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The Marwari community is well known for its business and community service... Dr Taknet has made a valuable contribution to the history of the Marwari community through his much researched work. I compliment him for this great task.

PROF Y. SUDERSHAN RAO, *Chairperson,*
Indian Council of Historical Research,
Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India

Dr D.K. Taknet's many endeavours have resulted in unearthing an impressive wealth of information about the Marwaris, much of which would have been lost in the folds of history if it wasn't for his penchant for extensive research and love of the community. *The Marwari Heritage* is aimed at bringing to light the community's unsurpassable contributions towards the socio-economic development of the country. It is intended to be a visual treat with rare photographs and insight based on comprehensive research.

MANECK DAVAR, *Editor, Marwar India, Mumbai*

Dr Taknet has written a well-researched history of the Marwari community in simple prose. It is easy to read and understand and fills many blanks in earlier studies on this subject with a refreshing new dimension on the community. A comprehensive, well-documented and beautifully illustrated book with rare visuals, it provides useful information on a subject about which very little has been written. Despite being a research study, it is extremely interesting and holds the attention of the readers from the beginning to the end.

INDER SAWHNEY, *Chief of Bureau,*
Gujarat Samachar, New Delhi

Back cover: The origin of the Marwaris is visible from the map of the Shekhawati region in Rajasthan. They migrated from various towns of this region as highlighted in the map. The temple, well and *chhatri*; a woman carrying a *matka* of water on her head, and a man leading his camel showcase the quintessential sights of this region.



I commend IIME, Jaipur on its excellent initiative in bringing the age-old sage of this enterprising community to the people through a coffee table book.

HAMID ANSARI, *Vice-President of India*

In preparing the volume, Dr D.K. Taknet has done thorough research for which he deserves congratulations as well as the gratitude of the reader. The rare images, be they of the past or present, offer visual pleasure while the accompanying descriptions make for absorbing reading. The volume is as much a symbol of transformation under way in India as the innovative enterprises that Marwari entrepreneurs are pioneering every day.

DR ARVIND PANAGARIYA, *Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, New Delhi*

I congratulate Dr D.K. Taknet on his commendable work that without any academic obfuscation offers a comprehensive account of the Marwari's historic contributions.

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN, *Minister of State (IC), Commerce & Industry, India*

In *The Marwari Heritage*, Dr D.K. Taknet has given a comprehensive account of the history and current achievements of this community. He has brought to light the little known facts about their contribution... His painstaking labour to reveal the history of this community over several centuries and keen insights into their ethos are quite evident in this work. To my knowledge there is hardly any comparable work about any other community in India. This book is a source of knowledge for anyone interested in the contribution of the Marwaris in diverse fields of our national life.

PROF V.S. VYAS, *Former Member, Economic Advisory Council to Prime Minister*

THE MARWARI HERITAGE

D.K. TAKNET



D.K. TAKNET

From the early Vedic period, the Vaishyas, the oldest mercantile community of India, generated wealth for the nation through their remarkable efforts. Their Marwari offshoots were appointed by many rulers as ministers, advisors and diwans and were recognised as the first philanthropists in India.

The Marwari Heritage takes the reader on a voyage of discovery of the Marwaris who migrated from Rajputana, Haryana, Malwa and its adjoining regions to other parts of India. They braved trials and tribulations in uncharted territories, supporting others of their community, never losing faith in their ability to succeed, and focused on their goal, they became the uncrowned kings, first of trade and business, and later of industry. They joined the freedom struggle with a true spirit of patriotism, philanthropy and active political involvement. Many courted imprisonment and even achieved martyrdom.

Today, the roots of the Marwari community are deeply enmeshed in the social, cultural and economic fabric of India. Their innate psyche of giving back to society has seen them donate generously to education, empowerment of women and vocational training leading to employment. Shedding some traditions and retaining many, they have stepped into the modern age, achieving an enviable cultural mix. At the helm of most successful entrepreneurial enterprises, their focus on innovation and technological advancement has resulted in governments of several countries seeking their advice on economic growth. Of the many who have left an indelible mark on the history, socio-political and economic foundations of the country, this book is enriched with rich cameos of some of these 'greats' and the reader derives insights into numerous newly discovered and hitherto unrecorded facts.

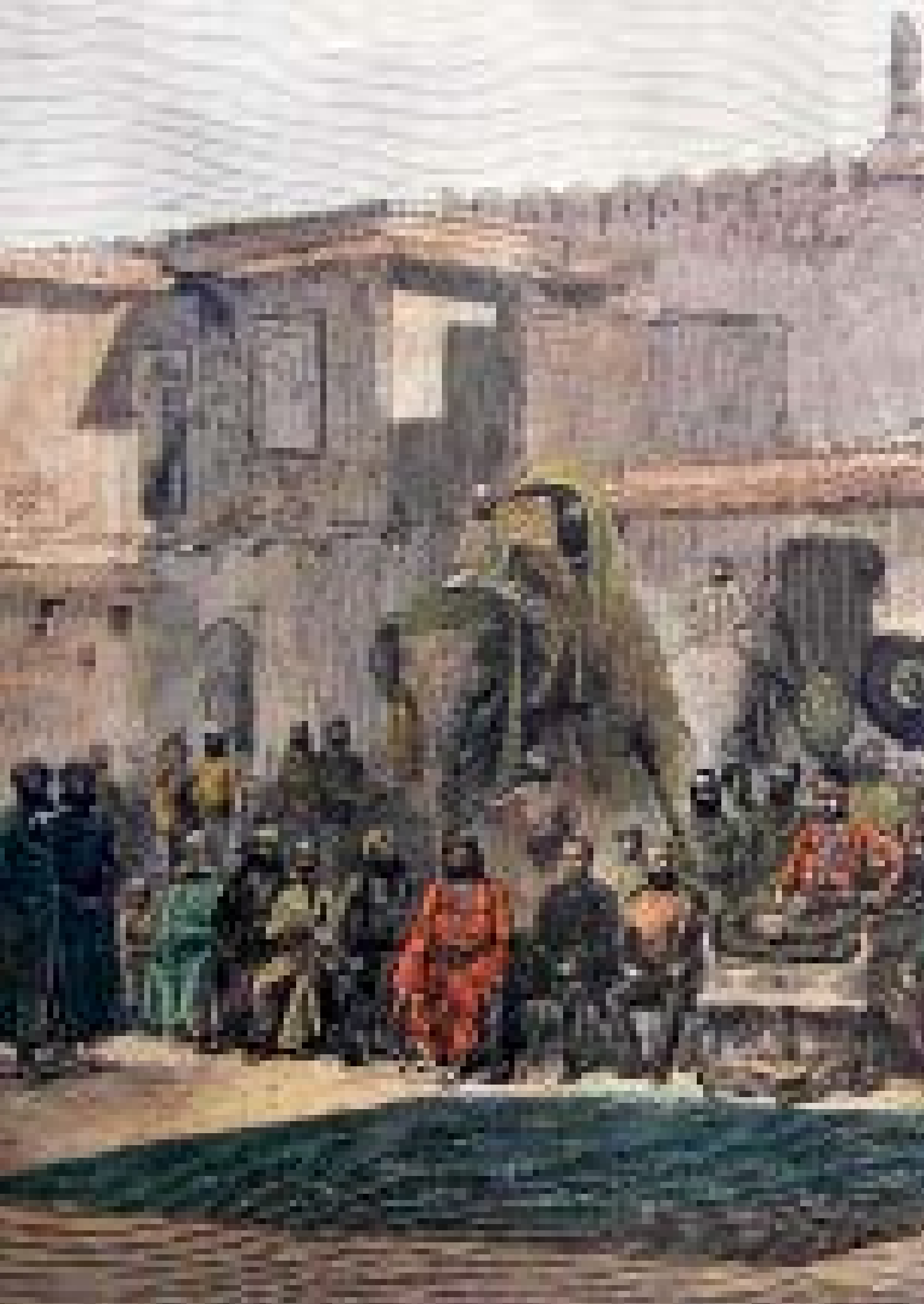
The younger generation of Marwaris continue to dream big and build on the foundations their forefathers planted. They continue to grow from strength to strength, marching towards new horizons. The plethora of welfare schemes and trusts responsible for development of the nation's needy continue to be monitored with precision.

Meticulously researched over five years and richly illustrated with over 100 rare, coloured photographs, paintings, and 600 black and white photographs, illustrations and rare documents published for the first time, readers have much to feast their eyes on. This pictorial book also serves as an inspiration to any and everyone who dares to dream and reach for the skies.

Front cover: On Deepavali, Marwari businessmen invoke the blessings of the Goddess Lakshmi with traditional prayers. They place new *bahi-khatas* relating to the commencement of a new business before the idols of Lord Ganesha, Goddess Lakshmi and the family deities. Making the first entry in the *bahi-khatas*, the merchants pray to Goddess Lakshmi to grant them wisdom to carry out business with honesty. The *bahi*, *kalam*, *dawat*, *mangal kalash*, *deepak* and *puja ki thali* are placed before the goddess, and a *swastika* and *devi ki bindiya* are drawn with *kumkum* on the first page of the *bahi*.

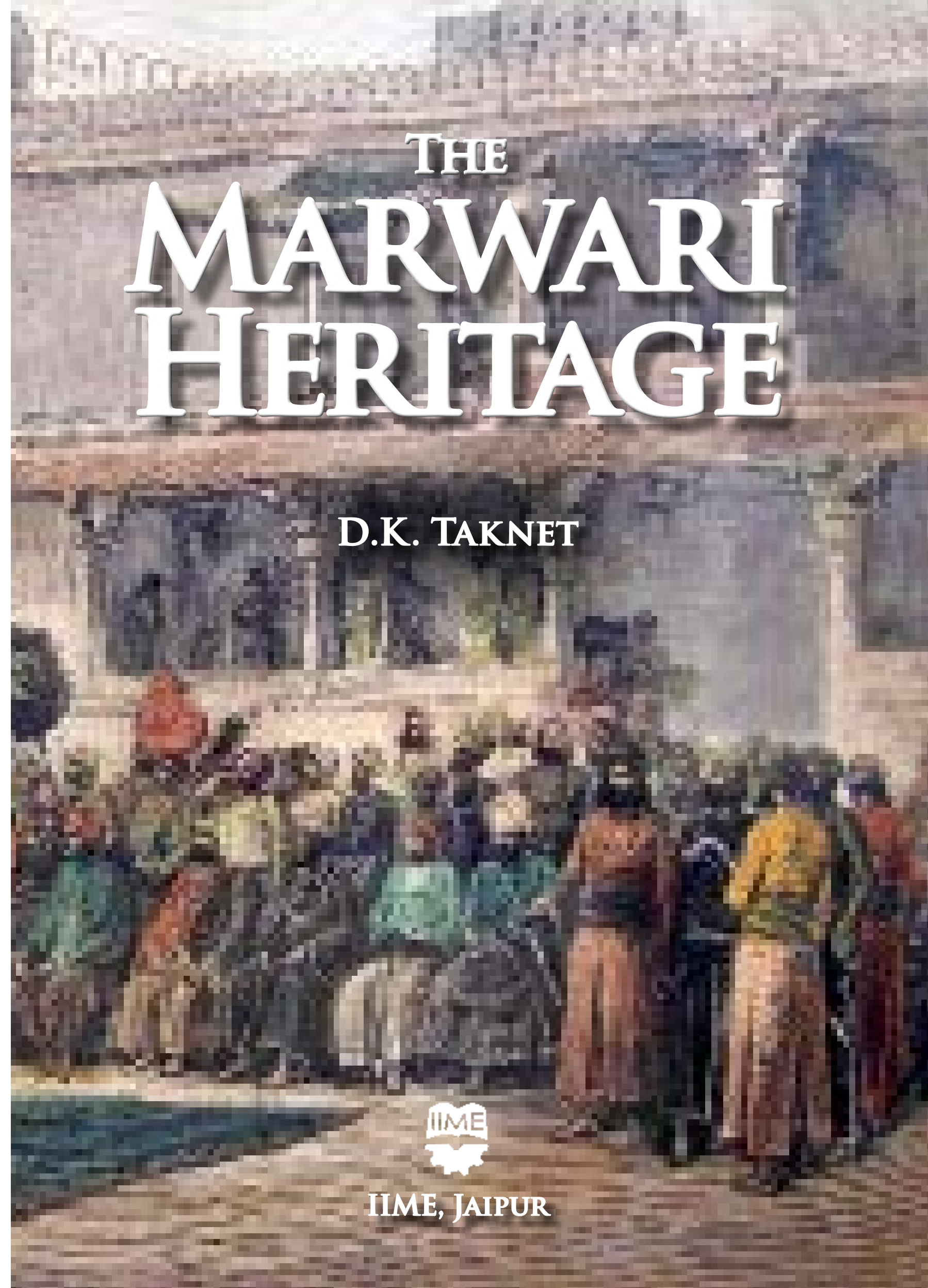
Half Title: An old painting of a ruler visiting a Marwari house. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Marwari community had amassed a large amount of wealth in British India, become very influential and held sway over Rajputana. The rajas even started the tradition of visiting the houses of renowned traders on special occasions. These visits were a symbol of social recognition as was the honour of powerful Marwaris being seated near the rulers in their courts.





THE MARWARI HERITAGE

D.K. TAKNET



IIME, JAIPUR



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This study was undertaken by IIME, Jaipur, which is a scientific and industrial research organisation, recognised by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, New Delhi, as notified in the *Gazette of India* and the *Rajpatra of Rajasthan*.

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INDIA 1857

MIGRATION OF THE MARWARIS



The delineation of international boundaries is not authoritative.



Dedicated to
the unsung heroes of the older generation of the
Marwari Community whose adventurous spirit, courage,
patriotism, vision, enterprise and sense of social responsibility
was the lodestar that guided and nurtured hundreds
of others throughout India. Their traditions, legacy and
heritage have been carried forward successfully
by the younger generation of Marwaris
who have enriched both
Indian society and the world at large
for the betterment of mankind.

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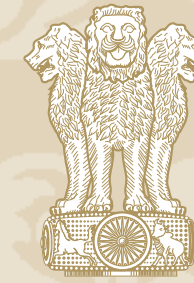
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सत्यमेव जयते

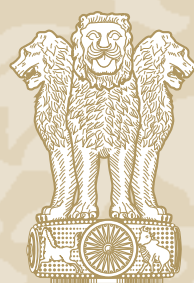
FOREWORD

The India subcontinent is known for its diversity. Different cultures, religions and languages have coexisted peacefully in this nation for millennia. Rajasthan – home to the bulk of the Great Indian Desert – has its own unique blend of cultures, customs and festivals. And within Rajasthan, the Marwari community, the subject of this extraordinary book, enjoys a unique place. The trials and tribulations that the Marwaris underwent before they became the captains of trade and industry in India, while also making their mark in distant lands of Africa and America, make for inspiring tales of courage and adventure. Remarkably, while their entrepreneurial talents produced unprecedented wealth, like the Dutch Burgers, they themselves rarely indulged in it, using it for the good of the community instead.

Besides being a visual feast, *The Marwari Heritage* is a valuable contribution to the business and social history of India. Coffee table books are often rich in pictures and colours but light on content. But make no mistake: this volume is as serious about bringing you the history of its subjects in depth as it is about tracking rare photographs about them. Undoubtedly, Dr D.K. Taknet's thorough research deserves congratulations as well as the gratitude of the reader. The rare images, both of the past and the present, offer visual pleasure while the accompanying descriptions make for absorbing reading. This book is as much about the transformation under way in India as it is about the innovative enterprises being pioneered by Marwari entrepreneurs.

25 May 2015

Arvind Panagariya
Vice Chairman,
NITI Aayog
New Delhi



सत्यमेव जयते

INTRODUCTION

Rajputana, as it was known in earlier days in history, is certainly an iconic representation of Indian culture and heritage. Its transformation from Rajputana to Rajasthan was a period chronicled in tales of fierce battles against invading armies, legendary heroes and valiant women. Even while living life on the edge of a sword, the valourous Rajputs in their magnificent forts exuded exuberance enriched by their colourful traditions and customs. This brief but essential reference to Rajputana's history serves as an explanatory background to the saga of the Marwaris, which is the subject of this book, for it provides a key to the moral fibre engrained in the very being of their ancestors and passed down over generations.

It would be no exaggeration to say that patriotism, sacrifice for the motherland, and quest for excellence were virtues infused into every Marwari infant – from the cradle itself. Adverse climatic conditions and consequent reduced financial circumstances forced them to seek their livelihood elsewhere, resulting in this intrepid community spreading its presence across the entire Indian subcontinent. With a mere '*lota and a dor*' (a pot and a cord for drawing water) and their determination to survive and succeed, but above all, their hardworking mentality and ethic, the community started small, as petty shopkeepers and traders, only to finally become great entrepreneurs in their own right.

They achieved remarkable progress in the trading of gems, jewellery, silver, gold, jute, hessian and grains, along with delving in insurance and import-export. Towards the end of the pre-Independence era and immediately after Independence, the Marwaris entered the international arena. Their exceptional progress was recorded by Capt Brook Charles in his travelogue

in which he said: 'They are creating business history and empires more magnificent than their German, French and British counterparts.'

After Independence, they took over many European firms, adopted modern trade practices and established several trade organisations. Their innovations in industry had a worldwide impact. Their business acumen was acclaimed by *Time* Magazine: 'A Marwari is born with his business acumen from the womb.' Starting out from small '*gaddis*', their spectacular journey in the private sector today spans both national and international communities.

Of course, what lends a humanitarian dimension to their business is their yearning for public service, be it through generous donations or the establishment of charitable trusts.

I congratulate Dr D.K. Taknet on his commendable work that, without any academic obfuscation, offers a comprehensive account of the Marwaris' historic contributions.

11 May 2015

Nirmala Sitharaman
Minister of State (IC), Commerce & Industry
India

PREFACE

Business communities in India have played a significant role in the socio-economic development of the country. Initially, however, scant attention was paid by scholars to the historical contribution of these communities. It was only later that, inspired by the West which gave due importance to economic history, some scholars began to make an objective assessment of the achievements of Indian business communities. The history of the Marwaris who migrated from erstwhile Rajputana and its adjoining regions to other parts of India falls within this purview.

Largely traders and businessmen, the Marwaris migrated to various parts of India from the erstwhile states of Rajputana, Haryana, Malwa and its adjoining regions. Essentially, 'Marwari' is not a caste: it is an indicator of a particular socio-cultural, micro unit of the deeply layered and interestingly textured Indian society. Perhaps the harsh environment, scarcity of water and deteriorating economic conditions were themselves responsible for the perseverance and indefatigable spirit that went on to become the hallmark of the Marwaris. This pictorial book deals with the marathon struggle of the Marwaris in the course of their migration to various parts of India. Their integrity, foresight and business acumen won them the confidence of rulers of the princely states and the British, and soon, they assumed the administration of states in many instances, fought fierce battles and won wars as commanders of armies. Many rulers appointed them as their ministers, advisors and diwans, and gave them due respect and recognition for their exemplary services. Their multifarious skills saw them rise to towering positions in trade and industry and other spheres of social activity in pre-Independence India.

Braving great odds, they started out as modest businessmen, rising to become agents of the British traders. Later, the tremendous wealth they earned enabled them to challenge the trade monopoly of the British and, eventually, they became the owners of British companies. They set up the first jute mill in India, the first Indian bank, the first Indian insurance company, the first yarn mill and the first power-operated iron factory. A major part of their hard-earned wealth was spent on public welfare and in furthering the cause of the freedom movement in India. It is a common perception that Marwaris confined themselves to business and industry. But the reality is that they actively participated in the wars fought by the Indians for their independence, be it the rebellion of 1857 or the freedom struggle. In the past little attention has been paid to this aspect; this study attempts to fill this lacuna. It is indeed ironical that historians have failed to give due credit to the significant contribution of the Marwaris to the freedom struggle.

After independence, the Marwaris developed and flourished manifold, virtually becoming masters of the private sector. They consolidated their place in industrial leadership by providing the maximum number of presidents to prestigious organisations such as FICCI, CII, ASSOCHAM and other chambers of commerce in the country. Their role in the economic reconstruction and opening up of the economy in India in the 1990s cannot be underestimated. Entrepreneurship, which is ingrained in every fibre of the Marwari being, as is the popular belief, has by now become a saga of unprecedented success. So much so, that with the passage of time, their skills in industry and business have crossed the boundaries of India and spread worldwide.

IIME's comprehensive and carefully researched study attempts to bridge the wide chasm that exists in research on this subject and incorporates details about the multifaceted personalities and trailblazers of the community who left their imprint at national and international levels. Besides educational, cultural and literary development, this community has shown tremendous zeal for active participation in scientific research, constructive politics and various other creative professions. Above all, its willingness to contribute towards the well-being of the public at large has given it a distinctive and unique identity. National leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and others extolled this characteristic of the Marwaris.

This book is based on studies from primary as well as secondary sources. Primary information has been gathered from personal interviews with *munims*, *gumastas* and entrepreneurs of the community. Our team travelled over 3,50,000 kilometres and spent over 2,000 days researching and interviewing over 8,000 people directly or indirectly associated with this great community – ranging from a Chairman Emeritus to ordinary, service-class Marwaris. People from diverse backgrounds poured their hearts out narrating fascinating stories, replete with previously untapped facts, inspiring anecdotes, opinions and vignettes, providing dramatic insights into various facets of this entrepreneurial community. The research team diligently pored over approximately 2,75,000 pages of information, apart from other data including personal records, memoirs, diaries and ledgers, British gazetteers, census reports, biographies, daily newspapers, journals and reports of conventions and conferences held periodically.

Much of the material in this book is based on my earlier studies. I offer my gratitude to the entire Marwari community and to all those who have helped. The research associates and Business History Museum (BHM)-IIME, which is a treasure trove of knowledge and literary resources, provided immense help in research. Its outstanding collection of rare, old and new

books and journals on a vast spectrum of subjects enriched my research phenomenally. I must acknowledge the courteous and efficient assistance provided by various private and public libraries, museums, art collectors and galleries in India and abroad: it is from them that most of the paintings, prints, maps, illustrations and early photographs have been reproduced. It has been a truly enriching experience to gain such insight into the cultural heritage of the Marwari community and, needless to say, a mammoth task to condense its magnificent journey into the pages of this book.

During the course of researching this book, I was confronted with many challenges. Geographically, an extensive area had to be covered and huge resources and manpower were required to collect primary and secondary data, along with visuals. I launched into the research with the limited resources at my disposal, compensating somehow with the enthusiasm, indefatigable spirit and conviction of my team. As the book goes into print, I feel a tremendous sense of satisfaction as there is no doubt that the Marwari community has a great history that needs to be narrated.

My immense gratitude to Dr Arvind Panagariya, a renowned economist and Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, Govt. of India, for his encouraging Foreword. Sincere thanks to Smt. Nirjala Sitharaman, Minister of State (IC), Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India, for her perceptive Introduction. I am particularly grateful to the Marwari entrepreneurs who enthusiastically shared information about their families. I am most sincerely grateful for all the valuable support, constant and peerless guidance and help extended by Kamal Morarka, industrialist, former parliamentarian and philanthropist. A special thanks to Rahul Bajaj, Head – Bajaj Group; Bhavarlal Jain, Founder-Chairman – Jain Irrigation Systems Limited; Narendrakumar A. Baldota, CMD – MSPL Limited; C.K. Birla, Chairman – CK Birla Group; Niraj Bajaj, CMD – Mukand Limited; Hemant Kanoria, Chairman – Srei; Navrattan Kothari, Chairman – KGK Group; Ramdas Agarwal, Founder-President – International Vaish Federation; R.P. Mody, Founder-Promoter of the Hindustan Group; H.M. Bangur, Managing Director – Shree Cement Limited, Dilipkumar V. Lakhi, Chairman – Lakhi Group, Lalit Gandhi, former National President of the All India Marwari Yuva Manch; Rajkumar Kudilal Seksaria and Nandkumar Kudilal Seksaria, and Maneck Davar – Editor, *Marwar India*, for their valuable support, suggestions and interaction, and frankly exchanging their views with me. There are many others whose names do not appear here but who have given me encouragement and their best wishes – I am deeply grateful to all of you.

Sincere thanks and deep gratitude to Veena Baswani, an accomplished editor, for her meticulous editing of the book and constructive suggestions. My warm appreciation of the

efficient and ungrudging research assistance provided by Brig K.N. Pandit, VSM, Dr N.M. Sharma, Neeraj Mehrotra, S. Mukherjee, Nirati Agrawal, Neeru Sood, Devashish and Shambhu Chaudhary for their untiring efforts and timely feedback on the manuscript. I would also like to thank Michele Beguin, Deidi Von Schaewen, K.K. Agrawal, S.N. Sharma, Yogendra Gupta, Raj Chauhan, Gopal Kumawat, Trilok and Dinodia Photo Library for providing us with rare and valuable photographs that have added such value to the book. I am grateful to Samdar Singh Khangarot, Suresh Chandra Sharma, Deepak Sharma, Dharampal, Tribuwan Singh, Rajendar Arya and Vikas Soni for painstakingly and lovingly creating the paintings that embellish the book.

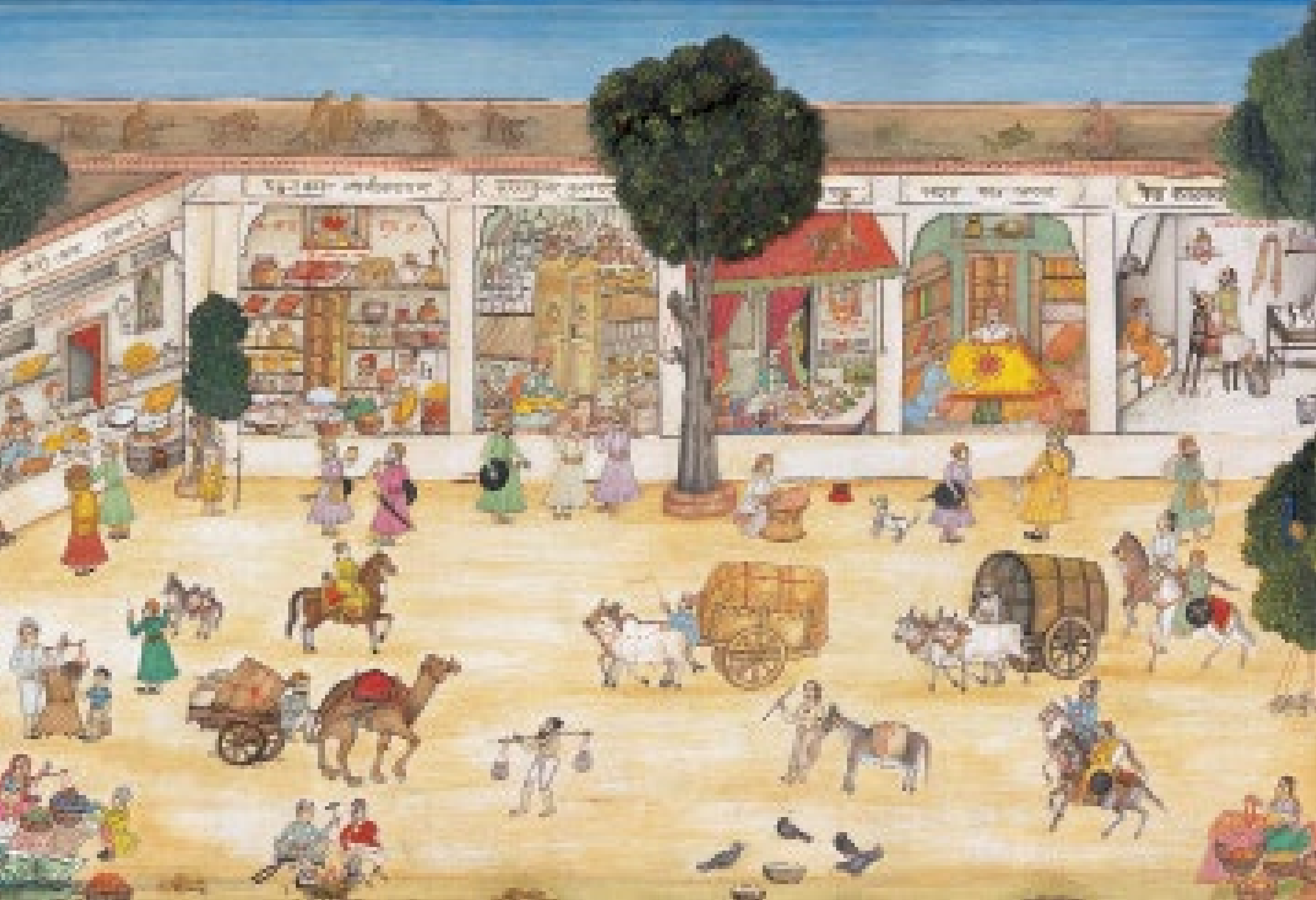
Many thanks to Pankaj Bhatnagar and his team of designers – the understated design of the book is what lends it a timeless elegance. I am especially indebted to Narendra Paruchuri, Chairman of Pragati Offset Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad, and his colleagues, for their efforts to achieve the highest quality printing standards. I wish to acknowledge Shiv Hari, Mithlesh Chaturvedi, Dayanand and Chhotelal for their coordination and computer assistance. S.N. Singh Chirana, Vinod Bhardwaj, O.P. and Sadhna Vyash, Mukul and Archana Goyal, Jaibodh and Shraddha Pandey, P.P. Ashok, Rajat and Anchal Agarwal, Nalini Gupta, Shalini Mathur, Neha Sahi, Umaid Singh and Sita Bhati, Anand Soni, Naveen Mathur, S.P. and Manju Shekhawat, Rajshri Sarawgi, Rajesh Kudiwal, Dr Shailesh Lodha, Dr Manish Bhargav, Dr C.S. Sharma and Rajendra Prasad Sharma – I greatly appreciate your help and immense encouragement.

Finally, I owe a deep debt of gratitude and appreciation to my wife Sujata who has been a constant source of strength and encouragement. Her painstaking efforts in undertaking art and photo research, and scrupulously examining the manuscript to offer valuable critical suggestions, have added much to the book. The love, enthusiasm and youthful spirit of my son Devang has continuously inspired and rejuvenated me. He is truly the wind beneath my wings and I would never have flown without him. I feel privileged that they are an integral part of my life.

I sincerely hope this book will create greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of the Marwari community. I appeal to the community to protect and conserve its history. Material wealth is transient but the wisdom of ages is incalculable wealth that needs to be cherished. I believe that the Marwaris will continue to play a major role in business and as nation-builders for many years to come. I hope that the lives of the great Marwari personages that have been described in the book will be a source of inspiration for the youth of our country.

Jaipur
1 July 2015

D.K. Taknet



It was during the early Vedic Period that the division of society took place into four main classes: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. This division later formed the basis of the development of castes in the Aryan social system. The Mahabharata refers to a Vaishya as one who earns fame from rearing of cattle, who is employed in agriculture as a means of acquiring wealth, who is pure in behaviour and attends to the study of the Vedas. The Vaishyas were considered to be a class of people who engaged in cattle-rearing, agriculture and trade, while some even worked as artisans. From the later Vedic period, the Vasihyas began to specialise in trade and distribution activities. With the passage of time, trade and distribution began spreading to other areas and development of transport became an urgent need. The Vaishyas began to gain recognition as a class of merchants and traders. Blessed with sharp brains, they developed several systems relating to



The Vedas derive their name from *veda*, meaning knowledge. They are a body of texts written in Vedic Sanskrit. Originating in ancient India, they are the oldest Sanskrit literary texts and the oldest scriptures of Hinduism. The Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Sama Veda relate to the performance of *yajnas* or sacrifices. The Atharva Veda comprises spells, incarnations and charms.



Clad in their traditional dhotis, kurtas, and *paggars* or *safas* (turbaned headgear), Marwari traders lived in joint families, working together and sharing responsibilities. Apart from agriculture and cattle rearing, they started engaging in distribution activities in which transport became an urgent need. They used cattle as a means of transport to carry goods from place to place.

the marketing of goods and commodities. The community additionally took up other activities such as moneylending and banking and even combined these functions with trading.

It would not be out of place here to take a quick look at the early stages of economic development in India. While in the initial stages, the distribution of products was more or less confined to a village, which was inevitably a self-sufficient unit, with time, the trading activity of peddlers (who initially bartered or sold their goods within the precincts of a single village) expanded to a number of villages in the close vicinity. This added new dimensions to the activity of producers and craftsmen and introduced the idea of distribution which later developed into trade. In due course, production became a specialised activity and artisans became skilled at their crafts. The Mahabharata makes mention of business caravans that travelled long distances primarily to carry goods for trading purposes. Other historical literature also refers to goods being transported

to remote areas by merchant caravans. Some of these merchant groups were described as migrant traders whose life comprised travelling on chosen routes, camping at different places, procuring consumer goods and then trading and distributing them elsewhere. It was not too long before these migrant traders steadily integrated both the assembling and distribution functions of trading as a matter of convenience.

The Rig Veda refers to a very powerful and enterprising caste called Panni whose major occupation was agriculture, trade, cow-breeding and moneylending. In fact, members of this class owned the bulk of *godhan*. The Rig Veda Samhita states that the Pannis undertook voyages in connection with trade and sold commodities not only at prohibitive prices but also charged interest on the selling price. The Pannis were originally Aryans, known as Phoenicians to the ancient Western world and as Foniks to ancient Greece and Germany. In 500 BC, Herodotus identified the Pannis as Vaniks.



The Gupta Dynasty – *Left:* Chandra Gupta I reigned over Magadha from c. 319 to 335 CE. He expanded his empire through marriage alliances from the Ganges River to Prayag. Maharajadhiraja was his imperial title.
Centre: Samudra Gupta acceded the throne in c. 335 CE. Establishing Pataliputra as his capital, he performed many *ashwamedha yajnas* to expand his kingdom to the east, west and north. A devotee of Lord Vishnu, a poet and a musician, historians described him as the ‘Indian Napoleon’.
Right: Chandra Gupta II ruled from c. 380 to 413 CE. Known as Vikramaditya or the ‘Sun of Power’, he expanded his realm westwards, and established a second capital at Ujjain. The Gupta period was acknowledged as the Golden Age, marked for great achievements in literature, music, architecture and philosophy. Fa Hien, a Chinese pilgrim who visited the kingdom, wrote highly of beautiful cities, hospitals and universities, and a contented people.

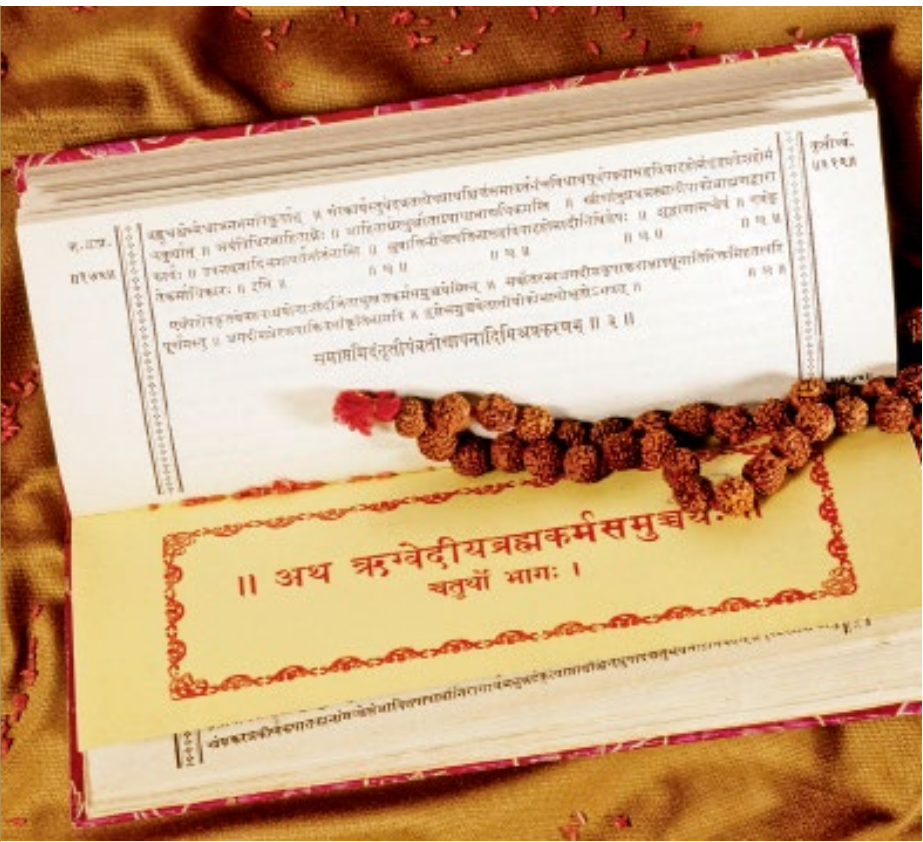
Emergence of the Vaishyas as Traders

The grammarian Panini derived the word Vanik from *Pan Dhatu*. The influence exercised by the Vaniks in East Asia and the whole of South Europe in 2000 BC is detailed in ancient European history. The original Vanik caste had devised a written language and boasted knowledge of navigation prior to 2000 BC. The Egyptians, Greeks and Romans had learnt the technique of navigation from them. The Pannis were thus the oldest amongst the main mercantile groups of India and the Vaishyas, the Gujarati and Bengali merchant castes, Bhotias, Chettiers, Aroras, Khatri and the Lals of Delhi were their offshoots.

Prof R.B. Upadhyaya mentions: ‘Hindu philosophy, however, permitted the carrying on of trade in conjunction with agriculture and dairy farming.’ In this context, the thirty-third hymn of

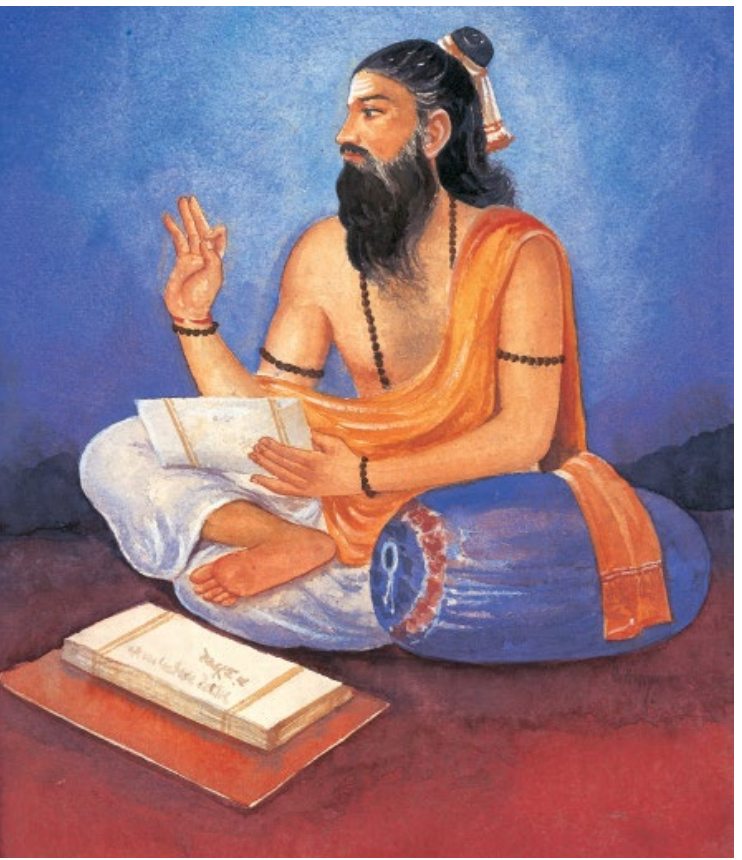
the Rig Veda is very important. It states that the Vaishyas used to look after cattle and cultivate land. By the third century BC, the Vaishyas gained recognition more as merchants and traders than as agriculturists or cattle-breeders: *Ni sarvsen indhradhi ransakt, samaryoga ajati yasya vashti; choushkayaman indra moori vamam ma panirbhuri smadadhi prabuhad*. The situation changed after 500 CE: the Vaishyas started facing a difficult time as traders for they appeared to have migrated in various directions between the sixth and twelfth centuries.

Religious treatises provide vivid descriptions of the duties of the Vaishya *varna*. Prior to the *Manu Smriti*, the sage Atri wrote a treatise known as *Atri Smriti* which clearly stated that charity, acquisition of learning, business and performance of *yajnas* were the principal duties



Top: The Vedas are eternal, everlasting truths and the greatest scriptures of Indian literature. They contain mantras to be chanted at religious ceremonies. Passed down orally through generations, they were written down in 1500 BC. The Rig Veda comprises 1,028 Vedic Sanskrit hymns and 10,600 verses, organised into ten books.
Bottom left: This *torana* slab is originally from Mathura. The depiction of the cart is indicative of the transportation of goods over long distances. The horsemen riding in front of the cart and behind it portray the protection required for such caravans.

of a Vaishya. The number of these duties was increased from four to seven in the *Manu Smriti*. Amongst these, the protection of animals, charity, sacrifice, learning, trade, realisation of interest and the functions associated with agriculture were accorded prominence. Of these seven, two of these functions – acquisition of learning and sacrifice – were dropped in the *Harit Smriti*. According to the *Gautam Dharmasutra*, agriculture, commerce (trade), cattle-breeding and moneylending were the Vaishyas’ principal duties. The *Bhagavad Gita* also states: ‘*Krishi goraksya vanijyam vaishyakarma svabhavajam*



Top: Panini was a Sanskrit grammarian from ancient India, renowned for his formulation of the 3,959 rules of Sanskrit morphology, syntax and semantics in the grammar known as *Ashtadhyayi* meaning ‘Eight chapters’.
Bottom right: A gold coin belonging to the period of Samudra Gupta’s reign (c. 335 – 380 CE). Samudra Gupta was regarded as one of the greatest military geniuses in Indian history. He was a benevolent king and a patron of the arts. Most of our knowledge about Samudra Gupta comes from an inscription engraved on a rock edict found in Kaushambi.

– agriculture, protection of cows and business were essential duties of the Vaishyas.’ Kautilya declared that gaining knowledge, performing sacrifices, dispensing charity, agriculture, cattle-breeding and trade were the prime concerns of the Vaishyas. The duties and functions of the Vaishyas kept changing periodically but the accumulation of capital continued to be their mainstay. It was due to the nature of the duties assigned to them that the Vaishyas began to be addressed as *seths*, *shresthis*, *vaniks* or *sarthvahs* during the Gupta period.





References in the Mahabharata refer to the Vaishyas as a people engaged in cattle-rearing, and agriculture as a means of livelihood. Some were artisans. The later Vedic period witnessed them moving into trade and distribution within the vicinity of their own villages. The *Manu Smriti* described seven duties of the Vaishyas: protection of animals, charity, sacrifice, learning, trade, realisation of interest and functions related to agriculture. Though these duties changed periodically, the accumulation of capital remained their focus. Due to the nature of the duties associated with them, the Vaishyas came to be addressed as *seths*, *shresthis*, *vaniks* or *sarthvaks* during the Gupta period.

Growing Clout of the Vaishyas

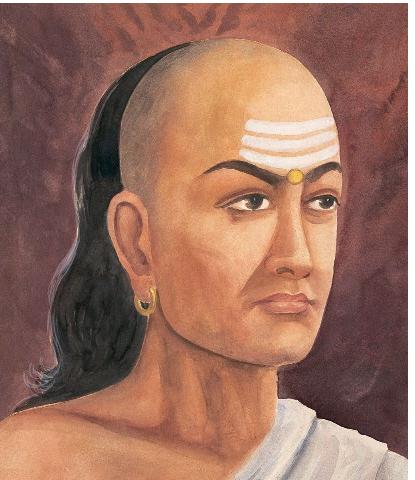
It is noteworthy that besides the mandatory functions elaborated upon in religious treatises, the Vaishyas shouldered several other responsibilities which enhanced their prestige in society. For example, in many instances, they took charge of the administration of states, fought battles and won wars as commanders of armies. Many rulers appointed them as their ministers, advisors and diwans. In Rajputana, there was a popular saying: 'No matter whether you induct ministers from other castes or not, there should be at least one *bania* minister in the cabinet because in the event of controversies, he will solve the problem by pleasing everybody with his sweet tongue.' Apart from Rajputana, the Vaishyas served as ministers in the Delhi court. Todarmal, a member of the Agarwal sub-caste of the Marwari community, headed the revenue department of Sher Shah Suri and later that of Akbar. During the rule of Humayun, Akbar and Jahangir, several Vaishyas held the post of treasurer and headed other ministries. Rai Indermal was Shah Jahan's diwan. Among other noteworthy Vaishya diwans during the Mughal period were Lala Rajaram, Rai Patnimal, Ram Pratap, Lala Nadomal Gurwala, Lala Radhakrishan, Chhitarmal Gurwala, Seth Patramdas, Babu Manohardas Shah, Lala Badridas Kotwalwale, Lala Meghraj, Lala Pirumal, Diwan Partitrai, Raja Bahadur Shambhuprasad, Diwan Shriram, Raja Shivprasad Bahadur, Harishchandra Peshwa, Lala Fatehchand, Lala Dwarkadas, Rai Khyaliram Bahadur, Lala Amirchand, Maharaja



Top: The Vaishyas fought numerous battles and won wars as commanders of armies. Many rulers appointed them as ministers, advisors, administrators, treasurers and diwans in their durbars. They played a significant role in the state administration and held all the key positions for the smooth functioning of numerous principalities. They remained the most trusted class of people by the Mughals, Rajputs and other Indian rulers.

Top right: Raja Todarmal was an erstwhile member of the Agarwal sub-caste of the Marwari community. Finance Minister of Akbar and founder of the Muria language, he also adorned the court of Sher Shah Suri.

Above right: Kautilya was the most influential legal advisor during Chandragupta Maurya's reign and was known for his monumental work *Arthashastra*. His influence was crucial in consolidating the great Mauryan empire.



Devi Singh, Raja Bahadur Singh, Chaudhary Chokharam, Dalpatrai, Shah Govindchand, Shah Raghuvardayal, Diwan Hattiram, Diwan Nanumal, Raja Ratan Chand, Seth Mirzamal Poddar, Rai Balgovind, Lala Sitaram and Lala Amichand. The Ganeriwals of Lachhmangarh developed business in Hyderabad and eventually became the treasurers of the state of Hyderabad.

It must also be recorded that there were many accomplished diwans from the Khandelwal Jain Samaj who played a significant role in the administration of numerous principalities. Notable names included: Nirbhairam Chhabra, Mamatya Nanu Godha, Sanghi Mohandas, Ballu Shah, Vimaldas Chhabra, Ramchandra Chhabra, Fatehchand Chhabra, Rav Jagram Pandya, Rav Kriparam Pandya, Vijayram Chhabra, Kishoredas

Mahajan, Tarachand Bilala, Nainsukh Terapanthi, Srichand Chhabra, Kaniram Baid, Kishanchand Chhabra, Jhobchand Chhabra, Ratanchand, Jaichand, Nandlal Godha, Aratram Khinduka, Nonadram Khinduka, Nainsukh Khinduka, Sanghi Motiram Godha, Amarchand Sogani, Sanghi Jivraj, Sanghi Mohanram, Bhagchand, Bhagatram Bagra, Sheojilal Chhabra, Amolakchand Khinduka, Keshari Singh Kasliwal, Balchand Chhabra, Jaichand Chhabra, Raichand Chhabra, Sanghi Mannalal Chhabra, Kriparam Chhabra, Sheojilal Patni, Amarchand Patni, Sampatram Khinduka, Sadasukh Chhabra, Kriparam Chhabra, Likhamichand Chhabra, Likhamichand Godha, Munshi Pyarelal Kasliwal, Parbat Shah Patni, Fatehchand, Jodhraj Kasliwal, Sahajram Chhabra and Sabha Singh.