

## **THE RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE OF WESTERN RAJASTHAN – A MAJOR TOURIST ATTRACTION**

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The Geography of Western Rajasthan, especially its desert has played a very important role in casting its culture into its peculiar mould.<sup>1</sup> The desert, the paucity of rain, the black and yellow sand storm and scorching wind have protected it from foreign invasions and preserved its pristine characteristics. Because of these this region has maintained its traditions and pristine glory. Scholars like Col. James Tod, Manucci and Deboiney sprayed the tails of its glory throughout the world and have aroused curiosity about this region the multi-colored culture of this region which flourished in the peculiar geographical conditions, has been the main tourist attraction.

Before independence almost all the princely states in Western Rajasthan were ruled by Rajputs rulers. These rulers took pride in maintaining the Vedic traditions. At the same time they gave due regard to other religions and therefore Jainism, Christianity and Islam could flourish here.

Secularism prevailed here. As a result of mutual give and take, the mode of living, the food habits, dress and customs and traditions assumed a peculiar character.

In the 7th century before the advent of the Rajputs, races like the Maves, Bhils, Minas and the Gurjar inhabited this land.<sup>2</sup> Nothing can be said for certain about the aborigines of this place. The inhabitants of this region are said to have descended from the original human races like Elpodenarick, Oriental, Madetararian and Proto-Nordic. In course of time on account of the inter-mixing of the original human races no original human race has preserved its purity as much as such. Hence the present inhabitants reveal characteristics of more than one race.

The Hindus form the majority in this region with more than 150 clans, castes, and sub-castes. Among the Muslims there are the Sheikhs, Pathans, Maves and Sayyids. There are many castes which share the traditions and customs of both the Hindus and the Muslims.<sup>3</sup> The chief among such castes are Kayamkhanis of Nagore region and the Sammas and Sumras of Jaisalmer the economic and social conditions of the Rajputs, Brahmins, Oswal and the Jats have been comparatively better. In Western Rajasthan there are about 60 schedule-castes and tribes.

In this region the males enjoy primacy. In comparison with girls the boys are better looked after. In most of the upper classes widow marriage and polygamy are

prohibited.<sup>4</sup> Among some communities a number of marriages are arranged on a particular auspicious day. The Dowry system prevails.

Death-feast is common. Those persons who have no successor arrange their death-feast in their own lifetime. Getting tonsure on the death of a relative, abstaining from festivities and gaudy clothes throughout the year, wearing blue, black or brown clothes are symbols of mourning.<sup>5</sup>

The practice of taking opium in the country side and the liquor among the Rajputs is common.<sup>6</sup> Opium is common on both the occasions of pleasure as well as pain. Opium is offered with cordial persistence. In order to bury the hatchet people assemble and offer opium to one another. In the villages, women fetch water from a village well or a pond in pitchers carefully balanced on their head. Bedecked in ornaments and singing in unison, when the women go to fetch water they present a very fascinating sight.

The multi-coloured clothes of Western Rajasthan are very dear to the tourists. Many of the tourists can be seen wandering here and there wearing such clothes and when they return home they carry such richly coloured clothes as gifts for their relatives. The traditional costumes of the rulers of this palace were influenced by the Mughals. Jama, Khirkiya Pag, Angarkhi, Churidar Payjama, Kamar-bund, Dagger and sword formed parts of the royal costumes.<sup>7</sup> The advent of the British brought Breeches in the place of 'Churidar-Payjamas'. With the Breeches also came Sherwani, Achkan or the Jodhpuri Coats. Jodhpuri Breeches and coats were very popular in London once upon a time. Many Earls, Lords and dukes took the Jodhpuri Coats and Breeches.

Turban, Pagri, Safa, Fenta were different forms of head-gear. Nobody was allowed to enter bare headed in the 'Rawla' i.e. the castle of the village landlord. The style of wearing these multi-coloured turbans was different from place to place. Most villagers carry a small piece of cloth with them which is known as 'Angocha'. The villagers wear a white 'Angarkhi' (A kind of shirt) which is called 'Bugatari' in the local dialect. The 'Orni' or the Dupatta worn by women is also multi-coloured and is variously known as Chunari, Peela, Phagania, Pomacha, Basanti, Loharia, Dabakia etc. The other articles of clothing for women are Chaghra (Kind of skirt), Angarkhi and Kanchali (a kind of bodice).

The women of Western Rajasthan are very fond of the ornaments. Not only foreign tourists, even for local tourists these ornaments are a source of great attraction. The popular ornaments of Western Rajasthan are as follows:-<sup>8</sup>

Angad, Binti, Angootho, Akota, Anat, Anwat, Anwla, Aad, Arsi, Illi, Aurangpatta, Oganja, Kangan, Kunchikas, Kanthki, Kanthlo, Kanthsari, Kanthi, Kandoro, Kantimandan, Kartoro, Karla, Kara, Kariyan, Kari, Kankati, Kanoti, Karanphool, Kardhani, Kankni, Kanto, Kanthlo, Kambi, Kartaria, Kilangi, Kundal, Karkli, Kokru, Koko, Khangri, Khanch, Gajro, Galpatio, Galbundh, Gal Saukli, Galsari, Galhar, Gurda, Gujri, Gokhru, Goolia, Googra, Googarmal, Chandanhar, Champakali, Champalhar, Chamak, Churi, Chand, Chik, Cheedh, Cheetah, Chump, Chur, Churiyah, Chain, Choti, Chauth, Chauki, Chara, Challa, Chap, Chail, Kara, Jantar, Jav, Jibhi,

Jehar, Joran, Jhab Jhabi, Jhanjhar, Jhumar, Jhumariyan, Jhabi, Jhalro, Jhuntna, Jhela, Taddo, Tanka, Tiki, Tiko, Tidi, Bhalko, Tilo, Tussi, Tunpio, Toom, Tevto, Totian, Topus, Dandlo, Dungarla, Doro, Tarkantho, Tara, Tara-nami, Timaniyon, Tillri, Tilak, Teeb, Turro, Tulsimala, Telri, Tevto, Todar, Toria, Dhun Dhugi, Nakhphool, Nakbesar, Nakalia, Nakhia, Nagodar, Nath, Nali, nimboli, Nupur, Nevrian, Nogri, Nosarhar, Panchalro, Pagpah, Pacheli, Patio, Patta, Pajeb, Patla, Pat, Payal, Para, Pavta, Pipal Patta, Punchi, Putaliyan, Penjani, Polariya, Phini, Phulariyan, Bangari, Bund-Bangari, Baju-Chowk , Baju-Pati, Baju-Band, Badli, Barlo, Batiyan, Bichhiya, Bichuriyan, Binti-darno, Bunda, Bulak, Boojli, Buli, Berla, Boor, Boor-nali, Boriyo, Bhanwariyo, Bhalko, Bhuband, Mangal-sutra, Machhiyan, Matar-Mala, Mang-Tiko, Mani, Mathe-ri-Pat, Madalia, Mala, Mudra, Urkiyan, Undri, Muthiyo, Memad, Moti-chowkro, Moti-Siri, Moor-Mindi, Movan- Mala, Mohar-Binti, Rakhri, Rai Phool, Remi-Jhol, Langar, Latkan, Lar, Lar-Murat, Locket, Lirke, Loong, Vadalo, Satlari, Sari, Saheli, Sankal, Satan, Singar-Patti, Sire-Pech, Sili-Kanto, sees-Phool, Surag-bali, Suralia, Sutura, Hath-arsi, Hath-pah, Hath-Vadla, Hath-Sandlot, Hamel, Handle, Habit and Hera-nami, etc.

Marwari is spoken in Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner and Shekhawati region. From the literacy point of view this dialect is very rich.<sup>9</sup> Famous scholars and linguists like Tessitori from Italy and Gearson from France were so charmed by its richness that they came all the way from those distant lands and wandered amidst the sand-dunes of Western Rajasthan to learn the dialect and explore its rich heritage.

The Marwari dialect is known as Western Rajasthani, its ain sub-dialects are Mewari, Dharki, Bikaneri, Bagari, Shekhawati, Kheravi, Godwari and Devravati.

Fairs and Festivals are the traditional features of the folk life of Western Rajasthan.<sup>10</sup> Markets are held on the occasions of festivals. Many of the Fairs are religious in nature while there are many cattle Fairs held at Nagore, Tilwara and at Parbatsar. On such occasions many programmes are arranged for tourists. The main festivals are Holi, Shivratri, Sheelastmi, Janamashtami, Raksha Bandhan, Ram Navmi, Ankha Teej, Nijle Ekadash, Chhoti-Teej, Bari-Teej, Ghurla, Gangore, Dashera, Dipawali, etc.<sup>11</sup>Of these, many are celebrated all over the country but in Western Rajasthan they are peculiarly celebrated with the richness of local colours. With the festival of Holi are combined with the Doondh Sanskar. The Nahan of Sanod , Phool-dol and the tradition of Illoji are in Rajasthan only.<sup>12</sup> On the occasion of holi the male dancers with sticks in their heads with bunches of little bells tied round their ankles present such a charming sight that they have become the symbol of the whole of Rajasthan. The enthusiasm of people on the occasion of the festivals like Ghangor and Ghurla is a treat to watch. Beves of women singing folk songs connected with these festivals may be seen going through the streets and Bazaars. Some of the other peculiar festivals are Hariyali Amavas, Bachhabaras and OOB-Chat.

The cultural heritage of Western Rajasthan is very old, rich and glorious. This region abounds in marvellous treasures of literature, music, dance, fine-arts and handicrafts.

Wall paintings in various styles abound in Western Rajasthan. We may come across Frasco and Mural pintings in their various forms i.e. Paintings on stone walls, plastered walls, Arayas forms of painting, colour paintings ornamented with small mirror pieces

and folk paintings on mud-plastered walls in the country side. Almost all types of pictures have their silent characteristics in the matter of craftsmanship, in the selection of subject and various colours. Every painting representing men, women and trees bears symbolic significance of its own. The Shekhawati region is very rich from the point of view of wall paintings.<sup>13</sup> Very Charming and attractive wall paintings of Dhola Maru and Jhula can be seen on the walls of Behariji's temple at Baghariavas near Ringas, the Gangaji temple in Churu, in the Haveli of Ramnathji Poddar in Navalgarh and at Mandava, Ramgarh, Fatehpur, Laxmangarh etc.<sup>14</sup>

In the historic Jodhpur fort the Ranivas (ladies' apartments) abounds in wall paintings. The shavalenga-Sadavrata story, the paintings of Madhu-Malti and the stories of Phulwati, Panna and Viramdeo together with the various forms of heroines are exquisitely portrayed in the Seventh Century Jodhpur Style.<sup>15</sup> In the famous Nagore Fort we come across Frasco and Mural Paintings in the Janana Mahal.<sup>16</sup>

In Bikaner there are Paintings painted in oil and water. In the Junagarh Fort of Bikaner the wall paintings of Krishna-Leela and the various forms of heroines are a feast for the eyes. In the fort of Jaisalmer the wall paintings of Mumal, etc. In Jaisalmer style 17 are excellent examples of this are of Rajasthan at the sight of which tourists are filled with admiration and amazement.

In the field of Painting of the Western Rajasthan the Jodhpur Style and the Bikaner style occupy an important place. In both of these styles the animals painted are mainly the crow-kite, camel and the horse. On the basis of colour, background, border, birds and beasts, human forms especially the eyes one can easily distinguish the Jodhpur-bikaner paintings from those of Kishangarh, Jaipur, Bundi and Udaipur styles.<sup>18</sup> In the Jodhpur style, eyes were painted like the Almond. In the Bikaner style the eyes are like the Khanjan bird. The paintings of Western Rajasthan can be easily distinguished from other paintings on the basis of the stature, the formation of the nose, lips, chin, fingers and the eye-brows of the figures portrayed. The paintings of Mumal, 186 paintings of Dhola-Maru together with those of the famous epics Ramayan and the Mahabharat are famous in the Jodhpur Style. Paintings of hunting scenes, the royal court and processions are the chief among the paintings of Bikaner style.<sup>19</sup>

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