CHAPTER III

WOMEN DURING BHAUMAKARA RULE
It was during the Bhaumakara rule (736 A.D. to 945 A.D.) in Orissa that women played a distinguished role. They were found to have appeared as ruling chiefs successively for about fifty-five years. Before highlighting their role a brief resume of the political history of Orissa from the end of the Gupta rule till the emergence of the Bhaumakaras needs to be discussed for a better understanding of the subject under discussion. Moreover there are also some cursory references to the role of women during this period.

One Yasovarman of Kanauj invaded Eastern India in the first quarter of the eighth century A.D. and defeated many of its rulers. Among them was Jivitagupta, the last King of the Gupta line, who was defeated and killed by Yasovarman in about 725 A.D. The Magadha Empire was thus destroyed. About this time the rule of the Sailodbhavas of Kangoda and the Eastern Gangas of Kalinga also vanished as a result of the invasion of Yasovarman. Some time after that one Lalitaditya of Kashmir killed Yasovarman in a fierce battle. Consequently there was anarchy in Eastern India. Harsadeva, an ambitious general, took advantage of this situation and established his rule in
Eastern India. This is known from the Pasupatinath Temple Inscription of Harsadeva's daughter Rajyamati. This Harsadeva was a king of Gauda, Odra, Kalinga and Kosala. But he was also killed by Lalitaditya after which anarchy returned to Eastern India. Meanwhile one Unmatta Simha alias Sivakaradeva 1 established this Bhaumakara dynasty in question in about 736 A.D. in the kingdom of Tosali in Odra. This kingdom was subsequently divided into North Tosali and South Tosali comprising the extensive territory from Midanapur in the north to Mahendragiri in the south. Guhadeva-pataka or Guhesvarapataka was its capital. River Mahanadi was the dividing line between North and South Tosali.

The origin of the Bhaumakaras of Orissa is shrouded in obscurity. The dynasty was called Bhauma, because it claimed descent from bhumi or the earth. The earlier copper plates of the Bhaumakaras refer to their descent from a person named 'Bhauma'. In their later records karas 2 appears as their family name. Therefore, the ruling

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dynasty is known as Bhaumakara. There is also controversy regarding their original home. Scholars like H.K. Mahatab, Pandit B. Misra, N. K. Sahu and R. C. Majumdar are of the opinion that the Bhaumakaras belonged to Orissa and were probably of a non-Aryan tribe. They were the descendants of the Mahendra Bhauma tribe of the Vishnu Purana. This reference further reveals that the Kalingas, the Mahisyas and the Mahendra Bhaumas were protected by the King Guha. Thus it appears that Guha was an early ruler of the tribe in whose name the capital of the Bhaumakara Kingdom was named Guhadevapataka or Guhesvarapataka. It seems that the Bhuyans of the present day are the representatives of this ancient Bhaumas.

Like the women of all other primitive tribes, those of the Bhuyans enjoy greater freedom than the caste Hindu women. It is found that seven queens of the Bhaumakara dynasty ruled over Orissa. They were full-fledged sovereigns and assumed titles as such. It appears that this was the only Hindu dynasty in the history of India in which the women occupied the throne as successors either to their deceased husbands or fathers. The rest of India provides only two such examples. One is that of Rudramba of the Kakatiya dynasty, who occupied the throne after her father and the other is that of the Kashmiri queen Didda who ruled after her husband. It seems that the Bhaumakaras, being a non-Aryan tribe, followed the custom of allowing their female members to succeed their deceased husbands.

The history of this illustrious dynasty is given below in outlines for a better understanding of the role of women during its rule. Some scholars suggest that the Bhaumakara dynasty of Orissa had connection with the ruling Bhuyans of Assam on the ground that both claimed their descent from Naraka of the legends though

10 Ibid.: : -i-v -
others hold an opposite view. Of these latter, B. Misra is one who holds the view that the Bhaumakaras of Orissa had no connection with the ruling Bhauñas of Assam, on the ground that the early members of the former were Buddhists, whereas the latter were Saivites. There is every possibility that the early rulers of the Bhauma dynasty converted themselves to Buddhism. This is also corroborated by a tradition recorded in the accounts of the Tibetan Historian Taranath. It refers to the Buddhist monk Luipa who converted a king of Odivisa (Orissa) to Buddhism.

The sculptural remains of Orissa and Assam further indicates the connection between the Bhaumakaras of Orissa and the Bhaumakaras of Kamarupa (Assam). Two images of Ganga, one found at Dah Parvatiya in the Tejpur district of Assam and the other at Hatnagiri in the Cuttack district of Orissa now preserved in the Patna Museum, possess similar iconographic features though the Assamese specimen

13 Datta, B. N., Mystic Tales of Lama Taranath, (Calcutta, 1944), p.11.
is earlier to the Orissan one by about three centuries. Yet the continuity of the tradition has been remarkably preserved in the latter.

The Hevajra Tantra further proves the cultural link between Orissa and Assam as it enumerates Jalandhara, Oddiyana, Purnagiri and Kamarupa as the four sacred pithas or centres of Tantrism. The Kalika Purana also mentions the same four places: Oddiyana and Kamarupa pithas have been identified with Orissa and Assam respectively. The presiding deities of these two centres, Jagannatha and Kamakshya, were installed in places bearing identical names such as Milacala. The facts mentioned above suggest a close cultural link between Orissa and Kamarupa. If this is taken into consideration, then it

ARASI, XXIV, 1924-25, (Calcutta, 1927), pl. XXXII(a) and (b).
16 Kalika Purana, (Bangabasi Edition), Ch.43-45,64.
can safely be said that the Bhaumakaras of Orissa most likely hailed from Assam.

The circumstances in which Paramopasaka Ksemankaradeva founded the Bhaumakara kingdom in Orissa is not known. The Neulpur copper plate of Subhakar I of Samvat 54, mentions Maharaja Ksemankaradeva as the father of Sivakaradeva I and the earliest member of the family. Hardly anything is known about him. He was either a feudatory or a governor who was in charge of the Odra region conquered by Harsavarman, the ruler of Assam. After his death Sivakaradeva I declared himself independent in 732-33 A.D. The Hindol and Dharakote copper plates of Subhakara mentioned that Laksmikara, a king, was the progenitor of the family. D. C. Sircar regards Laksmikara and Ksemankara as identical. But B. Misra is of the opinion that Laksmikara was the father of Ksemankara. Since Laksmikara and Ksemankara were two distinct persons and neither of the above views are supported by any cogent evidence, Laksmikara was in all probability a remote

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21 Ibid., p.293.
ancestor of the Bhaumakara family of either the Utkal or the Kamarupa branch. The title Paramopasaka indicates that he was a Buddhist. The early Bhauma rulers became Buddhists. The Tibetan tradition also reveals that Luipa converted Ksemankaradeva of Orissa to the Buddhist faith. The Neulpur Copper Plate of his grandson, Subhakaradeva I states that he "established four orders (Castes) in their proper duties", which indicates that though he was a Buddhist, yet he encouraged the caste system.

Ksemankara was succeeded by his illustrious son Sivakaradeva alias Ummattakesari (the ferocious lion) as mentioned in the Dhenkanal Copper Plate of Tribhuvanamahadevi I. He is mentioned as Sri-Bharasaha or one who is capable of carrying the weight of Sri or Laksmi and as Paramopasaka and Anugata which means that he was a devout Buddhist like his father. Another inscription

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22 Panigrahi, K. C., H. O., p.75.
23 EI, XV, (1919-20), p.5.
24 EI, XV, (1919-20), p.5.
    Misra, B., O.U.B.K., p.78.
found on an image of goddess Chamunda at Jajpur reveals that the image was installed by a queen named Vatsadevi. It is suggested that she was a queen of Kshemankara and mother of Sivakara I. Sivakaradeva has been described as the first great Bhaumakara ruler in many copper plate charters of his family, as it was he who secured a vast territory by defeating some neighbouring rulers. He defeated the king of Radha (South-West Bengal) in a battle and "forcibly took away his daughter Jayavatidevi along with his fortunes." This would imply that Sivakaradeva defeated the ruler of Radha and demanded the hand of his daughter as a trophy of his victory. This Radha princess may be identified with Mahadevi Jayavali-devi, mentioned as the queen of Sivakaradeva I in the Chaurasi plate of Sivakaradeva II. Sivakaradeva I was the architect of the Bhaumakara Kingdom who rose from the position of the king of a small state to the ruler of a big kingdom comprising the whole of modern Orissa, along with the territories then known as Kalinga (the tract

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between Ganjam and the river Godavari) and Dandabhukti (Midnapur region). This is proved by the Baud plate of Prithvi Mahadevi. He consolidated his empire and ruled it till his glorious reign came to an end some time before 790 A.D.

Sivakaradeva I was succeeded by his son Subhaskaradeva I. He too was a 'paramasaugata', the follower of Lord Buddha. He married Madhava Devi who was a Saivite. The Hamsesvara Temple Inscription of Jajpur reveals that queen Madhava Devi built a temple and installed the Madhavesvara Siva after her name at Jajpur. She appointed a Saivacharya (priest) for the worship of the deity. For the worship of the deity and the maintenance of the temple she also re-excavated a Vāpi (tank) close to the temple and established a hātā, (a market or a fair) in its vicinity. It is evident from this record that Madhava Devi was a devotee of Lord Siva.

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34 Misra, B., O.U.B.K., p.4.
37 Ibid., V.6.
although her husband Subhakaradeva I was a devout Buddhist. This shows that he was tolerant and magnanimous towards other religious sects.

Subhakaradeva I in his own copper plate grant calls himself Maharaja. He is described as Maharaja-dhiraja in the Chaurasi Copper Plate of his son. Furthermore in the Terundia plate of his grandson, he is decorated with the titles Maharaja-dhiraja Paramesvara. This shows that he was the first important ruler of the Bhaumakara dynasty.

Subhakaradeva I was succeeded by his eldest son Sivakaradeva II (C. 800-820 A.D.). Like his ancestor he was a Buddhist king and was described as saugata-sraya, i.e., one who has taken refuge in the Buddha. He married Mohinidevi of Bhauma lineage, possibly indicating a royal family of which the progenitor was a ruler named Bhavana. However, the existence of such a king or dynasty is not known from any other source. However, his queen was a

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39 EI, Vol. XV, pp.1-8- Prajapati


41 EI, Vol. XXVIII, pp.213.
After the death of the elder brother Sivakaradeva II, his younger brother Santikaradeva I alias Gayada I (C. 820-835 A.D.) ascended the throne of Tosali. It seems that there was a dispute for succession between Subhakaradeva II and his uncle Santikaradeva I. Both of them appear to have ruled simultaneously for some time. This is indicated by the fact that after the death of Sivakaradeva II, his younger brother Santikaradeva I who came out successful in this dispute, ascended the throne, and not his son Subhakaradeva II. The Hindol plate of his son, Subhakaradeva III reveals that Santikaradeva was a heroic, magnanimous and generous ruler widely renowned for his charity.

Santikara married Gosvaminidevi alias Tribhubanamahadevi I of Nagodbhavakula. She was the daughter of king Rajamalla of Southern India. The Copper Plate grant of her son Subhakaradeva II reveals that she was the daughter of Rajamalladeva of Nagodbhavakula. She might have belonged either to the Sailodbhava or to the Ganga dynasty. Of course the former ruled in Orissa and was superseded

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43 Panigrahi, K. C., H. O., p.80.
44 JBGRS, Vol. XVI, p.77.
by the Bhaumakaras, but no king of that dynasty was found with the name Rajamalla. On the other hand, four kings of the Western Ganga dynasty bearing the name of Rajamalla ruled in Mysore, of whom Rajamalla I (817 AD to 835 A.D.) was the most powerful. So he can rightly be identified with this Rajamalla, the father of Tribhuvanamahadevi I. While Tribhuvanamahadevi was ruling in 846 A.D. Rajamalla started his reign in 817 A.D. Thus the time gap between the daughter’s reign in Orissa and her father’s in Mysore was 29 years which is quite possible.

As mentioned in the records of the Western Ganas, Rajamalla I was a powerful king of the dynasty. By taking advantage of the rule of Amoghavarsa, a minor, he freed his own kingdom from the yoke of the Rastrakutas. He strengthened his kingdom by matrimonial alliances. He revived the lost fortune of his own kingdom and also that of the Bhaumakaras by putting an end to the Rastrakuta and Pala domination in Orissa. Thus the marriage of Santi-kara I with Tribhuvanamahadevi, the daughter of Rajamalla I, marked a turning point in the history of the Bhaumakaras.

45 Panigrahi, K. C.; H. O., pp.80-81.
46 Ibid., p.81.
Santikaradeva I was succeeded by his elder brother’s son Subhakaradeva II (C. 835 to 838 A.D.). In 836 A.D. he issued the Terundia copper plate granting the village Lavagunda of South Tosali in favour of six Brahmins of Bharadvaja gotra. He issued this grant at the request of his queen Mrnnadevi and it was meant for the maintenance of a monastery. This charter reveals that Subhakaradeva II was a Buddhist. He used the titles Paramabhattaraka, Maharajadhiraja and Paramesvara.

Subhakaradeva II was succeeded by his cousin Subhakaradeva III, son of Santikaradeva I and Tribhuvanamahadevi I. Subhakaradeva II did not mention in his charters the name of Santikaradeva I whom he succeeded, because the latter belonged to the younger branch. Similarly, in the charters of Santikaradeva I, his son Subhakaradeva III and his queen Tribhuvanamahadevi I of the younger branch, there is no mention of the name of Subhakara II of the elder branch. The Hindol copper plate of Subhakaradeva III records the gift of a village to the God Vaidyanatha Bhattaraka, enshrined in the temple of Pulindesvara Siva at Yavanagula-Patika, built by one Pulindaraja. His Hindol and Dharakota plates, both

48 JBCRS, XVI, (1930), pp.69-83.
JBCRS, XVII, ii-iii, (1931), pp.198-201.
dated in Samvat 103 (839 A.D.), give an idea of the extent of the Bhaumakara Kingdom during his reign. The Hindol charter records the gift of the village Naddilo in Kankavira-Visaya in Uttara Tosali for the worship of the deity and for the maintenance of the temple establishment, whereas the Dharakota plate registers the grant of the village Gundaja in Jayakataka Visaya of Kongoda-mandala in Daksina Tosali. It suggests that Subhakaradeva III exercised his suzerainty over both Northern and Southern Tosali. He was also known as Kusumahara I and Simhadhvaja or Simhaketu.

As stated earlier, six queens of Bhaumakara dynasty ruled over Orissa as sovereign rulers. Tribhuvanamahadevi I was the first known queen of the Bhauma dynasty to take the reign of administration as a sovereign ruler in 845 A.D. She was a great source of inspiration to the subsequent women rulers of Tosali. After a brief rule Subhakaradeva III died without a child and his mother, the widow queen of Santikaradeva I, Goswaminidevi, ascended the throne at the request of the Bhaumakara nobles. It is also stated

49 JAHRS, IV, iii and iv, (January and April, 1930), pp.189-94; Mishra, B., O.U.B.K., pp.21-22.
50 JBORS, II, iv, (1916), pp.419-427.
in her own Dhenkanal grant that being a lady, she was at first reluctant to ascend the throne, but when the nobles and feudatories of the kingdom cited the example of one Gosvaminidevi, a preceding lady ruler of the family, Tribhuvanamahadevi agreed to ascend the throne.

The identification of Gosvaminidevi cannot be made as her name is not found in any other record of the dynasty. However, Tribhuvanamahadevi ascended the throne like Katyayani. Her name means (Tribhuvana Mahadevi) the goddess of three worlds. The accession of a queen to the throne was unprecedented in the political history of Orissa. As such she might have faced a rebellion which she suppressed with an iron hand. Her own Dhenkanal grant issued in the Bhaum year 110 (i.e., 846 A.D.) reveals that she was the wife of Santikaradeva I and her father was the great Western Ganga King of Mysore, Rajamalla I (817-853 A.D.). She assumed the imperial title Paramabhattarika, Maharajadhiraja and Paramesvari. She was also known as Sindagouri. The Dhenkanal plates state that at the time of her accession "the Kara family had to depend upon nothing but their past glory," and that

52 Ibid.
"the kingdom looked like a woman who had a distressful heart." It is very likely that she could put an end to the Rashrakuta and Pala domination in Orissa and restored the lost prestige of the kingdom with the help of her father, who was a very powerful king of his time. She carried on the administration of the kingdom very efficiently. It was for this reason that the political history of the Bhoumas entered a glorious phase. She could maintain an effective hold over her vassals, who exhibited "devoted loyalty" to her. She appointed officers "of pure character and clean hands." She "Loved state-craft as much as her son." She was "magnanimity incarnate" like her illustrious predecessor. Taxation was light during her time. She was a devout worshipper of Vishnu and a great patron of Vaishnavism.

In the Talcher Plate of Subhakaradēva IV Tribhubanamahadevi is compared with Sesa-Naga who bears the burden

56 Ibid.
of the entire earth on its hoods. This plate further pays glorious tribute to her as an ideal ruler in the following words:

"During her rule the country advanced in three branches (of administration), the foes were extirpated, the glory spread abroad and there was harmony among the people."

Her Dhenkanal plate further states that she enjoyed an unparalleled fortune and during her reign the stability and prosperity of the kingdom remained unimpaired. The power and prosperity of the kingdom during the reign of this illustrious queen are also substantially corroborated by the accounts of Ibn Khurdadhbih, which state that the Dahuma (the Bhauma-ruler) maintained a vast army of 300,000 men and that the royal power belonged to a woman who was called rayina. The Bhaumas did not recognise the suzerainty of any other power during her reign. Thus it

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61 Ibid., p.30.
* Ibn Khurdadhbih wrote his geography in 846 A.D. as such he was a close contemporary of Tribhuvanamahadevi I.
was during the reign of Tribhuvanamahadevi that the Kara dynasty emerged from a period of disaster and distress. Her influence was so pervasive that her successors ruled as sovereign powers till the end of the dynasty. However, the Talcher plate of Subhakaradeva IV records that she did not rule till her death. She abdicated the throne in favour of her grandson Santikaradeva II when he attained sufficient majority and was considered fit to bear the burden of the kingdom. Thereafter she led a religious life. She died in 850 A.D.

Santikaradeva II alias Lonabhara I alias Gayada II succeeded his grandmother when he was in his late teens in 850 A.D. According to the Baud Plate of Prthvimahadevi Gosvami had no son. As such Santikaradeva II may be taken as the daughter's son of the great queen. No charter issued by Santikaradeva has yet been discovered. The Talcher plate of his son Sivakaradeva III refers to his marriage with Hiramahadevi, the

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64 Ibid., p.37.
daughter of king Simhamana of the Mana dynasty. Hira-
mahadevi is described as Maharajadhiraja Paramesvari in
the plate of her son which indicates that she looked
after the administration after the death of her husband. That was because all her sons were minor at the time. However, no detailed history of her reign is known.

Santikaradeva II was succeeded by his eldest son, Subhakaradeva IV (C. 865 A.D. to 882 A.D.) alias Kusumahara II. Janmejaya I, the Somavamsi king of South Kosala who followed an aggressive foreign policy, defeated and killed the Bhaumakara feudatory, Ranabhanja-
deva who was ruling then over the Baud-Athmallik region. Janmejaya did not want to continue the war, and made peace with the Bhaumakaras by establishing matrimonial alliance with Subhakaradeva IV. The Boud plate reveals that he gave his daughter Prthvimahadevi in marriage to Subhakaradeva IV. But this marriage ultimately brought disaster to the Bhaumakara kingdom.

Subhakaradeva died without any issue. He was succeeded by his younger brother Sivakaradeva III alias

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69 II. XXIX, (1951-52), pp. 210-220.
Lalitahara (C. 882 to 890 A.D.). Sivakaradeva III was a devout Saiva and called himself Paramamahesvara and Paramabhattaraka. There were family feuds during his reign. He was known to have died a victim of court intrigues. The death of Sivakara III was followed by a struggle for succession to the throne. He had two sons, namely, Santikara III alias Lavanabhara II and Subhakara V. But their claims to the throne were ignored. So Prthvi-mahadevi alias Tribhuvanamahadevi II, the widowed queen of Subhakaradeva IV, became the next Bhaugta ruler of Tosali. It is evident from her Baud Plates dated in the year 150 (894 A.D.) that Prthvimahadevi was the daughter of Somakula tilaka Kosaladhipati Svabhavatunga and Nrutta Mahadevi. She married Subhakaradeva IV alias Kusumahara II. Svabhavatunga has been identified by scholars with Janmejaya I Mahabhavagupta, the founder of the Somavamsi dynasty in Orissa. The Brahmesvara

71 EI, XXIX, (1951-52), pp.210-220.
  (Sidhaamsa Valmsa nalinl Sri VikaasaikabhasvVatah
  rajNa Svabhavatuugasaya Kosaladhipateh Suta,
  Sriman Nrutta MahadevyKritajamaa Parigraha
  Srimat Kusumaharaasaya Mahadevi MahardhikA)
73 Panigrahi, K. C., C. B. S. O., p.6:
  JASL, XIII (1947), pp.63 ff.
Temple inscription belonging to the reign of the Somavamsi King Udyotkesari Mahabhavagupta reveals that Janmejaya, the founder of the Somavamsi dynasty, "drew to himself the fortune of the king of the Udra country who was killed by his Kunta (a sharp pointed weapon) in a battle. It suggests that he killed a reigning monarch of the Bhaumakara dynasty of Orissa. In this way he extended his sphere of political influence over the Bhaumakara Kingdom. After killing Sivakaradeva III Janmejaya, I raised his daughter Prthvimahadevi to the throne of the Bhaumakaras. He probably acted as a de-facto ruler. His intervention was a turning point in the history of the Bhaumakaras, from this time on their power started declining resulting ultimately in their downfall.

The aforesaid Baud Plate of Prthvimahadevi stated that Subhakaradeva IV and his brother Sivakaradeva III having died without issue, Subhakaradeva's queen Prthvimahadevi took up the administration. She was very...
much proud of her lineage and even after her marriage she showed greater loyalty to the Somavansis than to the Bhauakaras. D. C. Sircar believes that she could ascend the throne and consolidate her position in Tosali, very probably due to the help of her father, Janamejaya, the ruler of Kosala. In her Baud charters she makes the false statement that she ascended the throne as her husband Subhakara IV and his brother Sivakaradeva III died childless. It was certain that Subhakara IV had no issue, but the charters of the later Bhauka rulers show that Sivakara III had at least two sons, namely, Santikara III and Subhakara V. Both of them became kings later on. It shows that Prthvimahadevi deliberately suppressed the truth and ignored the claims of Santikara III and Subhakara V to the throne.

Her object was union of Tosali with the kingdom of Kosala. On the other hand, in the records of the later members of the Bhauka family, the name of Prthvimahadevi has not been included in the genealogical lists. Thus it suggests that she was regarded as an usurper as she ascended the throne with the help of an external power. As she did not secure the throne under normal

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conditions, the Bhaumakaras resented this act of hers. So their relations with her became embittered. It was almost during this time that the Somavamsi King Yajati I donated in his own name a village, Chandagrama in Madhya-visaya of South Tosali, to a Brahmin of Odradesa. This donation of a village in the heart of Tosali by a king of Kosala indicates that the fall of Tosali was not far off. This external interference in the internal affairs of the Bhauma Kingdom generated an ill-feeling among the subjects towards Prthvimahadevi. The patriotic ministers and officers of Tosali were not prepared to accept the Somavamsis' intervention in the internal affairs of the Bhaumakaras. They were waiting for an opportunity for retaliation. Jajati I was the contemporary of the Kalachuri King Sartkaragana who invaded the Western frontiers of Kosala. When Jajati I was engaged in fighting against the Kalachuris the ministers and officers of Tosali took advantage of his absence and deposed Prthvimahadevi. They requested the widow queen of Sivakara III to ascend the throne and save the prestige of the kingdom of Tosali and of the Bhaumakara family. The queen accepted their request and ascended.

the throne. She took the name of Tribhuvanamahadevi III. When Jajati I learnt of the political development in Tosali, he made peace with the Kalachuris and rushed to the eastern frontier. But with the help of her ministers, officers and feudatories, Tribhuvanamahadevi III had consolidated her position in Tosali. Jajati did not interfere in the internal affairs of the Bhaumakaras. After this event Prthvimahadevi was believed to have spent the rest of her life in Kosala.

Maharajadhiraja Paramesvari Tribhuvanamahadevi III was a follower of Vaisnavism, but she was tolerant towards other religions. During her reign she donated the two Baud charters in Samvat 158 (A.D. 894) at the request of Sasilekha, the wife of Mahamandaladhipati Mangala Kalasa of Dandabhukta-mandala. She also donated two villages in favour of the temple of Nannesvara Siva. Sasilekha of the Virata family had constructed the temple in commemoration of her departed father Nana and had enshrined the deity of Uma-Mahesvara.

Tribhuvanamahadevi III, wife of Sivakara III Lalitahara, succeeded to the throne after Prthvimahadevi. A few scholars have confused her with Tribhuvanamahadevi I or Gosvaminidevi, the wife of Santikara I alias Gayada.

The Dhenkanal charter of Tribhuvanamahadevi III is a dated charter. The date is mentioned in symbolical letters "Lu chu" which means 160 i.e., 896 A.D. while B. Misra has taken it as 110, D.C. Sircar has accepted it as 120. B. Misra and D. C. Sirkar tried to identify this Tribhuvanamahadevi with Tribhuvanamahadevi I, the wife of Santikara I. Tribhuvanamahadevi I belonged to Nagodbhavakula. Thus, Tribhuvanamahadevi I and Tribhuvanamahadevi III were not the same person. They are two different persons.

Tribhuvanamahadevi III assumed the imperial titles of Parama-bhattarika, Maharajadhiraja Paramesvari. She mounted the lion throne like the goddess Katyayani (Durga). Her lotus like feet were kissed by all feudatory chiefs with loyalty. She is described as the symbol of magnanimity, the bud of the tree of modesty, the store house of the honey of courtesy and the off-shoot of the root of beauty. She was a devout Vaisnava like Prthvimahadevi.

Tribhuvana-mahadevi had two sons of whom the elder was Santikaradeva III who married Dharmamahadevi and the younger was Subhakaradeva V who married Gaurimahadevi and Vakulamahadevi. Both ruled over Tosali successively after their mother. Subhakaradeva V had no male issue. Gaurimahadevi had a daughter named Dandimaahadevi. Gourimahadevi succeeded to the throne after
Subhakaradeva V.

The Talatali Plate reveals that when her husband died, queen Gauri, with all her people bowing down at her lotus feet and with her fame as white as the moon-beam, sat for long like Gauri on the throne of her husband. She ruled for a brief period. No charter of her time has been discovered as yet. She was however able to maintain law and order in her kingdom as the Kumurang Plate of Dandimahadevi says that, "at her lotus-like feet prostrated the entire population of the kingdom."

Gaurimahadevi was succeeded by her daughter Dandimahadevi. She issued half a dozen charters viz., the two Ganjam grants, the Kumurang grant, the Santigrama grant, the Arual grant and the Ambagan grant. These

85 EI, XXIX, (1951-52), pp. 79-89.
87 Ibid., p. 24.
grants contains high praise of her. In these grants 
Dandimahadevi is mentioned as having assumed the 
 imperial titles of Parama-mahesvari, Parama-bhattarika, 
Maharajadhiraja Paramesvari. The above-mentioned grants 
record land grants in both Uttara and Dakshina Tosali, 
a fact which suggests that she was the powerful sovereign 
ruler of the entire Tosali kingdom. She possessed charm 
and grace and was extremely beautiful. She was unmarried. 
Her rule was peaceful. The description of pearls and 
gems in her records indicates the prosperity of her 
kingdom. She maintained absolute authority throughout 
her kingdom. Furthermore she secured the borders of her 
kingdom from "formidable and hostile kings" who were 
"humbled by her prowess" She was the last great ruler 
of the dynasty.

Dandimahadevi died a premature death and was 
succeeded by her step-mother Vakulamahadevi, who was born 
in the Bhanja family. She is described in her own 
record and in the Taltalai plates of Dharmamahadevi as 
"an ornament like a flag with insignia in the family of 
the Bhanja Kings," instead of "an ornament like a flag 

with insignia in the family of the Kara kings.\textsuperscript{91} as stated in the Kumurang plate of Dandimahadevi. The mention of Bhanja in place of Kara suggests the raising of a member of the Bhanja family to the Bhamukaara throne. This queen was known to have issued only one copper-plate in which she donated a village of Uttara Tosali in Samvat 204 (A. D. 940).

Vakulamahadevi was succeeded by Dharmamahadevi, the queen of her husband's elder brother, Santikara III,\textsuperscript{94}\textsuperscript{95} She has issued Taltalai and Angul plates, which are undated. The Angul charter, was issued during the reign of her husband where she has been described as Sri Dharmamahadevi without any royal title. In the Taltali plate, she is described as Parama-bhattarika Maharaja-dhiraja Paramesvari. She ruled the kingdom efficiently. She was the last known ruler of the dynasty. The records of these female rulers do not reveal their political activities. So K. C. Panigrahi points out that they were

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{91} Misra, B., O. U. B. K., p.65.
\item \textsuperscript{92} Subudhi, U., Op. cit., p.79.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Sahu, N. K., and Others, Op. cit., p.131.
\item \textsuperscript{94} IHQ, XXI, iii (1945), pp.213-22.
\item \textsuperscript{95} Misra, B., O. U. B. K., pp.52-56.
\item \textsuperscript{96} IHQ, XXI, iii (1945), pp.213-23.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Ibid., p.219.
\end{itemize}

(Tato Dharma Mahādevī Mahādevī Mahīyasya, Śrī Bhṛulavānabhārasya bhuvasthālampālayat).
perhaps nominees of the Bhanjas, the vassals of the Bhaumakaras.

The succession of four queens one after the other and their brief rule indicate that the Bhaumakara dynasty was then passing through a critical period. One of the striking features was that none of the four queens adopted a son to succeed her. It is seen that Vakulamahadevi and Dharmamahadevi ruled in northern Tosali with the help of the Bhanjas. It appears that the whole of northern Tosali was not under their possession. They granted villages situated only in the Dhenkanal-Angul regions which touched the territories of the Bhanjas. However, they did not give up their claim over Guhesvarapataka, the Bhauma capital, though it had been occupied by the Somavamsis. They have mentioned Guhesvarapataka (Jajpur) as the place of issue of their land grants. These last two queens together might have ruled for a period of fifteen years.

There was the monarchical system of government based on the principle of heredity. But due to the absence of male heirs, the queens often succeeded the
kings, assumed royal titles and ruled with full royal status. The Talcher Plate of Subhakaradeva IV reveals that during the reign of Tribhuvanamahadevi I, the kingdom made progress in three branches of administration; it enjoyed external peace and glory and internal harmony of the subjects. After the death of Subhakara V, the throne passed to Gaurimahadevi, Dandimahadevi, Vakulamahadevi and Dharmamahadevi successively. Seven female rulers of this dynasty took up the reins of administration perhaps on account of their superior ability as compared to the male members of the family. It was because of external invasion or internal conspiracy that Tribhuvanamahadevi I and Tribhuvanamahadevi II secured the throne with the help of their fathers, Rajamalla I of Western Ganga dynasty and Janmejaya Svabhavatunga of Somavamsi dynasty respectively, who were powerful rulers of the time.

Women is general used to enjoy a high status in society during this period. As already mentioned the widowed queens and daughter of a deceased king ascended the throne ruled independently as full sovereign rulers. During the minority of her grandson, Tribhuvanamahadevi I

100 JBCRS, II, iv, (1916), pp.419-427. 
ruled as a full-fledged sovereign and not as a regent. Tribhuvanamahadevi II too ruled the Bhaumakara kingdom after the death of her husband though her husband's brother had sons who were rightful heirs to the throne. These two queens played very important roles. Tribhuvanamahadevi I restored the lost power and prestige of the Bhauma kingdom with the help of her illustrious father, Rajamalla I of Mysore. Prthvimahadevi alias Tribhuvanamahadevi II was installed on the Bhauma throne by her father, Janmejaya I, a fact which sowed the seeds of internal trouble in the family and ultimately led to the fall of the Bhaumakaras. It shows that people of ancient Orissa accepted women as their rulers. Seven queens ascended the throne of the Bhaumakara dynasty. Of them six were wives of kings and Dandimahadevi was the daughter of a king and a reigning queen. It seems that the Bhauma queens had been trained both in the art of warfare and the system of administration which enabled them to administer the extensive Bhauma Kingdom with success. The image of goddess Chamunda was installed

by Vatsadevi, queen of Kshemankara and Madhavadevi, queen of Subhakara-deva I, built a temple and installed the Madhavesvara Siva. Madhavadevi also appointed a saivacharya for the worship of the deity. She excavated a tank close to the temple and established a market in its vicinity. The female rulers enjoyed equal status with the male rulers and were free to grant villages to the Brahmanas and religious establishments.

Medhatithi, a commentator on Manu, was a contemporary of the Bhaumakaras. He was of the opinion that women should not enjoy freedom of action in any field of life. They should seek permission of their father when unmarried, of their husband and other male relatives after their marriage. He also permitted a husband to divorce his wife if she was barren, bore only daughters or whose children died. Similarly Narada and Katyayana were of the opinion that the widow had no right to her husband's property. The commentator on Manu also pointed out that women were ignorant of Sanskrit language. They were not permitted to acquire

106 Yajnavalkya Smrti, I, 85-86.
107 Manubhasya, IX, 2.
108 Ibid., 187.
109 Narada Smrti, XIII, 52.
110 Manubhasya, IX, 81.
111 Yajnavalkya Smrti, II 136 (quoted).
higher education. If the guardian was unable to find a husband before her marriageable age, a girl was allowed to choose her husband. The position of women in general in the society during this period was based on those principles of Manu. There were a lot of restrictions on them in the family, such as on education, marriage and property rights. But the role played by the queens of Bhaumakara dynasty in the history of Orissa was exceptional. It was commendable. It is really surprising that when society put so many restrictions on women in general, it gave most honourable position to the queens of the Bhaumakara dynasty. They ruled as sovereign monarchs, and were supported by their nobles, ministers and feudatory chiefs. The Bhaumas, being a people of tribal origin, allowed their female members the right of succession which was not enjoyed by the contemporary female members of any other Indian royal families. The Bhauma epigraphic records reveal that the female rulers presided over the assembly of their feudatories with their usual female garments, used jewels, gold ornaments and decorated their feet with

112 Manubhasya, II, 49.
113 EI, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 263 ff.
Devadasis were attached to the temples during this period as is revealed from the Ratnagiri copper plate of Karnakesari. It refers to the existence of Devadasis in the Salanapura mahavihara. Karpurasri belonging to the Solanapura mahavihara, was the daughter of a woman and grand daughter of another woman. Of course, there is no mention of her father or grandfather. D. C. Sircar suggests that "the absence of any reference to Karpurasri's father and grand-father and her representation as the daughter and grand-daughter of females appear to suggest that she was born of a harlot." Karpurasri's mother was a mahari, which is an Oriya term meaning a dancing girl of a Devadasi. The aforesaid record of the Somavamsi period thus reveals that Karpurasri's mother and grand-mother too were temple dancers.*

During the reign of the Bhaumakaras, nuns were probably allowed in the Buddhist monasteries, particularly

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118 Ibid., p.203.
* For details see Chapter VII.
in the Buddhist temple of Jayasrama Vihara, as revealed in the Talcher plate of Sivakara III. It is presumed by D. C. Sirkar that Devadasis were maintained in Buddhist shrines in the early medieval period. It seems that virgins dedicated to a noble cause, living the life of a Buddhist nun, degenerated into devadasis. They were allowed to pollute the temples of god. The practice of sati was unknown. It seems the concubinage did not exist during this period. The Purda system too was unknown in the society.

Thus, it is to be observed that the position of women in the society during the Bhauma-kara rule was one of honour and dignity. They could even occupy a position of eminence by holding the sovereign power in the domain of administration of the kingdom.