

CHAPTER-3

STUDY OF RAMAYANA AND MAHABHARATA IN INDIAN ART

The Ramayana

Ramayana is a compilation of the glory of shri *Rama*, the son of king *Dashratha*. This epic has elevated the idealism in Indian culture. In the epic the character of *Rama* has narrated as an ideal king, son, husband, brother and friend. In fact *Rama* has shown as the protector of humanism. The characteristic of *Rama* is deeply rooted in man and woman of India and that has manifested in songs (folk, classical), dance, paintings, sculptures, poetry, drama etc. in all the genres. The glory of the *Rama Chandra* is refined from day by day through the centuries. Even in the materialistic world these characteristics can be found in society. *Rama* still exists in the life, behavior and aims of people of the country.

The characteristics of *Rama* are so attracted that it has become the source of inspiration to all the creative human beings. As known the *Valmiki Ramayana* is an ancient writing about the character of *Rama* so the poetry written afterward is also the same. Time to time writers and poets has reflected their passion in different languages. As Indian subcontinent is a collage of many languages so the *Ramayana* has also written in various regional languages. Thus the characteristic of *Rama* has spread all around. But the main epic about *Rama* is the *Ramayana* of *Valmiki*.

Ramayana is an ideal and inspirational epic not even for the poet and writers but for the artist too. Through the ages the *Ramayana* has narrated in various style or schools of Indian art. The light and shades of the life of *Raja Rama* is shown in the life of every human. *Ramayana* has depicted from the folk art to the classical arts and even on the walls of various temples and palaces i.e.

"The scene of the Marriage Ceremony of Rama Sita in **Virupaksha Temple**, Rama and Hanumana in **Lepakshi Temple**, Rama – Sita in **Vishnu Temple**, the scene of Rama – Lakshmana – Sugriva and Coronation of Rama in **Pundrika temple** at Vijaynagar. Incarnation of Vishnu as Rama and Swayamwara of Sita at **Prasann Venkatraman temple**, tenth incarnation of Vishnu, fight of Rama-Ravana, returning Sita-Rama to Ayodhya at **Narsimha temple** in Mysore, depiction of whole *Ramayana* at **Rama Temple**, scenes of *Ramayana* in **Padmanabhaswami temple**. Scene of yajna by Dashratha for children, Exile of Rama- Sita and Lakshmana, Coronation of Rama etc. at **Matancheri Mahal** at Kerala."¹ Except the given example, there are numberless places in India where *Ramayana* has depicted in different forms and genres of arts.

Ramayana had become a renowned theme for Paintings in the Miniature school of Rajasthani, Mughal and Pahari.

Medieval time period of India, art was flourished on the walls and followed by a strong tradition of Pat-Chitra that had spread not only in India but also in *China, Korea, Japan, Cambodia, Java, Sumatra, Lanka, Nepal, Tibet* and *Afghanistan*. These pat-chitra had made on the palm leaves, cloth and paper and helped to spreading out the religion beliefs in different countries in interesting and effective way. Artist has left the

religious staunch and painted *Kalpasutra*, *Kalka Charya Katha*, *Markandeya Puran*, *Durga Saptshati*, *Rati Rahasy*, *Kaamsutra* with generosity. Later style of painting has also impacted with the previous depictions.

Art has flourished completely till the Gupta period and the caves of Ajanta, Ellora and Bagh are the examples of this development. Gupta period has elaborated as the golden period of Indian art by the historians and art critics.

Further the growth of various arts has interrupted because of political imbalance due to attack of invaders. But slow and steady arts have maintained the developing process. In this journey, glimpse of the developing style of Rajasthani miniature painting has flourished in various principalities of Rajasthan.

Rajasthani paintings are also known as *Rajput Paintings* "The term Rajput is employed because all the works discussed have been produced under the patronage of Rajput princes; it conveniently summarizes the fact of board distinction from Mughal; and its preferable to any sectarian name such as Hindu, because that would have too wide a geographical application. Rajput painting is a counterpart of the vernacular literature of Hindustan."² Rajput art has created the magic world in art *i.e.* heroic man, beautiful, passionate, shy but bold woman, tamed wild beasts. This is the world depicted by Rajput painters. Inheriting diverse traditions, Rajasthani School has displayed a rich range of expression.

"Mewar, Bundi, Kota, Jaipur and Kishangarh in eastern Rajasthan and Joadhpur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer in the western region became the important centers of painting. The Rajput belonged to the warrior class and claimed descent from Rama, the hero of the epic Ramayana"³

Often the Rajput patrons commissioned their painters. In Rajasthani Miniature paintings each school has presented a special facial structure. As a region Rajasthan have a rich culture and tradition of costumes, patterns and jewelry that can also seen in the miniature paintings. Thus Rajput paintings have provided the encyclopedia about the information of customs, costumes, architecture and religion.

In the earlier style of paintings the two-dimensional effect was enhanced with flat application of colour. Some of the night scenes are depicted as if in the full sunlight. In the painting interior and exterior of Rajput places has been painted. Rajasthani painters has inspired with the religions and secular literature sources. For the painting theme were selected from *Puranas*, *Epics*, *Bhagvatapurana*, and *Devimahatamy*. From the *Puranas*, *Vishnupurana*, *Bhagwatpurana* are of the favorite subjects to be painted.

Ramayana and *Mahabharata* the both celebrated Epics are painted with versatility in different styles of Rajasthani miniature paintings. Some other themes were also painted that are *Barahmasa* and *Ragmala*. In *Barahmasa* artist has depicted the changes of twelve seasons of India with keep observance and minute details and how that affected the human in a pleasant way. Artist has elaborated different musical moods according to specific iconographic rules in *Ragamala* paintings.

“Popular Love Ballads namely, Dhola-Maru, Sohni-Mahivala, Madhavanala-Kamakandala, Nala-Damyanti, Hammira-Hatha, Laila-Majnu etc”⁴ all are the provided themes which were frequently taken up by the painter.

“Rajput paintings have unveiled a forgotten world of beauty which had been created in a forgotten span of time. To admire Rajput painting was not enough..... It is the outcome of a

cultural synthesis, contemporary with its production and is the manifestation of the sum total of emotions in which religious beliefs, human and divine love and secular aspirations have all played their part.”⁵

The Mughal art is one of the miniature schools. “The Mughal school evidences an assimilation of various traits of the art of the schools that flourished in India, Persia, Central Asia and Europe.”⁶ Mughal paintings are social art indeed embraced religious and legendary themes and without any doubt represented the inclusive source of reconstruction of native life, works, and beliefs.

Mughal painters have constituted the environment, plant and animals too. So it is quite true that Mughal miniature art is as much social as the other school of Indian miniature art *i.e.* Rajasthani and Pahari etc. Mughal paintings have developed various sections of art like portrait, narrative arts, historical, mythological, calligraphy, margin paintings etc.

Mughal school of miniature art has widespread in country and flourished at *Awadh* (Lucknow and Faizabad), *Lahore*, *Patna* and *Delhi*. Influence of Mughals can be seen not only in arts but also in the form, shapes, patterns and decoration of architecture, utensils, furniture, carpets and textile fabrics.

Mughal art has flourished in different manner under the patronage of various emperors- *Babur*, *Humayun*, *Akbar*, *Jahangir*, *Shah Jahan*, *Aurangzeb*, etc.-

Babur was the first ruler of Mughal dynasty in India. As a good art critic he analyzed the art works of Persian painters *Bihzad* and *Shah Muzaffar*. “Babur had illustrated manuscript in his royal library, demonstrating his interest in painting. The illustrated copies of the *Shahnama* (Timurid School, c. 1440)

and the *Zafarnama* of 1467, containing Bihzad's painting, were previously in Bahadur's collection."⁷

Painting has flourished and developed its distinct style under the independent vision of Mughal Emperor *Akbar*. He never support the conservative elements and beliefs of Muslims infect he claimed the revelation of divine wisdom. In the paintings of his time-period it seems that artists have tried to explore external and internal quality of the objects. *Hamzanama* or *Dastan-i-Amir Hamza*, *Anwar-i-Suhaili*, *Khamsa of Nizami*, *Gulistan*, *Tutinama*, *Chandayana*, *Nimatnama*, *Darabnama*, "*Razmnama* (Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II, Museum, Jaipur, c. 1584), *Ramayana* (Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II, Museum, Jaipur, ad. 1587)"⁸ are some of the well known illustrated albums of Mughal miniature paintings.

In his (*Akbar's*) time period, artist has intermingled Persian, Indigenous and foreign elements of art. During *Akbar's* reign a number of Hindu epics texts- *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Harivansha*, *Nala-Damianti*, *Panchtantra* were translated into Persian and often illustrated with paintings. Through the translation and paintings of Indian classical works into Persian language shows *Akbar's* interest in Indian cultural values.

"Mughal paintings, freed from religious association, renounced iconic and symbolic representation in favor of non-symbolic and descriptive visual documents of contemporary life. While depicting themes relating to the legends and myths of Islam (for example, in the illustrations of the *Hamzanama*), the artist's visual narratives are simply interpretative and their choice of subject matter to represent the themes is only functional. Similarly, in the treatment of themes illustrating great Hindu epics like the *Ramayana*, *Razmnama*, *Harivansha*, the Mughal artist's approach to the subject matter is purely

documented, their descriptive visual narratives do not calculated to arise religious sentiments.”⁹

As *Akbar*, *Jahangir* also took personal interest in the artworks of his artists. He was an enthusiastic patron and generous connoisseur for artist and their art works, paintings of historical events, nature and unusual incidents of daily life were depicted in the reign period of *Jahangir*. In such painting artist has shown the curiosity, pleasure and amazement for the beholders. Depiction of natural birds and animals in the painting was loved by him too much.

After *Jahangir*, *Shah Jahan* has contributed his goodness as a patron and connoisseur for the growth of artist and art works. “Shah Jahan’s inmate love for surface brilliance and ornate objects drew an artist’s work very close to the accomplishment of a skilled draftsman. His great fondness for jewelry and architecture in marble richly inlaid with precious stones left an impact on the paintings of his reign.”¹⁰

Although *Jahangir* has preferred the artworks that reflected physical reality, harmonious colour effects and convincing naturalism but *Shah Jahan* has promoted the use of gold, glimmering jewels, richly woven textile, profuse surface decoration on architecture columns.

Taste of Mughal art and aesthetics had changed because of the perfect idealism of *Shah Jahan* and humanistic vision of *Jahangir*. Then with the arrival of *Aurangzeb* in the Mughal dynasty, the glorious chapter of the achievements of the artist was abrupted. Thus artist has to move towards the other regains for the sake of patronage to them.

“In the history of Indian paintings, Pahari miniature paintings convey a specific meaning: the paintings produced in

the north-western Himalayas- the region which roughly comprises the present Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Tehri Garhwal (Uttar Pradesh); and the art got the patronage of the local chiefs who were mostly Rajput. The word 'Pahari' is the adjectival form of 'Pahar', which is hill, meaning something coming from or belonging to the hills."¹¹

Pahari miniature painting has flourished at various centers *Basohli, Guler, Chamba, Mandi, Kangra* are the major and at *Garhwal, Hindur, Jammu, Kullu, Bilaspur, Srinagar* are the minor centers of Pahari miniature school.

Despite stylistic diversities, Pahari miniature school is renowned for softness, tranquility, spontaneity, lyricism, inherent symbolism, minute details and deep feeling of human emotions that denote the miniatures.

The cult of *God-Love, Nayaka-Nayaki-Bhed, Ragmala Paintings, Baramasa, Krishna Lila, Legend of Shiva, Markandeyapurana*, epics- *The Mahabharata, Kirat Arjuna, The Ramayana* and some other stories *i.e.- Aniruddha and Usha, Malti-Madhu, Sohni-Mahiwal, Laila-Majnu, Sassi-Punnu, Nala-Damyanti*, Erotic depiction, portraits, animals and birds are the subjects of depiction in Pahari miniature.

Both the epics, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are well depicted in artworks from the pat-chitra to Pahari school. Different incidents of epics were painted in various sub-school of miniature. The story was indifferent according to *Valmiki Ramayana, Tulsi Ramcharitmanas, Vedavyasa's Mahabharata* and other regional versions of the epics.

Here the description of text from the epic is presented through the visual manner in the form of miniature painting.

Sage Narada requests Valmiki to write the story of Rama

(Kangra style, Pahari Paintings, early 19th century, Paper, 40.6 x 55.7 cm, Acc. No. 49.49/276 Collection – National Museum.) (Fig. 3.1) : In this painting artist has narrated one of the very first scene, from *Baal Kaand* of the epic *Ramayana* artist has depicted sage *Valmiki* and sage *Narada* sitting at the hermitage of sage. There sage *Narada* has urged him to write about the story of *Rama* after narrating the story to him.

Artist has depicted the scene as beautifully as it seems an exotic landscape. At the centre point of the space artist has placed a thatched hut, inside that some clothes are hanging on a rope. One sage is sitting in front of the hut but sage *Valmiki* and sage *Narada* are sitting at the right side of the hut. A holy river has shown at both side of hermitage. At the foreground some small mounts has depicted at both the right and left side, with light colour grass and red and white forest flowers. Artist has depicted the environment in light colours, trees in dark colours and so the environment seems to be very pleasant and divine. In such peaceful and spiritual surroundings, the red cloth of sage *Narada* has become the central point for the viewer.

Rama and Lakshmana discover the dying crane

(Illustration to the Hindu Epic, The Ramayana, Malwa, Central India, c. 1630, size: 8½ x 6½ inch. Gopal Krishna Kanoria collection, Calcutta) (Fig. 3.2) : In the present miniature artist has shown the incident, *Rama* followed by his brother *Lakshmana* in the search of *Sita*. Here the dying vulture is *Jatayu*, who bravely constrained *Ravana*'s efforts for abduction of *Sita*. *Ravana* mortally wounded *Jatayu* and blood was shedding from its neck. For *Rama* it was the ray of hope about the search of his wife *Sita*.

The painting has presented the calm approach of logic with simple composition, dramatic juxtaposition of colours and gentle lines.

Rama Pinning for Sita

(Gouache on paper, Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th Century; from a Kangra Workshop, size- 26.5 x 33cm, Collection of Mr. Gopi Krishna Kanoria, Patna.) (Fig. 3.3): Artist has depicted *Rama* and *Lakshmana* seating side a cave. *Rama* was identified due to his blue complexion and dress of exile. *Lakshmana* wearing a headgear of green leafs and is sitting with *Rama*.

Here artist has shown the impatience of *Rama* through his gesture. In spite the support of monkeys, *Rama* has depicted in hopeless position; although the character of *Rama* has explained as the embodiment of dhairya, patience, and morality in the *Valmiki Ramayana*.

Artist has evolved the viewer in the painting through the depiction of state of mind of the principal character.

Rama destroyed the demon's armies

(From a Ramayana series, Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh, size- 22 x 31cm, Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh.) (Fig. 3.4) : In this miniature artist has used the convention of continuous narration to evoke a sense of wonder. On the same leaf artist has depicted *Surpanakha*, first as a beautiful persuading *Rama*, then *Lakshmana* has cut off her nose and finally artist has depicted her flying off. Then she is depicted as the demon, huge, weird, dark, and misshapen, with a curling tongue, long fangs, brisling hair and pendulous breasts. Artist has narrated a complete incident in a single artwork.

The Fight between Jatatyu, the vulture and Ravana

(From the Ramayana Series, Gouache on Paper, Pahari, 1st

quarter of the 18th century, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi.) (Fig. 3.5) : Artist had illustrated the feeling of devotion of *Jatayu* in the painting through the depiction of their episode. *Jatayu* had fought courageously with the ten headed and twenty armed *Ravana*, the demon king of Lanka. In the battle *Ravana* has pierced *Jatayu*'s body with a spear and then hacked his mighty wings with the axe. Artist has depicted *Sita* in the right corner smaller than *Jatayu* and *Ravana*. This painting belongs to a "large series (more than 270 leaves) popularly referred to as the "Shangri" Ramayana, with reference to the small place in Kullu."¹²

Lakshmana, seeing Bharata's approach, tells Rama that he intends to slay their brothers

(Folio from a miniature of the Ramayana, Sub-Imperial Mughal, C. 1600, sheet, size- 289x178mm) (Fig. 3.6) : Artist has depicted *Lakshmana*'s doubt, *Bharata* and *Shatrugna*'s approach and *Rama*'s faith in a single miniature. Artist has blocked the sight of characters by a line of trees and set apart in two sections, in one *Rama* and *Lakshmana* in other section *Bharata* and *Shatrugna* with the army.

This picture is a good example of Mughal style of depiction. The rich, deep colour, rock, natural rendering of trees and humans, the lively moment, the unified composition are some remarkable qualities of the miniature. The rhythm and ponderous grace has maintained in the whole miniature.

The monkey Prince Angada clasps the feet of his dead father, Vali, at the request of his mother, Tara

(Folio-18 from a manuscript of the Kishkindha Kanda (Book-4) of the Ramayana, Mankot, c. 1700-1710, size- 169x267mm) (Fig. 3.7) : In this miniature artist has depicted the episode of the death of *Vali*. *Rama*, *Lakshmana*, *Sugriva*, *Hanumana*, standing around his dead body. *Tara*, wife of dead *Vali* is lamenting and sitting on the floor with white cloths and loose hair. Prince *Angada* has grasped his father's feet in grief. It seems that the tree is bending in sorrow, to give the shelter the sorrowful women.

Having told the monkeys that the abducted Sita is in Lanka, the vulture Sampati regains his wings

(Folio-48 from a manuscript of the Kiskindha Kanda (Book-4), of the Ramayana, Mankot, c. 1700-1710, size- 165x266mm) (Fig. 3.8) : *Sugriva* has sent the bear king *Jambvant*, *Angada*, *Hanuman* with other monkeys in search of *Sita*. In the way they all met vulture *Sampati* on the mountain cave. The wings of *Sampati* were burned off, once when he was shielded his brother *Jatayu*, as they flew too close to the sun.

Artist has added here that *Sampati* has regained his wings when he helped monkey in the search of *Sita*. Range of mountains is creating a balanced space division in this painting.

A simple version of the bright colour style associated with Basohli and Kullu now practiced in Mankot.

Lakshmana cuts the nose off the demoness Surpanakha

(Leave from the Aranyakanda (Book-3) of the Ramayana series, Kangra, c. 1750-80, size- 210x311mm) (Fig. 3.9) : In the beautiful landscape of hills, artist has narrated the story in different scenes. In one scene *Rama-Sita-Lakshmana* are

interacting with a peacock and demoness *Surpanakha* watching them behind the hill. In second scene *Rama* and *Sita* shown sitting in a hut and in third scene *Lakshmana* has cut off the nose of demoness *Surpanakha*.

Artist has used the ancient technique of continues narration to present in a single composition events that take place at different times.

Surpanakha instigates her brother Ravana to abduct Sita

(Leave from the *Aranyakanda* (Book-3) of the Ramayana series, Kangra, c. 1750-80, size- 210x311mm) (Fig. 3.10) : Artist has depicted *Surpanakha* in the royal court of *Ravana*, franking up the situation against *Rama-Sita-Lakshmana* and convincing him to abduct *Sita* a the revenge for her insult.

Artist has shown *Ravana* twice and his horned, yellow charioteer thrice, again utilizing continuous narration. The movement is directed in the painting to the upper right space. In the back down to the bottom middle that *Ravana* goes out in his mule-down chariot.

Ravana abducted Sita after sending Maricha in the guise of a golden deer to lure Rama and Lakshmana away

(Leave from the *Aranyakanda* (Book-3) of the Ramayana series, Kangra, c. 1750-80, size- 206-311mm) (Fig. 3.11) : Artist has illustrated many chapters of *Aranyakanda* in a single miniature painting. Artist has started the story from the left upper corner and ends it in the right below corner of the painting. Artist has narrated the tragic episode very sensible as well as beautiful manner. Beautiful in the sense that beautiful landscape of background play very important role by symbolizing the peaceful, pleasant environment of the life of *Rama-Sita* and *Lakshmana* before the abduction of *Sita*. Artist has maintained

the stylistic and iconographic continuity in the miniature painting.

The Hermitage of sage Bharadwaja

(Pahari School, Chamba Kalam, Kangra idiom, c. 1780-1785, size- 33.1x22.7cm.) (Fig. 3.12) : After crossing the river *Ganga* in a boat provided by *Guha*, *Ram-Sita-Lakshmana* has reached at the hermitage of *Bharadwaja muni* at *Prayag*.

Artist has narrated the episode in which *Rama* was asking guidance from *sage* about the place on that they (*Ram-Sita-Lakshmana*) could stay during the exile. The hermitage of *sage Bharadwaja* was depicted in detail as it is the God's abode and can give place to humanity for stay whether human, birds or animals.

The Agony of Bharata

(Pahari School, Chamba, Kangra idiom, c. 1780-1788, size 34x23.1cm) (Fig. 3.13) : In the painting *Bharat* has shown full grief and in agony. *Bharat* was consoling by *Shatrughana*, mother *Kaushalya* and a nobleman and surrounded by nobles and army men.

This is the episode when *Bharat* feels himself helpless and banished like his brother *Rama* due the ill will of mother *Kaikayi*. While seeing the countrymen and noblemen preparing for coronation ceremony of *Bharat* on the wish of *Kaikayi*, *Bharat* was emotionally shattered.

The diagonal line of standing female figure at the centre and the prominent curving river lend movement to the scene. Whole painting was extremely dominated with green color.

The Four Brother meets in joy

(Pahari School, Chamba kalam, Kangra idiom, c. 1780-1785.) (Fig. 3.14) : In this miniature painting artist has narrated the scene of reunion of four brothers and rest of the family members and noblemen at the hermitage to *Rama*, *Sita* and *Lakshmana* near the river *Mandakini*. With the river artist has divided the space in composition. The main episode has shown in the left side space where *Rama* and *Lakshmana* are embracing the mothers and other ladies from the palace but *Satrughna* has bowed at the feet of *Sita* and *Bharat* is embracing to a rishi behind. Weeping *Kaushalya* has depicted in yellow *dupatta* and queen *Sumitra* has consoled her. *Sumitra* has portrayed noble, virtuous but practical in the epic *Ramayana*. *Lakshmana* is embracing to a lady, she is undoubtedly *Kaikayi*, who is now troubled at heart and sorrowful on the meeting the persons for whose misfortunes she was responsible. At the right lower corner some nobles has grouped together and suggested that many more has followed them. Some of them have showed bowing in the foreground.

Rama at the hermitage of Sage Atri

(Pahari School, Chamba Kalam, Kangra idiom, c. 1780-1785) (Fig. 3.15) : In this miniature painting artist has narrated the episode when *Rama*, *Sita* and *Lakshmana* has left *Chitrakuta* and moved forward. Then they reached at the hermitage of sage *Atri* and were staying at the hermitage.

Sage *Atri* has seated at the center and conversing with *Rama* and *Lakshmana* who has shown seated at the left. On the other side of sage *Atri*, *Sita* and *Anusuya* has seated near a hut and talking affectionately. In the episode *Anusuya* has shown quite eager to know the story of the marriage of *Rama* and *Sita*. For her *Sita* has narrated the whole story in detail and *Anusuya*

has given her celestial gifts, ornaments, pastes and robes which would never fade or get soiled.

Artist has depicted the light colour hut with the background of dark green foliage and leaves has sat at the top of the hut for decoration sake. The geometrical shape from the skin of deer executed a sharp contrast of the other shapes of the paintings.

Rama at the hermitage of sage Agastya

(Pahari School, Chamba Kalam, Kangra idiom. C. 1780-1785) (Fig. 3.16) : *Rama, Sita* and *Lakshmana*, while wandering all around during the exile, has reached at the hermitage of sage *Agastya*. At the hermitage sage *Agastya* was laying with several other ascetics. Beside the hermitage artist has painted a tranquil lake full of lotus flowers and leaves as a symbol of homage, the sage *Agastya* has offered fruits, roots, flowers, water and other things in great profusion to *Rama, Sita* and *Lakshmana*.

According to *Ramayana* at this meeting sage *Agastya* has given the mighty weapons *i.e.* powerful bow, a *brahmhadatta* dart resembling the sun, two inexhaustible quivers filled with sharp arrow and sword to *Rama*. Sage has also suggested them that they should live in *Panchavati* in rest of the period of exile.

The depiction of nature in the landscape has enhanced the beauty of the scene. Although the area depicted in the painting seem to be far away from the village and town of householders yet was looked as the divine abode of sage and anchorite. With the two main groups in foreground artist has composed birds, animals and anchorites in different spaces in the painting that has created the movement in the painting.

The Panchavati Hermitage

(Pahari School, Chamba Kalam, Kangra idiom, c. 1780-1785) (Fig. 3.17) : Here *Rama-Sita-Lakshmana* has shown sitting in the front of a hut at *Panchavati*. A huge bird is the centre of attraction in the painting. This is the scene when after reaching *Panchavati* they have seen a huge bird and enquired whether it is a demon or not. Then they came to know that huge bird was named *Jatayu*, a good friend of king *Dasharatha*.

In difference to this relationship, *Rama* paid obeisance to him and enquired of him about his name and lineage.

Rama is gazing affectionately at *Sita* while they are seated on a leopard skin conversing with each other. *Lakshmana* and the great vulture *Jatayu* are shown on each side of them as if in attendance on the divine couple. *Jatayu* in painting has depicted simply as a huge bird.

Artist has depicted a river flowing in the foreground and trees seemed very old *i.e.* banyan. Different birds and animals have shown interacting with each other as tigers, deer and peacock, flamingo etc.

Lakshmana and Jatayu conversing at Panchavati Hermitage

(Pahari School, Chamba Kalam, Kangra idiom, c. 1780-1785) (Fig. 3.18) : In this painting artist has depicted the scene of *Panchavati*. Here *Rama* has shown seated on the tiger's skin and worshipping an idol with the various auspicious articles that required in the ritual of worship. At the right side *Sita* in red clothes has seated on the yellow *aasana* in front of the hut. While cooking the meal she is looking behind. Artist has depicted utensils of clay, leafs and wood in surroundings. At the left area *Lakshmana* has seated on the yellow grass mat and conversing with *Jatayu*, the huge bird. In mythology it is common to see birds and animals talking with humans and helped them. In the background artist has shown a river and

large stones as the space division in the composition. Trees are also playing the significant role by covering hut and enhancing the natural beauty.

Surpanakha at Rama's Hermitage

(Pahari School, Chamba Kalam, Kangra idiom, c. 1780-1785) (Fig. 3.19) : In this painting artist has narrated the episode of demoness *Surpanakha's* arrival at *Panchavati*.

Passing from the way of *Panchvati* she has seen *Rama*, a youthful, full of valor, royalty prince near a hut. She transformed herself into beautiful maiden wearing red clothes, came near the hermitage and inquired about *Rama*, who he was and why he was stayed in the woods? She came to know the *Rama* is the eldest son of king *Dashtrath*, *Sita* is daughter-in-law and *Lakshmana* is younger son. She has tried to persuade *Rama* to marry her but *Rama* denied as he has already married and having a beautiful wife named *Sita*. *Rama* suggested her to offer *Lakshmana*. But she did not get any positive answer from *Lakshmana*.

In the painting artist has narrated the *Rama*, *Sita*, *Lakshmana* and *Jatayu* sitting in the peaceful atmosphere in their hermitage. *Sita* is busy in cooking food; *Lakshmana* and *Jatayu* are in conversation. On the arrival of the demoness *Surpanakha*, all of them have gently turned their face towards her. Artist has created a good balance in the composition of forms. River, trees, birds and stones are also playing important role in the painting.

The Demon Maricha in the guise of a Deer

(Pahari School, Chamba Kalam, Kangra idiom, c. 1780-1785) (Fig. 3.20) : With the humiliation and injury demoness *Surpanakha* went back to her brother *Ravana* at his kingdom *Lanka*. Because the ill will of revenge *Surpanakha* flattered *Ravana* by praising the past victories. Then she provoked *Ravana* through the description of the beauty and charm of *Sita*. After all the effort of *Surpanakha*, *Ravana* has decided to abduct *Sita* and with this ill will he went to *Maricha* and forced him to assist him in his plan. *Maricha* possessed magical powers and transformed himself into the marvelous form of deer and entered in the hermitage to *Rama*.

In the painting artist has depicted two scenes together. In one scene *Sita* in collecting flowers and saw a wonderful deer. She was enamored by the beauty of the deer. In second scene, deer appears again near the two brothers when they are looking at the animal with a feeling of amazement.

In the painting artist has used yellow light green and red colour in the background and make the pleasant environment.

Rama chasing the magic deer

(Pahari School, Chamba Kalam, Kangra idiom, c. 1780-1785) (Fig. 3.21) : Here in the centre of the miniature artist has depicted *Rama* holding bow with left and arrow with the right hand while chasing the deer. *Rama* has looked back towards *Sita* as she wanted to have that deer.

Artist has again depicted *Rama* and deer in upper left corner of the painting. *Rama* is running fast, holding bow with right and arrow in left hand. Deer is also running rapidly to keep *Rama* far away from the *Sita* and hermitage.

For the narration artist has depicted the scene in group from the foreground till the background that way of narration helped viewer to understand the episode with the painting. Artist

has painted *Jatayu* as the witness of the miserable happening. At foreground artist has also depicted a river full of flowers, buds and leaves. In the painting artist has applied harmonious and dullness of the pigment according to the object and elements.

Rama meets with adverse Omens

(Pahari School, Chamba Kalam, Kangra idiom, c. 1780-1785) (Fig. 3.22) : In this painting artist has narrated the episode when *Rama* is returning back to the hermitage after slaying *Maricha*. But at the hermitage *Ravana*, the demon's king of *Lanka*, has abducted *Sita* in the absence of *Lakshmana* and *Rama*. As the symbol of this unethical act *Rama* has seem terrible portents namely jackals and wild beasts howling. A ghost like figure has shown lying behind a tree and sitting on the tree an owl has started hooting.

Rama was deceived by *Maricha* through the illusion of deer then both brothers became more perplexed and anxious about *Sita*. Artist has depicted the time period of dusk and it seems the state of mind of *Rama* has reflected through the atmosphere. Gray, dark, dull tones of pigment symbolizing the prevailing gloom. Standing trunks of broken tree has anticipates a surrealistic approach. The whole scene has created the mysterious environment at all around the atmosphere.

Rama and Lakshmana bemoaning the loss of Sita

(Pahari School, Chamba Kalam, Kangra idiom, c. 1780-1785) (Fig. 3.23) : After returned back both brothers *Rama* and *Lakshmana* could not found *Sita* at the hermitage, even the things were mismanaged. *Rama* overwhelmed with sorrow and seems like soulless here. Both brothers searched for her at the nearby places, at the lake, hills, caves, garden but they could not find any trace to find her. Even driven by anxiety *Rama* has asked from trees, birds, animals, and flower about beloved *Sita*.

In the miniature the whole scene is composed in the centre space in front of the hut. Both brothers have shown with their face downcast. Around the hut everything appears in disarray. In the painting *Rama* has looked crestfallen, as his cap is lying on the ground and garland scattered in pieces. To symbolize the condition the birds and animals are not in pair but single in the miniature.

The Death of King Dasharatha, the father of Rama

(Folio 30r, 30 x 18 cm. Inscribed : Tarah Basawan amal Miskin) (Fig. 3.24) : This is very important painting but has distorted from the left side and from the bottom side. Here artist has depicted the inside view of royal palace and the human forms has composed in the foreground. In the painting artist has narrated the episode of king *Dasharatha's* death due to the departure of his favourite son *Rama* with brother *Lakshama* and newly wed wife *Sita*, to the exile for fourteen years.

Artist has placed the dead body of king *Dasharatha* at the floor, covered with white clothes. He was surrounded by his three queens *Kaushalya*, *Sumitra* and *Kaikayi*. All three queens have depicted here with loose hair.

One queen is sitting at the head side and other two queens are sitting at the feet side space on the low height bed. On the right side space two female servants are standing. One of them has astonished after seeing the mourning environment in the royal palace and other woman has shown holding a utensil in right hand and a fan in the left hand. Artist has shown the emptiness of the environment. In this miniature painting artist has made floral design all around in the background but that design is not overloading the composition.

Mother earth receiving her daughter Sita back to her womb

(Kangra style, Pahari, early 19th century, paper, 33.2 x 42.5 cm, Acc No. 76.696, National Museum, New Delhi.) (Fig. 3.25) : In this miniature painting artist has beautifully project the main event. This painting has shown the episode of when *Sita* has left his ideal husband king *Rama* and her mother earth has appeared to take her back.

For this painting artist has divided the space through the formation of wall and architectural formation. Thus artist has separated the space of royal palace and depicted the inside open area of the royal palace.

So many people have gathered for the great ceremony of *Ashwamedha Yajana* performed by their king *Rama*. Among them sage *Valmiki*, sage *Vishwamitra*, *Bharat*, *Lakshmana*, *Shatrughana*, *Hanumana*, *Sugriva*, *Jambavant*, Queen-*Kaushalya*, *Kaikayi*, *Sumitra* and the wives of prince's, *Lava-Kusha*, and other family members and people of kingdom has depicted there. The horse of *Ashwamedha Yajana* has also depicted at the foreground. Some women are peeping out from the windows and some others from the terrace to witness the ceremony.

But instead of the ceremony of *Ashwamedha Yajana*, an unexpected incident has happened when daughter of king *Janaka* and wife of king *Rama* has called her mother earth to appear and took her back in her lape from this earthly world. In the centre artist has depicted *Sita* folding her hands, sitting in the lap of a lady called mother earth. The mother earth has shown sitting on the thrown. So many gods and goddess has appeared from the clouds in the sky to witness this incident. Artist has applied white colour in sky and as well as in the wall but separate them with a thin line. Artist has repeated red,

yellow and white colour majorly but he has maintained the significance of each form.

The Mahabharata

The *Mahabharata*, an ancient Hindu epic has its own aesthetics value. This aesthetic is the beauty of perception and every human being get associated with it. This leads the human from *Sagun* to *Nirgun*. *Sagun* can be measurable, understood and visible by all and *Nirgun* is intangible, immeasurable, unseen but felt by all.

In characters *Mahabharata* have been crafted in anomalous personality with the reflection of all the light and dark shades of life. The epic is witnessing the "law that, as the oyster makes its own shell, so the mind of man creates and necessitates his own life and fate. The whole philosophy of the epic is implicit in this romance, just as it is in the common household life. Far more than the national tradition, it embodies the national morality."¹³

"Thus the principal concern of *Mahabharata* is relationship of the self with the self and with the others. This great epic provides us a method to understand the human condition itself."¹⁴

The narrator *Maharishi Vedavyas* has shown a thousand of tales, some more and less ancient have been embedded in its interstices, yet this great epic moves on from one end of the poem to the other with full of swiftness and various shades of life. It is more subtle and relevant for the present social intercourse which it portrayed many years before.

In the present form *Mahabharata* has eighteen sections called *Parv* "of which the first section establishes the context of the rivalry between the *Pandavas* and the *Kauravas*. The next three build up to the war. Then come six sections describing the

emotional, material and spiritual consequences of the war."¹⁵ Thus the story and the narratives of *Mahabharata* seem to be so close to our life and society that it reflects in the poetry-prose through the different writers from the very early till now. Through the ages writers and poets depicted their emotions and agony in different languages. Indian subcontinent is a collage of many languages so *Mahabharata* has also been written in various regional languages. But the *Mahabharat* written by *Vedvyas* is in Sanskrit and much popular among the mass.

The epic has mingled with revenge, agony, grief, sorrow, power, justice, equality, truth, respect, love, governance and many other emotions with the religious belief. But beyond religion these issues are still relevant from the common house hold life to the great art works. *Mahabharata* has been depicted not only by the poets or writers but also by the artists. Artists have illustrated the essence of the epic in different style. Somehow the story of the *Mahabharata* reflects in our society. That creates similarity between the stories of the epic with the common people. Every human being persists the best and worst in him. It is the situations that make him known for the quality.

Mahabharata has been painted from the folk to the classical arts. The epic has been transformed into painting on the walls of many temple and palaces in India. Some of that are named such as:-

Ellora:- scene of the self motivation of Arjuna, Arjunaanugrih, Abhimanu in Chakrayuha, Kaurav- Pandav and Krishna in the battle field of Kurukshetra.

Mahabalipuram :- Chakravyuh, Battle Scene Kurukshetra.

Lingaraj Temple:- scene of the Pandavas departure to Heaven.

Pattdakal:- In **Mallikarjun Temple** Ravananugrih Swrup, Panchpandav, Subhadraharn, scene of the game of Chausar, Duryodhan in Vaishampayan Sarovar, Abhimanu in Chakrayuha, Kiratarjun, Bhim, Duryodhan etc.

Vijay Nagar:- In **Virupaksha Temple** the scene of Arjun is participating in Draupadi Swayamwara, Wedding of Arjun, Bhishma on Arrows bed and in **Leepakshi Temple** the scene of Arjun is receiving the blessing of Shiva, Arjun Meditating, Krishna driving the Arjun's chariot, Draupadi's marriage to Arjun in Krishna's presence has been depicted.

Mysore:- the scene of Great War of Kurukshetra, preaching of Krishna to Arjun, Krishna driving Arjuna's chariot is in **Narsimha Temple**.

Kerala:- In **Vishnu Temple** the scene from the Mahabharat has been painted on wall.

Somnathpur:- In **Keshav Temple** the scene of the assassination of the demon Hidimb by Bhim.

Hoyesaleshwar Temple:- the scene of the fight between Arjun and Karn, story of Arjun and Krishan, Draupadi Swayamvar, fight of Arjun and Bhishma, Cakravyuh, Bhishma on the bed of Arrows, Bhim killing the Elephant, the detailed depiction of the Bhishm Parv, Dron Parv and Karn Parv.

Rajasthan:- A scene from the Mahabharat on the Nala-Damyanti legend is also illustrated on the walls of **Badar Mahal** in Bundi.

Panch Pandav Mandap, Daupadi Rath, Nakul Sahdev Rath, Arjun Rath, Dharmraj Rath, Bhim Rath in **Mahabalipuram**. Various scenes from Mahabharata has depicted in **Jagnathpuri Temple**.

Mahabharata has been depicted in the miniature paintings of Rajasthan, Mughal and Pahari schools. In Mughal time period *Mahabharata* has been translated from Sanskrit to Persian language under the name of *Razmanaama* in the reign of the emperor *Jalaluddin Muhammad Akabar*.

"The Indian religious and political literature to all periods, both Sanskrit and vernacular, contains incidental references to paintings, Chitrasala..., sufficient by themselves to prove the continuity of the art,"¹⁶ without any doubt.

Thus it is evident that although painting did not remained forever yet as the poetry and music, painting also have its significant position among the other arts in India. The old Indian schools of various classical and folk art like dance, music, drama, paintings has survived in considerable vigour almost to the present day.

Rajasthani paintings are those works which has been painted in *Rajputana*. Thus Rajput miniature painting school has flourished at the various centers of *Rajasthan*. *Ragmala*, *Gita Govinda*, *Chaura Panchasika Kama-Sutra*, Epics-*Ramanyana* and *Mahabharata* are some themes that inspired Rajasthani painters. In Rajput paintings the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are one of the major themes for narration, which continues to develop and proliferate into expressive variability with the decades.

"Other themes also develop which may at first seem rather precious, the representation of women in the infinite variety of her moods, the visualization of the musical moods. But the tradition of *Barahmasa* (seasonal) songs will infiltrate into these traditions too and tone down the preciousity developed by an over-classicized sophistication. Still later, they will be annexed by Krishna and epics theme and thus won back to a current that

is ages-old, that can insinuate itself into the hearts of young and old, and of all strata of society."¹⁷

In Mughal dynasty miniature art also flourished with Indian mythological theme and with Persian style. In the Mughal era, phases had changed in art according to the interest of the emperor, like emperor *Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar* has emphasized on book art, illustration and translation of Sanskrit text in Persian language. Yet *Akbar* could neither read nor write.

"*Akbar's* interest in books and paintings went deeper than merely maintaining a family tradition. He collected & commissioned manuscripts and books not only because he was keen to expand the horizons of his own knowledge but also because he wanted to disseminate this knowledge to his principal courtiers and subjects. He made substantial additions to his father's atelier and recruited eminent calligraphers, master painters, skilled papermakers, expert bookbinders and other book craftsmen from all over the Islamic world and the subcontinent. *Akbar* specially loved paintings and he ensured that his personal copies of manuscript were lavishly illustrated."¹⁸

Akbar had brought together the scholars from all religions who articulated their religious beliefs before him. Thus *Akbar* has promulgated his new faith named *Din-i-Illahi* that approaches religious beliefs and prohibited unnecessary conflicts on the basis of reason. On this way the translation of *Mahabharata* into Persian began as the inter-religious discourse.

"*Akbar* choose the saga of *Mahabharata*, Badauni says, because 'this is the most famous of the Hindu books, and contains all sorts of stories and moral reflections, and advice, and matters relating to conduct and manners and religion and science, and account of their sects and mode of worship, under

the form of a history of war of Kurus & Pandus'... And the Hindu believers consider it a great religious merit to read and copy it. And they keep it hid from the Muslims."¹⁹

To complete the first draft it took 18 months and before it was ready to present to *Akbar*, it took almost four years. *Mahabharata* had presented to *Akbar* in four lavishly bound volumes containing paintings by leading masters of the atelier.

"It is true the common man was never privileged to see either the Mughal miniature or the Pahari miniature. But where as the former was a vehicle for the portrayal of an aristocratic court life of which the painter was only a spectator; the subject-matter of Pahari miniatures painting was for the most part in tune with the painter's innermost feelings, religious beliefs, and love of epic lore."²⁰

Some of the Indian miniature paintings based on the epic *Mahabharata* are such as :

The Unveiling of Draupadi

(Pahari (early Kangra), late 17th early 18th century size 11 X 15 in. Collection – William Rothenstein) (Fig. 3.26) : Artist has depicted the scene of royal court of blind *Kuru* king *Dhritrashtra*. The king has surrounded by many noble intellectual men, like *Bhishma*, *Drona*, *Vidur*, *Karna* and many sages. In the left side on foreground five *Pandavas* have depicted in deep distress after the defeat in *chausar* game. In the centre at foreground *Duryodhana* has painted while provoking *Dushasana* for the insane behavior with *Draupadi*.

At the right side corner of foreground *Dushasana* has depicted misbehaving with *Draupadi*. Here in the painting *Dushasana* has shown dragging *Draupadi's* garments from her body but a miracle wrought by *Krishna* of *Dwaraka* in response

to her prayer as the veils accumulate upon the floor, leaving her still covered.

The whole assembly became astonished, "whether is the woman in the cloth, or is the cloth in her or is she made of clothing, or is it (nothing but) the woman's dress?"²¹

Mahabharata; The Unveiling of Draupadi

(Pahari (early Kangra), late 17th – early 18th century, reduced lahore Museum.) (Fig. 3.27) : Artist has projected this scene at indoor space of royal palace. Here artist has depicted the royal court of king *Dhritrashtra*, where king was surrounded by the noble men and intellectuals. In the very right and left side at the foreground artist has painted soldiers, watching the misfortunate incident of the royal court. At the centre of foreground artist has painted *chaupad* and scattered dice. In the right side of the *chaupad* artist has depicted five helpless *Pandavas* after their defeat in the game. They have also become the witness of disrespectful behavior of the royal court with their wife *Draupadi*, when *Dushasana* has tried to unveil her by dragging out her clothes. But he could not succeed in his intentions through the divine grace of lord *Krishna* to her. Artist has marred the story in a very balance composition.

Death of Bhishma

(Pahari, 177th Century) (Fig. 3.28) : In the miniature artist has depicted *Bhishma* in the centre reclined on the bed of arrows. *Bhishma* was surrounded from feet side with *Yudhisthira*, other *Pandavas* and *Duryodhana* and on the head side with seven *Rishi* including *Narada* holding *Vina* and four handed *Krishna* holding mace, lotus and conch.

Bhishma was the venerable uncle of *Pandu* and *Dhritrashtra* and instructor for the *Pandavas* and Kauravas. But

in the great war of *Mahabharata* he fought from the side of *Kauravas*. *Bhishma* was undefeatable soldier in *Kauravas* army. *Pandavas* has done such hardship to conquer *Bhishma* in the battle. At last *Bhishma* was fallen down from his chariot. He was surrounded by *Pandavas* and *Drupad Kumar Shikhandi* with pierced arrows in his body. After saw such hardship and to support *dharma*, *Bhishma* has fallen down himself with the pierced body through arrows. At that time sun was in the southern solstice, an inauspicious time for death so *Bhishma* has holded his life till the sun should reach the north.

Till the time he instructed *Yudhisthira* about the four branches of knowledge.

Sauti recites the slokas of the Mahabharata

(Folio IV, 31.2 x 22.6 cm. reproduced : Chaghatai 1943-44, plate -2) (Fig. 3.29) : In this miniature artist has narrated the opening episode of the epic, in which the *Mahabharata* was first recited by *rishi Vaisampayana* and *Maharishi Saunaka* at the occasion of *Sarpa Yajna* or snake sacrifice for king *Janamajeya* in the *Naimisha* forest.

Artist has also written the text in four lines at the upper space of the painting. The whole painting had divided in three parts. At upper space floral design was made in a box, after that artist has written the text related to the episode.

In the middle space of the painting artist has narrated the recitation of the epic *Mahabharata* among the sages. In an octagonal space fifteen sages has shown discussing the epic. Two sages are reciting the text, one of them *Sauti* is sitting on a decorated throne and other one is wearing turban. *Saumaka* is sitting on the deer skin by his side. This octagonal space has

surrounded by fifteen thatched huts that must be the living space of the sages.

In the foreground, five *brahmanas* and a noble man wearing a turban are performing a *Yajna* in a sacrifice pit, on the bank of river.

Samudra-Manthana — Devas and Asuras Churn the Ocean

(Folio 7r, 33x22.5 cm, reproduced : Khandalavala 1987)
(Fig. 3.30) : A conclave of gods has gathered at the peak of mount *Sumeru* about to get the *amrita*, the nectar of immortality. Lord *Vishnu* and *Brahma* has advised *devas* and *asuras* to assemble and place mount *Mandara* on the back of tortoise, the incarnation of lord *Vishnu* in the great ocean. For the churning they have called the serpent king *Vasuki* to coil around the mountain. On the one side *devas* had hold his tail and from other side *asuras* hold his neck for the churning.

From the churning many things produced i.e. the moon, the white horse-*Vchhaisrava*, the gem *Kaustubha*, *Parijata*- the wishing tree, the four-tusked elephant *Airavata* of *Indra*, the goddess- *Lakshmi* and *Suradevi*, the conch *Panchajanya*, *Surbhi*- the wish fulfilled sacred cow, the great poison and the *amrita* etc.

In the painting at the centre artist has depicted the mount *Mandrara* as the tree placed on the strong back of tortoise of green colour. Four gods and four demons have shown holding the snake seems all are willing to get *amrita* and obtain immortality. The things and material appears from the churning has painted at the upper space of the painting with the light colour background.

At the bottom space of the painting some text has written in a box. "This painting completely lacks the drama and fury of

the original story. The four tusked white elephant is painted black here. The subject is illustrated in the 1598-99 Razmnama but not in the imperial copy at Jaipur."²²

Parikshit takes refuge in a palace atop a pillar

(Folio 12r, 33.2 x 21.7 cm.) (Fig. 3.31) : In this miniature artist has depicted a scene from the story of king *Parikshit* and snake *Takshaka*.

Once *Parikshit*, son of *Abhimanyu* and *Uttara* reached at the hermitage of *muni* named *Samik*. Because of the anger *Parikshit* has insulted *muni Samik* by putting a dead serpent around his neck. But when *Sringi*, the son of *muni Samik* has seen the insult of his father, he has cursed *Parikshit* with death from the deadly bite of the serpent king *Takshaka* with in next few days.

Here artist has depicted that when king *Parikshit* came to know about the curse, he tried to escape and took refuge in a palace atop a tall pillar, with some physicians and learned *Brahmanas*. But after all precautions, snake *Takshaka* reached at the top of the pillar and bites at the neck of king *Parikshit*.

Artist has depicted some noble and learned men sitting beneath the pillar while other are trying to leap back in different directions to escape themselves from the snake.

Artist has also painted a water pond with lotus flower and leafs, fishes, ducks, and crocodile. Near that pond artist has depicted a burning tree but with new leafs, a sage and a serpent. This is the another part of the story, where sage *Kashyapa* is coming to protect king *Parikshit* but on the way he saw a burning tree with the poison of snake *Takshaka* so he gave new life to the tree.

Artist has created the harmony with light and bright tones of pigment in painting. At the bottom of the full-page painting artist has also write some text in one line about the painting.

"An exact replica of this painting in a different colour scheme was offered for sale at Sotheby's on April 16, 1984 (lot 22). Some decorative details of the palace structure and the text line are missing in this replica."²³

Sarpa-Yajna – The Snake sacrifice of Janamejaya

(Folio 15r, 28.8 x 18 cm.) (Fig. 3.32) : In this miniature artist has depicted the episode of *Sarpa-Yajna* performed by *Janamejaya*, the son of *Parikshit*. *Janamejaya* has wanted to take revenge by exterminating all snakes on the earth because his father king *Parikshit* had died through the poisonous bite of serpent king *Takshaka*. In the painting artist has shown snakes of all shapes, sizes, colours, harmless and deadly pour in from every direction and perish in *Yajna*.

Artist has painted the variety of enormous snakes as some of them with the heads of dragons, horses, and elephant. Artist has shown the compound wall of the palace and dramatically placed the ten priests and reciters around the square shaped *vedi*.

Among all of them *Janamejaya* was probably the young man in the middle right since he is the only one who seated on a mat. At the upper space of the painting artist has depicted *Indra* seated on a throne which seems to be float in the air. Snake king *Takshaka*'s head protruding from *Indra*'s left armpit as he too shelter to escape from the *yajna* fire. The two celestial dancers also depicted behind the throne of *Indra*.

Artist has shown unusually two tiny figures of women seated in the window-like open space in the compound wall of

the palace. Artist has given one lined text at the bottom of the composition.

Dushyanta and Sakuntala

(Folio 18r, 29 x 19 cm.) (Fig. 3.33) : Here artist has narrated the story of the meeting of *Dushyanta* and *Sakuntala*. King *Dushyanta* was going for a hunt, with a large retinue. While chasing the prey he has reached at the hermitage of rishi *Kanva* after paying homage to the sage he decided to rest there. There he meets *Sakuntala*, a young girl with incredible beauty and sweet manners. Rishi *Kanva* has found her and brought up her lovingly, over whelmed by her loveliness as his own daughter.

King *Dushyanta* has proposed her for immediate marriage. *Dushyanta* leaves the hermitage after assuring her that she will be taken to his kingdom with full honour of a queen.

At the lower half space of the composition artist has projected the scene of hunting. At the right side soldiers were leading with elephant, horse and bulk cart with trained tiger. All animals of the forest are running to save their life from the hunter.

But in the upper space of the composition tiger, snake, cow, peacock and birds are enjoy the peaceful life under the protection of sage *Knava* under the hermitage area. That shows the serenity of the *ashrama*. In that space artist has depicted a thatched hut with an elaborated gateway. There *Sakuntala* has received *Dushyanta*. *Sakuntala* has dressed in traditional costume and *Dushyanta* as a crowned king. Artist also has written some text in four line at the upper space of the composition.

Jatugriha-daha - The burning of the house of lac

(Folio 35v, 29.7 x 17.9 cm) (Fig. 3.34) : This is the episode when *Duryodhana* became insecure due to the growing popularity and prospect of *Pandav* brother. At urge of *Duryodhana* *Dhritarashtra* has asked *Yudhisthira* to visit the city *Varanavata* along with his mother and brothers. In *Varanavata*, *Duryodhana's* trustable architect *Purochana* has made a majestic mansion with highly inflammable material including straw, lac, resin war and wood and *Duryodhana* has planned to set fire when all the *Pandavas* asleep at the night. But *Vidura*, *Pandavas* uncle has send the information to them on time and they dug out a secret tunnel from the mansion to the outside space. Through that tunnel they all *Pandava's* and mother *Kunti* has escaped safely. In the mansion another set of genests – a *Nishada* mother and her five sons-perish in the flames.

In the very upper space artist has written some text about the episode of composition. After that a burning house has depicted with bodies of *Nishada* mother and her five sons. At the centre of foreground artist has depicted huge *Bhima* carrying his brothers and mother on his body. At the left side in forground tired *Pandavas* and their mother has shown asleep in the open ground. Them demon *Hidimb* has attacked on them but *Bhima* killed him and has to marry his sister *Hidimba*, who fall in love with *Bhima*. In the centre of the composition artist has depicted a scene of *Pandavas* peaceful stay at *Varanavrata*, when *Yudhisthira* went on a hunt in his chariot with a trained tiger. A flowing river with a boat and boatman who helped *Pandavas* to cross the river and rescue safely.

Arjuna shoots the fish to win the hands of Draupadi

(Folio 40v, 40.5 x 25.4 cm, reproduced: Chaghatai 1943-44) (Fig. 3.35): In this miniature painting artist has narrated the episode of *Draupadi Swayamvara*.

Artist has depicted the main scene in the centre and from three sides took the wide margin. In the margin space at the upper side two gods are sitting on their throne and watching the whole ceremony. It seems that they have their attendants on one side winged *Garuda* with human body and at other side a "Persian type simurg."²⁴

A group of musicians is playing music while sitting on the elephants and horses. Some other horses and elephants has painted but with their riders.

In the central space of the composition an invisible wall indicate by four gateways that seem to be placed in the air and decorated with *vandanvaar* of leafs. At the middle area a long poll has place and a fish hanged on it while *Arjuna* has pierced its eye by seeing reflection in a cauldron of smoking oil placed at poll's base. Then *Draupadi* garlands *Arjuna* before all kings and princes who have assembled to take part in the ceremony. The participants have watched the whole ceremony and *Arjuna's* success with expression of awe and amazement.

Death of Pandu

(Folio 28v, 29.7 x 17cm) (Fig. 3.36) : In this artwork artist has narrated the story of *Pandu's* death. Once king *Pandu* went on the hunt in the forest but his arrow pierced a copulating blackbuck and doe but infect that blackbuck is *muni Kimindama* and doe is her beloved wife. For this act *muni Kimindama* has cursed *Pandu* that he will meet his end while making love. Because of the fear of this curse, *Pandu* abstinence for many years. But *Kunti* has a boon from god sun that she can invited any god whenever she want but in result she will get a child as the blessing of the god. Thus both wives of *Pandu*- *Kunti* and *Madri* has five sons *Yudhishtira*, *Bhima*, *Arjuna*, *Nakula* and *Sahadeva* from the gods of *Dharma*, *Vayu*, *Indra* and the *Asvinkii Kumara's* twins. But once driven by the power of curse or call of the end *Pandu* has spend time with beloved *Madri* and dies as he is making love with her.

In this miniature artist has narrated the story in fragments, not in sequence. In the centre *Pandu* was shown on the horse with a servant when his arrow hit to the *muni Kimindama* in the form of blackbuck. In the upper space *Pandu* has show with *Kunti* and *Madri* discussing the incident of the curse given by *muni Kimindama*. But again *Pandu* has depicted in a green but sitting with queen *Madri*. In the foreground *Pandu* has shown lying on the pyre and *Madri* is preparing herself by holding coconut to join her husband on his pyre bed. At the left side on foreground five *Pandava* brothers has shown sitting with their mother *Kunti*.

Artist has depicted rest three group, one is at the upper right corner two servants has holding the palanquin, second group is at the centre left space showing three hermits as the witness of *Pandu's* sin and in third group at the right side

bottom space four sages are seeing the consequences of the whole episode.

Yudhisthira loses a game of dice and goes into exile with Draupadi and his brothers

(Folio 59v, 30.4 x 17.9cm.) (Fig. 3.37) : In this miniature artist has narrated one of the most important episode game of the dice and disrobed *Draupadi* that further became the turning point in the story of epic *Mahabharata*.

For the game of *Chaupad* *Yudhisthira* represented *Pandavas* and *Sakuni*, the maternal uncle of *Duryodhana* has represented *Kauravas* and game has begin in between them.

Sakuni was the master of that game so *Yudhisthira* has stake *Pandavas* earthly possessions, their arms and weapons, himself with four brothers and *Draupadi*, their beloved wife. But finally he loosed everything living and non-living things and became the slave of *Kauravas*. The defeat of *Pandavas* culminates in humiliation of *Draupadi* in the royal court of *Dhritrashtra*, where his son *Dushasana* has tried to disrobe her.

In the painting artist has depicted the crucial scene of *Mahabharata* with inadequate rendering. Here the court of *Dhritrashtra* has depicted with the multi-arched portion at the top and the doorway with adjoining wall in the bottom left corner. In that court under a tent like space *Yudhisthira* and *Sakuni* are playing the dice game and around them their elders, nobles, invited kings and rest of the family and sages were sitting cross-legged on the ground and became the eye-witness of this unethical task of royal court. At the court *Dushasama* has depicted while disrobing *Draupadi* and no one from the royal court tried to stop him.

In the foreground artist has depicted *Pandavas* in the dress of deer skin along with *Draupadi*. The final outcome of this unlawful game of dice is that they have to go for an exile of twelve years and at thirteenth year they have to live in a city incognito. At the background of this scene artist has depicted again floral design but to symbolize the forest he has apply green colour in the base.

Yudhisthira, his brothers and Draupadi accompanied by a dog ascend Mount Meru and finally arrive in heaven

(Folio 629 v, 28.9 x 17.7 cm, Reproduced: Khandalaval 1987) (Fig. 3.38) : This episode is from the last *parva* the story of *Mahabharata*. When *Yudhisthira* has began his final journey towards *Himalaya* with brothers and *Draupadi* after giving the *Hastinapura* throne to their grandson *Parikshit*. A dog unknown to them accompanies, which is actually *Dharmadeva* in disguise. In the way all brothers and *Draupadi* except *Yudhisthira* has fallen down because of some sins of their life time. That artist has depicted at the left side space from the foreground till the middle space.

After that the scene has depicted here, when *Indra deva* has came on *Airavata* to receive *Yudhisthira* with the *Dharmadeva* dog. In the narration of this scene *Airavata* has depicted as a strong, elegant, ornamented white colour elephant. On the elephant *Indra* is sitting at the neck space and servant is sitting at the back space. At the left side top part of the painting shows the four brothers and *Draupadi* waiting for *Yudhisthira* and dog (dharma deva) in a pavilion beyond the *Himalaya* watching a celestial dance and music performance. At the background of top scenes artist has given the blue colour and at the bottom space on the foreground some text has written regarding this episode of the great epic the *Mahabharata*.

"The invention of a painter consists not in a inventing the subject, but in a capacity of forming in his imagination the subject in a manner best accommodated to his art, through wholly borrowed from poets, historians, or popular traditions..."²⁵

In different traditions (classical, folk) styles, forms and school of miniature painting, depiction of epic has been the most widely illustrated theme. Every traditional artist adheres to his own stylistic distinction in painting. The minutest details of the story and characters has explored in lines and colours in the miniatures. Though like the epic theme artist had immense scope for ingenuity to work and discover new aspects. Miniature paintings are purely illustrative and text based, according to their textual sources at stylistic distinction.

In miniature paintings artist has not only illustrate every significant event of characters life, but also represent all known art styles of Indian miniature paintings.

The story of both epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* is well known among people. In the miniature paintings artist has focused on the *katha* and as well as on its illustrative aspect, on how a particular event reveals differently in each artistic style.

The difference among the real pristine Rajput art, the refined painting of the Mughal court and sensuous miniature of Pahari School is persisted in a high manner. As the small scale paintings all are supreme in their own fashion.

"Rajput art romantic, vital any mystic, lyrical and graceful in a rather modest and rustic manner; it retains the formalistic conventions of an art based on tradition, but uses the fashions of the day in architectural backgrounds and costumes. Its

subjects are the old epics, popular stories, Hindi lyrics and music, portraits and scenes in contemporary history. Mughal art excels in technical perfection of craftsmanship; it is keenly curious about the appearance of men, animals and flowers and delights in factual representation. In spite of a number of conventions, it tries to depict things as they are seen, studied; it is extremely elegant and tasteful in its arrangement of colours and compositions and is truly the art for the connoisseur."²⁶

Where under the patronage of Mughal emperor *Jalaluddin Mohammad Akabar* so many Indian mythological texts were not even translated but also narrated through their painting style. It allowed within limits the expression of individual styles and introduced many artists known by name.

Drawing of Pahari schools developed in many delightful styles of surprising variety. "They are the art of feudal states in which the life of the royal court and the life of the people is not divided by barriers of custom and awe-inspiring majesty. King and subject live close to each other. Pahari painting has an air of sweet intimacy and gentleness whether it shows the family life and the adventures of gods, kings or human and myths, epics. Nature with all its splendour of trees, flowers and animals is studied with loving care."²⁷

Thus it is necessary to understand the expression of mythology in the narration of miniature painting in different time periods. The phase of miniature painting has a very creative phase because it represented in very clear ways, how the narrative artists devised marvelous solutions to their pictorial problems. Such a way of explaining stylistic development brings into prominence several varieties of pictorial evidence of alterations of indigenous conventions."²⁸

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