

A Reappraisal of the Evidence Relating to the Horse Sacrifice of Samudragupta

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Rightly, no historian has doubted the performance of the horse-sacrifice (*aśvamedha*) by Samudragupta, as there is overwhelming and definite evidence in its favour. The main evidence may be cited: Samudragupta was a great conqueror as is evident from his large scale conquests, both in northern and southern India mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription¹ and, according to *śāstric* injunctions, conquest is a pre-requisite for that sacrifice. He was a follower of Brahmanical religion, which prescribes performance of *aśvamedha* for a king for obtaining the status of *samrāṭa*² (paramount sovereign). His successors refer to him as performer of horse-sacrifice. He issued *aśvamedha* type of coins,³ which show on the obverse, in front of *yūpa* sacrificial horse-the most important item relating to this sacrifice, and bear the legend *rājādhirājaḥ pṛithivīm-avitvā divaṃ jayatyāhṛita-vājimedhaḥ*; a few coins bear *avitvā* instead of *vijitya*. On the reverse is shown chief-queen, who plays a significant role in this ritual, holding flywhisk, and the legend *aśvamedha-parākramaḥ*, i.e. whose valour is established by (the performance of) horse-sacrifice. The gifting of large number of cows and huge amount of gold by this ruler, which is also an important feature of *aśvamedha*, is mentioned in the Gupta epigraphs.⁴ A sealing of unknown provenance in the British Museum Collection shows a horse with a *yūpa* and the legend *parākramaḥ*.⁵ *Parākrama* is a title of Samudragupta, and the sealing obviously belongs to him, and the presence of the horse before *yūpa* shows that it is related with his *aśvamedha*. D.R.Bhandarkar is of the view that the sealing 'must have been originally attached to some document dispatched from Samudragupta's Sacrificial Hall'⁶ It does not seem to have been an official seal as the official seals of the Imperial Guptas invariably bear the *garuḍa* insignia. In the inscriptions of the Vākāṭaka queen, Prabhāvatīgupta, daughter of the Imperial Gupta king Chandragupta II, Samudragupta has been referred to as performer of many horse-sacrifices.⁷ In passing, we may state that D.R.Bhandarkar⁸ is of the view that in the *Raghuvamśam* of Kālidāsa the reference to Indra's visiting the sacrificial spot at Pāṭaliputra is inspired by Samudragupta's horse-sacrifice. Below we discuss some pieces of evidence relating to the *aśvamedha* of Samudragupta.

Samudragupta issued *aśvamedha* type of coins. As no model of this coin-type

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was available to Samudragupta, the type first being introduced by him, there should be no doubt regarding the coins being taken as proof of his performing *aśvamedha*, and the epigraph of his successors categorically mention him as performer of horse-sacrifice. Kumāragupta I also issued coins of this type,⁹ but in his case, while there is a possibility that he issued such coins on performing *aśvamedha*,¹⁰ it is also likely that such coins were issued by him merely in imitation of the coin-type of his illustrious grandfather, Samudragupta, without himself performing that sacrifice.¹¹ However, as discussed below, B.N.Mukherjee's reading of the inscriptions on the stone horse from Khairagarh in the Lucknow Museum provides evidence of Kumāragupta's performing a horse sacrifice.

It is a matter of debate whether the *aśvamedha* type of coins were issued as tokens for distribution as *dakṣiṇā* (gift) to the brāhmaṇas participating as priests in the horse-sacrifice,¹² or as regular coinage. Since there are more than one variety of *aśvamedha* coins, some scholars conclude that these were produced in different mints, and opine that they would not have been meant for *dakṣiṇā*, for if they were meant for that purpose then they should have been produced from one and the same mint. This could be so, but it would have been the number of the coins to be minted as also some other factors that would have been the deciding factor for the use of one mint or more than one mint, rather than the consideration whether they were tokens meant for *dakṣiṇā* or coins to be used for economic transactions, and the possibility of issuing two varieties of coins from a single mint cannot be ruled out.

It is generally agreed upon by scholars that if Samudragupta's horse-sacrifice had been performed before engraving of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, it being a very important achievement, it must have been recorded therein, as it has been recorded in the inscriptions of his successors. But the text of that inscription, at least the preserved part of it, does not mention it. This suggests, as most scholars also believe, that the sacrifice was performed after the recording of this inscription; it seems unlikely that it was recorded in the mutilated portion of the text of that epigraph.

Most probably, Samudragupta performed *aśvamedha* after completing his conquest of northern and southern India.¹³ D.R.Bhandarkar is of the view that after the conquest of south India, on return journey to Pāṭaliputra, he along with the sacrificial steed halted for some time at Kauśāmbī, the meeting point of the great 'arteries of communication in India' and it was then that the panegyrics were recorded on Aśokan pillar so that his fame may long endure. From there, Bhandarkar says, the Gupta ruler proceeded to Pāṭaliputra, where, the final rituals relating to *aśvamedha* were performed.¹⁴

However, if Samudragupta marched through eastern coast and, after reaching Kāñchī, returned through the same route, as is the most probable and most accepted view, then Kauśāmbī would not have been on his route to Pāṭaliputra, unless he made a change in the route of his return journey from that of his forward journey. Bhandarkar assumes that Samudragupta had been marching with the sacrificial steed from Pāṭaliputra throughout his campaign in south India, and brought it back with him to Pāṭaliputra after his victorious march.

S.R.Goyal opines that the Allahabad Pillar Inscription was engraved when the *aśvamedha* was in progress, as, according to the *śāstras*, on the occasion of *aśvamedha*, the description of battles was necessary; he even labels the pillar bearing the inscription as *śobhā-yūpa*.¹⁵ P.L.Gupta says that from a line in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, it can be said that Samudragupta was planning to perform *aśvamedha*.¹⁶ Ashvini Agrawal opines that the Prayāga *praśasti* was composed to be sung at the time of the *aśvamedha*.¹⁷ But the inscription is partly in verse and partly in prose. If it were meant to be sung, then the whole inscription could have been composed in verse, particularly as Hariṣeṇa, the composer of the *praśasti*, as evinced by the verses in the *praśasti*, was a highly talented poet.

V.C.Pandey and A. Pandey¹⁸ are of the view that Samudragupta had performed horse-sacrifice before the engraving of the Allahabad Pillar inscription, and its performance was mentioned in the beginning lines of the inscription, which are mutilated. They believe that the gifting of hundreds or thousands of cows mentioned in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription is related to this sacrifice. Further, they find a reference to *dīkṣā* ritual in *mantra-dīkṣā* in line 26 of the epigraph, and refer to Āpastamba, according to which the performer of this sacrifice was to undergo such a ritual. They also suggest that in the inscription (as per their reading) there occurs *pravitata* which seems to refer to the *govitata* sacrifice- a kind of *aśvamedha* sacrifice, which, being much cumbersome, was very rarely performed, and as such has been referred to in the epigraph as one that was long in abeyance. However, as pointed out by Ashvini Agrawal, there is hardly any possibility of reading *pravitata* in the inscription.¹⁹

M.K.Dhavalikar²⁰ suggests that since the *aśvamedha* type of coins do not bear the name of Samudragupta who performed the sacrifice and instead bear the legend *aśvamedha-parākramaḥ*, they should be taken as coins issued not by him, but as issued by Chandragupta II to commemorate the *aśvamedha* performed by Samudragupta. This, however, is not acceptable, as the coins bear the title *parākrama*, which was so peculiar to Samudragupta that there cannot be any possibility of misunderstanding about the

authorship of these coins. Moreover, if they would have been issued by Chandragupta II with a view to commemorating the performance of the *aśvamedha* by his father, then his name, or at least his *āditya* title *Vikramāditya*, as a commemorator, should have been there. We may state that despite the fact that a large number of scholars consider Chandragupta-Kumāradevī type of coins as issued by Samudragupta to commemorate his parents, we do not agree with that view mainly because neither the name of that Gupta ruler, nor his typical *viruda* as commemorator occurs on such coins.

The term *chir=otsann=āśvamedh=āharttā* occurs on Samudragupta's Nalanda²¹ and Gaya²² plates which are not original ones but, in all probability, partly copied from the damaged original plates and partly resorted with the help of the copperplate inscriptions of his successor (or successors). It is met with in the Bilsad Pillar Inscription of Kumāragupta I,²³ and in the Bihar Pillar Inscription variously ascribed to Skandagupta, Purugupta and Budhagupta.²⁴ It has been taken by some scholars to mean as 'performer of horse-sacrifice which had been long in abeyance'.²⁵ This translation is not acceptable as it is not historically correct to say that the sacrifice had been long in abeyance. As H.C.Raychaudhuri points out, '... the *aśvamedha* was celebrated by several kings during the interval which elapsed from the time to Puṣyamitra Śuṅga to that of Samudragupta, e.g., Pārāsarīputra Sarvatāta, Sātakarṇi the husband of Nāyanikā, Vāsiṣṭhīputra Ikṣvāku Śrī-Cāntamūla, Devavarman Śālaṅkāyana, Pravarasena I Vākāṭaka, Śiva-Skandavarman Pallava, and the Nāga kings of the House of Bhāraśivas'.²⁶ Of these, Puṣyamitra is known to have performed two horse-sacrifices,²⁷ Pravarasena I,²⁸ four, and the Bhāraśivas, ten.²⁹ Raychaudhuri further states, 'It is probable, however, that the court poets of the Guptas knew little about these monarchs.'³⁰ We, like some other scholars, however, feel that they must have known about at least some, if not all, of these rulers, particularly those who were their near contemporaries. No king known to Indian history has better claims to the title of *aśvamedha-yājī* than Samudragupta,³¹ and one could argue that the epithet, though not historically correct, was ascribed to the Gupta emperor with a view to glorifying him. But in our view, a more suitable interpretation of *chir=otsann=āśvamedh=āharttā* in the Gupta epigraphs than given above may be offered. But before we mention and discuss it in the next paragraph, we may mention another interpretation proposed by some scholars. V.S.Pathak³² and J.Agrawal³³ take *chir=otsanna* to mean not 'long in abeyance', but as 'long protracted', i e, which lasted for a long period of time. It is true that this is a feature of the *aśvamedha* sacrifice, yet we do not agree with this translation, though grammatically correct, as we feel that the fact that *aśvamedha* is a long lasting ritual must have been well known to

the people, and therefore there should not have been any need to state the obvious.

D.R.Bhandarkar points out³⁴ that in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,³⁵ there is a mention of *utsanna-yajña*. In it is stated: *utsanna-yajña iva vā eṣa yad=aśvamedhaḥ kim vā hyetasya kkriyate kim vā na*, 'Verily what is (called) *aśvamedha* is as it were, a decayed sacrifice. Because something thereof is performed and something not.' In the *Taittirīya-saṁhitā*,³⁶ it is stated: *utsanna-yajño vai eṣa yad=aśvamedhaḥ*. Sāyaṇa explains that it is called *utsanna-yajña* because some parts (*avayava*) of it were either utterly lost (*vinaṣṭa*) or completely forgotten (*ativismṛita*).³⁷ Bhandarkar, accepting Sāyaṇa's commentary, explains as to how Samudragupta was in a position to perform *aśvamedha* in its full detail. According to him, perhaps, Vedic lore was better preserved in south India than in the north India, and Samudragupta, in the course of his south Indian expedition, was able to recover from there such elements of sacrifice as had been forgotten in north India.³⁸ It is difficult to agree with this view. Even if it is accepted that Vedic rituals were better preserved in south India during the Gupta period, Samudragupta could very well have invited Vedic scholars from there, as from other places, offering them the lure of sumptuous *dakṣiṇā*, and with their guidance, got collected all the details regarding the rituals relating to the sacrifice. Moreover, before Samudragupta, some south Indian kings, as stated above, are known to have performed *aśvamedha*, and if full details regarding the performance of the sacrifice were available in south India, then they would have performed the sacrifice in accordance with them, and therefore the use of the epithet *chir=otsann=aśvamedh=āharttā* in that sense would not be quite appropriate for Samudragupta.

The evidence of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* mentioned above shows that even in the period when it was composed while some *aśvamedhas* were performed strictly following *śāstric* injunctions in all their details, others, due to certain reasons, such as constraint of time and resources, could not be performed in that manner. As stated above, the *Taittirīya-saṁhitā* mentions a type of *aśvamedha* as *utsanna-yajña*; it however, does not state why it is so designated. It is the commentator, Sāyaṇa, who lived long after the composition of that text, in the second half of the fourteenth century C.E.,³⁹ who explains the term *utsanna-yajña* as one regarding which some parts of *śāstric* injunctions are utterly lost or completely forgotten. This, in our view, reflects the situation that existed during the time of the commentator rather than in the time of the composition of the *Taittirīya-saṁhitā*. We are of the opinion that some kings performed the *aśvamedha* following *śāstric* injunctions in their full details, while others did not or could not perform it in that way. The latter type was known as *utsanna-yajña*. The

reason for not performing sacrifices with complete details was not because they had been lost or forgotten but because of certain constraints such as of time and resources. But by the time of Sāyaṇa, so far as his knowledge went, some of the details regarding the performance of the sacrifice had been either lost or forgotten and therefore he interpreted the expression in that sense. J.Agrawal⁴⁰ points out that in the *Taittirīya-saṁhitā* the term *utsanna* has been applied not only to the *aśvamedha* but also to *agnicayana* ritual, and in the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* (ii. v. 2. 48) for *Cāturmāsya* and for *aśvamedha* (XII. 3.3.6). In the *Kāthaka* and *Maitrāyīṇī-saṁhitās*, the word *utsanna* has been used for *vājapeya*. Agrawal rightly observes that it is impossible to believe that Vedic rites of such outstanding importance as the *aśvamedha*, *vājapeya* and *cāturmāsya* had gone into disuse at that point of time when these works were composed.⁴¹

We are of the view that the expression *cir=otsann=āśmedh=āharttā* in the context of Samudragupta is meant to convey that he performed *aśvamedha* sacrifice in full details meticulously, and that before him, for a long time (*cira*) the sacrifices had not been performed in that way. This interpretation would absolve the Gupta panegyrist of the charge of being ignorant of the *aśvamedha* sacrifice performed by near contemporary and earlier kings.

In earlier texts like the *Brāhmaṇas*⁴² and the *Śrauta-sūtras*,⁴³ paramount sovereign alone was entitled to perform *aśvamedha*, but later, even feudatories are known to have done so,⁴⁴ and the *aśvamedha* came to be associated with a variety of purposes, such as 'attainment of a son' (*putraprāpti*)⁴⁵ and washing away of sins.⁴⁶ Despite this, *aśvamedha* remained a royal privilege, the commoners, howsoever prosperous or powerful they might have been, were not entitled to perform this sacrifice.⁴⁷ The representation of a horse on *aśvamedha* type of coins and the legend *aśvamedha-parākramaḥ*, i e, 'who performed *aśvamedha* through his valour', and the circular legend stating that he performed the sacrifice after conquering the earth, would show that the horse was actually let loose and the sacrifice was performed in accordance with the *śāstric* injunctions and in the capacity of a paramount sovereign.⁴⁸

Some scholars relate Samudragupta's Lyrist type of coins⁴⁹ with his *aśvamedha* sacrifice. According to the *śāstric* injunction, in that sacrifice lute-players who sang to the lute, included *rājanya*. It has been suggested⁵⁰ that Samudragupta himself performed the act in the sacrifice performed for him. In the *aśvamedha* the *rājanya* sings to the lute verses composed by him and may be that in Prayāga *Praśasti* some verses were meant for that purpose.⁵¹ However, if he had done so, and if the horse sacrifice had been performed before the engraving of the Allahabad Pillar Inscription then, as stated above,

this would have been mentioned in that inscription; a proper place for the mention of his performing the act of *vīṇā-vādaka* in his horse-sacrifice in the inscription would have been where he has been compared with Nārada and Tumburu for his musical skill.

In the Poona Copper plate of Prabhāvatīguptā,⁵² the widowed queen of the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena II, and the daughter of Gupta emperor Chandragupta II, Samudragupta, her grandfather, is mentioned as performer of 'more than one' horse-sacrifice (*anek=aśvamedha-yājī*). As seen above, some other kings, much inferior to Samudragupta, are said to have performed many *aśvamedhas*, and one such king, Mādhavarman of Viṣṇukuṇḍin dynasty, is credited with the performance of as many as eleven *aśvamedhas*.⁵³ *Aśvamedha* sacrifice, in its original form, is of long duration, involving huge expenditure, requiring mighty forces and great resources, entailing large-scale campaigns and warfare, and as such, performing eleven sacrifices by Mādhavarman would look incredible. Bhandarkar, significantly, cited evidence from the *Mahābhārata* where Vyāsa is stated to have said to Yudhiṣṭhira that by increasing *dakṣiṇā* threefold,⁵⁴ the sacrifice would become threefold. It would seem that the Viṣṇukuṇḍin king paid eleven times the *dakṣiṇā* that he chose to pay as fee for one sacrifice, and thereby claimed to have performed eleven sacrifices. V.V.Mirashi⁵⁵ does not agree with the view of Bhandarkar that the Viṣṇukuṇḍin king was not so powerful and resourceful as to have actually performed eleven sacrifices, and as such in most cases merely paid some *dakṣiṇā* to the priests in the name of horse sacrifice. Mirashi argues that if merely by paying *dakṣiṇā* in the name of horse sacrifice one would become entitled to be called as 'one who has performed horse-sacrifice' then 'there would have been many more instances of multiple *aśvamedhas*... [and] people would not have attached any value to such fictitious *aśvamedhas*.'⁵⁶ But, as stated above, *aśvamedha* had lost its original importance, and besides being performed for establishing the status of a paramount sovereign, it also came to be performed for such purposes as attainment of a son, and washing away sins.⁵⁷

D.R.Bhandarkar tries to justify the statement *anek=aśvamedha=yājī* for Samudragupta in the Vākāṭaka inscriptions by suggesting that Samudragupta performed only one horse-sacrifice solemnly, but distributed *dakṣiṇā* many times more than laid down for one sacrifice. We have seen above, while describing the *aśvamedha* type of coins, that the legend on some coins has *avitvā* (after protecting) and on others *vijitya* (after conquering), and also that some scholars consider that the coins bearing two different legends should be taken as issued from two different mints and on two different

occasions, and also as indicative of more than one sacrifice performed by him. Since neither Samudragupta's own records, nor those of his descendants mention him as performer of many (more than one) horse-sacrifices, and merely refer to him as one who performed horse-sacrifice, we feel that Samudragupta performed only one horse-sacrifice, the statement in the Vākāṭaka records need not be taken as historical fact. As regards the difference in the legend on *aśvamedha* type of coins, there would not have been any bar in issuing coins with two different legends as related to one and the same horse-sacrifice, either from the same mint or from two different mints. Ashvini Agrawal,⁵⁸ who also does not believe that Samudragupta performed many sacrifices, feels that in mentioning him as performer of many horse sacrifices, the Vākāṭaka records either exaggerate his achievements, or such statement is the result of the scribal error. Since the Vākāṭaka records, which refer to Samudragupta as performer of more than one horse-sacrifice, make glaring mistakes in detailing the Gupta genealogy and ascribe many epithets typical of Samudragupta to Chandragupta II, their evidence in this respect cannot be relied. We do not consider it to a scribal error, as the scribe normally would not, of his own, have added *aneka* in the epigraph. To us, it appears that since Pravarasena I Vākāṭaka has been mentioned in the Vākāṭaka records as one who performed four horse-sacrifices, Prabhāvatīguptā did not like to portray her grandfather, Samudragupta, who certainly was mightier than that Vākāṭaka king, in lesser light than him. She felt that ascribing him less than four sacrifices would place Samudragupta in lower position than the Vākāṭaka king, and giving a figure more than four would be a great exaggeration, and so she would *aneka* (more than one) was deliberately chosen. If Samudragupta had performed many horse-sacrifices, then his successors, who mention him as *chir=otsann=aśvamedh=āharttā*, would have also called him *anek=aśvamedh=āharttā*, as in our view, the latter title would reflect no less, nay even more, significant achievement than the former. Incidentally, we may recollect that a descendant of Puṣyamitra Śuṅga, in his epigraph, proudly refers to him as *dvir=aśvamedha-yājī*, 'who had performed two horse-sacrifices'.⁵⁹ S.R.Goyal⁶⁰ is of the opinion that Samudragupta performed a few *aśvamedha* of abbreviated type, followed by an elaborate one after he had made extensive conquests, and that while his successors took pride in his performing elaborate *aśvamedha*, Prabhāvatīguptā laid emphasis on his performing several *aśvamedhas*, particularly as Pravarasena Vākāṭaka has been referred to as performer of our *aśvamedhas*.

An almost life-size stone horse, discovered near Khairagarh in Kheri district, bears inscription in Gupta characters which was read as*ddaguttassa deyadhamma*,⁶¹

(i e, religious benefactions of...*dragupta*). Bhandarkar, like some other scholars, restored the missing letters at the beginning of the inscription as *Samu*, and took the horse as a representation of the sacrificial horse of Samudragupta, in stone. He also opined that after performing the horse-sacrifice, representations of sacrificial horse 'were put up by Samudragupta at important places in his empire as souvenirs of this celebration'.⁶² It is difficult to agree with the view of the learned scholar. For the first, Khairagarh, where the stone horse has been found, does not seem to have been a place of political or religious significance in the Gupta period. Secondly, no such representation of the horse has been found at such important cities as Pāṭaliputra and Ujjayinī, and therefore it is too much to conclude from a single representation of horse sculptured in stone that such ones were put at different places of importance. The missing letters at the beginning of the inscription on the stone horse, it has been suggested, could as well be restored as *Cam* or *Im*, and the name could as well have been Chandragupta or Indragupta, who could be a private individual and not necessarily a king. Had the horse been related to *aśvamedha* of Samudragupta, then some indication of it would have been given in the inscription on it, by inscribing something like *aśvamedha-parākramah*, which occurs on the *aśvamedha* type of coins of that ruler, rather than the words *deya-dhamma* (pious gift). Thirdly, the language of the inscription, as read by Bhandarkar and some other scholars is Prakrit, and not Sanskrit. Bhandarkar says that the use of Prakrit language need not be a hurdle in its being ascribed to the Gupta king, as even in the Gupta period, that language continued to be the language of the masses.⁶³ But the inscriptions of the Imperial Gupta kings, and the legends on their coins and seals are in Sanskrit, and not in Prakrit. If the inscription in question belonged to the Gupta emperor Samudragupta, then it is not understandable as to why Sanskrit has not been used for it, more so when it is related to horse-sacrifice, a typical Brāhmanical ritual of Vedic origin, in the performance of which all the *mantras* to be recited are in Sanskrit.

A new dimension has been added to the identification of the king and the purpose for which the stone horse was stilled, by the reading of the inscriptions on the stone horse by B.N.Mukherjee.⁶⁴ According to him, there are three inscriptions- one on the neck in the Gupta Brāhmī, and two in the *Śāṅkha-lipi* on the back and the buttock respectively. The Brāhmī inscription which was read by most of the scholars as*dda Guttasa deyadhamma* is read by Mukherjee as *Aśvarasa yajño*, which refers to horse-sacrifice. Each of the two inscriptions in the '*Śāṅkha-lipi*' is read by him as *Mahendrādityah*. He takes the stone horse as replica of the sacrificial horse of

Kumāragupta whose title was *Mahendrāditya*. This reading has the merit that it refers to the *aśvamedha*, it gives the name of the king who performed the sacrifice, and also that the language used is Sanskrit. The stone horse is a replica of the horse of the *aśvamedha*. It is still not clear why Khairagarh was chosen for stalling the horse, though it may be suggested that it was originally stalled at Naimisha, a great religious centre in its neighbourhood and transported to Khairagarh in later period. Mukherjee's reading would provide an unflinching evidence regarding the performance of horse-sacrifice by Kumāragupta I, and the inscribed horse would no more be used as an evidence related to Samudragupta's *aśvamedha*.

Notes and References

1. D.R.Bhandarkar, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III, Inscriptions of the Early Guptas, edited by B.Ch. Chhabra and G.S.Gai, New Delhi, 1981.
2. *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, as referred to by H.C.Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, 7th ed, Calcutta, 2004, p.53.
3. A.S.Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Varanasi, 1957, p. 67ff. C.D.Chatterjee (*Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, XXXVII, pp. 86-87) does not agree with the view that the female figure stands for the queen on such grounds as : (i) In the *Śrauta-sūtras* there is no mention of queen holding *caurī* in right hand and *pāśa* in the left, (ii) the object before the female figure is like *śakti* and not *sūcī* as is mentioned in the work detailing horse-sacrifice, and (iii) in the *aśvamedha* the role of the chief queen is hateful and vulgar and her husband would not have liked to portray her in that context. P.L.Gupta (*Gupta Sāmrājya*, p. 31) agrees with Chatterjee and accepts his suggestion that the *caurī* bearing female figure should be identified as goddess and not a queen. However, Altekar opines that the important role, the queen played in the ritual relating horse sacrifice, justifies the identification of the female figure with her and identification suggested by him is generally followed by scholars.
4. Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, No. 1, p. 214, mentions hundred thousand [coins]; *ibid.*, No. 2, p.222, mentions gifting of gold; *ibid.*; No. 3, p. 227, No. 4, p. 230, and No. 16, p. 269, as givers of many crores of gold (coins).
5. E.J.Rapson, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1901, p. 102.
6. D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
7. D.C.Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, 2nd ed., pp. 435 ff.
8. *CII*, III, p. 7.
9. Altekar, *op. cit.*, pp. 200ff.
10. Altekar is emphatic about Kumāragupta's having performed at least one horse-sacrifice (*op. cit.*, p. 200). The ascription of the performance to Chandragupta II, on the basis of the wrong reading of the inscription by J.Ratnakar on a stone horse found in village near Varanasi (*Indian Historical Quarterly*, III, p. 719) has rightly been rejected by scholars. See e.g., R.C.Majumdar, *Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age*, p. 169, n. 1.

11. Incidentally, Kumāraguta I also issued Lyrist type of coins (Altekar, *op. cit.*, pp. 211ff). It is difficult to say whether he was a skilled musician or merely imitated the coin-type of Samudragupta.
12. J. Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Gupta Dynasties and of Śaśānka, King of Gauḍa* (in the British Museum, London, 1914, p. xxxi.)
13. D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 35; A.Agrawal, *Rise and Fall of the Imperial Guptas*, Delhi, 1985, p. 125.
14. D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
15. S.R.Goyal, *Gupta Sāmrajya Kā Itihāsa*, Meerut, 1987, p. 159.
16. P.L.Gupta, *Gupta Sāmrajya*, 2nd ed, Varanasi, 1991, p. 274. He, however, does not specify the line.
17. A.Agrawal, *Rise and Fall of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 127.
18. V.C.Pandey and A. Pandey, *A New History of Ancient India*, 1998, p. 371.
19. A.Agrawal, *op. cit.*, p. 127.
20. *JNSI*, XX(ii), pp. 175-77.
21. D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, No. 3, p. 227.
22. *Ibid.*, No. 4, p. 230.
23. *Ibid.*, No. 16, p. 269.
24. *Ibid.*, No. 41, p. 345ff.
25. J.F.Fleet, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, III, Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and Their Successors, 1888, p. 44, 54; R. G. Basak, *History of North-Eastern India*, 2nd ed, 1967, p. 36.
26. H.C.Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 484.
27. The Ayodhya Stone Inscription of Dhanadeva, D.C.Sircar, *Select Inscriptions bearing on the Indian History and Civilization*, I, 2nd ed, Calcutta, 1965, pp. 94-95.
28. Basim Copper-plate Inscription of Vindhyaśakti II, D.C.Sircar, *op. cit.*, pp. 430ff.
29. To these may be added a king named Śilavarman, ruling in the area around Kalsi in Dehradun district, Uttarakhand in the third century A.D. who is said to have performed at least four sacrifices. The inscription on bricks used for the construction of the sacrificial altar reads--*caturthasyāśvamedhasya cityo 'yaṁ Śilavarmaṇaḥ* (T.N.Ramchandran, *JIH*, XXII, p. 100).
30. H.C.Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 484.
31. R.C.Majumdar (ed), *Comprehensive History of India*, III (i), p. 32.
32. V.S.Pathak, *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, XIX, pp. 14ff.
33. J. Agrawal, as referred to by A.Agrawal, *op. cit.*, p. 95, 127.
34. D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
35. *Kāṇḍa XIII*, vide D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
36. *Taittirīya-Saṁhitā*, V. 4. 12. 3. vide D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
37. As referred to by D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
38. *Ibid.*
39. K.A.N.Sastri, *A History of South India*, 3rd ed, Oxford, 1966, p. 266.
40. *Sir Jadunath Sarkar Commemoration Volume*, ii, (ed. by H.R. Gupta), pp. 10-13.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

42. *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, XIII. 1.6.3. *vide* D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
43. *Baudhāyana-śrauta-sūtra*, XV. 1.1; *Āpastamba-Śrauta-sūtra*, XX. 1.1, as referred to by D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
44. D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
45. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 12. 3, 9, 12, as referred to by D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 36n.
46. *Mahābhārata*, XIV. 18. 16, as referred to by D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
47. D.C.Sircar, *IHQ*, IV, pp. 272-73.
48. R.C.Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
49. A.S.Altekar, *op. cit.*, pp. 73ff.
50. A.Agrawal, *op. cit.*, pp. 127ff.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
52. D.C.Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, I, pp. 435ff.
53. E. Hultzsch, 'Ramtirtham Plates of Indravarman', *Epigraphia Indica*, XI, pp. 133ff, at p. 134, line 3.
54. *Mahābhārata*, XIV, 88. 13-15, *vide* D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
55. *Journal of the Epigraphic Society of India*, IX, p. 50.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*
58. A.Agrawal, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
59. D.C.Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.
60. S.R.Goyal, *The Imperial Guptas*, p. 241.
61. V.A.Smith, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1893, p. 98; D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 41. Allan (*op. cit.*, p. xxxi) reads the legend as ... *adaguttasa deyadhamma* and he, like Bhandarkar, suggests that it refers to Samudragupta's horse-sacrifice.
62. D.R.Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
63. *Ibid.*
64. See 'Decipherment of the Shell Script', U.P. *Saṅgrahālaya Purātattva Patrikā*, No 31, pp. 1-46 and plates.

