

The Royal Colors of Rajasthan

By

Ms. Ankurita Khajanchi

ankurita20@gmail.com

Abstract

“The colors all royal, the shades of happiness

The culture of my land is carved with such finesse”

Amidst the dunes of Jaisalmer, a historic premise has been converted into a school, with the use of modern technologies to survive the heat without coolers. I was awestruck to have come across the splendid architecture.

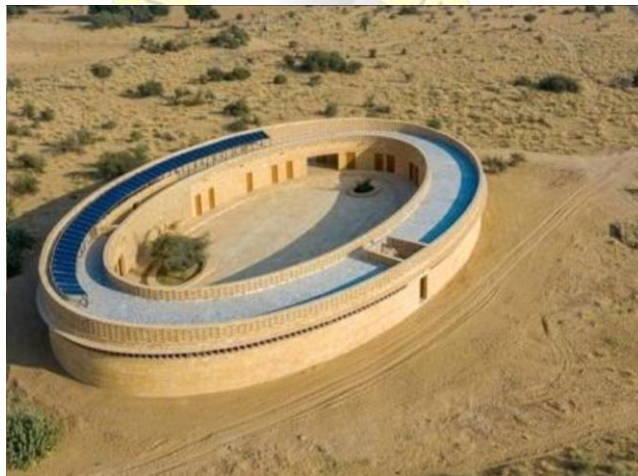


Image 1: Rajkumari Ratnavati Girls School, Jaisalmer

From the extensive beige sandy monotone to the dramatic diversity and visual variety that pervade, make Rajasthan one of the most vibrantly colorful of Indian states. With the distinction of being the largest state of India, Rajasthan is endowed with much dynamism. The development of culture and social systems in Rajasthan is an offshoot of historic and geographical conditions. Culture is like a vast unfathomable ocean, every village, hamlet, palace, cenotaph and household is imbued with its rich multi-cultural characteristics. The

state has an inexhaustible treasure of art, architecture and traditions which have been involving with the changing times.

Keywords

Folk art, Architecture, Festivals, Lifestyle.

Introduction

Our glorious heritage is as old as pre-historical civilizations and as rich as royalty. This state is the cradle of ancient civilizations that bear the evidence of its primitiveness and highly developed human settlements. It is said that culture makes a man a human being. Cultural Landscapes are indeed the narratives of the bygone and incorporate art, sculpture, and monuments, besides literature and music. Even the dresses we wear, the food we eat, our style of living are all integral parts of our culture. A legacy for the people of Rajasthan, they provide scenic, economic, ecological, social, recreational, and educational opportunities.

Elements of the Culture of Rajasthan and Their Evolution

Bespangled with royal tinges, the culture of Rajasthan is reflected in the daily life of the people. The rich culture of Rajasthan has added exuberance, vibrance and color to the thirsty desert with its symbols of culture and expressions of regional identity.

Folk Arts

“Rajasthani style of paintings and frescoes on vast expanse
The folk plays on festivals and breathtaking folk dance
And the rich tradition of folk arts mesmerizes into a trance.”

The folk culture is a rich feature of our land. Rajasthan has seen progress in various aspects of folk art. They have been with us for centuries together. History reveals that kings and their kinsmen were patrons of arts and crafts ranging from wood and marble carving to weaving, pottery, and paintings.



Image 2: Bani Thani-Kishangarh School of Painting

Source of entertainment and representative of true folk life, some of these folk arts like the kalbelia Dance, the Chakri Dance, Turra Kilangi, Gair, Terracotta, Theva Art, Fad making have reached overseas. Ghoomar dance is indeed the soul of the state.



Image 3: Kalbelia Dance Performed in Foreign Countries

Rajasthan is also renowned the world over for its hand-printed textiles, jewelry, painting, furniture, leatherwork, pottery, and metal craft. The use of beautiful colors and ornate designs are some unique features of the artwork of the state. The land of Thar is much more

than the sand and standing out like a paradox through and through is its culture – like a recurring motif reflected in its decorative arts and crafts.



Image 4: Usta Art

These arts have been developed in various forms since time immemorial and are nurtured even today. Rajasthan was on the ancient trade route, which exposed its people to different cultures and traditions.



Image 5: Manganyar Singers in Bollywood

Architecture

“The exuberant fort and the palaces massive
 With splendid architecture and carvings extensive
 The Havelis are mansions with several hundred windows
 The State has a valiance of warriors and heroes”

Architecture has an independent place in the history of human culture. Forts, temples, monuments, Havelis, Cenotaphs are the hallmark of medieval architecture in Rajasthan. The shared culture led to the architectural styles encompassing the elements of various religions, dynasties & rulers.



Image 6: Chittorgarh

The forts which were once built for the purpose of habitation, defence, and material storage besides safeguarding people against invasion are now a major part of the tourism industry. The forts are being opened for night tourism; the palaces are being converted into heritage hotels.



Image 7: Six Forts Included in UNESCO World Heritage List

The 6 majestic forts – Chittorgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Ranthambore, Amber, Gagron and Jaisalmer have the recognition of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Jaisalmer fort is the only living fort in Asia. The palaces have been transformed, keeping their magnificence intact and opening them for the public.



Image 8: Rampuriya Haveli, Bikaner

Not just these, the Havelis of Shekhawati, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, the shrines and cenotaphs, the umpteen number of temples which are a sign of the richness of the culture, are also a symbol of economic development.

Villages like Samode, Khuri, Bijaipur, Khimsar, Mandawa, Kuchaman, etc. are architectural marvels exhibiting exquisite craftsmanship.



Image 9: Samode Village Turned into Tourist Haven

Fairs and Festivals

Festivals are like a daily affair in Rajasthan, marked with affection joy, and often communal harmony. The nature of fairs has undergone a lot of transition. The Pushkar fair, the Kapilmuni fair, Ramdevra, and many more, are a symbol of public faith, devotion, and celebration. The animal fairs and the many smaller ones, once celebrated as events of enthusiasm, fun, and frolic, are still important for the small craftsmen who put up their stalls and sell kinds of stuff to earn a living.



Image 10: Gangaur

These fairs impart dynamism and joy and are a source for the cultural stream to flow from one generation to another.

Lifestyle

In a video of 1940's, I saw the main market of one of the biggest cities of Rajasthan brimming with people in Dhotis & Turbans, on bullock carts and camel carts. Clothes-their color, design, and cut could earlier signify which village and caste someone came from. Every area had its own style of turbans, jewelry, apparels, and even footwear.

The beautiful, ornate designs of Adivasi (tribal) jewelry have now become fashionable among the urban elite and can now be bought everywhere.



Image 11: Women in Traditional Colorful Attire

Language and Literature

Aryan's language > Vedic Sanskrit > Pali > Prakrit > Shourseni Prakrit.

The Shourseni Prakrit finally degenerated into Gurjari, later giving birth to Rajasthani. It is further classified into Dingal and Pingal. Rajasthani is a rich language and has a vast volume of literature, though not constitutionally recognised. We have hundreds of dialects and sub-dialects. Writers and poets have imbued the culture of Rajasthan in their works.

From inscriptions, epigraphs (as old as that from 5th century BC), painted books to large texts, the literature of Rajasthan is a vast sea.

Conclusion

Rajasthan, no matter its topography, has been the acclaimed world over as a fond royal retreat. The colors of its culture seep through the golden sands, spangling an indelible impression in hearts and minds. And, we here, welcome each and everyone with open arms, singing our song '**Padharo Mhare Des**' (Welcome to our land).

References

- Dharohar Rajasthan

- Rajasthan Adhyayan RBSE
- www.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in
- Pictures from www.instagram.com/upen.ras

About the Author

Ankurita Khajanchi is a bilingual author, content and creative writer. She cleared the Rajasthan Administrative Services Exam in 2017. Her poetry book *Our Togetherness-The Amaranthine Music Of Love* won the Best Debut Poetry Book Award in Alsphere Foundation's 4th ALS LITFEST 2022. She has also written a book on Civil Services Interview Preparation and has contributed to many anthologies and magazines. She is an avid learner.

