

DAVARIS: A Community within Rajput Society of Jaipur



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Abstract

Davaris were the female servants in the zenana deorhi of the Rajput chiefs. They were gifted in dowry by the chief to his daughter. For the comfort of her daughter he did so. They were loyal and trustworthy to the princess. The royal Rajput women worshipped in the temple situated in the deorhi otherwise they sent their davaris. A Rajput woman could not talk directly to her in-laws. This was regarded as symbols of etiquette. Concubines were organised to help her. Concubinage was generally considered to be an attribute of monogamy.¹ It could not be denied that many Daroghas must originally have belonged to the Rajput caste. They could be from touchable class of society.

In Royal Rajput families, Purdah had become the symbol of respect and status. They looked after the administration from behind the purdah in the zenana palace, when needed. No men could enter into the zenana deorhi. They sent messages to the ranis through davaris. Due to rigid purdah system, the bride needed some assistants. These assistants acted as messenger of the Rani. Thus the davri system established.

Concubinage prevailed specially among western Rajputana. The prince fed a heterogeneous class of casual persons, for their beautiful wives, which attached with the aristocratic families. The female slaves were the part of dowry given to the bride. The number of slave girls was the symbol of prestige. These classes had been used for all sorts of domestic and military job.

This paper proposes to analyze the individuality of davaris and as integral part of the Rajput Society.

Keywords: Rajputs, Daroghas, Davaris, Zenana deorhi, British Paramountcy.

Introduction

The Rajputs were Kshatriyas so they were engaged in administration and war. Gradually the Varna system had loosened its strictness. Har or the Sun is the patron of all who love war and strong drink, and is especially the object of the Rajput warrior's devotion, blood and wine accordingly, are the chief oblations to this god.²

According to Campbell, Rajput females are a very unsatisfactory institution, and this goes far to weigh down and give a comparatively bad name to men who are often industrious enough.³

Louis Dumont described about polygamy in his work 'Homo Hierarchicus', In the case of a man his first marriage becomes the principal marriage only if it bears him children, preferably sons. But a man has the option, either in the ease of the barrenness of the first marriage, or freely in other castes (royal etc.) of taking other wives, either with full rite (necessary for the wife if she has not been married before) or with secondary rite (if the wife was already been married). Thus, for a man there are supplementary or subsidiary marriages, with a corresponding hierarchy of wives.⁴ The marriage was organized by the elders of the family usually with the same caste in Rajput society.⁵ The *Bhat* and *Bhatnis* or *Charans* and *Charanis* played the role of match - makers and family chroniclers were appointed by aristocrats to match the suitability of the couples.⁶

The politics of state was influenced by the politics of zenana deorhi. The staff of Zenana deorhi consisted a darogah (the incharge of administration), a deorhidar (for security), and a badaran (female deorhidar). Concubines who were the favourites of their masters or the protégés of powerful courtiers were also women to be reckoned with in Rajput palaces. Whatever delights or consolations the zenana offered its master; it also brought political consideration into virtually all of personal relationship.⁷ Concubinage was generally considered to be an attribute of monogamy.⁸ The practice was for sexual pleasure of the prince.⁹ It refers to

the state of a man and a woman cohabiting as married persons without the full sanction of legal marriage.¹⁰

Davri system

The king's first wife was regarded as *patrani* or *vadi*.¹¹ She was privileged to be the mother of the heir-apparent.¹² Each rani wanted to secure her position. They wanted to be '*manetan*' i.e. the wife who was close to the ruler. Inversely, '*Kumanetan*' was one who did not enjoy the favour of the ruler.¹³

In Rajput Society, each rani had her own *deorhi* which was called Sarkar. It consisted a darogah (incharge of administration), a deorhidar (for security), and a badaran (female deorhidar). They got the charge of departments and were called Darogha Baggi Khana (the incharge of the carriages), Darogha Zenani Deorhi etc.

During British paramountcy, the Rajputs who lost their jagirs adopted the profession of agriculture. They were considered lower Rajputs and were counted in Darogha caste. Darogha received food and on auspicious occasions clothes. He was appointed for lifelong jobs of their master. He could only be free after paying all debts in favour of the master. The family of Darogha was the responsibility of the master.

Concubines belonged to the Daroghas, a separate caste amongst the Hindus of Rajasthan.¹⁴ It refers to the state of a man and a woman cohabiting as married persons without the full sanction of legal marriage.¹⁵ There were specific castes from which the concubines could be chosen. They could not be Rajputs, Brahmins, Chamars, Kanjar, Koli, Chandal. They could be Gurjar, Ahir, Jat, Mali, Kayastha, and Darji. After the *chura* ceremony of the *pardayats* and *paswans*, they were admitted into deorhi. In the royal harem, they were not recognized as queens, even as *khavasans* and *pardayatans*. But they had respectable status in harem.¹⁶ They were called by various titles such as *Rai*, *Bai* and *Sukh*.¹⁷ For instance, *pardayat* Jawahar Rai ji,¹⁸ *pardayat* Bhurai Rai ji,¹⁹ *pardayat* Mahtab Rai ji,²⁰ *pardayat* Kesar Rai ji,²¹ etc.

Concubines were called by different names in different territories such as *Khawas*, *Daroghas*, *Chakar*, *Chela*, *Huzurees*, *Ravna Rajputs* and *Golas*. *Khawas* were generally Jatnis or Gurjarins, who kept in seclusion of the Zenana. Their offspring were known as *Khawaswala* or *Suretwalas*. They were treated as Rajputs but not allowed to put their mouth to the Hukah of a pure born man and could not dine in the same dish, though the true Rajput would eat food cooked by them. *Daroghi* were those women who were bought and worked about a Rajput's house, but never leave it. *Golis* were generally of low caste, they had treated as slaves. *Daroghas* and *Golis* assumed the name and clan of their owner.

R. C. Gunartha wrote in *Raj Parijan Parichay*, "The females were known by different names such as *Daroghas*, *Daijwal*, *Sukh*, *Hazuri*, *Bai*, *Rai*, *Chokari*, *Goli*, *Chain*, *Davris* were commonly used term for them.²² *Jiji* was used for those *davris* who had come with mother. The number of these girls (*davaris*) was dependent on the status of the Rajput chief. If the chief did not have such girls, purchased and gave them to their daughters. The senior and experienced *davris* were also sent to guide the bride about

customs of royal households. The male who had come with bride in form of dowry were known as *Dajwals*. They provided day to day report of work to the owner. The unmarried *davri* girls got married to the unmarried boys belonged to the bridegroom side. Such boys were called *Panch Kalyani*.²³ On the death of their master, *davaris* also broke their *churas* (bangles) with the queen. They could be given as *Shaiya daan* (alms), given on the twelfth day after the death of the king or the queen to the Brahmins. They could be brought back from Brahmin's house after the payment of a sum of money.

Sometimes they proved influential and capable to mould the state politics. For instance, Rani Bhattiyani became the queen regent in 1819, but was under the complete influence of one of her badarans whose name was Rupa. She built up her own strong faction consisting mainly of herself, Jootha Ram, and Thakur Shyam Singh of Bissau. Rupa brought Jootha Ram, the most infamous character in the history of Jaipur, and Thakur Shyam Singh of Bissau, the most notorious jagirdar, into close association with the Rani. When Rani Bhattiyani tied a rakhi with her own hands to the wrist of Thakur Shyam Singh, Rupa accepted a bribe of 500 gold Mohurs from the thakur for this sign of royal favour.²⁴ Another instance, *Pardayat Pholai Rai*²⁵ received grants and gifts on her birthday.²⁶ She was treated equal to queen after giving birth to a baby boy in 1884 A.D. She was then called *pardayat jee sahiba shree pholai rai*.²⁷ She was received Rs.8011 and the child *Chimnaji* was presented a gold bangles, 9 *mohars* and Rs.341.²⁸ Her daughter *Baijeelal* got married to Inder Singh s/o Rao Raja Tej Singh of Jodhpur.²⁹ Some *pardayats* were influential. In 1889 A.D. the residence of *pardayat Pholai Rai* was the venue of all marriages. During the reign of Sawai Ram Singh *pardayat* Bhurai Rai was influential and received gifts in large numbers. The gifts consisted horse, horse with leash (*ghoda lagam*), Elephant of mark (*hathi nishan ka*), *chandani* (tent), palanquin, money etc.³⁰

When the ruler choose a *pardayat*, a *chura* ceremony had organized. After the ceremony, the ruler gave rights to wear gold on her feet and ivory bangles in hands. They put in *purdah* as well. There were levels among the concubines. First was *Pardayats* and second was *paswan*. Maharaja Madho Singh II of Jaipur had many *paswans*, some of whom were entitled to wear *ganga jamuni* anklets. These anklets made half of silver and half of gold. Others were allowed to wear pure gold, and some just silver only. The ones allowed to wear gold on their feet were cleaned the most senior among them.³¹ *Valna* was the jewellery for the *davri*, when she was the representative of marriage party. She went to the other marriage party to check out the girl.

On the death of *pardayats*, all the rituals were performed. In 1889 A.D. *pardayat* Bhurai Rai died, the death ceremony was performed.³² Sometimes queens also organised feasts on special occasions for *pardayats*. In 1896 A.D., *banoro* (pre - marriage feast) was organised by Maharani jee Sahiba Shree Jhalijee, Maharani jee Sahiba Shree Chandawat jee and Maharani jee Sahiba Shree Tawar

jee together on the occasion of marriage of Bai jee lal d/o *pardayat* Kesar Rai.³³

Johur, it was very close to the rite of sati. It was the horrible sacrifice where the females were immolated on the defeat in war, to preserve them to get pollute or captive. In this section, the Rajputs fought to the last phase, determined to destroy their women rather than they should fall into the hands of their enemy. They were conveyed to a great subterranean retreat where, in chambers impervious to the light of day, the funeral pyres were lighted, and the queen and several thousand women sought security from dishonour by committing themselves to the flames.³⁴ Concubines also sacrificed themselves with their lords.

In 1839, the domestic slavery was suppressed. Generally this practice was uncommon in Jaipur. Although *davari* system was a kind of domestic slavery which was continued illegally. It was treated as the part of tradition of Rajput society.

The tenure of Ram Singh was prosperous and peaceful. He was known for his efforts to develop the state.³⁵ In 1900 A. D. the Indian National Social Conference passed regulations to curtail the unnecessary heavy budget of marriages and induced marriage reforms.³⁶ It also affected the *davari* system.

Conclusion

Davaris were the integral part of Rajput society. They were the status symbol among them. Numbers of concubines determined the prosperity and status of the family in the society. They were not considered respectable but there were many instances which shows their influence and interference in the administration. *Pardayats* and *Paswans* were usually engaged in getting the attention of the king.

The social history of Rajput is incomplete without this community. This system prepared a new community which included all castes except untouchables. This community adopted the etiquettes, customs and rituals of Rajput. They had accepted the system as their part of life. This system had abolished the individuality of a person. They had to perform their duties and dedicated towards their respective master. During the British paramountcy, this practice became weak. In non ruling class Rajput families, they were considered as economic burden on the family. Gradually Royal ruling class Rajputs also cut off the number of *davaris*.

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