

**DESERT SOVERGNITIES: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF
KINGSHIP AND DEMOCRACY IN THE THAR**

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**Desert Sovereignties: An Ethnography of Kingship and
Democracy in the Thar**

by

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, **Desert Sovereignities: An Ethnography of Kingship and Democracy in the Thar** being submitted by Bharat Hun to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi for the award of **Doctor of Philosophy** is a record of bonafide work carried by him under my supervision. In my opinion, the thesis has reached the standards of fulfilling the requirements for submission relating to the degree.

The contents of the thesis have not been submitted in part or full, to any other university or institute for the award of any other degree or diploma.

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Abstract

The thesis undertakes an ethnographic study exploration of democracy, focusing on the Jaisalmer district in the Thar desert. It's an exposition of how to study the state anthropologically without sidelining classical concepts of anthropology. The study inquires three concepts that are integral to the state in different ways: sovereignty, kingship, and democracy. Kingship is a central idiom of political judgement. It's also a normative yardstick against which people perceive the modern state. The ethnography challenges many of the myths of Western political and social theory- the opposition of sacred and secular, the opposition of kingship and democracy, the divine and political sovereignty. It also challenges the heuristic utility of the idea of 'sovereignty'. The thesis argues that in the former princely state of Jaisalmer, the transition to democracy is less than complete. This, however, does not mean that the transition is 'imperfect'; instead it generates the particular texture and grain of democracy in many post-colonial states. Democracy itself is provincialized; there is no one-size-fits-all. Instead, there are many vernacular forms. The use of 'swarm', 'heat', 'animals', and 'gift' as conceptual lenses to study the state-people relationship is a significant contribution of this work. The anthropological concept 'The Gift' was used to mark the different kinds of relationships and transactions that occur between the state and the people. The thesis also highlights the contestation surrounding conservation efforts in the desert ecosystem, revealing tensions between the idea of a pristine reserve and the area's ancient human habitation. The thesis shows how local care for nature and global conservatism differ. The loss of access to land, misplaced care of animals by the government and abandonment of humans are construed as peculiar characteristics of a modern state.

सार

यह शोधलेख थार रेगिस्तान में जैसलमेर जिले पर ध्यान केंद्रित करते हुए, लोकतंत्र का एक नृजातिशास्त्रीय अध्ययन अन्वेषण करता है। यह अध्ययन इस बात की व्याख्या है कि मानवविज्ञान की शास्त्रीय अवधारणाओं को दरकिनार किए बिना मानवशास्त्रीय रूप से राज्य का अध्ययन कैसे किया जाए। अध्ययन तीन अवधारणाओं की जांच करता है जो विभिन्न तरीकों से राज्य के अभिन्न अंग हैं: संप्रभुता, राजतंत्र और लोकतंत्र। राजतंत्र राजनीतिक निर्णय का एक केंद्रीय मुहावरा है, यह एक मानक मापदण्ड भी है जिसके आधार पर लोग आधुनिक राज्य को समझते हैं। नृजातिविज्ञान पश्चिमी राजनीतिक और सामाजिक सिद्धांत के कई मिथकों को चुनौती देता है - पवित्र और लौकिक का द्वंद्व, राजत्व और लोकतंत्र का द्वंद्व, दैवीय संप्रभुता और राजनीतिक संप्रभुता का द्वंद्व। यह 'संप्रभुता' के विचार की अनुमानी उपयोगिता को भी चुनौती देता है। शोधलेख का तर्क है कि जैसलमेर की पूर्व रियासत में, लोकतंत्र में परिवर्तन पूर्ण से कम है। हालाँकि इसका मतलब यह नहीं है कि कम 'अपूर्ण' है; इसके बजाय यह कई उत्तर-औपनिवेशिक राज्यों में लोकतंत्र की विशेष बनावट और स्वरूप को उत्पन्न करता है। लोकतंत्र स्वयं प्रांतीयकृत है; ऐसा कोई एक आकार नहीं है जो सभी के लिए उपयुक्त हो। इसके बजाय, कई स्थानीय रूप हैं। राज्य-लोगों के संबंधों का अध्ययन करने के लिए वैचारिक दृष्टि के रूप में 'टिड्डी', 'गर्मी', 'जानवर' और 'उपहार' का उपयोग इस कार्य का एक महत्वपूर्ण योगदान है। मानवशास्त्रीय अवधारणा 'द गिफ्ट' का उपयोग राज्य और लोगों के बीच होने वाले विभिन्न प्रकार के संबंधों और लेनदेन को चिह्नित करने के लिए किया गया था। शोधलेख रेगिस्तानी पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र में संरक्षण प्रयासों के आसपास की प्रतिस्पर्धा पर प्रकाश डालता है, जो एक प्राचीन संरक्षित क्षेत्र के विचार और क्षेत्र के प्राचीन मानव निवास के बीच तनाव को प्रकट करती है। थीसिस से पता चलता है कि प्रकृति की स्थानीय देखभाल और वैश्विक रूढ़िवादिता में क्या अंतर है। भूमि उपयोग पर प्रतिबन्ध, सरकार द्वारा जानवरों की गलत देखभाल और मनुष्यों का परित्याग आधुनिक राज्य की विशिष्ट विशेषताओं के रूप में समझा जाता है।

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