
Austerity

The constitution of the Hindu caste body entailed a reconstitution of the self through a regime of bodily discipline centered on austerity. As they accumulated wealth and power, Vaishnav and Jain merchant castes fused their ethical perspectives and bodily practices with currents within brahmanism and popular devotionalism that also celebrated asceticism, including an emphasis on nonviolence. Sectarian Vaishnavism, including that of the Vallabhites, and most Jain orders prescribed an austere life and a lack of attachment to sensory pleasure even as they encouraged large and conspicuous expenditure and lavish worship at temples and religious festivals. In the Jain perspective, at least, to practice its austere codes was in itself a type of war, a war upon one's ego, base desires, and worldly attachments. This is why the figures most revered by the Jains were the *tīrthankars*, who were considered to be victors, commanding effective sovereignty upon their own bodies and inner selves.

The eighteenth-century alignment of historical factors in Marwar—an enthusiastic Vaishnav king and his consort and a body of politically and socially influential Vaishnav-Jain merchants and brahmins—drew the state into generalizing an ethic of austerity and even more so, as chapters 4 and 5 argued, nonviolence upon its subjects. Merchant and brahmin castes were the only ones among the Rathor state's subjects to also police themselves in order to effect greater conformity with an ethical code emphasizing vegetarianism, teetotalism, and a “vice”-free life.

Marwar's mahajans converted their position of immense influence in Marwar into local power. As they jockeyed to cement their place among the “old order” elites of Marwar—the rajputs and brahmins, who derived their status from land and ritual power, respectively—they did so while aspiring to a life of austere domesticity. Under Vijai Singh and his successor, Bhim Singh, both Vaishnav kings, Marwar saw the imposition of kingdom-wide, universal bans on injury to nonhumans, brewing and drinking liquor, and gambling. In these same decades, the Rathor state worked to punish those involved in “illicit” sex and one of its consequences, abortion. It attempted to impose a code of chastity, channeling sexual activity into

wedlock. With the exception of the ban on animal slaughter, which was imposed with vigor on all subjects, it was members of Vaishnav and Jain merchant communities who received the most attention from state-imposed efforts to cultivate through these laws a virtuous body politic. Vaishnav and Jain merchant state officers perhaps were most invested in disciplining their own caste fellows—men and women—in order to create and preserve distinction from the mass of those below. As they sought to join the old guard of elites and mark off a new elite domain, of the Hindu, of which they were part, they used state machinery to forge a connection between austerity, a denial of sensory pleasure, and virtue on the one hand and being Hindu on the other.

Scriptures of the Shvetambar Jain community, the sect to which the Osvāl Jains belonged, emphasized asceticism not only for monks but also imbued the lay path heavily with ascetic values. By the thirteenth century, an extensive literature laid out the duties and obligations of the Jain layman. The Five Lesser Vows expected of laymen, paralleling the Five Great Vows expected of the Jain ascetic, emphasized nonviolence, honesty, chastity, abstention from stealing, and nonattachment to worldly possessions. Since the measures to which monks went to adhere to values like nonviolence were too much to expect from laity, the expectations of lay followers were lesser. With respect to nonviolence, lay Jains were to avoid all unnecessary destruction of life forms. An important means of achieving this end was the avoidance of those occupations that entailed injury to living beings, such as farming and animal husbandry. Historians frequently cite this as an explanation for why Jains became concentrated in the professions of trade and moneylending.¹

Vis-à-vis chastity, the norms for lay Jains prescribed restriction of sexual activity to within wedlock and prescribed monogamy.² The ideal lay Jain was to curb his sex drive and, if possible, renounce all sexual activity after the birth of a son who could inherit his business.³ It is important to note here that these were normative prescriptions and also that even at the level of prescription, Jain monastic authors made room for lay followers to adapt to local custom (*deśācāra*). Historical evidence, in manuscript illustrations and inscriptions, often depicts Jain male donors with more than one wife, suggesting that Jain laymen practiced polygyny.⁴ This makes the drive among mahajan caste groups in eighteenth-century Marwar to enforce adherence among their members all the more remarkable.

Nonattachment to worldly possessions translated for lay Jains into an exhortation to live simply and expend all surplus wealth in religious and charitable giving.⁵ Other prescriptions emphasized fasting on holy days. Monastic preaching and didactic literature circulated these values among lay Jains. Needless to say, then as now, lay Jains may not have adhered strictly to all of these ethical prescriptions. Yet, lay Jains subscribed to these values in principle and strove to enact their “correct ethical dispositions” through such public acts as religious gifting, community participation, and a pursuit of correctness in business and familial affairs.⁶

For Jain and Vaishnav merchants, *ābrū* or reputation had implications not only for their standing within the community of Jains but also their creditworthiness. This reputation was based on correct behavior, or public conformity with expectations of Jain laymen, which in turn was an index of inner piety. Simplicity, strict vegetarianism, temperance, generous gifting for one's religious sect, and carefully regulated marriage alliances were among the behaviors that bestowed a good reputation upon a Jain merchant. Religious giving entailed the construction and maintenance of temples and libraries and the financing of communal festivals.⁷ Expenditures in pursuit of the collective goals of one's religious community then helped to transform money into spiritual and social credit.⁸ To that extent, the cultivation of virtue was directly related for the Vaishnav and Jain merchant to business success and power within the local community.

Jains were divided by the mendicant lineage to which their caste bore ritual affiliation. These divisions could be deep enough, such as those between Digambaras and Shvetambaras, to prevent their members from uniting in a single *saṅgh* (assembly). Generally, leadership of a town's Jain *saṅgh* and of mercantile associations such as a *mahājan* in Gujarat was bestowed upon the most prosperous man in their midst. This was because Jains considered business success an index of moral worth. In seventeenth-century Gujarat, the merchant magnate Virji Vora (d. 1675) was also the head of the order of lay Jains (*saṅghpati*) in the port of Surat.⁹ Another magnate and a specialist in jewels and moneylending, Shantidas Jhaveri (d. 1660) of Ahmedabad, was very close to Mughal emperors Jahangir and Shahjahan. The wealth, business networks, and political connections he cultivated were eventually inherited by his grandson, Khushalchand. In 1725, the merchants of Ahmedabad bestowed on Khushalchand the hereditary office of *nagarśeṭh* (literally, "Chief of the City") of Ahmedabad in 1725.¹⁰ In their time, both Virji Vora and Shantidas Jhaveri also exercised tremendous influence in the Shvetambar communities that they were part of. As active participants in the world around them and as mobile people, merchants would also have been exposed to Persianate ethics of balance and self-control, which too impinged on the body. In that sense, the investment in the body as a site of ethical cultivation was a marker of elite identity across early modern South Asia.¹¹ The Jain *saṅgh* and its leaders played an active role in directing their community toward moral uplift, which also could manifest itself in other ways beyond the body, such as saving the lives of animals and other nonhuman creatures.

MERCANTILE ETHICS AND ANIMAL PROTECTION

As wealthy members of society and at the very heart of the administration of the Rathor state, merchants in Marwar were able to elevate into universally applicable law what had until then been their caste *dharma*, as I discussed in greater detail in chapter 4. While the strict requirement to adhere to noninjury in Jainism is known, the association between Vaishnav identity and sworn vegetarianism was

also a strict one. The *MVSK*, part of the history of the Rathors commissioned by Maharaja Mansingh in the early nineteenth century, draws a connection between Vijai Singh's shift of allegiance to the Vallabhite order and his outlawing of butchery and alcohol consumption. In the very next statement, mentioned in chapter 1, after noting that in 1765 Vijai Singh "accepted the [Vaishnav] Gusains," the *MVSK* says: "*Kasāivāḍo mane huvo. Sehar meṃ dārū manē huvo* (Slaughterhouses were forbidden. Alcohol was forbidden in the towns)."¹² Elsewhere too, while praising the prosperity achieved by Vijai Singh, the *MVSK* notes: "*mhārāj to bhagatī rai bas hoy śrījī rī sevā kare su kasāivāḍo meṃ dīyo* (the Maharaja is serving the Lord under the influence of *bhakti* and has eradicated slaughterhouses)."¹³

In 1786, Singhvi Bhimraj, the Osvāl Jain courtier very close to Maharaja Vijai Singh and his beloved consort, Gulab Rai, who was serving at the time as the *bakhśī* or head of military matters in Marwar, issued a command to the governor of Jodhpur. Apart from demonstrating the hand of a Jain mahajan in guiding the "nonviolent" posture of the crown, the order also shows the naturalized association between Vaishnav affiliation, the protection of animal lives, and vegetarianism:

A goat died in Rajput Hara's home in Nev village and the family threw the carcass to a camel. A swami used to live on Hara's estate as a *hālī* (a laborer in debt) but the two fell out. The swami came to the *kachaiḍī* (district governor's office) to report that the rajput had killed the goat. In response, the *kachaiḍī* conducted an investigation and the crown issued a *sanad*. Now, the *jāgirdār* of Nev has appealed to the crown again, vouching for the rajput's innocence and saying, "The swami is lying. The rajput's family have been devotees of Shri Thakurji (Krishna) for two generations. They are Vaishnavs ("*tulchhī*") and have taken a vow to refrain from meat-eating ("*mās ro sūms chhai*"). The entire village can testify to this." Dismiss the earlier judgment by the order of Shri Hajur.

—*Duvāyatī* Singhvi Bhimraj¹⁴

Singhvi Bhimraj's order not only demonstrates that Vaishnav affiliation served as evidence of adherence to vegetarianism but also that even some families of rajput landholders in rural Marwar had started to join Vaishnav sects. In this historical setting—that is, given just how widespread Vaishnav and Jain affiliation was among the region's elites—the pursuit of a vegetarian body politic was not a unilateral imposition by the Vaishnav Maharaja Vijai Singh or his successor Bhim Singh upon their subject body. This policy enjoyed the enthusiastic support of powerful constituents of state and society: merchants and brahmins as already demonstrated and some rajputs too. Manning the highest echelons and the rank and file of the Rathor state, these wealthy and influential sections of the Marwari populace may well have even initiated the strict enforcement of a ban on animal slaughter. For the sections that rallied behind the crown's campaign against animal slaughter were the same groups that were either Vaishnav or Jain. These Vaishnav and Jain merchants and their brahman allies had been driving the Rathor state toward the policing of the boundaries of their Hindu community, as I have shown in chapters 2

and 3. Among the Jains at least, the most prosperous and therefore most honorable merchants in the locality were also holders of moral authority. As leaders of local mercantile caste councils, they were in charge of not only enforcing business norms and regulating relationships but also directing the ethical life of the community.¹⁵

An indicator of the self-imposed nature of nonviolence and vegetarianism among mahajans and brahmans is that cases of animal slaughter in which they figured drew in not only the state but also played out in their local caste councils. For instance, Mahajan Dipa cited the humiliation caused to his local caste group (*nyāt*) by allegations of eating meat and drinking against him and his family.¹⁶ Put another way, merchant castes were so associated with vegetarianism and teetotalism that if even one of their members violated this code, this would be an aberration that drew attention from the local community. Conformity to these codes became linked with family and caste honor, such that a member of the merchant caste eating meat brought humiliation to the entire community of merchants. No doubt, the merchant community applied social pressure and tools of caste-based discipline to keep their members in line with a life-preserving ethic. In another instance, a mahajan's neighbors started to harass him after two other mahajans accused his wife of regularly being involved in animal slaughter.¹⁷ The accused mahajan woman was put through an ordeal (*dhij*) and emerged innocent but the district administration still declared her guilty.¹⁸ It was after this that Mahajan Dipa's neighbors started to harass his family by digging a pit next to his front door, to obstruct free passage in and out of the house.¹⁹ When it rained, the pit would collect water, weakening the foundation of the Dipa's house. Helpless, the mahajan finally turned to the crown in Jodhpur for help, winning an order from Singhvi Motichand, Pancholi Fatehkaran, and Asopa Fatehram that commanded the district governor to fill up the pit and punish the officer who had wrongly sentenced the mahajan's wife.²⁰

The crown's involvement, however, was insufficient in preventing the local caste group's harassment of Mahajan Dipa and his family. A year later, in 1789, he petitioned the crown once more. Perhaps emboldened by the crown's support, he reported that now officers from the local magistracy—which officer lists reflect at the time as being mostly mahajans—had demolished a platform (*chaukī*) that had always stood before the entrance to his home. They would not let him rebuild it unless he had a deed (*paṭṭā*) for the platform registered in his name. Mahajan Dipa pointed out that there was no custom of requiring a *paṭṭā* for the platform that people often had outside their houses. Once more, the crown, represented by Bhandari Dayaldas and Pancholi Fatehkaran, responded sympathetically, asking for an explanation from the local authorities as to why they had not implemented the earlier order and instructing them to only charge the mahajan for registering the platform to his name if they did so with others' platforms.²¹ As with many cases in the *Jodhpur Sanad Parwāna Bahī* records, we do not know how this case was eventually resolved, but regardless of the outcome it is possible to say that for merchants, accusations of animal slaughter were sufficient to merit relentless social

pressure, even harassment in some cases, from their caste fellows. Local administrators, many of whom were mahajans themselves, aided mercantile castes' efforts to discipline their members into resolute vegetarianism. The association between merchant caste identity and the practice of nonharm was already in place by the eighteenth century.²²

A similar pattern can be observed among brahmins too. When Brahman Nihala was accused of killing many animals, his local caste group expelled him in 1786. This punishment exceeded even that imposed by the state, which was the payment of a very small fine to the governor's office, the *kachaiḍi*. Some of his caste fellows made an attempt to reintegrate him into the caste as long as he atoned by making a pilgrimage to the river Ganga, leading other caste fellows to appeal to the crown for an intervention to prevent Brahman Nihala's reintegration into the caste.²³ While neither side disagreed that the killing of animals was a grave crime, they did not see eye-to-eye on whether expiation absolved the guilty brahmin of his sins.

Elsewhere, the caste fellows of Brahman Chatra, of Badu village in Parbatsar district, expelled him from their caste for his son's unintentional killing of an animal. In order to engineer a return into the caste fold, the brahmin hosted a communal feast (*jīmanī*) for all of his caste fellows from twenty-five villages.²⁴ The issue was a fractious one and not everyone was in the mood to forgive. Caste members from roughly seven villages refused to partake of the feast, thus formally withholding their assent to the effort to reintegrate Chatra into the brahmin caste. Under pressure from this faction, the brahmin family whose daughter was engaged to Chatra's son broke off the engagement and married the girl to someone else. Chatra was in the midst of a social boycott. Refusing to accept this fate, Chatra petitioned the crown for help, citing an ongoing feud with his brother Jiva as an excuse and saying it was this that led his son to unintentionally kill the animal in the first place.

Pancholi Fatehkaran, on behalf of the Rathor crown, did not adjudicate the dispute but referred it back to the local brahmin caste council for resolution. What the council did was to command the holding of an even larger convention of the brahmin caste, gathering the heads of brahmin castes of fifty-two villages in the area to adjudicate the dispute. The crown declared that it would uphold whatever conclusion this caste convention reached.²⁵ As is common with cases in the *bahīs*, we do not know how the case played out and what the supra-local caste convention decided, but this episode makes clear that brahmins, like merchants, were on board with a stance of noninjury toward all nonhuman life.

LIQUOR

It was not just meat but alcohol too that was deemed off-limits in late eighteenth-century Marwar. From at least 1770, the Rathor state outlawed the general production and sale of alcohol. Liquor was now only to be consumed with royal permission and there are a few instances of such permission being granted even in this time of general prohibition.²⁶ The quest for vegetarianism and temperance

were intertwined, as reflected in state orders that bundle the two issues together. In 1784, the crown's newswriters informed it that they had found evidence of animal slaughter and the existence of breweries (*dārū rī bhaṭī*) in the vicinity of the border region of Ghanerao.²⁷ The crown immediately ordered its administrators at the nearest district headquarters, in Desuri, to make special arrangements there to put an end to these practices.²⁸ Seventeen years later, in 1801, officers in Jodhpur were still dispatching orders to enforce the ban across the kingdom. They sent out a decree to all of Marwar's district headquarters stating:

- There should be no animal slaughter (*jīv haṃsyā*). Prevent the butchers (*kasāīs*) from practicing their trade. Have them sign an undertaking (*muchalkā*).
- Do not allow the sale of alcohol without a permit. Get the brewers (*kalāls*) to sign an undertaking committing to this. Enforce this in the towns. For the villages in the district, dispatch *parvānās* (written orders) bearing these commands. These practices should cease everywhere. Whoever continues with them will be punished and fined to ensure that they never repeat these again.²⁹

Similarly, in 1793, when the crown received reports that the governor of Didwana had permitted the brewers in his jurisdiction to sell alcohol (*dārū*), it threatened him with severe punishment if such a report ever surfaced again. It ordered him to explain himself in writing and to fine the brewers who had gone ahead with defying the crown's ban on the sale of alcohol.³⁰

Articulating a felt connection between the two "crimes," in 1801, an unnamed crown officer reprimanded the subordinates of the governor of Daulatpura district for defying crown orders banning animal slaughter (*jīv haṃsyā*) and drinking. These men—the *kilādār* (fortkeeper) and the *faujdar* (the district's military chief), both rajputs, and a servant (*chākar*) of unidentified caste—had gotten drunk and indulged in revelry (*fitur* and *matvāl*) right in front of the fort's gate.³¹ Crown officers heard of this misbehavior directly from their newswriters and demanded an explanation for this open disregard for its laws, that too by its own officers. The crown instructed in the same order that the Daulatpura governor should put an end to the sale of alcohol in the butchers' quarter (*kasāivāḍā*) in the town, suggesting that at least in Daulatpura at the time, not just meat but also alcohol could be obtained from butchers.³² When notified of yet another instance of its officers, all nonmahajans, defying the ban on alcohol, the crown bunched its response to the report of drinking with one concerning animal slaughter.³³

The prohibition of violence upon animals, then, was part of the same moral regime in early modern Marwar that proscribed the consumption of alcohol. In both cases, the state elevated the ethical injunctions embraced by particular castes, in particular, merchants and brahmans, to the status of universal law. That is, the taking of animal lives and the production and consumption of liquor were now

banned in the entire kingdom. The expectation of adherence to these laws from all subjects was a departure from the prior practice of upholding custom that varied among castes and localities. At the same time, the implementation of these laws was not uniform. In the case of gambling, drinking, and abortion, the state decreed universal bans but in practice largely pursued adherence from members of mercantile and brahman castes. When it came to protecting animal lives, the state did punish all violators of the ban on animal slaughter. Still, as chapter 4 showed, punishments for animal slaughter varied by caste and some were punished far more harshly than others.

These orders are quite remarkable for a state in which monarchical authority lay with a rajput and in which rajputs remained a powerful force as landed chiefs and military rank holders. This is because rajputs had long been associated with a culture of hunting, meat eating, and liquor consumption. There is plenty of evidence of the rajputs' involvement in hunting from paintings commissioned by kings and nobles. Paintings depicting the rajput noble or king out for a hunt date back to at least the seventeenth century.³⁴ Such visual depictions continued to be produced in Marwar even in Vijai Singh's reign, that is, in the same decades that the Rathor state was waging a war on animal slaughter. In Vijai Singh's reign, these depictions, however, were generally produced by smaller *thikānās* or seats of rajput lords in Marwar rather than by the Rathor ruling family at Jodhpur or the leading lineages at court.³⁵

In addition, rajputs had since the medieval period venerated the Devi (Goddess), whether as Durga or in the form of the many female deities associated either with rajput clans (*kul devīs*) or with the land. The worship of these deities involved the ritual slaughter of animals such as goats or buffaloes, sacrifices made as offerings to appease the goddess. At the same time, the ritual practice surrounding many of these goddesses was itself in a process of transition in the course of the early modern period, with a shift away from blood sacrifice and toward the offering of foodstuffs and flowers. At the same time, it is unclear how far along such a shift was in Marwar by the mid-eighteenth century. Evidence from painting suggests that in at least some parts of Marwar, the ritual offering of blood sacrifice to the Goddess remained in practice and that rajput lords remained patrons of this practice.³⁶ As indicated by an order discussed above—the one centered on a rajput family that claimed Vaishnav affiliation as proof of their innocence when charged with the killing of a goat—this was a time of change even among rajputs as a caste group. That is, many rajputs had become Vaishnav, some taking formal initiation into sects such as the Vallabh Sampraday of which Majaraja Vijai Singh and a large number of the region's merchants were part. It is difficult to say if these Vaishnav rajputs immediately abandoned the killing of animals, whether for food or as ritual sacrifice to deeply revered goddesses. But by taking allegiance as Vaishnavs, they would certainly have sworn to refrain from animal slaughter and meat eating.

Still, it is clear that whether they became Vaishnav or not, rajputs were a wrinkle in the Rathor state's plan to impose vegetarianism and animal protectionism across its domain. From the outset, as demonstrated above in cases involving mostly rajputs, its own district officials defied the crown's attempt to impose prohibition within its domain. Some of these were errant mahajans too. The earliest reference in the *Jodhpur Sanad Parwāna Bahīs* to prohibition in Marwar is from 1771. In that year, the crown's newswriters informed it that at a celebration at the house of the treasurer (*kārkūn*) of Phalodhi district, rajput and *sunār* (goldsmith) women sang songs and, a few days later, drank the alcohol that the *kārkūn* served them in return for their services. The crown demanded that all the local officers send in a report explaining their version of this event.³⁷

At other times, it was not district officers but the people in their jurisdiction who violated the ban on drink. In 1772, the crown's newswriters brought reports of the people of Nagaur drinking alcohol while celebrating the spring festival of Holi. The crown asked the administrators of the town to explain why they allowed this violation of the kingdom's laws.³⁸ Holi clearly occasioned much merriment, and in the same year an armored soldier (*silhaipos*) in another town, Bilada, asked the local governor for some alcohol on the occasion of the festival. Instead of procuring the alcohol under state supervision from the brewers' homes, the soldier had his subordinates bring it directly and drank it. Even as the governor denied granting them the permission to do this, the crown ordered him to investigate how such a flagrant infringement of state laws could occur in his jurisdiction.³⁹

In another episode, the crown's newswriters informed it in 1772 of the drunken carousing that the sons of two high-ranking officers in Jalor, along with a *mutsaddi* (clerk), had indulged in while on their way to attend the annual fair of Mahadevji Jalandharji. Jalandharji, or Jalandar Nath, was a legendary figure revered by Jalor-based yogis and their followers. On their way back to Jalor, they invited some courtesans (*pātariyām*) along and the party entered the town singing. Appalled, the crown asked for a detailed report of the entire matter, trying to ascertain exactly who among the many officers involved was to blame.⁴⁰ Once more, records do not reflect how this matter was resolved. Low-ranking state employees too broke the law against drinking and paid a price for it. Barber (*nāī*) Nagla, a soldier in the *darogā*'s troop, molested a woman and struck a leatherworker (*meghvāl*) with a sword after getting drunk. For this he was fired.⁴¹

Sometimes different wings of district administrations could get caught up in a conflict over implementing the ban on drinking. In 1774, a brewer from a village in Parbatsar faced the wrath of a local rajput landholder for refusing to set up a brewery (*dārū rī bhaṭī*) for him. The brewer was seeking to comply with the royal prohibition (*īn bāt rī śrī darbār rī manāī hai*) on producing alcohol. In retaliation, the landlord, a *jāgirdār* or holder of state-bestowed rights in land, confiscated the brewer's livestock, leading the brewer to turn to the governor for justice. Despite the governor's order commanding the landlord to return the brewer's animals to

him, the *jāgīrdār* refused to comply. The brewer then approached the crown for help. In response to his petition, the crown instructed the governor to ensure that the *jāgīrdār* returned the brewer's livestock.⁴²

It is unclear if the brewer was able to win his livestock back, but the episode demonstrates the fissures within district and local administrative orders that could arise over the implementation of crown laws. It also shows the recognition by some ordinary subjects of the risks of defying crown laws and, stemming from this, their compliance with these laws even in the face of extreme retaliation by local overlords. That said, the Rathor crown in Jodhpur sought to punish every instance of defiance of the ban on drinking not only by ordinary subjects but also by its officers, most of the defiant ones in the case of liquor being rajputs.

Why did the Rathor state outlaw drinking within its domain? I suggest that the royal position on the issue, emanating from Vijai Singh's effort to craft a new kingly profile as a devout Vaishnav, aligned with the moral preoccupations of the crown's mercantile subjects and officers. Both gambling and drinking had long carried unwholesome connotations, reflected in the prohibitions that various religious codes, including those of Islam, Vaishnavism, Shastric brahmanism, and Jainism, placed upon these "vices." Historically, however, membership of these religious communities did not necessarily translate into a resolute adherence to temperance. Rather, the relationship between ethico-legal injunctions and practice varied tremendously over time and place and from person to person.

Among merchants in eighteenth-century Marwar, both of the religious orders that they were most drawn to, Krishna-centered Vaishnav sects and Jainism, were firmly opposed to drinking. In this, they sharply distinguished themselves from Shaiva and tantric practice, in competition with whom the *bhakti* mode had arisen, whose very ritual entailed the consumption and offering to the deity of alcohol. The declaration and enforcement of a ban on liquor by royal fiat upon an entire society, as it occurred in Marwar, is notable then for its strict imposition of the ethical principles of particular religious communities upon all. It is also significant that this proscription aligned with attitudes toward alcohol that were dominant among particular castes, especially merchants.

Just as with vegetarianism, merchants and brahmans imposed abstinence from alcohol upon their own caste fellows. If members of these communities violated the ban on drinking, it was not just the state but also their own local caste councils that would punish them. In 1786, the community of Shrimali brahmans of a few villages in Siwana became polarized into factions on the question of how to deal with their caste fellow, Anop, a drinker. The dispute escalated all the way to capital, Jodhpur, as we know from this command issued in 1789:

[To the Siwana governor's office] Sirimali brahmans Sivlal, Devram, Kheta, and Bakhta of Sivanchi village submitted an appeal: "Sirimali Anop drinks alcohol. This caused conflict in our local caste group (*nyāt*). We sent our payment of thirty rupees toward the *mārkhāi* cess with the Chakar Bhaira who works there and had the

matter addressed. Anop was caught in the act of drinking. Anop's niece, his brother Daulatram's daughter, was about to get married when our caste fellows said we won't let anyone attend the celebratory feast (*jīman*) the family will host. For two–three days, no one was able to attend. But after that, Anopa and the Sirimalis of the caste sat down together and ate. Now they have expelled us from the caste. This section of the caste has in this way eaten with a fallen (*bīṭalyoḍā*) brahman. This is wrong." The order is: If this is what happened, once it is proven that Anopa drank, then fine him roundly. In future, do as is customary (*sirasto*) in their local caste group. If these brahmans ate with Anopa even after knowing that he had been expelled, then look into this matter. Such a deed should never be done again. If this is not what happened then each of the officers there should separately send in a report.

—By the order of Singhvi Motichand⁴³

Four Shrimali brahman men, in their determination to have a caste fellow punished for being a drinker, ganged up, paid thirty rupees of extra tax to win the support of local administrators, and managed to catch him in the act of drinking. They then tried to engineer a boycott of a feast hosted by the accused brahman Anopa's family, an action whose social meaning was the excommunication of Anopa and his family from the caste. The plan backfired and the men found themselves expelled instead. They turned to the crown in Jodhpur, whose officer, of a merchant caste, ruled that if Anopa had indeed drunk then he should have been boycotted, and that if other brahmans failed to boycott him knowing that he was a drinker, they deserved to be investigated. In practice, then, members of brahman communities were not united in a rigid imposition of temperance. Some could be willing to look the other way to a certain extent. The involvement of the state and the introduction and application of a state law banning drink, however, set in motion a new set of dynamics. The state, with its punitive capabilities of fines and arrests, became an added tool in the hands of those seeking a straight and narrow adherence to a "vice"-free life.

In this particular case, local authorities in Siwana next conducted an ordeal to try to resolve the matter but both sides were proven true. Anopa and his family were, as a result of the inconclusive ordeal, reincorporated into the local caste group. Secure in their position, they began to bully one of the men, Kheta, who had originally reported Anopa, disrupting his interactions with other caste fellows. They were so persistent that this bullied brahman approached the crown in 1789, three years after he had first petitioned it regarding the matter.⁴⁴ While the petitioner won the crown's sympathy yet again, the case demonstrates that among brahmans, the consumption of alcohol was considered in principle a violation severe enough to result in expulsion from the caste. In Anopa's case, most of his caste fellows decided to let the matter of his drinking pass, but had they all formally accepted his guilt, the norms within their community would have demanded Anopa's expulsion from the caste group. It was not the question of whether alcohol consumption was wrong that divided the Shrimali brahmans of Nagaur, but whether to formally hold Anopa responsible for the lapse.

A similar acquiescence to the outlawing of liquor can be observed among those upwardly mobile communities that sought inclusion in the elite realm of the mahajans and brahmans. In 1776, the local caste group of goldsmiths (*sunārs*) in Phalodhi gathered and decided to fine fifteen of their caste fellows two hundred and twenty-five rupees for drinking. This group punishment was surely meant to set an example. The fifteen men then petitioned the crown for a discount on the fine, citing their inability to pay such a large sum, and managed to have it reduced to seventy-five rupees.⁴⁵ The goldsmiths, since at least the mid-eighteenth century, had been making a concerted effort to assert caste parity with the mahajans.⁴⁶ They fought for the right of their bridegrooms to lead their wedding processions astride horses, for their women to wear veils, and for their inclusion in communal rituals—all privileges that the mahajans enjoyed but tried to deny to the goldsmiths in order to preserve the exclusivity of the elite caste domain to which they aspired.

Apart from generalizing what had until then been an unevenly followed ethical prescription among some faiths and castes, the Rathor state's ban on liquor was an economic blow to the brewers (*kalāls*) of Marwar. Like butchers, they found their trade outlawed and the craft in which they were skilled no longer permissible. Risking punishment, some continued to brew and sell alcohol on the sly. And for doing so, some of them got caught. In 1786, the crown asked the governor's office in Merta to explain why it had permitted its brewers to resettle in the town when they had been expelled earlier for brewing alcohol (*kalālām dārū kāḍhī thī*). It demanded a list of names of all the brewers involved, likely in order to follow up more effectively on the earlier command to remove them from Merta.⁴⁷

Other brewers were more fortunate, ingeniously building on influential contacts and continued demand. Running a successful brewing business in these times, however, attracted the anger of those brewers who had complied with the law of the land. In 1789, all the brewers of Sojhat formed a delegation and petitioned the crown. They complained that despite the royal ban on alcohol, brewer Jairam had set up many breweries and also imported alcohol for sale in Marwar. All the local authorities in Sojhat had failed to prevent this. "All of us have turned to farming to earn a living. Despite his selling alcohol in a time of prohibition, why hasn't he been fined?" they asked. The crown instructed the governor of Sojhat to explain himself and to fine Jairam.⁴⁸

The prohibition on the production and consumption of liquor in Marwar under Vijai Singh then was implemented in practice through arrests, fines, and banishments. The virtue of temperance was no longer just something to aspire to but rather required from all the residents of Marwar. Of course, even as there was a degree of enforcement of the law, it is likely that the brewing, sale, and consumption of liquor continued in those pockets and regions of Marwar in which the Rathor state's reach was not quite as deep. Compared to the mass of documentation generated by the quest to outlaw animal slaughter, the orders in pursuit of a sober subject body are fewer in number. This suggests that despite the

multipronged nature of the quest to recast the markers of elite identity in Marwar, some efforts held higher priority than others. Still, the ban on drinking added to the stigmatization of liquor consumption and made the brewing of liquor, a skill generally commanded by a relatively “low” caste, a particularly risky activity.

GAMBLING

In the same decades, the Rathor crown also criminalized gambling (*juvai ramnā*). Unlike with Rathor efforts to enforce vegetarianism, which enveloped all subjects, it was mahajans who were prominent among those accused of gambling. In 1771, the Rathor crown reiterated to its administrators in Phalodhi an earlier order that banned gambling in all the kingdom’s towns. It pressured the governor of Phalodhi to impose higher fines on anyone caught gambling, reprimanding it for lowering fines recently.⁴⁹ Mahajans are conspicuous in their centrality to cases of gambling.⁵⁰ In 1774, Mahajan Bhikha of Jalor petitioned the crown, saying that while he had been fined four and half rupees upon being caught gambling, the other mahajans who were caught with him were fined only one or two rupees each. Noting the baseless discrepancy, the crown ordered the magistracy in Jalor to give him a discount of two rupees on the fine.⁵¹ The next year two Vaishnav devotees, Bhagats Chainram and Surdas, appealed to the crown for help when the magistracy in Merta fined them for gambling. They said that while they were on their begging rounds, they had merely sat with some mahajan boys who were gambling (*juvai ramtā thā*). The boys were about to give the devotees a few cowries in charity when the local authorities arrested the boys for gambling.

Later, the magistrate’s man arrested the *bhagat* devotees too, accusing them of lending money to the mahajan boys so that the latter could gamble on their behalf (*īṅā nu rupiyā udhārā de nai tai juvai ramāyā chhai*). As punishment, the magistracy then canceled a debt of twenty-one rupees that a local mahajan owed the devotees and kept them under arrest for seven days. Sympathetic to the Bhagats’ plight, the crown ordered the Merta magistracy to have the money that was due to them returned and to explain why it had treated them so harshly.⁵² In other examples of gambling merchants running afoul of the state, in 1788, three mahajans and two brahmans got caught in Sojhat, and in Merta a handful of mahajans ran afoul of a local officer for gambling.⁵³

It is noteworthy that the mahajans are predominant among those fined for gambling. In late eighteenth-century Marwar, the mahajans were among the few communities that had the quantum of wealth and skill with handling money to regularly gamble. Entrepreneurship and the handling of capital, that is, the mercantile trade, entailed the regular taking of risk. Investment and gambling then were not too far removed. Strands in mercantile caste cultures of western India may even have encouraged gambling and speculation and presented it as essential to their caste character, as the activities of the diaspora in the 1880s and 1890s

indicate.⁵⁴ As Ritu Birla notes for the colonial context, the category “gambling” could be wrongly imposed upon forms of speculation and hedging associated with merchants of Marwari origin that had nothing to do with games of chance played for entertainment.⁵⁵ Based on the details available about the cases of gambling intercepted by agents of the Rathor state, however, it was not types of speculation, hedging, or betting (*sattā*) that were illegal or unacceptable to this precolonial government. Rather, it was gambling as play (*juvai ramnā*)— keeping in mind that not insignificant sums of money could be at stake during such play—that was troublesome to a courtly elite looking to discipline its fellow “upright” merchants.

Due to the overlaps among entrepreneurship, moneylending, and speculation, merchants may have gambled more than their contemporaries from other walks of life and it is likely that this is why they got caught most often for it. Apart from being invested in disciplining their caste fellows, Rathor administrators may also have disciplined merchants more for the crime of gambling due to their ability to pay larger fines. However, when seen in the context of the larger campaign to target vice and cultivate virtue among mahajans, both self- and state-imposed, it is clear that money was not the main driver for the greater disciplining of merchants.

That the crown was especially concerned with mahajans gambling is shown by its laxer response to the few recorded instances of other communities’ gambling. Leatherworker Chokhla, from a village in Nagaur, complained that he was among four men that Jat Naga, a farmer, gave money to gamble on his behalf. From the ones who lost money, Jat Naga extracted debt papers but soon ripped up, for unspecified reasons, these papers for all but the leatherworker. The crown ordered the governor to get the *jāṭ* to cancel the leatherworker’s debt too since he had canceled everyone else’s.⁵⁶ It did not discipline any of the men involved for gambling.

The merchants’ wealth was accompanied by their indispensability to the crown’s own functioning. They lent money to the crown, and royal indebtedness to individual mahajans quite frequently undercut its effort to penalize them. This happened in the case of Ami Khandelval, whom the governor of Merta fined a hundred and five rupees for gambling. In the span of a few months, Ami succeeded in having the crown instruct the district governor to reimburse the entire sum to him, alluding in the command to the ongoing “give-and-take” (*leṅ deṅ*) that the state had with Ami.⁵⁷ In another instance of this, the authorities in Sojhat punished three mahajans and two brahmans that they had caught gambling by confiscating the six rupees, sixty-one-and-a-half *takās*,⁵⁸ and a handful of valuable goods that lay on the gambling table. The crown underscored to the governor the importance of making it clear to these men that they were never to gamble again and demanded that the money and goods be immediately dispatched to the central treasury, illustrating its interest in fines upon gambling as a source of income.⁵⁹ One of the implicated merchants, however, petitioned the crown for leniency, and within a few weeks the governor’s office in Sojhat received an instruction to return all the money and valuables that it had earlier confiscated.⁶⁰

Despite its intention to punish gambling with fines, the crown could also end up reversing district authorities' actions due to the political influence that some merchants could wield upon it. The effort to ban gambling then was an arena in which the dependence of the state upon mercantile capital played out. A shared moral disapproval of gambling gave the crown an opportunity to discipline and fine merchants even as its indebtedness to mercantile capital constrained its ability to effectively enact its punitive authority. Fines for violations of custom or law in Marwar were generally levied in proportion to the payee's economic standing.

Mahajans held sway over district administrative officers, aiding their ability to bypass the law against gambling. In 1788, while on his rounds (*chaukī phirtā*), a guard at the Merta magistracy, Sipahi Nivaj, caught some mahajans in the town gambling on one of the days leading up to the Diwali festival. He confiscated the money they had been gambling with and brought it to the magistracy. To his surprise, the magistrate refused to deposit the money in the magistracy, saying that gambling in the days before Diwali was permissible and that Nivaj had erred in confiscating the money. Nivaj returned the money to all but one of the mahajans since one of them had left by then. Accusing Nivaj of graft, the magistrate fined him a rupee, wrote to the governor's officers to lodge a complaint against him, and even before collecting the fine, fired Nivaj from service.

In his quest for justice, Nivaj petitioned the crown, relaying his side of the story and explaining that he was not at fault (*mho maim chūk nahī*). While the crown ordered him reinstated to the rolls in Merta, it did not waive off his fine nor upbraid or punish the magistrate for his actions. The Merta magistrate's harsh actions against his junior employee on a dubious charge of graft could well have been triggered by Nivaj's temerity in confiscating money from a community as influential as the mahajans. The state's reluctance to disturb this status quo is indicated by the crown's refusal to confirm or deny the Diwali caveat to its ban on gambling that the magistrate may have summarily introduced while trying to protect the mahajans.⁶¹

Taken in isolation, the Rathor crown's drive against gambling and its particular targeting of men from merchant castes may appear to be a precolonial antecedent of the outlawing of gambling and indigenous forms of speculation witnessed under colonial rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But when read in the context of the wider efforts at producing an ethical body of merchant and brahman subjects, the penalization of gambling in Marwar appears to be a piece of the wider campaign of moral "uplift" that a Vaishnav king and his upwardly mobile Vaishnav-Jain merchant administrators sought to implement across the region.

Ascetic values, emphasizing a denial or limiting of sensory pleasures and the pursuit of a simple life, were what constituted this idea of virtue. This lends nuance to any simple association of Vallabhite practice with "*bhog*" or an indulgence of the senses. Rather, certain kinds of indulgences of the base passions were anathema to

the Vaishnav-Jain mercantile milieu. This was not limited to such “illicit” indulgences as liquor, meat, and gambling but also to “excessive” sex, as the next chapter will show. A Vaishnav king and Vaishnav-Jain merchants raised the ethical imperatives of their sects to universal laws applicable to all in the domain. Yet, when it came to laws pertaining to drinking, gambling, and chastity, it was the merchants and brahmans who were the chief targets of the Rathor state’s effort to craft a body of ethical subjects. As with meat eating, the adoption into universal law of these ethical codes idealized the caste groups, particularly merchants, that had already embraced them on their own. For religious communities, such as Shaivas and yogis, whose religious practice required the offering of liquor to the deity and its ritual consumption by devotees, these state-led changes restricted their ability to openly practice their faith. These changes also stigmatized the ritual practices of Shaiva, tantric, and devi-worshipping communities.

In their pursuit to move up in the world, it was not the mere emulation of brahmanical strictures of caste and ritual that the merchants brought to the eighteenth-century milieu in Marwar. Missing from a king- and text-centered history of Hindu-ness and of caste is the transformation of “brahmanical orthodoxy” or “brahmanism” itself. It was precisely in these centuries that ritual “purity” in brahmanical terms was recast in various sites to include an emphasis on a strict adherence to vegetarianism and the protection of nonhuman lives. In Marwar, this charge was led not by brahmans but by nonbrahmans, that is, merchants. Brahmans played an important but not leading role.

In addition, the body of documents generated by the effort to end animal slaughter in Marwar helps to fill in a gap in our understanding of legislation and legal culture in early modern South Asia. Farhat Hasan’s exploration of the operation of the Mughal state as a legal order on the ground in seventeenth-century Gujarat made clear the involvement of local notables in the resolution of disputes and the practice of state law. Nandita Sahai has pointed to the bonds of dependence that could tie early modern kings to their productive subjects as well as the limits placed on sovereign action by the discourse of custom. By this point in this book, it will be clear that the making of new laws and the resolution of disputes began to be grounded in the eighteenth century in Marwar in the pursuit of particular ethical visions now deemed universal. While we know of laws pronounced by kings and emperors, Vijai Singh’s Marwar offers us a detailed look at how the implementation of sovereign laws played out on the ground. What emerges is both a picture of governing through consensus, as with the region’s elite, but also one of imposing laws through coercion.

The degree to which the Rathor state intervened in the moral lives of its subjects has few precedents in South Asian history. One of these is the neighboring kingdom of Amer (Jaipur) under Jai Singh II (r. 1699–1743).⁶² The Peshwa’s government in the western Deccan during the eighteenth century is another example of an interventionist state policing the moral lives of its subjects.⁶³ Contrary to

the dominant idea about premodern South Asian states not being too invested in actively intervening in the “private” lives of their subjects, the material from Marwar when read alongside information about eighteenth-century Jaipur and the Maratha state suggests that in the post-Mughal milieu, a new type of state form had emerged in some parts of South Asia. This type of eighteenth-century state considered the reformation of the moral fiber of its elite subjects to be an important element in the fashioning of its authority. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that all of these kingdoms also made a turn toward a greater concern with regulating caste.