amauna copper plate of the Mahārāja Nandana¹ dated in the Gupta era 232 (= 551 A. D.), instead of mentioning the name of the Gupta overlord, mentions Nandana's *guru* indicating thereby that at that time there was no Gupta emperor worth the name on the throne. On the other hand, we find that Śānavarman, the fourth king of the house of Mukhara, assumed the title of *Mahārājādhirāja* not far removed from 554 A. D., the date of the Haraha inscription², in which his exploits have been described. Therefore, the tradition that the Gupta empire collapsed in 550-51 A. D. may be regarded as substantially correct.³

DATE OF THE END OF GUPTA RULE IN ORISSA

However, it appears that in certain parts of the eastern India, the scions of the imperial Gupta family continued to rule for some

1 *EI*, X, pp. 29 ff.

2 *EI*, XIV, pp. 110 ff.

3 In support of the genealogy of the Gupta dynasty as reconstructed in this work, attention may be drawn to the possibilities suggested by the principle of average reign-period. It is generally admitted that the average reign-period of one generation is about 22/23 years. Of course, instances of three or four generations of a dynasty ruling for exceptionally short or long periods may be cited, but it may be readily conceded that the *average* reign-period for one generation of a dynasty which ruled for 231 years should not have been very far from 22/23 years. In other words, one would expect that Vishnugupta, the last Gupta emperor, belonged to 10th or 11th generation of the Gupta emperors. But the belief in the existence of only one Bālāditya means that Vishnugupta was the great-grandson of Purugupta, the great-great-grandson of Chandragupta I. It gives us only 8 generations for 231 years with an average of about 29 years. It is apparently too much, especially when we find that during the declining phase of the dynasty, i.e. in the post-Skandagupta period, when one would expect rather rapid changes on the throne, it gives us only 3 genera-

years more. In this connection D. C. Sircar¹ has drawn our attention to another very interesting tradition recorded in the Jain work *Tiloya-paṇṇatti* of Jadvasaba (Yati-Vṛishabha). According to the Stanza 1608 of this work the Guptas ruled for 231 years.

tato Guttā tanaṁ rajje doṇi sayāṇi igitīsā.

This tradition corroborates the one recorded by Jinaseṇa in his *Harivāṁśa Purāṇa*. But in Stanzas 1503-4 of *Tiloya-paṇṇatti* we find a different tradition in regard to the rule of the Śakas and the Guptas.

jado ya Saga-ṇarimdo rejjam raṁsassa du-saya-bāda'ā doṇi sadā paṇaṇṇā Guttāṇam.....

According to this tradition the Śakas ruled for 242 years and the Guptas for 255 years. It means that the Guptas ruled up to

tions for 84 years, with an average of 28 years ! It can be argued, though, that several rulers of the same generation may have ruled one after another ; but the law of *average* reign-period takes into account such possibilities, and it is after taking into consideration such instances that the average length of one generation is supposed to be in the vicinity of 22/23 years. Therefore, an average of 29 years for all the generations of the Gupta dynasty and an average of 28 years for its last three generations should be regarded as rather too high. On the other hand, in the reconstruction proposed above, Vainyagupta, the grandson of Budhagupta belongs to the 8th generation. After him we have placed Bhānugupta, who was succeeded in turn by Prakāśāditya, Narasimhagupta Bālāditya II, Vaira, Kumāragupta III and Vishṇugupta Chandrāditya. These 6 kings belonged to 5 generations. Unfortunately the parentage of Bhānugupta is not known. But most probably, he belonged to the generation immediately following that of Budhagupta. It gives us 11 generations in all with an average of 21 years for one generation. Even if Bhānugupta belonged to the generation of Budhagupta, which is highly unlikely, we will have 10 generation in all with an average of 23.1 years for one. Further, it may also be noted that in our reconstruction, the last 6 kings belonging to 5 generations ruled for only 41 years. This is what one would expect in the last years of the history of a dynasty. The examples of the Maurya, Śuṅga, Mughal and other dynasties strongly suggest such a possibility.

¹ Sircar, *Essays Presented to Sir Jadunath Sarkar*, p. 346 f.

574-75 A. D. It has been rightly suggested that as "the two traditions, viz. the one giving the duration of the Gupta rule as 231 years and the other speaking of 255 years in place of 231, are found in the same work and are not separated by a wide gap, it is permissible to think that the author had in view two altogether different traditions on the same subject"¹. That the tradition giving the duration of the Gupta rule as 255 years is not unauthentic is proved by the Sumaṇḍala copper plate inscription² according to which Gupta suzerainty was acknowledged in the Ganjam region of Orissa as late as the Gupta year 250=659 A. D. It is not impossible, therefore, to think that after the loss of U. P. and Bihar, some scions of the imperial Gupta family, whose names are not known, continued to maintain their hold on some parts of Bengal and Orissa, however precariously, at least till 569 A. D. and quite possibly up to 574-75 A. D. It is worth noting that the Soro plate of Sambhuyaśas³ dated in the Gupta year 260=579 A. D. is the earliest post-Gupta record pointing to the independence of Orissa from the yoke of the Guptas. It may be concluded, therefore, that the first of the two traditions relates to the extirpation of Gupta rule from the Gaṅgā Valley and the second refers to the overthrow of the Guptas from Orissa. If such was the case, the first event took place about 550 A. D. and the second about 574 A. D.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

² *EI*, XXVIII, pp. 79-85.

³ *Ibid.*, XXIII, pp. 201 ff; Vol. XXVIII, pp. 83-84.

⁴ Sircar, D. C., *op. cit.*, p. 347.

CONCLUSION

History is an intelligible account of the constant flux—the manifestation of reality through a series of changes, which like a myriad coloured glass, have innumerable contexts and patterns. Everchanging circumstances have constantly shifting contexts, acting and reacting on each other in a holistic fashion. As such it is difficult to establish a causal relation between the changing circumstance and its background. At best a historian can point out the bearing of the context—geographical, political, economic or any other—on the changing pattern of events.

Like Vāk, the bashful maiden of the R̥gvedic verse, events divulge their secrets only in the private chamber of their contexts, and elsewhere refuse stubbornly to disclose themselves. Without a proper evaluation of contexts, therefore, one may reconstruct from events merely a rope of sand—a wreath of flowers can be fashioned only with the help of a string of contexts. For example, the history of events attendant on the debut of Samudragupta as an emperor, has been hitherto regarded only as a story of struggle between him and his adversary, which is not very intelligible without any reference to motivation or meaningful antecedents and concomitants. A study of this important event of the Gupta history in its proper context, however, reveals the interesting pattern of attitudes and interests that gave shape and content to the various factions in the Gupta court at that time, and it becomes quite clear that the conflict between Samudragupta and Kācha was not merely the struggle for power between two individual princes ; it was at least partly ideological and basically a tussle between the two factions which had different social outlook and economic interests. What was to be decided was not merely the superiority of one prince over the other ; the very composite nature of the new empire was threatened and the policy of religious toleration, which characterized the subsequent history of the dynasty, was challenged. Thus, a study of the struggle for throne between Samudragupta

and Kācha in its proper historical context imparts a new complexion to the episode.

It is with this modest objective—to put the main political developments in their proper contexts—and not by way of the analysis of the determining influences, that we tried to study the colour scheme of the variegated canvas of the Gupta history, and attempted to read the meaning of relation between the central picture and its background. In such a venture, none can claim finality, but it is hoped that an intelligible explanation, based on a critically analysed evidence, has been suggested without any prejudice to other alternatives which may be offered when fresh data and new facts may come to light.



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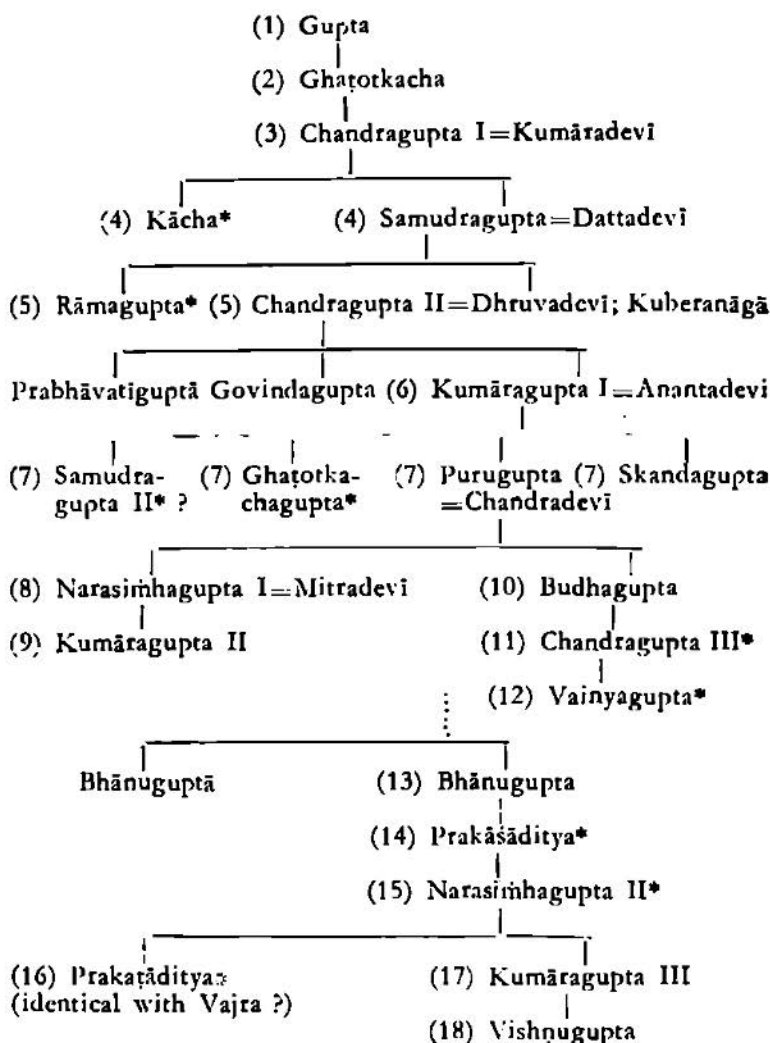
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GENEALOGY OF THE IMPERIAL GUPTAS



Note : The chart is based on the suggestions advocated in the present work. The place of Bhānugupta in the genealogy of the dynasty is altogether unknown. The relation of a king whose name is marked with an asterisk, with his immediate predecessor is not known from the royal epigraphs, but other lines of evidence make it quite reasonable to assume that the latter was the father of the former. The chronological order of a ruler is indicated by his number, but in cases where wars of succession took place and for some time two or more princes ruled simultaneously, the same number is given to all of them.

CHRONOLOGY

Note : The following chart is based on the conclusions arrived at in the present work.

A. D.

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 217 | Last known date of the Magha king Bhīmavaraman. |
| 224 | Rise of Sassanians in Iran. |
| 224-41 | Ardashir I, Sassanid. |
| 230 | Po-tiao (? Vāsudeva), the great Kushāṇa king sends embassy to China. |
| 241-72 | Shāpur I, Sassanid. |
| 248-49 | Initial year of the Traikūṭaka era. |
| c. 255-75 | Vindhyāsakti, Vākāṭaka. |
| c. 275-335 | Pravarasena I, Vākāṭaka. |
| 276-93 | Vaharān II, Sassanid. |
| 283-84 | Revolt of Hormizd against Vaharān II in Bactria. |
| 293-303 | Narseh, Sassanid. |
| c. 295-300 | Mahārāja Gupta, the founder of the Gupta dynasty. |
| c. 300 | Marriage of Vākāṭaka crown-prince Gautamīputra With the daughter of Bhavanāga. |
| c. 300-319 | Ghaṭotkacha, the second Gupta king. |
| 303-09 | Hormizd II, Sassanid. |
| 304 | Rudrasīmha II occupies the throne of the Western Kshatrapas after ousting the legitimate heir. |
| c. 305 | Chandragupta I, crown-prince of Ghaṭotkacha, marries Kumāradevī, the Lichchhavi princess. |
| c. 305-40 | Bhavanāga, Bhāraśīva ruler of Padmāvati. |
| c. 305-32 | Rudrasīmha II and his son Yaśodaman II. |
| 309-79 | Shāpur II, Sassanid. |
| 319 | Initial year of the Gupta era. |
| 319-c. 350 | Chandragupta I. |
| c. 320-80 | Vasubandhu the Elder. |
| c. 330 | Marriage of Samudragupta. |
| c. 332-33 | Birth of Rāmagupta. |

- 332-48 Blank in Kshatrapa history.
- c. 335 Birth of Chandragupta II; death of Pravarasena I; accession of Rudrasena I, Vākātaka.
- c. 335-60 Rudrasena I, Vākātaka.
- c. 340 Death of Bhavanāga.
- c. 340-70 Mayuraśarman, Kadamba.
- c. 348 Accession of Mahākshatrapa Svāmī Rudrasena III.
- c. 350 Accession of Samudragupta; Nāgasena rules at Padmāvati; invasion of Jouan-Jouan or Chionites on Bactria and the Expulsion of the Kidāra Kushāṇas from there to Gandhāra; Shāpur II moves towards his eastern frontier as the result of tribal movements.
- c. 350-53 Kācha, the rebellious brother of Samudragupta.
- 350-58 Shāpur II's wars in the east.
- c. 350-400 Creative period of Kālidāsa's life.
- c. 350-60 Conquest of North India by Samudragupta.
- 352 Accession of Śrimeghavarṇa of Ceylon.
- c. 355 Pushyavarman founds Varman dynasty in Kāmārūpa; accession of Jayavarman of Mandasor.
- 358 Shāpur II concludes treaty with the Kushāṇas and Chionites.
- 359 Siege of Amida.
- c. 360 Kalinga invasion of Samudragupta; Hemamālā, the Kalinga princess, flees for Ceylon.
- 361 Indian embassy reaches Rome; Hemamālā arrives Ceylon.
- 367-68 Kushāṇas defeat Shāpur II twice.
- c. 369 *Chirotsanna* horse-sacrifice of Samudragupta.
- c. 370 Hephthalites invade Gandhāra from Bactria; expedition of 'Chandra' against the Vālkhikas.
- 371 Vishṇuvardhana of Varik tribe.
- 375-76 Accession of Chandragupta II; revolt of Rāmāgupta in Malwa.
- 379-83 Ardashir II, Sassanid.
- c. 380 Marriage of Prabhāvatīguptā with Rudrasena II, Vākātaka.

- c. 380-405 Samudravarmān of Kāmarūpa.
- 382 Śiṃhasena, Western Kshatrapa.
- 383 Chinese general takes Kumārajīva to China; Mahārāja Trikamala of Gaya record.
- c. 385 Death of Rudrasena II, Vākāṭaka.
- c. 385-410 Regency of Prabhāvatiguptā.
- 386 Mahārāja Svamidāsa of Central India.
- 401 Sanakānika ruler of Udayagiri record.
- 404 Naravarman of Mandasor.
- c. 405-20 Balavarman of Kāmarūpa.
- 408 Alaric invades Rome.
- c. 410-40 Pravarasena II, Vākāṭaka.
- c. 410-12 Śaka war of Chandragupta II.
- c. 415 Death of Chandragupta II.
- 415-c. 454 Kumāragupta I.
- 421-38 Bahram Gor of Iran.
- 423 Viśvavarman of Mandasor.
- 426 King Bhulūṇḍa of Central India.
- 428 King of Ka-pi-li sends embassy to China.
- c. 430 Kakusthavarmān, Kadamba.
- 436 Guild of silk-weavers build a Sun-temple at Daśapura; King Rudradāsa of Central India.
- c. 440-60 Narendrasena, Vākāṭaka; Paṇḍava ruler Bharatābala.
- 444-47 Uparika Chirātadatta of Puṇḍravardhana.
- 453 . Death of Attila, the Hun ruler.
- c. 454 Death of Kumāragupta I; accession of Skandagupta and revolt of Purugupta, Ghatotkachagupta and Samudragupta II (?).
- 455 Bursting of Sudarśana lake; Paṇḍadatta appointed governor of Surāshtra.
- c. 455-57 Skandagupta's victory over the Hūṇas, Pushyamitras, rebellious brothers and other enemies.
- c. 455-70 Vasubandhu the Younger in the Gupta court.
- 457 Junagadh record of Skandagupta.
- c. 460-80 Prithviśeṇa II, Vākāṭaka.

- c. 460-85 Uchchhakalpa king Vyāghra.
- c. 467 Death of Skandagupta; king Prabhākara of Malwa.
- c. 470 Narasimhagupta Bālāditya I; rise of *Senāpati* Bhaṭārka of Valabhi.
- c. 470-500 Bhaṭārka and Dharasena of Valabhi.
- 472 Sun temple of Mandasor repaired.
- 473 Kumāragupta II.
- c. 475 Accession of Budhagupta.
- 475-517 Hastin, the Privrājaka king.
- 477 Mahārāja Lakshmaṇa of Jayapura.
- 482 Uparika Mahārāja Brahmadatta of Puṇḍravardhana.
- 484 King Phiroz of Iran killed by the Hephthalites; Mātrivishṇu, the *Viśvaypati* of Eran.
- 486 King Subandhu of Mahishmati.
- c. 490 Mahārāja Gauri of Malwa, and his overlord Āditya-vardhana.
- c. 490-540 First three kings of the Maukhari dynasty of Kanauj and Later Gupta family of Magadha.
- 493-96 Known dates of Uchchhakalpa king Jyanātha.
- c. 500-80 First three kings of the Pushyabhuti dyansty of Thanesar.
- 502 Droṇasimha, Younger son of Bhaṭārka.
- c. 505 Chandragupta III.
- 506-7 Vainyagupta.
- 510 Bhānugupta and his friend Goparāja of the Eran inscription; Hūṇas in Malwa; Prakāsāditya accepts Hūṇa overlordship.
- 510-33 Known dates of Uchchhakalpa king Śarvanātha.
- c. 511-12 Death of Toramāṇa; accession of Mihirakula.
- c. 517 Revolt of Narasimhagupta II.
- 518-28 Saṁkshobha, the Parivrājaka king.
- 520 Sung Yun in Gandhāra.
- c. 525-45 Dhruvasena I of Valabhi.
- c. 526-27 Gwalior inscription of Mihirakula.
- c. 527-32 Defeat of Mihirakula; region of Vajra (= Prakāṣāditya ?); conquest of Yaśodharman; accession of Kumāragupta III.

- 532 Mandasor inscription of Yaśodharman-Vishṇu-
vardhana.
- c. 532-50 Kumāragupta III and Vishṇugupta.
- 539 Chinese mission in Magadha.
- c. 540-60 Kumāragupta of the Later Gupta family.
- 543 Fifth Damodarpur copper plate inscription.
- 546 Paramārtha reaches China.
- 550 End of the Gupta rule in North India.
- 551 Amauna grant of Nandana.
- 553 Badaganga rock inscription refers to the *Aśramedha*
of Bhūti-varman of Kāmarūpa.
- 554 Known date of Iśānavarman Maukharī.
- c. 559-67 Guhasena of Valabhī.
- 569 Prithivīgraha of Orissa refers to Gupta sovereignty.
- 574 End of the last ^{visistages}visistages of Gupta rule in Orissa.
- 579 Soro plates of Śambhuyāśas, Orrisan chief.
- 587 Death of Varāhamihira.
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