

Rajputs and Ugra Kshatriyas

Rajput O Ugrakshatriya

Compiled by Haricharan Bandhu

An account of Kshatriya lineages described in the Vedas, Upanishads and Jain religious scriptures, and the history of Rajput empire in Bengal

English translation

Based on the second Bengali edition, Calcutta, 1940.

Source limitation: printed pages 142 and 143 are missing from the available scan. The gap is marked in the conclusion.

About this translation

This English translation covers all the text present in the scanned second edition: the dedication, publisher's appeal, author's foreword, nine chapters and surviving conclusion. Printed pages 142 and 143 are missing from the available scan, so that passage is explicitly marked as a source gap. The original errata sheets are reproduced in an appendix, with an English guide.

The author's first-person voice, historical assertions, caste classifications and judgments about religious or social groups have been retained. They express the author's position in this historical work; translating them does not verify or endorse them. Terms such as "today" and "the present" refer to the author's period.

Sanskrit, Prakrit and Gujarati quotations are rendered into English. Where the book also supplies a Bengali explanation, that explanation is translated separately. Passages already printed in English are retained with obvious typographical errors regularised. Names are transliterated for readability; difficult readings are identified in square-bracketed translator's notes. Author's footnotes are kept with the relevant passage and labelled.

Source edition

Compiled by Sri Haricharan Bandhu.

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Dedication

Dear Birendra Prasad

He whose nature is Being, Consciousness and Bliss
Dwells divinely in every vessel, in manifold forms.

Living beings, spellbound by Maya, in ever changing dress,
Come and go through the field of action, bound by the thread of karma.

One who has fallen short in yoga returns again
To attain perfection, 'in the homes of the pure and prosperous.'

You lost your way and came into this unfortunate one's lap.
Was that why you left, as though through a moment's mistake?

May you find peace at the feet of those lords of men,
Workers in the spirit of yoga, honoured throughout the world.

Your unfortunate
Dada Mashai

[Translator's note: The affectionate form of address Dada Mashai is retained because the dedication alone does not establish the precise family relationship. The line about the homes of the pure and prosperous quotes a phrase from Bhagavad Gita 6.41.]

Publisher's appeal

By the grace of God, the second edition of the book entitled Rajput O Ugrakshatriya, the modest fruit of the devoted labours of the deeply respected Sri Haricharan Bandhu, is now offered to the public. About thirty years ago, in its first edition, he demonstrated the identity of Rajputs and Ugra Kshatriyas from ancient religious scriptures such as the Vedas and Upanishads and authoritative Jain texts such as the Kalpasutra. In the present edition, with the help of books and inscriptions published by the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad and the Varendra Anusandhan Samiti, he has shown that the Rajput Kshatriyas who came to Bengal in search of fortune and lived by warfare received agraharas in Rarh and gradually rose to the rank of subordinate rulers. Being powerful, courageous and skilled in war, they acquired the honourable designation “Ugrakshatriya-suta,” corresponding to the name “Ugraputra” found in the Vedas, Upanishads and other religious scriptures.

He has further shown that the Pala emperors arose from the Pala-titled “Ratnakar” family of Burdwan, one of these Ugra Kshatriya ruling families, and that the Sena kings arose from the Sena-titled Soma lineage. The evidence Sri Bandhu has collected in support of his subject, and his impartial discussion of the reasonableness of that evidence, will be particularly valued not only by the Ugra Kshatriya community but by every enquiring reader, especially future writers of Bengal's history.

This book is the result of Sri Bandhu's lifelong, untiring labour. So that it may be kept in every Ugra Kshatriya household like a household almanac—

—and so that, by reading it, every Ugra Kshatriya may become aware of past glory and regain self-possession, the price has been kept as low as possible.

Here we cannot avoid mentioning a sorrowful event, as though fate had mocked us. After reading the manuscript, the distinguished scholar, the late Amulyacharan Vidyabhushan, had of his own accord expressed a wish to write an introduction. His sudden, premature death has grieved us as deeply as the loss of a relative. May God grant perfect peace to his soul, wearied by its labours; and may the goodwill he bore us in this world descend from the next as a blessing upon our work. This alone is our prayer.

Finally, as the publisher of this book, my appeal to my fellow community members is this: the mutual hostility among our different ranks or sections, and the resulting lack of solidarity, cause me great pain. We have still not understood that this hostility is wholly opposed to the community's progress and is another name for self-destruction. What could be more regrettable? I hope that this book compiled by Sri Bandhu will remedy the grievance I have described, unite the Ugra Kshatriyas once again, and keep alive in their hearts the self-respect befitting Kshatriyas.

On the auspicious Akshaya Tritiya. Calcutta, 27 Baishakh 1347. Respectfully, Sri Dwijendra Chandra Ray.

Author's foreword

In the first edition of this book, the chapter entitled “Different sages, different opinions” set out, from various scriptures, differing views about the origins of communities classified as anuloma and pratiloma, and about the origins of the Vaidya and Kayastha communities. In the present edition those chapters have been omitted. In their place, the history of Rajput rule in Bengal has been discussed through the inscriptions issued by Bengal's later rulers, the Pala and Sena kings. With bowed head, I offer sincere thanks to the scholars who have laboured to decipher these inscriptions, and to those who, through the Varendra Anusandhan Samiti and the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, have published them and made discussion easier.

It should also be mentioned here that the late Pannalal Singh of Jiaganj–Nehalia, a man of many virtues, placed me under an enduring debt of gratitude by directing me to the books relevant to my subject.

In my long years of work I found a colleague, like a brother, in the esteemed Sri Ashutosh Chowdhury of Bajargram, Burdwan. I regard him as an encouragement sent by God. It was he who first introduced me to our community and, by drawing its sympathy towards me, continued to encourage me. I shall always remember the heartfelt support of Burdwan's well-known lawyer, the late Nibaran Chandra Hui; the late Haripada Datta of Belgram; and the late Jatabihari Hui of Rampur.

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge that, had my friend Sri Dwijendra Chandra Ray not undertaken the heavy responsibility of publication, it would not have been easy for me to publish this book. My fellow community members and I therefore remain in his lasting debt.

Jiaganj, Murshidabad. Sri Haricharan Bandhu.

Chapter One

Rajputs and Ugra Kshatriyas in the Vedas Upanishads and other religious scriptures

In referring to the degradation of certain classes of Kshatriyas, including the Paundras, Dravidas, Kambojas, Yavanas and Shakas, through the absence of Brahmans, the revered Manu says:

Gradually, through the abandonment of religious rites and the absence of Brahmans, these Kshatriya peoples have attained the condition of Vrishalas in the world.

The use here of the plural expression *kshatriya jatayah* makes it quite clear that Kshatriya is not the name of a single community. It is, rather, a general designation of varna for rulers descended from different families bearing different names.

The great sage Krishna Dvaipayana Vedavyasa, who divided the Vedas, writes in the Brahmavaivarta Purana concerning Kshatriyas of the solar and lunar lines and the Vedic Kshatriyas born from Brahma's arms:

The foremost Kshatriyas are remembered as those of the Moon, the Sun and the Manus; other Kshatriya peoples arose from the region of Brahma's arms.

Here too, the plural *kshatriya jatayah* clearly shows that the Vedic Kshatriyas born from Brahma's arms were divided into different classes bearing different names.

The Kshatriyas descended from the Sun, Moon and Manu belonged to the lineages of sages and were therefore Brahmans by birth. For this reason they attained a higher position than the Kshatriyas of the Vedic royal families. Within Rajput society too, the superiority of the solar and lunar Kshatriyas over the Agnikula has always been acknowledged. We shall now show that the Vedic Kshatriyas also bore different names and were divided into different classes, among which the Bhoja and Ugra lineages became particularly celebrated. Let us first see what the Rigveda Samhita, which first described the division into varnas with the words "His arms were made the Rajanya," says concerning the Bhoja and Ugra kings.

The Rigveda Samhita, Ashtaka 8, Adhyaya 6, Mandala 10, Sukta 107, says:

8. The Bhojas do not die, nor come to want; the Bhojas suffer neither injury nor pain. All that exists in this world and in heaven, Dakshina bestows upon them.

9. The Bhojas are first to win the cow that yields nourishment; they win the richly adorned maiden. The Bhojas obtain the essence of the draught; they conquer those who challenge them in battle, advancing unbidden.

The author's Bengali rendering:

The Bhojas have no death; they do not become destitute, nor suffer affliction, pain or sorrow. Whatever exists on earth or in heaven, Dakshina gives it all to them. 8.

The Bhojas first obtain cows that yield ghee and milk. They obtain the essence of intoxicating drink and beautifully clothed women. The Bhojas conquer their insolent enemies. 9.

[Translator's note: The author treats Bhoja as the name of a royal lineage. That interpretation is retained throughout this discussion; the following page records Sayana's different explanation of the word.]

10. For the Bhoja they groom the swift horse; for him stands the beautifully adorned maiden. This house belongs to the Bhoja, furnished like a lotus pool and wondrous like a dwelling of the gods.

11. Well bearing horses carry the Bhoja; a well made chariot proceeds towards the giver of Dakshina. May the gods protect the Bhoja in battle. The Bhoja conquers his enemies in the encounters of war.

The author's Bengali rendering:

They groom the swift horse for the Bhoja; the lovely woman waits for him. This house, arranged like a lotus pool and as beautiful as a temple, exists for the Bhoja. 10.

Horses that carry well convey the Bhoja; a well built chariot stands ready for him. May the gods protect the Bhoja in war; in battle he conquers his enemies. 11.

Mahamahopadhyaya Sayanacharya explains *Bhoja* as a provider of food or a giver of Dakshina. In fact, extraordinary generosity was a special characteristic of kings of the Bhoja line; it was for this reason that they became known as Bhojas.

Ashtaka 6, Adhyaya 3, Mandala 8, Sukta 45, verses 4 and 5:

4. As soon as he was born, the slayer of Vritra took up his arrow and asked his mother: "Who are the Ugras? Who are those renowned?"

Commentary:

Immediately upon being born, the destroyer of Vritra took up the *bunda*, an arrow. As Yaska says, "Bunda means an arrow" (Nirukta 6.31). Taking the arrow, he questioned his mother: "Who are the Ugras, whose strength is raised? Who are renowned and spoken of as invincible?"

5. His mighty mother answered: "Whoever seeks enmity with you fights like an impressive elephant upon the mountain."

Commentary:

O Indra, your mother, the mighty one, answered you: whoever desires to be your enemy does battle like an elephant, conspicuous upon the mountain.

The author's Bengali rendering:

Having been born, the slayer of Vritra took an arrow and asked his mother who were renowned as Ugras. 4.

His powerful mother answered: "Whoever seeks to be your enemy fights like an elephant seen upon the mountain." 5.

Ashtaka 6, Adhyaya 5, Mandala 8, Sukta 77, verses 1, 2 and 3:

1. Upon his birth, the performer of a hundred deeds questioned his mother thus: "Who are the Ugras? Who are renowned?"

Commentary:

This Indra, as soon as he was born, being the performer of a hundred deeds, questioned his own mother. What did he ask? "Who in the world are Ugras, possessed of great strength? Who are heard of, who are renowned?"

2. Then his mighty mother named Aurnavabha and Ahishuva: "Son, these are for you to overcome."

Commentary:

Questioned by Indra, his mighty mother immediately answered him. What did she say? Two Asuras named Aurnavabha and Ahishuva exist; those two and others like them, my son, are for you to overcome.

Author's footnote, continued on the next page: Sayanacharya has explained *asura* as "powerful" in many places. It is therefore certain that here too he uses the word in the sense of a powerful being. The Rigveda Samhita itself also uses *asura* in this sense in many verses; for example—

3. The slayer of Vritra drew them together, as a cord draws the spokes at the hub. Growing in strength, he became a destroyer of Dasyus.

Commentary:

The destroyer of Vritra drew these two together. *Khedana* means drawing or pulling. Just as a cord draws together the spokes of a chariot wheel at the opening of its hub, so that they are joined, he drew them together. Thus Indra, the destroyer of enemies, became powerful.

The author's Bengali rendering:

Indra, immediately on being born and endowed with many powers of action, asked his mother: “Who are the Ugras, and who are renowned?” 1.

His mighty mother said: “Son, there are many, such as Aurnavabha and Ahishuva, whom you ought to overcome.” 2.

Having been born, Indra drew them together at once, just as a rope draws together the spokes at a chariot wheel's hub, and became mighty as a destroyer of Dasyus—that is, of enemies. 3.

The Aryan sages composed many verses or hymns seeking victory for their own patrons and the defeat and destruction of their patrons' Aryan and non Aryan enemies. In doing so they praised the gods as their patrons' own—

Author's footnote continued:

“I proclaimed this to Duhshima, Prithavana and Vena, and to Rama, the powerful one, among the generous patrons: they yoked five hundred steeds, and their fame was spread along the way.” (Rigveda 10.93.14.)

The deities who come to our sacrificial ground for our good, having yoked horses to five hundred chariots—I proclaim their greatness to kings such as Duhshima, Prithavana, Vena and the powerful Rama, and to other wealthy kings.

In this passage Sayanacharya also explains *asura* as “powerful.”

[Translator's note: The source's Bengali explanation of this verse differs from a literal rendering of the Sanskrit. Both are retained. The small print of the proper names should be checked.]

—leaders and friends. It is therefore natural that the opposing warriors should also be described as enemies of the gods.

Ashtaka 5, Adhyaya 6, Mandala 7, Sukta 83, verse 1:

O leaders Indra and Varuna! Seeing your friendship, the worshipping patron, bearing the *prithuparshu*, a kind of sickle, went eastwards in the hope of gaining cattle. Destroy the Dasa Vritras and the Aryans—that is, destroy every kind of enemy, Aryan and non Aryan. Come with protection for King Sudas.

Although in the verses cited above Ugra warriors such as Aurnavabha and Ahishuva are described as enemies of Indra and the other gods, elsewhere the Ugra warriors themselves praise the gods. Verses also occur that pray for the protection of Ugraputras from enemies.

Ashtaka 5, Adhyaya 3, Mandala 7, Sukta 31, verse 3:

Even the waters nourish him; the Ugra warriors praise him in the conflicts.

Commentary:

At Indra's birth the waters, spreading widely, nourish Indra. When enemies threaten, the Ugras, whose force is uplifted or who are radiant with power, and the heroic warriors, also praise this very Indra.

The author's Bengali rendering:

The widely spread waters sustain Indra. When danger arises, the Ugra warriors praise him.

The Atharvaveda, Kanda 5, 18.6, says:

The Ugra who thinks himself a king and wishes to slay a Brahman—his kingdom flows away; the Brahman prevails over him.

[Translator's note: The hymn numbers in the old typography on this page are liable to misreading. The first verse is identified by its address to Indra and Varuna; the last is identified by its opening ugro raja manyamano.]

The author's Bengali rendering:

The Ugra who, having become a king, wishes to kill a Brahman loses his kingdom, and the Brahman is victorious.

The imperial rulers of the Ugra line are described in the Rig, Yajur and Atharva Vedas by the expression *ugro madhyamashih*. The Rigveda Samhita, Ashtaka 8, Adhyaya 5, Varga 10, says:

12. O herbs, as you spread through limb after limb and joint after joint, drive away disease, like an Ugra who strikes at the centre.

Sayana's commentary:

The Ugra is one of raised strength; *madhyamashi* is a king situated in the middle. Just as he continually repels troublesome enemies at every step, so do you.

Verse 86 of Chapter 12 of the White Yajurveda is exactly like the verse quoted above. Uvata Acharya comments on it as follows:

An Ugra is a Kshatriya wearing an armguard of lizard skin and finger protection. He is further qualified as *madhyamashi*: one who pierces the middle part. Just as he repels enemies, so do you.

Mahidhara comments on the same verse:

“Like an Ugra who strikes the centre”: he destroys the vital part within the body, hence *madhyamashi*, a striker at the vital point. The derivation is from the root *shri*, “to injure,” with the suffix *kvip*. The Ugra is an excellent Kshatriya, with lizard skin armguard and finger protection fastened on and weapon raised; just as he repels enemies, so do you.

The author's Bengali rendering:

O herb! Just as Ugra kings occupying the centre of the circle of kings destroy their enemies while wearing armguards and finger protectors, so spread throughout the patient's body and destroy the disease.

The Atharvaveda Samhita, Kanda 4, Sukta 9, verse 9, says:

O salve, as you spread through limb after limb and joint after joint, drive away disease, like an Ugra who strikes at the centre.

Sayanacharya's commentary:

“Like an Ugra who strikes at the centre”: the king situated in the middle of the circle of kings described in political science as enemy, friend and so on. Just as he, with his strength raised, subdues the enemies around him, so do you.

The author's Bengali rendering:

O salve! Just as Ugra kings at the centre of the circle of kings subdue their enemies, so spread throughout the patient's body and remove the disease.

In ancient Aryan society, especially among Brahmans and Kshatriyas, it was common to be known by the name of one's father, mother or ancestor. Indeed, expressions signifying descent were even used when people addressed one another. Just as the gotra identifies lineage among Brahmans, so among Kshatriyas many community names indicating descent arose, such as Ikshvaku, Kakutstha, Parthaka, Kaurava, Pandava and Yadava. The Vedic word *rajanya* likewise denotes offspring, and it is from *rajanya* that the designation *rajaputra* or Rajput arose. In Vedic times Kshatriyas of the Ugra line were also called *Ugraputra*, and it is certain that the designation *Ugrakshatriya suta* arose from this word.

The Rigveda Samhita, Ashtaka 6, Adhyaya 1, Mandala 8, Sukta 17, verse 11, as cited in the book, says:

Protect us in the gift, in the deep, rich in Ugraputras. Let the net of one who seeks to slay not harm our offspring, our descendants.

[Translator's note: The compound containing “deep” and “Ugraputra” is difficult. The commentary and the author's Bengali interpretation continue on page 9. Check the lineage name Parthaka against the Bengali print. The verse beginning pahi dane gabhira is generally numbered Rigveda 8.18.10.]

Sayanacharya's commentary on this verse:

“You protect”: O Aditi, you guard us. “In the gift,” in the offering; “in the deep,” in the water—this is a name for water, as in the list beginning “deep, unfathomable.” “In that which has Ugra

sons”: in that water in which the sons are Ugras, of uplifted strength. Let the net belonging to one who seeks to slay, to injure, not harm the child, our offspring and the child’s descendant; let it cause no injury at all.

The author’s Bengali rendering:

O Aditi! Protect us on every side. In the slender, Ugraputra containing water, may the net of the assailant not injure our sons.

[Translator’s note: “Slender” follows the printed Bengali reading, which is awkward in context and remains uncertain. The verse’s compound and the author’s interpretation should be checked together, rather than silently regularised.]

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad of the White Yajurveda, Chapter 3, Brahmana 8, passage 2, and the Shatapatha Brahmana, 14.6.8.2, say:

She, Gargi, said: “Yajnavalkya, as an Ugraputra of Kashi or Videha strings an unstrung bow and approaches with two feathered arrows in his hand that pierce the enemy, so I have approached you with two questions. Answer them for me.”

Anandagiri’s gloss:

O Yajnavalkya, just as in the world a man of Kashi—one born among the Kashis, whose bravery is famous—or a man of Videha, a king of the Videhas, an Ugraputra, that is, the offspring of a warrior, approaches: this is the sense.

Pandit Shivashankar’s commentary:

O Yajnavalkya, just as an Ugraputra—one who is both fierce and a son, or a son of the Ugras, the Kshatriyas of fearsome disposition—approaches you.

The author’s Bengali rendering begins:

Gargi said: “O Yajnavalkya! Just as Ugraputras dwelling in Kashi or Videha string an unstrung bow and take in their hands two arrows, fitted with bamboo shafts and able to hurt the enemy —”

“—and present themselves on the battlefield, so I too have appeared before you with two questions.”

It is now quite clear that the Ugraputras or Ugra Kshatriyas were among the Rajput Kshatriyas born from Brahma’s arms. Thus the interpolator of the Brihaddharma Purana, referring specifically to the Ugra Rajput Kshatriyas who had come to Bengal, said:

“Ugra and Rajaputra arose in her, the Shudra woman, from the Kshatriya.”

In reality, Rajput is a general designation of the pure Kshatriyas born from Brahma's arms, and *Ugrakshatriya suta* is a particular class of those Rajput Kshatriyas. In later times the solar and lunar Kshatriyas joined the Rajput Kshatriyas through warfare and matrimonial alliances. This is why, in present day Rajput society, we find solar and lunar Kshatriyas as well as the Agnikula.

In his commentary on verse 11 of Chapter 7 of the Manusamhita, the celebrated commentator Medhatithi says:

“Ugra is a particular community; in the Veda the word is used in the sense of king.”

That is, the Ugrias form a particular community and are known in the Veda as kings. It is indeed quite clear that a community described in the Veda as kings must be one of the Kshatriya peoples born from Brahma's arms: “His arms were made the Rajanya”; “Other Kshatriya peoples arose from the region of Brahma's arms.”

In the same way, the commentator Govindaraja refers in one place to the Ugra kings mentioned in the Vedas, and elsewhere to the Ugra community descended from a Kshatriya's Shudra wife

—

—and for this reason Kulluka Bhatta, a commentator on the Manusamhita, expresses surprise in mocking language in his note on Chapter 4, verse 212:

Govindaraja, in the Manjari, called the Ugra a king; in his commentary on Manu, he said that the Ugra was born to a Shudra woman by a Kshatriya. Claiming that the two statements are distinct, he declared of his own accord, “Ugra means king.” Wonderful indeed is this self contradictory performance of his!

Among religious scriptures, Shruti and Smriti are the most authoritative. The Rigveda Samhita mentions kings or Kshatriyas of the Ugra line, while the Manusamhita mentions an Ugra community descended from a Kshatriya's Shudra wife. We must therefore acknowledge the existence of both communities. This is no invention of Govindaraja's, and there is no reason at all to express surprise at it.

Chapter Two

Rajputs and Ugra Kshatriyas in Jain religious scriptures

Sri Rishabhadeva Swami, or Sri Adinatha Swami, is the first Tirthankara of Jainism, or the founder of the Jain religion. The life and acts of Rishabhadeva are described in Chapter 4 of Canto 5 of the Srimad Bhagavata, composed by the great sage Krishna Dvaipayana Vedavyasa, as follows.

Translation of the Sanskrit passage:

1. Shuka said: From the time of his birth the divine marks were evident upon him. His influence grew day by day, together with equanimity, tranquillity, detachment, sovereignty and great powers. Ministers, subjects, Brahmans and gods all greatly desired that he should protect the earth.
2. His father, seeing him thus endowed with a most excellent body, great qualities, vigour, strength, splendour, fame, prowess and courage, gave him the name Rishabha, “the foremost.”
3. Once the mighty Indra, out of rivalry, withheld rain from his country. Perceiving this, Lord Rishabhadeva, master of yoga, smiled and, by his own yogic power, caused rain to fall upon his region, named Ajanabha.
4. King Nabhi, having obtained the good son he desired, was overwhelmed with joy. His voice choked with emotion as, under the influence of affection and the play of Maya, he lovingly called the ancient Lord—who had taken on the ways of human life—“my child” and “dear son,” and nurtured him, attaining supreme delight.
5. Knowing the affection of the citizens, ministers and people of the countryside, King Nabhi consecrated his son to preserve the bounds of righteousness and entrusted him to the Brahmans. With Merudevi he went to Vishala. There, through skilful and tranquil austerity and concentrated yoga, he worshipped Lord Vasudeva under the name Nara Narayana and in time attained the Lord’s glory.
6. O descendant of Pandu, they recite these two verses concerning him: “Who could follow the deeds of the royal sage Nabhi, whose pure actions brought Hari himself to become his son?”
7. “Who, apart from Nabhi, is so devoted to the Brahmans? The Brahmans, honoured with auspicious offerings, revealed to him by their power the Lord of sacrifice in his sacrificial enclosure.”
8. Lord Rishabhadeva regarded this region as a field of action. He demonstrated residence in a teacher’s household, received the teachers’ blessings and permission, and practised the duties of householders—

—then, with Jayanti, given to him by Indra, he begot a hundred sons equal to himself, while teaching through his conduct the twofold ritual duties handed down in sacred tradition. Of these the great yogi Bharata was the eldest and greatest in qualities; from him this region is called Bharata. 8–9.

10. After him, Kushavarta, Ilavarta, Brahmavarta, Malaya, Ketu, Bhadrasena, Indrasprik, Vidarbha and Kikata were the nine foremost sons.

11. Kavi, Havi, Antariksha, Prabuddha, Pippalayana, Avirhotra, Drumila, Chamasa and Karabhajana—

12. —were nine great devotees who expounded the Bhagavata faith. Later we shall describe their good deeds, enriched by the Lord’s greatness, and the dialogue between Vasudeva and Narada that leads to peace.

13. The eighty one younger sons of Jayanti obeyed their father, were modest, deeply learned in the Veda, devoted to sacrifice and pure in their conduct; they became Brahmans.

14. The Lord called Rishabha was independent, eternally free from the succession of miseries, experiencing pure bliss, the Lord himself. Yet, as though otherwise, he undertook actions. By his conduct he taught those who did not understand the righteousness suited to their time. Equable, tranquil, friendly and compassionate, he regulated the household world through righteousness, wealth, fame, children, happiness and liberation.

15. Whatever the foremost person does, the world follows.

16. Although he himself knew the entire sacred teaching, including all duties, he followed the path shown by the Brahmans and governed the people through conciliation and the other means.

17. He performed every kind of sacrifice a hundred times, as prescribed, with all requirements supplied: materials, place, time, age, faith, officiating priests and the several purposes for which the rites were undertaken.

18. In the region protected by Lord Rishabha, no person sought anything for himself from another at any time or by any means, as one would not seek an out of season flower. They desired only the ever increasing affection they continually felt towards their ruler.

19. Once, in his wanderings, Lord Rishabha reached Brahmavarta. In the assembly of the foremost knowers of Brahman, while the people listened, he saw his sons standing before him, self controlled and disciplined by humility and affection. Although they were already thus trained, he instructed them and spoke as follows.

Thus ends Chapter 4, in the account of Rishabhadeva, in Canto 5 of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, the collection for the highest ascetics, the account of creation and its continuation.

The author's Bengali rendering:

Shukadeva said: “O king! When Lord Rishabhadeva was born, the divine signs became clearly visible upon his body. His influence increased day by day, along with equanimity, tranquillity, detachment, sovereignty and great prosperity. Seeing this, the ministers, Brahmans, gods and subjects all wished that he should become king and protect the earth. King Rishabhadeva's body was supremely excellent, worthy of poets' description. His father, seeing him distinguished by influence, power, energy, beauty, fame and other qualities, named him Rishabha. Once Indra, king of the immortals, presumptuously withheld rain from his kingdom. Then Lord Rishabhadeva, master of yoga, smilingly flooded the region named Ajanabha with rain through the power of his yogic Maya. King Nabhi, having obtained the son he desired, was absorbed in joy. The Lord, the ancient Person, had voluntarily assumed a human body. Nabhi, out of affection, addressed him lovingly as ‘my child’ and ‘dear son’—”

“—and brought him up with tenderness, gaining the greatest delight. After some time Nabhi saw that his son was capable, and that the townspeople and ministers were devoted to him. To preserve the bounds of righteousness, he installed his son in the kingdom, placed him in the care of the Brahmans, and went with Merudevi to Badarikashrama. There, through intense but tranquil austerity and concentrated yoga, he worshipped Lord Vasudeva, called Nara Narayana, and in due course attained his glory. O Pandava! Scholars recite two verses about this:

“What other man could perform the glorious deeds of the royal sage Nabhi? Because of his pure actions, Lord Hari himself accepted the condition of his son. Who, other than Nabhi, possesses such power of birth? The Brahmans in his sacrifice, honoured with their fees, showed him by the power of their mantras the very Lord of sacrifice at the place of sacrifice.

“Lord Rishabhadeva regarded his region as a field of action. Yet, to instruct people by example, he himself lived in a teacher's household. After completing his education, he returned home with his teachers' permission. He then began to teach people their duties and performed the rites prescribed by both Shruti and Smriti. Indra had married to him a daughter named Jayanti. In due course Lord Rishabhadeva begot upon her a hundred sons endowed with qualities like his own. Bharata was the eldest of these hundred sons. He was a great yogi—”

“—and possessed of outstanding virtues. After him this region is known as Bharatavarsha. Among Rishabhadeva's remaining ninety nine sons, Kushavarta, Ilavarta, Brahmavarta, Malaya, Ketu, Bhadrāsena, Indrasprik, Vidarbha and Kikata were the nine foremost. These nine were Bharata's next younger brothers. After these nine came Kavi, Havi, Antariksha, Prabuddha, Pippalayana, Avirhotra, Dravida, Chamasa and Karabhajana. They were teachers of the Bhagavata faith and great devotees. Their lives were enriched by the Lord's greatness; I shall describe them later, in Canto 11, which will include the dialogue of Vasudeva and Narada. The eighty one youngest sons obeyed their father, were humble, learned in the Vedas, devoted to sacrifice and pure in conduct. They all became Brahmans.

“Lord Rishabhadeva was his own master. He was free from every succession of miseries, the Lord whose nature is pure bliss and knowledge. Nevertheless, he performed various deeds like one who was not the Lord, so that by his own conduct he might teach people the religion that had arisen with him. He himself possessed every good quality. Yet, out of compassion, he regulated everyone in the household through the attainment of righteousness, wealth, fame, offspring, enjoyment and liberation. Others follow whatever actions the foremost people perform. He himself knew the mysteries of the Vedas, which set out all duties. Nevertheless, following the path shown by the Brahmins, he undertook the protection of his subjects through conciliation and the other means. He performed every kind of sacrifice a hundred times according to the rules—”

[Translator’s note: The Sanskrit list has Drumila; the Bengali rendering prints Dravida. The difference is retained.]

“—and those sacrifices were fully supplied with materials, proper place and time, youthful vigour, faith, officiating priests and offerings addressed to the various deities. In this Bharatavarsha, protected by Lord Rishabhadeva, no person wished to ask another for anything for himself, as one would not seek a flower out of season. No one even looked towards another’s possessions. The subjects desired nothing beyond an ever increasing affection for their king. Once, while travelling, Lord Rishabhadeva arrived in Brahmavarta. Entering the assembly of the foremost knowers of Brahman there, he saw his sons standing in self control. Although they were already restrained and disciplined by humility and affection, Rishabhadeva began to instruct them before the people, for the purpose of governing the subjects.”

Chapter 5 of Canto 5 of the Srimad Bhagavata describes the teaching on nirvana—the essence of Jain religion—that Sri Rishabhadeva Swami imparted to his sons. The following chapter describes his departure from the body. It is therefore quite clear that Jainism too is one of India’s oldest religious traditions.

Although followers of Jainism now exist in almost every part of India, they all originally belonged to Rajputana, and Jainism enjoys particular prominence in that region. Moreover, of the twenty four Tirthankaras, twenty two were Kshatriyas of the Ikshvaku line, and the remaining two were Kshatriyas of the Hari, or Yadu, line—

—so it goes without saying that what the Jain scriptures state concerning the different Kshatriya lineages, when supported by the Vedas, Upanishads and other religious scriptures, is particularly authoritative.

In answer to Dharma's question when he appeared in the form of a crane, Maharaja Yudhishtira said:

The Vedas differ; the Smritis differ; there is no sage whose opinion does not differ.

That is, the Vedas are diverse, the Smritis are diverse, and no sage holds an opinion identical to all others. Since Jainism is a distinct religious tradition, it is entirely natural that it should differ somewhat on certain matters. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge as historical truth those statements about Kshatriya communities that agree completely with the Vedas, Upanishads and other religious scriptures.

On the origin of the Kshatriyas, the Rigveda Samhita says:

His arms were made the Rajanya.

That is, his—Brahma's—two arms became the Rajanya. The Vishnu Purana says:

They arose from Brahma's breast, abounding in the quality of rajas.

That is, when the desire to create stirred Brahma's rajas, Kshatriyas endowed with rajas arose from his breast. The Harivamsha says:

According to the colours white, red, yellow and dark, Vishnu, reflecting upon them, established the varnas.

That is, Vishnu assigned varna to the human beings created by Brahma according to their white, red, yellow and dark colours, representing sattva, rajas, rajas mixed with tamas, and tamas. In the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, the Lord says:

I created the four varnas according to the divisions of qualities and actions.

That is, I myself created the four varnas according to qualities and actions. Various religious scriptures also relate how, according to qualities and actions, the solar and lunar Kshatriyas arose from the Brahman sages Marichi and Atri—

—respectively.

From Jain scriptures we learn that Sri Rishabhadeva Swami likewise established four lineages according to qualities and actions: Bhoja, Ugra, Rajanya and Kshatriya. Among them, those of the Bhoja line who possessed qualities appropriate to Brahmans attained Brahmanhood. Those whom he employed to protect the kingdom and govern the subjects were called Ugtras because they administered the kingdom sternly: "Ugra, because of inflicting severe punishment." The

companions and relatives of Rishabhadeva Swami, who belonged to the Ikshvaku line, received the title Rajanya; all the remaining people received the title Kshatriya. Commentators on Jain scriptures have called the latter “members of ordinary royal families.”

In the Srimad Bhagavata, Sri Rishabhadeva Swami is described as an incarnation of Vishnu. In Jain religious scriptures, Rishabhadeva Swami, founder of the Bhoja, Ugra, Rajanya and Kshatriya lineages, is said to be another name for Brahma. The Jain commentators, however, do not accept that Brahma literally had four faces. They explain it as follows:

“When a thousand years had passed for Sri Rishabhadeva, he wandered to the garden called Purimatala in the city of Vinita. There, beneath a banyan tree, on the eleventh day of the dark fortnight of Phalguna, after fasting for three days, he attained in the first watch of the day *kevala jnana*: the manifestation of the soul’s perfect knowledge, which knows and sees all things in the past, future and present. Then sixty four Indras arrived, and the gods constructed a *samavasarana*. They laid it out with three enclosing walls—”

“—and twelve gateways, and so forth. They built three gateways in each direction. In the middle they made a jewelled platform, and in its centre stood an ashoka tree. Beneath it they arranged four thrones in the four directions, facing the gateways. Sri Rishabhadeva, the Arhat, took his place on the eastern throne; on the other three they placed three images resembling him. Thus anyone arriving through any gateway saw Sri Rishabhadeva facing them. For this reason Lord Rishabhadeva became famous in the world as the four faced Brahma. The Dhananjaya Kosha records Brahma as a name of Sri Rishabhadeva.”

From *Jainatattvarsha*, page 505, published by the Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay.

Whether Lord Rishabhadeva Swami was an incarnation of Vishnu or another name for Brahma lies outside our present subject. What matters here is that Rishabhadeva Swami of the Ikshvaku line founded Jainism; that the twenty three subsequent Tirthankaras, born in Kshatriya families, propagated it—

Author’s footnote:

According to Jain scriptures, Sri Rishabhadeva is another name for the four faced Brahma. We also find that one name of the “four faced” Rishabhadeva is Chaumukh. The celebrated historian Hunter says:

“There (on the mount Aboo) are five temples in all, one of the largest being three storied, dedicated to Rishavanath, the first of the twenty four Tirthankars, or deified men whom the Jains worship. The shrine, which is the only inclosed part of the Rishavanath temple, has four doors, facing the cardinal points. The image inside the temple is quadruple, and is called Chaumukh, a not unfrequent form of this Tirthankar.”

Hunter's *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, volume 1.

[Translator's note: The Hunter passage is already in English in the book; it is retained, with obvious scanning errors regularised.]

—and that Rajputana, the field of activity of Kshatriya peoples, is the chief seat of Jainism. In this chapter we shall show what those Jain scriptures say about the different classes of Kshatriyas, particularly about the Vedic Bhoja and Ugra Kshatriyas even during the reign of the Ikshvaku Kshatriyas.

The Jain scriptures were written in the Prakrit or Ardhamagadhi of their time, as well as in various regional languages. Consequently, some differences of spelling and pronunciation occur: for example, Bhoga for Bhoja, Ugga for Ugra, Uggaputta for Ugraputra, Ikkhagu for Ikshvaku, and Khattiya for Kshatriya. These differences do not affect our determination of the facts concerning the subject under discussion.

The Kalpasutra is a particularly authoritative Jain scripture. At the birth of Lord Mahavira Swami, Indra, king of the gods, describing the birth to the commander of Siddhartha's country, mentioned several celebrated lineages:

Whether among Arhats, universal monarchs, Baladevas or Vasudevas; in an Ugra family, a Bhoja family, an Ikshvaku family, a Kshatriya family, or in any other similarly pure community, family, lineage or race—

The author's Bengali explanation begins:

Whether in an Arhat family, a universal monarch's family, Baladeva's family, Vasudeva's family, an Ugra family, a Bhoja family, an Ikshvaku family, a Kshatriya family, or any other—
—pure community, lineage or family, such a birth has never occurred and will never occur again.

It is quite clear that the pure Vedic Bhoja and Ugra lineages are meant here. Further discussion on this point is therefore unnecessary.

The lineages mentioned above are explained in Maharaja Vinayavijaya's commentary on the Kalpasutra, called *Subodhika*. An extract from the Gujarati translation of that commentary is given here:

“In this way, certainly: Ugra means the families of those whom Lord Adinatha appointed as protectors. Bhoga means the families of those whom he appointed as teachers. Rajanya means the families of those whom Lord Rishabhadeva established as his friends. Ikkhaga means the

families of those born in Sri Rishabhadeva's own line. Kshatriya means the families of those whom Adinatha established to oversee the subjects." And so forth.

We can clearly see here that, at the rise of the kings of the Ikshvaku line, the royal power of the Vedic Bhoja and Ugra Kshatriyas had diminished somewhat. Many Bhojas, however, became teachers according to their qualities and actions—that is, they attained Brahmanhood—while the Ugras remained engaged in protecting the people, a duty appropriate to Kshatriyas. The Manusamhita says, "The Kshatriya's function is to bear weapons." The Atrisamhita says, "Living by arms and protecting living beings." It therefore goes without saying that the work of protecting subjects is a Kshatriya occupation.

The Uvavai Sutra is an authoritative Jain religious work. Its first Upanga mentions Kshatriya families as follows:

At that time and in those circumstances, among the many venerable ascetics who were disciples of the venerable ascetic Mahavira were some who had renounced from the Ugras, Rajanyas, Kauravas and Kshatriyas, and from soldiers, warriors, army commanders, readers of the sacred texts, merchant chiefs and wealthy householders.

Abhayadeva Suri's commentary:

Antevasi means disciples. The expression *anne gaiya* includes different individuals, some of one kind and some of another. "Ugras who have renounced": the Ugras are those appointed by Adideva to guard and protect, and their descendants. They were Ugras who then went forth, accepting initiation. The other terms are to be understood similarly. The Bhogas are those whom that same Lord established as teachers, and their descendants. The Rajanyas are those whom he established as companions, and those born in their line. Ikshvakus constitute a particular lineage. Nagas are those descended from the Naga line. Kauravas are Kurus, descended from the Kuru line. Kshatriyas are those who belong to the second of the four varnas. *Bhata* means soldiers; *jodha* means men more distinguished than ordinary soldiers, such as warriors capable of fighting a thousand. *Senavai* means army commanders. *Pasatthara* are the more distinguished readers of religious scriptures. The merchant chiefs are like men whose foreheads bear a golden band conferred by the goddess Shri. And so forth.

Agama Sangraha, number 12, Uvavai Sutra, first Upanga, page 12; published by the late Rai Dhanapati Singh Bahadur, the well known zamindar of Baluchar, Murshidabad.

The Rayapaseni Sutra is another authoritative Jain religious work. In describing the people who went to visit an ascetic named Keshi Kumara Shramana, it mentions several Kshatriya lineages. The original sutra reads:

1. Many Ugras, Ugraputras, Bhogas, Rajanyas, Kshatriyas, Ikshvakus, Kauravas and others, down to wealthy householders and their sons, bathed and performed their offerings. As described in the Uvavai, some went mounted on elephants and others on foot, proceeding in great crowds and companies. Seeing this, he reflected thus.
2. He summoned an attendant and said: “Beloved of the gods, is there today in the city of Shravasti a festival of Indra, or another festival, down to a festival of the ocean, that so many Ugras are going out?”

Malayagiri Acharya’s commentary:

“Many Ugras, Ugraputras, Bhogas”: the Ugras were established by Adideva. Ugraputras are those same people in their youthful condition. Ikshvakus are descendants of his lineage. Likewise the Bhogas are descended from the teachers appointed by Adideva himself. Rajanyas are descended from the Lord’s companions, and the enumeration continues as far as the Kauravas.

The further enumeration includes Kshatriyas, Brahmans, soldiers, warriors, Mallakis and their sons, and Licchavis. Here Kshatriyas are members of ordinary royal families. Soldiers are brave; warriors are more distinguished than soldiers. The Mallakis and Licchavis are particular rulers. Thus King Chetaka is said to have eighteen confederate kings under him: nine Mallakis and nine Licchavis. There are also many other rulers, regional lords and chiefs; crown princes are the foremost of royal persons, adorned with a band bestowed by a pleased sovereign—
—while royal representatives and regional rulers govern territories. *Kutumbikas* are masters of a number of households; *vallabhas* are favoured persons. And so forth.

An extract from Maharaja Meghraj’s Gujarati commentary, called *Balavabodha*, is quoted here:

“These many people whom Adinatha appointed as protectors are Ugras; their sons are Ugraputras. Those born in the royal line whom Adinatha appointed as friends are Rajanyas. Kshatriyas belong to ordinary royal families. Ikshvakus belong to the line of Lord Rishabhadeva. The word ‘and so on’ includes warriors, the nine Mallas—men strong as elephants—and their sons, the Licchavis and their sons, kings, lords possessing wealth in many forms, regional chiefs, great merchant chiefs, army commanders and leaders of caravans; the sons of wealthy householders are also included. First they bathed, worshipped their household deities, put on clean clothes and ornaments, and went forth with the splendour of music and artistic display described in the Uvavai Sutra. Some rode horses, some elephants, and some were seated in palanquins or litters. Others went in groups on foot, coming out of the town. Thinking about this, he called an attendant and expressed the question that had arisen in his

mind: ‘Beloved of the gods! Is there a festival of Indra, or one of the other festivals, today in the city of Shravasti, that so many Ugras, Bhogas and all these other people are going out mounted on elephants and horses?’” And so forth.

Agama Sangraha, number 10, Rayapaseni Sutra; published by Rai Dhanapati Singh Bahadur.

[Translator’s note: This Gujarati passage is printed in Bengali script. Several words in its middle enumeration are worn or unclear. The categories are translated provisionally and should be checked by a reader of older Gujarati.]

The story of King Pradeshi

A verse work entitled *Paradeshi Raja ki Chaupai*, composed by Rishi Jaymal in the regional Hindi of Rajputana about five hundred years ago, is based on the Rayapaseni Sutra mentioned above. It was collected by Rai Sitab Chand Nahar Bahadur, the distinguished zamindar of Azimganj, Murshidabad, and published by his worthy son, the late Puran Chand Nahar, M.A., B.L., an ornament of the Jain community. The portion corresponding to the original sutras is quoted below:

[The source marks an omission here.]

63. Thinking thus, some mounted horses, others chariots or comfortable litters; some travelled in palanquins or other carriages and went into that garden.

64. They carefully observed the five rules for approaching the holy teacher, and served him in the threefold manner, with mind, speech and body, as described in the Uvavai.

65. At that time Chitra was in Shravasti and heard a remarkable sound made by many people. A thought arose in his mind: “Whither are so many people going?”

66. “What occasion is there in Shravasti today? Is there a great festival of Indra, or of Hari, the four faced Brahma or Rudra, or of the Nagas or Vaishravana?”

67. “Is it for a spirit, a Yaksha, a Bhairava or a shrine; a tree, mountain or cave; a river, lake, or bathing in the sea, or another such occasion?”

68. “Those born in the Bhoja and Ugra Kshatriya families, and those of the Ikshvaku line, have adorned themselves with ornaments and mounted their own vehicles; they go together in groups.”

69. With this thought in mind, Chitra summoned a servant. After bowing with much respect, the thought that had arisen was set forth.

70. The servant, certain that Keshi had arrived, replied: “There is no great festival today for Indra or any of the other deities.”

71. “Keshi Swami has come to the garden with five hundred ascetics. Many people from the Ugra and other families are going to pay him reverence; that is the sound you hear.”

[The source marks an omission here.]

82. “I have become devoted to your religion; know this without doubt. I wish to ask again and again: tell me of this religion of yours.”

83. “Merchant chiefs, commanders and kings, the foremost men of the Ugra and other families, abandoned wealth, vehicles, territories and the rest, and accepted the burden of self restraint.”

84. “I do not have such strength to abandon this unstable worldly life. Nevertheless, instruct me; I will take the lay follower’s vows.”

From *Paradeshi Raja ki Chaupai*.

The Nandikalpa Vritti, citing the Acharanga Sutra, second Shrutaskandha, Adhyayana 10, Uddesha 2, says:

When a monk has entered [a place] and knows the families there—such as Ugra families, Bhoga families, Rajanya families, Kshatriya families, Ikshvaku families or Harivamsha families — [the source omits the continuation]. 542.

The celebrated Jain scholars led by Professor Pandit Ravji Bhai Devraj of Kutch, Gujarat, explain *Uggakulani* in their commentary on this passage as “families of protectors.” They further say, “The six families from Ugra through Harivamsha belong to the Rajput class.” That is, the six families mentioned—Ugra, Bhoja, Rajanya, Kshatriya, Ikshvaku and Harivamsha—are included among the Rajputs.

The celebrated Jain lexicon *Abhidhana Rajendra*, composed by the renowned Jain teacher Vijayarajendra Surishvara Maharaj of Bharatpur in Rajputana, a master of all Jain Agamas, describes the Uggas or Uggaputtas as pure Kshatriyas belonging to the red varna, or as “a particular Kshatriya community.” Needless to say, this is approved in every respect by the Vedas, Upanishads and other Jain religious scriptures. The *Abhidhana Rajendra* says:

Ugga: Ugra, so called because of inflicting severe punishment; a particular division of Kshatriyas, descended from the line of protectors established by Adideva.

Uggakula: the family of protectors.

Uggaputta: sons of the Ugras; princes of the Ugras; members of a particular Kshatriya community.

Author's footnote:

We have already cited the Harivamsha: “According to the colours white, red, yellow and dark, Vishnu, reflecting upon them, established the varnas.” That is, Vishnu determined the varnas of the human beings created by Brahma according to white, red, yellow and dark, corresponding to sattva, rajas, rajas mixed with tamas, and tamas. Among these, the Kshatriyas are red in colour, or endowed with rajas. It is therefore certain that the phrases in the Jain scriptures and lexicon—*arakta pane*, *arakta vamshaje* and *araktinam kule*—indicate a pure Kshatriya lineage belonging to the red varna.

[Translator's note: The author's footnote interprets these expressions through “red.” The surrounding Jain commentaries explain the Ugras' function as guardians or protectors. The spellings and this philological argument require particular scrutiny; both the quoted explanation and the author's inference have been preserved.]

In the Rigveda Samhita we first find only the four fundamental varnas—Brahman, Rajanya, Vaishya and Shudra—and in that same text we find two royal lineages celebrated as Bhoja and Ugra. Other Vedas and the Upanishads also mention them. There can therefore be no doubt that these Bhoja and Ugra kings belonged to the Rajanyas born from the arms, as described in the Rigveda. Some commentators, however, prefer to take only the dictionary meanings of the words: Ugra as “one whose strength is raised,” “warrior” and so forth, and Bhoja as “giver of food.” They thus wish to treat Bhoja and Ugra simply as adjectives applicable to Kshatriyas in general. But just as the separate existence of the Brahman, Kshatriya and other varnas cannot be denied because each of their names has a meaning, so the existence of the Bhoja and Ugra lineages cannot be denied merely because their names have meanings.

Secondly, even today a celebrated and distinct family called Bhoja exists within the Agnikula of Rajput society. We also know that thirty six principal families, bearing different names, and countless minor and extinct families arose from the three original lines—the solar, lunar and Agnikula. We may therefore say without doubt that the Ugra line also continues in Rajput society under different names.

Thirdly, Jainism is one of India's most ancient religious traditions.

Although the language and meaning of the Vedas and Upanishads are difficult for ordinary people to understand, the Jain religious scriptures were written in the Prakrit language in common use at the time. It is quite clear that the Uggas and Uggaputtas whom these Jain scriptures describe as the equals of the Bhoja and Ikshvaku families are the Vedic Ugras and Ugraputras. Jainism's fundamental principle is “Non violence is the highest religion”; Ikshvaku

Kshatriyas founded and propagated it; and Rajputana, the field of activity of Kshatriya peoples, is its chief seat. It therefore goes without saying that, in such a religion's scriptures, the low Ugra community described by Manu as following violent occupations could not receive a standing equal to that of pure Kshatriyas. Indeed, in more than one place in Jain scriptures, when different Kshatriya lineages are mentioned, we have observed that only the Ugra name is singled out in expressions such as "the Ugra and other families" and "the foremost of the Ugra and other families." Such usage undoubtedly establishes the eminence of the Ugra family. There can be not the slightest doubt that these are not Manu's Ugras, but the Ugra lineage that forms one of the Vedic Rajanya peoples born from the arms.

Chapter Three

Distinctive characteristics of the Ugra Kshatriya community

Through our discussion of the Vedas, Upanishads and Jain scriptures, we have found clear evidence of two pure Kshatriya lineages, celebrated as Bhoja and Ugra, which were particularly distinguished among the Vedic Rajanya peoples born from Brahma's arms. Nor can there be the slightest doubt that Manu's Ugra community, born of a Kshatriya father and a Shudra mother, is an entirely separate and very low community. Yet, although the people of Bengal have witnessed the good conduct and religious fidelity of the Ugra Kshatriyas who came to Bengal, and have observed their exceptional social standing among all Bengal's non Brahman communities, high and low, together with their Kshatriya customs of wearing the sacred thread and observing twelve days of mourning impurity, they continue to circulate various contradictory and erroneous opinions about their varna. This reveals the Bengalis' unfamiliarity with Kshatriya peoples. It is a matter of direct observation that the good conduct, religious fidelity, courage, vigour and social position of these Ugra Kshatriyas are unlike those of the low Ugra and similar communities. Without introducing further argument on that point, we shall now set out only those communal characteristics by which the Ugra Kshatriyas can be recognised as pure Kshatriyas of the Vedic Ugra line.

1. Although Manu's Ugras have Kshatriya ancestry, they are born of Shudra mothers and are therefore Shudras according to all religious scriptures. According to the Manusamhita, they are of the same class as, live alongside, and follow occupations as low as those of Kshattris, Pukkakas, leather workers, Dhigvanas and Venas who play musical instruments. It would therefore be wholly impossible for them to acquire the designation Kshatriya or adopt Kshatriya customs. By contrast, the designation *Ugrakshatriya suta* corresponds exactly to the *Ugraputra* of the Vedas and Upanishads and the *Uggaputta* of Jain scriptures. It is thus clear that the Ugra Kshatriya sutas who came to Bengal, possessing good conduct and fidelity to their own religion, are the Vedic Ugraputras and the Jain scriptures' Uggaputtas, "those born in an Ugra Kshatriya family."

2. They do not merely bear the name Kshatriya. In Bengal, where all non Brahman communities except one section of the Vaidyas have attained Shudra status—in this Bengal governed by Raghunandana's rulings—they have lived near Navadvip, the chief seat of Brahmanical religion,

while maintaining Kshatriya customs such as wearing the sacred thread and observing twelve days of mourning impurity. High ranking Brahmins perform their priestly rites. Some families have indeed abandoned the sacred thread in response to the circumstances of time and place. Nevertheless, some still follow their old family custom of observing ten or twelve days of impurity; others have adopted a month. Such differences of ritual among members of the same community, descended from the same stock and living in the same region, furnish a clear example of Manu's statement—

Gradually, through the abandonment of rites, these Kshatriya peoples attained the condition of Vrishalas in the world.

They show beyond doubt how a twice born community gradually attains Shudra status through the loss of rites.

3. At present Ugra Kshatriya society is divided into two classes: Janau, that is, wearers of the sacred thread, and ordinary Ugrakshatriya sutas who do not wear it. Each of these is again divided into three classes: Kulin, Satgrihastha and Maulik. Yet every Ugra Kshatriya, irrespective of class or lineage, places "Raja" before the name of the family's original ancestor when identifying himself: "a descendant of Raja Dhirsingh Ray," "a descendant of Raja Nilabandhu," "a descendant of Raja Brahmagoha," "a descendant of Raja Shakambhar Datta," and so on. Just as the name Rajput has fundamentally come to be used in place of the Vedic *rajanya*, this method of identifying oneself, irrespective of lineage, as "a descendant of Raja so and so" certainly shows that the Ugra Kshatriyas have continued to identify themselves as Kshatriyas descended from the Vedic Ugra royal line.

4. When educating their children, Ugra Kshatriyas have them memorise the following verse as the marks of an Ugra Kshatriya family:

Honour, good conduct, steadfast wisdom and eloquence;
Fame and wealth, with no attachment to violence—

A fierce disposition and strength:
These are the nine marks of the Ugra Kshatriya family.

[Translator's note: The wording and grammar of this family verse are irregular. Its list of qualities is rendered provisionally; the last half line in particular should be checked against the scan.]

These family characteristics are precisely the distinguishing marks of the Vedic Ugra Rajanyas. This becomes quite clear when we consider the bravery and other qualities of the Ugra Rajanyas described in the Vedas and Upanishads. Further discussion is therefore unnecessary.

5. A verse was composed asserting that both Rajputs and Ugra Kshatriyas are children of a Kshatriya's Vaishya wife, and it was inserted into the list of communities in the Brihaddharma Purana. In the preceding chapters, however, through discussion of the Vedas, Upanishads and Jain scriptures, we have fully demonstrated that the Ugra Kshatriyas constitute one of the particularly distinguished original lineages of ancient Rajput society and are pure Kshatriyas. The Vedas and Upanishads are the most authoritative religious scriptures. The extent to which Jain scriptures also provide authoritative evidence for the ancient history of Rajput peoples can be understood from the following observation by Colonel Tod, historian of Rajputana.

Discussing the history of Mewar, he writes:

“Mewar has, from the most remote period, afforded a refuge to the followers of the Jain faith, which was the religion of Ballabhi, the first capital of the Rana's ancestors, and many monuments attest the support this family has granted to its professors in all the—”

“—vicissitudes of their fortunes. One of the best preserved monumental remains in India is a column most elaborately sculptured, to Parswa Nath in Cheetore. The noblest remains of sacred architecture, not in Mewar only, but throughout western India, are Buddhist or Jain; and the many ancient cities where this religion was fostered, have inscriptions which evince their prosperity in these countries, with whose history their own is interwoven.” Chapter XIX.

Jainism was founded and propagated by solar Kshatriya kings, is firmly established in the territory of India's foremost solar Kshatriya ruler, and has Rajputana—the field of activity of Kshatriya peoples—as its sphere of propagation. There can therefore be no doubt that those statements in Jain scriptures which are supported by the Vedas, Upanishads and other Shruti texts are entirely trustworthy.

6. Concerning the occupation of the Ugra community, the Brihaddharma Purana says:

Let this man be called Ugra: he is strong and courageous. O wise one, let him be skilled in battle, for his occupation is that of a Kshatriya.

The Brahmans say to Prithu, son of Vena:

“O wise one, this man is strong and brave; let him therefore be known as Ugra. He follows a Kshatriya's occupation; let him be proficient in warfare.”

This clearly shows—

—that the Ugra community of this Brihaddharma Purana is entirely different from Manu’s Ugra community. We have already said that the three kinds of Kshatriyas—those of solar, lunar and Vedic royal descent—gradually divided into many branches bearing different names.

Consequently, in comparatively recent Rajput society there was no separate Ugra Kshatriya body descended from the Vedic royal line, nor is there one now. It is therefore certain that someone who had directly observed the Ugra Kshatriyas living by warfare after coming to Bengal, but was unfamiliar with Kshatriyas of the Vedic Ugra royal line, invented an explanation of their origin and occupation and thereby enlarged the Brihaddharma Purana. In the *Abhidhana Sarvasva* composed by Halayudha, court scholar of Maharaja Lakshmana Sena, we likewise find: “Ugra: one whose occupation is the practice of warfare.”

Pandit Rajendralal Acharya writes in his book *Bangalir Bal*:

“The stories of the bravery of Burdwan’s Ugra Kshatriyas were still alive in everyone’s memory. Sultan Sulaiman had been able to subdue them only after prolonged and fierce warfare. Bengali Ugra Kshatriyas did not sacrifice only their hair; like the Sikhs, they gave their heads together with it. They joyfully embraced the great stake of execution, yet did not abandon their religion. Bengali Brahmans had not yet forgotten that, only a short time before, they too had fought the Pathans fiercely to defend the temples of Saptagram.”

Pandit Dinabandhu Acharya Vedashastri writes in his book *Samaj Biplab*:

“The Aguris or Ugra Kshatriyas once wielded the sceptre throughout Anga. In ancient times they established their capital at Tamralipta.”

Rajanikanta Chakravarti of Malda writes in volume 2 of his *History of Gauda*:

“The destruction of Hindu temples and images was pursued with enthusiasm during the rule of the Karrani dynasty. [The source marks an omission.] The Aguris of the Burdwan region did not submit readily to the oppressive Pathans. Sulaiman of Gauda thought that, if they became Muslims, the Muslim body would grow stronger. He told them to become Muslims. They rejected the proposal with contempt. They were put upon stakes.”

7. The scriptures permit twice born people, including Brahmans, when calamity obstructs their own occupations, to earn a livelihood by adopting the occupation of the immediately lower varna. The Ugra Kshatriyas, who lived by warfare and held agraahas or jagirs, likewise began supporting themselves by Vaishya occupations such as cultivation and trade when their military employment in Bengal ended. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Reverend Lal Behari Day wrote an English book portraying a poor Ugra Kshatriya farming family in order to

describe the way of life of Bengal's cultivators. His observations on the character of the Ugra Kshatriya community—

—are also relevant here:

“Amongst the peasantry of Western Bengal there is not a braver nor a more independent class than the Ugrakshatriyas or Aguris, the caste of which our hero was a member. Somewhat fairer in complexion than Bengal peasants in general, better built, and more muscular in their corporeal forms, they are known to be a bold and somewhat a fierce race, and less patient of any injustice or oppression than the ordinary Bangali raiyat, who is content quietly to submit, even without a protest, to any amount of kicking. The phrase Agurir gonar, or the ‘Aguri bully’, which has passed into a proverb, indicates that the Aguris are, in the estimation of their countrymen, a hot blooded class; that they are fearless and determined in their character, and that they resent the slightest insult that is offered them. Fewer in numbers than the Sadgopa class, which constitutes the bulk of the Vardhamana peasantry, they are a compact and united band; and there is amongst them a sort of esprit de corps which is hardly to be found in any other class of Bengalis.”

Bengal Peasant Life, Chapter XLII.

The author's immortal pen vividly portrays the exceptional courage and spirit to stand against injustice in the heart of a destitute Ugra Kshatriya, reduced from a jagirdar to an ordinary cultivator and afflicted by seven hundred years of lost employment. This demonstrates that, just as the fire within a flint is not extinguished even when it lies submerged in the unfathomable sea for a thousand years, so the Kshatriya spirit of the Ugra Kshatriyas has not yet been entirely extinguished despite seven hundred years of changed circumstances and overturned fortunes.

8. At present the Ugra Kshatriyas earn their living through zamindari and talukdari estates, moneylending, trade and, generally, agricultural holdings. Some of the modern educated members have entered professions such as advocacy, legal agency and medicine. Yet two gifted poets of the Burdwan region itself, Ghanaram Chakravarti and Kavikankan Mukundaram Chakravarti, clearly recorded that in the past this very Ugra Kshatriya community came to Bengal and gained the glory of victory in war through the Kshatriya occupation of fighting.

9. As we have already said, the Kshatriyas are fundamentally divided into three classes: first, the Vedic Rajanya families born from Brahma's arms, from whom the name Rajput arose; second, the solar line descended from the great sage Marichi; and third, the lunar line descended from the great sage Atri. In present day Rajput society too, we find the three original lines—solar, lunar and Agnikula—

—in existence. Over time, probably the family bards who lacked knowledge of the scriptures, influenced by the common belief that Rudra and Agni are identical, imagined that Kshatriyas had arisen from a sacrificial fire pit and received their Kshatriya status by the favour of Mother Shakambhari. They thus gave the name Agnikula to the Vedic Kshatriyas born from Brahma's arms.

Be that as it may, every Rajput family devoutly worships Mother Shakambhari. The esteemed Colonel Tod says:

“Asa, Sacambhari, Mata, is the divinity Hope, Mother Protectress of the Sacae, or races.”

“Every Rajput adores Asapoorna, ‘The fulfiller of desire’; or Sacambhari Devi (Goddess, protectress). She is invoked previous to any undertaking.”

Chapter VI, Tod's *Rajasthan*.

Within Bengal as a whole, the worship of Mother Shakambhari is practised in the Burdwan region inhabited by Ugra Kshatriyas, especially in almost every Ugra Kshatriya household. This plainly indicates that these Ugra Kshatriyas are none other than Rajputs descended from the Agnikula Kshatriya stock, and that the Agnikula Rajputs in turn are Kshatriyas descended from the Vedic Rajanya families such as Bhoja and Ugra.

10. The Ugra Kshatriyas' devotion to their own religion is also exceptionally strong. Among them are rich and poor, educated and uneducated people of every class, yet, apart from one individual, none has ever abandoned that religion—

—and every lineage within the community has established the service of a family deity. Suitable rent free landed property has been set aside to ensure that this worship may continue properly and without hindrance for all time. In fact, in no other region of Bengal, among no other non Brahman community, does one find such devotion to serving the gods irrespective of wealth or poverty.

The truth is that the people of Bengal circulate various erroneous views about the origin of this ritually observant Ugra Kshatriya community because they know of Manu's Ugras, born of Kshatriya fathers and Shudra mothers, but are unfamiliar with the existence of Ugra Kshatriyas born from Brahma's arms. Far from being low like Manu's Ugras and similar communities, the Ugra Kshatriyas alone maintain Kshatriya customs within Bengali Hindu society. Moreover, even those who hold erroneous views about their origin, out of regard for truth, warmly praise

their good conduct and fidelity to their religion. The late Lalmohan Vidyanidhi, although describing the Ugra Kshatriyas in his *Sambandha Nirnaya* as the offspring of a Kshatriya's Vaishya wife according to the Brihaddharma Purana, writes of their customs:

“Although naturally proud, they observe all their rites and possess good conduct. Some among them are humble, educated and well mannered. There is neither ordinary commensality nor marriage between the two classes, Janau and Suta, although friendly feasting is not forbidden. Both groups serve the gods and practise hospitality.”

The revered Mahamahopadhyaya Panchanan Tarkaratna, although identifying the Ugra Kshatriyas as Manu's Ugras born of a Kshatriya and a Shudra woman in his book *Ugrakshatriya Bibarana*, openly praises their conduct and customs. He says:

“From the earliest times the Ugra Kshatriya community has followed the arrangements prescribed by the Vedas. Many maintain charitable feeding and guest houses. They generally receive guests with devotion. Many have installed images for worship. Shalagrama stones are present in almost every household. Many have also established Shiva shrines.

“[The source marks an omission.] Holy days, vows, fasting, gifts to spiritual teachers, priests and Brahmins—all are dear to them. Almost everyone undertakes pilgrimage with particular eagerness. Such a community, purified by observance, is exceedingly rare today.

“[The source marks an omission.] Though denied twice born status by their mother's religious standing, the extraordinary fidelity, spirit, helpfulness to others, protection of those seeking refuge and exceptional self sacrifice inherited from their father's community continue to ennoble this people of Kshatriya descent.”

The author's parenthetical comment:

Having identified the Ugra Kshatriyas with Manu's Ugras, he describes them as “denied twice born status by their mother's religious standing” and as “of Kshatriya descent.” Yet direct evidence still exists that the Ugra Kshatriyas have not been deprived of twice born status. We have also shown in the appropriate place that they are not a mixed community merely descended in part from Kshatriyas, but a celebrated original lineage belonging to the Kshatriya varna born from the arms in the Vedas—

—[end of the author's parenthesis]. Tarkaratna's quotation continues:

“The women are attentive to purity of conduct and the observance of vows. They know well how to honour chastity. [The source marks an omission.] Formerly, many women of this community died together with their husbands. Even today, at various places in Burdwan district, on riverbanks, beside tanks or in open fields, ‘Sati temples’ remain as memorials of those devoted and chaste women.”

11. The account current in Rajput society concerning the origin of Agnikula Kshatriyas is this: once, to destroy demons, the Brahmans performed a sacrifice on the summit of Mount Arbuda, or Abu. From that sacrifice arose four warriors—Pramara, Parihara, Solanki or Chalukya, and Chauhan. By the favour of the goddess Shakti they attained Kshatriya status and destroyed the demons. Their descendants are called Agnikula. Among ordinary Ugra Kshatriyas too, the longstanding belief is that, when the primordial goddess assumed the form of Ugrachanda to destroy the demons, the Ugra Kshatriyas arose from drops of her perspiration. It goes without saying that the latter story is simply a variant of the former. Ugra Kshatriya society never believed, and still does not believe, that its people belong to the low Ugra community born of Kshatriya fathers and Shudra mothers. Although Bengal's professional interpreters of scripture have greatly damaged their high aristocratic standing, the belief that they descend from pure Kshatriya families remains firmly established among them—

—and the artificial character of the caste lists attributed to Parashurama and of the Brihaddharma and Brahmavaivarta Puranas current in Bengal directly demonstrates that the people of Bengal formerly did not mistake the Ugra Kshatriyas for Manu's Ugras either.

In concluding, we would say that there are only two chief and entirely dependable foundations for determining the identity of a community: first, its conduct, customs, rites, family traditions and social position; second, its genealogy. Regrettably, many who now discuss the nature of communities, whether through ignorance or deliberately out of self interest, fail to follow these two basic principles. In many cases they endeavour to make a leather worker into a pure person and a pure person into a leather worker. As the common saying has it, whatever name you give a rose, it will still yield a sweet scent. This saying applies very well to the discussion of communal identity. The revered Manu also says:

Whether concealed or openly manifest, they are to be recognised by their own actions.

“Own actions” here means communal conduct, customs and ritual observances. Those who truly possess eyes and ears, and the understanding to judge a matter according to person, place and time, must therefore acknowledge that these ritually observant, religiously faithful Ugra Kshatriyas and Rajputs, possessing a particularly distinguished social position, are not Manu's low Ugras, nor the mixed communities imagined by the Brihaddharma and Brahmavaivarta—
—Puranas. Secondly, just as the gotras and related designations identify Brahman lineages, Kshatriyas too possess individual lineage identities such as Solar, Lunar, Bhoja and Ugra.

Numerous present day families have arisen from these original lineages. These genealogical names therefore do not indicate mixed descent among the Kshatriyas who bear them; they are certain evidence of their pure Kshatriya status.

Chapter Four

Why the Ugra Kshatriyas are called Agari

In the preceding chapters, through discussion of the Vedas, Upanishads and other supremely authoritative religious scriptures, together with Jain scriptures, we have obtained abundant evidence of the pure Kshatriya status and identity of Rajputs and Ugra Kshatriyas. We have also seen the incomparable bravery and fidelity to their religion of these Rajputs or Ugra Kshatriyas who came to Bengal and lived by warfare. It is nevertheless essential to determine why they have been called Agari in Bengal and in certain works of old Bengali literature.

We have hitherto heard many opinions on this matter. Some say Agari or Aguri is a corrupted form of Ugra. Others think they were called Agari because they guarded the frontier between Bengal and Utkala, the Hindi word for guarding being *agarana*. Mahamahopadhyaya Panchanan Tarkaratna writes in his *Ugrakshatriya Bibarana*: “They came from Agra as members of Raja Man Singh’s army; hence their name Agari or Aguri.” All these statements, however, rest only on conjecture. We have, in particular, found evidence that Ugra Kshatriyas lived in Bengal and followed a military occupation even during Hindu rule. The more significant evidence recently obtained on this matter is set out below.

In 1929 a copperplate charter issued by Maharaja Vijaya Sena was found while an ancient tank was being cleared of silt at Mallasarul, a village under Galsi police station in Burdwan district, inhabited by Ugra Kshatriyas. Dr Sureshwar Ray, who discovered the inscription, presented it to the Sahitya Parishad, and it is now preserved in their museum. The late Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Shastri, Professor Chintaharan Chakravarti and the celebrated archaeologist, the late Nani Gopal Majumdar, deciphered it. A reproduction and other material concerning it were published in the first issue of the *Sahitya Parishad Patrika* for 1344—

—[Bengali era]. An extract is quoted below for the reader’s information:

Having duly honoured the Kartakritika, Kumaramatya, Chauroddharanika, Audrangika, Agraharika, Aurnasthanika, Bhogapatika, Vishayapatika, their appointed officers, the Hiranyasamudayika, Pattanaka, Avasathika and those connected with the temple property, the following give notice, together with the Vithi administration: Himadatta, a Mahattara holding an agrahara at Ardhakaraka in Vakkattaka Vithi; Suvarnayasha, Mahattara of Nirvritavataka; Dhanasvamin, Mahattara and agrahara holder at Kapishtavataka; Shashtidatta and Shridatta, Mahattaras and agrahara holders at Vatavallaka; Bhatta Vamanasvamin, agrahara holder at

Koddavira; Mahidatta and Rajyadatta, agrahara holders at Godhagrama; Jivasvamin of Shalmalivataka; the swordsman Hari of Vakkattaka; the swordsman Goyika of Madhuvataka; the swordsman Bhadranandi of Khandajotika; the cavalry leader Hari of Vindhapura; and others.

“We have been approached by the revered Maharaja Vijaya Sena, who wishes to purchase from us, in accordance with the rules, eight kulyavapas in the village of Vetragarta belonging to this Vithi, and to bestow them upon the Rigvedic scholar Vatsasvamin of the Kaundinya gotra for the performance of the five great sacrifices. The gift is to increase the merit of his mother, father and himself, to endure to the end of a cosmic age and to be enjoyed by the recipient’s sons, grandsons and descendants.”

The author’s Bengali translation begins by explaining the official titles:

Kartakritika: inspector of what has and has not been done; Kumaramatya: supervisor of princes; Chauroddharanika: judge; Audrangika: one who travels in the air [?]; Agraharika: jagirdar; Aurnasthanika: a great person—

[Translator’s note: The unusual explanations, including the question mark after “travels in the air,” belong to the source. They are not modern definitions of these administrative offices. Several inscriptional place names are provisional readings of the Bengali print.]

—Bhogapati: examiner of food; Vishayapati: subordinate ruler; appointed officers: guardians, such as darogas; Hiranyasamudayika: merchant chief or treasurer; Pattanaka: city governor; Avasathika: wealthy householder. Having welcomed these and the persons connected with the temple property, the following give notice: Himadatta, Mahattara and agrahara holder of Ardhakaraka in Vakkattaka Vithi; Suvarneyasha, Mahattara of Nirvritavataka; Dhanasvamin, Mahattara and agrahara holder of Kapishtavataka; Shashtidatta and Shridatta, Mahattaras and agrahara holders of Vatavallaka; Bhatta Vamanasvamin, agrahara holder of Koddavira; Mahidatta and Rajyadatta, agrahara holders of Godhagrama; Jivasvamin of Shalmalivataka; the swordsman Hari of Vakkattaka; the swordsman Goyika of Madhuvataka; the swordsman Bhadranandi of Khandajotika; the cavalry leader Hari of Vindhapura; and the Vithi administration. Maharaja Vijaya Sena wishes to purchase from us eight kulyavapas of land in Vetragarta village in Vakkattaka Vithi and grant it to the Brahman Vatsasvamin, a Rigvedic scholar of the Kaundinya gotra, for the performance of the five great sacrifices.

We have already encountered the verse: “There are twenty two Aguris; their village is a jagir won in victory.” But *jagir* is a Persian word. Those who received royal grants of land during Muslim rule therefore became jagirdars. That Ugra Kshatriyas lived here and followed a military occupation during Hindu rule as well can be understood from Halayudha’s *Abhidhana Sarvasva*, composed at the court of Maharaja Lakshmana Sena, and from the Brihaddharma Purana. In Sanskrit, land granted by a king is called an *agrahara*, and its holder an *agraharika* or *agrahari*.

It is thus quite clear that these agrahara holders were Ugra Kshatriyas, that Agari or Aguri is a shortened form of *agrahari*, and that it is not originally the name of a community.

Another point deserves particular attention. The charters discovered up to now in various parts of India, especially those issued by Bengal's kings, conventionally mention the presence and assent first of kings and princes, and then of the different classes of ministers and royal officials; nowhere, however, does the word *agrahari* appear. Yet the charter under discussion, found at Mallasarul in Burdwan district—a region extensively inhabited by Ugra Kshatriyas—and concerning villages of that very area, names seven eminent agrahara holders associated with four agraharas. Since these holders are qualified as *Mahattara*, the existence of other ordinary agrahara holders in the area may be inferred. There is therefore no reason to doubt that these agrahara holders were Ugra Kshatriyas.

Because the charter names three persons ending in *svamin*—Dhanasvamin, Bhatta Vamanasvamin and Jivasvamin—some may regard them as Brahmins. Yet even a Brahmin does not receive the title Swami unless he is a celibate religious student or a renunciant, whereas these men appear to have been householders favoured by the king. Just as *pati*, *kanta* and *natha* form parts of such present day personal names as Dhanapati, Ganapati, Ramakanta and Ramanatha, so *svamin* appears here to form part of their names. Moreover, where many people had to be named, a thousand years ago, in any region of India—

—the names of Brahmin Swamis would have come first. Although Vatsasvamin, the recipient of the land, was a Brahmin, it is clear that his full name is formed by joining *svamin* to *Vatsa*. Nor was *Bhatta* an exclusively Brahmin title: it could also mean a high ranking royal official or a bard.

Be that as it may, that the Datta and Yasha lineages mentioned in this charter were Ugra Kshatriyas can be understood from the following genealogy of the community. It is recorded in the family books of the genealogists Shashtidas Bhattacharya and Ganesh Kulacharya, and quoted in Mahamahopadhyaya Panchanan Tarkaratna's *Ugrakshatriya Bibarana* and the late Lalmohan Vidyanidhi's *Sambandha Nirnaya*:

At Nishanka, the Indu house; Soma at Mujafar.

At Baghata, the Paresha lineage; the Pavi and Padma houses.

Barbak, Kanchana and Soma mingle in the Yasha line.

At Sat Saika, Gupta and Hui shine forth.

At Dhenga, the pure families Dam, Datta and De.
In the Husam Patra line the sage; Sankhyayana in the Yasha line.
At Burdwan, Ratnakara; in the south, Rajana.
At Ekuara, by acknowledgement, the son of Sena.

[Translator's note: This is a compressed genealogical mnemonic, not ordinary prose. The relations between its place names and family names are provisional. In particular, Nishanka, Pavi, Sat Saika, Dhenga and Husam require checking against the original verse on printed page 50.]

The eminent agrahara holders bearing the names Yasha and Datta, and the Ugra Kshatriyas bearing the same names who are now also known as Agari—

—are clearly identical. In the following chapter we shall also see that Maharajadhiraja Gopaladeva, the exemplary emperor of the Gauda state, arose from this Ratnakara lineage, which at some later time became known as the Pala line. Bengal's last Hindu royal family, who went from this very region and once again occupied the throne of Gauda, likewise arose from this military community of agrahara holders. These were the Sena kings, one of the Rajput lineages that had come to Bengal, whom the composers of their charters praised as “the crest jewel of Kshatriya families” and “the glory of the Brahma Kshatriya lineage.”

Historians unanimously acknowledge that the military Ugra Kshatriya community of Rarh was once very powerful. The Mallasarul charter under discussion also clearly indicates that they were a strong community in Rarh even in the prehistoric period.

Verse 4 of the Khalimpur charter issued by Maharajadhiraja Dharmapaladeva records that the people of Gauda placed Maharajadhiraja Gopaladeva upon Gauda's throne to end *matsyanyaya*, the condition in which the stronger devour the weaker. The military agrahara holding subordinate rulers gave Gopaladeva considerable assistance in ending this disorder; and during the long reign of the Pala emperors—

—they may readily be supposed to have preserved the strength of the state as subordinate rulers under the Pala empire. Moreover, when Mahipaladeva was killed in battle by the Kaivarta rebels Divyoka and Bhima, these agrahara holding subordinate rulers also gave his brother Maharajadhiraja Ramapaladeva much help in recovering his ancestral kingdom. Sandhyakar Nandi, a poet patronised by Ramapaladeva, clearly mentions this in verse 43 of the first chapter of the *Ramacharita* and in his own commentary on it:

43. Intent upon his desired purpose, he then wandered with great difficulty across an earth filled with many great mountain and forest lords.

Commentary:

Ramapala, wishing to bring the circle of subordinate rulers over to him, travelled about with difficulty. Here the lords described are the agraharika, vaishayika and ataviya subordinate rulers: holders of agraharas, district lords and forest chiefs. The “desired purpose” means the object he wished to attain.

The author’s Bengali rendering:

Ramapala, deeply intent upon obtaining his desired kingdom, wished to bring the circle of subordinate rulers fully over to him—that is, completely under his control. He therefore travelled with great hardship over the land, which was filled with various great agraharika, vaishayika and ataviya, or forest, subordinate kings.

Chapter Five

Section One Ancient accounts of Rarh

The nature of Aryan civilisation and the ancient history of Aryan society are recorded in the Vedas, Puranas and other religious scriptures. Although, for various reasons, many artificial additions entered the Puranas and related scriptures in later times, it is not impossible to determine the actual truth from them by reasoning and by reconciling different texts. Knowledge of the history following the Puranic age, however, was once virtually impossible. For some time now, buried villages and towns, divine images, temples and other remains discovered in different places have provided evidence of the civilisation and society of the distant past. Similarly, numerous stone inscriptions and copperplate charters unearthed in different regions of India, deciphered and explained by archaeological scholars, have supplied clear information about the genealogies, religions and administrative systems of many royal families. Reproductions and translations of these inscriptions have appeared from time to time in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, *Epigraphia Indica*, the *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal—*

—*Asiatic Society* and other publications. The inscriptions concerning Bengal have been published in *Gaudarajamala*, *Gaudalekhamala*, *Inscriptions of Bengal* and other books by the Varendra Anusandhan Samiti. Established under the patronage of the scholarly royal family of Dighapatia in Rajshahi district, especially the learned Rajkumar Sarat Kumar Ray Bahadur, M.A., this society has greatly facilitated discussion of Bengal's ancient history.

First, we quote the statements of foreign travellers and historians concerning Rarh's valour and civilisation, together with the carefully considered observations that appear at the beginning of *Gaudarajamala*, written by the celebrated archaeologist Ramaprasad Chanda:

“In 326 BC, when the world conquering Alexander, king of Macedonia, had occupied the Punjab and reached the bank of the Beas, news of two kingdoms called the ‘Prasii’ and the ‘Gangaridai’ reached his camp. It is difficult to obtain definite information about the Gangaridai from the way Alexander's historians described these two kingdoms.”

Source note: McCrindle, *The Invasion of India by Alexander the Great*, Westminster, 1893.

“Some time later, the Greek envoy Megasthenes came to the court of the Maurya emperor Chandragupta at Pataliputra. Calling the country whose capital was Pataliputra ‘Prasii,’ or the eastern country, he mentioned another independent kingdom to its east called ‘Gangaridi.’ The

‘Gangaridai’ and ‘Gangaridi’ mentioned by Greek writers are presumed to be identical. The original *Indica*, containing Megasthenes’ account of India, is no longer available. We must rely on the portions quoted by other writers in their own books.

“Following Megasthenes, Diodorus wrote: ‘The Ganges flows along the eastern boundary of the country of the Gangaridai and falls into the sea. The Gangaridai possess innumerable elephants of enormous size trained for war. For this reason their country has never been conquered by a foreign king: the inhabitants of other countries fear the countless, irresistible war elephants of the Gangaridai.’ The part of Bengal situated to the west of the Bhagirathi—”

Source notes: McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, Calcutta, 1877; McCrindle’s *Megasthenes*, pages 33–34.

“—is now called Rarh. In ancient times this region was known as Suhma. The name Rarh is also ancient. The old Jain text composed in Prakrit, the *Acharanga Sutra* (1.8.3), mentions Ladha, or Rarh. It does not seem that the Gangaridai kingdom was confined to Rarh alone, for a ruler of Rarh alone could not have maintained independence in rivalry with the powerful king of Magadha. Bengal’s other two divisions, Pundra or Varendra and Vanga, must also have belonged to the Gangaridai kingdom; Kalinga too was at one time joined to it.

“Pliny, following Megasthenes, wrote: ‘The lower course of the Ganges passes through the kingdom of the Gangaridi Calingae. Its capital is Parthalis. Sixty thousand infantry, one thousand cavalry and seven hundred elephants stand equipped to guard its king.’ Another writer, Solinus, quoted this portion of Megasthenes in a different form: ‘The Gangaridae inhabit the farthest region. Their king’s army has one thousand cavalry, seven hundred elephants and sixty thousand infantry.’ Because Pliny mentions Gangaridi and Calingae—”

“—or Kalinga together, it appears that Kalinga then formed part of the Gangaridi kingdom. At that time Kalinga denoted present day Odisha and the land south of Odisha extending to the Godavari. Later, when Odisha came to be called Odra or Utkala and only the southern part of ancient Kalinga continued to bear the name Kalinga, Utkala was still reckoned as one Kalinga within ‘all the Kalingas,’ or Trikalanga.

“By the latter part of the first century BC, the fame of Bengali skill in warfare had reached distant Rome. At the opening of the third book of the *Georgics*, the great poet Virgil wrote that he would return to his birthplace, Mantua, and build a marble temple. In it he would install an image of the Roman emperor, and on its doors he would depict in gold and ivory the famous battles of the Gangaridi and the royal emblems of the Nile. Virgil had ample opportunity to obtain information about India. Indian rulers then sent envoys to Rome, and close trading relations existed between India and Rome. In the first book of the *Georgics*, Virgil wrote—”

“—that ivory was imported into Rome from India. At that time Barygaza, or Bhrigukachchha, modern Broach, and Gange, the chief city of the Gangaridi, were India’s principal ports; India’s foreign trade was conducted from these two ports. A work called the *Periplus of the Erythraean*

Sea, composed in the first century AD, states that coral, fine muslin and other goods were exported from Gange.

“Modern scholars of both East and West have made considerable efforts to determine the Indian names and locations of the countries, cities and rivers mentioned by Megasthenes, Ptolemy and others. It does not appear that anyone has yet reached a definitive conclusion. Their opinions are therefore not quoted here, to avoid unnecessary length.”

Moreover, every account of the royal family or families that long wielded unchallenged authority in this vast Gangaridi kingdom and maintained its independence in rivalry with the powerful kings of Magadha has also disappeared into the darkness of the past.

[Translator’s note: The commodity “coral” follows the Bengali word prabal in the source. This and the historical geography above are the quoted author’s account, not updated identifications.]

Section Two The origin of the Ugra Kshatriyas or Agaris

The archaeological scholars who deciphered the Mallasarul copperplate infer from its script that it was engraved in the sixth century AD. At that time this region was governed by Maharaja Vijaya Sena, a subordinate ruler of Maharajadhiraja Gopachandra, and the charter was issued by him. It is quite clear that the eminent agrahara holders bearing titles such as Datta and Yasha were, through their combined military strength, the right hand of this subordinate kingdom. At that time the grammatically correct form *agrahari* had not yet changed into the colloquial Agari or become a communal designation. We shall now show the popular account, based on fanciful invention, that later arose concerning the origin and royal power of this exceptionally strong Agari community.

Some time ago the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad printed and published a manuscript Ramayana dated Shaka 1501, found in the village of Patrasayer in Bankura district, as a work composed by Pandit Krittibas. In its Uttarakanda, within the story of the Shudra ascetic Shambuka, the Agari community is mentioned as Shambuka’s sons. The distinguished scholar Hirendranath—

—Datta calls this passage “the genealogy of the Aguri community” in his foreword to that Ramayana. It is therefore appropriate to examine the scriptural foundation of the passage, the limits of the religious writer’s authority, the reason for such a tradition concerning the Agaris, and what historical information we may obtain from it. We shall accordingly discuss the statements in this Ramayana here.

When Sri Ramachandra cut off the head of the Shudra ascetic Shambuka and cast his body into the fire, Shambuka—according to this Ramayana—assumed a Gandharva body and was ascending to heaven. He called to Ramachandra and said:

“Lord, my family remains in the mortal world;
I did not have the opportunity to bid them farewell.
I married into an excellent family, in everyone’s knowledge;
Twelve sons were born from her womb.
They are mighty, unmatched in battle,
Skilled in weapons and missiles, and clever in understanding.
I married a second time, a Brahman’s daughter,
Born in a great family, beautiful, virtuous and devoted to her husband.
From her womb I had ten sons;
They wear tree bark and bear matted locks upon their heads—”
“—born of my seed, the Brahman woman’s sons.
In accordance with righteousness, please care for them.”

The Shambuka story in the original Ramayana composed by the great sage Valmiki contains no account of the Shudra ascetic’s marriages to Shudra and Brahman daughters, the birth of twenty two sons, his request to Ramachandra to maintain them, his attainment of a Gandharva body, or his ascent to heaven. On the contrary, it expressly states that Shambuka could not attain heaven even after being killed by Ramachandra. There is therefore no doubt that all the statements of this so called Kritibas concerning the Agari community’s origin are his own inventions and entirely unreal. Nevertheless, the account he recorded almost four centuries ago, from direct observation of the Agaris’ conduct, customs, rites and disposition, reads as follows:

“The Shudra Agaris became known as Kshatriyas;
Lady Lakshmi became the giver of their boons.
The Janau Agaris bear the thread upon their breasts;
They neither kill nor milk cows, and worship Narayana.
The great Shura Kshatriyas became very powerful,
Unequaled in wealth, grain, strength and valour.
Some are of good family, some without family standing, some very unruly;
In pride, some are Chandalas by nature—”

[Translator’s note: The line concerning the thread on the breast is awkward in the old Bengali wording. This rendering follows the distinction between Janau and Suta explained immediately afterwards.]

“—the Chandali’s son acknowledges neither father nor brother;
Having given a daughter in marriage, he killed his son in law over a dispute.

The good people built many temples and monasteries,
And installed within them the three eyed god.
They made grants of land to worthy Brahmins;
Daily the Brahmins performed worship in the god's presence.
Those who wear the sacrificial thread, the ten full brothers,
Neither hold the plough, carry burdens nor milk cows.
They provided embankments, causeways and excellent tanks,
Guest houses, drinking water shelters and houses of the gods.
They recite the Gayatri, perform the twilight rites and worship the gods;
The ten brothers embody learning.
The Brahmin woman's ten sons are learned in judgement;
They perform religious acts and listen to scripture, their minds on nothing else."

The respected Hirendranath Datta also points out that the Uttarakanda in the Ramayana published by the Sahitya Parishad differs from Pandit Krittibas's Ramayana. He writes:

"Many differences can be observed between this Uttarakanda and the Ramayanas printed at Serampore and Battala. Vaishnava influence is clearly evident in the commonly printed books, but in this Uttarakanda it is Shaiva influence that is apparent."

It is therefore certain that this—

—Uttarakanda was artificially inserted into the Ramayana composed by Pandit Krittibas.

Whoever wrote it, however, the picture he gives of Ugra Kshatriya society clearly shows him to have been an eyewitness. From his writing we obtain the following historical information about conditions four hundred years ago:

1. The Ugra Kshatriyas of that time were unequalled in strength, courage and vigour.
2. They had two classes, Janau and Suta, and both enjoyed Lakshmi's favour.
3. Both classes excavated tanks, built temples and established divine worship; they gave freely for guest houses, drinking water shelters and similar works.
4. The Suta class was extremely irascible, proud and quarrelsome. Indeed, a community still called "the headstrong Aguri" cannot have been very quiet and mild four hundred years ago.
5. The historically known Shura Kshatriyas of southern Rarh—the "great Shura Kshatriyas"—belonged to Ugra Kshatriya society.

6. By “the Chandali’s son” the poet intended the Chandela Kshatriyas known within Ugra Kshatriya society as Cha Grami; for even today uninformed people call their family goddess, Mother Chandalleshvari—

—by the altered names Chandan-eshvari or Chaleshvari.

7. The Janau class of Ugra Kshatriya society wore the sacred thread; the Suta class did not—that is, they followed Shudra customs. Both, however, were known as Kshatriyas.

This last fact—that one class followed Kshatriya customs and another Shudra customs, although both bore the title Kshatriya—is a riddle that “some understand, while others remain perplexed.” For this reason various erroneous and fanciful views about the origin of the Ugra Kshatriya community have been recorded in the Brahmapurana, Brihaddharma Purana, the caste list attributed to Parashurama, *Shabda Kalpadruma*, *Vachaspathyam*, *Vishvakosha* and other works. The Ramayana under discussion presents an extreme example. Inserting the Agaris into the Shambuka story is not merely without scriptural foundation; it is wholly contrary to scripture. No religious scripture in any age has sanctioned a Shudra Shambuka’s marriage to a Brahman daughter and the attainment of twice born status by her children. In particular, the extravagant supposition that the sons begotten by a man upon a Brahman woman acquired twice born status, when Ramachandra had been compelled to execute that very man for the sinful act of a Shudra performing austerities, is neither scriptural nor reasonable.

Be that as it may, to determine the cause of these two forms of custom—

—and ritual within Ugra Kshatriya society, we must also examine the position of other non Brahman communities within Bengali Hindu society. Apart from western Bengal’s Vaidyas and the Janau Ugra Kshatriyas, all its other communities follow Shudra customs and rites. For the same reason, one class of Ugra Kshatriyas too has fallen away from the Savitri initiation. We shall discuss this at length in the subsequent chapter entitled “Buddhist influence in Ugra Kshatriya society.” Let us now see how the Ramayana under discussion describes the dwelling places of Shambuka’s sons. The poet says:

“At Raghunatha’s command Hanuman mounted a chariot,
And, taking them all with him, set out southwards.
South of Gauda lay the impassable ocean;
They travelled far and reached its shore.
At Hanuman’s bidding the ocean yielded territory;

The twenty two brothers took twenty two towns.
All became known by the name Agari;
Each had a yojana for his dwelling.”

Underlying this description too is the historical truth that the Agari community’s authority extended through Rarh, on the western bank of the Ganges, as far as the sea coast—

—and within this territory, the genealogical lists of Ugra Kshatriyas in the family books of Kulacharya Shashtidas Bhattacharya and others mention the Pala family of Burdwan in the line “Ratnakara at Burdwan, a king in the south” (see Chapter Four). It is also quite clear that they were celebrated as the Ratnakara, or Ocean, lineage because their territory extended to the sea coast and they possessed immense naval power.

Section Three The genealogy of the Pala emperors

In his *Dharmamangala*, Ghanaram Chakravarti of Burdwan, one of Bengal’s ancient poets, composed a genealogy of the Pala emperors that not only connects them with the sea but imagines them as descendants of the sea itself.

The story in Canto 14 of the *Dharmamangala* is as follows. One day Maharaja Dharmapala went hunting, leaving his wife Vallabhadevi responsible for feeding the Brahmans. Absorbed in a game of dice, Vallabhadevi neglected the Brahmans’ meal. When Dharmapaladeva returned, he banished her to the forest. The queen built a little hut in a forest on the bank of the Ganges and began to live there.

Some time later Dharmapaladeva went hunting, lost his way and, suffering from thirst, arrived at that very hut—

—without recognising his wife. Vallabhadevi, however, recognised her husband and attended to him. She then mixed into his food various herbs obtained from forest women, hoping to bring him under her influence. But Dharmapaladeva recovered his composure, recognised his wife and did not eat the food. He left after promising to take her home the following day.

In distress, Vallabhadevi cast all the food into the Ganges. It floated with the current into the sea. The Ocean then assumed Dharmapaladeva’s form and appeared before Vallabhadevi. Afterwards he revealed his identity and blessed her with a boon, and so forth. This is the account of Devapaladeva’s birth.

Every educated person knows that our country never possessed a regular practice of writing history. From works such as the great poet Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* and the learned Bengali Sandhyakar Nandi's *Ramacharita*, we can indeed obtain a certain amount of historical information, but it cannot be called sufficient for historical inquiry. For these reasons, most of the books that later poets composed on the basis of such works, or following popular tradition, deserve to be counted among tales nourished by poetic fancy.

Like the Ramayana attributed to Pandit Krittibas, Ghanaram—

—Chakravarti's *Dharmamangala* also abounds in poetic invention. Since the poet appeared long after Dharmapaladeva, he had no means of knowing even the name of Dharmapala's wife except through imagination; he therefore called her Vallabhadevi. In verses 9, 10 and 11 of the Munger inscription issued by Devapaladeva, we find:

9. That king, entering household life, took the hand of Rannadevi, daughter of Sri Parabala, ornament of the Rashtrakutas.

10. "Is this Lakshmi in bodily form, the Earth herself embodied, the king's fame made visible, or the household goddess?" So the people wondered at that woman of pure conduct, who surpassed the women of the inner palace through her naturally weighty virtues.

11. That praiseworthy and devoted wife bore a son, Sri Devapaladeva of gracious countenance, just as an oyster in the sea produces the jewel of a pearl.

The author's Bengali rendering:

In household life, Dharmapaladeva married Rannadevi, daughter of Maharaja Sri Parabala, the ornament of the Rashtrakuta kingdom. The subjects wondered whether this queen of pure conduct was Lakshmi embodied, the Earth embodied, the king's fame embodied, or the household goddess. Through her grave disposition and virtues she surpassed the inner palace. Just as a sea oyster brings forth a pearl jewel, the praiseworthy, devoted Rannadevi gave birth to Sri Devapaladeva of gracious countenance.

Be that as it may, the foundation of Ghanaram Chakravarti's poetic invention is also this: even after the Pala kings, originally rulers of a small kingdom, ascended the jewelled throne of Gauda, they did not neglect their long celebrated naval strength. Consequently, their fame as the Ratnakara lineage never disappeared.

In the Khalimpur charter issued by Maharajadhiraja Sri Dharmapaladeva we find:

The various boats moving along the course of the Bhagirathi create the impression of a range of mountain peaks set into a bridge.

That is, the various warships upon the Bhagirathi's stream create in people's minds the illusion of mountain peaks forming a bridge.

Sandhyakar Nandi, a poet patronised by Maharajadhiraja Madanapaladeva, composed an extraordinary poem entitled *Ramacharita*. From beginning to end it is written in language with a double meaning. On one side it describes Ravana's abduction of Sita, wife of Ramachandra, son of King Dasharatha, and Rama's rescue of Sita after killing Ravana. On the other, it describes the seizure by the Kaivarta subordinate rulers Divya and Bhima of Maharaja Ramapaladeva's *janaka bhu*, or ancestral land, Varendra, followed by warfare and Ramapala's victory. The late Haraprasad Shastri found this book in the Nepal king's library, brought it from there and arranged for its printing and publication by the Asiatic Society. In verses 3—

—and 4 of its first chapter, Dharmapaladeva is also described as born of the Ocean's lineage, and his naval strength is celebrated:

3. May that Ocean, from which Lakshmi emerged, increase your prosperity: at the great dissolution, after withdrawing the worlds, the Lord enters it.

The author's Bengali rendering:

May the lord of waters, the Ocean from which Lakshmi appeared, and into which Vasudeva enters at the dissolution after taking all the worlds into his belly, increase your wealth and prosperity.

4. In that lineage there arose a king named Dharma, a light of his family, radiant like Ikshvaku. His spotless fame, proclaimed throughout the world, shone even after crossing the sea.

The author's Bengali rendering:

In that Ocean lineage was born a king named Dharma, a light of his family, brilliant like Ikshvaku. His pure fame, renowned throughout the world, passed beyond the sea—that is, it spread to the sea's farther shore.

Verse 8 of that chapter explicitly states that Vighrapaladeva was born in the Ratnakara lineage:

8. In this Ratnakara lineage there arose King Vighrapala, whose splendour was compared with Hari, before whom rows of kings bowed.

The author's Bengali rendering:

Just as the Moon arose from the sea, so King Vighrapala, more powerful than a lion, was born in the Ratnakara lineage. Kings bowed before him.

Just as the Pala kings' fame as the Ratnakara lineage because of their immense naval power is a historical fact, so too is their great devotion and reverence towards gods, goddesses and Brahmins, although they worshipped Lord Buddha—

—and it is clear that Ghanaram's *Dharmamangala* story of Dharmapaladeva banishing his wife for neglecting the service of Brahmins is merely an exaggeration of that truth.

Section Four The community and original settlement of the Pala emperors

Because the Pala emperors were worshippers of Lord Buddha, none of their charters mentions their jati or varna. We have already noted, however, Maharajadhiraja Dharmapaladeva's marriage to a Rashtrakuta king's daughter. Maharaja Vigrahapaladeva likewise married Lajjadevi, an ornament of the Haihaya family—identified here as Hui:

9. His wife was called Lajja, like Jahnu's daughter to the Ocean, an ornament of the Haihaya line. Her pure deeds were a supreme means of sanctification for the families of both her father and her husband.

From the Bhagalpur charter issued by Narayanapaladeva.

Their marriages to these distinguished Kshatriya princesses clearly show the Pala emperors to have been Kshatriyas of the Rajput class.

In the copperplate charter issued by Vaidyadeva, the Brahman minister of Maharajadhiraja Kumarapaladeva—

—found at Kamauli village near the confluence of the Ganges and Varana at Varanasi, the Pala line is explicitly described as solar Kshatriya:

1. Victory to Hari, who playfully assumed the form of a boar, whose body extends across the directions, a measure of the sky and a spear for protecting the seed of the world.

The author's Bengali rendering:

Victory to Sri Hari, the measure of the sky, the spear guarding the seed of creation, who playfully assumed a boar's body, his form spanning the directions.

2. In the lineage of the Sun, his right eye, there was formerly born King Vigrahapala, perfected in prosperity of every kind.

The author's Bengali rendering:

In the line of the Sun, who is Sri Hari's right eye, there was once born a king named Vigrahapala, eminent in every virtue.

The introductory portion of the *Gaudarajamala* mentioned earlier was written by the celebrated archaeologist, the late Akshay Kumar Maitreya. We shall first quote his investigation of the original home or settlement of the Pala emperors. He writes:

“On the other hand, it will be seen in *Gaudarajamala* that immediately before the rise of the Pala kings the whole country was divided into many small kingdoms. No one possessed authority over the whole country—”

“—physical force had become dominant; the weak were oppressed in the grasp of the strong; the country had become utterly anarchic. Sanskrit literature calls such a condition *matsyanyaya*. To remove it, the people collectively elected Gopaladeva as king. He was the first ruler of the Pala royal family, known in history as Gopaladeva the First.

“That the people of this country once elected a man king to remove anarchy, demonstrating the divinely bestowed, irresistible strength of popular power, is the most noteworthy event in Bengali history. When discussing the countries and periods in which such an emergence of popular power has occurred, this remarkable event in Bengali history deserves to be remembered.

“Bengal has entirely forgotten it. Although Lama Taranatha’s work in Tibetan records a popular tradition about it, and traces of the tradition remained in Bengali folk tales, no one accepted it as a historical event. But—”

“—because it is clearly stated in the copperplate charter of Gopaladeva’s son Dharmapaladeva, discovered at Khalimpur in Malda, this noteworthy tradition has acquired the standing of history. The dynasty thus established with the people’s aid obtained sovereignty over all Uttarapatha, or Aryavarta; yet its history has still not been adequately discussed in Bengali literature. The rise and fall of this Gauda empire is the principal subject of *Gaudarajamala*. The chief subject of the other divisions of the Gauda account—art, descriptions, inscriptions, texts, communal identity, iconography and religious communities—is likewise the rise and fall of this Gauda empire, for all of it belongs to Bengali history.

“There is one reason why these matters have not received their due appreciation from Bengalis. In discussing the birthplace of the Pala kings and how they acquired the Gauda throne, many have concluded that they were inhabitants and rulers of Magadha, who gradually extended their kingdom into Bengal and acquired the title ‘Lord of Gauda’; the Bengalis lived subject to them —”

“—in subordination. Finding references to victorious military headquarters at Pataliputra in Dharmapaladeva’s charter, at Mudgagiri or Munger in Devapaladeva’s charter, and likewise at Mudgagiri in Narayanapaladeva’s charter, I too, like many others, concluded that the earlier Pala kings did not live in Bengal. As soon as I began investigations in Varendra, that conclusion changed. Verse 2 of the Garuda pillar established in Varendra states that Dharma, or

Dharmapala, was first lord of the eastern direction and later, through the skilful counsel of the minister Garga, became lord of all directions. Taranatha's work also indicates that Gauda was conquered first and Magadha afterwards. In the *Ramacharita*, Varendra is called the Pala kings' *janaka bhumi*, their ancestral homeland. There is therefore no longer reason to doubt that the Pala kings were Bengalis.

"If the Pala kings were Bengalis, where did their capital disappear? In what secluded place in Bengal did the Bengali king elected by Bengalis, Gopaladeva, put on the royal crown? Upon what soil did the hearts of the Bengali people swell and beat with the praiseworthy glory of this unprecedented manifestation—"

"—of popular power? Some, attempting to settle the question while sitting at home and seeing no other way to solve it, have conjectured that the Pala kings had no capital fixed in one place. They preferred to live in victorious military headquarters; wherever such a headquarters was established, a royal town appropriate to the occasion arose.

"Although such a wandering life might occasionally have pleased a king, such an arrangement appears quite impossible for a kingdom. The Anusandhan Samiti could not accept the peculiar supposition that a dynasty ruling an immense empire across Aryavarta possessed no permanent capital anywhere. It therefore undertook investigations in Varendra and discovered the ruins of various royal cities."

Reading this observation by the late Maitreya, guide of the Varendra Anusandhan Samiti, makes it quite clear that the question of the Pala emperors' original home still remains an unsolved—
—riddle for archaeological scholars. What is surprising is that Maitreya, apparently satisfied to a degree, saw Varendra described as Ramapaladeva's *janaka bhu* in Sandhyakar Nandi's *Ramacharita* and determined that it was therefore the Pala emperors' birthplace. It is remarkable that even so learned an archaeologist overlooked the poem's technique: on one side it describes Ravana's seizure of Sita, wife of Dasharatha's son Ramachandra; on the other, Bhima in the role of Ravana seizes the *janaka bhu* of Ramapaladeva in the role of Rama. Overlooking this, he accepted Varendra as the birthplace of the Pala emperors.

Where Ramapaladeva is represented as Ramachandra and the rebel Bhima as Ravana, it is entirely natural for the poet to use *janaka* of the seized Varendra land to sustain the comparison with Sita, Janaka's daughter. But this cannot be accepted as evidence that Varendra was the birthplace of the Pala emperors' ancestors.

Secondly, a charter of the Pala emperor Mahipaladeva, an ancestor of Ramapaladeva, discovered at Bangarh in Dinajpur, contains the following verse:

From him arose Sri Mahipaladeva, protector of the earth, who destroyed all enemies in battle by the might of his arms and recovered his ancestral kingdom, which had been wrongfully seized and lost—

—placing his lotus feet upon the heads of kings.

Here Varendra is called Mahipaladeva's ancestral kingdom. It is therefore clear that Varendra was not the Pala emperors' original birthplace.

On the other hand, the following two verses in the inscription on the Garuda pillar at Badal in Dinajpur clearly show that the Pala emperors had been rulers of a small kingdom somewhere west of the Gauda state. Subsequently, through the skilful counsel of their Brahman minister Garga, Dharmapaladeva became lord of the eastern direction and then lord of every direction:

1. In the Shandilya line arose Viradeva, the foremost of the twice born. In his gotra was Panchala; from him Garga was born.
2. "Indra was lord of the eastern direction, not of the others; even there, though he had Brihaspati as minister, he was conquered by the demon lords. But I have made Dharma, lord of that direction, master of every direction." Thus Garga laughed at Brihaspati.

The author's Bengali rendering:

Viradeva was born in the Shandilya line; in his gotra was Panchala, and from Panchala was born Garga. 1. Garga mocked Brihaspati, saying that Indra had ruled only the eastern direction, not the others, yet even in that single direction the demon lords defeated him despite having a minister such as Brihaspati—

—"whereas I have made Dharma, lord of that eastern direction, master of every direction." 2.

Lama Taranatha also says in his work that the Pala emperors conquered Gauda first and Magadha afterwards. It is therefore certain that their campaign of conquest began from Rarh, situated between Gauda and Magadha.

Those learned archaeological scholars can, as it were, breathe life into bricks, stone, earth, broken and whole images and other lifeless objects, make them speak and determine the truth. Why they nevertheless continue to speculate without looking towards this vast Rarh region is beyond our limited understanding. It was the field of activity of the Shura kings; the place where the Sena kings, conquerors of Kashi, Kamarupa and Kalinga, rose to power; the land that carried

upon its breast ports such as Saptagram and Tamralipta, filled with immeasurable merchandise, advancing the country's prosperity and welfare; and the country protected and well governed as far as the coast by the immensely powerful agrahara holding Ugra Kshatriya heroes.

During the reign of the Chandela king Kirtivarman, in the middle of the eleventh century, Prince Vikramaditya defeated the ruler of Gauda and separated Rarh from the Gauda state.

Consequently, their court poet Krishna Mishra, in his *Prabodha Chandrodaya*—

—described “the peerless Gauda realm, and within it Rarh.” In truth, this very Rarh is an inexhaustible source of the nectar like milk of Mother Bengal, rich in water and fruit. Drinking this nectar, poets such as Jayadeva, Chandidas, Mukundaram, Ghanaram and Kashiram delighted all directions with their sweet songs. Through its intoxicating power Sri Chaitanya flooded India with love. Tasting this nectar, Rammohan, in Bengal's dark age, astonished the world with the pure light of knowledge in the Upanishads, India's imperishable treasure. Anointed in this stream, the eternally perfected Sri Ramakrishna harmonised all religions and is worshipped as an incarnation for the age.

In the distant past, to remedy the *matsyanyaya* brought about in Bengal by conflict between Hinduism and Buddhism, a great man named Ramai Pandit appeared in a secluded village of Rarh. Through the great Buddhist formula, “I take refuge in the Buddha; I take refuge in the Dharma; I take refuge in the Sangha,” that source of universal love, he infused new life into the old framework of Sanatana Hindu religion with its many rites and ceremonies, establishing a novel faith that captivated the people. Its deity was Lord Buddha, incarnation of Narayana, in the form of Dharmaraj. His place of spiritual practice was the bank of the Balluka river, between the Damodar and Dwarakeshwar, not far from Burdwan. Works composed by Burdwan's poets—

—such as the *Dharmapurana*, *Shunyapurana* and *Dharmamangala* were its history, sacred legends and religious scriptures. Bengal's exemplary rulers, the Pala emperors and empresses of the Ratnakara line, and their subordinate Sena kings and queens, were the adherents, heroes and heroines of that religion.

Again, Mother Bengal's indomitable, fierce natured adopted sons—the Shura, Pala, Chandela, Sena and other royal families—first found shelter upon this loving breast and drank this nectar. Then, through unmatched valour, they raised Bengal's victorious banner in every direction across India. This is no dream or fancy; it is a firmly established truth of Bengali history.

If we consider attentively the geographical positions of Rarh and the ancient city of Gauda, and their natural relationship, we can readily understand Rarh as Gauda's Khyber Pass or Panipat, and the Ganges as the city's natural moat. Rarh, as the state's frontier, and the Ganges, as its broad moat, protected Gauda against external enemies; that is why the site was chosen for the capital. In this Rarh region the strength of Shura, Pala, Chandela, Sena and other Hindu rulers, and later of Mughals, Pathans, Marathas and other warlike peoples, was repeatedly tested. The Naihati copperplate and popular tradition clearly show that the Shura and Sena kings made Rarh their home. Direct evidence that the Pala—

—emperors too went from Burdwan, the heart of Rarh, to occupy the throne of Gauda has not yet disappeared. Its truth can be understood by attending closely to the following evidence and judging it impartially.

1a. We have already seen that the Ramayana circulated under Pandit Krittibas's name describes the Ugra Kshatriya community as rulers of twenty two small kingdoms granted by the Ocean.

1b. Ghanaram Chakravarti of Burdwan, in his *Dharmamangala*, and Sandhyakar Nandi, in his *Ramacharita*, describe the Pala emperors as born of the Ocean's lineage and favoured with the Ocean's boon.

2a. In the extracts from Ugra Kshatriya family books quoted by Mahamahopadhyaya Panchanan Tarkaratna and the late Lalmohan Vidyanidhi, we find: "Ratnakara at Burdwan, a king in the south."

2b. In Sandhyakar Nandi's celebrated *Ramacharita* we find:

In this Ratnakara lineage there arose King Vigrahapala, whose splendour was honoured by Hari and before whom rows of kings bowed.

That is, Vigrahapala, whose prowess was praised even by a lion, was born in the Ratnakara gotra or lineage. He defeated the kings of his time and brought them under his control.

3a. Within Ugra Kshatriya society, the Ratnakara family is known by the title Pala.

3b. The Pala emperors, though celebrated as the Ratnakara line, also bore the title Pala.

4a. In the households of the Pala family within Ugra Kshatriya society, Lord Buddha is worshipped as Dharmaraj, together with the goddess Prajnaparamita and the Dharma wheel, alongside Hindu deities such as the Narayana stone, Mahadeva and Mother Trailokyatarini.

4b. Although the Pala emperors worshipped Lord Buddha, their charters show them granting land for service and worship of Narayana, Mahadeva and other gods, dedicating the merit to Buddha. Not only that: they had the Mahabharata recited for Buddha's sake, and, after bathing in the Ganges, gave land to Brahmans as an offering. This is the true form of the Buddhism current in Bengal and adopted by the Pala emperors.

5. We have already said that the new form of Bengal's Buddhism was given fresh life at Burdwan, the centre of Rarh. It was by taking refuge in this new religion that Gopaladeva could establish himself securely upon Gauda's throne, and he named his son Dharmapala after his chosen deity.

6. Although Maharajadhiraja Gopaladeva was the first to occupy Gauda's throne, the Gauda empire was actually established during Dharmapaladeva's reign. At the end of his Khalimpur charter we find—

“In the increasingly victorious reign, year 32, day 12 of Marga.”

This clearly indicates that Maharajadhiraja Dharmapaladeva's victorious expansion began from Burdwan. The composer of the charter has hinted at that fact.

[Translator's note: The author reads a suggestion of the place name Vardhamana or Burdwan in abhivardhamana, “increasing.” The literal sense of the charter's dating formula is retained above.]

7. All the Pala charters discovered to date appear to have been issued from *jayaskandhavaras* in different regions—that is, army camps in conquered territories. It is therefore clear that those regions were not the Pala emperors' original homes. Thus Dharmapaladeva's Khalimpur charter, issued from “the victorious camp established at Pataliputra”; Devapaladeva's Munger charter, from “the victorious camp established at Mudgagiri”; Narayanapaladeva's Bhagalpur charter, also from Mudgagiri; Mahipaladeva the First's Bangarh charter, from “the victorious camp established at Vilasapura”; Madanapaladeva's Manahali charter, from “the victorious camp established near Ramavati city”; and other charters prove that the original Pala homeland was not in Bhagalpur, Patna, Munger or the regions on the eastern bank of the Ganges. In particular, verse 4 of Dharmapaladeva's Khalimpur charter shows that Gopaladeva did not originally establish his empire by force: the people voluntarily caused him to accept royal authority, as follows—

3. From him, Dayitavishnu, was born the accomplished, praiseworthy Vapyata, destroyer of enemies, who adorned the earth as far as the sea with his fame.

4. His son was the celebrated Sri Gopala, crest jewel of kings, whom the people caused to take the hand of royal Fortune in order to remove *matsyanyaya*. The full moon night, with the abundant splendour of its moonlight, could imitate the whiteness of his enduring fame spread through the recesses of the directions.

The author's Bengali rendering:

The accomplished, praiseworthy Vapyata, destroyer of enemies, who adorned the earth to the seas with his abundant fame, was born from Dayitavishnu. 3.

The celebrated King Gopala, crown jewel among rulers, was born of Vapyata. To end *matsyanyaya*, the people caused him to take the hand of royal Fortune. The full moon night's moonlight could imitate the whiteness of his lasting fame spread throughout the directions. 4.

These two verses clearly show that Gopaladeva was the son of a king named Vapyata ruling some region, and that the people placed him on Gauda's throne to end disorder. We shall show later what great quality drew them to him, what captivating power persuaded them to place the sceptre in his hands, and through what extraordinary strength that sacred sceptre could be wielded across India with glory and unimpeded authority for century after century.

That the extensive Rarh region on the western bank of the Bhagirathi belonged to the Pala empire from its very establishment is a historical fact. At the Divya Memorial Festival held in 1341 under the presidency of the celebrated and respected archaeologist Ramaprasad Chanda, the tireless worker, the late Ayodhyanath Vidyavinod, said in his address:

“In the eighth century, harassed by the oppression, persecution and foreign invasions arising from anarchy, the heroes of Gauda placed the royal crown upon the noble head of Gopala, descendant of the subordinate king Dayitavishnu, from the birthplace of the Gangaridai heroes, opening a new chapter in Bengali history.”

Yet there is no evidence of a Pala campaign of conquest in Rarh. Rather, old Bengali poems such as the *Dharmamangala* tell of royal relatives in the region—King Haripala of Simulia, King Gajapati of Mangalkot, King Karna Sena of Mayna—and of subordinate rulers holding jagirs who belonged to the Indu, Soma, Gupta, Yasha, Datta, Sena and other lineages. Since Rarh belonged to the Pala empire from the beginning, while no Pala campaign there is mentioned, there is no room to doubt that Gopaladeva arose from Burdwan's Ratnakara family at the centre of Rarh.

Author's footnote: Present day enquiring historians acknowledge that, to remove *matsyanyaya*, the people of Gauda elected Gopaladeva, one of the subordinate rulers of Rarh, that land which produces heroes. In the

January 1913 *Dhaka Review*, in an article entitled “Ramacharita and the Pala Kings,” the president of the History Section of the Dhaka Sahitya Parishad said: “Dayitavishnu was a minor king of Rarh.”

8. In the *Chandi* poem composed by Bengal’s early poet Kavikankan Mukundaram Chakravarti, a young hunter named Kalketu receives great wealth through the goddess’s grace, clears the forest and establishes the kingdom of Gujarat. He subsequently comes into conflict with the king of Kalinga, and a great war follows. Gujarat, however, lies at India’s western edge, and Kalinga at its eastern edge. The name Gujarat is therefore merely the poet’s invention. In describing a hunter clearing a forest and founding a kingdom, the poet followed a popular tradition current in western Bengal. It is said that the immensely powerful founder of Bishnupur’s kingdom was brought up from childhood in a Bagdi household, and through his intelligence and ingenuity cleared the forest and founded Bishnupur. For this reason the region remains known as Bana Bishnupur, or Forest Bishnupur. We may therefore infer that Kalketu came into conflict with the subordinate rulers of Rarh and Kalinga, and that such a tradition was current in the poet’s time, during Muslim rule.

There is also no doubt that his poem clearly reveals the political and social picture of his own day. Living in Burdwan, inhabited by Ugra Kshatriyas, the poet wrote of them in passing:

“Among the five Hazras,
You shall enjoy the subjects’ revenues;
You shall be the king’s gatekeeper.”

[Translator’s note: The first line of this short quotation is worn. “Five Hazras” is provisional; the title Hazra and the reference to revenues should be checked against the scan.]

“The commanders and all the subordinate rulers are present;
You accepted the betel leaf as a pledge to capture the hero.”

“I am neither a Niyogi nor a Chaudhuri, nor do I hold a taluk.”

In particular, concerning Madanapaladeva of Burdwan’s Pala line on the battlefield, he writes:

“Like Death to nine hundred thousand, Madan Pala charged,
Brandishing shield and sword again and again.”

This clearly shows that even during Muslim rule the stories of the Ugra Kshatriyas’ bravery had not entirely vanished. There is therefore no reason to doubt that in the distant past Maharajadhiraja Gopaladeva arose from this Ratnakara family bearing the title Pala.

In conclusion, it should also be mentioned that the author of the *Ramacharita*, after calling the Pala emperors the Ratnakara lineage, explicitly calls them Kshatriyas:

17. With Bharati dwelling in his mouth, serving as Lakshmi's seat and as lord of the people, he upheld the world like the Creator, having sprung from the navel of Shripati.

Commentary:

“With Bharati in his mouth,” and so on. “Seat of Kamala” means the abode of Shri or Fortune. Here Shripati is a king, and *nabhi* a Kshatriya; from him he was born. “Like the Creator” is a comparison by a double meaning: the other was born from the bodily navel of Shripati, Vasudeva. The remainder is easy. The interpretation applies in both senses.

The author's Bengali rendering:

Sarasvati dwelt in the mouth of Ramachandra—or, in the other sense, Ramapala. He was Lakshmi's refuge and the lord of his subjects. Like the Creator born from Vasudeva's navel, this king, born from his *nabhi*, upheld the world.

Chapter Six

Buddhist influence in Ugra Kshatriya society

We have seen that every scholar who has directly observed the Ugra Kshatriyas while discussing communal identity has warmly praised their good conduct, fidelity to their religion, Kshatriya courage, vigour and other virtues. Yet the longstanding Kshatriya customs of one class, the present Shudra customs of another, and the Kshatriya designation borne by both remain a riddle to scholars.

In his *Sambandha Nirnaya*, the revered late Lalmohan Vidyanidhi relied chiefly upon the Brihaddharma Purana for the origins of Bengal's non Brahman communities. No other religious scripture presents so exact a picture of the present society of Bengal—and Bengal alone. Following it, he describes Rajput Kshatriyas as the children of a Kshatriya's Vaishya wife: "Ugra and Rajaputra arose in her, the Vaishya woman, from a Kshatriya." But when mentioning the Ugra Kshatriyas he writes that those of the Janau class say they are the Ugras of the Brihaddharma Purana—that is, born of a Kshatriya's Vaishya wife—and therefore wear the sacred thread; whereas those of the Suta class are, according to Manu, the children of a Shudra mother and therefore do not wear it.

We have never heard such a conclusion from any Ugra Kshatriya of any class. Even if someone has accepted it, we ought to examine how reasonable it is. First, the portions of the Brihaddharma and Brahmapurana dealing with communal origins cannot have been composed by the great sage Krishna Dvaipayana Vedavyasa; had they been, they would not express mutually contradictory views. Even if the Brihaddharma Purana's account were accepted as true, one would have to acknowledge that *suta* in the communal designation *Ugrakshatriya* *suta* is used in place of *putra* in *Rajaputra Kshatriya*. Moreover, if Ugras born of a Kshatriya's Shudra wife according to Manu or Yajnavalkya, living in the same villages and region, adopted the name Ugra Kshatriya, then the children of a Kshatriya's Vaishya wife would have adopted the name Kshatriya according to Manu, or Mahishya according to Yajnavalkya. If the Janau Ugra Kshatriyas were the Ugras of the Brihaddharma Purana, then the Ugra Kshatriya sutas would, according to that same Purana, be called Napita or Modaka: "From a Kshatriya and a Shudra maiden arose the barber and the confectioner." It is unreasonable to require two different

scriptures to determine the origins of two classes of the same community, of the same lineage, living in the same village.

The substance of the explanation of Ugra in the *Vishvakosha* is that children of a Kshatriya's Shudra wife—the Janau class—are of anuloma—

—descent and therefore wear the sacred thread, while children of a Kshatriya's Brahman wife—the Suta class—are of pratiloma descent and therefore do not. This conclusion is wholly contrary to scripture. Nor is there any historical foundation for the *Vishvakosha*'s statement. If we ask which Kshatriya families came to the Burdwan division and married so many Brahman daughters, and why the Brahmans of this region gave so many daughters to Kshatriyas, its complete lack of foundation becomes readily apparent. In truth, the Ugra Kshatriyas are neither the Ugrias nor the Sutas of the Manu and Yajnavalkya Samhitas. We have obtained abundant evidence that *Ugrakshatriya suta* is a complete communal designation, and that these people are identical with Rajput Kshatriyas: in Chapter One from the Vedas, Upanishads and other supremely authoritative Hindu scriptures, and in Chapter Two from the scriptures of Jainism, one of the religions of Rajput inhabited Rajputana.

We shall give one further example of arbitrariness in discussions of communal identity. In the foreword to his very large book *Kayasther Varna Nirnaya*, the late Nagendranath Basu, Prachyavidyamaharnava and editor of the *Vishvakosha*, writes:

“The draft classification now issued by the British Government according to varna and social position agrees neither with religious scripture nor with the present social order. That the Bengali Rajputs, placed after the Brahmans and above the Kshatriyas—”

“—are a mixed varna and lower than Kshatriyas and Kayasthas can be understood by anyone who reads this verse from the caste list attributed to Parashurama:

‘From a Kshatriya and a Karana maiden the Rajput came into being; from a Karana and a Rajput woman, the Aguri is said to have arisen.’

“The Karana community arose through connection with a Shudra woman. Since Rajputs were born from Karana women, they can no longer be counted as Kshatriyas; indeed, the Rajput community is inferior in lineage standing even to true Vaishyas.” And so forth.

In fact, there is no religious scripture written by Parashurama, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Nor does a sage named Parashurama appear among the twenty sages who promulgated religious law, listed in Chapter One of the Yajnavalkya Samhita. For these reasons scholars express the view that books bearing such extraordinary attributions “were written solely to deceive people.”

Nagendranath Basu himself expressed that very opinion about the book in the *Education Gazette* of 8 Agrahayan 1318:

“The book exists nowhere outside Bengal. It was composed in Bengal at a quite recent date for some particular purpose.”

Further discussion is unnecessary.

In the introduction to his historical work *Rajatarangini*, the great poet Kalhana writes:

That worthy man alone deserves praise whose speech, when recounting what actually happened, stands like a judge, free of attachment and aversion.

Quoting this verse in his introduction to *Gaudarajamala*, the revered late Akshay Kumar Maitreya expresses his regret:

“In our literature this counsel has still not received its proper respect. Our personal, communal or sectarian attachments and aversions still predispose us in favour of or against many historical conclusions.”

For these and other reasons, very few people in the present age possess the ability to discuss communal history impartially and without self interest; it would hardly be an exaggeration to say none do. Be that as it may, we have accepted with gratitude and bowed heads, as a blessing, the respected Prachyavidyamaharnava’s expressions “the covertly Buddhist Agari community” and “for that reason he was reproached as an Agari Datta,” in his article “Ramananda Ghosh the Buddha Incarnation, the Buddha Incarnation of Chaitanya’s Age and the Revival of Buddhism,” published in the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad’s *Haraprasad Sambardhana Lekhamala*. For the Ugra Kshatriyas are not merely covert Buddhists or Buddhist in outlook. The Pala kings once ascended the throne of Gauda and, on one side, raised Buddhism’s victorious banner throughout India—

—proclaiming its reassuring message of equality and friendship; on the other, as supreme rulers of the Indian empire, they established the victorious glory of Gauda from the sea to the Himalayas. That Pala family remains today one of the eminent lineages within Ugra Kshatriya society, bringing it honour. During the reign of those Pala kings many ministers, royal relatives, subordinate rulers and agrahara holders came under the influence of the dynasty and of Buddhism. For that reason one class of Ugra Kshatriyas, having abandoned the rites appropriate to Kshatriyas, still bears witness to the Buddhist influence of the past.

An extract from the article by the Prachyavidyamaharnava mentioned above follows:

“In the manuscript of Ramananda Ghosh’s Ramayana that has come into our possession, the Adikanda was begun in Paush 1186 and completed in Baishakh 1187. The Ayodhyakanda was completed on 7 Paush 1187, the Aranyakanda on the 16th, and the Kishkindhakanda on 27 Paush. At the end of the Aranyakanda it is written:

‘This book belongs to Ramkanai Hazra;
Written by Sri Ramshankar Chanda, his sister’s son.
His home is at Nakhua Basai, south of Ambika;
Now he lives at Ranihati, Shimul Nabanai.’”

[Translator’s note: The manuscript’s village names in the final two lines are provisional transliterations and should be checked. The years are Bengali era years.]

“The person from whom I obtained the book is named Pashupati Hazra; he appears likely to be a descendant of Ramkanai Hazra. After Ramananda Ghosh’s death, his disciples and their disciples continued to sing this novel Ramayana within their own community, and for that reason later copies were made. The Hazra who copied it descended from some such disciple and belonged to Ramananda’s Buddhist community. It therefore appears that in 1187, or AD 1780, and even later, this community existed in covertly Buddhist Rarh and that the Agaris believed in the Buddha incarnation. The man who gave me the manuscript was an Agari. At one time the Agari community was very powerful and influential in the Burdwan region.

“From the genealogies of the northern Rarhi Kayasthas we learn that, when Maheshwar Datta was killed together with his father, son and brother under King Ballala Sena’s persecution, his pregnant wife took shelter in an Agari household and saved herself. Ubaru Datta was born to her there. Raja Ganesha, lord of Gauda, arose from this Ubaru Datta’s line. The Agaris were Buddhist in outlook, and because Ubaru Datta had been brought up in their house, the family books describe him as ‘for that reason reproached as an Agari Datta.’ Respectable Agaris still maintain a certain distinctiveness within society. It seems that—”

“—covert Buddhist customs remain among them. In different parts of Burdwan district, examining the family books, family traditions and customs not only of Dharma Pandits and Yogis, but of eminent Agaris, Sadgopas, Gandhabaniks, Subarnabaniks and other communities, may reveal much evidence of hidden Buddhism. Although Bengali Hindu society once absorbed Buddhism, Dharma Thakur’s influence has still not disappeared from Rarh. Dharmaraj or Dharma Thakur is still worshipped in every old village of Rarh. The greater the Brahman influence, the more Hindu the character of Dharma Thakur. But where Dharma Pandits or Dom Pandits still hold authority, Dharma Thakur remains in his older form. Yet, whether worshipped by Brahmans or Dharma Pandits, his fundamental mantra has nowhere been abandoned. That mantra is:

‘I contemplate the form of the Void, which has no end, beginning or middle, no hands or feet, no body or sound, no shape or visible form, no fear or death, and no birth; knowable through the insight of the masters of yoga, present in every part, sole lord of all worlds, fulfiller of devotees’ desires and giver of boons to gods and human beings.’”

There is not the slightest doubt that the military Ugra Kshatriya community was closely connected with the Buddhist Pala emperors and with the newly propagated form of Buddhism—and that, for this reason, one of its classes fell away from the Savitri initiation. In fact, during the long reign of the Pala emperors, who followed Lord Buddha’s supremely beautiful and universal religion, all the Vaidyas and Kayasthas of Bengal, except the Vaidyas of western Bengal and the Janau Ugra Kshatriyas, together with the different branches of the Vaishya varna—merchants, Sadgopas, Tilis, Tamulis, weavers, smiths, potters, confectioners and the rest—came under the influence of the royal religion. Accepting the copper initiation then current in Buddhism and abandoning their former rites, they too fell away from the Savitri and came to be called Shudras. For this reason Raghunandana, Bengal’s foremost Smarta authority, declared the absence of Kshatriya and Vaishya varnas in the Kali age and acknowledged only Brahmans and Shudras. He did not thereby say that people of Kshatriya and Vaishya descent no longer existed; he said that their Shudra condition had arisen through their lack of rites.

Later, some communities invented implausible stories of Ballala Sena’s rash conduct, others of his marriage to a Dom girl, and so forth, pointing to these as the reasons for abandoning their twice born rites and thus deceiving themselves. Yet, on calm reflection, there can be no doubt that the reason for Bengal’s widespread loss of the upanayana rite was Buddhism’s unimpeded influence.

Every religious community has its own methods of initiation and distinctive symbols. For example, in the Sikh religion founded by Guru Nanak, initiation is called the giving of *amrit*, or nectar, and every initiated Sikh must bear an iron bracelet, a comb, a discus, drawers, a sword and uncut hair. In the religion propagated by Sri Chaitanya, a rosary and forehead mark form parts of initiation. Likewise, in the form in which Ramai Pandit introduced and spread Buddhism in Bengal, initiation included worshipping a Dharma stone like a Shalagrama stone and wearing a copper bracelet and copper ring consecrated by mantras. Ramai Pandit completed the upanayana of his own son Dharmadas according to this procedure. For the reader’s information we quote an extract from Mayur Bhatta’s *Dharmapurana*, published by the Sahitya Parishad:

“From the Void, Niranjana himself speaks:
‘Ramai and all you sages, listen.
All of you give Dharmadas the copper thread,
Otherwise you will all incur Dharma’s anger.
I established the Pandit lineage for Dharma’s worship;
I sent Dharmadas into the world.
Therefore, sages, do not act otherwise:
All of you give Dharmadas the copper thread.’”

[Translator’s note: The list of Sikh articles is translated as printed and includes a discus in addition to the familiar articles.]

“Having said this, Dharmaraj returned to his own abode;
Hearing it, all the sages rejoiced.”

After several ceremonies resembling upanayana, when Dharmadas’s rite was completed:

“Ramai Pandit instructed Dharmadas;
He was initiated by Someshwar Pandit.” Pages 75–77.

After the initiation, Ramai Pandit said to Dharmadas:

“Travel from town to town and distribute the stones;
There is no distinction of caste at all.
Giving copper bracelets, teach them to worship the stone;
No fault will arise from it.
Teach the rule to Brahmans, Kshatriyas and everyone else,
Presenting them with the Dharma stone.
From Brahmans to Haris, leather workers and Doms, teach all the procedure;
Have them wear the copper bracelet.” Page 81.

Then:

“Having received instruction from his father,
Dharmadas travelled from town to town distributing stones.
He himself fashioned and purified the copper bracelets—”

“—and presented them to every community.
He gave the stone and bracelet to everyone;
In giving the copper he made no distinction of caste.
Without considering any difference of caste at all,
He taught and spread the practice among every community:
Sadgopa, Kaivarta, Goala and Tamuli;
Ugra Kshatriya, potter, Ekadasha and Tili;
Yogi, Ashvin, weaver, Mala and Malakar;

Barber, washerman, Dule and conch worker;
Hari, leather worker, Dom, Kalu, Chandala and others;
Majhi, Bagdi and Mete—there was no caste distinction;
Goldsmith, Subarnabanik and blacksmith;
Carpenter, Gandhabene, fisherman and Poddar;
Kshatriya, Barui, Vaidya, Pod and Pakhmara;
Kayastha and Keora too put on the copper bracelet.
Thus, travelling through different countries,
Dharmadas distributed the Dharma stones.”

[Translator’s note: Community names that lack a precise English equivalent are retained in transliteration. Ashvin, Mala, Ekadasha and Pakhmara should be checked against the printed list.]

We have already said that one class of Ugra Kshatriyas—the military subordinate rulers and agra-hara holders—came under the influence of the Buddhist Pala emperors and the Buddhism newly introduced in the Burdwan region—

—and thereby fell away from the Savitri initiation. The passage from the *Dharmapurana* also reveals another fact: when that Purana was composed, the Ugra Kshatriyas were known by that name, and no communal designation Agari or Aguri was current.

Chapter Seven

The religion and politics of the exemplary Pala emperors

Observing the supreme progress of physical science in the middle of the twentieth century and its unimaginable influence upon water, land and sky, we feel that humanity has perhaps made the Puranic stories of another age into visible truth and occupied the seat of the gods while still in mortal bodies. But a little sober reflection shows that these scientific inventions are being used to diminish the natural divinity within humankind and to harm the world by imitating the predatory instincts of ferocious creatures. Every scientific invention seems a separate instrument for sacrificing hundreds of thousands of human beings—

—and every advancing nation on earth is occupied on a vast scale in preparing and carrying out this human sacrifice. What is astonishing is that even in subjugated and downtrodden India, today, the terrible dance of fratricidal conflict is visible everywhere in religion's name. The oppression of the weak by the strong seems to be the supreme mark of civilisation in the present age. Such a condition in a country is called *matsyanyaya* in Sanskrit. About a thousand years ago, this condition once became powerful in Gauda as a result of conflict between Hinduism and Buddhism. To remedy it, the people of Gauda voluntarily placed Maharaja Gopaladeva upon their throne. In this chapter we shall give a few examples of the religion and incomparable statecraft of Gopaladeva and the emperors of his line in those circumstances, hoping that, as the last evidence of ancient India's civilisation and culture, they may engage our readers.

The Pala emperors worshipped Lord Buddha, and accordingly an invocation to their chosen deity appears at the beginning of each of their charters. Yet they regarded all religions equally.

Tolerance of other faiths seems to have been an essential part of their religion and a glory of their dynasty. In the charter Maharaja Devapaladeva issued to Vihekarata Mishra from his victorious camp at Mudgagiri—

[Translator's note: The recipient's name, Vihekarata Mishra, is a provisional reading of the Bengali print.]

—it is stated that his father Maharajadhiraja Dharmapaladeva established everyone in their own religious duties, and that, by obtaining such a son, Dharmapala's father Maharaja Gopaladeva was freed from his obligations to his ancestors in heaven:

5. Through his son Sri Dharmapala, who understood the meaning of the scriptures and, correcting the varnas when they strayed, established them in their own duties, he became free of debt to his ancestors dwelling in heaven.

By this same charter Maharaja Devapaladeva granted a village to a Brahman learned in the meaning of the Vedas.

Maharajadhiraja Dharmapaladeva not only sought to establish the followers of all religions in their respective duties; he also assisted them through grants of land for offerings and worship of different gods. For example:

“From the illustrious victorious camp established at Pataliputra: the devout Buddhist, meditator upon the feet of Maharajadhiraja Sri Gopaladeva, supreme lord, supreme sovereign and Maharajadhiraja, the illustrious Dharmapaladeva, being in good health—

“[The source marks an omission.] Be it known to you that the great overlord of subordinate rulers, Sri Narayanavarman, has made the following request to us through the envoy, Crown Prince Sri Tribhuvanapala: ‘To increase the merit of my mother, father and myself, I have caused a temple to be built at Shubhasthali. For Lord Narayana Bhattaraka installed there, together with the Brahman priests from Lata and other attendants responsible for his service, and for the performance of worship and offerings—”

[Translator’s note: The running Bengali paragraph prints Devapaladeva, but the quoted charter names Dharmapaladeva. Dharmapaladeva is used here, following the explicit correction for page 103, line 9, in the book’s errata.]

“—may Your Majesty give four villages, together with the market and Talapataka belonging to them.”

Around 1879, Sir Alexander Cunningham found a stone slab south of the celebrated Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya. An inscription occupies its left side; on its right are figures of Vishnu, Surya and another indistinct deity. The inscription records that in the twenty sixth regnal year of Dharmapaladeva, on Saturday, the fifth day of the dark fortnight of Bhadra, Keshava, son of the sculptor Ujjvala, installed a four faced Mahadeva. The establishment of a Shaiva image at the world renowned Buddhist pilgrimage site of Mahabodhi demonstrates the Pala kings’ equal regard for all religions. The text reads:

1–2. In a beautiful temple, Keshava, son of the stone sculptor Ujjvala, installed a four faced Mahadeva for the welfare of the community of initiated students among the foremost Mallas residing at Mahabodhi.

3. This good man also excavated a very deep and holy tank, equal to the Ganges, at a cost of three thousand drammās.

4. In the twenty sixth year, when Dharmapala was ruler of the earth, on the fifth day of the dark fortnight of Bhadra, on the day of the Sun's son, Saturn.

The Bhagalpur charter issued by Maharajadhiraja Narayanapaladeva—

[Translator's note: The printed page ends with this unfinished introduction to the Bhagalpur charter. The next page resumes the general discussion without supplying a corresponding quotation. The break is retained rather than filled from another source.]

Archaeological scholars have expressed surprise at the grants of land to Brahmins by the devout Buddhist Pala emperors for worshipping Hindu gods and goddesses, and especially at their sympathetic attitude towards the establishment of a Shaiva image at the world renowned Buddhist pilgrimage site of Mahabodhi. Although the Pala emperors were devoted worshippers of Lord Buddha, they nevertheless worshipped every kind of god and goddess with devotion, and performed various religious ceremonies prescribed in Hindu scriptures, wishing to please their chosen deity. In the charter of Maharajadhiraja Mahipaladeva the First found at Bangarh, we see that he bathed in the Ganges according to the rules on the day of the equinoctial sankranti and gave land to a Brahmin:

“From the illustrious victorious camp established at Vilasapura: the devout Buddhist, meditator upon the feet of Maharajadhiraja Sri Vighrapaladeva, supreme lord, great sovereign and Maharajadhiraja, the illustrious Mahipaladeva, being in good health—[grants] Kuratapallika village, with the land within its defined boundaries, excluding Chutapallika, situated in Gokalika Mandala within Kotivarsha Vishaya in Sri Pundravardhana Bhukti. [The source marks an omission.] To the Bhatta's son Krishnaditya Sharma, son of the Bhatta's son Madhusudana and grandson of the Bhatta's son Hrishiksha, resident of Chavati village: having duly bathed in the Ganges at the equinoctial sankranti, we have given it by charter.”

A charter of Maharajadhiraja Madana—

[Translator's note: The personal and village names in this grant require checking against the Bengali inscription text, particularly Hrishiksha and Chavati.]

—paladeva, found at Manahali village in Dinajpur, informs us that his chief queen Chitramatika Devi had the Mahabharata, spoken by Vedavyasa, recited. As the offering for that recitation, in the eighth year of his victorious reign, the devout Buddhist Maharajadhiraja Madanapaladeva granted land in Halavarta Mandala, within Kotivarsha Vishaya in Pundravardhana Bhukti, to Pandit Sri Bateshvara Svami Sharma. The charter was issued from the illustrious victorious camp established near Ramavati city:

“Under the rule of *bhumichchhidra*, to endure as long as the moon, sun and earth, for the increase of the merit and fame of our mother, father and ourselves, we have granted by charter, dedicating it to Lord Buddha Bhattaraka, to Pandit Sri Bateshvara Svami Sharma, of the Kautsa gotra and the Shandilya, Asita and Devala pravaras, a fellow student of Pandit Uttama, a student of the Kauthuma branch of the Samaveda, of Champahitti and resident there, great grandson of Vatsa Svami, grandson of Prajapati Svami and son of Shaunaka Svami. This is the offering assigned by the chief queen Chitramatika for the recitation of the Mahabharata spoken by Vedavyasa.”

From an inscription engraved upon the pedestal of a Buddha image found at Sarnath, the celebrated Buddhist pilgrimage site near Varanasi, we learn that in AD 1083 Maharajadhiraja Mahipaladeva caused a hundred works, including Ishana and Chitraghanta and shrines of the nine Durgas, to be constructed at Varanasi—

[Translator’s note: The source prints 1083 as a Christian era date. The date and its era should be checked; no conversion has been silently substituted. The compound describing the Varanasi works is also difficult.]

—and had the Dharmarajika, or Dharma stone shrine, repaired and a Gandhakuti built. The inscription says:

2. The illustrious Mahipala, lord of Gauda, had hundreds of works, including Ishana and Chitraghanta, constructed at Kashi.
3. At his command, the two brothers, learned in Shruti, restored the Dharmarajika with all its parts and the Dharma wheel to a new condition.
4. They also made a new stone Gandhakuti of the eight great sacred places: the illustrious Sthirapala and his younger brother Vasantapala.

Although our country had no regular practice of writing history, from the charters and other inscriptions of the Pala period and from old Bengali poems we can clearly understand their religious views. Though themselves worshippers of the supremely compassionate Buddha, they regarded all religions then current with equal favour and made abundant gifts of land to establish everyone in their own faith. They themselves bathed in the Ganges according to the rules, arranged recitations of Puranic scriptures such as the Mahabharata, and gave land to Brahmans as offerings. Maharajadhiraja Mahipaladeva had hundreds of works, including Chitraghanta, built at Varanasi. They performed all these religious acts for Lord Buddha’s sake and to increase the merit and fame of their mothers, fathers and themselves. From Maharaja—

—dhiraja Dharmapaladeva’s reign to that of Maharajadhiraja Madanapaladeva, generation after generation was inspired by this broad religious spirit. They showed equal reverence and devotion

towards Buddhist ascetics and Brahmans learned in the Vedas. To speak truly, they followed the directions of Hindu religion and scripture, regarded all faiths equally, surrendered themselves at the feet of their chosen deity, Lord Buddha, the ninth incarnation, and attained supreme peace. This was their religious policy.

This liberality and universal sympathy in religious matters greatly assisted the Pala emperors in building, governing and enlarging their empire. Without disturbing in the slightest the conduct, customs or rites of caste Hindus who believed in varnashrama dharma, they spread the reassuring message of equality and friendship of universal Buddhism—the fountain of love for all—among Bengal’s people down to those called Chandalas. They not only awakened self respect among them but united and organised them in one common love, thereby establishing an immeasurable and unconquerable state power in Bengal. There can therefore be no doubt that this policy also demonstrates their political foresight.

Even when invading other kingdoms to establish imperial authority, the Pala—

—kings treated defeated rulers in the manner described in verse 8 of Devapaladeva’s Munger charter:

8. At the end of his conquests he removed all the distress of the other kings through excellent honours and sent them back to their own places. As they lovingly remembered his fitting conduct, their hearts yearned like those who, fallen from heaven, remember a former birth.

That is, at the end of his campaigns, the king—Dharmapaladeva—dispelled the defeated rulers’ sorrow by distributing splendid rewards and gave them permission to return to their homes. Once restored to their own kingdoms, whenever they thought about the appropriate conduct of affairs, their hearts filled with affectionate longing, like the hearts of people who remember a previous birth and have fallen from heaven after their merit is exhausted.

The immense power of the Pala emperors, their greatness of character, religious liberality and parental affection towards their subjects established them in the rank of great human beings. Their subjects sang their deeds with reverence, and for that reason “Mahipala’s songs” remains proverbial in Bengal even today. Dharmapaladeva’s popularity is described in verse 13 of the Khalimpur charter as follows:

Cowherds at the boundaries, forest dwellers in the woods, people beside the villages, playful children in every courtyard, merchants in every market—

—and parrots within their cages in pleasure houses sang his praises. Hearing his own eulogy, his face was always slightly turned and lowered in modest embarrassment. 13.

The author's Bengali rendering:

Hearing his own praises sung by cowherds in the borderlands, forest dwellers in the woods, ordinary people near villages, children playing in household courtyards, merchants at every place of buying and selling, and caged parrots in pleasure houses, this king's face was always gently turned and bowed through modesty.

India has neither that Rama nor that Ayodhya any longer. Through the exploitative policy of foreign rulers, imperial Mother India has been reduced to a skeleton. Her air is further polluted by the poisonous winds of communal and provincial division. Those sons of India, their claws and teeth fallen out, who still sit here and there upon sacred royal thrones, busy themselves imitating the paramount power instead of fulfilling their royal duty. God alone knows what calamity awaits India, or what is to come.

Chapter Eight

The Ugra Kshatriya and Brahma Kshatriya Sena Kings

The Pala emperors worshipped the Lord Buddha and held the universal Buddhist religion in the deepest reverence. In none of their charters did they display pride of caste by giving even the slightest indication of their own jati or varna. Nevertheless, from the Kamauli inscription issued by their Brahman minister Vaidyadeva, and from their marriages with Rajput princesses, we have clearly understood them to have been Rajput Kshatriyas of the solar line.

On the other hand, the Sena kings rose in Bengal when the religion of the four varnas and stages of life was reviving and the influence of the Pala emperors was almost extinguished. In every charter they issued, they seem to have tried eagerly to express their jati, varna and other distinctions in various ways. These declarations make it quite easy to recognise them as Rajputs of the lunar line. Yet the description of Samantasena in the Deopara inscription issued by Maharajadhiraja Vijayasena—“brahma-kshatriyanam ajani kula-shiro-dama”—has apparently presented a serious difficulty to scholars of antiquity. The learned Professor Kielhorn translated it as—

“the head-garland of Brahmans and Kshatriyas.” The late Nani Gopal Majumdar, formerly head of the Varendra Research Society and editor of the Sena inscriptions in *Inscriptions of Bengal*, wrote on page 44 of that book:

In verse 5 of the present record he is called “Brahmakshatriya kulasiradama,” which epithet could not be correctly interpreted by Professor Kielhorn. He translated it as “The head-garland of the class of Brahmanas and Kshatriyas.” The correct interpretation of this expression was first suggested by Professor D. R. Bhandarkar, whose translation “the head-garland of Brahmakshatri caste” was accepted by Vincent A. Smith. It thus appears that the Senas belonged to the Brahmakshatri caste, a fact which is of considerable significance.

He shows that no less than five royal families were designated “Brahmakshatri.” The term was applied to those who were Brahmanas first and became Kshatriyas afterwards—that is, those who exchanged their priestly for martial pursuits.

The author’s Bengali rendering:

In the fifth verse he is called “Brahmakshatriya shirodama.” Professor Kielhorn did not interpret this correctly. He translated it as the head-garland of Brahmans and Kshatriyas.

Professor D. R. Bhandarkar supplied the correct interpretation, translating it as the head-garland of the Brahmakshatri caste. From this it is understood that—

—the Sena dynasty belonged to the Brahmakshatri caste, and this is a matter of considerable importance.

He has shown that at least five royal families were similarly known by the designation Brahmakshatri. This title was given to those who were originally Brahmans and subsequently became Kshatriyas—that is, those who adopted military occupations in place of the Brahman’s occupation.

There is no doubt that it would be most unbecoming to show the slightest distrust of the conclusions of these world-renowned scholars. Their exceptional learning, tireless labour and thoughtful research have brought to light the antiquities of many regions and made India’s past glory known to the world. At the same time, it would not be proper to accept a conclusion contrary to the accounts in the Vedas, Puranas and other religious scriptures, to beliefs long current in society, and to directly observable examples. We therefore offer due respect to the scholars mentioned above and set out our own argument below.

The first verse of the inscription under discussion praises five-faced Shiva. The second praises the temple of Pradyumneshvara and celebrates the divine play of Hari and Hara. The third glorifies the Moon on the forehead of Shiva Chandrashekhara. The fourth describes the birth of Virasena and other kings of the Deccan, whose virtues sanctified the verses—the *Mahabharata*—composed by the son of the sage Parashara, Vyasa. Thus:

In the lineage of him who witnesses the amorous arts of the celestial women, the kings of the southern lands—

—Virasena and the others—adorned the world with their fame. Purified by contemplation of their conduct, the nectar-streams of excellent poetry were composed by Parashara’s son to delight the ears of the world. In that Sena lineage was born Samantasena, the head-garland of the Brahma Kshatriyas, who proclaimed a sacred utterance consisting in the destruction of hundreds of opposing warriors.

[Translator’s note: The closing expression is the inscription’s martial and religious wordplay around brahmavadi. The author’s interpretation of “Brahma Kshatriya” follows later in this chapter.]

We shall discuss later the scriptural and historical meaning of the Sena kings' designation "Brahma Kshatriya." For the present, verse 14 of the same inscription says of Maharaja Vijayasena:

Who could count, in their multitudes, the kings whom he, fighting every day, defeated or slew?
In this world he tolerated the royal title only in the Moon, acknowledging him as his own ancestor.

The author's Bengali rendering:

Who can count the kings engaged in war who are daily killed or defeated by him? In this world Vijayasena endures the title "king" only in the Moon, because the Moon is his original ancestor.

Another copperplate issued by Maharaja Vijayasena has been discovered at Barrackpore in the Twenty-four Parganas. Its first verse invokes the blessing of the Lord Dhurjati. Kartikeya and Ganesha, playing in the Ganges upon his head, had discovered the crescent moon and were pulling at it, mistaking it for a little fish among the waterweeds; seeing this, he smiled. Then—the second verse glorifies the Moon, who is the eye of Lakshmi's lord and the ornament on the head of Parvati's lord. The third describes the birth of rajaputras—Rajputs—in his lineage:

In his lineage arose royal princes who displayed the Moon's play upon the earth: they shed the moonlight of a fame as pure as a royal swan's feathers; their hands, laid upon the proud heads of others, marked out the quarters; they were the very bounds of accumulated merit, possessed of a circle of nectar-filled arts. [Verse 3]

[Translator's note: This verse compares kings with the Moon through several double meanings, including kara as hand, ray or tribute, and kala as an art or a lunar digit. The English conveys the principal imagery rather than reproducing every pun.]

The fourth verse then calls Samantasena the crest-ornament of the Kshatriyas themselves:

In their lineage arose a lord, eminent in the noble wealth of lineage and virtues: an ornament of the Kshatriyas, a raincloud to the chataka-bird hearts of the poor.

The seventh verse describes Vijayasena's marriage to Vilasadevi of the Shura lineage. The eighth calls Ballalasena "kshatranam atapatram"—the shelter of the Kshatriyas. Thus:

His queen was Vilasadevi, the moonlight of the ocean of the Shura family, the delightful playground for the wagtails of his two eyes amid lotus-like beauty. [Verse 7]

From him and in her was born the illustrious Ballalasena: the parasol of the Kshatriyas, resplendent as the sun upon the summit of the golden mountain, ever covering the world with fame white as the masses of foam of the celestial river; the essence of the beauty of the Love-

god and the Moon, and a beloved rival in wisdom to the lord of the goddess of eloquence.
[Verse 8]

A copperplate issued by Maharaja Ballalasena has been found at the village of Naihati near Katwa. Its first verse describes Mahadeva as Ardhanarishvara and seeks his blessing. The second describes the Moon on Mahadeva's forehead and prays for his victory. The third mentions the origin of the Rajputs in that lunar lineage, their adornment of Rarh, their exceptional justice and good conduct, and their protection of those seeking refuge.

Besides identifying the Sena kings' lineage, this charter clearly names the region of their settlement in Bengal. For this reason it has become especially valuable to scholars investigating antiquity. People have had scope to express various opinions about the caste of the Pala kings and their first settlement in Bengal. After the discovery of this copperplate, however, there can be no similar confusion about the Sena kings. For our readers' information we quote only a few verses:

In his flourishing lineage were born royal princes. By achievements never seen before, they adorned Rarh, renowned for established traditions of good conduct. Their fame washed the heavens in waves, bright with the broad generosity through which they continually bestowed freedom from fear upon the world. [Verse 3]

In their lineage arose mighty Samantasena: the sun at the end of an age to the ocean of opposing armies; a moon whose bright glory and moonlight of fame delighted the waterlily groves of his friends; an immovable mountain securing the fulfilment of the cherished ambitions of those devoted to him from birth; truthful in conduct, and an abode of unfeigned compassion. [Verse 4]

From him was born Hemantasenadeva, a bee at the lotus feet of the Bull-bannered Lord, adorned with virtues, and a destroying winter to the lake of his enemies. [Verse 5]

The author's Bengali rendering:

Royal princes were born in his—the Moon's—prosperous lineage. They adorned Rarh, which was famous for exceptional good conduct and greatness. Through their constant concern for the world's welfare and affection for their dependants, the waves of their fame washed the horizons. [3]

In their lineage arose the powerful Samantasenadeva. To the immense armies of his enemies he was fierce as the sun at the dissolution of the world. To his friends he was like the autumn moon, enchanting the mind with its bright rays and filling the waterlilies with waves of delight. In assuring victory to his lifelong loyal friends, he stood firm as a mountain within the kingdom

of their hearts. He followed the path of righteousness and good conduct, and his heart was a dwelling-place of sincere compassion. [4]

From him was born Hemantasenadeva. Like a bee, he was drawn to and remained at the feet of the Bull-bannered Lord. His virtues were his only ornaments, and to the multitude of enemies, who resembled a lake, he was like a devastating winter. [5]

A copperplate issued by Maharajadhiraja Lakshmanasena has been discovered at Madhainagar near Sirajganj. Its first verse describes Hara and Gauri and seeks the blessing of five-faced Shiva. The second describes the Moon rising from the Ocean of Milk. The third depicts the kings of the lunar line as conquerors of the three worlds. The fourth then describes the birth of Samantasena, the head-garland of the Karnata Kshatriyas, in the lineage of Virasena—father of the celebrated righteous King Nala—whose fame is recorded in the Puranas:

In the lineage of Virasena, whose many virtues are celebrated in the narratives of the Puranas, was born Samantasena, the head-garland of the Karnata Kshatriyas.

The closing portion of its sixth verse resembles the corresponding passage of Vijayasena's Deopara inscription:

From him was born Vijayasena, a mass of splendour, the sole survivor among kings contending in battle. In this world he tolerated the royal title only in the Moon, because he was the original ancestor of his lineage.

The ninth verse describes Maharaja Ballalasena's acquisition as queen of Ramadevi, a Rajput princess of the Chalukya line:

His beloved was Ramadevi, a crest-jewel among the royal women, a crescent moon of the family of Chalukya kings, an object of honour even to Lakshmi and the Earth.

On the other face of this charter, in the prose section, Maharajadhiraja Lakshmanasena is also called "supremely initiated, a Meru among the highest Brahma Kshatriyas." Thus:

Meditating upon the feet of the supreme lord and king of kings, Sri Ballalassenadeva ... the universal sovereign, emperor among valiant heroes ... lamp of the lunar dynasty, King Pratapanarayana, supremely initiated, a Meru among the highest Brahma Kshatriyas ... the illustrious Lakshmanasenadeva ...

Copperplates issued by Maharajadhiraja Lakshmanasena have been discovered at Anulia village near Ranaghat; at Govindapur village in the Twenty-four Parganas; and during the removal of silt from the great reservoir called Tarpandighi in the Balurghat subdivision of Dinajpur district. The first seven verses are the same in all three inscriptions. Of these, the second and third say

that the Sena dynasty arose in the lineage of the Lord of Herbs—the Moon—brought forth through the meditation of the great sage Atri:

May that radiance, the culmination of Atri's successive meditations, bring delight. At the swift appearance in the world of that nectar-bodied one, joy arose in the ocean; thirst was utterly quenched among the chakora birds; bewilderment departed from the waterlilies; and the Love-god thought, "I alone am here." [Verse 2]

In that lineage of the Lord of Herbs arose kings whose toenails shone with the brilliance of the crowns of countless rulers bowing in service. These kings, whose enemies' wives were afflicted by the poisonous fever of their might, became famous as the Sena kings. [Verse 3]

The passages quoted from the Sena kings' charters clearly show that each declared himself a descendant of Virasena of the lunar line, mentioned in the *Mahabharata* composed by Vyasa. Their matrimonial connections with Rajput Kshatriya families also make it clear that they were lunar Kshatriyas of the Rajput class. Therefore, the words "brahma-vadi—sa brahma-kshatriyanam ajani kula-shiro-dama Samantasena" cannot establish that the Sena dynasty was Brahman.

What we have to say on this subject was briefly submitted in a letter addressed to the respected Maharajkumar Sri Sarat Kumar Ray, founder of the Varendra Research Society. For the information of sympathetic readers, a complete copy of that letter is given below.

To the lotus hands of Maharajkumar Sri Sarat Kumar Ray, M.A., adorned with innumerable virtues.

Sir,

During the past half-century, my study of the history of the Rajput people has led me to certain truths concerning their origin and classification. I have recorded these in a small booklet of my own composition entitled *The Origin of the Rajpoot Kshatriyas*. The reason I have ventured today to place this modest booklet in your honoured hands—

—is that I have something to submit concerning the conclusion about the caste of Bengal's last royal dynasty, the Senas, reached in *Inscriptions of Bengal*. This work was published by the Varendra Research Society, which you founded and support, and edited by the learned Sri Nani Gopal Majumdar. I pray that you will regard this as the inquiry of an inquirer after truth, rather than as an attack upon the conclusions of the learned members of the Society, and pardon all my faults.

On page 44 of *Inscriptions of Bengal*, the caste of the Sena dynasty is discussed in connection with Vijayasena's Deopara inscription. The learned Professor Kielhorn interpreted "brahma-kshatriyanam ajani kula-shiro-dama Samantasena" as the head-ornament of Brahmans and Kshatriyas. Sri Bhandarkar interpreted it as the "Brahmakshatri caste," and explained the origin of that caste as follows:

Those who were Brahmans first and became Kshatriyas afterwards, that is, those who exchanged their priestly for martial pursuits.

The learned Mr Majumdar accepted this interpretation. Yet it is not possible to understand the interpreter's precise intention from Mr Bhandarkar's expressions "Brahmans first and Kshatriyas afterwards" and "exchange of the Brahman occupation for the Kshatriya occupation." For in the Madhainagar inscription Samantasena is called the "head-garland of the Karnata Kshatriyas."

This makes it quite clear that the Sena kings were Kshatriyas who came from the Karnata region. The same inscription's account of Ballalasena taking the hand of Ramadevi, a Chalukya princess, proves them to have been Rajput Kshatriyas. The word *rajaputra* itself occurs in more than one place in their charters. At the beginning of every charter, their praises of the Moon and related statements explicitly identify them as belonging to the lunar line. It is therefore clear that they were Rajputs of that line. In addition, the fourth verse of the Madhainagar inscription places Samantasena's birth "in the lineage of Virasena, whose many virtues are celebrated in the Puranic narratives." The latter part of the fourth verse of the Deopara inscription similarly identifies the lineage as one described by Parashara's son, Vyasa. By these statements they declare themselves Puranic Kshatriyas of the lunar line.

In these circumstances, the above interpretation of the adjective "Brahma Kshatriya" in the two expressions "head-garland of the Brahma Kshatriyas" in the Deopara inscription and "Meru among Brahma Kshatriyas" in the Madhainagar inscription does not appear appropriate. Both the solar and lunar branches of the Kshatriya people originated from the Brahmans Marichi and Atri. Yet nowhere in the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* or other Puranas did they receive the title "Brahma Kshatriya." There would therefore be no point in applying a new distinguishing epithet to someone of their line. Nor is it likely that Hindu kings as devoted to their own religious duties as the Senas would adopt an unscriptural title merely to display pride. Again—

—there is no evidence anywhere for identifying a Brahman family as "Brahmans of the lunar line."

In our opinion, therefore, just as the solar and lunar ruling houses of Udaipur, Jaipur, Jodhpur and other regions joined Rajput society—“the arms were made the Rajanya”—and came to be praised as Rajputs and crest-ornaments of Rajput lineages, so the Sena dynasty that came to Bengal was distinguished by the phrases “head-garland of the Brahma Kshatriyas” and “Meru among Brahma Kshatriyas” in that same Rajput sense: “other Kshatriya peoples arose from the region of Brahma’s arms.” This is my respectful submission. End of letter.

Section Two Brahma Kshatriyas Samantasena and Lakshmanasena

In the preceding discussion we have seen the scripturally consistent meaning of the Rajput Samantasena’s title “Brahma Kshatriya.” Yet among all the inscriptions issued by the Sena kings, only Samantasena is called Brahma Kshatriya in Vijayasena’s Deopara stone inscription, and only Lakshmanasena is so called in Lakshmanasena’s Madhainagar copperplate. In these two inscriptions and the other Sena charters, the valour and innumerable other virtues of their alleged ancestor Virasena, famous in the *Mahabharata*, and of Hemantasena, Vijayasena, Ballalasena and the later Keshavasena, Vishvarupasena and others are lavishly praised. Nevertheless, none of these others is ever called Brahma Kshatriya—

—they are everywhere called Kshatriyas of the lunar line. There can therefore be no doubt that this distinction arose from some particular quality in Samantasena and Lakshmanasena. That quality is explained below.

The ancient Sanskrit writers of literature, philosophy and science, and even the authors of religious scriptures, paid close attention to metre, ornament and verbal beauty. Yet at certain points they used words allowing a verse, or part of a verse, to be interpreted in different ways. Such composition was then a mark of learning. Many examples of writing that conveys two meanings occur in the inscriptions under discussion. The *Ramacharitam* of Sandhyakar Nandi, a poet patronised by the Pala emperors, is a brilliant example of this kind of composition.

Umapatidhara, author of the Deopara stone inscription, was also a celebrated scholar and poet. In verse 35 of his eulogy he introduces himself as follows:

This eulogy is the work of the poet Umapatidhara, whose understanding has been purified by examining words and their meanings: a tender thread upon which the pure pearls of the Sena kings are strung without knots.

Umapatidhara, whose mind was purified by the examination of words and their meanings, may claim the credit for threading the Sena kings, like spotless pearls, into a soft and knotless garland. Yet by calling the lunar Rajput Kshatriya Samantasena the “head-garland of the Brahma Kshatriyas,” he has tied a knot—

—which, as we see, has bewildered even the great learned authorities of the present day.

At the beginning of the fourth verse of his *Gita Govinda*, the crest-jewel of poets, Jayadeva Goswami, also said: “Umapatidhara makes speech put forth leaves.” The commentator explains: “Umapatidhara—the poet of that name—makes words or sentences put forth leaves: that is, expands them, displaying verbal elaboration in his compositions.” Surely there is not the slightest reason to consider Umapatidhara such a fool that he would call Samantasena a “Brahma Kshatriya”—a Brahman?—in verse 5 of the eulogy and then call his grandson Vijayasena a lunar Kshatriya in verse 16 of the very same eulogy. In the commentator’s language, this may simply be described as his verbal elaboration. Nevertheless, we should undoubtedly try to determine what other reasons the poet might have had for calling Samantasena a Brahma Kshatriya.

First, if we attend to the adjective *brahma-vadi* accompanying Samantasena’s title, it is clear that he was saluted as a “brahma-vadi Brahma Kshatriya” because of his religious devotion. In the same way, Maharaja Janaka, though a Kshatriya, was known as a royal sage; the Kshatriya king Vishvamitra attained the rank of a great sage through the power of austerities. Indeed, verse 9 of the Deopara inscription says that Samantasena spent his last years in the forest hermitages of sages beside the Ganges, where renowned ascetics struggled against the fear of rebirth—

—where the air was fragrant with sacrificial smoke, where young deer satisfied themselves by drinking the milk of the compassionate sages’ wives, and where countless parrots knew all the Vedas by heart. Thus:

In his final years he frequented the holy forest hermitages beside the sands of the Ganges: fragrant with the smoke of clarified-butter offerings, their ascetics’ wives relieved at the breast by suckling young deer, their flocks of parrots practised in reciting sacred knowledge, and their interiors filled with great ascetics assaulting the fear of worldly rebirth. [Verse 9]

That is, in old age Samantasena adopted a form of forest retirement, lived religiously and became worthy of the name of sage. The poet therefore saluted him as a “brahma-vadi Brahma Kshatriya.” Nor is it difficult to determine why, instead of the long-established titles “royal sage” or “great sage,” he called him the crest-jewel of the Brahma Kshatriya lineage.

The martial Rajputs who came to Bengal adopted the honourable title “Ugra Kshatriya suta,” found in the Vedas, Upanishads and other scriptures, as an expression of strength of arm and valour. Just as the Pala emperors rose from the Ratnakar lineage of this people, so the Sena kings of Rarh, originally among the Pala emperors’ subordinate rulers, rose from the Soma lineage of the Ugra Kshatriyas. “Rajput Kshatriya,” “Ugra Kshatriya” and “Agnikula Kshatriya” are scripturally approved and long-established designations of the Kshatriya people. Umapatidhara, whose understanding was purified by the examination of words and their meanings, merely saluted the religious Samantasena by ornamenting his community’s designation—

—with a scripturally acceptable figure of speech. This offers no basis for considering the Sena dynasty Brahman. Though uncommon, the expression may instead be accepted as a royal version of such titles as Rajput Kshatriya and Ugra Kshatriya. This is the compositional skill of the poet whose understanding was purified by examining words and their meanings.

Following Umapatidhara, the author of the Madhainagar copperplate also called Lakshmanasena “lamp of the Soma lineage” and “supremely initiated, highest Brahma Kshatriya.” Here too, the adjectives “supremely initiated” and “highest Brahma Kshatriya” indicate Lakshmanasena’s wholehearted engagement in a religious observance. Another point deserves attention: the eulogies in Vijayasena’s and Ballalasena’s charters begin with “Homage to Shiva,” whereas all four inscriptions issued by Lakshmanasena begin with “Homage to Narayana.” This clearly suggests that Lakshmanasena was initiated into the Vaishnava faith and lived religiously—possibly influenced by one of his court poets, Jayadeva Goswami, the crest-jewel of Vaishnavas. Here he is also called *parama-narasimha*, meaning a worshipper of the Lord Nrisimha. Above all, his epithet “lamp of the Soma lineage” removes the grounds for suspecting him to have been a Brahman.

Chapter Nine

Rajputs and Ugra Kshatriyas in Bengal

We have already said that the scholars who deciphered the Mallasarul copperplate judged from its script that it was issued in the sixth century AD. It is therefore clear that the martial Agrahari community, bearing surnames such as Yash, Datta and Nandi, was already present in that region. These Agraharis were Rajputs by community. Because they were engaged in warfare, however, they adopted the honourable title “Ugra Kshatriya suta,” expressive of strength, prowess and valour and sanctioned by the Vedas, Upanishads and other religious scriptures. Even today, boys in Ugra Kshatriya society are taught to recite the following verse as the defining qualities of their lineage:

Reputation, good conduct, steadfast wisdom and eloquence;
fame and wealth, without attachment to violence;
a fierce nature, strength and weapons borne—
these are the nine marks of the Ugra Kshatriya lineage.

In other words, the descriptions of the Ugra sons in the Vedas and Upanishads—“exceptional strength,” “heroic nature,” “sons of Kshatriyas of formidable disposition,” and so forth—have continued, word for word, to be proclaimed as the characteristic marks of the Ugra Kshatriyas—and the way the *Brihaddharma Purana*, while recording the identity of Rajputs and Ugra Kshatriyas, describes the Ugra Kshatriyas’ military occupation also supports this conclusion. See page 35.

Today we see military bodies of various classes and names, such as Sikh, Gurkha, Rajput and Pathan. In the same way, the martial Rajputs who came to Bengal seeking their fortunes entered military service and received the title “Ugra Kshatriya suta.” Having obtained *agrahara*, or land granted by the king, they gradually rose through military skill to the position of subordinate rulers. In this way twenty-two small kingdoms were established in Rarh, the borderland of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. It is a historical fact that their rulers gradually became powerful. In Chapter Five we found ample evidence that Gopaladeva, the first Pala emperor and lord of Gauda, arose from one of these families, the Ratnakar lineage of Burdwan.

Error gives birth to error. In the preceding chapter we saw that Samantasena’s designation “brahma-vadi, head-garland of the Brahma Kshatriyas” and Lakshmanasena’s “supremely

initiated, highest Brahma Kshatriya” were applied to them personally because of their religious devotion. Furthermore, Umapatidhara, author of the Deopara eulogy, master of all the scriptures and possessed of an understanding purified through the examination of words and meanings, applied the name “Brahma Kshatriya” to the Rajput Kshatriyas in the sense that “other Kshatriya peoples arose from the region of Brahma’s arms”—

—and Samantasena, though of the lunar line, was a Kshatriya of the Rajput class; hence he was called the crest-jewel of the Brahma Kshatriyas.

The Sena kings explicitly stated in every one of their charters that they were lunar Rajput Kshatriyas by community. Vijayasena, who in the Deopara inscription called Samantasena, descended from Virasena of the lunar line, “brahma-vadi, head-garland of the Brahma Kshatriyas,” also issued the Barrackpore inscription. Its third verse describes the birth of Rajputs in the lunar line—“rajaputras came into being”—and Samantasena’s birth “in their lineage.”

Again, in the third verse of Ballalasena’s Naihati inscription, we have seen the birth of Rajputs in the lunar line—“rajaputras were born”—and Samantasena’s birth “in their lineage.”

The late Nani Gopal Majumdar, translator of these inscriptions, used the reasoning by which he had previously concluded, when translating the Deopara record, that the Sena dynasty was “Brahman” or of the “Brahmakshatri caste.” Accordingly, he translated *rajaputra* everywhere as “princes.” Yet one should notice that no king is named in the Karnata region, the Senas’ original homeland, or in Rarh, where they first settled after coming to Bengal and which they “adorned”—

—in fact, no king of the Sena line is named from Virasena of the *Mahabharata* down to Vijayasena’s acquisition of the kingdom. It is therefore not reasonable to identify the Senas preceding Vijayasena as “princes.” Above all, when Vijayasena, introducing his grandfather, and Ballalasena, introducing his great-grandfather, name no king but say that Samantasena was born in the lineage of the Rajputs—“in their lineage”—the conclusion consistent with scripture and reason is that this Sena family belonged to the lunar Rajput people.

Although Hemantasena is called Maharajadhiraja in the Barrackpore inscription, verse 13 of the Deopara inscription makes it clear that he was not actually ruler of a region:

What has Rama, master of an innumerable army of monkey-lords, accomplished? What has Partha, leader of the Pandava army, achieved? In their victories they were but instruments. He,

with only his sword-adorned arm, won as his reward sole sovereignty over the circle of the earth bounded by the shores of the seven seas.

The author's Bengali rendering:

How can the victories of Rama, commander of countless monkey warriors, or of Partha with his vast army, be compared with that of Vijayasena, who gained the earth's kingdom, surrounded by the seven seas, with the aid of his sword-bearing arm alone?

This too makes it clear that Samantasena was born in the lineage of the Rajput Kshatriyas—
—rather than in a particular famous royal family.

In the celebrated Colonel Tod's *Rajasthan*, Volume One, Chapter Six, we find the Chandra, Soma, Surya and other lineages included among the thirty-six principal Rajput clans. Maharaja Lakshmanasena is saluted in the Madhainagar inscription as "lamp of the Soma lineage." In the Idilpur inscription, Keshavasena is similarly saluted as "the sun that opens the lotus of the Sena family, lamp of the Soma lineage." It is therefore clear that the Senas living in Rarh were Kshatriyas of the Rajput class, and that at first they were merely subordinate rulers under the Pala emperors.

During the reign of Maharajadhiraja Devapaladeva, the historically renowned subordinate ruler Karnasena came into conflict with the powerful Ichhai Ghosh of Dhekkurgarh on the Ajay River. As a result, Karnasena had to move south and settle there. Later, his son Lavasena, or Lausena, defeated and killed Ichhai Ghosh at Devapaladeva's command. Karnasena had married Devapaladeva's sister-in-law, so it is quite clear that he too was a Rajput Kshatriya. It is said that, after conquering Kamarupa, Lausena, on his return from Gauda to Moynagarh, married the daughter of Gajapati, the subordinate ruler of Mangalkot, and the daughter of Haripal of Shimul.

We have already seen Lakshmanasena and Keshavasena saluted as "lamp of the Soma lineage" and "the sun opening the lotus of the Sena family, lamp of the Soma lineage." At the very beginning of the Ugra Kshatriya genealogical list we find: "At Nihshanka is the Indu house; Soma at Muzaffar," and "Barbak, Kanchan, Soma mingle with Yash." The two parganas, Muzaffarshahi and Barbak Singh, lie beside the Ajay River and near Dhekkurgarh. There can therefore be no doubt that this Soma-line Sena dynasty rose from the Ugra Kshatriya Soma lineage. Sena families of the Soma lineage still live in these two parganas and elsewhere. This is not conjecture, but directly observable truth.

At this point we draw the attention of inquisitive and thoughtful readers to an important matter. Today we see many hundreds of thousands of Brahmans and Kayasthas in Bengal belonging to the gotras and lineages of just five Brahmans and five Kayasthas brought by Adishura. It would be mere lack of thought to suppose that the community, lineages and surnames of the Pala and Sena Rajput kings, who successively governed Bengal for five hundred years, have now been wiped entirely from Bengal's face. On the contrary, many Ugra Kshatriyas bearing the surname Pal and belonging to the Ratnakar lineage, and others bearing the surname Sen and belonging to the Soma lineage, live in Rarh, the region of the Rajput people's first settlement.

We shall conclude our argument by drawing the inquiring reader's attention to the following points.

1. Sandhyakar Nandi, author of the *Ramacharitam*, calls the Pala emperors Kshatriyas: see its first chapter, verse 17 and his own commentary, quoted on page 88. Their Brahman minister Vaidyadeva calls them solar Kshatriyas in the Kamauli inscription; see page 72. Their marriages into the Rashtrakuta royal family and the Haihaya lineage make it clear that they were solar Rajput Kshatriyas.

2. In all their charters, the Sena kings declare in various ways that they were lunar Kshatriyas. Their marriages into the Shura lineage and the Chalukya lineage, one of the Agnikula Rajput clans, also identify them as lunar Rajput Kshatriyas. Nevertheless, some conclude that the Sena kings were Brahmans because Umapatidhara, the eulogist learned in all the scriptures, saluted the forest-retirement observer Vijayasena as "head-garland of the Brahma Kshatriyas" in the Deopara inscription issued by Maharaja Vijayasena. If they attend to Vedavyasa's declaration of the Brahmanhood of the solar royal sage Nabhi in the *Bhagavata*, Canto Five, Chapter Four, verse 7, quoted in Chapter Two of this book—see page 12—they will realise that it is entirely mistaken to conclude from the adjective *brahma* that the lunar Kshatriya Sena kings belonged to the Brahman caste.

[Translator's note: Here the printed text names Vijayasena as the forest-retirement observer; the preceding argument on pages 125–126 names Samantasena. The name is retained as printed for review. The verse number 7 follows the book's errata, correcting 5.]

The designation "Agnikula" arose within Rajput Kshatriya society from the belief that Brahma and fire are identical. The *Shatapatha Brahmana* (6.1.1.5) says: "He became Prajapati; he is this

fire that is built up.” That is, the primordial Person became Prajapati, and this blazing fire is that Person.

The great sage Vedavyasa said, “Other Kshatriya peoples arose from the region of Brahma’s arms.” Therefore the Kshatriyas born of Brahma’s arms may also be called Brahma Kshatriyas.

3. In Chapter One, discussion of the Vedas, Upanishads and other scriptures established beyond doubt the identity of the two communal designations “Rajput Kshatriya” and “Ugra Kshatriya suta,” and their unalloyed Kshatriya status.

4. In Chapter Two, we also saw that all the religious scriptures of Jainism—one of India’s most ancient religions, firmly established and scrupulously practised in Rajputana, the historic field of Rajput activity—support the Vedic and Upanishadic statements concerning the identity of Rajputs and Ugra Kshatriyas and their unalloyed Kshatriya status.

5. The caste list composed in Bengal and incorporated in the *Brihaddharma Purana* also clearly acknowledges the identity of Rajputs and Ugra Kshatriyas in the verse: “The Ugra and the Rajaputra both arose from a Kshatriya in a Vaishya woman.” Yet, just as Bengal’s climate causes people—

—to deteriorate physically, so the social standing of all Bengal’s non-Brahman communities has been considerably diminished. Along with them, Rajputs and Ugra Kshatriyas of unalloyed Kshatriya descent have been imagined as the children of a Kshatriya father and a Vaishya wife.

In fact, after the great flood of Buddhist influence in Bengal, when Hinduism revived, mutually contradictory accounts of caste were incorporated in the Puranas and other religious scriptures.

The result is that today no unalloyed varna exists in Bengal apart from Brahman and Shudra.

That is, the communities classed outside Bengal as Kshatriya or Vaishya, though following proper conduct, are all known in Bengal as *sat-Shudras*, or respectable Shudras, and have been deprived of the Savitri initiation.

Nor is this all. Apart from the small number of Brahmans and the so-called *sat-Shudras*, the remaining communities of Bengal include some from whom water may not be accepted and others treated as entirely untouchable. Certain Brahmans maintained these communities’ Hindu identity and somehow kept their connection with the wider Hindu society unbroken, accepting priestly service among them to assist their religious observances. Those self-sacrificing Brahmans, like the great sage Dadhichi, are themselves treated in Bengali Hindu society as

fallen, disgraced and degraded, and are called *varna-Brahmans*. Such a system is peculiar to Bengal.

On the other hand, those earthly gods who possessed learning, humility and other virtues and were honoured by receiving *kulin* status from Ballalasena—

—their descendants have taken this hereditary distinction as a licence for multiple marriages and have conducted a marriage business for the past eight hundred years. The resulting upheaval in Brahman society has not ended even today. This custom, destructive of religion, is also a peculiarity of Bengal.

We further believe that, through the Pala emperors' liberal religious outlook and good government, the law of the fish and anarchy were removed, and Bengal enjoyed complete peace and prosperity for at least four centuries. Then, during the short-lived rule of the Sena kings, Buddhist influence was curtailed under the pretext of reconstructing Hindu society. It is said that Ballalasena's lack of judgment brought various abuses, oppression and injustices upon Bengali Hindu society. As a result, the Bengali people, torn apart in body, were easily forced to submit to the Muslim conquerors. Later, many Hindus of the lower classes embraced Islam to free themselves from the oppression of arbitrary caste Hindus. This has made possible the establishment in Bengal today of the "dual system of government," as though it were the rod of divine justice.

[Translator's note: "Today" refers to the period of the 1940 edition. The author's social and political interpretation is retained; "dual system of government" translates his phrase dwaita shasanatantra.]

Conclusion

In a Bengal thus surrounded by the ramparts and moats of the impenetrable fortress of eternal Hinduism, and living near Nabadwip, the capital of Brahman religion, the Ugra Kshatriyas alone have continued to observe Kshatriya customs: wearing the sacred thread appropriate to Kshatriyas and observing twelve days of mourning impurity. Yet Bengal's *Brihaddharma Purana* says of them, "born from a Kshatriya in a Vaishya woman"; the *Brahmavaivarta Purana* says, "Aguri from a Karana in a Rajaputri woman"; the so-called Krittibas account calls them sons of the Shudra ascetic Shanaka; and the *Vishvakosha* identifies one section of them as the *murdhabhishikta* community, born of a Kshatriya father and Brahman mother. Again, for some time now—since the publication of the *Vachaspatya* dictionary, *Shabdakalpadruma* and similar works—they have become Manu's "creatures with Kshatriya and Shudra parentage." More astonishing still, Brahmans of high rank have served as their priests for hundreds of years without hesitation.

Concerning the occupation and dwelling-place of the Ugra people born of a Kshatriya and a Shudra, the Lord Manu gives these directions:

Catching and killing creatures that live in holes is the occupation of Ugras, Kshattris and Pukkasas; leather-work is that of Dhigvanas, and playing musical instruments that of Venas.

These people, recognised by their occupations, should live by sacred trees, in cremation grounds, on hills and in groves, supporting themselves by their respective work.

—Chapter Ten

That is, together with the outcaste Kshattri and Pukkasa peoples, their occupation is the catching and killing of monitor lizards and similar creatures. Along with the leather-working Dhigvanas, the instrument-playing Venas, and communities such as the Chandalas and Shvapakas, they are to live outside villages, on hills, in groves and in cremation grounds. Bharata Mallika, the famous commentator on the *Amarakosha*, says, "In the vernacular, Aghori." In the everyday language of the northwestern regions this community is known as "Aghori"; there, it is commonly cited as an example of a low community without proper observances. In Bengal this wandering people is called "Haghare." Indeed, a religious sect imitating this community's objectionable practices cultivates equal regard for excrement and sandalwood and is therefore known as the "Aghorpanthi."

[Translator's note: These descriptions reproduce the author's polemical comparison and historical caste vocabulary. They are not independent characterisations of the communities or religious traditions named.]

A glance at the caste lists in the *Brihaddharma Purana* and *Brahmavaivarta Purana* clearly suggests that these lists were artificially inserted into those Puranas in Bengal itself. They present a precise picture of Bengali communities and name the communities regarded as fallen in Bengal, together with the alleged causes of their degradation, although those same communities are not considered fallen outside Bengal. For these reasons, scholars have also judged the caste list attributed to Parashurama to be a comparatively modern composition from Bengal, lacking authority. Moreover, both the *Brihaddharma Purana* and *Brahmavaivarta Purana* were composed by the great sage Krishna Dvaipayana Vedavyasa. The two mutually contradictory verses on the origin of Rajputs and Ugra Kshatriyas incorporated in these Puranas—

—can therefore clearly be understood as no more than the mistaken inventions of Bengal's professional interpreters of scripture concerning the Rajput Kshatriya people.

If one disregards place, time and person, and gropes blindly without first mastering the subject, it is natural that one person's burden should fall upon another's shoulders, and that differing opinions should arise like those of blind men describing an elephant. It is through such one-sidedness that the "Ugra Kshatriya suta" has finally become the "Ugra born of a Kshatriya and a Shudra" in Bengali Hindu society, and that the lunar Sena kings have been considered "Brahmans" or a "Brahmakshatri caste."

The gratifying fact is that Bengal has never lacked scholars versed in all the scriptures. By God's grace and the blessings of the Ugra Kshatriyas' celebrated ancestors, an occasion once arose for discussion of the community's origin and standing in the assembly of scholars at Baranagar, Rani Bhavani's capital on the Bhagirathi. An Ugra Kshatriya trader of Rajaganj, near that capital, became involved in a dispute with a member of another prominent non-Brahman community about the superiority of their respective communities. Both sought a judgment from the scholars in the revered queen's court. Those learned men acknowledged the Ugra Kshatriyas' superior standing as the "kingly community" and issued a written ruling. By a turn of circumstances, that document came to be preserved in our own household—

—but later, during my fatherless childhood, most of our ancestral house collapsed in the great flood of the Bengali year 1286. Many of our property papers remained under heaps of bricks for a long time and were destroyed. Probably the written ruling was also lost with them.

Later I learned the substance of that ruling from my late mother and my late maternal uncle, Bipin Bihari Yash. Seeing Kshatriya observances maintained in Ugra Kshatriya society, I had from childhood a very strong desire to investigate the origins and standing of the Ugra Kshatriyas, the “kingly community.” Subsequently I found this account of the origin of the four varnas in the *Rigveda Samhita*: “His—Brahma’s—mouth became the Brahman, his arms became the Rajanya, what were his thighs became the Vaishya, and from his feet the Shudra was born.” Accordingly, the *Manusamhita* says: “For the increase of the world, Brahma produced the Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra respectively from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet.” Immediately afterwards, another account of the origin of the four varnas is given:

Brahma divided his own body into two parts, becoming male in one part and female in the other. The male part begot the Virat Person upon the female part. That Virat Person performed austerities and created me, Svayambhuva Manu. I first created the ten Prajapatis: Marichi, Atri, Pulaha, Pulastya, Kratu, Angira, Pracheta, Vashishtha, Bhrigu and Narada.

[Translator’s note: These two printed pages are absent from the digitised source used for this translation. The scan proceeds directly from printed page 141 to printed page 144. Their text has not been reconstructed or invented; a copy of the missing leaves is required to complete this passage.]

—by preserving those distinctive communal qualities, they remain an example to Bengali Hindu society: this is directly observable truth.

Those who have studied Kshatriya history know that the community’s designations are continually changing. The Ikshvaku, Raghu and other lineages arose from the solar line itself. In present-day Rajput society too, many famous and obscure lineages have arisen from the solar and lunar lines and the four Agnikula clans. From genealogical lists recorded by Khichi and the poet Chand, and from the *Kumarapala Charitra*, the eminent Colonel Tod recovered a list of thirty-six lineages derived from the solar, lunar and four Agnikula lines. He then recorded many branches and sub-branches of these families.

In Rarh within Bengal we find the names of three martial communities: Rajput Kshatriyas; Agraharis, that is, Agaris or Ugra Kshatriyas; and Brahma Kshatriyas. Everyone knows that “Agrahari” and “Ugra Kshatriya” are two designations of the same people. We have seen that among the Rajput Sena kings, Samantasena and Lakshmanasena received such titles as “brahma-vadi Brahma Kshatriya” and “highest Brahma Kshatriya” because of their religious devotion. Again, we have clearly learned from the Vedas, Upanishads, Jain religious scriptures and the *Brihaddharma Purana* current in Bengal that “Rajput Kshatriya” and “Ugra Kshatriya suta” are

equivalent designations. It is therefore clear that the fortune-seeking Rajput Kshatriyas who came to Bengal received agraharas and became—

—“Agraharis”; that because they were strong, courageous, skilled in warfare and followed Kshatriya occupations, they were known as “Ugra Kshatriya sutas”; and that Samantasena and Lakshmanasena, of their own lineage, were saluted as “Brahma Kshatriyas” because of their religious devotion.

The evidence of the Ugra Kshatriyas’ Kshatriya status consists of more than a few scriptural statements. Even in their most helpless condition, they sacrificed themselves to protect the temples of Saptagram. At the end, seven hundred defeated and captive Ugra Kshatriya warriors contemptuously rejected the offer to save their lives by abandoning their religion and gave up their lives upon the great stakes. This is a defining characteristic of the Rajput Kshatriyas. History bears witness that the Rajputs who came to Bengal under the name of Ugra Kshatriyas passed even that trial by fire with honour.

There can be no doubt that they showed exceptional affection for those who sought their protection when they sheltered the pregnant wife of Maheshvar Datta—who had been persecuted and killed, together with his brothers, by Maharajadhiraja Ballalasena—and saved both her life and that of her unborn child. It is regrettable that Bengal’s scholars of antiquity continue along the wrong path without examining the customs, conduct, rites, social rights and glorious past of the Ugra Kshatriyas, the distinctive martial community of Rarh, the field of Rajput activity in Bengal and the region adorned by Rajput Kshatriyas. We declare openly that the history of this small Ugra Kshatriya people of Rarh, possessing exceptional social rights and good conduct—
—is the glorious national history of Bengal’s past. In the present age, when wealth determines social distinction, so long as the social rights and distinctive communal character of this impoverished people remain disregarded, Bengal’s antiquities will certainly remain shrouded in darkness.

End

Appendix The original errata

The two original correction sheets precede printed page 1 in the Bengali edition. They are reproduced on the next two pages for comparison. Their four column headings mean Page, Line, Incorrect and Correct. The repeated-page sign means “same page as above.”

Most entries correct Sanskrit spelling, case endings or joined compounds and therefore do not produce a distinct change in the English wording. The following two entries directly affect references or names in the translation:

Printed page 103, line 9: Devapaladeva should read Dharmapaladeva. The translation follows the corrected name.

Printed page 134, line 19: “5th” should read “7th.” The translation follows verse 7 in the cited Bhagavata passage.

The facsimiles preserve the exact incorrect and corrected spellings for specialist checking. The translated text elsewhere in this PDF can be selected and searched.

Errata sheet 1

Columns: Page · Line · Incorrect · Correct

শুদ্ধিপত্র

পৃষ্ঠা	পুঙ্ক্তি	অশুদ্ধ	শুদ্ধ
৬৮	৮	পাণিভগ্নহে	পাণিভগ্নহে
ঐ	৯	ক্ষিত্তি নৃশারীণী	ক্ষিত্তি নৃশরীরিণী
ঐ	১০	মূর্তাতথবা	মূর্তাতথবা
ঐ	১৪	সুতমসুত	সুতমসুত
৭০	৪	লোকাহরণং	লোকাহরণং
ঐ	১৬	রত্নাকরে মুশ্মিন	রত্নাকরেৎমুশ্মিন্
৭১	১২	জঙ্ঘুকণা	জঙ্ঘুকণা
৭২	৪	কুন্তু	কুন্তুঃ
৭৭	১২	ক্ষৌণী নামক	ক্ষৌণী নায়ক
৭৮	১৭	পুরোনিশি	পুরোদিশি
৮৫	৩	প্রকৃতিঃলক্ষ্মা	প্রকৃতিভিলক্ষ্মাঃ
১০৩	৯	দেবপালদেব	ধর্মপালদেব
১০৪	১৪	মহা দেবশচতুমুখ	মহাদেবশচতুমুখঃ
ঐ	২০	সুনো	সুনো
১০৫	১৫	অন্তঃপাতি	অন্তঃপাতি
ঐ	১৭	গ্রাম	গ্রামে
১০৯	২১	গ্রামপোকর্থে	গ্রামোপকর্থে
ঐ	২২	প্রত্যাপনং	প্রত্যাপণং
১১০	১	বেশ্মানি	বেশ্মনি

Errata sheet 2

Columns: Page · Line · Incorrect · Correct

৯০			
পৃষ্ঠা	পুঙ্ক্তি	অশুদ্ধ	শুদ্ধ
১১০	১	পিঞ্জরোদর	পঞ্জরোদর
১১৪	২	স্বক্তি মাধবীক ধারাঃ	স্বক্তিমাধবীকধারা
১১৫	৭	বভূভুব	বভূবুঃ
ঐ	১৫	শূরকুলাশোধি	শূরকুলাস্তোধি
১২৫	২	তুলিয়াছেন	তুলিয়াছে
ঐ	৪	বাচ	বাচঃ
১৩০	৯	রাজপুত্রঃ	রাজপুত্রা
১৩১	১৫	হেতোঃ	হেতোঃ
ঐ	১৬	সপ্তাশোধিতটা	সপ্তাশ্তোধিতটা
১৩৪	১৯	৫ম	৭ম
১৩৫	১১	উগ্রক্ষত্রিয় স্মৃত	উগ্রক্ষত্রিয়স্মৃত
১৩৬	৬	পুনরভ্যদয়	পুনরভ্যদয় ।

Translator's note

This English translation of Haricharan Bandhu's Rajput O Ugrakshatriya was prepared with assistance from OpenAI Codex for the Aguri Heritage project. It is based on the digitised second Bengali edition, published in Calcutta in 1940. Its purpose is to make the book accessible to English readers.

The translation covers the dedication, publisher's appeal, author's foreword, nine chapters and all surviving text of the conclusion. Printed pages 142 and 143 are absent from the available digitised copy: the scan passes directly from page 141 to page 144. The missing passage has not been reconstructed. The gap is marked where it occurs and will require another copy of those pages to complete.

OCR was used as an aid to reading the scanned print, with visual checking of the source. Older Bengali typography, worn characters and quotations in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Gujarati leave some readings uncertain. These are identified in bracketed notes, particularly where names, dates, genealogies or wordplay require specialist interpretation. The translation is not a fully verified scholarly edition.

The translation retains the author's arguments and first-person voice. Historical claims, accounts of community origins, caste classifications and judgments about religious or social groups belong to the original author and his period. Their inclusion does not establish their historical accuracy or imply the translator's endorsement. References to "today" or "the present" should be read in the context of the 1940 edition.

Quotations are rendered in English; where the author also supplies a Bengali explanation, that explanation is translated separately. Names and technical terms are generally retained in readable transliteration. The original errata sheets are reproduced in the appendix with an English guide, and corrections that affect names or references are identified in the text.

The table of contents uses the page numbers of this English PDF. Page references in the author's text and editorial notes refer to the original Bengali edition or the work being cited.

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