THE Dhanaka Family (matrimonially connected with the Ikṣvākus - Andhradesa, c.200-625 A.D.):

The Ayaka Pillar inscription of Nagarjunakonda inequivocally indicates that there existed a family named 'Dhanaka' in the Andhradesa which was matrimonially connected with the Ikṣvāku king - Vāsisthiputra-Śrī Sāntamula the great. His only daughter Adavi Santi-Śrī was married to an official styled the Mahāsenāpati Mahātalavāra-Mahāādhanāyaka Śkanda Visākha Nāga who belonged to the Dhanaka family. She herself was distinguished by the title of Mahātalavāri. K. Gopalachari opines that the office of the Mahātalavāra was hereditary in the Kulahaka, Dhanaka and Pugiya families and that the Ikṣvākus were matrimonially connected with Mahātalavāras. Reference to the name 'Dhanaka' as a clan or family in the inscription leaves no room for doubt in the existence of a class of people known as Dhanakas.

The Dhanaka Family of Nāga Descent:

The Ikṣvākus were northerners, but with the passage of time they penetrated into the land of the Andhras. With these Ikṣvākus, the Dhanakas (people) were matrimonially connected. The name of their chief who is reported to have married the Emperor's only daughter Adavi Santi Śrī, ends in Nāga, thus apparently he belonged to a Nāga family or clan. It thus,

becomes clear that the Iksvakus of Andhradesa (c.200-625 A.D.) were matrimonially connected with the Nagas. The Nagas and the Aryan races have mixed together to such an extent that it is practically difficult to separate them from each other. The Nāga Sept or Clan or tribe or Gotra which found an exalted place amongst modern Dhanaka or Dhanuks (archers) could fairly be connected with the ancient Nāga race and so with the Dhnakas (people) of the Andhradesa (200-625 A.D.). The Dhanakataka dynasty was founded by the Nāgas or Andhrabhṛtyas or Cutu Kula kings who held the title Śatakarni like the Imperial Satavāhanas. It may be probable that the Dhanakas of Nāga descent founded the capital 'Dhanakataka' or 'Dhanaka' after their name which on the one hand, could be associated with the Sanskrit word, Dhānushka (bowman or archer) and on the other hand, with the word, Dona or Donaka or Drona (Drona of relics of Buddha). The Nāgas of northern India are reported to have carried off these relics to Majerika country in the south which is identified with the capital 'Dhanakataka' or the Andhrabhṛtyas or Nāgas of Vanavāsa or Vanvāsī.

6. Ibid., pp. 451 and 455.
The Deities Skanda and Visakha and their Association with the Dhanaka Family:

The deities Skanda and Visakha are said to have been the gods of war for the fighting tribes of Ancient India. 'Sarkanda' (reed) which symbolises power i.e. the arrow. The weapon bow (Dhanus) and arrow (Isu or Bāna) is mated with god—Rudra (RV.II.33.10 and 10) or Śiva (RV.II.33.8) who is identified with Agni (RV.i.27,10). It becomes clear that Kumāra and his sons, Sakha, Visākha, Naigameya and Prishthajah were the descendants of Agni (Fire God) or Rudra or Śiva (Storms God) who may further be called Agniputras or Agnidharas or Rudra or Rudariyas, i.e. the Maruts (RV.i,114,6,9;ii.33,1; x,48.11). Visākha was the son of Kumāra, Kumāra was the son of Agni (Fire) and was born in a clump of 'Sara' reeds.13 He had four sons, viz., Sakha, Visākha, Naigameya and Prishthajah. Kumāra's birth in a clump of Sara-reeds, reminds of the Rgvedic weapon 'bow (dhanus, viii.72.4;77.11;ix,99,1;x.18.9, etc) and 'arrow' (īṣu, ii,24.8; viii,7,4, etc.). The bow was also called dhanvan (RV.ii,24.8;33.10;vi.59,7;viii,20.2, etc.). The arrow (īṣu) was called by different names such as īṣu; bāna (RV.vi,75.17) Saru (RV.i,100,18;ii,12.10;iv,3.7 etc.) Sarya or Sarya (RV.i,119.10; 148.4;x,178,3). The arrow (īṣu, bāna) commonly consists of

12. Ibid., p.16, fn 10.
three parts, namely, the Shaft (Śalya) which was made of reed
still known as Śara, the head of which was either of horn
(RV.vi.75.11), or of metal, copper, bronze or iron, (ayo-mukham),
and the feather socket (parṇa-dhi) to which feathers were
stuck up or fastened to make it fly swiftly, through the air
(RV.vi.46.11).

Skanda and Visākha are mentioned by Patañjali (2nd
century B.C.) as two separate gods. However, relying upon the
Epics and Purāṇas, Sir R.G. Bhandarkar14 and Asim Kumar
Chatterjee15 suggest that Visākha represents another aspect
of Skanda (god of war). Patañjali expressly mentions the
images of Śiva, Skanda and Visākha which were worshipped by
the northern people. Skanda's another name is Karṇīkeya—who
was brought up by the six Pleiades (Krittikas).16 He is called
by many names, viz. Skanda, Visākha, Karṇīkeya, Kumāra,
Mahāsena, etc. Skanda-Karṇīkeya was a form of Śiva Himself.
His being the leader of the army of the gods was an idea
probably suggested by his being the leader of Gana of Rudra.17

The Nagarujanakonda inscriptions18 give valuable
information about the four powerful feudatory families of the
Andhradesa. They are all said to have matrimonially connected

18. "Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India", No.71,
Nagarujanakonda, 1930, pp.3, 4, 5, 6, 7; 1938, pp.3, 4, 5 & 7.
with the royal family of the Ikṣvāku kings. One of them was
the Dhanaka family, which belonged to the Nāga race. The
appellations Skanda and Visakha to his name would probably
suggest that he was a staunch follower of these Brahmanical
deities. The Commander-in-Chief was styled as Mahāsenāpati
Mahātālavāra Mahādandaṇṇāyaka Skanda Visakha Nāga, and who
being the foremost nobleman could force Vasiṣṭhiputra Śri
Santamula the great into marrying his only daughter Adavi
Śanti Śri with him. It is ascertained that these deities were
worshipped by the northern and southern people alike. They
invoked the aid of these deities in the time of political
troubles. The Kuśanas, the Yaudheyas and the Guptas all found
in him the invincible martial spirit. The Yaudheyas were
a group of three allied tribes viz., the Yaudheya (warrior)
the Bāgri (warrior) and the Bhatti (warrior) and they regarded
Kārttikeya their guardian deity. The Yaudheyas are also known
as 'Mattamayurakas' associated with the sacred bird 'Peacock',
the symbol of celibacy and bachelorhood; the well known
'Vahana' of the war-god Kārttikeya. With these Yaudheyas were
connected the exogamous clans of the modern Dhanaks or Dhanuks
(archers). These, clans are, Bāgri, Sehwan, Kaith, Nāga or Nāgar
Mahar, and probably Bhatti. The Yaudheyas were Anava-Kshatriyas
originated from Nṛga or Mrga, Suvrata and Sivi-Ausinara, three

20. Asim Kumar Chaterjee's The Cult of Skanda-Kārttikeya",
pp. 32,33,35.
21. Ibid.,p.35.
of the five sons of Usinara. 'Mahar' clan is connected with Johiya's brother Mahar, and Bhatti were united with the Yaudheyas. 'Sehwan' clan is connected with the Śivis, descendants of Śivi-Ausinara, Kaith (Kayastha) is found connected with the Ambasthas, the descendants of Usinara's son Suvrata. It is noticed that the Yaudheyas worshipped Kaṭṭikiya as well as Nāga deity. They are said to have used the 'Snake'(Nāga) symbol on their coins. The name 'Dhanuvaktra(Dhanushka) is mentioned as a soldier of 'Subrahmanya'(sloka. 62,ch.45,Śalya-parvan,Moḥ.). In the Purāṇa index (Rāma Chandra Dikshitar) Dhanuka is the son of Sambhu or god Śiva, who is associated with the Nāga. Thus Skanda Karttikeya is associated with the Dhanaks(archers). It is also not incorrect that the modern Dhanaks or Dhanuks (Skt. Dhanushka) have amongst them the Nāga clan or Sept.or tribe or gotra. Naturally it strengthens our view and support our assertion that the Nāgar-archers (Nāga Dhanaks) are the representatives of ancient Dhanakas(people) of Andhradesa in one way or the other.

22. Ibbetson's"Panjab Castes", see Joya-Mahar.
23. "Alexander Cunningham",'Ancient Geography of India', pp. 206-09 and 222-25; see "Sehwan".
25. B.C.Law's Ancient Tribes of India,pp.68-69,82-84,96-97.
Naqas in the Vedic Literature:

The Nagas (Skt. Takshacs) are the modern representatives of ancient Sarpa Rishi Arbuda (RV. x.94 and Ait.Bra.vi.1) maker of the juice from the Soma plant and Lady-Rishi Sarpa-Rājni, offerer of prayer-to the god Śūrya (RV.x.189), and Sarpa Rishi Jaratkarna, son of Iravat (RV.x.76) composer of hymn in praise of Stones with which soma plant was crushed. Jaratkarna is identified with Jaratkaru of the Mahābhārata.

In order to acquaint ourselves with the Nāga (Sanskrit Taṅkshac) race, their history, though in brief, may be glanced at in the following pages.

Vedic Ahi (Serpent) Vṛtra, was a Brāhmaṇ and was the priest of the Devas and Āsuras alike. He was the son of 'Tvāstr' (the fire-god) who forged the Vajra (thunderbolt) from the bones of a great sage-Dadhici or Dadhicha. Surprisingly, this 'Vajra' (weapon) which was fashioned for Indra, was used for killing Tvāstr's son Vṛtra who was known by the name of Viśvarupa or Omniform. Vṛtra being fire-god (Agnideva) had been worshipped by the Bhṛgus and the Angiraśas and we still find this practice among the Parsees who worship the fire (Agni). Rishi Uśanas-Śūkra, Vālmiki and Mārkanda were

27. A.C.Das's Rgvedic Culture, p.57.
28. Ibid., p.52.
31. Buddha Prakash's Political and Social Movements in Ancient Panjab.
32. F.E.Pargiter's A.I.H.T., p.191.
all Bhargavas (descendants of Bhrgu Rishi). Killing of Vṛtra by Indra made Tvāstr displeased and he and his followers stopped Indra’s worship. The Vṛtras were serpent worshippers and were an Aryan tribe. Arbuda, a Rishi (RV.x.94) is called Kadraveya Sarpa, (Pancavimsa Brāhmaṇa xxv.15) mentions him as the priest at the Snake festival. Aitareya (vi.1) and Kaśhitaki Brāhmaṇas (xxiv.1) as a maker of mantras. (Vedic Index-1,37) The Phallus (Linga) worship was in vogue among the Vedic Aryans and the later Vedic Aryans found the same creed in ‘Skambha’ “the Golden Phallus standing in the Waters” (AV.x.7). ‘Skambha’ was the first principal in creation or ‘the secret Trajpati’. The Vedic and later Vedic-Aryans worshipped natural objects and had among them the Sarpa and Garuda Aryan tribes.

The Nāgas of Patalaloka (Saur-āśtra):

The Nāgas of (Saurāśtra) are associated with the Indus Valley Civilization and their habitat was the Patalaloka in the lower Indus Valley. They are spoken of as the Sun and Serpent worshippers. The worship of god ‘Śiva’ (Mahādeva) and the Mother Earth, later on, Mother goddess, emerged as a strong Hindu faith.

34. A.C.Das, op.cit., pp.57 and 58.
35. A.C.Das's "Ṛgvedic Culture", p. 169.
36. Buddha Prakash's, Political and Social Movements in Ancient Panjab, p. 462.
The Nāgas in the Epics:

The Rāmāyana mentions them as the children of Sūras and the Ocean as their home. They saw Hanuman crossing the sea in search of Sita. Their women mentioned as most beautiful and some of them were abducted by Rāvana. Their men are described as handsome and intelligent race. They are described as equal to gods. Their splendid town Bhogawati in the Pātalā (modern Gujarat region), where the Lord of Serpents, Vāsuki dwelt, was sacked by Rāvana and defeated their leaders, Vāsuki, Takshac, Sankha and Jati and later on, they are presumed to have mixed with the 'Cheras' or 'Ceras', who were known in Ashoka's time as 'Keralaputras'.

The Mahābhārata describes them as Vṛtras and identified Vṛtra with 'Viśvarūpa'-Tvastra, the prohita of gods. The Mahābhārata gives an account of exploitation of the Nāgas or Takshacs by Krishna and Arjuna. The Khandava forest, dwelling place of the Nāgas, was burnt by them. Takshac and his son 'Asvasena' escaped unhurt. Takshac is reported to have killed Parikshit. However, his son 'Janamejaya' defeated

37. Rāmāyana, v.i., 73.137.  
38. Ibid., v.1.84.  
39. Ibid., v.12.22.  
40. Ibid., iv., 60.16 and iv.62.12.  
41. Bishan Das's, "Tarikh-e-Hindī" (Urdu) pp. 388-89  
43. Mbh., I,218.4 and I,218.9.  
44. Ibid., I,42.22-23.
the Nāgas. But for the intervention of a Brahmana 'Astika' (whose mother was Nāga) Janamejaya would have perished all of them. The names of these Nāgas are found among the Marātha families. In later times, they strengthened their relationship by matrimonial alliances, e.g., Arjuna married Ulūpi, Purukutsa married Narmāda, Kusā married Kumudvati. an ascetic Jaratkaru married Jaratkaru Nāgi, sister of Vāsuki, Astika Brahmana was born out of this wedlock. Janamejaya's priest Somasrava had Nāga mother. Aryaka, the grandfather of Krishna was also a Nāga Chief. Nāga Susravas's daughter, Chanderlekha had love affairs with a Brahman Visākha according to Kalahana. Gunaksi, the daughter of Indra's Charioteer was married to the Nāga prince. Sumukha was born from the race of Airavada, he is honoured as the sister's son of Vāmanā. His father, a Nāga Chikura by name 'Omatali' was slain by the son of Vinata not long ago quoted Narada Muni. Arjuna also had a son BabhruVahana by Citraṅgeda, the Nāga daughter of Chitravahana and after her father's death Arjuna became the king of Manipur.

49. J. Ph. Vogel's *Serpent Lore or the Nagas in Hindu Legend and Aīt.*, pp. 24, 34, 83, 191.
The Naṅgas in the Purāṇas:

The Naṅgas in Nilamata-Purāṇa:

The very name 'Nilamata' is of Naṅga origin. Naṅgas were the children of Prajapati, Kaśyapa and his wife Kadru, the mother of serpents and the daughter of Daksha. The Devas, the Daityas, the Danavas, the Khasas, the Bhadras and the Garuda all were the sons of Prajapati Kaśyapa. Their seat reserved in Satīśara(Kashmir Valley) as their abode and Nila being their king. The Naṅgas were connected with the historical tribes such as the Ambasthas, Drāvidas, Kambojas, Strimukhas, and Śakas. The Nilamata-purāṇa refers to tribes such as the Naṅgas, the Piśacás, the Abhishiras, the Gāndhāras, the Jullundharas, the Sakas, the Khasas, the Taṅganas, the Mandavas, the Madras, the Antagiris and the Bahigiris. King Nila is said to be the progenitor of the Naṅgas and their original home was Kashmir. Balarāma was an Incarnation of 'Shesa' called also 'Ananta', Śiva is said to be father of Shesa(Naṅga) and the Naṅgas are thus his devotees. The tribes participating in the Mahābhārata war are mentioned in the Nilamata Purāṇa as follows:

Piśacás, Daradas, Pundras, Kundivisas, Marutas,

52. Ibid.,p.102.
54. Ibid.,p.56.
Dhanukas (Dhanukas or Dhanakas), Tanganas, Pataṅgas, Bahlikas (Punjab Tribes), Colas, sided the Pāṇḍavas. The Sakas, Kambojas, Bahlikas, Yavanas, Paradas, Kunindas, Ambasthas and Pīśācas supported Duryodhana. The Nāgas names in the Nilamata Purāṇa are mentioned as religious leaders such as ‘Narayana’, Vasudeva, Sankarsena, Anirudha, Pradumna, Janardhana, Hari, Hara, Bhava, Mahādeva, Sambhu, Kapil, Guha, Kumara, Rāma and Laksman, etc.

The Nāgas in the Buddhist Literature:

In the Buddhist literature the Nāgas are mentioned as the Eight Great Chiefs, viz., Nanda, Upananda, Sagara, Vāsuki Takshac, Mansvin, Anantapata and Utpala. They bore Kshatriya names corresponding to the heroes of the epics e.g., Dhrtaṛṣthra, Dhananjaya, Aryaka, Kauraviya, Janamejaya, Dilipa, Prithusravas, Ambarisha, Udayana, Raghava and Baladeva, etc.

The Sarpas or Nāgas (Serpent Worshippers) and their Origin:

There are different views on the Snake worship. I cannot do better than subjoin here, J.Ph.Vogel and A.C.Das's views on this point "Before commencing our account of the historical development and various aspects of Indian Snake worships, there is one point more to be considered. Several writers like Ferguson have put forward the opinion that Indian Snake worship was un-Aryan in origin. According to them, the

56. Ibid., p. 62 fn.
57. Ibid., p.243.
Aryans adopted it from the Daśyus, the dark-skinned aborigines of the Peninsula. One of the chief arguments adduced in support of this view is that in the Rgveda, the earliest of the four Vedas, no reference to Snake worship is made. It should, however, be remembered that the Rgveda Samhita is a collection of some thousand hymns from which it is impossible to derive a complete idea of the civilization of those days. In the Yajurveda and especially in the Atharvaveda, serpent worship is referred to unambiguously. The same is true of later Vedic literature. In this connection, it should also be noted that the mythic snake kings bear personal names which almost invariably are not Dravidians, but purely Aryan. The very word Nāga, by which the serpent deities are generally designed is supposed to be related with the English word "Snake" and consequently in ...Indo-Germanic in its origin.  

The Nāgas in Indian History:

J. Ph. Vogel gives a list of the Nāga dynasties which claimed Nāga or Nāgi origin as follows:

1. The Dynasty of Udayana, in the north west frontier of India.

2. The Dynasty of Nāga Karkota of Kashmir Lalitaditya (800 A.D.) was its famous king.

58. Indian Serpent Lore or the Nāgas in Hindu Legend and Art,

59. Indian Serpent Lore or the Nagas in Hindu Legend and Art, p. 295.

4. The Dynasty of Magadha, Vidimisara or Bimbisara and Ajatasatru were its popular kings among ten Nāgas.

5. The kings of Chhotanagpur.

6. The Dynasty of Manipur.

7. The Dynasty of Bastar.

8. The Dynasty of Gonds.

9. The Dynasty of Cambodia, founded by a Brahman, named Kaundinya of the dynasty of Somavamsa.

10. The Dynasty of Thaton.

11. The Dynasty of Pallavas.

12. The Dynasty of Satavahanas or Salivahanas, Satavahana or Salivahana was the son of Nāga by a Brahman widow. Pratishthana (Paithana) was the birth place and capital of king Šālivahana, founder of the Śaka era in 78 A.D.

The Foundation of Dhanakataka Dynasty C.B.C.73:

After throwing the Kava Dynasty, the Dhanakataka Dynasty was founded by Simuka c.B.C.73 also known by various names such as Sindhuka, Sisuka and Siparaka. According to the Vishnu Purāṇa, the fourth king of the Kava Dynasty was Susrman, whose servant, named Siparaka of the Andhra Tribe,
killed him and occupied the throne. The foundation of the Andhrabhṛtya dynasty was thus laid down by Siparaka. Thirty kings of the Andhrabhṛtya dynasty ruled over the country for 456 years according to the Vishnu Purāṇa. However, it gives the names of only twenty two kings as under:

Siparaka, his brother Krishna, his son Śrī-Śatakarni; his son Purnotsahga; his son Śatakarni; his son Lambodara; his son Evilaka; his son Meghasvati; his son Patumat; his son Arishta Karman; his son Hala; his son Talaka; his son Pravilesena; his son Sundara, named Śatakarni; his son Chakora Śatakarni; his son Sivastati; his son Gomatiputra; his son Pulimat; his son Sivasri-Śatakarni; his son Vijaya; his son Chandrasri and his son Pulomarchish.

The Andhrabhṛtyas had two branches, i.e. the younger and the elder, the former ruled at Paithana or Pratishthana... on the Godavari, while the latter reigned at Capital Dhanakataka. After some time the seat of the Capital Dhanakataka became vacant. Consequently, the Paithana princes occupied it. Gautamiputra Śatakarni is said to have ruled at Dhanakataka from 133 to 154 A.D., whereas his son Pulamayi reigned at Paithana from 130 to 154 A.D. After Gautamiputra's death his son and successor, Pulamayi reigned at Dhanakataka as well.

The father and the son are said to have defeated the powerful Saka Kshatrapa kings Nahapana and Jayadaman. Andhrabhṛtya were also called Cutṭul-Kula Śatakarnis or Nāgas. They

were divided into two branches, i.e., the younger branch of Vanavas or Vaijayanti and the Imperial Satavahanas. After the death of Mahabhoja Aryaka Dhensasena C.225-232 A.D., the Andhrabhṛtyas Nāgas of Vanavasa or Vaijayavanti disappeared and Virakurca Pallava C.233 A.D., husband of the daughter of Nāga king Visnuskanda Satakarni usurped the throne of Vanavasa. Gautamiputra Śrī-Śatakarni is said to have destroyed the Sakas, Scythians, Tukharas, Yavanas Greeks and the Pahlavas, parthians and re-established the Varnaśramadharma, i.e., Brāhman Kshatriya, Vaśya and Śudra in the realm of Satavahanas. The last king of the dynasty, Pulumavi IV, was overthrown by a subordinate Ikṣvaku prince C.208 A.D. Vāsimthiputra Śrī Sāntamula, whose daughter Adavi Sant Śrī, later on, became the wife of a Dhanaka chief, styled Mahāsanāpāti, Mahātalavāra Mahādāṇḍanāyaka Skanda Viśākha Nāga. The capital name Dhanakataka reminds us of the Taks or Takas or Takkas of the Punjab. The words, Dhanaka, taka could literally be understood as Dhanushka and Takshac, i.e., an archer and a Nāga. In other words, Nāga-Dhankakas (Nāga-archers) or the Dhanakas, people of Andhradesa of Nāga origin, may be connected with their capital Dhanakataka. The Taks or Takas or Takkas (Skt. Takshacs Nāgas) of the Punjab ruled the country Takadesa with their capital Sakala. The old Nagari characters are associated with Takari which was brought

66. E.I., viii, p. 60, No. 2.
68. Cunningham, Alexander, Ancient Geography of India, pp. 126 and 129.
into use by the Takas or Takkas. According to Alexander Cunningham, the Takari or Nagari characters have been in vogue amongst the Brāhmans of Kashmir and Kangra. He found its characters in the inscriptions as well as upon the coins of Kashmir and Kangra. He noticed it on the Sati-monuments of Mandi; and in the inscriptions of Pinjore near Chandigarh. Kalhana's Rajatarangini is also preserved in the Takari character.

The Taks or Takkas (Skt. Takshacs=Nāgas) at the time of Alexander's invasion:

Tod refers to the Paractakas or the mountain Taks whom Alexander encountered. According to him Taxila or Takshac or Nāga was the chief of the Taks(Nāgas), who befriended the Macedonian king. The Taks or Nāgas are reported to have been dispossessed of their land and Capital Salbhapoor, founded by Śalivahana or Takshac or Nāga by the Bhatti princes. In consequence of this defeat they were compelled to migrate to south India, Ceylon and Malabar and probably embraced Buddhism though continued with Brāhmanical-creed and faith of rigid mortifications, and performed ten Asvamedha sacrifices. The ancient inscriptions in the Pali or Buddhist character are associated with the Naga race such as Tusta, Takshac and Tak.

Tod refers to these inscriptions which were found at many places in Rajasthan. These inscriptions, according to him, are of the race called Tusta, Takshac and Tak, whose descendants are described as Mori and Paramara. Thus, it is not improbable
that Rajputs like Mori and Paramara were of Nāga origin. The Takshacs-Mori according to him have been lords of cheetore' since very long time. They had in their possession Asergarh and Chand Bardai called one of them the Standard bearer Tak of Aser. 69

Unfortunately, after the decline of the Kusanas in northern India and the Saka Mahakshatrapas in the Dakshinapatha, the history of India is obscure. However, sporadic references give us certain clues about the kingdom of the celebrated Nāga race. It is well known that the Bharasiva branch of the Nāgas dominated a large part of northern India. The Vishnu Purāṇa 70 mentions the chief seats of their power at Vidisa. Padmavati, Padma Pawaya or in the kingdom of Pawaya in the state of Gwalior in Central India. Kantipuri Kantit, Mirzapur district and Mathura. Vidisa was ruled by Sesha, Bhogin and Sacha or Sada or Chandra or Chandramsra. The coins usually attributed to kings Seshadatta, Ramadatta, and Sasachandradatta of Mathura are the issues of the Nāga rulers of Vidisa. The coins of Purushadatta, Uttamadatta, Kamadatta, Bhavadatta and Sivanandi in the Mathura series are also issues of early Nāga rulers of Vidisa. 71 Wilson identifies Bhilsa with Vidisa where Vrisha bull on the coins, is attributed to a dynastic appellation of bull or Siva's Nandni with Trisula on their coins. The Nāga rulers of Padmavati were Bhima, Skanda Vasu, Brahapani, Ravi, Prabhakara, Bhava, Deva and

71. Wilson, H.H., op.cit., ii,3,p.149 fn.52-Vidisa Seat of the Nāgas is omitted in the Vishnu Purāṇa and instead gives the name of a river as Vidisa which is identified by Wilson with Besa river, joining the Betwa at Bhilsa.
and Ganpati who ruled from the 2nd to 4th century A.D. and issued coins with the figure bull and peacock. Padmavati, ancient paways, was the capital of Bharasiva Nāgas. Bhava-Nāga and Ganapati extended their political influence as far as Malwa as indicated by the Nāga coins found at Ujjain. Samudra gupta defeated the Nāga kings Ganapati and Nāgasena and thus consolidated the Gupta rule in India from north to south. The powerful Nāga king Virasena ousted the Kusana's from the U.P., Mathura and the Eastern Punjab and re-established Hindu sovereignty at Mathura, previously a Buddhist centre under Kusanas. After Virasenanaṇa, the kingdom of the Nāgas was divided into three branches which comprised Mathura, Padmavati and Kantipuri. The Vishnu Purāṇa gives these three names over which the nine Nāga kings ruled. After this division, Barhiṇaṇa, Chharajanaṇa, Bhavanana and Rudrasena of Padmavati issued coins. It is well known that the Vakatakas and the Guptas were matrimonially connected with the Nāgas, e.g., a Vākātaka prince Pravasena married a Nāga princess, the daughter of the Bharasiva Nāga. Chandra Gupta-II married Kubernāga, and out of this wedlock was born Prabhavati Gupta, who was married to a Vākātaka king Rudrasena-II. After her husband's death she ruled the Vākātaka country from Nandivardhana, Capital in Maharashtra. Kubernāga, the wife of king Chandragupta-II, came to be known as Mahādevi. The iron pillar conventionally attributed to the name of Chandra Gupta-II, is still a controversial figure, for its inscription contains the name of a person Chandra. There were other powerful rulers such as
Chandravaman, and Chandramsana that whose names are found in the corresponding reports of Malwa-Gana Rajyas people's Republic of Malwa and Nepal.

The celebrated city Mahishmati, modern Mandhata on the river Narbadâ or Narmadá, is said to have been associated with the Haihayas and the Nāgas. Arjuna is reported to have reigned at Mahishmati. He married Ulūpi and Chitraṅgada, two princesses of the Nāgas. Purukutsa, two married Nāga princess Narmadā and had by her a son named Trasadasyu. Arjuna belonged to the Haihya family and his Grandfather's name is recorded as Dhanaka in the Vishnu Purāṇa. This word literally connects modern caste Dhanak as well as Dhanaka family of Andhradesa (c.200-625 A.D.).

A Nāga dynasty of Shergarh has also been discovered and the names of some Nāga rulers are, Somanta, Devadatta, Bindunāga, Padmanāga and Barvanāga. The Pāla dynasty of Bengal originated from the illegitimate offspring of a Nāga. Nāga Tribhuvna Mahādevi, who descended from Nāga, ruled the Bhaumakāra kingdom of Orissa and assumed the title of Goswamini. The Karnata dynasties viz, the Chandaka or Chindaka Nāgas of

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73. JRAS, 1910, pp.441-7; Pargiter identified Mahishmati with Mandhata.
74. Mbh., i.206,13-34; (1,2,397).
75. Mbh., i.207,13-23(1,2,215,7826;1,2,217,7883).
76. Wilson, H.H., op.cit., iv.3, p.296 fn.4; ibid, iv.11, p.334.
77. Ibid., ii,p.334.
Bastar and Chhatisgarh and the Taiapavamsas of Orissa, all
were the descendants of the Nāgas. The Bhosale rulers of
Mahārāshtra were matrimonially connected with the Marāthas,
who had Naga blood in their veins. Gupta, Chauhan, the
ruler of Bagardesa was associated with the Nāgas. At the
commencement of the rainy season, he is worshipped by all and
sundry and the festival is connected with the worship of
serpents (Nagās). The Nagās are also associated with the fort-
Ahichhatra and the Abhiras, for the local legend of the Adi-
Raja and the Nāga with the Ahichhatra or Serpents Canopy,
suggests some connection of the Ahiras (modern Ahirs) with the
Nagās. King Bhoja of Dhara had Nagā mother. The last but not
the least, are the Aggarwala, the bais Rajputs, the Nagpals of
Punjab, the Kayasthas of Bengal (one of their sub-castes is
known as Nag), all claim Nagā origin. Even the Jats and the
Dhanks could not be exempted from having absorbed some percentage
of Nagā blood, the former are fully discussed by Col. James Tod
under the generic name Tak (Skt. Takshac-Naga), and the later
have amongst them a Nagā clan, i.e. Naga-Dhanaks (Naga-Archers).

80. Vaidya, C.V., "Early History of Rajputs-100-750 A.D.
of Medieval Hindu India", 600-1200 A.D.
81. Vogel, J.Ph., op.cit.,
82. Cunningham, Alexander, op.cit., pp. 303-06.
83. Kosambi, D.D., "The Culture and Civilization of Ancient
India in Historical Outline ", p. 168.
The Scythians or Sakas:

The Sanskrit literature grouped them with the Greeks, Pahlavas Bahlikas (Panjabi), and their women were praised for beauty and strength. Their prowess in archery (the art of military science - dhanurveda), is testified by the Greek historian Herodotus, who narrates an interesting story involving heavy loss to the Persian king, Darius on the border of their land.

"Once the Persian king Darius is said to have invaded their country and commanded that they must accept his suzerainty. He waited for some time for their reply in black and white. The Scythians in return, sent him four things, viz., a bird, a rat, a frog and a few arrows, as an expression of their intention. The king Darius mistook these things for their frustration, disappointment, and defeat. Simultaneously, the king was informed of a heavy loss of his army personnel and material as well. The Scythians warned him of some other serious consequences, if he did not retreat. They explained the meaning of these above symbols to the invader of their country as follows: "That unless the Persians learnt the arts, such as flying in the air like a bird, (a bird, first defensive symbol), hiding in the hole like a rat, (second defensive symbol), and diving into the water like a
frog(third defensive symbol), they would not be able to face the attack of their arrows, (symbol of strength or power of the Scythian people).  

It is significant to note that the word 'Saka' or 'Saga' or 'Sak' is derived from the "Iranian word 'Skutha' meaning an archer. Obviously, it is corresponding with the Sanskrit word 'Dhanush' and thus, their mastery in the art of archery must have frustrated the Persian king, Darius in his attempts to subdue them.

Thus, their name itself is mated with the weapon 'bow' and arrow (dhanush or dhanvan), and (išhu or báña), like that of the word 'Dhanaka' or 'Dhanak' (Skt. Dhanushka).

The Origin of the Sakas and their Association with the Indian Archers (Dhānushkas):

It is said that the Gujars (ancient Khazars), the Jats (ancient Jits, Juts, Getes, Yuchis, or Yutis), the Nāgas (ancient Taks, Takshacs, Tocharis) and the Ahirs (ancient Abhiras, Avars and Gomis) are generally termed as


Scythians of Sakatae or Sakadvipa or of Scythic lineage. Herodotus mentions the names of Hercules, the god of extraordinary strength and "Echidna" or half-woman, half-serpent, and their son 'Scythes'. Hercules is said to have bequeathed a bow (Dhanush) to his son, Scythes, who, afterwards, became the ancestor of Scythians or Sakas.

Similar story is mentioned by Diodorus, according to whom, Scythians or Sakas, are the children of a Virgin, born of the earth 'Ella' whose upper half body formed a female figure and lower half a serpent. Jupiter being husband had a son by her, named Scythes from whom originated the Scythians or Sakas. The Puranic story relating to their origin is slightly different. It is said that the mythologized 'Ella' or the Earth was the daughter of the Sun-born Iksväku. She being in the forest was espoused by the Budha mercury or the son of Indu, moon, in consequence of which the Indu race came into being. The story of 'illa' or Ella is narrated in various ways involving her in change of sex, at one time female and another as male named, Sudyumna. Budha(moon) had a son by her, named Pururavas from whom the lunar race originated.


See also Bingley, A.H., "History of Caste and Culture of Jats and Gujar", p. 16.
A Graphical Sketch of their Origin:

1. Hercules$^87$ (The god of extraordinary strength) = Echidna female or half woman and half serpent

   (son) Scythes

   Palas
   (The Scythic-Pali, the Shepherd
   invaders of Egypt)

   Napas
   or
   Tekshacs

   Ñagas (Snake-race of the Tatar Genealogy)

2. A virgin born of ella or illa or ila$^88$(earth)
   half woman plus half serpent= jupiter being husband
   (son) Scythes
   Scythians or Sakas.

3. Once Manu offered a sacrifice -
   to Mitra and Varuna, but the rite -
   was deranged through an irregularity of
   the ministering priest in consequence of
   which a daughter instead boy, was born,

Budha, the son of the deity of the moon espoused her and had by her a son named Pururavas.\(^89\)

Thus, the lunar-race came into being. If Tod's view on the origin of the Śakas (Scythians) is to be accepted, then the Nāgas—or Takshacs or Nāgas one of the two sons of Scythes who was bequeathed a bow (dhanus) by Hercules (the god of an extraordinary strength) may fairly be construed as the born archers (dhanushkas) for the word Saka or Sacae or Sak itself, stands for an archer or Bowman as suggested by Mr. Vishwa Mitra Mohan.\(^90\) According to him, the words Sak or Saka or Saga are formed from Indo-European root Skeud, meaning to shoot or its European equivalent Scythian is formed from the Iranian word Skutha and from Śak or Śaka meaning an archer (dhanushka).

The Nagas probably migrated to the south from their original abode Kashmir. It is said that the original inhabitants of Kashmir Valley were the Nāgas, then came the Pīśācas and the Manavas.\(^91\) The Tamil poet sarcastically portrays their picture as of strong limbs and hardy frames and fierce looking as tigers, wearing long and curbed locks of hair, the blood thirsty Maravar, armed with the bow bound with

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89. Wilson, H.H., "Vishnu Purāṇa", IV, pp.278-79, fn.5. See also Fargiter's A.I.H.T., pp.58,85,253-54.

90. The Sakas in India and Their Impact on Indian Life and Culture, p. 4.

leather, ever-ready to injure others, shoot their arrows at poor and helpless travellers from whom they can rob nothing, only to feast their eyes on the quivering limbs of their victims. According to him, they resisted successfully the armies of the Tamil kings, nay, they compelled them to turn their back and fly. The Nāgas are referred to have conquered the aboriginal races of the Tamil country. As their name suggests, they usually worshipped the Nāga deities. They worshipped the dreaded Kāli or Durga or 'Sheranwali' as known in the Fanjab. They decorated the image of goddess Kāli with the bones and skins of ferocious animals and creepers, such as snakes, boar and tiger and placed in her hand a strong-bow (dhanus) bent and ready to shoot at. Kāli is referred to have mounted on a stag probably for its stormy runs and jumps, instead of lion or tiger as we usually notice. The above religious performance by the Nāgas suggest that the Nāgas as bowmen (dhaṇushkas) invoked the aid of goddess Kāli or Durga in times of war. The Kāli could bless their bows with victory, provided they sacrificed animals like buffaloes at her altar.

We have already noticed in the preceding pages that the Capital Dhanakakata or Dhanakataka or Dharnikotta or Dhayataka or Dhanaka, was founded by the serpent worshiping people or Nāgas, known to the various writers as the Satavahanas.

or Śālivahanaś or Andhrabhrtyas Śatakarnis or Cutu Kula Śatakarnis. The word Dhanaka or Dhanakataka or Dhanakakata is derived from a 'Drona' or Donaka of the relics of Buddha. The Chinese travellers visiting India between 399 and 413 A.D. and 629 to 645 A.D. saw with their own eyes the Nāgas guarding the Buddha's relics at Ramagrama (Kapilvastu near Nepal Tarai). The Nāgas of Northern India are reported to have carried off these relics in the South at Majerika which is identified with the Capital Dhanakataka of the Nāgas. The Nāga king Bassaro-Naga had his residence at Majerika or Ptolemy's Malanga was the Capital of the Nāgas of Majerika. Cunningham identified Dharnikotta with the Dhanakakata of Hwen Thsang (7th century A.D.) and with the Majerika Stupa of the Nāgas. As he observes, on a general review of all evidence in favour of the identification of Dharnikotta with the Dhanakakata of Hwen Thsang and with the Majerika Stupa of the Nāgas, the most striking point is the exceeding beauty of the relic Stupa, which is common to all of them. I have already quoted the account of the Mahāwansā as to the gorgeous magnificence of the Nāga Stupa of Majerika, the last-step of which was beyond the power of all the riches of Cylone to equal. Similarly, the Chinese pilgrim was struck with the unusual beauty of the religious edifices of Dhanakakata, which he describes as possessing all the

94. Beal's Fah hian, c.xxiii and M. Julien's Hiouen Thsang, ii. 326.
95. Cunningham, A., op. cit., p. 455.
magnificance of the palaces of Bactria. His reference to the Karle inscriptions Nos. 10, 11 and 14, Journ, Asiat, Soc. Bombay, V. 155, 156 and 159 and Kanheri inscriptions Nos. 8 and 39, Journ, Asiat, Soc., Bombay, V. 20 and VI, gives us a clue to understand the meaning of the words Dhanakakata, Dharnikotta, Dhanakataka, Dhanvakataka.