

Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription Of Skandagupta: Reading Between The Lines

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ABSTRACT

The Gupta dynasty transformed itself into an empire owing to the conquests of Samudragupta, the seeds for which were sown by the Chandragupta-Kumāradevī marriage. The empire was amplified by Chandragupta II and sustained by Kumāragupta. This mighty Gupta Empire could have been washed away by the pushyamitra and hūṇ a tide. When the fear of obliteration stared the Guptas in the face, the situation demanded for a fearsome leader. The exigency for a saviour was fulfilled by Skandagupta who rose to the occasion and proved himself to be worthy of being the emperor. A critical analysis of the contents of the Bhitari stone pillar inscription of Skandagupta not only gives further insight into the life of this invincible warrior who became a Mahārājādhirāja by his own valour, but also opens up a pandora's box of conjectures while solving some including the puzzle of the original home of the Guptas.

Keywords: pushyamitra, hūṇ a, bhitari, skandagupta.

The most important epigraph for the political history of the reign of Skandagupta is the Bhitari (Ghazipur District) pillar inscription for it gives the genealogy of Gupta kings from Gupta up to Skandagupta and highlights the great calamity that befell the Gupta dynasty due to the invasions of the Pushyamitras and the Hūṇ as and the success achieved by Skandagupta against them ^[1]. This undated inscription is written in Sanskrit and the characters belong to the western variety of the northern class of Brāhmī alphabets ^[2].

The inscription begins in prose giving the genealogy which had become stereotypical by then. Samudragupta, the great grandson of the illustrious Gupta, grandson of the illustrious Ghaṭ otkacha and the son of Mahārājādhirāja Chandragupta (I) and Lichchhavi princess Mahādevī Kumāradevī is eulogized as the exterminator of all kings, one who had no antagonist, whose fame was tasted by the water of the four oceans, one who was equal to Dhanada, Varuṇ a, Indra and Antaka, the very axe of Kṛ itānta, the giver of many millions of lawfully acquired cows and gold and the restorer of the aśvamēdha sacrifice that had long been in abeyance^[3]. He is followed by Mahārājādhirāja Chandragupta (II) and Mahārājādhirāja Kumāragupta who are both labelled as Paramabhāgavata^[4].

The first verse introduces the aika-vīraḥ^[5] of the Gupta lineage, Skandagupta. The absence of the expression tat-pādānudhyāta for Skandagupta in relation to his father Kumāragupta has given rise to many speculations. B.P. Sinha^[6] and S.R. Goyal^[7] hypothesize that Purugupta occupied the Gupta throne after the death of his father to be overthrown by Skandagupta who emerged victorious in the struggle for succession. H.C. Raychaudhuri's^[8] viewpoint that there is not the slightest reference to fratricidal war seems more acceptable. He opines that the use of the epithets like amal=ātmā^[9] (pure soul) in the Bhitari pillar inscription and para-hitakārī (benefactor of others) on his archer type coins^[10] for Skandagupta do not warrant the conclusion that he shed the blood of his brothers^[11]. R.C. Majumdar^[12] is of the view that in the expressions vichalita-kula-lakshmī (shaken fortune of the family) and viplutām-vaṁśa-lakshmī (convulsed fortune of the family) in the Bhitari inscription, the words vaṁśa and kula have been chosen with care to indicate that there was great danger to the family, rather than to the empire, and that if the intention had been to refer to foreign invasion, then the expression would better have been rājya-lakshmī. This standpoint is countered by D.K. Ganguly who states—'The supposed distinction between rājyaṁ and vaṁśa cannot be held applicable to Ancient India, where a kingdom was hardly distinguished from the dynasty ruling over it. Any invasion from without, threatening the kingdom, could reasonably be construed by the dynasty ruling over the given area'.^[13] Additionally, not much stress should be laid on the expression tat-pādānudhyāta, for the reference to Skandagupta as one 'who subsisted (like a bee) on the wide – spreading water lilies which were the feet of (his) father',^[14] gives just about the same sense. Thus, R.K. Mookerji^[15] has rightly pointed out that because of his fidelity and competence, Skandagupta succeeded his father in a peaceful manner.

A problem that presents itself is apropos the name of Skandagupta's mother, her ancestry and her social status. According to the Bhitari inscription, Skandagupta announcing his victory 'betook himself to (his) mother, whose eyes were full of tears of joy, just as Kṛ ishṇ a when he had slain (his) enemies, betook himself to (his mother) Dēvakī^[16]. An unsupportable suggestion has been put forward by some scholars that the name of the mother of Kṛ ishṇ a, Dēvakī, has intentionally been mentioned, as that was also the name of Skandagupta's mother^[17]. The choice of mentioning Kṛ ishṇ a and his mother must have been because Skandagupta was a paramabhāgavata and also that the inscription records the installation of a Vaishṇ avite image. It must be added that while Skandagupta's mother had become

widow by the time he vanquished his enemies, Dēvakī's husband was alive when Kṛ ishṇa killed Kaṁsa.

Since the enemy killed by Kṛ ishṇa was his own maternal uncle, it has been conjectured that the enemy of Skandagupta mentioned in his inscription was his maternal uncle. D.R. Bhandarkar^[18] suggests that his maternal uncle belonged to the Nāga dynasty. Ashvini Agrawal^[19] points out, 'a Nāga rebellion at this stage in the Gupta history and that too by his mother's relations is most unlikely for most of the powerful Nāga kings like Achyutanandi, Nāgasena, Nāgadatta, Gaṇ apatināga etc. had been uprooted by Samudragupta and the kingdoms of Mathurā, Padmāvatī, Vidiśā and Ahichhatrā had been merged in the Gupta empire. It is not likely that during the strong rule of Chandragupta II Vikramāditya and Kumāragupta Mahendrāditya the Nāgas had again built up a mighty military machine and were able to revolt'. The Bhitari inscription mentions that when Skandagupta broke the news of his victory to his mother, she shed tears of joy, which wouldn't have been the case if her son's enemy who was defeated was her own brother.

The inscription mentions the names of the chief queens of the emperors preceding Kumāragupta, but doesn't mention his wife's name, who was the reigning King's mother. Instead, Skandagupta is abruptly introduced as the son of Kumāragupta^[20]. This, according to some scholars, was the result of a deliberate choice, instead of being an accidental error of omission^[21]. Both P.L Gupta^[22] and A.L Basham^[23] are of the opinion that the omission of the name of Skandagupta's mother signifies that he was born of a mistress, a concubine or a slave girl in the harem. A.L Basham cites the statement of the Bhitari inscription that he was raised to the dignity of an āryan by the songs and panegyrics of the bards as a corroborative evidence of the humble origin of Skandagupta. Had Skandagupta been a Śūdrā-putra or a Pāraśava, he would not be recognized, as is evident from the testimony of the contemporary writer Yājñavalkya, as a scion of the Gupta family; in that case, Skandagupta's claim to the revival of the glory of the Gupta family and prominence in the Gupta lineage would remain inexplicable^[25]. The alleged reference to Skandagupta's elevation to the status of an āryan is based on A.L Basham's interpretation of the term āryatām in the passage gītaiś=ca stutibhiś=ca vandaka-jano yaṁ prāpayaty=āryatām in the sense of āryan status^[26]. But the term may be employed in the sense of respect, greatness, tribute etc. And judged in this context, the passage may be taken to imply, 'to whom respect was paid by the bards in the form of songs and panegyrics'^[27]. J. Agrawal's interpretation that Skandagupta blushed when his eulogy was recited^[28], suits the context best. This humility is highlighted by the inscription which states that not only was Skandagupta a mighty conqueror, he was also a benevolent ruler who 'showed mercy to the conquered people in distress'^[29]. He became neither proud nor arrogant, though his glory increased day by day^[30].

The omission of the name of Skandagupta's mother may be for consideration of metre^[31]. H.C Raychaudhuri^[32] rightly points out that the evidence of the seals, which being royal are more accurate, should be differentiated from that of the ordinary praśastis, which at time omit the name of the mother of the reigning king, even though she may be the chief queen. R.K. Mookerji^[33] echoes Raychaudhuri's viewpoint and states that the epigraphic practice of mentioning mother of the ruling king is not

uniform or conclusive. J.Agrawal^[34] opines that the poet who composed the Bhitari inscription was so keen for varṁśogāna the he even forgot to mention the name of the mother of Skandagupta.

The enemies who had posed a serious threat to the Gupta sovereign power and who were overcome after a very strenuous fight were the Pushyamitras, who had built up a strong military power and the resources for a war^[35]. What Fleet^[36] read as Pushyamitrāṁś, was read by Divekar^[37] as yuddhy=amitrāṁś=cha (enemies in war). D.R. Bhandarkar rejected the reading of Fleet and accepted that of Divekar, stating that it is highly strange that such an insignificant clan as the Pushyamitras should all at once rise to such an eminence as to dominate Gupta supremacy for a while, only to sink into perennial oblivion thereafter^[38]. Ashvini Agrawal^[39] counters Bhandarkar's opinion by stating that if Bhavadattavarman of a tiny Nala kingdom could defeat the Vākāṭ akas who were masters of a fairly extensive kingdom in the deccan, then the relatively insignificant Pushyamitras could as well have shaken the mighty Guptas by launching an offensive against them. It seems highly improbable that an opponent who troubled Skandagupta so much that he had to pass a whole night on bare ground wouldn't even be mentioned by name and classified generally as Yudhy-amitrān. 'Pushyamitrān' reading seems correct to us.

Attempts have been made to identify the Pushyamitras and the region inhabited by them. K.D. Bajpai^[40] identifies them with the scions of the Mitra dynasties (pañchāla region) and K.C. Jain^[41] considers them as progenies of the Śuṅ ga-mitra chiefs of Ahichchhatrā, Mathurā, Ayodhyā and Kauśāmbī. R.D. Banerji^[42] identifies them with the Hūṇ as and S.R. Goyal^[43] with the Varmans of Malwa. The most convincing identification, that it was a tribe inhabiting Mekala on the Narmada, is based on purāṇ ic testimony^[44]. S.R. Goyal's^[45] theory that Pushyamitras were assisted by Vākāṭ akas is fantastic and cannot be accepted for not even a single evidence supports the claim. In the present state of our knowledge it seems extremely difficult to fix the place of battle but it seems that the confrontation with the Guptas would have occurred not very far away from the Maikal range.

Bhitari inscription states that Skandagupta 'placed (his) left foot on a footstool which was the king (of that tribe himself)' ^[46]. Skandagupta's placing his foot on the king's helpless body and his mother's tears denote the responsibility of the Pushyamitras in Kumāragupta's death. The possibility of Kumāragupta meeting his end in or due to the battle against the Pushyamitras cannot be ignored. The emperor's death would have thrown the empire into chaos and jeopardized the continuation of the Guptas as an imperial family. Humiliation of the Pushyamitran king by Skandagupta was a symbol of his completed vengeance. His mother's tears depict the relief that she felt when she realised that her son had saved the empire and exacted revenge by annihilating the Pushyamitras. The lack of corroborative evidence refrains us from formulating positive conclusions. Kamsa, in a fit of rage, had ordered the death of Dēvakī, Vāsudeva and Nanda. As a result Kṛ ishṇ a assassinated the villainous king in front of the people of Mathurā, thus saving his family. So the most plausible explanation that can be given is that when the Guptas were facing the fear of obliteration, Skandagupta's heroics on the battlefield ensured that the Guptas lived on and he emerged as the saviour of his family, just like the Vaishṇ ava deity. The

victory was decisive and the tribe so thoroughly subdued that after their defeat we hear no mention of them in any source.

Skandagupta had to fight a more formidable enemy- the Hūṇ as and the battle was so intense that it 'made the earth shake' ^[47]. Skandagupta worked such a havoc in their ranks, that they suffered a crushing defeat and took to flight, carrying with them the tales of Skandagupta's extraordinary prowess, and the Indian frontiers were made immune from the menace for another half a century ^[48].

McGovern^[49] asserts, Skandagupta was defeated many times by the Hūṇ as and the Gupta Empire almost corroded away as a result of their successive invasions. R.D. Banerji^[50] postulates that Skandagupta died fighting the Hūṇ as the third time. He proposes that during the Hūṇ a invasion, Purugupta set himself as rival king and Skandagupta was defeated by the Hūṇ as and died. V.A. Smith^[51] posits that there were reseeded Hūṇ a invasions, and Skandagupta was unable to check them in the later part of his reign, as he had done in the earlier part of it, and succumbed to them. K.K. Thaplyal ^[52] rightly points that some scholars were so overwhelmed by the fighting skills of the Hūṇ as as also the record of their success in battles fought outside India, that they took them as victorious against Skandagupta, despite the fact that there is no evidence to substantiate it. Another view that can be out rightly rejected is Bhandarkar's viewpoint that the Nāgas invited the Hūṇ as to invade the Gupta Empire ^[53].

The place where the battle between Skandagupta and the Hūṇ as was fought hasn't been satisfactorily identified. Some scholars, following Fleet's reading Gāṇ ga-dhvani in the Bhitari pillar inscription, believe that the battle was fought on the banks of Ganga ^[54]. Chhabra ^[55] and J. Agrawal ^[56] instead read śārṇ ga-dhvani 'twang of the bow' and take it suggestive of a battle scene. K.K. Thaplyal ^[57] echoes Sohoni's ^[58] view that the Hūṇ as overran the Gangetic plain upto Bhitari and in the battle Kumāragupta was killed, otherwise there is just no reason why this particular site was selected to commemorate Kumāragupta. According to J. Agrawal, the Hūṇ as never penetrated into any part of India near the Ganga ^[59] and the Hūṇ a war was fought in Surāshṭ ra, the region for which Skandagupta is said to have deeply deliberated to find out a very competent official to govern ^[60]. We mustn't forget the asseveration of Mehrauli iron pillar inscription^[61] which states that Chandra crossed the seven mouths(sapta-mukhāni) of Indus to overwhelm, probably, the Hūṇ as. Talking about the path that Chandra (Chandragupta II) took Ashvini Agrawal^[62] writes "It is therefore clear that Chandra proceeded for the conquest of the Vālhikas from the lower Indus valley via Bolan pass and thence took a northerly direction towards Bactria which was partly held by the Kushāṇ as and partly by the Hūṇ as about this time." There shouldn't be a hindrance then, in accepting that the Hūṇ as, seeking revenge, followed the same path from Bactria to the Bolan pass to Gujarat where they collided with the forces marshalled by Skandagupta. This view seems more cogent .

The Pushyamitra and the Hūṇ a wars in the Bhitari inscription solve a two fold purpose. Not only does it help in refuting the claim of some scholars that Kumāragupta (I) abdicated the throne ^[63] for during a dire situation like this the emperor mustn't had resigned himself to religious duties, it also proves that Skandagupta was the worthy and rightful claimant to the throne and Bhitari

inscription's claim that he was the most eminent hero in the lineage of the Guptas is not a vain boast. The Kahaum stone pillar inscription which serves as an epilogue to the Bhitari epigraph refers to year 141 (gupta era) as a Śāntē varshē^[64] (peaceful year) of Skandagupta. The fact that Skandagupta triumphed in eliminating the threat posed to the empire and by 460 AD established tranquillity throughout his dominion is discernible.

Verses 9-12 state the purpose of the Bhitari inscription. The object of it was to record the installation of the image of the God Śārṅ gin^[65]. In the Mahābhārata, Vāsudeva's and/or Kṛ ishṇ a's bow is called Śārṅ ga (it is the divine Vaishṇ ava bow)^[66]. In verse 10^[67] Skandagupta is credited with the making of an image of a deity that is known to be a mighty archer and reflects the qualities^[68] of himself and his father. In view of the fact that the merit of this act is assigned to the deceased father, Kumāragupta, the name suggested for the image, Kumārasvāmin, is an intelligent supposition^[69]. To summarize, the inscription in verses 9-12 tells us that Skandagupta installed the image of Vāsudeva, possibly named Kumārasvāmin, a deity who's a great archer just like Kumāragupta and for its maintenance Skandagupta assigned the community to the deity, meaning, he exempted that community from taxes, so that its surplus production could be used for worship and maintenance. Both beneficial acts were performed to increase the merit of the deceased father, Kumāragupta.

It has already been shown that the theory of Bhitari being the place where Skandagupta clashed with the Hūṇ as or Pushyamitras doesn't seem tenable, for the Guptas wouldn't have just lazed around at Patliputra waiting for the antagonists to run over their territory and reach as far as Ghazipur. If we can really hazard a conjecture pertaining to the location of the pillar, it should be that Bhitari must have been related somehow to the original home of the Guptas. Competent authorities have already shown that corroborating the literary, numismatic and epigraphical evidence reveals Eastern part of modern day Uttar Pradesh as the sole contender for the region where the Guptas appeared for the first time as a political entity.^[70] Sarnath is the earliest place associated with the Guptas, for it finds mention in relation to the first known Gupta ruler Śrī Gupta. I-tsing's testimony provided the first piece of evidence when his Mṛ igaśikhāvana was correctly identified with the deer park at Sarnath^[71]. Furthermore, an inscription on the pedestal of an image found at Sarnath referring to it having been established by Śrī Gupta^[72], the lord (Svāmi) is palaeographically datable to c. 3rd-4th century AD. The title Svāmi may indicate that Śrī Gupta could have been a chieftain, if not a king though the Gupta inscriptions from Samudragupta onwards provide him with the title of Mahārāja. Considering that the distance between Bhitari and Sarnath isn't even 40km it's not unreasonable to believe that Śrī Gupta's petty territory stretched between these two places, inclusive of them both. The succession of political conquests can be gleaned as such. Original home being Bhitari, Śrī Gupta set out towards Sarnath, capturing it. Chandragupta I, if purānic testimony is believed, extended his dominion further to Prayāg on the Ganges, Ayodhayā and Magadha^[73]. Infact, Samudragupta's Allahabad praśasti^[74] which gives an account of the Āryavarta monarchs uprooted by Samudragupta makes no mention of any king residing in the Bhitari-Sarnath region. Next comes the clinching evidence of the Bhitari inscription itself. D.C. Sircar observed that Skandagupta may have

installed the image of the Vishṇu and granted the village for the latter's worship for the merit of Kumāragupta (I) on the occasion of an annual śrāddha of the dead king^[75]. T.P. Verma building on Sircar's premise exhorts, "It is noteworthy here that Bhitari could not have been chosen for the śrāddha of his father unless it was his ancestral home. Bhitari, which is very near to Vārāṇasi, cannot be regarded to have been a holy place worthy of performing the śrāddha of his father by a king like Skandagupta so it should be regarded as the ancestral place of the Guptas."^[76] Their very existence as a political entity was in jeopardy and a loss to either the Pushyamitra or the Hūṇas would have deracinated the dynasty that was established by Gupta. To commemorate Skandagupta's heroic triumph which ensured that the Imperial house of the Guptas continued, a place was chosen from where it all began around two centuries ago - Bhitari.

Dandekar^[77] writes: 'His wise administration, his heroic wars, his patriotic ambitions- all these made Skandagupta one of the greatest Gupta emperors. K.K. Thaplyal^[78] nominates Samudragupta and Chandragupta II for the title of the greatest Gupta monarch and agrees with R.C. Majumdar in considering the former of the two as the greatest ruler of the dynasty. While Samudragupta and Chandragupta II united most of the Indian subcontinent under one banner, Skandagupta made sure that the Gupta flag soared high even in the worst of situations. Had it not been for his valour, Gupta Empire would have faded into obscurity. So Ashvini Agrawal^[79] labelling Skandagupta as 'the greatest of all the Gupta rulers by all standards of judgement' seems justifiable.

Notes and References

1. Thaplyal, K.K., *The Imperial Guptas*, p. 240.
2. Bhandarkar, D.R., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III, p. 313.
3. Fleet, J.F., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III, p. 54. Eulogising Samudragupta as being the restorer of the aśvamēdha sacrifice and the very axe of Kṛitānta reminds us of the Aśvamēdha and Battle axe type coins of the Emperor. (Altekar, A.S., *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, pp. 56-69). Noteworthy, is the epithet 'sarvarājochchettā' used here for Samudragupta. The same legend occurs on the reverse of Kācha coins (ibid., p. 88), thus making the case that the two were identical. Discussing the Kācha-Samudragupta debate is not the purpose of this paper. Some scholars take Samudragupta and Kācha to be the same (see Agrawal, A., *Rise and Fall of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 105) while others have chosen the opposing standpoint (see Thaplyal, K.K., pp. 69-89).
4. Ibid., pp. 54-55.
5. Ibid., p. 53.
6. Sinha, B.P., *The Decline of the Kingdom of Magadha*, pp. 41 ff.
7. Goyal, S.R., *A History of the Imperial Guptas*, pp. 308 ff.
8. Raychaudhuri, H.C., *Political History of Ancient India*, p. 509.
9. Fleet, J.F., *op.cit.*, p. 53.

10. Altekar, A.S., *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, pp. 242-243.
11. Raychaudhuri, H.C., *op.cit.*, p. 509.
12. Majumdar, R.C., in *Comprehensive History of India*, III (i), p. 70.
13. Ganguly, D.K., *The Imperial Guptas and their times*, p. 78.
14. Fleet, J.F., *op.cit.*, p. 55.
15. Mookerji, R.K., *Gupta Empire*, p. 90.
16. Fleet, J.F., *op.cit.*, p. 55.
17. Raychaudhuri, H.C., *op.cit.*, p. 506, n2.
18. Bhandarkar, D.R., *op.cit.*, p. 80.
19. Agrawal, A., *Rise and Fall of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 210.
20. Thaplyal, K.K., *op.cit.*, p. 249.
21. Majumdar, R.C., *op.cit.*, p. 71. Sinha, B.P., *op.cit.*, p. 31.
22. *The Imperial Guptas*, p. 330.
23. Basham, A.L., *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XVII, p. 367.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 369.
25. Ganguly, D.K., *op.cit.*, p. 80.
26. Basham, A.L., *op.cit.*, p. 369.
27. Ganguly, D.K., *op.cit.*, p. 80.
28. Thaplyal, K.K., *op.cit.*, p. 252.
29. Fleet, J.F., *op.cit.*, p. 56.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.
31. Thaplyal, K.K., *op.cit.*, p. 251.
32. Raychaudhuri, H.C., *op.cit.*, pp. 505-06.
33. *Gupta Empire*, p. 94.
34. Agrawal, J., *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, XLVIII-XLIX, pp. 325-327.
35. Agrawal, A., *op.cit.*, p. 211.
36. Fleet, J.F., *op.cit.*, p. 54.
37. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, I, pp. 99 ff.
38. Bhandarkar, D.R., *op.cit.*, p. 80.
39. Agrawal, A., *op.cit.*, p. 211.
40. Bajpai, K.D., in B.Ch. Chhabra et. al. (ed.), *Reappraising Gupta History for S.R Goyal*, p. 202.
41. *Malwa through the ages*, p. 238.
42. *The Age of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 46.
43. *The Imperial Guptas*, p. 359.
44. Pargiter, F.E., *Dynasties of the Kāli Age*, p. 51.
45. *The Imperial Guptas*, p. 348.
46. Fleet, J.F., *op.cit.*, p. 55.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
48. Agrawal, A., *op.cit.*, p.212. An echo of Skandagupta's victory over the Hūṇ as is perhaps to be found in *Kathāsaritasāgara* of Somadeva.
49. *The Early Empires of Central Asia*, p. 416.
50. *The Age of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 310.

51. Early history of India, 3rd ed., p. 310.
52. Thaplyal, K.K., op. cit., p. 261.
53. Bhandarkar, D.R., op. cit., p. 81.
54. Thaplyal, K.K., op. cit., p. 260.
55. In Deshpande, G.T., et.al.(ed) Felicitation volume presented to Mahamahopadhyaya, Dr. VV Mirashi, p. 369.
56. Researches in Indian epigraphy and numismatics, p. 29.
57. Thaplyal, K.K., op. cit., p. 260.
58. Sohni, S.V., "Notes and queries on Bhitari pillar inscription of Skandagupta", JBRS .Vol. LIII, Jan-Dec1967, p. 105.
59. Agrawal, J., Researches In Indian Epigraphy and Numismatics, p. 29.
60. Agrawal, J., Proceedings of the Indian History Congress 1958, pp. 160-61.
61. Bhandarkar, D.R., op. cit., p. 259.
62. Agrawal, A., op.cit.,p. 181. Ashvini Agrawal accepts the view that the Hūṇ entered from the Bolan pass and cites the evidence of the Hūṇ as setting up their headquarters at Badghis (see Agrawal, A., op.cit., p. 214).
63. For different theories, see Thaplyal, K.K., op. cit., p. 232.
64. Bhandarkar, D.R., Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, III, p. 307.
65. Fleet, J.F., op. cit., p. 56.
66. Mahābhārata 5.155.6,9. Cf., Mahābhārata 2.2.12,3.21.18. Amarakośa 1.1.40 gives Śārṅgi as Vishṇu's name.
67. Fleet, J.F, op. cit., p. 56.
68. The archer type coins of Kumāragupta and Skandagupta provide ample evidence (vide. Agrawal, A., op.cit., pp. 24-28)
69. Bhandarkar, D.R., op.cit., p. 314. Bhandarkar cites numerous instances of persons setting up idols of Vishṇu or Śiva either in their own name or in their father's or mother's name (Bhandarkar, D.R., op.cit., p. 237 n.1)
70. Agrawal, A., Rise and Fall of the Imperial Guptas, pp. 79-82; Goyal, S.R., A History of the Imperial Guptas, pp. 41ff; Sharma, T.R., A Political History of the Imperial Guptas, pp. 36-40.
71. Agrawal, A., op.cit., p. 81.
72. Mukherjee, B.N., Commentary in H.C. Raychaudhuri's, Political History of Ancient India, pp. 765-766. B.N. Mukherjee adds a note of caution- Uncertainty prevails over "whether he was the same as the founder of the Gupta family and, if he was so, whether the area of Sarnath was within the original territory or home province of the Imperial Guptas. Sarnath, a place of pilgrimage, could have witnessed dedications by outsiders." But the circumstantial evidence here is too strong to reject Sarnath's inclusion in the home province of Śrī Gupta, who was the first ruler of the Gupta dynasty.
73. Thaplyal, K.K., op. cit., pp. 61-62.
74. Bhandarkar, D.R., op.cit., p. 217.
75. Sircar, D.C., Select Inscriptions, Vol.1, 1965, p. 324, n3.
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