



Miniature Paintings: Riches & Legacy of Indian Cultural Heritage

Dr. Preeti Singh*

*Head, Department of Anthropology, National P.G. College Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India. (An Autonomous, NAAC 'A' Accredited & CPE College of Lucknow University, India).
Email: - preetisinghtomar@yahoo.com

Citation: Dr. Preeti Singh (2024), Miniature Paintings: Riches & Legacy Of Indian Cultural Heritage, Educational Administration: Theory and Practice, 30(5), 13606-13622
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i5.5898

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Since time immortal (upper palaeolithic period) art and paintings have been a way to express the desires and emotions of an individual or group. In Indian context this expression of art form has a rich cultural heritage, as India is a melting pot of diverse forms of cultures and traditions, each having its own uniqueness in every aspect of life – food, rituals, ornaments, garments and art expression etc.

Miniature paintings belong to the second phase of art form, basically drawn on leaves and barks of wood etc, used in epigraphy, manuscripts etc. These paintings are very small sized, artistic expression, having a configuration of 25 square inch (less than 100 cm²) and a ratio, not more than of 1/6 of the actual size. Examples include Tutinama and Hamza-nama etc. The art of miniature paintings in India draws its origin some 30,000 years in prehistoric and protohistoric times, and the best evidences can be witnessed from murals of Bhimbetka cave and Ajanta Ellora sites of Madhya Pradesh (2nd – 5th century B.C.). But its actual development could be traced as early as 9th – 11th century, where it became handy. This art developed in many forms and stages, that is closely associated with the ragas of Indian classical music, Gita Govind, mythologies, epics, khaka etc., in most of the paintings and depicting the side profile of human figures.

The present study aims to recapitulate the treasures hidden and role played by the miniature paintings in our cultural legacy, as history is not only associated with blood shed, wars, kings etc., but it also takes us long way back to the history of its people, from savagery towards civilizations.

Key Words: - Art form, Miniature paintings, Prehistoric & Historic times, Cultural heritage, India.

Introduction

The legacy of any country and an insight into their treasures of varied form of drawings, dialect, artifacts, paintings, manuscripts can tell a story of its past cultures, traditions and civilizations and are referred to as cultural heritage. Prehistoric or ancient paintings are unique expressions, that recreate the ambience of their times and are often nostalgic.

In Indian context this expression of art form has a rich cultural heritage, as India is a melting pot of diverse forms of cultures and traditions, each having its own uniqueness in every aspect of life – food, rituals, ornaments, epigraphy, manuscripts, paintings- especially miniature paintings and other forms of artistic expression etc.

The Substance of Miniature

The word miniature conjectures for being small in size and dimensions, is derived from Latin word minium, meaning lead oxide or red oxide, was used in manuscripts, inscriptions, other than mural drawings and later in small portraits. Painting or varnana or citra kalà in Hindi, on the other hand is drawing and art work of one's desires and emotions in the form of abstract, narration, gestures etc. Thus, Miniature paintings, also known as limning are very small sized, artistic expression, having a configuration of 25 square inch (less than 100 cm²) and a ratio, not more than of 1/6 of the actual size. These are paradise of beautiful handmade colourful,

sophisticated and illuminated paintings, with very fine and delicate brushwork, having matchless expressions. Examples include Tuti-nama and Hamza-nama etc.

Its Historical Charm

The beginning of drawing objects and figures on the walls of caves and rock shelter sites brought a drastic change in the thought process of the prehistoric people, leading to human civilizations. The magnificent paintings in the form of lines, tally marks, signs, symbols and figure of humans and animals were the very first artistic expressions of early man of prehistoric times thousands of years ago, delineating their thoughtprovoking emotions and desires, for the success in hunting, decorative purpose, magico- religious motifs or simply art for the sake of art. Earliest known paintings done by early man dates back to some 40,000 years from Castillo cave site in France and from Spain. This was the first phase of art form belonging to the paintings done on the walls of rock caves or murals. Examples of which are also found from India, nearly of 30,000 years ago include Ajanta, Ellora, Bhimbetka, Bagh, Sittanvāsala, and many more, depict the love for nature and its forces. Apart from rock cave shelter sites, murals can also be seen in temples and royal palaces. Miniature paintings are usually the second phase of art forms, that began with the advent of calligraphy & manuscripts. Basically, drawn on leaves, vellum and barks of wood etc, in ancient times and later on cloth and paper, these paintings were used as illustrations etc. The art of miniature paintings in India draws its origin some 30,000 years in prehistoric and protohistoric times, and the best evidences can be witnessed from murals of Bhimbetka cave and Ajanta Ellora sites of Madhya Pradesh & Maharashtra (2nd – 5th century B.C.).

But its actual development could be traced as early as 9th – 11th century, where it became handy and were drawn in inscriptions and epigraphy for illustration purposes and later in the form of portraits of rulers, kings and female figures. This art developed in many forms and stages, that is closely associated with themes like, the ragas of Indian classical music, Gita Govind, mythologies, epics, khaka etc., in most of the paintings and depicting the side profile of human figures.

Perspective of Study

Miniature paintings are colourful entity that are closely associated with socio cultural background and precious heritage of a country across the world, that must be preserved for the future generations. These paintings in the form of art highlights the very essence of thoughtful expressions of emotions, correct perceptions, knowledge, similitude, grace of people of prehistoric and historic times. The present study highlights altogether the origin, historical charm associated with, diversified and distinct phases or schools of miniature paintings, the techniques and tools involved, and their chronological development, as these engross a significant identity of Indian cultural heritage & art form.

Methodology

The present paper highlights the origin, historical charm associated with, diversified and distinct other aspects of our incredible heritage of Indian culture – Miniature Paintings. As the paper is totally a conceptual one, based on facts and descriptive in nature, therefore secondary sources of data have been used throughout in the study. Further most of the details and elements have been explained with the help of illustrations, from various other sources.

Review of Literature

Miniature paintings and their various aspects have drawn the attentions and have always been a spirit of inquiry, that are being studied since 18th century by different scholars across the world. Some studies include - P. Brown (1927)¹, Parimoo (1959)², W.G. Archer (1973)³, K. Chaitanya (1984)⁴, A. Chakraverty (1996 & 2005)⁵,

¹ Brown, P. 1927. Indian Painting. Calcutta: The Association Press & London: Oxford University Press.

² Parimoo, R. 1959. The Technique and Care of Indian Miniature Paintings (Synopsis). Indian Museums Journal, Vol. 8, Asia art archive.org.hk.

³ W. G. Archer, (1973). Indian Paintings from The Punjab Hills: A Survey and History of Pahari Miniature Painting. Sotheby Parke Bernet Publications Limited.

⁴ K.Chaitanya, (1973). A History of Indian Painting: Pahari Traditions, Volume 4.

⁵ Chakraverty, A. 2005. Indian Miniature Painting. New Delhi: Lustre Press.

Jeyaraj (2002)⁶, Daljeet, et al (2003)⁷, J. Cummins (2006)⁸, Evans (2017)⁹, Aditi Deka et al (2018)¹⁰, and many more to the credit.

Discussion

Artistic & Aesthetic Expression

Paintings in Indian as well as global context, reflects the visual representations of the varied cultures, religions, passions, sentiments, joys and aspirations of the people. The leitmotifs or say the keynotes of these miniatures represent the life, styles and times of people, kings and their courts, nature, plants and animals in that era, that usually depicted the celebration of colours, festivals and all that was beautiful. And as such Indian painting are a record of happy times and happy people who expressed their hopes and faith through their works of art¹¹.



FIGURE 15: - MALWA STYLE MINIATURE PAINTING. COURTESY: - HIMANCHAL STATE MUSEUM.IN



FIGURE 2: RITUALS IN THE EGYPTIAN BOOK OF THE DEAD. COURTESY: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC.COM

⁶ Jeyaraj, V. 2002. Care of Paintings, Publishers- Commissioner of Museums, govt. museum, Tamilnadu.

⁷ Daljeet et al., (2003). Fragrance in colour: Indian Miniature Paintings from The Collection of The National Museum, New Delhi.

⁸ Cummins, Joan (2006). Indian paintings from cave paintings to the colonial period. Boston: MFA Publications.

⁹ Evans, M.B. August 2017, Miniature paintings. liveaboutdotcom

¹⁰ A. Deka, G. Pathak, J. Kaur, 2018. Cultures & Colours of India: History & Development of Miniature Paintings. International journal of arts and humanities and management studies, Vol. 4 (7), pp:87-91.

¹¹ Painting- A Survey. cbseacademic.nic.in/web_material/doc/ktpi/8_Painting_old.pdf

Globally among the ancient miniature art forms, the earliest surviving are manuscript paintings like **Sushruta Samhita of Indian origin, The Book of Dead, (papyrus rolls of Egyptian)**, some other manuscripts or inscriptions are **the scrolls of Classical Greece and Rome, Aztec pictorial Maps, and Mayan and Chinese codices**. The European illuminated manuscripts had keynotes depicting all possible thoughts and ideas of that times. Contemporarily, the Celtic illuminators developed a unique, abstract style of elaborate decoration, the written text had intricated latticework borders, full-page initial letters embraced by interlacing scrolls.

With the advent of industrial revolution printing began in the 14th century and the 15th century saw the last and final brilliant period of Flemish and Italian illumination. Now with the passing of time and changing scenario, European manuscript paintings survived only in official documents, maps, and also in the form of hand-coloured, block-printed pages.¹²

Indian Miniatures

With the evolution in biological changes, came evolution of cultures and the starting of civilizations saw enormous changes in decorative styles of miniature & wall paintings. The earliest evidences of elaborate paintings are from Bhimbetka (M.P.) and Ajanta cave (Maharashtra) sites in the form of frescos & murals, representing Neolithic culture's everyday life activities and other varied Indian cultures of Mesolithic and



FIGURE 3: AMAZING STORY OF MAHABHARAT CAVES IN BHIMBETKA. COURTESY: ASTROULAGAM.COM.MY

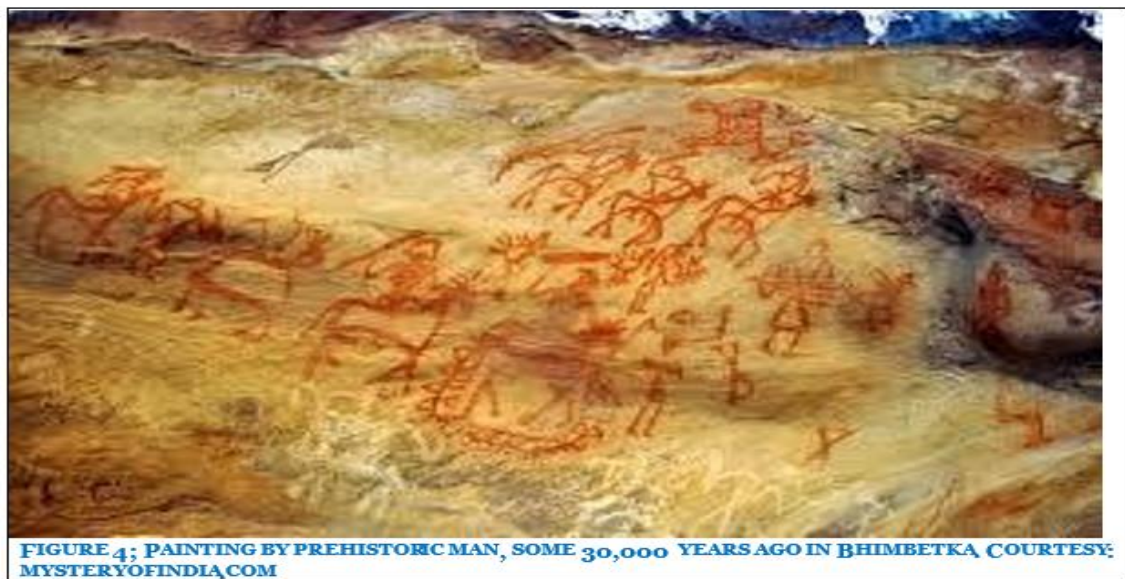


FIGURE 4: PAINTING BY PREHISTORIC MAN, SOME 30,000 YEARS AGO IN BHIMBETKA COURTESY: MYSTERYOFINDIA.COM

¹² miniature paintings-www.britannica.com/art/miniature-painting.

Chalcolithic. References of which can be found in Brahminical and Buddhist literatures of pre-Christian era¹³.

Miniature paintings on the narrow palm leaves in manuscripts like Kalpasutra & Kālkācārya needs special mention. It is universally long established from ancient times in Indian context that knowledge and art are categorised into 64 (chausath) kalas and Alekhyā vidyā is one of its major components, that focuses on paintings, visualizing six underlying principles - Roop-bheda, Pramanam, Lavanya yoganam, Sadrisham, Bhava and Varnikabanga.



FIGURE 5: FRESCO PAINTING OF BODHISATTVAS' IN AJANTA CAVES. COURTESY: EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG

Basically, art forms originated in two major areas – Eastern India (Pala) & Western India (Apabrahmsa), and their glimpses can be seen in many schools and sub schools, that came into existence after and developed their own styles of expressing their thoughts and emotions in the form of paintings, which reached its zenith in Mughal period. The chronology begins with the

- Palas of Bengal
- Jain
- Deccan (Lepakshi paintings)
- Pahari
- Rajasthani
- Mughal

¹³ Singh V.K., Sinha S.K., Maity S. Kothari R., Sharma M., Ojha A., Singh N.K. Indian frescoes and miniature painting. Pdf, group2, syndicate. www.mcrhrdi.gov.in

SCHOOLS OF MINIATURE PAINTINGS



FIGURE 6: - MAP SHOWING DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOLS IN MINIATURE PAINTING ACROSS INDIA. COURTESY: WWW.MCRHRDL.GOV.IN

The Palas School of Miniature Art (750 A.D. – mid 12th century)



FIGURE 7 & 8: TOP – MANUSCRIPT PAGE OF MAITREYA BHODISATTAVA ON HIS THRONE. SANSKRIT ASTASĀHARSRIKA PRAJNĀPĀRAMITĀ SUTRA, A MANUSCRIPT WRITTEN IN RANJANA LANGUAGE IN INDIA, IN EARLY 12TH CENTURY. (COURTESY: WIKIMEDIA). BOTTOM: -MANUSCRIPTS WITH MINIATURES (COURTESY: MICHEL DAIMIO & GUWAHATI STATE MUSEUM)

Originated in Bengal was the earliest, belonging to 8th century A.D. and influenced by the Buddhist ideologies, often depicting portraits of Buddha, their tantric rituals, and monasteries of Nalanda, Somapura, Mahavir, Vikram shila and more. These were drawn on palm leaves and barks of trees, that had symbolic use of colours. It had a naturalistic style with pale colours with contemporary sculptures in stone & bronze. This art form spread across continents of S.E.

Asia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Tibet and Burma. Came to an abrupt end, when Muslim invaders arrived in India.¹⁴

¹⁴ Singh V.K., Sinha S.K., Maity S. Kothari R., Sharma M., Ojha A., Singh N.K. Indian frescoes and miniature painting. Pdf, group2, syndicate. www.mcrhrdi.gov.in

The Mughal School of Miniature Art (1560- 1800 A.D.).

Miniature art form flourished and reached its pinnacle in the reign of Mughal emperor Akbar & Jahangir. The art form, had an intermingling style of Indian miniatures & the Persian art.



FIGURE 9: PAINTING FROM ANWAR- I – SUHALVI. MUGHALS PAINTED (COURTESY: BRILL.COM) (COURTESY: MADRAS COURIER.COM)



FIGURE 10: RAZM-NAMA – WHEN MAHABHARAT

In the later half, European influence can also be felt, with the coming of Britishers. The paintings had incredible aesthetic expressions, along with secularism, elegance, nobility and poise style. The major & elaborate works of this time were Gulistan of Sadi, Razm-nama (a Persian translation of Mahabharat), Hamza nama, Anwar-i-suhavli (book of fables), Anwar-i- sunavli to name a few. The detailing in these miniature arts has boldness of execution in colours along with finesse. The floral linings of border around the paintings were the magical

touch, unique to the times. With the changing emperorship, the colours became more attractive and ornamental with the use of gold in embellishments. The best example is the portrait of emperor Shahjahan. But during the reign of Aurangzeb(fanatic) and the decline of Mughal dynasty, the art form also lost its charm these manuscripts are mostly kept in museums and private collections outside India.

The Pahari School of Miniature Art (17th century A.D.)

An amalgamation of Mughal & Rajasthani style of miniature art form of paintings, these were very lively and romantic. Distributed from the regions of Jammu & Kashmir to Garhwal to Uttar Pradesh, gave rise to other schools like Basholi, Kangra, Chamba etc. Portraiture of God & Goddess and beautiful picturization of Himalayas were the main subject matter of this school. The theme also depicts tales from Gita-Govind, Rasmanjari & Bhagavat puran.¹⁵ The use of bright exotic colours is influenced by Rajasthan, while the decorative borders are derived from Mughals.



FIGURE 11: - SCENIC BEAUTY OF PAHARI MINIATURE PAINTINGS. COURTESY: ROYALKANGRA.COM



FIGURE 12- RAMAYAN RETOLD IN MINIATURE PAINTINGS. COURTESY: DECCAN HERALD.COM

¹⁵ Nandgopal, C. 2018, Miniature school of paintings. Publisher- IGNOU.

The Deccan School of Miniature Art (15th – 18th century)



FIGURE 13: - DECCANI GOLCONDA MINIATURE PAINTING. COURTESY: PINTEREST.COM

Inspired by Vijayanagar school of traditions, the paintings were a new genre of art work, belonging to Ahmednagar, Bijapur, Golconda, Orissa, Mysore & Tanjore traditions that painted deities of Hindus from mythologies and epics. The jewelleries and ornaments were painted in such a manner, which gave them a raised effect. Earlier the miniature paintings were independent, but in later half of 17th & 18th century, Mughlai influence can also be witnessed in the art form. [center for culture] The first painting in this school that was painted is of bull elephant, in most of paintings nayaika along with sakhis are portrayed, the portraiture of Adil Shahi and Ragamala series are remarkable and mesmerising. The paintings are the admixture of Persian & Hindu style of paintings. In the book Kitab-i- Nauras, paintings based on Bhairva, Kedari, Kalyani, Gauri raga etc., are evident, which testifies the fusion of Hindu- Muslim commitment. The paintings also reflect the political instability. Other remarkable art forms of this school include - Tarif and Nimat-nama were fine artistic features of Ahmednagar, so were Nujum-ul-um and Kulliyat illustrated art pieces from Golconda.

The Rajasthani School of Miniature Art (15th – 19th century).



FIGURE 14: - COURTESY: HIMACHAL STATE MUSEUM

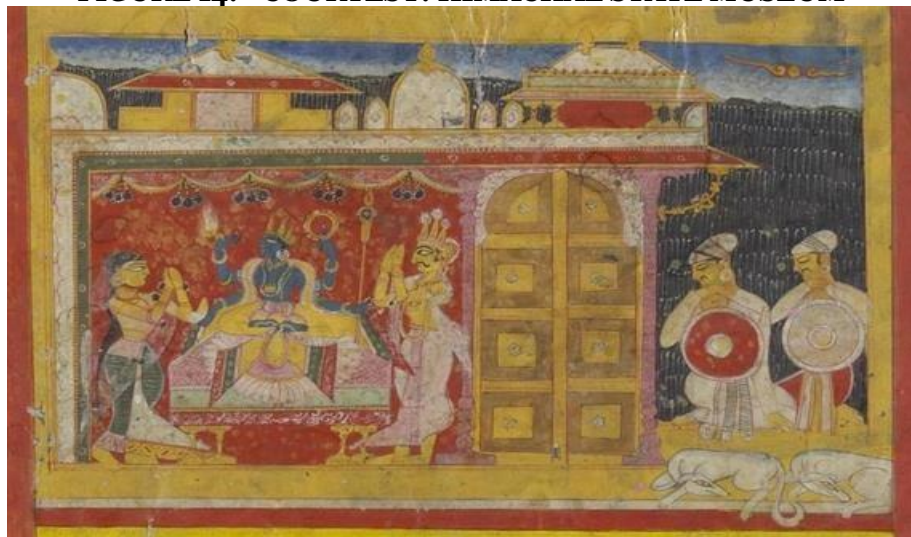


FIGURE 15: - MALWA STYLE MINIATURE PAINTING. COURTESY: - HIMANCHAL STATE MUSEUM.IN

The miniature art work was widely spread in varied regions of Sirohi, Marwar, Amer, Jaipur, Bundi, Malpura, Malwa and Mewar- are fort of Raga-mala paintings, producing its own style and sub styles, with emphasis on folklores, music, Indian tradition and customs taking a front seat, based on epics, mythologies and religion. Galvanized by the Vallabh sect, energised by bhakti sringaar, bhagwan Sri Krishna was mostly painted in all forms of rasalila portraitures and in some cases of Hanuman tradition were also drawn. The artists on many occasions used Mughal painting styles to depict Radha – Krisna. The preserved manuscripts are full of richness of Rajasthani culture and traditions. The harmony & integration are very much vibrant in colours and lines. The use of dark, thick and vibrant colours like yellow, blue, green, silver, gold and red are mostly evident. Apart from miniature paintings, frescos can also be witnessed in and around Rajasthan.



FIGURE 16: - MEWAR STYLE OF MINIATURE PAINTING



FIGURE 17: - MINIATURE PAINTING AT BUNDI FORT. COURTESY: TIMESOFINDIA.COM

The different manners in which paintings were made are known as **kalam**. Some of the mesmerizing miniature art work on manuscripts include Ladies in the Garden, Vasant Vilas scroll (1451 A.D), Caurāpāncāsikā. Other subjects are like Shiva and Parvati, Baramasa, Nayaka-Nayika-bheda, Ramayan, Mahabharat, Bhagavat puran and many others, are some of affluent art work of its kind.

Medium, Techniques & Tools Used in Miniature Paintings

Medium of Miniature Paintings

Paintings is an art form that was mostly handmade and delicate, especially miniatures, used by the people of prehistoric, historic and in contemporary times, to express their thoughts and emotions from everyday life instances. The earliest surviving miniature paintings in India from 750 A.D till 10th century were executed on the rock cave walls & roofs-murals, tablets of clay and metals, and later on perishable materials like papyrus & palm and birch leaves, barks, wood, ivory, vellum (skin of calf, goat & sheep), cloth, and on paper from 14th century onwards.



FIGURE 18: - 1000-YEAR-OLD SANSKRIT MANUSCRIPT WITH MINIATURE PAINTING, AṢṬASAHĀSRIKĀ PRAJÑĀPARAMITĀ ON PALM LEAF. COURTESY SCROLL.IN

MINIATURE PAINTING ON PARCHMENT



FIGURE 19: - MINIATURE PAINTING ON PARCHMENT OF SOCRATES DEBATE ON PHILOSOPHY WITH HIS DISCIPLES. COURTESY: ART.COM

The images were painted with texts in religious manuscripts, albums and books, with illustrations in mythological epics. But in the later centuries the themes of miniature paintings expanded their horizon and further included portraits of kings & queens, court scenes, scenic beauty, flora and fauna.

MINIATURE PAINTING ON WOOD



FIGURE 20: - PORTION OF A ~1000 YEAR OLD BEAUTIFULLY PAINTED WOODEN MANUSCRIPT COVER FROM BIHAR OR NEPAL SHOWING FIRST SERMON OF BUDDHA AT SARNATH. ©THEMET

MINIATURE PAINTING ON CLOTH



FIGURE 21: KRISHNA RASA LEELA.

MINIATURE PAINTING ON METAL



FIGURE 22: - TIGER DRAWN ON TIPU SULTAN'S SWORD'S BLADE. COURTESY: - SOTHEBY'S LONDON, 27 APRIL 1994, LOT 134.



FIGURE 23: - SHIELD OF TIPU SULTAN WITH SUN RADIANT & FLORAL MOTIFS. COURTESY: - TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM, DEPARTMENT OF ORIENTAL ANTIQUITIES: 1878.1101.450



FIGURE 24: - ANTIQUE INDIAN MINIATURE PAINTING ON HAND WRITTEN ILLUMINATED JAIN MANUSCRIPT PAPER. COURTESY: - ESTY.COM

FIGURE 25: -MUGHAL EMPEROR AKBAR'S MINIATURE PAINTING ON IVORY. COURTESY: ALAMY. STOCK.

The discovery of paper brought a renaissance in visual presentations, which took the art of miniature paintings to higher levels. Along with paper came the blue pigment Lapiz Lazuli, hence the paper and the blue pigment is a landmark in the history of miniature paintings.¹⁶ This made miniature paintings more illustrated and illuminated.

Technique & Pigments Used in Miniature Art & Painting

Apart from size, miniatures traditionally were also appreciated for the finer detailing in them, where every single detail is scaled and miniaturized, with fine brush marks. It's these detail that differentiates a miniature from a small painting. The emphasis lays on the creation of a mood and the communications of bhava-emotions through rich and lyrical styles. [11]¹⁷.

Techniques used include hatching, stippling, and glazing. Material used for drawing known as vasli was prepared from the fusion of rice stalk, bamboo and certain other mediums as the composition, perspective, and colour were of utmost importance.

The colourants for drawing were made from extracts of natural vegetable colours and oils, minerals, organic inks and dyes, indigo and earth tone pigments. These were mixed with other colours to obtain a wide range of secondary and tertiary colours. Conch shells, metallic gold and silver leaf, were commonly used in Persian, Mughal, and later Indian miniatures, to enhance the gleam of pigments.

For a greater intensity and vibrancy of colours, all hues of colours were first fortified. These had to be finely ground, generally with help of batan uña or grinding stone. Khalva yantra was used to remove impurities and filter the pigments, before mixing them with a binding medium. Binding medium (Rice water, Gum Arabic, animal glue, or starch paste), served three important purposes: it increased the fluidity of the colours, allowing them to be more easily spread on the surface of material used. Use of binding medium made the pigments increasingly water soluble¹⁸¹⁹. Regional differences did exist in terms of local preferences for particular types of binding media over others²⁰. The pigments that were used in miniature paintings were

¹⁶ Outline of history of miniature paintings with special reference to Ragamala paintings 09_chapter2.pdf. Shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in.

¹⁷ miniature paintings -national gallery of modern arts, 2020. www.ngmaindia.gov.in/sh-miniature-painting.asp

¹⁸ Parimoo, R. 1959. The Technique and Care of Indian Miniature Paintings. (Synopsis). Indian Museums Journal, Vol.

¹⁹ , Asia art archive.org.hk

²⁰ The Minassian collections of Persians, Mughal & Indian miniature paintings. The Brown university library. www.brown.library .

Black was one of the most important colours, used for preparing sketches and drawings and to provide a depth of tone within paintings themselves. This colour was obtained by burning and collecting the soot of organic material such as bone, oil, or wood, a form of pure carbon. Apart from colouring, charcoal powder was also used to transfer compositions via pouching.

White pigment was made from lead, zinc & chalk, generally used to prepare the surface, before applying colours and elocation of details in a painting. It was usually mixed with other pigments to discover newer pastel shades of colours, especially blue & purple. Red colour, since the very beginning was considered as colour of celebrations and festivity. This included colours obtained from iron oxide (red ochre), which was primarily utilized in making the base sketch for the miniatures. Other red variants were vermilion and mercury sulphide. In green shades, Verdigris green was considered prominent, made by admixture of copper filings and vinegar, resulting in luminous and glittering copper patina pigment, that was caustic in nature. Other green variants were made by mixing yellow and blue pigments. Blue was derived from minerals and organic source; lapis lazuli was the most favoured and in demand during renaissance and medieval times. It was also known for its luminous and gleaming nature, used for illumination in miniature paintings. Organic blue was made from indigo dye. Orange colour was obtained by mixing yellow and red. Orpiment yellow was used for obtaining vibrant and brilliant orange. Yellow or orpiment was extracted from arsenic, while yellow ochre was procured by filtering a particular type of soil. Mauve or Lavender were secondary colours, extracted by mixing red, blue and white pigments. In some case vermilion and indigo mixtures were also in use. **Metallic gold and silver** were used for decorative purposes in armours, architecture, celestial elements, landscapes and manuscripts and for depicting water.

Tools Used for Drawing Miniatures

The tools used in making miniature paintings that were dearly possessed by the artists, included pens, pencils and brushes. Pens also known as kalam and their nib, that were used for writing purposes and calligraphy, made from reed in various shapes and sizes, according to the requirements.

Pencils used during ancient times were generally of undefined shapes and sizes, and two to three or four inches in length, used in drawing the outline of sketches of the miniatures. Outlining with pencils had an advantage, as whenever the lines that were wrongly drawn, could be wiped out and fresh lines redrawn correctly.²¹

Brushes used for painting miniatures, were prepared from the hairs of squirrels and cats for finer detailing, while the goat hairs from its ears and fibres from certain plants, were used in executions of coarse works. The hairs were tied together with the quill of pigeon feathers, and attached to a handle. For painting on birch, palm and other leaves, tindu style was used for designing, where the size of brush handle was not more than the size of little finger in length, having a copper nail that measured two barley grains. One part of nail being visible and the rest fixed inside the handle.²² For every pigment different brush was used, so that pigments need not get mixed up. Brushes of varying thickness and thinness were applied for filling colours, outlining, shading and detailing etc.

Relevance of Miniature Paintings

Throughout the world, its different regions are demarcated by varied ethnicity which is unique to them, and India is no exception. It beholds highly rich lineages and heritages of our enormous cultures, that are spread over the entire nation and can be viewed with the lenses of their language, literature, music, cuisine, dance and art forms. These aspects of culture from varied regions are well preserved and help us in revisiting the journey of the glorious past by the present generations. It depicts what all happened, and how people lived in the past. As art in India did not emerge all of a sudden with a blink of eye as revolution or a movement, like in other regions of the world. The miniature art form in India also has journeyed through thousands of years, spiking the soul and mind of its people in ancient times as well, that is evident in colours and patterns. Thus, these small jewels of pictographic configurations, though compact depict the very essence and soul of thoughts, emotions, love, faith, celebrations, nature, animals, histories, battles, wars, tales, landscapes, elaborate scriptures & manuscripts, power, religion, individual experiences and above all human male and female figures in very influential and effective ways. These sophisticated art forms have therefore shaped our Indian cultures & heritages.

However, with the passage of time, things change and so did miniature paintings. It witnesses change and modifications in terms of colours- from natural to poster colours, became commercialised and mostly this ancient art form is replicated by the present-day artists.

Reasons for Its Decline & Damages

The art of miniature paintings flourished in earlier times, reaching its peak in Mughal reign and later declined with the coming of Britishers and draining India of its wealth. In the last decades of 20th century, the

²¹ http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/45760/10/10_chapter%203.pdf

²² http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/45760/10/10_chapter%203.pdf

advancement in science and technology, digitalization and modernisation took a toll on these masterpieces, as these traditional paintings lost their gleam to the diminishing skills to a great extent.

As the miniature paintings were mostly sketched on perishable materials and mediums, this also affected their longevity and is alarming. With passing of time these are becoming fragile, ramshackle and wobbly, losing the brilliance and vibrancy of colours, infected by termites and insects, affected by humid environments etc. In case of paintings made in caves sites, running water, weathering effect, easy access by the people is also a main concern of these precious paintings, the conservation of which needs to be handled carefully.

Conclusion

As these legacies have evolved through ages by trial-and-error techniques and most significantly are treasures of expositions of our phantom history with promiscuous and miscellaneous past. Thus, Miniature paintings in a nutshell are **mammoth universe of genuine and smaller art form., and will always remain a prized possession of our Indian cultural heritage,**

✚ **Note:** - Presented this paper, in 7th International Congress of SOSAA. Organized by society of South Asian Archaeology & department of history and archaeology, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka in Collaboration with Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, High Commission of India, Colombo, Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO. September 2020.