

MARWARIS OF KOLKATA: COMMUNITY, IDENTITY AND CITY

SWATI MANTRI



DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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MARWARIS OF KOLKATA: COMMUNITY, IDENTITY AND CITY

by

SWATI MANTRI

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Submitted

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Certificate

It is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Marwaris of Kolkata: Community, Identity and City**” being submitted by **Ms. Swati Mantri** to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi for the award of **Doctor of Philosophy** in department of Humanities and Social Sciences is a record of the bonafide research work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance. She has fulfilled the requirements for the submission of this thesis, which to the best of my knowledge has reached the requisite standard.

The material contained in the thesis has not been submitted in part or full to other university or institute for the award of any other degree or diploma.

Prof. Ravinder Kaur

Professor

Sociology & Social Anthropology
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

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Swati Mantri

Abstract

This thesis has attempted to understand the evolution of the socio-cultural identity of a migrant community, the Marwaris of Rajasthan, settled in the city of Kolkata. Positioning the city as an actor and a participant in shaping the identity of this migrant community, this research has explored the new forms of human sociality that emerge in the city as a porous space to negotiate between the given and the 'desired' identity through various aspects of 'everyday' life in the city-space. Examining how the Marwari community over time has negotiated and 're'-shaped their own sense of identity in the city of Kolkata, the study has argued that individuals and communities participate in 'place-making' in cities, although not without resistance, conflict or exchange. The resulting distinction between 'self' and 'other', 'we' and 'they', contrary to popular belief, has been shown to be not 'given' or natural, but as constructed and evolving under complex historical, political and socio-cultural conditions. The study has contributed to an ethnographic understanding of how material setting of space allows for new possibilities to emerge in shaping of social relationships. Studying the construction of Marwari identity as framed by the Kolkata(n) experience, the theoretical approach to the study is informed by the historical trajectory of the community's migration from north-west to the east of the country, by both classical and contemporary theories of identity studies, and by the indispensable role of the city in shaping the community identity in contemporary times. These three conceptual categories form the axis along which the study has unpacked the role of urban space in shaping identities and forming ethnic community solidarities.

सार

इस अध्ययन ने राजस्थान के मारवाड़ियों की सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक पहचान के विकास को समझने का प्रयास किया है, जो कोलकाता शहर में बसने वाला एक प्रवासी समुदाय है। इस प्रवासी समुदाय की पहचान को आकार देने में एक प्रतिभागी के रूप में शहर की भूमिका का निर्धारण करते हुए, इस शोध ने मानव सामाजिकता के नए रूपों की खोज की है जो शहर में 'निर्धारित' और 'वांछित' पहचान के बीच बातचीत करने के लिए एक इंटरैक्टिव स्थान के रूप में उभरता है। यह चर्चा शहर के क्षेत्र में रोजमर्रा की जिंदगी के विभिन्न पहलुओं के माध्यम से होती है। मारवाड़ी समुदाय ने समय के साथ कोलकाता शहर में अपनी पहचान की भावना को कैसे बदला, इसकी जांच करते हुए, इस अध्ययन में तर्क दिया गया है कि व्यक्ति और समुदाय शहरों में-स्थान-निर्माण 'में भाग लेते हैं, हालांकि प्रतिरोध, संघर्ष या विनिमय के बिना नहीं। यह अध्ययन दर्शाता है कि लोकप्रिय धारणा के विपरीत, स्व और दूसरे के बीच का अंतर स्वाभाविक नहीं है, लेकिन इसका निर्माण जटिल ऐतिहासिक, राजनीतिक और सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक परिस्थितियों में हुआ है। यह शोध सामाजिक रिश्तों को आकार देने में स्थान की भूमिका के पीछे नृवंशविज्ञान संबंधी कारणों को समझने में मदद करता है। कोलकाता के निवासी के रूप में अनुभवों के आधार पर मारवाड़ी पहचान के निर्माण का अध्ययन करने का प्रयास किया गया है। देश के उत्तर-पश्चिम से समुदाय के प्रवास के ऐतिहासिक प्रक्षेपवक्र ने अध्ययन के सैद्धांतिक दृष्टिकोण को निर्देशित किया है। यह पहचान अध्ययन के शास्त्रीय और समकालीन सिद्धांतों दोनों के माध्यम से किया गया है, और समकालीन समय में समुदाय की पहचान को आकार देने में शहर की अपरिहार्य भूमिका से भी। इन तीन वैचारिक श्रेणियों में वह अक्ष बनता है जिसके साथ अध्ययन ने पहचान को आकार देने और जातीय सामुदायिक एकजुटता बनाने में शहरी अंतरिक्ष की भूमिका को उजागर किया है।

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Glossary

- 1) *Adda* (Bengali): a place/location where people gather for idle conversation
- 2) *Adhyaksh* (Hindi): president and chairman of an organisation/association
- 3) *Anjali* (Bengali): prayer
- 4) *Ānk* (Hindi): issue
- 5) *Aāshram* (Hindi): places of religious retreat/monastery
- 6) *Achārya* (Hindi): spiritual teacher
- 7) *Bāhela* (Marwari): friends and family
- 8) *Baithak* (Hindi): drawing room/living room
- 9) *Bangāli/Bangla* (Bengali): Bengali
- 10) *Bari* (Bengali): home
- 11) *Bāsa* (Marwari): inn
- 12) *Bhadralok/Bhodrolok* (Bengali): the genteel and educated upper or upper-middle class men
- 13) *Bhadramohila* (Bengali): the genteel and educated upper or upper-middle class women
- 14) *Bhawan* (Hindi/Marwari): could be used to refer to a range of lodging-home/resting house/inn

- 15) *Bhog* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): offering to God
- 16) *Borolok* (Bengali): educated upper-class people; interchangeably used with *Bhadralok/Bhodrolok*
- 17) *Bonti* (Bengali): a kind of knife used in kitchen; associated as a prominent instrument with a Bengali household kitchen
- 18) *Buddijib* (Bengali): intellectual
- 19) *Chandni* (Marwari): sheet/bed-cover
- 20) *Chanda* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): donation (usually monetary)
- 21) *Chotolok* (Bengali): opposite category for *bhodrolok*; refers to the uneducated and usually hailing from lower middle class or lower class of population
- 22) *Chura* (Bengali): particular type of bangles worn at the time of marriage, found in Hindu communities belonging to North India
- 23) *Dalal* (Hindi/Marwari): middlemen/broker
- 24) *Des/ Desh* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): native land/homeland
- 25) *Desavar* (Marwari): foreign land
- 26) *Dewan* (Hindi/Marwari): revenue collector
- 27) *Dharam* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): religious/righteous duty
- 28) *Dharamshalas* (Hindi/Marwari): rest house (in the name of community service these accommodations usually charge a minimum rent or offer services for free)
- 29) *Dhol* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): a double-sided drum; an instrument generally used many festival celebrations in India

- 30) *Gaddi* (Marwari): office
- 31) *Gali* (Hindi/Marwari): lane
- 32) *Ghar* (Hindi/Marwari): home
- 33) *Ghāt* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): river bank
- 34) *Ghee* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): clarified butter
- 35) *Granth* (Hindi): memoir/commemorative text
- 36) *Gyāan* (Hindi): knowledge
- 37) *Haveli* (Hindi/Marwari): a big house/mansion typically built around a courtyard
- 38) *Hundi* (Marwari): indigenous bill of exchange
- 39) *Izzat* (Persian/Urdu): honour
- 40) *Jati* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): caste
- 41) *Kaam* (Hindi): work
- 42) *Kathā* (Hindi/Marwari): story
- 43) *Karmabhoomi* (Hindi): a place where one traditionally goes looking for employment
- 44) *Katra* (Marwari): an enclosed market
- 45) *Koshadhyaksh* (Hindi): treasurer
- 46) *Kshetra* (Hindi): sphere
- 47) *Kulta* (Hindi): promiscuous

- 48) *Lakshmi* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): wealth; Hindu Goddess associated with wealth and prosperity
- 49) *Lehenga* (Hindi/Marwari): skirt with elaborate work and embellishments worn by women
- 50) *Maal* (Hindi): stock/product
- 51) *Maidan* (Bengali/Hindi): park
- 52) *Mandi* (Hindi): a wholesale market
- 53) *Masala* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): spices and condiments (food)
- 54) *Masand* (Marwari): elongated round pillows
- 55) *Mazaāk* (Hindi): joke
- 56) *Munim* (Hindi/Marwari): head clerk
- 57) *Muthiya* (Hindi/Marwari): coolie
- 58) *Mutsuddi* (Marwari): agent
- 59) *Navela* (Hindi/Marwari): new
- 60) *Para/ Pallys/ mohalla/ illaka/ bazaar/ chowk* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): locality, neighbourhood, geographical area
- 61) *Paan* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): betel leaf
- 62) *Pagri* (Hindi): turban
- 63) *Pala* (Bengali): red coloured bangles worn by married women in Bengali community
- 64) *Pandit* (Hindi): practising priest in Hindu religion

- 65) *Panchang* (Hindi/Marwari): Hindu religious calendar
- 66) *Patit* (Hindi): fallen
- 67) *Poriborton* (Bengali): change
- 68) *Puja* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): worship
- 69) *Puja ghar* (Hindi): room or space in the house devoted to religious deity
- 70) *Pukur* (Bengali): pond
- 71) *Rājnetik* (Hindi): political
- 72) *Sabhyata* (Hindi): civilization
- 73) *Saharwāle* (Hindi/Marwari): city dwellers
- 74) *Sākh* (Marwari): trust
- 75) *Samaj* (Hindi/Marwari): community
- 76) *Samiti* (Hindi): committee
- 77) *Samvat* (Hindi): year. Era of Hindu chronology used in northern India, at present the Hindu calendar is following the *Vikram Samvat*.
- 78) *Sanskar* (Hindi/Marwari): social values
- 79) *Sanskriti* (Hindi/Marwari): culture
- 80) *Sanskritik* (Hindi/Marwari): cultural
- 81) *Saree* (Bengali/Hindi/Marwari): A traditional attire worn especially by Indian women. It consists of a long piece of cloth (usually 7 or 9 yards) that is draped around the body.

82) *Sarraḥ/Sarraḥḥa* (Marwari): Moneychangers, also popular as merchants dealing in silver and gold; applied to Hindu traders and a body of Hindu merchants.

83) *Seth* (Hindi/Marwari): term used to address the Marwari traders/boss/rich merchant/proprietor.

84) *Sudhāar* (Hindi): improvement/to rectify something

85) *Tāal-mel*: (Hindi): to move/work in tandem

86) *Vikaas* (Hindi): progress

87) *Vyapar kothi* (Hindi/Marwari): business houses

Abbreviations

<i>AIMF</i>	All India Marwari Federation
<i>BJP</i>	Bharatiya Janta Party
<i>BMC</i>	Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation
<i>CPI (M)</i>	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
<i>CCTV</i>	Close Circuit Television Camera
<i>MLA</i>	Member of Legislative Assembly
<i>Prof.</i>	Professor
<i>SLC</i>	Salt Lake City
<i>TMC</i>	The All India Trinamool Congress