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Representation of Women in Garhwal Miniature Paintings

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to look at the representation of women in Garhwal miniature paintings, an offshoot of Pahari painting, which remained in vogue from the 17th to 19th centuries. The pictorial evidence presents pictures of a woman on various realms like their functioning, costumes, ornaments and roles. In other words, art becomes a visual commentary on women when there is an absence of sources. The Garhwal School of painting is the one of the most prolific Pahari Schools of painting. The region of Garhwal received an impetus in painting when a Mughal prince, Suleiman Shikoh, fleeing from his uncle, Aurangzeb, had brought to Garhwal a whole retinue, which included a Mughal artist and his son. They remained at Garhwal even after the prince had left and were granted a substantial pension. The *nayikas*, or heroines of ancient Indian writers, are typical specimens of the Garhwal School's conception of womanly beauty. It is of utmost importance that one does not find in particular any court scene or any marriage procession painting since painting was not a favourite art at Garhwal but a number of paintings have been found from the *nayikabheda* series such as *Abhisarika nayika* or *Vipralabdha* nayika. The feminine figures are not robust rather seem imbued with lighter grace.

Keywords: Garhwal, Pahari, Miniature, *Nayika*, Women, Art.

If as historians we are working towards the recreation of a total picture moving away from the hitherto male or elite perspective, than unless history of women is studied or researched, our picture of past shall continue to be a partial one. There is no denying of fact that until now our perception of past has been primarily from male perspective. Unfortunately, our history writing has relegated women to background,

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assuming that women played no important role or were just playing a secondary role in the creation of the past. It is men's histories that have been presented universally as human. The framework, concepts and priorities of these universal histories only reflect male's interests, concerns and experiences and in no way do justice to the women and their roles (Mathews, 1984). Traditional historiography has thus either ignored the positive role of women or portrayed it as insignificant.

Art history has now been increasingly accepted as a major branch of knowledge supplementing various other kinds of histories. Art, as a manifestation of human thought and spirit, has valuable implications for a historian to conduct a thorough investigation into the intricacies of past. A different perspective of women's history is gaining currency in which the art forms like paintings are being used as tools of historical investigation. The development of theories about the way meanings is produced, semilogy in particular and the expanded Marxist concepts of ideology, led feminists to a more complex appraisal of what came to be called, representations. No longer could images be treated as discrete reflections- good, bad, false, truthful- of real women. The use of the term representation and later significance marked the importance of the process by which meanings are produced. The social manufacture of meaning occurs through both technical devices and codes and conventions generally referred to as the rhetoric of the image. For anyone to understand the image they must carry a whole baggage of social know ledges, assumptions and values. Therefore, notions of the image whose meanings derive from the conscious intentions of their maker gave way to the understanding of the social and ideological networks with in which meanings are socially produced and secured.

After almost two decades of Feminist writings about women in art, there remains relatively a small body of work in history of women and art. There are very few works, which identify women as subject of representation not as an object of representation. The present paper aims to look at the representation of women in Garhwal miniature paintings, particularly in *nayika* paintings, an off shoot of Pahari painting which was in vogue from the 17th to 19th centuries. The term 'miniature' is derived from the Latin word 'minium' that meant red lead. As the principal pigment used by the medieval illuminators was red lead, it began to be applied to the art and those who practiced it came to be known as 'miniatori' (*The Encyclopedia Americana* -1976:170). Even though the word is applied to all works of art of 'miniature' size, miniature paintings meant a very small portrait paintings finely executed on vellum (skin), precared cards, copper or ivory, jewelry, boxes, lockets, palm leaves and paper.

Feminism in the arts grew out of the contemporary women's movement. In the 1970's feminist historians and critics began to question the assumptions, which lay behind the masculine claim for universal values of a history of heroic art and which has systematically excluded women's productions and representations from its mainstream and powerfully transformed the women's image into position and consumption. The resulting re-examination of women's lives in art proceeded amidst debates about the relationship between gender/culture and creativity (Chadwick, 1919). It cannot be denied that in Indian art, the female form has been the most projected and

favoured subject through the ages. Womanly forms have been represented throughout history in various kinds of art form.

The term "representation" suggests a type of description or portrayal of someone or something. In the visual arts this implies that the art object depicts something other than or outside itself. A historical and critical evaluation of women in miniature art opens up new vistas in interpretation, by providing interesting details of how the lives of women were depicted in the socio-historical context of times. We know that reconstructing women's history is difficult in the absence of textual evidence. Though for the modern period, a vast reservoir of sources on women throughout the world and across many cultures are available in the form of journals, articles, diaries, organization records etc., while evaluating medieval period there is acute paucity of source material regarding women. Keeping in view these problems in writing of women's history, one has to search for new resources, which will enrich our understanding of the historical process. In this endeavour, the miniature paintings of pre modern India form a very important source for analysis of the role of women (Pande, et al, 2004:73). Such pictorial evidence presents a picture of awoman on various realms like their functioning, costumes, ornaments, roles, engagements and representations. One may not be able to narrate events from these, but the actions or activities of women can be observed. The medieval artists tried to paint to life, bringing out not only the physical features and personal appearance but also even the personality of each subject like their expressions, feelings, and activities. In particular artistic reflections like miniatures provide a kind of diversity in the historical source material.

During the last several last decades, the study and deliberations on women's symbol in painting has been a focal point of substantial attention in Indian art history. Through the ages, the woman form has been variously depicted by artists in Indian art. In early Indian paintings, woman is often equipped to evoke sensual pleasure for the onlookers. The analysis of women through art focuses on the possible material manifestation of various dimensions of women by interpreting art depictions. The image of woman has had varied representations from fertility goddesses to divine images or a sensuously articulated erotic lover. On a parallel drawn to man, the woman is depicted only in very limited states, such as engaged in very casual routines or in the form of a male consort/lover, being ignored from powerful display as compared to man. The religious and literary texts from time to time also formed as a base to provide necessary support to Indian artists to continue to represent feminine form within these parameters.

The earliest paintings that we have in India are the rock paintings of Bhim Bhetka. Here the artist has used the paintings to depict women's emotions through the subject matter of the daily life. They depict human figure through simple lines. These were merely naturalistic depictions of early humans' artistic representation of their exploratory relationship with nature. Indian art is coupled with Indian philosophy in which man and nature (*purush-prakriti*) are entwined. Nature symbolizes the woman. After several millennia, for instance, in the seventh century AD, carved pillar of Ellora in Maharashtra represents more detailed rock paintings with colour, mostly red and orange, derived from minerals, and are the precursors to the famous fresco of Ajanta

caves. These murals of Ajanta and Ellora were beautified with the sensuous and sublime figures of women. In the portrayal of womanhood, the graceful female icons have been painted in the forms of queens, dancers, mistresses and other secondary forms. The artists were reproducing the soft roundness of their breasts, their curvy lips, the turn of their heads, thin shaped eyebrows, the slanting glances of their eyes and the gestures of their hands. It is interesting to note that most of the Ajanta heroines are depicted naked, or in near nudity, while all the others in the same scene are fully clothed. The women are painted in repose, talking to their lovers, instructing their handmaids, admiring themselves in mirrors, carrying offerings, or simply standing, sitting and gossiping. During the 5th century A.D. Buddha was celebrated as a divine king and his chambers as a divine king and his chambers in the form of caves were beautified with all medium amusements including dancing girls.

Miniature paintings in India depict a variety of themes, from the doings of gods and kings to important episodes in the lives of humankind. The art of miniature had been in vogue after the coming of the Mughals and the women were particularly used as an object of male gaze. In the era of the Mughals, miniature tradition of Indian painting had touched the zenith of delicacy and it saw the actual and full flowering of miniature art. There are many images of women engaged in erotic display like a man surrounded by many women in a toilet scene. The depiction of women in Mughal paintings had been done in manuscripts, which are very few in number. The artists started to portray women figures with full bosoms in standard body type. Between the Jain and Mughal periods, that is, from the 10th to 17th centuries, miniatures were also produced to illustrate love stories, portraits and to record the doing of kings and countries. In the period of Akbar, the Hindu epics and stories had also been illustrated in manuscripts, for instance, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and so on. In these stories women were portrayed as per their role in the story. The Persian artists who flocked to his court taught the new techniques to Indian artists and themselves benefitted by absorbing the best elements of indigenous traditions with the result that a rare blend of a wonderful new school came into existence (Shivrammurthy, 1970:90).

With the coming of Muslims into India, the large scale paintings disappear along with the disappearance of the large kingdoms and miniature form art with the Persian effects became popular. That time the art restricted only to the court of the kings and the subject matter of that time was the court scenes. This art of painting developed as a blending of Persian and Indian ideas. Translation of manuscripts and Indian texts were done during the time of Mughal kings. During Jahangir reign Mughal's painting reached its height. The art of portraiture, by its royal patron received special attention; accurate portrait was confined to male noble and courtiers. During Akbar's period mostly male courtiers were painted because females were not allowed to appear in the open courts. Female becomes popular subject during Jahangir due to powerful influence of Nur Jahan. She had very strong personality. Her creative abilities ranged from costumes designing to hunting. The Muslim royal ladies had generally lived in separate quarter called 'zenana' or Harem, apartments inaccessible to strangers. In Mughal art women were presented simply as beauties – bathing women with their attendants were repeatedly painted by this era of artists. In these paintings the status

of women is shown in different ways like the royal ladies were normally shown hidden behind a veil (*pardha*) or within four walls surrounded by attendants. After the downfall of Mughal period the art of that time moved into different regions. These artists trained by Persian artist now in these different regions produced painting in new distinctive style, inspired by the royal and romantic lives of the Mughals. The particular miniature produced by Indian artists in their own style is known as Rajput or Rajasthani miniature. During this time several schools of painting such as Mewar, Bundi, Kotah, Marwar, Jaipur and Kishan-garh were established. The subject matter of those miniature paintings was the daily life-hunting scene of Radha and Krishna in various moods, night scene, and the artist depicted the human moods or *rasas* through *Nayak* and *nayikas* in their paintings. Female represents as a heroin in Rajasthani miniature paintings. The most famous art school of that period was Kishangarh, famous for *banithani* paintings. It is totally different style with highly exaggerated feature like long neck, large almond shape eye and long fingers. It reached a peak in the 18th century during the rule of Raja Sancar Chand who fell in love with his slave and then the portrait of that slave is found in Kishangarh.

The Bharat Natyam Shastra classified women in three categories: goddess, heroine and courtesan (*devi, nayika, ganika*). The *Nayak-nayika* theme was popular with artists of the 16th-17th century. Heroes and heroines were usually taken from popular Sanskrit poems mainly of Krishna and Radha. These paintings depict the woman waiting for her lover or going to meet him. The whole scene, her eyes, her body language her attention everything is focused on her lover. Hence we have a depiction of all these in the miniature paintings along with women as royal women, ordinary women, *Yoginis*, and also *Raginis*.

The art of miniature painting was brought to the Punjab Hill States from the Mughal and Rajput states, and along the way, it collected the traditions of both schools (Brijbhushan, 1979:176). What we know as the "Pahari look" is a gradual development that cannot be said to have originated in any particular school at a special date (Brijbhushan, 1979:173). The origins of Pahari painting are not known; we do not know when and where beginnings were made in this field of art. A. Coomaraswamy was the first scholar to draw world attention to this art expression and show that there is a unity in Indian art. Coomaraswamy states that, through all Indian schools of thought there runs like a golden thread the fundamental idealism of the Upanishads, the Vedanta, so in all Indian art there is a unity that underlies all its be wildering variety. This unifying principle is here also Idealism, and this must of necessity have been so, for the synthesis of Indian thought is one, not many (Coomaraswamy, 1981:17). The "new look" became most evident in the female form, although male figures also underwent a change. By AD 1775, we find the emergence of a new type of female figure: there is a fragile delicacy to the frame and a porcelain quality to the women's faces (Brijbhushan, 1979:173). J. C. French and Laurence Binyon too entertained similar opinions about the origins of Pahari painting. French explained that the artists had seen in the houses of their princely patrons examples of the paintings of the Mughal School, perhaps some Persian paintings also, and imitated the qualities they found in these (French, 1931: VI).

The Garhwal School of painting is an off shoot of the Pahari School of painting. The foundation of Garhwal miniature paintings were laid in Garhwal (Uttarakhand), as far back as 1658; but it was not known outside until it was discovered in 1908. The capital of Garhwal, called Srinagar, lay deep into the hills. The region of Garhwal received an impetus in painting when a Mughal prince, Suleiman Shikoh, fleeing from his uncle, the emperor Aurangzeb, had brought to Garhwal a whole retinue, which included a Mughal artist and his son. These artists had been as much goldsmiths and courtiers as actual painters and they remained at Garhwal after the prince had left and were granted a substantial pension (Archer, 1954:2). The founders of the Garhwal School were Sham Das and Har Das, father and son duo, who came to the court of Raja Prithvipat Shah (AD 1625-60). Both belonged to the Shah Jahan School of Mughal painting (Lal, 1968:15). It was after the arrival of the two artists from the Mughal court that the ruler of Garhwal created the office of *tasbirdar* (picture-maker). Suleiman Shikoh, a nephew of Aurangzeb, fled from his uncle's wrath and found refuge at the court of Prithvipat Shah of Garhwal. As it was usual those days, he came with a whole retinue, including two artists, father and son, Sham Das and Har Das. After only a year, however, the Mughal prince was handed over to the emperor by Medini Shah, the son of Prithvipat Shah. The prince left, but the artists were allowed to stay on and work in Garhwal and were treated with favour by the ruler and his son, although Garhwal painting at that time was extremely elementary. Even though painting was not a favourite art at Garhwal court, it must have possibly developed due to the arrival of Mughal artists and later from Guler and Kangra.

This hilly region was not conducive to the formation of a large kingdom and thus in an area of about thirty thousand square miles, there were many principalities ruled by Rajput dynasties (Ohri, 2001:1). There were as many as 36 states, each ruled by a separate raja, each committed to its own type of Rajput culture, each proudly jealous. Not every state possessed painters. In fact, only when a particular ruler was keenly interested in art painting appeared to have flourished. In this connection, the size of a state was quite irrelevant, the smallest state sometimes possessed artists, the largest and greatest possessed no artists at all. It was the personality of the ruler-patron which provided the one essential element (Archer, 1957). Until the first half of the 17th century, no painting seems to have existed in any of the Rajput states of the Punjab Hills. Indeed it is as if the great schools of Punjab Hill painting developed in the 17th century out of nowhere. Aurangzeb is known to have neglected the arts, and artists working at the Mughal court had dispersed in search of patronage. (Ohri, 1991) Karl Khandalavala suggested that the artists trained in the Mughal School of the Aurangzeb period and familiar with the trends in Rajasthani painting were mainly responsible for the formation and development of the Pahari style of painting. He believed that the activity of painting started in the hills in the last quarter of the 17th century. The dispersal of artists from the Mughal court had, he believes, started already in Shah Jahan's reign (Khandalavala, 1958:19-20).

Each miniature style had its own characteristics; the Mughal drawings are known for their refinement in execution; Rajasthani drawings are known for their boldness and fast movement, but the Pahari drawings are rhythmical, which suit their romantic

subjects (Singh, 1982:21). What Chinese art achieved for landscape is here accomplished for human love. Here if never and nowhere else in the world the western gates are opened wide. The arms of lovers are about each other's necks, eye meets eye, the whispering *sakhis* speak of nothing else but the course of Krishna's courtship, the very animals are spellbound by the sound of Krishna's flute and the elements stand still to hear the *ragas* and *raginis*. This art is only with the realities of life; above all, with passionate love service, conceived as the means and symbol of all union. (Goswami et al, 1997:7).

Among all the centres of Pahari painting, Garhwal was also one of the foremost to receive the scholar's attention (Singh, 1982:152). The famous series illustrating *Gita Govinda* and *Bihari Satsai* were discovered in Garhwal's Palace collection (Singh, 1982:152). Moreover, Garhwal's history confirms the arrival of the Mughal artists. The work of Garhwal School bears the closest possible relation to that of Kangra. There was a considerable movement of both art and artists between these states, and paintings formed part of the dowries of princesses. One may assume in this regard that as conditions in Kangra became more and more unsettled, the painters sought elsewhere a patronage that could no longer be extended to them at home. It was also highly probable that some accompanied the two sisters of Raja Anirudh of Kangra (son of Sansar Chand) who were married to the Raja of Garhwal, Sudarshan Shah (Coomaraswamy, 1972:132). The Kangra princesses brought with them to Tehri the paintings from the collection of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra, who was the greatest connoisseur of painting in the Punjab hills, in the form of dowry. The collection in Garhwal created interest in Raja Sudarshan Shah and he preserved it. His successors made additions to the collection. Raja Bhawani Shah (AD 1859-72) married a princess of Mandi. She also brought Pahari paintings with her. Raja Pratap Shah's (AD 1872-96) consort, Rani Guleria was also interested in painting. She carefully preserved the entire collection after the death of her husband and during the minority of her son, Raja Kirti Shah (AD 1892-1913). She ruled for six years as *Rajmata* and gave to her favourite son, Kunwar Vichitra Shah, a good number of paintings from the collection which she had been preserving (Lal, 1968:29).

The fame of Garhwal painting is mainly based on Molaram, a painter, poet, and diplomat, born in the fourth generation of the Mughal painters who had arrived earlier at the Garhwal court. He developed painting as his career and evolved a distinct style of his own imbibing stylistic influences from different schools of paintings that he observed and assimilated into his own diction (Jain and Handa, 2009:19). Mola Ram states this in his *Garh Rajvansh ka Itihas* that the reigning king of Garhwal, Prithvi Shah employed the painter-duo in his court as tasbirdar, i.e., the picture-maker. W.G. Archer writes that the sudden development can only be explained on one as sumption-that outside artists had reached the court, including Mola Ram's ancestors (Archer, 1954:2). He is also believed to have visited Kangra in his early years and that is when a certain change in his paintings is noticed. His work was freer in expression, says Chandramani Singh. He adds that it has more graceful forms and the fluttering ends of the girl's *dupatta* are shown with greater freedom. Faces, although they show the common Pahari type, are smaller, with raised eyebrows and narrower eyes. The lips are curved in the suggestion of a smile.

Miniature paintings in India depict a variety of themes, from the doings of gods and kings to important episodes in the lives of men (Brijbhushan, 1979:33). Scenes of valour and heroism, worship and devotion, lovers' trysts and partings, the holdings of courts and the building of cities, all formed useful subjects of the painters. As painting moved out by the imperial ateliers to the courts of Rajasthan and the hill states, the innately hierarchical concept of Indian art asserted itself and the artist imbued each canvas he painted with a significance extending beyond the purely visual content (Brijbhushan, 1979:34). Love, music, and religion all combined to give earthly beings a supernatural aspect and to bring the gods down to earth for the edification of mortals (Brijbhushan, 1979:34).

The depiction of women according to their characteristics, feelings and erotic sentiments as given in *nayikabheda* were very popular with painters of the Pahari schools just as pictures of *Baramasa* (The Twelve Months) and *Ragamala* (garland of melodies) were popular themes of the Rajasthani painters (Lal, 1968:23). The foundation of the literary tradition of analyzing and classifying the emotional states of men and women in love with zest and precision who are referred to as *nayaka* and *nayika* were laid down by Bharat Muni and was continued by his descendants. The *nayikas* are typical specimens of the Garhwal School's conception of womanly beauty. The *nayika*, or heroines of the ancient Indian writers, were young women preoccupied with love in its different forms. The term *nayika* is not used in the literal sense meaning heroine, but for passionate and devoted lover in Indian art who represents various shades of love, love in union and love in separation. Mukandi Lal states that the Pahari artists drew inspiration for painting lovely women as *nayikas* from the Hindi poets of the 17th and 18th centuries, such as Keshav Das, Bihari, Mati Ram, Rahim, Rakhsan and Nagari Das (Lal, 1968:23). Sanskrit scholars like Bharata, Dhanamjaya and many more have classified *nayikas* according to love situations into eight types (*ashtanayika*). The *ashtanayika* classifications of Bhanudatta, elaborated by Keshavdas, need special mention here.

Svandhinapatika, the heroine, is the one who dominates her beloved. The hero is depicted as massaging her feet or putting avermilion mark on her forehead. She is the one swollen with pride of her beloved's love and devotion. *Utkanthita*, heroine, is alone and yearns for her lover, who has been inadvertently delayed from keeping the tryst. She is distressed because the beloved has not turned up. *Basakasayya* awaits her lover by her bed, and is depicted either welcoming him or waiting for him at the door while her maids prepare the bed. She is the one who embellishes herself for the union and her surroundings for her lover's arrival to create an enjoyable environment around him. *Abhisandhita* or *Kalahantarita* is separated from her lover owing to her own ill temper or lack of consideration. She is the one who is regretful for impulsiveness in conflict with her lover. *Khandita* is offended and is usually seen reproaching her lover for his lack of faithfulness. She is the one whose lover had disappointed her which made her upset. *Prositapatika* sits and mourns the departure of her lover surrounded by her maids, and refuses to be consoled. She is the one who is missing her beloved as he is far away on a long journey. *Vipralabdhika* is shown throwing away her jewels because her lover has failed to keep the tryst. She is

depicted to be frustrated that her lover has not turned up at the meeting place as he assured her for the reunion. *Abhisarika* braves the storm and lightning, snakes and other dangers of the forest to meet her lover. She is usually shown at the door of her house or on the way to the tryst. (Brijbhushan, 1979:39) She is the one who courageously goes out to meet the lover.

These themes have numerous pictorial versions from the Pahari artists and it is on these lines that the heroines of Garhwal paintings have also been depicted. The heroine in these paintings occupies a prominent place and the hero is mostly relegated to a secondary position. *Nayakas* do appear on the scene as her companions but are not given much significance. Mukandi Lal writes that the Garhwal School excels other Pahari schools in the treatment of women. Here they stand out more slender and charming; there is more detail in the depiction of ornaments; the drapery is often transparent and attractive (Lal, 1968:23). Jamila Brijbhushan, however, writes that the women's faces lack the extreme delicacy in comparison to Kangra art (Brijbhushan, 1979:178).

We now look at a few examples of these nayikas in Garhwal paintings from the *Nayikabheda* series.

Molaram himself described the *Abhisarika nayika* (see Annexure 1) he painted, in a verse, which he has written on the top of the painting. "The heroine is going to meet her lover. She turns back to look at a golden anklet, which has just fallen off. There are also snakes below and lightning above. In Indian poetry, a girl's face was often described as 'lovely as the lightning' while the play of lightning on the cloud was a common symbol for the union of lovers" (Archer, 1954:5). W.G. Archer states that, all the images in this picture are drawn from poetry and are inserted for precise symbolic ends. Frail lightning echoes the girl's beauty. Flowering creepers repeat the droop and pattern of her dress while birds, motionless in the rainy darkness, parallel her poise and calm. It is the pouring rain and the twin cobras, however, which sustain the vital roles. The rain is a discomfort which the girl must silently endure and a symbol of her goal-the passionate encounter with her lover to whom she speeds (Archer, 1954:12).

The next painting (Annexure 2) portrays an *utka/utkanthitanayika*. There is lightning, flickering in the sky, which gives warning of thestorm. However, the lightning also has other meanings, which invest the picture with poetic charm. Echoing the girl's grave beauty, the lightning also reflects her agitation, its restless presence hinting at the frenzy beneath her tranquil poise" (Archer, 1954:6). The heroine is decked up in a pale brown bodice, dark red skirt, and blue veil and with all kinds of jewellery, be it an ecklace, nose ring, bangles, bracelet, armlet or anklets. She is even seen to have applied red paint on her hands and toes. But her face depicts that she is troubled and upset by the fact that her lover has not turned up as promised.

A painting of *Vipralabdha nayika* (Annexure 3) has also been discovered. The heroine stands on a bed of green leaves under a beautiful green tree. In front is another green tree adorned with spikes of pinkish flowers of the *mandar*, a favourite motif of Mola Ram and of the Garhwal School as a whole. The *nayika* wears an orange *dupatta* studded with golden stars and with a golden border. All her features, her lovely arms

and hands, her arched, swan-like neck and heaving bosom are drawn exquisitely. The ornaments are drawn so realistically that they can easily be identified. But the painting indicates that she did not care for her ornaments since her lover had not arrived at the rendezvous to admire them. She is depicted as throwing off her ornaments in disgust and disappointment.

It is in a painting of the great lovers of Rajput legend, Baz Bahadur and Rupmati, that Garhwal painting achieves perhaps its most poetic expression (Annexure 4). In the middle of the 16th century, the last Muhammadan ruler of Malwa in central India became enamoured of Rupmati, a Hindu courtesan. There were times when they would ride together at nights. Their love lasted for seven years- to be ended with the defeat of Baz Bahadur by a Mughal army and the subsequent capture and suicide of Rupmati (Archer, 1954:10). In the painting "the two lovers are shown resting on a hillside, their horses tethered in a corpse while a young moon shows amid the stars. Rupmati is sleeping on a red coverlet, while Baz Bahadur gazes at her eyes. Above her, stretch the triple trunks of a tree-the leafless branches echoing with their sinuous curves her graceful lines. Beyond the hillside are two leopards, suggesting by their close encounter the ferocious nature of the lovers' feeling. Over the entire scene broods the entranced stillness of a summer night" (Archer, 1954:10). Yet once again it is a woman, the supreme object of romantic poetry, whose beauty is the picture's chief concern. A young moon hanging in the sky, a tree with frail and leafless branches parallels the innocent freshness of Rupmati's lovely form (Archer, 1957:918).

Often the *nayaka* is depicted as Krishna himself and the *nayika* as Radha. The legend of Krishna and Radha and their love sport (*lila*) provided rich material to Pahari painters in general and to the artists of Garhwal in particular. While Radha, Krishna's principal love, is not mentioned in the *Bhagvata Purana*, a Sanskrit text of about the 10th century A.D., she is the leading figure in the *Gita Govinda*, a Sanskrit poem by Jayadev two centuries later. It is a well-accepted fact that the artists of Pahari schools were influenced by the romantic literature and painted pictures in terms of Krishna and Radha to provide, as it were, divine sanction for the lapses and love affairs of their patrons, the Pahari Rajas (Lal, 1968:25).

Again, there are many paintings focusing on the legend of Krishna and Radha. In this painting (Annexure 5), illustration to a *Bihari Satsai* series, Radha is bathing while Krishna watches her in rapture. The painting shows, Radha, naked from her bath, is seated on a brown stool clasping her black hair which shields her like a mantle. A maid in mauve and orange-brown skirt holds a dish before her. Behind her, a second maid screens her with a mauve cloth. In the bottom left-hand corner, Krishna in yellow cloak gazed intently at her. Terrace floor and pavilion walls stark white. Brass pots and a *lota* spout beside the stool. To the rear, flows a swirling river (Alaknanda) with twin hills (Archer, 1973: 112-13).

We observe women in various locations and poses in many of these paintings. Here women are portrayed completing their toilet, watching a storm, dressing the hair, riding with maids, hurrying through the night to meet her lover, or waiting for her lover on a bed of leaves in a secluded glade. In many cases, the picture was a simple evocation of feminine charm. The characteristics of the Garhwal paintings include

beautiful women with fully developed breasts, thin waist line, delicate brow and thin nose with definite nose bridge. A delicacy in nature echoes delicacy in women and whether the subject is lovers in a moon-lit retreat or a lady hastening through the night, the images of nature are all employed to interpret and enhance a passionate scene (Archer, 1954: 5). The outer landscape she passes through is a metaphor of the inner emotions of the *nayika*. In Garhwal paintings, the passionate romance was treated with innocent grace while line itself was used to express a sense of musical rhythm.

The female costume usually includes a Rajput style tight bodice, full skirt and scarf, the sash being optional. The bodice is considered abbreviated, in other words, the women's clothes covered the entire form, with only the suggestion of a bosom. The head is decorously covered and the hair falls in soft lines on the shoulders (Brijbhushan, 1979:173). One end of the scarf is tucked in at the waist and taken around the back, across the bosom, and draped over the shoulders and head, with the other end trailing at the back (Brijbhushan, 1979:170). The ladies of position wear fine, patterned fabrics, with gold or decorated edges, while attendants wear outfits in coarser materials. The only class difference noticed was in the material of their clothing, number/types of jewelry worn or their placement.

The paintings of the Garhwal School also bear an unmistakable hallmark which is invariably found in the paintings of Mola Ram. The horizontal, curved *chandan tika* (sandal paste mark) on the forehead of women of high status is peculiar to paintings of the Garhwal School (Lal, 1968: 22). Jamila Brijbhushan asserted that the sandalwood paste mark in the shape of a crescent on the forehead, if not exclusive to Garhwal, was much favoured here (Brijbhushan, 1979: 178).

The Garhwal paintings also include the Rukmini-Mangal collection, illustrations of Sudama Charita. Apart from the mythological depictions, the miniature also featured portraits or pictures of girls playing ball or musical instruments or amusing themselves with birds and animals. Not only have the artists created charming women but also ornaments, trees, and flowers. *Chakorpriya* and *Morpriya* are also common themes in Garhwal paintings. Mola Ram painted several pictures of girls playing with the *chakor* (the Greek partridge) and *mor* (peacock), all in the same pose. *Morpriya* (Annexure 6), *Chakorpriya* and *Balakpriya* (fond of children) and *Mayanmukhi* (the beautiful one, literally the moon-faced one) demonstrate the development of Mola Ram's style. The artists of Garhwal have thus painted and drawn animals, birds and flowers in various contexts: subjectively; in the paintings of men and women for purely decorative purposes; and also objectively in landscapes and in individual studies. The depiction of leafless branches, with the spikes of pinkish exuberance of the *mandar* blooms in the foreground, and the globular dark trees on the horizon are some of the characterizing features of the Garhwal painting (Jain and Handa, 2009: 31). There are few depictions of women as *ragas*. During the 16th century in the courts of Deccani Kingdoms, several conventional systems of music *ragas* and *raginis* were apostrophized as ladies and pictures were made to indicate their themes (Archer, 1960). It was observed that the Sultans of the time developed a routine of pleasure and work in the provincial capitals of their kingdoms. In periods of peace they

cultivated the arts especially music which seems to have supplied abiding consolation with a depth and mastery beyond the superficial connoisseur. It is not surprising therefore to find that among the themes which the Sultanate courts preferred the artists to take up were the rendering in paintings *raga raginis* or musical modes. We have the same kind of depiction in the Garwal paintings (Annexure 7). Sindhuri Ragini, a lady of Hindola Raga (the 'swinging' music) is suggested by a party of girls swimming in a lotus-pond. The floats which sustain them are empty upturned pitchers, plugged with straw-a device still used in Northern India.

Hence to conclude, Garhwal painting, even though it could not attain the same fame as its counterparts, presents some of the greatest works. In many of their paintings the Krishna lila scenes were basic subject for pahari paintings, however some other themes were also painted by artists, but majorly the *gopi* with Krishna, women with Krishna, god and goddesses, fight scene, dance by *gopies* and women, love scene were dominantly painted by Indian artists. Ras lila can be seen in most of the paintings, Krishna playing with women called *gopi* and Radha. Bathing scenes of women (*gopies*) in the lake of village are famous in which Krishna steals the clothes and climbs up the tree and *gopies* without clothes come out from the water pond and ask Krishna to give their clothes back. The romance was highly celebrated and the themes were filled with colours of love-making, waiting for the lover, parting and so on. These paintings were filled with emotions in romantic premises with naturalistic beauty. The artist had equipped the love-depicted fables of Radha and Krishna with detailed ornamentation. We find beautiful depictions of women in different scenes and situations. The brilliant looks of the female figures, their natural gestures, their bodice and veil give completeness to the paintings, where grace of women is revealed. It shows us the culture and living practices of people during that period and helps us in the reconstruction of Women's history for the Garhwal region.

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Annexure 1: A night of storm, a lady, *abhisarika nayika*, going through the dark to meet her lover.



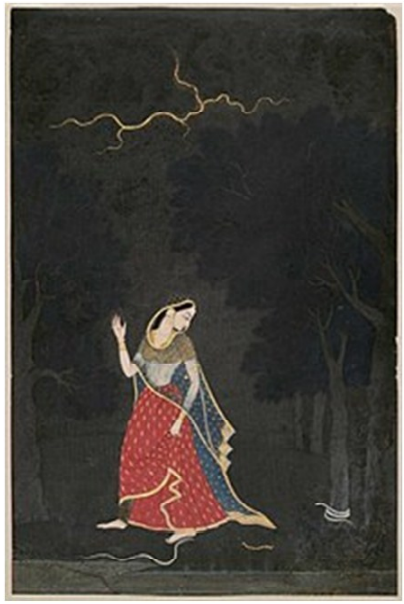
(*Source:* Archer, W.G. *Garhwal Painting*. London: Faber and Faber, 1954, p.13. Also http://www.indianart.ru/eng/garhwal/5.php.)

Annexure 2: A lady at the tryst, *utka nayika*, waiting for her lover to arrive.



(*Source:* Archer, W.G. *Garhwal Painting*. London: Faber and Faber, 1954, p.7. Also http://www.indianart.ru/eng/garhwal/2.php.)

Annexure 3: *Vipralabdha nayika*: The heroine stands on a bed of green leaves under a beautiful green tree.



(*Source:* Lal, Mukandi. *Garhwal Painting*. Delhi: Publications Division (Government of India), 1968, p. 60)

Annexure 4: Lovers in a moon-lit retreat, Baz Bahadur and Rupmati, resting on a hillside.



(*Source:* Archer, W.G. *Garhwal Painting*. London: Faber and Faber, 1954, p.11. Also http:// www.indianart.ru/eng/garhwal/4.php.)http://www.indianart.ru/eng/garhwal/4.php.)

Annexure 5: Radha bathing, while Krishna watching her in rapture.



(*Source:* http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O72908/krishna-and-radha-painting-unknown/)

Annexure 6: A painting depicting *mor priya*, a lady with a peacock on terrace.



(*Source:* Victoria & Albert Museum.http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O432885/painting- ram-mola/.)

Annexure 7: Illustration to the Indian musical mode, Sindhuri Ragini. Garhwal, c. 1790. Ram Gopal Collection, London.



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