

# Rajas of the Ganges Strategy Guide

## Introduction

Rajas of the Ganges holds a special place among my favorite games, as it provides a clear path to mastery. This article aims to enhance the gameplay for those with similar goals, specifically for 2-player games (Navaratnas + Ganga module), but many principles also apply to higher player counts.

## At a Glance

### **Quote:**

#### 1. The Macro View

- Mixed strategy > Heavy Money = Fame

#### 2. Evaluating the Board State at the Start of the Game to Decide on a Strategy

- 1 market of each kind & 3 and 4 directional tiles (consider your dice as well)

#### 3. Dice Management

- 3 karma dice River > 3 color dice River > **Dancer** > 2 dice River > 1-for-2 dice > 1 dice (assuming the dice color matches what you want)

#### 4. How to Get Money

- Different market spot
- No. 4
- River spots
- Connecting to the bottom of the board (longer than the top but more worthwhile in the long run)
- 1 market (only worth if activating 3 or more)

#### 5. How to Get Fame

- No. 4 then build monuments
- Board
- River spots

#### 6. How to Quickly Get Your 6 Workers

- River is your good friend
- If you have a good Money set-up (3 different markets), focus on river spots giving fame
- If you have a good Fame set-up (min. 3 monument upgrades), focus on river spots giving money

#### 7. What Yield Tiles to Pick

- Make sure you have a good Brown end-game yield tile
- If you have a bad Money engine, pick Money
- If you are reaching the yield tile soon and lack dice, pick dice

## 8. Others

- (Base Game) the most optimal way to build is to go down the center and build both ends
- Withhold building to punish opponents for getting dice in the color of the tile you want and can get

### Macro View

Mixed > Money = Fame

The game concludes when the fame and money tracks intersect. Thus, players can opt to focus heavily on money, fame, or pursue a mixed strategy.

In a balanced strategy, players benefit from both tracks, making it generally more advantageous. A slight emphasis on money is preferred due to better bonuses (river and dice) compared to fame (upgrade, karma, and river).

**However, a fame-heavy strategy can still be successful. In Raja of the Ganges, flexibility is key, and understanding your best options at any given moment is crucial.**

### Evaluating the Board State at the Start of the Game to Decide on Strategy

1 market of each kind & 3 and 4 directional tiles

By default, seek market tiles of each kind (green/yellow/red) providing 2-3 coins to quickly form 3 different markets for 6-9 coins. Two-markets-in-one tile and affordable market tiles are also viable. The 3-different-markets meeple spot offers the best VP-to-cost ratio, as it requires investment in only 3 tiles and costs no dice.

If acquiring these tiles is challenging, consider going for monument upgrades. In such cases, focus on 3 or 4 directional monument tiles or those combining monuments and market tiles to build both the fame and money tracks simultaneously.

For example, in the given illustration, consider '7' blue (since green Market is rare) and then either '5' Orange, '9' Green, or '7' Purple.

This tile evaluation remains relevant throughout the game as you aim to build towards the bottom for the most rewarding outcomes. **Deciding between "sub-par" 3 or 4 directional tiles (usually market tiles) and tiles that fit your monument upgrades will likely determine your chosen strategy, whether Heavy Money, Mixed, or Heavy Fame.**

### Dice Management

3 karma dice River > 3 color dice River > Dancer > 2 dice River > 1-for-2 dice > 1 dice

Dice color matters only when building.

Dice plays a crucial role in lubricating your VP engine. In order of preference, obtain dice through the following methods:

- 1 River spot (1 die per karma): The uniform color aids in building tiles.
- 2 River spot (2 dice) is superior to 1-for-2 dice exchange because it advances the river track, providing better rewards and an extra meeple.
- 3 Dancer: While Dancer is more useful in the early game, it gradually loses its edge as you accumulate enough yield tiles.
- 4 1-for-2 dice exchange is usually better than acquiring 1 die because more dice of the same color make building easier, and you get a free roll of the die you gave up. Think of it as receiving a new die, rerolling your die, and giving it a different color.

**Consider saving a die to acquire more dice, as this is typically the trade-off. With dice, focus on increasing both money and fame.**

### Strategies for Resource Acquisition in Rajas of the Ganges

#### How to Get Money

- Different market spot
- No. 4
- River spots
- Connecting to the bottom of the board (longer than the top but more worthwhile in the long run)
- 1 market (only worth if activating 3 or more)

#### How to Get Fame

- No. 4 then build monuments
- Board
- River spots

#### How to Quickly Get Your 6 Workers

In the Advanced game, you start with 3 workers and can unlock 3 more by advancing on the Money, Fame, and River tracks. **Rushing for 6 workers is beneficial, outweighing the drawback of yielding tiles to opponents. This is because 1 worker is minimally worth 1 die, and the benefit of yield tiles diminishes as opponents acquire more.**

River is your good friend

- If you have a good Money set-up (3 different markets), focus on river spots giving fame
- If you have a good Fame set-up (min. 3 monument upgrades), focus on river spots giving money

**While it's preferable to get 3 markets and then focus on fame for the extra worker, circumstances may not allow this, usually due to tile constraints. In such cases, focus on fame but make a conscious effort to obtain all the Money bonuses on the river.** Anticipate whether your opponent is using the 'build' or 'river' locations and try to beat them to it or delay your visit to these locations until the next round if there are no

compelling reasons to visit this round. The goal is to secure the worker on the Money track.

The river is an excellent place to utilize low rolls and can yield various rewards. Climbing it strategically for the rewards you need (usually dice + fame or money) is key. The **Portuguese (#6)** turns out to be more useful than perceived, particularly when moving up the river without #6 is challenging. Keep this in mind when deciding whether to use the '6' dice to build tiles or ascend the river. #6 can also be a good option when landing on the river reward that allows you to pick one of #1 - #5 bonuses.

#### What Yield Tiles to Pick

Ensure you have a good Brown end-game yield tile

- Based on my observation, players prefer taking yield tiles in this order: Red/Brown > Yellow/White.

- **Starting with a bad brown yield token can be detrimental, and players should quickly exchange it for a good brown yield token.** Only the bolded tiles below consistently provide 6 or more fame.

#### **Quote:**

**1 fame per 3 river spots > 1 fame per worker > 1 fame per market >> = 2 coins per monument upgrade >>> 2 coins per tile connected >>>> 1 coin per building = 2 fame per bend**

For white, yellow and red yield tiles,

- If you have a weak Money engine, pick Money
- If you are approaching the yield tile soon and lack dice, pick dice

#### Others

(Base Game) the most optimal way to build is to go down the center and build both ends

- The bottom rewards are significantly more potent. Consider this scenario (and how you should generally build in the base game):

4 Fame & 7 money or 6 money & 8 Money. If lacking dice, consider taking a detour to the 2nd bottom row first, as it is more valuable than going down the sides where you get 3 dice before reaching your rewards.

- For the Advanced mode, route choice is flexible; pick a route that aligns with what you want to build.

Withhold building to punish opponents for acquiring dice in the color of the tile you want and can get

- This is an advanced consideration when players have a good sense of whether a given tile is sought after by others. Otherwise, it's generally better to buy a tile first, see what that tile is, before obtaining dice to better adapt to the available tiles for purchase.

#### Parting Remarks

Critics have pointed out Rajas of the Ganges for being scripted on a strategic level, but the game's essence lies in tactical decisions. It's 80% tactical, akin to navigating a maze in the fog. The fun lies in assessing the most likely path based on limited information.

I hope this guide aids those striving to enhance their gameplay

#### **Addendum:**

**As nandblock rightly points out in the comments, the Master Builder is often overlooked.** There are a few advantages to it, namely:

Converts dead ends to live paths (translating to creating dead ends for yield rewards and then over-building to continue the path)

Provides the ability to snag a tile if you lack enough dice of the same color to build conventionally

Saves coins.

I have used it effectively too. Note that these advantages must be weighed against not advancing your path (since you are replacing and not adding a new tile).

In 2-player games, I have been humbled by players frequently picking the Great Mogul.

**The Great Mogul can be a very good pick if both players have developed their 3 markets.** Let's say both players can get 6 coins from the spot, the Great Mogul can represent a 12-coins swing (+6 to you, -6 to your opponent). This is also very good if it would help you or stop your opponent from getting a reward on the Money track. **That said, you still have to weigh it against advancing 1 river step or converting to 6 for Portuguese or building tiles.**