

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **PAINTINGS OF KUTCH**

#### **Section I : Cataloguing of Relevant and Unpublished Materials**

This chapter deals with one of the primary concerns of the research, which brings to light some of the recently discovered paintings of Kutch, belonging to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. An attempt has been made in every possible way to incorporate a wide range of scattered materials, and to narrow down to relevant conclusions. As the entire documentation belongs to varied thematic contents and painterly styles, they are grouped into two broad sections: Section-I covers the cataloguing of unpublished materials on the basis of thematic contents as listed below. A) Portrait and Durbar paintings, B) Vaishnava paintings, C) Ethnographic studies of the Company period, and D) Festival scrolls. And Section-II covers the Stylistic Observations.

## **Chapter 3, Section-I.A**

### **Portrait and Durbar Paintings of the Maharaos of Kutch**

#### **Introductory Note:**

This section of portrait and Durbar paintings, of the Kutch Maharaos and royal personages, are not a large number of paintings that can define a stylistic discourse of this painting tradition. Nevertheless, these works have historical significance, which adds meaning to the range of works already discussed by scholars previously. Most of these portrait paintings are in an exceptionally simplified style, following the standard/popular prototype themes, especially of the Mughal and popular Rajasthani schools. However, stylistically the portraits done during the early and mid-eighteenth century had their uniqueness in the quality of draftsmanship, which deteriorates in the late eighteenth century.

It is an acknowledged phenomenon that often the patron's interests and taste have influenced both the subject matter and the aesthetic quality of the works produced. The court paintings activities in this provenance begin to appear only in 1740's under the reign of Rao Desal-I, when the land was generating an increased revenue due to the trifling ports.

#### **Rao Desal- I (b.1682- d.1752 and r. 1718-1741)**

Rao Desal-I, a ruler who joins the reign in the prime of his life, handsome, and of pleasing and courteous manners, was one of the most favorite and fondly remembered rulers in Kutch history. His was times when the revenue of the province was initially very small, but having appointed Sheth Devkaran, an efficient administrator as his minister, reversed the graph by amassing great wealth in his treasury. His was also the rule when the depleting funds in the Gujarat revenue, forced the Mughal military to advance into Kutch, thrice, demanding tribute, over an already spared agreement with Jahangir.<sup>32</sup> But his good relation with his Bhayats (chief Jadejas), kept him in great support when the Mughal expedition took

---

<sup>32</sup> As a province of the Mughal Empire, Kutch had for more than a century and a quarter, was free from the attack for a hundred years under the agreement sanctioned by the Emperor Jahangir, that pilgrims be sent to Mecca free of charge and Kutch be spared of the payment of tribute. REF: Patel G.D., 1971, *Op,cit*, Pp. 126.

place. Unfortunately, this good faith lasted only for a brief period. His own very jealous and rebellious son, Lakhpat, murdered his minister, and placed his father in confinement, taking over the ruling power in his hand. Rao Desal was dethroned from his power and spent his last eleven years in confinement and died at the age of 70.

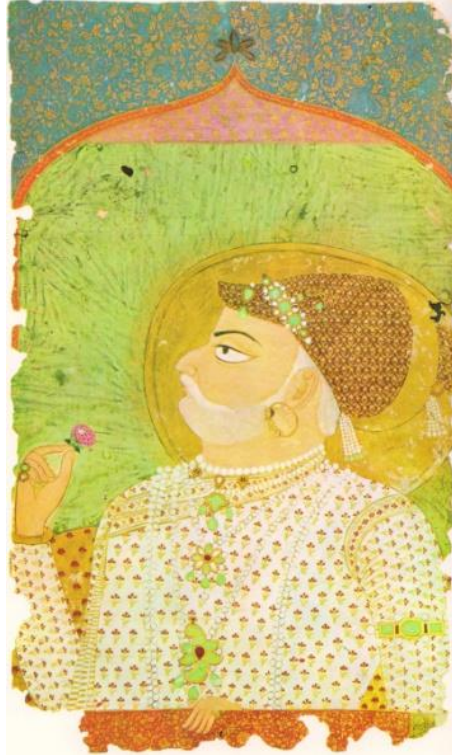


Plate 1, Portrait of Rao Desal I

Now it is quite possible that although we do not come across any reference to Rao Desal as a patron of art, there are few paintings in which he appears, in white-beard, suggesting that he must have set himself as a patron of art during his later years. Interestingly, in most of his paintings, he appears attending the Durbar with the sheer supremacy of an assured ruler- with his head raised with robustness, smoking a *hukkah* or holding a flower in his hand. He can be easily identified among all Kutch rulers, as he is the only Maharao who appears in Kutch Durbar paintings of advanced age, except of course his ancestors depicted in a succession group commissioned by him. He wears a *paghdi* shaped like a cap, projecting on the forehead, which continues cylindrically winding backward and ends with a golden pleat at the high end. A three-piece (*teen kalingi*) gem studded *serpech* tied around his *paghdi*, and strings of pearls dangling from the back of his turban, and strings of pearl necklaces enrich his highly sophisticated personality.

Plate1: Reproduction from Publication A Place Apart Paintings in Kutch, 1720-1820



Plate 2, Title: Succession group of Raos, Inscribed: *Rao Shri Raydhanji, Rao Shri Pragmalji, Rao Shri Godji, Rao Shri Desalji*, Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of eighteenth century.

Medium: Pigment on paper with real pearls embedded as jewelry

Collection: Aaina Mehal, Bhuj

The succession group of Raos is probably one of the earliest paintings in the present documentation, which comprises the portrait paintings of the four Maharaos, which include Rao Shri Desal and his ancestors back three generations. This was probably the time when the painting was rather in its pre-establishment stage. The collage of four Raos chronologically begins with Rao Shri Raydhan (c.1662-1697 A.D.) on the top left facing his successor Rao Shri Pragmal (1697-1715) on the right and Rao Shri Godh (1715 - 1718) and Rao Shri Desal I (1718 - 1741) at the bottom, composed within a four-quarter grid format. The artist has drawn each of these portraits as if, a view from *Jharokha*.<sup>33</sup> Each of them is visible from waist above holding a flower in one hand and the other hand resting on the carpet which is covering the balustrade. The portrait of these Raos are mostly in their

<sup>33</sup> *Jharokha* format is a largely depicted format in the Mughal courts implicating that the King obliging his pupil by presenting himself at the palace window.

advanced years except Rao Shree Godh I, who died young after a brief reign of 3 years. All of them have a halo (green with golden rays) that encircles their head, which adds to the aura of dignity and authority, with bolster supporting their back. Each of them wears a turban which is broadly accepted as the stylised Kutchi turban, in white or red colour. The red band that runs in between the four quarters has the inscription of each of the Raos in *devnagri* script.

We often believe that it is Rao Lakhpat (Desal's son) who initiated the tradition of painting, in the Kutch courts, but in this painting, it appears only Rao Desal could have described the resemblance of his great ancestors to the artist.

Such four quarter *Jharokha* format is largely depicted in Mughal courts, identified as a family group, which depicts the ancestral lineage of the last ruler. The format was popular in Mughal and Rajput courts. But here apparently the source of visual reference seems to be a Mughal work. Aaina Mehal, where this painting is displayed, also displays two more paintings of a similar size and format, of a succession group of Mughal Emperors. One frame depicts Humayun, Taimur, Babur, and Akbar, and the second painting depicts Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb, and Shah Azam. The linear quality and colour treatment of these two paintings, clearly suggest the refines of Mughal work. Although it is obvious from the close resemblance of the format that it is this group of Mughal paintings that have inspired the Kutch version. Two more paintings of a similar format are already discussed by B.N. Goswamy and A.L Dallapiccola in their publication- *Family group of the Raos*, a much later work, which depicts Rao Desal I, Rao Lakhpat, Rao Godh, and Rao Raydhan.

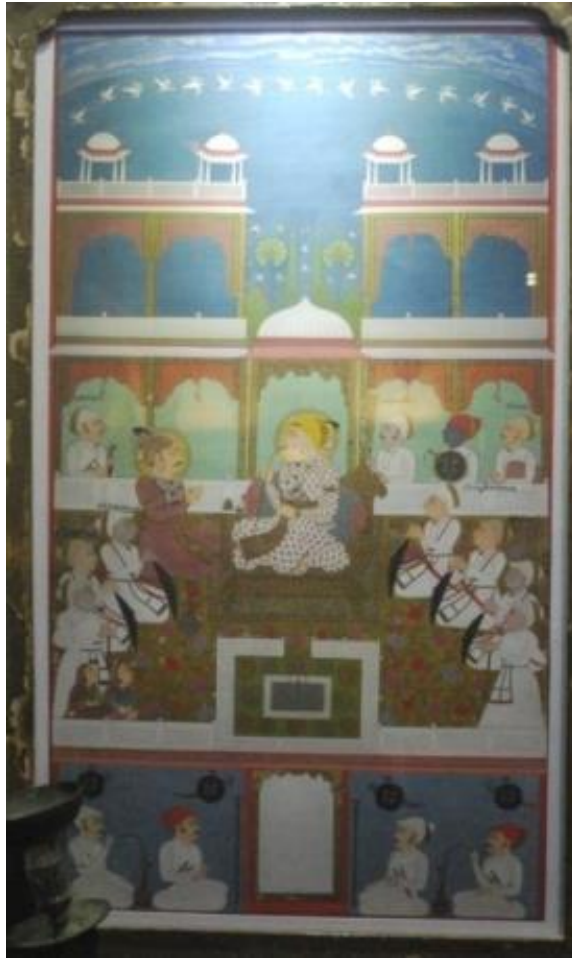


Plate 3, Title: Maharao Desal and Lakhpat in Durbar, Date: Mid-eighteenth Century  
Medium: Pigment on paper with real pearl and precious stones embedded as jewelry  
Collection: Aaina Mehal, Bhuj

The painting represents a formal court held by Rao Shri Desal, attended by Rao Lakhpat and other noblemen, the Jadeja Bhayats of Kutch. Rao Desal is depicted seated on a throne smoking a *hukkha*. Rao Lakhpat is seated on his right on the carpet floor along with others in the court. Both of them are depicted formally dressed for the Durbar, heavily ornate, and both the Raos have a nimbus around their head. It is interesting to note that despite Rao Lakhpat's hasty political interest in acquiring his father's position. Lakhpat in this painting is depicted joining hands before Desal in a *namaskar* gesture, and is completely un-weapon, unlike others in the durbar, and not even has he the ceremonial dagger tucked on his waist like his father. Dr. Goswamy and Dr. A.L Dallapiccola, comment on a similar durbar painting,<sup>34</sup> as works with political undertones. *'There is every indication that here*

---

<sup>34</sup> Goswamy B.N, and Dallapiccola A.L , 1983, *Opcit*, Figure 1 .

*Lakhpatji is as much the focus of attention as his father. Since we know that Lakhpatji seized authority during the lifetime of his father, it is not unlikely that through a painting such as this, the young Rao was creating evidence suggesting filial devotion on the one hand, and the naturalness of the succession on the other*'. Here there is a possibility that the present durbar is also one such politically undertone painting, commissioned by Rao Lakhpat, but it is interesting to note that all the Bhayats sitting in the durbar are older men, as aged in appearance as Rao Desal. All of them have grey hairs and white mustaches, and all are wearing a *pagadi* similar to Rao Desal, except Lakhpat. It is interesting to note the two young ladies (bards) seated on the left end of the durbar with a *dholak* in hand but depicted paying attention to the father and son like the rest in the durbar. There are four young men depicted in the background as if behind the balustrade probably a veranda. At the bottom of the page, another four young men are depicted seated guarding the durbar hall outside, out of which two are depicted smoking a *hukkah*.

**Rao Lakhpat** (b.1717 and d.1760, and 1741-r.1752-1760)

Mirza Rao Lakhpat handsome and intelligent was one of the most popular rulers in Kutch, not for his efficiency in administration, but for his pleasing manners and love for show, which made him popular not only in Kutch but also outside the province. He organized splendid Durbar and invited many foreigners and great personalities whom he greeted with hospitality. Greater was his curiosity about the world outside. A poet by himself he founded the Braj bhasha institute in Bhuj, where the bards and Charans might perfect their study of Braj bhasha poetry. This institute was unique of its kind in the country then.<sup>35</sup> Today, he is fondly remembered for his patronage on art and literature. He even received the title Mirza in return for paying honor to Emperor Alamgir II by presenting him with some Kutch horses and Gujarat Bullock.<sup>36</sup>

A man with progressive ideas and wisdom, but in the opinion of Jadejas, is one of the less favored Raos, firstly for being impatient in setting up himself as an independent ruler, by confining his father and murdering his very efficient minister Sheth Devkaran. Secondly, though a man with ability and vision his love for show and extravagant lifestyle

---

<sup>35</sup> Patel G.D., 1971, *Op.cit*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*

soon emptied the royal treasury. Within Kutch, he and his misfit administrators were ill popular for tormenting and amassing great wealth by fining feudatories. Ministers were chosen solely on account of their wealth, which and passed on to the Rao.

Unpopular as he may sound amongst the Bhayats, he was undoubtedly a favorite among Kutch artists. He makes his presence in a large number of paintings be it family groups or Durbar scenes, mounted on an elephant with a troop of an army, or the self-obsessed equestrian portraits and many variations of him standing / seated on a terrace. Infact it is from his period that scholar's state with confidence of a proper workshop have been established in the court of Kutch. Lakhpat being a man of considerable intelligence, treated foreigners with much liberality and from them picked a large store of information about other countries. He is also the one who invited the famous Ramsingh Malam,<sup>37</sup> whose contribution to Kutch art and architecture is remembered even today. Rao died at the early age of 54, suffering from leprosy.



Plate 4, Portrait of Rao Lakhpat, Date: Mid-eighteenth Century

Medium: Pigment on paper with real pearl and precious stones embedded as jewelry

Collection: Aaina Mehal, Bhuj

---

<sup>37</sup> For Ramsingh Malam contribution in detail, Refer to Chapter 5, Pp. 165



In paintings the artist has captured him as a handsome young man in the prime of his age, always dressed in royal attire and heavily accessorised in pearl and gem ornaments. What captivates his features the most are his sharp profile features and lustrous eyes. He has a medium size sharp edge nose and well-shaped slender mustache. He is usually depicted with a *tripundra tilaka*- a three-line horizontal *tilak* with a dot of *kumkum* in the centre, on his fore-head. His slightly bulging chin and fit physique suggest his age is not more than mid-thirties. One more unique feature is his turban, very different from other rulers. He wears a modest size turban, with pleats that go winding around the head giving a conical bend upwards on the back of the head. A broad strip of the golden band runs along with the winding of the turban. He too like his father ties a three-gem studded *sarpech* on his turban, with pearl strings dangling from behind.



Plate 5, Title: Seated Rao Shri Lakhpat, Inscribed: *Ra Lakho*, Size: 15 x 11 cm

Date: Mid- eighteenth Century A.D., Medium: Line drawing on paper,

Collection: Kutch Museum, Bhuj

The seated portrait of Rao Lakhpat (inscribed: Ra Lakho), is the finest drawing of any Rao drafted, with at most precision. This line drawing represents Rao at the prime of his life- charming, young and handsome. His fit physic and up-straight body suggest his young age. His sparkling young eyes and tamed slender mustache effortlessly pull all the

attention towards his remarkable personality. He is depicted seated on the ground posing sideways against a flat plain background holding a shield in his left hand and the right-hand bend arms at 90 degrees. Unlike his later portrait, the lack of nimbus, *sarpech*, *bajubandh* and *tilak* on his forehead suggests an informal setup or the unclaimed position in the court as a Rao of Kutch.

The use of colour seems intentionally minimal in this portrait, with the use of red on the saber of his bend sword, a portion visible from behind his body, and on the jewel locket. And a strip of gold beautifully decorates his *paghdi*. The fine stippling on the face-below the eyes, around the nose, and beard suggest the completion of the portrait. It is a highly sophisticated drawing to have been produced in Kutch court where we barely even hear of such a skilled artist.



Plate 6, Title: Equestrian portrait of Maharao Lakhpat, Date: Mid-eighteenth Century

Medium: Pigment on paper with real pearls and stones embedded on ear-rings

Collection: Aaina Mehal, Bhuj

Rao Lakhpat nimbate mounted on horse-back was one of the most popular themes preferred by Rajput rulers, especially during the mid-eighteenth century and years later. Here Rao Lakhpat in his iconic feature is depicted on a horse back smoking a *hukkah*, attended by foot servants marching in three-fourth trousers. Five men are marching ahead of the horse with spear and dagger in hand, a *hukkah* holder walks beside the horse, and three men walking right behind the horse- one carrying the royal insignia, next a peacock marshal and the third is the Sidi- the most discussed *hukkah* coal-bearer<sup>38</sup>. A few interesting unusual variations is the attire of a few men in green and red or the turban color which is unlike the usual red one. Suggests the artist's close familiarity with the works seen in Mewar court works. Rather the man who unusually turns around to look at the procession, and the flywhisk bearer- who is a young man with a beard depicted wearing a *sarpech* on his head, are all familiar characters that appear in Mewar Procession scenes. The Siddi coal-bearer has a differently shaped head gear unlike the rest of the men. It seems this particular composition has also probably served as a prototype for later generations to commission their version of equestrian portraits with foot soldiers.



Plate 7, Title: Maharao Lakhpat's Ashwari going to Delhi, Date: Mid-eighteenth Century, Medium: Pigment on paper, and use of gold, Collection: Aaina Mehal, Bhuj

---

<sup>38</sup> Goswamy B.N, and Dallapiccola A.L, 1983, *Opcit.*

Maharao Lakhpat with golden nimbus, smoking a *hukkah*, and riding on an elephant is popular prototype among Rajput rajas. The title given by the museum suggests it is an *ashwari* going to Delhi. Although the visual does not indicate anything related. In the year 1757, just three years before Rao's death, he did visit Delhi to present Alamgir II (1754-1759) with some Kutch horses and Gujarat bullocks and returned having received the title, Mirza. But unfortunately, the painting does not depict any such view or illustrate the horses and bullocks, unless it is inscribed behind. The procession depicts Rao Lakhpat mounted on an elephant accompanied by a mahout holding his *hukkah*, and a whisk holder sitting behind the Rao swaying the fly whisk. A good number of foot soldiers are marching along with the elephant- and two men marching ahead holding the royal spear. A bearded man holding rolled carpets, probably carpets for the Rao to rest occasionally at intervals. Armed men with swords and shields in large numbers are marching with a long weapon in hand, which appears like a rifle. One man is carrying a mace in hand followed by a *hukkah* and coal bearers, and a few foot soldiers. All these men have a colourful attire which is very unusual in Kutch paintings as we rarely see Kutch men in any colour but white. Interestingly like in many of the prototype errors, even this painting has the front feet of the elephant, and a few foot soldiers which appear to be floating in the air. Another painting of Rao on an elephant procession published in *A Place Apart*<sup>39</sup>, now in Mr. W. Uhde collection, Mannheim, is a more elaborate version in horizontal format. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century similar or larger procession scenes were depicted in many of the Rajput courts, especially in Mewar court which might have inspired the artist to cover such scenes. The fact that Aaina Mehal displayed in their collection a procession scene of Maharana Jagat Singh of Udaipur, on an elephant confirms the fact that paintings few Mewar paintings acted as prototype for the Kutch version.

---

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*



Plate 8, Title: Rao Lakhpat Standing, Size: 26 x17.5 cm, Date: Second half of eighteenth Century, Medium: Pigment on paper with real stones embedded, Collection: Kutch Museum, Bhuj

Rao Lakhpat holding a sword standing on a terrace is one of the frequently painted portrait views of him that we come across. In the present painting, he appears in a plain white *angarakha*, holding a sword (straight) in his right hand and a flower in the other. The terrace is white ground which has a balustrade, laced with a strip of yellow flowering plant against sky blue background. A similar more elaborate view is published in ‘A Place Apart’ publication, where he is also accompanied by a Siddi *hukkah* bearer. An earlier publication of the same authors has an image of him depicted standing on the terrace wearing a fur-collared cloak which is popularly seen worn by Mughal royal personages.



Plate 9, Title: Noblemen Standing Kutch, Size: 26 x17.5 cm  
Date: Second half of the eighteenth Century, Artist: Unknown  
Medium : Pigment on paper with real stones embedded  
Collection: Kutch Museum, Bhuj

**Rao Godh,** (b.1734- d. 1778, and r. 1741-1760-1778)

Cruel and unscrupulous Rao Godh is one of the most unpopular rulers in Kutch, who in spite of many large fortunes, left the royal treasury empty. He was 16 years when instigated by Punja (Rao's minister) and his mother, he demanded an administrative position. Although he was given Mundra to run its administration. It goes without credit that Rao Desal wanted one of his illegitimate sons as his successor in Bhuj. But unfortunately, the Bhayats appointed Godh as the right heir to the throne. When he succeeded to the throne much was expected from him, as his father almost emptied the treasury. This was the time when agriculture and Mandvi as a city were flourishing. But a fugal in private life, spent all on his personal benefit, replaced and kept a large amount of Siddi soldiers in the court, and kept large establishment of elephants and horses.

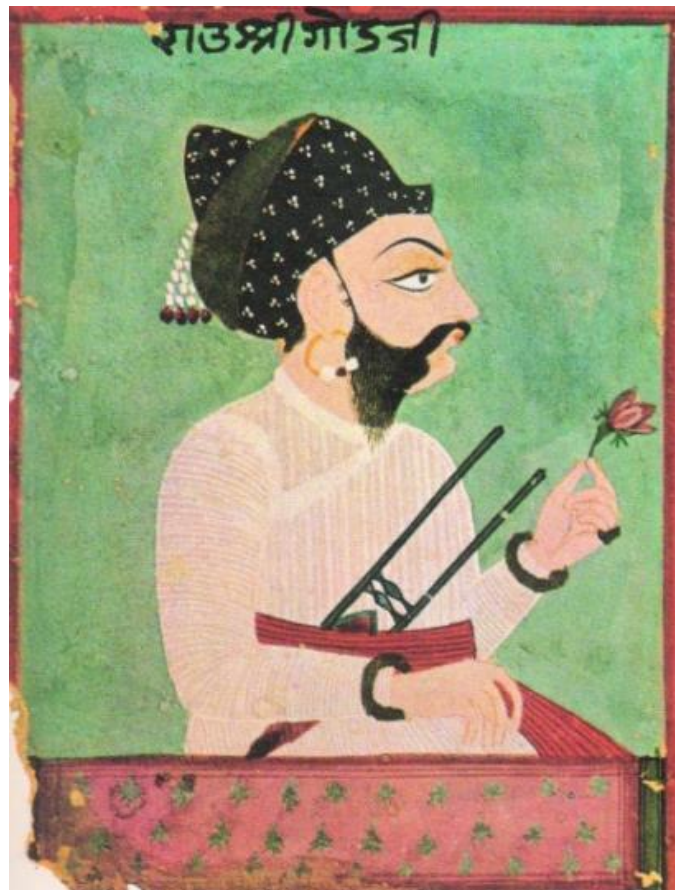


Plate 10, Portrait of Rao Godh

Ref: Reproduction from Publication, A Place Apart Paintings in Kutch, 1720-1820



Plate 11, Title: Seated Rao Lakhpat and Godh, Inscribed on top: *Rao Shri Lakhpatji, Rao Shri Godhaji*, Date: Third Quarter of the Eighteenth Century, Medium : Pigment on paper with use of gold, Collection: Aaina Mehal, Bhuj

Rao Lakhpat and Rao Godh depicted seated facing each other is yet another painting of the two Raos inspired by the family *Jharokha* format, ofcourse instead of dividing the space into four quarter format here the space is divided into two parts, and the long vertical space available in the forefront is used by the artist to depict the complete view of the two Raos. The foreground is a terrace that opens into a fountain garden. The white balustrade laced with marigold planted border is again seen here. Both the Raos are dressed identically in a long white *angarakha* with golden jery designs, formally dressed as Raos of Kutch. The plump body of Rao Lakhpat compared with the lean physique of young Godh shows the artist well understanding of the age difference between the two. The nimbate around their head with *serpech* depicts the power that rests on both the Raos. Rao Godh at a young age demanded for a position in administration and its believed that even before the death of the Rao in reign, Godh demanded to work independently as a Rao of Mundra. Although Rao



agreed in giving the position, history record how Lakhpat was not in favour of giving his position to his son Lakhpat and how he wished one of his six illegitimate sons, to be his successor.



Plate 12, Prince on the lap of Ruler and African Guards, Size: 26 x 13.5 cms,  
Date: Second half of Eighteenth century, Artist: unknown, Medium: Pigment on paper,  
Collection: Kutch Museum, Bhuj

This painting and four other paintings now in Kutch Museum Collection, were purchased by Baroda Museum and sent to Bhuj Collection in 1977. An article published by V.L. Devkar and U.P. Shah on the five paintings, classify by them to the reign of Rao Lakhpat,<sup>40</sup> The painting is identified in the catalogue as “A scene of religious attributed the works to King Lakhpat with his son, attended by Yati Kanaka Kushalji, a Jain monk with whose help Rao established a school of poetry and Braj Pathashala.<sup>41</sup> Now although the fact could be true, what is difficult is to accept is the already familiar feature of Rao Lakhpat. All through the collection of paintings Rao Lakhpat has an iconic feature, it appears as if, not even time and age could change his feature. Infact to me the Rao appears closer to the features of Rao Godh. Moreover, it was during his reign due to political unrest he got all his soldiers replaced with Sidi’s (African soldiers), till the power of the Durbar rested upon them. The young lad sitting smoking a *hukkah* could be none other than his legitimate son Raydhan who succeeded after his father, at a very early age of fifteen, only to slack the

<sup>40</sup> Shah U.P and Devkar V L, *Some Paintings from Kutch in the Baroda Museum*, Bulletin of the Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery. Baroda, Volume 23, The Museum, 1971

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*

administration further. The guest is undoubtedly a holy man as he holds a rosary in hand and the unusual white shawl that covers his body usually used by a priest/monk. But the red cap is misleading. Infact referring to the next plate we are more convinced that the holy man could be none other than the royal priest.

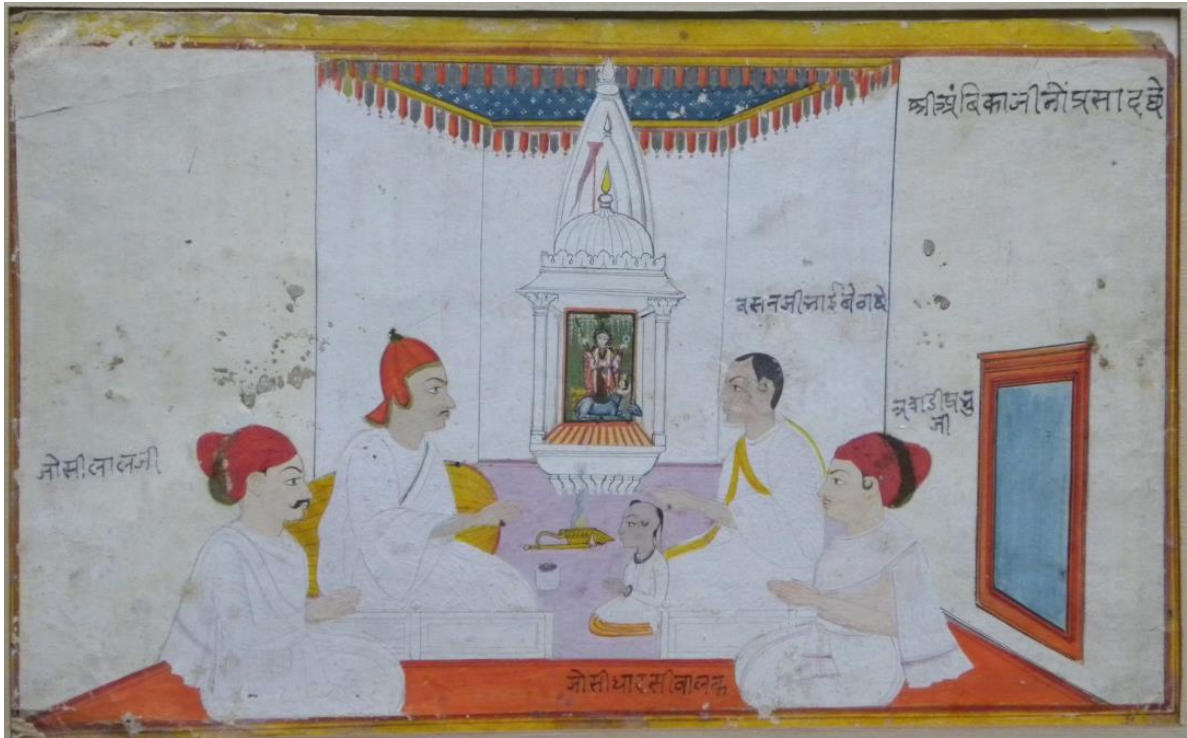


Plate: 13, Title: Amba mata, Inscribed: *shree-ambika-ji-no-prasad-che, vasanjibhai-bethache, travadi-prabhuji, josidarsi balak, josilalji*, Date: Second half of eighteenth Century  
Artist: Unknown, Medium: Pigment on paper, Collection: Kutch Museum, Bhuj

Another painting in the same horizontal format can be identified as a religious ceremony being performed in the court. Although most of the characters are inscribed, it is very difficult to identify who these personalities were and what was the occasion. From the inscription on top, *shree-ambika-ji-no-prasad-che*, we may partially guess that this could be a gratitude paid to Ambaji for blessing the family with a child. The burning arti suggests the commemoration of the pooja. Two men in Kutchi stylized turban are seated outside the balustrade that separates the inner shrine and outer. All five are seated in *namaskar mudra* before a shrine of Ambika (who is in Mahishasuramardini *rupa*). The conical cap and the huge yellow bolster behind the fourth unidentified character suggest that he is the most important person seated in the group. He must have been an important and obvious personality, and the artist has not put an inscription intentionally.

**Rao Raydhan III**, (b.1763- 1813, and r. 1778-1786, restored again 1801-1813)

Rao Raydhan, elder son of Rao Godh succeeded his father at an early age of fifteen. Having passed his childhood with the women in the palace, and having inherited unlimited power at an early age. Surrounded by attendants sullied and debased by constant scenes of bloodshed and cruelty he was exposed to the worse. He was influenced to worse advices and the region was most disturbed as he also gave himself up to debauchery. During his reign the administration of the state had fallen into complete chaos. Five years after his reign, he started showing signs of mental disturbances, that by 1786 he was imprisoned, replaced by his minor younger brother Prithiraj in position. Although after Prithiraj's death Raydhan was once again restored back for 12 years.

Throughout the years of his confinement, he remained a staunch follower of Islam religion, showing great zeal for the faith by assuming the characteristics and austerities of a fakir. He remained the whole day with a staff in hand counting his beads and reciting passages from Quran. Within the palace he also built a tomb in which he directed his body to be laid. But members of the family were unable to come to agreement with and hence burnt his body according to Hindu customs.

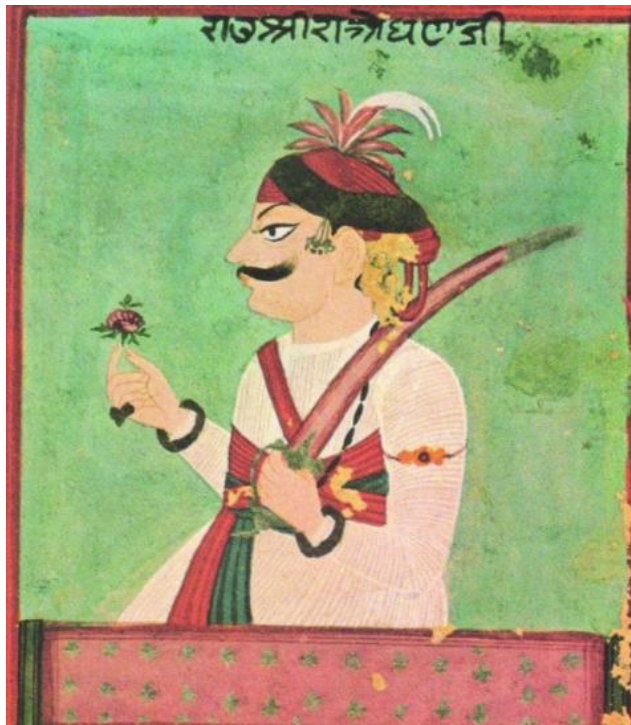


Plate 14, Portrait of Rao Raydhan, Ref: Reproduction from Publication A Place Apart  
Paintings in Kutch, 1720-1820



Plate: 15, Title: Rao Raydhan seated, Date: Second half of the Eighteenth Century  
Medium: Pigment on paper, Collection: Aaina Mehal, Kutch

Little time could he had, to get himself painted but surprisingly there are a few painted during his time. Two of his portraits are in an earlier publication<sup>42</sup>, one in which he appears in a family group along with Rao Desal, Rao Lakhpat, and Rao Godh, and another in which he is standing on a terrace along with a *hukkah* holder and Minister Sidi Masud. In the current documentation, we have only one painting of him in a Durbar, seated all by himself. From the available visual we can note that the style of his *pagadhi* was very different from the rest of the Raos. He wears a humble-sized *pagadhi* which winds around the head a few times and a portion of the turban dangles from behind the head. One of the ends of the turban flair opens on the top of the head giving the appearance of a pleated fan.

The young facial contour indicates that he could have commissioned the works during his early reign of five years. In paintings, he appears with or without a mustache. He

---

<sup>42</sup> Goswamy B.N. and Dallapiccola A.L.,1983, *Op.cit.*

and his associates are mostly shown wearing an *angarakha* which covers the knee and a second frill/skirt below it which covers still the feet.



Plate 16, Title: A Young Prince on the Lap of a Queen, Attended by a Jamadar

Date: Late Eighteenth Century, Medium: Pigment on paper,

Collection: Kutch Museum, Bhuj

This is yet another painting in horizontal format probably belonging to the second half of the eighteenth century. Prince is seated on the lap of his mother, attended by a *Durbar* man who is offering them a close lid grey colored round pot/bottle. The queen and her son are depicted seated on the same *aasana*, with a huge bolster supporting her back. She is holding a rose in her right hand which is the symbol of aristocracy, and her left hand is engaged probably tying her son's turban. She is dressed in heavy ornaments, esp. her hands are filled with gold bangles, and her neck with pearl strings. For the first time, we get to see a woman in painting, dressed in local attire. In this, she has worn a heavily embroider/patterned *choli* blouse which has a small narrow v-shaped neckline, hand sleeves that covers her elbows.

A *Sidi* holding a peacock *morcha* is standing right behind the queen. Another lady probably the queen's female attendant is also depicted seated on the ground, on the carpeted floor, again in a *kutchi* attire. The royal lady could be Rao Raydhana's mother Maharani Motiba Sahiba, by whose influence the administration of the state was under control after Rao Godh's reign. And the Jamadar must be none other than her minister Devchand a much-

respected Lohana, who during the previous reign had more than once managed the affairs of the state well.<sup>43</sup>

**Rao Prithviraj,** (b.1774 d.1801, and r. 1786-1801)

Very little is recorded about Prithviraj in administration. But the fact that he was only a minor of age 12 when he came to reign explains that the administration was mostly under the headship of the chief Bhayat led by Meghji Sheth and Dosal Ven. In 1786 due to the intolerable misconduct of Rao Raydhan one of the ministers Meghji Sheth of Anjar seized the palace to confine Raydhan and placed his younger brother Prithviraj to manage the administration. He was soon elected and appointed to the throne. The council of Bara-Bhayat was formed, in order to centralize the administrative structure. This government was successful for some time but soon led to more chaos. Extreme were the troubles, when Baiji bava, as he was fondly addressed, died at the early age of 27.

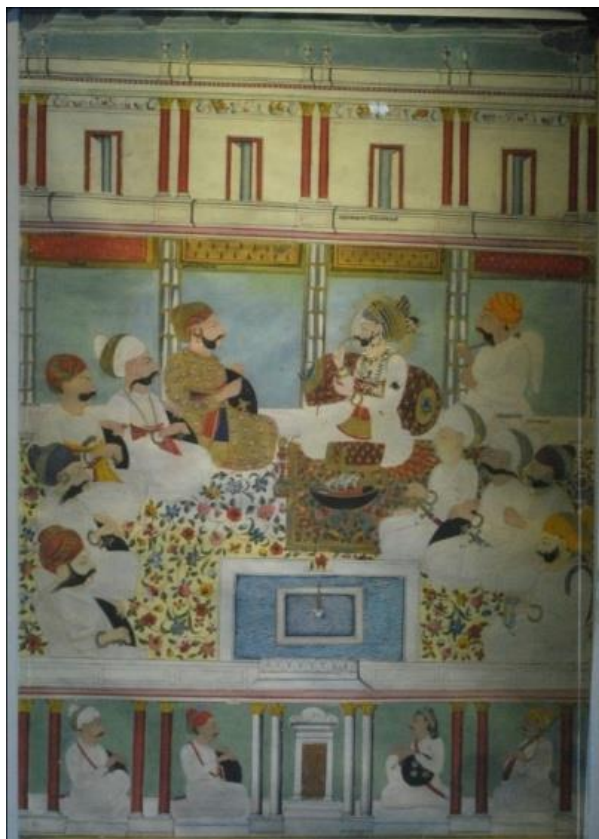


Plate 17, Title: Barabhayat Raj, twelve men Parliamentary, Inscribed: *maharao kumar shri pruthvirajji* Size: 37.5 x 32, Date: late 18<sup>th</sup> century Medium : Pigment on paper

Collection: Aaina Mehal, Bhuj

<sup>43</sup> Campbell James, Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, Volume V- Kutch, Palanpur and Mahikandha, Government Central Press, Bombay, 1880.

This is a very curious painting from the Aaina Mehal collection, a second of a kind that represents a close familiarity with the ambiance of the palace. First could be the Durbar of Maharao Desal and Rao Lakhpat, Refer to Plate no 2. Both the paintings have a familiar approach, to the Durbar hall at Aaina Mehal. Both are not an exact lookalike of the space, but an attempt we can't disagree with.

The court hall designed by Ramsingh malam at the Aaina Mehal is a very interesting chamber, to visit even today, which is a fusion of traditional aesthetics with Italian courtyard fountains. This courtyard at the palace is a closed space that is accessible through many small doors from three directions. A corridor supported by double pillars (wooden) circumambulates this space. The rest of the space which forms a square shallow pool has water sprinklers and fountains within. The centre of this pond is a spacious raised platform where the Rao could conduct his Durbar. Even today this space is décor with carpets and a resting cushion to give a glimpse of bygone days.

### **Rao Bharmal I, (b.1798, d.1846 and r.1814-1819)**

Rao Raydhan died without an heir to his position and one of his illegitimate sons Mansingh (later named Bharmal), was appointed as the Rao of Kutch. Bharmal soon gave himself up to drunkenness and the whole power of the government fell into the hands of his extravagant favorites. The whole revenue of the state was wasted in debauchery. The nuisance reached a sight that a petition was signed by eight of the leading Jadejas chiefs asking for help from British government to depose him. His reign was for a very brief period of five years.

We do not have a painting of Bharmal in the present documentation, but from an already published reproduction of him, we may assume that his appearance in the painting is very similar to Rao Prithviraj. Without the inscription, he could be easily misunderstood with Rao Pruthviraj in appearance, except he wears a turban different from all others. His turban is a medium-sized bulky headgear, which winds around the head in symmetry from all sides.

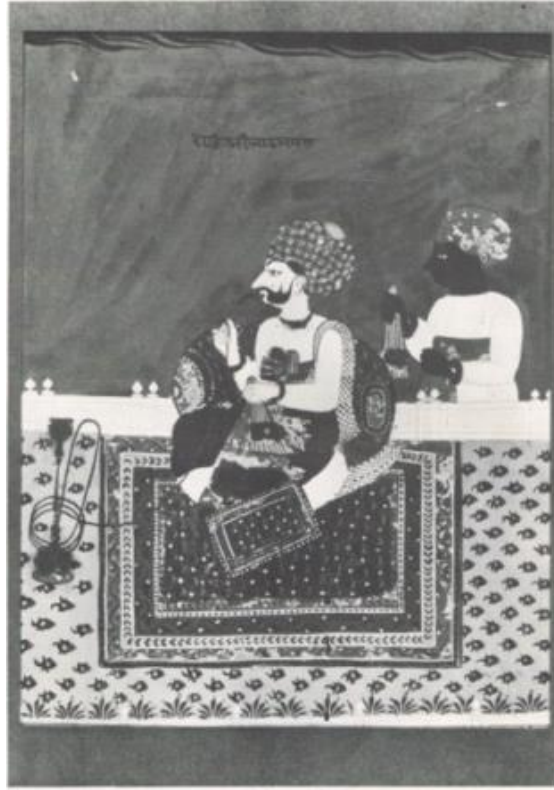


Plate 18, Portrait of Rao Bharmal, Ref: Reproduction from Publication, A Place Apart  
Paintings in Kutch,1720-1820

**Rao Desal II**, (b.1814, d 1860 and r.1819-1860)

Rao Desal, son of Rao Bharmal was a minor of five years when he was elected to reign, by the Bhayat, and a Regency was formed to manage the state affairs. The then resident Pottinger had attended with care to his education that by the age of fourteen, he turned into a youth of uncommon promise. As a result of which by age seventeen he showed considerable ability, could read and write English, and had a good knowledge of arithmetic's and astronomy. By 1833 he started taking part in public business and soon showed himself equal to the conduct of ordinary affairs. As a consequence of his zeal and ability he showed, the regency withdrew, granting full power to the Rao. The country was increasing in wealth. Rao Desal was then more than anyone else learned in the traditions and customs of the province. He was careful of the painstaking judge and was a devoted ally of the British government. With the help of a few chiefs and court servants, he managed the business of the country very efficiently.



With Rao Desal's period, we enter into the times of modern phase in the history of Kutch. Due to the advent of the British, and through academic training, new techniques and strategies were being explored in Kutch. Although we donot know of Desal as a patron of art, a large number of paintings were produced in Kutch during this period. Moreover, Rao Desal himself appears in a few of these paintings all dressed formally, for a Durbar.



Plate 19, His Highness Mirza Rao Shree Desal, Rao of Kutch

Size: 15 x 19.5 cm, Technique: Lithograph from Bombay Government Records

The portrait of His highness mirza Rao Shree Desal, Rao of Kutch is a very interesting portrait of Rao in lithograph print. The information on the print is read as: *Lithog.d in the Chief Eng by Ede Jesus. Coloured in the Political Department Secretariat. Bombay 19<sup>th</sup> Feb \_\_\_\_\_* (portion flaked).

After Lakhpat's paintings, it is Rao Shree Desal who appears in many collections. Paintings of him standing or seated formally dressed for a durbar is how he appears mostly. There are references that address him as short heightened, yet pleasant in nature. He is always dressed in his formal best decked wearing jewels ornaments. There is barely a set or album in the early nineteenth century collection which has refrained from capturing his

pleasant appearance. Be it the political agent's archives or the local artist everyone seems to know him and has fondly painted him. His most repeated iconic appearance is him, holding a bent sword in one hand and a shield in the other. The turban that he wears is less stylized and more naturalistic in approach. His thick long sideburn paired with his beard appear to split in two halves bending outwards from the chin. There is an interesting painting of him in The Aaina Mehal collection of him attending A Nauch performance. The Bara-bhayats seated on either side in two rows, are interestingly placed by the artist. There are inscriptions in Urdu beside a few of the figures. From his time, we start seeing naturalism in painting, with an additional understanding of figurative studies.



Plate No:20, Rao Desal in Darbar, Date: Early 19<sup>th</sup> century,  
Medium : Pigment on paper, Collection: Aaina Mehal, Bhuj

Portraits we often see of Rao Desal II are more naturalistic in style (refer to Plate no 20). As one can notice in this painting, an attempt has been made by the artist to depict him in a three-fourth profile, unlike in the earlier phase where the artist is comfortable portraying figures in a side profile. But what is interesting to note is, that artist is not just attempting with frontal study, rather he is getting trained to do naturalistic studies. In the darbar painting

of Rao Desal II (refer to Plate no 22) all men are unusually facing frontal wearing elaborate turbans and all dressed for the gathering. Every figure is individually studied and so are the represented close to their real appearance. Some figures are of medium size, while others were slightly exaggerated. The treatment of their costume is well studied with folds and shades. It is interesting to note that these artists were very comfortable drawing individual figures, but their understanding of perspective seems immature. The *natch* girl and the characters in the foreground are depicted proportionally much smaller compared to the figures in the background. Infact the figures standing behind Rao appear even bigger in ratio. Here there is a high possibility that the artist studied the individuals first and then laid out the composition. Here the application of colour and technique appear to be traditional, with high usage of gold in the painting composition. Apart from this work, he appears in various company period albums and litho-prints. Of course, these prints were initially drawn by English men, but simultaneously the local artist was getting trained in the new medium which is watercolor on paper, using real models for study. Stylistically this phase could be easily classified, as it is an intermediate phase where the figurative studies are more realistic and the backdrop and application of the paint layer are traditional.

**Rao Pragmal, (b.1839 - d.1875, and r.1860-1875)**

After Rao Desal's reign his son Rao Pragmal was duly installed without any oppression. A wise and beneficent ruler. Rao Pragmal in several respects was different in character from his father. Equally truthful and loyal to the British Government but he had more courtly manners and a more refined taste and had a much higher idea of his power and prerogative. During the fifteen years of his reign, he further improved the management of his state. He framed codes for the guidance of his officers in matters of civil and criminal justice. Undertook works of public usefulness and introduced a state system of education and vaccination. He was honored with the knight grand commander of the state of India. Unlike his fore-fathers' none who left Kutch he visited Bombay thrice. Today one of the important landmarks of Bhuj city is the clock-tower of Pragmehal which is visible from many distances across, was built under his interest.



Plate: 21, Portrait painting of Rao Pragmal II Seated, Date: Late Nineteenth Century  
Medium: Oil painting on Canvas, Collection: Aaina Mehal, Bhuj

Rao Pragmal seated on an English chair was a popular visual idiom used in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings, which depicts the raja or a noble man in an indoor studio style portrait set up. It must have been a modern trend for that period, which reflects the sophistication of the company-trained artist. He is seated at ease with his right arm resting on the round table and his left hand on the long sword. He is dressed in his formal atelier. There is something about the quality that makes us want to believe that the image could have been painted using a photographic reference.

**Rao Khengar-III, (b.1866 , r. 1875-1942, and d.1942)**

As Khengar was only 10 years of age, a regency consisting of a political agent, a chief minister, Jadeja, and a leading merchant was appointed in the council for administrative support. Which worked efficiently till he turns 18 when the regency council was dissolved, and Rao Khengar was brought to full power. Rao Khengar was a popular and honored ruler at home and abroad. Kutch was on a steady march toward progress. He was a great sports-man, naturalist, and ornithologist, deeply interested in animal life and the

behavior of fauna.<sup>44</sup> Once he came into power he undertook many social reforms. He extensively toured Kutch to acquaint himself with first-hand information. Travel abroad built hospitals in Bhuj, and medical relief was extended in the state. Took great interest in improving water storage, Khengar-sagar was constructed. Extended primary and secondary education, particularly the education of girls. Encouraged art schools for encouraging ancient handicrafts and traditional industries. The first rail line was started. Agriculture was encouraged. The region of Kandla was improved with a port and Mandvi was improved.



Plate 22, Title: Rao Khengar III, Date: Late nineteenth century,  
Medium: Painting on canvas, Collection: Aaina Mehal, Bhuj

By the reign of Rao Khengar, we are certain that the tradition of commissioning traditional portrait painting is long lost. But continuous patronage is seen. By this time the artist was growing ambitious with their skill of painting. By now they started painting long horizontal scrolls that documented festivals and processions. The Bhuj museum and Aaina Mehal preserve these scrolls in their collection. Infact one is since long on display which draws a lot of visitors' attention.

---

<sup>44</sup> Patel G.D., 1971, *Op.cit*



Plate 23, Khengarji Savari. Size: 22 x 1500 cms, Dated: 1876 by Artist: Jumma Ibrahim (Inscribed) Medium: Pigment on paper, Collection: Aaina Mehal, Kutch

## Chapter 3, Section-I.B

### a) Ramayana Paintings

Ramayana set consist of twenty-seven loose folios of size approximately 25 x 23 cms, mounted on a grey-coloured sheet. The collection belongs to Bhuj Museum, Kutch. It was acquired by the Museum in 1994 when Mr. Dinmanibhai Vora, a retired Sanskrit scholar of Bhuj<sup>45</sup>, gifted it to the Museum which came to his possession by chance. The same year an article was published in the Newspaper regarding his kind donation to the museum which identifies the set as painted in Gujarat in Rajasthani style dating back to mid-nineteenth century. It is very obvious that by the time Mr Dinmanibhai found these paintings, the common people of Kutch had long forgotten that Bhuj too had its impulse of painting miniatures in the courts. Although the present study attempts to re-examine the folios to verify the stylistic affiliations of the set and its approximate date.

All these folios are beautifully composed and painted, with often small inscriptions in Devnagari script besides important characters to help identify the figures. Few paintings are incomplete, but all of them have a final bright red border of 3 mm width, which gives a sense of completeness to the painting. This gives a sense of completeness to the paintings. Most of the narratives depicted are identifiable except Plate no. 49, which is highly damaged.

#### **Tracing the Textual source:**

The epic tale of Ramayana traditionally was a compilation of 24,000 verses by Sage Valmiki, broadly divided into six/seven Kandas (books) - Balakanda, Ayodhyakanda, Aranyakanda, Kishkindhakanda, Sundarakanda, Lankakanda, and Uttarakanda. As Ramayana was inherited through an oral tradition over many centuries, variants of Ramayana survived which later inspired many scholars to come up with secondary literature in various languages. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century Kamba-Ramayana was composed in Tamil. Sri Ranganatha Ramayana in Telugu, Adhyatma Ramayana in Malayalam, Torave Ramayana in Kannada, Saptakanda Ramayana in Assamese, Shri Ramapanchali in Bangali, Shri

---

<sup>45</sup> Newspaper cutting, refer to Pp no.58

Eknatha Bhavartha Ramayana in Marathi, Dandi Ramayana in Odia, Awadhi version of Ramacharitamanas, and few of the many regional variations. Apart from the classical compilation of the Ramayana text into various regional languages, there were popular folk variations which were adopted into our cultural history through performances. One such popular folk practice of the Kutch region is known as Rama-randh<sup>46</sup>. As the Raos were patron to this folk tradition, a transliteration of Rama-randh compiled by Ramasingh Rathod is cross-refered with this material, to verify if the narratives match with the present set.

After referring to Rama-randh, we can state with affirmation that the text referred for these folios is none other than the popular Ramacharitamanas by poet Tulsidas. There are a few episodes from the life of Rama that differs in narration, between Valmiki Ramayana and Ramacharitamanas text. The ones that distinctly separated the two sources are the illustrations of, 1) Child Rama feeding Kakabhushandi, 2) *Mrigya* a childhood sport which Rama and his brother's play in the forest, 3) Rama and Sita encounter in the garden of Mithila a day before the Swayamvara 4) the presence of Ravana in the Swayamvara of Sita. Infact towards the end of the set, the wedding scenes are elaborated into multiple folios, combining the *lokik* (worldly) practices.

---

<sup>46</sup> Rathod Ramsingh, 1993, *Op.cit.*



Visual Analysis along side the translation of Ramacharita Text/commentory:



Plate 24, Raja Dasharatha meeting Sage Vashishtha

Apparently, this is the opening episode of this set, from where the story of Rama begins. Raja Dasharatha with his four-fold army visit Sage Vashishtha (the royal priest), who is here depicted seated by the banks of river Saryu. Vashishtha is the priest and preceptor of the Ishvaku clan. It is with his guidance, Raja Dasharatha prepares for the Ashvamedha Yagna, the Vedic sacrifice of a horse, usually performed by a Raja to acquire power and glory, in this case for progeny.

In the painting, Dasharatha is represented in the conventional royal appearance dressed in a long white *angarakha*, carrying a quiver filled with arrows on his shoulder. He wears a *pagadhi* stylised in the popular Mewari idiom and has a halo around his head representing royalty. He is accompanied by three other darbar men, a horse, and an elephant. A long trail of army men, dressed in conventional *kutchi pagadhi* and three-quarter pants, is depicted following the Raja. The fortified city of Ayodhya is depicted in a distant background.



Plate 25, Raja Dasharatha performing the Putrakameshti yagna

This painting is in continuation with the first narration, where the Putrakameshti *yajna* is being performed by Sage Vashistha and Rishi Shringa, who are seated in a *yajna-mandapa*. Pleased by the Rajas' generous offerings, *Yajna-purush* appears out of *agni* and offers the golden vessel of *kheer* to Raja Dasharatha. The delighted Raja immediately takes the *kheer* to his palace and offers it to his queens, who share the sacred *prasad* amongst the three in their private quarters.

The presence of Raja Dasharatha, at two places in the same painting, once inside the *yajna mandapa* and the second time inside the palace of Ayodhya city, suggests the artists' familiarity with the continuous narrative technique. It is also interesting to note how the artist creates enclosed sections at different places, in a simplified manner. Like the episode depicted in the forefront of the page, by the banks of the meandering river Saryu. A wall of plantain trees appears to encircle the mandapa area from the rest of the ground/episode which continues in the recession. On the top left is delineated the fortified city and the scenes

that continues inside the palace. Raja Dasharath offers' *kheer* to his three queens and the three queens sharing the bowl of *kheer* in their private quarters, are separated by pillars.

Words like *Yajnamandap*, *Shringrishi*, *Yajnapurush*, *Dasharatha*, *Sumitra*, *Kaushalya*, *Kaikeyi* are scribbled in the painting for ease of identification. The artist incorporating sailing ships on the river is an interesting adaptation of their close acquaintance with port cities and views.



Plate 26, Raja Dasharatha rejoicing the birth of his four sons.

Having consumed the sacred *kheer*, all three queens gave birth to children with divine goodness. Kaushalya gave birth to Rama, Sumitra to twins-Lakshmana and Shatrugna, and Kaikeyi to Bharata. In the painting, the narration of the episode begins from within the palace, to the scene happening outside the fort. First, Raja Dasharatha receives the news of his son's birth through the lady attendant. Second, each of these children is depicted with their respective mothers in their private quarters. Third where the pleased Raja Dasharatha is offering boundless gifts to Sage Vashistha and Brahmins, in different forms

like wealth and cow. It is interesting to note how the artist is creating the granularity of the palace, by adding additional structures and canopies on the roof.

The birth of Rama was an auspicious moment, when demi-gods decent from the sky showering flowers from flying *vimanas*, and Gandharvas appears playing music expressing joy. In the painting, Rama is also depicted bearing the divine attributes of Vishnu- of blue complexioned and four arms holding- *Shankha*, *Pushpa*, *Gadha*, and *Charkra*.



Plate 27, The divine play of Rama as a child

This painting compiles the various childhood episodes of Rama which depicts him as a mischievous but divine infant. The artist has compiled the following episodes in one painting- infant Rama offering food to devotee Kakabhushundi (crow), his mysterious games with mother Kaushalya while luring him to sleep, '*Mrigya*' hunting games (Rama plays with his brother in the forest by striking arrows at deer. The deer believed to have to receive *moksha* by the hands of Rama. For this sport hunt the brothers used to receive a special reward, for their accomplishments, from Raja Dasharatha. The incorporation of a four-fold army in this painting is an unconventional depiction.

By now we can observe how the artist is standardizing the view of Ayodhya city by depicting a fortified city at a distance, within which are placed the royal palace and other residences. In the foreground is the meandering river Saryu, with ships sailing and lotus flowers floating in it. The open ground between the fortified wall and the river is where the episodes are illustrated.



Plate 28, Title: Vishwamitra's visit to Ayodhya city

As we can see in the painting, the arrival of sage Vishwamitra to the city of Ayodhya was a great merit for Raja Dasharath. Raja Dasharath immediately goes to receive the sage and reverently brings him to the court and makes him sit on his own throne. He honors him by personally washing the sages' feet and greets him by offering various kinds of food. In no time, Sage Vishwamitra shares his purpose for the visit, which was to take Rama and Lakshmana along with him to kill the demons in the forest that is interrupting their sacred *yajna*. Raja Dasharath who could not think of separating from his sons expresses his hesitation by requesting the Sage to take everything he possesses but his sons. But then sage Vishwamitra manifold ways to convince Raja Dasharath to let his sons proceed with

Vishwamitra. In the consecutive session, we can see Raja Dasharatha's willingness to let the boys, Rama and Lakshmana, go with Vishwamitra to the forest to annihilate the demons. Before departing the boys visit their mother's apartment to take her blessing.

In the painting, each of the scenes is very well executed by the painter, beginning from the scene outside the court to the one inside. The inscription on the top gives a clear identification of the two sages Vishwamitra and Vashishta, which would have been otherwise difficult to identify.



Plate 29, Rama killing Demon Tadaka

Sage Vishwamitra's arrival in Ayodhya city is a crucial event in Rama and Lakshmana's life as they were now stepping out from their secured environment to the forest hermitage along with the sages. The present folio depicts Rama killing the demon Tadaka who harassed the sage's lives in the forest. Having killed Tadaka in one shaft, the seer Vishwamitra, recognizes Rama's valor and imparts with him the sacred formula which arms against hunger, and thirst, and endowed him with unequalled strength of the body. Here it's

interesting to note how the artist is shifting the landscape from a city to a forest environment by depicting cliffs, dense palm, trees and wild deer. The dark animated cloud near the forest creates a dramatic environment while Tadaka collapses on the ground. It is also interesting to note how an enclosed and serene environment is created by the artist by the pond side, where Vishwamitra is depicted imparting his knowledge with the two brothers.



Plate 30, Rama and Lakshmana Killing Rakshasha's in the Forest

Having acquired the sacred learning from Vishwamitra, the two brothers continue their journey with Vishwamitra in the forest. According to the narrative in Ramacharitamanas, at day-break all the sages started offering oblation into the sacred fire, while Rama and Lakshman guard the arena against forest demons Marichi and Subahu. In the painting, Sage Vishwamitra is depicted performing *yajna* along with three other sages in a *yajna* mandapa near his abode. At a distance beyond this arena are depicted Rama and Lakshmana killing the demons. Heavenly gods in flying *vimanas*, shower flowers on the brothers, indicating the victory of the two brothers in their fight with demons. Depiction of

the sea at a distance is part of the narrative, as such a description is also given in the text, where Mariachi's head falls some eight hundred miles away from the forest.



Plate 31, Rama removing Ahilya's curse

After the heroic deeds of the two brothers, Sage Viswamitra invites Rama and Lakshman to attend the great gathering at Mithila, for Dhanushyagna. On their way to Mithila, the Brahmanas narrated to the boys the many legends from the Puranas. Soon they reached a dead forest, which was, without birds and living creatures. It was the hermit of Gautam Rushi and Ahilya. Ahilya the beautiful young wife of Gautam Maharshi was cursed by her husband, for mistaking Indra as her husband, and gets cursed into a rock. At the very touch of Rama's feet on the rock, Ahilya gets liberated from the curse and takes her human form.

In the painting, there are two scenes depicted in two spaces. One is Sage Vishwamitra narrating the legends of Puranas on the top, to his pupil. There is also a depiction on the right in which Rama is depicted, preaching to the sages. Second, at the bottom, Rama is releasing Ahilya from her curse. Ahilya appears before him. Sage



Vishwamitra is playing an important role here standing right after Rama, probably instructing him, Lakshmana, and rest of the Rishis are standing behind them. Being a preceptor of Rama and Lakshmana he is depicted most of the time training and guiding them.



Plate 32, Raja Janaka receiving Sage Vishwamitra

Accompanied by the group of hermits, the two brothers proceed further, and quickly drew near to the capital of Mithila. The text describes the city as a beautiful city with many big and small wells, rivers, and tanks full of water as sweet as nectar. Lotuses of different colours opened their petals; while a cool, soft, and fragrant breeze ever delighted the soul. The city is flooded with feudatory princes, dancers, panegyrists, and bards. There were spacious stables and stalls for elephants, which were crowded at all times with steeds, elephants, and chariots. The painter, as narrated in the text, has depicted the city as bustling as possible. Pleased by the view of the city, Vishwamitra decides to encamp at the orchard along with his companions. But as soon as Raja Janak of Mithila comes to know about the Vishwamitra's presence, he visits to greet the Sage.

It is interesting to note here how the painter visualises Mittila, as the city familiar to him, which is the setup of Bhuj. A town that resides within the fortified walls, dry landscapes, and a temple and lake outside the periphery. The temporary tents appear close to the ones the British used to set up while camping on the outskirts of Bhuj city.



Plate 33, Rama and Sita at the palace garden in Mithila

Having done their routine devotional rituals Rama and Lakshmana take leave from Vishwamitra to see the arrangement at Raja Janaka capital. Moving around the two brothers landed at the lovely royal garden planted at the palace premises. In the centre of the garden are a lovely lake and a Devi temple. The lake is a beautiful water body with blooming lotuses and aquatic birds. At that very moment, even Sita visits the garden to offer prayers to goddess Girija. She is accompanied by her girl companions. The amazing meeting between Rama and Sita is described in detail in the Ramacharita text.

The artist has accommodated every description possible in this painting with utmost care. One interesting incorporation is the *mushroo* skirted lady companion of Sita, who like a bee hive is seen accompanying Sita everywhere she goes. The small procession moving

out of the fort gate in fact resembles close to the actual sight when the royal ladies used to move out of Kutch court.

The treatment of spaces or the demarcation of spaces is comfortably incorporated by the artist.



Plate 34, Raja Janaka sending Sadananda to invite Vishwamitra and the two brothers to witness the Swayamvara

According to the description in the text, Raja Janaka sends his preceptor Sadananda to invite sage Vishwamitra, with the two brothers. Once again, the painter beautifully composes the narration, by sharing two parallel scenes happening at the same time.

One is the view inside the court where Raja Janaka is informing Sadananda of his interest in inviting the two brothers for the Swayamvara, and Sadananda takes the message further to Sage Vishwamitra and the two brothers. And second, at the same time the city outside is depicted with a large number of visitors who are residing in tents outside the fort around the lake and by the river. A large number of darbar men with temporary tents outside the fort must be a very common scene for a Kutch painter as military men guarding the city

during political threats would have been a frequent scenario. What makes the gathering a wedding ceremony is the colorful flower beds on the ground.

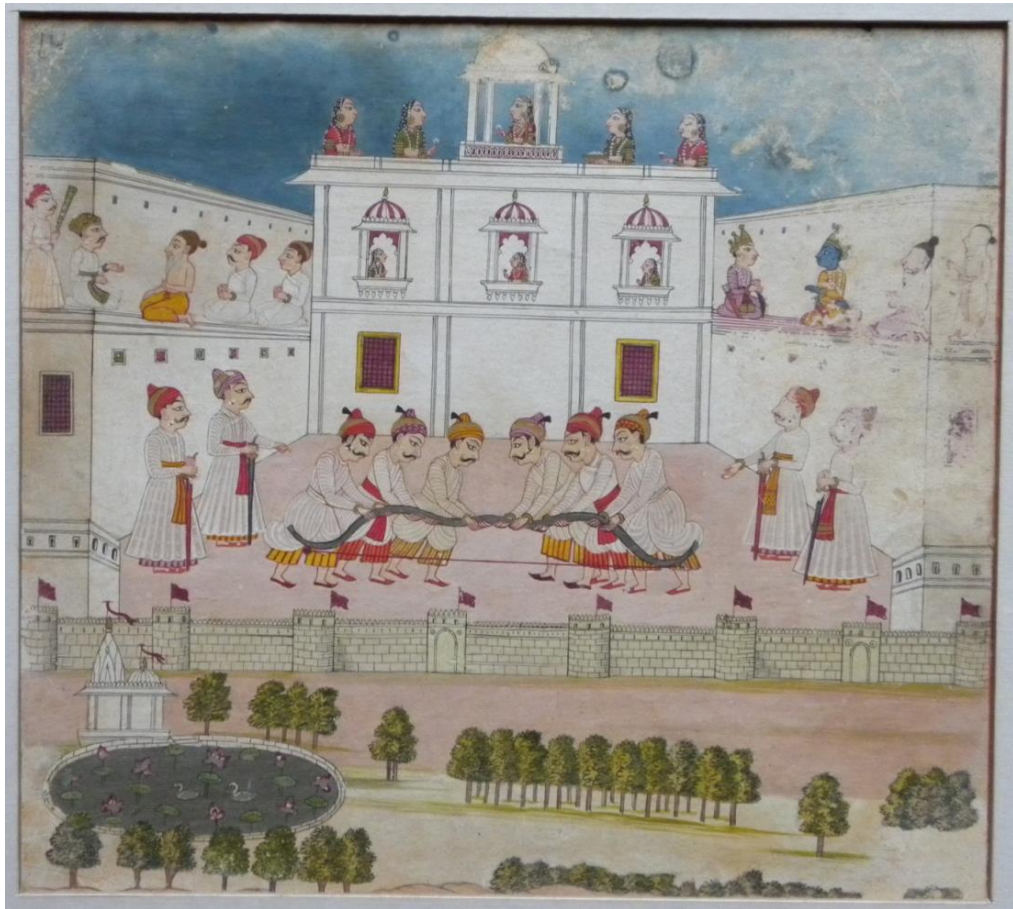


Plate 35, Presenting the Shiv-dhanaush for the Svayamvara.

The painting brings the viewers close to the swayamvara preparations. Soldiers are depicted moving the Shiv-dhanaush to the arena of Svayamvara. The delight of Raja Janaka's to behold the two brothers at the arena is expressed in the text. Although with due courtesy he goes to Vishwamitra to clasp the sage's blessings. The central portion of the building is a beautiful structure with *Jharokhas* and large checkered window frames, with canopied structures on top. Each of these *Jharokhas* is occupied by females. On either side of this structure, the building continues further at an angle, which in the painting is occupied by important male members. This compound is secured within a fort wall, outside which there is a fenced lake and a temple surrounded by arid land and vegetation. Even today the palace compound has a large assembly space before the ladies' quarters, with overhanging balconies on the first floor and iron grid windows on the lower floor. Although not an exact resemblance to the building but a close similarity is seen.

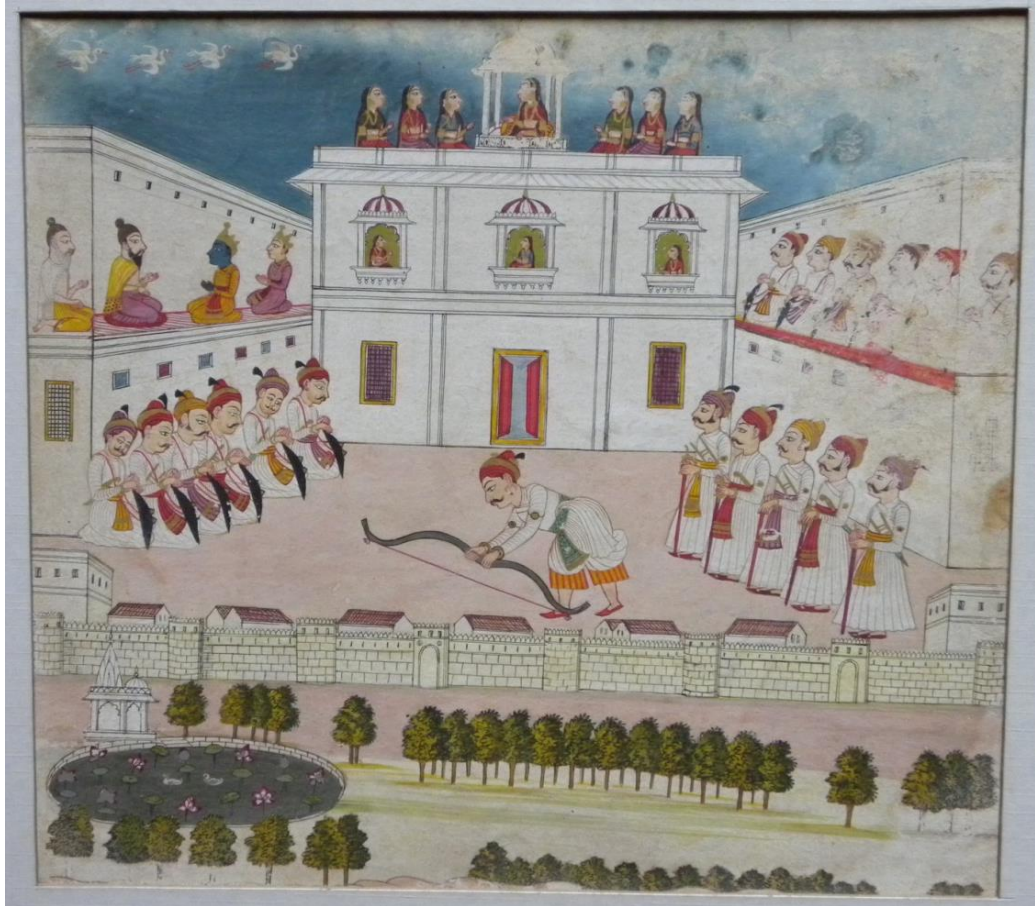


Plate 36, Rajas attempting to lift the Shiv-dhanush

One by one every Raja who have traveled from far and wide, intending to marry the beautiful Sita, made their best attempts to lift the Shiv-dhanush. But the bow refused to be lifted. As Sage Vishwamitra and the two brothers were royal guest, they are depicted seated on the balcony, unlike the other Rajas who came to participate in the Swayamvara. The appearance of ladies by the canopy, terrace, and overhanging balconies shows the great enthusiasm filled in the air to see the hero who wins Sita's in the Swayamvara.

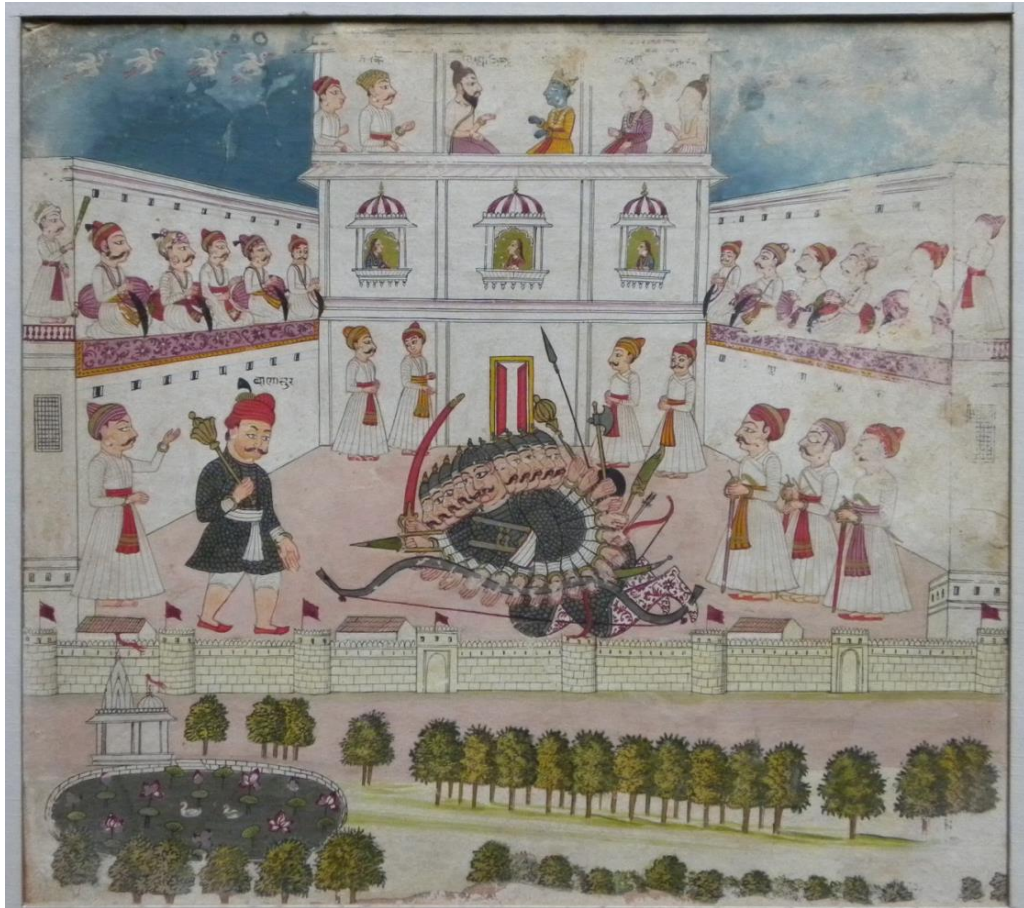


Plate 37, Ravana lifting Shiv-dhanush

One out of the many rajas who attended the Swayamvar was Lanka Raja Ravana. In the painting, the ten-headed Ravana is depicted lifting the Shiv-dhanush. But unfortunately, like many other men, he too failed to lift the Shiv-dhanush. Besides Ravana, stands Banasura, an *asura*, who also is interested in getting married to the Sita. Interestingly the Ramacharitamanas text narrates that after seeing the size of the Shiv-dhanush, the two, Ravana and Banasura, quietly slipped away as soon as they saw the bow.

In this folio, although the quadrangle is the same, the position of Vishwamitra and the two brothers have shifted from the left balcony to the top floor above the ladies' quarters. Here he is seating with Raja Janaka. We may assume that the Swayamvar went on for so many days that the placement kept shifting.



Plate 38, Rama breaks the Shiv-dhanaush

During the Swayamvara when none of the men could lift the bow, Raja Janaka expresses his disappointment in not finding a suitable groom for Sita. Seeing Janaka disappointed, Vishwamitra said in the most endearing words to Rama, to get up, break the bow of Shiva and relieve Janaka of his anguish. On hearing his Guru's words Rama gets up, greets his Guru, and proceeds to lift the bow. This is depicted on the left balcony. The bow gleamed like a flash of lightning as he grasped it in his hand. No one knew when He took it in His hands, strung it, and drew it tight. In no time he breaks the Dhanush in two halves. Rama broke the bow in halves the awful crash resounded through all the spheres.

In the painting, Rama is depicted holding the broken Shiv-dhanush in two halves and Laxman behind him. The auspicious moment is celebrated with music being played on the right.



Plate 39, Sita Garlanding Rama, Inscribed: *Sitaji Varmala Aarope che*

Rama lifting and breaking the Shiv-dhanush was a moment of celebration in the court. Soon Sita was to express her acceptance by garlanding Rama. In the text, it is Sadananda who then gives the word, and Sita advanced toward Rama to complete her swayamvar. Accompanied by her companions, who were singing festive songs, Sita offers her garland to Rama and adorns him.

Sita appears in the folio thrice, at three different places. Once on the top row seated inside the canopy, as if witnessing the Dhanusha yagya. Another time, behind Sadananda, taking permission from Raja Janaka before accepting Rama, and the third time garlanding Rama. This auspicious event was being blessed by heavenly figures in their flying ships showering flowers at the holy couple. Musical instruments are being played as a part of the celebration. Sage Vishwamitra and the Brahmin men are depicted seated on the balcony on the left as if reciting mantras.



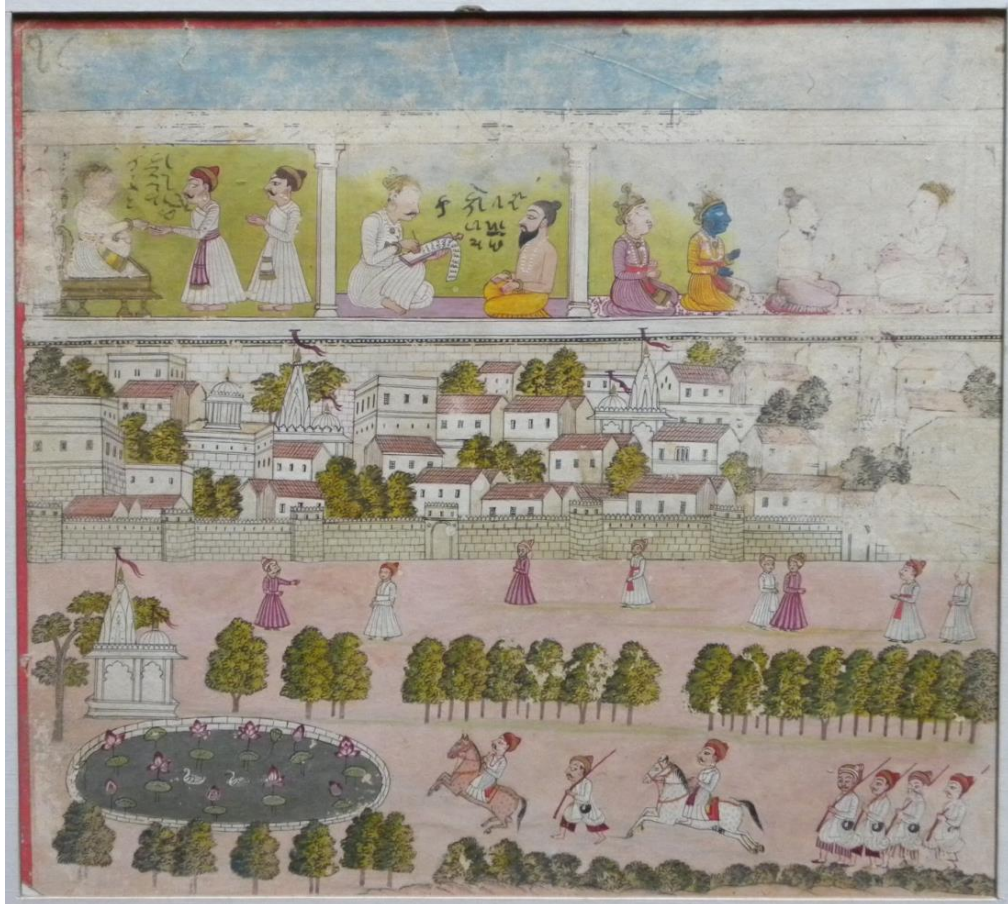


Plate 40, Wedding invitation scroll being scribed for Raja Dasharatha  
Inscribed: *Kankotri lakhave che.*

Once Sita accepted her groom to be Rama, a wedding ceremony was followed. For this Raja Janaka prepares a *kankotri* (invitation) which was scribed in a scroll. The scroll describes in length the sequence of events that happened at Mithila and also invites the city of Ayodhya to the wedding.



Plate 41, Raja Dasharatha receiving the Kankotri.

Identifying this image was not difficult, as by now we can recognize Ayodhya city by the strong fortification and the Saryu River flowing by the city. Inside the court, we can see Raja Dasharatha receiving the Kankotri from the messenger. In the next scene, we can see Raja Dasharatha reading out the Kankotri before two men who could be non-other than Bharata and Shatrugna. And in the next scene, Bharata and Shatrugna go to the ladies' quarters, where the message is given to the three mothers, Kaushalya, Sumitra and, Kaikeyi. The unusual depiction of animal groups outside the city of Ayodhya could be the good omens depicted in visual form.

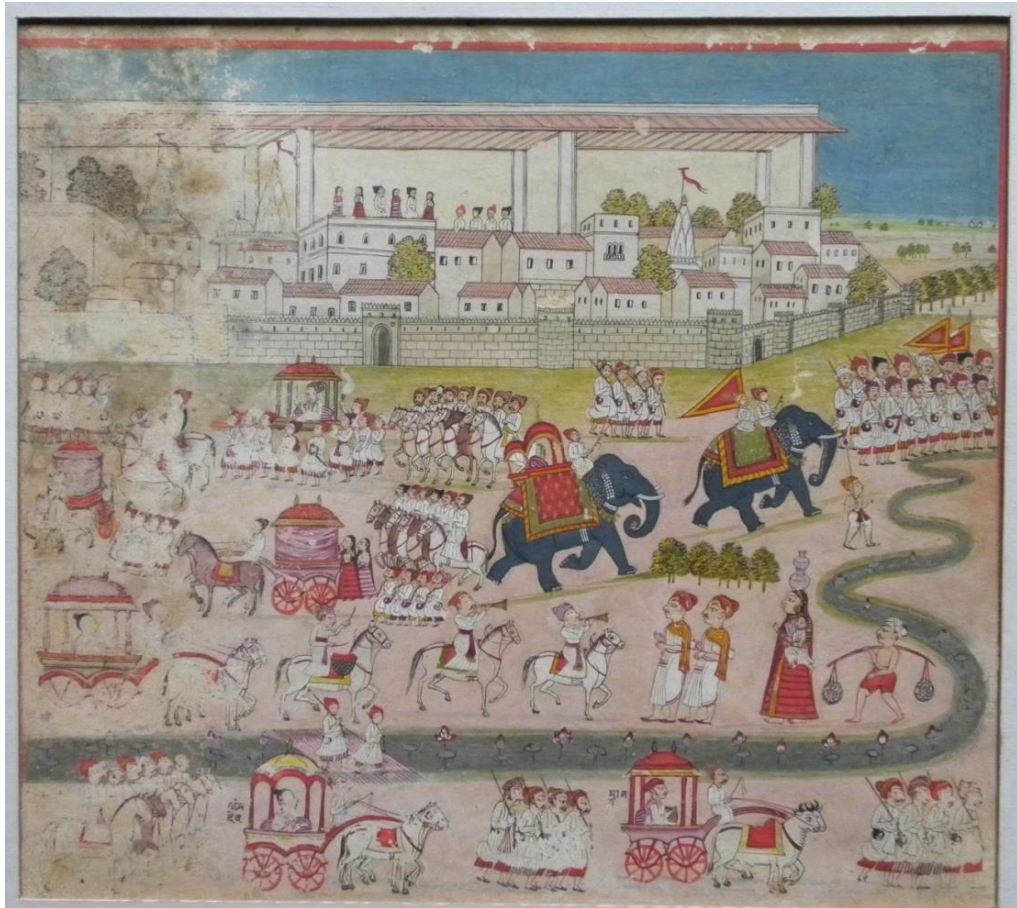


Plate 42, The City of Ayodhya preparing for Rama's wedding

No description in this folio that could give a clear idea as to which episode is represented in this painting. But the busy city of Ayodhya and announcements suggest that this could be the preparations for Rama's wedding.

As soon as Raja Dasharatha receives the invitation, he calls Bharata, to make all preparations for the wedding procession. Both the brothers were thrilled to hear Raja Dasharatha's command. Bharata immediately sent for the officers in charge of the stables and issued the necessary instructions. They equipped the horses with gorgeous saddles; gallant steeds of different colours stood there in their majesty. The charioteers had made their vehicles with gorgeous ornaments. Having mounted onto the chariots the participants of the procession began to collect outside the city. There were various kinds of vehicles and charming palanquins, getting ready. The bards, panegyrists, and rhapsodists too rode on vehicles appropriate to their respective ranks. Potters marched with burdens slung across their shoulders; who could enumerate the varieties of goods they carried. Soldiers marched,

and proceeded on the journey equipped with weapons. The appearance of a woman with a pitcher on head and a child in her arms is interesting.



Plate 43, The Marriage ceremony begins.

Once the royal procession was received at Mithila the grand wedding ceremony began by washing the grooms' feet, a popular custom practice in many societies. The Raja greets the groom by offering many gifts. While the sages recited the Veda mantras, flowers rained down from the heavens.

The view is set in a long hall with pillars and corridors on either side. The other end of the hall has a raised platform that appears like a stage, but the *chauri* where the ceremony is being held is placed in the centre of the hall. Sita is made to sit in a chair within the *chauri* and Rama is sitting in a *pitha* (stool) where his feet are being washed by Raja Janaka and his queen. Raja Dasharatha is placed in another chair on the right of the *mandapa* attended by a few courtiers. On the left of the *chauri*, Vishwamitra is depicted seated on the floor reciting mantras with his with another sage.



Plate 44, Kanyadaan

Kanyadaan of Sita is a beautiful composition in which we can see Raja Janaka giving Sita's hands to Rama who is seated in a *pitha* supported by a bolster. Rama holds a sword in his hands, which is depicted resting on his left shoulder, symbolizing a Shatriya wedding. Raja Janaka with his queen and two royal family priests Vishwamitra and Sadananda are all within the chauri. The lady with a hand fan standing behind the royal groom balances the composition within the chauri. Outside this frame are on either side the bride and groom's families, on the left are a large group of girl companions of Sita and on the right is the groom's family from Ayodhya, including Raja Dasharatha who is seated on the chair. The wedding being an auspicious gathering, even demi gods appear and shower flowers from above.

The study of perspective in these paintings is very engaging. We see a similar corridor during Rao Prithviraj's reign. The sky is lit with stars and a crescent moon appears in the sky.



Plate 45, Ferra, part of the wedding ceremony

This folio depicts the *agni-fera* of couple the Rama-Sita. The two ends of the garments, of the Bride and the Bridegroom, were tied together (as a token of their indissoluble union) and the couple began to circumambulate the fire (to show that the two had been united in the presence of the fire-god as a witness). Ofcourse, the *agni* here is missing, so is the furniture's. The chair on which Raja Dasharatha was sitting, although he is painting as if in a squatting posture the chair is left incomplete. The scene depicted behind could be the exchange of ceremonial gifts and games between the two couples.

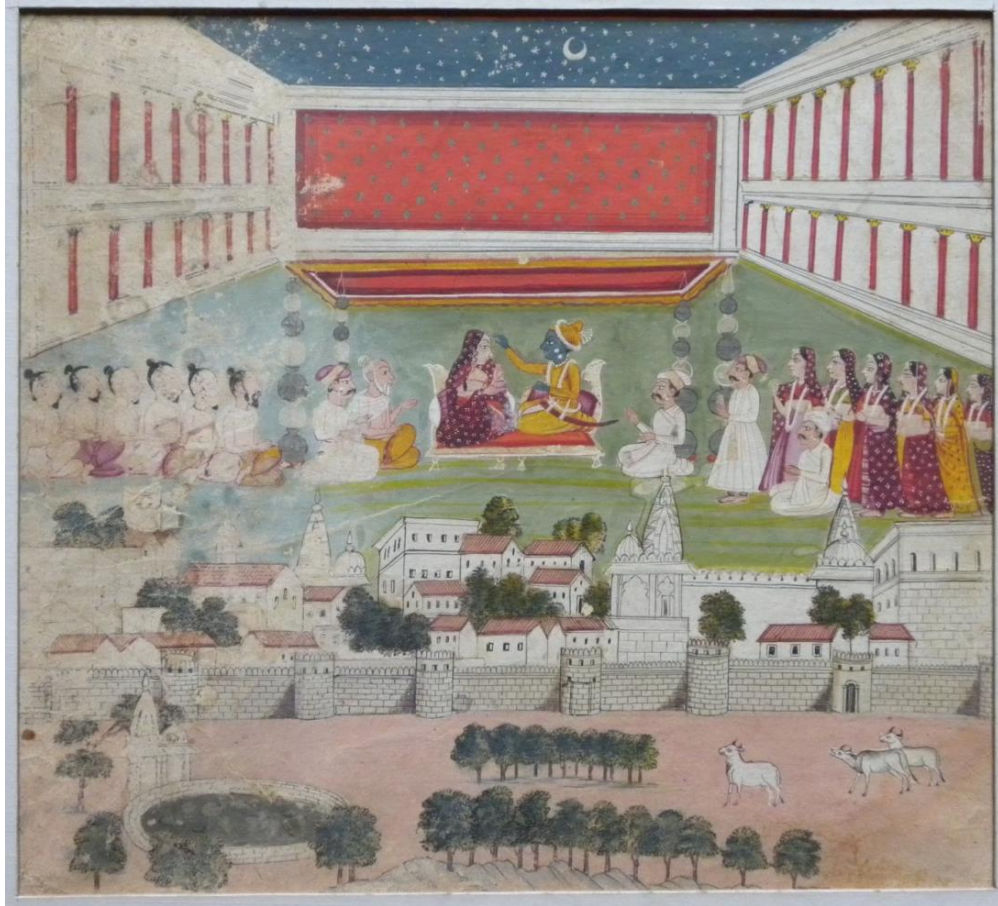


Plate 46, Sindur

The Bride and Bridegroom having paced around the fire complete all the rituals of the wedding. Rama applies the vermilion on Sita's forehead, a sight the charm of which was altogether beyond description. Then Vashistha gave the direction that the bride and bridegroom may sit together on the same seat.

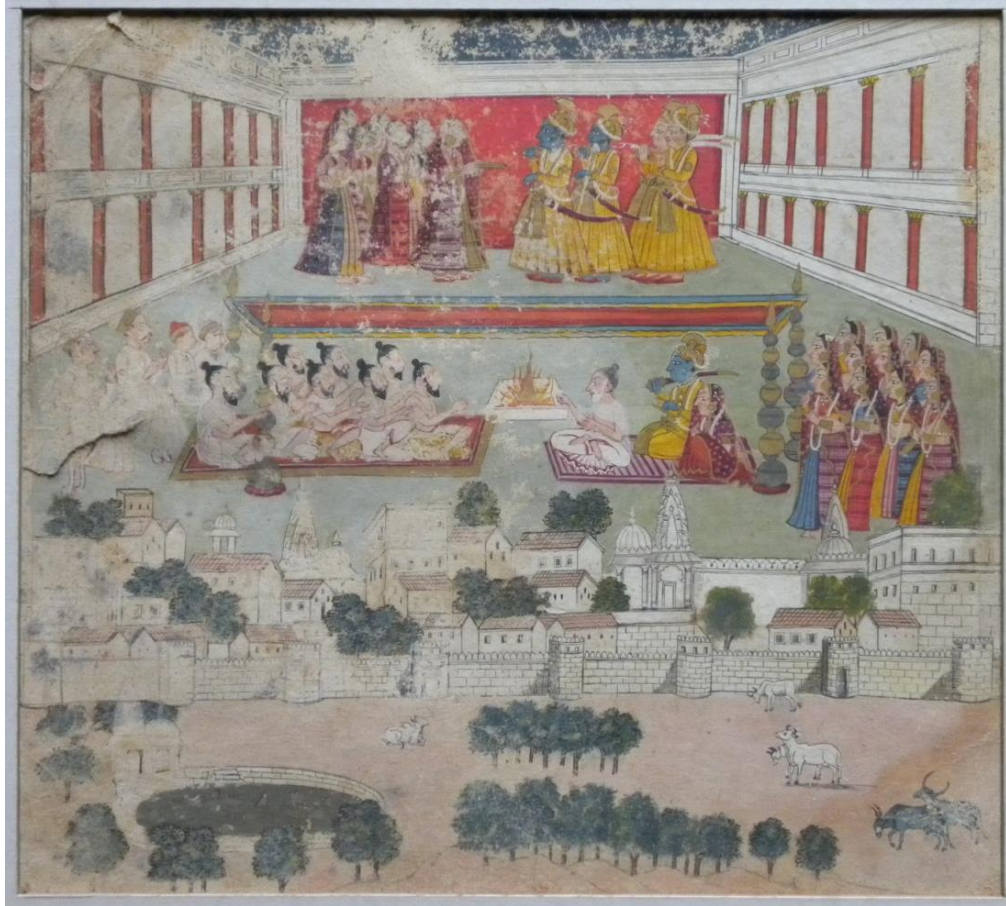


Plate 47, All three brothers get married to the three sisters

Soon after the marriage ceremony, considering the holy gathering, Sage Vashishtha puts a suggestion that even the other three brothers be wed to the four daughters of Mithila. Raja Janaka accepts the suggestion and sent for the other three princesses of Mithila. With all honor, Sita's cousin Madhavi (who was an embodiment of goodness, virtue, joy, and beauty) was given to Bharata, Shrutakirti (who was the bright-eyed and fair-faced princess, who was a mine of all virtues and was well-known for her beauty and amiability) was given to Shatrugna and Urmila (who was known to be the crest-jewel of charming girls) to Laxmana. Each clad in a bride's and groom's attire is depicted in the background facing each other. Whereas Rama Sita along with Sage Vashishtha are in the *chauri* performing the wedding rituals before the holy fire.





Plate 48, The Wedding procession returning to Ayodhya.

The wedding procession returning to Ayodhya is the climax scene of this set, when the four brothers having married to the four daughters of Mithila are returning back Ayodhya. The procession is mostly on foot except the grooms being carried on horseback and bride are on bullock cart. Probably this is how the procession moved in where the artist belonged. The city is still Mithila where the procession is held, easily identified by the lake in the periphery. The procession is returning at night indicated by the moon lit starry sky. Something very unique about this painting is the way the buildings are treated at the far end of the painting. At first it was made to believe that this could have been a later addition. But on a closer look we understand that the building is shaded in a different manner than earlier depictions. There is a shadow treatment, which the artist is giving to these building. This added technique and the clock tower makes this painting unique from the rest of the set.

### **Pictorial Analysis:**

Over the last thirty-five years, historians researching in this area have been speculating on various challenging sets of paintings to understand the developmental stages of this provenance and have successfully narrowed down to styles we have already discussed in the literature review. But this set is stylistically indigenous to the provenance of our concern. At one glance we do see some Mewar influence in the rendering of lines and application of colours in the figures, but largely they drift away from there to a place from where it was executed, which I believe is the city of Bhuj.

From the painter's lenses the story is narrated between two cities, one the city of Ayodhya which is a fortified city built by the banks of the river Saryu, and the other is the city of Mithila, which is a fortified city with a huge lake in the outer periphery. Folio no 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 42 represent Ayodhya city, and folio no. 32,33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, and 48 represent Mithila. In both the cities' sights, the painter has beautifully embedded parchment of town settlement within the fortified walls. It is interesting to note here how the painters are composing the residential settlement. If one carefully study folio no: 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, and 48, a stencil or reference is used to duplicate these residences. At the same time, he also ensures not to repeat them so frequently that he would occasionally flip the stencil or alter with a few changes manually.

The painter is also treating the palace of Ayodhya and Mithila differently. Ayodhya city has an interior that appears like a compartment separated by pillars. Whereas, the Mithila palace is more glandular in space and appearance. It has a two-storied palace complex with *Jharokhas*, *zanana*, large halls, and canopies on the terraces. As already discussed earlier, Mithila city closely resembles the palace complex in Bhuj.

Yet another visual that the painter incorporates of what he sees around him is seen in Plate no 25, 26, 27, 28, and 30. Unusually ships are sailing in the river. Such a feature comes effortlessly for a painter from Kutch as he is most acquainted with.

The treatment of the sky is mostly a blue spread, occasionally with luminous clouds, for example, Folio no 31, 32, 38, and 41. The marriage is a night reception, with a starry sky

and crescent moon. The treatment of land is mostly a pink spread ground, mostly bare, with trees indicative of some vegetation.

Such an approach of depicting, residences within fortified city walls, the city vanishing into the bare blue sky, basic flora and sailing ships are all works of a remarkably skillful native artist. Restating Dr Goswamy's observation on landscape paintings of Kutch, *there is a clear concern with space and with distance, reliance on observation, which is very different from what one ordinarily sees in the whole range of Indian Painting*. Stylistically this set has no affiliation with the popular schools of Indian miniatures, making it an indigenous style to the land of Kutch.

### **Dating the set:**

Dating this set to mid-nineteenth century is an unfair appropriation, as by 1830's artist of Kutch was already introduced to naturalism in their technique. By 1830's the artists' works was more painterly than linear. Capturing ethnographic subjects were the need of the new patron. Be it the portraits done of Rao Desalji III in his court or the paintings sold in the market, the technique became more Europeanized. Hence, we may assume this set probably have been done, when the artist was still learning by imitating copies of the landscape that came from outside, between 1775 to 1820 A.D. Working on this set must have been a challenge for the artist, as it appears as an important transition or rather experiment by the artist who attempts to blend the traditional style, with the new understanding of city landscapes inspired by European prints. The landscape is depicted with a decent understanding of depth, distance, and proportion, horizontally spread across, and the narrative gets easily incorporated in a very linear approach. Another issue we have here is when we study the last painting (Plate no 48), which has a clock tower, if not exactly the same, similar to the Pragmehal clock tower which came up in 1865. This indeed is one of the earliest clock towers in the city which is still visible from far distances. Also, we could notice that the treatment of architecture in the background and the foreground is very different in the painting. It almost appears as if somebody must have superimposed that part at a later date. So this is set to such a later date as the late nineteenth century, rather than the first decade of the eighteenth century.



Plate 49, Unidentified folio from Ramayana set

Lord Rama breaking Shiva Dhanush — Sita garlands him with Varmala. (Inset Mr. Dinmanbhai Vora).

### Retired teacher donates paintings to museum

**BHUJ.** **DINMANBHAI** VORA, 80, a retired teacher and a Sanskrit scholar of Bhuj has gifted a chest of 27 paintings done in Gujarati, Rajasthani style to the Kutch Museum, Bhuj.

Of the 27 paintings, 26 are on Ramayana theme beginning from Para Kameethi Yajna—religious rites to get a male child performed by Kasmale Daasrath till the Vanavas of Lord Rama. The remaining secular painting shows two Rajasthani beauties.

This series of miniatures is uniform in style, framing and size and a few of them bear on the side margins the description of the subject of the painting in Gujarati written in Devanagari script.

The paintings depict a fortified town of Ayodhya. Holy river Sarayu is shown with a dark patch skirting the fort having aqua life and flowers within. The fort is shown with many bastions and gates. Ayodhya is shown having palatial white buildings and numerous temples with fluttering flags over them. Interestingly a clock tower is also shown making it easier to date the set of paintings. They are about 150 years old. The flowers, trees, birds and grazing animals over the hill slopes on the backdrop take the onlooker to great aesthetic heights. The drovers of both male and female characters are done with great imagination. Lord Rama and Laxman are shown wearing crown, fish with Jams and ordinary people with high headdress. The women are shown wearing ghagras with multiple folds. Their faces are shown having pointed nose and sharp eyes—symbol of beauty.

The use of yellow, red and gold colours with blue sky and white clouds make the paintings look fresh.

The subject is dealt with appropriate skill. The plight of Ravana at his failure to break the Shiva's bow very vividly depicted on his face.

The present purchase price of the chest is around Rs. 20,000. When approached Mr. Vora explained the paintings belonged to the public and hence I gave it back.

28/5/94

Newspaper cutting

## Chapter 3, Section-I.B

### b) Avatar Gita Manuscript

Avatar Gita is an elaborately scribed bounded manuscript, with illustrations of the twenty-four attributes of Lord Vishnu. The size of the manuscript is approximately 28 x 30 cm in height and width, with a total of thirty-five illustrations. The Manuscript is a massive volume of 374 numbers pages, of text scribed in Devanagari script in the Maru-Gujarati language. The colophon detail at the end gives information that the text was scribed by Tiwari Chaganji Sut Hardey in the year samvat 1858 (1801 A.D), at Bhuj Nagar. The date of this manuscript may be easily mixed up with the ‘*Yash Ratnavali*’(genealogy of the Jadejas), narrated in the later part of the text which is an addition made on a later date by Yuvraj Vijayaraj.

The textual source of this Avatar Gita manuscript is Avatar Charitra composed by Kavi Narharidas, in the year samvat 1733 (1676 A.D), *aashaad maas, geeshmakrut, krukshnapath* tithi 8, mangalwar. Narharidas Barahath (1648-1733) was a famous Rajasthani poet born in a charan family, in Tahla village in the Nagaur district of Rajasthan. He was a beloved of his contemporary fellow poets and Maharaja Sur Singh of Jodhpur. He was patronized as a court poet by Maharaja Gaja Singh I. Despite his court position, his works reflected so much of his love for Hari that today he is recalled more as a Bhakti poet than as a court poet. One of the most widely circulated and popular compositions is the Avatar Charitra grandh, which he composed in 1733 at the sacred land of Pushkar, Rajasthan. The poet uses twenty-two different types of verses in this text, enhancing the ornamental qualities of this grandh. He has the main verses in Chaupai. His contemporaries have referred to his Chaupai as a perfect frame for the composition. As the twenty-four avatars were recomposed in regional language, adopting a narrative format, the literature was largely accessible to common people. This composition also meant so much to Narharidas that he got hundreds of copies made and circulated at his expense. Interestingly, the present manuscript is a later scribed and illustrated version of the same popular text, by Tiwari Chaganji Sut Hardev in the year 1801 A.D, at Bhuj Nagar.

The concept of Avatar that we popularly carry in our minds is the Dashavatars of Vishnu, in which Vishnu the protector, descent to earth, from time to time to restore Dharma. But according to Shrimat Bhagavata Purana, there is the innumerable incarnation of Vishnu, who has the qualities of the Sanatan. This compilation by Kavi Narharidas exemplifies the twenty-four Avatars of Vishnu filled with devotional *bhava*. The incarnation of Rama is elaborately described in his composition. As it's the illustration of the manuscript which is of our primary concern, for the present research, further a pictorial analysis is carried out in this chapter. By the size of the book, we can roughly gauge the magnitude and patience the scribe had in commissioning the project.



Plate 50, Adi Purusha

(Scribed within the composition are words by the character which read: *Shri Narayana, Laxmi, Sheshnaga, and Brahma*)

**Adi Purusha** (Plate 50): According to Vaishnav theology, Adi Purusha is considered the first man in the Universe. It is one of the most popular images of Narayan we have in mind, of Him reclining on the white Sheshnag, and Laxmi by his feet. On the lotus sprung from Vishnu's navel is seated Brahma. This is the first illustration composed in this text, which defies the simplicity in which the paintings are composed in the subsequent pages. The illustration appears on a flat light teal-blue background, with a very unusually composed five-hooded Sheshnag, floating on an ocean. The ocean is painted in blue, given a linear wave texture, which runs parallel to the starlit sky at the top. The

composition of figures and their contours have a native quality, which appears more spontaneous.

**Hari-Hara** (Plate 51): Hari-Hara is the divine form, with one half of Shiva and the other half of Vishnu. In this representation, the divine figure is depicted seated on a lotus with consorts Laxmi and Parvati on either lap. Ganga is personified on Shiva's head. Garuda and Nandi their *vahana* is placed seated on a brick-raised plinth on either side. Jambuvati-Krishna as the divine couple is depicted flying on Garuda. The Goddess is usually depicted seated on the left, with Narayana's hand resting on Laxmis' shoulder. The background is a teal blue flat ground, but this time the space appears as an interior of a structure, indicated by the two red window frames and inward lamps on either end.

**Varaha** (Plate 52): Varaha avatar of Vishnu appears as a human body with a boar head. He incarnated to fight and killed the demon Hiranyaksha, and rescues the earth which was hidden and submerged in the flooded ocean. The flooded ocean symbolizes the state of ignorance and sins the earth was submerged within. The illustration interestingly demonstrates the involvement of Brahma and Indra in the narrative, by representing them on either end of the composition. Once again, the figures appear to be floating on flat blue ground and water is depicted at the bottom.

**Sanakadi Kumaras** (Plate 53): The four Kumaras are Manasa-putras (mind-born sons) of Brahma, also referred to as Rishis, who are eternal companions to Vishnu. They are namely, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, and Sanat who constantly recite the mantra '*Hari Sharanam*'. In the painting, all four Kumaras are depicted facing each other seated on a tiger skin, by a coral cliff. The representation of palm trees and a peacock on the tree appears as voluntary by the painter.

**Sujagya** (Plate 54): The child named Yagya was the divine son born to Aakruti (daughter of Swayambhuv Manu) and Prajapati Rushi. The lad was regarded as the forefather who initiated and established the system of doing fire sacrifices as a means to

empower the dynamic energy and power of nature. Yagya which means the sacred fire was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, who was anointed to the throne of Indra by the demi-Gods. The representation appears to be the scene after his fight with *asuras* (demons), who were tormenting his father and mother while offering fire sacrifice.

**Nara-Narayana** (Plate 55): Nara-Narayana is the twin brothers, Avatar of Vishnu, born on earth for the preservation of Dharma and righteousness. They were born to establish the principle of non-duality of Vedanta, which meant that humans and the Supreme Being are not two entities but one under the cosmic consciousness. The painting represents the two brothers performing extreme tapa by the Badrikaashram in the Himalayas. And the jealous demi-gods sent *apsaras* to distract the two. In the painting Kamdev, the god of love is also depicted, who brings celestial beauties to distract the two brothers' penance. But to Kamadev's surprise, both continued to remain in the state of penance undistracted and also forgive the gods with at-most humility.

**Kapila** (Plate 56): Sage Kapila was a Vedic sage, who is regarded as the fifth incarnation of Vishnu as per the Bhagavata Purana. Kapila Gita is part of the Bhagavata which is contributed by him, which explains the philosophies of Sankhya shastra, Bhakti yoga, and Ashtanga yoga. He is assumed to be the form assumed by the divine Pradyumna when he became free from the influence of all worldly desires. The episode depicted here is an event from his life, when 60,000 Sagar-putra, except four, got self-burnt into ashes as they disrespected the sage while he was performing deep meditation. The four Sagar-putra and their predecessors did meditation for thousands of years to please Ganga in order to release the curse.

**Dattatreya** (Plate 57): Dattatreya is a fractional incarnation of Vishnu, also one of the Sapta Rishis, who is said to have created the planet named 'Soma'. Here Dattatreya is depicted single-headed seated on a tiger skin in conversation with two of his great devotees- Prahalad and Sahastrarjun. Prahalad the great devotee of Vishnu, was taught the eclectic state of Avadhut Sanyasi in the form of a huge python by Dattatreya. Young Kartavirya (later known as Sahastrarjuna) King of Mahishmati was blessed, with a thousand powerful



hands to concur the world, by his Guru Dattatreya. The story of Dattatreya is given in great detail in Markandeya Purana.

**Rushabhadev** (Plate 58): Rushabhadev is an avatar of Vishnu who was born to King Nabhai and Queen Merudevi. According to Bhagavata Purana, he is the eighth avatar of Vishnu. Throughout his life, he laid a fine example of how a truly wise man should live a fruitful life. He ruled the kingdom righteously following the law of Dharma and liberated himself having epitomized the highest state of spiritual realization and supreme bliss. In the painting, he is depicted conversing with his wife Jayanta, and mother Merudevi. Behind Rishbhadev stands his son and four men in courtly attire.

**Dhruva** (Plate 59): Dhruva was a young boy born to King Uttaanpad who was ignored and disregarded by his father, inspite of his attempts to draw affection toward him. That he started accepting Vishnu as his eternal loving father and protector. For this Dhruva had to perform severe austerity and penance. The painting demonstrates his meeting with Narada who instructed him to meditate on Vishnu. The narrative continues in the same painting when the pleased Hari appears before him to bless him with two boons. One his kingdom and another a permanent place in heaven in honor of his unwavering and steady determination. It is interesting to note here how the artist is attempting to fill the flat backgrounds with occasional palm tree representations.

**Prithu** (Plate 60): Born out of the mystical power of many sages, Prithu is regarded as the first civilized man on earth. He establishes an uninterrupted administration of his people by establishing law and order. Vaishnav believes he structures the first complex infrastructure of civilization on earth that could meet the growing demand of mankind. Agriculture, building the body of knowledge called the Vedas, created villages and towns, offer obligations, and establish the tradition of doing fire sacrifices. In the illustration, Prithu is seated on a throne, and demigods appear in their flying ships showering flowers on him.

**Hayagriva** (Plate 61): Hayagriva is the horse-headed incarnation of Vishnu who was born to kill, the horse-headed *asura*. Goddess Parvati had given a boon to this *asura* that he would only be killed by an exact look-alike of him. This boon almost made him immortal as one could not be an exact look-alike of him. Hence to get rid of the *asura*, Vishnu took the form of Hayagriva. In the illustration, the *asura* is depicted in two hands, and Vishnu's reincarnation with four hands. The presence of Brahma and Narada also suggests the narrative associated with the missing Vedas.

**Kurma** (Plate 62): Kurma avatar of Vishnu is popularly known to many as it is the second avatar of Vishnu in the Dashavatara. The tortoise avatar of Vishnu incarnates at the time of Samudramandhan, to support mount Mandara which had started sinking during the churning of the ocean. The churning of the ocean by the gods and demons was in search of Amrut, the nectar which would have made them immortal. This illustration is like many other popular representations of the Kurma avatar, where the two groups are churning the ocean and during the process, alluring products come.

**Mohini** (Plate 63): Mohini was one of the most enchanting and only female avatar of Vishnu, created to deceive the Asuras who won the pot of *amrit* (ambrosia of immortality) during the Samudramandhan (churning of the ocean). Her avatar was meant to convey the message that worldly temptations are above spiritual liberation. Here Mohini is seen standing before Asuras and turning back at Devatas, which gives a clue that she could be moving towards Devatas to distribute the *amrit*, while the Asuras watch.

**Matsya** (Plate 64): Matsya avatar of Vishnu is the first avatar of Vishnu amongst the Dashavatars, who was born to rescue Manu the civilized man on Earth from a great flood. However, the illustration depicted here is a lesser-known narrative of this avatar, from the Matsya Purana. In this narrative, the Matsya avatar is depicted fighting Shankasura- the conch demon who stole Brahmas' four Vedas and hide them in a ship in the ocean. In the same painting, he is once again depicted helping Sheshnaga rescue the ship from the demon. So according to the narrative, it is Matsya's avatar who restores dharma.

**Narasimha** (Plate 65): Narasimha is the half-lion half-human incarnation of Vishnu who was born to finish the demon, Hiranyakashipu. This fierce form of Vishnu is also, the god of destruction during the Mahapralaya (the great disillusions). In the painting, Narasimha having emerged out of a pillar is depicted killing the demon Hiranyakashipu on his lap. The door appears symbolic of the space where he is being killed, not inside nor outside, neither the sky nor ground, neither during the day nor night. He is being killed on His lap, which is neither sky nor land. After killing Hiranyakashipu, the fierce avatar of Vishnu was in so much rage, that to pacify Him, Brahma and Siva called Laxmi, and his devotee Prahlad sang a hymn in praise of the lord.

**Vamana** (Plate 66): Vamana is yet another avatar of Vishnu, born to kill Bali, who had concurred the two worlds- heaven and earth. The Gods have lost their position in heaven goes to Vishnu for his intervention, who then incarnates in the form of a Vamana. The illustration depicts Mahabali after his victory over the many lands, distributing gifts to everyone. Vishnu as Vamana makes his demand before Bali, asking for a gift of three-step land. Which the king grants. In the first step, he covers the entire earth. His second step covers all of heaven. As the Vamana had no place left for the third step, Bali offers his head to the Brahmin to keep his promise.

**Gajendra moksha** (Plate 67): Gajendramoksha is the incident when Vishnu descent to Earth to rescue his devotee- the elephant from the clutches of a crocodile. Gajendra the lord of elephants, one day happen to visit the garden of Ritumat on the mountain Trikuta which was surrounded by the ocean of milk. As soon as he got into the lake, he gets caught by a crocodile so strong that he could not escape. When his friends and family could not save him from the clutches, Gajendra who happens to be a devotee of Vishnu cries out for his help offering prayers. It is interesting to note here, that Vishnu himself descended on earth to rescue Gajendra in the avatar of Hari.

**Hansa** (Plate 68): Hansa or the divine swan as Vishnu had incarnated to preach Sankaadi, the four mind-born celestial sons of the creator Brahma. He incarnated as a swan to answer Sankaadi's question regarding Moksha and Atma, which Brahma could not answer.

So, they meditated upon Vishnu from whom Brahma was born once again. He is the form of a swan who preached the great tenants of metaphysics and Vedanta to Sankaadi. In the painting, all four sons are facing Brahma. And Hansa's avatar is placed behind the Sankaadi sons.

**Dhanvantari** (Plate 70): is an avatar of Vishnu who took birth to heal people with his knowledge of medicinal plants. It is he who gave the curative power of herbs to the people. He emerged from the Ocean when Samudramandhan happened. The King of God Indra appointed him as the celestial physician of God.

**Parashuram** (Plate 71): Parashuram as an avatar of Vishnu, is believed to be immortal, and is also known to subdue the haughty Kshatriya race led by King Kartavirya. Here Parashuram appears to carry a bow on his shoulder like Rama but also holds a long battle-axe in his other arm. He is charging against King Kartavirya, depicted in the painting in Kshatriya attire with multiple hands, accompanied by an army of elephants and men on horses. In the bottom right corner is the depiction of the Surabhi cow (the wish full filling Devine cow), who was owned by Jamdagni (Parashuram's father), the stealing of which led to the war between the two.

**Vyasa** (Plate 72): Vyas is considered an incarnation of Vishnu himself. The Vishnudramottara describes him in great detail. He has enshrined the task of simplifying the ocean of scriptures into classified theories, so that common people could comprehend the theories. He taught Rig Veda to Paila, Yajurveda to Vaishampayana, Sam Veda to Jaimini, and Atharvaveda to Sumanthu.

**Narada** (Plate 73): Sage Narada is believed to be the personified Mana, who is a manifestation of the Supreme Being. He roams in the entire creation, having nothing to stop his path, never staying in one place for more than a fleeting moment. Narada's intention was always to turn a living being away from his sinful ways, and lead him toward the good. The painting depicts a scene from Ramacharitamanas when Naradaji visited Rama near a lake

and ask for a *vardan*, which among all names Rama-nama must be the most important and powerful one.

**Rama** (Plate 74) (*Sita-apaharan*): In the epic story of Ramayana, Vishnu took birth as a Kshatriya to slay the demon, Ravana. This popular human avatar of Vishnu and the legendary epic is one of the most popular narratives known to Indians in India and abroad. The episode depicted here is *Sita apaharan*, a scene from the Aranya Kanda, when Ravana in disguise as a sadhu, visits Sita in the forest hermitage, to trick and abduct her. It is this episode that leads to the killing of Ravana by Rama at the end of the epic.

**Rama meets Sugreeva** (Plate 75): This particular episode from the Ramayana epic is referred to as Sugreevajne, when in exile Rama meets Sugreev at the Rushyamukha Mountain and takes his help to fight Ravana. In order to fight the army Rama promises to give Sugriva back his kingdom from Vali

**Decorative floral motif** (Plate 77 and 83): a decorative floral motif is something that a native of Kutch could not separate from. This page was probably spaced for a narrative scene to be illustrated, but the artist took the liberty to fill it with decorative fill of floral motifs, reasons we would understand only by reading the text.

**Rama** (Plate 78): Rama meets Hanuman, which was an event after Rama's return to Ayodhya. In the illustration, Rama and Sita with Sakhi appear to visit Hanuman at his residence, which is guarded by two Vanaras (monkey army). Lakshmana with his Senapati is standing outside the structure of the canopy, playing the drum. Kaushalya, Sumitra, and Kaikayi are seen in the horse chariot approaching in the same direction as Hanuman's residence.

**Rama** (Plate 79): Rama's return to Ayodhya was a moment of celebration in the city of Ayodhya. First the occasion was the coronation of Rama. Here Rama and Sita are depicted seated on the *pitha* (stool), which represents the throne. And Lakshmana, Bharata, and Shatrugna are depicting standing facing the seated holy couple. Behind them are seated

the three mothers. Sage Vashishtha appears to perform the ritual and is depicted followed by three other army men. Unfortunately, there is not much pomp depicted in this ceremony as narrated in the epic.

**Krishna: Kaliya daman** (Plate 81): is one of the most dynamic representations of Krishna and one of the most fondly depicted compositions by an Indian artist. This particular composition is yet another interesting composition that beautifully balances the narration in the Kutchi style. Krishna is dancing and playing flute on the head of Kaliya Naga and his snake wives are pleading to release the naga. At the same time by the banks of river Yamuna, we can see Nanda Yashodha and Balram bow before him in adoration and love.

**Krishna (Kamsavadhha)** (Plate 82): Krishna is the well-known avatar of Vishnu who had pronounced the Bhagavata Gita to Arjuna. He was also born to kill King Kamsa, the tyrant ruler of Mathura. Kamsa made many attempts to kill Krishna by sending asura to fight with him, but all his attempts failed before the power of the divine child. The last attempt was made by Chanura and Mustika, the two wrestlers who challenged the two brothers to fight with them. Having killed the two wrestlers Krishna charged against army of the king until he leaps to reach Kamsa who was seated in his arena. Krishna drags him out and struck him with his sword. This was a moment of celebration for the people of Mathura, which is depicted on the right.

**Rukmini harana** (Plate 84): is an episode that is described in the Dashamskanda of Bhagavata Purana, which describes Krishna marriage in detail. She was the daughter of King Bhishmaka and the princess of Vidharbha, whose marriage was arranged with Shishupal the crowned prince of Chedi Kingdom. Although Rukmini who was impressed by Krishna's heroic stories always desired to marry Krishna. To avoid any bloodshed, Rukmini invites Krishna to elope her before the wedding, to which Krishna agrees. The painting depicts Rukmini and Krishna eloping in a chariot. Rukmi her elder brother, with his *sena*, chases and fights Krishna but fails before the powerful one. Krishna spares Rukmi on request by Rukmini.

**Buddha** (Plate 85): It is believed that at the first stage of the Kaliyuga, the path of the Vedas was destroyed and all men became adharmas. Those who sought refuge with Vishnu were deluded and others were destroyed. God Vishnu was born as Gautama, the Shakyamuni, to preach the ways of Dharma to his disciples. In the painting, Buddhaji is depicted preaching to his disciples. But at a distance far there is a representation of a cow and calf gazing by a house. Strangely these two creatures are surrounded by an unusual water body like a lake.

**Kalki** (Plate 86): Kalki is the popular *avatar*, foreseen as the next incarnation of Vishnu, to be born before the end of Kalyuga. He is most commonly visualized as traveling on a horse holding a shield and sword in hand. The primary purpose of his incarnation like others is to restore Dharma. This illustration is an unusual representation as here Kalki is leading his horse by hand.



Plate 51, Hari-Hara

(Scribed: *Jambuvati, Shri Krishna, Garuda, Mahashiva, Hari, Parvati, Laxmi, Ganga, Nandi and Garuda*)



Plate 52, Varaha

(Scribed: *Brahma, Varaha, Harinakha, Indra and Airavat*)



Plate 53, Sanakadi Kumaras

(Scribed: *Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, Sanatkumar*)





Plate 54, Shri Jagapavatar

(Scribed: *Sudama, Dikadevaganah, Yagyamurti, Daityadaanavganah, manusva yamunama*)



Plate 55, Nara-Narayana

(Scribed: *Nara, Narayan, Apsarao and Kamadev*)



Plate 56, Sage Kapila  
(Scribed: Kapila deva, Ganga, ashvah, sagarputrah)



Plate 57, Dattatreya  
(Scribed: Dattatreya, prahalada, Sahastr-arjuna)



Plate 58, Rishabhadev

(Scribed: *Rushabhadev, Rushabhadev putra, Maratadaya, Jayanti, Marudevi*)

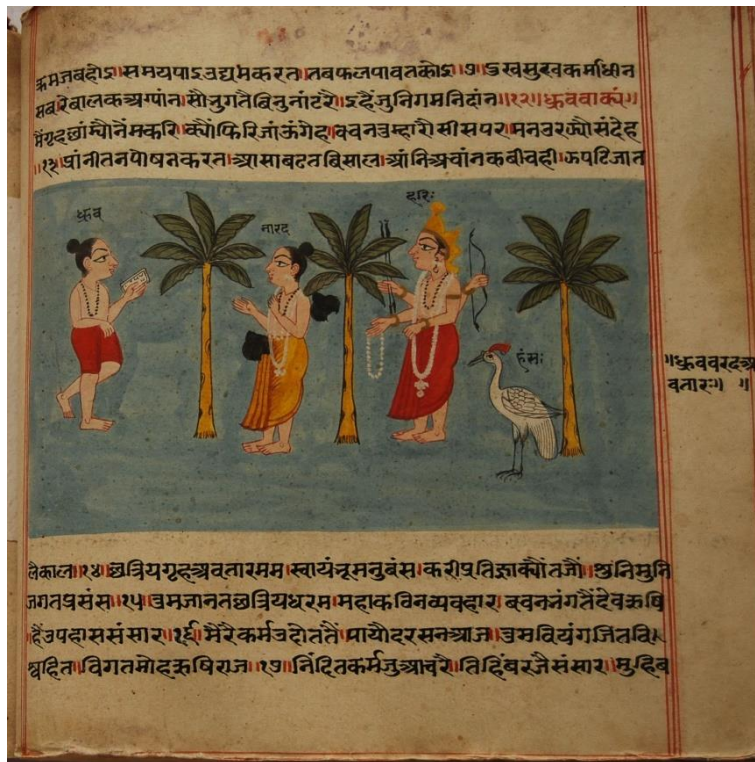


Plate 59, Dhruva

(Scribed: *Dhruva, Narada, Hari, Hans*)



Plate 60, Prithu  
(Scribed: Prithu, devata .....)



Plate 61, Hayagriva  
(Scribed: Narada, Brahma, Hayagrivahari, Hayagrivanamaasura)



Plate 62, Kurma

(Scribed: Dhanusha, Kalpavruksha, Ravi, Chandra, Kamdhenu, Vasukinaga, Airavat, Ashwamedha, Devgana, Asuragana, Kurmavata)



Plate 63, Mohini

(Scribed: Indra, Shiva, Brahma Krishna, Mohini, Bali, Nmuchi, Vapraditri, Pakaha)



Plate 64, Matsya

(Scribed: *Brahma, Machavatara, Shankasur, Mabamurti*)



Plate 65, Narasimha

(Scribed: *Laxmi, Prahalad, Narasimha, Hirayakaship, Shiva, Brahma*)



Plate 66, Vamana

(Scribed: Vamana, Bali, Vandhyavali, Vashishtha)



Plate 67, Gajendra moksha

(Scribed: Gajendra, Hari, Gajendraparivar)



Plate 68, Hansa

(Scribed: Brahma, Sankaadi, Hansaavantara, Bhahma)



Plate 69, Shri Machantaravatar

(Scribed: Svayambhu, ....Uttra, Tamasaj, Raivatapa)





Plate 70, Dhanvantari

(Scribed: *dhanvantari, Shishrudava*)



Plate 71, Parashuram

(Scribed: *Parashuramah, Sahatr bhujana, Sena, Kamdhenu*)



Plate 72, Vyasa

(Scribed: *Vyasah, Vaisampayana, sutapaurani, anpepishishp*)



Plate 73, Narada

(Scribed: *Shri Rama, Narada*)



Plate 74, Scene from Ramayana  
(Scribed: Sitaji, Ravanatirupa)

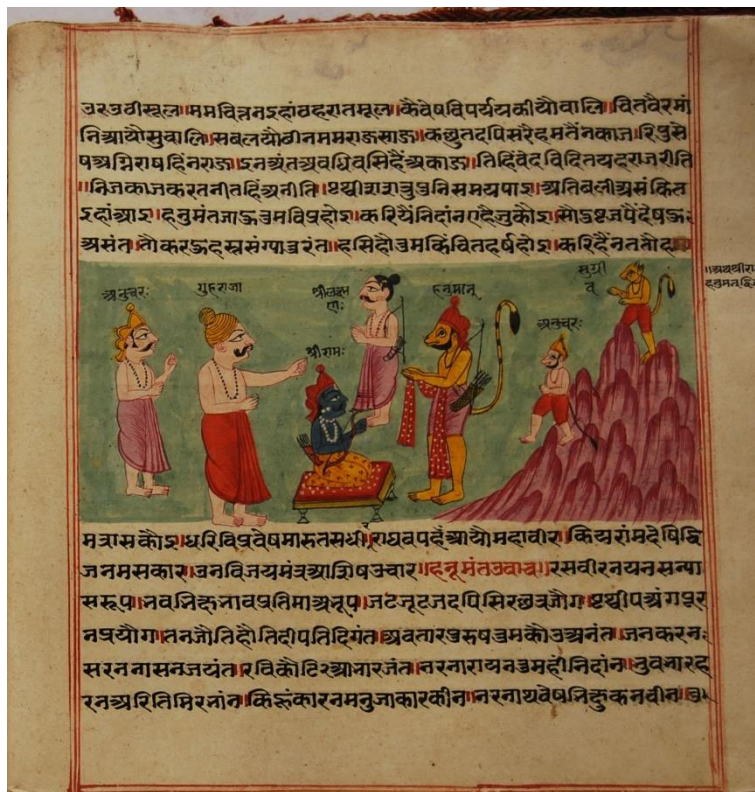


Plate 75, Scene from Ramayana  
(Scribed: Shri Rama, Shri Laxmana, Hanuman, Guharaja, Anucharaha)



Plate 76, Scene from Ramayana, Unidentified

(Scribed: *Mayandaha, Dividaha, Sushen, dhunaha, Lachmanah, Bhuharochē, Neela, Trikutamavala, Hanuman Angad, Jambuka, Nelaha, Vibhishana, Nirumaladevi*)



Plate 77, Decorative floral motif



Plate 78, Scene from Ramayana

(Scribed: Hanuman, Rama, Sita, Sakhi, Vanara Lakshmana, sena, Vanara, Kaushalya, Sumitra, Kaikaya, Purajanah)



Plate 79, Scene from Ramayana

Scribed: (Sita, Ramachandra, Laxmana, Bharata, Shatrugna, Vashistha, Sena, Nrutakiyo)



Plate 80, Ganesha and Saraswati putri  
 Scribed: (*Ganesha, Hansavahini Saraswati, Undir*)



Plate 81, Shri Krishna-Kaliya daman  
 Scribed: (*Shri Krishna, Kali Naga, Nanda, Upananda, Yashodha, Nagpatni, Nagumari, Godhana, Balbhaji*)



Plate 82, Krishna

Scribed: (Shri Krushna, Kamsa, Mukut, Balbhai, Chanura, Mushtika)



Plate 83, Decorative floral motif



Plate 84, Rukmini (Harana)

Scribed: (Rukmini, Shriramah, Rukmiyo, Sena)

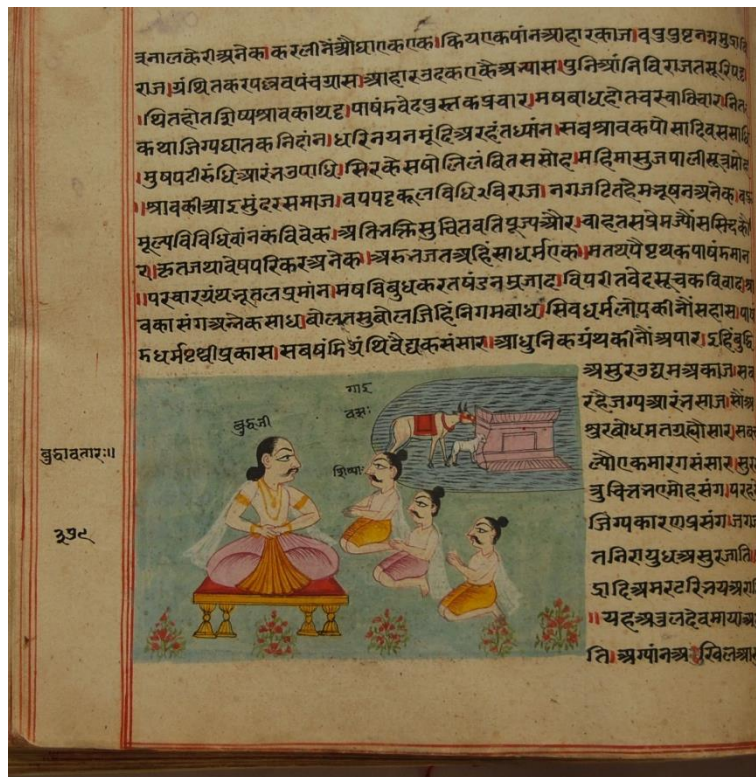


Plate 85, Buddha

Scribed: (Buddhaji, gaai, Bachha shisya)





Plate 86, Kalki

(Scribed: Kalki, Ashwa)

### Stylistic Analysis of the illustrations:

All illustrations in the manuscript are in a very simplified format. The artist has used a light blue or teal green ground for every painting in which the characters are depicted. Most of the figures appear to be directly placed on the ground. But interesting to note is there is something much more grounded about the figural composition that we don't feel the characters floating on the surface. Attempt to depict a sky or the landscape are seldom. Although a sky is depicted in the initial two illustrations, the star-lit night scene almost reminds us of the Ramayana set when Sita is getting married to Rama after her *swayamvar*. Here also the crescent moon which appears in the sky doesn't have any significance to do with the narrative of the text. But the painter seems to have intuitively designed it which is consciously removed from the composition in the later pages. The ground or the horizon in the scene is never suggested by the painter in the composition. Depiction of vegetation is very scanty. What occasionally appears is a palm tree here and there. The quality of composition and lines appears very spontaneous.

The most prominent Kutchi feature that we see in the illustrations are the characters who appear as Senapati in the compositions. The Senapati wears a turban which is very unique to the Kutch region. This style of turban is seen from Rao Desal's portrait to the rein of Rao Prithviraj. We have already discussed in length regarding this in the previous chapter.

Yet another curious tendency of a Kutch painter is to fill empty spaces with floral patterns. Here there are two places where such an element is seen on Plate no: 78 and 84. This space for some reason got filled with floral designs in replacement of a narrative. Dr. Goswamy refers to some of these motifs as a sign manual of the artist but here it almost appears as a conveniently altered correction.

## Chapter 3, Section-I.B

### c) Krishna-Balarama Paintings

Krishna-Balarama paintings are a set of five folios, illustrating episodes from Bhagavata Purana, of the two divine brothers, and their heroic exploits in the companies of *gopas* (Krishna's childhood cowherd friends). Although similar thematic contents are popularly coined under the term *Krishna-lila*, the importance of Krishna's divine brother Balarama in these paintings is inevitable, hence titled as Krishna-Balarama folios. The episodes depicted in this set are Dhanukaasura-vadha, Pralamba-vadha, Agasur-vadha, Gopies offering food to Krishna, and village women offering food to Krishna and his friends. A significant element that makes this set interesting is the unusual *bhava* in which the divine blue God Krishna is visualized by the painter.

The painting is in the traditional manuscript (horizontal) format of size approximately fourteen (height) by twenty-seven (width) centimeters. Double-line borders around the margin of the folios give a visual impact as if they were a part of an illustrative manuscript set. But unfortunately, the reverse side of the painting was not accessible for view to indicate if it was a part of a scribed manuscript. At the bottom of these illustrations, there are scribes in Devnagiri script. These inscriptions apart from helping us identify these episodes could also help in guessing the provenance of this painting, which is mostly Kutch, and Gujarati. Like in folio no 88, '*Dhankasuravyoche*', which is clearly in the Gujarati language. It also has a mixture of Braj bhasha in its scribe like in folio no 88 '*Baldevji ko daisa (Pralamba) le jarahe hai*'.

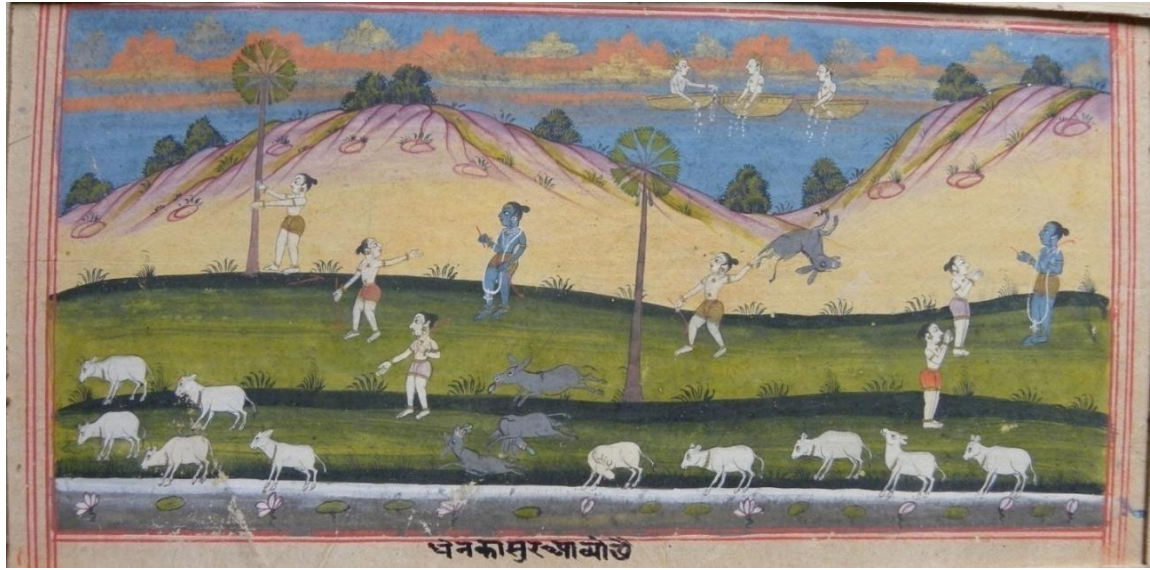


Plate 87, Dhanukaasura Vadha, Inscribed: *Dhankasuravyoche*

Dhanukaasura Vadha:

The Bhagavata Purana narration: According to the narrative in the Bhagavata Purana text, this episode is happening at Talvana forest, where the two adventurous brothers and their friends tend their cows far from Vrindavan. The *gopas* inform the two divine brothers of the forest and how the palm trees bear ripe fruits, sweet and fragrant. The *gopas* also inform how unfortunate a circumstance is that such a forest is forbidden to visit due to the powerful demon named Denuka (who takes a form of an ass) residing within. Adventurous as the two brothers were, they took the challenge, and walked into the forest along with their friends. In the forest, Balarama enjoyed his great strength by shaking the trees so that all the ripe fruits would fall. Disturbed by the arrival of the children, the demon charges towards Balarama. But Balarama known for his great strength, seized the demon and swirled him around, and threw him on top of the palm tree. According to the narrative, the palm tree shook so heavily that it fell on another tree, which fell yet on another one, and the next. Similarly, the two brothers attacked back all ferocious demons', leaving the forest covered with fruits and life-less demon bodies. The triumph of the two reached the Demi-Gods who appeared showering flowers on the holy brothers.

Reading the painting: Contradicting to the dense forest adventure of the two brothers as narrated in the Purana, in Folio No. 87, the scene is replaced with a wide bare landscape with rocky hills and two palm trees. The artist has composed the episode in a continuous narrative format, starting left to right, where Balarama is depicted shaking the palm tree with

his hands, in the meanwhile Krishna and his friends are watching him in action. Moving rightwards is the second part of the sequence, where Balarama is depicted swinging the demon in the air, while all the other demons lay unconscious on the ground. On the extreme right is the depiction of Krishna, standing wearing a long garland and *gopas* praying to him. Three demi-gods have appeared on their flying ships, showering flowers at Balarama who has taken the centre of attention in the episode. At the base of the painting is the flowing river Yamuna, by the banks, where the cows have depicted grazing, undistracted by the events happening in the background. The cows are moving by the banks of Yamuna, from right to left, against the narration which is otherwise from left to right.



Plate 88, Pralamba-vadha, Inscribed: *Shree baldevjikodaisa le jayahai*

Pralamba-vadha:

Pralamba carrying away Balarama is yet another interesting episode where Balarama's strength and heroic act are given importance. Bhagavata Purana narrates the episode as happening around Bandiraka (a banyan tree), under which Krishna-Balarama and *gopas* would engage themselves in various sports activities during summer days. According to the legend, on one such occasion *Asura* Pralamba, alter in the form of a *gopa*, joins to play with them, to abduct them. Krishna being the supreme knower of all recognized him and let him join their game. Having divided the teams into two halves, one group under Balarama and the other under Krishna, they started the game of *harinakridanam*, which was defined by the rule that the winners would climb on the back of the defeated ones who then had to carry them to a finishing line. Intending to terminate Pralambha, Krishna surrenders

defeat, by which his team which included Pralambha had to carry Balarama's team to the finishing line. Understanding Krishna's invincible nature, Pralambha who was carrying Balarama on his shoulder set off in great haste beyond the finish line, where one should dismount Balarama. Balarama being carried away from his company realized he was being abducted, and became so heavy that Pralambha transformed into his original form, with a body covered with golden ornaments, blazing eyes, frowned eyebrows, rows of terrible teeth, and wild hair. Amazed by the effulgence, Balarama was put off but soon regained his wits. He fearlessly hit his enemy with his fist on the demon's head. The *asura* collapsed to the ground lifeless, spitting blood from his mouth. The *gopas* were once again astonished by Balarama's display of power and praised him for his powerful gut.

In folio no.88, once again you can see the familiar wide stretch of land with rocky hills and a river flowing at the base of the folio. Bandiraka the banyan tree is the only tree at the location around which the episode is depicted. *Gopas* are depicted standing in pairs before the tree, having un-mounted their companies, whereas Pralambha slightly bigger in size is depicted carrying away Balarama. On the right of the folio, a little away from the tree is standing Krishna with two other *gopas* watching the event. Unlike others who are all wearing *langot* (including Balarama and Pralambha), Krishna is standing dressed in a long dhoti. In this painting, Krishna Balarama and Pralambha are wearing a crown.

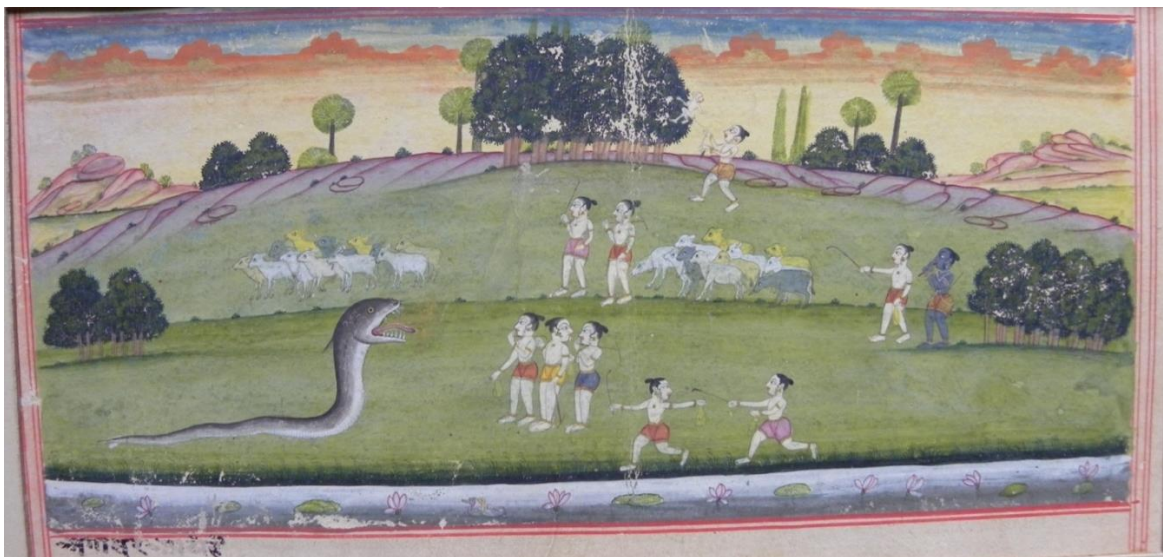


Plate 89, Agasura-vadha, Inscribed: *Agasuraayore*

### Agasuravadha-

The killing of Agasura is described as one of Krishna's childhood acts at the age of five in the Bhagavata Purana text, which is also one of the preferred episodes by many Indian painters. Agasura was the demon sent by Kamsa to kill Krishna, who took the form of a huge snake. This demon snake traps Krishna and his friends by camouflaging himself amongst trees and letting them enter his mouth, which appeared like a large cave. He let all his friends and cattle enter his mouth. Krishna having realized Agasura's demonic form walked in after the *gopas* to rescue his dear one. As soon as the demon started to swallow the *gopas* and his calves, Krishna started expanding himself and within no time wrestled with the giant, whose body broke out through the top of the skull, rescuing his friends back to life.

In the painting, the scene is only the beginning of the episode, when Agasura, a huge snake with an open mouth is depicted waiting by the river, while a group of *gopas* engaged in discussion is approaching the snake. Cattle in two groups are depicted moving in their background, undistracted by the snake's presence. In this painting, unlike earlier depictions, the artist has incorporated a few random groups of trees probably to signify the dense foliage as described in the Purana. Krishna here is depicted playfully advancing alongside Balarama playing his flute.



Plate 90, Thakorji, Inscribed: *Thakorji*

#### Gopies offering food to Krishna:

This is an unidentified episode from the set, with an inscription at the bottom scribed '*thakorji*'. Krishna and Balarama in *langot* are seated on the ground with two other ladies who are serving food to them. What is being served, could be yogurt rice to the two divine brothers. The cows are depicted seated under the tree. One of the most popular references to villagers offering food to Krishna in Bhagavata Purana is after the episode of Krishna carrying mount Govardhana. Soon after this incident, there are references in Bhagavata, of villagers often offering food to Krishna expressing their gratitude for protecting them. The incorporation of residences in the background, by the base of the hill, indicates that the ladies could have visited from the nearby village.



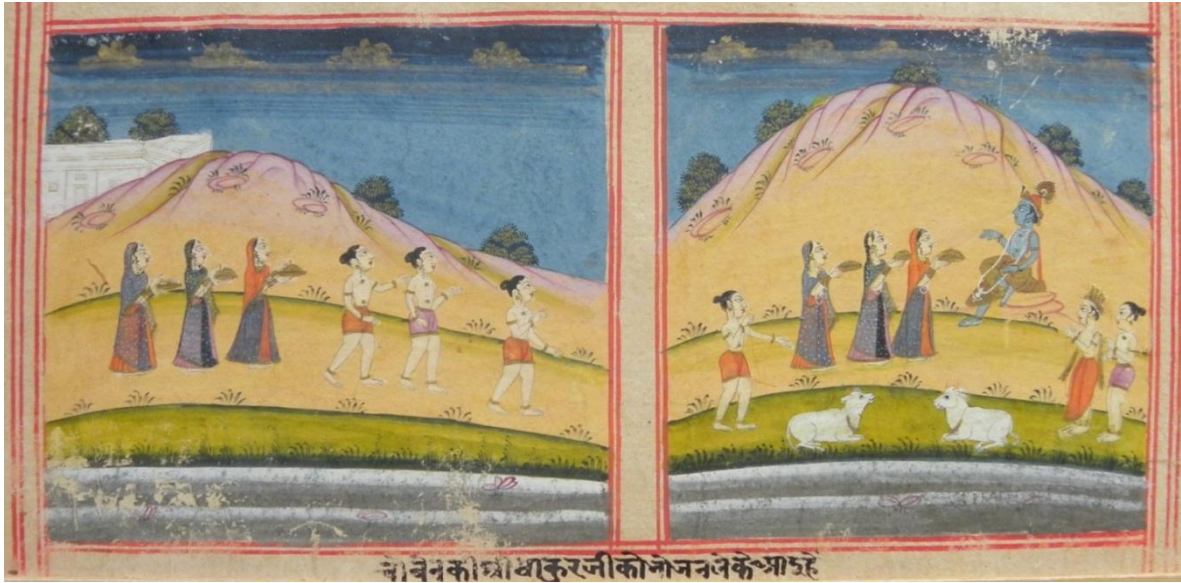


Plate 91, Village women offer food to Thakurji,  
 Inscribed: *Chauben ki Stri Thakorji ko bhojan leke aarahe*

Brahmin women offering food to Thakurji-

Ladies (*Chauben*<sup>47</sup>) bringing food for Krishna is yet another episode from Bhagavata Purana, from his childhood episode. In this narrative, Krishna-Balarama and friends, set out with their cattle, a little far from Vrindavan. In no time they were starving for food. Intending to please some Brahmin ladies devotes to Krishna, the Devine child sent his friends to the nearby village for food. He suggested *Gopa*'s to visit the nearby village, where sacrifices were being performed by the Brahmins. The *gopa*'s went to the sacrificial arena asking for some food but returned disappointed. Hearing their disappointment, Krishna once again sent his friends to the wives of the Brahmins. Gathering hope once again, the boys visited the women in the family asking for food and giving reference to Krishna. The wives who were enchanted by Krishna's divine stories always wanted to see him for real. The anxious ladies brought food of different kinds to him. In the painting, the episode is depicted in a continuous narrative separated into compartments. In the first grid, the ladies are taken to Krishna by his friends. And in the next compartment, they are offering food to Krishna.

<sup>47</sup> Brahmin caste in Northern India

## Visual Analysis:

All five paintings are depicted on a similar landscape (local), which is mostly a wide-open space with a lush green ground and rocky hills (or coral-shaped hills). At the base flow's river Yamuna, which is depicted in grey color, with lotus flowers depicted. Plants are rarely depicted except for random bushes on hills or unless the narrative demands, like the palm tree or banyan tree in folio no 88 and 89. The sky is mostly a blue spread, with floating vibrant clouds. We see that the set reflects a stylization that follows the devotional school of *Pushtimargi sampradaya*. The theme and style also seem to derive from its universal devotional practices. As mentioned earlier, one can notice that it is mostly Balarama who is in action. Krishna all the while is just present as a universal sustainer. Although Krishna is present garbing all attention appears in blue wearing a long garland. What makes this set most interesting is the *bhava* (state of mind/body), in which each of these characters is being conceived by the artist. Krishna who is usually depicted as the hero of the plot in most of his childhood episodes is here taking *tanmaya bhava* (omnipresence) or an attitude of a universal protector. For instance, the painter usually takes a lot of pleasure in depicting young Krishna's supreme power while killing demons. But in this set, Krishna is hardly depicted in action. On the contrary, it is Balarama in action. Be it the Denukasuravadh, Agasurvadh or when Pralambha carries away Balarama, Krishna all the while is just standing at a distance watching the event as if he understands the situation better than any of them present there. What is more fascinating is how Krishna without grabbing centre stage is still drawing a significant amount of attention to himself. It is again the *bhava* of his associates, which the painter is using as a tool to highlight Krishna. In folio no 88, one can observe how the narrative transforms from *sakhyabhāva* the attitude of a friend, to *dāsyabhāva*, the attitude of devotion.

## Conclusion:

We may conclude with a certain amount of conformity that the present set of paint was painted in Kutch for a patron who was a Vaishnava devotee by an artist who understood the expression best. Vaishnavism present in this part of the country is mostly due to the Bhatiyas and Hindu Baniyas, who claim to play an important role in the overseas trade and commerce of Kutch. These communities followed the Pushtimarg or the creed of spiritual nourishment founded by Vishnu Swamy, and propagated by Vallabhacharya. Narayan Sarovar in Kutch is sacred for followers of Pushtimarg as Vallabhacharya during his lifetime

is believed to have visited and stayed at Kutch. So, this particular painting seems to have no stylistic connection with the royal patronage of Kutch but must have been commissioned by a follower of the Vaishnava Sampradaya around the nineteenth century.

### Chapter 3, Section-I.C

#### Ethnographic studies, of the Company period

The study of the company paintings, or the ethnographic study of the Kutchis, began with a small set of twelve folios from the Kutch Museum collection. But surprisingly, as the research advanced their quantity swelled to larger sets that to ignore the efforts made by the native artist would be unfair. Although this chapter only covers the study on the twelve folios, the larger sets are attached glossary towards the end of this thesis (Refer to pg. 207). This set of painting now in the Kutch Museum collection is a curious set of twelve paintings that depicts the ethnographic study of Kutch, a theme executed following the Company trends. But the fact that puts one surprise is the lack of attention paid to acknowledge the efforts made by these artists, in the pan-Indian context. From what we know from the previous chapters, the traditional style was more ambiguous, mostly a borrowed tradition from the popular Rajput schools. But by the mid-nineteenth century, a large number of artists were putting immense effort to improve their technique and style to adapt to European taste.



Plate no: 92, A Jain women

Apart from the description that tells that she is a Jain woman, even her white attire and accessories, suggest that she is a Jain Monk, following the Svetamber sect. She is depicted wearing a *Cholapattak* (a white long robe) and *pangorani* (a shawl that covers the upper part of the body), holding an *ogho* (woolen broom used to flee away flies/insects) in her right hand, and a small *potli* (to carry a woolen bed sheet/or a woolen mat to sit) on her left hand. She has a *muhpatti* (a white piece of cloth covering her mouth) tied to her ears, to practice ahimsa. These monks travel barefoot visiting pilgrimages, practicing austerity and self-control over their minds and passion. The white robe is to renounce worldly pleasures to attain *moksha*. Jainism had flourished in Kutch since ancient times and Bhadresar temple is one of the oldest temples in India and hence an important pilgrim centre for Jains from all over Gujarat. So, she must have been one of those many pilgrims who came to visit the Bhadresar temple.



Plate no: 93, Weaver

In this painting, the weaver is depicted seated, engaged in working on a handloom. He is a dark young man, bare upper half wearing a dhoti that covers his lower torso. Though half bare he is wearing a white turban on his head, as customary in Kutch probably to protect oneself from the extreme heat. He is weaving a white long piece of cloth that has thin red borders on either side. The mechanism of the loom seems like a local setup with long twigs and barks of trees, probably how they used to work in those days with less advanced mechanics. On his left is a vessel placed filled with a small spindle that runs through the cross-cross unit.

Weaving was carried out on a large extent in Kutch. Cotton cloth in large quantities was frequently exported to Zanzibar. And in Mandvi silk weaving was carried out to a large extent. Most of these weavers belong to the Khatri caste, partly Hindus and partly Muslims. This young man with a clean shaved beard and thin mustaches suggests that he could be the Hindu Khatri community engaged in weaving. A similar Plate is found at the India Office Library Archive titled the 'Process of Weaving, Bombay, Vienna Exh, 1873.'



Plate No:94, A Perfume seller

The eighteenth and nineteenth-century were the time when every Indian with ethnic diversity was a model for an artist. Likewise, even this perfume seller standing carrying a *potli* (cloth sack) over his right shoulder, and his left hand resting over a walking stick was a subject of interest. The walking stick suggests the long distance he travels selling *Ittar* (perfume), village to village. He too like many others, has an interesting outlook. He is a middle-aged bearded man, wearing a white *angarakha* and *dhoti* with a long waistband that goes around his waist about five to six times, with both ends meeting a knot in front. He is also wearing an interesting Afghani headgear, which suggests that he follows the Islam religion.

Surprisingly Kutch history or Gazetteer doesn't record any Kutchies engaged in an occupation based on perfume selling but, Gujarat history records a Muslim community called *attarwala* who migrated to Ahmedabad from Agra during the Mughal emperor Jahangir. These

*attarwala* claim to be soldiers from the Hazara soldiers, who are Urdu-speaking people who mainly lived in Central Afghanistan. After settling in Gujarat, they took up the occupation of manufacturing perfumes known as *attars*. Possibility some of these *attarwala* must be frequently traveling to their proximal land to sell their products.

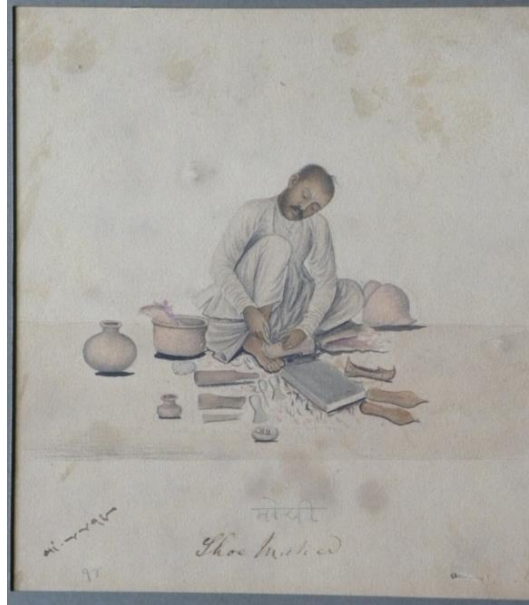


Plate No: 95, Shoe Maker

In this folio, a cobbler is depicted engaged in stitching a *mojari* (pointed shoes made of leather), a lot used by Rabaries, as they travel far with their cattle. All his stitching tools lay before him including the finished *mojari*, with a pair of soles. He is wearing an interesting white *kedyu* (long sleeves, double jacketed shirt) and *dhoti* (loose trousers) from his waist. He has a small mustache and clean shaved beard with his head almost shaved leaving just a tail of hair at the crown of his head. His u-shaped tilak on his forehead suggests the religion that he follows which could be Vaishnavism. According to the 1880 Gazetteer, there are 500 families of Gujarat Hindu shoemakers, settled chiefly at Bhuj.



Plate No: 96, Sindhi Sepoy

Sindhi Sepoy is a study of a well-built middle-aged man with accessorized weapons. He is standing holding a musket in his left hand, resting over his left shoulder. He carries additional weaponry like a shield, and two daggers, both tucked inside the long waistband which is coiled around his belly. Unlike other Kutchies he has a better body build and attire which is more like the Pathans of Kutch. The headgear worn by him is also an unusual one, unlike the white headband of Kutch, this is a proper high hat. According to the British Gazetteer, there were around 391, Sepoy, scattered over different parts of Kutch especially in Bhuj, coming from Ahmedabad, Sindh, and Northwest province, around the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They speak Hindustani mixed with Kutchi and Gujarati. Their costume is nothing in particular, and they generally marry among themselves, and sometimes they also associate with Pathans of Kutch'. This Sindhi Sepoy could be one such Sepoy from Sindh.





Plate No: 97, Jain Monk

The depiction of the Jain monk is yet another image of a Svetamber Jain standing holding an *ogho* in his right hand and a *potli* in his left hand. Surprisingly it is an exact look-alike to that of a Jain Woman the standing posture and very close facial features. The only broad difference between the two is, that in the former one, the head is covered by the *pangarani*. Whereas in this folio the monk's head is uncovered showing his curly locks.



Plate No: 98, Hermit

The depiction is that of a male and a female hermit, following the Vallabhacharya sect. The white u-shaped tilak on the forehead and the white robe used to cover the upper half of the body an indication of their preferred religious sect. Appears even Vallabh hermits preferred walking barefoot.

Vallabhacharya during his lifetime is believed to have visited and stayed at Narayan Sarovar in Kutch, where the pilgrim is sacred for followers of Pushtimarg followers. Moreover, there is an interesting royal patronage associated with this pilgrim site, ‘Maharani Vaheli Mahakaunvar, wife of Desalji I, displeased by the priest of Dwaraka, was determined to raise Narayansarovar as a place of sacredness. In the year 1734, the first temple was constructed. Ever since then, pilgrims must have been frequently traveling through these routes to visit the temple.



Plate No: 99, Jain Priest

This is yet another Jain depiction from the set, but unlike the earlier two monks, this one is of a priest. This Guruji is depicted in a side profile with mustaches and long hair that covers his earlobe. In his right hand, he is holding a red pot (which has a holder), and in his left hand a long stick. He is also depicted wearing a *kimli* a woolen shawl that is usually worn over the left shoulder and covers the body till a little above the knee. Unlike Jain monks who are depicted barefoot walking from one pilgrim to another, Jain priests following secular ideologies are depicted wearing chapels like many others.

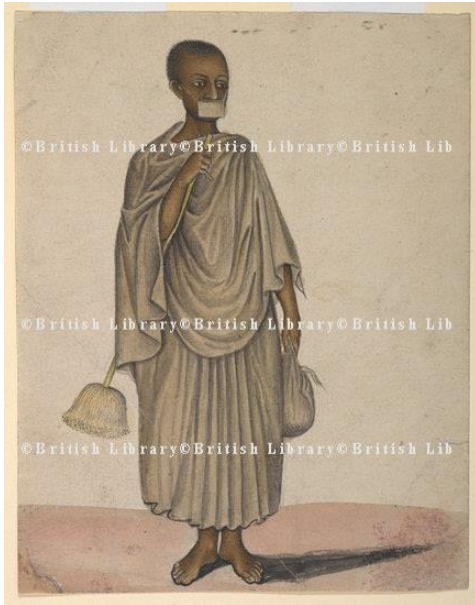
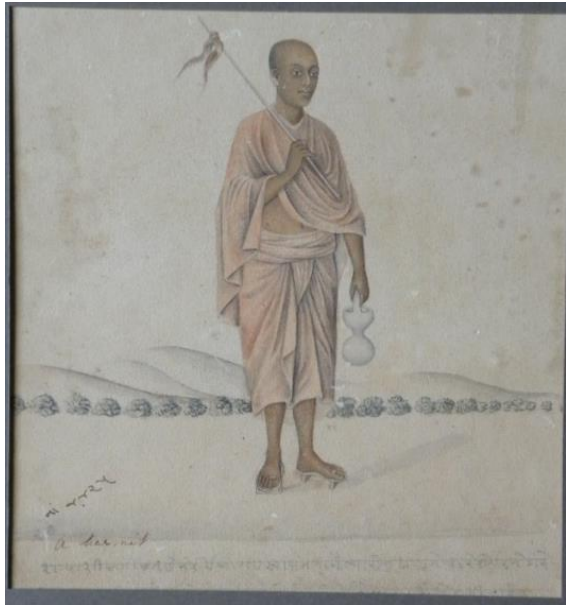


Plate No: 100, A hermit

The image of a Vaishnavite hermit is an interesting one. To our surprise, the Jain monk from the India Office collection and the Vaishnavite hermit are very similar resembling models except for what they wear. The interesting element to note here is, the same person was made to model twice for the artist to document, or it was a similar-looking person. In this image, the artist has also attempted to treat the background with small shrubs and uneven terrain.



Plate No: 101, Turner

Turner (*Charanio*) was yet another occupation of the people of Kutch in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Three men are depicted engaged in polishing their swords. The polisher is depicted engaged in working on a buffing stone, which is manually functioning with the help of an assistant who is pulling the two ends of the rope to rotate the plate. A third man is sitting on the ground working independently polishing a sword. All three of them are wearing the usual white, long-sleeved jacket with loose trousers and white *pagadhi* on their head. The gazetteer record around 20 Muslim families who came from Sindh with the Jadejas clan as polishers. This turner could be one from the same lineage who was engaged in the occupation of polishing swords.



Plate no: 102, Goldsmith

In the painting, a sonar is depicted melting a piece of gold holding a tweezer in his left hand and a cylindrical long hollow stick in the other which moderates the temperature of the metal while designing. He wears a white attire, accessorized with golden ornaments on his neck and ears. He is wearing an unusually coloured turban, which is a combination of red and yellow. According to gazetteer records Patni sonis, around 412 in number in 1880 claim to be Songhad Rajputs who were employed by the Rao to make common Jewels and women ornaments. Infact, Kutch had long been famous for the Superior design and workmanship of its gold and silver. He must have been from one such family from Songhad, due to which he is wearing a colourful turban.



Plate No: 103, Wrapper

If by wrapper what the artist means is spinning, then cotton spinning was a very common occupation of residents of Kutch. The attire is the usual white long-sleeved under jacket along with loose trousers. About 200 families were settled in Bhuj, chiefly from the Marwar region, whose occupation was cotton spinning in Kutch.

### **Formal Analysis:**

All 12 paintings are in a vertical format of size roughly 20 x 18 in cm, mostly single figures, with an inscription at the bottom in English and Gujarati identifying the various Occupations. The figures are set against a plain background, with a trail of shadow on the ground (shadow falling mostly on the right). The artist has applied the technique of single-point view to study the model. The model is mostly standing before the artist roughly at a distance of five to six feet, the eye point is roughly near the shoulder of the model, and the view of the head and feet (top) is at a consecutive angle. Figures are delineated in the classical proportion of western academic schools, with an attempt to foreshortening (see folio 96 and 102). The thin raised naturalistic eyebrows, and the slender long nails of hands and feet put us surprised as to how did these artists, train themselves with such detailed precisions. The study of the textile fold is with a good understanding of light and shade. The outlines are barely visible, treated by shades, and the line otherwise observed is thin and confident. Use of color is minimum, in shades of grey, a technique which was popular in European academic schools

as ‘Grisaille’. Occasionally the artist has played with the color red (or orange), by applying it on head gears and as textile borders, to lift the shades of grey. The consistency in proportion and facial feature (which is very similar in almost every model), suggests that by this time, the artist was well trained in figurative studies.

At the bottom of each sheet, there is text scribbled in English and Gujarati script identifying the various caste and professions to which they belong, one can also see a description written with a pencil at the bottom in Gujarati along with sequence numbers (in English and Gujarati). Occasionally, there is also mention of the price at which it is sold in English and Gujarati, which also suggests it was sold in the market for one rupee and the buyer could have been a local Indian collector or English officer. The position of this text seems to be altering from centre to left to the right bottom of the page. The scribe in English is probably using a pen in rightward leaning calligraphic font. And the scribe in Gujarati is someone who supervised the artist. Occasionally certain folios have a detailed description in Gujarati below the title. This indicates that the artist could have been a local artist, who was trained in an academic style, supervised by a Kutchi, probably to be sold to Europeans. The reference to amount ‘Priced Rupees One’ and ‘Kimmat Rupaiah 1’ clearly suggests that these were paintings commissioned to be sold and not specifically for one patron.

Written details in the above 12 paintings:

Title as Inscribed in English and Gujarati	Ref.no scribed in Gujarati	Ref.no in Pencil	Inscribed details in English	Inscribed details in Gujarati
Jain Woman	4416	11	Priced Rupees 1	Kimat Rupaiah 1
Weavers	4417	12		
A Perfume Seller	4415	13		Kimat Rupaiah 1
Shoe Maker	4419	14		
Sindhi Sepoy	4420	15		Kimat Rupaiah 1
Jain Monk	4421	16	Priced Rupees 1	Kimat Rupaiah 1
Hermit	4422	17		Kimat Rupaiah 1
Jain Priest	4424	19		Kimat Rupaiah 1
A Hermit	4425	20		
Turner	4426	21		Kimat Rupaiah 1
Goldsmith	4427	23		Kimat Rupaiah 1
Wrapper	4430	25		

### **Similar other works and dating the set:**

Although very less is known about this nineteenth-century artistic development in Kutch, by bringing all scattered references together we do come to understand that the modern period of Kutch did perk up some artists of Kutch to compile a few albums according to the new patrons. One such album very close in technique and style, to that discussed above, is found in the India Office Library, a set of 72 paintings bound in 2 volumes depicting trades and caste in Cutch. The catalog list of this album is published in *Company Drawings in the Indian Office Library* by Mildred Archer<sup>48</sup>. Two other albums are of Lieutenant Stanley Raikes in the Tapi collection and Dr. Henry Pittmen album of birds. All 72 paintings and a few more collections are attached separately as appendix.

Kutch and many districts within Gujarat got placed under the political authority of the Bombay Presidency after the second Anglo-Maratha war around 1802-1803. And the distinct style of company painting got introduced to Kutch probably after 1819 when British officers frequented their visits to this remote land. We believe one among these British officers would have trained the local artist that such large albums were compiled by the local artist. Referring to the inscription in some of these paintings in the album we could date the works to c.1850.

---

<sup>48</sup> Mildred Archer, *Company Drawings in the Indian Office Library*, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London, 1972.

## **Chapter 3, Section-I.D**

### **Processions and Festivals**

The works of art in this group are put together based on the format rather than the theme. They are elaborate paintings documenting procession scenes of Nagapanchami and Muharram held in the city of Bhuj. The painting of both these festivals is few of the records of Kutch which stand as testimony from the past, which demonstrates the enthusiasm amongst local communities to participate in a social event. While documenting the collection, four scroll paintings which meant relevant to the study were found. One scroll is on display at the Aaina Mehal collection, open to public view, and three others from the Kutch Museum collection. As the Aaina Mehal Nagapanchami scroll is already on display for view, the current documentation brings in only the one from the Kutch Museum collection. In conversation with the curator, we gather that there is more in the Aaina Mehal collection but the condition is too fragile to be documented. All three scrolls are in horizontal format, composed from right to left.

Every time we look at these works, it unfolds the monumental works assigned and taken up by the patron and artist. As two of the scrolls have written information that there are commissioned by Rao Khengarji we know for sure that it was part of his court patronage that resulted in such contributions.





Plate No 104, Nagpanchami Ashwari

The Nagpanchami scroll is also referred to as Khengarji *ashwari*, as it is on the occasion of Nagpanchami that the annual royal procession was held in the city of Bhuj. The festival of Nagpanchami which is observed on the fifth day of the bright half of *Shraavan* is depicted in the scroll. This festival has a special significance for the citizens of Bhuj. On this day a large number of people from the town join the procession and proceed to Bhujiya hill. A small temple of Bhujiya nag was consecrated on the hill. The legend about this Bhujiya nag is known to every citizen in Kutch.

The sight of a live cobra is considered very auspicious on that day, and it was a customary practice that snake charmers took live cobras from house to house, and residents fed them milk. According to Aaina Mehal former curator, P.J Jethi, this procession commemorated ever since Rao Lakhpat's time when the Kutch army defeated the Mughal *subedar* of Ahmedabad near the Bhuja hill, back in 1729. There is a writing, in two languages, at the extreme right end of the scroll which has mostly faded off due to the aging of the paper, which gives information that this painting is a documentation of H. H Maharaja Khengarje aswari, painted in the year 1887. The size of the painting is 22 x 1500 cm in length. The scroll is presumably painted on paper which is relined on cloth. The object is a valuable procession of

the Kutch Museum collections, Bhuj. There is a similar scroll on the same subject by an artist named Vadalal Md. Jumma dated,,,,(illegible) which appears as a copy of the original. You may refer to page no.76.

The horizontal scroll is in two pieces. Only the second half of the scroll could be documented as the first half is in brittle condition, so analysis is based on the observation of the second half which depicts the beginning of the procession. The procession is led by a man on horseback followed by a small group of men playing percussion instruments, this is then followed by a group of men carrying rifles. Right behind is a group of darbar men carrying a canopy on a bullock cart. Following them begin the trail of darbar men on horseback and holding the long satin fluttering flags. These red flags, with a yellow border, make the procession come to life. There is a depiction of a handsome young man sitting on a beautiful horse/ probably a mare we can't ignore the notice. Next to this are two Sadhu babas walking blowing their musical instrument and flag in hand. Behind him is a bullock cart carrying a palanquin guarded by darbar men and a peacock *fan* bearer. The palanquin is empty but the inscription which is partially visible at the bottom read, *mataji no rath*. These kinds of inscriptions are at the bottom of every group and important personalities in the scroll, but unfortunately, they are not legible. Followed by the *rath* is a group of men marching dressed in English uniforms. The musical group that follows them plays instruments of western taste like drums, bugles, cymbals, and flutes. Following them are again the trail of darbar men on horseback with large flags fluttering in the air. It is probably from here the royal personalities start appearing. Unfortunately, the second portion which depicts Rao Khengarji was not available for study due to its fragile condition. A similar copy of the same scroll was commissioned

Rao Khengarji was a popular and honored ruler at home and abroad. He took great interest in improving the needs of the community he lived in. Being fully aware of the importance of technical education, he opened an art school for encouraging ancient handicrafts and traditional industries. Khengarji was the last of the rulers who despite constrained revenue tried to put Kutch on the path of progress in several directions. Khengarji must have commissioned the artist to paint the scrolls as part of the documentation of such cultural practices.

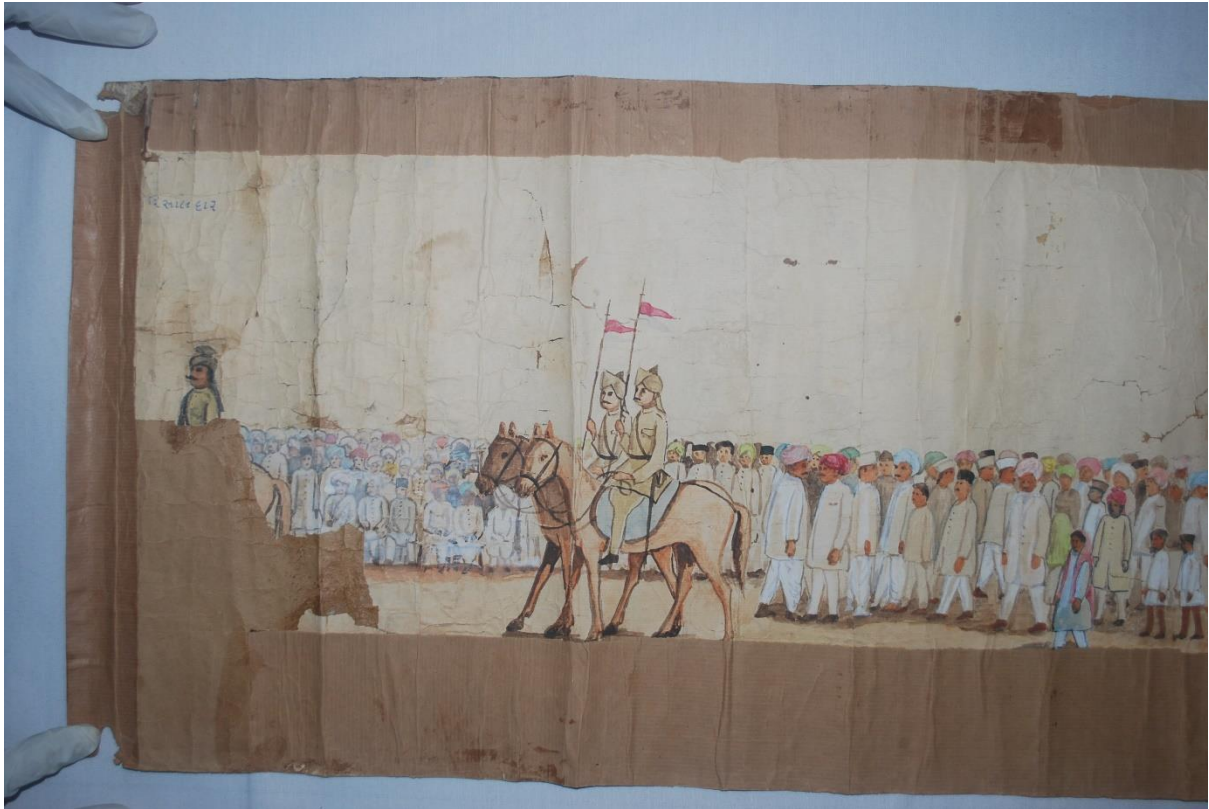


Plate No 105, Muharram procession

Muharram is a procession that is largely held by the Shiah communities but observed by all Muslims. This special veneration is for the month in which Imam Hussain, the son of Ali was killed. His death is the subject of public mourning, and for the first ten days, fasting and self-denial are observed by followers. An interesting feature of the Muharram procession is the Taziahs made of bamboo and tinsel after the model of the shrine of the Imam at Karbala. These shrines are taken around in procession on the tenth day and submerged in the water of a river or lake. The scroll depicted here is a 20th-century work by artist Ali Muhamad from Bhuj.

Moharram as a subject was frequently depicted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in many schools across India, esp in the Murshidabad and Patna schools. But for a place like Kutch to document such elaborate documentation is a wonder. In the documentation, it is visible how apart from people participating, there are a large number of people gathered to watch the procession. Interestingly, in the beginning, there are few dignitaries depicted seated on chairs at the beginning of the procession.

The Tizyah, miniature shrines, are being carried by men folks belonging to the various communities in the society. Interesting to note is that even the Raos participated in the

procession by taking Taziah in their contribution. Apart from the shrines, there are also a large number of communities carrying Zulinah (horse replica), rolled on wheeled carriers. Information shared by one of the residents from Kamangar-falia, belonging to the Kamangar family (artist) shares that these horse replicas used in Taziah for a very long time are prepared by their community people and are taken out during procession times.

It is interesting to note in the procession depiction that Sidi community women also join the procession along with their men folk. By tradition women usually offer their mourning rituals in an *azakhana*. But few exceptions are seen here.

## Chapter 3, Section-II

### Stylistic Observations

As seen in Section I, for a hundred and fifty years, starting from the early 1740's to the end of the 1900's there has been continuous attempt to paintings in the provenance of Kutch, supported by the court of Bhuj. But when one stylistically tries to define the school, there are a lot of discrepancies that are discussed in this section. Stylistic discrepancies, that change as the result of the changing patronage, and growing networking with the outside world. But interestingly these multi-lingual stylistic overlaps are what the makes the Kutch school of painting unique. Based on the materials available so far, an attempt has been made to classify the stylistic idioms into definite groups such that range from Style A to Style ...and their broad classifications are as listed below:

- 1) Paintings at the onset of this tradition- Most sophisticated Durbar paintings (1740-1760)
- 2) Development of Indigenous styles- (1760-1830)
- 3) Stylistic Departures - Impact of Academic understanding- (1825- late 1800s)

#### **Paintings at the onset of this tradition – (1740-1760)**

We see from Rao Desal I's reign there is a sudden acquaintance with court paintings, and the need to involve a learning environment. Stylistically the paintings produced at the onset of this traditional impulse were some of the most sophisticated works produced in the Kutch court. Large size durbar paintings and portraiture that we could even doubt if it must have been by a local artist. But interestingly, considering the period within which the works have been produced which is from 1740-1760, doesn't appear as a brief intervention by a visiting artist, rather there is a continuous coming and going of artist.

**Style A:** Most of the paintings produced during this period are unique compositions to this regions' cultural documentation. All qualities of a good portrait- flawless elegant lines, the delicacy of touch, the defined facial contours, and modeling alongside tonal

gradations along with a close familiarity with the understanding of the popular thematic composition of the Mughal and Rajput courts are seen in these works. For Eg: Portrait of Rao Desal by a *Jharokha* (Plate No:1), The succession group of Rao's (Plate No:2), Maharao Desal and Lakhpat in Durbar (Plate no: 3), Potrait of Rao Lakhpat (Plate No: 4), Equestrian portrait of Maharao Lakhpat (Plate no: 6), Maharao Lakhpat's ashwari going to Delhi (Plate No : 7), and Seated Rao Lakhpat and Godh (Plate No :11 ). The embellishment of tiny pearls, semi-precious stones, and the use of gold all indicate the imperial aesthetic quality in these paintings.

### **Development of Indigenous styles - (1760-1830)**

The period from 1760 one starts observing a large number of variations in the styles of works produced at the court as there were a large number of artists who were probably taking interest in contributing and every hand was different from each other. This style also become indigenous to the style that develops in Kutch hence are broadly classified as below:

**Style B:** A gradual variation in the quality of composition of potriats are seen during Rao Godh's reign at Bhuj from around 1760. The compositions become further simple, and an attempt is being made to imitate Style-A, but fails in giving finer details like giving the tonal gradations (refer to Plate no:8, 9 and 10). In no time even the formats change to horizontal set-up and unique composition with simpler modeling like: Prince on the lap of Ruler and African Guards (Plate No:12), Amba Mata no Prasad che (Plate No:13), A young prince on the lap of a Queen who is attended by a Jamadar (Plate No:16). A sudden change in hand is also seen duing Rao Raydhan reign, small portrait painting with highly dexterous details, with strong and contrast use of color combination like the painting which depicts Rao Raydhan seated (Plate No :15). Somehow the works representing his successor brother Prithvi Rao are of extraordinary quality (refer to Plate No:17).

**Style C:** This phase is also the most discussed phase which is referred to as the autodidactic phase in this research. When the native artist began to copy large number of European prints and slowly acquired the requisite knowledge to draw perspective and recession. In this phase when initially, the artist began by copying a large number of European prints that depicts views and buildings of Europe. And in no time the artist started

looking at their surroundings and produced views with a similar idea of perspectives and shades. Kutch views covered by these artists were views of Bhuj with a mad elephant in the foreground, views of Bhuj city with the Raos palace seen from above, view of the town of Jakhau, view of Anjar. The landscape<sup>49</sup> studies that is being referred here are set of painting referred in 'A Place Apart- Paintings of Kutch', a similar work was not found in the present study. But interestingly the Ramayana set seems to be work of the landscape artist. At one glance we do see some Mewar influence in the rendering of lines and use of colours in the figures, but largely they drift away from there to be placed to the city of Bhuj. Like if you closely study these painting next to the landscape works one start observing stylistic overlaps in the composition. In the Ramayana set which depicts the city of Mithila, incorporating elements from the surroundings such as: the palace, the fortified walls, the lake, the temporary tents, and the parched vegetation, which the artist used in Landscape depiction. We can observe a strange confidence in these works of these artists, especially in the Ramayana paintings when the artist is probably overlapping two styles- incorporating a landscape or a structural background, as against flat grounds of the narratives.

**Style D:** This style is still very ambiguous as the current study could incorporate only a part of the large tradition which is still being searched. Although on the basis of available material we are certain that the artist was continuously improving on their understanding of painting through experimentation. Hence there are also overlaps seen in these works. Of the three sets that were available for study under the Vaishnav group of paintings, we gather that Avatar Gita illustrations and Ramayanas folios are unique set to understand the regionally developed style. If one studies the figures in both these set, they stand independent of the background or composition. One won't miss noticing the Senapati (army men) in the composition who appear close to the men appearing in Rao Lakhpat's portrait paintings. The lines appear more spontaneous than dexterous. The treatment of the sky during the day and the star lit night which is very unique to the works seen in this region. One can't deny the fact that these two sets also remind one of the styles of painting from Gujarat, especially the non-Jain illustrated manuscripts. At the same time if we see even Krishna Balarama folios are being done in Kutch which has nothing in common with

---

<sup>49</sup> Refer to Landscape Painting, Pp The present documentation, could not find works of similar kind for study.

the above two sets but yet it is done in Kutch. The inscription scribed in Gujarati and Braj gives a clear indication that the set belongs to this region but stylistically drifts apart. We may notice here that in this phase the artist is stylistically 'liberal' in technique, but not yet 'folkish'. Meaning they are less elaborate in style, more suggested than indicated with precision. Such a quality in painting is commonly seen in the styles of painting developing in the Gujarat, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

Analysing works of art on a stylistic framework we may conclude that the initial impulse is of a trained artist who probably came from Rajasthan, while the second and third variations of styles developed in Kutch by the native artist. On the basis of stylistic analysis of portrait paintings, we may conclude that by the end of Rao Godh reign the stylistic idiom of Kutch court started to change and an improvement in the artist's understanding may be noticed during Rao Raydhan and his brother Prithviraj's reign.

#### **Impact of Academic Understanding- (1825- late 1800s)**

The second quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially from the reign of Rao Desal-II is a modern phase in the history of Kutch paintings when a large number of local artists were engaged in company style paintings- that is with a proper understanding of perspective, volume and recession with advanced materials. Today we know that a large number of ethnographic studies were conducted in this region by local artist along with one prominent study of birds for ornithologist Dr Hendry Pittman. But as largely observed by scholars of Company period works, Western India as a distinct style never developed on a large scale like in Delhi, Lucknow, Murshidabad, Patna, Mysore, and Tanjavur. What we know of western academic training in the west is at the outset of J.J School of arts which set up fine-arts education in India in the year 1857, with elementary drawing and design classes at Elphinstone institute, under the British administration. With the aim to impart European academic art knowledge in the sub-continent. A few acknowledged works known from this period are mostly pieces of Mumbai ports and city landscapes by British administrators. But interestingly what we get to see in this part of western India are the work produced a decade prior to the setting up of academic schools around the 1940s.



**Style E:** Unlike other regions where Company school works have a strong influence on their local traditions Kutch again seems like an exception where the artist seems to have learned everything fresh. It seems that company period works, especially the ethnographic studies are works undoubtedly by Kutch local artists but far superior in quality as they exactly imitated the western academic understanding of human anatomy and tonalities. The application of colour is with the understanding of ‘Grisaille’, with few striking contrasts applied occasionally, which is very much in the taste of the western patron. The artist could exactly understand what their patron wanted like the documentation of human races of all kinds. From royal personalities, noble men, soldiers, various human occupations, pilgrims, gypsies, and beggars. Every personality that they saw around was documented. Interestingly there are even residences covered of British political agents documented as part of the study. One of the most frequent subjects depicted is the barefoot traveling Jain Swetambar monks and Sindhi sepoy. Rao Desal II appears in the sets quite frequently.