

CHAPTER-IV

NARASIMHADEVA I (1238-1264 A.D.)

Narasimhadeva I, son of Anangabhimadeva III through queen Kasturidevi, succeeded his father to the Gaᅅga throne in A.D. 1238. He is known as Lāᅅgulā Narasimhadeva in Orissa¹ tradition. He is probably called so because of some of his bodily deformities. An illustrious son of an illustrious father, Narasimhadeva I was one of the greatest rulers of the Imperial Gaᅅga family and in annals of Orissa. He was the first ruler of history of Orissa to assume the title Gajapati². He launched successful offensives against the Muslim Nawabs of Bengal and earned credible victories over them. In the south, he conducted a vigorous military operation against the Kākatiyas of Warrangl³. These military successes of Narasimhadeva I resulted in the expansion of the Gaᅅga territories upto river Bhāgirathī Gaᅅgā or Hooghly in the north and Gautamī Gaᅅgā or river Godāvarī in the south. It can be said without hesitation that the Imperial Gaᅅga power and pelf reached its zenith during his time.

At the time of his accession to the throne in A.D. 1238, the situation in the northern borders of the Gaᅅga kingdom was quite alarming. The Muslim Nawabs of Bengal, who had earlier made an unsuccessful attempt to occupy Orissa during the reign of Anangabhimadeva III⁴, were

1. E.I., XXXI, p. 109.

2. Mitra, Debala; Konarka, p.8; Panigrahi, op.cit., p.164.

3. I.O., V, i, p. 137 and E.I., XXXIII, pp. 41-43ff.

4. See above ch. III.

still a threat to the Ganga kingdom. With the consolidation of the power of the Sultanate in Delhi and those of the Nawabs in Bengal, the danger of a Muslim offensive on the Ganga kingdom seemed imminent. Fully realising the gravity of the situation, Narasimhadeva I decided to gear up the military preparedness of the kingdom. He realised that it is futile to defend the kingdom from a possible Muslim attack, as this would not silence the belligerence of the Muslim Nawabs of Bengal. Instead, he chose to launch an offensive against the Muslim Nawabs of Bengal in order to crush their military power. It is astonishing to note that at a time when the Muslim power was dreaded by other native Indian rulers, Narasimhadeva I wanted to have a trial of strength with the Muslim Nawabs of Bengal.

At this time Malik Izzuddin Tughril-i-Tughan Khan was the Nawab of Bengal. He assumed the office of the Nawab in A.D. 1233 and continued till 1244 A.D. The weaknesses of the Delhi Sultans Rukun-ud-din-Firozshah, Razia, Muiz-ud-din Baharam and Alla-ud-din Musud Shah, helped Tughril-i-Tughan Khan to strengthen his position in Bengal. He made himself independent and dreamt of a sultanate in eastern India. But his dream of becoming a Sultan was shattered by Narasimhadeva I, who appeared on the frontier of Bengal at the head of a large army in 1243 A.D. Tughril-i-Tughan Khan failed to realise the danger and made no efforts to contain the invasion of the Ganga army till it reached Lakhnor towards the end of 1243 A.D. When Lakhnor was ravaged by the Ganga forces, Tughril-i-Tughan Khan realised

his mistake and made hasty preparations to repel the invaders. Minhaj-i-Siraj, the author of the Tabaqat-i-Nasiri¹, who accompanied Malik Tughril-i-Tughan Khan to Lakhnor and witnessed the battle between the Nawab's forces and the Gaᅅga army, writes: "In the year 641 A.H., the Rāi of Jājnagar commenced molesting the Lakhnāvati territory and in the month of Shawwal, 641 A.H. corresponding to November 1243 A.D, Malik Tughril-i-Tughan Khan marched towards the Jājnagar country"². The Muslim forces marched along the highway as far as Lakhnor and reached Kāᅇāsīn after having crossed the rivers Ajaya and Dāmodar. Siraj mentioned in his account that on reaching Kāᅇāsīn "on Saturday the 6th of the month of zi-ka-dah, 641 A.H. (15th April, 1244 A.D.) Malik Tughril-i-Tughan Khan made his troops mount and an engagement commenced"³. At the approach of the Muslims the Gaᅅga army retreated without offering any fight. The forces of Tughan Khan delivered an assault on the fort of Kāᅇāsīn which was abandoned by the Gaᅅga army. Since there was no challenge from the side of the enemy, the Muslim forces retired to a midday meal and were in a relaxing mood. Just at this time the Gaᅅga forces, who concealed themselves in the canegroves and thick bushes of Kāᅇāsīn, ambushed the Muslim soldiers and took every one by surprise. Minhaj writes that a section of the Gaᅅga forces made a sortie from the

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1. Minhaj-i-Siraj, author of Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, accompanied Tughril-i-Tughan Khan to witness the battle.
 2. Minhaj-i-Siraj, Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, pp. 738-739.
 3. Ibid.

direction of the fort and simultaneously another detachment of two hundred footmen and fifty horse-men stole their way from behind the cane jungle and fell upon the Muslim forces.¹ A great panic seized the Muslim army of Tughril-i-Tughan Khan which sustained heavy casualties at the hands of the Gaᅅga forces. Tughril-i-Tughan Khan having lost the battle of Kāᅇāsīn made a hasty return to Lakhanāvati, the capital of Muslim Bengal. The Gaᅅga forces chased their Muslim counterparts far away from Kāᅇāsīn. It was a veritable disaster for the Muslim Nawab.² Minhaj records "the Mohammadans sustained an overthrow and a great number of their holy warriors attained martyrdom"³. The victory at Kāᅇāsīn resulted in the expansion of the Gaᅅga kingdom upto the river Dāmodar in the north.

In 642 A.H. (1245 A.D.) the forces of Narasimhadeva I followed up their success at Kāᅇāsīn by attacking⁴ Lakhnor. In the battle that ensued, a large number of Muslim soldiers were killed along with Fakhor-ul-Mulk Karim-ud-din-Laghori, the commandant of the fort of Lakhnor.⁵ After the capture of Lakhnor the Gaᅅga forces drove away the Muslims and forced them to take shelter in the fort of Lakhnāvati. They laid a seize on the fort Lakhnāvati and threatened the position of the Muslim Nawab in Bengal.

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1. Ibid., and Sarkar, J.N.; History of Bengal, II, pp. 47-51.
 2. HCIP; V, The Struggle for Empire, pp. 207-208.
 3. Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, p.738.
 4. Ibid; pp. 739-740.
 5. Ibid.

At this critical juncture Tughril-i-Tughan Khan sent Sharf-ul-Mulk-Al-ashari and Kazi Jalla-ud-din-kashani to the Imperial court of Sultan Alludin-Masud Shah to solicit his help against the invading troops of Narasimhadeva I.¹ The appeal of the Nawab was heeded and the Sultan ordered Malik Qura-quash Khan, the Nawab of Karā Manikpur and Malik Tamur Khan, the Nawab of Oudh to come to the assistance of Tughan Khan.² The military assistance sought by Tughan Khan reached Lakhnāvati on the 1st of zi-hajjah 642 A.H. (30 April, 1245 A.D.). With the arrival of Muslim forces from the north under the command of Malik Tamur Khan, the Gaᅅga forces vacated their seize on the fort of Lakhnāvati and retreated.³ Malik Tughril-i-Tughan Khan expected that the forces under Malik Tamur Khan would chase the Gaᅅga forces out of Bengal, but his expectations were belied as Tamur-Khan developed a distrust of Tughan Khan. The forces of Tamur Khan laid seize on Lakhnāvati with the objective of depriving Tughan Khan of the territories of Bengal. After a series of skirmishes between the troops of Tamur Khan and Tughan Khan, Lakhnāvati was captured by Tamur Khan while Tughan Khan fled away from Bengal for safety.⁴ Tamur Khan was in possession of Lakhnāvati for about two years till his death. The conflict between Tamur Khan and Tughan Khan helped the Gaᅅga army to plunder some districts of Muslim Bengal.

1. Sarkar, op.cit., pp. 48-52.

2. Ibid; Panigrahi, op.cit., pp. 165-68.

3. Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, pp. 739-40.

4. Tabaqat, i, p.584.

After the flight of Tughan Khan, Tamur Khan got possession of the territories of Muslim Bengal. He raised a standard of rebellion against the Delhi Sultan for about two years and died some time around 1247¹. His death was followed by a state of confusion in Bengal during which Masud Jani captured the political powers². Finally in 650 A.H. Malik Ikhitar-ud-din Yazbak, the Governor of Oudh, was transferred to Bengal as its new Nawab³. Yazbak led an expedition in 651 A.H. (1253 A.D.) to the Rādhā territory but all his efforts were set at naught by the Gaṅga army under the command of 'Savantar'⁴ who was the son-in-law of the Gaṅga king. A fierce battle ensued between the forces of Yazbak and Narasimhadeva I in which Yazbak suffered a defeat with heavy loss⁵.

Minhaj-i-Siraj mentioned in his account that the commander of the Gaṅga army was 'savantar'⁶, who during the time of Malik Tughril-i-Tughan Khan, had "advanced to the bank of the river of Lakhanāvati and having shown the greatest audacity had driven the Musalamans as far as the gate of the city of Lakhnāvati."⁷ From the above account of

1. Sarkar, J.N., op.cit., pp. 48-52.

2. Ibid.

3. Panigrahi, op.cit., p.169.

4. Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, pp. 762-763; JASB, (1896), p.20.

5. Panigrahi, op.cit., p.169.

6. Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, pp. 762-66ff.

7. Ibid.

the Muslim chronicler, it is clear that the capture of Lakhnor, the victory at Kāṣāsīn, and the sieze at Lakhnāvati during the time of the Tughan Khan, were successfully carried out by the commander of the Gaṅga army named 'Savantar' who also defeated Yazbak when the latter made an attempt to recapture Rādha. 'Savantar' of the Muslim chronicle obviously refers to a person who was the commander of the Gaṅga army and the son-in-law of either Anāṅgabhimadeva III or Narasiṁhadeva I. His identification is possible with a piece of information supplied by the Ananta-Vāsudeva temple inscription which mentions the donar, Chandrikādevī, was the daughter of Anāṅgabhimadeva III and was married to Paramardideva of the Haihaya family. Earlier we have identified the Haihayas with the chedis or Kālachuris, who were defeated by Anāṅgabhimadeva III. The above inscription further states that Paramardideva, after having practised the diverse kinds of pleasure with his wife "Found the enemies of the battle during king Vira-Narasiṁhadeva to be dwelling in the world of the Gods and went himself thither in fury to conquer them and throw them with full display of glory". It is thus clear that Paramardideva, the son-in-law of Anāṅgabhimadeva I and the brother-in-law of Narasiṁhadeva I, served the two Gaṅga monarchs as the commander of their

1. E.I., XIII, pp. 150-155.

2. Ibid.

3. Chātesvara inscription, E.I., XXI X, pp. 127ff.

4. E.I., XIII, pp. 150-155.

army and fought successful battles against the enemies of Narasimhadeva I, which obviously refers to the Muslim Nawabs of Bengal. The mention of Paramardi in the Anantavāsudeva temple and 'Savantar' in the account of Minhaj-i-siraj, would suggest that the military operations of the Gāṅga monarch, Narasimhadeva I, were successfully conducted by Paramardideva, who perhaps held the position of sāmanta as supposed by P. Acharya.¹ The Kendupāṭanā² copper plates of Narasimhadeva II, the grandson of Narasimhadeva I mentions that Narasimhadeva I conquered Rādha and Varendra from the Yavanas.³ The description of Narasimhadeva I's victory over the Yavanas goes thus; "the white river Gāṅgā blackned for a great distance by collyrium washed away by the tears from the eyes of the weeping Yavanis of Rādha and Varendra and rendered waveless, as if by this astonishing achievement and was now transformed by that monarch (Narasimhadeva I) into the black watered Yamunā".⁴ Rādha and Varendra of the above inscription certainly refer to the two main administrative divisions of the territory of Muslim Bengal or Lakhnāvati. Narasimhadeva I with his victories over Tughril-i-Tughan Khan between 1243-45 A.D. could successfully capture these two regions. When he vacated the seize of Lakhnāvati after the arrival of the military re-inforcement from Karāmanikpur and Oudh, he probably retired to Kāṭāsīn which served as a guardian

1. OHRJ., Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 274-288.

2. I.O., V, i, pp. 293-296; JASB., LXV, (1896), pp. 229-271.

3. The Muslims are usually referred as Yavanas. Chakravarty, M.M.; The Chronology of the Eastern Gāṅga Kings of Orissa, (1903), Appendix-II.

4. JASB., (1896), Vol. XV, p. 232.

fort of his kingdom in the north. When Yazbak became Nawab of Bengal, he made an effort to recapture Rādha but was unsuccessful. Minhaz-i-Shiraj writes in the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri*, the Gaṅga ruler invaded Lakhnāvati thrice during the time of Yazbak. On the third occasion, Minhaj writes "Malik Yazbak sustained a slight reverse and a white elephant which was ruttish, got out of his hand in the field of battle and fell into the hands of the infidels of Yazbak¹". Minhaj also tells us that the forces of Narasimhadeva I were firmly placed at Umurdan, which has been identified with Mandaran near Chinsurah in the Hooghly district of West Bengal². Having been defeated by the forces of Narasimhadeva I Malik Yazbak sought the assistance of the Sultan of Delhi. In 653 A.H. (1255 A.D.) Yazbak made a fresh bid to recapture Rādha. He avoided frontal attacks and dealt swift charges with his horses on the Gaṅga army³. He captured Umurdan, identified with Mandaran, and soon after struck a coin in his name from Lakhnāvati⁴. During this campaign, Paramardideva, the valiant general of the Gaṅga army, died while fighting⁵. Although Paramardi was killed in the battle, Rādha continued to be under the possession of the Gaṅgas. Even in death Paramardi could earn the esteem of the Muslim chronicler Minhaj-i-Shiraj who describes

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1. Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, p.763.
 2. J & PASB, (1909), p.217.
 3. Sarkar, op.cit., pp. 47-51.
 4. Banerjee, HQ, Vol.I, p.266.
 5. E.I. XIII, pp. 150-161.

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him as a valorous fighter.

Thus the protracted struggle between Narasimhadeva I and the Nawabs of Bengal continued for 12 years i.e., 1243-1253 A.D. As a result, Narasimhadeva I captured the Rādhā region of Muslim Bengal comprising Midnāpore, Bānkura and Hooghly districts. In 1255 A.D., Yazbak regained Mandaran but failed to dispossess the Gāngās from Rādhā. Yazbak rebelled against the Sultan of Delhi in 1255 A.D. and died while leading an expedition to Kāmarupa in Assam. With his death the struggle between Narasimhadeva I and the Nawab of Bengal ended.

The victories of Narasimhadeva I over the Muslims of Bengal have been mentioned in the Ekāvali, a sanskrit Smriti work by Vidyādhara. The Ekāvali makes a reference to Narasimhadeva's fights with the Yavanas or the Muslims of Bengal and his victories over them. It gives Narasimhadeva I the proud epithet yavanabani ballabha² or the conquerer of the Yavana kingdom which obviously refers to Muslim Bengal and Hamira-mada-mardana³ or the vanquisher of the Muslim Amirs of Bengal.

It has been observed earlier that the Kākatiya ruler Ganapati frustrated the efforts of Anāgabhimadeva III in the latter's attempt to occupy the veṅgi region and established his supremacy over that area by defeating the velanatti chiefs. The relationship between Ganapati and Anāgabhimadeva III was not all that cordial and

1. Panigrahi, K.C., op.cit., p. 165,

2. The Ekāvali of Vidyādhara, JASB, (1903), Appendix-II.

this spirit of rivalry was witnessed even during the time of Narasiṃhadeva I, the son and successor of Anāṅgabhimadeva III. Narasiṃhadeva I, a valiant fighter and a great general of his age, carefully watched the happenings beyond the southern border of his kingdom. Probably after his successes against the Muslim Nawabs of Bengal, he was engaged in a battle with Gaṇapati in which he emerged victorious. The Liṅgarāja temple inscription of Narasiṃhadeva I clearly mentions that Narasiṃhadeva I frightened Gaṇapati with his sword. Gaṇapati of the aforesaid inscription was none other than the Kākatiya ruler Gaṇapati of Warrangal. The description in the said inscription is as follows:

"sva-kara-karavāla-kampita-gaṇapati-bhū-senāpati-
Gajabāji, -Samāja -rājarāja-tanujātmaja-sya-
maricī-Parāsarā-acara-vicāra-caturaviranara-keśarī-
dharādhi-pasya-nyāya-namra-Paripanthi-Prithīvīpati-
kirita-kotimani-ghṛṇi-sreṇī-bhiru-nita pada-
sarojasya-sāmrajyā bhiseka-c'atrutha-samvat-sare."

It has been edited by Pandit Surya Narayan Das, whose argument has given us the welcome light on this issue. It is thus clear that Narasiṃhadeva I, son of Anāṅgabhimadeva III and grandson of Rājarāja III threatened the the Kākatiya ruler Gaṇapati. It appears that the conflict

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1. I.O., V, 1, (1975), No. 80, pp. 124-125; I.C. Vol. III, pp. 221-226.
 2. S.I.I., IV, No. 1952.
 3. I.O., V, 1, No. 80, pp. 124-125.

between the two rulers took place over a border dispute in which Narasimhadeva triumphed. Some historians tend to believe that Narasimhadeva I defeated Ganapati's daughter Rudrambā by taking the advantage of the unsettled conditions in the Kākatiya kingdom after the death of Ganapati. But since there is a clear reference in the Lingarāja temple inscription to a king named Ganapati being humbled by Narasimhadeva I we can suggest that it was Ganapati and not his daughter Rudrambā who was defeated by Narasimhadeva I. But this victory of Narasimhadeva I was of little consequence as there is no proof of any annexation of the Kākatiya territory by the Gaṅga ruler. In all likelihood, river Godāvarī continued to be the boundary line between the Gaṅga and the Kākatiya kingdoms.

The kendupaṭānā plates of Narasimhadeva II mentions that Sitādevī, the queen of Narasimhadeva I was the daughter of a Malwa king. H.C.Ray has inferred that queen Sitādevī was the daughter of the Pāramāra king of Malwa. At the present state of our knowledge it is difficult to identify the Pāramāra king who was the father-in-law of Narasimhadeva I. But it can be said that the matrimonial alliance between the two families was a factor that attributed to the unprecedented military success of Narasimhadeva I.

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1. Andhra Pradesh District Gazetteer, East Godavari, (1979), p. 28
 2. OHRI, Vol. 1, No. 4, (1953), p. 303; IHO, (1954) pp. 81-83 and IC, III, pp. 221-226.
 3. JASB, Vol. LXV, Pt. 1, (1896), pp. 229-271.
 4. Ray, H. C., DHNI., Vol. 1, pp. 469ff.

Narasimhadeva I achieved crowning glory by constructing a majestic edifice in honour of the Sun God at Arkaksetra or Konārka¹. The temple stands as a monument of triumph and a testimony to Narasimhadeva I's military successes. As a monument, the Konārka temple forms a class by itself and a representative specimen of the Kalingan style. In the monument the Kalingan style of temple building art reached its climax. The details about the architecture of the temple and its sculptures will be described in Chapter-VIII.

The Chandrashekhera temple inscription of Narasimhadeva I on the Kapilās Hill points out that the king succeeded in humbling the pride of his enemies by the power of his arms at the command of God Purushottama². The inscription further states that Narasimhadeva I was a Paramamāheśvara, Durgā-putra and Purushottamaputra³. Anaṅgabhimadeva III also calls himself Purushottam Putra⁴, Rudraputra and Durgā Putra in his Drāksarama inscription. The spirit of harmony and tolerance advocated by Narasimhadeva I and crystallised in the cult of Jagannātha will be dealt later.

The achievements of Narasimhadeva I immortalises him in the annals of the Gāngas. Some of the grants of his successors pay glowing tributes to him for his military successes and for constructing the Sun temple at Konārka⁵. Narasimhadeva I is known to have made donations

1. JASB, LXV, pp. 229 ff.

2. Kapilās Temple inscription of Narasimhadeva I; I.O., Vol.V, Part 1, pp. 136-137, No.90 and E.I., XXXIII, pp. 41-45.

3. Ibid.

4. S.I.I., V, No.1329.

5. I.O., V, i, (1975), pp. 293-296.

to different shrines at Bhubaneswar, Srikurman, Simhachalam, and Kapilās.

One Lingarāja temple inscription refers to the construction of a monastery called Sadāsiva Maṭha in Bhubaneswar during the reign of Narasimhadeva I. This monastery was a place of shelter for the refugees of Bengal (Gauda and Rāḍha) who had fled owing to the incursion of the Muslim rulers. The historical significance of the inscription is that it records an example of refugee rehabilitation in the 13th century. The text of the inscription is as follows:-

"Sadāsiva Matha Vasthita Rādhāgauda desiya
tāpasajana bhejana byavastha Śrī
Narasimhadevasya Samsta Srāhi....."²

Narasimhadeva I has been considered as a remarkable figure in the history of Orissa. He possessed qualities of an out standing warrior and a military general. He was a true follower of the deputy ideology or rauta concept of his father, Narasimhadeva I even surpassed his father by constructing the unparalleled temple for Surya at Konārka. A sculpture in the temple shows Narasimha personally worshipping the triad i.e., Purushottama, Sivalinga and Goddess Durgā on a platform. This suggests that all the major religious faiths of Orissa were brought into one fold during this time.

Narasimhadeva's military tactics were executed with consummate skill and this kept the territorial

1. Mahatab, History of Orissa, p. 233.

2. Ibid.

bounds of the kingdom well defended and protected. Besides this, he administered the state as per the traditions of Marici and parāsara¹ and followed the niti texts like his father. In the light of the above statement his Srikur¹mam inscription(Saka 1172) may be referred. The inscription mentions that he "excelled the ocean in sobriety because he was devoid of bad nature and agitation, and yielded valuable articles without the need of churning."² His sincere efforts for the progress in the field of learning, art and architecture, and religion are praiseworthy and bring admiration from different quarters. His glorious reign ended sometime in Saka 1186 or 1264 A.D.

1. I.H.O., XXXI, pp. 81ff.

2. Rao, C.V. Ramachandra, Medieval Andhra

(Nellore, 1976) p. 108.