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**COLOUR & COMPOSITION
IN INDIAN MINIATURE
ART.** spl. Project: Pratima Rawat.

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**COLOUR & COMPOSITION
IN INDIAN MINIATURE
ART.**

**COLOUR & COMPOSITION IN INDIAN
MINIATURE ART.**

SPECIAL PROJECT

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the Master of Design degree
in Visual Communication.

Jan'90 - March'90.

By - **PRATIMA RAWAT**

886128

Guide - **S. N. NADKARNI**

Industrial Design Centre,
Indian Institute of Technology,
Powai, Bombay-76.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The Visual Communication SPECIAL PROJECT
entitled

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COLOUR AND COMPOSITION IN INDIAN MINIATURE ART

This project is concerned with a Brief study of-

- Colours used in the paintings - in terms of light and shade. Hue, contrast saturation, similar chroma, Gray effect, Harmony and variation.
- History/Theme/Background/Mythology related with it.
- The use of colours to express/illustrate the theme.
- How the colours used are related with each other in this painting- i.e. Any symbolic expression through use of colours ?
- The different elements/figures in the painting.
- Their significance/Relation to illustrate the theme.
- Study of environment of the painting - what is suggests about the period/time when the painting was made.

INDIAN MINIATURE ART - an introduction-

Indian Miniature is the treasure of age less beauty materialized on a few square centimetres and telling love, the joy of living, the splendour of creation in its cosmic manifestation and sunning up thousands of years of thoughts, meditation and creativity.

Their rich colours cobalt blues, shell powder whites, vermilion and tropical greens often accented with gold and silver leaf with which they were painted. Sometimes with strokes so fine that a brush of a single squirrel's hair was used.

It's admiration was natural beauty and illustration of its most secret dreams. Its highest aspiration were - poetry and music.

It's eternal source was an impressioned love of life and beauty, recognition of human relation to the universe, worship of love, love of man and women as a prelude to absolute love in divine plenitude and union.

**ANALYSIS OF SELECTED
PAINTING FROM KANGRA
AND MUGHAL SCHOOL**

THE STUDY OF COLOUR AND COMPOSITION IN KANGRA SCHOOL PAINTINGS

A GENERAL STUDY

The miniature of this school of art mostly illustrate the mythology of poems written by Bihari, Keshavdas and Jayadeva who wrote ecstatically of the love of Radha and Krishan.

Lord Krishna is the main subject of most of these miniatures. Generally his fun loving and romantic nature is indicated. The description of Krishna in this work provided the painter with guide lines which have always been faithfully followed. His black body sandal bedecked, clad in yellow, garlanded with earrings dancing on his cheeks as he made sports"

In this miniature there is no attempt was made to present a realistic illustration. There is total lack of perspective and relative depth. The face is distinguished by a straight nose, almost in line with forehead, narrow curved eyes and delicate modeling. The Kangra artists seems to have had considerable difficulty in depicting the eyes in a frontal view.

The colour used are flat and do not indicate any attempt to show the light and shade effect. Yellow, Orange, Green, Pink, Mauve, Gray and White are colours use by all the artists of Kangra. In decorated borders dark blue and gold are favourite combinations, white and coloured flowers, the acanthus and birds are all decorative devices.

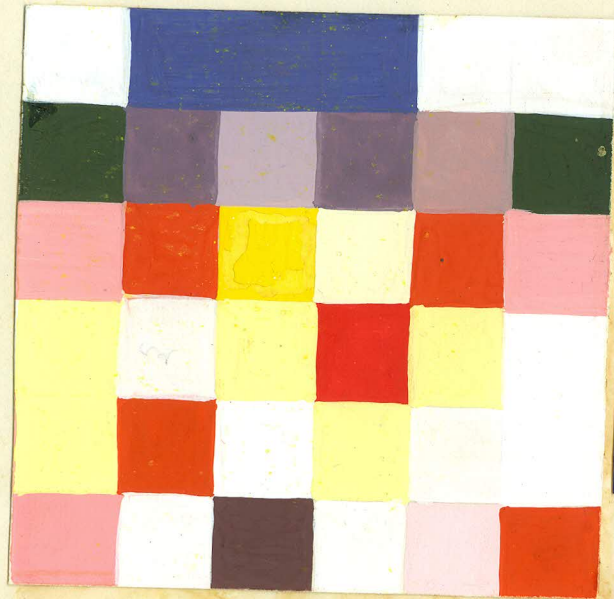
Most human figures illustrated look alike this seems to be because of these miniature illustration were made with a view to represent an emotion/feeling or occurrence and not any particular human figure.

**KANGRA SCHOOL
PAINTINGS**



RADHA AND KRISHNA LOOKING INTO A MIRROR

The theme of the painting is Radha and Krishna admiring each others beauty through mirror. This seems to be the meeting place at Radha's Sakhi's house and two Sakhies are making garland for them.



The main colours used in this painting are Yellow and red as hue and blue violet, white, gray, green and red- orange.

The yellow and red are very prominent and showing its full brilliance against off white background, while white garland and pearls of their jewellery and crown indicate the purity of their love.



The blue -violet sky contrast to Krishna's dress and Sakhi's (right) robe simultaneously.

The pink of other Sakhi's dress is balancing the light-red tone of the wall and flooring design.

The deewan on which Radha and Krishna seated is showing its richness with having decorative design on it in red and green. It's indicating the importance of Radha-Krishna and their respect.



The gray green trees are giving the depth to the painting. Gold is used for jewellery and border for jurry which shows their richness.



The horizontal and vertical lines of floor and pillars indicated the space limit and contrasting to the arc representing the ceiling limitation. The right pillar is drawn longer than left one which give an illusion of having one pillar front and other little behind.

The brown fountain is looking very dark against white.



The lotus leaves and other flowers and birds are creating an interesting and romantic environment.

ANALYSIS

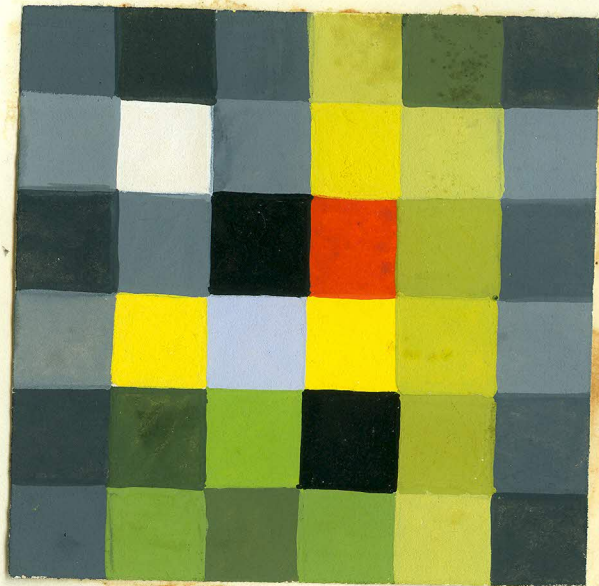
It was when all the Kangra school artists liked to make such kind of painting i. e. Radha and Krishna as lovers meet at predecided place and admire each other beauty.



TRYST IN THE FOREST

The theme of this painting is - Radha and Krishna met a tryst on the outskirts of the village. As they stood on the bed of leaves, there was a flash of lighting in the dark cloud, and it started drizzling. Krishna raised his blanket to protect Radha from rain.

This is a painting of rare beauty expressive of the tenderness of love.



The main colours used are yellow, green orange, black and gray and showing their brilliance. The illustration and colours of the painting indicates that it is the month of Savan (monsoon). The gray cloud and green area signify this. The contrasting white cranes are adding beauty to clouds. It shows that birds go to their nests as they get the signal of the weather change.

The highlight on the trees and ground is due to lighting flash in the dark cloud. They gray clouds reflect from the water which appears gray.

Krishna's black shawl with red lines radiates luminous warmth. The bright yellow of his dhoti is extremely brilliant, with cold aggressive quality of expression.

The Red - orange robe of Radha is highly contrasting with green background. It symbolizes her youthfulness. Her Gold embroidered dupatta looks dull against other colours but as in those times gold jurry work on dupatta and borders of the robes, was a tradition for occasional clothes. It was considered as the symbol of richness and status of the person.

The artist wanted to show that Radha and Krishna are superior than common people. The Decorative frame border of the painting has tertiary colours which do not match with the painting. It has a balancing effect on the painting and helps it to look separate from the frame.



MONTH OF JYESHTHA

This painting subjected on the meeting of Radha and Krishna in the month of Jyeshtha i.e. May and June.



This painting is a good example of harmony of similar chromas and other side strikingly contrasting colours blue and red orange.

The golden sun is not looking bright but its standing for very hot weather. The saturated green and brown merging with others, are dull by character. This dullness indicates the heat of the dry weather.

The white robe of Krishna is the influence of Mughal style of dressing. White is giving the coolness and yellow motives and trouser colour looking bright and exiting against the white background.

Radha's Blue dupatta has it natural character and highly contrasting red orange is making it more prominent.

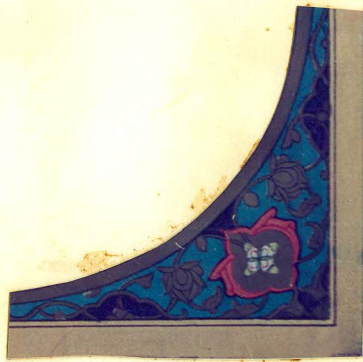
The red tips of her fingers is balancing her red dress. Red is a warm colour but in India it is considered as a young and youthfull colour for girls.

The white floor is just to balance the effect of coolness and purity. It is a link to the saturated colours. It also makes the meeting more expressive and cheerful.

The parallel vertical lines used for their robes, is giving smoothness and rhythmic effect to the painting but horizontal line looking very abstract as it divides the ground and house balcony.

The dry trees and animals are showing that the green and bushy jungle is has become dry and left





with nothing.

painting is protected by two oval and square frame,
both are opposite character but decorative design
and bold colours are helping to maintain two
abstract forms.

**MUGHAL SCHOOL
PAINTINGS**

COLOUR AND COMPOSITION IN MUGHAL SCHOOL PAINTINGS

A GENERAL STUDY

The art of this school contains the main features of portraits of the rulers/emperors, their life style personal and publicly, court scene battle scene and some times as described by the poets and writers.

The attempt was made to represent the true characters.

Faces are round and smooth, fine work of lines for shading and hair.

This school paintings have simpler setting of building, clothes, seat holsters etc.

Style of decoration, cloth/fashion, characteristic style is according to the rulers of ancient time.

Dress for women i.e Lehenga, choli and odhani remain always same as in other paintings that's because most of the emperors married Hindu girl and they were using their traditional dresses.

These paintings are highly influence by persian and Jain style of painting.

The illustration technique, use of manuscript and command of perspective and shading approximately European paintings.

The Human figures, animals and background are less stylized and more realistic .

Some artists contracted themselves with calligraphy and abstract design for decoration purpose.

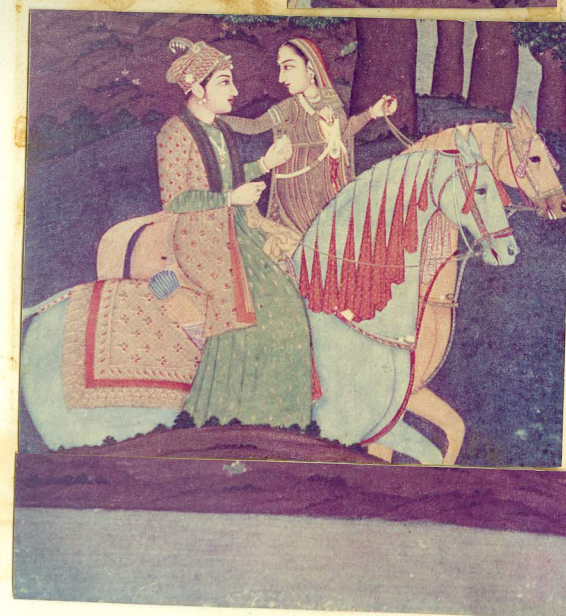
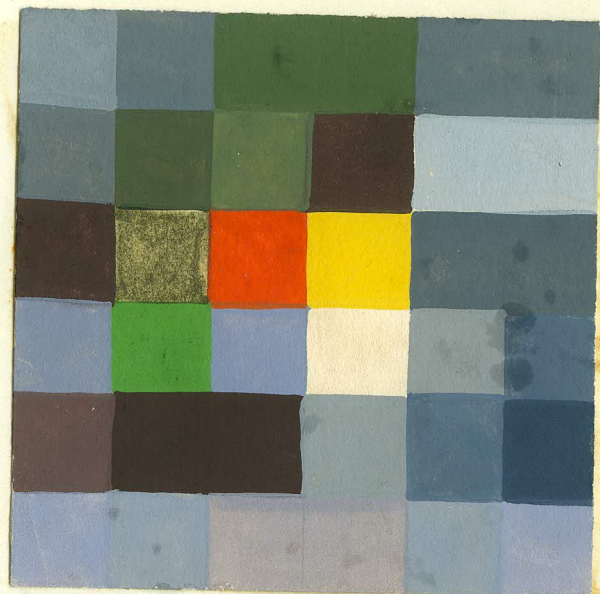
Secondary colours seems to be the favourite colours for all the painters, orange, green, yellow, purple, brown, black and gold are common to all the mughal paintings.

Specially the green and blue for floor covering were widely used.



BAZ BAHADUR AND RUPMATI RIDING BY NIGHT

The illustration related to the theme that Rupamati and Baz Bahadur are riding by the night and enjoying the coolness of clear and pleasant weather in dim moon light.



Here the main colours are blue-gray, gray-green, brown, green, orange, red-orange, yellow and gray-blue.

According to the theme dull and dark gray, green and brown are used to create the night effect. All these three colours have same amount of darkness which could be called as harmony of similar chromes. The moon and stars are contrasting to gray sky.

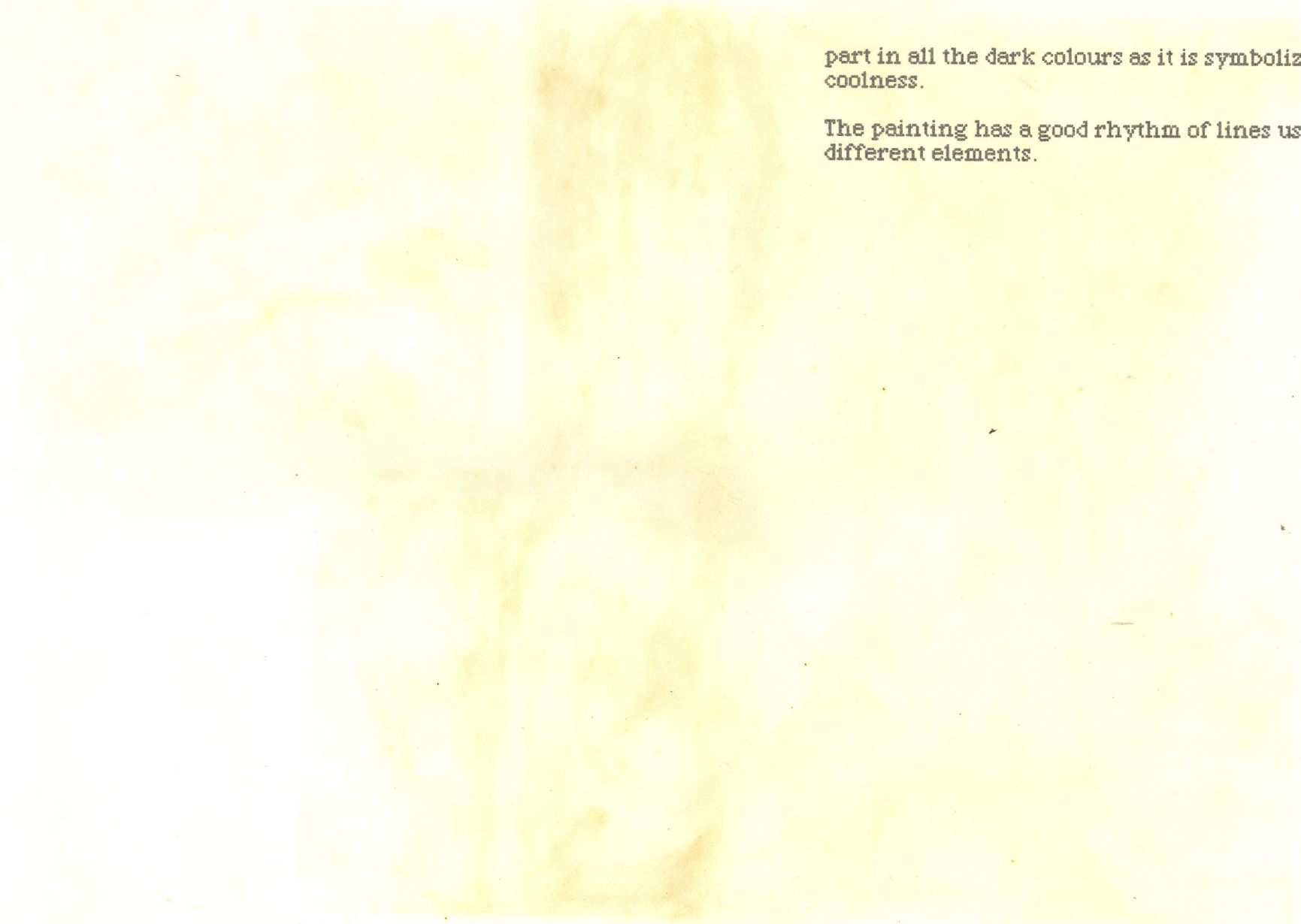
On the other hand artist has divided the foreground and background by using the bright and existing colours for the subject.

The blue gray and orange yellow horses are providing contrast and both the colours are in their brilliance. The red-orange is giving a simultaneous contrast with green and gray blue.

The white pearls of their jewellery and crown highlighting in dark background.

As in Kangra painting here also the gold symbolizes for the richness, the expensive value of the materials and jewels, through it looks dull compare to other bright colours. unlike other school paintings here the colour used for faces is same but to give depth near chin and neck, brown is used. The use of light brown and then dark brown is providing the effect of natural growth of hair.

The gray colour of water is the reflection from the sky showing good harmonious effect of entire background. The characteristic colour of water is seen of extremely left. Gray is playing the major



part in all the dark colours as it is symbolizes for coolness.

The painting has a good rhythm of lines used for different elements.



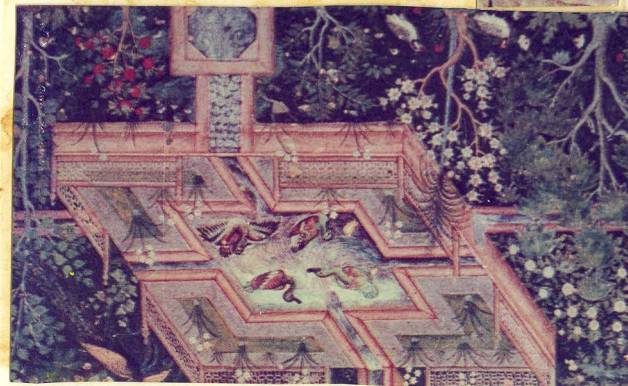
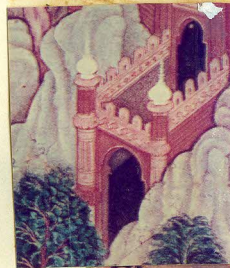
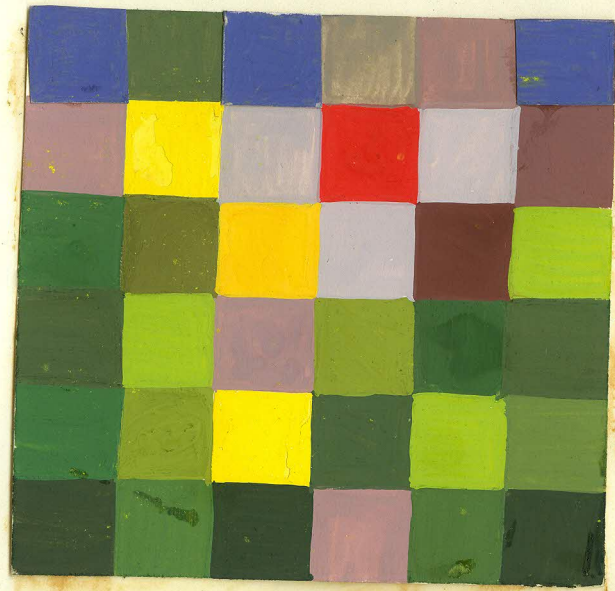
PRINCES RUDABA, MOTHER OF RUSTAM AND ZAL

Theme of this painting is based on one of the Akbar's court historians. Abdul Qadir Badasni, records in an entry of Hijra of his well-known account of Akbar's reign.

This wonderful miniature showing a well-laid garden of beautiful trees, creepers and flowering shrubs with formal water courses fed from a spout carved as a bull's head (Goumukhj), is closely related to the garden of the Hamzanama miniature.

The painting shows princess Rudaba, daughter of Mihrab, King of Kabul a petite beauty clad in Mughal costumes, lets down her long dresses as a rope for prince Zal to climb up to her palace tower.

The gateways and walls with a tower, minarets and battlements resemble the red sandstone edifices of Agra and Fatehpur Sikri.



ANALYSIS

Major colours used are yellow, Red, Green, blue brown and black gray.

The colour used here are indicating the sunset scene.

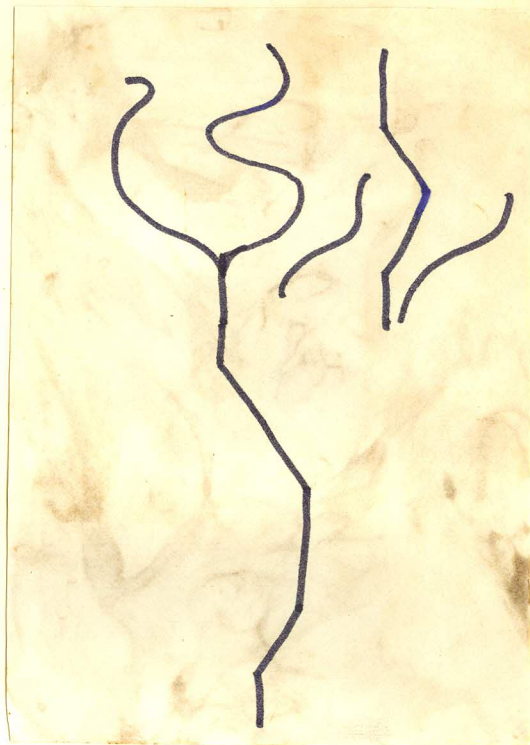
The three hues red, yellow and blue are place very closely to each other of the top of the picture. They look very static but as yellow (Zal's robe) comes with green at the centre, gives an existing effect.

The light brown and off white rocks look dull with bright hues but help the fort to stand out prominently. The black tone gives depth to four main doorways of the fort. Painting has a complementary contrast.

Red colour is local subservient to exposition. It's without expressive significance the small amount of red, orange of princesses robe is contrast of extension with blue, green and brown colour of the picture as a whole. Here the artist used another kind of contrast of proportion and great small contrast.

The black and long hair of princes falling on the rock giving an out line to her figure. The dull brown at the below centre, looks very bright and aggressive due to dark green surrounding.

This form and composition is good example of structures made by nature and man. The upper half part looks very rhythmic where rocks make a circular curve and joint narrowly abstract structure fountain. Colours of both the structures are very alike which relates them with each other.



The projected part of the rack has its characteristic feature of having very neat cut which looks like balcony of the fort.



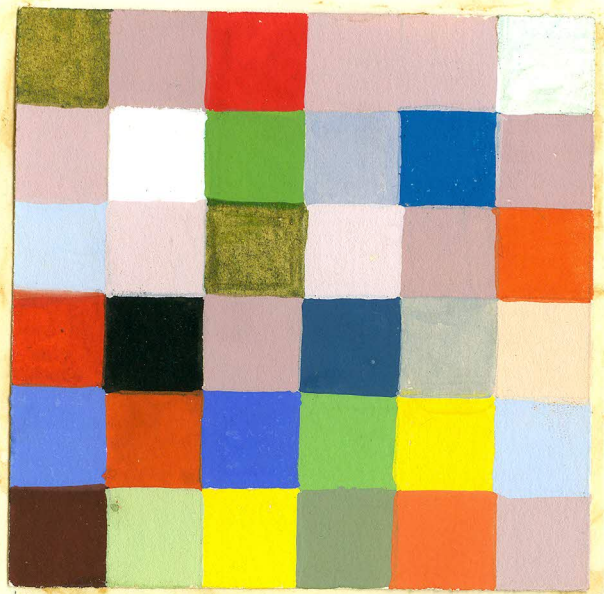
KHAN JAHAN PRESENTS HIS PRISONERS TO AKBAR

The illustrative composition is showing the presentation of prisoners to Akbar.

There was a rebellion of princes of the Timurid house in Gujarat in 1572-73. Akbar's General including Khan Jahan and Husain Quli Khan imprisoned many of them and brought to Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri. They had to suffer great humiliation for their rebellious act and were clothed or sewn in raw animal skin.

Akbar is seated on a richly decorated throne carpet in the Jharokha, while the general pay their respects to him before presenting the rebellion Mirzas in a full darbar.

This painting is done by three different artists i.e. left-half by Mansur, Right-half by Husain, Naqqash and important faces by Keshavdas.



The stylistic expressiveness of this painting is the result of brilliant composition of primary, secondary and tertiary colours.

Akbar is the Hero of the painting, seated at the highest level in green robe. This prominent green is used to show his position, polite nature and characteristic quality. The red turban stands strongly and contrasting to his robe.


The general standing at the middle left side is another attractive figure in all because of his black Jama (robe) and red-orange contrasting shawl which is showing warmth as well as his respect for Akbar.

The right half of the picture has the dull harmony of saturated colours but this breaks as left side contains the exiting and rich hues. The complementary colours green/red, blue/orange, yellow, maroon and black are modifying the painting.

On both the left and right extremes of the painting a dark area of green black presents a strong contrast and stands out prominently. The blue carpet at the centre, helps red and white to show their purity.

The peacock (top-right) blue is strikingly beautiful on saturated brown. It signifies the atmosphere of good weather.

The red on top, centre and bottom, is balancing the picture step by step. Gold is used as a tool of decorative ornament for carpets, fabrics vessel as well as weapons. The realistic figures and



geometrical lines of fort showing the difference between animate and inanimate objects.

The entire painting suggests the well planned court, people and their respect to higher authorities.

This painting has a very simple looking frame, it keeps the painting with in itself.

The main point is that this particular painting is a very good example of good combination of subjective. colours in objective contexts. Probably because of it is a contribution of three different artists of same school.

CONCLUSION

After doing a detail- study of different kind of miniature painting, their traditions, techniques theme and mythology, and also a study of colours theory i.e. their interpretation with other chromes composition and relation with the paintings etc.

Finally 2 different school paintings were selected and analysed them from different aspects according to colours composition theme related to them.

It was found that though the artists had the liberty of using subjective colours but they still had to be objective which could match the theme or requirements of the painting.

But some times the artists were completely depended on the poets or writers when they illustrated the poems. That's because most of all writers/poets described about colours also. For example Bihari describes in one of the famous poem (Doha)-

Meri Bhav badha Radha nagar soye .
Ja ten ki jhaien perat Sham harit duti hoye..

“ मेरी भव बाधा, राधा नागर सोए ।
जा तन की झाँई परत, शाम हरित दुति होए ”

In second line Bihari explains about Radha and Krishna's complexion.

He says that if Radha's shadow falls on Krishna's body his body colour changes in green i.e. Radha's colour is yellow and Krishna's blue. When Radha's colour shadow fall on Krishna's blue body, changes it's colour into green, (yellow and blue mix and result green).

In India many colours symbolize to the particular reason or subject though colours theoretically interpret differently as seen in many paintings.

Thus we see that though artists were bound with the tradition and myths but still they were successful in representing these master- pieces in few centimetre squares. That is because of each school had it's own theme, style, technique, and perspective of working.

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