



## The Significance of Landscape in Pahari Miniature Painting

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ABSTRACT

Paintings under Rajput school of Art were divided into two categories. Rajasthani school and Pahari school. In the second half of the 19th century Pahari paintings play a great role in the history of Indian miniature painting. The earliest paintings in miniature style originated in Basohli, from where the style spread to the hill states of Mankot, Nurpur, Kulu, Mandi, Suket, Bilaspur, Nalagarh, Chamba, Guler and Kangra. Pahari Artists inspired from the natural beauty. They filled the emotions in the landscapes which is said the painted poetry and express the harmony between man and nature. They used the landscape to present the main theme as the suitable background for them. Landscapes were based on the illustrations of Baramasa Bhagvata Purana, Rasamanjari and Ragamala series.

### KEYWORDS

Pahari, Miniature Painting, Landscapes, Nature

### Introduction:

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Himachal Pradesh and Punjab, some such beautiful paintings were discovered which further added some beautiful and glorious pages to the History of Indian Painting. Before coming of the Britishers several small states flourished in the hilly area of north India. Paintings under Rajput school were divided into two categories. First is Rajasthani school and second Pahari School. The area of Pahari School was the hill states of Punjab. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Pahari miniature Paintings play a great role in the history of Indian Painting. Some of the hilly states like Kangra, Jammu, Chamba, Basohli and Kullu were of ancient origin, even of Pre-Christian or early Christian era. The Jammu Princess claimed their descent from Rama's son Kusa and that they came from Ayodhya.<sup>1</sup>

The hill chiefs, commonly known as Raja with different family name such as "Dev" in Jammu, 'chand' in Kangra, 'Verman' in Chamba, 'Sen' in Mandi and Suket. Different scripts were used in these states. Among the hill states Kangra was the Biggest and oldest.<sup>2</sup> from the time of Alexander the historical records. A proverb in this region was very popular: "He, who holds the Kangra fort, holds the hills." Jammu was also a strong power. Nadaun was also an attractive and historical place in Kangra. Kulu, Nurpur, Bilaspur, Basohli and Mandi were also famous for the art of painting. The natural beauty and pleasant weather of this area added the charm to Pahari Kalam.<sup>3</sup>

Pahari miniature painting is an expression of the soul and its sensitivity its admiration for natural beauty and an illustration of its secret dreams and its highest aspirations-both poetry and music. It is a tender language of colors, lines and shapes, a variation of an eternal melody. Like the poetry, music and melody gave birth to an unimaginable wealth of miniatures. To capture the real meaning of this delicate, sensitive art, by means of which the painter has to interpret the entire heritage of the spiritual, social and cultural life of the people. To present the entire range of human feelings with the help of nature in the background, Artist of Pahari Kalam took one of the subjects as Baramasa.<sup>4</sup> A number of Paintings have disappeared but many works have been fortunately preserved.

The earliest paintings in miniature style originated in Basohli from where the style spread to the hill states of Mankot, Nurpur, Kulu, Mandi, Suket, Bilaspur, Nalagarh, Chamba, Guler and Kangra.<sup>5</sup>

'Oh, painter! How many days have passed and you have not

drawn the picture of my friend!'

'I shall so prepare the portrait of yourself and your friend that instantly in the picture the emotions in the divided lovers shall meet.' "Unknown Pahari poet". The Pahari artist filled the emotions in the landscapes which is said the painted poetry and express the harmony between man and nature. The Pahari artist had acquired a sure sense of tonal values of color to express the subtle changes of light is evident from a "Nay-ika" picture in which the heroine is striding forth in the mid day sun to a tryst. The tonal values change gradually from the deeper green of the grass in the foreground to the silvery sheen of the sky to convey the feeling of the sun's relentless heat.<sup>6</sup> Relief from the heat was brought about by the monsoon rains, which is one reason why in India it is the season for love.

The landscapes of Pahari painters were not based totally on imagination. They believed that a work of art should be both imitative and imaginative. The Pahari artist has a two fold relation to nature, as Goethe says, "he is at once her master and her slave. He is her slave in as much as he must work with earthly things in order to be understood but he is her master, in as much as he subjects (7) these earthly means to his high intentions."<sup>7</sup>

The Pahari artists illustrated Hills, Shrubs, flowering trees of the region but composed them according to their own choice. To a Pahari Painter, Nature and art are, of course, connected, but not in the strict model and copy relationship. Nature supplies the grounds for art and the artist's business is to interpret nature, not just copy its outer appearances.

For the Pahari Landscape painters "Nature is not a refuge." The use of natural scenes was to present the main theme as the suitable background for them. India has never had any separate school of landscape painting like china and Japan, but figurative subjects in the landscape settings got a full appreciation of the true function of fine Art. A painting named "The south wind cool itself in the snow of the Himalayas, 1730 A.D., Basohli." This painting is the only example of pure landscape by Basohli artists, in which human figures are not shown. Their conception of sandal trees which are found in Mysore state of south India is purely imaginary. As these artists lived in the outer hills, they also had no idea of Himalayan glaciers and alpine vegetation. This explains the manner in which they have painted the snow in the crags of mountains and the trees. This is one of the illustrations of Gita Govinda.<sup>8</sup>

Pahari Painters discovered a vast area for their expressions. Pahari line is very rhythmical and effective to express the romantic subjects. Paintings are not only naturalistic but very rich, bright and soothing. Manku and Nainsukh were among the best painters of this school. Nainsukh probably the court painter of Balwant Singh often used landscapes beautifully in soft colours in the background of many portraits. In Baramasa illustrations, the landscapic element comes in vivid forms, splendid views of changing nature in the hills during twelve months. In most of the paintings background is full of different colourful or more sophisticated trees and flowering plants but there is also an intermediate stage when half of the scene is occupied by natural surroundings and other half by architectural motifs. In some cases canopies are introduced in landscape settings.<sup>9</sup>

In Basohli paintings, a dense forest with beautifully formed trees was a suitable background in many paintings. The Mughal influence was absorbed at each centre of Pahari Painting, differently and accepted according to the local taste and capacity. In some paintings of Guler-Kangra tradition we find a particular treatment of the cloud of Mughal tradition. In the paintings of Bhagavata Purana in Kangra the full moon rising from behind the hills can be seen. In Raagmala series the trees are more stylized. The trees with large and decorating leaves are a distinctive feature of the Bilaspur style landscape painting. The light green background filled with thin dark green lines is commonly known as "Sink Pardaz" style. In the landscape paintings of Kullu, Pine trees were introduced in the background. In some paintings the dense forest shown with birds forms a romantic background. In Garhwal School, landscape painting was based on the Kangra tradition. In most of the paintings, the whole background is filled with flowering trees and shrubs. In Guler trees are not simply symbols but are integral elements in a landscape painting. Nature is not only observed very well but one may even be able to recognize some of the topographical features of the particular regions.

Generally the artists of Paharischool have not written their names on the paintings but the name of Nainsukh is found on the Jammu paintings. Kashmir school also contributed in the development of Mughal and Paharischool of Landscape painting. The Pahari Artists were more interested in instilling a romantic flavor and lyrical charm in their landscapes of fantasy than being true to nature.<sup>10</sup> These landscapes provide an ideal setting for the glorification of love, where all men are heroic, all women are beautiful, Passionate and shy. Every natural element is made to empathize with the mood of the occasion.

**Conclusion:-**Pahari miniature painting is an expression of the soul and its sensitivity, its admiration for natural beauty and an illustration of its secret dreams and its highest aspirations – both poetry and music. To present the entire range of human feelings with the help of pleasant nature in the background of illustrations and portraits, Pahari Artist was blessed and successful. For Pahari Artists Nature and Art are part and parcel for each other. Nature supplies the ground for art and the artist's duty is to interpret nature, not to copy the outer appearances only.

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