

Paintings of Kutch – A New Documentation

(A Study on the Stylistic Development of Paintings in Kutch during the
Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century)

ABSTRACT

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Introduction

It is never a matter of surprise to read the uncertainty expressed by historians, whether Kutch had an independent school of miniature painting or not. But every time a new set of painting surface out, the doubt takes another step toward surety that it did have an independent impulse supported by Royal and some affluent local patrons.

The present study titled, 'New Documentation of Paintings from Kutch', brings to light relevant and more recently discovered paintings of Kutch that are unpublished among the concerned readers. In my belief, the lack of proper attention given to such provincial style is the reason why paintings done in such region are still overshadowed by the prolific research otherwise carried out in the prominent schools of Indian miniature paintings. Certainly, these paintings do not have a very long historical base like the popular Rajput traditions, but they are not a negligible quantity either, that we could completely overlook. Be it the Kamangari frescos or the ones done on paper the surviving evidence proves that the tradition lasted for a brief period of a hundred and fifty years, roughly from the downfall of the Mughal Empire to the establishment of the British Raj in India. Nevertheless, to narrow down to these conclusions it was important to trace the whys and where force of this artistic impulse in the western most district of India.

The primary interest of the present research is three-fold. 1) To bring to light the lesser-known paintings specific to Kutch regions. 2) to define its stylistic affiliation, and 3) to attempt to remove the ambiguity in the area of study. Alongside critical cataloguing, the research also emphasizes on raising some of the relevant issues pertaining to the study- such as: Whether Kutch paintings were a minor off-shoot of a prominent schools or a provincial school? Who were its patrons and artist? 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 these lesser-known collections moved 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?

Hypothesis of the Thesis

The research emphasized 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. The research broadly speculates that this provenance was a promising centre for painting activity in Gujarat during the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

The Land of Kutch and its Politics

Kutch has remained distant from the rest of India 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. It is one of the largest districts in the state of Gujarat, but unlike Gujarat which is an agrarian land, Kutch owns only a small portion of cultivable land. Its ancient inhabitants were the Ahir communities and tribes who were predominantly into cattle rearing and small irrigation. Interestingly, the wild-asses survived in this small vegetation, and so did the migratory birds (flamingoes) who enjoyed the salt-marshland. Geographically, this arid land is placed within the seismic tract of India. This means structurally this land is weak and under constant tension and compression. This causes frequent tremors on the land, resulting in further distribution of population and ruined settlements. But over time, they rebuilt to survive once again. The greater benefit the people see in this land against such odd terrain is undoubtedly a long stretch of coastal line, which connects with the world outside rather than the inside. This gives Kutch a unique structure that differs from the rest of Gujarat. History from time and again, starting from early civilization to the recent past, reveals that the people of Kutch always looked for substances in the sea than the land.

Such a land became home to Samma Rajputs (Hindu rulers of Sindh) who were forced to move out of Sindh when Khilji dynasty was annexing the western territories from the ninth century. By the tenth century, a significant area was under their control and by the fourteenth century they started establishing their supremacy in the regions of Kutch. These Samma Rajputs in Kutch, re-

identified their dynasty as the Jadeja clan of Rajputs, and ever since then it was the Samma-Jadeja Rajputs who established their rule over Kutch till it got integrated into the Union of India. Even under the Jadeja Rajputs 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 with the peninsulas across India.

Nevertheless incidences are noted when from 1500's when the inland favours with the imperial courts increased, and the Raos realized the need to establish a close affiliation with the inlanders. One most frequently narrated event dates back to the Gujarat Sultanate time, around the sixteenth century. This very incident also narrates how the present clan of rulers gets the title 'Rao' from the Sultan of Gujarat. In about 1550's there was an internal rivalry between the Jadeja brothers- Jam Hamir and Jam Raval, which broke into a major fight. Jam Raval defeated Jam Hamir, whereupon Hamir's four sons had to take refuge in Ahmedabad. During their stranded stay in the city, Khengar, the second son of Jam Hamir showed bravery before Sultan Mahmud Begada by killing a tiger in a fight. Impressed by the valor of the fourteen-year-old boy, the Sultan in appreciation handed over the territory of Morvi within his dominions and conferred him the title of 'Rao'. As Rao Khengar was outraged by his uncle Jam Raval's ill-treatment of his family. He used Morvi as the base for operations to avenge his father's death and recovered his possessions over Kutch. Since then it was Rao Khengar's clan who rules over Kutch, and Jam Raval's clan who moves to rule Saurashtra after negotiation. Soon after this incident Rao Khengar makes Bhuj his new Capital and establishes a 'Bhayat system' of administration. The 'Bhayat system' consisted of the descendent of the royal family who would own and govern a domain allocated to them, and occasionally report to the Rao at his court. Henceforth, Rao remained an independent ruler within the Gujarat Sultanate, by establishing a friendly relationship with the Sultans. As against the exclusion of tax tribute, an offer of 5000 horses was presented to the Sultans.

Impressed by the Sultanate city of Ahmedabad, where Khengar spent his formative years, he tried to re-establish a similar potential town in Kutch. He realized that the towns of Anjar and Bhuj could become such potential centres and hence improved their infrastructure, crafts, and agriculture. To improve its trade, around 1580's, he laid the foundation stones for the port of Rayanpur. His amiable relations with the rulers of Sindh, especially when he extended his offer to assist Gazikhan, a prince of Sindh, rewarded him the land in Sindh extending up to 'Rahim ki

Bazaar'. In the year 1585, Rao Khengar-I died at an advanced age, having established an independent kingdom in Kutch. Peace and tranquillity was ensured by the Sultans of Gujarat and Rao Khengar-I was succeeded by his son Rao Bharmal in 1585. The succession of position according to the primogeniture since then are listed below for further reference:

Names of the Raos	Period of Reign
Rao Khengar I	1548- 1585 CE
Rao Bharmal I	1585-1631 CE
Rao Bhojraj	1631-1645 CE
Rao Khengar II	1645-1654 CE
Rao Tamachi	1654-1665 CE
Rao Raydhan	1665-1697 CE
Rao Pragmal I	1697-1715 CE
Rao Godh I	1715- 1718 CE
Rao Desal I	1718- 1752 CE
Mirza Rao Lakhpat	1741-r.1752- 1760 CE
Rao Godh II	1760-1778 CE
Rao Raydhan III	1778-1786 CE 1801-1813 CE
Rao Prithviraj	1786-1801 CE
Rao Bharmal II	1814-1819 CE
Rao Desal II	1819-1860 CE
Rao Pragmal II	1860-1875 CE
Rao Khengar III	1875-1942 CE
Rao Vijayraj	1942-1948 CE

Rao Khengar-I was succeeded by his son Rao Bharmal-I who ruled till 1631. His reign saw the general administration of Gujarat pass from the Sultans to the rule of Mughals Emperors at Delhi. Emperor Akbar had appointed Mirza Aziz Kokah as the Governor of Gujarat at

Ahmedabad. But unlike the rest of Gujarat, who were resisting and rebelling against the Mughals, the Rao's established a discreet political position. Infact there are many incidences noted when the Rao makes fair donations to impress the Emperor, and in return gains political independence in administrations. One such incident is noted during Rao Bharmal's (1585-1631) reign when Emperor Jahangir visited Ahmedabad, in 1617. During this time Rao Bharmal paid his respect to him by presenting him with 100 Kutchi horses, 100 Ashrafis and 2000 koris. Impressed by his fair contribution, the Emperor in return gave Rao his own horse, a male and female elephant, a dagger, a sword with diamond studded hilt, and four rings. Jahangir further exempted Rao from the annual tax contributions, with the friendly interest to allow free passage to pilgrims to Mecca, and use its port for navigation. Jahangir also permitted him to mint and use his independent coins in Kutch. Around 1592, during Rao Bharmal's reign, Subahdar Mirza Aziz Kokah, foster brother of Akbar, seems to have visited Mecca using the Kutch port facility.

Rao Bhojraj (r.1631-1645) and Rao Khengar II (r.1645-1654) reign continued to celebrate the independence even when Emperor Shah Jahan (1628-1657) came to power at Delhi, and was aggressively expanding his territories in Southern Gujarat. In no time Emperor appointed his son Aurangzeb as Mughal governor of Ahmedabad for a brief period of three years. Followed by Dara Shikoh in 1648 and later prince Murad Baksh around 1654. The political stability with the Governors at Ahmedabad reflected a steady economic growth of the Kutch state, and hence trade flourished.

Rao Tamachi reign (r.1654-1662) saw the crowning of Mughal rule across Indian subcontinent under the headship of Aurangzeb. Murad Baksh allied himself with Aurangzeb and proclaimed himself to full power at Ahmedabad. In the meanwhile Dara Shikho retreated from Agra to Delhi, and then to Lahore. Dara Shikho's next destination was Multan and Tatta (Sindh). From Sindh he crossed the Rann and took shelter under the Rao in a garden house known as Darawadi. But when asked for help to fight the Emperor, the Rao expressed his inability to help him with such a large force. At the same time, Shah Nawaz Khan was appointed Governor of Gujarat, at Surat, and he opened his treasury to Dara Shikoh to raise a new army against Aurangzeb which was also supported by Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Mewar. Unfortunately, all efforts failed before the accomplished Emperor Aurangzeb.

Rao Raydhan-I's (1662-1697) reign saw the infiltration of the Maratha rulers into the lands of Gujarat. In 1661 Aurangzeb replaced Inayat Khan as commander for Surat, who fought the battle of Surat with the Marathas which was led by Chattrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Meanwhile, the Mughals who were desperately in need of funds started sending their representative to collect revenue from Kutch. Qutb-ud-din Mohamad Azam Shah, the third son of Aurangzeb, was appointed *Subehdar* of Gujarat and he sent Haider Quli Khan the Viceroy of Gujarat expressing his interest in collecting revenue from Kutch. In disagreement few expeditions were made by the Mughal army on Bhuj, but finally settled by the earlier agreement under which Kutch tribute was remitted. Saint (Oliya), Shah Murad from Bukhara, who then resided in Mundra, was instrumental in bringing about a peaceful solution to the impending war which was to take place between Rao Raydhan and Mauzzim Beg.

First half of the eighteenth century, i.e. from the rule of Rao Godh-I (1715-1718) to Rao Desal-I (1718-1752), saw the withdrawal of the Mughals Empire and the territorial expansion of Marathas in Gujarat. By Rao Desal's reign, the Dabhade clan of Marathas, led by Khanderao Dabade had occupied several territories in Gujarat and laid the foundation for Maratha power at Vadodara. This was also the time when Rao Desal had to frequently face imperial forces by the Mughal Viceroys to collect revenue- once under Muazzim Beg commandership and another time under Nawab Kesar Khan. Nevertheless, with the individual capacity of minister Devkaran, Kutch stood united and fought against all forces. As the Marathas were significantly interested in land-based territorial expanse, Kutch which was at the extreme west was not a major threat as much as the Mughals were. Hence during this period, the Kutch rulers could continue to celebrate their independent rule and improve upon their administrative policies which proved conducive to the prosperity of the region. During Rao Godh's time, the lands of Mundra, Kanthi, and Anjar were added to the reign which brought in an important increase in revenue. Towards the mid of the eighteenth century due to the incursion of Gaekwads and Peshwas in the Mughal territory many of the Viceroys and officers sent by the Mughals were frequented by royals from Marwad courts. In the year 1752 Rao Desal I's reign came to an end along with the end of Mughal rule in Gujarat. The same year Ahmedabad- the capital of Mughal in Gujarat fell into the hands of the Marathas.

It is interesting to note that Rao's discreet and friendly political stand remained even as the Mughals lost their complete power in Gujarat, that in 1757 Rao Lakhpat (1752-1760) presented Emperor Alamgir II with some Kutchi horses and bullocks, and in return received the title of 'Mirza' and in gift, the Mahi Maratib. This insignia of Mahi Maratib is preserved, at Aaina Mehal Palace Museum, even to this day as memorabilia of Rao's good relation with Mughal rulers. Rao's diplomatic stand with the Marathas is also certain as the following year Rao planned an expedition against Tatta, Sindh, and was promised help both from Peshwa and the Gaekwad, but no active step seems to have been taken.

Rao Godh-II's (1760-1778) reign was a period when more than the Marathas, Sindh was advancing to strengthen their hold on Kutch, taking advantage of the political scenario. This time the Afghan army of the Kalhora clan from Sindh, who was since long looking for a chance to meddle in Kutch affairs, took interest. In 1762, Gulam Shah Kalhora, taking into confidence one of Rao's ex-minister Punja raised an army of 70,000 men, and made a major expedition from Sindh. This Battle of Jara was followed by an attack and plunder on Tera village, burning the residences into losses and many thousand slain. Gulam Shah's Army retired from Kutch on the condition that a matrimonial alliance with Kutch be built by taking in marriage Rao's sister. Although this matrimonial alliance was later compromised and settled by giving the daughter of Khakhar, a near kinsman of Rao. As against this insult Gulam Shah build a dam at Ali Bandar across the Kori mouth of the Indus, resulting in a loss that cost more than a war with Kutch.

In the next three decades, under the rule of Rao Raydhan (1778-1813) and his brother Rao Prithviraj the administration of Kutch went from bad to worse. The condition was so bad that the council of Barabhayat led by Fateh Muhamad turned to take help from the British Government. Kutch ruled autonomous during the Mughal and Maratha administrations, that it continued to celebrate its independence even when East India Company was expanding and gaining control over western India after the Anglo-Maratha war. The Company exercised its power across regions of Gujarat by embarking a policy of offering Subsidiary Alliances to the state. Such a Treaty of Alliance was signed between East India Company and Kutch, after Rao Bharmal's reign. Although a special status of independence to rule, was guaranteed by Presidency at a maintenance cost. The major British intervention happened when the Council of Regency initiated their support by assisting minor Rao Desal II (r,1819-1860), as against the

vacant throne, and looked after parts of administration in the state. In one such treaties, Rao's claim on Navanagar was lost. But this benefited further security with Kutch borders, from conflicting invasion from eastern Gujarat. The next major interventions were of a mutual administrative benefit, like eliminating piracy, preserve and protect Mandvi port in peace and tranquillity. Although in relation, it had restricted the import and storage of arms and military in the territory from foreign vessels. The most strategic agreement was signed when the Kutch ports were made a 'Free Zone' for British vessels, and British port to Kutch vessels. Apart from political and economic benefits, there were social concerns that the Agents improved, by eliminating ill practices like female infanticide, sati and suppress slave trade in this region. Hence inspite of being a prominent princely state under the Bombay Presidency they were not directly governed by the British officers but a political agent would be sent to manage the state administration.

Rao Desal's II (1819-1860) reign was the beginning of British engagement in the administration of Kutch. Capitan Mac Murdo was the first Political Agent who was sent to Kutch from Bombay to head the council of regency. This period saw Kutch suffer from natural calamities and invasions from Sindh. The land was hit by a severe earthquake in 1819, followed by famine in the year 1823, 1825, and 1832 causing damage. Taking advantage of this situation, even the Maraudin band from Sindh, headed by Kesar Khan and Sher Buland Khan invaded. But Kutch remained stable under the efficient rule of Rao Desal. With the suppression of pirates in the sea even maritime trade with Africa, Omen and Zanzibar improved resulting in increased revenue. Slowly the industrialization of Kutch started to set in moving towards a modern time frame. From Rao Desal-II reign, Kutch enters a modern period of administrative functioning.

Rao Pragmal-II (1860-1875) was a wise and benevolent ruler. According to Rushbook Willams, his reign saw tranquillity in common with the rest of India. During the fifteen years of his reign he showed great enthusiasm for improving the social and economic management of the state. Shops of subsidized rates were open for the public to alleviate the distress of the famine affected. For the first time in the history of Kutch non-kutchies were appointed as ministers and officials to improve the administrative and judicial functioning of this land trade, commerce, and agriculture were encouraged for the prosperity of Kutch. He also set up a system of formal education. The first high school of Bhuj named the Alfred High school was built by

Rao in 1870. Grants were given to promising students who wished to study outside. Financial assistance was given to build libraries in Bhuj Mandvi and Mundra. He was also a great builder. Work for Pragmehal palace designed by Colonel Henry Clair Wilkins began during his reign. Development of Mundra port and harbor work at Mandvi is attributed to him. He built roads and hospitals. An estimated expenditure of Rs 8 lakhs was sanctioned by Rao in 1875 for the construction of the Prince of Wales Breakwater.¹

Rao Khengar-III's (1875- 1942) reign marks importance as the regency council was dissolved by the British Government. Apart from maintaining an already-established system, he also initiated new aspects. He took great interest in improving the water storage system of Kutch. Encouraged girls' education. Opened Art school for stimulating the importance of ancient handicrafts and traditional industries. Built a port at Kandla. In a nutshell Khengarji and Rao Vijayaraj (1942-1948) succeeded to throw celebrated a centralized authority over the land. Literally and figuratively Kutch had entered a modern phase. In every sphere under administration- be it police, reduction of dacoits and raids, safeguarding the borders between Sindh and Kutch, improving the judiciary system, revenue, social reforms, education and medical facility every facility resulted in the welfare of its people. In no time like the rest of India's princely states even Kutch got integrated into the Union of India.

Paintings of Kutch

Amidst this political scenario the art of painting developed in the courts of Kutch and sustained for a hundred and fifty years. Today the people of Kutch have a faint memory of having seen "Kamangari paintings" – a popular term for frescoes done on the walls of Kutch residences during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But it comes as a pleasant surprise to know that these frescoes were part of a larger traditional impulse that began in the Courts of Kutch during the eighteenth century. But unfortunately, both these art forms are fast getting lost from people minds that its time to regale the efforts made by its patron and artist. Although what inspires the present study are the works executed on paper, and certain parts of the study discusses about the frescoes as the former must have had an impact on the latter.

¹ Patel G.D., 1971, *Op.cit*, Pp. 336.

In the present monograph an attempt has been made in every possible way to incorporate a wide range of scattered materials, group them into thematic sets, and weave a common thread within these materials. The selection of visuals was not restricted to the stylistic affiliation which we call the '*kalam*', but rather the focus was to bring together paintings made in Kutch by the local artist. For the ease of handling a wide range of materials they have been broadly classified into four broad thematic ranges such as: A) Portrait and Durbar paintings of the Maharaos of Kutch, B) Vaishnava paintings C) Ethnographic studies, of the Company period, and D) Festivals scrolls. The concluding note to this chapter discusses at length the revised stylistic development of Paintings in Kutch during the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

A) Portrait and Durbar paintings of the Maharaos of Kutch: this section in the thesis catalogues portraiture and Durbar paintings of the Maharaos and their nobles at the court of Kutch. One of the earliest painting in the present document begins from Rao Desal's reign (r. 1718-1741). Followed by Rao Lakhpatri (1741-r.1752-1760), Rao Godh, (r. 1741-1760-1778), Rao Raydhan III, (b.1763- 1813, and r. 1778-1786, restored again 1801-1813, and Rao Prithviraj, (r. 1786-1801). From Desal II's reign Kutch enters the modern phase under the British influence. All of these paintings are not in large numbers that can define a stylistic discourse of this school 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 from Rao Desal-I till Rao Godh'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 Bhagavata Purana 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

ingenious 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 Bhuj-nagar, dated 1801. Infact it is being made in times when the financial and political condition of Kutch court was in great 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, a visual glossary of more works are attached towards the end to see the larger range of works produced during the nineteenth century by native artist.

D) Festivals scrolls: In this section more than the subject it is the format that has brought together the works of art in this group together. These 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.

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 define the school, there are a lot of ambiguity in the styles. But interestingly these 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 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 others an autodidactic attempt, when the artist is 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 have reduced to a fairly

small sizes. 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 artist 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 were continuously improving on their understanding of painting through experimentation. In this phase the artist are 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 19th 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 artist 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 contrast 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.

The Patrons of Art in Kutch

We are certain that the tradition of painting miniatures developed in the Royal courts, during Rao Desal-I's period, as he frequently appears in portraits and durbar paintings of Kutch. However, it is Maharao Lakhpat- who is considered to be one of the greatest patrons to promote art in Kutch, a status no ruler is set to have achieved. The city of Bhuj in the nineteenth century was acknowledged as a place where more than thousands of artists and artisans resided, whose ancestors were credited to have settled during the reign of Rao Lakhpat. Trade was in full-fledged motion during his time and the revenue recovery was progressing, more than any other ruler of his dynasty could collect. At the age of thirty-five, Lakhpat imprisons his father Rao Desal and ceased the wealth of 1 Cr. Rupees which were in his treasury. This wealth facilitated him to become the greatest patron of art in the history of Kutch.

As we all know, having great wealth and spending them on art does not make one a great patron. Great patrons need to be even greater connoisseurs, to get acknowledged as a patron of art, and be remembered in history. Two such personalities who made Rao an art benefactor were, 1) Ramsingh Malam- the navigator, architect, and craftsman, and 2) Jain Yati Kanaka Kaushalji who helped him to set up the Braj bhasha institute in Bhuj.

Ramsingh Malam's service under Rao Lakhpatt is proved to be one of the finest decisions in the field of Kutch arts. Ramsingh was a Gujarati navigator from the Saurashtra region, who at a very young age got wrecked on a sea voyage. He was then rescued by a Dutch ship which took him to Holland. In Holland, he served at many factories and learned several European arts and crafts, the knowledge which he carried back to his hometown. But unfortunately, his creative ideas to set up such workshops in India were not considered in his hometown. At the same time, Kutch Rao took great interest in his ideas and absorbed him into the court of Kutch.

Rao gave him a workshop in the palace and founded a school of enamel work. This school summoned the best goldsmiths and silversmiths to teach and improve their art of enamelling, which Ramsingh learned at Holland. This art was a court luxury that remained popular for more than a century but declined in later years due to the lack of patronage. Ramsingh was also sent to Europe twice, to perfect his knowledge of glass making and iron foundry. During his second visit, he also took with him several Kutchi apprentices for higher instructions in Europe. They returned enhanced with many skills, which helped in setting up a tile and glass factory near Mandvi. Watches and clocks on European models were also made in Kutch. Gun casting and iron foundry were established which turned in excellent production of cannons and Ramsingh supervised all these activities.

Apart from founding and setting up all these factories he also contributed to Kutch architecture. The finest of his contribution is the Aaina Mehal- hall of mirrors, designed and executed by Ramsingh around 1750. This structure is part of the earlier dated palace complex, which is built using stones like the traditional Indian palace, but its interiors were decorated in an Indo-European taste, and its walls are of white marble covered with mirrors supported by gilded ornaments. The floors are laid using delftware tiles, which were popular among royal and wealthy European residences during the 18th century. The hall was illuminated by elaborate pendant candelabra, and shades of Venetian glasses. Most of which were brought to Bhuj by Ramsingh himself. The building reflects the genius of design, art, and decoration, with a love for meticulous craftsmanship. Apart from this, even the Chhattardi (funerary monument) of Rao Desai and the successor ruler Rao Lakha, was designed by Ramsingh. He also decorated Rao Raydhan's Chhattardi and Aaina Mehal with Delft blue tiles. It appears Ramsingh continued to

serve at the palace during Rao Godh's reign. This increases the possibility that the copies of European prints (referred as 'nachgemalt') made in Kutch must have been of Rao Godh and Ramsingh's interest.

While Ramsingh was establishing and engaging fine arts and artists in the courts of Kutch, Jain Yati Kanaka Kaushalji, a scholar par excellence was associated with the development of learning in the court of Bhuj. He was a scholar from the Kishangarh Rajasthan (some reference says Marwad-Jodhpur region) and was installed as Bhattarak, to head the institute of Braj Bhasha at the court of Bhuj. He was a genius in Pingal composition. Along with the growing interest of Rao Lakhpat, Shree Kanaks Kaushal carried out the most significant work of setting up the Braj Bhasha Institute at Bhuj. Here the bards and charans could perfect their study of poetry. And such a literary activity was unique in Western India that students from a distant land would come to learn Braj bhasha in the court of Bhuj. As Lakhpat was himself a great poet, he often organized open recitals on poetry at the court, where the best composers were awarded prizes and allowed to study and develop their skills further at the court. This institution was so popular and well-established that it survived and continued to mentor students even after Rao Lakhpat's reign, some references state till when Indian gets integrated with the Union of India.

Kavi Kuvar Khushal and Kavi Kalyan Khuashal are a few of the popular names of students who got trained under Kanaka Kaushalji. Kavi Kuvar Khuashal continues to work at the court during the later reign whose popular compositions continue to appear between the years 1764-1821. Some of the popular titles are Pingalsharstra (S.V.1761), Pingal-hamir (S. 1765), Lakhpati-pingal (SV.1807, Patan archives), Godh-pingal (SV. 1821, Patan archives). *Lakhpatji manjri nammala* (Jaipur archives) is a text with 202 verses, of which 102 verses describe the history of the Jadeja clan and the following verses narrate Rao Lakhpat. This text was composed in two versions, one by the teacher and the second version by the student. *Parsaat namahmaala* (Jaipur archives) is a similar composition in the Farsi language by Kuvar Kaushalji. *Lakhpatji jas Sindhu*, *lakhpati swarga prapth samay*, *maharao lakhpati duvabedh*, and *maato no chand* (in dingal language) are a few other compositions of this school. Rao Lakhpat himself is credited with five major Braj Bhasha works, among them some are in a

technical style such as Suratatarangini and Rasa-sringara, and some in Hari bhakti vilasa, in addition to short poems in the Kutchi language. He owed this talent to his master and friend, the Rajakavi Hamirdan Ratnu of Jodhpur. For years to come it seems the Kavya-shala were placed within the palace complex, and a list from the time of Jivan Khushal (1876) records around 1100 manuscripts.

Although Lakhpatji's contribution and patronage of Braj Pathshala went elaborate in this section, it was important to realize the uncompromised patronage support this institute received even after Lakhpat's reign, and especially in time of political distress. We may assume that painters who worked at the court in portrait documentation could have also contributed into illustrating few of the manuscript mention above. It appears, if not for this institute even painters of Kutch could not have sustained for a long time in Kutch.

Rao Godh though not acknowledged as a patron of art in general history, the no of paintings of him indicates that he too must have continued the tradition of painting by employing artists in court, like his father. Rao Godh's time was more challenging as the royal treasury got exhausted, and he had to re-generate the revenue. In his early years, Rao Godh took interest in improving the situation by building ports and working towards public welfare but eventually wasted all revenue for his entertainment.

Three generations after Rao Godh- that is Rao Raydhanji, Rao Bharmalji, and Prithvijji are marked in the history of Kutch, as a phase of downfall. A decline in political conditions lined by inefficient rulers and debauched administrators.

Merchants and Wealthy Businessmen as Patrons of Art- The land of Kutch witnessed a sudden shift in the art trends during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries along with its flourishing trade, as the abundant wealth was immediately reflected in the cultural and social setup of the society. Apart from noblemen now even merchants and wealthy families took interest in endorsing the local artist and began to construct a social position of high prestige in society. But unlike the courtly styles of producing miniature paintings and portrait figures, the merchants were highly influenced by the trends they saw in their inland trade with their

profitable neighbouring states of Rajasthan. The vibrant frescos that adorned the Havelis and residential buildings, of the Merchants in Rajasthan must have inspired the affluent businessmen in Kutch who preferred their residences to be painted with vibrant frescoes. By the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the walls of residences of many influential people started to be fill with paintings of various themes, mostly depicting religious scenes if not decorative motifs inspired by nature.

It was then in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, when the **British** started signing treaties with the regency council, that the rise of a modern phase appeared in the administration. Treaty of Alliance was signed between East India Company and Kutch, in the nineteenth century, to assist minor Rao Desal II, and they took charge of parts of administration in the state. This involvement had a great impact on the painting tradition of Kutch which we shall collate in this section. So far, from the number of works discovered in various collections, we are certain that a large number of the local artists were involved in the making of Ethnographic and bird studies in 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.

The Artist of Kutch

Having dealt with a wide range of materials, an attempt has been made to trace the artists who were contributing to the painting traditions. Be it the miniatures or the frescoes, today a large number of them are referred to as 'Kamangari Kalam' by the people of Kutch. This terminology comes from 'Kamangar', a bow-making Muslim community that resided in Kutch. Their extensive participation in the art activity of this region, must have influenced the people to address the art activity as Kamangari works/ Kamangari Kalam. Nevertheless, the questions that are being raised are: Is this terminology appropriate? Or a more loosely coined terminology? Did the Kamangars contribute to the court tradition, or did they work only on the frescos? If they did work on paintings, how did they learn the technique of fresco making and

painting on *wasli*? What was their style of painting? A profusely large number of works done on walls and manuscripts needed familiarity with Hindu Iconography. How did the Kamangars familiarize themselves with Hindu iconography? A brief note on the native artists by Mrs. Postan (an English Guest), in her travelogue, comments that she likes to believe that, 'the Hindu artists were more adaptive in learning than Mahomedans who were restricted to create God's creations'. Encountering such questions also raises the probability that more artist communities must have engaged with the tradition, but are unacknowledged. As a response to these questions raised, it was important to investigate deeper into this area of ambiguity. Hence this chapter, the first section titled 'Kamangars' traces the origin of the artist community in Kutch, and the second section speculates to understand the artist based on the quality of draftsman ship.

Kamangars – The Known Painters of Kutch

As mentioned above most of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century paintings, be it the once on paper, or the murals, today are referred as Kamangari kalam. But Kamangars as a community are largely referred to as fine skilled bow-makers and shield-makers from Delhi. From a bow making community, to enhance the sophisticated skill of a painter is unusual though, but not impossible. Hence an attempt is made in this session, to assimilate information on the role of this community in Kutch society. First written reference to this community appear in 1880 Gazetteer of Kutch. It states: "Shield-making and painting: There are in Bhuj about 15 musalman families of painters, Kamangars who are said to have come from Delhi. They make toys, shields, and sticks and colour them with different dyes. Shield making, is one of the special cutch industries. The Kamangars import rhinoceros and elephant hide from Zanzibar, work them into semi-transparent discs of various sizes, paint them, and without any help from leather workers mount them as shields. The fewer the flaws and stains, the greater the value of the shield. Measuring generally about 2.5 ft across the rhinoceros shields vary in price from 2s to 10 pounds (rs 1-100) those for nobles and chiefs are gold or silver mounted and sometimes studded with gems. Shield makers have no particular busy season and in the rains are more or less idle, their average daily earnings are about 1s (as 8) they keep yearly 11 holidays and though hardworking and thrifty are not able to save."

Interesting to note here is the title itself, which says ‘shield making and painting’. This is the earliest written record to a painting/painter that we come across for this region. Here Kamangar’s contribution to painting on toys, sticks, and shields are highlighted as much as their profession of shield-making. Although there is no direct reference to these families as trained court or fresco artists, nor mention of their painterly contributions. What is interesting is that they are primarily addressed as a finely skilled artist and a hardworking community, with a readiness to adapt to alternate art practices.

Around 1971, yet another affirmative statement gets recorded in the Gazetteer of Kutch on these communities painting contribution. Which states: “Kutch has its style of painting known as Kamangari, it was developed during the time of Lakhaji II. Old and modern specimens of Kamangari work are found everywhere in Kutch. Kamangaras have produced the best specimen of mural decoration preserved in the Aaina palace, in the bungalow of Mac Murdo in Anjar, in the Bhandara of Dharamnath at moti rayan, in the Akhada of Jangi at Dhrang and in Bhuj Museum. Animals, birds, leaves, flowers, and creeper, incidents of everyday life, scenes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, elephant fights, and deer hunting have been painted with extraordinary grace and charm giving full play to their imagination. Horses, camels, elephants in a royal procession painted in Sujaba's residence, and a picture of a mother and child in the Ayna Palace are life-like. The influence of the Rajput and Moghul styles of painting is noticeable in the paintings in Ayna Palace. These colourful mural Paintings dating back to about 140 years give a good idea of the classical art of Kamangars of Kutch.”

Based on the above reference one could state that the Kamangar communities must have profusely contributed to the frescos paintings of this region. But the questions still remain: How did they learn this sophisticated art? The colour recipes? and most important how did these communities familiarize themselves with Hindu iconography? As a large number of works executed on walls were Vaishnava themes, which could have been more familiar only to a Hindu artist. Hence to come to a convincing conclusion, it would be ideal to re-read the artistic attributions based on the quality of draftsman ship of the artist for the present study.

Speculations- Based on the Quality of Draftsmanship of the Artist

The first painting ascribed to this court belongs to Maharaja Rao Desal I's reign. These large-size Royal portraits and Darbar scenes produced during his time are some of the most sophisticated works allied to this land. A quality that remained consistent till Rao Lakhpat's reign. As mentioned in the previous chapter, even the thematic compositions were popular themes familiar to a Mughal and Rajput courts painter. All qualities of a good portrait- flawless elegant lines, the delicacy of touch, the defined facial contours, and modelling alongside tonal gradations are visible on these portraits. Even for an extraordinary Kamangar artist to be gifted with such refined skills, and to believe that he could have learned by observing the activities in the Mughal court in Delhi seems unrealistic. Infact all points direct to the possibility that a master artist was probably invited to Kutch from outside. Comprehending that Rao Desal I and Rao Lakhpat by the second quarter of the eighteenth century had established a political and matrimonial connection with the court of Jodhpur, it is quite likely that an artist from Jodhpur or Nagaur must have visited Kutch to make Raos portraits in his initial phase.

Taking a step further, there is also a high possibility that Mughal Artist Dalchand or his disciple could have been invited to Kutch to train the native artist. This assumption is not based on any historical facts or signatures but merely based on a broad possibility. Dalchand was a trained court artist by his father, painter Bhavanidas, who was trained at the Lahore court of Prince Muhammad Mu'azzam, and later moved to Delhi to work under Emperor Bahadur Shah I. Around 1724, he moved to Jodhpur court to work for Maharaja Abhai Singh and later to Kishangarh around 1728. As commented by Terence McNerney, 'Dalchand was one of the leading Mughal court painters who were active from c.1710-1760. He was particularly gifted as a portrait painter and as an inventor of new compositions for group portraits and depictions of court events. Dalchand's portraits are remarkable for their psychological insights, and for the way they suggest the underlying character of the subject portrayed. As Dalchand spent most of his career in Rajasthan (initially at Jodhpur and later at Kishangarh, his oeuvre shows the way that the Mughal high style and interest in observable facts spread from the imperial court to those outlying areas of the empire where an interest in painting also flourished.'

This particular interest in attributing the works to artist Dalchand or his disciples is based on three reasons. Primarily, the quality of portraiture itself- the imperial large-size portrait

composition and darbar paintings, the elegant facial contours, controlled lines, the delicacy of touch, and the knowledge of traditional colours recipes all point to the fact that the artist was a trained professional who work for Kutch court. In the early portraiture, we also see a lot of similarities in the colours used in Jodhpur and Nagaur schools, especially the use of Mughal green background which is common to Jodhpur and Kutch. There is also a possibility that the Mughal group portrait hung on the walls of Aaina Mehal, depicting the ‘Succession group of Mughal Emperors’ was gifted by the artist himself as a prototype to design a Kutch version. Secondly, this was the time when the Kutch court was inviting masters from outside to train and encourage the native artist, with the vision to popularize Kutch as a centre for Braj bhasha learning and fine arts. Bhattaraka, Kanaka Kaushalji who head the institute at the court of Bhuj was a scholar par excellent from Kishangarh region. He could have had some influence. The court also patronized Ramsingh Malam who was looking after the production of the art of enameling, tiles, and glass, who was also sent to Europe twice to perfect his learnings to set up factories in Kutch. This indicates that Rao was keen on hiring the best men in his court. It does not seem impossible to invite an established artist to the court of Bhuj. Thirdly, Maharaja Abhai Singh of Jodhpur was appointed as a *Subahdar* of Gujarat from 1730 to 1738 and stayed in Gujarat till 1733. Kutch during this period extended matrimonial alliance with Ramsingh, son of Maharaja Abhay Singh. And by this time artist Dalchand had already offered his services in the court of Abhay Singh at Jodhpur and moved to Kishangarh for better living. But studies by Faiyaz Ali Khan states that Dalchand would have remained an employee of the Kishangarh atelier until 1742, when the information from the *bahi* record ceases.² Because of the proximity in time and connection it does not seem impossible to address if he offered his services to Kutch or stayed for a brief period or occasionally visited Kutch, till 1760, to train the native artist.

Probably this was also an opportunity when the Kamangars or native artists, got to learn the art of miniature painting from a Master. We have already noted that Rao Lakhpat who was an institute builder and hence must have taken this opportunity to train some of the native artists with the requisite knowledge. Kamangars who were already on service at the court and inclined to learn must have grabbed this opportunity to train themselves along with a few others. Hence

² *Ibid.* Pp. 566

it is a largely assumed, but thoughtfully put statement that Kamangars learned the technique to paint from a Jodhpur Master.

Stylistically speaking, it is only from Rao Godh's reign that we start seeing works of a native artist in the Kutch court cultures. Rao Godh's portraits are largely available of two kinds: one which is imperial in quality, and the other, which has resembling qualities but not superior enough. They are small in size, and the colours are toned down to pastel shades. Here the finer details of an imperial style are lost. This could be because by then the local artist must have started working at the court giving their best efforts. A further stylistic departure is seen during Rao Raydhan's period, but understanding Rao's religious preferences, which was Islam, it is obvious he encouraged an artist who followed an Islam faith. But definitely, the preference for Durbar subjects and the imperial quality was compromised over the development of a regional style.

This phase from 1760-1820, based on the stylistic references it could be stated that the artist was experimenting with his understanding of painting. To begin with, they make copies of European prints, then slowly moves to document their surroundings. In no time they realize they could collage Indian religious narratives and merge them with their understanding of landscapes. Ramayan set as a fine example where we see both elements. And then independent documentation like the illustrated Avatar-gita Grandh. Interestingly, what the artist continues to retain with him are minor details like the royal turban style, the royal procession view, the three-quarter *jama*, and the bare blue sky. For all the Vaishnav paintings and manuscripts, it is hard to believe that a Kamangar could have contributed. Hence it has to be an artist well-versed in the Hindu narratives that they need no instruction to compose the illustration.

Similarly around the 1800's when the Merchant families took interest in painting their residences, Kutch painters must have immediately acquainted themselves with the traditional knowledge of fresco paintings, including the preparation of gum-arabic on wet surfaces, and the application of pigments on these surfaces, every process of fresco painting was picked up by the Kutch artist. Here it may be observed that although popular Hindu subjects were painted on the wall of these residences, one cannot ignore the strong element of design embellishing

the spaces. Very often we see the tree-of-life design, geometric patterns, textile motifs, and also Buraq and angel figures. Hence we may assume that a large number of Kamangars could have contributed to the mural tradition.

Once again around the 1830s, a workshop seems to have been held for the artist by Rao Desal III. This time a large number of native artists underwent training on new mediums and techniques. Our larger guess is that Marianne Postan must have trained and introduced these artists, the skill to study a model and draw what the British saw as picturesque. It appears unlike what Marianne Postan had in mind regarding Kutch artists, they were open to adapting to new instructions. Similarly, even when ornithologist Dr. Henry Pittman visited Kutch, the native artist seems to have no hesitation to study a new model. There was a sheer confidence that they exhibited through their works. Be it to work on Indian paper or an imported one, watercolour or gouache, the artist blissfully painted as if they loved to document their surroundings. Some had a sensitive hand that they could imitate the English like the ethnographic study by Marianne Postan. And another painter used strong Indian colours to sketch their models. Based on inscribed details at the bottom of the page, we do gather that these paintings were sold to the buyers at the cost of Rupees 1 per folio. Which was indeed an alluring return for a skilled native painter.

In the later part of the nineteenth century we may assume that two factors affected the life of the artist: 1) the increased use of cameras, these paintings started losing their importance as ethnographic documentation was now available with ease. 2) During this period a large number of people migrated out of Kutch for greater opportunity. It must be around this period when the Rao's started supporting the artist by sponsoring a large number of scroll paintings that illustrated the local procession scenes. The artist who continued to reside put in the best of their knowledge. Their small ethnographic study became detailed long scroll paintings that demonstrate the moving processions. The name of the artist scribed on the scroll, Vadalal Md Jumma ... (illegible) and Jumma Ibrahim (Khengarji Sawari indicates that he is an artist following Islam religion.

Conclusion

Around the second quarter of the 18th century, instability in Delhi led to a decline in the power structure in the politics of Mughal courts, and the Rajputs of Rajasthan who since long had been subdued before the Mughal, got a new political position. This subjugation gifted Marwar the benefit of being appointed as Viceroys for Gujarat on behalf of the Mughals. It is this inland connection of Kutch with the imperial courts, which altered its cultural relationship. Exactly when Abhai Singh (r. 1724-1749) of Jodhpur and Rao Desalji of Kutch visit each other is uncertain, but we know for certain that Maharaja Abhai Singh, was appointed *subahdar* of Gujarat from 1730-1737, and he stayed in Gujarat till 1733. It must be one such visit that matrimonial allies with Abhai Singh's son Ramsingh was committed with the princess of Kutch. And briefly even Abhai Singh's brother Bakhat Singh was granted the *subahdar* post by Mughal prince Ahmed Shah (r.1748-1754). It appear that it is from this period that Kutch Rao's take interest in commissioning self-portraits which inspires the later developments.

Yet another intervention happened when prince Lakha announced his intention of taking service with the Maharana of Udaipur. This happened as a clash with the Maharao Desalji for cutting down his allowances, which he was inclined to extravagant spending. Although reconciliation was arranged and the prince returned to his homeland. This visit seems like a turning point in Kutch's history as now the impulse to relatively grow large as a centre developed in the mind of the young prince Lakha. Lakha was struck by the flamboyant lifestyle of the Udaipur court, that he was too anxious to come to power that he murdered the Maharao's most trusted minister Devkaran Sheth around 1738 and assumed full power of the court by confining Maharao into his quarters, by 1741 A.D. Young ministers were appointed at the court and senior courtiers sent across different part of Kutch. His authority was mostly accepted across Kutch Jagirs, except there was some resistance at Mandvi.

At Udaipur, the prince probably saw a flamboyant cultural centre. A thriving trade town with all extravagance and comfort lifestyle. An economic boom that was decisively shaping the social and political relationship, which also had a place for art practice within social and historic moments. Soon a transition happened in the state of Kutch. He realized the need for his land to

improve as a cultural centre. To his good fortune, the great treasury of Maharao Desalji was now being spent by Lakhatji to mark Kutch as a great centre for art and learning. As an amateur and impatient patron, he was probably not very rigid with his clients' innovative production, rather embraced every form as a cultural product. Be it the innovative industries set by Ramsingh Malam like- Iron foundry, Glass foundry, tile factories, or the enamelling and clock-making workshops. Or Shri Kanaka Kaushals Braj Bhasha Institute, Kutch suddenly started reflecting as a cultural industry for the mainland skilled workers which invariably resulted in immigration. Silversmiths, goldsmiths, and tape makers were invited to Kutch, or rather flocked to Kutch as a result of the cultural boom. Understanding the taste of Raos even the merchants who travelled across returned with expensive gifts for the Rao, which now become the collective pieces decorating the palace walls. What got overshadowed by the significant industrial growth was probably the painting tradition which happened in an isolation with a small group of armatures.

This sudden momentum and progress did pour in a large number of people to look for a promising future under the Raos. But unfortunately, patronage and investment could not survive beyond a hundred years. The growing pirates at the coast brought the progress of the state to a halt. Some painters continue to survive by contributing to the mural tradition which had gained popularity by this time. The affluent merchant class by now was making a statement in society by commissioning artworks in their residences. The wall of many residences, temples, and schools were now getting profusely painted with frescos. Of course what inspired these affluent traders must have been the painted Havelies at the pilgrim centre of Nathdwara, which was frequently visited by the merchants.

By the early 19th century, survival was the key for these artists but just then a new challenge was placed before the artist by the English men. They wanted the lives of people documented so that they could carry them back home as souvenirs. To execute these works the artist even up their skills to the new trend of drawing and watercolouring. But time and again, the patronage could not meet the needs of the artist so many moved out for better prospects.

The rapid industrialization and growth of Mumbai in the second half of the nineteenth century must have been yet another reason why people out-migrated. This was the time when the

city of Bombay was proving to be a promising land to look for a good living. A weaving and spinning company was 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 the University of Bombay (1857) which was the first modern institute for higher education to be established in India, 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 Indo-Pakistan conflict, which resulted in the migration on a large number of Muslim population. Of our familiarity, the Kamangar communities also move out during this period. Infact the district of Kutch even attracted pointed attention after independence on account of the border dispute between India and Pakistan, regarding sovereignty a certain part of Kutch. In 1965 this dispute flared into an armed collision. Which got settled by parting away the provenance of Sindh which was formerly under British India.

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.

Through this research, 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. Certainly, the highly sophisticated style that we see during Rao Lakhpat's reign are works of a master painter probably invited from Jodhpur, and the indigenous styles affiliated to this regions painting tradition only begins during Rao Godh's reign. Infact the fifty years starting from 1760 to 1820, is marked in the political history of Kutch when the administration goes from bad to worse, but interestingly this is also the time when a large number of religious texts (many illustrated) are being documented at the court under the supervision of Raja Bhatnarak Yati Jain Yati Shri Kanaka Kaushal and his disciple Kuvar Kaushal. If we look back in time, from around the eleventh to sixteenth century, Jain Acharyas of Gujarat and western

India were involved in Sanskrit learning, manuscript writing, and commissioning of paintings illustrating a diverse range of thematic texts taking financial support from ministers, intellectuals, and businessmen. A similar attempt is seen here by a connoisseurs in the development and sustenance of this art in the province of Kutch.