

USE OF PERSPECTIVE IN PAHARI MINIATURE PAINTING: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

MMANJEET SINGH¹ & DR. HIM K. CHATTERJEE²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Visual Arts, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla
² Professor & Chairman, Department of Visual Arts, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla

Abstract

The miniature painting of the Pahari School from Northern India makes Indian art history remarkable. The study reveals the use of perspective in Pahari miniature painting. This school of miniature painting is considered as the branch of Mughal School with some changes and adoptions. Due to their smaller size, fine details, and vibrant color scheme, these paintings leave an indelible mark in the spectator's mind. The Indian artist was much concerned with the context rather than the content, which he was using in his compositions. He was using art as a medium to narrate the content from religious texts, poems, and stories. To achieve the appropriate effects from his creations, he kept himself free from limitations. In his compositions, he has beautified the figures to the level of his fantasy world, which required a high level of workmanship and competency. He also used the principle of dominance to show the importance of the main figure in his compositions. But these paintings lack to some extent in the use of perspective whether it is aerial or linear. Although the Jahangir period witnessed the contact with European art and tried to learn and imply the use of perspective, it could not replace the native explanation of perspective. And this can also be seen in the miniature paintings from the Pahari school. The miniature painting artist got inspiration from European art and tried to learn the rendering of figures and objects. And with the implication of this technique, he made his motifs look lively and real. In comparison to linear, aerial perspective can be observed in numerous miniature paintings from the Mughal period. But the Pahari school artist missed this aerial perspective many times and lost the effect of showing distance in his landscapes and outer scenes. This paper is an analysis of the use of perspective in the Pahari miniature paintings.

Keywords: Mughal Art, Pahari Miniature Painting, Use of Perspective, The Impact of European Art.

INTRODUCTION

Pahari miniature painting is an important part of Indian Painting which got flourished in the mountainous region of north India during the 17th to 19th centuries. Artists migrated from the Mughal court, brought this style to the Hindu courts of Rajputana. And the family members or their disciples carried on this style to different schools. As the style was directly related to the Mughal style; we see lots of similarities between these two styles. This style got bifurcated into two parts where the geographical situations played a role in their nomenclature. Schools that were situated in the plains, especially in Rajasthan, got their name collectively as Rajasthani miniature painting and the schools, from the mountainous region of north India, got their name as Pahari miniature painting. Basohli, Kangra, Guler, and Garhwal schools have contributed mainly to Pahari miniature painting. Pahari miniature painting also has some differences

from Rajasthani miniature painting, in the context of the subject, themes, choice of colors, facial expressions, and overall impact. These characteristics bring uniqueness and make this Pahari miniature paintings world famous. When we see and observe these paintings technically and precisely, we find that there was an inappropriateness in the use of perspective whether it is linear or aerial.

When we see any distant object through the atmospheric medium; it looks bluish. And this transmission of color through the atmosphere is called aerial perspective and it helps us to observe depth. Some factors like the distance between the distant object and the viewer, the decreasing amount of light, and the inclusion of other source's light are the main contributor to this effect of aerial perspective (Arcot J. Preetham, 2003).

Filippo Brunelleschi has been considered the pioneer of systematic use of perspective. His method of perspective characterized a few mandatory things like diminishing perpendicular lines, the meeting point of these lines, and a horizontal line. He made it clear to understand that with the help of linear perspective, we can create an effect of volume or depth on a flat plane (Leung, Brendon, 2020). With the use of linear perspective, an artist can make his/her artwork look real possessing the impression of deepness and space. In common, objects near to the spectator are depicted comparatively bigger than distant objects. Also, the ratio of dimensions of different objects is considered important while drawing these objects in a composition. This study will analyze the inappropriate use of perspective in Pahadi miniature painting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

During the 13th and 14th centuries, artists from the West World were using methods of perspective very wisely. But here in India miniature painting artists were not aware of the correct use of this method of perspective. Indian artists were taking the help of their imagination and fantasy to accomplish the compositions. We see Idealism in their drawing compositions. They refuse the use of the method of perspective. The method of miniature painting artists to observe things was quite different. In this style of Indian painting, importance has been given to other factors or elements such as the use of colors, impact, expression, beauty, and strength of lines rather than the use of the method of perspective. The forms and images used in the Indian miniature paintings represent the inner world of the artist's mind while they were narrating the

themes in their compositions. The use of the method of perspective and the awareness about the use of optical equipment for real-looking drawings was not in the use or trend. This was the reason these paintings look completely different from European paintings of that time (**Vaidya, 2008**). The study and making of copies of western artworks especially oil paintings made an effect on the work styles of Mughal Artists. They started working on aerial perspective. European characteristic “aerial perspective” is being seen in the works of major artists such as Kesu Das, Basawan, Govardhan, etc. Mughal artists tried to use the linear perspective in the copy works but they did not achieve that level of success. Although, they got good results in the application of aerial perspective (**Sinha, 2012**). During the period of Shah Jahan, it became trendy to depict swaying clouds and different effects of atmosphere in the background of a composition. This feature was being used by Mughal artists as an inspiration taken from European artworks, seen and observed by them. In the background of compositions, landscapes were depicted by using aerial perspective (**Ramos, 2014**). In the middle of the 16th century, Mughals introduced different topics to miniature painting such as portraiture, plants, animals, birds, and building structures. There was a trend that multi artists worked collectively on a single miniature. The Mughal artists tried to use the method of linear perspective and also gave attention to single-point perspective in their drawings. To achieve real effects in their artworks, they created the impression of mass and space (**Niranjan and Nandagopal, 2015**). The Mughal painting got originated as a blend of indigenous styles of our country and the foreigner Persian style of painting. The huge attention to nature and the fineness of drawing remained the specialty of Mughal art. It was the effect of European artworks that inspired the Mughal artist to exercise some new traits like rendering of objects and the use of perspective to introduce real-looking effects to his artworks (**Seetharaman and Chand, 2016**). The uniqueness and the specialty of the Mughal style were clearly the consequence of the joint workmanship of Hindu and Muslim artists. The inclination towards naturalism was the effect of European art and this new introduction decreased the lyrical quality in the miniature paintings. With the publicization of Western culture in India, the local methods and styles of painting got blossom, and copies of European artworks were made. For the local artist, emotions related to the object were the main concern rather than the object itself. In the elements of native art, the line was playing a major part instead of the color. The native art adopted and assimilated several components from the exotic arts. Instead of inculcation of formal perspective in the painting, the artist was seeking the hidden reality. In the Mughal period due to the increase in the impact of exotic art, the

paintings were strongly showing the combined impression of Persia and England (**Analojeh, 2019**). The Mughal period has witnessed the great inclination of Jahangir toward art and its growth. He also tried to modernize the conventional techniques; used in miniature painting by adapting the European techniques. He encouraged the artists to learn the method of single-point perspective from European artworks. And subsequently, the multilayered perspective method got replaced by this European method of perspective. Even Akbar also had a personal interest in European Art. To learn perspective and modeling from Europe was also an objective of Hindu artists to make the miniature painting compositions more real-looking. In some works, from the Mughal period, we see figures and other motifs of compositions rendered three-dimensionally by these artists (**Lavanya, 2019**). By the mid-17th century artists from Mughal, courts had been learned the method of perspective. In “Four Sufi Shaikhs by A Riverside” Mughal, c. 1640-50, we can see the application of linear and aerial perspective as the artist narrowed the river banks to show the longer distance and broaden the river in the front. But this technique was not used frequently. Among Shahjahan’s court artists, Payag was well known for his aerial perspective (**Losty**). Among the Mughal emperors, Jahangir was greatly interested in the artworks from Europe. Especially the oil paintings he received in the form of presents from the British High Authorities made a huge impact on him. The use of single-point perspective in these foreign artworks attracted Jahangir and he asked his artists to work on this method (**Vashnavi and Ramya, 2021**). The introduction of modeling through very soft shading and native explanation of perspective have been the main features of Mughal miniatures. Mughal artists started to bring natural effects in the background scenes in place of the older technique of using ornamental patterns. An aerial perspective can be observed and their landscape compositions were made precisely. Some of the Mughal artists were also having a good sense of foreshortening (**Brown, 1960**). In the earlier times, miniatures were made with a purpose to illustrate any text related to history, mythology, or religion. And these miniatures were having some written material on them as it was required to accomplish the design or composition. Later on, the artists felt that the miniatures are quite complete without text also. Miniature painting artists took the help of distortion in the major parts of any composition such as the volume of the figures or forms, and the linear and aerial methods of perspective. And their purpose behind the application of distortions was to achieve the expected compositional effects according to their fantasy or the theme. The Persians also ignored naturalism for the purpose of a good and decorative setting

of the composition. Artists used the different forms and motifs according to the need for design instead of their natural appearance (**Bracy, 1966**).

METHODOLOGY

This research paper is an analytical study with a qualitative approach, where previous research papers, research articles, books, and images have been studied or reviewed to analyze the use of perspective in Pahari miniature painting.

DISCUSSION

By reviewing the literature, it is found that there was only a partial introduction of perspective in the miniature painting of the Mughal period. And this was due to the impact of European art over Mughal emperors that they encouraged the artists to work on this. Whether the artists got success in its implementation or they used it in the native manner only. But as the Pahari painting has been liberal in comparison to the authoritative nature of Mughal art, we see the abundance of outdoor natural scenes instead of architectural views of the court in these paintings. Therefore, this lack of perspective especially the linear perspective is less visible in the Pahari paintings rather than the Mughal paintings.

The Pahari miniature painting in fig.1 is showing a beautiful view of Radha and Krishna's meeting. The artist has composed the scene as Radha is standing on the threshold and conversating with Krishna, who is passing from there with His cow. The painting has full justification for the features of the related school, as we can feel and observe the vibrancy in colour scheme, the facial expressions of figures, delicacy, and hard workmanship of the artist. But in the use of perspective, we can see the inappropriateness whether it is linear or aerial.

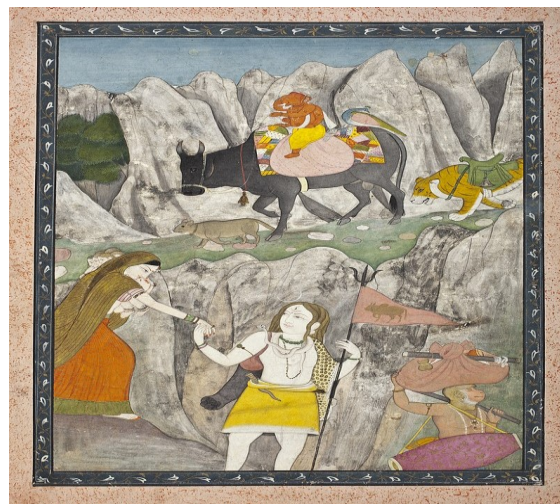
Fig.1: Krishna with a cow passes Radha Indian, Pahari, 1850–75



Source: <https://www.mfa.org/collections/object/krishna-with-a-cow-passes-radha-148827>

Firstly, the artist is showing the good application of linear perspective by decreasing the size of figures in the back, in comparison to the figures in the front. But, on the other hand, we see the failure of the artist in the application of the linear perspective. The vertical casing (frame) of the door which is flanking the Radha, the façade, the next upper window, and the square-shaped roof are indicating the negligence of linear perspective. Secondly, the painting shows a green lawn where the artist has applied the same green colour from the front to the back and the same intensity of white colour to the buildings at the near and the distance.

Fig.2: Pahari Painting, 1800, Shiva's family on the March



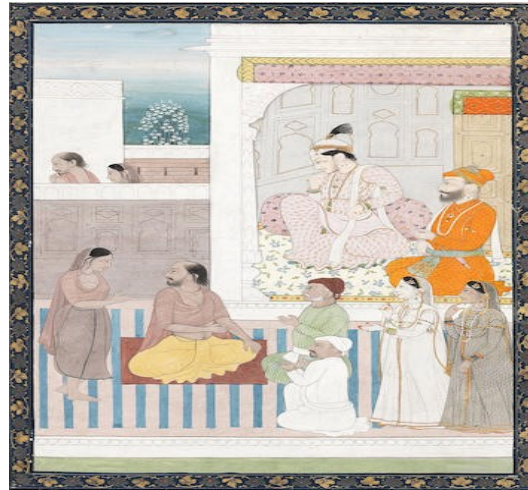
Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org>

In this miniature painting from Chamba (fig.2), the size of figures and hills at the distance is against the linear perspective. The hills in the front and back are almost of equal size and the animal figures have been depicted as very big. We can also see that the color intensity of hills is the same in the front and back. Secondly, the colors of the figures in the back are bright and fresh which is against the aerial perspective.

The fig.3 shows a beautiful composition where the artist has depicted a court scene. He has depicted some human figures sitting and standing on a carpet in the front and two figures in the back in a chamber. Here we see that the artist has ignored the rule of perspective by showing the back figures bigger in comparison to the figures in the front. He has used the dominance of the figure as the basic feature of Indian art, by showing the main figure larger in size. Secondly, we can

see the strips of carpet which also indicate the negligence of the rule of perspective as these strips should have been depicted converging towards the back.

Fig.3: A Prince Arbitrating in a Dispute between a Man and Wife, Guler, Circa 1820



Source: <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/25435/lot/137/?category=list>

From the future perspective, if these Pahari miniature paintings are made by incorporating the formal and appropriate use of aerial and linear perspective, with all the technicalities, the results shall be excellent.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that there was no formal and appropriate use of perspective in the Pahari miniature painting. As the Pahari Painting is the outgrowth of Mughal Painting, this lack of proper use of perspective prevailing also in the Pahari School. The main motive of the Pahari miniature painting artist was to narrate the story expressively by giving a huge amount of space to the role-playing figures. They worked in their native styles, such as sometimes they used rendering techniques to create volume in the living and non-living forms, and sometimes they kept using flat colors. It was the expression that was the priority for the artist rather than other parameters. Instead of this inappropriate use of perspective, these miniature paintings hold a unique place in the history of Indian art. The delicacy, vibrancy, hard workmanship, aesthetic sense, and expression, used in these Pahari miniature paintings, are so good that this drawback of perspective has been converted into the specialty of this particular style of miniature painting.

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