

# The Udaipur Diaries

Janki Mashruwala

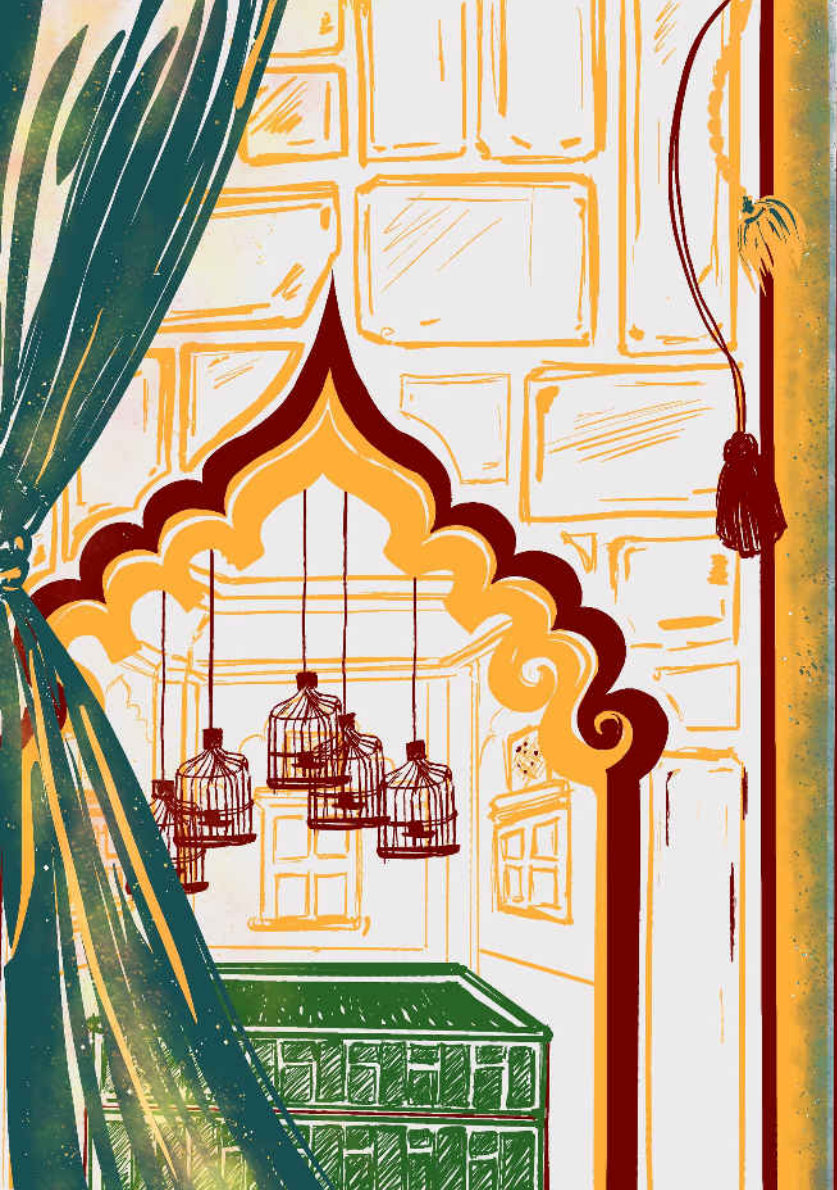




# Introduction

History repeats itself more often than not. Hence, it is wise to learn the history of a place to avoid the same mistakes as people before us. To know what they went through and their way of life, what built the city into what it is today. This book consists of a few short stories about Udaipur.

While India was ruled by multiple different Rulers belonging to different dynasties, it also adapted several cultural norms which made an amalgamation of Rajput, Mughal and British architecture. This graphic novel consists of different folk tales from the land of lakes, Udaipur.



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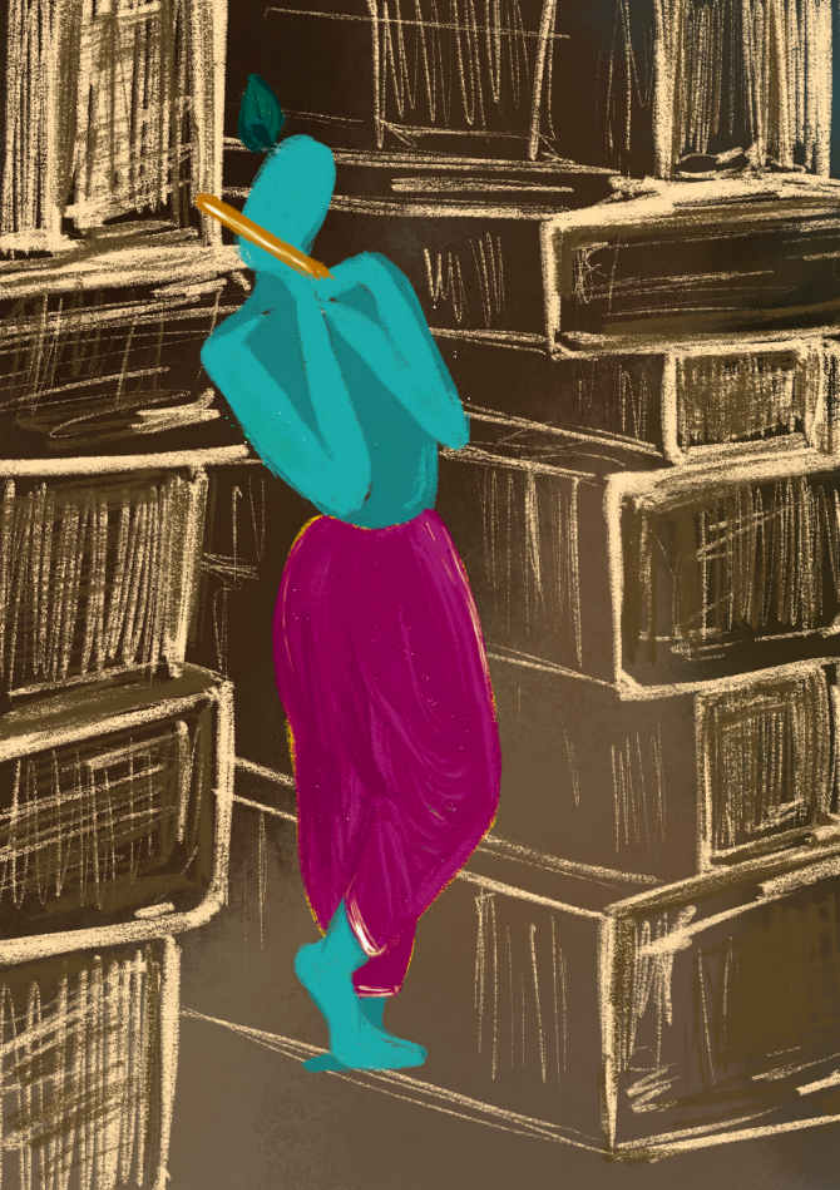
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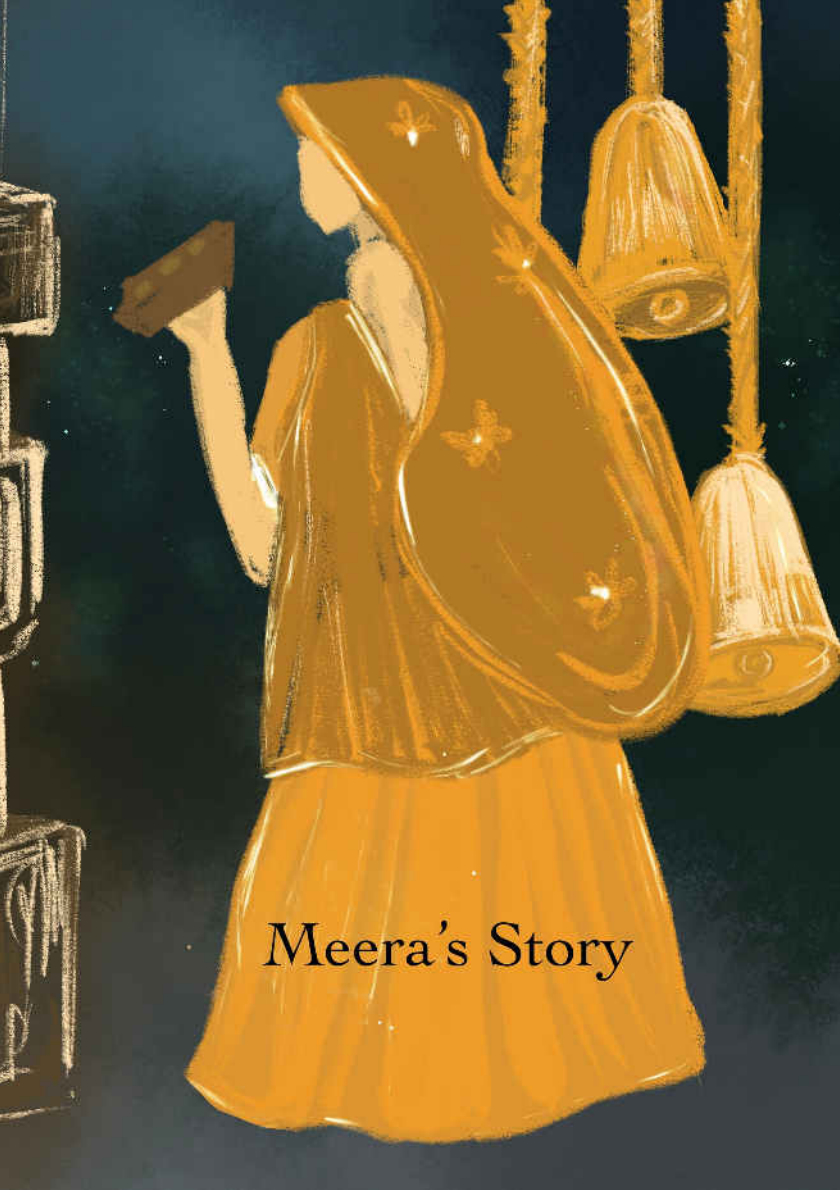
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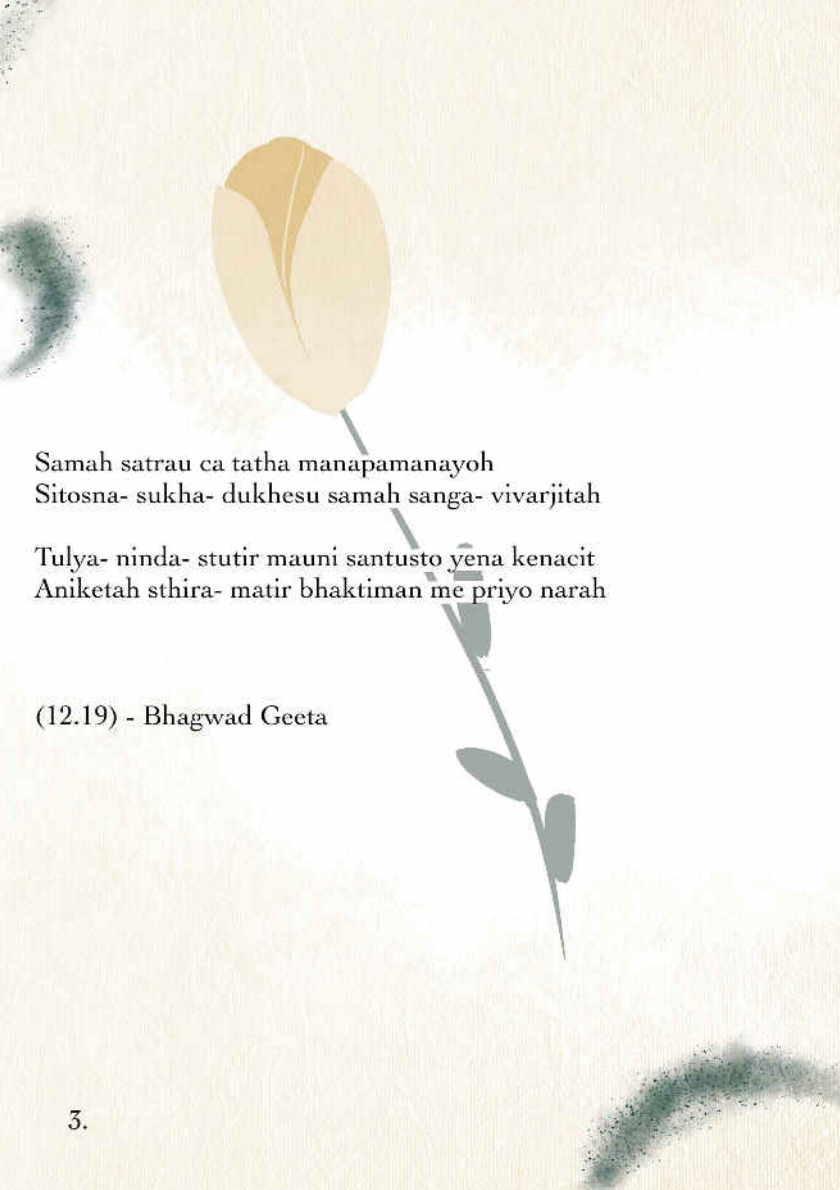
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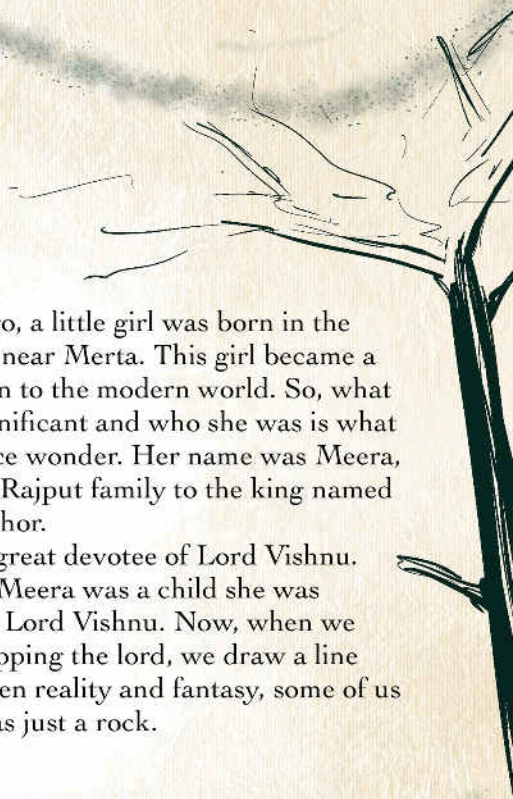


Samah satrau ca tatha manapamanayoh  
Sitosna- sukha- dukhesu samah sanga- vivarjitah

Tulya- ninda- stutir mauni santusto yena kenacit  
Aniketah sthira- matir bhaktiman me priyo narah

(12.19) - Bhagwad Geeta





Long long time ago, a little girl was born in the village of Kurkhi, near Merta. This girl became a symbol of devotion to the modern world. So, what she did was so significant and who she was is what makes the audience wonder. Her name was Meera, she was born in a Rajput family to the king named Ratan Singh Ranthor.

Ranthor's were a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Hence ever since Meera was a child she was taught to worship Lord Vishnu. Now, when we talk about worshipping the lord, we draw a line somewhere between reality and fantasy, some of us even see a statue as just a rock.

## Meera's childhood

One fine day, when the palace was decorated for a wedding, when the traditions were in line, the customs happened during the dawn and the dusk. Innocent Meera who was with her mother looked at her Ma and asked, "who is my groom, Ma?", like every other parent who would say something to answer a 4 year old just to reply to her curiosity pointed at a Krishna idol and said, "My dear Meera, Lord Krishna, the beautiful idol standing there is your bridegroom."

And that was the beginning of Meera's limitless devotion for her Lord, her groom, her best friend. Meera's devotion had no boundaries, she took Krishna as her partner and her lord. She would bathe the idol, dress it, dance with it, sang beautiful songs for her lord and talked to him as well. .



As she grew up, her father arranged her marriage with Rana Kumbha of Chitore, in Mewar. She was a dutiful and loyal wife to her husband, obeyed everything that he said. After finishing off her household duties she would go to a temple to worship Krishna every evening. And would sing and dance for her Lord and for her the god would talk to her, sing along with her. Meera's devotion to Krishna did not lessen after her marriage and this did not make goddess worshipping women of Chittor happy. They would get jealous and would conspire against her, try to break her marriage and force her to worship goddess Durga. She faced various difficulties but despite them she never doubted her lord and her loyalty never shook.





One day, Meera's sister-in-law, Udabai told Rana that she saw Meera with her lover at the temple where she goes to worship Krishna everyday and insinuated that Meera was indulging herself freely with Rishi Munis near there. Listening to this Rana became furious and hastily took his sword and went to Meera's room. On reaching there he found out that Meera was not there.

On his way out he met a relative, who on seeing Rana in that condition advised him that Meera is a good woman and that she could not have done something of that sort and to take his next action wisely. Sun was setting, on this day not just Meera was going to the temple but shortly after, Rana and Udabai also went to the temple. On reaching there, they were flabbergasted on seeing what they saw. Meera was ecstatic, talking to the idol.

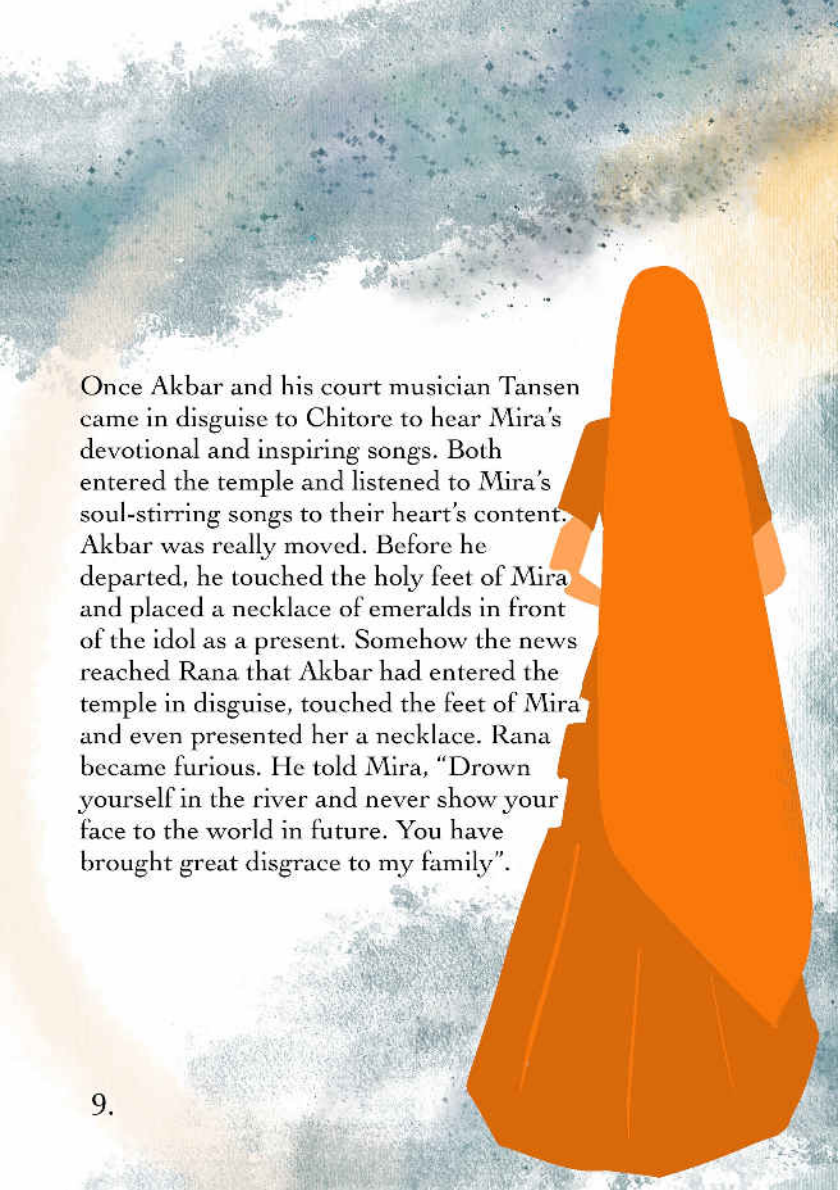




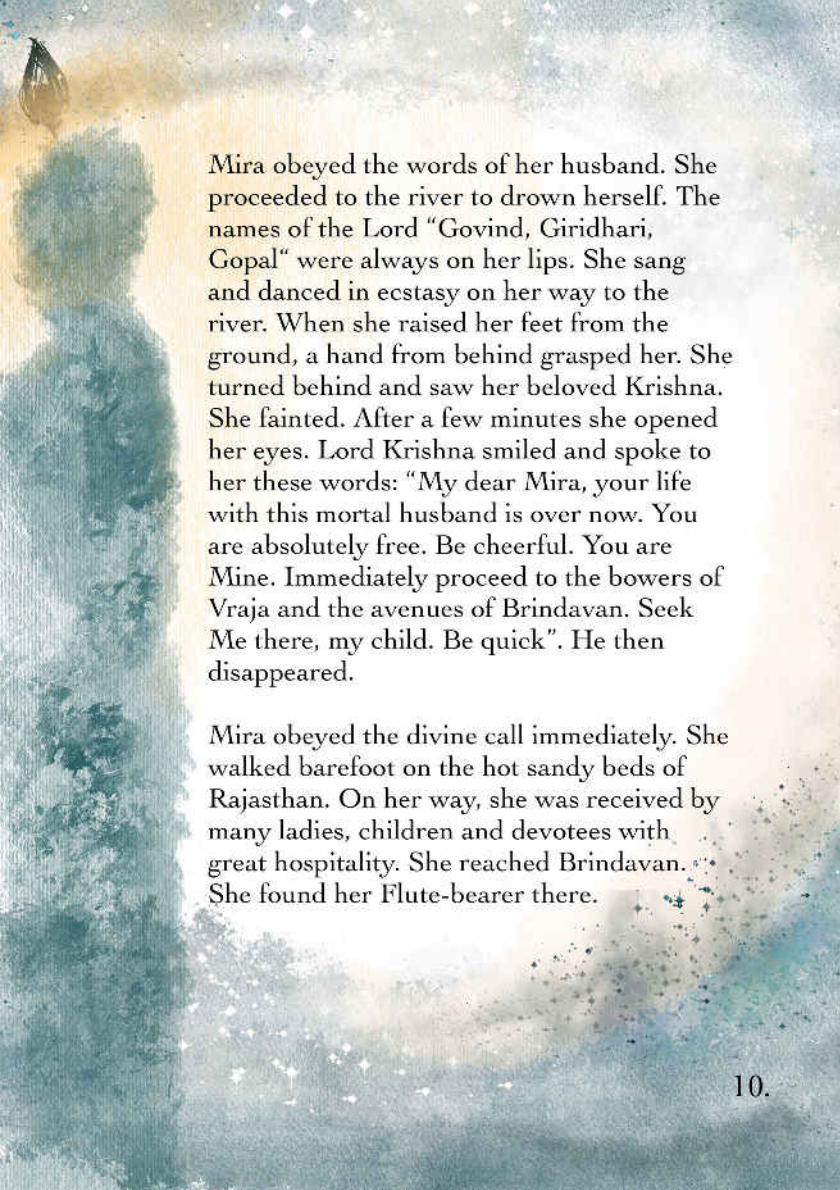
Kumbha asked her, “whom are you talking to?” to which she replied, “There sits he my lord, the Nanichora who has stolen my heart” and then fainted.

Meera’s life had only gotten difficult. She was tested in many ways. Here, Sri Krishna always stood by the side of Mira. Once Rana sent a cobra in a basket to Mira with the message that it contained a garland of flowers. Mira took her bath and sat for worship. After finishing her meditation, she opened the basket and found inside a lovely idol of Sri Krishna and a garland of flowers. Then Rana sent her a cup of poison with the message that it was nectar. Mira offered it to Lord Krishna and took it as His Prasad. It was real nectar to her. Then Rana sent a bed of nails for Mira to sleep on. Mira finished her worship and slept on the bed of nails. The bed of nails was transformed into a bed of roses.



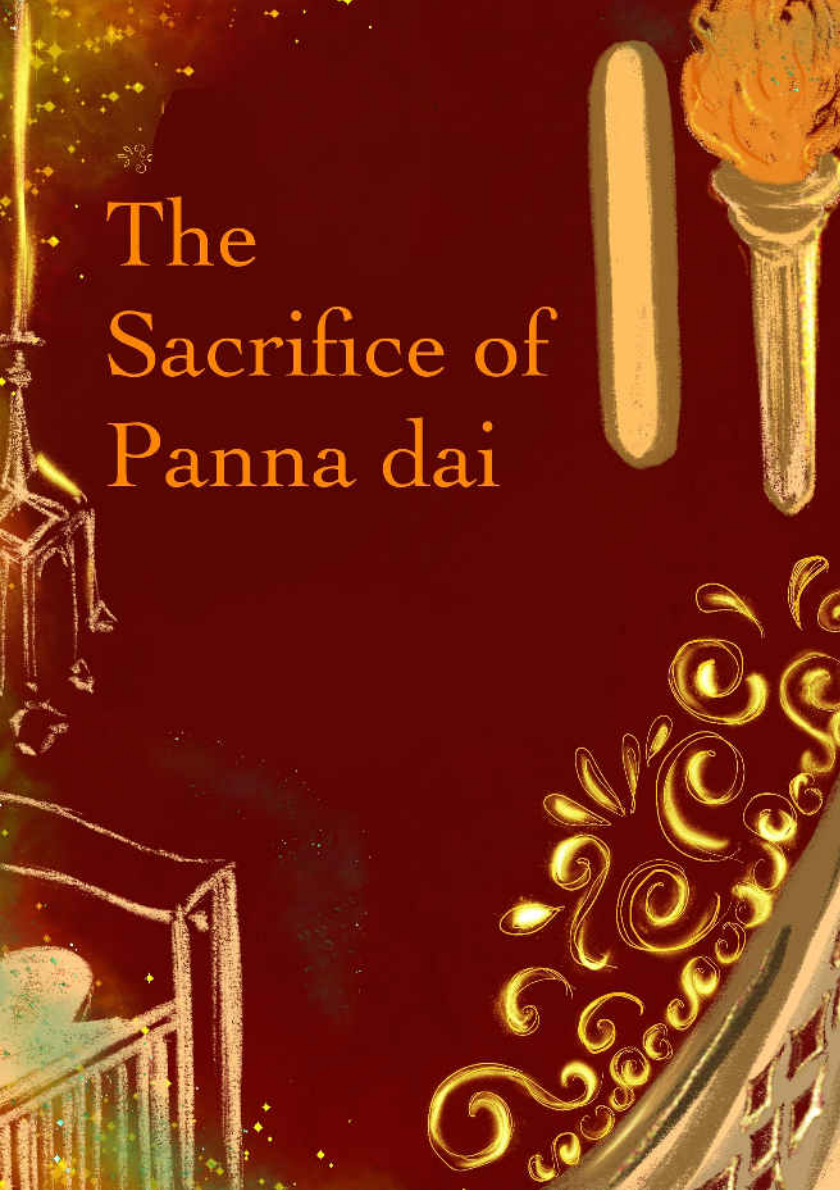
A woman in a bright orange sari is shown from the back, standing against a textured, abstract background of blue, green, and white. The sari has a subtle pattern and a long, flowing tail. The background has a painterly, watercolor-like quality with soft transitions and some darker spots.

Once Akbar and his court musician Tansen came in disguise to Chitore to hear Mira's devotional and inspiring songs. Both entered the temple and listened to Mira's soul-stirring songs to their heart's content. Akbar was really moved. Before he departed, he touched the holy feet of Mira and placed a necklace of emeralds in front of the idol as a present. Somehow the news reached Rana that Akbar had entered the temple in disguise, touched the feet of Mira and even presented her a necklace. Rana became furious. He told Mira, "Drown yourself in the river and never show your face to the world in future. You have brought great disgrace to my family".



Mira obeyed the words of her husband. She proceeded to the river to drown herself. The names of the Lord “Govind, Giridhari, Gopal” were always on her lips. She sang and danced in ecstasy on her way to the river. When she raised her feet from the ground, a hand from behind grasped her. She turned behind and saw her beloved Krishna. She fainted. After a few minutes she opened her eyes. Lord Krishna smiled and spoke to her these words: “My dear Mira, your life with this mortal husband is over now. You are absolutely free. Be cheerful. You are Mine. Immediately proceed to the bowers of Vraja and the avenues of Brindavan. Seek Me there, my child. Be quick”. He then disappeared.

Mira obeyed the divine call immediately. She walked barefoot on the hot sandy beds of Rajasthan. On her way, she was received by many ladies, children and devotees with great hospitality. She reached Brindavan. She found her Flute-bearer there.



The  
Sacrifice of  
Panna dai






Rana Sanga had four sons, i.e., Bhojraj Singh, Rana Ratan Singh, Vikramaditya and Udai Singh. It was 1528 and Rana Sanga after taking over nearly the entirety of north India, had a tragic death during the battle of Khanwa, by being poisoned by his own chiefsman. Mewar was coping up with the loss of their oldest prince and now the death of their brave king. The kingdom was ascended to his eldest son, Ratan Singh, who faced the same fate as his brother, Bhojraj, the highest honorary death, to die in battle. But this was no ordinary loss for Mewar. It was a difficult time for the kingdom. It was left under the rule of a teenage king, Vikramaditya, who like other teenagers was ill-tempered and arrogant and couldn't fulfil his responsibility as a king.



Once Chittor was attacked by Bahadur Shah Zafar around the year 1535. Vikramaditya decided to fight back, and lost his rule over his homeland. Bahadur Shah later returned back to Gujarat.

During this battle, Mewar also lost hundreds of women, who committed Jauhar. Rani Karnavati was one of them. Before that she asked Panna dai to take care of her son, Udai Singh who was an infant at that time and escape from there and go towards Bundi and return when the situation got better. Vikramaditya went along as well with some loyal servants and nobles.





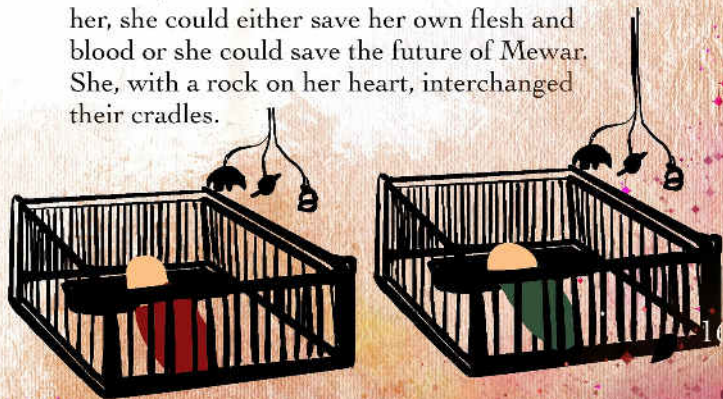
After returning  
Vikramaditya was the  
same as before, vile and  
shrewd. In 1536, when his  
behaviour crossed limits,  
he abused a respected old  
chief person at court and  
thus was sentenced to  
prison by the kingdom  
nobles. And thus, Udai  
Singh became the  
youngest King of their  
kingdom.

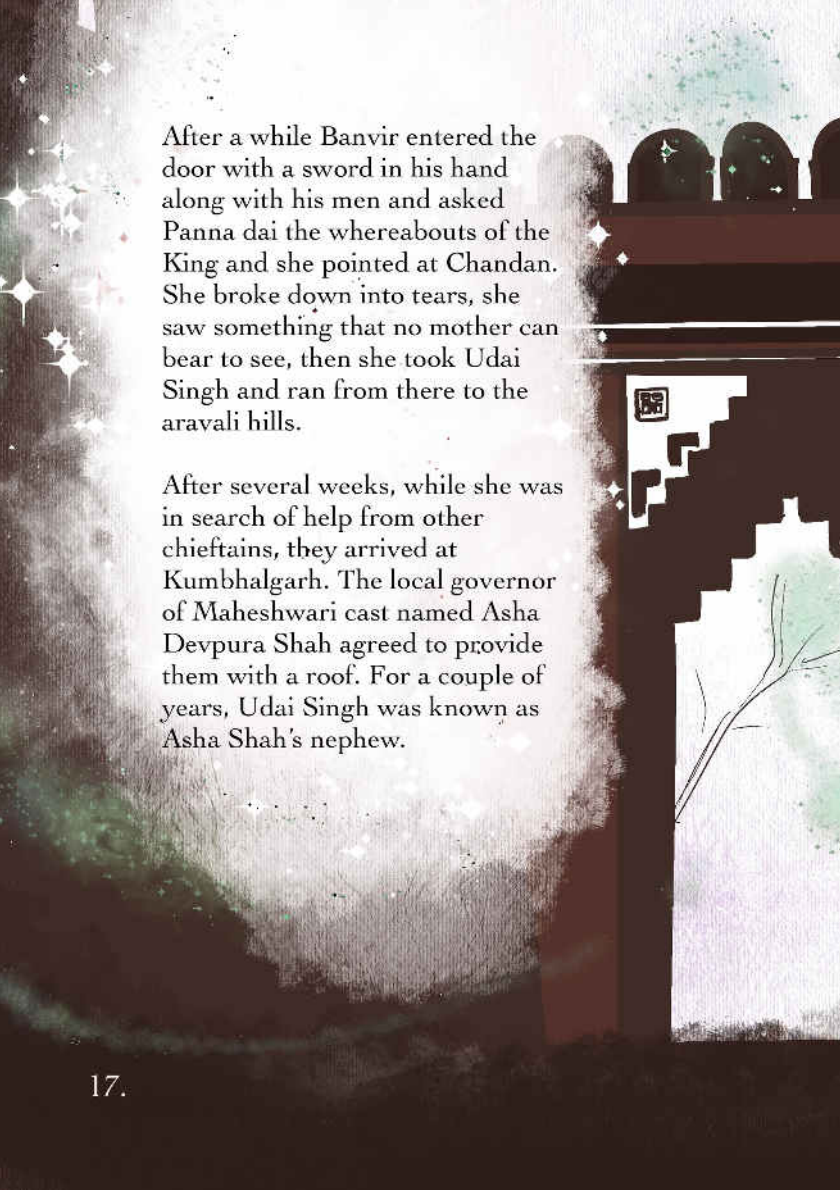
Udai Singh was too young  
to take the responsibilities  
that were of a king.

Chiefsmen decided that it  
would be wise to invite  
Banvir to guard Udai  
Singh as well as then  
current political matters.

Banvir was illicit son of Rana Sanga's older brother, Prithviraj who was sent to exile. Hence he thought that he was the rightful heir of Chittorgarh. In order to become the king he had to put aside his hurdles, Vikramaditya and Udai Singh. Vikramaditya's situation was perfect for Banvir's cruel plan and taking advantage of that he assassinated him in prison.


He then hurried towards Udai Singh. That night Pannadai arranged the bed for both Udai Singh and her son, Chandan. After a few minutes a maid came running to panna dai telling her that Banvir is heading towards them and he wants to kill Udai Singh for his greed for the throne. Panna dai got scared and startled, she had a difficult choice in front of her, she could either save her own flesh and blood or she could save the future of Mewar. She, with a rock on her heart, interchanged their cradles.





After a while Banvir entered the door with a sword in his hand along with his men and asked Panna dai the whereabouts of the King and she pointed at Chandan. She broke down into tears, she saw something that no mother can bear to see, then she took Udai Singh and ran from there to the aravali hills.

After several weeks, while she was in search of help from other chieftains, they arrived at Kumbhalgarh. The local governor of Maheshwari cast named Asha Devpura Shah agreed to provide them with a roof. For a couple of years, Udai Singh was known as Asha Shah's nephew.



Four years passed and Udai Singh was married to a Rajput Princess. In 1540, when Udai Singh was 18, Panna knew he was ready to defeat Banvir. Thus, Panna Dai contacted chieftains of Mewar and revealed to them the full story of the deception and the escape.

After knowing the truth, Rajput chieftains joined Udai Singh in the revolt against Banvir. He marched on Chittor to reclaim his throne with the help of Mewar and Marwar force. Thus, Banvir was defeated, in the battle fought near Maholi.


At last, Udai Singh rode to his kingdom and was crowned as the Maharana of Mewar. Mewar was in the right hands, because of just one lady. The lady who sacrificed her own son for Mewar. The Iron Lady!



# Jagmandir









Col. Tod writes in his Annals of Mewar -

"...Khuram and Muhabbat Khan compelled to take refuge in Udaipur....he (Shah Jahan) took up his abode on the island abode on the island, on which a sumptuous residence was raised, adorned with a lofty dome and crowned with a crescent. The interior was decorated with onyx, cornelean, jasper, and agates, and the floors were covered with rich Turkey carpets. Here Khuram resided, every wish anticipated, till a short time before the death of his father, when he retired to Persia.....Nothing but marble enters into their composition; columns, baths, reservoirs, fountains, all are of this material, often inlaid with mosaics, the uniformity pleasingly diversified by the light passing through coloured glass. The walls, both here and in the grand palace, contain many medallions in gypsum, portraying the chief events in the history of the family. Orange and lemon groves, and parterres of flowers intervene to dispel the monotony of the buildings, while on every side the tamarind and the cocoanut palm spread their welcome shade."

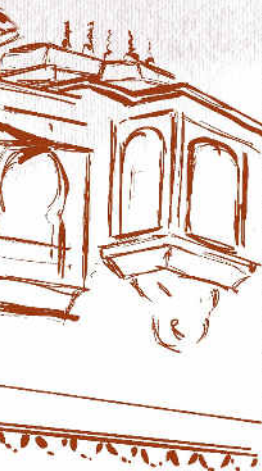




Jag Mandir Palace is a beautiful palace located on the southern island of Lake Pichola. The three-storied Palace is a palatial structure made in yellow sandstone and marble. Built in early years of 17th century, Jag Mandir Palace was raised by Maharana Karan Singh to serve as a hiding place for Prince Khurram (popularly known as Shah Jahan). Between the years of 1620-28, Maharana Karan Singh ruled the region and during this period Prince Khurram revolted against his father.

Maharana Karan Singh helped Prince Khurram as he was born to a Rajput mother. Khurram, accompanied by his wife and two sons left the kingdom. Then, Maharana Karan provided them a safe haven in the City Palace of Udaipur. The aristocrats were unsuccessful in adhering to the Rajput customs; subsequently Karan Singh shifted them to the Jag Mandir Palace. At that time, Jag Mandir Palace was under construction.





It is great to know that Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (Prince Khurram) imbibed several ideas, especially of pieta dura work, for the world-renowned Taj Mahal from Jag Mandir Palace, during his stay in 1623-24. The Palace was completed by Maharana Jagat Singh during his reign (1628-1652) after the death of Karan Singh. The present form of the Palace is the result of further additions that were made to it by Maharana Jagat Singh. Talking about the historical facts, Maharana Swaroop Singh sheltered a number of European families in this Palace, during the revolt of 1857.



In Jag Mandir Palace, Gul Mahal catches the major attention as this is the place where Prince Khurram lived with his family. Gul Mahal is made in the Islamic style of architecture, which states that Karan Singh kept in mind the taste of Khurram. The hall has amazing interiors and is decorated with the Muslim crescent. To serve the religious purpose of Khurram, a mosque was also constructed in the complex of the Palace. Another attraction of this Palace is the courtyard, which is festooned with black and white tiles.



Baiya  
ne  
Bula O!!

Messaging at  
Zeenana





g at

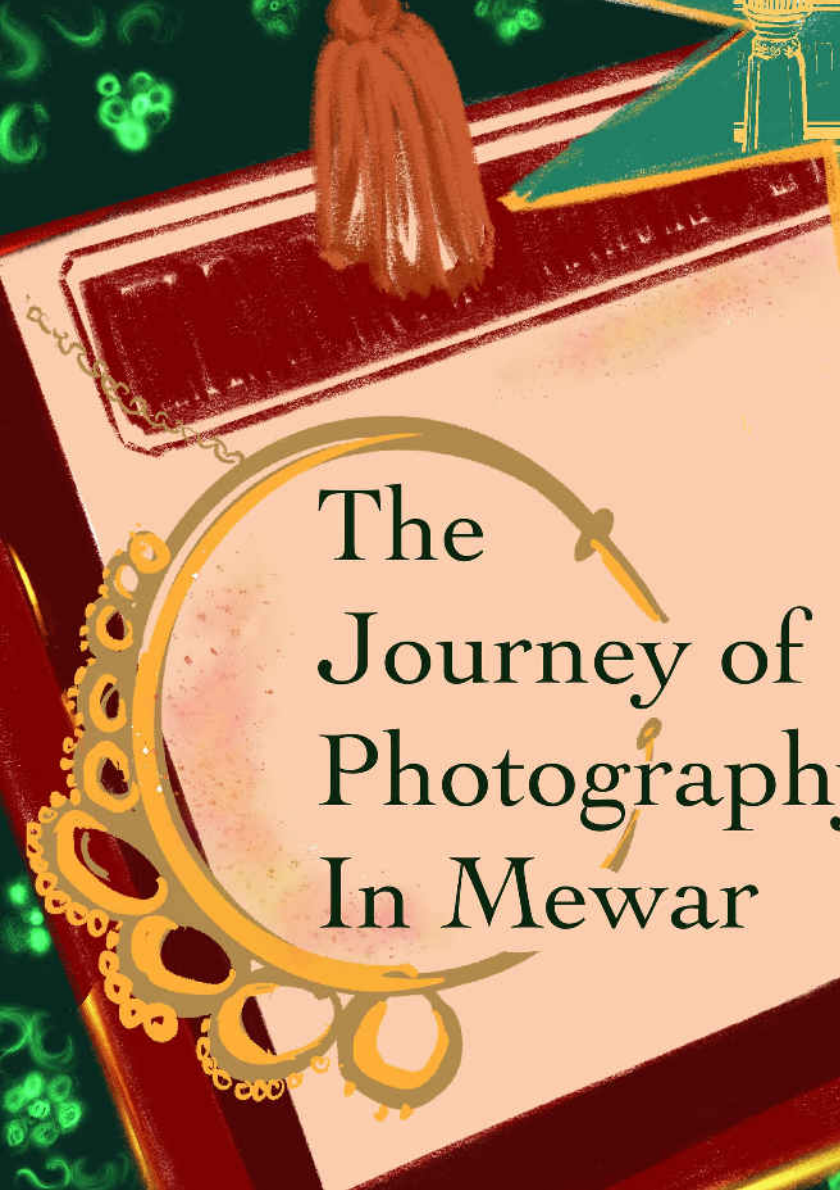


## Messaging at Zenana

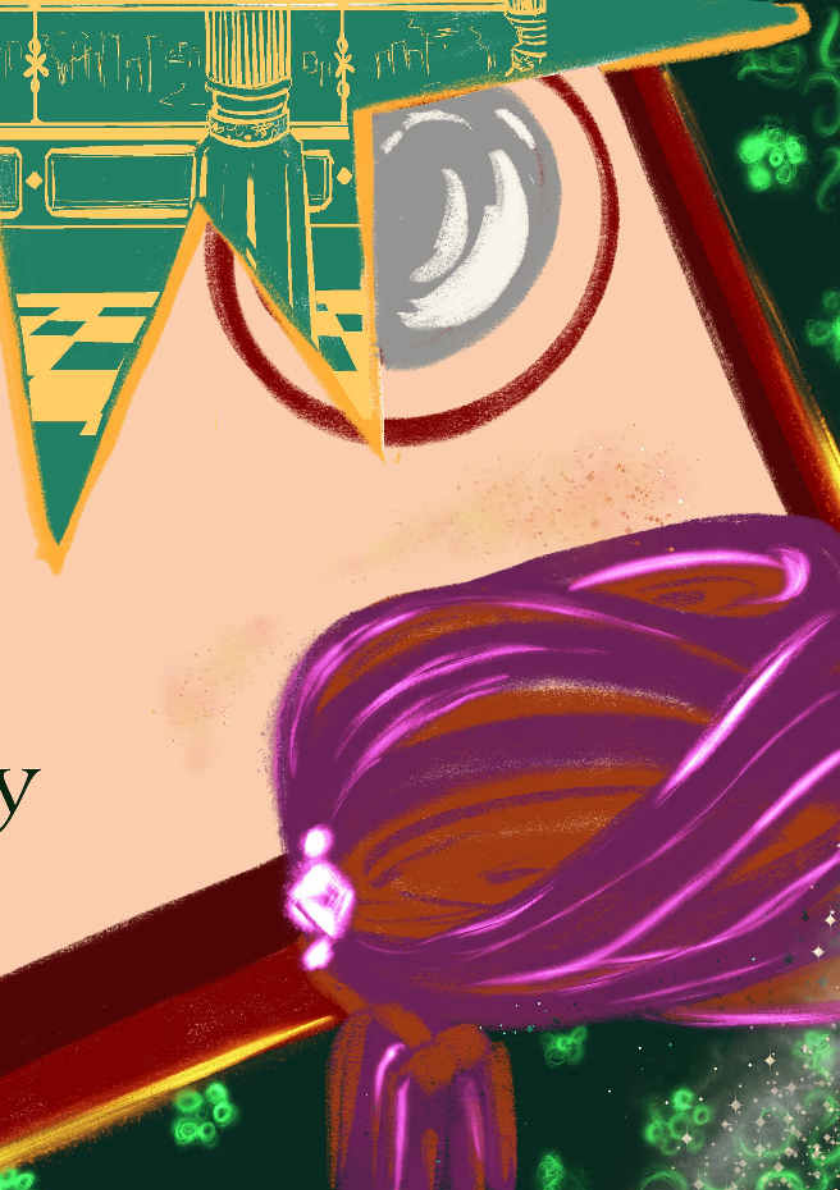
There was a manner in which messages from the outside world filtered into the Zenana. It was exchanged between a series of persons before it reached the right recipient. The messenger was almost always a man, and male entry into the Zenana was forbidden. He would convey his message to the male attendant at the outer Zenani Deodhi. Further on, the message was given to the female attendant stationed at the inner Deodhi. She would then, in a hushed tone, say 'Baiya ne bulao!' or 'call one of the maids', or simply cough or clap to indicate the same. This mannequin indicates the female attendant at the inner Zenana Deodhi.



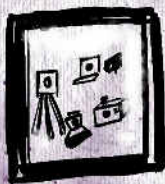




The  
Journey of  
Photography  
In Mewar

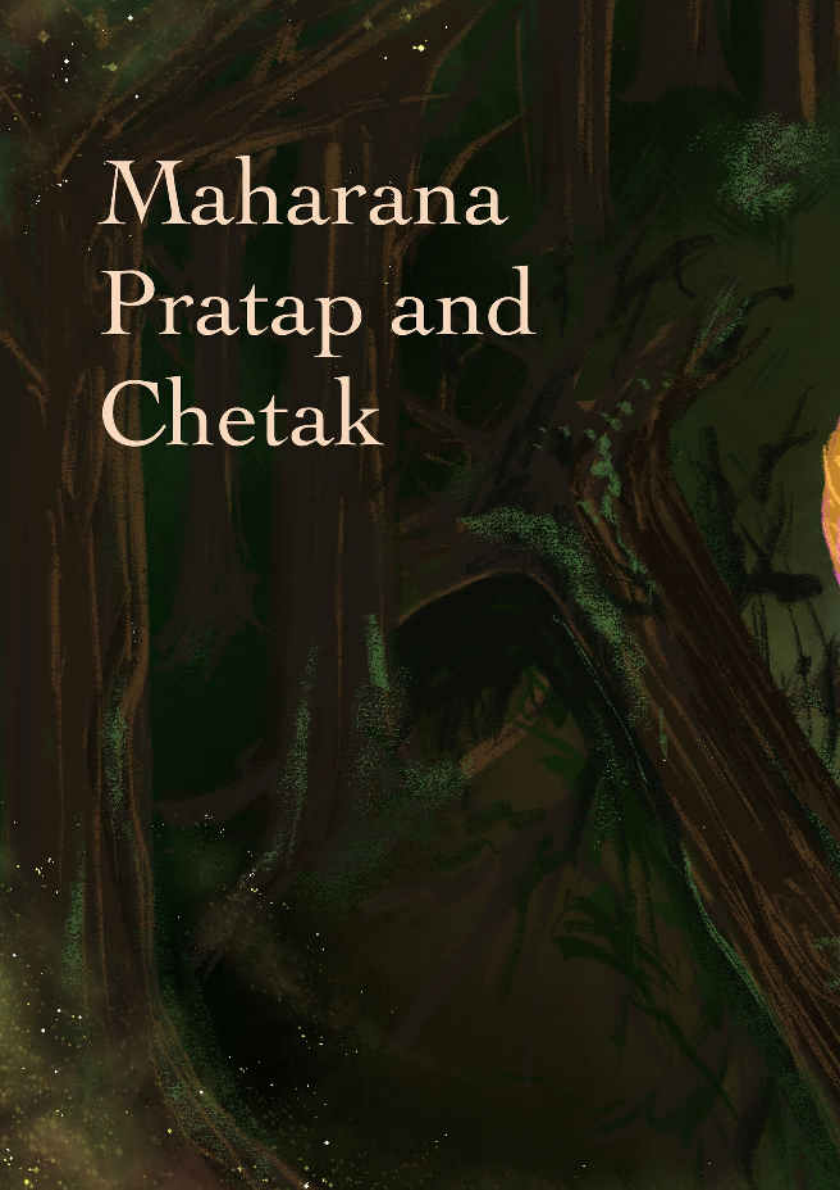


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The earliest reference to the Camera in Mewar was found in the work of Col.

James Tod, the British Political Agent in Udaipur. In his interactions with the then heir of Mewar, Kunwar Amar Singh, son of Maharana Bheem Singh (I. 1778-1828 CE), the Camera Obscura, a device that Col. James Tod had brought along with him, was explored. Expediently the Camera and Photography gained immense popularity across India and within The Mewar Family. It subsequently reached out to include not only the nobility but also a larger group of diverse local communities. This transient journey of photography in Mewar, including the evolution in its techniques, can be traced through this display. The exhibition features 60 reproductions of archival photographs from the collection of The City Palace Museum, Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation, Udaipur. A separate section is dedicated to painted photographs, a technique that involved hand painting photographs, and which emerged because of the growing popularity of photography, causing the royal miniature artists to apply their skill to a new task.



Maharana  
Pratap and  
Chetak





In 1568, during the reign of Udai Singh II, Chittor was conquered by the Mughal Emperor Akbar after the third Jauhar at Chittor. However, Udai Singh and the royal family of Mewar escaped before the capture of the fort and moved to the foothills of the Aravalli Range where Udai Singh founded the city of Udaipur in 1559. Rana Udai Singh had wished Jagmal, his son, from her favorite - the Bhatiyani queen to succeed him. But after his death the senior nobles wanted Pratap, the eldest son, to be their king as was customary. During the coronation ceremony, Jagmal was physically moved out of the palace by the Chundawat Chief and Tomar chief Ramshah and prevailed upon Pratap, who was crowned as the next Rana of Mewar.



Folklore has it that Pratap did not want to go against the wishes of his father but Rajput nobles convinced him that Jajmal was not fit to rule in the troubled times of the day; but it is quite possible that what occurred was a bitterly contested struggle for succession: something characteristic of most South Asian kingdoms of the age.

Though the chief reasons for resentment between Pratap Singh and Akbar is unclear, it is now largely agreed that it had to do with disagreements over the status of Mewar within the Mughal Empire, were it to at all accept Mughal suzerainty. The tensions were further characterised by the fact that Babur and Rana Sanga, grandfathers to Akbar and Pratap respectively, had earlier bitterly contested the control over the Gangetic plains and the Doab. It is evident that there had been some measures of reconciliation, such as acceptance of ambassadors and representatives between the two courts. However, none of these could ever be taken to any logical end.

## Conflict

Chittorgarh (Chittor fort), Pratap's ancestral home, was under Mughal occupation. Living a life on the run, the dream of reconquering Chittor (and thus reclaiming the glory of Mewar) was greatly cherished by Pratap, and his future efforts were bent towards this goal. In essence Pratap remained king of the whole of Rajputana (now Rajasthan) and the lands surrounding it except Chittor.

Nearly all of Pratap's fellow Rajput chiefs had meanwhile entered into the vassalage of the Mughals. Even Pratap's own brothers, Shakti Singh and Sagar Singh, served Akbar. Indeed, many Rajput chiefs, such as Raja Man Singh of Amber (later known as Maharaja of Jaipur) served as army commanders in Akbar's armies and as members of his council.

Akbar sent a total of six diplomatic missions to Pratap, seeking to negotiate the same sort of peaceful alliance that he had concluded with the other Rajput chiefs. This is clearly evidential of the ends sought by each of the two rulers: for Akbar, having an independent or semi independent kingdom, within his otherwise consolidated empire was politically unsound and militarily dangerous; for Pratap Singh, on the other hand, to accept vassalage with little in return was a political suicide, and a steep fall for Mewar in the region's power structure.

#### Battle of Haldighati

On June 21, 1576 (June 18 by other calculations), the two armies met at Haldighati, near the town of Gogunda in present-day Rajasthan. While accounts vary as to the exact strength of the two armies, all sources concur that the Mughal forces outnumbered Pratap's men.




CHETAK was a pure KATHIAWARI breed horse.

The TRUE story is something like this.... A very small village called KHOD, near present CHOTILA in Saurashtra region of Gujarat state, had tribe of "Danti Charans" living there. They used to travel all over Gujarat and Rajasthan and do business of selling Good Breed Horses to Big Kingdoms.

When they heard of the Maharana Pratap's fighting with Delhi Sultanate, they had selected Two lovely Colts from KATHIAWAR, both Grey colour one was 1 yr 2 months named





However, the numerical superiority of the Mughal army and their artillery began to tell. Seeing that the battle was favouring Akbar and with the huge amount of death of soldiers on both sides, Pratap's generals prevailed upon him to flee the field so as to be able to fight another day. Myths indicate that to facilitate Pratap's escape, one of his lieutenants, a member of the Jhala clan, donned Pratap's distinctive garments and took his place in the battlefield. He was soon killed. Meanwhile, riding his trusty steed Chetak, Pratap was able to successfully evade captivity and escape to the hills. However, Chetak was critically wounded on his left thigh by a mardana (Elephant Trunk Sword), with spear of weight 263 kg. while Pratap had attempted to nail down the Mughal Emperor Akbar. Chetak was bleeding heavily and he collapsed after jumping over a small brook a few kilometres away from the battle field.



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M.R.P ₹300

This book consists of a few short stories for children about the history of Udaipur and what made the place it is now. And has stories like the evolution of photography in India and Meerabai's story. How one bloodline can have so many great warriors and selfless women.

