



**The Divine Rights of the King as "Devaputra"- A
Critical Study of the Kings of Kakatiya (Chalukya)
dynasty of Bastar**

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Abstract

The historical times of Bastar enlist the Kakatiyas (Chalukyas) as the last ruling dynasty. During the times of Bhaonsala of Nagpur, Bastar was integrated into the British Raj till 1947 when the nation attained freedom. The paper attempts to study the ancient Vedic philosophy of Kingship and divine rights of a King as the "Devputra" or the Son of God while performing their duty towards the clan God or goddess throughout their life. The paper also highlights the Vedic concept of close association of the King with the cosmic power and energy of Shakti through Shaktiupasana which provides the King a much higher status than common people as he acts as a bridge between the powers of the heaven and the life giving forces on the earth. In the Kakatiya dynasty the king is regarded as the *Maati Pujari* or First Priest of the goddess and throughout his life he is attached to his people but at the same time he has a detached devotion while he serves the goddess. The dynasty chosen to study the concept of Devputra and the divine rights of a King is the Kakatiya (Chalukyas) of Bastar royal house who have been serving the clan Goddess Maa Danteshwari since ages as a family member and a living Goddess.

The tradition of "Devaputra" or the "son of God" is an age old tradition descending from the times of Kushanas when Kanishka, the Kushana King assumed the title of Devputra by imitating the emperors of Rome and China. The coins of the Kushanas had inscribed Kanishka as the "King of Kings" and on one side it featured the King with the inscribed image of highly revered god and goddess on other side, thereby rendering the king the status of 'Devputra' or the Son of God. Below are some figures of Kanishka's coins showcasing the idea. The details are mentioned in the citation.:



Fig 1 (see citation)



Fig 2 (see citation)

The term "Son of God" is acknowledged in Hebrew Bible referring to humans having special relationship with God. Solomon and kings of Israel were called son of god. However many emperors and rulers emerging from the Zhou dynasty in China, Alexander the great and emperors of Japan have assumed this title reflecting their filial relationship(child and parent relationship) with the deities. Since then the tradition was followed by many royal houses in world. The Romans regarded Julius Caesar as the son of God and eventually from Kushanas the concept manifested itself in various dynasties.

In the Indian context Vedas mentions Kings as someone "who is chosen and appointed as King by Lord Indra". The trend continues to flourish in many royal houses in Indian dynasties where the Kings have gained the status of Devputra through the reverence towards their clan gods and goddesses whom they serve throughout their life like sons. In this context referring to the Kakatiya dynasty of Bastar the Kings gained the title of Pratham Pujari (First Priest) and Maati Pujari of the clan goddess Maa Danteshwari whom they have been serving since ages as the Devputra. Founded in the fifteenth century the 11th largest princely

state by area, Raja Annamdev (1324-1369) was the first Raja of Bastar. He was the traditional founder and the brother of the Kakatiya King Prataprudradev of Warangal. He established himself at Bastar defeating the Naagvanshi King. His capital was at Mudhota, under the protection of Dantaeshwari Maa. Since then Maa Danteshwari is the Kuldevi and family deity of the Kakatiyas of Bastar. (<https://www.indianrajputs.com/view/bastar>)

Looking at the concept of Kingship and a king's divine association, the Rig Veda has defined the term 'King' and the deeds of an individual that make him deserve the title of King. In the context of Rig Veda Gods have been referred as Kings. However hymns (10-173- 10-175) addressed to the earthly kings reflect the idea that the earthly kings have been established by the virtue of Lord Indra thus reflecting dependency and close proximity of the earthly kings upon Gods:

RV Mandala 10, 173

आ तवाहर्षमन्तरेधि धरुवस्तिष्ठाविचाचलिः ।

विशस्त्वा सर्वा वाञ्छन्तु मा तवद राष्ट्रमधि भरशत ॥

इहैवैधि माप चयोष्ठाः पर्वत इवाविचाचलिः ।

इन्द्रैवेह धरुवस्तिष्ठेह राष्ट्रमु धारय ॥

इममिन्द्रो अदीधरद धरुवं धरुवेण हविषा ।

तस्मै सोमोधि बरवत तस्मा उ बरहमणस पतिः ॥

धरुवा दयोर्धुवा पर्थिवी धरुवासः पर्वता इमे ।

धरुवं विश्वमिदं जगद धरुवो राजा विशामयम ॥

धरुवं ते राजा वरुणो धरुवं देवो बर्हस्पतिः ।

धरुवं त इन्द्रश्चाग्निश्च राष्ट्रं धारयतां धरुवम ॥

धरुवं धरुवेण हविषाभि सोमं मर्शामसि ।

अथो तैन्द्रः केवलीर्विशो बलिहृतस करत ॥

Translation -

BE with us; I have chosen thee: stand steadfast(unwavering) and immovable.

Let all the people wish for thee let not thy kingship fall away.

2. Be even here; fall not away be like a mountain unremoved.

Stand steadfast here like Indra's self, and hold the kingship in the grasp.

3. This man hath Indra established, made secure by strong oblation's power.

May Soma speak a benison, and Brahmanaspati, on him.

4. Firm is the sky and firm the earth, and steadfast also are these hills.

Steadfast is all this living world, and steadfast is this King of men.

5. Steadfast, may Varuna the King, steadfast, the God Brhaspati,

Steadfast, may Indra, steadfast too, may Agni keep thy steadfast reign.

6. On constant Soma let us think with constant sacrificial gift

And then may Indra make the clans bring tribute unto thee alone.

RV Mandala 10, 174

अभीवर्तेन हविषा येनेन्द्रो अभिवाव्रते |

तेनास्मान्ब्रह्मणस पते.अभि राष्ट्राय वर्तय ||

अभिद्रव्य सपत्नानभि या नो अरातयः |

अभि पर्तन्यन्तन्तिष्ठाभि यो न इरस्यति ||

अभि तवा देवः सविताभि सोमो अवीव्रतत |

अभि तवा विश्वाभूतान्यभीवर्तो यथाससि ||

येनेन्द्रो हविषा कर्त्वर्यभवद दयुम्न्युत्तमः |

इदं तदक्रि देवा असपत्नः किलाभुवम ||

असपत्नः सपत्नहाभिराष्ट्रो विषासहिः |

यथाहमेषां भूतानां विराजानि जनस्य च ||* (<https://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rvsan/rv10174.htm>)

Translation:

WITH offering for success in fight whence Indra was victorious.

With this, O Brahmanaspati, let us attain to royal sway.

2. Subduing those who rival us, subduing all malignities,

Withstand the man who menaces, withstand the man who angers us.

3. Soma and Savitar the God have made thee a victorious King

All elements have aided thee, to make thee general conqueror.

4. Oblation, that which Indra. gave and thus grew glorious and most high,-

This have I offered, Gods! and hence now, verily, am rival less.

5. Slayer of rivals, rival less, victorious, with royal sway,

Over these beings may I rule, may I be Sovran of the folk.

Kings serves as the "Devaputra" or the son of God by rendering their services to the clan God or goddess and following the path of dharma continue to preserve the sanctity of their mind, body and soul.

In the history of the Kakatiyas of Bastar royalty wherein Maharaja Pravir Chandra Bhanja Dev of Bastar was worshipped as the Mahapujari, and Mahaprabhu assumed a status no less than God on earth. The famous Dussehra festival of the region has always been spearheaded by the Kakatiya Kings of the dynasty and now it is Maharaja Kamal Chandra Bhanjadev who is the First priest of Maa Danteshwari. As the *Pratham Pujari* and *Maati Pujari* of Maa Danteshwari the Royal house of Bastar plays a significant role in the arrangement of the festivities which is a sovereign festival of worship in Bastar, a trend continuing since centuries. This paper throws light upon the Vedic concept of Kingship, his Dharma as the Devputra, the divine rights of the King and through this lens views the Kakatiya dynasty of Bastar.

The clan gods and goddesses have been given special place in the royal ruling dynasties since ages. Goddess worship as "Shaktiupasana" has been an ancient tradition followed by the ruling clans and dynasties (Odisha, <https://historyofodisha.in/history-of-sakti-cult-in-odisha/>) evident in chapters of Indian history. The practice of Shaktiupasana by the Kings in Chhattisgarh is quite evident through the deep faith and reverence reflected in the worship of the clan goddess in various forms by royal dynasties like the upasana of Danteshwari Maa by the Kakatiyas, Mahamaya as the clan goddess of the Kaluchuris of Ratanpur and many more dynasties worshipping Shakti as Bhawani or Ma Durga.

The King acts as a dynamic medium between the spiritual forces of the cosmos and the earthly customs. He is the bridge between the earthly and heavenly power, between the spirituality and polity in where he functions between the powers of heaven and his people, it is he who invokes the Gods and Goddesses through his righteousness and conduct to seek the blessings of the almighty, so he is no less than an agent of God . The King and his idea of seeking protection and power from the clan goddess presents the king's status no less than the 'Son of God' or 'Devaputra' who throughout his life serves the goddess as his mother and living member of the family.

The association of King and Goddess, Purush and Prakriti, mother and son-The Kushanas were the first to reflect their colossal status considering themselves 'Godlike' by adopting the title 'Devputra' *(*Prayag Prashasti, Allahabad Pillar inscription, Harisen the court poet describes *Samudragupta as the invincible, 4 th century CE*) . For Samudragupta also known as Kaach it was inscribed on the coins " *He who has won this earth due to his actions and conduct will win the heaven*"



Fig 3 (see citation)

In the middle ages the worship of Shakti became prominent and which as per the Hindu tradition is defined as the active dimension and the divine power of God head that makes the God create and display himself in the world.

In Bastar royal family the celebration of Dussehra reflects the duties of the King as a servant of Maa Danteshwari and this is the reason why among the two fortnights of Dussehra among *Pitrupaksh* and *Devipaksha*, the second one *Devipaksha* celebrates the glories of Devi in full swing. The *Devipaksha* is of great significance as the King of Bastar on the fifth day of Navratri goes to invite Maa for Dussehra and eventually she comes with her grand processions to Jagdalpur and celebrates the festival with her children. Thus the son of goddess escorts the Godmother to take her blessings and shower it upon his people.

The Vedic Version of Shaktiupasana and the King as Devputra- The history of *Shaktiupasana* or worshipping Shakti is age old and dates back to the Vedic age as the Vedas recite the Dharma or the duties of a King as protector and saviour of his people and tell what a true King is and his duties. The powerful kings have always been in the practice of worshipping Shakti. Rama worshipped Maa Durga before his fight with Ravana, Yudhisthira worshipped Maa before the incognito. As the Sri Sukta of the Rig Veda expresses on Shaktiupasana:

*Who are you O great Goddess
I am the manifestation of Brahman
From me the world arises
As nature and the self.*

(Devi Upanishad)

*You are called Durga by all
Because you save men from difficulty
You are the soul refuge of men. (Mahabharata Virat Parva)*

The principal deity of the Kakatiyas in Bastar is the Kakatiya Mata who is Divine Bhadrakali. The Danteshwari maa and Kakatiya Mata are very similar as the temple has Kakatiya scriptures . Quite evident in the coins of the Kakatiyas of Warangal the figure displays the detail as under :



Fig 4 (see citation)

The present King of Bastar serves as the First priest of Danteshwari maa and is no less than her son to whom he has given the highest status and prime importance in his life. Maa Danteshwari is regarded as an embodiment of the Bhadrakali who manifests her energy in almost all creations and creative

energies of the world. As per the ancient legend of Bhadrakali it so happened that once Brahma Vishnu and Shiva sang in her praise telling her that they had forgotten her sacred mantra of creation to which the goddess replied :

"There is no difference at all between the Great God (Purusha) and myself. It is only for the sake of the world that we appear as two. In absence of this manifested world, there is neither the male, not female nor androgyne."

"Nothing in this world is devoid of me. I enter into every substance, and making Purusha the instrument. I do all the actions. I am the coolness of water, the heat of fire, the lustre in the sun and also the soothing rays of the moon, which are but manifestations of my power."

"If abandoned by me, this universe becomes motionless. If I leave Shiva, he will not be able to kill demons. A weak man is declared to be without any Shakti, nobody says that he is without Shiva, or without Vishnu. Those who are timid, afraid, or under one's enemies - they are all called Shakti-less; no one says that this man is Shiva-less and so forth." *(Shakti Worship in India)

(Shakti- The Driving force of Kings or Purusha) - The dialogue above itself reflects the incompleteness of a male or Purusha without female or Prakriti or Shakti and in its absence they are all powerless, they may be capable but they will not be able to use their power unless they are infused with the divine energy of Shakti. The power of the matriarchal goddesses grew before the advent of the age of Aryans in India when they were worshipped as mother goddesses, the cult of goddesses started attracting attention in the age of Guptas and in the middle ages the female divinities were connected with their male spouses as Gods. Shakti, the manifestation of divine dynamic energy is looked upon by her worshippers as "All Powerful Supreme Being" with no comparison to a male god.

The Divine Powers of King in Bible- The Divine powers and rights of a King are reflected in many cultures and as per Bible King is a divine being chosen by God as a ruler, though he may not be perfect but he is God's choice so he must be respected. As per Bible the Divine rights of the King states :

Romans 13:1 (KJV) says, *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.* This is a strong argument stating that any governmental authority must be treated as divinely ordained.

Daniel 2: 21 (KJV) says, *And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding,* which suggests that God not only has the power to appoint kings, but also the power to remove them if they should displease him.

1 Peter 2:13-14 (KJV) says, *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.* Taken with the other quotes, the divine right of kings seems quite clearly established in the Bible.

Divine powers and rights of the King in Vedic context- The Vedas recognize that Kingship manifests only in Gods and it designates Indra, Soma, Agni, Varuna and Yama as Kings. The Vedic hymns of Rig Veda addressed to the earthly Kings in the tenth Mandala (Hymns 173-175) reflect that a King is established by Indra and made victorious by Soma. The Brahmanas reflected the divine association of the King with God through his qualities and religious rituals performed by him.

The idea of detached devotion towards the duties of the King signify his status transcending above the common people and his countrymen and unlike others he cannot lead a free life as he is tied with the dual responsibility, one towards his people and other towards the divine. The epics like Ramayana where the Rajdharma is clearly reflected shows multiple events of **detached devotion** of a king when for the sake of fulfilling the wishes of people who raise doubt over chastity of Sita, Rama has to banish her. The epic Mahabharata reflects the detached devotion towards the duties of a King when fighting on the battlefield Lord Krishna sermons Arjuna on the detachment of personal relationships, family bonds for the protection of Satya and Dharma.

The Kakatiyas in Bastar had been following the divine rights of a King and the tradition has been continuing since ages. Speaking in an interview on the idea of detached devotion, the present King Maharaja Kamal Chandra Bhanjdev talked about his experience of holding the Kingship after his father and continuing the tradition of Maati Pujari serving Maa Danteshwari. The Maharaja added that being a king demands lot of sacrifice and obedience of values. He recalls the time when he was quite young and lost his father, but then like other common people he was not allowed to see and perform the last rites of his father nor he was allowed to meet his mother before ten days as the tradition says that the one proceeding the Kingship becomes the First Priest of Maa Danteshwari and so it is restricted for him to attend funerals, last rites and wear white clothes to express sorrow. It was a hard time for him to follow the tradition as being a teenager school boy. He was conferred with the title of the King of Bastar adorned in bridal colours which reflected his detached devotion as a King and his first service to maa as the Devputra, the one with divine rights.

The theory of Kingship that combined the practices of communal dharma of brahman and a kshatriya in which the brahman correctly instructed others in their duties and guided their spiritual practice but the kshatriya was invested to perform the royal function and work in obedience with the dharma to carry out proper practices. Thus the practice demanded an essential cooperation between the two and this was one of the fundamental elements in the theory of Kingship. The credit of the settling of Aranyaka Brahmins in Bastar goes to the Goncha festival of Bastar celebrated from over 610 years started by the Chalukya dynasty. After this in many phases the Brahmin families came and settled in Bastar. In 1408 Maharaja Pusushottam Dev visited Puri when the King of Puri gifted him a 16 wheeled chariot of Subhadra and conferred him with the title of 'Rathpati'. Along with the chariot about 360 Aranyak Brahmin families also came along with Maharaja who brought several idols of Lord Jagannath, Balbhadra and Subhadra which were 22 in number. The Goncha is unique as in the rathyatra of Bastar these 22 idols are also taken out in the procession along with the idols of Balbhadra, Subhadra and Jagannath. Thus the Brahmins settled in Bastar as the purohits.

The idea of attaining Moksha and getting rid from the Samsara is also one of the rules abiding the aspect of Kingship of which the story of Vidula in Mahabharata is an excellent example when his duties become more important and essential than his unpleasant adversity.

The divine rule of Kingship says that “those rulers who are ready to accept and fulfil their duties without desiring that which does not have an enduring worth, and they detach themselves from actions but think only about the result of action, then it leads finally to escape from their karmas, and in this way they achieve the spiritual goal of Brahma and escape from the samsara. The tribal of the Bastar have a close relationship with their rulers as they are the high priests of Maa Danteshwari , a goddess sacred to the adivasis. The idea is exemplified when the Adivasis abduct the King on the 11th day of Dussehra and on 12th day he is returned back to the throne. The act shows that any changes to the monarchy will be resisted by the tribe. In the year 1876 when the British interfered with the administration of the King by replacing officials the changes to the monarchy was highly resented. Maharaja Pravir Chandra Bhanjdeo of Bastar was worshipped as God by the Adivasis and still there exists a temple of the Maharaja where he is worshipped as a God because he was the one who ruled Bastar as per the interest of the tribes, and so he is still the King who lives in the heart of his people.

The Dharmasutras and the Dharmashastras reflect the image of a King as a protector and a preserver of dharmas in his kingdom. Manu 72 states that the self existing lord created the King to restore order in the world so by performing the duty of a protector the King flourishes. The weak and helpless must receive royal protection and a king when challenged must never back down from a battle as doing battle is his dharma. Maharaja Pravir Chandra Bhanjdeo exists as a protector of his people and the one who fought for the sake of dharma, he is the Devputra who truly served the Danteshwari. In the temple there is a photo of the Maharaja with the deity where he appears with all the grandeurs of a Devputra. In an emotionless politics Pravir CHANDRA Bhanja Dev was vocal in his defence of tribal rights and clashed with the Congress government, but unfortunately on 25th March he sacrificed his life along with multiple tribals

in the police firing inside his palace at Jagdalpur. The King dies for the sake of his people and considered that it is the indigenous tribes that have highest claim on the natural resources of Bastar. The death and killing had shaken the entire country and it is considered as a major reason behind the outbreak of the Maoist violence in the state (<https://www.opindia.com/2021/08/how-killing-of-pravir-chandra-bhanj-deo-made-bastar-a-naxal-hotbed-i-pravir-the-advasi-god/>)

Ages have passed after that mishap but the King's affection for his people and vice versa has not at all mitigated in these years which is a priceless possession of the royal house. Being a soft spoken man H H Maharaja Kamal Chandra Bhanjdeo is highly revered by the tribals coming from remote areas seeking his blessings and worshipping him, people flock to the Bastar palace to catch a glimpse of their Raja. During the Dussehra eve the palace is open for all which they state as their second home and the king as their God. With a heart elated in the ecstasy of his people's love, the Praja...Maharaja says:

"I see myself as a change agent, as someone who can bring about a difference around him. Therefore, I consider it a privilege. I have a vision for Bastar, and I am glad that as a King, I am in a better position to put it into reality. I am here as pratham pujari (first priest) of Danteshwari Mai, the presiding deity of Bastar..."

And a flame of hope lightens for a change in the coming years.....

CITATIONS

Courtesy: Special thanks to Maharaj Kumar Mohit Chandra Bhanjdeo, Maharaj Kumar Suryaveer Chandra Bhanjdeo, Dr Apratim Jha Assistant Professor Christ College Jagdalpur

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Sinhavlokan Blog by Rahul Singh

Fig 1 Gold dinar, c. 128-150 CE

Weight: 7.94 gm., Diam: 20-21 mm., Die axis: 1 o'clock

Crowned, diademed king standing facing, holding spear and sacrificing at altar at left,

Bactrian legend around: β AONANO β AO KA ... N η β KI KO β ANO
(King of Kings Kanishka Kushan) /

Goddess of plenty Ardochsho standing right, holding cornucopia,

Bactrian legend left: AP Δ OX β O, tamgha at right

Göbl 71 <https://coinindia.com/galleries-kanishka.html>

Fig 2 Gold dinar, c. 128-150 CE

Weight: 7.93 gm., Diam: 20 mm., Die axis: 12 o'clock

Crowned, diademed king standing facing, holding spear and sacrificing at altar at left,

Bactrian legend around: β AONANO β AO KA ... N η β KI KO β ANO
(King of Kings Kanishka Kushan) /

The Buddha standing facing, left hand holding robe, right hand in *abhayamudra*, "have no fear",

Bactrian legend left: BO Δ Δ O, tamgha at right

Göbl 66

Fig 3 Gold coin of Kacha. Chakradhvaja type.

Obverse: Kacha, nimbate, standing left, sacrificing at altar and holding filleted *chakradhvaja* (wheel-standard); legend *Kā-cha* † in Gupta script vertically below left arm, circular Brahmi legend around *Kacho gamavajitya divam karmabhir-uttamair-jayati* ("Having conquered the earth, Kacha wins the heaven by excellent deeds").^[1]

Reverse: Goddess (possibly *Lakshmi*) standing left, holding flower and cornucopia, Brāhmī legend at right: *Sarvarājochchettā* ("Exterminator of all kings").

Fig 4 Kakatiyas of Warangal - gold punch-marked double gadyana, repousse fabric, tentatively attributed to period of Gunda IV (955-995AD),

9.77g, Height: 64.75mm, Width: 64.71mm. Obv: In centre, a highly accomplished depiction of a four-armed goddess seated frontally under a prabha, struck from a single die. Sixteen punches around - 2x Kannada letter 'Shri' combined, 1x Kannada legend Mandalika, 1x Kannada legend Kesari at cardinal points; 4x boar facing right, sun and moon above, flanked by two lotus punches, in each quadrant created by the cardinal punches.

Extremely fine, Extremely rare.

Most likely an issue of Gunda IV (955-995AD), an early Kakatiya ruler who ruled as a feudatory of the Rashtrakutas. The title 'Mandalika' might refer to the feudatory status of Gunda IV. The weight of the coin is double that of a normal gadyana. The representation of the goddess in the centre is most likely that of Kakati, the patron / originator goddess of the Kakatiya dynasty.