



## POLITICS OF FESTIVALS

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One of the most remarkable thing about the theories of civilizing process is the way it encompasses both the minute details of people's behavior and the processes of society's structural development. 'The web of actions grow so complex and extensive, the efforts required to behave correctly within it becomes so great, that besides the individual's conscious self control, an automatic, blindly functioning apparatus of self control is firmly established.'<sup>1</sup> The more differentiated social functions become, the larger the number of people on whom the individual depends in all his actions. To fulfill his own functions every individual is constrained to take account of his own and other people's action through a whole series of links in the social web. This act of balance between external constraints and self restrain calls for the need of rituals.

It is necessary first of all to distinguish between two major forms of ritual activity when trying to understand the highly differentiated Rajput society. There is on one hand religious issues and on another life cycle rituals. They can also be distinguished as calendrical and non calendrical rituals.<sup>2</sup>

Calendrical rituals occur on a regular schedule, and the occasion for their performance is always an event in some natural cycle like day and night, the waxing and waning of the moon, the seasons, the eclipses, positions of the planets and the stars. The distinction is useful as a minor distinction within a broader framework, but the category of the non-calendrical rituals is too large. As it stands here, life cycle rituals are the major category of the natural cycle rituals to be used here, and this will include not just birth, marriage and death, but also health and sickness as a cycle involving the use of ritual action.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Mennell, *Norbert Elias: Civilizing and the Human Self-Image*, Oxford, Black Basil Limited, 1989, p.96.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Roland Auguet, *Cruelty and Civilization*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970. p.

One of the effects of the ritualizing practices is precisely that of assigning them a time- i.e. a moment, a tempo and a duration- which is independent of external necessities, those of climate technique or economy, thereby conferring on them the sort of arbitrary necessity which specifically defines collective rhythm...the submission to the collective rhythm rigorously demanded structures not only the group's representation of the world but the group itself.<sup>4</sup>

Festivals and festivities formed an integral part of Rajputana during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Every festival had a religious and historical significance. Most of the festivals were common to the whole of Rajasthan and the procedure of celebration was also similar. Regarding festivals, Col. James Tod has opined as follows:

“However important may be the study of military, civil and political history , the science is incomplete without the mythological history: and he is little imbued the spirit of philosophy, who can perceive in the fables of antiquity nothing but a fervid imagination. Did no other consequence result from the study of mythology, than the fact, that in all ages and countries man has desecrated his reason and voluntarily reduced himself below the level of the brutes that perish, it must provoke inquiry into the cause of this degradation. Such an investigation would develop, not only the source of history, the handmaid of the arts of the sciences, but the origin and application of the latter, in a theogony typical of the seasons, their changes, and the products. Thus may be considered the parent all history”.<sup>5</sup>

Pramod K. Nayar explains it more clearly,

“Public culture constructs meanings around and about particular issues, experiences and conditions. Our everyday life and its experiences are mediated by these meanings. How we interpret events, response, images, attitudes and behavior is conditioned , in part, by the already circulating meanings... this construction of meaning around...is possible because there are pre-existing frameworks.”<sup>6</sup>

With the help of some important festivals , now let us examine how public culture shaped the minds and the lives of the masses in the desired way.

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<sup>4</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Structure, Habitus, Power: Basis for a Theory of Symbolic Power, in Nicholas Dirks, Geoff Eley and Sherry B. Ortner (ed.s), *Culture, Power, History*, Princeton, 1993

<sup>5</sup> Col. James Tod, *Annales and Antiquities of Rajasthan, Vol I*, KMN Publishers, New Delhi, 1971, p.444.

<sup>6</sup> Pramod K. Nayar, *States of Sentiments: Exploring the Cultures of Emotion*, Orient Blackswan, New Delhi, 2011, p.17

## **I. Gangour**

‘Our theories tell us that the ceremonial of the public life are merely the trappings of power... perhaps our own rituals are far more than drapery; perhaps they too play and altogether different and more substantial role in the political affairs.’<sup>7</sup>

The festivities of Gangour begins on the next day of Holi and continues for fifteen days. Women would go to pitchers of water, green grass and flowers in groups, singing the hymns of Gouri. When we say that in every area there was at least one idol of Gouri, then it means that the owner of the idol is also the owner of local power and distinction. It is because not everyone could afford to have a precious (of gold or silver) idol. Only who has monetary or political power could afford the idol, which in turn, would give them more power over society.

Referring to Gangour, Col. James Tod writes, ‘whoever desires to witness one of the most imposing and pleasing of Hindu Festivals, let him repair to Odipur ( Udaipur), and behold the rites of the lotus queen Pudma, the Gauri of Rajasthan’.<sup>8</sup>

Before embarking on the details of the rituals of Gangour, we must bear in mind that ‘at the beginning, their prime importance was essentially cosmic, to show that ritual was an integral part of the universe, with heaven and earth bound together by ceremonial’.<sup>9</sup>

This is chiefly a festival of women in which unmarried girls worship and pray for a handsome and suitable groom and married women pray for the long life of their husbands. Here we can observe that there is a silent and subtle system which understands what is desired by the society and then provide a systematic way to attain it. Thus ‘cultural objects can be internalized and thereby transmitted from one actor to another’.<sup>10</sup> As we proceed we will observe that faith is unquestionable and is blindly followed. There is no scientific proof that Gauri is the provider of marital bliss, but it can never be doubted and believed as natural and eternal fact.

“Among the many remarkable festivals of Rajat’han, kept with peculiar brilliancy at Oodipur (Udaipur), is that in honour of Gouri, or Ishani, the goddess of abundance, the Isis of Egypt, the Ceres of Greece. Like the Rajput Saturnalia, which it follows, it belongs to the vernal equinox, when nature in these regions proximate to the tropic is in the full expanse of her

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<sup>7</sup> David Cannadine and Simon Price, *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p.1.

<sup>8</sup> Col. James Tod, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. I, p. 459.

<sup>9</sup> David Cannadine and Simon Price, *Op. Cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils, *Towards a General Theory of Action: Theoretical Foundations of Social Sciences*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 2001, p. 66.

charms and the matronly Gouri casts her golden mantle over the beauties of the verdant vassant. Then the fruits exhibit their promise to the eye, the kohil fills the ear with the melody, the air is impregnated with aroma, to form a wreath for the beneficent Gauri”.

“Gauri is one of the names of the Isa of Parvati, wife of the greatest of the gods, Mahadev or Ishwara, who is conjoined with her in these rites, which exclusively appertain to women. The meaning of Gauri is ‘yellow’, emblematic of the ripened harvest, when the votaries of the goddess her effigies, which are those of a matron painted in the colour of ripe corn...here she is seen as Ana-purana, the benefactress of the mankind. The rites commence when the sun enters Aries (the opening of the Hindu year), by a deputation to a spot beyond the city, “to bring earth for the image of the Gauri.” When this is formed, a smaller one of Ishwara is made, and they are placed together; a small trench is then excavated in which barley is sown; the ground is irrigated and artificial heat supplied till the grain germinates, when the females join hands and dance around it, invoking the blessings of Gauri on their husbands. The young corn is then taken up, distributed and presented by the females, to the men, who wear it in their turbans. Every wealthy family has its image, or at least every poorwa or subdivision of the city. These and other rites known only to the initiated, having been performed for the several days within doors, they decorate the images, and prepare to carry them in procession to the lake”.<sup>11</sup>

The common people might make their clay idols or painted Shiv and Parvati at their homes but the celebration by the royal house and their participation in the procession was most sought after. These processions are the occasions when the people get to have a look at the Maharaja. It is believed that hierarchies are dissolved here, but instead, they are more solidified and the people give their silent approval without their own knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

In the royal families the prayers would begin in accordance with astrologically determined to create a sense of auspiciousness. The knowledge of Hindu and local beliefs of rituals was used to perfect precision. The small things like, bathing, decoration, changing of dress of idol, etc. were determined by the moon’s position in Maharaja’s astrological chart.<sup>13</sup> This will create and maintain a belief in the sacredness of the entire process.

The description of the Gangour procession of Mewar by Kaviraja Shyamaldas is as follows; “The Maharana rode on his horse on the third *nakkarah* (kettledrum). The gun sounds from the *Eklinggarh* announced the commencement of Gauri’s procession. The Maharana with his

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<sup>11</sup> Col. James Tod, Op. Cit., Vol. I, pp. 454-455.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 456.

<sup>13</sup> *Religious Trust, File No. 6*, Maharana Maan Singh Pustak Prakash, Jodhpur, p. 18.

cavalcade proceeded to the Pichola Lake. The arrangement of the procession used to be in a set precedence given here under:

“Elephants carrying the royal ensign were followed by the elephants carrying nobles and the officers of the court.

Then came the army and artillery with their bands. Tamjam and Khasa elephants with golden and silvery seats (*howdhas*) moved ahead of the first grade nobles, ministers, bards and high officers on their horses.

The crown prince moved in the procession either in front of the Khasa elephants or in front of the Maharana’s horse”<sup>14</sup>.

Here we can observe that the might of the state was displayed. The treatment of the idol of Gauri is done like nothing else. Nobody but the Maharana can afford to announce the coming of Gauri with gun sounds. It will prove his highest regard for the Gauri and people’s belief in her. Also, if a procession moves with so much grandeur, then only people will be attracted to leave their homes and participate in it. At the same time, we observe that the state official hierarchy is displayed in front of people. People now know who is the *diwan*, *bakshi* and Maharaja. Everybody’s position has got displayed and confirmed in public view. This makes the subversion of hierarchy impossible. This helps the royalty get the approval of the people to rule year after year.

Kaviraja Shyamaldas further writes,

“The Rankanakan orchestra played sweet melodies”.

“The Maharana dressed in royal robes wore ornaments, necklaces and carried his sword and shield. He rode on horse back, on his both sides *chanwar* (fly-whisk) was waved and over his head was held the royal *parasal*. *Changir*, *Kirniya*, *Adani*, *Chawa*, etc. of the *lawazama* (parts of the royal insignia) surrounded him.

Some nobles and the courtiers followed the Rana on their horses. They were followed by mounted soldiers and kettle drums.

On both sides of the procession moved the *charidars* (heralds) who warned the people to move out of the royal path. The *dholies* (drummers) sang couplets describing the heroic deeds of the Maharana and his ancestors. In this way the procession moved to the banks of the Pichola Lake”<sup>15</sup>.

Here we can see that the splendor of the Maharana is created and displayed by the royal insignia, ornaments, dresses, etc. The poetic rendition of the heroic deeds of the Maharana

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<sup>14</sup> Kaviraja Shyamaldas, *Vir Vinod*, Vol. I, Shaktawat Publishing House, Udaipur, 1974, p. 120.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 121.

and his ancestors must have created sense of awe in the minds of his spectators. At the same time, bravery, being the basic trait of the Rajputs, must have made people believe that they are the legitimate people to rule over them.

We further read,

“From the other side the image of Gauri, well dressed and decorated, was borne through the Tripolia to the lake by the females of the royal household accompanied by some of the nobles and officers. As the procession reached the lake the Maharana attended by his nobles, ministers and courtiers remained standing till the goddess was seated on her throne near the bank and danced for sometime. When the ablutions are over, the goddess was taken to the palace. The Rana and his courtiers then moved into the huge boats. The Maharana occupied his *gaddi*, seat on the boat and his first grade nobles occupied seats according to their precedence and some of the courtiers remained standing. The second grade nobles occupied another boat. The boats then moved south of the lake. Display of fireworks made the sight very picturesque. After boating *Khas* (special) durbar was held”.<sup>16</sup>

Here we can observe that the high regard shown to the deity revered by the masses, made the ruler get close to the ruled and win their trust. The things like fireworks, which can not be afforded by the people, made the people believe in his wealth and supremacy.

Observing all this we can say that truth does not exist but is created. It all began with the created truth that Gauri is the provider of eternal marital bliss, then a detailed festival was instituted in which people are drawn and shown as if it is naturally evolved. Like this and many other festivals imposed a way of life on the people and enmeshed people towards its fulfillment. There is no alternative way of life to imagine. ‘Having adopted the...pattern of time reckoning by lunar months and the holydays which are attached to it, the...(people) have felt obliged to celebrate its sacred time periods in the only way they know.’<sup>17</sup>

## **II. Teej**

‘Religion is illusion, albeit a collective one, not an individual one. Ritual is obsessive action, though it is collective and is distinct...making some contribution to the maintenance of social life.’<sup>18</sup> Religion tells people what to aspire for and how to celebrate their life. It also stops masses to look in another direction. ‘That is why we can rest assured in advance that the practices of the cult, whatever they may be, are something more than movements without

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 122.

<sup>17</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, The Free Press, New York, 1969, p. 77.

<sup>18</sup> Roland Auguet, *Cruelty and Civilization*, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1970, p.

importance and gestures without efficacy.’<sup>19</sup> Like Gangour, Teej is also a popular festival in Rajasthan. On this day, like Gangour, the procession of ‘Mother Teej’ is taken out. Teej is the symbolic day of Parvati only. It is believed on the day of Teej, after severe austerities, Parvati could gain Lord Shiva. From that day, the festival of Teej is considered to be bestower of marital bliss on women.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, we can observe that people are taught to think of certain things by rituals and others obliterated. According to Tod,

“The third, emphatically called “*teej*” (third) is sacred to the mountain goddess Parvati, being the day on which, after long austerities, she was reunited to Shiva: she accordingly declared it holy, and proclaimed that whoever invoked her on that day should possess whatever was desired. The *teej* is accordingly revered by the women, and the husbandman of Rajasthan, who deem it as a most favourable day to take e possession of land, or to re-inhabit a deserted dwelling. When on the expulsion of the predatory powers from the devoted lands of the Mewar, proclamation were disseminated far and wide, they showed their love of country by obedience to the summons. Collecting their goods and chattels, they congregated from all parts, but assembled at a common rendezvous to make their entry to the *bapota* ‘land of their sires,’ on the *teej* of the Sawan. On this fortunate occasion, a band of three hundred men, women, and children, with colour flying, drums beating, the female taking precedence with brass vessels of water on their heads, and chanting the *suhailea* (song of joy); entered the town of Kapasan, to revisit their desolate dwelling and return thanks on their long abandoned alters of Parvati for a happiness they had never contemplated”.

“Red garments are worn by all classes on this day, and at Jeipoor (Jaipur) clothes of this colour are presented by the Raja to all the chiefs. At that court, the *teej*, richly attired, is borne on a throne by women chanting hymns, attended by the prince and nobles. On this day, fathers present red garments and stuffs to their daughters”.<sup>21</sup>

Looking at this description of Tod, we can say that ‘feelings and emotions are seen to derive from culture’.<sup>22</sup> In the same breath we can comment that,

“Men do not act, as members of a group, in accordance with that each feels as an individual; each man feels as a function of the way in which he is permitted or obliged to act. Customs

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.29.

<sup>21</sup> Col. James Tod, Op. Cit., Vol. I, p. 463.

<sup>22</sup> Roland Auguet, Op. Cit., p. 31.

are given as external norms before giving rise to internal sentiments of individuals as well as the circumstance in which he may, or must be displayed”.<sup>23</sup>

### **III. Navratri and Dashahara**

In the month of *Asoj* or *Ashwin* from the beginning of the brighter half to the *navami* (ninth), *Navratri* is celebrated and on the next day i.e. that is tenth, *Dashahara* is celebrated.

“On the first day of *Navratra*, an important function is held which is known as *Khadag Sthapana* (fixing of sword for worship). On this day, from the armoury, a double edged sword is taken out. This is taken in a full procession by the Maharana to a temple in Sajjan Niwas Bagh where the priests take it inside and establishes it as a deity. One Nath priest is made to sit in front of it, who prays to it without taking food or water till *Ashtami*. Till then thousands of people come for the Darshan. Maharana himself comes with the evening procession. On this day below Amar Mahal at Choti Chopar, the idol of Goddess (Durga) is also established where Brahmins perform various rituals. Till *Ashtami* lot of male buffaloes and male goats are sacrificed”.<sup>24</sup>

Not only in Mewar but also in other royal houses of Rajasthan, Navratra has special significance. It is because war was the main duty of Kshatriyas and worship of weapons and goddess of war- Durga, Bhawani or Chandi- was their sacred duty. The worship of sword and goddess go on together. This is to clearly instill in the minds of people, activities which are reverent to them. Worship proves the highest level of dedication. Sacrifice is the symbolic offering made to the goddess.<sup>25</sup>

In Amber, in the times of Sawai Pratap Singh, thousands of male buffaloes and male goats were sacrificed, as is evident from the following statement, ‘Then Maharajadhiraj came to the temple of Devi, on the Eighth in Amber. Thousands of male buffaloes and male goats were sacrificed’.<sup>26</sup>

On *Navami* (ninth) the king and nobles performed the tradition of *Ashwapuja* (horse worship). ‘In Udaipur, Maharana, at the time of evening, first of all worshiped horses and then elephants and eventually held a durbar at Nagina Badi.’<sup>27</sup>

Regarding Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh, we get the following description, ‘On the *Navami* (Ninth) he worshipped nine horses, on *Dashmi* (tenth) ten horses, elephants and all the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 31.

<sup>24</sup> Kaviraja Shyamaldas, Vir Vinod, Vol. I, p.128.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 129.

<sup>26</sup> Surajdas, *Pratap Prakash*, Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur, 1984, p. 20.

<sup>27</sup> Kaviraja Shyamaldas, Op.Cit., p. 129.



*karkhanas* (manufacturing units).<sup>28</sup> This ritual of worshipping horses, elephants, flags, army was common in ruling class and was called *Nirajan* or *Lohamisarika*.<sup>29</sup>

Regarding this, Tod opines, ‘It is essentially martial and confined to the Rajputs, who on the departure of monsoon finds himself at the liberty to indulge in his passion whether for rapine or revenge, but which in the tropical regions are necessarily suspended during the rains.’<sup>30</sup>

On the tenth day, *Vijaydashami* or *Dashahara* is celebrated. On this day Lord Rama became victorious over the Ravana. By connecting themselves to the mythological heroes, the Rajputs project themselves as their descendants and bearers of the same glory. It also legitimizes their authority and makes it impossible to be challenged. ‘The taxonomies of the mythico-religious system at once divide and unify, legitimating unity in division, that is to say, hierarchy.’<sup>31</sup>

“All over Rajasthan *Dashahara* festival was celebrated in a magnificent style. The nobles were required to be present in the state capital with their quota of soldiers. The rulers held *darbars*, received *nazar* and *nichrawal* and conferred ranks, honours or rewards on nobles, *muttsadis* and deserving state officials. The horses and elephants purchased during the year were bathed, decorated and paraded before the ruler who named each of them”.<sup>32</sup>

“In next one or two days the ruler inspected his own regiment and the regiment of his nobles. The guns were fired to show that they were in working order. The troops then paraded before the Prince with the nobles in the warrior’s dress and carried with them gun, sword, spear, shield, arrow, and bow etc.”<sup>33</sup>

Col. James Tod’s observation of this spectacle is as follows,

‘The hilarity of the party, the diversified costume, the various forms, colours and decorations of the turbans, in which some have heron plum, or spring from some shrub sacred to the god of war; the cluster of lances, shining matchlock, and black bucklers, the scarlet housings of the steeds and waving pennons, recall forcibly the glorious days of the devoted *Sanga*, or immortal Pratap’.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Surajdas, Op.Cit.,p. 21.

<sup>29</sup> Suryamal Mishran, *Veer Satsai*, Prof. Kanhaiyalal Gaur and Aashiya Girdhardan (ed.s) Bengali Hindi Mandal, Calcutta, 1951, p. 179.

<sup>30</sup> Col. James Tod, Op. Cit., Vol. I, p. 464.

<sup>31</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Structure, Habitus, Power: Basis for a Theory of Symbolic Power, in Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley and Sherry B. Ortner (ed.s), *Culture, Power, History*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1993, p. 160.

<sup>32</sup> Kaviraja Shyamaldas, Op. Cit., Vol. I, pp.130-131.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 131.

<sup>34</sup> Col. James Tod, Op. Cit., Vol. I, p. 467.

In Marwar, the durbar of *Dashahara* was held on the Ninth of the bright half of *Asoj* (Ashwin).<sup>35</sup> On the tenth, the Maharaja went on a procession to the place where Ravana's effigy was placed. After burning Ravana's effigy, an intoxicated buffalo was brought before the Maharaja who pierced it with his spear and the nobles slew it. The procession then returned to the fort, where the idol of Lord Rama was worshipped".<sup>36</sup>

In Bikaner the ancient heirloom brought from Jodhpur by Rao Bika was worshipped on *Dashahara* along with the horse known as 'Dal Shringar'. The kettle drums, the ensign, the weapons, the war orchestra and the flag of victory was worshipped. The Maharaja went in procession to worship *Shami* (Khejra) tree.<sup>37</sup>

#### **IV. Diwali**

Now, when we are studying one festival after another, we can visualize the fabric of human life being woven around them. The masses are enmeshed between mythology and political beliefs. They are so tightly enmeshed that there is no other life possible than the one already existing. The festival of Diwali is another handcraft of mythology in which people merge their existence and forget if there is any difference.

"On the *Amavas*, or the ides of *Cartic* (*Kartik*) , is one of the most brilliant festival of Rajast'han, called the *Dewali*, when every city, village, and encampment exhibits a blaze of splendor. The potters' wheel revolve for weeks before solely in manufacture of lamps (*dewa*), and from the palace to the peasants' hut everyone supplies himself them, in proportion to his means, and arranges them according to his fancy. Stuffs, pieces of gold and sweetmeats are carried in trays and consecrated at the temple of *Lacshmi*, the goddess of wealth, to whom the day is consecrated. The Rana on this day honours his prime minister with his presence to dinner; and his chief minister of state, who is always of merchantile class, pour oil in a terracotta lamp, which his sovereign holds; the same libation of oil is permitted by each of the near relations of the minister. On this day, it is incumbent upon every votary of *Lacshmi* to try the chance of the dice, and from their success in the *dewali*, the prince, the chief, the merchant, and the artisan foretell the state of their coffers for the ensuing year".<sup>38</sup>

Thus, we can see that everybody from the king to the peasant is woven in the fabric of culture and can not possibly change it, because their minds are entrapped and can not imagine any other way of life. The focus of the people shifted from the issues of politics and power and

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<sup>35</sup> Hakikat Bahi, Rajasthan State Archives, V.S. 1821- 1830, No. 2, p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>37</sup> Col. James Tod, Op. Cit., Vol. I, p. 134.

<sup>38</sup> Col. James Tod, Op. Cit., Vol. I, p. 475.

limited only to the annual cycle of rituals. People learn to emote accordingly and seek joy only in this.

Tod further notes,

“To the infernal god Yama, who is the “son of the sun,” the second day following the *Amavas*, or ides of *Cartica*, is also sacred; it is called *Bhartri divitiya*, or ‘the brother’ because the river goddess Yamuna on this day entertained her brother Yama, and is therefore consecrated to fraternal affection. At the hour of curfew (*gaodaluk*, when the cattle returns from the fields), the cow is worshipped, the herd having being previously tended. From this ceremony no rank is exempted on the preceding day, dedicated day to Crishna (Krishna); prince and peasant all become pastoral attendants on the cow as the part of *Prithwi*, or the earth.<sup>39</sup>

The *Ist Sudi* or Sixteenth of *Cartica*, is the grand festival of *Anacuta* sacred to the Hindu *Ceres*, which will be described with its solemnities at *Nat'hdwara* (Nathdwara). There is a state procession, horse-races, and elephant fights at the *Chougan*; the evening closes with a display of fireworks”.<sup>40</sup>

With mythology and history, the ruling class mixes up with the common people in order to make their mark on their minds by the means of horse races, elephant fights and fireworks, which are inaccessible to them without their generosity.

The rulers held *darbars* on this day and received *nazars* and revenue of the districts. The officers (*muttsadis*) and nobles were rewarded for their meritorious services. Promotions and appointments were also ordered on this occasion.<sup>41</sup> In Bikaner the Jaats of Shekhasar and Rooneah applied *tilak* on the forehead of the Maharaja and his principal nobles.<sup>42</sup>

## **V. Holi**

Moving forward with the more and more evolution of the collective belief and simultaneous diminishing of the individualistic spirits, let us examine the way the ‘mythico-ritual homologies (of Holi) constitutes a perfectly closed world’.<sup>43</sup>

Before reading Col. James Tod’s description of Holi in Mewar, we must bear in mind that, “When the conditions of existence of which the members of a group are the product are very little differentiated the dispositions which each of them exercise in his practice are confirmed and hence reinforced by the practice of the other members of group (one function

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 476.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 476.

<sup>41</sup> *Dastur Komwar Bahi*, Rajasthan State Archives, Vol. 25, V.S, 1774, p. 451.

<sup>42</sup> Col. James Tod, Op. Cit., Vol. II, p. 142.

<sup>43</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Structure, Habitus, Power: Basis for a Theory of Symbolic Power’, in Nicholas B. Dirks...p. 163.

of symbolic exchanges such as feasts and ceremonies being to favour such the circular reinforcement which is the foundation of collective belief) and also by institutions which constitute thought as much as they express it... The self-evidence of the world is reduplicated by the instituted discourses about the world in which the whole group's adherence to the self-evidence is affirmed".<sup>44</sup>

As Phalgun advances, 'the bacchanalia mirth increases; groups are continually patrolling the streets, throwing a crimson powder at each other, or ejecting a solution of colour from syringes, so that the garments and visages of all are one mass of crimson. On the Eighth, emphatically called the Phag, the Rana joins the queens and their attendants in the palace, when all restraint is removed and mirth is unlimited. But the most brilliant sight of the playing of the holi on the horse back, on the terrace in front of the palace. Each chief who chooses to join has a plentiful supply of ...*abira*, which with the most graceful and dexterous horsemanship they dart at each other, pursuing, caprioling, and jesting... the last day of *Poonum* (Purnima) ends holi, when the *Nakkaras* (drums) from the *Tripolia* summon all the chiefs with their retinue to attend to the prince, and accompany him in procession to the *Chougan*, their Champ de Mars. In the centre of this is a long sala or hall, the ascent to which is by a flight of steps: the roof is supported by square columns without walls, so that the court is entirely open. Here, surrounded by his chiefs the Rana passes an hour, listening to the songs in praise of *Holica* (Holika), while a scurrilous *kavya* (Poetry) or couplet from some wag in the crowd reminds him that exalted rank in no Protection against the license of the spring Saturnalia; though "*Diwan of Eklinga*" (Maharana) has not to reproach himself with a failure of obedience to the rites of goddess, having fulfilled the command "to multiply" more than an individual in his kingdom. While Rana and his chiefs are thus amused above, the buffoons and itinerant groups mix with the cavalcade, throw powder in their eyes, or deluge their garments with the crimson solution...

On the last day, the Rana feasts his chiefs, and the camp breaks up with the distribution of *Khanda Nareal* (broken coconuts) or sword or coconuts, to the chiefs and all "whom the king delights to honour".<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 162.

<sup>45</sup> Col. James Tod, Op. Cit., Vol. I, p.452.

## **VI. Rakshabanbhan**

On the *puṛnima* (full moon) of *Savan* month, *Rakhi* or *Raksha bandhan* is celebrated. In Marwar for four festivals- Dashahara, Diwali, Holi and *Rakshabandhan*- durbar was held in Daulatkhana Chowk of fort.<sup>46</sup> In the time of Maharaja Bakht Singh, the durbar of Rakhi is described as follows,

“ *Savan Sud 15*, the durbar of *Rakhi* took place at the Daulatkhana Chowk. He sat on the throne of gold and *sardars* and *muttasadia* did *nazar* and *nichrawal*. First of all, the *Rakhis* and shawls of Shri Gosain and Shri Ayas priests came, then the *Rakhis* of other priests, then those of Charans and Brahmins came”.<sup>47</sup>

In the quote from the sequence of the arrival of *Rakhis*, we can tell who were more respected in the court (and also in the society). Since it was a festival of brothers and sisters, the durbar was also held in the *zenana*, in which princesses would tie *Rakhi* on the hand of the Maharaja. Those princesses who were married would send the *dastur* of *Rakhi* with Brahmins. The Maharaja would accept all of them. In return he would send *dastur* in accordance to the *jagir*, title, etc. given to them in their marital house. If the princess would be a Maharani of any state then the *dastur* befitting her status would be sent.<sup>48</sup>

In *dastur* princesses would send gold *rakhi*, coconut, sacred thread, sweets, dry fruits, etc. According to the tradition all the eatables would go to the son of the nurse or nanny of the Maharaja known as *Dhai Bhai*, but the *dastur* for the princesses would go from the monarch. On this occasion the daughters of the *pardayats*, singers, etc., would also tie *Rakhi* to the Maharaja and in return they would get dresses, jewellery and cash. On *Rakshabandhan*, from several *parganas* and towns the Brahmins would come to tie *Rakhi* to the ruler. It was not possible to get the *Rakhi* tied from everyone, so the *Khanda* (sword) was kept on the throne and the Brahmins would tie *Rakhi* on that. All of them would get cash and gifts from the state. As we read, “From *paragana* Doliawas and others Brahmins came with their *Rakhis*, which was tied to the *Khanda*. As always the gifts were given according to the tradition, by the officials of the religious department”.<sup>49</sup>

Here, we can clearly see, that it was considered the duty of an upright Rajput to protect women. So this festival was celebrated to remind and renew this vow. At the same time this duty was also extended to the Brahmins, who were considered to be the representatives of the god. This act would make them popular as the protector of the faith. We also examine

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p. 453.

<sup>47</sup> *Maharaja Bakht Singh ji ki Khyat*, Rajasthani Shodh Sansthan, Jodhpur, 1993, p. 45.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 46.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 54.

that all the princesses were not accorded the same treatment. It was given to their status. In other words, hierarchy already existed in the royalty and they were simply maintained by ritual differentiation.<sup>50</sup>

Sometimes, either due to the reasons of protection, help or for the purpose of getting close to any influential person, *Rakhi* was sent and the receptor would thus become the “*Rakhi-bund bhai* (Rakhi bound brother)”<sup>51</sup> of the sender. These were the significant ways of winning political alliances. About such incidences Col. James Tod writes, “The claims thus acquired by the fair are far stronger than those of consanguinity”.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, we must not take rituals seriously and not consider them just as decorative pieces of social structure.

## **VII. Ghurla**

In Marwar there was a festival purely related to a historical event. This is called Ghurla. In V.S. 1470 (1547 A.D.), the hakim of Ajmer Mallu Khan captured the younger brother of Rao Sathal (ruler of Marwar) by treachery. On the receiving the news, the ruler along with Rao Bika and Duda of Bikaner attacked Ajmer. On that Mallu Khan released his captive but in retaliation attacked Merta and Pipar and captured the going for Gangour prayers. Eventually all of them were released and the senapati of Mallu Khan, Ghurle Khan was murdered. His head was severed and then taken around the place. To commemorate this event, on the same day every year, pots with lot of holes are taken, a lighted lamp placed in it and taken around.<sup>53</sup> This pot is considered the representation of the injured face of Ghurle Khan. In this way Rao Sathal got injured seriously and eventually passed away. Since he got injured during the period of Gangour worship and died because of that, in Marwar, the idol of Lord Shiva is not worshipped on Gangour. This festival is definitely a celebration of Rajput bravery and sacrifice for the sake of Dharma and women.<sup>54</sup>

Likewise there were many other festivals like Shivratri, Ganesh Chaturthi, Makar Sankranti, Ramnavami, Gurupurnima, etc. By now we have understood how social formation takes place. We can infer that, ‘a cultural system is a pattern of culture whose differentiated parts are interrelated to form value systems, belief systems, and systems of expressive symbols’.<sup>55</sup> This cultural form enters so silently and spontaneously in people’s mind that they do not even question it. This way a world is created which is perfect and unquestionable. To sum it up in the words of Pierre Bourdieu,

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>51</sup> Col. James Tod, Op. Cit., Vol .I, p. 462.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 463.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 465.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p. 466.

<sup>55</sup> Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils, Op. Cit., p. 55.

“Nature” as Science understands it- a cultural fact which is the historical product of the long labour of “disenchantment”- is never encountered in such a universe. Between the child and world the whole group intervenes, not just warning that inculcate a fear of supernatural dangers, but with a whole universe of ritual practices and also of discourses, saying proverbs all structured in concordance with the principle of the corresponding habitus. Furthermore, through the acts and symbols which are intended to contribute to the reproduction of nature and of the group of the analytical reproduction of the natural processes...helps to produce in the agents temporary reactions or even lasting dispositions attuned to the objective processes exempted from the ritual action-helps, in other words, to make the world conform to the myth.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, Op. Cit., p. 163.