

Bappa Rawal Annadata's Life Achievements

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ABSTRACT

One of the most powerful and well-known kings of the Mewar Dynasty was Bappa Rawal. Despite being a living descendant of the Guhilot line, Prince Kalbhoj (his real name), who hailed from the Atri clan, did not adopt the name of the family that had been used for seven generations when he ascended to the throne. Instead, he founded the Mewar Dynasty and gave it the name of the newly-acquired country. He later rose to prominence as a beloved hero on several battlefields, but his intriguing life is riddled with mysteries, and numerous tales have been made about him. According to legend, Bappa received the kingdom from Mewar area sage Harit Rishi. His father, Rawal Mahendra II, had wed a Paramara Rajput lady from Chandravati or Mt. Abu, both of which were Paramara hubs at the time. She was also related to Maan Mori, the ruler of the Paramara people and a significant portion of the State of Mewar. This included the territory of the Guhilot clan, which Malwa-based Paramara invaders had claimed a century or so earlier and captured. They established their capital at the venerable citadel of Chittorgarh.

According to legend, Bappa Rawal grew up close to the city of Nagda. There are various tales about Bappa's formative years as a young man amid the untamed Vindhya Range, as there are for most high-spirited rulers. His pranks included apparently harmless mischief with rural damsels, however it's possible that it wasn't so innocent (he cared for the holy livestock of the Brahmans). He 'married' a number of the young ladies one day during a game he made up, which required him to leave Nagda for a hideout in the hills to avoid the enraged parents of the young girls. This story of potential virility has an intriguing addendum in that Bappa Rawal is reported to have wed several women and fathered well over a hundred offspring.

KEYWORD: Dynasty , Territory , Potential , Descendant , Virility

INTRODUCTION

Bappa Rawal is considered to have been born in 712-13 AD in Anandapura, Rajasthan. [ref] There is a degree of epigraphic uncertainty about Bappa Rawal as a historical figure, as early inscriptions from Mewar do not mention him in their genealogical lists. The Atpur inscription of 977 AD does not mention Bappa Rawal, but he heads almost all succeeding lists. However, it does mention that the individual responsible for shifting the family's base from Vallabhi to Mewar hailed from Anandapura. [ref]

This inscription identifies Guhadatta as the founder of the Guhila line. It is only later inscriptions and bardic legends that call Bappa Rawal as the founder of the Guhila Mewar line. Most historians have associated him with 'Kalabhoja'. Some, like RD Bhandarkar and R.C. Majumdar, argue that it is plausible to associate Bappa Rawal with Khummana I. However, it is largely well established that Kalabhoja is the same as Bappa Rawal.

There can be no mention of the late 1st Millennium CE without Bappa Rawal. He lived for 40 years (713-753CE) but his contribution to the vast Indic landscape is unmistakably remarkable and inspiring. He was

born as Kaalbhoja to Nagaditya and Kamlavati of the Guhilot clan which claimed lineage from Sri Rama's son Lava. The 1400 year long struggle of the Guhilot-Sisodiya dynasty starts from Bappa Rawal.

His childhood was riddled with pain. Due to some circumstances, his mother brought him to a forest where he grew up with the tribal Bheels who took care of him. Thus, the seed of the long relationship between the tribal Bheels and Mewar rulers was planted.

Several land grants, inscriptions, gold coins and literary text refer to Bappa in a variety of ways - Bapp, bappak, Bappai, Baapaa etc. Historians have speculated that Bappa may have been a designation rather than a proper name. [ref] This view is ratified by the towering scholar of Mewar history, Kaviraj Shyamaldas in his book 'Vir Vinod'. The name 'Bappa' could have been applied to a number of individuals to honour their paternal as well as valorous qualities as well.

The word 'Rawal' means small prince, and this may have pointed towards his initial status within the Mori kingdom of a prince in Idar. There are bardic legends that seek to explain the adoption of the title 'Rawal'. One of them suggests that Bappa's mother prayed to her local goddess who granted her a boon that her son will go on to be an extremely industrious and courageous ruler. This is what prompted him to change his title to 'Rawal'. It can be said with some degree of certainty that the word 'Rawal' befits any brave Rajput warrior, and such an epithet fits into the personality of Bappa, who was an intrepid warrior. [ref] Bappa Rawal is believed to have remained in disguise in the hills of Nagada, where he lost his father in an encounter with the Bhils of Idar. In fact, out of all male members he alone could survive the calamity that befell his family. He was brought up by a Brahman lady of Nagada, for whom he tended cows. All this while, he was accompanied by two faithful Bhil adherents, and when Bappa attained a position of authority, these loyal companions were granted jagirs of Oguna and Undri villages. [ref]

As a prince, Bappa ruled over the ravines inhabited by the Bhil community, and this equipped him with martial abilities that proved to be of immense utility in his future as a warrior. Bardic legends provide details about Bappa's childhood. He received support from a few Bhils, among whom the names of Baleo and Dewa are particularly well known. Baleo is known to have applied the tika of sovereignty on Bappa's forehead. [ref]

HIS MIND-BLOWING CONQUESTS

Umayyad Caliphate was a gigantic kingdom of thirty five nations in Central Asia, ruled by a mighty emperor Muhammed Bin Quasim. That rapacious marauder, having defeated Iran, Afganistan, Sind and after plundering their wealth and destroying temples and civilisational heritages, set his pleonectic eyes down further south in 738 CE. That was his fatal mistake. To drive that menacing enemy out and teach that predator an unforgettable lesson, Bappa Rawal created a confederacy of warriors by uniting the Hindu rulers of Ajmer and Jaisalmer. Under his leadership, a series of battles, called 'Battle of Rajasthan' was fought when Bappa Rawal ruthlessly decimated the enemy, chased and drove them into the deep desert beyond Ghazni in Afganistan. After successfully raiding Afghanistan, he defeated and killed Commander Salim of Afghanistan and made his own nephew, king of Ghazni.

As a visionary commander of army and a ferocious fighter, he knew that it is not enough if the enemy is exterminated within our border alone but should be annihilated in their homeland as well. So, He marched ahead, wiped them out and established his reign upto Iran. On his way back, he erected guard posts at every hundred kilometres, each with one thousand troops and headed by Rajput chiefs, so that the enemy cannot dream of striking again. Thus the Islamic invasion was successfully thwarted for more than four centuries till the Second battle of Tarain in 1192 CE. To further fortify the North West Frontier, he built a

city by name, Rawalpindi [presently in Pakistan] and made that place his military base. Stationed there, he launched sixteen successful attacks in north west, thus expanding his kingdom of Mewar upto Iran. His guts, grit, gallantry were so astonishing that the Arabs were mortally afraid even at the mention of his name. They christened him 'Hindu invader'! His vast empire extended Sindh, Baluchistan, Ghazni, Kandahar, Khorasan, Turan, Isfahan, Iran in Central Asia!

DEVOTION TO SIVA AND LAST YEARS

Valiant and venturesome warrior was just one side of his personality. On the other side, he was a pious devotee of Shiva! He had an esoteric, spiritual relationship with his guru, Harit rashi, a saint in the Pasupata sect of Saivism, who is said to have guided him in his ventures and blessed him with victory. He constructed a Shiva temple in Udaipur, by name, Eklingji, the ruling God of Mewar dynasty. The Eklingji Temple is one of Rajasthan's most visited and revered religious sites. The temple in the town of Eklingji (Kailashpuri) is responsible for the town's widespread fame. The temple is very spectacular, both in design and construction. He issued gold coins, depicting Shiva, His trident and Nandi, to commemorate the establishment of Mewar kingdom. He initiated the tradition of worshipping this deity that is being followed by his descendants to this day. Many details about Bappa Rawal can be seen in the book, Ekalinga Mahathmya.

While he was ruthless, rancorous and relentless to his enemies, he was charitable, compassionate and considerate to his own subjects. Since, he was immensely loved by his people, they looked at him as their father and started calling him 'Bappa' [Father].

Bappa Rawal ruled his vast empire before he took to spiritual path to submit and surrender himself to the devotion of God Shiva. After abdicating the throne in 753 CE, he retreated to the forest and completely submerged himself into the devotion of Lord Shiva. He is known to have lived very long, perhaps exceeding hundred years and attained the divine feet of God Shiva at a very ripe age. In short, his life epitomised the dictum enshrined in Kalidasa's Mahakavya, Raghuvamsam described as under:

[As adolescents, Raghu dynasty monarchs excel in their education; as adults, they are inclined towards earthly pleasures; as seniors, they are drawn to saintly pursuits; and as gurus, they are able to yoke their thoughts with the Absolute and release their souls from their bodies, achieving moksha.] [1-8]

AN UNDERRATED LEGEND

In short, Bappa Rawal, the most under-rated hero in history, was a true kshatriya – pugnacious, combative, militant, bellicose, truculent, defiant, aggressive. His motto was simple: Attack! Offence is the best form of defence. In the present day warfare, the inane, insipid, asinine ethical canons of conscience, convention, comportment, consideration are all anachronism. We live not in Threta yuga, but Kali yuga, dog-eats-dog world, where the scheming, shrewd, sharp, sly victor is always right. If only our subsequent kings, chieftains, warriors had scrupulously been unscrupulous in adopting this principle, they could have successfully thwarted onslaughts of the aliens later in history.

Now, let us reflect on the most vital aspect of history chronicling. The mighty Romans invaded and conquered Britain in AD 43. But, not a single mention can be found in the history books of schools in Britain. The Mongols under the notorious bandit Chenghis Khan pulverised China in 13th century AD. The Chinese children are never taught about it. Their historians meticulously ensure that their future generation is kept insulated from such gloomy defeatist details, justifying that it will interfere in their aim of inculcating in them positive spirit of patriotism and pride, chutzpah and courage.

On the other hand, it is indeed shocking to note that, even after seven decades of freedom, we have to punctiliously search for Bappa Rawal to know anything about him. It is awful, appalling, atrocious that all our history books have, while scrupulously blacked out his heroics as well as the victories of our own kings, shamelessly, sing paeans on the fake victories of foreign invaders in profusion.

It is imperative that an immediate sweeping change is made in all our history text books throughout our nation, weeding out all the portions of foreign intruders and instead, plant in them, the true magnificent, majestic, monumental triumphs of our own monarchs, on reading which, our future generation will saunter through the globe with pride and pomposity, elation and euphoria. When are we going to start and complete the exercise, since, till then, in every academic year our younger generation, i.e., the future citizens of our nation will continue to be fed with false, farcical, fabricated, fictitious negative narrations as history, deleterious to their psyche?

Upon the command of Harit Rishi, Bappa conducted severe penance for Ekling, a form of Prabhu Shiva. After getting blessings from Maa Bhavani in his dreams, he started working under the Mori Rulers of Chittorgarh.

During the same period, Sindh was attacked by the first Islamic invasion of Bharat by Mohammad Bin Qasim, a general of the Khalifa. This Arabian invasion was repelled many times by the great Sindhi King Raja Dahir. The Buddhists in the region changed camps and supported Qasim giving him vital information to defeat Raja Dahir. And defeat he did in a fierce battle. Dahir's whole family was wiped out and his daughters were taken captives as slaves to offer the Khalifa.

After Sindh, Qasim turned towards the region of Mewar in Rajasthan. James Todd, the chronicler of ancient Rajasthani History, writes that Dahir's one son survived and escaped to Chittorgarh where he recounted the inhuman atrocities committed by Qasim. Rapes were unheard in Bharat's battle history. The Arabs also didn't observe any rules in war.

Sensing a major war, Bappa Rawal created a friendship with the King of the mighty GurjaraPratihara king Nagabhatta, the Gujarat's king Jaybhatta and the Navsari Chalukyas' AvanijanashrayaPulakeshin.

Qasim returned to Arab and left the further conquest of Bharat in the hands of Junaid Al Marri. He saw initial success in his campaigns in southern Rajasthan, Gujarat and Malwa (MP). But then under the command of Bappa Rawal, 6000 soldiers fought a bloody battle in Mandovar, Rajasthan against an Arab army 10 times larger and defeated them mercilessly. Junaid was slayed. The slew of defeats for Arabs who had conquered the mighty kingdoms in Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, Syria and Northern Africa. The Arab chroniclers themselves mention, "We cannot find a single place to hide from the wrath of the Hindus".

Bappa Rawal then led a contingent of strong warriors and chased the Arabs to Iran. He defeated a local vassal of Qasim, Salim, in Ghazni and married his daughter. He left his nephew to rule Ghazni. To discourage further invasions, Bappa constructed big watchtowers all the way to Iran, some of which are still standing in some parts of Pakistan.

In 726 CE, Bappa overthrew the Mori rulers of Chittorgarh and hence established the Mewar Dynasty which still exists till date. Later, he fought 70 small battles in the span of 5 months to assuage instability in the Peshawar -Lahore region. Khyber was handed over to the Rajputs. Rawalpindi is named after Bappa Rawal. The Pathans of Nowshera are progenies of Bappa and his consorts whom he married in the region. Everybody remembers Charles Martel who similarly stopped the Arabian onslaught into Gaul during the same period but we have forgotten Bappa Rawal's contribution. Kaalbhoja was called Bappa or 'father' by his subjects out of love, respect and admiration for the sacrifices he did. Let's not forget him.

BAPPA RAWAL: Rise of An Audacious King.

The great Bappa Rawal was the founder of this majestic and tenacious Kshatriya Rajput kingdom. He is still remembered in the folklores of Mewar for his indomitable courage and chivalry. He conquered the Arabs and even them out of the Indian subcontinent.

**King of Mewar the Great Bappa Rawal**

It is noted that none of the Mewar chiefs submitted to the Mogul empire entirely or ever attended the Delhi Durbar. Even under British rule, the Mewar prince did not attend the last Delhi Darbar.

C.V. Vaidya had described the personality of this legendary king as the Charles Martel of India who disintegrated the Arabs into pieces. Charles Martel also defeated the Arabs.

Initially, Bappa Rawal was the minor prince under king Mori of Chittor. He ruled the small state of Nagada (Nagahrada). He belonged to the Guhila family of Rajputs. He was also a devotee of Lord Shiva.

Like his descendants and future Indian kings like Shivaji Maharaj, Bappa Rawal was also a strong follower of Sanatan Dharma. When the Arabs conquered Sindh in 712 CE under the leadership of Mohammad bin Qassim the inner kingdom of the Subcontinents became their next target.

Arabs marched towards the kingdom of Moris of Chittor. It is believed that they augmented large forces and harass the Moris. The NavasariChalukya Grant of 739-740 mentions that the Arabs attacked the Maurya (probably referred to as Chittor), Chavotaka, Kachchha, etc.

Harita a sage advised Bappa to go to Chittor and join the service of Mori and fight against the Melchas which were infamous for breaking Hindu temples and idols. Soon after this Bappa Rawal due to his military leadership and unshakable bravery was given the command of the army to counter the Arabs.

FRONTIER AGAINST ARABS

According to many historians, it is widely accepted that the king of Mori died childlessly, and due to this Bappa ascended the throne of Chittor and founded the Guhils Rajput kingdom.

When he died he became a devotee as stated by the Ekalinga inscription. He abdicated the throne in 763 and ascended in 713. The Arabs invaded the Maurya kingdom before 738 and according to the Navasari inscription, Bappa accession maybe around 740 or earlier in 730. His rule lasted for 33 years. Junayd became the leader of the Arabs and marched into the western Rajputana. Here a series of wars were fought which now are known as the "Battles of Rajasthan".

Note: It is also believed that Bappa used the terrain of Rajputana as a strategic point to defeat and chase the invader out of his country. Today the name of this great king is taken with huge respect as he is considered to be the first king of Mewar who wiped out the Arabs.

Bappa Rawal unified the various small kingdoms and augmented a strong Hindu alliance against the Arabs. The Hindu army of Bappa Rawal badly defeated the Arabs and even chased them out of India.

According to legends, it is believed that Bappa Rawal set up a military base at Rawalpindi and liberated Sindh from Arabs. But the sad part is that the name of this audacious Hindu Rajput king is known outside the boundaries of Rajasthan.

It is up to us to bring the history of real heroes of this country who acted as a bulwark and shielded the nation from disintegration.

SHAIVITE AFFILIATION

There was a series of conflicts in the eighth century AD between the regional rulers of North-Western India and the Arabs of Sindh, and Bappa Rawal played a key part in the victory of the Indian kings. By the early eighth century, only a few decades after the advent of Islam, Arab Muslims had already begun an invasion of India that was essentially an extension of their conquest of Persia. Rajputana's western and northern frontiers were vulnerable to Muslim invasion, so Bappa combined the lesser rulers of Ajmer and Jaisalmer to defend against them. In a battle against the Arabs, Bappa Rawal won and temporarily swung the balance of power. In Sindh, Bin Qasim was successful in defeating Dahir, but he was ultimately halted by Bappa Rawal. Some sources claim that Qasim launched an assault on the Mori Rajput-ruled city of Chittor. Dahir's son, Bappa, was a Mori army leader, as was Bappa's father, who belonged to the Guhilot clan. In the end, Bappa was successful in his pursuit of Bin Qasim all the way back to the western banks of the Sindhu, which is modern-day Baluchistan. Afterward, he led an army to Ghazni, where he easily overthrew the local king Salim and appointed a representative before marching back to Chittor. After Raja Mori anointed Bappa Rawal as his successor and crowned him King of Chittor, Bappa Rawal and his forces swept through the Middle East and North Africa, conquering and making vassal states of the kingdoms of Kandahar, Khorasan, Turan, Ispahan, and Iran. As a result, he was able to protect India's borders while still expanding them somewhat.

Almost all inscriptions and bardic sources converge on one undeniable fact- the association of BappaRawal with the Pashupata saint Harit-Rashi. The story of the origins of any empire in India more often than not includes the blessings of a saint, helping founders and successors trace their lineage to the hoary 'sant-parampara' of Bharat. The Pashupata sect of Shaivism has a significant presence in the hills of Mewar. Bappa Rawal's ascent to power also can be determined to an extent by certain legends, that gained credence particularly after the 13th century, when the Guhilas became dominant in the region. The Ekalinga Mahatmya also furnishes some valuable details in this regard. [ref]

Bappa Rawal is recognised as a devout Shaivite and he held the idol of Ekalinga in great spiritual regard. He is known have constructed the famous Eklingji temple, and initiated the tradition of worshipping this deity, that is followed by his descendants to this day. He is also believed to have been a disciple of Harit Rasi, who according to the Ekalinga Mahatmya guided Bappa Rawal to move to Mewar and vanquish the the invading Arabs. Harit Rasi's name-suffix 'Rasi' suggests that he belonged to the Pashupata Sect.

Muhnot Nainsi, a 17th century scholar from Rajasthan, also suggests that Harit Rasi- a great devotee of Ekalinga- propitiated Shiva and obtained the boon of the kingdom of Mewar for Bappa, who tended cows and served him for twelve years. [ref] The Chittor inscription of 1274 and the Mount Abu inscription of 1285 also elucidate upon Bappa's years in a position of regal supremacy in Mewar. The Ekalinga Mahatmya is another source that points towards Bappa receiving a boon from Ekalinga Sankara and subsequently becoming the first king in his lineage. This boon is often considered to be that of a golden

valaya for his foot, an indicator of sovereignty, given by Harit Rasi for his profound devotion towards Shiva.

There is numismatic evidence as well to suggest that Bappa Rawal received the benediction of a Pashupata sage. Bappa's gold coin depicts a Shivalinga with a trident and Nandi on either sides. GH Ojha highlights a number of legends that illustrate how Harit Rashi pleased Lord Shiva. One legend ascribes how Haritrasi had served a goddess and requested for a boon to hand over the kingdom of Mewar to Bappa Rawal. The goddess beseeched him to please Lord Shiva, as only he could possibly hand over territory to any individual. Thus, Lord Shiva appeared as Ekalinga, and this went to become an object of worship for everyone in the Guhila line. [ref]

Upon collation, all these sources seem to unanimously underline the Shaivite underpinning of Bappa's ascent to power. While there is a degree of uncertainty about the exact date when he became king as well as the existence of a saint called Harit Rasi, it can be surmised from the above evidence that the Guhilas sought to legitimise their position by associating themselves with the Pashupata sect, that had grown in prominence by the second millennium.

COUNTERING ARABS

His greatest achievement, for which he continues to be revered, was in vanquishing an Arab army that was being led by a commander named Junaid. The Arabs had overrun Mewar from c. 735- 748 AD, and Bappa is known to have defeated this formidable force. Junaid was a very powerful leader who according to Arab writer Al-Biladuri, overran Kathiawar, Kutch, Saurashtra, Mandor. Defeating him was a stellar achievement and helped Bappa secure a position for himself in the league of the greatest warriors to have taken birth on this land. The Navasari Plates of Avani-Janshreyapulakesin too mention Arab raids in several regions of Gujarat. This grant, dating 739-40 mentions the Arabs attacking the Mori kingdom, along with Chavotaka, Kaccha and other states. It is believed that BappaRawal may have allied with Nagbhata, king of the Pratihara dynasty in the war against the Arabs. Dhawal of Hadoti also apparently allied with these two powers in the Later, Bappa also sided with the Pratiharas in their conflict with the Rashtrakutas. Bappa set up many trading posts at every 100 kilometers with 100 troops while returning to Mewar after defeating the Arabs. One of them was Rawalpindi, named after him. These efforts helped extend the sway of Mewar up till Iran. He is known to have gone up till Ghazni, defeated and slain Commander Salim, and then place Salim's nephew on the throne. Such evidence illustrates how Bappa Rawal had emerged as one of the strongest political leaders in India in the 8th century AD.

CORONATION

Bappa Rawal dethroned the Mori king Manuraja (or Kukadeshwar, as per Somani) and occupied the fortress of Chittor in approximately 745 AD. [ref] The reasons behind this major event could range from the weak nature of the ruling class in Mewar to the damage caused by the Arabs. Bappa Rawal's ambitions to occupy more territory can also not be ruled out. Bardic tradition also denies any major confrontation between the Mori king and Bappa Rawal. Rather, a lot of the Mori officials were assimilated into the Guhila apparatus and this helped lay a stronger foundation for the state. It won't also be incorrect to assume that Bappa emerged as a protector of his state, and there are historians who do argue that he may have enlisted himself in service with the Mori king along with fellow Bhil clansmen. Scholars also speculate that the incumbent Mori king might have died childless, leaving the political space open for challengers.

[ref] Regardless, the Mori lineage certainly ceased after Bappa took over Mewar, and this led to the emergence of an illustrious line of rulers in Chittor - the Guhilas.

Bappa Rawal is known to have lived a very long life, perhaps exceeding even hundred years. He is known to have married multiple times, and blessed with numerous progeny. He ruled from around 19 years, before abdicating his throne and retreating to the forests to spend the remainder of his life as a recluse. His age at the time of abdication may have been around 39, as speculated by Kaviraj Shyamaldas in 'Vir Vinod'. Given his Shaivite affiliation, it can be surmised that he devoted his old age to worshipping Lord Shiva. He died at a ripe old age. However, Bappa Rawal had surely laid robust foundations for his successors to build upon. Founded way back in the 730s, this illustrious line still subsists in the 21st century. He was succeeded by his son Khuman, who also repulsed Arab incursions through his tactical oeuvre.

CONCLUSION

1. Bappa Rawal is considered to be the real founder of the Guhil dynasty of Mewar.
2. Bappa ji Rawal laid the foundation of the Guhil dynasty by demolishing the Maurya Empire in Chittor.
3. According to popular stories, he had so much strength that he used to sacrifice two buffaloes simultaneously in one stroke.
4. The world famous temple of Shri Eklingji of Mewar dynasty was built by Bappa Rawal ji in 734 AD.
5. Bappa Rawal ji ran his victory chariot all over India, Bappaji's army had more than 12 lakh soldiers. He had about 100 wives, of which more than 35 were Muslim women.
6. The famous city of Rawalpindi in present-day Pakistan was named after Bappa Rawal.

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