



ORIGIN CITY OF RIGHT TO INFORMATION

BEAWAR : AN INTELLECTUAL TOURISM

(A Sociological Study of Beawar City)

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ABSTRACT: Beawar is a district of state Rajasthan, India. Beawar was the financial capital of Merwara state of Rajputana. As of 2011, the population of Beawar is 342,935. It is located 60 kilometres south from Ajmer, the divisional headquarter and 184 kilometres (114 mi) southwest of the state capital Jaipur, amidst Aravali hills. The city used to be a major center for trade, especially in raw cotton, and used to have cotton presses and the Krishna cotton mills. Currently, major industries include mineral-based units, machine-based units, machine tools and accessories, pre-stressed concrete pipes, plastic products, textiles, wooden furniture and asbestos cement pipes. Beawar is the largest producer of cement in northern India and home to Shree Cement.^[1] It is situated in a mineral-rich region having reserves of feldspar, quartz, asbestos, soapstone, magnesite, calcite, limestone, mica, emerald, granite, and masonry stone. Reserves of barytes, fluorite, wollastonite and vermiculite have also been found.

KEYWORDS: Beawar, Rajasthan, Aravalli, cotton, asbestos, textiles, mineral-rich, information, intellectual, tourism

I.INTRODUCTION

Nearest airports are Jodhpur (145 km), Kishangarh and Jaipur (190 km). It is also connected by RSRTC operated buses to all parts of Rajasthan, and neighboring Delhi NCR, Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh). It also has railway connectivity with Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmadabad, Bangalore (bi-weekly), Haridwar, Dehradun (weekly), Bareilly and Muzzafarpur.¹

In the early 19th century, Beawar was a village. By 1825, the British acquired control of the Ajmer-Merwara region, and established a cantonment around 4 miles from the existing village. In 1836, they attracted merchants and constructed a bazaar (market), which became the core of a site called "Naya Shahar" or "Naya Nagar" ("New Town").^[2] Colonel George Dickson (1795-1857) established this new town on the waste land adjacent to the cantonment and the original Beawar village.² The area eventually evolved into the present-day town of Beawar.^[3]

The population of the town rose substantially over the next decade, as it became the centre of cotton trade. In 1871, the battalion was moved from the local cantonment to Ajmer, but the town continued remained an important trading centre.^[2]

A municipality was established at Beawar in 1866.^[4] In 1880, railway reached the town, and in 1881, Krishna Cotton Mill was established there. By 1901, the town had a population of 21,928, with 48.6 of the work force employed in the manufacturing sector (38% in cotton textiles industry). Metalwork, calico printing,³ and grain trade were the other important industries of the town.^[2]

Beawar is the birthplace of classical mathematician Duncan Sommerville.^[5] The city was the birthplace of the revolution that gave India its historic RTI(Right to Information) Act, 2005 under the leadership of Aruna Roy. The inner city of Beawar is the old historical city, also known as the "Walled City" (Parkota). There are four famous gates of the city known as Ajmeri Gate, Mewari Gate, Chang Gate and Surajpole Gate. The area within these gates is the main market of Beawar.⁴ The outer area of Beawar is a developing area. Residential expansion is taking place on Ajmer road, ira Road and Delwara road, specially Raas Babra Road. An Army Cantonment is being established near Roopnagar which covers a vast area and have future prospects of business trade and development there. New shopping complexes and hotels are also being built. The outer city is home to all transport hubs such as central bus station, railway station, and private tour operators. The city



also has a church, some degree-granting colleges, a shopping complex, and cinema halls (Jaimandir and City Cinema - a newly built multiplex).. Currently a PVR cinema is being constructed in Beawar.⁵ Most of the hotels are centered on the bus stand and railway station. It is important to note that as traveling patterns change, new hotels are coming up on the roads leading into town. Veer Tejaji Maharaj Beawar Fair is one of the major fairs of the town. Locals of Beawar gather to celebrate Baadshah, which means "King". The Baadshah travels across the town to reach the Mayor's office, spreading colour all over the town in celebration of Holi, the festival of colours. It is celebrated in memory of the one-day king "Agarwal".⁶

"Baadshah" is decorated in traditional style and travels up to the magistrate office, where it plays and gives its resolutions for the public. With him, another person, Birbal, dances in his special style. On the day of "Baadshah", there are performances by local people in "Teliwara" as well as near the Suraj Pol gate.

Annually, the city also celebrates Dusshera by burning an effigy of Ravana on the eve of Dusshera.⁷

There are also other festivals celebrated like "Gair" which is organised annually near the festival of "Holi" organized in different areas or mohallas of the city.

As of the 2011 India census, Beawar had a population of 342,935. Males constitute 51% of the population and females 49%. Beawar has an average literacy rate of 64%, higher than the national average of 59.5%, with 60% of the males and 40% of females literate. Around 15% of the population was under 6 years of age. Beawar is a hub of small scale industry (generating revenue in crores). Beawar is larger than many present district headquarters of Rajasthan. There has been demand for creating a Beawar district over the last two decades. Majority of employment is provided by RIICO. Beawar is also an important office of Shree Cement. Major employment and revenue provider of Beawar is the mining and mineral industries of which the region is enriched with. Beawar is located at 26.1°N 74.32°E. It has an average elevation of 439 metres (1,440 ft).⁸

II.DISCUSSION

Beawar Legislative Assembly constituency is one of the 200 Legislative Assembly constituencies of Rajasthan state in India.^{[2][3]} It is part of Ajmer district. In a country where memory is often either short or contested, how often does a social movement remember its origin and journey? On Sunday, a large group of first-time activists of the Right To Information movement came to Beawar, a small town in Rajasthan, to remember their first protest 19 years ago. The protest had lasted 40 days at a busy traffic roundabout called Chang Gate -- it was here that the activists questioned the state government about its delay in granting the right to information even though the chief minister at that time, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, had given an assurance. After conducting five public hearings across the state to expose widespread corruption and exploitation by panchayat and block-level officials between 1994 and 1995, the activists had successfully pressured Shekhawat and extracted a promise to open the locks on government files. They waited a year. When nothing happened, hundreds of villagers descended on Beawar to demand the law on April 5, 1996. The rest, as they say, is history. Not only Rajasthan but the entire country passed one of the most empowering legislations of the modern era. A street exhibition was mounted Sunday to commemorate the event. Many residents gathered and cheered on. "Beawar ka Junoon, Bana Desh ka Qanoon," said the title banner of the exhibition. (Beawar's determination became the nation's law.)⁹

"RTI ki janambhoomi", some said with pride. Many looked for themselves in the displayed photos of the protest. "How old were you then?" they asked each other and laughed. Villagers crowded around the photographs and dragged their frayed fingers through the images to identify those they recognised. Slogans they shouted in 1996 were splashed across the exhibit panels. Old protest songs were sung again - many of them with old lyrics demanding a right to information law -- now with a line saying "we now have the law but we have to keep the fight on to expand it." "What started here in Beawar gave us all a law which served as a key that opened up a treasure for us," said Mahendra Jain, a lawyer, 45, who had helped the activists with free food and water during their protest in 1996. Jain has filed more than a hundred RTI applications in recent years prying open files on land allotment,¹⁰ municipal works and so on. Activists Aruna Roy, Nikhil Dey and Shankarji saluted and thanked residents of Beawar for giving them free vegetables, tea, and small ten-rupee donations daily. They recalled "Room no 2" in the Chang Gate dharamshala where they held daily strategy meetings back then. Some villagers even recalled how pigs would enter the tents where they slept at night. "It was not an easy fight," said Susheela Devi, who was at the first protest site. "We must not forget it. By remembering it, we are refuelling ourselves." Unlike the United



States, where information law was a potent tool for researchers and journalists, the RTI in India has been used to expose corruption, demand pensions and minimum wages, punish officials and vote out inefficient governments.¹¹ On Sunday, Dey told the residents and activists the plan to build a museum in Beawar and said it will be a place of community pride. "Beawar ki Sampatti", Dey called it. The museum will not only commemorate Beawar's contribution but will chronicle the nationwide struggle for the law, it's progress, pushback and the continuing battle.

Beawar – A Quaint Trade Town

Situated in the midst of the vast sandy desert of Ajmer, Beawar takes you by surprise with its well laid out streets flanked by buzzing old mills and bustling street markets, all laid neatly within its walled territory. Around the wall, the city takes shape with charming new villas and modern shopping centers. Beawar sets a distinct and refreshing trend against the ancient, royal cities of the rest of Rajasthan. The colonial headquarters of the erstwhile Merwara district, the city was established by British officer Colonel Charles George Dixon in the 19th century as a military cantonment. Over the years, the city has evolved as a major trading hub, with a charming cultural spirit.¹²

Explore Beawar's Cultural Side

Discover the colonial essence of Beawar with a visit to the charming locales of the walled inner city. Some of the popular attractions here include the verdant Subhash Udyan and the charming domed pavilion of Mahadev ji ki Chhatri. Soak in the local culture at the Panch Batti public circle.

Experience the divine presence at popular religious sites such as the Shoolbread Memorial CNI Church, Sumatinath Jain Temple, Sankat Mochan Hanuman Temple, and Ashapura Mata Temple. Visit during the annual Tejaji Fair and the Gair Festival to witness the cultural splendor of Beawar.¹³

A major trading center for rural arts and crafts, the local markets of Beawar are certainly worth a visit. Do not leave the city without tasting the delectable local sweet Tilpatti from the Halwai Gali.

Navigating the City

The walled inner city of Beawar can be conveniently explored by walking around. Auto-rickshaws are the preferred means of local transport in the city. They can be hired directly from the streets. Rental car services for sight-seeing tours are available for the convenience of tourists.¹⁴

III.RESULTS

The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (Association for the Empowerment of Labourers and Farmers) is an Indian political organisation best known for its demand for the Right to Information Act (RTI) which grew out of the demand for minimum wages for workers.^[1] On April 6, 1996, the MKSS announced a strike in the city of Beawar in Ajmer, Rajasthan.^[2] After a series of public hearings exposed systemic corruption across Rajasthan,¹⁶ and the renegeing of the promise of the Right to Information given by the then Chief Minister of Rajasthan, the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan began a historic forty-day-long dharna (sit in protest) to demand the Right to Information. Protestors came from across rural Rajasthan to the city of Beawar. The novelty of this protest was the demand for information by the poor instead of expected basic needs like food and shelter. During the protest, a memorandum was given to the sub-divisional officer at Beawar that demanded local expenditure records.^[3]

The protest began with support from over one hundred and fifty villages. It was supported by donations of grain from these villages and individuals in Beawar. Almost forty-six thousand rupees were donated to keep the protest going. Nearby vegetable vendors donated to the protestors providing them with food and water.^[4] Doctors offered their services. Local people joined in and walked with the rural protestors. The people of Beawar embraced the protest and began to make it their own. The protest was marked by cultural expression including song, theatre and puppetry. Local cultural groups joined in. These included a group of devotional singers (Bhajan Mandali)¹⁵ who would sing parodies of devotional songs in support of the demands of the protestors. Bagpipers and local poets also joined in. Local cadres of trade unions also lent their support.^[5]



As the protest gained momentum, people began to visit Beawar from across the country to see the extraordinary happenings that were taking place in this small city in Rajasthan. Journalists, lawmakers, and artists, amongst many others came to the city of Beawar. Senior journalists who visited included Nikhil Chakravartty, Kuldip Nayar, and Prabhash Joshi. Prabhash Joshi wrote a historic editorial in the Jansatta newspaper entitled "Hum Jaanenge, Hum Jiyenge" (We will know, we will live). This title became a slogan of the RTI movement in India and was modified to say "the right to know is the right to live".^[6]

In April 2015, the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan returned to Chang gate, the site of the forty day long protest to commemorate entering the tenth year of remembering the protest.^[7] A street exhibition entitled "Beawar ka Junoon bana desh ka kanoon" (Beawar's determination became the nation's law) with archival photos, posters and newspaper articles was set up. Old protest songs were sung as many citizens of Beawar who had been part of the protests remembered the struggle.^[8] A museum with archival material to remember the city that gave birth to the RTI movement is being planned at Bewar.^[8] One of the innovations of the MKSS was the method of Jan Sunwais or Public Hearings where detailed documents derived from official expenditure records were read aloud to the people of the villages who gathered. Jan Sunwais are organised independent of the government but government officials are invited to attend.^[7] In the form of a hearing, people are invited to give their testimonies which often reveal differences between official records and people's experiences.^[9] Before the existence of the RTI Act, it was very difficult to access official records and not many Jan Sunwais could be organised.^[9]

The walled city of Beawar is drenched in a colonial essence as it was established as a military cantonment by British officer Colonel Charles George Dixon in the 19th century. The best way to explore Beawar is either by walking or hiring an auto-rickshaw. Start your trip with the lush green Subhash Udyan, the hub of all cultural and recreational activities in the city. The park has some great rides for children and makes for a picturesque picnic spot. To get a glimpse of the city's rich architectural heritage, head to the charming domed pavilion of Mahadev Ji ki Chhatri. Located near the bustling Agarsen Market, it is the most famous temple of Beawar that is dedicated to Lord Shiva. Enjoy a stopover at the Panch Batti public circle and absorb the local culture. Beawar has a fine selection of Rajasthani handicrafts that are available at affordable prices. The local markets of the city are lined with stores selling colourful ethnic handicrafts like Rajasthani puppets and other decorative items. The Shoolbred Memorial CNI Church in Shahpura Mohalla stands as a testament to the city's colonial past and is a must-visit site in Beawar. Visit the Halwai Gali to shop for Beawar's famous til patti, a form of gajak or crispy sweet dish made from sugar and sesame seeds. The best time to visit Beawar is during the annual Tejaji Fair and the Gair Festival when one can witness the city's cultural abundance.^[18]

Badnore, earlier known as Vardhanpur, is a quaint little village located in the Bhilwara District of Rajasthan. Badnore Fort is an excellent example of medieval Indian military style of architecture. This seven storied fort stands atop a hill and presents breathtaking views all around. There are many small monuments and temples within the precincts of Badnore Fort and around it. The buildings within Badnore Fort Bhilwara are all built in traditional Rajputana style of architecture, which is a local variation of the extensive Hindu style of architecture. It is a seven storied fort that lies 70 km from Bhilwara.^[13]

Ashapura Mata is one of aspect devi and one of the principle deity of Kutch. As the name indicates, she is the Goddess who fulfills the wish & desires of all those who trust and believe her. The unique thing about most of the idol of Ashapura Mata is that it has 7 pairs of eyes. Her temples are mainly found in Gujarat. Some people in Rajasthan and Gujarat consider her to be an incarnation (avatar) of goddess Annapoorna devi.^[14]

Surajpole is a locality in the Udaipur city of Rajasthan state. This is one of the largest and most ... Surajpole Darvaja or Surajpole is one entry gate among seven, the others being Hathipole, Udiapole, Chandpole, DelhiGate, and so on.^[15]

A mere mention of the word Rajasthan conjures up images of kings and kingdoms, elaborate architecture, chivalry, bright colours, folklore and festivities. Jaipur, the Capital City has a story of its own. Even the hotel I stayed in had one. On a hot summer afternoon I reached Jaipur from Ranthambore. I was booked at the Taj Jai Mahal Palace – home of an army



General – and hunting grounds of the royal family of Jaipur. The ruler of Jaipur, Jai Singh, left behind two sons Ishwari Singh and Madho Singh. The sons were at loggerheads for the Jaipur throne.¹⁶

IV.CONCLUSIONS

Beawar is a city in Rajasthan, India. Beawar was the financial capital of Merwara state of Rajputana. As of 2011, the population of Beawar is 342,935. It is located 184 kilometres (114 mi) southwest of the state capital Jaipur, amidst Aravali hills. The city used to be a major center of trade, especially in raw cotton, and used to have cotton presses and the Krishna cotton mills. Currently, major industries include mineral-based units, machine-based units, machine tools and accessories, pre-stressed concrete pipes, plastic products, textiles, wooden furniture and asbestos cement pipes. Beawar is the largest producer of cement in northern India and home to Shree Cement. It lies in mineral-rich region having reserves of feldspar, quartz, asbestos, soapstone, magnesite, calcite, limestone, mica, emerald, granite, and masonry stone. Reserves of barytes, fluorite, wollastonite and vermiculite have also been found. Nearest airports are Jodhpur (145 km) and Jaipur (190 km). It is also connected by RSRTC operated buses to all parts of Rajasthan, and neighboring Delhi NCR, Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh). It also had railway connectivity with Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmadabad, Bangalore (bi-weekly), Haridwar, Dehradun (weekly), Bareilly and Kolkata.¹⁸

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