2.1 Profile of the State

2.1.1 History

Rajasthan finds it historical presence way back during the Indus Valley Civilization around 3000 – 1700 BC that has been evidenced from the advanced level of urban development excavations found in Bikaner region of Rajasthan that dates back to Harappan Ages (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005). This region is also known as the Rajputana, after the martial community that ruled for centuries. In fact other than the ruler of Bharatpur who was a Jat, all the other rulers of this region hailed from the Rajput caste (Harlan, 1992).

This land has been inhabited and ruled by the martial communities such as the Chauhans, Guhilots/Gehlots of Mewar. The Chauhans ruled from seventh to twelfth century, followed by the Gehlots of Mewar who took control of the warring tribes. The other prolific states here were Marwar, Jaipur, Bundi, Kota, Bharatpur and Alwar (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Harlan, 1992). All the other states were subsidiaries of these states. The entire region accepted the British Treaty of Subordinate Alliance in 1818 which completely secured the interests of the princes, but completely ousted that of the general citizens which created a disenchantment among the commoners that remains to date (Harlan, 1992). The 1857 uprising was instrumental in binding the common men and women to identify the potential and eventual uniting and their participation in the freedom struggle of the nation from the British rule. After getting independence from the
British rule, the region over a period of eight years starting from March 1948 to November 1956, integrated the Rajputana into one union composite presently known as Rajasthan (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Rudolph & Rudolph, 1984). The Hindi name *raja-sthan* literally translates in English into *kings abode*. This is a state that was formulated in its present form post Indian Independence on the 1st of November 1956 by bringing together erstwhile nineteen princely states and two chieftainships of Rajputanas and one British administered territory of Ajmer-Mewar (Mathur, 2004; Rudolph & Rudolph, 1968, 1984). And the word *Raj-put* literally means *king’s son*. It is in this derivative understanding that all Rajput’s are descendants of kings and have royal blood if not princes themselves, that gives them a sense of pride and arrogance in their inheritance (Harlan, 1992; Rudolph & Rudolph, 1984).

Rajasthan is a state in the North-western part of India spread over a total land area of 342,239 square kilometre, making it the largest state area-wise of India (Mathur, 2004). It achieved its current formulation under the States Reorganization Act, 1956 and it is spread over a total land area of 342,239 square kilometre with a population density of 68,621,012 people according to the Census 2011 report. At present, Rajasthan has 32 districts which are divided into 241 tehsils, 183 municipalities, 237 Panchayat Samities, and 9184 villages (Census Report, 2011).

2.1.2 Culture – caste, customs, ritual, festivals.
As defined in the Cambridge dictionary, Culture is the way of life, particularly the general customs and beliefs of a group of people at a particular time. The music, arts, customs or in other words the culture of a particular region is also influenced by the geographical location of the place (Harlan, 1992). In Rajasthan, the Rajput, the Mughal and the Maratha rules’ influence on the art and music is evident from the artefacts of the past exhibited in the current time (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Harlan, 1992; Mathur, 2004).

According to the Census 2011 report, Rajasthan is mostly inhabited by Hindus at 88.49 percent, Muslims at 9.07 percent, 1.27 percent Sikhs and 0.91 percent Jains and 0.14 percent Christians and others of the total population.

The rituals, customs and traditional practices in Rajasthan are predominantly guided by the Vedas. The people in Rajasthan follow the Vedic rites and rituals for almost every ceremony and as the Vedas prescribe everyone practicing it has to perform many Sanskaras from their birth till death. Broadly there are more than dozen of them to be practiced over one’s whole lifespan. They are divided in the three major life events of an individual, when they are born, when they get married and when they die (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

2.1.2.1. Caste

Caste system is an important element for understanding the social factors in India which consequently influences the economic, political, physical, and spiritual life of an Indian. The people are seen in different light according to the hierarchical positions they hold and the roles are assigned to each individual according to the caste he/she belongs to (Berreman, 1960; Olcott, 1944; Porter, 1895; Shah, 2002). However the concept of caste has befuddled many scholarly
attempts to understand and explain it in simple terms, both among Indian as well as global scholars (Porter, 1895; Shah, 2002). During the British rule, many sociologists and anthropologists endeavoured to do so (See E.A.H Blunt’s 1931 work that explores caste system in the northern India).

According to Ambedkar (1987) the origin of caste system in India is laden on the Varnashram concept of Hindu social order which does not consider the single entity of the person but the social identity of the class or Varna he/she belongs to (as cited in Shah, 2002, 84). Ambedkar (1987) further elaborates that there were originally four Varna or classes as delineated in the Manusmriti, which were Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. These categories were ranked higher and lower according to which part of God it originated from such as the Brahmin came from the mouth, Kshatriya from the arms, Vaishyas from the thigh and Shudra from the feet, so the hierarchy among them automatically follows from their positioning in the divine order. Ambedkar (1987) pointed out the fifth order that was visible in modern times namely Panchamas or Untouchables. He also called them the Dalits derived from the Sanskrit word dalita that literally means the broken or the oppressed.

E.A.H Blunt, a sociologist and an Indian administrative servicemen worked during the British period in India and published one of his seminal work in 1931 where he explored the caste dynamics in two northern places in India, namely Agra and Oudh. He pointed out that caste system varied from one place to another and there was no standardized model for it. He indicated that a ‘spirit of exclusiveness’ (Blunt, 2010, 1) does permeate among all although there are no uniform do’s and don’ts for everyone as in some groups widows remarriages are allowed while in others it is not; accepting food is ok among some groups while
others strictly prohibit taking from any other caste. The notion of polluting others by touch and polluting by mere proximity or presence is also noted. Commensality is not encouraged among different caste groups and heredity is a principal characteristic of one’s caste (Blunt, 2010).

Mason Olcott (1944) in his attempt to understand caste system prevalent in India identified five primary features of it, namely endogamy, compelling religious sanctions, hierarchy based on birth and reincarnation, social-economic interdependence, and the outcaste substratum (Olcott, 1944, 648-649). He explained that according to the caste system practiced ardently among the Indian population, marriage as a social institution is carried out only among same community or clan or Jati which ensures that caste is passed on through heredity; the activities partaken by each individual is according to the assigned role to that particular caste since generations; and the Untouchables are the most downtrodden section of the community who are destined to a life of service towards the higher class people in the society.

The vantage point determines how one aspect is observed and interpreted in the social order, for a Dalit his point of reference would be servitude and obedience while for a Brahmin’s point of view would be to demand services (Shah, 2002).

It is also to be remembered that Mahatma Gandhi who followed the Sanatan Hinduism was staunchly against untouchability and considered them as Harijans meaning God’s (Hari) children (jan). It needs to be understood that Ambedkar and Gandhi debated on this subject for years and the former considered shunning Hinduism altogether and adopting Buddhism as the way out from the casteism nexus in Indian society while Gandhi believed in
shunning the ill-practice of untouchability to be the solution of doing away from casteism in India (Shah, 2010).

As cautioned by Ambedkar (1987), ‘you cannot build anything on the foundations of caste … [it] will crack and will never be a whole’ (Shah, 2002, 102), holds true for present state of India where caste-based differences and a renewed zeal in Hindutva (“Hindutva and the Dalit question”, 2015) is trying to reinforce the older way of lifestyle.

2.1.2.2. Customs and rituals

In case of customs involving birth of a child, there are around eight ceremonies or Sanskaras that are observed to be followed in a Rajasthani household. Beginning with the Garbhahdhan ceremony which is performed after the bride conceives for the first time. Only close family members of the bride and groom are informed and a small ceremony of song and dance is observed among the family members. Outsiders are not informed at this time as it is considered that someone may put a bad omen on the pregnant women which could cause complications for the pregnant women (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

Around the eight month of pregnancy the Athmaasaceremony is performed wherein all the relative assemble in the girl’s residence in order to pray to their Istyadev or family deity to keep the mother and the child safe and healthy and for a uncomplicated delivery. The ceremony is highlighted by the nine non-stop songs that eulogise the mother and child and their upcoming bond of togetherness. The expecting woman is treated like a precious gem and loads of gifts are given to her. In the ninth month, she is invited by as many relatives as possible for dinner or lunch and fed every possible delicacy as a means of
blessing and gratitude for carrying the weight of the child and taking care of it (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

When the child is born, the ceremony of Jatakarma is performed where the baby is fed honey and ghee, symbolising that the child has a speech as pure and sweet as nectar. If the baby is a boy child, it was announced by thumping copper plate in a celebratory mode, while if the baby is a girl child there is no such announcement and there is grief and sorrow reflected in the atmosphere where the mother is seen apologising for bringing misfortune into the house and the husband and his family looking down disappointed and down on the woman for the same (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Mathur, 2004).

After a few days of the birth of the child, particularly boy child, the Panghat Poojan or Kua Poojan is performed where the women in the family and the neighbourhood women escort the mother of the child to a nearby well, where they offer prayers to the water body. They make a procession through the route where they sing songs in praises of the gods and goddesses. This is a Rajasthani tradition and has no Vedic precedence (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

This occasion is followed by Namkaran ceremony where the child gets his name which is performed either on the eleventh day or at completion of hundred days of the birth. The family priest is invited to perform the naming/christening ceremony and offer prayers to the gods for blessing the child. The women sing songs and offer good wishes to the child (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

Then comes the Annaprashan ceremony where the infant upon reaching his sixth month is for the first time introduced to solid food by feeding him cooked
rice with milk and sugar known as kheer, curd and ghee and honey as his first meal (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

*Mundanor* tonsuring is an important ceremony performed when the boy is two or three years old. It is believed that by tonsuring the child gets rid of his past life problems and is able to start afresh in his new life. This is a significant custom performed in their ancestral temples (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

Then comes the *Upanayan* ceremony which is performed during the boy’s eighth or ninth year where he is taken to an Acharya or Guru or ancestral priest of the family for initiation into a life of a hermit/ Brahmachari. The child is clad in an ascetic cloth and a sacred thread is hung over his left shoulder and diagonally across his right arm and he is required to wear it at all times throughout his life. This ceremony is conducted only with the Brahmin caste children (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

**Marriage** is considered as one of the most important Sanskaras of life in Rajasthani culture, and regarded as compulsory for every able-bodied person. The preferred choice is an arranged marriage where the parents of both boy and the girl decide on the proposal and match the horoscopes of the girl and the boy in order to check how many *Gunasor* terrestrial traits are compatible among the couple. The proposals are brought by the family priests or someone of that level. No particular age limit is visible in a Rajasthani marriage, children as young as 5-10 years of age are married off, despite ban on it under the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929. In fact, among the Sahariya tribesmen, marriages are fixed even before the child is born and the children when they come to the
world have to abide by their parents promises, no matter what (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Harlan, 1992).

There are certain customs with regards to marriage ceremony in Rajasthan which are common as well as unique to the place. Customs like the marriage ceremony itself that has many elements such *Sagai, Tika, Toran-bandana, Saptapadi* and *Gauna* are present in other parts of the country as well. However, there is still prevalence of polygamy among many castes and tribes of Rajasthan among Hindus which is unique to this place. Although Inter-religious marriages are not the preferred practice but we find exceptions here. Inter-caste marriages are also not the preferred option but if done the couple may have to leave the village and live separately in another place. Even dowry system is quite prevalent in this belt. Rajasthan maybe is considered as one of the most advanced states with regards to their Divorce and remarriage norms (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Harlan, 1992).

**Marriage ceremony**

From the time of engagement till the event of the marriage ceremony, there are a bunch of other rituals that are traditionally observed in a Rajasthani household. Such as *Sagai* which is the process of engagement ceremony which takes place immediately after the priest informs about the matching horoscopes and the bride’s father sends a coconut along with other gifts to the groom father signifying that the marriage is finalised. The coconut is considered most auspicious for this occasion (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Harlan, 1992).

The next ceremony is the *Tika or Tilak* ceremony which is an auspicious date selected by the family priest where the members from the bride’s family visit
the groom’s house and perform the ceremony. The bridegroom is smeared with a vermilion mark on his forehead and token gifts like clothes, jewelleries, sweets, etc. are given to him. The attending family members are also treated with a grand meal. In some caste the attendees are given a small dosage of opium to mark the occasion as finalised and in case due to some untoward event if the marriage was not solemnised, these attendees would be expected to share that Tilak ceremony did take place earlier (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

The next event is on the day of the wedding known as Toran Bandana which is a colourful ceremony performed when the bridegroom arrives into the bride’s house riding a horse with a sword in his hand. He has to tap the wooden crown (called Toran) atop the main entrance of the bride’s house with his sword seven times. The mother-in-law then welcomes him by applying curd and mustard on his forehead (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Harlan, 1992).

Finally the ceremony of Saptapadi is the actual wedding ritual performed under a canopy of decorated stage with a fire burning in centre called havan directly under the starlit sky where the bridegroom is offered the hand of the bride and takes the oath of marriage in the name of God. They are required to walk around the havan seven times, the first three rounds are led by the bride and the last four rounds are led by the groom and all the while they have to chants some verses from the Vedas that the priests prompts to them. This signifies the brides transfer from her natal family into the groom’s family (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Harlan, 1992).

Rajasthan like many other regions in the country has a prominent Dowry system, so much so that in the case of sex-selective abortions, dowries are
considered one of the most crucial factors. The bride’s family is expected to offer expensive gifts to the tune of exorbitant amounts, most often way beyond their reach to the bridegroom’s family for accepting their daughter for marriage into their family. It has been often observed that the parents of the bride have to take huge amount of loans for the wedding which breaks their economic upkeep forever and make them penurious (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Mathur, 2004).

**Divorce** is one aspect that has seen historically broadmindedness among the Rajasthani people, most prominently among the lower castes and Rajput, although the Brahmin and Vaishya community did not practice it frequently. The ground for divorce by either party could be on any grounds ranging from mutual antipathy, mental and physical disparity, adjustmental issues, and wilful desertion, convicted for crimes, drunkenness, impotency and insanity. There are evidence of divorce records as early as eighteenth century. The wife has the right to take back any property she brought with her during her marriage (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005). Although as Mathur (2004) points out violence against women is chronically high in Rajasthan for some decades now and it is delusionary to believe that the women have the freedom to divorce and also ask for her property back.

Keeping this in context, another customary right is discussed here known as **Nata Pratha** practiced predominantly in Rajasthan but has found its distorted usage in other parts such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar as well (Bhat, Sen & Pradhan, 2005; Mann & Mann, 1989; Mathur, 2004) which was designed initially for empowering the married women wherein she could leave her husband if dissatisfied and go back to her parent’s home or directly move in with another man if she wanted to and would not require her parents’ or her
present husbands’ permission, only such a remarriage would require the present husband to pay a compensation (Jhagda or Jhagra) to the earlier husband as decided by the village panchayat (Bhat, et al., 2005; Mann & Mann, 1989). In current distorted form the pratha is associated with a bride price the Jhagda or Jhagra of the woman without her willingness or intent. The father or the husband forces the women to remarry for the bride price and a series of exploitation begins for the woman (Bhat, et al. 2005). The Nata Pratha has become a tool of exploitation and control of women by their male relatives, mostly the husband or father by threatening to sell them off and bring another one from the marketplace among some of the Rajasthani communities (Rege, 2000). The women moving in through the Nata pratha are not considered as the lawful wife but are treated like bonded labour who have to accede to whatsoever the man wants her to do in order to stay under his roof in one shelter and not get resold multiple times (Rege, 2000).

Coming to the last circle of a life cycle, Death has certain ceremonies that need to be observed according to the Vedic norms and Rajasthani follow three funeral ceremonies, namely Antyeshthi, Tiya and Mausar (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

We should also remember Sati Pratha or self-immolation of wives on the pyre of their deceased husband is a proud culture of the Rajput women which is now extinct due to the ban by the government (Harlan, 1992). There is need to understand that Sati is not the act or the commitment but the becoming of one (Harlan, 1992, p. 115). Sati means a ‘good woman’ who is a pativrata(committed to care for her husband with unwavering faith and honesty and prays to die before her husband does) and when due to unfortunate turn of
events the husband dies before her, she becomes sativrata (die on the husband’s pyre and achieve goddesses status and take care of the family from there) (Harlan, 1992). This was predominant among Rajput women and till date they offer prayers to Satimata of their ancestry and woman are extremely proud of it, although do not support to do so owing to the governmental bans and consequently jeopardizing the family’s safety and security (Harlan, 1992).

Antyeshthi is the process of carrying out of the funeral procession to the crematorium. When an old person dies, the procession is led by a musical band signifying a celebratory tone for a fulfilling life lived by the deceased. The eldest son or a near male relative lights the funeral pyre. The bereaved family mourns for twelve days. Professional weepers also known as Rudaalis are invited to cry for the dead person. This custom is typical of Rajasthan alone.

Tiya is ritual of the family members to go to the cremation ground to collect the ashes on the third day of burning the pyre. Upon collection and bringing the ashes in a vessel, the family and relatives gather in the deceased person’s house for performing a havan where the priest offers prayers hymning Vedic chants for the peace and solace of the departed soul.

Mausar is another custom typical of Rajasthan where on the twelfth day of death, the family throws a grand feast in honour of the dead. Most of the time, the entire village and more are invited for this event and it has been observed that numerous families actually have to take hefty loans in order to perform this event. The young people are gradually doing away with this practice as it puts the family under debt, so there have been numerous instances where the old
people have thrown such feast while still alive. The state government has banned the practice as it puts unbearable pressure on the existing family.

### 2.1.2.3 Fairs and Festivals

Rajasthan is full of colourful fairs and festivals, almost all throughout the year (Bhatnagar, 1988; Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005). One of the attractions of Rajasthan is these colourful festivities and fairs observed and enjoyed by masses to commemorate certain gods & goddesses, revere their ancient heroes, cherish their livestock, and revere their region and so on (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Carstairs, 1961).

In Rajasthan, out of the majority population of 88.49 percent Hindus, we find 13.4 percent of them are tribal or Adivasi spread all over the state (Census, 2011) and they perform and observe some typical ceremonies and rituals that are celebrated since ages. Many of them have mythological significance (Harlan, 1992), such as the **Annakoot Festival** that is observed in the Shrinathji Temple in Nathdwara, near Udaipur. This festival commemorates the victory of child Krishna when He protected the villagers of Govardhan from the wrath of God Indra. It is also known as Govardhan Puja. Anna-koot literally translates to grain-mountain, wherein the courtyard of the temple is filled with a mountain of food erected from huge piles of baked rice. The temple gates are opened to usher in hundreds of singing and dancing Bhils who are allowed to take away all the food which they consider as the blessings of Kalia Baba. This food is considered as blessing and used also for medicinal purposes in case of ailments, it is parcelled to family and friends as sacred gifts (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Carstairs, 1961). Then there is the **Adivasi Fair** held at Baneshwar in
Dungarpur district, the location is a calm delta formed by the rivers Som and Mahi. It is considered to be the biggest fair/mela of adivasis across India with tens of thousands of people thronging the place for the holy dip in the river Som. Baneshwar fair takes place around the English month of February while in Hindu calendar it is the Shukla Ekadasi of Magh and it is almost a week-long fair. Baneshwar, the name is taken from the holy Shiva linga of the Shiv temple in Dungarpur and alternately Baneshwar also means *master of delta* in the vagdi language. This fair combines two fairs, first one is observed to commemorate Lord Shiva who is also known as Baneshwar Mahadev and the other half of the fair is to pay tribute and celebrate the final construction of the Vishnu temple by Jankunwar who was the daughter-in-law of MavjiMaharaj. The tribal communities, namely the Bhil’s from regions like Udaipur, Dungarpur and Banswara come to this fair most earnestly every year (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Carstairs, 1961).

Rajasthan has a fair or is in a celebratory mood in some part of the region almost every month of the year (Harlan, 1992), **Banganga Fair** is a fair organised on the banks of the stream in a small historical town called Bairath which is about 11 kms from Jaipur. This fair is held during the months of April-May or on the Purnima of Baisakh in veneration of Arjuna’ power, the strongest among the Pandavas in Mahabharata who is supposed to have brought into life this stream where the believers take a sacred dip in it. **Jeen Mata Fair** is another very important fair that pays its tribute to Jeen Mata, a local deity with an eight-faced statue placed in Adabla Girmala village of Rivasi in Sikar district, where two oil lamps are lit at all times without fail. It is believed in Rajasthani culture that unless one has paid their respect to Jeen Mata in this
temple, one has missed out on something life-altering and path breaking in their lives. Rajasthani’ belief is that every wish of a devotee is fulfilled once s/he offers their prayers in front of this deity. The fair is organised around Durga Puja every year (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

**Kaila Devi Fair** is another important fair that is held in Kaila Devi Village which is 24 kms to the south-west of Karauli district. The devotees come from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and other places to offer their prayers to the Goddess who is considered a protector. Kaila Devi is another form of Goddess Durga. Devout followers offer the *kanak-dandoti* which is a form of obeisance where the devotee travels a distance of about 15-20 kms lying prostrate and marking the tip of his/her outstretched hands over their head as the point for forward movement. It naturally takes days for devotees to travel the distance and some of them perform it without eating or drinking while some make halts and eat and drink nominally in order to sustain, as they cannot get up from the position of lying flat on their stomach (“Kaila Devi Temple”, n.d.). The fair is held from Chaitra Krishna 12 to Chaitra Shukla 12 in the Hindu calendar which comes around the English month of March-April every year (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

Another regionally significant fair is the **Karni Mata Fair** held twice a year at Nokha in Bikaner district. The first fair is celebrated over a fortnight during the Navratras beginning in Chaitra Ekam to Chaitra Shukla Dashmi which falls around the March-April month of English calendar. The second fair is held in the Navratri from Ashvin Shukla Ekam to Ashvin Shukla Dashmi which is held around September-October of English calendar (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005). The local deity is considered an incarnation of Goddess Durga, and is supposed to
have lived around the 15th century serving mankind throughout her live. She is considered the patron of the Bikaner royalty and is revered by the locals. Another interesting fact is that this temple is also known as the Rat temple due to the presence of numerous rodents that roam freely in the compound of the temple. It is believed that one of Karni Mata’s child died and she brought him back to life in the form of a mouse, so the rats are considered holy and sighting a white rat is considered highly auspicious though rare (“Karni Mata Fair”, n.d.).

Sheetla Mata Fair is another important fair held in Seel-ki-Doongri near Chaksu, a tehsil in Jaipur district during Chaitra Krishna Ashtami i.e. March-April every year. This village is named after the goddess. Sheetla in Sanskrit means ‘one who cools’ (Gupta, 1999) and Sheetla Mata is considered as the incarnate of Goddess Durga. In this form she is the goddess who fends away or cures smallpox, sores, ghouls, pustules and other diseases. There is a shrine of the goddess on top of a hillock and the structure is built by Maharaja Madho Singh of Jaipur. Devotees come to the shrines to offer their prayers and seek her blessings to keep themselves as well as their families and relatives safe and healthy (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

A significant fair commemorating courage and devotion of wife towards her husband is Rani Sati Mela held in Jhunjhunu which is celebrated with great reverence (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005). There are varying information on the actual date of the occurrence of the event, however the story goes that once a teenaged girl called Narayani Bai while going towards her husband’s home right after her marriage was attacked by her husband’s enemy. There was a fierce fight where she is also believed to have fought valiantly however her husband
was killed in the fight. Narayani upon realising that her husband was no more asked the caretaker to arrange for her immolation upon her husband’s pyre. She told the caretaker to carry their ashes on the horse and wherever he stops, a temple should be built in that site. The caretaker did exactly as he was instructed and rode the horse as far and wide as it wanted to go and stopped at reaching Jhunjhunu which house the first Mata Sati temple (Sen, 2002). She is the first bride of the thirteen brides in the Jalan lineage to self-immolate themselves which took place on the Margshirsh Krishna Navami and the last Sati in this lineage took place on the Bhadrapada Amavasya which are the two days when the Rani Sati Fairs are held till date in Jhunjhunu (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005; Sen, 2002).

Celebrations are also carried to honour and commemorate the ancient heroes of the region with fairs such Hero Worship Fairs and Veerpuri Fair where they pay their homages to ancient Rajasthani heroes like Gogaji, Ramdeoji, Ramdevji, Tejaji and Jaswant Singh and so on (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

There are fairs celebrating the animal lives such as the Pushkar Mela or Camel Fair held on Kartik Purnima which falls around the months of October and November. There are tens of thousands of animals like Camels, cows, buffaloes and goats that are brought here for exhibition, sale and purchase. Pushkar Mela is also popular for its pilgrimage significance for the Hindus who consider taking a dip in the lake is holy and helps cure many ailments and sins (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005). Other fairs like Mallinath Fair, Nagaur Fair, and Elephant Fair are specially organised to celebrate the animal lives in the region, various kinds of games, and competitions are held to entertain the audience. Buying and
selling of cattle are also undertaken during these fairs (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

Desert Festival of Jaisalmer, Summer Festival of Mount Abu, Mewar Festival, Marwar Festival, Jodhpur Festival, etc. are other regional celebrations that are popular among local and foreign tourists (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

Other regular Hindu festivals like Holi, Diwali, Dussehra are also devoutly celebrated by the Rajasthani people. Along with these festivals, Rajasthani people are famous for celebrating two unique festivals called Gangaur and Teej. Gangaur is a festival to celebrate harvest, monsoon and marital bliss. This festival begins one day after Holi and is observed over a period of 16 days. The word Gangaur is derived from two Sanskrit words, Gana that symbolises Lord Shiva and Gaur which stands for Goddess Gauri or Parvati who symbolizes Saubhagya or marital bliss, thus Gangaur means celebration of ‘divine marriage bonds’ (Gold, 1997). It has religious and cultural significance and is celebrated with great fervour and zeal. The unmarried young girls and married women alike fast throughout the 16 days with some nominal foods taken during the evenings. The unmarried girls offer their prayers to get a loving, strong and honest husband like Lord Shiva and the married women pray for their husband’s good health and happy conjugal life forever. Elaborate processions carrying idols of the gods is taken around every afternoon inside the town; the Jaipur and Udaipur processions are a riot of colourfully dressed women and people from distant villages travel all the way to the city to enjoy the festivity, there is also a Fair organised during the period. At the end of the 16th day, the procession ends into visarjan of the idol in a well/pond/lake as per the availability of water sources.
The other significant festival is Teej which is celebrated three times a year in Rajasthan. It is celebrated during the months of July-August – September. With the advent of monsoon, the parched lands are appeased giving relief to people and they celebrate it as Haryali Teej, falls on the third day of Shraavan. Next is KajariTeej which comes on the third day of the dark moon night of Bhadrapada while Hartalika Teej is the third day of the bright half of the Bhadrapada. Women offer prayers to Goddess Parvati for protection and good health for their spouses, children and their own self. The most colourful Teej fair is organised in Jaipur town and people from all the adjoining places visit the town to enjoy the procession of caparisoned elephants, camels and horses and such grand exhibitions.

2.1.3 Social System – family structure, kinship, etc.

According to the Oxford dictionary ‘social system’ is ‘a set of interdependent relationships, customs, and institutions that constitute a society’. One of the prominent sociologist, Talcott Parsons in his seminal work *The Social System* in 1951 described social structures, social systems, social action and such concepts in a complex abstract manner. However, understanding it in a simplistic manner, social system to him means the plurality of individual actors interacting with each other as per their common norms and meanings, culturally and sociologically (Turner, 1991). Families, kinships, school, neighbours, and such other daily interacting agents in a person’s lives are part of the social system one lives in.

Rajasthan is a traditional patriarchal society with certain unwavering norms and values that everyone must live by in their lifetime. The family as a unit is taken
extremely seriously and the joint family system is a preferred practice (Mathur, 2004). In Rajasthan, joint or undivided family signals a patrilineal group of members where all the men are bound to each other by blood, this may include two, three and more generations living in the same house under the same roof with one single kitchen to everyone, sharing joint land and other property that is handed over via ancestry (Singer & Cohen, 1968). In the rural areas, they even live in extended family structure where the cousins and other relatives of the patriarch are also living in the neighbourhood (Harlan, 1992; Kaur, 2004; Mathur, 2005). Wherever there are nuclear families, the migration for economic advances is considered as an integral factor and is undesirable and believed to be disintegrating the ideal joint family system (Kaur, 2004; Singer & Cohen, 1968).

In Rajasthan, the norms and values are heavily guarded by the elders, of the family as well as the community, the men are considered the decision-makers, protector, bread-winners and the women are supposed to perform the roles of catering to the domestic needs of the family members by cooking, cleaning, child caring, fetching water, fetching firewood, etc. (Agarwal, 1997, 2003; Colfer, 2013; Ghosh, 2015).

2.1.4 Living Pattern

According to the Census 2011, most of the Indian population is still living in villages at 69 percent of the total population, and in case of Rajasthan 75.11 percent of the inhabitants are based in rural settings. Upon deeper look at the provisional report, the population mobility trend reflects an inverse proportional
rise of 1.5 percentile in Urban with exact decrease of percentile in Rural data in the national level, while same inverse increase and decrease of 3.35 percentile is observed in the mobility trend of the population in Rajasthan in the same period of 2001-2011 (Census, 2011) as reflected in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Population Mobility in India and Rajasthan (2001&2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Rajasthan</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Rajasthan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001 Urban</td>
<td>27.81</td>
<td>72.91</td>
<td>31.16</td>
<td>68.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 Urban</td>
<td>23.39</td>
<td>76.61</td>
<td>24.89</td>
<td>75.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Report, 2011, Government of India

The official report of intra-district, inter-district and inter-state migration trend of the 2011 data is still awaited, however if we look at some of the earlier year reports we can cautiously extrapolate that search for employment opportunities is a major factor with almost 52.7 percent moving to urban location in the period of 2007-2008 nationally (Bhagat, 2014, p.16).

Another significant trend among the Rajasthani community of Marwari’s, Rajputs, or any other caste is their sense of belonging to their roots which is manifested from the behaviours exhibited by the migrated person/s, even when they are settled somewhere else they would contribute to the development of
their village infrastructure, constantly renovate their ancestral house even if no one from the family get to live there beside during vacations or for some family ceremony; these actions may also be considered ostentatious by some, nevertheless improvement of the village infrastructures does take place.

The largest State in land mass Rajasthan has a geographically diverse terrain from lofty rocks, rolling sand dunes, sweltering heat to freezing cold, fertile plains and deep dense forests, it has it all. The Aravalli ranges divide the State into South-East and North-West regions. The North –West part of the state comprises approximately the two-third of it and is covered in sand dunes and deserts, districts like Jaisalmer, Bikaner, and Jodhpur are part of it while the eastern region has fertile tracts (Bhatt & Bhargava, 2005).

2.2 Factors for setting the SEZ in the location

Mahindra World City Jaipur is spread over 3000 acres of land with 3 sector-specific operational units in IT/ITeS, Engineering & Related industries and Handicrafts and a Domestic Tariff Area (DTA), along with Residential & Social infrastructure already planned for it. The IT unit is purportedly the largest in India with a 750 acres stretch alone. MWC is located right off the NH8 (Delhi-Ajmer Highway) which gives it the easy access to the Western ports. It is just 262 kms from Delhi in the South-west of Jaipur. The location has hassle-free rail, air and road connectivity, at present as well as more projected in near future as reflected in the Figure 2.1 below which is attractive for all the investors to associate with this project (MWC, 2011).
The intent for such a project is clearly reflected from the inauguration speech of the Chief Minister Ms Vasundhara Raje when she exults the project as an important milestone for the State, more so, as other States in the country have been showing severe opposition from the local populations (“Vasundhara Raje inaugurates,” 2008). This public-private partnership with 74:26 ratio between MWC and Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation (RIICO) is seen as an ‘investment that would change the life of the people of Jaipur and impact future ventures in Rajasthan’ (“Vasundhara Raje inaugurates,” 2008). The MWC point out that the SEZ would attract investment to the tune of more than 100 billion rupees and enable in creating direct employment for lakhs of people and additionally another lakh or more jobs through indirect industries related positions (“Vasundhara Raje inaugurates,” 2008). Jaipur in its drive to attract investors for economic growth and
development has splurged into rapid industrialisation and infrastructural advancements like introducing Metro Lines and Bus Rapid Transit services within the city. MWC has already been felicitated as Climate Positive Development Stage 2 Certification, making it the first city to receive this honour, from the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group which is a global network of the larger cities taking action in addressing the climate change issues (Press Release, 2016). According to Anand Mahindra the presence of arid land mass in the region did not provide much opportunities to the farmers in the area which is also one factor that they gave away their lands without much opposition (“Land Wars”, 2011).

The project not only has industries and engineering units but has massive plan for housing projects that would have latest designs and technologies installed alluring the elites from far and near to invest and own for themselves (Levien, 2011). The project’s proximity to different adjoining urban cities of the northern part of India is an attractive and lucrative proposition for conglomerates to invest as well (Bidwai, 2006; Levien, 2011).

It may be concluded hence that a culturally rich and vibrant state of traditionalists are adopting modernisation for the growth and development of their region. Keeping their cultural heritage intact, Rajasthan is making rapid strides towards industrialisation, modernisation and employment generation. Although the affected people those who actually lose their land in the process, should have been consulted but this project did not do so. There is an acute emphasis on religion and worship of many goddesses or female figures is evident across castes in a Rajasthani person’s lifetime, however the actual life of the living, breathing girl or women in the region is still marginalised and
suffocated. To elucidate, the researcher would like to draw attention on the Census data of Rajasthan on Sex Ratio of 0-6 year’s age group which shows a decrease in number at 888 in 2011 from 909 in 2001. Even the maternal mortality rate of 255 according to the Sample Registration System (SRS 2010-2012) Census of India report, show the disregard and negligence shown towards women in general. If numbers could speak, these shout out loud for help! The entrenched son preference among Rajasthani psyche does not allow the girl child to even be born amidst all the worship and cacophony of divine deliverance. Caste system is extremely ingrained in the social fabric of Rajasthan with pompous exhibition of Rajputana glamour, sacrosanct hierarchies and adherence of religious and social practices make this region highly volatile and traditional in the current capitalist modern liberal thinking times.

Whether this developmental project can make any incremental changes in the Rajasthani mindset about the status of women in the long-run would be interesting to observe in future.