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Rajput Paintings: The Power of Seeing and Being Seen

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Important terms

Rajput painting – a modern term for paintings produced, mostly in small format on paper, in a group of kingdoms located in what is today the state of Rajasthan. Many Rajput paintings were produced in the royal workshops of the rulers of these kingdoms, between about the 16th and 19th centuries.

Rajput – Literally, “son of a king.” The rulers of the pre-modern kingdoms of Rajasthan (lit. “place of Rajas”) called themselves Rajputs and claimed the caste status of *kshatriya*, the warrior caste in the Hindu caste system.

Mewar – a Rajput kingdom in southern Rajasthan. In the 16th century the capital was moved to the city of Udaipur, which became an important center for painting production. Mewar came under British paramountcy in 1818.

Nathdwara – a pilgrimage center for the Pushtimarg sect of Hinduism, located in Rajasthan to the east of Udaipur.

Surdas – a 16th century poet associated with the region of Braj (modern Uttar Pradesh), the area in which the Hindu god Krishna is said to have spent his childhood. He wrote poems in the vernacular language known as Brajbhasa, many inspired by devotion to Krishna.

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