

## CHAPTER 2

### BRAHMINS, RAJPUTS AND BANIAS IN THE CITY OF JAIPUR

Jaipur is not only a planned city architecturally it is also a planned city in social and cultural sense. Within the walled area different localities were assigned on the basis of caste and religion. Brahmins were given priority in the northern parts of the city known as Brahmpuri and Purani Basti. Still about seventy per cent of population of these areas belong to this community. Rajputs are dispersed all over the city mainly outside the walled area as no specific residential area was planned for them. While Banias are concentrated in Johri Bazar and Kishanpole Bazar known as Choukri Topkhanadesh, Chaukri Visheswerji and Modikhana.

This chapter provides the historical background of Brahmins, Rajputs and Banias in reference to Jaipur city. The chapter is divided into three sections dealing with the three castes. Each section begins with a brief introduction of the concerned caste in general and later on it describes in particular context of the city of Jaipur.

## I. BRAHMINS

Brahmins, as a community, are historically the oldest, numerically the largest and geographically widely distributed in India as well as neighbouring countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka. The Census of India (1901) gives the caste split as follows: Brahmins 14,893,300, Rajputs 10,040,800 and Vaishyas or trading castes 10,680,800<sup>1</sup>. According to the 1931 Census<sup>2</sup> (later censuses do not give figures on caste) they were highly concentrated in Rajputana (now Rajasthan), i.e., about 7.61% of the total population of the state. Similarly, the 1901 Census of India also suggested a high proportion of the Brahmins, that is, about 10.4% of the total population of Rajasthan. They were dispersed throughout the state but were proportionately strongest in Jaipur, that is, over 13% of the city's population<sup>3</sup>.

Brahmins, in India, are broadly divided into two groups<sup>4</sup>: the Gaudas and the Dravidas. This division is rather geographical and the dividing line is Vindhya Range.

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1. See Saraswati, B. 1977:1

2. Census of India 1931, Vol.I - India, Part I Report by J.R. Hutton, Delhi Manager of Pub., 1933.

3. The Imperial Gazetteer, Vol.XXI, 19808:III.

4. See Saraswati, B. 1977:39-81; Wilson, J., vol. 1976 (rpt.):17- ; Balfour 1885:430.

Brahmins of the North of Vindhya are called Gaudas and of the South of the Vindhya are called Dravidas. These two major groups are further divided into five categories each:

I. Panch-Gauda (mainly found in):

1. Gauda (North-western parts of India)
2. Saraswat (North-west)
3. Kanyakubja (U.P., Assam, Nepal)
4. Maithil (North Bihar)
5. Utkala (Orissa).

II. Panch Dravidas are:

1. Maharashtra (Marathi)
2. Tailangana or Andhras (Telugu)
3. Dravidas (Tamilian)
4. Karnataka (Karnadika)
5. Gurjara (Gujrati).

These ten sub-divisions are again based on the territorial origins. Some of these regional names way back to the days of Vedas and Puranas. And some of the subdivisions' names are taken from the district to which they originally belonged, others are named from their sects or literary achievements or their knowledge of the Vedas.

In Rajasthan we have found Brahmins claiming descent

from both Gauda and Dravida sections.

### **BRAHMINS IN THE CITY OF JAIPUR**

However, Jaipur has always recorded a large number of Brahmins in its population compared to any other, erstwhile, princely states of Rajasthan.

A regular census of the city was taken in 1870, but it was the census of 1901 which gives detailed data on caste and occupation of the people. There were 24,365 Brahmins, i.e., 15% of the total population of the city. Out of these (24,365), the largest number was that of Gaur Brahmins (10,131) followed by Pareeks (2,773)<sup>5</sup>. An earlier account<sup>6</sup> suggests much higher percentage of Brahmins i.e. more than 30% in 1835. The percentage had relatively decreased over the years especially after the Independence. But Jaipur is always considered as a city of Brahmins and Banias.

The Brahmins of Jaipur can broadly be divided into two sections. Firstly, there are those who were inhabitants of Amber and nearby villages before Jaipur came into being. Secondly, there are the learned Brahmins brought to the city

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5. Census Report of Jaipur State for 1901:164.

6. Boileau 1835.

at different times since its foundation (as teachers, priests or administrators). These both types are/were involved in secular as well as sacred occupations.

The main subdivisions among the Brahmins in Jaipur are as follows:

(1) **Gaur** (Adi-Gaur or Deswali Gaur): The majority of Brahmins in the city belongs to this category. Nearly a century back, i.e., in 1901<sup>7</sup>, about 50% of the Brahmins were gaur. Distribution-wise not much has changed as they are still in a large number in Jaipur city and its surrounding areas. Kurukshetra region now Haryana is supposed to be their place of origin<sup>8</sup>. The word 'Gaur', means a priest, it is also associated with the river Ghagar. Many of them were cultivators, and the educated ones were family priests of Agrawal Banias.<sup>9</sup>

(2) **Pareek or Purohit**: They are highly concentrated in the city and were family priests of Jaipur rulers and other kachwaha Rajput thikanedars. They were not Sanskrit Pandits or much educated but rather used to represent the ruler in

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7. Census Report for Jaipur State, 1901:164.

8. Bhattacharya, J.N. 1968 (rpt.):40-42.

9. ibid.

the religious ceremonies and many of them were land grantees and behaved as jagirdars. They also claim to be the hereditary priests of the Suryavanshi Kshatriya rulers of Ayodhya and trace their origin from Parashar Rishi, the father of Ved Vyas, the author of Mahabharat. However, they were/are in abundance in the surrounding areas of Jaipur. Many of them are still associated with their villages of origin. There is a reference that Raja Bharmal of Amber (1547-73 A.D.) invited a Pareek Brahmin from a nearby village, Sirsi, and gave him the post of Rajguru or Purohit and a Jagir and exempted it him from payment of tax. Still a large number of these Rajpurohits are in habitants of the areas like Brahmpuri and Chokri Purani Basti in the city of Jaipur.<sup>10</sup>

(3) **Dadhich or Daimas**: They claim to be the descendants of the <sup>Rishi</sup> Dadhich, and were mainly Pandits, who earned their livelihood by reading the Bhagwat and other Kathas. They were also important functionaries in the Marwar region (Jodhpur).<sup>11</sup>

(4) **Khandelwals**: They are found mainly in Jaipur, and trace their origin from Khandel Rishi of Khandela, a place near Jaipur on the border of Shekhawati region. They were

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10. Rajasthan Patrika, 'Nagar Parikrama', 16 Dec. 1994:8.

11. Wilson, Vol.II 1976 (rpt.):176.

mainly engaged in nonpriestly services, business and agriculture.<sup>12</sup>

(5) **Gujar Gaur**: They are known as the priests of Gujars and were earlier settled in Gujrat. They trace their origin from Gautam Rishi.<sup>13</sup>

(6) **Saraswat**: They derive their name from the river Saraswati and originally belonged to Punjab. They were mainly agriculturists and Shakti worshippers.<sup>14</sup>

Most of Brahmins belong to the above six divisions and are also known as *Chheniats*. They are mainly vegetarians, endogamous and engaged in modern occupations. There are other groups of Brahmins too in the city such as:

**Dakot**<sup>15</sup>: A class of mendicant Brahmins who are degraded by the acceptance of gifts made for eliminating evil influence of the planet Saturn (*Shani*) though they are believed to be experts in the Indian astrology. They accept rather inauspicious articles such as black cloth, oil, *til* (*sesame*), iron, buffaloes, salt, etc. particularly on Satur-

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12. ibid.:177.

13. Bhattacharya, J.N. 1968:100; Dave 1992:29.

14. ibid.:43; Russell 1969 (rpt.):357.

15. see Wilson, Vol.II 1976:173-4; Bhattacharya 1968:453.

days. Even today, Dakots have their regular patrons from whom they receive money or the above mentioned articles on Saturdays.

**Acharya:** Like Maha-Brahmins of other parts of India, they conduct funeral rites. Therefore, they are considered as degraded because they accept what is considered to be impure and related to the dead person. Wilson writes that they are not scholars or an educated lot as they know only few *mantras* relating to the last rites<sup>16</sup>. Some of them were also involved in other activities such as stone work (*silawat*) and manual laborer.<sup>17</sup>

**Chaturvedi:** Literally means the reader of the four Vedas. They associate themselves with the Kanojia Brahmins<sup>18</sup>. They are mainly *Vedic Karmakandi* pandits who are Sanskrit scholars also.

Another group of Pandits is *Bhatras* involved in priestly duties and conduct *purohit karmas*.

There are other Brahmins<sup>19</sup> in the city of Jaipur like

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16. Wilson, Vol.II 1976:195.

17. ibid.

18. .Bhattacharya 1968:453.

19. See Wilson 1976:166-187.

Paliwals, Pushkarnas, Shrimalis, Sachodas, Divas etc. who are associated with the other parts of Rajasthan.

Apart from these Brahmins there is a group of Bengali, Gujrati, Telegu (Telangana) and Kashmiri Brahmins who came to Jaipur city in the early years of its foundation. They are part of Jaipur but with their identities remain intact as a Bengali, Kashmiri or Gujrati. Some of them still have contact with their places of origin through marriage alliances especially the Bengalis and the Gujratis. While Kashmiris and Telegu Brahmins do not have contacts in that sense they might not be using their regional language but marriages definitely take place within the community. In most of the cases, they still observe their own festivals following marriage rules and rituals in their own style. They have their own priests to perform marriage and other ceremonies.<sup>20</sup> For example, most of the Gujrati and the Telegu marriages of these Brahmins take place in the day time in their own particular style. Their women do not cover their head like a Jaipuri. They invite their own priests, wear cloths in their traditional style. The Mahant of the Gopinathji Temple gave the information that till now,

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20. Information provided by the respondents, i.e., Kashmiri, Gujrati, Bengali and Telegu Brahmins.

not a single member of their family has got married to a non-Bengali. They still give and take daughters and wives from Bengal. So within the family mode of communication is Bengali. Moreover, all the other priests in the temple are Bengali so their major interaction is with the Bengalis only even after living in the city for generations.

On the contrary, Telegu Brahmins, in the city, do not speak their language, and now language is becoming a barrier in interacting with the Telegu Brahmins who are still in the Telangana area. Marriages are also settled between those who are settled in north India. They were mainly *Kavi* (poets) or Sanskrit scholars and were given patronage by the erstwhile Jaipur rulers.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, Brahmins from Bengal and other far-flung areas started coming to Jaipur since the time of Man Singh, i.e., 1589 A.D. The first batch of Bengali Brahmins came along with the idol of *Siladevi* in 1592-1800 A.D. They were mainly priests. *Vidyadhar*<sup>22</sup> the famous minister of Jaisingh II was their descendant. Another group of Bengali Brahmins came to Jaipur between 1714 to 1739 A.D. with the images of *Govindevaji*, *Gopinathji*, *Radhadamodarji* from Vrindaban and

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21. Information gathered during the field work.

22. Roy 1978:43.

are still Mahants of these temples.

Later in 1850 A.D. onwards many English educated Bangalis came to Jaipur as teachers and subsequently they were recruited in the services of the Maharaja and few of them became Prime Ministers of the state e.g. Babu Kanti Chander and Sansar Chandra Sen<sup>23</sup>.

In Jaipur there resides a small section of Vaishnava *Telegu Brahmins*, who migrated from Telangana (now in Andhra Pradesh) about four centuries back. They are either Sanskrit scholars or musicians and were used to be part of erstwhile *gunijankhana*<sup>24</sup>. The earliest reference of a Telegu Brahmin in the city, is of a Sanskrit scholar Shivananda Goswami. He was the guru of Vishu Singh (1690-1700 A.D.), the father of Jaisingh II. One of his important works called the *Simha Sidhanta Sindu*, deals with the mantras related to religious sacrifices and magic words. He was also given a jagir of four villages by Vishnu Singh<sup>25</sup>.

These Brahmins are mainly followers of Vallabhacharya,

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23. Rudolph and Rudolph 1984:97-99.

24. Information provided by Mrs. Chandrakala Bhatt, 83, in a personal interview June 1994. Her father was a state poet with a Jagir and she got married to a musician of Jaipur state *Gunijankhana*

25. Roy 1978:19-20.

a 15th century (1479 A.D.) saint from Telangana district. They worship Krishna as a child, i.e., His *Bal-Gopal Swarup* and believe in singing devotional songs rather than in elaborate religious rites. A small section of Gujrati Brahmins also resides in the city mainly in the Brahmpuri area. They came to Jaipur to take part in the religious ceremonies (*havans*) conducted for the foundation of the Jaipur city.

Kashmiri Brahmins mainly came to the city during British Raj and were given high posts in the court of Jaipur state. Some of them rose to the position of *Divan*.

### **Explanation**

A large proportion of Brahmins in the city relate their history to Amber/Jaipur rulers who invited them from different parts of the country, especially at the time of its foundation, i.e., in 1727 A.D. However, Jaipur must have had a strong Brahmin population in the surrounding areas. As there are references of Jaipur rulers inviting Brahmins from the nearby villages and giving them incentives to settle down in the new city, 'Purohitji Ka Katla' (a shopping complex) in Johri Bazar is one of such examples.

A large number of Brahmins were invited to settle in

Jaipur by the founder of the city, Sawai Jaisingh II. He was a devout Vaishnavite, though most of the Amber rulers were also Vaishnavites. But he brought all the four major Vaishnava sects<sup>26</sup> - Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha and Nimbarka as well as Chaitanya's followers - the Gaudiya Vaishnavas in the city and also tried to introduce certain reforms among them. He provided space, built temples and gave them tax free Jagirs.

Sawai Jai Singh II was also into the Mughal services and served as General and Governor of different Mughal provinces. These wide contacts helped him to invite learned Brahmins to his new city and he appointed them in the various capacities - as teachers, advisors and temple priests. At the same time, Jaipur provided security to the Brahmins which was under severe threat during the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb's time, who was not as tolerant as his precedents. To avoid his atrociousness a mass exodus of priests, along with the images of Krishna, took place from Vrindaban and Mathura. Many of the images<sup>27</sup> were brought to Jaipur, e.g., Govindevji, Gopinathji, Radha Damodar, Gokulananda and Radhavinode between 1714 to 1739 A.D.

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26. See Roy, A.K. 1978:170.

27. See Roy 1978:27, 162.

Jaisingh II was not only a Vaishnavite but he also believed in Puranic and Vedic Hinduism with its *pujas*, rituals and *yajnas*. In his efforts to revive many of the sacrifices of the Vedic age he performed Vajapeya and Ashvamegha Yajnas. <sup>28</sup> Probably a major influx of Brahmins started at the time of Yajnas performance, when a certain number of Brahmins was required according to the scriptures<sup>29</sup>.

There is a reference suggesting that Jaipur Maharaja designated non-Brahmins as Brahmins to give sanction to organise probably the 'Aswamegha Yajna'. "There have been at times large manufacturers of Brahmins by rulers. Some princes have imported Brahmins from distant localities, and other princes have raised lower castes to the dignity of Brahmins. Jeypore has a class of ploughing Brahmins, as regards whom a tradition relates that a warlike prince required a vast concord of priests to give dignity to his sacrifice, and accordingly created five tribes of Brahmins out of the surrounding populations..."<sup>30</sup> How far is it true is a different matter but the reference is certainly to the

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28. *ibid.*:19-24.

29. See Sharma, S.N. 1977:110.

30. Balfour's The Cyclopedia of India 1885 (1967 rpt.):429.

six Brahmin sub-castes, namely, Gaur, Gujar Gaur, Pareek, Khandelwal, Daima and Saraswat of Jaipur. It is said that Jaisingh II tried to unison various Brahmins, however, he succeeded only to get the six subcastes to interdine<sup>31</sup>.

In his efforts to reform different religious sects Jaisingh II made the Vaishnava ascetics following the Hindu *Chatur varna* rule in strict manner and permitted marriages among them<sup>32</sup>. His emphasis on caste followed by marriage permission not only gave importance to Brahmins but also made the 'Mahant' designation a hereditary one which was not so earlier. Consequently, the *Gaddi* of Mahant at Galta's Ramanandi sect, temples of Gopinathji, Govindevji, etc. of Gaudiya Vaishnavas became hereditary. Earlier, Mahants were used to be celibates following teacher-student tradition. In a way these reforms also helped in increasing the Brahmin population in the city.

Jaipur has a history or rather tradition of constructing temples by the rulers, the public and the royal women of zenana<sup>33</sup>. The city has temples for Puranic Gods like Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti, Ganapati and Surya. Though, here we do

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31. Dave 1992:27-8.

32. See Roy 1978:25.

33. See the Photograph in the Chapter 6.

not have any important temple for Shakti except Siladevi of Amber brought to Jaipur from Bengal by Raja Mansingh in 1604 A.D. and another Jamwamata at Jamwa Ramgarh.

Every street in the city seems to have small temples of Hanumanji and Shivji. At present, within the *Parkota* (walled area), there are about one thousand temples.<sup>34</sup> All these temples are obviously run by Brahmins, reflecting a high dependency of Brahmins on temples. In pre-Independence time many of the temples were jagir holders. In 1947, there were about 5,535 such religious jagirs in the Jaipur state and nearly 600 temples were maintained by the state in the city. Few of these jagirs were known as Guru Jagirs, it included seven main temples like Govindevji, Galtaji etc.<sup>35</sup> In 1947, these jagirs were abolished and were provided with the cash maintenace allowance which further helped in to sustain the hereditary dependence on the temples.

A popular belief among the people of the city is that Jaipur is founded on the power of Mantras and a large number of small temples in the middle of roads are attributed to

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34. Information regarding the number of temples has been provided by N.K. Pareek in a personal interview June 1994. He is a journalist.

35. Roy, A.K. 1978:70.

it. Since Jaipur is not a natural city, probably Jaisingh II took services of Tantriks and made use of the *Mantra vidhya* also while constructing the city.

The large number of Brahmins and their association with the rulers suggest that the Rajas of Amber/Jaipur were trying to establish themselves as proper or rather reputed Rajputs. They took help of the Brahmins to legitimize their claim as *Suryavanshi* Rajputs. They even performed *yajnas* which were not performed for centuries, constructed temples such as of Surya and Vishnu whose worship had almost disappeared from the North India.

It also indicates that a very small principality became economically as well as politically powerful with the alliance of Mughal rulers of Delhi but their status within the Rajput community of the region remained dubious. They were not admired for their rather diplomatic skills. Perhaps, with the help of the Brahmins they were trying to gain prestige.

On the contrary, a Jaipur state historian commented on the high percentage of Brahmins and writes that "clearly showing how the Kachhwa state has been the asylum of Hinduism when persecuted elsewhere, and how the Rajput word has protected the priesthood of the nation even from beyond the

frontiers of Jaipur. It speaks equally eloquently of the Jaipur rajas' boundless charity to the pious and their patronage of the sacred learning of their faith".<sup>36</sup>

## II. RAJPUTS

The word 'Rajput', meaning son of a king or 'Rajputra', is the designation of several groups who began to emerge from the seventh-eighth century A.D. and became dominant in north India. Rajputs are known as rulers, warriors and the landowning martial groups or races, the modern representative of the ancient kshatriyas, who formed the second order of the varna system.<sup>37</sup>

There are various views regarding the origin of Rajputs. Some believe them to be descendants of Gujars (see Cunningham 1849; Crooke 1896:42, Vol.IV). Another view is that a few Rajput clans have an Indo-Scythian origin.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, some believe that the Rajputs were ancient Hindu kshatriyas. Although the Kshatriyas were supposed to be rulers and warriors, but not all of them were rulers. Since Rajputs consider themselves to be sons of kings and

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36. Sarkar, J. 1984:9-10.

37. Crooke 1896:Vol.IV; Russell 1969 (rpt.):411-4.

38. Tod 1971:Vol.I.

Rajas, there is a tradition among them to claim ancestry from some famous kings or great warriors, whether of local origin or of foreign descent, e.g., Greeks, Shakas and Hunas. Quite often there were inter-marriages between the two. These rulers were concentrated in the western parts of India especially the desert area and Aravalli Hills.<sup>39</sup>

There is a general tendency to claim for kshatriya status among the martial groups. The three major martial groups who claim to be kshatriyas are: (1) the Rajputs; (2) the Marathas; and (3) the Jats<sup>40</sup>

Of the three martial groups mentioned, the Rajputs are the most outstanding, with a long history as rulers and warriors. They began to rise from the 7-8th centuries A.D., and by the twelfth century Rajputs became very prominent in north-western India. The term which was used in earlier times for the sons of King began to be applied during this period to the military clans and to the numerous small chiefs holding villages who largely constituted the ruling landed aristocracy.<sup>41</sup> Later on groups who were in close

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39. Russell 1916; 1969:198-9; Fox 1985:3.

40. In Punjab many of the Jat groups became Sikh during the 18th-19th centuries A.D.

41. Dutta, R.C. 1888 (reprint 1972:64-8).

proximity with the Rajputs or joined military also started claiming to be Rajputs.

The Rajputs were undoubtedly powerful during early medieval times. Later on they either fought against Muslim rulers or became subservient to them but their power in either case remained intact in their respective areas as the Mughal rulers recognized their authority and made them local chieftains responsible for the collection of revenue and its payment to them.

With the downfall of the Mughal empire, the small Jagirdars and Thikanedars became stronger as they started withholding revenues due to the government.

In their tradition of tracing origin from a famous King, Col. Tod listed 36 royal clans from where most of the Rajputs derive their origin. Even the 36 royal clans as listed by Tod are divided into various clan-clusters and ranked in a complex style. There are four major prestigious sets and clans from whom most of Rajputs derive their descent, ranked in the order as Suryavanshi (Solar), Chandravanshi (Lunar), Angikula (Fire) and Nagvanshi (Serpent).<sup>42</sup>

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42. Tod 1971:49; Karve 1965:165-71.

Important Rajput clans with their many branches can be grouped according to their origin as<sup>43</sup>:

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|----------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. Surya vanshi      | 2. Chandra vanshi | 3. Agnikula |
|                      | 8 Branches        | 87 Branches |
| 1. Sisodia or Gahlot | 1. Bhatti         | 1. Parmar   |
| 24 branches          | (Jaiselmer)       |             |
| (Mewar/Udaipur)      |                   |             |
| 2. Rathor            | 2. Jhareja        | 2. Parihar  |
| 24 branches          | (Kutch)           |             |
| (Marwar/Jodhpur)     |                   |             |
| 3. Kachwaha          |                   | 3. Solanki  |
| 12 houses            |                   |             |
| (Jaipur)             |                   | 4. Chauhan  |

Between the 7th and 11th centuries several Rajput clans arose to power in Rajasthan. The Gahlots/Sisodias migrated from Gujrat and occupied the Mewar region sometime in 646 A.D. Next came Parihars at Mandor near Jodhpur. They were followed in the 8th century by the Chauhans who first settled down at Sambhar and later on at Ajmer, and at the same time the Bhattis established themselves in Jaisalmer. The Jadons procured Karoli during the middle of 11th century; the Kachwahas came to Jaipur region from Gwalior about 1128 A.D.; the Rathors came to Marwar from Kanauj in the beginning of the 13th century, and in 1838, Jhalas established themselves in Jhalawar.<sup>44</sup>

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43. Tod 1971:68-100; Karve 1968:166-7

44. The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.XXI, 1908:94.

## RAJPUTS IN THE CITY OF JAIPUR

Rajputs, politically most dominant and significant but numerically smaller in proportion compared to Brahmins and Banias, basically belong to the villages and the towns of erstwhile Jaipur state, where they were landlords or Jagirdars. They were either looking after their land or recruited in the state army, serving to the Mughal rulers and later to the Britishers.

In 1901, out of the total population of 1,60,167 of Jaipur city, Rajputs were only 5,338 which also included a few hundred Muslims of Rajput descent. "In most of the castes the numbers of males and females were almost equal, but among the Rajputs living in the city there were only 1,799 females compared to 3,539 males. It is likely that most of the Rajputs in the city were in the army or police and had left their families in their village homes."<sup>45</sup>

Kachwaha clan form the majority among the Rajputs i.e. about 50%, followed by the Chauhans 19% and the Rathors 10%.<sup>46</sup> The data on Jaipur state suggests that in 1931 Rajputs were about 4.3% of the total population of the

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45. Census Report of Jaipur State for 1901:144-9.

46. ibid.:165.

Jaipur state, out of these 52% belong to the ruling clan, Kachwaha. Though a large number migrated to Alwar as the Naruka lineage of Kachwahas established a separate state in 1780 A.D.<sup>47</sup>

The word Kachwaha became more popular during and after the reign of Raja Mansingh of Amber (1550-1614 A.D.). It is believed that few of Kush's (the epic hero Ram's son) descendants migrated to the river Sone and constructed the fort of Rohtas and later founded the city of Narwar near Gwalior (i.e. before 11th century A.D.) and ruled the area for about 800 years. Gwalior, Dubkhund and Narwar were the major cities under the Kachwaha clans. In the eleventh century one of their sons Dulha Rai established his territories in Rajputana at Dausa (60 km. from Jaipur) after defeating Minas and Bar Gujars. Thus, Dausa became the first capital of the Kachwahas in Dhundhar, the area was known as Dhundhar. After making Dausa his base of operations Dulha Rai expelled the Minas from Machi (now Ramgarh) and from Khoh. To commemorate his victory Dulha Rai constructed a temple dedicated to Jamwa Mata, the Kuldevi of Kachwahas, is still worshipped by the rulers of Jaipur.

Amber, before its submission to Akber, in 1562 A.D.,

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47. Sarkar, J. 1984:10.

was a small state exposed to internal and external dangers. It was a vassal state under Rana Kumbha of Mewar and Rao Maldeo of Marwar conquered parts of Amber. But from 1572 A.D. onwards the Kachwahas became important and indispensable *Mansabdars* under Akbar and in lieu of their services they were rewarded by grant of large Jagirs or assignments against *mansabs* (territories under Mughal empire).<sup>48</sup> And Sawai Jaisingh II of Amber founded the city of Jaipur in 1727.

Rajputs, as a caste, are divided into various clans and sub-clans rather than on the lines of sub-castes like Brahmins and Banias. So there is intermixing of the clans through marriage alliance. Rajputs do not marry into the same clan, i.e., they observe clan exogamy and caste endogamy. Since Rajputs were rulers also, there evolved a different set of classes within the Rajput community and each claiming or sometimes forming hierarchy of clans on the basis of their past and sometimes present status. However, this system led to preference for hypergamous marriages among Rajputs.

In Jaipur, like other parts of Rajasthan, Rajputs, as a

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48. Bhargava, V.S. 1979:3-5; Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.XIII, 1908:384.

ruling community, were divided on the basis of their political standing as:

- (1) 'Raja' or 'Maharaja' or 'Maharana', i.e., the ruler.
- (2) 'Jagirdars' or 'Thakar' or 'Thikanedars', i.e., the feudal lords.

Sometimes they were also known as Raja, Rao Raja, Rao or Rawal or Rawat. They were mainly courtiers or servants of the ruler who used to get land or Jagir in place of salary. The title was not limited to the Rajputs. Many of the Jagir holders were non-Rajputs. The Jagirs were generally hereditary not like that of Mughal rulers of Delhi where the Jagirs were confiscable.

Many a times, the younger brothers of the ruler or Maharaja were conferred with Jagirs so the main Thikanedars used to belong to the clans of the ruler. For example, in Jaipur state the most important Jagirs were held by Kachwaha Rajputs. The twelve powerful Jagirs known as 'Barah Kotris' were, in fact, descendants from Amber ruler Prithviraj's (1503-1527) 12 sons<sup>49</sup>. Their names are as follows<sup>50</sup>:

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49. Tod, II 1971:285.

50. Sarkar, J. 1984:32-33

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Seat</b>	<b>Name of the Sub-clan</b>
1.	Puranmal	Nimera	Puranmal-ot
2.	Sanga	Sanganer	no issues so it labeled to the parent state Jaipur
3.	Pachyan	Samriya	Panchyan-ot
4.	Gopal	Chomu & Samod	Natha-ot
5.	Balbhadra	Achrol	Balbhadr-ot
6.	Surtan	Surothe	Surtanot
7.	Jagmal	Diggi	Khangarot
8.	Chaturbhuj	Bagru	Chaturbhujot
9.	Kalyandas	Kalwar	Kalyan-ot
10.	Kumbha	Banskhoh	Kumbhani
11.	Sheobrahma	Nidar	Sheobrahma-pota
12.	Naro	Watka	Banvir-pota

In every princely state of Rajasthan including Jaipur, the main aristocracy was formed by the same clan, e.g., Jaipur's Kachwahas, Jodhpur's Rathor, Udaipur's Sisodias, etc.

The important Jagirdars were usually related by clan-nish and were in the service of the rulers. In case of absence of legitimate heir, the practice of adoption from among the Jagirdars was prevalent. In Jaipur's history it

was a common feature sometimes leading to conflicts and hostilities. In practice, due to mutual distrust Rajput rulers used to employ non-Rajputs or Rajputs of different clans on higher and important posts, for example, Champawats of Rathor clan from Jodhpur became very powerful in Jaipur during Sawai Ram Singh's time (1833-1880).<sup>51</sup>

Some of the ambitious and adventurous clansmen established their own states. For example, Shekhawati Thikanas (14th century) and Alwar state (late 1770s) are the offshoots of Jaipur state.

Probably due to mutual mistrust or fear of conflict, if Rajputs are concentrated at one place, no specific residential area was planned for them with the city planning as were for Brahmins and Banias. Except the City Palace no other space as such was assigned or modelled for Rajputs. Though important Jagirdars of Jaipur state were required to have their houses in the city, the buildings were even constructed by the state and the cost was recovered later on instalment basis.<sup>52</sup> But the houses were not concentrated to one particular area rather spread out in most of the *chawkeris*. In fact, majority of Rajputs stay outside the walled

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51. See Rudolph and Rudolph 1984:81-95.

52. Roy 1978:58.

area like Bani Park, C. Scheme etc., the new colonies came up after the Independence.

### III. BANIAS

Banias are generally associated with the Vaishya Varna as many of them belong to merchant class and are traditionally involved in trade and commerce. On the contrary, many of the Bania sub-groups claim their ancestry from Rajput or Kshatriya clans.<sup>53</sup>

Tod<sup>54</sup> gives a list of 84 mercantile castes and most of them are supposed to belong to Rajput descents and are from Rajasthan's Marwar region. Important ones in the list are Agarwal, Oswal, Srimali, Khandelwal, Paliwal, etc.

These groups maintain that they are the offshoot of Rajputs who took up business and consequently became Banias. This trend is not limited to Rajasthan, there are similar instances in Gujrat also, for instance Patidars (but now they are claiming to Banias again). Khatri is another commercial community claimed to be of Rajput descent.

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53. Russell Vol.II, 1969 (rpt.):116-7.

54. Top I, 76, 109; II, 145.

## BANIAS IN THE CITY OF JAIPUR

The word 'Banias' is usually associated with merchants in general. But in particular reference to the city of Banias in Jaipur indicate a community, a caste divided into many sub-divisions or sub-castes. Though there are many commercial communities in the city, all of them are not called Banias or included in the category of 'Banias'. At the same time all these Banias groups are not involved in business. Some of them are engaged in other occupations and services from the time Jaipur was founded. Here, in the study, the Banias category will also include the Jain community as the two have a tradition of intermarriages.

Outside Rajasthan, in common parlance, Banias and other business communities who hailed from Rajasthan are called 'Marwaris'. Within Rajasthan or in Jaipur city the word 'Marwari' is not used for business class or particularly the Banias caste as business community.

Banias are distributed throughout Rajasthan. They comprised about 7.8% of the total population in Rajasthan in 1901 and were mainly traders and bankers, and some of them had business connections all over India.<sup>55</sup>

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55. The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.XXI, 1908:112.

Jaipur estimated a much larger Bania population. It was estimated about 14% of the city's total population in 1901. According to the Census of 1901, the total number of Bania subcastes was as follows: Agrawals (Hindu) 8,106; Khandelwal (Hindu) 4,718; Khandelwal (Jain) 3,635; Saraogi 2,927; Oswals and Maheshwari 2% of the total Bania population.<sup>56</sup>

As per the 1911 Census<sup>57</sup> there were about 7,43,000 Banias in Rajputana, out of that 1,96,000 belonged to Jaipur state. Accordingly, Agarwals, Khandelwals and Saraogi formed the major part of the Bania population in the Jaipur state, and percentage-wise the highest among the other princely states of Rajasthan, namely Bikaner, Jodhpur and Udaipur. Boileau estimated a much higher Bania population in the city of Jaipur, i.e. about 20% of the total population.<sup>58</sup>

Many factors seem to have contributed in attracting Banias to the city of Jaipur. Likewise, at the time of

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56. Census Report for Jaipur State 1901:164.

57. Census of India, 1911, Vol.XXII: Rajasthan and Ajmer-Mewara, pp.208-211.

58. Boileau 1835:232-5.

Jaipur's inception, Amber, Sanganer and Chaksu already had a large Bania and Bania-Jain population, and the new city provided new opportunities for trade and commerce. Moreover, Jaipur's elaborate markets, each market dealing with separate items, were part of the city's planning. Identical shops were constructed by the state and were subsequently sold out to merchants. As a result, many of the Banias shifted from Amber, the old capital; and from the nearby towns like Sanganer, Chaksu, and from arid regions like Shekhawati and Marwar; and from politically insecure areas like Agra, Mathura and Delhi.

In the 18th century the new city of Jaipur provided, much needed, security to Brahmins as well as to traders from frequent invasions of the Delhi-Agra-Mathura region by Ahmed Shah Abdali, the Marathas were also shifting their interest to the North.<sup>59</sup> The Sikhs were hampering the Mughals trade route through the Punjab. Such unstable political conditions of Delhi and nearby cities made money-lenders and jewellers to flee from these areas and Jaipur was the nearest and the safest place in those days. Moreover, Jaipur rulers provided them with facilities to settle them down in the city. In turn, these Banias helped in the rapid pros-

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59. See Roy 1978:VIII.

perity of the city.

Another reason as cited by Jadunath Sarkar is that in the 18th century Jaipur "was also the chief exchange house and distributing centre for the trade of the Punjab, Kashmir and Central Asia in one direction, and the merchandise of the Gangetic valley, Malwa and Gujrat on the other."<sup>60</sup>

Girdhari's Bhojansara (1739) also suggests that Jaipur had become a flourishing trading, banking, centre jewellery industry as early as 1739 A.D.

Many of Shekhawati bankers and traders, the 'Marwaris' had their firms in the city by 1850s, before they migrated to the other parts of India, important among them were Baldeo Das Brijmohan Birla of Pilani, Bansidhar Khetan of Mehansar, etc.<sup>61</sup> Probably, the first outmigration of Marwaris from their home towns was to Jaipur and those who settled down in Jaipur rarely left the city.<sup>62</sup>

By the 19th century Jaipur was the head quarters of banking and exchange and was the largest and the richest

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60. Jadunath Sarkar 1984:15.

61. See the list in Roy 1978:93.

62. See for details on migration, Timberg, T.A. 1978:99-124.

city of Rajputana.<sup>63</sup> This is also evident in the population composition - in the total population of Rajputana Mahajans/Banias were about 7.8%,<sup>64</sup> while the percentage of Banias in Jaipur city was 14%.<sup>65</sup>

In 1881, Jaipur had seven banking firms doing business of about Rs.2.5 crores (£250,000) and possessed a capital of more than £6,000,000 sterling. In addition to these there were several minor houses whose collective business was about half a crore rupees a year.<sup>66</sup>

Banias of Jaipur were not only bankers or jewellers but they also used to finance trade like Sambhar salt, opium, and were also suppliers money-lenders to Jagirdars.

Even today, precious stone cutting and jewelry is the most promising trade, and most of the rich and influential families of the city are involved in it. Presently, Jaipur is the foremost city in India in exporting polished gems. Moreover, gem industry provides the largest employment opportunities and attracts even people who have no family affiliation to the trade.

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63. The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.XXI, 1908:133.

64. ibid.:112.

65. Census of Jaipur State for 1901:144.

66. The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.IV, 1881:689.

Banias were/are not limited to trade and commerce. They were in important positions too from the days of Jaisingh II (1700-1743). He had about seven Bania-Jains ministers in his court.

The major Bania sub-castes who reside in Jaipur are as follows:

1 **Agrawals:** They trace their origin from a Rajpur ruler Agrasen of Agroha, a town now in Haryana. Agrawals maintain that their 17 or 18 gotras are derived from Agrasen's 17 sons who were displaced by Ghori's attacks in the 12th century so they gave up their martial affiliation and took up commerce.<sup>67</sup>

In Jaipur Agrawals are both Hindu and Jain. Jains also observe local Hindu festivals, they employ Hindu priests and also intermarry with Agrawal Hindus. In such cases the women usually adopt their husbands religion. Agrawals are also divided on the lines of *Dasa* and *bisa*, i.e., of pure and mixed descent.

In the city, there is a reformist Digamber (Jain) sect

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67. Russell Vol.II, 1969:136-9; Bhattacharya, J.N. 1968:163-4.

known as *Terapantis*,<sup>68</sup> most of the Agrawal Jains belong to that sect.

2. **Khandelwals**: The majority of Banias in Jaipur are Khandelwals, originated from Khandela a town near Jaipur. They belong to both Jain and Hindu faith. They were not only businessmen but also important post holders<sup>69</sup> in Jaipur state administration since Amber days. Sanghi Nanu Godha was Mansingh's (1589) minister and travelled with him to Bengal. Another, Sanghi Mohandas Badjatiya was Jaisingh II's Divan. Ram Chandra Chhabra was an important minister and commander of Jaisingh II who helped in recovering Amber from Mughals with the association of Mewar in 1707.

3. **Saraogis**<sup>70</sup> are Digamber Jains and mainly concentrated in Jaipur city. In fact, the surrounding areas of Jaipur, e.g., Sanganer, Chaksu, were important Jain settlement much before Jaipur's foundation and they came down to the new city.

Saraogis also claim to be Rajputs of Jadu vanshi of

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68. Terapanthis do not worship images, and have neither temples nor yatis. They lay presbyters recite their sacred books and serve as teachers of the faith for the benefit of younger generations. See Bhattacharya, J.N. 1968:439.

69. Pangaria & Pahariya 1993:175-6.

70. See Roy 1978:180-183.

Dwarka (Gujrat) who embraced Jainism.<sup>71</sup>

4. **Oswals** are mainly Swetamber Jains and claim to be of Rajput origin. They were important postholders in Jaipur state though they were more dominant in Udaipur and Jodhpur states. Many of them are into jewelry and precious stone business and are the most educated lot among the Banias.

They believe that the name 'Oswal' is taken from a town Osia or Osnagar in Marwar, where all the ruler, his court and people became Jain.<sup>72</sup> But they kept the tradition of employing Brahmin priests known as Bhojak or 'eaters'.

5. **Maheshwaris**<sup>73</sup> trace their origin from a Rajput prince and derive their name from Shiva or Mahesh as his worshipper. Few references suggest that they belonged to an ancient town Maheshwar near Indore. However, majority of them are hailed from Bikaner, Jodhpur and nearby places. They are mainly Hindus. Maheshwaris are the most enterprising among the Banias who migrated out<sup>74</sup> of Rajasthan in mid and late 19th century to the port cities

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71. Gahlot, J.S. 1981:36.

72. Russell Vol.II, 1969:155.

73. ibid.:152-4.

74. See Timberg 1978:76.

like Calcutta and Bombay. Birlas', the foremost industrialist family, belong to this community.

Jaipur city consists of a large number of Brahmins, they are mainly vegetarians, endogamous and engaged in modern occupations. Rajput, politically most dominant and significant but numerically smaller in proportion compare to Brahmins and Banias, basically belong to the villages and the towns of erstwhile Jaipur state, where they were landlords or Jagirdars. They were either looking after their land or recruited in the state army, serving to the Mughal rulers and later to the Britishers.

And Banias were/are not limited to trade and commerce or to jewelry business, they were in important positions since Jaipur's foundation.