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# Study Of Indian Miniature Paintings: A Review

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## Abstract

From the prehistoric times, creativity has been represented through the application of natural pigments on the surface of the earth. There are so many examples in which the narration of earthen colours have been discussed. The narration which indicates the story of human beings and their representation of artistic skills. The art of Miniature paintings which is introduced around 11<sup>th</sup> century in India in the form of illustrated manuscripts by Pala dynasty was also flourished through the application of organic colours and natural pigments extracted directly or indirectly from the nature. Then all the major schools like Rajasthani, Mughal, Pahari etc. have also explored the same approach of organic application of colours in the creation of theme and subjects. The colours have the approach of sustainability as they are free from any chemicals. Moreover, the theme of the paintings are also representing the celebration of nature. The study will be based on the exploration of some selected miniature paintings. The response of the art fraternity and related groups will be collected to do survey regarding the approach of natural theme and colours in context to miniatures.

**Keywords:** Miniature and Environment, Nature and Painting, Sustainable Art, Organic Process and Painting.

## Introduction

Miniature paintings has been came into light during the establishment of Pala dynasty. There were manuscripts illustrations and the process was entirely organic. The miniature paintings is a refine version of the very tradition of manuscripts illustration. According to Jain, "The earliest Miniature paintings in India can be traced back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, when they flourished under the patronage of the Palas of Bengal. Buddhist texts and scriptures were illustrated on 3-inch-wide palm leaf manuscripts, with images of Buddhist deities. Pala art was defined by subdued colours and sinuous lines, evocative of the murals in Ajanta"

(2016). After that, majority of different schools can be seen including Rajasthani, Pahari, Mughal and so on and on. The miniature paintings gave us a very glimpse of nature, flora and fauna and foliage in an urban setting which is unique and one of its kind. The environment and eco-friendly practices were also promoted directly or indirectly through these miniature paintings. Though the major themes and subjects were related with the depiction of courtly affairs, love scenes, and daily activities of that times. Some scriptures and manuscripts were also been depicted through narratives. In all these depictions, one common aspects was nature. The artists celebrated the nature everywhere. Even no subjects or themes have been projected without the personal of nature. If we see the artworks, we can clearly see the ample amount of flora and fauna even in the details of architecture, a scenery of nature has been depicted. The study showcases some of the major details and highlights of the same, how the beauty of nature and environment have been clubbed together and promoted through the art of miniatures. Some of the artworks have been taken into consideration to analyze the same through details and orientation.



**Fig.1 Lot 33: Dhani Ram, Radha Krishna in the Rain, natural pigments on paper, 8.25 x 11 inches**

**Source:** <https://blog.saffronart.com/2019/07/24/8-themes-in-miniature-paintings/>

Miniatures are mostly beautified with the stories of Radha and Krishan even their love usually projected through the symphony of nature. Different moods of whether have been used to create an association with the ongoing situations of lover, beloved etc. Even, the animals and birds have been used in a symbolic way to create a harmony in between the emotions and desire. As nature is always considered as a reason to enhance the emotional feelings, these green landscapes are representing the same. Even the sitting arrangements of dry leaves can be seen in some of the miniatures which promotes the very idea of sustainability. The clean and fresh ponds with lotuses are also indicating the same bliss of nature and also giving a hint to the human beings that nature is the utmost bliss. In numerous scene, the projection was decorated with borders which have plenty of intricate patterns and drawings of flowers and leafs. In some cases, if we miss the nature in the background, these decorative borders can fill the gap and represents the beauty of nature.

The Gita Govinda – an epic 12th century Sanskrit poem by Jayadeva that narrated Krishna’s romance with Radha, and his relationship with the gopis of Vrindavana – was a favourite theme among Indian miniaturists (Jain, 2016).

According to a study, “In\_this\_illustration, Radha and Krishna meet in the forests of Vrindavana, on the banks of the river Yamuna. The trees with delicately intertwined flowering creepers in the background, and the lotus-filled river in the foreground, set the atmosphere of romance for their rendezvous. They are enacting Lila Hawa, where they exchange their clothes and each adapts the other’s persona – Radha acts as Krishna and Krishna is depicted as shy Radha”( Jain, 2016).

### **Techniques Methods and Application of Miniatures**

Previously, the organic and natural substance used to be use in creating all kind of compositions which was eco-friendly but time taking too. The artists go through rigorous process of making or creating such colours from organic substance. The colours and tools which are free from any chemical have been used earlier but now a days synthetic colours have took their place. The approach of taking natural pigments is also a promotion which was done in context to sustainability by the artists. The artists were also able to create the natural aura because of these natural pigments.

The pigment itself create the approach when artists feel connected and close to the gifts and belongings of nature. Even the organic pigment gives a soothing effect to the artwork and also provide some health benefits too which is not directly visible. In all the miniature paintings, the aura of green colours in different shades have been projected through the application of decorative patterns and detailing. The very primary approach of nature has bene imagined first by the artists and then artistic expressions took their way to represent the imaginative though with the fusion of or through a hint of reality.

## **Different Schools of Miniature**

If we look back at history, it was Pala dynasty which came forward with this unique idea of documentation of their religious manuscripts in the form of illustrations. Small scale production of divine forms have been initiated then we have illustrated manuscripts of Buddhism. Afterwards, illustrated manuscripts of Jainism can be found. Through this gradual process, other prominent schools like Rajasthani, Mughal and Pahari style were also flourished with their individualistic approach. The subjects of Rajasthani and Pahari style was majorly occupied with the depiction of Lord Krishan and his counterpart Radha. Rajasthani School was a continuation of old Indian custom. This craftsmanship was developed under the Rajput lords. At the outset, this school had a Mughal impact, yet later it was laid out as simply Indian craftsmanship having no Mughal impact. Rajasthani School didn't start as smaller than normal, yet it was principally painting craftsmanship. First to prosper was the Rajasthani School in Mewar. Later, it thrived in Rajasthan's Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bundi, Kishangarh, Bikaner, and other locations. At Kishangarh, Kishan Singh was in power. According to several experts, Gular is where the Pahari School is thought to have its roots. Some academics believe that the Pahari School originated in Basohli. The 'Gular Kalam' was at its height in 1780 A.D. Then it made its way to Kangra, where it became known as "Kangra Kalam." The flourishment of Pahari style can be seen at various places with the furison of nature. The personification of nature with imagined reality can be seen in almost all the miniature paintings of that time. The monarchs may be seen as being surrounded by different women or making out with them. In the Mughal tradition, depictions of courtly life and monarchy combined with hunting and military scenes have been chosen over themes that focus on women (Randhawa 1959). Women have typically been portrayed in miniatures objectively, either as the male partner or lover or as a symbol of patriarchal structures, especially in Rajput paintings. Geographically, the Rajput paintings of the great kingdoms can be separated into two categories: the Jaipur School and the Himalayan Valleys of Punjab (or Hindu portion of Punjab). Rajput and Mughal styles can be used to categorise Indian miniatures, according to Reiff (1959) (original statement). The Punjab and Himalayan regions of Western India are home to the Rajput style (mainly Jammu and Kangra). The subject is centered on indigenous elements, native musical styles (Raga and Ragini), ancient religions, romance, and epic legends. Ragamala is represented in 36 modes, wherein the man refers to raga and the woman to ragini in the symbiotic love of music. The Ragamala series, Nayikas, and other pieces of love poetry have been depicted in paintings in the Rajput style. The portrayal of Radha and Krishna is rife with sensual fervour (Okada 1992).

In India, the Mughal evolution of miniature and painting continued for roughly three centuries after it began in Persia. The practice of miniature painting was passed down from generation to generation with new touches. Babur, the first Mughal emperor, was a person with strong aesthetic tastes and was involved in the projection of art and architecture. His interest towards gardens and its association is noteworthy but he played a significant role

to establish a miniature foundation. His son Humayun supported miniature painting and brought some Persian painters to India. The names Abdus Samad and Mir Sayyid Ali were noteworthy who started to paint the living and lively culture of Persian characteristics but with the fusion of Indian appeal. Humayun and his son Akbar learned how to draw from these creators. Even Akbar was very much interested to combine the indigenous aspects with the fusion of Persian and Islamic style. As he is celebrated as one of the most significant Mughal emperors because of his love and affection towards all kinds of arts. He gave patronage to various artists under his reign and appreciated their efforts with handsome prizes and gifts. The paintings of the Basholi School (of Rajput style) incorporate intense colour schemes with aspects of folk art. The artworks have emphasized the valiant worship of Lord Krishna and Vaishnavism. Through the miniatures, the Ramayana or Rasamanjari narrative was also represented. Basholi is where this local fashion first appeared, and it then spread to the other nearby Himalayan regions. Basholi's paintings are intensely imbued with the boldness and passion of romance and sensual portraiture. Love-erotica has been symbolically adapted everywhere, including the use of specific colours, natural elements, and environments for all the elements. Princesses and their attendants are shown in lovemaking scenarios using vine-vessels, flowers, and fruits.

In 1560 A.D., the Deccan (Deccani) School of Miniature Painting was founded. The Deccani School did not exist at the time the Mughal School did. Many painters moved to Deccan to look for support when Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb expelled Mughal artists from the Mughal Empire. The Deccan (16th and 17th centuries) was influenced by the Mughals in Ahmednagar, Bijapur, and Golconda. The Mughal style first emerged in Deccan, but its impact on Deccani paintings greatly intensified in the 17th and 18th centuries. Ahmednagar, Bijapur, and Golconda, as well as other Deccani centers like Hyderabad and Tanjore, were places where Deccani paintings grew and thrived. Surprisingly, a significant number of the surviving Indian paintings' greatest works were created for the enigmatic Deccan Sultans.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, all the reviewed study showcasing a close connection among all the miniature schools of India. They have exchanged ideas, thoughts and styles but some aspects are quite exclusive in context of facial attributes, gestures, attire, projection of stories etc. A strong influence of courtship and kingships can be seen in Mughal School of miniature with the advancement of Persian characteristics. The Rajput style was more convinced with the heroism of Lord Krishna where kings often manipulated the minds of onlookers with the symbolic representation in disguise of Lord Krishna. Some of the attributes of other mythological stories have also been executed with the fusion of imagined surroundings. The delicacy and sophisticated postures were the remarkable features of almost all the miniature paintings.

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