**1. Ancient Bengal**

* **Vedic Period (1500–1000 BCE):**Bengal was divided among various Janapadas (kingdoms).  
  Key regions and their modern equivalents:
  + **Pundravardhana:** Rajshahi and Rangpur (Bangladesh), Malda (West Bengal, India).
  + **Vanga:** Khulna, Barisal (Bangladesh), Presidency and Medinipur divisions (West Bengal, India).
  + **Radha:** Probable location in West Bengal, India.
  + **Samatata:** Dhaka, Barisal, Chittagong (Bangladesh).
  + **Harikela:** Sylhet, Chittagong, Dhaka (Bangladesh).

**2. Bengal under Magadha Empires (684–320 BCE):**

* **Nanda Empire (c. 345–322 BCE):**
  + Under Mahapadma Nanda, the empire extended from Punjab to Odisha and Bengal.
  + Initiated the conquest of Bharatvarsh (Indian subcontinent).
* **Maurya Empire (c. 322–185 BCE):**
  + Founded by Chandragupta Maurya, unified the Indian subcontinent.
  + Achievements under Ashoka:
    - Spread of Buddhism through missionary activities.
    - Construction of the Grand Trunk Road.
    - Era of social harmony and advancements in knowledge and sciences.

**3. Classical Bengal (320–1000 CE):**

* **Gupta Empire (Golden Age of India):**
  + Significant advancements in science, culture, and Hindu traditions.
  + Development of the Hindu numeral system, including the symbol for zero.
  + Bengal was a key province with evidence of a monetized economy (Gupta coins found).
  + Era marked by peace, prosperity, and flourishing artistic endeavors.

**"Matsyanyayam"**

**Definition**:  
The term *Matsyanyayam*, from Sanskrit, translates to "law of the fish," where the stronger consume the weaker. This concept is described in the *Kautilya Arthashastra* and symbolizes chaos when law enforcement is absent.

**Historical Context**:

* Refers to Bengal's political condition between **650–750 AD**, post-Shashanka's death (c. 637 AD), and before the rise of the **Pala dynasty** (750 AD–1161 AD).
* A period of fragmented governance and anarchy across Gauda, Vanga, and Samatata, with no centralized rule.

**Consequences**:

1. **Anarchy and Instability**:
   * Numerous small kingdoms engaged in internal warfare.
   * Absence of a strong authority led to social and political disorder.
2. **Economic Decline**:
   * Trade and commerce deteriorated.
   * Decline of prominent ports like **Tamralipti**.
3. **Cultural and Structural Decay**:
   * Ruins of earlier eras in Mahasthana reflect destruction during this time.
   * Temples and monasteries built in the Pala period were constructed on these ruins.
4. **Famine**:
   * A devastating famine, possibly linked to this chaos, further worsened the situation.

**Resolution**:

* The anarchy ended with **Gopala**, founder of the Pala dynasty, who unified Bengal and re-established law and order.