Chapter II.

Legends about the origin of the Candellas.

The origin of most of the Rajput dynasties of Northern India is somewhat obscure and uncertain. Traditional theories with regard to most of them are generally associated with some legends contained either in laudatory verses or in bardic ballads or even in unwritten folk-tales or songs. The dynasties like the Cāhāmanas, the Pratiharas, the Caukukyas and the Parmāras are regarded as the four fire-born races (agnikula). Their founders are said to have sprung from the fire-altar of the sage Vasistha on the Mount Ābu. The Kalacuris claim to have descended from Yayäti, the Kachwāhas from Kusa, the son of Rāma, and the Guhilots directly from Rāma.

The Candellas, in the same way, trace their descent from the Moon, in which respect the inscriptions of the dynasty as well as current traditions are almost unanimous. 'Candrātreya' has been adopted as the clan-name of the family in their epigraphic records, after the name of the sage Candrātreya, who has been claimed to be the progenitor of the family ('Candrātreya-muṣṭar mahiyasā kule', 'Candrātreya maṇḍrānaṁ vamśa'). The Khajurāho Inscription of V.S. 1011 is the

earliest available record to refer to this mythical origin of the family. It states that the renowned sages of pure character, viz., Marici, Atri and others, arose from the Primordial Being, the Maker of the Universe (Viśvasṛk Purāṇapurṣa). Of them Atri begat Candrātreya, a sage, who acquired great power by ceaseless austerities. Thereafter the record merely states that 'in the family of the sage Candrātreya was born Namūka', the first king of the dynasty. The Khajurāho Inscription of Y.S. 1059 and the Batesvar Stone Inscription of Y.S. 1252 also trace the origin of the family from the eponymous sage Atri, from whose eye sprang the Moon, from whom was born the sage Candrātreya. Kielhorn suggests that the form 'Candrātreya' may have been the Sanskritised


form of the term, 'Candrella' (Candra and suffix illa, meaning descended from Candra), found in the Dudahi Stone Inscription of Devalabhdhi. The colloquial terms, 'Candela' and 'Candella' used in folk literature are also noticed in some of the inscriptions, viz., the Deogadh Rock Inscription mentions 'Candella'; the Benares Grant of Laksmi-Karna, 'Candella'; the Madampur Stone Inscription of Gahamana PrthviraJadeva III9 and the Charkhari Plate of V.S. 1108, 'Candela'. Obviously all these terms indicate the association of the Moon with the origin of the family. A direct descent from the Moon is also described in the Mahoba Inscription1 and the Ajaygadh Rock Inscription of V.S. 1317. Thus mythical details about the lunar origin such as are generally found in the records of other ruling families, viz., the Kalacuris and the Yadavas of East Bengal, are not furnished in the Candella inscriptions.

The local traditions have preserved curious stories explaining the place of the Moon-God in regard to the origin of the family. The material, which is derived from these sources, is hardly of much historical value, but even in these absurd stories some points are found which may have some significance. The whole tradition as to the origin of the Candellas, as embodied in the Mahobā Khand, should be placed before scholars, so that they may be helped to form a proper estimate about the character of the legendary material available. The work has only been cursorily mentioned by other writers. It is given here in detail from the original text.

The Mahobā Khand is generally taken to be a part of the Prthvirāj Rāso of the well known Central Indian bard, Cānd Bardāi. The question of the authorship of the Mahobā Khand is a matter of controversy. Sri Shyamasundar Das, who edited the text under the caption, Parmāl Rāso, holds that it can never be a part of the Prthvirāj Rāso, and that its authorship cannot be ascribed to Cānd Bardāi. He suggests that it would not be unnatural for a Bundelkhandi poet to compose the Rāso (Mahobā Khand) on the lines of either Cānd Bardāi's story, or Jāgnīk Rāi's Alhā Rāso, or similar other works and incorporate in it the materials derived from traditions. According to Sri Das, the extant Mahobā Khand could not have been composed earlier than the 17th or 18th century of the Vikram Era, i.e., much later in point of time than the Prthvirāj Rāso of Cānd Bardāi, who was a friend and contemporary of Prthvirāj Cauhān.¹⁶

The first chapter of the Mahobā Khand relates the story of the birth of Candravarman (नर्मद-उत्पत्ति सृष्टि), who is described as the first ruler of the Gándella lineage. While describing the birth of the first prince of the Gándella clan, the author introduces the story of Hānavati, the daughter of Hāmrāj, a priest of the Gahiravārś, and her union with the Moon-God. Reference to this story has been already made by Cunningham and Dr. H. C. Ray.

The story has been rejected as a 'silly legend' by V. A. Smith. But a critical examination of the legend may reveal, in spite of its apparent absurdities, a substratum of fact. I have carefully examined the manuscript of the Mahobā Khand in the Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. It is, however, entered in the catalogue of the Library of the Society under the title, "Prthvirāj Rāso by Čand Bardāi". The only printed edition of the work has been published from the Kāśi Nāgri Pracārini Sabha under the title, 'Prārāj Rāso' (now out of print).

The story opens in the Purānic style in the august presence of Anasgapala, the Tamara king. The poet introduces the story thus - सुनन्तु अथवा जय जय कर, दूरस कथा सुनन्तु॥३७॥

(Listen now to the three dynasties, their early history is being narrated).

The three dynasties referred to by the poet are mentioned in the following order: —

First the Godas, then the Gahirawars, and after them the Candels, born of the daughter ofHanraj, the family-priest of the Gahirawars).

The main purpose of the poet is to give the history of the Candellas, who came to power by supplanting the Gahirawars. As to the Godas, who are mentioned as having ruled prior to the Gahirawars, nothing definite can be said. In another place of the text there is a reference to the Gandas associated with Mahismati. It appears that the Gandas have been referred to as Godas in the above verse. In fact the Asiatic Society Manuscript gives the reading 'Gauda' for Goda. It may be suggested that the word Goda or Gauda may have been applied to the indigenous tribes inhabiting Mahoba and its neighbourhood (Bundelkhand), who later came to be known as the Gonds. J.C. Nesfield points out on the basis of the Census Report of 1882 that the aboriginal Gond of the Central India should not be confused with the Gonds of the Gangetic valley, and the name of the former should properly be spelt as 'Gauda'.

20. M.K. (Ms.) has a variant reading — प्रथम श्रेणी गुड़ जोड़ेंगे अगला फिर से वढ़ी।

The reference to the Gahirawārs, following the Gaodas but preceding the Candellas, is curious, though it is to be found in all the versions of local traditions. A number of antiquated embankments, dry beds of lakes and tanks are ascribed to the Gahirawār rulers by local people. V. Smith recognised their antiquity and placed them in the pre-Candela period. If the Gahirawārs are to be regarded as identical with the Gahārwārs (Gāhadavālas), it is difficult to find a place for them prior to the rise of the Candellas. The official records of the Gāhadavālas mention their first ruler, Yaśovigraha, as appearing after the end of the families of the Sun and the Moon, i.e., the Gurjara-Pratiharas and the Kalacuris respectively. Thus the Gāhadavālas came to power not earlier than the first quarter of the 11th century A.D. In these records there is no information about the Gāhadavālas ruling in Mahoba or anywhere else earlier than the 9th century A.D., when the rise of the Candellas took place.

Smith in this connection refers to a Gorakhpur tradition, mentioned in Martin's Eastern India II (quoted in Beames' Elliot I, P. 124) that the Gahārwārs are descendants of the famous Rājā Nala, and they came to Kāśi from Nalapura (mod. Narwār, near Gwālior). He surmises that while migrating southwards during the period of political instability following

23. I.A. XXIII., P. 11.
the decline of the empire of Harsavardhana, some of them branched off from the main stream to settle at Mahoba. While Yasovigraha, who seems to have been a commoner, bringing distinction to his family, founded the well-known Gahadavala dynasty of Benares and Kanauj, these Gahirawars (Gahadavalas), who are supposed to have settled at Mahoba, may have owned a principality there and ruled before the rise of the Candels of the Mahoba Khand.

There are a few verses regarding the Gahirawar dynasty in the Mahoba Khand, which are quoted below:

These verses give us a genealogical account of the Gahirawars, described as connected with Kāḍī. Karanānd, the first ruler of the line, was a very upright administrator, under whom every subject was happy and contented. His son, Ranasimha, was as beautiful as Cupid; and his son Naranāth, was a valiant soldier. He was succeeded by his son, Jujasimha, and after him came Jagannatha Raya, who conquered the fort of Batnadurga. His son was Barasimha, who seized Mahismati and defeated the Gaudas. Next came his son, Indrajit, to whom the goddess Vindhyadevi appeared in person.

The dynastic history, as described above, can hardly be regarded as authentic. None of the names occurring in the list of Gahirawār kings is to be found in the records of the Gāhadavālas. Then, again, the description of the Gahirawārs as belonging to Benares (जनपद बनरा) can hardly be accepted. For the Gāhadavālas of Benares can by no means be carried back to a period earlier than the 11th century A.D., on the basis of the historical materials at our disposal. But if the Gorakhpur tradition, mentioned earlier, has any value, it may, as already suggested, indicate an earlier settlement of the Gahirawārs at Mahoba. That the Gahirawārs, mentioned by the author, were, in his opinion, the same as the Gāhadavālas, is apparent from the reference to the Kāśi region. The connection with the Gāhadavālas is not directly shown in the verses quoted above, but most probably the author means the Gāhadavālas when he refers to Kāśi in the manner he has done so in the verse. The memory of the Gāhadavālas, it appears, had not entirely faded away from the minds of the people for whom the Mahoba Khand was meant. It is not unlikely that while referring to the Gahirawārs, who were known only from ballads and songs current in Mahoba, the poet, struck by the similarity of the two names - Gahirawārs and Gahārwārs (Gāhadavālas), introduced a link between the two by connecting the former with Kāśi, and thus raised the status of the Gahirawārs, the local rulers of Mahoba, in the estimation of the people.

Now the poet takes up the third dynasty, the Candela, stated to have been given birth to by Hemavatī, the daughter of the priest of the Gahirawār rulers.
Heeraj, a man of amiable disposition, was a priest to King Indrajit Gahirwar, as evidently refers to the last named king of the Gahirwar family. The priest was blessed with the birth of a daughter, whom he named Hemavati. She was not only as beautiful as a picture but her manners also were charming. But unfortunately when she was only sixteen years old, she became a widow by the curse of Lord Indra (कृष्ण वर्ष सुना मई। सुना अभन्त बिधवा मई। --- २०१)

Then we are introduced to the queer anecdote of the union of the Moon-God and the beautiful woman, Hemavati. It was a sultry summer night. Hemavati felt very uneasy and went out to have a bath. While she was taking her bath, the Moon-God, the friend of Kumuda flowers, appeared on the sky. Seeing this exquisitely beautiful lady in that position, the Moon-God felt exceedingly delighted. He came down on the earth near her and embraced her passionately. The incident is described in further details in verses 91-94. The God sported with Hemavati for the whole night, but the latter was not aware of his identity. (नारि आय नार्की वदितेन नार्मि। ग्यांजन मिक नार्क न जानिम॥२०२) Now when he was preparing to return to the skies, his own region, Hemavati ran after him and caught hold of him by his hands. Further she threatened to curse him for having spoilt her life.

26. Variant in M.K. (Ms.)
27. Variant in M.K. (Ms.)
At this the Moon-God turned round and said, - 'You need not curse me, rather be happy to note that your son will be a King. He will be a vigorous ruler enjoying the whole world, and from him will spring a thousand branches'. Now, of course, she had to compose herself and in consideration of the assurance given by the Moon-God, she gave up the idea of cursing him. But what tormented her most was the fear of social degradation that would result from this union, as she was a widow. So she prayed to the Moon-God, - 'How shall my dishonour be effaced? I am a poor widow without a lord or husband though I may possess a youthful body."

'I fear not' replied Candrama, 'your son will be born on the bank of the Karnavati river (modern the Ken), and he will be a valiant hero. Then go to Khajurapura (modern Khajuraho or Khajraho), offer gifts and perform sacrifices. He will reign in Mahobā with extensive possessions acquired by defeating other monarchs through the efforts of his four-fold army. He will possess a philosopher's stone, which will turn iron into gold. He will build numerous temples and excavate lakes and tanks. He will also build a fortress at the holy Kāliñjar'.

But all these promises of glory waiting for the son could not remove Hemavati's apprehensions of social stigma in this world and future sufferings in the next. So in utter
agony she cried out, 'You would make my son a king no doubt, but I shall be made to suffer in Hell'.

Then the Moon-God prescribed some expiatory rites for her.

Then comes the section describing how the prophecy came true.

After leaving Kāśi Hemavati came to Kāliṇjar and passed four months there taking purificatory baths and offering sacrifices for the birth of a son. From Kāliṇjar she went to a village and stayed there at the house of the village headman, where she gave birth to a son. The new-born child, Čandravarman by name, was like another moon. He was born at dawn on Monday, the 11th day of the waxing moon in the month of Mādhava (Vaiśākha), when joyous notes were sounded and auspicious ceremonies were performed by the women of the celestial abode.
The Moon-God appeared again and repeated his prophecy but warned her that the dynasty founded by her son would continue to rule only as long as its rulers retained the surname 'Varman'. Brhaspati, the preceptor of the gods, came and wrote the horoscope of the child (नामपत्र) and the Moon-God held a festival (महोत्सव) there in the presence of a large gathering.

The next incident refers to the time when Gandravarman was sixteen years old. He was so powerful and courageous that he killed a tiger with a piece of stone only, and a lion, twelve cubits long, by means of a missile of the type of a short staff. 

At the news of this achievement of her son, Hsnavati felt exceedingly glad and she recited a hymn to the Moon-God, and forthwith he appeared. 

The Moon-God kissed his son and called him a ruler among men. He brought with him a touchstone, which he now places at the disposal of Gandravarman. 

Almost all the prominent gods made their appearance at Khajuraho to bless Gandravarman on the occasion of his consecration. The God of Wealth came with all his forces and presented them to Gandravarman. He was also taught polity by the three gods, viz., Kubera.
the Dhanapati, Brahaspati, the preceptor of gods, and the Moon-God himself. (सन्ताने राजा ते सं प्रभापति गुरु दीपानाथ।)

The next verse relates to the marriage of Candravarman when we find the Moon-God once again warning him that the surname 'varman' should never be given up (कृपारण नरिचार।)

Next, there is a description of the achievements of King Candravarman rendered possible mainly by his acquisition of wealth through the touchstone, presented to him by the Moon-God. The occupation of Kāliñjār was his first achievement.

After taking Kāliñjār he took bath and worshipped the God Nilakantha and thereafter on an auspicious day offered gifts worth a hundred crore of gold coins to Brahmins and ascetics. Then he devoted himself to the task of extending his possessions.

He set out on an expedition accompanied by no less than thirty thousand soldiers, and in course of only five praharas he occupied two janapadas. The achievement of the Cāndel king frightened the Gahirāwars, who fled away leaving their own dominion of Kāl, which also came under the occupation of Candravarman.

Candravarman is also stated to have built a fort at Kāliñjār (कृतं सन्तुर्जम्य खलं सवसत्तम ।)

The sanctity of Kāliñjār as a holy place is stressed in the following verse:

κृतं सन्तुर्जम्य खलं सवसत्तम ।

कृतं सन्तुर्जम्य खलं सवसत्तम ।
A bath at Kalinjar will earn more religious merit than a visit to the heavenly region.

From Kalinjar the king accompanied by his queen came to Khajuraho and sat at the feet of his mother, Hemavati. The mother described to the son the agony that she had to endure when most uncharitable references were made to her past life by all sorts of people.

So she earnestly requested her son to perform the Bhandya Yajña as prescribed by the Moon-God and thus relieve her of this mental torture.

She further directed him to construct 85 temples with a lake and a garden attached to each and to give sufficient gifts and offerings to brahmans.

Candravarman carried out the directions of his mother and performed the sacrifice with all the attendant rites and ceremonies. For the construction work, however, he invoked the aid of the Divine Builder, Viśvakarman, who built 85 temples in course of only four hours.

At the conclusion of the ceremony all sins of Hemavati were washed away, and free from all blemishes, she went directly to Heaven.
After having faithfully performed the sacrifice, Candravarman set himself to the task of building up his new capital at Mahoba.

This, then, is the story, in brief, about the origin of the Candella dynasty, as preserved in the Mahoba Khand, which, however, finds little corroboration from the epigraphic records of the time of the Candella rule. The only point of agreement between these traditions and the inscriptional documents is the theory of the descent from the Moon-God. But the inscriptions trace the lineage in the conventional way, as has already been mentioned, either directly from the Moon, or from Atri, the progenitor of the lunar race of Kshatriyas. This evidence from their own records, coupled with the inclusion of the Candellas in the list of 36 Rajput families of noble rank by Cand Bardai (कंड बर्दाई), have led G.V. Vaidya to regard the Candellas as of high birth and of Aryan origin.

But Smith and a few other scholars reject the theory attributing a high pedigree to the Candellas. According to them the attempt of the Candellas to trace their ancestry from Candra is only for the purpose of hiding the real origin,
which was probably from such aboriginal tribes as the Bhars and the Gonds.  

In analysing the story of the Mahobā Khand, however, it appears, that although the origin of the family is connected with the Moon-God, the irregular nature of the association did constantly trouble the poet as well as his listeners. This is evident from the details given in the story as well as the enquiry made by the Tomara king, before whom the story was narrated. The King asks, 'How is it that a Kṣatriya caste was born of a Brāhma? (कै कै भाषा कोंडी अन्य सिंह (कै)?) A direct answer to this question is evaded by the poet, who only gives the story by way of an explanation. The story, as narrated, reveals the following irregularities regarding the origin of Candravarman and his dynasty:

(i) The origin of a Kṣatriya dynasty from a Brahmin woman 

(ii) Her widowhood when the intercourse takes place, which is prohibited in the Śastras, and, 

(iii) The character of the union requiring Candravarman to be treated as अधर्मस नृत्य !

We may next analyse the incredible features included in the story. 

(i) Apart from the connection with the Moon-God, other divine or semi-divine personalities are associated with Candravarman in different periods of his career, viz., (a) Brhaspati writing his horoscope, (b) Celestial women performing auspicious rites at the time of his birth, marriage, consecration, etc., (c) Brhaspati, Kubera and Candra teaching him polity.

32. I.A. XXXVII., P. 137; E.H.I., P. 379.
(ii) The exhibition of a rather unusual feat of strength and courage in killing a tiger and a lion merely with stones and missiles. Reference may in this connection be made to similar incidents in the lives of Sher Shah and Babur.

(iii) The gift of a touchstone by the Moon-God and procurement of immeasurable wealth, thereby making it possible for Candravarman to organise a strong four-fold army and occupy Kāliṇjar and other adjacent tracts by defeating their rulers.34

(iv) Building of temples, constructing lakes and gardens by the divine architect, Viśvakarman, at Khajurāho in course of only four hours.

Instances of Brahmins becoming Kṣatriyas (i.e., Brahma-Kṣatriyas) on assumption of royal power were not unknown. The case of the Gandallas was evidently not similar to them. Otherwise the poet would not have experienced so much difficulty in giving a direct answer to the question of the Tomara king.

Where the origin of a dynasty is not pure from the orthodox point of view, but still it has to be glorified, stories are manufactured in which some irregular features can be detected from which alone in the absence of any other internal evidence, an impure origin can be inferred. For

example, Naraka, the progenitor of the earliest of the Kāmarupa kings, is stated to have been born of the Earth Goddess as a result of an intercourse with Viṣṇu in His Boar incarnation. But it was an irregular intercourse as the Earth Goddess was 'unclean' at the time.

On the whole, the Mahoba Khond, though unacceptable, gives an idea as to how legends were connected and mythical elements introduced to explain the origin and early history of a ruling dynasty, when real facts about it have already been forgotten. It cannot be treated as totally useless in so far as it agrees with the materials found from inscriptions and other sources, showing the continuity of a tradition that was not completely lost, even after some centuries.

The Candellas became a considerable power and made useful contribution to the greatness of Mahoba. The existence of songs and ballads about them which the author of the Mahoba Kand must have utilised show that they were remembered for many centuries. Even in their own time the Candellas had been given a lunar origin. The aryisation of an indigenous tribe must have been completed when they began to rule.