

Ques-The emergence of Rajputs is a part of a larger process. It should not be seen in a binary of indigenous or foreign origin. Comment.

Answer: The term 'Rajput' has originated from the Sanskrit word 'Rajaputra'. Initially, it referred to an individual as 'son/s of king/s'. But, up to the early medieval period, it came to denote a 'caste group' which shared a set of ethos. It began to be used in the context of the ruling class or landed feudal class. However, 'how this transition took place is a subject of historiographical debate.

The first literary reference to the Rajputs is found in the context of the Arab conquest of Sindh when 5000 horsemen had gathered to support Dahir, ruler of Sindh. They were called 'Rajaputras' or 'Rajputs'. Scholars like Colonel Todd and Cunningham tried to highlight the foreign origin of Rajputs whom they considered as the descendants of Shakas and Kushanas. On the other hand, the concept of 'Agnikula' Rajput mentioned in Prithvirajraso of Chand Bardai emphasizes the indigenous origin.

But, a closer analysis suggests that as a social group, the Rajput class was actually heterogeneous and their rise had a lot to do with institutions like land grants, peasant nation of tribal societies, and expansion of clan-based polities.

The emergence of Rajputs was the result of a complex process. Like the warrior classes in other parts of the world, Rajputs organized into a warrior class and individuals from a cross-section of society -from royal princesses to small zamindars- were accommodated into the Rajput class.

• **Factors behind their emergence:**

1. The Kshatriya Varna is known from the ancient period evolved into the Rajput class over time.
2. Also, regardless of whichever Varna they belong to, the ruling class started self-identifying as Rajputs. In this group, some foreign elements like Shakas and Kushanas- which had been *Indianised*- were also incorporated.
3. Emergence of Rajputs can also be the result of a political process. E.g. some recipients of land grants became very powerful. They built their forts, organized their armies, and pushed their way into the Rajput class.
4. An economic process is also behind it. Basically, the agrarian economy expanded into tribal areas due to the land grants. Relatively egalitarian tribal societies were turned into hierarchical peasant societies. This process raised the social status of some families that controlled more land and enjoyed political authority. They were initiated into the Rajput class.
5. Some landed magnets achieved social approval through marital alliances as well. Then, some families joined the Rajput class with the help of the concept of '*Bramhakshatra*'. They emphasized their combined Brahmin-Kshatriya heritage and claimed a right to rule.
6. Historians like Richard Eaton point to the Rajputisation of soldiers from Eastern India (Purbia Rajputs) when they were commissioned by Malwa Sultanate into their armies.

In this way, the emergence of Rajput is the result of a comprehensive process as more than one factor contributed to it and new elements kept joining this group in each period.



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