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The Kotah paintings are the pictorial records of Kotah and succeeded in leaving a stamp of its own excellence. It also had an impact on the other neighbouring schools and customs, traditions and living standards. The study of the paintings of Bada Mahal and other Kotah paintings in various collections reveals that the artists at Kotah mastered the skill of miniature paintings and brought it to international heights.

The painting at Kotah started as early as in 17th century and continued up till end of 19th century. The state of Kotah officially came into existence as a separate entity from Bundi in circa. A.D. 1631. The earliest known examples of miniatures in Kotah style are of circa.A.D. 1620.30, that means Kotah School of painting originated before the formal declaration of Kotah as a separate state.

Since the Kotah rulers were in services for Mughals in different regions, and they brought the artists from those regions to Kotah, therefore early paintings of Kotah style show a great influence of Mughal art, but gradually this impact of Mughal art decreased. The Kotah style of paintings developed as a blending of skills and techniques of the artists of different regions, employed by rulers in Kotah court. So it can be said that the existence of unique Kotah style of paintings is because of the efforts of Kotah rulers who patronized and encouraged the artists by giving them suitable rewards.

Although there is a lot of similarity between Kotah paintings and Bundi paintings, their origin can be identified by the unique style of facial features, vegetation and such other typical features depicted in the paintings. The reasons for similarity in both the schools are given below:

1) Bundi painting is the precursor of Kotah painting, therefore the similarity is obvious.
2) The model for the painting in both the schools was Chunar Ragamala.
3) Kotah and Bundi are neighbours, and there were frequent interchange of artists and ideas.

The themes of Kotah paintings cover a vast canvas and assume wider dimensions. These are based on Mythology, such as, Shiva, Vishnu, Krishna legends, The Ramayana, the Bhagavata Purana. Nayaka-Nayika-Bheda, Baramasa,Ragamala, love legends;
Madhavanala- Kamakandala, Dhola-Maru, Madhu-Malti and Laila- Majnu, Portraits, Hunting, Festivals and Historical events, depiction of ladies and Harem, Court scenes and etc. are also among kotah depictions.

_Vaishnavism_ came into existence in Kotah during the period of Maharao Bhim Singh I. He renamed Kotah as Nandgaon and considered himself as a minister (Sevak) of Krishna. Due to the influence of _Vaishnavism_ in Kotah, we find the depiction of miniatures related to Krishna in abundance.

Kotah paintings of _Nayaka-Nayika-Bheda_ are based on the poetry of Keshavadasa’s _Rasikapriya_ and Bihari’s _Satrai_. _Baramasa_ paintings of Kotah are also based on Keshavadasa’s poetry. _Radha_ and _Krishna_ were the divine lovers of the Kotah artists. The divine couple i.e. _Radha_ and _Krishna_ is shown embracing each other to enjoy the pleasure of love in union and creates a romantic atmosphere (pls .51, 52).

Kotah _Ragamala_ paintings took the painter system of classification of _Ragas_ as the basis for their paintings. Most of the _Ragamala_ paintings of Kotah have taken _Chunar Ragamala_ as a model. The _Ragamala_ paintings of the 19th century are different and unique, having very simple compositions and bright colours.

We find the depiction of various love legends in Kotah paintings. It is interesting to note that each series of paintings depicting different love legends show different styles of Kotah art.

The appearance and attire of rulers in the paintings is beautifully rendered with the likeness of rulers. They are shown elegantly dressed and bejeweled with pearl Jewellery. The head of the figures of rulers are decorated with circular white or green coloured aura, which is sometimes outlined with golden rays, and gives the rulers a divine appearance and importance. The pointed moustaches and black beard have been minutely and appealingly drawn by hatching. The straight gaze and expressionless faces suggest a royal demeanor. The portraits of common man are rather expressive. The portraits are mostly placed against monochrome background. Artist has made use of pardaz in the figures, faces and costumes to suggest the roundness. In group portraits main figure is painted bigger in size than other figures.

Extremely well rendered paintings of Kotah are on hunting. These depictions of the wild game are unmatched with any other Rajasthani schools and are the unique
contributions of Kotah to the world of art. The theme has been painted from beginning to end but the best are of Maharao Umed Singh's time, who himself was a very good hunter. The Kotah rulers used to take artists with them during hunt who used to paint the event later. Ladies also used to hunt at Kotah and were expert shooters. The Kotah painters have mostly set the game in a dense forest with beautiful and minute depiction of vegetation found in the surroundings of Kotah. The animal drawings are full of movement and are very expressive.

Depictions of festivals in Kotah also have unique characteristics. Many festivals like Gangaur, Dusshera, Diwali, Holi etc. are painted. These depictions give a visual record of customs and traditions of Kotah. Paintings of Maharao Ram Singh II and Shatrusal II depict them hunting a buffalo, which was sacrificed to be offered to Devi Durga during Durga Ashtami. Depiction of Hathion Ki Holi is worth mentioning here, which was the way adopted by Kotah rulers to mix with the common people. Maharao used to play holi with the people of Kotah by spraying and showering coloured water on them with pipe, as can be seen in the miniature of Rao Ram Singh I’s time and on the walls of Lakshmi Bhandar and Bada Mahal, Kotah. Paintings related to festivals of Vallabh Sampradaya are also painted.

The paintings based on historical events as seen in Kotah School are very rare in any other Rajasthani school. The paintings of Brahm Bhoj (pl.16) and meeting of Maharao Ram Singh with Britishers (pl.29) are historically important. After observing the paintings of Kotah style, we can say that these paintings are the best sources to understand the historical, mythological, social and cultural aspects of Kotah state and its rulers. These pictorial representations of Kotah help us to find out their close relations with the other kings, their love for hunting, festivals and enjoying the dance performances and fascination of medieval poetry and love literature as is visualized in the romantic love paintings (pls .71, 71a, 72), Baramasa (pls. 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68), Ragamala (pls 69, 70) and Nayaka-Nayika-Bheda themes (pl. 60).

Figures of ladies in the Kotah paintings are shown bejeweled with gold and pearl Jewellery. They are shown with typical Rajasthani dress i.e. Choli, Ghagra and Odhni and in some cases Mughal costume also. The Odhni of thick material like shawl and thin transparent Odhni are also shown.
Court scenes depict royal splendor, discipline and activities of court. We also find depiction of some Grotish forms which gives some message in symbolic form.

Critically analyzing Kotah paintings reveal that the technique used by Kotah artist for miniatures is same as that of Mughal miniature technique with slight variations according to local availability of materials. For murals Kotah artist used Secco-fresco technique which is called *Ala Gila* in local language. The colours were made from vegetables, minerals and stones. Very fine brushes made of animal hair were used. Paintings were made on paper, cloth and walls.

The Kotah artists used bold expressive lines capturing the movement and energy as visible in hunting scenes. *Pardaz* technique is used by Kotah artists to show texture in animate and inanimate objects. Artist tried to represent each single hair in the figures through a multitude of fine strokes of the Brush. Colours used in Kotah paintings are usually bright and in some cases having symbolic value also. White, Red, blue, yellow, green are mostly used. There is lavish use of various shades of green in depiction of vegetation. Metallic colours have also been used by Kotah artists. Pure Gold in powered form mixed with water and binders was used in Kotah paintings. Light seem to be coming from all the sides in Kotah paintings. We can see multiple perspectives in some of the paintings. Perspective as a dimensional expansion of the objects is not found in Kotah paintings. Only in few paintings, we can see a little understanding of perspective. Depiction of sky shows depth in some paintings. The Kotah artists have made use of symmetrical, asymmetrical, Pyramid and vertical arrangements in the compositions. Indoor and outdoor both the settings have been painted in Kotah paintings. Landscapes in Kotah paintings depict local vegetation. The paintings of common man have expressive faces. The expression through gestures has also been suggested by Kotah artists. We find most of the paintings painted in series like *Ragamala, Baramasa, Love legends, Rukmani Parinaya* etc. For these serial paintings, a team of artists used to work under the supervision of a Chief or Head artist and all of them used to paint paintings on the same theme and later they were presented to the patterns or the persons interested. Props have been painted both in background and foreground. Interiors in Kotah paintings are decorative but simple. Mostly we find low sitting arrangements. Some paintings of Kotah are divided into compartments, depicting two or three scenes at a time. Kotah figures are
tall and slim having Mughal influence. Later normal sized figures having some characteristics of Mewar and Bundi can also be seen in the paintings. Kotah even after becoming an independent state could not shake off its servility to Bundi style. This is proved by the fact that one of the miniature paintings of Kotah style which depicted Baz Bahadur and Rupmati hunting (couple hunting) painted in the later 18th century is a copy of the similar painting of Bundi style painted in the early 18th century. Depiction of compositional formula, figures, their actions etc. are very much similar to Bundi style. But paintings of 19th century and late 18th century show unique Kotah Style in figures which are short and stout but proportionate. The faces are round with upturned tapered eyes and sharp features. Female figures in Kotah paintings are more delicate and charming. Despite the similarities and dissimilarities between the two distinctive schools - Bundi and Kotah, the Kotah style had left a stamp of its own from the artistic point of view. In late 19th century, the European impact on figures is also visible. Figures in all paintings are painted mostly in profile.

The Art of Jhalawar shows a great impact of Kotah paintings as can be seen in (pl.6a). Kotah style also had a wide impact on the paintings of Uniara, the thikana of Kotah. Four important paintings of Uniara style are pasted on the walls of Bada Mahal, Kotah. Even today, the painters of Kotah use to paint in the traditional Kotah style which attracts international tourism and art lovers. Its impact is also visible on the European painters like Henri Rosseau, who must have taken inspiration from hunting scenes of Kotah which reflects in his art. Kotah art also have contributed to the modern art. The artists of the 20th century have emulated Kotah themes such as Ragamala and Baramasa. Ragamala theme is noticed in the art works of the famous artists like M.F. Hussain, O.P.Sharma and Jaswant Singh, who painted this theme in their modern style of painting. Thus it becomes clear that its impact and contribution is rich as is proved from its miniatures and murals.