

**ON THE HISTORICITY OF DHYUVSWAMINI- RAM GUPTA – CHANDRA GUPTA II
DRAMA BY VISHAKHADATTA**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Vishakhadatta's drama named 'Devi Candraguptam' has long been debated whether it is historical or not? In this work, after carefully examining the evidences it is found that it is indeed historical and that the debate about Ram Gupta being a historical person or not - is also clarified.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to traditional accounts, Ram Gupta decided to expand his kingdom by attacking the Sakas in Gujarat [1]. The situation got worse and the Gupta army got trapped. The Saka king, Rudrasimha III, laid a condition that Ram Gupta hand over his wife Dhruvswamini as a way out. The weak king wanted to accede to the demand and was willing to accept these terms, even at the displeasure of his wife and his brother Chandra Gupta II. In disguise as a woman, Chandra Gupta went to the Saka camp, killed the Saka king and was victorious. His valour impressed the queen naturally. A short while later, Ram Gupta was overthrown and killed by his brother, who became the king. Chandra Gupta II also married his former sister-in-law, Dhruvswamini.

The whole incident was so well-known that Visakhadatta dramatized it and many authors referred to it as shown in Table 3. In recent times, this version is also written by Jayshanker Prasad in the drama named Dhruvswamini in Hindi.

The objective of this work is to ascertain the facts or historicity of the above belief using recently published works.

2. ASCENDENCE OF CHANDRA GUPTA II TO THE THRONE

One can refer to many books on Ancient Indian History to check the reign of Chandra Gupta II to be between 375-380 AD and 415 AD [2-6]. From the descriptions above, the Saka kingdom must have been annexed around 375 AD since that is when Chandra Gupta II ascended to the throne. The discussion on Ram Gupta is also there in these books. However, most historians say that Ram Gupta was not a historical king during the Gupta period. There is an uncertainty in the year when Chandra Gupta II ascended to the throne.

3. BALASUBRAMANIAM'S DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT [7]

In the recent work, Balasubramaniam has described the history of the Saka kings and their silver coins [7]. In their coins, the bust of the king was on obverse with the date of issue indicated in Saka era on the side of the bust. On

the reverse, the identity of the king was indicated in circular legend where the centre was occupied with the symbol of three-peak Mountain with a flowing curved line indicating a river, and sometimes a crescent and a fire altar above the mountains. This can be seen in the last coin issued by Mahakshatrapa Svami Rudrasimha III (388 AD). After this date, no more kshatrapa coins are found.

Next, Chandra Gupta II issued silver coins also, just like the kshatrapas which were in 409 AD, the earliest. Thus there was a gap of almost 20 years. In these coins, the bust of the Gupta emperor was incorporated on the obverse side, and the date of issue was in Gupta era (beginning at 320 AD)

Udayagiri caves inscriptions in Eastern Malwa indicate the presence of Chanfragupta II in 402 AD [8]. Fig. 1 shows Chandra Gupta II which is a rare proof of his being the king who had visited the cave. Thus, the period between 388 AD to 409 AD indicates a transition period between the rule of Kshatrapas in Gujarat and the complete annexation of the territory Chandra Gupta II Vikramaditya.

Balasubramaniam also writes that the western areas were ruled by kshatrapas without break between 120 AD to 388 AD.

He also thinks that Western Kshatrapas were small kingdoms, and therefore, they might not have attacked the Guptas.

4.SIRCAR'S DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT [4]

Sircar has done a very detailed work on the rule of Kshatrapas. He writes that there are silver coins issued by Mahakshatrapa Rudrasena III. These coins (two groups of coins) range between 348 AD to 378 AD.

He also writes that - according to some inscriptions, Samudragupta (335-376) extirpated a Kshatrapa king named Rudradeva which he says – was Rudrasena III. Furthermore, he writes that the Saka king staged a rebellion against the rule of Samudragupta before his death.

Table 1 shows the names and times of Kshatrapas which agree with Balasubramaniam's statement that they had ruled without break between 120 AD to 388 AD.

Sircar also writes about copper coins of fifth century AD bearing the name of Ram Gupta were found near Eran – Vidisha area but thinks that these coins were those of local chiefs

One can also refer to [15] where the summary about these coins as follows:

“In Summary P. L. Gupta points out this discussion will show that the present coins are similar in fabric, type and metallurgy with the coins of Chandra Gupta II issued by him at Malabar. They have the legend in the Gupta script and the name of the issuer is clearly Ram Gupta, who was the brother of Chandra Gupta. We, thus, have clear evidences proving his existence. “

The author thinks that one cannot rule out Ram Gupta of the Gupta Dynasty because Eran Vidisha area falls on the way from Ujjain to Pataliputra, modern Patna. Emperor Ashoka after being appointed as a viceroy went from Pataliputra (Patna) to Ujjain through Vidisha where he married the daughter (later on became the mother of Princess Samghamitra and Prince Mahendra) of a local businessman.

After the battle with kshatrapa during the last days of Samudragupta , the two princes could have been returning to Pataliputra when Samudragupta could have died and Ram Gupta still not back to the capital became the king and issued a coin made of copper from the Vidisha area. It was not possible for Ram Gupta to issue coins earlier than this time as he was not the king.

Since differences had already arisen between Chandra Gupta II and Ram Gupta during the battle just earlier which could result in Ram Gupta's assassination after this event? Such killings (honour killings) are not uncommon even to-day in India.

In this way, Ram Gupta's rule was short possibly did not last for a year even.

5 SUCCESSION OF SAMUDRAGUPTA – RAM GUPTA AND CHANDRA GUPTA

From the above, it is clear that the Guptas fought two battles not one against the kshatrapas; one to suppress the rebellion towards the end of Samudragupta's life around 376 AD, and another one after 388 AD (after the last coin issued by the last kshatrpa). Balasubramaniam provides evidence in form of coins issued by Chandra Gupta II in the year 409 AD.

Final victory over the Sakas in the year 409 AD is also supported by Sharan [10] using independent astronomical evidences.

Based on the above evidences one can clearly see that Ram Gupta and Chandra Gupta II went to suppress the rebellion staged by the kshatrpa before 376 AD. The event about the exchange of Dhruvswamini had to happen during the suppression of this rebellion when Ram Gupta initially lost out to the Kshatrpa which was immediately followed by rescue of Dhruvswamini by Chandra Gupta II. However, these two were not able to completely destroy the kshatrpa rule which continued even after this event around 376 AD as can be seen in Table 1 or in Balasubramaniam's description.

Table 2 shows the variation in the year of death of Samudragupta [10-14]. Thus the succession year of Samudragupta is fuzzy, and it can account for the ascendance to the throne of Ram Gupta or a period of transition in succession, possibly a struggle between the two princes.

The above event being historical can also be seen in Table 3 where it is described in the drama form by Visakhadatta in his work, 'Devichandraguptam' going back to the time of Chandra Gupta II.

6. STANDARDS OF ACCEPTANCE OF A HISTORICAL EVENT

Can the drama written by Visakhadatta in the 5th century be acceptable evidence due to the fact that it is a mere drama? Is there any precedence for such things?

The answer is yes. For example, Tripathy on page 148 writes about the destruction of the Nanda's family based on Puranic, Buddhist and Jain accounts.

In the present case, Visakhadatta lived at the same time as Chandra Gupta II, and so, his account can have equal acceptability as that of the Puranas.

7 CONCLUSIONS

In this work, a review of history was carried out to check out the historicity of the ancient drama written by Visakhadatta named Devicandraguptam. This drama primarily describes the events in the battle between Ram Gupta and the kshatrapas. It was found that the battle was historical but it took place at the time of Samudragupta's last days when Ram Gupta was not the king. The other characters in the drama have not been disputed by historians.

Regarding the historicity of Ram Gupta, an evidence, copper coins, were found in Vidisha which have been ascertained by expert in this field that those were issued by Ram Gupta of the Gupta Dynasty.

As far as the location is concerned about these finds away from Pataliputra, the capital of the Gupta Empire, it was explained that Vidisha happens to be on the way between Ujjain (the kshatrapa country) to Pataliputra. Secondly, the need to issue even a copper coins - could have arisen because Samudragupta could have died while the two princes were returning from the battle.

Absence of other coins or evidences about Ram Gupta was explained due to the honour killing of Ram Gupta by his younger brother Chandra Gupta II , soon after issuing of the copper coins or not much after that.

There is nothing else in the drama that appears not historical; after all, it was written at the time of Chandra Gupta II to retain the accuracy of the events.

8. REFERENCES

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- 2 Chandra Gupta Vikramaditya “[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chandra Gupta_II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chandra_Gupta_II)
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TABLE 1: THE TIMELINE OF WESTERN KSHATRAPAS [3]

KSHATRAPAS	TIME
Abhiraka Bhumaka Nahapana	105 - 125 AD
Chastana Jayadaman Rudradaman-I Damajadasari Rudrasimha-I Jivadaman Satyadaman Rudrasena-I Sanghadaman Prithvisena Damasena Damajada Viradraman ... Yasodaman Vijayasena Damajada Rudrasena-II Visvasimha	130 - 150 AD 178 - 197 AD 199 - 222 AD 222 - 236 AD 234 - 239 AD 238 - 239 AD 238 - 250 AD 250 - 255 AD 256 - 278 AD 277 - 290 AD

Bhratadaman Visvasena Rudrasimha Yasodaman	278 - 295 AD 294 - 304 AD 305 - 313 AD 317 - 332 AD
Rudrasena-III Swami Simhasena Swami Rudrasena Swami Rudrasimha	348 - 390 AD

TABLE 2 : TABLE SHOWING MARGIN OF ERROR IN THE YEAR OF DEATH OF SAMUDRAGUPTA

REFERENCE NUMBER	YEAR OF DEATH OF SAMUDRAGUPTA (AD)
10	376
11	371
12	380
13	375
14	380
15	380

**TABLE 3: TABLE SHOWING VARIOUS WORKS IN INDIAN HISTORY ABOUT
DHRUVSWAMINI , RAM GUPTA, AND CHANDRA GUPTA II**

AUTHOR	WORK	CENTURY AD
Visakhadatta	Devicandraguptam	5th
Bana	Harscarita	7th
Amoghavarsha I	Sanjan Plates	9th
Ramcandra and Gunacandra	Natya Darpana	11th
Bhoja	Sringara- Prakasaka	11th
Abul Hasan Ali	Majmal-ut- tawarikh	13th
Sankararya	Commentary on Harscarita	18th
Jayshanker Prasad	Dhruvswamini	20th



**FIG 1 LORD VISHNU IN THE FORM OF BOAR IN CAVE 5
AT UDAYAGIRI**