

OBSERVATIONS ON THE MRIGAYĀ COIN TYPES OF THE GUPTAS

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I

Mrigayā or hunting was considered by the ancient Indian political thinkers as one of the traditional *vyasanas* or addictions.¹ *Vyasanas* are of two types, viz., *Kopaja* and *Kāmaja*.² According to Kauṭilya vices originating out of *Kāma*, are fourfold, viz., *mrigayā*, *dyūta* (gambling), women and drinking.³ As regards the relative harmfulness of these vices due to *kāma*, Kauṭilya refers to the view of Piśuna, one of his predecessors on polity, who held *mrigayā* as the worst of all addictions.⁴ But Kauṭilya rejects his views,⁵ and praises the royal game of hunting, because it results in the disappearance of phlegm, bile and sweat, and leads to the acquisition of skill in aiming at stationary and moving bodies⁶ etc. Kāmandaka also refers to these qualities of *mrigayā*,⁷ although he favoured hunting only under certain specific conditions. Kālidāsa in *Sākuntalam* (II. 5) uses almost the phraseology of Kauṭilya, and very emphatically points out the merits of *mrigayā*, stating 'vainly, indeed, is hunting called a vice' (*mīṭhyairva vyasanam vadaṁti mrigayā-*

1. *Mahābhārata* gives the total number of vices as seven, cf., Sabhāparva, 68.20; Udyogaparva, 33.92; King Rudradeva in his *Syainikaśāstram* (II. 1-3) enumerates eighteen addictions, the last of which is *mrigayā*.
2. Kauṭilya, VIII, iii. 4-5; *Manusmṛiti*, VII. 44-48, 50; *Kāmandakanitisāra*, XIV. 6-7; *Matsya Purāṇa*, 215.55.
3. *Arthaśāstra*, VIII, iii. 5, 41, 42; *Manusmṛiti* VII. 50, enumerates the *Kāmaja* vices as drinking, gambling, women and hunting; in order of their effectiveness. Kāmandaka, XIV.7 repeats Kauṭilya. Cf. also Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśam*, XI. 7.
4. *Arthaśāstra*, VIII, iii. 39-41.
5. Ibid, VIII, iii. 42-46.
6. मृगयायां तु व्यायामः श्लेष्मपित्तः मेदः स्वेदनाशश्च स्थिते च काये लक्ष-परिचयः कोपभयस्यानेषु च मृगाणां चित्तज्ञानमनित्ययानं चेति ॥ ४६ ॥
Arthaśāstra, Kangle, Vol. I, VIII. iii.
7. जितश्रमत्वं व्यायाम आमभेदकफक्षयः ।
चरस्थिरेषु लक्षेषु बाणसिद्धिरनुत्तमा ॥
Kāmandaka, XIV. 25

yām).¹ Śukra² suggests that kings should hunt such wild beasts as *vyāghra* etc., and states that hunting infuses valour and promotes the power to aim, diminishes fear and leads towards the swiftness in hurling different weapons. Dandin's enumeration of the merits of *mrigayā*, though ironical³, is very elaborate. Writing about the big hunt, he says, "there is nothing so beneficial as hunting (*mrigayā*). It gives the legs magnificent exercise; and long-winded speed might prove very handy after a defeat. It dries up the phlegmatic humour; thus promoting digestion, the sole foundation of health. By reducing fat, it makes the body vigorous, agile. It gives power to endure cold, heat, wind, rain, hunger, thirst. It interprets the mental activities of living beings from their physical expression. It supplements scanty crops with the flesh of deer, buffaloes, wild oxen, and other game. It makes land routes secure by killing such creatures as wolves and tigers. It wins the confidence of the jungle tribes."⁴ Rudradeva dwells upon the merits of hunting in an almost equally enthusiastic manner⁵ and makes it desirable for the attainment of the three ends of life.⁶ Rudradeva further states that, "in hunting, all the five qualities of a Kshatriya are developed, namely, the practice of archery, conduct towards equals, agility of motion, energy of body, cleverness in the management of horses, and the knowledge of the incomparable delight when the policy succeeds."⁷

II

The survey of *mrigayā* as detailed above, shows how esteemed as a *kriḍā* or pastime of ancient Indian kings it was. It was favoured most by the Gupta monarchs, as is clear from

1. Kālidāsa, *Sākuntalam*, II. 4-5; cf. also *Raghuvamśa*, IX. 49.
2. शौर्यं प्रवर्धते नित्यं लक्ष्यसंधानमेव च ।
अकातरत्वं शस्त्रास्त्रशीघ्रपातनकारिता ॥
Sukraniti, I. 31, 32.
3. As pointed out by Kane, P. V., in *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. III, p. 55.
4. *Daśakumāracharita*, p. 160 (Translated by Ryder, A.W., Bombay, 1956); text. VIII, p. 352 (Calcutta, 1936).
5. *Syainikaśāstram*, III. 17-25, ed. by Haraprasad Shastri, Calcutta, 1910.
6. मृगयायाः.....त्रिवर्गस्य, साधनाय, प्रशस्यते ।
Syainikaśāstram, III. 35.
7. धनुर्वेदाभ्यासः समविधिरनुत्तमश्च लघुता,
गतिर्गतिस्साहः तुरगविहृतौ चातिप्रदुता ।
तथा नीतेर्योगे रसपरिचयश्चाप्यनुपमो,
मृगव्यायां क्षात्रो गुणसमुदयोऽभ्यस्यत इव ॥
Ibid, VII. 29, p. 39 and 35.

the evidence of their coins. Even those writers, who were not in favour of it, were probably forced by their royal patrons, who liked it so much, to favour it and to recognise its advantages.¹

Many Gupta kings are known to have issued *mṛigayā* type of coins. And these coins betray their issuer's fondness for the game of hunt. The *mṛigayā* coin types of the Gupta's consist of the Tiger-slayer type² of Samudragupta, the Lion-slayer type³ of Chandragupta II, the Tiger-slayer,⁴ the Lion-slayer,⁵ the Elephant rider-lion slayer⁶ and the Rhinoceros-slayer types⁷ of Kumargupta I, and the Horse-man-lion slayer-type of Prakāśāditya.⁸

1. Cf. In *Sākuntalam* (Ch. II) the Vidūshaka criticises his *mṛigayāśila* friend, the king Dushyanta, for he had to roam from one forest to the other in summer, with the king and also because he drank the tepid and bitter water of the mountain-streams (*girinadi*) and ate the roasted flesh at odd hours. The Senāpati flatters Dushyanta, by saying that *mṛigayā* has proved to be a merit in the person of the King (II. 4). Dushyanta, at this, refers to the statements of Vidūshaka who denounces the hunt. At this, the Senāpati asks Vidūshaka to be firm in his denunciation and opposition of the chase, and himself he humours the king by recounting the merits of hunting and finally adds a touch of satire to his statements by saying *mīthyaiva vyasanam vadanti mṛigayāyām* (II. 5). This shows that this game was not popular even with the high officials of the state, probably because it involved much trouble and exertion. Similarly, Kāmandaka listing the demerits of *mṛigayā* states that if a king wants to hunt in spite of its disadvantages, he should do it in forests specially planted for the purpose (XIV. 28-41).

2. Allan, *BMC, G.D.*, Pl. II. 14-15; Altekar, *BHIC.*, Pl. VI. 9-10; Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pl. III. 13-14.
3. Allan, *BMC, G.D.*, Pls. VIII. 11-17, IX. 1-13; Altekar, *BHIC.*, Pls. XVI. 8-15, XVII. 1-14, XVIII. 1-10; Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pls. VI. 1-15, VII. 1-10.
4. Allan, *BMC, G.D.*, Pls. XIV. 14-17, XV. 1-4; Altekar, *BHIC.*, Pl. XXVII. 1-15; Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pl. XII. 11-13.
5. Allan, *BMC, G.D.*, Pl. XIV. 1-13; Altekar, *BHIC.*, Pls. XXVIII. 1-15, XXIX. 1-15; Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pl. XII. 1-10.
6. Altekar, *BHIC.*, Pl. XXX. 1-4; Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pl. XIII. 1-2.
7. Altekar, *BHIC.*, Pl. XXX. 5-8; Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pl. XIII. 3-6; *JNSI*, XI, Pl. III. 7.
8. Allan, *BMC, G.D.*, Pl. XXII. 1-6; Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pl. XV. 14-15.

Several scholars have found in these coin types allusions to certain military conquests or expeditions of the Gupta kings. It has been suggested that Samudragupta issued his Tiger-slayer type of coins to commemorate his successful expedition in Bengal or in the Mahākāntāra and an allusion to the king Vyāghrarāja detected in the epithet *Vyāghra-parākrama*.¹ Similarly the Lion-slayer type, in all its classes, is taken to refer to the military expedition of Chandragupta II into Saurāshtra and it is suggested that the epithet *Sinhavikrama*² alludes to the defeat of Rudrasimha. And although it has not been possible to find allusions to the names of enemy kings in the epithets adopted by Kumaragupta I on his issues, it is stated that the Rhinoceros slayer type signifies a successful movement in or occupation of Bengal and Assam,³ a hypothesis not confirmed by any other source. Similarly it has been pointed out that the Tiger-slayer type of Kumargupta I "may possibly indicate that he attempted to repeat the southern venture of his grandfather." Even the Horseman lion-slayer type of Prakāśāditya has been found not without any political significances and it is regarded that the Horseman part was associated with the Southern provinces of the empire and the Lion-slayer with the North.⁴

But, it seems to us that these coin types of the Guptas do not contain anything special and need not necessarily be interpreted as indicating victories in various regions. Firstly, because, of all Gupta Gold coins, it is arbitrary to select only the *Mṛigayā* types of coins for such interpretations especially when most of the Gupta types essentially are of a military

1. Raychaudhuri, *PIIAI*, p. 543 n. 1, Calcutta, 1953 (6th ed.); *JNSI*, vol. XXIV, p. 34ff. Cf. also for similar views, Mookerjee, R. K., *The Gupta Empire*, p. 35, 55, Bombay 1959; Chattopadhyaya, S. K., *The Early History of North India*, p. 163; Agarwal, V. S. *Nāgarī Prachārīnī Patrikā* (Vikramāṅka, Uttarārdha), pp. 263-264, (V. S. 2001).
2. Mookerjee, R. K., *The Gupta Empire*, p. 55; Raychaudhuri, H. C., *PIIAI*, p. 543 n. 1; *The Classical Age*, pp. 21-22; *The Vākātaka Gupta Age*, p. 157, Banaras, 1954; *JNSI*, vol. XXIV, p. 37.
3. Joshi, M., *JNSI*, vol. XXIV, p. 38 n. 2.
4. Raychaudhuri, H. C., *PIIAI*, pp. 569-570; Chattopadhyaya, S., *The Early History of North India*, pp. 177-178.
5. Allan, J., *BMC, G.D.*, pp. lxxxvi, xci; Raychaudhuri, *PIIAI*, p. 587.

significance.¹ Secondly, the detection of allusions to Vyāghra-rāja and Rudrasimha III in *Vyāghraparākramah* and *Simhavi-kramah* has no sound and secure basis. Because kings such as Samudragupta and Chandragupta II could hardly have entertained the idea of comparing themselves with their aforesaid vanquished enemies. One variety of Chandragupta's Lion-retreating class contains the reverse epithet *Śrīsimhavi-kramah*² and there is no reason to believe that this king could have accorded the honorific *Śrī* to his humbled enemy. Another reverse epithet *Simhaachandrah*³ clearly indicates that the reverse legend is nothing more than a title of Chandragupta. And the same must therefore be the case with Samudragupta. Further the *Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa*⁴ states that kings must employ Vikrama ending names, a fact which may confirm our contention.

Thirdly Kumaragupta's Tiger slayer type also does not indicate his military expedition towards south. This expedition can be supported neither by the find of 1,395 coins from Satārā district nor by Kumaragupta's imitation of the Traikūṭaka money. And even if imitation of the Traikūṭaka coinage and the discovery of a hoard in Satārā district may support a theory of southward expansion or expedition by Kumārāgupta, we have no Vyāghrarāja to fight him in the Mahākantāra as in the case of Samudragupta. Fourthly, the supposed allusion to an unknown king possibly of the name of Khadga and his defeat at the hands of Kumārāgupta in Bengal is without any foundation.

Fifthly, the Horseman and Lion-slayer types should not be associated with the southern and the northern provinces of the Guptas, because their Gold coinage was intended as an imperial and international currency. The silver and copper currencies of the Gupta's were meant to satisfy local needs and traditions.

1. The present writer considers the Standard, the Archer, the Battle-axe, the Swordsman and the Kārttikeya types of the Guptas as indicative of the military strength and power of their issuer's. Aśvamedha and certain dubious types like Apratigha (?) etc., may also be partly military types.
2. Allan, *BMC, G.D.*, p. 44, Pl. IX. 11; Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, pp. 111, 119, Pl. VII. 5.
3. Allan, *BMC, G.D.*, p. 43, Pl. IX. 10; Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, p. 118, Pl. VII. 4.
4. Shah, Priyabala, *Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, vol. II, p. 30; Baroda, 1961.

Thus it appears that it is not proper to derive such political conclusions from the Gupta coins of the hunting series.

III

However, we feel, that all the *mrigayā* coin types of the Guptas should be considered together for a correct determination of their exact nature. Such a consideration, as proposed herein, would point out a gradual and independent development of the coins of this series.

Samudragupta, the initiator of this type, uses his epithet *vyāghraparākramah*, both on the obverse¹ and reverse², with his name on the other side. This shows that the king had not yet been able to determine as to which of the two faces of the coin would be suitable for his epithet.

Howsoever a great and able administrator Chandragupta II might have been, he certainly was not a greater military conqueror than his illustrious father. But it seems, he was not prepared to accept this fact. His Lion-slayer type was inspired and imitated from the Tiger-slayer type of his father.³ And the adoption of Lion for this type, as also the chosen prey of the king, for his big hunt, indicates that he thought himself to be greater, more courageous and valorous than Samudragupta. These issues, therefore, were intended to outrival the *vyāghraparākrama* i. e., Samudragupta, with the help of *simhavi-krama* of Chandragupta II. But, Chandragupta II unlike his father, uses his reverse title *simhavi-krama* even on the obverse but always in association with a long and high sounding legend (*Narendrachandraḥ prahitarāṇo rāṇe jayatyajeyo bhuvi simhavi-kramah*) at least on the Lion-combatant and Lion trampler varieties of this type. Thus it appears that this king fixed the place of the epithet qualifying his lion-like valour on the reverse, but he could not totally depart from the earlier practice and consequently he gave his reverse epithet on the obverse as well, although as a part of the long legend. Another point of difference from the Tiger-slayer type of his

1. The epithet occurs on the obverse on Allan's, *BMC, G.D.*, Pl. II. 14, and Altekar's *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pl. III. 14; *BHC*, Pl. VI. 9.
2. And on reverse on Altekar's, *BHC*, Pl. VI. 10; Allan's *BMC, G.D.*, Pl. II. 15; and Altekar's, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, Pl. III. 13.
3. Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, p. 70; cf. Allan, *BMC, G.D.*, p. xli; *BHC*, p. lxxxv.

father is found in the introduction of at least two new variations of *śiṃhavikrama* (i. e., *śrīśiṃhavikrama* and *śiṃha-chandra*), as pointed out elsewhere.

Kumaragupta I seems to have accepted the preceding *mṛigayā* types as two established numismatic conventions and therefore issued coins of these types. His Tiger-slayer type is a close imitation of his grandfather's type. This king, however, used *śrīmān vyāghrabalaparākramah*¹ on the obverse and *Kumargupto'dhirājā*² on the reverse, with a view to improve on Samudragupta's issues. The invariable use of the honorific *śrīmān* shows that Kumaragupta I was using his obverse epithet as a designation qualifying his strength and prowess.

Kumargupta uses several variations of legends and epithets on his Lion-slayer type. Kumaragupta issued this type, only in two classes viz., Lion-combatant and Lion-trampler. The restored obverse legend of var. A. of Class I is *Kṣhītipatirajitumahendraḥ Kumāragupto divaṃ jayati*,³ and this legend is slightly different from the obverse legends of his father. But the obverse legends of varieties B (*Kumāragupto vijayī śiṃhamahendro divaṃ jayati*)⁴ and C (*Kumāragupto yuddhi śiṃhavikramaḥ*)⁵ show that variety A coins might be the latest issues of this class (I). The coins of this class contain either *śrīmahendrasīṃhaḥ*⁶ or simply as *śiṃhamahendra*⁷. The obverse legend of class II is a step still further (*Sākṣādiva narasiṃho śiṃhamahendro jayatyaniṣam*)⁸, and the coins bearing this obverse legend, probably are still later issues. The

1. Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, pp. 191 and 192.
2. Altekar also thinks that "the reverse legend is an adaptation from and an improvement over that of Samudragupta. It reads '*Kumāragupto'dhirājā*,...the word *adhirāja* being obviously more appropriate than *rājā* for an emperor. The change in wording here seems to be deliberate," *Coinage of the Gupta Empire* p. 191; *BHU.*, p. ciii.
3. Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, p. 186; *BHU.*, p. civ. PL. XXVIII. 8-10.
4. Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, p. 186.
5. Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, p. 186; *BHU.*, p. civ-cv, PL. XXVIII. 1-7; XXIX. 8-15.
6. Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, p. 187, 189-190, PL. XII. 1, 6, 7, 8; *BHU.*, pp. civ-cv, PL. XXVIII. 8-10, 13, 14; XXIX. 7.
7. Altekar, *Ibid*, p. 188, 190, PL. XII. 2-4, 9-11; *BHU.* pp. civ-cv.
8. Altekar, *Ibid*, p. 187; *BHU.*, p. cv.

reverse epithets of the coins of class II are the same as those of class I. One thing may here be pointed out, that the use of *śiṃhavikrama* by Kumargupta on the obverse of his Lion-slayer coins, and both on obverse and reverse by Chandragupta shows that they meant to blazon their Lion-like valour. The latter adopted this adjective as a designation for himself. This will explain why the reverse adjectives of Kumaragupta are *śiṃhamahendra* or *Śrīśiṃhamahendra* different from *śiṃhavikrama*. So the *vyāghraparākrama* of Samudragupta compares and qualifies his tiger-like prowess. And the same is true of *Śiṃhavikrama* and *Śiṃhamahendra* of the subsequent kings. But Kumaragupta I seems to have styled it a bit differently than his illustrious father to show his superiority over the former. And this is further confirmed by the gradual development of the obverse legends of Kumaragupta's Lion-slayer type which is itself an evidence indicative of his self-supposed superiority over his father.

Kumaragupta I on the obverse of his Elephant rider lion-slayer type styles himself as *Kṣhataripu Kumāragupto rājatrātā jayati rūpuṇ*.¹ This legend shows him to have exterminated his enemies, as a protector of the vassals, and as a conqueror of the enemies. The mention of the protection of feudatories is interesting. The reverse legend *Śiṃhanihaṇtā Mahendragajaḥ* seems to be a new feature in as much as it mentions the State Elephant of Kumaragupta, almost equal to the Airāvata of Indra. This also indicates his sense of superiority over his predecessors.

Thus Kumaragupta, by the issue of Tiger and Lion-slayer types, appears to have publicised himself as equal to Samudragupta and Chandragupta II, nay far superior to them both in courage and prowess. This megalomaniac tendency of Kumaragupta I is further evidenced by his Rhinoceros slayer type of coins. On these coins, he calls himself the protector by the sword from the Rhinoceros (*Bhartā khaḍgatrātā Kumāragupto jayatyaniṣam*)², their reverse contains an epithet, in the nature of a designation, as *Śrī Mahendrakhaḍga* on the pattern of the former types. This type similarly, has nothing from which some political bearing can be adduced.

Further development of the coin types of the sport-series was checked after Kumaragupta due to disturbed

1. Altekar, *The Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, p. 196; *BHU.*, pp. cvi, cix, contains a slightly different reading.
2. Altekar, *BHU.*, pp. cvii-cviii, PL. XXX. 5-8.

political conditions of the Gupta Empire. And the only other type of the sport-series, namely the Horseman-Lion-slayer type of Prakāśāditya, no doubt is a mixture of the Horseman and the Lion-slayer types of the Guptas. It was inspired by the Elephant-rider Lion-slayer type of Kumaragupta I, and shows its issuer's craze for a new type. The obverse legend of this type is only partly restored to (*viṣṭiya*) *vasudhāni divam jayati*,¹ and the reverse has *Śrī Prakāśādityaḥ*. Prakāśāditya was so feeble a ruler that he could not have held the northern and the southern portions of the Gupta kingdom intact as Raychaudhuri² contends.

IV

The only important fact that can be gleaned from the *mṛigayā* types of the Gupta's, is their love and fondness for the game of hunt³. They may also acquaint us with the wild beast or beasts they favoured most to shoot down, either on foot or from animal back and with the weapons they liked to play this game.

The views of Kālidāsa etc. on hunting, taken together with the numismatic evidences indicate that it was not only favoured for the fun of it, but also for its merits. But, it appears that in spite of all its merits, the game of *mṛigayā* was not favoured by some ancient Indian political thinkers. Kauṭilya, though favoured it, as pointed out earlier, yet imposes certain restrictions on kings interested in *mṛigayā*. He says that a "forest...provided with only one entrance, rendered inaccessible by the construction of ditches all round, with plantations of delicious fruit trees, bushes, bowers, and thornless trees, with an expansive lake of water, full of harmless animals and with tigers (*vyāla*), beasts of prey (*mārgāyuka*), male and female elephants, young elephants, and bisons—all deprived of their claws and teeth—shall be

1. Allan, *BMC, GD.*, p.135, PL. XXII. 1-6; Altekar, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, p. 285.
2. Raychaudhuri, H. C., *PIIAI*, p. 587.
3. Altekar, *BIC*, pp. cvii; cf. also, *Coinage of the Gupta Empire*, pp. 105, n. 1, 197; Vidya Prakash, *JNSI*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 270-271. Vidya Prakash's suggestion that the Archer type of Gupta's also 'hints towards hunting' (p. 271) is, however, baseless.

formed for king's sports⁴." Kāmandaka follows the pattern of Kauṭilya, and having pointed out the merits and demerits of *mṛigayā*--perhaps with a view to divert a king's liking for it--puts forth an alternative suggestion. He says, that if a king is inclined to enjoy with *mṛigayā* he should cause the planting of a *mṛigayāraṇya* near the capital city.⁵ This forest should be $1\frac{1}{2}$ *yojanas* in length and breadth, and should be encircled by a high wall which could not be crossed by the beasts.⁶ This forest should be cleared of hills, thorny bushes and poisonous trees etc. It must contain ponds, flowers and shady trees.⁷ This preserved forest should also be full of animal herds of male and female elephants, young elephants, tigers etc. without claws and teeth, and hornless *mṛigas* (probably rhinoceroses).⁸ The forests preserved for the royal hunt should contain wild beasts of different species.⁹ And when the king enters this forest for hunting, his armies should be kept in waiting, at a distance⁷ (surely for protection). Further, Kāmandaka says that the king will enjoy his hunting expedition in such a forest with all its merits, this is the way of hunting befitting a king, and that a king should not go hunting like *mṛigas*⁸ (wild beasts). Since Kāmandaka was not much removed in time from the Guptas, his statements in this connection, may be said to have implied some actual practice of a similar nature. But such preserved forests hardly would have allowed the Brāhmanaṣas etc. to establish *āśramas* etc. therein. And as the woods mentioned by Kālidāsa in his *Sakuntalā* and *Raghuvamśa* appear to have contained hermitages etc., his forests do not appear to have been preserved ones. The poetic descriptions of Kālidāsa testify to it. But, however, we feel that Kālidāsa

1. Shamashastry, *Arthaśāstra*, BK. II. 2; तावन्मात्रमेकद्वारं खातमुप्तं स्वादुफलयुल्लमगुच्छमकरटकिदुममुत्तनतोयाशयदान्तमुगचतुष्पदं भग्नखदंष्ट्रव्यालं मार्गयुकहस्तिहस्तिनीकलभं मृगवनं विहारार्थं राज्ञः कारयेत् ॥ ३ ॥ Not only this, forests even for public hunting were to be preserved on the frontiers of the kingdom : सर्वातिथिमुगं प्रत्यन्ते चान्यन्मृगवनं भूमिवशेन वा निवेशयेत् ॥ ४ ॥ Kangle, *Arthaśāstra*, Vol. I, Bk. II. 2, 3-4, p. 34.

2. Kāmandaka, XIV. 28.
3. Ibid., XIV. 29.
4. Ibid., XIV. 30-31.
5. मृगसंघातसम्पूर्णं हस्तिनीकलभान्वितम् । भग्नदन्तनखव्याघ्रं छिन्नशृङ्गविषाणि च ॥ Ibid., XIV. 34.
6. Ibid., XIV. 39.
7. Ibid., XIV. 40.
8. Ibid., XIV. 41-42.

certainly had the said *mrigayāranya*s in mind, which is clear from the fact that Daśaratha shoots down different species of animals—deers, boars, wild buffaloes, tigers, lions, elephants, yaks and also the rhinoceroses¹, with a remarkable ease. But then, if he had the pattern of *mrigayā*—forests in mind, why did he failed to describe them as such? The answer will be that if he would have described them as *mrigayā*—forests, he could not have been in a position to locate the *Ashrama* of Kaṇva in it, as also the existence of Śravaṇa Kumāra with his parents. We feel, this fully explains the difficulty of Kālidāsa.

Therefore, in the light of these facts the tiger, lion and rhinoceros-slayer coin types of the Guptas, need not necessarily be taken to suppose the conquest of a region which abounded in these animals, and wherein the victor would have enjoyed the game of hunting.

All these literary references and suppositions based on them, can further be confirmed by epigraphic evidence. The royal pastime of hunting was popular even with the Rāshtrakūṭas. An inscription of Govinda III² shows how the king killed boars, preserved for his sport with spear. This evidence shows clearly "that there were game preserves in the various centres of the empire for the use of the emperors and courtiers."³

On the basis of all these grounds it can well be said that the Gupta kings had their own preserved forests, fully equipped with animals of various species, to meet out their hunting demands. And their *mrigayā* types were meant to denote only their skill in hunting and nothing more than that.

1. *Raghuvamśa*, IX. 53, 55, 57, 59-60.

Cf. also नृपाणां शस्यते नित्यं मृगयाकैलिकर्मणि ।

सा रक्षया रक्षकैराप्तैरेवं (क) योजनविस्तृता ॥

जनसंचाररहिता वृक्षच्छेदविवर्जिता ।

निवारित मृगाधाता प्रत्यन्ते छिन्नभूरुहा ॥

उपान्तवनविश्रस्तसमागममृगैर्युता ।

धनेनैव प्रकारेण रक्षणीयाऽष्टवी सदा ।

स्वपुरस्य समीपस्था विनोदाय महीभुजाम् ।

सुवर्णकैर्महिषारूढैः शोषनीया पुनः पुनः ॥

व्याघ्रादीन्पदसङ्घातैस्तां विलोक्य विधातयेत् ।

तांस्तान् भेदान्प्रवक्ष्यामि राजयोग्यान्पुण्यं पुथक् ॥

Mānasollāsa, IV. ch. 15. vs. 1441-45, pp. 42, 276-7.

2. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XI. p. 126.
3. Altekar, *Rāshtrakūṭas and their Times*, p. 351, Poona, 1934.

V

From the narratives of Kālidāsa it appears that the kings and their attendants used to put on a hunting suit (*mrigayā veśa*)¹ while out on *mrigayā* expeditions. He gives a graphic description of king Daśaratha who entered the forest for hunting, clad in a dress matching with the colour of the woods.² In this connection his long hair is mentioned as tied up with a *vanamāla*³. King Someshvara also states that the king, as also the ladies of the harem and the attendants accompanying him on hunting ventures, must all be dressed in fully green *dvīpadi*'s⁴.

The dress of the Guptas on their *mrigayā* types, must therefore presumably be the said hunting dress suitable to the occasion.

1. *Śākuntalam*, ed. kale, p. 68 ; *Raghuvamśa*, IX. 50
2. *Raghuvamśa*, IX, 49-51.
3. *Ibid*, IX, 50.
4. *Mānasollāsa*, Vimsati IV, Ch. 15, V. 1471.