

### ANCIENT BENGAL

### **DYNASTIES**

- **❖**Gangaridai
- **❖**Maurya
- **❖Guptas**
- **⇔**Gaur
- **❖Pala**
- **⇔**Sena

Gangaridai, an ancient kingdom situated in eastern India (covering modern-day Bengal).

It has started flourishing from around 400 BC.



#### BCE & CE

- C.E. = Common Era or Christian era: used when referring to a year after the birth of Jesus Christ when the Christian calendar starts counting years
- B.C.E. = Before Common Era or Before Current Era or Before Christian Era: used when referring to a year before the birth of Jesus Christ when the Christian calendar starts counting years.
- These are also referred to as BC (Before Christ) & AD (Anno Domini which is Latin for "Year of Our Lord").
- Why Have Some People Adopted BCE/CE? An important reason for adopting BCE/CE
  is religious neutrality. Since the Gregorian calendar has superseded other calendars to
  become the international standard, members of non-Christian groups may object to
  the explicitly Christian origins of BC and AD.

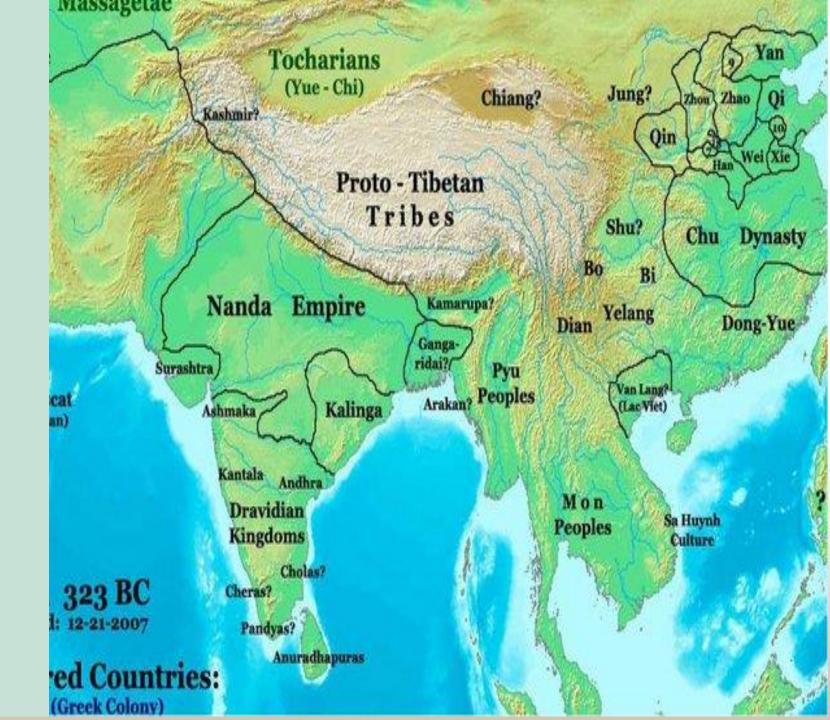
### Other names

"Gandaridae"
"Gandridae"
"Gaṅgā-rāṣṭra"
"Gaṅgā-rāḍha"
"Gaṅgā-hrdaya"

Gangarid is a Greek formation of the Indian word "Ganga-hṛd", meaning 'the land with the Ganges at its heart'.



Writers variously mention the Gangaridai as a distinct tribe, or a nation within a larger kingdom (presumably the Nanda empire).



How do we know about Gangaridai?

From Greek and Roman Historians, Alexander's soldiers.

- Diodorus (Greek Historian)
   mentions two powerful nations
   Prasioi (Prasii) and the
   Gangaridai.
- Quintus Curtius Rufus (Roman Historian) tells us that two peoples, the Gangaridai and the Pharrisii, inhabited the further banks of the Ganges.

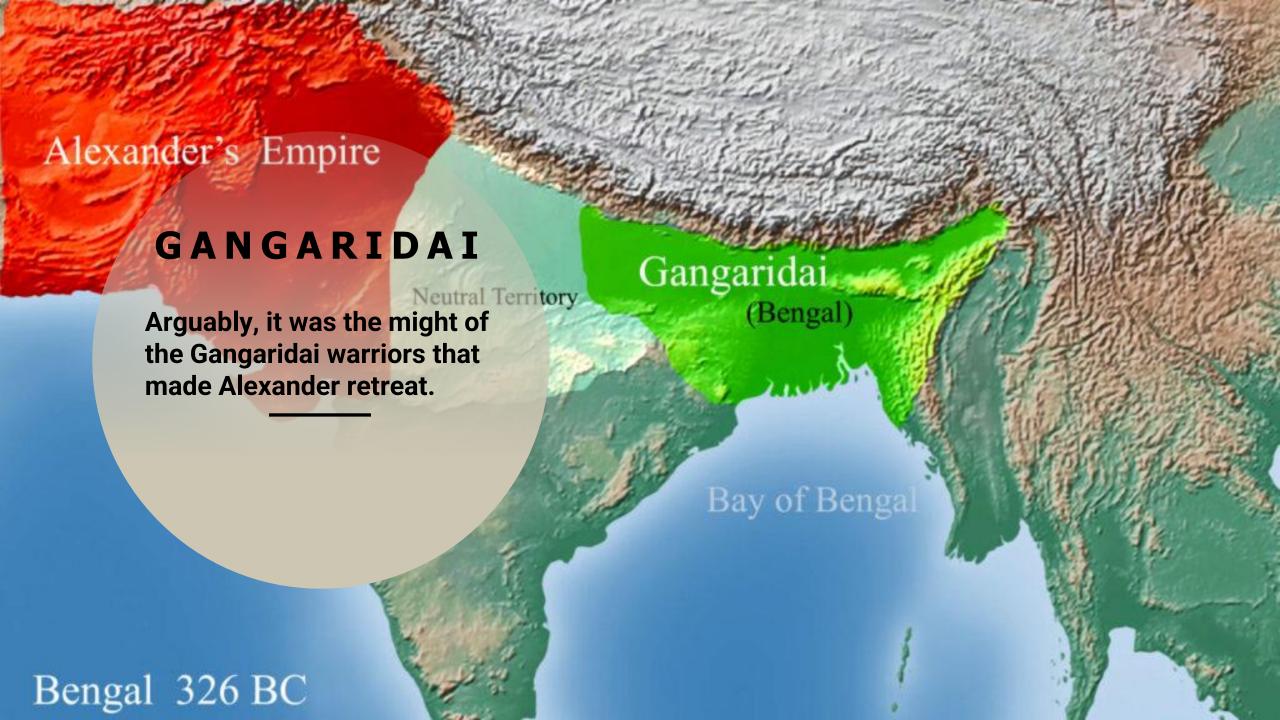
# How do we know about Gangaridai?

- Pliny (1st century AD) writes that the final part of the Ganges flowed through the country of the Gangarides.
- **Ptolemy** (2nd century AD) writes that Gangaridai occupies the entire region about the five mouths of the Ganges.



Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (90 BC - 30 BC) depicted the **Gangaridai** warriors in this manner:

"The river is called the Ganges which had a width of thirty-two stadia, and a greater depth than any other Indian river. Beyond this again were situated the dominions of the nation of the Prasioi [Prasii] and the Gandaridai, whose king, Xandrammes, had an army of 20,000 horses, 200,000 infantry, 2,000 chariots and 4,000 elephants trained and equipped for war.... Now this (Ganges) river, which is 30 stadia broad, flows from north to south, and empties its water into the ocean forming the eastern boundary of the Gandaridai, a nation which possesses the greatest number of elephants and the largest in size."



# Powerful nation

Greek writers state that Alexander the Great withdrew from the Indian subcontinent because of the strong war elephant force and the formidable army of Gangaridai.

# Powerful nation

....the Gandaridae, whose king was Xandrames. He had twenty thousand cavalry, two hundred thousand infantry, two thousand chariots, and four thousand elephants equipped for war. "

-- Diodorus Siculus

**Cavalry** - soldiers who fought on horseback.

**Infantry** - soldiers marching or fighting on foot.

# Powerful nation





For the kings of the Gandaridai and the Prasiai (Prasii) were reported to be waiting for Alexander with an army of 80,000 horse, 200,000 foot, 8,000 warchariots, and 6,000 fighting elephants."

– Plutarch

# Capital at present



Archaeologists have considered Chandraketugarh (West Bengal, India) as the ancient city of Gange, the capital of Gangaridai.

The Wari-Bateshwar of Bangladesh have also been identified as a part of Gangaridai.

## King

Diodorus mentions Gangaridai and Prasii as one nation, naming Xandramas as the king of this nation. Diodorus calls them "two nations under one king."

Modern historian Hemchandra Chowdhury writes: "about the time of Alexander's invasion, the Gangaridai were a very powerful nation, and either formed a dual monarchy with the Prasioi [Prasii], or were closely associated with them on equal terms in a common cause against the foreign invader."

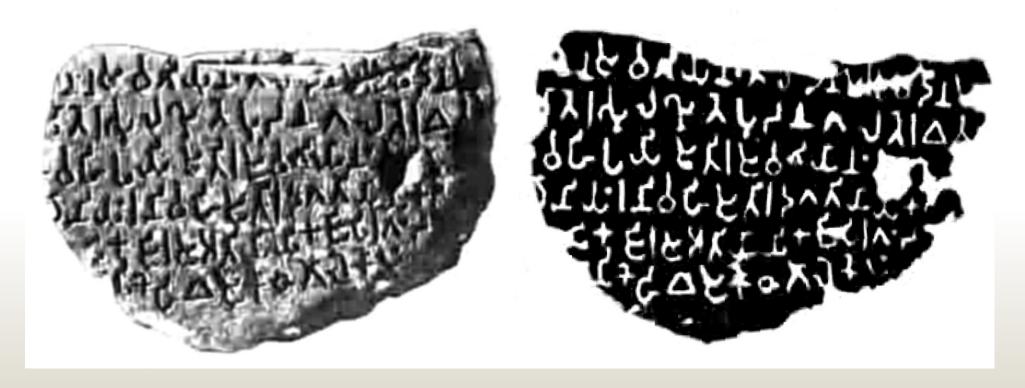
# MAURYA [4<sup>TH</sup> TO 2<sup>ND</sup> B.C.E.]

- Mauryan empire, a state centred at Pataliputra (later Patna), lasted from about 321 to 185 BCE and was the first empire to encompass most of the Indian subcontinent.
- Chandragupta Maurya was the founder of the Mauryan dynasty.
- Its most famous ruler was Asoka (ca. 273-232 B.C.)



Chandragupta, from an Indian postage stamp.

### MAURYA [4<sup>TH</sup> TO 2<sup>ND</sup> B.C.E.]



The Mauryan period Mahasthan inscription in Brahmi, recording a land grant.

## **GUPTA**

The Guptas emerged from the fall of the Mauryas.

Gupta empire located in some parts of northern and central and western India.

Time Period: from the 4th century till the end of the 6th century.



### GOLDEN PERIOD

It is known as the Golden Age of India because of the considerable achievements in the fields of

mathematics, astronomy, science, religion, and philosophy during the Gupta Empire.

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Gupta numerals around 4th century A.D.								

- They were the first to use algebra
- Develop the idea of zero
- Explain the concept of infinity.

# NALANDA (427-1197)

One of the first universities in the world, Nalanda University, was established by Kumaragupta of the Gupta dynasty. Many kings and scholars contributed to it as well.

- The facility included 10 temples, 8 distinct compounds, meditation rooms, classrooms, lakes, and parks.
- In its nine-story library, monks copied books and other materials so that each scholar can have their collections.

At its peak, the University housed 10,000 students in dorms, which may have been a *first for an educational institution, along with* 2,000 professors.

# SHASHANKA (600 AD AND 625 AD) THE KING OF GAUDA/GAUR

- Shashanka was an important king of ancient Bengal, who occupied a prominent place in Bengal history.
- Information about King Shashanka has been made available by his coins, inscriptions, and the Harshacharita, the biography of the Pushyabhuti emperor Harshavardhana or Harsha (606-647 CE), written by his court poet Banabhatta or Bana (c. 7th century CE).
- The Chinese Buddhist monk-scholar Hiuen Tsang or Xuanzang (602-664 CE) who visited India in the 7th century CE, states in his work Si-yu-ki that Shashanka, or She-sang-kia, was the king of Karnasuvarna.

# SHASHANKA (600 AD AND 625 AD) THE KING OF GAUDA/GAUR

Shashanka actively championed Hinduism. The coins of Shashanka clearly show his preferences: the Hindu god Shiva is depicted with his bull on one side while the Hindu goddess of prosperity Lakshmi is depicted on the other.

#### **Art & Architecture of Shashanka Dynasty:**

- several square and circular stupas,
- ☐ remains of square
- remnants of two walls
- ☐ dighi (lake) measuring over 140 acres
- 80 football fields
- developed metropolitan city ideas
- ☐ **Bengali Calender:** Shashanka, is credited with creating the Bengali calendar



#### MATSYAN-YA-YAM

- Period between the death of Shashangka and rise of Palas in mid 8th century.
- Matsyan-ya-yam (fish-eat-fish), a Sankrit term, refers to a situation when big fish swallows a small fish.
- Chaos prevailed in Bengal as no ruler could retain power for more than a year.

# RISE OF PALAS

- Pala kings put an end to the disorder/chaotic period referred to as matsyan-yayam after the death of Shashanka.
- 'Pala'means protector.
- Ruled for 400 years!
   (Mid 8<sup>th</sup>-late 11<sup>th</sup> Century)
- Followers of Buddhism.

## Pala Administration

The basis of their long rule was the **efficient** administrative system.

- An organised system of administration prevailed from the village level to the central government level.
- They inherited an administrative structure from the Guptas and made the structure more efficient and added many new characteristics.
- The long list of state-officials, found in the Pala copperplates, clearly indicate that the administration was taking care of every aspect of public life - from the ferry ghats to the riverways, land routes, trade and commerce, towns and ports, and law and order in the country. Even forest or market management was not left out.
- Revenue collection: They built up an efficient structure for revenue collection.
- **Public welfare**: The most glorious aspect of Pala rule was their policy of public-welfare.

### RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

- Dharmapala, a devout Buddhist, adopted a policy of religious tolerance.
- The Pala rulers were Buddhists, but the majority of their subjects were Hindus.

## SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

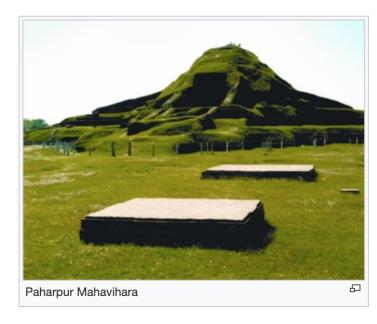
 This region became the hub of Buddhistteaching.

- Buddhism spread to areas like Myanmar, Indonesia, etc.
- Viharas or monasteries became center of excellence.
- Nalanda university was revived.

# TERR ACOTTA & SCULPTURE



The terracotta plaques from Paharpur, Vihara have been attributed to the Pala period.





### **LITERATURE**



The prashastis in the numerous Pala copperplates clearly indicate the development of Sanskrit language and poetry.

**Abhinanda**, the famous poet and **Gaudapada**, the well-known philosopher were from that time. **Sandhyakara Nandi**, a poet from Varendra, composed his Ramacharitam under the patronage of the last known Pala king Madanapala.

Thus, the long rule of the Pala dynasty for about four centuries bestowed glories on Bengal in various fields of human activities. The Pala rulers as well as the people of Bengal can legitimately claim credit for these glories.



#### GAUDAPADA

- Gaudapāda is best known for his analytical exposition on the tenets of Advaita Vedānta that provided a firm ontological grounding to Vedānta philosophy.
- According to Gaudapāda's thesis, the ultimate ontological reality is the pure consciousness, which is bereft of attributes and intentionality.
- The world of duality is nothing but a vibration of the mind (manodṛśya or manaspandita). The pluralistic world is imagined by the mind (samkalpa) and this false projection is sponsored by the illusory factor called māyā.

## SENA (11<sup>TH</sup> -12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)



The Sena Empire was a Hindu dynasty that ruled from Bengal through the 11<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### SENA (11TH-12TH CENTURY)

The founder of Sena dynasty was Samanta Sena (however sources vary on this). Other rules included:

- Hemanta Sena
- Vijaya Sena
- ❖ Ballala Sena
- Lakshmana Sena

### SENA (11TH-12TH CENTURY)

- ❖ The rule of the Senas in Bengal is usually connected with the emergence of orthodox Hinduism in a Hindu-Buddhist society which for long had enjoyed the peaceful coexistence of the two religion.
- ❖ The Sena period witnessed the development of Sanskrit literature.
- Sculptural art developed under the patronage of the Sena kings and courtiers.

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