

Almost each six-line verse in the 188-verses long poem, Jaichand's *Saiki*, a history of hundred years, begins with an abbreviated reference to the years, spanning from 1658 to 1714 (VS 1715 to 1761).¹

Brief introduction to Jaichand's *Saiki*:

Unlike the poetic visions of the monsoon season and kingly visions that associated the patronage of water tanks and lakes with genealogical and commemorative narratives, the Jain monk-traveler Jaichand offered an ecological perspective on rains and droughts in his historical poetry. *Saiki* may have belonged to a wider genre of historical writing heralded by non-courtly scribes and travelers, however, we know very little about this genre as such texts have received extremely limited attention from historians of literature, culture or Jain religiosity.²

Jaichand fashions himself as a traveler and gatherer of information from local people and historical sources. He covers largely the towns and cities of Rajasthan in the Northwest, though Jaichand occasionally also offers perspectives on places further south in the Deccan. While he does not claim to belong to a specific region, the genre of *Saiki* and Jaichand's use of language suggests that he comes from Marwar, Mewar or Bikaner. He often writes in a manner of speaking, so as to say, the "information that he has heard," especially in elaborating about regions in the East and the South beyond the regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat.³ This suggests that Jaichand had greatest proximity to northwestern India or that simply he employed this rhetorical conceit to attest his knowledge. In describing one season of famine and draught in the Deccan as an anomaly, he refers to the region as a place where there were never "bad times," thus contrasting it with the North and West where year upon year the patterns of good and bad rains, abundance and famines continued.⁴ His account most certainly is a treasure trove to think of the mid-seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries story of high politics and negotiations between regional polities in Northern, Western and Southern India and with the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, especially aided by politically savvy itinerant officials.

Jaichand's approach to composing history in a chronological manner alternates between telling stories of political and ecological changes. This rhythmic narrative structure alerts us to the stakes the author saw in recounting rains in telling the history of the sixty-odd years that lead up to the mid-eighteenth century. Usually we encounter a set of five to six verses that offer a perspective on the nature of political conflicts and alliances, followed by a report, in the subsequent set of three-four verses, on annual rains and associated state of agricultural production, economy of the grains markets, migration patterns of people, and social behavior of people from various classes and castes. For instance, in one of the introductory verses (8), Jaichand discussed the actions of Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar in the year 1658 (1715 VS)⁵, followed by a report on Emperor Aurangzeb's territorial outposts and inheritance woes.⁶ An account of the political negotiations and fierce battles that ensued among Mughal princes and Rajput kings, especially those who controlled Mughal provinces in this time period, follows. Jaichand concludes this strand of history by turning to the reasons for Raj Singh's attack on Malpura and Ajmer and the wise counsel he received from Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur. Verse fifteen leads onto a set of three verses on the environmental, economic and societal happenings from the years 1658 to 1661 (1715 to 1721 VS).⁷

Related to the workshop theme, I will focus on verses 16, 17, and 18, and 103, 112 (verse is followed by Dr. Jawalia's brief commentary in Hindi):

सं. 1715-1717
सुख

(16)

पनरोतरै दुरभिख पड्यो, सोळोतरै धान गळ्या सगळा।
सतरोतरै पाइली सोळ, मेह न वूठा पाछै पहिला।
मालपुरै बहु मंडि, राणै मास्या थी पहिली।
लगोलगि तीन बरस, धान न रह्या दुनियां दुहिली
जतियां रै चेला जुड्या, साहू सपूत ज साहरा।
जैचंद जोरो न केहनो, सुख सिरज्या हुवै नाह रा॥

संवत् सतरह सौ पंद्रह में दुर्भिक्ष (अकाल) पड़ा। संवत् सतरह सौ सोलह में अतिवृष्टि से सभी तरह के धान्य गल गये। संवत् सतरह सौ सतरह में अनाज का भाव सोलह पाइली का था। अंतिम दिनों में वर्षा नहीं हुई। लगातार तीन वर्षों से अकाल की स्थिति रहने से अन्न का अभाव हो गया और देश की प्रजा संतप्त रही। इन वर्षों में सेठ-साहुकारों के बेटे तक जतियों के शिष्य बन गए। जयचंद कहता है कि इस स्थिति पर किसी का वश (जोर) नहीं है। सुख का सृजन भगवान का किया हुआ होता है ॥ 16 ॥

In fifteen there was famine, in sixteen all grain decayed

In seventeen (the cost of grain) for "pail" was sixteen, no rains poured in these last days (?)

Many grain markets in Malpura, were destroyed by the Rana in those days

For three consecutive years, there were no grains and people were starved (pained)?

The sons of merchants and moneylenders became the followers of monks

Jaichand says no one has control (on these conditions), prosperousness (happiness/ good times?) is created by God (16)

(17)

अठारोतरै मेह अपार, उगणीसै बाजरी बहुळी।
बीसै न तूठा मेह, निरसी हुइ धरती सगळी॥
बीस रै तोलै मण दोढ, नाज भाव एम जणायो।
अढी सेर वलि घ्रित, मिलै नही रोके रुपये मुलायो॥
गाइ बळद मुआ गया, छाछि न मिली ओषधें।
बीकानेर वड देस मे, जोति आँख्यां री किम वधै॥

संवत् सतरह सौ अठारह में खूब वर्षा हुई। संवत् सतरह सौ उन्नीस में बाजरे की पैदावार बहुत अधिक हुई। संवत् सतरह सौ बीस में संतोषप्रद वर्षा नहीं होने से धरती रसविहीन हो गई। अनाज का भाव (एक रुपए का) बीस के तोल से डेढ़ मण का हो गया और घी का भाव एक रुपए का अढाई सेर का था, पर रोकड़ी (नकद) रुपया देने पर भी वह उपलब्ध नहीं होता था। गाय बैल आदि पशु मर गए। स्थिति यहां तक गंभीर हो गई कि दवा के रूप में छाछ तक उपलब्ध नहीं होती थी, ऐसी अवस्था में बीकानेर जैसे विशाल प्रदेश में लोगों की आंखों की ज्योति (दृष्टि) किस प्रकार स्वस्थ हो सकती है ॥ 17 ॥

In eighteen there was abundant rain, in nineteen there was lots of millet

In twenty the clouds did not burst, the entire earth became dry (without water)

The cost of grain for twenty *tolas* was now the same as for one-and-half *mana*

Two-and-half *ser* of ghee could not be brought even with one rupee (payment) in cash

Cows and buffalos died, one does not even find buttermilk to soothe/cure (as a medicine/soother)

In a large place like Bikaner, how do people hope for the future? (how do peoples' eyes light up?) (17)

(18)

इक्कीसै घण अन्न, सरस नीपना सरसै।
भाद्रव हुआ दोइ, मेह तिहाँ बहुळा वरसै॥
सोजितै न हुआ सुभिक्ष, तिहाँ पण घणा बिकाणा।
दुखी हुआ बहु मनुष, पड्या फिर्या घणू सीदाणा॥
कहै जैचंद बहुग्यान करि, भला दीह वळिया वळी।
मुख साहिबी बैठा करो, पूरो निज मन नी रळी॥

संवत् सतरह सौ इक्कीस में रसयुक्त धान्य प्रभूत मात्रा में उत्पन्न हुआ। उस वर्ष दो भादवे थे और दोनों में ही बरसात भी बहुत अच्छी हुई। परंतु सोजत के क्षेत्र में दुर्भिक्ष की स्थिति रहने से वहाँ बहुत अधिक संख्या में लोग बिक गए। मनुष्य अत्यधिक संतप्त होकर घरों में पड़े रहे अथवा घर छोड़कर बाहर चले गए और इधर-उधर घूमते हुए दुःखी होते रहे। जैचंद बहुत अधिक विचार (बोध) करके कहता है कि अच्छे दिन पुनः आएंगे। आप घर बैठे भगवान का भजन करो और अपनी अभिलाषाओं की पूर्ति करो ॥ 18 ॥

In twenty one abundant grains, flourished with *rasa* (does this imply nutrients rather than the reference to succulent crops in the commentary?)

There were two monsoons, both poured abundant rains

Sojat did not see this abundance, there many people were sold

Many humans were in pain, roamed here and there or suffered at home

Says Jaichand after giving deep thought, good days will come back again

All must sit and take God's name, who will fulfill all your hearts' desires (18)

What does Jaichand have to say about political time and ecological time in 1699 (1757 VS), at the dawn of Udaipur's Amar Singh II reign, when the large-scale painting on cloth featuring the king and Udaipur court and city in a monsoon downpour was made (Fig. 1)? *Sukala*, good times!

good times
1757
1907
संवत् 1757 में नवकोटि मारवाड़ में सर्वत्र सुकाल की स्थिति रही।
बीकानेर के महाराजा सुजानसिंह अश्वारूढ़ होकर दक्षिण भारत में दौरे करता था। उदयपुर और चित्तौड़ दुर्ग में महाराणा अमरसिंह तथा जैसलमेर में यशवंतसिंह और आमेर की गद्दी पर सवाई जयसिंह शोभा दे रहे थे। धरती में इतना अन्न उत्पन्न हुआ कि यहां के राजा-महाराजा सभी आनंद में थे। जयचंद कहता है कि अपने भाग्य और पुण्य कर्मों के कारण सभी सुखी थे ॥ 103 ॥

(103)

सतावने हुआ सुकाल, मारवाड़ नवकोट मझारी।
सुजानसिंह बीकानेरियो, फिर दखिण में असवारी ॥
राजै राणो अमरसिंह, उदैपुर चीतोड़ कोटे।
जसवंतसिंह जेसलमेर, सवाई जैसिंह अंबेर ओटे ॥
इतरी धरती नीपनी, राउ राणा सगळा सुखी।
जैचंद कहै निज बखत सूं, पुन्ये करी सहु में सुखी ॥

Omrao
Bikaner
in Deccan
Amar Singh
Jaislmer
Chittor
menthi
transcri

Fifty-seven saw good times, in all regions of Marwar
Sujan Singh of Bikaner, embarked to Deccan on a horse
Rana Amar Singh ruled in Udaipur and Chittor fort
Jaswant Singh at Jaislmer, Sawai Jai Singh at Amer
Crops were abundant on the earth, Raos and Ranas were happy
Says Jaichand, on their good fortune, well earned through past deeds (103)



Fig.1: Maharana Amar Singh Watching an Elephant Spectacle in the Palace Courtyard and the City of Udaipur in the Monsoon, c. 1705. Artists Unknown. 109.2 x 175.2 cm (Freer and Sackler Gallery of Asian Art)

The genre of Jaichand's *Saiki* is distinct from the panegyrics in courtly poetry—both from works that recounted the history of kings and royal spaces and from literature that described types of seasons and idealized heroines and heroes. Both these genres deliberate aesthetic emotions attached to rains and lakes. Unlike Keshavdas who speaks about the sounds, sights and smells of the monsoon in classifying the sensations and emotions that define seasons, Jaichand adopts an enumerative strategy: we sense his insistence on years, chronology, and facticity—who killed whom in small and big wars, who became the next king, names of key ministers and political players who constantly moved between courts, whether there were less or more rains, floods and droughts, comparing droughts that occurred in different regions and different years, for example like 1751 in Marwar and 1687 in Gujarat (verse 80, p. 132), quantity and quality of agricultural produce and fluctuations in the prices of grains and butter across regions, and the constant movement of people from the regions of Rajasthan to the central lush lands of Malwa due to the lack of rains and grains. Jaichand employed words from Old Hindi and verse structure that makes connections with courtly literature, though he rarely engages aesthetic motifs. Jaichand's language, as noted above, takes from the regional dialects of Rajasthan, particularly region around Udaipur and Jodhpur, evokes the sensibility of a *bol-chal ki bhasa*, a language in which people conversed on a daily basis. Perhaps like the news papers created and circulated by messengers and men who established the information network of eighteenth-century India, Jaichand's verse partakes in a culture of reportage and critique. On limited occasions, during a season of good monsoons, we certainly hear of celebratory emotions like the earth is now *sarasa*, full of *rasa*, and that is was earlier *nirasa*, without any *rasa*, during a season of drought. The parallels between how water drenches the soil and *rasa* or the liquid materiality of juice are unmistakable. But, again, the suggestion here is one of good conditions and bad conditions for farmers, merchants, kings and society at large.

Ultimately by alternating between the political and the ecological, Jaichand creates a picture of *dukhal*, bad times, and *sukhal*, good times. It does not appear that he employed the quality of rains to shape political narratives. For instance, in his verses on the reign of Amar Singh II discussed below we will see that seasons of both good and bad rains prevailed, but the poet's concern lies more in conveying a narrative on economy, social order and livelihood than portraying an idealized and stable vision of the entire reign of a single ruler. Neither does Jaichand dedicate his work to a single royal or mercantile patron, nor does he sing praises of a singular figure.⁸ Instead, in his verses we find critiques—of Emperor Aurangzeb and Rajput kings alike—for the atrocities they inflicted on the common man;⁹ he criticizes Jain merchants for how they manipulated prices on the grains market; and, he questions the integrity of his own monk community for how they played with the sentiments of lay men and women during difficult times. As seen above, while recounting Raj Singh's destruction of crops in Malpura in a verse sixteen that focused on the ecological story of the year, the author appears to stress that distressing times could be brought upon by God, and how he controls nature, and by kings, and how they conduct themselves. Prosperity and morality is linked to ecology and politics. Both are steeped in crisis. Both change year upon year.

¹ All the years in the poetry are noted per the Indian calendar, so my translations of the verses include the dates per Vikram Samvat however, in the main text I follow the Georgian/ Western

² Brijmohan Jawalia suggests the existence of such a genre in his introduction to a printed edition of this manuscript but does not elaborate on other evidence. I also want to alert you that while (a) geographer has mined this source for data on climate change and waterworks, and a historian has recently published the verses with an introduction in Rajasthani, historians of literature or culture have entirely ignored, as far as I have researched, this genre or composition. My current research in this direction, while exciting, offers fairly tentative and schematic interpretations.

³ Verse 30. Jawalia. p. 108.

⁴ Verse 109. Jawalia, p. 148.

⁵ Verses 1-7 are missing from the manuscript. Jawalia suggests that verses 1-6 must have included introductory verses for the poetry and description of the years from 1652-57.

⁶ And by fifteen, he killed the (residents of) Malpura for no reason
Having launched an attack on *kbwaja*, from there he ventured off to Ajmer
He burned the fields, brought dark times, all citizens were pained
The next three years were distraught, all men starved and died
Rana Raj Singh who was angry with *padsab* (Aurangzeb), looted people's homes
Did not take the wealth of the emperor, tell us whom did he torture? (8)

From Aurangabad, Aurangzeb watched provinces in the south
Bringing one lakh horses, established his empire on the entire earth
The brave Muradbaksh counted the posts in Gujarat
Shah Suja controlled the lands and kings in the east
He will apply *tilak* (on the forehead) of Dara Shikoh, thus contemplated the emperor in his mind
The three princes joined hands, destroyed the emperor's prestige (9)

⁷ He grabbed the opportunity, made his army strong, Rana Raj Singh made a pledge
He attacked Malpura, the entire city ran for refuge
He burned all the crops of Tonk and Toda
He decided to destroy the shrine of *kbwajaji*, at that time Jai Singh counseled
We have to live within the empire, enmity will increase with attacks on Ajmer
Rana returned to Udaipur, completed all his works (15)

⁸ Except on one occasion when he introduces and praises Anup Singh of Bikaner most likely in the context of the assembly of intellectuals that was hosted in samovar 1749 and 1750, discussed in the introduction. Verse 76. Jawalia, p 130.

⁹ See the introductory verses on Raj Singh. On another occasion in verse 92, Jaichand notes how Rajputs indulge in looting and attacks on common people. Jawalia, p 139.