

## **SARDAR SHAHR & ITS REGION REFLECTING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

**PK PANDIA\***

Sardar Shahr, situated in Churu district of Northern Rajasthan, is at present a tehsil. This whole area has witnessed various phases of historical significance. According to geologist Karter, 'The semi-arid area of western India must have once been a surface of an expanse of the sea extending to the Aravali hills.' This area, it is believed by geologists, was once a Tethis ocean that over a period of time was reduced to a desert owing to some geographical activities. Colonel James Todd has written in this regard, 'The western stretch of the desert was too difficult to cross. The passers-by would die of thirst and starvation. In fact it was a valley of death.'

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the Mahabharata literature, this desert area has earned the reputation of being a Jaangal or Kuru Jaangal. In the common parlance, the area situated towards Southern Punjab and Haryana and northern Rajasthan was addressed as Bangar, thereby implying an area away from the river and thus dry. Once a Hakra Bahan (Hakra river) would occasionally flow in this region.

However, due to some geographical turmoil and spread of the desert, the river was lost to view. Colonel James Todd has expressed his view adding, 'The area, submerged in water over a period of time, got muddy but was shaped into a plain when dried up, was called Rann, Rinni or Rinn in the local dialect.' The adjoining tehsil, i.e. Taranagar was hitherto known as Rinni only.

In the nearby area of Halasar close to Bhanipura village of Sardar Shahr tehsil, the gigantic stones of various contours are known as Ruwan (smoky or wooly) among the villagers. All this calls for the geographical and historical research of this area.

In Taranagar tehsil Shyam Pandia tank, Banya's bawri (step well), Sujangarh's Dronacharya (Gopalpura) are also believed to have connection with the Mahabharata era.

### **MYTHS PREVALENT AMONG LOCALS**

Close to the present Fogan village of Sardar Shahr tehsil, there is widely believed to be an ancient city known as Koyalapattan. Here the word pattan is very crucial as it means a place which was sailed or rowed across in the boat etc. Koyalapattan, it is widely held, was situated on the bank of the river Hakara flowing in the yester era. Anant Raj Sankhala, Sawaria Kewat, seven Sujan Seths, Shrigrakh and Mahatma Bhagirath were well known figures of the time. The place, two kilometers away from Fogan, is held to be the originating oldest place of Jogians and an inscription available at the site also points the same because the script of the inscription could not be deciphered and decoded till today.

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\* Asst. Professor, B.T.T. College, IASE (D) University, Sardar Shahr (Raj). *E-mail Id:* pkpandia2015@gmail.com

As such, the authenticity of the claims could not be established for sure. Likewise, another inscription on exhibition nearby on the well of the Ramdeoji temple could not be decoded and deciphered till today. So the mystery has deepened over the period of time.

### **INTERESTING EVIDENCE**

But at least one thing that strikes the mind of the spectator is that there must have been a civilization of a sort, given the fact that Kalibanga is also situated in the adjoining district of Churu district and that both this area and Kalibanga belonged to the same district when Bikaner was the common district or being the division. Moreover, the close proximity may have something to do with historical heritage as well. Here a very important thing to be noted and subsequently deserving action is the fact the pieces of terricota are conspicuous with their presence just like that of Kalibanga.

### **KINGS AND RACES**

According to historians, 'Between 250 and 320 A.D., there was hardly any competent figure at the helm of affairs to look after north Rajasthan, South west Punjab, and western Uttar Pradesh. During the aforesaid period, Yodheya race was a very powerful republic. The Yodheyas ruled in the north and western Rajasthan. Both the sides of the Sutlej were called Joiyawad, a place known for the Joio or Yodheys. Joias had 1100 villages; out of them 600 were in Rajasthan and the rest were in the west of the Sutlej. The Bikaner region claimed Jeetpur, Kumbhana, Mahajan, Pipasar etc.

### **ARRIVAL OF RATHORES**

Historian Hira Chand Ojha in his book 'History of Bikaner State' [1 (p.69)] has mentioned that, 'Prior to the advent of Rathores, this area, later

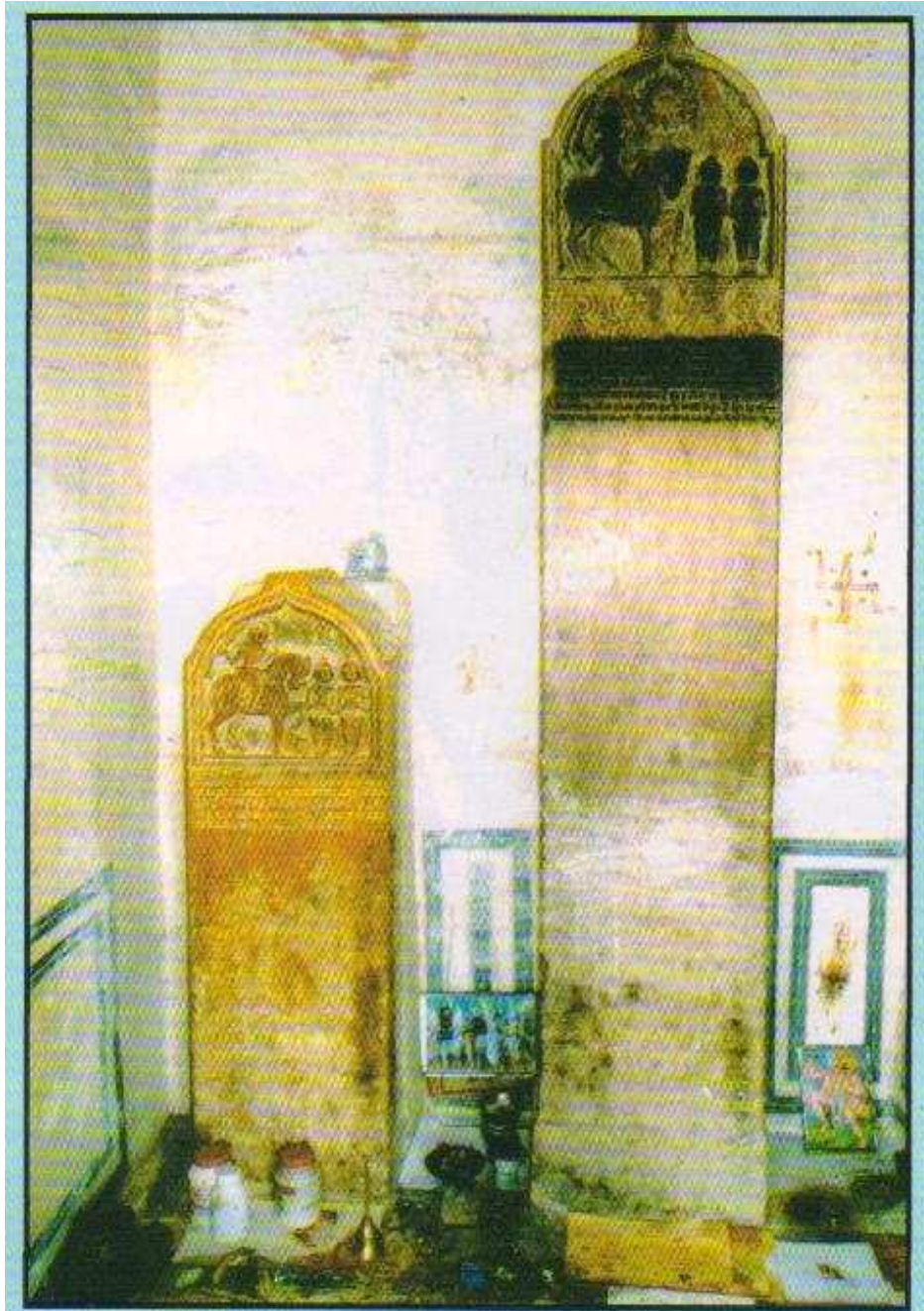
known as Bikaner, was inhabited and ruled by such castes that were born here. These castes were divided and sub-divided into various sub-castes. In some parts of this region, there were Joias, Chauhans, Sankhalas, Parmars, Batsi, etc. that ruled over the area but it is difficult to establish which part was ruled by whom and who was better disposed of at that time.'

### **PRESENCE OF VARIOUS RACES**

In the Bangar region of north Rajasthan, Joiawara from Joias, Sambhar from Chauhans, Mandor from Parihars, Chandravati from Parmars (Panwar) and Vallavhi from Solankis came into being and got prosperous. According to Nenssi Ki Khayat, Dayaldas ki Khayat, Colonel Tod's Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, Paulet's Gazetter, Munshi Jwala Sahay's Wakya Rajputana, Munshi Sohanlal's Twarikh Rajshree Bikaner and Dr. Pemaram's History of Jats in Rajasthan, Jats had a very dominating presence in seven Girashia (Girashia means a morsel that amounts to small pockets of land).

### **BIKANER KINGDOM**

According to Colonel Todd, the land, which was selected by Rao Bikaji, belonged to Naraji Jat and it is why Rao Bikaji named the city Bikaner using his own name Bika along with Nara, thus giving due honor to the owner of the land as well as establishing his name. In Vikram Samvat 1627, Rao Kalyanmal escorted Rai Singh to Nagaur to make him available at the service of Emperor Akbar. Rai Singh was conferred the title of King in Vikram Samvat 1630. Subsequently, King Rai Singh assigned the task to his younger brother Ram Singh of consolidating his kingdom but in Vikram Samvat 1634 his brother was killed in Udasar near Kalyanpura of Saran belt. Thereafter, a memorial was built in honor of Ram Singh which is still in existence.



**Figure 1. King Ram Singh's Memorial.**

### **PRACTICE OF NAMING CITIES**

In the year 1766, King Gaj Singh built a fort in Luddhi and named it Rajgarh after his son Prince Raj Singh. This became a common practice as in 1920 Rajgarh was renamed as Sadulpur after Sadul Singh, in 1799 Bigor as Fatehgarh after Fateh Singh, in 1800 Sodal as Suratgarh after Surat Singh, in 1803 Kolasar as Ratangarh after Ratan Singh, in 1805 Bhatner as Hanumangarh

after Hanuman Singh, in 1830-31 Alwana (near Suratgarh) as Sardargarh, in 1838 Rajiasar as Sardargarh (Churu district), in 1880 Rupalsar as Dungargarh after Dungar Singh, on 26 October, 1927 Ramnagar as Ganganagar, and on 16 March, 1941 Rinni as Taranagar after Tara Singh. However, Sardargarh was renamed as Sardarshahr after five years of its inception because the duplicity of the names was causing administrative problems.

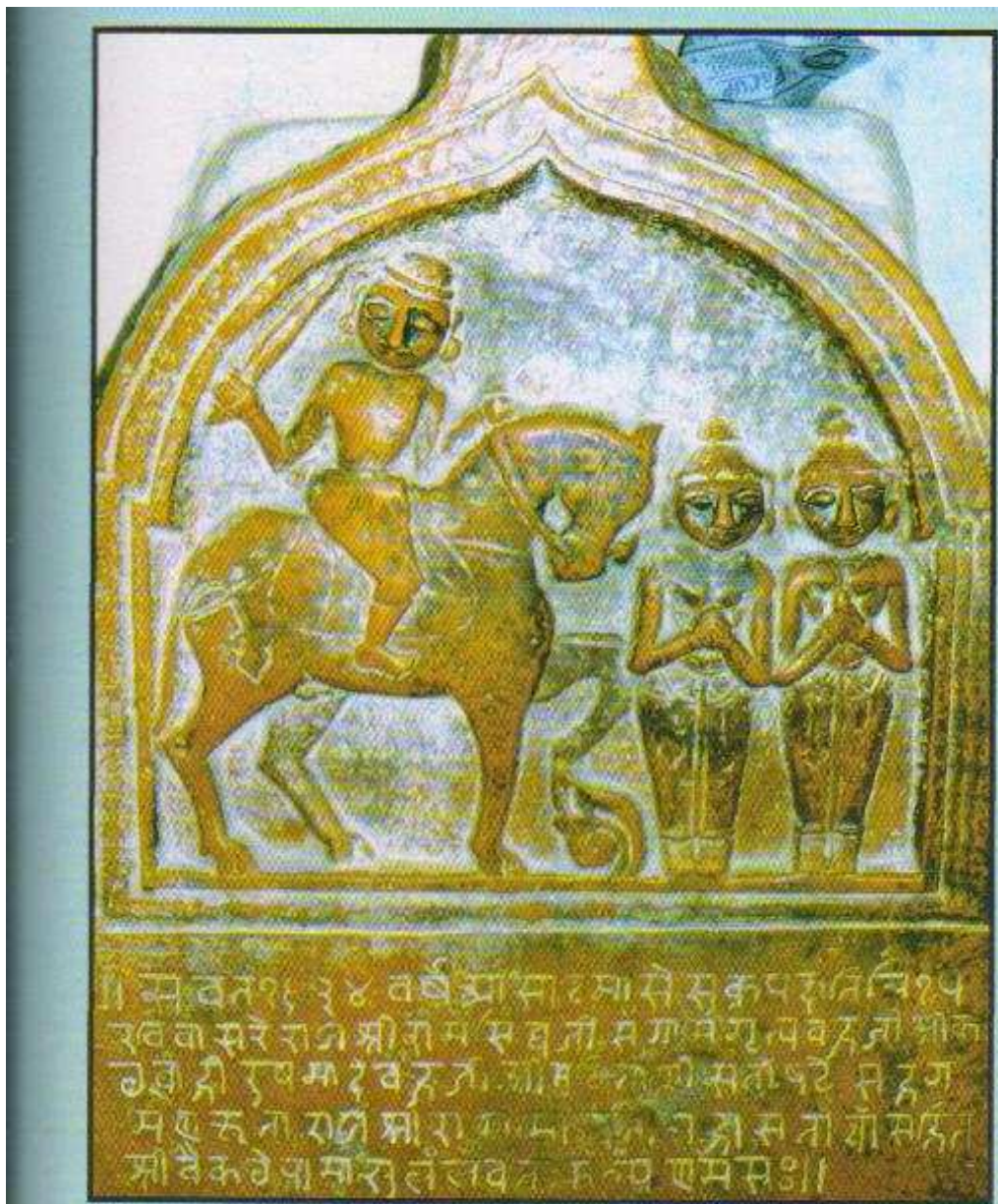


Figure 2. King Ram Singh's Memoriam 1634 A.D.

### FACTS RELATED TO PULASAR

In 1444 Pulasar village was founded by Pula Ram and was given away to Rang Reda Pandia and Pula Ram himself settled down at Fogan. The present city of Sardarshahr was originally a village known as Rajiasar that was founded by Raju of Udasar.

### NIZAMAT SYSTEM OF BIKANER STATE

Later Bikaner State came into being and it was divided into six Nizamats:

1. Sadar Bikaner
2. Rajgarh
3. Sujangarh
4. Ganga Nagar
5. Raisingh Nagar
6. Suratgarh

Sardar Shahr was under the Sujangarh Nizamat from the viewpoint of administration. Sardar Shahr was founded in 1838 by King Ratan Singh of Bikaner after his son Prince Sardar Singh. As mentioned earlier, initially it was named as Sardar Garh but later it was renamed as Sardar

Shahr. The account books and letters of the time bear a testimony to this fact.

### **SETTLEMENT OF SARDAR SHAHR**

The Rajasthan District Gazetteer mentioned that in the year 1831 (1888 V.S.), Rajawas village was renamed as Sardar Shahr and the foundation of Sardar Garh's (Shahr's) fort was laid down in 1895. At that time, the fort used to be built first and subsequently the settlement of the subject would follow due to the security concerns. However, historian Hirachand Ojha maintains that King Sardar Singh founded Sardar Shahr Rajalwara village. However, Shri Gobind Agarwal in his research book of history counters this saying that Rajalwara village is still in existence and as such it does not hold water. The Rajwala well is famous in Sardar Shahr. And it is believed that it was named after a shepherd known as Rajia. The King of Bikaner has written letters to the prominent merchants of the area for settling down in the new city and one among them was Jai Kishan Chindalia. The letter to this effect is still available. There is a letter in the archives of Bikaner from Shaha Hindumal Diwan in which it is mentioned that whosoever settles at Sardar Garh (Shahr) shall have to pay no tax for the next five years. The letter is dated as Jyestha Baray 2, 1895 V.S. However, Prof. Devendra Handa in his book *Sardar Shahr: Itihas and Parampara* has referred to Moza Alwana, a small helmet, before Sardar Shahr was founded. The residents that built havelis in Sardar Shahr at the inaugural stage of the city were gifted Rs. 25 and Rs. 11. This payment was released from the Royal Treasury of Bikaner.

### **EDUCATION**

Maharaja Ganga Singh founded Ganga Golden Jubilee High School in 1937 at Tal Maidan in Sardar Shahr while celebrating the Golden Jubilee of his rule. However the real credit for promoting and consolidating the education network goes to

the Dugar family including Swami Ram Sharan Ji Maharaj, and Shri Kanak Mal Dugar.

### **PUBLIC WELFARE WORK**

A great devastating famine agitated Maharaja Ganga Singh so much that he resolved to have canals in his kingdom. He also visualized having a dry port in Bikaner even at that time. Maharaja Ganga Singh was able to realize his dream and the Ganga Canal was inaugurated by the then Viceroy Lord Irvin on 27 October, 1927. He also made it possible to travel by train in the desert area. The first railway track was possible because of him. The introduction of the railways enabled the public of this area to traverse to far flung areas such as Kolkata, Assam, Bengal etc.

### **MOHILS & CHAUHANS**

Sardar Shahr and its adjoining area had been under Mohils and Chauhans for some time and the adjoining area comprised of Chchapar, Dronapur, Charelu, Dungar Garh etc. Mohil Indra Pal's deoli bears testimony to this fact. Historian Hira Chand Ojha has referred to a Deoli as Chhatri (a small canopied rest room etc.) but at present the Chhatri is not in existence and only the Deoli is there. But if the Chhatri was built in memory of Indra Mohil, it at least makes one thing clear that he must have been a king or an important figure of his time. He must have been ruling this area at that time. In 1241 V.S. Mohil Rana Ahar was also killed in that war. But a very important phase of history in this area is highlighted by an inscription known as Mohil Indra Pal's Deoli (Memoriam cum shrine) near Rajwala well of Sardar Shahr. This inscription has an image of a horse rider holding a sword in one hand while two women are standing in the view. It is dated as Samvat 1241. It means that this image is about eight hundred twenty five years ago. But the regrettable part of the story is that the local administration was so callous regarding the conservation of the statue that the lower part of the scripted statue has been rubbed out. It is quite possible that Mohil

Indra Pal's Deoli was a memorial in honor of satis who have sacrificed themselves in accordance with the practice of the time. But one thing is apparently clear that there was a small habitation even before the formal laying of the foundation stone in 1838. This habitation was known as Mohil Bari, too. At places, it is also mentioned as Alwana village.

### **OLD TEMPLES OF SARDAR SHAHR**

There is an old temple nicknamed as Bodia Mandir, on the steps of which is inscribed 1632 V.S. as the year the foundation stone of the temple was laid down. The city has got two temples, namely, Paraswanath Jain temple and Golachha Mandir that are believed to have been built between 1493 and 1733 V.S. There is also a Deoli, just five kilometers away from Sardar Shahr. This belongs to Late Ram Singh s/o Rao Kalyanmal and it is dated as 1634 V.S.

### **CONCLUSION**

However, one thing is quite clear that Sardar Shahr and this region have witnessed many historical events of great importance. But due to apathy of the ruling class and indifference of the

common man, the eventful era could not have been recorded for the benefit of the people living in the present era. Certain places such as Fogan, Mohil Indra Pal's Deoli can enrich history if pain is taken to peep into the past through these windows. It is quite possible that India in particular and the world in general can get to know some more information about the Harppan civilization.

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