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## Depiction Of Proshitabhartruka Nayika And Her Pangs Of Separation In Indian Miniature Paintings

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### Abstract

The theme of love treated and discussed in Indian art reflects the synchronization of the philosophy of life. Painters used tender emotions to depict a woman, a nayika as the subject for their paintings, but with a certain execution, they depicted the same attractive subject coldly and callously. Similarly, an artist can transform an unmoving subject into an interesting, still, yet loudly speaking image through a lively, vibrant composition. Thus, the brilliance of a painting or its painterly value cannot be estimated at first glance, but requires a hundredfold visualisation. Suggestions and observations from different literatures are examined in depth to gain insights from a comparative study of their writings on nayika-bheda and their representations. The study focuses on Proshitabhartruka nayika, a type of woman who misses her lover who has gone on a journey and is shown with the feeling of separation which is unbearable for her. The depiction of the feeling of viraha or separation pain and grief in Indian miniature painting was studied from the point of view of an artist who painted and expressed the theme of nayika through his brushwork or his use of tactile values, figurative representation, perspective and composition. The artist's understanding of a subject and its translation into a still image that speaks thousands of words has been given a visual language.

**Keywords:** Ashtanayika, Miniature Painting, Proshitabhartruka Nayika, Separation, Visuals.

### Introduction

In Indian art, the term Nayika refers to a passionate and faithful lover who portrays multiple shades of love, love in union and love in separation, rather than a heroine. Kalidasa in his Meghadoot describes the beauty of Nayika as follows:

"Behold before you the beautiful slender young lady

Appearing as first creation of god with red lips like ripe blimb

Shining sharp teeth glance like a doe

Slender waist and a deep navel walking slowly her hips being heavy

Slightly bent with the weight of her full grown breast" (Bhatnagar 81)

Bharata in his Natyashastra had touched upon the subject of nayika-bheda and provided a typology of the different types of romantic heroines that was left to ritikal poets to give body to it and enlarge it to a delightful arrangement (Dehejia and Sharma 37). The painters referred those riti poets for the ashtanayikas classification or the eight states of nayika in relation to nayaka which first met within Bharata's Natyashastra and his successors of dramaturgy and

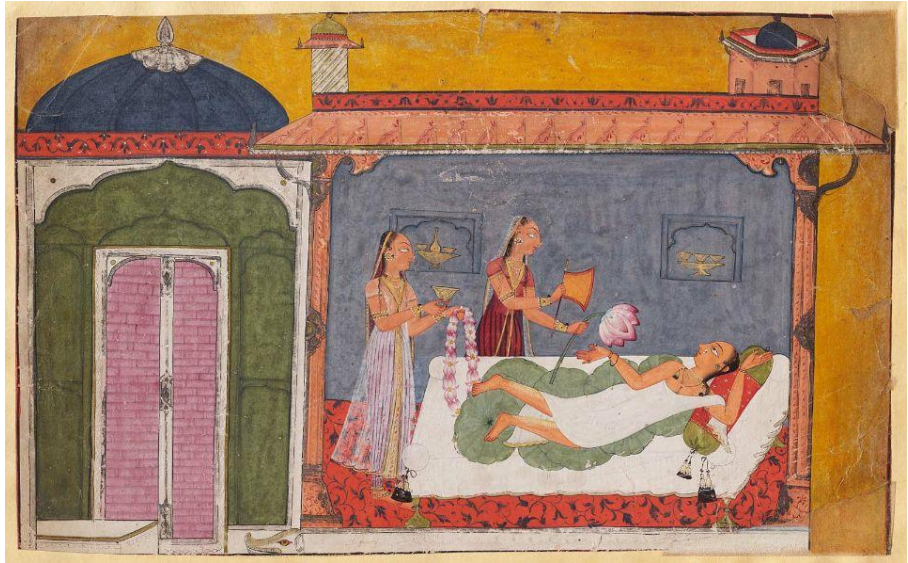
then according to (Datta 1203) the same classification continued to be followed by his successors such as Vatsyayana in his text on erotic, Kamasutra who followed a purely sexual classification of woman and whole Kavya shastra tradition of poetics which resulted in many different typologies of nayikas being variously classified according to physical type, situation, circumstances, emotional state, behavior and so on (Hawley, Stratton, and Wulff 91). And this grew by the concept of rasa derived from early Indian aesthetics, over centuries. The ashtanayikas refer to the eight divisions shown in different situation she may find herself in, the plethora of emotions she may experience and her response to her various romantic dispositions. There are minor differences between various scholars in their descriptions about eight nayikas, but they follow the same pattern. Keshavadasa also followed this classification but in different order as- svadhinapatika, utka or utkanthita, Vasakasajja, Kalahantarita, Khandita, prositapreyasi, vipralabdha and Abhisarika. Amongst these eightfolds, Prositapreyasi or Proshitabhartruka is described as one with a sojourning husband, away in a distinct land on business, shown seated mourning the separation of her lover, surrounded by her maids, but refusing to be consoled (Sodhi, Bundi school 52-53). A woman who is left alone by her lover because of his work, leaving her heartbroken and desolate. She is surrounded by her maids, who try to comfort her, but she chooses to mourn the separation of her lover, refusing to be consoled. This tale of love and loss has been immortalized in Indian literature and art for centuries.

Proshitabhartruka Nayika in the Natyashastra has been explained as:

**“gurukaaryaantara vashaad yasyaa vai proshita priyah  
praroodhaalakakeshaantaa bhavet proshita bhartrika (24:218)”** (Chaturvedi)  
Dhananjaya also describes her as **“duradesantarasthe tu karyatah prositapriya”**

Prositabhartruka also known as Prositapreyasi or Prositapriya is the nayika who is undergoing the throbbing of separation and missing her lover who is gone on a journey and is therefore sad. These pangs are unbearable and therefore she loses interest in dressing and

grooming herself. She is restless, shattered, and thus become careless towards her appearance. Proshitapreyasi is depicted as a young woman with striking beauty. Her almond-shaped eyes, full lips, and long tresses make her look like a celestial nymph. She is usually shown seated with her head bent down and eyes focused on the ground, an indication of her sorrow. Also she is described in desperate conditions like hair left messy and uncombed, counting the days of his return and feeling discontented without him. The separation is due to pertinent circumstance, like some mission, livelihood or education of the hero. Hence, the separation is justified but awful. Unlike the Vasakasajika, she knows the duration of separation.



**Figure I**

*Proshitabhartruka Nayika*, from an illustrated manuscript of the *Rasamanjari*, Possibly Mankot, Punjab Hills, Northern India, Pahari, about 1700–10, 16.3 x 27.5 cm , Opaque watercolor, gold and silver on paper, Collection-Museum of Fine Arts Boston

“In miniatures, she is generally depicted sitting and mourning the separation of her lover surrounded by her maids and refuses to be consoled” (Sodhi, Bundi school 52-53). Here also situation is similar and in the painting, nayika is shown reclined in a very awkward posture as is aware that her lover would not turn up soon. Her emotions run so high that she cannot be comforted even by her closest confidantes. Her grief is intense, and she doesn't want to hide it. Her expressions do not appear composed, rather she is in sad mood. The presence of maids surrounding her reinforces the idea of her isolation and helplessness. They speak softly to her, try to make her cheerful by offering her favorite things and encourage her to move on from her



grief. Yet, despite their efforts, she refuses to be consoled and cheer up and remains unmoved, lost in her thoughts. Her refusal to be consoled also speaks to her unwavering devotion to her beloved husband. No matter how far he may be, she is willing to wait for him with unfaltering loyalty. The most important in this painting is the nayika's expressions and gesture as if she is saying that 'What is the need of these flowers? Or what will I do out of them?' Her expressions portray immense grief as if she had made her mind not to take interest in worldly things. She is negligent of her appearance and deprived of energy. The colours used by painter are suitable to the picture as greyish very grimy and dull background covering most of the space of illustration reflects her state of depression and hopelessness. She is draped in a single cloth of white colour as if her life has become uninteresting after him. Her favourite flower has failed to attract her and make her smiling.



Detail of Figure I

The vessels decorated in the niches of wall, red coloured big pillow on white unsullied bed sheet with leafy decoration at centre and the floor below of intense red colour reflecting her heart burning of separation are all suggesting the preparation that she would have done with the help of her companions to welcome her beloved. But soon all turned into deadly unexciting environment as he didn't come. The door is shown closed which contrasts the anguish of nayika that she will not allow him to come and meet now and has tightly shut the door of her place as well as



Detail of Figure I

her heart. It might be possible that closed door is suggesting that it will get open after nayaka's arrival and in same manner she will enjoy everything only after the coming of her hero, till then she had shut his desires and likings. Again grotesque face visible below at the end of pavilion is a common characteristic feature which can be noticed in several paintings of Pahari region. Each and every prop has been executed perfectly in the painting.



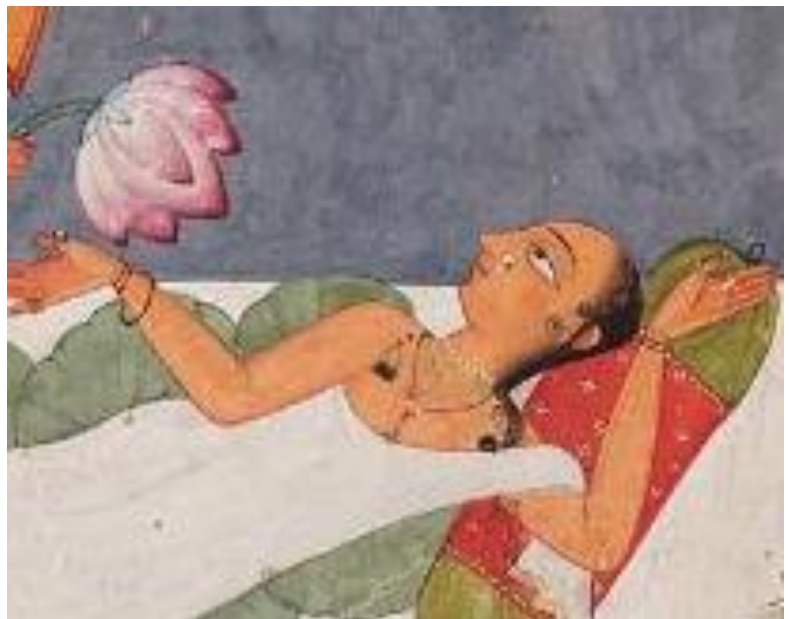
Detail of Figure I

Soordasa's few lines are suitable to this nayika:

**"akhiyaan hari darasan ki pyaasi  
dekho chaahat kamala nainani ko nis din rahati udaasi  
kesar tilaka motin ki maalaa brindaavan ke vaasi  
aaye udho phiri gaye aangan daari gaye gal phaasi  
soordas prabhu tumhare daras ko laihe karavat kaasi"** (Chaturvedi)

Soordasa says that her eyes are thirsty for the view of Hari (Krishna, the nayaka). She remains sorrowful all the time as her eyes want to see into his lotus eyes. She is lost into Krishna's looks with Kesar tilak on his forehead and pearl necklace on chest. He assured to come but didn't turn up and for her, situation had become like hell. Here in the picture she appears impassive and has abandoned her colourful dresses, ornaments and moreover she is no more interested in combing or making her hairstyle and thus had left her hair open.

The other representation of Proshitabhartruka is from unknown



Detail of Figure I



region, but it appears to be from Kangra or Guler, Pahari due to painting framed in an oval format. All the other components including female forms rendered elegantly, their costumes, landscape behind and architectural building have Pahari characteristics in them. At very first glance it seems to be Vasakasajja but while scrutinizing it closely, each and every constituent entitles her as Proshitabhartruka nayika. The mood of vasakasajja nayika echoes only because of her seated posture with sophistication and bashfulness. Because Proshitabhartruka has been described in various texts and poetries as dull, restless and negligent towards herself. But body condition of this particular nayika do not seems tedious, infact her seated posture and coy gesture suggests her being Vasakasajja nayika.

Examining the image closely, grayish blue coloured garment worn by the nayika can be noticed which is very unusual in representation of vasakasajja. She is undoubtedly proshitabhartruka as she is clad in dull colour and her heart's condition which is filled with lust and passion is reflected clearly by the red bolster behind her. The landscape too dried like her smashed desire. Sand burnt of heat bear a resemblance to the lady's vanished expectation of her lover's arrival. Few green bushes are reflecting a little space for hope. The companion lady is also placed by the artist into the scene which is usually found associated with this particular nayika playing her role of encouraging and cheering her.



**Figure II**

*Proshitabhartruka Nayika*, Folio from *Rasikapriya* of Keshavadasa, Region-?, ca. 1800-1820, Opaque watercolor on paper, 24.4 x 14.8 cm, Collection-Brooklyn Museum

It was a challenge for an artist to paint the same story over and over again with brilliance and fresh luminosity to distinguish himself from the other artists. In this way, a remarkable innovative dimension was added to the art world by painters. Through careful visual representation, painters uncovered and opened up the facts presented in literature. These miniature paintings are symbolic and imbued with poetic metaphors. They offer deeper, hidden

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meanings and a richness of detail that invites very attentive but thoughtful exploration. And the artists have breathed life into these vivid verbal images by applying their colours to the subject. The overall study aims to examine and understand the silent language of the miniatures from a different perspective. In concluding these Proshitabhartruka paintings, study came to the realisation that paintings are intimate and viewing is personal, and everyone including painters and poets or writers sought to reshape the classical tradition "according to their own understanding." For one sees each painting and enters the direction in which the painter tries to lead the viewer, but he understands the painting and extracts the meaning according to his own abilities and interests.

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