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Communal constitution of the Chauhans of Sambalpur

Ms.Rama Biswas
Assistant Teacher
Gaighata high school
North 24 parganas
West Bengal
India

Abstract

In brief it is mainly a discussion on the tribal and non-tribal structure of society of the state of Sambalpur. Within this social hierarchy, the Chauhans stood first, followed by various tribal groups like the Binjhals, Kondh, and Sahara etc. The Chauhans maintained a balance of relationship within their tribal population. They created all possible conveniences to attract people of the higher social groups from outside to settle in their kingdom. To arrive at a definite historical conclusion as to how the social structure was designed by the Chauhans of Sambalpur, the author of the article consulted the only contemporary as well as authentic Sanskrit courtly chronicle of sixteenth century, 'KosalanandaKavyam', the eighteenth century authentic Lariya courtly chronicle 'Jaya Chandrika'and other vernacular sources of seventeenth century such as 'Sasisena Kavya', 'Sambala Mansa'. Nineteenth century British accounts are used adequately as well. This paper is an attempt at providing certain observations on the social structure of western Orissa under the Chauhans of Sambalpur during sixteenth to eighteenth century.

In the beginning of the fourteenth century the last Chauhans ruler of Garh Sambar, Visala Deva was killed in a battle by a Yavana and his queen, Jayanti Devi, who was pregnant and belonged to the princely Rajput Chauhans clan of Mainpuri in Uttar Pradesh, fled with some followers to Patnagarh in western Orissa. She sought asylum with the Bariha, a Binjhal tribal headman of Ramod village located at present in the Tureikela block of Bolangir district of western Orissa, where she gave birth to a baby boy who was named Ramai Deva (*DvijaścakārāsyaŚiśorabhikhyāmarthānvitāṃ Rāma Iti Prasanaḥ*) [Das, S.P., 1962: 190]. The child was adopted by a local

Brahman fief holder or Mullick named Chakradhara Panigrahi (*Tuma Pānigrāhi Mama Dharmatāta*) [Das, S.P.1962: 190]. Ramai Deva was handsome, heroic, prudent and popular (*BabrudheḥnudinaṃDīpyāDvijāgāre Samātrukaḥ, HabyabāḍabaKarmānauSāmidhenyā Hutāhuti*) [Sahu, J.K. Sahu and Chopdar, D., 2000:12]. Once he killed a ferocious tiger with his axe (*DurdābaDabanirbheduŚārduloḥti Madaḥśṛitān . . . Dhruta Carmāsinā Tena Bhinna Marmā Prakaṃpitaḥ*) and relieved the terror-stricken people who out of gratitude raised him to the throne, which was lying vacant while administration was being taken care of by eight ministers [Sahu, J.K. Sahu and Chopdar, D., 2000:12-14]. The Ganga king Bhanu Deva III of Orissa was pleased with Ramai Deva for his success and as a reward gave him in marriage a Ganga princess called Bhanumati (*GuṇaiyrutāBhānumateti Yoṣitaiḥ*) who was a daughter of the king's brother Samara Singha (*BidhāyaPurbaṃSamaraṃPadaṃPuraḥ...Sa Rājarājeśvara Bāraṇe Śvaro Bhabantamāheti Sumaṅgaloṭṭaram, GuṇānitāBhātṛusutā Mahejitā*) [Sahu, J.K. Sahu and Chopdar, D., 2000:71-75]. After Ramai Deva there were eight kings who ruled over Patnagarh up to the middle of the sixteenth century. They were, Mahalingadeva, Vaijaladeva, Vatsarajadeva, Bhojarajadeva, Pratapamalladeva, Vikramadityadeva, Vaijaladeva II, and Hiradharadeva [Sahu, J. K. Sahu and Chopdar, D., 2000:192-193]. In the first half of the sixteenth centuries the Gajapati king Prataprudra Deva died and an internal struggle started between his son and his minister for the royal crown of Utkala. Thus the Gajapati of coastal Orissa had no time to interfere in the political affair of the Chauhans of Patnagarh although it was considered as part of their territories. Taking advantage of that Narasingha Deva (1540-1547) the son of Hiradhara Deva declared independence with the help of his brother Balarama Deva (*BidhāyaYupaṃNarasiṅghamagrajaṃSuputrapautraṃNṛupamāṭṭapaṭunaṃ, CakāraBirjyoṇaJaśaḥsarobaraṃMahimahendraḥ Sumanomanoharaṃ*) [Das, S.P., 1962:217]. In the middle of the sixteenth century the kingdom of Sambalpur was established by Balarama Deva the elder brother of King Narasingha Deva of Patnagarh on the bank of river Mahanadi. There was no central authority, which ruled over Sambalpur, and it was under the control of some of the tribal people who acknowledged the suzerainty of the Barman of Boudh. There is a legend regarding the establishment of the Sambalpur kingdom by Balarama Deva. During the month of *Sravana* (rainy season) the chief queen of Narasingha Deva was in labour. The chief maid, who was in charge of the queen's care, was staying on the other side of the river Mayabati and nobody was willing to cross the flooded river to call her for the service of the queen. Under such a circumstance, her brother-in-law Balarama Deva personally crossed the river and brought the maid back to the service of the queen. The queen gave birth to a son who was named Hamir Deva. Impressed with the bravery of his younger brother Balarama Deva, King Narasingha Deva offered the Sambalpur province to Balarama Deva as a reward for his service [Mallik Ramachandra, 1985: 106-107]. Balarama Deva got the Huma area, which was situated in between the rivers Mahanadi, Anga and Suktel and established his capital at first at Bargarh on the bank of the river Zira and later shifted to Sambalpur, which was situated, on the bank of the river Mahanadi.The kingdom of Sambalpur was mostly inhabited by different tribal groups such as the Savaras, Munda, Jhara, Gonds, Binjhals, Kondh, Bhuiya, Kuda, Kurmi, Kishan and Oraon. In order to gain the support of the tribal groups, the Chauhans granted them some space in religious as well as political spheres [Mazumdar, B.C., 1925: 22]. Balarama Deva started granting lands to Brahmins and temples,"which contributed to changing the agrarian situation in the state and also the formation of a hierarchical social order and Brahmanisation or Hindunisation of the society" [Pasayat, C., 2007: 47-48]. An assimilation of tribal and non-tribal population in the social hierarchy system could be seen throughout the Chauhans rule. As the Chauhans rulers came to represent the minority group within a tribal dominated society within their own kingdom, they created all possible arrangements to attract people of higher social groups from outside to settle down in their kingdom. Ajita Sing (1725-1766) invited Brahmans from Puri and housed them in a new settlement known as Ajitpur Sasana [Das Swapneswar, 1923: 43]. In the social hierarchy the Chauhans stood first, followed by various tribal groups like the Binjhals, Kondh, and Sahara etc. Sometimes those groups claimed themselves to be like the Rajputs with status of a Kshatriyas. For instance, the Binjhals Zamindar of Borasambar in his work *Nrusingha Mahatma* claimed his ancestor originated from the Rajput race [Mazumdar, B.C.,

1911:25]. The ruling Gonds and Binjhals chief of Sambalpur were also elevated to the rank of Kshatriyas by the Chauhans ruler who bestows them with titles like *Sing*, *Sai* and *Singh Barihas*. The Brahmans enjoyed an honorable position in the society and one of the principal duties of the kings was to protect them [Mishra, Lingaraja, 1945: Canto-XVII, Verse-8]. The Vaishya and Sudra constituted the other two sections of the society. Apart from these there were thirty-six major castes found in the Chauhans territory. Sometimes they created a new social group within the existing castes by providing space in religious as well as administrative systems [Das, A., 1963: 258]. Appointment of one lower caste group as Thanapati (priest of Saivist shrines) throughout their territory was one such arrangement. Similarly, the Sahara caste was generally considered to be untouchables in the social hierarchy of Sambalpur but a person from this caste was appointed main priest of Goddess Samalaiswari. In the later period of the Chauhans rule another caste known as Kulta mainly engaged in cultivation was also assimilated into the social hierarchy.

The social structure of western Orissa under the Chauhans was similar to that of the old varna based system with a large proportion of tribal population now also being assimilated into the four fold divisions of Hindu society in Orissa. But the only difference was, within a fully-fledged tribal society a non-tribal society had also been continued. Thus, the kingdom of the Chauhans represented two kinds of society, the tribal and non-tribal. Within those divisions one could find different subordinate groups. The tribal society was represented by the Gonds, Binjhals, Bhuiya, Kondh, Karwar, Kishan, Kols, Sahara, Kharias and Ganda who comprised bulk of the Chauhans population. Among those the Binjhals, Gonds, Savaras, Kondh and Bhuiya were the five dominant tribal groups extensively spread over five different geographical zones in the Chauhans kingdom of Sambalpur. The Binjhals, Gonds and Sahara were mainly dominated across the border of the Chauhans territories adjacent to Chhattisgarh in the vicinity of Patnagarh. The Kondh and the Bhuiya were inhabitants of the northern and western part of Chauhans territory adjacent to the feudatory states of Boudh and Bamara respectively. The non-tribal society was represented by the four Varnas. Seventeenth century monograph *Chikitsa Manjari* of Gopinatha Sarangai the court physician of Chhatra Sai (1691-1725) reveals that Sambalpur was inhabited by four principal castes: Brahman, Kshatriyas, Vaishya and Sudra (*BrāhmaṇaĀdi Kari Cāribarṇa Se Nagre BāsaKarichanti Puṇa*) [Das, S.P. 1962: 264]. The contemporary literature *Kosalananda Kavyam* and *Jay Chandrika* throw light on the social condition of the Chauhans rule. Similarly the English accounts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries give interesting historical background of the tribal society, which grew parallel with the non-tribal one.

Gonds

The Gonds and Binjhals were the ruling castes of the Sambalpur tract. They represented a number of Zamindaris under the Chauhans. They migrated from the highlands of central India and settled down in the hilly tracts of the western Orissa [Mazumdar, B.C., 1911:24]. According to folk tradition they at first established their hold over Barapahar or the mounting range comprising 12 mountains (*Sātapurāku Dhari, BārapāhāḍaGheri*) near Sambalpur. They had also established a permanent site for their tutelary deity Linga on top of the Barapahar range (*SātapurāraSabāṬipireLiṅgaUyāṅgadaGiri*) [Das, S.P., 1962: 8]. In the social hierarchy the Gonds were divided into two groups. The 'Raja Gonds' formed the aristocracy and the 'Dhur or dust Gonds' represented the lower class [Das, S. P., 1962: 75]. The Raja Gonds called themselves as the 'sons of the soil' of the Chauhans kingdom and wore a sacred thread like that worn by Brahman as they believed that the Brahman had stolen their sacred thread [Das, Swapneswar, 1923: 30]. The Gonds were generally agriculturists but they served as Zamindars under the Chauhans. Out of eighteen feudatory chiefs of the Chauhan ten feudatory chiefs were represented by the Gonds. The Gonds Zamindars of Raigarh and Sarangarh helped Baliara Sing (1617-1657) in carving out the vast dominion of eighteen garhs [Das, A., 1963: 153].

Binjhals

Among the various indigenous tribes, Binjhals represented bulk of the Chauhans population. Their ancestral home was the Vindhaya range and in due course of time they settled down at the foothills of Gondhmeardhun (Borasambar) and Rabaeedinga (Khurriar) in the northern and northwestern boundaries of the Chauhans territories respectively [Impey, H.B., 1958: 12]. They claimed to be the descendents of Rajput. Rajendra Singh Bariha, the Binjhal Zamindar and author of the *Nrusingha Mahatmya* claimed the Rajput origin of his tribes and it has been stated that: Four heroic youths of the forest region who possessed wonderful magical powers, married Savara-Lohar girls, and became the progenitors of the Binjhals; and the descendants of the eldest of them are the ancestors of the Zamindar family of Borasambar [Mazumdar, B.C. 1911: 25]. They traced their ancestry to twelve brother's sons of the Goddess Vindhyabasini who were ace archers. According to another tradition: One day when they were in pursuit of a wild bear in the forest, they let off their arrows which flew to the door of the Lord Jagannath at Puri and stuck in it. Nobody was able to pull them from the door. At length the brothers arrived and drew them forth quite easily with their hands. The king was very much pleased with them and granted some estates in their favors [Russel, R.V. Russell and Lal, Hira, 1916, Vol.II: 30]. They were generally cultivators and skilful in 'dala' (reclaimers of jungle) cultivation [Malley, L.S.S. O., 2007: 76]. They were often proprietors of villages. The Chauhans appointed them as the Zamindars of Borasambar.

Sahara

They were known as Souras, Saoras and Savaras and have been identified with the Suari of Pliny and the Sabarai of Ptolemy. They were divided into two sub castes called 'Oriya' and 'Lariya' [Malley, L.S.S. O., 2007: 73]. They identified themselves as the descendents of mythological figure Jara and associated themselves with the Jagannatha cult. According to a popular tradition, after the death of lord Krishna, Jara and Arjuna burnt the dead body but the nucleus of the lord could not be burnt and was floated in the sea and in due course of time it took shelter inside the idol of Jagannatha [Sahu, K.C., 1971: 55]. According to another story: Their ancestor was an old Bhil hermit called Sawar, who lived in Karod, two miles from Seorinarayan. The god Jagannath had at this time appeared in Seorinarayan and the old Sawar used to worship him. The king of Orissa had built the great temple at Puri and wished to install Jagannath in it, and he sent a Brahman to fetch him from Seorinarayan, but nobody knew where he was except the old hermit Sawar. The Brahman besought him in vain to be allowed to see the god and even went so far as to marry his daughter, and finally the old man consented to take him blindfold to the place. The Brahman, however, tied some mustard seeds in a corner of his cloth and made a hole in it so that they dropped out one by one on the way. After some time they grew up and served to guide him to the spot. The Brahman then went to Seorinarayan alone and begged the god to go to Puri. Jagannath consented, and assuming the form of a log of wood and floated down the Mahanadi to Puri, where he was taken out and placed in the temple. A carpenter agreed to carve the god's image out of the log of wood on condition that the temple should be shut up for six months while the work was going on. But some curious people opened the door before the time and the work could not proceed, and thus the image of the god is only half carved out of the wood up to the present day. As a consolation to the old man the God ordained that the place should bear the hermit's name before his own as Seorinarayan [Russel, R.V. and Lal, Hira, 1916,Vol. IV:04]. Seorinarayan has been located in the western part of Orissa, somewhere near Sonpur [Stietencron, H. V., 1986: 65]. Similarly, some of the settlements of the Savars were found on the banks of the river Mahanadi. The main occupations of the community were to collect diamond and gold from Mahanadi's riverbed and officiate as village priests. In due course of time they were assigned as the chief priests of the village deity in the Chauhans territories. It was Balarama Deva who appointed them as chief priests of goddess Samalaiswari in Sambalpur.

Kondh

They were largely inhabitants of the feudatory state of Boudh. A small proportion of Kondh was found in the Khariar Zamindari of Sambalpur. There was no strict endogamy within the Kondh tribes and they were divided into two groups, the Kutia Konds and the plain dwelling Konds. Their presence was almost necessary in the coronation ceremony of Kalahandi, the feudatory state of the Chauhans where: It was the custom until recently for the Raja of Kalahandi to sit in the lap of a Kond on his accession while he received the oaths of fealty. The man who held the Raja was the eldest member of a particular family, residing in the village of Gausi Patna, and had the title of Patnaji. The coronation of the Raja took place in this village to which all the chiefs repaired; the Patnaji would be seated on a large rock, richly dressed, with a cloth over his knee on which the Raja sat. The Diwan or the minister then tied the turban of state on the Raja's head, while all the other chiefs present held the end of the cloth. The Rajas was also accustomed to marry a Kond girl as one of his wives, though latterly he did not allow her to live in the palace [Russell, R.V. and Lal, Hira, 1916, Vol.III: 465].

Bhuiya

The Bhuiya tribe was mainly found in the feudatory state of Bamara. They were divided into twelve sects: Thakur, or the clan of royal blood; Saont, from Samanta, a viceroy; Padhan, a village headman; Naik, a military leader; Kalo, a wizard or priest; Dehri, also a priest; Chatria, one who carried the royal umbrella; Sahu, a moneylender; Majhi, a headman; Behra, manager of the household; Amata, counselor; and Dandsena, a police official [Russell, R.V. and Lal Hira, 1916, Vol. II: 316]. According to Colonel Dalton: They are a privileged class, holding as hereditaments the principal offices of the State, and are organized as a body of militia. The chiefs have no right to exercise any authority till they have received the *tilak* or token of investiture from their powerful Bhuiya vassals [Dalton, C., 1872: 140]. Members of the tribes were the household servants of the king of Bamara. They claimed that the first king of Bamara was a scion of Patnagarh who was stolen from the royal house and appointed as the king of Bamara by their ancestor [Russell, R.V. and Lal, Hira, 1916, Vol. III: 307].

Brahman

Although this community represented small groups in the kingdom of Sambalpur yet it played a dominant role in the social set up. A few Brahman settlements were found in the western part of Orissa before the advent of the Chauhans. That settlement dweller was popularly known as Jharua or forest dweller and was being granted patronage by the predecessor of the Chauhans. The Chauhans made all possible attempts for the larger settlement of the Brahmans in their territories. They encouraged those groups who migrated from the coastal part of Orissa as well as from Chhattisgarh to settle down in the kingdom of Sambalpur. It was Ramai Deva, the first Chauhans ruler of Patnagarh who brought Brahman from Jajpur in the coastal part of Orissa to settle down in his capital [Das, S.P., 1962:199]. Similarly, during the time of Balabhadra Deva (1561-1591) a group of Brahman called Lariya migrated from Chhattisgarh and settled down in Sambalpur. In due course of time these groups popularly came to be known as Utkala or Oriya Brahmans. Further, they were sub divided into a number of groups according to their occupation, service to the kingdom and the position they held in the society namely, Aranayaka, Raghunathia, Bhimgira, Halua, Sarua etc. Among those sub divided sects the Jharua or Aranayaka were looked down upon by the Utkala or Oriya and generally avoided maintain any social relationship. They claimed that they were the earliest inhabitants of the Sambalpur tract whereas the Utkala or Oriya considered Jharua as pseudo-Brahman created from the men of the jungle. The presence of Utkala Brahmans were less than the Jharua one, however, they had considerable influence over the Chauhans monarchs and were predominately found in the vicinity of Sambalpur. The Chauhans did not

distinguish both these groups with regards to patronage. They considered the Aranayaka Brahman to be the head of religious activities and the Utkala as head of the village activities (*Aranya BrāhmaṇaKularaNetā, HumāMahādebaMandireHoiṇa Hotā, OḍiyāBrāhmaṇa . . . Gāuliya hoi Achanti rahi*) [Das, Swapneswar, 1923: 39].

Kshatriyas

In the kingdom of Sambalpur the ruling house was belonged to the Kshatriyas community. In due course of time some of the tribal groups were upgraded into the Kshatriyas status by the Chauhans. They granted the title of *Singh Deo* and *Singh Baboo* to some of the tribal communities who were holding different Zamindaris in the kingdom of Sambalpur. The ruling Gond and Binjhal chiefs were upgraded into the Kshatriyas status. The Binjhal chief of Borasambar was given the title of 'Bariha' by the Chauhans and one of their rulers in his literary work claimed the status of a Rajput. Similarly, the Gond chiefs also claimed themselves to be worthy of Kshatriyas status.

Vaishya and Sudra

Among the thirty-six castes in the kingdom of Sambalpur the Kulta, Dumal and Agriha came under the Vaishya community who immigrated from different parts of Orissa and Chhattisgarh (*Baseṃ Sahara ChatiśoJāti, Mahā Ramya Soṃbhābahuṃ Bhāti*) [Das, S.P., 1962: 266]. The Kultas were major agriculturists group who settled down in different parts of the Chauhans territories. According to Hamid, "The Kulta remains the steady and industrious cultivator of the district and really the backbone of the cultivating class" [Senapati, N., 1971:114]. There is a legend regarding their origin: Their ancestors were employed as water-bearers in the royal house hold of Rama, and having accompanied him in his exile, were permitted to settle in the Oriya country at the request of the Raghunathia Brahmans, who wanted cultivators to till the soil . . . Rama, when wandering in the forests of Sambalpur, met three brothers and asked them to draw water called Sudh (well- mannered). The second made a cup of leaves and drew water from a well with a rope . . . the third brought water only in a hollow gourd and was named Kulta from *ku-rita*, ill mannered . . . when Rama felt thirsty, and seeing a Kol carrying water in a gourd, asked him to give it to him. Being conscious of his low position, the Kol was reluctant to do so. Thereupon Rama told the Kol to pour the water in a hole on a stone, and then drank it. It so happened that his wife Sita threw away a half-eaten fruit, which turned into a girl; and this girl Rama bestowed on the Kol as a mark of his gratitude for giving him the water. Their issue was therefore called Kolitha from Kol and *litha* (half-eaten) [Russell, R.V. and Lal, Hira, 1916,Vol.III: 537-538]. The Kulta of Sambalpur claimed that their ancestor migrated from Boudh. According to a tradition, the king of Boudh gave one family of Dumal and four families of Kulta to the king of Patnagarh during the marriage of his daughter. When there was political instability in Patnagarh in the mid-seventeenth century they migrated first to Sonpur and latter to Sambalpur. According to local tradition: There was a *Gauntia* (village head-man) of Kulta caste in Patnagarh during the reign of Rai Singh. The *Gaunita* had two sons named Kubera Sahu and Amara Sahu and a most beautiful daughter. An influential noble of the royal family of Patnagarh wanted the hands of his enchanted daughter. But the beauty and her family did not accept this proposal. Apprehending trouble, on night the*Gauntia* left the territory of Patnagarh with his family and belongings loaded in about one hundred carts. About a thousand cows accompanied the party. They marched relentlessly throughout the whole night. They crossed the river *Ang/Ong* early next morning and reached the territory of Sambalpur Rajya. Standing on the north bank of the river *Ang* on the soil of the then Sambalpur *Rajya*, the *Guantia* heaved a sigh of relief. Pointing his right hand towards the rising sun, he took an oath that in future he or his descendants would never cross the river *Ang*. There after they proceeded further north. They passed through Barpali and crossed the river *Jira* on the third day of their journey. They spend the night on the northern bank of the river. At night, the *Gauntia*had a strange dream. A female deity appeared and told him not to proceed further. She told the *Gauntia* to settle there with the land as far as his cows and bullocks were then taking rest. Since the limit of

this settlement was determined by the presence of his cows, it was popularly called Gai-Sima where by Gai means cow and Sima refers to boundary [Pasayat, C., 2007: 88-89]. It was Ajita Sing (1725-1767) who built a Siva temple at Gaisima and donated land to them.

Agharia

They belonged to the second cultivator group who migrated from Patnagarh and settled down in Sambalpur during the reign of Madhukara Sai (1591-1617). Their forefathers came from north India and settled down in Patnagarh. According to a family tradition: Their forefathers were Rajputs who lived near Agra. They were accustomed to salute the king of Delhi with one hand only and without bending the head. The king after suffering this for a long time determined to punish them for their contumacy, and summoned all the Agharias to appear before him. At the door through which they were to pass to his presence he fixed a sword at the height of a man's neck. The haughty Agharias came to the door, holding their heads high and not seeing the sword, and as a natural consequence they were all decapitated as they passed through. But there was one Agharia who had heard about the fixing of the sword and who thought it better to stay at home, saying that he had some ceremony to perform. When the king heard that there was one Agharia who had not passed through the door, he sent again, commanding him to come. The Agharia did not wish to go but felt it impossible to decline. He therefore sent for a Chamar of his village and besought him to go instead, saying that he would become a Rajput in his death and that he would ever be held in remembrance by the Agharia's descendants. The Chamar consented to sacrifice himself for his master, and going before the king was beheaded at the door. But the Agharia fled south, taking his whole village with him, and came to Chhattisgarh, where each of the families in the village found a clan of the Agharia caste. And in memory of this, whenever an Agharia makes a libation to his ancestors, he first pours a little water on the ground in honour of the dead Chamar . . . three brothers of different families escaped and first went to Orissa, where they asked the Gajpati king to employ them as soldiers. The king caused two sheaths of swords to be placed before them, and telling them that one contained a sword and the other a bullock-goad, asked them to select one and by their choice to determine whether they would be soldiers or husbandmen. From one sheath a haft of gold projected and from the other one of silver. The Agharias pulled out the golden haft and found that they had chosen the goad. Condemned, as they considered, driving the plough, the Agharias took off their sacred threads, which they could no longer wear, and gave them to the youngest member of the caste, saying that he should keep them and be their Bhat, and they would support him with contributions of a tenth of the produce of their fields. He asserted, and his descendants are the genealogists of the Agharias and are termed Dashanshi [Russell, R.V. and Lal, Hira, 1916,Vol. II: 9]. In due course of time they settled down in the village of Laida in the beginning and later on spread across all the Chauhan territories of Raigarh, Sarangarh, Gangapur, and Bamanda. They were broadly divided into two groups, the Bada or superior Agharia and the Chhote, Sarolia or Sarwaria, the inferior or mixed Agharias. In totality they represented 84 exogamous sections, of which 60 bear the title of Patel, 18 that of Naik, and 6 of Chaudhri [Russell, R.V. and Lal, Hira, 1916,Vol. II: 10].

Dumal

The third agriculturist class was Dumal who like the other two communities migrated to the kingdom of the Chauhans. They mainly settled down in the feudatory state of Sonpur. It was the queen of Raj Singh the princess of Khimdi who brought the community to Sonpur along with their tutelary deity Khambeswari [Mazumdar, B.C., 1911: 117]. They claimed that they were originally from Odsingha situated in the feudatory state of Athmallik and in due course of time they migrated to Boudh. According to their family tradition they had come out from *Dimba* (egg) [Das, S. P., 1962: 13]. Like the other castes the Dumal did not have any sub division but had a complicated system of exogamy. These

were, the 'got or sept', the 'barga' or family title and the 'mitti' or earth from which they sprang, that was, the name of the original village of the clan [Russell, R.V. and Lal, Hira, 1916, Vol. II: 531].

Mali

Thanapati or Mali, the non-agriculturist caste represented the Vaishya community and were mainly responsible for the day-to-day religious affairs of the Saivite temple. They served as a priest of Siva as well as Samalaiswari temples. They associated their origin to God Mahadeva. According to their tradition: On one occasion a Rajput prince from Jaipur made a pilgrimage to the temple of Jagannath at Puri, and on his return stopped at the celebrated temple of Mahadeo at Huma near Sambalpur. Mahadeo appeared before the prince and asked him to become his priest; the Rajput asked to be excused as he was old, but Mahadeo promised him three sons, which he duly obtained and in gratitude dedicated them to the service of the god [Russell, R.V. and Lal, Hira, 1916, Vol. III: 17]. They were sub divided into two groups *Gandhmalis* or village priests, more or less in the position of village menials and below the cultivating caste and the*Pujaris* or priests of Mahadeo's temples and the *Bandhadias* or those who worship him on the banks of tanks, and the *Mundjhulas* or devotees of goddess Samalaiswari in Sambalpur.

Conclusion

The Chauhans were more open to accumulate different group into the social system of the kingdom of Sambalpur. In fact an assimilation of tribal and non-tribal population in the social hierarchy was seen throughout the Chauhans rule. Side by side a fusion of tribal and non-tribal culture took place in the Chauhans period. The non-tribal populace worshiped the tribal gods like Lingo and Burha Deo of the Gonds. Tribal goddesses like Samalaiswari, Khambeswari and Mauli were accepted as the tutelary deities by the Chauhans king. The tribal people also received fair treatment in the political sphere by the Chauhans king. Even though before the Chauhans some of the Brahman settlements were found in Sambalpur but the Chauhans made all possible attempts to encourage large numbers of Brahmans to settle down in different part of their territories. There was no strict provision for division of profession according to the norms of the four-fold division of society. In fact different castes and communities were free to adopt any profession under the Chauhans.

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