

## Preface

The present study began with the thought of covering the region of Hadauti that has generally remained on the peripheries of all kinds. Although there are a few works covering seventeenth and eighteenth century Kota.<sup>1</sup> There is hardly a work covering the entire reign of Hadauti especially from a woman's point of view. Reading through some of the interesting works on women's history while doing my post-graduation the seeds were sown for this research.<sup>2</sup> To study any aspect of womanhood an understanding of certain key term associated with gender studies is important. The foremost happens to be 'feminism' which is not like other *isms* that have been theorized and brought into practice; instead it is continuously evolving concept therefore a very complex subject. 'Feminism' has been defined:

As an awareness of patriarchal control, exploitation and oppression at the material and ideological levels of women's labor, fertility and sexuality, in the family, at work place and in

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<sup>1</sup> Norbert Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Colonial India*, U.K., Cambridge University Press, 2003; Sethia Madhu Tandon, *Rajput Polity: Warriors, Peasants and Merchants (1700-1800)*, Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Kosambi, Meera, *Crossing Thresholds: Feminist Essays in Social History*, Ranikhet, Permanent Black, 2007; Maithreyi Krishanraj, *History through Gender Lens*, Kirit Shah & Meherjyoti Shah eds., *Historiography Past & Present*, Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 2005; Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, New Delhi, Foundation Books, 1998; Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Colonial India*, New Delhi, Chronicle Books, 2005 etc.

society in general, and conscious action by women and men to transform the present situation.<sup>3</sup>

This inclusive definition opens up role for those clearly set the table for those (not just women) who correlate themselves as 'feminists', any one finding a flaw in the prescribed 'conventional' nomenclature designed for men and women, disagreeing to accept it can broadly be clubbed into as feminists.

The present study tries to investigate the patriarchal relations between men and women of Hadauti. Whether the 'change' visible in British India had the capacity to penetrate the hinterlands of the Hadauti region is a question of interest? How Hadauti people were aware about the freedom struggles in British India and what were their issues during transition? Were Hadauti women involved in the 'freedom struggle'? Evolution of a society is a slow process with various stages and levels. This study tries identifying the nature of 'transition' in the Hadauti region especially touching the lives of women in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Re-writing history from women's perceptive was the need of the hour in the post-Independent India as Maithreyi Krishanraj puts it: 'Women live in an already gendered society and as gendered beings the truth that they tell is

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<sup>3</sup> Kamla Bhasin and Nighat Said Khan, *Feminism and its Relevance in South-Asia*, 2009, New Delhi Women Unlimited, 3.

from their experience of gendered beings in a gendered society.<sup>4</sup> She also warns the women researchers not to investigate only women because gender study is not just about women it is about both; as sex is biological but gender is 'man-made device' and so is patriarchy.<sup>5</sup>

What becomes clear from the variety of women's studies is that all the main institutions in society are patriarchal in nature let that be family, religion, media or even law.<sup>6</sup> The entire web of social construct systematically represents its roots to be deep within us as if we are born natural with it. It is completely paradoxical in practice not just for women but also for men; terming 'anatomy as destiny' is bizarre yet a reality exists in all its forms around us.<sup>7</sup>

The present study is about the women of Hadauti region of Rajasthan; an inspiration borne out from curiosity to explore historically the lesser known region with a gender perceptive. Gender does not mean to focus simply on the status, condition of women instead there is an attempt to understand the workings of 'patriarchy' without which gender study is incomplete.

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<sup>4</sup> Maithreyi Krishnaraj, 'Research in women studies- need for a critical appraisal', p. 3012, *Economic and Political Weekly*, July, 9, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 3013.

<sup>6</sup> Bhasin, Kamla, *What is Patriarchy*, New Delhi, Women Unlimited, 2009, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Kosambi, Meera, *Crossing Thresholds: Feminist Essays in Social History*, Ranikhet, Permanent Black, 2007, 129.

For a history student the utmost challenge is to be able to place women in the historical time frame to see some pattern. Historiography with interdisciplinary approach provides a better opportunity to harness the research for a sensitive issue such as gender. It can be understood only by getting down to its history and by revealing the causes behind biases and prejudices. Therefore, a time period of 125 years from 1850 to 1975 was chosen to some aspects of womanhood in the region. It helped in drawing the map of Hadauti in Rajasthan at the micro-level while at the macro-level sketching its structure in the sub continental context.

The modern historiography has seen a constant evolution with emphasis of studies at the regional levels. Most of the historical works on India especially in the princely states were uncritical focuses on the ruling class gaining accolades from the rulers. James Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* in two volumes is one of the earliest extensive works on Rajasthan romanticizing the feudal pasts. Two regional epics in the historiography of Rajasthan, namely *Vamsh-Bhaskar* by Surya Mal Mishran and *Veer-Vinod* by Shyamaldas emerged as landmarks in the history writing of Rajasthan.<sup>8</sup>

Change began to be visible in the works of G.S. Ojha, Dashrath Sharma and Mathura Lal Sharma.<sup>9</sup> Mostly these works were the political history of the region. With G.D.Sharma's *Rajput Polity* engaging into the detailed analysis of

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<sup>8</sup> Surya Mal Mishran, *Vamsh-Bhaskar*, Jodhpur, v.s. 1956; Shyamaldas, *Veer-Vinod*, Delhi, 1986 (reprint)

<sup>9</sup> G.S. Ojha, *Rajputana ka Itihas*, Ajmer, 1937; Dashrat Sharma, *The Early Chahman Dynasty*, Delhi, 1992 (reprint); M.L. Sharma, *Kota Rajya ka Itihas*, I, II, Kota, 1939.

the Rajput clan brotherhood in the Marwar region<sup>10</sup> offered a new dimension to the Rajput-Mughal relationship by breaking away from the conventional notion of unrestricted clan structure represented by Tod. The work tried to reveal the fact that the hierarchal process within the Rajputs was prevalent even before the Mughals. Many other crucial works on the specific issues in the regional histories were of S. Nurul Hasan, Satish Chandra, Dilbagh Singh and S.P. Gupta.<sup>11</sup> B. D. Chattopadhyaya's work went into the details of analyzing the formation of the sub-clans, the territorial units and legitimization of their rights to rule, defining 'the historical process as a range of interactions emphasizing the element of interdependence.'<sup>12</sup>

There have been other works analyzing the Rajput polity in the context of other warrior tribes and also in relationship with different authorities emerging time to time.<sup>13</sup> Eminent scholars have also tried to analyze 'transition' in the eighteenth century. C.A. Bayly tried defocusing the effect of transitioning powers from the Mughals to the local powers which were

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<sup>10</sup> S.P. Gupta, *The Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan*, Delhi, 1986

<sup>11</sup> S. Nurul Hasan, S.P. Gupta and K.N. Hasan, "The Pattern of Agricultural Production in the Territories of Amber", in *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 1967; S. Nurul Hasan and S.P. Gupta, "Prices of Foodgrains in the Territories of Amber", in *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 1967; Satish Chandra, "Some Aspects of Indian Village Society in Northern India during the Eighteenth Century", in *Indian Historical Review*, I, 1974; S.P. Gupta, *The Agrarian System of Eastern Rajasthan*, Delhi, 1986 and Dilbagh Singh, *State Landlords and Peasants*. Delhi, 1990.

<sup>12</sup> B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "Origins of Rajputs" and "Political Process and the Structure of Polity in Early Medieval India" in *Making of Early Medieval India*, New Delhi, 1994.

<sup>13</sup> For other interesting works in the field of Rajput polity refer to D. Kolff, *Naikar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of Military Labour Market in Hindustan 1450-1850*, Cambridge, 1990; Ziegler, "Rajput Loyalties During the Mughal Period" J. F. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, Delhi, 1998.

gaining their stronghold within the region politically as well as economically.<sup>14</sup>

Recently Madhu Tandon Sethia has tried to understand the Rajput Polity of the Hadas of the Hadauti region. She describes them to be credibly autonomous who never attempted like the Jats and Sikhs to challenge the imperial authority. They never attempted to declare their independence from the Mughals. Marathas used to extract heavy money from the Hadas. She examines the sources of revenue of the Hadas and explores the relationship between the merchant class and rulers in relation to the peasantry.<sup>15</sup> Norbert Peabody added another dimension to study the region of Hadauti in his book 'Hindu Kingship and Polity in Colonial India'. He focused on the Vallabhcharya cult and how the priestly class influenced some very important decisions of the ruler and how there were different chain of events working parallel with the politics of the state.<sup>16</sup>

Most of the works have focused on the political, economic and social aspects of Rajasthan, very few paying attention to women. Santosh Yadav has exceptionally focused on the position of women in the nineteenth and

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<sup>14</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and Making of the British Empire, The New Cambridge History of India*, Cambridge, 1998; C.A. Bayly, *Rulers Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870*, New Delhi, 1998.

<sup>15</sup> Madhu Tandon Sethia, *Rajput Polity: Warriors, Peasants and Merchants (1700-1800)*, New Delhi, 2003

<sup>16</sup> Norbert Peabody, *Hindu Kingship*, op. cit., 2003.

twentieth century Rajasthan.<sup>17</sup> She has brought some interesting facts to light respecting women of Rajasthan including Hadauti. She tries identifying the problems of women in not just with feudalism but also with the British rule which equally ignored the importance of reforms for the women of Rajasthan. Ira Das, Ram Pande, V. Vashishth and R.P. Vyas have also highlighted the condition of women of Rajasthan.<sup>18</sup>

The present study is a small step in focusing on the condition of women of the Hadauti region by questioning the role of the state in respecting women's upliftment. It was found relevant to analyze the relation between the native states and the imperial power that helped highlighting some of key women issues. As the political establishments never wanted to disrupt the established equations the 'change' was only possible when the people became aware of their rights. The limited role of enlightened men and women who raised their voice against the injustice and prejudice has also been attempted.

The study is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter "Situating Hadauti in Space and Time" forms a historical introduction of the region.

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<sup>17</sup> Santosh Yadav, *Unnisavi aur Beeswi Shatabadi mein Striyon ki Stithi*, Printwell Publishers, Jaipur, 1987; Santosh Yadav, *Rajasthan mein Das pratha ka badalta swarup*, 1977, Tenth Session, Rajasthan History Congress, Udaipur Session.

<sup>18</sup> Das, Ira, 'Sati: A Heinous System of Women Oppression', *Shodhak*, Vol.17, Pt. A, Sr. No. 49, 1988; Das, Ira, 'Female Infanticide in Rajputana', *Shodhak*, Vol. 18, Pt. A, Sr. No. 52, 1989; Pande, Ram, 'Foreign Travellers on Social conditions in Rajasthan', *Shodhak*, Vol.6, Pt. B, Sr. No. 17, 1977; Vashishtha, V.K., 'Evolution of the Social Policy of the British Government in the State of Rajputana during the Nineteenth Century', 1975, *Rajasthan History Congress*, Eighth Session, Ajmer; Vyas, R.P., 'The Walterkrit Rajputra Hitkarni Sabha and its Impact', 1975, *Rajasthan History Congress*, Eighth Session, Ajmer.

How did the Hadas enter the region, established a principality and gave the region its name is discussed. The dual policy by the British in handling the princely states consequently hampering the growth of the region has been looked into in reaction to progressive states of Baroda, Mysore and Travancore. The rulers were weak and insecure, hence too submissive to the British that they failed in taking any position to initiate reforms. While the British for their own interests never insisted hard on the implementation of reforms. They left the princely states on the whims of the rulers who accepted or silently refused the advice of the political agents according to their suitability.

The second chapter looks at the complex issue of "The Individual in Society" Caste system is a bitter reality of Indian society governing the public life. It has also given power to the few of the upper crust who then have used, misused and abused their power to exploit the larger section of the society through existing 'hierarchy.' Three sources have proved to be useful to study the castes in Rajputana. A report by Munshi Raibahadur Hardayal titled 'Report- Mardumshumari Rajmarwar' of 1891. It is interesting to grasp the hidden prejudice that Munshi Hardayal carried for castes and communities other than of the Rajputs and Brahmins.<sup>19</sup> Second is Census of 1901 Report by A.D. Bannerman. Bannerman's approach is totally different from

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<sup>19</sup> Hardayal, Munshi Raibahadur, 'Report Mardumshumari Rajmarwar 1891 c. Marwar Census Report 1891': *Rajasthan ki jaityo Ka Itihas evam Ritirivaz*, Jodhpur, Maharaja Mansingh Pustak.Prakash Shodh Kendra, 2010.



Hardayal's.<sup>20</sup> The recent study by Shyamlal provides a completely different dimension in understanding of the caste hierarchy. His approach of understanding the social order 'from the below' have marked new standards in history writing.<sup>21</sup>

No matter what caste a woman belongs to, her status is secondary in most of the cases.

The third chapter "Contextualizing Sexuality" studies men, power, authority and wickedness to 'demonize' women in all possible manners from sati to witch-hunting, from female infanticide to widow-hood. Men used all resources at their command to control the sexuality of the sexuality of women. Their inability to control their own sexual drive has forced them to dominate women for perpetual subjugation. Sexuality of women has been used by men to even generate and accumulate wealth for their mean ends.

Folk songs of the region have been analyzed to understand the patriarchal system by which men and women are habituated to a male dominant world view. Children listening and singing these folk songs grow up subsuming the gender stereotypes in their personality.

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<sup>20</sup> A.D. Bannerman (Capt.), *Census of India, Rajputana*, Vol. XXV Part-I, Lucknow, Nawal Kishore Press, 1902.

<sup>21</sup> Shyamlal, *Ambedkar and Dalit Movement: Special Reference to Rajasthan*, Jaipur, Rawat Publications, 2008.

But women's own perception and of society is studied in the fourth chapter entitled 'Women's Shared Spaces'. There are occasions such as festivals and marriages when women get together and share their experiences. Within the domain women carve out spaces for their catharsis. This chapter uses the non-archival sources to get a peep into women's world in the given restrictions.

The fifth chapter takes us to the 'change' that starts affecting the educated section of Hadauti including women. The 'Images of Women' are discussed in the back drop of transition into 'modernity' of the Hadauti. Here we encounter Rampyari Shastri, a spinster and a principal in the Girls' School, becoming the victim of petty politics just because she was raising her voice to uplift the backward classes and women of Kota. She had to struggle for her survival in exile in her later days. We also get to a child widow Beni Gupta who decided not to remarry and pursued her studies to become a teacher and a principal in various schools and colleges in Rajasthan. Lastly, we have Shakuntala Sharma a.k.a. Renu from a high class Brahmin family who decided to remain a spinster as the man she loved someone and could not marry. On the family's disapproving her choice she refused to accept any one else as her partner. All the three were feminists in their own ways. They stood for what they believed was 'right' for them without giving in to the social pressure and taboos. All of them questioned construct of dividing men and women.

The sixth chapter reviews 'Modernity and Hadauti Women,' using various data available in the census records to study. It tries to study the real status of nineteenth and twentieth century women in 'modernizing' Hadauti. It also questions the term 'modernity' in relation to the region of Hadauti.

The road to modernization for women was not easy. The women's struggles even in the metropolis throw sufficient light. The Hadauti women experienced road blocks of domination through feudalism and the British autocracy. It helps in understanding the Hadauti women in comparison with the women of the metropolitan cities of Bombay, Pune, Hyderabad, Baroda and Calcutta.

The thesis ends with 'Conclusion' that carries the findings of the study. A transition toward modernization is incomplete if seen through women's perception. Women of Hadauti realized the importance of Independence much later when compared to the advanced states of Maharashtra or Bengal. One of the reasons observed is the lack of awareness and possession of power in the hands of few which kept the women of the region on the back foot, hence slow transition of the region.

I owe deep gratitude to all those who had been with me and my work since the time I thought of pursuing doctoral thesis. To begin with my parents who encouraged me all through my work. My mother who believed in my decision and my father whose nervousness gave me the strong reason to go ahead in my research and prove them wrong when he had thought that there

was no women's history in Hadauti. I feel myself to be blessed to have Dr. Rajkumar Hans as my mentor. He helped to bring out the better of me from the most complicated and difficult situations. Where I thought I got stuck he believed I could walk. I still remember he said to me once during one of our discussions "it is good that you feel lost, now you would work to find your way out; it means you are evolving." I am grateful for his 'silent presence' that gave me space to work without putting into words he had ensured me whenever I would be stuck, he would be there to guide my way out from the dark. A deep gratitude to ICHR for accepting my research proposal and granting me scholarship that helped me in carrying my research smoothly.

I miss Hemi on this day who otherwise would have been with me but destiny played its game and took her away from me forever. I know she would have been very pleased and excited to know that I am able to complete my work.

In the Kota Archives from where I began my data collection I would like to thank Mr. Mathur who arranged Bastas for me. Late Mr. Dhannalal Suman of Hadauti Shodh Pratishthan, Kota was reasonably considerate and helpful in letting me visit the library and records which were otherwise unavailable in the archives. The help that I got in the Bikaner Archives and National Archives is commendable as the staff helped me find relevant records that were needed for my writing. My thanks to the archivists.

Many people who helped me in the field work Ms. Usha niece of Ms. Beni Gupta helped me to go through some of the works that had been worked on her. Ms. Shraddha, niece of late Shakuntla Sharma, gave me copies of her writings and a personal diary which immensely helped me in reconstructing her life experience. Ex-police officer Mr. Chandra Singh who shared his experience of working with the Kanjar caste of Jhalawar; his insight on the subject helped me to know the caste hierarchy of the region in much easier way. Last but not the least the entire Sharma family who made our visit in Bikaner so much easier and homely, the extended family that they had become during those days cannot be described in any words. My sincere thanks to all of them.

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