CHAPTER III

MYTHOLOGY IN COSMOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS

(1)

CANDRA

It is found that whatever be the cause of the birth of a god from a celestial body or a natural phenomenon, “in his final form the god is the outcome of an active human mind which might have received external impressions passively.” Thus we find, the early Bengal inscriptions render multifaceted attributions towards Candra, the celestial body, deified as the Moon-god. Though doubtlessly Candra has been referred to in different inscriptions by different names as a mythological figure, we have discussed here about Candra while dealing with mythology in cosmographic elements since Candra, as will be seen below, has exceedingly interesting cosmographic elements.

We mention here the different names of Candra and discuss below, chronologically, analysing his characteristics available in the inscriptions.

Śaśadhara, Śītāṁśu, Indu, Mṛgāṅka, Candra, Sudhānidhi, Śītakaraṇa, Himakara, Śītaraśmi, Śrīkaṇṭha-śiromaṇi, Parameśvara-vallabha, Sudhādīdhiti, Sudhāṁśu, Śaśi, Sukotivarṣi, Kṣīramahārṇava-tanaya, Tuhinakara, Tamivallabha, Devastamivallabha, Oṣadhinātha and Rajanijāni.

CANDRA AS A SYMBOL OF BEAUTY

In a number of inscriptions Candra is praised for its beautiful appearance which brings joy to the world and is mentioned with different appellations.

Śaśadhara

Verse 2 of the Khālimpur copper-plate inscription of regnal year 32 of Dharmapāla (c. 775-810 A. D.) cited above, compares Dayitaviṣṇu, the progenitor of the Pālas with the Moon (śaśadhara), the source of that lustre which brings joy to the universe (viśva māḥlādayantyaḥ).

2. See above, p.29.
Verse 5 of the above mentioned record refers to the Moon as Śitāṁsu.

Indu

The Moon is referred to as Indu in four inscriptions.

i) Verse 4 of the undated Ghoṣrāwā stone-inscription of Devapāla (c. 810-847 A. D.), cited above, describes that the meritorious distinguished twice-born (Indragupta mentioned in Verse 3) along with his wife Rajjekādevī shone like the Moon with its spotless digit (kalaya [s] malayā yathenduh).

ii) The undated Bodh-gaya pedestal inscription of the time of Gopāla III (c. 967-984 A.D.) describes that the mass of fame of Dharmabhūma who dedicated the image for the mitigation of the sufferings of the world is comparable to the autumnal Moon (śāradendu-kiranāvovala kirtipuṇijaḥ).

iii) Verse 4 of the Kṛṣṇa-dvārīka temple inscription of regnal year 15 of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A.D.), cited above, illustrates that the noble families of the great Brāhmaṇas are pure as the kunda flowers opened by the beauty of the Moon of the Autumn (nihāra-hāra-śaradinduvibuddha-kunda-sandoha-sundara).

iv) The face of Pārvatī is compared with the Moon (mukhamindu) in the undated Deopāra stone inscription of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A.D.), cited above. Verse 1 of the inscription describes the smiling face of Śambhu looking at the expression of the "Goddess in moonbeams, contracting like a bud in bashfulness."

In the vedic mythology, Soma, the sacrificial plant or juice, the food of the gods, is very often called as a 'drop' or Indu. The mythology of Soma being symbolical of the Moon-god is discussed below elaborately.

1. See above, p. 23.
3. See above, p. 12.
CANDRA AS A SYMBOL OF PURITY

We notice in some of the Bengal inscriptions that Candra is referred to not only as a symbol of beauty, but also as a symbol of purity and is mentioned by different names.

Mrğaṇka

Candra is referred to as Mrğaṇka in two inscriptions.

i) Verse 17 of the undated Nidhanpur copper-plate inscription of Bhaskararvarman, cited above, eulogises the king Mrğaṇka who just like the Moon had no blemish and was spotless. Here the name Mrğaṇka means both the king and the Moon.

ii) Verse 4 of the Naihati copper-plate inscription of Vallālasena, cited above, eulogises Sāmantasena, born in the family of the Moon, who himself was like the Moon beaming with glory and rejoicing the bed of water-lilies (kirtti-jyotsno jjvalasriḥ priya kumudavanolla- salilāmrğaṇkaḥ).

Śaraccandra

The spotless beauty of the Moon of Autumn mentioned in the early Bengal inscriptions is compared with the fame of the luminaries.

Verse 16 of the Bhagalpur copper-plate inscription of regnal year 17 of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A.D.), cited above, describes the fame of the Pāla monarch as white as the Moon of autumn (Śaraccandra).

1. See above, p. 45.
2. See above, p. 137.
Sudhanidhi

The Moon is referred to as sudhanidhi in two inscriptions.

i) Verse 8 of the Kṛṣṇa-dvārika temple inscription of Nayapāla (c.1037-1043 A. D.), cited above,\(^1\) states that the fame of the great Brāhmaṇa (mentioned as Śūdraka in the previous verse) spreads like the lustre of the Moon of Autumn (saratasudhanidhi sudhā).

ii) Verse 10 of the above mentioned inscription compares Śūdraka, well versed in sixty-four kalās, with the Moon full in sixteen digits (i.e. Full Moon), as both of them dispel the darkness of man-kind (yastāpāntakaraḥ sudhanidhirivapurṇaḥ kalāṇāṁ gaṇai). It may be mentioned here that Verse 5 of the Gayā Narasimha temple inscription of regnal year 15 of Nayapāla compares Viśvarūpa, son of Śūdraka, with the Moon and Viśvarūpa (Viṣṇu).

The epic mythology\(^2\) portrays the beneficial character of the Moon. The full Moon has sixteen phases. Only one remaining intact, the others increase or decrease. All parvan days are regarded as sacred and it is said that specially on new Moon and full Moon days one must be chaste. The Moon is brightest on the seventh day and almost consumed on the fourteenth. It seems that the Moon disappears partially, not to be lost totally but to re-appear with a new body, the soul remaining the same. “As a good god, the Moon is tamisrahan and tamoṣīghnanaḥ, destroying darkness”. The Rāmāyāna reveals that Candra Śaśāṅka destroys evil, rising like a hamsa in a silver cage.\(^3\) The Moon is lokakānta, i.e. beloved of the people. He fulfills all the wishes of his devotees, who give him offerings.\(^4\)

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1. See above, p. 12.
3. Ibid., p.92.
4. Ibid., p.92
CANDRA-RAŚMI AS A SYMBOL OF PURITY AND COOLNESS

In a number of early Bengal inscriptions, mentioned below, we find, Moon light is considered as a good omen.

i) Verse 5 of the undated Chittagong copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of Kāntideva (c. 800-825 A. D.) describes the fame of the king as pure as moon-light (jyotsnā-hāra-tuṣāra-kunda-dhavalam)

ii) In Verse 6 of the undated Rāmpāl copper-plate inscription\(^2\) of Śrīcāndra (c. 925-975 A. D.), the golden coloured Śrīkāṇcanā the queen of the king (Trailokyacandra) is compared with the light of the Moon (Jyotsneva Candrasya) along with Śaci, Gauri and Śrī.

iii) Verse 18 of the Manahali copper-plate inscription\(^3\) of Madanapāla (c. 1143-1161 A. D.) of regnal year 8 elucidates that the king filled the universe with his Moon-like-white (Candra-gaura) activities and protected the earth garlanded by seven seas.

Śitakirāna

iv) Verse 4 of the Kamauli copper-plate of Vāidyadeva, cited above,\(^4\) refers to Moon as the cool-rayed one (śitakirāna).

Himakara

v) Verse 32 of the same Kamauli plate refers to Moon as himakara.

Śitarasmi

vi) Verse 11 of the Idilpur copper-plate inscription of the 3rd regnal year of Sūryasena, cited above,\(^5\) refers to Candra as śitarasmi.

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4. See above, p. 16.
5. See above, p. 49.
CANDRA AS A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF ŚIVA

The epithets of Candra noticed to occur in the Bengal inscriptions, mentioned below, show his close association with Śiva.

Śrīkaṇṭha-śiromāṇi

i) Verse 13 of the Manahali inscription\(^1\) of regnal year 8 of Madanapāla (c. 1143-1161 A.D.) eulogises Mahīpāla as the crest-jewel of the foremost of the Brāhmaṇas resembling Śiva with the Moon as his diadem (śrīkaṇṭha-śiromāṇi).

ii) Verse 2 of the Naihāṭi copper-plate inscription of regnal year 11 of Vallālasena (c.1159-1179 A.D.), cited above,\(^2\) refers to Moon as śrīkaṇṭha-śiromāṇi.

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to Soma as the king of the Brāhmaṇas. The Harivaṃśa calls Soma as dvijeśvara.\(^3\)

Parameśvara-vallabha

In Verse 8 of the Bādāl inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla, cited above,\(^4\) Soma is described as the beloved of Śiva (śomeśvarah śrīmān parameśvara-vallabhaḥ). According to A. K. Maitreyā,\(^5\) the line means in one sense Someśvara is favourite of the king and in other sense Soma is favourite of Śiva. It is found in the inscriptions as well as in literature that Soma or Moon is closely associated with Śiva.

Verse 5 of the Bādāl inscription describes that the rays of the Moon (Indu-kirāṇa) adorning the fore-head of Maheśa enhances the whiteness of progenitor of Gaurī i.e. Mount Himālaya.

\(^{1}\) N. N. Basu in JI. As. Soc. Beng., Vol. LXIX, part I, pp. 66 ff,
\(^{2}\) See above, p. 137.
\(^{3}\) Hopkins, op. cit., p. 93.
\(^{4}\) See above, p. 7.
Sudhādīdhiti

In Verse 3 of the undated Deopāra inscription of Vijayasena, cited above,¹ prayer is invoked in favour of the nectar-rayed Moon (sudhādīdhitiḥ) to be triumphant whose throne is the golden locks of lord Śiva, to whom fly-whisk is swung by the spray-clusters of the waves of the Ganges, and whose umbrella is the serpent encircling Śiva’s head.

Literature corroborates the close association of Soma the Moon and Śiva, as points out² S. Bhattacharji.

1) According to the Rgveda the Mujavat hill is the abode of both. The epics also express the same view with slight variations in the later time. But the abode is hill essentially.

2) In the sacrificial ritual, both have the red-brown calf as oblation.

3) Śiva is connected with the north³ so is Soma⁴.

4) The Kauśīṭaki Upaniṣad⁵ invokes Soma as five-faced.

5) Intoxication is closely associated with Rudra-Śiva and Soma.

6) From the mythological aspect, Moon is associated with the next life and vegetation which coincides with that of Yama and Śiva.

7) Śiva with crescent-Moon on head is called as virajo-nirajo marah⁶ where nira-ja means Moon⁷.

¹. See above, p. 18.
³. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, IX, I, I, 10.
⁵. Ch. II, 6,3.
CANDRA AS THE KING

Sudhāṁśu

Candra is mentioned as the king in a Bengal inscription. Here he is called Sudhāṁśu. Verse 16 of the Deopārī plate of Vijayasena, cited above\(^1\), mentions the Moon as Sudhāṁśu who only could assume the title of 'king' (Sudhāṁśu kevalaiṁ rājaśabdah).

Verse 22 of this plate compares the boat of the king on the Ganges to shine like the crescent Moon on the water of the river on Śiva’s head (taririndukalā).

We find that the epithets of Candra, mentioned in the early Bengal epigraphs are also met with in Indian literature. The Rāmāyana describes Candra as a white goose in the blue lake of the sky. The Moon is adored with various epithets like udurāj, udupati, water–lord, night-wanderer, water-born, king of stars, lord of lotuses (kumudanātha), lord of plants etc. in the epic mythology. In the Harivamśa he is the ruler of the waters, so ocean swells with the rise of the Moon.\(^2\)

Śaśi

We find this name of the Moon in Verse 8 of the Bhuvanesvara inscription of Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, cited above.\(^3\)

CANDRA AS REFLECTED IN THE EPIGRAPHS OF CANDRA KINGS

Study of the inscriptions of the Candra rulers of east Bengal starting from Śricandra (c. 925-975 A. D.) to Govindacandra (c. 1020-1055 A. D.) reveals that the kings not only bear Candra in their names but also their successes are compared with the Moon. Here we would present some of those inscriptions.

1) Verse 2 of the undated Rāmpāl copper-plate of Śricandra (c. 925-975 A. D.) states that Purnacandra (c. 865-885 A. D.), the progenitor of the Candra dynasty who possessed enormous fortune, became illustrious in the world like the full Moon (pūrnacandraśadṛśaṁ).

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1. See above, p. 18.
2. Hopkins, op.cit., Ch. V., pp. 89 ff.
3. See above, p. 5.
Verse 3 of the record states “his son Suvarṇacandra, who was renowned in this world, became a follower of the Buddha, as if because he was born in the family of the Moon, the god, whose rays are the fountain-head of nectar and who devoutly bears in his lap the Buddha in his Hare-birth (śaśakajātaka).”\(^1\)

In the Buddhist mythology, Candimā is a name of Devaputta who dwells in a vimāna called Canda, the Moon, which he controls. The Moon can not move in the sky without the permission of Candimā. Hence he is regarded as the Moon-god. According to Šaša Jātaka the Bodhisvatta, in his birth as hare, proved his unwillingness to stop to give alms, and Sakka being pleased with him painted the figure of a hare on the moon, which sign would be seen throughout this kappa.\(^2\)

According to D. C. Sircar,\(^3\) Suvarṇacandra may have been the first Buddhist king of the family.

Verse 4 of the inscription under discussion states that Suvarṇacandra was so named by the people, because when he was in mother’s womb his mother satisfied her desire by seeing the rising Moon on a new Moon day and got a son comparable to the beauty of the new Moon.

N. G. Majumdar opines\(^4\) that still it is a common belief that if a pregnant woman looks at the New Moon, she gets a baby as beautiful as the Moon.

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The epic mythology illustrates various sides of the benevolent character of the new Moon. Offering of rice and honey to the rising full Moon in a dish of udumbara wood is also beneficial. He, who performs the *candravrata* on the night of the full Moon, becomes full-limbed as the Moon and also gets beauty, good fortune and luck of knowledge.

2) Verse 5 of the *Paścimbhāg* plate of regnal year 5 of Śrīcandra compares Trailokyacandra (c. 905-925 A. D.) with the Moon whose rise caused the oozing away of the moonstones which were the eyes of (the heroes) captured by him.

The epic mythology states that the Moon-stone *candrakānta* is made of moon-beams. In the bright half of the month of Pauṣa, when Rohiṇī is in conjunction, one should bathe and lie in the open and drink moon-beams. The *Rāmāyana* describes Rāma’s face as fair as candrakānta.

3) Verse 7 of the *Rāmpāl* plate, cited above, describes the birth of Śrīcandra resembling the Moon and having marks destined for kingship on account of *rājayoga*.

4) The two *Maināmati* plates of Ladahacandra describe Kalyāṇacandra as the cause of making the moon-like faces of the Gauḍa ladies devoid of sweet smile in the form of Moon rays and spreading spotless fame in eight directions which became resplendent like the rays of the Moon (Verse 8).
CANDRA CREATED FROM THE SUN

Sukotivarsī

The Moon is adored with the epithet Sukotivarsī as the scatterer of myriads of rays from the Sun in three inscriptions.

i) Verse 10 of the Bānagdh grant1 of regnal year 9 of Mahipāla I (c. 989-1037 A. D.) compares Vigrahamāla II with the myriad-rayed Moon taking shape from the Sun.

ii) Verse 10 of the Āmgāchi copper-plate inscription2 of regnal year 12 of Vigrahamāla III (c. 1043-1070 A. D.) repeats the expression of the above mentioned inscription.

iii) The same expression adoring the Moon (saviturvasukotivarsi kālena Candra) is again noticed to occur in Verse 9 of the Manahali copper-plate inscription3 of regnal year 8 of Madanapāla (c. 1143-1161 A. D.). In the above mentioned inscriptions the birth of Vigrahamāla II (c. 984-989 A. D.) from Gopāla II (c. 967-984 A. D.) is glorified by comparing the incident with the Moon taking birth from the Sun. Perhaps the composers of the charters had it in mind that although the Moon was a bestower of good wishes and joy to all its devotees, actually the Sun was the source of all his power, scientifically which is very much true.

The purāṇic mythology also knew the fact of getting all energy from the Sun by the Moon and some other planets. It is said in the Viṣṇu purāṇa that the “sovereign Sun is the cause of day and night, perpetually revolves, affording delight to the gods, to the mankind. Cherished by the Sushumna ray of the Sun, the Moon is fed to the full in the fortnight of its growth; and in the fortnight of its wane the ambrosia of its substance is perpetually drunk by the immortals, until the last two remaining digits are drunk by the progenitors; hence these two orders of beings are nourished by the Sun”.4

2. Ibid., Vol. XV, pp. 293 ff.
Some other purānas like the Vāyu Purāṇa, Linga Purāṇa and Matsya Purāṇa name some specific rays from the myriads of rays scattered from the Sun. Those seven principal rays are supposed to supply heat to the Moon, the stars and to Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

CANDRA, SON OF THE OCEAN OF MILK

Kṣīramahārṇavasya tanaya

We discuss now the inscriptions mentioning Candra as the son of the Ocean of Milk.

1) Verse 17 of the undated Nidhanpur copper-plate of Bhāskaravarman (c. 600-650 A.D.), cited above, mentions the Moon, as the son of the Milky Ocean.

2) Verse 2 of the Barrackpur plate of Vijayasena, cited above, depicts the Moon as the son of the Ocean of Milk (kṣīramahārṇavasya tanayaḥ).

This verse also praises the Moon with a number of epithets other than the above mentioned one as —

a) The friend of the mind-born (preyānmanojjanmanasaṃcāsuḥ),

b) The eye of the husband of Śrī and the crest-ornament of the husband of Mountain’s daughter (Śripaṇīturaḍṛtanayābhartuḥ śirobhāṣaṇam),

c) The point on the fore-head of the young lady (who is) the Eastern Quarter (prāgāśātarūṇī-lalāta-tilakam),

d) The crest-jewel of the eastern mountain, the deity of the temple in heaven and essence (i.e. the best) of the gods, the ice-rayed one (pūrbārdṛcudāmaṇīrdyosevālayadaivatam điviṣadāṁ sarastuṣāra-dyutiḥ).

1. Ibid., p. 342.
2. See above, p. 45.
3. See above, p. 71.
The early epic mythology\(^1\) recognises the fact. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* the story of Churning of Ocean of milk for *āmṛta* is well-known. In the *Mahābhārata*, the divine king of Tortoise upholds the mountain. Here the Moon rises first followed by Śri and Surā (*Vārūṇī*). The story is corroborated by the purāṇas. Here the cool-rayed Moon (*Śitāṁśu*) rises from the Ocean of milk after the apsarās and is seized by Mahādeva.

3) Verse 2 of the Mādhāinagar copper-plate inscription of Lakṣmaṇasena, cited above,\(^2\) mentions the Moon as born from the Ocean of Milk (*kṛṣirāmbhonidhījīvita*).

4) Verse 8 of the Bhuvaṇeśvara inscription, cited above,\(^3\) compares Atyāṅga (son of Rathāṅga) with the Moon, son of Ocean of Milk (*Śaśīva kṣīrodādavikala kalākalinilayaḥ*).

5) Verse 18 of the Kamauli copper-plate of Vaidyadeva, cited above,\(^4\) describes the ocean as the birth-place of the Moon (*Candrasyodbhavbhūrmahīḥrasa (śa)ranam*).

Verse 4 of this inscription compares the famous Rāmpāla as the cool-rayed Moon born from the Ocean like Pāla dynasty (*Pāla kulābdhi-śitakiraṇaḥ*).

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2. See above, p. 19.
3. See above, p. 5.
4. See above, p. 16.
VERSE 8 OF THE BADAL GURUD PILLAR INSCRIPTION, CITED ABOVE, refers to the Moon as Soma who sprang from Atri. (tasya śrīarkārādevyātreḥ soma iva dvijaḥ).

A brief discussion on the mysterious mythological transformation of Soma, the plant to Candra may be interesting here.

To trace the path of the phenomenon of Soma becoming Candra, we have to keep in mind that the process of evolution of the idea did not mature in just few days, but like each and every incident of Indian mythology, the merger of Soma and Candra was an affair of long intellectual thoughts linked with the needs and spiritual urges of the people.

Soma was essentially a drink, made out of a plant, after going through special process of preparation. But "its mysteriously exhilarating and invigorating action, surpassing that of ordinary food or drink and prompting to deeds beyond the natural powers, led to Soma being regarded as a divine drink which bestows immortal life."2

Thus we find a prayer is made in the Rgveda3 as: "Soma, bring me to the region where there is resplendence... make me immortal there". According to the vedic mythology4 Soma has medicinal power also and helps the blind to see and lame to walk. It stimulates the voice and is called 'lord of speech', vācaspati. In the Rgveda5 Soma is said as the lord of plants and earns the epithet vanaspati, lord of the woods. One Rgvedic passage6 describes the plant as maujavata which means grown on Mount Mūjavat and that is why is called giristha. It is also the abode of Rudra-Śiva. Thus vedic literature connect Soma with the lunar gods. In the vedic mythology Soma is attached to the Śiva-Yama complex. Soma's first home is in the sky and it is said that eagle fetched it from heaven.7 In the beginning, Soma

1. See above, p. 7.
3. IX, 78 and113.
5. IX, 114, 2.
6. X, 34, 1.
7. Rgveda, IX, 82, 3; IX, 48, 3; cited by S. Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 153.
was merely a plant. But gradually he is personified as a god. The \textit{Rgveda}\textsuperscript{1} states that Soma is green by day and shines clearly by night. With the help of Soma the forefathers knew where the Pañis had hidden the stolen cows.\textsuperscript{2} S. Bhattacharji suggests\textsuperscript{3} that Soma the plant has fibres, \textit{ahśu}, and the word also means ‘ray’, thus Soma itself becomes ambiguous.

Soma sacrifice is one of the main rituals of the \textit{Rgveda}. According to Macdonell\textsuperscript{4} considering the large number of hymns addressing Soma in the \textit{Rgveda}, the plant-god comes third, in order of importance of vedic gods. During the ritual, god Soma is invoked under the name of ‘Indu’ as well as Soma, to come to the sacrifice and accept the offerings on the strewn grass. ‘Indu’ as one of the names of the Moon, suggests the identification of Soma the plant with the Moon-god.

The \textit{Satapatha Brāhmaṇa}\textsuperscript{5} mentions that king Soma, the food of the gods, is the Moon. The \textit{Kauṭiṣṭaki Brāhmaṇa}\textsuperscript{6} echoes the concept, describing the plant as a symbol of the Moon-god. The cause of the phases of the Moon is explained in the mythology of the \textit{Brāhmaṇas}, as due to eating its substances of ambrosia by the gods and fathers. In the \textit{Atharvaveda}\textsuperscript{7} Soma often means the Moon. So, Soma the vedic god, is the personification of the intoxicating and medicinal beaverage and the idea of Soma’s transformation to Moon grew steadily in the later mythology. Soma is very often called a ‘drop’, \textit{indu}. Soma in the bowls is said in one passage to appear like the Moon in the waters. Though in the \textit{Rgveda} no distinct instance is identified, but in the later literature identification of Soma and the Moon is clear.\textsuperscript{8} Early Bengal inscriptions also echo the same. Besides the Bādāl inscription discussed above, the Moon-god has been described as born from the Atri’s eye in the following inscriptions —

1) Verse 1 of the two \textit{Maināmati} plates of regnal year 6 of Laḍahacandra, cited above, (\textit{jyotih eyutam-Ātri-netrāt}),

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1. IX, 97, 9. 
2. \textit{Rgveda}, IX, 97, 39. 
5. I, 6,4,5. 
7. VII, 81, 3, 4; cited by Macdonell, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 112. 

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2) Verse 2 of the Govindapur charter\(^1\) and
3) The Tarpanḍīghi charter\(^2\) of the 2nd regnal year of Lakṣmaṇasena and
4) The Ānulīa charter\(^3\) of the 3rd regnal year of Lakṣmaṇasena.

Verse 2 of the above mentioned charters of Lakṣmaṇasena describe that the nectar-bodied light (Moon) born of the continuous meditation of Atri, brings joy to the world and on the sea, creates feelings of absolute safety in cakora birds and absence of stupor in lilies and makes the god of love realise that he is non-pareil.

In the epic mythology\(^4\) we find that Soma is established as the Moon-god. But rather than implying divinity always, the Moon is mentioned by various names in the inscriptions as Candra, Candramā, Śaśi, Indu, Śaśadhara, Śaśāṅka etc. The legend of Soma as the son of Atri is found in the Harivamśa. A foetus was borne by the ten quarters. But they could not bear it and let it fall. Brahman rescued him in his chariot and moved around the earth twenty-seven times. During this time nectar-rays fell on the earth and herbs and creepers were born out of it. After practising penance, Brahman made him the king of the creepers. But the early epic gives a different story regarding Soma’s birth from Atri, the seer.\(^5\) “Here we learn, Atri is the hotṛ (priest) of Soma at the God’s Titha.” The Viṣṇu Purāṇa\(^6\) echoes almost the same expression with slight variation. Soma (the moon) was the son of Atri who was the son of Brahmā. Brahmā again installed Soma as the sovereign of plants, of Brāhmaṇa and of the stars. The Vāyu Purāṇa says that the essence of Soma (Somatva) was issued from the eyes of Atri and impregnated the ten quarters.\(^7\)

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CANDRA LINEAGE

Epigraphical evidences show that the Candra, Varman, Deva and Sena dynasties of Bengal claimed their descent from the Candra lineage as discussed below —

1) Verse 3 of the undated Maināmati copper-plate¹ of Govindacandra introduces the family (i.e. the Candra dynasty) as descended from the Moon-god.

2) Verse 3 and Verse 4 of the Barrackpur copper-plate of regnal years 62 (given by R. D. Banerji² as 32) of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A. D.) describe the Moon-god as the progenitor of the Sena dynasty.

3) The Belava copper-plate of regnal year 5 of Bhojavarman (c. 1137-1145 A. D.), cited above,³ describes the names of mythological ancestors of the Yadu family from which the Varmans traced their origin. Here in first 3 verses the Moon lineage is narrated in the following order: 1) Svaymbhū (Brahma) 2) Atri 3) Candramā 4) Budha 5) Purūravas 6) Āyu 7) Nahuṣa 8) Yayāti and 9) Yadu. Verse 4 of the record states that Hari was born in this family and Verse 5 declares that Varmans were relatives of Hari. Verse 6 of the same inscription mentions the Moon-god as Soma and as a friend of Vajravaran.

4) Verse 2 of the undated Pākāmodā copper-plate inscription⁴ of Daśarathadeva (c. 1255-1290 A. D.) describes that the lineage of the Deva kings belong to the Moon and the names of their ancestors (i.e. the kings of Moon lineage) are mentioned in the next verses.

5) In the undated Ādavāḍī inscription⁵ of Daśarathadeva the king is called as Somavānśapradipa.

³. See above, p. 32.
All the three copper-plate charters of Dāmodaradeva (c. 1230-1255 A.D) —
6) the Mehar plate of regnal year 41,
7) the Sobhārāmpur plate of regnal year 62 and
8) the Chittagong plate of regnal year 133, after praising the Moon in the usual way in Verse 2, acknowledge the descent of the Deva dynasty from the Moon-god.

The inscriptions of the kings of the Sena dynasty glorify their vamśa (i.e. the Moon lineage) in various ways.

9) Verse 3 of the Barrackpur plate of Vijayasena, cited above, states that the princes (rājaputras) of the Senas, born in the lineage of the Moon, (tadvamśe) resemble the characteristics of the Moon in all their virtues.

a) The rays of fame of the Senas are as white as the feathers of the swan and the Senas played over the kings, as the Moon plays over mountains (kśmādha ra meaning both king and mountain).

b) Both of them fix the boundaries of different quarters, — one by imposing taxes and the other by his rays (kara meaning both tax and rays).

c) The kings of the Sena dynasty were at peak of virtues where as Moon is the ultimate goal of the virtuous people as it is believed that virtuous people go to the Moon after death.

d) The Senas reached at the height of perfection in nectar like fine-arts as the Moon had a perfect circle of nectarine digits (Kala meaning fine-arts as well as the digits of the Moon).

4. ibid., p. 64, n. 7.
5. Ibid., p. 64, n. 10.
Tuhinakara

Candra is mentioned as tuhinakara in Verse 4 of the same inscription. Verse 4 introduces Sāmantasena as the head-ornament of the Sena dynasty who has a beautiful appearance as that of the digit of the ice-rayed one i.e. the Moon (tuhinakara kalā-mūtti [ṛṭi].)

10) In Verse 3 of the undated Deopāra copper-plate inscription\(^1\) of Vijayasena, prayer is invoked in favour of the king Moon (rājā sudhāṣḍhitih) to be triumphant whose throne is the golden locks of Lord Śiva, to whom fly-whisk is swung by the spray-clusters of the waves of the Gaṅgā and whose umbrella is the hood of the serpent encircling Śiva’s head.

Verse 4 of the Deopāra record declares that in this family (vāṁśe) that witness the continuous amorous wiles of the wives of the gods (Hara and Hari described in Verse 1 and Verse 2), were born Virasena and others, the famous kings of the Deccan.

Verse 16 of the above inscription declares that the Moon is the first member of the Sena lineage (varṣasya purvaḥ puruṣa) and Vijayasena tolerated only the Moon to assume the title of ‘king’.

Tamivallabha

11) In the Naihāṭi copper-plate of regnal year 11 of Vallālasena (c. 1159-1179 A.D.), cited above,\(^2\) the Senas trace back their origin to the Moon lineage. Verse 2 prays for the beloved of Night i.e. the Moon (tamivallabha) to be victorious. The Moon is adored here with many other attributes.

i) On his rise the Ocean exults in abundance of joy and the god of love (Smara) appears to be the hero of the three worlds.

ii) The sleepiness of the kumuda flowers (nistandrāḥ kumudākara) is plundered.

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2. See above, p. 137.
iii) The wounded sense of wrath in the deer-eyed ones (i.e. ladies) is cured.

iv) The city of cakras rejoice on account of plenty of food.

The Moon is mentioned in the inscription referred to above, as god (devastamivaallabha). All the above mentioned characteristics of the Moon are corroborated in the epic mythology.¹

Verse 3 of this record describes that the princes born in the prosperous family of the Moon, adorned Rādhā with their righteous acts and unprecedented dignities.

Verse 4 of the Naihāṭi plate eulogises Sāmantasena as a mighty king born in that family (tesāmvainše mahaujāḥ) whose glorious acts were like the rays of the Moon (Kirtti-jyotsnojvalasiṅ).²

In the later epic mythology² Soma is described as the son of the powerful seer Atri. Hopkins suggests that this was done by later genealogists to establish the Moon-race with same dignity as claimed by the Solar dynasty for long.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa³ gives an account of the glorious Moon-dynasty which produced many celebrated rulers of the earth who were famous for their valour, magnificence, power and great activities.

The genealogy⁴ of the Moon-race would be more clear if it is shown in a tabular form in the following way which shows upto Kṛṣṇa in the Yadu lineage and on the other hand Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas in the line of Puru.

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¹ Hopkins, op. cit., pp. 89 ff.
² ibid., Ch. V., p. 90.
³ Wilson, op. cit., Ch. VI., pp. 556 ff.
⁴ J. Garrett, p. 338.
Atri, the muni.

Soma (or Candra) the Moon.

Budha (or Mercury)

Pururavas

Āyus

Nahuṣa

Yayāti

Line of Puru

Puru

Duṣyanta

Bharata

Hastin

Kuru

Śāntanu

Line of Yadu

Yadu

Vṛṣṇi

Audhaka

Śūra

Vasudeva, brother of Kunti

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma

contemporary with sons of Pāṇḍu and Dhrḍarāṣṭra

Citrāṅgada Vicitravīrya Vyāsa Bhīṣma

both died childless

Dhrḍarāṣṭra

Pāṇḍu

Vidura

Duryodhana Yudhiṣṭhira Bhīma Arjuna Nakul Sahadeva

and 99 brothers
CANDRA, THE HEALER

Oṣadhinātha

It is evident from some of the passages of the Rgveda\(^1\) that Soma is a plant which grows by the banks of the rivers. It is also said that Soma’s birth place is the hilly area. Gradually Soma becomes the king of plants and like Rudra’s and Varuṇa’s power of healing, in the later literature, he becomes both the Moon and the plant and is associated with ailments and drugs. This characteristic is also reflected in some inscriptions.

In Verse 3 of the Govindapur, Tarpaṇḍighi and Ānuliā copper-plate inscriptions of Lakṣmaṇasena (c.1179-1206 A. D.), cited above, the Sena dynasty while claiming descent from the Moon race uses the expression oṣadhinātha varṇe i.e. the line of the lord of plants. The epic mythology\(^2\) states that as lord of plants, the Moon restores the moisture taken from the earth by the Sun and so cakoras rejoice having plenty of foods. In Verse 2 of the inscriptions\(^3\), referred to above, invocation is made to the son of Atri (i.e. the Moon) with almost similar expressions as in those of Vallālasena. Verse 2 states that the mystic light of the nectar-bodied one (amṛtātmah) brings joy for the sea, awakes safety feelings in cakora birds, removes the slumber in lilies and awakes the feeling of non-pareil in god of love.

Verse 2 of the Mādhāinagar charter\(^4\) of the 27th regnal year of Lakṣmaṇasena, consists of all the characteristics of the Moon-god, already discussed above.

Here the Moon-god is adored\(^5\) as

1) the god who is the lotus in the waters of the heavenly river (svargaṅgājalapūṇḍarikamāṃstva prādāradhārāgṛham).

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1. IX, 65, 22.
4. Ibid., pp. 106 ff.
5. Ibid., pp. 109 ff.
2) He is the shower bath of ambrosia, the flower of the tree of love, the precious pearl decorating Śiva’s head (śrīgaradrumpamīśvarasikhālaṅkāramukta maṇīḥ).

3) He is born of the ocean of milk and is the unique being who can make the lotuses smile (ksīrāmbhonidhiśivita kuṇudiniḥrṇdai kavaiḥāsako).

4) The Moon is the priest of the king Cupid in the ceremony intended to bring in his prosperity (jiyanmanmatharājapauṣṭikamahāsāntidvija ścandrāmāḥ). According to H. N. Randle,¹ The Bhāwāl copper-plate inscription of Lākṣmaṇaśena closely resembles the Mādhāṅnagar inscription.

Janmāntaraṅcadramā

The Idilpāḍā copper-plate charter issued in the 3rd regnal year of Śuśrasena (c. 1210-1215 A.D.), the Madanapāḍā copper-plate charter issued in the 2nd regnal year of Śuśrasena and re-issued in the 14th regnal year of Viśvarūpasena (c. 1206-1225 A. D.) making some corrections, cited above, eulogise the Moon as janmāntaraṅcandramā in Verse 2 and in Verse 3 and describe the descent of the great Sena kings from the Moon.

In a hymn of the Rgveda, Book IX, we find a prayer is addressed to Soma for bliss in the next world. In all mythology Moon is associated with death. In the epic mythology a verse describes Soma as belonging to the Pitrmat god². Soma Pitrmat is the special god of the fathers. Moon-god has special influence on fathers. Candramā is the lord of Nakṣatras, and Nakṣatramārga is Surāvīthi, the path by which the deads go. Again it is said, that the Moon does not disappear but re-appears as the same soul with a new body.³ Soma is said as the king of the priests who delights the fathers with ambrosia in the dark half and the gods in the bright half of the month. He is grahaṅgaṇeśvara and without him nothing is produced.⁴

². Cf. Hopkins, op. cit., Ch.II., p. 32.
³. Ibid., Ch.V, p. 91.
⁴. Ibid., pp. 89 ff.
The waxing and waning of the Moon is beautifully described in the purāṇic mythology.¹ The chariot of the Moon is drawn by ten horses, white as Jasmine. Thirty-six thousand three hundred and thirty three divinities drink the lunar ambrosia. When he is reduced to two digits, enters the orbit of the Sun to abide by the ray called Amā, creating amāvasyā. Then it is said that for the whole day and night Moon is immersed in the water and enters the branches and shoots of the trees and from there to the Sun. At this period cutting off a branch or tearing a leaf is equal to the guilt of killing a Brāhmaṇa. When the remaining portion of the Moon consists of but a fifteenth part, the progenitors drink the portion of ambrosia in the afternoon. The satisfied pitṛs remain calm afterwards. In this way, the cool ray Moon nourishes the gods in the bright fortnight and pitṛs in the dark one. At the same time by shedding cool nectary radiance on men, animals, insects and plants, nourishes them also.

¹ Cf. Wilson, op. cit., Ch. XII, pp. 342 ff.
CONSORTS OF CANDRA

Rohini

i) In Verse 5 of the khālimpur record, Rohini is mentioned as the beloved of the Moon (Śīlāṁśo riva Rohini). Here the Moon is presented in anthropomorphised form. In the mythology, constantly new ideas invoked new personifications. It is true for the Moon-god also. S. Bhattacharji opines that the vedic god Soma becomes the Moon-god in the Rāmaṇyāṣa, who has a wife. Probably in the epic mythology the Moon god possesses lower stratum than the Sun-god. Here we come to know that Dakṣa gave twenty-seven stars (considered as his daughters) to Soma. But Soma had a special weakness for Rohini and he was cursed by Dakṣa to have yaksman, consumption, which still continues. But Moon recovered by bathing in the Sarasvati and by worshipping Devesa. He has to keep up the remedy to ensure health. This curse is alluded to in Manu as in the epics.

Kānti

ii) In Verse 3 of the Bādāl Garuḍa pillar inscription of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A. D.), cited above, the queen Icchādevī is compared with the pure and soft beauty of Candra (nirmala-snigdhā kānti scandra-maso yathā). According to A. K. Maitreya, this verse mentions the beauty of Kāntidevi, the spouse of Candra, whose image is still situated in the temple of Lokanātha in Puri, by the right side of the image of Candra.

2. Hopkins, op.cit., Ch V, p. 89.
3. Ibid., p. 90.
Verse 8 of the Barrackpur copper-plate inscription, cited above,\(^1\) shows a peculiar change of mood regarding the name of the Moon. Here the Moon is presented as the bride of the night (rajanljāni).

At the end of the Moon episode we would like to draw attention to an epigraph where even Moon has been said to be defeated in loveliness by a majestic person.

It is Verse 5 of the Rāmganj copper-plate\(^2\) of regnal year 35 of Īśvaraghoṣa (c. 1040-1080 A. D.) which describes the victorious Īśvaraghoṣa to defeat even the Moon-light in loveliness (kāntyā jītendudyutiḥ).

Our study of the different names and aspects of Candra as depicted in the early Bengal epigraphs and their literary corroborations, unfolds the mystery behind the rhyming of earthly Soma plant with cosmic Moon, later deified as the Moon-god, progenitor of different dynasties of Bengal.

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DIGGAJAS

The divine elephants are mentioned in two inscriptions of Śrīcandra. We find the reference of diggajas in Verse 15 of the Paścimbhāg copper-plate of Śrīcandra (c.925-975 A.D.), cited above. It narrates\(^1\) that the multitude of dust arising out of the battles of the Candra king reached the heaven and was received by the elephants of the quarters (diggajai) with much delight as they had longing for mundane dust. But the gods avoided it and remained at a distance as they were unable to shut their eyes.

Verse 7 of the undated Kedārpur copper-plate inscription\(^2\) of Śrīcandra repeats the same expression.

In the epic mythology,\(^3\) the divine elephants (diggajas) are described as the guardians of the quarters. Their numbers increased as the numbers of the dikpālas began to increase. They are called as diggajas (as mentioned in the epigraphs), disāgajas and digvaranas. The chief of them is Airāvata, belonging to Indra. The divine elephants carry the lokapālas and are always considered as beneficial. They blow the winds out of their trunks and morally, the protective elephants like to fight against evil demons.

D.C. Sircar points out that\(^4\) the eight cardinal points with which dikpālas and diggajas are associated are pūrva (east), āgniya (south-east), daśāsītha (south), nairṛta (south-west), paścima (west), vāyava (north-west), uttara (north) and aiśāna (north-east). According to the Amarakośa\(^5\) the dikpālas of these eight quarters are Indra, Agni, Yama, Nairṛta, Varuṇa, Marut, Kuvera and Īśāna. The list of eight diggajas\(^6\) runs as follows- Airāvata, Puṇḍarika, Vāmana, Kumuda, Aṇjana, Puṣpadanta, Sārvabhauma and Supratīka. The order of the diggajas varies in different lists.

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\(^{4}\) *The Bhakti cult and Ancient Indian Geography*, p. 160.
\(^{5}\) I, ii, 6, as cited by *ibid.*, p. 160.
\(^{6}\) Amarakośa, I, ii, 8; cited by *ibid.*, p. 160.
DIKPĀLAS

Our study reveals that the quarters or the dikpālas are mentioned in eight early inscriptions of Bengal where the virtues of the earthly kings are compared with those of dikpālas. The earliest one of the inscriptions mentioning dikpālas refers to Indra as one of the lord of the quarters.

i) Indra is described as the lord of the east (purodisi-pati) in Verse 2 of the Bāḍāl Garuḍa pillar inscription of the time of Nārāyanapāla (c. 876-930 A. D.), cited above.1 There are five groups of epic lokapālas, comprising of Agni, Yama, Varuṇa, Indra, Kuvera, Soma. The representatives of south and west are regarded as constant as Yama and Varuṇa2. The number of the dikpālas identified with lokapālas was later raised to eight.3 Thus the Manusmṛti tells that the king embodies in his self all the eight lokapālas, who are “Indra, Anila (Vāyu), Yama, Arka (Sūrya), Agni, Varuṇa, Candra (Soma) and Vittesa (Kuvera) while the Anurakṣaṇa (about the sixth century A. D.) recognises Indra, Vahṇi (Agni), Pitṛpati (Yama), Nairṛta, Varuṇa, Marut (Vāyu), Kuvera and Īśāna as the lords of the quarters”.4

ii) Verse 8 of the undated Rāmpāl copper-plate inscription5 of Śricandra eulogises him as one, who made the earth decorated by bringing it under his umbrella and made the faces of the quarters (disāṁ mukhāni) fragrant (sugandhi).

From the time of the Brāhmaṇas onwards certain gods are spoken of as guardians of certain quarters.6 Though the concept is old, yet the names of eight gods as the

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1. See above, p. 7.
4. Ibid., p. 77.
guardians of four major and four subsidiary quarters are finalised in the well-developed purānic mythology only. The gods who take care of the four major directions east, west, north and south are Indra, Varuṇa, Kuvera and Yama respectively. The guardians of south-east is Agni that of south-west is Niṛṛti, north-west belongs to Vāyu and north-east to Īśana.¹ The world protectors (lokapālas) are assigned only for the four cardinal points.² Vālmiki recognises four lokapālas Indra, Yama, Varuṇa and Kuvera for east, south, west and north quarters.³ The Harivamśa describes how the creator first distributed power among the gods of whom Indra was made first as the king of the three worlds.⁴

In the early Bengal epigraphs some of the earthly kings are considered as blessed with the virtues of the eight dikpālas.

iii) Verse 6 of the Bāngāḍh copper-plate inscription⁵ of regnal year 9 of Mahipāla I (c. 989-1037 A. D.) and

(iv) Manahali copper-plate inscription⁶ of regnal year 8 of Madanapāla (c. 1143-1161 A. D.) describe the prosperous king Nārāyaṇapāla as embodied with the merits of the Dikpālas (dikpāloḥ kṣitipālanāya.)

(v) In Verse 7 of the Naihati copper-plate inscription⁷ of regnal year 11 of Vallālasena, Vijayasena has been glorified with the epithet prithvipati, whose “deeds were sung (in ballads) in the cities of the lords of the quarters”⁸ (dikpālacakra-putabhedana gītakīrtitiḥ).

¹. J. N. Banerjea, op. cit., pp. 519-520.
². Hopkins, op.cit., Ch. V, p. 149.
³. Ibid., p. 150.
⁴. Ibid., p. 151.
D.C. Sircar points out that medieval purānic conception regards the number of dikpālas as ten, with Brahman in the zenith and Ananta in the nadir. S. Bhattacharji remarks that after analysing the characters of the lords of the quarters, it is found that Indra and the Ādityas command only one quarter, the east and the rest are governed by the gods associated with death and destruction.

(vi) Verse 7 of the Govindapur charter of regnal year 2,
(vii) the Tarpaṇḍighī charter of regnal year 2 and
(viii) the Ānuliā plate of regnal year 3 of Lakṣmaṇasena (c. 1179-1206 A. D.), cited above, describe that the lords of the quarters (dīgaṅgana) manifesting their distinctive powers, contributed part of their own in making up of the king Lakṣmaṇasena so that they would be able to enjoy the charms of the nymphs through the king Lakṣmaṇasena. According to N. G. Majumdar, the passage reminds us the eight dikpālas mentioned by Manu.
**KALPAVRKṢA**

Kalpaḥrw̃kasas, the trees that grant wishes are explained in the mythology\(^1\) as either magical or heavenly, but on occasions may be found in earth. We find mention of kalpavṛkṣas with the names of Kalpataru, Kalpadruma, Kalpaśākhī in early Bengal inscriptions also.

1) Verse 10 of the Kṛṣṇa-dvārikā temple inscription of the time of Nayapāla, cited above, eulogises the virtuous person (Viśvāditya, mentioned in Verse 9 of this record) as a movable kalpavṛkṣa (*jaṅgama-kalpavṛkṣa*) to others.

2) Verse 11 of the Mūrttiśiva’s Bāṅgadāḥ *prāṣasti*, cited above, describes about the sixteen great gifts (*ṣoḍaśa-mahādāna*) ceremony performed by Indraśiva. Here the fifth item is mentioned as kalpadruma.

3) Verse 1 of the undated Silimpur stone slab inscription\(^2\) of the time of Jayapāla (11th century A. D.), a Pāla ruler of Kāmarūpa, praises the god *Catur-bhuja* (i.e. Viṣṇu) as the *kalpadruma* to all the human beings.

4) Verse 8 of the Idilpur copper-plate inscription of regnal year 3 of Sūryasena (c. 1210-1215 A. D.), cited above, refers to Lākṣmaṇasena as *kalpadruma*.

Verse 2 of the same inscription praises Lākṣmaṇasena stating that the “moon did not rest in the firmament alone and the wishing tree on the golden Mountain”\(^3\) (*kaṇakabhuḍhara eva kalpaśākhī*) as the king descended on the earth.

Again the forests of kalpatrees (*kaḷpakṣmārūḥakānanāṇī*) in the region of the golden Mountains are mentioned in Verse 20 of the above mentioned record.

It may be mentioned here that in Verse 27 of the Bhuvaneśvara inscription of Bhavadeva, cited above,\(^4\) Viṣṇu is described as the terrestrial Pāriyāta tree which fulfills all human desire (*Pāriyātavitapti saṃkalpasiddhipraḍāḥ*). Here Pāriyāta tree is depicted as the kalpavṛkṣa.

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4. See above, p. 5.
We have already discussed about the inscriptions referring to the Ocean of Milk as the birth-place of Lakṣmi in Chapter I (Section I-B on Lakṣmi) and as birth place of Candra in Chapter III. The story of the churning of the Ocean of Milk is described in the epics and in various purāṇas with slight variations, the main theme being the same. The epic mythology describes that in order to get the beverage of immortality, the divinities and the demons jointly began to churn the Ocean of Milk, with Mountain Mandāra as the staff and Vāsukī as the cord. The Rāmāyaṇa tells the rise of Dhanvantari, sixty crores of Apsaras, Surā, Uccaiḥśravas, the jewel Kaustubha and last of all ambrosia, a decoction of herbs collected by Jāmbabhat from the water. In the Mahābhārata the Moon rises first followed by Śrī and Surā (Vāruṇi) and the divine physician bearing ambrosia. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa tells us about the rising of Surabhī, Vāruṇi, Pārijātā tree, the nymphs, the cool-rayed Moon, poison, Dhanvantari with the cup of amṛta and lastly the goddess Śrī, radiant with beauty. Here we would cite the inscriptions highlighting some other aspects of the Ocean.

1) Verse 2 of the Bhāgalpur copper-plate of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A.D.) of regnal year 17 and Bāngaḍh copper-plate of Mahipāla I (c. 989-1037 A.D.) of regnal year 9, praise Dharmapāla as a king whose grandeur mocked the charm of the Ocean of Milk. The point of comparisons are as follows:

a) Ocean is the birth-place of Lakṣmi, whereas Dharmapāla is the descendant of the ocean like Pāla dynasty;

b) The Ocean is full of makaras, on the other hand Dharmapāla levied taxes (kara) evenly;

c) Ocean of Milk is able to bear Viṣṇu and the king is competent enough to bear the burden of the world;

d) The Ocean was the only refuge to the Mountains flocking through fear of cleavage of their wings, the king was also the shelter of the kings who were afraid of annihilation;

e) The Ocean maintained the boundaries and Dharmapāla the dignity of social order and

f) The Ocean was the abode of Sun-rays where as Dharmapāla was the receptacle of valour.

It may be mentioned here that the Rāmacarita of Sandhyakara Nandi presents the Pālas as descended from the ‘Samudra-kula’, whatever that may mean.¹

2) In Verse 14 of the undated Bāngadā inscription of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A. D.) cited above,² the great scholar Sarvaśīva is compared with Śiva in connection with the legend of churning of Ocean. Here it is said that Sarvaśīva gave the status of the king of Gauḍa’s preceptor to his younger brother and disciple Mūrttiśīva and himself greeted the life of renouncement (Vānaprastha), just like Śiva gifted Lakṣmī to his disciple Hari and accepted the deadly poison issued from the water for himself.

3) We find, a detailed account of the Ocean, in Verse 18 of the Kamauli copper-plate³ of regnal year 4 of Vaidyadeva (c. 1128-1136 A. D). Here the poet says that Vaidyadeva resembles the Ocean in every aspect, except two. He was not a protector

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¹ N. G. Majumdar, ibid., Vol. XXII, p. 152.
² See above, p. 12.

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of the fools \(jala=jada\) as the Ocean was a \(Jalādhāra\) and he could not be conquered \(laṅghita\), as the Ocean was crossed by Rāma. Otherwise both of them possess identical qualities, such as:

a) The Ocean is the birth-place of the Moon \((\text{Candrasyo dḥababhuḥ})\) and he is the source of delight;

b) The Ocean is the refuge of mountain (e.g. \(\text{Maināka}\)) and he is the refuge of the kings \(mahīhra\text{ aranāṁ}\);

c) The Ocean is the home of living beings, and he is the home of a disposition in which the \(sāttva\) element of goodness predominates;

d) The bottom of the Ocean is adorned by precious stones \((\text{ratnānāṁ nilayah})\) and he is enriched with deep knowledge;

e) The Ocean is full of sparkling water \((\text{sphurat-ramayaṁ})\) and he is filled with \(rasa\);

f) Both are abode of Lakṣmī and prosperity \((\text{Śriyāḥ kulagrham})\) and

g) Viśṇu is the wealth of both of their hearts \((\text{svāntasthiṭa-Śripatiḥ})\).
MANASA SAROVARA

We find mention of the Mānasa Sarovara in the Maināmatī copper-plate inscription¹ of the 17th regnal year of Harikāladeva Raṇavaṇkamalla. Verse 1 of the inscription refers to the renowned learned person Hedi-eba. It is said in this verse that he was so virtuous that Dharma in his pious mind played like a hamsa in the clear Mānasa Lake.

In the Indian mythology² Mānasa lake is considered as a celebrated sacred lake situated in the centre of the Himalaya mountain. According to the epic mythology³ hamsa, an emblem of the pure soul and god, lives at lake Mānasa. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa⁴ mentions Mānasa as one of the four great lakes Aruṇoda, Mahābhadra, Śitoda and Mānasa.

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PARVATA

Study of early Bengal epigraphs reveals several names of Mountains which were considered important in the history of religion. Sometimes their examples are drawn as a symbol of height and grandeur and sometimes divinity is imposed on them in accordance with mythology. The names of the parvatas discussed below are – Mandara, Kailāsa, Malaya, Kula-parvatas, Rohaṇa, Himāvat, Krauṇca, Maināka, Vindhyā and Meru.

MANDARA

i) Verse 13 of the undated Ghoṣrāwā stone slab inscription\(^1\) of the time of Devapāla (c. 810-847 A. D.) states that Viradeva erected such a huge temple for the diamond throne, that those travelling in celestial cars would mistake it to be a peak of the mountain Kailāsa or of Mandara (vimānagānāṁ kailāsamandara -mahidharasṛṅga-śaṅkā).

ii) We find mention of the huge mountain Mandara in Verse 16 of the Irdā copper-plate inscription\(^2\) of regnal year 13 of the Kāmboja king Nayapāla (c.1030-1055 A. D.). The power of the mighty king Nayapāla is compared with Mountain Mandara. It is said that he did not care about the powerful forces of his enemies, nor did he depend upon his own friends, but he himself alone won the battles hundred times, by the power of his arms resembling Mountain Mandara.

iii) Verse 8 of the Bāngaḍh inscription of Nayapāla\(^3\) states that the constant stay of Śiva in the temple made by Dharmaśiva, reminded people of the attempt of the Mountain Mandara to outshine the Mountain Kailāsa as Śiva’s abode.

In the Indian mythology\(^4\) Mandara is mentioned as the great Mountain which

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was used as the staff during the churning of the ocean. The epic mythology\textsuperscript{1} says that Indra and Maruts stay here. This is the Mountain where Viṣṇu slew Naraka for Indra. This is the place where gandharvas sing and play lute, nymphs dance and eighty-eight thousand gandharvas serve Kuvera.

**MALAYA**

i) We find mention of Malaya Mountain of the far south in Verse 23 of the Mirjāpur copper plate inscription\textsuperscript{2} of Śūrapāla I (c. 862–875 A. D.). Verse 22 and 23 of the record tell about the king’s victory in the battles and his enemies fly to the valley of the Mountain Malaya in the far south and to the Prāleya-śaila (Himālayas) in the north.

ii) Reference of Mountain Malaya is noticed again in Verse 8 of the Paścimbhāg plate of Śricandra.

The name of the Malaya hill is noticed to occur in the epic\textsuperscript{3} and purānic\textsuperscript{4} mythologies. H. C. Raychaudhuri remarks\textsuperscript{5} that Malaya is next to Himavat and perhaps the most famous mountain in Sanskrit literature. The name Malaya is associated with the Dravidian word ‘Mala’ or ‘Malei’ meaning hill\textsuperscript{6}.

**KAILĀSA**

Mention of the great Mountain Kailāsa is noticed to occur in three early Bengal inscriptions.

i) Verse 22 and 23 of the Mirjāpur copper-plate inscription\textsuperscript{7} of regnal year 3 of Śūrapāla I (c. 862-875 A. D.) mentions the area bounded by the Vindhya in

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid., pp. 151-160.
\textsuperscript{3} *Mbh.*, III, 281, 44 ff;
the south and the Kailāsa mountain in the north (which received a shake from the hands of Daśāśya i.e. Rāvaṇa). The two mountains are characterised by sun-rise and sun-set in the east and west respectively.

ii) Mountain Kailāsa had a special importance among the Śaivas. Verse 6 of the undated Bāngaḍh stone inscription of the time of Nayapāla (c. 1037-1043 A. D.), cited above, compares the great *matha* of Golagi, with Kailāsa, the ornament of the earth. Verse 8 of the record describes the great temple built in honour of Trilocana-guru by his disciple Dharmaśiva, like an ornament of Vārāṇasī, resembling the Mountain Kailāsa.

Verse 9 of the same inscription refers to a beautifully built *prāśāda-meru* spending a large amount of gold. In Varāhamihira’s *Brhatasamhitā* the temple, biggest in size is compared with Mountain Kailāsa.

Śiva-bhūdhara

Kailāsa is referred to as Śiva-bhūdhara in one inscription.

iii) In Verse 7 of the Kamauli copper-plate inscription of regnal year 4 of Vaidyadeva (c.1128-1136 A. D.), cited above, the Kailāsa mountain is expressed as Śiva-bhūdhara i.e the mountain of Śiva. The verse says that Vaidyadeva was endowed with highest happiness and his lake of leaping glory was of such a huge extent, that even the great Kailāsa mountain appeared as small as a lotus-sprout in comparison of its vastness.

In Indian tradition and myth, Kailāsa is the most famous mountain which is believed to be the abode of Śiva and Pārvatī. The deep respect for the sacred mountains, Meru and Kailāsa is perhaps “because the Sanskrit-speaking Indians remembered the ancient home, where they dwelt with the other primitive peoples of their family before they descended to occupy the vast plains which extend between the Indus and the Ganges.”

1. See above, p. 12.
3. See above, p. 16.
Mountain Kailāsa is often mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa. Once the Puṣpaka chariot of Rāvana was stuck to it and he could not move it with all his strength. Nandin, the white favourite bull of Śiva, reminded Rāvana that it happened because he disturbed Śiva when he was with Pārvatī. Rāvana became furious and angrily lifted Mountain Kailāsa to give it a good shake. But Śiva resisted his move with his toe only. This act got Rāvana injured and he had to yell for a thousand years to please Śiva and finally was successful to get a boon from Śiva. Thus he got the name Rāvana, the yeller and became invulnerable to all but men.1

In the purāṇas, Kailāsa is described as a fabulous mountain of pure silver and as brilliantly white, situated to the west of Meru.2 Near the northern heights of the Himālayas, Kailāsa is said to extend east and west eighty Yojanas in breadth from sea to sea.3

**KULAPARVATAS**

Mention of kulaparvatas is noticed to occur in two early Bengal inscriptions.

i) Verse 7 of the Bāṅgaḍh copper-plate inscription4 of regnal year 9 of Mahipāla I (c.989-1037 A. D.) narrates that Rājyapāla, the lord of the earthly region, earned high reputation by excavating ocean-deep lakes and building a temple, comprising of large compartments like the kulaparvatas (kulabhūdharatulya-kakṣaiḥ). Verse 20 of the same inscription eulogises Mūrttiśiva as the creator of another earth consisting of kulaparvatas and seven seas.

ii) Verse 10 of the Bāṅgaḍh inscription of Nayapāla, cited above,5 states that the large maṭha was adorned with a number of temples and tanks. The whole complex is described by the composer of the record as the creation of the earth consisting of seven seas and eight kula mountains.

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5. See above, p. 12.
D. C. Sircar points out\textsuperscript{1} that it is only when Himavat is counted along with the seven *kulaparvatas*, the number may become eight. But the Himavat is not a *kula-parvata*, but a *varṣa-parvata*. According to H. C. Ray Chaudhuri,\textsuperscript{2} the meaning of the word *kulaparvata* is not explained in the geographical section of the purāṇas. Every *varṣa* has seven principal ranges which are known as *kulaparvatas*.\textsuperscript{3} The epic mythology\textsuperscript{4} considers the seven *kulaparvatas* as the ancient doors of heaven. \textquotedblleft The seven are the Orissa chain, the southern part of the Western ghats, and the northern part (these three being called Mahendra, Malaya and Sahya), the range called Śuktimat (in the east), the Gondwana range called Rkṣavat, the (Eastern) Vindhyā, and the Northern and Western Vindhyā, called Pāriyātra.\textsuperscript{5} The names of the seven *kulaparvatas* are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*.\textsuperscript{6} The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*\textsuperscript{7} gives the same account of the *kulaparvatas* as the epics. The seven main chains of mountains in Bhārata are mentioned here as Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Śuktimat, Rkṣa, Vindhyā and Pāripātra. H. C. Roychaudhuri points out\textsuperscript{8} that Ptolemy knew about the *kulaparvatas*. He further observes that as the word *kula* means race, country or tribe, each *kulaparvata* is associated with a distinct country or tribe.

ROHĀṆĀ

Verse 21 of the Bāṅgālī copper-plate inscription of Nayapāla, discussed above, mentions the name of another mountain, Rohāṇā.

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3. Agni Purāṇa, 108, 32; as cited by ibid., p. 90.  
5. Ibid., p. 8.  
6. VI, 9,11.  

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HIMAVAT

Himavat is mentioned in the early Bengal inscriptions with different names.

i) Himagiri

a) Verse 27 of the Bāngaḍ inscription of Nayapāla, mentioned above, describes a huge temple as white as the snow mountain Himavat (himagirinīva śubhram).

b) Verse 13 of the Paścimbhāg plate inscription states that the streams called Citrāsilā and Puśpabhadrā flowed near the Himagiri.

ii) Prāleya-saila

The Mountain Himālaya is referred to as Prāleya-saila in Verse 23 of the Mirjapur inscription of Śūrapāla I (c. 862-875 A. D.).

iii) Gaurī-pitā

Verse 5 of the Bādāl Garuḍa pillar inscription1 of the time of Nārāyaṇapāla (c. 876-930 A. D.) describes the Mountain Himālaya as the father of Gauri (Gaurī-pitā).

The other inscriptions mentioning Himālaya as the father of Durgā have been discussed in Chapter I, Section II (B).

iv) Śrīsaila

Himālaya is mentioned as Śrīsaila in the Naihāṭi inscription. Verse 4 of the Naihāṭi copper-plate inscription of regnal year 11 of Vallālasena (c. 1159-1179 A. D.), cited above, glorifies karunādhama Samantasena by comparing him with the great Mountain Himālaya (Śrīsailaḥ). According to R. D. Banerji, “this mountain is supposed to contain all sorts of precious things upon which people come unexpectedly.”2 Samantasena also stood like a mountain of assurance to his friends for ever, to fulfil their desire into reality.

The epic mythology3 acknowledges Himavat as the Śailaguru. He is the father of Umā. Between Bhṛgu and Śiva, he chose Śiva as his daughter’s groom and was  

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cursed by Bhrgu to lose its gems. The Rāmāyana\(^1\) shows him as the father-in-law of Śaṅkara and Gaṅgā is called Haimavati in the Mahābhārata\(^2\) as the daughter of Himālaya mountain. The epic mythology\(^3\) tells that the nymph Manoramā (or Menā), daughter of Mountain Meru and wife of Himavat, bore him two daughters Gaṅgā and Umā. The purāṇas\(^4\) also have the legend.

The acquaintance of our ancient authors with the great mountain, even with the classical writers\(^5\) is proved by frequent reference to the Himavat in their writings.\(^6\) A passage in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa\(^7\) describes that the Himavat range stretches along the north of the country Bhārata, like the string of a bow. The Mahābhārata\(^8\) describes that it stretched from the eastern to the western ocean. Kālidāsa adores Himālaya as nagādhīrāja.\(^9\)

Krauṅca

Verse 1 of the Barrackpur copper-plate inscription\(^10\) of regnal year 62 of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A.D.) mentions Skanda as the enemy of Mountain Krauṅca (Krauṅcārī).

Krauṅca is associated with the great Himavat mountain system.\(^11\)

In Indian mythology, mountains are described as the holy places where Gods, Gandharvas, Vidyācharas can dwell, as well as the ascetics and the kings can perform their sacrificial rites. Sometimes their anthropomorphised forms can talk.

\(^1\) IV, 9, 41; cited by Hopkins, op. cit., p. 9.
\(^2\) VI, 119; cited by Hopkins, op. cit., p. 5.
\(^4\) Wilson, op. cit., p. 121.
\(^5\) Ptolemy, VII, 1, 26 (Majumdar-Sastri ed., p. 81); cited in St. Ind. Ant., p. 94.
\(^7\) 57, 59; cited by ibid., p. 93, n. 4.
\(^8\) VI, 6, 3.
\(^9\) Kumāra-sambhava, I, 1.
\(^11\) H. C. Roychaudhuri, op. cit., p. 119, n. 2.
even can produce offspring. As known from the epic mythology\textsuperscript{1} "Himavat is Śailaguru and his son is Maināka, whose son in turn is Krauṇca, who, however, is also called son of Himavat." Krauṇca is described as the white mountain of silver\textsuperscript{2} as contrasted with golden Himavat.\textsuperscript{3} Seven headed dragons guard it and in it is a golden lake, where Skanda was nursed by his mothers. Once Krauṇca was shot by Skanda, the Mountain fled, but returned only to be pierced again and fled while shrinking.

The Vāyu Purāṇa attributes the splitting of the Mountain Krauṇca to Kārttikeya in a different legend. Once Indra and Kārttikeya picked up a quarrel between them regarding their individual powers and decided to solve it by running a race round the Mountain Krauṇca. Incidentally Krauṇca was asked to be the judge and he delivered his decision in favour of Indra, not in a fair way. Kārttikeya got furious and hurled his lance at the Mountain to pierce it at once\textsuperscript{4}.

**MAINĀKA**

1) Verse 26 of the undated Deopāra stone inscription of Vijayasena (c. 1096-1159 A. D.), cited above,\textsuperscript{5} describes the huge temple of Pradyumneśvara as the Mountain Maināka standing in the midst of the sea.

According to a legend\textsuperscript{6} the golden hearted mountain Maināka, son of Himavat, helped Hanuman to take rest on his summit, while Hanuman was on his way to Laṅkā. Maināka rose up from the depth of the water at the request of the ocean. When Hanuman asked about his antecedents, the spirit of the mountains answered that in the early days mountain had wings. All creatures were afraid of these flying monsters. So Indra cut off their wings to make the earth firm and stable. Only

\begin{itemize}
  \item 2. *R.*, VI, 67, 19.
  \item 5. See above, p. 18.
\end{itemize}
Maināka escaped by the help of the wind and the ocean gave it refuge. The mountain which stood firm against Nagāri (Indra) was barrier against Asuras and Maya deposited a mass of gems in it.1

ii) A hint of this legend we find in Verse 18 of the Kamauli copper-plate inscription of Vaidyadeva, where ocean is described as the refuge of mountains (mahidhraśaraṇāṁ).

VINDHYA

i) The epic-purānic legend relating Vindhya and the great sage Agastya is mentioned in Verse 27 of the Deopārā inscription of Vijayasena. Here the huge temple built by Vijayasena is compared with the Vindhya. The poet says that this time the Sun could do nothing even if he placed the sage to the southern-most corner of the quarter. Because, if the agreement between the mountain and the sage is broken and Vindhya rises to the utmost height then also the mountain would be no match for the temple.

The legend is corroborated by literary evidence. The famous epic legend3 depicts Vindhya as a proud mountain, who obstructed the Sun to go through, but later was persuaded by Agastya to wait until he came back. Vindhya ceased growing and it is said that it still awaits his return.

In another version4 once Vindhya was punished by his spiritual guide Agastya for his presumption in emulating the lofty height of Himalaya and Meru. Vindhya prostrated himself before the sage and still remains in that posture by command of the holy sage.

ii) Verse 8 of the Paścimbhāg plate of Śricandra, cited above,5 mentions the mountains and rivers of the locality where the soldiers of Trailokyacandra

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5. See above, p. 53.
celebrated their victory. It says that the forces of the king enjoyed the famous curds of Vaṅga at the village of Kṛṣṇaśikharin and drank the water of the river Suruṅgā and streams in the forest girdling Mountain Vindhya and finally reached Mountain Malaya.

**MERU, THE KANAKABHŪDHARA**

i) Verse 8 of the undated Maināmati copper-plate inscription of Govindacandra (c.1020-1055 A.D.), cited above,\(^1\) introduces Laḍahacandra as a scholar who could be easily approached by other learned people (*vidyādhāras*), just like the golden Mountain (Meru or Sumeru) was accessible to the celestial beings known as Vidyādhāras.

According to the epic mythology,\(^2\) Vidyādhāras are wizards (wisdom-holders) who are spirits and have become like fairies or sylphs. The *Rāmāyana* introduces them as “doers of good and devoted to joy.” These sylphs are found especially in Gandhamādana and other northern mountains with Kinnaras.\(^3\)

ii) Verse 5 of the Rāmganj copper-plate inscription of\(^4\) Īśvaraghoṣa (c. 1040-1080 A.D.) of his regnal year 35, praises Īśvaraghoṣa as majestic as the golden Mountain Sumeru.

iii) Verse 5 of the Mādhāinagar copper-plate inscription\(^5\) of regnal year 27 of Lākṣmaṇasena (c. 1179-1206 A. D.) glorifies the prowess and fame of Hemanṭasena as if, it is touching the crest of Mount Sumeru.

iv) Verse 11 of the Idilpur copper-plate inscription of Sūryasena narrates that it seemed, with the descent of Lākṣmaṇasena to the earth, the wishing tree could not stay on the golden Mountain (*na kanakabhūdhara eva kalpaśūkhī*). Verse 20 of this inscription also mentions the golden Mountain as one of the places where the distressed people wandered.

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1. See above, p. 76.
According to the epic mythology “Meru is one of the seven ranges running across Jambudvīpa and is represented by the flag-staff in the god’s allegorical car.”\(^1\) Sumeru is just an epithet of Meru itself. Its peaks are said to reach higher than the Sun. The huge mountain is thirty three thousand leagues in extent and eighty four thousand in height. It is the abode of gods and saints and is especially the home of Prajāpati. But above all the peak is the home of Viṣṇu. The Sun and the stars revolve around it.\(^2\)

The account of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa\(^3\) gives the height of the golden Mountain (Kanakabhūdhara) as eighty-four thousand yojanas and depth below the surface of the earth as sixteen thousand. The diameter at the summit is given as thirty-two thousands yojanas and at base, sixteen thousand and the shape is like a seed-cup of the lotus or like an inverted cone. According to the purāṇic writers, the entire mountain system of the world centres round Meru, the mountain of gold, which stands in the middle of Ilāvṛtā.\(^4\)

There are however, some variations in different purāṇas\(^5\) regarding the shape. The Padma Purāṇa suggests that it is like a bell shaped flower of Dhutura, the Vāyu Purāṇa says of different colours in different sides of the Mount Meru. The Liṅga Purāṇa, Matsya Purāṇa and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa attribute different colours and shapes to Meru. According to some scholars the Aryan race may have entered the country through the neighbouring region of this golden Mountain Meru, lying to the north of the Himalaya range and “thus have preserved the name in their traditions as a relic of the old mountain worship. Mount Meru is in short the olympus of India.”\(^6\)

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2. Ibid., p. 10.