

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: IND32856
Country: India
Date: 6 February 2008

Keywords: India – Rajputs – Haryana

This response was prepared by the Research & Information Services Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. This research response may not, under any circumstance, be cited in a decision or any other document. Anyone wishing to use this information may only cite the primary source material contained herein.

Questions

1. Please provide general information about the position of Rajputs in India, and in Haryana state.

RESPONSE

1. Please provide general information about the position of Rajputs in India, and in Haryana state.

The Rajputs are a large Hindu caste which falls within the Kshatriya group (the warrior castes): the second group in the Varna system. They comprise numerous clans which vary in status ranging from princely lineages to agricultural workers. The Rajputs are located mainly in central and northern India, including Haryana. Their economic status varies according to location. No information was found in the sources consulted indicating that Rajputs, as a group, have no civil, economic or political rights in India. However, it is reported that the Rajputs are reviving their demands for Other Backward Caste (OBC) status in Rajasthan.

Information in this response is provided under the following headings:

[The caste system](#)
[Rajputs in India](#)
[Rajputs in Haryana](#)
[Kurukshetra district maps](#)

The caste system

Deshpande, in 2001 at the University of Carolina in the USA, briefly summarised the ancient Varna system in India as follows:

Briefly summarizing; the ancient Varna system divided Hindu society into initially four, later five, distinct *Varna* or castes, that are mutually exclusive, hereditary, endogamous and occupation-specific. These are the Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaisyas (traders and merchants) and Sudras (those engaged in menial jobs) and those doing the most despicable menial jobs – the Ati Sudras or the former untouchables (Deshpande, Ashwini 2001, 'Caste at Birth? Redefining Disparity in India', *Review of Development Economics*, Vol. 5, No. 1, p.131 – Attachment 1).

On castes Jayaraman, in 2005 an associate professor and Chair of the Postgraduate Research Committee of the School of Humanities, University of Western Sydney, noted that:

The caste (*jati*) is an endogamous group, and *gotra* (clan) is an exogamous division within it. Normally, some of the larger castes, such as Rajpt, (sic) Jat, Vellala, and Brahman, have many constituent exogamous subgroups. The rule of endogamy obliges a person to marry within one's group (*jati*), while the rule of exogamy obliges a person to marry outside one's group (*gotra*) (Jayaraman, R. 2005, 'Personal Identity in a Globalized World: Cultural Roots of Hindu Personal Names and Surnames', *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 38, No. 3, February, p.484 – Attachment 2).

For general background information on castes and caste violence see questions 1 (pp.1-12) and 7 (pp.28-29) in: RRT Research & Information 2007, *Research Response IND32629*, 13 December – Attachment 3).

Rajputs in India

In 1997 Professor Robin Jeffrey, at the time a professor at La Trobe University, advised that Rajputs are a large Hindi-speaking caste group historically a part of the warrior (Kshatriya) group of castes. It comprises numerous clans at various status levels. Their economic status varies according to location and occupy positions of impoverished gentry in some parts of India (Record of telephone conversation between Professor Robin Jeffrey, School of Politics, Faculty of Humanities, La Trobe University and Anthea Hammond, Research, Information and Documentation Section, Refugee Review Tribunal, Melbourne on 30 April 1997 – Attachment 4).

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on the Rajput states:

(from Sanskrit *raja-putra*: "son of a king"), any of about 12,000,000 landowners **organized in patrilineal clans and located mainly in central and northern India**, especially in former Rajputana ("Land of the Rajputs"). **The Rajputs regard themselves as descendants or members of the Kshatriya (warrior ruling) class, but they actually vary greatly in status, from princely lineages, such as the Guhilot and Kachwaha, to simple cultivators.** Most authorities agree that successful claims to Rajput status frequently were made by groups that attained secular power; probably central Asian invaders as well as patrician lines of indigenous tribal peoples were absorbed in this way. There are numbers of Muslim Rajputs in the northwest, and Rajputs generally have adopted the custom of purdah (seclusion of women). Their ethos includes an intense pride in ancestry and a mettlesome regard for personal honour. They seek hypergamous marriages (*i.e.*, the bride marrying into a social group higher than her own) ('Rajput' 2008, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 23 January, Encyclopædia Britannica Online website <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9062531/Rajput> – Accessed 23 January 2008 – Attachment 5).

A 2006 medical article, researching the body weight of India's social groups, described the Rajputs in the following terms:

In the Hindu caste hierarchy the Brahmins, regarded as the priestly caste, occupy the topmost position. They are the principal landowning caste in Central India and hardly practice agriculture. **The Rajputs are traditional rulers and warriors. They observe Brahminical customs and traditions and occupy a high position in the social hierarchy. Today, they practice agriculture for their livelihood. This group is socially, economically, and politically affluent and dominates over Indian society and polity** (Adak, D.K., Gautam, R. K., Bharati, S., Gharami, A. K., Pal, M., Bharati, P. 2006, 'Body Mass Index and Chronic Energy Deficiency of Adult Males of Central Indian Populations', Body Mass Index and Chronic Energy Deficiency of Adult Males of Central Indian Populations, Find Articles website, *Human Biology*, April http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3659/is_200604/ai_n17184036/pg_2 – Accessed 3 December 2007 – Attachment 6).

In a 2005 article, Gupta, at that time at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, also noted that caste status varied in different locations. He wrote:

...**There are different rankings in different locales** depending upon who has the power and the wherewithal to make a particular ranking system, or hierarchy, work to their advantage. In some cases, the Brahmins were able to realize their favored hierarchy in practice; in other cases, it was the Jats, **or the Rajputs**, or the Marathas, or the Marawas, or the Lingayats, and so on...(Gupta, D. 2005, 'Caste and Politics: Identity Over System', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol.34, p.412 – Attachment 7).

On Rajput clans the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board states that:

There are various Rajput clans, created more or less on the Hindu caste system and each identifiable by the color, pattern and style of their turbans. The Rathore clan is from the ruling class (notable among them being the Maharajah of Jodhpur), and so are the Chauhans, whose greatest ruler was Prithviraj Chauhan (12th Century AD). They are also called Thakur as a mark of respect. The other clans are subservient to them, especially the Mahar (camel drivers), Lohar (ironsmith), Berupia (entertainers), Bhopa (reciters of epic tales). Gracia (untouchables), and the Rabari (Shepherds) (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, *IND38715.E – India: Rajput Sikh religion*, 27 March – Attachment 8).

Jayaraman also writes that Rajputs have an extensive clan and lineage organisation. Some clan and lineage names, for example Sesodia, Rathore, Chauhan and Paramar are used as surnames by Rajputs. However, at times, the surnames are also used by other castes that try to imitate the social practices of the Rajputs. Also, the name Singh, used by all Sikh men, is commonly used by some Kshatriya castes, such as the northern Indian Rajputs (Jayaraman, R. 2005, 'Personal Identity in a Globalized World: Cultural Roots of Hindu Personal Names and Surnames', *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 38, No. 3, February, pp.485-486 – Attachment 2).

Although the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* estimates the Rajput population as “12,000,000 landowners” (see above) the Joshua Project¹ has estimated it around 35.3 million and 40.44

¹ Information accessed from the Joshua Project website indicates that it is a Christian research group “identifying and highlighting the people groups of the world that have the least exposure to the Gospel and the least Christian presence in their midst” ('What is Joshua Project' (undated), Joshua Project website <http://www.joshuaproject.net/joshua-project.php> - Accessed 31 January 2008 – Attachment 9).

million ('Peoples of South Asia: Rajput' (undated), Joshua Project website <http://www.joshuaproject.net/profiles/maps/ml113412.pdf> – Accessed 23 January 2008 – Attachment 10; 'Rajput of India' (undated), Joshua Project website <http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rog3=IN&rop3=113412> – Accessed 23 January 2008 – Attachment 11).

The Joshua Project has indicated that the Rajput are spread throughout India with the largest numbers being in Uttar Pradesh (9,830,000), Madhya Pradesh (5,224,000), Rajasthan (4,223,000), Bihar (4,044,000), Uttaranachal (2,894,000), Gujarat (2,362,000), Haryana (1,510,000), Himachal Pradesh (1,272,000), Maharashtra (979,000) and Delhi (968,000) ('Rajput of India' (undated), Joshua Project website <http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rog3=IN&rop3=113412> – Accessed 23 January 2008 – Attachment 11).

Jeffrey advised that the Rajput population extends from Rajasthan in the west of India to Bihar in the east. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* stated that Rajputs are “located mainly in central and northern India” (Record of telephone conversation between Professor Robin Jeffrey, School of Politics, Faculty of Humanities, La Trobe University and Anthea Hammond, Research, Information and Documentation Section, Refugee Review Tribunal, Melbourne on 30 April 1997 – Attachment 4; 'Rajput' 2008, Encyclopædia Britannica, 23 January, Encyclopædia Britannica Online website <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9062531/Rajput> – Accessed 23 January 2008 – Attachment 5).)

The Joshua Project also indicated that Hindi is the primary language of about 20 million Rajputs and there are another 83 languages spoken by the other Rajputs ('Rajput of India' (undated), Joshua Project website <http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rog3=IN&rop3=113412> – Accessed 23 January 2008 – Attachment 11).

In respect of Other Backward Caste (OBC) status a January 2008 news article reported that the Rajput community was reviving demands for OBC reservation in Rajasthan ('Now, Rajputs needle Raje' 2008, *The Statesman*, 23 January – Attachment 12; Yagnik, Kalpesh 2007, 'Rajasthan BURNING', *DNA Sunday*, 3 June – Attachment 13).

Information in an earlier RRT Research Response notes that there are benefits that can be won by being granted OBC status (RRT Research & Information 2007, *Research Response IND32303*, 10 September, pp.2-8 – Attachment 14).

Rajputs in Haryana

The WebIndia123 website, an Indian reference portal, provides the following information on the Rajputs in Haryana:

Rajputs a sub clan of Gurjars occupy a respectable position in Haryana. The various Rajput clans trace their ancestry to the ancient warriors (Kshatriya) who figure so prominently in legend and ancient lore. **The oldest Rajput settlers in Haryana are two principal clans, the Mandhars and the Chauhans.** The Mandhars claim to have descended from Lav, one of the two sons of Rama, the great hero of Epic Ramayana. They are thus descendants of Surajabansis. The Chauhans claim descent from Rana Har Rai. Other Rajput clans are Badgular, Parmara (Puars), Bachas, Tunwars, Gurs etc.

In earlier times the Rajputs have formed an important class of the feudals in Haryana. **But now the new social legislation and in particular the land laws, have drastically cut down larger holdings of land which led to the disappearance of the feudal gentry** ('The People: Jats' (undated), Webindia123.com <http://www.webindia123.com/Hariyana/PEOPLE/people.htm#j> – Accessed 6 September 2007 – Attachment 15).

In respect of caste violence in Haryana the attached RRT Research Response, although not referring specifically to Rajputs, covers the issue of such violence particularly in relation to Gujjars and Jats (RRT Research & Information 2007, *Research Response IND32303*, 10 September – Attachment 14).

Although the WebIndia123 website describes Rajputs as “a sub clan of Gurjars” (also spelt as Gujjars), most sources identify them as separate castes. Other sources note an ethnic affinity between the two groups. Attached are some sources identifying Rajputs and Gurjars as separate groups (Yagnik, Kalpesh 2007, ‘Rajasthan BURNING’, *DNA Sunday*, 3 June – Attachment 13; ‘Where people vote for charisma and not caste’ 2007, *Indian Express*, 26 January – Attachment 16; ‘Jantra, Mantra, Tantra And Mundane Poverty’ 2004, *Financial Express*, 10 January – Attachment 17; Chauhan, Chetan 2003, ‘...But the old caste rules may not apply this year’, *Hindustan Times*, 23 September – Attachment 18).

However, Dabral and Malik, from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Delhi, note that the Gujjars of north-western India have ethnic affinities with the Rajputs (as well as the Jats, Ahirs) and belong to one ethnic stock (Dabral, Shweta and Malik, S. L. 2004, ‘Demographic Study of Gujjars of Delhi: I. Population Structure and Socio-cultural Profile’, *Journal of Human Ecology*, Vol. 16, No. 1, p.18 <http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/JHE/JHE-16-0-000-000-2004-Web/JHE-16-1-001-073-2004-Abst-PDF/JHE-16-1-017-024-2004-Dabral-S/JHE-16-1-017-024-2004-Dabral-S.pdf> – Accessed 4 February 2008 – Attachment 19).

Also, Khari in his book *Jats and Gujjars: Origin, History and Culture* tracing the origin of “Rajput” notes that the *gotras* of Jats, Gujjars and Yadavs coincide. He continues:

But it is true that in India the distinction between the Jats, Gujjars, and Rajputs is probably social rather than ethnic (Khari, Rahul 2007, *Jats and Gujjars: Origin, History and Culture*, Reference Press, New Delhi, p.24 – Attachment 20).

Little information was found in the sources consulted specifically on Rajputs being the subject of mistreatment in Haryana. One incident reported in March-February 2007 involved Rajputs destroying Dalit establishments following the murder of a Rajput in Karnal district (Rajalakshmi, T.K. 2007, ‘Village Terror’, *Frontline*, Vol. 24, Iss. 6, 24 March – 6 April <http://www.flonnet.com/fl2406/stories/20070406002403900.htm> – Accessed 18 May 2007 – Attachment 21; Tandon, Aditi 2007, ‘Dalits’ Joint Action Forum moves HC’, *The Tribune*, 19 March <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2007/20070319/haryana.htm> – Accessed 23 January 2008 – Attachment 22).

Kurukshetra district maps

Kurukshetra district is located in the north of Haryana State. Pehowa is some 25 kms to the west of Thanesar, the district headquarters.

Attached are the following maps of Kurukshetra district and Haryana state:

- ‘Kurukshetra (Haryana)’ (undated), *Maps of India* – Attachment 23.
- ‘Haryana (District Map)’ (undated), *Maps of India* – Attachment 24.
- ‘Haryana, India’ 2000, *Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas 2000* – Attachment 25.

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Google Scholar <http://scholar.google.com.au/>

Frontline <http://www.flonnet.com/>

Hindustan Times <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Homepage/Homepage.aspx>

India Today <http://indiatoday.digitaltoday.in/>

The Times of India <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/>

The Tribune <http://www.tribuneindia.com/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. Deshpande, Ashwini 2001, ‘Caste at Birth? Redefining Disparity in India’, *Review of Development Economics*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp.130-144.
2. Jayaraman, R. 2005, ‘Personal Identity in a Globalized World: Cultural Roots of Hindu Personal Names and Surnames’, *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 38, No. 3, February, pp.476-490.
3. RRT Research & Information 2007, *Research Response IND32629*, 13 December.
4. Record of telephone conversation between Professor Robin Jeffrey, School of Politics, Faculty of Humanities, La Trobe University and Anthea Hammond, Research, Information and Documentation Section, Refugee Review Tribunal, Melbourne on 30 April 1997.
5. ‘Rajput’ 2008, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 23 January, Encyclopædia Britannica Online website <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9062531/Rajput> – Accessed 23 January 2008.
6. Adak, D.K., Gautam, R. K., Bharati, S., Gharami, A. K., Pal, M., Bharati, P. 2006, ‘Body Mass Index and Chronic Energy Deficiency of Adult Males of Central Indian Populations’, *Body Mass Index and Chronic Energy Deficiency of Adult Males of*

Central Indian Populations, Find Articles website, *Human Biology*, April
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3659/is_200604/ai_n17184036/pg_2 –
Accessed 3 December 2007.

7. Gupta, D. 2005, 'Caste and Politics: Identity Over System', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol.34, pp.409-427.
8. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, *IND38715.E – India: Rajput Sikh religion*, 27 March. (REFINFO)
9. 'What is Joshua Project' (undated), Joshua Project website
<http://www.joshuaproject.net/joshua-project.php> – Accessed 31 January 2008.
10. 'Peoples of South Asia: Rajput' (undated), Joshua Project website
<http://www.joshuaproject.net/profiles/maps/ml113412.pdf> – Accessed 23 January 2008.
11. 'Rajput of India' (undated), Joshua Project website
<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php?rog3=IN&rop3=113412> – Accessed 23 January 2008.
12. 'Now, Rajputs needle Raje' 2008, *The Statesman*, 23 January. (FACTIVA)
13. Yagnik, Kalpesh 2007, 'Rajasthan BURNING', *DNA Sunday*, 3 June. (FACTIVA)
14. RRT Research & Information 2007, *Research Response IND32303*, 10 September.
15. 'The People: Jats' (undated), Webindia123.com
<http://www.webindia123.com/Hariyana/PEOPLE/people.htm#j> – Accessed 6 September 2007.
16. 'Where people vote for charisma and not caste' 2007, *Indian Express*, 26 January. (FACTIVA)
17. Jantra, Mantra, Tantra And Mundane Poverty' 2004, *Financial Express*, 10 January. (FACTIVA)
18. Chauhan, Chetan 2003, '...But the old caste rules may not apply this year', *Hindustan Times*, 23 September. (FACTIVA)
19. Dabral, Shweta and Malik, S. L. 2004, 'Demographic Study of Gujjars of Delhi: I. Population Structure and Socio-cultural Profile', *Journal of Human Ecology*, Vol. 16, No. 1, p.18 pp.17-24 <http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/JHE/JHE-16-0-000-000-2004-Web/JHE-16-1-001-073-2004-Abst-PDF/JHE-16-1-017-024-2004-Dabral-S/JHE-16-1-017-024-2004-Dabral-S.pdf> – Accessed 4 February 2008.
20. Khari, Rahul 2007, *Jats and Gujjars: Origin, History and Culture*, Reference Press, New Delhi, pp.22-25. (MRT-RRT Library)
21. Rajalakshmi, T.K. 2007, 'Village Terror', *Frontline*, Vol. 24, Iss. 6, 24 March – 6 April <http://www.flonnet.com/fl2406/stories/20070406002403900.htm> – Accessed 18 May 2007.

22. Tandon, Aditi 2007, 'Dalits' Joint Action Forum moves HC', *The Tribune*, 19 March <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2007/20070319/haryana.htm> – Accessed 23 January 2008.
23. 'Kurukshetra (Haryana)' (undated), *Maps of India*.
24. 'Haryana (District Map)' (undated), *Maps of India*.
25. 'Haryana, India' 2000, *Microsoft Encarta Interactive Atlas 2000*.