CHAPTER-III
SECTION-A
BEGINNING OF DYNASTIC RULE

THE RULE OF THE VARMANS

Epigraphs are generally taken to be more reliable than literature. Because literature, even if it is contemporary there is enough scope for colouring of actual facts according to the whims and ideologies of the writer concerned. On the other hand, the epigraphs, in usual practice, do not show much tendency for such colouring of facts. If the epigraph happens to be contemporary to the event, definitely it is of immense value, for the researcher in history of the period concerned. It is the epigraphs which provide us with the facts about the beginning of the historical period of Assam history.

The Allahabad Pillar prāśasti of the Gupta emperor Samudragupta, the Dubi and the Nidhanpur copperplate
grants, the seal attached to the Dubi copperplate grant and
the Nalanda clay seal of Bhaskaravarman have established
the fact that one Puṣyavarman was the founder of the
Varman dynasty which again happens to be the first
historical ruling dynasty of ancient Assam. The nearest
evidence to the event and the actors involved in it are
considered more reliable than the remote ones. Now, it
seems that Puṣyavarman himself has not left any record for
us to study about his time, and that we are to depend upon
the inscriptions left behind by Kumāra Bhaskaravarman,
which we have already mentioned, as well as the Allahabad
Pillar praśasti of emperor Samudragupta.

Puṣyavarman (350-375 A.D.):

As sighted elsewhere the Allahabad Pillar praśasti1
mentions Kāmarūpa as one of the five frontier kingdoms
whose rulers, al beit voluntarily accepted his suzerainty

1. "Samataṭa-Ḍavāka-Kāmarūpa-Nepāla-Karttipuraṇḍi pratyanta

npatibhiḥ......sarvakaradānāyaṇākarana........" 

These kingdoms are identified as followed:

Samataṭa = South East Bengal

Ḍavāka = situated in present Nagoan District

Karttipura = somewhere in the Himalayas
and paid tributes to him. The record, though does not mention the name of the ruler, the scholars by inference believe it to be none other than Puṣyavarman, the founder of the Varman line of kings.

Generally, it is held on the basis of the Mathura inscription that Samudragupta’s son Chandragupta II ascended the throne between 375 and 380 A.D\(^2\) leading to the conclusion that Samudragupta obviously reigned before A.D. 375 or 380 A.D. On the other hand, Bhāskaravarman who was the 13th generation from Puṣyavarman and a contemporary of Harṣavardhana is generally said to have died in or around 650 A.D. If we take 25 years as the average period for each Varman king then Puṣyavarman’s period lies between 350-375 A.D. The two copperplate grants of Bhāskaravarman say that the names of Puṣyavarman’s son and successor and his daughter-in-law were Samudravarman and Dattavati or Dattadevi respectively, which were exactly the names of the Gupta

\[2. \text{Epigraphia Indica, XXI, pp. 8f; Sircar, D.C., SI, I pp.269f}\]
emperor and his chief queen. This has been generally inferred that the Gupta emperor, Samudragupta reigned before 375 A.D. and our Puṣyavarman was a contemporary of Samudragupta, i.e. the unnamed frontier king of Kāmarūpa who in imitation of ‘Samudragupta’ named the Crown Prince and the Crown Princess as Samudra and Dattadevī.³ It is also possible that Samudravarman and his queen themselves adopted these names at the time of appointment as Crown Prince and Princess, or at the time of the coronation ceremony.⁴ This shows that Puṣyavarman was contemporary of Samudragupta, while Samudravarman was the contemporary of Chandragupta II. On the basis of the above-mentioned calculation the genealogy of the Varman kings and their respective years of rule is given below. However, on the basis of frequency of political events occurred in the reigns of certain kings, necessary alterations have been made in this regard.

4. *TCHA* Vol. 1, p.97
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the ruler</th>
<th>Name of the queen</th>
<th>Tentative date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puṣyavarman</td>
<td></td>
<td>A.D.350 - A.D.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samudravarman</td>
<td>Dattavatī / Dattadevī</td>
<td>A.D.375 - A.D.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balavarman I</td>
<td>Ratnavatī / Ratnadevī</td>
<td>A.D.400 - A.D.425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalyaṇavarman</td>
<td>Gandharvavatī</td>
<td>A.D.425 - A.D.450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaṇapativarman</td>
<td>Yajñavatī</td>
<td>A.D.450 - A.D.475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahendravarman</td>
<td>Suvratā</td>
<td>A.D.475 - A.D.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nārāyaṇavarman</td>
<td>Devavatī / Devamatī</td>
<td>A.D.500 - A.D.515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutivarman/ Vijnānavarman</td>
<td></td>
<td>A.D.515 - A.D.555</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Genealogy: The Bhauma-Varman Family:
According to R. G. Basak, Puṣyavarman was contemporary of Chandragupta and Samudravarman of Samudragupta. But in that case, it becomes difficult to place Bhāskara in the first half of 7th century A.D. This division tallies well with the reign of Harṣavardhana. That Bhāskara and Harṣavardhana were contemporaries is a historical fact. Like this, Bhāskara’s two inscriptions show that Bhāskaravarman was the 13th in succession of the

Varman line of kings. Then, it sounds a bit strange that one adopts the name of his overlord or his favourite hero even during his (the overlord or the favourite person) lifetime. However, he may name his son after the man of his admiration or one may adopt the name of his hero after his (the man of admiration) death. It seems that either of these two alternatives must have had happened with Samudravarman. In our opinion, the similarity between the names of Puṣyavarman’s son and daughter-in-law and those of the Gupta emperor Samudragupta and his chief queen, as indicated above, cannot be taken as a mere coincidence. All available data lead us to believe that Puṣyavarman was not a feudatory chief, as will be proved later on, but an independent ruler who owed allegiance to the Gupta emperor. It is needless to prove here that Samudragupta was certainly the most magnificent personality of the time and enjoyed general admiration from the rulers of contemporary India, and it is why Puṣyavarman presumably christened his son and daughter-in-law as such. Again, the Gupta influence in the administrative set-up, religion,
society, architecture and script of ancient Assam is too clear to be ignored. Padmanath Bhattacharyya’s contention that the names Samudravarman and Dattadevi (his queen) were given in imitation of Samudragupta, thereby accepting Gupta political hegemony seems to be true. This fact, by no way, indicates that Samudravarman’s power was rising high after the death of Samudragupta as held by P. C. Choudhury. The Nagajari-Khanikargaon stone inscription which bears Gupta influence in script and style of writing shows that Aryanisation penetrated into Upper Assam as early as 5th century A.D. The Nagajari-Khanikargaon stone inscription maintains the distinction between $b$ and $v$ as in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription; although sentences are incomplete, the language is chaste Sanskrit free from the influence of local Prākrit, (IAA, p. 304). However, it may be surmised from this that lower part of Assam or Prāgjyotiṣa which is the gateway to the whole eastern region from the western direction must have been more

Aryanised, more under Gupta influence, if not political, certainly cultural. Hence, it seems safe to say that when Puṣyavarman, the founder of the Varman dynasty had established himself as the head of the State of Prāgjyotisha and been consolidating his royal status must have adopted a friendly, yet some sort of a subordinate position towards the Gupta emperor, Samudragupta.

The controversy regarding the background of Puṣyavarman also calls for attention. R. M. Nath says that Puṣyavarman originally came from central India and helped Samudragupta to expel the reigning king of Kāmarūpa and afterwards established himself on the throne, while B. M. Barua has tried to establish a connection between the Varmans of Kāmarūpa with those of Trigarta in the Udicyottarapatha or somewhere in the Punjab. D. C. Sircar, after examining various possibilities regarding the origin of Puṣyavarman, has come to the conclusion that there is no need to attach much importance to the 'fabricated ancestry

claimed by the descendants of Puṣyavarman. To quote him: 'A word may be said here about the descent from Naraka claimed by the descendants of Puṣyavarman at least from about the seventh century A.D. Since it is noticed from the first time in the records of Bhāskaravarman and his account in Bāṇa’s Harṣacarita. The claim is not found in the earlier Umachal and Bargāṅgā inscriptions of the time of Bhāskaravarman’s ancestors. It has often been forgotten that, during the early medieval period most of the ruling families of India began to fabricate for themselves a respectable ancestry such, e.g., as descent from the Sun or Moon or some Epic hero, or from the god Brahman through the gotra sage, or from the Yādava or Nāga lineage. Thus, so far as the early inscriptions are concerned, the foreign Gurjaras spoke of their descent from king Karṇa of the Mahābhārata in an inscription of 706 A.D. The Pallavas claimed the god Brahman as their ancestor through their gotra sage Bharadvāja at least from the time of Nandivarman II Pallavamalla (c 730-96 A.D) and a Shahi

10. TCHA Vol. 1., p.96
king of foreign origin ruling in the Gilgit region in the 8th century A.D. declared that he belonged to the Bhagadatta-
vanîsa. Since the Epico-Purânic myths associated Prâgjyotîsa with Naraka and his descendants, it was quite
natural for the kings of ancient Assam to fabricate the story of their descent from Naraka’s family. A few points have,
however, to be noticed in this connection. In the first place, the Mlechcha dynasty of Sâlastambha, which succeeded the
dynasty of Puṣyavarman but had no relation with it, also claimed descent from Naraka in course of time as a matter
of fashion. Secondly, since according to tradition Naraka was a son of the god, Vishṇu, his descendants were
expected to have been devotees of that god; but Bhâskaravarman was a devotee of the god Śiva while many
of the later rulers of Prâgjyotiṣa-Kâmarûpa are known to have been especially devoted to the goddess Kâmeśvari
(Kâmâkhyâ) and her consort Kâmeśvara (Śiva) as we shall see below. Thirdly, contemporary Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-
tsang says that Bhâskaravarman, who was a descendent of Nârâyaṇadeva, was a Brahmana by caste, thought it is
usually, but without any justification, regarded as due to a confusion. In any case, under the circumstances noted above no special important needs be attached to the fabricated ancestry claimed by the descendents of Puṣyavarman."

It is true that both the Umācal Rock inscription of Surendravarman and Baḍgaṅgā Rock inscription of the time of Bhūtivarman belonging to the pre-Bhāskara age have not claimed descent from the legendary Bhaumas viz. Naraka and his successors who are made essentially connected with Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa in the epics; but at the same time we must notice the fact that they have not also mentioned about the direct ancestry of the Varmans. Both the inscriptions are content in describing respective purpose of issuing the charter and under whose authority it had been issued. One should not loose sight of the fact that the two records under reference (i.e. the Umācal Rock inscription of Surendravarman and the Baḍgaṅgā Rock inscription of the time of Bhutivarman, are some sort of

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official notice like modern nameplates, and, therefore, one should not expect eulogical descriptions of the authorities concerned. Again, D. C. Sircar's observation that the fabrication of ancestry with some ancient epic-famous hero or king or the Sun or the Moon, or god 'Brahman' through the gotra sage, or from the Yādava or the Nāga lineage, became almost a fashion during the early medieval period among the ruling families of ancient India is absolutely true and like this, it may be also a fact that the trend of claiming descent from the legendary Bhaumas began from 7th century onwards. But then what we must notice is that descent has been claimed from Naraka and Bhagadatta not only by Bhāskaravarman but also by the succeeding two dynasties. These two epic-famous heroes are essentially related to Prāgjyotīṣa. This proves definitely one thing, that the three dynasties belonged to this land only. As a matter of fact, the Sālastambhas were regarded as mlecchas, i.e., non-Aryans. Now this reasoning can be made that if Sālastambha, a mleccha, claimed descent from the Naraka-Bhagadatta family, we must admit that the other two
dynasties were also evidently non-Aryan and were natives of Prāgjyotisa. They all felt proud by claiming descent from Naraka and Bhagadatta who had established close relations with the native people, i.e. the Kirātas (Mongoloid peoples). Another fact to be noticed here is that Bhāskaravarman was a direct descendant of Puṣyavarman and the existing sources clearly reveal that the Varman kings from Puṣyavarman upto Bhāskaravarman were quite powerful and cultured; hence if its founder, Puṣyavarman came from some other place of India, this would have been surely known to his descendents, or in that case to Bhāskaravarman. But there is no doubt that this ‘fabrication’ of ancestry supposedly done by Bhāskaravarman or some of his ancestors certainly provided the line with respect. After considering all these aspects, in our view, Puṣyavarman was a Hinduised king most probably of Mongoloid origin who had encouraged the process of Aryanisation in the land to consolidate his newly founded kingdom. The view has been already expressed in the previous chapter. There is only one direct source regarding Puṣyavarman’s relationship with
Samudragupta. It is the reference to Kāmarūpa in the Allahabad pillar *praṇāḍī* as one of the five frontier States (*Samataṭa-Ḍavāka-Kāmarūpa-Nepāla-Kartṛipuraḍī pratyanta nṛpatibhiḥ-śāsana* (line 22).\(^{12}\) whose kings voluntarily acknowledged his suzerainty.

According to this statement, the kings of the frontier kingdoms of Samataṭa, Ḍavāka, Nepāla and Kartṛipura, Kāmarūpa along with a host of tribes such as the Malavas and others who flourished in Western and Central India “.....fully gratified the imperious commands of the Gupta emperor by giving all kinds of taxes and obeying his orders and coming to perform obeisance.”\(^{13}\) We have already shown the unnamed Kāmarūpa king mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar *praṇāḍī* was Puṣyavarmaṇ. Both S. K. Bhuyan\(^{14}\) and K. L. Barua\(^{15}\) among the earlier historians, arrived at the conclusion of a supposed defeat of the ruler of Kāmarūpa at the hands of emperor Samudragupta. S. K.

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Bhuyan gave this view on the basis of Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvaṁśa*’s stating of Raghu’s *vijaya* over the ‘Kāmarūpa ruler’ (who is again placed in the 5th century A.D.) But the fact is that neither can we identify Kālidāsa’s Raghu with Samudragupta, nor can we present the legendary Vikramādītya as a fully historical figure. While K. L. Barua’s contention, as P. C. Chaudhury has already said, is based purely on a personal belief. K. L. Barua identified Subāhu of Mādhava episode with Puṣyavarman who was defeated at the hands of Samudragupta. It seems that the eagerness to reconstruct the history of Kāmarūpa as well as to link Kāmarūpa politically with the Indian sub-continent prompted the two historians to take recourse to the character of a litterateur’s imagination (Raghu’s historicity has not been proved yet). Though some amount of historicity may be there in the Mādhava tradition, there is not even a vague reference to Subāhu in the epigraphs by which we may hold that Subāhu and Puṣyavarman were the same person and that Puṣyavarman was defeated by

Samudragupta. The Allahabad Pillar prāśasti nowhere has mentioned that Samudragupta had ever taken any trip to Kāmarūpa or the other ‘frontier States’. On the otherhand, a bigger and a powerful State, in general practice, does not antagonise the frontier States, but brings them under its influence diplomatically. This happened in the past also. By this process, the frontier States have had turned out to be buffers against the other big power across the border. It should not be an exaggeration if we present our view on this contention that an emperor of Samudragupta’s might was diplomatic enough to bring those States under Gupta political sway diplomatically. On the other side, the pratyantanrpatis also after calculating Gupta might owed their allegiance to Samudragupta which poet Hariṣeṇa has recorded in the prāśasti. To be noted, neither scribe of the Dubi nor of the Nidhanpur copperplate grant has recorded any such defeat of Puṣyavarman at the hands of Samudragupta. The writer of Dubi copperplate grant has very impartially recorded a previous defeat of Bhāskaravarman and his elder brother at the hands of the
king of Gauda. Under these circumstances, it may be held that the facts recorded in these two copperplate grants were actual events. On the other hand, the piece of information that the names of Puṣyavarman’s son and successor and that of his daughter-in-law were Samudravarman and Dattadevī or Dattavatī, respectively, proves indirectly that the State of Kāmarūpa accepted Gupta suzerainty. If it was not the case, the names of her sovereign and his consort would not have been Samudravarman and Dattavatī or Dattadevī. In the light of all these points, it seems to be quite reasonable to express the view that Puṣyavarman owed allegiance to Samudragupta being overwhelmed more because by his astounding personality rather than being conquered by the latter, and same was the condition during the time of Samudravarman also.

The next issue to be discussed in connection with Puṣyavarman is the epithet mahārajādhirāja being used before his name in the seal attached to the Dubi grant. As is already stated, in both the grants (Dubi and Nidhanpur), Puṣyavarman has been described as a powerful king who
caused great havoc to his adversaries. His adversaries included both kings and other 'enemies' viz., the feudal lords. In the local inscriptions, the names of not a single State has been mentioned together with Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa. Only in the Allahabad Pillar praśasti, the name of Davāka has been mentioned together with Kāmarūpa as a frontier State. But it is very likely that Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa was surrounded by small principalities administered by tribal lords or chiefs who had always been under the political sway of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa. But these lords possessing arms, whenever got an opportunity created troubles for the Prāgjyotiṣa-dhipati as is evident from the local epigraphs belonging to the three dynasties. (ref Häyuṇṭhal inscriptions of Harjjaravarman). Davāka, too, might have been a small principality situated on the south-eastern frontier of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa, outside its control. But Puṣyavarman was certainly a powerful ruler possessing qualities as those of Indra and had subjugated other chiefs, if not Davāka, and took the title of mahārājādhirāja (king of kings). Although, Davāka has
found place as a separate kingdom together with Kāmarūpa in Allahabad Pillar prāśasti, no reference has been made to this kingdom in any other epigraph, be it local or outside the province. Thus, this proves for certain that this area got merged in the kingdom of Prāgijyotīśa-Kāmarūpa at some point of time. But the problem lies regarding the question as to who conquered this portion and expanded the south-eastern boundary of Prāgijyotīśa. Both the Dubi and the Nidhanpur grants refer to innumerable battles which Bhāskaravarman’s ancestors fought against their unnamed ‘enemies’ and ‘kings’ and won victories over them. Whereas the discovery of the Nagājari-Khanikargāon fragmentary stone inscription in the district of Golaghat strongly established the fact that Aryan culture had spread as far as Upper Assam and as early as the 5th century A.D. or before. The inscription again bears close resemblance to Gupta script and style of writing. Now this may conveniently be said that the influence of Aryan culture, to say Gupta culture as a part of it, spread to this far-flung area through the kingdom of Prāgijyotīśa-Kāmarūpa, the
strongest and the most ancient State of the region. And this Aryanisation process is such a process that needed both mass co-operation and royal patronage. Considering these facts, we may say that the areas toward the east (like the principality in the district of Golaghat) came under the influence of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa before the 5th century A.D. and many of them (like Davāka) were under direct control of Prāgjyotiṣa. That means the Varman kings ruling before the 6th century A.D. viz., Puṣyavarman, Samudravarman, Balavarman, Kalyāṇavarman, Gaṇapativarman and Mahendravarman who have been praised by Bhāskara’s scribe as powerful enough to cause havoc in the enemies’ camps, were responsible in the expansion of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa’s political hegemony towards the east. Most probably, Mahendravarman, as we shall prove later on annexed Davāka into the kingdom of Kāmarūpa.

Samudravarman: (375-400 A.D.)

Puṣyavarman’s son and successor, Samudravarman maintained the elevated status of the kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa, for he has been praised in the Dubi and the
Nidhanpur grants as possessing power as well as knowledge and other qualities. In the Nidhanpur grant, his reign is described as devoid of anarchy (mātsyanyāya) and in the seal attached to the Dubi grant, he has been called a mahāraja (king of kings). The following verses are attributed to Samudravarman:

“....He was similar to an ocean, famous and illustrious with an excess of knowledge and qualities” (v 2, Dubi grant, IAA, p.21)

“He, who was adored by the host of kings, and endowed with qualities, and the dispeller of darkness in the form of enemies, and capable of subduing others, retired to the heaven with the help of yoga after having enjoyed for long the whole earth, endowed with auspicious jewels” (v 13, Dubi Grant, IAA, p.21)

“His, son was Samudravarman, who was as it were the fifth samudra (Ocean) being devoid of anarchy (i.e., mātsyanyāya, which is common to other four oceans), having jewels as open exhibits (unlike the other oceans
which have jewels hidden below) ...... ” (v 8, Nidhanpur grant, IAA, p. 50).

Balavarman I : (400-425 A.D.)

The third king was Samudravaran’s son Balavarman (who is generally regarded as Balavarman I). In the seal attached to the Dubi grant, he has been called a mahārājādhirāja. Balavarman’s activities have been described in the following verses of the Dubi and the Nidhanpur grants -

“Having endured the fire like arrows in the battle-field and having defeated the enemies accompanied by large armies, this strong man, the ornament of the Bhauma-dynasty enjoyed the world and as such was known as Balavarma.” (v 15, Dubi grant, IAA., p. 21).

“This fulfiller of wishes retired to the heaven itself with the help of meditation after having enjoyed the earth having embellished with gold and jewels and also having performed several sacrifices accompanied by gifts and having destroyed the power and pride of the enemies.” (v 16, Dubi grant, IAA., p. 21).
"That king (Samudravarman) had a son born of (his queen) Dattadevi, (named) Balavarman, whose force (bala) and armour (varma) never broken up and whose army would easily march against enemies." (v 9, Nidhanpur grant, IAA., p. 51)

"His (Samudravarman's) son from Dattadevi was the king of kings Śrī Balavarman, from him was born in queen Śrī Ratnavatī the king of kings Śrī Kalyāṇavarma". (Seal attached to the Dubi grant).

All these verses and the data provided by the seal attached to the Dubi grant resemble each other in describing Balavarman; that Balavarman was the son of Samudravarman and Dattadevi; that he succeeded his father and possessed the title of mahārājādhirāja and in due course, he was succeeded by his son Kalyāṇavarman.

The V 16 of the Dubi grant reveals that Balavarman was the first among the Varman kings who performed 'several sacrifices, thereby confirming his status as a mahārājādhirāja. This very information has motivated historians to conclude that it was Balavarman who
expanded the south-eastern frontier of the kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa by conquering ‘the kingdom of Davāka’ which had formerly been an independent state. However, P. C. Chaudhury has not given any view in this regard because, as he puts it, ‘It may be conjectured that he tried for the conquest of Davāka or other small principalities to the cast, but he could not have been successful, since his triumphs are described in the vaguest and most general terms.’

Regarding the conquest of the Kapilī valley, we have already expressed our opinion. This is suffice here to say that Balavarman maintained Prāgjyotiṣa’s suzerainty over other principalities of the time. The v 15 of the Dubi grant says that because of his prowess, this ‘ornament of the Bhauma dynasty’ came to be known as Balavarman, bala meaning strength or power.

The Dubi copperplate grant provides us with a very important information regarding Balavarman in particular and the Varmans in general. The Varmans were performers

17. Allahabad Pillar Prasasti
of sacrifices or *yajñas* and Balavarman was the first among the Varmans to perform ‘sacrifices accompanied by gifts’ (v 16). This king has also been described as a person who possessed ‘great strength’, ‘good look’, ‘virtue’, and also ‘intellect’. This combination of such personal merits, of course, made him a magnificent personality of his time and may be concluded that Balavarman was the king who formally ousted Gupta suzerainty from Prāgjyotisā-Kamarūpa and also brought neighbouring areas under his control. To boost up his morale, he performed sacrifices and also established diplomatic relations with other Indian States like Kāśmīra.

Another issue to be taken into account is the connection between Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa under Balavarman and Kāśmīra under Meghavāhana, and the marriage between Meghavāhana and Amṛtaprabhā who is said to have been a princess of Prāgjyotisā.19 Considering the time factor, this is now generally held that Balavarman was the supposed father of princess Amṛtaprabhā. This will not be surprising

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19. RT., 2.14 7ff.
If we say that Balavarman was a magnificent personality as he has been described as a person who possessed strength, good looks, virtue and intellect. It is quite possible that a shrewd king like Balavarman established diplomatic relationship with the kingdom of Kāśmīra situated on the north-western frontier of India, and to cement this relationship, he gave his daughter in marriage to the Kāśmīra king, Meghavāhana, who is said to have been a Buddhist in religion.

It seems that Amṛtāprabhā embraced Buddhism before her marriage. Her father had already had a soft corner toward Buddhism which is evident from the presence of a Buddhist pontiff by the name of Stunpā (Lo Stunpā who belonged to a country called Loh) in Kāmarūpa. It shows that during Balavarman’s time Buddhism was known to Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa. Evidently Amṛtāprabhā took Stunpā with her to Kāśmīra. As Amṛtāprabhā was a virtuous lady, she constructed a stūpa in the name of her guru or spiritual guide, Stunpā and also a vihāra, named Amṛtabhavana (monastery) for the Bhikṣus (monks) from foreign country,
evidently her paternal land to boost up her faith in Buddhism in her new homeland. (bhogāya deśyabhikṣuṇāṁ
vallabhāsyāṁṛtaprabhā / vihāram uccāramṛtabhavanākhyam
akārayat / deśaikadeśallornāmnaḥ prāptastasyāḥ piturguruḥ /
stunpā tadbhasaya prokto lostonpā stūpakāryakṛt). Can we
identify Loh with Leh in Ladakh? It remains debatable. M.
A. Stein in his translation of the Rājatarangini takes the
word stunpā as a Tibetan word and views that Kalhana used
the term stunpā in the sense of a guru or spiritual teacher
and definitely not in the sense of a proper name.20 However,
K. L. Barua and P. C. Choudhury take stunpā to be a proper
name.21 King Meghavāhana ruled in Kāśmīra in the 5th
century A.D. Balavarman, too, may be shown to have
flourished in the first half of the 5th century A.D. (400-425
A.D.). In that case, Balavarman obviously was the father of
princess Amṛtaprabhā of Prāgjyotīsa. This princess brought
to Kāshmīra from her paternal land a religious teacher, a
Buddhist monk and got a vihāra constructed in his name. K.

20. Stein, M. A., RT. (tr.), p.73
L. Barua, thus, takes Balavarman to be a Buddhist convert.\textsuperscript{22} M. M. Sharma opposes this view as baseless, since the grants of Bhāskaravarman clearly speak of the predominance of the Brahmanical religion in ancient Assam.\textsuperscript{23} Noticeably, unlike Balavarman, a Buddhist king must have refrained from performing sacrifices. Interestingly, Balavarman appears to be the first king of ancient Assam who had ever performed a sacrifice. Under these circumstances, M. M. Sharma\textsuperscript{24} rewrites the concerned passage in the following manner:

"There arrived (prāptah) a guru, who is in his own language called stūpā, from a province (deśaikadeśa) named Loh, belonging to the dominion of her father and built the stūpa (called that of) Lo-stonpā" (v.10).

Here, Amṛtaprabhā is taken to have built a monastery for the benefit of monks belonging to a province named Loh within her father's territory. The term ekadeśa means 'a part'; hence a province of her native territory. On the

\textsuperscript{22} Barua, K.L. \textit{EHK}. p.30
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{IAA.}, Intro. p.0.19.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{ibid} p.0.20
strength of this observation, M. M. Sharma opines that a part of Tibet was under Balavarman’s control. Like Stunpā, the other people of his land were also Buddhist in religion whom Amṛtaprabhā addressed as her compatriots. (deśyabhikṣus).

Balavarman was not a Buddhist as in the local epigraphs, he is said to have performed several sacrifices. While Rājatraraṅgīṇī is a distant evidence to the event and the actors. Most likely, Balavarman had spiritual discourses with Stunpā who was a Tibetan. It is this catholicity of mind which prompted Balavarman to give his daughter in marriage to a Buddhist king. We may also say that an intelligent king like Balavarman kept religion out of politics and sent this spiritual leader to Kāśmīra to accompany and guide his daughter in her new homeland. Amṛtaprabhā as a token of gratefulness built the stūpa in Stunpā’s name and also a monastery for the Bhikṣus who came from Tibet, a Buddhist country. deśyabhikṣus in this case indicates monks belonging to her guru’s land. Thus, there is now no room to conceive like M.M. Sharma that a
part of Tibet to which Stunpā belonged was under Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa. This observation also lacks evidential proof.

Kalyāṇavarman (425-450 A.D.) :

The following verses are dedicated to Kalyāṇavarman, the fourth king in the Varman line.

The Dubi inscription :

"With the remainder of the merits of his good deeds Kalyāṇavarman, who was endowed with accumulation of merits and who was the performer of good deeds became the king" (v 17, IAA, p. 21)

"Born of Sri Ṛṣṭnadevī, the wise king (Kalyāṇavarma), who indulged in the only pleasure of doing good to others, who was equal in strength to Indra, who was the killer of the enemy and who had a moon like face and was possessed of great strength, retired in course of time to become the guest of Indra, after having performed a number of auspicious deeds also having killed huge hosts of enemies and also having enjoyed pleasure produced by his own good deeds." (v 18-19, IAA., p. 21).
The Nidhanpur inscription:

"His (Balavarman) son born of (queen) Ratnavatī was
the king named Kalyāṇavarman, who was not the abode
of even very small faults." (v 10, IAA. p.51)

In the seal attached to the Dubi grant, Kalyāṇavarman
has been described as the fourth generation of Varman line.

These information clearly show that Kalyāṇavarman
was the successor of Balavarman who was as great as a
person and powerful as a king and he also had a moon like
face. P. C. Choudhury utilized this very fact to conclude
that the king called Yu-Chai (meaning with the eye or face
like the moon) of Kia-pi-li (supposed to be the Dabaka
region) of the Kapilī valley mentioned in the Shung Shu
(426-479 A.D.) who sent a friendly mission to China in 428
A.D. was Kalyāṇavarman. Because, in the Dubi grant, he
has been described as a powerful king ‘.... the killer of
nenemy’ and who ‘had a moon like face’. P.C. Choudhury
takes Yu-Chai as a nick name. It seems that he has truly
found a clue for argument if we accept the contention that
Yu-Chai was really a nick name. Kalyāṇavarman seemed to
have ruled between 425 and 450 A.D. thus he
Kalyāṇavarman was the ruler who sent an embassy to
China. It is possible that after conquering Kapilī valley,
Kalyāṇavarman sent an embassy to China and that is why,
he has been described as the king of Kia-pi-li. Moreover, as
P. C. Choudhury says, he possessed a ‘moon-like face.’ But
a careful reading of the Dubi grant gives an impression that
Kalyāṇavarman’s reign period was more or less eventless;
it seems, he only maintained the newly-gained power and
prestige of the kingdom of the Varmans. It is also possible
that Kalyāṇavarman’s father Balavarman conquered the
Kapilī region, till then an independent frontier kingdom,
and soon after this significant victory, he performed
sacrifices and sent the mission to China just as he
established diplomatic relationship with Kāśmīra through
matrimonial alliance. But the date 428 A.D. of the proposed
mission has stood as an obstacle in establishing this fact.
Again, if we hold that Balavarman or some other
predecessor of Kalyāṇavarman, conquered the Kapilī valley,
and Kalyāṇavarman, in the year 428 A.D. sent the mission
to China, in that case, he would have certainly be described as the king of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa and not as 'the king of Kapili'. Thus, now, it seems quite reasonable for us to conclude that till the time of sending of the mission, Kapili or Dabaka was an independent kingdom and it was a king of this state who sent this mission in 428 A.D., most probably to strengthen his position against the rapidly rising power of Prāgjyotiṣa. Regarding the question of 'moon like face', it can be said that both the Varmans and the ruling family of Dabaka were racially of the same Mongoloid stock. This can be conjectured on the basis of the predominance of Mongoloid peoples in North-Eastern India. Mongoloid people generally have round faces like the moon. In the Dubi epigraph, king Chandramukhavarman has also been described as having a face like the moon (line 31). This may also be a general way of expressing the physical beauty of the sovereign. The Rājamāḷa also points out that the Kapili valley was inhabited by the Kirātas.²⁵

According to the Rājamāḷa, the rulers of Tripura were the

descendants of Yayāti and that Pratardhana, the 12th king from him, conquered the Kirātas and founded a kingdom with its capital on the bank of the Kapilī river. On the basis of this tradition, K. L. Barua viewed that it was a king of Tripura who sent the mission to China. But to us, the Rājamāla account appears to be an effort on the part of the Tripuri royalty to trace their origin from a famous Purānic figure. It is possible that at some point of time, some Mongoloid chief belonging to the Kapilī valley migrated to Tripura and established a kingdom there.

The above discussion offers enough grounds to prove N. K. Bhattasali’s views debatable that one Balavarman of the Gupta epigraph was ruling in Dabaka (Ḍavāka) and that it was Bhūtivarman who conquered the Dabaka region in middle of 6th century A.D. In the final analysis it can be conjectured that neither Balavarman nor Kalyāṇavarman conquered the Dabaka region but enjoyed nominal allegiance of Dabaka as has been mentioned earlier. It was Mahendravarman who ruled between 475-500 A.D. annexed Dabaka into the kingdom of Prāgyotīṣa-Kāmarūpa as we shall prove it later on.
Gañapativarman (450-475 A.D.)

The following verses are attributed to Gañapativarman in the Dubi and the Nidhanpur copperplates grants. He is also known as Gañendravarman.

The Dubi inscription:

"In Gandharvavatī was born the king (i.e., the master of the earth) Gañendravarma who was similar in lusture to the sun (i.e., the enemy of darkness." (v 20. IAA, p.22).

The Nidhanpur inscription:

"From him (Balavarman) queen Gandharvavatī begot a son Gañapati (by name), who was incessantly raining gifts (dānavarṣaṇa), was endowed with innumerable qualities, for the extermination of the Kali age (i.e., strife) like Lord Gañapati, who has an incessant flow of ichor (dānavarṣaṇa), is endowed with innumerable qualities for the extermination of strife (kali)" (v 11. IAA, p.51).

He appears to have just ruled peacefully,—and it seems that his rule was not important from the point of view of territorial expansion. Verse 22 of the Dubi inscription
further says that this king after enjoying the earth as Janaka, gathered an assembly of people, placed the kingdom in the hands of his accomplished son and retired to the heaven (IAA, p.22).

Mahendravarman (475-500 A.D.):
From the following verses, a picture can be drawn about the period of Mahendravarman.

The Dubi inscription:

"He, the son of Yajñadevi, Mahendravarma by name, who was the vanquisher of the enemy and similar to the king of gods in valour and similar to the moon in lusture, enjoyed the kingdom and protected his subjects like his own progeny duly." (v 23, IAA, p. 20).

"Having conquered the earth as the ocean as the girdle and subduing the enemy through, power, the king performed a number of sacrifices like the great Indra and also got a Śacī like consort in Suvaratā." (v 24, IAA, p. 22).

The Nidhanpur inscription:

"His (Gaṇapatīvarman) queen Yajñavatī bought forth a son Mahendravarman who was the support for the
scarificial rites like the fire, the very foundation for sacrificial rites, in the manner of the friction-wood (arani) which is also the source of sacrifices (yajñavati).” (v12, IAA, p. 51).

In the seal attached to the Dubi grant, he has been described as the performer of two horse sacrifices.

‘......Śrī Mahendra, the performer of two horse sacrifices’ (śrī-mahendraudvisturagamedhāhartā). (IAA., p. 33)

All these verses clearly give emphasis on Mahendravarman being a very powerful ruler who performed two horse sacrifices (aśvamedha) and extended his sway upto the ‘Ocean’, i.e. Bay of Bengal. As we have already discussed that till 428 A.D., Davāka (Dabaka), an important kingdom of this part of India was still an independent kingdom. However, as is mentioned earlier, Prāgijyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa had been enjoying nominal subjugation of Davāka. The epigraphs reveal that compared to Balavarman who ruled between 400-425 A.D., the reigns of both Kalyāṇavarman and Gaṇapativarman were more or less eventless; of course, they maintained the
status of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa. It appears that Davāka during this time made an attempt to dissuade herself from the clutches of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa, but to no avail. In 428 A.D. the king of Kia-pi-li or Dabaka or Davāka even sent a friendly mission to the Chinese emperor. The epigraphs clearly refer to both these kings being engaged in fighting against some unidentified kings. The king of Davāka seems to be the most prominent among these enemy kings. And finally, an expansionist like Mahendravarman, annexed Davāka into the kingdom of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa and afterward tried his luck in the west, i.e. Bengal then under the Later Guptas. After annexing Davāka, Mahendravaraman performed the first aśvamedha sacrifice. Here, this may be added that Balavarman did not annex Davāka. He conquered some other local chiefs and enjoyed Davāka’s nominal subjugation which was surely a tactful diplomatic act on his part. It seems he gave much more emphasis in establishing diplomatic relationship for the rise of his kingdom which had still been in an infant stage. Had he annexed Davāka at that point of time he would surely
have performed the *aśvamedha* sacrifice. Thus, it is safe to say that Balavarman subjugated some other local chiefs and performed other sacrifices to cement his victories. It was Mahendravarman who annexed Davāka into Prājyotisa-Kāmarūpa and became the first ruler to perform the *aśvamedha* sacrifice. As a matter of fact, as we shall show below that he got another chance to perform *aśvamedha* when he brought South-east Bengal under his control and maintained his hold upon this area by giving stiff resistance against the Later Guptas. No doubt, it is a glorious event in the history of ancient Assam.

According to D. C. Sircar, it was Nārāyaṇavarman and not Mahendravarman who performed the horse sacrifices (*aśvamedha*) and in their performances, his son Bhūtivarman or Mahābhūtivarman, then the Crown Prince, took active part since Nārāyaṇavarman was at that time very old. But in our view, the clear mention of Mahendravarman being the performer of two horse sacrifices leaves no room for such speculation. However,
Sircar has not denied that the Varman rulers from the time of Mahendravarman onward, taking advantage of the decline of the Guptas, adopted the policy of expansion towards the west so that they could build a niche for themselves in all India politics.\textsuperscript{27} In this connection, we must remember Balavarman’s earlier attempt in establishing diplomatic relationship with Kāśmīra, another important frontier kingdom at the time when the imperial Guptas were ruling in northern India as the supreme power. Thus, it was but natural that the Varman rulers later on would definitely try to expand their kingdom at the cost of the empire.

P. C. Choudhury puts Mahendravarman’s reigning period (450-485 A.D.) between Skandagupta’s rule (455-467 A.D.) and Buddhagupta’s rule\textsuperscript{28} (477-495 or 500 A.D. R. C. Majumder, \textit{A.I.,} p. 240). During this period the Guptas lost control over much of Bengal. Most probably, South-east Bengal passed into the hands of Mahendravarman who after conquering these parts performed his second horse sacrifice. He has also rightly

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{28} Choudhury, P.C., \textit{HCPA.,} p.152
pointed out that the contemporary situations in Bengal favoured Mahendravarman as it had no local power at that time.\textsuperscript{29} This has also been opined by him that Mahendravarman might have come into conflict with Gupta emperor Buddhagupta in connection with the occupation of Puṇḍravardhana in North- Bengal and was defeated at the hands of the latter whose occupation of the region between 477-496 A.D. is proved by his Damodarpur plates.\textsuperscript{30} Again, by the beginning of the 6th century A.D. i.e, about 507 A.D. (GE 188=507A.D), South-east Bengal passed into the hands of the Guptas as Gupta emperor Vainyagupta’s Gunaighar inscription refers to him as having his sway even upto Tripura.\textsuperscript{31} Therefore, according to P. C. Choudhury, Kāmarūpa’s sway over South-east Bengal occurred about 470-480 A.D. \textsuperscript{32}

Now, we have put Mahendravarman’s period approximately between 475 A.D. and 500 A.D. Hence, we must accept that Mahendravarman and Gupta emperor

\textsuperscript{29} ibid, p.154 \\
\textsuperscript{30} Raychoudhury, H.C., PHAI. p. 590f. \\
\textsuperscript{31} Sircar, D. C., SI., pp. 331 \\
\textsuperscript{32} Choudhury, P.C., HCPA., p.154.
Buddhagupta came into conflict against each other, the former had been trying to enter the political arena of northern India while the latter was trying to revive the lost power and glory of the Guptas. Both the contestants were, no doubt, men of substance. It seems that both of them fought against each other in a series of fights whereby Mahendravarman became successful in establishing his sway over South-east Bengal about which the Dubi grant refers to as Mahendravarman holding his sway upto the 'ocean'. To commemorate the most significant victory of the Varmans uptil then, Mahendravarman performed asvamedha sacrifice. However, Puṇḍravardhana or North Bengal was under Buddhagupta as is corroborated by his Damodarpur plates, Sarnath inscription and Eran epigraph.  

Thus, a great beginning had been made by Mahendravarman in respect of bringing our land politically close to the Indian sub-continent. As we know, his efforts did not prove futile. In the coming two centuries, his

33. ibid
successors, especially Bhūtivarman and the great Bhāskaravarman brought this beginning to its logical end.

Mahendravarman’s reign is also very important from another point of view as we have a direct source to his period. The Umācal Rock inscription dated 5th century A.D. has been left by him. Though, in the inscription, the name of the king is referred to as Surendravarman, it has been accepted by all historians that Surendravarman and Mahendravarman were the same person.\textsuperscript{34} This inscription refers to the establishment of a cave temple of the illustrious Lord Balabhadra by \textit{mahārājādhirāja Śrī Surendravarman}.\textsuperscript{35} This inscription is taken to be inscribed between 470 and 494 A.D. which tallies well with the period of Mahendravarman as given by us. The following reasons have been offered to suggest that Surendravarman and Mahendravarman were the same person.\textsuperscript{36}

(i) This inscription closely resembles the Baḍgaṅgā Rock inscription of Bhūtivarman (6th century A.D.) in respect of style, occasion and the palaeographic peculiarities.

\textsuperscript{34} IAA., p. 3
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{ibid}
(ii) The two names Surendervarman and Mahendravarman are very similar. Both Surendra (lord of the gods) and Mahendra (the great lord) indicates Indra, the Lord of Heaven. Then, ancient local epigraphs are known to have used synonyms of kings. Mention of Gaṇapatiyarman as Gaṇendravarman meaning Lord Ganesa in the Dubi grant is a good example in this regard.

In this connection, it can be discussed that Mahendravarman first took victorious arms of Prāgjayotisa-Kāmarūpa in the western direction as far as the sea and got impressed by the popularity of the deity of Balabhadra-svāmī in those regions. For example, we may cite the installation of Balabhadra together with Lord Kṛṣṇa and Subhadrā in the Jagannath Temple of Puri. So after coming back to his country, Mahendravarman constructed a cave temple as in other parts of India for the installation of the deity of Balabhadra. To be noted, this has had been the one and only instance of construction of a cave temple and the installation of the deity of Balabhadra in the whole Brahmaputra valley.
According to Sarnath epigraph, Buddhagupta was on the throne in GE 157=476-77 A.D. His accession, therefore, can be dated a year or so earlier. Then Buddhagupta’s rule came to an end shortly after G.E. 195=494-95 A.D. This is his last known date from the silver coins. His rule, therefore, can be placed between 475-495 A.D.\textsuperscript{37} Thus, Buddhagupta and Mahendravarman were two great contemporaries of the time. It is but natural that both these men came into conflict with each other. Actually, Buddhagupta’s accession to the throne proved to be an effective check on Mahendravarman’s sky-high ambition. Buddhagupta successfully resisted Kāmarūpa inroads and protected Puṇḍravardhana or Northern Bengal from the coveted eyes of Mahendravarman. The Damodarpur (Dinajpur dist), Sarnath (Benares dist.) and Eran (Saugar, Madhya Pradesh) inscriptions demonstrate that Buddhagupta had his authority all over the country from North Bengal to Madhya Pradesh. They reveal that North Bengal was governed by two viceroys by the names of

\textsuperscript{37} Tripathi, R.S., \textit{PHAI}, p.265
Brahmadatta and Jayadatta; Eastern Malwa was governed by one *mahārāja* Maṭrviṣṇu while one Surasvacandra, a feudatory king ruled the tract between the Kālindī (Yamuna) and the Narmada. Thus, we may say proudly that Mahendravarman not only conquered for the first time a large tract (South east Bengal), but also maintained his hold over it.

**Nārāyaṇavarman (500-515 A.D.)**:

Nārāyaṇavarman has been praised in the Dubi grant as a virtuous person ‘a seat of good qualities’ as well as a king fit to rule and that he was ‘the destroyer of the vanity of the enemies.’ His reign may be placed approximately between 500-515 A.D. It is quite likely that Nārāyaṇavarman lacked the magnitude which was an ornament of Mahendravarman’s character. This can be inferred from the somewhat mild praise of the king’s prowess by the scribes while describing his many-sided activities relating to the state. It is also possible that he, unlike his father, adopted a policy of peaceful coexistence.

38. *ibid*
But this policy of Nārāyaṇavarman gave birth to several rebellious chiefs. Nevertheless, Nārāyaṇavarman was able to quell these revolts and hence been described as the 'destroyer of the vanity of the enemies.' Most probably, Nārāyaṇavarman lost control over a vast portion of South east Bengal when Vainyagupta was ruling over the Gupta dominions. Vainyagupta had his sway upto Tripura in the east (Gunaighar inscription, G.E. 188=507 A.D.).

Bhūtivarman or Mahābhūtivarman (515-555 A.D.)

It is a very noteworthy fact about Bhūtivarman's reign is that he was installed on the throne even during the life time of his father and predecessor Nārāyaṇavarman as is revealed by the Dubi grant (vv 28-29). To be noted, his grand father, the great Mahendravarman was also installed as king during the life time of his predecessor Gaṇapativarman. This means that both of them might have been actively engaged in politics of the country even during their respective stints as Crown Princes and this eventually led to their early accession to the throne even during the

39. ibid
life time of their respective predecessors. Interestingly, both of them proved themselves to be great conquerors as well as efficient administrators. Bhutivarman’s rule may be placed between 515-555 A.D.

However, the Dubi and the Nidhanpur grants have not specifically described Bhutivarman’s activities in details, but have given emphasis on him being a man of supernal abilities. The Nidhanpur grant has described him as the sixth mahābhūta (basic element). The Dubi grant describes him as follows:

“Then this illustrious king, who was like the king of gods, famous for his valour........ having performed a horse sacrifice, retired to the abode of Indra”. (IAA, p.23)

What does that mean? Bhūtivarman, a great conqueror, the performer of one aśvamedha sacrifice must have avenged the defeat of his father at the hands of Vainyagupta and again extended Prāgjyotisha-Kāmrūpa’s western frontier up to the ocean, thus giving a permanent shape to his grandfather’s glorious conquests. However, it
is to be noted, during Bhūtivarman's reign, the Gupta empire had already vanished into oblivion. In the erstwhile Gupta dominions, rose several petty states ruled by local rulers. Bhūtivarman defeated those local rulers and reconquered Southeast Bengal. Certainly, Bhūtivarman in the absence of the mighty Guptas would try to advance further in the western direction. The Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskarvarman which was a renewal of the revenue free grant of land, originally made by Bhūtivarman proves this statement. But the question arises as to what extent this king advanced towards the west.

K. L. Barua, one of the pioneer authorities in ancient Assam history has drawn the furthest limit of the western frontier of Prāgyotisā-Kāmarūpa in Bhūtivarman's time. According to him, modern Purnea district of eastern Bihar was included in the western part of Bhūtivarman's kingdom. P. C. Choudhury has drawn Puṇḍravardhana or North Bengal as the western frontier of Bhūtivarman's kingdom. K. L. Barua has given several arguments in

40. SEHA., P.9
41. Choudhury, P.C., HCPA., p.160
support of his theory. In this connection, a discussion on the location of the donated land of the Nidhanpur inscription is necessary. The Nidhanpur grant reads as follows: (IAA, pp 53, 54)

"......... who (Bhāskaravarman) commands the present and the future district of Candrapuri (as follows). Let it be known to you that the land of the Mayūrasālamalāgrahāra lying within this district granted (earlier) by issuing a copperplate charter by king Bhūtivarman has become liable to revenue on account of the loss of the copper plates. So by the Mahāraja (Bhāskaravarman), having informed the senior respectable persons and having issued orders for making a fresh copper plate grant the land has been awarded to the Brāhmaṇas, who have been enjoying the grant in the manner of bhūmichidra so that no tax is levied on it as the sun, the moon and the earth will endure. Here the names of the Brāhmaṇas are as follows ........... (lines 34 to 54):

Seven shares (aṁśāḥ) are (allotted) for the purpose of bali (worship), caru (oblation) and satra (hospitality). The
produce of the land, found as an extension (due to the drying up) of the Gaṅginī shall be equally shared by the Brāhmaṇas as recorded. These are the boundaries: to the east lies the dry Kauśikā, to the South-east, the very dry Kauśikā marked by a hewn fig tree, to the west now the boundary of Gaṅginī, to the north west a potter’s pit and the said Gaṅginī bent eastward, to the north a large jaṭalī tree, to north-east the pond of the controlling tradesman Khāsoka and the dry Kauśikā. The officer issuing hundred commands is Śrī Gopāla who has received the five great śabdas. The officers who mark the boundaries are the headman of the Candrapuri (named) Śrīkṣikuṇḍa, the dispute settler (nyākaraṇika) Janārdanasvāmin, the controlling officer (vyavahāri) Haradatta and the clerk (kāyastha) Dundhunātha and others. The Master of the treasury is the Mahāsāmanta Divākaraprabha. Tax collector is Dattakāra-pūrṇa. The copper smith (i.e., the maker of the plates) is Kāliyā’ (lines 126 to 136).

Since after the burning of the plates, these newly
written letters are different in form (from the letters of the earlier grant) they are not (to be suspected as) forged” (v 28).

K. L. Barua, first of all, has taken stand on the river Kauśikā. He identifies Kauśikā (Kauśikī) with modern Kośī in the Purnea district of Bihar. That means Bhūtivarman conquered a part of eastern Purnea from the contemporary Gupta ruler and granted lands to 200 Brahmanas on the bank of the Kauśikā i.e., Kośī, obviously to commemorate his victory. It appears that the scribe wrote Kauśikā for Kauśikī, the ancient name of river Kośī. Kośī is a river which has had several dried up channels. Till 19th century these were known as Marā-Kośī (marā = dead) or the Buḍhī- (ancient) Kośī. K. L. Barua has drawn this information from Dr. Francis Buchanan’s Account of Puraniya (Purnea). According to Buchanan’s report on Purnea, who prepared the report mostly by ethnography, in the beginning of the 19th century, the district of Purnea incorporated in itself a much larger area towards the east

42. SEHA., p.9
43. ibid
44. ibid
upto the Karatoya and Rangpur on the north-east (1809-14). This district of Purnea in antiquity was the eastern part of Mithila while the western part was Tirhut (Tirahut) or Tirabhuki. On the other hand, the river Kosi unlike its present straight north-south way into the Ganges, in ancient times, had a big eastward bend before finally falling into the Ganges.

Together with the above mentioned factors K. L. Barua, on the basis of the strikingly close racial, linguistic and cultural affinities between Mithila and Kamarupa has further opined that whole of Mithila was under the old kingdom of Kamarupa between 6th and the 8th centuries. According to Akbarnama of Abul Fazl, the western boundary of Koch King Naranarayana's kingdom was Tirhut. K. L. Barua has accepted this contention, but in our view this will need further research. Again K. L. Barua in order to show the closeness between Kamarupa

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45. ibid
46. ibid, p. 5
47. ibid
48. ibid
49. ibid
50. ibid, p. 7
and Mithilā has given most modern examples, firstly *Ratnamālā*, a grammar book composed by a Kāmrūpa Paṇḍit in early part of the medieval period, was studied in Mithilā till 19th century; secondly its two commentaries were also composed by two Kāmrūpa Pandits; and thirdly, with regard to the Hindu law of succession, the Maithili work *Vivāda-Cintāmaṇi* of Vāchaspati Miśra and the *Kāmarūpa-nibandha* hold similar views as against those of Raghunandana of Bengal. But this is not suffice to hold such a bold view as to Kāmarūpa covering the whole of Mithilā. Generally, it is held that (as we have shown in the Chapter-II, sec-B (i), Aryan migration to Assam took place from Mithilā and this trend continued during the whole range of Assam’s ancient history. It is possible that at some point of time some people (Brahmaṇas) from Kāmarūpa also, migrated to Mithilā, which had always been a seat of Brahmanical learning and settled there. In this way, a process of exchange of views on various aspects of life and society between these two places took place and this is the factor responsible for such affinities in race, language,
literature and culture. In this connection, it can as well be argued that the similarities between Assam and Mithilā speak of a close cultural bondage between the two regions which was definitely preceded by some kind of political bondage. As we all know from the time of the later rulers of the Sālastambha dynasty till the end of the Pāla rule, Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa’s western boundary receded continuously leading ultimately to the final break up of the kingdom. That means, this political connection between Mithilā and Kāmarūpa existed before this period.

However, the fact that river Kośī which had many abandoned courses towards the east makes our belief confirmed that the said Kauśikā river having dried up courses towards the east is certainly the modern Kośī river which flows through Purnea. If we accept Buchanan’s contention that ‘in remote antiquity Kośī passed towards the east until it joined the Brahmaputra having no communication with the Ganges,’51 then it becomes all the more straight and simple to identify Kośī with Kauśikā.

51. IAA, p.60
Unfortunately, we lack concrete evidence to prove this statement. However, the account in the Nidhanpur inscription of the river Kauśikā and the river Gaṅginī and the dried up river beds of Kośī of Buchanan’s account—‘Plan of the District of Puraniya’ (which are also shown on Renell’s map of 1783) are enough to show that Kośī was śuṣka (dried up) Kauśikā. Thus, Bhūtivarman conquered, if not the whole of Purnea, certainly the eastern part. Now, this is also beyond doubt that Bhūtivarman brought Puṇḍravardhana or North Bengal under his control. It is quite likely that this area got incorporated in the Puṇḍravardhana-bhūkti.

To be noted, even though earlier we have refuted the theory of conquest of whole of Mithilā on the basis of comparatively very modern instances now, we may at least say with confidence that this conquest by Bhūtivarman contributed a lot in the migration of people from this area to Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa.

Several historians like N. K. Bhattasali, J. C. Ghosh and R. G. Bhandarkar hold that Candrapuri-vaṣaya belonged
to Pančakhaṇḍa of Sylhet, where the plates were found, taking the ṣuska-Kauśikā to be a dried up channel of the Kusiara river which flows through Sylhet. But the learned scholars have not shown properly the ground in the identification of ṣuska-Kauśikā with Kusiara except the phonetical similarity which is also not clear. However, they say that Gaṅginī of Nidhanpur copperplates was situated in Sylhet itself because in Sylhet, rivers are commonly called ‘gāṅg’. In our opinion this is not enough to hold a theory.

Kamalakanta Gupta, after taking account of the ‘Candrapura-viṣaya’ of Śrīhaṭṭamaṇḍala in Puṇḍravardhana-bhūkti of the Paścimbhāg copper plate of Śrī-Chandra of Vikramapura (10th century A.D.) which is credited with donating lands in Candrapura-viṣaya to 6000 Brāhmaṇas bearing surnames like ‘Gupta’, ‘Śarma’, ‘Datta’, ‘Nāga’, ‘Nandi’, ‘Pāla’, ‘Ghoṣa’, ‘Dāma’ ‘Kara’, ‘Dhara’ etc. (these surnames are also mentioned in the Nidhanpur copperplates) has indentified ‘Candrapuri’ with this
‘Candrāpura’ and also opined that 6000 Brāhmaṇas were the descendants of the 200 Brāhmaṇas of the different gotras of the Nidhanpur charter. He has also drawn our attention to the fact that ‘when a river changes its course, a portion of the old abandoned bed silted upon two ends is generally called gaṅgini or gaṅginā in Sylhet district also’

All these are quite interesting facts, but all these arguments get stuck up with the vital issue of the identification of the dried river Kauśikā. The river Kośī or ‘Kauśikī’ has had never penetrated into Sylhet. And as we have seen, we cannot identify Kusiara with śuṣka- Kauśikā. The arguments given above in support of śuṣka-Kauśikā being an abandoned course of Kauśikī have more weight than those given in support of Kauśikā being an abandoned course of Kusiara.

The Khālimpur inscription of Dharmapāladeva (circa 802 A.D.) and the Tezpur grant of Vanamālavarmadeva help a lot in this regard. The donated land in the Nidhanpur grant is said to have constituted the Mayūraśālamalāgrahāra.

In the Khaliimpur grant, the name of an agrahāra is Mādhā-
śālmaḷi which is said to have been within the Puṇḍravardhana-bhūkti. The close similarity of the two names definitely points to the fact that the two agrāhāras belonged to the same area. 'Māḍhā' of the 8th century A.D. is the vulgar form of 'Mayūra' of 6th century A.D.. This inscription also mentions a 'Gaṅginikā' as belonging to Puṇḍravardhana just as the Nidhanpur grant has mentioned about a 'Gaṅginikā' as belonging to Candrapuri-viṣaya. This location of Mayūrasālalalāgrahāra in Candrapuri- viṣaya tallies well with the location of Candrapuri- viṣaya given in the Tezpur grant of Vanamālavarmadeva of the succeeding Śālastambha dynasty. It has been said that the granted land was situated to the west of Triṣrotā (Teesta) and had Candrapūrī as the south eastern boundary. Thus, this area simply falls under Puṇḍravardhana-bhūkti. Puṇḍravardhana is generally taken to have comprised the modern districts of Dinajpur, Maldah, Rajshahi and western parts of Bogra and Rangpur.55 It is possible that Candrapuri- viṣaya comprised

55. ibid
a much larger area than the Candrapuri of Vanamāla’s time and incorporated in itself a portion of eastern Mithilā.

K. L. Barua in his attempt to place Candrapuri in eastern Purnea also argued that Śrīhaṭṭa or Sylhet had never become a part of ancient Kāmarūpa while P. C. Choudhury has tried to prove that Sylhet was a part of ancient Kāmarūpa. Whether Sylhet was a part of Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa or not is a different matter, but in our view, the already discussed arguments are enough to prove that Bhūtivarman extended Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa as far as eastern Purnea. Moreover, we should give extra attention to the data provided by the local epigraph, viz. the Tezpur grant of Vanamālavarmadeva.

K. L. Barua’s view is that Bhūtivarman conquered a part of modern Purnea as well as a part of Bhutan and Morung (now in Nepal) by 525 A.D. before the invasion of Yaśodharman in 533-534 A.D. He further has concluded that this tract was under Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa till the time of Susthitavarman, when Mahāsenagupta invaded

56. SEHA., p.72-74
Kāmarūpa, defeated the former and occupied the tract to be reoccupied by Bhāskaravarman later on. Otherwise it would not have been possible for Bhāskara to assist a Chinese mission with troops which could not have passed through a hostile territory. But, according to him, Sylhet did not form a part of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa as Syllhet or Śrīhaṭṭa had always been mentioned in ancient works like Hiuen Tsang's account (Silhichatolo), the Yogini-Tantra, and in Sādhanamālā, separately from Kāmarūpa. Then Sylhet which has been separated by the Garo, the Khasi and the Jaintia hills from the Brahmaputra Valley has had no easy communication links with Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa. However, he has not denied the probability of Mymensing being a part of ancient Assam, because this area was easily accessible from Guwahati, Kamatāpur or Kochbihar through the river Brahmaputra which flowed through this district till 18th century A.D. P. C. Choudhury, as we have seen above, has given several reasons to establish that Bhūtivarman conquered only upto North Bengal and

donated land there. But regarding the probability of conquest of Sylhet by a Kāmarūpa king prior to Bhāskaravarman, he has discussed only one solid factor. An inscription dated 600 A.D. has the expression, "Śrīhaṭṭādhiśvarebhyaḥ." According to him 'the reference is very doubtful. It is in the praśasti of the temple of Lakṣa Maṇḍala at Madhā in Jaunsār Bawār. It records the dedication of a temple of Śiva (v. 20) by Īśvarā, who belonged to the royal race of Simhapura, for the spiritual welfare of her dead husband; Śrī Chandragupta, son of a king of Jālandhara. The praśasti is placed between A.D. 600-800. Above the praśasti in the centre, there are some irregular letters, probably of a later date, which seem to read 'śrīhaṭṭādhiśvarebhyaḥ.' The epithet has nothing to do with Sylhet, for both Simhapura and Jālandhara lay in the Punjab. It is likely that it stands for the supreme lord Śiva, the presiding deity of Śrīhaṭṭa, for whom the temple was erected by Īśvaradevī. The name Śrīhaṭṭa is derived from Haṭakeśvara Śiva who is said to have been worshipped by the Nāgar Brāhmaṇas who lived originally in the region
around Kāśmīra. In any case, finally the expression may best be taken to have a religious imprint, and it has nothing to do with the independent status of Sylhet, during either the reign of Bhūtivarman or that of Bhāskarvarman. Here what P. C. Choudhury has argued seems to be absolutely correct.

Now, even if we presume that the Kāmarūpa kings in remote antiquity did not take the passage to Sylhet through the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia hills, their armies must have easily roamed about the whole area from Rangpur down to Sylhet and from there to Cachar through the Surma Valley. The Varman kings first (Mahendravarman) had already extended their sway as far as the sea in South-east Bengal. Considering the political importance, Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa had attained in Indian politics from the time of Balavarman onwards upto Śrī Harśavarmadeva, it can easily be said that this eastern most kingdom had exerted its political influence all over eastern India. Again, if we take into account the hilly-region factor (the existence of Garo, Khasi and Jaintia hills between Sylhet and Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa,
making communication difficult), it becomes equally difficult to believe that either Bhūtivarman or any Kāmarūpa king had found any interest in taking their armies again into the mountainous tracts of Bhutan and Morung. Separate mention of Sylhet or Śrīhatṭa does not necessarily mean that Sylhet had never been conquered by Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa. At best, this may be taken to imply that traditionally Sylhet was not a part of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa.

P. C. Choudhury⁵⁸ argues that Bhūtivarman’s conquests in Puṇḍravardhana cannot be placed before the exploits of Yaśodharman or earlier than 545-550 A.D. (because in the period between 543-544 A.D. Puṇḍravardhana was ruled by a governor, appointed by a Gupta ruler, paramabhaṭṭaraka-maharājādhirāja-prthvipati). Moreover, the Later Guptas namely, Kṛṣṇagupta, Harṣagupta, Jīvitagupta and Kumāragupta III, (the latter being a contemporary of Īśānavarman (Maukhāri), were ruling between 510-554 A.D. in some parts of Magadha; however, it is doubtful

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⁵⁸. ibid, p. 165
whether Gauḍa constituted a part of their territory. This data is known from the Haraha grant.\(^5\) In the Haraha epigraph, Jivitagupta is said to have come into contact with the "haughty foes, living in the sea-shore." And he is said in the Aphsad epigraph, to have "churned that formidable milk ocean, the cause of the attainment of fortune, which was the army of the shining Isānavarman, a very moon among kings." These two instances obviously refer to the fights of these kings with some petty rulers of western and southern Bengal, where independent kingdoms had been founded during the first half of the 6th century A.D. These kings were Dharmaditya known from Faridpur grant, Gopachandra known from Faridpur grant, Vijayasena known from Mallasarul grant and Samāchāradeva but their sway did not reach North Bengal.

By giving these arguments P. C. Choudhury has come to the conclusion that before 543-44 A.D., Bhūtivarman did not conquer Puṇḍravardhana, not to speak of Bihar, as the Guptas had hold over north Bengal. According to P. C.

Choudhury, at best it can be said that ........ either Jīvita-gupta or Kumāragupta III came into conflict with Bhūtivārman after the invasion of Yaśodharman; but ‘it is unlikely that Bhūtivārman could make himself the master of the whole of Eastern India as did Bhāskara.’

Now, a discussion is necessary regarding the date of the conquest of Puṇḍravardhana and Eastern Mithilā. K. L. Barua says that in 525 A.D. Mahābhūtivārman conquered this area. But after nearly ten years, he lost it to Yaśodharman of Malwa. Later, after Yaśodharman’s departure, he again reoccupied the area. This seems to be a very complicated theory. On the other hand, P. C. Choudhury maintains that Bhūtivārman conquered territories in the Puṇḍravardhana-bhūkti around 550 A.D. Because, Yaśodharman is supposed to have led his expedition to the east in 533-34 and the Apshad inscription proves that in 543-44 A.D. Puṇḍravardhana was ruled by a Gupta ruler. Then the Baḍgaṅgā Rock inscription, where Bhūtivārman is said to have performed an Aśvamedha sacrifice, is dated 553-54. A.D. In our view, P. C. Choudhury seems to be correct. That is, Bhūtivārman,
taking advantage of the departure of Yaśodharman and the decline of the Later Guptas, by this time much experienced in politics as well as in warfare, led Kāmarūpa’s victorious arms into the northern part of Puṇḍravardhana and thence to Eastern Mithilā where he is said to have granted a large fertile tract between the dried river Gaṅgīnīkā and the dried Kauśikā to 200 Brahmanās to his utmost mental satisfaction. By this action, he celebrated his victory as well as consolidated his position in the conquered territory.

It may be surmised that before this dream-conquest, Bhūtivarmā, consolidated his position in the neighbourhood of Prāgjyaotisā-Kāmarūpa as well as in South eastern and Southern Bengal. In both the Dubi and the Nidhanpur grants, he has been highly praised as powerful king who might have waged countless fights against ‘all the enemies’. Even though, certain grants like Faridpur, Mallasarul etc. mention a number of independent kings who reigned in the first half of the 6th century A.D. in Western and Southern Bengal; but this should not be taken to mean
that these kings continuously maintained their independence. In the Haraha epigraph, Jivtiagupta is said to have fought against some petty rulers ruling near the sea shore. Thus, it seems that both the Later Guptas and Bhūtivarman tried to extend their respective territories at the cost of these petty rulers. Bhūtivarman’s grandfather Mahendravarman first brought South-east Bengal as far as the sea shore under Kāmarūpa’s control. No doubt, Bhūtivarman followed his grandfather’s expansionist policy and waged numerous fights against ‘all his enemies’. i.e., both the rebellious vassals and the independent kings. One thing is to be noticed here is that the local epigraphs record numerous fights of the kings of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa against numerous vassal rulers and kings. It is also a well-known historical fact that the Kāmarūpa rulers had a craze for victories in the west. Thus, in the first half of the 6th century A.D. Bhūtivarman had been waging wars against ‘kings’ in Western and Southern Bengal.
Yaśodharman’s Exploits in the Lauhitya:

According to the Mandasor inscription, Yaśodharman of Malwa in 533-34 A.D. led his expedition up to Lauhitya. It seems quite probable that seeing the rise of Bhūtivarmā, Yaśodharman, a conqueror decided to fight against him and accordingly invaded the territories lying towards the east of the Indian sub-continent. He penetrated as far as the Brahmaputra valley; otherwise, the name Lauhitya, which is not a common name of river Brahmaputra outside Assam, would not have been inscribed in the epigraph. However, it is likely that Bhūtivarmā and Yaśodharman concluded some pact, and accordingly Yaśodharman left Kāmarūpa. After his departure, it seems that Jivitāgupta conquered the territories in Southern and Northern Bengal. The data that in 543-44 A.D., ten years after Yaśodharman’s invasion, the governor of a Gupta ruler was ruling in Pundravardhāna also tallies well with this structure of facts. Thus, around 550 A.D., taking advantage of the decline of the Later Guptas, Bhūtivarmā again rose his head and conquered territories up to Eastern Mithila. After conquering the Gupta

60. The Mandasor pillar inscription says about Yaśodharman expedition as follows: *janendra* Yaśodharman ‘Spurning the limits of his own kingdom ..........conquered countries not enjoyed before even by the Guptas ......and invaded lands, which the chiefs of the Hūnas could not penetrate’ (*C II, III*, No. 33, pp.146, 148)

Further, ‘homage was tendered to him by chieftains from the river Lauhitya to Mt. Mahendra, and from the Himalayas to the Western ocean, ..........’ (Tripathi, *PHA* I, p. 282)
tortories, he might have performed the Asvamedha sacrifice. Shortly after these events, he died probably in 555 A.D.

Thus, the above discussion on the long reign of Bhūtivarman may be taken to establish the fact that he really had done a great job in respect of conquest by establishing Kāmarūpa’s authority over south-eastern part of Southern and a part of North Bengal and Eastern Mithila. In the foundation thus laid down by Mahendravarman, he added one more stepping stone for further greatness of the kingdom of Prājyotisha-Kāmarūpa under Bhāskaravarman.

THE PERIOD BETWEEN 555 A.D. AND 594 A.D.

During this period of thirtynine years, altogether four kings reigned. Among them, too, Supratisthitavarman, most probably ruled for a very brief time. Because, Bhāskaravarman was very much present on the throne of Kāmrūpa by the early years of the 7th century A.D. taking part in all India politics with none other than the Puṣyabhūtis under emperor Harṣavardhana of Thānesvāra. Contemporary events in North-Central India, particularly
Kanauj, Thāneśvara and Bengal, more precisely ancient Gauḍa which are to be discussed below, and certain events described in the local inscriptions prove that Bhāskaravarman ascended the throne precisely in the last years of the last decade of the 6th century A.D.

P. C. Choudhury fixes 594 A.D. as the year of Bhāskaravarman’s accession to the throne of Prāgyotisa-Kāmarupa. The basis of this fixation is the tradition of the Kāmarupa era, popularly known also as Nṛpa-śaka or Bhāskarābda. According to an old Assamese chronicle, Kāmarūpar Purāvṛtta, the invasion of Kāmarūpa by Bakhtyar Khalji took place in the year 612 (of Nṛpa-śaka or Kamarūpa era). The date of Bakhtyar’s invasion is attested by two other very authentic sources, viz., (i) the Kanai Baraśi Bowā Rock inscription of Saka 1127 = 1205-6A.D. and (ii) the Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri, the Persian chronicle by Minhaj-ud-din who accompanied the invader as his chronicler. Now, the 612 K.E. is =. (1205-612n) 594 A.D. It is only to a famous king of the status of Bhāskaravarman

61. Choudhury, P.C., HCPA., p.179
that the starting of an era can be ascribed, and thus it is quite probable that Bhāskaravarman "celebrated his coronation" by starting this new era. It is also interesting to note that Bhāskarābda is found to be popular in the Kāmarūpi-jyotiṣa circle side by side with the Śaka era, surprisingly though some modern historians seem to have, knowingly or unknowingly, ignored this aspect while determining the date of Bhākaravarman. P. C. Choudhury further holds that Bhākaravarman ascended the throne by a few years earlier to Harṣavardhana and survived him by few more years after him.

The first few years of the 7th century A.D., was a period of political turmoil. This political restlessness was the direct product of the traditional hunger for territorial expansion of the Indian kings and princes, whoever had attained considerable power at the time. The power-hungry ruling families of the time were the Maukhāris of Kanauj, the Later Guptas of Magadha and the Kālachuris and the Puṣyabhūtis of Thāneśvara. Shortly before the beginning of this rivalry, however, Yaśodharman’s victorious arms (of
Malwa) had caused a political whirlpool that had drawn northern India as far as the Lauhitya in Kāmarūpa (this point has all already been discussed earlier). The post-Yaśodharman period witnessed a long-drawn struggle between the Maukharis and the Later Guptas, as the former had a coveted eye upon Magadha and Gauḍa. These two important political seats adjoined their territories but formed part of the dominions of the Later Guptas. At last Mahāsenagupta of the Later Gupta family put an end to Maukhāri aggression in these territories. Like Yaśodharman of Mālwa, this king too carried his victorious arms to Kāmarūpa and defeated contemporary Kāmarūpa king Susthitavarmaṇa, the father of Supratisthita and Bhāskara-varman. These events approximately took place shortly before 595 A.D. The Later Guptas, most probably had been ruling Bengal indirectly through a local chief who acknowledged their suzerainty. But very soon, Mahāsenagupta had to face a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Kālaḥuris. In 595 A.D. the Malwan capital of the Later Gupta kingdom, Ujjayini was in the possession of the
Kālachuri king Śaṅkaragaṇa. This defeat forced the two young sons of Mahāsenagupta to take shelter of king Prabhakarvardhana of Thānesvara whose mother Mahāsenaguptā was most probably a sister of king Mahāsenagupta. This reconstruction of history is basically based on the similarity of the two names 'Mahāsenagupta' and 'Mahāsenagupta' which is also not baseless. Nevertheless, this reconstruction, if true, offers itself as a strong platform for the rise of an independent kingdom of Gauḍa under a powerful and ambitious man like Śaśāṅka. It also explains why Śaśāṅka, the founder of this independent kingdom was involved in a war with the Maukhāri king and the ruler of Kāmarūpa, the two great enemies of the Later Guptas, and formed an alliance with Devagupta, the king of Malwa. Śaśāṅka became the king of Gauḍa sometime before 606 A.D. with his capital at Karṇasuvaruṇa. Karṇasuvaruṇa is generally identified with a place called Rangamati, six miles south-west of Berhampur in Murshidabad (first

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62. *HB.* P.58
63. *JBORS.* XIX. P.40 5ff., *IHQ.* XII, p.461
64. *HB.* P.58
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propounded by Beveridge *JASB*, 1893, pp. 315-328. However, M. Chakravorty identifies it with Gauḍa or Lakhanawati, *JASB*, V.S.N. 1908 pp. 280-811). In other words, the political traditions of the sixth century were continued in the seventh century A.D.

Conquest of Kṛttivarman, the Chalukyan king who claims to have conquered Aṅga, Vaṅga and Magadha, too, weakened the Later Guptas of Gauḍa and Magadha. This evidently offered the required opportunity to an ambitious vassal ruler like Ṣaśānka to establish an independent kingdom in Gauḍa. However, paucity of data has made all these probable conclusions. On the part of Devagupta, he evidently took possession of the dominions of Mahāsenagupta. On the other hand, hereditary enmity of Devagupta with the Maukhāris extended to the Puṣyabhūtis after king Grahavarman Maukhāri married Rājyaśrī, the Puṣyabhūti princess. She was the daughter of king Prabhākaravardhana and the sister of the would be kings of Thāneśvara, Rājyavardhana and Harṣavardhana. After this alliance, the enmity between the Maukhāris and Mahāsenagupta came to an end.
Anyway, the establishment of marital relationship between the Maukhāris and Puṣyabhūtīs necessitated an immediate alliance between Śaśāṅka and Devagupta, the king of Malwa in order to retain their separate existence. In their bid to power they took to treachery to deal with the Maukhāris and the Puṣyabhūtīs. To be noted, diplomatic alliance between Devagupta and Śaśāṅka is based on their simultaneous hostile operations against the Maukhāris and the Puṣyabhūtīs. The fatal illness of Prabhākaravardhana, the Thāneśvara king, gave these ambitious allies their opportunity. Devagupta first defeated Grahavarmana Maukhāri and imprisoned his wife at Kanauj. Next he made an attempt to capture Thāneśvara itself. At this, Rājyavardhana, the newly crowned king, marched against Devagupta leaving his younger brother Harṣavardhana in charge of the kingdom. Rājyavardhana defeated Devagupta, but he himself was killed by Śaśāṅka. Now, whether Śaśāṅka killed Rājyavardhana in a fair fight or by treachery is not certain. Doubt has been raised by Bengal historians

65. HC. tr. p.173
66. Ibid, p. 174-176
on the ground that the accounts of Bāna and Hicun Tsang which actually testify to the treacherous murder of Rājyavardhana, give two different versions of the incident.67

Anyway, the death of Rājyavardhana in 606 A.D. left Śaśāṅka the master of the situation.

As soon as the news of the death of Rājyavardhana reached Harṣa, he took a solemn vow to destroy Śaśāṅka, and marched to Gauḍa. On his way, he met the messenger of Bhāskaravarman, Hamsabega, and concluded an alliance with this king from the east68 obviously against their common enemy Śaśāṅka. Thereafter for fifty years more Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa, together with Thānesvara would decide the fate of North-Central India in general and Śaśāṅka of Gauḍa in particular.

The Reigns of Chandramukhavarman, Sthitavarman, Susthitavarman and Supratiṣṭhitavarman (555—594 A.D) :

The second half of the 6th century A.D. witnessed the rule of four kings viz., Chandramukhavarman, Sthitavarman, Susthitavarman and Suprathishthitavarman in Prāgjyotisā-

67. HB. p. 62
68. HC. tr. p.216-223
Kāmarūpa. After the eventful long reign of Bhūtivarman, the short reigns of these four kings obviously indicate a fall in the political fortune of the state. But it was not due to any high-handed attitude or thoughtlessness of these kings. The following are the verses attributed to these kings in the inscriptions -

Chandramukhavarman :

‘Then with the attainment of victory in due order, Śrī Chandramukhavarman, embellished by a circle of prosperous chiefs or the kings became the lord of the world (i.e. became the king)’ (v 32, Dubi copperplates, IIA, p. 23).
‘This largly mighty lord of the world after having duly caused the wailing of the strong (anatagonists) and damage of the pride of his enemies, having conquered the earth with the ocean as her girdle, having performed sacrifices frequently, and gratifying the suppliants with gifts and friends with fortune established his son in the charge of the earth and retired to the same abode as that of Indra. (v. 37, Dubi copperplates) (IIA p. 23)
The Nidhanpur grant simply refers to Chandramukhavarman as a good king who was the son of Vijñānavatī and father of Sthitavarman.

It appears that Chandramukhavarman retained Mahabhūtivarman’s conquests in the west. After ruling for sometime, he abdicated the throne in favour of his son, Sthitavarman and soon he died. Either he was ill or due to his advanced age, he abdicated the throne.

Sthitavarman/ Sthitivarman/ Sthiravarman :

The Dubi copperplate inscription speaks highly of the personal qualities of Sthita-, Sthiti-or Sthiravarman but nothing is expressed in it regarding his political activities. However, under his rule, it is said that the state was ‘devoid of theft, famine, epidemic and oppression etc.’ (43, the Dubi copperplates, IAA. p-24)

In the Nidhanpur grant, Sthitavarman is referred to only as a ‘king of unfathomable nature.’ It is mentioned that the “Brāhmaṇas.........performed the unfailing coronation ceremony and also peace-gaining auspicious deeds, alongwith the sound of the conchshell and the dundubhi-
drum and the king enjoyed it all like the lord of the gods.” (v 40, Dubi grant, *IAA.*, p. 24)

“He was a man of restrain and his feet, red with the rays of the crest jewels of many a prostrating vassal king assumed the beauty of two land-lotuses” (v 48. Dubi grant, *IAA.* p.24)

“The illustrious (king) named Śrī Sthiravarman after spending some days in the old city built up a new city on the bank of the holy river (i.e., Brahmaputra) along with the citizens, the servants and also the relatives” (v 49, Dubi grant, *IAA.*, p-24)

These verses show that Śtitavarman ruled for some years. No mention of outside conquests indicates that he lost control over these areas beyond the Karatoya, most probably either to Mahāsenagupta or to some unknown local ruler. But within ancient Assam, he maintained ‘the pride of the Bhauma family.’ The vassal kings as earlier, had also served this king with their services. As he did not face any external invasion, this may be held that the shifting of the capital was due to some internal reason. Most probably, to be nearer to the holy river Brahmaputra, he built up a new palace on the bank of the river. v 42 of the Dubi inscription also reveals the importance laid to this river. It is said that the ‘lord of the river used to reside in the capital city which was
crowded with beautifully embellished people and which was devoid of theft, famine, epidemic and oppression, no doubt due to blessings of the lord of the river.' This shifting also helped the king and other members of the royal family to pay their homage daily to the famous Kāmākhyā temple standing near by.

**Susthitavarman and Supratiṣṭhitavarman:**

Susthitavarman, the son Sthitavarman, was a learned man as is envisaged from the following verse in the Dubi copperplate inscription-

'He swammed across the large and very deep ocean of the subjects of studies, perturbed by huge currents, having waters in the form of Grammar, sharks (*timi*) in the form of polity, alligators in the form of *sāṁkhya*, resonant with the chirping of the cranes (*sarasas*) in the form of *mīmāṁsā*, fanned on all sides by the wind in the form of explanations and covered by the foams in the form of *nyāya*.' (v 55, Dubi grant, *IAA*, p.25).

Although, Sushtitavarman has been mentioned in the Dubi copperplate inscription as a powerful king, the verses (62-67) are basically attributed to his two intelligent sons-Supratiṣṭhitita and Bhāskara who were equally good in warfare. v 63 says that Supratiṣṭhitita proved himself to be of awful countenance in the
battle-field. Thus, he joined in the battles even as a prince. The Aphsad Stone inscription of Ādityasena (c. 672 A.D.) (KŚ., Bhūmikā, p, 15; IAA., Intro. p.o.15) says that the fame of Mahāsenagupta arising out of the feat of his defeating Sushtihtavarman used to be sung widely on the banks of Brahmaputra.

Both the Dubi and the Nidhanpur copperplate inscriptions are silent about Mahāsenagupta’s Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa invasion. But the missing of certain things with regard to Susthitavarman which are so common in the descriptions of other illustrious Varman kings, such as describing the ‘Ocean’ as the boundary of the state, performance of different sacrifices by the kings, adoption of high sounding imperial titles, etc. indicates that this king had to adopt a low profile due to some unknown debacle in his political career. Thus, he faced defeat at the hands of Mahāsenagupta. Most probably, Mahāsenagupta went back with a war booty and a tribute. This Kāmarūpa invasion was followed by another one which took place in Supratiṣṭhitavarman’s time just after Sthitavarman’s death. This invasion was made by king Śašāṅka of Gauḍa.

The way both the princes are praised as good warriors, it is clear that they gave a stiff resistance to some formidable enemy,
i.e. to Mahāsenagupta. It is possible that after a fierce fighting Mahāsenagupta defeated the Kāmarūpa army. But Prāgijyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa did not have any territorial loss, otherwise it would have been surely mentioned in the epigraphs, be it in the Aphisad inscription or in the local inscriptions.

Mahāsenagupta must have thought it impolitic to conquer any territory seeing Prāgijyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa’s might in the battlefield. Previously, even Yasodharman of Malwa also did not conquer any territory of the country. Noticeably, the geographical location and topography of the country had always favoured the native army to make some offensive strikes on the invading army. Best examples lay in the Muhammedan invasions of Kāmarūpa in the first decade of the 13th century and afterwards the Mughal invasions of 17th century A.D.

The verses in the Dubi copperplate inscription reads thus:

“.... of the two sons, endowed with royal qualities, mainfest on this earth through merits, one illustrious son was named Aridamanendra (Supratiṣṭhitavarman), who was both good-looking and of awful countenance in the battlefield and was as amiable as the moon to the friends.” (v 63, IAA, p. 26)

“.......the other illustrious one was named Śrī Bhāskaravarma,
Thus, it is clear that both the princes joined in some war and proved their mettle in the battlefield.

Verse 68 in the said inscription reads thus:

"The father having disappeared in other world (i.e. heaven) for mingling up with the person of Indra and the army of the Gauḍas, very powerful in the water, having gradually arrived, the two sons, though they were only in their youth, but yet endowed with the growth of a large and challenging valour, appeared on the spot with all ease, even with handful of soldiers like Bala (i.e. Balarāma) and Acyuta (i.e. Kṛṣṇa)." (IAA., p. 27).

It seems that Susthitavarman died shortly after the war, in which his two sons joined themselves actively, or in that case after Mahāsenagupta’s invasion.

We have seen that post Yaśodharman period was a period of political instability in Northern India generated by mutual rivalry among the royal houses of the time. It has been already mentioned that Mahāsenagupta’s invasion took place sometime before 594 A.D. For in about 595 A.D. he faced a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Kālachuri king, Śankaragaṇa. This defeat compelled
Mahāsenagupta’s two sons to take shelter in the Thāneśvara royal family which had family relation with the Later Guptas, and put the Malwan capital of the Later Gupta, Ujjaini, at the hands of Śaṅkaragaṇa. It is very much possible that Mahāsenagupta, hearing the advance of Śaṅkaragaṇa, hurried back to his own state but to no avail.

Śaśāṇika’s Invasion of Prāgyotisa-Kāmarūpa:

On the other hand, a period of political instability also began in Prāgyotisa-Kāmarūpa following Mahāsenagupta’s invasion. This invasion was followed by Sushtihtavarman’s death. And taking this very opportunity, a formidable enemy, named Śaśāṇika brought here the Gauḍa army, no doubt, to saturate his thirst for territories.

Verse 68 of the Dubi grant evidently gives the same picture. The new and the youthful king Supratiṣṭhita did not get the required time and resources to prevent the advancing army.

Verse 69 reads thus:

“Then having arrived at the battlefield like those two (i.e. Bala and Acyuta) in the battle of Bāṇa-Asura, the two brothers endowed with vanity and unconquerable strength of the army, pierced elegantly the foreheads of the large number of very mighty elephants, belonging to the Gauḍas, who also killed a
number of their own enemies, in the manner of Kārttikeya piercing the Krauñça hill, with arrows as sharp as the bolt of Indra and drawn as far as their ears.” (IAA p. 27)

Thus, the two young sons of late Sushtihtavarman for the sake of their motherland jumped into the battlefield. They used various types of weapons like arrows, saktis, wheels, prāsas and swords. But unfortunately, ultimately they were taken as prisoners to Gauḍa. (v 70-71, Dubi charter). It it stated that after sometime, both Supratiṣṭhita and Bhāskara were sent back to their country. According to the Dubi grant it was because of their good conduct, they were set free. Most probably, the pressure from the west as generated by the establishment of marital relationship between the Maukhāris of Kanauj and Puṣyabhūtis of Thānesvara (Puṣyabhūti princess Rājyaśrī got married to king Grahavarman Maukhāri of Kanauj) compelled Śaśāṅka to think twice about his relationship with Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa.

Anyway, soon after being set free, Supratiṣṭhita died most probably due to certain illness. Then, as is inscribed in the Dubi grant, the mantle fell on the younger prince Bhāskaravarman who was like ‘the Sun (bhāskara) possessed of huge lustre.’ (v 72, IAA p. 27)
Bhāskaravarman:

Bhāskaravarman evidently was the last known Varman king. The aforesaid passage about his father Sushtihtavarman makes it clear that Bhāskaravarman ascended the throne at an uneasy time, never experienced before by the Varmans. The untimely death of both his father and elder brother, two consecutive defeats at the hands of foreign invaders, loss of territories beyond the Karatoya conquered by his great grand-father, Bhūtivarman, and, that too, at a time when the kings and princes of Northern India had been engaged in incessant warfare against each other to conquer territories as much as possible, and lastly, maintenance of peace and order inside the country in the face of so many adverse happenings as mentioned here—all these factors, no doubt, put a mounting pressure on the young Bhāskaravarman. But one thing was clear, that if this young king succeeded in solving these problems, he would definitely occupy the seat of highest achievement in the annals of Assam’s history. It is unfortunate, however, that Bhāskaravarman’s own inscriptions do not refer to his military and political achievement in mid-Indian politics with Harṣa as his ally which is, of course, due to the basic nature of the
epigraphs rather than land grants. However, Banabhaṭṭa gives us some detailed information of Bhāskara’s exploits in the west.

After ascending the throne, at a favourable time, Bhāskaravarman attacked Śaśāṅka. In the war that followed, he defeated Śaśāṅka and occupied his capital Karṇasuvāraṇa. A great victory indeed! That Bhāskara conquered the portion of Gauḍa upto Karṇasuvāraṇa is proved by the Nidhanpur copperplate inscription itself as it was issued from the victorious royal residence of Karṇasuvāraṇa. When did this victorious campaign take place? The possible answers are many in number. D. C. Sircar takes Bhāskaravarman’s presence in Karṇasuvāraṇa definitely to be a direct result of an invasion probably led jointly by him and Śri-Harṣa sometime after Śaśāṅka’s death.\(^{69}\) Earlier, P. N. Bhattacharya, too, thought on the same line that it was a joint victory and Bhāskara did not rule over Karṇasuvāraṇa, but to celebrate the victory, he immediately (606 A.D.) issued that charter; it was Harṣa who actually got hold over it.\(^{70}\)

It has been rightly observed in the editorial note (\textit{TCHA}, Vol I, p.115), that no evidence refers to an alliance between Bhāskara

\begin{footnotes}
\item[69] \textit{TCHA} Vol.\textit{I.}, p.115
\item[70] \textit{KS.}, pp. 5, 9f
\end{footnotes}
and Śrī-Harṣa for an invasion of Gauḍa, while on the otherhand, issuing of the Nidhanpur charter from Karṇasuvāraṇa definitely testifies to the fact that Bhāskara conquered this area. R. C. Majumdar, too, says: 'It would have been highly impolitic on the part of Bhāskaravarman to issue a formal royal edict from a place which belonged not to him, but to a mighty king like Harṣa.'\textsuperscript{71}

Hīuen Tsang says, in reference to Kājaṅgala (near Rajmahal) that it had ceased to be an independent state centuries ago and it had a deserted capital. He says:

‘Hence when king Śilāditya in his progress to East India held his court here, he cut grass to make huts, and burned these when leaving.’\textsuperscript{72}

Thus, it has been revealed that Harṣa led a military campaign to Bengal, (Kāmarūpa had already established diplomatic alliance with Harṣa) but evidently very soon he had to leave the country. This may mean two things: — either he was not finally successful in his campaign of 'East India' or he left this particular place while moving further towards the east. Again, it is also equally possible that Hīuen Tsang refers by this statement to Harṣa's holding

\textsuperscript{71} HB. p. 78
\textsuperscript{72} Watters II p. 183
of a court in the course of his return journey from the conquest of Kongada in 643 A.D.\textsuperscript{73} Now, Hiuen Tsang himself says that Śaśāṅka was in possession of Magadha at the time of his death\textsuperscript{74} which took place shortly before 637-38 A.D.\textsuperscript{75} This statement is proved by Ma-Twan-Lin that Śilāditya assumed the title of king of Magadha in 641 A.D.\textsuperscript{76} Under these circumstances, it seems reasonable to hold that Bhāskaravarman invaded Śaśāṅka’s territory all alone. The news of the advance of Harṣa’s army under Bhanḍi towards the cast to punish Śaśāṅka might have contributed a lot in his defeat against Bhāskaravarman.

Bhāskaravarman spent no time in renewing the Nidhanpur charter, originally issued by Bhūtivarman, from the (jaya-)skandhāvāra of Karṇasuvarna. We have located the donated land by the Nidhanpur charter in Purnea in Eastern Bihar. This point is already discussed in connection with the rule of Bhūtivarman. No doubt, this magnificent victory over Śaśāṅka raised Bhāskaravarman’s position to a new height. Bhāskaravarman retained his conquests until his death. Perhaps this was the reason,

\textsuperscript{73} Life, p. 172
\textsuperscript{74} Watters II, 115
\textsuperscript{75} HB. p. 65
\textsuperscript{76} ibid
why Harṣavardhana always felt the need to retain his friendship with Bhāskaravarman. The importance of this victory is well reflected in the Nidhanpur charter even though it was connected with the granting of land,— “Let there be welfare to all. (This charter is issued) from the (royal) residence of Karṇasuvāra, the royal palace (skandhāvāra = capital city) which has acquired (upātta), property in respect of the meaning (anavartha) of the word ‘victory’ (jaya prefixed to it), owing to the possession of splendid ships, elephants, horses and foot-soldiers’ (lines 2-3, IIA, p. 50). Thus, this marvellous victory was connected with Bhāskara’s possessing of splendid ships, elephants, horses and foot-soldiers. By this victory, Bhāskaravarman gave a permanent shape to Bhūṭivarman’s conquests and avenged his own defeat at the hands of Śaśāṅka. More than that, this victory acted as the driving force in cementing his alliance with Harṣavardhana.

War against Śaśāṅka

Bāṇa writes about Bhāskaravarman’s emissary Harīnāsāvega’s meeting with emperor Harṣavardhana seeking an alliance with the latter. It Harīnāsāvega is said to have stated: “From childhood, it

77. HC. tr. p.211
was this prince's firm resolution never to do homage to any being except the lotus feet of Śiva. Such an ambition, so difficult of attainment may be reached by one of three means,— by a conquest of the whole earth, by death or by a friend like Your Majesty. The Sovereign of Kāmarūpa desires with Your Majesty an imperishable alliance. Commission me to say that the Sovereign of Kāmarūpa may enjoy Your Majesty's hearty embrace, so that the crused bits of bracelet-gems may grind as they clash against the jewelled edge of great arm-rings. If Your Majesty accepts not his love, command me what to report to my master.” Harṣavardhana replied in an equally warm manner, “Now could the mind of one like one possibly even in a dream show aversion, Harṇasavega, when such a great and noble spirit, such a treasure of virtue and captain of the worthy, bestows his love as an absent friend upon me. Therefore, use your endeavours that my yearning to see the prince may not torment me long”

Not doubt, this was an alliance made between two needy (of the alliance) persons, rather two kings. The earlier discussion on the contemporary politics of Northern India clearly shows that both Harṣavardhana and Bhāskaravarman under circumstances came closer to each other. Harṇasavega met Harṣavardhana who
was on his way to Gauḍa with a huge army to punish Śaśāṅka. It is said that proceeding still further, he met Bhanḍi who made him aware of the details of Rājyavardhana’s murder at the hands of Śaśāṅka and the escape of his sister Rājyasrī from the prison.\(^7\) Hearing this, Harṣa, left the army in charge of Bhanḍi, and went out in search of his sister, and at last found her in the Vindhyan forest.\(^8\) Meanwhile, Bhanḍi marched against the Gauḍa king, and Harṣa himself joined it on the bank of the Ganges after bringing his sister back with him. Of the further progress of his huge army no definite information is available; neither in Harṣacarita nor in Hiuen Tsang’s account.

We have already mentioned Bhāskara’s gains in the war against Śaśāṅka. It appears that before Harṣa’s arrival, the war ended. Most probably the presence of Bhanḍi’s army on the border freightend Śaśāṅka so much that after being defeated by Bhāskaravarman, he fled towards the south for good. Again Śaśāṅka who was originally a vassal king of Mahāsenagupta, rose to the position of an independent king and a conqueror within a very short time, i.e. ten to fifteen years (595 A.D. - 606 A.D.). So, by

\(^7\) ibid., pp.224-225
\(^8\) ibid., p.249
that time he must have become tired of warfare and the writing was on the wall. About Harṣa’s gains in the war, we have no direct information.

According to the Ārya-Maṇjuśrī-mūlakalpa, a late Buddhist work, Harṣavardhana “defeated Soma (meaning the moon i.e. Śaśāṅka), the pursuer of wicked deeds, and Soma was forbidden to move out of his country (being ordered) to remain therein (thenceforth).”

This particular data indicates that Harṣavardhana did not kill or overthrow Śaśāṅka. It appears that Śaśāṅka acknowledged Harṣavardhana’s overlordship. Hiuen Tsang’s reference to Harṣavardhana’s holding his court at Kājaṅgala (Rajmahal) before proceeding to Odra (Eastern Orissa) and Koṅgoḍa (Ganjam region) on a military campaign around 643 A.D., may be utilised to support the above statement. Harṣavardhana evidently proceeded to Orissa through South-Western Bengal. It may be held that the feudatory Orissan kings after Śaśāṅka’s death rose their heads high and consequently, by this act, they invited the wrath of the emperor whose suzerainty Śaśāṅka had acknowledged till his death. Thus,

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80. HB., p.64
81. TCHA. Vol I. P.116
with Śaśāṅka acknowledging Harśavardhana’s suzerainty the latter’s mission of both punishing Śaśāṅka and establishing his control over Eastern India came to completion.

Bhāskara’s Other Conquests

Bhāskaravarman conquered Karṇasuvārṇa and we have proved that he issued from there a land charter in the district of Chandrapuri, situated in Eastern Purnea. Evidently, Puṅḍravardhana came under his direct control. In the Ārya-Maṁjuśrī-mūlakaḷpa, Puṅḍra is described as Śaśāṅka’s capital\textsuperscript{82} against which Harśavardhana waged war with the latter. It appears that this work referred to Harṣa’s early campaign against Śaśāṅka when Bhāskara, too, from the eastern direction attacked Gauḍa. And actually it was Bhāskaravarman’s army which marched against Puṅḍra, situated adjacent to Kāmarūpa’s traditional boundary. Noticeably, unlike other places like Kāmarūpa or Samatāṭa, Hiuen Tsang, while describing about Puṅḍravardhana has not referred to the name of any king evidently because, it had been a conquered territory. Besides Northern Bengal, Western Bengal was included within Śaśāṅka’s dominions. It is difficult to say, if Southern and Eastern

\begin{footnote}[82] HB P.64\end{footnote}
Bengal, too, were under his control. As Hiuen Tsang refers to Śilabhadra, the Buddhist patriarch of Nalanda as being a scion of the Brahmanical royal family of Samatata, D. C. Sircar takes it to mean that Samatata had an independent king of its own. Now, Chinese accounts have described Bhāskaravarman as the king of Eastern India. Again, Hiuen Tsang remarks that the rulers of Kāmarūpa had the sea-route to China under their protection. This was the region, which had been conquered by the Varman rulers several times,—first by Mahendravarman, and then by Bhūtivarmar. Bhāskaravarman who also had the mission of reconquering his forefathers' conquests must have also dealt with Samatata. It is quite likely that the Brahmanical royal family of Samatata acknowledged Bhāskara’s overlordship. That is also the reason why Harsavardhana never felt the need to march either against Puṇḍra or Samatata. Thus, in the real sense, Bhāskaravarman was the king of Eastern India. He was the king who had control over North-East India, North Bengal, South-east Bengal and parts of Bihar. About Bhāskaravarman’s control over Śrīhaṭṭa or Sylhet, a discussion is already held earlier while writing

83. TCHA., Vol. I. p. 116
84. Life, XVI f., p. 195f.
about Bhūtivarman. Hiuen Tsang states thus: “To the east of Kāmarūpa, the country was a series of hills and hillocks without any principal city, and it reached the south-west barbarians (of China) .......that the South-west borders of Szuchuan were distant about two months journey. In the South-east of the country were wild elephants which ranged in herds.”

Evidently, Kāmarūpa had its eastern boundary touching the borders of Burma (Myanmar) and China. Then, one fact is to be always remembered that Bhāskaravarman was the lone king of Assam who had a perfect rapport with the emperor of Northern India, i.e. Harṣavardhana.

Hiuen Tsang’s visit to Prāgyotīṣa-Kāmarūpa

It is really important that the celebrated Chinese pilgrim and Buddhist scholar paid a month’s visit to Prāgyotīṣa-Kāmarūpa and, that too, at the invitation of Bhāskaravarman.

Learning from a Brāhmaṇa, who had faced defeat in a scholarly discourse with Hiuen Tsang about the magnetism of the latter, Kumārarāja, as Bhāskaravarman has been addressed in the Chinese accounts, sent messenger to Nālandā to invite Hiuen Tsang. The messenger handed to Śilabhadra a letter to this effect: “Your
disciple wishes to see the great priest coming from China. I pray you, respected Sir, to send him and so gratify this imperial thought of mind.” As Śīlabhadra had already accepted emperor Harṣavardhana’s invitation for the Chinese pilgrim, he for twice declined Bhāskara’s invitation. At the third time Bhāskara angrily retorted thus: “if he does not come, your disciple will then let the evil portion of himself prevail. In recent times, Śaśāṅkā-ṛāja was equal still to the destruction of the law and uprooted the Bodhi tree. Do you, my master, suppose that your disciple has no such power as this? If necessary then I will equip my army and elephants, and like the clouds sweep down on and trample to the very dust that monastery of Nalanda. These words (are true) as the sun: master, it is better for you to examine and see (what you will do).”

At this development, Śīlabhadra finally gave his consent on the proposed visit of Hiuen Tsang to Prāgijyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa,—

“With regard to that king, his better mind (or virtuous mind) is fast bound and weak, within his territories the law of Buddha has not widely extended, since the time that he heard your honourable name, he had formed a deep attachment for you, perhaps you are

88. *ibid.*, p.14
destined to be, in this period of your existence, his good friend. Use your best diligence then and go. You have become a disciple in order to benefit the world; this then is perhaps your just opportunity; and as when you destroy a tree you have only to cut through the root and the branches will of themselves wither away, so when you arrive in that country only cause the heart of the king to open to the truth and then the people will also be converted. But if you refuse and do not go, then perhaps there will be evil deeds done. Do not shrink from this slight trouble. 89

The above passage, on the one hand, shows Bhāskaravarman’s vituous and scholarly mind to meet a scholarly celebrity while on the other hand, as well shows his power and prowess, so well known outside his country. Bhāskaravarman was the perfect blend of contemporary Indian ideas of enlightened despotism and imperialism. Enlightened Despotism is a modern phenomenon of Europe. But this idea can as well be used in the context of ancient India. Śilabhadra himself compared the ‘king’ with the root of a tree while his subjects with numerous branches.

On his arrival (sometime in 643 A.D.) the Master of the Law was given a hearty welcome by Bhāskaravarman with his great

89. *ibid*, p. 15
officers. Much ceremony was held inside the palace. Everyday, music and banquets were arranged with religious offerings of flowers and incense.

It has come to light from the discourses between Bhāskararvarman and Hiuen Tsang that the former was well aware of Ch’in-wang’s (prince of Ch’in) victories against the rebellion of Liu-wu-chow. He was the second son of T’ang Kao Tsu, who in 619 A.D. suppressed the serious rebellion. However, he was finally killed by the Turks. The musical ballads composed in commemoration of his unique achievement and known as “Ch’in-wang-p’o chen-yao” and ‘Shen-kung-p’o-ch’ en-yao’, were performed at various places of China. Emperor Kao Tsu even ordered that the ‘po-ch’ en-yao’ should be given when a victorious general returning from a victorious campaign entered the capital. It seems, Bhāskararvarman enquired Hiuen Tsang of this heroic episode of his country “...... At present in various states of India a song has been heard for some time called the music of the conquests of Ch’in (Tsin) wang’ of Mahāchina.............. this refers to your Reverence’s native country I presume.” The Master of the Law replied, “Yes, this song praises my sovereign’s
excellences." Bhāskaravarman when enquired about the great T'ang country in what direction it lay, and how far it was distant, Huien Tsang replied that his native country Tang was the Mahāchina of the Indians and that it was situated some myriads of Li to the north east of India. Bhāskaravarman also informed Huien Tsang that all his subjects, "having their moral and material wants cared for by this ruler, sing the 'song of Ch'in-wang's conquests' and this fine song had been known in his country."  

The tremendous popularity of this Chinese musical ballad in India particularly in Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa may be attributed to the closeness of the two countries with each other. We have already mentioned that the eastern boundary of Kāmarūpa touched the borders of Burma (Myanmar) and South-West China. Similarly, it had access to the sea routes in South-East Bengal which was connected with Java and Sumatra by sea-route. Anyway, all these point out that Prāgjyotisā-Kāmarūpa under Bhāskaravarman exerted great influence in this part of the Indian sub-continent.

Bhāskaravarman is said to have insisted the Chinese pilgrim to stay for some more time in his capital. But the latter reminding

90. ibid
92. ibid, p.9.
him of his (Hiuen Tsang) great duty of enlighting his native people of the great Truth, expressed his inability to prolong his stay in Kāmarūpa. At this Bhāskaravarman agreed to Hiuen Tsang’s wishes. He offered Hiuen Tsang if the latter chose the Southern Sea route (through Java and Sumatra), to send some officers with him. Bhāskaravarman is said to have bestowed on him every sort of valuables. However, Hiuen Tsang accepted only a cap called ho-la-li made of coarse skin lined with soft down designed to protect from both rain and sun whilst on the road.

Bhāskaravarman’s meeting with Harśavardhana

A fact to be noted here is that before receiving Bhāskaravarman’s message of visiting his country, Hiuen Tsang met a Nigrantha and asked him to foretell whether he would be able to go back to China together with all the sacred books and images collected by him. In reply, the Nigrantha said, “Do not be anxious, Śilāditya Rāja and Kumāra Rāja will themselves despatch men as escort. The master will successfully return without accident.” Thus, the Nigrantha had full faith in both empeors Harśavardhana and Bhāskaravarman.

93. ibid
94. ibid.
95. Life by Hwui-Li, enlarged by Yen Thsang., cited in NEVF., p.13
They were close allies and enjoyed mutual understanding with each other. This fact also removes any doubt regarding Bhāskara’s independent position in the face of Harṣa’s imperialism. Otherwise, the Nigrantha would not have referred to a vassal ruler together with his overlord giving equal status with the latter.

It seems, regarding Hiuen Tsang’s visit of Kāmarūpa before visiting Harṣa, there had been a little misunderstanding between Harṣa and Bhāskara. Hearing of the Chinese pilgrim’s stay at Kāmarūpa (after coming back from his Koṅgoda campaign), Harṣa immediately sent a summon to Bhāskara demanding the return of his foreign guest. Bhāskara refused it saying that the king could have his head but not his guest. “I trouble you for your head,” came the quick reply. Thereupon, the Kāmarūpa king became submissive and proceeded with the pilgrim, and a grand retinue to join Śrīlāditya. Bhāskaravarman was a shrewd politician as he was learned. He readily understood the danger of antagonising Harṣa. Moreover, he could have also appreciated the emperor’s good wishes in his restlessness to meet the celebrated pilgrim.

Bhāskaravarman in the Religious Council at Kanauj

Together with Hiuen Tsang both Harṣavardhana and Bhāskaravarman proceeded by land and river in grand procession
to the city of Kanauj where, Harṣavardhana had convoked a great Buddhist assembly.

"On the day of sacred ceremony a golden statue of Buddha placed on a great elephant was carried in the procession ......Śiladitya, holding a white fly-fan and dressed as Indra, walked on the right; on the left walked a tributary king, Kumāra, another of Hiuen Tsang’s admirers, dressed to represent Brahmā." 96

"Moreover, they harnessed two other great elephants, and loaded them with jewels and flowers (or precious flowers) to follow behind the image of Buddha and each step they took they scattered these flowers aboard." 97

From Kanauj, after the end of the great Council, the two kings, with their Chinese guest, and attended by magnificent retinues, went on

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96. Saint-Hilaire Barthelemy T., Hiouen Thsang in India, cited in NEVF, p. 19

This quotation cited here gives a vivid description of the religious procession taken out by emperor Harṣa and Bhāskara at Kanauj. But here the term ‘Kumāra’ does not imply a ‘tributary king’ as the author seems to have believed. Bhāskara is also known as ‘Kumāra Rāja’ perhaps because of his accession to the throne while very young (kumāra) after the premature death of his elder brother, Supratisthita, as can be gathered from the Dubi plates. Here the author seems to have mis-construed the term ‘Kumāra’ to mean ‘a tributary king.’ Rev. S. Beal has used the term ‘Kumāra-raja of Eastern India’ to designate Bhāskararman. (Life, p. 177). Beal has not pointed to the ‘tributary’ status of Bhāskara, and rightly so. As a matter of fact, this particular information itself is an indicator of the independent status of Bhāskararman. Otherwise, the emperor would not have allowed a subordinate ally to take part in the procession as Brahmā, himself being dressed as Lord Śakra or Indra, and, that too, in the front together with him right in the left side of the statue of the Buddha. Noticeably again, both Indra and Brahmā are two most important gods in the Hindu tradition, and Brahma as the Creator of the Universe, and thus one of the Hindu Trinity, has superior status than the other gods including Indra. Bhāskara perhaps because of being senior in age to Harṣa as well as his seniority in the royal status as his accession to the throne took place at least by a few years before c 600 A.D., he got to be dressed as Brahmā symbolically, in this great ceremony. They (Harṣa and Bhāskara) also wore tiaras like the Devas (opcit., p. 177)

97. Saint-Hilaire Barthelemy T., Hiouen Thsang in India (629-45; in French! 1r. by Laura Ensor, cited in NEVF, p. 19
to Prayaga for the great periodical distribution of religious gifts and alms which was to be made there by Śilāditya. It was at Prayaga, Hiuen Tsang bade his hosts farewell.

**Bhāskaravarman at Prayaga**

It is stated: “Śilāditya-rāja, after twenty-one days, pitched his tent on the north bank of the Ganges (at Prayaga). Kumāraraṇa, occupied the south side of the river Jumna by the side of a flowering grove. On the morrow morning, the military followers of Śilāditya-rāja and Kumāraraṇa, embarked on ships, proceeded to the place of the appointed assembly. All being given away, Śilāditya-rāja begged from his sister an ordinary second hand garment.”

It is to be noted here that (after Hiuen Tsang bade farewell to his two hosts), “three days after separation, the king, in company with Kumāra-rāja and Dhruvabhaṭṭa-rāja, took several hundred light horsemen and again came to accompany him for a time and to take final leave, so kindly disposed were the kings to the master.”

The vivid description given in the above passage of the meeting between Bhāskaravarman and Harṣavardhana first at Kanauj and then at Prayaga shows clearly the existence of the good rapport between two magnificent kings of ancient India. They understood each other, and also understood the contemporary politics of the country. Their better understanding of the situation in fact, helped both of them to bring it completely under their control. Their respective achievements — one was the emperor of Northern India

99. *ibid.*, p. 18
while the other was the 'King of Eastern India.' Bhāskaravarman had respect for the emperor and the latter had full faith in him. Such an example of mutual understanding between two kings in ancient India is noticeably rare in history.

Connection of Bhāskaravarman with the Chinese Mission of 648 A.D. *The New History of the Tsang Dynasty* refers to an event, a Chinese campaign of India (648 A.D.) which had some bearing on the history of Assam.

One Wang-hiuen-ts’oe was sent on a mission to India with Tsiang- Cheu-jenn as his second in command. Before their arrival, Chi-lo-i-to (Śiładitya or Harśavardhana) had died, and there was disorder in his territory. His minister Na-fu-ti (sic) O-lo-na-shuen (Arunāśva or Arjuna), who had usurped the royal power, sent his soldiers to drive out Wang. Wang, being defeated, fled to Tibet and appealed to the neighbouring countries for help. Tu-fan (Tibet) and Nepāla furnished him with several thousands of soldiers. This time Wang and his assistant Cheu-jenn got success. The latter made Arunāśva his prisoner and received submission of 580 walled towns. The king of Eastern India, Chi-Kicu-mo (Śrī-Kumāra), sent him as present 30,000 oxen and horses, provision for all his army, and also bows, scimitars and collars of great value. The kingdom
of KJa-mu-lu (Kāmarūpa) presented to the emperor some curious articles and a map of the country and asked for the gift of an image of Lao-tsu. Wang retained O-lo-na-sheun as his prisoner and presented him to the emperor. The victory was proclaimed officially in the temples of the ancestors of the emperor, and Wang was promoted.\textsuperscript{100}

This O-la-na-shuen, most probably, was the king Ti-na-fu-ti or Tirabhūkti (Tirhut or North Bihar) who became king by usurping the throne of Harṣavardhana.\textsuperscript{101} It seems that Bhāskaravarman offered assistance to Wang against the usurper of his late ally and later on also sent some presents to the Chinese emperor.\textsuperscript{102} That is why his personal presents have been recorded separately from those from the kingdom of Kāmarūpa.

However, this is a noticeable thing that how far Bhāskaravarman had done right by assisting a foreign mission against a native king of India, whoever he might have been—a usurper or a genuine king. More data will be needed to review this point. But certainly, his offering of assistance to the Chinese mission did not exert any influence in the history of ancient Assam.

\textsuperscript{100} ibid, p.19
\textsuperscript{101} TCHAV Vol. I., p. 119
\textsuperscript{102} ibid, p. 119
It had remained more or less an isolated event. Even, in the context of Northern India, this event could not affect the course of history. It is also possible that after Śilāditya's death, seeing the downfall of his kingdom, Bhāskaravarman apprehended China's gradual arrival in the inner politics of Northern India and this fear had motivated him to maintain good relations with its emperor so that by this act of him, Kāmarūpa could be saved from the coveted eyes of the emperor of the great neighbouring country.

It is held that Bhāskaravarman died in 650 A.D. Hiuen Tsang has left a very pleasant picture of his kingdom. No doubt, this pleasantness became visible due to the paternalistic care he took for his subjects.

103. *ibid*, p. 120
CHAPTER-III

SECTION - B

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VARMANS

The Nature of the State

How the Varmans ruled? What type of a state they established? What were the various organs of the state polity? Was their administrative machinery efficient? Was it people oriented? etc., are the questions that arise in this respect. After a long period of obscurity, it were the Varmans who gave Prāgjiyotiśa-Kāmarūpa a permanent place in history. Historical period of Assam’s history is therefore, reckoned to being with the rule of Puṣyavarman, the founder of the Varman dynasty.

That Puṣyavarman was the king mahārāja mahādhirāja until his death and that he was immediately succeeded by his son Samudravarman and they were followed by another eleven kings are known from the Varman records discovered so far. The available sources refer to no such popular revolt which might have toppled
the existing government and deteriorated law and order situation in the country. One may argue that the scribe of the Dubi and the Nidhanpur grants deliberately omitted such events which may discolour the colourful reigns of the Varman kings. But it is difficult to accept this contention as the scribe of the Dubi grant had very impartially and clearly described an earlier defeat of Bhāskaravarman and Supratiṣṭhitavarman at the hands of the Gauḍa army under king Śaśāṅka. Of course, both the grants refer in several cases, to certain unnamed 'enemies' who were accordingly brought under control. These 'unnamed enemies' were taken by us to be some powerful persons who possessed both arms and manpower i.e., the so-called feudal lords (mainly the chiefs of the subjugated tribes) and also some other powerful persons closely linked to the administration. But luckily, the Varman kings were successful in curbing these disturbing elements as well as the defiant tribal chiefs who tried to assert their independence from time to time. But these revolts did not take a popular character. There might have been two reasons—firstly, the mass people did not have enough reasons to stand against their sovereign, and secondly, they had very little voice in the administration of the country. In our belief, both these factors worked together in debarring the people from
revolting against any of the Varman kings. Both the inscriptions have praised the Varman kings in general as just, merciful, intelligent and brave who cared for their subjects. Bhūtivarman has been described as ‘giving gifts to the people up to their best desire’; Chandramukhvarman as ‘the source of diligent of the people’; Susthitavarman was ‘bent on doing good even to one who had done harm’; Supratiṣṭhītavarman or Aridanendra ‘was like another full moon since he was a delight to the lily in the form of good men and the closing of petals to the lotus in the form of wicked men’, Bhāskaravarman assumed monarchy ‘for prosperity.....’. In the Nidhanpur grant, Samudravarman’s reign has been described as devoid of mātsyanyāya or anarchy. The Mech revolt under Sālastambha which placed him on the throne of Prāgiyotiṣa was not a typical popular revolt caused by popular grievances. It was more of a kind of community revolt under the leadership of its ambitious and powerful chief. Sālastambha with the help of his people staged a successful revolt which overthrew a weak ruler from the throne and placed the former on it.

Besides claiming their descent from Naraka who again had claimed himself to be the son of Lord Viṣṇu in his Boar incarnation,
the Varman kings have been compared to Indra in respect of possessing kingly qualities and in some cases to Lord Viṣṇu himself by the composers of the Dubi and the Nidhanpur copperplates. Many a time, they have been compared to Gaṇesa, Kārttikeya, Acyuta and to Balarāma. Queens have been compared to goddess Lakṣmī and goddess Pārvati. In this connection, the following lines are worth quoting: “The queen (Nayanā) had always been exceedingly delighted by (her son) Śrī-Susthitavarman, who was full of good qualities and possessed of a lusture like that of the full moon and powerful and responsible for the uprooting of the host of enemies, like the daughter of the king of mountains (i.e. Pārvati) by Skanda (i.e. Kārttikeya), like Aditi by the protector of the three worlds (i.e. Viṣṇu) and like Devaki by the illustrious lord Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of the demons.” (v 53, Dubi copperplates, IAA, p. 25)

This queen who had been married to Sthitavarman, (v 50 of the Dubi copperplates) has also been compared to goddess Śrī or Lakṣmī, Paulomī (Sacī) and Durgā (v 51). It is really interesting that as in the Gupta polity, the Varman kings have repeatedly been compared to Indra and to Viṣṇu with regard to their functions
of preserving and protecting the people. Lākṣmī, the goddess of fortune, frequently appears on many Gupta coins. In the Dubi grant general prosperity of the State has been personified with goddess Lākṣmī. Likewise, the Varman queens have also been compared in their beauty and devotion to their husbands to Lākṣmī who is also depicted as devoted wife of Lord Viṣṇu in the Hindu scriptures as we have mentioned above. Another noticeable fact in this regard is that like the Gupta emperors who were represented as gods and not as sons of the god, Varman kings were in several instances have been identified with Lord Viṣṇu Himself.

All the aforesaid examples definitely point to the fact that the kings and the queens were regarded as divine and infallible and that is why above the law. But the way they have been praised in both the epigraphs, we are tended to believe that they did not misuse the “divine” element facility. No doubt, this self-claimed divinity contributed in strengthening their position as kings as well as in administering their subjects. That is, in the process of pursuing of their “divine” authority, the subjects lost their voice in the administration of their country which however, had been a common feature in a monarchy of the ancient period.
Subjects who possessed both man and material power, caused troubles time and again for the Varmans. That is, even the "divine" element failed to check these troublemongers. This does not however, mean that they were not religious or less religious compared to the humble subjects. Thus, we may say that "divine" element factor helped mainly in controlling the people in general. It was the arms of the Varmans which brought these armed persons under control.

One important feature of the Varman rule is that no war of succession took place among the Varmans. This fact is very important because it implies that there was definitely a rule of succession, the law of primogeniture. According to this rule, the eldest son was entitled to succeed his father. And the Varmans abided by that rule. This also implies that the Varmans were by nature just, truthful and religious. The Varman kings never deviated themselves from performing their duties.

Another fact to be noted here is that all the Varman kings reigned till their death or until they abdicated the throne voluntarily. As we have mentioned earlier, they had faced troubles but they solved them. No doubt, they laid emphasis on force. At least two
kings abdicated the throne in favour of their sons. Verse-22 shows Gațapativarman abdicating in favour of his "accomplished" son Mahendravarman; and V-37 shows Chandramukhavarman, abdicating in favour of his son Sthitavarman. In time of declaring abdication, the people were asked to gather and in front of them the old and the ailing king made the declaration. It does not appear that the two kings were forced to abdicate or they did it out of any religious fervour.

In the external field, all the Varman kings more or less followed an expansionist policy and maintained a well-organised army. The kings of ancient India maintained their own standing armies even through in times of need, soldiers had been furnished by the feudatories and the other feudal lords. The same was the case with ancient Assam right from the time of the Varmans. If it was not so, the Varmans could not have achieved such triumphant successes in their campaigns in the west. It is clear that the subjects heartily accepted the expansionist policy of the Varmans and worshipped them as heroes. In this regard, only Nārāyaṇavarman and Gaṇapativarman were exceptions. Both of them followed a policy of peaceful co-existence. Whatever the king decided for them, the
people accepted without any hesitation. Economic condition must have been also satisfactory. And therefore, the Varman kings could wage so many battles with other kingdoms as well as their other “enemies”. It seems, people were also content with their needs and income or they were made to be so by the existing socio-political order.

All these factors created a condition wherein the Varmans could rule despotically. Thus, the Varman kingdom had a despotic system of government. In the Varman kingdom, the King’s (who was the superior authority) will was binding upon his subjects. We may cite here the examples of Balavarman and Bhāskaravarman who in spite of being kings of a Hindu kingdom showed so much of respect to two Buddhist pontiffs and also never faced any opposition from their subjects.

What we have gathered from the above discussion is that amidst the chiefs of numerous clans or tribes, Puṣyavarman founded a kingdom and ruled it in the same manner as in the most ancient kingdom of this region i.e. the kingdom of Prāgjyotisha under Naraka, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta. Here we may intend to say that Puṣyavarman was a man of Naraka’s magnitude who by sheer power established his control over the other chiefs of the land,
laid the foundation of a kingdom and adopted the title of mahārājaḥdhirāja (king of kings). His successors adopted the title of paramesvara-paramabhaṭṭāraka-mahārājaḥdhirāja. Then the Varmans started claiming descent from the legendary Bhaumas only to consolidate their position as we have shown in Chapter-II Sec-B which was also very common among the non-Aryan ruling families of ancient India. Now we are convinced that the Varmans were despots, ruling absolutely in the name of god for the well-being of their subjects.

The Varman kings and queens were compared to and in some cases even identified with some gods and goddesses. Obviously, for such a development, the Varmans got the consent of the dominating Brāhmaṇa class. As a normal practice, this class was closely linked with administration and the education system. Hence, basically they constituted the intelligentsia of the country. But this development should not lead us to the conclusion that the Varmans established a theocratic government in the country. A theocratic state is that where a king usurps the functions of the Church or when the head of the Church becomes the king (Altekar A.S., SGAI, p 51)
The Varmans followed Brahmanism, most probably they were Śaivite Hindus though they claimed descent from Naraka who is said to be the son of Viṣṇu and Prthvī. Bāna’s Harṣacarita claims Bhāskaravarman to be a descendent of the Vaiṣṇava family.¹ However, Bhāskaravarman is said to be a devotee of Śiva (v-1 of the Dubi and Nidhanpur copperplate inscriptions). The Dubi and the Nidhanpur grants, both reflect clearly that the Varman kings and queens were devoted to religion. But they were not religious figures. In valour and dignity they have been compared to Indra, the king of the gods. Sometimes they are compared to Gaṇeśa and to Kārttikeya for possessing tremendous physical strength. Whilst queens are repeatedly compared to Lakṣmī and sometimes to Pārvatī and Śaci in beauty and chastity. The queens have been generally praised as sources of the country’s prosperity.

It is quite clear that the kings were compared to Indra because they were expected to maintain the sovereignty of the country as well as to look after the welfare of the subjects. Similarly, queens have been repeatedly compared to Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune, because the queens, as beautiful and chaste as Lakṣmī, were taken to be the sources of prosperity for the country. So, religion was not the goal of those comparisons.

¹ IAA., p. 36
Moreover, various aspects of administration like the laws and rules of administration, the customs and conventions were not total reflections of religion. Similarly, the state employees, belonging to both high and low grades were not given appointments on the basis of their religious background or on their attaining of religious education. The kings were given proper education on daṇḍanīti or polity. Of course, importance was given on the upgradation of their moral character by giving them knowledge of the epics and other religious works. Their possessing of high moral character served as a useful check on the so called unlimited power of the king. In this connection, we also must take this fact into account that the Varman kings were not religious bigots. Otherwise, two Buddhist pontiffs could not have earned so much respect from two powerful Varman kings. One was Stunpā of Balavarman’s time and the other was Hiuen Tsang of Bhāskaravarman’s time. Again, we do not find any clue in the epigraphs or any other source to the fact that the influence of the Brāhmaṇas was like the influence of Ulemas in any Muslim state of India of 12th-13th century A.D. Actually, many Brāhmaṇas related to the administration in any ancient Indian State right from the days of the Mahābhārata
(Dronāchāryya in the *Mahābhārata*, Kautilya in the Mauryan period etc.) were Brāhmaṇas by caste, but were not essentially religious figures. The Varman kingdom was no exception. It appears from the Dubi grant that Susthitavarman and Bhāskaravarman were Śaivites, even though the ancestral deity of the Varmans was Viṣṇu. What is noteworthy is that the inscription beautifully establishes a connection between Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu in their respective attributes—'

\[ \cdots \ \text{(Lord Śiva) removes all the ills like Viṣṇu (Lokeśa), as it were, and who does good to men.} \]

In addition to Lord Śiva and Lord Viṣṇu, a number of other gods and goddesses such as Gaṅeśa, Kārttikeya, Pārvati or Durgā have also been mentioned in both the Dubi and the Nidhanpur grants with reverence. The river Brahmaputra on the bank of which king Sthitavarman built a new city was also given a sacred place by the Varmans and it was believed that the “lord of the river” used to dwell in the royal capital.

“'The lord of the river’ (used to dwell) in the royal capital, which was crowded with beautifully embellished people always in \[ \cdots \ \text{and which was devoid of theft, famine, epidemic and oppression, etc.} \]’ (Dubi grant, *IAA*, p. 24)

Another fact to be noticed in this regard is that the Varmans were expansionists, and even by general reasoning, we can not
correlate expansionism with a theocratic regime. The Varmans were devoted to their religion, no doubt, but religious bigotry was not their fashion, be it in the case of various Brahmanical sects or other religions. Although, almost all the people were Hindus, we can not say that it was due to strict religious policy of the Varmans. The Brahmaputra valley, by and large remained uninfluenced by other religions like Jainism or Buddhism. Historians like K. L. Barua and B. K. Barua evidently has shown that though later Buddhism in the form of Tantric Vajrāyaṇa was prevalent in Assam but has had never took the position of a popular religion. Śīlabhadra, in his address to Hiuen Tsang in Nālandā after receiving Bhāskaravarman’s request to send Hiuen Tsang to Prāgjyotisa says, “......... within his territories the law of Buddha has not widely extended; since the time that he heard your honourable name, he has formed a deep attachment for you,” and instructed Hiuen Tsang to propagate Buddha’s ideals in Prāgjyotisa. A probable cause for almost non-prevalence of Buddhism in Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa during thr period of our concern may be explained that in the Gupta period, influence of Buddhism considerably declined

2. SEHA., p.37
3. Barua, B.K., ACHA., p.83
and on the other hand, Brahmanism attained wide-spread popularity under the patronage of the Gupta emperors. Although, in Harshavardhana’s time, Buddhism had rejuvenated, after his death, (647 or 648 A.D.), it received a serious set-back as a period of political instability cast its shadow over the country. In case of Assam, Bhāskaravarman also died in 650 A.D. and as he left no issue to succeed him, a period of political instability also began therein. Such a period did not prove congenial for religious discourses at various levels. After the Varmans, the Śālastambhas ruled in Prāgjyotiśa-Kāmarūpa and they followed either Vaiṣṇavism or Śaivism. For these reasons, Buddhism could not establish any lasting influence in the Brahmputra valley. Above all, prior to this period, Assam remained outside the Mauryan empire of emperor Aśoka (273-232 B.C.), the greatest ever propagator of Buddhism. B. K. Barua has also termed the ancient period of the history of Assam ‘by no means sectarian’. ⁴ He further says, ‘Not only did kings establish toleration, but they often patronised all sects in equal measures.’ ⁵ Hiuen Tsang’s testimony that Bhāskaravarman had no faith in Buddha but respected the learned

⁴. *Ibid*, p.185  
⁵. *Ibid*
‘Srāmaṇas’, clearly shows the catholicity of mind of the Varman kings in general and Bhāskaravarman in particular. B. K. Barua’s following observation is worth-noting here: “......Bhāskaravarman’s relation with the Chinese traveller and his active participation in the religious ceremonies organised by Harṣa is most illuminating in regard to the spirit of toleration maintained by the kings of Assam”. The Chinese writer, Huwi-li’s information is also to be noticed in this connection: “If the Master is able to dwell in my dominions and receive my religious offerings I will undertake to found 100 monasteries on the master’s behalf.” These examples clearly state that the Varmans offered patronage to other religions also. As a matter of fact, from Vedic period, it has been held in Brahmanic literature that the king’s duty was to promote piety and religiousness by extending equal patronage to all sects and religions and to enforce customary laws approved by the social conscience.

Regarding influence of the Brāhmaṇas in administration some lines are necessary in this regard. In ancient India, though early literature gives several examples of sages trying to influence the

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6. Ibid., p.187
7. Watters, p.186
8. Altekar, A.S., SGAI, p.186
State by cursing the monarchs, but in course of time, the Kṣatriyas and the Brāhmaṇas patched up their quarrel, because 'it was realised that the two could prosper only if they co-operated with each other. Each conceded a qualified divinity to the other, .....' Ultimately, this developed the practice of claiming descent from Purānic or epic hero or any god which was done by the Brāhmaṇas for the ruling dynasty and in return, the influential Brāhmaṇas were given agrahāras with numerous immunities. The Brāhmaṇas also performed the religious duties assigned to them by the kings.

In Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa, this practice began as early as 5th century A.D. (shown in Chapter II, Sec-B (ii). Showing respect to and helping materially the Brāhmaṇas was a part of contemporary Hindu culture, but the Brāhmaṇas in no Indian contemporary State tried to override the kings. None of the Varman kings usurped the power and position of the Brāhmaṇas, nor any of them became a puppet in the hands of the Brāhmaṇas. The king was regarded as the highest authority in the State. Many early Brāhmaṇical literature suggested many privileges like exemption from taxation, no capital punishment, milder punishment etc, but in actual practice, this was not so. Of course, the practice of granting agrahāras to

9. Ibid., p.53
10. Ibid., p.54
Brahmanas, temples or monasteries led to the curbing of the king’s authority in the granted lands, but overall the king’s supreme authority was accepted by all. The Varmans had a secular outlook and tried to keep it in practice as far as possible under the existing socio-political order of ancient India.

The Varmans followed like any other contemporary Indian state including the imperial Guptas, the patriarchal system of succession. The law of primogeniture was followed strictly. Amongst the thirteen Varman kings, only Bhāskaravarmān was the younger son who had become a king. He ascended the throne at the death of his elder brother Supraṭiṣṭhitavarmān who died at a young age.

About the Gupta kings, R. S. Sharma writes: “Coins and inscriptions represent the Gupta king primarily as a fighter and general who took delight in hunting and fighting. He appointed ministers, commanders, governors etc. He received the obesiance of his vassals and princes and his pompous titles Paramēśvara, Mahārājādhīraṇa, Paramabhaṭṭāraka indicate the existence of lesser princes and chiefs with whom he had to come to terms in his empire.”11 The Dubi and the Nidhapur charters clearly reveal that

each of these observations suit the case of the Varman 'king'. Thus, the Varmans, as we have already mentioned, took the Imperial Guptas as their rolemodels. These two epigraphs also represent the kings as educated and trained in statecraft. About Vajradatta, the Dubi copperplates grant describes like this. “........ Having studied the four Vedas along with Arigas and the grammar and the logic entirely within one year and having acquired the knowledge of subduing and training of the elephants and learning also about the breed, nature and excellence of horses and the views of the preceptors of the devas and asuras respectively (the Nitiśāstras of Brhaspati and Śukra) upto their very essence, he performed a number of horse-sacrifices with his riches” (vv. 4-5, Dubi grant, IAA, p. 20). Obviously, the Varman kings were urged upon to take Vajradatta as their ideal. It also describes Susthitavarman as having studied various subjects like grammar, polity, Sāṁkhya, Mimāṁsā, logic and Nyāya. Mention of the various technical terms on polity like ‘mātsyanyāya’ ‘ābhīgāmika’ qualities mean certain attractive attributes of the king mentioned in the Kāmandakīya Nitiśāra. Intellect was regarded as an essential precondition of a ‘king’ together with other physical traits. Verse 14 of the Dubi grant is worth-mentioning here. It says, “The son (Balavarman )
who was born to him from the side of Śri Dattavati, who was firm, possessed of great strength, good looking pious and endowed with the traits of a king, became the king by virtue of the quality of his intellect for the purpose of obtaining the most desired stability (of the royal family).” (IAA, p. 23). In this grant, altogether six verses have been attributed in eulogising the high moral character of Sthitavarman as well as other physical traits like prowess and intellect “........Sthitavarman had a clear conception of the purport of various Śāstras and also thorough study of the Vedas, possessed of a renowned lineage and prowess............”

Thus, this intelligent, educated, strong and virtuous king was expected to rule the State in such a way so that it could be devoid of “theft, famine, epidemic and oppression, etc”. In the Nidhanpur grant, Samudravarman’s kingdom has
been described as devoid of mātsyanyāya or anarchy. This verse may also come under review in this regard: “Lakṣmi (the goddess of fortune), though fickle (by nature) became as steady as a duly married chaste wife after having found a master in him, who was another Viṣṇu (Puṣyavarman), as it were.” It makes it crystal clear that Puṣyavarman adopted all necessary measures to make the kingdom prosperous. Besides, establishing a strong administrative machinery he must have paid his attention to economic production, i.e. bringing land under cultivation which ensured a secured life for his subjects and also brought riches to him. Thus, we may surmise that providing security of life and property was considered as the primary duty and function of the king. The composer of the Dubi grant in vv. 28-29, hailed the birth of Bhūtivarman, (who was a “repository of supernal abilities” because it would ensure prosperity of the subjects (IAA, p. 23).

In administering their authority, the Varman kings adopted a paternalistic attitude toward their subjects. For example, we may cite the following verse (v. 23) of the
Dubi grant: "He, the son of Yajñadevī, Mahendravarman by name, who was the vanquisher of the enemy and similar to the king of gods in valour and similar to moon in lusture, enjoyed the kingdom and protected his subjects like own progeny duly". (IAA, p.22)

But was the Varman kingdom a true welfare state? The scribes of both the Dubi and the Nidhanpur inscriptions have not described the welfare activities i.e. the "good" and the "pious" deeds of the Varman kings except "giving of gifts to the people" up to their best desire. Nevertheless, this can be easily surmised that for the all-round prosperity of the people, the Varmans engaged themselves in the general welfare activities. Moreover they gave various types of gifts including land to the Brāhmaṇa class. They offered gifts because, according to the śāstras, giving gifts to the needy and the Brāhmaṇas is the key to one's spiritual development. In gift-giving in the Nidhanpur inscription, Bhāskaravarman has been compared to the famous Purāṇic figure king Śivi. A general study of the
Dubi and the Nidhanpur grants show that equal importance has been laid by the scribes in the king’s physical strength and the might of his arms as well as in his intellect and other personal merits. Obviously, the Varmans engaged themselves in war activities as well as welfare activities. Both the inscriptions indicate a general prosperous condition of the Varman kingdom. The two peace-loving monarchs, Kalyāṇavarman and Nārāyaṇavarman must have vigorously engaged themselves in welfare activities. The following quotes are worth-mentioning here:

“Born of Śrī-Ratnadevi, the wise king (Kalyāṇavarman), indulged in the only pleasure of doing good to others.”
(v 18, Dubi grant, IAA p. 21)

“Nārāyaṇavarman became king in order to “dispel the demerits of the subjects.” (v 26, Dubi grant, IAA, p. 22)

During Bhūtivarman’s reign, a great expansionist of his time, his minister built an alms house, evidently for the benefit of the monks. (Badgāṅgā Rock inscription, IAA, p. 5)

All these are conceivable facts. But in a caste and class ridden society, welfare activities were destined to
discriminate among the subjects. Furthermore, unlike emperor Asoka, the greatest humanitarian monarch of the world, the Varmans did not totally abandon their thirst for territories.

Functions of the king:

The following lines from the Nidhanpur grant are worth-mentioning here: "......he, who has been created by the lord (Brahmā) born of the lotus, the cause of the origin, arrangement and destruction of the universe, for the proper distribution of the duties of (various) castes and stages of life (the varṇāśrama-dharma), which has been lying in a confused state, who like a lord of the World (jagatpati) at the very time of accession to the throne (udayān) could endear the circle of the friends and foes (maṇḍala) to him like the Sun (jagatpati), which assumes a red disc (anurakta-maṇḍala) in time of its rise and like the Sun which makes an equal distribution of its rays, caused the light of Āryadharma to appear again, after having dispelled the darkness of the Kali age with an equal distribution of
the revenue, who has surpassed the whole ring of his feudatories by the strength of his own arm, who has devised many a way of enjoyment for his hereditary subjects......” (IAA. p. 52).

Thus, the educated, intelligent, skilled and virtuous Varman king ruled according to his own will, but evidently in consultation with his amātyas, top-rank officials like Senāpati, provincial governors (who were basically drawn from the royalty and other feudatories), the viṣayapatis and other employees of the State. All these people were appointed by the king himself and they had complete loyalty to His Majesty. The Nidhanpur grant states, “.............who (the King) commands the present and the future district officers (viṣayapatis) as well as the courts of Justice...........).” That means besides the administrative department, the king was the fountain head of justice.

Coronation :

The coronation ceremony was held regularly with much pomp and grandeur. Performing of coronation ceremony

12 Barua, B.K. ACHA Vol.I. p.44
was regarded as a must for a would be king. Because it had a “mystic” value of its own and also because it formally conferred the title of “King” on the prince concerned. The v 40 of the Dubi grant describes the coronation ceremony of Sthitavarman in this manner: “Then the brahmmins performed sacerdotal deed in flawless manner and performed the unfailing (dhruva) coronation ceremony and also peace-gaining auspicious deeds, alongwith the sound of the conch shell and the dundubhi-drum and the king enjoyed it all like the lord of the gods (i.e. Indra).” (IAA, p. 24)

The Queen :

The queen in the Varman kingdom was much respected. In the grants, the term “Śrī” has been essentially added before their names. They have been mentioned together with the names of their husbands. They are generally described as devoted wives, who possessed divine beauty, intellect as well as integrity of character, and as mothers of the would be kings. From the sources available, it is difficult to discern anything about their involvement direct or indirect, in the administration of the country.
Crown Prince:

Altukar is of the view that in the Gupta administration, the Yuvarāja or the Crown Prince had his both separate civil and military establishments and could issue orders to the heads of the provincial governments with the consent of the emperor.\textsuperscript{13} Citing the case of aged Kumāragupta I in the last years of his reign and the Yuvarāja Skandagupta, he also assumes that, ‘if the king was old, a good deal of the administrative work would fall upon the heir-apparent’. To be noted, when the Puṣyamitras invaded the Guptas toward the end of Kumāragupta’s reign, it was Skandagupta who rose to the occasion and saved the empire. As we know, both Gaṇapativarman and Nārāyaṇvarman abdicated the throne in favour of their ‘accomplished’ sons, viz. Mahendravarman and Bhūtivarman, respectively. Incidentally both of them achieved tremendous success in politics. We may surmise that as Crown Princes, they experienced a lot in matters of politics and administration.

\textsuperscript{13} Altukar, A.S. \textit{SGAI}, p.341
In the Dubi grant, it has been written very clearly that Nārāyaṇavarman, before death installed Bhutivarman, already ‘famous for his armour in the form of physical strength’ as the king. Although, the Yuvarāja or the Crown Prince enjoyed the position next to the king, but it was a mere formal hierarchy of power structure.

The Feudatories:

Both the Dubi and the Nidhanpur inscriptions mention in connection with almost all the Varman kings that either they subdued the revolts of many a feudatory called Rājā, or they enjoyed the allegiance from and service done by the feudatories. This implies that the Kāmarūpa kings followed the principle of not annexing the territory of an enemy king who was conquered or killed in war but appointing a near relative of the former king as his own nominee to the vacant throne and imposing conditions of vassalship upon him. This is as prescribed by Manu. Those who were powerful among them were called Mahā-sāmantas. In the

list of persons to whom Śāsanas were addressed also appear the titles of rājā and the rājā (queen). The sovereign must have addressed the feudatory king and the queen in whose territory, the land was granted. In such territories, the task of maintaining law and order situation depended on the feudatory king himself. Their another duty was to supply armies to the sovereign in times of need.

Ministers:

In actual practice, the powerful persons next to the king were his maṇṭris or advisers, the Sanskrit equivalent to English ‘Minister’ who were used to be appointed by the king. In Gupta polity, they were also called maṇṭrin, amātya and sacīva.\(^\text{15}\) In the Baḍgaṅgā Rock inscription of the time Bhūtivarman, there is a term called viṣayāmātya. This viṣayāmātya, by the name of Avagūṇa constructed an alms house to secure longevity for his Royal Highness, mahārājādhirāja Bhūtivarman. Most probably, he was a top-rank amātya or minister who supervised the works of

\(^{15}\) Sharma, R.S., opcit., p.323
various *visṣaya-patis* or district governors. This view has also been expressed by D. C. Sircar.\(^{16}\) We don’t hear of a *viṣayāmātya* in the Gupta administrative machinery. So, the introduction of the office of the *visayāmātya* was a innovative task of the Varmans. In Varman administration also, district governors were known as *viṣayapatis* (line 49, Nidhanpur charter). The term *mantrimanḍala* (council of ministers) is mentioned in *Kāmandakīya Nītiśāra*, a text on polity belonging to the 8th, century A.D., but not in the Gupta inscriptions.\(^{17}\) In the sources regarding the history of the Varmans, also, the term *maṇtri-manḍala* has not found its place. However, it is most likely that there were several ministers and one amongst them served as Chief Minister since this had been a universal system. The Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva of later years mentions the term *saciva-samāja* (council of ministers). The *Life of Hiuen Tsang* reports that Bhāskaravarman took counselling from his

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17. Sharma, R.S., *opcit.*, p.323
ministers each time he discussed with Harṣavardhana on the bank of the Ganges.\textsuperscript{18}

Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa under the Varmans was one of the powerful States of contemporary India. In that case, the centre must had been the pivot of administration. In addition to the king, and his ministers, there was a set of skilled officials to execute the policies adopted by the king. The capital city and the adjacent areas were under the direct control of the king and his officials. From the Nidhanpur grant, we get the name of a high official named Śrī-Gopāla, the Svāmi who received the honour of five great\textsuperscript{19} śabdas (prāpta-pañca-mahāśabda). He might have been one of the five high officials whose designations had the prefix Mahā or great, and he was present at the time of issuing the charter. B. K. Barua had suggested that in Kāmarūpa, the expression, prāpta-mahā-śabda was possibly used to denote an official who had successfully held the

\textsuperscript{18} Life, p. 172
\textsuperscript{19} IAA., p. 75
five offices of *mahāsāmanta, mahāmātya, mahāsainyapati, mahāpratihāra* and *mahādvārādhipati* having been promoted from one to the other. But this view is unacceptable because *mahāsāmanta* was not the designation of any official. The powerful feudatories were called *mahāsāmantas*. In addition to Śrī-Gopāla, the other centrally recruited high officers was *mahāsāmanta* Divākara-prabha who was either the keeper of the royal store house or the master of the treasury, and tax-collector, Dattakārāpūrṇa. Vasuvarṇa was the composer and writer of the grant. He might have been a central government employee.

Central Administration:

It may be presumed that heredity and merit, both were counted in case of recruitment to higher offices like the keeper of the royal storehouse or the treasury officer, etc. Definitely, in the appointment of *mahāsāmanta* Divākara-prabha, his family background was also counted.

We may presume that the practice of holding one post by

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the members of the same family for generations was in vogue in Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa at that time. Again, this is also clear that a top-rank officer like Śrī-Gopāla got his job on account of personal merit. Because he was neither a mahāsāmanta nor he belonged to the royalty. If so, he would have surely been described as such. It is possible that he might have belonged to certain well-off family. It is unfortunate that we cannot trace the caste of this high officer of the Varman administration who issued 100 commands. The *Arthaśāstra* though prescribes that appointment of officials and soldiers should be hereditary, it is difficult to find out how far this has been put into practice in the Mauryan period down to the pre-Gupta period. But in the Gupta period, the trend of hereditary appointments of ministers and officers was in existence. 21

Hence, this can be said that this trend penetrated into Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa as well.

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Another high official of the Varman polity mentioned in the Haršacarita of Bāṇabhaṭṭa was dūta or ambassador named Haṁsavega, who was sent to Harṣavardhan’s court by Bhāskaravarman seeking alliance with the former. As the office was obviously one of great trust and responsibility, it was definitely given to men of noble descent.

The four available epigraphic records do not mention the name of any province. Furthermore, for the loss of the last few plates of the Dubi grant, we do not have a clear idea of the plot of land donated. However, mention of the two terms bhūkti (province) and maṇḍala (subdivision) in the Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva and the wide-spread use of these two terms all over India lead us to believe that for administrative convenience the kingdom was divided into several bhūktis; bhūktis into maṇḍalas, maṇḍalas into several viṣayas. Chandrapuri is such a viṣaya as mentioned in the Nidhanpur grant; but here the name of the maṇḍala or the bhūkti to which Chandrapuri viṣaya belonged is not
mentioned. Village (grāma) was the lowest administrative unit. There were also the puras or nagaras (cities). Then both the Dubi and the Nidhanpur grants testify to the creation of two big agrahāras, i.e. tax-free lands granted to Brāhmaṇa donees. Obviously, persons having royal blood were made provincial governors and under each provincial governor, there was a set of officials to run the provincial administration. However, we do not know the name of designation of the provincial governor. The chief administrative officers of the viṣayas were viṣayapatis. There seems to be another class of officers, called nāyaka. Śrīksikunda was the nāyaka of Chandrapuri-viṣaya (line 133, Nidhanpur charter), who perhaps was a Police officer stationed at Chandrapuri. The Sukranitisāra, however, defines it as ‘lord of ten villages.”

22. Under the viṣatapati were the following officers: nyāyakaraṇīka (disputesettler), vyavahārī (controlling officer), kāyastha (Clerk) etc. B. N. Puri has rightly suggested that as the king’s sāsanas or

22. Barua, B.K. opcit., p.60
commands were, conveyed to the visayapatis as well, the link between the centre and the district seems to have been maintained.23

Local Administration:

It can be conjectured that Bhāskaravarman’s informing the leading men of the district (jyestḥabhadrān) in time of issuing the grant, implies the existence of a popular body. But it is impossible to say how it was constituted or what was its actual position in the administration. It appears that in addition to the capital-city Prāgjyotiṣapura, there were other towns as well, such as the capitals of the provinces, district head-quarters and the skandhāvara (meaning both camp of victory and capital city). No doubt, these were well-fortified, properly laid out and connected by roads and streets. Evidently, these towns were the hub of trading as well as literary and cultural activities, and as such, all types of people,—learned men, preceptors, poets, artisans, merchants, State-officials etc. lived in these towns, thus

23. TCHA, Vol. I, p.182
providing a cosmopolitan look to these towns. As the towns were basically administrative headquarters, these were directly run by the State and no such popular body existed as in the countryside.

Military Administration:

Except Kalyāṇavarman and Nārāyaṇavarman, all the Varman kings followed the policy of expansion. Even these two kings are said to have maintained the super power position of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa in this region. Obviously, the Varmans established a well organised military administration. Unlike the Gupta polity, there was no Mahasandhivigrahika (Minister of war and peace or the foreign minister) in the Varman polity. The Mahāsāndhivigrahika had several Sandhivigrahika under him, and along with them he decided mainly which of the kingdoms were to be annexed and which were to remain in the feudatory status. This minister worked in close cooperation with the military department. The absence of this

term in all the available inscriptions of ancient Assam recovered so far, prove that the Kāmarūpa kings themselves decided these matters. The Varman kings were themselves distinguished soldiers and usually marched with their army as the Commander-in-Chief. Under them were the different grades of officials and the feudatory chiefs, who presumably commanded their own detachments. References to naval engagement besides the common land fightings in the Dubi grant indicates that the army was consisted of elephants, horses, foot-soldiers and navy. Hiuen Tsang’s reference to wild elephants ravaging in herds indicates a good supply of elephants for war-purposes. By our general reasoning, it can be said that people belonging to different classes were recruited to the various branches and grades of the army. Though this is not specifically mentioned that foreigners were appointed in the military service, considering the tremendous might of the efficient Kāmarūpa army, it can be said that foreigners comming from the west

25. Si-Yu-Ki, NEVF., p.6
were appointed under various capacities. For this reason, the Kāmarūpa army was well-acquainted with the war-tactics as well as arms of contemporary other Indian kingdoms. The Apshad inscription refers to a naval engagement which took place between Susthitavarman and the Later Gupta king Mahāsenagupta on the bank of the Lauhitya. Likewise, the Nidhanpur grant refers to a possible naval engagement that took place between Supratisthita and Bhāskara and Śaśaṅka of Gauḍa.

Hiuen Tsang, too, testifies to the naval activities of contemporary Kāmarūpa. According to him, Bhāskaravarman had a flotilla of 30,000 ships. When he became alarmed at having enraged Harṣa by refusing to part with Hiuen Tsang, “embarking with the Master of the law they passed up the Ganges to gather in order to reach the place where Śilāditya-rāja (Harṣa) was residing.” After reaching Kic-shu-ho-ki-lo (Kājaṅgala, Rajmahal), he “first ordered some men to construct on the north bank of Ganges a pavilion of travel, and then on a certain day he passed
over the river and coming to the pavilion, there placed the Master of the Law, after which he with his ministers went to meet Śilāditya-rāja on the north bank of the river.”

On way to Prayāga to attend the assembly, Harṣavardhana convened to give away gifts, both Bhāskaravarman and Harṣavardhana together with their armies took the water-way along the Ganges. Lastly, on Hiuen Tsang’s return journey to China, Bhāskaravarman offered to help in this way, “If you select the southern sea route then I will send official attendants to accompany you.”

The durga or fort was regarded as an essential part of the military establishment in ancient India. Though the available sources do not speak anything about the fort or durga, this can be surmised that the Varmans provided much importance to the construction of forts. Kautilya classifies forts according to their location into four types, namely, parvata (hill-fort) audaka (water-fort), dhanvana

26. Liśc., p. 172
27. Ibid., p. 186
28. Ibid., p. 188
(desert fort) and vanadurga (forest fort); of these four, Kauṭilya, prefers the hill-forts for they are unassailable.\textsuperscript{29} The Kālikāpurāṇa mentions two more types namely, bhūmi (earth fort) and vrksa (tree fort). It further lays down that a fortified town must be triangular in shape or circular or square sized.\textsuperscript{30} It appears that except desert fort, the other forts were available in early Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa since for these, it was an ideal place. Regarding the bhūmi and vrksa forts, it can be said that the Varmans might have been the originators. We do not have any concrete data regarding this aspect.

Weapons of war:

Regarding weapons, the Dubi grant mentions thus:

They (Supratiṣṭhita and Bhāskara) rendered the army of the enemy terrified and weak immediately with the striking of the various types of weapons like arrows, saktis (javelins), wheels, prāsas and swords.

\textsuperscript{29} Shamasastry, \textit{Arthaśāstra}, (tr) Chap., III. pp. 54-55
\textsuperscript{30} Barua, B.K. \textit{opcit}, p.71
Land System:

Regarding the land system, the Varman kings, in fact, all the Kāmarūpa kings followed the general northern Indian tradition which claimed that all land belonged to the Crown. The king also declared that all woods, forests, ferries and mines, and all other natural properties belonged to the Crown. Though this declaration does not appear in both Dubi and Nidhanpur grants, this has been mentioned in other inscriptions of later dynasties. The kings, imitating the Gupta emperors and other rulers of that time, followed vigorously the practice of granting lands with various administrative and fiscal immunities. This aspect has already been discussed in detail in Chapter II Sec B (ii). Through this process, a powerful land-owning Brāhmaṇa class was formed. Gradually, during the later two dynasties, this practice got intensified with more and more fiscal rights being enjoyed by the class. In addition to them there was the secular land-owning class, which was comparatively small in size. This can also be surmised that
the Varman kings also granted lands to religious institutions like temples for their maintenance. Both the Dubi and the Nidhanpur grants and Hiuen Tsang’s account draw a rosy picture of the economic condition of the Kāmarūpa people. This leads us to believe that all the people, high or low and rich or poor, possessed property, the land being the most important one. Moreover, the practice of addressing the prominent citizens together with the Brāhmaṇas and other high officials at the time of issuing of charters points out that these people possessed lands. In the country-side, it can be said that the villagers, both individually and corporately possessed some kind of rights over the unclaimed lands within the boundaries of their village. This has been a general feature of the Indian land system before the coming of capitalism in the country under British rule. Regarding land tenure, we observe no specific feature. The common feature of ‘bhūmi-chidra’ (uncultivable land) ‘brāhmadeya-agrahāra’ (lands granted to the Brāhmaṇa donees) and lands granted to religious institutions denote
that on such lands no tax was levied. Whereas individual proprietors of land paid tax both in kind or cash. The right of occupation was hereditary as long as the occupant paid the taxes and other dues to the treasury (*koṣa*).

From the Dubi grant of Bhāskaravarman, which was a renewal of the land charter originally made by Bhūtivarmān, it may be discerned that under the Varmans, periodic inspections of grant and titles were undertaken and loss of charter was a matter of concern since it invalidates the freedom from taxation, unless, of course, a fresh charter was made renewing the privilege.

The above discussion is suffice to say that Prāgjayotiṣa-Kāmarūpa was a State having all the seven elements of State, viz., *Svāmī* (king), *amātya* (minister), *janapada* (territory), *danḍa* (military), *koṣa* (treasury), *mitra* (ally) and *durga* (fort), mentioned in ancient Hindu scriptures (the *Arthaśāstra*, the *Kāmandakīya Nītisāra*, the *Manusmṛti*, the *Śukranītisāra* and the *Mahābhārata* (Śānti-parva).