

C H A P T E R. (III)

ANCESTRY OF THE CHAUHANS OF PĀṬNĀ (WESTERN ORISSA)

It has been pointed out in the previous chapter that Ramāi Deva, a scion of the Chauhan family, founded the rule of his dynasty in the kingdom of Pāṭnā in Western Orissa. The tradition regarding the ancestry of Ramāi Deva has been preserved in the 'Kosalānānda.' This work states that after the defeat and death of Prithvirāja III, a member of his family, named Alhana Deva, established his power at Garha-Sambhar, where the Chauhans ruled for ten generations. The last of the line, viśāla Deva, was killed in the battle by the Yavanas and his queen, who was at that time enceinte, fled with some followers to Pāṭnā in Orissa, where she took refuge in the house of a Brahmin and there gave birth to a son, whom she named Ramāi or Rama Deva. When Ramāi came of age, he became handsome and heroic, prudent and popular. Once he killed a ferocious white tiger by his axe and relieved the terror-stricken people who, out of gratitude, raised him to the throne, which was at that time lying vacant.¹ This story has been repeated in the 'Jaya Chandrikā' of Prahlād Dubeṣ with some alterations here and there. The 'Jaya Chandrikā', however, does not mention the ten kings after Prithvirāja but simply states that after the death of the great Chauhan, an enceinte princess of his family fled to Pāṭnā where, in .

1. KN (Somepur edition) canto IV
The author Gaṅgādhara Misra appears to have confounded Garh-Sambhar with Mainpurī because the Mainpurī Chauhans were being regarded as Gar-Sambhari Chauhans.

in the house of Chakradhara Panigrahi, she gave birth to Ramai, who later on destroyed the Mullick oligarchy and declared himself the king of the territory.¹

A different version of this tradition is found in the account of T. Motte, who visited Sambalpur in 1766 A.D. He narrates the story as follows.

" Sumbhulpoor was founded by Bulram Dakee of whom they relate the following history. About two centuries are past, since a company of Hindus set out from the banks of the river Sommer in the province of Azmir, on a pilgrimage to the temple of Jaggermat. On their return, the whole party was murdered, except one woman who made her escape to Patna, a place thirty coss south from hence, at that time the capital of this part of the country. She supported herself with begging until her son grew up and shewed such a happy genius for learning and such dexterity at his exercises that the Rajah adopted him. When he succeeded, he built this place and made it his residence, calling it Sumbhulpoor from the country of his father. Had his family come from the Sommer, he would have called it Sommerpoor; whereas, I should think he came from Sumbhul, a large city in the Rohilla country." ²

Motte appears to have collected these informations from some unauthentic sources. It is not difficult to prove that he is wrong both in fact and figures. This incident could not have taken place " two centuries" before him as stated in

1. J.C- Canto I.

2. T. Motte- " A Narrative of a journey to the Diamond Mines at Sumbhulpoor in the province of Orissa." Asiatic Annual Register 1799.

his account and the place of the foundation of the Chauhān rule was not Sāmbalpur but Pāṭnā. It may further be pointed out that Sāmbalpur was the name of the place long before the coming of the Chauhāns and it is not named after Sommer or Sāmbhul as stated by Motte. Ptolemy has called it Sambalaka "even as early as second century A.D."¹ The story regarding the foundation of the Chauhān rule in Western Orissa, as narrated by Motte, has not been corroborated by any of the writers who wrote on the subject before or after him.

About a century after Motte, Major H.B. Impey, Deputy Commissioner of Sāmbalpur, attempted to present a systematic account about the Chauhāns of Pāṭnā on the basis of records, accessible to him. His account, preserved in the Record Room of the Collector of the Sāmbalpur district, gives the following details about the foundation of Chauhān rule in Pāṭnā.

"2. The Muharajahs of Patna claim direct descent from a race^e of Rajput Rajahs of Gurh Sumbul near Mynpoore² and count back the individuals of this race for 32 generations.

3. It is narrated that these Rajahs used to be in constant attendance at the court of Dilhee till the last,

1. J.W. McCrindle- Ancient India as described by Ptolemy (Cal(1885) pp. 71,167,169,172-73.

2. Mainpurī, a district headquarters of Uttar Pradesh is situated about 70 K.M. away from Agra.

named Hutumbur Sing, who having intrigued and run off with one of the king's daughters, was pursued and killed and his family forced to fly. Amongst the wives of this Rajah was one, who, escaping, arrived enceinte, in Patna and found refuge with the chief of Kholagurh being one of the 8 gurhs, as marginally noted, which, at that time, alone formed the territories of Patna, being comprised within the three rivers. Ung, Mahanuddy and Tel and bounded on the west by Khurriar (a possession then of Jeypoor) and Bindanawagurh; and the chiefs of which took it in turn, a day at a time, to exercise full authority, as Rajah over the whole. She was placed in charge of the said chief's Brahmin at Rampoor and there gave birth to a boy named Ramee Deo. The chief adopted the boy and subsequently on his coming of age, himself being sick and weary of rule, resigned his position to him. Ramee Deo, soon after this, succeeded in murdering the other seven chiefs and usurping to himself the whole and permanent authority in Patna. Finally, he married a daughter of the ruler of Orissa through whose influence and power, he was enabled to maintain his usurped position."¹

Charles Grant, in the 'Gazetteer of the Central Provinces,'² has fully supported this account of Impey. "The Maharajas of Patna" he writes, "claim direct descent from a race of Rajput Rajas of Garhsambar, near Mainpuri, and trace

1. Edited in O.H.R.J. Vol. II, No.2 July, 1958.

2x Garhs noted in the margin are :- (1) Patna (2) Salebhata (3) Kangaon (4) Jhorasinga (5) Sindeekela (6) Kholagarh (7) Goorha gurh (8) Koonagarh.

2. Charles Grant- Gazetteer of the Central Provinces of India. p. 393-394.

it through thirty-one generations. It is alleged that Hitamber Singh, the last of these Rājās, offended the king of Delhi and was killed; that his family had to abandon their country and fly in every direction; and that one of his wives who was at that time enceinte, found her way down to Patna which was, it seems, at that time represented by a cluster of eight garhs and the chief of each garh took it in turn to rule for a day over the whole. The chief of Kolagarh received the Rani kindly and in due time, she gave birth to a boy who was called Ramai Deva. The chief adopted him and eventually abdicated in his favour, and when it came to his turn to rule, he took the first opportunity of causing the chiefs of the other seven garhs to be murdered and setting himself up as the ruler over the whole, with the title of Maharaja."

L.S.S.O' Malley, in his 'Bengal District Gazetteers, Sambalpur'¹ also writes, " According to tradition, Sambalpur was at an early period under the rule of the Maharajas of Patna, who were the head of a cluster of states known as Athara Garhjat (i.e. the 18 forts) and dominated a large tract to the east of Ratanpur Kingdom. Their ancestor is said to have been a Rajput prince, who lived near Mainpuri and was expelled from his territories by the Muhammadans. He came with his family to Patna, where he was killed in battle, but his wife, who was pregnant,

1. Bengal District Gazetteer- Sambalpur. p. 21.

was sheltered by a Binjhal in whose hut she gave birth to a son. At that time Patna was divided amongst eight chiefs, each of whom took it in turn to reign for one day over the whole territory. The Rajput boy, Ramai Deva, on growing up, killed the eight chiefs and made himself sole ruler of Patna."

L.E.B. Cobden-Ramsay, in his 'Feudatory States of Orissa',¹ gives a still different story. "It is said that Hamir Deva had fled from Garh-Shambar and established himself at Manikgarh fort in the hills of Khariar. On one occasion, before proceeding to battle, he took leave of his seven wives and told them that should he not return they would be apprised of his death by the homeward flight of some carrier pigeons. He failed to return and was never afterwards heard of, the return of the pigeons satisfied his Ranis that he had fallen. Six of them drowned themselves in the pool, called Ramdarha, near Narsinghnath, to the north of the Patna state, and the remaining Rani was found wandering in the jungles near Ramud on the border between Patna and Khariar. She was kindly treated by her preserver, a Binjhal; in due course she was delivered of a child-Ramai Deva who put an end to the Ath-malik gadi by murdering the eight chiefs and himself assuming supremacy over the eight garhs (forts) which he welded into the compact state of Patna and thus introduced the administration of Chauhan family."

1. Cobden- Ramsay- Feudatory States of Orissa. p. 284.

S.C. Mullick supports this account in his "Short History of Kosāla"¹ and thinks that the battle to which Hamīr had been, must have been fought between Gaṅga king of Orissa and Kalachuri ruler of Ratanpur in 1138 A.D. He gives the date of the foundation of the Chauhān dynasty of Pāṭnā as 1159 A.D. But it is, no doubt, too early to be admitted by sober history, as Prithvirāja III from whom the Pāṭnā Chauhāns claim descent, was not even born by that time.²

Sri B.C. Mazumdar, basing on the traditions of the Sonepur Durbār³, states that one Humeru of the family of Prithvirāja of Delhi, having lost his position at Mainpurī, in upper India, during the time of the Muhammadan rulers, came with his queens to the border of Pāṭnā state, where his son Ramāi Deva, by his mythical powers, overthrew the government of the eight Mullicks and established the Chauhān rule.

Prof. R.D. Banerjee⁴ makes an analytical study of the Gazetteers, compiled by European officers, regarding ancestry of the Chauhāns of Pāṭnā and Sāmbalpur, and comes

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1. S.C. Mullick- Short History of Kosāla. p. 87.
 2. Prithvirāja-III was born in V.S. 1223 i.e. 1165-66 A.D. E.C.D. p.72.
 3. B.C. Mazumdar- Sonepur in +Sambalpur Tract.Ch.VI. p.44. Also "Orissa in the Making," by the same author p.219.
 4. "Rajput origin in Orissa"
Modern Review March, 1928.

to the conclusion that, because of different versions in the Gazetteer sources, the Pāṭnā-Sambalpur house need not be associated with the Chauhān families of North India. "The only cause which I can assign for this craze for Rajput origin" he concludes, "is the preponderance of the Rajputs as warriors and mercenaries in the 17th century, when, under the Mughals, they spread their fame from Balkh to Assam and from Kashmir to Ahmadnagar." Unfortunately, Prof. Banerjee's conclusion is based on his study of only the Gazetteers, which are, in fact, secondary sources. He has ignored original literary accounts as well as epigraphical records, which clearly state that the ruling families of Pāṭnā and Sambalpur are a branch of the Chauhāns. That the rulers of Pāṭnā family called themselves as Chauhāns even before the occupation of India by the Moghuls, is known from the work 'Prabodha Čhāndrikā' which was composed about 1500 A.D. by Rājā Vaijala Deva of Pāṭnā kingdom. In this work, the poet has introduced himself as a scion of the Chauhān family. (Chauhāna Vamśa Tilakah)¹. The 'Kosalānānda' as well as the 'Jaya Čhāndrikā' dated in the 17th and 18th century respectively, state that the rulers of Sambalpur belong to the Chauhān family of Prithvirāja III. Copper-plate chart^{er}s₂ issued by Prithvī Singh² of Sonepur and Jayanta Singh³ and Narāyana Singh⁴ of Sambalpur, also bear testimony to their

1. Prabodha Čhāndrikā Verse 2.

2. Two Copper-plate grants of Prithvī Singh are available to us. They have not yet been edited.

3. 'Two copper-plate grants from Themara' edited by P. Acharya. O.H.R.J. Vol. II No.1.

4. 'Bargarh copper-plate' edited by G.S. Das and S.C. De. O.H.R.J. Vol. II No.3 and 4.

Chauhān lineage. The royal insignia, which these rulers have invariably used in their seal and for signature, is a Chakra with four tridents at the cardinal points and this device has also been used by the Chauhān chiefs all over India as royal insignia. The Chauhān lineage of these rulers of Western Orissa, therefore, can not be doubted.

Almost all traditions, indigenous records and accounts, left by foreign scholars, agree on the points that the founder of the Chauhān rule in Western Orissa was Ramāi Deva, who belonged to the family of Prithvirāja Chauhān, that he was the posthumous son of a Chauhān chief of Garha Sambhar, near Mainpur, in U.P. and that he was born in Pātnā and brought up by one of the eight Mullicks of that state. In this connection, it is interesting to note that a small caste of village watchmen and labourers in the Chhattisgarh is still known as Chauhāns. R.V. Russell, who made a study of this caste, states that these people "claim themselves to be of Rajput origin and say that their ancestors came from Mainpur which is the home of the Chauhan clan of Rajputs".¹ B.C. Mazumdar, who later on attempts an anthropological survey of Raipur and Bilāspur districts, supports this fact and writes that² "these highly-degraded and illiterate Chauhāns of backward Chhattisgarh

R.V. Russell :- Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces
Vol. II p.427.

villages, narrate the story that they came to the Chhattisgarh plains from Mainpurī as camp-followers and soldiers of a prince of their caste, who had to leave Mainpurī in quest of a new country for himself, when the Pathan Mohomedan of Delhi made his situation very unsafe¹. This saying of the illiterate villagers of Chhattisgarh as recorded by Russell and Mazumdar corroborates the traditions and records discussed in this chapter regarding the coming of the Chauhāns from Mainpurī to Patnā-garh, in western Orissa.

It may, however, be noted that Garh-Sambhar (Śākambharī) is a place located in Rājasthān, while Mainpurī is in the Uttar Pradesh. The Orissan Chauhāns call themselves Mainpurī, as well as, Garh-Sambharī, because of the fact that they regard themselves as the descendants of the Chauhān ruling families of Mainpurī, whose ancestors were Chauhāns of Śākambharī, the close relatives of the famous Prithvirāja III. After the defeat and death of Prithvirāja III in 1192 A.D., his kingdom was overrun by the armies of Qutb-ud-din Aibak, whereupon, scions of the Śākambharī Chauhāns, whose exact relation with Prithvirāja, has not been ascertained, came to Mainpurī and established there a principality early in the 13th century A.D. From Orissan records, we get two different sets of genealogy of the ancestors of Ramāi Deva. The Gazetteer sources give the names of thirty one kings with Richpāl Singh as the progenitor. As Ramāi Deo founded his dynasty

1. B.C. Mazumdar- 'The Chauhān Rulers of Somnagar' p.9. \

2. O.H.R.J. Vol. II No.2 Appendix I, page 14.

at Pāṭnāgarh in the mid 14th century A.D., we get hardly 150 years for all his ancestors at Mainpurī and the long list of 31 rulers, therefore, seems to be highly improbable. The ^{as} Kośālanānāṅkī an earlier work, preserves a more authentic account. It gives the names of only ten kings as the ancestors of Ramāi Deva with Alhana Deva as the founder of the line¹. E.R. Neave, on the other hand, furnishes a different genealogy of the Chauhān Rājās of Mainpurī with Deo Brahm, "a less distinguished cadet" of the family of Prithvirāja III, as the founder.² Tradition, preserved by the Chauhāns of Mainpurī, reveals that Deo Brahm came to that territory with his four brothers.³ Alhana Deva is, very likely, one of the younger brothers of Deo Brahm. Tenth in descent from Alhana Deva, was Viśāla Deva, who was killed by a Muslim ruler of Delhi, and his wife, who was at that time enceinte, fled to Pāṭnāgarh in Orissa, where she gave birth to Ramāi Deva.

It may be pointed out here that scions of the Mainpurī Chauhāns have founded various chiefships in different parts of Northern and Central India, notable among which are Rājaur, Dalippur, Partāpner, Ekā, Derā and Pāṭnāgarh.⁴ This wide dispersion is, in fact, an important subject of investigation for scholars, interested in Rājput history.

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1. KN (Sonepur Edition) Canto IV verses 1-11.
 2. Mainpurī District Gazetteers- By E.R. Neave I.C.S. Allahabad 1910.
 3. The author has collected this information from Mainpurī.
 4. Sir Roper Lethbridge- The Golden Book of India (London 1893) pp. 254, 293, 323, 380, 466, 413, 453.