

## The Rajputs:

According to a mythical narration, the RAJPUTS originated from the sacrificial fire performed by VASHISTHA and other saints near the Nakhi Lake on Mount Abu with a view to containing the growing strength of demons. As the narration goes, four warriors came out of the sacrificial fire and destroyed the demons. The descendants of these four warriors formed four distinct lineages.

There are many views, thus, put forward about the origin of the Rajputs.

1. **Tod's Foreign origin theory:** Mr. Tod, the author of 'History of Rajasthan', says that the Rajputs are of foreign origin. Scholars such as Dr. Ghosh, Crooks and Bhandarak also subscribe to this view. They think that the Rajputs are the progeny of foreign races such as 'Shakas', 'Hunas' and 'Guptas'. These foreign races settled in India and married among the Indian races. Those who belonged the high class among these foreign races, came to be known as the 'Rajputs', whereas others came to be known as 'Jats' and 'Ahirs.'

**Reasons in favour:** The following reasons are put forward to support this theory:

- (i) The 'Shakas', the 'Hunas' and the 'Gurjars' also worshipped the fire like the Rajputs.
- (ii) There is no mention of the Rajputs in the history of India before the advent of these foreign races in India.

2. **Vaidya's Theory:** Most of the Indian historians do not agree with Mr. Tod and his supporters. Scholars like C.V. Vaidya, Ved Vyasa and Gaurj Sankar Ojha consider the Rajputs the descendants of the Aryans.

**Reasons in favour:**

- (i) The edicts of the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> century confirm that they were 'Suryavanshis' and 'Chandravanshis'.
- (ii) The worship of fire was prevalent in Indian even before the origin of Buddhism.
- (iii) The complexion and body structure of the Rajputs resembles that of the Aryans.
- (iv) The Rajputs of Mewar, Bikaner and Jaipur consider themselves to be the descendants of the Suryavanshi Kshatriyas. The Rajputs of Jaisalmer believe themselves.

3. **Chandra Bardai's Agnikund Theory:** According to Chandra Barai, the author of 'Prithvi Raj Raso' the Rajputs were born from the Agni Kund. According to this account, Parshuram had put an end to all Kshatriyas. But people felt the necessity of the Kshatriyas for their defence. So, they performed a grand Yajna at Mount Abu. It continued for forty days. In the end, the fire produced four great warriors. These four warriors later became the

originators of the Chauhan, Chalukya, Pawar and Pratihara clans of Rajputs. But the historians believe this to be a myth.

4. **Dr. Smith's View**: According to Dr. Smith, some Rajput clans are the descendants of foreign races whereas some of them are Indian. Chauhans and Pratiharas are the Rajputs of first class whereas Rathours and Chandels are considered to be second rate Rajputs. In the beginning, both these classes of Rajputs fought with each other but later they made treaties and began to live amicably.

The view put forward by Dr. Smith is more convincing. According to this view, the Rajputs were neither foreigners nor wholly Indians. This is a widely accepted view.

## **Describe the Political, Social, Religious and Cultural Life of the Rajputs in Medieval India, (Northern India).**

During the period between 647 A. D. to 1192 A. D. The northern Indian was divided into many petty states. They were ruled by the Rajputs. And so, this age is known as the 'Rajput age' in the history of India. The political, social, religious and cultural life of the Rajputs of northern India is as below:

1. ***Political Life***: The Rajputs lacked political unity. So, many petty states came into existence in north India. Different Rajput rulers ruled over different states. There was no central power. King was the head of the Rajput kingdom. All the powers of the state were vested with him. He was the Chief General of the army. He was assisted by the prince and queen in performing his state duties in some states. And there were some ministers also to help him. They were appointed by the king himself. Their head was called Mahamantri or Mahamatya. The general was named Dandanayaka. In fact, political administration of the Rajputs was based on feudal system. The king distributed jagirs among his feudal lords and the feudal lord, in turn, helped him in times of war, rebellion or other crisis with his money and army. The chief sources of state income were land –revenue, toll – tax, war-tax, gifts and other penalties. The king himself dispensed justice. He dispensed justice according to the laws of Samritis. Punishments were severe. However, the Rajputs had a good military organization. Their army consisted of foot-soldiers, riders and elephants. They used swords and other armaments in the war. There was special arrangement of forts during a war.

2. ***Social Life***: Caste-system was very rigid in Rajput society. The persons of high castes did not marry their daughters in low castes. Women, however, held a respectable position in society. They took part in wars. There was no 'purdah'. Most of the women were educated

and the maids of high families even chose their husband by 'sayamvar'. The Rajputs were very bold and courageous. They detested the cowards. But they had some disqualifications too. Some of them took Bhang, drinks and opium. They were, fond of dancing and singing also.

3. **Religious Life:** The Rajputs believed in Hindu gods and goddesses, they worshipped Lord Rama and Lord Krishna. Worship of Lord Shiva was most prevalent in their society. They had erected temples to extol their gods. They took great delight in reading the Vedas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata everyday. The Rajputs were superstitious also. They had faith in magical incantations and other superstitions.

4. **Cultural Life:** The Rajputs constructed big forts and magnificent palaces. The Fort of Chittor is a fine example of artistic grandeur of Rajput art and architecture. The palaces of Jaipur and Udaipur, too, are famous for their artistic excellence. And the best of all are the buildings built at Bhuvaneshwar and Khajuraho.

Literature was also at its height in Rajput period. Rajput rulers like Munj, Bhoja and Prithviraj Chauhan were famous scholars of their time. They paid special attention to the development of literature.

## **Feudalism:**

Feudalism was a system where the king paid the officials or the chiefs by land grants in lieu of salary. In return for this land or Jagir that chief led co-operation to the king in administration, economic assistance, and in case of need provided the king with a fixed number of soldiers. The feudal lords collected taxes from the peasants and gave a part of it to the king. These land grants were temporary and were liable to be resumed whenever the ruler wanted. But with the passage of time, various officers within the territories of these rulers started looking upon their assignments as hereditary fiefs. After sometime, even some government officers began to be considered hereditary. Members of a family in Bengal held the office of Mahamantri for four generations' thus most offices began to be considered as the monopoly of few families. Many hereditary chiefs gradually began to assume functions of the government. They not only assessed and collected land revenue, but also assumed more and more administrative powers. These powers included right of awarding punishments and exacting fines on their followers without the prior permission of the ruler. This led to the increase of the number of people who drew sustenance from land without working on it themselves. This type of society may be called a feudal society. The common feature of a

feudal society is that the dominant position in society is held by those who draw their sustenance from land without working on it.

**Result:** Feudalism had the following results:

**Bad Results:**

- (a) Feudalism weakened the king who became dependent on feudal lords.
- (b) Many lords had their own armies and they began to defy the established conventions.
- (c) This led to the decline of trade.
- (d) The superiority of feudal lords weakened the local governments.

**Good Results:**

- (a) The feudal lords provided protection to the farmers in an age filled with uncertainty.
- (b) Some feudal lords showed interest in the development of agriculture.

**Assess the Position of Women during the Period from A.D. 800 – 1200.**

**Female Education:** There is no reference to women teachers in the dictionaries written during this period. It shows the poor state of higher education among women. However, from some of the dramatic works of the period, we find that the court ladies and even the queen's maids-in-waiting were capable of composing excellent Sanskrit and Prakrit verses. Various stories point to the skill of princesses in the fine arts, especially in painting and music. Females were highly skilled in various arts, including poetry.

**Female Marriage:** As for marriage, the Smriti writers say that girls were to be given away by their parents, between the ages of six and eight or between their eighth year and attaining puberty. Remarriage was allowed under certain conditions when the husband had deserted or died, or adopted the life of a recluse, or was impotent or had become an outcaste.

**Right to Property:** In general, women were distrusted. Their life was regulated by the male relations-father, brother, husband and son. However, within the home, they were honoured. If a husband abandoned even a guilty wife, she was to be given maintenance. With the growth of property rights in land, the property rights of women also increased. In order to preserve the property of a family, women were given the right to inherit. She was entitled to the entire estate of her husband if he died sonless. Daughters also had the right to succeed to the properties of a widow. Thus, we notice that the growth of feudal society strengthened the concept of private enterprise.

**Sati:** The practice of sati was made obligatory by some writers, but condemned by others. According to an Arab writer, Sulaiman, wives of kings sometimes burnt themselves on the

funeral pyre of their husbands, but it was for them to exercise their option in the matter. The feudal chiefs maintained the practice of large number of women. It resulted in disputes about property and, so there was a tendency for the rite of sati to spread.

## **Main Features of the Caste System Prevalent during A.D. 800 – 1200.**

The description of the main features of the caste system prevalent during A.D. 800 - 1200 were as follows:

1. The Caste System formed the basis of the society.
2. The Brahmins were blessed with many privileges.
3. The lower strata of society got worst hit under this system.
4. Inter-caste marriages were looked down upon.
5. Experts in handicrafts were treated as people belonging to lower castes.
6. Labourers and Bhils were regarded as untouchables.

## **Economic Conditions of the People during the Period A.D. 800 – 1200.**

The description of the economic condition of the people during the period A.D. 800 – 1200 is as follows.

1. **Trade and Commerce:** This period is considered a period of stagnation and decline in northern India. Trade and commerce saw a great setback between the seventh and the tenth century. But the situation gradually changed with emergence of a powerful Arab empire. The Indian fabrics, incenses and spices were of great demand among the Arabs. This led to an increase of Arab's trade with India and south-west Asia. As a result, many new towns came into existence. With the decline of the Roman Empire. China had become the main centre of trade in the Indian Ocean. The Chinese imported enormous quantities of spices from South-East Asia and India. They also imported ivory from Africa and glassware from west Asia. To this list of imported goods were added medicinal and herbs, lae, incense, and all types of rare things. Thus, both India and South – East Asia became important staging centres for trade between China and the countries of West Asia and Africa.

Thus, while India's trade with the western areas declined, trade with South –East Asia and China grew steadily till the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The lead in the trade was taken by south India and Bengal. This, in return, led to the prosperity of these areas.

2. **Agriculture:** The main occupation of the Indian people was agriculture. Some people were engaged in handicrafts such as textiles, work on gold and silver, metallurgy etc. Indian

agriculture also continued to be in a flourishing condition. The ministers, officials and feudal chiefs lived in great ostentation and splendor. But it does not mean that there was prosperity all round. There were many poor people in the cities who could not get enough to eat.

The condition of farmers was also not very good. They had to give one sixth of their produce as revenue. Besides, they also had to pay grazing tax, tax on ponds etc. Land Lords had right to levy fixed or unfixed, proper or improper taxes on the peasants. The peasants were also subjected to forced labour. On the basis of all the above facts, we can say that the life of the peasants was very hard during the period A.D. 800 – 1200.

### **Bhakti movement:**

Bhakti movement started in south India. It was led by a series of popular saints called Nayanars and Alvars. They were devotees of Shiva and Vishnu respectively. It rejected austerities and rigidities in Hinduism. They looked upon religion as a matter of formal worship a living bond based on love between the god and the worshipper. They spoke in a simple language which every one could understand. These saints carried their message of love and devotion wherever they went. Some of them belonged to the lower classes and some were Brahmanas. There were also a few woman saints. They disregarded the inequalities of caste. The path of Bhakti advocated by these saints was open to all. The Bhakti Movement won the fold of Hinduism and many adherents of Buddhism and Jainism.

### **Lingayat or Vir Shaiva Movement:**

The Lingayat movement was started in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Lingayats were the worshipers of the Shiva. They also challenged the tenets of Jainism. Its founder was Basava and his nephew Chammabasava. They were associated with the court of the Kalachuri kings of Karnataka. They established their faith after bitter disputes with the Jains they did not believe in casteism. They rejected fasts, feasts, pilgrimages and sacrifices. They opposed child marriage and allowed remarriage of widows. Sankara's Philosophy:

Sankara's Philosophy was a saint who advocated devotion to God through singing of hymns. The most serious challenge to Buddhism and Jainism came from Sankara. He reformulated the Hindu philosophy and many a time defeated his Jain and Buddhist opponents in debate. He expounded the philosophy of 'advaitavada' or 'monism' which forced the adherents of both Jainism and Buddhism to seek fresh air into the broader folds of Hinduism.



Short Terms:

**Samants:** Samants belonged to a new class of people that grew between 800- 1200 A.D. A Samanta had his own group of soldiers and ruled like a king in his Jagir.

**Bhoga:** The revenue assignments granted by a ruler to his officers were called Bhogas.

**Vishitit:** Forced labour was called Vishiti.

**Mechha:** The foreign invaders were known as Mechhas.

**Advaitavada:** Sankara's philosophy is called Advaitavada.

**Fief:** After the fall of the Roman Empire the new system of government that rose in Europe's called Feudalism. It is derived from the Latin word 'Feudum' which is synonymous to English word 'Fief'.

**Vassal:** On the top of the feudal pyramid was the King who was like a most powerful feudal chief. He in turn granted fiefs or tracts of land to smaller chiefs called Lords who swore to him an oath of loyalty. They were called his 'Vassal'.

**Serfdom:** 'Serfdom' was a major feature of European feudalism .a serf was a peasant who worked on his master's land and could not migrate to any other area.

**Manor:** The Manor was a fort-like house, where the lord or the master of the lands lived. He maintained law and order and provided protection to his serfs as well as smaller chiefs. The serf in return worked on the lands of his master.

