MARATHA-RAJPUT RELATIONS DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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The Maratha-Rajput relations is an issue which occupies considerable space in the Mughal chronicals of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and in the writings of early colonial administrators. Both, the Marathi as well as Rajasthani sources provide extensive and significant information relating to the changing contours in their relations. The Marathas self-perception and a set of social attributes ascribed to them by others are in sharp contrast. As the Marathas began to resist and later challenge Mughal empire, they were characterized as predatory elements by the historians of the empire. Since the Marathas were in the forefront to resist the expansion of the English East India Company in Central and Northern India, they began to be portrayed as ‘robbers’ etc. by early colonial administrators. These representations of the Marathas in Mughal and colonial sources still persist. However, one must take cognizance of the fact that the Maratha history to be found in most textbooks is still redolent with images of ‘bandits’.

No wonder that the value judgements of Mughal historians and colonial administrators continue as axioms in historiography. However, there is need to re-look at these pronouncements upon the Marathas. It is also important to note that Mughal-centric accounts of the late eighteenth century offer a different perception of the Marathas. They are less virulent in their criticism. Some scholars have re-looked at the Marathas basing themselves on Marathi sources. Similarly we come across Rajput-centric accounts of the Maratha-Rajput relations. There is need to look at the Maratha-Rajput relations during the eighteenth century in the light of Rajasthani sources. The Maratha-Rajput relations have often been depicted as hostile. Was this hostility all pervasive or their relations were cordial at the social, cultural and political levels. Else conflict and cordiality co-existed. In the present work an attempt is being made to re-look at various facets of the Maratha-Rajput relations. While taking into consideration the Mughal, Maratha, Rajput and colonial approaches, our effort would be to focus on hitherto unused Rajasthani sources.

While reviewing the literature, we find that some of the Mughal court historians and colonial authorities perceptions of the Marathas still continue to find place in modern
historical writing. In Mughal chronicles, the Marathas are associated with raids and destruction. The biasness of the Mughal court historians and officials in the context of their dealings with the Marathas is obvious. As the Marathas successfully challenged the Mughal authority, the concern of the Mughal historians and officials indisputably influenced their perception of the Marathas. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Mughal accounts see the Marathas negatively. Khafi Khan’s *Muntakhab-ul Lubab*, an important contemporary Persian source, profiles Shivaji as, “the truculent rebel”,¹ “the designing rascal”,² “the treacherous foe”,³ and “the bloodthirsty assassin”,⁴ and the Marathas as a, “race of Robbers”,⁵ and as rapacious elements. In his work, *Nushka-i-Dilkusha*, Bhimsen calls the Marathas as ‘malefactors’.⁶

European accounts related to this particular period are predominantly British who had their own political agenda. Adnre Wink says that the first generation of British administrators depicted the Maratha rule with more venom than even the Mughals. He says that the British officers views were based more on sanctimonious moralizing rather than dispassionate and objective assessments of economic or political processes.⁷ In Tod’s writings there is a monolithic representation of the Marathas⁸. We find a similar echo in the writings of V.A. Smith.⁹

However, recent researches based on the Maratha sources have challenged both the Mughal and British portrayal of the Marathas. They have been arguing that the Marathas were not a habitual destroyer of the economy, rather they provided an alternative administration to the Mughals in the territories conquered by them. Thus, Andre Wink¹⁰ and Stewart Gordon¹¹ have portrayed the Marathas in a new light.

² Ibid., p.259.
³ Ibid., p. 260.
⁴ Ibid., p.260.
⁵ Ibid., p. 464.
¹⁰ Andre Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India*.
There is a rich historiography related to the Maratha penetration in Rajasthan. As has been already discussed, James Tod’s treatment of Maratha-Rajput relations is highly biased in favour of the Rajputs. J.N. Sarkar’s work, *Fall of the Mughal Empire* in four volumes is highly informative and comprehensive. But Sarkar is highly judgemental on each event and the persons involved. It covers all the major political events involving the Marathas and the Rajput States. Subsequent historical writings on Maratha penetration in the region and Maratha-Rajput relations during the eighteenth century have been largely Rajput-centric in approach. Except for Jaipur, Maratha relations with the major Rajput States which witnessed Maratha inroads are presented in the works of G.R. Parihar, K.S. Gupta, R.P. Shastri, M.L. Sharma, Beni Gupta and R.K. Saxena. While examining the relations of the Marathas with the States of Jaipur, Marwar, Kota and Bundi, they have focused more on political narrative about the Maratha-Rajput relations in their works.

G.R. Parihar’s work, *Marwar and the Marathas (1724-1843)* throws light on various stages through which Maratha-Rajput relations passed up to 1818. The work shows clash of interest between the two in Gujarat and the attempt to curb the Maratha menace by Abhay Singh, the Jodhpur Raja. The events following Abhay Singh’s death leading to Maratha penetration into Marwar and the history of Maratha-Rajput relations are dealt with by Parihar. K.S. Gupta’s book, *Mewar and the Maratha Relations (1735-1818)* traces the relationship between the two from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century. He has shown how the history of Mewar during this period is a record of the tragic downturn. He treats the Maratha domination of Mewar as a great calamity. R.K. Saxena’s work on ‘*Maratha Relations with the Major States of Rajputana*’, is more comprehensive and covers the States of Jaipur, Marwar, Mewar, Kota and Bundi during the period 1761-

1818. He has shown how the Rajputs themselves created atmosphere which facilitated the Maratha control over Rajput States. J.N. Sarkar and Raghubir Sinh’s ‘A History of Jaipur’,\textsuperscript{19} also touches Jaipur-Maratha relations in a broader context. V.S. Bhatnagar’s work, ‘Life and Times of Sawai Jai Singh’,\textsuperscript{20} provides useful information on Jaipur-Maratha relations during Sawai Jai Singh’s reign.

The contribution of these scholars is tremendous, yet they have ignored to examine some very important Rajasthani sources for understanding the complex nature of their relationship in totality. They largely re-iterated Tod’s approach. An indepth account of the nature of Maratha domination and their political, social and economic process of the State formation in the eighteenth century is long overdue.

The Maratha-Rajput relations need to be examined in the context of the emergence of the Marathas as the sole contestant for political supremacy in North India. What kind of change could be discerned once the encounter between the Marathas and other power located in North India began? Which factors enabled the Marathas to reach the pinnacle of power during the period from 1753 tp 1759 in North India? Yet the question arises that at the same time what led to the political isolation of the Marathas which found manifestation at the battle of Panipat in 1761 which proved disastrous for the Marathas. How did the Rajputs and Rajasthan figure in the period subsequent to the battle of Panipat? Did the Marathas ever visualize a well conceived Rajput policy in the context of their future plans to regain and retain political ascendency? Why was their handling of the Rajputs vastly different from the Mughals? Did the Marathas exercise paramount authority over the Rajput clan States in the same manner as did the Mughals? The question arises did the indifferent attitude of the Rajputs towards the Marathas shape the Maratha policy in Rajasthan or they did not consider the co-operation of the Rajputs necessary in the pursuit of their ambitions in North Indian politics? The advancement of the Marathas in Rajasthan also raises the question of the perception of the Marathas and their representation in non-Marathi sources and the nature of their dealings with the local societies. Did the image of the


\textsuperscript{20} V.S. Bhargava, ‘Life and Times of Sawai Jai Singh 1688-1743, Imper India, Delhi, 1974.
Marathas change overtime in the context of historical situation of North India in general and of Rajasthan in particular.

In the wake of the declining Mughal authority during the eighteenth century the Rajputs were left to fend for themselves. The waning Mughal control encouraged the rulers of the principal Rajput States to pursue the policy of territorial expansion of their *watan* (dominion) areas at the expense of the Mughals. It also paved the way for the revival of the old Rajput polity. The Rajput States witnessed growing inter-state feuds and intra-clan rivalries. Succession disputes paved the way for the entry of the Marathas who were invited to intervene in the internal disputes by one of the contending parties. Did it amount to implicit recognition of the paramount authority of the Marathas by the Rajputs or the Marathas were desirous to replace the Mughals as the paramount power in Rajasthan?

**Nature of Source Material**

Since the Rajput States were the main target of the Maratha attacks in the eighteenth century, it is important to study the relations of the Marathas with the Rajputs as recorded in the Rajasthani sources, both primary as well as secondary. The nature of the present study necessitates the use of contemporary sources as far as possible. An attempt has been made to weave into the narrative ample citations from original documents. The Rajput States of Kota, Bundi, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur and Bikaner have rich Archival sources related to this period. The richest collection are the Jaipur records 21 which in turn are compiled under *kharitas, chitthiyats, dastur komwar – dikhni, Amber records, arzdashts*, etc.

The secondary sources used are the modern historical works. Kaviraj Shyamaldas’s *Vir Vinod* 22 is one of the earliest Indian historical works written in Hindi. Though Mewar was the central concern of Shyamal Das, the work also focuses on the slow and gradual hold of

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the Marathas on the other States of Rajasthan. The other works used in the present work are the *Khyats* of Nainsi, *Rathora ri Khyat* and *Marwar ri Khyat*.

Marathi letters dispatched from the offices of Peshwa *Daftar* and other Marathi sources cover a large number of issues concerning the Maratha-Rajput relations. Besides these sources, the early correspondence of the East India Company’s officials also need to be looked into.

**Chapterization**

The present work is divided into five chapters. Each chapter covers a particular aspect or stage in Maratha presence in Rajasthan that emerges from the analysis of the primary and secondary sources. The emphasis is largely on the relations of the Marathas with the two major Rajput States of Jaipur and Jodhpur. The study is limited to these two States in order to make it viable in terms of the handling of vast primary source material which is available in Rajasthani and Marathi.

The first chapter deals with *Maratha Intervention in Rajasthan: 1730-1760 (Part-I)*. The time frame taken into consideration is from 1730-1760. For the sake of a better understanding of their relations, this period takes into consideration the initial phase of the Maratha-Rajput relations first in the context of the Mughal-Maratha relations and thereafter in the context of the decline of Mughal central authority and its implications for Rajput States. There was a revival of the pre-Mughal inter and intra-clan rivalries in the Rajput States in the wake of the waning Mughal power which facilitated the entry of the Marathas into Rajasthan. Thus, the Marathas initially entered Rajasthan to settle the domestic feuds, for which they were hired. Later they became the masters who levied tribute and ravaged the land each successive year.

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The chapter also discusses Jai Singh’s governorships of Malwa, along with a brief discussion about the various Rajput States, with the main thrust being the States of Jaipur and Jodhpur. While taking into consideration the two major sub-divisions of Rajasthan, viz., the north-western and south-eastern, an effort has been made to explore the levels of production – agricultural, mineral etc. This would help to determine the motivations that propelled the Marathas to deal with different states of Rajasthan.

The second chapter is entitled, ‘Maratha Intervention in Rajasthan: 1761-1794 (Part-II)’. The Maratha defeat in the third battle of Panipat emboldened the Rajputs to resist the Marathas. The Maratha defeat at Panipat in 1761 demonstrated their weakness which did not go unnoticed by the Rajputs. The present study explores whether there was a continuity or change in the Maratha-Rajput relations in the post-Panipat phase. The phase ends with the final subjugation of the Rajput states by Mahadaji Sindhia who later died when he was at the zenith of his power. The chapter also focuses on the local Rajput support availed of by the Marathas.

The third chapter focuses on the, ‘Economic Impact of the Maratha Presence in Jaipur and Jodhpur States’. The kharitas, chitthis, yaddashti, are the chief sources of information for this chapter. It was common knowledge that Maratha visitations in Rajasthan were not a happy experience both for the Rajput rulers and their subjects. The chapter focuses on the economic strain on the State exchequer and the hardships suffered by the local people. It also highlights the various means adopted by the State and the people to resist and mitigate the Marathas. This chapter also discusses the impact of the Maratha presence on the economy of the region. What measures were adopted by the State to overcome the financial crisis? How much and in what form were the payments made by the States of Jaipur and Jodhpur?

The fourth chapter deals with the, ‘Diplomatic Ties and Socio-Cultural Co-operation between the Marathas and Rajputs’, The relationship between the Rajputs and the Marathas has been generally seen as permanent hostility and antagonism. The general perception is that the Marathas made armed incursions, plundered and devastated the Rajput States. Perhaps this is just one side of the picture. Our sources explores whether their relations were marked by the existence of
maintenance of social ties and areas of co-operation. *Dastur komwar – Dikhni* and the *kharitas* are the chief sources of information for this chapter. The other themes discussed in this chapter are diplomatic and trade relations, the nature of communication and how people from both sides interacted with each other. The Marathas engaged in different professions visiting Rajasthan are also discussed.

The **fifth chapter** focuses on ‘Maratha Occupation of Rajasthan and Rajput Resistance’. *Kharitas* are the chief source of information used in this chapter. An effort has been made to study the territorial arrangements made by the Marathas in the territories transferred to them by the Rajput rulers. It also attempts to study the nature of administrative control of the Marathas in these areas. An attempt has also been made to look at the forms of resistance of the Rajputs to the Maratha domination. How the Marathas responded to the resistance of the Rajputs and manifestation of the antipathy of the Rajputs towards the Marathas are also examined in this chapter.

At the end it may be concluded that the Maratha-Rajput relation is a field of study which despite being impregnated with daunting difficulties needs to be understood on the basis of contemporary documentation and not modern prejudices. In this work we have been able to explore, basing ourselves on a variety of sources, the nuanced and complex facets in the Maratha-Rajput relations during the eighteenth century.