CHAPTER-II

The Chauhan Administration
From the 14th century A.D Sambalpur came under the Chauhan ruler of Patna who was the head of a cluster of eighteen states known as Atharagarjat. We know from all available sources and evidences that Ramai Deva was the founder of the Chauhan rule in Patna. The Orissan Chauhans claimed themselves to be from ‘Mainpuri’ as well as Garh-Sambhari (in Rajasthan) because of the fact that they regarded themselves as the descendants of the Chauhan ruling family of Mainpuri whose ancestors were Chauhans of Garh-Sambhar related to famous Prithviraj III. In course of time the Chauhans extended their influence over the surrounding territories including Sambalpur and the adjacent States.

In the middle of the 16th century, Narasingha Deva, the Chauhan ruler of Patna, ceded to his brother Balaram Deva the territory of Sambalpur where the latter built a kingdom, independent of Patna. Balaram Deva was a reputed warrior and soon consolidated the Chauhan rule in the Sambalpur region and after the death of his brother Narasingha Deva, he also had the political suzerainty over the Patna kingdom.

During the time of Balaram Deva the kingdom of Sambalpur was extended on all sides by wars and conquests. He ruled from 1552-1584. Kalyan Sahai, the Haihaya ruler of Ratanpur, being defeated by Balaram Deva, ceded Sarangarh, Raigarh and Sakti to the kingdom of Sambalpur. He then conquered the Ganga kingdom of Bamanda and

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1 N. Senapati, (ed), *op.cit.*, p.60.
2 Presently known as Patnagarh in Bolangir district.
reinstalled its chief Ramachandra Deva as a feudatory of Sambalpur. Soon after this there was a conflict between Balaram Deva and the king of Sirguja on the issue of boundary between their territories. Balaram invaded Sirguja through Gangpur which was then a feudatory state of Sirguja. The ruler of Gangapur submitted and acknowledged the overlordship of Balaram Deva without any war. Subsequently, Sirguja was defeated and was made a vassal state. Then he married the princess of Sirguja and brought the image of “Anantasayi-Vishnu” – “reclining on the serpent”, from Sirguja which he installed in a temple at Sambalpur. Meanwhile, Narasingha Deva, Raja of Patnagarh died and his successors were very weak. Taking this opportunity, Balaram Deva not only asserted his independence, but also reduced the kingdom of Patna as an appendage to the growing kingdom of Sambalpur. The Chauhan territory grew from a struggling principality to a powerful kingdom during his time.

Hrudayanarayana Dev, son of Balaram Deva, ruled for a short period from 1600 to 1605 A.D. During his reign he was not engaged with further conquests and devoted himself to the task of consolidating the kingdom built by his father. Then he reformed the internal administration of the kingdom, improved the life-standard of the people and built a temple of Pataneswari, the presiding deity of Patna, at Sambalpur.

Balabhadra Dev, the son of Hrudayanarayana Dev, ruled for a long period of 25 years (1605 – 1630 A.D). He conquered Baud after a protracted battle which lasted for twelve years and subjugated its ruler Siddha Bhanja. He was not only a great warrior but also a great

4 Gangadhar Mishra, *op. cit*, Canto XX, Verse XV.
builder, who improved the fort of Sambalpur, originally built by Balaram Deva¹. Further, he constructed the Brahma pura temple where he installed the image of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra². He erected at the gate of his fort a Siva temple, dedicated to Lord Someswara³. He built two forts at Chandrapur and Kikirda and a palace known as Jarumahal.

Madhukara Dev succeeded his father and ruled from 1630-60 A.D. He renovated the Vishnu temple at Sambalpur for Ananta Sayya image that had been brought by Balaram Deva from Sirguja as a trophy of victory. He also established the Gopalji Matha at Sambalpur and Ramaji Matha at Puri⁴. During his reign, the ruler of Sirguja defied his authority and denied to pay any tribute, whereupon Madhukara Dev invaded the territory, defeated and imprisoned him in the fort of Sambalpur⁵.

The Chauhan kingdom, however, reached the pinnacle of power during the rule of Baliar Singh, the son and successor of Madhukara Dev. The most significant military campaign of Baliar Singh was directed against the Bonai State, whose chief Indra Deva of the famous “Kadamba Dynasty” was overpowered and submitted before the authority of Sambalpur. He also conquered Yamatangi, which is identified with Yamagarta Mandala, comprising some portion of the modern Keonjhar district⁶, roughly the Pallahara region, which was under a Bhanj ruler. With these conquests Baliar Singh became the

¹ Ibid., Canto XX.
³ R.C. Mullick, op.cit, p.171.
⁴ Ibid., p.175.
⁵ N.Senapati (ed), op.cit, pp.62-63.

Baliar Singh was succeeded by Ratan Singh who ruled for only four months, and met a premature death in 1690 A.D. At that time his eldest son Chhatra Sai was at Chandrapur, far away from Sambalpur. Taking this opportunity, the ambitious Dewan seized the power and defied the authority of Chhatra Sai. The young Raja was terrified after hearing the news and fled to Sarangarh with his baby son Ajit Singh to seek the help of Dewan Udyota Sai. Further, he asked for the help of the ruler of Raigarh Durjaya Singh who agreed to help him. Being elated with the success, the combined forces under the command of Chhatra Sai appeared at the gate of Sambalpur and suppressed the rebels and became the Raja of Sambalpur in 1690 A.D. Then the two chiefs were amply rewarded.

Chhatra Sai (1690-1725), after becoming the king of Sambalpur, took certain measures to fortify the town. He renovated the temple of Samalai and repaired many of other temples. On the confluence of Ib and Bheden rivers, he established a village called Rampur. One

2 R.C. Mullick, op.cit, p.183.
3 N.Senapati (ed), op.cit, p.64.
4 *Navayuga*, vol.1, (2nd issue), p.49 f.
5 N.Senapati (ed), op.cit, p.64.
Prananath Rajput of Banaras had helped Chhatra Sai who gave him the Zamindari of Rampur\(^1\), which was erstwhile a Gond estate.

The reign of Chhatra Sai was marked by many intrigues and plots. He selected Ajit as the crown prince. One of the Ranis of Chhatra Sai, the Haihaya Princess of Ratanpur, is said to have been showing special favour to two officers named Puru Seth and Mana Mishra, which displeased other officers. They joined hands in a plot against her and informed the Raja that the Rani was making a secret effort to install her son Burha Ray on the gaddi of Sambalpur. The Raja believed it blindly and executed both the mother and the son. On getting the news, the Raja of Ratanpur attacked Sambalpur\(^2\) and inflicted a defeat on Chhatra Sai, who was however, pardoned and was restored to power. Shortly after that the Raja retired to Puri and spent there the rest of his life\(^3\). Chhatra Sai repented for killing the queen and his son later on and in the memory of the unlucky prince Burha Ray he constructed a Siva temple, known as the temple of “Budharaja” on the summit of a hill at Sambalpur.

The Chauhan kingdom reached at the apex of its glory during Baliar Singh and the process of disintegration of the great empire built by Balaram Deva began during the imperfect rule of Chhatra Sai. The beautiful edifices of the Chauhans splitted away like houses of cards and torn to pieces at the time of Ajit Singh, the weak, incapable, idle and luxury-loving successor of Chhatra Sai.

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3 Ibid.
The King:

In the Chauhan system of administration, the Raja was the fountain head of all powers in the State. He was the supreme civil, military and judicial authority. He is described as a “Divine Personality” by poets and chroniclers. Ramai Deva, the founder of the Chauhan dynasty in Patna “when adorned with a crown looks like a mortal moon. By his powers, he surpasses the sun, by fame the moon and by brilliancy he tops the eastern mountain with the rising sun”. His broad chest, bright with gold and diamond chains, was like the bosom of Vishnu, the resting place of goddesses of beauty and wealth. The theory of “Divine Right” was deep-rooted here as it was in other princely states of India. Even Manu, the Indian Law-giver, represents the king as a ‘Divine Person’ and this tradition continued till the mediaeval period. Gajapati Rama Chandra Deva, the founder of the Bhoi dynasty of Khurdha, on reinstalling the image of Lord Jagannath in the temple of Puri after the sacrilege of Kalapahar, styled himself as “Abhinava Indradyumna”. From his time, the Gajapatis were regarded as the moving image of Lord Vishnu throughout Orissa. This had its immediate effect on the Chauhan rulers of Western Orissa who in emulating the example of the Gajapatis, posed themselves as representative of God on earth.

2 Ibid, Canto-VII, Verse II.
3 Manuscript of “Srikrishna Vakta Vastalya Charitam” preserved in the Orissa State Museum.
The Chauhan Raja of Sambalpur styled himself as the "Lord of Atharagarh" or "Eighteen Forts". The kingdom was constituted by a cluster of eighteen semi-independent states in feudal subordination to or confederation with the Raja of Sambalpur. Sir Richard Temple, in his report of 1863, observed that "the Chieftainships which formerly owed allegiance to Sambalpur and Patna were, including those of two, eighteen in number. They were known for many ages as the Atharagarh, just as the adjacent county to the west was called Chhattisgarh-(36 garhs). Major Impey has given an account of Sambalpur-Patna confederacy and described it as a cluster of eighteen garhs. Lt. Kitto, who visited Sambalpur in 1838 also observed that the state of Sambalpur was (previous to its dismemberment) subdivided into eighteen garhs or chieftainships, held in fief of the Lord paramount who resided at Sambalpur and therefore called Atharagarh. Most of these, however, have long since thrown off their allegiance and ceased to pay tribute or furnish their quota of Paiks (militia). The famous kingdom of Sambalpur, with its eighteen forts presents a unique scene where shines king Balaram Deva like autumn moon. The eighteen forts were serving him and the thirteen Dandapata were following him. Chhatra Sai, the king of Sambalpur, has been described as the Lord of eighteen forts and thirteen Dandapatas. The formation of eighteen garhs was started by Ramai Deva in 1360 A.D and completed during

1. Ibid.
5. Prahallad Dubey, op.cit, Canto II.
6. Ibid.
the time of Baliar Singh (1660 A.D), the fifth Chauhan Raja of Sambalpur. It lasted for about 150 years down to the close of the reign of Jayantara Singh (1818 A.D).

In this connection, it is to be noted that the term eighteen garhs had been used in Orissa as a symbol of sovereignty long before the coming of the Chauhans. In the plate of Samkshabha (518 A.D) there is a reference to the cluster of eighteen forest-kings. It can not be denied that the Chauhan rulers of Sambalpur, for some generation, were lord of the eighteen garhs in theory as well as in practice.

The 'Kosalananda' enumerates the qualities of a king in the mouth of a royal preceptor called Rudra Das. He observed that a king should have a majestic outlook, a commanding personality, skillful in arms and well-versed in the sastras, generous, truthful, courageous, respectful to the Brahmins and anxious to lend protection to its subjects¹. The might and majesty of the king was, indeed, the most important factor which made the Chauhan rule a success in Sambalpur. When the personal force weakened towards the end of the reign of Ajit Singh, the anti-social elements cut loose and the kingdom fell victim to the Marathas and the British².

Though in theory the Chauhan king was an absolute monarch, but in practice, he had to submit himself to several checks on his royal prerogatives. In making of the laws, he had to pay due regards to the sacred scriptures and the local customs and traditions. He had to exercise his executive power only with the approval and co-operation of his council of ministers. The ministers were appointed by him and held offices at his pleasure. They were persons of intelligence and

² J.K. Sahu, *op.cit*, p.212.
integrity. They were the permanent residents of the state, belonging preferably to the warrior class and the wealthy and the wise\(^1\).

**Dewan:**

The number of ministers varied from time to time under the Chauhan kingship\(^2\). The prime position of honour among the ministers went to the Dewan, or the Chief Minister. He had exalted great authority and exercised the power and prerogatives of the Raja with certain restrictions. He was in charge of the general administration, was the head of the finance department and also controlled the militia. Every branch of public administration came under his purview. For his multifarious works, he was sumptuously paid by assignment of the revenue of large estate\(^3\).

In the reign of Ajit Singh, the Dewan of Sambalpur was so powerful that it became difficult on the part of the ruler to dismiss him from the post. The only way to get rid of him was to take his life by secret plots. Dewan Dakshin Ray was murdered and his successor also followed his fate\(^4\). But after him, Dewan Akbar Ray put the king in prison and assumed the administration of the kingdom for about fifteen years.

**Pay Master General and Lord High Steward:**

Among other ministers mention may be made of the Pay Master General, known as Bakshi, and the Lord High Steward, who was in charge of the imperial household. In power and influence, the latter

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3. *Ibid*.
was only next to the Dewan. The Bakshi, besides being the Pay Master General of all the officers of the State was also responsible for the recruitment of the army.

**Military Administration:**

The Chauhan rulers laid much emphasis on the military organisation of the State. Castles at that time had formed a nucleus of military organisation and a large number of them were built by the Chauhans throughout their kingdom in places of strategic importance. The headquarters of the eighteen states were each an impregnable stronghold. Balarama Deva in 1575 A.D constructed the Baragarh Fort near Sambalpur and Balabhadra Deva (1605 A.D) raised two forts at Chandrapur and Kirkida.

Though the king was the Supreme Commander of the army, he had under him a Senapati to help him at the time of war as well as in putting down internal disturbances. The army consisted of four divisions, viz. the Infantry, the Cavalry, the Elephants and The Navy. The king of Sambalpur had a large standing army of 32,000 foot, 30 elephants and 7000 horses. The naval power of the state played a vital role in the navigable Mahanadi. A large numbe of “Keuts” (Boatmen), a native caste of the district were recruited to the naval force and their officers were given the title “Dandasena”. Till date in Sambalpur town there are some Keut families bearing the proud title of Dandasena.

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Baliar Singh had appointed four “Karanas” from Puri in certain important offices at Sambalpur. One of them was in-charge of preparing calendar (Panjika); the second (Chhamu Karana Pattanaik) was looking after the income and expenditure of the state; the third (Bakshi) was the Pay Master General and the fourth (Sahani) was the superintendent of the horses and the elephants of the Raja.\(^1\)

**Revenue Administration:**

The Revenue Administration was based on the ancient Indian tradition. The ‘Grama’ was placed under a “Gramika” or “Gauntia”, who was responsible for the general administration and revenue collection of the village. It is known from the early British records that, the Gauntias were not hereditary, that their duties and that their position mainly depended on their efficient performance and that they enjoyed as their remuneration rent-free land of the village. There were some ‘Brahmottar’ and ‘Birti’ villages held by the rulers.\(^3\)

Some villages were also assigned for the maintenance of temples being known as “Devottar” or “Dharmottar”. There was a Devottar department which looked after the temples under the direct management of the state. The revenue of Devottar villages or landed property of those temples was realised by the Devottar department and spent on the worship of the deity, on the maintenance and up-keep of

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\(^1\) R.C. Mullick, *op.cit.*, p.165.  
the temples. The land held by the grantee and his successors was subject to the performance of worship.1

There were also “Kumari grants”, where villages were held rent-free by members of the Raja’s family as a maintenance of assignment. They were known as Babuan Maufis2.

Besides, there were “Sindurtikas” or villages bestowed upon the Rani at the time of marriage, as well as Jagirdaris held by the illegitimate scions or distant relatives of the king3.

Higher in status and rank than the Gauntias, were the “Garhtias” and Zamindars, who enjoyed the proprietorship of the estate under a kind of “ill defined military tenure in perpetuity, at least by prescription and consent, though not by any express stipulation”4. They paid the Raja a comparatively light revenue known as “Takoli. Some of them belonged to the family of the rulers and some obtained the grants for the services, they rendered to the royal family. Besides, the “Gond” and “Binhjals” Chieftains, in the outline parts of the states, were left undisturbed in their estates, which they had possessed prior to the coming of the Chauhans5.

The villages or cluster of villages under the police jurisdiction of Garhtias consisted mostly of the Paiks. The payment of these officers and that of the Paikmen under them was met by service-lands out of one or more of the village or villages in which their headquarters were located6. Garhtias were required to attend the rulers when he was

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1 R.K. Ramdhyani, *op.cit*, vol.III.
3 Ibid.
4 F.Dewar, *op.cit.*, p.44.
travelling and also on “Dasahara Day”. In Sambalpur state, there were sixteen Garhtia estates\(^1\) including Bora-Sambar which was for some time one of the eighteen garhs in the feudal confederation with Sambalpur. Bora-Sambar and Ghess were Binjhal estates and the latter was originally an appanage of the former. Ten Zamindaris namely Kolabira, Machida, Kodabaga, Laida, Loisingga, Kharsal, Paharsirgira, Bheden, Patkulanda and Mundomahal were owned by the Gonds\(^2\). The Zamindaris of Rajpur and Barpali were held by Chauhan Rajput scions of the family of the Raja of Sambalpur\(^3\). Rampur Zamindari was created by Chhatra Sai in favour of Prananath Rajput, a soldier of fortune, who found his way from the Benaras district after having assisted the Raja in putting down a rising of his subjects\(^4\). The last Zamindari, Bijepur, was created in 1821 A.D by Maharaja Sai in favour of Gopi Kulta for his loyal service\(^5\).

The principal source of revenue of the Raja was his ‘Bhaga’ or ‘share’ of the produce which varied from time to time. He also derived income from crown land, mines, forests, excise etc. and tribute from vassal Chiefs. Some irregular and unpopular taxes of the time were “Bethi”, “Beggari”, “Magan”, and “Rasad”\(^6\). These taxes were no doubt

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2 Ibid., p.165.
3 Ibid.
4 F.Dewar, op.cit., p.47.
5 Ibid.

Bethi – Free and forced labour for the construction and repair of roads, the house of the Raja etc.
Beggari – Free and forced carrying of luggages of the Raja and his officers.
Magan – Free and forced contribution, cash and kind on the occasion of marriage, death etc. in the Raja’s family.
Rasad – Free ration, supply to the Raja, his cousins or his officers while camping in the mofussil.
burdensome for the common people but the Chauhans were not collecting it rigorously.

**Judicial Administration:**

As regards the administration of justice, there was no written code of laws under the Chauhans. The king was the fountain of all justice and the final court of appeal. In his work, he was assisted by the Dewan and some judges. In villages, the administration of justice was left with the Zamindars, Garhtias and Gauntias who could decide any case in their respective Panchayats. Panchayat system played a vital role in all stages of our civilisation and its importance under the Chauhans cannot be over-estimated. With the efflux of time, however, the system degenerated and its members often served the Gountias and Zamindars with the motive of profit and power. The different caste guilds had also their different caste-Panchayats to decide matters of caste-disputes. The inter-caste disputes were, however, referred to the ruler, who being the head of the all-caste-guilds could give the final and authoritative verdict.

**Police Administration:**

The police administration of the Chauhans was based on a strong footing. The Zamindars and the Gauntias were responsible for peace, security and public health of their respective villages. They appointed a number of village watchmen who were known as “Jhankars” and “Chaukidars”. In the early Chauhan period, the police administrative division designated as “Dandapatas” was under the “Dandapalas” and the Jhankars serving them were under the “Danduasi”.

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2 B.C. Majumdar, *The Chauhan Rulers of Sonepur*, (Calcutta, 1925), p.34.
3 J.K. Sahu, op.cit., p.221.
the Dandapata system was discontinued and the police responsibilities were taken up by the Zamindars.

The villagers were jointly responsible for the maintenance of peace and security in their villages, although this responsibility was being enforced through their leader, the village headman. When a theft was committed in a village, the headman was to trace the thief and recover the stolen property. If he failed in this task, he was to pay compensation. The system degenerated in later times owing to the decline in the standard of village-morality.

The early British writers have strongly criticised the working of the village police. The British Government, however, provided in their Regulation XIII of 1805 that the principal Zamindars and Landlords were to be constituted as police officers within their respective estates, according to the established usages of the country. But in the estates, where the Zamindars were divested of the police power, special "Daroghas" were appointed and the latter managed the police function with the help of the Khandayats.

The Chauhans had formed a confederation of eighteen states under the hegemony of Sambalpur. The Chiefs of the seventeen states, other than Sambalpur, also bore the proud title of Raja. They paid annual tribute to the Raja of Sambalpur and helped him in times of war and conquests. The Zamindars and Garhtias also exercised absolute power in their villages. Land grants were given to the priests of the temples. Last but not the least, the Chauhan system of administration was based on feudal organisation. Most of these feudal lords were aboriginal chiefs and ruled according to their own rules and customs.

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2 Sir Thomas Munro, "*East India Judicial Selection*", vol.1, p.154.
Infact, the Chauhan administration represented a compromise between the tribal life and monarchy by conquest. This was possible because all the authorities from the Rajas downwards were satisfied with a very limited sphere of direct control and thereby they gave each grade of society below them, ample scope to progress and prosper.

**Socio-Economic Condition**

**Social Life:**

The Chauhan monarchs found their territories mostly inhabited by the aboriginal tribes. They tried to improve the social life of these people by introducing more of the Aryan elements encouraging the Brahmins and other higher caste immigrants. No doubt, a few Brahmins-settlements were already there patronised by the Somavamsis, the Telugu-Chodas, the Gangas, and other ruling dynasties in the past. But vigorous attempts were made by the Chauhans to attract people of higher social status from outside to come and settle permanently in their territories, by offering land and other privileges. They also showed paternal care and patronage for the local aborigines to develop a healthy social life after their own customs and traditions. Consequently, the tribal elements persisted with great vigour throughout their rule and at the same time they were brought under the influence of the Aryan settlers.

The Gonds, Binjhals, Bhuiyas, Kawars, Kandhas, Kisans, Kols, Kudas, Saharas, Kharias, Gandas, and many other aboriginal tribes formed the bulk of the population of the Chauhan dominion. The Gonds, Binjhals and Kandhas were once the ruling castes of this

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1 J.K. Sahu, op.cit., p.224.
territory and they owned a number of Zamindaris under the Raja of Sambalpur\(^1\).

There are two divisions of the Gonds: the aristocratic class designated as Raj Gonds, and the plebians known as the Dhur (dust) Gonds\(^2\). The Raj Gonds took sacred thread and they outdid the Aryan Brahmins in their purificatory observances. Even they washed the wood before it was burnt to cook their food\(^3\).

The Binjhals also were a strictly orthodox community and they did not take their food from the Brahmins\(^4\). Tradition associated them with the Vindhyā hills and they came to Bora-Sambar through Ratanpur of Chhattisgarh\(^5\). The aristocratic Binjhals called themselves “Barihas” and they boasted of their Rajput origin\(^6\). The Gonds and the Binjhals served the villages as Jhankars, the village priest and watchmen. Under the Chauhans, they became mostly Hinduised and the Hindu immigrants to these territories were also greatly influenced by their social customs.

The “Savaras” or “Saharas”, one of the earliest tribes, adopted many Hindu customs, although they did not accept the Brahmin priests in their religious performances\(^7\). Their chief deity was “Mahalakshmi”, the Hindu goddess of wealth. They were considered as the best of sorcerers. The Gandas, Chamars, Ghasias, Haries, Mangans and

\(^1\) N. Senapati (ed), op.cit., p.117.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) L.S.S.O'Malley, op.cit., p.75.
\(^4\) Ibid., p.78.
\(^5\) Ibid., p.76.
\(^6\) N. Senapati (ed), op.cit., p.118.
\(^7\) Ibid., p.121.
Mehtars were the lowest and the most despised class and even the touch of their shadow defiled a Brahmin.

The Gandas were regularly employed as drummers and pipers at Hindu marriage. Many of them earned their livelihood by weaving coarse clothes in almost all the villages. There were Ganda Chaukidars to help the Jhankars, the principal watchmen. Among the immigrants to Western Orissa during the Chauhan rule, mention may be made of the “Kultas”, “Gours”, “Bhulias”, “Kustas” etc. The Kultas, who came from Baud were great cultivators and were wealthy people having large holdings. The Bhulias and the Kustas, the two weaver-castes, came from Chhattisgarh. The Gours took care of the cattle and served the nobles as the “Narias”. The Brahmins were less numerous but more advanced and highly respected in the society. The Negi, the village accountant, “Kumbhar” – the potter, “Luhura” – the black-smith, “Dhoba” – the washerman, and “Bhandari” – the barbers, rendered important and useful services to the society.

**Status of Women:**

The status of the women under the Chauhans was commendable. There was no purda system and women were allowed to work with men in all spheres of social activities. Marriage was considered as a sacred tie by all classes of people, nevertheless widow marriage, divorce and polygamy were permissible in the society. A widow was often induced to marry the younger brother of her deceased husband. The Brahmins did not recognise the widow marriage. Polygamy was common in the aristocratic families.

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2. Ibid.
3. L.S.S.O'Malley, op.cit., p.79.
A Zamindar generally married a new wife the day he got his power over the Zamindari to commemorate the occasion, although by that time he might have a dozen of wives.\(^1\)

Early marriage was not uncommon in the society. The aboriginals like the Gandas and Saharas and the immigrant castes like the Bhulias and the Kultas performed the marriage before the girl attained puberty\(^2\), failing which, she was first married to a bow and arrow and only after that the actual marriage was celebrated\(^3\).

**Dress and Ornaments:**

The women were very fond of ornaments. In addition to glass and silver bracelets, they wore Bandrias\(^4\), Katrias\(^5\) in their hands, Tada\(^6\) and Bahasuta\(^7\) on their arms, Painris\(^8\) on their ankles and Khagala\(^9\) on their necks. They were all made of silver. Ears were decorated with gold Jhalkas\(^10\) and Ganthias\(^11\) and the nose had two to three gold ornaments, like Dandi Guna and Natha\(^12\). The hair style was of a different kind and the most common was called “Khusa”\(^13\), which was

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\(^2\) N. Senapati (ed), op.cit., p.125.

\(^3\) J.K. Sahu, op.cit., p.117.

\(^4\) Bandria – a silver ornament for the wrists of the ladies.

\(^5\) Katria – one type of wrist ornaments.

\(^6\) Tada – a silver armlet.

\(^7\) Bahasuta – an armlet made of silver.

\(^8\) Painri – a silver ornament for anklets.

\(^9\) Khagla – an ornament for neck used by the ladies.

\(^10\) Jhalka – a gold ornament for ear.

\(^11\) Ganthia – ear ornament made of gold.

\(^12\) Dandi, Guna and Natha – a gold ornament used by the ladies in their nose.

\(^13\) Khusa – Roundish braid of a lady.
roundish in shape and was studded with a number of hairpins, gold and silver flowers and a comb.

They used to wear different kinds of sarees as Bichitrapari, Saktapari, Kankanpari, Duiphulia, Panchphulia, Dāsphulia, Chandankura, Baulmaia etc. each of which exhibited an artistic design of its own. At the time of bath, they rubbed themselves with turmeric which gave the skin a radiance. The dress items of males were simple. They wore only Dhoti and some times a chadar. On festive occasions the wealthy people wore Matha or silk garments.

Amusement:

The people, used to play certain games and sports during their leisure. Ganjapa among the males and Chhaka among the females were the most common indoor games. The most important outdoor games among the males were the Dahimakdi, Gudu,

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1 J.K. Sahu, op.cit., p.228.
2 Matha - A valuable and costly garment made from Khusa or cocoon-silk worm.
3 Ganjapa - A game like chess, is played between two opposite camps. One pack comprise of 144 circular cards, painted in 12 different colours. Each colour had 12 cards, equally divided between Rama and Ravana. This game which centre round the epic episode of the Rama-Ravan fight.
4 Chhaka - A game of women folk is played with cowries made of brass on a specially prepared cloth with 24 small square blocks on each of its four sides.
5 Dahimakdi - outdoor game played in the branches of a tree by the male groups.
6 Gudu - played between two opposite groups equal in number in the field by males.
Khokho, etc. and among the females Humo occupied the prominent position.

**Song and Dance:**

Young men and maidens of the aboriginal tribes were fond of dance and music. The important folk dances were Karma, Dalkhai, Danda, and Suanacha. Karma was a dance festival celebrated on the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of Bhadraba. The object of the festival was joining the matrimony of two branches of Karma tree (*Nauclea parvifolia*) as king and queen with the belief that this union would make the session a year of plenty. When the sacred branches were placed on the altar, the girls, who fasted for the purpose gathered there with fine (arua) rice, frankincense and molasses to worship the Karamsani. Then an old man recited the legend of this worship and thereafter, men and women began to dance singing in praise of Karamsani till the dawn.

Dalkhai and Suanacha were performed by young girls who danced and sang merrily when their male partners played at the drums.

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1 Khokho – a similar type of game like gudu.
2 Humo – played in the evening in moonlight by young unmarried girls, who arm in arm, form two rows and approach each other with sweet songs.
3 Karma – a colourful dance performed by the Binjhals, Kharias, Oram, Kisan and Kol tribes in the month of September and October.
4 Dalkhai – a dance performed by young Kandha and Binjhal girls on Dasahara celebrated in the month of October.
5 Danda – an open air lyric theatre performed in the month of Chaitra, Mina Sankranti to Pana Sankranti i.e. March to April.
6 Suanacha – a colourful dance performed by the young girls.
Dandanacha is an open air lyric theatre dominated by dances, singing the love story of Radha and Krishna.

**Festivals:**

The festivals in the Chauhan territories were mostly connected with agriculture. The Akshaya Tritiya\(^1\) ceremony, on the eve of sowing the first seeds, the Nuakhai\(^2\), when the new rice was available and the Puspuni\(^3\), soon after the harvest, were celebrated by the people. Of the non-agrarian festivals, Sitala Sasthi\(^4\), the Car festival\(^5\), and Dasahara festival\(^6\) were celebrated pompously. Besides this Puajuntia\(^7\) and Bhaijuntia\(^8\) were common among the women sect. Another pompous

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1. **Akshaya Tritiya** - observed on the 3\(^{rd}\) day of the second half of Baisakha (May).
2. **Nuakhai** - it is one of the most important festivals known as Navarna, when the first grains of the new paddy crop, cooked into various dishes, are offered to the deities, being celebrated on the 5\(^{th}\) day in the bright fortnight of Bhadраб.
3. **Puspuni** - it is celebrated after the complete harvesting of crops in the month of Pausa (December-January).
4. **Sitalsasthi** - it is the marriage celebration of Siva and Parvati, observed in the month of Jyestha (June).
5. **Car Festival** - otherwise known as Ratha-Yatra of Lord Jagannath, Balabhdra and Goddess Subhadra, observed in the month of Asarha (June-July).
6. **Dasahara** - observed in the month of Aswina devoted to the ceremonial worship of Durga.
7. **Puajuntia** - observed by mothers for the welfare of their sons maintaining great austerity in the month of Aswin.
8. **Bhaijuntia** - a Brata observed by the women, young, old married and unmarried for their brothers.
festival of the people was Mahasivaratri\(^1\) celebrated at night and Baisakha Purnima\(^2\) celebrated on the previous night.

Motte, who visited Sambalpur in 1766 A.D has given a biased account of the society by describing its people as lazy, cruel, treacherous and coward\(^3\). He was incorrect in his assessment. The people did not lack in courage and vigour, which got proved by their grim struggle against the British. The people were very hospitable towards their friends and equally hostile towards their foes. They were simple, sober, scrupulous and their society was vivacious with mirthful music\(^4\).

**Economic Condition:**

The economic condition of the people under the Chauhans was prosperous. They encouraged caste professions and trades through rivers and highways by the merchant class. They used to conduct business either in co-operative ways or under a market regulation, sanctioned by the authority. Arts and crafts had free scope of development and various cottage industries flourished in order to cater to the needs of the locality.

**Agriculture:**

Agriculture was the principal occupation of the people. Mainly the Kultas, Aghrias, and Malis had adopted it as their main

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1. Mahasiva Ratri – celebrated in the month of Phalguna (March) in all important Siva temples.
2. Baisakha Purnima – celebrated in the month of Baisakha (May).
occupation. A number of female labourers were also engaged with their male counterparts on the field. Rice was their staple crop. The principal pulses grown in these territories were Birhi (*Phaseolus radiatus*), Mung (*Phaseolus mungo*), Kuluth (*Dolichus biflorus*), Masur (*Ersvam lens*) and Peas. Sugarcane was widely cultivated for molasses which was an important article for trade. A kind of crude sugar known as Nabata was manufactured by the local people. The light sandy soil of this country was favourable for the growth of fruit trees of which Mahua (*Bassia latifolia*), Mango, Palm, Date-palm etc. were fairly common. The garden crops were melon, water-melon, maize, orange, lemon, guava etc. The favourite crops of the aboriginal races were Kuda² (*Paspalum scrabiculatum*) and Gunji (*Panicum psilo-podium*)³. Turmeric was the monopoly cultivation of the Kandhas.

**Irrigation:**

Tanks were the most common means of irrigation. They were of three kinds viz. Kata⁴, Munda⁵, and Bandha⁶. Large tanks known as Sagaras were excavated by the rulers themselves to facilitate irrigation⁷, Ram Sagar and Jagannath Sagar at Sambalpur were

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² Kuda – It is sown in July and ripen in October-November.
³ Gunji – it is ripen rapidly and can be reaped sixty days after it is sown.
⁵ Kata – an ordinary irrigation tank and was constructed by throwing a strong earthen embankment, slightly curved at either end, across a drainage line, so as to hold up an irregularly shaped sheet of water.
⁶ Munda – it is an embankment of smaller size across a drainage channel.
⁷ Bandha – it is a four sided tank below a Kata, from which it derives it water by percolation

⁷ R.C. Mullick, op.cit., p.106.
constructed during the reign of Ratan Singh (1690 A.D) and Chhatra Sagar during the time of Chhatra Sai (1690-1725 A.D)\(^1\). Apart from tanks, a large number of wells were also dug specially for gardens and sugarcane farming.

**Industry:**

Among the industrial classes, the Kustas, Bhulias, Kullis and Gandas were noted as cloth-weavers. The Kullis and Gandas produced coarse clothes for the poor people. But the Bhulias worked for the well-to-do and their products were of aristocratic design, durable texture and fast and variegated colours. They also wove different kinds of beautiful sarees. These sarees were named after the designs and most of the designs were woven in a process which was known as ‘Kama’ or ‘Bandha’ i.e. “tie and die work”.

The Gandas carried on the rearing of the Tusser silk worms, chiefly on the Sahaja tree (*Terminalia tomentosa*), but the weaving of the tusser cloth was monopolised by the Kustas\(^2\). The tusser industry fast declined with the end of the Chauhan rule in Sambalpur not only for the lack of royal patronage but also because of keen competition, with the silk fabrics from Ganjam. Yet as late as 1905 A.D, N.G. Mukherjee wrote that “the intrinsic merits of the Sambalpur tusser clothes are very great. In quality, the Sambalpur tussers excels Bengal tusser, and the skill of the Sambalpur spinners is greater than that of any other district”\(^3\).

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\(^3\) N.G. Mukherjee – *A report on “An Enquiry into the State of the Tusser silk Industry in Bengal and the Central Province”* (1905).
The iron industry was the monopoly of the ‘Lohara’ called “Kheti” (ironsmith) who supplied most of the iron goods through indigenous and primitive methods. Iron was the chief item of export to the coastal districts of Orissa.

The brass and bell metal industries were carried on by the “Kansaris” and “Kharras” and the chief centres of the trade were Tukura, Barpali and Remenda in Sambalpur.

Gold and silver ornaments were made by Sunaris. Gold dust and diamonds were collected in the river Mahanadi by the local caste known as “Jhoras”. Sambalpur had long been noted for diamond mines and the Chauhan rulers did not fail to utilise this lucrative source to their benefit. Balaram Deva, the first Chauhan ruler of Sambalpur employed the Jhoras for collection of diamond from the Mahanadi and assigned them the villages of Hirakud and Junani for their service.

Of other industries, mention may be made of the stone-carving of the “Sahansias”, the bamboo works of the “Betras”, drums made by the “Ghasias” and leather sandals of the “Chamars”. The Sahansias came to Sambalpur during the construction of Samalai Temple by Balaram Deva.

Subsequently, they erected a number of temples and built sculptures of gods and goddesses in different parts of the kingdom. For carving small images, they used a black stone resembling marble or a

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1 J.K. Sahu, op.cit., p.237.
green stone like Jade. But for larger figures, a fine red sand stone called "Dalima" was preferred by them.

Sasan was an important centre of bamboo works during the Chauhan rule and a large number of baskets were exported from this place.

Toy-making was also a popular cottage industry. Out of the soft Simuli wood, the carpenters (Maharana) used to carve a variety of animal figures like that of cat, horse, tiger and elephant. In size as well as in the use of colour, these toys were different from those found in other parts of the country.

Both internal and external trade was briskly carried on in the Chauhan dominion. Weekly markets or "Hata" in every important village and Annual Fairs at Huma and Nrushinghanatha were chief centres of internal trade. Merchandise was transported from place to place by means of bullock cart or by ass or by horse. These goods-carrying animals when passing in groups were collectively known as Banjari.

**Trade and Commerce:**

In addition to diamond and gold, the people exported rice, oil seeds, hems, hides, bones and forest products such as timber, lac and wax. The principal imports were salt, sugar, wheat etc. All the goods of Chhattisgarh were exported to the province of Cuttack mainly through Sambalpur. The best means of communication between Sambalpur and Cuttack was the river Mahanadi and an army of

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1 R.C. Mullick, op.cit., p.162
2 J.K. Sahu, op.cit., p.240.
3 Ibid.
boatmen or 'Keuts' were employed to transport the goods. Different kinds of boats\textsuperscript{1} used by them were known as Dangas\textsuperscript{2}, Kuslis\textsuperscript{3}, Patwas\textsuperscript{4} and Chaps\textsuperscript{5}.

During the rule of the Chauhans, barter system was very common with the people. Yet coins were not totally unknown to them though cowries (symbolic cell-coins) were widely being used for small business. For greater transaction, gold coins known as "Asarpis", silver coins as "Jarbees" and copper coins as paisa were in use.

An Asarpi was equivalent to 15 Jarbees or rupees and the value of a Jarbee was 64 times that of a copper paisa. The Chauhan rupee was known as Cutcha rupee in other states and it was accepted only at half of its face value\textsuperscript{6}.

The standard measure of seeds under the Chauhans was a Tambi. Twenty Tambis made a Khandi, and eight Khandis a Purug. The size of tambi differed from place to place. The later Chauhan rulers of Sambalpur prescribed a standard tambi, which they called "Lakshmi Prasad Tambi" after the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi\textsuperscript{7}.

\textsuperscript{1} L.S.S.O'Malley, op.cit., p.162.
\textsuperscript{2} Danga – it is made of wood and is used for carrying passengers in the river.
\textsuperscript{3} Kusli – it is as similar as Danga, broader in space, shorter in length, used for carrying food grains.
\textsuperscript{4} Patwa – it is a long, narrow boat, 35 mt. to 40 mt. in length and used for carrying food grains.
\textsuperscript{5} Chap – Used for carrying cattle and carts, and generally used in flood times.
\textsuperscript{7} F.Dewar, op.cit., p.16.
The living standard of the people under the Chauhans was simple and comfortable. They were living their lives in a peaceful manner. No man was rich except in grains, and no man distressingly poor, for supply of food was abundant and cheap. The people were capable of steady and sustained labour, frugal in manner and never depend on others.