PART – I
CHAPTER — I

THE RAJPUT AND HIS SOCIETY

To the medieval Indian, the world offered certain values which were the gifts of tradition; a tradition that was composed of earlier cultures of varied types. Amalgamation had been possible in the past. The proud result of this great fusion is to be noticed in the intellectual output of 400 A.D. - 600 A.D. — the golden age of the 'Imperial Guptas'. Thus a norm was formed, and the attempts of the Rajputs in the later years were directed mainly towards clinging to it.

From the fall of the Gupta Empire, a strange pattern governed the political history of India. The formation of an empire remained the pivot of the ambitions of every aspirant to political fame. This became a heritage of the Rajputs in the early medieval period. By the Seventeenth century, the Rajputs were forced to settle down to a well defined pattern of existence. Their hope of holding an authoritative sway over the whole of India had been crushed by the rise of the Mughal empire. Politically a defensive role had been thrust upon them.

The cultural impact of Islam on Indian Society was felt through reactions. The first contact had been both bloody and violent, and the Indian Society had hastily shut its doors in fear. The Rajputs became the champions of this Society. The Brahmanical Hindus gladly received these warriors as protectors, and whatever their origin, they were allowed to fill the breach left by the old Kshatriyas.
The social and political outlooks of the early medieval Rajputs were characterised by this martial role. It had come to be generally accepted by the Seventeenth century. The Rajput himself had ceased to be overpowered by his own heroic position. But now came a new danger. Through the person of Akbar, the Mughal power stretched out a friendly hand. This kind overture was backed by promises of economic facilities. A period now followed, that was marked by two contradictory pulls. On the one hand the Rajput was forced to submit, and socially accept the ruling class as their kin (as more and more Rajput princesses went into the Mughal harem following the footsteps of the princess of Jaipur). On the other hand, they retained their own customs and social practices whose sanctions came from the Vedas and the Smritis. The interchange was marked in certain practices of dress and manners, while the reaction was also expressed through greater emphasis on purification of caste, protection of women and emphasis on religious rituals.

This strange contradiction of acceptance and refusal is clearly reflected in the paintings. When Rajasthani painting emerged as a clearly defined art mode, it adapted the technique of Mughal court art to themes which were entirely their own. Out of these socio-political tensions emerged the concepts and values, which guided the Rajput and his art in the Seventeenth century.

Society: Structure and Composition:

The Rajput Society was composed of a number of clans, and graded by castes. The composition of the population included
a few tribes. Such as the Bhils and the Minas. These were regarded as antajas, or outcastes along with the lowest order of the Hindu caste system. The rest of the people were Rajputs, though often they followed a different religion like the Jainas. In these cases, a certain difference came to be marked through religious customs and practices. On the whole this society drew its main sanction from the Brāhmanical tradition manifested mainly through the Smritis.

The structure of Society was feudal. Social relationship was based on land and kinship. A definite contract marked the exchanges between the clan chief who was the overlord and the clan members who occupied land. Reciprocity of services was expected between the Rajput chief and his men. This came to be known as 'Swāmidharma' and played an important part in formulating the social ethics.

The gradation of society according to caste must have existed in the Gujarat-Rajasthan area from the period of Brahmanical domination. The Rajputs were new entrants into this society. The various theories regarding their origin, specially the 'Agnikula myth', point to a process of gradual social elevation. Dr. Dasaratha Sharma writes about this —

"There can be no doubt about the fitness of the Rajputs to be classed as Kshatriyas. They were fighters by profession and knew how to shed their blood in the defence of their country and culture. But ... it would be idle to maintain that they belonged to one jāti."

Evidently, the foreign tribes like the Hunas and Gurjaras and indigenous people who lived by fighting were socially elevated together with the Hindu 'chaturvarna' society, and all that was demanded of them was, that they followed the Vedic rites. The assimilation became clear through intermarriage. Dr. Dasaratha Sharma writes — 

"some of them intermarried with the ancient Kshatriyas and Brāhmaṇas of the land." It is interesting to notice that while society allowed them to step into the place of the ancient Kshatriyas, the Rajputs helped in fostering this illusion by tracing their genealogical tree from the epic families. In this way the Pratiharas claimed descent from Lakshmana and the Chāndellas from the lunar dynasty.

The martial character of the Rajput is emphasised even to the present day. In a survey, Mr. John T. Hitchcock studied this aspect of the modern Rajput Society. He writes —

"What differentiates the martial Rajput from other Rajputs is the great stress he lays upon his connection with these illustrious ancestors. . . . Largely because of this stress upon the blood relationship between themselves and the kings and heroes of the past, one of the most basic attributes of the martial Rajput is the strongly held belief that he himself, at least by tradition and innate capacity is a warrior and ruler." 

He writes further that a number of attitudes follow from this emphasis on the Rajput as the inheritor of the tradition of

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2. Ibid., Pg. 441.
warrior and ruler.

"The martial Rajput, for example regard it as his duty to see that the proper social relationships between all castes are maintained, and the hierarchical order of society is preserved." 4

This emphasis on an epic tradition is perhaps reflected in the large number of illustrations of the 'Rāmāyaṇa'. For 'Rāma' more than any other stands as the symbol of victory over non-aryan culture.

The greatest importance was socially accredited to the Brāhmaṇas. They were the highest caste and the real upholder of the 'Chaturvarṇa Samāj'. The Rajputana Gazetteer (published in 1879) records the unabated influence of the Brāhmaṇas even in the nineteenth century. To their list is added the Bhāts and the charāṇas, the keepers of secular tradition and the genealogists.

After the Brāhmaṇas and the Kshatriyas came the Vaiśyas. These were the rich burghers. The Jaina traditions record the general prosperity of this class. But this caste was fluid in its composition, as all those who became merchants could be included within its fold.

"Among the Vaiśyas as in some other castes, we find the two ideals of varṇa and jāti. While varṇa lays stress on culture, character, profession, social duties and the organic nature of human society, jāti emphasises birth, heredity and hereditary privileges. The doors of the Vaiśya varṇa were open to every new comer, who took up the profession of trade, even though the incomers generally fell into a sub-caste of their own." 5

4. Ibid., Pg. 11.
5. Sharma, Dasaratha : Rajasthan through the Ages, Vol.I, Pg. 438
The Jaina merchant community who were the counterpart of the Vaisyas, also exerted great influence on society mainly through their wealth.

"They were adventurous traders though generally not very good soldiers. At royal courts they had influence enough to prevent the Brāhmaṇas from tyrannising over their gurus. Places like Amahillapattana, Srimala, Kiratakupa, Prahādpura and Osia owed their prosperity primarily to the Vaisyas." 6

It cannot be marked out whether clear cut guilds of merchants existed in Rajasthan as in medieval Europe. The caste by its peculiar composition generally formulated the basis of an organisation, which must have operated both socially and economically.

The lowest order, to be included within the caste system are the Śūdras. Their list however varies from time to time. The majority of agricultural labourers and members of the craftsman's guilds are included among them. As urban existence expands, the number of professional men to be included in the list of Śūdras also increase. Probably within this list should be included the 'Chitrakara' i.e. the painter. But no mention of this particular caste group is found in the records.

A large number of subcastes also developed in this period, among them the Kāyasthas' and Khatris'were quite important. The chief significance of the Kāyasthas lie in their being scribes. Dr. Dasarathśa Sharma writes that in the early Dharmaśastras and

6. Ibid., Pg. 438.
7. Ibid., Pgs. 447-448.
This group was included within the caste of Sudras. Later they were assigned a Kshatriya origin. It is interesting to notice that names of scribes have been found (from the illustrated Mss) who were supposed to be of 'Kayastha' origin. Dr. Moti Chandra and Mr. Karl Khandalwala mention an illustrated Kalpasutra, where the name of the scribe given runs as follows:

"It was written and illustrated by Kayastha Venidasa son of Karmasimha Gaunda. For the welfare of all."

The outcastes, or those outside the 'chaturvarna' society were known as the Antyajas. Sometimes the term Mlechha were also applied to the outsiders. According to Dr. Dasaratha Sharma the unabsorbed remnants of foreign immigrants like the Sakas, Yavanas and Hunas might have been included among these. But indigenous people as the Sabaras, Kiratas, Khasas, Giras, Gaudas, Pulindas, Kochas, Bhariyas and Billias also were termed Mlechha, because they too stood outside the pale of Aryan culture. Evidently these people lived with their own organisations, often retaining the basic structure of a tribal society.

The retention of the caste hierarchy regulated the occupations of the people. Further classification was provided by the contractual relationship, found in a feudal society. Binding the socio-economic system within a single framework,

religion operated as the guiding force in individual as well as collective existence.

Feudalism in Rajasthan was characterised by the importance granted to kinship. The records of Malwa Gujarat and Rajasthan give the impression that the major portion of land in these areas was held as fiefs by kinsmen, vassals and officials, who were probably assigned more villages than priests and temples.

Moreover clan loyalty based on land holdings, acted as the protective force in Rajput society. Dr. G.N. Sharma describing the administrative system of medieval Rajasthan writes —

"Each Jagirdar enjoyed a particular area of land consisting of towns, villages and kheras and in return he was expected to supply a fixed quota of men and lead them to the battlefield."

These landholders formed a powerful feudal order, under a strong monarchy. According to Dr. G.N. Sharma, feudalism emerged in Rajasthan, through the attempts of the Rajputs to crush the tribal people of that region —

"This extraordinary circumstance makes us believe that the origin of the so called feudalism lies in certain stages of responses and challenges. The response was from the Rajputs and the challenges from the tribal people. Thus from sixth century onwards a new growth was seen in the socio-economic structure which was later on bound by political and military ties."

The second factor which Dr. G.N. Sharma considers to be responsible for the rise of feudalism in Rajasthan was: the

12. Ibid. Pg. 205.
13. Ibid. Pg. 205.
Internecine wars. As a result a small group of fighters became political leaders. A number of subordinates to the lords were also found. These men served the lord, attended his person and followed him to war. *"In course of time" comments Dr. G.N. Sharma "such a servitude turned into loyalty or rebellion."

The courts of the overlords were situated in the fortified towns. During the wars, these capitals had to be shifted. An example is furnished by Mānā Pratap of Mewar who transferred his capital to Chawand after being forced to leave Chitor. During the periods of peace, the smaller feudal chiefs i.e. the jāgirdars were bound to pay homage at court and carry on duties, partake in the ceremonies and festivals.

A well developed corporate life also existed in the villages. The feudal lord was the most powerful authority here. He was at full liberty regarding the assessment of taxes, and collection. He was also entrusted with civil and criminal powers of justice over his vassals and sub-vassals. But the rulers of the states preserved with them the power of interference, when they found the actions of the jāgirdars undesirable.

A body called the 'Panchakūla' is known to have existed in the Rajasthani villages. It is described by Dr. G.N. Sharma's

as a semi-government body. He writes that its function was to be in charge of land records. They were authorized to transfer land and ownership, according to the instructions received from the rulers of the state. The body was also authorized to collect taxes on sale of articles within the area of a particular village and allocate the money for charitable and public use. This kind of semi-government organisation for administration of villages in Rajasthan may have been successful. Its very composition reveals that it served as a link between the State and the Village. Apart from these every caste in the village had its own panchayets to deal with the social crimes, While Jaina records describe a semi-religious body like the Sangha which dealt with both secular and religious matters mainly of the Jaina community.

The Economic condition:

Land was the main basis of wealth and Agriculture was the primary occupation of the people. The holdings were categorized into free land i.e. the Khailāsh, where the holder had the right to sell or mortgage, so long as he paid the rent. The second category was that of jagirs, where holders held land due to kinship, offered political, military and civil services and paid an annual tribute. The third category was Bhūmi held by Bhumiās who paid a nominal quit rent and performed services such as guarding the roads and the village, escorting the treasures to

the court etc. But they were not allowed to sell their land. The fourth category was the land granted to Brāhmaṇas and others of the priestly class like the Chāraṇas and the Bhāţs. These lands could not be sold, and the yield had to be utilised strictly for the purposes specified in the grant. The fifth category was common land used by all, for pasture and grazing.

The harvests were mainly two, and belonged to autumn and spring. The autumn harvest provided the food for the poorer people while the spring harvest was utilised to pay off the money lender, on whom they were dependent for everything. The produces varied regionally. The holdings were very small and came through hereditary rights, most of the land being traditional holdings. Method of agriculture was almost the same as in modern days, with the use of oxen and ploughs. The entire family and in fact the whole village was connected with agriculture either directly or indirectly. The Jāts, Gujars etc. were known as the agricultural labourers but other castes also participated in cultivation of land.

The other occupations were mainly those needed for a self-sufficient village economy and operated through the caste guilds.

The mercantile community brought about a spread of the money economy. In the fourteenth and fifteenth century, trade with foreign lands like Java and Hormuz flourished. This trade must have expanded in the Mughal period. The general economic prosperity is reflected also in the wealth
of the mercantile community. The wealth circulated through trade and internal commerce and also came to be locked, through building of temples and endowments to monastries. Money lending, in the absence of any other banking system also became extremely lucrative. The money lenders became influential men and are even known to have lent money to kings in times of war.

The Mughal impact on the changing economy was mainly reflected through adoption of Mughal dresses and changes in diets. This was a part of a general socio-economic upheaval, mainly due to the increasing political submission of the Rajput states to the central authority in Delhi.

The Mughal Impact:

The apparent influence of the Mughals is found in contemporary dresses and changes in certain social customs. The descriptions given by Dr. G.N. Sharma are interesting. Here painting can be treated as an important source. Evidently the relations with the Mughal court, which resulted in granting of dresses and armour by the Emperor to the Rajput nobility, brought about the transformations. The adoption of the Akbari chakdar jamāh, and the Jehangiri turban was a common feature of Rajasthani painting. (In fact it is used as an important evidence to date the paintings of the sixteenth century, mainly the 'chairapañcāśikā' group.)

The dietary habit of the Rajput noble also underwent a change as social interchanges with the Mughals became more frequent. From the usual preparations of maize, barley, bajra, gur and curd, the Rajput noble moved over to more spicy food and sweets. 18 Dr. G.N. Sharma writes that the table manners also underwent a change as they began to use superior kind of decorated silken cloths over which the dishes were arranged. Moreover the uses of spoons, dishes, cups of silver and gold were definitely foreign to the Rajputs before they came in contact with the Mughals. This interchange was not one sided, but it was mainly limited to the Rajput nobility and the Muslim aristocracy. The common people remained unaffected.

Reflection in Painting:

The structure and composition of society was not portrayed in the paintings to present a photographic document. The reflection came through the experiences of the artist, who naturally drew upon his daily life to create his visual images. The themes were often removed in time from the medieval period. An example may be found in the illustrations of the Bhāgavat Purāṇa. 19 A seventeenth century illustration of 'The holding up of the mount Govardhan' yields interesting features.

19. See Plate – II
Here we see the corporate life of an entire village. Nanda is depicted clearly as a seventeenth century Rajput chief. Krishna is a small prince. All the nobles wear Mughal costumes like the transparent coat and the atpati turban. The women though wearing the Chani and Ghagra, also wear blouses — a definite trace of Mughal impact on women's garments. These are no village damsels, their heavy ornaments testify to their nobility. The uses of ornaments for hand, neck, arm, ear, nose are also seen from this painting. The rest of the picture is filled by animals and youths who may be of the villages. The importance of cattle breeding as a profession, is clear today in modern Rajasthan, and must have been more so in the medieval period.

Dr. G.N. Sharma, describing the paintings as sources of social history, mentions quite a few. An illustrated Bhāgavat Dasāmskandha (V.S. 1667) Pustak Prakash Library, Jodhpur, shows a village school and children playing outdoor games. In an illustrated 'Ārṣa Rāmāyaṇa' of V.S. 1705 reserved in the Prāchya Vidyā Pratishthān, Udaipur, scenes of town and village life are clearly depicted. The mode of warfare and contemporary costumes and ornaments can also be studied from these illustrations. He further mentions a Bhāgavat Purāṇa of the seventeenth century preserved in the Kotah Museum which is important for the study of a village house, and its equipments. Forms and sizes of huts

depicted are clearly representative of contemporary structures. It also shows the shape and size of ornaments worn by children.

Another interesting manuscript illustration mentioned by Dr. G.N. Sharma is a 'Sārangadhar Padhati' No. 934 which belonged to the Saraswati Bhandar Library, Udaipur. It is of the late Eighteenth Century, and contains realistic depictions of beggars, porters, oil pressers and palanquin bearers.

An illustrated 'Dholā Māru' of early seventeenth century preserved in the National Museum shows contemporary modes of chase and hunt, the uses of camels as vehicles, the dangers of robbers on roads. It illustrates certain marriage rites such as the welcoming of bride and groom by women.

Quite a large number of prevailing games and amusements of the people have been illustrated in the paintings. Dr. G.N. Sharma mentions a 'Dholā Māru ri Vāt' dated V.S. 1677 reserved in the Saraswati Bhandar Library, Udaipur. Here the game of 'Chaupar' which became popular even among the women of the harem is clearly illustrated.

Another important evidence of the amusements found in the village life, was to be seen in the persons of the jugglers. These were known as 'Mat' boys and girls. They performed rope

21. See Plates XI, XII.
tricks, climbed poles, and did other acrobatic feats. The presence of these travelling performers lighted up medieval life both in Europe and India. They were considered a very necessary part of existence. This is very often found in the illustrations of the Rāginī Deśākh. Most of the paintings show a pole with an acrobat on top and two figures on either side. A painting of the Rāga Rāginī set of the Central Museum, Jaipur, show two sets of wrestlers in the foreground. Other figures in the background are seen to be showing further feats.

In this way a cross section of the seventeenth century Rajput society with its amusements, and sorrows are portrayed in the paintings. As evidences on paper, these paintings give us a more colourful and revealing picture compared to the dry records of grants and parwanas which are our main sources of history.

II

Religion and Festivals :

Religion acted as the guiding force of life in medieval Rajasthan. The large number of temples all over the region, dedicated to Hindu and Jaina deities testify to the fervour of the people. A general egalitarian spirit is also manifested here.

In the medieval period, most of the cults of the 'Panchāyatanda' worship, flourished in Rajasthan. Though outside

this group had a seat here, for Pushkar was his main 'tīrtha'.

'Tantra' had flourished in Rajasthan in the early medieval period. The 'Nātha's' and 'Siddha's' with other Saiva and Sākta sects continued to flourish even in the seventeenth century. These people also gained protection, and received alms from the rulers. The common people feared and respected them, but considered them to be outside the ordinary social norms.

The most important factor which influenced religious life in Rajasthan was the rise of medieval mysticism. The impact of Vallabhāchārya became widespread in Rajasthan.

A number of works belonging to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries give us an account of the religious conditions of the region. In the writings of Udairājā, a writer of the early seventeenth century, an interesting approach to God is noticed. He recognises the dual aspect of the creator, and refers to them as 'Pīdar' and 'Madar'. Rejection of formalities and rituals is found in the writer of 'Viprabodh' who places Hari above all gods. He assigns a very high place to prayer. So new methods as a result of the changing concepts were being discovered in Rajasthan. The main aim now was to reach God through simple methods of devotion. Godīdās, a writer of the seventeenth century pointed out that 'Īśvara', 'Yoga', 'Sādhanā' and 'Bhakti' were only various pathways to reach the ultimate goal.

the impact of revelatory religions like Islam on the traditional basis of Brahmanical religion is considered by some scholars to have given birth to the rise of a mystic and monotheistic urge in medieval Indian religion. Others consider the heart of the Bhaktivāda, (as it came to be known) to belong to Bhagavat Gītā, and therefore completely derived from the Vedic traditions. A definite trend is however noticed on the part of the early medieval Indian to move away from the ritualism and intellectual speculations of the Brahmanical religion. A tendency is noticed to turn to God as a personal saviour. From the fourteenth century onwards, this changed attitude is found in the teachings of the early medieval saints of Rajasthan. An important feature of medieval mysticism was the changed mode of worship. Idolatry and meaningless rituals were denounced. Devotion was expressed through singing, dancing and reciting the scriptures in the popular language.

By the seventeenth century the influence exerted by mysticism had settled down to a particular pattern. The Vaisnavas, who had continued to be one of the important sects in this period adopted the simpler mode of worship. Flowers, tulsi leaves and songs replaced the costly rituals. The cult of Vasudeva Krishna became widely popular. This resulted in the creation of a new impact on literature and the plastic arts.
Krishna became a symbol. He was projected as a motif, in poetry, sculpture and painting. Music, literature and the visual arts all revolved around personality cults and due to this a degree of artistic individualism was manifested. This is mainly to be seen through the poetry and paintings of Krishnite theme, where, irrespective of caste and creed, the musician or painter expressed his feelings through uses of particular imagery. This crystallizing of religious feelings into symbols, greatly enriched the artistic production of the land, and was mainly responsible for reviving the spirit of original creation. A release from the earlier imitations, and commentaries, was achieved by literature in this period. The inspiration should be ascribed to medieval mysticism which gave a new life to a declining society.

But in spite of the great impact of Bhaktiyad, the predominance of the Smritis remained. Men lived according to old traditions of the 'Chaturvarna' society. A degree of ritualism returned after the sects became organised and settled down in certain areas. The mystics created a stir, which cast a shadow over the old beliefs; but though it influenced it could not change the traditional base of the Hindu religious system. It is interesting to notice the ethics and moral values which prevailed in this age. Jainism which was an important force, coupled with Brahmanical Hinduism and the new wave of religious mysticism, formulated these values. Dr. Dasarath Sharmadiscussing a fifteenth

25. Ibid. Pg. 124.
century work known as the 'Kanhādade Prabandha', gives a very interesting list of social crimes. Through the lamentation of a Rajput prisoner in the hands of the Turks, a curious list of the social and ethical values is revealed. The usual crimes of adultery, theft, robbery, refusal of alms to Brahmins, inhospitality, acts of irreverence to the panchāya-ana gods are enumerated. A further list is given which springs from medieval chivalry i.e. treating the wives of others as sisters, and being the general protector of womanhood. A reference to the importance of the feudal structure of society is found in the respect paid to 'Swāmidharma' i.e. allegiance to the overlord. Acceptance of bribes, destruction of pastures and embankments, are considered as harmful as non-observance of the Ekādaśī fast, and worshipping Krishna without 'tulsi' leaves. The influence of the smritis mingled with the changing concepts introduced by Vaisnavism can be noticed here. It becomes amusing when to this list of grave crimes the poet adds: "Did I have bhāat at night (rice or food)? Did I deal in lac, salt and sesamum?" Dr. Dasarath Sharma notices distinct traces of Jaina influence in these restrictions. The medieval society, became a field of combined ethical values, whose application seemed to be universally binding, exempting neither the Hindu nor the Jaina. 

27. Ibid., Pg. 113.
Festivals:

The names of festivals can be gathered from medieval sources, and some are observed even today. These are mainly religious. Mention may be made of — the Jhulan on the eleventh of Chaitra when the image of Vāsudeva is swing to and fro; a festival to celebrate the birth of Krishna; Mahānavami; Śivarātri; Diwālī on the first day of the month of Kārtik; the Gouri tritiya or the third of Vaisākh when women worshipped Gouri; and of course the Holi or spring festival. The last is associated with the God of love and was in the nature of a Saturnalia. It is also connected with the stories of Rādhā and Krishna.

Quite a large number of the festivals are depicted in painting. The most frequent are however the Jhulan festival which is commonly found in the illustration to the 'Rāga Hindol' and The Holi festival is usually depicted, in the illustration to the Rāga Pancham.

The traces of the religious atmosphere of the land are found mainly in the themes of the paintings. The overwhelming preponderance of Krishna as a motif, the dominant note of love to be found in the Rāga-Rāgini as well as the Nāyaka-Nāyikā bheda paintings reflect the changes in the spiritual atmosphere. The Rādhā-Krishna myth became an allegory, and a strange idea of love equated to religion where man and woman leaves all social bonds to unite with God, came to prevail. This concept of 'parakīyā' came to lend an amorous note to religion. Love and religion, came to be treated as two aspects of the same emotion.
Profane love was elevated to the rank of the sacred, as philosophy gave it a basis and this gave a zest to painting reaching the artist through the medieval poetry. In the analysis of the themes of Rajasthani painting specially the Māyaka–Māyikā bheda, and the Krishna leelās, medieval mysticism should be specially noticed.

III

The position of the patron and the artist in the Seventeenth Century Rajasthan:

The traditions of Rajasthani painting are derived from three sources. The first was the Mss. illustrations in the Western Indian style. These were mainly Jaina religious texts. The execution of the illustrations as well as the copying of the texts were considered as a holy task of the Jaina monks. This was then the product of an organised monastic art. The second indigenous tradition was the folk art of the region. These survived in later years through the folk reproductions of certain Rajasthani paintings, and through the influences exerted on certain sub-schools of painting. The third influence came from the Mughal court. Under the Emperors, specially from the time of Akbar, Persian master painters were brought to the Mughal court. A studio or atelier was formed. Here the master, trained men as assistants and sometimes turned out skilled artists. These lesser artists, often retrenched from the Imperial Atelier found employment in the provincial courts of the Rajput kings. They brought the mark of an art whose clientele had to be the elite.
From the sources of the artistic tradition in Rajasthan can be determined the position of the patron and the artist.

The Patron:

The feudal structure of Rajput society places the king at the top. He was the supreme lord over all he surveyed. Naturally the patronage to the arts was one of his duties. This was a traditional belief, handed down from the earliest concept of the duties of a king in India. Next to the king came the members of the royal household. It is quite clear that the women who were confined within the limited enclosures should find a relaxation in commissioning illustrations of sacred texts and favourite kāvyas. Portraits were executed from the earliest times in Rajasthan. This also testifies to the importance given by the king and the court to painting. The painter was considered as a recorder, along with the Bhāts and the Chārans. He was thus a necessary part of the royal household.

The rich merchant community both Hindus and Jainas also became patrons, mainly, after painting had broken off the rigours of Jaina religious canons. Even in Jaina paintings, the loosening of style is noticed with a change in themes, as illustrated through the paintings of the Vasanta Vilāsa. The strict religious discipline of the Jainas began to weaken in painting. With the impact of medieval mysticism Krishna became

popular even among the Jainas. The art was therefore free from
the confines of the monastery. Patronage also threw open the
door to the individual artist. With this extension in patronage,
painting also grew profuse. Thus a bourgeois market was opened
to the medieval artist.

Lastly, paintings were bought for decorations, and
religious rites by the village people, who wanted the
paintings of the popular gods and their exploits as in the case
of Rām or Krishna, desired the illustrations from their favourite
tales. Sometimes these illustrations were executed by the village
artist who was a Sudra by caste. Sometimes the popularity of the
tale as in the case of the Dholā Māru and the Laur Chandā,
attracted a court painter, who took up the illustrations. In
this way the folk taste fashioned art, travelling from below.
The folk element in Rajasthani painting is therefore most often
ddictated by the terms of patronage. It is strange process by
which the culture of a peasant people finds an echo in more
sophisticated society. In a tradition bound society like the
Rajputs, this passage and interchange of artistic appreciation
must have been easy.

The Painter:

The word 'silpā' writes Dr. Stella Kramarisch does not
express itself clearly through the synonyms of artist, artisan.

29. Kramarisch, Stella: 'Traditions of the Indian Craftsman' in
Traditional India: Structure and Change - Edited by Milton
Singer. Pg. 18.
or craftsman. In medieval Indian society he could be all three. The village craftsman must have belonged to the 'Sūdra' caste, or might even have been Kāyasthas as seen already. The mention of the 'Chitrakara' is not found in Rajasthan. Like his counterparts all over the country, the Rajput painter of the villages was the member of a guild and his productions, (as mentioned before) survived through folk reproductions of the court paintings. They thus followed a common art mode and bore all the characteristics of the regional mode of painting. Their works are usually recognised by an absence of refinement and uses of certain bright colours popular among the pastoral and agricultural people, who lived mainly outdoors. These artists mainly remain anonymous. Their individuality is marred by their membership to a guild, and their position obscured by the caste-ridden society.

It is against the obscurity of the 'folk artist' that the Rajasthani court painters emerge as individuals. Often they are found to be Muslims. This was a definite result of the impact of the courtly cultures of the Mughals. In the Ain-i-Akbari (translated by Blochmann. Pg. 114) a list is given of the painters in Akbar's employ. It is interesting to find the names of quite a few Hindus among these. The most interesting, is a certain Daswanth, who was the son of a palkee-bearer. The emperor recognised his talent and he was recruited into the Royal atelier to be trained by the master. Another interesting example is to be seen in the illustration to a 'Nimat Namā' (a cookery book) executed in the Sultanate period. Here an unmistakable Indian
is noticed among the attendants. This Indian element must have been introduced by an indigenous artist recruited into the Royal atelier.

The earliest dated painting belonging to the Rajasthani mode was found in Chawand. It is a dated set of Rāgāmālā painted by the artist Nisardi reserved in the collection of Mr. G.K. Kanoria. Another set of paintings belonging to the Mewar idiom is supposed to be painted by one Sahabdin. It is also a Rāgāmālā series dated 1628 and reserved in the Moti Chand Khajanchi collection. Another work by this painter is found to be an illustrated set of the Bhāgavat Purāṇa now reserved in the Bhandarkar Institute, Poona. Mr. Karl Khandalwala, describing the characteristics of the paintings, described Sahabdin to be a retrenched artist who belonged to Jahangir's atelier. For he seems to have painted the person of the emperor in one of the figures. But Sahabdin is not an isolated example; we get the names of Ruknuddin of the Bikaner idiom, and Mihal Chand of Kishengarh.

The explanation is perhaps to be found in the political history of the period. As more and more Rajput states (with the exception of Mewar) were either bought off or crushed to become Mughal subjects, their rulers became courtiers of the Mughals.

It became natural that along with the adoption of the Mughal dress, they would adopt their art. It became prestigious to appoint a retrenched painter of the Imperial Court. In fact after seventeenth century, the influence of Mughal painting on the Rajasthani schools became more pronounced. The themes saved it from becoming provincial Mughal art. A large number of portraits belonging to this period reserved in the collection of Kumar Sangrām Singh of Nawalgarh are signed by a certain 'Chand of Junia'. This testifies to the role of photographer that was accorded to the artist.

But inspite of the number of signed paintings it becomes clear, from the large number of undated and unsigned ones, that the Rajasthani painter had not accepted the style of leaving his name on his production. He remains impervious to the Mughal idea of treating the artist as an individual. Probably the target number of signed paintings are therefore found from the Muslim painters. The illustrations of the Bhāgavat Purāṇa by a Muslim painter might seem untraditional, but this can be explained by the general wave of mysticism which prevailed over the land. To the mystics, the Hindu and the Muslim were not of separate races, but merely human beings. This is more clearly recognised in the religious consciousness of the artist expressed through the depiction of the 'Krishna' motif.

Secondly, the court painter, whether Hindu or Muslim, was mainly a courtier, and an important person. Economically he must
have been solvent for he received the patronage of the king, his household, and also that of the rich burghers. Thus the Rajasthani painter emerges as a person quite different from the anonymous artists of the classical period. But in spite of this slight emergence of individual prestige, the artists and the patrons were products of a traditional society; a society whose religion, ideas of chivalry and social ethics formulated the norms and conventions of the arts.