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Mount Abu: The Mythic, The Divine and The Profane

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Abstract

The paper examines the multiple images of landscapes within the singular space of Mount Abu. One finds different meanings of landscapes from ancient to modern times While divinity defines the landscape of Abu, space emerged as a political arena from medieval times. In modern times, space is reified, and the space of Abu sees the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial imaginations coming together.

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Introduction

Mount Abu is a part of the Aravalli range, an old fold mountain that covers portions of three Indian states of Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan in the post-colonial times. The paper explores the different ways in which Abu as space has been appropriated since the earliest times. The landscape of Abu constantly interplays with the mythic, divine, and profane from the earliest available narratives to the time of the British imperial settlement and the present day.

Divinity was dominant until British imperial authorities arrived in the early nineteenth century. Since then, intentional and nuanced efforts to erase history have been observed, severing the link between the divine and Mount Abu everyday life at Place-making, reflecting the English sensibilities and socio-cultural settings in Abu, imposed a different way of life and attempted to efface the existing landscape. This resulted in tensions with the local people, which will be discussed in the last section of the article. The British narrative about hill people will vary from the Indian point of view. The discussions on the multiple imaginations of Mount Abu are divided into four broad themes.

Materials and Methods

The research methodology involves field and archival research in Mount Abu, Rajasthan. The oral narratives of the local balladeer provide an interesting source. The Abu Nagar Palika Records and the District Collectorate records were seen at Abu. The Public Works and Civil and Municipal Department files in the National Archives of India were consulted for the work. The research article also used travel accounts of the nineteenth and

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twentieth centuries. These records at times corroborate each other.

Mythic and a Brahaminic Landscape

There are several tales attached to Abu of the past. Some indicate a mythical past associated with an Indigenous ruler called Shambhala and other dasas or dasyus. In a local text called *Holy Abu*, Shri Jayanvijayaji cites Sten Konow, stating that Ar-budha is mentioned in 'the oldest hymns of the Rigveda' (Jayantavijayaji, 1954, p. 3). It seems that Ar-budha was the place inhabited by the dasas or dasyus (probably the local people in Abu at that time), and later, it came to be associated with the tribe of Nagas or the tribe of the snakes (p.3). The association with snakes resonates in the later traditions about Ar-budha in the Vedic records.

Abu has a well-etched history in the Brahaminic worldview. It is mentioned in ancient Hindu scriptures like the Vedas and Puranas, old legends, and classical Greek and Roman accounts. In the classical account of Ptolemy a mountain west and south of Vindhyas is called Apokopa, a reference to Ar-budha (Ptolemy, p.77, Vogel, 1949, p. 146), Ptolemy calls Arbudha as Apokopa, meaning 'the punishment of the gods'. In Greek it means 'what has been cut of', suggesting 'a cleft' or 'a cliff' or 'a steep hill' (Ptolemy, p.76). In the *Periplus* (sec.15), there is a reference to 'a range of precipitous hills running along the coast of Azania, i.e. of Ajan in Africa' (p.76). The Sanskrit name Arbudha, may have compared a parallel phenomenon, as a place 'rent by an earthquake' at some time creating a cleft (chhidra) (p.77). Ptolemy ascribed the cleaving of a mountain by an earthquake to the anger of the gods, bent on punishing some heinous crime (p.77).

Indian legends tell a more romantic saga about the creation of this lone mountain range amidst a flat topography. A local balladeer retold the tale in his dialect. According to a myth narrated in the local ballads, Abu had a hollow pit (*chhidra*) in ancient times. Sage Vashistha's divine cow, Nandini, fell into a deep pit. She produced a huge amount of milk to float out of the chasm. This would not be possible for ordinary mortals. The *Rishi* requested the god Shiva, believed in ancient lore as the god of vegetation, to help him. God Shiva asked him to go to Himavat, who suggested his youngest son, Nandivardhana, could assist the sage. Nandivardhan agrees, but as the tale proceeds, he states that being lame, he would need help to carry him to that land. Nandivardhan told the sage to seek the help of his friend, a serpent by the name of Ar-budha, to bring him to the spot on his back. The serpent had two conditions: first, the spot be named after him, and second, the place be full of flora and fauna. This is the story of the origin of Ab-budha, recited in the local songs by Rao Ukaiji, the local Bhat at Abu. Bhats are the minstrel tribes of Rajputana maintaining the genealogy (*Asiatic Journal*, p.124)

Divinity is associated with Abu's other geographical formation: the lake. The lake in Abu is called Nakhi Talao. According to local legend, Lord Indra (King of Gods in Hindu mythology) created the lake with his nail; hence, it is called the Nail Lake (Jayantavijayaji, 1954, p. 73). Besides the local legends, lores and the Brahminic tradition, the human activities are present in Abu as historical records. It suggests that besides the divine and the sacred landscape, political and strategic interests play an essential role in the development of Abu.

Weaving Divine and Human Landscape

In medieval times, the political history of Abu assumes importance. The sacred and the political were brought together in the same space at Abu, giving political importance to Abu. The new political clans prominent in medieval Indian history, Parmara, Parihara, Solankis and Chauhans, were incorporated into the Brahminical fold as Kshatriyas (Warrior castes) at Abu (Tod, 1914, p.108).They came to be called the Agnikula Rajputs as they 'sprung from the holy sacrificial pit of the sage Vasishtha at Mount Abu' (Jayantavijayaji, 1954, p.90) Col. Tod refers to the 'convocation of gods there to regenerate the warrior castes'(p.ii). Tod states that 'the Paramara or Panwar was brought into existence by Indra, the Chalukya or Solanki by Brahma, the Parihar by Siva, and finally the Chauhan by Vishnu.'(Tod, 1914, p. 109)). Paramaras were one of the regenerated clans, and the divinity of Abu was reinforced again. Tod describes Abu as the place 'where the four races were created by the Brahmans to fight the battles of Achaleswara and polytheism, against the monotheistic Buddhists represented as the serpents or Takshaks' (p.108.) Tod probably confuses Buddhist and Jain traditions as at another place he mentions Parsvanatha as the twenty-third Buddha, with his symbol Takshak (serpent) (p.108).

Tod describes contentions between the followers of Parsvanatha, under his emblem, the snake and Krishna under his emblem, eagle or Garuda (p.108). The presence of Jain and Brahminic traditions in Abu signifies the sanctity of Abu for both traditions. The Paramara rulers of Chandravati built the fort of Achalgarh, with the famous temple of Achleshwar Mahadev, in the thirteenth century (Dhoundiyal, 1967, p. 430). The Achalgarh fort is a stone fort, and the strategic advantage of Abu's height was used to construct it. Paramaras retreated in this fort during their conflict with the Deoria Rajputs, who would succeed the Paramaras. Now, 'Paramaras are known as Loks and are scattered in the seventeen villages in and around Abu. They do not like to meet strangers and practice strict endogamy' (*The Imperial Gazetteer,* 1908, p. 432).

Innumerable temples of Hindu deities abound in the station. With the temple of Mahadev, there is the temple of Ar-budha Devi, the ruling goddess of the place, situated at an elevated point close to the British station. One has to climb thousands of steps to reach the peak on which the Adhar Devi (commonly called) temple is situated. It is among the highest points in Abu, along with the Guru Shikhar. At Guru Shikhar, one finds impressive caves with shrines of various sages like *Rishi* Attri, Anasuya and *Rishi* Dattatreya (*The Imperial Gazetteer*, 1908, p.432). Colonel Tod described Guru Shikhar as the 'saint's pinnacle', 'the highest peak of the insulated Aboo', from where he could 'survey over this wide expanse, from the blue waters of the Indus west to the transalpine Aravalli may as justly be defined as Western Rajasthan' (Tod, p.9).

Intricate carvings in stone further enhance Abu's divinity and human workmanship at the world-famous Dilwara temples. A rich mercantile community of India, the Jains, dedicated these temples to Mahavira and other Tirthankaras of the Jains. Intricate and 'delicate floral patterns in hard stone, delicate traceries and stone windows, the stone figurines with their jewellery and elaborate costumes' (*The Imperial Gazetteer*, 1908, Vol. V, p.432) highlight the skills of the artisans and the stone masons of those times. The temples were built by Vastupala and Tejpala, the two ministers of an eleventh-century Indian dynasty of the Chalukyas. The two were also the leading merchants of their times (Jayantvijayaji, 1954, pp.15-21, p. 91) The fine craftsmanship of the Jain shrines at Mount Abu matches the delicate stonework of the Dilwara. The Lunasimha-vasai is the most famous, built of 'finely wrought white marble' and a 'big sculpture of Neminath (Jain Tirthankar), made of black basalt'(*The Imperial Gazetteer*, Vol. V, p. 432). It was built by Tejapala for his wife, Anupama Devi and son, Lavanyasinha, with the permission of his ruler, Bhima, the Second of the Solanki dynasty and the local chief, Somasimha (p.91).

While the history of Abu in medieval times is dominated by the conflicts between the different Rajput clans as powerful, politically dominant groups and the craftsmanship of the wealthy Jain patrons, the local inhabitants of Abu - the Bhils, Girassias, Minas, etc. - and their lived experience and world view cannot be ignored. The local inhabitants of Abu are usually pushed to the margins of history, but their presence and activities inscribe the landscape of Abu.

The Lived Landscape: The pre-British Settlement of Abu

Abu is the land of the Bhil tribes, immortalised in the local legends for their loyalty, martial qualities and sacrifice. Their colourful dresses with feathers and their skill with bows and arrows are described in many accounts. Their loyalty to the Rajput chiefs of Mewar, such as Rana Sanga and Maharana Pratap, is still sung in the ballads of the Rajputana. However, only some specimens of their habitat, costumes and tools are shown in the local museum. The museum also contains some of the old sculptures from the medieval kingdom of Chandravati.

The hills in India usually are the sacred sites in the great Brahminical tradition of the plains as the abode of the gods and goddesses, where human presence was a sacrilege. The divine spaces are usually considered empty, based on purity (Hirsch & O'Hanlon, 1995, p. 4). However, the local inhabitants of the hills were generally regarded as low in the social order under the Great Brahminical tradition, as they did not adhere to the rules of the Brahminical structures.

The nineteenth-century English colonists shared a similar sentiment about the hill inhabitants. Tod held the hill people of Abu low on the civilisational scale. Among the earliest visitors to Abu was a team of army men sent by Tod in the 1820s. Tod described Abu hill

people as 'forest lords', who were found to be 'in the inverse ratio of the civilisation' (Tod, 1914, pp. 8-9). He mentions the area as 'inhabited by communities of the aboriginal races, living in a state of primeval (sic) and almost savage independence'(pp. 8-9). For the hill people inhabiting these mountain spots, these lands are the places of their everyday activities. They are 'dispersed through the valleys in small rude hamlets, neat their pastures or places of defence' (p. 8). Major C.A. Baylay, a Political Agent, accused the Bhils and Girassias (Baylay, 1880, p.113) of cutting and burning the jungle for walar - –'a peculiar rain cultivation', destroying 'a great portion of forests' (p. 92). He condemned Minas and Bhils as 'always troublesome races, having a hereditary taste for plundering and cattle-lifting' (p.113). Baylay (1880) is less severe in his descriptions of Girassias, stating that 'formerly great plunderers, but have now settled down to agriculture, and seldom give any trouble. They are said to be the descendants of Rajputs married to Bhil women'(p.113).

The colonial narrative of English officers is at variance with the narrative of Indian descriptions of Abu's hill communities. Sohanlal Patni (1984) and Dhoundiyal (1967) describe Bhils and Girassias to be very productive. The Bhils were forest dwellers, with pastoralism as their primary activity. They also practised '*watar*', along with the activity of animal husbandry (Dhoundiyal, 1967, p. 101). The Bhils efficiently collected wood, gum, herbs and honey. The local markets existed before the arrival of the British. The Bhils sold their produce in the local markets and fairs, which were of very old standing (Adams, 1899, p. 139). They skillfully used bamboo to make baskets, fans, and mats. It seems there was a division of labour. It is mentioned that the women collected different produce from the forests, such as *khajurs,* berries, *Jamuns, Karaunda,* raw mango (*Keri*), and tamarind, and sold them at the market. Almost every Bhil household had cows, buffaloes and goats. Hen-rearing was an essential occupation among them (Patni, 1984, p. 58).

Besides the pastoral and forest life, agricultural communities Patels, Dheds and Meenas co-existed. The Loks took to agriculture after losing their position as rulers. The genesis of *Loks* is obscure. They claim to be the Paramaras, who originated from the fire-pit of *Rishi* Vashistha at Mount Abu, but disclaim any association with the Paramaras of Gujrat. The present Deoria Rajput rulers later succeeded them, and the Loks became the small landholders who practised strict endogamy (Mirams, 1924, p. 35). The agriculturalists cultivated the Rabi and the Kharif crops. Manure was not used for the rain crops at Abu, but for the Rabi crops, more care was taken: the ground was first ploughed at the close of the rains and then twice or thrice afterwards. The seed was sown by scattering by hand, and crop rotation was unknown (*The Rajputana Gazetteer*,1879, pp. 98-99). The implements used were 'the plough or the *hal*; the hamar, a flat tog for breaking the clods and levelling; the *phaora* for digging; the *kori*, a piece of flat wood for making beds and channels; and a wooden pitch-fork' (p. 99).

The everyday activities coexisted with the recreational, occupational and divine pursuits amongst the local inhabitants of Abu in pre-colonial times. The local communities of Bhils and Girassias celebrated their festivals, which were interwoven in their daily lives. The great and the little traditions came together to celebrate Dussehra, the Holi, and the Gangaur, a festival of goddess Parvati, celebrated with the beatings of the drums and songs (pp. 54-64).

The imperial officers of the nineteenth century saw the tradition of hunting among the Bhils with suspicion. Imperial Gazetteer and Col. Tod presented a romantic picture of the use of bows and arrows made entirely of bamboo by Bhils and Girassias (*The Imperial Gazetteer* of India, 1908, pp.102-103). Colonel Tod admired the dexterity with which the Bhilnis handled their bows and arrows (p.9). They particularly liked the meat from black sheep and goats (*The Rajputana Gazetteer*,1879, p.98; Dhoundiyal, 1967, p.101). Their descriptions only reinforce their image of 'wild', which had negative connotations in the Puritan Christian tradition and the imperial tradition (Rennie, 1991, p.13, p. 21). The British considered these forest people frozen in time, who did not change in modern times. In the ancient and medieval polity, the Bhils seem politically significant. According to Patni, the word Bhil originates from Dravidian, meaning the '*pratyancha'* or raised bowstring. Their skill with bows and arrows was acknowledged in the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and the Puranas (Patni, 1984, p. 54). Bhils played a crucial role in medieval politics as they were adept at guerrilla warfare, using the forests

tactically for defence and shelter. Maharana Pratap employed the services of the Bhils to apply pressure on the Mughal political system. Maharana Pratap strategically used this guerilla warfare to elude the control of the centralising Mughal forces. This is alluded to by Baylay (1880) when he states that the Bhils and Minas were 'too often encouraged by the thakurs, who are glad to have a numerous following of these classes, as they prove useful soldiers and adherents in times of difficulty'(p.113).

The colonial state saw Bhils' martial qualities as a threat in the nineteenth century, and they were bracketed as the 'Criminal tribe' (*The Criminal Tribes* Act, 1871). Baylay (1880) described Bhils and Minas as 'the principal criminal classes of the State' (p.114). The Act of 1871 restricted the movements of the tribes, and they were under strict surveillance.

Before the British came, Abu was under the possession of the Raja of Sirohi. There are references to the expeditions into the hills under the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals, but these expeditions left the life of the hill people largely untouched. Local chiefs usually collected taxes from the agriculturalists and the trading castes. Abu was under the princely state of Sirohi at the time of British arrival (*The Sirohi State Administration Report,* 1939-40, p.2). Tracing descent from the central characters of the epic Mahabharat, the ruling house of Sirohi claims association with the Chauhans (p. 2). The British glorified the rulers of Sirohi as being 'magnificently stubborn'(p.2).

Lumbha or Lumaji (Baylay, 1880, p. 96) founded the Chauhan Deora rule on Abu, now known as the Sirohi Raj. In the time of Deora's immediate successors, the Chauhans constantly struggled with the Parmars (who held the more significant part of Sirohi). They finally defeated the Paramaras, capturing Chandravati in about 1303 AD and later Abu and Achalgarh (*Sirohi State Administration Report,* pp.2-3) Baylay (1880) mentions that Rana Kumbhaji of Chittor took refuge in Abu with the permission of then Deoria ruler Sains Mal against the 'Delhi Emperor's army' (p.99). After the retreat of the Delhi army, the Rana refused to leave Abu, 'having found what a strong position Abu was' (p.99). Since then, the Sirohi Durbar has not permitted any Raja to go to Abu. Both the Paramara and the Deora rulers of Sirohi recognised the elevation of Mount Abu as a natural strategic defence against enemies. The history of Mount Abu will undergo yet another change with the arrival of British officers in this region in the early nineteenth century. The making of Abu as the hill station of the British Raj will impose a different imagination based on English sensibilities. Abu would be converted into a British sanitarium in the 1840s. Those markers of identity that defined Abu settlement and its people in the pre-British period were slowly effaced or marginalised.

Mount Abu: 'A Cockpit' of the British Empire

The advent of the British transformed Abu. With its elevation and temperate climate, Abu was seen as an oasis in the desert or 'a cockpit' of the British empire, paraphrasing Rudyard Kipling, who describes Rajputana as the 'cockpit of India' (Cole, 1922, p.6). The British first interceded in the affairs of Sirohi in 1817, when Sheo Singh, regent of Sirohi, requested British protection against Marwar and Meenas. Captain Tod, the Political Agent in Western Rajputana, commenced inquiries and supported the Sirohi royal family (Baylay, 1880, p.100). A treaty was concluded between Sheo Singh and the British government, with Captain Spiers as the Political Agent of Sirohi state (p.100).

The Agent to the Governor-General of the Ajmer-Merwara represented the imperial seat of authority at Abu during the summer from April to October (p. 100). It was made the seat of the British Raj in the Rajputana - a point of interaction between the British state and the princely states of Rajputana. The principle of paramountcy was asserted at Abu, with the British authorities insisting that all the princes must reside at Abu and that their Vakils must be present continuously in Abu (Foreign Department Files, 1833).

The British settled in Mount Abu in the 1840s, establishing a sanitarium in 1843, primarily for the Neemuch and Erinpura cantonments and the local English population in Rajputana (Pritchard, 1860; Baylay, 1880, p.101). In 1865, the earliest municipal organisation was established in Abu (Awasthi, 1972, p. 324). Mount Abu was formally taken on lease by the British authorities from the Sirohi Darbar in 1917 (Abu Nagar Palika Records, old, 1917). The British acquired the most elevated area for their settlement. The British were adept at

projecting their position as rulers. For this, they took vantage points of Abu (Sahlins, 1985, p. 61). They were equally aware of the significance of the gods and goddesses occupying the highest points and wanted to appropriate a similar strategic position for themselves (Pradhan, 2017, p. 58).

The states of the local chiefs surrounding Abu possess a strong Brahmanic influence (Abu Nagar Palika Records, old). The lease agreements between the English administrators and the Sirohi Darbar stipulated that cattle and kine could not be slaughtered in Abu (Abu Nagar Palika, Records, old). Ignoring Sirohi Darbar's terms, cattle slaughter was permitted, and slaughterhouses were allotted at the Abu station, as the meat was part of English eating habits. In the station of Mount Abu, pillars were erected, defining the boundaries since 1917 (Abu Nagar Palika Records, old). The English asserted a claim to space distinct from the sacred and everyday lifestyle of the hill people and the Indian pilgrims.
Mount Abu was soon transformed into an English summer retreat with English cottages, social life, culture, and rules and regulations. The British gradually imposed an English lifestyle in the station. The Agent to the Governor-General resided in the 'Residency', a classic chalet-style bungalow in Abu (PWD File, No. 64, January 1912). It was also called the 'Eagle's Nest' for its location atop a jagged rocky peak. The Residency had all the comforts of a colonial government house – billiard room, tennis courts, Residency lawns, Fowl House, Office of the AGG, servant's quarters, and the stable. The Abu PWD records mention that '90 pakhals' were 'supplied by 12 Bhishtis to the Residency Garden daily' (PWD records, 20 January 1912). Bhishtis supply water, carrying in mussuck or goatskin (Yule & Burnell, 2013, p.97). Pakhals were possibly artificially created water storage pits for irrigation. Abu soon emerged as a bustling township, with new constructions and buildings of varied styles of architecture in the form of havelis, palaces and villas. The rulers used their distinctive architectural designs and embellished them with royal insignias. Some prominent rulers who had their abodes in Abu were the Jodhpur House, the Jaipur House, the Bikaner House, and the Nimbdi Palace. The British also created areas of sociability for the English community and the Indian princes - a lake, and a wildlife spot called the Trevor Tank, was built for those interested in hunting; Trevor Oval and Polo Pavilion, a vast ground in a prime spot in Abu, was used for polo and fancy-dress balls; the Rajputana Club emerged as a point of social interaction between the English and the Rajput princes and the Sunset point, an ideal spot for viewing both the sunset and sunrise The Abu Club and the animal hospital were also built in the station (File No. D/1716/47, General File regarding Establishment at Abu, suggested for the Improvement, Abu Nagar Palika Records, Abu (District Magistrate Office), 1947).All these were developed to attract English officials and their families to Abu as an imperial resort.

Abu also emerged as a destination for education. The English introduced this new concept to teach their young ones in the bracing, cool climes of the mountains. Sir Henry Lawrence, the Commander-in-Chief of the East India Company, famous for his brave defence of the Lucknow Residency during the 1857 upheaval, first conceived the idea of the Lawrence Schools for orphans and poor children of English and Eurasian soldiers serving in India at Abu (Dhoundiyal, 1967, p. 362). St. Lawrence Asylums emerged at Abu as a result of his tireless efforts. Today, it is an important training centre of the Central Reserve Police Force. In 1885, St. Mary's School was set up as a high school. The main building was erected by B.B. and C.I. Railway Company in 1887 at a cost of about a lakh and a half Rupees. In 1903, the school was taken over by the S.P.C. Mission and then by the Roman Catholic Mission of Ajmer. In 1929, the Irish Christian Brothers, who run the school, took charge. Beginning with 90 students in 1930-31, there were 140 students in 1950-51 (p. 362). Nuns of the Order of the Saint Mary of the Angels started Sophia Convent High School (p. 369). All these developments in Mount Abu by the colonial English authorities would result in tensions and challenges.

The Spatial Interstices and Contestation

In transforming Mount Abu as an English township, the British wanted to erase the past histories of the place. The policy of segregation from the local population was followed. Still, the presence of the Raghunath Temple, overlooking the sacred lake and the association of Abu with the divine, mythical past in the heart of the English station created tensions with the Jain and Hindu pilgrims. A reading of the Raghunath Temple records shows the temple priests' litigation with the local municipal authority. As a

religious ritual, pilgrims took a dip in the divine lake, but the English authorities of Abu did not allow the pilgrims to take dips in the lake.

A congregation of a large group of Indian pilgrims was viewed with suspicion by the colonial authorities, threatening the security and well-being of the English men, women, and children. They were also concerned about the start of the epidemics in the sanitarium. The colonial state was perpetually uneasy about the presence of Indians near the British settlement, especially in the hill station, which they regarded as exclusive English spaces (Pradhan, 2017, p.83.). They restricted the movement of Indian people in the Abu station. The colonial authorities sought to deny Abu's historical significance.

The British constructed a separate Muram road for the Jain pilgrims via Dhundhai and Torna village, bypassing the English station (File No.975(old), Abu Nagar Palika Records). This caused hardships and inconvenience to the Jain pilgrims visiting the Dilwara temples, which is evident from the number of petitions filed by the Jain community. The route from the British settlement was the most frequented route to the Dilwara Temples (Abu Nagar Palika, File No. 975 (old). They highlighted the inconvenience of travelling by bullock carts on the roads, which were not properly constructed and created difficulties for women and older adults (Abu Nagar Palika, File No. 975 (old).

There is a contestation of space between the rulers and their subjects as the colonial rulers attempt to marginalise the historical significance of the pre-British past. The limitations that the colonial authorities tried to impose on Mount Abu, projecting Mount Abu, the prefix of Mount with Abu, comparing it to Olympus, the place of gods in Greek mythology, as an exclusive space of the English, sees cracks and finally shatters after Indian independence.

In 1947, the 'district of Abu was retroceded to the Sirohi Darbar on the 19th July, 1947' (File No. D/1716/47, 1947, Abu District Magistrate Records). Khan Sahib F.K. Suntook was appointed as the DM (District Magistrate) of Abu station on 24 July 1947 as the 'President, Council of Administration'(File No. D/1716/47, 1947, Abu District Magistrate Records). All departments in Abu, including the Dilwara Tehsil, were placed under his direct charge.

Results

The result of colonial urbanisation is an uneven development of different regions in India and pockets of growth within the same space. Such tensions and contradictions were revealed in the correspondences exchanged between the various local groups, pilgrims and the local colonial authorities. The colonial officers imagined Mount Abu as a health station, which led to the segregation of space during British rule. Such exclusion of space collapses in post-independence India. The middle classes now swarm the hill station, and the concept of the resort has been taken to new levels in postcolonial India. The process of tourism and tourist industry has accelerated in the post-independence period. More such studies are needed to connect local and global trends under spatial history.

Discussion

The significance of this work is that the research focuses on the lesser-explored regions and places in Indian history. Regional histories, in particular, the study on mountains is an upcoming area of research. The place-making of the regions on the margins of history is highlighted in the research article. The research is centred around the different imaginations and historical experiences in the history of Abu at different periods in history. These local histories have become relevant in understanding and connecting the metanarrative of colonial urbanisation in the twentieth century with ensuing tensions.

Conclusion

The history of Abu, as seen today, is what David Harvey (2003) described (in the building of the Basilica of Sacre-Coeur, pp.311-340) as a contest between 'those who struggled for and against the embellishment of that spot (p. 340). Today, the spot has become a noisy tourist locale, which in some ways continues the trend of the colonial sanitarium. From a sacred divine landscape, Abu was appropriated as the lands of the warriors and the hunters (the Bhils) in medieval times to an 'Elysium', a segregated space of the English colonists in the nineteenth century, after strife with the local Bhils in 1857 to the protests of the Jain community.

In the post-independence period, the hill station of Abu brought the sacred and profane together, a process that began in the British period. The commodification of space has made Mount Abu a place for tourism

on a larger scale after independence; the dandiya replaces the ballroom dances of the Victorian era, and the imperial ambience of Abu is now a public space swarming with Indian people. From a sacred, divine and mythical space to a tapestry of everyday activities and festivities of the hill people, Abu was recast as an English sanitarium and a colonial hill station in the nineteenth century to become an Indian tourist resort in present times.

With the departure of the British in 1947, the previous British segregation and British presence were eroded, and the Indian middle classes now regularly descend on Abu during vacations. As the evening falls, almost all the tourists, either on foot or pony, assemble at the 'Sunset Point' to watch the sun going down into the desert. The well-lit eating joints, open till late into the night, attract hordes of tourists. During the festive season of September-October, many tourists, especially youngsters, mainly from Rajasthan and nearby Gujrat, come in large groups to participate in the nightlong garbas (the traditional stick dance of Gujrat). Many fast-food joints around it cater to the needs of the tourists. There are many ice-cream parlours and eating joints of favourite Gujarati food, pav-bhaji - a bun with a curry of mashed potatoes and other vegetables.

The Dilwara Jain temples and other Hindu temples are regular tourist affairs and not so much about pilgrimage. The touristic spectacle and fetish of commodification catering to the capitalist market economic forces is evident everywhere. The divine is catered to by the spiritual presence of the new age institutionalised religious sect, catering to a new age clientele and the challenges of modernity. A religious sect of Brahmakumaris, who renounced all ties and practised celibacy, set up a sprawling campus in Abu. They dress in absolute white, and they are a visible presence. They have set up a hospital in Abu. Their centre provides free food and cheap lodging to people unable to afford the expensive hotels at Abu. They have developed a landscaped park in a vast expanse of flat space, with fountains, shaded seats, and meditation centres under the thatched roof pavilions, named the 'peace park'. Divine replaced by spirituality with commercial ingenuity has integrated and reified in new ways.

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Informed Consent Statement
This study did not involve human participants, and therefore, informed consent was not required.

Permission to Reproduce Material from other Sources
Not Applicable

Author Contributions
The sole author was responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis, writing, and final approval of the manuscript.

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