CHAPTER - III

GUPTA RULE IN ORISSA, RE-EXAMINED
Samudragupta swept over different parts of Orissa in the course of his South Indian campaign in the middle of the fourth century A.D. He subjugated the kings of Kosala, Mahākāntāra, Kurāla, Pīṭhāpura, Koṭṭāura, Eranḍapalla and Devarāśṭra. But his conquests of these principalities did not lead to their annexation to the Gupta Empire. Samudragupta's campaign in Orissa was in the nature of Dharma-vijaya; and therefore he only made the Orissan kings subservient, but did not annex their kingdoms into his empire.

The successors of Samudragupta are known to have ruled till the middle of the sixth century A.D. Chandragupta II extended his supremacy from Bengal to the Indus in the fifth century A.D. Under Kumaragupta I, Pundravardhana Bhukti corresponded to modern north Bengal and formed a part of the Gupta suzerainty and was extended up to Orissa at a later time.

The Māṭharas who came to lime-light after the South Indian campaign of Samudragupta are not known to have accepted the overlordship of the Guptas. They are known to have issued fifteen copper plate grants, but in all these charters they have used only their own regnal years. There is no reference to the Gupta Era in their records.

The earliest reference to Gupta Era in Orissan epigraph is noticed in the Sumanḍāla Copper Plate grant of Dharmarāja who ruled over 'Kaliṅga rāṣṭra' as a subordinate of PrithiviÇvigraha. This charter was dated 'Sāṃvat' 250 - a style of dating which was current in the Gupta empire. We also find reference to the use of the Gupta Era in the Kaṅāsa Plate of Lokavigraha dated Sāṃvat 280, and Paṭiākelā Copper Plate grant of Sambhuyasa dated Sāṃvat 283. These references have led D.C.Sircar and S.N.Rajguru to hold the view that there was Gupta rule in Orissa, while it is known to us that the Māṭharas who ruled over Kaliṅga from the Krishnaveni to Mahanadi, used their own regnal year and they have nothing

5. **OHRJ, 1952.**
to do with the Gupta overlord. The Guptas ceased to rule in 550 A.D. but the earliest Orissan epigraph referring to the use of the Gupta Era is dated 570 A.D. when the Gupta empire had already declined and fallen from power.

In the light of these sources of information scholars are divided in their opinion regarding the extent of the Gupta rule in Orissa. The basis of the arguments of Sircar and Rajguru in support of the theory of the Gupta rule in Orissa is the frequent use of Gupta Era in some of the copper plate grants of the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. Recently, Sircar has shown that according to one tradition recorded in the Jain work *Trilokaprajñāpāti* the Gupta rule lasted for a period of 232 years, whereas according to another tradition mentioned in the same work the Gupta reigned for 255 years. In this context D.C. Sircar observes -

As the two traditions are found in the same work and are not separated by the wide gap, it is permissible to think that the author had in view two altogether different traditions on the same subject. It appears that the first one relates to the explosion of the Gupta rule from their home province in Bihar and U.P. and the second refers to the final overthrow of the Guptas from Bengal and Orissa. If such was the case, the first event took place about 551 A.D. and the second about 575 A.D.

Rajguru, similarly, based his theory of the Gupta rule in Kaliṅga on the contents of the Sumaṇḍala Copper plate grant of Dharmarāja of the Gupta Saṃvat 250. He has offered a detailed discussion with a comparative study of three inscriptions: the Sumaṇḍala Copper Plate inscription, the Kaṇāsa Plates of Sri Lokavigraha and the Ganjam plates of Mādhavarāja.

The Copper Plate inscriptions in which we find the use of the Gupta Era are -

i) Sumaṇḍala Plates of Dharmarāja of the year 250 = 569 A.D.

ii) Soro Plates of Sambhuyaśa of Toṣali of the year 260 = 579 A.D.

iii) Kaṇāsa Plates of Sri Lokavigraha of the year 280 = 599 A.D.

iv) Ārang Plates (Raipur district, Madhaya Pradesh) of Maharāja Bhimasena of South Kosala of the year 292 = 601 A.D.

v) Paṭiākelā (Cuttack District, Orissa) Plates of Maharāja Śivarāja of the year 283 = 602 A.D.

10. ibid, vol.IX, pp.287ff.
D.C. Sircar\textsuperscript{11} is inclined to believe, on the basis of the Sumaṇḍala Copper Plate inscription of Prithvivigraha dated the Gupta Era 250 (569 A.D.), that Orissa at the time was under the imperial Guptas. The preamble of the Sumaṇḍala charter runs as follows:

\begin{quote}
ॐ स्वास्ति चतुरुद्धि मैस्मस्तेवा साधारण पवित्रसरस्यस्माद्यायवसुस्वसः ्राजावर्त्तमान गुप्तराज्ये वर्त्तमाणये प्रदेशसाधुते कल्याणः साहसुरामसरति श्री पुरुषोत्तमादृके
\end{quote}

The word 'Varttamāna' in these lines is explained by Sircar in the sense of 'existing' and hence he is of the opinion that in the first-half of the sixth century A.D. Orissa acknowledged its allegiance to the imperial Guptas and constituted a viceroyalty under Dharamarāja. N.K. Sahu\textsuperscript{13} is of the opinion that the Sumaṇḍala inscription does not conclusively prove the inclusion of Orissa in the Gupta empire. He says that the word 'Varttamāna' should not be taken in the sense of 'existing'

\textsuperscript{11} EI, vol.XXVIII, pp.79-85.
but 'Pravarttamāna', meaning 'promulgated'. Sahu's view seems to be acceptable and we are inclined to believe that the inscription refers to the Saṅvat which was 'promulgated' by the Guptas and not to the 'existing' Gupta territory.

In the Kaṇāsa copper plate of Lokavigraha of the same Vigraha family, the word 'Pravarttamāna' has been inserted in place of Varttamāna. The inscription refers to the Gupta year 280 (599 A.D.).

The date portion of the inscription runs as follows -

"...Pravarttamāna Gupta Rāja Saṅvatsare Asityuttare Śatadvaye...."

This refers to the year 280 of the Era promulgated in the Gupta Rājya and not to the existence of the Gupta empire in the year 280 = 600 A.D.

The Gupta empire ceased to exist in 550 A.D. H.C. Raychoudhury¹⁴ refers to a tradition recorded by Jinasena in the Harivaṃśa in which the tradition reveals that the Guptas ruled for 231 years and that the Gupta suzerainty ended in 550 A.D.

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\text{Guptānām cha śhataśvayam ekatrinśhacha varṣāṇi kālavīdvirudāḥṛtam ...} \]

¹⁵. Harivaṃśa - Chapter 60.
Besides, the Trilokaprajñāpati a Jain work by Jadivasaha also refers to the same tradition regarding the duration of 231 years of the Gupta rule.

The last known Gupta record is the Dāmodarpur Copper Plate inscription dated Gupta Era 224 corresponding to 543 A.D. The Harha Inscription of the time of Sri Isānavarman dated Saṃvat 511-553 A.D. reveals that the very heart of the Gupta empire was under the Maukharis by that time. This is corroborated by the Deovarnāk Inscription which refers to the rule of Sarvavarman and Avantivarman, the son and grandson of Isānavarman respectively, over Magadha region. The Eran inscription of the Huṇa king Toramāṇa (in his first regnal year, c.500-15) and the Gwalior inscription of the Huṇa king Mihirakula (c.515-35 A.D.) show that East and West Malwa no longer formed parts of Gupta empire. These references in the inscriptions conclusively prove that the mighty fabric of the great Gupta empire covering wide areas of Northern India disintegrated by the middle of the sixth century A.D. In such a case Sircar's theory (based on the reference to the Gupta Era in the


19. ibid, p.396ff.
20. ibid, p.440ff.
Sumaṇḍala and Kaṇāsa plates) that Orissa was included in the Gupta empire seems untenable. In order to explain his point of view that the Gupta empire was in existence as late as 569 A.D. Sircar comments on the Sumaṇḍala plate inscription -

The present inscription indicating the continuity of the imperial Gupta rule as late as A.D. 569 thus seems to suggest that even after the distintegration of the empire, there were some numbers of the family who claimed the status of their imperial predecessors, whether their position was normal like that of James III of England or that of Mughal Emperor Shah Alam and his successors can hardly be determined in the present state of our knowledge. There is, however, no doubt that till A.D. 569 viceroys like Prithvivigraha Bhaṭṭāraka of Kaliṅga continued their allegiance to the Gupta Emperor. The word Bhaṭṭāraka attached to Prithvivigraha's name may suggest that he ruled practically as an independent monarch; but he did so without finally throwing off the yoke of the Guptas. It is possible that he had blood-relationship with the Guptas and was eager to display it to improve his own case against those of their rival rulers of the country.21

The Sumaṇḍala Copper Plate was issued by Mahārāja Dharmarāja, who a feudatory of Prithvivigraha is indicated in this inscription as an independent ruler belonging to the Vigraha family of Kaliṅga. Nowhere he has been stated as a viceroy of the Gupta emperor or as having any blood relationship with the

Gupta family. None of the epigraphic or the literary sources refers to this fact. Besides, had he been a scion of the Gupta family, he would have mentioned the fact in the charter.

The inference regarding the viceroyalty of the Guptas cannot stand because nowhere in India a Gupta emperor existed in 569 A.D. The Gupta Era, which started in 319/20 A.D. was accepted in course of time as one of the standard era in India, and it is found to be in vogue long after the decay of the Gupta rule in India. So the mention of the Gupta Era in the inscriptions does not necessarily indicate Gupta rule.

It is evident that like other states of Dakshināpatha (South India) Kaliṅga did not form a part Samudragupta's empire. His invasion broke down the petty principalities and paved the way for political unity under the hegemony of the Māṭharas, who came to prominence shortly after the Gupta monarch's retreat. The Māṭharas ruled over Kaliṅga as an independent power for about a century and a half. They ruled upto c.500 A.D. from Mahānadi to the Krishnaveni. None of the kings of this dynasty is known to be under the suzerainty of the Gupta emperors.
Sircar further supports his theory by the Peddadugam Plates of king Satrudamana of Giri Kaliṅga dated c.500 A.D.\textsuperscript{22} from his headquarters at Sīmhapura identified with modern Singapuram near Srikakulam. The inscription declares him as a subordinate of one Bhāṭṭāraka (Bhāṭṭāraka-pāda-parigrihiita), and Sircar assumes that the epithet 'Bhāṭṭāraka' in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. was used by the feudatories of the Guptas in reference to their imperial over-lord\textsuperscript{23}. It may be pointed out that the epithet Bhāṭṭāraka was not a monopoly of the imperial Gupta rulers during the period mentioned here. Śaktivarman, the Māthara king of Kaliṅga (c.400-420 A.D.) has been referred to as Śaktivaṭṭāraka in the Andhavaram copper plate inscription\textsuperscript{24} of his son Ananta Śaktivarman.

The Nala king Arthapati who ruled over Baster-Koraput region in c.465-75 A.D. is called Sri Maharāja Arthapati Bhāṭṭāraka both in the Kesariibeḍā\textsuperscript{25} and Riṭhāpur copper plate grants. Prithvivigraha, the ruler of Kaliṅga in 570 A.D. is therefore declared as Bhāṭṭāraka in the Sumandala copper plate grant and there is no cogent reason to believe that this epithet was born only by the Gupta monarchs.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} EI, vol.XXVIII, pp.81-82.
\item \textsuperscript{23} JIH, vol.XXXIV, p.283.
\item \textsuperscript{24} EI, vol.XXVIII, pp.175-79.
\item \textsuperscript{25} ibid, pp.12-16; ibid, vol.XIX, pp.100-104.
\end{itemize}
Besides, it is stated by Sircar that Lokavigraha Bhaṭṭāraka of the Kaṇāsa plate was an independent monarch who has used the Gupta Era in his inscription, and has also assumed the title of 'Bhaṭṭāraka'. So Sircar's view seems to contradict itself. But we have seen above Lokavigraha was not a feudatory of the imperial Guptas. So it can be said that 'Bhaṭṭāraka' was not a title exclusively and specifically used by the imperial Guptas or later-Guptas or even their feudatories. Independent kings or their feudatories also used this title.

Maharāja Šatrudāmana of the Peḍḍadugam grant was very likely the feudatory of the Māṭhara king Śaktivārman of Kaliṅga who was ruling over the territory extending from Mahānādi to the Krishna from his headquarters in the fifth century A.D. Further the Ganjam plate of Mādhavarāja II, the son of Ayasobhita I and grandson of Mādhavarāja I of the Śailodbhava dynasty is dated the Gupta Era 300. The date portion runs as follows -

"...Chaturdadhi Salīla Bichi Mekhalā Nilimāyaṁ Sadveepaṇḍiri Pattanabatyaṁ Vasundharaṁyāṁ Gauptādeva varṣa śatatraye vartamāne ...."
In view of its popularity the Gupta Era was also used by Mādhavarāja although he was a subordinate of Sasāṅka. Like the Saka Era which is being used for centuries after Kanishka, Gupta Era was also used in different parts of India after the fall of the Guptas.

We may point out in this context that Paṭiākelā plates of Śivarāja of the time of Śambhūyaśa of the year 283 and the Soro plates of Śambhūyaśa of the year 260 are also considered by some scholars to be dated Gupta Era. R.D.Banerjee while editing the Paṭiākelā charter refers the date of the grant to the Gupta Era. D.C.Sircar also accepts Banerjee's view. But a close study of the charter leads us to point out that Śambhūyaśa has not used Gupta Era in the grant. The second line of this charter specifically refers to the use of Māna Era which, according to S.N.Rajguru, started in 240 A.D. Banerjee, Sircar and N.K.Sahu are inclined to believe that Śambhūyaśa belonged to the Māna dynasty but he used Gupta Samvat. But there are reasons to differ from the views of these

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28. ibid.
30. ibid, pp.285-88.
32. OHRJ, vol.IV, pp.6-10.
learned scholars. The Paṭiākelā plate clearly says that Śambhūyaśa belonged to the spotless Mudgala family and the Soro\(^{34}\) and the Erbang plates\(^{35}\) describe him as the moon in the sky of the Mudgala. It is therefore clear that Śambhūyaśa did not belong to the Mana but Mudgala family and that the era used by him is not Gupta Era but Māna Era.

In the light of the preceding discussion we are inclined to believe that soon after the retreat of Samudragupta Māṭharas emerged as powerful monarchs of Kaliṅga, and they ruled for about one hundred and fifty years without being subserient to the Guptas. They extended their territory from the Krishnaveni to Mahānadi while the Mudgalas ruled over the Toṣali, north of the river Mahānadi, free from any Gupta control. The Mudgalas like the Māṭharas are independent of the Guptas and the era used by them was Māna Era and not Gupta Saṁvat as presumed by some scholars.

South Kosala was conquered by Samudragupta in the middle of the fourth century A.D. But it was not annexed in the Gupta empire during that period. However, the successors of Samudragupta could not have remained indifferent to the existence of independent South Kosala on the border of Vidarbha.

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34. *EI*, vol.XXIII, p.201ff.
35. *OHRJ*, vol.XII, No.3, pp.113-121.
We know from the Bhitari Pillar Inscription\(^{36}\) that during the last days of Kumāragupta, Skandagupta launched a campaign against Pushyamitras who flourished in the kingdom of Mekala adjacent to Kosala. We further know from the Rithāpur Copper Plate\(^{37}\) grant that Bhavadattavarman of the Nala family launched a campaign against Vākātakas and occupied Nandivardhana for some time. He then proceeded as far as Prayag which was the heart of the Gupta empire. Presumably the then Gupta emperor Skandagupta could not have kept quiet when the Nala king, having vanquished his relatives, had gone as far as Prayag.

It is very likely that Skandagupta extended military aid to the Vākātakas who succeeded in regaining their capital and backed by Gupta support marched against the Nalas and burnt the city of Pushkari. It is very probable that during this period Skandagupta the successor of Kumāragupta I exercised his imperial sway over South Kosala. The discoveries of the large number of Gold coins in the South Kosala bearing the names Mahendrāditya, and Kramāditya, go a long way in support of this hypothesis.

\(^{36}\) Sircar,D.C., Select Inscriptions, p.321.

The Mahendrāditya coin - the type suggestive of king Mahendra - is, however, worth noting here. A number of Mahendrāditya coins of gold are known which are as follows -

i) One coin of Mahendrāditya found in the Lucknow Museum.

ii) Fifty-four coins of Mahendrāditya from the Khairtal hoard.

iii) One coin of Mahendrāditya found in the old fort of Madanpur-Rampur in the Kalahandi district of Orissa.

iv) A hoard containing a coin of Sri Mahendrāditya and eleven coins of Sri Prasannamātra from the village Bhandara in the Chanda district of Maharashtra.

v) Forty-six coins of Mahendrāditya and three other coins of Kramāditya from the Pitaiband village in the Raipur district of Madhya Pradesh.

Publication about the first coin with the legend 'Sri Mahendrāditya' was made by Rai Bahadur Prayag Dayal who has identified it as a gold token of Kumāragupta I because his name as Mahendrāditya appears on his silver and silver-plated coins. Sir Ajit Ghose objected to the above identification on the ground that Kumāragupta, who issued a very

38. NS, vol.XLIV, No.309.
42. ibid, vol.XXII, p.184.
43. NS, vol.XLVI, No.309.
44. ibid, No.32.
large number of gold and silver coins of various types, should not have issued, in addition, any tokens. Second, it is only on the silver coins of his western issues and on his coins of Vallabhi fabric that he is styled Kumāragupta-Mahendrāditya, but never simply Mahendrāditya. The legend Mahendrāditya does not occur on his other silver coins or on any of his gold coins. These objections lead Sir Ghose to believe that the plague must be assigned to some later king of the Sixth or Seventh century A.D. who may have taken the title of Mahendrāditya. V.P. Rode divides the Mahendrāditya coins into two types. The earlier ones, according to him, were issued by Kumāragupta I - Mahendrāditya towards the middle of the fifth century for circulation in Dakṣhiṇa Kosala, and the later specimens may be taken as the currency of Tivaradeva, the powerful ruler of the 'Soma-Vaṃsi' dynasty and his successor about 150 years later in the sixth century A.D. A.S. Altaker disagreed with Rode as there is not sufficient evidence to show why the coins of Mahendrāditya should have been copied by a number of kings of Kosala without even a


47. JNSI, vol.X, pp.139-42.
change of name. Moreover, these coins were confined to South-Kosala and there is no evidence to prove that this province was included in the Gupta empire. Altaker concluded that the coins were not issued by any Gupta emperor but were the issues of some ruler in Mahākośala who had adopted the biruda of Mahendrāditya.

Mirashi\(^\text{48}\), on the otherhand, has suggested that Sura, the first king mentioned in the copper plate grant of Bhimasena II\(^\text{49}\) was a contemporary of Kumāragupta I and may have introduced this coinage of his suzerain in his country. Perhaps there was a dynastic change in Dakṣiṇa Kośala at the time and Sura obtained the throne with the help of Kumāragupta I. In gratitude, he may have issued these coins in the name of his suzerain.

Further, while publishing the Chanda hoard of the repousse gold coin of Mahendrāditya and Prasannamātra, Balchandra Jain\(^\text{50}\) thought that Mahendrāditya was not far from Prasannamātra. As the coins of Mahendrāditya and Prasannamātra are also found in Orissa, he believed that both these kings belonged to a local dynasty, Šarabhapuriya of South-Kosala, which had its hold over a wider area than Chhatisgarh and


\(^{49}\) EI, vol. IX, p.342.

\(^{50}\) JNSI, vol.XVI, pp.215-18.
included the territory extending up to Chanda district in the west and Cuttack in the east. He also inferred that Mahendrāditya may be a successor of Narendra belonging to the Śarabhapuriya dynasty, if his name Mahendra be taken as an indication of it.

But these views of Jain are destined to be untenable because of a recent find of coins from the village of Pitaiband in the Raipur district of Madhya Pradesh. In this hoard, the coins of Mahendrāditya are found associated with those having the name of one Kramāditya. This had led Sri Jain to think that these were the issues of the Gupta emperors, Kumāragupta I and his son Skandagupta respectively. However, Sri Jain doubts still, as he thinks that there is hardly anything to place Guptas in Chhatisgarh except the Allahabad inscription. The use of the Gupta Era is one solitary record found in the Raipur district (the Ārāng Copper plates of Bhimasena II) may not be taken as a sufficient evidence to prove that the province was administered by the Gupta emperors.

The Nalas who were the enemies of the Vākātakas and Guptas fell from political power towards the close of the fifth century A.D. The Nalas were followed by the Śarabhapuriya who, as we infer from the recently published Kurudh Copper Plate grant of Mahārāja Narendra of the Śarabhapuriya dynasty, dated

52. EI, vol.XXXI, p.263ff.
the 24th year of his reign, owed allegiance to the Guptas. We learn from these plates that one Paramabhaṭṭāraka had made a grant of the village Kesavaka situated in Chullādasimabhoga while taking bath in the confluence of Gaṅgā and Yamunā. The said grant was recorded in a palm leaf which was burnt during a fire incident. Therefore as per the request of the donee's son Mahārāja Narendra reissued the grant in a copper plate charter from the victorious military camp Tilakeswara. M.G. Dikshit identifies the Paramabhaṭṭāraka-pāda, who originally made the grant, with Mahārāja Narendra's father Śarabha. This, however, according to D.C. Sircar, is not supported by the language of the inscription, the word 'father' being conspicuous by its absence from the context.

The imperial title Paramabhaṭṭāraka, alongwith Mahārājādhirāja Parameswara is known to have been popularised by the Imperial Guptas since the fourth century A.D. and it is difficult to believe that Mahārāja Narendra's father 'Śarabha' like the Imperial Guptas about the end of the fifth century, enjoyed the title Paramabhaṭṭāraka (and presumably also Mahārājādhirāja Parameswara). As the Gupta power had been fast declining since the closing years of the fifth century it is intelligible how Śarabha's son Mahārāja Narendra, ruling considerably away from the centre of the Gupta empire, issued his charter as an independent monarch without referring to his allegiance to the

53. IHQ, vol.XXII, pp.64-65; ibid, vol.XXIV, pp.75-77.
Gupta emperor. But his respectful mention of the Paramabhaṭṭārakapāda to whom Narendra's family must have owed complete allegiance originally, shows that he still considered himself, however nominally, a subordinate of the imperial Guptas. It is, however, to be noticed that he was powerful enough to describe himself as Paramabhaṭṭārakapādānudhyata. At the same time, he also does not use the Gupta era, like erstwhile feudatories of the imperial Guptas who did so with or without some kind of reference to their former overlord. It is of course difficult to identify this Gupta emperor without further evidence; but the manner in which he is twice mentioned by Narendra in the present charter seems to indicate that Gupta influence was not totally absent from South Kosala even about the beginning of the Sixth century A.D.55

Such was the stronghold of the Guptas over South Kosala even as late as the beginning of the Seventh century A.D. Mahārāja Bhimasena II used Gupta Era while issuing the Ārang copper plate grant in Gupta Era 282 = 601 A.D.

"Guptānām Saṃvatsara-śate
200,80-2-Bhaḍra di 10,8"

The use of the Gupta Era by Bhimasena II in 601 A.D. indicates that as a result of the stronghold of the Guptas for some time in the Sixth century A.D. the era was popular in South Kosala.

55. EI, vol.XXXI, pp.267-68.
This study of the inscriptional and numismatic sources leads us to believe that closely following the South Indian campaign of Samudragupta the Māṭharas of Kaliṅga and the Nalas of South Kosala asserted their independence. The Māṭharas of Kaliṅga did not owe allegiance to the Guptas. But with the fall of the Nalas in South Kosala the Guptas and the Vākātakas seem 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 Kumāragupta I and Skandagupta. The reference to Paramabhaṭṭāraka in Kurudh plates also indicates that on the eve of the rise of the Śarbhapuriyas 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.