

in the Gupta inscriptions,⁷ the status remained unchanged in the second generation, and from the third generation the Gupta kings became Mahārājādhirājas. Literally, Mahārāja means a great king. But the apparent and deliberate differentiation in the status of the earlier and later kings suggests that the political status of this Gupta was not much high in his own times.⁸ Probably he was only a feudal chief and not an independent king.

The name Gupta is so short that it looks suspiciously queer. But we must point out that the first part has not been lost or damaged in the inscription. Palaeographically it is quite categorical that the name is Gupta, there is no loss or damage of syllables.

In ordinary life in all societies we find the convenient tendency to drop one part of the name. We address a person by the *pūrvapada* or the *uttarapada* whichever is convenient to us. By the passage of time that name becomes his popular name. In some cases even his original name may be forgotten. In our own case *Gupta* may have been the *uttarapada* of the name of the first king by which he may have been generally known. The name Gupta was probably very popular, so much so that the dynasty itself was named after it.

The practice of shortening the names is not known in the Vedic times ; it is noticed by Pāṇini and seems to have been fashionable in the times of Katyāyana and Patañjali.⁹ Several examples of it are also met with in the Buddhist literature.

In modern historical usage Śrī has become so much associated with the name of the first king of the Gupta dynasty that it has become a real part of his name generally written as 'Śrī Gupta'.

The psychology behind it may be that the use of the smaller names sounds queer and it is brought at par with other names in the dynasty, e.g. Candragupta, Samudragupta, Kumāragupta, etc.

V.A. Smith¹⁰ suggests that this name was not simply Gupta, but Śrīgupta, implying thereby that Śrī is an integral part of his name, not the honorific prefix. Fleet¹¹ has thoroughly refuted all his arguments and we may not discuss them here.

Some corroborative evidence for the historicity of Śrī