Home > Jat people

Jat people

Chaudhary Charan Singh, the first Jat Prime Minister of India, accompanied by his wife, on his way to address the nation at the Red Fort, Delhi, Independence Day, 15 August 1979.

Regions with significant populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>India and Pakistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryanvi • Hindi • Punjabi • Rajasthani • Sindhi • Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism • Islam • Sikhism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Jat people (Hindi pronunciation: ) (also spelled Jatt and Jaat) are a traditionally agricultural community in Northern India and Pakistan. Originally pastoralists in the lower Indus river-valley of Sindh, Jats migrated north into the Punjab region, Delhi, Rajputana, and the western Gangetic Plain in late medieval times. Primarily of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh faiths, they now live mostly in the Indian States of Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh and the Pakistani provinces of Punjab and Sindh.

The Jat community saw radical social changes in the 17th century, the Hindu Jats took up arms against the Mughal Empire during the late 17th and early 18th century. The Hindu Jat kingdom reached its zenith under Maharaja Suraj Mal of Bharatpur (1707–1763). The Jat community of the Punjab region played an important role in the development of the martial Khalsa Panth of Sikhism; they are more commonly known as the Jat Sikhs. By the 20th century, the landowning Jats became an influential group in several parts of North India, including Haryana, Punjab, Western Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi. Over the years, several Jats abandoned agriculture in favour of urban jobs, and used their dominant economic and political status to claim higher social status.

Jats are classified as Other Backward Class (OBC) in India’s seven out of the thirty-six States and UTs, namely Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Uttarakhand, UP, MP and Chhattisgarh. But only the Jats of Rajasthan - excluding those of Bharatpur district and Dholpur district - are entitled to
reservation in the central government jobs under the OBC reservation. In 2016, the Jats of Haryana organized massive protests demanding to be classified as OBC in order to avail affirmative action benefits.

Contents

- **1 History**
  - 1.1 States of the 18th century
  - 1.2 Sikh states
- **2 Demographics**
  - 2.1 Post-independence estimates
    - 2.1.1 Republic of India
    - 2.1.2 Pakistan
- **3 Culture and society**
  - 3.1 Military
  - 3.2 Religious beliefs
  - 3.3 Varna status
- **4 Clan system**
- **5 See also**
- **6 Footnotes**
- **7 References**
  - 7.1 Citations
- **8 Further reading**
- **9 External links**

History
A Jutt (Jat) Muslim camel-driver from Sind, 1872

Jat Sikh of the "Sindhoo" clan, Lahore, 1872.

Jats in the Delhi Territory in 1868.
Jat girl from **Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh**, India, 1868.

Ethnographic photograph of Jat zemindars (land owners) in **Rajasthan**, playing **pachisi**, 1874.

The **durbar** of the teenage Hindu Jat ruler of **Bharatpur**, a princely state in **Rajasthan**, early 1860s.
Maharaja Suraj Mal, the 18th century Hindu Jat ruler of Bharatpur. Historians have described him as “the Plato of the Jat people" and the "Jat Odysseus", because of his political sagacity, steady intellect and clear vision.\[17\]

The Jats are a paradigmatic example of community- and identity-formation in early modern Indian subcontinent.\[18\] "Jat" is an elastic label applied to a wide-ranging, traditionally non-elite, community which had its origins in pastoralism in the lower Indus valley of Sindh.\[18\] At the time of Muhammad bin Qasim’s conquest of Sind in the 8th century, Arab writers described agglomerations of Jats in the arid, the wet, and the mountainous regions of the conquered land.\[20\] The new Islamic rulers, though professing a theologically egalitarian religion, did not alter either the non-elite status of Jats or the discriminatory practices against them that had been put in place in the long period of Hindu rule in Sind.\[21\] Between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries, Jat herders migrated, up along the river valleys, into the Punjab,\[18\] which had not been brought under the plough in the first millennium.\[22\] Many took up tilling in regions such as Western Punjab, where the sakia (water wheel) had been recently introduced.\[18][18][24] By early Mughal times, in the Punjab, the term "Jat" had become loosely synonymous with "peasant",\[25\] and some Jats had come to own land and exert local influence.\[18\]

According to historians Catherine Asher and Cynthia Talbot,\[26\]

The Jats also provide an important insight into how religious identities evolved during the precolonial era. Before they settled in the Punjab and other northern regions, the pastoralist Jats had little exposure to any of the mainstream religions. Only after they became more integrated into the agrarian world did the Jats adopt the dominant religion of the people in whose midst they dwelt.\[26\]

With passage of time, in the western Punjab, the Jats became primarily Muslim, in the eastern Punjab, Sikh, and in the areas between Delhi Territory and Agra, primarily Hindu, their divisions by
faith reflecting the geographical strengths of these religions.\[26\] During the decline of Mughal rule in the early 18th century, the Indian subcontinent’s hinterland dwellers, many of whom were armed and nomadic, increasingly interacted with settled townspeople and agriculturists. Many new rulers of the 18th century came from such martial and nomadic backgrounds. The effect of this interaction on India's social organization lasted well into the colonial period. During much of this time, non-elite tillers and pastoralists, such as the Jats or Ahirs, were part of a social spectrum that blended only indistinctly into the elite landowning classes at one end, and the menial or ritually polluting classes at the other.\[27\] During the heyday of Mughal rule, Jats had recognized rights. According to Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf:

Upstart warriors, Marathas, Jats, and the like, as coherent social groups with military and governing ideals, were themselves a product of the Mughal context, which recognized them and provided them with military and governing experience. Their successes were a part of the Mughal success.\[28\]

As the Mughal empire now faltered, there were a series of rural rebellions in North India.\[29\] Although these had sometimes been characterized as "peasant rebellions", others, such as Muzaffar Alam, have pointed out that small local landholders, or zemindars, often led these uprisings.\[29\] The Sikh and Jat rebellions were led by such small local zemindars, who had close association and family connections with each other and with the peasants under them, and who were often armed.\[30\]

These communities of rising peasant-warriors were not well-established Indian castes,\[31\] but rather quite new, without fixed status categories, and with the ability to absorb older peasant castes, sundry warlords, and nomadic groups on the fringes of settled agriculture.\[32\]\[33\] The Mughal Empire, even at the zenith of its power, functioned by devolving authority and never had direct control over its rural grandees.\[34\] It was these zemindars who gained most from these rebellions, in both cases, increasing the land under their control.\[34\] The more triumphant even attained the ranks of minor princes, such as the Jat ruler Badan Singh of the princely state of Bharatpur.\[35\]

The non-Sikh Jats came to predominate south and east of Delhi after 1710.\[33\] According to historian Christopher Bayly:

Men characterised by early eighteenth century Mughal records as plunderers and bandits preying on the imperial lines of communications had by the end of the century
spawned a range of petty states linked by marriage alliance and religious practice. [33]

The Jats had moved into the Gangetic Plain in two large migrations, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively. [33] They were not a caste in the usual Hindu sense, for example, in which Bhumihars of the eastern Gangetic plain were; rather they were an umbrella group of peasant-warriors. [33] According to Christopher Bayly:

This was a society where Brahmins were few and male Jats married into the whole range of lower agricultural and entrepreneurial castes. A kind of tribal nationalism animated them rather than a nice calculation of caste differences expressed within the context of Brahminical Hindu state. [33]

By the mid-eighteenth century, the ruler of the recently established Jat kingdom of Bharatpur, Raja Surajmal, felt sanguine enough about durability to build a garden palace at nearby Dig (Deeg). [34] Although, the palace, Gopal Bhavan, was named for Lord Krishna, its domes, arches, and garden were evocative of Mughal architecture, a reflection ultimately of how much these new rulers—aspiring dynasts all—were products of the Mughal epoch. [34] In another nod to the Mughal legacy, in the 1750s, Surajmal removed his own Jat brethren from positions of power and replaced them with a contingent of Mughal revenue officials from Delhi who proceeded to implement the Mughal scheme of collecting land-rent. [34]

According to historian, Eric Stokes,

When the power of the Bharatpur raja was riding high, fighting clans of Jats encroached into the Karnal/Panipat, Mathura, Agra, and Aligarh districts, usually at the expense of Rajput groups. But such a political umbrella was too fragile and short-lived for substantial displacement to be effected. [35]

States of the 18th century

Jat states of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries included Kuchesar ruled by the Dalal Jats, Gohad ruled by Rana Jats, [36] and the Mursan state (the present-day Hathras district in Uttar Pradesh) ruled by the Thenua Jats. [citation needed] A recent ruler of this state was Raja Mahendra Pratap (1886–1979), who was popularly known as Aryan Peshwa. [37][38]

Jat rulers occupied and ruled from Gwalior Fort on several occasions:

- 1740 to 1756 by Maharaja Bhim Singh Rana [39]
- 1761 to 1767 by Maharaja Chhatar Singh Rana [40][41][42]
- In 1778, the Gwalior fort was again under the reign Rana Lokendra Singh. [43]
- 1780 to 1783 by Maharaja Chhatra Singh Rana [44]

Maharaja Suraj Mal captured Agra Fort on 12 June 1761 and it remained in the possession of Bharatpur rulers till 1774. [45]

Sikh states
Maharaja Bhupinder Singh Sidhu of Patiala.

Patiala and Nabha were two important Sikh [46][47] states in Punjab, ruled by the Jat-Sikh [48] people of the Siddhu clan. The Jind state in present-day Haryana was founded by the descendants of Phul Jat of Siddhu ancestry. These states were formed with the military assistance of the sixth Sikh guru, known as Guru Har Gobind [46].

The rulers of Faridkot were Brar Jat Sikhs. [49]

Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839) of the Sandhawalia [citation needed] Jat clan (other historians assert a Sansi Caste lineage to Maharaja Ranjit Singh) of Punjab became the Sikh emperor of the sovereign country of Punjab and the Sikh Empire. He united the Sikh factions into one state, and conquered vast tracts of territory on all sides of his kingdom. From the capture of Lahore in 1799, he rapidly annexed the rest of the Punjab. To secure his empire, he invaded North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) (which was then part of Afghanistan), and defeated the Pathan militias and tribes. Ranjit Singh took the title of "Maharaja" on 12 April 1801 (to coincide with Baisakhi day). Lahore served as his capital from 1799. In 1802 he took the city of Amritsar and in 1818 he successfully invaded Kashmir. [50]

Demographics

As of 2016, Jats constitutes 2 percent of India's total population. [51]

According to Encyclopædia Britannica,

In the early 21st century the Jat constituted about 20 percent of the population of Punjab, nearly 10 percent of the population of Balochistan, Rajasthan, and Delhi, and from 2 to 5 percent of the populations of Sindh, Northwest Frontier, and Uttar Pradesh. The four million Jat of Pakistan are mainly Muslim; the nearly six million Jat of India are mostly divided into two large castes of about equal strength: one Sikh, concentrated in Punjab, the other Hindu. [52]

Post-independence estimates

In 2012, the Hindustan Times reported that the Jat people in India were estimated to number around
82.5 million (8.25 crore). [53]

**Republic of India**

Some specific clans of Jat people are classified as Other Backward Class in some states, examples of which are those in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi. [54][55][56][57]

In the 20th century and more recently, Jats have dominated as the political class in Haryana[58] and Punjab. [59] Some Jat people have become notable political leaders, including the sixth Prime Minister of India, Charan Singh.

Consolidation of economic gains and participation in the electoral process are two visible outcomes of the post-independence situation. Through this participation they have been able to significantly influence the politics of North India. Economic differentiation, migration and mobility could be clearly noticed amongst the Jat people. [60]

**Pakistan**

A large number of the Jat Muslim people live in Pakistan and have dominant roles in public life in the Pakistani Punjab and Pakistan in general. Jat communities also exist in Pakistani-administered Kashmir, in Sindh, particularly the Indus delta and among Seraiki-speaking communities in southern Pakistani Punjab, the Kachhi region of Balochistan and the Dera Ismail Khan District of the North West Frontier Province.
In Pakistan also, Jat people have become notable political leaders, like Asif Ali Zardari and Hina Rabbani Khar.[61]

Culture and society

The anthropologist Susan Bayly says that the Jats were non-elite tillers and herders.[61][64]

Military

14th Murrays Jat Lancers (Risaldar Major) by AC Lovett (1862-1919).jpg

A large number of Jat people serve in the Indian Army, including the Jat Regiment, Sikh Regiment, Rajputana Rifles and the Grenadiers, where they have won many of the highest military awards for gallantry and bravery. Jat people also serve in the Pakistan Army especially in the Punjab Regiment.[65]

The Jat people were designated by officials of the British Raj as a "martial race", which meant that they were one of the groups whom the British favoured for recruitment to the British Indian Army.[66][67] The Jats participated in both, World War I as well as World War II, as a part of the British Indian Army.[68] In the period subsequent to 1881, when the British reversed their prior anti-Sikh policies, it was necessary to profess Sikhism in order to be recruited to the army because the administration believed Hindus to be inferior for military purposes.[69]

The Indian Army admitted in 2013 that the 150-strong Presidential Bodyguard comprises only people who are Hindu Jats, Jat Sikhs and Hindu Rajputs. Refuting claims of discrimination, it said that this was for "functional" reasons rather than selection based on caste or religion.[70]

Religious beliefs

According to Khushwant Singh, the Jats' attitude never allowed themselves to be absorbed in the Brahminic fold.
The Jat's spirit of freedom and equality refused to submit to Brahmanical Hinduism and in its turn drew the censure of the privileged Brahmins.... The upper caste Hindu's denigration of the Jat did not in the least lower the Jat in his own eyes nor elevate the Brahmin or the Kshatriya in the Jat's estimation. On the contrary, he assumed a somewhat condescending attitude towards the Brahmin, whom he considered little more than a soothsayer or a beggar, or the Kshatriya, who disdained earning an honest living and was proud of being a mercenary. 

Jats pray to their dead ancestors, a practice which is called Jathera. 

Varna status

The Hindu varna system is unclear on Jat status within the caste system. Some sources state that Jats are regarded as Kshatriyas or "degraded Kshatriyas" who, as they did not observe Brahmanic rites and rituals, had fallen to the status of Shudra. Uma Chakravarti reports that the varna status of the Jats improved over time, with the Jats starting in the untouchable/chandala varna during the eighth century, changing to shudra status by the 11th century, and with some Jats striving for zamindar status after the Jat rebellion of the 17th century.

The Rajputs refused to accept Jat claims to kshatriya status during the later years of the British Raj and this disagreement frequently resulted in violent incidents between the two communities. The claim at that time was being made by the Arya Samaj, who saw it as a means to counter the colonial belief that the Jats were of Indo-Scythian origin.

Clan system

The Jat people are subdivided into numerous clans, some of which overlap with other groups.

In addition to the conventional Sarva Khap Panchayat, there are regional Jat Mahasabhas affiliated to the All India Jat Mahasabha to organize and safeguard the interests of the community, which held its meeting at regional and national levels to take stock of their activities and devise practical ways and means for the amelioration of the community.

See also

- List of Jats
- Origin of Jat people from Shiva's Locks
- Jat Regiment
- World Jat Aryan Foundation
- Jat reservation agitation

Footnotes

1. ^ According to Susan Bayly, "... (North India) contained large numbers of non-elite tillers. In the Punjab and the western Gangetic Plains, convention defined the Rajput's non-elite counterpart as a Jat. Like many similar titles used elsewhere, this was not so much a caste name as a broad designation for the man of substance in rural terrain. ... To be called Jat has in some regions implied a background of pastoralism, though it has more commonly been a designation of non-servile cultivating people."
2. "Glossary: Jat: title of north India's major non-elite 'peasant' caste."[62]

3. "... in the middle decades of the (nineteenth) century, there were two contrasting trends in India's agrarian regions. Previously marginal areas took off as zones of newly profitable 'peasant' agriculture, disadvantaging non-elite tilling groups, who were known by such titles as Jat in western NWP and Gounder in Coimbatore."[63]

4. "In the later nineteenth century, this thinking led colonial officials to try to protect Sikh Jats and other non-elite 'peasants' whom they now favoured as military recruits by advocating legislation under the so-called land alienation."[64]

References

Citations


2. "Jat reservation: Supreme Court dismisses Centre's review petition". intoday.in.

3. Khazanov, Anatoly M.; Wink, Andre (2012), Nomads in the Sedentary World, Routledge, p. 177, ISBN 978-1-136-12194-4, retrieved 15 August 2013. Quote: "Hiuen Tsang gave the following account of a numerous pastoral-nomadic population in seventh-century Sin-ti (Sind): 'By the side of the river..[of Sind], along the flat marshy lowlands for some thousand li, there are several hundreds of thousands [a very great many] families ..[which] give themselves exclusively to tending cattle and from this derive their livelihood. They have no masters, and whether men or women, have neither rich nor poor.' While they were left unnamed by the Chinese pilgrim, these same people of lower Sind were called Jats' or 'Jats of the wastes' by the Arab geographers. The Jats, as 'dromedary men.' were one of the chief pastoral-nomadic divisions at that time, with numerous subdivisions, ....

4. Wink, André (2004), Indo-Islamic society: 14th - 15th centuries, BRILL, pp. 92-93, ISBN 978-90-04-13561-1, retrieved 15 August 2013. Quote: "In Sind, the breeding and grazing of sheep and buffaloes was the regular occupations of pastoral nomads in the lower country of the south, while the breeding of goats and camels was the dominant activity in the regions immediately to the east of the Kirthar range and between Multan and Mansura. The jats were one of the chief pastoral-nomadic divisions here in early-medieval times, and although some of these migrated as far as Iraq, they generally did not move over very long distances on a regular basis. Many jats migrated to the north, into the Panjab, and here, between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries, the once largely pastoral-nomadic Jat population was transformed into sedentary peasants. Some Jats continued to live in the thinly populated barr country between the five rivers of the Panjab, adopting a kind of transhumance, based on the herding of goats and camels. It seems that what happened to the jats is paradigmatic of most other pastoral and pastoral-nomadic populations in India in the sense that they became ever more closed in by an expanding sedentary-agricultural realm."

5. The Sikhs of the Punjab p. 5 by J.S. Grewal Quote: "However, the most numerous of the agricultural tribes were the Jats. They had come from Sindh and Rajasthan along the river valleys, moving up, displacing the Gujjars and Rajputs to occupy culturable lands. Before the end of the sixteenth century they were more numerous than any other agricultural tribe between the rivers Jhelum and Jamuna."


can the liberation that the Muslim conquerors offered to those who sought to escape from the caste system be taken for granted. ... a caliphal governor of Sind in the late 830s is said to have ... (continued the previous Hindu requirement that) ... the Jats, when walking out of doors in future, to be accompanied by a dog. The fact that the dog is an unclean animal to both Hindu and Muslim made it easy for the Muslim conquerors to retain the status quo regarding a low-caste tribe. In other words, the new regime in the eighth and ninth centuries did not abrogate discriminatory regulations dating from a period of Hindu sovereignty; rather, it maintained them. (page 15)"

"Nor can the liberation that the Muslim conquerors offered to those who sought to escape from the caste system be taken for granted. ... a caliphal governor of Sind in the late 830s is said to have ... (continued the previous Hindu requirement that) ... the Jats, when walking out of doors in future, to be accompanied by a dog. The fact that the dog is an unclean animal to both Hindu and Muslim made it easy for the Muslim conquerors to retain the status quo regarding a low-caste tribe. In other words, the new regime in the eighth and ninth centuries did not abrogate discriminatory regulations dating from a period of Hindu sovereignty; rather, it maintained them. (page 15)"

"... the most numerous of the agricultural tribes (in the Punjab) were the Jats. They had come from Sindh and Rajasthan along the river valleys, moving up, displacing the Gujjars and the Rajputs to occupy culturable lands. (page 5)"

"The flatlands in the upper Punjab doabs do not seem to have been heavily farmed in the first millennium. ... Early-medieval dry farming developed in Sindh, around Multan, and in Rajasthan, ... From here, Jat farmers seem to have moved into the upper Punjab doabs and into the western Ganga basin in
the first half of the second millennium. (page 117)"


37. Life and Times of Raja Mahendra Pratap, Ed by Dr Vier Singh, Delhi 2005, ISBN 81-88629-32-4, p.44


41. V. S. Krishnan: Madhya Pradesh District Gazetteer, Gwalior


Britten, Thomas A. (1997). *American Indians in World War I: At Home and at War* (illustrated, reprint ed.). University of New Mexico Press. p. 128. ISBN 0826320902. The Rajputs, Jats, Dogras, Pathans, Gorkhas, and Sikhs, for example, were considered martial races. Consequently, the British labored to ensure that members of the so-called martial castes dominated the ranks of infantry and cavalry and placed them in special "class regiments."


a practice known as Jathera.


Further reading

- Shweder, Richard A.; Minow, Martha; Markus, Hazel Rose (November 2004). *Engaging...*


External links

• Jat people at DMOZ

Categories:
Jat