

Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala: Aesthetics Journey through Photographs

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Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

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Artistic Narration 2024,
Vol. XV, No. 1,
Article No. 7 pp. 38-45

Online available at:
<https://anubooks.com/journal/artistic-narration>

Abstract

The royal city of Patiala is famous for its Music, Painting, Murals, Forts and Buildings and its Royal Culture. Patiala was founded by Baba Ala Singh and successive maharajas also developed the artistic development of the Estate. The Art of Photography started at Patiala during the reign of Maharaja Rajinder Singh. The artist presented the Royal life of the Maharajas in photographs. Maharaja Bhupinder Singh emerged as the most famous Maharaja of Patiala, the image of which is presented in the form of Shingar Rasa (beauty) through pictures. In the research paper, an aesthetic analysis of the photographs of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh has been done, from which the artistic form of Maharaja's life from childhood to a young Maharaja is presented. Photographs are visual sources of the Maharaja's life that are as important as written sources.

Keywords

Patiala, Royal Life, Baba Ala Singh, Maharaja Bhupinder Singh, Photography, Aesthetics.

Introduction

The real founder of Patiala princely state was Baba Ala Singh (1691-1765). They established Patiala in 1762.¹ 'Ala Singh attacked Sirhind, laid the foundation of Patiala city from the money received from there and built the Fort Mubarak.² The present city of Patiala is settled around the fort. Nine Maharajas (Baba Ala Singh, M. Amar Singh, M. Sahib Singh, M. Karam Singh, M. Narinder Singh, M. Mahendra Singh, M. Rajinder Singh, M. Bhupinder Singh (1891-1938) and M. Yadwinder Singh) ruled and gave the artistic atmosphere at Patiala. Artists through various art methods took Patiala to artistic heights. After the death of Maharaja Rajinder Singh on October 12, 1891 AD. The Maharaja's son Bhupinder Singh became the successor at the age of 9 years.³ The Council of Regency was formed to administer the administration during the minor rule, and it was decided that the education and upbringing of the Maharaja would be the responsibility of the British Government and not the Council of Regency. An English teacher was appointed for the education of the Maharaja. After some time Atchison (Chief) College was sent to Lahore. An English medical officer named Major Hendley was appointed to take care of the health.

At the age of 18 years, the kingship of the state was handed over to him. Ceremony on November 3, 1910 paid to in which the Viceroy of India, Lord Pinto, joined.⁴ In 1911. Maharaja participated in the Durbar held at Delhi through the new Viceroy, Lord Harding. During the First World War (1914-18) the Maharaja rendered valuable services to the British Government. The Patiala 'Imperial Service Infantry' and 'Patiala Imperial Services Lancers gave evidence of bravery and loyalty by participating in many battles fought by the British in Egypt, Gallipoli, Palestine and Mesopotamia. In 1918, the Maharaja was included as the Indian representative in the Imperial War Conference and the Imperial War Cabinet. Also participated in the first Round Table Conference held in London in 1930 as a representative of *Rajwadas*.

In the field of education, primary education was made compulsory and free for children aged 9 to 11 years.⁵ Making special efforts to encourage Punjabi language, Punjabi was declared as the official language in 1910. As a result of the efforts of the Maharaja, an American company named Remington produced a type of machine called 'Gurmukhi'.⁶ Patiala heritage became a prominent princely state of Punjab due to the commendable work done for the development of the Punjabi language, because the functioning of the Punjabi language made it accessible to the common people. They grew and became loyal to the princely state, especially those whose mother tongue was Punjabi. The advent of the Punjabi language in the field of education raised the standard of living of the common people. Based on the first language, other languages especially Hindi and English developed in Patiala. Along with language, Punjabi culture as well as art also won appreciation at home and abroad.

Maharaja opened the department focusing on Music and Dance. Patiala *Gharana* gained nationwide fame in music only because of patronage. Like his father, Maharaja Bhupinder Singh was a cricket lover, due to which Patiala became the home of cricket in India. With enthusiastic efforts, the 'Cricket Club of India' was formed and the Maharaja became its first President. NIS complete with international-level facilities keeping in mind the importance of sports and the best future of the players was established. Maharaja Bhupinder Singh being a famous ruler, shrewd policy maker, able administrator, excellent sportsman and a great patron of the Arts had collected high class Ministers, Officials, Writers and Artists in his court. Due to his great personality, he became a great leader of *Rajwads*. Among all patrons of Patiala, Maharaja Bhupinder Singh also made important contributions to the field of art, especially in the field of photography. By this time, photography was also emerging in terms of technical and artistic development. Patiala had also become strong economically. The grandeur of the Maharajas of Patiala can be felt through Art, especially in the photography of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh. The photographer has captured the image of the Maharaja from an artistic point of view, be it his royal style or romantic life. Seeing the vicissitudes of life, Maharaja died on March 25, 1938 AD.⁷

The Maharaja's royal pomp and grandeur in the pictures touch the viewer's heart. Maharaja Bhupinder Singh's collection of portraits is part of the British Museum London, National Portrait Gallery, London, Archives Department Patiala and Chandigarh besides private collections. Completing the Art process with the artist's aesthetic experience, psyche, inner wisdom, Art Elements, Principles, Rhythm, *Rasa* and *Bhava* is like the joyful process of a mother's conception to the birth of a child. Meanwhile, as the mother endures many hardships and finally enjoys beauty, the picture reaches the heights of beauty by setting a technical journey. Then, leaving behind the technique of the picture, *Rasik's* attention is focused on the external and internal appearance (*bhavas*). These artistic moments have been celebrated and captured by different artists according to the medium.

Painting and photography are two different mediums of the creative process. Both have the same state of artistry, charm and joy. Photography creates an appearance better than painting. The inner form is shaped by the artist with the state of mind. What appearance, image, and expression of the man or woman portrayed by the artist satisfied the psyche? Also depends on costume, ornaments, body Language or mantra-enchanted face etc. When the elements captured in the picture make the viewer feel a different sensation, the picture acquires the status of art and fills the entire universe with charm and joy. Charm affects the state of mind of the beholder. A calm white cloud in the sky feels like itself to a lover who wanders around in search of a beloved. The cloud can bring happiness to a person who loves solitude. The state in which the scene will be presented through the picture connects with the viewer's subconscious. The artist chooses the medium to create it. Through creation

harmony is created in the state of mind of the Artist and the Viewer. An image of a lover created by imagination is no less capable than that of a king or queen. The Creator creates every aspect of happiness in it. It can be as important as the spiritual state of the person who sees the image of the king or queen.

Photographers communicate emotions by harnessing the energy of light. Therefore, a person is emotionally connected with the pictures in the house. Creating a world in a limited space requires great artistic talent. The artist's use of space as an object of thought, meaning and power is the identity of the artist. In the beginning, photography continued to be done in black and white. In these pictures, all the colors and elements to convey the feelings of life, character and appearance are present and capable of making *Indra-Dhanush*. White can be felt as the positive flow of life and black as the symbol of emptiness.

Before handing over the powers of the throne, the picture shows the Maharaja sitting on a special couch, wearing a black robe with gold embroidery, black shiny boots, a white turban on his head and a scepter (Stick) in his hand. A patterned carpet spread on the ground, and painted curtains in the background add to the artistry of the picture. Bhupinder Singh sitting in a relaxed state with both his arms resting on the couch and his hand resting on the arm of the chair is providing balance to the picture. The neck is slightly high but in balance. It seems Maharaja is ready to take responsibility. The expression of the face and the brightness of the eyes give the honor of being a Maharaja. There is more emphasis on the main subject but the light-coloured pillar shown in the background is alerting the king to the impending responsibility. (Fig-1)



Fig- 1



Fig- 2

A picture of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh (1891-1938) of Patiala and officials at the time when the state was being administered by a council. Maharaja Bhupinder Singh was a minor. Raja Ranbir Singh is sitting on the right side of Bhupinder Singh. Wherever Bhupinder Singh went, Raja Ranbir Singh followed him as a lucky auspicious thinker. A slight smile on the Maharaja's face is coloring the whole picture. The little prince sitting among the age-drawer office-bearers is young in age but royal in manner. The officers sitting around the Maharaja are in black attire while both Maharaja Bhupinder Singh and Raja Ranbir

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Singh sitting next to him are shown in white royal attire i.e. the same status. Although the dress is stately, the shoes worn by all the dignitaries and the Maharaja seem to be of British influence. The necklace studded with pearls and diamonds around the neck of the Maharaja is a symbol of the prosperity and wealth of the state. The string of pearls on the spot white turban and the *kalgi* clearly distinguish the Maharaja from the rest of the office bearers. The traditional ornaments worn by the Maharajas passed down from generation to generation add to the beauty of the picture. The facial expression of the British officer sitting to the right of the Maharaja and the sword in his hand indicates that he will be an officer of very high rank. In the finished picture, the hands of the group members are perfectly still and in a state of relaxation. The background is a few light-colored curtains, mostly flat. The eight important persons seated in the group immerse the seated viewer in a graceful state of rank, status and robes. (Fig-2)

Maharaja Bhupinder Singh, who is known among the people of the princely state as well as the British people who love all kinds of sports, is seen stepping up to bat during the match at the age of 20. The Maharaja is the center point of this picture. Everyone's attention is also on Bhupinder Singh. The Indian and some British officials, workers or players appearing in the picture are dressed in British style. The rest of the members are wearing black and the Maharaja's feet are wearing white (cricket) shoes, showing a different stature and appearance than the rest of the members. The earring, glowing due to the shadow, draws the viewer's attention, which seems to represent Bhupinder Singh as the Maharaja. (Fig-3)



Fig- 3

When Bhupinder Singh ascended the throne of the Maharaja, a precious diamond necklace became part of the Patiala princely state which was made by the House of Cartier in 1928 at the special request of the Maharaja. The necklace had five chains and included a neck collar. 2,930 diamonds including the 'De Beers' diamond, which was the seventh largest diamond in the world at the time. The necklace included seven other large diamonds ranging from 18 to 73 carats and several Burmese rubies.⁸

In 1926, Herbert Vandyck, a photographer, was invited by Maharaja Bhupinder Singh to come to Patiala and set up a studio on the same plans as the studio in London.⁹ A portrait of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh, which is housed in the British Library in London, shows him wearing all the jewels. The way the jewelry is worn on the body. The composition of the jewelry in the picture looks amazing. Jewellery does not dominate the image but increases the scale of beauty. The white feather fluttering at the beginning of the bouquet hanging on the turban decorated on the head leaves an immediate impression on the black

background. The face is flat and straight, the eyes somewhat intoxicated and the expression conveys an expression of depth like a silent lake.



Fig-4

The turban tied on the head and wrapped around the neck are six respectively, eight adorning the lower part of the neck and the upper part of the chest respectively and four and then three rows covering the chest completely, followed by two rows of diamond garland followed by a large diamond all over the body. Gives beauty, balance, Rhythm, and Speed, Gracefully communicating embellishments perfectly express the *Rasa*. White silk dresses are a symbol of true affection and love. The silk clothes on the arms are perfectly matched with the jewelry to convey the meaning. The embroidered pattern on the silk transparent fringe worn on one side shoulder has the perfect ability to accommodate jewelry. mustache and beard on the face heralds the first step towards puberty. In the portrait up to the waist, the artist has successfully tried to convey the complete meaning, essence and principle, beauty essence, feelings and emotions are combined to provide supernatural form. (Fig-4)

In this exceptionally planned studio shoot, Maharaja Bhupinder's two wives, *Maharani Vimal Kaur* and *Maharani Yashoda Devi*, are seated in front of him and the other four women are his daughters. The Queen, seated on the left, wears a ruby necklace designed by Cartier. The dress of the Maharaja is somewhat similar to the dress of the daughter seated on the lower right. The sampling done on both is almost uniform. The two princesses standing side by side have some simple costumes to show some contrast between married and unmarried, while the costumes of the two seated empresses are more elaborate. The *Maharanis* talking to each other and leaving a slight smile is a symbol of affection towards the *Maharaja*. The *Maharaja* is depicted at the center of the picture as a protector of the princesses and a lover or husband to the Queens. Queens and princesses are the main subjects in the picture, as all are shown wearing jewels. Only the medals of the Maharaja are visible. A perfectly flat background, and a patterned carpet laid underneath help to add more beauty to the picture. The light coming from one side helps to break the silence of the darkness and takes the viewer's gaze around the room and finally leads to the *Maharaja*. The picture seems to use mostly geometric composition. The *Maharaja* forms a triangle with the two queens, and a rectangle with the princesses standing around while the complete picture appears to form a square. The seating arrangement of Queens and princesses looks triangular. More women have been given importance in the picture. Perhaps that is why the triangle would have been used for conjunction, which is a symbol of woman in Indian Philosophy. The seven members represent the seven colors of *Indra-*

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Dhanush. The hair of the queens and princesses is depicted with straight braids. The two princesses standing next to the *Maharaja* are wearing *Nathali* on their noses, which is a sign of a married girl. Indian culture is represented by queens and princesses. She is depicted wearing head coverings, *sarees* and jewelry that are the hallmarks of Indian tradition. The white color of *sarees* symbolizes the prosperity of the state and the chastity of women. Joined hands are a form of respect for one's culture and tradition. Women do not seem to be in any bond, because even sitting women on the carpet means they have a special place in the kingdom. (Fig-5)



Fig-5

In the conclusion an attempt has been made to narrate the complete life span of princesses, *Maharajas* and *Maharanis* through historical, aesthetic and traditional methods through photographs. Through the Elements, principles of art, the correct use of light and shade, technical expertise and aesthetic appeal, photographs have charted an artistic journey through history to the present day. By combining the historical form of images with role and significance as the main basis, the sources are the main subject, and set an aesthetic journey with technique and aesthetics. In the pictures, the kings, queens, royal family, dignified royal women, the costumes worn by the *Maharajas*, jewels, swords held in their hands, and *kali* hung on their heads, narrate many historical and mythological stories, the palaces show their identity even today in the form of pictures. On the walls of museums, and art galleries, they have made their mark with splendour. The artistic and aesthetic study of the pictures and the artist's aesthetic will serve as a guide for generations.

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Footnotes

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