

Rajput Paintings – A Mini Review

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Abstract

Rajput painting originated in the royal states of Rajasthan, somewhere around the late 16th and early 17th century. The Mughals ruled almost all the princely states of Rajasthan at that time and because of this; most of the schools of Rajput Painting in India reflect strong Mughal influence. Each of the Rajput kingdoms evolved a distinctive style. However, similarities and common features can still be found in the paintings of different territories.

Introduction

One can also observe the dominance of Chaurapanchasika group style in Indian Rajasthani Paintings. The main themes around which Rajasthani Paintings of India revolved include the Great epics of Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the life of Lord Krishna, landscapes and humans. Rajput paintings of India were also done on the walls of palaces, inner chambers of the forts, havelis, etc. Colors used for the painting were derived from minerals, plant sources, conch shells, precious stones, gold and silver, etc.

Schools of Rajput Painting

Starting from the 16th century, when the Rajput Painting originated, numerous schools emerged, including:

- Bikaner School
- Bundi-Kota Kalam School
- Jaipur School
- Kishengarh School
- Marwar School
- Mewar School
- Raagamala School

Amber and Jaipur

The paintings of Amber and Jaipur show strong Mughal influence. However, at the same time, the bold compositions and use of abstractions reflected regional characteristics. The 18th and early 19th century saw Rajput paintings illustrating episodes from the life of Krishna. The other popular themes of the 19th century were Ragamala and devotional subjects.

Bikaner

Rajasthani paintings of Bikaner were also based on Mughal tradition. Apart from the Mughal style, the paintings of Bikaner also reflect marked influence of Deccan paintings. During the late 18th century, the city started showing conservative Rajput styles with smoothness and abstractions. However, they were devoid of any pomposity and flamboyance.

Bundi

Rajput paintings started originating in Bundi around the late 16th century and reflected heavy Mughal influence. Wall paintings, dating back to the reign of Rao Ratan Singh (1607-1631), are good examples of Bundi style of paintings. The time of Rao Chattar Sal (1631-1658) and Bhao Singh (1658-1681) saw great emphasis on court scenes as themes. Other themes include those based on the lives

of nobles, lovers and ladies.

Kota

Kota paintings look very natural in their appearance and are calligraphic in their execution. The reign of Jagat Singh (1658-1684) saw vivacious colors and bold lines being used in portraiture. With the arrival of Arjun Singh (1720-1723), the painting started depicting males with a long hooked nose. 18th century was also the time for hunting scenes, Ragamalas, and portraits as the themes. Ram Singh II (1827-1866) ordered the depiction of worship, hunting, darbar and processions in paintings.

Kishangarh

Kishangarh style of painting was basically a fusion of Mughal and regional style. The most common theme of this style consisted of the depiction of the love between Krishna and Radha. Other popular themes included the poetry of Sawant Singh, Shahnama and court scenes, etc. Kishangarh School is best known for its Bani Thani paintings. With the demise of Savant Singh and his leading painters, this school lost its glory and started breaking down.

Malwa

One of the most conservative Rajput Painting Schools of the 17th century, Malwa was highly influenced by Chaurpanchasika style. The emphasis was laid on strong colors and bold lines. At times, one can also observe a remote Mughal influence on these paintings.

Marwar

The earliest example of the Rajasthani paintings of Marwar is that of Ragamala, which was painted in Pali in 1623. In the 18th century, the most common themes included, the portraiture of nobles on horses and darbar scenes. With the arrival of artists like Dalchand, Marwar paintings also started reflecting Mughal influence.

Mewar

Mewar school of Rajput paintings concentrated on its conservative style, trying to avoid the dominance of the Mughals. The earliest example of the Mewar School is that of Chawand Ragamala, dating back to 1605. One can observe heavy similarity with the Chaurapanchasika style, especially the flatness, the bright colors, and even common motifs. Towards the end of the 17th century and the early 18th century, Mewar style saw revival and late 18th century again witnessed its decline. From mid 19th century to mid 20th century, it continued as a court art.

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