



## NARRATIVE ARTS IN RAJPUTANA AND MUGHAL MINIATURE PAINTINGS

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### **Abstract**

*Miniature painting from India, especially that of the Mughal and Rajputana dynasty, has revealed the affluent artistic, cultural, and religious past of the period. The images and expressions of Rajput and Mughal art styles, all of which originated from themes identified with the religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam, were quite different. Mughal art works are mostly characterized by a secular and courtly style of realism and richness, compared to mysticism and spiritualism and popular cultural themes mostly used in Rajput art. The paper discusses contrast between the Rajput and Mughal miniature paintings, focusing on the use of differences in symbolic and stylistic elements used for representation of components such as water bodies, plants, trees, and heavenly attributes. It goes on a higher level in terms of a larger cultural conversation that could be witnessed between secularism and spirituality in the case of Indian court art. Indian court art in both its variations-the one of Persian aesthetic influence and local cultural influence-is therefore molded, giving evidence of an entirely different pattern to artistic development in the Indian history complex.*

**Keywords:** *Narrative Arts, Rajput and Mughal Miniature Paintings, Mughal Art, India's Artistic History.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam are the three major faiths that have had an impact on Indian art. Because of the Mughal dynasty's crucial role in preserving Muslim art, it is commonly referred to as Mughal art. Hindu art from Punjab known as Rajput is derived from the Rajputana and Hill Rajput peoples. Mughal art refers to the Islamic art genres that were popular under the Mughal dynasty. Mysticism is a defining feature of Buddhist and Rajput paintings, which are representative of India's religious life. Religion and spirituality are the central subjects in both styles. Rajputs and Buddhists both contributed to depictions of India's religious life in art. On the other hand, Mughal art was technically precise, depicted a diverse array of subjects, and was exceedingly intricate. Paintings from the Mughal era, which began in the 1600s, are well-known instances of court art in India.

Various styles from India, Iran, Persia, and even Europe were incorporated into the commissioned paintings for the Rise of the Mughal Court. We now call this new and innovative kind of artistic expression Mughal Art, and it all started with these factors coming together. Neither the claim that the Mughal Empire was the first Islamic empire nor the claim that the court paintings created during that era were the first of their kind in India are true. The paintings displayed in the Mughal court can only be understood by delving into Indian history and art prior to the Mughal Empire's foundation. In this post, we will look at court paintings from the Rajput and Mughal empires and see how they were similar and different.

A Buddhist palm leaf book from eastern India's Pala period provides the first evidence of Indian miniature painting, which may have originated in the ninth or tenth century. Concurrently, this ritual was also recorded in a western Indian Jaina palm leaf text. Paper manuscripts, with their more expansive layout compared to palm leaves, became increasingly popular in India in the 12th century, when the material was first brought to the nation. However, at that period in India, no other schools of miniature painting existed; these miniature manuscripts were the only ones.

From 1451 to 1526 AD, the Lodi era saw the rise of a bourgeois school of manuscript art in the Sultanate. An example of the court style was shown in the Sultanate's illustrated document. The art of miniature painting reached its zenith during the first period of direct contact between Islamic



civilisation and India. During the reign of the Mughal Empire (1526–1757 AD), a new era in Indian painting's development began with the formation of studios at the imperial court. Portraits, genre scenes, album miniatures, and celebratory or genre scenes were among the many kinds of paintings that made their way across India from that place. Persian art had a significant impact on early Indian miniature painting, although that influence was short-lived because Indian artists swiftly established their own unique style.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Prasad, Suraj & Sen (2021)** - "Folk art" is a sort of artwork created by people in a community without professional artistic training in order to portray that group's cultural identity. Experts claim that the Madhubani painting style originated in Bihar's Mithila region and is currently acknowledged as a form of Hindu traditional art. These works of art are now being acclaimed all around the world. In its original form, women used it to adorn the walls and floors of their homes for religious occasions. The majority of people who paint in this manner are still members of the Brahmin, Kayastha, and Dalit castes. Thus, there is a distinct gender and socioeconomic inequality in Madhubani paintings; this study aims to investigate these concerns and the cultural, social, and economic impacts they have on women in particular as well as the community at large. Both primary and secondary sources would be used in the project's research.

**Bennabhaktula Lavanya (2022)** - The study of historical methodology, the analysis of many schools of thought on a given historical subject, and the history of the production of historical accounts are all areas of focus for the intellectual and academic discipline of historiography. Paintings, for example, provide a visual experience of a variety of shapes, lines, procedures, ideas, and historical depictions. The experience of focussing on a subject while trying to comprehend art history is communicated and appreciated by art historians through the use of visual analysis and sources. Mediaeval art historians used a range of stylistic methodologies, such as analysis, development, and change, as well as distinctive styles, to characterise the miniature paintings of mediaeval India. They also emphasised the patronage and style of particular eras, places, and artists as part of their emphasis on patronage and style.



**Vaidya, Aradhana (2022)** - The purpose of this research and the project that goes along with it is to examine and analyse the features of the ancient Indian miniature painting art form from the perspective of time-based digital media. These beautiful artworks were the result of much love and care. The colours are vibrant and upbeat, and the patterns are complex. They are carefully and artistically drawn, and they use a distinct form of depiction that is very different from the traditional lens-based viewpoint. The majority of digital three-dimensional media employ actual or virtual camera photos to represent space. I somewhat deviated from convention for this project since I wanted to give animation a fresh look. The project demonstrates how one may create a consistent and unique visual aesthetic while maintaining the depth and visual expressiveness found in traditional painting styles with the aid of contemporary technologies.

**Jackson, Penelope. (2022)** - This part focusses on interior paintings of studios and museums, including reproductions of artwork. Sometimes the only information we have about a painting comes from its small representation within another piece of art. Examples of paintings-within-paintings created specifically to educate the public include Samuel Morse's Gallery of the Louvre, which was created to show American audiences miniature replicas of well-known European Old Masters. The watercolours by George Jones of the interiors of J. M. W. Turner's home and gallery, as well as the chambers of the grand mansion, Petworth House, are part of this significant historical documentation and resource of collections and installations. This part focusses on interior paintings of studios and museums, including reproductions of artwork. Sometimes the only information we have about a painting comes from its small representation within another piece of art.

**Dr. Mandakini Sharma, et al. (2021)** - Applying natural hues to the earth's surface has been a means for humans to show their creativity since ancient times. Throughout history, the storytelling of earthy hues has been investigated in numerous occasions. This is the story that narrates how humans have demonstrated their capacity for creativity. The use of organic hues and natural pigments that were either directly or indirectly obtained from the natural environment allowed the art of miniature painting, which was originally introduced in India in the 11th century by the Pala dynasty in the form of adorned manuscripts, to flourish. Then, every major school of thought, including Rajasthani, Mughal, and Pahari, has studied the same technique of employing natural

colouring to build themes and concepts. The hues are environmentally friendly in their approach because they don't include any chemicals.

### 3. MUGHAL INDIA'S MINIATURE PAINTING AND MANUSCRIPT ILLUMINATION ARTS

Miniature paintings embedded in beautifully illuminated manuscripts held a significant position in Persian courts, which were next to those of India; their spread throughout the region started in central Asian countries in the seventh century. In 1530 C.E., Humayun, the second Mughal emperor, used these Persian miniatures as the centrepiece of his court in India. Humayun promoted the blending of Persian miniatures with native Indian paintings by employing a large number of male Indian and Persian artists as court artists. During the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the Indian subcontinent was ruled by the Mughals, there were many works of art in the later Indo-Persian style, often known as Mughal painting, that featured calligraphy, animal motifs, and the history of Indian territory.



**Figure 1:** Mughal Painting Style

During the reign of Akbar, the third Mughal emperor (1556–1605), Indo-Persian miniature paintings frequently depicted male imperial rulers, Islamic spiritual narratives (such the prophet Muhammad's mystical travels), and mythological stories from many religions. In the years that followed, autonomous and small kingdoms in Rajasthan, India, as well as regions under Rajput authority, were able to create their own distinctive miniature painting style thanks to Akbar's strong backing.



**Figure 2:** Rajput Miniature Painting Art's

Among other significant Sanskrit literature that recount Hindu stories, these Rajasthani paintings featured images from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Puranas. Numerous Rajasthani paintings from the late 17th to the early 19th centuries depicted court life. The gopis, the fierce and aggressive Hindu gods, and the Hindu goddess Durga and her army of obedient and visually similar female milkmaidens are some of the well-known characters depicted in these works.

### **3.1. Types of Rajputana & Mughal Miniature Paintings**

Across the range of Indian painting traditions, the subcontinent's culture is shown in numerous ways. People have been practicing this from the dawn of time. Over time, paintings seen as belonging to the classical Indian style have evolved into a synthesis of the different traditions that have shaped them. Even traditional folk paintings from India are becoming more and more well-liked by art enthusiasts both domestically and internationally. This pattern is evident in India as well as other nations. Many Indian folk art show a great deal of influence from the country's numerous regional customs and traditions.

This is demonstrated by the intricate murals and Buddhist palm leaf scrolls found in Ajanta and Ellora.



- 1) Paintings in Caves
- 2) The paintings of Madhubani
- 3) Small-scale paintings
- 4) Mughal artwork
- 5) Paintings from Mysore
- 6) Paintings by Pathari
- 7) Tanjore artwork

### **3.2. Fundamental contrasts between the Mughal and Rajput painting styles**

The following are the main ways that Rajput and Mughal painting styles differ:

- Unlike Mughal art, which is more practical, worldly, and secular, Rajput art is more mystical, spiritual, and sacred.
- Rajput art is more democratic than Mughal art since it is less aristocratic, while Mughal art primarily captures the grandeur and dignity of Mughal culture because it was primarily restricted to Imperial courts.
- In contrast, Rajput painting was a popular art form that frequently featured well-known and adored subjects.
- Folk art informed and inspired the Rajput style, while Mughal art was maintained apart from it.
- The materialistic elements of animal life, such hunting deer and fighting elephants, are generally the center of Mughal design.
- In contrast, the Rajput style emphasizes the religious and artistic qualities of animals, portraying them as gods and adding to the beauty of the paintings.

### **4. COMPARISON BETWEEN MUGHAL AND RAJPUT MINIATURE PAINTINGS**

The visual components of Rajput and Mughal miniature paintings provide distinctive stylistic and symbolic options that are representative of their creative and cultural traditions. Key visual components of the two styles are contrasted in the table below:

**Table 1:** Comparison between Mughal vs. Rajput Paintings

<b>Visual Element</b>	<b>Mughal Painting</b>	<b>Rajput Painting</b>
<b>Waterbodies</b>	Realistic and Symbolic: Waterbodies with reflections, ripples, and depth are frequently depicted in Mughal art as realistic representations of life, fertility, and tranquilly. Water adds a natural aspect to "Jahangir Hunting Near a River," symbolising plenty and cleanliness.	Decorative and symbolic: Rajput waterbodies are more stylised and ethereal; they are frequently portrayed as geometric shapes with ornamental patterns, such as rectangles or trapezoids, and they occupy less area, as demonstrated in "The Elephants at Mount Trikuta."
<b>Banana Plant</b>	Mughal paintings, like "The Garden of Prince Salim," emphasise the banana plant's magnificence in a naturalistic and symbolic manner. It represents wealth, reproduction, and the power of the empire over the natural world.	Banana plants are ornamental and stylised in Rajput art, with soft shade and fan-shaped leaves. Rather of striving for realism, they are ornamental additions.
<b>Tree with Trunk</b>	As seen in "The Death of Khan Jahan Lodi," where robust tree trunks provide visual equilibrium, Mughal trees are big and lifelike, signifying strength and stability.	Decorative and stylised: Rajput trees have ornate crowns and patterns that produce rhythmic repetition, as in "Rama, Sita, and Laksmana in the Hermitage of Bhardvaja." They are also flatter, more colourful, and less realistic.
<b>Background</b>	Detailed and Secondary: As demonstrated in "Akbar Receives the Persian Ambassador," Mughal	Rajput backdrops are frequently abstract and geometric, with geometric elements and vibrant

	backgrounds contribute intricacy through gardens, landscapes, and architecture, yet they nonetheless take a backseat to the primary characters.	colours that emphasise a symbolic approach by framing the action rather than creating depth.
<b>Horizon</b>	Expansive and Low: Mughal horizons are usually low to highlight the grandeur of the sky and the power of the king, as seen in "Emperor Babur Supervising the Layout of His Garden."	High and Mystical: Rajput horizons are high and incorporate natural features like mountains, giving hunting and fighting a more mystical and symbolic meaning.
<b>Clouds</b>	Calm and Atmospheric: As seen in "Prince Khurram on Horseback," the gentle, flowing Mughal clouds provide depth and serenity.	Bold and Dynamic: Unlike the more subdued Mughal technique, Rajput clouds are stylised and abstract, giving the composition vitality and vitality.
<b>Lightning</b>	Dramatic and Seldom Seen: Lightning is rarely employed in Mughal art, frequently signifying chaos or divine intervention, as seen in the "Storm Scene from the Hamzanama," which features crisp lines against a black sky.	Stylised and Symbolic: Rajput art uses more abstract and stylised lightning to lend energy and brightness to the landscape without introducing particular details.

## 5. CONCLUSION

On the variously diverse cultural landscapes of India, Rajput and Mughal miniature painting reflect the distinctive nature of social values and artistic emphasis among their patrons. Mughal paintings more or less revolved around the royal court, meaning material richness, grandeur, and a fascination for realism achieved with a great amount of detail and life-like depictions with the use



of symbolism, power, and fertility. On the other hand, the art of Rajputs celebrates Hindu mythology, folk traditions, and spiritual themes, and the subjects are portrayed in a more stylized and decorative manner resonating with regional aesthetics and religious symbolism. Though elements of natural life are included in both styles, the Rajput style often spiritualizes animals and plants, unlike the Mughal approach that favors the depiction of the same in a naturalistic manner. This coming together of Persian influences and indigenous styles makes beautiful fusion in art still talked about today for their unique contribution to Indian art. In fact, on studying these contrasts, one realises that Rajput and Mughal art aren't merely two styles; they're a visual narration of India's richly multifaceted cultural heritage.

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