

Essence of Rajasthani Miniature: *Ragamala* Painting

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There is a connection between the various elements of nature and the human conscience which consequently leads to the creation of all phenomenal Arts. It is the similar approach and nature that creates accordance between the different streams of Arts. Through the common motif of expression of emotions and sentiments, all distinctive forms of arts result in ecstasy and blissfulness.

Mysterious music and sounds are always present in nature, like the chirping of birds and the falling cascade. Similarly, we may consider rainbow as the most sublime form of painting noticed in the vicinity of nature. Music and painting have been the medium of worship and pleasure since the ancient times as both of them spring out of the deepest corner of the heart and soul. It is not just music which contains rhythm, it is also, metaphorically, an inherent aspect of painting. If music is a balanced mixture of tone and rhythm, painting contains a proportional harmony of color and lining to achieve an entirety.

According to Vishnudharmottara Purana:

बिना तु नृत्य शास्त्रे चित्रसूत्रम् सुदुर्विदम् ।

To learn painting, one needs to have an understanding of music, and this was noticed in the 11th Century which emphasized on music education in order to learn painting.

Painting also follows the belief of the 3 Lokas (Worlds) just like the art of dancing, which is reiterated in the Vishnudharmottara Purana again as:

यथा न त्ते तथा चित्रै त्रैलोक्यानुक तिः स्म ताः ॥

In India, it has been a tradition of Puranas to concretize an abstract form. This tradition is also called *Agam Parampara*, the tradition of the science of "Vedas". According to this point of view, many poets created *Raga Dhyana* (thoughts of Raga) to describe the nature of particular Ragas. The concept of *Raga-Ragini* was imagined and originated for the vocalists not acquainted with the *Ras Shastra*, to make their thoughts amiable to the forms and colours of Ragas on the basis of *Raga Dhyana*.

The association of a subject with the divine form makes the subject venerable as per the Indian beliefs; thus, *Aahat* and *Anhat Naad* refer to the latent presence of a divine aspect in the mysterious sound of music. Hence, the concept of *Raga Dhyana* is more near to idolatry paganism, because it was conceived of a distinct form of a Raga with its specific nature and influence.

The attempt to visualize what is audible gave birth to the concept of *Ragamala* (garland of Ragas) Paintings. The *Ragamala* miniature painting tradition combines poetry and painting by giving a visible form to music. Before exploring

the *Ragamala* painting tradition, it is important to have an understanding of the word Raga in the context of both music and painting.

In Indian music, 'Raga' is a series of sounds produced through the throat which expresses the state of the soul. The word 'Raga' was first mentioned by Matang Muni in his literary composition '*Brihaddeshi*' between 4th and 8th Century. A couplet from the same is produced below which defines 'Raga' as the particular sound decorated with *swar* and *varna* pleasing the heart of the audience:

योऽयं ध्वनि विशेषस्तु स्वर वर्ण विभूषितः
रंजको जनचित्तानाम् स रागः कथितै बुधैः ।।²

According to Dr. Moti Chandra Khajanchi, the word 'Raga' has been derived from *Rang* (colour) which means to get drenched in colours of transmitted essence, intellect, sentiments or emotions.

Much before *Brihaddeshi*, the word 'Raga' was used by Kalidas in *Abhigyan Shakuntalam*. Another literary work belonging to the same era named 'Raga Sagar' describes 'Raga' as a human being, God or Goddess. But for a clear and authentic classification of 'Raga' family, 'Sangeet Makarand' composed by Narad in 8th Century must be referred to.³ This work used the word 'Purush Raga', 'Stri Raga' and 'Napunsak Raga' for the very first time, but noteworthy is that the word Ragini is not used here. The very first use of word Ragini is in *Pancham Saar Samhita* most probably the work is done by Narad, between 7th to 11th century.⁴

At the arrival of Medieval period till its end we could find so many works of much importance as Jaydev's *Geet Govind*, *Sangeet Ratnakar* by Sarangdev, *Rag Tarangini* by Lochan, *Sadrag Chandroday* by Damodar Pandit, *Sangeet Raj* and *Sangeet Mimansa* by Maharana Kumbha, *Raga Mala* by Kshemkaran, *Sangeet Kalpdrum* by Krishnanand Vyas of Mewar, and *Sangeet Saar* by the emperor of Jaipur.... and so on. A Classification of Raga and Ragini is also provided at the end of *Gurugranth Sahib* compiled by Guru Arjun in (1581-1606).

Further *Raga Vibodh* by Somnath describes the nayikas as Raginis. In the modern era, it is noteworthy that 'Nagamat-E-Asafi' was composed by Mohhmed Raza, which is an amended form of Raga Ragini family, different from the ancient opinion.

In this period of transference, Sorindra Mohan Tagore's literary work named "*Universal History of Music*" upheld the Raga Ragini families.

This classification of Raga family was further classified in four theories namely *Shiv Mât*, *Bharat Mât*, *Hanumat Mât* and *Kallinath Mât*.

According to this classification, all the literary works which have given the principle of six Ragas and thirty six Raginis have been following *Shiv* and *Kallinath Mât* and the works with the principle of six Ragas and their thirty wives/ Raginis have been following *Hanumat* and *Bharat Mât*.

Thus the male Ragas of *Shiv* and *Kallinath Mât* are:

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| 1- Shri | 2 Megh |
| 3 Basant | 4- Bhairav |
| 5- Pancham | 6- Nat-Narayan |

And the male Ragas of *Hanumat* and *Bharat Mât* are:

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| 1- Bhairav | 2- Malkosh |
| 3- Hindol | 4- Deepak |
| 5- Shri | 6- Megh |

One must, however, keep in mind that *Ragamala* Miniature Painting was not based merely on audible Ragas, but was also influenced by the Medieval literary creations known as *Reetikavya*, which includes Bhanudatta's *Rasmanjari*, Bihari's *Satsai*, Matiram's *Rasraaj*, Keshav Das's *Rasikpriya*, Jaidev's *Geet Govind*, Bhirtrihari's *Sringaar Shatak* etc. A look at the literature of *Ragamala* miniature paintings tells us that the painting of Ragas was inspired during a particular period only.

Chronologically, the *Chunar Raagmala of Bundi (1597)* is the earliest *Ragamala* miniature painting of Rajasthan.⁵ Then comes the painting from Chawand (Udaipur) made in 1605.⁶ Most of the *Ragamala* paintings belong to the Rajput School, but after the arrival of the Mughals, the place of devotional sentiments was taken by amorous feelings. The complete development of Rajasthan school of *Ragamala* miniature painting took place towards the end of 17th century at Bundi and Mewar prominently along with Bikaner, Jodhpur, Dhoondhar, Haroti etc.

In the paintings of Rajput school, there is a presence of prosperity, courtesy and abiding beauty, nicely blended with the inner most feeling and emotions. A noteworthy quality of the Rajsthani brush is the use of imagination as can be seen in the Raga Dhyana miniature paintings in which the principle of raga Dhyana is given fine imaginative touches.

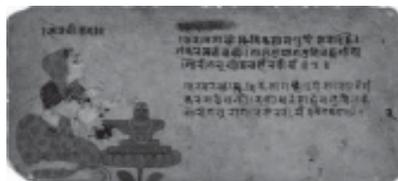
We can see some outstanding examples of *Ragamala* Miniature painting in Raga Bhairavi, Aasavari, Ramkali, Gaud Sarang, Lalit Sorath, Gauri, Vasant and Malhar. Ragini Bangal is a unique master piece of this school.⁷

To create an erotic environment, the painters enliven the paintings by using their innovative and imaginative talent other than *Raga Dhyana* theory.

A comparative study of the picture of Raga Bhairavi of this school and the Raga Mala Dhayan of Rag Bhairavi in "Sangeet Kalpdramankur" clarifies the imaginative heights of the Rajsthani Painters.

Raga Dhayan of Ragini Bhairavi is as follows :

“स्फटिकरचित्तपीठै रम्यकैलासशृंगे, विकचकमलपत्रैरर्चयन्ती महेशम् ।
करतलधृतवीणा पीतवर्णायताक्षी, सुकविभिरियमुक्ता भैरवी भैरवस्त्री ॥



(Fig. - *Sangeet Chintan-I 149*)

The above picture indicates that Ragini Bhairavi who has very beautiful eyes with long lashes lives in a grand beautiful palace made of Sfatik stone. She is worshipping lord Shiva with Lotus flowers. The Palace of Ragini Bhairavi is located in the midst of a lake.⁸

Similarly the *Raga Dhyana* of Todi, Aasavari, Malshri, Ramkali, Lalit, Malkosh, Hindol, Malhar and many more ragas have been depicted. Initially *Raga Dhyana* used to deal independently with Raga's nature only. They were created with Shloka to worship the Ragas, possessing devotional sentiments.

Till 19th century there was a marvelous jump in the number of *Ragamala* miniature paintings. Now the *Raga Dhyana* was available in Hindi too. For instance:

मालकोश नीले वसन, श्वेत छरी लिये हाथ।
मोतियन की माला गरे, सकल सखी हैं साथ ॥

The Rajput period paintings were closely related to Brij bhasha poetry which developed with the rebirth of *Vaishnav Mat*. To give a significant form to their expressions, the painters of Rajput School in this period depicted Radha and Krishna in the form of nayak-nayika. As a part of Vaishnav rituals, *Ragamala* has always been replete with the emotion of love as well as devotional sentiments.

Here, music found its way into Rajasthani Miniature Painting and Nayak-Nayika were painted in the disguise of raga-ragini. Nayak was often painted as Krishna and nayika as Radha. Raga-Raginis represented nayak-nayika in a wide range of situations, times, seasons and moods. This complete series of *Ragamala* miniature paintings is also known as *Rasa Chitra*.

According to scriptures, *Sringar rasa* has a strong element of sexual passion, which does not exist in the other eight rasas. So, the influence of *Sringar rasa* in *Ragamala* paintings is more powerful than that of the other eight rasas. In the verses used in musical compositions, mainly *Sringar rasa* is noticed, other eight rasas find a place for themselves only where they are necessary. The description of erotic love in the heart of the devotee, beloved, friend, Radha, Krishna, Gopies and the Swakiya, Parkiya and Ganika nayika has a strong element of sexual passion.

Generally the nature, characteristics, forms and symbols used for raga-raginis have been portrayed as similar in all the schools of Rajasthani miniature painting. Still sometimes differences in these areas can be noticed, which are to be attributed

to the differences in the Mughal and Rajasthani style of painting in Rajasthani ragamala.

Nature embodies both the male and the female principles. It is the union of Purusha and Prakriti or matter and energy which created the world. In Indian music, some ragas are regarded as male and some as female. Whereas male ragas are depicted as having a serious, sober, profound and impressive nature, female ragas are portrayed as soft, nimble, delicate and variable.

Music, in India, is considered of divine origin and capable of evoking a certain state of mind or mood (rasa) in the listeners as well as in the musician. The rasa appropriate to a particular raga or ragini is produced when a suitable combination of literary craft and music has been achieved. In the absence of the literary component, technical aspects of music help in producing the desired rasa. Whereas Raga Shankara, Malshri, Vibhas, Hindol and Bhairav filled with Veer and Raudra rasa, raga Peelu, Bhairvi, Kafi, Khamaj and Yaman produce Shringar Rasa. The male ragas reflect emotions like courage, anger, wonder and female ragas reflect love, happiness and sorrow. The Vasant raga, which reflects seasonal changes in nature, is filled with a feeling of splendor and cheerfulness.

As we know, each raga or ragini is based on an emotional situation reflecting a particular mood of love, either in union or separation. The picture of raga is a visual representation of a particular state of mind treating the material world and nature as a mirror of any given mood.

Initially, the Ragamala paintings contained a number of symbols – animals, birds, human and divine forms. Later, in the Indian Poetic era called *Reetikaal*, both literature and painting were influenced by nayak-nayika bhed. The subject for the songs was nayak-nayika instead of God and Goddess. Natyashastra classifies men and women, who are called nayak and nayika meaning heroes and heroines or lovers, according to their physical and mental states.

In this essay we shall focus on the relation of Ragamala paintings with nayak-nayika bhed and *shadritu* or *baramasa*. Nayak-nayika bhed reflects emotions depicting men and women whereas shadritu or baramasa does the same in the context of seasons.

In Natyashastra, the Nayikas are classified according to their transitory mental state and circumstances:

“तत्रा वासकसज्जा वा विरहोत्कण्ठितापि वा
 खंडिता विप्रलब्ध वा तथा प्रोशितपतिका
 स्वाधीनपतिका वापि कलहंतरिता वा
 यथा अभिसारिका चैव अ-टैव नायिकाः स्मृताः॥”
 नाट्यशास्त्र

From these eight Nayikas only a few are presented mainly in the form of Raginis, in the *Ragamala* Paintings. They are Proshitpatika, Vasaksajja, Swadhinpatika and Abhisarika etc.

The color scheme and symbols used in painting verify the specific Raga or Ragini. As deer in Ragini Todi, tiger in Bangali, camel in Maru, snakes in Asawari, swing in Hindol, peacock in Kukubh, nayika worshipping Shivaling in Bhairavi, a beloved painting a portrait in Dhanashri, an offended beloved in Ramkali etc. (*Rajasthani Ragamala Chitran Parmapara 73*)

Table⁹

| Raga | Nayak | Wife/ Ragini | Nayika | State | Season |
|---------|--------------------------------|---|--|---|---------|
| Bhirav | Dheerodaat | 1- Bhairavi 2- Madhumadhvi 3- Bangali 4- Varari 5- Saindhvi | Proshitpatika Swadhinpatika Abhisarika Abhisarika Proshitpatika | Separation of Love Union of Love Separation of Love Separation of Love Separation of Love | Summer |
| Malkosh | Dheer Lalit | 1- Todi 2- Khambawati 3- Gouri 4- Gunkali 5- Kukubh | Abhisarika Swadhinpatika Abhisarika Virohotkanthita Virohatkanthita | Separation of Love Joyful Union Unrequited Love Unrequited Love Separation of Love | Shishir |
| Hindol | Dheer Lalit | 1. Bilawal 2. Ramkali 3. Deshakhya 4. Patmanjari 5. Lalita | Vasaksajja Swadhinpatika Swadhinpatika Proshitpatika Khandita | Separation of Love Joyful Union Joyful Union Unrequited Love Unrequited Love | Vasant |
| Deepak | Young, brave, calm, Royal Hero | 1- Kedar 2- Kanhara 3- Desi 4- Kamod 5- Nat | Abhisarika Swadhinpatika Proshit Patika Proshit Patika | Unrequited Love Joyful Union Unrequited Love Unrequited Love | Winter |
| Shree | Teenage, young, patient nature | 1- Vasanti 2- Malvi 3- Malavshree 4- Dhanashree 5- Aasawari | Swadhinpatika Swadhinpatika Vasaksajja Proshit Patika Proshit Patika | Joyful Union Joyful Union Unrequited Love Separation of Love Unrequited Love | Hemant |
| Megh | young | 1- Mallar 2- Deskar 3- Bhupali 4- Gurjari 5- Tanka | Proshit Patika Swadhinpatika Vasaksajja Abhisarika Proshit Patika | Unrequited Love Joyful Union Unrequited Love Unrequited Love Separation of Love | Rain |

Dealing with Raschitra, where in *Ragamala* this charming allegory shows the lovely families of the six Ragas named Bhirava, Malkosh, Shri Raga, Hindola, Deepak and Megh. Each of these is wedded to five raginis of nymphs of harmony, which present the mental states of Nayak-Nayika and clarify the structure of specific Rasa.

Now, here the six male Raga and their wives (Raginis) have been taken from *Hanumat Mât*, one of the 'Matâs' of Raga-Ragini family concept.

The reason behind taking this Mât only, is the 16th to 18th Century depiction itself in Rajasthani Miniature Painting, as most of the *Ragamala* Miniature Paintings do relate with the same Raga-Raginis of Hanumat Mât, consequently it became the reason.

From the psychological point of view a deep study of the Nayak-Nayika reflects an auxiliary sentiment which is surprising, yet according to mood. The specific Ragas associated with suitable Nayikas according to their Nature. For instance, the Dhyana of Raga Bhairav:



Bhairav Raga, Kananki, 1709 A.D.

**गंगाधरः शशिकलातिलकास्त्रिनेत्रः सर्पैर्विभूषित तनुर्गजकृतिवासाः।
भास्वत्रिशूलकर एष नृमुण्डधारी शुभ्राम्बरो जयति भैरव आदि रागः॥**

Raga Bhairav is always in the form of Lord Shiva, a severe ascetic who wears ash on the whole body, matted hair consisting river Ganga on the head, snakes and skull garlands as a necklace. (*Sangeet Chintan-I 67*)

In *Ragamala* painting the most important factor is the presentation of music.

Though *Ragamala* presents specific Ragas but in Rasa Chitra to see the relation between *Ragamala* Miniature, Nayak Nayika Bhed and ShadRitu or Baramasa we can take some suitable pictures.

Here ShadRitu's association with *Ragamala* appeals a good unity and balance, as the male Ragas and the season both are equal in number. From the six Ragas, Malkosh, Hindol and Shree are considered always in the union of Love. Thus the seasons' association with these Ragas is according to their nature. Eventually, these states of union and separation of love depends on the Raginis, therefore the situation of union and separation of all six Ragas takes place according to their Raginis. Thus, whoever is in separation of love, represents Nayikas of Baramasa, either Vasaksajja, Proshitpatika or Virohatkanthita.

For instance, Ragini Bilawal, wife of Raga Hindol is the beloved waiting for her union. The Ragini here representing Vasaksajja Nayika is preparing for her husband's arrival and is a Nayika of Baramasa; whereas, ragini Ramakali, again wife of Raga Hindol, is the Swadhinpatika Nayika and is depicted as an offended mistress. In the union of love, her husband is requesting and pursuing her. The picture of a joyful union delivers the message of one of the season of ShadRitu, most probably the spring season. Here, the noticeable point is that the ShadRitu always provides a ground for Union of Love whereas Baramasa is the depiction of Nayika's mental state and circumstances during separation of love.

Now, Raga Hindol, Raga Megh, Shri Raga and Raga Deepak are a few examples which establish a relation between *Ragamala*, Nayak-Nayika Bhed and ShadRitu

because firstly, they are in union of love and present Sringar Rasa as the most important element of Nayak Nayika Bhed.

Secondly **Raga Hindol** as the name applies is the Raga of Spring season that is one of ShadRitu Varnan which shows the unity of love. Dealing with Joyful Union here, raga hindol is presented as Dheer Lalit Nayak with loyally loved (swadhinpatika) Nayika on the swing which is representing



Hindol Raga, Marwar, 17th Cen. A.D.

Ragini Deshakhya. This Raga presents Sringar Rasa.

Again **Shri Raga**, which has the singing period in the season

Hemant that is also one of the season of ShadRitu. Also it presents Union of love with his Ragini Vasanti and Malvi. Here Shri Raga is depicted in amorous and Joyful Union of love with his Ragini Malvi, Swadhinpatika Nayika. The atmosphere reflects a romantic mood as the bedroom scene is depicted.



Ragini Malavi of Shri Raga, Amber Cen. 1700 A.D.

Thirdly **Raga Megha** indicates by its nature the singing period Rainy

season. Therefore the environment which is created in the paintings with the help of symbols and similes produce a feeling of Rati and association with love seasons and Sringara Rasa. The Sky is dark with rain. The cranes startled by the flicker of lightening take to their wings. The land is green and lotus is in bloom. Radha and Krishna's bliss know no bounds, for they are together again.....

Radha and Krishana enjoying the atmosphere in Joyful Union, the Nayika here must be depicted as Swadhinpatika, in the form of Ragini Deskar.



Ragini Deskar of Megh (Bihari Satsai Series) Rajasthan, Cen. 1719 A.D.



Ragini Desai of Deshak, Kerk, Cen. 1720 A.D.

Raga Deshak with his wife Ragini Desai makes a Joyful Union. The singing period of Raga is winter season



Ragini Desai of Malkesh, Kishangarh

To see the examples of Unrequited love which represent Haramasa, we do mention Ragini Todii, wife of Raga Malkesh. Todii, depicted as Abhinavika Nayika in separation of love.

Ragini Dhanashri wife of Shri Raga is Proshitpatika Nayika, painting a portrait of her husband while waiting for him.

Other than the Hanumat Mat, many ragas and Raginis have been depicted in a joyful union of love, correlating to Shadritu and Nayak-Nayika Bhed. A few of them are Raga Vibhas, Pancham, Sarang, Kalyan, Maru etc.

Here the main factors of analysis are the forms, figures gestures and postures which present the specific mood of Nayak-Nayika. These Nayak-Nayika depicted as love unity, the first state of Sringara Rasa and on the other hand, an Unrequited Love which is the second state.

This Sringara Rasa when brought to the highest climate through love and devotion is seen as Bhakti Rasa which is expression of divine love and to please the favorite god or goddess devotees cultivate feelings of femininity giving a tremendous power and the broadest receptivity.

Beginning with *Ragamala*, which is correlated with Shadritu, Baramasa and Nayak Nayika Bhed as a positive emotion, is productive, adds psycho value in terms of emotionality. This expression of emotion which gives fragrance to the society but the most important if it not release, it turns into abnormality. This emotional process begins with cognition than perception and only a true lover of art can observe the feeling which gives birth to emotions and results in the ecstatic exclamation of wonder over the beauty of the same.



Ragini Dhanashri, Later 19th Cen. Bundi

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