

ORIGIN OF THE RAJPUTS :

There is no agreement among the scholars regarding the origin of the Rajputs. It has been opined by many scholars that the Rajputs are the descendants of foreign invaders like Sakas, Kushana, white-Hunas etc. All these foreigners, who permanently settled in India, were absorbed within the Hindu society and were accorded the status of the Kshatriyas.

It was only afterwards that they claimed their lineage from the ancient Kshatriya families. The other view is that the Rajputs are the descendants of the ancient Brahamana or Kshatriya families and it is only because of certain circumstances that they have been called the Rajputs.

Earliest and much debated opinion concerning the origin of the Rajputs is that all Rajput families were the descendants of the Gurjaras and the Gurjaras were of foreign origin. Therefore, all Rajput families were of foreign origin and only, later on, were placed among Indian Kshatriyas and were called the Rajputs. The adherents of this view argue that we find references to the Gujjaras only after the 6th century when foreigners had penetrated in India.

So, they were not of Indian origin but foreigners. Cunningham described them as the descendants of the Kushanas. A.M.T. Jackson described that one race called Khajara lived in Arminia in the 4th century. When the Hunas attacked India, Khajaras also entered India and both of them settled themselves here by the beginning of the 6th century. These Khajaras were called Gurjaras by the Indians. Kalhana has narrated the events of the reign of Gurjara king, Alkhana who ruled in Punjab in the 9th century.

A part of Rajputana was called Gurjara-Pradesh in the 9th century while, in the 10th century, Gujarat was referred to as Gurjara. Therefore, some scholars have described that the Gurjaras entered India through Afghanistan, settled themselves in different parts of India and were the ancestors of the Rajputs. A stone-inscription at Rajora of 959 A.D. describes Mathandeo, a feudal Chief of Vijaypala as Gurjara-Pratihara.

It led to the conclusion that the Pratiharas were also a branch of the Gurjaras. The Chalukyas gave the name of Gujarat to that particular territory. It meant that the Chalukyas were also the Gurjaras. Prithviraja Raso also described that the Pratiharas, the Chalukyas, the Parmaras and the Chauhanas originated out of a sacrificial fire-pit which supported the theory of foreign origin of the Rajputs.

Therefore, several scholars described that all thirty-two Kulas of the Rajputs originated from the Gurjaras who were foreigners and, thus, all Rajputs were foreigners and were provided the status of the Kshatriyas only afterwards.

However, this view has not been accepted by the majority of modern historians. It is not certain that the Khajaras were called the Gurjaras. Except the Parmaras, rest of the three Rajput Kulas refused to accept their origin out of sacrificial fire-pit. There is no proof that these four Rajput clans had blood relations. On the contrary, it has been regarded more reliable that the Parmaras and the Chaulukvas had no relation, whatsoever, within the Gurjaras.

No early Muslim record has mentioned that the Gurjaras were a clan. Rather a particular territory has been referred to as Gurjara. In India, several families were named on the name of the territory' which they inhabited. Therefore, it is more logical to accept that the Pratihara was that clan which occupied Gurjara-Pradesh.

Arab scholars, Sulaimana and Abu Jaid described Jurj as a state and they used the word jurj for Gurjara-Pradesh. Therefore, modern historians refused to accept this view that all Rajput Kulas were the descendants of the Gujjaras and as the Gujjaras were foreigners so all Rajputs had a foreign origin.

Tod, in his *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, declared that the Rajputs were of Scythian origin. He drew parallels between the customs of foreigners like Sakas, Kushanas and Hunas, etc. and the Rajputs. He expressed that customs like Aswamedha-Yajna, worship of horse and arms and the status of women in society were similar among these foreigners and the Rajputs and therefore, declared that the Rajputs were the descendants of these foreigners.

William Brook supported the view of Tod. He contended that many family names of the Rajputs could be traced back only to the period of invasion of these foreigners and particularly those of the Hunas and thus justifies the theory of their origin from foreigners.

He said that even the Gurjaras were foreigners who came to India at the time of the invasions of the Hunas, accepted Hinduism, entered into marriage relations with Indians and, thus, gave birth to many Rajput families. Afterwards, they tried to establish their lineage from the ancient Solar or Lunar Kshatriya dynasties.

Dr V.A. Smith supported the same view. He observed that invasions of the Hunas seriously affected Indian society which brought about many social changes and also established many new ruling dynasties. Therefore, among the Rajput families many belong to foreigners while many other belong to lower Kshatriya families.

Dr Iswari Prasad and Dr Bhandarkar have also accepted this theory of foreign origin of the Rajputs. Dr Iswari Prasad does not regard the Rajputs as low-born Kshatriyas. However, he accepts that the absorption of foreign invaders within the Hindu society brought about the origin of the Rajputs.

Certain popular beliefs, particularly that of Chand Bardai, the court-poet of Prithviraj Chauhan, state that the Rajputs originated from a sacrificial fire-pit. According to them when Parasuram destroyed all the Kshatriyas then the ancient sages did a Yajna on Mount Abu to safeguard the Vedic religion.

Out of that Yajna fire four heroes were born and the descendants of these heroes were the four Rajput families, viz., the Chauhan, the Solanki or Chalukya, the Paramara and the Pratihara. This also supports the view of the foreign origin of Rajputs.

But Pandit Gauri Sankar Ojha has refuted the above viewpoint in his book *The History of Rajputana*. He states that parallels drawn by Colonel Tod between the customs of foreigners who settled in India and the Rajputs do not justify the view that the Rajputs are foreigners. Most of these customs had grown up before the coming of these foreign invaders.

Therefore, the Rajputs did not pursue these customs because of their foreign origin. On the contrary, these foreigners accepted these Indian customs in the process of their being Indianized. He further states that the Rajputs cannot be accepted to be of foreign origin on the basis of race or physical features. Therefore, he regards the Rajputs as descendants of ancient Kshatriya families. Dr Chintamani also supports this view.

A few modern historians like Dr R.C. Majumdar. Dr Hariram and Dr Dashratha Sharma state that most Rajput families are the descendants of ancient Kshatriya or Brahamana families though, of course, the lineage of a few families is doubtful. Dr R.C. Majumdar contends that the Rajputs cannot be accepted to be of foreign origin on the basis of certain parallel customs of the foreigners of their race.

Of course, foreigners were accepted within the Hindu society and accorded the status of lower Kshatriyas but the facts do not permit us to accept the view that political power of India had passed into the hands of these new converts to Hinduism. After the death of Harsha, most of the ruling dynasties belonged to ancient Kshatriya families.

The Puranas and even the Harsha- charita of Banabhatta use the words Rajputra for the sons of Kshatriya-kings. Afterwards, the distortion of the word Rajputra became Rajput. Therefore, the Rajputs were the descendants of the Hindu Kshatriya families. However, all those Kshatriya princes, who established their independent kingdoms after the death of Harsha, called themselves Rajputs.

Of course, certain foreigners also established their independent kingdoms in the North-West and the Western part of India and when they were accepted within the Hindu society they, being rulers, also called themselves Rajputs and were accepted as such. Therefore, there is no doubt that while most of the Rajput families are of Indian origin, a few of them have their origin from among the foreigners. Dr R.C. Majumdar does not accept the theory of the origin of the Rajputs out of sacrificial fire-pit as an historical fact.

He maintains that mostly the Rajputs are the descendants of Hindu Kshatriya or Brahamana families. He writes that Bappa Rawal, the real founder ruler of the Guhilot Rajput family of Mewar was a Brahamana, Harisena, the founder of Gurjara-Pratihara dynasty, was

a Brahamana whose one wife was Kshatriya and the other one a Brahamana, the Chandella-Rajputs are the descendants of the sage Chandratreya who was born of the moon; the Parmara-Rajputs claim their origin from the Kshatriya Rashtrakuta-family; and the Chalukyas of Badami were Kshatriyas.

Dr Dashratha Sharma has supported the view of Dr Majumdar in his book Early Chauhan Dynasties. On the basis of ancient inscriptions and coins, he has rightly rejected the story of sacrificial-pit and also the view of the foreign origin of the Rajputs as expressed by Tod. V.A. Smith, Bhandarkar. etc. He maintains that the founders of all important dynasties of the Rajputs like the Chauhans, the Guhilots, the Pallavas, the Kadambas, the Pratiharas and the Parmaras were Brahamanas.

After the fall of the empire of Harsha, India passed through a disturbed and unstable state of affairs. At that very time it was further endangered by the attacks of the Arabs and the Turks. Therefore, as had happened many times in ancient India the Brahamanas took up arms for the defence of their culture and religion and were called Kshatriya-Rajputs and ultimately Rajputs.

Thus, the view that the Rajputs mostly belonged to foreign races does not hold at present. Of course, the origin of a few families can be traced from foreigners but most of the Rajputs have descended from the aborigines of India and were either Brahamanas or Kshatriyas.