



# THE EVOLUTION OF SCENIC REPRESENTATION IN RAJPUTANA AND MUGHAL MINIATURE PAINTINGS: FORMS, FUNCTIONS, AND SYMBOLISM

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## Abstract

*This study explores the evolution of scenic representation in Rajputana and Mughal miniature paintings, emphasizing their forms, functions, and symbolism. It highlights the influence of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam on Indian art, particularly focusing on the Mughal dynasty's role in preserving and developing Mughal art, which is characterized by its intricate detail and diverse subject matter. The research traces the origins of Indian miniature painting back to the ninth and tenth centuries, noting the significant developments during the Mughal Empire and the emergence of Rajput painting from the royal courts of Rajasthan. The study employs qualitative research methods to analyze the visual vocabularies of Rajput and Mughal paintings, aiming to identify recurring themes and shifts in representation from iconic to realistic portrayals over time. It also addresses ethical considerations in the study of these artworks, ensuring respect for intellectual property and cultural heritage. The findings are intended to enhance understanding of these artistic traditions and inform contemporary design practices.*

**Keywords:** *Rajputana and Mughal Miniature Paintings, Mughal Art, Visual Vocabulary, Rajput Painting, Royal Courts*

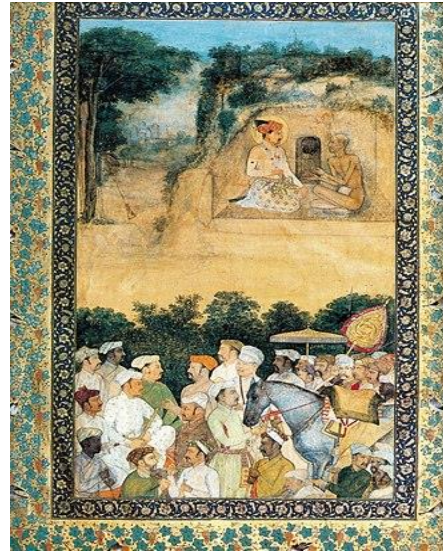
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Painting in India has been influenced by three main religious traditions: Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. Muslim art is called Mughal because the Mughal dynasty was instrumental in its survival. Because of its ties to Rajputana and the Hill Rajput of Punjab, this Hindu painting is called Rajput. The Islamic art forms that were favoured by the Mughal dynasty are referred to as Mughal art. Both Buddhist and Rajput paintings, emblematic of India's religious life, have mysticism as their defining characteristic and religion and spirituality as its major themes. The religious life of India was depicted in art by Rajputs and Buddhists. Conversely, Mughal art was incredibly complex in addition to being technically accurate and featuring a wide range of subjects. Famous examples of Indian court art include paintings from the Mughal dynasty, which date back to the 1600s.

The Rise of the Mughal Court featured a unique blend of Indian, Islamic, Persian, and European styles in court paintings. While the Mughal Empire is not the first Islamic empire or court paintings ever produced in India, studying Indian history and art before the founding of the Mughal Empire is essential to understand their origins. The Mughal and Rajput dynasties' court paintings share similarities and contrasts, with the Mughal art dating back to the ninth and tenth centuries. Indian miniature painting originated in the ninth and tenth centuries, with the first documented examples in Buddhist Pala era palm leaf books and Jaina palm leaf manuscripts. The popularity of illustrations on paper manuscripts began in the 12th century, but there were no other schools of miniature painting in India at the time. The Lodi era saw the emergence of a Sultanate bourgeois school of manuscript, which represented the court style. The Mughal Empire's studios for Indian painting were formed at the Imperial court, marking a new period in the development of Indian painting. From there, various types of paintings, including portraits, celebratory scenes, album miniatures, and portraits, spread throughout India. Although Persian art initially influenced Indian miniature painting, Indian painters quickly reclaimed their independence and created their own distinctive style.



**Figure 1:** Emperor Jahangir's visit to the ascetic Jadrup, about 1616–1620

Rajput painting, a style popular between the 16th and 19th centuries, originated from the royal courts of the Rajput dynasty in Rajasthan. The Rajputana rulers developed their distinctive style in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and the name "Rajput Painting" has since spread across India. The two most well-known schools of Rajput painting were the Pahari and Rajasthani schools, which included various locations in Rajasthan. Rajasthani artists often featured cities such as Udaipur, Bundi, Kota, Amber, Jaipur, Marwar, Bikaner, and Kishangarh. The stylistic similarities between Bundi and Kota paintings are thought to be due to resource sharing. Rajput painters include seventeenth-century Mewar artists Nasir ud Din and Sahibdin, eighteenth-century Mewar artists Bakhta and Chokha, eighteenth-century Bikaner artists Ruknuddin and Ustad Sahibdin, eighteenth-century Kishangarh artist Bhavanidas, and the famous Krishna and Radha artist Nihalchand.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Dr. Preeti Singh (2024)** - Artistic expression, such as paintings, has been utilised to communicate the emotions and goals of individuals or communities since the upper Palaeolithic period. India is a cultural melting pot where many different traditions and cultures coexist, each with its own unique way of life that is reflected in art, rituals, food, clothing, and more. As a



result, this artistic expression has a long and storied history in the Indian context. Included in the second stage of this art genre are miniature paintings. Epigraphy, manuscripts, and other artistic endeavours frequently make use of these paintings, which are typically executed on wood barks and leaves. The dimensions of these little works of art are fewer than twenty-five square inches (less than one hundred square centimetres) and their aspect ratio is less than one sixth of the actual size. There are many examples of such names, such as Tuti-nama and Hamza-nama. There is evidence that the practice of creating miniature paintings in India dates back to the protohistoric and prehistoric periods, about 30,000 years ago. Murals from the Ajanta Ellora and Bhimbetka cave sites in Madhya Pradesh, which date to around the second and fifth centuries B.C., provide the strongest evidence. But as it didn't become practical until the ninth or eleventh century, its true development may be traced back to that time. Indian classical music's ragas, the Gita Govind, mythology, epics, and khaka are just a few of the many influences on this art form, which predominantly depicts human figures in profile. This research aims to recapitulate the hidden riches and the role of miniature paintings in our cultural inheritance, considering that history is not only associated with bloodshed, battles, monarchs, and other such things, but also traces the history of its people from barbarism to civilisations.

**Dr. Hari Om Shanker (2023)** - Painting once again started to make tremendous strides in terms of development throughout the reign of the Mughal rulers because of their keen interest in the art form. Beginning under the rule of the Mughal Empire's founder, Babur, and continuing until the death of Shah Jahan, painting underwent significant progress. (The Mughal Empire was founded by Babur). During the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir, painting was refined and eventually reached its zenith. Both of these epochs are renowned as the pinnacle of artistic achievement in painting. Professional artists also created the hashiya, or border decorations, that adorned Mughal artworks. When it came to making hashiya, these artists were unrivalled. It was another common practice to wrap the photo around the khat in a round pattern. 2017, according to Pratap. Beautiful, beautifully woven patterns adorned these khats. The bell-boots weren't the only anthropomorphic or hunting-related motif found along these borders. As a traditional decoration, plates of gold or silver would be scattered on the hashiya. Alternatively, the plates would be divided into small and large khat and laid out in flat patterns of two or three colours.



**Umer Hameed and Usman Hameed (2023)** - Throughout this series of lectures, we will dig into the fascinating world of Indian painting styles. These styles will embrace not just the general Indian heritage but also the many different regional interpretations of that legacy. Our tour will take us through a variety of diverse styles, including Mughal, Pahari, Deccan, Rajasthan, and Bengal School of Indian Painting, among others. A full grasp of the varied and dynamic world of Indian creativity will be provided via the examination of the distinctive characteristics and historical background of each style, which will be presented through a rich tapestry of examples.

**Brijesh Swaroop Katiyar (2023)** - A history that dates back many centuries, Indian miniature painting has a particular character on the international art scene. Its history dates back to ancient times. Both Buddhism and Jainism, two faiths that originated during the Vedic era with the intention of reforming societal patterns, used art as a potent medium for the diffusion of their ideas and teachings to a large number of people. Thus, with Buddhism arose the tradition of mural painting and with Jainism the art form that emerged was the writing of manuscripts and the depiction of illustrations in them; Since these manuscripts were prepared on palm and bhojpatras, which were small in size, the size of the pictures made in them were also very small, due to which later art critics counted such pictures under miniature painting style. It is also important to remember that the tradition of miniature painting had already begun to emerge in the seventh century, when it was supported by the Pala dynasty. This is something that should be taken into consideration. The Jain style, on the other hand, was responsible for the broad growth of this heritage. This style may be seen in a variety of miniature paintings in styles such as Rajasthani, Mughal, and Pahari, amongst others. Along with religious and cultural forms, spiritual contemplation and meditation have been reflected in a very supernatural manner in ancient Indian miniatures such as Pala and Jain miniatures. On the other hand, miniature styles such as Rajasthani, Mughal, Deccani, and Pahari miniatures depicted miniature paintings based on the themes of popular texts at the time with a courtly elegance. On the basis of their painting method, colour scheme, subject matter, stylistic traits, and other characteristics, the primary purpose of this research article is to investigate all of these miniature painting styles in a step-by-step manner. These styles emerged throughout distinct time periods.



**K. Mrutyunjaya Rao (2022)** - As the keeper of Indian visual culture's legacy for the next generation, this article delves into the remarkable impact of Indian miniature painting. There are several transitions and idioms covered in the course as well. The religious text no longer treats visual imagery as an afterthought; on the contrary, it gives it paramount importance. Instead of trying to imitate nature, the artist has taken on a more divine essence and a profound appreciation for Indian culture. Not only is it ornamental, but it also has a religious purpose. "Horrorvacue," which refers to the urge to fill space, is a prevalent feature of Indians and is often shown in Indian paintings. Within the scope of this essay, the articulations of line, colour, and space are addressed. It is possible that the Indian painter was able to experience extraordinary colour patterns as a result of the climatic circumstances. The deep-seated reverence for religion and environment, as well as the desire to satisfy the aesthetic preferences of his client. Because of this, he will always be remembered as a unique artist in the world.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**3.1. Research Design:** The research design is a crucial aspect of a research project, guiding the researcher in making decisions about data collection and analysis. It provides a blueprint for the researcher's actions, including formulating the hypothesis, analyzing the data, and ensuring reliability. For this investigation, a qualitative research methodology was used, focusing on providing a detailed description of a phenomenon through focus groups, open-ended questions, or interviews. Although the findings may not be applicable to the general public due to high costs and small sample sizes, qualitative research can provide deeper insights and inform theory, practice, and specific cases.

**3.2. Sample Design:** A sampling design is a predetermined plan for selecting a subset of a larger population for further study. Researchers choose a sample design based on various factors, such as the number of objects included and the quality of the artworks. The first stage involves discussing sources of Rajput and Mughal paintings with specialists, obtaining high-quality photographs from museums, online collections, and books. The collection is then organized using Picasa3, a desktop application developed by Google, which allows for quick filtering and querying of individual artworks based on tags.



- 3.3. Data Collection:** Data is crucial for decision-making processes and is collected through various methods such as questionnaires, observations, surveys, and literature. This study uses primary and secondary sources to gather data from existing literature and participants, ensuring a comprehensive response to the research question.
- 3.4. Data Tools:** This study aims to enhance understanding of Rajput and Mughal paintings through design principles. It systematically assesses artworks, providing a comprehensive perspective. The findings can be used by exhibitors to create contemporary design ideas and showcase miniature paintings in design museums. The research can also be valuable for students and instructors in developing a broader understanding of painting and design.

#### **4. RAJPUT MINIATURE PAINTINGS AND ITS VISUAL VOCABULARY**

Rajput painting, a style popular between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, originated from the royal courts of the Rajput dynasty in Rajasthan. The Rajputana rulers developed their distinctive style in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and the name "Rajput Painting" has since spread across India. The two most well-known schools of Rajput painting were the Pahari and Rajasthani schools, which included various locations in Rajasthan.

Miniature painting is a significant part of Indian art history, with popularity growing from the northern Punjab hills to the southern Deccan during the 16th and 19th centuries. Rajasthani artists often featured cities such as Udaipur, Bundi, Kota, Amber, Jaipur, Marwar (including Jodhpur), Bikaner, and Kishangarh. The resource sharing that occurred when Kota was established on Bundi soil is thought to be the reason for the stylistic similarities between Bundi and Kota paintings. Jaipur and Amber were both influenced by their closeness to one another, leading to a refined style. However, the attribution of Sirohi art has been challenged due to the scarcity of Sirohi art, which is limited to a handful of ragamala folios.

Rajput painters include seventeenth-century Mewar artists Nasir ud din and Sahibdin, eighteenth-century Mewar artists Bakhta and his son Chokha, eighteenth-century Bikaner artists Ruknuddin and Ustad Sahibdin, eighteenth-century Kishangarh artist Bhavanidas, and the famous Krishna and Radha artist Nihalchand.



#### **4.1. The Artistic Value of Rajput and Mughal Paintings**

Paintings depict and narrate tales. Paintings chronicle individuals and occurrences. Paintings depict narratives from the Ramayana, Bhagavata Purana, Gita Govinda, or the Satsai. They construct tales based on themes such as Rasamanjari, Rasikapriya, and rāgamālā. Paintings depict patrons, often monarchs and nobles, appearing for portraits at court, engaged in hunting, enjoying music, or in the company of ladies. The narratives develop within diverse terrains: a river meanders below, lotus blossoms drift alluringly, trees adorn a hillside, banana plants emerge from behind borders and foliage, lush vistas extend to the horizon, birds soar, animals ascend rocky surfaces, clouds accumulate, lightning strikes, and rain cascades in torrents... the potential is limitless. The patrons are shown in jungles, mounted on horses or an elephant, pursuing lions; they are present in court among other nobles; or they sit peacefully alone, smoking a hukkāh or clutching a flower, while an attendant wields a fly-whisk. All of this is clearly shown inside a boundary, which is sometimes breached by the components within.

#### **5. DEFINING THE VISUAL VOCABULARY OF MUGHAL AND RAJPUT ART**

Trees, pavilions, the sky, and other recurrent themes may be seen in practically all paintings, as the previous discussion made clear. The parts that follow describe the methodical process used to determine the paintings' visual lexicon.

- i. The following standards were used to choose a group of paintings:
  - Since the investigation pertains to a time span between the early seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, the paintings must have been created during this period.
  - Representative paintings were required from each fifty-year interval: 1600-1649, 1650-1699, and so on.
  - The principal centres of painting in the Mughal and Rajput areas pertinent to the inquiry must be included.



- The paintings must be created by Masters<sup>17</sup>, whether known or unnamed, who were trendsetters in their respective areas.
  - The paintings must have been published and recognised within the professional community, since their publication signifies their importance, having been selected above other works.
- ii. It was determined, after much deliberation, that illustrations from the subsequent publications would be used to delineate the visual vocabulary:
- Milo C. Beach et al., editors, *Masters of Indian Painting 1100-1650 and Masters of India Painting 1650-1900* (2011): These enormous volumes, which include the majority of the most eminent artists of their eras, are among the finest repositories of miniature paintings.
  - Rosemary Crill's *Marwar Painting* (2009): With a vast selection of Marwar paintings throughout the years, this book is a wonderful addition to the previous two, which only have a small number of Marwar paintings.
  - When it comes to Kotah's art, Stuart Cary Welch (ed.) provides the following information: This, too, enhances the previously mentioned publications since it offers some interesting insights into later Kota paintings.
  - *Romantic, Divine, and Courtly Art from India: Roda Ahluwalia's Rajput Painting* (2008): Beautiful Bundi and Kota paintings may be found in this book, which is a great combination of the British Museum's wonderful collection of miniature paintings.
  - "The arts of India," written by Joseph M. Dye III and released in 2003. Drawing inspiration from the extensive painting collection housed in the Virginia Museum of the Arts, this compilation details some of the finest miniature paintings from many centers.
  - *Mughal painters*: This book includes significant material not included in the *Masters of Indian Painting* and chronologically lists paintings by Pahari painters from several centres in the area.



- iii. Two strategies were used: One) To begin understanding the visual language, make a note of every distinguishable component in the chosen artwork and then search for recurring components. Every single item, no matter how little, was included; they included accessories like sandals, arrows and bows, mace, water pitcher, pot lid, and so on. During the process, it quickly became clear that many aspects might be grouped together into a category and that there weren't many elements that were really repeated across the paintings. For instance, one may group together items such as pajāmā, patkā, cummerbund, and jāmā as masculine clothing. Two) This brought up the second strategy, which was to ask, "What are the most prominent elements in this painting?" and identify the top 10 elements from each painting. Some of the following characteristics would be shared by the elements: Largeness of scale; originality of portrayal; prominence owing to colour; prominence owing to background contrast; and prominence owing to gradations or outlining.
- Rajput Paintings: Following the listing of the top components from each of the chosen artworks, the most prevalent elements were determined. There were distinct components found (note: this is based on the top elements of a picture, not a complete list). Man, Woman, Trees with trunks, Waterbody, Background, Sky, Pavilion, Clouds, Banana plant, Mountain/hill, Bamboo, Horse, Fountain, Horizon, Deer were the top components in terms of frequency of occurrence. Eight components (such as Bolster, Palace Courtyard, and Lotus) happened three times; twelve elements (such as Shield, Hukkah, and Cow) occurred twice; and fifty-two elements (such as Pots, Bed, and Boar) occurred just once.
  - Mughal Paintings: After listing the most important components of each of the chosen artworks, the aspects that were most prevalent were determined. The top components of a painting were the number of distinct elements that were found. Man, Background, Trees with trunks, Sky, Woman, Horizon, Waterbody, Clouds, etc. were the most often occurring components.
- iv. Perceptual visual analysis revealed that in each picture, the top eight to ten pieces accounted for more than 80% of the overall area.



## 6. CONCLUSION

The evolution of scenic representation in Rajputana and Mughal miniature paintings reflects a rich tapestry of cultural influences and artistic innovation. Both styles emerged from distinct historical contexts, with Rajput painting rooted in the royal courts of Rajasthan and Mughal art flourishing under the Mughal dynasty's patronage. While Rajput paintings are characterized by their vibrant colors and themes of valor and romance, Mughal art is noted for its technical precision and diverse subject matter, blending Indian, Persian, and European styles. The research methodology employed in this study highlights the importance of qualitative analysis and ethical considerations in exploring these artistic traditions. Ultimately, the findings suggest that despite their differences, both Rajput and Mughal miniature paintings share recurring themes and visual vocabularies, showcasing a dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation in Indian art history. This exploration not only enriches our understanding of these artistic forms but also underscores their significance in the broader narrative of India's cultural heritage.

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