

Colourful Blend in the Miniatures of Rajasthan

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Reference to this paper
should be made as follows:

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Miniatures of Rajasthan*

Artistic Narration 2024,
Vol. XV, No. 1,
Article No. 1 pp. 1-4

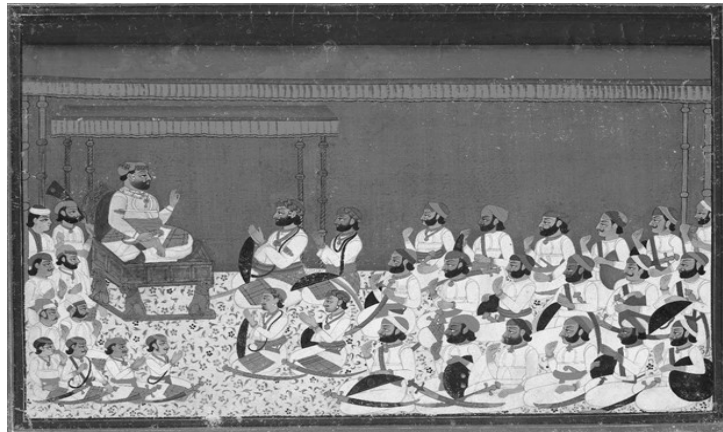
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Abstract

Miniature painting in India was introduced by the Mughals who had brought this art from Persia. When the Mughal ruler Humayun came to India he brought Persian artists along with him who had mastery in miniature art. His son Akbar further extended his territories bringing all the states in Rajasthan (except Mewar), Malwa, Gujrat, Kashmir, Kabul, Kandahar, and Bengal, etc. His love for art was fruitful as he built an atelier for these artists to promote this rich art form. These Persian artists trained the Indian artists who in return produced paintings in a new distinctive style, taking inspiration from the romantic and royal lives of the Mughals. The particular miniature produced by the Indian artists in their own distinctive style is called Rajput or Rajasthani miniatures. These Rajput paintings present a world of fantasy and color, of heroes and heroines gorgeously attired in brilliant hues, of epic poems and love songs, of courtly majesty and India's romantic past. Delighting the senses, the art representing the Hindu classical tradition that existed in painting, poetry, literature, and dance was nurtured from the 16th to the 19th century.

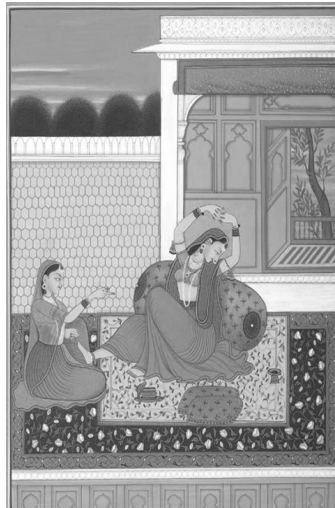
The major content of the Rajput painting was the depiction of religious and literary Hindu texts, which also provided a glimpse of the medieval Hindu culture and its worldview. There were several subjects in the Rajput paintings that were an outcome of the influence of the Mughals. A fine example is the emphasis on the precise recording of ancestral lineage and history, also the portraits of rulers participating in rituals or the royal pastime of hunt, are completely alien to the timeless Hindu world of the Gods and Goddesses. The patrons of the Rajput paintings were members of the royalty and nobility of the many courts of Rajasthan, central India, and the Punjab hill states. These paintings were meant for the eyes only and were kept in poti khans, which were store rooms in the royal palaces and treasured in the same way as jewelry; indeed, both paintings and jewelry formed part of the princesses' dowries for royal marriage. A painting was usually small enough to be held in the palm of a hand and admired. Natural and vegetable pigments were used in their making. The painters who produced this art belonged to the lowly tarkhans or carpenter class, and the profession was passed down from fathers and uncles to sons and nephews.

The early Rajput manuscript painting on paper co-existed with later Jain manuscript illustrations and sultanate paintings commissioned by the Delhi sultans in the 15th to the 16th centuries. The dominant theme of the Rajput painting was love, both romantic and divine, an example of which is the Abhisarika Naiya, a heroine who braves the dangers of the night to meet her lover. The primary sources of Rajput painting were Indian folk tales and epic literature, love songs chanted throughout the land and religious poems, myths and legends from the Puranas. As said before portraiture was alien to the Hindu culture and took precedence as a direct influence of Mughal painting.

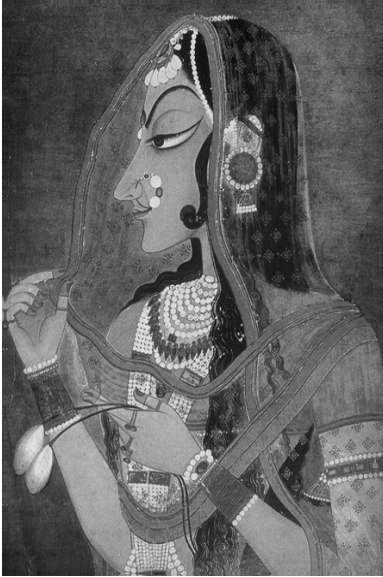


The ancient Indian aesthetic code of *rasa*, literally meaning flavor or sentiments as savored by Rajput court patrons and practiced by their artists was concerned with the mood; and emotional content. The nine emotional states – love, mirth, sorrow, anger, fear, heroism, disgust, astonishment, and tranquility were experienced according to the corresponding *rasa* or flavor, conveyed by the art object. *Sringara rasa* or the erotic sentiment is the main *rasa* expressed in most religious and literary themes of Rajput painting, conveying the emotion of love.

The *Gitagovinda* is a poem composed by the 12th-century Bengali poet Jayadeva, which is full of erotic and passionate rhetoric, which was picked up by the artists and given expression as sensual imagery depicting Krishna and Radha. During this time several schools of painting evolved such as Mewar (Udaipur), Bundi, Kotah, Marwar, (Jodhpur), Bikaner, Jaipur and Kishangarh. The major centers under the Mewar School were Udaipur, Nathdwara, Chavanda and Chittor. *Chavand Ragamala* is amongst the most famous productions from the Mewar School of Art. Mewar housed the oldest manuscript ‘*Roopasacharyam*’ which was a blend of Gujrat, Rajasthan and Jain art styles and was written in 1423. Progress and development continued even until the rise of the Mughal Empire as Mewar except for all other states did not surrender to the Mughals. Mewar school became the art of the common man as it was popular among them, though Mughal art had also developed by that time but couldn’t become popular amongst the common folks as it was confined to the royal courts.



The other famous school of the Rajasthan miniatures is Kishangarh, the state was inherited by Kishan Singh in 1609 and after six years of rule he joined the court of the Mughal ruler Jehangir. However, it was only under the reign of Sawant Singh that the



Kishangarh Art School saw its climax. His pen name was 'Nagri Das'. It is believed that Nagri, which is another name for Radha was in love with a woman whom he worshipped as Radha, called 'Bani Thani' as she wore the latest fashioned clothes. 'Radha Bani Thani' is amongst the most famous paintings of the Rajasthani School of Art. Apart from this the subject matter of this school depicted hunting scenes, court scenes, portraits, Radha and Krishna (during the reign of Raja Sawant Singh), Gitagovinda, nayak- nayika bhed, water sports, depiction of women (At no other school of Rajasthan have women been painted so beautifully).

The women depicted in the Kishangarh paintings can be compared to the women of Kangra, with eyes in the shape of a bird wagtail. A postal stamp

has been issued by the Government of India on the painting of Bani Thani of Kishangarh.

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