

Bengal under the Palas and Senas (750-1204)

Syed Umar Hayat

Bengal remained under the Pala and Sena rule for about five hundred years at a very crucial phase of the history of the Indian subcontinent. It was a time when Muslim civilization was introduced in India through conquests and peaceful missionary efforts. Hence, it is significant to analyze the nature of the growing interaction between the prevailing indigenous political, religious, social, cultural and economic environment with the incoming Muslim socio-political value structure.

In order to assess the status of Bengal's success in maintaining its separate identity over a long period of time, it is essential to probe into the nature of its political, social, cultural, and religious institutions. Another objective of the study is to make a comparison between the attitude of the Palas and the Senas towards Islam as a religion as well as a political force.

The Pala Empire

Bengal came into contact with Muslim political power¹ in early thirteenth century i.e., about five hundred years after Muhammad bin Qasim's conquest of Sindh in 712. From then onwards the Indus valley areas, with some gaps apart, remained under Muslim political influence. Throughout this phase of history Bengal retained its independent status under the reigns of the Palas and the Senas.

It is important to note that Bengal, before the advent of the Muslim and British powers, maintained its independent political character mostly throughout recorded history. This position of Bengal

is evident through the early literature on the ancient history of Bengal. According to the *Budhayana Dharmasutra* the Pundras² of north Bengal and the Vangas³ of central and eastern Bengal were "living outside the pale of Vedic culture"⁴. The continuation of Bengal's separate entity till the early centuries after Christ is also apparent in the works of the classical as well as the modern writers. Well known historian Sailendra Nath Sen writes that "During the first two centuries of the Christian era, the whole of the deltaic Bengal was organized into a powerful kingdom with its capital at Gange."⁵ Curtius maintains that at the time of Alexander's invasion the two nations of Gangaridae and the Prasioi, commanded by a common king Agrammes, were "waiting for Alexander with a formidable army which deterred the Macedonian leader to proceed further."⁶

The independent status of Bengal was, however, compromised during the rule of the Mauryas who exercised authority, though limited, over the deltaic and northern parts of Bengal for a short period. Bengal's fully independent character became almost non-existent during the rule of the imperial Guptas, the successors of the Mauryas. Despite this political upheaval at least some part of Bengal tried to maintain its separate identity under a new name Samatata till the advent of the sixth century⁷. It is also on record that Vanyagupta had independently ruled eastern Bengal from the year 506 to 507. The attempts to completely annihilate Bengali kingdom failed to mature due to the process of decline of the Gupta empire that started in early sixth century.

Bengal regained its separate political status on the ruins of the Gupta authority that continued till with intervals till the establishment of British colonial power in India. The fall of the Guptas witnessed two independent kingdoms - Samatata or Vanga and Gauda - that rose in the political arena of Bengal. The kingdom of Samatata or Vanga originally comprised eastern and southern Bengal while the kingdom of Gauda included the northern and western parts of Bengal. These two kingdoms continued to exist roughly between 525 to 575.

By early seventh century the independent status of Bengal became further strengthened when king Sasanka founded an autonomous kingdom comprising north and west Bengal including Magadha (Bihar). A little later he extended his empire up to Urrisa. It is, however, not proven that Sasanka's empire included both the southern and the eastern Bengal. Through these conquests the empire emerged

as an important power in north-eastern India in the face of the mighty power of Harshavardhana of Kanauj. Sasanka's death in the first half of the seventh century⁸ served as a final blow to break up his laboriously built empire⁹ into many petty states in different parts of Bengal. The intrigues and rivalries among these rulers gave birth to a situation of continuous anarchy for about a hundred years which ended with the establishment of the Pala empire.

To comprehend the political situation of India at the time of the rise of Pala empire, perhaps it would be enough to emphasize that India was divided into dozens of small and big kingdoms. And these kingdoms were not based on any religious affinity but on regional identity. The survival of the Pala empire (650-1250) in the midst of this political turmoil suggests solid footings of the empire itself.¹⁰ Thus the Palas rose to be one of the three dominating dynasties of the region along with Gurjara-Pratiharas and the Rastrakutas. These three dynasties became the contending powers for gaining supremacy over the northern parts of the subcontinent.

Rise of the Palas

As already mentioned,¹⁰ the prevailing anarchy in the region does not lead us to any clear picture of the political condition of post-Sasanka Bengal. According to one source "It is difficult to construct, even in outline, the political history of Bengal after the death of Sasanka."¹¹ Despite such a confused political set up in the area, it is noteworthy that democratic traditions were still cherished as it were the, "people of Bengal [who] selected Gopala as their king."¹² But this view of people electing the king is, to some historians, based on a misinterpretation of the term *prakstis* mentioned in the copper plates found at Khalimpur. To them the term *prakstis* does not necessarily mean subjects but "principal officers",¹³ technically speaking. The election of Gopala, therefore, in their view, does not mean that he was elected directly by the masses as understood in the modern times.¹⁴ The election introduced in the area, in whatever form it was, can safely be termed as a unique phenomenon in the political history of the region. The closest parallel of this kind of popular political acumen was evident in Japan in 1870. Appreciating the political consciousness of the people of Bengal R.C. Majumdar writes:

It reflects no small credit upon the political sagacity and the spirit of sacrifice of the leading men of Bengal that they rose to the occasion

and selected one among themselves to be the sole ruler of Bengal to whom they all paid willing allegiance. It is not every age, it is not every nation, that can show such a noble example of subordinating private interests to public welfare.¹⁵

Gopala's election thus marked the foundation of the Pala empire as the successive rulers of the dynasty used the last part of his name, i.e., 'pala' as their name-ending.

Gopala, a Kshatria by birth, was born near Pundravardhana (Bogra District of present Bangladesh). There is hardly any authentic detail available about his early life. As regards his political career, it is on record that despite being popularly elected he turned out to be a despot in the political history of Bengal. Besides, he was well known for his capabilities as a ruler and a general.¹⁶ Gopala's father Vapyata¹⁷ whom history knows as a renowned military chief who overpowered his enemies. But there is no certain evidence on the point that he ever ruled his area.¹⁸ Gopala's grandfather, Dayitavishnu, though a learned man, had no military accomplishment to his credit¹⁹.

It is believed that Gopala's original kingdom was established in Vane²⁰ in East Bengal. Historians, however, are not certain about the original parameter of Gopala's kingdom for which he was elected²¹. He, however, expanded the boundaries of his kingdom and by his death in 775, he was able to carve out "a good kingdom" for his successors.²²

Gopala and his successors were Buddhists by religion²³ and are credited with having revived the Nalanda University,²⁴ the Buddhist educational institution. The revival of this famous ancient Buddhist university, where ten thousand Buddhist students used to study free of cost, had become a symbol of Buddhist revival especially because it had been burnt to ashes by the Hindus in 640 A.D.²⁵

The Climax of The Pala Empire

Dharmapala (775-810), Gopala's son and successor, was a powerful ruler enough to transform his kingdom into a big empire by bringing Bengal and Bihar under his direct rule. Besides, he conquered Kanauj²⁶ - the symbol of power in the then northern India - but did not make it a part of his empire.²⁷ The state was continued to be ruled by Chakrayudha as Dharmapala's protégé.²⁸ In addition to Kanauj a large number of vassal states in the Punjab, Afghanistan,²⁹ Western Hill

States, Rajputana, Malwa and Berar also accepted the over-lordship of the Pala Emperor.³⁰ Thus Dharmapala materialized his dream of founding an empire in north India and thereby launched Bengal into a career of imperial glory. Thus it was after these achievements that he assumed full imperial title of *Paramesvara Paramabhattaraka Maharajadhiraja*.

Dharmapala's reign proved to be a landmark in the propagation of Islam in Bengal. It was during his rule when the earliest Muslim contact with Bengal occurred. The Muslim merchants got safe areas in the coastal region of southern Bengal and that paved the way for the Muslim preachers and saints to come to Bengal for preaching Islam.³¹

The expansion and progress of the Pala Empire continued under Devapala (810-859), the son and successor of Dharmapala, who successfully extended his empire from the Himalayas to the Vindhyas.³² Devapala's expeditions extended his domains up to Sindh, "a feat to which no other ruler of Bengal could lay claim during the next thousand years."³³ King Devapala claimed control even over the Deccan which was necessary for the expanding empire to pursue its commercial interests in south-east Asia³⁴. But his victories in the south proved to be an occasional affair as his power was mainly concentrated in the north. Thus after the temporary dilapidation of the Gurjara-Pratiharas³⁵ and Rashtrakutas³⁶ he momentarily became the undisputed potentate of the north India.

About the might of Devapala and his father, it has been said that, "The reigns of Dharmapala and Devapala constitute the most brilliant chapter in the history of Bengal. Never before, or since, till the advent of the British, did Bengal play such an important role in Indian politics"³⁷.

Towards Decline

The decline of the Pala Empire coincided with the death of Devapala whose weak successors could not check the sharp decline which continued unabated for about one and a half century. During this inglorious period of the Pala rule five kings ruled the empire: Vigrahapala I (950-853), Naranapala (854-908), Rajyapala (908-940, Gopala II (940-) and Vigrahapala II (950-986).

The mighty Devapala was succeeded by Vigrahapala³⁸ I (850-853)³⁹ who was "a man of pacific and religious disposition."⁴⁰ In view

of the non-availability of authentic historical evidence it is difficult to ascertain his role in the building up of empire. After a very short reign he relinquished the throne⁴¹ in favour of his son Narayanapala (854-908) who ruled for more than half a century without any significant military achievement⁴². Some time after 860, Narayanapala's empire witnessed a gradual decline caused by the onslaughts of Rashtrakuta King Amoghavarsha (814-880). The latter was assisted in his task by the intrigues of the local rulers like Anga, Vanga and Magadha⁴³ who also accepted the suzerainty of the Rastrakutas⁴⁴. The attacks of the Rastrakutas that had already weakened the Pala empire facilitated the Pratiharas kings Bhojadeva and Mahendrapala in making best use of the opportunity. Therefore, they gradually extended their kingdom in the east and as a result Narayanapala lost not only Magadha but also north Bengal, the heartland of the Pala Empire⁴⁵. Moreover the Sulki King of Orissa also broke a portion of Radha⁴⁶ from the Pala sovereignty.⁴⁷ Some of the records indicate that towards the end of his rule Narayanapala had succeeded in recovering north Bengal and south Bihar from the Pratiharas.⁴⁸

On the death of Narayanapala in 908 his son Rajyapala ascended the throne and ruled the remaining part of his ancestral empire for thirty-two years. Like his father he was also without any significant military achievement. His marriage with the daughter of the Rashtrakuta king Tunga made him an ally of the powerful rulers thereby according him a chance to devote to the works of public utility such as excavation of tanks and construction of lofty temples⁴⁹.

During the aforementioned period of stagnation Gopala II, the son and successor of Narayanapala, ascended the throne in 940 and continued his rule for about seventeen years. The reasons why the Pratiharas could not attack Pala empire, during his reign, were good relationship between the Palas and the Rastrakutas and relatively weaker position of the Pratiharas themselves. These circumstances enabled Gopala II to maintain his undisturbed rule over the territories up to Magadha on the west.⁵⁰ During the same period, some sources claim, the Chandella dynasty grew much powerful and a vast area from Kashmir to Bengal came under its domination. Moreover, Gopala II lost his control over eastern and southern Bengal because of the rise of several independent petty kingdoms in those areas.⁵¹

Thus, from the reign of Vigrahapala I to that of Vigrahapala II, the total 136 years' history of the Pala kingdom witnessed almost

continuous, gradual and unabated downfall. During this period the Pala Empire of Dharmapala and Devapala transformed into three independent kingdoms i.e., the Chandra kingdom⁵², the Kamboja-Pala kingdom⁵³ and the proper Pala kingdom comprising Anga and Magadha.

Restoration (988-1075)

The decline of the Pala Empire was to some extent checked by Mahipala I (988-1038), the son and successor of Vigrahapala II, who recovered northern and eastern Bengal within three years.

During early eleventh century Mahipala did not join the Hindu Alliance organized by the Shahi kings of the Punjab against Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. Why he did not join the alliance? In historians' view, generally speaking, the reasons were Mahipala's religious intolerance and preoccupation with internal problems.⁵⁴ It is, however, true that Mahipala being "a staunch follower of Buddhism" did a lot of work to revive the religion not only in his dominion but even in the far area of Tibet⁵⁵. The fact indicates that Mahipala's strong love for Buddhism might have contributed in keeping him outside the Hindu alliance. Whatever the reasons were, one thing is very clear that Bengal managed to retain its separate position by refusing to merge itself with other parts of the subcontinent.

Nayapala the successor of Mahipala entered a long-drawn struggle with the *Kalachuri* King Karna who was ultimately defeated by Nayapala. The defeated Karna signed a treaty with Nayapala through the mediation of famous Buddhist scholar Dipankara Srijnana also known as Atisa.⁵⁶

During the reign of Vigrahapala III, who succeeded Nayapala in 1055, King Karna once again made an abortive attack on Bengal. This defeat also resulted in a truce concluded between the contending parties. The marriage of Vigrahapala with the daughter of king Karna further cemented the peace process. The stability thus created was ultimately disrupted by the invasions by Chalukya King Vicramaditya VI and Somavamsi king of Orissa. Thus the Pala King lost eastern, western and southern Bengal and his hold over Magadha also became irresolute.⁵⁷

Disintegration and Short Lived Revival (1070-1120)

Mahipala II⁵⁸ succeeded his father Vigrahapala III at a time when the Pala Empire was facing quick down fall. Ignoring the political expedencies, Mahipala II imprisoned his brothers - Surapala II and Ramapala - on the charge of conspiring against him. In reaction to this imperial action the vassal chiefs rose in rebellion against the emperor. Underestimating his strength Mahipala ignored the counsel of his ministers and launched an attack against the rebel chiefs. Divya, a powerful official of the empire, defeated and killed Mahipala in a battle and assumed supremacy over north Bengal. In the meanwhile Surapala II and Ramapala escaped to Magadha where the former died after a short reign.

Ramapala who succeeded his brother Surapala II soon made a successful attempt at restoring the lost power of the Pala Empire. In this mission of his he was supported by his maternal uncle Rastrakuta king Mathana,⁵⁹ his two sons and many of the feudatory chiefs of south Bihar and south-west Bengal. Thus having become the acknowledged leader of the region Ramapala defeated king Bhima across the Ganges. This success encouraged Ramapala to transfer his capital from Magadha to Ramavati.

Though a short-lived attempt at restoring the lost glory of the Pala Empire, it made Varman king of east-Bengal to recognize Ramapala's over-lordship which also meant the passage of Kamarupa under his control. This further empowered Ramapala to interfere in the politics of Orissa for a short period. The extension of his conquests up to Kalinga ultimately enabled him to restore Pala supremacy not only over Bengal but also over parts of Orissa and Assam. But it turned out to be the last flicker of the Pala might which, after the death of Ramapala in 1120, was eroded by internal dissension.

The Down Fall (1120-1161)

Kumarapala, the son and successor of Ramapala, proved to be a weak ruler. During his five years' reign he failed to properly deal with the internal disturbances. Even his courtiers took advantage of his weak position. For example, Vaidyadeva, a favourite minister of Kumarapala, after putting down the rebellion in Assam, declined to restore Kamarupa to the Pala Empire and virtually assumed independence after the death of Kumarapala.

Gopala III the successor of Kumarapala was soon after his succession was reportedly murdered by his uncle Madanapala. Madanapala's managed to keep Magadha as well as north Bengal within the Pala Empire at least for the first few years of his fourteen year rule. Despite this military strength, Madanapala's personal weakness proved fatal to the continuation of his Empire. In the east the Varmans declared independence and in Orissa the eastern Gangas⁶⁰ became developing centrifugal tendencies. On the other hand the Senas after attaining the mastery over southern and eastern Bengal, defeated Madanapala. Thus before the death of Madanapala in 1161, the Pala sovereignty over western, southern and eastern Bengal as well as in western and northern Bihar ceased to exist. Consequently, the Pala rule shrunk to limited areas of central and eastern Bihar and a part of north Bengal. After Madanapala, Govindapala ruled the Pala Empire till 1162 but it is not certain if he had any relation whatsoever with the Palas.

The Sena Dynasty

The Senas after gaining power in Modern West Bengal ultimately pushed the Palas from northern and western Bengal up to southern Bihar and gradually consolidated their power over whole of Bengal for the first time in its history⁶¹. Later the Senas made military excursions far into Bihar. Their Power in Bengal was weakened by the invasions of Ikhtiaruddin Muhammad bin Bakhtiar Khilji in early twelfth century⁶². The Sena dynasty, however, survived till the middle of the century⁶³.

The original abode of the Senas was Karnata in South India. It is assumed that they came to Bengal along with the Chalukya king Vicramaditya VI who invaded Bengal, Assam and other parts of northern India. It is believed that Samantasena, the founder of the Sena dynasty, was a Brahmin himself but his successors claimed to be Kshatriyas. Thus the Senas came to known as *Brahma-Kshatriya*⁶⁴ by caste.

The Senas gained position in western Bengal towards the end of the eleventh century when the power of the Pala kings became very weak during the rule of Mahipala II. The earliest known person and founder of the Sena family was Samantasena who was much famous in South India as a warrior. In his old age Samantasena settled himself in Radha or modern Burdwan Division of West Bengal. But there is no

clear evidence that he himself was able to found a Sena kingdom in Bengal.

The Senas could not attain independent position in Bengal until the last quarter of the eleventh century when the later Pala king Madanapala was facing revolts from different quarters. Taking advantage of such unstable political situation in Bengal Hemantasena, son of Samantasena, founded an independent Sena Principality in Radha or the modern Burdwan Division of West Bengal.

Hemantasena's son Vijaysena(1097-1160)⁶⁵ who reigned for over sixty years glorified his family's by conquering much of Bengal.⁶⁶ His marriage with a princess of the ruling Sura family of southern Radha extended his control over the rest of Radha.

Thereafter, Vijayasena was able to conquer nearly whole of Bengal and assumed the full imperial titles, *Paramesvara*, *Paramabhattaraka*, *Maharajadhiraja*⁶⁷. Unlike the later Pala kings, Vijayasena consolidated his power over Bengal to an extent where he could easily check the foreign invasions over his kingdom.

Vijayasena's son and successor Vallalasena (1160-1178)⁶⁸ maintained and extended the inherited dominions⁶⁹ by putting an end to the Pala Empire by defeating the last Pala king Govindapala. His marriage with the daughter of a Chalukya king further added to the growing strength of the Senas.

Vallalasena was staunch believer in Brahmanism and it was he who introduced the practice of "*Kulinism* among the Brahmanas, the Vaidyas and kayasthas of Bengal"⁷⁰. Besides his political and military achievements Vallalasena is known for his scholarship and two of his scholarly works are still existing⁷¹.

Vallalasena was succeeded by his son Lakshmanasena(1179-1205) when the latter was sixty years old. His most important military success was victory over the Gahadavalas who expelled the Palas from Magadha. During the last phase of his rebellions within the kingdom weakened Lakshmanasena and Ikhtiyar-ud-din Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji's attack in early thirteenth century proved to be a crushing blow on the Senas. During Lakshmanasena's stay at the capital city of Nadiya (in West Bengal), Ikhtiyar-ud-din Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khalji with only eighteen horsemen entered the city and attacked the palace at a time when the old king was taking his lunch. As a result of the surprise attack Lakshmanasena fled to Vikrampur(in

present Bangladesh) where he continued his rule for some time and died after 1205.

Lakshmanasena's son and successor Visvarupasena (1207-20) continued his rule over eastern and southern parts of Bengal. Then he was succeeded by his brother Keshavasena. These two Senas were able to withstand the attacks of the Muslim rulers of Lakhnauti(Gaur). The history of the Senas after the rule Keshavasena is not definitely known. However, according to *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* the Sena rule over some parts of Bengal was continued probably up to 1260.

Conclusion

The survival of Pala Empire in the midst of widespread political turmoil suggests solid footings of the empire itself. The main contributing factor in this regard appears to be the introduction of democratic institutions in the area. This radical change from despotism to the involvement of mass in running the administration of the country provided the new rulers with an unprecedented mass support. This support helped them face even the mightiest blows of their time. Besides, it is important to note that they always maintained their regional identity and only compromised it under unavoidable circumstances.

The religious impact of the Pala rule was very profound. As the Pala kings were practicing Buddhists so under their reigns Buddhism got strong state patronage. In their drive to patronize Buddhism, the Palas not only established many Buddhist religious and educational institutions in different parts of their empire but also sent Buddhist missions abroad to propagate the religion. Thus Buddhism became a powerful international force that was spread from Tibet in the north and the islands of Malaya in the south. Despite all this religiosity on the part of the Palas it is not correct to assume that the Pala kings were religiously intolerant towards the members of other religions communities like Hindus and Muslims. Successful trade relations between the Muslim world⁷² and Bengal was, for the first time in its history, during the Pala rule testify the truth of the above statement. The Pala administration took definite measures to ensure safe environment for the Muslim merchants. In the long run these mutually benefiting commercial relations facilitated preaching Islam initially in the coastal areas and later in other parts of Bengal. As a matter of fact the tolerant attitude of the Buddhists⁷³ towards the followers of alien

religious faiths provided the Muslims with a sound opportunity to carry on both the business and the propagation of Islam in Bengal.

The Senas, who succeeded the Palas, restored Brahmanic Hinduism⁷⁴ as state religion. During their rule Brahmanism got strong state patronage and missions were sent abroad to propagate Hinduism.⁷⁵ Thus with the passing over of the political power from the tolerant Palas to the intolerant and orthodox Senas created a schism which ultimately resulted in Hindu self-assertion on the one hand and on the other caused the decline of Buddhism in Bengal. This rivalry also paved the way for the emergence of Islam in Bengal.

In the development of the Bengali language the pala rule turned out to be an epoch-making era. The inception and development of "Proto-Bengali" and composition of Buddhist hymns in Bengali language also went to the credit of Dharmapala. Thus it is not far from truth to say that language and culture significantly flourished under the patronage of the Palas and the Bengali language received a mass appeal.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ikhtiar-ud din Muhammad bin Bakhtiar Khilji captured power with the help of only seventeen soldiers approximately in 1204. There is difference of opinion about the date of his attack on Bengal and the last year which has been determined by the historians is 1204. See, Abdul Karim, *Pak-Bharatey Muslim Shashan (Muslim Rule in Indo-Pakistan)*, Dhaka, kendrio Bangla Unnaon Board, 1969, pp. 39 & 156.
2. According to the *Aitereya Brahmana* the people of the Pundras were *Dasyusi* (robbers). See, Sailendra Nath Sen, *Ancient History of Bangladesh, India & Pakistan*, New Delhi, 1988, Willy Eastern Limited, p.230.
3. The Vangas were, according to the ancient religious epics, civilized and high-born families of Ayodhya. See, Sailendra Nath Sen, p.230.
4. Sailendra Nath Sen, p. 230.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
8. The exact date of his death is uncertain. He died between 619 and 637. See, Abdul Momin Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal (750-1200 A.D.)*, Dhaka, The Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1967, p.5.

9. Abdul Momin Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal, 750-1200*, Dhaka, The Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1967, pp. 4-5. Also see, *Encyclopedia of Asian History*, Vol.I, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988, p.148 and Sailendra Nath Sen, p 234.
10. The Pala Dynasty comprised the following eighteen kings: 1. Gopala (750-777) 2. Dharamapala (770-810) 3. Devapala (810-850). 4. Vighrahapala I (850-853). 5. Narayanapala (854-908). 6. Raiyapala (908-940). 7. Gopala II (940-). 8. Vighrahapala II (960-986). 9. Mahipala I (988-1038). 10. Nayapala (1038-1055). 11. Vighrahapala III (1055-). 12. Mahipala II (1070-). 13. Ramapala (1077-1119). 14. Kumarapala (1120-). 15. Mahendrapala also known as Gopala III (1125-1140). 16. Madanapala (1140-1144). 17. Govindapala (1155-1159). 18. Indradymna. The relation of the last two with the Palas is doubtful. See, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Events and Dates*, Bangalore, Sterling Publications Private Limited, pp. 354-55. Also see, *Encyclopaedia Asiatica*, Delhi, 1987, Cosmo Publications 1982, p.82.; The reign periods of the Pala Kings have been mostly taken from, Shahnara Hussain, *Everyday Life in the Pala Empire*, Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1968, pp. 20, 24, 30, 35 and 37.
11. Abdul Momin Chowdhury, *op.cit.*, p. 5.
12. See *Encyclopaedia of Indian Events & Dates*, Bangalore, Sterling Publications Private Limited, 1987, p. 17.
13. See, Shahanara Hussain, *Everyday Life in the Pala Empire*, Dacca, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1968, pp. 20-21.
14. There is difference of opinion regarding his reign period. According to the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Events and Dates* (p.17) the period was from 750 to 770. R.C. Majumdar is of the opinion that, "His reign period is not definitely known but probably extended from A.D. 750 to 810". See R.C. Majumdar, p. 45.
15. R.C. Majumdar, "The Palas", in Bharatia Vidya Bhavan, *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. IV, Bombay, Bharatia Vidya Bhavan, 1993, p. 44. -
16. *Ibid.*
17. He was called the "destroyer of foes". See, Shahanara Hussain, *Everyday life in the Pala Empire*, Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1968, p.21.
18. R.C. Majumdar, *op.cit.*, p. 44.
19. This has been stated in a poetical work *Ramacharita* which was written by a court-poet of a later Pala king. See, R.C. Majumdar, p.45. Thus Gopala was the real founder of the Pala Empire.
20. During the ancient times Eastern Bengal was also called as *Vanga* and Western Bengal was called as *Gaunda*. "...Gopala rose to power from Varendri where he was perhaps a ruling chief, and soon became the

- ruler of the whole of Bengal by the support of the ruling chiefs". See, Shahanara Hussain, p.23.
21. According to Taranatha, Gopala was elected king for a part of Bengal but the archaeological findings reveal that he was elected "without any such geographical limits." See, R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
 22. Hans Raj, *History of Medieval India*, Delhi, Surjeet Publications, 1986, p. 17
 23. *Ibid.*
 24. The present name of the place is "Bara Gaon" which is situated in the Patna District of Bihar Province in India. See, Mohammad Matiur Rahman, ed., *Oitihashik Obhidhan* (Historical Dictionary), Dhaka, Bangla Academy, 1967, p. 55.
 25. *Ibid.* Also see, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Events and Dates*, p. 17.
 26. Modern Uttar Pradesh In India.
 27. A three-way struggle for Kanauj began in the middle of the eighth century between the Gurjara-Pratiharas, the Palas of Bengal and the Rashtrakutas, the first Deccan dynasty to aspire political dominance over northern India. All the three in turn gained control over Kanauj. The Palas of Bengal were the first to acquire ascendancy for a short period in the early part of the ninth century and became the masters of Kanauj. See, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 86. Also see A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, Fontana, 1967, p.71.
 28. Indrayudha the ruler of Kanauj was defeated by Dharmapala and another ruler, Chakrayudha, probably of the same family was placed on the throne by Dharmapala. See, R.C. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
 29. Ishwari Prasad, *A Short History of Muslim Rule In India* (revised edition), no place of publication, 1990, p. 25.
 30. Dharmapala in the later part of his rule arranged a *darbar* in which a number of vassal chiefs by bowing down before him accepted him as their overlord. See, R.C. Majumdar, *Op. cit.*, p. 46.
 31. Ahmad Hasan Dani, "Early Muslim Contact With Bengal", S. Moinul Haq, comp., *The Proceedings of the All Pakistan History Conference* (First Session), Karachi, 1951, pp. 196-201.
 32. Sailendra Nath Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 235.
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
 34. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of India, Pakistan Bangladesh, Sri Lanka*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p.86.
 35. The Gurjara-Pratiharas were the most powerful among the several Gurjara families that ruled in Rajasthan during the mid-sixth century. Later on they became one of the greatest imperial dynasties in north India. From the time of Junaid to that of Mahmud of Ghazni, the Pratiharas stood as parapet of defence against the attacks of the

- Muslim forces. The Arab writers have endorsed that the Pratiharas had "effectively impeded the progress of the Muslim expansion beyond the confines of Sindh, for nearly three hundred years". See, *Encyclopedia of Asian History*, Vol. 2, p.13. Also See, *Encyclopaedia of India*, Vol. XVI, New Delhi, Rima Publishing House, 1992, p. 22.
36. The Rashtrakuta Dynasty ruled Deccan from 752 to 972 A.D. They moved towards north in early seventh century and were able to over power the Pratiharas, Eastern Chalukyas and Cholas besides the Palas. See, *Encyclopedia Asian History*, Vol. 3, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988, p. 330.
37. Sailendra Nath Sen, *op. cit.* p. 236.
38. Vighrahapala is also known as Surapala.
39. Some of the historians are of the view that he was son of Devapala and some consider him as his nephew. See, Sailendra Nath Sen, p. 236. Vighrahapala was probably the son of Jayapala who was a great general and cousin of Devapala. See, Shahanara Hussain, p. 30.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Sailendra Nath Sen, *op. cit.* p. 236.
42. Shahanara Hussain, p. 30.
43. The traditional Buddhist sources reveal that Magadha was one of the sixteen ancient North Indian states and the present Bihar state of India was its heartland. It was the site of many events of Buddha's life. Magadha remained the core area of many kingdoms from the sixth century B.C. to the eight century A.D. See, *Encyclopedia of Asian History*, p. 457.
44. Shahanara Hussain, p. 31.
45. Sailendra Nath Sen, p. 236.
46. Western Bengal.
47. Shahanara Hussain, p. 31.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*
51. For example, the kingdom of Harikela (ruled by a Buddhist king) and its capital situated near present Sylhet in Bangladesh; king Layahachandradeva's dominion was situated in the vicinity of modern Comilla in Bangladesh and his reign lasted from 900 to 1000; the Chandra dynasty's kingdom situated in Eastern Bengal during the period between 900 and 1050. For details see, Shahanara Hussain, pp. 32-34.
52. The Chandra Kingdom comprised East and South Bengal.
53. The Komboja-Pala kingdom comprised North and West Bengal.
54. R. C. Majumdar, *The History of Bengal*, Vol. I, Dacca, The University of Dacca, 1963 (Second Edition), p. 141.

55. Ishwari Prasad, *op.cit.*, p. 25.
56. Sailendra Nath Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
57. The Varmanas occupied eastern Bengal and Kamarupa assumed Independence.
58. Surapala II and Ramapala were the other two sons.
59. Also known as Mahana.
60. Ganga as a family name has been used by many Indian dynasties. The original family ruled the southern part of Karnataka from the second half of the fourth century until the medieval period. See, *Encyclopedia of Asian History*, Vol. 1, p. 490.
61. Abdul Momin Chowdhury, *op.cit.*, p.204.
62. There exists difference of opinion about the date of attack on Bengal by Bakhtiar Khilji. The most probable year was 1204 but some of the historians believe that he invaded Bengal in 1199. See Ishwari Prasad, *A Short History of Muslim Rule in India* (revised edition), no place of publication, 1990, p. 26.
63. *Encyclopedia of Asian History*, Vol. 3, p.411.
64. Their original profession was priestly but later on they adopted martial profession. See, Abdul Momin Chowdhury, p. 206.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
66. *Encyclopedia of Asian History*, vol. 3, p. 411.
67. Before his hold over nearly whole of Bengal Vijayasena had to fight with the rulers of Nanya, Virga, Raghava, Gauda, Kamarupa and Kalinga. Vijay's expeditions towards the north, east and south were very successful but his attempts towards the west were without any success. See, Sailendra Nath Sen, pp. 243-44.
68. Abdul Momin Chaudhury, *op.cit.*, p.220.
69. It has been written in the *Vallala-charita* that Vallalasena's kingdom comprised of Vanga, Varendra, Radha, Bagdi and Mithila. See, Sailendra Nath Sen, p. 244.
70. Ishwari Prasad, *op.cit.*, p. 26
71. Vallalasena wrote four books of which two i.e., the *Danasagara* (an extensive digest of matters relating to gifts) and the *Adbhutasagara* (on omens and portents) are extant. See, Sailendra Nath Sen, p. 244.
72. An Arab merchant after visiting India wrote his account in 851 terming the Pala Empire as Ruhmi. He has mentioned about the might of the Palas *vis-a-vis* the Gurjaras and the Rashtrakutas.
73. How far the Buddhists were tolerant to the Muslims that has been explained by Ibn Batuta, a famous Muslim traveler of the fourteenth century, in his account of Ceylon. He writes, "they show respect for Muslim *darwishes*, lodge them in their houses and give them to eat, they live in their houses amidst their wives and children. This is contrary to the usage of the other Indian idolaters who never make

friends with Muslims, and never give them to eat or to drink out of their vessels." See Ibn Batuta, *travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354*; I tr. By H. A. R. Gibb, London 1929, p. 96, c.f., Abdul Momin Choudhury, "Conversion to Islam in Bengal: An Exploration" in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain, eds. *Bangladesh: History and Culture*, Vol. One, New Delhi, South Asian Publishers, 1986, p.11.

74. *Encyclopedia of Asian History*, Vol. I, p. 133

75. Ishwari Prasad, p. 26.