

RAJASTHANI MINIATURE PAINTING: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Indian painting is one of the greatest cultural traditions of the world. Miniature's History of Indian Painting has been designed as a project which will take into account all the relevant research data and match the most scholarly work in its references, but will melt the material in a fluent and engaging narration, the images reflected in it being always the varied visions of beauty in the tradition. We focused and provide relevant information about miniature painting on the basis of surveyed results between the eras of 15th to 17th century by visited the different painting schools, previous related data and analyze the data in aspect of this work, some are based on Mughal and Mewar Painting. In this thesis work we provide the result of Rajasthan Miniature painting by the survey on it.

INTRODUCTION

The word miniature is derived from the Latin word minimum, red lead is a picture of ancient or medieval illuminated manuscript; the simple decoration of the early codices having been miniated or delineated with that pigment. Generally small scale of the medieval pictures has led to an etymological confusion of the term with minuteness and to its application to small paintings especially portrait miniatures, which however grow from the same tradition and at least initially use similar techniques.

Indian painting was exposed to Greco-Roman as well as Iranian and Chinese influences. Cave paintings in different parts of India are remarkable. The earliest paintings of the prehistoric age in the caves all over the world gives us magnificent examples of the observant eyes. The prehistoric cave painting in India gives us a picture of life of those far-off days of the early man in India. The art of painting has been a medium of both, expression and communication from the earliest known period of history. The art of painting progressed gradually and it reached its zenith during the Satavahana period (2nd – 1st B.C.) and also the Gupta Vakataka period (5th-6th A.D.) Indian paintings are one of the oldest art forms throughout history. Indian paintings are mode of expression, which depict social movements, spiritual beliefs and general life.

Rajasthani painting originated at the royal states of Rajasthan, somewhere around the late 16th and early 17th century. The Mughals ruled almost all the princely states of Rajasthan at that time and because of this; most of the schools of Rajput Painting in India reflect strong Mughal influence. Each of the Rajput kingdoms evolved a distinctive style. However, similarities and common features can still be found in the paintings of different territories.

One can also observe the dominance of Chaurapanchasika group style in Indian Rajasthani Paintings. The main themes around which Rajasthani Paintings of India revolved include the Great epics of Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the life of Lord Krishna, landscapes and humans.

The second volume covered the great transition from the mural to the miniature and also studied in detail Mughal and Deccani painting. This is the third volume and it deals with a phase which is perhaps most the complex and fascinating in the whole tradition the origins and evolution of Rajput painting. Like underground rivers, streams from the main medieval current flowed beneath the Moghul presence to nourish mutant strains which later evolved into distinctive schools in Malwa, Mewar, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Bundi, Kotah and Kishengarh.

The study of Rajasthani painting is comparatively young, and new material is continually being uncovered. Distinct schools have been separated out on the basis of style, such as Mewar painting, Bundi painting and that of its neighboring sister state of Kotah, Kishangarh painting, Bikaner, Jaipur, Marwari, and, outside Rajasthan proper, Malwa painting, also referred to as Central Indian painting.

Indian painting is one of the greatest cultural traditions of the world. It is the sustained joy that created it and gave it richly varied forms of expression through the ages has not so far been matched by a widely shared joy in appreciation; it is because art has been long mixed up with archaeology in India and has intimidated the layman.

RELATED WORK

Because of its unique geographical, historical and cultural background, Rajasthan has earned much fame. On one hand, there are the high peaks of the Aravalli Hills; valleys with green vegetation and the beauty of nature, while on the other hand are the large expanses of desert.

In the domain of world painting India occupies a unique and honorable place. Buddhist and Jain art in the styles of Pal, Gujarat, Apbhransh-Rajasthani, Mughal and Pahari have ever kept intact traditions of Indian painting since the 2nd century A.D. till the present day. In this

series of paintings Rajasthani art, adopting the traditions of Ajanta has developed its own unique cultural perspective and history.

With regard to the nomenclature of Rajasthani painting, scholars hold varied opinion. Some call it Rajput painting and others Rajasthani painting. AnandaCoomaraswamy was the first scholar who scientifically classified Rajasthani painting in his book titled Rajput Painting in 1916.

According to him, the theme of Rajput painting relates to Rajputana and the hill states of Punjab. He divided it into two parts, Rajasthani concerning Rajputana and Pahari relating to the hill states of Jammu, Kangra, Garhwal, Basohli, and Chamba. The administrators of these states, often belonging to the Rajput clan, had termed these paintings Rajput.

On the basis of earlier views Western scholars had recognized that the Rajasthani style flourished in various princely states after the downfall of the Mughal Empire. Some scholars however hold the view that it was merely an offshoot of Mughal painting, and prospered in the reign of Jahangir. On the strength of new researches undertaken and opinions formed years ago these views have been dismissed.

Hence these views, also expressed by DrCoomaraswamy, do not appear appropriate even though historically they are highly significant!' With reference to the parameters regarding the antiquity of Rajasthani paintings, Dr Goetz presented his research papers, which throw light on its history.' Karl Khandalawala discussed in detail the origin and development of this painting.

Great scholars like RaikrishanDass, Pramod Chandra, Sangram Singh, SatyaPrakash, AnandKrishan, HirenMukherji and others also published scholarly articles from time to time which highlight details of the origin and growth of Rajasthani painting. On the basis of this research and many available ancient paintings it is now generally admitted that Rajasthani painting is a significant link with traditional Indian painting.

Up to the 15th century this style of painting flourished in Rajasthan. Using Jain and later Jain texts as the basis on which the painting was done, this may be termed the Jain style, Gujarat style, Western India style or Apbhransh style. Undoubtedly, the period from the 7th century to the 15th century saw an era of impressive growth of painting, iconography and architecture in Rajasthan developed from the synpaper of original art and the traditions of Ajanta-Ellora. From this point no distinction had ever been made between the Rajasthan and Gujarat styles. In the regions of Bangur and Chhappan, many artists from Gujarat had settled and were known as Sompuras. During the reign of MaharanaKumbha, the legendary artist Shilpi Mandan migrated here from Gujarat."

Rajasthani painting originated in the state of Rajasthan alone. Having been greatly influenced by other styles of painting, it flourished greatly in this state. In its growth the ancient history of the state and its geography played a major role. On the heroic soil of the Rajputs,

The Bengali Raginipainting of Bharat Kala Bhawan is one of them. The above view of RaikrishanDass seems authentic today as at the time Rajasthani painting was taking shape Babar, grandfather of Akbar and founder of the Mughal Empire in India, was born in 1463. MehmoodBegra, Sultan of Gujarat, and MaharanaKumbha both earned great reputation as keen lovers of art. In the same period painting had attained its zenith in Kashmir in the reign of JainulAbdin, when probably a cultural exchange between friendly states might have taken place.

Because of the emergence of the Rajasthani style in Gujarat and Mewar the dormant consciousness of Indian painting awakened. It was a new version of the Apbhransh style. From the point of expression of sentiments and depiction of drawings, even though the Rajput style had emerged in its unique perspective, in selection of theme it had faithfully followed the Apbhransh style. Very artistic paintings depicting Rag-Mala, Shringar, descriptions of Barah-Masa and Krishna-Lila were the contribution of the Rajput style, which had its origin in the Apbhranshstyle."evidence of their chivalrous deeds and the imprint of their civilization and culture in the shape of poetry, painting, and architecture are scattered here and there.

Painting is a space for the critical deployment of ambiguity, with failure and unknowing. Being a surveyor today doesn't mean seeing painting as some kind of anachronistic refuge, or thinking that the modernist project of the medium can be rehabilitated, or even continue to be flogged. We should considered the complexities, loadings and problems of painting as devices for producing meaning today, informed by a new range of conditions.

In the beginning this style was inspired by religion as the followers of Ramanuka like Sur, Tulsi, Meera, and Vallabhacharya and ChaitanyaMahaprabhu had taken the expansion and publicity of Hindu Vaishnava religion to the climax. The invasions of Mughals and their atrocities led the Hindi society to a special strength and rigidity towards religion. The poets like Keshava, Matiram, Bewhari and deva infused a new life in the Hindu world. In later stage, paintings were done on Romance and general folk themes.

There was a controversy among the scholars over the name of Rajasthani School also. Shrio Percy Brown and Dr. Coomar Swami have called it Rajput school. They have taken Paharischool also under this school. But Pahari School came into being after the end of Mughal School at the places like Kangra, Basohli, Chamba etc. with a mixture of Mughal and Rajput style. Whatever was there at Rajasthan was of old type and by that time the PahariSchool had not even been originated. Besides this a new school of painting came into in Rajasthan in the 15th century by the impact of Apabhransha School whereas Paharischool came into being in the 17th

century. That is why there is a lot of difference in both the schools and the critics of the modern world of art consider 'Rajasthani School of Paintings' as its appropriate name. Another thing as the political situation and traditions of hot the palaces were different and the centers of paintings were also different.

There are two distinct strands of painting in India. One is rooted in religious traditions and nurtured by the patronage of the rich and royal, and done mostly by men. The other is rooted in everyday life and folk tradition, and done mostly by women.

To the former belong the Buddhist frescoes on the walls of the Ajanta caves in Maharashtra, the miniature paintings of the Mughal court, and the different school of Rajasthani painting. The style of Ajanta paintings is truly indigenous and was revived in the early 20th century by Nandalal Bose in Shanti niketan, West Bengal.

Although Persian-inspired, Mughal and Rajasthani miniatures too are part and parcel of Indian painting of the former genre. Of the latter genre, the most famous are the Madhubani and Mithila paintings of Bihar, the Warli paintings of Maharashtra, the Mandana paintings of Rajasthan, which are basically wall and floor paintings.

Painting done not for art's sake but as a daily religious ritual include geometric and floral patterns on the floor by the women folk called kolam in the south of India, rangoli in Maharashtra, alpona in Bengal, aripana in Bihar and so on. Painting on cloth is exemplified by Kalamkari work of Kalahasti and Masulipatnam in Andhra Pradesh, and phad painting of Rajasthan. Quite unique is Tanjavur paintings embellished with gold leaf and semi-precious stones, which were originally commissioned by Maratha kings of the 18th century.

MINIATURE PAINTING

In this paper work we recommend and provide relevant information about miniature painting on the basis of surveyed results between the eras of 15th to 17th century by visiting the different painting schools, previous related data and analyse the data in aspect of this work, some are based on Mughal and Mewar Painting.

Miniatures paintings are wonderful and very special work of art because they are delicate handmade paintings, much smaller in size than a normal painting. The colors used in miniature painting are handmade, acquired from vegetables, minerals, indigo, conch shells, precious stones, pure gold and silver. The most common theme of Indian miniature painting comprises the Ragas i.e., the melodies of Indian classical music.

The intense urge for artistic expression in the Western Himalayas from the 17th century onwards produced miniatures as well as wall paintings. However, while miniatures were

produced here from the second half of the 17th century onwards, known wall paintings cannot be dated earlier than the last quarter of the 18th century. But it is quite possible that, as in some other parts of India, a painting tradition may have existed in the Western Himalayas earlier than the datable remains. The fact that the artists were well acquainted with the technique of preparing plaster for wall paintings seems to lend support to this view.

Subjects of Miniature paintings are krishan Lila (sports of Krishna), raga ravines (Musical melodies), and nayikaBheda (diff classes of heroines on which Sanskrit and Hindu writers on love, classified women), rituchitra (seasons), panchatantra. The paintings give an insight into the life of the royals and the common man, the beauty of their womenfolk and the inspirations and devotions of the artists themselves. Music is associated with paintings here the different ragas were considered appropriate to different seasons. The order of seasons are Bhairava, Malava, Sri-Raga, Hindola or vasanta, Dipaka and Megha each of which is wedded to the five Raginis, or nymphs of harmony presenting wonderfully diversified images for the artist's imagination. During the 17th century, art was at its peak in Rajasthan.

In the miniatures painted during the time of Mughal Empire and the Rajput kings have generally depicted the life style of the kings and the princes. The Mughal Miniature painters chose their subjects involving the courts and the kings. This painting, too, shows how a prince is involved in playing with his pet, the falcon.

The art of Miniature painting was introduced to the land of India by the Mughals, who brought the much-revealed art from Persia. In the sixteenth century, the Mughal ruler Humayun brought artists from Persia, who was specialized in miniature painting. The succeeding Mughal Emperor, Akbar built an atelier for them to promote the rich art form. These artists, on their part, trained Indian artists who produced paintings in a new distinctive style, inspired by the royal and romantic lives of the Mughals.

SURVEY

In this paper analyses and evaluates the results of miniature painting to validate the presented framework. We consider different styles and schools to complete this survey or find out the history of painting in India with their style and pattern.

There are the some following schools and their miniature analysis which we are considering in our paper work:

- **The Pala School**

The earliest examples of miniature painting in India exist in the form of illustrations to the religious texts on Buddhism executed under the Palas of the eastern India and the Jain texts

executed in western India during the 11th-12th centuries A.D. The Pala period (750 A.D. to the middle of the 12th century) witnessed the last great phase of Buddhism and of the Buddhist art in India. The Buddhist monasteries (*mahaviharas*) of Nalanda, Odantapuri, Vikramsila and Somarupa were great centres of Buddhist learning and art. A large number of manuscripts on palm-leaf relating to the Buddhist themes were written and illustrated with the images of Buddhist deities at these centres which also had workshops for the casting of bronze images. Students and pilgrims from all over South-East Asia gathered there for education and religious instruction. They took back to their countries examples of Pala Buddhist art, in the form of bronzes and manuscripts which helped to carry the Pala style to Nepal, Tibet, Burma, Sri Lanka and Java etc. The surviving examples of the Pala illustrated manuscripts mostly belong to the Vajrayana School of Buddhism.

The Pala art came to a sudden end after the destruction of the Buddhist monasteries at the hands of Muslim invaders in the first half of the 13th century.

- **The Western Indian School**

The motivating force for the artistic activity in Western India was Jainism just as it was Buddhism in case of the Ajanta and the Pala arts. Jainism was patronized by the Kings of the Chalukya Dynasty who ruled Gujarat and parts of Rajasthan and Malwa from 961 A.D. to the end of the 13th century.

This is an art of primitive vitality vigorous line and forceful colours. From about 1100 to 1400 A.D., palm-leaf was used for the manuscripts and later on paper was introduced for the purpose. The *Kalpasutra* and the *Kalakacharya -Katha*, the two very popular Jain texts were repeatedly written and illustrated with paintings.

- **The Mughal School**

The origin of the Mughal School of Painting is considered to be a landmark in the history of painting in India. With the establishment of the Mughal empire, the Mughal School of painting originated in the reign of Akbar in 1560 A.D. Emperor Akbar was keenly interested in the art of painting and architecture. While he was a boy he had taken lessons in drawing. In the beginning of his rule an atelier of painting was established under the supervision of two Persian masters, Mir Sayyed Ali and Abdul Samad Khan, who were originally employed by his father Humayun. A large number of Indian artists from all over India were recruited to work under the Persian masters.

- **The Deccani Schools**

Though no pre-Mughal painting from the Deccan are so far known to exist, yet it can safely be presumed that sophisticated schools of painting flourished there, making a significant contribution to the development of the Mughal style in North India. Early centres of painting in the Deccan, during the 16th and 17th centuries were Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda.

- **Ahmednagar**

The earliest examples of the Ahmednagar painting are contained in a volume of poems written in praise of Hussain Nizam Shahi of Ahmednagar (1553-1565) and his queen.

Some other fine examples of the Ahmednagar painting are the "Hindola Raga" of about 1590 A.D. and portraits of Burhan Nizam Shah II of Ahmednagar (1591-96 A.D.) and of Malik Amber of about 1605 A.D. existing in the National Museum, New Delhi and other museums.

- **Bijapur**

In Bijapur, painting was patronized by Ali Adil Shah I (1558-80 A.D.) and his successor Ibrahim II (1580-1627 A.D.). An encyclopaedia known as the Najum-al-ulum (Stars of Sciences), preserved in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, was illustrated in 1570 A.D. in the reign of Ali Adil Shah I. The profuse use of gold colour, some flowering plants and arabesques on the top of the throne are derived from the Persian tradition.

- **Golconda**

The earliest paintings identified as Golconda work are a group of five charming paintings of about 1590 A.D. in the British Museum, London, painted in the period of Muhammad Quli Qutub Shah (1580-1611) Golconda.

Early Deccani painting absorbed influences of the northern tradition of the pre-Mughal painting which was flourishing in Malwa, and of the southern tradition of the Vijayanagar murals as evident in the treatment of female types and costumes. Influence of the Persian painting is also observed in the treatment of the horizon gold sky and landscape. The colours are rich and brilliant and are different from those of the northern painting. Tradition of the early Deccani painting continued long after the extinction of the Deccan Sultanates of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda.

- **Hyderabad**

A miniature showing a princess in the company of maids is a typical example of the Hyderabad school of painting. The princess is reclining on richly furnished terrace covered with a canopy. The style of the painting is decorative. Typical characteristics of the Hyderabad painting like the

rich colours, the Deccani facial types and costumes can be observed in the miniature. It belongs to the third quarter of the 18th century.

- **Tanjore**

A style of painting characterized by bold drawing, techniques of shading and the use of pure and brilliant colours flourished at Tanjore in South India during the late 18th and 19th centuries. The style is decorative and is marked by the use of bright colours and ornamental details. The conical crown appearing in the miniature is a typical feature of the Tanjore painting.

THE CENTRAL INDIAN AND RAJASTHANI SCHOOLS

In the 16th century there already existed in Central India and Rajasthan the primitive art traditions in the form of the 'Western Indian' and the 'Chaurapanchasika' styles which served as a base for the origin and growth of various schools of painting during the 17th century. Peaceful conditions prevailed in Rajasthan in the latter half of the 16th and the 17th centuries. The Rajput rulers had gradually accepted the Mughal supremacy and many among them occupied important positions in the Mughal court. Some of the rulers also entered into matrimonial alliances with the Mughals.

The Rajput rulers following the example set by the Mughal Emperors employed artists to work at their courts. Some of the Mughal artists of inferior merit, who were no longer required by the Mughal Emperors, migrated to Rajasthan and other places and found employment at the local courts. It is believed that the popular version of the Mughal style which these painters carried to various places influenced the already existing styles of paintings there with the consequence that a number of new schools of painting originated in Rajasthan and Central India in the 17th and 18th centuries. Among these the important schools of paintings are Malwa, Mewar, and Bundi- kata, Amber Jaipur, Bikaner, Marwar and Kishengarh.

- **Malwa**

Some of the important paintings executed in the Malwa style are a series of the Rasikapriya dated 1634 A.D., a series of the AmaruSataka painted in 1652 A.D. at a place called Nasratgarh and a series of the Ragamala painted in 1680 A.D. by an artist named Madhau Das, at Narsyanga Shah, some of them available in the National Museum, New Delhi, another Amaru-Sataka of the same period in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay and a Ragamala series of about 1650 A.D. in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras. The art of painting in Malwa continued till the end of the 17th century A.D.

- **Mewar**

The earliest example of Mewar painting is a series of the Ragamala painted in 1605 A.D. at Chawand, a small place near Udaipur, by Misardi. Most of the paintings of this series are in the collection of Shri Gopi Krishna Kanoria. An example from the Ragamala series painted by Sahibdin in 1628 A.D. which is now in the National Museum, is the miniature that shows the Lalita Ragini. The heroine is lying on a bed with her eyes closed under a painted pavilion with a door, while a maid presses her feet. Outside, the hero is seen carrying a garland in either hand. In the foreground is a caparisoned horse with a groom sitting near the steps of the pavilion. The drawing is bold and the colours are bright and contrasting. The text of the painting is written in black on the top against the yellow ground.

- **Bundi**

The Bundi style of painting is very close to the Mewar style, but the former excels the latter in quality. Painting in Bundi started as early as circa 1625 A.D. A painting showing Bhairavi Ragini, in the Allahabad Museum is one of the earliest examples of Bundi painting. Some examples are an illustrated manuscript of the Bhagawata Purana in the Kotah Museum and a series of the Rasikapriya in the National Museum, New Delhi.

- **Kishengarh**

A beautiful miniature of the Kishengarh School, from the National Museum collection is illustrated here. It portrays a lovely pastoral scene of the return of Krishna with gopas and cows to Gokula in the evening. The painting is marked by delicate drawing, fine modelling of the human figures and cows and the broad vista of landscape showing a stream, rows of overlapping trees, and architecture. The artist has displayed a masterly skill in the grouping of many figures in the miniature. The painting has a golden inner border. It is ascribed to the middle of the 18th century and may be the work of Nihal Chand the famous artist of Kishengarh.

THE PAHARI SCHOOLS

The Pahari region comprises the present State of Himachal Pradesh, some adjoining areas of the Punjab, the area of Jammu in the Jammu and Kashmir State and Garhwal in Uttar Pradesh.

- **Basholi**

An illustration from a series of Gita Govinda painted by artist Manaku in 1730 A.D. shows further development of the Basholi style. The miniature which is in the collection of the National Museum depicts Krishna in the company of gopis in a grove on the bank of a river. There is a

change in the facial type which becomes a little heavier and also in the tree forms which assume a somewhat naturalistic character, which may be due to the influence of the Mughal painting.

- **Guler**

The last phase of the Basohli style was closely followed by the Jammu group. of paintings mainly consisting of portraits of Raja Balwant Singh of Jasrota (a small place near Jammu) by Nainsukh, an artist who originally belonged to Guler but had settled at Jasrota. He worked both at Jasrota and at Guler. These paintings are in a new naturalistic and delicate style marking a change from the earlier traditions of the Basohli art. The colours used are soft and cool. The style appears to have been inspired by the naturalistic style of the Mughal painting of the Muhammad Shah period.

- **Kangra**

The name Kangra style is given to this group of painting for the reason that they are identical in style to the portraits of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra. In these paintings, the faces of women in profile have the nose almost in line with the forehead, the eyes are long and narrow and the chin is sharp. There is, however, no modelling of figures and hair is treated as a flat mass.

CONCLUSION

Miniature art painters for centuries they have been creating artwork on canvas, parchment, stone and mud walls. Artwork is a game of meticulousness, patience and perseverance. Each painting can take months, and some of them even years to finish.

Sadly with the economic boom and the rise of glitzy malls, these artisans are getting squeezed out. Some are selling out and creating fast, low quality paintings that can be sold for a high premium at tourist driven shops.

Miniatures paintings are beautiful handmade paintings, which are quite colorful but small in size. The highlight of these paintings is the intricate and delicate brushwork, which lends them a unique identity. The colors are handmade, from minerals, vegetables, precious stones, indigo, conch shells, pure gold and silver. The most common theme of the Miniature painting of India comprises of the Ragas i.e., the musical codes of Indian classical music. There were a number of miniature schools in the country, including those of Mughals, Rajputs and the Deccan.

The modern assembly line is founded on the principle of interchangeability, not the least of which is the lowly skilled laborers, akin to our enthusiastic apprentice applying the pale blue wash on the nascent miniature in Amber.

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