

## **Conclusion**

**Paintings of Kutch – A New Documentation**, is a study on the stylistic development of paintings in this region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The research emphasizes on establishing that Kutch was a Provincial school in Western India. And as a substitute to this argument, it was important to consider two factors: 1) that this school had a sizable range of works commissioned in this region to address it as a provincial school, and 2) the range should also have an indigenous painterly style affiliated with this school. Alongside these major concerns there were relevant issues addressed in the study such as: if the paintings were a minor offshoot of the popular 'Rajput styles or a continuation of the 'Gujarati' style? Who were the patrons, and artists of this art tradition? What inspired this tradition and how did it sustain for a hundred and fifty years? What led to the decline of this tradition? Why and how did these lesser-known collections move out of Kutch? Are the reasons similar to the other popular schools across India? or does Kutch have a different story to narrate? Today what is the significance of these paintings, in the pan-Indian context?

In order to narrow down to a convincing answer, an extensive survey was carried out in the six different peripheries of this study, which also formed the core chapters of this research. 1) A Geo-political Survey of Kutch, 2) Literature Review, 3) Cataloging of Relevant and Unpublished material 4) Tracing the Artist, 5) An Enquiry into its Patrons, and 6) Reviewing the Centre- Peripheral Relation of Kutch.

### **Summary of the Six Chapters:**

#### **Chapter 1: The Geo-political survey of Kutch:**

This chapter focuses on understanding the political position of Kutch with its contemporary and principal rulers. It is largely observed that Kutch celebrated special independence throughout its political history as compared to the rest of Gujarat, especially since the rise of Samma Rajputs in Kutch till it got integrated into the Union of India. Incidences are narrated in this chapter on how it negotiated with its political independence in administrations, by offering mutual benefits to Sultanates and Mughals. Offers using the port benefit, such as free passage to pilgrims to Mecca and support in international trade by giving

the advantage of its well-established commercial ports. Similarly, even with the British, it could negotiate their political independence over a mutual agreement that Kutch ports be made 'Free Zone' for British vessels and vice-versa. Hence from 1550's we start seeing that this distant isolated land, starts improving its peripheral relation with its inlanders. As we are certain that the impulse to paint came from the outside this Geo-political understanding helped in forming the base for further study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Literature published by scholars previously has proved significant in many ways, especially the book, 'The Place Apart- Painting of Kutch' for two reasons: 1) It got published at a time when even the people of Kutch had completely forgotten of this painting tradition. 2) The publication brought to light the group of paintings that reached Germany, which is now sold to private collectors. So, if not for this publication the collection would have never come to the sight of Indian readers. 3) The sets of 'Landscape painting' discussed in the publication are indigenous to this tradition, and such material is so far not found in Indian archives. This Landscape paintings also proved crucial to understanding the development phases of this regional tradition, hence this phase is elaborated on in detail in this chapter. Further, the critical views held by other contemporary scholars on the publication gave further impetus to the current research on the ambiguity of calling this tradition a provincial school and the need to do a holistic study, especially using the works still displayed at the Aaina Mehal palace which show a strong eighteenth-century European influence. Studying monographs, articles and notes contributed by other scholar's like- Ramsinghji Rathod, U.P Shah, Stuart Welch Cary, Mildred Archer, J.P Losty, and MacLennan gave lead to source visual materials now scattered among private collectors and Archives. These monographs also helped realize that a vast range of visuals are available from this region and is time once again to rewrite its history bringing it together.

## **Chapter-3**

This chapter forms the core of the research, and has two broad sections: Sections-I) Cataloging of Relevant and Unpublished material, and Section-II) Understanding the stylistic affiliation of this painting tradition.

### Section I- Cataloging of Relevant and Unpublished material

A) Portrait and Durbar paintings of the Maharaos of Kutch: this section catalogues portraiture and Durbar paintings of the Maharaos and their nobles at the court of Kutch. The paintings are not in large numbers that can define a stylistic discourse but they certainly have historical significance, which adds 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 initial few decades that is Rao Desal-I and Rao Desal's reign have their unique draftsmanship quality, which clearly deteriorates in the late eighteenth century.

B) The Vaishnava painting section deals with three different sets of materials. One is a set of twenty-seven miniature paintings depicting Balkanda of Ramayana. The second is a dated and illustrated manuscript of Avatar Gita originally composed by Bhakti kavi Narharidas. Third, are some loose folios of Krishna-Balaram which is assumed to have been painted in Kutch. Amongst the three, the set of Ramayana paintings is significant to understand the stylistic affinity of this school as it has even element which defines the indigenous quality of a Kutch Provincial style. Avatar Gita manuscript is the next crucial text to understand the painting and literary contribution of this regions, as it is a voluminous and illustrated manuscript, which also gives a significant information that the book was compiled at Bhujnagar, dated 1801. Infact it is interesting to note how such a volumes compilation is being carried out in Kutch even during financial and political chaos.

C) Ethnographic studies of Company period paintings were an exciting section for documentation as they grew into large numbers. Today these documents are preliminary records to understand the different races of Kutch and understand their costumes and customs. Although, for the catalogue only the absolutely unpublished set of 12 paintings from Kutch Museum, Bhuj collection is considered. Nevertheless, the Appendix at the end has more works to see the larger range of works produced during the nineteenth century by native artist.

D) Festivals scrolls: This section more than the subject it is the format that has brought together the works of art together, which were scrolls. These scroll paintings are elaborate documentation of the procession scenes of Nagapanchami and Muharram held in the city of Bhuj. The painting of both these festivals is a few of the records of Kutch which stand as

testimony from the past and demonstrate the enthusiasm amongst local communities to participate in a social event.

## Section-II) Stylistic Observations

This section collates the stylistic analysis of Kutch paintings over a hundred and fifty years, starting from the early 1740s to the end of the 1900s. It is observed that there has been a continuous patronage of paintings in the provenance of Kutch, supported by the Raos of Kutch. But when one stylistically defines the school, there are a lot of ambiguity in the styles. But interestingly this multi-lingual stylistic idiom is what makes Kutch school unique from the other provincial schools. Based on the range to visuals selected for study, we could broadly classify the stylistic affiliations of this school into three broad groups as listed below and they are further sub-classified into varied styles ranging from Style-A to E.

- 1) Paintings at the onset of this tradition – Most sophisticated Durbar paintings (1740-1760)
- 2) Development of Indigenous styles - (1760-1820)
- 3) Stylistic Departures- Impact of Academic understanding- (1825- late 1800s)

### Paintings at the onset of this tradition – Most sophisticated Durbar paintings (1740-1800)

**Style A:** We see from Rao Desal I's reign there is a sudden acquaintance with court paintings tradition, and the works produced at the onset of this traditional impulse were some of the most sophisticated works. Large size durbar paintings and portraiture that we would even doubt if it must have been by a local artist. At the same time, they are indeed unique compositions to this region's cultural documentation. All qualities of a good portrait- flawless elegant lines, the delicacy of touch, the defined facial contours, and modelling 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. The embellishment of tiny pearls, semi-precious stones, and the use of gold all enhance the aesthetic quality in these paintings. Such works are seen from Rao Desal's reign till Rao Godh's early reign.

### Development of Indigenous styles: from 1760-1820.

From 1760 a large number of stylistic overlaps are seen in the works produced at Kutch owing to the number of artists who must have joined to work at the court. Some may be seen as works by a trained artist while many other an autodidactic attempt, when the artist are learning by observing. Briefed below are the stylistic idioms that developed during this phase strictly based on the range of material available to study.

**Style B-** Darbar paintings: From the reign of Rao Godh-II, that is 1760's we start observing a variation in the compositional quality of the Darbar paintings. They are indeed unique composition but with simpler modelling skills. Sometimes the format is horizontal like a manuscript layout. And the colours change to mellowed down tones and there is indeed a large use of a sky-blue background. One, no longer see the Mughal/Rajput green background which we observe in the early phase. And the size of these portraits has reduced to a fairly small size. It appears for certain that these are works of a native artist, who were trained to composed miniatures. And the last of this quality is seen till Rao Prithviraj's period till around 1800. However, during Rao Rayadhan's reign the works turn highly dexterous and there is a contrast use of strong colors combinations. In total the stylistically the quality of this phase looks compromised over the sophisticated early phase, yet they are uncompromised attempts made by the native artist of this region.

**Style C-** The next obvious phase is also the most discussed phase, which is the autodidactic phase, when native artist learned the art of painting by copying a large number of European prints and slowly acquired the requisite knowledge to drawing perspectives and shades. In no time these artist started documenting their surroundings and nearby landscapes which are works addressed in the publication 'A Place Apart'. Eventually these artists experimented further by blending these landscape works with religious narratives which gives us the beautifully composed Ramayana paintings indigenous to the styles in Kutch. At one glance we do see some Mewar influence in the rendering of figures, but they largely drift away from there to be placed to the city of Bhuj.

**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. 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 the non-Jain illustrated manuscripts done during the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

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

**Style E-** 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, recession, using advanced mediums, and who produced art to cater to English men. Unlike other regions where Company school works have a strong influence of 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 from what they were painting a few years prior. 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.

#### **Chapter 4-Tracing the contributors of this tradition: The Artist**

Based on the quality of the draftsmanship of an artist we could narrow down to the following observation. The large size highly sophisticated quality of paintings that we see in the early phase at the court are works of a Master painter who were invited to paint portraiture of Rao Desal I and Rao Lakhat. The selection of themes, the uniqueness in the composition and the quality of draftsmanship suggest that the works could be of none other than the Mughal trained portraiture Dalchand, who worked at the Rajput court from c.1724-1760, initially for Jodhpur court and later Kishangarh. This is being stated not on the bases of an inscriptional reference or any other written record but strictly on the basis of reading the draftsmanship quality of the painting. Further factors that supported this assumption is, 1) Rao Desal I had extended a matrimonial alliance with Ramsingh, son of Maharaja Abhai

Singh of Jodhpur who was appointed as a Subahdar of Gujarat from 1730 to 1738, and 2) Raj kavi Hamirdan Ratnau of Jodhpur was young Lakhpat's Master and friend who introduced Shri Kanaka Kaushalji of Kishangarh to Lakhpat. Who then head the institute of Braj Bhasha Institute at Bhuj. So here there is a possibility of acquaintance that the Master artist could have trained the native artist the art of miniature painting. With regard to Kamangar community as painters of Kutch, we still have no clear evidences to negate otherwise. Infact every observation further points to the fact that the Kamangars must have contribution largely to the painting tradition. Moreover, they are addressed as finely skilled craftsmen who has the readiness to adapt to an alternated art practice. However, the illustration that we see in the religious manuscripts with Vaishnav theme has a strong sense of Bhakti bhava which only a Hindu artist could have produced.

## **Chapter 5: Critical inquiry into one of the important Concerns: The Patronage**

We may broadly assume that the potential class of people who could support the art of painting in Kutch were the Royals, Merchants & British. But this chapter further clarifies the role of Connoisseurs in the development and sustenance of this art in the province of Kutch. We could affirmatively state that the art of painting penetrated into the court tradition during Rao Desal's period, and it grew into a provincial school because of Rao Lakhpat's patronage. Mirza Maharao Lakhpat struck by the flamboyant lifestyles of the Rajputs traditions was anxious and impatient to come to power, and when he came to power, he changed the cultural history of Kutch itself. As an amateur patron, he was not very rigid with his clients' innovative ideas but rather embraced every form of art as a creative production. He hired Ramsingh Malam- the navigator, architect, and craftsman, to supervise the school of enamel work, watch and clock making, glass and delftware tile factory, gun casting, iron foundry, and cannon making factories. While Raj Bhattnarak Shri Kanaka Kaushal was largely involved in literary activity. The city grew to become one of the greatest centres of art in Gujarat, and Rao its greatest patron. This sudden upsurge in the patronage of art and culture in the region opened new prospects to islanders that artisans and craftsmen from nearby provenance who started immigrating to this land. 1880 Gazetteers recorded that more than 20,000 artisans reside in Bhuj whose ancestors are said to have migrated during Rao Lakhpatjis reign. Such a great patron of kutch reigned for 25 years and with his demise begins the matter of sustenance of these industrial set up. However, the art of enameling, and the Braj Bhasha institute continue to survive for the next hundred and fifty years. And

under the larger umbrella of Braj Bhasha Institute even the art of paintings survive because of the involvement of Raj Bhattnarak, Jain yati Shri Kanaka Kaushal. If we look back in time, from around eleventh to sixteenth century, Jain Acharyas of Gujarat and western India were involved in Sanskrit learning, manuscript writing and commissioning of paintings illustrating diverse range of thematic text, taking financial support from ministers, intellectuals and businessmen. A similar attempt is seen here by Jain Yati Kanaka Kushal. He was the head of Braj bhasha Institute and it appears somehow that he could convince the Jagir of Roha who was one of the Barabhayat to sponsor the funding of the institute. Stylistically also it is around this period that most of the indigenous styles develop at the court. Concurrently, the Merchants and wealthy business-men rose to become the next affluent to support this art practice in Kutch. But they were predominantly inspired by the tradition of frescos making. And as a large range of painting were on Vaishnava theme, we may for certain state that their inspiration came from pilgrim centres of Nathdwara. Based on facts put together in the current research we are certain that after the Treaty of Alliance was signed between East India Company and Kutch Raos, early in the nineteenth century, a great impact was put on the painting tradition of Kutch. The coming and going of English men gave fresh hopes to the native artist that they continued to survive in their profession by making paintings for the Englishmen. The cities' most enthusiasts' British patrons were agents: Captain Mac Murdo and Stanley Napier Rakies and few others were the English Guests Mr. and Mrs. Postans, Dr. Hendry Pittman, Mr. and Mrs Thomas Chase Parr.

## **Chapter 6: Reviewing the Centre-Peripheral Relation of Kutch**

This chapter defines Kutch as a periphery in relation to its cultural centres. It has been observed that Kutch remained distant from the rest of Gujarat for a very long time. It not only remained at the extreme west of the country but also remained aloof from the mainland due to its unique topographical feature- of salt-encrusted wasteland- the Rann. Its history reveals that from early civilization to the recent past, the people of Kutch always looked for substances in the sea than the land for its sustenance. For this reason, the land remotely operated without having to engage with the mainland, and for century's together Kutchi pilots and merchants celebrated their partnership with the outside land especially Zanzibar, Arabia, the Gulf, and the peninsulas across India. Nevertheless, from the 1500's inland interpolation between Kutch court and the imperial courts increased, and the Raos realized the need to establish a close affiliation with the inlanders. By mid-eighteenth century with



the frequent visits of Maharaos from the Rajput courts as Mughal appointed Subahdar, the Raos of Kutch realized the need for his land to improve as a cultural centre. To Mirza Rao Lakhpat's good fortune, the great treasury of his father helped him become one of the greatest patrons of art known in the history of Kutch. He setup unique factories and instituted Pathashalas to encourage creative productions. This sudden momentum and progress poured in a large number of people to look for a promising future under the Raos. Alongside Rao, even the affluent merchant class by now was making a statement in society by commissioning paintings in their residences. But unfortunately, patronage and investment could not survive beyond a hundred and fifty years. Many artists moved out for better prospects, and to make situation worse the land was hit by a severe earthquake in 1819, followed by famine in the year 1823, 1825, and 1832 causing severe damage to people's property.

Another factor that largely effected the population of Kutch was the rapid growth of Mumbai as the new center in the second half of the nineteenth century. The city of Bombay was proving to be a promising land to look for a good living. A weaving and spinning company were established in the year 1854. Large textile industries grew up in and around the city of Bombay. The Bombay shipping and Iron shipping companies started in 1863 to make Indian merchants free from the British. It had many additional facilities which a modern city could offer like higher education, rail connectivity, water, and electricity facility. It is obvious that the adventurous businessmen of this land now moved to bigger cities or abroad for better opulence changing the socio-economic structure of the people residing in this area. The next major shift happened another fifty years later, with the impact of the Indo-Pakistan conflict, which resulted in the migration of a large number of Muslim populations. Of our familiarity, the Kamangar communities also move out during this period. As capitalism and culture cannot escape each other, along with the out-migration of its people in large numbers, the city lost its cultural charms. A relational impact of all of these factors has directly affected the painting tradition in Kutch.