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+91 9940572462

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Landscape Painting in Indian Art

DR. SHAHLA HASAN

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPT. OF PAINTING, FACULTY OF VISUAL ARTS, HAMIDIA GIRLS' PG COLLEGE, PRAYAGRAJ, INDIA

ABSTRACT: Landscape painting, also known as landscape art, is the depiction of natural scenery such as mountains, valleys, trees, rivers, and forests, especially where the main subject is a wide view—with its elements arranged into a coherent composition. In other works, landscape backgrounds for figures can still form an important part of the work. Sky is almost always included in the view, and weather is often an element of the composition. Detailed landscapes as a distinct subject are not found in all artistic traditions, and develop when there is already a sophisticated tradition of representing other subjects.

KEYWORDS: landscape, painting, Indian, art, traditions, sky, forests, scenery

I. INTRODUCTION

Hindu painting had long set scenes amid lush vegetation, as many of the stories depicted demanded. Mughal painting combined this and the Persian style, and in miniatures of royal hunts often depicted wide landscapes. Scenes set during the monsoon rains, with dark clouds and flashes of lightning, are popular. Later, influence from European prints is evident. Landscape art arrived in India through travelling European artists who brought the aesthetic of painting mountains, rivers and trees against the sky and a distant horizon—nature as a subject in itself—to Indian art, where it had traditionally only formed a backdrop in narrative-driven, figural paintings. The genre remained popular throughout the nineteenth century with a great demand for landscapes of India both in Europe and among the newly anglicised elite in India. Its popularity began to wane with the advent of modernism and a growing emphasis on the human figure, but several Indian artists, a significant name among them Gopal Ghose, continued to practice the form, now absorbing a wide range of new artistic trends and influences.[1,2,3]

The exhibition brings together the work of the earliest European artist-travellers to India such as Thomas Daniell, William Hodges, Edward Cheney, and Robert Grindlay, academic realist oil landscapes by acknowledged masters of the form, J. P. Gangooly and Ravi Varma, as well as a strong representation of academic Indian art school-trained artists from the 1920s-60s who specialised in landscapes such as S. L. Haldankar, M. K. Parandekar, L. N. Taskar, D. C. Joglekar, and S. G. Thakur Singh—and Bengal School's Far East-inspired innovations seen in the works of Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose, Prosanto Roy, Benode Behari Mukherjee, and Indra Dugar. Master printmaker Haren Das, known for his serene, bucolic landscapes of rural Bengal, finds special and substantial representation. A highlight of the exhibition is the inclusion of two scrolls over eight-feet long, one each by artists Kripal Singh Shekhawat and Bishnupada Roychowdhury. The scrolls depict long narratives featuring tiny figures and objects painted painstakingly over paper, reflecting the strong influence of Japanese art.

Post-independent Indian art and modernism is represented by the abiding landscapist Gopal Ghose, experiments in abstraction by F. N. Souza, K. S. Kulkarni, S. H. Raza, S. K. Bakre, Ganesh Haloi, Akbar Padamsee, Ram Kumar, and a rare find—two landscapes by M. F. Husain, an artist not known to have painted landscapes. Other modernist Indian masters too find representation, many with their early works, artists such as Bikash Bhattacharjee and Sunil Das, early modernist landscapes and fantasyscapes of Avinash Chandra, those by Chittaprosad, Rabin Mondal and P. T. Reddy, and Himalayanscapes by Devyani and Kanwal Krishna, and the masterful Bireswar Sen.

Paintings in India mainly followed the patterns that were based on religious and traditional motifs. Things related to nature were always a part of Indian paintings but, they were never the central subject matter of the artwork. Rather, they were supportive and decorative of the central theme. Painting landscapes of mountains, flora, fauna, clouds, water, etc. were introduced by the European travelers who happened to be artists. Through this post, we will try to understand how this style of painting identifies with the Indian diaspora and how it has been incorporated into landscape paintings by famous artists.



The genre was popular among the elites in Europe and India in the nineteenth century. However, it was a traditional form of art that saw a decline in demand and popularity in the wake of modernism that the art world in the 20th century. But, many Indian artists were so influenced by the growing emphasis of the style that they didn't stop painting the landscapes. One of them was Gopal Ghose. He didn't stop practicing landscape paintings and was incorporating new ideas and trends that followed in those times. He is that artist whose paintings come under the list of landscape paintings by famous artists.

The European travelers that influenced Indian artist to make landscapes were:-

1. Thomas Daniell
2. William Hodges
3. Edward Cheney
4. Robert Grindlay

There were many modern Indian artists that filled the canvas with the aesthetic realism of Landscapes through their oil on canvas technique.[4,5,6] They were:-

1. J.P. Ganguly
2. Ravi Varma

There are many artists that were academically trained to depict landscapes with perfection. The era from the 1920s to 1940s saw the emergence of artists of this ilk. They were:-

1. L. Haldankar
2. M. K. Parandekar
3. L. N. Taskar
4. D. C. Joglekar
5. S. G. Thakur Singh

The Bengal school of art was also known for training such artists that were endowed with the gift of artistic divinity to carve the beauty and bounty of nature on an inanimate canvas to make it an epitome of undying grace. These artists have left a legacy of aestheticism of no match:-

1. Abanindranath Tagore
2. Nandalal Bose
3. Prosanto Roy
4. Benode Behari Mukherjee
5. Indra Dugar

There is a name that needs to be mentioned especially- Haren Das. He was a printmaker. His prints were known for evoking a feeling of astute serenity and eclecticism. He captured the cityscapes and rustic landscape of Bengal in his prints that are unparalleled.

Indian artists belonging to the post-modernist era were filled with examples of artists who experimented with landscapes in their own styles and comfort such as:-

1. F. N. Souza
2. K. S. Kulkarni
3. S. H. Raza
4. S. K. Bakre
5. Ganesh Haloi
6. Akbar Padamsee
7. Ram Kumar



However, M.F. Hussain is one of those painters who are not renowned for making famous landscape paintings. There are only two landscape paintings that he painted with a pinch of abstraction. These works are hard to find.[7,8,9]

Bijay Biswal- The Karma Yogi of Landscape Paintings

Have you ever travelled on a train and looked outside the window at the figures that seem to run behind? A ticket examiner on the train has the most adventurous life for that matter. He is the one who can set the highest record for travelling on the train.

It seems, Bijay Biswal, a ticket Examiner in the central railways, was far more interested in those daily life landscapes. While checking tickets, he has been observing the 'insignificant'. Sherlock Holmes used to say that insignificant things are most important and require great attention. Bijay has proved this through his artwork.

His eclectic taste in choosing the subject matter of his paintings have garnered appreciation from all over. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed commendation for Bijay's landscape in his Radio Programme also known as 'Mann Ki Baat'. Fairly impressed by his dedication, he called him Karma Yogi or the one for whom his work is divine.

His paintings along with other works belonging to 17 artists are displayed in Delhi. There was an exhibition named 'Lands Within' which was a treat for art lovers, especially for old school people who have a sweet spot for landscape artists. This art exhibit features works of people like Masood Hussaini and other landscape paintings by famous artists. He is famous for capturing the heavenly abode on earth –Kashmir.

Now, his paintings are on display in Delhi with 17 other artists.

II. DISCUSSION

It has been over twenty years now as a ticket checker, but he realized his dreams as an artist. For him, railways hold a great deal. According to him, "My work shows another side of the railways that includes romanticism and beauty. I am doing paintings since childhood and always looked for a subject until I realized that railways are the one.", as reported by Hindustan Times on September 14 2016.[10,11,12]

Paresh Maity: A Tryst with watercolors

He and watercolors have some connection. For forty years, he has been painting and his love for the style has not toned down. This medium is not very famous as it is hard to handle due to inconveniences. The paintings made in watercolors also don't last long. Despite all these, he owes his loyalty to this traditional art form.

One of the art exhibitions organized at Lalit Kala Academy explores the artist's love for landscapes in the delicate and soft strokes of the brush. The exhibition was christened as 'World of Watercolors'. He is often spotted in his usual beret and scarf with a peculiar accent of a Bengali boy. The art exhibition too was no exception. When asked about his solemn marriage with one of the oldest forms of art, "I have been painting with watercolors - those tiny tubes you used to get - since the age of 10, when I was just getting into the field of art."

According to him, "Watercolor is the most difficult and oldest medium in the field of painting as there are many limitations. The size of the artwork is a big challenge, especially when done on a large scale. The application has to be timed and finished before the color dries."

As a resilient traveler, he has embellished the canvas with the vivacious colors of natural and manmade marvels against the backdrop of nature. He is one adventurous soul. He is often spotted drawing at bizarre locations like one he was painting in a houseboat floating in the Alappuzha waters. Sometimes, in front of a palace in Kochi, sitting cross-legged while creating an imprint of the grandiose building itself.

These magnificent markers of class and artistic creation are rare to find but they are a sight to behold. The scenic beauty of a landscape can't be matched. So, you are lucky if you have one of the landscape paintings by famous artists in your possession!

III. RESULTS

Pahari painting (lit. 'a painting from the mountainous regions, pahar meaning a mountain in Hindi') is an umbrella term used for a form of Indian painting, done mostly in miniature forms, originating from the lower Himalayan hill kingdoms of North India and plains of Punjab, during the early 17th to mid 19th century, notably Basohli, Mankot, Nurpur, Chamba, Kangra, Guler, Mandi and Garhwal.^{[1][2]} Nainsukh was a famous master of the mid-18th century, followed by his family workshop for another two generations. The central theme of Pahari painting is depiction of eternal love of Hindu deities Radha and Krishna. A distinct lyricism, spontaneous rhythm, softness, minute intricate details of composition, and intense perception and portrayal of human emotions and physical features distinguish the Pahari miniatures from the other miniature schools like Deccan, Mughal and Rajasthani-Rajput.^{[3][4]}

Origin and area

The Pahari school developed and flourished during 17th-19th centuries stretching from Jammu to Garhwal, in the sub-Himalayan India, through Himachal Pradesh. Each created stark variations within the genre, ranging from bold intense Basohli Painting, originating from Basohli in Jammu and Kashmir, to the delicate and lyrical Kangra paintings, which became synonymous to the style before other schools of paintings developed, and finally to the poetic and cinematic representations in Garhwali Paintings by Mola Ram. The Kangra style reached its pinnacle with paintings of Radha and Krishna, inspired by Jayadeva's Gita Govinda.^[5]

Pahari painting grew out of the Mughal painting, though this was patronized mostly by the Rajput kings who ruled many parts of the region, and gave birth to a new idiom in Indian painting.^[6] Some local antecedents have also been suggested, as a vivid Kashmiri tradition of mural paintings flourished between the 9th and 17th centuries, as seen in the murals of Alchi Monastery or Tsaparang.^[7]

Schools of Pahari painting

A small hill state situated alongside the banks of river Ravi, known as Basohli, ushered in this new style in 1690. Over the following two centuries, this style was perfected in various major and minor centres of Pahari Art. The major centres consist of the Guler, Chamba, Mandi and Kangra schools, while the minor ones include: Garhwal, Hindur, Jammu, Kullu, Bilaspur, Srinagar, and a few other schools located in the Punjab plains.^{[8][4]} The Basohli school is further sub-divided into the Nurpur and Mankot sub-schools, while Kangra school also constitutes the Sikh, and the Nalagarh or Hindur branches, and Mandi branch falls under the Kullu branch.^[13,14,15]

The various schools are characterised by diversities of style, theme and content, yet there is a common Himalayan softness and perspective that weaves them together. The human figures represented are moderately statured. Both male and female figures are exquisitely drawn, and made alluring, as are the representations of deities, which are given an anthropomorphic appeal, particularly visible in the portraits of Radha and Krishna. The figures have round faces, semicircular foreheads above small, deep set eyes that distinctly define this school of miniature art.^{[4][8]}

Major Pahari schools of painting

- Basohli School: Basohli is credited with the initiation of the Pahari school in mid-17th Century. As the first school of Pahari miniatures, Basohli can be differentiated by its double storey building structures in a square-format background, lotus flowers and use of elaborate shikharas, and other decorative elements. Literary classics like the Rasa-Manjari, Ramayana, themes from the Ragamala, and Gita Govinda were drawn at Basohli that defined the beginnings and the thematic-base of the entire Pahari form of art which next flourished at Guler.^{[4][8]}
- Guler School: The Guler paintings are delicate, similar to the Mughal form of miniatures, but different in terms of the feelings and emotions they evoke. Artworks from this school have refined lines and delicate shades of colours. The school is noted for its wondrous portraiture of the feminine world, and space. Landscapes here are presented with marked sensitivity.^{[4][8]}
- Chamba School:^{[9][10]} The typical female figures in paintings of the Chamba school exude warm, sensual and charming beauty. Noted for its deft handling and mixing of colours, the canvas space of Chamba paintings is dominated by red and blue colours.^[4]



- Mandi: Art from this school is noted for its depictions of the Tantra cult associated with the worship of the Devi or the Goddess. The ferocious and wrathful forms of the Devi are given a larger-than-life finish, and crude mystified look with deep tones of red, black and blue shades.^{[4][8]}
- Kangra School: It is at Kangra, that the Pahari miniature form reaches its finest and creative best. The Kangra paintings are closer to the soil given their degree of realism; soft, almost musical effect of the colour textures, and interplay of the primary palette. Red, yellow, and blue dominate the Kangra canvas framed inside fine borders, either plain, or richly embellished. Jewellery with fine brushstrokes, neat buildings and arrangement of the background space, contrasting colours differentiating the relieved landscapes carefully painted with intricately delicate trees, leaves, flowers, birds, etc. - reveal the school's artistic splendour and maturity.^{[4][11]}

Other Pahari schools of painting

- Garhwal School: It shares an affinity with the Guler School and its sensitive portrayals of landscape. A Garhwal miniature often has an overcast sky with clouds, foggy landscapes, etc.^{[4][8]}
- Hindur or Nalagarh School: This school of Pahari miniatures can be distinguished by their evolved symbolism, narrative details, realist depictions of human figure with sharp features, rich costumes, each figure busy in his/her own lifestyle.^{[4][8]}
- Jammu School: The human figures strewn across the Jammu School's canvas are tall, slim with marked well-defined physical characteristics. Hills and strained nature depictions, with light colours employed in bright shades, are other stylised features of this school.^{[4][8]}
- Patiala School: An integral part of the Sikh School,^[12] this style developed in the Punjab plains and was characterised by Sikh images, and stereotypical costumes, and emphasis on features like beards and moustaches.^[4]
- Kashmir, Lahore, Mankot and other schools: The surrounding minor centres where Pahari art developed following the conventions of the major art centres. There exists little difference in between these schools.^{[4][8]}

III. CONCLUSION

Painters often try their hands on different genres of paintings. Landscape art painting is one of the most popular genres and has been taken by the popular and budding Indian artists. [16,17,18]

It is a fact that India is one of the countries which are blessed with beautiful locales and exotic nature. Indian painters are privileged to paint these beautiful locations with their innovative imaginations on their canvases. Painters around in India have created famous landscape paintings and have honoured by the global art lovers. In this blog, I have selected three prominent painters and their creations to showcase how Indian paintings are best for innovative concepts and unique in their treatments.

Prabal Mallick: He is one of the prominent Indian painters who has tried his hand on landscape paintings and was honoured with several awards and accolades from the global art lovers. One of his unique creations is named "Break" and in this painting, the artist has portrayed isolation of a road. We can see two cars standing in an isolated road along with a human figure. There are trees on both the sides of the road and the painting has a unique color combination that increases the beauty of this particular painting.

Iruvan Karunakaran: A painter from the southern part of India is popular because of his innovative creation named "Charminar". The artist has tried to reflect the beauty of the hassled city life in Hyderabad during monsoon while capturing captured historical monument Charminar in his artwork. It is one of the greatest landscape art paintings online of all time and has been appreciated the art lovers across the globe.

Bahadur Singh: He is one painter who has a series of painting named "Seasons". The painting named "Seasons 1" portrays the scorching summer with the golden sunlight coming in between the trees. The painting is unique because of its great color combination. The leaves have the color of burning lava to depict the unbearable heat of summers.[19]

Indian art is the term commonly used to designate the art of the Indian subcontinent, which includes the present political divisions of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Although a relationship between political history and the history of Indian art before the advent of Islam is at best problematical, a brief review will provide a broad context. The earliest



urban culture of the subcontinent is represented by the Indus Valley civilization (c. 2500-1800 BC), which possessed several flourishing cities not only in the Indus Valley but also in Gujarat and Rajasthan. The circumstances in which this culture came to an end are obscure. Although there is no clear proof of historical continuity, scholars have noticed several striking similarities between this early culture and features of later Indian civilization. The period immediately following the urban Indus Valley civilization is marked by a variety of essentially rural cultures. A second urbanization began to occur only around the 6th century BC, when flourishing cities started to reappear, particularly in the Gangetic Basin. The Buddha lived and preached in this period, which culminated in the great Maurya Empire, whose relatively few works are the earliest surviving remnants of monumental art. The Maurya dynast Ashoka (died 238 BC) is considered the greatest of Buddhist kings; and the majority of the monuments of the next 500 years appear to be dedicated to the Buddhist faith, though iconographical and other details suggest that the art also drew heavily on popular religion.

The Maurya Empire spread over almost all of what is modern India and Pakistan. Territories as extensive were never possessed by any other dynasty. With its fall, the empire broke up into a number of states ruled by many dynasties, some of which acquired considerable power and fame for varying periods of time. Among these, the Shungas (c. 2nd-1st century BC) in the north and the longer-lived Satavahanas in the Deccan and the south are particularly noteworthy. Though these kings were Hindu by religion, Buddhist monuments form the great majority of surviving works.

Toward the end of the 1st century BC, northern India was subjected to a series of invasions by Scythian tribes, resulting finally in the establishment of the vast Kushan (Kusana) empire, of which Mathura was an important centre. The new rulers seemed to have followed Indian faiths, the great emperor Kaniska (c. AD 78) being a devout Buddhist. The schools of Gandhara and Mathura flourished during their rule, and, though much of the work is dedicated to the Buddhist religion, the foundations of later Hindu iconography were also laid in this period. While the Kushan dynasty was sovereign in the north, the Satavahanas continued to rule in the south. The bulk of the work at Amaravati was produced during their hegemony. (see also Index: Gandhara art, Mathura art)

Around the mid-4th century, the Gupta dynasty, of indigenous origin, rapidly expanded its power, uprooting the last remnants of foreign rule and succeeding in bringing almost all of northern India under its sway. In the Deccan there arose at the same time the equally powerful Vakatakas, with whom the Guptas appear to have had friendly relations. The period extending from the 4th through the 5th centuries is marked by the most flourishing artistic activities. In addition to the Buddhist monuments, there are the first strong indications of specifically Hindu patronage. Works of remarkable beauty and elegance were produced in this period, which is commonly called the Golden Age of India.

The disintegration of these two empires toward the close of the 5th and the 6th centuries ushered in what has been called the medieval period (c. 8th-12th centuries), marked by the appearance of a large number of states and dynasties, often at war with each other. Their rise to power and their decline was part of a constantly recurring process, for none of them was able to hold onto a position of even relative paramountcy for any extended period of time. In the north, the great dynasties were the Gurjara-Pratiharas, whose empire at its greatest equalled that of the Guptas; the Palas, who ruled chiefly over northeastern India; and various other dynasties, such as the Kalachuris, the Chandelas, and the Paramaras of north central India, the Cahamanas of Rajasthan, the Calukyas of Gujarat. In the Deccan, also, several dynasties rose and fell, the most powerful of which were the Calukyas of Badami, the Rastrakutas, and the Calukyas of Kalyani. They were often at war not only with their powerful neighbours to the north but also with the great Pallava and Cola kingdoms of southern India. Most of the dynasties of medieval India were Hindu, though some Jaina and a very few Buddhist kings are also known. The various faiths, however, existed in comparative harmony; and Buddhist and Jaina monuments continued to be built, though most of the surviving works are Hindu.

Although the effects of constant struggle were not as devastating as one might expect, largely as a result of the institutionalization of war and its confinement to appropriate castes, the Hindu kingdoms fell easy prey to the Islamic invasions, which began as early as the 8th century AD but gathered strength only in the 11th century. By the end of the 12th century, almost all of northern India had been conquered. Islamic advances in the south were checked for a while by the Vijayanagara dynasty, but with its collapse almost all of India fell under various degrees of Islamic hegemony. Large Hindu kingdoms enjoying differing degrees of independence continued to exist chiefly in Rajasthan and portions of southern India, but overall political supremacy was vested with the Islamic states. The Muslim powers were also divided into many kingdoms, despite attempts made by the sultanate of Delhi, and later by the Mughals, to achieve paramountcy over large portions of India. These attempts were successful only for short periods of time. Although the initial impact of Islam on Indian art was generally destructive, Islamic influences entering India were gradually transformed in the new environment and eventually resulted in the flowering of an extremely rich and important aspect of the Indian genius.



The ascendancy of the European powers in the 18th century, culminating in the establishment of the British Empire, laid the foundation of modern India's contacts with the West. As a whole, the European advent was marked by a relative insensitivity to native art traditions, but rising nationalism attempted a conscious revival of Indian art toward the end of the 19th century. In modern times, the absorption of European influence is a more natural, freer process that affects artistic development in a vital and profound way.[20]

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6. ^ The "scaef" coming from the Old English "sceppan" meaning "to shape". OED "Landscape", Ingold, 126; Jackson, 156; Growth & Wilson, 2-3. See the "Etymology" section at Landscape for further detail and references.
7. ^ Honour & Fleming, 53. The only very complete example, the Spring Fresco is now in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens, but there are several others with only animal figures, surviving in fragments.
8. ^ Honour & Fleming, 150–151
9. ^ A major theme throughout both Sickman and Paine. See for example Sickmann pp. 132–133, 182–186, 203–204, 319, 352–356, and Paine pp. 160–168, 235–243.
10. ^ Clark, 17–18
11. ^ Clark, 23-4; image, another
12. ^ Now removed to the Palazzo Massimo; Commons images Archived 2012-08-12 at the Wayback Machine
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14. ^ Clark, 31-2
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16. ^ Honour & Fleming, 357, see Wood for full coverage
17. ^ Ainsworth, Maryan Wynn et al., From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, p. 302, 323; 2009, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009. ISBN 0-8709-9870-6, google books
18. ^ See the landscape work of Barent Gael and Jacob van der Ulft, for example, whose Italian-style landscapes were formulaic copies, sometimes from prints.
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