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Its history dating back to the Indus Valley Civilisation, 2,500 BC at least, the modern state of Rajasthan was formed on 30 March 1949 when the territory of Rajputana, comprising princely dependencies of the British Raj, merged with free India. This opened a fresh chapter in the annals of the region, characterised till then by its regal heritage, assertive kingdoms, power play and feudal mores. Democratic India's Constitution was based on the ideal of equality, and a quasi-socialist model of development was adopted.

Even so, enclaves of formidable wealth and privilege continued to exist, of old ruling families and the new rich. Among the former were the erstwhile royals and aristocrats of Rajasthan; and among the latter, the thriving business class that was dominated by some prominent families from the Shekhawati region of the state. Though based in other parts of the country and abroad, the Mittals, Birlas, Goenkas, Dalmias, Poddars, and many others retained their ancestral *havelis* and cultural bond with their desert homeland.

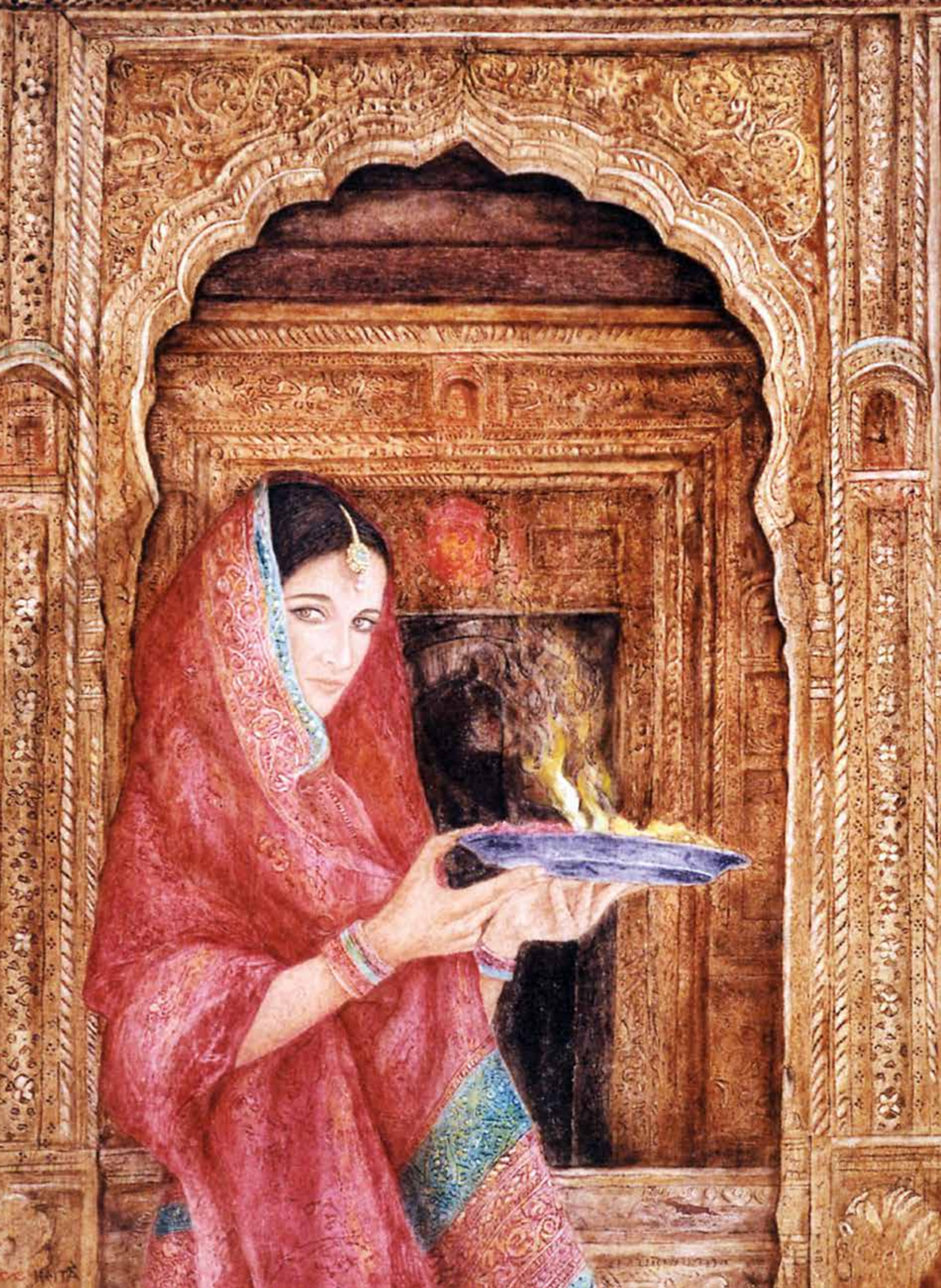
Besides being a visual feast, *The Colours of Rajasthan* is a valuable contribution. Generally, coffee table books are rich in visuals but light on content. However, this pictorial book is as serious about bringing out the history of the subjects in depth as it is about tracking rare photographs about them. Undoubtedly, Dr D.K. Taknet's meticulous research deserves congratulations as well as the gratitude of the reader. The rare images, both of the past and the present, offer visual pleasure while the accompanying descriptions make for absorbing reading. And, indeed, it is this ability to cherish the old and blend with the modern that sums up the story of Rajasthan.



Rajasthan is one of the most fascinating states of India and perhaps the richest in terms of cultural heritage. It is also the largest. This magical land of colours is known for its valour, chivalry and romance. It is immensely rich in history, hospitality and natural beauty. The state has unusual diversity in all forms: inhabitants, costumes, traditions, customs, music, dialects, cuisine and environment. Rajasthan always teems with joy and bonhomie that are unique to this part of the country. The natural terrain is simply mesmerising, with the lofty Aravalli Hills — one of the oldest ranges in the world — spreading out, and the golden sand dunes of the great Thar desert undulating gently.

The state is a haven for diverse wildlife and rich variety of flora and fauna. There is a certain magic about travelling through Rajasthan, which is unequalled by any other place in the world. Its past, people, their inherent drive to explore and great potential in the present time fascinates economists, sociologists, anthropologists and historians around the globe.

Dr D.K. Taknet has delved deep into the past and present of Rajasthan in a comprehensible and splendid style. This book delineates not only the contributions of past builders but of present-day leaders and pioneers to continue the constructive tradition of their predecessors. I facilitate Dr Taknet, IIME, a Research Institute and the Department of Tourism for producing this well-written, lucid and informative book about India's most exotic state.



Preface

Rajasthan, the desert state, is known as the land of the Rajputs, warriors and entrepreneurs, and spread across an area of 3,42,239 square kilometres. The low Aravalli hill acts range as a buffer against the advance of desert sand, and demarcates two distinct regions: one dominated by scrub, thorn and shifting sands, and the other fertile, green and rich in mineral deposits. Discovery of large oil reserves efforts the prospect of a prosperous economic future. The economy is principally agrarin. Rajasthan is bound to the west and north-west by Pakistan; in the north and north-east by Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh; in the east and south-east by Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh; and in the south-west by Gujarat.

The desert, forests, ravines, wetlands and water systems harbour varied wildlife. A few are endangered species. Forests were conserved by royals. Princely states ruled under central, imperial control. Some kingdoms fragmented into smaller ones, and feuds over ascendancy were common features. The Heritage palaces astound beholders within the walls of invincible forts. The ostentatious lifestyle of erstwhile royalty and rich merchants is juxtaposed with rustic life. Farmers till the parched land and women walk several miles daily to fetch pots of water from streams and ponds. The aggressively martial credo has ceded to the mercantile ethos. Rajasthani merchants today control trade and business and have made a monumental contribution to the industrial development of the country.

Camel Corps of Bikaner, Rajputana Rifles and President's Security guards epitomise the old martial tradition. Rajasthani soldiers have won laurels and honours in the armed forces. Modern modes of communication have made the state easily accessible. Surmounting the harsh terrain, people celebrate life for their love of vibrant colours, festivals, dance, folk music and feasting.

Rajasthan is a haven of hospitality. It abounds with stories of heroism; of eternal love; and of sacrifice. With bursting bazaars, *havelis*, palaces, forts and shrines, wildlife sanctuaries offer exciting excursions to explore during vacations and venues to host business conventions.

IIME's comprehensive and systematic research study bridges the wide chasm that exists in research on this subject. This pictorial book is based on studies from primary and secondary sources. Our team travelled over 2,75,000 kilometres and spent over 1,500 days researching and interviewing over 5,000 people directly or indirectly. People from diverse backgrounds narrated true stories, replete with untapped facts, truths and inspiring anecdotes. The research team diligently poured out approximately 2,25,000 pages of information, apart from data of personal records, memoirs, diaries and ledgers, British gazetteers, census reports, daily newspapers, journals and reports of conventions and conferences that were held periodically.

The Business History Museum (BHM)-IIME, which is a treasure trove of knowledge and literary sources, helped immensely during research. The collection of rare, old and new books and journals on a vast spectrum of subjects enriched the research phenomenally. I acknowledged the competent assistance rendered by various private and public libraries, museums, art collectors and galleries in India and abroad: where mainly the paintings, lithographs, line sketches, maps, illustrations and photographs have been reproduced.

In the course of research, I was confronted with adverse challenges. Geographically, an extensive area had to be

covered and astronomical resources and manpower were required to collect primary and secondary data, along with visuals. I embarked upon the research journey with limited finances at my disposal, primarily with the support of an indefatigable spirit, dedication, enthusiasm and never-give-up attitude, and conviction of my team associates. I owe a debt of gratitude to the Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan. There are many samaritans whose names have not appeared here, whose wishes always encouraged me to produce the best. Sincere thanks and appreciation to Jehanara Wasi, an accomplished editor, for her constructive suggestions and punctilious editing of the book. Many thanks to Pankaj Bhatnagar and his team of designers – the understated design lends a timeless elegance to the book.

Finally, I owe a debt of heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to my wife Sujata who is a pillar of strength, patience and motivation. Her painstaking efforts in undertaking art and photo research, and scrupulously examining the manuscript to offer valuable critical suggestions, have enhanced the quality of the book. The infinite love, enthusiasm and youthful spirit of my son Devang has continuously inspired and rejuvenated me afresh. He is truly the wind beneath my wings and I would never have flown without him. I feel blessed that they are an integral part of my life. I believe that the Rajasthanis will continue to play a pivotal role in business and as nation-builders for years to come. The lives of the stalwart Rajasthani personages that have been described in the book will be a beacon of hope and inspiration to the youth of India.

Jaipur

D.K. Taknet