

GLORIOUS MEWAR

(A Brief Account)

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In this summary I have given a continued narration of the history of the Ranas and Maharanas of Mewar avoiding the descriptions chapter-wise as detailed in the forthcoming book.

In this book, I have tried to give historical and cultural accounts of the Ranas and the Maharanas of Mewar from the very beginning of their history which began as early as the sixth century A.D. with the life and times of Guhil after whom the ruling princes of Mewar came to be known as the Guhilots.

Prior to giving the historical account of the rulers of Mewar, I have briefly talked about the significant contributions made by Tod, the author of the famous work known as Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan.

In order to have an insight into the evolving of Indian History I have first briefly talked about the emergence of the Aryans, their separation from the European and Iranian groups and their migration towards India, and their settlements in the north western, and in the Indo-Gangetic doab region.

A small discussion about the origin of the Rajputs has also been included. It is not known as to since when the ruling warrior community of India came to be called as the Rajputs. There is no epigraphic or literary mention about them till the tenth century A.D. The word Rajput is

derived from the Sanskrit word "Rajputra". According to D.R. Bhandarkar, Rajputs were the direct descendants of the Vedic Aryans who came to India between 2000 to 1500 B.C. However according to Tod, Vincent Smith and others, Rajputs came about to be due to the intermingling of different races, such as the Scythians, Sakas, Khushanas, Gurjars and the Huns. Such Rajputs looked very much like their European cousins and had similar habits.

According to Puranas and Mahabharata, there were ninety- two generations of the rulers of Ayodhya from Manu to Brihadabala who was killed by Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna Pandava. After several more generations, Vijaya- the last king from Ayodhya moved towards Rajasthan for reason not known. He managed to reach Nagda near Chittor and ruled from there. Later princes of the same family styled themselves as Ranas. According to a traditional version the royal family of Mewar was descendant from Lava one of the twin sons of Rama, who ruled from Lohakot or Modern Lahore now in Pakistan. The last descendant of the family was called Kanakasena and again for unknown reasons he traveled to Bhallabhipura in Gujarat and made that city his capital city.

In historical terms then, and after a lapse of four centuries, the accounts of which period are

not clearly known, that in 524 A.D. Scythians a powerful Asian tribe invaded India and conquered several regions in the Northwest including Gujarat. During the Scythian attack the entire family of the Maitraka King Siladitya ruling from Ballabhipura was killed, only the queen Pushpavati survived as she was not in the city, but was on her pilgrimage to worship for the welfare of her unborn child. It was there, that she gave birth to her son who came to be called Guhil or the cave born. He spent his childhood amongst the boys of the Bhil tribe of his age in the forest. After a while he was accepted by the Bhils as their king who put the "tikka", the mark of sovereignty on Guhil's forehead. He was also granted a large size tract of land as his forest territory from the chief of the Bhil tribe. The ceremony of putting the vermilion "tikka" on the forehead on the king's forehead has been observed in Mewar for the last-fourteen hundred years. Nagda or Nagrahdapura remained the capital city of the small state of Mewar for Guhil's descendants. The seventh ruler of the family was Aparajita who was killed by a Bhil, while hunting. This king left behind a small boy of three years, who was also brought up by a Brahmin lady like his ancestor Guhil, and this child was none other than the great Bappa Rawal. Bappa Rawal is rightly regarded as the real founder of the kingdom of Mewar. A sage called Harita Rishi met young Bappa Rawal and advised him to become a follower of the local God Eklingji and build a temple for the God which was willingly done. Again since that time all the Mewar kings throughout their history have remained staunch followers of this God.

Bappa Rawal after dethroning the Mori King occupied the fortress of Chittor and ruled from there. One of his great achievements was the vanquishing of Arab forces under their commander called Junaid in 739A.D. In the end he abandoned his family and the country itself. He then went to Khorasan in central Asia and spent the rest of his life there.

A brief account of the sources of the history of Mewar rulers, which includes both contemporary and modern has been given. Mention of some of the outstanding contemporary work is made such as Raj Prashasti of Ranchod Bhatt, of the reign of Maharana Raj Singh in which his life and history is given in detail. Another important work is Ain-i-Akbari of Abul Fazal, one of the famous nobles "navaratna" of the Mughal emperor Akbar. A number of Persian and Indian authors like Waris and Chand Bardai have been mentioned. Chand Bardai wrote Prithviraj Raso during the reign of Rana Samar Singh. Apart from that, some of the Maharanas themselves wrote historical accounts such as Maharana Kumbha and Maharana Raj Singh. Some of the famous modern writers of the history of Mewar have been Tod, G.H. Ojha, Shriram Sharma, Gopinath Sharma, B.P. Saxena and several others.

Regarding the earliest date of the beginning of history in Rajasthan, it is claimed that it dates back to the prehistoric period. It is claimed that there existed civilization comparable to that of Harappa and Mohenjodaro during the period 3000 to 1000 B.C. Excavation were conducted near Bikaner, Udaipur, Ahar, Bagor and Bharatpur, which revealed that civilization

similar to Mohenjodaro and Harappa existed there. There exist some references from the epics to show that the region of Rajasthan formed a part of the ruling dynasties around 1500 to 1000 B.C. It is believed that Bhim Pandava had visited Chittor. A big depression near Chittor is quite often referred to as Bhimagori. Bhima is also known to have built a citadel there. During the Mauryan period most of Rajasthan was a part of the Mauryan Empire. This is proved by the existence of two Ashoka Maurya's Rock Edicts belonging to around 272 to 250 B.C. from Bairat near Jaipur. During the first two centuries of the Christian era, several foreign tribes invaded India such as the Saka, Scythians, Kushana, Huns and so on. The great Gupta empire was followed by the empire of Harsha Vardhana, later the break up these empires brought into existence a number of smaller states, mostly Rajput states and one such state was that of Mewar.

Some information regarding the Geography of Mewar, its flora and fauna has been given. The land of Mewar is surrounded on all sides by the Aravalli Mountains, which range three to four thousand feet in height. Relevant information about the rivers of Rajasthan and the productivity of the soil has been mentioned together with the natural resources of the land.

It is appropriate to enlighten this history by the happenings, which were occurring in the region of central Asia, especially those which took place after the life and times of Prophet Mohammad. The events that happened there, and due to them the events that occurred in

north west of India have also been mentioned. The Islamic forces, after conquering Persia and territories up to the Oxus River in Central Asia turned their attention towards India. At that time a king of the Mori dynasty was ruling in Chittor. He was dethroned by Bappa Rawal and he himself started ruling from there. He is regarded as the progenitor of the Guhilot family.

The Chittor ruler Bappa Rawal then dealt a crushing defeat to the Arab forces under the command of Junaid in 739 A.D., who then had to withdraw from all regions of Mewar. It was again in the year 812 A.D. that another Arab army under the command of Mahmud, son of the famous Harun-ul-Rashid of Arabia, invaded India. At that time, Khommen, the Guhilot king of Chittor fought and defeated the Arabs in twenty-four pitched battles, and in all of them Arabs were defeated.

After the departure of Bappa Rawal in the second half of the eighth century, the successive Guhilot princes succeeded in keeping intact the territorial extent of the kingdom of Mewar. They were the vassal kings of the kingdom of the Gurjara Pratiharas. It was king Bhartaripata who succeeded in removing the Mewar subservience of the Gurjara Pratihara rulers. Some of the other Guhilot kings of Mewar were Allata, Narvahana, Shakti kumar, Naravaman, Kirtivaraman, Yograj, Vairat, Jaitra Singh, Tej Singh, Samar Singh and Ratan Singh. It was after the death of Rana Ratan Singh, during the attack of Sultan Allauddin on Chittor, it appeared that the ruling dynasty of Mewar had become extinct. Therefore in 1303 it was

observed that, in the history of Mewar for the second time, a prince from the junior branch of the Sisodia family had to assume the powers of the crown in Chittor and whose name was Ajay Singh. As instructed by his father, he selected his elder brother's son Hammir to succeed him instead of his own sons. He was the first king to style himself as the Maharana, and the first to use Sisodia as the family name.

The period of the reigns of Hammir, Lakha, Kshetra Simha and Mokal is regarded as the period of stability and progress. All these kings were strong enough not only to safeguard their own kingdom but also to carry out raids and attacks on the armies of the Sultan of Delhi, who was Mohammad bin Tughlaq at this time. Maharana Lakha got renovated a number of Jain and Hindu temples in Chittor. He also conducted several "tuladan" which stood for the weighing of the person concerned against the precious metal of Gold and Silver and thereafter distributing the wealth thus collected amongst the poor.

Early in the year 1433, Maharana Mokal was assassinated while awaiting the armies of Sultan Ahmad Shah of Gujarat, who had declared war on Mewar.

The next three Maharanas namely Kumbha, Raimal, and Sanga were responsible for making their kingdom powerful, prosperous and very famous. Maharana Kumbha was a great, and multifaceted personality. Not only was he a great warrior but an outstanding builder, an artist, a scholar and much more. His two famous buildings are the fort of Kumbhalgarh and the famous and an architectural marvel called Kirtistambha or the tower of victory.

This 15th century tower still stands in much of its old glory and represents the glorious style of architecture of that time. It contains several inscriptions of famous kings.

Occasionally extremely sad and mean acts happened in the course of history and in the lives of great and famous kings. One such act happened in the life of the great warrior king Kumbha who was murdered by his own flesh and blood, his own son called Uda, known in history as "hatyaro" or the killer, as he killed his old and seriously ill father, who would have, in any case died within a short period of time. He sought help from all around, but no one came forward to help him to succeed to the waiting throne of Mewar. Finally Raimal the real heir apparent to the throne of Mewar succeeded to his ancestral throne. He ruled for a fairly long period of time, that of thirty-six years. He ruled successfully and capably, and was respected by all his subjects, relatives and friends. He was a pious minded and an efficient king. He died in 1527.

Maharana Sangram Singh, popularly known as Maharana Sanga was one of the most remarkable rulers of Indian History, especially in the historical annals of Rajasthan. His fight with Babur the first Mughal ruler of India is considered as the most significant part of his life and his career. Babur defeated Sanga in the battle of Khanua in 1527. Mewar had reached the pinnacle of its glory during his period of rule. It is rightly believed that at one time there existed a distinct possibility that this Maharana of Mewar might defeat and kill the Delhi Sultan, and thereafter conquer Delhi, and rule from there over the vast Indian empire. The result

of this battle was a brilliant victory for Babur. War scared Sanga received more wounds at Khanua and had to be escorted out of the battlefield. It is believed that he was poisoned and died later, broken hearted. He was called the "fragment of a soldier" as he had lost one eye, one arm and severely damaged one of his legs, besides more than eighty wounds all over his powerful body.

His three sons succeeded Maharana Sanga one after another. Their names were Ratan Singh, Vikramaditya, and Uday Singh. Ratan Singh came to the throne in 1527 and he ruled for a very short period of time that of only four years. His main contribution was the renovation of the Jain temple called the Shatrunjaya temple in Gujarat. This temple is still in a very good condition.

The next occupant on the throne of Mewar was Vikramaditya, the younger stepbrother of Maharana Ratan Singh. He was a lad of only fifteen years. The new young Maharana was of a turbulent and passionate nature, and instead of spending his time in state affairs, he kept himself busy in pursuing such activities as wrestling. He awarded big prizes to professional wrestlers, at the same time he neglected and insulted the respected nobles and ministers of the court. As such he became quite unpopular. He neglected the upkeep of the army. The time was thus ripe for an attack on Chittor. Queen mother Karmavati invited the Mughal emperor Humayun to help her son. Before the Mughal armies could arrive, Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat attacked Chittor in 1535. This was the second sack of Chittor. The devastation of Chittor had already

occurred and queen Karmavati with several royal and noble ladies had committed Jauhar and sacrificed themselves.

After the second sack of Chittor, a peace treaty was signed between Maharana Vikramaditya of Mewar and the Sultan of Gujarat. Maharana had to return all those regions of Malwa, which had been annexed, to Mewar by Maharana Sanga. He was asked to pay a sum of nine lakhs, along with several elephants and horses, as well as the bejeweled belt and the sword to the Sultan.

It was also during Vikramaditya's reign that the event of the sacrifice of Panna Dai took place. Banvir an illegitimate son of Maharana Sanga had usurped the throne as the result of which the ruling young Maharana Vikramaditya had to leave Chittor. Banvir pursued and killed him. He was then coming after Udai Singh, the eight years old younger brother of the Maharana. It was at that stage that the royal nurse Panna Dai, in order to save Udai Singh her royal charge, placed her own son who was of the same age as the prince was on the royal bed. Banvir sliced off the head of Panna Dai's son thinking that he was prince Udai Singh. Indeed such unimaginable sacrifice only a Rajput could perform. Panna Dai sought refuge in many faithful strong holds of the royal family, till she finally reached Kumbhalgarh along with child Udai Singh where the governor of the Fort Asa Shah gave them refuge. When Udai Singh became fifteen years old, he was recognized as the new Maharana, nobles and the citizens of Chittor put the royal "tika" on his forehead and offered him his ancestral crown, which he accepted.

Soon after assuming the powers of the Maharana Udai Singh had to face two very critical situations and dangers on Mewar, one of which he was able to avert by sending the keys of the city and fort of Chittor to Sher Shah Suri, who had driven out emperor Humayun from Agra and had himself taken his place in the royal capital city. The second danger also came from Agra, and this time it was in the form of emperor Akbar, who is believed to have sent emissaries to Maharana Udai Singh with a proposal for a permanent settlement between the two powers. Maharana Udai Singh declined to accept such an offer, and such a refusal caused him the severe Mughal attack on Chittor. Maharana Udai Singh's nobles and his war council members advised him to leave Chittor with a small force, which he did.

Maharana Udai Singh was criticized for acting in a cowardly manner both the times, first against Sher Shah and then against Akbar by leaving the scene of action when he was needed the most. On the other hand it was also realized that by going away he first saved the Afghan attack on Chittor, and the second time he left the fort so that he could continue the struggle from outside the fort, and save himself and his family for future. It can be argued both ways.

His eldest son Pratap Singh succeeded Maharana Udai Singh in 1572. The history of these two powerful and determined monarchs, that of Akbar and Pratap is an interesting phase of the larger canvas of Indian history. If Akbar stood for his sovereign rights as the emperor of his Indian empire, Pratap held his

freedom and the independent status of his own kingdom at the highest level, for him Akbar was a foreigner, as such he had no right to rule over the original people and their land in India. He declared that he would never surrender to the imperial authority of Akbar no matter how much he would have to suffer for it. In spite of both Akbar and Pratap making sincere efforts to avoid serious confrontation, the battle of Haldighati did take place in 1576. As a result of Maharana Pratap's absolute refusal to surrender to Akbar, and accept him as the supreme authority of India, forced the emperor to declare war on Mewar. Raja Man Singh was made the commander of the Mughal forces, and the chief commander of Maharana's army was Hakim Khan Sur, who was a Pathan. The first half of the battle was fought outside the entrance of the battlefield, and during that period, the Rajputs out shown their Mughal adversaries brilliantly. However Man Singh averted their complete rout. He fought from the top of his massive elephant, whereas Pratap rode and fought from the back of his famous steed Chetak. Haldighati was a battle, which yielded no results. It was rightly remarked, "in Haldighati the imperialist power achieved nothing, and the Rajputs lost nothing". All the same time both the powers claimed their absolute victory. Maharana Pratap died a peaceful death on January 19, 1597, at the age of fifty-seven years only. His mortal remains were cremated at Bandoli near Chevand, near Udaipur.

The eldest son of Maharana Pratap was Amar Singh and he succeeded his father in January 1597 in Udaipur. Chittor as the capital

city was at last abandoned, as it was becoming very difficult to safeguard it. In Agra a little later in the year 1605, Salim succeeded his father Akbar as emperor Jahangir. So both these kings were close contemporaries, and both had to face similar situations against each other that of fighting battles with each other. Like Akbar, Jahangir was also obsessed with the unquenchable desire to conquer and acquire the territories of Mewar, especially the historic city of Chittor. The enmity and fighting was renewed between Agra and Udaipur for a period of the next ten years. Both Akbar, and after him Jahangir continued to send large armies to attack Chittor and other cities of Mewar but due the strength and perseverance of the Rajput forces, the Mughal armies had to ultimately withdraw. Maharana Amar Singh at last took the initiative to start negotiations for peace. Both the sides had really become exhausted due to fighting battles and diminishing of their resources as the result of fighting. As the result of such exhaustion of all types, peace treaty was proposed and signed between prince Khurram from the Mughal side and prince Karan Singh on the Mewar side. The signing of the Mughal-Mewar alliance finally brought about peace and mutual good will between the two most important powers in India during the early seventeenth century.

Karan Singh ruled for a very short period of only eight years from (1620-1628). It was as the result of peace between Agra and Udaipur that much all round progress could be achieved. The two powerful Mughal emperors namely Jahangir and Shah Jahan treated the Mewar Maharanas with dignity and respect.

Such condition allowed Karan Singh to use his talents, energy and resources to make the people and the cities, especially Udaipur culturally and architecturally beautiful and graceful. Karan Singh first got repaired the walls of old forts and palaces, and next he was responsible in the construction of new and glorious palaces, namely the lake palace Jagmandir, where Shah Jahan, then as prince Khurram had stayed for a period of eight months, at a time when he was running and escaping from his father Jahangir's fury. The Mewar Maharana Karan Singh then gave him a peaceful refuge and comfort. He had also carried out a number of administrative reforms in his kingdom.

His able son Jagat Singh succeeded Maharana Karan Singh on his ancestral throne, on May 8, 1628. The customary robe of honour and gifts welcomed him on such an occasion by the Mughal emperor Jahangir. Unlike his father Jagat Singh was ambitious and enterprising. He decided to assert his authority over those neighbouring states, which showed resistance, or rebellious attitude towards Mewar. Apart from indulging in such aggressive activities, he was also responsible for carrying out a number of peaceful, religious and architectural activities. His mother Jambuvati performed pilgrimages to the northern cities of Mathura, Gokul, Prayag, Kashi, Dwarika and several other places. Jagat Singh, and his mother performed Tuladan a number of times in such holy places, as well as gave charities to the deserving and the needy. Maharana Jagat Singh got the magnificent Jagdish temple constructed in the heart of the

city of Udaipur. A large number of inscriptions have come to light belonging to his reign from the walls of this temple.

Maharana Raj Singh successor of Jagat Singh had his reign full of a number of epoch making events. It was very unfortunate that at this period of time Aurangzeb the third son of the Shah Jahan was the emperor of the Mughal Empire and was ruling from the new Mughal capital of Delhi created by Shah Jahan. He had first imprisoned his aged father Shah Jahan in the Agra fort, and at the same time, he had eliminated his three brothers during the war of succession between the four sons of the old emperor. Raj Singh believed in hitting back in equal terms, if he was hurt by Aurangzeb. He asserted that if the Mughal forces could damage his land, and torture his subjects he would do the same to the Mughals. He resisted the imposition of Jazia on the Hindu population not only of his state but elsewhere in the country. Aurangzeb continued to follow the policy of destroying Hindu temples and breaking down of the revered images of the Hindus in Mathura, Vrindavan and other holy shrines. A timely action was taken to remove certain revered Vaishnava icons from Mathura, Gokul and Brindavan. Maharana Raj Singh took a very serious view of such happening and wrote a strongly worded letter on this matter to the emperor. A Mughal attack on the Jagdish temple in Udaipur was ordered, but such an attempt failed in 1680.

Finally, Maharana Raj Singh's role in the Rajput war fought between the Rajput states of Mewar and Marwar on one side and the Moghuls on the other side caused great deal

of discomfort and problems for Aurangzeb. The Maharana gave all the help and support to Durgadas the brave and faithful minister of the state of Marwar. Aurangzeb had ordered the family of Maharana Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur to come to Delhi, after he had died in the northwest frontier region. Durgadas wanted the emperor to recognize the infant prince Ajit as the new Maharaja of Jodhpur, but the emperor refused to do that. Raj Singh gave shelter to the mother of Ajit, as well as to Durgadas. Finally, Raj Singh also helped Aurangzeb's son prince Akbar to rebel against his father's authority, and when that did not happen, Maharana and Durgadas helped the prince to escape from the country itself with the help of Sambhaji the Maratha king. The prince went to Persia and lived the rest of his life there.

Maharana Raj Singh was a very strong and powerful monarch who defied Aurangzeb several times, and even defeated the Mughal armies also on a number of occasions, something which none of his ancestors particularly Pratap were able to do. However ultimately both suffered reverses in terms of men and money. Finally, a treaty was concluded between the emperor and the Maharana's son Jai Singh in 1681. Maharana Raj Singh having died earlier.

The most notable contribution of Maharana Raj Singh was the creation of the great lake called Rajsamunda at a place called Kankroli. The purpose of the creation of such a magnificent lake was to save his subjects from the tragedies of severe famines. One such terrible famine had taken place just a

short while back. The lake is also famous for having the longest inscription inscribed on the embankments of the lake.

Jai Singh succeeded his father in 1680, and almost immediately after, he got busy with the planning of the terms of the new treaty signed between him and the emperor. The success of the settlement was seen in the fact that the relations between Mewar and the Mughal Empire remained on very cordial terms for a long period of time. The most important contribution of the Maharana Jai Singh to Mewar was the creation of the largest artificial lake not only in India but in the world until the creation of the Aswan dam in Egypt. This lake was thirty miles long and was called the Jaisamund Lake, named after the Maharana himself.

On the death of the Jai Singh, his eldest son Amar Singh II assumed the powers of the scepter and the crown in 1698, in Udaipur. During the war of succession going on in Delhi amongst the four sons of Aurangzeb, Maharana Amar Singh II captured Pur and Mandal and laid siege to Shahpur. Triple Alliance had been formed between Mewar, Marwar and Jaipur, and in order to cement the Alliance the Mewar ruler offered to marry his daughter Chandrakumari to Maharaja Jai Singh of Amber. Another event of some importance was the occurrence of the battle of Sambhar between the Sayyid brothers who were in charge of the Mughal administration in Delhi and the Rajput allies. In this battle the Sayyid brothers were killed. The three Allied partners were Maharana Jai Singh of Amber, Maharana Ajit Singh of Jodhpur,

and Maharana Amar Singh II of Mewar. The Rajputs won the battle during the course of which several Mughal soldiers were killed. The defeat of Sambhar gave a severe blow to the strength and unity of the empire. After the death of Maharana Amar Singh II, the new Maharana Sangram Singh II took his rightful place as the new Maharana in 1711.

He remained on cordial relations with Farrukhsiyar, the Mughal emperor. Farrukhsiyar reimposed Jazia on the Hindu population, at this Maharana Sangram Singh wrote to the emperor that the tax should be removed immediately as it was a cruel act to impose it because it was simply unbearable and impossible for the Hindus to pay. Emperor explained that he had been instructed by the Sharif of Mecca to do so, so he had to follow the instructions. By 1711, Marathas crossed the Narmada and penetrated into the regions of northern India. In 1726 and 1728, Marathas created disturbances in Mewar. In 1725, two Maratha leaders Gopal Pant and Appaji Pant met the Maharana, and requested him to use his influence with the Mughal emperor to allow the Marathas to collect Chauth from Malwa.

It is necessary to know here the importance of the royal family of Sangram Singh II. Maharana Sangram Singh II had four sons. His eldest son Jagat Singh succeeded him on the Mewar throne. His other three sons were Nath Singh, Bagh Singh and Arjun Singh, and all three of them received jagirs. Nath Singh got Bagor, Bagh Singh got Karajali and Arjun Singh Shivrati. Nath Singh had five sons, the eldest being Bhim Singh. Later on whenever

adoptions were required to take care of the future continuation of the Sisodia family of Mewar, the sons from the three families of Sangram Singh's sons were taken.

Maharana Jagat Singh gave a great deal of patronage to artists. Artist Jagannath flourished during his reign. His miniature paintings of Mewar school known as the Satasyee (1720), Gita Govinda (1724) and Sundar Sringar (1726) were greatly admired.

Sangram Singh was the last ruler to enjoy internal stability, and freedom from outside influence, because with his death commenced the Maratha ascendancy. The most painful truth about the Marathas was, that they were avowed Hindus. The Ranas and Maharanas of Mewar had for hundreds of years solidly refused to be dominated by the Afghans, the Turks, and then the Mughals but then to be forcefully dominated by their own co-religionists and brethrens, perhaps even relatives, was a painful reality. The first Maratha invasion took place in 1736, and the man whose unhappy lot it was to see such a happening was Maharana Jagat Singh II who came to the throne in 1734. However it will have to be admitted that he himself did precious little to check the misdeeds of the Marathas in his state or even in his own capital city. Peshwa Baji Rao had himself arrived in Udaipur, who demanded a heavy annual payment of tribute from the Maharana, which ultimately crumbled the state economy. Maharana was himself not energetic enough to control the over bearing demands of the invader. He is believed to have been given over to all kinds of pleasures, though he patronized all kinds

of arts. It is believed that most of the palaces and villas scattered all over the Udaipur valley were his creations. He wasted both his life and wealth of his country. He was succeeded by four Maharanas namely Pratap Singh II, Raj Singh II, Ari Singh, and Hammir Singh from 1751 to 1778. All of them were spineless and given to all kinds of pleasures. The only thing that happened during this period was the forceful occupation and squeezing out of the wealth and happiness of the people of Mewar by the Marathas. The new successor on the throne was Bhim Singh who too was a minor, and under the total control of his mother. The financial situation of the kingdom and of his own had become so bad that he was forced to borrow money for his own wedding. His reign is remembered for the tragic death of his beautiful young daughter Krishna Kumari whom both the rulers of Jodhpur and Jaipur wanted to marry but Bhim Singh her father was unable to decide about her future. Therefore in order to avert a war on her father's kingdom and his honour she consumed poison and died. Bhim Singh was devastated at her sacrifice. The best thing that happened this time was the appearance of Col Tod, the British Agent who set about the task of straightening the financial situation and then arrange to see the payment of British arrears. In 1818, the British authorities signed political treaties with all the princes of Rajasthan, as also with the state of Mewar. With the British supreme control in place, the Maratha inroads finally stopped and progressive reforms could take place in Udaipur, and within two years with British help the state revenue were doubled.

Tod certainly managed the administration of Udaipur very efficiently.

Next Maharana was Jawan Singh, and from his reign onwards the Sisodia royal family went under a curse. It is believed that the curse was pronounced by one of the nautch girls of the palaces as she was betrayed and fell into the lake Pichhola while she was crossing the lake on a tight rope because of a wager. Before going down in water, she had declared that no Maharana from that time onwards would be blessed with a natural heir and as it came to pass during the next hundred years, out of the seven Maharana who ascended the Mewar gaddi, six had to be adopted. Such an event took place in the presence of the Maharana along with his nobles and followers.

Jawan Singh adopted Swaroop Singh from the Bagor family. The new Maharana after a long period of time turned out to be very sincere and efficient king. Because of his policies some dignity and reputation of Udaipur family returned. But he came into some conflict with the British government on the issue of the abolition of sati. It was maintained by the Maharana that the performance of sati was a religious and a traditional rite, and that he would not tolerate any outside influence on that issue. However all his arguments were put aside and sati was banned in Udaipur, as it was in other regions of British India.

In 1857, occurred to famous great Indian mutiny due to various well-known reasons. The British political Agent at that time in Udaipur was Lt.Col. Lawrence who took a

very conciliatory and diplomatic approach with the Maharana and persuaded him to be cooperative with the government, which he certainly did. He showed extraordinary compassion and gave honourable refuge to the British men, women and children who were running away in fear of the Indian revolutionaries. He housed all of them in the magnificent Jagmandir palace and personally saw to their comforts. Even Queen Victoria was moved by his kind and generous behavior and thanked the Maharana through a personal letter. One month before he died he adopted Shambhu Singh as his successor in 1861. As he was a minor, the state affairs were managed very capably and by a council, headed by the British political agent Lt.Col. Eden, who greatly improved the both the finances as well as the administration of the state. The young Maharana aged eighteen only, carried out several reforms already began by the political agent. He took steps to see that famines do not occur again. He even educated himself especially in English, the first Maharana to do so. He built a magnificent, tall and elegant palace for himself called the Shambhu Niwas, which is now a part of the city palace in Udaipur. The Maharana was decorated by Queen Victoria in 1871, and died while still a young man of twenty-seven years only. He had adopted Sajjan Singh his first cousin as his successor and who was also a minor boy of sixteen years. Sajjan Singh had a very a modern outlook in his thinking and acting. He realized the need for a workable judicial system and opened the first High Court in Udaipur. In his government he created new

departments for running the various aspects of administration, such as irrigation, education, finances, public works and few more. It is believed that during his life time Udaipur ranked equal to Bombay in modernization and progress. The British Queen wanted to award him the honour of the "Star of India", but he declined the offer, saying that he like his ancestors is already known as the "Sun King", so why does he need to have the title of a "star". He however later on accepted the offer to be courteous to the Queen.

He too died childless therefore yet another adoption was required and the new Maharana after a long time was a mature man of thirty-six years and a father of two children. He ruled for a fairly long period of time from 1884 to 1930 A.D. As he had, had enough time to study and experience, the political conditions of his "adopted father and grand father", he decided to completely change the outlook and the pattern of his relationship with the British authorities. He made it clear to them that he would not accept the secondary role in his own state's government. He further emphasized that he was the king of his people not by the grace of the British Queen but by the will of his people and by the authority of his ancestors. Besides his personality was such that he commanded awe and respect.

Fateh Singh was extremely progressive and extremely freedom loving and independent minded king. One might think of some comparison of him with Maharana Pratap. There were the Mughals then, and the British for him. Fateh Singh created several educational institutions especially a number of

schools for children. He further gave a lot of importance to create a railways lines in various parts of the state connecting important cities.

He was succeeded by his natural born son, Bhopal Singh an event of great importance, as such an occasion had occurred after more than a century. Bhopal Singh was born in 1884 just a year before his father's accession to the Mewar Gaddi.

Although his birth was a matter of great jubilation yet his life was spent in a very unfortunate manner, he was struck by a couple of deadly diseases by the time he was only sixteen years old, first by tuberculosis and then by Pott's curvature of the spine which resulted in a projection of his bone at the back of his neck. He assumed the powers of the crown in 1930. Although crippled in his body, yet he possessed an extremely energetic and active brain. He never allowed his crippled condition to stop him from performing all his duties, official and social. He deeply cared for his poor subjects, for whom he carried out several reforms. He was very patriotic and had already decided his course of action and his role in the freedom movement going on in the rest of India. He declared "My choice is made, as the decision was made by my ancestors. If they had wanted they would have left behind a much larger Mewar. They stood for freedom and independence and so will I. I am with free and united India" and thus he handed over a 1500 years old kingdom to the makers of modern and independent India. He believed that his ancestors would have approved of his decision.

There had to be yet another adoption, and Maharana Bhopal Singh adopted young Bhagwat Singh who became the next Maharana, though for namesake only. He belonged to the Shivrati branch of the family. Maharana Bhopal Singh died in 1955.

During the rule of Maharana Bhagwat Singh, certain definite decisions had to be taken, when the Privy Purse allowed to the princes was abolished. The Maharana had to decide how to collect funds mainly to ensure the up keep of the palaces all around. So Bhagwat Singh established a private company to which he sold the lake Palace Jagmandir and made the other lake palace Jagniwas, turned into a luxury hotel. He established trusts to see to the maintenance of the palaces in Udaipur. Then by the Constitutional Amendment Act of 1971, the earlier rulers and princes were declared to be the ordinary citizens of the Republic of India, and all their allowances and privileges ceased to exist, and like everyone else they too were to earn their living. In 1969, Bhagwat Singh created the Maharana Mewar Foundation, which collected funds from endowments, interests, fees and rents from buildings. Finally, Bhagwat Singh's younger son Arvind Singh was handed over the management of the various trusts and the management of the various awards founded by his father. He added one more Award and called it the Hakim Khan Suri award for the great ideal of religious tolerance.

After giving the narration of the lives and activities of the Maharanas, I have also included some relevant discussions on such topics as the administrative system as prevailing in Mewar,

and other Rajput states, military organization, social and economic organizations, position of women, religious beliefs of the Rajputs. Some other topics dealt with are Mewar School of Painting, and activities in the field of literature and education. A chapter has been included about the remarkable traditions beliefs and the characteristics of bravery, chivalry and magnanimity of the Rajputs.

Finally, the chapter named influences of the external forces on the history of Mewar, has been included. Such influences came from the Sultans, the Mughal emperors, the Marathas and the British. I have dealt with the factors and situations that arose as the result of the relationship of the Mewar Maharanas with Islamic, Hindu and the British powers.

The Sultans of Malwa, Gujarat and Delhi were of Afghan origin and by the end of the thirteenth century they had fully established themselves in Gujarat, and Malwa both very close to Mewar. Delhi had been under the rule of the Sultans since Mohammad Ghori had conquered and occupied Delhi after defeating and killing Prithviraj Chauhan. Sultans of Gujarat and Malwa were often very jealous of the power and prosperity of the kingdom of Mewar and of and on they committed aggression on Chittor. The Maharanas of Mewar had to be always ready for such attacks, and many times they were successful. Amongst the Sultans of Delhi, Allauddin Khilji and Iltutmish had attacked Chittor. During all such attacks, great deal of damage occurred in terms of men and money as well as architectural buildings. A great deal of cultural exchange also took place, which was good for the Sultans as well as for Mewar.

With the Mughals the Mewar Maharana had developed a very especial relationship. Babur, the first Mughal had arrived in India in 1526, he ruled from Agra and died in 1530. His successor, Humayun went through very difficult times, as the Afghan leader Sher Shah Suri, proved much too powerful for him and he ousted Humayun from India, and assumed imperial power in Agra. Humayun then went to Persia and lived there for the next fifteen years. He returned and regained his kingdom with Persian help. He died soon after and his minor son Akbar aged thirteen years became the next ruler from Agra. As the result of his conquests he created a big empire within the subcontinent stretching from Punjab in the north to Ahmednagar in the South, and from Gujarat in the west to Bihar in the east. There were however some states within this empire that defied his authority, and one such state was Mewar. For the next half a century that he lived from 1556 to 1605, his powerful desire was to conquer Mewar, and make the Maharanas subservient to him. The Maharanas never let that happen, and so the struggle between them was always on, with some peaceful periods in between.

After the decline of the Mughals following the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, and the consequent break up of the vast Mughal empire, many important regions of the empire such as Awadh in the east, Ahmednagar in the South, Gujarat and Malwa in the west and some areas around Delhi itself declared their independence from the Mughal authority. The power that raised its head loud and clear at that time was that of the Marathas from the West.

One of the greatest kings of Indian history has been the great Maratha leader Shivaji. He stood for the ideals of "Swarajya" as he termed it. He felt that Hindus the majority population of India had since the last hundreds of years been groaning under Islamic domination of the Sultans and then of the Mughals. The worst of the dynasty was Aurangzeb, whose contemporary Shivaji himself was. The last of the great Mughal emperors had indeed been extremely cruel towards the Hindu population. He ordered the destruction of hundreds of temples in every religious holy city of India such as Mathura, Vrindavan, Kashi and Prayag. He had also imposed especial and the humiliating taxes of Jazia and Pilgrim tax on the Hindus. So Shivaji was justified in bringing about a struggle with the Islamic authority represented by the Mughals. Shivaji died in 1680. Soon after him the Maratha confederacy took shape and the five constituents of such a group were the Peshwa, Holkar, Sindhia, Gaikwad and Bhonsle. After the passing away of Shivaji the restraining and the moderating influence was gone, and the Marathas generally became free to attack and create disharmony and conditions of destructions and anarchy wherever they went. After crossing the river Narmada they reached north wards into Malwa, and from there into Mewar and other parts of Rajasthan. In Rajasthan and particularly in Mewar they really acted in a very troublesome and dictatorial style. They often demanded a huge lot of money from the Maharana, each time they rushed in the Rajput territory. The conditions in Mewar were reduced to a very sorry plight, till the British arrived there in

the person of Col Tod in 1818. Sometimes the Marathas were invited by some of the Rajput chiefs themselves for their own goals and gains.

At this stage the British came as the guardian angels for the Mewar monarchy. Within a short period of time after the British reached Udaipur, the raids nearly stopped, and the revenues of the state started improving. The successive Maharanas though with much persuasion and a lot of difficulties were able to gradually pay back the British dues.

The British government signed similar treaties with all the Rajput states in 1818. In Udaipur the treaty was signed on January 13, 1818, Col Tod representing the British government, and Maharana Bhim Singh for Mewar. Maharana Jawan Singh and Swaroop Singh with the help of the British agent considerably improved the financial situation of Mewar. After the occurrence of the great mutiny of 1857, the British queen herself, and Her Majesty's Government in India displayed a conciliatory approach to appease the Indian public. In Mewar Maharana Swaroop Singh acted in a very helpful manner during the occurrence of the great revolt. British men, women and children who were running away in fear of the Indian revolutionaries were given shelter and refuge in the fabulous Jagmandir lake palace by the Maharana, who personally looked after their safety and comfort. For this the Queen thanked the Maharana. After Maharana Shambhu Singh and Sajjan Singh, Maharana Fateh Singh assumed the powers of the crown. He was a mature man of thirty-six years at the time of his accession. He

showed firmness, independent mindset and direct approach with the British authorities instead of playing the subsidiary role to the British and that he made it clear to them. He snubbed the British authorities several times till he was dethroned in 1921. He was succeeded by his natural son Bhopal Singh, who was very intelligent and strong-minded though unfortunately he possessed a crippled body. He was the first ruler to accede his state to the Indian Union of modern India. His adopted son, Bhagwat Singh, though only a nominal ruler had to witness the scrapping of the prince's Privy Purse, and the taking away of all the titles and privileges of the princes. They were also told by the government of free India, that in the new Republic every citizen stood on equal terms, no kings and princes any more. Though extremely hard to bear, all the princes at last accepted their fate and felt proud to be living in independent India

It is worthwhile to learn about the importance the Rajputs especially their kings placed on their word of honour. Whatever was promised once just had to be adhered to at any cost. Rajputs also valued friendship, brotherhood, and giving refuge and help to those who needed from them with all seriousness and absolute commitment. A few relevant examples have been included in the narration of the Maharanas.

A chapter on the history of Mewar through its forts, palaces, temples, lakes and gardens, giving in detail the description and photographs of the grand and beautiful edifices has been included. The geographical features such as the Aravalli Mountains their peaks and

valleys enabled the kings of Mewar to build impregnable strong and extensive forts. A few grand monarchs such as Maharanas Kumbha, Udai Singh Karana Singh, Jagat Singh and later on Amar Singh II, Shambu Singh created unbelievably magnificent palaces, temples and other shrines. From Maharana Udai Singh onwards a number of Maharanas namely Raj Singh, and Jai Singh created deep lakes to keep the people happy and satisfied in having abundance of the most important necessity of life - which is water. Lakes were also created to keep away the eventuality of famines as far away as possible. Finally one just has to visit Udaipur to realize how much all the Maharanas who ruled from this great city loved gardens.

Writing about the history of Mewar has been a delightful and emotional journey for me. As I have been fortunate enough to have visited several cities of Rajasthan, such as Udaipur, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Chittor and Mount Abu, I am familiar with the common and every day scenes on the streets of those cities. I have tried to compare these scenes with those of the earlier centuries in Mewar. The delight I have felt while gazing at the glorious edifices namely palaces, forts, and temples has been the best part of my emotional journey. The architectural and sculptural achievements are beyond compare. I feel greatly honoured for having expressed my feelings about the history of the great Maharanas of Mewar.