

## WOMEN IN PAHARI MINIATURE

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### **Abstract**

*Miniatures are the highly detailed works that not only fascinate artists but also the viewers. Miniature flourished in different regions and artists gave a specific touch to each miniature style consisting of different characteristics, so as Pahari Miniature was among them. In the Pahari style, artists not only depicted the beauty of hills but also gave importance to Female Indian Beauty. The way females dressed during that period, their style, posture, mood and their importance all are discussed in this research paper.*

### **Keywords:**

*Miniatures, Female, Ashtnayika, Nayika, lover, heroin, moods*

Reference to this paper  
should be made as follows:

**Received: 08.07.2024**

**Approved: 24.09.2024**

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**Article No.29**

RJPSS Apr.24-Sept24. 2024

Vol. XLIX No. 2,  
pp. 226-233

Similarity Check - 3%

**Online available at:**

<https://anubooks.com/journal-volume/rjpss-2024-vol-xlIX-no2-sept>

<https://doi.org/10.31995/rjpss.2024.v49i02.029>

Miniatures are the highly detailed works on small surfaces. Its traces go back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD developed from Gujarati and Pala manuscripts. Earlier miniatures were illustrated on palm leaf and with the invention of paper in the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD artists found it more effective and suitable for the works, so from that time manuscripts started developing and after being introduced to new art forms and styles it became part of miniatures. During the 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century AD when the Mughals invaded India, they had not only impacted our economy but also had a great impact on the transformation of the Indian art form. They introduced different styles of painting and architecture. Persian style was enormously introduced by the Mughals which left an impactful footprint on the mindset of Indian artists which is clearly visible while observing their style of working through their miniatures. This style is famously known as the Indo-Persian style. Miniature work peaked during the Mughal period. Mughal emperor introduced their court artist to different Rajput kings which set a new transformation in the miniature field. From there onwards artists started developing different styles according to their regions, which resulted in developing different schools of miniature in different regions with their special characteristics, and features like: Rajasthani miniature, Mughal miniature, Pahari Miniature etc.

In the Rajput hills in the Himalayan range, a style was developed famously called Pahari miniature. As it was originated in Hills and in Hindi it is known as “Pahari” so this style was named Pahari miniature painting. It was developed around the 17<sup>th</sup> century AD and flourished in various Rajput hilly regions. It's main, sub schools were Basholi, Kangra, Guler, Kullu-Mandi, Chamba, and Garhwal.



Pahari miniature was influenced or we can say its roots belong to Gujarati Manuscripts, Mughal miniature, Rajasthani miniature and local art. The composition of Pahari miniature has the essence of the mountain region, its environment, birds, floral and fauna. Artists developed their style under the patronage of Rajput kings. As these kings were Hindu and believed in Vaishnav culture so the work done under them was inspired by religious themes like Mahabharata, Ramayana, Krishan Lila, Durga Sapsatti, Bhagwat Puran, Shiv Puran etc., not only religious theme but also literature themes (Jayadeva's Geeta Govinda, Bhanu Datta's Chittarasamanjari, Ragamala, Rasikapriya, Barahamasa, Nayak-Nayika Bheda) and historical theme

(court art, portraiture of king and queen, war events, kings' lifestyle). The Divine Lover Hero is Krishna (Nayak), and Radha (nayika) is the popular theme in Pahari paintings. Nayika acts and each woman has Nayika in her inner self when she is in love, where she expresses her love, anger, sorrow, possessiveness, etc. towards her lover.

Females have been given a different status and identity in the Pahari miniatures. The artists have depicted women delicately, tenderly, and in beautiful postures. Women have played a key role in this style, whether in showing culture and tradition through them or to show her in the sensual form with her lover. The Pahari artists have given a different perspective to the Indian female beauty in this style. The characteristic features of the female in the Pahari miniature are as follows:

Female faces were round in shape, nose was pointed and thin, the forehead was elongated, the fingers were long in size and appeared in rhythm, their eyes were shaped like a lotus, and their eyebrows were delicate. In the Basholi School of Painting we can see artists depict females with open hair strands falling on the shoulders and cheeks of females. Sometimes women are also depicted semi-nude.

The female body was tall and their waist was thin. From its developing stage to reaching the later state artists developed and improvised female figures. During its developing stage artists depicted women in static poses (straight poses) with flat-headed shapes, flat backs and elongated necks. Reaching to its later phase artists made many developments in the shape and size of female figures, artists began to depict tall figures, using curved lines to give rhythm to postures, long necks became short and artists started giving more realistic features in females. In between, artists also emphasized on development of facial expressions and emotions.

Artists use two different types of costumes for females in Miniature one is 'pathway', a full ankle-length gown having a tight bodice cut put below the breast to which a full front opening skirt is attached along with long tight fitted sleeves. Females were painted in traditional clothes like Ghaghara, Choli and Dupatta. Sometimes female headgears were of various types like scarves, and long transparent Dupatta decorated with mirrors and ornaments. The costume of the female in the Pahari miniature painting reflects the rich cultural heritage and artistic tradition of the Himalayan region.

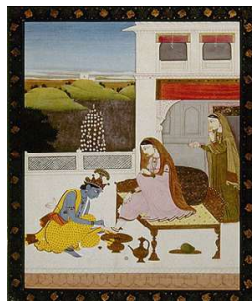
Females were adorned with jewelry made of pearls, emeralds (mostly green emeralds), and gold. The jewelry was highly detailed and fine lined, as few artists belong to the goldsmith family so their main focus and their high knowledge of jewelry design can be seen in their works. Artists use a patch of white color to highlight pearl jewelry. Some females were portrayed wearing a large pendent

attached to a string of pearls while some females were shown wearing large necklaces and Kanthi. Females are even wearing armlets (basebands) made up of gold, pearls and gems. Females often wear anklets or Payal. These anklets appear like bells on thread.

The palm, fingers, the nails, and soles of the feet were painted with red pigment usually to highlight henna (mehndi).

Females were depicted in different positions like- seated on a chair which symbolizes her royalty most artists used Thakurains (queens) in this position, seated on Jhoola, standing with hands together which indicates prayer or gesture to please someone. Playing musical instruments (Ragini) which express their artistic creation and passion, lying on bed, in groups, etc. The artist often uses different elements like hookah, platform, etc, to depict female royalty. For example- A painting of a noble lady, belongs to Kangra School, 1825. These postures signify different moods and settings of the composition.

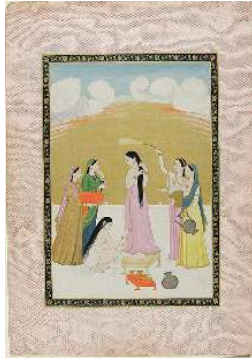
One of the most painted themes in Pahari's miniature is Ashta Nayika or Eight heroines. In this miniature, heroines were painted in different postures and positions symbolizing different moods and settings. The details about Ashta Nayika have been discussed in Bharatmuni's Natyashastra and in verses of Keshavadas's Rasikapriya. Pahari artists were inspired by this literature and illustrated these verses in pictorial form. The classification of eight heroines or Nayikas are as follows:



**Svadhinapatika-** She is seen trying to dominate her lover. Her hero (lover/Nayak) was shown pampering his heroine in such a way that he was shown massaging the seated heroine's feet, washing her feet, painting them with lac dye and applying tilak on her forehead. As the hero was adoring his heroine. Example- Krishna paints Radha's toenail red, Rasakpriya series, Kangra school, 1800 CE.



**Utka- the** Heroine is shown in loneliness and craving for her lover who hasn't come due to some mishappening or involuntary absence. Usually, to depict this scene she was painted in a sitting position or standing alone on the bed of leaves surrounded by the forest, on the edge of the forest pool and wild deer are seen nearby. Example- The heroine who waits anxiously for her absent lover, Utka Nayika, Chamba School, 1760-65.



**Vasakasajja-** Vasakasajja Nayika is a heroine shown as she is waiting for her lover. She was depicted waiting on the door for her lover, while maids were preparing the bed. The use of garlands, and lotus leaves were the basic symbolized as her wait for her lover. Sometimes she is seen talking to a crow as it is considered a good omen for the lover's safe return. Example- Vasakasajja Nayika with female attendants, Kangra school, 18<sup>th</sup> century AD.



**Abhisandhita-** She was shown in unkindness due to an argument with her lover and he was walking away from her in anger. She was in dejected mood. She was sitting in an abandoned position with her head down whereas her lover was shown moving away from her in the opposite direction. Example- Plate(iv) Abhisandhita Nayika: The lover's quarrel, Kangra, 1800 AD.



**Khandita-** She was offended by her beloved. She was pictured as she was questioning her lover in anger after they met. She can also be considered as insecure and possessive towards her lover. Example- Illustration from Rasikapriya series- Khandita Nayika, A heroine reproaching her lover, Kangra school, 1810-1820 AD.



**Proshita Patika-** Her lover went on a journey leaving her unhappy. She was depicted surrounded by her maids, and sakhi(friends) who were confronting her. The absence of Krishna(hero) can be assumed in painting. Example- Proshita Patika Nayika, a disconsolate lady reclining on a bed, attended by an elder lady and two maids, Nurpur, 1770-1780



**Vipralabdha-** She was lonely and in grief as her beloved didn't appear, like Utka Nayika was waiting for her lover to come but Vipralabdha Nayika's wait was over, the time passed and her lover abandoned her. She was shown harshly taking off her jewelry and throwing it down on the floor in grief. Example- Vipralabdha Nayika, Chamba School, 1700-1799



**Abhisarika-** She is brave, and goes out to meet her lover at night crossing the dense forest neglecting all the dangers. She was painted in a dark night scene, alone passing through hurdles like snakes, ghosts, heavy rainfall etc. Example- Krishna Abhisheka nayika, the nayika who goes out to meet her lover in the dark phase of the monsoon, Kangra, 1800-1825AD.

Pahari artists have not only presented women in the form of nayika but have also shown their emotions and state of mind. Artists successfully portrayed the mental state of females in miniature such as their unhappiness, ego sadness, anxiety etc. For example: Viyadhi- the love-sick heroine, Kangra Kalam, 1800 AD. In Pahari's miniature we can also see Females showing divine power in the form of goddesses like Kali, Radha, and Durga. For example: Devi in the form of Bhadrakali surrounded by other gods and goddesses, from the Tantric Devi series, belongs to Basholi school, circa 1660-70. In this miniature artist used bold colors and shows Devi on a bright yellow surface. Baramasha (The twelve months of the season) was also a popular theme among the artists where they depicted Radha Krishna in 12 different seasons with supporting elements of nature. In this female was shown with her lover in different positions and postures surrounded by nature.

### Conclusion

Pahari miniature flourished under the patronage of Rajput kings in Rajput Hills in the Himalayan region, it first flourished in Basholi and later on in different regions as time passed. Pahari miniature was a fusion of different miniature styles and Pahari local art. Pahari miniature faces many developments and improvisations whether in style, color, shape or figures. Pahari miniature is proper representation of beautiful scenes of the hilly region and a depiction of various storylines. Pahari artists not only focused on beautiful hills but also tried to glorify Indian Mythology,



the simplicity of the Poet's lyrics, verses and the purity of Historical events that propagate these as their main subjects. Women play a vital role in Pahari miniature paintings, representing femininity, family, storytelling, daily life and cultural significance. In the Pahari miniature we can also see Females in the form of goddesses like Kali, Radha, and Durga. Artists have personified women with their ethereal beauty reflecting the grace and simplicity of the Pahari region. Pahari artists were way ahead of their time as they had majorly focused on representing the importance of women in society as they used to show women in different postures and movements that simplified the freedom they used to enjoy during that period which was mostly neglected by other miniature schools. The aesthetic value enhanced by the rhythmic figures of women presented by artists in Pahari miniature makes it stand out in a league of miniatures in Indian art History. Portrayal of women in this particular style focuses on the role of women in nature whether it is concerned about creation, emotions or credibility to uplift the mood. These Pahari miniatures face many transformations from using bold colors, overall body figures, and less emphasis on expressions to using subtle and vibrant colors, giving a more realistic touch to the figure and focusing on the inner and outer emotions of the female. The female figure's body goes with significant changes in shape and proportions with an emphasis on curves, texture and pattern. Artists started showing emotional expressions along with physical appearance which are clearly visible in the works of the Ashtnayika series. As binding up I would like to express the joy of observing these Pahari miniatures and the essence of freedom pictorially depicted by the artists of those times is an absolute masterclass. Nature, stories, expressions of women, and their rhythmic figures are surely capable of grabbing the attention of any art lover.

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