Depiction of Women: A Review on Major Studies on Indian Manuscripts and Illustration

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ABSTRACT
The projection of women is changing from the ancient time till today. The socio-cultural values and stereotypical imagery have played a major role to construct the variety in the portrayal of women. This imagery somehow represents them as an object of desire and where it is not followed, a lack of significant subjects can be seen. The present paper is a review of all major studies from the origin and development of illustrated manuscripts till the pre-colonial times. There are various studies, Showcase the development of illustrated manuscripts and miniatures, for the observation all the studies related with the major schools have been discussed in the research.

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION
Discussion
The magnificent miniature paintings, which date back to the Pal dynasty in India, have also flourished on the Indian subcontinent. Although, the Mughal era saw the Mughalization of miniatures at its highest point, other dynasties also made significant contributions to the industry. In the 11th and 12th centuries, the oldest illustrated manuscript evidence of India was discovered. The Eastern Indian manuscripts, which are part of the Buddhist legacy, were created in Assam, Koch Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, and Nepal. Bihar and Bengal had the top universities. The manuscript tradition in Bengal comprises two distinct periods, known as earlier and later. The Jain manuscripts, such as Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita, were illustrated during the earlier era in the 11th century. The Jain deities owned these pictures. The regional Mughal School was created in Murshidabad at the beginning of the 18th century by the subsequent school of this design. The later style combines a primitive approach with folk elements from Bengal. Numerous topics, such as portraits of aristocrats and Viceroy's of Bengal, have been represented in the later style. The Prajnaparamita has once again been portrayed in Bihar, and other other artworks have also featured numerous Hindu subjects (Gupta, 1972).

There are very few Pala period paintings still in existence, however palm leaf paintings have been used as illustrations to advance Buddhism. The paintings were based on stories from Buddhism. A
semi-naked woman has been depicted in a happy mood in the painting "The Birth of Buddha" (Huntington et. al. 2016). The pictures in the Jain style have a textual legacy that is related to Western India. The religious-secular poetry of Jainism retained this pattern. After some time, the Rajput and Mughal styles, which featured representations of Krishna and other deities, began to influence it. Paintings from the 16th century depict the passionate love poetry that was written during the tenure of the Muslim king Husain Shah. The depiction of the feminine figures is full of charm and sensuality, with romance predominating (Bhattacharya, 1966). Khandalavala and Chandra talked about the Kalpasutra, which was painted at Jaunpur. They also provided interpretations of the many Jain and later Jain versions of this document using the Kalakacharya Katha. The tradition of illustrated Jain manuscripts was first established in Western India (Gujarat) and later flourished in Rajasthan and Malwa. In the later stages of the Jain period, Chaurapanchasika and Laur-Chanda were the two most important decorated and illustrated books (Khandalavala & Chandra, 1962). The palm leaf miniature painting dates back to the Pala dynasty and was created to illustrate tales connected to the Jain religion. Randhawa also discussed the Rajput and Pahari styles of Indian School miniature paintings, as well as their themes. He stated that Krishna's heroics had dominated the themes throughout and that Krishna had been utilised as a vehicle to portray the courtly life and love tales of rulers. The monarchs may appear to be surrounded by numerous women or to be engaging in intimate relationships with them. In the Mughal tradition, subjects that center on women have been favored above representations of courtly life and royalty paired with hunting and military scenes (Randhawa 1959). Especially in Rajput paintings, women have often been depicted honestly in miniatures, either as the male spouse or lover or as a symbol of patriarchal norms. Rajput paintings from the great kingdoms can be divided into two categories based on where they were created: the Jaipur School and the Himalayan Valleys of Punjab (or Hindu portion of Punjab). The combination of a naturalistic setting and the portrayal of Lord Krishna's love scenes has led to the flourishing of the Rajput style. However, the main focus was on the heroic portrayal of Lord Krishna, either in the character of a lover or in the form of the almighty God. The paintings were also embellished with gods and epic narratives. Despite Krishna's dominance at this time, Devi's potent imagery has nonetheless prevailed as the warrior Goddess or as the world's rescuer (Coomaraswamy, 1912). The Basholi School (of Rajput style) paintings combine vibrant colour schemes with elements of folk art. The artwork has emphasized Vaishnavism and Lord Krishna's heroic adoration. The Ramayana or Rasamanjari story was also shown through the miniatures. This regional style originated in Basholi and later extended to the other adjacent Himalayan regions. Romance and sensual portraiture are boldly and passionately shown in Basholi's paintings. Everywhere, including the use of certain colours, natural elements, and surroundings for all the elements, love-erotica has been symbolically adapted. On vine-vessels, flowers, and fruits are depictions of princesses and their attendants in romantic settings. The body types and clothing have been designed to give spectators a sensual impression. The primary preoccupation is Krishna, and countless paintings have shown him in the most intimate relationship with women (Randhawa, 1959). According to Reiff (1959), Rajput and Mughal styles can be utilized to classify Indian miniatures. The Rajput style originated in the Punjab and Himalayan regions of Western India (mainly Jammu and Kangra). The focus of the discussion is on native components, indigenous musical genres (Raga and Ragini), old religions, love, and epic narratives. Ragamala is depicted in 36 different ways, with the man using the term raga and the woman ragini to signify their mutual love of music. Through appreciation, WG Archer talked about the small design and fifteen colour
plates of old Indian paintings. He added that they were affected by other cultures. He proposed two ways that Indian paintings express themselves; the first is related to Western conventions from the Renaissance until the middle of the nineteenth century. Which offers representations of the art of sensuous experiences. Another was influenced by Irish and Northumbrian miniatures from the seventh and eighth centuries, as well as by the influence of Romanesque art from the twelfth and twentieth centuries, particularly Picasso's paintings. The women have been depicted in a seductive style akin to the love poetry of Kalidasa, a Sanskrit poet who was active in India about the fifth century C.E. The religious sentiments had changed their form in manuscript traditions following the demise of Buddhism in other areas of India. Following the establishment of Muslim kingdoms in Deccan in 1347, Indian art was separated into three main styles in the 16th century. The Krishna love-poetry was the main preoccupation for the Hindu majority, while the Jain tradition was present in Western, Middle, and Eastern India. The South's wall painting style, which was influenced by Ellora, was started in the second style. The third one belonged to Orissa, where images from the Gita Govinda and Kama-sutra scriptures had been used (WG Archer, 1956, 2012). Indian paintings often used the Krishna and Radha motif. According to Levine, the social restriction—namely, the physical and sexual attachment—was like a threat to a regular man. While it was taboo for regular people to express these emotions in public, Lord Krishna was free to do so. In all manuscripts, the Lord was commonly pictured and described as being surrounded by the group of cowgirls (Levine, 1971). However, Nath said that the artist of the Mithuna couples of Khajuraho was not involved in the painting of divinity, therefore love depiction themes are not as strictly prohibited in ancient Indian art and architecture. He was eager to capture the realistic piece of artwork in all of its genuine originality. He presented women in a nude and erotic pose in this realistic depiction to produce an aesthetically pleasing result. Nath went on to say that because Mithuna couples are embodiments of aesthetic pleasure, they cannot be seen as a vulgar display of sexual union. At the holy sanctuaries of all Indian religions, temples have been represented from the second century BC to at least the seventeenth century AD (Nath, 1986). All of these representations, in his opinion, were intended for aesthetic appeal rather than to evoke a state of sensory rapture, as Nath also asserted. Coomaraswamy further classified the Rajput paintings into two categories: Pahari paintings from the Punjab hill state and Rajasthani paintings from Rajasthan. The heroic form of Krishna has been depicted in Rajput paintings. The enchanted love of Radha and Krishna has been romantically depicted in artworks from Kishangarh. Women have long been regarded as the most charmed beings on earth and in heaven in Indian poetry. These paintings have Mughal courtly scene influences as well. The main focus of Kishangarh style was Bani-Thani, often known as the Indian Mona Lisa, the mistress of King Sawant Singh. Under the mask of the sacred sanctuary, sensuality has been depicted (Randhawa, 1981). The most alluring expression in ancient Indian paintings was the representation of love poetry. Women's beauty has been praised as the subject of the most representation by poets, sages, and artists alike. The feminine representation was notably influenced by the projection of beauty and sensuality during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The manuscripts from that period portray the same idea of beauty in Kishangarh, Rajasthan. Radha was depicted with graceful beauty, as Radha-lila was this place's favourite topic. King Sawant Singh has been portrayed as Lord Krishna, while the so-called Bani-Thani, his mistress, has been portrayed as Radha.
For decades, this figure has served as the inspiration for artists as a symbol of beauty and allure (Randhawa M & Randhawa D, 1982). In the court style paintings of Rajasthan and Punjab during the 20th century, romanticism was at its height. With their captivated longing and alluring poses, the women have been shown as initiating the erotic journey on the creative canvas. Lord Krishna was described as an absolute God and was more concentrated. He was portrayed as having sexy encounters with plenty of ladies. The majority of his adored, Radha, and the other cowgirls have been displayed as giving private performances at many locations. Krishna is frequently depicted in artwork as possessing extraordinary strength as a warrior, divine God, a lover of all women, and a demon-killer from an early age. Although he was a good military director, Bhagavad Gita preacher, and politician in addition to having other noteworthy skills, the Rajput style of paintings emphasize his sensuality more (WG Archer, 1956).

Following then, the Islamic or Mughal miniature blossomed under many benefactors. The Islamic dynasty can be divided into three groups: the Safavids in Iran, the Mughals in India, and the Ottomans in Anatolia and the Middle East. Hogarth spoke about the harem, which is a term for a forbidden area, after briefly describing the Ottoman Empire. The location was created specifically for the king and was off limits to female household members and the king's family. More than a thousand ladies used to live in the harem as the king's servants. Additionally, there was room reserved for the king's unbridled enjoyment and amusement of his sexual intimacy with his queens and concubines. Most of the women in this group were non-Muslims who were presented to the king as a gift to the victor after winning the war (Hogarth, 2014). As a result, it is possible to assess the status of women in that society through such documentation, and the painting accurately depicted that status for women. The narrative of manuscripts piqued the Mughal monarchs' interest. Under their sponsorship, paintings were created to tell their stories and manuscripts were illustrated to depict their mythical lives. In order to describe their courtly life, brave acts, and self-portraits, the subjects of these stories have been located.

The group of Indigenous painters successfully combined Persian and Indian influences. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata were two Indian mythical manuscripts that were illustrated during Akbar's reign (Lewis, 1976). Other provincial styles existed in addition to the major dynasties, in which miniatures have also been produced. There were three important provinces in the Deccan during the reign of Akbar, and paintings of women have been found there. The three primary Schools of Deccan painting in these regions between the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were Bijapur, Golkonda, and Ahmednagar. There is a manuscript in Golkonda School called Diwan-of-Hafiz that features numerous drawings of women. A prince is shown in one artwork enjoying himself while taking in a dancing performance. Another dancing scene with some differences is depicted in another painting. We may notice a lot of ladies who have been portrayed as dancing or pushing the men's legs. Such subjects were quite prevalent in paintings done in the Deccan style (Barrett, 1960). In later Deccan art, women are treated as both a majestic being and an average person, whereas men are typically depicted as princes (Goswami, 2004-05). A woman has once more been done regularly as furniture in the Imperial Mughal style. Those schools' most well-known illustrated manuscripts were Tarif-i-Husayn Shahi and Najum-ul-ulum in Ahmadnagar, and Niamat-nama in Mandu (Malwa). Bijapur is also where the Ragini paintings were created. Paintings of courtly scenes and natural beauty were frequently accompanied by European subjects during the
Jahangir loved attractive women, so there are also amusing portraits of a lot of gorgeous women. In the 1620s, under the reign of Jahangir, Govardhan was a renowned artist. His skill at painting portraits of women was particularly well known. His portrayal of ladies was notable for its beauty and delicate motion. He depicted a number of attractive women in the courtly and social lives of princes and their loved ones. In these products, he was more adept than Bishan Das, the previous artist of the Mughal court. In an era when women were typically shunned in art, Bishan Das was regarded as a genius for his depictions of feminine charm and delicacy. The paintings depicting Jahangir playing Holi and Jahangir embracing Nur-Jahan are outstanding examples of Govardhan's feminine symbols. Some semi-naked female European figures have also been depicted at this time. The Mughal paintings from Akbar's reign were influenced by Persian art and had many story motifs in common with Razmnama. The artists also painted portraits of Akbar and other regal figures. The emperor and nobles were frequently shown in paintings during Muhammad Shah's reign (1719–48) to be surrounded by numerous beautiful women, engaging in sexual activity and enjoying music. The women have been pictured dancing, flying kites, feeding pigeons, and engaging in other activities. The popular topic was focused on a heroine getting ready for a man's bedchamber while surrounded by numerous female servants. The most popular subject at this time was depicting intense love. Women were shown in rural Mughal art as having love encounters, smoking hookah, and other activities. During the sixteenth century, love poetry in the Rajput style flourished in Mewar, Kotah, and Bundi. Lord Krishna's heroic union with the elements of nature was united with many. Additionally, the women were shown to be related to animals. Additionally, they were depicted as taking on the roles of well-known figures from historical love stories, Ragamala forms, Nayika Bheda, and diverse scenarios from daily life. Women were portrayed in various locations, such as Jaipur, Jodhpur, and Kishangarh, using a combination of Mughal and Rajasthani styles. In comparison to other Indian traditions, the face beauty and movements of women have evolved in these regions in a more delicate and beautiful way. Emperors portrayed as Krishna and their concubines and queens as Gopis have been shown in paintings in a variety of passionate poses. Again, Krishna legends served as the inspiration for the artworks in Basholi, Kulu, and Chamba. Other Sanskrit love poems, including the Gita-Govinda, were also sensually drawn. This sexual feminine attraction was still present in nude and semi-naked poses in Pahari art.

It is possible to consider how women are projected and observed in Kangra style miniature paintings. The Nayika, or primary female figure, has been represented with a group of women in an effort to portray the heroine as the focus of male attention. The heroine's Sakhi, or female friend, has consistently served as a conduit for communication with her lover. The female friend of the heroine utilized to convey the love and affection of the hero to the heroine. Through the location of the individuals and the background settlements in some paintings, the heroine has been created as the center of focus. In this story, the heroine's attractiveness has been emphasised by her lover, friends, audience members, and even by her own eyes. Most of the bathroom scenes on display have intricate embellishment. The heroine is depicted as being surrounded by attendants who are naked or somewhat naked, which again suggests that ladies are being settled as a spectacle (Aitken, 2002). The prestige of a woman, which was formerly honoured through imagery of the Goddess, has been transferred to other sensual displays of beauty and projection.
References