Chapter II

Buddhism in the Pala Age

From Coppala (c.750-70 A.D.) to Devapala (c.810-50 A.D.)

In the previous chapter we have discussed about the patronage which was extended to Buddhism by the ruling dynasties of the pre-Pala period as well as the background of the establishment of the Pala Dynasty by Coppala around 750 A.D. It is a great fortune for Buddhism that it received the long span of rule of the Buddhist Pala dynasty from the middle of the eighth century to the middle of the twelfth century. Indeed, the best and prolonged period of Indian Buddhism coincides with the age of the Pala rulers of Bengal and Bihar. It is to be noted here that not only the Paldas themselves, but also some other independent royal families in East and South-east Bengal like the Devas and Chandras were also ardent supporters of Buddhism and separate mention has been made of them in this chapter.

The inscriptions pertaining to the Pala rulers or their subjects, specially the land-grants as well as other relevant records, enable us to obtain an idea of their religious policy. In short, this policy was marked by a religious catholicity. Though their personal religion
was Buddhism, they were by no means bigot and in pursuance of the policy of their predecessors they extended support to Brahmanical cults. In fact, not a few of their charters\footnote{These copper-plate charters contain the invocation of the Buddha. They also bear seals containing the well-known Buddhist symbol, viz., the dharma-chakra flanked by two antelopes.} recording grants of lands to several individual Brahmins bear testimony to this fact.

That all the Pāla kings were Paramasaugetas, has been evidenced from their epigraphic records, the dated manuscripts as well as literary texts. To cite one example from the Bhagalpur grant of Nārayanapāla\footnote{IA, Vol.XV, p.304; GL, p.55.}. It opens thus:

"Victorious is that illustrious Lord of the world (Lokanātha) Dasabala, whose heart was resplendent with the Jewel of compassion, taken Maitri as his Mistress, whose wisdom (arising from) perfect knowledge, washed off ignorance (as the pure water of a river does the mud) and having overcome the power of kāmākāri (who do not acknowledge any control and act wilfully), attained ever-lasting peace". All these epithets are equally applicable to both Buddha and Gopāladeva.

The epigraphic records of Dharmapāla and Devapāla also contain Mahāyānic concept of Buddha. The language
of some of the verses is as follows:

"May the ten powers of Vajrāsana (of Buddha) who has firmly attained, as to fortune, to omniscience (those powers) which cherished by his consort - great compassion, conquer, the regions where many hosts of the Evil one are seen protecting you."

"May the perfection of that venerable being, whose objects are accomplished, whose mind is steadfast in the cause of others and who is ever treading the path of virtue, procure for his people unsurpassed perfection - that being who, a sugata and in all things a lord of the earth, having excelled the ways of perfection of the creatures of the three worlds by display of his awful might has attained in to bliss."

These eulogies afford us a glimpse of the new dimension of the Mahāyāna philosophy and its full-length image may be found in the religious practice of the Pūla Kings, countless deities of Buddhist gods and goddesses, the concepts of Vajrayāna-Mantryāna-Kalchakrayāna-Sahajayāna, songs and dohas of Siddhācharyas and in the Buddhist philosophical texts of this period.

The attitude and the notion of the Pala Kings towards Brahmanism show that they reserved veneration towards Brahmanical religion and even adopted various Brahmanical religious practices and rituals. Many of the Pala monarchs accepted princesses of the Brahmanical dynasties as their wives. They also donated lands to many Brahmins for the enhancement of religious merit and fame. The list of some representative land-grants is given in the following Table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reign period</th>
<th>Magadha</th>
<th>North Bengal</th>
<th>West Bengal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Brahmanism</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmapāla</td>
<td>Nalanda</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devapāla</td>
<td>2. Nalanda</td>
<td>1. Monghyr</td>
<td>Ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narāyanapāla</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Bhagal-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nājyapāla</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Bhaturiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopāla II</td>
<td>Ml</td>
<td>Ml</td>
<td>Ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahipāla I</td>
<td>Ml</td>
<td>Ml</td>
<td>Ml</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nayapāla</td>
<td>Ml</td>
<td>Ml</td>
<td>Ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kamboja-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pala)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigrahapāla</td>
<td>Ml</td>
<td>Ml</td>
<td>Ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madarapāla II</td>
<td>Ml</td>
<td>Ml</td>
<td>Ml</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. As for example, Dharmapala married a Rastrakuta princess Ramadevi and Vigrahapala I a Haihaya princess Lajjadevi.
The reason of this predilection of the Pala rulers to favour the Brahmanical religion by making endowments to individual Brāhmaṇas or institutions is not far to seek: the royal donors imbibed the age-old tradition of religious tolerance and impartial religious policy of the State as witnessed in earlier period (supra, Chapter I). It is not unlikely that Brahmanical wives of the Pala kings also exerted some influence on their husbands to make such grants, which traditionally they believed to be a meritorious act. Besides, Brahmanism being the earliest and oldest religious system in India, always held in high esteem even by the people of heterodox faiths such as Buddhists and Jains, some of whom were converts and as such appear to have retained some religious practice and ritual of the faith they hitherto professed. Thus the Pala kings also patronised Brahmanism and this seems to be supported by their land-grants as well as by numerous Brahmanical images belonging to this period. The last rites performed by Jayapāla after the death of Dharmaśāla's brother Vākapāla seem to have been carried out in accordance with the Brahmanical prescriptions. Rāmapāla committed religious suicide

6. In earlier days also wives of Buddhist kings showed favour to Brahmanism. Thus Prabhavati, queen of the Buddhist king Devakhadga, installed a Brahmanical deity called Sarvānī, supra, Chapter I.
by drowning himself in the Ganges after donating large sums and valuables on hearing the news of the death of his maternal uncle, Mathana. Dharmapāla devoted himself to reform the Brahmanical social order by reorganising the caste system as laid down in the scripture. All these instances demonstrate, inter alia, the attitude of the Pālas towards Brahmanism.

However, we find that the Pāla Kings devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the service of Buddhist religion and Saṅgha and made concentrated efforts for the extension of the influence of Buddhism. The piety and acts of patronage of Buddhism by individual Pāla Kings is discussed according to the accepted Pāla genealogy and chronology as shown in the following Table.

The genealogy of the Pāla Kings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of King</th>
<th>Approximate reign-period</th>
<th>Approximate year of accession</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gopāla I</td>
<td>750 A.D.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmapāla</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>770 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devapāla</td>
<td>39 (or 35)</td>
<td>810 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surapāla I</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>850 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigrahapāla I</td>
<td>3 (? )</td>
<td>856 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Monghyr copper-plate of Devapāla, V, 5; FI, XVIII, p. 304.
As is natural, there were kings of varying degrees of power and competence in the Pala family, and accordingly Buddhism moved in rapid and slow strides. It gathered a greater momentum during the reigns of strong kings like Dharmpala, Devapala, Mahipala I, Nayapala and Ramapala, and relatively slowly progressed when weaklings like Vigrahapala I, Narayanapala and Mahipala II were on the throne.
Tāranātha, who provides us an interesting account of Gopaladeva, despite its ambiguity and legendary nature, states that Gopāla was a great Upāsaka and attained siddhi by worshipping the Goddess Chunā, the tutelary deity, long before his nomination as King of Bengal⁸. Schiefner mentioned in his note of his edition of Tāranātha's account about a manuscript of Chunā-Sādhanā kept in the Tibetan 'Tan-gyur', which was also appeared from Paris under the title 'Sādhanā-mālā-tantra' Fol.81⁹. It shows that Chunā-Sādhanā is a part of Buddhist Tantra. We have already mentioned that Pāla dynasty subscribed to the Mahāyānic system of Buddhism and this information of Tāranātha may be interpreted that the Tantric system even in its rudimentary form was in vogue in the beginning of the Pāla reign.

Whatever it may be, it proves the highly religious disposition of Gopāladeva and it is reasonably expected that after his assumption of power as ruler of the country, he made concentrated effort for prosperity of Buddhism. The Tibetan tradition credits Gopāla with the establishment of the Odantapura Mahāvihāra, within

⁹. Ibid., fn.2.
10. Ibid., p.258.
the walking distance of Nālandā, and if the tradition is relied upon it may appear that Gopāla's aim was to develop this monastic establishment in the line of Nālandā Monastery. A Tibetan legend further tells us that this Pāla establishment was built on the site of a lake being miraculously dried up. Tārenātha's statement is not, however, an undisputed one, since other traditions have variously described Dharmapāla and Devapāla as its founder. The Odantapura monastery was completely destroyed by the Muslim invaders and its remains are yet untraceable. As such, it is difficult to solve the problem of assigning the authorship of this monastery to any of these three Pāla kings. Tārenātha also supplies a long list of Buddhist scholars who flourished during the reign of Gopāla, thus indicating a brisk era of activities in the field of Buddhist theology during his reign. What we can reasonably surmise is that though Gopāla did not find ample time to render adequate service to Buddhism, he did his best to re-establish the religion of the Master in the midst of his greater duty of restoring law and order in his country.

What Gopāla could not do to his satisfaction, his illustrious son Dharmapaladeva did it with success.

The records of his reign while give him the usual royal epithets like Paramabhāttāraka and Mahārājādhiraśa, describe him as a devout worshipper of Sugata (i.e., Buddha). Dharmapāla, who ascended to the throne of Gauda-Magadha in circa A.D. 770, not only established the imperial edifice, but also served the cause of Buddhism devotedly.

There are adequate references to Dharmapāla's patronage of Buddhist religion in Tibetan Chronicles. The king is credited with the establishment of the Vikramaśīla Mahāvihāra in Magadha and it may be regarded as one of his monumental works for the furtherance of Buddhism. This Vihāra was situated on a hill top on the bank of the Ganges which contained life-sized image of the Master, fifty-three smaller temples belonging to the Guhya Tantra and fifty-four ordinary temples. The arrangement for the provision of food and clothing were lavishly made for the inmates of the monastery, consisting of total one hundred and fourteen persons, out of which one hundred-eight were Pāṇḍitas. A festival was organised every month for listening to the Doctrine and excellent gifts were distributed. Tāranātha also states that Dharmapāla built fifty centres for studying Buddhist doctrine and out of

them, thirty-five establishments were exclusively devoted for the study of Prajñā-paramita. We learn from Tāranātha that Haribhadra and Jñānapada were his preceptors and they were versatile in the Guhyasamāja and the Prajñā-paramita. He offered his preceptors highest seat of honour and helped the propagation of the doctrine enunciated in the Prajñā-paramita and the Guhyasamāja in all directions.

Attempts by different scholars were going from a long past to identify the location of Vikramāļa which lay somewhere in the east of Magadha. Recently, excavations at Antichak near Bhagalpur by the Patna University have enhanced the probability of its being the likely site of this famous University of by-gone days. Whatever may be its exact location, the credit of its foundation may be given to Dharmapāla on the basis of the second name of Dharmapāla which was Śrī-Vikramāļalādeva. Though Tāranātha ascribes the foundation of the Somapuri-Vihāra in Varendra to Devapāla, the clay seals recovered among the ruins of Paharpur (the Rajshai District, Bangladesh) reveal the name of Dharmapāla as the founder of this monastery.

15. MAS No.55 ("Paharpur", K.N.Dikshit); cf. terracotta seals contain the inscription "Śrī-Dharmapāladeva-Mahavihārya-Arya-Bhikshasānga"; compare plate LIX(h) in Dikshit’s Report, Ibid.
Apart from setting up new monasteries which subsequently became centres of adding new dimensions to the Buddhist theology, Dharmapāla provided encouragement and financial help to the scholars of his time to devote themselves to writing or annotating Buddhist religious or philosophical texts. As for example, we find from the Tibetan tradition that Haribhadra under the patronage of Dharmapāla composed his famous annotation of Abhisamayālekhāra, by retreating to the solitary room of Traikūṭaka Mahāvihāra. It seems that the Buddhist literature of Bengal attained enrichment under the inspiration of Dharmapāla (infra). Two illustrious artists of ancient Bengal, Bītpalo and Dhīman, who introduced new artistic styles in sculpture and painting, known as the Pāla school of Art, lived at Nālandā during his reign (infra).

The reign of Dharmapāla, as we find from the above accounts, is marked by his contributions to the progress and improvement of Buddhist creed and culture, a rare accomplishment for an Emperor, more so, when we ponder that he nursed his religious faith by devoting his time and energy and mobilising state's resources in the midst of involvement in war and politics.

Parameśvara Paramabhattāyaka Mahārajādeva and Parama-Saṅgata Dvapāladeva, the third king of this dynasty, toed the line of his father Dharmapāla in respect of Buddhism. Among the inscriptions of his reign, the Nālandā copper-plate of Devapāla and the Ghosrawa stone inscription of a Buddhist monk throw welcome light on the role of Devapāla as a patron of Buddhism. As regards image-inscriptions, they are found engraved on images of either Buddhist or Brahmānical deities, which were consecrated by private citizens for the enhancement of their religious merit. They also indicate the trend of religious activities among the masses and the reverence of the common people for Buddhism. However, the discovery of a large number of Buddhist images or relics consecrated by the common people show the popularity and strength gained by Buddhism in Magadha and Bengal during the reign of Devapalādeva, a direct reflection on King's benefaction of Buddhism. As no archaeological relic like a Buddhist image or an epigraphical record with Buddhist overtones has yet been found in the Bengal delta, it is not possible to suggest as to how Buddhism or Buddhist institutions were benefited by Devapāla's patronage. All such objects have been from the Magadha region, notably the renowned and age-old places of pilgrimage like Nālandā and Bodhagayā.

It has already been said that like his predecessors Devapala was also a Buddhist. His deep devotion
towards Buddhism is explicit, *inter alia*, in the following preamble of his Mongbyr copper-plate:17

"Maharajadhiraja the illustrious Devapaladeva, who meditated on the feet of ... the devout worshipper of Sugata."

More important than the Mongbyr grant is the *Nalanda* copper-plate 18. It shows not only Devapala's patronage of the Nalanda monastery, but also refers to the high place of eminence held by him in the sphere of international Buddhism. This grant resulted from the request of Bālaputradēva of the Śailendra dynasty of Java who has been described in this copper-plate as "an expert in crushing the pride of all rulers ...." A passage of it further reads: "When the mind attracted by the manifold excellences of Nalanda and through devotion to the son of Siddhodhana (Buddha) and having realised that riches were fickle like the waves of a mountain stream, built there (at Nalanda) a monastery which was the abode of the assembly of monks various good qualities and was white with stuccoed and lofty dwellings." The Javanese king was thus a devout worshipper of Buddha and a royal patron of Nalanda. The

construction of a monastery at Nalanda by a king of distant foreign land proves that Nalanda was still bright with its past glories and was known as the foremost centre of Buddhist studies under the custody of the Pala kings who inherited this great Buddhist establishment from the illustrious Gupta rulers and Harshavardhana.

Bālaputradeva requested Devapāla through a messenger to make donation for the maintenance of the monastery which he built at Nalanda. The Pala monarch accepted the request and issued the grant which reveals, that he granted five villages "for the welfare of himself, his parents and the world", the villages being mentioned as Nandivamāka, Manivāyaka, Māyika, Hasti and Pālamāva. These were gifted "together with the undivided lands with ground places, mango and madhuka (bassia latifolia) trees", free from all troubles, "exempt from the entry of the chetas (village officers) and bhatas, with all taxes due to the king's family or court with nothing of these to be recorded, according to the bhūmischchidra, to last as long as the moon and the sun and the earth endure". But the portion the land or part of the village made gift to gods, and the Brāhmanas already kept outside the premise of the grant (lines 33-37). The purpose of the grant "being requested by the illustrious Maharaja Bālaputradeva, the King of
Suvarnadwipa, through a messenger 'I have caused to be built a monastery at Nalanda', granted by this edict towards the income for the Blessed Buddha the abode of all the leading virtues like the Prajñāpāramitā for the offering oblations, shelter, garments, alms, beds, the requisites of the sick like medicines, etc., of the assembly of the venerable bhikshus of the four quarters (comprising) the Bodhisattvas, well-versed in the tantras and the eight great holy personages (i.e., Ariya and Ruggalas) to writing the dharmaratnas or Buddhist texts and for the upkeep and repair of the monastery (when) damaged'. Thus Devapaladeva gifted the total income of these five villages consisted of rent including arrear and resulted from exploitation of land or trees permanently to Nalanda monastery for defraying all sorts of expenses in running and maintaining the establishment.

Apart from the Nalanda monastery, Devapala was perhaps associated with other Buddhist establishments. Thus Taranātha mentions that he was the founder of the Somapuri Monastery in Varendra, though we have seen above that Dharmapala has been described as the founder.

of the same in some other records (supra, note 23) it has been suggested that the name, 'Dharmapāla Vihāra' was meant to be commemorative— the son's dutiful tribute to the memory of the father. In other words, Devapāla built it to commemorate his father. To us the suggestion appears to be speculative in the face of positive evidence unearthed from the Paharpur, the site of this monastery. The Tibetan tradition, it is to be borne in mind, was recorded long after the reign of Devapāla and was based on the legends circulated in the country at that time. Subsequent archaeological findings and researches have proved the work of Taranātha erroneous at several places.

The Ghosrawa (a village in the Patna district) inscription is an eloquent testimony to Devapāla's deep interest in the welfare of the Mālanda Mahāvihāra and his devotion to the Buddhism. This inscription tells us about a great Buddhist scholar and monk Viśadeva, who formerly belonged to the Brahmanical religion, well-versed in the Vedas and his birth-place was Magarahāra (modern Māmāribār near Jalalabad in Afghanistan).

"Being anxious to follow the teaching of Buddha, he studied Buddhist theology at Kanishka Vihāra (in modern Peshawar) under the teacher Sarvajñāśāntī and formally

embraced Buddhism. He visited the diamond-throne at Mahābodhi (i.e., Bodh-Gayā) and stayed at Yasovarman-Vihāra under the patronage of King Devapāladeva, and erected two chaityas on the hill Indrāsilā, about 5 miles south-west of Ghoarwa. Vīrādeva was elected the President (Sanghasthavīra) of the Nalanda Monastery by the Sangha or Assembly. According to the record Devapala "shone like the sun, endowed with splendour, filling quarters with his daily rising and dispelling the spread of darkness". It also informs that Vīrādeva was worshipped by the Lord of the Universe, Devapāla.

However, his Monghyr copper-plate demonstrates that Devapāla followed the tradition of religious tolerance and congenial relationship with Brahmanism, set by his father Dharmapāla. This land-grant shows that he donated the village of Meshika to a Brahmin named Bhāṭṭa Vīhekaratamātāra.

Though we do not get a complete picture of Devapāla's patronage towards his religion from the epigraphical records or Tibetan traditions, the few examples of his benefaction for Buddhism testify to his stature and eminence in the fields of Buddhism and Buddhist learning.
From the Death of Devapāla (c. 850 A.D.) to the Rise of Mahīpāla I (c. 988 A.D.)

The Pala kings after Devapāla lacked the vigour and strength of their predecessors. As a result, the power and prestige of the empire considerably suffered and the political decline seems to have naturally affected the progress of the faith they professed. The most meagre evidence of the epigraphic records and the comparative silence of the Tibetan Chronicles about the activities of the Pala kings of this period on the issue of Buddhism are significant. Yet there is no reason to doubt that the Pala rulers of this period withdrew their support of Buddhism. Indeed they remained as devout Buddhists as their forefathers were.

The cause of this phenomenon is not difficult to infer. The Pala kings during the period under review were busy in maintaining the integrity of their kingdom and hardly found any time to give attention to their religion. The most notable event in the history of the Pālas of this period is the dismemberment of their kingdom: the Vaṅga-Samstata sector slipped away from their hands and two Buddhist independent dynasties sprang up there, first under Kāntīdeva and then under the Chandra kings. Besides, a line of kings called the Kāmbuja-Pālas also appear to have snatched away another slice of the
Pāla empire and carved out a kingdom in West and North Bengal (i.e., Radhā-Varendra). Such political turmoil leading to the loss of power and prestige of the Pālas did not, however, affect the career of Buddhism inasmuch as the family of Kāntideva and the Chandra dynasty, who professed Buddhism, also considerably supported their religion.

Devapāla seems to have been immediately succeeded by Sūrapāla, who finds mention in the Pedal pillar inscription of Bhaṭṭa Gurava Miśra (Gurava's father, Fedāra-misra, served under Sūrapāla) and the recently discovered copper-plate from Mirzapur, U.P. The Mirzapur copper-plate has set at rest the controversy about the identification of Sūrapāla with Vīgraḥapāla I, since it clearly mentions Sūrapāla as the son and successor of Devapāla, his mother being Bhaṇadevi, a daughter of king Durilabhāraja21. Vīgraḥapāla I was the son of Jayapāla, the latter's younger cousin of Devapāla and thus he was the cousin of Sūrapāla. Sūrapāla seems to have been succeeded by Vīgraḥapāla I and the latter by his son Nārâyapāla. Both Sūrapāla and Vīgraḥapāla I ruled for a short period and the reign of the latter seems to have come to an end by 856 A.D.

Sūrapāla has been described in the Mirzapur copper-plate as Parama-saṅgata and is said to have assumed the usual royal titles in this record. The epithet Parama-saṅgata, in addition to the Buddhist Dharma-chakra-antelope symbol, proves that he was a Buddhist. The epigraph records a donation of some villages in Śrīnagara-bhukti (i.e., Patna) to the Śaiva-chūryas of Banaras at the behest of queen Mahādevī Mahesakobhattārīka by king Sūrapāla while camping at Mudgagiri. His reverence to Brahmanism is further attested by the Badal pillar inscription, according to which, he attended the sacrificial ceremonies performed by his minister, Kedaramisra, and poured holy water over his own head for the welfare of his empire. Thus both these records prove that Sūrapāla followed the policy of religious catholicity of his predecessors though he himself was a Buddhist.

Two other records of his time need mention. These are two epigraphs inscribed on the pedestal of two images of Buddha and are reportedly found somewhere in Bihar²². They are supposed to contain the name of Uddāṅga-pura (ancient Odantapurī, according to some modern town of Bihar-Sharif) and they record that the

Images were installed by Furnadasa, a Buddhist monk of Sind, in the 3rd year of Surapala. As Surapala is now distinguished from Vigrahapala I, these records are no longer ascribed to him.

Vigrahapala I appears to be on the throne hardly for more than a couple of years. He abdicated his throne in favour of his son Narayanspāla. He was also of ascetic nature like his father. Narayanspāla reigned as long as 54 years, yet no spectacular evidence of his support to Buddhism has so far come to light. Only a land-grant issued by him, i.e., Bhagalpur copper-plate 23 went to the benefit of Brahmanical religion and rest of the inscriptions of his time numbering four was in the nature of image, stone and pillar inscriptions, inscribed either by the king or by the ordinary people of his kingdom.

Among them we find that a certain monk named Dharmamitra, a resident of Andhravishaya, installed an image of Buddha in some place in Magadha (most probably at Osantapura) during the 9th regnal year of Narayanspāla 24. The Basal pillar inscription 25 (already mentioned) contains an eulogy about five generations of hereditary Brahmin ministers who served under four Pāla kings beginning

   The village was donated for worshipping the image of Siva.
from Dharmapala. Similarly, the rest of the image-inscriptions or stone-inscriptions like the Gaya stone inscription\textsuperscript{26} etc., are acts of munificence of individuals towards the cause of Brahmanism.

From the Buddhist point of view, therefore, the reign of Narayapala seems to be insignificant, though the presence of a Buddhistic emblem of dharma-chakra and invocation in his inscriptions prove the deep faith and devotion to Buddhism of the said Pala ruler. The instances of observation of Brahmanical rites by Narayapa-pala show that he followed the traditional religious policy of his forebears.

Nâjayapala, the son and successor of Narayapala, ascended the throne in c.908 A.D. The Bangarh\textsuperscript{27} copper-plate of one of his descendants, Mahipaladeva, has given credit to him for undertaking different beneficial works like the excavation of tanks, establishment of lofty temples etc. Apart from this, we do not get any land-grant for the benefaction of Buddhism, nor any other records, which directly bears his name for any meritorious work in the field of religion. A few image

\textsuperscript{26} El, Vol.XXXV, p.225.
Inscriptions discovered at Kurkihar (near Patna), revealing the names of individuals who commissioned the relevant Buddhist images for their religious merit, tend to show that Buddhism was yet quite active in Magadha.

Though not important for Buddhism, the Bhaturiya stone inscription recording the grant of one hundred puranmas, the income of the village, Madhurasava, to the temple of Siva, by Rājyapāla indicates the prominence enjoyed by Brahmanism in the Bengal delta. It also shows the perpetuation of the religious policy which consisted in the support of the Brahmanical religion by Rājyapāla. However, the installation of several Buddhist images at monasteries by common laity, attests to the devotion of the people of Bengal towards Buddhism.

28. Kurkihar image inscription, JBOIS, Vol.XXVI, pp.246, 47,48,50; followings are the inscribed images:
   (i) Gift of the image by one named Nārasimha Chaturvedin, a Vedic Brāhmaṇa who became a disciple of the Sthāvira Vairochana Simha in the 28th year of the King Rājyapāla.
   (ii) Image installed by Mūlaka, wife of Mahāraja, a resident of Aparaka monastery in the 31st regnal year of Rājyapāla.
   (iii) The image containing Buddhist inscription, belonging to the 32nd year of his reign.
   (iv) Inscribed image donated by Gauka, the second wife of Gopālabōna of Aparaka monastery.

Gopāla II, who ascended the Pāla throne after the death of his father Rājyapāla, was relatively more powerful than the three preceding Pāla kings. After a long lapse of time, we get few examples of activities in Buddhist religion during his reign. The pedestal of a Buddha statue discovered at Bodhgaya and the inscription on it reveals the name of certain Sukrasena consecrated the Buddha image during his reign. The colophon of the manuscript Ashtasahasrika-prajñāparamitā had borne the following sentence: "Paramāśvara paramabhattārika parama-saṅgata Mahārājābhiseka Sūtrāmad-gopaladeva pravarāsevina-kalyāna viyajayotadi-samvat 15 āśvin-dine 4 Śrī-Virkramāsiladeva-vibhūre likhitam". It shows that Vikramāśīla-mahāvihara continued to receive the royal patronage and the works of religious merit like the writing of Ashtasahasrika-prajñāparamitā were undertaken there during the reign of Gopāla II. Though we do not get any instance of active participation of Gopāla II for the improvement or benefit of his religious creed, it proves his devotion for Buddhism, created enthusiasm among his subjects to consecrate Buddhist image or writing of the Buddhist texts. The epigraphical records of Gopāla II's reign do not demonstrate any different picture.

(1908)
31. JRASBL, 1910, pp.150-51.
from the earlier Pāla kings as regards the policy towards Brahmanism.

The last ruler in the order of succession during this stagnant political phase of the Pāla dynasty was Vigrāhabāla II. It seems that the political power of the Pālas was virtually on the point of collapse, when Vigrāhabāla II had to take shelter either in Rāhha or Vanga being dislodged from other areas. We cannot expect any positive contribution of the Pāla king towards Buddhism during this political crisis. Of the few relics having a bearing on the reign of Vigrāhabāla II, discovered till recently, mention may be made of Manuscript of Pañcharaksha and the Kurkihar images and some Terracottas. The scanty information emanating from the above archaeological finds do not enable us to determine the nature or the quantum of the patronage towards Buddhism by Vigrāhabāla II vis-a-vis the position of Buddhism during his reign.

What has been said above reveals, however, that in this period of decadence of the Pāla political power, Buddhism could not receive that royal support it used to.

33. BI (RDB), p.199.
35. JEOAS, Vol.XXXVI, No.4, pp.36, 37, 33 ff, 239, 240.
get in the preceding era of Gopāla-Dharmapāla-Devapāla.
It, however, continued to enjoy the support of the common man as is indicated by several Buddhist images bearing the names of private individuals consecrating them as well as the lands donated by them.

The Period of Mahipāla I and Nayanātha

The Pāla kingdom received a new lease of life with the accession of Mahipāla I. He restored the fortunes of his family and the political stability of his reign resulted in the resurgence of Buddhism. Of the epigraphical records of Mahipāla's reign, testifying to his patronage of Buddhism, the Saranatha inscription deserves a particular mention. This inscription of Samvat 1083 states that Mahipāla I entrusted his two brothers, Āhirapāla and Vasantapāla for the repairs and new construction of different religious buildings at this site. The works undertaken by the brothers of Mahipāla on his behalf are as follows: (1) repairs of Dharmarājīka, (2) repairs of Dharmachakra, i.e., the Dharma-chakra, where Buddha preached for the first time, (3) construction of "new Gandha-kuṭi (shrine) made of stone", i.e., the temple of Buddha.

36. PB, p.75; it is discovered at Bodhgaya and kept in a temple.
The buildings in question remain unidentified and the find-spot of the broken image of Buddha is also unknown. According to Vogel, Dharmājīkā might be a stūpa erected by Asoka and Dharmachakra might be the place where the temple found by Yuan Chwang and enshrining a life-size statue of Buddha. The famous Dhamarka stūpa at Saṃrātha might have been one of the edifices which was repaired by the pious brothers of Mahipāla.

The other religious buildings, hundreds in number, as we are told are unidentified. Like the Saṃrātha epi-graph, the Nālandā stone inscription dated 11th year of his reign reveals that the repairs and renewals of Nālandā monastery were undertaken during his reign by Bālāditya who belonged to the Mahāyānīst school and was a resident of Tailādhaka. In addition, it is learnt from the Tibetan tradition that the Somapura monastery considerably prospered during the reign of Mahipāla I. This seems to receive corroboration from the excavations at Paharpur, the site of the monastery. As observed by Dikshit, who excavated the site: "The prosperity of the establishment was reflected in a wholesale renovation in the main temple and in the monastic cells where

a number of ornamental pedestals seem to have been installed and the shrine of Tārā in the Satyapir Bhita numerous votive stūpas were constructed."

Apart from the construction or repair of numerous Buddhist temples and chaityas at Saranāth, other evidences of his support of Buddhism are available. Thus a stone inscription discovered at Nalanda, which was issued by a monk named Vipaśāmitra, refers to a Vajra-charya named Karunamitra, who lived in the Somapura Mahavihāra. He died at the time of burning down his house by the army of Bangaladesha. It is further learnt from the inscription on the pedestal of a Buddha image that the image of the Master in Bhumiparamāsudra was installed by Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahāpāladeva in his 11th regnal year and it was donated by him with two Gadbakūtas. Two manuscripts of Ashtasahasrikā-Prajñāparamitā, one written in his 5th regnal year and kept at the library of the Cambridge University (No. Add. 1464)

41. The manuscript contains in its colophon: "Paramesvara paramabhaṭṭāraka mahārajaḥvidvāja arīman-Mahā-pāladeva-pravardhamāna vijayārāje 5 aśvinikrishne..."

the monk-scholar Prajnâpâliita was honoured by King Mahipala and the king invited him to stay at Otsâyana-Çâmanî monastery near Jñâvalâ-guhâ in the south of Magadha. It seems that Tantric Buddhism flourished during his reign as Taranâtha mentions the names of different Acharayas for composing commentaries on the Guhya-samaja and many other tantras and "under the auspices of these acharyas, the tantra was widely spread also in Magadha.

But like his predecessors Mahipala I was by no means a religious bigot. Though he was an ardent devotee and patron of Buddhism, he was respectful to Hinduism. In fact his Belwa land-grant of his 5th regnal year and the Bangarh grant of his 9th regnal year, testify to his support of the Brahmanical religion.

Though the historical process of final disintegration of the Pala Empire started during the reign of Nayapala, his reign-period was also significant like his father, Mahîpâla I, in the history of Buddhism in the Vanga-Magadha region. The beginning of the 11th century should be regarded as the new era in the life of Buddhism in this region. Nayapala infused new life-blood in Buddhism. The monasteries of Vikramâsila in Magadha and

43. Taranâtha (DPC), pp.284-88.
44. Ibid.
Somapura in Bengal rose to its height of fame during this period. Numerous monks from Kashmir and different parts of India as well as from Tibet came to these monasteries. Thus one Lochab from Tibet stayed in both these monasteries for either writing Buddhist texts or copying the Buddhist manuscripts or translating the same in the Tibetan language. Buddhist celebrities like Ratnakara-Santi and Atisa-Dipankara made appearance in this period. The exquisite sculptures of Buddhist deities belonging to the Bengal school of Art bear witness to the plastic endeavours of this period. A Bengalee monk from Varendra (North Bengal) during this period in 1026 went to China with many Sanskrit texts.

It is told that several Buddhist religious texts written in the 11th century Bengali script are preserved in the Horiuzi Templo of Japan. If this is a fact, it shows that these Buddhist texts made their way to Japan either directly or via other countries during the reigns of Mahipala and Nayapala. The scholarly pursuits in the realm of Buddhist philosophy were widespread during the period. Apart from the copying of Buddhist manuscripts already mentioned, many such copied manuscripts of their reigns, i.e., 11th century A.D.

47. Manasi O Marmabani (Bengali) 1329 B.S., p.482; EBDH, p.76.
found their way to Nepal and are now preserved in private and public collections. We learn from the scribe who copied the work of Prajñākaramati, a Buddhist philosopher, that he flourished during this period.

Again, it was during this period that a large number of Indian Pandits migrated to Tibet where they translated many Buddhist treatises in the language of that land in collaboration with local scholars. Apart from a spirit of Buddhist philosophical texts, the period witnessed the emergence of the vernacular literature in the Dohas and songs composed by the Buddhist Siddhacharyas. Besides, the Buddhist philosophy also took a positive turn towards Tantricism and Tantric gods and goddesses entered into popular Buddhism and received homage as incarnations and representations of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Nayapalī also contributed to the development of Buddhism. Indeed, the dedicated service of the father and the son brought about all-round prosperity of Buddhism for the second time. A manuscript of the Pañcarākṣa, discovered and preserved at the Cambridge University, contains the information that it was written at the

49. For details see, S.C. Das, Indian Pandits in the Land of Snow.
expense of the queen Uddikara who was a Paramopasika (great devotee) in the 14th regnal year of Paramasaugata mahārājādhirāja parmātāra sriman-Nayapāladeva. Atisa-Dipankara was the spiritual guide of Nayapala like 'Byan-chub' of western Tibet. Atisa reportedly advised him: "Behave like (one with) eyes with regard to your own faults but as the blind with regard to the fault of others. Avoid arrogance and egoism and always meditate on the void. Give publicity to your own faults; do not find faults of others. Give publicity to the virtues of others; keep your own virtues hidden. Do not accept gifts. Always avoid profit and fame. Meditate on Maitri and Karuna. Strengthen the Bodhichitta. The ten akusala-kārmas are to be avoided. Reverence is to be always strengthened. Remember to curb the desires to remain self-content and to act in the virtuous way."

Nayapala may be believed to have followed the advice of his spiritual preceptor, Atisā, and the latter described his disciple as having spread the religion of the Master and ruled the kingdom according to it. According to Tibetan sources some temples of the Nalanda monastery were destroyed by the heretical (tirthika)

50. Bendall Catalogue, p.175, No. Add. 1688.
52. Vimala-ratna-lekha-nāma, Slokas 6-9; ibid., p.520.
King Karna of the West who invaded the kingdom of Nayapala and Atisa brought peace and amity between the belligerent kings. It appears from this incident that the contemporary non-Buddhist monarchs of the neighbouring regions did not like the prosperity of Buddhism in the reign of Nayapala and such religious antipathy was one of the reasons of their attack on the Buddhist kingdom of Palas. The exact quantum of Nayapala's contribution to the cause of the faith he professed is not known.

From Vigrashapala III to Ramanala

The sign of decline of the Pala empire and hence that of Buddhism became more apparent in the reign of Vigrashapala III, the son and successor of Nayapala. The only positive evidence of Vigrashapala's contribution to the cause of Buddhism is furnished by the image of the Master which was consecrated by Dshaka, the son of Suvarnakara, in the 13th regnal year of this king. This information, which is obtained from the inscription borne by the pedestal of the image, indicates that Buddhism continued to enjoy the popularity among the people.

54. PB, p. 112.
during this time. Vigrabapala III also made two land-grants discovered at Belwa\textsuperscript{55} and Amgachi\textsuperscript{56} to individual Brahmanas and this shows that Brahmanas were still held in esteem by the kings of this Buddhist dynasty.

Mahipala II, Surapala and Ramapala, the sons of Vigrabapala III, ascended the throne one after another. During the ephemeral reigns of the first two kings, namely Mahipala II and Surapala II, the Pala kingdom was on the verge of complete disintegration on account of attacks from within and without, notably owing to the rebellion of the Kalvartas under the leadership of their chief Divyoka. Some of the peripheral regions appear to have become independent and the Pala kingdom seems to have been confined to Magadha and North Bengal. During this period of anarchy and confusion Buddhism is not expected to flourish or prosper, and indeed no records, either epigraphical or literary, assignable to this period have so far come to light which speak otherwise\textsuperscript{57}.

\textsuperscript{55} EL, Vol.XXIX, pp.5-6.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., Vol.XV, pp.293-301.
\textsuperscript{57} The two identical inscriptions on pedestals of Buddha images, preserved at the Indian Museum, state that an old Buddhist monk Puradasa consecrated these images at Uddandapura in the 3rd year of Surapala. Mr.Hara-prasad Sastrl has identified this king with Surapala II. But most scholars assign these images to the reign of Vigrabapala I or Surapala I, which we have already mentioned. See JASS, NS, Vol.IV, p.108.
Ramapala, the last outstanding king of this dynasty and the last flicker of the lamp of the Pāla fortunes, was a great devotee of the Buddhist religion. The Rāmācharita of Sandhyākaranandi describes Ramavatī, the capital founded by him, as containing the population of Bhikshus and an image of Avalokitesvara 'whose greatness consisted in saving all sentient beings'.

According to this text, Ramapala erected a great monastery named Jagaddala-vihara and nearer to this was the place of pilgrimage under the name of Apunabhava.

According to Taranatha\textsuperscript{58}, shortly after Ramapala had become king, he appointed great Achārya Abhayākara-gupta as the Upadhyaya of Vajrāsana (Bodhgaya) and subsequently he entrusted him with the office of the Upadhyaya of Vikramāla and Nalanda Monastery as well. Another distinguished Achārya of the time was Ratnakarasanti-pa. Both of them 'were comparable in qualities to the older Maхаachāryas like Vasubandhu and others, though by the influence of time there was difference in the magnitude of their contributions to the Law and in the welfare caused by them to the living beings'.

The archaeological finds and inscriptions of Ramapala's reign include an image of Tara, installed at

\textsuperscript{58} Taranatha (DPC), Ch.16, pp.313-14.
the ancient Uddandapura fortress in the second regnal year of Ramapala, which is now housed in the Indian Museum. The copy of Ashtasahasrika Prajñā-pāramitā was made during the 15th year of the reign of Ramapala by a writer named Grahakunda who belonged to Nalanda in Magadha. The image of Bodhisattva was discovered from the village named Chandmau near Giriyek mountain in the Patna district of Bihar and kept at the Indian Museum in Calcutta. This image was consecrated by a merchant (Parame-bajana vanika) named Sadhu-Sabarana, a resident of the village called Etraha within Rajagriha in the 42nd regnal year of Ramapaladeva.

Though the Tibetan source of information indicates the affluent condition of Buddhism under the stewardship and encouragement of Ramapala, it also contains indications about the decline of the religion of the Master. Taranatha refers to the gradual increase in the number of tirthikas (heretics) and mlechchhas in the kingdom of Bhamgala and other places. And at the turn of the century the invasion of the Muslims dealt a severe blow to Buddhism in Eastern India.

The Ramacharita also mentions different pious works of Ramapala, e.g., the digging of large tanks, planting of many gardens, etc., and construction of Hindu temples. Ramapala ended his life by committing suicide as he drowned himself in the Ganges after distributing wealth to Brahmanas in order to proceed to heaven (RC, IV,8-10). This shows that in spite of the Buddhistic leanings of Ramapala, he greatly revered Brahmanical religion and believed in the Brahmanical faith of attainment of heaven by committing the religious suicide.

The restoration of the power of the Pālas under Ramapala was temporary and his death paved the way of the end of the Pāla rule in Vanga-Magadha. Consequently it also led to the decline of Buddhism.

Ramapala was succeeded by his eldest son Kumārapāla, the latter by his son (i.e., grandson of Ramapala) Gopala III and the latter by the second son of Ramapala named Madanapāla. A copy of Ashtasahasrika-Prajñāpāramitā written in the Vikramaśāla-Mahāvihāra in the 5th year of Gopāla III's reign is known; it is now preserved in the British Museum. The reign of Madanapāla is also of some importance from our point of view. The Manabali (in the Dinajpur district) grant of the king, bearing the usual Dharmačakra seal and beginning with Om Namo Bodhisatva, was issued in the 8th year of his reign. Similarly, a

62. JASE, 1910, pp. 150-51.
63. Ibid., 1900, pp. 66-73.
broken Buddhist statue with an inscription on its pedestal, has been recovered from a village named Valgudar in the Monghyr district; the image was consecrated in the 18th year of the reign of the Pala monarch and in the Saka year 1083⁶⁴. Another Buddhist image with an inscription on its pedestal bears the 19th regnal year of the king; this comes from Jaynagar, near Lakhisarai in North Bihar⁶⁵. A few Buddhist manuscripts copied during the reign of Madanapāla are also known. Thus a text of *Panccharaksha* was copied in his 17th regnal year⁶⁶.

The last two kings of the Pala dynasty are Govindapāla and Palapāla⁶⁷, though some scholars have expressed doubt about the existence of the last-named ruler⁶⁸. Buddhist manuscripts were also copied during the reign of Govindapāla. Chronologically, Madanapāla and Govindapāla (last known date is 1232 V.S. = 1175 A.D.) were close with each other, their last known dates being

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67. Palapāla's name has been sought to be read by Cunningham in a record discovered at Jaynagar, *ASR*, Pl.XLV, No.33; also see *JBORS*, 1918, pp.496 ff.
68. R.C.Majumdar, for instance, has expressed doubt. *HAB*, p.160.
contiguous. Probably both of them were defeated by a common enemy within a few years of 1162 A.D. and thus the illustrious Pala dynasty came to an end.

The last days of the Pala rulers being obscure, it is not possible to review the situation of Buddhism vis-a-vis its royal patrons. The events of copying of manuscripts and consecrating Buddhist images, however, show that the religion of the Master still continued to enjoy support from the kings and the people, though the Pala monarchs of this period could not obviously extend their patronage to it as effectively as their forebears did.

Buddhism in the Period of the Line of Kāntideva of Harikela

The existence of another Buddhist is revealed by a single copper-plate inscription discovered from the Baraakhara temple in Chittagong. Palaeographically it is datable in the 9th century. It is incomplete and from what remains it appears that it was issued as a land grant. The grant was made by a certain Kāntideva, the king of Harikela from the city of Vardhamānapura in Harikela.

(Sylhet-Comilla-Chittagong region). The record has disclosed the names of three successive generations: Bhadradatta, Dhanadatta and Kantideva. Kantideva is styled Parama-Saucata-Paramesvara and Mahārājadhirāja. Whether or not Kantideva was related with aforesaid Bhavadeva of Samatata has not yet been determined and in the absence of any detailed information about Kantideva's reign or any other person of this family it has not yet been possible to reconstruct the history of Buddhism during the reign-periods of Kantideva and his predecessors.

**Buddhism in the Period of the Chandra Dynasty of Varanasi-Samatata**

Another independent dynasty that flourished in East Bengal during the period of Pāla supremacy and deserve a particular mention are the rulers whose names end in Chandra. In fact, politically as well as religiously the Chandras occupy an important position in the annals of early mediaeval Bengal and fortunately more details are known about them. Next to the Pālas, these Chandra rulers were substantial supporters of Buddhism.

Apart from the Tibetan Chronicles and the work of Taranātha, as many as thirteen inscriptions belonging to the reign-periods of different members of this dynasty have been discovered from different areas of East Bengal. Most of these inscriptions will be referred to in proper places. For the list, see Appendix 2.
These epigraphical records have revealed the names of the successive kings of this dynasty: Purnachandra, Suvarnachandra, Trailokyachandra, Srichandra, Kalyanachandra, Ladahachandra and Govindachandra. Their reign-period is usually placed between circa 825 and 1035 A.D.

The religious faith of this dynasty (barring its earliest member) has been demonstrated by the epigraphic records issued by Srichandra (he is the earliest to issue charters) and his successors. Thus the Rampal (near Dacca) plate of Srichandra, bearing the Dharurachakra seal, opens with a verse in honour of Jina (i.e., Buddha), Dharma and also indirectly of Sangha (0.1-3) and it then says:

'His (i.e., of Purnachandra, the founder of the dynasty) son Suvarnachandra .... became a follower of the Buddha 71.

The information contained in the above extract is important, since it clearly indicates that it was Suvarnachandra, the second member of the family, who embraced Buddhism. In other words, Suvarnachandra's father (and presumably also his other predecessors) were followers of Brahmanical religion. In fact, none of the

71. FI, Vol.XII, p.136; Majumdar, R.G., IE, pp.1ff.
Chandra records contains any hint whatsoever as to the Buddhist affiliation of Purnachandra. The Rampal charter says that 'his name was mentioned on the footstools of images, on pillars of victory, copper-plates etc. (Verse 2)'. From Suvarnachandra onwards all the rulers were devout Buddhist, as is attested by the epithet, Paramasauagata prefixed to the names of respective kings as well as by the Dharma wheel seal soldered on their copper-plate grants. In this respect Chandra records are similar to those of the Pala rulers.

The first verse (U.1-3) of Rampal plate describes Lord Buddha as 'the unique receptacle of mercy' (karunakapatram) and the Dharma as 'the unique lamp of the world' (jagadekadipah). It further says that in consequence of the worship of Buddha and Dharma the entire noble-minded Sangha of monks transcends the series of continuous existence (samsara)\(^72\); in other words, the Sangha can thus attain Nirvana. The passage is thus essentially Mahāyāna in character.

All the six inscriptions of Sricbandra, discovered at different places of East Bengal such as, Peachtimbhas\(^73\), Madanpur\(^74\) and Dhulla\(^75\), record the royal

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72. This verse occurs about the beginning of other charters, e.g., Edilpur.
73. Copper-plates of Sylhet, edited by K.K. Gupta, pp.81-152.
75. Ibid., Vol.XXXIII, pp.134-40.
benefactions to individual Brāhmaṇas or Maṭhas (i.e., Brahmanical institutions). The remaining inscriptions, hailing from Kedarpur and Edilpur, are incomplete and donors are unknown. The interesting point concerning these grants is that the king donated lands to the Brāhmaṇas or Brahmanical institutions with invocation of Buddha and dedicated the same in the name of Lord Budhhabhaṭṭarika. This again proves that Sricandra and his successors followed like the Palas the age-old religious toleration. While in the Rampal charter the gift of land was made in favour of Śantivārīka or 'the priest in charge of propitiatory rites' on the occasion of Kotihoma ceremony, in the Dhulla copper-plate the land-grant was made in favour of a similar Śantivārīka on the performance of a certain propitiatory rite called Adhuta-
Śanti, during the Ṛma-Chatusṭaya or the Four Ṛmas. Thus Sricandra, though a Buddhist, used to take active part in Brahmanical observances of this nature and this fact is thus of considerable importance in the present context. As regards Sricandra's benefactions to his own religious faith, no record testifying to the fact has so far come to light, but it is reasonable to believe that he patronised it considerably.

Only one land-grant of the reign of Kalyāṇa-
chandra76, the son and successor of Sricandra, has come

76. PIHC, Vol.XXIII, 1960, pt.1, p.36. The plate was recovered from Dacca and is dated in the 24th regnal year.
to light. It records the donation of land to a Brahmin Pandita. While it shows his religious catholicity, we are in the dark about his active support of his own faith.

The excavation at Lalmai-Mainamati hills in the Mainamati region has yielded two copper-plates of Ladahachandra. It is the same region where the records of Bhavadeva have been discovered. Ladahachandra, son and successor of Kalyanachandra, granted lands by these copper-plates in the name of Vasudeva (Vishnu). Interestingly enough, it is also known from them that the Chandra king went to Varanasi and bathed many times in the Ganges, and is said to have showered the rains of gold and spread spotless fame in all directions by his erudition and poetical genius. Thus Ladahachandra, though a Buddhist (his plates give him the usual epithet Parama-Saugata and they bear the Dharmachakra seal as well), held Brahmanism in esteem and not only supported it but also like his grandfather followed Brahmanical rites and occasionally rituals.

77. His name was hitherto known from the Bharello image inscription (El. Vol.XVII, pp.349-55). For his Mainamati plates, see Khan, F.A., Mainamati, pp.21ff; Bangla Ekademi Patrika, Vol.IV, 1367 B.S., pp.25ff and PIHC, Vol.XXIII, pt.1, pp.56ff.
The records of Govindachandra, the son and successor of Ladabachandra, and the last king of this dynasty does not throw any light on the nature of the benefaction towards Buddhism during his reign. His solitary copper-plate discovered from the same excavated site at Mainamati shows that the grant was made in favour of Natesvara-bhattarakā, i.e., Śiva. In this copper-plate hope is expressed that Brahma may bestow welfare on him, Vishnu may sustain his body and Indra may kill his enemies. Thus though Govindachandra is mentioned as a Paramasaguṛa in this copper-plate, it appears that like his father and other predecessors, he had a distinct predilection for Brahmanical religion.

The foregoing discussion thus unambiguously indicates that the Chandra rulers were devout Buddhists. No clear instances of their devotion towards Buddhism on a personal level have, however, come to light so far.

Attempts have been made to identify the Gopichandra or Govichandra of popular ballads, current in Bengal and other parts of India, with Govindachandra of the Chandra dynasty. As the composition of these ballads cannot be placed much earlier than the 17th or 18th

78. PLSC, Vol.XXIII, 1960, pt.1, pp.36ff; Khan, Mainamati, p.13; Bangla Akademi Patrika, Vol.IV, 1367 B.S., p.25ff. Govindachandra is known from two more inscriptions of his reign. His name seems to be alluded to in the Tirimall inscription of Rajendra Chola.
century, it is difficult to ascertain the amount of truth embedded in them. The different versions of the Gopichandi-ballad, though centre round a king of Bengal named Gopichand or Govichand who embraced the life of an ascetic giving up his kingship, do not agree as to the genealogy of the king. The identity of the name of the mother of Govichandra with that of a well-known place in Comilla as Mainamati is no absolute proof of the identity of Govichandra-Gopichandra of the ballad with Govindachandra of the Chandra dynasty.79

**Buddhism in the Period of Varman Dynasty**

The Chandra dynasty of East Bengal was replaced by an orthodox Brahmanical dynasty. As members of this dynasty had their names ending in Varman, it is known as the Varman dynasty. It had its capital at Vikramapura in Dacca, the erstwhile capital of the Chandras.

The change in the reigning dynasties and their religious faiths did not, however, affect the religious situation in the country. The tradition of religious toleration was demonstrated by the members of the new

79. Muhammad Shahidulla placed this Gopichandra between 675 and 700 A.D. and identified him with Govichandra of the account of Taranatha. Taranatha's Govichandra, however, flourished before the emergence of the Pala. See N.K.Shattasali Commemoration Volume, pp.1ff.
dynasty. Thus the Vajroyogini copper-plate of Samalavarmān (date unknown; c. 12th century A.D.) states that the king made a gift to Bhumadeva for the benefit of the deity Prajñāpāramitā and others. We also learn from the colophones of the two Buddhist texts that these manuscripts were copied during the 19th and 39th regnal years of Hariyārman, who was probably a brother of Samalavarmān. It may be safely said that Buddhism received the support during the period of its fading end on the soil of Bengal even from the devout Vaiṣṇava Varman kings and could retain the position in Eastern and Southern Bengal as a living religion.

Buddhism under the Kamboja-Pāle Dynasty

The discovery of a copper-plate issued by Naya-pāla in his 13th regnal year from a place named Irda in Balasore district of Orissa, has given a new orientation to the political history of the Pāla period. The historians have come to a definite conclusion on the basis of the epithet contained in the copper-plate as 'the ornament of the Kamboja family', about the existence of

81. PB, p. 97; IE, p. 28; Sastri Catalogue, I, p. 79; IHO, Vol. XXII, p. 135.
82. EI, Vol. XXII, pp. 150-59; XXIV, pp. 43-47.
another independent royal dynasty with the name-ending Paša with Kamboja lineage as a result of the invasion of a hill-tribe from a place named Kamboja, differently located by scholars in north, west or east. It has been held that the Kamboja-Pašas carved out a kingdom in the 10th century, taking advantage of the weakness of the Pašas. This kingdom included portions of North and West Bengal, which were once under the sway of the Imperial Pašas.

This new fact in the dynastic history of Bengal in Paša period does not affect the life of Buddhism in Bengal otherwise. As we find from the above-noted Irda copper-plate, the religious faith of the Kamboja-Paša dynasty was identical with that of the Pašas. The copper-plate describes Rājya-paša, the father of Nayapaša, the donor of the grant, as Parama-Saúgata and it bears the emblem of dharmachakra flanked by deer on both sides on the seal in the same manner as we have already witnessed on the copper-plate seals of the Paša rulers. This feature of the charters of the Kamboja-Pašas clearly reveals that the kings of this dynasty were Mahāyāna Buddhists like the Paša monarchs. Though the Irda copper-plate does not

83. For details see, HAB, pp. 126-127; GR, p. 37, BI, 231.
throw any light on the benefaction of the Kamboja-Pala kings and no other copper-plate or relic of this dynasty has yet been discovered, it may fairly be assumed that members of this dynasty were ardent devotees of Sugata like the Palas and thus understandably supported their own religion, i.e., Buddhism.

Though fragmentary scraps of information, derived from the few scattered inscriptions of such minor Buddhist dynasties, do not afford us complete picture of Buddhism and also of the royal patronage of this religion during their reign-period, they convey a convincing impression that they enabled Buddhism to continue as a living religion in Bengal. It is also apparent that the members of these minor dynasties provided much-needed help to this religion at the time when the Pala kings were unable to extend the patronage of Buddhism in those areas of Bengal, from where they were either dislodged or had lost their effective authority. The momentum which Buddhism gathered and maintained, as we witness during this period, was therefore the result of the joint contributions of the Pala rulers and the members of independent minor dynasties of Bengal of the Pala culture-epoch.