

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY JAIPUR CITY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Monumental architectural constructions are closely associated with political manoeuvres and mediums to establish political rule. Historically, in India construction of robust but equally decorative edifices of royalty in form of palaces, temples, idols, *charbaghs* (gardens), mosques, tombs and more importantly city, was one of the most elaborative tool for stamping political supremacy. Through this paper, an attempt will be made to glance at one of this projection of political articulation *i.e.* Jaipur city, which became not only a capital city but also expounded social, political, economic cultural experiments of its builder and ruler Sawai Jai Singh. Historically speaking cities define not only economic worth of the ruler but also showcase the political, social and cultural flare of the time. Erection of Cities and especially the Capital or imperial city, therefore symbolizes the true art of Kingship with all its political paraphernalia.

To understand city's evolution in historical terms it is important to not only look at patterns of state patronage and state sponsored interventions but as Catherine B. Asher, states, it is equally essential to assess the roles of different participants, who may have individual interests which became aligned and mutually reinforced.¹ A City imagined could be connected to immediate cultural and political realities on the basis of motives of individuals and groups, who help in shaping its environment.² It is therefore essential to glance at these varied participants without relegating them to obscure representations, as collective memories and representations reveal a more nuanced story.³

The Indian buildings across different historical periods especially during the ancient and medieval

centuries encompasses not only the ideology of its builder but in fact its gridded pattern is closely influenced by the traditional knowledge of *Vastu Vidya* or *Vastu Shashtra*, which literally translates to 'science of architecture'. The utilization of this science is not only evident in construction of smaller spaces *i.e.* houses but also even in monumental buildings like temples, cities, palaces and many other. *Vastu* in simpler terms means dwelling and its locational site. The intricacies of this *vastu* is defined by the site and planned articulations in form of units or *mandalams* in the site and where and how they are placed. Thus, dwelling in *Vastu* is ideally a place whose environment is suited for the settlers in that space. In figurative sense buildings under *Vastu Shashtra* are prepared under the principal of *vastupurusamandala*, where each segment not only has relative association with nature but even bodily representation of the human being and hence the above term. One can situate the influence specifically in case of Jaipur city.

ESTABLISHMENT OF JAIPUR CITY

While engaging with the architectural construction of Jaipur city, it is essential to learn about the logical motive force which pushed Sawai Jai Singh to undertake such a lavish architectural endeavour. He introduced many significant administrative, economic, social and religious changes, which had a lasting impact during and after his tenure. Of all these introductions most effective yet understated change, is the shifting of capital from Amber and establishment of new capital city of Jaipur. For all practical concerns of the time, the shift in capital was validated at the expense increasing population of Amber city and it's not so very expanding territorial boundary, thereby

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causing a major crunch of space. However, apart from this practical intention, certain other concerns dominated the shift.

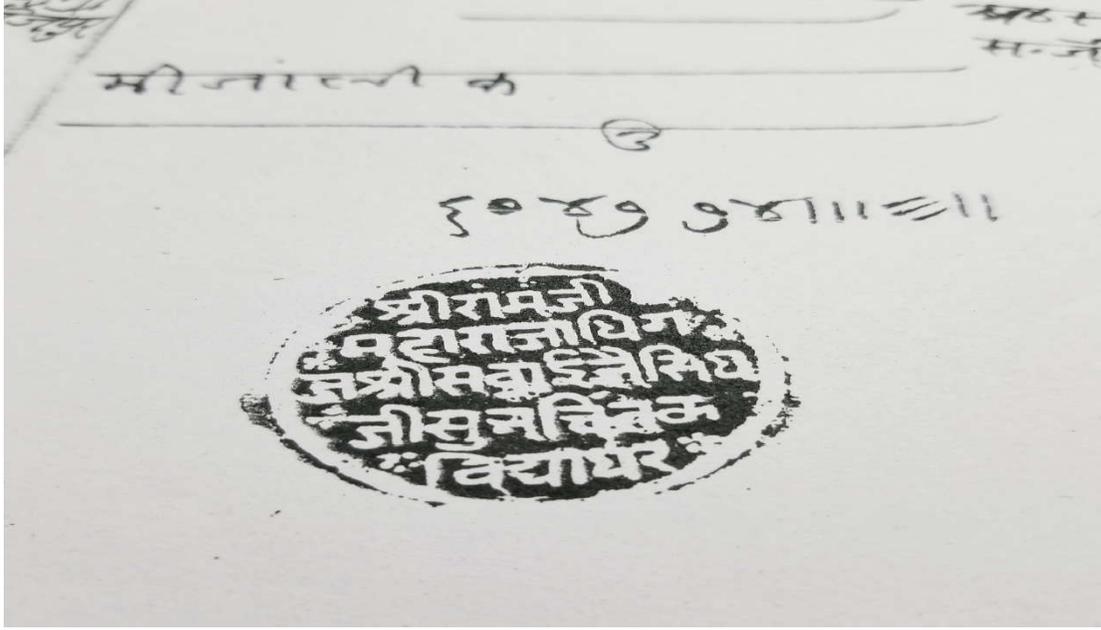
The city was a representation of a scared domain, as by establishing close linkages between his political might and religious outlook, Jai Singh managed to provide religious legitimacy to his expansionist endeavours. Evidently Jai Singh, aimed to establish himself as the supreme lord of the Rajputana land and thereby displayed all intentions to get his name recorded in history as a great builder. The naming of the city on his name also marked a step ahead in this direction. Jai Singh's continuous attempt to establish his supremacy were not restricted within the confines of the territorial space of Rajputana, and even flowed out through representational architectural structures especially *vedshalas* (Jantar-Mantar observatories) in regions of Mathura, Delhi, Banaras, Ujjain apart from Jaipur. It can be stated that such constructions having religious and astronomical objectives also served the pragmatic purpose of promoting political control with popular support. Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot have asserted that the creation of new city by Jai Singh, was one chapter in the long-drawn struggle for independence that was being asserted by the regional powers.⁴

Having addressed the exponential political, social and ideological matrix which pushed Sawai Jai Singh to lay foundations of the new city, further light should be thrown on ideas which stimulated the notional process of planning involved in the structuring of the city. Was it a mere representation of the foresightedness of its creator or was it's planning an embodiment of various nuances of external (foreign) and internal (Indian) influences?

Some of the travellers, who visited Jaipur during the 19th and 20th century, highlight that the plan and the layout of the city was influenced by the European prototypes. Even the *pothikhana* (Library) of Jaipur, maintains 18th c records of continuous correspondence

between Jai Singh and European scholars and architects, and this proves that the former was extensively interested in the European mathematics and astrology. A rich collection of world maps and atlases were procured and secured in the *pothikhana* at the behest of Sawai Jai Singh. The richness of the *pothikhana* is even corroborated by the *Kapad Dwara* documents, which furnish information about a 18th century circular map of the world, painted on cloth with meticulous detailing of longitudes and latitudes. This map was inscribed with *Nagari* characters and was prepared and copied at the behest of Jai Singh, from a European version, which originally dates to 1669.⁵ However, European architectural heritage and its intricacies were not the sole influence behind the making of the Jaipur city. In fact, true to the context of such records it can be highlighted that European building tradition may be one of the many, influences, that may have impacted the styling of the Jaipur city. Yadendra Sahai, has taken a stand in opposition to one represented by the travellers.⁶ He argues that the European influence is nowhere visible in the Jaipur city and pushes the case for indigenous origin of the Jaipur city, which he compares with the Indra Puri of Indra, discussed in *Shilpa Shashtra*.⁷

Also, he overlooks even the over-arching role played by the state Diwan Vidyadhar, a Bengali Brahman, in the maintenance of strict vigil over the architectural constructions of the time. He in fact sees the city and its various constructions as the whole sole endeavour of Sawai Jai Singh and brainchild of his architectural prowess. ⁸The second level of disagreement highlighted by Sahai, is questionable as all the information relating to layout of buildings, maps and blueprints of city, material purchased and used for the construction, were supplied to Vidya Dhar as chief Diwan and interestingly the *Arsatta (Roznama) Imarti*, the archival notings related to building material purchased was stamped by Vidyadhar himself.



Bhojana Sara written by Girdhari, who worked as the court poet of Jai Singh, quotes the name of Vidya Dhar as the architect of the new city.

पुराकरेंबहुहरषकरि, मनमहिमोदबढ़ाय ।
विद्याधरसोंबोलकहिं, सहरसुएकबसाय ।

Due to completion, we are happy,
our heart is elated.

Vidya Dhar got the city settled.

Thus unlike, Sahai's perception, Vidya Dhar enjoyed supreme powers and was the chief overseer of all the constructional activities taking place in Jaipur city and Jai Singh always sought first-hand information from him, in relation to the progress of work. One of the by lanes named after Vidya Dhar as 'Vidhya Dhara ka Rasta' and leading towards his *haveli* and another garden named 'Vidya Dhara ka Bagh' (and still located in the present-day Jaipur), also stand testimony to the status of rank enjoyed by the Diwan.

Ashim Kumar Roy and Giles Tillotson, have opined religious fervour and zeal of the ruler, as the main background in which the city was constructed. Accordingly, they argue that the architectural constructions of the Jaipur city clearly fall in line with the status quo of Hindu Kingship and Hindu city model. Their arguments embody a conception of a city defined in a series of text known as *Vastu Shashtras*, which are canonical treatises, usually in Sanskrit, and guide regarding architecture, design and

planning'.¹⁰ However, Tillotson, argues that this science form was only randomly used in the laying of foundations and creation of structures in other cities and in fact it was only in the Jaipur city that it was consistently used in every erected structure.¹¹

Apart from the abovementioned frames of study third level of discussion has focused upon the borrowed elements from the Mughal prototypes. It has been stated by this set of scholars that, the Mughals were forerunners, as far as the building activities were concerned and regional states borrowed the knowledge. Also, since they were ruling as imperial heads, they had more resources at their disposal and land to be brought under usage and therefore they could undertake huge architectural constructions, including establishment of new cities. With many learned men of pen, wisdom, scientific understanding flocking the Mughal court from regional as well as international frontiers, spirited discussions on varied issues could take place very easily and decorative engagements and sharing of art and architectural knowledge was one them. Thus, it was no small deal, that the Mughals were the creators of three of the most famed and discussed capital cities of medieval era i.e. Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, and Shahjahnabad. Focusing on Mughal architectural worth, and its continuum in regional and sub-regional pockets, Catherine B. Asher highlights the associations between the Mughals and the Kachchwahas,

prevalent at the level of sharing of architectural logistics and interests involved in the erection of buildings. She argues that it was because of the support and protection provided by the Mughal rulers that Kachchwaha rulers namely Man Singh and Sawai Jai Singh, were able to carry out their constructional activities peacefully, both within and outside the sphere of their *Watan* Jagir.¹² The outlined patterns of similarities between the architectural heritage of Shahjahanabad and Jaipur stands in opposition with the argument which sees Jaipur as the sovereign turf of kingship postulated by a Hindu ruler, on Shastric and Vaishnavite principles.

Monica Horstmann and James Hastings emphasize that the building of the city of Jaipur as well as the temples within the city were indicators of self-assertions by the Kachchwaha rulers, Sawai Jai Singh against the Mughals. These authors have overemphasized the importance of the *Shastric* model in their portrayals of presenting Jaipur as a 'Hindu City'. Hindu Kingship model was also forwarded by Tillotson along with Sachdev, who focus on the Shastric articulation of statecraft. They opine that the Jaipur rulers, used the Shastric norms and modified it to accommodate the existing building in the city. They compare Jaipur with other so-called Hindu cities, such as Madurai, Dabhoi, Sikar and Sanganer. They trace the Kachchwaha- Mughal alliance and highlight the career of Sawai Jai Singh, but they do not discuss the extent and exact nature of Mughal sovereignty over the Kachchwaha political environment.¹³

Fatima Imam disagreed with the above mentioned Hindu city model and argues that the availability of the archival data in the private collection of Sawai Jai Singh clearly indicates that he used the architectural example of the Mughal cities.¹⁴ She further adds that Sawai Jai Singh enjoyed power and prestige amongst the Mughal mansabdars and therefore was made a collective *Subedar* of many *subas*, a power enjoyed by only select few *Mansab* holders. In these *subas*, too Jai Singh carried out constructional activities and got constructed many residential quarters known as Jai Singh *Puras*. The term *pura* means town and there are references of maintenance of at least five *puras* by Jai Singh, in areas apart from Jaipur. One reference from Kapad-Dwara, clearly furnish first-hand information about such constructions. The recorded plan talks of a *Pura* at Ujjain, which was prepared in second decade of

18th century. It gives the names of the places, notes about ownership of land, 20 *havelis* of kayasthas, *havelis* of Mahajans, MahvidyaKund, Sita Kund, Maratha Village, Thakur-dwara (temple), house of Trilok Chand, bazar of thatheras (brass merchants), cloth merchants, mosque of Shah Muhammad, *haveli* of Nihal chand and many other details.¹⁵

Fatima Imam, further says that Sawai Jai Singh's real achievement lies in the successful incorporation of Mughal patterns by making subtle changes to suit the needs of the environs. The cities in India always mushroomed around the forts and rulers always took residence in a capital with difficult access because of natural or artificial barriers such as deserts, ridges or forts. Jaipur possessed all of these advantages. At the same time, this city was different from the other Rajput cities because it was not built on a ridge or mountain, such as the cities of Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Bharatpur. Jaipur was very accessible and like Shahjahanabad, there was less emphasis on the fortification around the city. The fact that Jaipur was built on an open plain reflected Sawai Jai Singh's confidence, even though he chose an area in vicinity of Amber, so as to continue the traditional relationship in the area.

Jaipur lies 5 miles south of Amber, the old capital city on a small plain. It was surrounded by hills on three sides and a dam was built on northern side. Sawai Jai Singh laid the foundation of his new city in 1727 A.D. and named it after him. Sawai Jaipur or Sawai Jai Nagar is the earliest recorded reference related to the city in the archival records of the time.

नगरबसायोंएकनयो, जयसिंघसवाई ।

जाकीसोभाजगतमै, दसहोंदिसिछाई ।

A new city settled by Jai Singh Sawai.

It is popular in 10 directions.

Kurmavillas written by poet Virachit, furnishes information about the establishment of Jaipur City in 1787 V.S. /1727 C.E., in the month of *Sawan* (August). It talks about different palaces like Pritam niwas, Chandra mahal, Badal mahal, Govind mahal (which was compared with heaven). Writer further states that Jainagar (Jaipur) is a representation of Indrapuri on earth and its houses the domain of all four Varnas.¹⁷

PLANNING OF THE CITY

Sawai Jai Singh, used the new city as a tool for power and status enhancement, and accordingly he

never separated himself from the imperial control and in fact remained attached to the Mughal head as he sought imperial recognition for his city, an aspect which is well documented in the annals of history. Corroborating information is provided below. Just after the completion of the main wards of the city of Jaipur, Jai Singh applied to the Mughal emperor for the imperial recognition for his newly founded city. In 1733 AD, he sent a ‘Parwana’, to the emperor

Muhammad Shah. Sawai Jai Singh received the following reply from the imperial head, “Maharajadhiraj Sawai Jai Singh had informed that he has founded a new city under the name of Sawai Jaipur in the imperial territory near Amber and has requested the name of Sawai Jaipur instead of Amber may be written in the imperial records. His request has been accepted and it is ordered that Sawai Jaipur may be written instead of Amber in future”.¹⁸

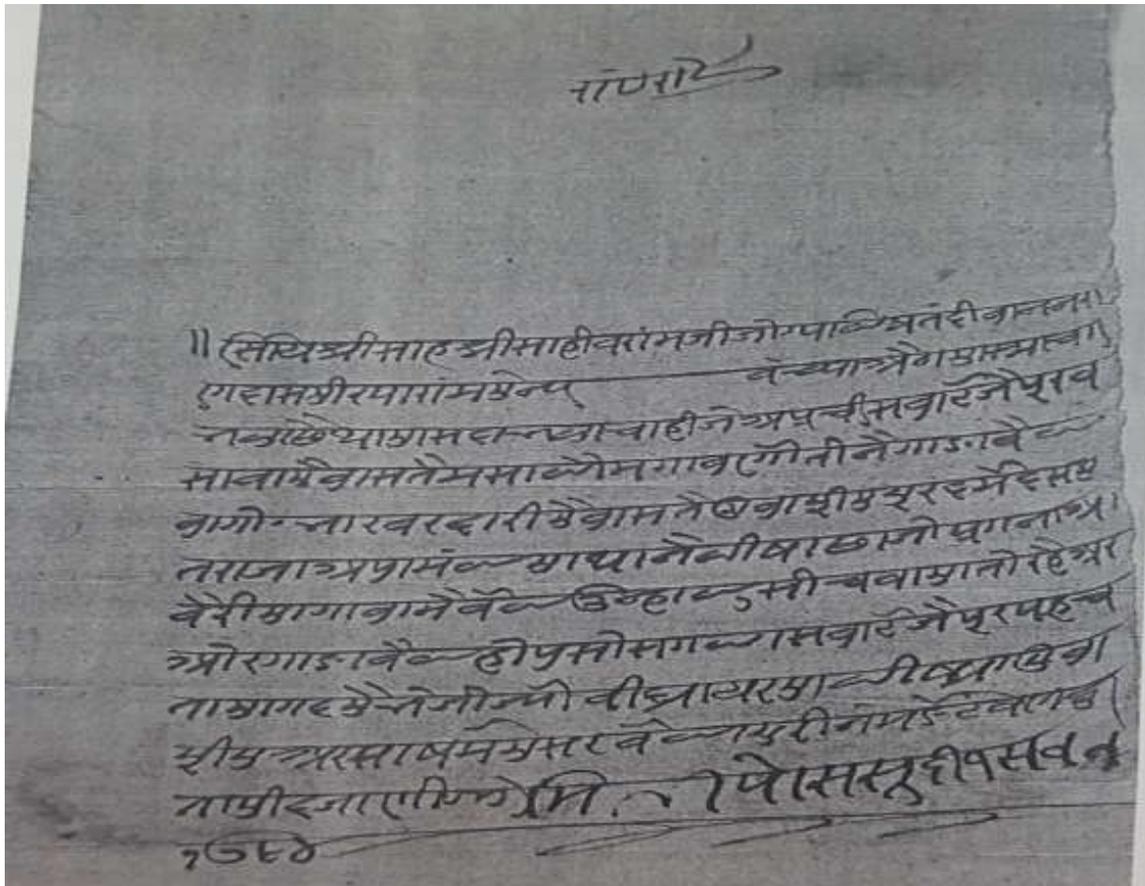


Figure 1: Arzdastwrote by Diwan Vidya Dhar, in 1784 V.S./ 1727 C.E., to state official, seeking permission for purchase of three bullock carts of raw material for the construction of the city.

Ashim Kumar Roy, claimed that as originally planned, Jaipur was to have only four rectangular blocks, namely those occupied today by the 1) Palace, 2) Purani Basti, 3) Topkhana, 4) a block combining Modikhana and Visheshvarji.¹⁹ The city of Jaipur was planned not only to have straight and wide roads but also to achieve the almost uniform height and similarity of architecture of the houses built on the main road.

Jaipur City: walls and gates

When we firstly engage in the study of the Jaipur city, its huge walls and gates draw the major

attention. Sawai Jai Singh not only focused upon the internal beautification and uniformity of his city but also was equally interested in providing his city and its population the necessary protection through walls and entryways through management of huge gates. The wider expense of these walls and gates not only effectively provided the necessary barricading, but helped Sawai Jai Singh to draw the attention of one and all towards the overall expanse and scaling of the city achieved by him. The wall is on average 6 meters high and 3 meters thick and is pierced by a

total of seven gates, representative of Shastric calculations.²⁰ The main gates are, Chandra Pol (West Side), Suraj Pol (East side), Jorawar Singh Pol/ Dhruv Pol (North side), Ajmeri Gate, Naya Pol, Sanganeri Gate and Ghut Darwaza (Southern side)

The Chowkries (Wards)

The principal streets of the city define the grid of the mandala and divide the city into Chowkries (wards).²¹ The names of these Chowkries from west to east are 1)Topkhana desh, 2) Modikhana, 3)Visheshvarji, 4) Ghat Darwaja, 5) Topkhana Hazuri, 6)Purani Basti, 7)the Palace and 8)Ramchandarji

The division of the city into wards and there subdivisions into sub-wards, by different scales of grid, relates to the system of social distribution, the patterns of settlement of people according to the caste or jati, that is defined by the *shashtras* and now is more commonly known as the ‘*mohalla system*’.²² Another interesting account is furnished through the document of 1839 V.S./ 1782 C.E., wherein an order was passed by the state with reference to a Khati (wood-worker), named Koju, living in the Khatiya *Mohalla*. For his good work, prize money of 38 rupees was to be handed over to him by the Daroga *Imarti*, on the behalf of the state and for the same he was asked to present himself in the court, so as to sign on receiving the same amount.

Catherine B. Asher also talks about this feature of the Jaipur and also Amber city. She says that on the order of the ruler, ‘a huge map of Amber, about 21 Feet Square was produced’.²³ Inscriptions on the map indicate that members of a single profession occupied neighbourhoods. The similar pattern is evident even in the Shahjahanabad, but over there it was not representative of *Shashtra* based *jati* division of cityscape and more specifically was done to prevent chaotic conditions from prevailing in the city. Working upon the same hypothesis, while understanding the *mohalla* division of Jaipur city, one need to address the question, whether Jai Singh, based himself upon the *Shastric* nuances of city division in accordance to the *Jatis* and their functions and thereby was engrossed in caste based social understanding, or was he merely dividing the city *mohallas* in accordance to occupational as well as *jati* consideration, under the garb of the practical political concern of avoiding any rifts between different communities in near future, especially if they are settled together, instead of different mohallas.

Thus, keeping in sight the future issues relating to the social disturbances, Sawai Jai Singh may have induced the systematic caste-based division of Mohallas. Vibhuti Sachdev and Giles Tillotson, have tried to assess this very division of *Mohallas*, but managed to present the case study of only *Brahmapuri*, i.e. the Brahmin *mohalla*. Thus, the exercise undertaken by the two, appears significant but only partially as it did not open up the nature of other mohallas.

City Palace

The strongest base of the city was its palace. According to Stephen P. Blake, who studied the city of Shahjahanabad, ‘the palace fortress was the centre of not only the city and the empire but also the universe.’²⁴ The sacredness of capital cities as the centre of universe has been discussed in classical Hindu texts also. The centrality of the palace complex, as sacred or the centre of the universe has specific political dimensions as well. The palace complex functions both as a public space as well as a private residence. Of many visitors to the Jaipur court, the account of Bishop Heber stands out, as he tried to beautifully note the pomp and decorative displays of the palace. As a catholic missionary he visited Jaipur in 1832 and commented on its open pavilions with marble pillars, richly carved. He further asserted that even though these pavilions were inferior in size, in all other respects they were equal to the hall of audience in the castle of Delhi.²⁵

The palace complexes

It consists of a series of gates or pals from east Sereh Deorhi, Udaipal, Jaypal, Vijaypal etc, spacious squares, pleasing structures like the *Diwan-i-am* (Sabha Niwas), *Diwan-i-khas*, but the most impressive building in the royal sector is the Chandramahal, the seven-storied palace.²⁶ According to Vibhuti and Tillotson, ‘the Shastric texts specify seven storeys from the palaces of Kshatriya kings and the Chandramahal is one of the few Rajput palaces to achieve this paradigmatic number’²⁷

On the ground floor of this Chandramahal is the Pritam Niwas with a small audience hall in its centre. The next two storeys are occupied by the magnificent Sukh Niwas, above this is Rang Mahal also known as the Sabha Niwas. Apart from that there is Chavi Niwas, Shri Niwas and Mukut Mandir. Poet Krishnadatta in Pratap Prakash, furnishes vivid description of the Chandra Mahal with its spacious halls and numerous *durbars* (courtly meetings), fairs

and festivals organised inside the premises of the famous Mahal.²⁸

Sawai Jai Singh constructed the Jai Niwas bag and Nichla bag in the tradition of the Mughal garden.²⁹ Besides the royal palaces, public halls, courtyards and gardens, this complex also housed the Karkhanas (departments) for various manufacturing and patronage purposes. Over years, during the 18th century many other buildings were added to this complex. In 1749, Ishwari Singh (1743-50) constructed a victory tower, the Ishwar Lat or Swarga Shuli. The tower is seven storeys high. It is one of the conspicuous landmarks in the city. Ashim Kumar Roy also tells a romantic tale about the deadly love of Ishwari Singh and that he built the tower to see her lover³⁰ and in 1799 Pratap Singh (1778-1803), built the famous building of Jaipur i.e. Hawa Mahal. The designer of this remarkable structure has been identified as Lal Chand Ustad.³¹ Poet Krishanadatta written *Pratap Prakash*, provides important information about 18th century Jaipur especially during the reign of Pratap Singh (1764-1803). Poet informs that besides Hawa Mahal, Pratap Singh also got constructed the Badal Mahal, and Mukut Mandir on the 7th floor of Chandra Mahal.³²

These are some of the features of the palace complex of Jaipur of Jai Niwas, the Royal house of the Kachchwaha rulers of Jaipur.

The planning of the city was governed by geometry and symmetry. The plan divided the city into nine rectangular *nidhis* or sectors. Central axis of the city, which was 3.2 kms in length, was laid from east to west, between the gate of Suraj Pol and Chand Pole, connecting with straight roads. This axis was crossed by three roads at right angle dividing the city into nine blocks, which were further sub-divided by lanes.

Initially, the main roadside area was reserved for markets at Chandpole, Kishanpole, Gangauri, Tripoli, Chaura rasta, Johari Bazar, Sireh Deorhi, Ram Ganj and Ghat bazar. Since the beginning these are the specialized markets dealing with the business of particular commodities.

चौपरिकेकीन्हेहैंबाजार,
विचिवीचिवनाएचौकचार ।
ल्याऐनहेरीबाजारमाहि,
विचिमैववेगहरेरखांहि ।
चौकनिमैकुंडरचेगंभीर,
जगपीवततिनकोमिषतनीर ।

There is a market in chowkri.
In it there are 4 chowks.
In the middle it is deep.
There is a well in the chowkri,
People drink its sweet water.

Kapad-dwara documents also details about the phased evolution of the market centres. Ram Ganj, finds continuous entry in the documents, which indicate that though the designing of the market was done in Sawai Jai Singh's time but it was completed after his death. The market came to handle a well-organized trade in cotton wool, with the development of a *rui-ki-mandi* (shopping area for cotton wool), in its panorama.³⁴

Virachit in *Kurmvillas* gives information on the establishment of numerous bazars or markets in Jaipur. Most of these markets were located near Chowkries and were flourishing and lots of money exchanged hands as Kuber (Hindu God of wealth) like figures were its owners. The shops had perforated panels, which acted as decorations as well as allowed light and air to pass through.³⁵

Over years instead of being recognized for its architectural heritage, Jaipur came to be renowned for trade and commerce a fact corroborated by the *Kapad-Dwara* and the *parwanas* secured in the Bikaner state archives. In fact, it is well-established fact that Sawai Jai Singh had himself invited many traders from across India, to settle down in Jaipur along with their families and as a lucrative benefit they were even freed from their hasil tax a fact which is corroborated from the Buddhi Vilas.

बहुविधिकेकारीगरअनूप,
परिवारसहितबुलवायभूप ।
तिनकोपुरमैदीन्हेवसाय,
हासिलसबकोमाफीकराय ।

Many different categories of craftsmen,
Were called along with the families.
They were settled in the Pur/city,

Even they were exempted from their hasil (tax).

In order to support and promote these trading activities, Sawai Jai Singh had very early laid the foundations of all the major markets i.e. Sireh Deorhi, Kishanpole, Johri Pole, and Gangari.³⁷ According to the map LS/14 (dated 1725), in the city palace museum collection, which has come to be known as the progress report map. 162 shops were constructed by the state in each of these bazars.³⁸ All these shops

were uniform in shape; size and all these features were also ordered to be in harmony with each other. Almost immediately afterwards similar bazars were constructed along Chandra pole, Tripolia, Ramganj. They were ready before 1734. The shops were constructed in typical architectural style on both side of the road. They were only single storied and any vertical expansion was disallowed as the first floor of the shops were reserved for the masses of the city, so that they could watch the royal processions from there.³⁹

The concentrative evolution of Jaipur city as a prosperous hub bringing together heterogeneous social groupings was a defined political motive force of its ruler as is even evident through paragraphs of *Buddhi Villas* which elaborate that Sawai Jai Singh settled people of all the four Varnas in the city and even invited different faith followers to settle down in the city.

छत्रीब्रामणअरवैस्यसूद्र,
च्यारिहूवरणकेगुण-समुद्र ।

Kashtriya, Brahaman and Vaishya, Shudra,
Resource pool of all the four Varnas.

However, despite settling all the different categories of the citizens in the new capital city, Sawai Jai Singh did not do away with differential pattern of social equation and continued to abide by the notion of social hierarchy, by settling different categories and communities in different mohallas as even portrayed by Poet Bhakata Rama in his work *Buddhi Villas*.

पुर-छोरवशीवारांगनासु,
वहुकरतनाचमनुअपछरासु ।

At the extremity of the city walls were settled
Prostitutes,
They performed dances like apsaras (nymphs).

The city of Jaipur as understood from both scholarly interpretations and archival notings presents a picture of an evolving landscape, which cannot be merely understood as a political project of its ruler i.e. Sawai Jai Singh and rather be subjected to wider explorations. The Jaipur city appears as a relationship between ideas, ideologies and architectural forms that were forever evolving, across space and time. It is true that architectural patronage of capital cityscape was a genuine concern of the Sawai Jai Singh, so as to etch his name in the history books, but as discussed earlier, many additional concerns necessitated the

massive city construction. Thus, city planning was an evidence of political manoeuvre, social projection, economic ventures and cultural negotiation along a continuum of relationships.

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