

## Dilpiction of Birds in Indian Miniature Painting

**Ashish Dobriyal**

*Master's in Fine Art(M.F.A)*

*Minerva Institute of Management & Tech*

*Dehradun, Uttarakhand*

**Dr. Om Prakash Mishra**

*Professor*

*Minerva Institute of Management & Tech*

*Dehradun ,Uttarakhand*

*Email: mishroop200@gmail.com*

### Abstract

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**Ashish Dobriyal**  
**Dr. Om Prakash Mishra**

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*As the name suggests, miniature paintings are handmade paintings in very small size which were beautifully colored with natural pigments by skilled artist. One of the most outstanding features of miniature paintings is the complex and balanced brushwork which define their unique identity. As mention above the work on these paintings were performed by natural colors and these colors were derived from various natural sources such as vegetables, indigo, precious stones, gold and silver. Ragas or a pattern of musical notes, and religious and religious and historical events\stories, depiction of daily life activities, portraits, hunting scenes, animals and birds, royal court scenes etc. were the themes in which Indian miniature artists perform their work and convey their imagination, thoughts and events. These paintings were painted in very small scales which were commonly for the court albums and books. These are executed in paper (Wasli) and cloth. The Palas of Bengal are considered as the pioneers of miniature painting in India, but the art form reached its peak during the Mughal rule. Mughal ruler such as Akbar, Jahagir, Shah Jaha were great art lover and praise art during their rule the golden period of Indian miniature painting came during the rule of Jahagir and during this period the work in miniature painting reached its hights most of the work in animals and birds were performed and painted during this*

*period Miskin and other artists put great efforts in the depiction of birds and animal in their painting birds and animals (Flora and Fauna) were also used in the Hasiyas(in general borders for ornamentation) tradition of miniature paintings was further taken forward by the artists of various Rajasthani schools of painting, including the Kishangarh, Bundi Jaipur, Mewar and Marwar. History of Miniature Paintings*

*The pictorial style that developed and evolve in these schools of different kingdom were significantly diverse in terms of execution, fine or bold use of color and brush strokes, preference of colours, compositional elements in terms of dipictional of architecture, figures and nature such as flora and fauna .*

### **Keywords**

Miniature, portraits, Composition, tone, Value, Hasiyas, Rajputs, Patrons, illustrate, manuscripts, flora and fauna

### **Introduction**

Miniature paintings originated in India around 750 A.D when the Palas ruled over the eastern part of India. Since religious teachings of the Buddha, accompanied by his images, were written on palm leaves, these paintings became popular. As these paintings were done on palm leaves, they had to be in small size because of limited space. Around 960 A.D, similar paintings were introduced in the western parts of India by the rulers of the Chalukya Dynasty. During this period, miniature paintings often portrayed religious themes. With the rise of the Mughal Empire, miniature paintings started growing and reached its peak of that time. Akbar's love for art, Indian miniature paintings combined elements of Persian style of painting, to give rise to the Mughal style of painting. Which gave a unique taste to Indian miniature, the ornamentation of Hasiyas(borders) by Persian artists and the Indian miniature painting techniques gave birth to unique style known as Indo- Persian style. These miniature paintings further evolved with the influence of European paintings in the Mughal court. Even after the decline of the Mughal Empire, miniature paintings and artists were patronized by the Rajput rulers of Rajasthan. Though influenced by the Mughal style of painting, the miniature paintings of Rajasthan had their own distinct features and often depicted the royal lifestyle and religious and historical stories of Lord Krishna and Radha. Most of these miniature paintings depicted the lifestyle of kings and queens and also narrated their tales of bravery. Some of these paintings were also created to showcase the contribution of various rulers towards their respective subjects and kingdoms.

### Schools of Miniature Paintings

#### **HERE ARE SOME OF THE PAINTINGS FROM DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF DIFFERENT ERA CONTRIBUTED THEIR UNFORGETTABLE WORKS IN MINIATURE PAINTING**

##### **1. ROYAL HAWK USED FOR FALCONRY**

Ustad Mansoor,

Period – 1618-1620 A.D. (Jahangir's time)

Medium – tempera on paper (water colour),

School – Mughal School of art.

##### **Description –**

Ustad Mansoor knew the fondness of emperor for his pet falcon. In this painting a tamed falcon is sitting on a cushioned bird rest. On the bird rest, Nadir – ul – As is signed by Ustad Mansoor who was awarded this title. The cruel eye of falcon can be seen in this painting. The falcon is painted in white against a yellow background with brown details of its folded wings, a sharp beak and round vigilant eyes is painted in light brown and yellow ochre deep colour.



Three words Jahangir Patashah at top, Bahari near the falcon and Uttam on the bottom are written. Bahari means falcon and Uttam means excellent. This tempera painting is made by “Ustad Mansoor” of Jahangir court. He painted a tamed falcon resting on a cushions bird rest with highly realistic manner for “Jahangir Nama”. some calligraphy is shown in this painting.

Indian art also includes depictions of animals which are made up of human figures or other elements from throughout nature - called Composite Animals. These images invert the normal Indian approach to interpreting form. These composites, made up of disparate elements (animal, human, demon, and so on) are found in India from the early Mughal period onward, giving rise to the Mughal label.

##### **2. THE WORLD OF ANIMALS**

School- Mugal

Artist- Miskin

Time-1616-1620 (Approx)

Medium- tempr on paper

##### **Description:**

This work by Miskin, The World of Animals, demonstrates Persian influences, seen



here in the stylized dragons, simurghs and horses, and the fantastic rock formations.

However, the spatial depth and the strong contrasts in illumination derive from the European art encountered by the Mughal artists during this period.

A sense of fresh liveliness. The painting's spatial depth entices us to move alongside the flowing brook behind the tree, contemplate every nook and cranny of the rocks rendered in such fascinating detail, or meander along the softly rolling hillsides. The drawing is fluid and refined. Miskin's workmanship and acute observation were exemplary...

It's a busy picture showing the whole animal kingdom, but peace and tranquility prevails. The lion and antelope, ostrich and dragon, elephant and crocodile coexist in perfect harmony - a metaphor for the peace that prevails in the reign of a just and courageous emperor.

### **3. PEAFLOW**

School- Mugal

Artist- Mansur

Title: Peafowl

Artist: Attributed to Mansur (active ca. 1589–1626)

Date: ca. 1610

Culture: India (Mughal court at Agra)

Medium: Opaque watercolor on paper

Dimensions: Page: 14 1/2 x 9 7/8 in. (36.8 x 25.1 cm)

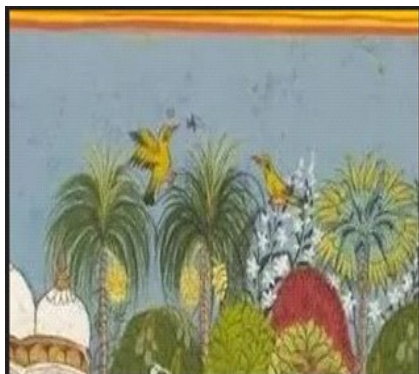
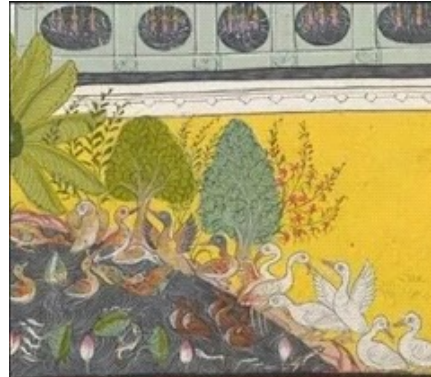
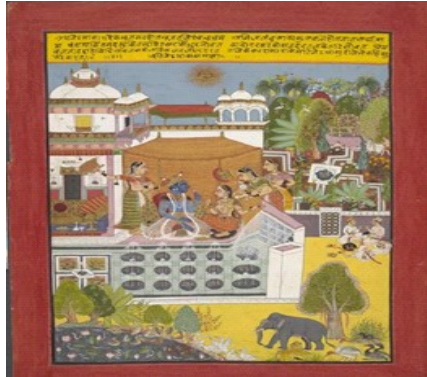


#### **Description:**

This painting of mansur shows the male and female peacock or we can say a couple of peacock. This painting is in yellow ochre colour only the male peacock and the flowers and tree draw the attention of the audience. We can see the birds falling for their homes or nest it seems like it is the evening scene. We can see the mountain of rock behind the peacock and in foreground the female peacock and flowers were painted.

Mansur's ability to capture the essence of his subject is exemplified here. A male peafowl and hen display themselves in an unusually descriptive landscape, which echoes and mimics their deportment in a single vision of the unity of nature. The artist deployed Timurid-style rock formations to add to the imperial tenor of his study of these majestic birds. The mauve markings of the male are echoed in the flowers in the foreground, his rich tail plumage in the tree beyond. An attribution to the Master (Ustad) Mansur seems secure.

### **RAJASTHANI SCHOOL**



#### 4. RADHA AND KRISHNA WITH GOPIS

School-Rajasthani School

Artist- Unkown

Medium- Tempura

Date: ca. 1660 (approx)

#### Discription:

In this painting of Radha and Krishna we can find Indian Spot-billed Duck were at the foreground & the Indian Golden Oriole was at the top of the tree at the background with an elephant. In this painting we can see the Radha and Krishna sitting in their palace accompanied with Gopies at the background we can see the huge palace and the flora and fauna fountains can be seen in front of Radha and Krishna it seems that they were sitting and theirselves and watching these beautiful creatures. In the foreground the family of ducks were depicted some of them were coming out from the pond and some of them are going into it here we can find the perfect balance which artist want to show in this painting between nature, human and god. Some of the ducks in the bottom left pond are brown with a dotted white patch on the breast. They are most likely simplified depictions of spot-billed ducks. These large greyish brown ducks are found almost everywhere in Rajasthan and seldom mingle with other species, preferring to roam marshes and freshwater wetlands in small groups. Though they are named after the signature red dot on their bills, this feature is missing in certain sub-species. They have black bills with yellow tips and a green panel on their wings that is only visible when they are in flight. The Indian Golden Oriole is one of the few species of yellow birds of Rajasthan. Others include the Yellow-footed green pigeon, the Treepie, and the Common Lora. The male golden oriole has a black patch around its eyes and wings, which this artist has captured in astonishing detail. They are partial migrants: most

Indian Golden orioles are residents, and those that live in northern regions often migrate to the south for winters. They also like to nest near black drongos and take advantage of their territorial nature.

### **5. VARAHA, THE BOAR AVATAR OF VISHNU**

School- Rajasthan school,

Time- 1790-1810

Medium- Tempra with gold

Artist- Unkown

#### **Description:-**

This is the painting of lord Vishnu avtara known as varaha half boar and half human like figure at the centre holding the mother earth after winning the war with a demon Hiranyaksh who took mother earth into deep ocean. Hiranyaksh was lying dead below the foot of lord Varaha after his defeat.



In this painting we can see the flora and fauna is well composed at the background with some birds flying across. In the foreground we can see the ocean in which Hiranyaksh hides mother Earth and we can find small red feathered Indian ducks. The border was decorated with the flowers, petals and leaves with gold colour which shows the effect of Mughal art of that time. The birds are crossing seems to be a Siberian crane a migratory bird which migrates from Etawah and Mainpur to spend the winters. In the 19th century, artificial wetlands were created in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, after which these birds flocked there regularly. Siberian cranes have not been spotted in India since 2002/2003 after a harsh drought dried up the Bharatpur wetlands. Though the wetlands are now in a stable state, the birds have yet to grace their presence. Bird-watchers believe that the Central Asian flock of Siberian cranes that migrated to India has gone extinct completely, and these birds will never be seen in this country again.



### **6. RADHA AND KRISHNA WELCOMING THE RAINY SEASON.**

School- Rajasthan school,(kota)

Time- 1750

Medium- Tempra with gold

Artist- Keshavdasas

Courtesy- National Museum, New Delhi

#### **Description:-**

This painting is a visual; depiction of the month of Sharavan based on Keshavdasas rendering of

Baramasa. Baramasa is an Indian classical literature consisting songs of twelve months, and Baramasa painting capture the various human sentiments and the same is presented through different seasons.

Here in this painting we can see the Radha and Krishna were sitting at the roof watching their surroundings. At the background we can notice the forest and the sky full of red colour which indicate either the early morning or evening scene. In the foreground the depiction of birds is done by the artist the pond or a river is in the foreground mostly the aquatic birds or those birds which are mostly seen in the monsoon period is painted in the foreground. We can see the duck, cranes and black wing stilt. There are four closely linked species of stilts spread over Eurasia, Africa, and America. The black-winged stilt is a wader with long pink legs and a long black beak. They have black upper parts and white underparts. Certain subspecies may have all-white heads, while others may have black heads and backs. They can be distinguished from similar black and white water birds due to their beaks which help them hunt insects and small crustaceans. In India, black-winged stilt species are found in all states except Andaman and Nicobar.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

During the time of pre-historic to new contemporary art world the depiction of birds and animals were frequently done by the painters in terms of symbolisation, depicting seasons, ornamentation, etc. Depiction of animals and birds are very common in Indian miniature paintings as well as very important. Impressions of birds can be seen in the various sculpture of medieval Indian art including Buddhist sculpture and Jain, Pal or Apbhransh style of art. In Mughal period paintings of birds are in the peak most of the depiction of birds can be seen in this period. The conscious or model depiction of birds is mainly used in the form of portrait of birds with ruler or sole study of birds can be seen during this period. The birds were also depicted as in the form of ornamentation in the borders of Mughal and Rajput paintings known as Hasiyas in gold work for decorating the painting. In Rajput miniature the birds which have been depicted as the form of monsoon or the series of Baramasa, Nayak-Nayika or Rag Raginis, Krishna leela etc. Each depiction of birds in each painting plays a significant role in the particular painting. Each birds such as parrot and peacock was mainly used to denote the series or the theme of Nayak-Nayika and Krishna and Radha. (The divine love) Eagle was painted to show the bravery of the person. Migratory birds or endangered birds were also depicted in the miniature painting. Paintings of birds are clearly specifies the breed and the region of the bird artist very keenly observe the birds in their painting and presented it with their skilful hands so that the birds may distinguished from other breed. The work in birds in Indian miniature was highly recognisable and appreciable the artist shows their unmatched craftsmanship and their artistic expression in these paintings. Artist also shows the unbeakable bond of

human and nature and the dependency among humanity and nature by the dipiction of birds. Nowadays in contemporary world, artist enthusiastically depicting their love towards birds by painting or by including them within their painting even in the folk art or tribal art the birds and animals plays a vital role and were frequently depicted as in Madhubani, Phad, Patchitra etc. are few examples of unbreakable bond of nature and human aesthetic expression and emotion. Painting of birds was sacrificed after the invention of camera and photography nowadays photographers clicks the un imaginable photos of birds and the nature an artist hardly capture by their eyes and imagination but apart from these challenges the artist of contemporary world still shows their love by painting birds on their canvas. Prashad Natrajan, Jogen Chowdhury, Arvind Mahajan are some of the well-known Indian artist still involve birds in their work.

### **ABOUT THE ARTIS**

#### **MANSUR**

#### **ACTIVE AT MUGHAL COURTS IN DELHI AND LAHORE IN LATE 1580S, ALLAHABAD 1600–1604, AND AGRA UNTIL CA. 1626**

Ustad (master) Mansur received the highest accolade from emperor Jahangir, the title of Nadir al-Asr (the Wonder of the Age), for his ability to paint and preserve the likenesses of the animals and flowers that engaged the emperor's attention. Jahangir devoted the longest passage given to any artist in Mughal history to Mansur, stating that "in painting, he is unique in his time." By studying the flora and fauna of India, Jahangir was continuing a tradition begun by his great-grandfather Babur, who's Babur -nama has a section devoted to this subject. Jahangir prided himself in being the first to direct artists to record these marvels of nature in natural history paintings. And in this, no one surpassed Mansur.

Mansur appeared as a named painter in the late Akbar period, first as one working for a senior master (notably Kanha, Miskin, and then Basawan), and later independently. He is accredited by the library scribes for his contributions to the first edition of the Akbarnama (1589–90), Baburnama (1589) and Chinghiznama. It is the Baburnama that reveals for the first time Mansur's unique gift for animal studies, for which he was quickly rewarded with the title of Ustad (master), presumably by Akbar himself. Mansur was also recognized for his gold illuminated and calligraphed frontispieces (sarlawh) and owner-title pages (shamsa), which were as esteemed as much as painting, if not more, in some connoisseur circles. In one extraordinary joint work, Mansur employed his unsurpassed skills in gold work to depict the throne-dais on which Prince Salim sits imperially, in exile in Allahabad.

Under Jahangir, whom he served first as a prince-in-exile at Allahabad, Mansur increasingly came to work on independent paintings intended to be gathered into imperial albums (Muraqqas) rather than contribute to integrated illustrated manuscripts, Akbar's favoured format. Mansur worked mainly in fine line brushwork with thin washes of pig-



ment, capturing the exotic nature of his subject, which he placed against a lightly sketched ground sparingly described with tufts of grass or wildflowers. What set Mansur apart from his contemporaries, and natural history painters in general, was his deep empathy for his subject matter, the creatures and plants of India. He routinely accompanied the emperor on his numerous travels, witnessing and recording his subjects first hand. In spring 1620, Jahangir toured Kashmir to admire its natural beauty, and he recorded in his Memoirs, "The flowers seen in the summer pastures of Kashmir are beyond enumeration. Those drawn by the Master Nadir al-Asr Mansur number more than a hundred." Mansur was always at hand to capture these wonders for Jahangir's curiosity and aesthetic pleasure.