

ANCIENT ODISHA

Date Line of Kharavela the Great

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There is an assumption among some-scholars till to-day that there was a period of Nanda rule in the then Kalinga which was conquered by so called Mahapadma Nanda and annexed it to the Nanda Empire. On puranic and legendary accounts, this assumption is nicely based. For this rule no authentic history is available. In the Hatigumpha inscription, the term Nanda is found mentioned more than once. It is stated in the same inscription that a Nanda King had excavated a canal which was repaired and enlarged by Kharavel. It is the sole

epigraphic evidence available on which a period of Nanda Rule in then Kalinga postulated by historians. Scholars like Dr. B.M. Barua, and some others identified the Nanda Raja of the Hatigumpha inscription with Chandasoka who did the act of aggression on Kalinga in 261 B.C. This identification, aforesaid is acceptable to scholars of repute. Chandragupta was enthroned in 324 B.C. under the leadership and advice of the great Chanakya, a reformer and scholar of those days in Magadha.

There is no early evidence to prove that the dynasty established by Chandragupta was ever known as mौरya dynasty. Nor his successors including Chandasoka had ever mentioned about it in any of their Rock edicts anywhere edicted by them. In the 8th Century A.D. a drama by name Mudrarakshyasa had been composed by Bisakha Dutta where the name mौरya appears to have started as the name of the mother of Chandragupta was Mura. On the other hand, the so called Mौरya dynasty was originally known as Nanda dynasty only, in all Rock edicts found throughout India and abroad.

Of-course historian like Dr. N.K. Sahoo and some others did not accept this. In the name of some Punch Marked coins available in the then Kalinga, they have tried to show that there was a period of Nanda rule in Kalinga before Chandasoka. Without the supposed rule of Nanda the Punch marked coins would have been circulated in Kalinga by the traders. Rule of Nandas is not a necessity for this punch marked coin circulation.

In any part of India, the Nanda Kings were not known to have undertaken any irrigation work. But we know one instance that Chandasoka executed a vast irrigation work in Junagarh of Gujrat. Hence for the benefit of the newly conquered people of Kalinga, it is not impossible, Ashoka had excavated a canal which was reexcavated and enlarged by Kharavela as is evidenced by the Hatigumpha inscription.

There is no concrete and sure evidence to show that there was actually a Nanda Rule in Kalinga other than that of Ashoka. This rule can not be connected with any type of contemporary relic as it can be done with Chandasoka who had left sacred monuments.

About the causes of the Kalinga War in 261 B.C. there is no unanimity among the scholars. But one cause is almost unanimously accepted by all scholars is that it was an act of aggression because Chandasoka was a war like prince who ascended the Magadhan throne by eliminating all possible claimants through the act of violence. His predecessors conquered almost all parts of India excepting Kalinga. The existence of Kalinga as an independent and developed country would have been an eye-sore to an ambitious king like Ashoka whose cupidity and greed might have been excited due to the tremendous growth of maritime trade of Kalinga at that point of time.

Before Kharavela the liberation of Kalinga might have been achieved. By waging a successful struggle against Magadha Kharavela brought back the sacred seat of Jain which seems to have had a great significance on the religious life of the people of the then Kalinga.

Till- today the date line of Kharavel is not yet historically decided. For some scholars Kharavela belongs to 2nd Century B.C. and some place him in the 1st Century B.C. others drag him down to the 1st Century A.D. An attempt has been made here to discuss some relevant points on the date of Kharavela basing on the substantial agreement of the later scholars who have finally deciphered, the matter to conclude. In accordance with epigraph let us put some references are as follows:

1. Fourth line – Dutiya Ca Vaseachtayatasatakarmin

2. 6th line – Pandhama Ca Danivase .«««.

Nandaraj – Tibasa – Sata – OGhatitamtausulia Bata

3. 11th line – Kalingapuvaraj – Nivestia Pithudagadava – Nagaline Kadhya Tijeenp Adabha Vanam Ca Teras – Vas – Sat – Katam

4. 15th line – Sat – Das – Lena – Satam – Karapitam

In accordance with the REX III it is almost conclusive that Ashoka was the first among the Indian Kings reigning after Budha's demise to conquer the unconquered land of Kalinga and annex the same to his own kingdom as per the observation of Dr. B.M. Barua.

In the pre-Christian era the Mourya emperors were known to have undertaken the construction of irrigation works among the known Indian Kings. Ashoka had completed the construction of large irrigation work started by his grand father Chandragupta at the then Girnar under the leadership of his governor. In the distant western province of his empire, if Ashoka could have undertaken a vast irrigation work we can very easily presume that he would have constructed a canal in Kalinga, a newly conquered province for which he has shown special solicitude.

For the benefits of his own subjects, the Nanda Kings of whom the so called Mahapadma Nanda was most prominent have never undertaken the construction of irrigation works during period of Nanda rule. On the other hand, these Nanda kings were very unpopular among their subjects for they were oppressive, greedy and cupid.

In the inscription of Kharavela Ashoka thus appear to be Nanda Raja who had constructed a canal in Tosali. This identification is considered very sound as the epithet Nanda Raja applied to Ashoka need not frighten us as there is no evidence yet discovered can prove that during period of Kharavela Ashoka was not known as a Nanda King. On the contrary his Grand father Chandragupta had been represented as PurvaNanda-Suta etc.

Kalinga war was started in 261 B.C. and Ashoka engraved his rock edicts at Dhauli and Jaugada in about 257 B.C. Hence it is quite natural Hatigumpha inscription should have been connected to the neighbourhood of these two aforesaid dates.

Engraving of the inscription and the construction of the canal had been done simultaneously most probably. Since Ti-basa-sata has been referred to the interval between the construction of the canal and the fifth year of the reign of Kharavel, to fix-up the date, the correct interpretation of the compound Ti-basa-sata will enable us definitely to reach a conclusion.

But among the scholars unfortunately there is a difference of opinion about the interpretation of the compound ti-basa-sata. For some it is 300 years and for others it is 103 years. Even for Dr. Barua who has taken great pain to decipher the Hatigumpha inscription could not make out correctly for the compound to make 103 years or 300 years as he failed

to notice the other clues already there in the inscription of Kharavela. If he could have compared Satadasa-lena-sata of the fifteenth line with Ti-basasata of the 6th line of the inscription along with teras-vasa-sata of the 11th line which formed similar grammatical construction, he must have reached a conclusion that these compounds must have followed the same grammatical rules and principles.

All most all scholars mean Sata-dasa-lenasata as 117 caves only and it can not be 17 hundreds caves because the later interpretation will land us in an absurd proposition. In the tiny hillock of Udayagiri which is identified as Kumari Parvata, 17 hundred caves could not be excavated by Kharavela and his successors. Similarly the compound tera-sa-basa-sata can not be 13 hundred years and ti-basa-sata cannot be 300 years. Hence ti-basa-sata will have only one interpretation i.e. 103 years.

Therefore the fifth year of the reign of Kharavela will be 257 B.C. - 103 B.C. = 154 B.C. and he might have been enthroned 159 B.C. Hence Kharavela belongs to 2nd Century B.C. only.

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