CHAPTER-III

The Deccan and Rajasthan Schools of Ragamala Paintings

Having in the previous Chapters written first about the ragamala ethos and then on raga, ragini and rasa, the thesis now narrows focus on two particular Schools, Deccan and Rajasthan of ragamala painting, in which Colour and Form are proposed to be studied.

To begin with, it is important to keep in mind that a miniature painting in India has had three primary influences on its technique. The first influence is of mural or wall-painting. Then comes the influence of leaf-painting. The third influence began when leaf was displaced by paper as the surface to be painted. The use of paper in painting is said to have begun in the fourteenth century. Murals had permitted the freedom to paint large surfaces. The use of leaf as a painting surface drastically restricted the painting space. Figures and objects, were proportionately reduced. This must have made demands on the painter’s technique. The introduction of paper while extending the artist’s freedom must have introduced changes in technique. Roy Craven describes a pre-first century Indian painting scenario when sacred scripture got illustrated—

Long before the first century A.D. paintings were used in India as illustrations for volumes of sacred scripture. The first ‘books’ were composed of slim, delicate palm leaves, seldom more than two
inches...threaded on cords which secured them between feat wooden covers.

Of these Craven says—

The oldest to survive date from the eleventh century. They are Pala Buddhist manuscripts from Bihar and Bengal and of those the Jains of Western India.

Daljeet describes both Pala and Jain miniatures. They were narrative in form and symbolic in style. Palm-leaf restricted the canvas. Even on cloth of larger size these restrictions had become the rule. What transpired on the painting surface is described by Daljeet—

Extra protruding eyes, short starded men and women, angular faces, pointed noses rich costumes, fine ornaments worthy of a goldsmith's hand, profusion of gold embellishment, use of bright colours with blue and red dominating angularity of active lines and rhythm vitality of movement.

The scriptural text that got illustrated, and therefore, became sacred twice, as it were, first as scripture and next as an illustration. The calligrapher, was therefore, the paramount craftsman, as Craven says—

The calligrapher who dealt directly with the sacred text was considered the paramount craftsman, and...while ruling the guidelines for his script he

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1 Graven, Roy C., A Concise History of Indian Art, Vikas Publishing House Ltd., New Delhi, 1979, p. 219
2 Ibid.
3 Daljeet, Immortal Miniatures, Aravali Boks International, New Delhi, 2002, p. 15
indicated the area and the subject matter for the illustration.

However, the palm-leaf illustration as an art-effort got due attention. This also Craven records—

The few remaining palm-leaf illustrations are sophisticated in line and colour, with figures modeled closely upon ...Pala sculpture.

Pala style art was carried away to Nepal and Tibet, because of Muslim invasions. However, Jain palm-leaf painting flourished under the patronage of Jain merchants and ship builders of Gujarat, who filled libraries with these sacred texts. Craven also appreciates the vigorous quality of the drawing line, though that it remained 'a formal execution' is also noticed—

The style is flat and decorative its early palette was generally restricted to simple reds, yellows, some blue, gold black and white. The vigorous quality of the drawing line is its distinctive virtue, though even that remained formalized.

One distinguishing feature of early Jain painting, says Craven, 'is that in profile heads' both eyes are shown. This feature may be because the model was temple sculpture 'which had bulging glass eyes added to enhance the realism of the image.'

Coomaraswamy, in 1916, talked about an eight-century blank in Indian painting that spanned the time between 650 and 1427 A.D.
The 1976 edition repeats the assertion. However, research has established that there was continuity and Coomaraswamy was ‘too rigid’ Tömöry says this in The History of Fine Arts in India and the West. Indeed, the Ajanta characteristics continued not only in Bagh in Madhya Pradesh, but also, in Bihar and Bengal till as late as the eleventh century under Pala governance. One has to accept that there being inter-action, there were cross-influences. The Indian miniature primarily remained symbolic and religious, grounded as it was in this particular part of time, on Vaishnavism and the spread of bhakti. The thought remained intact, entire and whole, as a profoundly enabling ethos.

The effect of the introduction of paper in painting did have its impact. Craven writes of the effect of the change from palm-leaf to paper. There was a profuse increase in production—

Among the popular literary works profusely illustrated in the early Rajasthani painting styles were the Bhagwata Purana, the Gita Govinda, the Chaurapanéha-sika, the Rasipriya and the Baramasah.

Paper, according to Craven came to India through Persia during the second half of the 1300s, and ‘by the beginning of the fifteenth century’, the ‘transition in Western Indian painting from palm-leaf to paper had more or less taken place.’ And, Craven says that the same ships that brought paper also imported blue pigment. As a consequence he writes—

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8 Ibid. p. 222
9 Ibid. 220

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By the sixteenth century the solid red backgrounds traditionally used as the basic panel for each illustration had changed to blue. 

With the use of blue pigment, 'more greens and blues were added to a brightening palette'. Use of paper made the brushwork 'more elaborate and detached'. This was not possible on a palm-leaf surface. This was the final West India Painting scenario, which, extending back to the Ajantas was almost a millennia and a half time-span.

This thesis having to concentrate primarily on Deccan and Rajasthan Ragamala Schools, it next focuses on them.

To begin with, the Deccan Ragamala School has its own legacy of art. Zebrowski in the Introduction to Deccani Painting says, how in 1927, a major break-through was made by N.C. Mehta. It produced a growing awareness of Deccani art as a distinct phenomenon. It was Painting of a Bull Elephant considered to be done 'by a Deccan painter', the first of that 'school of painting yet known.' Thereafter, discoveries multiplied and the following decades had Goetz, Kramirch and Gray directing attention to Deccan painting one after the other. The sentence with which Zebrowski begins the Introduction to his book adds critical lustre to Deccan painting—

A surprisingly large proportion of surviving masterpieces of Indian painting was produce for the mysterious Sultans who ruled the Deccan...during the 16th and 17th centuries....It has now become clear

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10 Ibid. p.220
11 Ibid.
that at least three kingdoms. Ahmednagar Bijapur and Golconda produced painting of astonishing quality\textsuperscript{13}.

Zebrowski ends the introduction to \textit{Deccani Painting} saying that his book written in 1983, was the 'first attempt to bring together all the known' examples of Deccani painting\textsuperscript{14}. The author anticipates that some day more material will come to light and add to the knowledge and understanding of 'the artistic heights reached by a major culture'\textsuperscript{15}.

The author of \textit{Deccani Painting} makes the following interesting statement saying how the Deccan preserved and developed a distinct Islamic culture. To quote—

\begin{quote}
As the Deccan preserved its political independence from Northern India until the present century, except for a brief period of four decades (1687-1724), following conquest by the Mughal emperor Anurangzeb, a distinct Islamic culture developed there\textsuperscript{16}.
\end{quote}

The Deccan population was extremely mixed. It was composed not only of Indian Muslims and Hindus, but also of large communities of Turks, Persians, Arabs, and Africans. Zebrowski writes about this extreme mix of population—

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid. p.7.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid. p.15.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid. p.9
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Sufis, writers, merchants and military men from all over the middle east came to preach, write, or conquer, learned by generous royal patronage. Thus, apart from a close Savafid-bond there was Arab influence also, particularly that of Egypt, Iraq and Yemen, because of longstanding commercial links. Zebrowski calls Deccan the greatest center of Arab learning and literary composition. To quote—

The Deccan became, within India, the greatest center of Arabic learning and literary composition. It held until the Mughal conquest of 1857.

However, the Deccan had not remained with the Muslims always. For, till the early fourteenth century, when the Deccan was subdued by the Muslim kings of Delhi, it had been continuously ruled by Hindu kings. What added to the extreme mix of the Deccan population was the fact that Ahmed Nizam Shah, the Sultan of Ahmednagar, was the son of a Hindu slave, converted to Islam. Also, all the three Deccan Sultanates adhered to the Shia sect of Islam, and remained close allies of the Safavids of Iran (1501-1702), and, against the Sunni Mughal empire of North India.

Further still, as is already mentioned earlier in this thesis, Ibrahim Adil Shah-II wrote poetry in praise of Saraswati and Ganesh, and still insisted that he was nevertheless a Muslim. He also composed poetry in praise of Bandnavaz Gesudaraz, one of the most known Sufi saints in the South, who was himself a spiritual disciple of Naseeruddin Chirag Delhi of Delhi.

17 Ibid. p.9
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid. p.9
Ibrahim Adil Shah-II’s *Kitab-i-Nauras* has been given some attention in Chapter-I, to which more needs to be added. Thus, the editor of *Kitab-i-Nauras*, Nazir Ahmed, while writing of Ibrahim’s religious tolerance and of Bijapur style being a blend of Persian and Hindu styles, also writes of the Deccan School maintaining its peculiar traits, even after it started borrowing from the Mughal School of painting. Appraising an Ibrahim portrait, Nazir Ahmed says—

The portrait is suggestive of the peculiar trait of the Bijapur School of painting in which the Persian style was gracefully blended with the Hindu style. It further indicates Ibrahim’s interest in the Hindu style (or the style of the art of Vijaynagar) which elaborately testifies to his religious tolerance.20

Nazir Ahmed also writes of the continuance of this mixed style—

This mixed style was prevalent even after A.H. 1014/1650, the probable date after which according to Dr. Moti Chand the Bijapur School began to borrow from the Mughal School of painting. This, however, fully confirms the view of Dr. Moti Chand that even during this period the school maintained its peculiar features.21

Continuing, Nazir Ahmed says that the early *ragamala* paintings of ‘Dakhani origin’ preserved mostly in the Bikaner Collection are of mixed Turkish, Persian and Hindu style. This, he


21 Ibid.
says was the common style during the reigns of both Ali I and Ibrahim II. For, after the collapse of Vijayanagar in 1565, its artists and musicians had journeyed to ‘find patrons at the courts of Adil Shahs, Qutub Shahs or Nizam Shahs’\(^{22}\).

According to Nazir Ahmed, both Moti Chanda and Khandelwala are of opinion that—

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\text{It is more appropriate to ascribe these Ragamala pictures to no one else than to Ibrahim Adil. The reason for doing so is that, according to these two scholars, he was the first monarch to think of representing the “pictorial motifs” associated with certain ragas and ragnis in his Kitab-i-Nauras}^{23}\.
\]

Tömöry on p.255 of *A History of Fine Arts in India and the West (1992)* says after the Bahamani rulers conquered Vijayanagar, they adopted certain cultural ideas of the Vanquished. As a consequence, painting flourished at Bahamani courts ‘often executed by Hindu artists trained in the Vijayanagar style of Hampi and Lepakshi’. At Bijapur, artistic activity ‘was more intense and paintings more numerous’. The Bijapur court also encouraged music during the reigns of Ali Adil Shah-I and Ibrahim Adil Shah-II, who ‘adopted Indian classical music and produced the earliest of *Ragamala* paintings’. Still at p.256, Tömöry says that according ‘to some art historians the very idea of depicting musical modes in painting originated in Bijapur’.

\(^{22}\)Ibid. p.32.

\(^{23}\)Ibid.
Ibrahim’s Kitab-i-Nauras too refers to dhyaan formulas and devata-maya-rupa as the source of all pictorial representation of Indian melodies, the ragas and raganis. Also, the practice of composing ragamala verses describing the ragas ‘seems to have been current long before the middle of the fifteenth century’. But, Nazir Ahmed says—

It is difficult to say whether pictorial illustrations corresponding to descriptive word-picture have been painted much before the sixteenth century

Ibrahim Adil Shah too describes some of these melodies in his Kitab-i-Nauras. They are pen pictures ‘different from the images usually painted’, as Nazir Ahmed says. The pen-pictures are those of bhairva, asavari, ramkari, kanara, and kedar, that is, of five only, though it is claimed that pen-pictures of raganis malar, gauri, and kalyani were also included.

Two of these pen-descriptions from Ibrahim Adil Shah-II’s Kitab-i-Nauras are being included in this thesis. Thus Ibrahim describes asavari, and kedar in the following ways. First, his description of asavari—

a female yogi, who has renounced the will seated on a promontory inside a fort surrounded by water beneath a sandal tree. It delicate and perfumed foliage of which bends to protect her from the morning sun’s rays,. Her dawning womanhood is arrayed in the salmon-coloured garb of a jogan. Her raven hair is massed on top of the head in a jata. Her
white brow gleams the sacred mark of religion in camphor. Her slumberous eyes are heavy with the power of music and her mouth is on a pongi, which she is blowing. The deadly serpents and peacocks are attracted beyond control.

But, it must be remembered that it is a pen-description, and may contradict a *ragamala* depiction. One example of ‘a sharp contrast with a *ragamala* depiction’, which Nazir Ahmed mentions is that of *ragini kedari*. Thus, while Ibrahim’s is given below, the *ragamala* depiction follows after it—

Ibrahim’s pen-description of *ragini kedari*—

Kedari is a young maiden of incomparable beauty who, having been separated from her lover is greatly afflicted and has grown weak and feed. She has curly locks and a white complexion and she is robed in white she is sitting and is sprinkling powered Chandan on her body and is drawing pictures on the ground with her nails.

This, Nazir Ahmed says is ‘in sharp contrast’ with a *ragamala* depiction. He quotes—

Kedari, is a beautiful lady robed in crimson red. She is so absorbed in the meditation of Mahadeva that she assumes his form. Her matted locks are massed on the top of her head and from them flows the Ganges. With the mark of the crescent on her

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26 Ibid. p.70.
27 Ibid. p.71 and 72.
28 Ibid.p72
forehead and a black serpent soiled round her head,  
the lady is sitting on the skin of a lion.\footnote{Ibid. p.72.}

But that Ibrahim Adil Shah's commitment to \textit{nauras} was to help engineer a 'cultural renaissance' in the Deccan can also not be denied. To this, the Deccan Sultan's contact with Iran and the Middle East on the one hand, and, of a fallen Vijayanagar's strong cultural impact on the other, also contributed. Nirmala Joshi's \textbf{Preface}, as also P.K. Gode's \textbf{Foreword} to Nazir Ahmed's 1956 edition of Ibrahim Adil Shah-II's \textit{Kitab-i-Nauras} both testify to Ibrahim's commitment to engineer 'a fusion of Hindus and Muslim\footnote{Ibid. p. VI}' and thus engineer 'a cultural renaissance' in the Deccan. Infact, as has been written earlier in Chapter-I, Nirmala Joshi says that Ibrahim Adil Shah-II in the South was as much a creature of 'the same historical forces', as was Akbar in the North\footnote{Ibid. p. I}.

To revert to Zebrowski, unfortunately very few Deccan paintings have the painter's signature on them. To transcend this difficulty, Zebrowski gives the unknown artists interesting names\footnote{Zebrowski, Mrk, Op.cit}. One, he calls the Bikaner painter, the next the Bodleian painter, and the third Leningrad Painter, the fourth the Dublin painter and finally, the fifth is called the Bombay painter. He gives these names to the painters after the present location of their work. Thus, the Bikaner painter is supposed to feature sensual delight in the mass and the movement of the human body. An example being the \textit{Procession of Ibrahim Adil Shah-II}. The Bodleian painter was more interested in

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\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Ibid. p.72.}
\item \footnote{Ibid. p. VI}
\item \footnote{Ibid. p. I}
\item \footnote{Zebrowski, Mrk, Op.cit}
\end{itemize}
capturing reality. 'His figures radiate', as Zebrowski, says 'an intense meditative calm' and the examples given are *Durwesh receiving a visitor* and the *Mullah lost in contemplation of religious truths*. The Leningrad painter is supposed to be 'vastly different'. He is best described in Zebrowski's own words—

Vastly different is the work of the Leningrad painter, who by using paradise garden settings achieves a sombre poetry particularly suited to Ibrahim's romantic temperament.\(^33\)

The Dublin painter is a younger artist 'strongly influenced by the Leningrad painter', but with a 'drier version of the same vision'. Examples of the paintings done by him are *Madona and Child*, the *Kiss*, and, the *Siesta*, as well as, the *Yogini* in which he is supposed to have achieved the 'brooding tension of the Leningrad painter's work'.\(^34\)

One very significant feature of a Deccani painting is the reflection in it of its perpetual political instability, though. The 'escapist mood' is supposed to have characterized the Deccan courts. The Deccan Sultans were supposed to take more interest in leisure and the arts than in government or conquest, the sack of Vijaynagar in 1565 being one very significant exception, which the *Tarif* describes and illustrates. Indeed, the Leninguard painter’s *Siesta* is supposed to illustrate the mood of the times.

According to Zebrowski, recording historical events, or portraying, or, recording the thrill of a hunt, or, a court ceremonial,
or, Hindu ritual, could have been favourite Rajasthan themes. However, the Deccan painter was never interested in these, for—

...princely portraiture pre-dominates in the Deccan. They aim to establish a gently lyrical atmosphere, often one of quiet abandon to the joys of love, music, poetry or just the perfume of a flower.\textsuperscript{35}

Zebrowski continues this theme—

Although figures are conventional types, moods are brilliantly established through fantastic colours and unconventional poses.\textsuperscript{36}

It is almost a private world that often reflects reverie which Zebrowski puts in the following words—

We are admitted into the private world of feeling, inhabited by pages, princes, durweshes and mullahs; rarely do we see an army on the march. Reflection and reverie triumph over dramatic action.\textsuperscript{37}

Deccan art is bred, according to Zebrowski, 'in an exotic, multiracial society.'\textsuperscript{38} And therefore, 'it has the impossible fantastic mood of a mirage.\textsuperscript{39} To quote Zebrowski fully—

The delicate rhythms of Persia, the lush sensuality of southern India the restraint of European and Ottoman Turkish portraiture all contributed to its uniqueness.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. p.10.  
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. p.10  
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid. p.10.  
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
Zebrowski on Deccan art is never short of appreciation. For, he says—

In most Deccan art fantastic colours and exuberant distortion of form create a restless opulence and a romantic nostalgia for another time and place\textsuperscript{41}.

Of the Bahamani Sultans, those of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda were great patrons of art. From Ahmednagar, we have the \textit{Tarif}. It is an illustrated description of Husain Nizami Shah I’s reign. The \textit{Tarif} focuses principally on three aspects. First on court life, next on the Vijaynagar campaign, and finally on the celebration of victory over Vijaynagar. Portraiture was very unorthodox in as much as it had six queen-portraits out of its twelve illustrations, which was unthinkable in Islamic art. Indeed, she often sits perched on the Sultan’s knee\textsuperscript{42}. Zebrowski attributes the style to Mandu in Malwa. The primary feature of \textit{Nimatnama} is that it is an amalgam of divergent art-styles. According to Zebrowski.

The \textit{Nimat-nama} is an amalgam of remarkably divergent sources, including fifteenth century Turkman elements from Shiraz and a western Indian (Jain) contribution from nearly Hindu centres\textsuperscript{43}.

As the \textit{Tarif} and \textit{Nimatnama} were fine artistic features of Ahmednagar, so were \textit{Nujum-ul-um} and \textit{Kulliyat} illustrated art pieces from Golconda. One of its Sultans, Quli Qutub Shah, has been compared to Ibrahim Adil Shah-II in his patronage of the arts, even as the latter was compared to Akbar for similar enthusiasm.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p.10
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p.18.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p.19

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The Bahamani Sultans' patronage attracted artist not only from India and Persia but also from Europe. Vijayanagar painters also sought and found patronage there. Thus, a mixed style is the primary feature of the Bijapur School. Moti Chanda lists its features—

1. It is marked by the depth of colours (blue being the most favourite) and lavish use of gold. This aspect distinguishes it from the contemporary Mughal School of the North.

2. The miniatures are often limited to a single figure and even when there is more than one figure, there is no attempt at showing perspective, the action being confined to a single plane.

3. The human face is in profile in direct contradiction to the Persian and early Mughal school of painting.

4. The treatment of woman is typically Indian, both in form and spirit she wears a sari and bodice in typically Dekhani fashion.

Jagdish Mittal writes of sets of Deccani ragamala paintings. Thus, he says that from about 1550, ragamala themes were favored by Deccan Hindu and Muslim rulers and wealthy merchants. The earliest Deccan ragamala painting is 'a splendid group of about 15 of the late sixteenth century'. Almost all depict the nayika, either in the company of sakhis or maid-servants in a forest with blossoming trees, or, are shown seated conversing or flirting with a nayika in a chamber or palace courtyard or are with sakhis on a swing in a forest with blossoming trees and creepers. This is a near Mittal description, already noted in Chapter-I

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Another set Mittal says of about ‘perhaps eighty four’ was probably produced in Northern Deccan between 1680-1700\textsuperscript{45}.

Next, are the three sets which are ‘now scattered but are often published’. The finest of the three has Sanskrit text in Devnagri on the reverse with a translation in Persian and Arabic script. A notable feature of this set is the use of *lapis luzuli* in each work. The second set has the Sanskrit text in the panel on the top of each painting. The third set has short captions. In all three sets, Mittal says, the colours are ‘warm and charming’, the figures ‘tall and beautifully proportioned’ the workmanship ‘bold and precise’, and the composition ‘very imaginative and emphatically Deccani’\textsuperscript{46}.

The ‘most important’ Deccan *ragamala* series, as Mittal says is a set of thirty six paintings done perhaps in the eighteenth century. Scholars first thought it to be of Rajasthan, because the figures in the series were ‘delicate and sensuous’, the colours ‘very refined and restrained’, and applied ‘with enamel-like precision’. It was, says Mittal, perhaps painted in 1750, a late Hyderabad group\textsuperscript{47}.

Mittal describes the general features of Hyderabad miniatures. First, is the division of the picture-space. This space is divided irrespective of theme in more or less the same way in most paintings. The sky is generally dull. It is sometimes depicted by a small band of tangled clouds. But, 18\textsuperscript{th} century onwards, the sky becomes lighter, deeper, and even ‘takes a garish look’. The parapets and terraces are of marble. The doors are light-brown in colour and have ‘views’ of


\textsuperscript{46} Ibid. p.168.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.p.170.
the wood in deeper brown. Male and female figures are usually tall and have a fine built. Men wear long plain or printed *jamas*. The architecture is typically late Mughal and Deccani. The *hashiyas* in the early miniatures have golden floral designs but after 1750, they usually become plain and single-coloured. However, Hyderabadi miniature paintings do not show as much European influence as do those of the Mughals. To quote Mittal—

As compared to the contemporary Mughal paintings, the Hyderabadi paintings had few European influences in matters of detail and depiction.48

According to Mittal, there is yet another ‘exquisite set’ and ‘executed by a different painter’. It is ‘bolder in treatment’, has ‘fine colouring’ and ‘bold workmanship’, besides ‘tall figures and imaginative iconography’. All in all, Mittal considers it a ‘balanced composition’.49

Mittal next writes of four paintings on cloth that display the *barahmasa* theme. The set was presented to Swami Madho Singh of Jaipur in 1752 by Salabat Jung. Each depicts the seasons symbolically. Each has a prominent female figure, a tree, birds and a deer or a small girl in front with flower beds in the foreground. There is also a ‘detailed panoramic city-scape’ in the background. The paintings are of ‘exquisite merit’ and have ‘overall opulence’. Scholars were misled to attribute them to early eighteenth century, whereas Mittal says they appear to have been done between 1750-


1760. The paintings have 'severity' as well as 'formality' and yet have 'competent draftsmanship'. The 'colouring' has 'gem-like brilliance'. They are 'sensitively drawn' and the people in it are 'penetratingly characterized'.

Finally, Mittal speaks of the Wanaparthy ragamala set, done he says, around 1775. It is 'aesthetically charming' and 'conceptually organized' and 'imaginative'. It has 'rough execution', 'great strength' and 'visual power'. Its colour palette is 'unconventional'. Its figures are tall and costumes of the fashion generally current in Deccan.

Deccan works, according to Mittal have 'lyrical' and 'mystical intensity'. Patrons commissioned illustrations of Persian and Urdu literary texts, ragamalas, portraiture and paintings of royal processions. There was Mughal influence also. For, from about 1636, Mughal envoys stayed at the southern capital. And from 1650 onwards, Rajasthan influence is also discernible, for, several Rajput chieftains were stationed at Aurangabad in Aurangzeb's army. In 1686-87, the Mughals annexed Bijapur and Golconda and the Mughal governors had their headquarters at Hyderabad from 1687 to 1724. Thus, even under these influences Deccan painting developed 'a mixed medium', which had Mughal, Rajasthan and Deccan traits. The Asaf Jahi period between 1724 and 1762 is known as the Hyderabad School. There were several local schools also, like those encouraged by the Nawabs of Kurnool, the Rajas of Wanapathy, and
the Maratha rulers. Thus, the Peshwas of Pune, the Rajas of Sataru and Kohlapur, and, the Bhonsle Rajas of Nagpur patronized painters, who were active in temple towns and trading centers. Mittal therefore speaks of a Deccan ethos in painting, between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The Deccanis were ‘a pleasure loving people’ says Mittal for whom ‘women’ enjoyed ‘a special place’, and thus ‘hunting and war scenes’ were ‘rare’—

In the Deccan more than any other part of India the source of nayikas are the Ragamala paintings.

The Rajasthan Ragamala School has in fact already received attention in as much as its literary ethos has been considered. For the ragamala Rajasthan School, let us begin with Randhwa and Galbraith’s Indian Painting. The sub-title of the book The Scene, Themes, and Legends best describes the primary features of not only the Rajasthan miniature, but also of the Rajasthani ragamala. The authors treat different Rajasthan schools of painting under separate headings. However, they also describe some of the legends, as well as, the locale. Of these, a few examples shall be given as and when the Rajasthan schools are described, because it is felt that these descriptions shall also contribute to the understanding of the characteristic Rajasthan ethos.

Rajasthan miniature painting itself consists of schools, of which from the point of ragamala, the important ones are Mewar, Bundi, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Amer. At these places interest in

54 Ibid. p. 165
55 Ibid.p.168.
ragamala painting is consistent. Therefore, only these Schools are being considered. However, certain observations made by Daljeet Kaur need to be mentioned. She observes that the art of painting remained a prime cult in Rajasthan for three centuries—

The art of painting was the prime cult of the creative consciousness of the 17th, 18th and 19th century Rajasthan.57

For this, the ruler-patron need not have been hugely propertied and rich and influential, for, even a thikana 'had its own team of court painters' and developed its own 'stylistic traits'. To quote Daljeet once more—

Howsoever small a state, it had its own team of court painters, came out with its own preference of teams and developed its own stylistic traits and individualities.58

Comparatively small principalities called thikanas with meager revenues, incurred heavy expenditure developing their court artists. Painting indeed had become a cult and almost a status symbol. Again, to quote Daljeet—

The Rajput states seem to have been treating the art of painting as almost a status symbol.59

Daljeet sees a unique 'richness of warm primary' colours, gracious figures, primitive vigour and direct expression in a

58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.p18.
Rajasthan miniature. These miniatures represent the people of Rajasthan very well. Rajasthan was, as Daljeet says, a home of 'colourful festivals; and the land of heroic and chivalrous people, who fought with valour, grace and dauntless courage, loved with zeal and warmth'. They celebrated life 'in its colorfulness, romance, adventure and virility and died great heroes'. Rajasthan painting record this. Those of the late sixteenth century betray considerable Mughal stylistic influence because by then Mughal art had attained perfection. However, as Daljeet says 'stylistic influence in Mughal art'—

...constitutes only the body, the outercasement of a Rajasthan miniature.

For, Rajasthan has prominent features which are reflected—

in her people, the character of her soil, culture, life styles, traditions, colours, climate, always enshrining its soul.

Daljeet describes the Rajasthan painter. His mind appears inspired by a 'votive and devotional ancient art cult'. As a result.

....while seeking to recreate his own world, unknowingly sought from his Ajanta, Gupta and Gujarat Kalpasutra predecessors his art vision and made Rajasthani miniatures an instrument essentially representing India's great creative tradition.

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60 Ibid.p.17
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.p.17
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.p.17
65 Ibid.
The stylistic perfection could have come from Mughal art, however, a Rajasthan miniature’s ‘spiritual inspiration’ was from Gujarat’s Jain paintings. Further still, landscape was from its own geography, topography and local surrounding. It had thus ‘a distinctiveness of its own’, because—

...its theme and character (were) from its own land, people culture and colours.

And thus—

The Rajasthani miniature essentially reflects a kind of restrained detachment, piety, self-control, grace and submissiveness of a Hindu mind.

Its human figures had ‘a kind of celestial calm’. For a Rajasthan painter ‘life was an endless devotion’ and therefore he did not see—

any contradiction in combining in his painting romance with religion or mundane with a transcendental, for to him in either case idealism was supreme as it was in Ajanta murals.

Daljeet says that Rajasthan as a land of warriors worshipped Shakti and yet Lord Krishna and his Lilas dominate Rajasthan miniature. It is possible that in Krishna Lila, the Rajasthani painter ‘sought balance and equilibrium for his lands’ violent nature’. Thus—

In its divine form the Radha-Krishna legend was to him the ladder which could elevate to spiritual
heights, whereas in its human form it was an unending source of sensual delight for the legend was endowed with inexhaustible modes, moods and aspects of worldly love.

This apart, most rulers who patronized painting in Rajasthan had, according to Daljeet—

...taken to Krishna cult of Vaishnavism, after the establishment of Vallabh sect of Srinathji at Nathadwara in the state of Mewar.

Not only this—

The neighbouring states of Rajasthan shared the impact and before long they saw Lord-Krishna as their household deity, object of million's faith and the theme of most of the creative activities.

The artists, who reached Rajput courts after the two great Exoduses, one in 1658 when Aurangzeb ascended the Mughal throne, and, the other in 1738 when Nadir Shah sacked Delhi, felt that it was best to serve their new patrons according to their wishes for they had been well received. Daljeet describes what these migrant artists did for their patrons. They painted now their new environment—

....the character of their new soil and her people, her geography, local surroundings and the total environment and personality of their new patrons were different from there prior experience. Liberally received, accommodated and patronized these...

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70 Ibid.p.18.  
71 Ibid.  
72 Ibid.p.18.
painters considered it their first obligation to render paintings which reflected the character of this new land, the religious beliefs and life-tradition of her people, and tastes and preferences of their new masters.

With this as the Rajasthan miniature painting scenario, let us focus on Mewar ragamala painting. Mewar, another name for Udaipur state, had an eventful history. Its spirit of independence is reputed, with Chittor as its finest example. Randhawa and Galbraith describe it as a fine, open, undulating country, partly hills, rocks and dense jungle with their share of spotted deer and antelopes. It has numerous lakes, and tall, elegant palaces with pavilions. The following is a description from Goetz of a Rajasthan miniature quoted by Randhawa and Galbraith—

The scenes are much simpler, but drawn with a sure hand, well composed and full of a joy of life and a fine sensitiveness of observation. They are far from naturalism, and their individual components must still be accepted more as symbols than as exact descriptions of nature.

Randhawa and Galbreith characterize mid-17th century Mewar painting in which Sahibdin and Manohar figure as having—

....great and primitive vigor. Primary colours—reds, blues and yellows—are lavishly used.

73 Ibid.p.18.
75 Ibid.
These two authors also refer to Archer for the description of the Mewar style of this period—

...a style of virile intensity, characterized by glowing passionate colour, deft rhythm and robust simplifications.

This style continued into the third quarter of the seventeenth century during the rule of Raj Singh (1652-1681). He was a great patron of art and literature, continuing Jagat Singh’s interests in the arts, who himself was reputed for having built Jagmandir Palace and the Jagdish temple. The palace is known for its palatial columns, its lakes and reservoirs, fountains, orange and lemon groves. The main inspiration of Mewar painting during Sangram Singh’s reign (1710-1734) was Krishna. Describing a Bhagwat Purana miniature, Randhawa and Galbraith particularly note the ‘soft radiance of the moon’, in this painting and its stylized trees and water reprinted by ‘spiral convention’. The final comment by the two authors on Mewar painting is for its colour—

...the beauty of Mewar painting is not in its line but in its colour. Here, as in others, yellows, reds, blues and blacks are boldly and effectively used.

Edith Tömöry in A History of Fine Arts in India and the West, divides Mewar painting into two periods, one the formative and the other mature. The first includes the ragamala series done in 1605. The artist was Nasiruddin. The paintings show a close relation with

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76 Ibid. p.76.
77 Ibid.p.77.
the *Chaurpanchiska* series, done earlier in Mewar between 1550 and 1680 A. D. *Chaurpanchiska* was a favourite theme of its Rajput painters and their patrons. The paintings depict architecture and clothing of a prosperous Hindu court art. As is characteristic, Mewar *ragamala* painting also portrays ‘love in separation’ and ‘love in union’.

As an example *Tömöry* mentions *raga dipak* and describing it calls it ‘a two-dimensional composition, filled in with flat areas’—

...of colour, mainly red, yellow and black. The red background a Central Indian tradition symbolises passion. The sky and landscape are also conventionally treated. The painting on the right is in strict frontal view, with no attempt at perspective. A man and woman, seated to the left, listen to music played by a figure sitting on the extreme left. The facial features resemble the *Chaurpanchiska*.

*Tömöry* says that the period of maturity was ushered in during the reign of Jagat Singh-I (1628-1752), whose patronage of art has already been noticed earlier. *Tömöry* commenting on what she characterizes as the mature period in Mewar painting describes it as follows—

The paintings of this period characterized by bright colours, lush vegetation treated decoratively, scant perspective to represent the simple architectural details, and a definite facial, type-oval faces, narrow foreheads, prominent noses fish like eyes, and small mouth. While horses and elephants are painted more

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naturalistically, the birds and other animals still follow the Western Indian idiom\textsuperscript{80}.

Tömöry says that all these features can be seen in another ragamala series done in 1628 by Sahibdin. He was a 'prolific and accomplished master'. He transformed Mewar painting, as Tömöry says 'from a primitive-folk style into a sophisticated art'. Tömöry says that not all Muslim painters could have been from the Mughal court, for, an exodus is possible from Mandu also after its sack in 1561, more so because Mewar was not very far from Mandu. And, only contact with other artists could have brought in Mughal influence indirectly, 'absorbing the essentials of composition, refinement of drawing, and competent use of a varied palette'\textsuperscript{81}.

Another example that Tömöry gives is that of vasanta ragini from the ragamala series done in 1650, exemplifying what Tömöry calls, 'the typical mature Mewar style'. In the painting Krishna flanked by three gopis dances under trees that flower. Many birds crowd on trees, and these include two peacocks. The background is painted in 'vivid lacquer red', the dominating colour. The gopi on the left, plays a drum and the one on the right holds cymbals, the third holds a spray gun to spray coloured powder. Below are vessels, and a dish which holds two more spray guns. The blue sky edged by a wavy white line crowns the scene. It appears that the festival of spring is about to arrive and everyone in the painting exhilarates\textsuperscript{82}.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.p.259.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.p.259.
Tömöry calls Sahibdin 'the greatest master of the mature Mewar style. He had a profuse output, which included a Nayik-Nayikabheda series, a Bhagwat Purana, Yuddhakanda of the Ramayan (1652), and Sukar Ksetra Mahatmya (1655). Tömöry writing of his best compositions says that in Sahibdin's best compositions a backdrop of forest scenery helps to unify the figures in front. He makes clever use of the famous textile designs of Mewar to clothe his figures which he groups in a masterly fashion. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, according to Tömöry, Mewar 'degenerated to routine copying'. The large quantity produced during this century lacks its earlier charming quality.\footnote{Ibid.p.259.}

Turning to Bundi, we have Randhawa and Galbraith describe it as 'hard and stony'. In winter it blossoms. It is covered with green wheat, white and pink poppies and blue sky. The uncultivated countryside is green and dotted with trees. Its villages have morgosa trees and platforms with villagers feeding peacocks and pigeons. Bundi has a lovely capital. This geographical description could well provoke artists' imagination.

Painting in Bundi began under Rao Chattar Sal and shows Mewar influence. However, according to Randhawa and Galbraith, at had its own characteristic way of depicting feminine beauty—

\textit{A receding forehead and chin, a strong nose and full cheeks and sharply penciled eyebrows}\footnote{Randhawar, MS, and Galbraith, JK, Op.cit.p.80.}.
Bundi, as the authors describe has beautiful landscapes, lakes, and plantains that lend colour to the environment. To quote Randhawa and Galbraith—

The landscape with its lakes, date plains and plantains is also faithful to that of Bundi.

Giving a general description of Bundi painting, the authors commenting both on its colour and designs say—

Colours—pure blues, reds, yellows and greens—are boldly used. Design and composition are sure and strong.

The most accomplished phase of paintings of Bundi was reached during the reign of Ummed Singh. Randhawa and Galbraith make it a point to make specific mention of ragamala paintings and introduce it as if it were a new genre. They give the examples of ragini lalita, raga malkaus and ragini vibhasa. Lalita, according to them is represented as a lady sound asleep and Malkaus a prince and princess, while vibhasa by an angry lover. They consider madhu madhavi version as the finest example of Bundi ragamala paintings.

The authors single out the colour red and say—

Red, the colour representing passion is used lavishly in these paintings.

Having themes, scenes and legends of Indian painting always in mind, the authors describe the legend of Madhavanala and

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85 Ibid.p.80
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.p84
88 Ibid.
Kamakandala in some detail, as they do a few better known North Indian legends.

Among the plates the authors include one on raga malkaus called ‘Dalliance’. Describing the photo plate the authors say—

On a carpet on a terrace in a moonlit night the lovers embrace. Their eyes are deeply tinctured with love and the woman is in a mood of joyous abandon. In the sky a male duck is in warm pursuit of its mate. Such symbols were much used in Rajput painting to convey the mood and intention of lovers.

Edith Tömöry makes her own observations on Bundi ragamala paintings. She focusses attention on bhairavi ragini, representing as she says, the ‘formative period’ of Bundi School. The lady is worshipping at a Shiv temple. The description of the figure given is quoted below—

The lady’s rounded chin, her eyes and other features, as well as the dark colours, recall the Mewar style.

Bundi is supposed to have produced many paintings of high quality in mid seventeenth century. When the style matured, human figures conformed ‘to a regular type’. Tömöry speaks of a curious feature in the mature Bundi painting and sees it in the use of receding line to indicate perspective.

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89 Ibid. p.86.
91 Ibid. p.260.
92 Ibid.
Tömöry chooses a *vasant ragini* example painted in 1660, to typify the glory of Bundi style at its highest. As usual Krishna with his *gopis* dance besides a lotus pond. To quote Tömöry —

> The lively rhythmic gestures contrast with the conventional treatment of the supplying waters of the pond, the grass, trees and flowers. These enhance the romantic mood of the scene\(^93\).

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, according to Tömöry, Bundi School ‘underwent further changes’. Faces become more refined. Water is stylized. Vivid colours enrich the landscape. The favourite themes of this period remained *ragamala, baramasa* and *rasikpriya*\(^94\).

*Jodhpur*, also called *Marwar*, is the largest state of Rajasthan. Sterile, sandy, inhospitable, it has scanty vegetation. It is a thorny wild world, all desert, a country Randhawa and Galbraith describe as ‘a sea of sand’. Water being scarce and wells ‘far down’, in the morning there are processions of women in red and yellow wraps with brass vessels resting gracefully on their heads. Life is hard and as Randhawa and Galbraith put it ‘song and laughter lighten it’. As usual, the geography and life that these two authors choose to describe help a more close understanding of the paintings that these areas produced\(^95\).

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\(^{93}\) Ibid.p.261

\(^{94}\) Ibid.

As compared to other states, Jain style of painting flourished in Jodhpur during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Therefore, as the authors say—

A Ragamala series of 1623 was painted at Pali in a style of folk art.\(^{96}\)

Jaswant Singh patronized painting in the Mughal style. With Bijai Singh (1753-1793), the Mughal style faded and Rajput elements became dominant. Under Bhim Singh (1793-1803), the patronage continued. Goetz gives the following description. Their—

...eyes were elongated over the temples to the hair, their breasts and buttocks protruded like cups, whereas the waist was drawn in like that of a bee, the movements swing in a wild dance, the colors glowed like jewelry. The whole spirit was one of rakish extravagance and reckless lust for life.\(^{97}\)

Tömöry speaks of ‘rhythmic-lines’ and jewel-like colours as a feature of Jodhpur school.\(^{98}\) Till the Mughal influence lasted, it accounted as Tomory says for—

...graceful and romantic figures of women silhouetted against a dark background.\(^{99}\)

The Jodhpur style of painting refined as it reached its zenith during the reign of Man Singh.

Ved Bhatnagar in *Shringar Ras-The Rasraj* gives 18 ragamala photo plates, out of which twelve are from Jaipur and six from Bund.\(^{96}\) Ibid.p.93.\(^{97}\) Ibid\(^{98}\) Tomory, Edith, Op.cit.p.262.\(^{99}\) Ibid.p.262.
The Bundi plates are, according to the author, from the sixteenth century, and of Jaipur from the eighteenth.\(^{100}\)

The rulers of Jaipur from earliest times maintained cordial relations with Mughal emperors. Painting, for many years, is said to have followed the Mughal style. It was work of high distinction. Inspite of local refinements, much painting done at Jaipur has been attributed to the Mughal court.

However, as has already been said, quoting Daljeet in earlier pages, even migrant painters when they reached Rajasthan courts, being welcome, served their new patrons to depict in their painting-effort, not only the cultural ethos of their patrons but also the geography and locale of their new environment. Thus, Randhawa and Galbraith say that during Pratap Singh’s reign (1779-1803), Mughal influence receded and a genuine Jaipur Rajput style, made its appearance. This was the golden age of painting in Jaipur. Randhawa and Galbraith say some 50 artists were employed by Pratap Singh. He was also a scholar and a poet, and a prolific author.\(^{101}\)

Pratap Singh was an ardent follower of Krishna. Randhawa and Galbraith say that Pratap Singh’s favorite amusement was ‘to dress as Krishna’. And he had his women concubines act the part of his gopis, in a pastoral dance. In the palace there was a large 15/16 feet painting depicting this dance with Pratap Singh participating as Krishna.\(^{102}\) According to Sita Sharma, the Baroda State Museum has a

\(^{100}\) Bhatnagar, Ved Shringar-The Ras Raj. Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 2004


\(^{102}\) Ibid.p.115.
very charming *ragamala* series which she attributes to the 'minority years' of Sawai Jai Singh-II. Sharma says that this series in its general character continues the tradition of the two *ragamala* series of Jai Singh's time\(^{103}\).

Sawai Jai Singh was also a staunch Vaishnav and a great devotee of Krishna. In his time also, numerous miniatures depicting the Krishna *lila* theme were painted. Thus, Mughal influences on painting notwithstanding, the painterly features got to be Rajasthani. Sita Sharma says that though Mughal sophistication is present in Rajasthani miniatures, it is Hindu religiosity that ultimately becomes the determining factor\(^{104}\).

Sita Sharma calls *Amber* a sub-school. According to Sharma, it appears modeled on a Deccani style which she says is manifest in *Najmul-ulum, Tarif-Hussain-Shahi* and the *ragamala* done in the Deccan in the 16\(^{th}\) century. The influence of the artist-refugees from the collapsed Vijaynagar empire is manifest in early Amber painting. She quotes Goetz who goes on to say—

Amber School of painting developed in C.A. A D. 1570-80, emerged from local elements of Marwari origin, with a considerable admixture of later Marwari, Mewari, Jain-Gujarati and Deccani (Post-Vijaynagar) features\(^{105}\).

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\(^{104}\) Ibid. p. 49.

\(^{105}\) Ibid.
According to Sita Sharma, Amber ragamala consists of two varieties. Either it is primitive or very refined\(^{106}\).

We now come to the Chapter-V which shall read Deccani and Rajasthani ragamala painting-examples, individually and separately, for their Colour and Form. However, after that, Chapter-IV shall devote abundant space to both Colour and Form as significant concepts in the philosophy of art both in India, as well as, in the West.

\(^{106}\) Ibid. p. 52