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History of Indian art

2 **The Rajasthani School of Miniature Painting**

Origin and Development

In the beginning of the 15th century, the delineation of miniature paintings in the Jain Kalpasutra style was started in Mewar (Udaipur), area of Rajasthan. In these paintings we find the collaboration of specific elements of local folk arts and the great art traditions of Ajanta and Gujarat.

The most developed form of this art-style can be seen in the paintings of 'Palam Bhagwat' of 1555 A.D., in which the basic art-style of Rajasthan has been presented in pure form. Gradually, this style of miniature painting has been followed by other centres of Rajasthan.

Specialities of the miniature paintings painted in this region can be seen as the following—**sentimental faces, sharp features, imposing figures, presenting different humanly emotions, potential underlining and warm, primary colours** showing unique richness.

Depiction of Theme: In these miniatures, the themes are mostly narrative, but at the same time, these are independent. The miniatures based on Ragamala, Nayak-Nayika-Bhed, Baramasa, Ramayana, Rasikapriya, Bihari-Satsai, legendary of lovers like Dhola-Maru and Laila-Majnu, Vishnu-Dasavatara, Rasamanjari, Krishna-Lila, Bhagavata Purana, Prithviraj-Raso etc. are narrative, whereas scenes of durbar, hunting, royal processions, ceremonies, festivals, outings, sporting, wine and music parties, harem-life.

On the basis of **geographical diversities** and **local interests**, the art of Rajasthan can be classified into several **sub-schools of miniature paintings** which are as follows:

- 1. Mewar (Udaipur) Sub-school of Miniature Paintings.** In the beginning of the 15th century, miniature paintings were painted in Mewar area (Rajasthan). Its most developed form can be seen in the paintings of 'Palam Bhagvat'. There are some other paintings based on the themes of the painters 'Sahibdin' and 'Manohar'. They painted many immortal great paintings based on **Bhaktiropatras, Panchvyakhyanoropatra, Banbhedropatra** and the Ragas.
- 2. Bundi Sub-school of Miniature Paintings.** The first miniature painting of Bundi style was painted in **Chunar** in the form of **Ragamala series of paintings**. The art skills of Bundi style are unique due to the **conjugation** of the **Mughal** and the **Deccan art** elements. But, Bundi has a well-practised hand in portraits.

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3. **Jodhpur Sub-school of Miniature Paintings.** Jodhpur got art tradition in heritage from Mewar. In the beginning of the 17th century, it was known for **Pali Ragmala** paintings. Pure indigenous delineation is the stylistic characteristic of these paintings.

4. **Bikaner Sub-school of Miniature Paintings.** In this sub-school, there is abundance of **elements** of the **Mughal art**, because the painters of the Mughal court came to Bikaner. They implemented customs of Mughal art in the local art. As a result, the new style of painting came into existence. These painters accepted the **tradition of Bikaner** style of painting and kept their inclination towards the paintings of the **Hindu myths**.

Painters: Ali Raza, Master Sahibdin, Ruknuddin, Nuruddin, and Murad were the famous painters of this sub-school.

5. **Kishangarh Sub-school of Miniature Paintings.** Mysterious beauty of women is the life of Kishangarh style of painting. The immortal paintings like **Bani-Thani** (Radha) and the painting of king Sawant Singh are the identity of Kishangarh style.

Painters: Bhawani Das, Surat Ram and Nihal Chand are priceless heritage of the painting kingdom.

6. **Jaipur Sub-school of Miniature Paintings.** In Jaipur, this style of miniature painting got patronage in the reign of king **Sawai Jai Singh**. In Amer, more paintings have been made on abstract subjects. Live shapes and hunting scenes is the identity of Ajmer-Sawar. Other centres of this sub-school are Jalor, Jaisalmer and Puskar.

Painters: Mohammad Shah and Sahib Ram were the prominent artists of Jaipur sub-school.

7. **Kota Sub-school of Miniature Paintings.** There are some stylistic and topical similarities between the styles of Kota and Bundi. But Kota style has excellence in paintings of **Baramasa** (a conventional verse composition consisting of twelve stanzas depicting the suffering and agony of separation and the changing moods and characteristics of nature during the twelve months of the year, (a particular type of Hindi poetry).