CONCLUSION
The Political history of ancient Orissa in the pre-Gupta period is shrouded in considerable mystery. The reign of Khāravela which is most eventful in the history of Orissa was followed by a period of baffling obscurity. It is the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta which enables scholars to lift the veil of oblivion and study the history of ancient Orissa from the time of the south Indian campaign of Samudragupta in the middle of the fourth century A.D. The discovery of a large number of Kushāṇa and Puri-Kushāṇa coins and the Asanpāṭ stone inscription of Satrubhanja throw a considerable light on the Pre-Gupta period.

The lines 5, 6 and 7 of the Asanpāṭ Stone inscription indicate that for some time Mahārāja Satrubhanja established his hegemony in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa having achieved triumph in hundreds of battles against Kushāṇas. That Satrubhanja had to fight against the Kushāṇas before establishing his authority on the above areas suggests that for some time there was east-ward expansion of the Kushāṇa empire.

A critical study of the Asanpāṭ stone inscription reveals that in or about the fourth century A.D. Satrubhanja of the Nāga family claimed victory in one hundred battles against 'Devaputras'. This means that there was still the
remnant of Kushāṇa power in Orissa in the fourth century A.D. It is well known that with the death of Vāsudeva in or about 176 A.D. the Kushāṇa empire disintegrated. However, it is quite probable that the local Kushāṇa chiefs and other princes took advantage of the situation and asserted their independence. It seems that the Great Kushāṇas lost their hold over Orissa from the time of Vāsudeva, the Kushāṇa chief, who very probably asserted independence, exercised their sway till the fourth century of the Christian era. Therefore, it is believed that with the fall of the Kushāṇas, when the supply of real Kushāṇa copper coins fell short, the Kushāṇa chiefs who asserted independence circulated the so-called Puri-Kushāṇa coins in ancient Bihar and Orissa.

It was with the rise of Samudragupta that 'Daivaputras' (obviously the Kushāṇa chiefs of the Punjab region) submitted before the Guptas. In the same analogy we believe that even after the fall of the Great Kushāṇas, the Kushāṇa Chiefs continued to circulate the so-called Puri-Kushāṇa coins in Orissa. It was the rise of Śatrubhanja that brought about the fall of the 'Devaputras' in hundreds of battles in the north and north-western part of Orissa.

Although Śatrubhanja had fought against Kushāṇa chiefs and probably had extended his suzerainty as far as Tōṣali, he had nothing to do with Kaliṅga which came under the Māṭharas in the fourth century A.D. The capitals of Kaliṅga during this period were located at Pistapura and Simhapura.
far away from Bhubaneswar. Under Umāvarman, Bhilingi, where a hoard of Puri-Kushāṇa coins was found, became an integral part of Kaliṅga and when the Māṭharas extended their territory as far as the river Mahānadi in the north, Bhilingabhoga viśaya, identified with modern Bhilingi, occupied a central position in their territory. It is evident, therefore, to believe that just as Samudragupta ousted remnant of Kushāṇa power in North-Western part of India by subduing the Daivaputras, the early kings of Kaliṅga, belonging to the Māṭhara and the Vaśiśṭha families were also responsible to oust the remnant of Kushāṇa power in Kaliṅga, just as Śatrubhanja in the Keonjher region fought against 'Devaputras'. The Māṭharas who marched from their capital Pistapura in the north-eastern direction, very probably had to fight with Kushāṇa chiefs near Bhilingi which served as their stronghold in the subsequent period. So we think that Bhilingi hoard of Puri-Kushāṇa coins was either issued by the Kushāṇa chiefs before they were defeated by the Māṭharas or the Māṭharas themselves.

In the age of the Imperial Guptas closely following the South Indian campaign of Samudragupta there emerged in ancient Orissa the ruling dynasties like the Māṭharas (Kaliṅga), the Nāgas (Keonjhar region), the Nalas (Puṣkari) and the Sarabhapuriyas (South Kosala), who exerted great influence over the political and cultural life of the region for about two centuries. None of these dynasties had submitted before the
Gupta monarchs. They did not even use Gupta Era in their records. The Mātharas of Kaliṅga did not owe alligence to the Guptas. But with the fall of the Nalas in South Kosala the Guptas and the Vākātakas seems to have ruled over South Kosala for some time. A large number of gold coins bearing the names of Mahendrāditya and Kramāditya found in South Kosala lend support to the view that in all probabilities the coins were minted by the Gupta monarch. The reference of Paramabhaṭṭāraka in Kurudh copper plates of Mahārāja Narendra indicates that on the eve of the rise of the Sarabhapuriyas, the Guptas had established their control over South Kosala. Thus, while the Gupta hegemony was not extended to the coastal tracts of Orissa, it exercised its political weight over South Kosala for about a century.

Apart from giving rise to independent sub-regional kingdoms in the post-Gupta period under the Mātharas, the Nāgas, the Nalas, the Sarabhapuriyas, the new-age facilitated the growth of Brāhmānical culture in various aspects of social life of the people of ancient Orissa. Not only Sanskrit language and Brāhmānical religion could spread in the tribal-dominated regions of ancient Orissa but also one witnessed the introduction of the Gupta system of administration and polity. The use of Gupta-Era and coinage was another aspect of this new age. In the sphere of art and architecture the emergence of a new tradition was equally significant.
The kings of Kaliṅga and South Kosala extended liberal patronage for the spread of Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and other cults which gradually sanskritised the authochothonous tribal deities of Orissa in order to make Orissa a centre of Brāhmaṇical culture. Subsequently religious synthesis became the order of the day which gave birth to a number of new cults such as Harihara, Saptamātrikā and other forms of religious syncretism.

Temple as one of the most important forms of architecture was started in Kaliṅga and South Kosala a few years later than its origin in the Gupta empire. The process of evolution of the temple architecture and decorative art in this region marked a close similarity with classical trends; and the Gupta cultural traditions left an indelible imprint over the regional culture of Orissa notwithstanding the absence of direct political control of the Gupta kings. Inspite of the geographical and political barriers India had achieved cultural unity spearheaded by Brāhmaṇical religion, Sanskrit language and Gupta polity.

***