



## Whose Quest for Identity?: The Kaivartta Rebellion in the *Ramacharitam* of Sandhyakaranandin

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### Abstract

The Kaivartta Rebellion in Pala Bengal was a decisive event that severed the Varendra region from Pala control, which was the *janakabhū* of the Palas at a time when the Pala Empire was embroiled in succession politics threatened by the fluctuating loyalty of the samanta chiefs. The only mention of Kaivartta Revolt we find is in the *Ramacharitam* written by Sandhyakaranandin, dedicated to Emperor Ramapala. This paper aims to identify the different quests for identity during the uprising of the Kaivarttas. There are different historiographical interpretations behind the causes of the uprising, but what this paper focuses on is how this revolt facilitates many identity creations. For the Kaivarttas the revolt was to claim an identity for upward social mobility. The same goes for the samantas, whose relationship with the Pala overlords was one of political reciprocity. The samantas were also looking for political independence and were in search of a stronger alliance with the overlords. Apart from the ritual upliftment, the land was itself an important asset and a source of power for upward social mobility which the Kaivarttas did so claiming their identity as farmers from fishermen. For the author himself, the writing of the text itself was a challenge that might enable him to end up at the Pala court where he will be royally patronised. Towards the end, Ramapala's quest for political legitimation can be understood in the context of this rebellion as artfully justified by the author Sandhyakaranandin.

**Keywords:** Pala, Charita, Ramacharitam, Kaivartta, Revolt, Samanta.



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### Introduction

Newton's Third Law of Action states 'to every action, there is equal and opposite reaction', this same goes for history when tyranny and oppression give rise to uprisings. Uprisings have an intense effect on any society as they imbalance the existing socio-political equilibrium. Peasant uprisings were very common in colonial India as attested from government records and archives contrary to ancient times where sources were rare to justify the occurrence of such uprisings.

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The key theme of this paper is to focus on the different identity formations in the light of the Kaivartta Rebellion as seen from *charita* literature, in this case, the Ramacharitam from a critical perspective. Historians must rely on viable sources to write history. History writing is itself a political procedure as it reflects the ideology of who is writing and to whom or to which event it is dedicated. The sources or what I call 'authoritative sources' that enable historians to write or record the events of the past should be understood that it is the narrative of events commissioned by the rulers or authority in power. Hence, events like histories of uprisings or rebellions which are mostly associated with people's history (a domain well associated with subaltern schools that began in the 1980s) are less likely to be noticed by conventional authoritative sources. The only exception that the *Ramacharitam* makes is the mention of the Kaivartta Rebellion at the beginning of the text, an event that facilitated the rise of Ramapala as an eligible Pala ruler. Historical traditions emerge from and reflect their social context, and the context may produce and extend to a broad range of social forms. Within these forms, history is generally the record of recognizable socio-political groups. Historical consciousness begins with the recording of the past only when society shows consciousness of both the past and the future. E.H. Carr writes "There is no more significant pointer to the character of a society than the kind of history it writes or fails to write" (Carr, 2018, p. 43). Since the past is a permanent dimension of human identity, its constructions and contents can change with new definitions of identity. The definitions of identity also change how we look into our past. Here sources like different historical texts as readings of the past play important roles in their appearance or existence; and it becomes particularly apparent when there is an official version that differs from other versions. Romila Thapar states that meanings of such constructions as the sources tell us may not be always taken at face value, for the historian needs to reach behind the symbols to understand the complexities and the different meanings embedded in such sources (Thapar, 2013, pp. 5 – 7). Society may record the events of its past as a tradition (as a way to remember their past), but that necessarily may not constitute a history. To understand why a society records an event, and in what form, involves understanding some of the ideological debates of the past. The narrative is given a chronological framework, and the explanations of events assume some causal connections. Proving the veracity of the record is at this point less crucial than examining the nature of its construction. History, or historical writing in the forms that we now acknowledge as history, emerges from such historical traditions (Thapar, 2013, pp. 5 – 7). So if the West has always portrayed that India lacked a sense of history writing, accepting this view might be problematic. India's way of history writing was different from the European counterpart as here historical consciousness created a 'historical tradition' to record the past. The reason it is called a tradition is how events of the past have occurred and hence *itihasa* (thus it was) and it is now up to the historian to read the narratives of the past to identify true historical events.

### ***Charitas* as History**

The beginning of early medieval era in India witnessed the rise of decentralised political entities in the wake of the decline of the Gupta Empire. Post-Gupta polities were recognised majorly on the lines of regionalism, linguistics, and cultic affiliations. The early medieval times witnessed the rigorous politics of the *samantas* or feudal lords who were aspiring to be politically independent aligning themselves with powerful overlords as opposed to the weaker ones. Early Medieval Northern India which was politically and militarily superior to South India became subordinate in the energy and exuberance of the new period for the first time due to foreign invasions. Indian kings from all areas began to increase their patronage of literature and to strategise their support for religion, searching for religious counselors that could bolster their political and military agendas. The court cultures of the Guptas and the Vakatakas were seriously compromised. Divinisation of the king by his apotheosis (as incarnations and manifestations of a god or tracing his lineage to Solar and Lunar dynasties) becomes the medium to legitimize his power apart from his political and martial skills. The corollary to this was the feudalization of divinity, wherein the gods became perceived as warlords and the rulers of the earth (Davidson, 2004, pp. 15 – 16). *Charita* literatures after *prashatis*, meticulously records this. *Charitas* roughly translates as biographies as opposed to *Kavyas* which are epics. *Charitas* treats (historical) events in a linear timeframe as it deals with the events that actually happened, unlike the Puranas which deal with cyclical timeline. Therefore, the biographical span in the *charitas* is linear. Romila Thapar shows that biographies, to be considered part of a historical tradition, have to show awareness of that tradition even while narrating events in the life of a person. The biographer may be observing and recording events. He selects the events that he regards as worthy of transmission to a contemporary audience and to posterity. The biographer is a committed witness. He chooses the actions of a particular person, indicates their cause and purpose, and locates them at a point in time and space. When it is the biography of a contemporary, the biographer and his patron choose what they want to be transmitted (Thapar, 2013, p. 471). The biographer has also the discretion to note events as worthy of his contemporary relevance. The term '*charita*' means 'moving', 'doing', or 'going' referring to the activities of the person. As told earlier biography stands in a linear timeframe for which, unlike *kathas*, these narratives are not boxed into a series of larger and smaller stories. The tradition of *charita* writing roughly starts with Ashvaghosha's writing of the *Buddhacharita*. Biographies also served to legitimise dynasties as Indian dynasties of this time traced their lineage to Surya and Chandra Dynasties. *Charitas* like *Harshacharita* of Banabhatta, *Ramacharitam* of Sandhyakaranandin, and *Vallalacharita* of Anandabhatta are no exception to this. But what I observe taking the case of *Ramacharitam* of Sandhyakaranandin is that this text is important because of the many identity formations in the context of the Kaivartta uprising apart from Ramapala's justification to become the eligible Pala king.

Mahamahopadhyay Haraprasad Sastri was the first to discover the manuscript of *Ramacharitam* from Nepal Durbar Library in 1897. He edited the text in the Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (Sastri, 1915, pp. 1 – 56). Some of his interpretations

would be later revised by Akshaya Kumar Maitreya. R.G. Basak, R.C. Majumdar, and N.G. Banerjee prepared a new version of the text which was published by the Varendra Research Society in Rajshahi, the society which was on a journey to recover the antiquities and glorious past of Bengal through Archaeology as contrary to the study of literary texts of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad in Calcutta.

### **Authorship and its identity**

The first quest of identity this paper would like to show was by the author himself. Sandhyakaranandin, being an artful biographer gives his history in the section of the *kaviprashasti* which marks the conclusion of the text. He states he was an inhabitant of the village of Brihadvatu close to Pundravardhana city, the Pala capital. He was the grandson of Pinakanandi and the son of Prajapatinandi (Majumdar et al., 1910, pp. VII – VIII). His father Prajapatinandi was a minister of war and peace and hence was designated as *Sandhi* (Roy, 2009, p. 26).<sup>i</sup> He was a Karana-Kayastha<sup>ii</sup> (Majumdar, 1943, pp. 585 – 589) by caste and his village Brihadvatu is represented as *punyabhu* or the holy land like Varendra was represented by the Palas as the *janaka bhū*. Charitas were mostly written in Sanskrit as scribes and Brahmanas travelled and migrated to long distances in search of employment and introduced their characteristic culture into new areas at elite levels like courts. Hence, authors like Sandhyakaranandin were not alone as poets competed in search of worthy patrons and kings who would endorse them at their courts. This network of migrants created an elite Sanskrit Culture which Sheldon Pollock describes as the 'Sanskrit Cosmopolis' (Pollock, 1996, pp. 197 – 249). In an age of Sanskrit Cosmopolis, authors and poets with the finest literary skills competed against each other to find powerful courts that could endorse them. The author of the Ramacharitam was himself a part of this competition where his search for identity was entirely based on his literary skills which he could artfully use to have the king convinced to endorse the author at his court. Sandhyakaranandin used titles that must have indicated his competitive profession. In the *kaviprashasti* he is described as *nandi kula kumuda kanana purnendu* (the full moon amongst the forest of lotuses belonging to the family of Nandis), *kavya kala kula nilaya* (the abode of the assemblage of poetic arts), *guna mani meru* (mountain of gems like virtue), *ashesha bhasha visharada* (well versed in inexhaustible array of languages – as he plays with words to justify Ramapala's right to rule, a section which I have dealt later) and *kali kala Valmiki* (Valmiki of the Kali age) as he describes his work *Ramayana* of the Kali age (Roy, 2009, pp. 26 – 27; Majumdar, 1943, pp. VII – VIII). All this shows his quest for self-identity in the Pala court in the competitive environment.

### **The Rebels and their Rebellion for an identity**

Secondly, to discuss about the identity of the samantas, we must understand the nature of the Kaivartta uprising which was a quest for the Kaivarttas in search of a new identity with the changing society of those times. To show the different nature of the revolt it is important to get a view of a brief historiographical analysis while dealing with the quest for identity. According to H.P. Sastri, the Kaivartta Rebellion was a result

was a result of the tyranny of the Pala Kings on the Kaivarttas under Mahipala II, who succeeded his father Vighrahapala III as the eldest son (Sastri, 1910, p. 13). Ramaprasad Chanda and Akshaya Kumara Maitreya too shared a similar view. Maitreya sees this as a General Revolution (Maitreya, 1987, pp. 39 – 44). Chanda situates this rebellion against the background of the Indian resistance to British Colonialism (Chanda, 1912/1975, p. 59). A.M. Chowdhury sees it as the revolt of the *samantas* of North Bengal and not of the Kaivarttas from his observation in the *Ramacharitam* (Chowdhury, 1967, pp. 102 – 110).<sup>iii</sup> Romila Thapar sees what followed in the aftermath of the revolt as a politics of the *samantas* rather than the kings. The *Ramacharitam* reads the section like a 'vignette of the peer group of a family, with one among them trying to desperately maintain a position superior to the intermediaries' (Thapar, 2013, pp. 500 – 502). Kunal Chakrabarti sees what started as a revolt would gradually take the shape of a 'sub-regional supremacy' in a situation of political unrest. This happened at a time when the Pala state was experiencing a transition of power from Vighrahapala III to Mahipala II at a time when the Kaivartta uprising took place. It would be during this transition when the struggle amongst the *samantas* took place for sub-regional supremacy in which the Kaivarttas took part. Chakrabarti calls the Kaivartta Revolt an 'Organised Revolt', something which is rare under the existing conditions of peasantry in Ancient India (Chakrabarti, 2019, pp. 494 – 495). Sayantani Pal doesn't conform to Chakrabarti's view because an 'organised' revolt in those times was hard to imagine, although not denying the existence of the revolt (Pal, 2019). The text shows the emergence of the Kaivarttas who were no longer happy to be *dhivaras* (fishermen) and aspired for a better social status as *halikas* (cultivators) (Pal, 2019, pp. 501 – 517). The Kaivarttas as fishermen are mentioned in the Ashokan Inscriptions as *kevatabhoga* as early as third century BCE in the 5<sup>th</sup> Pillar Edict of Ashoka, where the emperor issued an order to prevent the killing of fishes in the preserves of fishermen (*kevatabhoga*) (Basak, 1959, p. 98 – 105). Could the demand for a new occupational status be the only reason behind the uprising? In 1965, R.S. Sharma situated this uprising against the background of feudal oppression as lands belonging to the Kaivarttas were confiscated by Mahipala, and Sharma characterized this event as 'a peasant uprising directed against the Palas' (Sharma, 1965, p. 268). In 1988, Sharma adds a religious cause to the revolt where the Saivite Kaivarttas revolted against the Pala Buddhist Kings who donated the lands (owned by the Kaivarttas) to the Buddhists for a monastery. Sharma also found the elevation of the ritual status of the Kaivarttas as an instance of the revolt evidenced in the *Vallalacharita*. (Sharma, 1988, p. 9 -11). He states that perhaps this is why Ramapala built several Shiva temples in his newly built capital of Ramavati after the revolt. Kunal Chakrabarti does not agree with this clarification. To him the impoverishment of the Kaivarttas brought about by the confiscation of their lands and their Shaivite affiliation is hard to believe. Firstly because seeing from the Belwa Plate of Mahipala I, the transference of the village of Osinna<sup>iv</sup> from the Kaivarttas to a fresh donee can never be the cause for the impoverishment of an entire community (Sircar, 1951, p. 7). The Ashrafpur Grant of Devakhadga contains a detailed list of lands that were seized by the king to be donated to the Buddhist Sanghamitra Vihara ("Ashrafpur

Grant of Devakhadga," 1905, pp. 85 – 91). Theoretically, in the South Asian context, the king is the owner of lands, for which Europeans have usually seen the absence of the notion of private property in South Asia. But could the resentment of the Kaivarttas show a sense of 'private property' in Bengal when their allotted lands were taken back and allotted to others? Moreover, the Pala kings were seen to be adopting Shaivism by this time. Starting with Surapala I who built a temple for Maheshvara Shiva in Varanasi and granted lands in favour of the *Pashupata* acharyas there, the Pala affiliation with Shaivism was seen this time. Narayanapala I ruling in the second of the 9<sup>th</sup> century had converted himself to Shaivism. Therefore, the belief that the revolt was a tussle between Shaivite Kaivarttas and Buddhist Pala kings lacks strong support (Pal, 2019, p. 510). Later, Sharma categorised the revolt under two phases – one under the leadership of Divya and the other under Bhima (Sharma, 2003, pp. 215 – 235). They revolted on the grounds that their lands were taken away by Mahipala II and oppressive taxes were imposed on them. The people of Varendra were burdened by the imposition of cruel taxes (*krurakarapidita*) even under Bhima and this would be finally resolved by Ramapala after Bhima's defeat. But more importantly, their revolt was a twofold process. The quest of the Kaivarttas to be *halikas* (cultivators) from *jalikas* (fishermen) stemmed from two needs – first was the need to raise their social status by some sort of ritual upliftment and second was to acquire social power by acquiring lands from turning into a cultivator from a fisherman. If Sharma's Marxist theory is to be accepted that the rebellion happened out of feudal oppression, then it should be added that rather simply understanding the revolt as a result of feudal oppression or tyranny the revolt should be understood as a situation that set the feasible grounds on which claimants of new identities were made. If acquiring and owning land was a source of gaining status and power in the society with land grants to Brahmanas in the form of *Agraharas* and *Brahmadeyas* becoming important in early medieval kingship, the Kaivarttas too aspired to own lands to acquire power and high social status. A reason for this could be that fishery was perhaps less economically productive than agriculture. The Arthashastra mentions the three principal occasions that contributed to the state economy – *krsi* (agriculture), *vanijya* (trade), and *pasupalya* (cattle-tending). These three constitute together *vartta*, a word derived from *vrtti* meaning livelihood. It is the *vartta* that sustains the state treasury and army enabling the state to hold its own people and check its enemies (KAS 1.4.2) (Kangle, 1992, p. 166). Brahmanical literatures like the *Manusmriti* states a Kaivartta is an offspring of a Nishada father and Ayogava mother (Pal, 2019, pp. 505 – 506). Both *Gautama Dharmasutra* and *Yajnavalkasmriti* says the Mahishyas were the offspring of Kshatriya father and Vaishya mother (Ray, 1980, pp. 293 – 294). Now since the *Brahmavaivarta Puarana* mentions that the Kaivarttas were also the offsprings of Kshatriya father and Vaishya mother (Tarkaratna, 1925, 10.111), the Chasa Kaivarttas were demanding to be enlisted as Mahishyas in Risley's Census of 1901. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Mahishya Movement led by the All Bengal Student Mahishya Student Association claimed the nomenclature of the 'Kaivartta revolt' to be discarded and to be declared as 'the election of King Divya by the Bengali people in the 11<sup>th</sup> century'. They claimed

since they were associated with *mahishas* (buffaloes) which in turn is associated with agriculture, they are eligible for this name. The text does mention buffaloes and the absence of the chariots once (R. G. Basak, 1953, pp. 40 – 42).

### **Samantas and their quest for political identities**

If the rebellion is considered as a rebellion of *samantas* as argued by A.M. Chowdhury, then did Divya represent the interests of the *samantas* or the Kaivarttas? Divya, the Kaivartta king is mentioned as *mamsabhujā* (an officer sharing royal fortune) in verse 38 who rose to a high position but took to fraudulent practice as a vow (*upadhivratī*). He is stated as the one who occupied Varendri, the *paitrabhumi* of the Palas (Pal, 2019, pp. 509 – 510). The poet blames Mahipala II for his wrong policy that led to his downfall. In verse 22A the tragedy of Gautama Rishi who cursed his wife Ahalya as she was tricked into Indra's vices was portrayed by Sandhyakaranandin in verse 22B as Mahipala's wrong policy which led the Pala kingdom to enter a miserable state full of darkness. Ahalya's curse would be lifted by Rama bringing normalcy to Gautama's family (verse 22A), likewise, Ramapala was the only one to uplift darkness from the kingdom, the darkness brought about by the actions of his elder brother (verse 22B) (Majumdar et al., 1910, pp.17 – 18). Divya initially wasn't present during the rebellion. He only emerged as a victorious leader later in the course of the events, perhaps this rebellion that enabled the breakdown of the Pala kingdom helped him to be an aspiring *samanta* who is set to carve out an independent rich territory, Varnedri, in this case. Whether he was trying to get help from other *samantas* or was emulating himself as a populist leader aligning himself with the Kaivarttas is difficult to imagine. Kumkum Roy states that the *samantas* could take advantage of this fluid political situation (that was about to become a struggle for sub-regional supremacy as argued by Kunal Chakrabarti) (Roy, 2009, p. 24).<sup>v</sup> Divya was a new king and hence couldn't strongly establish himself as a proper king. He was met with armies like that of Jatavarman of Eastern Bengal attested in the Belwa Copperplate of Bhojavarman as *nindan-divyabhujā-sriyam* (Mukherji & Maity, 1967, p. 235). The Belwa plate says that 'Jatavarman brought to disgrace the strength of the arms of Divya' (Majumdar, 1943, p. 154).

What Divya couldn't achieve was perhaps would be fulfilled by his nephew Bhima, who was simultaneously portrayed as the mighty Ravana, the epitome of villainy. Sandhyakarnandin has tactfully portrayed Bhima's quest for identity to an extent that is required to show the might of Ramapala facing a worthy opponent like Bhima. Bhima showed all the signs of what an established *samanta* could possess – wealth, territory and armies. In his quest for identity, he is portrayed as the successor of the usurper Divya who is now the king of Varendri as Ramapala was in exile at Mudgiri (Monghyr in Bihar). Bhima possessed armies of cavalry, elephantry, and buffaloes and wealth of gold, silver and jewels which were all confiscated by Ramapala upon Bhima's defeat. Bhima is said to have been further supported by Harivarman of the Varman Dynasty who supplied *kisabalena*, i.e., naked soldiers (Pal, 2019, pp. 511 – 512). I see the *kisabalenas* more as an ill-equipped auxiliary force. Harivarman's support for Bhima

could be the reason that the former wanted to prevent the expansion of Pala rule further in Southeast Bengal which was then under the Varman Dynasty. Therefore, it is hard to believe that either Divya or Bhima truly represented a peasantry community and its interests and revolted as leader of the Kaivarttas without any political reason. Bhima in verse 23B is compared with the eternal ocean which hosts innumerable treasures as stated in verse 23A. In the same verse (23B), Bhima is said to possess excellent elephants and cavalry having no rivals to fight with, and even Lakshmi (prosperity) and Saraswati (wisdom) (Majumdar et al., 1910, p. 55). In verse 25, he is said to possess the attributes of the *kalpa* (wish-fulfilling) tree, where officers secured their positions as he promoted their interests (Majumdar et al., 1910, p. 56). Could these be the officers who were dissatisfied with Mahipala's rule and now turned to Bhima as their king? In verse 26B, he is said to cast aside all *apunyadharmas* (impurities), and Shiva and Bhavani are said to reside in his heart (Majumdar et al., 1910, pp. 56 – 57). This is very interesting where in *charita* literature the intervention of gods or apotheosis of a king is usually meant to facilitate and legitimize the rule of the king, endorsing the king's royal ambition. Here it is done in the case of the antagonist. The *samantas* are portrayed as the monkey army of the Ramayana where the Rashtrakuta prince Shivaraja is presented by the author as the faithful and loyal Hanuman, beloved of Rama as his pious follower (R. G. Basak, 1953, I.46 – 47). Ramapala begging for help from the other powers traveling from place to place can be an indication of Rama's 14 years in exile as foretold in the Ramayana.

Among Ramapala's circuit of allies (*milita ananta samantachakra*) (Majumdar et al., 1910, canto II), foremost was his maternal uncle and the Rashtrakuta chief Mathana (or Mahana) along with his two sons Mahamandalika Kahnaradeva and Suvarnadeva, and his brother's son Mahapratihara Shivaraja (Majumdar, 1943, pp. 156 – 157).<sup>vi</sup> This Shivaraja is equated as Hanuman, who is known for his deep love and unquestioned loyalty towards Rama. Shivaraja eventually came to Ramapala's aid perhaps to honour commitments that had been cemented out of matrimonial ties (Roy, 2009, p. 22). In verses 44A and 44B Ramapala's alliance of *samantas* was portrayed by the author as Rama's alliance with Sugriva who was the son of Surya (the son god) (Majumdar et al., 1910, p. 33). *Samantas* were gradually becoming powerful in late Pala period as shown by Ryosuke Furui. Furui notes in the text, *samantas* of eastern Bihar and western Bengal who formed Ramapala's group are described as *vyala* and *atavika*. In the commentary, *vyala*, meaning 'wicked', is glossed as *agraharika*, 'the one who appropriates agrahara' and *vaisyika*, which may also denote an appropriator of *visaya* in analogy. *Atavika* on the other hand is equated with *atavikasamanta* and connotes a forest chief. These words suggest that those *samantas* consisted of some power who had exploited weakened governmental control in appropriating land of donated tracts or lower administrative units, and the others who were forest chiefs under weaker control from the beginning. Ramapala had to appease them with gifts of land and enormous movable wealth to get their support. Thus, the control of the Palas over their *samantas* was weak even in their remaining territory (Furui, 2014, pp. 93 – 98).



**Both the divine and mortal Rama(s) have triumphed over evil**

This lastly brings us to the search for the identity of the protagonist of the Ramacharitam, i.e., Ramapala. The battle of Ramapala and Bhima equated with Rama vs. Ravana was described in verses 12 – 20 of chapter 2 of the *Ramacharitam* (Majumdar et al., 1910, pp. 47 – 54). Rama triumphs over Ravana to rescue Sita, whereas Ramapala triumphs over Bhima to reclaim his Varendri region, described by the author as Sita – the most beautiful region surpassing the beauty of regions like Anga, Kuntala, Karnataka, Madhyadesa (Roy, 2009, p. 23). In the beginning of the text, Ramapala is described as Hari or Vishnu and Rama of Ramayana. Both possessed valour, power, and most importantly, generosity. Sandhyakaranandin portrays both characters as ideal models of kingship. Just like Kalidasa who was well acquainted with the model of the epic Ramayana of Valmiki while writing his *Raghuvamsa*, Sandhyakaranandin might have been likewise accustomed to it, from where he drew his inspiration. Kumkum Roy sees this as an image-building exercise of the Pala ruler. The author has skilfully played with words to legitimise Ramapala's accession to Pala's throne. Not being the elder son of Vighrahapala III, he uses the term *jyestha* to designate the best among his (Ramapala's) brothers, as compared to Rama who was meant to be the king as per the law of primogeniture when the term *jyestha* is applied.<sup>vii</sup> Rama was made king as per the law of primogeniture. But Ramapala II was not the eldest son of Vighrahapala III. Sandhyakaranandin twists the meaning of *jyestha* to give a different interpretation to bypass the law of primogeniture to legitimize the rule of Ramapala. Sandhyakaranandin might have hoped to glorify Ramapala's rule like no way other and portray his kingdom as *Ram Rajya* (kingdom of Rama) – the perfect kingdom to ever exist in the upcoming days of the decline of the Pala rule as the empire moved into oblivion with Ramapala's death and with the accession of weaker Pala kings.

**Declaration of Conflicts of Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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**Notes:**

<sup>i</sup> Kum Kum Roy sees *Sandhi* as an abbreviation for *Sandhivighrahika*, an official designation known from Gupta inscriptions, often translated as minister of war and peace.

<sup>ii</sup> The Kayastha is mentioned as a royal officer in the Vishnu and Yajnavalka Smritis. According to the former he wrote public documents and the commentary to the latter explains his office as that of an accountant and a scribe. According to Kshirasvamin's commentary on the *Amarakosha*, Karana denotes a group of officers like Kayastha. Like in other parts of India towards the conclusion of the Hindu period, R.C. Majumdar believes the castes Karana and Kayastha have amalgamated together to form Karana-Kayastha. According to the *Gauda-kayastha-vamsa*, the Kayasthas were recognised in Bengal by the 10<sup>th</sup> Century and according to the *Kulaji* texts, they were the descendants of the five Brahmanas who were invited to Bengal by the king Adisura.

iii To A.M. Chowdhury, the Kaivarttas were not a class as they had a chief (Divya and Bhima) as shown in the text.

iv The village of Osinna was given to the Kaivarttas for their service ('*Ausi(nna)-kaivartta-vrtti*')

v Kum Kum Roy says the success of Pala rule goes into their diplomatic and political efforts of consolidating power by trying to assert supremacy over their *samanta* subordinates and neighbours, but that needs to be contextualised where the composition of the ruling elite as well as the hierarchies were fluid rather than fixed.

vi R.C. Majumdar provides a list of the allies whose names are found from the text. Among others were Bhimasyas who was the king of Pithi and Magadha, Viraguna (king of Kotatavi in the south), Jayasimha (king of Dandabhukti, now Midnapore district), Vikramaraja (lord of Bala-Balabhi), Lakshmisura (lord of Aparā-Mandara in Hoogly district), Surapala (lord of Kujavati in Santhal Pargana), Rudrashikhara (ruler of Tailakampa in Manbhum district), Bhaskara (king of Uchchhala), Pratapasimha (king of Dhekkariya, near Katwa in Burdwan district), Narasimharjuna (ruler of Kayangala-mandala, south of Rajmahal), Chandarjuna of Sankatagrama, Vijayaraja of Nidravali, Soma of Paduvanva, Dvorapavardhana (ruler of Kaushambi, in Bogra or Rajshahi district).

vii Unlike the fraternal love (*saubhratm*) the Valmiki Ramayana endorses among Rama and his brothers and his sons Kusa and Lava, the reality was different in case of Ramapala.

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