CHAPTER ONE

BENGAL IN SPACE AND TIME
Bengal represents various territorial compositions, political developments and religious manifestations during different periods of her history. In space, ancient Bengal composes of a good number of well-defined territorial units (now included in the Indian States of West Bengal, Tripura and neighbouring Republic of Bangladesh); medieval Bengal shows addition of some new territories with alteration and territorial redistribution of the nomenclatures of many of the ancient divisions; and modern Bengal (as demarcated by the Bengal Presidency) emerges at first as the largest administrative division of the British Indian Empire with subsequent contraction of its territorial limits. In time also, Bengal passes through three distinct phases of political and socio-religious transformations: ancient Bengal embraces such developments from pre-historic time to the twelfth Century A.D., highlighting the rules of Vainyagupta (a scion of the Imperial Gupta family), Śaśāṅka (king of Gauḍa), the Buddhist Pāla and Brahmanical Sena monarchs, and some independent and semi-independent minor ruling dynasties like the Chandras, the Varmans etc.; medieval Bengal depicts, from the twelfth Century A.D. to the mid-eighteenth Century A.D., altogether different political and socio-religious developments under the Turko-Afgan rulers, independent Bengal Sultans and Mughal imperialism; and
modern Bengal represents, from the mid-eighteenth Century A.D. to the nineteenth Century A.D., the growth and expansion of British rule and subsequent struggle against it.

I

BENGAL IN SPACE:

TERRITORIAL BACKGROUND

1. ANCIENT BENGAL

Bengal in ancient times geographically denoted a larger territory than the Indian state of West Bengal and the whole of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh taken together and also included certain fringe areas of the Indian states of Bihar, Orissa and the state of Tripura where Bengali dialect was prevalent among the inhabitants at that time. In the distant past the different territorial units of this vast region were known under different designations, such as Vaṅga, Gauḍa, Rāḍha and Samatāṭa, and the denotations of such geographical nomenclatures are discussed below.

**Vaṅga**

The word appears for the first time, both as the name of a people and a region, in the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*¹ (c. eighth-seventh Cent. B.C.) with Magadha and as such in respect of antiquity it

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1. II, 1.1, p.200.
preceedes over all other geographical nomenclatures of ancient Bengal. At a later date the Dharma Sūtras (c. fourth-second Cent. B.C.) mentions the people of Vāṅga as allies of Aṅga, Suhma, Puṇḍra and Kaliṅga signifying territories of north-eastern Bihar, southern portion of Burdwan, north Bengal and Orissa respectively and place Vaṅga outside the pale of Aryan Culture. The Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali (c. second Cent. B.C.), the Prākrit Milinda Panha (c. first Cent. B.C.) and the Jaina Upāṅga Pannavana (c. second or first Cent. B.C.) also refer to Vaṅga and its people. The Milinda Panha mentions Vaṅga as a maritime port on the sea and the Pannavana includes Tamralipti within Vaṅga. The Rāghuvamśa (c. fifth Cent. A.D.) of Kālidāsa ² locates the habitat of the Vaṅgas amidst the riverine tracts of the Ganges and by implication, extends the western boundary of their habitat beyond the river Hooghly, to the river Kapiṣā or Kasai in the district of Medinipur. The name also occurs in the Nāgarjunakonda inscription (third Cent. A.D.), the Meherauli pillar inscription (fourth Cent. A.D.), the Mahākūṭa inscription of the Chālukya King Pulakeśin II (seventh Cent. A.D.) and some epigraphs of the Pāla-Sena monarchs (mid-eighth to early thirteenth Cent. A.D.) of Bengal. One of the inscriptions locates even Vikrampura (Dhaka district), which was included in Puṇḍravardhana bhukti, within Vaṅga. All these allusions, many of which are vague and imprecise, to Vaṅga as a territorial nomenclature fail to determine precisely its limits which varied in different epochs in the wake of political vicissitudes. However, on the basis of the collective testimony of these records it

2. IV. 36,
may be assumed that in earlier times as a geo-political unit Vaṅga at its widest stretch denoted parts of the trans-Bhāgīrathī region which included parts of the present Paśchim Banga.

**Gauḍa**

Nothing precisely is known about the geographical location of Gauḍa from Pāṇini's *Ashtādhyāyī* (c. fifth Cent. B.C.) where it appears for the first time. A city of Gauḍapura is also mentioned by Pāṇini. The name also appears in other early literary texts like Kautilya's *Arthasastra* (c. fourth Cent. B.C.) and Bharata's *Nātyaśāstra* (c. first Cent. B.C.). The *Brihat Saṃhitā* (first quarter of the sixth Cent. A.D.) of Varāhamihira locates the habitat of the Gauḍaka tribe in the eastern division and distinguishes it from Paṇḍra (North Bengal), Tāmraliptika (in Medinipur district) and Vaṅga and Samatāta, both in South East Bengal. It appears from all these sources that Gauḍa at first was the name of a district. The probable expansion of the Gauḍa territory up to the sea-shore is indicated by the Haraha inscription (dt. 611 Vikrama era, 554 A.D.) of the Maukhari King Isanavarman where it is mentioned that the said monarch forced the Gauḍas to seek refuge in the sea. The viṣaya of Gauḍa may be

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6. 'Kritya chayati mauchita sthalabhubo Gaudan samudrsraya adhyasista nataksitisacharanah simhasanayoji.' See *El*, XIV, p.117.
identified with ancient Karṇaṇa (the present Ṛajbāqīdāṇga near Chiruti Railway Station in the Murshidabad district) if the Gauḍa King mentioned in Bāna’s Ḥarṣaṭhārīta (early seventh Cent. A.D.) is accepted as identical with the Shen-Sang-Kia (Ṣaṣānka) lord of Kie-ło-na-su-fa-la-na (Karṇaṇa) of the contemporary accounts of the Chinese pilgrim in India, Yuan Chwang. The Bhavīṣya Purāṇa (upper limit fifth century A.D.) locates Gauḍa territory lying to the north of Burdwan and south of Padmā. The Kathāsārītalārā places the city of Bardhamana within Gauḍa. The collective testimony of these records prove that apart from a viṣaya or a city, Gauḍa was also the name of a kingdom or an empire where the Gauḍādhipa of Bāna or Ṣaṣānka of Yuan Chwang ruled and besides Karṇaṇa, Magadha and Kuśāṇa also came under its sway.

Sometimes Gauḍa and Vaṅga were used to denote same geopolitical entity. In the eighth Century the epithet of Vaṅgapati (Lord of Vaṅga) and Gauḍēśvara (Lord of Gauḍa) were invariably applied to the Pāla Kings and the tradition thus emerged continued in the later times when the Sena Kings with their seat at Rāḍha (West Bengal) styled themselves Gauḍēśvara. Thus from the eighth to the twelfth Century Bengal en bloc was known by both the names Gauḍa and Vaṅga. Similar to other ancient geographical nomenclature Gauḍa had both a narrow and a wider denotation. In a narrow sense Gauḍa denotes a city

8. See Tawney’s translation, p.204.
or a viṣaya. But in its wider implication Gauḍa, according to Kāmasūtra of Vātsāyana (a work of the Gupta times), extends as far as Kāliṅga. Likewise, according to Śaktisaṅgamatantra (sixteenth Cent. A.D.) it comprises whole territory from Vaṅga (central and eastern Bṛgan) to Bhuvaneśa (Orissa). Gauḍa reached its widest geo-political configuration in the Rājatarāṅginī of Kalhana wherein the expression Pāṃcha-Gauḍa includes besides Gauḍa proper countries like Sarasvatī, Kānyakubja, Mithilā and Utkala denoting East Punjab, Gangetic doab, North Bihar and North Orissa respectively. This is reminiscent of the vastness of the Gauḍa empire under the celebrated Pāla monarch Dharmapāla.

Vaṅgāla

Vaṅgāla emerged as a geographical nomenclature at least from the beginning of the ninth Century which is proved by the Nesārika Grant of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa King Govinda III (dated 727 Śaka/805 A.D.) where the great Pāla monarch Dharmapāla is mentioned as ruling over Vaṅgāla. But the name gained popularity in use during tenth and eleventh Centuries during the reign of the Chandra Kings. The cumulative evidences of some authentic sources seem to locate Vaṅgāla amidst the low-lying flats of the Gangetic delta bordering the estuaries. The Tibetan writer Lāmā Tāranāth in course of referring to Govinda Chandra of Bhaṅgāla distinguishes Bhaṅgāla from Rāḍha and Varendra and locates the country in Eastern India along with Kāmarūpa.

10. See K.K. Dasgupta's article in The Telegraph, July 3, 1987,
and Tripurā. In another text he mentions Chātigrāma (modern Chittagong) as the capital of Gopīchandra, thereby indicating that Bhaṅgāla or Vaṅgāla comprises southern part of East Bengal including the tract lying to the east of Meghnā river.

**Samataṭa**

The name Samataṭa occurs for the first time in the Allahabad Prāśasti (c. fourth Cent. A.D.) of Samudra Gupta. The Brihat Saṁhitā (c. sixth Cent. A.D.) of Varāhamihira while identifying it as an eastern country distinguishes it from Vaṅga. A century later the Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang locates Samatata as a country lying south of Kāmarūpa (Assam) and bordering on the Bay of Bengal. I-tsing (c.691-92 A.D.) refers to the king of Samatata who is generally identified with Rājarājabhaṭa of Āshrafpur Copper Plates, and if such identification is justified then it may be assumed that the capital of Samatata was at that time Karmanta or modern Bādkāmta, west of Comilla. In later times Samatata became attached to Tipperah district which is proved by the Bāghaurā inscription of the reign of Mahīpāla and the Meherpur Copper plate of Dāmodaradeva (1234 A.D.). Thus Samatata seems to comprise the Chittagong, Comilla and Noakhali districts of Bangladesh approximately.

Pundra

Pundra or Puṇḍravardhana derives its nomenclature from the name of the inhabitants of the region. The early reference to this country appears in the Mahābhārata, the Kalpasūtra, the Asokāvadāna and the accounts of the Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang (seventh Cent. A.D.). It appears from relevant sources that the tract of Puṇḍra or Puṇḍravardhana or Puṇḍravardhanabhukti was probably demarcated by the river Kāratovā on the east, Mahānandā on the west and south eastern branch of Gāṅgā (modern Padmā) on the south. The Mahāstāṅgārī fragmentary stone plaque (discovered in Mahāstāṅgārī in the Bogra district of Bangladesh) refers to Fudanagala (=Puṇḍranagara), the metropolis of Puṇḍravardhana which proves that the present Mahāsthāna region was nerve-centre of that territorial division which comprised portions of North-Bengal. The name of Puṇḍravardhana as a bhukti or administrative division figures for the first time in an inscription (dated 124 = 443-44 A.D.) of Kumāragupta I. Some other records of later times, like those of the successors of Kumāragupta, the Pālas and the Senas, also mention the same. During the Gupta and early Pāla rule Puṇḍravardhana as a bhukti comprised the Rajshahi division of pre-partition Bengal. But in the eleventh-thirteenth Century this bhukti comprised practically the whole of pre-partition Bengal excluding the Burdwan division.

15. Bhīṣma Parva, IX, 35; Vana parva, LXXXV.
Varendra

Varendra or Varendrī was an inseparable part of Pundravadhan. It was a mandala (smaller administrative unit) within Pundravadhanabhukti and as Pundranagara was situated within its area, it may be identified as the metropolitan district of Pundravadhana territory. The inclusion of Varendrī in Pundravadhana is substantiated by the Deopara inscription of Vijayasena (mid-twelfth Cent.), the Tarbandighō and Mādhāinagar grants of Lakṣmaṇaṣena (twelfth Cent.) and the Silimpur inscription of the Kāmarūpa King Jayapāla and the form Varendra-mandala figures in the Tālcher Grant of Gayaṭāṅgadeva and Kavi-praśasti of the Rāmācharita of Sandhyākara Nandī who definitely locates this mandala between the Ganges and the Karatoya. Literary and epigraphic records indicate that in the early medieval period Varendra comprised a considerable portion of the present Bogra, Rajshahi and Dinajpur districts.

Suhma

The name Suhma appears in many old literary records like the Mahābhāṣya, the Mahābhārata and the Harivamśa, but nowhere its exact location is mentioned. This territory probably comprised some tracts lying to the west of Vaṅga and north of Tāmralipti which included districts of Burdwan, Hooghly, Nadia and a part of North 24 Parganas on the river Bhāgīrathī. Some old literary records describe

18. IV.2.52.
Suhma as a separate territorial entity than that of Tamralipti, but in the Daśakumāracharita (sixth Cent. A.D.) the both seems to form a single kingdom. Suhma does not appear in the Accounts of Ywan-chwang. Either the territory was included by that time in Tamralipta (Tan-mo-li-ti) or it was not within the itinerary of the Chinese pilgrim. A twelfth Century poetical work, the Pavanadūta of Dhoyi, indicates that the nucleus of Suhma at that time was Hooghly-Triveni-Saptagrama sector of the Burdwan district. But in later period Suhma might have lost its separate territorial identity and became a part of Rāḍha which is substantiated by Nīlkantha when he equates Suhma with Rāḍha (Suhmā-Rāḍah).

Rāḍha

The earliest reference to Rāḍha is to be found in the Āyārāṅgasūtta\(^{19}\), the oldest Jain scripture, where the land of Lāḍhas (Rāḍha) has been described as a pathless country and inhabited by a folk who behaved rudely with Mahāvīra during his journey to that region. Rāḍha most probably figures also in the Dīpavaṃśa (fourth Cent.) and Mahāvaṃśa (fifth Cent.), the two Ceylonese Buddhist Chronicles, where a certain Vijaya coming from Siňhapura in Lala (most probably Rāḍha) is mentioned to have settled a colony in Ceylon (modern Sri-Lanka). Thus the existence of a country called Rāḍha at least in the fifth Cent. B.C. is proved by these evidences.

\(^{19}\) I.8.3.
Literary as well as epigraphical records of later times show the division of this country into two distinct regions - Uttara and Dakshiṇa. This is proved by the Tirumalai inscription of Rajendra Chola and the Ganoriplates of Vākpati Muṇja (c.981 A.D.) where Uttiraḷāḍam (Uttara Rāḍha) and Dakshiṇa-Rāḍha have been mentioned respectively. Most probably the region lying to the west of the Bhāgīrathī, which is known as the Burdwan division of the present day, comprised ancient Rāḍha and the river Damodar served as the demarcating line of Uttara and Dakṣiṇa Rāḍha.

Tāmralipta, Tāmralipti or Dāmalipta

Tāmralipta figures as a distinct ethno-geographical entity in the 'digvijaya' section of the Sabhāparva of the Mahābhārata. But in some old records20 this country appears under different nomenclatures initially forming a part of Suhma or Vaṅga as attested by Jaina Pannavana. Most probably the people of Tāmralipta was called by Ptolemy (second century A.D.) as Tāmalities. Ywan Chwang mentioned Tan-mo-lih-ti (Tāmralipta) as the southern district of Eastern India comprising not any large territory. Modern Tamluk in the Medinipur district may reasonable be identified as the core-land of ancient Tāmralipta.

20. Tāmralipta-Mahābhārata, Ādi-P., C.LXXXVI, 13; Sabhā-P., 24, LII,18; Atharva-pariṣiṣṭa LVI,4. etc.
Chandradvīpa

Chandradvīpa, probably owing its name to the Chandra dynasty, once appears to be a part of Harikela as it figures in the Rāmpāl grant of Śrīchandra. In the Madhyapādā (Bakherganj district, Bangladesh) inscription of Viśvarūpasena besides Bangalbada, there is a geographical name which fragmentarily occurs as -ndradvīpa which has been variously read by the scholars as fragment of the name Kandradvīpa, Indradvīpa and Chandradvīpa. If the last reading is accepted, then Chandradvīpa seems to have corresponded to the entire coastal region including the island of Sandwip, a part of Noakhali district and modern Bakherganj district was also once included in it.

Harikela

This territorial division of ancient Bengal is first mentioned by I-ťsing as the eastern limit of Eastern India. It also figures in some later works. The Karpūra-manjari of Rājaśekhara (late ninth - early tenth Cent.) refers to the Harikela damsels from the east. Hemachandra and Yādava Prakaśa use Vanga and Harikela synonymously. Still later, this territorial nomenclature figures along with Khādi, Rādha and Vaṅgāla (all in Bengal). If Harikela taken identical with Śrīhāṭṭa in the two manuscripts of the

Rūpachintāmani (completed in 1515 Śaka) and Kalpadrukosha then Harikela corresponded with Śrīhatta in those days. This assumption is supported by the author of the Śrīrṣita work named Kṛityasāra where, the writer while quoting a verse from the Liṅga Purāṇa, in a note Harikela is identified as Śrīhattadesa. Moreover, in a tenth Century epigraphical record of the Chandra dynasty Harikela is described as the mainstay of the king of Chandradvīpa of the Bakherganj district, Bangladesh. Numismatic evidence further indicates the inclusion of Chittagong and Comilla district within the territorial division of Harikela. Thus at its bordest stretch Harikela in ancient days included the present day Noakhali, Chittagong, Comilla and Bakherganj districts.

ii. MEDIEVAL BENGAL

The Turkish invasion of Bengal during the early years of the thirteenth Century A.D. is usually regarded as the dividing line between ancient and medieval periods of the history of the land under consideration. Bengal at that time seems to be composed of five distinct territorial divisions, namely, Rāḍha, Bāḍī, Vaṅga, Varendra and Mithilā. Of these Rāḍha, Vaṅga and Varendra are old territorial units to be found in ancient time also. Of course in medieval time the territorial distributions of each of these divisions experienced

24. Pal, Promadlal, Early History of Bengal, I, p. 3-4
25. infra, p.34
27. supra, p.2-4, 9, 10-11
considerable amount of changes. The country lying west of the Hooghly river and south of the Ganges was known as Rādha; the vast territory that existed on the east of the delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra was designated as Vānga; and the land that flourished north of Pādamā river between Karatoya and Mahānandā rivers was called Varendra.

Of the rest two territorial divisions, Mithilā or the country lying west of the Mahānandā river is always recognised as a territorial unit of Bihar lying beyond the geographical confines of Bengal, and as such it does not come within the purview of the present discussion. As regards Bādgī, it generally denotes a vast portion of littoral Bengal formed by the delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra.

Besides all these territorial divisions of medieval Bengal, the name of a new territorial division 'Bhāṭī' also appears around sixteenth Century in the geographical nomenclatures of the period. In fine, in addition to three ancient territorial divisions, two other geographical nomenclatures, Bādgī and Bhāṭī (both situated within the geographical confines of Bengal proper), became popular in the medieval period. A brief account of these two medieval territorial divisions is given below:

28. In the sixteenth Century, the Moghul Court historian Abu'l Fazal mentions Vaṅgāla as another name of Vāṅga and explains by saying that the earlier rulers of Vāṅga raised huge mounds or embankments called all over the coastal Bengal to keep off seawater from agricultural lands. This derivation of Vaṅgāla from Vāṅga-āl would suggest that Vaṅgāla was originally situated in the coastal area of South Bengal. (see Sircar, D.C., Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, p.132).


30. Sen,Benoy Chandra, Some Historical Aspects of the Inscriptions of Bengal, p. 103
Bagdi

Bagdi, Vaghdi or Bagdi is one of the traditional geographical units of Bengal and its nomenclature is sometimes explained as a Bengali derivation from the term Vaggahadi or Vagghadi which is nothing but the Prākrit form of the Sanskrit word Vyāghrataṭi. If this explanation is tenable then Vyāghrataṭi (=Bagdi) is at least as old as the time of the Pāla king Dharmapāla (late eighth or early ninth Century A.D.). The Vyāghrataṭi-manḍala figures as a political division in the Khālimpur record of this monarch. Literally Vyāghrataṭi may have meant the whole of the tiger-infested coast corresponding to the entire delta between the Ganges and the Brahmaputra. But as a manḍala or administrative division its boundaries might have been different. In the absence of any definite proof, it is difficult to ascertain the exact territorial limits of Vyāghrataṭi. Moreover, from linguistic point of view, although 'Bagdi' and 'Vyāghrataṭi' seem to be akin to each other, it cannot be assumed that Bagdi of the medieval times denoted the same geographical division represented by Vyāghrataṭi of earlier period.

According to Cunningham, the boundaries of Bagdi are the Jalangi, the Meghna and the sea on the south, roughly corresponding to ancient Samatata. Sometime Bagdi is also identified with the Mahal Bagdi which lay on the borderland between ancient Rādhā and Utkala in

31. Sen, Benoy Chandra, op.cit., p.100.
32. EI, IV, p.242.
north Medinipur and mentioned in Ain-i-Akbari. Interestingly enough, as late as the second half of the eighteenth century Rennell's Atlas shows 'Bagree' as a large tract of country in Vishnupur and Midnapur, between the Rupnārāyan and Cossāi rivers. Whatever might be the different interpretations and identifications of this geographical nomenclature and territorial distribution of this medieval division of Bengal, the fact remains that traditionally Bāḍi denotes at least a portion of the modern Presidency Division of West Bengal including the Sundarbans.

**Bhāṭī**

Bhāṭī literally means 'land of the ebb-tide' or downstream, and as such it is rather a successor of the ancient name Samataṭa which is essentially a descriptive term meaning the country of which the rivers have flat and level banks. Though the term appears prominently in the territorial terminology of medieval Bengal around the sixteenth Century A.D., its early use may be traced to the days of Taranāth in the eleventh Century A.D. who refers to it as an island realm near the mouth of the river Ganges. In the sixteenth Century A.D. Abul Fazal generalizes its expansion as four hundred Koś from east to west and three hundred Koś from north to

34. Majumdar R.C., HAB, p.229-230.
35. See Rennell, J., Memoir of Map of Hindoostan, (London, 1783), Plate No.VI.
36. Majumdar R. C., HAB, p.229.
37. Supra, p.7
38. Majumdar, R. C., HAB, p.12.
south. It also appears that other medieval Muslim historians used the name to denote the coast strip from the Hooghly to the Meghna rivers. That Bhāṭī also includes a portion of ancient Vāṅgāla is proved by the fact that in a book of the Maynāmatī Gopāchandr legend a significant reference is made to the Vāṅgālas with long beards coming from Bhāṭī. Thus Bhāṭi or Bhāṭi-deśā is comprised of the low-lying flats of the Gangetic delta that border on the great estuaries from the region along the Meghnā river on one side and Hijli in the Medinipur district on the other including the Sundarbans.

iii. MODERN BENGAL

Bengal emerged from medieval to modern phase of her history during second-half of the eighteenth Century A.D. when the English East India Company, after defeating Nawab Sirajud-daullah in the battle of Plassey (1757 A.D.), concluded certain treaties with successive Subahdars of Bengal which led to gradual transfer of sovereignty from Mughal imperium to the English Company. Since the acquisition of Diwani in 1765 A.D., the English Company from time to time divided Bengal into several districts (e.g., Dhaka, Hooghly, Birbhum, Tippera, Dinajpur, Jessore, Nadia, Rajshahi, Rangpur etc.) for the purposes of systematic collection of revenue and effective administration. At the

39. Sen, Benoy Chandra, SHAIB, p.103
40. JASB, 1878, p.150.
41. For details see : Chakrabarti, Monomohan., A summary of the changes in the jurisdiction of Districts in Bengal, 1757-1916.
time of the introduction of Permanent Settlement for land-tenure in 1793 A.D. there were sixteen such districts in Bengal. Later on the number of districts increased to thirty-five, and when in 1787 A.D. British administrative institutions in Bengal were taking their final shape, the number of districts was reduced to twenty-five.\footnote{Sinha, Narendra Krishna (ed.) \textit{The History of Bengal (1757-1905)}, p.129.}

In space also the British Indian province of Bengal during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became large and unwieldy. At some period every territorial addition to the English Company's dominion extending from Assam (1826 A.D.) in the east to Delhi beyond in the west had been added on to Bengal for administrative centralization. Even after the formation of the North-West Provinces in 1830 A.D., the inclusion of Arakan to British Burma and the Constitution of Assam into a chief commissionership in 1874 A.D. the province still comprised Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Chhoto Nagpur including its hilly tracts and certain other tributary states.\footnote{Mehra, Purshotam, \textit{A Dictionary of Modern Indian History : 1707-1947}, \footnote{Ibid.}}

But at the time of dividing Bengal into several districts or expansion of the provincial control beyond its geographical boundaries, no respect was shown to the age-old territorial nomenclatures or their boundaries. The districts of British Bengal were administrative units and had no congruity with the aforesaid nomenclatures or their
boundaries of the bygone days. In course of time the ancient and medieval territorial nomenclatures became things of the past and they only survived in some social and cultural usages. Even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries A.D. the ancient territorial nomenclatures have been sometimes prefixed to the caste-identity of a person to denote his ancestral residence, for instance, Rādhī or Vārendrī Brāhmaṇa, Paundra Kshatriya etc. Writing in the eighteenth century A.D., the famous Bengali poet Bharat Chandra described Pratapaditya, the most daring of the Barabhumiyans of medieval Bengal, as 'Vaṅgaja Kāyastha' (meaning a Kāyastha by caste who hails from Vanga).

II

BENGAL IN TIME:

HISTORICAL BACKGROND

i. ANCIENT TIMES

Recent archaeological excavations and explorations have proved beyond doubt the prehistoric antiquity of man in Bengal which was so long meagrely known to us. The excavations at Pāṇḍu Rājār Dhibi (B.C. 1012 ± 120) in the river valley of Ajay in the district of Bardhaman, West Bengal, and in some other sites on the Ajay, Kunur and Kopai rivers have revealed the existence of a late Chalcolithic culture in

Eastern India bearing similarity with those of same affiliation discovered in Central India and Rajasthan. They have also shown that Bengal had commercial relations with Crete and other countries of the Mediterranean world. The recent chance discoveries of a few stray Neolithic artefacts in some of the hilly areas of Bangladesh, like Sitakundu, Chittagong, Rangamati, Comilla etc., and some other of the same variety picked up by some field-archaeologists at Deulpota and Harinarayanapur, both in South 24 Parganas and other places in the district of Medinipur, West Bengal, indicate the unmistakable footsteps of early man in this region.

The early history of Bengal is extremely legendary. The Vedic literature only mentions some ethnic groups who were inhabiting Bengal at that time in few independent principalities outside the pale of Aryan civilisation. All these together with some references by Greaco-Roman writers such as Curtius, Plutarch, Ptolemy and the unknown author of the Periplus are indeed poor substitutes for history. A mighty empire prevailed in the gangetic delta, known to the Greeks as Gangaridae which was ruled most probably by a king of the Nanda dynasty and variously mentioned by the Graeco-Roman writers as Agrammes and Xandrames, when the Macedonian army under the command of Alexander the great burst upon the plains of Punjab in 326 B.C.

Bengal gradually came under the pale of Aryan culture in the fourth century B.C. and the fragmentary Brāhmī inscription from Mahasthangarh (Bogra district, Bangladesh) unmistakable proves that North Bengal in the third century B.C., either wholly or partly, formed part of the vast Maurya empire, then known as Puṇḍravardhana.

Between the fall of the Mauryas and the foundation of the Gupta dynasty as a paramount power at least in North India for more than six centuries nothing definite can be said about the history of Bengal except the names of a few local kings who were perpetually at war with each other. Though a number of Kushāṇa coins have been discovered in different parts of Bengal, nothing definitely can be said about the extension of the Kushāṇa domination in this region. With the establishment of Gupta domination in Northern India as a paramount power and its extension towards the east except for the Kingdom of Samatāta in the trans-Meghna region, almost rest of Bengal was incorporated in the imperial fabric during the reigns of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II.

At the beginning of the sixth century the Gupta Empire began to disintegrate. Vainyagupta, a scion of the family, established an independent Kingdom in Eastern Bengal and Samatāta became a part of his Kingdom. The final blow to the fall of the empire was inflicted by the Malwa king Yaśovardhana and by the middle of the sixth century over the ruins of Gupta empire in Bengal arose the independent kingdom

49. Regarding the original homeland of the Imperial Guptas, see Ganguly, D.C., 'The Early Home of the Imperial Guptas' in IHQ, XIV, p.532-535.
of Vaṅga and Gauḍa. Epigraphic and numismatic records prove that three independent kings Gopachandra, Dharmaditya and Samāchārādeva ruled over the Vaṅga kingdom sometimes between 525 and 575 A.D.

Śaśānka, who probably began his career as a subordinate vassal (mahāsāmanta) under Mahāsena, a later Gupta king, came to the limelight in the early seventh century. Taking full advantage of the decline of the Later Guptas and a series of foreign invasions of Bengal, he established a powerful kingdom in Northern and Western Bengal with Karnasuvarṇa in Mursidabad district of West Bengal as his capital and also brought Magadha under his sway. This brought him in conflict with Harshavardhana of Thaneswar and Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa (Assam). However, Śaśānka was able to keep his extensive dominion intact until his death, shortly before 637 A.D.

The death of Śaśānka was followed by nearly a century-long anarchy and confusion. There was no established central authority, and rivalry among local ruling chiefs for personal aggrandisement was the order of the day. Widespread troubles within this one-time politically organised region, combined with invasions from without including those of Yaśovarmana, the king of Kashmir, led the common people (prakṛti) to frantically search for a leader who would give them the taste of peace by putting the house in order. The political situation and the psychological climate of the day is tellingly reflected in an early Pāla

50. The capital was in the vicinity of Rajbadidanga. See Das, Sudhir Ranjan. Rājbāḍidāṅga. 1962. p. 58.
record, the Khālimpur copper-plate of king Dharmapāla, in which it is stated that Gopāla (c.747-774 A.D.) was made king to take the hand of Fortune, by the people (prakṛiti) in order to put an end to Mātasya-nyāya (the practice of fishes in which large fishes swallow the smaller ones).

While uncertainty also hangs over determining the ancestry of Gopāla, the relevant sources are not unanimous regarding the location of his original kingdom. In all likelihood Gopāla rose to power in Varendri in about 750 A.D. and he gradually brought almost all parts of Bengal as well as Magadha under his sway. The history of Bengal entered into an era of prosperity and stable government. The rule of this first Pāla king ended around 774 A.D.

Dharmapāla (c.774-806 A.D.), the son and successor of Gopāla, inherited an apparently well knit kingdom and hence perhaps ventured for an expansion of the Pāla imperialism towards the west. The death of the formidable ruling personalities like Yaśovarman and Lalitāditya created a political vacuum in North India at that time and the Rāṣṭrakūtas of Deccan, the Pratiharas of Malwa and Rajputana, and the Pālas of Bengal and Bihar became locked in a diehard struggle for

51. For Khālimpur inscription, See EI, IV.4, p.248, 251. Though prakṛiti generally refers to the agency which elected or selected the king in that anarchy, as popular election was out of question in that anarchy, some scholars think that the principal officers or leading chiefs of the land selected one of them, namely Gopāla, and the people endorsed it.

52. For details, see Majumdar, R. C., HAB, p.96.

53. For details, see ibid, p.99-100.
mastery over the region for a long time to come. Though Dharmapāla
suffered some reverses at the hands of the Pratihāra kings,
Vatsarāja and Nāgabhaṭa II, and tendered nominal submission to the
Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Govinda III which culminated into matrimonial
alliance. Ultimately by dint of his own military genius and
diplomatic skill he pushed ahead his victorious campaigns towards
the furthermost region of Northern India. The Khālimpur Copper-
plate inscription of Dharmapāla, for example, attests to his
overlordship over a large portion of northern India when it states
that the rulers of Bhoja, Matsya, Madra, Kuru, Yudū, Yavana,
Avantī, Gandhāra and Kīra assembled at the Imperial Durbar at
Kanauj under Dharmapāla. The Bhāgalpur Copper-plate inscription of
Nārāyaṇapāla further records that Dharmapāla established his
sovereignty over Mahodaya or Kanauj and planted his nominee
Chakrāyūḍha as a subordinate ruler. The Monghyr Copper-plate
inscription of Devapāla of Samvat 33 even claims Dharmapāla's
advance upto Kedāra in the Gahrwal region of the Himalayas and
Gokarnā probably in the Western coast. Thus on the basis of these
epigraphic evidences and in conformity with the epithet
'Uttarapathasvāmin' applied by Soḍḍhala, an eleventh Century

54. Inscription of Vatsarāja dated śaka 717 (i.e. 795 A.D.) shows
how he defeated the Karnāṭaka, Lāṭa, Gauḍa, Mleccha and
Kīra rulers as well as king Jayapīḍa and the Tomara king
Vyāghra. D.C.Sircar thinks that the Karnāṭa king was Dhruva
and the Gauḍa ruler Dharmapāla. See The Kānyakubja-Gauḍa
Struggle, p.73.
55. EI, IV., p.248, 252.
56. IA, XV., p.304.
57. EI, XVIII, p.305.
58. Udayasundarī-Kathā, p.4-6.
Gujarati poet, to him may be safely assumed that the Punjab, Eastern Rajputana, Mālwa, Berar and some region in the Western Himalayas at least came under the political influences of Dharmapāla, who remained an overlord over these principalities. He was the first Pāla King to use full imperial titles such as Paramaśvara Parambhaṭṭaraka Mahāraḍādhināja. And he may have ruled for about thirty-two years.

Devapāla succeeded his father in about 806 A.D. His reign has been regarded as the high watermark of Pāla imperialism. Epigraphic records of the king attribute to him wide conquests and authority over an extensive area. It appears, however, that he carried his arms in Utkala (Orissa), Prāgjyotisha (Kamrup), the territories of Kāmbojas and the Hūnas and the Vindhya countries in the Central India. He also appears to have continued the hereditary struggle with the Pratihāras and probably defeated the Pratihāra king Rāmabhadrā, the son and successor of Nāgabhaṭa II. Later, Rāmabhadrā's son and successor Mihirabhoja, retaliated and initially succeeded, but was ultimately defeated by him.

All in all, Devapāla ruled up to c.841 A.D. over an extensive empire. Assisted by his cousin and general Jayapāla and the family of able ministers, he extended his sway over Assam and Orissa on one

59. EI IV, p.253; EI. XXIII, p.290 ff.
60. EI.IV, p.251, 254. Tāranātha assigns him a forty years rule.
side and Kāmboja and Hūra kingdoms on the other. However, it seems that only Bengal and Bihar were under his direct administrative control and the rest of his empire was ruled by the vassal kings. An epigraphic record \(^{62}\) proves the establishment of cultural and friendly relations during his reign with king Balāputradeva of Suvarṇadvīpa and shows the prestige he enjoyed outside India.

The immediate course of events that followed the death of Devapāla is somewhat complicated. It appears from recent epigraphic discoveries \(^{63}\) that he was succeeded by his elder son, Mahendrapāla (c.841-856 A.D.) and the latter by his younger son Śūrapāla I (c.856-868 A.D.). After Śūrapāla I came the son of his cousin, Jayapāla, and seemingly there was a supercession in the direct line of succession. An inconsequential king, Vigrahapāla I (c.868-870 A.D.) abdicated the throne in favour of his son Nārayanapāla.

The reign of Nārayanapāla (c.870-924 A.D.) witnessed further decline of the empire. The king lost some portions of his territory to the Pratihāra king Mihirabhōja and the Sulki king Raṇastambha \(^{64}\) and suffered reverses at the hands of Rāṣhtrakuta king Krishna II \(^{65}\) (c.880-915 A.D.). The Pāla empire now became virtually limited to Western Bengal and the northern part of the Gangetic delta. Nārayanapāla was,

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\(^{62}\) Nālanda Copper-plate inscription of Devapāla, EI.XVII, p.322,325,326.

\(^{63}\) The recent discovery of a Copper-plate grant at Jagajībanpur in Malda district of West Bengal has disclosed the existence of this Mahendrapāla who ruled at least for fifteen years and thus necessitated a reconstruction of the current Pāla chronology.

\(^{64}\) Majumdar, R.C., HAB, p.121.

\(^{65}\) Deoli Copper-plate inscription of dated Śaka-Samvat 862, EI.III, 1894-95, p.282.
however, succeeded in liberating Magadha and North Bengal. Significant facts are not known about the reign of his son and successor Rajyapala (c.924-961 A.D.), except that he befriended the Rāṣṭrakūṭas by a matrimonial alliance. The next ruler, Gopāla II (c.961-978 A.D.), the son of Rajyapāla, had to give way to a Gauḍa king of Kāmboja family in the northern and western portion of his Bengal territory. Eastern Bengal too appears to have slipped out of the hands of the Pālas and went up to the members of a royal family with Chandra-ending name. The Pāla dominion under Gopāla II was virtually restricted to Magadha and Āṅga.

Further attrition of the Pāla empire took place during the reign of the next king, Vigrahapāla (c.978-980 A.D.). This happened because of the onslaughts of the Kalachuri king Yuvarāja I in Gauḍa and Kalinga, of his son Lakshmanarāja in Vaṅgāla, the Chāndella king Yośovarman over the Gauḍas and the rise of an independent kingdom of Harikēla in south-eastern Bengal under Laḍahachandradeva (c.1000-1020 A.D.) of the Chandra dynasty.

66. Sinha, Bindesawari Prasad (ed.), The Decline of the Kingdom of Magadha (cir.455-1000), 1.2, p.2581
67. Rajyapāla married Bhāgyadevī, daughter of Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Tuṅga. Regarding the identification of Tuṅga, scholars are not unanimous.
68. It is mentioned in the Bangarh pillar inscription of the Kambra king Kuṅjarahatavarga of Gauḍa. See Chanda, Ramaprasad, Gauḍarājamālā (in Bengali), p.35.
69. The newly discovered Dacca inscription of Śrīchandra mentioned that he reinstated Gopāla (probably Gopala II) from Eastern India, JVRM, 5, p.51-52.
70. The poetical inscription of Bilhāri of Kalachuri king Yuvarāja I, EI, XXIV, p.256-265.
71. Goharwā Copper-plate inscription of Kalachuri king Lakshmanarāja, EI, XI, p.142.
73. Ray, Nihar Ranjan, Vaṅgālīr Itihāsa .1.2 , Ādi Parva (in Bengali), p.132
This sorry state of affairs was put to an end by Mahipala I (c.980-1028 A.D.), the son of Vigrahapala II around 980 A.D. Epigraphical records of his reign clearly indicate his success in restoring the fallen fortunes of his family and also the expansion of the Pala dominion in Northern and Western Bengal and Northern Orissa. Mahipala I, however, suffered some reverses in the hands of Rajendra Chola and the Kalachuri king Gangeyadeva (c.1015-1041 A.D.) during the closing years of his reign. But they seem to have hardly affected his position. He kept himself aloof from the Hindu confederacy organised by the Shahi kings of the Punjab against Sultan Mahmud of Gazni.

The reign of Mahipala I came to an end around 1028 A.D. and under the next two successive Pala kings, Nayapala (c.1028-1043 A.D.) and Vigrahapala III (c.1043-1069 A.D.) the royal authority was sufficiently slackened in Eastern and Southern Bengal, though Magadha was in its full grip. The reign of the former experienced the burnt of the invasion of Kalachuri king Karna (c.1041-1072 A.D.) in Western Bengal and re-emergence of the political power of the Chandras in Vanga and Samatata. During the reign of the latter a

75. Sircar, Dines Chandra, Pal-Sen Yuger Vaṃśānucharit (in Bengali),p.82-83.
76. Ibid.,p.82.
77. Paikore pillar inscription of the Kalachuri king Karna, see ASI.AR (1921-22),p.115.
78. The Chandra ruled in Samatata and Vanga with their capital at Vikramapura from A.D.900 to 1059, see JVRM,5,p.53.
powerful feudatory Chief Mahāmaṇḍalikā Iśvaraghosha (c.1040-1080 A.D.) was a defacto ruler of a small sector, the Dhekkari in Western Bengal.

The death of Vigrahapāla III was followed by a scramble for the throne. Mahīpāla II (c.1069-1071 A.D.), the eldest son of the deceased monarch, imprisoned his other two brothers, Śūrapāla II and Rāmapāla. His oppressive rule led to a revolt of the Kaivartas of Bengal under Divya and Bhīma resulting his defeat and death and the occupation of Varendrī by Divya (c.1071-1100 A.D.), a high official of the Kaivarta caste.

After the two years of rule of Śūrapāla II (c.1071-1073 A.D.) Rāmapāla ascended the throne in around 1073 A.D. With the help of his allies he recovered his paternal kingdom by defeating and killing the Kaivarta Chief Bhīma and his family. Rāmapāla established his new capital at Rāmāvatī and proceeded to measure swords with other enemies. The Varman kings of East Bengal eventually submitted to him and the rulers of Orissa (Utkala and Kaliṅga) and Kāmarupa followed the suit. Rāmapāla suffered

79. Rāmgaṇj copper-plate inscription of Iśvaraghosha, see Majumder, Nani Gopal, Inscriptions of Bengal, III, p.149.
80. Sircar, Dines Chandra, PSYV, p.87.
81. Rāmcharitam, II.49.
82. Ibid., III.44.
83. Ibid., III.45.
84. Ibid., III.47.
discomfiture at the hands of the king Nânyadeva (c.1097-1147 A.D.) of Mithilâ, the king of Kâśî-Kânyakubja, and although he lost a substantial portion of the Patna district to Gahaḍavala Govindachandra, he checked his forward move. The eventful life of Râmapâla shows him to be the last flicker of the lamp of Pâla fortune and he creditably gave a fresh lease of life of few decades more to a decaying kingdom.

Among the four sons of Râmapâla - Vittapâla, Râjyapâla, Kumârapâla and Madanapâla - Kumârapâla (c.1126-1128 A.D.) succeeded his father and soon after his death Kâmarupa85 and the Varman kingdom of East Bengal86 once again became independent. Meanwhile, the Gaṅga king of Kâlîṅga carried his aggressions as far as modern Medinipur and the Gahaḍavalas marched to Patna and conquered Monghyr.

The Pâla dominion with Vârendrî and some parts of Central and Eastern Bihar as its integral parts, remained within the jurisdiction of the next ruler Gopâla III for at least fifteen years (c.1128-1143 A.D.). After the death of Gopâla III, Madanapâla, the son of Kumârapâla, ascended the throne around 1143 A.D. Madanapâla (c.1143-1175 A.D.) was virtually the last important monarch of the

86. Vajrayogini Copper-plate inscription (fragmented) of Sâmalavarman, EL, XXX, p.259 ff.
dynasty with his direct authority over Dinajpur in North Bengal and Monghyr district of Bihar. One of his ministers brought Varanasi under his sway.

The next two members of the house, Govindapāla (c.1175-1179 A.D.) and Palapāla (c.1179-1214 A.D.) were nominal rulers, respectively ruling over the Gaya district and the Monghyr-Bhagalpur region. Towards the end of his reign Palapāla probably acknowledged the supremacy of Vallālasena, one of the eminent rulers of the Sena dynasty.

The Buddhist Pāla dynasty ruled over an extensive region of Eastern India for more than four centuries and the peace, property and political stability which this long rule gave to Bengal and Bihar, ancient Gauda and Magadha, fostered an all-round cultural development, and in particular set a new trend in the creative areas of visual art.

During the waning phase of the Pāla political authority a family was gradually rising to power. The names of its members end in Sena. The manner in which this dynasty established itself as a ruling power after the Pālas is not clear. Of the Kshatriya or

87. Manhali Copper-plate inscription of the 9th regnal year of Madanapāla (see Maitrey, A.K., Gaudālekhamālā, p.147 ff.) and Valgudar image inscription of his 18th regnal year, EI. XXVIII, p.145.
Brahma-Kshatriya\textsuperscript{89} origin, the Senas came from the Kārṇāṭaka region. The earliest of the line of three kings is Sāmantasena (c.1060-1080 A.D.), a descendant of one Vīrasena, who supposedly settled on the banks of the Ganges in the Rādhā country of West Bengal\textsuperscript{90}. Probably he was a feudatory of the Pāla king Vigrahapāla III (c.1043-1069 A.D.).

Nothing is known about his son and successor Hemantasena (c.1080-1096 A.D.), but his grandson Vijayasena (c.1096-1159 A.D.) was first to assume the title Mahārājādhirāja and proved himself to be the real founder of the kingdom. His work of implementing the imperialist policy was perhaps facilitated by his father who carved out a principality in West Bengal during the troubled times that Kaivarta revolt of Varendri. If he is identified with Vijayarāja of Nidrāvala, an ally of Rāmapāla (c.1073-1126 A.D.), in his campaign against the Kaivarta rebels, it may be inferred that he entered into a subsidiary alliance with Ramapala and after his death Vijayaraja defeated Rāmapāla's son and successor Madanapāla (c.1143-1175 A.D.) and declared independence. And if the Vallālacharita is relied upon, he was a friend of Anantavarma Choḍagaṇga (c.1078-1147 A.D.)\textsuperscript{91} the king of Orissa, whom he probably helped in his campaign in the Rādhā country against the Pāla king Kumārapāla. Vijayasena claims to have defeated Nāṇya, Rāghava, Vardhana and the kings of Gauḍa, 

\textsuperscript{89.} Deopāra stone inscription of Vijayasena, EI.I, p.305 ff.
\textsuperscript{90.} Naihāti Copper-plate inscription of Vallālasena, EI.XIV, p.159 ff.
\textsuperscript{91.} Sircar, Dines Chandra, PSYV, p.118.
Kamarūpa and Kaliṅga. He came into conflict with the last three kings in consequence of his naval expedition towards the west up the whole course of the river Gaṅga. In addition to his capital at Vijayapura, probably founded by himself, he had a second one at Vikramapura in Eastern Bengal.

Vijayasena seems to have left for his successor, Vallālasena (c.1159-1179 A.D.), an extensive kingdom comprising virtually the entire Bengal of pre-partition days. Among the little known facts about Vallāla is the one that he brought Eastern Bihar and Magadha or at least a part of it under sway when Mithilā after Nānyadeva fell on evil days.

The next king Lakshmanasena (c.1179-1206 A.D.), the son of Vallālasena, was the last distinguished and accomplished ruler of the dynasty. He displayed his military ability in conquering Gauḍa during the reign of his grandfather. Later he curbed the power of the Kaliṅgas, reduced Kāmarūpa to subjection and defeated the king of Kāśī who was probably the Gahaḍavala king of Kanauj. The prevalence of the Lakṣmanasa-Samvat (era) in the Gaya region indicates his sway over this district which he probably established after ousting the Gahaḍavalas from Magadha. Lakshmanasena also erected sacrificial pillars at Kāśī, Prayāga and Purī. But in his old

92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., p.116.
94. Ibid., p.117.
95. Bhowal Copper-plate inscription of Lakshmanasena, EI.XXI, p.211.
age misfortune had befallen him. According to the *Tabaqat-Nasiri* by Minhaj, sometimes between 1193 and 1205 A.D., Muhammad-bin-Bakhtiyar Khalji, a subordinate officer of Qutbuddin Aibak who at that time was the viceregal representative of Muhammad bin Sam in India, made a surprise attack upon Nadia, the capital of his kingdom, where Lakshmaṇasena was living at that time and consequent to this the Hindu ruler had to make his escape to East Bengal.

Though there can not be any doubt that the inflow of Turkish forces in Bengal commenced from about this time, yet the narrative of Minhaj that Bakhtiyar came to Nadia with only eighteen horsemen and captured and sacked the city is not wholly reliable. However, there are reasons to believe that Lakshmaṇasena continued to rule in Eastern Bengal three or four years more till about 1205 A.D. After him his eldest son Viśvarūpasena (c.1206-1225 A.D.) was enrowned who was succeeded in his turn by his son Sūryasena (c.1210-1215 A.D.). Though both of them assumed various high-sounding titles, almost nothing is known about their political activities. The grants of lands as ruling princes by these monarchs in the Vikramapura region in Puṇḍravardhanabhukti only proves that the Sena rule continued till that time at least in some parts of East Bengal.

The Sena dynasty exercised authority over Bengal, and probably some parts of Bihar as well for a little more than a century. Under the rule of the three successive and powerful rulers,
Vijayaśena, Vallālasena and Lakshmaṇasena, Bengal not only enjoyed a peace and prosperity, but also saw an efflorescence of Brahmanical art and culture, especially in the field of sculptural art and literature.

To visualize a panoramic view of the historical development in ancient Bengal, a brief account of some of the independent and semi-independent minor ruling dynasties of the period concerned is a desideratum. The most prominent of these dynasties is a Buddhist ruling family comprising members with Chandra name-endings. The land grants charters of different rulers of this dynasty show the inclusion of some parts of Vaṅga with the nerve-centre in Vikramapura and a chunk of Samatā with a concentration round Mainamati near the Comilla town and Sylhet (ancient Śrīhattamandala)\(^6\). While the regions of the first two rulers, Purnachandra (c.865-885 A.D.) and Suvarnachandra (c.885-900 A.D.) appear to be politically insignificant, Trailokyachandra (c.900-929 A.D.), the third member of the house, laid the real foundation of the glory and power of the dynasty. He conquered Chandradvipa and Samatā, defeated the king of Gauda, and became the absolute ruler and at least the defacto ruler of Vaṅga and Harikela\(^7\) respectively. The Devaparvata was his stronghold.


\(^7\) Ibid., p.47.
Śrīchandra (c.929-975 A.D.), the next ruler, further extended his authority and in fact his reign witnessed the zenith of the power and fame of the dynasty. Described as a 'digvijayan'\(^98\) in one of his records, he conquered Kāmarūpa and advanced as far as the foot of the Himalayas marching through the banks of Lauhitya, Chitrasīla and Pushpabhadra rivers, and also seemingly reinstated the Pāla king Gopāla II (c.961-968 A.D.)\(^99\) who had taken refuge in the Chandra kingdom during the reign of Trailokyachandra.

Kalyāṇachandra (c.975-1000 A.D.), the next ruler, continued his father's policy of conquests and was involved in a long-drawn struggle with Mlechchhas, probably the Sālastambha of the Lauhitya Valley and Gauḍa in the west. After him, the fortune of the Chandras declined. His successor, Ladahachandra (c.1000-1020 A.D.), is not credited with any military achievement, while the next ruler, Govindachandra (c.1020-1050 A.D.) was defeated by the army of Rājendra Chola between 1021 and 1025 A.D. With the revival of the Pāla power under Mahipāla I, the Chandra rulers received a substantial setback and they nominally survived as sovereign rulers with their capital at Vikramapura\(^100\).

The other notable family of rulers is known as Varmans, as the names of its members end in Varman. They emerged as a

\(^{98}\) Ibid., p.48.  
\(^{99}\) Ibid., p.49.  
\(^{100}\) Ibid., p.51.
political power in the declining phase of the Pāla glory. The Varmans had their kingdom in East Bengal with capital at Vikramapura. The dynasty had its earliest king in Vajravarman. His son Jatavarman (c.1055-1073 A.D.) raised the prestige of the house by marrying a daughter of the Chedi king Karna (c.1041-1072 A.D.). He was most probably the feudatory ruler of Aṅga under Vigrahapāla III (c.1043-1069 A.D.). We are told that Jatavarman had humbled the powers of the king of Kāmarūpa, Divya and Govardhana.101 His son Harivarman (c.1073-1127 A.D.), is believed to have initially inspired the rebel Kaivarta chief Bhima against the Pālas, but later on established friendly relation with Rāmapāla in his own interest. The next ruler, Sāmalavarman (c.1127-1137 A.D.), was not his direct heir and probably occupied the throne after dislodging his son.

Mention may be made of the ephemeral rule of the Kāmbojas over a small part of Bengal. This is indicated by the epigraphical records of a certain Nayapāla (c.1030-1055 A.D.) of the Kāmboja dynasty and an inscription of one Kūnjaraghathavarsha (c.915-925 A.D.) of the Kāmboja family.103 While the relationship between the Kāmbojas of this inscription with the above-noted Kāmbojas is not known, it appears that Nayapāla, his brother Nārayanapāla and their

101. Belava Copper-plate inscription of Bhojavaran, EI.XII,p.37.
102. Sircar, Dines Chandra, PSYV, p.138-139.
103. Írda Copper-plate inscription of Nayapāla, EI.,XIII,p.150-159.
104. Bāngarh Pillar inscription, see Maitreya, A.K., opcit, p.212.
and their father Rājyapāla had their stronghold at Daṇḍabhukti (Southern Medinipur) with a capital at Priyāṅgu of uncertain identification which they set up at the expense of the Pāla authority.

In East Bengal another line of rulers appeared on the contemporary political scene with Purushottamadeva (c.1180-1200 A.D.) as the leader. Originally he, as well as his son Madhusudanadeva or Madhumathanadeva (c.1200-1215 A.D.) and grandson Vāsudeva (c.1215-1230 A.D.) were feudatories of the Senas. Later, Damodaradeva (c.1230-1255 A.D.), the fourth member of the family became defacto ruler around 1230-1231 A.D., holding sway over a small region comprising Comilla, Noakhali and Chittagong, shortly before or after Bakhtiyar's invasion of Nadia. Damodaradeva's son, Daśarathadeva (c.1255-1290 A.D.), gained more power and seems to have transferred his capital to Sonargaon near Vikramapura in Dhaka. A portion of West Bengal seemingly slipped into the hands of the Muslims.

The minor ruling dynasties who ruled over different parts of Bengal during the Pāla and Sena periods, also created an environment in their respective kingdom congenial to the development of art and culture.

105. Sircar, Dines Chandra, PSYV, p.112.
106. Ibid., p.141.
107. Ibid., p.
108. Ibid., p.142.
Bengal in medieval times had been frequently independent of control of the sovereigns of Delhi. After his exploits in Nadia, Bakhtiyar Khalji (c.1198-1205 A.D.) removed his capital to Lakhnwatī (Lakshmanavati). Soon afterwards he undertook a futile expedition to Tibet and on his way back died after arriving at Devkot in the district of Dinajpur. Although Bakhtiyar was formally appointed governor of Bengal by Muizzuddin Muhammad bin Sam of Gazni, he enjoyed a great amount of autonomy in respect of his military plans and administrative reorganization in the newly conquered territories.

After the death of Bakhtiyar Muhammad Shiran Khalji (1205-1208 A.D.), a close associate of Bakhtiyar, succeeded to the throne of Lakhnwatī. He practically ruled Bengal independently but never used any sovereign title. Meanwhile Ali Mardan Khalji, another intimate companion of Bakhtiyar, fled to Delhi and instigated Quitbuddin Aibak, the viceregal representative of Gazni in India, to replace Shiran. Consequently Shiran was defeated and Husamuddin Iwaj was appointed governor of Lakhnwatī (1208-1210 A.D.). Later on Iwaj was dismissed and Ali Mardan Khalji (1210-1212 A.D.) was installed in his place. The new governor who became free from the

109. *Efra*, p.34
control of Delhi after the death of Qutbuddin Aibak was an oppressive ruler. Unable to bear the brunt of his tyranny, the Khalji amirs killed him and reinstated Husamuddin Iwaj as governor.

After assuming the name of Ghiyasuddin Khalji, Iwaj followed a deliberate policy of expansion and consolidation. He extended the Muslim rule over whole of the Gauda kingdom, and rulers of Jajnagar (Orissa), Vaṅga, Kāmarūpa and Tirhut paid tribute to him. The process of isolation of Bengal from North India received a fresh momentum under him. Numismatic evidences show that he adopted regal titles and attempted to stabilize his political position against Iltutmish, the contemporary ruler of Delhi. When Iltutmish led an expedition to Bengal, Ghiyasuddin warded off his opponents' hostility by entering into a treaty of peace with Iltutmish, the terms of which he never respected. Ghiyasuddin wrested his lost territories and invaded Bihar. Iltutmish sent his son Nasiruddin who killed Ghiyasuddin in an encounter around 1227 A.D. Nasiruddin (1227-1229 A.D.) now himself assumed the charge of governorship of Lakhnawati, but died shortly after.

The next important ruler of Lakhwati was Tughril Khan (1223-1244 A.D.) who sometime after 1235 A.D. defeated and killed Aur Khan, the Chief of Lakhnor, in a battle and extended his authority upto Lakhnor in the West. Meanwhile Iltutmish had died and taking

advantage of the successive Delhi rulers, Tughril Khan led an expedition to North India. But in 1243 A.D. king Narasimhadeva I of Gaṅga dynasty of Kaliṅga invaded Lakhnwatī and stormed the capital, but on receipt of the news of the approach of reinforcement from Oudh the Gaṅga king repaired to his own kingdom. Things now suddenly took a different turn. Tughril Khan had to conclude with Tamur Khan, the chief of the army of Oudh, leaving the governorship of Lakhnwatī to the latter. Tamur died in 1246 A.D.

Tamur was succeeded by Ikhtiyaruddin Yuzbuk, a former governor of Oudh. He planned to extend his authority over North India, attacked Oudh and assumed the title of Sultan Mughisuddin. But during his expedition to Kāmarūpa by a stratagem the king of that country got him prisoner and ultimately Yuzbuk died in captivity.

After the death of Yuzbuk a number of docile rulers came in succession in the throne of Lakhnwatī till Sultan Giyasuddin Balban of Delhi appointed Mugushuddin Tughral (1266-1281 A.D.) governor of the province. In 1279 Tughral led an expedition to Orissa and another to Kāmarūpa. He also extended his sway over some areas of Vaṅga. But ill advised, Tughral gave up allegiance to Sultan Giyasuddin Balban who at that time was greatly perturbed over the repeated invasions of the Mongals. Balban, however, set out with a large army, defeated and killed Tughral and raised his own son Nasiruddin Bugra Khan to the governorship of Lakhnwatī, thus
initiating the rule of the House of Balban (1286-1328 A.D.) in Bengal which was a regular prelude to the political independent of this country.  

Balban died in 1287 A.D. and after his death Bakhra Khan assumed the title of Sultan Nasiruddin Ahmad and thereafter ruled Bengal independently. Nasiruddin died in 1291 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Rukuddin Kaikus (1291-1301 A.D.). After Rukuddin his brother Shamsuddin Firoz Shah (1301-1322 A.D.) came to the throne. Epigraphic records from their times discovered in Monghyr and Bihar Sharif prove beyond doubt that both of them even ruled over parts of Bihar independently.  

The death of Shamsuddin Firoz Shah brought a fresh scramble for power in Bengal which confused the course of events at that time until Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluk of Delhi invaded Lakhnwat in 1324 A.D. and occupied the capital. Bengal was then split into three portions. While Nasiruddin Ibrahim, a son of Shamsuddin Firoz Shah, had become the Governor of Lakhnwat, Tatar Khan (Baharm Khan), a general who accompanied Ghiyasuddin Tughluk, was made the governor of Sonargao (Suvarnagaram) and Satgao (Saptagram) was placed under another governor. On his way back to Delhi Ghiyasuddin Tughluk died and he was succeeded by his son  

112. HSB, p.3.  
Muhammad bin Tughluk who immediately after assuming the royal authority released Bahadur Shah, a son of Shamsuddin Firoz Shah who was taken prisoner by Ghiyasuddin Tughluk, and appointed him governor of Sonārgāon. Meanwhile Nasiruddin Ibrahim died and Bahadur Shah who again tried to become independent was defeated and killed. Thus ended the rule of Balban dynasty of Bengal.

Due to the preoccupation of Muhammad bin Tughluk with rebellions in various parts of his kingdom, Bengal broke away from Delhi around 1338 A.D. Four years later, one of the nobles Ilyas Khan captured Lakhnwaṭī and ascended the throne under the title Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah. The beginning of the rule of the Ilyas Shah dynasty signalized a new phase in the history of Medieval Bengal as the rulers of this dynasty had tried to build up in every respect a state system independent of the control of Delhi. Ilyas Shah extended his dominions in the west from Tirhut to Champaran and finally up to Banaras. He invaded Jajnagar and by another expedition Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. Being alarmed at the prospect of Ilyas Shah in Eastern India, Firoz Shah Tughluk who succeeded Muhammad bin Tughluk as Sultan of Delhi invaded Bengal with a big army. After occupying Pāṇḍuā, the capital, Firoz forced Ilyas to seek shelter in strong fort of Ekḍālā. After a prolonged seize, Firoz tempted Ilyas out of the fort and defeated his army. Ilyas once again retreated into Ekḍālā. Ultimately a treaty was

114. HSB, p.11.
signed by which the river Kosi in Bihar was fixed as the boundary between their kingdoms. After Firoz had returned to Delhi, Ilyas Shah invaded Sonargaon and after occupying it virtually established his authority over both West and East Bengal.

After the death of Ilyas Shah his eldest son Sikandar Shah (1336-1392 A.D.) became the Sultan of Bengal. In 1358 A.D. Sultan Firoz Shah of Delhi invaded Bengal for the second time. Sikandar took refuge in the fort of Ekdālā and a position of impasse which ensued was however soon resolved by the conclusion of a treaty of peace after which for about two hundred years the Sultans of Bengal did not come into conflict with the sovereigns of Delhi. Sikandar was also a great builder. The Ādinā Masjid at Pāṇḍuā, the largest of its kind in India, was constructed by him. In 1392 A.D. Sikandar died in a battle with his rebellions son Giyasuddin Azam Shah (1392-1410 A.D.) who succeeded his father on the throne of Bengal. A man of learning, Giyasuddin ruled Bengal with great justice and moderation. He also sent an ambassador to the Chinese court.

Giyasuddin's reign was followed by the successions of some insignificant rulers of the dynasty and during the reign of the last of such rulers, Sultan Shamsuddin II (1412-1414 A.D.), the Hindu zamīndars of Bhāturīā named Gaṇesha (alias Danujamardana Deva)

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usurped the throne of Bengal. Ganesha died in 1418 A.D. and his son Jadu after being converted to Islam assumed the title of Jalauddin Muhammad Shah (1418-1431 A.D.) and began to rule Bengal. During his reign both Pāṇḍuā and Gauḍa became very famous and adorned with some of the finest specimens of Pathan architecture in Bengal.

After Jalauddin's death his son Shamsuddin Ahmad Shah sat on the throne of Bengal; but the chiefs of the kingdom soon killed him, and placed Nasiruddin Muhammad Shah (1442-1459 A.D.), a scion of the family of Ilyas Shah, on the throne. Towards the close of his reign a man named Khan Jahan conquered the forest districts of South Bengal. Nasiruddin Muhammad was succeeded by his son Rukuddin Barbak Shah (1459-1474 A.D.). He defeated Gajapati, the king of Mandaram and built some important structures of public utility. Yusuf Shah (1474-1482 A.D.), who succeeded his father Barbak Shah, conquered the Hindu kingdoms of Sylhet and Pāṇḍuā (Rāḍha). During his reign a large number of mosques were built; Mālādhar Basu of Kulīnagrām translated some cantos of Śrīmadbhagavat (known as 'Śrīkṛishṇa Viṣṇava') in Bengali and Vijayapandit rendered the Mahabhārata in the same language. Some insignificant rulers ascended the throne of Bengal after the death of Yusuf Shah and the last of these rulers, Jalauddin Fateh Shah, was assassinated by one of his own slaves named Barbaq who inducted Habshi rule in Bengal. Bengal had fallen into evil days due to
constant political murders, frequent changes of rulers and especially due to the misdeeds of Muzaffar Shah, the last of the Habshi rulers.  

At this juncture of events an influential circle of Nobles of Gauḍa and Pāṇḍu put Said Husain, an Uzir of Shamsuddin Muzaffar Shah, on the throne of Bengal. The new Sultan who assumed the title of Alauddin Husain Shah restored peace and prosperity to the country, established a stable government, and literary, epigraphic and numismatic source prove that his reign witnessed the expansion of the boundaries of his kingdom on all frontiers. Husain's military exploits include his achievements against king Prataparudra of Orissa, war with the king of Kāmarūpa and Mahārāja Dhananānikya of Tripura, and wresting of Bihar from the hands of the Sultan of Sarqi dynasty. Husain was a very firm and efficient ruler. His religious policy was marked by tolerance and liberation. Some of the important offices of the kingdom were held by the Hindus. During his reign and kingdom was adorned with numerous mosques, gates, bridges and minars, and various Bengali works like Manasāmaṅgala of Vijayagupta, Bengali translations of the Mahābhārata by Kabīndra Paramesvara, Manasāmaṅgala of Vipradāsa were composed.

116. HSB, p.33.
117. Ibid., p.38.
 Husain Shah was succeeded by his eldest son Nasiruddin Nasarat Shah (1519-1532 A.D.). He conquered the kingdom of Tirabhukti. But at that time Babar, the founder of the Mughal Empire in India, was leading an expedition to Bihar. A treaty of peace was concluded between them. Nasarat Shah died under tragic circumstances. After his death two more rulers of the dynasty, Firuz Shah (1532-1533 A.D.) and Mahmud Shah (1533-1538 A.D.) ruled Bengal for few years. Meanwhile another new force was operating in the political life of Eastern India. The Afghans, united under the leadership of Sher Khan, occupied Bihar and soon afterwards invaded Bengal. Thus the independence of Bengal came to an end in 1538 A.D.

During the rule of Sher Shah (1540-1545 A.D.) Bengal was administered by the Afghan chiefs of the Sur dynasty. But when in 1553 A.D. Muhammad Adil Shah usurped the throne, Muhammad Khan Sur, the then Governor of Bengal, declared his independence. But the sceptre of Bengal soon passed over to Sulaiman Karanani, the Governor of South Bihar, who was wise enough to make a formal acknowledgement of Mughal suzerainty already established in Delhi. But his son, Daud Karanani, after succeeding his father declared his independence which brought him into rupture with Akbar, the great Mughal. Daud Khan led an expedition into the Mughal territories on the Eastern frontier of Akbar's empire. The Mughal army under Munim Khan, a veteran general, invaded Bengal. After tough campaigning, Daud was forced to ask for peace. But soon afterwards
he rose in rebellion. However in 1576 A.D. the Mughal army under the
generalship of Husain Kuly Khan defeated Daud Khan in a stiff
battle and executed him. From this time Bengal became an integral
part of the Mughal Empire and Husain Kuly became its Governor.

In 1578 A.D. Husain Kuly Khan died and Muzaffar Khan
Turbati became the Governor. He brought certain changes in the
system of revenue collection which caused considerable dissension
among the feudal barons of Bengal and they under the leadership of
Bāro Bhuiyāns 118 raised the banner of rebellion against Muzaffar
Khan, took possession of Gauḍa and Pāṇḍwā and murdered the
Governor. The Mughal Governors of Bengal had to carry on relentless
fighting against these Bhuiyāns. When ManSingh was appointed
Governor of Bengal in 1594 A.D., he defeated Kedar Ray, and Isha
Khan thought it wise to sign a peace treaty with the Mughal
Governor. Akbar at first sent Raja Todarmall and then Governor Khan
Azam to crush the rebellions. But it was during the governorship of
Islam Khan (1608-1613 A.D.) that the Mughal forces after prolonged
fighting routed the rebellions Bhuiyāns of Bengal.

Meanwhile Mugh and Portuguese menace had also raised its
ugly head in coastal region of Bengal. The Portuguese were noted for
their piracy and depredation. They consolidated their position at

118. The most prominent of these Bāro Bhuiyāns or twelve feudal
landlords of Bengal were Kedar Ray of Sripura, Isha Khan and
his son Musa Khan of Sonārgāon, Pratāpāditya of Jessore-
Khulna and Usman of Mymensingh.
that time in the island of Sandwip under a chief named Sebastien Gonzales who made alliance with the exiled brother of the king of Arakan, a leader of the Mugh pirates, and temporarily created horror in the mind of the people of littoral Bengal. After some initial success the 'Hārmāds', as the pirates were known to the coastal people, met with reverses and ultimately withdrawn from their base of operation.

Bengal would have enjoyed unalloyed tranquility during the long period of Mughal rule that followed the death of Akbar but for the ambitious bids of Shah Jahan and Shuja, the two imperial princes, who raised the standard of rebellion against the emperors of Delhi of their respective times from Bengal. Shah Jahan was pardoned by his father, Emperor Jahangir and was forced to withdrawn from Bengal to Decan, and Shuja fled from Dhaka to Arakan and died there with his entire family under tragic circumstances.

The decline of the Mughal rule was synchronized with the emergence of the mighty forces: the Marathas and the more formidable powers of the West - the British, French, Dutch and the Portuguese. After the death of the last of the Great Mughals, Aurangzeb (1658-1707 A.D.), Murshid Quli Khan who was once a revenue officer of exceptional ability under the former, succeeded in

setting up virtually an independent Nizamat in the province in 1717 A.D. Under him Bengal enjoyed both security and prosperity, and Shuja-uddin by his tactfulness became the ruler of Bengal. He was succeeded by his son Sarfaraz Khan in 1739 A.D. But in 1740 A.D. Sarfaraz was deceived by a stratagem and was slain in a battle by Alivardi Khan who thereafter ascended the throne. During his reign Bengal was invaded by the Maratha Bargis and whole of Western Bengal became the scenes of their rapine and ravages. Unable to stem the tide of their plunder Alivardi at last made a truce with them. After the death of Alivardi Mirza Muhammad (alias Sirazud-daullah) succeeded to the throne of Bengal. He was a man of cruel and perverse temper, and soon came in confrontation with the British East India Company which ultimately led to the Battle of Plassey in 1757 A.D. Sirazud-daullah was defeated and murdered. The destiny of Bengal passed on to the hands of the British rulers for the next two hundred years.

In bare outline the history of these five-and-half centuries of muslim rule shows that during first two centuries of independence and isolation from Delhi, Bengal persistently clung to its provincial individuality when vigorous regional elements manifested themselves in the development of various arts, architecture and religious cults. With the advent of the Mughal rule, a uniform central administration was however implemented during next three-and-half centuries and the art and architecture of this eastern province of the empire gained a new dimension which broke down the age-old regional isolation in these fields.

120. Ibid., p.165.
The battle of Plassey ushered in a new era of political development in the history of Bengal. Though the territorial gains of the English Company from the treaty (June, 1757 A.D.) with Mirjafar whom the English placed on the throne after the murder of Sirajud-daullah were small and the English Company only got the restoration of their old privileges in the field of Commerce. Yet the English soon realized that the political control of the affairs of Bengal had by that time become indispensible for preservation and furtherance of their interest.\(^{121}\) Bengal under Mirjafar had fallen into a state of utter lawlessness and misery. By an intrigue the English deposed the Nawab in 1770 A.D. and placed on the throne his son-in-law Mirkasim.

Mirkasim was a ruler of predominant character and great administrative ability. He strengthened his power by reorganizing his army on European model and gave sincere attention to the improvement of exchequer.\(^{122}\) The question of duty-free inland trade of the Company's servants soon generated bitterness between the Nawab and the English, and it ultimately culminated into the battle of Buxar (1764 A.D.) in which the English came out victorious. Mirkasim fled after his defeat and the English company restored the old Nawab Mirjafar to the throne. The battle of Buxar


\(^{122}\) *Ibid.*, p.34.
reduced the Nawabship of Bengal to a shadow and the real power in the land went into the hands of the Company's servants who by their selfishness and rapacity brought such a state of anarchy that the hero of the battle of Plassey, Lord Robert Clive, was sent for the second time as Governor of Bengal in 1765 A.D. 123

From 1765 to 1772 A.D. there was Double Government in Bengal: the English East India Company being in charge of the Diwani, and Nawab nominally assumed the charges of Nizamat. The administration of Bengal thus became a duel and hybrid affairs 124, with European personnel the English Company operated through Asiatic forms and laws. Clive left Bengal in 1767 A.D. and Warren Hastings was sent as a governor in his place in 1772 A.D. In the interregnum the affairs of the English Company were in the hands of Verelst and Cartier and during their rule the condition of the people of the land became worse. In 1770 A.D. due to severe drought a terrible famine broke out which filled the country with utmost misery and death.

Hastings had instructions from authorities in England to demolish the whole fabric of the Double Government. In 1773 A.D. the Home Government in England assumed the actual responsibilities of governing the territories won by the servants of the English East India Company. With a view to end the confused state of

124. Ibid., p.176.
things that prevailed at that time, Hastings brought some important reforms in commercial, administrative, revenue and judicial matters. He next turned his attention towards the suppression of Sannyāsī and Fakir raider of Bengal. But the Governor always found himself at daggers drawn with his Council in Calcutta, the matter soon came to a crisis and he was accused of defalcations and bribery which in reprisal brought the execution of Mahārājā Nandakumar, a distinguished landlord of Bengal, on charges of forgery. Meanwhile the affairs of the English in Bengal did not escape the attention of the authorities in England. In 1784 A.D. by Pitt's India Act the control of Indian affairs was virtually transferred from the hand of the English Company to that of the Crown.

In 1786 A.D. Lord Cornwallis, invested with more extensive power, was sent as Governor-General to this country. During his tenure of office (1786-1793 A.D.) the Permanent Settlement recognizing the rights of the zamindars as perpetual was introduced in Bengal. Cornwallis also put down the bands of dacoits who were operating in different districts of Bengal and committing depredations on the defenceless cultivators. He split up the Civil Service into judicial and executive branches and established an appellate court of criminal judicative in Calcutta.

Inspired with imperial projects of implementing British Paramountcy everywhere in this land, either by a system of subsidiary alliances or by military conquest, Lord Wellesley came to India as the Governor-General in 1798 A.D. leaving apart his pan-Indian ambition, Wellesley's rule also witnessed some notable socio-cultural developments in Bengal in the threshold of the nineteenth Century. A Government House was built in Calcutta and funds were raised by lotteries to develop Calcutta into a Capital town under the supervision of a Town Improvement Committee\(^{128}\). In 1800 A.D. Wellesley founded the College of Fort William in Calcutta, which however became instrumental for the development of Bengali literature. Men like Missionary Carey, Judge Colebroke and Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar became associated with this college in later days. Wellesley also had good relations with the missionaries of Serampore who issued the first books printed in Bengali, published the first Bengali newspaper, and worked as the pioneers of Bengali education. In 1801 he put an end to the inhuman sacrifice of children at the festival of Gaṅgā Sāgar\(^{129}\).

Few notable incidents occurred in the history of Bengal during the tenures of office of the next two Governor-Generals, Lord Minto and Lord Hastings. While in 1807 A.D. Lord Minto established a censorship over press, a virulent epidemic of cholera swept Bengal in 1817 A.D. during the administration of Lord Hastings causing heavy toll on the life of the people. But when

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Lord William Bentick, who is remembered for his wise reforming and paternal administration, assumed the charges of Governor in 1828 A.D., there opened as an important epoch of social and educational reformations\textsuperscript{130}. Aided by eminent personalities of the time like Raja Rammohan Ray, Dwarakanath Tagore, Alexander Duff and others, Bentick introduced English education in Bengal, abolished the practice of Sati\textsuperscript{131}, organized a Thugee Department to track down and convict the Thugs or bandits, and did much to check slave trade in Bengal.

Nothing too remarkable happened in the history of Bengal during the Governor-Generalship of Lord Dalhousie (1848-1856 A.D.) except the opening of the first stretch of the East India Railway from Howrah to Hughly and the construction of first experimental telegraph lines along and across the Hughly river from Calcutta to Diamond Harbour, Mayapur and Kedegree. Of course during the rule of Frederick Halliday, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal under the Charter Act of 1853 A.D., occurred the Sepoy Mutiny which had far reaching consequences in the history of the British dominion in India. The mutiny manifested itself first at Barrackpore and Berhampore, both in Bengal, in early part of 1857 A.D. and then spread out in more violent form in other parts of North and Central India. So far as Bengal was concerned, the mutiny had little impact

\textsuperscript{130} Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), \textit{British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance}, p.2.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., p.2.
on the thought and life of the people. The mutiny of 1857 brought about fundamental changes in the character of Indian administration. It brought about the end of the Company's rule and Queen Victoria of England herself took over the administration of this country.

Bengal in the nineteenth century was marked by a strong wave of reforming activities in religion and society, and notable advancements in literary activities. The Brahma Samaj, founded by Rammohan Ray in 1828, gave a realistic expression to the concept of Universal Trueism of its founder. Brahmoism infused a new spirit into the nineteenth century religious thought of this country and brought to a focal point a comprehensive scheme of social, intellectual and political transformation of the country as visualised and formulated by Rammohan. The Samaj worked for the women's education, discarded purdah (exclusiveness of women), encouraged widow marriage and opposed polygamy and child marriage. Similar attempts were also made to eradicate some outstanding social evils of the time by Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, a great humanist of the nineteenth century Bengal. He stoutly protested against the wretched condition of the Hindu widows, polygamy, kulinism and child marriage. He was one of the pioneers in the field of female education in Bengal and founded a large number of girls' school in this province.

132. Ibid., p.498.
133. Sinha, Narendra Krishna, (ed.), op. cit., p.564
The greatest spiritual force of the closing phase of the nineteenth Century Bengal was Ramakrishna Paramahamsadeva, the saint of Dakshineswar. His life was an edifying story of the pilgrimage of a heroic soul, full of passion for God bent upon nothing but the realisation of Truth\textsuperscript{134}. He recognised that all religious led by different paths to the same God. The disciple of Ramakrishnadeva were legions and the foremost among them was Swami Vivekananda who electrified the Western world by his address at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, and after the death of the Master dedicated himself to a life of Action through monastic ideals at the institution he had set up, and known as the Ramakrishna Mission\textsuperscript{135}.

The impact of the west was not an unmixed evil altogether. It brought new forces, including a growing aspiration to further the cause of the cultural heritage of the country which in its turn produced some sort of creative upsurge in the domains of literature and art. By the end of the eighteenth century Ram Prasad Sen and Bharat Chandra Rai gave much stimulus to the promotion of Bengali devotional lyric poems and poetical compositions of epic fervour. Then came the writings of Rammohan Ray, the pioneer of Bengali prose literature and Iswar Chandra Gupta, the first of the poets of the Bengali literature of nineteenth century. While Michael

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p.554.

\textsuperscript{135} Sur,A.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.200.
Madhusudan Dutta successfully developed Bengali sonnets and epics to a remarkable height, the art of novel writing was perfected by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, a towering literary figure of the Century. But the greatest intellectual force of the Century was Rabindranath Tagore. He was a man of marvellous and versatile genius and a stupendous bridge between the East and the West.