

Gupta is afforded by two seals of which one is in Prakrit and gives the legend '*Gautasya*' while the other is in Sanskrit and has the reading '*Śrī Guptasya*'. It is most probable that these seals belong to the founder of the Gupta dynasty, especially the Sanskrit Seal.¹²

The dynastic name is derived from the termination Gupta of each king's personal name, showing that the line had no respectable origin as clan, tribe, or caste.¹³

The word 'Gupta' is derived from $\sqrt{\text{gup}}$ to protect.¹⁴ The Viṣṇu Purāṇa¹⁵ says—" (The termination) *śarman* is prescribed for a brāhmaṇa ; *varman* belongs to a kṣatriya ; (and) a name characterised by *gupta* and *dāsa* is approved of in the case of (respectively) a vaiśya and a sūdra". The commentary in the Bombay edition gives as examples, Somaśarman, Indravarman, Candragupta, and Sivadāsa.¹⁶ The Mānavadharmasāstra¹⁷ also lays down a similar rule without specifying the terminations. On the basis of these authorities, it has been suggested that the Early Guptas were not of a high caste, being at best vaiśyas, and hence felt pride in their matrimonial alliance with the Licchavis.¹⁸

But we find that the rules regarding the naming of persons prescribed in the Dharmasāstras were not always strictly followed. To give only a few examples the name of the well known astronomer, Brahmagupta, a brāhmaṇa, ended in 'Gupta'¹⁹ and likewise Dāsavarman is the name of a brāhmaṇa, in line 36 of the Nerur grant of Vijayāditya (dated Śaka-saṃvat 627).²⁰

We know of the names of the kings ending in Gupta as early as second century B.C. from the records of the excavations and explorations conducted in Central India.²¹ It may be noted from Tālagund stone pillar inscription of the time of Śāntivarman (A.D. 455-70)²² that the grandson of a brāhmaṇa king Mayūraśarman was named as Kāku(ut)sthavarman. Thus on consideration no weightage can be given to the word '*gupta*' denoting a Vaiśya class.

In this context we must note that Prabhāvati-guptā, the daughter of Candragupta II and chief queen of the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena II describes herself as belonging to the Dhāraṇa *gotra* in her Poona and Rithpur copper plate inscrip-