

THE INDIAN PORTRAIT-VIII

RAJPUTANA NAYAK

Flourished in the Royal courts of Rajasthan 1680-1940 CE



Anil Relia born 1957 in Surat, graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts, M. S. University, Baroda in 1978. In the same year, he started a small screen printing unit in Ahmedabad. His innovations in screen printing immediately caught the attention of many advertising agencies, renowned institutions and the corporate sector, all angling to use his skills for innovative print production assignments.

Anil Relia's innate knowledge of art and his experimentation with the screen printing media raised this medium to great heights, which led him into the field of serigraphy. Renowned artists like M. F. Husain, S. H. Raza, K. G. Subramanyan, Madhvi and Manu Parekh, Manjit Bawa, Jogen Chowdhury, Amit Ambalal and many more have worked with him in his graphic studio. Taking time out of his studio to follow his other passion of collecting art, he has acquired a mammoth collection. A lot of which is from various families and friends who had discarded their ancestral paintings as they found them old fashioned, out of style or no longer needed them. He regularly visits scrap shops and junk dealers in urban and rural areas, to find such works.

Anil Relia's love of art from childhood made him one of the most prominent art collectors of India. For his passion, Anil Relia has been honoured with many awards including an award from the President of India.



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From the collection of
Anil Relia

Curated by
Sonika Soni & Anil Relia

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Preface

This catalogue is an addition to the seven books already released on various media, forms, period and genre of Indian portraits.

Covering the art of portraiture which flourished in the royal courts of Rajputana or modern day Rajasthan, this catalogue includes some of the finest examples of their time and period. With this small catalogue, I also mean to pay tribute to the patrons and painters who enthusiastically produced all the marvellous portraits. Their combined efforts and active participation must have developed this genre as the mainstream courtly culture and as a mode of documentation.

My own journey of collecting portraits has been as fascinating as the art works and each piece is dear to me. An interview in the end of this catalogue provides glimpses of my story of collecting and other aspects which loomed around.

The court portraiture, which initially flourished in the Imperial Mughal court, and soon dispersed in all other kingdoms of India, was given special favours in Rajputana. As a collector of these portraits, I am more intrigued in their contextualisation and try and find their contemporariness and relevance in a modern collection.

My other intention is to study these portraits in their given context and I believe that the region and surrounding had a role to play in shaping the style elements.

Rajput portraits in my collection cover a range of subjects and this study is done in the light of different themes and sub themes including simple side profiles, equestrian portraits, processions and conceptual portraits (weaved around activities of patrons). Each portrait is further studied in the context of time and region. An attempt is made to understand different regions of Rajputana with an art historical approach and listing of major centres of courtly atelier. The artist's point of view is also taken into consideration and there are discussions on the material and techniques.

I am confident that this catalogue will provide an opportunity for many to know more about *Nayaks* or heroes from Rajputana, not just the rulers but also influential nobles, and also about their social and political milieus which shaped and developed various painterly styles.

I thank Sonika Soni for all her effort in bringing this catalogue to shape.

Anil Relia

Introduction

Rajputana Nayak

A person of superhuman qualities and often semi-divine origin; a person who is admired for their courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities!

Geographical boundaries of Rajputana

The ruling clans from Rajputana were either *Suryavanshi* or *Chandravanshi*, i.e. they trace their origin back to the sun or moon dynasties. They were destined to rule, hence, endured the divine rule of kingship. Selection of the ruler was based on birth and the eldest son was bestowed the natural right over the *gaddi* (throne). But the tension of acquisitions always persisted as ambitious kith and kin were constantly challenging the throne. Geographical boundaries of different regions of Rajputana along with their smaller kingdoms kept on shifting with the constant acquisition and merger trials. This chase of acquiring the throne was diplomatically supported at times by outer powers and sources like Mughals and Marathas.

A deeply imbibed hierarchical system existed in the court functions and lifestyle. *Thakurs*, or the rulers of minor kingdoms who hailed from same blood line as the ruler at capital, were closest courtiers and they were followed by the *Jagirdars* in the feudal line.

Map of Rajasthan



Painting centres of Rajputana covered in this catalogue

1. Mewar
2. Marwad
3. Maru
4. Shekhawati
5. Dhundhar
6. Hadoti
7. Ajmer-Merwarada
8. Vagad
9. Gorwar
10. Mewat

Jagir system was introduced in Rajput kingdoms after the intervention of Mughals. *Jagir* literally means the feudal land grant bestowed by monarch or ruler upon the feudal superiors in recognition of their loyalty, administrative and military services. *Rajputana Agency* or a district system was introduced when East India Company interfered in administration, politics and social matters. Areas like Ajmer-Mewara came under the British rule. This system sustained till 1949 when kingdoms were merged to form the Rajasthan state in independent India.

An outline of the present day map of Rajasthan with a broader division of various regions is provided (see page 8-9) where painterly activity flourished. No time zone is taken in consideration for mapping these regions, rather a convenient approach is applied which has a number of overlaps.

Portraiture in Rajputana

Rajput patrons from warrior clans displayed peculiar love for art and aesthetics. Dwelling at the thin line between ideal and realistic depictions, courtly portraits performed multiple roles, like of visual documentation, political gifts (*imaan* or *taqakufaat*) and as of valuable art objects.

Painters and patrons, both contributed in creating courtly styles: by creating newer standards and by shifting the pre-set norms in royal ateliers. Styles changed and developed due to a number of reasons

like shifting of geographical boundaries, migration of painters, political gifts, outer influences, altering culture and religion within the court. Ever changing tastes of the patrons and painters were also the driving forces behind shift in styles.

Rajput rulers, warriors, heads of religious institutions (like in Nathdwara) and rich and influential merchants were the major patrons and had their portraits painted for above mentioned purposes. These portraits, with their attributes like radiating nimbus, inscriptions informing of their revered status and efforts of painters present an image of valorous, influential *nayak* or hero.

For this study, portraits from Rajputana are split in five sections as:

- *Images of influence*: where courtly portraits of the rulers and other influential people are grouped.
- *Moving Along*: Groups all the equestrian portraits and procession.
- *Leisure*: This section covers the past times and leisure activities of the Rajputana rulers are portrayed.
- *Religion*: Lists portraits of influential nobles and rulers at worship; priests and religious heads.
- *Inspiration*: Last part of the catalogue shows artists attempts at giving forms to historical and mythical figures (which usually resembled their patrons and other known counterparts).

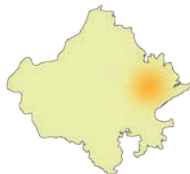
Sonika Soni

Images of influence



Maharaja Ram Singh (r.1667-1688) of Amber

by Amber court artist
circa 1680 CE



Gouache on paper
13.8 x 10.2 in. (35.1 x 25.9 cm.)

Front: (in Urdu): "Ram Singh"
"Raja Man Simha of Jaypore founder of ..?"

This portrait was part of a genealogical series of the rulers painted at Amber court, most possibly in the reign of Mirza Raja Jai Singh and Raja Ram Singh.

Raja Ram Singh, elder son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh (head of the Kuchhwaha Rajput clan), was posted in Shrinagar, Assam and Afghanistan and is remembered for an unfortunate incidence with Maratha ruler Shivaji in Aurengzeb's court. Prince Ram Singh was made representative at the Mughal court and also the care taker of Shivaji Maharaj and his nephew when they were to be presented in Aurengzeb's court. But the course of events led to Shivaji fleeing away, leaving Ram Singh as the main suspect which costed him his credibility and rank.

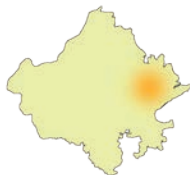
In this rendering, which resonates Mughal portraiture, Ram Singh's dignity and position is accentuated by a radiating golden nimbus. Two attendants serve him, one holds a *nisan* (royal insignia) which resemble *alams* from Deccan. Use of semi-precious Danafarang (malachite) as background and fine Urdu inscription next to the figure have been neatly worked out in keeping with Mughal style.



Jivan Ram, merchant from Jaipur

Attributed to Ramjidas, Jaipur court artist
circa 1780 CE

Gouache on paper
5.5 x 3.7 in. (14 x 9.4 cm.)



Back: "Jivan Ram..."

Chitara or artist Ramjidas of Jaipur is known as the Indian court artist with largest number of ascribed and attributed paintings. He was contemporaneous to artist Sahibram at Jaipur court atelier. Besides a few large scale royal portraits, his body of work includes portraits of a range of people from different strata of society.

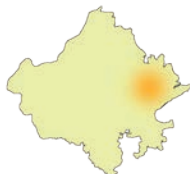
Dark complexioned Jivan Ram appears to be a gem merchant. He holds a small silver piece encrusted in gold border and has a tiny red coloured pouch and a small green packet placed in front of him, which affirms his vocation. His stern gaze shows his knowledge and authority on his possessions. He must have been a Vaishnavite, as is evident from his 'U' shaped *tilak* mark and his *tulsi-mala*.

In Ramjidas's signature style, the figure is highlighted with realistic touches against uncoloured background. Facial details and balanced figure brings not just the likeliness, but also character of the subject.



Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh III (1819-1835) of Jaipur with a courtier under canopy

Artist following Sahibram style
circa 1830 CE



Gouache on paper
11.1 x 7.7 in. (38.1 x 19.6 cm.)

Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh III was made heir apparent four months before his birth (right after his father's unfortunate demise). Since he was a minor, he spent first nine years of his life confined in a *zenana*. No matter how adverse the courtly and sociopolitical conditions were, painterly activities continued at Jaipur court. Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh III's portraits were painted in a large number by different painters.

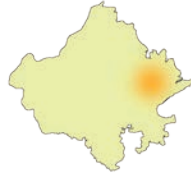
Jai Singh III is shown as a teenager, but in the full glory of a Jaipur ruler. This appears to be his wedding portrait as he is embellished with floral garlands and elaborate turban jewelry. A courtier is shown greeting (dressed almost similarly as the ruler), both are against the deep blue evening skyline.

For portraiture in this period, artists continued the style as popularized by masters like Sahibram and Ramjidas.



Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II (1834, r.1835-1880) of Jaipur

by Jaipur court artist
circa 1860 CE



Gouache on paper
15.7 x 11.9 in. (39.9 x 30.2 cm.)

Many of Ram Singh II's paintings and photographs done in a similar pose and details can be found in various different collections.

Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II's reign is marked with development and reform. He established a number of public institutions including schools and colleges, hospitals, public parks and museums, and worked immensely for the betterment of infrastructure like building of roads, the provision of gas street lighting, piped water and laying of railway lines. Influence of visiting European painters and introduction of camera had a lasting impact on art practice of local artists in his reign and they adopted photo-realism, naturalism, and techniques like oil paint and watercolour. Reference for majority of his portraits can be found in his self-taken photographs².

Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II is depicted here in his signature imperial moustache, split beard and spectacles. A pair of spectacles are placed on the round table along with a vase from which he has taken a rose to decorate in his turban. Folded velvet curtain in background draws European drapery style. Fine detailing of the texture of his combined (western and Indian) clothing allows one to distinguish different textiles like velvet overcoat with brocade, silk waist cloth, cotton trousers and leather boots.



Maharana Jagat Singh (1709, r.1734–1751) of Mewar

by Sukhe, Mewar court artist
dated 1751 CE



Gouache on paper
10.4 x 8.1 in. (26.4 x 20.6 cm.)

Front: "Maharana ji Shri Jagat Singh ji ri sabih ro pano"

Back: "Mi Sudi 5 sa 1807 Maharajadhiraj Maharana ji Shri Jagat Singhji ri surat ro pano kalami Chitaro Sukhe."

Maharana Jagat Singh is depicted here in a courtly portrait style which developed under the influence of Imperial Mughal culture. Holding a flower bud in one hand and a sword in other brings out his persona as an aesthete and a brave Rajput custodian.

Besides architectural undertakings, he is known for his call of a peace meeting, held in 1734, the *Hurda conference*. Immediately after his coronation, Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur and Maharaja Abhay Singh of Jodhpur, along with the rulers of Bundi, Kota, Karauli, Nagaur, Bikaner, Kishangarh and others paid **hima** a visit and gathered in Hurda to **signed** an *ikrarnamah* for unity and peace, as mutual protection against repeated Maratha attacks in Rajputana³. Keeping up with the history of Rajputs, this attempt towards unity had proved futile.

Jagat Singh's bulky stature is draped in a voluminous semi-transparent jama worn over an orange inner garment. Silver on his elaborate patka appears to have been charred. His bejewelled amar-shahi turban is **adorned** with a plume. Slightly embossed pearls around his neck, his *tilak* mark and radiating golden nimbus around his face are neatly carved.



Maharana Jagat Singh (1709, r.1734-1751) of Mewar

by Nande (Nanda?), Mewar court artist
dated 1736 CE



Gouache on mica and paper (cutout)
13 x 9.1 in. (33 x 23.1 cm.)

*Back: "Shri Ramji Samvat 1792 Saoj vid 10, Shriji re janam avasar daan
panaa nijar huo chitare Nande kido, Maharana Shri Jagat Singhji"*

On a refreshing note, this portrait presents a variation in its technique - a cut-out of Maharana's profile set on a small mica plate. Using mica must have been an experiment to depict glass of a window against a golden framed jharokha outlined with cusped arches. Change in material must have affected the usual practice of applying pigments, but the artist has very skillfully handled the brush while applying multiple coats of paint on a rather shrivelling mica surface. Artist's ingenious is marked in neatly cutting and pasting of the portrait against the thin and fragile mica plate and adding a maroon cushion behind the portrait.

On the basis of style and workmanship, this portrait represents quality work done in Jagat Singh's reign. He is shown seated in a jharokha, holding the edge with his right hand while his left hand rose up in the gesture of holding a flower or an aigrette (which the artist possibly missed while compiling the collage). Plain green and red borders around the small portrait works as an additional matt and highlights the **finess in portrait.**

finesse of the portrait.



Maharana Bhim Singh (1768, r.1778-1828) of Mewar

by Chokha (at Mewar court)
circa 1810 CE



Gouache on paper
9.4 x 5.9 in. (23.9 x 15 cm.)

Back: "Shri Bhim Singh ji ri surat ro pano Chokha ro"

Chokha, the master painter from Mewar-Devgarh court is known as the most influential painter of his time. Chokha depicts his patron Maharana Bhim Singh in his full grandeur in this portrait.

Maharana Bhim Singh is popular for his pompous lifestyle which he maintained even in the time of chaos and public unrest. A lover of arts, he commissioned some of the best known paintings from Mewar to the workshops of great masters Bagta and Chokha.

Chokha's Bhim Singh figures, much like his other portraits, are modelled and have a certain tactility. Though the ruler's expressions are static, **but** the liveliness comes from the lavish apparel and accessories.

A crescent moon is delicately painted near the face of the Maharana, which is a symbol of respect to their deity *Eklingji*.



Maharana Swarup Singh (1815, r.1842–1861) of Mewar

by Ambavo, Mewar court artist
dated 1864 CE



Gouache on paper
14.3 x 10.9 in. (36.3 x 27.7 cm.)

Front: "Shri Shri Maharana ji Sarup Singhji ri surat Samu birajya Bedle Rawat Bakhat Singh ji Rawat Lakshaman Singh ji Parsoli kaka Dal Singh ji Sivarati chataro Ambavo Samat 1921"

Maharana Swarup Singh is conducting court on a terrace and makes a *vitarka mudra* (preaching or discussion gesture) in front of his courtiers.

He is known to have made many reforms in the political, cultural and social spheres like abolition of *sati* and freely supported and gave refuge to British in Mewar. He was adopted by his brother Sardar Singh as the latter had no **issues**
children.

Rawat Bakhat Singh of Bedla, Rawat Laxman Singh of Parsoli and one of his uncles, Dal Sing of Shavrati attend his court and are shown seated on the floor in front of Sarup Singh. He is depicted in his royal self as dressed in a fine white and golden outfit and decked with gold-pearl jewelry and as seated on a chair (and not on a traditional gadi set up).

The background against the terrace is bright green (which is often known as 'tara green' as this particular shade of green was popularized by master artist Tara). Artist Ambavo worked in the workshop of master Tara and followed his style and colour palette, but could never match the dexterity and finesse of his master's lines.



Maharana Swarup Singh (1815, r.1842-1861) receiving Raja Balwant Singh of Ratlam

Attributed to Shivalal, Mewar court artist
circa 1850 CE



Gouache on paper
9.6 x 7.5 in. (24.4 x 19 cm.)

Back: "Raja Balwant Singh ji Ratlam"

Maharana Swarup Singh is shown receiving elderly Raja Balwant Singh of Ratlam in his court. Both were indirectly related as Maharaja Balwant Singh of Ratlam was married to daughter of Maharaja Sheodan Singh of Bagore (one of the four main branches **from branches** from which Mewar royal family preferred for adopting children).

Swarup Singh is shown making *vitarka mudra* (preaching or discussion gesture, compare pg. no. 29) while Balwant Singh, though much older in age, is seated on the floor, greeting him with *namaste mudra*. An attendant stands behind Swarup Singh's chair and is holding a *morchal* (peacock feather fan) and a sheathed sword.

This work is attributed to artist following the style of Shivalal, son of master artist Tara. Unlike other portraits of Swarup Singh, this has a white-yet bright background. Blue and whites of the floral carpet teams with shaded blue strokes of skyline.



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**Maharana Fateh Singh (1849, r.1884-1930) of Mewar
with Prince Bhupal Singh and Princess Ankaran Bai**

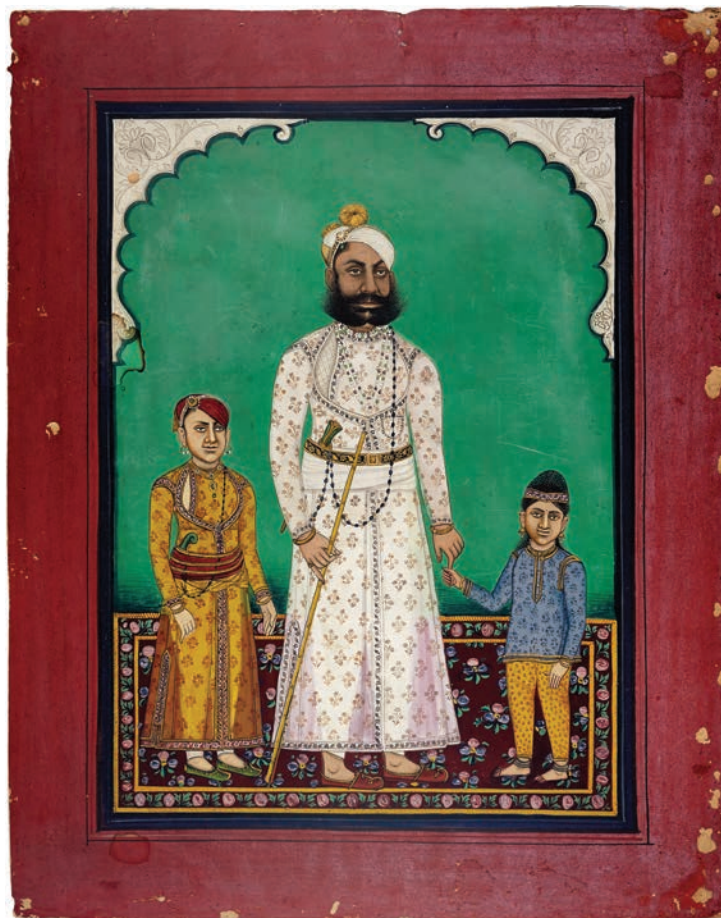
by Mewar court artist
circa 1885 CE



Gouache on paper
16.5 x 13 in. (41.9 x 33 cm.)

Done in a later Shivalal and Pannalal style, this portrait of Maharana Fateh Singh posing with his children is unique for its subject more than its rendering and appears to be based on a photograph. It depicts a rare occasion when a Mewar princess was allowed to be part of a portrait.

Prince Bhupal Singh in the image appears to be of nine to ten years and bears resemblance with his sister possibly Ankaran Bai⁴. Young and docile princess is shown holding her father's hand and the young prince, wearing a semi-transparent jama, has a stern face. Fateh Singh's disposition is austere and firm, reflecting his character and his white outfit adds to his magnificent personality.



Maharana Bhupal Singh (1884, r.1930-1955) of Mewar

by Mewar court artist
circa 1920 CE



Gouache on paper
20.8 x 16.7 in. (52.8 x 42.4 cm.)

A classic portrait of Maharana Bhupal Singh of Mewar, possibly in the Chandra Mahal of Lake Palace and shows the Sajjangarh (also known as the Monsoon Palace) in distant background from the window.

Bhupal Singh's short stature was due to spinal tuberculosis⁵. His foresightedness was instrumental in uniting the kingdoms of Rajputana to form Rajasthan state which subsequently merged in the Indian nation. He was also appointed as the *Raj Pramukh* of the newly formed state of Rajasthan.

This bejewelled portrait is based on one of his wedding photographs (as evident from the golden *kalangi* or aigrette decorated on his turban). Extended landscape as shown from the window in background refers to artist S. G. Thakar Singh who stayed and worked in Mewar and his style had a positive influence on fellow local painters.



1399

Maharana Bhagwat Singh (1921-1984) of Mewar with a prince

by Mewar court artist
circa 1940 CE



Gouache on paper
10 x 7.5 in. (25.4 x 19 cm.)

The 75th custodian of the house of Mewar, Maharana Bhagwat Singh, served one of the longest and unbroken custodianships of a royal house. He was adopted by the preceding Maharana Bhupal Singh from Shivarati branch and was married to Maharani Sushila Kumari, the granddaughter of Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner.

The court patronage for painters received a setback when all the kingdoms were merged in Rajasthan state, but Bhagwat Singh continued to reward painters. He founded an organization named 'Maharana of Mewar Charitable foundation' which runs the City Palace Museum in Udaipur and handles a number of philanthropic works, and also conducts an annual award function where selected people **from** are awarded for their excellency in different fields.



Chatur Singhji Bavji of Mewar

by Nathulal, Mewar court artist
circa 1880 CE

Gouache on paper
16 x 12 in. (40.6 x 30.5 cm.)



Front: "12 Kalam Nathulal Musavar ki 16"

तिलक करे छापा करे, भगमा भेष वणाया। चतुर सन्त री सादगी, सन्ता ऊपर जाय॥
(Holy men smear forehead / body and wear saffron clothing & remain unmarried, but Chatur leads a domestic simple life and still attains higher stature)

-Chatur Singhji Bavji in 'Chatur Chintamani'

The saint poet Chatur Singhji Bavji (from Karjali branch) was a social reformer and endorsed education and awareness. A number of books are to his credit and his couplets and verses made a large impact on society for their simple and lucid language.

He was revered by the then Maharana, and his humble belongings are still preserved which gives a glimpse of his simple and modest life style⁶.

This is a rare portrait, projecting Chatur Singh seated in a lavish room but on a strange note has a number of well-bred pet dogs in foreground.



Thakur Laxman Singhji (d. 1930) of Sardargarh

by **Ram Manawat** of Devgarh
dated 1899 CE



Gouache on paper

16.1 x 12 in. (40.9 x 30.5 cm.)

Front: "Shri Thakur Sahab Shri Laxman Shingh,ji, Sardargarh"
"Chatara **Nandram Manawat** Devgarh"
"Umar 30 saal samat 1956 ka fagan sud 11 banai"

Done in the popular indoor studio style of portraits, this portrait is a classic example of a new photo-realistic idiom which developed in almost all the court ateliers simultaneously post mid nineteenth century. A number of portraits in similar set up and rendering can be seen even within the collection (**compare pg. no.**).

Not much is known about the life and deeds of the 19th Thakur of Sardargarh, Laxman Singh. He hailed from the family of Raja Phul Singh Dodiya of Girnar. Dodiya's were given a jagir name 'Lawa' by Rana Lakha which later on became Sardargarh (after construction of a splendid fort by Thakur Sardar Singh) and remained a close thikana of Mewar. Thakur Sardar Singh was appointed as the supervisor for the construction of Jag Niwas, popularly known as the Lake Palace in Udaipur.

This inscribed portrait informs about the artist Ram Manawat from Devgarh. Age of Laxman Singh is inscribed as to be of thirty years in samvat 1956, or 1899 CE when this portrait was done. Lean, tall and dark complexioned Thakur has a gentle demeanour.



Harjeevan Das Jetha Shah Philanthropist from Surat

by Nathdwara artist
circa 1860 CE

Gouache on paper
23.6 x 15.7 in. (59.9 x 39.9 cm.)

Front: "Harjeevan Das Jetha Saha"

Harjeevan Das Jetha Shah, son of Jetha Shah Sitwala, was a resident of Ahmedabad and traded in silk and *zari*. They were suppliers to royal families and also exported internationally. In eighteenth century, the family shifted to Surat and established their own mills for the production of silk and *zari* (company was named after Harjeevan Jetha Shah) which led to the initiation of a family and subsequently a community entrepreneurship. These people were of religious nature and constructed a temple of their family Guru 'Govindji Guru Bapujibawa' in Surat.

This portrait is done in a predominant mixture of Mewar and Nathdwara style and Harjeevan must have commissioned it during one of his business tours. His fine costume with golden border and setup on a balcony with a small golden *paan-daan* and a *peek-daan* placed on either sides of him reflects his high taste.



Maharaja Ajit Singhji (1679, r.1699-1724) of Jodhpur

by Jodhpur court artist
circa 1740 CE



Gouache on paper
12.3 x 9.3 in. (31.2 x 23.6 cm.)

Back: "Maraj Shri Ajit Singhji"

This portrait is done in what is described as 'Mughalized Rajasthani style' which was a combination of various sensibilities⁷. Jodhpur portrait style from this period prominently rendered Rajput ideals of kingship or belief in divine rule and thus associated features like glowing nimbus around the face, slightly larger face (in proportion to body), stern gaze and idealized robust figure.

At the time of his birth, under the guardianship of Durga Das, Maharaja Ajit Singh survived all the hardships of being away from his homeland. He went **long a way**, from being a refugee in other Rajput kingdoms to finally claim his right on Marwar *gaddi*. Together with Mewar, Dhundhar and other Rajput rulers, he signed the *ahadnamah* (promise or treaty) for mutual protection against repeated Mughal threats in 1708 CE⁸.

In this portrait, **remarkable is the contrast** created by intricate floral decoration on soft furnishing set against white architectural features and ruler's white outfit and embossed strings of **pearls**.



Maharaja Man Singh (1783, r.1803-1843) of Jodhpur

by Jodhpur court artist
circa 1840 CE



Gouache on paper
14.5 x 10 in. (36.8 x 25.4 cm.)

A neat and refined early nineteenth century Jodhpur style portrait painted during the reign of Maharaja Man Singh shows him in his royal self, standing inside a lavishly decorated marble pavilion lined with gold decorations.

Maharaja Man Singh faced a long jolty track before he could claim his birth right over Marwar. He accessed the *gaddi* by his perseverance and partially by blessings of *mahasiddha* or Nath Yogi.

He spent his early life in Jalore where he became an ardent follower of Nath yogis to whom he rendered his devotion for the rest of his life and also constructed three temples in their honour in Marwar. He endorsed religion, culture and especially art of painting and commissioned a number of important manuscripts of the period.

In this portrait, his regalia includes billowing pink jama with tiny golden prints and broad gold border. All the aspects of this portrait including pavilion, carpet with finely rendered floral patterns, rolled up curtain, gem encrusted gold and pearl jewelry of the Maharaja, the aigrette and sword held in his hands reflect the fine taste as disposed by the ruler and as experienced and expressed by the artist.



Diwan Jhala Zalim Singh (1730-1823) of Kotah

by Kotah court artist
circa 1775 CE



Gouache on paper
7.9 x 5.3 in. (20.1 x 14 cm.)

Back: "Sabih Raje Zalim Singhji ri"

He was the chief minister (*musahib-e-ala*, or the *dirwan*) during the reign of Maharao Guman Singh and his successor Maharao Umed Singh of Kotah. Owing to his unparalleled bravery and diplomatic qualities, he almost ruled over the area and was considered as the most powerful man in Rajputana. He lost and regained the position of chief minister of Kotah after a brief stint in Mewar (during the reign of Maharana Ari Singh). He constructed his residence within the Kotah palace complex called *Jhala ki Haveli*.

He allied with British army and formed a treaty in 1817 which made Kotah the first kingdom to do so in Rajputana.

Along with his intrusion in politics and other aspects, he also made his appearance felt in artistic arenas and was portrayed in a number of paintings alongside the rulers. This particular portrait of his later life is remarkable for the fine line work, elaborate hookah and embroidered shawl which are also symbolic of his lavish lifestyle.



Bapji Shri Arup Das

by Nanuram of Kotah
circa 1820 CE



Gouache on paper
11.9 x 9.8 in. (30 x 24.9 cm.)

Front: "Soratho, Shri Guru Mor Swarup. Bhakti gyan ke roop Bhal. Yah Chabi Das Anup Samat Unnise Chhat sud Balwant Singh krut svakar varna";
"Mas eklauo ki no kaam likhyo chitra yah Nanuram"
Back: "Bapji Shri Arup Dasji chhabi ek hi hai? Asad bikram sa.?41 Das Bhareva"

Though not much is known about the **person in the portrait** as yet, but the attributes and surrounding of the portrait suggests that Bapji Shri Arup Das must have been a scholar or a religious preacher. He must have carried varied interests as apparent from a number of manuscripts and books placed open in front of him and his veena (a stringed musical instrument) **is** placed next to him while he smokes **from** a hookah.

His **has** **is** a dark complexioned stature, **and is** dressed in fine cotton clothes and a loosely tied turban. It appears that more than one artist must have worked **on** **in** this painting, and the background was possibly finished by an amateur hand. This portrait is ascribed to artist Nanuram, who must have worked in the last phase at Kotah atelier.

The Urdu text on one of the books placed in front of him reads:

"Hai shukra beshumaar usi ke mahaar ka,
jo he qaraar shaje dil bekaraar ka"



1190

Maharaja Satrusal II (1837, r.1866-1889) of Kotah

by Kotah court artist
circa 1870 CE



Gouache on paper (with mica and mirror embedded)
15 x 10.8 in. (38.1 x 27.4 cm.)

Front: "Shri Shri Shri Shri Shri Marajdhiraj Shri Maraval ji Shri Chhatarasal ji tasabir Saalgar ki"

The last great patron of Kotah paintings, Maharao Satrusal II, had portrayed himself in a large number of paintings and as the inscription on painting goes, this particular portrait was made for one of his birthdays.

After his coronation, he was able to restore the seventeen gun salute which **was** earlier reduced to four by British government in his father Maharao Ram Singh II's time due to Kotah's inactive participation in the revolt of 1857-1858. Satrusal's participation in the Durbar of the third viceroy in 1866 and in the Imperial Delhi Durbar of 1877 helped him develop a taste for foreign painterly traditions and the influenced king got them incorporated in his royal atelier.

Artists experimented with the materials and techniques in this embellished portrait by pasting mica and mirror pieces to enhance the effect of gem encrusted jewelry.



Diwan Bakhtawar Singh (1707-1779) of Bikaner

by Sahabdin of Bikaner
dated 1765 CE



Gouache on paper
9.8 x 5.7 in. (24.9 x 14.5 cm.)

Back: "Mohataa ji: Ravji Shri Vakhataav Singhji ri sabih Ustei Sahaabdin ri kxvi chhe. Savat 1822 me kati vad 12"

Mohta Bakhtawar Singh was appointed as the chief minister or *dirwan* of Bikaner four times and must have served at least three successive rulers including Maharaja Sujan Singh, Maharaja Jorawar Singh and Maharaja Gaj Singh of Bikaner.

In this portrait, he is shown standing on a terrace and appears to be an old learned man. He has white whiskers and moustache and his austere personality is enhanced by his white outfit and a simple *rudkarsh mala* around his neck. A pale green background adds to the overall appeal of the portrait. Bright red of the balustrade is subdued by whites and other sober tones in the composition.



Maharaja Gaj Singh (1723, r.1745-1787) of Bikaner

by Isai Abure (?) of Bikaner
dated 1796 CE



Gouache on paper (with embedded beetle wings)
12.2 x 7.9 in. (31 x 20.1 cm.)

Back: "Sabih 1 Shri Maharaj Shri Gaj Sah, ji ri Kaam uste Isai Abure (?) ro najar mujro maatam posi ro samat 1853 magsar vadi 7"
(on a wet stamp): "This painting belongs to the personal collection of H H Maharaja Bikaner"

Controlled line work, fine depiction and smoothness of colour palette suggests that this work was done by a master hand. Maharaja Gaj Singh's bulky, royal personality is enhanced through an ultra-fine cotton jama, grey-golden waist cloth, an angavastram and a signature Bikaneri turban. Most distinguished feature of the portrait is the use of blue coloured beetle wings which are neatly encrusted in the sheath and hilt of his sword and on his sarpech. Two large pearls in his earring take a dramatic swing and are contrasted against his extended whiskers. His fine large nimbus is placed off-centre (appears to have shifted down). Standing on a terrace, Gaj Singh's stout silhouette is neatly set against an olive green background.



Maharaja Anup Singh (1638, r.1669-1698) of Bikaner

by Gajadhar of Bikaner
dated 1834 CE



Gouache on paper
11.4 x 6.5 in. (29 x 16.5 cm.)

Back: "Sabih Maharaj Shri Anop Sangh ji ri bai, Shri ji Sahab ra najar holi ri ki likam Gajadhar bram dusro ? ki bi samat 1890 miti chatra vad 1"
(on a wet stamp): "This painting belongs to the personal collection of H H Maharaja Bikaner"

Maharaja Anup Singh was a learned man with a high regard for literature, manuscripts and languages and is known to have collected a large number of rare manuscripts in Sanskrit and other languages while he was posted in Deccan. He also established a library known as Anup Sanskrit library.

The three portraits, projected in similar set up and posture, were done by different artists in different periods. As was customary, portraits were often meant as political gifts and thus, were made in multiple copies. Paintings by master painters were often copied by young practicing artists in workshops for polishing their skills.

left
by Bikaner court artist
circa 1800 CE

Gouache on paper
8.8 x 6.3 in. (22.4 x 16 cm.)

right
by Ustad Samsutoro Chitaro
dated 1877 CE

Gouache on paper
10.8 x 6.7 in. (27.4 x 17 cm.)



Maharaja Bahadur Singh (r.1748-1781) of Kishangarh

by Kishangarh court artist
circa 1750 CE



Gouache on paper
14 x 10.8 in. (35.6 x 27.4 cm.)

Back: "Maharajadhiraj Shri Bahadur Singhji Kishangarh"

Maharaja Bahadur Singh of Kishangarh's long reign was marked with the tension of succession and Maratha attacks which he competently addressed. He declared himself as the ruler at the time of his father's death while his elder brother, the rightful heir was in Delhi.

He greatly favoured painting activities and favoured the style which was developed under the patronage of Maharaja Savant Singh. Facial features in this portrait with a sharp, pointed long nose and chin, receding forehead line and protruding lips faintly resemble the popular Radha-Krishna and *bani-thani* images. The white on white depiction of the figure is juxtaposed with a bright landscape in background and orange-golden horizon. His figure appears larger against small and meticulously detailed fortress in distant background.

A large number of his portraits were painted and can be seen in a number of royal and private collections.



2573

Maharaja Pratap Singh (1763, r.1788-1798) of Kishangarh

by **Sitaram**, Kishangarh court artist
circa 1780 CE



Gouache on paper
6.1 x 3.6 in. (15.5 x 9.1 cm.)

Front: "Shri Shri Maharaja Partap Singhji Bahadur Mushwar Sitaram"

Done in a folksy Kishangarh style, this portrait shows Maharaja Pratap Singh of Kishangarh practicing archery. Pratap Singh was an ambitious ruler and with the support of his cousin, Maharaja Man Singh, he tried to conquer the Jaipur and Jodhpur *gaddi* but could never succeed. He also lost and found Roopangarh from Amar Singh of Kakredi (?) and inhibited a Maratha attack for which he had to reconcile with his Jodhpur kinsmen.

Though the portrait is not amongst the **finest** specimens of refined Kishangarh qalam, but the colour scheme and features of the portrait, especially the arched eye and long, sharp nose **affirms** keeps up with the style and period.



**Maharaja Surat Singh (r.1844–1885) of Bikaner
with his *munim***

by Bikaner court artist
circa 1850 CE



Gouache on paper
12 x 9.1 in. (30.5 x 23.1 cm.)

*Back: "no. 440, inspection of accounts"
(on a wet stamp): "This painting belongs to the personal collection of H H
Maharaja Bikaner"*

This composition shows either documentation of daily activities of the ruler or inspection of the court records. Daily activities were recorded in almost all the kingdoms like *Haqiqat Bahida* in Mewar and *Roznamcha* in Dhundhar.

Maharaja Surat Singh is shown seated with his *munim* (accountant) who is jotting records in a *bahi* (accounts book). The ruler is dictating or instructing by waving his hand. The ruler is shown clad in an orange shawl and is seated on a maroon mat and an attendant is appointed to stir the air with a hand fan.

Maharaja Surat Singh was an observant ruler and invaded many kingdoms including Bahawalpur and made many peace treaties with kingdoms like Jaipur, Jodhpur and the British government.



Maharaja Rao Shekha (1433, r.1445-1488)
founder of Shekhawati region

by Shekhawati artist
 circa 1860 CE



Tempera on wall
 20 x 14.8 in. (50.8 x 37.8 cm.)

Rao Shekha hailed from the Kuchhwaha clan of Dhundhar region. He succeeded his father Rao Mokal at a young age of twelve in 1445 CE and displayed unparalleled bravery since his formative years. He founded a kingdom Shekhawati (named after him) with its capital at Amasar which was populated and ruled by his successive generations.

Shekhawati region is popular for its painted Havelis and a number of tourists and researchers come to admire and study the incredible art deco on the walls.

This portrait is a fragment of wall painting, done around mid-nineteenth century. This mural has a smoothness, and mixing of colours gives it appeal of a fresco. Shades of red, orange, brown and off-white are neutralized with grey background. Conceived image of this great warrior has all the Rajputana characteristics with a bulky face, long drooping moustache, extended whiskers, jewelled pearl jewelry and he carries a bow, a quiver and a shield.



Maharaja Shivdan Singhji (c.1845, r.1857-1874) of Alwar

by Alwar court artist
circa 1870 CE



Watercolour on paper
12.3 x 8.1 in. (31.2 x 20.6 cm.)

Front: "Maharaja Sawai Shivdan Singhji Alwar"

Versions of photographs of Rao Raja Shivdan Singh of Alwar were printed in multiple copies and were referenced by a number of painters also. This portrait is done on a thin machine made paper (as opposed to traditional handmade paper, *varak* or *vasli*) with a mixture of mineral pigments and readily available bright photo-colours.

Shivdan Singh is best known for construction of Company garden in the chhatari of Alwar Palace.

This portrait teams with the series of indoor studio portraits which invariably formed a unified style across the Rajputana, a few of these can be cited elsewhere in this catalogue (see pg. no. 40). He is seated at an ease with his right hand resting on a round table with European art deco in surrounding, dressed in his wedding finery and is decked with gem encrusted pearl jewelry. The portrait is completed with an inscription written at the top in Devanagari script.



Moving Along



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**Equestrian portrait of
Emperor Aurangzeb** (1618, r. 1658-1707)

by Kishangarh court artist
circa 1700 CE



Khakha or drawing on paper
16.9 x 12.8 in. (43 x 32 cm.)

This tinted drawing of Emperor Aurangzeb portrays him as a young warrior riding a rearing horse. The portrait was possibly done in the early phase of his reign when a few artists from his father Shah Jahan's atelier were still managing the fine quality.

Versions of finished paintings of this subject can be seen in a number of collections including Johnson album 3 in the British Library⁹, but this appears to be the study on which all the finished paintings are based.

The scattered use of gold shines outstandingly against the uncoloured background. Golden highlights of the javelin, turban, sash, and the nimbus are strategically chosen to enhance Aurangzeb's character as an emperor who chose to spend most of his life battling and campaigning.



Jagat Singh of Medta

by Marwar court artist (in the style of Ghanerao)
circa 1750-1800 CE

Khakha or drawing on paper
13 x 9.25 in. (33 x 23.5 cm.)



Back: "*Raj Shri Jagat Singhji Medatiyo Sameti ro dhani Isarot?*"

The four portraits are done in a *thakur* style (also known as Ghanerao) which developed as the offshoot of Marwar and Maru kingdoms like Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Bikaner. This style of painting is particularly know for the portraits of armed Rajput warriors astride horses in their military paraphernalia.

The simple line drawings are expressive but have a dry appeal of the Maru Pradesh, or dry desert lands of Rajputana, where they were rendered.



Jagram Nandawat (left)

Back: "*Shri Nandawat Jagramji, Bije ra not Pipad na Bajro dhani*"

11.8 x 9.1 in. (30 x 23 cm.)

Raj Shri Fakirdas Jodhsinghot (centre)

Back: "*Raj Shri Fakirdas ji Jodh Singhot Medatiyo, bavat te radhani*"

12.6 x 9.1 in. (32 x 23 cm.)

Raj Shri Sam Singhji (right)

Back: "*Raj Shri Sam Singhji Jodh Singhot eido*"

12.2 x 8.5 in. (31 x 21.6 cm.)



Thakur Rajan Singh (?) of a *thikana* in Marwar

by Marwar court artist
circa 1850 CE

Gouache on paper
10 x 7.2 in. (25.4 x 18.3 cm.)



Back: "Kan Rajan Singh Surat Singhot"

Thakur nobles of Marwar had their portraits painted at various occasions in a comparatively folk style.

Portrait of Thakur Rajan Singh (?) riding a horse shows him donning fine clothes, bejewelled turban, pearl necklaces and finely trimmed whiskers. He holds a long javelin and a sheathed sword as symbolic of his military endeavours. The chestnut horse's trappings are modest but attractive including a line of spiky ornament which runs along its neck till its *dumchi* (strap tied around its tail), orange saddle cloth and a *harla* (or necklace) with silver totems embedded in it. The Thakur noble is accompanied by an attendant walking along the horse and holding a sheathed sword.



Maharaja Ram Singh (1811, r. 1821-1889) of Bundi in a wedding procession

by Jodhpur court artist
circa 1830 CE



Gouache on paper
8.1 x 11.8 in. (20.6 x 30 cm.)

Front: "Bundi Durbar Ram Singhji"

Inscription informs that the *nayak* in procession is Ram Singh of Bundi, but the facial features do not go with other known images of him.

This procession scene is rendered in mixed style of Jodhpur and Bundi and appears to be of a royal wedding. The bridegroom has a golden nimbus around his face and is decked with lavish gold-pearl jewelry. Majority of the people attending the procession are clad in orange-red outfits, suiting the festive mood. People in the front rows are holding guns and javelins and few are holding various standards of the royal house. Artist rendered the movement of the procession by aligning men and **objects** including the guns, javelins and the rope inside the palanquin to show uniform flow and discipline.



Arani Bahadur Ghoda (*portrait of a horse*)

by Mewar court artist
dated 1761 CE



Gouache on paper
9.1 x 9.4 in. (23.1 x 23.9 cm.)

*Back: "Ghodo Arani Baadar Sodagar se haraath kharido hou 900/-mhi pano ori jama mha sud 8 samat 1818 varshe"
"Jaso ghodo he jesi surat he abe bilendara me"*

This fine specimen of equestrian portrait comes from a series of horse portraits which were painted at Mewar court in early eighteenth century. In this series, each horse is usually attended or ridden by a groom. These portraits bear inscriptions, and in this case, stating the name of the horse 'Arani Bahadar' and giving details of the purchase from a *sodagar*, or merchant in 900/-. It also informs that the image matches the real horse.

Horses

Horse have always been an integral part of Rajputana lifestyle and there are a number of stories in the oral traditions of their bravery in battlefield. Like in other kingdoms, Mewar also celebrates Ashwa Pujan, or worship of horses, on the day of Dussera to acknowledge the companionship and bravery of their horses.

Long and sleek figure of the horse and its groom, golden trappings and ornamentation of the horse, extended nose and a thin line along the chin of the groom places this portrait stylistically in the atelier of Maharana Ari Singh of Mewar.



Maharana Jawan Singh (r.1828-1838) of Mewar

Attributed to Baijnath
circa 1830 CE

Gouache on paper
9.8 x 7.7 in. (24.9 x 19.6 cm.)



Back: "Maharanoji Shri Jawan Sinhji ri svi"

A number of family tradition of painters served Mewar royal atelier including the family of celebrated artists Bagta and Chokha. This family migrated and returned to Mewar court after a stint at Devgarh. These two painters were most influential and their style became the court style which was followed by almost all the regional painters including **chitara** Baijnath of the same family.

A few small scale portraits of Maharana Bhim Singh and Maharana Jawan Singh in various collections can be attributed to Baijnath.

Riding a rearing horse, Maharana Jawan Singh is clad in a bright yellow-golden outfit teamed with lavish pearl jewelry. Horse's trappings include lines of golden *halra* (garlands) and red cloth flowing under its saddle.



Unidentifiable Mewar noble riding a horse

by Mewar court artist
circa 1830 CE



Khakha or drawing on paper
7 x 10 in. (17.8 x 25.4 cm.) each

The technique of traditional paintings includes six stages, where after preparing the base artist begins with sketching and composing the frame which is then followed by colour filling, shading, final lining and ornamentation. In a traditional workshop set up, an artist was required to master each stage and thus underwent a long and rigorous training, especially of brush lining. Line drawings are known as *khakha*, and the flow and perfection in the lines often of the lines .

Line drawings are known as khakha, or the trace and were prepared (usually as the first stage of painting) for study.

These two *khakhas* were made in Mewar royal workshop, possibly at the time when artist Tara headed the workshop during the reign of Maharana Swarup Singh.



Maharana Fateh Singh (1849, r.1884-1930) of Mewar

Attributed to Pannalal
dated 1904 CE

Gouache on paper
13.8 x 9.7 in. (35.1 x 24.6 cm.)



Front: "Maharana Shri 108 Shri Fatehsinhji eei 1960 kati sud 10"

Charring of pigments and deterioration of the condition has not lessened the charm which artist successfully created in depicting the austere personality of Maharana Fateh Singh of Mewar.

Riding a galloping horse, this portrait is possibly taken out of a series of the rulers of Mewar. Pigments used for the portrait are a mixture of natural (namely mineral, metallic and organic) and ready to use synthetic paints. The white horse and same coloured outfit of the Maharana are contrasted with yellow-golden decoration and a bright green background.



Tilkayat Girdharji (1843-1903) of Nathdwara in a procession

by Nathdwara Haveli artist
circa 1870 CE



Gouache on paper
12 x 19.8 in. (30.5 x 50.3 cm.)

Revered as a great patron of architecture, paintings and other arts, Tilkayat Girdharji is also known for his eccentricities. At times his whims made his pupil suffer harsh punishments. He constructed the famous Moti Mahal in 1861.

He was a man of independent nature and exercised his authority in the manner of an absolute monarch¹⁰. He fashioned his own troop which included European soldiers and was adamant enough to take Tantiya Tope in his refuge in the time of crisis. Disobedience with Maharana of Mewar and British government had adverse effects and he was banished from Nathdwara.

His pompous processions were largely meant as a show of his power and position and often included his own troops. In this composition, the two rows of his personal troop are marching in a discipline while he follows in his royal ensemble with his personal standards including *meghabamdar* (parasol), *nisan* (insignia), *morchal* (peacock feather fan), and others.



Tilkayat Damodarji Maharaj (1797-1826)

Artist following Kotah-Nathdwara style
circa 1830 CE



Gouache on paper
9.8 x 13.4 in. (24.6 x 34.3 cm.)

Goswami Damodarji Maharaj, popularly known as Dauji II, is shown in an elephant procession with a number of courtiers and soldiers. All the Goswamis in Kotah, Nathdwara and other places became influential enough to maintain their own armies for the safeguard of their region against repeated Mughal and Maratha attacks.

This is possibly one of the many paintings which depict the procession of Dauji II in Kotah which was arranged and attended by Maharao Kishor Singh himself as a gesture of acknowledgement.

First row in the procession is of infantry and all the soldiers are holding guns in their hands followed by soldiers holding javelins and spears, while the last row includes all the courtiers (a few riding caparisoned horses). The Goswami appears in royal paraphernalia with a large radiating nimbus around his head, seated in a golden howda placed on a decorated elephant. Two small golden dancing female idols are decorated on elephant's tusks.



Goswami Balkrishnalalji Maharaj (1868-1917) of Kankroli in a procession

by Nathdwara Haveli artist
circa 1880 CE



Gouache on paper
13.5 x 10.6 in. (34.3 x 26.9 cm.)

Front: "Shri Bal Krishnalalji Kankroli"

Goswami Balkrishnalalji of Kankroli in a royal procession, possibly commemorating the 'Chunari Gangaur'. Chunari Gangaur is an important festival of Shrinathji Haveli in Nathdwara and is also celebrated at other centers of Pushtimarg including Kankroli. All the participants in the procession have red and golden chunari tied as their waist cloth and turbans; similar chunari is also draped around the nisan (royal insignia).

Artist presented a curious mixture of perspectives as he struggled with the photo-realism and traditional idioms. While the procession is shown moving to the right of composition, the Goswami absurdly turns to his right to face the viewers and shows his frontal face which is finished with realistic touches.



Maharao Ram Singh II (1808, r.1828-1866) of Kotah

by Kotah court artist
circa 1840 CE

Gouache on paper
12.7 x 9.8 in. (32 x 24.9 cm.)



Maharao Ram Singh II of Kotah was a dynamic ruler and a noted patron of arts.

A large number of paintings were made by numerous painters documenting his daily life and his devotional inclinations. A number of Ram Singh's equestrian portraits depict him indulged in different activities like playing polo.

In keeping with Rajput proportions of delineation, this portrait depicts the well dressed ruler slightly larger in proportion as opposed to others in the composition. A bright colour palette of synthetic pigments is used, which was a common feature of mid nineteenth century and later Kotah paintings.



Rao Bahadur Singhji returning from mela

Artist following Uniara-Bundi style
circa 1790 CE

Gouache on paper
10.5 x 15.5 in. (26.7 x 39.4 cm.)



Back: *"Paano Rao Bahadar Sangh ji ka mela ki asawari"*

A ceremonious procession of return from a *mela* (fair) was attended by a number of courtiers and guards around an unidentifiable ruler being carried in a palanquin. Composition is depicted in reverse perspective, where figures in foreground are smaller in proportion than those in the background. The upper most row has camel guards, the middle one has a royal palanquin and in the foreground is infantry. Most of the soldiers and courtiers in the composition are shown holding guns and javelins.

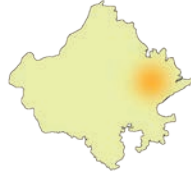
Spontaneity of the brush work and prominent use of primary and secondary colour scale and folksy figure types hints at central Indian influence on a regional (or a smaller *thikana*) style.



Rani Laxmi Bai (1835-1858) warrior queen of Jhansi

by Jaipur court artist
circa 1880 CE

Gouache on paper
9.6 x 7.8 in. (24.4 x 19.8 cm.)



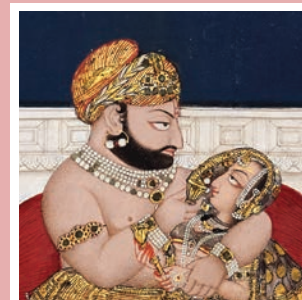
An imaginary portrait of a young Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi. She participated in the revolt of 1857 against East India Company. Rendered in a late style of Maharana Ram Singh II's atelier when artists had started using the readily available 'Lake colours' which had bright hues.

Jhansi ki Rani is shown riding a galloping horse and is holding a javelin. Dressed in contemporary Jaipur courtly style: wearing an angarakhi with brocade work on it, chudidar pajama teamed with a Maratha turban. Her horse's trappings include golden *halras* (necklaces) and a *jalidar* neck piece.

Background of this portrait is animated and is reduced in scale. The distant landscape has a range of mountains set against an orange horizon and bright blue sky, and the foreground shows a small water body with a few aquatic birds around it.



Leisure



**Maharaja Bakhat Singh (1706, r.1726-1752)
enjoying a performance**

by Nagaur court artist
circa 1740 CE

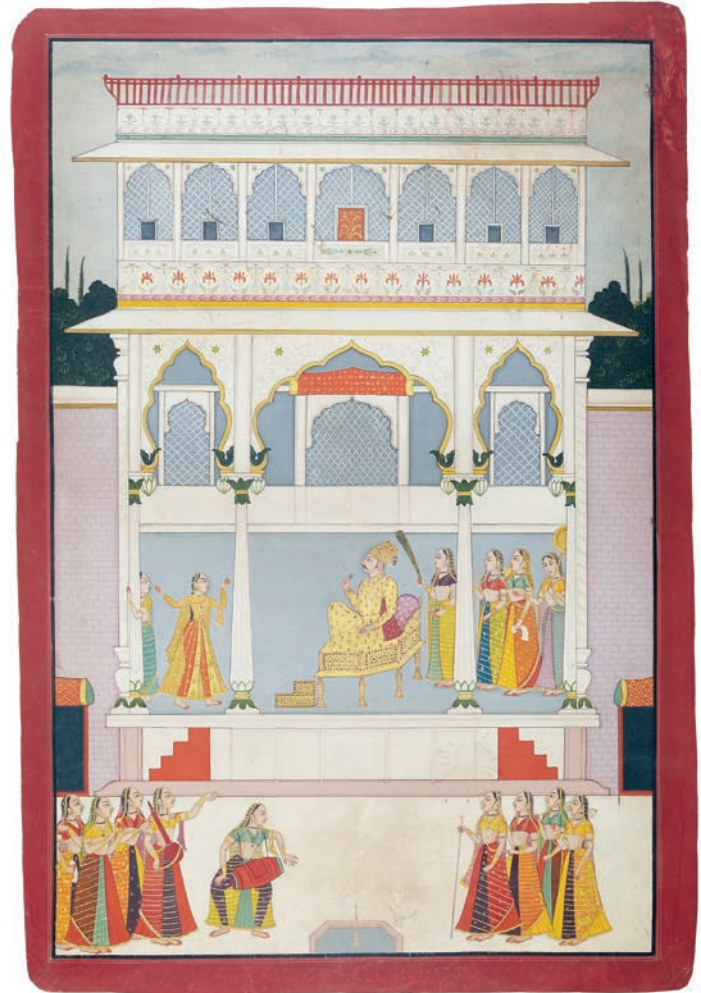


Gouache on paper
23.2 x 15.7 in. (59 x 39.8 cm.)

Maharaja Bakhat Singh became the ruler of Nagaur and later of Marwar also. He was granted the kingdom of Nagaur by his brother Maharaja Abhay Singh as an award for murdering their father Maharaja Ajit Singh.

At Nagaur royal atelier, he commissioned a number of paintings which showed him enjoying performances and indulged in festivities. He must have called a few painters from Jodhpur as the style refers back to preceding Jodhpur *qalam*.

This work is impressive for its scale but was possibly left incomplete as the pattern on the grey wall and white balustrade behind the ruler is missing. It is interesting to note that in most of his portraits, including this work, he is shown without a nimbus around his face, which was one of the essential features of Rajputana portraits for depicting rulers.



Maharaja Bakhat Singh (1706, r.1726-1752)
practicing archery

by Jodhpur court artist
 circa 1750 CE



Gouache on paper
 10 x 14.8 (25.4 x 37.6 cm.)

Front: "Maharajadhiraj Shri Bakhat Singhji"

Back: "Maharajadhiraj Shri Bakhat Singhji, Mharaj Rajeshwar Mharajadhiraj Maharaja Shri Shri Bakhat Singhji ri sabih Bishak Sudi?"

Maharaja Bakhat Singh was granted Nagaur by his brother for conspiring against their father. Bakhat Singh had a derived taste for art and culture from his predecessors and he established a painting workshop in the newly found 'Nagaur'.

Like other Jodhpur rulers, he commissioned a number of portraits and drawings documenting his luxurious lifestyle. This is one such composition, showing Bakhat Singh polishing his archery skills. Not many Marwar paintings are made on this theme, and the artist here got the patron's seated posture correct with arch of his straightened back matching with the curve of the bow.



**Maharaja Man Singh (1783, r.1803-1843) of Jodhpur
playing Holi with a bhagtan**

by Jodhpur court artist
circa 1840 CE



Gouache on paper
11.7 x 8.3 in. (29.7 x 21.1 cm.)

Along with a large volume of religious manuscripts, Maharaja Man Singh of Jodhpur also got his lifestyle painted. He particularly favoured compositions pertaining festivities and celebrations.

He must have commissioned a range of Holi depictions as they appear in a number of collections and most of these are meticulously detailed. He also got a number of performance based subjects painted.

Maharaja Man Singh appears in his signature side whiskers and curled up moustache and Kishangarh influenced upturned eye. This composition was also later adopted for depicting his successor Maharaja Takhat Singh (see pg. no. 108).



Maharaja Takhat Singh (1813, r.1843-1873) of Jodhpur playing Holi with a bhagtan

by Jodhpur court artist
circa 1850 CE



Gouache on paper
11.3 x 7.8 in. (28.7 x 19.8 cm.)

Front: "47 Maharaja Shri Shri Takhat Singhji 51"

Holi, festival of colours, is one of the many festivals celebrated with great pomp in almost all the Rajput kingdoms, especially at Jodhpur. This subject was painted in the ateliers of all the subsequent Maharajas of Jodhpur.

Maharaja Takhat Singh of Jodhpur gave generous patronage to his predecessor Maharaja Man Singh's atelier. Though not very effective at administrative aspects, Takhat Singh basked in leisure activities and celebrations which were documented in many paintings.

Compositionally this depiction owes to Maharaja Man Singh's Holi depiction (see pg. no. 106). This composition appears incomplete as it lacks the festive zeal due to absence of staining and squirting of Holi colours. This composition is crucial from a study point of view as it depicts the artist's approach to painting Holi scenes where final detailing is not delineated for it would have smudged under the paint splatter.



Maharaja Gulab Singh and Thakur Kulan Singh enjoying a feast with others

by Jodhpur court artist
circa 1840 CE



Gouache on paper
9.9 x 13.4 in. (25.1 x 34 cm.)

*Back: "Thakur Shri Gulab Singh, ji Sam Shri Somdhi? got khap Ranawat
Khushal Singhji ro chhoto bhai, Madare Sokarja? Pankho Rakhe;
Thakur Raj Shri Khulan Singh ji? SomSi ? got Rajthin ? khap Ranawat;
"Chaakar Ramoji hoko pivo;
"Chakar Jagmal Ranawat Dolat Singhji"*

Two young Thakurs- Gulab Singh, brother of Kushal Singh and Kulan Singh, both of Ranawat clan are depicted feasting with their courtiers who are seated hierarchically. Two servants (including a *morchal* bearer and a cook) are standing behind the group. Barbecued food can be seen in the centre of the composition and is also shared by the two nobles. All the men are shown clad in white outfits, colourful turbans and all are holding their shields and swords.

Set on a bright colour palette, folk renderings are enhanced with thick black outlining and drooping eyes. A line of olive green dense banana trees behind the white carved balustrade is contrasted with mustard flooring of the terrace and grey-ish blue skyline.



1713

**Maharana Jagat Singh (1709, r.1734-1751) of Mewar
in his *harem***

by Mewar court artist
circa 1730 CE



Gouache on paper
9.5 x 7.3 in. (24.1 x 18.5 cm.)

Paintings of *harem* or *zenana* (ladies section) were an integral part of the royal painting collections and were possibly meant for personal viewing.

An early eighteenth century portrait of Maharana Jagat Singh surrounded by a number of ladies serving him in the outdoors is remarkable for its unusual composition. Jagat Singh is depicted as a tall and bulky figure with full beard and a golden nimbus. All the petite ladies surrounding him are serving him by either holding his hookah pot, fan, nisan, morchal or are presenting him flowers. All of them are shown standing on a floral carpet and all the bright coloured outfits are juxtaposed with a dull malachite tone of the background.



Maharana Bhim Singh (1768, r.1778-1828) of Mewar seated under a *ganga-jamani* canopy

by Chokha (at Mewar court)
dated 1798 CE



Gouache on paper
14.1 x 10.5 in. (35.8 x 26.7 cm.)

Front: “*Shri Shri Maharanaaji Shri Bhim Singhji ganga-jamani chhildari me birajya chataro Chokho bakhtavat, sa. 1854*”

Back: “*Shri Shri Maharanaaji Shri Bhim Singhji ganga-jamani chhildari me birajya chataro Chokho*”

Maharana Bhim Singh of Mewar, the 67th custodian of the house of Mewar was a great patron of the art of painting and evidently commissioned a large amount of some of the best works (qualitative and quantitative) produced in Mewar.

Bhim Singh’s *zenana* depictions are elaborate, usually inclusive of a number of female figures bustling about the surrounding. His ‘higher than a normal human’ stature is rendered by a large nimbus around his face, his golden outfits and bejewelled pearl and gold ornaments and a zigzag patterned golden-silver canopy (often called as *ganga-jamani chhildari*). Arched frame along the edges of the composition followed by a finely carved jali adds to the overall grandeur.

This work appears to be done in collaboration by Chokha and Baijnath.



**Maharana Bhim Singh (1768, r.1778-1828) of Mewar
in his *harem***

by Chokha (at Mewar court)
circa 1810 CE



Gouache on paper
6.4 x 10.4 in. (16.3 x 26.4 cm.)

Back: "Tasabir Shri Shri Maharana ji Shri Bhim Singhji Arasi Bilas re upare bhagatan sati dasi re sathe podharane padhaaryaa tasbir Chokho banayi"

Maharana Bhim Singh's reign was marked with hardships including repeated Maratha attacks and plundering which left the royal exchequer empty. Conditions worsened to the extent that Bhim Singh had to borrow money for one of his weddings. But no catastrophe seems to have lessened his interest in vanity and art of painting. He married multiple times and had numerous children (some sources account him with 95 to 100 offspring). He commissioned a number of splendid paintings that depict him engaged in festivities, amusements, hunting, etc.

This portrait is one of many depictions of Maharana Bhim Singh in a *zenana*, and it has a soothing appeal to it. Chokha's refined brush work, signature facial features, slightly stout figures and contrasting colour palette are accentuated with profusion of gold against the bright white of the architecture and the grey-ish blue night skyline.



Rawat Gokul Das (1786-1821) of Devgarh with a consort

by Chokha (at Devgarh court)
dated 1810 CE



Gouache on paper
8.5 x 6.7 in. (21.6 x 17 cm.)

Back: "Tasvir Mharawal Shri Gokal Das,ji ri surat no pano najar? 1866 Chataro Chokho"

Gokul Das, the 9th Rawat of Devgarh is shown romancing with his consort in *zenana*. Unlike most of other *zenana* depictions of the period, the background is devoid of all the hustle bustle of ladies and objects. Gokul Das's upper body is embellished with symmetrically painted multiple lines of pearl necklaces and a meticulously decorated turban. His belongings like sword, shield, katar, etc. are placed neatly in front of him.

Chokha's depiction of Rawat Gokul Das's personality resembles to that of Maharana Bhim Singh of Mewar (see pg. no. 117). This composition appears to be painted in collaboration as the lady's feature are closer to the style of Baijnath¹¹.

Red of the mat and bolster is subdued by white of the floor and balustrade, further balanced by dark grey-ish blue of the night skyline.



**Maharana Bhim Singh (1768, r.1778-1828) and
Rawat Gokul Das (1786-1821) at shikar**

by Chokha (at Devgarh court)
dated 1800 CE



Gouache on paper
6.9 x 10.8 in. (17.5 x 27.4 cm.)

Back: "Shri Shri 108 Maharana ji Shri Shri Bhim Singh ji ri Sikar ro pano Chokha ra haath ro Devgarh Rawat Gokal Das ghodo Matt Bagas, Pano ori jamaa samat 1856"

Chokha, a master painter at both Devgarh and Mewar workshops, painted his patrons Maharana Bhim Singhji of Mewar and Rawat Gokul Das of Devgarh with a matching silhouette. Both the patrons bear a bulky stature, large almond shaped eyes, full bearded face and upward turned moustache.

Relations between Maharana Bhim Singh, the 67th custodian of the house of **Mewar** and Rawat Gokul Das, the 9th Rawat of **Devgarh**, gradually became cordial. Bhim Singh (with a nimbate face) is followed by Gokul Das and both are simultaneously attacking with javelins in a game of pig sticking.

Gokul Das had a comparatively peaceful and prosperous reign, away from the constant fear of Maratha attacks which was encountered by other Rajputana kingdoms including Mewar.

Both the rulers are shown prominently with their figures enlarged in scale in proportion to the surrounding. They are accompanied by a number of hounds and courtiers following them in background.



Maharana Swarup Singh (1815, r.1842-1861) of Mewar playing holi

by Ambavo of Mewar
circa 1845 CE



Gouache on paper
13. x 9.8 in. (33 x 24.9 cm.)

*Back: "Shri Eklingji, Maharajadhiraj Mharanaji Shri Shri Sarup Singh ji ri
tasbir hathi upare faag ro ? Sambat 1908 fagan sud 8 chataro Ambavo"*

Chitara or artist Ambavo was active during the reign of Maharana Swarup Singh, Shambhu Singh and Sajjan Singh and was possibly trained by master artist Tara.

Maharana Swarup Singh commissioned a number of paintings which portrayed his courtly and cultural life, especially featuring his grand holi celebrations. A number of paintings portraying him playing holi with his kith and kin were prepared in multiple copies and versions.

Compositionally and stylistically artist Ambavo owes a lot to his **master**, but his style is recognizable for a folksy appeal. His brush work is not as refined as his master and other colleagues like Shivalal and Parashuram.



Maharao Ram Singh II (1808, r.1828-1866) of Kotah celebrating Dussera

by Kotah court artist
circa 1840 CE

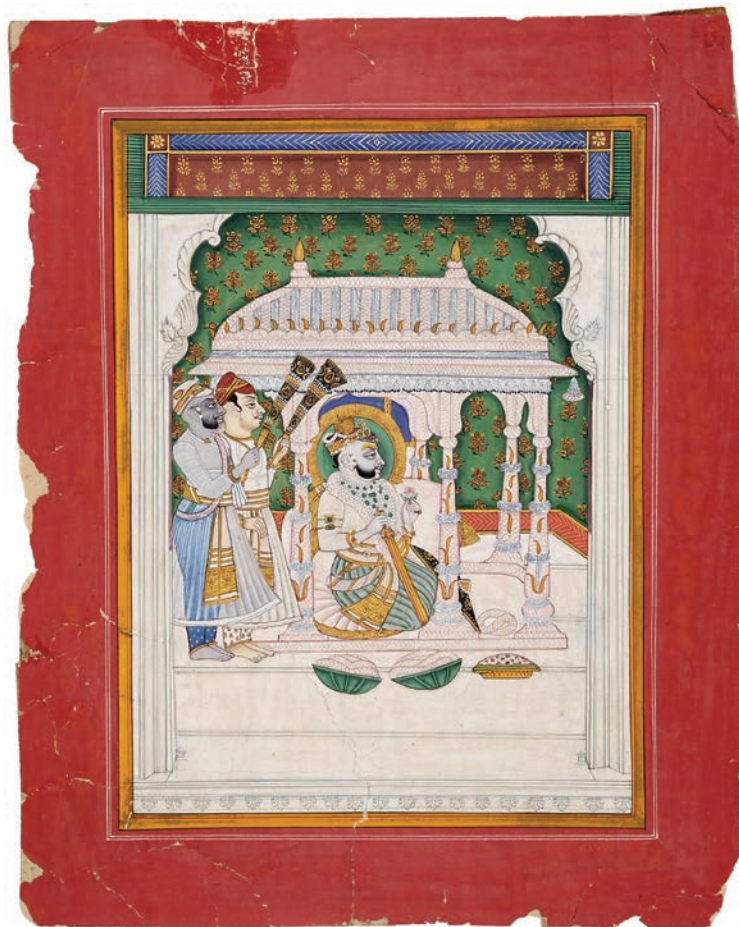


Gouache on paper
9 x 7.2 in. (22.9 x 18.3 cm.)

Maharao Ram Singh II, the 16th Maharao, of Kotah gathered a number of painters in his atelier and commissioned a large number and versions of paintings depicting his royal, courtly and personal life.

Arrangements in this composition are made for *shastra puja* (literally, worship of weapons) which is performed by almost all royal houses at the festival of Dussera. Rendered in a refined amalgamation of styles and with utmost precision, Ram Singh is depicted inside a marble *chhatari* and is served by two attendants.

Ram Singh's idealized profile is outlined with a confident thin line and appears to be done by a master hand and the bright yet sombre colours in the composition pertain to the Kotah aesthetics.



An armoured queen taming a tiger

by Kotah court artist
circa 1830 CE

Gouache on paper
19.3 x 14.6 in. (49 x 37.1 cm.)



An imaginary portrait of a lady (possibly a queen of Kotah) is expressively done in a late Kotah style (with mixed elements from late Devgarh animal renderings).

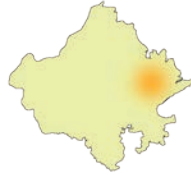
The armoured lady adorns a camouflaging lion shaped headgear as she executes the challenging task of taming the tiger. She holds the chain of leashed tiger who is anguishly roaring.

Tiger in the composition is rendered with bold and defining lines and was possibly done by a master practising in a late Kotah idiom and who must have seen the Devgarh life size tiger depictions¹².



**Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II (1835-1880)
of Jaipur hunting a tiger**

by Jaipur court artist
circa 1880 CE



Gouache on paper
12.6 x 9.7 in. (32 x 24.6 cm.)

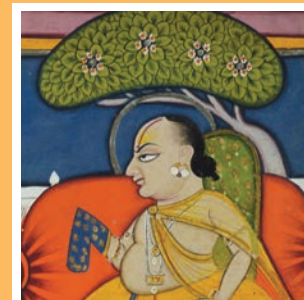
Maharaja Ram Singh II of Jaipur was a devout Shaivite and believed in reform and development.

Along with promotion of new technologies and a forward outlook, he promoted traditional practices and culture, and was a notable patron of paintings.

Artists freely experimented with techniques, materials and compositional settings. In this intriguing composition, artist appears to be struggling with photo-realism and traditional idealized depictions.



Religion



Shri Ayas Sundarvanji

by Jodhpur court artist
circa 1775 CE

Gouache on paper
13 x 9.9 in. (33 x 25.1 cm.)



Back: "Swami? Atasji"; "Ayaaji Shri Sandarvanji"

A group of six *Shaivite sadhus* (including a child) indulged in a discourse on a courtyard in front of a Shiva shrine (with a Shivalingam placed inside). One of them is Sundarvanji (could be either the oldest *sadhu* or the one with black beard seated on a red mat). Their outfits and attributes including *tilak* marks and *rudraksh mala* represent their Shaivite affiliations.

This composition has a mixture of styles from Jodhpur, Nagaur and Mughal and each portrait is rendered with an individuality. Artist tried successfully to impart central attention to the old man and the one seated on red mat by drawing their figures slightly larger in scale than the ones in the foreground. Vertical stripes of a durry in foreground goes against artist's attempt towards perspective, however, subdued tones and white foreground balances the visual equation with dark background and red border.



Maharaja Bhim Singh (r.1793-1803) of Jodhpur with a saint

by Jodhpur court artist
circa 1780 CE



Gouache on paper
9.3 x 13 in. (23.5 x 33.1 cm.)

Maharaja Bhim Singh's reign can be summed up as a contest for succession with his uncles and cousins. He seized Mehrangarh and declared himself as the ruler but soon surrendered and retired to his personal jagir at Sawana; very soon he once again regained his army, seized the fort and proclaimed himself ruler for the second time.

Maharaja Bhim Singh's daughter was married to Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh of Jaipur and that led to exchange of art, culture and aesthetics between the two kingdoms, however, no Jaipur impact can be seen on this painting.

In this portrait, Bhim Singh is shown visiting a priest and the meeting is depicted under a printed canopy. The priest is shown seated on a decorated carpet surrounded by cushions, resting against a **bolsters** and is sniffing a flower while Maharaja is seated humbly in front of him. Stylistically this composition has a folksy verve, but the facial features are individualistic and delineated in Jodhpur's characteristic style.



Maharaja Man Singh (1783, r.1803-1843) of Jodhpur worshipping Jalandharnath

by Jodhpur court artist
circa 1820 CE



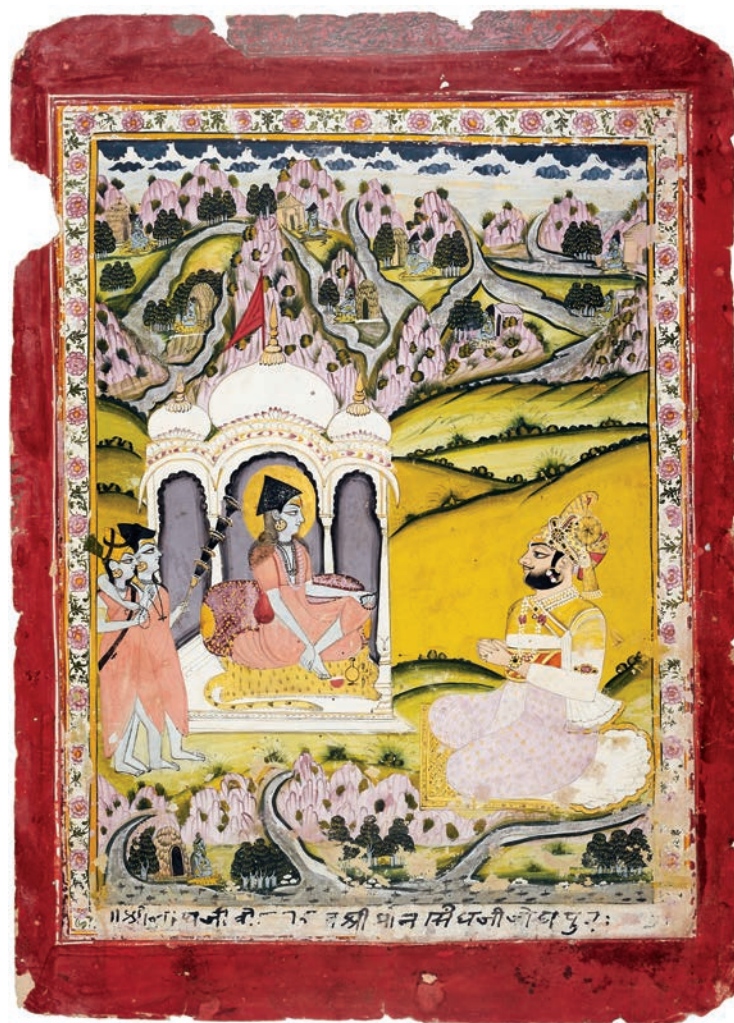
Gouache on paper
13.8 x 9.9 in. (35.1 x 25.1 cm.)

Front: "Shri Nathji ...?... Shri Man Singhji Jodhpur"

Amid a range of rocky hills surrounded by tributaries of a meandering river is a pristine white marble pavilion, where Jalandharnath is shown at ease. Maharaja Man Singh, who was a devout follower of mahasiddhas, pays his homage to Nath swami by making a *pranaam* or *namaste mudra*.

Artist draws a curious amalgamation of various perspectives where landscape can be seen as a mixture of hills and planes, as seen from an aerial perspective, while the central pavilions and figures are depicted as seen from an eye level. A number of small huts of yogis are shown scattered at the foothills.

Jalandharnath and two of his attendants are rendered in soft tones of blue and pale saffron outfits enhance their asceticism. Golden nimbus around Yogi's face provides him a higher stature.



Maharaja Takhat Singh (1813, r. 1843-1873)
worshipping Bahuchara Mata

by Jodhpur court artist
 circa 1850 CE



Gouache on paper
 13 x 9.7 in. (33 x 24.6 cm.)

Maharaja Takhat Singh of Jodhpur along with one of his wives is shown worshipping Bahuchara Mata inside a palatial set up. It is not established as yet whether Takhat Singh physically went to the temple located in Mehsana (Gujarat), but if he did, it would have been probably seeking the boon for a child.

Bahuchara Mata is commonly worshipped by a few communities, majorly by *Hijra* (trans-sexual and trans-gender) and by those who seek blessing for offsprings. A large golden radiating nimbus, elaborate crown, gem encrusted jewelry and embossed pearls heighten the grandeur with which Devi is projected. She holds a trident, a sword, a wine cup and a decanter in four of her hands. Her *vahana* (vehicle) is a large white cockerel with a red face, which symbolizes innocence; and is flanked by *kala* and *gora* Bhairava.



Maharaja Gaj Singhji (1723, r.1745-1787) of Bikaner worshipping goddess Karni Mata

by Bikaner court artist
circa 1770 CE



Gouache on paper
7.1 x 5.6 in. (18 x 14.2 cm.)

Karni Mata is worshipped as the incarnation of Durga by rulers of Marwar and Maru region including kingdoms like Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaisalmer and others.

She was revered and worshipped by Rao Jodha of Jodhpur and Rao Bika, founder of **Bikaner**, and she supposedly laid the foundation stone of forts at both, Jodhpur and Bikaner.

In this depiction, Maharaja Gaj Singh I, the 14th Maharaja of Bikaner is shown worshipping or pleading in front of an idol of Karni mata. She is depicted as seated on a golden throne placed in the outdoors on a white platform (and not inside a shrine). Mata's imagery is white complexioned, has four arms (holding various attributes) and *gora* and *kala* Bhairava are shown clinging around her feet.

Colours are taken from tertiary scheme teamed with bright red of the border which was an essential feature of Bikaner courtly paintings and was greatly favoured by both patrons and painters.



**Maharana Bhim Singh (1768, r.1778-1828)
worshipping in Jagannathrai temple**

Attributed to Chokha (at Mewar court)
circa 1820 CE



Gouache on paper
13.9 x 10.6 in. (35.3 x 26.9 cm.)

Done in the style of Chokha, a popular master artist from Mewar, this composition depicts Maharana Bhim Singh worshipping in the *garbha griha* or sanctum sanctorum of the Jagannathrai temple.

Jagannathrai is a form of Vishnu with four arms. This temple was constructed (right outside the Palace walls) by Maharana Jagat Singh in 1651 and was worshipped by all the subsequent Maharanas. Maharana Bhim Singh was of religious nature and a lot of compositions depict him worshipping various deities. This composition possibly depicts the event when Bhim Singh donated cows. In this composition, gold and silver chequered pattern behind the idol denotes the mirror work in the temple. A four armed Devi and a blue complexioned idol of Krishna playing a flute are placed on either sides of the main idol. A number of small vessels and other objects are placed on the platform in front of the idol and a golden *Garuda* and a white cow are placed in foreground.

Bhim Singh is shown in his royal paraphernalia, carrying his sword and shield and is seated in the foreground with his palms joined. A priest is performing the *seva* (fanning with a hand fan).



3262

Maharana Swarup Singh (1815, r. 1842-1861)
worshipping Shrinathji at Nathdwara

by Nathdwara Haveli artist
circa 1850 CE



Gouache on paper
13.6 x 9.8 in. (34.5 x 24.9 cm.)

*Back: "Chitra Shrinathji ko Shit kal ko Shringar ko Golpapg ghar Dwarvaga,
Maharana Sarup Singhji"
"Govind ji Girdhari"
"Rana ji Sarup Singh ji"*

Unlike most of the large Nathdwara manorath paper paintings, this smaller version of Maharana Swarup Singh worshipping Shrinathji is done in Nathdwara *qalam*. Outfit of the Shrinathji idol and *picharwai* (backdrop) are rendered in pink which possibly suggests at the *Falgun* or Holi *darshan*.

Maharana Swarup Singh has a large green-golden nimbus around his face and is worshipping in a humbling *pranaam mudra*. On the other side are a Goswami and a young child where the Goswami is fanning the idol with a *morchal* (peacock feather fan). A deep sky blue tone against the *shikhara* (top of super structure) of the Haveli hints at an evening set up.



A Young Goswami conducting a court

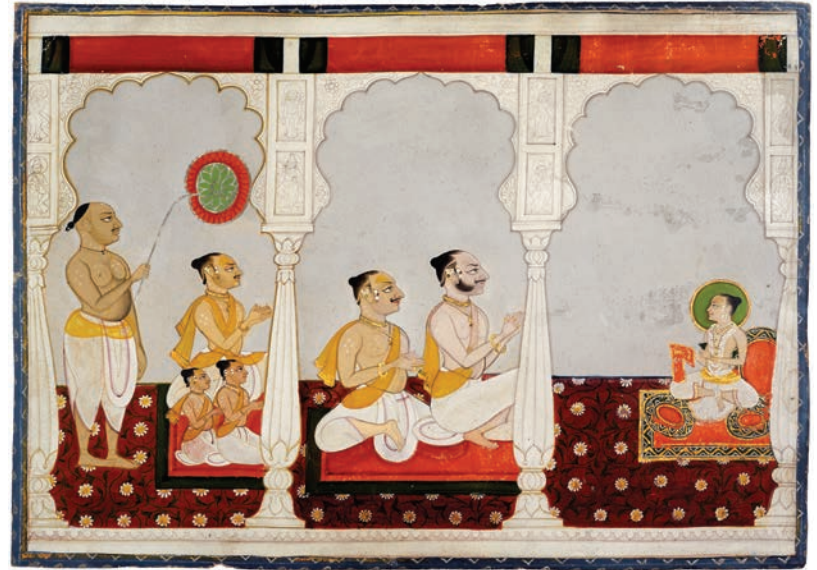
by Nathdwara Haveli artist
circa 1840 CE

Gouache on paper
9.8 x 13.8 in. (24.9 x 35.1 cm.)



Painting style of Nathdwara was formed by amalgamating idioms from Kotah, Mewar, Kishangarh and other nearby areas, and this merger of styles at times (like in the case of this portrait) creates confusion in contextualization and identification.

A young Goswami (but senior in position, as evident from his seat and green-golden nimbus), is conducting a court or is preaching his disciples (including two young shishyas) and is also chanting on his rosary hidden under his *gomukhi*. Bright colours of outfits and soft furnishings are drawn from primary and secondary colour schemes and are balanced with white colonnade of cusped arches and neutral grey of background.



**Maharana Fateh Singh (1849, r.1884-1930) attending
Manorath of five swarupas at Nathdwara**

by Ghasiram Hardev Sharma, Nathdwara
circa 1900 CE



Gouache on paper
21.1 x 15.9 in. (53.6 x 40.5 cm.)

A *manorath* is performed to fulfil a long cherished desire and an innermost yearning to perform *seva* to the deity. This portrait is of the assembly of five swarupas at Nathdwara. The swarupas are Shrinathji, Navneetpriyaji, Vitthalnathji, Dwarkadhish from Kankroli and Mathureshji from Kotah.

The celebration was attended by Maharana Fateh Singhji of Mewar. In the portrait Tilkayat Govardhanlalji is seen performing aarti on the left and besides him Maharana Fateh Singhji is praying. On the right many Goswami's from different areas like Kotah, Kashi, Kankroli and Shergarhwale are seen along with their children. The Maharana of Mewar used to regularly visit Nathdwara during such special occasions. In the outer frame two staff bearers are also seen on either side. In the background is a gold and silver brocade *picharwai* (backdrop) with golden cows. In the foreground are five golden vessels containing *biris* of *Paan* for each swarup.

This manorath has been painted by renowned artist Ghasiram Hardev Sharma. He was one of the most prolific artists of Nathdwara. After being engaged in painting murals for the Raja of Jhalawar, Ghasiram became chief or mukhiya of the painting department at Nathdwara.



Shrinathji as bridegroom, manorath performed by Tilkayat Govardhanlalji and other Goswamis

by Ghasiram Hardev Sharma
circa 1900 CE



Gouache on paper
20.1 x 15.4 in. (51.1 x 39.1 cm.)

In the center is Shrinathji's *sevra*¹³ *shringar* (his bridegroom decoration) which is pronounced by his elaborate headgear and a backdrop with gopis (milk maids). Shrinathji is adorned with a *chakdar* jama with gold on maroon bold floral patterns and long multiple pearl strings.

Priests in the composition can be identified as: (on the left) Goswami Govardhanlalji and possibly Goswami Ramchhodlal from Kotah; and (on the right) Damodarlalji, son of Govardhanlalji, Balkrishnaji of Kankroli, Vallabhji of Shergarhwale and Jivanlalji from Kashi (Varanasi)¹⁴.

Along with the finesse in depiction, master artist Ghasiram was an expert on setting colour schemes. In this composition, the bright golden canopy is juxtaposed with bright toned *toran* (string of wall decoration). Bright colours of *picharwai* (backdrop) and orange outfits are balanced with neutral grey of the walls, flooring and brown border.



Tilkayat Damodarji Maharaj (1797-1826) with a *shishya*

by Nathdwara Haveli artist
circa 1850 CE



Gouache on paper
12.8 x 9.8 in. (32.5 x 24.9 cm.)

In a short lived stewardship, Tilkayat Damodarji made a great impact on varied aspects of society. He constructed a number of private and public utility buildings including Bada Baag, Bada Bazar, Mathura Darwaza, a Gaushala (to accommodate 4000 cows), Lalbaug Palace and completed the boundary wall of Girdharsagar Lake.

His tenure was comparatively peaceful and his relation with rulers of various kingdoms was cordial. He was conferred certain powers related to justice in his region by Maharana Bhim Singh.

A number of painters flourished under his patronage and got a lot of ambitious projects completed like murals in the Haveli and in Mahuvavala akhada.

Unlike other terrace set up compositions, this painting shows a *chik* (curtain) drawn behind the balustrade which acts as a decorated backdrop and the same set up was also used for other paintings¹⁵.



A Goswami enjoying monsoon in a *baradari*

by Nathdwara Haveli artist
circa 1880 CE

Gouache on paper
10.1 x 13.9 in. (25.7 x 35.3 cm.)



A Goswami seated on an ornate chair inside a *baradari* (marble pavilion) constructed in a garden gives a glimpse of the lavish lifestyle followed by Goswamis and their families. Following the Libel case of 1862, the pompous and exorbitant lifestyle of Goswamis had come in question. Leaders of Pushtimarg had come under the critical eye for their misuse of power, political, social and financial status.

An evening scene, where the adolescent Goswami (as apparent from his sprouting moustache) is shown enjoying the downpour. He has a green-golden nimbus around his face and is served by two attendants. Amount of jewelry worn by the Goswami (especially his thick silver anklets), red backdrop with golden floral motifs (reminiscent of a Shrinathji pichawai), the two marble fountains on the either side of *baradari*, a well groomed garden with vases and golden balustrade echoes the growing wealth of Goswamis, which ultimately resulted in criticism.



Maharaja Kishor Singh (r.1819-1828) of Kotah worshipping Shrinathji

by Kotah court artist
circa 1820 CE



Gouache on paper
13.2 x 9.7 in. (33.5 x 24.6 cm.)

Revered as one of the most inspired Vaishnav among nineteenth-century rulers, Maharao Kishor Singh worshipped Shrinathji and all his swarups, including his personal deity Brijnathji.

Artist has played an interesting game of contrast and saturation with his colour choices in the composition. He teamed orange of the backdrop with Maharao Kishor Singh's outfit and blue of Shrinathji and background (behind the orange backdrop) with the night skyline. These bright colours are neutralized with grey base of the walls and floor in the temple complex, but at the same time are contrasted with a multi coloured flag at the top of the thatched roof and bright red border. While a priest performs ^{aarti}arti, venerating Kishor Singh attends the *darshan* with joined palms.

Kishor Singh must have assembled painters from Nathdwara and other courts, as evident from the mixed style and colour palette of paintings of his period.



Vallabhacharya (1479-1531) chanting on beads

Attributed to Nihal Chand, Kishangarh
circa 1750 CE

Gouache on paper

9.6 x 7.4 in. (24.4 x 18.8 cm.)



The founder of the Pushtimarg, Vallabhacharya was a mystic person and was blessed with divine vision. He also propounded the methods and rituals for *seva*, which are practised till day by Pushtimargis.

He travelled extensively and three of his major pilgrimages include: *Mathura* and *Vraja*- where Lord Krishna appeared and initiated Vallabha into *Bramha Sambandha Mantra*. *Pandharpur*- where the Lord appeared again and commanded him to marry so that his preaching can be carried on, this tradition of hereditary succession remains an important feature of Pushtimarg. *Vijayanagara*- he impressed the king Krishnadeva Raya with his profound knowledge and was award the title of *Acharya*.

He penned a number of important books on Vallabh sampradaya including *Anubhasya*, *Bramha Sutra*, *Subodhini* and *Shodasha Grantha*⁶.

Done in a refined early phase of Kishnagarh paintings, this portrait has a deep background which reflects profoundness of the subject. Vallabhacharya is shown clad in a pristine white outfit, chanting on beads and in front of him is a small manuscript with names of all swarups of Shrinathji inscribed on it. In the distant background is mount Govardhan. The play of multiple perspectives and symmetrically drawn nimbus of the *Acharya* are capturing.



Gokulnathji (1552-1641) reciting from a manuscript

Artist following Kishangarh-Nathdwara style
circa 1840 CE

Gouache on paper
12.6 x 9.4 in. (32 x 24 cm.)



Gokulnathji was the fourth son of Vitthalnathji and gained immense popularity as a devout Pushtimargi. He compiled a number of books in a vernacular dialect **and Braj bhasha**, which had a deep impact on local mass. He also compiled his father's travel experiences and incidences which he witnessed.

In this composition, except for the posture and facial features of the central figure, which are rendered in Kishangarh style, everything else is finished in a Nathdwara *qalam*.

Architectural features, flora and fauna refers to contemporary Nathdwara style where artists of the period had already started experimenting with photo-realism, perspectives and play of light. This painting also brings about the struggle of artists in continuing traditional aspects with contemporary influences: to draw Gokulnathji (who existed centuries ago), artist derived a traditional style and to depict the background he assembled more compelling contemporary idioms.



Baba Shri Morarswami reciting from a manuscript

by Dungarpur court artist
circa 1860 CE

Gouache on paper
7.4 x 5.8 in. (18.8 x 14.7 cm.)

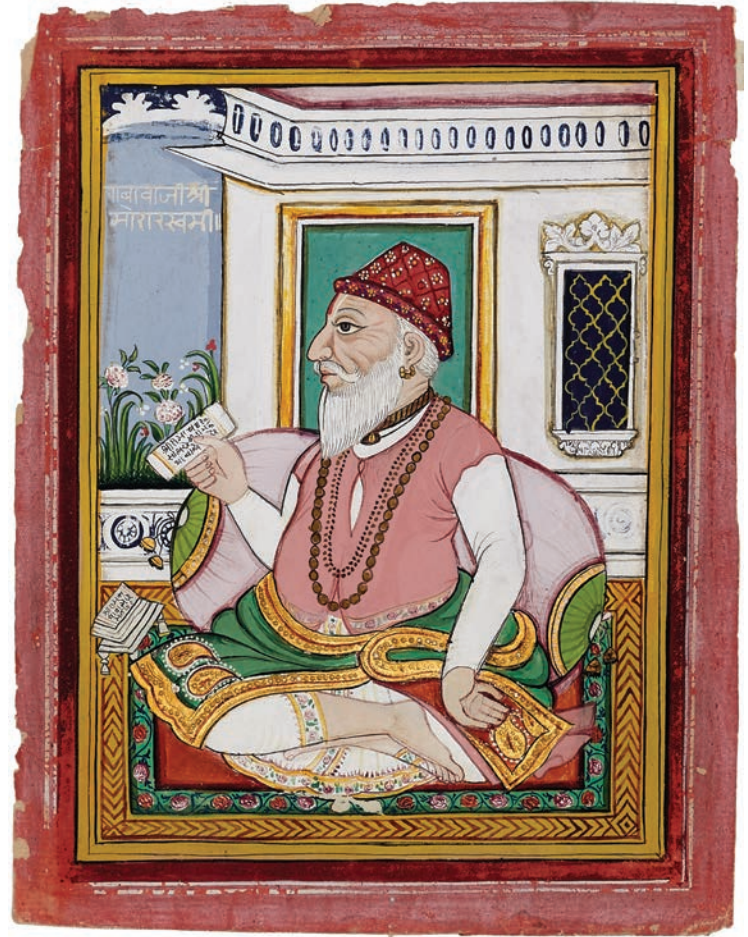


Front: "Babaji Shri Morarswami"

Nothing much is known as yet about Babaji Shri Morarswami and his connection with Dungarpur, but this depiction is expressive for bold lines, bright colours and courtly set up.

Elderly Babaji is shown reading from a folio of *Ramcharitmanas* and styles a *Vaishnavite tilak* mark, a round cap and *rudraksh malas*. His background with a palatial room, terrace garden and floral carpet suggests that he must be either visiting a royal dignitary or was a priest in an influential temple or court.

Painters from different regions like Mewar used to visit Dungarpur court and artist of this folksy portrait must have seen a number of other courtly counterparts.



A guthaka, portable shrine, of the various swarups of Lord Krishna

by Nathdwara Haveli artist
circa 1750 CE



6.1 x 5.7 in. (15.5 x 14.5 cm.) each folio
Gouache on paper, bound as a book

These folios are possibly the earliest examples of Nathdwara paper painting tradition. These depict all the influences which shaped the style, namely Kishangarh, Mewar besides folk counterparts. All the compositions are similar and are done in primary and secondary colour scheme but with confident lines.

Girdharji who was a Tilkayat from 1769 to 1807, is shown as a young priest in most of the folios and this series was made while he was a child.

These nine folios, depict various forms of Krishna and their worship by different Tilkayats and Goswamis in similar square frames.

1. Tilkayat performs the arti during the Annakoot festival
2. Tilkayat performing seva of Madanmohanji
3. Vitthalnathji and his seven sons, performing Pranayama
4. Goswami Damodarji (1655-1704) performs aarti to Vitthalnathji
5. Tilkayat performing seva of Mathureshji
6. Vitthalnathji maharaj of Kankroli performs aarti to Dwarkadhishji
7. Tilkayat Govindji (1729-1774) performs aarti to Navneetpriyaji
8. Tilkayat performing seva of Gokulchandramaji
9. Goswami seated under a tree and chanting on beads



1.



2.

3.



6.

7.



4.

5.



8.

9.

Inspiration



Maharaja Bisal Dev (8th century)
Warrior king of Ajmer

by Ajmer court artist
 circa 1760 CE



Gouache on paper
 12.6 x 8.7 in. (32 x 22.1 cm.)

Front: "Shri Bisal Devji Raja Ajmer ra"

Raja Bisal Dev (Vishal Dev Chauhan) of Ajmer is represented as a personification of a fierce demon on a killing spree. Vishal Dev Chauhan, also known as Bissal Dev or Bisaldev ruled Ajmer possibly in 8th century and is known to have started the Baisla gotra. Bisal Dev was brother of Mandalji, who founded the famous Mandal lake near Bhilwara district in Mewar and a popular semi-god Devnarayan was born in the family of Mandalji. Bisal Dev is said to have successfully resisted an Arab intrusion and also helped Gurjar-Tomars to gain control over Delhi.

Both these depictions could be of Baghji (founder of Baghravats), who appears in the folk tales of Devanarayan, as a composite form of lion and human, and existed in the reign of Bisal Dev.

These portraits were done by two different artists, but both capture the fearsome manifestation of the character.



16.4 x 12.8 in. (41.7 x 32.5
 cm.)

Gouache on paper
 circa: 1900



Portrait of Vedas

by Mewar court artist
circa 1720 CE

Gouache on paper

i. Rigveda 15 x 9.2 in. (38.1 x 23.4 cm.)

ii. Samveda 15 x 9 in. (38.1 x 22.9 cm.)

iii. Atharvaveda 15 x 9.3 in. (38.1 x 23.6 cm.)

These three Vedas, Rigveda, Samveda and Atharvaveda are possibly the earliest known depictions of the *swarup*, or personification of three (out of four) vedas.

Each portrait shows veda as bulky men (but of different groups) and appear to be learned Brahmins. Facial feature of Rigveda¹⁷ corresponds the contemporary age and look of the patron Maharana Sangram Singh (r. 1710-1734).

All the vedas are clad in dhoti and hold their respective veda in the form of bound horizontal manuscripts. The colophon in Sanskrit above each portrait gives the physical attributes like the body colour and shape of eyes and basic character of each *swarup* of veda. Foreground of each manifests the attributes as per their colophons. These portrait are done in a refined style and presents intense imagination and expressive power of the master artist of the period, and also reflect level of understanding, aesthetics and high tastes of the patron.



॥ वाग्देवता स्वर्ग्य ॥ सान्नेदेव स्वर्गिः । सुप्रयतः । शुचिः । सुविद्यासा । सकामी । रोमेवृ
 ॥ तृशरीरः ॥ शमी ॥ दडी । कातरं जयमः । श्यादित्यवर्णो वरुण । नवपरलिमानः ॥ २ ॥



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॥ श्री ॥ शुभर्वेदो स्वर्ग्य । अर्थवेद श्वती ह्यः । प्रवृद्धः । कामरूपी लिम्बात्मा । विश्वकजी ।
 ॥ सुदकर्मो रवशारवा ध्याय्यः । प्रयतश्च महानीलो त्यलवर्णो वरुण । दशपरलिमात्रः ॥ १
 ॥ ४ ॥



iii

**Maharana Jai Singh (1653, r.1680-1698) of Mewar
meeting Harirayji Maharaj (1591-1716)**

by Mewar court artist
circa 1860 CE



Gouache on paper
11.8 x 9.8 in. (30 x 24.9 cm.)

Front: "Shri Harirayji maharaj ke aage Rana Jesinghji bethe hai tinke pichhe paswan khada hai haathjore hai vah chitra lidho"

This imaginary composition, done in a mixed Mewar-Nathdwara style, features Maharana Jai Singh paying homage to Goswami Harirayji of Nathdwara Haveli. These two were contemporaneous and may have met as Jai Singh's father Maharana Raj Singh had issued land to Pushtimargis to set up the idol of Shrinathji. Since then, Maharanas of Mewar became devotees of Shrinathji and used to visit the Haveli and Goswamis frequently.

Original reference for this painting is not yet known. A colophon space has an inscription written in black ink in Devanagari script in a late Mewar dialect, saying Maharana Jai Singh is seated in front of Harirayji Maharaj (there by suggesting higher status of Harirayji than the former). There is also mention of a paswan standing behind Jai Singh and the artist, referred to as the one who 'chitra lidho' or made the painting, is standing with joined palms. A horizontal manuscript of Bhagwad Purana is placed in front of Harirayji.



**Prithviraj Chauhan (1149-1192) shooting
Muhammad Ghori (1149-1206)**

Attributed to Tara, Mewar court artist
circa 1860 CE



Gouache on paper
13.6 x 10.1 in. (34.5 x 25.7 cm.)

Front: "Prithviraj Chauhan, Patsa Shri Gori Sa, Chand Bhat"

*Char Bans Chaubi Gaj, ungal asat parman;
Ta upar sultan hai, mat chuke Chauhan.*

This couplet was narrated by the poet Chandbardai to Prithviraj Chauhan, telling him the exact position where Muhammad Ghori is seated. Based on a folklore, Prithviraj set his arrow at an angle suggested by Chandbardai and shot Ghori in his throat and before anyone could capture them, the poet and Rajput king stabbed each other.

Though there are no historical facts for this episode, it is nonetheless a popular story in Rajputana and has been recorded in many ways. Image of Prithviraj Chauhan can be cited elsewhere in this catalogue and is styled after the imaginary portrait of Maharana Pratap, which includes features of an ideal Rajput warrior. In an animated narration, Muhammad Ghori is painted twice, where in second depiction he is shown falling out of the *jharokha* after being shot. Artist follows the style and schematisation of famous artist Tara and his son Shivalal of Mewar.



Prithviraj Chauhan (1149-1192)

by Nathu Chatera of Kota
circa 1860 CE



Gouache on paper
13 x 9.5 in. (33 x 24.1 cm.)

Back: "Shri Raja Purviraj ro paano chatare Nathu najar kidho kimat ri 35"

Portraits of Prithviraj are imaginary, and are styled after Maharana Pratap's portrait which was initially conceptualized by artist Chokha of Mewar and Devgarh. Prithviraj Chauhan was the last independent Hindu king who ruled over Ajmer and Delhi and is usually remembered for defeating Muhammad Ghorī in the first battle of Tarain in 1192 CE and eloping with Sanjukta, daughter of King Jaichand of Kannauj.

He is styled as a brave armoured Rajput soldier, always holding a bow, quiver, a shield and a sword, and has a slightly bulky figure with large, slightly upward turned imperial moustache. These two portraits are an interesting study as the incomplete one provides glimpses to the process and techniques adopted by the painter to finish it.

These two portraits of Prithviraj Chauhan were done in a later Mewar-Nathdwara mixed idiom. The tinted drawing with no background provides the portrait a timelessness where a viewer has certain freedom to contextualise it. Whereas, the finished painting, with green-golden nimbus, outdoor setting in a terrace garden flanked by a carved marble balustrade places it in a preconceived Mughalized courtly portraiture style.



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Tinted drawing on paper
13.8 x 10.8 in. (35 x 27.5 cm.)
circa: 1860 CE

Lord Krishna preaching Arjuna in the battlefield

by Premchandar Ramlal of Nathdwara
circa 1900 CE

Gouache on paper

12.4 x 9.4 in. (31.5 x 23.9 cm.)



Depiction of an episode from the Mahabharata battle in which Krishna motivates Arjuna to fight against the Kauravas and Guru Dronacharya.

While Krishna, who chose to be the Arjuna's *sarathi* (charioteer), is indicating at battlefield by waving his hand and armoured Arjuna is paying homage with joined palms and bowed down head. Krishna then narrates the Bhagwat Gita's karma based philosophy to Arjuna, to boost his spirits.

This imaginary portrait of Krishna and Arjuna was created by a known Nathdwara artist who amalgamated traditional and contemporary influences to shaped his own style. Though Krishna's imagery is closer to semi-realistic counterparts, Arjuna appears to be modelled after the popular imagery of Rajput hero Maharana Pratap.

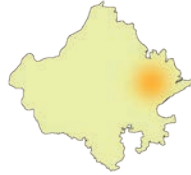
Artist Premchandar Ramlal is also credited to have painted the Juna Mahal in Dungarpur¹⁸.



King Pururava with Urvashi

by Ghasi Dayaram of Jaipur
circa 1790 CE

Gouache on paper
12.2 x 16.9 in. (31 x 43 cm.)



A folio from Jaipur Bhagwad Purana, canto eleven-chapter twenty six, depicts story of a Chandravamshi King Pururava and his wife, a celestial nymph, Urvashi.

Based on the story, Pururava was the direct descent of Bramha and was born in the line of Chandra. He had an unfortunate incidence with *apsara* Urvashi who was born on earth because of a curse. She marries Pururava on certain conditions but when they are not met, she returns to her palace. Lovelorn Pururava eventually follows her and on his return, he finds his heart full of regret. He then indulges himself in penance and leaves his body. Devas from *Vaikuntha* or swarg receive his body in a flying cart. Like an animation, Pururava is depicted four times in the composition.

Jaipur Bhagwad was possibly commissioned by Maharaja Sawai Madho Singh I and was completed in the atelier of Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh. All the folios were finished in a workshop pattern where the running narratives were composed by one master artist. Manuscript name, canto details and artist's name are written on the margins and inscriptions are written along the depictions in golden ink. A fascinating attempt is made towards perspective, vanishing point, shade effects and three dimensional architectural features.



Collector's View

(Extracts from an informal discussion between Anil Relia, the art collector and Sonika Soni)

SS: Do you remember the first Rajputana portrait which you acquired?

AR: It is an interesting story, I had gone to Nathdwara some 15-20 years back with Amitbhai (Amit Ambalal), at that time I was not much aware of this genre of paintings. One day we chanced to see a pencil drawing of a procession scene and I liked it for its fine workmanship. Even though the quoted price was very high, I nonetheless acquired it after a few rounds of negotiation. I got it neatly framed and hung it in my house. A few years later, scholar Tryna Lyons visited my house and saw the drawing. Later on she informed me that the drawing was an important work done by the master artist Ghasiram and it portrayed the wedding procession of Goswami Damodarlalji. She even published it in her book. This drawing is still hanging in my puja-ghar and gives me immense pleasure.

SS: Which is your favourite courtly portrait from your collection?

AR: A recently acquired Manorath painting which was done by master artist Ghasiram. But this painting is of a religious genre. My favourite courtly portrait is of Maharana Bhim Singh meeting Colonel James Tod. This portrait was done by Chokha and it was shown to me by a local vendor with a lot of other paintings. This vendor did not know much about the subject of the painting. This particular piece caught my attention and when I tried reading its inscription it confirmed my assumption that the firangi in the portrait was Col. Tod himself. Subject and style-wise it was the most important piece, but was least priced as firangi figures were not much in 'fashion' back then. My other favourite piece is the portrait of Bisal Dev of Ajmer. I got to see this painting up for sale at an auction and liked it instantly, but unfortunately it was tagged 'sold'. Later on, a close acquaintance showed me some pieces from his collection on his tablet. Immediately, I recognized the Bisal Dev portrait and realized that he must have acquired it from the auction. And when my friend got to know of how

much I liked this portrait, he offered it to me. I found another version of Bisal Dev portrait in Udaipur with a local merchant, but somehow the former one is dearer to me.

SS: Would you like to share your most interesting deal of any portrait in your collection?

AR: A few years back, a gentleman approached me during one of my portrait exhibitions. His surname was Khajanchi and I casually asked him if he knew Moti Chand Khajanchi of Bikaner. He was indeed related to him and told me that he had a few paintings from his family collection. I went to see those paintings and liked a few portraits. He quoted exorbitant prices, possibly referring to international auction catalogues. I dropped the idea at that time, but later reproached him as few of those works were triggering. Finally we settled on an average amount, which was still higher for me. After acquiring those pieces I realized that a Bikaner portrait was indeed a rare piece for it had betel wings encrusted, which is unusual for the region and period. So, even after my wait of two years, I felt as if those works were also waiting for me and it is humbling to realize that I have a few objects from the Khajanchi collection.

SS: What do you look in Rajput portraits while acquiring them?

AR: Nowadays I look for the gaps that I need to fill in my portrait series, but earlier I went on buying whatever fascinated me, irrespective of their region, period or subject. I looked for overall appeal and technical nuances. Sometimes, the people portrayed also intrigued me. I would like to share an interesting experience. Long back when I used to live in my brother's apartment in Ahmedabad and I had yet started collecting, I met an old man who we used to call 'dada' and he was a commercial painter. I used to visit him casually and saw that he had a few pictures hung on his walls and one day I asked him why they were there? He told me that he used to work for royal courts and for studios. He once got commissioned for painting on black &

white photographs. He finished the work but no one ever came to take the delivery, and this was the time right after the Indian independence. That was my first encounter with royal painted photographs and I bought all the four that he had hanging on his walls. More than the portraits, I liked their stories which he told me and I even included them in my portrait VII catalogue.

SS: Do you ever buy these portraits as an investment?

AR: I have many pieces which I acquired at nominal prices and could have easily sold when their price escalated, but that was not my agenda. I am just building my own collection which is solely for my pleasure, knowledge and also knowledge sharing. But if at all I get to know that certain portraits can fetch a high price, just the sense of their value gives me immense pleasure and mental satisfaction, but it has nothing to do with my collecting tendencies. Like I said, I buy what fascinates me. My initial tendency of buying has changed a bit as now I collect to fill the gaps in my sets, so that I can share them with other art lovers by the means of exhibitions, catalogues and maybe through a portrait museum in future. I am of the opinion that if someone acquires an object with investment in mind, one would never be content and happy with their collection.

SS: What are your sources of collecting portraits?

AR: I have touched almost all the modes, right from auction houses, agents, vendors, old streets, flea markets-not just in India but also in cities like Paris, New York and London. Market conditions are ever changing, and especially in the case of portraiture, market has gone from nowhere to higher than ever. And I believe, it is the secondary market behind fluctuation in prices and changing of market conditions.

End notes

1. Oxford dictionary
2. Reference for this work is Accession Number: 2012.04.0073-0007 in the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum.
3. A painting depicting the Hurda conference is displayed in the City Palace Museum, Udaipur; accession no. 2012.19.0018
4. Ankan Bai, who was married to Maharaja Madan Singh of Kishangrah and their daughter Manhar Kanwar was married to Maharawal Laxman Singh of Dungarpur. A newly established museum in Durngarpur 'Maharani Manhar Kumari Museum' has been named the granddaughter of Maharana Fateh Singh of Mewar.
5. KG Pramod Kumar, 2014, pg no. 113
6. His khadau, wooden slippers, his pen and writing tools, cot and few other stuff are preserved and displayed in a room adjoining Suraj Gokhda in the Merdana section of the City Palace Museum, Udaipur.
7. Debra Diamond, Garden and Cosmos, pg. no 67
8. Molly, 2004, pg. no. 357-364
9. Crill and Jariwala, 2010, pg. no. 106
10. Ambalal, 1987, pg. no. 69
11. Beach & Rawat, 2005, pg. no. 94
12. ibid, 2005, pg. no. 101
13. Sevra, literally is the head ornament for bride groom.
14. Ambalal, 2013, pg. no. 216
15. Ambalal, 1987, pg. no. 68
16. ibid, pg no. 44
17. Topsfield, 2002, pg. no.146
18. Lyons, 2004, pg. no. 43

Glossary

Alam: Royal Insignia from Deccan.

Amar-shahi turban: Turban style introduced in the court of Maharana Amar Singh I of Mewar.

Arti: The circling of a lamp and other offerings in front of the deity as an object of devotion.

Brahman: Is a *varna* or caste and its members are usually the priests and teachers who are supposed to be engaged in attaining the highest spiritual knowledge.

Danafarana: Malachite, a mineral pigment prepared and traditionally used by painters.

Darbar: Court or royal assembly.

Darshan: The gaze between deity and devotee, exchanged usually after worshipping or performing rites.

Devanagari: An ancient script for Sanskrit, Hindi and other languages written from left to right.

Gaddi: Throne.

Goswami: Priest.

Jharokha: Overhanging balcony with an arched opening in front.

Kalangi: Aigrette, an ornament to go with turban.

Nisan: Royal Insignia.

Pushtimarg: A path or sect founded by Vallabhacharya.

Sabih: Portrait painting.

Sarpech: Aigrette, a head ornament.

Tilak: An auspicious or devotional mark painted or applied on forehead.

Tilkayat: Chief Goswami or priest of Pushtimarga.

Tulsi mala: A kind of rosary made out of holy basil wood.

Vasli: Paper prepared for painting by joining two or more handmade sheets together with a starch based adhesive.

Vedas: Oldest preserved literature of India.

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