CHAPTER ONE

INDIA IN A.D. 300

THE FIVE CENTURIES THAT followed the death of the great Maurya Emperor Aśoka witnessed great changes in the political history of India. The great Magadhan empire gradually passed away, and though it is difficult to trace clearly the successive stages in its decline, there is no doubt that it had ceased to exist before, perhaps long before, the beginning of the Christian era. There has been much speculation about the causes that led to the downfall of the empire, but it is adequately accounted for by the two potent factors that were certainly at work, viz the normal centrifugal forces in Indian politics and the invasions from the north-west. These two might not have been absolutely independent, and we might easily conceive each to have strongly reacted on the other. Nevertheless, we can not only distinguish these two factors, but clearly trace their effect upon Indian politics down to the beginning of the fourth century A.D., the period with which this volume begins.

The history of the successive foreign hordes that established political power in India has been dealt with in detail in the preceding volume. The last of them, the Kusāṇas, grew very powerful and established a vast empire, but they could not eliminate altogether either the foreign rulers that preceded them or the various small principalities that arose in North India on the ruins of the Magadhan empire. The Kusāṇa empire broke down within a century, and its gradual dissolution gave rise to new indigenous principalities or revived those it had overthrown.

The date of the Kusāṇas still remains one of the few unsolved problems of Indian chronology. In consonance with the view of the great majority of scholars it has been assumed that Kanishka ascended the throne in A.D. 78, the epoch of the Saka era, though this view cannot be regarded as anything more than a hypothesis. As a matter of fact scholarly opinion is steadily tending to push forward this date by at least half a century or more. In any case it would not be safe to presume that the Kusāṇa empire came to an end long before A.D. 200. It is not even unlikely that it continued for some time even in the third century A.D. But whatever may be the date of the end of the empire, the Kusāṇas continued as a ruling power, with circum-
scribed powers, in the north-west throughout the third century and even far down into the succeeding century.

The Sakas who set up various principalities in India before the Kushānas, and were perhaps subjugated by them for a time, survived the Kushāna empire, and continued to rule as a great power in Western India, principally in Mālava and Surāśṭra, down to the close of the fourth century A.D.

Thus when the curtain rises on the political stage of India in A.D. 300, we find the two foreign powers, the Sakas and the Kushānas, occupying nearly the whole of the western and north-western regions. The rest of Northern India is divided into a large number of independent or semi-independent principalities, ruled over by either hereditary kings or non-monarchical clans. Among the latter, which occupied the western part, the Mālava and Yaudheyas occupied a prominent position. Not much is known of the kings or kingdoms, though the Nāgas and Bhāraśivas are better known than the rest. The names of many others are known from the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudra-gupta to which further reference will be made later. Indeed the detailed picture of the contemporary political condition of India, which this remarkable epigraph unfolds before our eyes, may be regarded as equally true of the beginning of the fourth century A.D.

The political condition of the Deccan was not much unlike that of North India, but all traces of foreign rule had disappeared from that region. The fall of the Sātavāhana empire was followed by the rise of a number of petty ruling families, one of which was gradually rising into prominence. It was the Vākāṭakas whose early history has been described in the preceding volume.

The downfall of the Sātavāhana empire also led to great changes in the political condition of South India. New rulers of northern origin set up independent principalities. These were probably the governors or other local officials of the Sātavāhanas, and took advantage of the weakness of the central government to declare independence. The family of one of them, the Pallavas, rose into prominence about the same time as the Vākāṭakas and, along with the Pāṇḍyas, soon dominated nearly the whole of South Indian peninsula. For five hundred years the Tamil powers of hoary antiquity like the Cholas and the Cheras sank into political insignificance. Thus for nearly the whole of the period with which this volume deals, the Pallavas and the Pāṇḍyas occupied the stage of South Indian history and maintained a continuity in politics which the rest of India lacked.

The Vākāṭakas, too, occupied a dominant position at the beginning of the fourth century A.D. They not only ruled over a large part of the
Deccan, but were also gradually extending their power into North India. Indeed it appeared very probable that they would succeed in re-establishing the political hegemony of India. But this was not to be. That part was destined to be played by the Guptas, who occupied a very insignificant position in A.D. 300 as rulers of a petty principality in Eastern India. The achievements of this family which fill the pages of Indian history during the next two centuries thus form the starting point of this volume.
Chapter Two

THE RISE OF THE GUPTAS

I. Origin

The surname ‘Gupta’ has been immortalized in the history of India by the imperial family which held sway over a large part of Northern India in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. But Gupta, as the end of a personal name, and the name of a clan or family, can be traced to a much earlier time. Of the former the most illustrious examples are furnished by Chandra-gupta, the founder of the Maurya empire and the Buddhist monk Upa-gupta who converted Asoka. Coming down to later times we come across names of royal officials in Sātavāhana period such as Pari-gupta, Siva-gupta, and Śivaskanda-gupta. The clan-name Gupta is evidenced by the Prākrit metronymic Gotiputa which is equivalent to Sanskrit Gaupti-putra, the son of a lady belonging to Gupta clan. This metronymic occurs no less than a dozen times in records engraved on stone before the rise of the imperial Guptas. An analysis of these records shows that the Gaupti-putras belonged to different parts of North India and the Deccan and pursued different vocations. They were saints, monks, warriors, royal scribes, and goldsmiths. Some of them belonged to the royal family and one is called a Mahārāthi, a term which has been taken in another context to mean a king of the Rāshtrakutas, i.e. of the Maratha country. The chief queen of a royal family is specifically referred to as belonging to the Gupta family (Gupta-Vamsādītā).

It was held in a later age that Gupta was the surname of a Vaiśya. This can hardly be true of the early period with which we are dealing. For it appears that not only individuals with the surname, but even persons descended from Gupta clan on their mother’s side, pursued the different walks of life appropriate to all the first three varnas or social orders.

But although the existence of Gupta clans or families in different parts of India is thus established on good authority, we cannot say

1 Lüders, List. Nos. 11, 92a, 94, 96, 156, 194, 271, 442, 663, 680-82, 1088, 1105, 1125.
2 CHI, I, 590.
3 Vishnu Purana, Bk. III, Ch. 10, v. 9, Cf. CHI., III, 11, n.1.
whether there was a parent stock from which all these were derived. It is not unlikely that there was one important clan or family which ramified in course of time and spread in different parts of India, or at least that there was a fiction of such a common descent, but it cannot be proved by any satisfactory evidence.

But even if any such notion of a primitive Gupta clan prevailed in India in the third century A.D., it is difficult to filiate the imperial Gupta family to it. The early records of this family do not refer to it as ‘Gupta’, and the later appellation ‘Guptānvaya’ or ‘Guptā family’ might be solely due to the fact that the names of all the kings beginning from Chandra-gupta I ended in the word Gupta. An exact analogy is furnished by the Pālas of Bengal whose family name Pālānvaya is undoubtedly derived from the name-ending of all its members.

Indeed the case of the imperial Guptas is somewhat more difficult. In the first place, here the word Gupta is not the name-ending of the first ruler, nor a part of his name, as is the case with Gopāla, the founder of the Pāla dynasty. It is the full name. For although the name is written as Śrīgupta in the Gupta genealogy, and some take the whole of it as the name of the king, there can be hardly any doubt that ‘Śrī’ is not an integral part of the name but merely an honorific prefix, such as has been added to the names of other kings in the same genealogy.4 Gupta, as the name of a person, is not, of course, unthinkable, nor even altogether unknown. For, according to Divyācādāna, it was the name of the father of the Buddhist monk Upagupta, and we have two seals with the legend ‘Guptasya’ (of Gupta).5 But it is not also unlikely that in all these cases Gupta is a mere abbreviation of a fuller name ending in Gupta. Such practices are sanctioned by Sanskrit grammarians, and according to the Mahābhāshya, the name Satyabhāmā can be represented by either ‘Satyā’ or ‘Bhāmā’. Perhaps we have an instance of this kind in the Eran Inscription where Dattā stands for Dattadevī, the name of the chief queen of Samudra-gupta.6 The name of the founder of the Gupta family, as given in the Gupta records, viz Gupta, may therefore be a contracted form of a bigger name, represented only by its last part. But the first part need not necessarily be Śrī.

Secondly, the successor of Gupta, i.e. the second king of the family, is simply called Ghaṭotkacha, without the name-ending

4 Cf. CIU, III, 8-9, n.3.
5 JRAS, 1901, 99; 1905, 814. Cf. also INSI, IX, 137 for Gupta as the synonym of Vishṇu.
6 ŚI, 261, n.3.
Gupta. Here, also, we may hold that it is a shortened form of the full name which is represented only by the first part.  

It is thus possible, though by no means certain, that the first two kings of the imperial family, like the rest, had names ending in ‘Gupta’. It is, therefore, uncertain whether the family really belonged to any existing Gupta clan or simply got the appellation ‘Gupta’ in later times from the fact that the king who raised it to power and distinction bore the name Chandra-gupta, and, perhaps, in imitation of him, all his successors had names ending in ‘Gupta’.

II. GUPTA AND GHATOTKACHA

No record of the first two kings has yet come to light. All that we know of them is derived from the genealogical account, which is first met with in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription (No. 3) of Samudra-gupta and is repeated word for word in many later records of the family. In this account Samudra-gupta is described as ‘the great-grandson of the Mahārāja, the illustrious (Śrī) Gupta, the grandson of the Mahārāja, the illustrious (Śrī) Ghaṭotkacha, the son of the Mahārāja Gādhirāja, the illustrious (Śrī) Chandra-gupta, and the daughter’s son of Lichchhavi (Lichchhavi-dauhitra) begotten on the Mahādevi Kumārādevi’.

The first thing that strikes us in this conventional genealogical account is the deliberate contrast in the royal titles applied to the first two kings and the third. It leaves no doubt that king Chandra-gupta was far more powerful, and occupied a much higher status than his two predecessors. As we shall see later, he was the real founder of the greatness of the family.

Both Gupta and his son Ghaṭotkacha are called mahārāja. The exact significance of this title is difficult to determine. The title is used by itself in respect of great kings like Kanishka and Huvishka, and must therefore have indicated paramount sovereignty. It is, however, pointed out by Fleet that ‘in the early Gupta and subsequent periods mahārāja was habitually used simply as a technical official title, indicative no doubt of considerable rank and power, but applied only to feudatories, not to paramount sovereigns’.  

This view, though now generally held, can hardly be accepted as correct. For, although the feudatories are called mahārāja, we find on the other hand that in the inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas, the title mahārāja is applied not

7 It may be noted that a later member of this family is actually called Ghaṭotkacha-gupta.
8 The number within brackets refers to the serial number of Gupta inscriptions given at the end of this volume.
9 CII, III, 15, n.4.
only to the Vākāṭaka kings but also to Bhavanāga, the Bhāraśiva ruler, who is said to have performed ten horse-sacrifices. The Maghas and the Lichchhavi rulers of Nepal are also called mahārāja. As these kings were powerful independent sovereigns and ruled about the same time as, and even both before and after, Gupta and Ghaṭotkachā, we cannot regard the latter as feudatories simply because they are styled mahārāja. As we do not know for certain where these Gupta kings ruled, and whether there was any paramount sovereign to whom they might have owed allegiance, we must leave undecided the question whether the first two Gupta kings were really independent rulers or feudatory chieftains.

Some scholars have traced a reference to the first Gupta king in a work of the famous Chinese pilgrim I-tsing known as Kau-fa-kao-sang-chuen in which he gives an account of 56 Buddhist pilgrims who visited India in the second half of the seventh century A.D. In connection with one of them, a Korean monk named Hwui Lun alias Prajñāvarmā, I-tsing refers to a ruined Buddhist establishment called the China Temple and adds: 'Tradition says that formerly a mahārāja called Che-li-ki-to built this temple for the use of the Chinese priests... and gave them the land and the revenues of about twenty villages as an endowment. This occurred some 500 years ago.'

As the Chinese form Che-li-ki-to is an exact rendering of Śrīgupta, some scholars have identified him with the first Gupta king. But others reject this identification on chronological grounds. As the memoir of I-tsing was composed about A.D. 691-92 and the king flourished about 500 years before that time, his reign-period falls about the close of the second century A.D. On the other hand, as the accession of Chandra-gupta I is usually placed in A.D. 320, his grandfather Gupta cannot be placed so early. This argument is not, however, so convincing as it appears to be. In the first place it is not certain, as we shall see later, that Chandra-gupta ascended the throne in A.D. 320, and his accession has been actually placed by some scholars in the first decade of the fourth century A.D. Secondly, as the great French Sinologist Chavannes has pointed out, the statement of I-tsing about 500 years need not be taken too literally, and may really imply only a date between 400 and 500 years, which would justify us in placing Śrīgupta about the middle of the third century A.D., or even somewhat later. It is, therefore, possible to agree with Allan that ‘considering

10 Beal, Life of Huien Tsang, xxxvi-xxxvii; Chavannes, Mémoires sur les Religieux éminents, etc. par I-tsing, 82-83.
11 Takakusu, I-tsing, liv.
12 EHI, 279.
the lapse of time and the fact that the Chinese pilgrim gives the statement on the authority of a “tradition handed down from ancient times by old men”, there seems no reason to doubt the identification on chronological grounds.  

If we accept this identification we may also form some idea of the locality over which king Gupta ruled. It is obvious from the statement of I-tsing quoted above that the China Temple, endowed by Sri-Gupta, was situated in his own territory. Fortunately, I-tsing gives full details about the direction and distance between the Mahābodhi Temple at Gayā and the Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no Temple near which the China Temple was situated. According to calculations made by Dr. D. C. Ganguly, the China Temple must be located somewhere in the modern district of Murshidabad in Bengal. This conclusion is strikingly confirmed by the fact that in an illustrated Cambridge manuscript dated A.D. 1015, there is a picture of a stūpa with the label ‘Mrīgasthāpana stūpa of Varendra’. As Foucher has pointed out, Mrīgasthāpana is the Indian original of I-tsing’s Mi-li-kia-si-kia-po-no, and as this was in Varendra, the China Temple near it might well have been located in the district of Murshidabad which is adjacent to it, on the other side of the river Gaṅgā or Padmā. It is not also unlikely that the China Temple might have been in Varendra, in the Rajshahi district on the left bank of the river, for this would fit in equally well with the distance and directions given by I-tsing.

But although we may provisionally accept the hypothesis that Gupta, the founder of the imperial Gupta family, ruled over parts of Bengal, it is difficult to accept, without further evidence, Dr. Ganguly’s view that the early home of the imperial Guptas is to be located in Bengal and not in Magadha. For we do not know how far his kingdom extended in the west, and it might very well have included a part of Magadha, even if not the whole of it. In such

14 CGD, XV. It is interesting to note in this connection that some scholars who object to Allan’s identification on chronological grounds easily accept, without demur, Mihirakula of Hsuan Tsang to be the chief of that name who lived c. A.D. 530, although Hsuan Tsang and other Chinese writers represent him to have flourished many centuries before the seventh century A.D. Hsuan Tsang’s error is less excusable than that of I-tsing. For, to represent a king, who lived four hundred years ago, as having flourished, in round number, about five hundred years before his time, is less unusual than to speak of a man, who died hardly a century before, as having lived many centuries ago.

15 IHQ, XIV, 532. Mr. Jagannath’s attempt (IHQ, XXII, 28 ff.) to locate the Chinese Temple in Benares district is vitiated by his reliance upon an old and obso-lete translation of Beal in preference to more recent and revised translation by the same scholar and Chavannes (op. cit.).


17 IHQ, XIV, 535.
a case, we cannot decide whether Magadha was the original home of the Guptas who later extended their power to Bengal, or vice versa.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that even if the proposed identification of Gupta with the king mentioned by I-tsing be not accepted, his statement proves that a king bearing a name ending in Gupta ruled over a portion of Bengal not long before the time of Gupta. In the absence of a more positive and definite knowledge about the origin of the imperial Guptas, it would not be unreasonable to hold that they were connected in some way with the Gupta king mentioned by I-tsing and probably acquired the territories ruled over by him. In other words, we may regard it as very probable that the dominions of the founder of the imperial Gupta family comprised a part of Bengal corresponding to Murshidabad or Rajshahi district and its immediate neighbourhood. On the other hand, it has been very plausibly argued, on the basis of the provenance of the coins and early inscriptions of the Guptas that their original home was in Eastern U.P.

Reference has been made to two seals with the name Gupta. These might have belonged to the founder of the imperial Gupta family, but we cannot be sure of this. Beyond these doubtful identifications we possess no information concerning him. Of his son Ghaṭotkacha we know even less. But there is one interesting fact about him to which attention may be drawn. In an inscription of Skanda-gupta found at Rewa, the genealogy of the Gupta family begins with Ghaṭotkacha and not with his father Gupta. The same thing occurs in two Vākāṭaka records which trace the genealogy of Queen Prabhāvatiguptā, daughter of Chandra-gupta II. As none of these is an official Gupta record we cannot attach much importance to the omission of Gupta's name. It cannot be surely due to ignorance and may be

18 Some scholars hold that Śrīgupta mentioned by I-tsing was an earlier member of the imperial Gupta family, probably a grandfather of Gupta. Cf. PHAI, 443-44; QJMS, XXIV, 220; JIH, VI. Supplement, 7.

19 S. R. Goyal, A History of the Imperial Guptas, 41-52. The fallacy of his argument is established by the fact that all the known inscriptions of Aśoka have been found far away from Bihar, which must have been the homeland of the Mauryas.

20 A short account of the record was published in the Summary of Papers, PAIOC, XII, 39. It begins with Ghaṭotkacha and calls the family 'tadvamśa' (his family) (and not sadavamśa as stated in the summary).

21 The genealogy begins with 'Guptānāmādirājo' in the Riddhapur Plate (IPASB, XX, 58) and 'Guptādirājo' in the Poona plates (EI, XV, 41), followed by the name of 'Mahārāja Ghaṭotkacha'. The editors of both the plates have translated it as 'Ghaṭotkacha, who had Gupta as the first king'. The editor of the second plate, which was published earlier, remarks that the 'construction is very faulty'. The expression in the first plate leaves no doubt that what was intended to convey in both these records was that Ghaṭotkacha was the first king of the Gupta family.
due to inadvertence. But if the omission is deliberate we can only conclude that posterity regarded Ghaṭotkacha as a more important figure than his father. Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri has made an ingenious suggestion that some stories in the Mahābhārata, describing the sins and iniquities of Ghaṭotkacha, the son of the demoness Hiḍimbā by Bhīma, were omitted in the final redaction of the epic during the Gupta age out of deference to the Gupta king Ghaṭotkacha.22

The Guptas probably belonged to the Dhāraṇa-gotra. For this is given as the gotra of the daughter of Chandra-gupta II,23 and as we know that her husband had a different gotra, we may reasonably trace it to her father’s family. But Dr. Raychaudhuri’s suggested inference from this that the Guptas may have been related to Queen Dhārini, the chief consort of Agnimitra,24 does not seem to be very plausible.

III. CHANDRA-GUPTA I

As already noted above, Chandra-gupta, the son of Ghaṭotkacha, was a more powerful ruler than his two predecessors, and founded the greatness of his family. This is not only indicated by the higher title mahārājādhīrāja bestowed upon him in the official records as opposed to mahārāja given to his two predecessors, but also by a number of gold coins issued by him. From the conventional genealogy repeated in the Gupta records, we know that Chandra-gupta married Kumāradevī belonging to the Lichchhavi clan, and the issue of this marriage was Samudra-gupta. It is noteworthy that even in the long genealogical accounts of the last Gupta emperors, which embrace ten generations of kings, there is no reference to the paternal family of any of the queens, of whom eight are named, with the single exception of Kumāradevī. It is obvious, therefore, that the family attached a great deal of importance to this marriage alliance.

The precise nature of this importance is difficult to decide. V. A. Smith held that ‘Kumāradevī evidently brought to her husband as her dowry valuable influence, which in the course of a few years secured to him a paramount position in Magadha and the neighbouring countries.’25 Allan doubts the correctness of this view, and holds that the pride with which the Guptas refer to the matrimonial alliance with the Lichchhavis ‘was probably due rather to the ancient lineage of the Lichchhavis than to any material advantages gained by this alliance’.26

23 Cf. the two plates mentioned in n. 21 earlier.
24 PHAI, 443 n.
25 EHI, 279.
26 CGD, XIX.
These two opinions may be regarded as typical of the general views which attribute the emphasis laid upon the Lichchhavi connection to either political power or social prestige which Kumāradevi brought to her husband. The gold coins of Chandra-gupta, however, distinctly weigh the balance in favour of the former view. These coins have on the obverse the names and portraits of Chandra-gupta and Kumāradevi, and on the reverse the figure of goddess Lakshmi with the legend Lichchhavayah (the Lichchhavis). The grounds on which Allan contended that these were issued by Samudra-gupta to commemorate the marriage of his parents are no longer held valid, and scholars now regard them as issues of the reign of Chandra-gupta I. 27 The legend on the reverse shows that the Lichchhavis still regarded themselves as the ruling power, and the figure of Kumāradevi on the obverse was obviously intended to emphasize the fact that she ruled in her own right as the sovereign of the Lichchhavis. These gold coins may, therefore, be taken to imply either that the marriage of Chandra-gupta and Kumāradevi brought about a union of the two separate States over which they ruled, or that Chandra-gupta, by his marriage, became the ruler of the Lichchhavis, along with his queen Kumāradevi. As pointed out by Altekar, 28 the reign of William III and Mary in England furnishes an analogy of the latter. The gold coins show that the Lichchhavis maintained their individuality throughout the reign of Chandra-gupta I, and it was not till the reign of his son Samudra-gupta, who inherited the two States from his two parents, that the fiction of a separate Lichchhavi kingdom was dissolved and the two dominions were merged into one State.

Read in this context the expression Lichchhavi-dauhitra (daughter’s son of the Lichchhavi), applied to Samudra-gupta, may be regarded as merely a counterpart of the gold coins, both serving to emphasize the contribution made by the Lichchhavis to the development of the political power, or the extension of dominions, of the Guptas. Besides, it is worth remembering that in spite of their ancient lineage the Lichchhavis were regarded as Vrātya, i.e. unorthodox and impure, in the Manu-samhitā. 29 It is therefore very unlikely that the Guptas would mention, with pride, the matrimonial alliance with the Lichchhavis with a view to increasing their social prestige. We may therefore accept with a tolerable degree of certainty that Chandra-gupta added to his own dominions those of his wife, and the srove-

29 X, 20, 22.
reignty over these two States passed to his son by the right of inheritance. This satisfactorily explains the reference to the Lichchhavis in the coins and inscriptions and the assumption of the higher title of Maharājādhirāja by Chandra-gupta I.

So far we are on tolerably sure ground. But uncertainty hangs over the very important question of locating these two States. V. A. Smith’s view,30 that the Lichchhavis were ruling in Pāṭaliputra at the time of Kumārdevi’s marriage with Chandra-gupta, is not supported by any satisfactory evidence. A Nepal inscription of the eighth century A.D. records a tradition that a Lichchhavi king Supushpa ‘was born a king’ at Puspha-pura which was another name of Pāṭaliputra.31 But that record also adds that 38 kings ruled between him and Mānadeva who flourished in the fifth-sixth century A.D.32 The date of Supushpa, even assuming his existence on the authority of such a late tradition, would thus be nearly eight hundred years anterior to the time of Kumārdevi, and it would not be safe to conclude that the Lichchhavis were masters of Pāṭaliputra at the time of her marriage with Chandra-gupta.

Similarly Allan’s view that the first Gupta king ruled over Pāṭaliputra and the neighbouring territory in Magadha is palpably wrong. It is evidently based on I-tsing’s statement33 referred to above, and Allan was entirely mistaken in supposing that the temple and the lands granted by Gupta to the Chinese pilgrims lay in Magadha. As we have seen above, they must be located in that part of Bengal which is now represented by Murshidabad or Rajshahi district, and we may presume that the original Gupta kingdom comprised this territory. But beyond this we cannot say anything.

As regards the Lichchhavis we know definitely that they lived in Vaiśāli in the time of Gautama Buddha, and ruled in the Nepal valley in the early centuries of the Christian era. As Samudra-gupta’s record refers to Nepāla as a subordinate State, it may be presumed that the Lichchhavis over whom his parents ruled did not live there. We may, therefore, provisionally locate these Lichchhavis in Vaiśāli and the neighbouring territory, the only other region associated with this clan in known history.

It is possible that the Gupta and Lichchhavi kingdoms, which were ultimately amalgamated, were originally adjacent States. In that case we may presume that the original Gupta territory embraced

30 EHI, 279.
31 HNI, 268-69; IA, IX, 178.
33 CGD, XIX.
a part of Bengal and Bihar. But no definite conclusion is possible in the present state of our knowledge.

Nor is it easy to form an idea of the extent of the dominions over which Chandra-gupta I ruled. Some have tried to deduce it from the territories in possession of his son Samudra-gupta before he launched his aggressive military campaigns. Unfortunately, as will be shown in the next chapter, it is not easy to form an accurate idea of these, as many of the conquests of that great emperor cannot be exactly located. It has been held, for example, that N. Bengal formed part of the dominions of Chandra-gupta I, for it is not included among the conquests of Samudra-gupta as recorded in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription. But many of the kings, referred to in that record as having been exterminated by Samudra-gupta, are quite unknown to us, and the ruler of N. Bengal might have been one of them, as a ruler of S. Bengal almost certainly was. All that we can reasonably infer is that Chandra-gupta's dominions must have been sufficiently large to justify his assumption of the imperial title Mahārājādhirāja, and to enable his son to begin that career of conquest which pushed its limits up to the Chambal on the west and beyond the Vindhayas, along the fringe of the eastern Deccan plateau, right up to the valley of the Krishnā, if not still further south. Such extensive conquests are no doubt mainly due to an uncommon military genius, but they also generally imply possession of resources, which, in the present state of our knowledge, constitute the fairest measure of the extent of territory ruled over by Chandra-gupta I. It almost certainly included the whole of Bihar and a part of Bengal, and the inclusion of a portion of U.P. is highly probable. But any attempt to define it more precisely is beset with difficulties.

Scholars generally accept the view that Chandra-gupta I ruled over Sāketa (Avadh), Prayāga (Allahabad), and Magadhā (South Bihar), on the basis of a verse in Vāyu Purāṇa. But there are certain difficulties. In the first place the reading of the Purānic passage is far from certain. The corresponding passage in the Vishnu Purāṇa omits Sāketa and makes Guptas and Magadhās rule jointly over the rest of the territory. The text of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa either omits the word Gupta or uses it in the sense of 'protected' and not as a name of a dynasty. What is worse, even some copies of the Vāyu Purāṇa substitute 'Guhyā', 'sapta' or 'Manidhānyaka' for Gupta.

Secondly, the passage in the Vāyu Purāṇa merely says that 'kings born of the Gupta race (Gupta-vamsaśāh) will enjoy those territories'.

34 HNI, 12-13.
35 For the Purānic verse with its different readings cf. DKA, 53 and IHQ, XXI, 141.
and no individual ruler is mentioned. It has been argued that if the account were compiled later than Chandra-gupta’s reign, ‘it is hardly credible that it would have omitted to notice Samudra-gupta’s conquests’.36 This cannot be regarded as a fair conclusion, and others have argued with equal cogency that the Purānic passage reflects the political status of Gupta and his ancestors37 or of the decadent Gupta empire, say in the first half of the sixth century A.D.

Chandra-gupta I has also been represented by some to have extended his conquests beyond the Sindhu river on the strength of the Meharauli Inscription.38 But ‘King Chandra’ mentioned in this record is most probably to be identified with Chandra-gupta II, and not Chandra-gupta I.39

An ingenious attempt has been made to treat the drama Kaumudī-mahotsava as a source of history for Chandra-gupta I.40 The plot of this drama turns round the story of Chanda-sena who was adopted as son by king Sundara-varman of Magadha and also appointed his commander-in-chief. The cursed Chanda-sena, however, allies himself with the barbarian (mlechchha) Lichchhavis, lays siege to Pātaliputra, defeats and kills Sundara-varman, and becomes king of Magadha. Some scholars have identified this Chanda-sena with Chandra-gupta I and have built up a romantic history of the period. It is forgotten, however, that according to epigraphic evidence, Chandra-gupta’s father and grandfather were both kings and this hardly applies to Chanda-sena who was an adopted son of Sundara-varman. Besides, Chanda-sena is called a Kāraskara, which was a low community, and the Lichchhavis are described as mlechchhas. Neither of these descriptions agrees with what we know about them. On the whole the reconstruction of the history of the early Guptas on the basis of the drama Kaumudī-mahotsava cannot be taken very seriously. The same thing may be said of a more recent attempt41 to write the history of the Guptas from details supplied by Bhavishyottara-Purāṇa, for the passage in question, if not the whole work,

36 DKA, XII; CGD, XIX; PHAI, 445-46.
37 JIH, VI, Suppl., 7-8.
38 HNI, 13; JIH, VI, Suppl., 14 ff.
39 This point will be discussed later.
40 An extensive literature has grown on this topic, but it is unnecessary to refer to it in detail. The theory, originally propounded by K. P. Jayaswal (ABORI, XII, 50; JBORS, XIX, 113) is supported by Pires (The Maukharis, 17, 23-41) and Dasaratha Sarma (TBORS, XXI, 77; XXII, 275). But it has been sufficiently refuted by Winternitz (Alpango Comm. Vol., 359-62), K. Chattopadhyaya (IHQ, XIV, 582), Jagannath (Thomas Comm. Vol., 115), and K. RagHAVACHARYULU (JAHRS, VI, 39). The theory has been justly rejected or ignored by most other scholars (IC, IX, 100, 232).
41 JBRS, XXX, 1.
bears the stamp of a modern forgery.\textsuperscript{42}

We know so very little about Chandra-gupta I that it is idle to speculate on his early career. There is nothing, for example, to support the view that he liberated Magadha from the yoke of the hated Scythians who had been oppressing the people for three centuries.\textsuperscript{43}

To the same category belongs the view that Chandra-gupta founded the era, known as Gupta era, to commemorate his coronation. We may regard it as more or less certain that the epoch of this era is either 20 December A.D. 318 or 26 February A.D. 320, the discrepancy being due to two different methods of calculation. But in spite of the almost unanimous support of scholars\textsuperscript{44} it is difficult to accept, as an established fact, that the year marks the accession or coronation of Chandra-gupta I. The only argument in favour of it is the fact that Chandra-gupta was the first to assume the title mahärājādhirāja and was evidently a powerful king who laid the foundation of the greatness of his family. On the other hand it was his son Samudragupta who is definitely known to have established a vast empire by his conquests, and it is at least equally likely that the era was founded by him. Reference may be made in support of this view to two copper-plate grants of Samudragupta dated in years 5 and 9. It is true that some scholars regard both these grants as forgeries, but there seems to be no valid ground to regard the earlier one as such. Further, even if these were forged at a later date, which cannot be

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Htg}, XX, 345; \textit{PIHC}, VII, 119.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{AIG}, 3, 5.

\textsuperscript{44} So far as I know, in addition to the views expressed in \textit{NHIP}, VI, 131-32, Dr. D. C. Sircar is the only scholar who has ventured to suggest that Samudragupta and not Chandra-gupta I founded the Gupta era. (\textit{Bhāratavarsha}, a Bengali monthly, 1348 (b.s.) Part II, 397; 1349 (b.s.), II, 193, 282.)

Goyal (\textit{op. cit.}, 106) suggests that the era was founded by Chandra-gupta II, 'who evidently reckoned it from some earlier important event of the history of his dynasty'. It is far more likely that the regnal year of Samudragupta continued to be used in the later epigraphs of the dynasty, and this led to the adoption of an era. An analogy is afforded by the Kushāna inscriptions.

On the other hand, Goyal has very plausibly argued that as Chandra-gupta II was the \textit{Dūtaka} of the Nālandā Grant of Year 5, he was old enough to take an active part in the administration, and could not, therefore, have been less than 20 years of age at that time, i.e., in A.D. 324. This is hardly likely in view of the fact that he was alive in A.D. 413. It may, of course, be argued that Chandra-gupta's name was wrongly added as \textit{Dūtaka} when the Grant was rewritten, or that \textit{Dūtaka} might sometimes be an honorary title like the Prince of Wales and does not necessarily indicate actual participation in the administration of the empire. But in any case, it is a strong, though not conclusive, argument against simultaneously holding the two views, namely, (1) that the Nālandā copper-plate was a genuine copy of the original Grant issued in the year 5 of Samudragupta's reign, and (2) that the foundation of the Gupta era commemorates, or marks the beginning of, Samudragupta's reign.
very remote, the writer probably copied an old grant or knew enough
of Samudra-gupta to believe that he was reigning in the year 5 of
the era. In that case it is more probable that Samudra-gupta founded
the era rather than that his father died within five years of his
 coronation.

Thus in spite of various theories and speculations that have gather-
ed round his name, Chandra-gupta I remains a dim figure in history,
for, besides his ancestry and marriage we know very little about him
that can be regarded as certain. The only other thing that we can
fairly infer is that he extended his ancestral dominions to an extent
which justified him in assuming the higher title of maharājādhirāja
and there is hardly any doubt that his marriage with a Lichchhāvī
princess enabled him to do this. The kingdom over which he ruled,
by his own right as well as that of his wife, probably included the
major part of Bihar, if not the whole of it, and also a portion of
Bengal and of Uttar Pradesh. He certainly ruled in the first quarter
of the fourth century A.D., but the actual date of his accession and
the duration of his reign are equally unknown.
CHAPTER THREE

SAMUDRA-GUPTA AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE GUPTA EMPIRE

I. ACCESSION AND EARLY CAREER OF SAMUDRA-GUPTA

Chandra-gupta I was succeeded by his son Samudra-gupta. By the fortunate discovery of a single record (No. 3) we have come to know more of this great king than perhaps any other ruler in Ancient India, with the solitary exception of Asoka. This record is engraved on a stone pillar of Asoka which now stands in a conspicuous position inside the fort at Allahabad. As it contains a short Asoka edict addressed to his officials (Mahamatus) at Kausambi, it is generally supposed that the pillar was originally set up in that famous ancient city which is now represented by the village of Kosam, on the left bank of the Yamuna (Jumna), about 28 miles west by south from Allahabad. As Hsuan Tsang makes no mention of this column in his account of Prayaga (Allahabad) it is supposed that the pillar had not been removed to its present site then, and was still at Kausambi when the record of Samudra-gupta was engraved on it. On the other hand some scholars have shown good grounds for the belief that the pillar is still in the original site where it was set up by Asoka.¹ The location of the pillar at the time of Samudra-gupta is of some importance, as it is a very natural supposition that the place where such an important official record was set up must have been one of the most important cities, if not the capital, of the empire.

The record belongs to the class known as praśasti or eulogy and was composed by Harishaṇa who held no less than three important posts, including that of the foreign minister.² It is natural that such a court official would exaggerate the royal virtues, and his statements should not therefore be taken at their face value. But even making

¹. IRAS, 1935, p. 697.
². Sāndhi-vigrahika. The exact significance of the other two posts, Kumudāmatya and Dandaṇayaka, is not known and will be discussed in connection with the administrative system. Harishaṇa is also called Khaḍyaṭapāṭhaka, a word not met with elsewhere. It has been explained as 'head of the superintendents of the royal kitchen' SI, 260, n. 1).
due allowance for this, his long composition, in mixed prose and verse and in a highflown literary style, is of great value as it gives us a number of specific details concerning the career and personality of the great emperor.

Unfortunately, the upper part of the inscription, containing the first four lines, has suffered very badly, partly owing to the peeling off of the surface of the stone and partly on account of the vicious habit of tourists inscribing their own names. Probably this portion contained only a general encomium, the concluding portion of which, referring to his accomplishments as a poet, is preserved in lines 5 and 6. This probably formed the third verse, to which reference will be made later.3

The next verse describes an important historical event, the full significance of which has been generally missed on account of the defective translation by Fleet. This verse tells us that in the full royal durbar the father of Samudra-gupta scanned him with eyes laden with tears of joy and sparkling with emotion, and, with the hairs of his body standing erect through affection, embraced him, exclaiming: 'Come, come! rule this whole world.' All the while Samudra-gupta was being looked at with melancholy faces by others of equal birth, and the courtiers were heaving sighs of relief.4

The verse thus describes a memorable scene in the royal court. For some reason or other, the king had decided to nominate his successor. It raised expectations in the hearts of many members of the royal family including his sons, and caused great excitement in public mind. Before a full session of the royal court, meeting in a highly tense atmosphere, the king announced in a somewhat dramatic manner that Samudra-gupta would henceforth rule the kingdom. The

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3 For an attempt to reconstruct this part of the inscription, cf. ABRIR, Vol. XXXIX, 34-45.

4 Fleet translated the passage as follows:
‘Who, 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), was hidden by (his) father—who, exclaiming “Verily (he is) worthy”, embraced (him) with the hairs of (his) body standing erect (through pleasure) (and thus) indicative of (his) sentiments, and scanned (him) 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’ (CII, III, 11-12).

Dr. Chhabra has argued, and in my opinion very rightly, that the words read by Fleet as ārya h = ity (verily he is worthy) are really ehy = eh = ity and suggests the following translation of the passage, which seems to be preferable:

‘With hair erect, indicating affection, when father embraced him, saying: “Come, come!”, those present in the court felt exhilarated, while the rival claimants looked at him with sullen faces. Then, his eyes laden with tears and sparkling with emotion, father cast a piercing glance at him and thus spake to him: “Protect thou the whole earth”’ (IC, XIV, 146).
royal declaration naturally caused keen disappointment to the other sons and rival claimants to the throne, and they looked melancholy. According to Harishena the choice gave great satisfaction to the members of the court, but this statement of the royal official cannot be taken at its face value.

It is generally held on the strength of the above passage that Chandra-gupta I selected Samudra-gupta as his heir apparent. But the words actually used—protect thou the whole earth (pāhy-evam-urvīm-itti)—undoubtedly imply that the king abdicated the throne in favour of his son, and the vivid description of the poet is more in keeping with this view.\footnote{Dr. Chhabra strongly supports this view after an elaborate discussion of the whole question \textit{(op. cit., 149)}.} The very fact that Harishena thought fit to record the event, many years after it had taken place, invests it with an unusual degree of importance such as we can hardly attach to a formal act of nominating a successor, unless some extraordinary features marked the political condition of the time. Perhaps the fears of a disputed succession were disturbing the peace of the kingdom, or creating party factions, and the king wanted to put a stop to all speculations and intrigues by an open declaration of his choice of a successor.\footnote{It is tempting to suggest that perhaps Chandra-gupta I wanted to unite his own kingdom with that of Kumāradevī, by nominating her son, in preference to his sons by other queens, some of whom may have been senior to Samudra-gupta. This would give rise to a situation of first-rate political importance such as is hinted at in the text.} Even then the actual words put in the mouth of the king were probably hardly appropriate to the occasion.

On the whole it is fair to conclude that whether Chandra-gupta I abdicated the throne in favour of Samudra-gupta as seems very likely, or merely nominated him as his successor, he was faced by difficulties real or apprehended. Although Harishena does not clearly refer to them, we may perhaps detect some reference to political troubles at the commencement of the reign of Samudra-gupta in the verse which immediately follows. The stone here is unfortunately damaged, and a good many words having been lost, it is impossible to be sure of the interpretation. But it clearly refers to some \textit{(kechīt)} who were attracted to him by his unusual (lit. superhuman) deeds (of valour?), and to others \textit{(kechīt)} who submitted (lit. fell at his feet charanam-\textit{upāgata}) after being afflicted by his prowess \textit{(viryy-ottapta)}. The next verse, equally mutilated, refers at the beginning to wrong-doers who were defeated by him in battle and, after a gap, there is an allusion to ‘good feelings’ and ‘repentance’; but the connection between the two parts is missing. It is possible to construe these two verses as referring to an outbreak of rebellion which was subdued by Samudra-
gupta, partly by fighting and partly by conciliatory measure or diplomacy. But as no complete sense of the verses can be made out, it is better not to form any definite conclusion on the basis of a speculative interpretation. But some scholars have even proceeded further. It has been suggested, for example, that Samudra-gupta’s brothers rose in rebellion against him and put Kācha, the eldest of them, on the throne. The name of Kācha has been found only on a number of gold coins which closely resemble those of Samudra-gupta. Numismatists are almost unanimous in attributing these coins to Samudra-gupta, though the possibility is not altogether excluded that they were issued by a king who flourished just before or after him. We may or may not accept Fleet’s view that Kācha was ‘a personal and less formal name of Samudra-gupta’, or Allan’s suggestion that ‘it was the original name of the emperor who took the name Samudra-gupta in allusion to his conquests’, but it is difficult to regard Kācha as a rebellious brother of Samudra-gupta without some positive evidence. A more recent attempt to identify him with Rāma-gupta, the presumed son and successor of Samudra-gupta, will be discussed in due course.

II. CONQUESTS OF SAMUDRA-GUPTA

The Allahabad prasasti refers to the various conquests of Samudra-gupta. They appear to have been arranged in geographical rather than chronological order, and it is difficult to identify the kings and localities mentioned in this connection. It is not possible, therefore, to give a connected and comprehensive historical account of the eventful career of the great emperor and of his wonderful military campaigns as these succeeded one another. All that we can do is to narrate the campaigns in the order in which these are recorded in the prasasti.

The seventh verse, which is the first to refer to his conquests, is badly mutilated. The extant portion mentions, at the beginning, that by his unaided prowess he uprooted Achyuta, Nāgasena, and probably one or more other kings whose names are now lost on account of the surface of the stone having been peeled off. As the letter ‘g’ is still legible immediately after Nāgasena, it has been plausibly suggested that it might have been Gaṇapati-nāga, who is mentioned in a later

7 ABORI, IX, 83; IBRS, XXXIV, 24.
8 Allan, CGD, xxxii, lxxiv; IHQ, 1959, p. 333. For the contrary view, cf. INSI, XI, 33.
9 CII, III, 27.
11 Goyal has offered elaborate arguments in support of this view but they rest on very weak grounds and are too hypothetical to be accepted as sober history (op. cit., 125 ff., 191 ff.).
part of the record along with Achyuta, Nāgasena, and several other kings as having been uprooted by Samudra-gupta. In any case it is reasonable to presume, that for some reason or other, reference is made here to Samudra-gupta’s victory over two or three kings which is repeated later in a fuller account. It may be therefore presumed that he conquered them before others. Fortunately—both the kings can be located with a tolerable degree of certainty. Achyuta is known from his coins to have ruled in Ahichhatra (Ramnagar in Bareilly district), and Nāgasena is usually identified with the king of that name who is stated in the Harsha-charita to have ruled in Pādmavatī, a famous city now represented by Padam Pawaya, 25 miles north-east of Narwar, in Madhya Pradesh. If these were the first conquests of Samudra-gupta, his father’s kingdom must have comprised a large part of the U.P.

The second part of verse 7 seems to imply that while Samudra-gupta was playing (or taking his pleasure) at the city called Pushpa, his army captured one who was born in the Kota family. The Kotas probably ruled somewhere in the upper Gangetic valley, as their coins have been found in E. Panjab and Delhi. The city called Pushpa most probably refers either to Pāṭaliputra or to Kānyakubja (Kanauj) both of which had another name Pushpapura. It is difficult to construe the relation between this city and the defeat of the Kotas and the other kings mentioned in the verse. It may be that the victory over them enabled Samudra-gupta to take pleasure in the city, i.e. to capture it. But it is also not unlikely that what the poet intended to convey was that compared with the defeat of Achyuta and Nāgasena, where the king had to lead the campaign in person, the victory over the Kotas, ending with the capture of their king, was a minor affair, left entirely to the army, while the king himself was staying at ease in a distant city. In the first case Pushpapura may be identified with Kānyakubja, which was evidently included in the realm of one of the kings mentioned in the verse. In the second case we may take Pushpapura to be the capital city of Pāṭaliputra where the emperor was pursuing his normal vocation while his army was engaged in the distant expedition against the Kotas.

The next or the eighth verse contains only a general encomium of Samudra-gupta. Then follows the prose portion which begins with a general statement of his skill in a hundred battles causing a hundred wounds inflicted all over his body by various weapons of

12 Nothing is definitely known about the capital of the Gupta empire. For an interesting discussion on this point, cf. Goyal (op. cit., 210 ff.).

13 It is difficult to accept S. K. Aiyangar’s view that Achyuta, Nāgasena and the Kota king made a combined attack against Pāṭaliputra, the capital of Samudra-gupta (JIH, VI, Supplement, 27).
which ten are specifically named. The poet then gives a long list of rulers, peoples and States conquered by Samudra-gupta or voluntarily submitting to him. These are divided into four classes according to their degrees of subjection or the measures adopted by the emperor after his victory over them.

To the first division belong all the kings of the South (ṣarva-Dakshināpatha-rāja) of whom twelve are specifically named. These were captured and then liberated, presumably on condition of acknowledging his authority, if not also of paying tribute, though neither of these is actually mentioned.

The next class comprises nine rulers of Āryāvarta (N. India) who were violently exterminated. It is obvious that their kingdoms were annexed and formed integral parts of the Gupta empire. That is perhaps the reason why the names of the kings alone are given without any reference to the States over which they ruled, for these had ceased to exist, perhaps long ago.

Under the third category are mentioned five kingdoms, and nine tribal States that paid taxes, obeyed orders, and performed obeisance in person to the great emperor. It is expressly said that the five kingdoms formed the frontier (pratyanta) of the empire. Probably the same thing was true also of the other nine States.

Last of all are mentioned a few independent or semi-independent principalities lying in remote corners, beyond the States of the third category. Their exact relationship with the Gupta emperor is difficult to determine, and will be discussed later.

III. THE EMPIRE OF SAMUDRA-GUPTA

It is quite clear from the above that the Gupta empire consisted of a central zone in North India under the direct rule of the emperor, and a number of tributary States, both monarchical and non-monarchical. If the rulers mentioned in the second category could be identified or at least localised, we could have some definite idea

14 These have been enumerated, and their identifications discussed in detail in the Appendix to this chapter.

15 The actual words are grahaya-moksh-ānugraha. I have followed Fleet’s translation. Mr. Ramadas takes the three words as applicable to different States and translates the passage as ‘capturing some, showing favour to some, and liberating some who had been under subjection’ (IHQ, I, 688). The policy of capturing kings and then liberating them is fairly well known, cf. Raghuvamsā, IV, 43. It does not imply a humiliating defeat of Samudra-gupta as Dubreuil has assumed (AHD, 60-61).


17 EHI, 285-88. Otherwise we have to presume that independent States intervened between the Gupta empire and their tributary States to which no reference has been made. This seems hardly likely when even the States further beyond these tributary States have been mentioned.
of the central zone. Of these, besides Achyuta and Nāgasena discussed above, Gaṇapati-nāga probably ruled in Vidiśā (Bhilsa) or Mathurā, and Chandra-varman in the Bankura district of West Bengal. Nothing definite is known of the rest.

But although we cannot define the boundary of the central zone by means of any positive evidence, we can indirectly form a fair idea of it from the position of the tributary States which formed its frontier. Fortunately many of these, if not all, can be located with a tolerable degree of certainty. Of the five kingdoms expressly mentioned as frontier, Samatā, Kāmarūpa, and Nepāla undoubtedly denote, respectively, Lower Bengal, Assam and Nepal, and the fourth, Davāka, was probably situated in Nowgong district in Assam. Among the tribal States mentioned in the same category, the Mādrakas occupied the territory between the Ravi and the Chenab with Sialkot as their capital, and the Yaudheyas ruled over an extensive region in the eastern and south-eastern Panjāb between Bahawalpur and Bharatpur. Further south, the Mālavas ruled in south-east Rājputāna, in the region represented by Kotah and Mewar. Among the other tribes the Sanakāṇikas can be definitely located in the neighbourhood of Bhilsa, and a few others also probably belonged to the same region.

We may thus reasonably conclude that the Gupta emperor had under his direct administration an extensive area which reached the boundaries of East Bengal and Assam in the east, and the foothills of the Himalayas in the north. In the west it extended up to the Panjāb and probably included its eastern districts between Lahore and Karnal. A straight line drawn from Karnal to Bhilsa would roughly represent the western boundary. 18

In the south, an inscription found at Eran (No. 4) proves that the Saugor district in M.P. was included in Samudra-gupta’s dominions. 19 He is also said, in the Allahabad praśasti, to have subdued all the Āṭavika rājas or kings of forest countries which roughly denote the

18 According to V. A. Smith ‘the dominion under the direct government of Samudra-gupta extended from the Hooghly on the east to the Yamunā and the Chambal on the west’. This leaves out the E. Panjāb which is not known to have belonged either to the Mādrakas or to the Yaudheyas, the only two tributary States in this region, and therefore presumably formed an integral part of the kingdom of Samudra-gupta. The same thing may be said of Mathurā to the west of the Yamunā if, as suggested above, it was the capital of Gaṇapati-nāga. In the east also, the Brahmputra, rather than the Hooghly, should be regarded as the boundary, as Kāmarūpa was a tributary kingdom on the frontier. The boundary of Samatā, another frontier kingdom, must also have been far to the east of the Hooghly river.

19 This follows from the expression suo-bhoga-nagār-Airikina-pradeśa which Fleet translates as ‘in a place in Airikina in the city of his own enjoyment’. This is generally taken to refer to Samudra-gupta. Mr. D. Sharma interprets the whole inscription in a
tracts, full of hills and dense jungles, extending eastwards from Jabalpur to Chota-Nagpur.20

It is evidently through these forest kingdoms that Samudra-gupta proceeded on his digvijaya, or campaign of victory, in Dakshinā-patha. Of the twelve States conquered by him in this region, Kosala undoubtedly denotes Mahākosala, comprising the modern districts of Bilaspur, Raipur and Sambalpur. Among the others, we can definitely locate three as their capital cities Pisṭapura, Veṅgi, and Kāñchī, correspond respectively to Pithapuram (E. Godavari district), Vegi or Peddavegi (7 miles north of Ellore in the W. Godavari district), and Kāñchipuram (Chingleput district). The uncertainty of identification in respect of the other kingdoms makes it impossible to indicate precisely either the route followed by him between Mahākosala and the eastern coastal region, or the extreme limit of his advance in the south. We have to deal only with probabilities which will be discussed in the Appendix of this chapter.

Among the rulers mentioned, Vishṅugopa of Kāñchī and Hastivarman of Veṅgi are known from other sources. The former belonged to the well known Pallava dynasty, and the latter to the Śālankāyana dynasty. This external corroboration and the specific mention of the names of rulers and States leave no doubt that Samudra-gupta’s victorious military campaign which carried him as far south as Kāñchī, and perhaps even beyond it, was undoubtedly a historical fact. It was no doubt a very ambitious undertaking and its success speaks highly of the wonderful skill in organizing transport and communication. But there is no justification, on that ground, to doubt its authenticity. Dubreuil has advanced the view that Samudra-gupta only proceeded up to the Krishnā river, and having been defeated there by a confederacy of the ‘kings of the different way and makes it a record of a feudatory of Samudra-gupta (JIH, XIV, 27). His main argument, however, falls to the ground if we supply the letters ‘tūte’ at the beginning of line 13 and read the word as tātēna as Dr. D. C. Sīcār has done (SI, 281).

20 The copper-plates of the Parivṛṣjaka Mahārāja Samkshobha mention him as ruling Dabhālā together with all the country included in the eighteen forest kingdoms (s-āśṭādas-ātavi-rāju-ābhīnantaram Dabhālā-pāhalā-rājyaṁ) (Fleet, 114; EI, VIII, 284 ff.). As Dabhālā undoubtedly denotes the region round Jabalpur, and the eighteen forest kingdoms must have been contiguous to it, they may be taken to denote the tracts full of hills and jungles in the direction of Chhattisgarh (cf. EI, VIII, 288). The Āṭavika rājas conquered by Samudra-gupta may be identified with the rulers of the eighteen forest kingdoms. As reference is made to their kings, though reduced to the position of servants (parichārakākṛta), they were probably feudatory States. Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri says that the Āṭavika rāyas undoubtedly included the realm of Ālavaka (Ghazipur), but cites no evidence. If Ghazipur near Benares is meant it will be too far to the north (PHAI, 451).
eastern Deccan, abandoned the conquests he had made along the coast of Orissa and returned home.\textsuperscript{21} This is in flat contradiction to the definite statement in the Allahabad \textit{praśasti} and has no positive evidence to support it.\textsuperscript{22} A royal \textit{praśasti} may undoubtedly be guilty of exaggeration, but we ought not, without sufficient reason, ignore its clear and categorical statements, far less accept, as truth, the exact reverse of what it says.

It is significant that a clear distinction is emphasized in the attitude of the emperor towards the vanquished kings of Āryāvarta (North) and Dākshiṇātya (South). Samudra-gupta uprooted (\textit{un-mīl}) the former, i.e. annexed their dominions, while he reinstated the latter in their kingdoms. Evidently he had enough political insight to realize that it was easier to conquer distant countries than to keep a permanent hold upon them. He therefore did not attempt the almost superhuman task of uprooting these rulers or even keeping them in permanent subjection. Instead, he attached them to the empire by his generous attitude in setting them free (\textit{mokṣhānugraha}). According to the \textit{praśasti} this enhanced his power (\textit{pratāpa}) and prosperity (\textit{mahā-bhāgya}) which probably means that he realized large sums from them and made them agree to pay tribute or give military assistance in times of need. But unfortunately the poet does not clearly refer to the terms on which the rulers got back their kingdoms.

The crushing defeat inflicted upon a number of kings in Northern India and the victorious campaign in the south must have enhanced the military reputation of Samudra-gupta to such an extent that kings and peoples, both far and near, were anxious to secure his good will and cultivate his friendship. It is therefore quite likely that some of the tributary States, mentioned in the third category, submitted to him without any actual fight. For the same reason, the States of the fourth category, viz the Kushāṇa and Saka chiefs of the Panjab and Western India and the inhabitants of Ceylon and other islands also did various services to please the emperor.

\textbf{IV. THE IMPERIAL POLICY}

In order to understand clearly the imperial policy of Samudra-gupta it is necessary to define, as precisely as possible, the exact services rendered by the last two categories of States. The task is rendered somewhat difficult by the uncertain meaning of some of the words used in the \textit{praśasti}, but it is possible to get at least a general idea. In addition to the payment of tributes of all kinds

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{AHD}, 60-61.
\textsuperscript{22} See the last sentence in n. 15 above.
(sarva-kura-dāna), the States of the third category had to perform three kinds of service, viz ājñākarana, praṇāma and āgamana. The first and the last evidently mean execution of specific orders given from time to time, and personal attendance at the imperial court when required. As to the second it means salutation by bowing one’s head, but if this ordinary meaning were intended it would not probably have been mentioned as a distinct item. For such a form of common courtesy, to be shown to a suzerain, hardly deserves specific mention. Probably some special kind of salutation by the feudatories, emphasizing their acknowledgement of the suzerainty of the emperor, was introduced by the Guptas in their durbar ceremonials, and this is signified by the term praṇāma.

It is more difficult to understand the corresponding phraseology applied to the fourth category of States. The actual words are: ātmanivedana-kanyopāyanadāna-garutmadāṅka-svavishayabhu-kti-tāsana-yāchana. The first, ātmanivedana, literally means ‘offering themselves’, and evidently means personal attendance in court. The second, kanyopāyanadāna, literally means presenting (upāyana) unmarried girls and giving (dāna) them in marriage. The latter undoubtedly refers to the daughters of the rulers, or at least their near relations. It is difficult to think of their sending such girls to the suzerains for any other objects than marriage. But as upāyana is clearly distinguished from dāna we can only construe the first as presenting pretty girls of easy virtue, which was probably customary in those days.23

The rest of the compound phrase may be interpreted as ‘the soliciting of charters, bearing the Garuḍa seal, for the government of one’s own territory’.24 In other words, these rulers were confirmed in the possession of their kingdoms by charters issued by the Gupta emperors. But this meaning cannot be regarded as certain. Some have taken Garutmad-aṅka to mean the Gupta coins bearing the figure of Garuḍa. In that case the phrase would mean that the rulers asked for royal charters for two purposes, viz (1) to use the Gupta gold currency in their territories and (2) to govern their kingdoms.25 In support of this view it has been pointed out that coins with the name of Samudra-gupta and his son were actually used by the Kushāṇa chiefs of the Western Panjab. These, however, bear no figures of Garuḍa. Allan is definitely of opinion that Garutmad-aṅka does not refer to any coin, and points out that ‘with the exception of certain silver coins, there are no coins on which the

23 It is mentioned in the Periplus (sec. 49) that beautiful maidens were regularly imported into Barygaza for the harem of the king.
24 CGD, xxiv-xxv; SI, 258, n. 3.
25 JBORS, XVIII, 207; XIX, 145.
bird Garuḍa is prominent enough for the coin to be described as having the Garuḍa for its type.\(^{28}\)

But whatever we may think of this difference, the two undeniable factors, viz that these rulers had to ask for charters to enjoy their territories, and also to attend the court in person, imply a considerable authority exercised by Samudra-gupta over these far-off potentates. It is possible that the court-poet has somewhat exaggerated the position of the Gupta emperor in respect of them. It is quite likely that the Śaka and Kushāṇa chiefs living on the frontier of the Gupta empire, and even the rulers of Ceylon and other islands, thought it politic to cultivate friendship with the mighty ruler Samudra-gupta, by personal visits, matrimonial relations, and occasional presents. But it is difficult to believe that they ruled their kingdoms as fiefs of the Gupta empire conferred upon them by royal charters. On the other hand, the Kushāṇa type of coins with the name of Samudra-gupta indicate a sort of real suzerainty, and the statement of the praśasti may be substantially correct so far at least as the Kushāṇa and Śaka States are concerned.

But the case of distant Ceylon seems to stand on a different footing. Fortunately, here, too, we have evidence that the claims advanced in the praśasti were not altogether without any basis. We learn from a Chinese account\(^{27}\) that two Buddhist monks sent to Buddha-Gayā (Bodhgayā) by Meghavāṇa, king of Ceylon, complained to him on their return that the Ceylonese pilgrims to that place suffered a great deal for want of suitable residential accommodation. To remove this difficulty, Meghavāṇa sent an embassy to Samudra-gupta with rich presents in order to secure permission for building a monastery and a rest-house at Buddha-Gayā. The permission being granted, Meghavāṇa built a splendid monastery there. Hiuan Tsang, who visited it three hundred years later, describes it as follows: 'Its buildings formed six courts, with terraces and halls of three storeys, enclosed by walls between 80 and 40 ft. high; the sculpture and painting were perfect.'\(^{28}\) Hiuan Tsang also records the tradition of its origin. We are told that the Ceylonese king 'gave in tribute to the king of India all the jewels of his country in order to secure permission for building the monastery. Possibly the author of the Allahabad praśasti, like Hiuan Tsang, regarded the rich presents sent by the king of Ceylon as tribute, construed the embassy as ātmanivedana (presenting oneself), and the granting of lands at Buddha-Gayā as 'enjoyment of territories by royal charter'.

\(^{28}\) CGD, xxv, n. 1.
\(^{27}\) IA, 1900, pp. 316, 401; IA, 1902, p. 194.
\(^{28}\) HTW, II, 188.
The dwellers of other islands, which are coupled with Ceylon in the same category, probably refer to the Indian colonies in the East Indies (cf. Ch. XXXI). It is possible that they sent embassies and kept on friendly relations with the great emperor of their motherland.

We are now in a position to review in broad outline the career of the great emperor and the extent and nature of the mighty empire founded by him.

Being called to the throne by the choice of his father, Samudra-gupta was probably faced with a difficult situation. But he proved himself worthy of the confidence his father had reposed in him. By his wise policy and vigour of action he maintained peace within his dominions and consolidated his resources. He was then engaged in a series of wars and probably his whole life was spent in military campaigns. His first campaigns were presumably against the kings of Aryavarta, for without settling affairs nearer home he could not have possibly undertaken military campaigns in distant lands. He defeated no less than nine kings of Aryavarta. Whether he met them singly or in one or more combinations, we cannot say, but his victory over them all was complete, and he annexed their kingdoms to his own dominion. Although we cannot definitely locate most of these kingdoms, we may say in a general way that Samudra-gupta’s dominion, after the incorporation of these territories extended, roughly speaking, from the Ravi to the Brahmaputra river, and from the foothills of the Himalayas to the Vindhyas. Towards the south-west the boundary of his kingdom followed an imaginary line drawn from Karnal to Bhilsa. Samudra-gupta then undertook a military campaign to the Deccan. Passing through Central India and Eastern M.P. he reached the eastern coast, and then proceeded along the coastal region as far as KaNichpuram, if not further south. In course of this campaign he defeated and captured no less than twelve kings. But he adopted a different policy towards them. He not only set them at liberty but also reinstated them in their own kingdoms, on conditions which are not specified but almost certainly included acknowledgement of his suzerainty.

Samudra-gupta now occupied a position of unquestioned supremacy, and many kingdoms and tribal States on his frontier acknowledged his suzerainty. They retained autonomy in internal administration, but had to pay tribute, attend at court, and render other stipulated

29 The various theories of Jayaswal about the career and military campaigns of Samudra-gupta, like the rest of his history of the Guptas, are too conjectural and full of wild guesses to be seriously considered. For Jayaswal’s views, cf. his article in JBIOS, XIX, which was later separately published under the title History of India A.D. 150 to 350, Part II.
services. Some of them were probably conquered by force, but many perhaps voluntarily offered their submission to escape the horrors of war and a worse fate. These States, which formed almost a ring round the dominion directly administered by Samudra-gupta, were the natural frontiers of Aryanārta on the north, east, and south. Even the Saka and Kushāna chiefs, lying beyond this area on the west and south-west, realized the necessity of keeping on good terms with the mighty emperor by personal visits, matrimonial alliances, and sending presents, and some of them had to tacitly acknowledge his suzerainty by inscribing his name on the coins issued by them. The name and fame of Samudra-gupta spread beyond the limits of India. The king of Ceylon sent him an embassy with rich presents and received from him, as a favour, lands near Buddha-Gaya for building a monastery. Even the dwellers of more distant islands are included among those who were submissive and friendly to Samudra-gupta and received favours from him. These were probably the Indian colonists who had set up kingdoms in Indo-China and the East Indies and kept themselves in touch with their motherland. As the poet has justly remarked, thus did Samudra-gupta, the first soldier of his age (apratiratha), 'bind the whole world by the amplitude of the vigour of his arm', and no wonder that his fame 'pervaded the whole world' and even ascended to the abode of the lord of the gods.30

The great empire built up by Samudra-gupta testifies not only to his great skill as a general but also to wise statesmanship of a very high order. His numerous victories and the march of his army through the long coastal regions in the Deccan give clear evidence of his extraordinary military talents and organizing ability. V. A. Smith has called him the Napoleon of India and, for all we know, he perhaps fully deserves this title. The imperial policy laid down by him and followed by his successors evinces a clear grasp of the political situation in India. For nearly five hundred years after the fall of the Maurya empire, India suffered from political disintegration and the foreign invasions encouraged by it. Samudra-gupta set himself to the great task of liberating India from the yoke of foreign rule and restoring her political solidarity. But he proceeded very cautiously in both these respects. He realized that it was impossible to bring the whole of India under one rule all at once, and it was wiser to proceed step by step. So he first consolidated his direct authority over a central

30 This expression was taken by Fleet to mean that Samudra-gupta was dead when the record was composed. But according to Sanskrit poets even the fame of living men reaches the heaven, and so such an expression does not necessarily imply the death of the man. Since this was pointed out by Bühler, Fleet's view of the posthumous character of the Allahabad Inscription is no longer accepted by any (cf. IHQ, XXIV, 104).
zone and left the surrounding States in a position which would not impair their authority over internal administration but put a stop to their mutual dissensions which were eating into the vitals of the political life of India as a whole. He had shown enough of his mailed fist to these kings, both of Northern and Southern India, to keep their aggressive spirit in check. At the same time he left them enough power and freedom, and took sufficient conciliatory measures, to prevent them from rising in rebellion out of sheer desperation. Similarly he humbled the power and pride of the Sakas and the Kushānas who represented the last remnants of foreign domination in India; but he did not make an all-out effort to exterminate their rule. There is no doubt, however, that he intended a gradual tightening of his policy in both these directions. His successor followed up his policy by incorporating some of the tributary States within his dominion and giving the death-blow to the Saka power in India. Although details are lacking, we know that before a century had passed since the death of Samudra-gupta, the writs of the Gupta emperors were obeyed by their governors from the Himalaya mountains to the Narmadā river and from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian sea. The Sakas and the Kushānas had vanished from the political arena, and even the redoubtable Hūṇas found the doors of India barred against them. The imperial policy of Samudra-gupta was also carried to the central Deccan. There the grand-daughter of a Gupta emperor was ruling over the large kingdom of the Vākāṭakas. Other matrimonial relations paved the way for the extension of the empire further south, as far as Kārṇāta or the Kanarese country in South India. The Gupta empire came to an end before the completion of this process, but it redounds to the great credit of Samudra-gupta that it was he who laid down the statesman-like policy which was steadily pursued by his successors for over a century, and resulted in the growth of a mighty empire such as India had never seen since the days of the Mauryas.

V. THE PERSONALITY OF SAMUDRA-GUPTA

Samudra-gupta was not merely a consummate general and a far-sighted statesman. He had in addition remarkable qualities of head and heart to which the poet has made copious reference. Some of his statements are no doubt merely vague general praises such as occur in all royal praśastis. But others seem to refer to some special characteristics which distinguished the personality of Samudra-gupta. We are told that the great emperor was endowed with poetical skill and musical accomplishments of a high order. Reference has been

91 Dr. R. K. Mookerji has collected together 'glimpses of the many-sided genius and character of Samudra-gupta given by his coins and inscriptions' (IC, IX, 177).
made to his poetic abilities in three different places. First, we are told in verse 3 (l. 6) that he earned fame among the learned by his many poetical works. Again, in verse 8, poetry is included among his various excellences. 32 Lastly, in line 27, he is said to have ‘established his title of “king of poets” by various poetical compositions that were fit to be the means of subsistence of learned people’. 33 These repeated references leave no doubt that the emperor had composed some poetical works none of which has, alas, survived.

Fortunately we have more positive evidence of the musical accomplishments of the emperor, referred to by the poet. This is furnished by a type of gold coins in which the king is represented as seated on a high-backed couch, playing on a vīnā (lyre or lute) which lies on his knees. As will be shown later, the coins of the early Gupta emperors represent their figures in various forms and poses taken from real life. The unconventional representation of Samudra-gupta in scanty clothes playing on a vīnā must be taken to indicate his musical talents. This unexpected confirmation of the writer of the praśasti seems also to invest with some authenticity his other statements, particularly his assertion about the emperor’s poetical ability.

Undue stress need not be laid on the general virtues and accomplishments of the emperor mentioned by the poet, such as wisdom and high intellect, knowledge of scriptures, kindness, specially to the poor and the helpless, and tenderness of heart. He is said to be a shining example of philanthropy. 34 His charity is referred to in some specific forms. First, he liberally patronized the poets and thereby gave the lie direct to the general notion ‘that there was an eternal discord between good poetry and material prosperity (śrī)’. 35 Secondly, reference is made to the reinstatement of many royal families who had lost their kingdoms (l. 23) and the restoration of wealth to the kings defeated by him (l. 26). The former need not necessarily refer to the kings, such as those of the South, who were defeated and then restored to their kingdoms. It is not unlikely that after conquering a kingdom he placed on the throne a member of the old royal family who had been dispossessed of it long ago. This is a well known policy of State that has been followed by conquerors in all ages and countries. 36

32 The translation of these two verses by Dr. Raghavan (JOR, XVI, 159) brings out the point very clearly.

33 This is Fleet’s translation. But Prof. Jagannath suggests a slightly different meaning (BV, IX, 277):

34 This is how Dr. Mookerji (op. cit.) renders the words samiddhasya vigrahavato lokānumgrahasya.

35 This seems to me to be the real meaning of the first part of v. 3, but it has been translated differently by Fleet and Mookerji (op. cit.).

36 Cf. Manu, VII, 202, and the policy followed by the British in many Indian States.
Lastly, he is said to have given many hundreds of thousands of cows, evidently as gifts to Brāhmaṇas, on the occasion of religious observances.

Only one very doubtful instance of Samudra-gupta’s patronage of literary men may be referred to. According to the great rhetorician Vāmana, Chandra-prakāśa, son of Chandra-gupta, was a great patron of letters and appointed the famous Buddhist scholar Vasubandhu as his minister. Unfortunately the date of Vasubandhu is not definitely known. But if he died about the middle of the fourth century A.D., as is generally held, Chandra-prakāśa may be taken as referring to Samudra-gupta. But the whole question is beset with difficulties and uncertainties. Samudra-gupta was a great follower of the Brahmanical religion. In two of his copper-plates (Nos. 1 & 2) he is referred to as ‘parama-Bhāgavata’, showing that he was a devotee of Viṣṇu. But these copper-plates are generally regarded as spurious. The same copper-plates refer to him as having performed the Aśvamedha sacrifice ‘that had been in abeyance for a long time’. This statement is repeated in the records of the later Gupta emperors, and is strikingly confirmed by a series of gold coins which represent on one side a horse before a sacrificial post, and on the other side a lady, presumably the chief queen, with the legend Aśvamedha-parākramaḥ. While there is thus no doubt that Samudra-gupta performed the Aśvamedha sacrifice, it is somewhat curious that no reference is made to it in the Allahabad prāśasti which gives such a detailed account of his reign. It has been suggested that the sacrifice was performed after that prāśasti was composed. We should, however, remember that the first four lines of the inscription are lost, and it is not unlikely that they contained a reference to it.

The claim that Samudra-gupta restored this politico-religious ceremony after it had long been out of use cannot be regarded as strictly correct. For we have epigraphic evidence that it was performed by several other kings not long before his time. But there was perhaps some justification for the claim. In the first place, there is no record to show that the Aśvamedha sacrifice was performed in Magadha or even in Eastern India since the days of Pushyamitra who flourished about five hundred years before Samudra-gupta.

37 An extensive literature has grown on this problem which has been fully discussed in EHI, 346 ff. For other traditions associating Vasubandhu with the Guptas, cf. NHIP, VI, 156n.; Goyal, op. cit., 214-15. But some scholars hold that the reference in Vāmana’s passage is to Subandhu and not Vasubandhu, and that Chandra-gupta refers to the first Maurya king (IHO, XIX, 69).
38 Some take the expression to mean ‘elaborate’ or ‘protracted’, JNSI, XIX, Part II, 14 ff.; Essays presented to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, II, 10 ff.
39 For the actual instances, cf. JIH, XIII, 35; PHAI, 461; IC, I, 117.
Secondly, though kings of the Vākāṭaka, Bhārāśiva, and other
dynasties, specially of the Deccan and South India, performed the
ceremony, it was more of a religious nature, and could not possibly
have been preceded by conquests on a large scale or open challenges to
the monarchs of India or of an extensive part of it, which formed the
very essence of this time-honoured ceremony as described in the
Epics. Samudra-gupta was the first historical king of India, with per-
haps the single exception of Pushyamitra, who had the right to perform
it in accordance with the well-known epic traditions and the injunc-
tions of the Śruti. Whether he actually let loose a horse which roamed
at large, throwing an open challenge to the crowned heads of India,
we cannot definitely say, though the gold coins with the figure of the
sacrificial horse make it very likely. But what is important to note
is that of all these reputed performers of the sacrifice he alone was
in a position to do this. He achieved the reality which made the
symbol immaterial. But in other cases, though the symbol might have
been used, it lacked any basis of reality. Hence the proud claim that
Samudra-gupta revived the Aśvamedha sacrifice after a long time
cannot be regarded as altogether without foundation.  

The Aśvamedha sacrifice performed by Samudra-gupta was not
only a symbol of his imperial power, but also of the dominant posi-
tion regained by Brahmanical religion after it had been temporarily
eclipsed by heterodox religions like Buddhism and Jainism. The
Gupta Age marks the end of one epoch and the beginning of another
in the history of Indian religion. Henceforth Buddhism and Jainism
steadily lost ground, and a new form of Brahmanical religion grew
more and more powerful. This ultimately developed into modern
Hinduism, while Buddhism altogether lost its separate entity, and
Jainism was confined to a small community in Western India. This
revolutionary change, of which the full history will be detailed else-
where, may be said to have been heralded by the Aśvamedha sacri-
fice performed by Samudra-gupta.

It is sad to think that we know so little of the great monarch who
looms so large in Indian history. It is a strange irony of fate that
India forgot this great figure and even his very name was lost in
oblivion. But while neither tradition nor literature in India has
preserved any reminiscence of this remarkable personality, there is
a solitary reference to him in a Javanese book of fables.  

40 IC, I, 117-18. For different views regarding the nature of Aśvamedha sacrifice,
and particularly whether it implied wide conquests and an imperial status, cf. IC, I,
115-18, 311, 637 (n. 1), 704; II, 140, 789; III, 759, 763.

41 IHQ, IX, 980.
at best only a name to us, known from his coins and a few records. His case, therefore, admirably illustrates the triumph of archaeology, and the role it has played in Indian history.

The gold coins issued by Samudra-gupta are of a large number of varieties. The portraits engraved on them give us some idea of the physical appearance of the great emperor and some of his personal habits and activities. In some types he is represented as holding a bow and arrow, sometimes shooting at a tiger, or armed with an axe and a sword. In others we find him sprinkling incense on an altar or playing on a lyre. The coins which thus mark both his peaceful pursuits and martial activities bear appropriate legends. The king is also exhibited in a variety of dresses suitable to the occasion. Usually he wears a close-fitting cap, coat and trousers, ear-rings, necklace (single or double), bracelets and armlets. But when playing on the lyre he wears only a piece of waist-cloth, his bare body showing robust physique with strong muscular arms and a fully developed chest. The fine artistic coins also reflect the aesthetic spirit which heralded a new age in the history of Indian art.

On the whole these coins enable us to visualize the great and powerful king whose picture is so admirably drawn in the Allahabad praśasti. Before our eyes stands the robust figure of the king whose physical vigour was fully matched by his intellectual and cultural pursuits. We seem to see before us the creator of the Golden Age in which India attained the full stature of her growth in moral, intellectual, cultural and material spheres—an age which has been the ideal and despair of succeeding generations.

It is perhaps the brilliance of the reign of Samudra-gupta that earned for him the title Vikramāditya which was later assumed by several of his successors. They were probably inspired by the name and fame of an earlier king who, according to Indian tradition, flourished in Ujjayinī and founded the era, known as Vikrama Samvat, in 57 B.C., to commemorate his victory over the Sakas. Some scholars, however, do not believe in the existence of this king and regard the whole legend as having grown round the Gupta emperors.

It was not without some reason that the contemporaries of Samudra-gupta regarded him as an incarnation of god on earth. He is not only regarded as equal to the gods Kuvera, Varuṇa, Indra and Yama, but is also described as ‘a superman, beyond comprehension’, and ‘only a man by form in having to act according to the customs and conventions governing this life’, but otherwise a god dwell-

42 Cf. Allan, CGD, 1-23; also Ch. XXXII of this volume.
43 This may be reasonably inferred from the title Śrī Vikramaḥ found on a coin of Samudra-gupta (JNSI, V, 136), but some scholars do not accept this view.
44 This is the translation by Mr. Mookerji (op. cit.) of the phrases purushasy-
ing on the earth. This is almost an exact echo of the view expressed in the famous code of Law, Manu-Smṛiti, that the king equals the eight dikpālas and ‘is a great deity in human form’. Whatever may be the origin of this doctrine, its final triumph and great popularity was perhaps not a little due to the personality of Samudra-gupta and the succession of able rulers who followed him.

As the theory of the divine origin of kings was expounded in Manu-Smṛiti, it may be presumed to have been already accepted in the Gupta court, and we need not discern anything more than an expression of this theory in Harishena’s comparison of Samudra-gupta with the four gods. It has been suggested, however, with some degree of plausibility, that as the four gods were guardians of the four directions, the comparison of Samudra-gupta with them possibly refers not only to his conquests in all directions, but to his possession of immense riches (like Kuvera), suzerainty over the seas (Varuna being the sea-god), the spread of the fame to celestial regions (of Indra), and his extirpation of various kings (like Yama, the god of death).

VI. THE DATE OF SAMUDRA-GUPTA

The view generally held that Samudra-gupta ascended the throne about A.D. 335 rests upon the belief that the Gupta Era, beginning in A.D. 320, commemorates the accession of his father Chandra-gupta I. As already pointed out, there are no adequate grounds for this belief; on the other hand there are at least two important considerations in favour of the view that Samudra-gupta founded the Gupta Era. In the first place his wide conquests and the Áśvamedha sacrifice fully entitled him to found an era, whereas such justification is lacking in the case of his father, who probably ruled only jointly with his wife over at least a part of his dominions which still theoretically maintained a separate entity. Secondly, two copper-plate grants (Nos. 1 & 2) of Samudra-gupta have been found at Nālandā and Gayā, dated respectively in the years 5 and 9. Some scholars regard them as spurious, but this view has been challenged by others who regard both of them, or at least the earlier one, as genuine. Even those who doubt its genuineness admit the proba-

äcintyasya and loka-somaya-krity-ānuvidhāna-mātra-mānushasya. Fleet renders the latter somewhat differently.

45 Cf. Manu, VII, 8. Manu also says that the king was created out of the particles of the eight dikpālas, including the four gods mentioned above, and equals them (VII, 47).

46 PHAI, 461. It has been suggested also that the poet meant to convey that Samudra-gupta was the equal of god Kuvera in wealth, Varuna in justice, Indra in power, and was invincible like Yama (IC, IX, 178).

47 The question has been fully discussed by the author, in IC, XI, 225-30.
bility that the date of the Nālandā grant was based on a correct knowledge of facts.48

We may thus reasonably assume that the Nālandā Grant was issued by Samudra-gupta in year 5. If the Gupta Era had been founded by Chandra-gupta I, this year must be referred to that era, for once it was instituted the kings continued the reckoning in that era and did not use their own regnal years, as is proved by the mode of dating the subsequent records. It would then follow that Chandra-gupta I died before the year 5 of this era.

This conclusion cannot be accepted unless we hold that Chandra-gupta founded the era long after his accession and marriage with Kumāradevi. For we cannot believe that Samudra-gupta was a boy of less than five when he was selected by his father, out of a number of rival candidates, to rule the kingdom, and was regarded as fit for this responsible task. V. A. Smith holds the view that Chandra-gupta I ascended the throne some time before A.D. 308 when he married Kumāradevi, and established the era on the occasion of his formal consecration or coronation.49 This view has been opposed by Fleet, Allan and others who hold that ‘the era must date from the first year of his reign’.50 In any case it seems reasonable to conclude that the era was started either from the beginning of Chandra-gupta’s reign, or from the time when his power was increased by his marriage alliance with the Lichchhavis. There is no ground for the belief that the era was started long after both these incidents and at some indeterminate period during the reign of Chandra-gupta I. It is therefore extremely unlikely that if Chandra-gupta I died less than five years after he had founded the era, his son Samudra-gupta had grown old enough to be thought fit by him to shoulder the heavy responsibilities of the growing kingdom.

If, therefore, the Nālandā Grant, or at least its date, be accepted as genuine, we are bound to presume that it was Samudra-gupta, and not his father, who founded the era. In other words the accession of Samudra-gupta in 320 marks the beginning of the era.51 The only objection that has been urged against this view is that it gives a total reign of 136 years to three generations of kings from Samudra-gupta to his grandson Kumāra-gupta, who died in year

48 PHAI, 447.
49 EHI, 279-80.
50 Allan, CGD, xx. But Allan contradicts himself when he says later (xxxii): ‘If we allow a reign of twenty-five years to Chandra-gupta I from the death of his father, the date of the accession of Samudra-gupta may be placed in A.D. 335.’
51 After I had stated this view (NHIP, VI, 159), I found that it was also suggested by Dr. D. C. Sircar in a Bengali magazine Bhāratavarsha (1348 a.s., Part II, 397, 1349, Part II, 193, 262). But cf. the last para of note 44 (p. 15).
136 of that era. But though somewhat unusual it cannot be regarded as impossible, and in any case it increases the total reign-periods of the three kings only by five years.

If we disregard the evidence of the Nālandā plate on account of its spurious character and take the Gupta Era as marking the accession of Chandra-gupta I, it is reasonable to assume that Samudra-gupta ascended the throne at about A.D. 350 when he was probably about 25 years of age. An earlier age is unlikely in view of his selection by his father, and a later age is rendered less probable by the long reigns of his son and grandson. On the whole the date A.D. 350 seems to be more likely than A.D. 335, generally adopted as the year of his accession. As noted above, Samudra-gupta was a contemporary of Meghavarṇa, king of Ceylon. Unfortunately the date of the latter is not known with certainty. According to the traditional reckoning adopted in Ceylon for Buddha’s death, Meghavarṇa’s reign covers the period from A.D. 304 to 332. But some modern scholars like Geiger have adopted a modified chronology according to which Meghavarṇa ruled from A.D. 352-79. If we adopt the former view we should put the accession of Samudra-gupta in A.D. 320 and regard him as the founder of the Gupta Era. The latter view, though not incompatible with this theory, would equally support the date A.D. 350, suggested for Samudra-gupta’s accession.

The end of Samudra-gupta’s reign is also equally uncertain. For although it is definitely known that his son Chandra-gupta II was on the throne in A.D. 380, and probably commenced his reign in A.D. 376, we are not sure whether there was an intervening reign between the two. This question will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter, and for the present we can only conclude that Samudra-gupta died in or before A.D. 376.
Appendix to Chapter Three

THE IDENTIFICATION OF RULERS AND LOCALITIES MENTIONED IN THE ALLAHABAD PRAŚASTI

I. THE TWELVE RULERS OF DAKSHIṆĀPATHA

1. Mahendra of Kosala: As already pointed out above, Kosala denotes Mahākosala or Dakshīṇa-Kosala comprising the eastern and southern parts of M.P., more particularly the Raipur, Drug, Bilaspur, and Sambalpur districts, and some States of the Eastern States Agency like Raigarh, Sarangarh and Patna. Mahendra has been identified with Mahendrāditya of the Nala dynasty.

2. Vyāghrāraja of Mahākāntāra: This ruler was identified by Bh. with Vyāghra, father of Jayanātha of the Uchchakalpa dynasty whose records, dated 174 and 177, have been found in Nagod State and Jabalpur district. If the years be referred to the Kalachuri Era, we get the date a.d. 423-26 for Jayanātha, and his father may well have been a contemporary of Samudra-gupta. Bh. further identifies him with Vyāghrādeva mentioned as a feudatory of the Vākṣṭaka king Prithivīśeṇa in a stone inscription found at Nachne-ki-tala in Ajaygadh State. If this Vākṣṭaka king is taken to be Prithivīśeṇa I, the identification is possible. But some scholars identify him with Prithivīśeṇa II who flourished more than a century later. Apart

52 The identification has been discussed by many scholars of whom a few are noted below together with the abbreviations by which they are referred to in this Appendix and its footnotes.

(1) Fleet—CII, III, (1-17, footnotes); JRAS, 1898, p. 369.
(2) Bhandarkar—IHQ, I, 250 (Bh).
(4) Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri—PHAI, 449 (IIC).
(5) V. A. Smith—JRAS, 1897, p. 27 (Smith).
(8) G. Sathanathai—Studies in the Ancient History of Toṇḍaimandal (R.S.).
(9) Allan—CGD, xxi ff.
(10) K. N. Dikshit—PAIOC, I, CXXIV.
(13) S. R. Goyal—History of the Imperial Guptas, 128-35, 139-68, 196-200.

53 BDCRI, VIII, 1; EI, X, 26.
54 IHQ, 1961, p. 23.
55 GH, III, 233; JRAS (1914), 817.
from this, the main objection against the proposed identification is the fact that this Vyāghradeva ruled in a region which cannot be regarded as a part of Dakshināpatha where Vyāghrarājā ruled. It has accordingly been suggested that Vyāghrarājā ruled in Jeypore forest in Orissa. This region is referred to as Mahāvana in an old inscription, and Mahāvana can be regarded as a synonym of Mahākāntāra over which Vyāghrarājā ruled. Jayaswal, however, identifies Mahākāntāra with Kanker and Bastar. Ramadas locates Mahākāntāra in the Agency tract of Ganjam to the west of Mahendra hill.

If the identification of Vyāghrarājā with the Vākāṭaka feudatory Vyāghradeva be maintained, we must hold that Samudra-gupta came into conflict with the Vākāṭakas, of which there is no other evidence, and conquered their territories in Central India which henceforth formed part of the Gupta empire.

3. Maṇṭarājā of Kurala (Kaurālaka): Fleet suggested the emendation Kairālaka for Kaurālaka which would give the name of the kingdom as Kerala, the well known region of South India. This identification, however, is improbable, as Kerala is too far south. Bh. places Kurala in Soupur territory in M.P. on the authority of a passage in the Pavaṇadūta which locates Kurala near Yāyāti-nagara on the Mahānādī (near Soupur). R.S. identifies Kurala with Cherla in Nugur tāluk, E. Godavari district. On the other hand Kielhorn takes the word Kurala as it is, and identifies it with the well-known Kolleru lake between the Godāvarī and the Krishnā. But this has been rightly objected to on the ground that in that case Kurala would be situated in Veṅgī which is separately mentioned. Dr. Barnett proposes to identify Kurala with one of the villages called Korāḍa in South India. Ramadas locates Kurala in the plain country to the north-east of the Mahendra hill.

4. Mahendra-giri of Pishṭapura: Pishṭapura can be definitely identified with modern Pithapuram in the E. Godavari district. As regards the name of the king, Fleet took it to be simply Mahendra and regarded ‘giri’ as a part of the following word Kauṭṭūraka. But this view is no longer held.

5. Svāmidatta of Koṭṭūra: Fleet’s identification of Koṭṭūra with Kottur-Pollachi in the Coimbatore district can no longer be upheld. His other identification with Kailāsa-Koṭṭa is less objectionable. M. Jouveau-Dubreuil’s identification with Koṭṭhoor, about 4 miles south-west of Tekkali in the Ganjam district, is more probable. But H.C. has pointed out that there are other places called Koṭṭura,

58 AHD, 58-60.
notably one at the foot of the hills in the Vizagapatam district. R.S. identifies it with Koṭṭūru near Tuní in the E. Godavari district, and Saletore with Koṭṭaṭa in the Kudligi tāluk, Bellary district. Ramadas joins Mahendragiri with Koṭṭūraka and takes the expression to mean Koṭṭūra near Mahendragiri or the well-known Mahendra hills. He points out that there are about a dozen villages called Koṭṭūra in the Ganjam district. He further combines 4 and 5 together and interprets it as Śvāmidatta who had his seat at Pīshṭapura and at Koṭṭūra near Mahendragiri’. This, originally suggested by Fleet, is hardly likely.

6. Damana of Eranḍapalla: Fleet’s identification of Eranḍapalla with Erandol in the Khandesh district can no longer be upheld. There can be hardly any doubt that it is identical with Eranḍapali, mentioned in the Siddhāntam plates of Devendravarman, king of Kaliṅga, which Dubreuil locates near Chicacole. But Ramadas suggests its identification with Yenḍipalli in Vizagapatam or Enḍapilli in Ellore tāluk, and R. S. with Erranguntapalle in the Chintalapudi tāluk of the W. Godavarī district.

7. Vishṅugopa of Kāṇchī: The king must have belonged to the well-known Pallava family whose capital Kāṇchī is now represented by Kāṇchipuram in Chingleput district.

8. Nilārāja of Avamukta: Jayaswal infers from his reading of the Hāthigumpha inscription that ‘the Āva country or people had their capital at Pithunda near the Godavari’ which is identical with Ptolemy’s Pītunda or Pitunda (metropolis). H. C. has drawn attention to the Avimukta-kshetra, on the bank of the Gautami, i.e. Godāvari river mentioned in the Brahma Purāṇa.

9. Hastivarman of Veṅgi: As noted above, the king belonged to the Śālaṅkāyana dynasty. Veṅgi was the name of the capital as well as of the country between the Kṛṣṇa and the Godāvari rivers extending up to the Eastern Ghats on the west. The capital city is now represented by Vegi or Pedda-Vegi, 7 miles north of Ellore.

10. Ugrasena of Pālakka: Smith identified Pālakka with Pālghāṭ or Pālakkādu in the south of the Malabar district. But it has most probably to be identified with a provincial capital of that name (Pālakkāda), mentioned in the Pallava records. The town was probably in the Nellore district. According to Ramadas the village of Pākkai in this district marks the site of ancient Pālakka.

11. Kuvera of Devarāśṭra: The old identification of Devarāśṭra with Mahāraśṭra must be given up. It is probably the same as Devarāśṭra mentioned in a copper-plate grant found in the Vizaga-
patam district, and corresponds to the region round Yellamanchili in that district. It has been identified with Kaliyangarā by S. K.

12. Dhanañjaya of Kusṭhalapura: This place-name was emended by Smith into Kuṣṭhalapura which denotes the holy city of Dvārakā. This view must be given up. Dr. Barnett suggests the identification of Kusṭhalapura with Kuttalur, near Polur in North Arcot.61 R. S. thinks that it is the same as Kuṣāvatī or Kuṣṭhalī corresponding to Ramnagar on the southern bank of the Narmadā, near Manḍī in M.P.62

It will be seen from the above discussion that the identification of the kingdoms, with the exception of Nos. 1, 4, 7 and 9, is very doubtful, and that of Nos. 2, 3, 5, 8 and 12 is extremely uncertain. So far, therefore, as we definitely know, Samudra-gupta proceeded along the eastern coast up to Kāñṭhipuram and evidently returned more or less by the same route. There are no grounds to suppose that he turned west and returned through Mahārāṣṭra and Khandesh. This view was principally based upon the old identifications of Nos. 6 and 11 which are no longer accepted by many scholars. The attempt of R. S. to revive it by his proposed identifications of Nos. 11 and 12 has not been very successful.

There is no doubt that Samudra-gupta proceeded through the Bilaspur and Raipur districts, but at what point he emerged on the eastern coast cannot be determined with certainty. Our view must depend on the identification of Nos. 2, 3, 5 and 6. According to the views generally accepted, Samudra-gupta passed through the Mahānadi valley to Orissa coast and then proceeded south through the Ganjam and Vizagapatam districts. But R. S. contends that Samudra-gupta passed through Bastar State and E. Godavari district to the coastal region near Pithapuram which was his 'first conquest on the coast of the Eastern Dakhan', and he had nothing to do with the Vizagapatam or Ganjam district. None of these views can be definitely accepted or rejected in the present state of our knowledge, but the former appears to be more probable.

II. THE NINE KINGS OF ĀRYĀVARTA

1. Rudradeva: K. N. Dikshit and several others63 identified him with the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena. But as the Vākāṭakas ruled in the Deccan and were far from being uprooted in the time of Samudra-gupta, this identification is not generally accepted. But the Vākāṭakas had also some territories in Central India as has already been pointed

61 Cal. Râp. (1924), 253 n.
62 S.K. refers to a river Kuṣṭhalī south of the Krishnā.
63 Cf. Goyal, op. cit., 142, n. 3.
out in course of the discussion about Vyāghra (No. 2 of Dakshinā-patha), and these were probably conquered by Samudra-gupta as we find them in the possession of the Guptas in later times. So the identification cannot be altogether rejected as improbable. Dr. D. C. Sircar suggests that Rudradeva might be the Western Satrap Rudradāman II or more probably his son Rudrasena III.64 M. M. Nagar identifies Rudradeva with king Śrī Rudra whose coins have been found at Kausāmbi (Kosam).65

2. Matila: A seal with the name Mattila was found at Bulandshahr in U.P. But as there is nothing to indicate that it was a royal seal, the identification of Matila and Mattila, though probable, cannot be regarded as certain.

3. Nāgasadatta: Dr. D. C. Sircar suggests that he might be the king of North Bengal and ancestor of the long line of Gupta viceroys of that province whose names ended in Datta.66

4. Chandra-varman: He must be identified with the king of Pushkaraṇa bearing that name whose record has been found at Susunia hill in Bankura district, Bengal. The city of Pushkaraṇa is probably to be identified with a village named Pokharan or Pokharna on the Damodar river, about 25 miles to the north-east of Susunia hill.67 Ancient ruins, reaching back probably to the Suiga period, have been found in this locality. The identification of Pushkaraṇa with Pokharan or Pokharna in Marwar, originally proposed by MM. H. P. Sastri, can no longer be maintained.

5. Ganapati-nāga: He was evidently a Nāga king. The Purāṇas locate two different branches of the Nāgas at Vidiśā and Mathurā. Hundreds of Gaṇapati-nāga's coins have been found at Mathurā and only a few at Bensagar and Pawāya.68 He may therefore be taken to be ruler of Mathurā, but Bh. regards him as king of Vidiśā.

6. Nāgasena: He ruled in Padmāvati (Padam Pawāya, 25 miles north-east of Narwar) as mentioned earlier. But some regard him as "a ruler of Mathurā".69

7. Achyuta: He ruled in Ahichhatra (Bareilly district) as mentioned earlier.

8. Nandi: H. C. suggests that Nandi was probably a Nāga prince because several Nāga kings with names ending in or beginning with Nandi are mentioned in the Purāṇas.

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64 PIHC, VII, 78.
65 JNSI, XI, 13.
66 PIHC, VII, 81.
67 ASIAR (1927-28), 188.
68 NHIP, VI, 141, n. 2.
69 Cf. ABORI, Vol. XLIV (1963), 47.
9. Balavarman: K. N. Dikshit proposed to identify him with a king of Kāmarūpa of that name, who is mentioned as an ancestor of Bhāskara-varman in the copper-plate grant of the latter. But as Kāmarūpa is specifically named in the next category of States this identification cannot be maintained.

III. THE TRIBUTARY STATES

A. The Five Border Kingdoms

1. Samataṭa: It undoubtedly denotes a part of Bengal though it is difficult to define its boundary in the Gupta period. That part of Bengal which lies to the east of the Meghna river, corresponding to Tippera, Noakhali and Chittagong districts, was certainly comprised in it. Hiuan Tsang's description of Samataṭa, however, shows that in his time it probably included a part of Central Bengal, viz the districts of Faridpur, Bākharganja, and possibly also Yaśohar (Jessore) and Kuhlā. Karmānta, which was probably the capital of Samataṭa in the seventh century A.D., has been identified with Bāḍkāmtā, situated twelve miles west of Comilla.70

2. Āvāka: It has been identified with a place called Doboka in Nowgong district, Assam.71 This is far more satisfactory than the older identification with Dacca or certain districts of North Bengal.

3-4. Kāmarūpa and Nepāla correspond, respectively, to parts of modern Assam and Nepal.

5. Kartrīpura: It probably corresponds to Kartārpur in the Jālanāḍhar district and also comprised the territory of the Katuria or Katyar rāj of Kumaun, Garhwal and Rohilkhand. Some scholars identify it with Karūr (or Karor) and regard this name as being derived from Kartrīpura.72

B. The Nine Tribal States

1-4. The Mālavas, Ārjunāyanas, Yaudheyas, and Mādrakas: The location of the first, third, and the fourth of these tribes has been generally indicated above, and the early history of all of them has been discussed in the preceding volume. The coins of the Ārjunāyanas are known, but their provenance is uncertain. If the four names have been placed in geographical order, as seems likely, the Ārjunāyanas may be located between the Mālavas in the south and the Yaudheyas in the north. Their territory was probably situated within the modern State of Jaipur.

70 HABR, 8.
72 JIH, XIV, 30.
5. The Ābhīras: Their history has been dealt with in the preceding volume. They had various settlements in W. Rājputāna and Mahārāṣṭra. A tract of land between Jhansi and Bhilsa, called Ahirwara, was evidently named after them, and probably represents the Ābhīra principality at the time of Samudra-gupta.

6. The Prājunas: Smith located them in the Narsinghpur district (M.P.); but Bh. prefers Narsingarh (CI) on the ground that it will bring them nearer to the Sanakānikas.

7. Sanakānikas: An inscription (No. 6) in Udayagiri near Bhilsa refers to a Sanakānika chief who was a feudatory of Chandra-gupta II. It is evident therefore that the Sanakānikas lived in this region in Samudra-gupta’s time. The chief, his father, and his grandfather are all called Mahārūjas. This shows that the Sanakānikas had probably a monarchical form of government, and this might be true of some of the other tribal States also. It is, of course, not quite unlikely that all the three chiefs were hereditary governors appointed by the Guptas after they had conquered the country.

8. The Kākas: The Kākas are mentioned along with the Rishikas and the Vidarbhas in the Mahābhārata (vi.9.64). Smith located them near the well known Sāñchī hill which is referred to as Kākanāda in ancient inscriptions. Jayaswal proposes to identify Kāka-pur, a village 20 miles north of Bhilsa, as the ancient seat of the Kākas.\footnote{73 IBORS, XVIII, 212.}

9. The Kharaparikas: The Kharpara army is mentioned in a medieval inscription found in the Damoh district (M.P.). Hence Hiralal locates the Kharaparikas in that district.\footnote{74 Ep. Ind., XII, 45.}

IV. THE SEMI-INDEPENDENT STATES

1. Daivaputra-shāhi-shāhānushāhi: Fleet, Smith, and Allan split up this compound into three parts and took each to denote a separate State.\footnote{75 Goyal (op. cit., 176-77) splits up the compound into two parts: Daivaputras-āhāti and Shāhānushāhi. He also identifies the first with Kidāra Kushāṇa and the second with the Sassanian king, Shāpur II.} But Bh. has shown very cogent reasons in favour of taking the whole compound as one name denoting the Kushānas who used all these titles or their equivalents. They ruled in W. Panjab and Afghanistan, and their history has been dealt with in the preceding volume. There is nothing to support the view that the Kushāna kingdom was divided into three States, the ruler of each of which appropriated one of these titles.

2. Saka: The most reasonable view seems to be that the Saka denoted the Western Kshatrapas, whose history has been dealt with in Chapter VI. Allan suggests that the Sakas particularly designate...
those Sakas in the north who issued the coins of Kushān types... which bear the name of Saka'. But the name is really Shāka, and need not be taken as an ethnic name. Bh. suggests that the Sakas refer to a separate Saka family ruling in Mālwa, one of whose records, dated 241 (= A.D. 319), has been found at Sānchī. The date of this record is, however, uncertain.

3. The Muruṇḍas: The Muruṇḍas have been identified with the Maroundai of Ptolemy 'who locates them on the left bank of the Ganges, south of the Gogra, down to the top of the delta'. Medieval Jaina books refer to Maruṇḍaraja as ruler of Kānyakubja and as residing in Pāṭaliputra. A Chinese text mentions Meou-loun as the title of the king of a country in India ruling about the middle of the third century A.D. This Meou-loun has been taken to be the same as Muruṇḍa, but it is difficult to accept Allan's view that the Chinese description of his capital seems to suggest Pāṭaliputra, for the Chinese text places the capital about 7000 li (i.e. more than 1000 miles) from the mouth of the Ganges.

It is to be noted that the location of the Muruṇḍas in the upper Ganges valley, not to speak of Pāṭaliputra, in the time of Samudragupta, is hardly compatible with what we know, or is generally accepted as true, about the early history of the Guptas. The Muruṇḍas are mentioned in the Purāṇas along with the Sakas, Yavanas, and Tushāras and are described as of foreign origin (mlechcha-sambhava). They probably ruled in the north-west or west along with the Sakas and Kushānas.

Sten Konow, however, holds that ‘Muruṇḍa' is not the name of a tribe, but a Saka word meaning 'lord', and Saka-Muruṇḍa denotes the Western Satraps. Javaswal takes the same view but also includes the smaller Saka rulers like the Shilada, Shāka and the Gaḍahara chiefs.

76 Allan, CGD, xxi; S. Lévi in Melanges Charles de Harlez, 178-85.
77 JBORS, XVIII, 210.
Chapter Four

THE GUPTA EMPIRE

1. THE RĀMA-GUPTA PROBLEM

According to the unanimous testimony of the Gupta records Samudra-gupta was succeeded by his son Chandra-gupta II, born of his chief queen Dattadevi. It appears from the mutilated Eran inscription (No. 4) of Samudra-gupta that Dattadevi had many sons and grandsons, though on account of the loss of a portion of the record it is difficult to come to a definite conclusion on this point. In the official genealogy of the Gupta kings, Chandra-gupta II is said to have been accepted by his father (tata-parigrihitāḥ), whereas the corresponding expression in respect of all other kings following him as meditating on his feet (tata-pādānudhyātā). It has been inferred from all this that Samudra-gupta selected, out of many sons, Chandra-gupta II as his fit successor.

This view was unanimously held by scholars until about half a century ago when the discovery of a few extracts from a long-lost dramatic work, Devī-Chandra-guptam, completely changed the situation. On the strength of these passages, corroborated by some external evidence, it was at first suspected, and later asserted with more and more conviction, that Rāma-gupta, an elder son, succeeded Samudra-gupta, but was later killed by his younger brother Chandra-gupta, who not only usurped his brother’s throne but also married his widow. There has been a keen and protracted controversy among scholars about how far this strange story and the romantic details accompanying it may be regarded as historical facts. As the recon-

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1 Cf. the edition of the inscription in SI (by D. C. Sircar), 260 ff.
2 For the various interpretations of this term cf. IHQ, XX, 288; IC, IX, 115, 118.
3 A vast literature has grown on this subject and it is not possible in a general history to treat the different viewpoints in detail. The following list, though not exhaustive, includes all the important contributors on the subject.

1. S. Lèvi—JA, CCIII, 201.
2. R. Saraswati—IA, LII, 181.
   (the most comprehensive treatment of the problem).
struction of the history of the Guptas after the death of Samudra-gupta is entirely dependent upon one's attitude towards this question, it must be dealt at some length before we proceed further.

The dramatic work Devī-Chandra-guptam was composed by Viśākhadeva, generally taken to be the same as the author of Mudrārākshasa. Its full text has not been discovered, but thirteen passages from it have been quoted by way of illustration in four different works on dramaturgy.4 As we have no knowledge of the context and sequence of these extracts, it is not an easy task to derive reliable information from them; but there is a fair degree of agreement among scholars about their general purport, which may be summarised as follows:

King Rāma-gupta, besieged in his camp at Alipur by a Śaka king, was forced to buy peace on condition of surrendering his queen Dhruvadevī to the enemy. This step is said to have been taken to appease the prakṛitis, a term which may mean either the 'subjects' or 'the ministers'. The latter meaning is preferable, as general subjects do not count for much in a military camp. Chandra-gupta, the younger brother of the king, finding no other means to save the situation, thought of performing some mystic rites in the night in order to secure the help of the Vetālas (vampires). It was necessary for this to get out of the camp, but this was difficult as the enemies kept a strict watch. Chandra-gupta was thinking of some plan to get out when an ingenious way suggested itself to him by the accidental visit of a female attendant in search of a courtesan who was in love with Chandra-gupta. This attendant was on the look out for the courtesan in order to give her a suit of dress and ornaments which queen Dhruvadevī had presented her. The sight of the dress and ornaments immediately suggested to Chandra-gupta the device of putting on the disguise of the queen. Whether he used this to go out at night is not clear, but certainly he appeared before his brother Rāma-gupta and suggested that instead of the queen, he should be sent in her disguise to the Śaka chief in fulfilment of the terms of the treaty. Rāma-gupta tried to dissuade his brother from taking this great risk, but failed. Ultimately Chandra-gupta visited the Śaka chief in that disguise, killed him, and returned safely to his brother. Next we find Chandra-gupta feigning madness for fear of his own life and also to conceal his love for somebody. Then he decides to visit the palace.

8. Sten Konow—IBORS, XXIII, 444.
9. V. V. Mirashi—IHQ, X, 48; IA, LXII, 201.
10. N. Das Gupta—IC, IV, 216.
4 Cf. Raghavan, op. cit.
This closes the Fifth Act of the drama, and no further extract is available from the remaining five Acts. But the rest of the story may be reconstructed without much difficulty from other evidence to which reference will presently be made. It may be easily presumed that Rāma-gupta alienated his wife and suffered in the estimation of the people by his ignoble conduct, while Chandra-gupta won the popular esteem and the love and admiration of the queen by his heroic adventure. So Rāma-gupta grew jealous of his brother and it was evidently to avoid the enmity of the king and conceal his love for the queen that Chandra-gupta feigned madness as described in Act V. But ultimately he killed the king, usurped his throne, and married his widow.

Such is the strange story that formed the plot of the drama Devi-Chandra-guptam. There has been no difficulty in identifying the hero and heroine with Chandra-gupta II and his queen Dhruvadevi. The question, therefore, arises how far we may regard the story as based on facts, and how much of it is merely poetic fancy.

Those who are inclined to accept as historical the main incidents revealed in the drama chiefly rely on the corroboration afforded by external evidence. First, we have the statement in Harsha-charita by Bānabhaṭṭa that ‘Chandra-gupta, disguised in a woman’s dress, murdered the Saka chief who coveted another’s wife’. That Bāna referred to the incident which is described in the drama is made clear by his commentator Śaṅkara who elucidates the passage by saying ‘that the Saka chief wanted Dhruvadevi, wife of Chandra-gupta’s brother, and Chandra-gupta, dressed as Dhruvadevi, along with a band of men, all disguised as women, killed the Saka chief secretly’. The second corroboration comes from two Rāṣṭrakūṭa records. A copper-plate grant of King Amoghavarsha contrasts this king with Vikramādiya who, in spite of his much vaunted charity, killed his brother and took away his kingdom and his wife. There is also a similar verse in respect of Govinda IV. Now Chandra-gupta II was known as Vikramādiya, and the passages obviously refer to him. A further, but doubtful, corroboration is afforded by a verse quoted by Rājaśekhara in his Kavya-mīmāṃsā which refers to a king Śarma-(or Sena) gupta, besieged somewhere in the Himalayas, as having given his wife Dhruvasvāminī to the Khasa chief. The name of the queen may be easily regarded as a variant of Dhruvadevi, but the name of the king varies and we have Khasa instead of a Saka chief. Lastly, reference has been made to the story of Rawwal and

5 The drama Devi-Chandra-guptam belongs to the Prakaraṇa class which usually consists of ten Acts (Raghavan, 35).
6 All the important evidences referred to below have been collected by Altekar (op. cit.).
Barkamaris, as narrated in *Mujmal-ui-Tawārikh*, which seems to be an echo of the plot of the *Devi-Chandra-guptam*.

This long array of corroborations from different sources, belonging to different periods and different regions, appears at first sight to invest the story with a fair degree of authenticity. But it is not unlikely that, with the exception of the passage in *Harsha-charita*, all these corroborative stories, none of which is earlier than the ninth century A.D., are really based on the drama itself. The date of its author Viśākhadeva or Viśākhadatta is not known with certainty, but he most probably flourished in or after the sixth century A.D.7 Bāna is thus the only known independent authority who makes any allusion to the story, and it is remarkable that he does not refer to Viśāma-gupta or Dhruvadevī in any way. His commentator Saṅkara flourished much later, about the fourteenth century A.D.8, and might have based his commentary on the story that was current and popular in his time.

The whole episode of Viśāma-gupta thus rests on the unsupported testimony of a dramatic work, composed about three or four centuries after the occurrence of the supposed events. This by itself is a strong argument against accepting it as historical. But its authenticity may be seriously doubted on other grounds, too.

In the first place, the name of Viśāma-gupta figures nowhere in the Gupta genealogy, which not only represents Chandra-gupta as the immediate successor of Samudra-gupta, but the phrase *tatparigrihiita*, applied to him, seems to indicate that he was nominated by his father to succeed him. As against this it has been argued that *tatparigrihiita* is a technical term not to be taken literally. It is, no doubt, applied exclusively to Chandra-gupta, but so is the word *satputra* (good son), and it may be argued with equal cogency that both these terms were used with a deliberate motive to legitimize the claim of Chandra-gupta II who had usurped the throne of his elder brother.

Secondly, there is no definite evidence of the existence of a king named Viśāma-gupta in the Imperial Gupta family. The name does not occur in any Gupta inscription and when the legend first came to be known there was no coin issued by Viśāma-gupta. It was urged against this that such negative evidence does not mean anything. It was also...

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7 Jayaswal, Sten Konow, Altekar and N. Das Gupta take Viśākhadatta to be a contemporary of Chandra-gupta II. Winternitz also at first held the same view but changed it on the ground that the drama *Devi-Chandra-guptam* could not possibly have been written either during the lifetime of Chandra-gupta II and Dhruvadevi or their son. He accordingly assigns it to the sixth century A.D. Lévi inclines to the same view. The fact that Viśākhadatta is not included among the great writers by Bāna may indicate that he flourished later than the seventh century A.D. Nothing can, therefore, be definitely said of Viśākhadatta's date except that he flourished between fourth and ninth century A.D. (*B. C. Law*, Vol. I, 50-51).

8 According to Jayaswal (p. 19) Saṅkara flourished in the eighteenth century A.D.
suggested that Kācha, who issued gold coins closely resembling those of Samudra-gupta, might have been the same as Rāma-gupta, the name Rāma in the existing text of the drama being a corrupt reading for Kācha. The position has been changed very considerably by the subsequent discovery of more than 200 copper coins of Rāma-gupta in Eastern Malwa which belong to the well-known Garuḍa and Garuḍadhvaja types of Imperial Gupta coins. Prof. K. D. Bajpai who noticed these coins accepted them as convincing evidence for accepting the genuineness of the story of Rāma-gupta, and was followed by others. But Dr. D. C. Sircar has challenged this view on the ground that at least two other kings, Mahārāja Hari-gupta and Indra-gupta, issued copper coins of the Garuḍa type, and therefore, on the basis of coins alone, Rāma-gupta cannot, any more than these two kings, be regarded as belonging to the Imperial Gupta family. Dr. Sircar thinks that all these three kings ‘flourished on the decline of the imperial authority of the Guptas in the outlying provinces of the Gupta empire about the close of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century A.D.’. Prof. Bajpai opposes this view on grounds which cannot be regarded as strong, far less convincing.\textsuperscript{9}

Thirdly, attention may justly be drawn to the absurdity of the story. It is difficult to believe that a Saka chief could reduce the successor of Samudra-gupta to such dire distress that he had to agree to surrender his queen to the enemy. It is true that extraordinary circumstances and chances of war sometimes reduce even a powerful foe to sore straits, but then it is impossible to believe that Samudra-gupta’s son and ministers would stoop so low as to offer the chief queen as a prize for liberty. Such an act would be considered as most ignominious in any age or country, and more so in India where even in later and more degenerate days hundreds of men and women in similar circumstances are known to have sacrificed their lives rather than their honour. It is a well-known canon of criticism that the more incredible a story is, the stronger should be the evidence for accepting it. Nothing but the strongest and most unimpeachable evidence should incline us to accept, as true, the story of the ignoble treaty concluded by Rāma-gupta with the Saka chief and the disloyal and disgraceful conduct of Chandra-gupta towards his brother. Arguments have been advanced to show that the marriage of widows was not prohibited by the laws of those days, but it is impossible to condemn Chandra-gupta II too strongly for murdering his elder brother and then marrying his widow. The personal name of the queen, Dhruvasvāminī—one with fixed devotion to husband—also must have always been

a bitter reproach to her life and conduct. It is necessary to remind
the apologists of the conduct of Chandra-gupta II that it has been
vigorously denounced in the Rāshṭrakūṭa records which are our only
source of information about it.

On the whole it must be admitted that the Rāma-gupta episode
rests on a very slender basis, and contains elements which are not
only highly incredible in themselves, but are also very much opposed
to our knowledge of facts and belief in practices of the period. It is
therefore impossible to accept even the general outline of the story
as based on historical facts.

2. RĀMA-GUPTA—A HISTORICAL CHARACTER

The above gives a fair summary of the opposing views on the
subject and the reasons on which they are based. But the recent
discovery of three inscriptions on stone images in the region of
Vidiśā (Madhya Pradesh), two of which clearly, and the third probab-
ly, refer to Mahārājadhīrāja Rāma-gupta,10 definitely prove the exist-
ence of Emperor Rāma-gupta, and it may be reasonably assumed that
he is the historical figure round whom the romantic plot of the Devi-
Chandra-guptam has been skilfully woven. The inscriptions, however,
do not solve all the problems discussed above. In the first place, it is
not clear whether Rāma-gupta succeeded his father and was later
ousted (if not murdered) by his brother Chandra-gupta, for it is
equally likely that on the death of Samudra-gupta both declared
themselves Emperor though actually in possession of different regions
of the empire. In the second place, the inscriptions do not throw any
light on the romantic elements in the story, mentioned above, namely,
the proposal of Rāma-gupta to buy peace by offering his queen to the
Saka king, the stratagem adopted by Chandra-gupta to visit the latter
in the disguise of the queen and kill him, and the subsequent conduct
of Chandra-gupta which deprived Rāma-gupta of his life, wife and
thrones. For, the existence of a predecessor or rival claimant to the
thrones does not necessarily confirm these details which, as shown
above, must be regarded as highly unlikely and unnatural.

Till further evidence comes to light we must suspend our judgment
on these details and regard Chandra-gupta as successor to the throne
of Samudra-gupta for all practical purposes. For, whether we regard
Rāma-gupta as the undisputed successor of Samudra-gupta or a rival
claimant to Chandra-gupta, we do not know anything about him or
his rule from any reliable, not to speak of authentic, source.

In view of this it is also unnecessary to discuss at length such
details of the story as the identity of the Saka chief killed by Chandra-

Vol. XIX, Nos. 1-2, pp. 139-151.
gupta II, the location of his military camp, the duration of Rāmagupta’s reign and the manner in which he was trapped into submission by the Saka chief and later murdered by his brother.

3. CHANDRA-GUPTA II

We have discussed in the preceding section two intriguing questions concerning Chandra-gupta II, viz, whether he was nominated to the throne by Samudra-gupta, or preceded by Rāma-gupta. To neither of these can we give any definite reply, but we may assume for the time being that he ascended the throne immediately after his father’s death.

The date of his accession can be fixed within narrow limits by an inscription (No. 5) engraved on a pillar at Mathurā, dated in the year 61 of the Gupta era which is equivalent to A.D. 380-81. It also gives the regnal year, but unfortunately this portion is so damaged that the letters cannot be clearly made out. The word has been read as ‘praṭhame’ (first) by some and ‘paṁchame’ (fifth) by others. Accordingly A.D. 380-81 would be the first or the fifth regnal year of Chandra-gupta II, and his date of accession would therefore be either A.D. 376-77 or 380-81.

We do not possess any long praśasti of Chandra-gupta II setting forth the details of his military campaigns like the Allahabad praśasti of his father. But we have clear evidence that he was a worthy son of his father and carried on victorious military campaigns to extend the bounds of his empire. A short inscription (No. 10) found inside a cave at Udayagiri near Bhilsa throws very interesting light on this question. It records the construction of the cave for god Sambhu (Śiva) by Virasena, an inhabitant of Pāṭaliputra, and the foreign minister of Chandra-gupta II. The emperor is described as both ‘a king of kings and ascetic’ (rājādhirājarshi) and his activities are said to be beyond comprehension. He is further described as one ‘who had bought the earth with prowess as the purchase-price, and reduced

11 Altekar and Sten Konow take him to be a Saka Satrap of Western India while R. D. Banerji, Jayaswal, and Mirashi regard him as a Kushāṇa king.

12 Alipura is the name given in one of the passages quoted from Devi-Chandra-guptam. According to the extant texts of Bāna’s Harsha-charita, Chandra-gupta II killed the Saka chief in aripura i.e. the enemy’s city. But it has been plausibly suggested that aripura is a mistake for alipura. Mirashi locates it in or near the Jālandhar Doab, and Jayaswal identifies it with Aliwal in the Jālandhar district. According to the verse quoted in Kāvyanāmādhava, the Gupta king was besieged at Kārūkeyanagara in the Himalayas, and Bhandarkar identifies it with Bajnath or Baidyanath in the district of Kumaon.

13 Altekar supplies these details on the basis of the story narrated in Muṣmal-ut-Tawārīkh.

14 ABORI, XVIII, 170.

15 IHQ, XVIII, 272.
the other kings to the position of slaves'. In conclusion we are told that Vīrasena came in the company of the king 'who was seeking to conquer the whole world'. This short record is a remarkable evidence of the spirit of aggressive imperialism which characterized the policy of Chandra-gupta II. It is proved alike by the vaunted boast about the conquest of the world and the specific event that Chandra-gupta reached as far as Bhilsa in the course of a military campaign undertaken with the express purpose of conquering the whole world.

We have another inscription (No. 6) in the same locality recording the construction of a (Vaishnava) cave temple by Sanakānika Mahārajā, a feudatory of Chandra-gupta II, in the year 82 (A.D. 401-2). A third inscription (No. 8) found in Sāñchī, less than five miles from Bhilsa, records the pious donations to the great Buddhist monastery by Āmra-kārdava, who had acquired victory and fame in many battles and whose livelihood was secured by serving Chandra-gupta. It would thus appear that he was a military officer under Chandra-gupta II. This inscription is dated in the year 93 (A.D. 412-13).

Apart from the curious fact that these three records, found in the same region, refer to the three important religious sects of the day, they present other interesting features. Is it a mere accident that the region was visited during the early years of the fifth century A.D. by the foreign minister, a military officer, and a feudatory chief of Chandra-gupta II? One of them expressly says that he accompanied the king in his military campaign, and it would not perhaps be stretching the imagination too much if we regard the two others as coming to the ancient city of Vidiśa (Bhilsa) or some neighbouring place on the same mission. This pre-supposes a protracted military campaign carried on by Chandra-gupta II to the west of Mālwha, and fortunately there are independent grounds in support of such a view.

The only important power that ruled in this region was the Śaka dynasty, known as Western Satraps, whose history has been discussed in the preceding volume (pp. 273 ff.). As noted there, this family of foreign rulers had been established in the latter half of the first century A.D., and their continued existence for more than three centuries is proved by an almost unbroken series of coins of a peculiar type and design. This series abruptly comes to an end in the last decade of the fourth century A.D.16 but reappears in the second decade of the fifth century17 as issues of Chandra-gupta II, and is continued by his successors. The conclusion is thus irresistible that

16 The latest coins bear dates of which the hundredth figure is 3 and tenth figure 1. The unit figure being lost the date may be any year between 310 and 319 Śaka (A.D. 388 and 397).

17 Only the first symbol of the date denoting 90 is legible. As it is in the Gupta era, the date falls between 406 and 415 when Chandra-gupta had ceased to reign.
the dominions of the Western Satraps were conquered by Chandra-gupta II and annexed to the Gupta Empire some time towards the close of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century A.D. The ‘Saka-muruṇḍas’ (p. 27), who were in a state of subordinate alliance during the reign of Samudra-gupta, were finally rooted out by his son who thus carried to its logical conclusion the imperial policy laid down by his father.

Literary references to a conflict between Chandra-gupta and a Saka chief have been discussed above. If we leave aside the story of Rāma-gupta, we may regard Bāna’s casual reference as an episode in Chandra-gupta’s long-drawn struggle against the Western Satraps. It is not unlikely, as Bāna says, that the Saka king, in course of his disreputable intrigues with another’s wife, was surprised and killed by his adversary Chandra-gupta II who probably lay concealed in the garb of a woman. Possibly this was the germ out of which developed the later story of Rāma-gupta and Dhruvadevi. In any case, the utter collapse of the Saka power, in consequence of such a death of the Saka chief, is more in consonance with known facts, but it is hardly reconcilable with the presumption that he was, a short while ago, so powerful as to compel the Gupta Emperor to accept peace on the most dishonourable terms.

The whole of the Kāthiāwār Peninsula was now included in the Gupta dominion and the Arabian Sea formed its western boundary. It was undoubtedly a remarkable achievement and must have profoundly impressed the imagination of the people. After more than three centuries the last vestige of the foreign rule was stamped out from Gujarat and Kāthiāwār Peninsula, and through their well-known harbours the Gupta Empire was brought into contact with the rich commercial markets of the western world. The victories of Chandra-gupta must, therefore, have been hailed on political, economic, and sentimental grounds, and probably formed the main basis of his claim to the title of Vikramāditya of hallowed memory. There were at least two significant facts that justified the assumption of the title by him. As in the case of the Vikramāditya of tradition, he defeated the Sakas and did more than that by finally extinguishing their power in India. Like Vikramāditya, again, Ujjaini was a seat of his power even if not a regular capital. He had, therefore, in a technical sense, far greater claim to the title of Vikramāditya than his father. Many scholars hold that the whole tradition about Vikramāditya grew out of the historical figure of Chandra-gupta II. This theory, which denies the existence of king Vikramāditya, or even any tradition to that effect, before the time of Chandra-gupta, must of course be given up, if we accept the view that the title was borne by Samudra-gupta also. But the probability is that the old
tradition of Vikramāditya was revived by the Gupta Emperors, and gradually gained new elements by its association with them. For not only Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II, but other Gupta kings also assumed the same or a similar title, and each of them perhaps contributed something new to an already existing tradition. Thus developed, slowly and gradually, the complete cycle of legends out of which posterity built up the composite figure of a single Vikramāditya, who was the repository of all kingly power and virtues, conqueror of the Śakas, founder of an era, patron of men of letters and science etc. The legend of Vikramāditya thus partly, though perhaps very largely, reflects the glory and splendour of the Gupta Age, but it is hardly justifiable to regard Chandra-gupta II alone as the historic prototype of the legendary figure of Vikramāditya. Whether there was a historical king Vikramāditya who founded the Samvat era in 58 B.C. may be doubted, but it is difficult to accept the view that Chandra-gupta II was the parent source of all the legends that are current about him. 18

So far we have discussed only the conquest of the Śaka dominions by Chandra-gupta II. But, was his victorious military campaign limited to that one expedition? It is not easy to give a definite answer one way or the other, for it depends upon the interpretation of a record on which widely different views have been held. This is an inscription engraved on the famous iron pillar which stands near the Kutb-Minar at Delhi and is generally referred to as the Meharauli Pillar Inscription (No. 67) from the name of the neighbouring village. It contains the eulogy of a king whose name is simply given as Chandra. He fought a battle in the Vaṅga country (Vaṅgesha) 19 and defeated the enemies who, uniting together, came against him. He also crossed in warfare the seven faces or feeders (saptā mukhāni) of the river Sindhu, 20 and defeated the Vāhlikas. The king was devoted to Vishnu. and set up the pillar as a standard of that god, on the hill called Vishnupada.

The first question that arises is the identity of king Chandra who

18 Different views about the historical character of Vikramāditya have been collected in the Vikrama Volume (Seindia Oriental Institute, Ujjain, 1948). For the views expressed above, cf. pp. 290-94.

19 Vaṅga is used both as the name of the people and of the country. Although used in the plural, it must denote here the country. According to rules of Sanskrit Grammar the plural of the people’s name can be used as the name of country (NIA, I, 196).

20 The faces probably really mean the feeders of the river Sindhu and not the lower parts of the river as we understand by the English word ‘mouths’. The seven feeders would naturally be the five rivers of the Panjab, with the Kabul and the Kumar rivers as suggested by Jayaswal (JBOIS, XVIII, 32). Sten Konow, however, takes it as the seven mouths of the Indus (NIA, I, 198).
was powerful enough to have carried victorious campaigns to Bengal on the east and to the trans-Indus countries on the west. He has been successively identified, among others, with the Gupta kings Chandra-gupta I and II, king Chandra-varman of the Varman family of Mandasor, and with the Kushāṇa king Kanishka, who had a second name Chandra. 21 The identification with Chandra-gupta I and Chandra-varman has not been generally accepted as there are no good grounds to believe that either of them was powerful enough to carry on conquests from Bengal to the Sindhu (Indus). The identity with Kanishka is not favoured on the ground that the alphabet of the Meharauli Inscription appears to be later than that of the Kushāṇa period. 22 So at present scholars are generally in favour of identifying king Chandra with Chandra-gupta II. This theory is undoubtedly the most plausible, but cannot be regarded as certain.

Proceeding on this assumption we may regard Chandra-gupta II as having attempted to complete the task left unfinished by his father in the north-western region, very much in the same way as he did in the west. The Daivaputra-Shahi-Shāhānushāhi, mentioned in the Allahabad praśasti as having enjoyed a position of subordinate alliance like the Sakas, must have been defeated, and the whole of the Western Panjab overrun, by Chandra-gupta II. He probably even proceeded beyond the Sindhu, as mentioned in the Meharauli Inscription, and advanced to the country of the Vāhlikas which is usually identified with Balkh. 23 There is no inherent improbability in this assumption though some scholars locate the Vāhlikas in the Panjab, 24 ignoring the express statement of the inscription that he crossed the seven mouths of the Indus before conquering them. If

21 The question has been discussed in JRASB, IX, 179. In addition to the references given therein cf. EI, XIV, 367; JIII, XVII, 34; IC, V, 206; NIA, I, 188; IHQ, XXI, 202; JAHRS, X, 86; Poona Orientalist, 1915-16. Goyal (op. cit., 201-9) identifies Chandra with Samudra-gupta.

22 On this point cf. the very interesting observations of F. W. Thomas, in India Antiqua, 296.

23 JBORS, XVIII, 32.

24 Sten Konow locates them in the Punjab and Sind (NIA, 1, 198). Bhandarkar locates the Vāhlikas in the north-eastern Panjab near the Beas river. His argument that the Vāhlikas and Vishnupada are mentioned together in the Rāmāyāṇa as in the Meharauli inscription (JAHRS, X, 87) misses the point that the two are not associated in any way in the inscription as they are in the Epic (cf. also SI, 276, n. 2). The fact that the Vāhlikas were defeated after Chandra had crossed the 'seven faces of the Indus' is altogether ignored by Bhandarkar. Another scholar explains it away by suggesting that although all the seven rivers were crossed, 'the most decisive action seems to have been fought at the crossing of the Beas and the rest seems to have been a triumphal march.' JBORS, XX, 99). This is hardly satisfactory unless we suppose that the Vāhlikas occupied the whole of the Panjab and even territory beyond it.
we accept this view, the military campaign of Chandra-gupta II must be regarded as a remarkable achievement, unequalled by any Indian ruler since the days of Chandra-gupta Maurya.

But in spite of the brilliant success of Chandra-gupta II from a military point of view, his victory in this region was not perhaps as decisive as against the Sakas. There is nothing to indicate that the Panjab was annexed to the Gupta dominion and formed an integral part of it. The use of the Gupta Era in an inscription found at Shorkot (Jhang district, Panjab), and the name of Chandra-gupta on some coins of the Kushāna type found in the locality undoubtedly testify to his political influence in that region, but neither in his reign, nor in that of any of his successors do we find the province ruled by any Gupta governor, as was the case in Gujarat and Kāthiāwār Peninsula which once formed the dominions of the Sakas. On the other hand there is hardly any trace of Gupta influence in the Panjab after the reign of Chandra-gupta II, and coins reveal the existence of petty chieftains. Although the coins bear the name Kidāra and were therefore presumably imitated from those of the Kidāra Kushānas, the rulers have purely Indian names. They were therefore either Indians continuing the use of the old type of coins current in the locality, or Hinduized Kushānas. In any case the rule of the Kushānas as foreigners had come to an end in the Panjab. To Chandra-gupta II, therefore, belongs the credit of having swept off the last vestige of foreign rule in India after a period of six hundred years.

The conquest of Vaṅga by Chandra-gupta II, as mentioned in the Meharauli inscription, would indicate an extension of the Gupta dominion on the east, very much in the same way as on the west and the north-west. Vaṅga is a synonym of Samataṭa which is included among the frontier tributary states of Samudra-gupta. It would appear that Chandra-gupta’s efforts to incorporate the territory into the Gupta dominion were stoutly resisted by the semi-independent chiefs of Bengal who had been united in a common cause. They were, however, defeated, and Vaṅga formed an integral part of the Gupta kingdom. As will be shown later, a member of the Imperial Gupta family was governing Vaṅga early in the sixth century A.D., and although we have no positive evidence for the intervening period,

25 The inscription is dated in the year 83 which is referred to the Gupta Era though this is not specifically mentioned in the record. It would thus fall in the reign of Chandra-gupta II (El, XVI, 15).
26 JRAS, 1893, p. 145.
27 Cf. Ch. VI.
28 The expression sameti-āgatān (who came united together) seems to indicate that several chiefs had combined against Chandra-gupta II.
we may well believe that Vaṅga or E. Bengal was annexed a century earlier by Chandra-gupta II.

The Meharauli Iron Pillar inscription thus furnishes very important and interesting information about the reign of Chandra-gupta II, if we identify him with king Chandra mentioned in that record. It is to be observed that the information thus supplied fits in well with the known facts of Gupta history and the career of Chandra-gupta II, and so does the qualifying phrase 'who attained sole supreme sovereignty in the world acquired by his own arm and (enjoyed) for a very long time'. Even the Vaishnava faith of king Chandra, the only personal trait of the king mentioned in the inscription, is in full agreement with the proposed identification inasmuch as Chandra-gupta II is called Bhāgavata in the Gupta records.

Apart from the highly important inscription it bears, the iron pillar itself is a monument of surpassing interest. It is nearly 24 feet in length with an average diameter of about 14 inches. The weight exceeds six tons, and the material is pure malleable iron of 7.66 specific gravity welded together. An eminent expert observed in 1881 that 'It is not many years since the production of such a pillar would have been an impossibility in the largest foundries of the world, and even now there are comparatively few where a similar mass of metal could be turned out'. This fact also points to a period, like that of Chāndra-gupta II, when the material resources and technical skill were highly developed. It is a great pity that we do not definitely know who built this monument and where. If we identify Chandra with Chandra-gupta II we must hold that it was a flagstaff (dhvaja) in honour of Vishnu, set up by him on the Vishnupada hill, as expressly mentioned in the concluding verse of the inscription. But he died probably shortly after, in any case, before the inscription was engraved. For it says that the king has quitted the earth and gone to the other world. It may be remarked that a similar Vishnu-dhvaja was set up after the death of Kumāra-gupta by his son Skanda-gupta (No. 30).

But the pillar was not certainly set up by Chandra-gupta where it

29 Even the expression 'by the breezes of whose prowess the southern ocean is even still perfumed' applied to Chandra fits in with Chandra-gupta II who conquered the territory of the Sakas extending up to the Arabian Sea. From the point of view of one writing in the N.E. Panjab the Arabian Sea may very well be regarded as the Southern Sea.

30 For the description and the quotation cf. FAS, 172.

31 This is the generally accepted view. D. Sharma, however, interprets the verse to mean that the king was still alive (IG, V, 206; JII, XVI, 17). Bhandarkar thinks that Chandra 'was not dead but alive, when the eulogy was engraved, though he was not then king.' (JAHRS, X, 86).
stands now. For it is distinctly stated that it originally stood on the Vishṇupada hill, and there is no trace of any hill near Meharauli. The identity of Vishṇupada is uncertain. It is mentioned in the two epics, and the context shows that it cannot be very far from the Vipāśa or Beas river. It has accordingly been located in the Siwalik range near the Beas or somewhere in the hills near Sadhaura in the Ambala district. Others have suggested, with less probability, Hardwar or a site beyond the Beas in the border of Gurdaspur and Kangra districts. It would thus appear that the dominion directly administered by Chandra-gupta extended up to the border of the Panjab.

The conquests as well as the extent of his empire fully entitled Chandra-gupta II to the dignity of an Aśvamedha sacrifice which was performed both by his father and son. That he had more justification than at least his son in proclaiming his power and status by this time-honoured ceremony, admits of no doubt. Yet it does not seem that he celebrated it; for the familiar series of Aśvamedha type of coins are not known to have been issued by him. Some scholars, however, believe that he, too, performed the sacrifice, on the strength of a short inscription on a stone image of a horse found near Banaras (Beaures). The inscription has been read as Chandramgu, which is taken to be Chandra-gupta, but the published facsimile of the inscription does not support this reading. There is thus no evidence that Chandra-gupta II actually celebrated the Aśvamedha sacrifice.

The marriage alliances of Chandra-gupta II seem to have formed an important part of his imperial policy. The marriage of his daughter Rabhāvatī with the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena II undoubtedly helped him to establish his political influence in the Deccan. For when his widowed daughter acted as regent for her minor son, the Gupta court exercised great power in the administration of the Vākāṭaka territory. This is clearly evidenced by the two copper-plate grants issued during her regency in which the names of her Gupta ancestors with imperial titles appear before that of the Vākāṭaka king with the title of Mahārāja.

This alliance must have stood Chandra-gupta II in good stead

32 According to tradition it was removed to Delhi by the Tomara, king Anaṅgapāla (IBORS, XX, 100).
33 IC, I, 515.
34 IBORS, XX, 97; III, XVI, 17.
35 ABORI, VIII, 172; IBORS, XVIII, 31.
36 IC, III, 512.
37 IHQ, III, 719.
38 Cf. Poona Pl. (EI, XV, 39); Riddhapur Pl. (JPASB, XX, 56).
when he was engaged in the war against the Sakas, and it is not unlikely that this very purpose at least partially influenced the action of Chandra-gupta.\textsuperscript{39} To the same motive may also be ascribed the marriage of Chandra-gupta II himself with Kuvera-nāgā, the mother of Prabhāvati-guptā. The Nāgas who ruled in N. Mālavā and the adjacent region held an important position in North Indian politics before Samudra-gupta established his empire, and Chandra-gupta\textsuperscript{II} probably sought to win their sympathy and support by marrying a princess of the Nāga family. Apart from the help they might have given him for consolidating the newly founded empire, they could be of great service to the Gupta army in its projected campaign against the Saka Satraps.

There are indications that this system of political alliances by marriages was carried on even further south beyond the Vākāṭaka dominions. We learn from a record of the Kadamba king Kākusthavarnan that his daughters were given in marriage to the Gupta and other kings.\textsuperscript{40} This king ruled in the Kuntala country which comprised the modern Kannada-speaking districts of N. Kanara, Shimoga, Chitaldroog, Bellary, Dharwar and adjoining districts. As he reigned in the first half of the fifth century A.D. it is not improbable that Chandra-gupta married his son to a Kuntala princess. This receives some sort of corroboration from the interesting fact that certain medieval chiefs of the Kanarese country claimed descent from Chandra-gupta.\textsuperscript{41} Reference may also be made in this connection to a tradition, preserved in more than one Sanskrit text, that king Vikramāditya sent Kālidāsa as an ambassador to a Kuntala king.\textsuperscript{42} A verse attributed to Kālidāsa represents this king as a sāmanta or feudatory king enjoying his life with wine and women, leaving the cares and responsibility of the administration to Vikramāditya. The scholars generally agree in identifying this Vikramāditya with Chandra-gupta II, but while some regard the Kuntala king as the Kadamba ruler Bhagiratha, others take him to be the Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena II.\textsuperscript{43} As the latter was the daughter's son of Chandragupta II, the verse would no doubt be more appropriate in his case, but he never ruled over Kuntala, and there is no reason why he should be called the lord of Kuntala.

\textsuperscript{39} Cf. V. A. Smith in \textit{IRAS}, 1914, p. 324.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{EI}, VIII, 29, 36.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{PHAI}, 475.
\textsuperscript{43} Cf. references in the preceding footnote. Mirashi takes the Kuntala ruler to be an early member of the Rāṣṭrakūta family of Mānapura, perhaps 'Devarāja' (\textit{ABORI}, XXV, 45).
GOLD COINS OF CHANDRA-GUPTA II

Although the medieval traditions cannot be regarded as historical, those cited above lead to a presumption that there was some sort of association between the Guptas and the Kuntala country, and that it probably dates from the time of Chandra-gupta II. There is, of course, nothing surprising in this. We know that Samudra-gupta had advanced up to the very border of the Kuntala country even though he might not have actually invaded it. The dominions of the Vākātas, who were at that time closely connected with the Guptas, almost reached the border of the Kuntala country. No wonder, therefore, that Chandra-gupta should seek to ally himself with the powerful Kadamba rulers of the south by diplomacy and marriage alliance. It would be, however, going too far to suggest that Kālidāsa was sent as an ambassador with the special purpose of contracting such a marriage alliance. The verse of Kālidāsa referred to above hardly suits such a theory.

It must not be concluded from what has been said above that Kālidāsa certainly lived in the court of Chandra-gupta II. This view is held by a large number of scholars, and is no doubt very probable. But the date of Kālidāsa is so uncertain that even now scholars are not wanting who regard him as having lived in the first century B.C. We have equally little information as to whether any other great luminary graced the court of Chandra-gupta II. Our knowledge is singularly deficient in this respect, though there is no doubt about the brilliance of the reign of Chandra-gupta II Vikramāditya.

Some idea of this brilliance may be formed to-day only by a careful examination of the varieties of gold coins issued by him, which almost rival those of his father in point of realistic representation of the figure of the Emperor. The differences in design are often very significant. Thus Chandra-gupta II is represented as slaying a lion in some coins which bear the legend simha-vikrama. This is undoubtedly a counterpart of the coins in which Samudra-gupta is represented as killing a tiger and is given the epithet vyāghra-parākramaḥ. Now this substitution of a lion for a tiger may be taken as based on fact, for by the conquest of Gujarat and Kāthiawar Peninsula, Chandra-gupta II had opportunity of hunting lions which his father lacked. The figure of Chandra-gupta seated on a couch resembles that of his father playing on a lyre, but instead of the musical instrument he holds a flower in his uplifted right hand with the word rūpakrīti written beneath the couch... This perhaps shows that he was more distinguished by his physical beauty, artistic sense, and love of nature than his talents for music. A new type of coinage showing the king as a rider on a fully caparisoned horse also probably reflects the personal habits of the king. On the whole, as in the case of Samudra-

44 Allan; CGD, 24-60.
gupta, the large variety of coins reflects both the martial spirit of the king as well as his peaceful pursuits.

Reference has been made above to some of the officers who accompanied Chandra-gupta in his campaign against the Sakas. The names of a few others are also known. Two feudatory chiefs, \textit{Mahārāja Trikamala} 45 and \textit{Mahārāja Śri Viśvāmitra Svāmī}, 46 ruled, respectively, near Gayā and Besnagar. Another, \textit{Mahārāja Svāmidāsa}, was also probably his feudatory, though this is doubted by some. 47 He had a \textit{mantrin} (minister) named Śikharasvāmī 48 who is supposed by some scholars to be the author of the famous treatise on polity named \textit{Kāmiddakīya-Niti}. 49

Although we have no information of the court of Chandra-gupta II Vikramāditya or of any of the ‘gems’ that adorned it, we have a contemporary account, by a foreigner, of the general state of his kingdom. Fa-hien, the famous Chinese pilgrim, spent more than six years in the dominions of the Gupta Emperor and visited many towns and sacred sites all over India. His brief remarks on what he describes as Madhyadeśa (Middle kingdom), i.e. the region to the east and south of Mathurā, leave the impression of a country enjoying a high degree of peace and prosperity. ‘The people’, he says,

‘are numerous and happy; they have not to register their households or attend to any magistrates and their rules; only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay (a portion of) the gain from it. If they want to go, they go; if they want to stay on, they stay. The king governs without decapitation or (other) corporal punishments. Criminals are simply fined, lightly or heavily, according to the circumstances (of each case). Even in cases of repeated attempts at wicked rebellion, they have only their right hands cut off. The king’s bodyguards and attendants all have salaries. Throughout the whole country the people do not kill any living creature, nor drink intoxicating liquor, nor eat onions or garlic. The only exception is that of the Chaṇḍālas. 50

45 Known from an inscription, dated 64, engraved on the image of a Bodhisatva at Gayā (ASIAR, 1922-23, p. 169).
46 His name occurs on a seal found at Besnagar (ASIAR, 1914-15, p. 81).
47 The date of his copper-plate grant, year 67, has been referred by some to the Gupta Era and by others to the Kalachuri Era (EI, XV, 289; ABORI, XXV, 159; IIQ, XXII, 64; XXIII, 156). The findspot of the inscription is not definitely known, and the city of Vakkhā from which the grant was issued cannot be identified with certainty.
48 Cf. Ins. No. 18.
49 JBOB, XVIII, 37.
50 Fa-hien started from China in A.D. 399 and returned there in A.D. 414. He spent about six years in Northern India. For an account of his travels cf. FTL. The passage quoted is from pp. 42-43.
It must be admitted that this is an idealized picture which is more to be valued for the general impression it conveys than the detailed specific information it supplies. Fa-hien's attention was almost wholly absorbed by things religious, particularly those connected with Buddhism. He felt little interest in secular affairs, so much so that he has not even cared to record the name of the great Emperor through whose wide dominions he travelled. We may not, for example, accept his specific observations about food as true, except in respect of the religious community with which alone he came into intimate contact. Similarly his remarks about land-tax and penal laws were probably based on what he saw and heard rather than an intensive study of the legal and fiscal system. But his observations about the general happiness and the unrestricted movement of the people, and his personal impression about the beneficent administration conferring peace and prosperity on the people, have a ring of truth and reflect great credit on the government of Chandra-gupta II. His reference to light punishments to criminals offers a striking contrast to the picture drawn by Magasthenes for the Maurya period and Hsiian Tsang for the reign of Harsha. A striking testimony to the peace maintained by Chandra-gupta II is perhaps furnished by the uneventful journey of Fa-hien without any trouble such as brigandage to which Hsiian Tsang was twice a victim.

We know little of the personal life of Chandra-gupta II. In addition to the chief queen Dhruvadevi or Dhruga-svāminī he had another wife, named Kuvera-nāga. The former bore him two sons, Kumāra-gupta and Govinda-gupta, and the latter was the mother of Prabhāvatī-guptā, the Vākāṭaka queen. If we believe in the episode of Rāma-gupta, Dhruvadevi must have had a romantic career. She probably used to take part in the actual administration as will be related later.

Chandra-gupta II was also called Deva-gupta. In the Sānchi inscription (No. 8) of his military officer Āmrakārdava we are told that Chandra-gupta II had the familiar name of Devarāja. Though this meaning was not regarded as certain on account of some lacunae in this part of the record, its correctness is proved by the alternate use of both Chandra-gupta and Deva-gupta as the name of the father of queen Prabhāvatī-guptā in the Vākāṭaka records. It would thus appear that Chandra-gupta II had a second name Deva-gupta, which had a more familiar form, Devarāja.

Chandra-gupta II had perhaps also a third name, Dhāva. This occurs in the Meharamauli inscription of Chandra, and unless we regard it as a mistake for a common word like bhāva, it can only be taken as the proper name of the king. The rest of the inscription is, however, very correctly engraved, and it is unlikely that a mistake was
committed here. So like Śāva, a name of his minister Virasena, Dhāva might have been a popular name of Chandra-gupta II, provided, of course, we regard him as identical with king Chandra.

The last known date of Chandra-gupta II is 93 (A.D. 412-13), and he did not rule much longer as his son Kumāra-gupta was on the throne in the year 96 (A.D. 415-16). He had thus a long reign of more than 32 years, counting from his earliest known date 61 (A.D. 380-81) which, as noted above, might have been his first or fifth regnal year. In the latter case his total reign period would be more than 36 years.

4 Govinda-gupta

It is not a little curious that every succession to the imperial throne after Samudra-gupta, though not known to be disputed by rival claimants at the time, forms a subject of keen dispute among scholars of the modern days. The older generation of scholars had no doubt in their minds that Samudra-gupta was succeeded by Chandra-gupta II and the latter by his son Kumāra-gupta. But the episode of Rāma-gupta has already disturbed this equanimity, and the emergence of a new ruler Govinda-gupta threatens to upset it still further.

One of the numerous clay seals discovered long ago amid the ruins of the ancient city of Vaiśālī contains the name of the great queen Dhruvasvāminī, the wife of Mahārāja Mahāśrī Chandra-gupta and the mother of Mahārāja Govinda-gupta. It was certainly thought unusual that Dhruvasvāminī should be styled the mother of Govinda-gupta rather than of Kumāra-gupta who was then regarded as having succeeded his father Chandra-gupta II. Dr. Bhandarkar drew the obvious conclusion that Govinda-gupta was an heir apparent to the Gupta throne and stationed as yuvāraja at Vaiśālī. He also tentatively assigned a brief rule to him between Chandra-gupta II and Kumāra-gupta, and held that he was either ousted by his brother or died a natural death between A.D. 411 and 414. But as there was no positive evidence that Govinda-gupta ascended the throne, it was supposed equally likely that he died before his father. Dr. Aivangar held the view that Kumāra-gupta was the heir apparent and governor of Vaiśālī, and during his absence Govinda-gupta was appointed in his place; but as the latter was a minor, the queen was acting as the regent. The general view seems to have been that Govinda-gupta was a younger brother of Kumāra-gupta and the governor of Vaiśālī, he was not an heir apparent and never ascended the throne.

51 Cf. Ins. No. 10.
52 Cf. Inscription Nos. 8 and 12.
53 ASIAR, 1903-4, p. 107.
54 IA, 1912, p. 3; IC, XI, 231.
55 JIH, VI. Suppl., 60.
56 Allan, CGD, xl.
The discovery of an inscription at Mandasor\textsuperscript{57} upset all these calculations. It refers to Govinda-gupta in terms which many scholars have taken to indicate that he not only ruled but was a supreme ruler. It is said for example that not only were his feet touched (ālingita) by the heads of kings whose power had been destroyed by him, but even Indra, the king of gods, was afraid of him. The inscription, dated A.D. 467, records donations made by the son of the general of Govinda-gupta who is referred to as having ruled in the past.

Once we accept the position that Govinda-gupta was a supreme ruler, the Vaiśāli seal appears in a new light and various suggestions naturally offer themselves. It seems to vindicate Bhandarkar's theory that Govinda-gupta ascended the throne shortly after G.E. 93, the last known date of his father, and died before G.E. 96, the earliest known date of Kumāra-gupta. But, curiously enough, Bhandarkar himself seems to have given up this view, for he suggested that Govinda-gupta and Kumāra-gupta were names of one and the same king.\textsuperscript{58} His new theory rests mainly upon a type of Kumāra-gupta's coins which has ku beneath the left arm of the royal figure and go between his feet. Bhandarkar thinks that ku stands for Kumāra-gupta and go for Govinda-gupta. This is, however, a very weak ground, for the coins in question most probably belong to the reign of Kumāra-gupta II and a symbol like 'go' also occurs on the coins of Narasimha-gupta.\textsuperscript{59}

The old theory of Bhandarkar that Govinda-gupta succeeded his father and had a short reign has been revived by others.\textsuperscript{60} The main difficulties in accepting this view are the same as in the case of Rāma-gupta. The genealogy of the Gupta kings does not mention Govinda-gupta, and we have no coin issued by him.

It must be pointed out, however, that the general eulogies contained in the Mandasor inscription do not necessarily imply that Govinda-gupta was an independent and supreme ruler; and even if we assume this, it does not necessarily follow that he preceded Kumāra-gupta. This view rests upon the belief based on the Vaiśāli seal that Govinda-gupta was the heir apparent, and as such the elder son of Chandra-gupta II. Such a conclusion is not, however, warranted by the legend on the seal, and it may not indicate anything more than the fact that Govinda-gupta was governing Vaiśāli; for that is sufficient to explain why in that locality Dhruvasvāmini should be called the mother of Govinda-gupta rather than of Kumāra-gupta.

\textsuperscript{57} Bh. List, No. 7.
\textsuperscript{58} IC, XI, 231.
\textsuperscript{59} CGD, 187, 141.
\textsuperscript{60} IHQ, XXII, 286; IC, XII, 167.
As soon as we give up the notion, not warranted by facts, that Govinda-gupta was the elder brother of Kumāra-gupta, we may postulate several alternative views. First, he might have rebelled against his brother Kumāra-gupta, or, after his death, against the latter's son Skanda-gupta, and set up as an independent king for a short period. Secondly, he might have ascended the throne during the short interval between the death of Chandra-gupta II and the accession of Kumāra-gupta, or even during the still shorter interval between the death of the latter and the accession of his son Skanda-gupta. It is extremely unlikely that a king who ruled for a very short while about A.D. 413 would be remembered more than fifty years after his death. It is, therefore, more reasonable to hold that Govinda-gupta rose to power about the middle of the fifth century A.D., either by a successful rebellion against his brother Kumāra-gupta, or by seizing the throne after his death when Skanda-gupta was far away fighting with the Hūnas. This view is more probable as it is in full accord with some known facts of the time to which reference will be made later. Lastly, the possibility is not altogether excluded that Govinda-gupta was not an independent, far less a supreme, ruler, but held a high office like governor, or even a Regent in the old age of Kumāra-gupta. On the whole nothing would justify us in introducing Govinda-gupta as a new king reigning between Chandra-gupta II and Kumāra-gupta I.

5. KUMĀRA-GUPTA

Kumāra-gupta, the son of Chandra-gupta II and Dhruvadevi, ascended the throne about A.D. 414. His known dates, from coins and inscriptions, range between 96 and 136 C.E. (C. A.D. 415-55). He had thus a long reign of no less than forty years. There are as many as thirteen inscriptions of his reign, but they convey very little information regarding the political history of the country. As a matter of fact, barring the probable conquest of a part of W. Malwa, no other incidents of his reign are known to us. But this does not necessarily indicate that his achievements were insignificant, or that his reign was of no historical importance. By following an aggressive policy, his father and grandfather had built up a big empire, and it required no little ability on the part of Kumāra-gupta to consolidate and keep intact the rich heritage bequeathed to him. An uneventful reign in his case would rather support his claim to be regarded as a strong ruler of consummate ability who alone could peacefully manage the newly acquired vast dominions for a period of nearly forty years. The coins and inscriptions testify to a regular and stable government, and it is possible that a considerable development in the system of administration was effected by Kumāra-gupta himself. But this cannot be
regarded as certain, as we know so little of the administrative machinery of the earlier period.

Kumāra-gupta performed an Aśvamedha sacrifice. Whether this indicates any new conquest by him is difficult to say. No such claim is made in any of his records. But his coins have been found in abundance in Western India as far as Ahmadabad and Bhavnagar, and a large hoard was found even in Satara. A few coins have also been found at Ellichpur in Berar. As already noted (pp. 59-60), we have evidence of the extension of the Gupta influence, even perhaps in the reign of Chandra-gupta II, not only in the Deccan but also further south in the Kanarese country. This is perhaps corroborated by the coins, but we should not draw from them any further inference of actual conquest or even military campaign in the Deccan.

It is probable, however, that Kumāra-gupta added a part of Western Malwa to the Gupta Empire. This kingdom was ruled by a line of kings whose names ended in -varman and had its capital probably at Daśapura, modern Mandasor, about 60 miles to the north-north-west of Ujjain. Nothing is known of the first two kings Jayavarman and Simha-varman. The third, Nara-varman, is known from two records (Nos. 49, 50) dated A.D. 404 and 417 which describe him to be a very powerful king. One of them gives him the epithet ‘aulikara’ which was perhaps the name or insignia of the family as we shall see later. His son Viśva-varman is also described in extravagant terms in a record (No. 51) dated A.D. 423. He and his son Bandhu-varman are referred to in an inscription (No. 52) which requires a more detailed discussion for our present purpose.

This inscription, found at Mandasor, begins with a long description of a guild of silk-weavers who had migrated from Lāṭa (Central and Southern Gujarat) and settled in Daśapura (modern Mandasor). It then abruptly breaks off from this topic and states: ‘while Kumāra-gupta was ruling the whole earth’. But before completing the idea by stating what took place during his reign, it goes on to say that there was a powerful ruler named king Viśva-varman, and that during the reign of his son, king Bandhu-varman, a temple of the Sun-god was built by the command of the guild in the year A.D. 436. It then adds that in course of time a part of the temple was destroyed (or damaged) by other kings, and so the guild had it repaired in the year A.D. 473.61

At the time when this inscription was first published Kumāra-gupta I was the only known Gupta Emperor of that name whose reign covered the period A.D. 415-55. It was accordingly held that the temple was built in A.D. 436 when Bandhu-varman was ruling in

61 IC, III, 379; IV, 262; SI, 299, n. 4.
Daśapura as the feudatory of Kumāra-gupta. But in that case the inscription contains no reference either to the Gupta Emperor, or to his feudatory chief at Daśapura, in A.D. 473 when the inscription was actually engraved. It would be somewhat strange that a record should refer to the past rulers and not to the present ones. It seems therefore better to take Kumāra-gupta of the inscription as Kumāra-gupta II, one of whose known dates is A.D. 473-74. It would then follow that the temple was originally built in A.D. 436 when Bandhu-varman was an independent ruler in Mandasor, but at the time of its repair, in A.D. 473, when the inscription was actually engraved, Mandasor had passed into the hands of the Gupta Emperor, Kumāra-gupta II. The annexation by the Guptas must therefore have taken place during the interval between A.D. 436 and 473, i.e. either during the reign of Kumāra-gupta I or not long after his death. In support of this view it may be pointed out that Bandhu-varman is described as a king in more or less the same terms which are applied to his father.

But the view generally held is that Kumāra-gupta of the Mandasor Inscription was Kumāra-gupta I, and Bandhu-varman was his feudatory. Now, in any case we must hold that both Nara-varman and Viśva-varman were independent rulers, for they issued no less than three inscriptions which referred to them as powerful rulers and contained no reference to the Gupta Emperors. It would then follow that the Gupta supremacy was established over this kingdom some time after A.D. 424, the date of the inscription issued by Viśva-varman as an independent ruler, and before A.D. 436, when Bandhu-varman was ruling Daśapura as the feudatory of Kumāra-gupta I. It is difficult to say whether the change in the political status of Daśapura was brought about by conquest or diplomacy, but the credit must go to Kumāra-gupta for rounding off the imperial domains by removing this isolated unit which probably formed a sort of pocket within the Gupta Empire.

Kumāra-gupta assumed the title Mahendra-ditya and is referred to as Śrī-Mahendra, Mahendra-simha, Aśvamedha-Mahendra, etc. on his coins. Some of his governors and feudatories are known to us from contemporary records. The most important of them was Ghatotkacha-gupta, who was the governor of Eran or Eastern Malwa in the year A.D. 435-36. The inscription (No. 17) which contains his name is unfortunately mutilated, but the extant portion seems to indicate very clearly that he was a member of the royal family. He was probably a son or a younger brother of Kumāra-gupta, though the relationship cannot be exactly determined. He is almost certainly to be identified with Ghatotkacha-gupta whose name is engraved on a seal found at Vaiśāli. As mentioned above, we have a seal of Govinda-gupta, brother of Kumāra-gupta, in the same place. We
know also of a gold coin issued by one Ghaṭotkacha-gupta, and it is not unlikely that he is identical with the governor of that time. As suggested above, Govinda-gupta might have been a governor under Kumāra-gupta. In that case it is significant to note that both these governors of the Imperial family assumed independence, though probably only for a short time; for the one is referred to as king in a single record, and the other is known as such from a single coin. Perhaps this took place after the death of Kumāra-gupta, and we shall discuss it in connection with the accession of Skanda-gupta. Another governor of Kumāra-gupta was Chirāṭa-datta (Nos. 20-21) who was ruling Pundravardhana-bhukti i.e. N. Bengal in the years 124 and 128 (A.D. 443, 447).

It is generally believed that the reign of Kumāra-gupta closed in a period of troubles. But this is very doubtful as we shall see later. So far as positive evidence goes there is nothing against the assumption that he died peacefully in A.D. 455.

6. SKANDA-GUPTA

(i) Early history

Skanda-gupta ascended the throne in 136 C.E. (A.D. 455-56), the very year in which his father Kumāra-gupta died. But indications are not wanting that his succession was not a peaceful one and that the empire had to pass through a sea of troubles immediately after his father's death, if not even before it. This information is derived from an inscription (No. 30) engraved on a stone pillar at Bhitarī (Ghaziapur district). As very important conclusions have been based on this record it would be convenient to begin with a summary of its contents.

After the genealogy in prose the first three verses are devoted to the general eulogy of Skanda-gupta. We learn from v. 4 that 'when he prepared himself to restore the fallen fortunes of his family, he spent a whole night on the bare earth', and then conquered the Pushyamitras (or simply enemies according to a different reading by some scholars), who had developed great power and wealth. According to v. 5, his glory was 'sung in every region by happy men, even down to the children'. V. 6 tells us that 'when his father had died, he conquered his enemies and established again the ruined fortunes of his lineage; and then crying, "the victory has been achieved", betook himself to his mother, whose eyes were full of tears from joy, just as Krīṣṇa, when he had slain his enemies, betook himself to his mother Devakī'. V. 7 repeats that by his own prowess he established again his lineage that had been made to totter, and subjugated the earth. V.8, which is badly mutilated, refers to a severe conflict with
the Hūnas in which the earth was shaken. The rest of the inscription merely says that Skanda-gupta set up an image of Vishnū in memory of his father.

The most striking thing in this record is the repeated references to a great calamity which threatened the very existence of the Imperial dynasty. It was tottering to its fall when Skanda-gupta revived its fortunes by defeating the enemy. Now the question arises whether the three references to this calamity point to the same event or to separate incidents. The former view seems preferable. In that case we must conclude from v. 6 that this calamity probably arose, and in any case was certainly averted, after and not before the death of his father. It may also be inferred that Skanda-gupta was engaged in a severe battle and fared badly at the beginning. The fight with the Pushyamitrás, referred to in v. 4, may be regarded as a part of the campaign. Either their invasion brought about the calamity or they took advantage of it to invade the Gupta dominions. The Pushyamitrás are mentioned in the Purāṇas as a tribe and have been tentatively located on the bank of the Narmada river. But, as noted above, the reading Pushyamitra is not certain, and some scholars prefer to read ‘yudhy-amitra’ instead. This would mean that the enemies whom Skanda-gupta defeated are not specifically named and only referred to in general terms.62

If we proceed on this assumption we may reasonably hold that the calamity was brought about by a disputed succession leading to a civil war. It is significant that in all the three references to the calamity, the kula or vaṁśa i.e. family is mentioned, probably emphasizing thereby that the danger threatened the Imperial family rather than the Empire. Apart from this there are other circumstances that lend support to this view. Thus verse 3 of the Junagadh inscription (No. 26) tells us that after his father had died Skanda-gupta made himself the ruler of the earth by his own prowess.63 A little later, the same record tells us that Lakshmi (i.e. the goddess of sovereignty) of her own accord selected Skanda-gupta as her husband, after having considered and discarded all the other sons of kings. These two passages, written within two years of the accession of Skanda-gupta, seem to indicate that there was a contest for the throne among the members of the royal family in which Skanda-gupta came out successful.64 This conclusion is corroborated by a new type of coins65

63 Fleet's translation is somewhat different, as he takes 'ātma-saktiā' to refer to Kumāra-gupta (CII, III, 62). In my opinion it refers to Skanda-gupta and this verse merely echoes the v. 6 of Bhitari Pillar Ins.
65 CGD, 118.
issued by Skanda-gupta. In these the king stands facing the goddess Lakshmi, who offers him an uncertain object, probably a ring or a garland; this may be a visual representation of the sentiments expressed in the second passage quoted above from the Junagadh inscription. The two verses and these coins seem to indicate that Skanda-gupta had no natural or legitimate claim to the throne, but obtained it by means of his own valour and prowess.

A clue to this is furnished by a close scrutiny of the genealogy of the Gupta Emperors as given in the Bhitarī Pillar Ins. of Skanda-gupta. It mentions Chandra-gupta I, Samudra-gupta and Chandra-gupta II, along with their chief queens (Mahādevis) but makes no reference to the chief queen of Kumāra-gupta or the queen-mother. It is true that the genealogies do not always refer to the Mahādevis, but in this case the omission of the name of the Mahādevī of the father of the reigning king offers a striking contrast to the mention of the Mahādevī of the two kings immediately preceding him, and cannot but be regarded as significant.66 Reference must also be made in this connection to the Bhitarī Seal which gives a complete genealogy of the Gupta Emperors till the third generation after Kumāra-gupta I. This list omits altogether the name of Skanda-gupta, and mentions, immediately after Kumāra-gupta I, his son Pūru-gupta by the chief queen (Mahādevī) Anantadevī.

The omission of Skanda-gupta’s name may be explained by supposing that the genealogy, as given in the Bhitarī Seal, was intended only to trace the pedigree of the reigning king and not to give a regular succession of kings.67 But the other circumstances mentioned above strongly indicate that Skanda-gupta’s mother was not a Mahādevī. Perhaps for this and other reasons too, the succession to the throne did not normally devolve upon him, but he had to contest it with Pūru-gupta, and probably also with other claimants, as will be mentioned later.

This civil war threatened to ruin the fortunes of the Imperial Gupta family which was almost tottering to its fall, as the Bhitarī Pillar inscription repeats no less than three times. But Skanda-gupta defeated his rivals and seized the throne. Then, as the Bhitarī Pillar Ins. says, Skanda-gupta betook himself to his mother as Krishna, when he had slain his enemies, betook himself to his mother Devakī. It is held by some that this comparison was suggested by the fact that

66 For a full discussion of this question cf. JPASB, XVII, 253; PHAI, 461; NHIP, VI, 176; JIH, XXXVII, 145; XL, 243; XLIII, 219.
67 This view is confirmed by the royal seals of Budha-gupta and Narasimha-gupta. One of these two brothers must have preceded the other, but none of them is mentioned in the seal of the other.
Devakī was also the name of Skanda-gupta's mother. It is, however, more plausible that the real point of the comparison was the degrading position of both Devakī and Skanda-gupta's mother before the victories of their sons had raised them to a position of power and prestige.

The course of events suggested above satisfactorily explains some other known facts. As already noted, there are good grounds to believe that both Govinda-gupta, the brother of Kumāra-gupta I, and Ghaṭotkacha-gupta, also closely related to him, assumed the position of an independent king. Another king, Prakāśāditya, known from his gold coins, also probably flourished about this time. If we assume that there was a disputed succession after the death of Kumāra-gupta I, we may easily account for the sudden emergence of so many independent kings. For, as often happens, the war of succession weakened the central authority, and important chiefs took advantage of it to assume independent authority. That their independence was short-lived is easily explained by the fact that Skanda-gupta defeated his rivals and consolidated his position in less than a year after his father's death.

The above reconstruction of the early history of Skanda-gupta is no doubt highly probable. But it can only be regarded as a reasonable hypothesis and by no means an established fact.

(ii) The Hūṇa War

Although the war of succession and the fight with the Pushyamitrás are both at best doubtful, we must admit that Skanda-gupta, at the very beginning of his reign, if not even before it, distinguished himself by military successes which secured the fortunes of his family from an imminent disaster. He gave a further proof of his remarkable military ability by defeating the Hūṇás and thus saving the Gupta Empire from a terrible calamity, if not utter ruin.

The brief reference to this incident in the Bhītarī Pillar Ins. does not convey an adequate idea of Skanda-gupta's achievement. In order to realize its full significance we must study the contemporary history and activities of the Hūṇás who have been justly described as the scourge of mankind. This topic will be dealt with in detail in a separate chapter. It is only necessary to state here that about the time when Skanda-gupta ascended the throne, one branch of the

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68 Sewell, *Historical Inscriptions of Southern India*, 349; SI, 314, n. 4.
69 CGD, li-lii. Both Hoernle and V. A. Smith regarded Prakāśāditya as the title of Pūru-gupta. Allan rejects it on the ground that it is highly improbable that Pūru-gupta was called both Vikramāditya and Prakāśāditya. But as we shall see later, the coins with the title Vikramāditya, attributed to Pūru-gupta, were most probably issued by Budha-gupta.
Hūnas, known as the Ephthalites or White Huns, had poured across the Oxus valley, conquered Gandhāra, and advanced as far as the Sindhu, if not beyond it, inflicting the most barbarous cruelties on the people. They had also carried their devastations to the west as far as the Danube, and had grown so powerful in Europe that their leader Attila, who died in A.D. 453, was ‘able to send equal defiance to the courts of the Eastern and the Western Roman Empire’. The atrocities they perpetrated wherever they went beggar all description, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that vast stretches of populated lands, enjoying plenty and prosperity, were reduced to mere wastes, and, for centuries, heaps of ruins alone marked the sites where stood the capitals of mighty kingdoms and renowned seats of culture and civilization.

From more detailed descriptions of the Hūnas in contemporary chronicles of the West we can easily imagine the veritable terror inspired by their impending invasion of India among all classes of her people. Fortunately, Skanda-gupta proved equal to the formidable task. Where he met the Hūnas we cannot say, but there is no doubt that he inflicted such a crushing defeat upon them that for nearly half a century, or perhaps even more, they never dared to cross the Sindhu river and penetrate into the interior of India. It was a remarkable achievement, indeed, to secure India from the ravages of the Hūnas for more than fifty years. The truth of this is brought home to us when we remember that, being foiled in their attempt against India, they turned towards Persia and, in A.D. 484, the king of Persia was defeated and killed, and the whole kingdom lay prostrate before the barbarians. There is no doubt that India felt a great sense of relief at the news of the great victory of Skanda-gupta, and no wonder that the praise of the great monarch was sung all over the country by men as well as children.

It is particularly noteworthy that the author of the Bhitari Pillar Ins. mentions Skanda-gupta’s victory over the Hūnas separately as a distinct event, after the fight with the Pushyamitras or the other enemies which was evidently concluded immediately after his father’s death. It would therefore appear that the Hūna invasion took place later in the reign of Skanda-gupta. But there is one circumstance which goes against this view. In the Junagadh Ins. (No. 26) occurs a verse, somewhat mutilated, which has been translated as follows: ‘Whose (i.e. Skanda-gupta’s) fame, moreover, even (his) enemies, in the countries of the Mlechchhas…having (their) pride broken down to the very root, announce with the words “verily the victory has been achieved by him.”’

This clearly means that Skanda-gupta...
utterly routed some Mlechchha hordes, who were seized with a terror of his name even though they lived in their own country, outside India. The description suits the Hūnas very well, and in the absence of any evidence that Skanda-gupta had to fight with other non-Indian outlandish (Mlechchha) tribes, we may take the passage in the Junagadh Ins. to refer to the Hūnas. But in that case the war with the Hūnas must be placed before 138 C.E., the date of the inscription, and most probably before 136 C.E., the date of the appointment of Parṇadatta as the governor of Surāśṭra before which the victory is said to have been achieved. This would mean that the Hūnas had invaded India probably even before the death of Kumāra-gupta I. One is then naturally tempted to ask whether this is not the great calamity that shook the very foundations of the Gupta Empire to which pointed and repeated references are made in the Bhūtarī Pillar Ins. This would admirably suit the whole tenor of that record, except, as noted above, the mention of the Hūna war as a separate event after the other incidents. But it is not unlikely that the other wars mentioned in that inscription were sequel to the Hūna invasion. Thus we may presume that while Kumāra-gupta I died, Skanda-gupta was engaged in fight with the Hūnas far away from the capital city, and taking advantage of this situation his rival claimants or the Pushyamitras raised the standard of revolt. But fortunately the campaign against the Hūnas was soon over, and having returned with his victorious army Skanda-gupta seized the throne without much difficulty after defeating his rivals. The only other alternative to this hypothesis is to regard the Mlechchhas, mentioned in the Junagadh Ins., as distinct from the Hūnas, and to take them to refer to some tribes like the Pushyamitras. But this is far less satisfactory. On the whole, we shall not probably be far wrong if we regard the Hūna invasion as the main, if not the sole, source of troubles that brought the Gupta family on the verge of ruin, and sorely tried the abilities of Skanda-gupta at the very beginning of his memorable career.

Some echoes of Skanda-gupta's great victory over the Hūnas may perhaps be traced in Indian literature. The Chāndra Vyākaraṇa71 illustrates the use of the imperfect tense by the sentence 'Ajayad-Jato (or Gupto) Hūnān' 'The Gupta (or Jato) conquered the Hūnas'. If we accept the reading Gupta we may undoubtedly take the passage as a reference to Skanda-gupta's victory. But others take the word Jato and its variants Japto or Jarto as the name of a people,72 and identify them with the Jāths.73 In that case the passage can be

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72 Kielhorn in NGGW, 1903, p. 305.
73 Hoernle in JRAI, 1906, p. 114.
hardly taken to refer to Skanda-gupta except on the fantastic supposition that the Guptas were Jāthas.  

The Kathāsaritsāgara has preserved a story of Vikramāditya, son of king Mahendrāditya of Ujjain. It is said that he succeeded to the throne on his father’s abdication and inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Mlechchhas who were overrunning the earth. As Mahendrāditya and Vikramāditya were the titles assumed respectively by Kumāra-gupta I and Skanda-gupta, it has been suggested that the story has preserved the memory of Skanda-gupta’s victory over the Hūṇas.  

(iii) Reign of Skanda-gupta  

The assumption of the title Vikramāditya was undoubtedly justified by the great achievements of Skanda-gupta. Although we do not know full details of his military campaigns, the inscriptions testify to his great military talents tested in many battles. The continual stress of the wars led to heavy drain on his finances and this is reflected by his coins. His gold coins are few in number in comparison with those of his predecessors, and some of them, but not the heavier coins, reveal depreciation in the purity of gold. But any conclusion about the state of the empire from this fact alone is unwarranted.  

But in spite of troubles and difficulties he maintained intact the vast empire inherited by him. Even the distant Kathiāwār Peninsula, which once formed the dominions of the Saka Satraps, was now ruled by his governor Parṇadatta. A long inscription (No. 26), engraved by the orders of this official on a large granite boulder near the modern town of Junagadh, throws interesting light on the life and reign of Skanda-gupta. It refers to the selection of Skanda-gupta by the goddess of sovereignty and his defeat of the Mlechchhas, as noted above. His next task, we are told, was to appoint the governors of all provinces. In this connection special emphasis is laid on the post of governor of Surāśṭra, and we have a long list of qualifications which must be possessed by him in order to bear the heavy burden. Whether this was introduced merely by way of eulogizing Parṇadatta, who alone was found suitable for the post, or any special importance attached to the border province of Surāśṭra in view of

74 Jayaswal in JBORS, XIX, 115-16.  
75 CGD, xlix.  
77 Allan thinks that towards the end of the reign of Skanda-gupta, or early in that of his successor, the greater part of the Gupta dominions in the west was lost to the dynasty. This view is based on the scarcity of Skanda-gupta’s silver coins with the Garuḍa reverse type in comparison with those of Kumāra-gupta I, and the absence of similar coins of his successors (CGD, xlix). No definite conclusion is possible on the basis of coins alone and the point has been discussed later in the light of other evidences available.
the Hūna invasion or flight with the Mlechchhas it is difficult to say. Similarly, we do not know whether the ‘appointment of governors of all provinces’ is merely a poetic description of an ordinary routine duty, or conveys the idea of a recent political upheaval which left the various provinces in unsettled conditions. This is not an unlikely view if we accept the theory of a disputed succession or civil war at the beginning of Skanda-gupta’s reign.

Parnadatta, the newly appointed governor of the ‘Western region’, viz Surāśṭra, appointed his son Chakrapālita as the magistrate of the city, which was presumably the capital and stood near modern Junagadh. The same boulder on which this inscription is engraved also contains the famous rock-edicts of Aśoka and an inscription of Rudradāman. From the latter we learn that the city was known in ancient days as Girinagarā which is now preserved in Gīnār, the name of the hill.

The inscriptions on the boulder at Gīnār enable us to trace the history of an irrigation reservoir for nearly 800 years. We learn from the inscription of Rudradāman that the reservoir, known as Sudarśana lake, was formed by building an embankment across the gorge near the boulder on which the inscriptions are engraved. It was first constructed by Chandragupta Maurya and improved by Aśoka. In the year A.D. 150 the lake burst on account of excessive rain, but the embankment was rebuilt, three times stronger, by Rudradāman. But the dam burst again, in the year 136 C.E. (A.D. 455-56). The inscription of Parnadatta gives a graphic account of the calamity and the measures adopted by his son Chakrapālita to repair the irrigation lake. In the year 137 C.E. (A.D. 456-57) he ‘made an immeasurable expenditure of wealth and built an embankment, a hundred cubits in all in length, and sixty and eight in breadth, and seven (?) men’s height in elevation...’ The same Chakrapālita also built a temple of Vishnu in the year 138 C.E. (A.D. 457-58) when presumably this inscription was set up to commemorate the great achievement.

The Junagadh inscription of Parnadatta is a reminder that after nearly seven hundred years since the days of the Mauryas, an official appointed by the king of distant Pāṭaliputra was ruling over the Kāthiāwār Peninsula in his name. Once more a royal writ passed current from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea. It also tells us that in spite of the stress and storm caused by the wars the government was fully alive to the civic needs of the people. The promptness with which the repair was done at an enormous expense speaks highly of the efficiency and resources of even the most remote provincial government.

While the Junagadh inscription of Parnadatta holds out before us the picture of a peaceful, prosperous, and stable empire of vast
dimensions, shortly after the accession of Skanda-gupta, a brief record of another governor, in West Malwa, conveys an altogether different view. It is an inscription (No. 31) found at Mandasor and mentions Chandra-gupta II and his son Govinda-gupta in terms already quoted (p. 65). It then refers to Vāyurakshita, the general of Govinda-gupta, and the former’s son Dattabhaṭa, the general of king Prabhākara. The object of the inscription is to record some constructions by Dattabhaṭa in Samvat 524 (A.D. 467-68). As the last known date of Skanda-gupta is C.E. 148 (A.D. 467-68) the record probably belongs to his reign. Yet it is curious that reference is made to the past kings Chandra-gupta II and Govinda-gupta, but not to Skanda-gupta, the reigning king.

As already noted above, another inscription from Mandasor (No. 52) specifically states that a temple built in A.D. 436 was damaged by other kings and repaired in A.D. 473. This indicates a troublesome state of things in this region between A.D. 436 and 473.

It is not unreasonable to hold therefore that W. Malwa broke off from the Gupta Empire under Govinda-gupta, as E. Malwa probably did under Ghaṭotkacha-gupta. But, as noted above, Skanda-gupta put an end to all these revolts. Evidently, there was probable recrudescence of troubles in W. Malwa towards the very end of Skanda-gupta’s reign. In this connection we may refer to the claim made in the Vākāṭaka records that king Narendraśana’s commands were obeyed by the lords of Kosala, Mekala and Mālava. Although the date of the Vākāṭaka king Narendraśana is not known with certainty, he is regarded by many as a contemporary of Skanda-gupta. If this view be accepted we may perhaps connect the invasion of Narendraśana with the troubles in Malwa. Either his invasion created the local troubles, or the disaffection of the local chiefs induced him to attack Malwa. In either case Skanda-gupta’s empire must have undergone a severe convulsion towards the close of his reign. But it does not seem that Narendraśana secured any permanent gain. His invasion must have been in the nature of a raid, if it took place at all in the reign of Skanda-gupta, who probably soon restored peace in this region.

Except this very doubtful instance we have no evidence that the ‘tranquil reign of Skanda-gupta, the lord of hundred kings’ as described in an inscription (No. 27) dated A.D. 460-61, was seriously disturbed. Perhaps he left the vast empire in peace and security when he died in or shortly after A.D. 467.

78 Cf. Ch. VII.