

A Past Captured in Paint

THAKUR RAGHURAJ SINGH of Badnore, Rajasthan, boasts a collection of more than 100 beautiful miniature paintings. The artworks, which have been in the family for 20 generations, can be traced as far back as the 16th century. The bulk of the collection, however, is dated between the 17th and 18th centuries. Apart from immortalising the rulers of Badnore, even the Maharanas of Udaipur have been portrayed with a golden halo as a mark of respect. What is equally evident is the depiction of erstwhile Thakurs, who held important positions in Mewar.

An offshoot of the Mewar school of art, the Badnore school produced a style of miniatures that, while remaining within the stylistic framework of the former, exhibited an individuality of their own. Throughout these paintings, the background colour—a shade of green called German

green, which was also used in the 19th century—Nathdwara paintings from Rajasthan—remains a constant. One of the miniatures that is part of the collection at the Prince of Wales Museum in Mumbai shows a woman performing Surya Puja (sun worship). This clearly indicates that the paintings weren't imaginary artworks but a depiction of real life.

Thakur Raghuraj Singh says, "The Badnore miniatures richly detail their chosen subjects to portray grandeur, valour, hedonism and utmost reverence for the ruler of the land while often conveying a heightened sense of drama to the viewer. Every nuance offers an honest peep into the past—a reason why the collection is easily the Kohinoor for the family, as it is a precious reminder of our heritage and evokes deep nostalgia."



The Badnore miniature paintings portray shikars, deities and court scenes, sometimes with details of the reigning ruler, artist and even subjects behind or on the paintings.