

Raghunandana Bhattarāya

DAYATATWA c†

OF

RAGHUNANDANA.

TRANSLATED

BY

GOLÁPCHANDRA SARKÁR, SÁSTRÍ, M. A., B. L.

VAKIL, HIGH COURT, CALCUTTA.

*Author of English versions of the Vramitrodaya and the Vivádaratnd-
kara Sanskrit Commentaries on Hindu Law ; Professor of Law,
Metropolitan Institution ; Fellow, Calcutta University ;
sometime Tagore Professor of Law, and author of the
Tagore Lectures on Adoption ; Professor of Law,
Bangabasi College ; Author of Hindu Law,
etc., etc. etc.*

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It may be interesting to trace the cause of the origin of a new school of law in Bengal, different from that of the rest of India. The reason why this change of law was introduced and accepted in Bengal is to be sought in the social history of the two highest castes of the Bengali Hindus. A'disúra one of the Hindu kings of Bengal became sorry to find no Bráhmána within his territory, so well versed in the sacred literature and the ceremonial of sacrifices, as to be able to enlighten him on the subject of the *Puttreshthi* sacrifice, *i. e.*, the sacrifice by the performance of which the birth of son may be secured, or to be able to perform the same in the prescribed mode. Buddhism had prevailed in Bengal for many centuries before the time of A'disúra, and appears to have been adopted by all classes excepting the Bráhmanas who were the greatest opponents of it, which though as a system of religion is really a branch of Hinduism, yet abolished the usage of hereditary caste or Bráhmanism, and preached equality by birth, and personal distinction based on possession of virtues, and thus laid the axe at the root of the Bráhmanical claim for inherited superiority, and necessarily turned them into its bitterest enemies. But the spread of Buddhism among other classes affected the Bráhmanas also, who could not be expected to learn the Shástras relating to the sacrifices, or to acquire the practical training for performing the same, while the people did not want to have them performed by their aid. The king of Bengal therefore had to request the king of Kányakubja or Kanauj to send him five learned Bráhmanas familiar with the sacred literature, and capable of performing as officiating priests all the Vedic

sacrifices. Accordingly five learned Bráhmanas came from Kanauj to Bengal, and with them came also five learned Káyasthas sent probably because they were virtuous members of the same caste with the king of Bengal, who had sent for them also. The Bráhmanas were highly respected by the king who was impressed with the evidence of their learning and occult power. The King was also pleased with the Káyasthas on account of their virtues and high attainments. To the former, the king made grants of many villages ; and on the latter, he conferred high appointments in his state ; and thus they were induced to settle in his territory where they became the leading members of their respective castes.

These five Bráhmanas and five Káyasthas were respectively the ancestors of the present high-caste Bráhmanas and high-caste Káyasthas of Bengal. There was intermarriage between these new comers and the old Bráhmanas and Káyasthas, respectively. The new comers and their descendants held a higher social position than their respective caste people that had been settled here from before. Poligamy prevailed amongst the male descendants of the new comers, to whom members of the original castes eagerly gave their daughters in marriage, for raising the social status of their families. Many of these daughters used to continue to reside in their father's house, where their husbands either resided with them or approached them from time to time. Thus their sons were born and bred-up in their maternal grand-father's house, and were provided for by him. And in this way arose a closer tie of