CHAPTER – III

The Stages and Process of Deification of Folk-Heroes (15th-17th Centuries)
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I. The Lives of Goga, Pabu, Teja and Ramdev in History:

The four widely worshiped folk-deities of Rajasthan-Goga, Pabu, Teja and Ramdev, have been regarded as historical personalities in our sources. They are believed to have ruled small states within Rajputana. With the exception of Teja, who was a Jat, these divine figures were Rajputs by caste. Most of the Rajasthan historians depict them as historical figures who lived at one point of time or another during the medieval period and who were posthumously deified by their followers due to their great deeds of valour and sacrifice. Such formulations accept the existence of Goga, Pabu, Teja and Ramdev as historical personalities. Some followers believe that they were human incarnations of God. Modern historiography and other writings on these deities nowhere suggest that these folk-deities were mere mythical figures and religious symbols. Their lives and careers are discussed by historians against the context of various developments during the medieval period. To understand how these deities acquired the present status in the popular imagination and memory, it is imperative to explain how they originated as, or transformed into deities over a period of time.

Goga, widely worshipped as a snake god, is also known as jafar pir or jahar pir.1 His cult is popular not only in Rajasthan but also in adjoining regions. If popular songs and verses composed in his praise are to be believed, Goga belonged to the dynasty of the Chauhan rulers of north India. The dynastic trees, (Vanshvalis) tracing the lineage of the Chauhan

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1 Satya Nararayan Mor; Shri Jahar Bhajanmala, Rajasthan, year of publication is not given.
rulers, as given in different bardic sources, consider Goga as a member of the Chauhan dynasty. Kyam Khan Rasau, a seventeenth century literary work composed by a poet Jaan in V.S. 1691 (1634 A.D.) traces the origin of various human races on earth to the descendants of Adam. The Chauhan rulers of north India, the poet believes, were the descendents of Saam who in turn was in the ninth generation of Adam. The emergence of different religious systems, particularly Hinduism and Islam, has been linked to the deeds of different races. Goga figures in this work in the course of the description of the genealogy of Chauhan rulers and he is believed to have flourished in the eleventh century. Poet Jaan in his treatise on Kyam khan discusses the line of Chauhan rulers to which Goga belonged.

अमरा अजरा सिधरा, पुनि बछरा ये चार ।
कन्हरदे के पुत्र है, प्रगट भये संसार ।।

अजराते चाहिल भये, सिधरा जौर जहाँ।
बछराते मोहिल भये, अमरेते चहुबान ।।

अमरा सुल जेवर भये, राज कर्यो जग माहि।
अंत मध्यो या जगत में अमर अजर को नाहि।।

ताके गूगा बैरसी, सेस धरह ये चार ।
राज कर्यो केतक बरस, अंत तज्जी संसार।

(Kanha had four sons-Amra, Ajra, Sidhra and Bachra. The descendants of Ajra were Chahils and Sidhra’s descendants became Jors. The descendants of Bachra were called Mohils and descendants of Amra came to be known as Chauhan. Amra had a son named

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2 Kavi Jaan, *Kayom Khan Rasou;* eds, Dr. Dashrath Sharma, Agarachand Nahata and Bhanwarlal Nahata Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute; 1996; P. 13-14

Jevar, who had ruled the world and subsequently died. Jevar had four sons- Goga, Barasi, Sais and Dharah. They after ruling for several years had left the world.\textsuperscript{4}

An inscription belonging to 1213 A.D also testified to the existence of Goga as a Chauhan ruler. The inscription refers to nine generations that flourished after Goga. If an approximate twenty years are assigned to one generation, the period of Goga roughly falls in the early eleventh century. Dr. Satya Ketu Vidhyalankar has also argued in favour of Goga having lived in the eleventh century. His analysis is based on the study of the songs of Goga which are popular in different parts of the Punjab\textsuperscript{5}. Manuscripts such as \textit{Goga Ji Ra Chhand}\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Goga Pairi}\textsuperscript{7} and \textit{Goga Chauhan Ki Nisani}\textsuperscript{8} also record that the birth of Goga was the result of the wish granted to his mother, Bachhal, by guru Gorakhnath.\textsuperscript{9} the founder of Nathpanth sect. The period of Gorakhnath has been fixed by scholars sometime in eleventh century.\textsuperscript{10} Goga, if at all he lived as a historical personality, must have lived during the same period.

Another legend of Goga mentions a battle between him and his cousin brothers who sought help of Prithavi Raj Chauhan, the ruler of Delhi. This legend depicts Goga contemporary of Prithavi Raj Chauhan who ruled Delhi in the late twelfth century. The fight which ensued between Goga and the army of Prthivi Raj Chauhan, indicates no dynastic relationship between the two as has been brought out by the genealogical

\textsuperscript{4} Kavi Jaan; \textit{Kyam Khan Rasau}; eds, Dr. Dashrath Sharma, Agarachand Nahata and Bhanwarlal Nahata RORI; 1996, P. 10,
\textsuperscript{5} Dr. Satya Ketu Vidhyalankar; \textit{Aggarwal Jati Ka Itihas}, P. 261-63
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Gugaji Ra Chhand}; V.S. 1839/1782 A. D. no. 106, RORI, Bikaner
\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Jodhpur Records}, Granthank.5, Basta no.9. RSAB
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Jodhpur Records}, Granthank 41, Basta no.72, RSAB
\textsuperscript{9} Gorakh Nath is known as founder of the Nath Panth in northern India. Nath Panth was a non-Brahmanical sect, which became popular in northern India during the early medieval period and challenged the Brahmanical authority in the religious sphere by rejecting Brahmanical rituals and way of life. North Indian popular traditions do not assign any time and place to Gorakhnath and he is believed to have interacted with different historical personalities as different points of time. He is considered immortal, ever present and appears whenever his devotees face difficulties.
\textsuperscript{10} Dr. Pema Ram, \textit{Madhyakaleen Rajasthan Main Dharmik Andolan}, Vanasthal Vidhyapeeth, 1977, pp.32 -34
constructs of Kyam Khan Raso and Muhanta Nainsi. Some scholars even have attempted to situate the birth of Goga during the eighth century and he is shown to have fought against Muhammad bin Qasim.\(^{11}\) However, no historical evidence is cited for this statement. Pandit Jhobarmal Sharma believes that Goga was contemporary of Pabu and Firuz Shah Tuglaq (1351-88) and had died fighting the Delhi Sultan. His argument is based on the belief that Goga married a niece of Pabu who in turn was born at the end of the 14th century or that in early 15\(^{th}\) century.\(^{12}\)

Aforementioned sources nowhere suggest that Goga was a Rajput ruler of some consequence. The traditions associated with Goga indicate that he was a petty Rajput chieftain and ruler of a small principality called Dedreva. Dedreva, however does not find mention in medieval Rajasthan sources as a kingdom or even as a principality. According to another popular tradition, Goga was born as a result of a wish granted by guru Gorakhnath. While granting the wish to Bachhal, the queen of Dedreva, Guru Gorakh Nath had prophesied that Goga would be a powerful man.\(^{13}\) True to the prophecy of Guru Gorak Nath, Goga possessed powers of both a warrior and miracle performer.

Another popular deity, Teja is venerated in both the western as well as eastern parts-in the Jaipur region and as far as Chittorgarh in south in Rajasthan. He is worshiped for his ability to cure snakebites. The shrines dedicated to Teja are called devera or thaan and his followers claim their existence in almost every village. His powers to heal the snakebites is considered enormous and it is believed that snakebite can be cured by

\(^{11}\) Chandradan Charan; Gugaji Chauhan Ri Rajasthani Gatha, Bhartiya Vidhya Mandir Shodh Partishthan, Bikaner, Rajasthan, 1962, pp.1-20.

\(^{12}\) Jhabarmal Sharma, Shodh Patrika, Part-1 no.3, page-142-153

\(^{13}\) Shree Chandradan Charan; “Goga Kaveya, Ek Parichey”; Varda; Rajasthani Sahitya Samiti; Basau; Year 2; No.1; January 1959; PP.91-97
merely remembering and uttering his name or tying a sacred thread called des or tanti to the victim.14

Teja is believed to have been born in Kharnaliya village in Pargana Nagaur-about two hundred kilometers northeast of Jodhpur. According to the most popular version of the life story of Teja, he married a girl from a village called Paner, which was located over hundred kilometers east of Nagaur and about thirty kilometers from Kishangarh. His followers view him as a historical person who posthumously attained the characteristics of a local god. However, there are few accounts dealing with historicity of Teja. Apart from the general acceptance among people of the belief that Teja was born in village Kharnaliya and was a Jat, different sources assign Teja to different time-periods. The life period of Teja is placed in different centuries-ranging from tenth century to eighteenth century depending upon the nature of source. In Tarikh-Ajmer, a detailed history of Ajmer Pargana, the date of Teja’s birth is recorded as V. S. 1072/ 1015 A. D.15 Scholars such as Ramesh Chandra Gunarthi and Shiv Singh Choyal have suggested 1751 A.D. as Teja’s year of birth and 1777 A.D., as the year of his death.16 Rajputana District Gazetteer, while basing its account of Teja on popular myths, mentions that Teja was born 890 years ago. Since the Gazetteer was written in the year 1904 A. D., Teja might have lived in the eleventh century.

Pabu is another important deity venerated in western Rajasthan. It is believed that Pabu was a Rathore chieftain who sacrificed his life protecting the cows. Scholars who have worked on the deities of western Rajasthan have suggested that there are strong grounds

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14 Dinesh Chandra Shukla, Rajasthan Ke Pramukh Sant Avam Lok Devta, Rajasthan Sahitya Sansthan, Jodhpur, 1992, p.4, also see, Pushpa Bhati, Rajasthan Ke Lok Devta Avam Lok Sahitya, Kavita Prakashan, Bikaner, 1996, p. 105
15 Thakur Des Raj; Jat Itihas; Agra, 1934,P. 624
16 Shri Ramesh Chandra Gunarthi; Rajasthan Ke Jatiyon Ki Khoj, P. 76 and Shri Shiv Singh Choyal; Rajasthan Lok Geet; Bhag-II; Tejaji ka Geet
for concluding that Pabu was a historical figure. Such a conclusion is based on the analysis of the family tree of the Rathore rulers in the region of Marwar and on the study of traditions associated with Pabu. According to L.P. Tessitori, Pabu was an important chieftain of the Rathore clan and his great grandfather Rao Siho was the founder of the Rathore principality in Marwar. Tessitori has shown that Rao Siho had migrated to Marwar from Kanauj. Rao Siho founded the Rathore kingdom during second half of thirteenth century and died in 1273 A.D. Rao Siha was succeeded by his son Asthan who was then succeeded by Dhandhal, father of Pabu. If the above mentioned information is taken to be true, Pabu must have lived in the fourteenth century. Tessitori has placed Pabu in third decade of the fourteenth century. (Tessitori’s conclusion about the date of Pabu’s birth is based on the funeral stone of Rao Siha and Dhuhar, brother of Dhandhala dated 1273 A.D. and 1310 A.D. respectively). The name of Pabu does not find mention in the genealogy of the Rathore rulers discussed by Munhta Nainsi in his 17th century Khyat as he has preferred to register only the branch of Rathore clan which ruled over the Jodhpur state of Marwar up to seventeenth century. But in the section entitled Ath Vat Rao Sihoji Re Vansh Ri Nainsi discusses the family tree of Rao Siha who had two wives-Solankini, daughter of Sidhrao Jai singh and Chavri Sobhagde, daughter of Vaghnathoth. Rao Siho had three sons from his two wives. Asthan from Solankini and Auj and Sonag from Sobhagde. Asthan had three sons- Dhuhar, Dhandhal and Chachag.

18 L. P Tessitori, A Progress Report on the work done during the year 1917 in connection with the Bardic and Historical Survey of Rajputana in Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal Vol 15.1919
19 Funeral inscription of Rao Siha , L.P Tessitori; a Progress Report on the preliminary work done during the year 1915 in connection with the proposed Bardic and Historical Survey of Rajputana in Journal of the Asiatic society of Bengal N.S 12, 1916 Page 57 to 116
21 Ibid.
Dhuhar had five sons from his wife Dropada Chauhan. They were Raipal, Pithar, Vaghmar, Kiratpal and Jaghath. Raipal had four sons from his wife Ratnade Bhatiyani-Kanha, Sando, Lakhamansen, and Sahanpal. Nainsi goes on to mention Rao Siho his son Asthan and then refers to Dhuhar, Dhandhal and Chachag as the three sons of Asthan. Afterwards, unlike Tessitori, Nainsi gives an account of Dhuhar and his descendents. Dhandhal and his descendents have been left out. Probably, this was done keeping in mind the subsequent political eclipse of this line. Dhandhal’s dynastic branch, as is evident from the genealogy given by Tessitori, either came to an end or failed to gain political prominence one generation after Pabu. Hence, Dhuhar’s line of descendents, must have caught the imagination of Nainsi. Nainsi, however, does give an account of Pabu and his activities in great detail in *Vat Pabuji Rā* and calls Pabu son of Dhandhal who finds mention in the genealogy constructed by him elsewhere in the same work. The absence of Pabu’s name from the genealogical list prepared by Nainsi might have been the result of his failure to inherit his father’s chieftancy, which went to Buro, the elder brother of Pabu. By corroborating these two references, it will not be wrong to conclude that even Nainsi was aware of Pabu’s existence even though he was not politically significant.

Some other scholars, basing their calculations on variety of other sources, have fixed the period of Pabu differently. Vishvashvar Nath Reu believes that Pabu was born in V.S.1341 and died in V.S.1381. Many verses and songs composed and sung in praise of Pabu also refer to the year of his birth. One such verse fixes the birth of Pabu in

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22 L.P.Tessitori, A Progress report on the work done during the year 1917 in connection with the Bardic and Historical Survey of Rajputana in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* Vol. 15, 1919, pp. 5 to 79.

23 Munhta Nainsi; *Khyat*, Vol. III, pp. 58 to 79

24 Pandit Vishvashvar Nath Reu; *Marwar Ka Itihas*, Part-1 Jodhpur,
V.S.1313/A.D.1256. 25 Asiya More in his work *Pabu Prakash* fixed V.S.1299/A.D.1242 as the year of Pabu’s birth and believed V.S.1323/A.D.1266 as the year of his death, believing that he lived only for twenty-four years. (Baron Samvat Pekh, Nishach Barakh Ninanon! Pabu Janam Sampekh; Asotam Phagun Mukar!).

Among other sources which support the view of human existence of Pabu are three inscriptions dated V.S.1415, 1483 and 1515. The inscriptions dated V.S. 1415 and 1483 refer to the construction of the temple of Pabu at village Kolu situated near Jodhpur. 26

The above mentioned epigraphic records by themselves may not tell us much about whether Pabu was actually a historical figure or not but the fact that these inscriptions were engraved by Dhandhalas, the dynasty known after Dhandhal’s name, does indicate Pabu’s relationship with Dhandhal’s dynasty.

It is difficult to authoritatively establish the existence of Ramdev as the Tanwar Rajput ruler of Pokran, although some modern scholars have little doubt about this deity’s Rajput lineage. Historical evidence in the form of epigraphic sources, unlike in case of Goga and Pabu, are lacking. Still, the existence of Ramdev as Rajput chief can not be ruled out if the details given by Bhat (genealogists) about the Tanwar ruling line are to be believed. The history depicted in the popular traditions associated with Ramdev and bardic literature is often distorted. Yet, if the references of places, names etc. are corroborated with other forms of historical evidence, the existence of Ramdev as a historical figure may not be doubted. Unlike in case of Goga and Pabu, we do not come across any authentic genealogical list of Tanwar ruling line of Rajasthan in medieval

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25 *Tera Sau Tera Tavo, Janmyoo Asaldham! Tera Sau Taities Mein Kamdhaj Aayo Kaam*; Dr. Brajilal Singh Barath; “*Pebuji Rathore Ka Sameyn*”, *Vishambhara*, year 8, No.1, 1973

sources. An attempt has been made by a modern scholar to construct dynastic tree\textsuperscript{27} of the Tanwar rulers in Rajasthan, on the basis of information gathered from Bhat literature.\textsuperscript{28}

The genealogy of the Tanwar ruling line constructed by Sona Ram Bishnoi places Ramdev as eighth descendant of Anangpal-II who ruled Delhi during the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{29} Ajmal, father of Ramdev, in Bhat literature is shown to have come to western Rajasthan and founded his principality at Pokaran.\textsuperscript{30} Munhta Nainsi in his seventeenth century \textit{Khyat} has recorded Rao Malji giving Pokaran to Ramdev for rehabilitation. In addition to the information supplied by genealogical records, to the existence of Ramdev as a historical figure and as the ruler of the principality of Pokaran one such oral narrative informs us that Tanwars first ruled Delhi and after loosing it, ruled Gwalior and finally established their hold over Pokaran. It is here that Ramdev’s sister visited him on the occasion of his marriage.\textsuperscript{31}

Although the sources mentioned above do not tell us the exact period of Ramdev, the evidence strongly suggests that Ramdev was a historical personality and a petty Rajput chief. In most of the popular traditions available to us, the period of Ramdev is given as the first half of fifteenth century. No historical document is available to corroborate this

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Sona Ram Bishnoi; \textit{Baba Ramdev Itihas Avam Sahitya}, Scientific Publishers, Jodhpur, 1989, pp.14-17
\item \textsuperscript{28} Bhat literature, available in abundance in Rajasthan, is a valuable source of history writing. At the same time, it has to be used cautiously as it contains inflated and distorted versions of various events and developments that were recorded from time to time by the patronized bards. The method of recording history by Bhats contained their periodical visits to the families they were associated with. Solemnizing marriage, childbirth, or any other socio-cultural event were marked by their visit to the concerned family, where they recorded additional information included the names of the new members of the family. In case of Jagirdars and other chieftains, these visits by Bhats could be more frequent. They also recorded donations made to them by the head of the family or any other activity such as wars and battles fought by their patrons. The accounts of donations and battles were often recorded in an inflated manner whereas distortion in recording names was a rare phenomenon.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Dr. Sona Ram Bishnoi; \textit{Baba Ramdev: Itihas Avam Sahitya}; Jodhpur; 1989; page 14-17
\item \textsuperscript{30} Sona Ram, Op. Cit., pp. 20-21
\end{itemize}
belief. Another date-V.S.1409 has been recorded by Bhats of Tanwar ruling line. If an attempt is made to fix the period of Ramdev from the dynastic tree constructed by Sona Ram Bishnoi, it brings us closer to the latter date. According to the genealogy constructed by Sona Ram Bishnoi, Anangpal-II, who ruled Delhi immediately before Prithavi Raj Chauhan captured the territory in twelfth century, must have ruled upto the seventh or eighth decade of twelfth century. Ramdev was born in the eighth generation of Anangpal-II. Hence the date given by Tanwar Bhats in their record seems most probable.

From the above account, it is clear that all the four folk-deities-Goga, Pabu, Ramdev and Teja, -were historical figures who lived at different points of time in medieval Rajasthan. All of them, except Teja who was a jat, were petty Rajput chiefs. Evidence drawn from genealogical records and bardic and folk narratives also prompts us to suggest that all of them flourished at different times in the period between twelfth-thirteenth and fifteenth centuries- a period characterized by such socio-political developments as the establishment of Delhi Sultanate, formation and consolidation of Rajput clans and states in Rajasthan in the wake of various social convulsions and conflicts and finally the gradual but never fully achieved transformation of many pastoral-tribal communities- such as the jats- into peasant communities.

II. Earliest Representations: Saviours of the Local Communities

As has been mentioned above, the actual lives of Goga, Pabu, Ramdev and Teja are shrouded in mystery. However, the foregoing analysis of the ecological, social and political conditions prevailing in western Rajasthan in the early medieval period does help us in contextualizing the lives and deeds of these heroic figures. They acquired fame

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32 Tanwaron Ke Bhato Ki Bahi; Tanwaron Ke Bhat, Village Aasalpur, Jaipur. RSAB.
33 Sona Ram, Op. Cit. pp.35
among the common people as the saviours of the subordinated and marginalized social groups at a time when conflict for territory and power among the newly emerging Rajput warrior-bands threatened local autonomy and the hold of the peasants and the pastoralists over their community resources. The process of Rajput state formation was characterized by the efforts of the chiefs and their followers to incorporate the peasants and tribals into their rigidly and hierarchically defined socio-political order. This must have caused widespread dislocation and consternation in the local society. It is no wonder then that the oppressed and helpless people looked up to the local warrior-figures such as Goga and Pabu to defend their lives, freedom, and resources.

The growth of hagiographic narratives and legendary materials about the lives and deeds of these historical personalities makes it difficult for us to reconstruct the actual events in which they might have participated. What is, however, clear from a close examination of these legends is that their heroic deeds were associated not so much with military conquests and capture of territories as with the general welfare of the local populace and its protection from external invaders.

Goga, the earliest among the four heroic figures, is believed to have been a Chauhan Rajput. By the time James Tod wrote his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* in the third decade of 19th century, the Chauhan Rajput identity of Goga had come to be treated as a well-established fact. Perhaps the first mention of Goga's Chauhan lineage occurs in a seventeenth century text, *Kyamkhan Rasau* by Jan Kavi34 and then in Nainsi's celebrated *Khyat*.35 Following the testimony of *Kyamkhan Rasau*, Nainsi's *Khyat* and other bardic accounts, modern Rajasthan scholars have tended to take the Chauhan

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34 Kavi Jan, Kyam Khan Rasau, eds, Dashrath Sharma, Agarachand Nahata, and Bhanvarlal Nahata, RORI, 1996, pp. 10-11
lineage of Goga for granted. James Tod calls him ‘Guga of Bhatinda’ who with his forty sons ‘drank the stream of sword’ in fighting against Mahmud of Ghazni. However R. C. Temple, William Crooke and G. W. Briggs and in more recent times Harjot Oberoi and Nonica Datta have drawn our attention to the contradictory time periods and multiple identities of Goga. From the accounts recorded in R. C. Temple’s The legends of Punjab William Crooke refers to the belief that ‘Gugaji’ or ‘Guggaji’ was killed in a battle against Firuz Shah who ruled Delhi at the end of the thirteenth century. Unless this ruler was Jalaluddin Firuz Khilji (1290-1296), no ruler of this name ruled Delhi at the end of the thirteenth century. If this ‘Firuz Shah’ was Iltutmish’s son Ruknuddin Firuz Shah (the son of Iltutmish who ruled Delhi for a few months after his father’s death in 1236), Goga’s date will have to be placed in the first half of the thirteenth century. But, if ‘Firuz Shah’ was Firuz Shah Tuglaq (1351-1388), then second half of the fourteenth century would be the likely time period of Goga. The last version has been accepted by some Rajasthani scholars. Most of the scholars, however, tend to accept Tod’s view that

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38 For William Crooke’s comment, see his editorial observation in Tod, Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, Vol.II, p. 807
41 Nonica Datta, Forming an Identity, A Social History of the Jats, OUP, 1999, pp. 22-23
42 See, for example, The song of Guga: As Recorded by Mirza Husain of Delhi from a Local Bard, in this work. Here, Goga is shown to be contemporary of a Delhi ruler, Firuz Shah, see pp. 261-300
44 See, for instance, Manohar Sharma, “Rajasthani Lok Giton Me Goga Chauhan”, Maru Bharti, 4:4, p.15
Goga was a contemporary of Mahmud of Ghazni and died fighting the Turkish invader.\textsuperscript{45}

In a Nathpanthi version, Goga is shown as a follower of Guru Gorakhnath and latter is believed to have sent an invisible army to help him against Prithvi Raj.\textsuperscript{46} Whether this Prithvi Raj was the Chauhan ruler of Delhi-Ajmer region is not clear. G. W. Briggs believes that Goga was a Rajput who was converted to Islam. As will be shown later, among Muslims and many lower caste communities, he also came to be venerated as 'Guga Pir' or 'Zahar Pir'.

As is evident from the works of Dashratha Sharma\textsuperscript{47} and B. D. Chattopadhayaya\textsuperscript{48} the Chauhan rose to a position of dominance in north-western Rajasthan during the period between 10\textsuperscript{th} and 12\textsuperscript{th} centuries. They enjoyed this political supremacy till the end of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century when they were ousted by the Turks who brought this region under their control. It must, however, be pointed out that during the period when Mahmud of Ghazni invaded India (late 10\textsuperscript{th} and early 11\textsuperscript{th} centuries), Chauhans were not an important political force and there is no historical evidence of any conflict between Goga Chauhan and Mahmud of Ghazni. After the establishment of the Turkish Sultanate in Delhi, some Chauhan chiefs, although marginalized, continued to resist the expansion of Sultanate power in Rajasthan. There was no constant conflict between the Delhi Sultans (from Iltutmish to Alauddin Khalji) and the Rajput chiefs of Rajasthan. The Sultans,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[46] G. W. Briggs, OP. Cit. P.24
\item[48] B. D. Chattopadhayaya, \textit{The Emergence of the Rajputs as Historical Process in Early Medieval Rajasthan in Karine Schomer et al. eds.; The Idea of Rajasthan: Explorations in Regional Identity; Vol. II;} Delhi; Manohar; 1994; PP 161-191
\end{footnotes}
particularly Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) made deep incursions into various parts of Rajasthan during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The most outstanding Chauhan chief who resisted Alauddin Khalji was Rao Hammir of Ranthambhor. It is, therefore, perplexing that later generations of bards, James Tod and modern Rajasthani scholars have seen Goga’s heroic deeds as part of Chauhan struggle against the Turkish invaders or rulers of Delhi. As has been pointed out earlier, pre-seventeenth century accounts of Goga do not mention him as a Chauhan hero of any consequence or refer to his fight against Mahmud of Ghazni or any Delhi Sultan. *Gogaji Ra Raswala*, a work compiled by a bardic poet Vithu Meha in the sixteenth century portrays Goga mainly as a saviour of cows (cattlewealth) belonging to various herdsmen. This narrative, which perhaps is earliest account of Goga available to us, opens up with the description of a conflict between Goga and his co-brothers (or cousins) over land and territory, ultimately presents Goga as a rescuer of cows and as sacrificing his life for the welfare of the community. Perhaps the original image of Goga was that of a defender of cattlewealth in semi-pastoral, semi-agricultural society. Portrayals of Goga as a Chauhan Rajput hero riding on his mare and fighting against the Turkish invaders, and as a Hindu warrior fighting against Muslim rulers of Delhi (a portrayal which contains distinct communal overtones that are so characteristic of many modern historical works from the times of James Tod) seem to be later representations, and superimpositions on the original version. Goga’s sacrifice of his life in defence of the interest of the local herdsmen became the basis of his glorification and the ultimate deification.

49 For these aspects see M. S. Ahluwalia, Muslim Expansion in Rajasthan, Delhi, 1978
Another celebrity, Pabu is believed to have belonged to the Rathore lineage of Rajputs. Most likely, he lived in western Rajasthan in the 13th-14th centuries. A detailed analysis of the legends about his life and deeds shall be undertaken in the following section, it may be pointed out here that like Goga, Pabu also began his career as the hero of the lower classes. One of the earliest bardic accounts of Pabu-as recorded in Nainsi’s seventeenth century *Khyat* informs us that he belonged to a minor branch of Rathore Rajput lineage.\(^50\) The social origin of his mother remains obscure- a fact that the bardic account tries to conceal by giving her the status of *apsara* (nymph). Pabu’s father never brought up the child at his residence and did not give him the same position and privileges as he accorded to his other sons whose mothers belonged to more respectable families. Throughout the narrative, Pabu is shown as a close ally and patron of the lowest caste ‘thories’. He was frequently taunted by his Rajput relatives for keeping the company of the *thoris* and was considered fit to be a peasant and not a mounted Rajput warrior. His image is that of a social bandit who stole the she-camels of the powerful Rajput chiefs and is shown as a saviour of the seven *thori* brothers. The narrative goes on to describing how Pabu and his *thori* followers sacrificed their lives for protecting the cattlewealth of the local Charans. Although the bardic tale as recorded by Nainsi shows important signs of the process of ‘Rajputization’ of the personality of Pabu, it still retains the above mentioned original ingredients that might have gone into the making of Pabu as a popular and lower caste hero. The original image of Pabu, therefore, was that of a warrior-hero (and also a bandit hero) who identified himself more with the lower caste *thoris* than with the high-caste Rajputs. Similarly, although the bardic tales emphasize the

\(^{50}\) Munhta Nainsi; *Munhta Nainsi Ri Khyat*, eds. Badri Prasad Sakaria, Vol. III, RORI, 1993, pp.58-79
Tanwar Rajput lineage of Ramdev (who most likely lived in the 14th-15th centuries) and trace his ancestry to the 12th century Tomar rulers of Delhi, in the beginning his popularity seems to have remained confined to the lower castes and even outcastes. Colonization of Pokharan region and triumph over those hostile groups/persons who did not allow peasants to settle there served as the basis of Ramdev’s glorification by the common people.\textsuperscript{51}

Teja is different from the other three figures in that he was a Jat by caste and unlike them, his identity as a Jat hero was so well established that a Rajput lineage could not have been assigned to him by the bards and their patrons. In fact, it is difficult to find a pre-eighteenth century bardic narrative about Teja. There is no mention of Teja in Nainsi’s \textit{Khyat}. He belonged to the Godara sub caste of Jats and is believed to have lived in Nagour region around the 11th century. He was the leader of the local Jat settlers and lost his life in saving their cattle from falling into the hands of the enemies. This act of his perhaps became the basis of the emergence of Teja as the warrior-hero of the local peasants and pastoralists.\textsuperscript{52}

So far we have discussed the factors that may have been responsible for the emergence of the historical personalities under discussion as warrior-heroes among the local society comprising peasants and herdsmen. The popularity of Goga, Pabu and other such figures did not, however, remained confined to the lower sections of the society. The political and ideological needs of the new Rajput states, particularly the urge to


\textsuperscript{52} Pushpa Bhati, \textit{Rajasthan Ke Lok Devta Avam Lok Sahitya}, Kavita Prakashan, Bikaner, 1996, p. 105
incorporate the local groups into their framework and penetrate deep into the local society, compelled them and their ideologues to celebrate the memory of their heroes.

During the period between 13th to 15th centuries, Rajasthan was divided into small principalities. The polity was characterized by the absence of overarching and centralized Rajput state and an entrenched administrative system. The territorial boundaries between these states were ill-defined and ruling clans were mostly at loggerheads with each other, which ultimately weakened them and later encouraged external interference. Numerous Rajput chiefs ruled their territories with the help of clan members and blood-brothers. In the absence of a centralized administration and land-revenue system, the Rajput chiefs indulged in pillage. It is the local tribals and peasants who suffered the most at the hands of these plundering bands. Lack of over arching political set up and a unified administrative system encouraged the Rajput chiefs to plunder the neighbouring territories for cattle, a fact often narrated in the folktales of the region. The local leaders and warriors, who protected their subjects from such raids, arranged food for the disinterested and dislocated people and rehabilitated the deserted lands, were held in high esteem by the people and gradually acquired the status of legendary figures in popular consciousness. Nainsi’s Vigat provides a detailed account of the establishment of Rathore rule in western Rajasthan in the period between 13th and 16th centuries. Rathores expanded their territory by offering protection to the villagers in lieu of protection money (gughari). In addition to establishing their control over Pali region, Thakurai (overlordship) of Rathores over eighty-four villages in an adjoining territory has

been recorded by Nainsi. In an age of internecine warfare among the Rajput clans, the Rathores, with the might of sword, kept adding villages after villages to their domain. By the middle of fifteenth century, the rule of Rathores was not only extended significantly to various parts of the Marwar region, the relations between Rathore rulers and local chiefs, which were based on mutual agreement, were now transformed into relationship of sovereign and subjects. As the Rathore state of Jodhpur grew in political and military stature, it sought to legitimize its position in ideological terms by linking their genealogies with the heroes of the Puranic past. In course of time, the Rathores came to be regarded as a dominant Rajput clan. Incorporation of the Rathores into the Mughal administrative-political framework further enhanced their political-genealogical status. This process of political advance and genealogical legitimation is clearly recorded in Nainsi’s Khyat. Establishment of large state by Rathores with a unified territory and large army minimized the danger of plunder by neighbouring chiefs. Matrimonial and political alliance with the Mughals further strengthened their position. The renewed process of consolidation witnessed penetration of Rajput rule and norms deep into the society. With the change in size and nature of state, new ideological needs arose. To establish ideological hegemony over the subject-population of the newly carved out large territorial state, new myths and symbols were invented and old symbols were re-emphasized. Constructed and inflated stories of Rajput valor and legends became the staple diet of bardic composition. The Charan poets, who enjoyed the patronage of Rathore rulers, played an important role in performing this task. Seventeenth and Eighteenth century bardic literature glorified both the actual and imagined deeds of the

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Rajput heroes. Sword, horses, skull and the practice of Sati, which are symptomatic of glorification of death in the battle, occupy the central place in these narratives.\(^{58}\)

The Charan poets on behest of their Rajput patrons undertook the task of propagating the legends and myths. The Charans were both the ideologues and conscience-keepers of the Rajput ethical and socio-political order. The bards, in turn, received patronage from the Rajput rulers. Maldeo, the Rathore king of Jodhpur between 1532 and 1561 granted villages to Vithu Meha, the Charan poet who composed the narratives of Goga and Pabu.\(^{59}\) The intention of Rathore rulers and their bards in propagating the life stories of the Rajput heroes of the past was to propagate the newly emerging value-system to sustain the Rajput socio-political order. Goga, Pabu and other warrior-figures were fitted into the ideal type of a Rajput hero fighting for his honour, territory, rank and for taking revenge (vair). All these values constituted what came to be called ‘Rajput Dharma’. Rajput rulers gained wider control over land traditionally controlled by their own subordinate clan men or by other clans or tribes. Once this control was established, the rulers sought to transform the organization of the state based on kinship-relations and brotherhood (bhaibat) into relationship based on service (chakri) and patronage.\(^{60}\) With control over large area and with their strong political association with Mughal rulers, differentiation began to emerge in the erstwhile undifferentiated state

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\(^{58}\) Badardan Dadhvadiya Ro Kaheyo, “Geet Pabuji Rathor Dhadhaloth Ro”, *Rajasthani Veerugeet Sangrah*, Part 2, RORI Jodhpur 1968, p26-36. The song accolades the bravery, battles, marriage and death of Pabu. Similar themes can be found in many other songs. See *Geet Raja Kesri Singh Shekhavat Ro* in the same volume, where the song is on King Kesri Singh Shekhavat of Khandela Kingdom of Shekhavat. Kesri Singh is killed in the battlefield fighting the Royal Governor of Ajmer. The theme is basically a gory picture of the battle and it says that the clean clear water of River Sambhar turned into red colour with the blood of the enemies. Similar kind of numerous songs can be found in *Veerugeet Sangrah*, which gives a vivid detail of the battles. Besides the battles and death the *Geet* also highlights the voluntary funeral pyre with the deceased husband i.e. *Sati* conducted by the wives in a very dramatic sequence.

\(^{59}\) Hiralal Maheshwari; *History of Rajasthani literature*; Sahitya Academy; 1980 P.59.

\(^{60}\) N. Ziegler, *Marwari Historical Chronicles: Sources for the Social Cultural History of Rajasthan*; in The Indian Economic and Social History Review; XII-2; 1976 1978, p.226
structure based on brotherhood. The king began to assert his authority over rest of his brotherhood. Sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the replacement of kinship as the basis of political organization with client patron relationship, a form relied upon by the Mughals. The client patron relationship led to the incorporation of those Rajputs into the political structure of the Rajput state who did not belong to the ruling clan. At the same time, the tentacles of the new centralizing Rajput states also began to spread horizontally to reach out to the peasants and pastorlists in the rural society. This involved not only establishing control over their surplus and other revenues but appropriating their heroes and myths as their own. These developments created a new space and necessitated a fresh attempt on the part of Rajput rulers to glorify the long dead war heroes in order to hegemonize the subject-population.

Thus the warrior heroes, in the initial phase of their valorization were venerated not only by Rajputs alone, but all sections of the society, they had ruled. Pabu and Teja were believed to have laid down their lives protecting the cattle of their subjects where as Goga was killed fighting his cousins, who had attacked his principality.  

III. The Process of Deification

The Process of valourization and deification of local Rajputs and other chiefs reflects the changing popular perception of them in Rajasthan society. The changing perception and concerns are reflected in the different genre of literature composed by

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61 Gogaji ra Rasavala and Pabuji ra Chand composed by Vethu Meha in the latter half of the sixteenth century, kram27884, sangrah 96, Manuscript RORI Bikaner. Besides the works of various Charan, there are plays on Goga’s vanishing beneath the earth recorded by R.C Temple in Legends Of Punjab. Stories about Pabu’s life can be found in Pabuji Lokgatha which are recited all over Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Jaipur and Shekhavati by the singers of Pabu called Bhopa’s see “Pabuji Lokgatha, Rajasthani Shorya Or Tyag Ki Prateek”, by Krishna Kumar Sharma in Shodh Patrika, year 20, Aank 3, july-sept 1969. Narratives of Teja can be found in the collection and translated work of Shri Ganpati Swami, “Gobhakht Tejaji”, Maru Bharti, feb 1953, year 1, Aank 2 published by Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.)
different generations of bards and other narrators. As has been discussed above, earliest representations of these celebrities stress their role as warrior figures who waged wars in defence of the interests of the local communities and its resources against the outsiders and invaders. Very soon, however, these folk-heroes became the objects of deification among the common people. Much before the end of the seventeenth century, figures such as Goga, Pabu, Teja and Ramdev came to acquire the status of folk-deities in popular consciousness. They were believed to have been supernatural and charismatic personalities who could perform miracles for the material welfare of the local pastoral and peasant communities. They acquired larger than life images and the original events of their lives became the basis for the growth of various mythical and legendary narratives. An attempt has been made in the following sections of this chapter to identify and discuss the process and stages which transformed the historical personages of Goga, Pabu, Teja and Ramdev into folk-warriors and then into local deities. In the absence of authentic contemporary accounts such as inscriptions, historical treatises, biographies and archival records, the oral traditions in the form of songs, verses and tales which traversed from one generation to another and from one region to another remain the important sources for delineating the process of deification of the folk-heroes. Charan poets, who were mostly patronized by the Rathore rulers, also recorded some of these traditions.

Thus, the first stage in the remembrance of the historical personalities under discussion was their celebration as local warrior-heroes whose lives and deeds were dedicated to serving the material needs and interests of the local peasants and pastoralists. The initial impetus to the glorification of Goga, Pabu, Ramdev and Teja came from these subordinated and oppressed social groups. However, as the posthumous popularity of
these personalities grew, the ruling classes, particularly the new large Rajput states (particularly the Rathore state of Jodhpur and Bikaner) initiated, through bardic narrative and genealogical proclaims, the process of ‘Rajputizing’ the memory of these heroes.

The examination of numerous legends associated with the lives of deities under study would throw light on the changing popular consciousness about them. A legend may be defined as a story or a group of stories handed down through popular oral tradition, usually consisting of an exaggerated or unrealistic account of some actually or possibly historical person- often a saint, monarch or popular hero. The legends do have a historical basis and those who believe in them consider them true. But although, they have firm historical basis in the heroic struggles and battles, they tell us more about the period in which they originated and became popular rather then the period and events they purport to describe. The importance of legends lies in what they reveal- the collective historical memory and historical consciousness of those who believed in them. In this sense, the legends serve as a point of entry into the cultural world of the believers of the cult of Goga, Pabu, Ramdev and Teja.

(a) Deification of Pabu:

Although there is no dearth of modern writings on Pabu, most of them are in the form of eulogistic accounts, which mix facts with fiction. While discussing the probable causes of deification of the figure of Pabu, John D. Smith, seeking paralles with the Robin Hood legends of Europe, attributes the phenomenon of Pabu as brigand and social bandit. Protecting cows and fighting heroic battles, in Smith’s view, helped Pabu in

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63 John. D. Smith is the only scholar who seems to have done a substantive work on Pabu, see his *Epic of Pabuji: A Study of, Transcription and Translation*, Cambridge University Press, 1991
acquiring a larger than life image when he was alive. Once he lived with this image, it became easy for his admirers to elevate him to the position of a deity after his death.\textsuperscript{64}

Explanation for deification provided by Smith is based on the heroic deeds attributed to Pabu. This does not explain the continuing devotion of the depressed communities to Pabu's cult over the long period of many centuries. The explanation offered by Smith for Pabu's popularity in his own lifetime and in the period immediately after his death cannot enable us to understand the long-term dynamics of the Pabu's cult. The cult of Pabu, as also those of other folk-deities, underwent a process of transformation-particularly in terms of modes of veneration and social composition of the followers- during the period between fifteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus, for example, the increased emphasis on the image of Pabu and others as archetypal horse-riding Rajput heroes could be the result of the patronage extended to the cults by the Rajput rulers in post seventeenth century period.

The process of deification of Pabu seems to have begun immediately after his death. As has been mentioned above, Pabu lived in the second and third decades of fourteenth century and died at an early age. If temples are an indication of ritual reverence accorded to the hero like figure, Pabu began to be worshiped as a god nearly a decade after his death when a temple was constructed as an act of religious devotion to him.\textsuperscript{65} However, one temple by itself does not indicate that Pabu was widely worshiped by people as a divine figure. In the overall ecological environment of western Rajasthan-


\textsuperscript{65} The first temple of Pabu was constructed in v.s. 1414/1357 A.D and second temple came up in v.s.1483/1426 A. D., L.P. Tessitori A progress Report on the work done during the year 1917 in connection with the Bardic and Historical survey of Rajputana in \textit{Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal}, vol. 15, 919 pp. 5 to 79
characterized by recurring droughts and famines, scarcity of resources, uncertainty of life, and overwhelming dependence on pastoral wealth and other community resources- the stories of the heroic deeds and sacrifices and ultimate martyrdom of Pabu and other celebrities in defence of the helpless people provided a ready made material base for the emergence of religious cults of the local deities. A society torn asunder repeatedly by political-military conflicts over land and resources and by the attempts of the Rajput warriors to establish their domains at the expense of other chiefs and local tribes caused considerable violence, dislocation and oppression. This phenomenon also must have placed the oppressed peasants and pastoralists to look towards their local heroes who would save them both from natural and humanly caused calamities.

The process of deification of Pabu-and other war heroes- must have first taken roots among the lower class followers rather than among the ruling Rajput clans. This inference is based on the close study of various traditions including those included in Munhta Nainsi’s *Khyat*-a voluminous work written in second half of the 17th century. Nainsi has recorded the story of Pabu (*Vat Pabuji Ri*).66 Since Nainsi must have recorded the version that was prevalent in the then society, it will not be wrong to suggest that the version must have been popular among common people. In other words, the myths and legends surrounding Pabu were already in popular circulation when Nainsi recorded them in his *Khyat* with the help of his bardic assistants. The narrative opens by informing us that one of the nymphs caught by Rathore potentate Dhandhal (Pabu’s father) in the course of one of his hunting expeditions agreed to live with him (there is no mention of any formal marriage ceremony being conducted) on the condition that he would never

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66 In the printed version of Nainsi’s *Khyat*, an account of Pabu is a long narrative of twenty-one pages. John D. Smith has translated this narrative in English in his *Epic of Pabuji* with the title “The Story of Pabuji as told by Munhta Nainsi”, see pp. 430-476 of the work.
attempt to know her secrets. Dhandhal took her to his village Kolu. In course of time two children (Pabu- a son, and Sonabai-a daughter) were born from the union of Dhandhal and the nymph. One day, Dhandhal decided to follow the nymph to know her secrets. He found out that fairy had turned into a lioness to feed Pabu who had turned into a lion cub. Upon this breach of trust by Dhandhal, the nymph mysteriously disappeared leaving Pabu behind. Dhandhal also had two more children from conventional marriage- a son Buro and a daughter, Pema Bai. Pema Bai was married to Khichi Jind Rao and Sona Bai to Dev Rao, ruler of Sirohi. After the death of Dhandhal, being elder in age, Buro inherited his father’s rights and property and nothing was left to the younger Pabu. In fact, Pabu was never brought to live in the residence of Dhandhal and lived with his mother before she disappeared. He had only a she camel and he used it for hunting and earning his livelihood. The story further narrates that how Pabu had given shelter to seven thori\(^67\) brothers. Somewhere south of Kolu, these seven thori brothers had killed the son of a Vaghela chief named Ano. Subsequently, they escaped from his territory and sought refuge in many places, but no one would accept them out of fear of Ano Veghela. The thoris then approached Buro, who advised them to ask Pabu as he had no servants. Buro shunned their company. The thoris went in search of Pabu, who had gone for hunting in the desert. There, they met a young boy and asked him the whereabouts of Pabu without knowing that the boy himself was Pabu. Pabu did not reveal his identity. Thoris then took away Pabu’s she-camel and killed it to satiate their hunger. To their dismay, they soon found that the boy himself was Pabu. Pabu asked them for his she-camel, which the thoris had eaten. One thori brothers went to the place where they had left the skeleton

\(^67\) Thori is a term of abuse generally used for one of the lowest castes. The community now has a more respectable nomenclature-Nayak
and to their surprise found the she-camel alive. This made them to realise the powers of
Pabu and they became his servants. This appears to be the first instance of Pabu
demonstrating his miraculous powers. The miracle clearly shows Pabu’s sympathy for the
starving men who belonged to an extremely low caste. Pabu not only gave them his she-
camel to satisfy their hunger, but also ultimately revived the animal to save them from
their agony and predicament. The incident made the seven thori brothers life-long loyal
followers of Pabu. An intimate bond of patron-client relationship developed between
them and their young patron who himself possessed no territory or village. It is evident
from the story that Pabu was never accorded the respect and status that was due to other
descendants of Dhandhal and was ridiculed for living in the company of the low caste
thories. From our perspective, these aspects of Pabu’s life (being the son of a mother who
perhaps had an obscure social origin, not being considered worthy of living in his father’s
house and facing social ostracism and deprivation for keeping the company of the thori
brothers, etc.) are of considerable significance because they constituted the raw material
that goes into the making of a popular hero.

Nainsi, in the story, records an incident where Pabu’s sister Sona Bai was insulted
by her husband—the Deora chief and a co-wife Vagheli on account of her brother’s
association with the thoris. One day when Sona was playing Chopar with Vagheli, the
latter humiliated her by boasting of her more respectable paternal background and by
adversely commenting on Pabu’s association with thories. Sona Bai replied that Pabu’s
thoris were better than the notables in the service of the Deora chief. The Rao who
overheard this, physically punished Sona. Pabu could not bear this humiliation of his
sister and reached Sirohi with this thori followers and punished his brother-in-law. We
are also told that Pabu also killed Ano Vaghela (Vagheli’s father) plundered his wife’s ornaments and gave them to Sona Bai as dowry. Subsequently, the story records the expedition of Pabu and his subordinate *thoris* into the territory of a powerful chief Dedo Sumaro for stealing his she-camels. On their way, they reached a river called ‘Panchnad’ which was very deep. Pabu, wasted no time in using his supernatural powers and brought himself and the *thoris* to other bank of the river. Thereafter, he captured the she-camels belonging to Dedo Sumaro and they were handed over to Buro’s daughter as a wedding gift. Pabu from there went to Goga, the chief of Dedreva, to whom his niece Kelan Bai was married. Goga praised him for his act of stealing camels but he doubted whether the stolen camels belonged to Dedo Sumaro. He therefore decided to test the powers of Pabu. Next day both went to the desert and left their horses there to graze. Afterwards Pabu went to fetch the horses, but found that both horses had their legs shackled with serpents. He understood that it was a miracle shown to him by Goga. He kept quiet and came back saying that he had not been able to find the horses. Then Goga went to find the horses and found a large lake with a small boat in the middle with both the horses in it. He acknowledged the supernatural powers of Pabu and came back. This time both of them went to find the horses and found them grazing where they had left them. This encounter between two historical figures belonging to two different periods- was perhaps a later invention when both of them had attained a high degree of posthumous popularity and both of them had come to be venerated as divine figures with supernatural powers. The narrative then also clearly demonstrates the attempts of Pabu’s followers to establish his superiority of the Chauhan hero. The episode of Pabu’s meeting with Goga also suggests that by Pabu’s time (or by the time, Pabu became a folk-hero in popular remembrance),
Goga was a well-established cult-figure or deity in certain localities of western Rajasthan. The bardic narratives as reproduced in Nainsi’s *Khyat* testifies to the popularity of both Goga and Pabu and puts the celebrated figures together in an example of historical conflatio. Since Pabu’s ‘Rajputization’ as a Rathor hero was already under way by Nainsi’s time, and since the story contains a Rathor-centric bias, it is not difficult to understand why the narrative sought to subordinate Goga to the authority of Pabu. A close reading of the narrative would suggest a certain degree of tension between the cult of Goga and that of Pabu during the period of 16th and 17th centuries. The bardic account of the miracles performed by Pabu and recorded in Nainsi’s version suggests that Pabu had not only become a popular hero by the seventeenth century but this popularity was gradually being transformed into deification of the folk-hero.

The denial of shelter to seven *thori* brothers by several Rajput chiefs was not only on account of their belonging to the lowest caste. The *thoris* had killed the son of Ano Vahgela, a powerful Rajput chief, in a feud and anyone providing shelter to them would have earned his animosity. While other Rajput chief, including Pabu’s step-brother Buro, refused to employ the seven *thori* brothers and protect them, Pabu emerges in the narrative as the champion of the cause of the lower-caste *thori* brothers.\(^{68}\) The narrative clearly underlines the departure that Pabu had made from the existing norms and customs. He not only offered the *thoris* shelter but also recruited them as his warrior subordinates and socialized with them. His association with the *thoris* and his crusade for

\(^{68}\) Pabu refused to accept the Rajput ostracization of the *thoris* and took them into his service. In fact, Pabu was much despised by his Rathor kinsmen for patronising the *thori* brothers. Throughout the story, we get the impression that the bond between Pabu and the *thoris* is not just that of a patron and clients but a deeper one of emotional bondage and mutual loyalty.
bringing camels to Marwar and protecting them must have played a crucial role in his deification by lower castes and the Raikas, a camel breeding community of Rajasthan. The legends associated with Pabu, Goga and Teja particularly emphasize the acts of stealing the cattle wealth. Pabu and Teja even died while protecting the cattle of their subjects and followers. In Vaat Pabuji Ri, Nainsi records several instances of capturing of camels by Pabu and other Rajput chiefs. Human survival in the desert land of western Rajasthan depended much on the availability of camels. In a pastoral society the cattle wealth particularly camels was the prime concern of both-the rulers and the subjects. Association of Pabu with thories, his daring acts of capturing camels from other Rajput chiefs and sacrificing his life to protect the cattle wealth of his subjects, it seems, were important ingredients in his deification initially by the lower caste groups of thoris and raikas. It is evident that in the initial stages, the Rajput ruling classes ignored Pabu and dismissed him merely as a champion of the lower castes. The narrative clearly shows how Pabu was ridiculed by the higher caste Rajputs for harnessing the company of the thoris. It was only gradually- when Pabu had already been established as a hero and deity of the lower classes- that the Rajput groups, particularly the Rathores found it difficult to ignore his memory.

(b) A Comparative Study of the Legends of Pabu

A comparative reading of legendary materials in poetry and prose composed by Charan poets of the 16th, 17th and 19th centuries about the life of Pabu throw valuable light on the process of deification of Pabu. The earliest work available to us on Pabu belongs to 16th century. Mehaji, a Charan poet who belonged to Vithu branch of Charans, composed Shri
Pabuji Dhandhal Ro Chhand.\textsuperscript{69} The seventeenth century bardic version of Pabu's life story is recorded by Munhta Nainsi in his celebrated Khyai\textsuperscript{70} and nineteenth century versions are written by Ramnath Kaviya, who lived from 1801 to 1879 A. D.\textsuperscript{71} and Morji Asiya who composed Pabu Prakash in the middle of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{72}

Vithu Meha has confined himself to describing the battle scenario between Pabu and Jindrao Khichhi who had attacked his territory for plundering the cattle wealth. Most of the forty-eight couplets of the Chhand are devoted to Pabu's commitment to the values of chivalry and greatness of his army. The narrative of Vithu Meha does not deal with other aspects of Pabu's life such as his marriage or miracles performed by him during the initial period of his life. The composition is confined to a description of the battle and is in no way different from other narratives composed by bards who usually used to accompany their patrons to the battlefield. The chief concern of the poet here is to project the chivalrous image of Pabu as a warrior and not to project him as a deity. It seems that although Dhandhals had constructed a temple dedicated to Pabu, he had not yet acquired the status of a popular deity before the sixteenth century. At the most his status may have been that of the clan deity of the Dhandhals. The wider process of deification first took roots among the common people rather than among the Rajputs. The Charan poets composed the accounts of the Rajput heroes for the consumption of their Rajput patrons. In this sense, the bardic accounts formed the part of Rajput political culture. But like in any other society, elite culture and popular culture overlapped and there were areas where

\textsuperscript{69} Shri Moolchand 'Pranesh', "Vithu Meha Kret, Shri Pabuji Dhandhal Ro Chhand" Varda; year 6, No.4, October, 1963

\textsuperscript{70} Munhta Nainsi, Munhta Nainsi Ri Khyat, eds. Badri Prasad Sakaria, Vol. III, RORI, 1993, pp.58-79

\textsuperscript{71} Shree Ramnathji Kaviya, "Pabuji Ke Sorethe", in Maru Bharati, year 13, No. 3, October 1964, P.34-35

the two acted upon each other. Thus, the composition of Charan poets, had a definite impact on the shaping of popular perception. But the contents of their composition were not always accepted by the lower classes without necessary modifications to suit their needs. The heroic characteristics of the deities emphasized by the bardic poets in their narratives were added to the accounts of miracles attributed to their deities in popular versions. The popular perceptions brought out the deities from the realm of Rajput valor and projected them as saviors of local populace from invaders, and also looked upon them as supernatural figures curing people from diseases and snakebites. A close examination of the popular narrative recorded by Munhta Nainsi in his Khyat complied in latter half of seventeenth century indicates changing popular perceptions about Pabu. Nainsi must have compiled the version that was prevalent in the western Rajasthan during his lifetime. A celestial nymph agreed to marry Dhandhal (Pabu’s father) on the condition that he would not follow and watch her activities secretly. Pabu was born to the nymph and she fed Pabu by turning herself into a lioness and Pabu into a lion cub. One day after being watched secretly in this condition by Dhandhal the nymph disappeared. The narrative depicts the very birth of Pabu as a supernatural event or phenomenon. Further, the narrative contains an episode in which Pabu not only gave shelter to seven thori brothers who had been denied protection by all other Rajput chiefs but also performed miracle to bring back to life his she camel, which he had earlier allowed the thori brothers to kill and eat to satiate their hunger. In an another anecdote, Pabu on his mission to plunder the she camels of an another chieftain crossed the overflowing river with his associates by demonstrating his miraculous powers. By the latter half of seventeenth century, these miraculous anecdotes about Pabu seem to have become part of
the popular culture in parts of western Rajasthan, as is evident from their incorporation into Nainsi’s Khyat.

In the seventeenth century version as narrated by Nainsi, the solemnization of Pabu’s marriage is a simple affair. The participants, except Guga, a local god, were mostly friends and relatives. Pabu is not even shown to have completed the marriage rituals.

Although the attempts in this version to ‘Rajputize’ the narrative can easily be deciphered, they seem to be a super-imposition on an original narrative that portrayed Pabu as a human hero turned into a local god. In his role as the performer of miracles he was a deity who protected and helped the believers of his cult. At the same time, however, he, as a human was not above death as he died at the hands of his enemies (who were also humans) in the battlefield. Though born of a celestial nymph, Pabu never achieved the status of God who had a predestined birth (descendency from heaven as an incarnation) and who had ‘travelled back to heaven’ after completing his mission on earth. The fact that Pabu is shown to have died fighting against his relatives in a battle is a clear indication of the popular perception of Pabu as an ordinary mortal. At the same time, however, his deeds transformed him, in popular memory, into a human hero and then gradually into a human celebrity with divine characteristics.

Projection of Pabu as a deity in the popular consciousness gradually led to the incorporation of popular beliefs, rituals, and symbols in the narrative. Pabu has been shown, in Nainsi’s narrative, to believe in good and bad omen. During the course of solemnizing the marriage, Pabu performs ceremonies such as toran (in which the bridegroom touches the ceiling of the gate of the bride’s home with tree leaves).

Observing omen before undertaking any important work had been integral part of the belief system in western Rajasthan. The work had to be delayed if one came across bad omen such as woman carrying an empty pot, certain birds seen on the left side and meeting a sonless man on the way, etc. These and other popular beliefs became the raw materials of the expanding narratives about Pabu and other local deities. Ignoring the bad omen, it is believed, cost Pabu his life. Pabu ignored the bad omen against the advice of his companions and proceeded to solemnize his scheduled marriage. Immediately after his return from the marriage, a battle with neighbouring chief took place. In which Pabu fighting valiantly lost his life.

The inflation of the Pabu narratives by the inclusion of the elements of ‘popular’ religion into various episodes is suggestive of the fact that as the posthumous popularity of Pabu increased, there was popular demand for more information about his life and deeds. This demand was met by inventing new details and by introducing familiar narrative forms and strategies that reflected popular concerns, aspirations, and expressions. These anecdotes helped people of various castes and communities in identifying themselves with Pabu’s ultimate sacrifice. There was then a two-way interaction between the Pabu story, and the creative and innovative energy of the ordinary people. The historical figure of Pabu became part of popular memory but in course of time, popular memory, with its richness and vibrance, transformed and refashioned the image of Pabu. It is this two way process, rooted in everyday expressions, needs and aspirations of the ordinary people of western Rajasthan, that resulted in the deification of Pabu.

The popular narrative of seventeenth century depicts the skills of Pabu as a warrior. The demonstration of miraculous powers establishes him as a supernatural being. From
Nainsi's account and other such contemporary narratives, two distinct stages may be deciphered in the growth of the Pabus' legend up to the 17th century. During the early stage—the period of initial stage formation when Rathor war bands were trying to establish their supremacy over local chiefs and tribes in the 14th–15th centuries—Pabu was a local hero defending the interest of the helpless local populace. During the second stage—the period of emergence of Rathor state with its centralized administrative and revenue systems in the 16th–17th centuries—Pabu emerged from a local hero into a popular deity. However, there was much overlapping between these two stages and elements of the first stage survived into the second. Thus elements such as Pabu emerging as the champion of the cause of the disenfranchised groups are common to both the stages. Giving shelter to the needy in times of draughts and famines was an important element in the glorification and deification of a hero. In the ecological setting of western Rajasthan which explained recurring famines and draughts, the story of Pabu helping his subordinates and subjects, giving them food and shelter, protecting their lives and cattle wealth, would constitute a ready made material in the glorification and deification of a historical hero.

The nineteenth and early twentieth century traditions about Pabu and other deities, however, bring into sharp focus the entry of some significant new features—the process of the deification. These include attempts to completely do way with the human characteristics of these deities by making their birth and death appear as supernatural events and by elevating their status to a level even higher than that of the gods of Hindu pantheon. Ramnath Kaviya (1801-1879) a Charan poet has composed couplets describing life events in the life of Pabu. His writings include passages in which saving cows has been described as Hindu Dharma and Pabu is called an incarnation of Lakshman, brother
of Lord Rama.\textsuperscript{74} It is difficult to come across such description of Pabu in the pre-nineteenth century narratives. Nainsi, for example, narrates the miraculous powers of Pabu and accords him the status of a local deity. Projection of Pabu as a protector of \textit{Hindu Dharma} and describing him as an incarnation of a mythical figure such as Lakshman are undoubtedly later innovations. They should be seen as a part of the process of incorporation of Pabu and other folk-deities into mainstream Hindu religious system. The process of Hinduization is the subject matter of another chapter of this thesis. A nineteenth century couplet composed by an unknown poet compares Pabu with the characters of Mahabharata. However, the original element in the story-the depiction of Pabu as the protector of the defenceless people and their cattle against formidable enemies-persists even in these ‘Hinduized’ accounts.\textsuperscript{75} Another early nineteenth century version of the story of Pabu told in \textit{Dhuha} (couplet) form is not much different from the version discussed above. Out of two hundred and sixty couplets of Pabu’s life story, not more than fifteen are devoted to his marriage.\textsuperscript{76} However, another nineteenth century version provides us with extensive details of Pabu’s marriage. The story is narrated in the form of \textit{Pawara}.\textsuperscript{77} The hundred and thirty eight \textit{Pawaras} have been devoted to describe the episode of marriage.\textsuperscript{78} By the time this version came into existence, Pabu, it seems, had acquired the status of a regional deity and attempts were made to bring him at par.

\textsuperscript{74} Shri Ramnathji Kaviya; “Pabuji Ke Sorthe”; in \textit{Maru Bharati}, year 13, No. 3, October 1964, P.34-35
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Pabu Kahun Ke Parasram, Arjan Kahun Ke Bhim, Chor na Chori Kar Sokai, Bari Takai Na Seve! Tera Pervara Kun Giraya Garh Dhandhal Ka Bhim!!}, in Ramnath Kaviya, \textit{Varda} year 1, No. 3, July 1958, PP. 1-31
\textsuperscript{76} Narayan Singh Bhati, “Pabuji Ra Dhuha”, \textit{Parampara}, Part-38; year not given; Rajasthani Shodh Sansthan, Chopasani, Jodhpur
\textsuperscript{77} Pawara comprises of couplets, which are sung by the professional Bhopas, worshipers of Pabu, for the public gathering.
\textsuperscript{78} “Pabuji Ke Vivah Ka Pawara”, in \textit{Maru Bharati}; year,1; no.2; February, 1953
with the gods of the Hindu pantheon. For the first time, it is in this version that we are
told that all god and goddesses of the earth were invited to the marriage of Pabu.79
According to a recent Phad narration (Phad is a scroll of cloth about 15 feet in length and
between four to five feet in width. It has paintings of Pabuji’s life episodes, which is
narrated by the medium of song by Bhopas, the priest singers)80 invitation for Pabu’s
marriage was given to Bemata, the goddess of fortune, Ramdev, Goga, Ganeshji and
Lord Rama. Here again, Pabu is described as an incarnation of Lakshman, brother of
Lord Rama. Such a projection helps in raising the status of Pabu as a deity as well as in
his incorporation into Hindu pantheon. Pre-twentieth century narratives composed by
Charan poets call Pabu an incarnation of Lord Lakshman, but do not provide any detail as
to why and how Lakshman decided to be reborn as Pabu. A recent narrative recorded by
Dr. Mahipal Singh Rathor81 provides details of this new episode in the story of Pabu. The
popular narrative states that Lakshman met a rakshshi (she demon) while he, along with
Lord Rama and Vishwamitra were on the lookout for demons in the jungle. The rakshshi
Tarika, who had been meditating for twelve years to please a Bawari (a pool like water
reservoir). The goddess of Bawari fulfilling the wish of Tarika declared that she would
marry the first man visiting the Bawari. The goddess turned the she demon into a
beautiful woman. When Lakshman visited the Bawari, Tarika insisted that he should
marry her. Lakshman, who was unable to marry her then, promised to marry her in next
life. Lakshman declared that he would be born as Pabu in Dhandhal’s family. It was to
keep this commitment that Lakshman was born as Pabu and married Soda Rajput

79 “Pabuji Ke Vivah Ka Pawara”, in Maru Bharati; year,1; no.2; February, 1953
80 Personally attended the ‘Phad Banchana’ on 8-1-1999 by Mallu Bhopa, Village Khal near Bikaner,
Rajasthan.
81 Dr. Mahipal Singh Rathor; Rajasthan Sahitya Mein Lok Devta Pabuji; Himanshu Publishers,
Udaipur,2001,P.43
princess, who the narrative tells was the incarnation of Tarika. In another contemporary popular narrative, the she demon Tarika is replaced with Sawroopnakha, sister of Ravana. These modern narratives lend to mythify the human personality of Pabu by linking him with great mythological characters of the epics and Puranas. The return of Pabu as incarnation of Lakshman to complete an unfinished task suggests that his death in the battlefield was a predestined act. The god departed from the world after the task was completed. Another contemporary narrative Pabu Prakash records that Shiva, Brahma, and Indra came to receive the wives of Pabu and his elder brother Buro when they performed sati. Similarly, Pabu is shown to have travelled in a heavenly palanquin after he died in the battlefield. Such narratives clearly reflect an urge on the part of Pabu’s believers to raise the status of their deity to the level of the gods of the great tradition of Hinduism- to a level at which he is shown as transcending the cycle of birth and death.

The bardic narratives on Pabu’s life from 16th century onwards lay particular stress on his commitment to Rajput Dharma. Vair (avenging the humiliation, defeat or death) and honoring commitment were two important elements of Rajput Dharma. Avenging the death of father or clan brother was considered Dharma (duty) of every Rajput. Cultural values such as settlement of vair and being true to one’s words had become integral component of the Rajput socio-political code of conduct. The bardic writers attached great significance to these values. The sixteenth century narration of

82 Ibid.
83 Mahakavi Morji Asiya; Pabu Prakash, Page.208
84 John .D. Smith, op cit., P.450
Pabu’s life story by Vithu Meha ends with the death of Pabu in the battlefield.\textsuperscript{85} However, the seventeenth century narrative recorded by Nainsi\textsuperscript{86} ends with Pabu’s nephew Jharda (son of Buro, Pabu’s elder brother) settling the *vair* by killing Jindrao Khichi. In Rajput value system, the feud between two parties could end if the one clan or party offered their daughter in marriage to another.\textsuperscript{87} Offer of daughter in marriage implied the public acknowledgement of their subordinate position by the clan, which made such an offer. In one version of Pabu’s story, Buro offers his sister to Jind Rao Khichi with a view to end the old animosity between the two clans. Jind Rao Khichi was looking for an opportunity to avenge his father’s death who was killed in a battle by Pabu. Pabu, however, did not favour Buro’s decision and settled in another village.\textsuperscript{88} Pabu, therefore, refused to accept a subordinate position and Jind Rao avenged his fathers’ death by killing Pabu in a battle. This version is a later addition, as it does not find mention either in the sixteenth century versions or in the story recorded by Nainsi. Although the bards patronized by the Rathor chiefs had begun to ‘Rajputize’ the Pabu legend from 16\textsuperscript{th} century onwards, the full-fashioning of Pabu as an archetypal Rajput hero was not a pre-eighteenth century development. Even in modern times-when the Charans have laid great emphasis on Pabu as the role model for the Rajputs by forcing on how he settled *vair* and defended the honour of his family and clan, the popular version of the Pabu legend as represented in the public performances of the low-caste *Bhopas* continue to privilege Pabu’s image as a benefactor of the poor and helpless over that of a Rajput warrior wanting to settle *vair* and defending family honour.

\textsuperscript{85} Shri Moolchand ‘Pranesh’, “Vithu Meha Kret, Shri Pabuji Dhandhal Ro Chhand” *Varda*; year 6, No.4, October, 1963
\textsuperscript{86} Nainsi, *op cit.* pp.58-79
\textsuperscript{87} Norman P. Ziegler, “Marvari historical Chronicles: Sources for the Social and Cultural History of Rajasthan”, in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, XII-2, April-June, 1976, pp.220-249.
\textsuperscript{88} Mahipal Singh Rathore, *op cit.* P.52-53
Thus the episode pertaining to Pabu’s refusal to accept the subordinate position of his family vis-à-vis Jind Rao Khichi by disassociating himself from the marriage of his step-sister does not find mention in the public performance of Phad narration by Bhopas of Pabu.\textsuperscript{89} However, a public narration of \textit{Phad} recorded and transcribed by John. D. Smith\textsuperscript{90} tells a different story. Pabu, according to this performance recorded by Smith, seemed worried after killing Sarang, father of Jind Rao Khichi. To end the feud, Pabu himself had sent a proposal to Jind Rao Khichi for his sisters’ marriage with him. Jind. Rao married Pabu’s sister but refused to end the feud.\textsuperscript{91} The public performance of ‘Phad’ narration before hundreds of people is a strong indicator of how the popular perception of Pabu remains at variance with the bardic or Rajput perception. The emphasis in these public performances has been more on Pabu’s charismatic personality, his being incarnation of the mythical Lakshman and on the miracles performed by him. The narratives of Charans on the other hand which underlined Rajput values and \textit{Rajput dharma} as the fundamental features of the Pabu legend were either overlooked or suitably altered in popular versions and \textit{Phad} performances. Subordinate social groups, impoverished and burdened due to constant warfare and burden of state taxes and natural calamities often fashioned and re-fashioned the image of Pabu and other folk heroes in the light of their everyday life-situations and to suit their material needs, concerns and aspirations.

Two conflicting traditions present in the Pabu legend grew historically-the popular tradition highlighting Pabu and other folk-heroes or folk-deities as benefactors

\textsuperscript{89} A public performance of \textit{Phad} narration by Bhopa and Bhopi, (male and female singer) was, attended by me at Bikaner on 8-10-1999 did not even mention the marriage of Pabu’s sister with Jind Rao Khichi.
\textsuperscript{90} John. D. Smith, \textit{op cit.}
\textsuperscript{91} John. D. Smith, \textit{op cit.} P.282
and saviours of the ordinary people, and the elitist, Rajput or bardic traditions focusing on the Rajput-like virtues of these heroes and deities. Despite this continuing tension between these growing traditions, there existed a relationship of constant negotiation and natural appropriation between the two. The two traditions did not exist independently of each other. They continuously shaped and reshaped each other. After all, folk-heroes or folk-deities fulfilled certain needs of the society as a whole. However, within the framework of the relations of dominance and subordination in the society of western Rajasthan, different groups related to these heroes turned deities in different ways.

(c) Deification of Ramdev

The paucity of sources has rendered it difficult to trace different stages of deification of Ramdev from the status of a warrior hero. Ramdev, as recorded by Nainsi in his *Vigat*, was a Tanwar Rajput and was assigned the *qasba* (town) of Pokran by Rao Maldeo, who ruled western Rajasthan during early sixteenth century. After ruling Pokharan for some time, Ramdev gave it to his daughter in marriage and settled in Runecha. It is after leaving Pokharan, that Ramdev must have become a religious figure. From references to Ramdev and his shrines in Nainsi’s *Vigat* clearly shows that Ramdev had acquired the status of popular deity by seventeenth century. Rarely do we come across any bardic composition of Ramdev’s life and deeds. The availability of such materials in the case of Goga and Pabu enables us to trace, though not unproblematically, the process of deification. The outlines of this process can particularly be established with relatively less difficulty when the information provided in bardic materials is corroborated by other forms of historical evidence. In the absence of prolific bardic

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92 Munhta Nainsi; *Vigat*, II; 291
traditions about Ramdev, much of the process of glorification and deification of this historical figure remains shrouded in obscurity. Some inferences regarding this process, however, may be drawn from the brief accounts given in Nainsi’s *Khyat* and *Vigat* and in some other oral traditions (not necessarily of the bardic variety).

Modern scholars such as Sonaram Bishnoi, Dominique Sila Khan, and Mumtaz Ali have studied the Ramdev cult and its historical significance. Sonaram Bishnoi and most of the other Rajasthan scholars adopt the conventional approach by viewing Ramdev and his cult as integral part of the medieval Bhakti movement. On the other hand, Dominique Sila Khan and Mumtaz Ali, place Ramdev in the unorthodox Islamic religious traditions. Accepting the views of J.N Hollister and J.M Campbell, Dominique Sila Khan in a recent study associates Ramdev with Imamshahi branch of Ismailism and believes that Ramdev had come from Rajasthan and converted the Meghwals, a lower caste, in Kachh. Mumtaz Ali has argued that Ramdev had adopted Islam as his religion and became a disciple of Pir Satgur Nur and finds resemblance in the Bhajans of Ramdev and the *Ginans* composed by Ismaili *pirs*. Sila Khan believes that projection of Ramdev cult, as a part of Hindu Bhakti movement is a later development. Ramdev cult, in her opinion, had an Ismaili origin. Sila Khan, in particular, stresses the multiple images of Ramdev in the later medieval period- before he came to be refashioned as a Rajput warrior and a Hindu Bhakti saint. That Ramdev had multiple images in the medieval period is evident from Nainsi’s *Khyat* and *Vigat*. The *Vigat* records a tale called *Bat Pargana Pokharan Ri*.

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95 J. N. Hollister, *The Shi’ a of India*, Delhi, Oriental Book Reprint Corporation, reprinted, 1979, pp.352
97 Dominique Sila Khan; *Conversions and shifting identities, Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis in Rajasthan*. Manohar, 1997,p.60
in which Ramdev is shown as a miracle-performing coloniser of Pokharan who worked under the Rathor tutelage and liberated the area from a demon and settled the peasants there. In his Khyat, however, Nainsi informs us that Ramdev (mentioned as Ramdev Pir) came under the influence of Nathpanth by becoming a follower of a Nathpanthi teacher, Balinath.

Interestingly, three different personalities of Ramdev emerge from Nainsi’s brief references— a settler of peasants in a hostile territory, a Muslim saint and finally a follower of Nathpanth. As a coloniser who liberated Pokharan from the clutches of a tyrant and helped the peasants to settle there, he is seen as a subordinate ally of the emerging Rathor state. Nainsi as an ideologue and historian of the Rathor state of Jodhpur, could not have overlooked Ramdev’s claims to greatness. It is, however, worth mentioning that while Goga and Pabu find mention in Nainsi’s account (and also in other bardic accounts from 16th century onwards) as warrior Rajput heroes, Ramdev is not exactly portrayed in the same light in the pre-eighteenth century period, though there are definite signs (in Nainsi’s account) of his being appropriated as a Rajput hero in the times to come. This aspect is ignored by scholars such as Dominique Sila Khan who views Rajputization of Ramdev and other folk-deities as an eighteenth and post-eighteenth century phenomenon. By Nainsi’s time (second half of the 17th century), the Rathore state had achieved a high degree of political and administrative centralization and had emerged as the most powerful political formation in western Rajasthan. The bardic tales of various local heroes were meticulously recorded by Nainsi and incorporated in his

100 G. D. Sharma, Rajput Polity, Ch. 1-4, pp. 1-113.
comprehensive history of the Rathor state of Jodhpur. While Nainsi stresses the Rajput images of Goga and Pabu and depicts them as Rajput warrior heroes, his brief mention of the activities of Ramdev ensured that Ramdev’s entry into the pantheon of deified Rajput heroes was well on agenda. In any case Nainsi’s portrayal of Ramdev as an altruistic miracle-performer was clearly an indication of the existence of Ramdev as a deified figure among the lower castes and peasant-settlers. His status as a pir (Muslim sufi saint)-as recorded by Nainsi—also testifies to the fact that the process of the deification of Ramdev was already underway by the seventeenth century.

The multiple identities of Ramdev ensured his popularity both among Muslims and non-Muslims. In this sense, the Ramdev cult resembles that of Goga who was also venerated as a pir (saint) and worshipped as a deity. Dominique Sila Khan’s explanation for the popularity of Ramdev among the lower-caste groups who had recently undergone Islamization is based on her conclusion that Ramdev was part of the unorthodox Nizari dawa (a branch of Ismaili sect based in Multan) which transgressed the conventional Hindu-Muslim religious boundaries.101 In her opinion, much before the process of ‘Hinduization’ and ‘Rajputization’ of Ramdev began in the eighteenth century, he was popular as Ramdev Pir or Ramshah Pir. His original medieval image was that of an Ismaili missionary than that of a archetypal Rajput hero warrior-saint.102 Sila Khan observes that Ramdev was perhaps buried at Runecha in keeping with Islamic rituals and his memorial at this place looks more like a Muslim tomb than a Hindu temple.103 While this image of Ramdev survived in Gujarat and Sind, the decline of the Ismaili sect in Rajasthan led to gradual replacement of the image by his portrayal as the deity of the

102 D. Sila Khan, Op. Cit., pp. 61-63
103 Ibid.
lowest castes—the untouchable dhedhs (now called Meghwals). It is perhaps these groups among which Ramdev might have been active as a radical Ismaili missionary and whose interests he might have championed. It is the untouchable dhedhs who kept Ramdev’s memory alive and deified him much before the Rajput elites came to appropriate him as their war-hero and deity. Ramdev’s association with the dhedhs came to be much ridiculed and derided by the upper castes. Thus while it is possible that Ramdev might have belonged to the Tomar (or Tanwar) Rajput clan, the initial impetus for the glorification and deification came from the lowest caste community of Dhedhs. In this sense, the social base of process of deification of Ramdev was the same as in the case of Goga and Pabu. The popularity of the Ramdev cult among the most oppressed social groups is also evident from his alleged association with the Nathpanth—a non-Brahmanical religious sect of medieval Rajasthan which was popular among the lower and lowest-caste groups.

As followers of Ramdev, the Meghwals bury their dead and perform worship at the mazar of Ramdev at Runecha. This must be the result of Ramdev’s association with this lowest caste community during his lifetime. This association is also established by numerous legends and has also been established by scholars who have worked on Ramdev. Meghwals still worship Ramdev as their chief deity. The historical connection of Ramdev with Meghwals must have encouraged them to deify Ramdev Pir as their deity initially. Thus, the Ramdev cult was adopted and modified by the untouchable communities such as Meghwals of Sind, Gujarat and Rajasthan. Dominique

Sila Khan calls it a “forgotten branch of Indian Ismailism.” While ‘Rajputization’ of the cult began in 18th century, adding Ramdev to histories of an elite literary tradition, to high Hinduism and to a high cultural form, in her opinion, is a process that took place only in nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

An investigation into the traditions associated with Ramdev compels one to underline important differences between his deification and that of Goga, Teja and Pabu. The process of deification, in this case, does not seem to have directly emerged from the glorification of a warrior-hero. Ramdev did not die in the battlefield to honour his words, to protect the cattle of the local community, or to defend the interests of the subjugated populace. Hence, he could not be revered by the people for being their protector as was the case with Goga, Teja and Pabu. Ramdev, it seems, had acquired the status of deity from a saint, who was popular among the Meghwals and other low castes in the region. He drew both Muslims and Non-Muslims as his disciples. The aforesaid formulation is substantiated from a seventeenth century Chhand composed by Sayar Khem who claimed to be Ramdev’s disciple. Sayar Khem addresses Ramdev as a Nirgun saint, as a Sufi, Maulvi and Dervesh. Ramdev is believed to have established a sect based on his teachings. The sect was known as Kamadia Panth and was open to people of all castes and religions. This further suggests that Ramdev lived as a saint who rejected the boundaries of religions and hierarchy of castes.

The structure and number of places of worship and fairs held to commemorate the deity suggest his popularity. The fair at Ramdevra (also known as Runecha), the village where

106 Ibid.; P.61
107 Ibid.; Page:62
108 "Ath Pachhimadhishji Ro Chhand” in Varda, year 14, No.2, April-June 1971, PP.17-28
Ramdev is believed to have taken *samadhi* had become a well-established feature of the cult during the 17th century. The fair was held twice a year in *Bhadwa* and *Mah*. Nainsi does not provide us information regarding the number of devotees and nature of their activities. However, certain observation may be made in this regard from the income that the State generated from these fairs. These fairs, along with the sites of devotion and pilgrimage, functioned as centers of commercial activities. Tax collected from these fairs ran into thousands of rupees every year. If the year-wise figures of income from the fairs, as recorded by Nainsi, are compared with the *hasil* collected from all the villages of the Pargana Pokharan, it works out to be ranging from 20% to 50% of the *hasil*. Nainsi also states that in an agriculturally prosperous year (1659) the State earned Rs. 15000/- from land revenue and other taxes, whereas income from two fairs of Ramdev held at Ramdevra in the same year was Rs 5000/-. The amount of collection from the fairs suggests the magnitude of the size of the fairs and popularity of Ramdev as a deity.

The references to places of worship of Ramdev as a deity and ponds constructed either in his name or attributed to him in Nainsi’s *Vigat* also suggest Ramdev’s posthumous popularity in medieval times. Nainsi mentions a *thaan* of Ramdev on the right side of the fort that serves as entrance to the town of Pokharan. The existence of this *thaan* next to the fort, however, does not suggest that it was constructed by the Rajput rulers. *Thaan*, a small platform, was, in all likelihood, constructed by his devotees who considered this site sacred as Ramdev was believed to have constructed a room like structure at this place after he had rehabilitated Pokharan. The conversion of places

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110 Nainsi; *Vigat* II, P.323
111 Nainsi, *Vigat* II, P.322
112 Nainsi, *Vigat* II, P.308
113 Nainsi, *Vigat* II, P.311
associated with the activities of the local deities into places of worship must have witnessed a corresponding increase with the growing influence of the cult. Nainsi in his description of ponds and Bavaris (step well) refers to a pond and Bawari which were believed to have been constructed by Ramdev. Hence, they were named Ramdesar. The pond was able to hold rainwater for eight months and the Bawari also contained sufficient water. The pond also originally had a Chhatri\(^{114}\) of Ramdev, which Nainsi records, had collapsed. The association of folk-heroes (or deities) or of their names with the water resources (e.g., reservoirs) of the local people to shape their religious beliefs, to suit their mundane expectations and needs in an environment, characterized the overwhelming presence of the waterless desert.

Certain later medieval traditions invented by his devotees but attributed to Ramdev himself harp on the influence of the non-conformist Bhakti movement over him. These traditions bring Ramdev closer to reformed Bhakti Hinduism of later medieval times. Such attempts must have facilitated increase in Ramdev's area of influence and raised his status as religious reformer and teacher. In this role of a Bhakti saint, Ramdev has been linked to medieval religious figures such as Kabir and Nanak. Like them, he is also seen as singer of devotional hymns.

There are twenty-four bhajans (Vani), which are believed to have been composed by Ramdev himself. In the Vanis attributed to him, Ramdev, like the monotheistic saints Kabir and Nanak, has emphasized the importance of Guru. Kabir regards Guru as a medium to achieve communion with God, Ramdev on the other hand regards God and

\(^{114}\) A canopy constructed in commemoration of some one. The canopy was constructed, and still is a practice in many parts of western Rajasthan, in honor and memory of the dead by the family or clan members. This practice has no religious connotation and the structure is not used for worshiping the dead.

\(^{115}\) Nainsi, Vigat II, P.312
Guru as one. Ramdev, like Kabir and Nanak, addresses Brahma as ‘formless’ (Nirgun)\textsuperscript{116} He is believed to have attempted a synthesis between Islamic and orthodox Hindu religious system with multiple gods and goddesses. He explains the bodily existence (Sagun) of gods and goddesses as a wish of Formless Brahma.\textsuperscript{117} In his verses, he has emphasized simplicity and true devotion. Pretensions by devotees are severely criticized by him. In this modern, Hinduized or Brahmanized portrayal, Ramdev is shown in the role of a religious teacher, not as a miracle-performing god. The bhajans stress the elements of devotion and reveal the non-orthodox, anti-Brahmanical and egalitarian religiosity of those who composed them in the name of Ramdev. Describing the method of devotion, Ramdev, in one couplet, recommends the recitation of the mantra Om by the devotees.\textsuperscript{118} This may indicate the impact of certain Brahmanical ritualistic forms on the Ramdev cult, but the dominant attitude in the bhajans attributed to Ramdev remains anti-elitist and non-sectarian. Talk of Hindu Muslim unity and attack on the socially dominant strata such as Brahmans and Mahajans are visible in the verses attributed to Ramdev.\textsuperscript{119}

\begin{verbatim}
गिरांड़ चंद्री दिल्ली डेरा, बाजसी छुर तांत ।
हिन्दू तुरक एक पियाले, बाबो भांगसी श्रान्त ।।

पहले बड़बड़ बमण, पाछे वाणिया पकडेला ।
पाछे जुगत विदूरणा जोगिया, ज्याने जकडेला ।।

Chitor Chanwari Dili Dera! Baajsi sur taant!

Hindu Turak Ek Piyale! Babo Bhang Si Bhraant!

Pahle Brabar Bamana! Pachhe Vaniya Pakarela!

Pachhe Jugat Vihuna Jogiyan! Jeyane Ja Jakarela!
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{116} Niz parman, vani attributed to Ramdev in Sona Ram Bishnoi; \textit{Op. Cit.} page.216
\textsuperscript{117} Sona Ram Vishnoi; \textit{Op. Cit.} page.216-217
\textsuperscript{118} Sona Ram Vishnoi; \textit{Op. Cit.}, pp. 232
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid. pp. 238,242
The couplets describe the events that will take place when the God will incarnate himself on earth. On occasion of the marriage of the God incarnate Chanvari—the place of solemnization of marriage will be in Chittorgarh whereas the marriage party would stay in Delhi. Five different kinds of music will also be played in celebration. On this occasion, Hindus and Muslims will eat together and god will remove all difference between the two. The second couplet reads that god will first punish the corrupt Brahmans and then the traders and Mahajans would be punished. Thereafter, yogis who do not know the art of meditating will be taken to task.)

The twenty-four Vanis, believed to have been composed by Ramdev, do not suggest Ramdev having supernatural powers. He appears to be a saint who believed in Bhakti and in the importance of Guru as the means to achieve Moksha or communion with the God. The vanis also suggest the influence of the anti-Brahmanical ideology on the Ramdev cult. The ‘rough rhetoric’ of the Nathpanth is evident in the above mentioned lines. As has already been pointed out, Nainsi represented Ramdev as a disciple of Nathpanthi teacher, Balinath. Ramdev is said to have claimed that he was a disciple of Balinath on whom he showers praises for enlightening him

वारी हो वारी वालीनाथ जी, में तो परस्या जरूर ।
रामदेव परचो पायो हे जी, सब में समाया पूरमपूर ॥

(Ramdev showers praise on his guru Balinath as he has given him the powers. Balinath, Ramdev says, is present in everyone.)

We also come across certain literary traditions, prevalent among his latter-day devotees that draw attention to his divine personality and godly virtues. Such an aura about Ramdev appears prominently in the literary traditions attributed to the devotees of Ramdev such as Harji Bhati.120 Harji Bhati, it appears from the literary traditions, was the contemporary of Ramdev. The literature composed by him thus can be called the second-

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120 Several vanis and bhajans believed to have been composed by Harji Bhati in praise of Ramdev include, “Harji Bhati Virachit Ramdevi Ki Vania”, “Harji Bhati Rachit Shri Ramdevji Ro Viyavlo”, and “Harji Bhati Rachit Ramdevji ro Badhavo”, reproduced in Sonaram Bishnoi, Baba Ramdev: Itetas Avam Sahiyya, Scientific Publishers, Jodhpur, 1989
generation literature. Though it is difficult to ascertain the period during which this literature was produced, it can not be attributed to a period before seventeenth century when Nainsi wrote his *Vigat*. This conclusion is based on the comparative analysis of two versions of a story narrated both by Nainsi and Harji Bhati. Munhta Nainsi in his *Vigat*, narrates a story where Ajmal, Ramdev's father, and Ramdev appear before Maldeo, the ruler of Jodhpur (1532-1562) and request for grant of land in Marwar. They were given Pokharan, an area depopulated due to atrocities of a demon called Bharon. Ramdev, a child, kills the demon. The story shows Ramdev as a human being with miraculous powers but stops short of treating him a divine figure or deity. On the other hand, the other version of the story narrated in Harji Bhati's songs depicts Ramdev as an incarnation of god Krishna. It provides the details of how Ramdev's father visited Mathura, offered prayers to god Krishna and was in turn told by the god that he himself would be born as his son. It is this Krishna who was reborn as Ramdev who killed the demon. Had Harji Bhati's version been the popular during seventeenth century, it would have found mention in Nainsi's *Vigat*. Thus it will not be wrong to conclude that version attributed to Harji Bhati is a later composition was written only after compilation of *Vigat* by Nainsi. It is quite possible that while Harji Bhati might have been Ramdev's disciple and contemporary, most of the literary compositions attributed to him are of latter-day (most likely post 18th century) origin. Thus while the process of deification of Ramdev-both in the form of fairs organized at sacred sites associated with him and in the form of raising of monuments- had begun much before Nainsi wrote his *Vigat* and *Khyat* in the later part of the 17th century, the phenomenon was not widespread enough to have

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121 Sona Ram Bishnoi, op. Cit. 312-313
compelled Nainsi to accept his deified status. Instead, the Rathor historian chose to represent him and his family as subordinate ally of the Rathor rulers of Jodhpur. In this sense, Nainsi’s treatment of Ramdev was no different from his portrayal of Goga and Pabu. All three of them to Nainsi were heroic figures (particularly Pabu due to his being a Rathor clansman) who also possessed miraculous powers. All three of them may have been raised to the status of deities in popular estimate but the ruling classes were not yet prepared to grant them the same status, although they could ill-afford to ignore them completely. In the post-Nainsi period, particularly during the 18th century, the deification of Ramdev—and also that of Goga and Pabu—acquired new dimensions both at the popular level and among the ruling Rajput elites. At the root of the deification phenomenon was the strong popular belief in the capacity of these figures to perform miracles—both during their lifetimes and posthumously as divine figures—for the general welfare of the community and for fulfilling the material needs of their individual followers.

The miracles believed to have been performed by these figures were meant to solve the day to day worldly problems of their devotees and did not resemble the metaphysical and other worldly miracles performed by the gods of Brahmanical pantheon. The expectations of the low-caste believers from their deities to fulfill their aspirations were confined to mundane matters. In case of Ramdev, belief in his miraculous powers could bring back to life the dead son of his sister and a calf belonging to his brother. He also cured the diseased leg of his wife.\(^{122}\) Ramdev is also worshiped for curing such ailments as stomachache, and for fulfilling the wish for the birth of a son and in modern times even for success in litigation.\(^ {123}\) The attribution of such miracles to

\(^{122}\) Sagarmal Sharma; *Rajasthan Ke Lok Devta.* Shekhavati Shodh Pratishthan, P.76

\(^{123}\) Ibid. P. 79
Ramdev was the basis for his deification. The people deified Ramdev and other historical personalities consciously expecting them to take care of their daily needs and problems.

As a deity and supernatural figure, Ramdev is addressed by Harji Bhati as the creator of the three worlds (Triloknath). Harji Bhati shows him miraculously producing milk and offering it to him. When Harji Bhati tasted the leftover milk, he became enlightened. In his eulogistic account of Ramdev’s deeds and virtues, Harji Bhati takes pride in being his disciple. He calls himself a slave and Ramdev as master who had imparted him the knowledge of the self. Moving away from the description of Ramdev’s miracle-performing powers, Harji Bhati, then highlights the spiritual attainments accruing from devotion to Ramdev.

In the twentieth century traditions of Ramdev, widely circulated and sold in the form of booklets, particular stress has been laid on the miraculous aspects of the cult and devotional elements are completely missing. Ramdev is projected as incarnation of god Krishna and lucid details of how he killed the demon Bharon are provided. Ramdev is even shown to have saved Balinath who as per earlier traditions was his guru. This kind of literature shows Ramdev at par with, and sometimes more powerful than, the gods of Hindu pantheon.

From the above account, we can identify various stages in the process of the deification of Ramdev. From a historical celebrity responsible for taking up the cause of the lowest caste dhedhs and from liberating the area of Pokharan from an unpopular local potentate, he rose to the position of a deified figure among these lowest caste groups

during the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries. These early attempts at the formation of the Ramdev cult are reflected in the creation of sacred sites and built structures in his memory, and also in the organization of fairs at these sites. With the growing popularity of lower-caste monotheistic movements in various parts of northern India during the later medieval period, some followers of Ramdev, influenced as they were by this movement and also by radical currents of the Sufi and Nathpani movements, began to look upon him as a nirguna saint with a radical social agenda. For these followers, he was not a deity but a radical spiritual preacher who disregarded the boundaries of caste and religion. Still later, however, the deification process assumed new dimensions with growing attempts in the modern period to see him as an integral, though distinct, part of a larger Hindu religious heritage.

(d) Deification of Goga and Teja

Goga and Teja both are worshiped as serpent-gods in Rajasthan. Our sources, as discussed earlier, suggest that Goga Chauhan had probably lived during 11th century and by 15th century, he had acquired the status of a folk-deity. It seems that he was not only worshiped in western Rajasthan alone but also in other parts of western India such as the Punjab and Gujarat.\textsuperscript{126} An early fifteenth century Jain source prohibits worship of Goga with other Hindu gods\textsuperscript{127} which suggests that he was worshiped at least among some sections of the society. The oral traditions associated with Goga contain two important features—his projection as war hero, since he is shown to have died fighting Turkish invaders and his close association with Guru Gorakhnath, the founder of a non-

\textsuperscript{126} For the popularity of Goga cult in the Punjab, see Harjot Oberoi, the Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition, Oxford University Press, 1994, Chapter 3, pp. 139-203.

\textsuperscript{127} Shrvak Vratodi Aitichaar; year 1409. Refered by G.D. Sharma in “Gugaji ke samain per kinchit aur parkash”, Varda; no.4; year 3; October 1960
brahmanical and heterodox Nathpanthi sect. Traditions of his association with Gorakhnath give us insights into pre-deified period of the Goga legend prior to fifteenth century. If the traditions kept alive by the present community of Goga devotees and other oral traditions become the basis for tracing back the history of the legend, Goga appears to be closely associated with Nathpanthis or Gorakhpanthis during his lifetime. It may be mentioned that the period between 10th-11th and 14th–15th centuries witnessed the growth of the powerful, non-Brahmanical Nathpanthi movement in various parts of northern India. The increasing popularity of Goga may have emboldened the Nathpanthis to portray him as a disciple of Gorakhnath. Since both the cults were popular among the lower castes, a certain degree of interaction and mutual appropriation between them was inevitable.

The present day cult of Goga is presided over by devotees known as bhagats. They not only perform jamma but also act as priests in shrines of Goga. bhagats are mostly from jogi caste, whose claim to a special aptitude for the office of priest rests on a mythical association between Goga and a particular school of jogis led by Guru Gorakhnath.

Dashratha Sharma refers to a thirteenth century source that records the existence of Goga’s math (centre of a sect). This was one of the several Mathas established by the Nathpanthis in Rajasthan and Gujarat. The sources indicate that Goga was associated

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128 See Satish Chandra, “Historical Background to the rise of the Bhakti Movement in Northern India”, in his Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India, New Delhi, Har Anand Publications, 1996, pp.110-31

129 A night long religious function where songs are sung by bhagats in exaltation of Goga and offerings are made by the devotees

130 Dr. Dashratha Sharma; “Gugaji Ke Samey Per Kinchit Aur Prakash”, in Varda, year 3, No.4, October 1960, PP. 2-4
with Jafarpanth, a branch of Gorakhpanth.\textsuperscript{131} It was because of this association that Goga acquired the name Jaharpir, distorted version of Jafarpir. The popular traditions associated with Goga’s birth and life story show that he owed his birth to Gorakhnath’s blessings, and he also had close association with the Panth throughout his life. According to a myth\textsuperscript{132} Dedreva (the place where Goga belonged) was once ruled by a king named Jevar. The queen Bachal did not have children. She began to worship Guru Gorakhnath, as the latter was known for fulfilling the wishes of his devotees. After finding Bachal a committed devotee who regularly visited him without fail, Gorakhnath satisfied with the woman’s commitment, asked her to come next day and take parsad that would fulfil her wish. Kachal, sister of Bachal, who overheard this conversation posed herself as Bachal and Gorakhnath gave her two barley seeds as parsad. Subsequently, Kachal gave birth to twin sons. When Bachal came and asked for parsad, Gorakhnath realised his mistake but had no more parsad left with him. To keep his words, Gorakhnath visited patal (the world underneath) and met Basuki, the king of snakes. Gorakhnath, after narrating the whole story, asked Basuki for a powerful snake that would be born as son to Bachal. Basuki, who himself was a devotee of Gorakhnath, willingly agreed to oblige him. Gorakhnath selected a snake named Padam Nag for the job. Gorakhnath blessed the snake and asked it to mingle with googal- a sweet mixture, which he gave to Bachal to eat. When Bachal returned pregnant with Goga to her husband’s house, the king’s sister expressed doubts about her character to her brother. She confided her suspicion to Raja Jevar. Together, they decided to banish Bachal from the palace. They arranged a bullock cart for her and sent her to her parent’s house. When the noise of bullock cart reached

\textsuperscript{131} Chadradan Charan, Gugaji Chauhan Ri Rajasthani Gatha, Bikaner, 1962, P.9
\textsuperscript{132} Shri Prithvi Raj Ji; Sampurna Goga Puran; Meerut pustak Bhandar; year of publication not given.
patal, Basuki mistook it for chariot of Jenmejey- a character from Mahabharata who had destroyed snakes at one point of time. Anticipating the same destruction again, Basuki immediately called a meeting of all snakes and decided to kill the occupants of the chariot. Taki Nag took up the challenge and killed the bullocks and the man who was driving the cart. Goga, who was witnessing the incident from inside his mother's womb came out and caught the snake by its head. Thereafter, Goga asked certain questions to Taki snake, which are quite revealing. Goga asked Taki as to how the children of the cart driver would survive and as to who would feed them. He also inquired whether his children would curse both of them or not? Hearing this Taki and his wife sucked the poison of bullocks and the cart driver and brought them back to life.

The myth depicts Goga as an incarnation of a powerful snake and a disciple of Gorakhnath. It also reflects Goga's image as a benefactor of the common people. Such legends provided the basis for the common people to associate themselves with Goga and raise the latter to the status of a deity. The myth describing Gorakhnath as guiding force in the life of Goga may have originated as a consequence of interaction between the Goga cult and the Nathpanthi sect, both of which were non-Brahmanical in nature. Alternatively, the myths of Goga being the follower of Gorakhnath may also indicate that Goga came under the influence of Nathpanth at some stage in his life.

Gradually, Goga acquired the image of having a supernatural influence over the serpents and was transformed into a god of serpents in popular imagination. His association with the heterodox Nathpanthi sect, open to the people of all castes and religion, must have helped the cult to draw followers and devotees from among lower castes and Muslims.
Sources of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries pertaining to western Rajsathan, however, do not suggest widespread worship of Goga. The Goga cult remained dormant during these centuries for lack of political patronage which in turn was due to the declining political position of the Chamanhas, the branch of Rajputs to which Goga had belonged. Chamnhas, who had reached a position of political prominence during 12th century could not maintain their position for long. Chamnhas were marginalised in the polity of Rajasthan, at a time when Rathors succeeded in carving out a large territory for themselves during the period between 13th and 15th centuries. Rathors, the rivals of Chamnhas, who were looking for new symbols of legitimacy, had no reason to extend state patronage to the Goga cult. As has been mentioned earlier, the Rathors even attempted to subordinate the Goga cult to that of Pabu, as is evident from Nainsi’s account of the latter. In this narrative, Pabu is shown as establishing his dominance over Goga by virtue of his superior ability to perform miracles. Thus while the cult of Goga lost its preeminent position to that of Pabu due to lack of political support, it appears that the former continued to remain influential at the most subterranean and popular level—particularly among the Jat peasants and the lower castes as it addressed some of their pressing material concerns.

By the seventeenth century, however, Goga again undoubtedly emerged as a popular deity in the Rajasthan society, though his cult still lacked the patronage of ruling Rajputs and other socially dominant sections of the society. Nainsi in his Khyat recognizes Goga as an established deity capable of performing miracles.\footnote{Goga performs miracles with snakes to convince Pabu of his powers in Munhta Nainsi Ri Khyat, Part. III, pp. 58-79} Bikaner Ki Gajal, a document
written in v.s.1765/1708 A.D.\textsuperscript{134} while describing various facets of Bikaner State, talks about existence of numerous places of worships belonging to various gods and goddesses. The \textit{gajal} and other sources refer to two kinds of places of worships, \textit{devara/dehara} and \textit{thaan}. Devara is a properly constructed temple with a regular priest to perform worship, whereas \textit{thaan} is a place of worship either dug in the wall of the house or a platform like structure which was small and low in height. The people could construct such \textit{thaans} in their houses or in their locality. The construction of temple, on the other hand, required large amount of money, which could not be arranged without royal patronage or help from economically affluent social groups. Existence of numerous \textit{thaans} of Gaga in the Bikaner State in the first decade of the eighteenth century suggests Gaga’s popularity among common masses and the distance the ruling Rajputs and other dominant sections had maintained from the cultic worship of Gaga. The \textit{thaans} had a symbol of snake engraved on it or on a stone slab, which indicated that Gaga by seventeenth century was considered as a snake god and had not yet acquired the status of a god encompassing the powers to look after the general or spiritual welfare of the people.

During the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, the personality and character of Gaga as a folk-deity began to acquire new dimensions, as is evident from the iconography and literature produced on him during this period. Now the \textit{thaans}, along with the symbol of snake, began to house the image-engraved on a stone slab- of Gaga riding a horse with a spear in the hand. Late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed the emergence of print culture as an important medium of propagating a more recently fashioned image of Gaga. The \textit{bhajans} and verses composed in praise of Gaga, which were so far transmitted

\textsuperscript{134} Shri Udaychand; “Bikaner Ki Gazal” by V.S. 1765, \textit{Parampara}, Part 108-109, 1995
from one generation to other orally, were now brought before the people in print. With this began an attempt to write religious treatises on the glory of Goga on the pattern of Brahminical deities. Even the titles of these treatises were copied from the popular Hindu religious scriptures. Hence, the songs and verses of Goga were compiled under the titles of *Goga Puran* and *Goga Chalisa* etc. Wide circulation of these publications not only popularized the cult of Goga, but also transformed his image from mere snake god into *Dukh hari* and *Mangal kari* (one who removes sorrows and does good to everyone). The representation of Goga in the popular literature (low priced material published in the form of booklets widely circulated and sold around the places of worships and fairs) as one of the Brahminical gods who took special care of the Brahmins and cows is evident not only in the verses composed but also in the preface to these booklets and their introductions.\(^{135}\) The language used for composing the devotional songs, it appears, had been simplified by the beginning of the twentieth century to make it easily understood. Along with simplified Marwari, modern Hindi was also introduced for the propagation of the Goga myths. Complex forms of story narration and versified compositions gave way to short and simple forms of narration. Such songs, easy to remember, must have facilitated the popularization of the Goga’s myths.

In most of these modern versions, Gorakhnath is shown blessing the birth of Goga, as a gift of God to his mother Bachhal. Goga is shown to have scuttled an attempt at poisoning him by a nurse immediately after his birth. In one of the verses Goga’s four associates and even his horse are shown as incarnations of gods thereby suggesting that

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\(^{135}\) Ratan Singh Mahipal, *Shree Jahar Bhajanmala* published by Satyanarayan Mor.
some gods themselves worked as his bodyguards. \(^{136}\) The physical representation of Goga in such songs and verses is very similar to the image of Brahminalical god Shiva. He is shown to have chain in one hand and a wooden hand rest (Kharag) in the other. Snakes are shown to have formed chains around his neck. Further, he is called ‘killer of the enemy’. \(^{137}\) Lord Shiva is also known as the destroyer of enemies.

In modern popular perception, Teja is also regarded as a Hindu god and fits into a general framework of *bhakti* \(^{138}\) Like Goga and Pabu, Teja is also depicted as a martial hero and deity who keeps his promise and saves cows. Paucity of sources makes it difficult for us to trace stages of Teja’s deification. An analysis of the myths about his heroic acts and subsequent death, however, suggest that Teja belonged to an ordinary peasant Jat family and must have been deified by commoners. Sacrificing his life for the protection of cows and cattle, it seems, must have been the cause of his initial deification. According to a popular myth, \(^{139}\) Tahar, Teja’s father and Lachma, his mother, worshiped the snake king Basak for the birth of a son. Teja was born of the wish granted by snake king Basak. His parents fixed his marriage to the daughter of Raimal, a resident of Paner village, whom they had met on their way to a pilgrimage. Teja did not remember the event, as he was an infant at the time of marriage. Owing to some personal differences, Teja’s parents kept his marriage as secret. Only Teja’s sister-in-law (elder brother’s wife) was told about his marriage. After several years, one day when Teja was ploughing his field, his sister-in-law was late in bringing food for him. An argument followed between the two and Teja’s sister-in-law revealed the secret of his marriage and insisted that he should bring his wife

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\(^{136}\) Shri Prithvi Raj Ji; *Sampurna Goga Puran*; Meerut pustak Bhandar; year of publication not given, P.273

\(^{137}\) Ratan Singh Mahipal, *Shree Jahar Bhajanmala* published by Satyanarayan mor; P.35

\(^{138}\) D. Sila Khan; *Conversion and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pir and the Ismailies in Rajasthan*; Delhi, Manohar, 1997

\(^{139}\) Dr. Pushpa Bhati; *Rajasthan Ke Lok Devta Avam Lok Sahitya*; Bikaner; 1996; PP.99-103)
to manage his household work. Teja found out the details of his marriage from his mother and started for Paner, the village of his in-laws. On his way to Paner, Teja met a Gurjari woman whose cows had been stolen by Mers. Teja promised to help her and decided to go to his wife only after bringing back Gurjari’s cows. Teja, after fighting with Mers, brought back the cows, but was grievously injured. Subsequently, he died of snakebite while lying on the ground in injured state.

Jats and Gurjars of village Kharnal and Paner subsequently made his than and began to worship him. The snake, by biting Teja, it is believed, had transferred his powers to him giving him ability to cure snakebite. The myth suggests that anyone who died protecting cattle was held in high esteem by people and was deified. Since, the traditions associated with Teja dominantly involve two communities-Jats and Gurjars, it may be stated that his initial deification took place among these two communities. Subsequently, new myths were coined involving characters from other castes and communities, which suggest the extension of the Teja cult among other social groups.

Popularization of various myths about the local deities was instrumental in raising them to the status of god. The forms of presentation of the myths, involvement of people such as yogi bhagats, bards and bhopas in this exercise using the already existing network of communication and creating new ones are important contributory factors in the process of deification. The priests, storytellers, genealogists, and the ordinary lower caste followers of these deities formed a loose community of believers of these cults. The methods adopted by these categories of people involved public recitation of songs and

140 According to some colonial scholars, the Mers belonging to Meena community were known for stealing and creating disturbances. The Mers had a sizeable presence in Marwar. We also find reference to them in writings of Col. James Todd. See; Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan; Part II; P.889
verses, presentation in the form of play and *swang* and recitation of *phar*. Moreover, a complex network of kinship, marriage, pilgrimage, and economic and political exchange had linked the communities with one another. Such linkages worked as vehicles for the dissemination of cultural and religious information.

To answer the question as to why the subordinate social groups, and particularly the lower castes, deified these warrior-figures and began worshiping them as *lok devta*, it is imperative to have a glimpse into the nature of social hierarchies and power relationships in the western Rajasthan society of pre-modern times. The emergence of the centralized and oppressive Rajput state system coupled with the domination of Brahmanical ideology effectively strengthened a socio-political system in which the peasants, pastoralist groups, social tribes and other marginal sections had to constantly face the brunt of state power and burden of taxes. These man-made factors aggravated the harshness of life in a natural environment characterized by the overpowering presence of the Thar desert. Struggle for survival in these conditions was manifested in religious domain in the form of widespread faith in cults, deities and saints. Open and violent forms of protest against the oppressive powers of the state was not always an easy and feasible option.

The cults of folk-deities and other forms of popular religion should not be treated as 'superstitious' beliefs. When the peasants and pastoral communities practised these cults, they, at the same time, evolved their own understanding of the world around them of the ways in which this could be transformed. Popular belief in these cults clearly reflected the images of heroes and villians that were prevalent in the society. The cults of the folk-deities were integral part of the ideological apparatus of the common people. In

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141 A type of play where the life history of a deity is narrated through combination of songs and storytelling
the hierarchically organized socio-political order in which the inequalities of caste and class were the defining features and the oppressive power of the state an inescapable reality, the oppressed groups adopted various forms of material resistance to the state authorities. In the late 17\textsuperscript{th} century, there were many independent peasant uprisings in northern India against the Mughal state and the Rajput chiefs who acted as its pillars.\textsuperscript{142} Although, evidence of the acts of open resistance by peasants, shepherds, and marginal groups during the late medieval period is lacking, it is clear that these groups may have adopted different forms of material resistance, if not an open rebellion, to oppose the inroads of the centralized state. More important, however, were the ideological forms of resistance, one dimension of which was the popular belief in the cults of folk-deities. To the oppressed groups, Goga, Pabu, Ramdev, Teja and other such historical figures were their heroes and the Rajput rulers were seen as oppressors. In most of the stories of these heroes, the Rajput chiefs have been portrayed as tyrants and oppressors.

\textsuperscript{142} Irfan Habib, Agrarian System of Mughal India 1556-1707, OUP first published, 1963, second revised edition, 1999, last chapter-IX.