

Chapter V

Tradition and Modernity

It is fascinating how a tiny community from the deserts of Rajasthan spread out to various corners of the subcontinent. Marwaris are believed to have the appetite for risk as entrepreneurs. The Marwaris controlled much of India's inland trade by the end of the First World War. Gradually they turned to industry after the war and by 1970 they controlled much of the nation's private industrial assets.¹ Among other things that are required by a nation to succeed economically, one of the most crucial prerequisite is the entrepreneur himself. By 2011, the Marwaris accounted for a quarter of the Indians on the list of billionaires in the Forbes.

Their presence in the Indian subcontinent rebuke the Weber theory that claims the nation to lack the 'Protestant ethic' of thrift and hardwork that made Europe industrially progressive. Thomas Timberg claimed that India was equally blessed with the Marwaris, Banias, Jains and other business communities whose traditional *dharma* constituted the pursuit of *artha* i.e. economic well-being.²

According to Timberg, the greatest family firms in the sub-continent even today trace their ancestry to Rajputana and Saurashtra, the former princely states now known as Rajasthan and Gujarat. These expatriates are also called Marwaris, presumably because the Marwar area of Rajasthan experienced the most sizeable out-migrants of the traditional merchant castes to the burgeoning colonial cities of Bombay, Calcutta and elsewhere in the second half of the nineteenth century.³ Not only did the Mahajans travel within the subcontinent but they were known for their economic activities in the Levant trade as far back as the fifteenth century. The system of deposit banking and money-lending, which was quite widespread in Iran, was said to have been controlled by the *banias* of India.⁴

¹ Timber, Thomas A. 2014. *The Marwaris: The Story of Indian Business from Jagat Seth to the Birlas*. Allen Lane. New Delhi.

² Ibid.

³ Timberg, T.A. 1978. *The Marwaris: from Traders to Industrialists*. Vikas Publications. Delhi.

⁴ Haider, Najaf. 1996. 'Precious Metal Flows and Currency Circulation in the Mughal Empire', in *the Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*. Vol. 39, No.3. Money in the Orient. pp. 298-364.

Thus, the movement of this community, which later grew and encapsulated many progressive communities within its fold, constitutes a very significant component of our study. In this chapter, we will not indulge in the arguments that praise the extraordinary success achieved by Mahajans in different corners of the subcontinent and beyond. Our focus will be on the factors and circumstances that were faced by the people of this community when they began to move beyond their demarcated boundaries. Here, we will try and analyse the impact felt by them during the process of migration, along with the impact of this migration on the other aspects of their lives. Thus, delineating continuity and change. They were seen migrating from one place to another as far back as the fourteenth century and even much earlier.

The migration of merchants has been studied by many historians.⁵ As Vijaya Ramaswamy states in her article⁶, for South India, the migration and settlement of mercantile communities has been studied by a wide range of scholars within the wider context of the spread of market centres and merchant guilds. Merchant communities were the first ones to have migrated to other South Asian nations.⁷ One noted historian to have contributed to this study of migration of mercantile communities is Noboru Karashima, whose focus has been the merchant diaspora.⁸ Burton Stein, on the other hand, has talked about the migration of peasant groups as mercenary peasant-warriors. One such contingent under the Cholas was known as *valangi velaikkarrar* - including merchants and smiths in the official ranks.

According to Shireen Moosvi, in her study of the migration of skilled labour in pre-colonial India, she has calculated the population of migrants in pre-industrial India via the method of backward projection. She points out that out of the total population of some 294.4 million, internal migrants constituted some 7.02 million or 2.39% of the total population. This calculation is indicative of the fact that migration formed a crucial part of daily lives of the pre-colonial populace.

⁵ Like Ashin Das Gupta (2001), Sanjay Subrahmanyam (2001) and Merkovits (2003).

⁶ Ramaswamy, Vijaya. 2016. 'Migrations of the weaver communities in medieval Peninsular India, thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries'. *Migrations in Medieval and Early Colonial India*, ed. By Vijaya Ramaswamy. Routledge. London and New York.

⁷ Into Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Burma, among others.

⁸ Karashima, Noboru. 2009. *Ancient to Medieval South Indian Society in Transition: Oxford Collected Essays*. OUP. New Delhi.

Merchants and traders have been seen as the exemplary symbols of human mobility since the beginning of civilization. Merchants were the most mobile communities since ancient times. They have been the most mobile Indian communities, constituting the very first diaspora communities to the South Asian region. They have left strong marks on the countries they migrated to, both in terms of cultural and linguistic impressions.

Recent historiography has opened up researches on social groups with respect to their mobility as strategies to survival. Not only have there been studies concerning this movement. But the repercussions of such a movement and the resultant cultural and linguistic blend have also come under the historical lens. Late Prof. Nandita P. Sahai has shed light on the movement of artisanal communities from Mawar to Malwa.⁹ She has talked about the movement of artisanal castes in a regional and more local context. She rightly stated the popularity of certain destinations, especially Malwa, for which our archival sources offer ample evidence in the case of Mahajans migrating from the north-western Rajasthan. The artisanal and trading communities were seen moving to Malwa due to varied reasons, which we will be discussing below in detail. Before such a discussion is undertaken, let us understand the political context in whose backdrop these migrations were taking place.

Since the fourteenth century onwards, several armed peasant communities have been known to be mobile in different parts of the subcontinent. Movement during the eighteenth century was intricately linked to the process of early state formation. The socio-political milieu of the eighteenth century provided merchants and other social groups various incentives and opportunities to go beyond their homeland. The recent reorientation of the eighteenth century debate to bring out the vitality of the socio-politico and economic trends of the period, in the context of a more evolutionary pattern of change and a considerable degree of continuity, has made the study of this period very interesting.

The decline in Mughal hegemony was manifested in the acceleration of various preceding processes and emergence of new phenomenon in various realms of

⁹ Sahai, Nandita, P. 2016. ‘From Marwar to Malwa and Back: Artisanal mobility and circulation during the eighteenth century’. *Migrations in Medieval and Early Colonial India*, ed. Vijaya Ramaswamy. Routledge. London.

society. In the context of weak imperial centre, many regional centres became successful with better management of agricultural set-up and co-option of the groups which controlled the agrarian surplus. The established nobles tried to make up for the loss of their prestige at the centre by seeking additional powers in their provinces on the basis of accumulated resources and alliances forged. Such alliances were autonomous bodies of mercenary soldiers, Indian and foreign merchants, administrative gentry, *zamindars* and mobile bands of peasant farmers. The Benaras kings and two lakh Bhumihars, for example, supported the lineages of Hatwa and Bettiah in Bihar. All such local powers represented an interesting and powerful process of decentralization of finance and military force from the centre and centralization of revenue within the regions.

Historian Muzaffar Alam has argued about the similar process being at work in Awadh, where according to him, the beginnings of the ‘new subedari’ can be traced. With the coming of Europeans, expansion of trade, the upper strata of local communities emerged most benefitted. The Governor’s success depended upon his ability to meet the demands of his region, by reducing rural tensions with the *zamindars* by nominal assessment of their grants and by extending concessions in trading cesses. The cash hungry emerging regional states undertook various measurements to survive in increasing competition from neighbouring states. The emerging states provided stable and flourishing markets to traders migrating from politically strife areas.

In this bi-directional process, the crystallisation of regional politics was linked with the emergence of vibrant cross-caste mercantile organisations and the growth of rooted service gentry, i.e. the intermediate classes who mastered the skills of market and pen. Maintaining their own community identity meant lot of efforts for the Mahajans. C.A.Bayly has argued that the revenue farmers could not farm without merchants and village traders who facilitated the extraction of revenue from the peasantry. The control held by people with commercial activities worked in such a way that the control of land became ineffective without access to silver, credit and markets in the eighteenth century. Therefore, the economy influenced and in turn was influenced by the growth of these classes.

According to Tapan Ray Chaudhary, by the mid-eighteenth century, development of market had made deep inroads into the subsistence character of Indian agriculture. Growing dependence of framers on traders, moneylenders and a

tendency towards localisation¹⁰ were characteristics of commercialisation. *Ijaradars*, whom Bayly referred to as ‘multifaceted portfolio capitalist’, were instrumental in the process of converting kind into cash, by channelling the cash crop into trade networks. The economically viable *ganjs*, *mandis*, etc. saw fortification and a gradual shift into urban centres like Jhansi, Rohilkhand, Pali, and many more.

He further states that though pre-colonial agriculture was marked by high yield per acre, yet the farming technology was backward and stagnant. Limited population pressure and overall size of the domestic market contributed to the relatively unchanging nature of Indian technology. The absence of two-way traffic of goods between specialised centres and villages created a hard core of economic isolation in most areas, except the well connected vibrant commercialised areas.

In the manufacturing sector there were strong elements of continuity. The rural consumers were still dependent for the bulk of manufactured goods on local produce. The manufacturing of products was closely linked to agriculture, for example, raw silk, indigo, sugar and oil. That meant the peasants were often indistinguishable from manufacturers. There was considerable growth of the phenomenon of merchant’s growing control over the producers and mode of production. Artisans were receiving from the traders not just raw material or cash but also daily wages. They emerged as ‘capitalist entrepreneurs’. However, the growth of capitalists little modified the traditional caste basis of manufacturing sector and production and distribution in agriculture.

By the 1720’s, the very important inter-regional trade along the coastal and inland routes showed some evidence of economic integration. This can be exemplified from the fact that the production of commodity price, import of bullion in Surat, etc. determined the prices and production in Bengal and Coromandel. This active and responsive relation between production and sale processes was possible due to the transportation of goods, circulation of money and market information across the subcontinent. In the politically insecure environment of the time, banking facilities gained importance. Newer avenues like insurance of goods emerged as business ventures. The Jagat Seths sending huge amount of money to Delhi from Bengal as *hundi* till 1754, informs us a great deal about the economic viability of

¹⁰ Specially in textile manufacturing.

the two regions. The importance of market information was largely capitalised by the Europeans, but it was in a way absent altogether prior to their coming.

In the West, politics and war encouraged migration of population towards defensible urban centres where merchants could be enticed to settle by trade hungry notables. For instance, in Punjab there was a situation of political turmoil and silting of Indus took place. As a result, important trading communities like Khatri's migrated to places like Awadh. Muzaffar Alam called this phenomenon the loss of the segment of population which could have provided social support to the new *subedari* in Punjab. Another factor which contributed to the same process was the monopoly which English East India Company established on the composition as well as direction of Indian exports. Gujarat, an important participant in foreign trade, declined in the first half of the century as a result of Europe being given importance as the prime consumer of Indian goods. There was a correspondent rise in the importance of Bengal as the exporter of raw material including salt, indigo and saltpetre.

Indian trade, before the colonial interference, had many positive features which were later capitalised upon. The impersonal and abstract trading concerns contrasted with the personal family-based business units in the subcontinent. The Europeans could quite comfortably meet the market demands utilising the layered indigenous networks without inducing any major transformation. There were *ganjs* and *mandis* for all kinds of trade controlled by specialised groups of people with whom the Company aligned or distanced, according to its need. C.A. Bayly argues that these merchant communities had not just adjusted to the new political conditions supporting commercialisation of power, but also influenced the pace of colonial trade and administration. For example, Chaube Brahmans in Ganges Valley, Rajasthani Bohras and Agarwals, Khatri's in Punjab and Cheltis extended their brand agencies to secure the flow of artisan products. They provided the advance for fine crops which the local aristocracies and armies required. They formed the trading and urban elites of the future.

At this juncture of history, there arose three broad types of states. Firstly, there were regional states established by the Mughal provincial governors who attained autonomy. They were dependent on merchant bankers and the division of resources among diverse ruling groups. The second were states established by the Sikh, Jat, Afghan and Maratha rebels against the Mughals. These states adopted the policy

of military fiscalism and religious identity to varying extents. And the third type of states were already independent but now even denied any form of theoretical subjugation. Mysore, under Tipu Sultan, was one of these states which maintained viability without being entirely dependent on merchant bankers.

With growing urbanisation in the eighteenth century, the relative balance of power between rulers and merchants shifted. In most places, commercial and financial magnates provided critical financial sustenance to the regional states, but in some states like Mysore, the merchants faced political backlash. If the Mughal capital cities of Delhi and Agra declined, regional capitals like Lucknow, Hyderabad and various Maratha cities, rose. With greater mobility of men, transportation and money, political instability at one place led to migration of communities with financial resources to another place.

After the second half of the eighteenth century, the new and potentially powerful was the English East India Company from whom indigenous classes faced competition and also with whom they formed strategic alliances. Between 1717-1757 they influenced the production of crops and international market. When the Company got the 1717 *dastak* from the Mughal emperor, they were allowed to trade excise free as long as goods were exported, so many Indian traders began to link themselves with the Company. Till the English were granted *diwani* (of Bengal) in 1765, the balance of trade was in favour of India. An important turning point in their position came after the Bengal famine and consequent threat of declining profits. From then on they began to interfere in politics and became the revenue based-policy making state.

Thus, it can be gathered that the Indian economy was not backward in the eighteenth century. Rather it was quite inter-connected and was adapting as per the changing conditions and trends. The changing backdrop of politics led to the rise of different classes in society which further meant rise of regional economies. Declining centres of commerce were compensated by alternative rising trade centres. To view the entire century with a generalised notion of decline is historically inaccurate. There were considerable changes in the economy of the eighteenth century India along with certain degree of continuity.

Some of the features of the economy at this juncture were: dislocation of centres, realignments, new strategic trading centres, emergence of intermediary commercial classes, commercialisation of agriculture, mercantile organisation,

alliances with powerful agents, trained regional troops and all these elements were reactions to the situations that existed during this period.

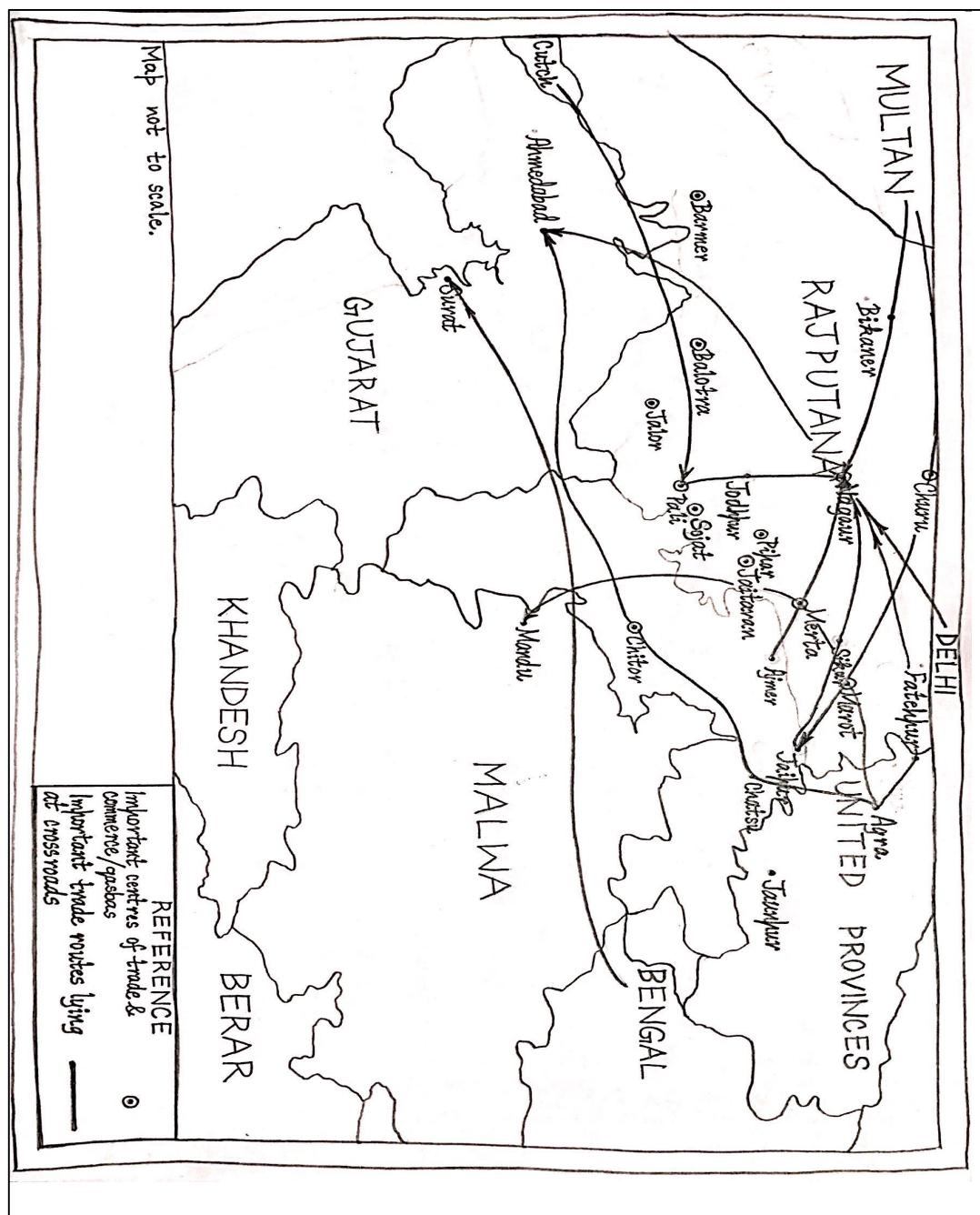
As far as migration of mercantile community is considered, north-western Rajasthan was not an area devoid of immigration inwards into the region. Merchants, artisans and other groups migrated outside of the area, but the area cannot be said to be totally devoid of any such movement within its borders. G.S.L. Devra opines that immigration of business houses was witnessed even to the desert zone of the region due to emerging *qasbas* there, marked with a highly organized and impressive way of functioning of the trade.

The impact this movement caused on the people involved has been highlighted by several historians for different communities in different locales of the subcontinent. But no major study has been done focusing on the migration of mercantile groups from north-western Rajasthan, the Marwaris as they came to be known later. Here, in this chapter, we shall make an attempt to analyse their movement – both inter-regional and intra-regional, and the nature of such movement along with the effect these movements produced in their social world.

Historical research has burst the earlier held notions that pre-colonial India was devoid of any major human movement. The colonial legacy in the field of transportation and communications had been highlighted, with a total absence of studies concerning solely the human movement before arrival of the British. The latest volume of work on migrations in medieval and early colonial India has questioned these Indological generalizations and provided answers by undertaking a methodological approach to such studies.

For the region of our studies, which was strategically located, connecting northern India with the Gujarat Coast and North-Western Frontier. Jodhpur or Marwar, as it was called earlier, was one of the chief principalities of Rajasthan, which was a desert zone: sandy, arid and agriculturally low yielding. The feasible conditions for the growth of agriculture in the south and south-eastern parts of the region made abundant grain available for trading. The overland trade routes from eastern India to the manufacturing centres of Multan and Sindh also passed from here. According to James Tod, some of the important centres of commerce and trade lay here. Because of the climatic aridity, unlike other regions where during the *Chaumasa* (monsoon season) roads became difficult to travel, traders preferred to

undertake the routes passing through this region. The attraction of shorter distances through Rajasthan remained etched in the minds of the traders.¹¹



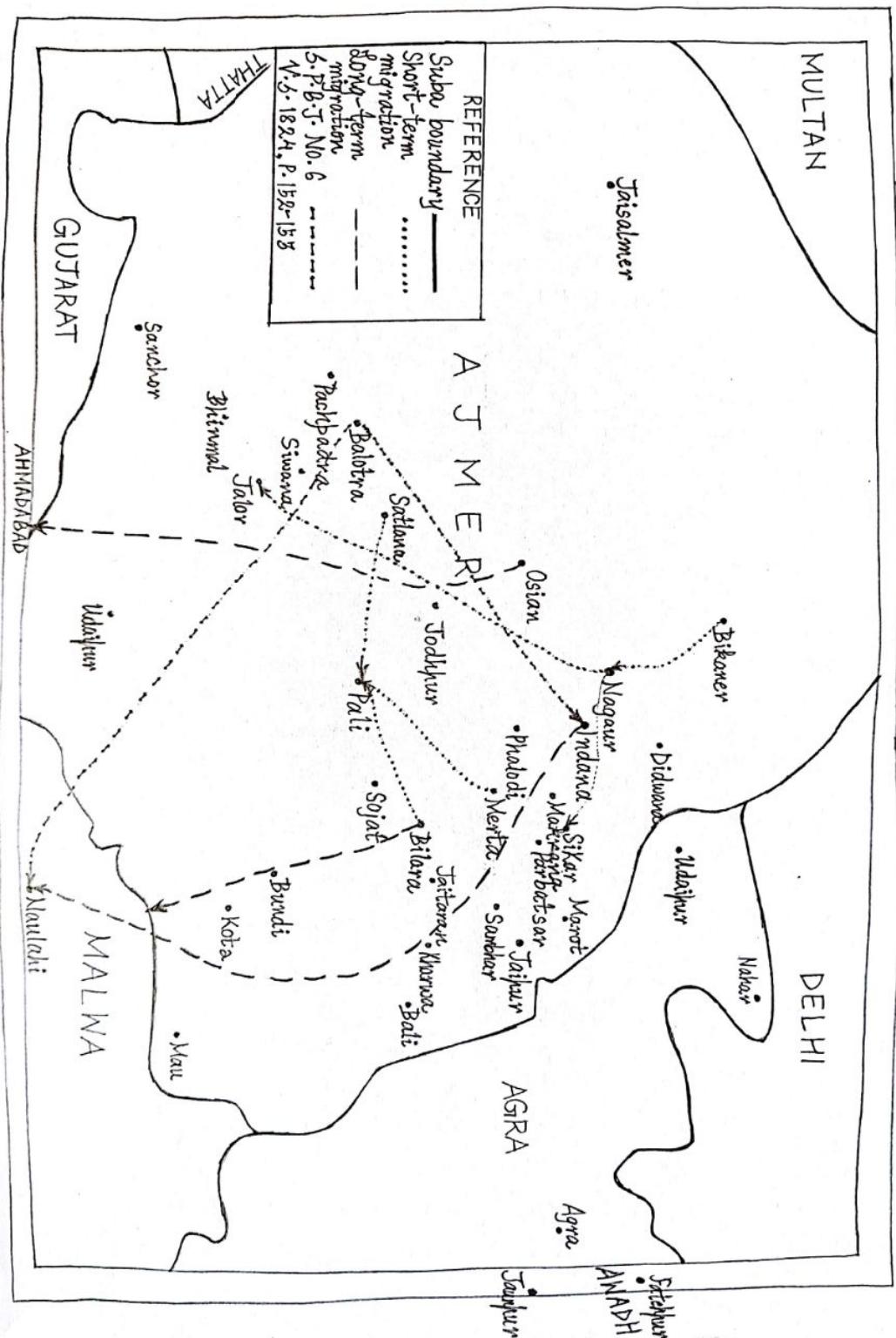
Map 1: Important trade routes passing through north-western Rajasthan, 1700s-1800s

It is reconstructed with the help of the sources mentioned below.

Source: Habib, Irfan. 1982. *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire: Political and Economic Maps with Detailed Notes, Bibliography and Index*. Rajasthan Political 1595, 6A. Rajasthan Economic, 6B. The Mughal Empire Political 1601.

Rai, Santosh Kumar. 2016. 'Many Madanpuras: memories and histories of migrant weavers of northern India during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'. *Migrations in Medieval and Early Colonial India*. ed. by Vijaya Ramaswamy. Routledge. South Asia Edition.

¹¹ Choondawat, Dr. Pradyuman Kumar Singh. 2004. 'Trade Relations and Routes of Rajasthan (Between Sindh and Multan) 1600-1800 A.D.' RHS. Chopasani (Jodhpur) Session. Vol. XVII. pp. 78-84.



Map 2: Mahajans' migration movements in north-western Rajasthan, 1700s-1800s

This map is not to scale. It is reconstructed with the help of the sources mentioned below.

Source: Habib, Irfan. 1982. *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire: Political and Economic Maps with Detailed Notes, Bibliography and Index*. Rajasthan Political 1595, 6A. Rajasthan Economic, 6B. Central India Political 1595-6 and 1601.

Tod, James. 1873. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan or the Central and Western Rajpoot States of India*. Vol. I. Asian Educational Services Edition. New Delhi. Map of Rajpootana. Derived from Allen's General Map of India by John Walker, Geographer. Reprint. 1874.

The Rathore principality of Jodhpur constituted of twenty-two *parganas* of Bali, Bilara, Didwana, Jaswantpura, Jaitaran, Jodhpur, Mallani, Maroth, Merta, Nagaur, Nawa, Pachhbhadra, Pali, Parbatsar, Phalodi, Sambhar, Sanchore, Sankara, Sheo, Shergarh, Siwana and Sojat. The topography of these *parganas* was varied. It ranged from being hilly and forested to sandy and arid. As we have discussed earlier, Qasbas emerged as important centres of trade that lay at these routes. For instance, Pali¹², Churu, among other such centres.

Various tax concessions were extended to traders plying on the trade routes passing through these *qasbas*. As per one document pertaining to Pali, the Mahajans professing trade and visiting Pali following the fair of Kapda were to be given tax concession on the transit tax (*nikaal ro hasal*).¹³ Similarly another document describing the tax concessions to be extended to Mahajans mentions the following important trade routes: Nagaur – Jalor – Maroth; Nagaur – Bhagod – Maroth; and Nagaur via Sikar. The route of Nagaur via Sikar had been non-functional since some time due to excessive tax collection by the authorities. The state, in this petition¹⁴, is seen ordering a rectification in tax collection rates as per those enforced on the other mentioned routes. So that the route via Sikar was resumed and trade prospered in the affected region.

Gumastas working under the *sahukars* were supposed to write accounts and *hundis* in outstation branches.¹⁵ In addition to this, *gumastas* working under prominent merchants had to visit the royal courts to deliver consignments of precious stones for the emperors and represent the merchants' case to the former. In order to perform these functions, members of the mercantile group would have to travel from one part of the country to another.

Nima Parekh of Diu migrated to Bombay in 1692. Many merchants migrated to Bombay from Gujarat at the end of the seventeenth century. The Bhukhan Parekhs operated as *sharafs* and were said to have branches across the subcontinent, in most

¹² SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 128; SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P.23 B; SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 177 B.

These documents reveal the commercial vitality of Pali during the period concerned: the passing of merchandise and caravans from Merta and other places via Pali, merchants participating in the fairs held in Pali, etc.

James Tod has referred to Pali as the 'commercial mart of western Rajwarra'.

¹³ SPBJ No. 2, V.S. 1822/1765 A.D. P 71 A.

¹⁴ SPBJ No. 1. V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 101A.

¹⁵ Makrand Mehta. *Indian Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Historical Perspective*.

of the commercial centres of India. They opened a branch in Bombay in mid-eighteenth century which was renowned in the foreign countries as well. There were several such family organisations which used to operate on a Pan-Indian scale. Since running of businesses demanded proper infrastructure at different levels. These economic opportunities were grabbed by few families with business acumen, that later flourished with huge capital at their disposal.

Apart from travelling from one corner of the region to another, merchants and traders' movement to the Mughal capital to get *farmans* issued in their favour was also witnessed. Savji¹⁶ visited Delhi to obtain a *farman* from the Mughal court of emperor Shahjahan in the seventeenth century. Shahjahan reduced the customs duty on the Porbandar port, upon his request, reducing the rate of collection from 6 percent to the earlier 3 percent.

Talking about the Mughal policy towards the merchants, it was not a uniform one. Though the Mughals were sympathetic to the indigenous merchants' interests in Surat, for example, but they followed no such consistent policy even in one realm. Sometimes justice was done to the merchants and at other times their cause was utterly neglected.¹⁷ In a number of incidents the officials of Surat were dismissed on the complaints of the merchants. While on the other hand, concessions were given away to the English and the Dutch undermining interests of the same group of merchants.

We also come across several instances of dispute whence the state authorities were seen extending concessions to the Mahajans in tax collection. Mahajans belonging to villages were compelled to visit the nearest *khacheri/thana* to get their grievances resolved. Mahajans from distant villages were seen petitioning at the *khacheri/thana* located in Jodhpur, Nagaur, Merta, Siwana, Jalor, Daulatpur and Pali.

The criticality of political skills to preserve economic interests of the trading towns has been discussed by K. N. Chaudhuri in his work.¹⁸ "The functional distinctiveness of the economic primate cities was to be found in their capacity to

¹⁶ A leading Parikh of Shrimali caste in Gujarat who gave up Jainism and adopted Vallabhachari way of life.

¹⁷ Kumar, Ashutosh. 2001. *Companies, Merchants and Mughal Officials at Surat in the 17th Century*. CHS. JNU. New Delhi.

¹⁸ Chaudhuri, K.N. 1978. 'Some Reflections on the Town and Country in Mughal India'. *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1.

offer a wide variety of commercial activities. They were able to handle goods which travelled over long distances; the cost indivisibility of transport arrangements; and the near-certainty of finding markets, etc.” The state at times took the guarantee of a merchant so as to facilitate him in carrying on his business and ensured him with a congenial environment for the same.

Mahajan Pema of village Sujaru had to return some amount of money to the Mahajan of Mesarad, Maya Chand. Since Pema had suffered a loss at business, so the state ordered the latter not to pressurise Pema for payment. And it also ensured that he will return the money in the next month.¹⁹

Similarly,

Mahajan Khushal Chand Duli Chand of Bikaner had a shop in Nagaur. He was redeemed to be a trader of good reputation. Orders were issued by the state that leniency should be practiced while dealing with him.²⁰

Shops were also provided to Mahajans by the state on concessional rents. In one case where a shop belonging to a Mahajan was sold to the *darbar*, later the same shop was given away to him as a rented-space. And orders were issued by the state that the shop be given on rent to no-one else, except him.²¹ Waivers were also given in favour of the Mahajans.²² Security as well was ensured to Mahajans and their goods.

Merchandise worth Rs.8/- coming from Bhilada to Pali was robbed on its way by the thieves. The state ordered that the merchants be ensured full security and a hunt for the goods be undertaken by the authorities. Also, the merchant concerned was to be given the amount worth of his stolen goods from the coffers of the state.²³

In cases where the Chaudharies, Brahmins, etc. kept their goods with themselves, it was ensured by the state that their goods were returned back to them.²⁴

¹⁹ SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 42 A.

²⁰ SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 48 B.

²¹ SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 36.

²² SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 8 A: Though the exact reason is not established in this incident, but a waiver of Rs.17/- was given to the Mahajans of Guhochra village. It should be noted that Rs.17/- was a large sum of money in those days.

²³ SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 80 B.

²⁴ SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 140 A (3); and similar other petitions.

The state also provided concessions to traders to give a boost to the economic activity of trading.²⁵

Agarwals: Khushal Chand and Kishan Dutt of Jodhpur were given a concession worth one-fourth in the taxes so as to promote trade in the region.

Similar concessions on the same rate were to be given in *rahdari*, *hasil* and other customary cesses.²⁶

According to Moreland, the exceptional prosperity of the coastal merchants, “is probably to be explained by the privileged status of the Moslem merchants, and by their importance for the maintenance of the customs revenue, and the supply of rare commodities; being free to live well, they acted in accordance with their inclinations, while the merchants of the interior were very far from being free, and led the quiet and unostentatious life required by the circumstances of their position.”²⁷ But the sources at our disposal reveal the same sort of privileges and freedom enjoyed by the merchants of the interior as well.

Any exploitation done to them by the government officials, like the *daroga* and *mussaraf*, who used to collect extra taxes from Mahajans in excess of the established ones were rebuked and reprimanded by the state.²⁸ As mentioned earlier, there were many important trade routes that lay in this region. Crucial trade routes were restored by the state. The most probable reason behind their closure could be either the lack of security or the over-charging of taxation. In one such instance, the route via Sikar is seen ordered to be restored back to function. Due to some hindrances it had stopped plying. Now, proper taxes were to be collected on this route, similar to that done on other routes. If *hasil* was not being collected on this route earlier, then it be not collected and the route be resumed.²⁹

The state is also seen interfering in the monetary disputes between the Mahajans and their debtors.³⁰

²⁵ SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 128; SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 6 B; SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 23 B.

²⁶ SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1766 A.D. P. 5 B.

²⁷ Moreland, W.H. 1962. *India at the death of Akbar*. Delhi.

²⁸ SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 28 B; SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 23 B.

²⁹ SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 101 A.

³⁰ SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 52 A.

Fairs were held in this region so as to promote local and long-distance trade. Traders from different parts of the subcontinent participated in these fairs, either to sell or procure goods. They were important occasions for the state to levy taxes and collect revenue. Some of the important fairs being: the fair of Kapardara; Mundwa fair; cattle fairs held at Gogano, near Nohar in the East and one at Kolayat; horse and cattle fair at Tilwara (near Balotra); the fair of Ram Devra; Kota fair; the ones held at different places in Bikaner; Pali fair, etc.

Realising their significance, the state considered it as its own responsibility to organise these fairs. ‘The *hakim* of the *pargana* in whose jurisdiction a particular fair was to be held, personally supervised all the respective arrangements that had to be done. He was supposed to ensure the safety and security of the merchants and merchandise. He had to arrange the provision of drinking water for merchants and also fodder for the animals used for transportation. A police station/*kotwali chabutra* was also established in the fairs where armed personnel were deputed to provide necessary protection to traders and their merchandise.’³¹

Merchants were invited by the state to participate in these fairs that acted as avenues of boosting the economy. Perks and privileges were provided to them in various forms. They were extended concessions in the taxes imposed on the transit goods.

Orders were issued by the state that the Mahajans coming to Pali after visiting the fair of Kapardara be given concession in the transit tax of *hasil* and *rahdari*, which they already paid earlier in the route. Only *sayar* be collected from them. It be also ensured that no unnecessary trouble is caused to them.³²

Also,

Orders were issued by the state that if *rahdari* was collected from the Mahajans visiting the fair of Pali, and from those bringing jeans and other merchandise to the fair of Kapardara, then it should be collected and if it was never collected on earlier occasions, then no trouble be caused to them. Tax had to be collected from them on the established lines.³³

³¹ Kumar, Mayank. 2001. *Environment and Society in Medieval Rajasthan*. CHS. JNU. New Delhi.

³² SPBJ No. 2, V.S.1822/1765 A.D. P. 71 A.

³³ SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 40 B; SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 23 B.

If any goods went missing from the merchant while on his way travelling to a fair, then it was made sure that a search be conducted to recover the same and some amount of money be provided to the merchant immediately as a compensation. Thus, security of the merchandise carried by these merchants formed a major responsibility of the state.

Mahajan Nola of Sambhar had gone to participate in the fair of Mundwa. On his way to the fair, his goods worth Rs.39/- were left behind somewhere in the village of Udwad. Orders have been issued by the state to give half the amount (of merchandise worth) be given to him from the *darbar* and a search be conducted to recover his goods.³⁴

Not only the ones who were engaged in trade, but also the ones engaged in agriculture were extended support by the state. As we saw earlier, the Mahajans engaged in agriculture were usually exploited by the village *jagirdars* or other officials, be it for taxation or exploitation in terms of the taking away of resources, etc. The state is seen resolving such matters for the betterment of Mahajans.

Despite all the state support provided to the Mahajans, not all their grievances were resolved to their satisfaction. They were seen migrating under the circumstances of oppression, indebtedness and in search of better opportunities. Mahajans were not the only ones on a move away from the region. Artisans and people belonging to the lower sections of society were also seen migrating under similar circumstances³⁵. Marubhumi or the ‘land of death’ was a land with considerable regional diversities. The north-western portion of the land was marked by low annual rainfall causing droughts and famine with recurrent food shortages that stimulated emigration.

Migration is a shift in the place of residence for some length of time.³⁶ This length of time can vary from being short in duration to permanent movement out of a

³⁴ SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 27 B.

³⁵ Late Prof. Nandita Prasad Sahai has discussed in detail the migration of artisans from Marwar to Malwa in her article.

³⁶ Rao, M.S.A. 1986. ‘Some Aspects of Sociology of Migration in India’, in *Studies in Migration: Internal and International Migration in India*. ed. M.S.A. Rao. Manohar. New Delhi.

place. Temporary migration was not an unknown phenomenon.³⁷ Fernao Nuniz³⁸ and Domingo Paes³⁹ have talked about the temporary migratory groups of merchants and artisans in the South Indian towns like Hampi under the Vijayanagar empire. We get evidence from the Tamil Nadu region of interregional migrations of weaving communities as new centres of patronage and authority emerged in the region during the thirteenth century. Shorter movements became more common across the regions at the first case, rather than stable migratory routes. Depletion of water resources was one of the factors that caused temporary migration in the arid region of Marwar.

One Mahajan belonging to the village Satlana used to conduct trade and business from Pali. But he was restricted by the state to stay in Pali.⁴⁰

Though the reason is not clear as to why did the state not allow the Mahajan to stay in Pali but a temporary intra-regional movement between Pali and Satlana was visible in this petition. Trade and commerce was being carried in Pali by Mahajans from adjoining regions. Some of the relatives of this Mahajan were also settled in Pali, as mentioned in the recorded petition. This further gives credence to the fact that extended community support was crucial for migrants, as will be discussed later in the chapter.

Short-term visits and tours are usually excluded from the purview of migration per se. The purpose that lay behind such movements were also varied. They range from movement to a new place due to unstable climatic conditions at the place of origin to movement seeking better likelihoods in life, as in cases of permanent migration. What would have been earlier a trend of temporary migration later opened the avenues for permanent migration to a region – Malwa in the case of Mahajans.

A group of five-seven Mahajans from village Pichipak, Bilara, migrated to Malwa *ri dharti* in V.S. 1812/1755 A.D. due to drought in their village. They were seen returning to their homeland after a gap of eleven years, i.e. in V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. The petition records a dispute concerning their agricultural

³⁷ Even Kharagsen – who roamed around from one corner of the subcontinent to another in search of better opportunities - moved back to his hometown of Jaunpur and opened his own shop in the city. This was after the demise of his uncle Sundardas, in Agra.

³⁸ A Portuguese chronicler and a diamond merchant by profession who wrote around 1520.

³⁹ Another Portuguese chronicler who wrote around 1509-10.

⁴⁰ SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 352/703.

Attached in Appendix V at end of the chapter.

and residential land. The state ordered the authorities to show sympathy to the returning Mahajans and help them re-establish themselves in the village. Their lands were to be restored to them.⁴¹

As per the above mentioned petition record, a group of Mahajans migrated from Pichipak, Bilara, *pargana* Jodhpur to Malwa, due to the climatic condition of drought prevalent in the region. The conditions behind this movement must have been very harsh to push the Mahajans to make a move. Though they returned when the climate became normal again and unstable condition subsided. An analyses of the petition offers us an insight into their migration. They must have moved along with their families in this case as they lost all their land in the hometown. There must have been no representative of theirs for such a loss of land to occur at the first place. Whatever opportunities they got in Malwa, it helped them survive for eleven years – which is quite a length of time. They still returned to their actual place of origin. Despite their absence for so many years, the state is seen to be quite supportive in re-establishing these Mahajans by restoring their lands. The reason behind such a support would have been the promotion of prosperity of the region resulting in increase in revenue collection.

Similarly,

The son of Mahajan JaiKishan, originally resident of Nagaur, ShriRam JaiGopal petitioned the Nagaur court in V.S. 1835/1778 A.D. that his father had his ancestral house in *khaejada ri pol*⁴² and owned a shop in the main market (*mandi*). His father migrated in V.S. 1787/1730 A.D. (*pardes para gaya tha*). The house and shop were taken over by the state under *khalsa* land. Jaikishan returned in V.S. 1805/1748 A.D. and petitioned the court for the restoration of land. After which the land was granted back to him. Jaikishan rented the house in V.S. 1811/1754 A.D. to a *bohra* and the shop to one Nandu. He collected the rent for a year, after which in V.S. 1812/1755 A.D. he migrated to Bikaner (*Bikaner kani para gayo tha*). Then the house was rented to Khushpal Chand and Kesari Chand. And the shop was rented to the *darbar* for the purpose of grain storage. The state ordered that an

⁴¹ SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 352/703.

Attached in Appendix V at end of the chapter.

⁴² The house must have been located in a prominent residential colony of Mahajans that was located near the market area. This reminds us of the house of Shantidas Zaveri that lay in *zaverivad* located near the mint house (later called *tanksalni pol*) and *sodagarni pol*, the hub of mercantile activities.

inquiry be conducted and facts be found out. If Jaikishan had actually migrated to the Deccan (*dakhin aya tare ae para gaya*) and his land taken over under the *khalsa*, then the same be restored to his son Jaigopal.

In the same petition, another property was disputed. This property lay in *Jajuwa ri baari*, mortgaged by Jaikishan. The state ordered that this property that be realised once the dues were settled and the papers of the same be realised.⁴³

In the above mentioned petition, it is seen that the Mahajan Jaikishan used to migrate from one place to another. First he is seen moving to the Deccan and later, to Bikaner from whence to and fro to Nagaur. He travelled back to his hometown as he had petitioned the court in 1748, i.e. 18 years after he had migrated. He must have migrated with his family as his properties were taken over by the state authorities under *khalsa* land. Forty-eight years after Jaikishan had migrated, his son was seen petitioning the court for restoration of his ancestral properties. Jaikishan, who must have migrated in search of better opportunities, most probably expired and his family now wanted to move back to Nagaur as running business in the migrant land was proving itself as a tough task.

Thus, the to and fro movement of Mahajans for as long a time-period as forty-eight years could be seen to exist. In addition to which the retention of ancestral properties was a common trend in the eighteenth century.

Another factor affecting a migrant while embarking on these movements was experience of the journey itself.

Mahajan Nola of Sambhar had participated in the fair of Mundwa, his goods – worth Rupees 39/- were robbed in the village of Udwad, on his way back. The state issued the order that a search be undertaken to recover the goods and half the money of their worth be given to Nola from the treasury (*adhkar inna nu darbar su dilaye deyo*).⁴⁴

Again,

Merchandise worth Rupees 8/- that had come from Bhilada to Pali was robbed on the way. Orders were issued by the state to ensure the safety of the

⁴³ SPBJ No. 22, V.S. 1835/ 1778 A.D. P. 83/375.

Document attached in Appendix V at the end of the chapter.

⁴⁴ SPBJ No. 1. V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 27 B.

merchants on the said route, search for these goods and the authorities were to make the payment to these merchants for the loss incurred.⁴⁵

Even a levy was enforced for night protection of merchandize, as informed by Tod.⁴⁶ He further informs that *rekwalee*⁴⁷ was demanded from every district that the caravans or *tandas* carrying merchandize used to pass through, wherever they halted for the day. ‘Each petty chief through whose district or patch of territory the merchants travelled, made a demand, till commerce was dreadfully shackled; but it was the only way in which it could be secured’.⁴⁸

Issues of security were ever prevalent in the minds of the migrants. Thus, two types of migrations can be identified: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary migration constituted the shift as per the choice of the people. Involuntary migration, on the other hand, were the one in which circumstances pushed the people to migrate. The former was relative to the economic and social conditioning of the migrant that decides his position upon arrival at the place of destination.

There can be multiple factors at work behind the phenomenon of migration. Political instability, economic betterment, social situations, drought and famines, and so on. In eighteenth century Rajasthan, state played a very important role in the migration of people. The state provided support in terms of security and ensuring that the migrants did not face hurdles at the place of destination. Even in times of return, establishing the people at their actual place became one of the duties performed by the state authorities.

A group of five-seven Mahajans from village Pichipak, Bilara, migrated to Malwa *ri dharti* in V.S. 1812/1755 A.D. due to drought in their village. They were seen returning to their homeland after a gap of eleven years, i.e. in V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. The petition records a dispute concerning their agricultural and residential pieces of land. The state ordered the authorities to show sympathy to the returning Mahajans and help them re-establish themselves in the village. Their lands were to be restored to them.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 80 B.

⁴⁶ James Todd. *Annals and Antiquities*.

⁴⁷ Which often consisted of cash and seldom kind.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 352/703.

In another such incident,

Mahajan Lahoti of village Adanapur petitioned that in V.S. 1819/1762 A.D. while he was in Malwa, the police officer (*hawaldar*) of his village turned his piece of land into a prison cell (*kothri karayi*). Later, the *hawaldar* sold the same piece of land to another Mahajan. In V.S. 1822/1765 A.D. when Lahoti returned to his village from Malwa, he had petitioned the state regarding the same and the state had issued orders for the authorities to return his land. But despite these orders, the authorities are not abiding by the state orders. Hence, Lahoti has filed a repetition in the matter.⁵⁰

As per the petition, Mahajan Lahoti was in Malwa for a period of three years or maybe more. The fact that Lahoti could still claim his piece of land upon his return reflects the point that his migration to Malwa must have been temporary in nature. The state support in re-establishing the Mahajan reflects the efforts being undertaken by the authorities to resettle deserted villages.

Migration was not always out of choice. It was carried only in unavoidable circumstances and at times, came with personal costs.⁵¹ The state is often seen to be consolable with the petitioners but the local officials did not relent and created pressurizing situations under which survival became difficult in an already difficult terrain. Petitioning must have been a recourse, but not in all the cases. Many a times members of the community must have resorted to migration. The exigencies of the circumstances were not identical in all the cases. Also, the state could not have successfully extended relief to all the petitioners.

Prof. Dilbagh Singh has mentioned that the state authorities were taking loans to resettle deserved villages in different *parganas* during this time period.⁵² The state was encouraging people to settle in new villages or was trying to rehabilitate the old deserted villages. In the case of Lahoti, the state was seen making such an effort and extending all help possible in terms of providing land and facilities for his smooth rehabilitation. Rajasthan witnessed famine and scarcity in the 1760's.

⁵⁰ SPBJ No. 21, V.S. 1835/1778 A.D. P. 232 A.

⁵¹ One of the instances of *silawats* and other construction workers migrating out of north-western Marwar, as quoted by late Prof. Nandita P. Sahai in her article, points out to the loss of an infant and a miscarriage in one of the families on move. The level of oppression must have been great to partake such risk.

⁵² Singh, Dilbagh. 1974. 'The Role of Mahajans in the Rural Economy in Eastern Rajasthan during the 18th Century.' *Social Scientist*, Vol. 2, No. 10.

Though the state was seen borrowing loans from the Mahajans, but not all Mahajans were economically equally capable to withstand harsh circumstances.

The state support to settle back the migrant Mahajans in their original villages is documented in the eighteenth century. This policy continued well into the nineteenth century. James Tod mentions about the political struggles between foes upon the new privileges that were granted to recall the scattered inhabitants.⁵³ Tax concessions were extended to them in their daily commercial activities so that trade and commerce was not affected. Their complaints against harassment were taken up seriously and attempts were made to resolve the issues faced by them. State at times took guarantee of a Mahajan who was trying to eke out a living in another village. The administration made sure that the system of tax collection was carried on with ease. The state did not want to loose any single source from its revenue generators. In the eighteenth century, when fight for resources was being witnessed on a pan-Indian scale, every individual and his labour counted as a resource for the authorities. Competition among the emerging states provided favourable incentives to the merchants and other classes who had skills to offer.

Inducing merchants and weavers to settle in new states was not limited to Rajasthan or Gujarat. It is known that Iradat Khan, one of the rajas of Azamgarh, induced merchants, mostly Agarwals, to migrate to Kopaganj, Mau, United Provinces in 1745. The Kopa village was a new settlement established by Iradat Khan himself during the eighteenth century. Many weavers were also known to have settled in nearby settlements since the sixteenth century onwards.

In times of natural calamities like famines, the impact was felt across the subcontinent. Distant regions became focal points of trading and commerce. When during the seventeenth century, famines hit Southern regions of Masulipatnam and Madras, paddy became 400% dearer. Grain was imported from as far as Bengal. The merchants clearly emerged as a profiteering group during these times of hardship. As the factors at St. George and the Surat Council reported, such impacts were to last for three years. So, while at one place the communities felt the impact of famines and had to migrate due to the push factors. On the other hand,

⁵³ James Tod. *Annals and Antiquities*.

geographical regions which could meet the demands of the people flourished and a small number of communities earned good amount of profit.

Few communities bore majority of the burden and were exposed to extortion and coercion. With rising inflation, survival became difficult. Migration was the only resort left for these communities. Few artisanal communities were seen abandoning their professions due to the pressing circumstances.⁵⁴ The artisan migrants from the north-western Rajasthan were confident of finding for themselves patrons at new places.⁵⁵

So far a change in profession by the artisans has not been documented from the region as the large tracts of unoccupied land and elite competition for limited manpower offered them abundant opportunities. Surely there must have been people who were hard hit by the state of affairs but overall their proportion must have been very less. Change in profession, at a time when occupational identity was a major element in an individual's life, was an extreme event. Giving up of resources and shifting of base were a much common sight. Chokkanatha Pulavar, a seventeenth century poet of Tamil region, in his famine song, mentioned that the merchants sold their balance books and weights and resorted to migration in difficult circumstances.

References to the migratory patterns in Rajasthan usually refer to the tendencies in the backdrop of droughts and famines or due to the Maratha inroads taking place in the region. As Archibald Adams states in his work,⁵⁶ if both food grain and grass famines occurred in a same year in the region of Marwar, then the only resort for the people to survive was to migrate. The preferred regions where the people usually migrated were: Eastern Rajasthan, Kota, Malwa, Sindh, Gujarat and Deccan or *dakhin*.

With the coming of the East India Company in the nineteenth century, the medieval weaving centres were displaced by the emerging trading centres. This enhanced the decision-making power of the merchants and *sahukars*. Thus, boosting their

⁵⁴ The factors of St. George in 1694 complained that weavers either absconded or migrated in groups to save themselves from the famines. The Panja Kummi – famine songs of the weaving community describe their hardships and resorting to selling their equipment. They migrated and became agricultural labourers and cart pullers.

⁵⁵ Late Prof. Nandita P. Sahai. *From Marwar to Malwa and Back*.

⁵⁶ Adams, Archibald. 1990. *The Western Rajputana States: A Medico-Topographical and General Account of Marwar, Sirohi, Jaiselmer*. Vintage Books. New Delhi.

hold in the regions where they had migrated. This increase in power and influence of the mercantile community is reflected in the many protests done by the peasants and artisanal communities in different states during this time-period.

Migration can be seen as another strategy to subsistence and avoid disturbances. They were also marks of protest against the social and economic oppressions. Merchants suffered due to the decline in purchasing power of the people in times of crisis. Migration or the threat of it⁵⁷, was an important bargaining tool for the Mahajans which had to be taken seriously as they were not hesitant in making a move. Hoarding was another resort to avert such famines. These records do not provide with much insight on such tendencies that lay beneath the surface, for instance, changes in the structures of society and pattern of settlement at the regional level.⁵⁸

Migration was also closely related to the phenomenon of state formation during the eighteenth century wherein new markets and trading centres were emerging. Mahajans had weak ties with agriculture. Limited dependence on land meant great mobility. Moreover, trade and moneylending served the ruling class with the requisite resources at their disposal. The newly emerging states, as we have discussed earlier, were in dire need of such resources. Due to their economic clout, Mahajans were granted important administrative posts in these states⁵⁹. They were innately tied to the political institutions of the day.

The practice of appointing the members belonging to the families of moneylenders in the offices of significance, like the ones dealing with revenue, both at *pargana* and state level became widespread in the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ “From the first quarter of the century we begin to come across many cases of traders and Mahajans obtaining appointments in local administration as *chaudharies* and *qanungos*.⁶¹ Not only was this phenomenon witnessed in the other parts of the state (for

⁵⁷ As discussed by Prasannan Parthasarthy in his work in the context of weavers in South India. Parthasarthy, Prasannan. 2001. *The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants and Kings in South India, 1720-1800*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

⁵⁸ Khadgawat, Dr. Mahendra ed. 2015. *Abhilekh*. State Archives Bikaner Publication.

⁵⁹ SPBJ No. 1, V.S. 1821/1764 A.D. P. 29 A; 35 B.

⁶⁰ Ranjan, Mrinal. 1998. *State and Merchants in 18th Century Eastern Rajasthan*. CHS. JNU. New Delhi.

⁶¹ Khan, Iqtidar Alam. 1976. ‘The Middle Classes in the Mughal Empire’, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Aug.

instance, in Eastern Rajasthan), but Iqtidar Alam Khan talks of it on a pan-Indian scale.

The *sharafs* were considered an indispensable part of the jewellery business. Emperor Jahangir's and Aurangzeb's jewellers included a *bania* to help them purchase jewels and diamonds. *Bania* Nyalchand helped the later identify which stone was pure or defective. The Ahmedabad jewellers used to travel to the diamond mines of Golconda, Raolconda, Bijapur and Kollur in the Deccan.⁶² Hence, merchants and traders were on a move for the purpose of business.

Niccolao Manucci, who visited India during Aurangzeb's reign, stated that the jewellers of Gujarat used to visit diamond mines located in other nations, including Persia. They either visited themselves or sent their agents to buy the precious stones required by them. He further mentions, "Their persons are well made and their women always smothered in jewellery".⁶³ Manucci's statement reflects the fact that the merchants and traders were travelling for the purpose of business as far as Persia and they had a well established network in place to do so. Also, it takes us beyond the realm of traders and merchants, to their womenfolk, who must have accompanied them on their journeys for such an observation.⁶⁴ Another Dutch account of 1667 states, "These 'benejanen' are very keen in the jewellery trade and roam about Persia continuously like bees in order to buy with profit all that can be obtained".

Exodus: With and Without Family

Migration is a very crucial phenomenon for the development of both economy and society. It constitutes one of the requisite component of urbanisation that acts as an agent for inducing change in the mindset of people. The increasing contact with people from diverse backgrounds and engagement in social activities introduces an element of change in the life of an individual. In addition to the new opportunities at hand, adjustments in the daily ways of life are also called for. Not only does the

⁶² We find the mention of Shantidas Zaveri traveling to Golconda and entering into contract with the Dutch East India Company for the same purpose.

⁶³ Quoted in Gopal, Surendra. 1975. *Commerce and Crafts in Gujarati 16th and 17th centuries*. Delhi.

⁶⁴ If they themselves were not involved in some capacity associated with the trade. Since the description reads - 'their women'.

migrant make modifications in his way of life, but repercussions are felt at the place of origin as well. People who are left behind have additional roles and duties added onto their existent tasks. In other words, the social equations of relationships undergo a transformation due to migration.

Migrants from Marwar have been generally considered as affluent people with diverse skills and entrepreneurial abilities, who migrated to different parts of the subcontinent and established successful ventures of their own. The sheer pace of success achieved by some of these migrants would have been a bone of contention between the migrants and locals at the place of destination.

The migrants, on the other hand, would have had to face various sorts of pressures. These would have emerged different factors right from the political developments to economic nexus witnessed in their new neighbourhood. With families left behind in their homeland, the survival in a new land constituted a struggle which would not have been without a purpose. Avenues for such a purpose to emerge in itself requires the prevalence of limited economic opportunities at homeland or better opportunities beyond homeland. It could have been either ways. Either the movement was voluntary or involuntary.

Due to change in the mode of payments via *hundis*, some movement was oblivious on the part of merchant traders. There were many occasions upon which the traders left their place of residence and moved to trading centres, be it for the purpose of some business transaction in terms of a *hundi* and paying visit to a regional market or to participate in a fair/*mela*.

Travel formed a very crucial part of a merchant's life. This can be inferred from the life story of Banarasidas⁶⁵ who spent lot of time travelling extensively, via different modes and to many cities for carrying out business activities. The territories were usually unsafe to transit at few patches and the weather was also harsh at times. All sorts of experiences were witnessed on these journeys and Banarasi was stuck in tense situations many a times. Though he did not permanently settle at another place, but he was accompanied by his wife only occasionally. They were separated for several years at a stretch. Merchants used to

⁶⁵ Banarasidas was a seventeenth century Jain merchant. He was also a theologian with works of Jain philosophy penned down by him. In 1641, he wrote the first autobiography in an Indian language found so far. This unique text, *Ardhakathanak*, provides us with insights into the life of a merchant and the impact of multiple factors on his life, both private and public.

travel and conduct business in different cities across the subcontinent as far back as Banarasi's lifetime. Banarasi's friend Dharamdas, who was his business partner for two years in Agra, belonged to a family of Oswals from Delhi.

One of the reasons behind the movement of merchants from one place to another, usually for short period of time, was political upheaval. Though other reasons such as outbreak of an epidemic like plague also played a role behind the movement of people. At two points, Banarasi talks about such incidents. Monetary exploitation was quite a common phenomenon in the sixteenth century.

The business community had to face challenges at various fronts. His community had to face persecutions on two occasions. On both the occasions, it was the governors who has an eye on the wealth of the merchant community. The Mughal administration, how far were aware of such regional situations cannot be said with surety, does not seem to have been directly involved in these persecutions.

Travelling for the purpose of business was not an easy task. There were several kind of hindrances that came while one was on travel. Difficult geographical terrain constituted one such hindrance. For instance, while on one occasion Kharagsen⁶⁶ was travelling back to Jaunpur from Bengal, Banarasi describes the geographical difficulties faced by his father. The reason behind this movement lay in the sudden death of Rai Dhanna, a leading merchant because of whom business could thrive in the region. Later Kharagsen travelled to Agra for another business venture. There he found support in his uncle (*chacha*) Sundardas, a trader in gold and silver. Another journey was undertaken by Kharagsen, but this time to get himself married in Meerut at the age of 22 years. On all these occasions, there were many hardships that Kharagsen had to face in order to reach from one place to another.

In order to be on the move at this frequency and to distant places, during the seventeenth century, there must have a strong network in existence which kept the merchants abreast with regional spatial conditions.

Once again the trading community fled Jaunpur, in 1657, due to the war-like situation created upon the *farman* of Emperor Akbar when the governor was ordered by the emperor to stop Sultan Salim Shah from reaching Kolhuban forest. At this juncture the merchants and traders migrated on their own and not collectively. In such times of political chaos, Kharagsen and his family had to take

⁶⁶ Father of Banarasidas.

refuge in a forest in Lakshmanpura, along with another family⁶⁷ for almost a week. Life of a merchant and his family, therefore, was not a smooth affair. It was full of upheavals now and then.

In times of political chaos, apart from migrating, the merchant class resorted to altering means of lifestyle. The dressing manner of the merchants and their family members changed as and when the circumstances became insecure.⁶⁸ Usually, wealthy people became victims at the hands of few political leaders. Many such instances have been described in detail by Banarasi and other contemporary merchants. Instances of exploitation and excesses were a common affair in the lives of merchants. Our archival sources speak volumes on such instances.

While on his way for his first business tour, Banarasi faced a number of difficulties on his way to Agra. There were warehouses available on rent for business travellers in addition to the *sarais* constructed at different places. Porters were also available on hire for fetching the luggage/cargo carried by the merchants, as Banarasi was seen hiring porters on his way to various cities. He incurred heavy loss in his first business venture and lost all his capital. His wife and mother-in-law helped him with some capital to make a new beginning. Later, in order to expand his business, Banarasi went to Patna with his friend and business partner Narottamdas. Banarasi, along with other merchants, used to represent *sahus*, i.e. big merchants, and do business on their behalf in other cities as far as Patna. In order to break free from this representation, deeds of release were to be enacted by the *sahu*.

Frequent movement for short-term was also existent since past many centuries. Organisation of fairs and regional *mandis* demanded travelling by a trader. The ability of Mahajans to adapt to situations and their flexibility is reflected in this very momentum. There were many in the surrounding who loathed his success and sheer capacity to work hard. People belonging to the upper echelon were seen exploiting him.

There were conflicts on several counts. Brahmans, among all other communities seem to have the maximum number of conflicts with the Mahajans.

⁶⁷ That of Dulah Shah, another renowned merchant and moneylender of the contemporary era.

⁶⁸ At the time of Emperor Akbar's death, riots broke out in the city of Jaunpur. The shopkeepers did not sit in their shops. The record books consisting of business transactions were buried and the cash was hidden at safe places. Men began to wear plain clothes. Women too dressed plainly.

A Brahmin had come to attend the marriage of Mahajan Deva's daughter. He had been given a sum of Rs.6/-, but he demanded at Rs.16/- from Deva. In response to the complaint filed by the Mahajan, state ordered that the Brahmin be given money as per the wishes of the Mahajan and no further trouble be given to the latter.⁶⁹

The Brahmins are also seen holding back their recovered goods. While trading, if the goods got stolen from the caravan of the Mahajans, either the Brahmins or the village *zamindar* used to keep the same with them without giving any information to the former about the goods or thief. The Mahajans used to lodge complaints regarding the situation on which the state used to issue orders of recovery.

The Mahajan of Rahida had helped the Chaudhary to get Rs. 600/- as loan from the village *bohra*. His commission of Rs. 1/- wasn't paid to him, rather his utensils and a sum of Rs. 11/- were taken away from him by the village *jagirdar*. Orders were issued by the state to find out the truth in the matter.⁷⁰

Such was the pressure exerted by the *jagirdars* on them that they resorted to means of protest like sitting on a hunger-strike:

The Khandelwal of village Farvasi, Harlal, informed the ruler that the village *jagirdar*, Shekhawat Mahsingh, was constructing a house and had asked his father to supply bricks for the same, that too free of cost. Harlal's father refused to comply with the illegitimate demand of the *jagirdar*. He said he could only provide him with bullocks to carry the bricks. But the *jagirdar* forced him to comply with his demand, upon which Harlal's father sat on a hunger-strike, during which he expired. Whence Harlal's mother committed *sati*.⁷¹

Apart from the exploitations they faced, there were other groups in the society who also wanted to have a share in their resources. The Mahajans often found themselves at crossroads with thieves and became victims of thieves and dacoits (*vyapariyan ka maal chor huyo*).

⁶⁹ SPBJ No. 5, V.S.1823/1766 A.D. P. 120 A; SPBJ No. 5, V.S.1823/1766 A.D. P. 254 A; SPBJ No. 9, V.S. 1826/1769 A.D. P. 149 B.

⁷⁰ SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 122 B.

⁷¹ SPBJ No.10, V.S.1827/1770 A.D. P. 234.

Land alienation and emigration are not things of the past. Seasonal migrations have been quite a common phenomenon at many places in early modern Rajasthan. Various researches have shown that Mahajans have been dispersing since long to other regions from their homeland for predominantly economic reasons.⁷² Their communal solidarity came to their rescue in the far-flung areas they migrated to. Not only did they migrate to other states but also to important centres of trade within Rajasthan from inner villages. Our sources reveal a similar trend. There were Mahajans who belonged to one village and migrated to Pali, a blooming commercial centre, where his relatives were settled.⁷³ And another instance informs us of a Mahajan belonging to Bikaner carrying his occupation in the *qasba* of Nagaur.⁷⁴ Migration doesn't seem to be a new trend to their community.

Collective solidarity among the community translated in en masse emigrations to more favourable locales if the state or landed magnates did not withdraw demands and remained oppressive in their extortion of taxes. For instance, attracting merchants in order to boost the economy of a region was regarded as a very favourable policy⁷⁵. James Tod described the success of Bhavnagar in these terms: 'As we entered the city there was nothing to call for particular notice, excepting the crowds of wealthy merchants traversing the streets, from whom, as the poet Chand says, "Cities derive their beauty"; and in this point of view, Bhavnagar was certainly beautiful.'⁷⁶ Not only this, but generally traders followed their local rulers and their respective states' entourages to different parts of South Asia, when the maharajas and chiefs in imperial service traversed the Mughal empire and beyond.⁷⁷

Banarasidas witnessed the members of Oswal *bania* community in almost all over North India. He mentions a locality in Fathpur named after one such migrant caste-group.⁷⁸ Similar instances are revealed in many other sources. It is told that the family of Shantidas Zaveri migrated to Ahmedabad from Marwar. His father, an

⁷² B.L. Bhadani. *Characteristics and Social Mores of the Banias*.

⁷³ SPBJ No.5, V.S.1823/1766 A.D. P. 177 B.

⁷⁴ Ibid, P. 48 B.

⁷⁵ Rima Hooja informs us of the fact that Ramgarh was referred to as 'Sethon-ka-Ramgarh'- Ramgarh of the merchants, after Devi Singh invited prominent merchants and traders to take up residence there.

⁷⁶ James Tod, *Travels*, pp. 260.

⁷⁷ Rima Hooja. 2006. *A History of Rajasthan*. Rupa & Co. New Delhi.

⁷⁸ Banarasidas. 2009. *Ardhakathanak: A Half Story*, tr. Rohini Chowdhury. Penguin Books. New Delhi.

Oswal Jain, Sahasra Kiran, had migrated from Osian, about 30 kilometres from Jodhpur in the late sixteenth century. He acquired the skills of a jeweller and also set up a *sarrafi* business.⁷⁹ Bhansali Kapur Chand, another Marwari, also went to Ahmedabad.⁸⁰ A large-scale migration from Marwar took place during the severe famine of 1694 to Patna where all were welcomed by a big merchant named Hiranand Sah, who himself was a migrant from Marwar. There may be a strong possibility that mass migration took place to those regions where they expected sympathies from people who themselves migrated previously and who would help them to settle down in an area new to them.

The New Neighbourhood & Residential Pattern of Migrants

The historical Malwa region includes what we now know as western Madhya Pradesh and parts of south-eastern Rajasthan. It emerged as the most preferred region for migration by the Mahajans.⁸¹ One of the *kahavats* mentions that Malwa and Sindh as two important regions where people used to migrate in the event of famines:

*Asadi puam dina nirmal uge chand
Koi singh koi malwa jaya katsi fand*⁸²

Almost all the routes of Western Rajasthan connecting the towns of Sindh and Multan were known as ‘camel routes’ (*Katar*) and the roads connecting Malwa to the Northern India were called ‘cart-routes’ (*Balad*).⁸³ In the year 1715-1771, when Marwar and adjoining regions were hit by famine, a large number of people

⁷⁹ Mehta, Makrand. 1991. *Indian Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Historical Perspective: With Special Reference to Shroffs of Gujarat from 17th to 19th Centuries*. Academic Foundation. Delhi. It is discussed on length in his work how the fact that Shantidas Zaveri belonged to the wealthy Jain community cemented his business prospective. Also, the nexus between Jain monks and Jain businessmen is explained in detail. This nexus helped serve the legitimacy that came due to political linkages with the rulers.

⁸⁰ Dwijendra Tripathi and M.J. Mehta. 1978. ‘The Nagarsheth of Ahmedabad: The History of an Urban Institution in a Gujarat City’, *IHC, 39th Session*. Hyderabad.

⁸¹ Maximum number of petitions mention Malwa as the place of migration of Mahajans.

⁸² Rao, Dr Narayan Singh. 2017. ‘Migration of Karshas and Science of Cultivation in Rajasthan: A Study Based on Krishi Kahavats and Baats’. *Abhilekh*. Vol. IV. Rajasthan State Archives. Bikaner. If the Moon rising on *Purnima* of *Asadh* month is dim, it means now an era of hardship and difficulties has begun and there are possibilities of drought and famine in the region. In order to escape from the resultant famine, the *karshas* (peasants) had only one option of migrating to either Sindh or Malwa.

⁸³ Choondawat, Dr. Pradyuman Kumar Singh. 2004. ‘Trade Relations and Routes of Rajasthan (Between Sindh and Multan) (1200-1800 A.D.)’. *RHC, Session Sheolijang*, Vol. XIX. pp. 63-67.

migrated Kota Bundi and Malwa.⁸⁴ Malwa region was ruled by the Mughals and later by the Marathas. Since the ancient times and as per the epigraphic records, mentioning all the major trade routes, it is evident that the *Madhya-Desh/Malwa* region was very well connected with Rajasthan. It lay conveniently connected with Marwar, on the western flank of the plateau. Some of the states in Malwa were founded by Rajput rulers. Amjerra, for example, was founded by Birsing – the second son of Rao Dooda of Mundore.

Several trade routes lay at the crossroads that lay between Marwar and Malwa. Malwa was a fertile land, as described by contemporary travellers, in addition to possessing few articles of commerce in abundance. The town was cosmopolitan in character constituting a good population of traders. This must have provided an impetus to merchants and traders coming in from other regions as the town could provide them with a comfortable environment to settle in. Therefore, Malwa was a land of opportunity and prosperity, especially for the migrants from this region of Rajasthan.

The Mughals followed the policy of settling the Rajputs in non-Rajput areas like Malwa since the mid-fourteenth century.⁸⁵ The same policy was followed under Akbar and Aurangzeb and a second wave of Rajput settlement took place in Malwa until the Marathas laid sway over the region by the second half of the eighteenth century. Malwa was thus a known region to the emigrating individuals from Rajasthan. James Tod also mentions few Solanki branches – Allote and Jawura - belonging to Malwa.⁸⁶ Regional networks would have been established and channels of information available to them who would inform about the prevailing situation there. They would have found people from the same traditional background who could offer them patronage and aid while they moved to this region to explore new opportunities.

Later, the Marathas continued to extend patronage to new settlers in order to let the land under their control prosper. Malwa continued to be a prosperous region with thriving urban centres at the time of the arrival of British forces. The Rathore kingdom was reduced to being a vassal in 1756 and with this change came the

⁸⁴ Mohan, Brij Javalia. 1969. ‘Rajasthan ki Arthik Avastha’. *Varda*. October. Year 12. No. 4.

⁸⁵ Late Prof. Nandita P. Sahai. *From Marwar to Malwa and Back*.

⁸⁶ James Tod. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan or the Central and Western Rajpoot States of India*. pp. 91.

increased pressure of revenue on the subjects. Amid this unstable political environment, Rathore Vijay Singh managed the political affairs well until the end of the century when the situation became more precarious. Such a scenario gave a push to the mobility of the subject populace.

Migrants belonging to a particular place and sharing common values, tend to share neighbourhood and form ethnic groups by merging internal differences of sub-caste and sub-region. The earlier migrants help the new entrants in getting work opportunities and settling down. These groups then try to foster their identities – originally carried by them from their place of origin. They establish their own set of institutions, among other things building their own places of worship.

This system of collectivity is not a new phenomenon. It has been studied as part and parcel of the various migration theories that have analysed the problem of ethnicity. Studies in migration are said to have been originated from two theories: cultural contact theories and the Marxian analysis of colonization and dissention. There was an unconscious acceptance of the conclave system by the political authorities. The social communities were allowed to regulate their own state of affairs by the higher authority.

Unlike the weaving communities under the Bahmani kingdom, who adopted the Muslim ways of life upon migration and participated in Muslim rituals,⁸⁷ the Mahajan community maintained their status quo in terms of their traditional and rituals. They had strong community ties. Wherever they went, they stuck to communal residential clusters, built temples and extended help to the members of their community. Even when they migrated within Rajasthan, they retained their ancestral homes located in their aboriginal towns where colonies were demarcated for their residence. As we have seen in the previous section, this demand for retaining land and other resources was supported by the state. This support was irrespective of the time-slab for which the migrants were away from their homeland.

⁸⁷ Though such rituals had their own demarcations and cannot be said to be syncretic in entirety.

। मीमांसा निवृत्ति वद्वर्तना पारपृष्ठ ४९

। तथा भासदीकरणं हंसरजैकुस्त्रैहृष्णैर्गोऽर्द्धराघव
शुभवां एश्वर्मन्तरामोहुवैष्टेहैषुरवल्लिमाकर्मन्
पवं एराघरहैकुष्टरामहाजगरीजापापापिगंगामोव
ब्रुवीसुपवंलराघरेकातीन्हैर्गोपगारनीजापाप
शीवारंणेषुरुक्तानीहैस्त्रजागवावरएवं वृद्धं
दीश्वरामनरीजापगाम्बैवारंणीदीकरणामावावार
रेवरोवरप्योऽपि शारंणारपादे वै है उपगाप
आपलीजापगांशवारंणां वृद्धपत्रेभाष्टपवरुप
पगांकानीतिश्वराप्यैहै कुव्रीमेणां रेवारंणां
है गोप्यमान्मोगवारंणीक्षेपातरैषयवैत्तमानी
इत्थीहुक्तुरपान्वेगदृष्टिकृष्णकोहैषंपादे
षुमद्भौतरेव्वागवीजापगांरोनिकान्वृद्धपव
पाहारेनरीजापगांवारंणोप्यैक्षुनैहीराम
जदेयोवंसदैगागवीभरतीजापगांरोडदीपवार
णोद्वैजनीरामैइरामवदन्वैरेस्त्रोपत

। जापोंमवाइराम

Petition 1:

One Mahajan, Daulatram, had migrated to Jaipur but his house lay in his hometown Didwana in the residential colony of Mahajans (*inna ra ghar Didwana mein Mahajan ra mohalla mein hai*). Some dispute arose over the concerned property (*jagya*) in confrontation with member of the Muslim community (*pathana ri jagya ro barna duji kaani hai*). The Pathan purchased land in the colony and constructed a house. On the other side of the house, was the house of Brahmins. Dispute arose around the door of the Pathan's house that opened in front of the door of Brahmins' house. The state ordered that the *barna* (door) of the house of the Pathan be reconstructed so that it opened on the other side, not opposite to that of the Brahmins' house.

This petition not only highlights the fact that Mahajans had separate residential colonies in different *qasbas*, but it also highlights the ethos surrounding residential complexes of particular communities. As can be inferred, Brahmins must be

⁸⁸ SPBJ No. 31, V.S. 1841/1784 A.D. P. 115 A (2).

residing next to the colony of Mahajans and when a house was purchased by a Muslim in the Mahajan colony, its door was not allowed to face the door of a Brahmin's house that was situated in the neighbourhood. This was such an important matter that it had to be taken up in the court.

Thus, the communal inward-oriented psychology of Mahajan community was reinforced by the largely residential clusters grouped accordingly. In the origin myth of Agarwals, it is said that whenever a new family came into the neighbourhood each house contributed one brick and one *mudra* (coin). Also, their ability to adapt themselves on the lines of a prevailing culture is said to have added to their commercial viability.

When in another city,⁸⁹ a merchant would prefer to rent a house nearby to that of another merchant. When plague broke out in Agra in V.S. 1673, Banarasidas escaped to a peaceful village of Brahmins and rented out a house near to that of another merchant. Also, for Ahmedabad it is known that there was a separate settlement for the jewellers called *zaverivad*.⁹⁰ The earliest reference to this settlement comes from the year 1606. It was located near the mint house and hub of mercantile activities in the city. The area was dotted by Jain temples and later some dispute arose in the colony due to Portuguese missionary activities.⁹¹

One instance of mass migration finds mention in the Ardhakathanak (A Half Story). The reason behind this movement was exploitation by the governor. Although the decision to migrate was taken collectively by the jeweller community but they all did not move out of the city together. All of them moved in their own capacity, individually, i.e. with their own families. Even at this juncture, when Kharagsen had moved to the town of Shahzadpur, a person named Karamachand Mahur – member of his community – came to his rescue and helped him by giving him his house to reside in the middle of the night. From Shahzadpur, Khargsen migrated to Allahabad for livelihood and he left behind his family at Shazadpur, i.e. at a safe place, away from the troublesome Jaunpur. Thirteen months after leaving Jaunpur, Kharagsen asked his family to move to Fatehpur. In Fatehpur, his

⁸⁹ When Banarsi was in Agra.

⁹⁰ Makrand Mehta. *Indian Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Historical Perspective*.

⁹¹ It is said that the jewelers petitioned emperor Jahangir against these missionary activities and a *farman* was issued in October 1615 compelling the Jesuits to give up their house in the *mahalla* of *Jawaharvada*.

family stayed in the colony where residences of Oswals were located (*Oswal ke ghar hain jahan*). This is indicative of communal residential clusters being in existence in major towns and cities across medieval India.

Under the then prevalent situation of political turmoil, sustenance had to be found in caste solidarity rather than other forms of dependencies. Migration was not an unknown fact of life for many Mahajans, though it was not yet a full-fledged trend during this period. Even on migrating to other areas the Mahajans preferred to stay together in *basas*.⁹² In crucial times, members of the brotherhood generally rendered help in the form of guarantee on loans or helping procure loans on low rates of interest or rescuing them from difficult circumstances.

Migrants' Social Structure

Communities are not monolithic. They are ever moving constellations of cohabiting with others.⁹³ Migration or movement is not merely a geographical displacement. A social displacement also takes place simultaneously. It produces repercussions on several aspects of an individual's life. For example, the custom of choosing an auspicious day for the purpose of traveling reveals us with an insight into lives of merchants and the notions held by their community. Beyond the social realm, such customs shed light on the political situation at that time. They speak about the hidden threats of security as faced by the members of the community en route to their destination. Hence, in order to avert all such dangers during the journey, an auspicious day was chosen by them, when the almighty would be their saviour.

Caravans were organized whence people from different cities used to gather and travel together to a single destination. For example, when Banarasi was travelling to Agra, a party of nineteen men was formed – Banarasidas and his nine servants, another Maheshwari and his six servants, and two Brahmins who joined in from Mathura.

⁹² Iqtidar Alam Khan. 1976. 'The Middle Classes in the Mughal Empire', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 5, No. 1, August. While citing *basas*, author cites the reference by Banarasidas made in *Ardha-Kathanak* to a whole locality of Oswal traders at Fatehpur who, as their group designation indicated, belonged originally to a small place in Marwar.

⁹³ Kanalu, Naveen. 2016. 'Pirla Panduga: Muharram practices of the Deccan weavers, their migrations, songs and memories'. *Migrations in Medieval and Early Colonial India*, ed. Vijaya Ramaswamy. Routledge. London.

Reputation of merchants was assessed by the reputation of people they dealt with, i.e. their contacts and network. This was moreover crucial while one was travelling and got stuck in some sort of trouble. People of repute could be the only ones who could rescue the merchants from such untoward incidents. The regional officials had all the authority to punish them if they were not able to prove their true identities. Banarasidas recalls a popular saying, while travelling to Agra on his first business tour, ‘one can always rely on relatives and saints’.⁹⁴

So far we have discussed the various issues that confronted the Mahajans while they had to migrate. Now we must shed light on the issues that awaited them while they had already migrated. They tended to return back after variable lengths of time. Hence, it is crucial to shed light on their bonds with their families and the varied concerns faced by them upon their return.

Migration had a gendered aspect attached to it. Men were more likely to leave the household and migrate to a distant place. One person migrating from a household increased the probability of the next generation to migrate ten-fold. The first generation of migrants had an emotional bondage with the family. The second generation migrating must have formed more close ties with the people around at new surroundings.

It is correctly stated,⁹⁵ at first the process of migration appears to be contrary to community formation. It disrupts stable community and is usually associated with cultural dislocation. It is when one looks at depth and realises the mechanisms that were built to deal with issues associated with migration. These were developed in response to the ripples felt in the social realm by such a movement. One of the first institutions that felt the immediate impact of migrants behaviour was their marital social life, i.e. the institutions of engagement and marriage.

Dola, the Mahajan of Balotra, petitioned in May, V.S. 1824/1767 A.D. that his daughter was engaged with the *shah* of Indrana, Jagannath, in V.S. 1816/1759 A.D. After which Jagannath went to Malwa. Now it’s been eight

⁹⁴ Stanza 311, pp. 131.

⁹⁵ Rai, Santosh Kumar. 2016. ‘Many Madanpuras: Memories and histories of migrant weavers of northern India during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’. *Migrations in Medieval and Early Colonial India*, ed. By Vijaya Ramaswamy. Routledge. London and New York.

years and the girl is getting older. Dola went to the village Nolayi in Malwa to call Jagannath, where his brother Uday Bija promised in front of the *panch* that on 3rd April Jagannath will return, if he doesn't then the girl be married at another place. So, the girl was engaged with the Mahajan of Basadi. When the husband-to-be came to Balhotra to wed the girl, the *panch* of Indrana asked for a sum of Rs.100/- from Dola. When Dola did not give the same to them, then they threatened him and shoed-away the going to be groom. The girl was left behind, only to sit at home (*tael-chadhi*). The state ordered to ask the *panch* of Balotra and Indrana as to why a going-to be bride (*tael-chadhi bindni nu kyu rakh tina ro*) was made to sit at home like this. And a reasonable answer was to be given to Dola.⁹⁶

In succession, we find these two documents in the petition records in the same *bahi khata* pertaining to this case:

The engagement of Mahajan Jagannath of Indrana was done with the daughter of Mahajan Dola in V.S. 1816/1759 A.D. Jagannath went to Malwa, during which time his brother gave the promise in written that if Jagannath did not return by the 3rd of April, V.S. 1824/1767A.D., Dola will be free to marry-off his daughter wherever he wishes to. There will not be any obligation in this regard.⁹⁷

The second document appears to have been taken up from the records or provided by Mahajan Dola as a proof to substantiate his case and cross-checked by the court and attached therein. It is revealed that the *panch* of Balotra and Indrana were exploiting the situation and trying to make some money from Dola. The actual victim in the whole case being the bride whose marriage did not materialise on two occasions. The relevant point here is that the consequences of migration were felt by not just the migrant's family but by another family that lay far in the aboriginal village. Ripples of tension were created to the extent that not only did the marriage break apart but it led to corruption and exploitation by the village officials. After the engagement of Jagannath and Dola's daughter, Dola himself went to Malwa to call the bridegroom. The groom was residing there with his brother⁹⁸ who

⁹⁶ SPBJ No. 6, V.S. 1824/1767 A.D. P. 152 B.

⁹⁷ SPBJ No.6, V.S. 1824/1767 A.D. P. 153 B.

⁹⁸ This fact is indicative of the element of community support in times of migration in both the cases whether Uday Bija was Jagannath's real brother or some distant relative residing in Nolayi, Malwa.

intervened in the matter and assured Jagannath's return to Indrana. This must have created tensions between the two families.

Similarly, in another such case the family of the bride visited Malwa to call back the groom to perform the ceremony of marriage as years were passing by. But due to no serious response from the groom's side, the bride had to be married in another family. Unlike the earlier case there were no prior petitions filed in the court and the matter had to be resolved by the *nyat-panch* at the community level as ordered by the state.

Mahajan Varse of village Virami petitioned that his engagement was done with the daughter of Bija, a Mahajan of Pali. Varse went to Malwa, during which time the girl was married to somebody else. The family of Bija have written in response to the petition that as they were concerned with the increasing age of their daughter, they went to Virami two-three times. The brother of Varse had assured them if Varse did not come by *Akha-Teej*, then Bija can marry his daughter at another place as per his own wish. This dispute between the *panch* of Pali and those of Virami be settled as per the customs of the Mahajan community, ordered the state.⁹⁹

In another petition,

The engagement of the daughter of Mahajan Lalavas was done with the Mahajan of Palasni, Dola, when the bride was aged 11 years. Lalavas's wife petitioned the court that Dola went to the South (*dakhin paro gayo*). Information of his migration came but he did not return. Now, Lalavas's daughter had turned 20 years and the latter were not allowing for her engagement with the Mahajan of Kevala. The state ordered that a time of 20 days be given to the family and relatives/*bhaiband* of Dola. If he doesn't return within the stipulated time, then the girl be engaged wherever her family wanted to.¹⁰⁰

Such disputes were so common that *parwanas* were written by the *hawaldars* over such conflicts:

⁹⁹ SPBJ No. 9, V.S. 1826/1769 A.D. P. 134 A.

¹⁰⁰ SPBJ No. 6, V.S. 1824/1767 A.D. P. 3 A.

A *parwana* was written by *hawaldar* of village Bilaspur regarding the conflict with respect to engagement between the *panch* of Mahajans of Pand and those of Bilaspur.”¹⁰¹

The major reason behind these disputes was migration of the bridegroom. Also, the factor of money might have been an added element. Money taken by the family of groom might have been utilised for his journey to Malwa or *dakhin desh*. And now his interest in marriage faded. Engagement of bride at two places was thus a common phenomenon among the Mahajans as the groom was a migrant not able to make a timely return.

Whatever be the reason, it seems to be a trend which came under the guise of a punishable offence. This is proved by the fact that the guarantor who was involved in the fixing of the engagement was liable to punishment and fine in case of the engagement not materialising into marriage. The state tried to resolve such disputes as amicably as possible and usually left it to the discretion of the *nyat-panchayat*.

There was some dispute regarding the ceremony of engagement between Jeevan and Mahajan Lala Manohar of village Jasutawas, who was the guarantor of this ceremony. Since the engagement was disputed and could not materialise, therefore, Lala Manohar was arrested and fined for grain worth Rs. 23/- Orders were given for his release after collecting the fine.¹⁰²

This was quite a bulky fine in those times. The sum of Rs. 23/- constituted a huge amount of money, though the fine was collected in terms of grain. This must have been done in order to recover the expenditure done by the family of the bride on the occasion of engagement.

In all these petitions, the groom was seen to have migrated after the ceremony of engagement. Nowhere is it mentioned that the engagement was done with a migrant. The bride's family members were seen running after the groom to distant places. They had to undertake long journeys for the sake of their daughter's future. The groom did not return on many occasions, for which we have petitions as proof. In many cases, the matter would not have always reached the court and might have been addressed by the *nyat-panchayat*. The general resolution being the marriage of daughter at another place. This resolution was arrived when the groom

¹⁰¹ SPBJ No. 6, V.S. 1824/1767 A.D. P. 166 A.

¹⁰² SPBJ No.2, V.S.1822/1765 A.D. P. 38 B.

was given a final deadline to return to the native soil. Thus, tensions and conflicts were created due to the behaviour of migrants. This had repercussions on his family and relatives in the village.

In a patriarchal society, where the identity of women was entrenched with that of her husband, father or brother, woman was left with a deep sense of longingness and separation when her husband was away. If wives and children had to be left behind at home, while the trader was on a move, this would have called several institutions to work as a base, a support behind launching this migration norm. It would have been a vital factor behind the institution of ‘joint family’ and its bondage, holding the members back somehow. For the males wouldn’t have had to worry much in that case. Analysing the nature of the petitions records at disposal and the various instances like those of property disputes or a familial-conflicts, it can be surmised that the institution of joint-family was the general trend in society. In that joint family structure, husband was a major means of identity for a woman. In his absence, in some cases, she was even denied with the basics of life. The feelings of separation and longingness as felt by womenfolk is reflected in the traditional ‘Geet Siyalo Ro’, which says:

In this season days are smaller and nights are longer. One does not feel good, if his/her beloved is not with him/her. One should enjoy the comfort of home, and should spent time in worship.

In this folklore, the lady is calling her husband and telling him that you should realise my condition in this weather when cold wind is blowing. You should not go out *pardesh* - in this season.

Though the following sagacity refers to later times, still the feeling of separation felt by women remained the same even in earlier times:

Amwan majori gileri
Mahua Tapaki gailen
Kekra se pathaon saneswa
Re nirmohia chhor de nokaria¹⁰³

¹⁰³ From Santosh Kumar Rai. *Many Madanpuras*.

The mago trees blossom
Mahua flower is blooming,
Through whom shall I send the message,
O cruel one give up your job.

Not every woman was ready for this separation. As seen in this region and time-period, incidents of extramarital relations became part of the general migrant's life lore. In the eighteenth century north-western Rajasthan, women were seen indulging in illicit relationships when their husbands were away. Women confronted emotional vacuums and often there were possibilities of their deviating from the moral-societal code of conduct. The notion of *be-adbi* as improper behaviour was also invoked with respect to the Mahajan women. There are instances where the *binyani* had illicit relationship with another man:

The *mussaraf* of Nagaur informed that in Mundwa, *bhai* Angad Ram had an affair with *binyani* Lali and the latter had an abortion done. In response, the state ordered that Angad Ram be put behind the bars as a punishment and he should be fined for the same.¹⁰⁴

In yet another instance, a daughter-in-law was alleged to have an illegal relation with one of her in-laws:

In village Godhrawas, the wife of Mahajan Nada had a fight with the sister of Kheta, amid which the latter put an allegation on the former: of having an extra-marital affair with one of her in-laws Harnath (*chacha sasura*). In response to this blame, without conducting any inquiry, Harnath was fined for Rs.40/- . In response to the petition, the state issued orders that if the allegation was found to be false then Harnath be released from jail and the penalised amount be returned to him.¹⁰⁵

On the mere allegation, the paramour was arrested and imposed with a hefty fine. This meant that illicit relationships were considered as a major breach of the moral code of conduct by the society. People involved in such acts were looked-down upon. These petitions reveal attitude of the people regarding the issue, despite acknowledging the fact that such relations used to exist. The child, who was the fruit of such relation, was not accepted by the society and thus, was aborted. But this was opposite to what existed among the lower echelons of society. Migrant belonging to the artisanal caste did not demand punishment for the deviating wife,

¹⁰⁴ SPBJ No. 2, V.S. 1822/1765 A.D. P. 32 B.

¹⁰⁵ SPBJ No. 15, V.S. 1832/1775 A.D. P. 358 B.

he merely asked for her restoration.¹⁰⁶ Several instances pointed out where the artisans were seen claiming rightfully what belonged to them. Women were also considered as their property that had to be restored back to them in any case.

Severing of ties with the extended family has not been documented for our region of study. Rather family members were seen undertaking guarantee of the migrant when his return was required, be it for some social cause or as ordered by the state.¹⁰⁷ Partitioning of families due to increased earning capacity of the migrant was not yet evident. Indeed the partitioning of family and its resources was taking place but migration as a reason behind the same cannot be asserted so far.

The share of each family member was already settled, prior to the demise of head of the family. The property was divided and siblings started living separately while their father was alive or else, whatever was decided while he was alive the same was supposed to be abided after his death. If this was not the case, then disputes arose and reached the court where the decision was taken.¹⁰⁸

In terms of petitions being raised at the court by the migrant Mahajans, most of these grievances dealt with land alienation. Their ancestral property was not a mere piece of land to them. The ancestral home had a sense of identity and attachment to their selves. When they had the option of abandoning such a claim and settling down at another place, they chose the former. They fought for their home which was much more than a property and belonged to their great grandfathers, a legacy. Kinsmen and people from the elite sections tried to appropriate these lands.

Mahajan Uday, had gone away from his hometown to Udaipur in the year V.S. 1825/A.D. 1768. In his absence, the *jagirdar* of his village had given his house to a Brahmin. Uday petitioned the state that it has been two years since his arrival that his house had not been returned to him. The state, in its response, ordered that if the land was an ancestral or inherited property

¹⁰⁶ Late Prof. Nandita P. Sahai. *From Marwar to Malwa and Back*.

¹⁰⁷ SPBJ No. 6, V.S. 1824/1767 A.D. P. 3 A; SPBJ No. 6, V.S. 1824/1767 A.D. P. 152 B; SPBJ No. 9, V.S. 1826/1769 A.D. P. 134 A.

¹⁰⁸ SPBJ No. 18, V.S. 1834/1777 A.D. P. 76 B (1); SPBJ No. 15, V.S. 1832/1775 A.D. P. 154 A; SPBJ No. 18, V.S. 1834/1777 A.D. P. 50 A.

belonging to Uday, then the same be handed over to him and the Brahmin be asked to vacate the said house.¹⁰⁹

Similarly,

Mahajan Lahoti, in the year 1765, prayed for state intervention for retrieval of his land. While he had gone to Malwa, the *hawaldar* of his village sold his land to another Mahajan without his permission. The state, upon ascertainment of the fact that it was Lahoti's ancestral property, ordered recovery of the said land.¹¹⁰

Such disputes gave rise to petitions which had to be resolved by the state authorities. These disputes constituted implications of migration on the community ties, which were strained and stressed. Resources in terms of property, as relationships, suffered while the Mahajan had gone away to earn livelihood. This created tensions in inter- and intra-community relationships and at times, led Mahajans on a face-to-face struggle with the government officials.

As per a saying in the United Provinces,¹¹¹ the migrant leaves his rituals and worship. This does not stand true in the context of Mahajans migrating from north-western Rajasthan. Their social imagery remained more so static and they were seen following the social mores like worshipping and deeds of charity.

Migrants used to get places of worship constructed in the new locales. Memories of the left behind world were carried over as a metaphor to new destinations.¹¹² For Mahajans, the terminology Marwari denoted their traditional linkages. It gave them an identity to which they could associate themselves. It is correctly stated that, apart from an obvious need of migrants from a different linguistic and cultural background for community support in a new place, rebuilding familiar identities made the establishment of communities a post-arrival priority among migrants.¹¹³ This was done in different forms at different places by diverse communities who migrated from their original dwellings.

¹⁰⁹ SPBJ No. 16, V.S. 1833/ 1776 A.D. P. 9 B.

¹¹⁰ SPBJ No. 18, V.S. 1835/ 1778 A.D. P. 232 A.

¹¹¹ *Je put pardeshi bhaiyele dev pitter sabse gaile.*

¹¹² Santosh Kumar Rai. *Many Madanpuras.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

As discussed by Prasannan, giving of food as a customary practice helped in establishing linkages by a community, especially ones on the move.

Ceremonies and customs are one of the many aspects that undergo change due to migration of a community or community member. It is via these rituals that one can gauge as to how far a community has moved from the collective ethos and mannerisms. And how the traditions are carried into a new setting and blended to newer forms. They stuck together despite competing with each other. In the process, resorting to mechanisms which promoted fellow feeling among themselves. Festivals provided occasions for collective identity manifestations and events for protest or revolts against the authority. Upon migrating to another city or while travelling, the ethos practiced in the daily routine of life were carried by the merchant. ‘Wherever Banarsi might have travelled, he never forgot to perform his regime of puja to the conch shell of Shiva.’¹¹⁴

Most of these migratory groups are known to possess the knowledge of more than two languages. Since the merchants have contacts across large networks, therefore, they speak their mother language as well as the language of the people in the new lands.

Migration had many implications for the migrant and his family. Firstly, the remittances brought by the migrants’ earnings. This increased the prosperity of the household. In order to remit money back home, a network of relationships must have been at work. Prior to the world of money orders, money would have been sent via some known relative or friend or brought by the migrant himself on a visit to his hometown. Second, the increased movement of people had an impact on their health, usually disseminating diseases over wide regions. Market towns were the first ones to get affected in such instances, with grain traders and handlers being the earliest victims.¹¹⁵ In the absence of archival records or any private records pertaining to migrant families, we can only surmise about the most probable trends that were faced by the migrating Mahajans,. We cannot say with affirmation so far much about the festivals and customs and the new way of life adopted by Mahajans at the new habitation.

¹¹⁴ Stanza 236, Pp. 101.

¹¹⁵ Rai, Santosh Kumar. *Many Madanpuras*.

After analysing the various sources, two things become apparent: one, that migration was resorted to by the Mahajans mostly in extreme cases, whence petitioning did not yield the desired result. Petitioning was seen as the very first resort, after the failure of which further action was taken. The members of the community temporarily changed base so as to tide over the immediate tensed situation. Also, Migration served as an opportunity for the Mahajans to explore new avenues of business. Largely migration from north-western Rajasthan was linear and took place from rural and semi-urban regions to urban centres of trade and commerce.

A strong network was in existence which kept them abreast with the regional opportunities and conditions. These networks proved crucial in such times of insecurities on road. Malwa, that lay conveniently connected with Marwar, emerged as the most preferred land to which the Mahajans migrated. Wherever they went, they stuck to communal residential clusters, built temples and extended help to the members of their community. It is also clear that at this stage, the migrants did not usually take their family along. Therefore, the concept of returning back home was in existence. Guarantees were raised by their community members that the migrant will return by a stipulated date and time.

By fixing their marriage in the hometown, the social threads to the community were still maintained and not let loose. Community guarantees constituted another symbol of trust and respect for word that was a part of their social lives. Upon their return to their aboriginal habitation, though the state extended all possible support in terms of restoring alienated lands. But their social relationships were seen undergoing transformation. Even while residing at the place of migration, the Mahajan was not totally free from the various social issues that confronted him. Apart from the difficulties in the occupational realm, the social world was also not free from issues and problems. Problems awaited him at both ends.

The Mahajans practiced an array of pursuits, ranging from trade to moneylending. It is in this context of their occupational skills that their movement should be understood. Also, the context of state formation in the eighteenth century should be kept in mind while analysing these movements. So far, from the archival

documents at our disposal, their movement seems to have been more local and regional in context. Initially what was a temporary movement towards a new habitat¹¹⁶ – reasons which later subsided – would have reduced to permanent movement.

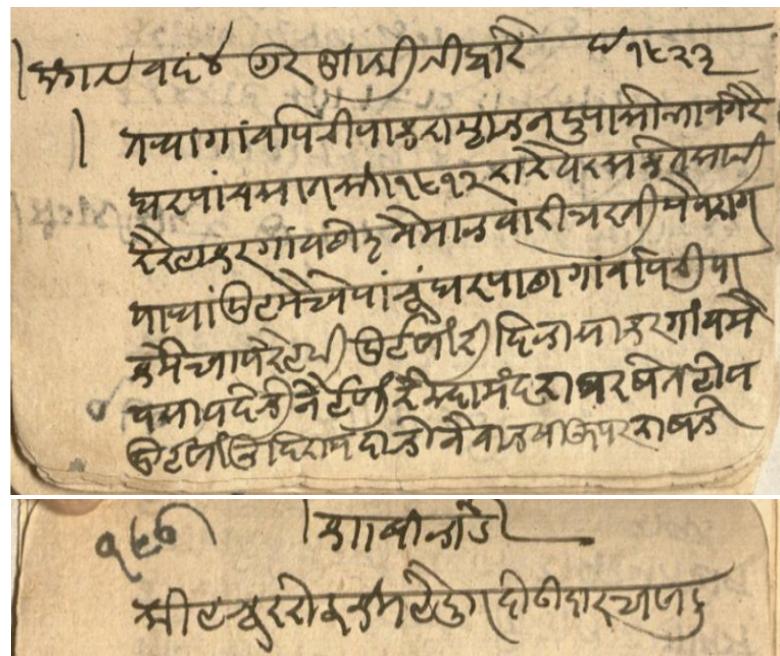
Though the Mahajans had access to the state grievance mechanism and required state support, still they preferred to migrate to places that had much more to offer. This access could in no way decide the frequency of their mobility as they belonged to a community that had the capability of turning opportunities to their favour. Their entrepreneurial spirits pushed them to move beyond their comfort zones and strive for better material gains.

Finance capital and commercialization and modernization of economy was well underway during this time-period. In succeeding times, we are not sure how far the return movement of Mahajans to their original homelands took place. But effectual bonds with kinsmen back home were surely maintained by the Mahajans during the eighteenth century. The consequences of these bonds and the exact nature of new bondages formed need to be researched further.

¹¹⁶ Due to the environmental reasons or reasons of exploitation.

Appendix V

Document 1 with Translation:



प्रांबीलाडौ

सं 1823

| मिति वद 4 गुर श्री जीघ्वारै

| तथा गावं पिचीपाक रा महाजन रुपा सोभा वगैरे घर पांच सात सं 1812
रा रे वरस फतेसाली रै रहाकर गावं छौड़ मै मालवा री घरती मै परा गया
थां सु हमै ओ पांचूं घर पाछा गावं पिचीपाक मै आवै रहे सु इणा रा दिलासा
कर गावं मै वसाव देजो इणा रै सदामद रा घर खेत होय सु इणा नु दिराय
देजो नै वाजबा उपर राखजो श्री हजूर रो हूकम है दुआदोठीदारअणादु

¹¹⁷ SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D. P. 352/703.

Document 2 with Translation:

जादपावने रव का१८३४ आगच्छ्रुत
। तथां रामाकृष्णिघटानीक्षेत्रोपायन
पादपरेगां दमधलं पां रामाकृष्णने कु
आदपानी मेटेउतेवोपारविष्णुगोपनी
सेहुरसीतेउणारामालकपानीप्रसाद
पानीमध्यलं पासिरल्पि शीलसिरदो
दुमठे डाक्षिणदारमल्ल

| भादवा वद 5 रव सं 1823 रा प्रां जोधपुर
 | तथां रा सरुपसिंघ लालसिंघोत खांपवपावत रै गावं सथलाणां रा महाजन
 नै कासा रा पाली मै है सु वोपार विणाज तो पाली मे राखणा नहीं सथलाणां
 मे रहे श्री हजूर रो हूकम है दुदोठीदारअणाद्

10

Document 3 with Translation:

1 मावद गोम आमोगर ~ १६२३

1 गण्या की काने रहा कांग पालि साकुरं द
कुली वंदरी नार्गार में इच्छन रहे तो जग
शबोपारी रहे सिटण्ठारे वृष्णारो भवत्व
जपरराष्ट्री श्रीरामरोद्धर्मरहु पर्जी
गोमार्दी

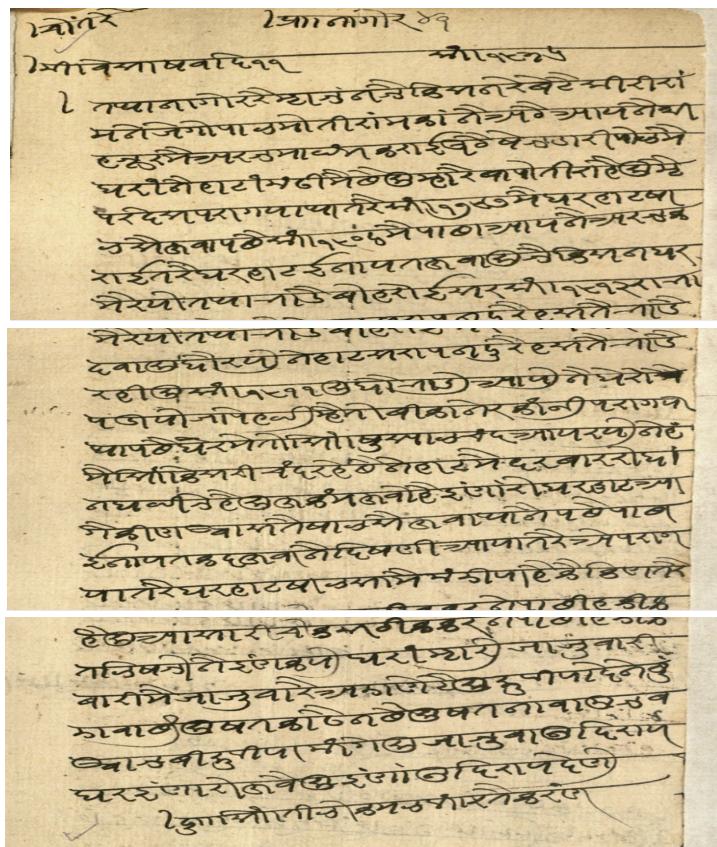
| महा वद 4 सोम प्रां सोजत सं 1823
| तथा बीकानेर रा बांणीया खुस्पालचंद दुलीचंद नागोर मे दुकान है नै औ
आछा वोपारी हे सु ईणां रै लहैणा रो उवाजवी उपर राखजो श्री हजूर रो
हूकम है दापणीयोआईदो

सं 1823

¹¹⁸ SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D., P. 177 B.

¹¹⁹ SPBJ No. 5, V.S. 1823/1766 A.D., P. 177 B.

Document 4 with Translation:



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| चोंतरै

| प्रां नागोर

| मीा वेसाख वदि 11

सं 1835

| तथा नागोर रै महांजन जैकिसन रे बेटै सीरी राम ने जेगोपाल मोतीराम कानै अठै आय नै श्री हजूर मै अरज मालम कराई उठै खेजणा रो पोल मे घरै नै हाट 1 मढ़ी मै छै सु म्हारै बापोती रा है सु महै घरे देस परा गया था तरै सं 1787 मै घर हाट खालसै हूवा पछै सं 1805 मै पाछा आय नै अरज कराई तरै घर हाट ईनायत हूवा सु जैकिसन घर मै रयो तथा भाडै बोहरो ईसर सं 1812 रा भाडै रही सु सं 1811 सुधौ भाडो आयो नै घरे पड़ीयो जा पेहली महै मो बीकानेर कानी परा गयो था पछै घर मे तो सिं खुस्पालचंद आय रयो ने हमै सिं केसरीचंद रहे छै ने हाट मै दरबार रो घांन घली जे है सु हूकम हूवो है ईणा रो घर हाट आगै कीणा उवासतै खालसै हूवा था नै दिखणी आया तरै ओ परा गया तरै घर हाट खालसा मै भड़ीया है कै किणा तरै है सु आसा री चोकस ठीक कर ने पाछी हकीकत लिखजो नै ईणा कयो घरा म्हारो जाजुवारी बारी मै जाजुवारै अडाणो है सु रुपीया देने छुणावा छो सु खत काठै न छै सु खत नावा सुजव उवाजबी रुपीया मांगे सु जाजुवा नु दिराय घर ईणा रो हूवै सु ईणा नु दिराय देणो

| दु सिं तीलोकमल पां फतैकरणा

¹²⁰ SPBJ No. 22, V.S. 1835/ 1778 A.D. P. 83/375.