CHAPTER - I

ORISSA IN THE PRE-GUPTA AGE
The political history of ancient Orissa in the Pre-Gupta age is shrouded in considerable mystery. The reign of Khāravela (1st century B.C.) which is most eventful in the long range of the history of Orissa was followed by a period of baffling obscurity. It is the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta which has enabled scholars to lift the veil of oblivion and study the history of ancient Orissa with all its details from the time of South Indian campaign of Samudragupta in the middle of the fourth century A.D. However, a peep into the so-called dark period is possible on the basis of the following source materials which throw light on the history of Orissa in the Pre-Gupta age:

i) The Bhadrak Stone Inscription of Mahārāja Gana

ii) The Asanapāt Stone Inscription of Satrubhaṅja

iii) A large number of Kushāṇa and Puri-Kushāṇa coins, and

iv) Literary sources indicating Muruṇḍa supremacy in Eastern India.

4. See next page.
The Bhadrak Stone Inscription, palaeographically assigned to some time circa third century A.D., refers to Mahārāja Gaṇa who ruled over ancient Orissa at least for eight years at the end of which the present epigraph was incised. The inscription refers to installation of three deities by Mahārāja Gaṇa, but it does not throw any specific light on the political history of the period. Even the name of the donor in the inscription has not been deciphered with certainty. D.C. Sircar reads the name of the donor as Gaṇa, whereas K.C. Panigrahi thinks that it should be read as Śūraśarmā. In the opinion of Panigrahi Mahārāja Śūraśarmā was a sub-ordinate ruler under the Murunḍas who, according to the Purāṇas, ruled over Eastern India during this period. But there is no clue in the inscription itself to ascertain that Śūraśarmā was the sub-ordinate of any Murunḍa king.

According to the Purāṇas the Murunḍas succeeded the Tukhāras, and thirteen Murunḍa kings ruled for centuries. A work of Jaina literature Abhīdhāna Rājendra refers to the Murunḍas of Eastern India with their capital at Pātāliputra.

6. ibid, p.240ff.
Indian Culture III, p.49.
According to Chinese annals\(^9\) between 240 and 245 A.D. the king of India was called Meouloun which, according to Sylvan Levi, means Muruṇḍa. The Greek geographer Ptolemy\(^10\) informs us that 'the Maroundai' occupied an extensive territory which comprised Tirhut and the country southward on the east of the Gangas as far as the Gangaridas. On the strength of these sources it has been supposed that Pandu, as described in Dāthāvamsa in 310 A.D., was a Muruṇḍa king and that his vassal Guhasiva of Kalinga probably issued the Puri-Kushāṇa coins.\(^11\)

In the course of the archaeological excavation at Sisupalgarh near Bhubaneswar, a gold coin bearing the motif of Vasudeva I was discovered. On stratigraphical basis the coin has been assigned to the third century A.D. The legend on the coin has been read by A.S. Altekar\(^12\) as 'Mahārājarājādhas Dharmaḍāmaḍhāraśa'. He has suggested that Dharma Dhāmaḍhara may well have been a ruler of the Muruṇḍa family.

\(^9\) Chatterjee, B.R. Indian Cultural Influence in Cambodia, pp. 17-18.
\(^11\) Law, B.C. 'Dāthāvamsa'
\(^12\) JNSI, vol. XII, p. 1.
It is obvious, then, that attempts have been made by scholars to establish the theory of Muruṇḍa Supremacy over Orissa; but the conclusions are based on hypothetical considerations. Mahārāja Śūraśarmā, as Panigrahi supposes, was probably a sub-ordinate under a Muruṇḍa king, although Śūraśarmā himself does not refer to his overlord. Again Guhasiva who is supposed to have issued Puri-Kushāṇa coins is only known to us from literature. Dharma Dāmadhara is also supposed to be a Muruṇḍa chief on hypothetical considerations.

The Muruṇḍas were a powerful tribe who lived in the Gangetic valley in Eastern India in the second and third centuries A.D. But it is worth noting here that there are no epigraphic or numismatic sources which directly associate the Muruṇḍas with any part of Orissa.

Now, the question is: who were ruling over Orissa at the time? The recently discovered inscription at Asanpāṭ in the Keonjhar district throws considerable light on the problem. On palaeographical ground this inscription may be assigned to the fourth century A.D. The

letters of the inscription are similar to those of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription\textsuperscript{16} of Samudragupta. The record reveals that Śatrubhaṅja, the Lord of Vindhyāṭāvi\textsuperscript{17} who earned great name and fame by donating lakhs of cows to Pāṭaliputra, Gayā, Krimila, Dadavardhana, Pundravardhana, Gorhati, Vardhamāna, Tāmralipti and Ubhaya Tośali, was adorned with victories in hundreds of battles against 'Devaputras'\textsuperscript{18}. The reference to 'Devaputra' here is indeed very significant. It can be fairly said that 'Devaputra' is not an epithet of Śatrubhaṅja\textsuperscript{19}. Had it been so, he would have been called 'Devaputrah'. The omission of the Visarga\textsuperscript{20} in the inscription can by no means be a mistake. The epigraph glorifies Śatrubhaṅja for having defeated Devaputra in hundreds of battles. It is very well known that 'Devaputra' was used as a royal title by the Kushāṇas in their inscriptions and coins\textsuperscript{21}.

\textsuperscript{17} OHRJ, vol.XIII, Part-II, line 5 of the inscription.
\textsuperscript{18} ibid, Line 2 of the inscription. (Devaputra-Samaraśatesu-Sumandita-Pratāpah)
\textsuperscript{19} JNSI, vol.XXXII, Part-I, p.27.
\textsuperscript{20} ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} ibid, vol.XXX, p.190.
It is also well known that Daivaputra Shāhi Shāhānu Shāhi entered into subordinate alliance with Samudragupta. So it is only fair to suppose that Šatrubhaṇja, a rising Nāga king (Nāgānvayo) who is believed to have donated innumerable cows to 'Ubhaya-Tošali' (the northern and southern Tošali)23, established his strong-hold on Eastern India as far as Orissa by subduing the Kushāṇas known as Devaputras. The lines 5, 6 and 7 of the Asanapāt Stone inscription indicate that for some time he established his hegemony in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa, having achieved triumph in hundreds of battles against the Kushāṇas. That Šatrubhaṇja had to fight against the Kushāṇas before establishing his hegemony in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa suggests that for some time there was east-ward expansion of the Kushāṇa empire.

The discovery of a large number of Kushāṇa and Puri-Kushāṇa coins in Orissa goes a long way to support this hypothesis. The discoveries of the Kushāṇa coins are detailed here:

a) Many copper coins of Kanishka and Huvishka were found at Bhanjkia in the Panchapīṭha Sub-division of Mayurbhanj district 24.

b) R.D. Banerjee discovered 112 copper coins of the Imperial Kushāṇas in the Mayurbhanj district\(^\text{25}\).

c) Copper coins of Kanishka and Huvishka were discovered at Sīṣupālgarh\(^\text{26}\).

d) Kushāṇa coins were found in the excavation at Viratgarh in Mayurbhanj district\(^\text{27}\).

e) L.N. Bhanjadeo of Keonjhar discovered some Kushāṇa coins and Puri-Kushāṇa coins at Sitabinji in Keonjhar district\(^\text{28}\).

f) B.V. Nath discovered 13 copper coins of Kanishka and Huvishka in the village Kayemā in the Jaipur Sub-Division of Cuttack district\(^\text{29}\).

g) At Gumbai Salt Factory near Mānika-Pātanā (Puri district) 84 copper coins of Kushāṇa rulers were discovered in 1893 along with Puri-Kushāṇa coins\(^\text{30}\).

h) J.D. Beglar discovered some Indo-Scythian coins at Jaugāḍa near Purusottampur in the Ganjam district\(^\text{31}\).


\(^{26}\) Ancient India, No. 5, p. 97.


\(^{29}\) Ibid, pp. 84-93.

\(^{30}\) Proceedings ASB, 1895, p. 161.

It is clear from these details that Kushāṇa coins were found in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Cuttack, Puri, and Ganjam districts of Orissa. The Kayemā hoard exclusively contains the coins of Kanishka and Huvishka. But the Kushāṇa coins in the hoards found at Bhanjkia, Viratgarh and Manikapatana would have been current in Orissa for a long period before they were imitated in the form of Puri-Kushāṇa coins towards the third or fourth century of the Christian era. It is true that most of the Kushāṇa coins are not found independent of the Puri-Kushāṇa coins. Yet, we need not presume that the Kushāṇa coins were current only at a time when the Kushāṇa empire had ceased to exist. It seems probable that the Kushāṇa empire extended as far as Orissa during the reign of Kanishka and Huvishka. Not a single coin of Vāsudeva has so far been noticed in any hoard in Orissa, although an imitation gold coin bearing the motif Vāsudeva I has been found at Śiśupalgarh excavation. Possibly Orissa was lost to Vāsudeva by the middle of the second century A.D. But at the same time it seems that provincial governors, appointed by the Kushāṇas in different parts of Orissa, asserted their independence at the fall of the empire and continued to use the coins of this erstwhile master.

As years passed, the supply of Kushāna coins gradually diminished. Consequently, there was the minting of the imitations of Kushāna copper coins which are found in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

A brief record of the discovery of the Puri-Kushāna coins in Orissa is given here:

i) In 1858, four miles to the west of Purushottampur in the district of Ganjam were found the crude imitation coins of Kushāna type.

ii) In 1893 a number of Puri-Kushāna coins were found in the Puri district.

iii) 910 Puri-Kushāna coins were discovered in 1912 in Balasore.

iv) In 1923 Puri-Kushāna coins along with Kushāna coins were found at Bhanjkia. Subsequently, 170 Puri-Kushāna coins were also found in association with Kushāna coins in Mayurbhanj.

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34. 'The Madras Journal of Literature and Science', No.6 (N.S) p.75.
36. ASIAR, 1924-25, p.130.
v) In 1853 P. Acharya brought nearly 1261 Puri-Kushāna coins from Bhanjkia to the Orissa State Museum and this hoard contains one coin of Kanishka.

vi) T. Ramchandran refers to five Puri-Kushāna coins discovered from Sitabinji.

vii) A gold coin was found in the Śisupāルgarh excavations, in imitation of the coin type of Vasudeva I. The legend on the coin has been read by A. S. Altekar as 'Mahārājarājadhasa Dharmāmadharsa'.

viii) The latest discovery of the Puri-Kushāna coins in Būlingi in Andhra Pradesh was made by S. C. Behera in 1960. It has not been possible to know if the hoard consisted of Puri-Kushāna coins exclusively, or it also consisted of some coins of the Great Kushānas, as many of the coins were mutilated by the local people.

Apart from the finds of these Puri-Kushāna coins, a good number of the genuine Kushāna copper coins have also been discovered in different parts of Chhotanagpur region (in Bihar) or the ancient Jhārkhand which formed a part of Utkala in ancient times. At Kārrā in Ranchi district one copper coin of Kanishka was found. At Kositanr in Hazaribagh district, 130 specimens including 110 pieces that

40. ibid, vol. XII, p.1.
42. Tripathy, S. op. cit., p.44.
belong to Kanishka and other pieces that are a great deal worn out and are said to be of the Kushāṇas were found in 1945. In West Bengal a genuine Kushāṇa coin was recovered from Tamluk in Midnapore district, and some imitation Kushāṇa types, recovered apparently from the Southern districts of the state, are now preserved in the Directorate of Archaeology, Government of West Bengal. Some struck copper pieces, numbering 24, alleged to be imitations of Kanishka-Huvishka coinage, are reported to have been collected from Bengal. They are now preserved in the British Museum. Some of these coins have close similarity with the Puri-Kushāṇa coins. It may be pointed out here that the different adjoining regions of Orissa i.e. Southern districts of West Bengal, north eastern parts of Andhra Pradesh, and Chhotanagpur region of Bihar where a considerable number of Kushāṇa and Puri-Kushāṇa coins have been found, formed parts of ancient Orissa even to the recent times. It is also to be noted that we have not yet come across any coin of Puri-Kushāṇa type in South-Kosala region, i.e. Chhatisgarh in Madhya Pradesh, Sambalpur, Bolangir and Kalahandi districts in Orissa, although a number of genuine copper coins of Kanishka, Huvishka and Vasudeva are known to have been

43. JBORS, List No.81; JNSI, vol.XXXVI, p.35.
44. JPASB, 1882, p.113.
discovered from this area. The only big hoard of these coins that contains 757 pieces, including 44 of Wima Kadphises, 324 of Kanishka and 362 of Huvishka was found in Shahdol district.

It is very difficult to ascertain the date of these Puri-Kushāṇa coins. One of the coins discovered from Rakhā Hills in Singhbhum district, Bihar, contains the inscription 'Tanka'. On palaeographical ground R.D. Banerjee assigns the coins some time before the middle of the seventh century A.D. Rapson puts the uninscribed coins to the period between the reign of Kanishka and the end of the Kushāṇa rule in India. V.A. Smith finds it impossible to fix the date of the excessively rude coins which are found in the area from Puri to Ganjam. Yet he thinks that they might belong to the fourth or the fifth century A.D. The Puri-Kushāṇa coins do not appear to have been circulated at one period. The coin bearing the inscription 'Tanka' obviously belonged to a later period; but it may well be said that the inscribed coins belong to an earlier, and most likely, to the Pre-Gupta period.

49. IMC, vol.I, p.64.
P. L. Gupta, while attempting to fix the date of the Kushāṇa currency in the eastern part of India, maintains that the Kushāṇa coins were current in Orissa in the period when the Kushāṇa empire had ceased to exist in Northern India. He has based this observation mainly on the ground that in the course of archaeological excavation conducted at Sisupālgarh near Bhubaneswar in 1948 a copper coin of Huvishka was found in a layer ascribable to the last quarter of the second century A.D. Leaving aside the questionable nature of the stratigraphical division of the soil at Sisupālgarh, however, it is unsafe to jump to an important conclusion on the evidence of a solitary coin, unless it is corroborated by other evidences. It is interesting to note how the coins of the Kushāṇas instead of being current in Orissa during the period of their rule, came to be introduced at a subsequent period in different parts of Orissa.

How can we then explain the discovery of hoards of Kushāṇa and the Puri-Kushāṇa coins in various parts of Orissa? These coins, made of copper, number some thousands, and not a few specimens as found in Bengal and Bihar.

That these coins infiltrated into Orissa by way of trade and commerce may be suggested (some scholars have actually done so) with reference to an analogous recovery of some hundreds of Roman 'dinarius' from the Indian coast. But whereas we may believe that gold and silver coins to some extent can be carried to distant lands without any implication of political occupation, the same argument cannot be advanced for explaining the presence of thousands of copper coins in Orissa. Copper coins do not travel long. They were generally issued for the purpose of local transactions of the people. If, therefore, they are found in abundance at a number of places in Orissa, it may be inferred that Orissa was conquered by the Kushāṇas for some time.

Indeed, once the theory of the Kushāṇa occupation of Orissa is accepted, the abundant use of the so-called Puri-Kushāṇa coins in the province can be satisfactorily explained. The Kushāṇa emperors ruled their vast dominion through Viceroyys, and it is not unlikely that they adopted the same policy in Orissa. A large number of Kushāṇa coins were evidently supplied to the outlying province from the Imperial mint at certain intervals of time, but this supply to Orissa from a distant centre being irregular and inadequate, the provincial governors were possibly empowered to issue copper coins on the basis of the Kushāṇa originals.
A critical study of the Asanpat Stone inscription reveals that in and about the fourth century A.D. Satrubhaṇja 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. But it is well known that with the death of Vasudeva in or about 176 A.D. the Kushāṇa empire began to disintegrate. However, it is quite probable that the local Kushāṇa chiefs and other princes took advantage of the situation and asserted independence. It seems that although the Great Kushāṇas lost their hold over Orissa from the time of Vasudeva, the Kushāṇa chiefs very probably asserted independence and exercised their sway till the fourth century A.D. We are therefore, inclined to believe that with the fall of Kushāṇas when the supply of real Kushāṇa Copper coins was short, the local Kushāṇa chiefs who asserted independence circulated the imitation Kushāṇa coins in Bihar and Orissa.

It may be noted in this context that after the fall of the great Kushāṇa empire after 230 or 240 A.D., the Kushāṇa chiefs, known to history as the 'Later Kushāṇas' ruled over the Punjab region for about a century, where also we find a large number of coins which are debased imitations of those of the Great Kushāṇa kings. It was with the rise of Samudragupta that Daivaputras, obviously the Kushāṇa chiefs of

the Punjab region, submitted before the Guptas. In a similar manner, we are inclined to believe, even after the fall of the Great Kushāṇa the Kushāṇa chiefs continued to circulate the Puri-Kushāṇa coins in Orissa. It was the rise of Śatrubhaṅja that brought about the fall of the 'Devaputras' in hundreds of battles in the northern and north-western parts of Orissa.

These 'Devaputras' of the Asanpāt inscription need not be confused with the 'Murunḍas'. The terms 'Devaputra' and 'Saka Murunḍa' have been mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription as distinctly different. So we think that although gleanings from literary sources show that the Murunḍas exerted supremacy for some time in Eastern India, the Kushāṇas continued to govern in different parts of Orissa till the fourth century A.D. In Keonjhar where we find both Kushāṇa and the Puri-Kushāṇa coins, there is also the inscription of Śatrubhaṅja of the Nāga family at Asanpāt. The inscription refers to the clash between Śatrubhaṅja and the Kushāṇa chiefs. In that case we may as well suggest that Puri-Kushana coins found at Keonjhar were either issued by the Kushāṇa chiefs prior to their struggle with Śatrubhaṅja, or the coins found Keonjhar were issued by Śatrubhaṅja himself. In the absence of any direct evidence it is not, however, safe to say as to who issued the Puri-Kushāṇa coins at Keonjhar.
Although Satrubhañja had fought against the Kushāṇa chiefs and had extended his suzerainty as far as Tosali, he had nothing to do with Kaliṅga\textsuperscript{52} which fell under the Māṭharas in the fourth century A.D. The capitals of Kaliṅga during this period were located at Pisthapura and Simhapura, far away from Bhubaneswar. Under Umāvarman, Bhilingi (where we find a hoard of Puri-Kushāṇa coins) became an integral part of Kaliṅga and when the Māṭharas extended their territory as far as the river Mahanadi in the north\textsuperscript{53} Bhilingabhogavishaya, identified as the modern Bhilingi\textsuperscript{54}, was situated in the heart of their territory.

It is possible that just as Samudragupta ousted the remnant of Kushāṇa power in North-Western India by subduing the Daivaputras, the early kings of Kaliṅga belonging to the Māṭhara dynasty of the Vaśīṣṭha families were also responsible to oust the remnant of Kushāṇa power from Kaliṅga at a time when Satrubhañja in the Keonjhar region fought against 'Devaputras'. The Māṭharas, who marched from their capital Pisthapura in the north-eastern direction, very probably had to confront the Kushāṇa chiefs near Bhilingi which became the former's stronghold in the subsequent period. One is inclined

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\textsuperscript{53.} Vide line 2, 3 of the Nirgondi grant.

\textsuperscript{54.} JNSI, vol.XXXII, p.33.
to think that the Bhilingi hoard of Puri-Kushāṇa coins were either issued by the Kushāṇa chiefs before they were defeated by the Māṭharas or by the Māṭharas themselves.

According to a Chinese legend recorded in Sridharmapitaka⁵⁵, a minister called Māṭhara brought about the tragic end of Kaṇīṣkha. We further learn from Mārkendeya Purāṇa⁵⁶ that the Matharas were a people who dwelt along the river Śatadru, not far from the capital of Kanīṣkha. We may, therefore, suppose that the Māṭharas of Kalinga who appeared in the political scene after the fall of Kushāṇa power in Orissa, might have migrated from the Sutleg valley and, like the minister Māṭhara who brought the tragic end of Kanīṣkha, played an important part in crushing the remnant of Kushāṇa power* in Orissa⁵⁷.

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55. IA, vol. XXXII, p.381.
57. JNSI, vol. XXXII, p.34.

* The sculptural representation of the gate-keepers with boots found in the caves of Udayagiri exhibit the cultural impact of the Kushāṇa. These life size figures of Dvarapalas remind us the Kushāṇa soldiers, armed with spears. A few Nāga images (CHRJ, vol. III, p.100ff) discovered from Bhubaneswar betray some affinity to the Kushāṇa school of sculpture.