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How a *Pābūjī kī Paṛ* Portrays the Story of Pābūjī Rāṭhoṛ

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In this video, Professor John D. Smith examines the visual narrative of a *Pābūjī kī paṛ* painted in Bhilwara, Rajasthan, India, by Jośī artists. The painting brings to life stories from *The Epic of Pābūjī*, using inventive visual strategies to depict multiple events, times, and locations.

Scenes in the courts are distinguished by characters who visit at different points in the story. For example, in the central court of Kolu, small figures facing Pābūjī show a Brahman bringing betrothal honors, Rūpnāth presenting Jindrāv Khīncī's head, and Harmal, disguised as a mendicant, reporting from Laṅkā—each appearing at separate moments.

Some scenes represent multiple events by reassigning the identity of a character, as in Pābūjī's battles with Mīrzā Khān and Lakkhū Paṭhān, or Gorakhnāth's initiation of Harmal and, later, Rūpnāth. This also occurs when a key character is omitted. For instance, during a performance, the singer Parbū Bhopo identified Pābūjī's fan bearer as the gardener who denies Pulvantī entry to Buṛo's garden.

Scenes can depict sequences of actions. Dhembo's beheading of the tiger, along with the severed head, is a simple example, while the court of Umarkoṭ during Pābūjī's marriage shows multiple events. In this latter scene, Pābūjī's act of spearing the genie Sukhyo Pīr to release water is represented from both a top view (the genie in the well) and a side view (Pābūjī attacking while cows drink).

Scenes can also span different locations. In the *satī* scene, women burn at Gūñjavo Well in Koḷū while Queen Gailovat hands her baby to a midwife. Above, the baby Rūpnāth swings in a cradle from a distant tree in Gīrnār, with the midwife holding the baby bridging the two spaces.

Finally, multiple scenes are distributed across the *paṛ* to trace a character's exploits, such as Pābūjī's wedding, Harmal's journey to Laṅkā to spy on camels, and Rūpnāth killing Khīncī to avenge Pābūjī's death.

After the credits (24:00), Parbū Bhopo, accompanied by his wife Rukmā Devī, performs a song about Harmal visiting his mother to test his *jogī* disguise. This three-minute example of *Pābūjī kī paṛ* performance (*Pābūjī kī paṛ vāṃcaṇo*) demonstrates how the two singers narrate the story and features Parbū, in full costume, playing his *rāvaṇhattho* (stick zither) in front of their *paṛ*.

For additional information see John D. Smith, *The Epic of Pābūjī: A Study, Transcription and Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). The video was recorded in April 1991 and edited in 2025. Duration: 27 minutes.

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<https://rumble.com/v79d2c0-how-a-pbj-k-pa-portrays-the-story-of-pbj-rho.html>

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