

A study on cultural history of Gwalior

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Abstract

Gwalior is a historic and major city in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh and one of the Counter-magnet cities. Located 319 kilometers south of Delhi the capital city of India, Gwalior occupies a strategic location in the Gird region of India. The city and its fortress have been ruled by several historic northern Indian kingdoms. From the Tomars in the 13th century, it was passed on to the Mughals, then to the Marathas in 1754 followed by the Scandia's in 18th century.

Besides being the administrative headquarters of Gwalior district and Gwalior division, Gwalior has many administrative offices of Chambal Division of northern Madhya Pradesh. Several administrative and judicial organizations, commissions and boards have their state, as well as national, headquarters situated in the city.

Keywords: Gwalior, Mughal, maharaja

Introduction

Gwalior was the winter capital of the state of Madhya Bharat which later became a part of the larger state of Madhya Pradesh. Before Indian independence on 15 August 1947, Gwalior remained a princely state of the British Raj with Scindias as the local rulers. High rocky hills surround the city from all sides, on the north it just forms the border of the Ganga- Yamuna Drainage Basin. The city however is situated in the valley between the hills. Gwalior's metropolitan area includes Lashkar Gwalior (Lashkar Subcity), Morar Gwalior (Morar Subcity), Thatipur and the *city centre*.

Gwalior was one of the major sites of rebellion during the 1857 uprising. Post-independence, Gwalior has emerged as an important tourist attraction in central India while many industries and administrative offices came up within the city. Before the end of the 20th century it became a million plus agglomeration and now it is a metropolitan city in central India. Gwalior is surrounded by industrial and commercial zones of neighboring districts on all three main directions. A 2016 report of the World Health Organization found Gwalior to be the second-most air-polluted city in the world and the most polluted city in India.

According to local tradition, Gwalior owes its name to a sage of former times. Suraj Sen, a prince of the *gurjar-pratihara* clan of the eighth century, is said to have lost his way in the forest. On a secluded hill, he met an old man, the sage Gwalipa, whose influence almost took him by surprise. Upon asking the sage for some drinking water, he was led to a pond, where the waters not only quenched his thirst but cured him of leprosy. Out of gratitude, the prince wished to offer the sage something in return, and the sage asked him to build a wall on the hill to protect the other sages from wild animals which often disturbed their *yajnas* (or *pujas*). Suraj Sen later built a palace inside the fort, which was named "Gwalior" after the sage, and eventually the city that grew around the fort took the same name.

Scindia is a Maratha clan in India. This clan included rulers of the Gwalior State in the 18th and 19th centuries, collaborators of the colonial British government during the 19th and the

20th centuries until India became independent, and politicians in independent India.

The Scindia state of Gwalior became a major regional power in the second half of the 18th century and figured prominently in the three Anglo-Maratha Wars. (Gwalior first fell to the British in 1780.) The Scindias held significant power over many of the Rajput states, and conquered the state of Ajmer. During the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the city was briefly held by rebel forces in 1858 until they were defeated by the British. The Scindia family ruled Gwalior until India's independence from the United Kingdom in 1947, when the Maharaja Jivajirao Scindia acceded to the Government of India. Gwalior was merged with a number of other princely states to become the new Indian state of Madhya Bharat. Jivajirao Scindia served as the state's Rajpramukh, or the appointed governor, from 28 May 1948 to 31 October 1956, when Madhya Bharat was merged into Madhya Pradesh.

Review of Literature

Sinha *et al.* (2014) ^[1] described that after being founded by Maharaj Suraj Sen, Gwalior Fort saw many different rulers ruling the city and suburbs around it. Gwalior became a prominent place for religious practices, cultures and other disciplines coming up during that time in the country. During the 6th century BC Gwalior was ruled by the Naad dynasty of Pataliputra. During the first century AD, Gwalior came under Naga Dynasty. From the carving found at Pawaya, it has been discovered that the Kushanas ruled the city till the 3rd century AD. After that, it came under the Guptas till 467 AD. During the 5th century, The Kannauj of Gurar-Pratihara Dynasty ruled Gwalior and played a prominent role in shaping its history. From 700–740 AD Gwalior (fondly called then as Gopal Giri) became the capital of Kannauj. A Magnificent Sun Temple was created at the fort hill during that period. Later Kachwaha became the rulers of Gwalior. The Padavali Group of Monuments near Morena, Sahastrabahu Temple at the Fort, Kankadmad, were built under their rule.

Agarwal *et al.* (2006) ^[2] described that during 1195–96 Muhammad of Ghor (also called Muhammad Ghori)

invaded Gwalior and planned a mass destruction to capture the fort. But he failed as the fort was unconquerable under the brave efforts of Parihars. In 1231 Iltutmish captured Gwalior after an 11-month-long effort and from then till the 13th century it remained under Muslim Rule. In 1375, Raja Veer Singh was made the ruler of Gwalior and he founded the rule of the Tomars in Gwalior. During those years, Gwalior saw its golden period.

Mehta *et al.* (2006) ^[3] described that the Jain Sculptures at Gwalior Fort were built during Tomar's rule. Raja Man Singh made his dream palace, the Maan Mandir Palace which is now a centre of tourist attraction at Gwalior Fort. Babur described it as "the pearl in the necklace of forts of India and not even the winds could touch its masts". The daily Light and Sound Show organised there tells about the history of the Gwalior Fort and Man Mandir Palace. Later in the 1730s, the Scindias captured Gwalior and it remained a princely state during the British Rule. Ganesh temple at Gwalior Fort has the very first occurrence of zero as a written number in the world. By the 15th century, the city had a noted singing school which was attended by Tansen. Gwalior was ruled by the Mughals and then the Marathas.

Joshi *et al.* (2005) ^[4] described that Gwalior is also known for not participating in the 1857 rebellion, mainly due to non-cooperation with Rani Lakshmibai. After Kalpi (Jhansi) fell into the hands of the British on 24 May 1858, Lakshmibai sought shelter at Gwalior Fort. The Maharaja of Gwalior was not willing to give up his fort without a fight as he was a strong ally of the British, but after negotiations, his troops capitulated and the rebels took possession of the fort.

Raghav *et al.* (2009) ^[5] described that the British attacked Gwalior in no time, the battle was fought by Lakshmibai. Indian forces numbered around 20,000, and British forces around 1600 assisted by Maharaja of Gwalior troops. Lakshmibai's example is remembered to this day by Indian nationalists. She died fighting, and Gwalior was free from rebels. There is a statue of Lakshmibai on her horse which commemorates her contribution to the fight for independence. Taty Tope and Rao Sahib escaped. Taty Tope was later captured and hanged in April 1859.

Cultural History of Gwalior

Gwalior is a well acknowledged place of art, associated with historic as well as contemporary evidence. In August 2005 a mural created by Aasutosh Panigrahi and five other artists was acknowledged as the World's Largest Indoor Mural by Guinness World Records. Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, the conference on Marathi Literature was held in Gwalior in 1961. It was presided over by writer Kusumavati Deshpande (herself a poet and also the wife of Kavi Anil). She was the first female president of the annual Sammelan since its inception in 1878. Culturally Gwalior is the confluence of two rich cultures Bundeli and Braj. Bundelkhand covers Gwalior, Bhind, Morena, Sagar, Shivpuri, Guna, Sheopur and adjoining areas.

Raja Man Singh Tomar, the King of Gwalior between 1486 and 1516 AD, was a patron of Drupad. Dhrupad is a vocal genre in Hindustani classical music, said to be the oldest still-in-use in that musical tradition. Its name is derived from the words "dhruva" (fixed) and "pada" (words). The term may denote both the verse form of the poetry and the style in which it is sung.

Gwalior holds an unparalleled reputation in Sangeet and has retained Indian traditions and the wealth of music intact over the years. The Gwalior Gharana is one of the oldest Khayal Gharanas and the one to which most classical Indian musicians can trace the origin of their style. The rise of the Gwalior Gharana started with the reign of the great Mughal emperor Akbar (1542–1605). The favorite singers of this patron of the arts was Tansen. Tansen was first amongst the vocalists at the mughal court of Akbar and came from the town of Gwalior.

Tansen, born in Behat, trained in music at Vrindavan, served Raja Ramchandra Waghela of Bandhawgarh, then went to Agra under the patronage of Akbar. An exponent of the Hindustani classical music's dhrupad style, he was counted among the Nine Jewels of the Royal Court. After the death of Tansen in Fatehpur Sikri and cremation in Agra, his ashes were buried in Gwalior. In remembrance of this artist there is a tomb constructed in Gwalior called the Tansen Tomb. Tansen Festival started in the 1930s. At present, artists from all over the country come to perform in the festival.

Baijnath Prasad was a classical singer (Dhrupadiya) who lived in Gwalior for his whole life under the patronage of Man Singh. Baiju was born in Chanderi and was cremated there. He received his musical training in Vrindaban under Swami Guru Haridas Ji. He was the court musician of Gwalior along with Nayak Charju, Bakshu, and others.

Sarod player Amjad Ali Khan is also from the city of Gwalior. His grandfather, Ghulam Ali Khan Bangash, became a court musician in Gwalior.

Tansen Music Festival- The Tansen Sangeet Samaroh, (Tansen Music Festival), is celebrated every year on the Tansen Tomb in Gwalior during the month of December. Tansen Samaroh is a platform where artists from all over India gather and participate to deliver vocal and instrumental performances. Gwalior's environment during the festival turns mystical with melodious music echoing. Music lovers from far and wide make it a point to be a part of this event at any cost, as it is a memorable experience for them. The Tansen Sangeet Samaroh is organized by the government of Madhya Pradesh, in association with the Academy of the Department of Culture. During the festival, music lovers and artists from all over the world gather to offer their tribute to Tansen. The academy offers honors to senior celebrities and junior artists by including them in the Samaroh through their music of performance.

Sarod Ghar - This Museum of Music has been set up in the old ancestral house of musician Hafiz Ali Khan. It houses ancient instruments of the Indian masters of the past. It also houses an impressive collection of photographs and documents. Sarod Ghar is a unique institution devoted to promoting Indian classical music, heritage and culture. Through this 'window' to the past, music lovers can gain a better understanding of the evolution and history of our classical music and a deeper perspective and insight into the context of the art as it exists today.

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