

THE ORIGIN OF GANGA DYNASTY –A NEW INSIGHT

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The historians of Orissa have shown how (the origin of India's illustrious Ganga dynasty) is shrouded in mystery. Infact, no documentary historical evidence has yet been available to establish their origin. These historians have accepted the inscriptions engraved at different times by the Ganga dynasties, chiefly of Kalinganagar and Mysore, as the basis of their research. Besides these royal dynasties, a community called Gangavamsa has spread all over India and the historians are completely silent about it. The kings of the Ganga dynasty had got their pedigree inscribed by their brahmin eulogists as well as the courtiers. In this regard, Dr. S.N. Rajaguru has given the following opinion: "Different royal dynasties, while narrating their geneology, were eager to identify themselves with the famous solar or lunar dynasties of the Puranas"¹. Dr. H. K. Mahatab and other historians have given similar opinions and have said that for this reason the geneology available from these inscriptions do not tally with the historical facts. For all these reasons, we have to trace out the common men of the Ganga dynasty or Ganga community spread all over India and try to know their ancestry in order to unravel the mystery surrounding the origin of the Ganga dynasty. It can be asserted that the historical Ganga dynasty has evolved from among the common men of the Ganga dynasty or Ganga community. Hence this writer has made an humble attempt to discuss the family history of Ganga dynasty or Ganga community, while trying to establish the origin of the Ganga dynasty.

A brief account of the Ganga dynasty available from the inscriptions engraved by the royal dynasties of Ganga community may be discussed. It is known from the inscription of Jainaguru Simhanandi, compiled by B. Lewis Rice that the forefathers of Ganga dynasty coming from Ayodhyapur under the leadership of Vishnugupta had initially settled at Ahichhatra located in the basin of the rivers Ganga and Yamuna. Later on they proceeded to Southern India in quest of new territory. On the way some of them had settled at Kalinga. Being advised by Jainaguru Simhanandi, Vishnugupta along with others came to Karnataka and established a new kingdom.² According to this inscription the Ganga dynasties of Karnataka and Kalinga had come from Northern India. In the opinion of Dr. N. K. Sahu, both the western and eastern Ganga dynasty belong to one and the same dynasty and they came from North India in 5th century A.D. and established new kingdoms in Kalinga and Karnataka respectively. We cite here the views of B.Lewis Rice on the above mentioned inscription of Jainaguru Simhanandi: "The origin of the

Gangas is derived from Ikshvaku and trace back to Ayodhyapura. Under Visnugupta the seat of government was moved to Ahichhatra, which, it is hinted, as Vijayapura. x x x With the arrival of Dadiga and Madhava in the South, at Ganga-perur and the establishment of the Gangavadi kingdom in Mysore aided by Simhanandi, we seem to come to historical events.”³

Supporting the above opinion Dr. H. K. Mahatab has shown that this Ganga community has been divided into several divisions and families with the passage of time.⁴ In the Andhavaram copperplate inscription of Indravarman III of Ganga dynasty, the Gangas are described as the descendants of the Tumbura dynasty.⁵ But, for different reasons, historians have not accepted this as an authentic evidence; rather they have expressed doubts about the facts of the inscription.⁶ So far no historian has been able to identify this *Tumbura* as a dynasty. It is mentioned in the *Vayu Purana* that at the foot hills of the Vindhyas, there was a Janapada (human habitation) named Tumura, Tumbura:

*“Toshalah Koshalaschaiva Taipura Vaidisastratha
Tumurastamburaschaiva sat Suranishadhah saha
Anupastundikerascha Vitihotrahyabantayah
Ete Janapadah sarve Vindhya prustha nivasinah.”*

[*Vayu Purana*, 1st Part, 45 chapter, *Bharatvarsha Varnana*.]

The translation of these lines are given below. The *Janapadas* such as *Tosali*, *Kosala*, *Tripura*, *Vidisha*, *Tumura*, *Tumhura*, *Nishadha*, *Anupa*, *Sundhikera*, *Vitihotra* and *Abanti* are at the foot of the Vindhyas. This implies that all these *Janapadas* are to the north of the Vindhyas.

*“Tumura Tumbura adi Janapada jete
Vindhyagiri antarbhukta emane Samaste.”⁷*

These two lines can be translated as follows. *The Janapadas* like Tumura, Tumbura etc. are all situated at the foot of the Vindhyas. Probably, while the Ganga dynasty or Vamsa was proceeding towards South from North India, a smaller branch from among them settled at the foot hills of Vindhyas and was known as the Tumbura race. Bachan Dubey, a researcher, while identifying the Tumbura race, has aptly stated, while dealing with the *Janapadas* of Vindhya Pristha of puranic period, mentions Malaya, Karusa (Baghel Khand), Mekala (Amarkantak), Utkal, Dasarma (Dhasan), Kiskindha (it is different from Kiskindha of South India), Tosali (Sisupalagarh in Orissa), *Kosala* (Dakshina Kosala, Raipur Bilaspur), Tripuri (Tripuri near Jabalpur), Vaidisa (Bhelsa), Naisadha (Narvargarh), Tundikara (Sindikar in Matsya), Vitihotra, Anupa (Omkar Mandhatri along the Narmada) and Tumbura (Tumain-Tumburu, Masya)⁸. In the abovementioned statement Mr. Dubey has identified the Tumbura-race with Masyas. That this word Masya written in English, may be an ‘Apabhramsa’ (distortion) of the word *Mahishya* can’t be ruled out. In an

attempt to identify this Mahisya-race with *Kaivarttas* (fishermen), the historian Jagabandhu Singh has defined the Mahisya-race. Quoting evidences from the *Padma Purana* and *Brahmavaibarta Purana*, he has established that the Mahisyas and the Kaivarttas are virtually the same. In his opinion, the child born of a Kshatriya father and Vaisya mother is called a *Kaivartta* or *Mahisya*.⁹ According to the Bengali historian Sevananda Bharati, the primary abode of the Mahisya-race was located in the northern bank of river Narmada, which originated from the foot hills of the Vindhya. The present day Ratnavati on the bank of river Narmada is perhaps another name of the ancient city Mahishimati. It was the old capital of the Mahishyas. Therefore, it had the name Mahishimati Nagari (the city of Mahishimati). The Mahishyas had migrated from Ayodhya on the bank of river Saraju and entered the province Midnapur through the eastern part of the Vindhya.¹⁰ From the above accounts given by Sevananda Bharati, it is obvious that a section of the *Kaivartta* or Mahisya-race had come from the banks of river Saraju and settled at the foot hills of the Vindhya. The name of this city Mahishimati is mentioned in the *Mahabharata* and *Srimad Bhagabata* of Vyasa. From this it appears that these *Kaivarttas* or *Mahisyas* had come from the bank of the Saraju and settled at the foot of the Vindhya in the age of *Mahabharata* or prior to that. It is probable that the *Kaivarttas* or *Mahisyas*, who had settled at the foot hills of the Vindhya had later on identified themselves as the Tumbura-race described in the Vayu Purana. In a book, written in Bengali and edited by Biharilal Kalye, it is mentioned: "The Gangas of Orissa are remarkable among the powerful independent kings ruling over different places of India. The first king of this Ganga dynasty Anantavarma belonged to the Mahisya race."¹¹ In other words he was one among the *Kaivarttas*. The historian, Jagabandhu Singh has challenged this opinion in his book *Prachina Utkal* (Ancient Utkal). According to him, the emperors of the very powerful and famous Ganga dynasty can never belong to the Kaivartta community which led a very poor life. Whatever may be the authenticity of the opinions of historians like Biharilal Kalye and Jagabandhu Singh, our discussion will show that these *Kaivarttas* belong to a great ancient race and they had a great tradition. Pandit Lalmohan Vidyanidhi in his book *Sambandha Nirnaya* and Mahima Ch. Mazumdar in *Gaude Brahmana* have mentioned that the Mahisya-race became very powerful and later on were divided into four parts, namely, Aswapati, Gajapati, Narapati and Chhatrapati. The Gajapatis had established their empire in Orissa.¹² In the Census Report, 1891 of Midnapur district of Ancient Kalinga, there is mention of the history of this Kaivartta or Mahisya-race: "The *Kaibarttas* are probably an offshoot of a race or tribe whose original seat was in the upcountry. They say that their ancestors lived on the banks of the Saraju or Gogri in Oudh. x x x When the forefathers of the present *Kaivarttas* migrated from their original home on the bank of the Saraju, their route probably lay along the eastern limit of the table land in central India and tradition assigns their first appearance in the district of Midnapur to *Sakabda* 822. They were led by five chiefs, who established as many separate chieftaincies in the district (1) Tamralipta or Tamruk, (2) Balisita, (3) Turka, (4)

Sujamutha, (5) Kutabpur.” This means the *Kaivarttas* had first settled on the bank of river Saraju or river Gogri in Oudh or Ayodhya. There is a tradition to the effect that their ancestors had settled in Midnapur district in 822 *Saka* era crossing the plateau of Madhya Pradesh. The five leaders who led them to this region had established five separate kingdoms namely, (1) Tamralipta or Tamluk, (2) Balisita or Mainagarh, (3) Turkee, (4) Sujamutha, (5) Kutabpur. Accepting this opinion, Sir Harbert Risley has mentioned in his book *Tribes and castes of Bengal*, they have five princedoms in the Midnapur district. Sevananda Bharati has mentioned that the ancient Tamralipta or modern Tamluk is the first settlement of the Gangas. Tamluk had extended from Midnapur to Orissa.¹³ That the *Kaivarttas* had come to Midnapur district in 822 of the *Saka* era may not be true and probably it may be 822 of the *Kaliyuga* era. It is because the Kurukshetra war was fought after several hundred years of the beginning of the *Kaliyuga*. In the *Rajatarangini* written by the Kashmiri historian Kalhan, it is mentioned that the Kauravas and the Pandavas had appeared after 753 years of the beginning of *Kaliyuga*. In the Kurukshetra war, Tamradhwaja, the son of Rajarshi Mayurdhwaja of Tamralipta kingdom had fought on the side of the Pandavas. It has been mentioned in *Imperial Gazetteers of India*, Vol. 1: “There was a kingdom of Tamralipta or Sumha, comprising what now constitutes the district of Midnapur and Howrah. The rulers of the country seem to have been *Kaivarttas*.”¹⁴

From this it can be inferred that Mayurdhwaja, the first king of Tamralipta described by Kalhan belonged to the *Kaivartta* or Mahisya-race and the *Kaivartta* or Mahisya-kings ruled over Tamralipta or Tamluk as sovereign kings for 4000 years beginning from pre-Mahabharata age to 17th century A.D. No other dynasty ruled for such a long time in the human history. This opinion has been accepted by Biharilal Kalye.¹⁵ This is the recorded history about the origin of the *Kaivarttas* or *Mahisyas*. Strangely enough there are similar historical records about the origin of the Gangas. It is known from the Vizagpattanam & Korni copperplate inscriptions¹⁶ of Chodaganga Dev that by 5th century A.D., eighty kings of the Ganga dynasty had ruled over Gangabadi of Kolahalpur. If one king had ruled at least for a period of twenty years, then these eighty kings would have ruled for about 1600 years. If we consider from this angle the Ganga dynasty had appeared 1600 years before 5th century A.D., which means their origin dates back to 11th century B.C. In this context we may mention that historians have agreed that the *Mahabharata* war was fought in 9th century B.C. This means the Ganga dynasty had appeared and achieved renown much before the events described in the epic *Mahabharata*. It has been noted above that Sevananda Bharati has established ancient Tamralipta or Modern Tamluk as the primary abode of the Ganga dynasty. The same has also been mentioned by Dr. Mahatab.¹⁷ Dr. N. K. Sahu has his own opinion: “Probably the primary abode of the Gangas is that region, which is described as Gangaridai by Meghasthenes.”¹⁸ The region shown as Gangaridai in the maps of the period of Meghasthenes can be identified with the coastal region of river Ganges along with modern Midnapur. Gangaridai has

been derived from the word Gangaradhi. Jagabandhu Singh has mentioned in his book *Prachina Utkal* that some Bengali historians are of opinion that Gangabadi, the name mentioned in Vizagpattnam and Komi copperplate inscriptions of Chodaganga Dev is a derivative of Gangaradhi. N.N. Basu, who has translated the inscriptions of the imperial Gangas has mentioned that the first Ganga king Ananta-varman and his descendants, who ruled over *Gangabada* or *Gangabadi* were also called Rudhi Ganga.¹⁹ It may be mentioned here that the word *radhi* or *rudhi* was applied to the *Kaivarttas* who inhabited the entire east coast region stretching from the mouth of river Ganges to the river Godavari in the South. It has been mentioned earlier that apart from the Ganga dynasty another dynasty called Ganga Vamsa has been living at different places of India. They are identified as *kaivarttas*, *Keutas* and *Dhivaras*. Trying to identify them, E.Thurston has said, the Jallaries are Telugu Fishermen, Palanquin bearers and cultivators. 'Jallaries' is derived from *Jala*, a net. Some are fresh water fishermen, while other fish with a cast-net (*Visuru Valalu*) from the sea shore or on the open sea. They bear the name Ganga Vamsamu, or people of Ganga, in the same way that a division of the Kabbera fishing caste is called Gangimakkalu. In caste Organisation and ceremonials, the Jalaries coincide with the *Milas*. They are called *Noliyas* by the Oriyas of Ganjam²⁰. Speaking about the Kabberas mentioned above, Thurston has said elsewhere: Gangimakkalu or Gangaputra meaning children or sons of the Ganga, the Goddess of water is the name a subdivision of Kabbera. The allied Gangavamsamu or people of Ganga is a name for Jalaris.²¹ The Kabberas are a caste of Canarees fishermen and cultivators.²² The Keutas worship especially Dasaraja and Gangadevi²³. In this way Sir Harbert Risley, the author of *Tribes and castes of Bengal* has also identified the *Kaivarttas* of Ganga dynasty living in the undivided Bengal. Agreeing with Sir Harbert Risley and E.Thurston, Mr. Kashinath Mishra has said, the Keutas originate from the *Kaivarttas*. First, the *Kaivarttas* were divided in to two parts. Those who resorted to cultivation were called *Halias* (cultivators). Those who earned their livelihood with nets were called *Jalia* or *Jalua* (fishermen). Other branches of the *Kaivarttas* were *Kandara*, *Kahara*, *Bagta*, *Gokha*, *Jamatalia*, *Bharatalia*, *Gingaraj*, *Keuta*, *Semili*, *Behera*, *Dhibara* and *Jhada* etc. They have surnames such as *Bag*, *Setha*, *Pande*, *Tana*, *Danshana* and *Mahalik* etc. Mother Ganga, the water Goddess, is their chief deity and they claim that they are the descendants of Ganga. They think that the famous Ganga kings of Kalinga belonged to the different branches of their race. *Kaivarttas* belonging to Ganga dynasty and living in the coastal areas call themselves *Jajari*. They are seen in the entire east coast region starting from Midnapur to Rameswar in the south. The *Jalari* fishermen living in Ganjam (Orissa) and Andhra Pradesh have different names like *Jalari*, *Nolia*, *Barakotia*, *Satakoshia*, *Panerundu kotala*, *Edukotala*, *Jona*, *Buguri*, *Bauri*, *Behera*, etc. Since the Keutas worship Samalai or Chaudeswari, they are called *Chudia-oda* or *Sutia-oda*. Another type of Keutas, living in hilly areas, catch fish from mountain streams with the help of a contraption made of bamboo. They are the Bishars named after their ancestor Basuki. The Jalaris of Ganga

dynasty claim that they had built the famous ports of *Peddapatna*, *Visakhapatna*, *Revalpatna* and *Vimilipatna*. They invite the people of their own caste living in these places to their marriage ceremonies. Like the *Kandhas* of some places calling themselves *Kahara*, the *Keutas* also call themselves *Kahara*. They have other names like *Dhimara*, *Dhibara*, *Karmakar*, *Mahara*, *Mahali* and *Mahala* etc. The *Gola* caste is an important branch of *Go-oda* or *Gauda* caste. The *Golas* have been divided into branches such as; *kadu Gola*, *Puja Gola*, *Komi*, *Jami* and *Musti* etc. They are the important inhabitants of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Karnatak and Tamilnadu. The branches like *Uduta*, *Idiga* and *Kuduga* etc., reside in Southern India and they call themselves *Gauda*. The *Golas* claim the present day Madaguia or *Odabadi* as their Original abode. They think that Nrusinghanath or Simhadriraju worshipped on Simhanhchal is their Father (God). Like the *Keutas* or *Kaivarttas* they claim that they belong to Ganga dynasty and that mother Ganga or Gangamma is their mother (Goddess). The icon of Gangamma is carved in the walls of their houses. The face and eyes of this icon are round and it has neither limbs nor body. They think one of their branches had conceived the image of Lord Jagannath. One of their branches is called *Gangaudu* or *Gangidu*.²⁴

From the above description it is obvious that apart from the Ganga dynasty, a community called *Gangavamsa* lived in different parts of India. They are identified as *Kaivartta*, *Keutas* or *Dhibara*. It will be reasonable to say that the Ganga Dynasty had originated from the *Kaivarttas* belonging to the Ganga race. Several English and Bengali historians have accepted this view. Accepting this view, Birupaksha Kar in his book, *Utkalre Bauddha yugara Itihasa O' Anyanya Prabandha* (The History of Bauddha Age in Utkal and other Essays) has said, this large state of Utkal had expanded its frontiers during the reign of the Ganga kings. Around 1100 A.D. the *Dhivaras* of Utkal had conquered Tamralipta. In the 12th year of his reign Anangabhima Dev had delivered a speech in the Puri-temple. In this speech he had said that the Utkal Empire had extended up to the river Damodar during the rule of the Ganga kings. From that period Tamralipta was included in the Utkal Empire" (1981, p. 8). Birupaksha Kar has not cited the evidence, which has led to such conclusion. If his remarks are true, it can be said beyond doubt that here the Ganga Dynasty has been identified with the *Dhibaras* of Utkal and Ganga Dynasty had originated from the *Dhibara*-race.

It is known from history that these *Kaivarttas* have been living in large numbers in areas stretching from the mouth of river Ganges, the Gangaridai region through the entire eastern coast of Kalinga up to Rameswaram in Tamilnadu. Besides they are also living in large numbers in the basins of the rivers namely, Ganga, Yamuna and Saraju of Northern India. They also live in Maharashtra, Mysore and the Vindhya regions. In an essay entitled, *Bharat Sagarer Mahishya Adhikar* (The rights of Mahisyas over the Indian seas), Sevananda Bharati has mentioned that the inhabitants of *Tamralipta* had gone to South and inhabited in Kalinga and areas located in the Southern coast of India.

The Tamils of Madras originated from the ancient Tamralipta race²⁵. Here it may be mentioned that the caste identified as Kaivartta by English researchers in books like Wilson's *World History and Tribes and castes of Bengal* of Sir Harbert Risley has been described as Mahishya by Sevananda Bharati in *Tamluk Itihas* and *Bharat Sagarer Mahishya Adhikar*. Bengali researchers like Rajakrushna Mukhopadhaya, Bankim Ch. Chattopadhyaya, Rajanikanta Gupta, Lalmohan Vidyandhi and Mahima Ch. Mazumdar have also tried to identify the with the Mahishya-race. While doing this they have taken into consideration only the history of Kaivartta-kings. If we make a comparative study of the English books and the Bengali books, we can know that the Kaivartta-race and the Mahishya-race are basically one and the same. Jagabandhu Singh has agreed to this opinion.²⁶

Basing on the views of Sir Harbert Risley and E.Thurston, Mr. Kashinath Mishra has shown that the *Keutas* have originated from the *Kaivarttas*. The *Kaivarttas* were, first, divided into two parts. Those who cultivated land were called Halia and those who caught fish with nets were called Jalua. Dr. Rajaguru has mentioned that maritime expedition was the chief occupation of the *Kaivarttas* inhabiting the coastal regions of Kalinga.²⁷ According to Dr. Rajaguru, although the shape of the boats in which people from Kalinga sailed to Ceylone is not yet known, it is beyond doubt the boats were rowed by the *Kaivarttas* of the coastal region of Orissa. Those *Kaivarttas* had a settlement near the port of Varuna. A *Kaivartta* royal dynasty was ruling over them. The Kings of the ancient Bhojaka dynasty had marital relationship with that dynasty. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the Kaivartta-race belongs to a higher race like that of the Kshatriyas. Under the instructions of those Kaivartta-kings, the experienced boatmen were rowing their boats from the port of Varuna to distant places. Even now the descendants of those *Kaivarttas* are living not only on the Ganjam coast, but also on the entire coast stretching from the river Ganges to river Godavari.²⁸ While discussing the history of Orissa in another context, Dr. Rajaguru has said that all the maritime expeditions undertaken from the South-Eastern coast beginning from the mouth of river Ganges were directed and controlled by those Kaivartta-kings. Citing evidence from the books of Sir Harbert Risley and E. Thurston, Mr. Kasinath Mishra has said that the Jalari sect of the *Kaivarttas* belonging to the Ganga dynasty had established the famous ports of Kalinga, namely, *Peddapatna*, *Visakhapatna*, *Revalpatna* and *Vimilipatna* etc. The chief occupations of these Kaivarttas were cultivation, fishing and maritime trade and expedition. The maritime trade of ancient Kalinga for which the Oriyas are proud was virtually controlled by the *Kaivarttas*. The adventurous *Kaivartta* sailors were sailing in the sea in their boats for months together and were carrying on trade in the distant islands in the sea. They belong to old *Sadhava* community (the traders) of whom both ancient Kalinga and modern Orissa feel proud. They had great achievements in the field of maritime trade. The Khudarankuni or Taa-poi legend and the festivals of boita vandana prevailing in Orissa owe their origin to these *Kaivarttas*.

Bashuli or *Basheli* is the tutelary deity of the Kaivarttas. This deity is being worshipped by the Kaivarttas in Ceylone, Kerala, Puri and in different coastal regions of India. The Kaivarttas live in the Basheli Sahi located in the north eastern direction of the Jagannath temple at Puri. The festivals celebrated by the Kaivarttas of Basheli Sahi on the fullmoon day of the month of Chaitra indicate their old traditions. This writer has come to know from a discussion with some Kaivartta leaders of Basheli Sahi that *Bashuli* or *Basheli* is the presiding deity of Shreekshetra, Puri. Probably at some point of time Shreekshetra Puri was the abode of the *Kaivarttas*. These *Kaivarttas* render a service to Lord Jagannath in the month of *Vaishakha* during the Chandan festival held for 21 days, when the lord is taken round in the *Narendra* tank on a boat. The *Kaivartta* servitors are called *Chapa Dalai*. The Keutas, who go to the river and the sea are otherwise called *Chapa Dalai*. In other words, they were called Dalai, Dalapati or Dala Behera. From the abovementioned interview, this writer has come to know that these people were acting as *Dalapati* (leader) of the Navy of the Gajapati kings of Ganga dynasty. From this it appears that they had relationship with Ganga dynasty. From ancient times *Bashuli* (Basheli), the tutelary deity of the *Kaivarttas* continues to be worshipped in the palace of the Gajapati king of Puri with pomp & ceremony. As a mark of that traditional worship, one saree and one rupee from the king is being sent to *Bashuli* peetha on every fullmoon day.²⁹ From this it appears that in the ancient days these *Kaivarttas* and their tradition had close relationship with the kings of Ganga dynasty. Twelve kalinga coins of the time of king Anantavarma Chodaganga Dev have been discovered from Kalingapatna, a place near Mukhalinga, which was once upon a time the capital of Kalinga. On one side of the fifth coin, there is the impression of a boat³⁰ Dr.Krupasindhu Bhatta in his essay. The Life Style of the Fisherman of the Chilika Region, has mentioned that the fishermen or the Kaivarttas of Chilika region worship Goddess Ganga.³¹ These *Kaivarttas* are identified as Vaisyas from the point of view of their nature, activities and occupation.

It has been shown that these *Kaivarttas* had ordered and well organised political and social institutions. There were different royal dynasties among them. During the celebration of social ceremonies like marriage they were inviting people of their own caste living in the ports built by them.³² Dr. Rajaguru also has mentioned that *Indrabhuti*, the king of Uddiyan belonged to the *Kaivartta* dynasty and Matsyendranath, the famous Nath-yogi was born in the Kaivartta-race.³³ Attempting to write the racial history of the Kaivarttas, the sudra-poet Achyutananda Das had written the *Kaivartta Gita*. Although he called himself a sudra, most probably he belonged to the Kaivartta-race. There are evidences in history to show that there was a separate social institution of the Kaivarttas on the sea-shore of Orissa. There they had a king of their own. It has been mentioned in the Banatumba copperplate inscriptions of Nettabhanja Dev that the Kshatriya kings of Orissa used to marry princesses from the *Kaivartta* dynasty.³⁴ The Bhanja king of Ghumsur had married a *Kaivartta* princess. The offsprings of Kshatriya kings and *Kaivartta*

princesses were identified with *Mahisyas*. This is proved from the definition of Mahishya-race given by Jagabandhu Singh.³⁵ The Mahishya race had originated in ancient Kalinga and some other places of ancient India from such marital relationship. When emperor Ashok invaded Kalinga he had to fight with a King, who was a *Kaivartta*. It becomes clear from the story of *Karubaki*. Karubaki was the daughter of the *Kaivartta* king whom Ashok had killed in the war. After the end of the war, being attracted by the beauty of Karubaki, Ashok took her away, forcibly married her and *Karubaki* found a place in history as the second queen of emperor Ashok. It has been mentioned in history that Ashok used to love his second queen very much and fulfilled all her wishes. Respecting the wishes of this queen Ashok had inscriptions in the name of *Karubaki*. Tibar, the son of this queen has also found a place in the pages of history. In order to win the support of the heroic Atabikas of Orissa, Ashok had made special arrangements. Accordingly he had placed one of the princes at Subarnagiri in the district of Phulbani of Orissa. Possibly that prince was Tibar, the son of *Karubaki*. Till now there is a *Kaivartta* street in that region of Subarnagiri. Although they identify themselves with the tribals, originally they belonged to the Kaivartta race. It becomes obvious from the above discussions that the Kaivarttas of Kalinga played an important role in maritime trade, literature, culture, folklore, folk song, legends and the spiritual field of Kalinga.

Dr. Rajaguru has mentioned elsewhere that the *Kaivarttas* or Keutas of North India, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa use the surname Dasa. In his opinion the Aryans in the Vedic age called non-Aryans Dasyu or Dasa and they used to look down upon these people. In the *Mahabharata* the name of Dasa king has been mentioned. Satyavati, the daughter of a Dasa king was the second queen of Santanu, a king belonging to the lunar dynasty. We know from the *Mahabharata* that when Satyavati was an unmarried Kaivartta girl, she had given birth to Krushna Dwaipayana Vyasa, who was sired by saint Parasara.³⁶

Regarding this Dr. S. K. Chatterjee has given the following opinion : "The Aryan invaders or immigrants found in India two groups of people, one of which they named was *Dasas* and *Dasyus* and other *Nishadas*. The *Dasa Dasyu* people evidently had ramifications or extensions in Iran as well. We have in the South East of the Caspians the Dahai people noted by the Greeks and *Daha* who are but the Iranian modification of Dasa, and in Iranian the word *dahyu* (when modern persian *dih*) was in use, meaning 'country' or 'the country side', which would only appear to have been originally a tribal name, the Iranian equivalent of the Indo Aryan *asyu*, generalised to mean the 'country' only. x x x The *Dasa Dasyu* (*Daha Dahyu*) people would appear to have spread from (at least Eastern Iran through Afghanistan to North Western and Western India-Punjab (and probably the Western or upper Ganges Valley) and Sind when the Aryans came into India".³⁷ About the word Dasa, a surname that represents a caste, it has been mentioned in "History and Culture of the Indian people" that it is a derivation from the word *Dahyus* from an Indo-European language. This word is a signifier of local inhabitants or natives.³⁸ Till today this word is in use in this sense in Iran. While entering into India from the side

of Iran, the Aryans had come across these local inhabitants and had identified them as *Dahyus*. Later on the word '*Dahyus*' was modified to *Dasyu* and *Dasa*. Although the word *Dahyus* was modified to *Dasyu* and *Dasa*, in the beginning this was never a derogatory word. According to Dr. Chatterjee this word was a signifier of local inhabitants or a definite tribe. Afterwards, when the local inhabitants and the Aryans were in conflict, the Aryans used *Dasyu* or *Dasa* in a contemptible sense. Although they used *Dasyu* or *Dasa* in this sense, on several occasions, the Aryans gave special status to these *Dasas* and addressed them as *Dasa varna* (*Dasa* caste), which was outside *chaturvarna* (the four main castes).³⁹ When the Aryan entered India, they were immensely rich and they led luxurious lives in urban areas, surrounded by forts. They had definite political organisations. The *Dasa* kings whom we know from Rigveda and other ancient vedic literature are *Ilibisha*, *Dhuni*, *Chumuri*, *Sambar*, *Varchin*, *Pipru* etc.⁴⁰ In his discussion Dr. Chatterjee has shown that while entering into India the Aryans confronted two castes namely *Dasa* and *Nishada*. The *Nishadas* lived at the foot hills of the Vindhyas and Satapura Mountains.⁴¹ Valmiki alias *Dasyu* Ratnakar, the author of the Ramayana belonged to this *Nishada* caste. Mr. Weber has identified the *Nishadas* as a primary caste and local inhabitants of India. In the Vedic literature this caste has been described as a mixed one resulting from inter caste marriage between *Brahman* men and *Sudra* women.⁴² Following this interpretation and quoting from *Sabdasagar*, a Hindi literary text, Gopal Ch. Praharaj has mentioned that the *Dasas* belong to the class of *Dhibaras* or *Keutas* (fishermen). In a special note, he has again mentioned that this caste is a product of the union between *Nishada* men and *Ayogaba* women. They build boats. *Dasa* is a family title among *Brahmans* and *Sudras* such as *Karanas* (writing caste), *Chasa* (farmers) and *Gaudas* (milkmen).⁴³ It may be mentioned here that when a non-Aryan caste achieved fame, at that time the Aryans, taking a liberal stand, were attributing imaginary paternity to that caste. This was a purposeful effort to own them. In this regard, we may cite the instances of *Dasyu* Ratnakar alias Valmiki, the saint Parasara, the queen Satyavati and Krushna Dwaipayana Vyasa. From the above discussion it is clear that these *Dasas* and *Nishadas* belonged to *Dhivara* or *Kaivartta* (fisherman) caste. Their occupation was building boats, rowing boats and catching fish. Apart from the *Dasa* and *Nishada* castes described by Dr. Chatterjee some other native castes are mentioned in Rigveda as well as in Vedic literatures. These castes are *Naga*, *Kirata*, *Savara*, *Pulinda*, *Pani*, *Kikata*, *Pundra*, *Villa*, *Santala*, *Gonda*, *Andhra*, *Mitibasa*, *Banara*, *Aja*, *Sigru*, *Yakhsya*, *Parnaka*, *Simyush* and *Chandala* etc.⁴⁴ All of them were primary castes. They were local inhabitants and lived in the forest. Although Rigveda does not give adequate description of these castes, their complete identity can be had from later vedic literatures. The composition of Rigveda and the arrival of the Aryas in India happened at the same time. On entering India, the Aryas faced the opposition of *Dasas* and *Kaivarttas*. Therefore, while composing Rigveda the Aryas did not adequately write about these castes. While entering into the then Jambu Dweepa or Bharat Varsa (present

day India) full of impenetrable mountains and dense forests, the Aryas avoided dangerous forest routes and proceeded through different river basins, which were comparatively safe. From the history of the arrival and progress of the Aryans, it is known that they attempted to settle on the river basins of *Sindhu*, *Saraswati*, *Ganga*, *Yamuna*, *Saraju* and other rivers in the north western frontier regions. While doing this, the local inhabitants, who confronted them were the *Kaivarttas* or the *Dasas*. The people of this *Kaivartta* or *Dasa* community were living in the basins of the above mentioned rivers. Building boats, rowing boats, weaving nets, catching fish and cultivation were their chief occupations. They opposed the arrival progress and setting of new habitations by the Aryas. For this there was collision between the two for a long time. The Aryas looked down upon the *Kaivarttas* or *Dasas*, who were living on the river basins. It is known from history that they possessed immense wealth and they had a well developed urban civilisation. They professed *Vratya* dharma, worshipped Linga (Phallus) and believed in Atharvaveda. Their religious life was unintelligible to the Aryas. When the Aryans came to India and composed Rigveda, the *Dasas* had a developed urban civilisation on the river basins of India and other local inhabitants had settled in dense forests.⁴⁵ In spite of the paucity of factual evidence about the origin of Ganga dynasty, we have made an elaborate discussion about the same. From this discussion the following become evident.

(a) The Ganga dynasty is the part of a great ancient *Kaivartta* or *Dasa* dynasty. Their original abode was located in the basins of rivers such as *Sindhu*, *Saraswati*, *Saraju*, *Yamuna*, and the sacred *Ganga* flowing in the north western frontiers of India. The mouth of river Ganga identified as *Gangaridai* was included in the above regions. For this reason, even after the rise and fall of a long historical period, they feel proud today by identifying themselves with Ganga dynasty or by calling themselves sons of Ganga. They have been worshipping mother Ganga as the primordial mother.

Although they inhabited the basins of above mentioned rivers, they have considered it proper to worship river Ganga as the primordial mother, because from the very beginning Ganga has been described as the most sacred river in Vedic as well as puranic literatures. It may be mentioned here that during pre-historic times the rivers, such as *Sindhu*, *Ganga*, and *Brahmaputra* etc. were part of the huge Siwalik river. Such opinion has been given by Geologists.⁴⁶ This Siwalik (abode of Lord Shiva) river has originated from mount Kailash most worshipped by the Hindus and the Manasarovara region located on its foot hills. Later this river has been divided into different rivers.⁴⁷ Mount Kailash was the prime place of worship of the Linga worshippers or the devotees of Lord Shiva. The Hindus believe that the river Ganga had emerged from the matted hair of Shiva. Therefore, Ganga is treated as the most sacred river of India. Possibly for this reason the people of Ganga dynasty have thought it proper to identify Ganga as the primordial mother even though they lived in the basins of different rivers in the past.

(b) During ancient times, much before the *Mahabharata* era, they had partially or completely migrated. While progressing into the south a faction of them settled in ancient Kalinga. Another faction proceeded through the eastern part of mount Vindhya and settled in Maharashtra and Mysore region of Karnataka. Although there is no factual evidence, another faction might have proceeded to the South through the western part of mount Vindhya.

The question arises why and when did the *Kaivarttas* of *Dasa* dynasty or Ganga dynasty migrate? In other words at what time and in which circumstance did these people go to the south leaving behind the fertile basins of rivers in northern India. Undoubtedly, it can be said that this migration took place in pre-historic times much before the *Mahabharata* era. The answers to such questions can be found out from Vedic literatures, *Puranas*, legends and traditions.

Archeological excavations have revealed a developed urban civilisation in the north part of river Ganga, north western frontier province, Sindhu Pradesh, Punjab and the Kathiawada region. This has been named as Indus Valley Civilisation.⁴⁸ The remains of this civilisation has been found from the basins of different rivers. In the opinion of Sir John Marshall, this civilisation is much older than the Vedic civilisation and it is separate and unique. Although there is dissenting opinion, most of the researchers have accepted the opinion of Sir John Marshall.⁴⁹ Most of the researchers including Dr. Chatterjee have given the opinion that the builders and inhabitants of Harappa and Mahenjodaro Civilisation used Dravidian language.⁵⁰ Supporting this opinion Dr. Munshi has said, 'Over five thousand years ago, aboriginal dwellers generally lived in forests, some of them, however, were slowly driven to the valleys before the pressure of more civilised migrants. Then a numerically vast people with a culture of which the Mahenjodaro ruins are the physical relics and the base of the Tamil language perhaps the intellectual race, overspread the country'.⁵¹ According to Dr. Chatterjee when the Aryans entered India, they had to confront two castes such as *Dasa* and *Nishada*. Supporting this opinion. Dr. Munshi has said, "In this land the Aryans, with their nature Gods, their sacrifices, their cows and horses and their conquering zeal, came into conflict with the *Dasas* and *Dasyus*".⁵² From such opinions of researchers, it can be reasonably presumed that these *Dasas* or *Dasyus* were the creators and inhabitants of above mentioned Indus Valley Civilisation. It is because these *Dasas* or *Dasyus* had a developed urban civilisation.⁵³ The traces of that urban civilisation of the *Dasas* is no where found. History has not recorded any other urban civilisation before the arrival of the Aryans. Therefore it can, undoubtedly, be said that the *Dasa Kaivarttas* were the creators and inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilisation and they used Dravidian language or as K. M. Munshi would say, the Tamil language . Although the *Kaivarttas* of this *Dasa* dynasty used to cultivate lands, they also made boats, rowed boats and caught fish with nets they wove. During this historic period, there was no opportunity for surface transport and hence

water way was the only channel of transport. The *Dasas* or *Kaivarttas* were very much skilled in undertaking voyages on water ways by rowing boats. Their young girls were efficient in rowing boats alone on water ways. We know from puranic incidents that Satyavati, the queen of emperor Santanu, alias Matsya Gandha used to row boats in the river Ganga, when she was an unmarried girl. During that time, she had conjugated with saint Parasara in the same boat. From the factual evidence obtained from the remains of Harappa and Mahenjodaro of the Indus Valley Civilisation, we know that they were making voyages to the seas. They used to catch fish from the sea and dried fish was one of their food items. Some historians presume that these people undertook voyages on water ways of rivers and seas and had trade relations with several foreign countries. "The representation on a seal of a mastless ship, with a central cabin and a steerman seated at the rudder, indicates that the people of the Indus Valley were acquainted with maritime vessels".⁵⁴ It may be mentioned here that the descriptions of the boat given in a seal has similarity with the boats used in the Chilika lake in ancient time. In the palmleaf manuscript of Bramhanda Purana collected by Jagabandhu Singh from Bhubaneswar, it is written—

*"Chilikahrade sahasran tu jalagami suboitah,
Bahu chakranvitah sighroh jantragah chalakasritah,
Banijyakarane saktah tripanch sikhara krutah.
Dyipantara gatayatah Java Malaya Simhale."* ⁵⁵

Although these *Dasas* or *Kaivarttas* were skilful and experts in voyages undertaken in the rivers and seas, they were defeated by the Aryans on the land. While the Aryans were fighting on the chariot driven by horses, these *Dasas* or *Kaivarttas* were fighting on the field. Consequently they could not equal the Aryans and were defeated. After defeating them the Aryans took these dark skinned *Kaivarttas* and used them as slaves. Several historians presume that possibly during this period their urban civilisation was destroyed by the Aryans. The Aryans described the cities as puras.⁵⁶ Indra, one of the chief deities of Aryans is called *Purandara*. Literally, one who destroys puras is called Purandar. Therefore, historians presume that the cities were destroyed by Indra, the chief deity of the Aryans or by the Aryans themselves. The Aryans defeated the *Dasas* or *Kaivarttas* in war, destroyed their dwelling places and the cities, oppressed them and made them slaves. Possibly during this period most of the *Dasas* and *Kaivarttas* were oppressed and expelled by the Aryans and escaped into the South leaving behind fertile lands in Northern India. Another reason for which the *Dasas* or *Kaivarttas* escaped into South India is found in vedic literature, *Mahabharata* and other *Puranas*. This reason states that after the Aryans entered into India and settled there, there was terrible floods in all the rivers between the Himalayas and the Vindhya of India. This flood has been described as *pralaya* (the deluge) in the *Puranas*. During this period all the regions between the Himalayas and the Vindhya were flooded. A.D.Pushalkar has narrated this

terrible flood or *pralaya* (the deluge) in the following words, the waters swept away all the three heavens, and Manu alone was saved.”⁵⁷ There are hints about this flood or *pralaya* in the Rigveda, but its first brief description is found in *Satapatha Brahman*. Elaborate descriptions are found in the *Mahabharata* and latter *Puranas*. It may be mentioned here that epic poets and *Purana*-writers of *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and other *Puranas* have expressed different historical truths through symbols about this terrible flood or *Pralaya*. *Satapatha Brahman* has mentioned the following incidents once, while Manu, an Aryan was washing his hands at dawn, a small fish along with water came to his hand and sought protection and prayed him, “kindly rear me up and I will save you”. This small fish apprehended danger for its life from some bigger animal. Taking pity on it, Manu had given protection to this small fish. The fish grew up and warned Manu about an imminent terrible flood. It also had advised him to keep a boat for saving himself from the flood. Accordingly, Manu built a boat. As predicted by the fish, a terrible flood inundated the entire land mass. As a result all the animals and human beings were drowned to death. But Manu sat on the boat he had made and the fish dragged the boat into the north and tied the boat to a tree on a mountain. When the flood receded Manu descended from the mountain and ruled over the entire land.⁵⁸ It appears the writer of *Satapatha Brahman* has used the fish as a symbol. Perhaps the fish is a symbol of the son of a *Kaivartta*. Having great skill in rowing, the son of the *Kaivartta* possibly could save the life of Manu from that terrible flood. It is remarkable that the Aryans respect Manu as the creator of the entire human race. This brief incident about *pralaya* mentioned in *Satapathabrahman* has been elaborated in the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*. Possibly this incident forms the basis of *Kaivartta Gita* written by Achyutananda Das, the saint poet of Orissa. It appears that Manu, a representative of the Aryan race, unskilled in rowing of boats was saved from the terrible flood with the help of *Dasas* or *Kaivarttas*, who were used as slaves by the Aryans. Earlier it has been said that the entire region between the Himalayas and Vindhya were affected by the terrible flood. The uncertainty of life, property and habitation caused by the terrible flood or *pralaya* possibly had urged the *Dasas* or *Kaivarttas* to escape into the comparatively safer hilly regions of the South. Possibly, due to this flood their urban civilisation was destroyed. From the factual evidence obtained from archeological excavation of Mahenjodaro and Harappa, it appears that terrible floods or *pralayas* have destroyed Northern India many a time. The writers of *Puranas* also have given indication of different *pralayas* at different times. From the archeological excavations of Mahenjodaro and Harappa, we have come to know that the remains of Indus Valley Civilisation lie in seven layers inside the earth. This means at different times different civilisations have risen and fallen in those places and later on have been re-built. Discussing this A.D. Pushalkar has said, ‘Excavation has brought to light seven different layers of buildings at Mahenjodaro, which have been assigned to three periods, viz. early, intermediate and late. Earlier layers lie submerged under subsoil water. The phase of the Indus Valley Civilisation found at Mohenjodaro and Harappa is

known as the 'Harappa Culture'. Explorations in Sind have brought to light three different 'cultures' viz. those of *Amri*, *Jhukar* and *Jhangar*, the first of which preceded and the last two followed the Harappa culture. *Chanhudaro* displayed traces of *Jhukar* and *Jhangar* cultures in the upper levels.

On the analogies of Troy and Rome, normally a period of one thousand years should be assigned for the occupation of the seven cities of Mahenjodaro, but as the decay at Mahenjodaro was much quicker on account of the imminent danger of floods (of which we get evidence) and as the re-occupation of the cities was much more rapid as seen from the uniformity of antiquities in all layers, a period of only 500 years has been assigned for the whole strata. As, however, the civilisation is already in a developed stage, roughly a period of 1000 years has been allotted for the antecedent evolution.⁵⁹ The above discussions show that during a particular period in the pre-historic times terrible floods repeatedly appeared in north India and destroyed human life, property and habitation. The danger posed by repeated floods to human life, property and habitation possibly forced the *Dasas* and *Kaivarttas* living on the fertile basins of rivers of north-India to migrate to the comparatively safer regions of the Deccan Plateau.

From the evidence found in Madala Panji we know the Gangas belonged to solar dynasty. Quoting from the Kornji copperplate inscription (JAHS, Vol.1) of Anantavarma Chodaganga Dev, Dr.Rajaguru has shown, "The elaborate genealogy, contained in the copperplates of the later Gangas, traces the dynasty of Turvasu, one of the sons of Yayati. It is stated that *Turvasu* had no sons and on worshipping the Mother Ganga, he had a son named Gangeya whose children were the Gangas. *Turvasu* was a puranic king and on the evidence of some of the *puranas* like the *Vishnu Purana* and the *Harivamsa*, a sequel to the *Mahabharata*, it could be seen that *Turvasu* had a son who succeeded him and that this family consisted in its main line of six generations. It can, therefore, be argued that the narrative contained in the inscriptions is opposed to the account of the puranas and may consequently be a concoction."⁶⁰ We see from the above discussions that Dr. Rajaguru has not accepted the facts relating to the pedigree of Chodaganga Dev as inscribed in Kornji copperplate inscription. It is because it has no resemblance with any puranic evidence. Like Dr. Rajaguru other established historians have not accepted this pedigree. To state briefly, they have given the view that by the time the *Mahabharata* war came to an end, both the solar and lunar dynasties had been exterminated from India. Later on, royal dynasties emerging from different classes, castes and clans were evincing interest to identify them with puranic royal dynasties through their brahmin eulogists and projected in their inscriptions. Therefore, the facts stated in the inscriptions have no resemblance with historical or puranic evidences. Since famous royal dynasties such as solar and lunar dynasties were exterminated, brahmin eulogists tried to include these new royal dynasties, which had emerged from different levels of society, in Aryan community and identified them with different royal dynasties. In this

connection Dr. Sahu has said that the writers of Puranas have included the kings of eastern kingdoms such as Utkal, Koshala, Gaya, Anga, Banga, Kalinga, Pundra and Sumha among the Aryans and described them as supporters of Vedic religion and culture.⁶¹ In spite of such opinions, it is clear from the facts stated in the Madalapanji and Korni copperplate inscription of Chodaganga Dev that the Gangas are the descendants of a king or an individual named Gangeya who belonged to the solar dynasty. While claiming his descent from some Gangeya in his Korni copperplate inscription, he has identified both the ancestors and descendants of Gangeya. But all these have been rejected by historians. However, Dr. Rajaguru, basing on the facts stated by Chodaganga Dev, has accepted Gangeya and the Gangas as belonging to solar dynasty.⁶² While enquiring about the identity of Gangeya of Solar dynasty whom Chodaganga Dev has claimed as his ancestor, the famous Bhisma, the son of Ganga or Gangeya of *Mahabharata* fame appears before us. This Gangeya, the son of Ganga or Bhisma belongs to lunar dynasty and since he was the greatest warrior of his time, he was a Kshatriya. In the society of his time he had achieved the reputation of being patriarch Bhisma, the greatest among the Kurus. Lord Krishna has mentioned in the *Bhagabat Geeta* that castes have been created taking into consideration one's *guna* (nature), *karma* (work) and *brutti* (occupation). With the help of such *guna*, *karma* and *brutti*, Lord Krishna had achieved the fame of being the greatest *Kshatriya* in his contemporary society. But by virtue of his birth he was a cowherd boy belonging to Jadu dynasty. Similarly with the same *guna*, *karma* and *brutti* Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa was treated as the greatest brahmin of his time.

It is said that he was born of the union between saint Parasara and the daughter of a *Kaivartta* (a fisher woman). If this is true, to what caste should Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa belong, taking into consideration his birth right? From the occupational point of view the *Kaivarttas* are included among the *Vaisyas*. Then, how can he be treated as a brahmin? Even though he practised *Dwijadharma* (duties of a brahmin), he was of mixed caste. Quoting from Hindu scriptures Mullah has written in *Principles of Hindu Law*, "The Hindu Law lays down certain rules for determining the caste of offsprings from parents belonging to different castes and gives separate names to the mixed castes to which such offsprings belong. When inter marriages were permitted by ancient Hindu Law, children born of mixed marriages were termed Anulomajah, that is, offsprings of Anuloma marriages, and their caste was neither that of their father nor that of their mother. They belonged to an intermediate caste higher than that of their mother, and lower than that of their father. Thus a son begotten by a *Brahman* upon a *Kshatriya* wife is a *Murdhavasikta*, upon a *Vaishya* wife is an *Ambashta*, and upon a *Sudra* wife is *Nishada* or *Parasara*. A son begotten by a *Kshatriya* on a *Vaishya* wife is a *Mahishya* and upon a *Sudra* wife an *Ugra*. A son born of a *Vaishya* by a *Sudra* wife is a *Karana*. It has accordingly been held that the illegitimate son of a *Kshatriya* by a *Sudra* woman is not a *Sudra*, but of a higher caste called *Ugra*".⁶³ If somebody considers *Kaivarttas*

as *Sudras* then Krushna Dwaipayana Vyasa should be a Nishada on account of his birth. These *Nishadas* belong to *Kaivartta* caste because of their occupation. So the question arises to which caste Bhisma, the son of Ganga or Gangeya would belong owing to his birth? For this we have to know Bhisma's origin or story of birth. From the records of original *Mahabharata*, we know that once Santanu, the Kuru king was wandering on the banks of the river Ganga. At that time the river Ganga appeared before him in the guise of a woman. Being attracted by her beauty, Santanu had courted her. Ganga gave her consent, but put forth a condition. The condition was Santanu would not resist any action of Ganga. The day Santanu would resist her, she would disappear. As Santanu accepted this condition Ganga stayed with him as a wife and their love lasted for a long time. It is worth mentioning here that there is no hint of a regular marriage between the two in the original *Mahabharata* written by Vyasa.⁶⁴ Out of the love and co-habitation of Ganga and Santanu, seven children were born and all of them were immersed in the river Ganga by their mother. When the eighth child was born, Ganga, as usual, went to immerse it in the river. Unable to bear it, Santanu protested. Since the condition was flouted, Ganga left the baby with Santanu and disappeared in the water of the river Ganges. Later on, when the baby grew up he came to be known as Gangeya, the son of Ganga, Devabrata as well as Bhisma. From the above accounts of Devabrata - Bhisma's birth given in the *Mahabharata* and other *puranas*, we don't get any hint about the family, race and caste of his mother. Because of this undivulgable incident, possibly the writers of *puranas* have preferred to remain silent on this issue. We have mentioned elsewhere that for different reasons the writers of *puranas* have expressed historical truths through symbols. The writer of *Mahabharata* possibly has tried to reveal something symbolically by stating that the river Ganga had appeared before Santanu in the guise of a woman. *Puranic Encyclopedia* mentions, "Ganga Devi was born as a mortal woman in the world under the name Ganga and she spent her days in the forests of the Ganga River Valleys."⁶⁵ The facts given in *Puranic Encyclopedia* appear plausible. Hence it can be definitely said that the appearance of river Ganga in the guise of a woman is symbolic. Although the *Encyclopedia* has mentioned the birth of Ganga Devi on the earth, it is silent about her family, race and caste. Should we presume that the writers of *Puranas* have given indication to the effect that Ganga Devi was a woman devoid of family, race and caste? In the then India only *Vratya* religionists did not believe in caste, race and family. They did not have any distinction of caste and race. Should we assume, then, that Ganga Devi was a *Vratya*? It is worth mentioning here that in contemporary India *Kaivarttas* lived in the Valleys of river Ganges and they were *Vratyas*. The Aryans were antagonistic towards them and also looked down upon them. On the other hand most of the *Kaivarttas* used to worship river Ganga as their *Adimata* (The primordial mother) and treated themselves as the progeny of Ganga. They had intimate relationship with river Ganga. Devabrata the son of Santanu was addressed as Gangeya or the son of Ganga. Later on, Devabrata had assumed the name Bhisma. The interpreters of *Puranic Encyclopedia*

have shown that Ganga was born on the earth and had spent her life in the forests of the Ganges Valley. On the other hand, the writers of Puranas have repeatedly shown that the river Ganges had appeared in the guise of a woman before Santanu on the banks of the river Ganges and disappeared into the waters of the river when the condition was broken by Santanu. From the above discussions it becomes obvious that Ganga Devi was really the daughter of a *Dasa-Kaivartta*. The *Dasa-Kaivarttas* neither believed nor accepted the casteist or racial distinctions of the Aryans. For this reason the love and co-habitation of Santanu and Ganga were unacceptable to the society dominated by the Aryans. Therefore, the writers of Puranas have used the river Ganga as a symbol. While describing the above incident through a symbol, the writers of Puranas have put forth several miraculous and superhuman incidents. But it is obvious that the so called Ganga was the daughter of a *Kaivartta*.

Ganga was born in a *Kaivartta* hamlet on the Ganges Valley. When her relationship with Santanu was severed, she, along with her eighth child, had returned to the same *Kaivartta* hamlet and reared him up. Later on this child came to be known as Gangaputra (son of Ganga) or Gangeya. As he was born from a Kshatriya father and a *Kaivartta* mother, he should be a *Mahishya* or a *Kaivartta*. But from the point of view of his nature, work and occupation, he was famous as the greatest Kshatriya warrior in his contemporary society. From the above discussions, we can rationally conclude that Gangaputra or Gangeya, the son of Santanu of solar dynasty and Ganga, the fisher-woman was a *Mahishya* or a *Kaivartta*. Due to his nature, work and occupation, later on he achieved the fame of being the greatest Kshatriya, Devabrata or Bhisma. Considering his birth, he can be called a *Mahishya* or a *Kshatriya*. Chodaganga Dev has given hints to this effect while claiming himself to be a descendant of Gangeya in Korni copperplate inscription. From the above discussions, it is obvious that the origin of the Ganga royal dynasty and that of the common people of Ganga dynasty were one and the same and all of them belonged to the *Kaivartta* or *Mahishya* community. Hence we can say that the Ganga dynasty has originated from the tradition rich, glorious and ancient *Dasa-Kaivartta* race or community.

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