PART II
Krishna : The Development of a Motif :

Rajasthani Painting from its earliest beginning portrayed certain common themes which become interesting in their repetitions. The explanation is to be found in the medieval community criteria — that is the combined experience of the community as a whole. A deep and intensified religious fervour found expression in an outburst of mysticism, characteristic of the age. It pervaded the entire Hindu society, and also served as the main basis of artistic experiences. Religious sentiments came to be crystalised into symbols. While the religio-erotic cult of Krishna serving as a contrast to the orthodox Brahmanical orgiastic ritualism, as well as cold intellectual speculation, provided the central tenet round which artistic imagination could revolve.

The overwhelming presence of Krishna as a motif in Rajasthani painting appear to be surprising. Upon closer observation however a distinction can be noticed between two sets of paintings. The first is exclusively devoted to the growth of a legend with Krishna as the central figure, while the second group of paintings depict the projection of Krishna as the main motif in the other thematic branches of Rajasthani paintings. These are mainly the Nāyaka-Nāyikā bheda (heroes and heroines) and the Rāgamālās (musical modes). Here the character of Krishna undergoes a change, as he adopts the attributes of the particular nāyaka or the Rāga depicted.
Krishna as an object of worship — The growth of the cult.

The cult of Vāsudeva Krishna prevailed in India, long before the emergence of Rajasthani painting as an artistic mode. The image of the God slowly developed, as time progressed to become in the medieval age, a dark boy of irrepressible charms, and a lover famed for his amorous sports with the gopis. This idyllic world, full of green meadows with flowers, and the eternal spring captured the medieval artistic expressions in one sweep. Krishna is a part of the greater Vishnu concept. "Dr. J.N. Banerjee describes the concept of Krishna to be a syncretism of the three concepts of the Vedic Sun God, the cosmic Narāyana of the Brāhmaṇas and the man-god Vāsudeva Krishna. As a Solar god, he is supposed to symbolize the forces vanquishing evil.

Dr. Sukumari Bhattacharya comments —

"The Vishnu concept reaches its culmination in Krishna, because as Krishna his anthropomorphism is most complete, full blooded and hence most convincing and emotionally satisfying." 2

The mention of the epic Krishna is first found in the 'Chāndogya Upanishad'. Here he is referred to as the son of 'Devakī' and a disciple of 'Ghōra Āngirasa'. In the 'Mahābhāṣya' he is mentioned as the hero of the Vṛṣṇi clan, and the names of his

brothers are also given. Dr. J.N. Banerjea while enumerating the sources from which the deification of Krishna is to be traced, also mentions Pāṇini's Astādhyāyī where the names of Krishna's followers are given. Commenting on this he states —

"Vāsudeva Krishna the Śatavatā hero with some of his relations Saṃkarṣana, Pradyumna Samba and Aniruddha came to be deified by his followers and admires. In the cult that grew round him, he and his relations were at first assigned the position of the hero gods — the holy Pancha viras of the Vṛṣṇi clan."  

Evidently it is the 'vira' concept, that came to be transformed into the concept of 'Vyūha' or emanation. To this was added the 'vibhāva' or ideas of incarnation. Thus according to Dr. J.N. Banerjea the cult of Vāsudeva was identified with both Vishnu and Nārāyana by the first century A.D.

Archaeological evidences have more clearly marked the progress of the cult. One of the earliest archaeological evidences regarding the worship of Vāsudeva Krishna in Northern India is the Besnagar Pillar Inscription of Heliodorus. The column described as 'Garudadvāja' indicates the identification of Vāsudeva with the Vedic deity Vishnu. (Garuda is recognised as the theriomorphic form of the latter.)

"Dr. J.N. Banerjea has pointed out some interesting inscriptions. The first was discovered by D.R. Bhandarkar at Nagor..."  

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4. Ibid. Pg. 386.
near Chitor (similar in date to the Heliodorus pillar). It describes — how a King Parasariputra Gajayana who had performed an Asvamedha Sacrifice caused a puja stone wall (Mārāyaṇa vātika) to be erected for Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva. The chief importance of this inscription lies in proving the acceptance of a performer of the Vedic sacrifice, of the Vāsudeva cult. He calls himself a 'Bhāgavat', which is also very important. The second inscription was noticed by Sri R.P. Chanda at Mathurā. This refers to the erection of a stone gateway and railing at a Vāsudeva temple in Mathurā during the rule of the Mahākshatrapa Sodasa, the son of Mahakshatrapa Rajyula. The significance of this inscription has been specially pointed out by Prof. J.N. Banerjea — as it is situated in Mathurā, the principal seat of the God's adventure. A third inscription from Mathura is the 'Mora Well Inscription', it mentions the five Vrishni heroes. The interesting points of these inscriptions lie in their being proofs to the popularity of the cult among foreigners like the Greeks and the Sakas. Thus from the beginning the Bhāgavata cult seems to have had an universal appeal. This is more clearly reflected in Literature. Apart from the Brāhmaṇical literature of the epics and purāṇas, Buddhist and Jaina sacred literature picked up the legend of Vāsudeva-Krishna.

In the Buddhist work of 'Ghata Jātaka' an account of the story is given which correspond in details to the incidents

7. Ibid. Pg. 29.
from the boyhood of the God. The transfer of the boy to the house of foster parents, the pastoral settings, and the killing of the maternal uncle are common to the legend, which is found in a more developed form in the Bhāgavat Purāṇa.

The Jaina traditional work the 'Uttarādhyāna sūtra' refers to Vāsudeva as Kesava, his parents are named Vāsudeva and Devakī, and he is described to be a contemporary of the twenty second Tīrthānkar. So we find a complex legend growing round the central figure of the epic hero.

As Dr. J.N. Banerjea mentions —

"In these episodes we have the accounts of the subjugation of some of the lower cults by a higher one which was soon to be accepted as authoritative by the orthodox section of the Vedic people."

The Vāsudeva-Krishna cult came to pose a challenge in two directions — on the one hand the totemistic practices and the various popular folk deities were forced to yield place to this new cult. On the other, the orthodox Brahmanical cults of Indra, and the later Siva, came to be vanquished, as the new God appeared in his full glory in the early medieval period.

These archaeological and literary evidences put forward by scholars show that Bhāgavatism with the worship of Vāsudeva-Krishna as its central figure, made considerable progress by the beginning of the Christian era. The cult had incorporated

9. It is irrelevant to discuss here, when and how Vishṇu, Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva became one.
the Vedic deity Vishnu and later 'Nārāyaṇa' making its own position extremely secure.

The importance of this new cult lies in the changed mode of worship. With the philosophy of the 'Srimad Bhagavat Gītā' as its central tenet, the religious practices depended upon individual faith or 'Bhakti'. Dr. Sukumari Bhattacharya while describing the characteristic of this new cult writes —

"It is quiet, the ritual consists of fruits, leaves, flowers and water given with devotion (Mbh. VI: 31: 22, XII: 257: 10). The God accepts it because of the devotion. This form of worship is entirely non-Vedic, it avoids sacrifices and its strong predilection for non-violence precludes offers of living creatures. This new-mode of worship is essentially epic-paurānic i.e. it is seen in a nebulous form in the epics and is clearly defined and established in the Purāṇas when neo-Brahmanism assumed its final shape in Hinduism." 10

With this pietic tradition existent in the cult of Bhāgavatism, it is only natural that the medieval religious consciousness would draw upon it as the source for newer philosophic speculations.

Medieval Mysticism or BhaktiVada:

Between 1100-1200 A.D. with the rise of Rāmānuja and the later sects of Nimbārka Mādhava and Vallabha, the trend is clearly noticed to move away from the 'Monism' of Shankar. Dr. S.K. Dey writes —

"(Bhakti) emerges in a more or less definite

form in the Bhāgavatism and Krishna-Vāsudeva worship of the ‘Bhagavad-Gītā’ on this basis it was systematised and erected into a philosopheme in such late Bhakti-works as the Nārada-Sāndilya-Sūtras, and it continued as a doctrine till about the end of the eighth century A.D. when the theory of spiritual non-dualism and world-illusion promulgated by the great Śaṅkarāchāryya and his followers appear to have imperilled its dualistic metaphysical foundation. This must have led to vigorous revival of Vaisnavism in the subsequent centuries; and about the 12th century A.D. we have four Sampredāyas or schools of thought into which the Vaisnava movement divided itself... associated respectively with the names of Rāmānuja, Madhava and Vishṇusvāmin (Vallabha) and Nimbārka.

These schools were all based on the principles of duality, and marked the distinction between the deity and the devotee. In this manner allowing the emotional projection of the worshipper into the object of worship.

**Islam and BhaktiVadā:**

The period following 1200 A.D. with its wave of religious mysticism came to be known as the period of ‘Bhakti-Vadā’. It is interesting to note the socio-political conditions and the role of individuals in the creation of what is also known as a ‘Theistic urge’ in Indian religion.

By 1200 A.D. the first impact of the Arabs in Sind was over, India unprepared faced the next impact — violent bloody and destructive. But the period that followed showed the Islamic people in the guise of rulers, often benevolent. An exchange was slowly becoming possible in a limited social level (for the Hindu society had now become rigid and insular). The Muslims tried conversion of the new people, but were successful either
by force or among the very low castes. With the emergence of Sufi mysticism the task became much easier. Dr. Aziz Ahmed has pointed out that, among the preachers of Islam in India, the Sufi whose training was more ascetic was closer to masses of the people than the theologist, who was generally a fanatic, and lacked the spiritual sensitiveness of the mystic. Moreover as they preached their religion to all on the basis of peace and often relied on what is known as dhikr (creation of the names or attributes of God), they offered a direct contact. But inspite of this interchange, it is quite clear that the heart of Indian mysticism was formed by the traditional 'Bhakti' piety drawn from Bhāgavatism. Sufism and Islamic egalitarianism might have served to offer an impulse that created a puritanical challenge to sexual rituals, continued by Tantricism. Probably they also helped in the development of an attitude. Of scepticism towards the cold speculations of Sankar's Vedāntism. This Scepticism and rejection of the scriptures is mainly to be found among the later schools of mystics like Kabir. Śrī Chaitanya in Bengal emphasising the emotions, progressed along the same path by allowing all men both Muslims and the outcasts to become his followers. The turn then was towards a personal God. The mode of belief, became individual faith to an emotional pitch, of even sexual ecstasies for God became a lover and a sex beloved.

The individual and the new religious consciousness:

To the medieval Indian, life flowed in sharply marked traditional streams — of religion and caste hierarchy. In the religion of the early medieval period, they had noticed with horror the Tantric practices aiming at the supernatural. Into the speculations of the intellectual Vedantist, they found little solace. Thus human element came increasingly to be negated from religion, yet society drew its main sanctions from this same religion. The caste hierarchy became increasingly rigid as the Brāhmans felt themselves to be helpless against the Muslims, who could offer the enticement of economic security.

The excess of Hindu religio-cultural hostility to the Muslims, toned itself down towards the end of the fifteenth century, but from the beginning of the contact, the Hindu was more repulsed than attracted.

Into this scene came men like Kabir, Rāmānanda, Sri Chaitanya. Their individual lives and personality attracted men as well as their doctrines. The novelty of words that 'Ram and Rahim was one' or that 'love to men was all' served to earn large followings. The character of this mass movement depended upon the individual respect to the 'Guru'. An emphasis was gradually being placed upon the individual.

The term 'Mysticism' was explained by medieval theologians in Europe — 13 "As a stretching out of the soul into 13. Happold, F.C. : Mysticism: A Study and an anthology (2nd edition), London, 1964, Pg. 37."
God through the urge of love." The same impulse was working among the Indians. They now needed a personal God. The cult of Vāsudeva-Krishna easily served this need. For as Dr. Sukumari Bhattacharya writes —

"The Vāsudeva-Krishna cult seems to have originated among pastoral folk, and his amorous career has a typical flavour of pastoral love poetry. He is pre-eminently a cow-herd and no myth of the H.V. and the Bh Pu loses sight of his earthly origin."

This naturally helped in the personal projection of the emotion of the devotee on a completely human level. Moreover, as medieval literature progressed we notice that 'Krishna is clearly conceived on two levels of significance on the human, regional and historical level, he is the cowherd hero. On the spiritual level he is the supreme being, these two layers of meaning tend to enhance each other's signifidance.'

Thus throughout the medieval period (1200 A.D. onwards) we notice the counter pulls of this new religion where God is regarded as a person as well as an object of worship. Krishna became a symbol. To the individual he embodied man's fight against all forms of mortal fear. He also served as the door through which relief from spiritual bondage can be attained. This emphasis on a particular heroic figure epitomises the 'Theistic urge' of medieval India, expressed through sporadic mass movements under the following of single gurus. Sublimation was reached through chantings, ecstatic evocations and hymns.

Rajasthan fell into this religious territory. The proximity to Brindaban, the place where the early life of the 'Blue God' was played out, naturally influenced the inhabitants.

From an early time Rajasthan has been the seat of the Vaisnava faith. The Ghosuttdi inscription of the second century B.C. (commemorating the construction of a wall to the hall of worship devoted to Samkarshana, Balarama and Vasudeva) was the earliest testimony to the prevalence of the cult in this region. Fragmentary sculptures depicting the Krishna theme have been found from the fourth century A.D. onwards at Pandor, in Narwar, and the north western Rajasthan. A fragmentary inscription belonging to the early Pratihara period refers to Krishna playing with Radhā and the Gopies at Gokul. With this tradition in front of them, the rulers and the people of Rajasthan constantly turned to the worship of Vasudeva-Krishna as an important deity. Dr. G.N. Sharma refers to a number of inscriptions which testify to the importance given by the Rajputs to the God Krishna. The Eklinga Inscription of V.S. 1485, refers to a temple which was constructed by Rana Nokal in honour of 'Dwarkādhish'. The Kumbhalgarh inscription mentions the building of a temple at Chitor to Gadādhar Vishnu. Another very interesting inscription pointed out by Dr. G.N. Sharma, describes the installation of images of Vasudeva-Krishna by Rānā

Kumbha. (The same king whom stories have accredited with bitter opposition to Mirābī, the chief Vaisnavite Saint of Rajasthan.)

In the late medieval period, the preachings of the Vallabhāchārya sect had a great impact on the people. The temple of Śrī Nathji at Nathwārā, with its immense wealth still bear testimony to the popularity of this sect in Rajasthan. Dr. G.N. Sharma has pointed out that apart from the influences exerted by Vallāḥāchārya, the teachings of the early medieval 'Bhaktas' of Rajasthan are found recorded in Mahāviveka V.S. 1650, the Viprabodh of V.S. 1737 and the Manasikha of V.S. 1779. These show a rejection of the meaningless rituals and caste rigidity common in Brāhmaṇical Hinduism. A blending of Hindu and Muslim mysticism is noticed, as devotion to God is advised to be expressed through music, dance and reading the holy texts in the Vernacular language. The final culmination of the impact on individual consciousness was expressed in the person of the charming princess Saint Mirābī, who left her home for the love of 'Krishna' with only her songs to accompany her.

As individuals, the patron and the artist of Rajasthani painting fell within, the socio-religious norms that were being set by this new wave of mysticism. The economic set up of the patronage was also partly changed. Hitherto the middle class for whom paintings were done, belonged to the rich

Jaina community. The patronage became wider, with the growth of Vaisnava influence in Rajasthan. Non Hindus like the Jainas also came to commission paintings of Krishna. Changes were introduced in Jaina illustrated texts as already noticed in the illustrated manuscript of the 'Vasanta Vilāsa'.

The enhanced religious feelings led to an increased number of temples. These bore the motifs illustrating the myth of Vasudeva Krishna. The popularity of the legend made its rendering on stone rather easy. This was later taken up by the painter, who drew the murals as well as illustrated sacred texts.

In a traditional society, the demands of the group formulated the themes of art. The patron and the artist shared the same taste instead of having individual tastes. Medieval mysticism gave a great deal of freedom both to the individual patron and the artist in allowing them to portray love, war and daily life through religious motifs. An expression of medieval chivalry is found through the romantic exploits of Krishna.

Individualism in the sense, understood by the average westerner was never possible in medieval India. Only a release from strict cannons was allowed. In the Seventeenth century, new norms came to be created, as the classical norms had broken down in the earlier period. Medieval mysticism, specially through the influence of the cult of Vasudeva Krishna, gave a universal sanction to the new norm. In the erection of this aesthetic convention both the artist and the patron took part. The common bond was a shared religious consciousness which included all men. Krishna thus became a new symbol in art, and even devout Muslims felt

no twinge of conscience in depicting his many exploits. The
danger of emphasising the role of the individual in the arts
of medieval India should be avoided, (mainly due to insufficient
informations). Nevertheless it becomes clear that mysticism,
specially adopting the cult of Vāsudeva-Krishna gave the
medieval Indian a number of 'saints' (gurus) which marks the
emergence of personalities in the caste ridden society of India.
This mark of humanism i.e. the love for man as an individual
transform helped to create the Rajasthani painter into an individual
artist from only a craftsman. It also released Rajasthani
painting from the limits of both monastic art as well as craft
guilds.

(11)

THE MYTH OF KRISHNA : the projection of the motif:

The Myth of Krishna has strange and irreconciliable
elements. In the Mahābhārata the Vrīṣṇi hero is uppermost. A
king, a statesman, a diplomat — he epitomises all the grandeurs
of a war god. But it is difficult to trace the sage, the disci­
ple of Ghora-Āṅgiras who philosophises in the Bhagavat Gītā.
Nor is there any trace of the boy Gopal, who spends his time in
idle sports, but while doing this also kills the demons. This
lovable figure of the Bh. Pu. is mentioned casually in the
'Naraniya' section of the Mahābhārat. No significance however
attaches to the incidents. The Harivaṃsa — an appendix of
the Mahābhārata first tries to rectify the mistake by reconstruct­
ing an early life of the Prince of Dwārakā. It is the Bh. Pu.
however who gives the whole charming story of boyhood and youth in the 'Daśam Skandha'. This part of the Purāṇa grew so popular in the medieval period, that the rest of the work was almost ignored.

The Krishna myth in its fully developed form was then first clearly expressed in the Bh. Pu. It is now necessary for the sake of the later art modes to discuss how the story of Gopāl-Krishna came to be grafted on that of the Vāsudeva-Krishna.

R.G. Bhandarkar relates that the mention of the early life of Krishna by the Chedi King Śiśupāla in the Sābhāparva are definite interpolations. According to him these stories were brought in by the Ābhīras, a foreign tribe who were Christian. Thus the early life of the shepherd God Christ helped to give birth to the stories of Krishna. J.N. Banerjea, agreeing with the opinions of other scholars, object to this theory of the Christian origin of the myth. According to him the Ābhīrs themselves had little to do with Christianity.

The Ghaṭa Jātaka which relates a similar story to the one found in the Bh. Purāṇa, naturally leads us to assume that certain stories must have been current among the pastoral folk of the country, which later came to be grafted on the Vrishṇi.

hero. Moreover whatever be the arguments regarding the date of the Ghaṭa Jātaka, the archaeological evidences, show that sculpture was adopting as a popular motif the boyhood of Krishna long before the emergence of Bh. Pu. (ninth-tenth century A.D.). The dependence of art was therefore upon those particular aspects of the myth which sprang from the humble consciousness of a pastoral people, rather than the figure round which intellectual Brāhmanism revolved. The survival of this 'motif' therefore into later medieval plastic arts, which showed certain folk characteristics can easily be explained.

"Finally, while analysing the Bh. Pu., T.J. Hopkins writes—

"The Bhāgavat does not represent the viewpoint of the established orthodox social and economic groups. On the contrary, the wealthy, learned and influential supporters of the status-quo appear as the prime opponents of devotional religion as it appears in the Bhāgavata." 21

This attitude would naturally be acceptable to medieval religious consciousness, whose outburst of mysticism had rejected the scriptures as well as socio-economic domination of the orthodox society. Thus the Bh. Pu. became the most widely known religious text, although the medieval period (1200 A.D. —— ) simultaneously, Krishna became the central figure in literature and the plastic arts not as the epic hero, but as the ideal lover, and a charming youth.

Transformation of 'Krishna' into a Motif:

The transformation of Krishna into a popular motif in all artistic modes were due to certain definite factors — Firstly Krishna had the stock features of the ritual hero — Dr. Sukumari Bhattacharya writes —

"Thus he has supernatural origin, with portents of faith, perils menacing him in infancy (Putana) initiation, wandering a magical contest (eg. Kamsavadh) the Kuvalay pida episode) trial or persecution (by Kamsa and his followers) a violent or mysterious death and resurrection or ascension (cs the H.V. account of his ascent to heaven)." 22

Secondly: as man and God combined in one, he presents that element of divinity on earth, that allows the people to project their emotions on him. Dr. Sukumari Bhattacharya while describing the definite appeal of Krishna writes —

"An entire people project their hopes and aspirations on to such a hero, concretizing him through myths and legends until their apotheosis is complete and then he becomes their 'ideal ego' their dream-self and can mould their communal life through his rich and complex hierophany ", 23.

Lastly: Krishna became a symbol of love. Raised to the level of an allegory the love and the amorous sports of the Gopis allow the medieval 'Vaisnavas' the freedom it was craving. Not confined within the social limits of marriage, it was also not debased into the terrible sexual orgies of Tantricism. Accompanied by dance and music, it still offered a sensuous charm, that was later raised to the heights of sexual orgiastic rituals.

22. Bhattacharya, Sukumari — The Indian Theogony, Pg. 304-305.
23. Ibid., Pg. 308.
Medieval Sculpture and the development of the Myth:

Krishna, with his early myth cycle of Gopala-Balaram, made an appearance in sculpture long before the medieval period (1200 A.D.). Early terra-cotta reliefs and figures were discovered at Rajasthan. Mr. H. Goetz and Mr. K.D. Bajpai mention that they showed representation from the legends of Gopala-Krishna, namely the lifting of the mount Govardhana, and taking tolls from the milkmaids. In stone, the earliest depiction it is to be found in a relief of red sand stone, reserved in the Mathura Museum. It is considered to be of the 1st or 2nd century A.D. It depicts Vasudeva crossing the Yamuna with the child Krishna.

In the bas reliefs of the Badami Caves II & IV Mr. R.D. Banerjea had discovered many incidents from the life of Krishna. Mainly his birth, childhood in Gokul with Balarama, the death of Pitamah, the uprooting of the Yamalārjuna trees, the incident of the cart, the killing of Vatsa, Arishita and Dhemuka, the submission of Kaliya, the lifting of mount Govardhan, the killing of Mushtika and Kamsa brothers. The inscriptions of the Western Chalukya king Mangalesa dated 500-578 A.D. as well as a Kanarese inscription of the same king on the rock wall outside Cave No.III, have given Dr. R.D. Banerjea the evidence to conclude that the two Vaishnava caves belonged to about 500-578 A.D.

The early Gupta temple of Deogarh has also been a very interesting landmark, in the depiction of the 'Krishna' motif. It is devoted wholly to Vishnu. Apart from the usual scenes, of the nativity, the butter thief and the killing of Kamsa, there is the interesting motif of Krishna's meeting with Sudama.

The popularity of the 'Krishna motif' as temple decorations, becomes quite evident by the 6th century A.D. onwards. Evidently the floating mass of stories, prevailing all over northern India found an expression in sculpture long before late medieval literature started drawing upon its rich store. Describing the Deogarh temple friezes, Pandit Madho Swarup Vat comments — 27 'The above panels offer earliest sculptural evidence of the popularity of the Krishna story in the Gupta period' (The author, moreover on the basis of the evidences gathered places the temple to be in the early part of the sixth century A.D.).

The excavations at Paharpur threw up strange and new data concerning the growth and depiction of the Krishna legend in the plastic medium. 28 Certain early incidents — like the killing of Pralambasura sent to kill Krishna — and the uprooting of the two Arjuna trees are found. The latter incident is depicted in a very interesting manner. The boyhood of Krishna

27. Ibid. Pg. 20.
is indicated by triple traces of hair on the head and the peculiar torque: besides the usual ornaments such as bracelets, anklets and a diadem on the forehead, the elaborate Kundala consisting of a broad piece of leaf (patra kundala) are noteworthy. Krishna is here shown standing astride with his feet placed on the heads of two prostrate figures while holding in each hand the bent upper part of the stump of a tree which stands on either border. The two figures below are identified with Nala and Kubera.

The most important and interesting find in Paharpur happens to be the figure of Radha. K.N. Dikshit writes —

"The long wall facing south in the second angle on the south-east contains some of the most important sculptures of the Krishna cult. The builders apparently paid special attention to these figures as they have been finally executed and sheltered in recesses embellished with lotus-leaf pattern bricks. The sequence of the figures leads to the conclusion that No. 22 is a figure intended to represent 'Radha and Krishna'. This is the very first representation of this divine pair. Although the earliest mention of Radha is to be found in Hala's Saptasati — a work assigned to the earlier centuries of the Christian era. The association of Radha with the divine cow-herd which is a special feature of late Vaishnavism in Bengal is not found in any of the earlier Puranic texts. Doubts have, therefore, been naturally raised against the identification, but the presence of the next two sculptures representing Yamuna and Balarama respectively raise the strong presumption that the divine pair is associated with Balarama and the river Yamuna — the scene of Krishna's early activity. It can not also be said that the female here represents one of the Gopis or cowherdesses with whom the boy Krishna sported for the halo behind the head indicates for certain that the female was of a divine character — The sculpture is attributed to about the seventh century A.D." 29.

"The figure of Krishna and Radha are also portrayed in characteristic attitudes, made popular in the..." 29. Ibid. Pg. 45.
medieval period — The figure of Krishna stands cross-legged with his right hand round the neck of Radha and the left in the attitude of protection with the fingers pointing upwards. The female figure has her left arm round the neck of Krishna while the right points below with all fingers. Probably the mystic significance of the attitude of the hands of the pair is that of the union of heaven and earth."

By seventh century A.D., it is quite clear that the plastic arts of sculpture had easily adopted Krishna-Gopal myth as a popular motif. Mander, Māmallapuram, Khajurāho and Ellorā have all shown the depictions from the life of Krishna — emphasising upon his human character, as well as his divinity. The same dual aspect of the sacred and the secular.

Rajasthan as an artistic territory, was within the popular influence of this myth. In Kishan Bilwās, where the main group of temples are devoted to Vishnu, the image of Krishna is repeated very often. A charming study of Krishna with his flute is particularly noticeable. These temples are however not very old, the oldest of the temples probably belong to the Gurjara-Pratihāra period.

Moreover in Mewar under the patronage of Rana Kumbha in 1448 the Krishna temple the Vrīji or Kumbhaśyāma, had been built on the remnants of a temple of the ninth century. This (medieval) zeal of building temples to the Vaiṣṇava sect was continued, and as a testimony to this stands the Nāthwādā temple near Udaipur, at present a modern construction with little aesthetic appeal except to the devout.
The interdependence of sculpture and painting is not very clearly marked. As artistic modes, Rajasthani painting emerged long after the decline of creative skill in sculpture. Stray stylistic affinities can however be noticed. The continued tradition of decorating buildings both religious and secular point to a large number of murals painted before the seventeenth century A.D. Dr. H. Goetz writing about the evolution of Rajasthani school of painting states —

"the characteristic features of Rajput painting are already evident in the Warrior Memorial Stones of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, also that reliefs in the purest Rajput style have been traced at Amber (C.A.1560 et seq) and Brindaban Nurpur (before 1613) and Datia (before 1627)." 30

The influence on these murals however point more to the western Indian Mss. illustrations style.

The link between the arts, therefore, depends more upon the continued depiction of the motif. Sculpture, except in the later Paharpur friezes, devote exclusive attention to 'Krishna-Gopāla' myth cycle rather than to the erotic element introduced in the sports with the Gopis and 'Rādhā'. Medieval literature, later strikes a new note by emphasising the amorous relations between 'Rādhā' the chief gopi and the cowherd youth Krishna. Poetry became a vehicle of the mystic sentiment, so that a bridge was erected between the sacred and the profane.

Rajasthani painting, developing mainly through manuscript illustration, depended more on medieval literature for inspiration. The main impetus was therefore mystic, and the paintings assumed the character of pastoral poetry which they illustrated.

**Krishna : of Literature :**

Love is the theme of poetry and 'Kāvyas' centring round the 'Vaiṣṇava movement' of the medieval period. Love in union and love in separation, clearly expressed the urgent cry of the human soul. 'Rādhā' emerged as the natural answer to the demands of duality. Mysticism in so far as it was a projection of the human soul into the divine developed doctrines, of which 'Rādhā' was the crystalised symbol of the devotee. In poetry, the planes of physical and spiritual were merged, and 'Brindāvan' was the platform, where freed from social restrictions, the devotee could find release from mortal fears. Poetry grew enriched as the doctrine of 'duality' or 'qualified monism' developed.

The floating 'Krishna' legend, developing as part of a cult, had found expression in pre-medieval sculpture, as well as literature. 'Bālcharitam' composed by Bṛhasa (whose date is still a matter of conjecture) gives full expression to the myth. The sports with the gopis are also mentioned. Kalidāsa also makes stray references to 'Krishna' the cowherd. When we notice the clear depictions of the Krishna-Gopāla myth at the
Deogarh temple of the Gupta period. These references do not surprise us. It becomes clear that long before Bh. Pu. was fully composed, (if ninth to sixteenth century is accepted as the real date of composition) a popular story growing in its own momentum had captured artistic imagination. It had also introduced an element of challenge to Brāhmanical orthodoxy by adopting itself into the Vishnu cult.

The mention of Rādhā is first found in the Gāthā Saptasati of Hāλa (a Prakrit composition). The accepted date of composition corresponds more or less to the date of the sculpture of Krishna and a divine female found at Paharpur. The full glory of the divine form of 'Rādhā' develops in the mystic poetry of the 'Bhakti period' (A.D. 1200 onwards). The Gīṭa-Govinda of Jaydeva created the first great impact that gave a new dimension to the 'Krishna' myth transforming it into an allegory of love.

The Bh. Pu. still remained, the main saga of 'Krishna'. Its popularity being undiminished, gave rise to later works, which deviated from the main incidents related in the religious text. Yet after the composition of Gīṭa Govinda by Jaydeva, she commands as great an importance as the central figure of Krishna. W.G. Archer writes —

31 "During the next two hundred years from the tenth to twelfth century the 'Krishna' story completely alters."

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It is not that the facts given in the Bh. Pu. are disputed. It is rather that the emphasis and viewpoint are changed.

Now this factor is rather important. The change is brought about by the general transformation in the religious outlook of the period. The poetry becomes a vehicle of that same religious impulse which had governed Indian arts norms from time immemorial. Only the character of this religion was different and new. Mysticism in Europe and Asia had given rise to beautiful poetry. The Cathars, the Troubadours, the Sufis, have produced some of the greatest love lyrics of all times. In India the same wave engulfed life and art. But this emphasis on 'love' was essentially a product of the medieval period, finding no echo in the classical tradition embodied in the plastic arts. When Rajasthani painting grew as an art media, it grew rich with the inspiration of 'Bhakti'. Classical painting had little influence on this school, therefore the dramas of Kālidāsa were not its theme.

A product of its age, it mainly developed as a form of Mss. illustration. These Mss. were mainly the 'Bhakti' works of the period, whose popularity in Rajasthan and Gujarat led to the replacement of the illustration of the Jaina religious works like the Kalkā Katha, by works like 'Bālagorāl Stuti.'

Jayadeva's poem 'Gīta Govinda' was the first to express the change that was ushered in by what is now termed as 'Bhakti literature'. The whole work deals with the many emotional
aspects of 'Radha' and Krishna's temporary separation and the ecstasy of the final union. But among all the glowing sensuality, the constant note is harped — Krishna is a God. His divinity must not be ignored.

The spread of the 'Krishna' cult as well as the later medieval works of 'Bhakti' owed most to Vallabhāchārya. A south Indian Brāhman he established an image of Krishna at Govardhan in the Braj country, and from this as his head quarters spread his doctrine into the neighbouring regions. He wrote many works in Sanskrit, but nothing in Hindi.

Vittal Nath his son is also credited to have written verses in Hindi, he is also acclaimed to be the author of a short prose work called 'Mandan' dealing with the story of Radhā and Krishna (which must be one of the earliest extant prose writings in Hindi).

Apart from their own literary productions (which were not considerable,) Vallabhāchārya and his son Vittalnāth each had four disciples, all of whom were Hindi poets. They are known as the 'Ashta Chātrap', because their poems are considered standards for that dialect of Western Hindi in which they wrote. The dialect was the Braj Bhāshā, named after the district in which they lived. This particular dialect exerted a significant influence on Hindi poetry of the Krishnaite themes. The disciples of Vallabhāchārya, who are included in the 'Ashta Chātrap' were — Sur Dās, Krishna Dās, Ray Ahari, Parmānand Dās and Kumbhan Dās. Those of Vittalnāth were, — Chaturbī Dās, Chhit Svāmi, Nand Dās and Govind Dās. These men flourished about the middle or the second half of the sixteenth century. The period approximately corresponds with the emergence of Rajasthani painting as an artistic media. Sur Dās is consi...
to be the greatest among these poets. His importance lies in the
fact that he excelled in many styles of composition. A large
number of incidents from the Bhagavata Purāṇa were reproduced by
him in exquisite verse and he was the writer of a number of
lyrics whose subject was the Radha-Krishna myths. These were
collected in the Sur Sagar and Suravali. The Sur Sagar became
very popular among the Rajasthani painters. This is evident from
the number of illustrated Sur Sagars which have been found.

Kesav Das (1555-1617) of Orchha, a poet of Bundelkhand
produced among his many other works on the art of poetry, a book
named Rasikpriya. It was a Hindi commentary to the Sanskrit
classification of love - the Nayakas and Nayikas. Kesav Das was
the forerunner in the movement to systematize the art of poetry.
His Kavipriya describing the necessary qualities marking a good
poem made him an authority on poetry. Though not belonging to
any particular religious sect like Surdas, he also became popular
among Rajasthani painters for his Rasikpriya was often illustrated.
He often used Krishna and Radha as examples and W.G. Archer
commenting on his work writes - 'Krishna, in fact, is here regarded
as resuming in himself all possible romantic experiences. He is no
longer merely the cowherd lover or the hero prince, the central
figure of a sacred narrative. Neither is he merely or only the lover
of Radha. He is deemed to know love from every angle and thus to
sanctify all modes of passionate behaviour. He is love itself.'

Krishna's transformation into a symbol is thus
complete. He casts his shadow over the whole of
nature. The cloud in the rainy season is darkened by

33. Archer, W.G. The Loves of Krishna, Pg. 92.
the blue complexion of Krishna, the spring is portrayed as the dancing 'Krishna', its autumnal rays reflect his golden dress. In fact 'Krishna' covers all aspect of existence, so that the whole world is empty and devoid of all colour without his divine presence.

It is out of these varied elements expressed in other forms of art, that Krishna of painting emerges.

(iii)

**Krishna in Painting:**

Some of the earliest paintings on Vaisnavite theme, is to be found in the Western Indian style of Mss. illustrations. Mr. M.R. Majumdar mentions a number of illustrated 'Balagopal stutis'. The first series was acquired by the Museum of fine arts, Boston. Mr. Norman Brown published a full account of this Ms. in Eastern Art, (Vol. 1) dates it to be about mid-fifteenth century. A second series of the same illustrated Ms. was acquired by the Baroda Museum. While a third and fourth series was also discovered. The last is rather damaged. Describing these Mr. M.R. Majumdar writes —

"Outstanding features of these miniatures are among others the brick red background, the simple colour scheme, the eyes of the figures drawn out to the ears, the further eye protruding beyond the facial line, eyebrows in simple curves, pointed nose, the large circular ear-rings and the floral decorations." 34

While discussing the Vaiṣṇavite theme in Gujarati painting Mr. Majumdar mentions another very interesting Ms. the Bhakti-rathnāvali. This a selection of the finest utterances on the nine-fold forms of Bhakti from the Bhāgavat. It is arranged in thirteen groups according to subjects. Describing this Ms. Mr. Majumdar states —

"Coming as it does from Gujarat proper, (it has been copied in Ahmedabad in Samvat 1806 i.e. 1700 A.D.) makes it evident that the Vaiṣṇava work was very popular on this side of India and that the style of these miniatures is the one that was prevalent in Gujarat down to the time of contemporary Mughal and Rajput influences." 35

This makes it clear that Gujarat and Rajasthan fell within a common artistic territory. It is marked by the themes, rather than the composition in the miniature paintings.

"Mr. Majumdar also mentions an illustrated 'Bhāgavat Dasām Skandha'. 36 This Ms. is painted in the usual style of Western Indian Ms. illustrations, and is dated by him to be of the late fifteenth century.

In the sixteenth century, the Krishna theme is depicted in the controversial 'Chaurapañchāśikā - Laur Chandā illustration' style. A Bhāgavat Purāṇa with fragmentary leaves dispersed in various collections have been discovered. Another single miniature in the collection of Sm. Madhuri Desai has been noticed by various scholars in their discussions on the origin of

35. Ibid. Pg. 4.
36. Ibid. Pg. 16.
Rajasthani Painting. The paintings are marked by that bright colour, absence of the further eye and simple composition with two dimensional perspective characteristic of this group. If the view, that marks this style as 'generic' is accepted, then the popularity of the Bhāgavat Purāṇa illustrations, and the Krishna theme, in Rajasthani painting becomes clear. Krishna is treated as a motif in Rajasthani painting, almost from the beginning of its origin as an artistic mode.

The earliest dated Bhāgavat Purāṇa that is mentioned by scholars is a Bhāgavat Dasamskandha of Jodhpur Fort. It is mentioned by Mr. M.R. Majumdar to be dated Samvat 1667 i.e. A.D. 1610. About this Ms. Mr. Majumdar writes that, the commentary was written in old Gujarati. The style seems to be characteristic of that period of transition when the 'pure Gujarati' style was gradually giving away to Rajasthani style of painting. The colouring he writes, are extremely simple being composed of the basic colours of red, blue, green and yellow. The paintings have no frame and no background. The size is varied, according to the demands of the narrative and the convenience of the scribe. Here the paintings serve as mere illustrations to the Ms. whose chief importance is given to the scribe rather than the painter. Another early instance of the Mewar idiom is to be found in only two leaves from a Bhāgavat in the Boston Museum. It is dated about 1625 A.D.

37. Ibid., Pg. 16.
Mr. Karl Khandalwala gives a detailed account of a fragmentary Bhagavat Purana reserved in the Bhandarkar Institute, Poona.

It contains 334 folios comprising Skandhas No. 8, 11, and 12 of the Bhagavat. The total number of illustrations are 129 of which 88 cover the full page. The size of each folio is $15\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Most of the paintings are in good condition. The size of each full page illustration with borders is approximately $14\frac{1}{2} \times 8$ inches. The borders are on an average about an inch wide. Some folios have full page illustration on both sides and no text. In the colophon of Skandha 12 of the manuscript the date is given as 10th August 1648 A.D. (Samvat 1705). The place where it was written is mentioned as the city of Udaipur. The name of the scribe appears from the colophon of Skanda No. 8. On folio No. 84 as one Jasavanta and Udaipur where it was written is again mentioned. At the bottom of the illustration on folio No. 5 Skandha 8 is written the name of the painter. The inscription reads 'Lishat Chitaro Sahabadi' which means the work of the painter Sahabadi. This is not the only folio in which the painters name appears. 38.

From the above description given by Mr. Khandalwala quite a number of points become clear.

First and the most important is the identity of the painter who is a Muslim. Mr. Khandalwala thinks that the painter was recruited from the atelier of Emperor Jahangir. For he seems to portray a man who bears great similarity to the emperor himself.

Secondly, the convention of using Moghul costumes, characteristic of the 'Chaurapancasikā group' is continued. It appears rather incongruous. The illustrations thus adopt a

contemporary note moving away from the tone of the narrative. But this also helps to form an artistic convention, as the painter applies a developed technique though foreign, to a traditional theme. It is interesting to note the Akbari and Jahangiri coats and breeches with Akbari turbans worn by the men, while the architecture portrayed is of the late Akbari and Jahangiri period. Even the Mughal technique of the Shadow under the armpit is continued.

Finally the colours used show a blending of Gujarati style Ms. illustrations with that of the Mughal court paintings. This happy inter-mixture formulated the style of Rajasthani painting in general and the Mewar idiom in particular. It also introduced a new vigour into old art forms.

According to Mr. Khandalwala, Sahabdin definitely left the Mughal atelier during the reign of Shajahan following a general retrenchment of artists. Evidently, he along with other artists then wandered in search of patronage. The Rajput rulers proved to be lovers of art, but they demanded the illustration of different themes. Thus it was the themes of the paintings in seventeenth century more than the style that distinguishes Rajasthani from Mughal paintings. This is particularly important in the case of the Bhāgavats illustrated. The Poona Bhāgavata should therefore be considered as a landmark in the illustrations of the Krishna themes.

39. Ibid. Pg. 7.
Another fragmentary Bhagavat is reserved in the National Museum. It is dated by the authorities 1648 A.D. and is supposed to belong to the Mewar idiom. The size of the paintings are mainly — 16.5 x 12.7 cm. Particularly interesting is the episode of 'Prahlad'.

40 Mr. Moti Chandra brings forward illustrations from various sets of Bhagavat Purana belonging to the Mewar idiom. Interesting examples are 'Krishna holding up the Mount Govardhan'. This shows the extremely lively grouping of humans and animals, while the whole Brindaban crowds under the mountain for shelter. The colours are very interesting. Specially marked is the note of animation in the painting. The other two illustrations are Krishna sporting in the Jamuna with Gopis dated circa 1700 A.D. belonging to Moti Chand himself. While the next is Krishna swallowing the forest fire. This painting is extremely interesting as the bright red gold line of the fire forms a ring round figures which are depicted like 'falling cards'. This painting is preserved in the collection of Mr. G.K. Kanoria. The set is however distributed in various collections.

Another interesting illustration to the Bhagavat Purana is to be found in 10 stray leaves in the Prachya Vidya Prathahan 40. Chandra, Moti: Mewar Painting in the Seventeenth Century, New Delhi, 1957. Plates No. 8 & 9.

41 Ibid. Plate No. 8.
42 Ibid. Plate No. 9.
Udaipur. The size of the paintings is about $16\frac{1}{2}$ x 9 inches. The inscription at the back is in old Rajasthani. The illustrations are slightly damaged. An excellent painting is the incident of Krishna with Sakatāsur. The background is yellow, in the left hand corner stands a woman and Krishna with two male figures. In the midst lies Krishna under the cart. A strange geometric shape is formed by the cart. In the left corner stands a well clad man probably Nanda, with Yasodā holding baby Krishna on her lap. They are being hailed by two figures.

The painting shows the use of red, light green, blue, dark blue and a happy use of gold.

The number of paintings found in different Museums and collections testify to the profuse illustrations of the Bhāgavat Purāṇa and Krishna leela themes. Mewar was particularly rich in the production of these paintings.

The other schools of painting did not lag behind, and large numbers have been yielded from different collections. Mention must be made of a set reserved in the Kotah Museum, referred to by Mr. Barret and Mr. Gray. They consider this to be one of the best products of the Bundi school. While Mr. H. Goetz mentions a Bhāgavat Purāṇa reserved in the Delhi Art

44. Goetz, H. 'Mewar with some Paintings from Jodhpur in the collection of Kumar Sangram Singh' in Marg Vol.XIV Pg. 43.
trade belonging to the Marwar idiom. Mr. Barret and Gray men-
tion a single painting of Krishna holding up the mount Govardhan, 
now preserved in the British Museum. This belongs to the Bikaner 
idiom and is painted by the artist Ruknuddin, a Muslim. Moreover 
the scholars notice in these paintings strong Deccani influence.

All these paintings helped to mark the style and feature 
of particular idioms of Rajasthani painting. In themes a con-
vention was formulated, which marks the importance of the 
'Bhagavat'.

In the regions of Bundelkhand and southern Rajasthan, 
over which the Malwa idiom of painting flourished are found a 
large number of illustrated Bhāgavat Purāṇas. The national 
Museum in Delhi alone house about two sets (though incomplete) 
of the illustrated sacred text belonging to C. 1660 A.D. and 
1650-1675 A.D. There are two fragmentary sets of Krishna leela 
belonging to C. 1650 A.D. and 1680 A.D. The last is particularly 
interesting as it shows certain interesting incidents from the 
eyear boyhood of Krishna. Mainly Krishna destroying Kesi, 
humbling the pride of Brahmā and walking with Balarām surrounded 
by cows. The size of these paintings are 22.8 x 16.6 cms.
Another interesting illustration to the Krishna leela is to be 
found in four leaves from an illustrated Bhāgavat of this same 
school, belonging to about 1690 A.D. This is reserved in the 
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras. The composition of the paintings 
are extremely interesting. The 'space' of the paintings are 
divided into planes by lines and squares. These are drawn
parallel or like a chess board. Sometimes this use of square and patterned line is used in a combined manner.

The Halwa school is particularly rich in colouring and most of the paintings show bright backgrounds of red, yellow, dark brown against which the movements, necessary in depiction of Krishna's boyhood and youth stand out in a striking manner.

By the seventeenth century, the depiction of the 'Krishna' theme became so common that a set of paintings emerge which do not often bear the captions, drawn from the Bhāgavat. The pictures tell their own story. The painter is here in the throes of a new impetus which creates a thematic convention. The artist and the patron however both take part in its erection. The best example of this is to be found in the Kishangarh paintings. Here the artist, Nihal Chand inspired by his poet prince creates a new type of female figure in the person of Radha.

Though the Bhāgavat Purāṇa is considered as the main storehouse of the Krishna myth, the other literary works bearing the 'Krishna' theme became popular materials for illustration. Two important works which must be mentioned are Jayadeva's Gīta-Govinda and Surdas's Sur Sāgar. The Rasikpriya of Keśavadās should also not be omitted. But in this work, Krishna is transformed into a 'Nāyaka' and his myth cycle does not remain with

him (as such this work describes special treatment mainly as a part of the Nayaka-Nayika bheda theme). Both in the Sur Sagar and in the Geeta-Govinda 'Krishna' retains all his attributes. He is projected as the central figure, round whom the literary work revolves.

The Geeta Govinda gained in popularity in the Gujarat-Rajasthan area, mainly due to its Vaishnava flavour. Though it mainly portrays the temporary separation of Radhā and Krishna, and the pangs of jealousy suffered by Radha due to Krishna's infidelity with other cow-girls, the work never loses sight of 'Krishna' as the God. This movement in the dual plane probably accounts for its place in the sacred texts of the Vaishnavas.

Mr. M.R. Majumdar mentions a Geeta-Govinda illustration belonging to the fifteenth century. The paintings are executed in the western Indian illustration style. It shows the extension of this style to other themes than strictly Jaina religious texts. According to Mr. M.R. Majumdar this is the earliest known illustration of the Geeta-Govinda text in India.

In the sixteenth century, the illustration of the Geeta-Govinda is to be found in the controversial Chaurepanchādikā style. A single miniature is reserved in the National Museum.


47. Khandelwal, K. New Documents of Indian Painting — a reappraisal (Bombay), 1969. Pg. 85-86.
most probably this is the colophon to the text. It shows an assembly of authors. Jayadeva is marked by an inscription over his head, on the background of the painting. The others are similarly marked. It is interesting to find here Umapati and Dhooyee, the two poets of Laxmana Sen's court, who were known to be Jayadev's contemporary.

The other Gita Govinda illustration belonging to the same group is reserved in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay. It is marked by the characteristic use of bright colours and Mughal costumes.

While discussing the Mewar school of painting in the seventeenth century Mr. Moti Chandra mentions a Gita-Govinda of about 1650 reserved in the Prince of Wales Museum. The inscription is in mixed Gujarati and Rajasthani. Another set, slightly later in date (about 1655-1660 A.D.) is mentioned by Dr. Moti Chandra to belong to the collection of KumarrSangram Singh of Nawalgarh. The painting reproduced in 'Mewar Painting in the seventeenth century' shows a Sakhi addressing the love-lorn Radha. Two unpublished paintings of the same set are extremely interesting. It shows Krishna saluting Radhā. The size of the painting is approximately 8 x 6. While the second

49. Chandra, Moti: Mewar Painting in the seventeenth Century', Pg. 2
50. Ibid. Plate No. 6.
shows Krishna opening the garments of Radha. The size is approximately 9 x 7 inches. Painted in the usual style of Mewar painting of the seventeenth century it shows good use of colour. Though pastel shades are found in the background, the colours mainly used are red, yellow, dark blue, etc. The general tone of the paintings are therefore very bright. The set shows no inscriptions on the top.

An interesting Gita Govinda illustration belonging to the Mewar idiom is preserved in the Prachya Vidya Samasthan, Udaipur. It is rather late in date (about 1723 A.D.). It shows interesting features. The text in Sanskrit is fully given, and the paintings only act as a decoration to the text. The paintings by themselves do not give a continuous narrative. The size of the paintings are also rather small about 6½ x 5 inches. The paintings appear to be in response to the similar demands for illustration as in modern works of fiction.

A very important work in this period is the Sur Sagar of Surdas. A large number of lyrics connected with the worship of Krishna and Radha were collected together in the Sur Sagar. This mainly dealt with Krishna's life in Brindaban. His departure to Mathurs is also dealt with in a poignant manner. The sentiments and the poetic value of this work made it very popular among the Vaishnavas.

The National Museum (New Delhi) has a very interesting illustration to the Sur Sagar. It belongs to the Mewar idiom and is dated c. 1640 A.D. Most of the paintings deal with the pathos of the Gopis at the approaching departure of Krishna to Mathura. This set has a few fragmentary
leaves. The inscription on the top is in the Devnagri script. The incidents in the paintings are very interesting. One painting with particularly dramatic movement, shows Krishna speaking to three women while another woman has fallen to the ground, with one hand on the breast. Another interesting painting shows Krishna thrice within the same frame of the composition. He is standing with bows and arrows, then conversing with Radha, finally he is seated below talking to Uddhava. Another painting shows Krishna leaving on a chariot while the disconsolate women sit huddled together. The colours used are mainly bright yellow in the background. The trees are painted in sap and dark green. The garments are brightly coloured. Krishna usually wears Mughal costumes and in one painting the chākdar Jāmā is very clearly marked. The happy blending of a purely Hindu subject, with Mughal court art is thus quite clear.

Another Sur Sāger is mentioned by Dr. Moti Chandra belonging to the G.K. Kanoria’s collection. It is dated about 1650-51 A.D. A painting is published from this set by Dr. Moti Chandra. This painting is extremely interesting. It contains the yellow format on top with the inscriptions describing the subject of the painting. The dance of Krishna. The colours are extremely bright and the top of the painting illustrates a set of musicians wearing contemporary costume of turbans, coats, waistbands, etc. Below is depicted a grove, where Krishna is

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51. Ibid. Plate No. 3.
seen to be dancing accompanied by dancing women. The movements of the figures, the generally bright colours and the vigorous gestures of the musicians strike a festive note.

In both sets of the illustrations very interesting use of gestures can be noticed. In the National Museum set, the women make interesting mudras with their hands. Probably the association of dance and music is responsible for this particular characteristic. It would perhaps not be irrelevant here to remember, the advises of the medieval mystics. They tried to approach God through songs and dances. To their inspiration, the poets owed his poetry. The painters seem to have kept this fact in their minds.

On analysing the paintings with a 'Krishna' motif from Gujarat-Rajasthan area (mainly of the seventeenth century) certain common points seem to emerge. These are extremely revealing, in studying the socio-religious development of medieval mysticism. The technique adopted granted a contemporary note. 'Krishna' is thus brought into the heart of medieval Rajasthan. Strangely this stamp of localisation helps to create an element of timelessness as it shows that neither Krishna nor his story is ever likely to grow old. While Krishna adopts the Mughal costumes and becomes a Rajput noble his heroic quality remains intact.

Secondly, the importance of religious legend and myths in painting becomes clearly marked. It shows that the medieval
period inspite of the various changes retained that sanctity of
religion to which they constantly turned for assurance. Painting
while depicting these themes reflect this basic urge.

The most interesting result of the projection of the
'Krishna' motif is to be found in a number of Krishna leelā sets
(already referred to). These often bear no caption. Sometimes
they bear a 'dohā' of some unknown village poet, often a compara-
tively better known court poet like Bihārīlāl is introduced.
Many hitherto unknown Hindū poet is discovered from the illus-
trations to his work. This trend becomes more marked in the
eighteenth century as more paintings emerge bearing quotations
from Bihārīlāl's Satsai or the Krishna-Rukmī Bell of Prithvirāj
Rāthor. Often however the paintings tell their own story and
the scribe is dispensed with altogether. But inspite of this,
the main tone of the 'Krishna' myth in painting is literary. It
is a translation into Visual objectives, the vision of a poet.

The dual reality, of the 'Sacred and Profane' had cap-
tured from time immemorial the mind of the Indians. This con-
tant dwelling into two worlds have tended to characterise all
Indian attitudes as idealistic (It is unnecessary here to quarrel
with this general belief). In medieval India, this quality was
clearly marked. 'Krishna' was the embodied form of that knowledge
of other worldliness, for in the words of the medieval poet —
'
He lives in that twilight zone across the holy river of our
spiritual life'. It is as such that the Rajasthani Painter has
brought him before us.