CHAPTER VIII

DEPICTION OF YOGINIS

Miniature paintings depicted a variety of themes mainly for royal consumption. Few themes communicating well-known social contents through illustrative hypothesis were also produced by artists. In their endeavor they tried to maintain uniformity between literary trends and visual representations. Even these depictions were produced for the enjoyment of their wealthy patrons and for their understanding of common cultural issues of the time. They depicted such themes once again highlighting the charm of feminine beauty with all its grace which was very much welcomed by the romantic royal personages and economic exigencies and were tuned to the tastes of market of art. Though the concept of Yogini was of mystic nature, yet the ladies depicted as Yoginis were tender in look and beautiful as other women figures depicted in Deccani miniatures giving pleasant feeling and aesthetic sensual look to the viewer, at the same time maintained a track with spiritual-realm.

Yoginis were illustrated with charming facial features presenting a look of royalty. They are invariably shown with matted hair raised upward and carrying either a morchhal (peacocks feathers) or a trident in one of the hands. Sometimes Yoginis are illustrated holding a musical instrument ektara or fan made of peacock feathers. The rich garments of Yogini consisted of tight brocaded pyjamas, a Khesa (upper garment of bhagava or saffron colour), a zari dupatta. elongated jama, long dupattas, a scarf over her hair and embroidered waistband. These women were also depicted wearing shoes and are covered with ornaments like selhi (a sort of necklace going across the right shoulder), necklaces made of pearls, earrings, mudari made of rubies, wristlets studded with gems and rosaries as bracelets. This suggest the high descent and aristocratic dignity of the Yoginis. Inspite of these decorations, Yoginis used to
smear their bodies with ashes and applied *quashqa* (paste of sandal) on the forehead, which gave them the look of an ascetic.

In few miniatures of Golconda and Hyderabad School of paintings, illustration of Yoganis in individual realms as well as Yoganis in conversation with ascetics, with royal atmosphere and in Deccani landscape with other women were depicted. The miniatures with a theme on Yoganis were first executed at Bijapur School during Ibrahim Adil - Shah's reign, which were in majority among Deccani Schools with unique style as a whole.

**PARTI**

**GOLCONDA**

In Golconda kingdom very few Yoganis pictures were painted when compared to Bijapur indicating only an impact of Bijapur School of painting on Golconda or imitation of such themes at this kingdom's atelier. The most important painting of Yoganis by a Dublin painter was dated to 1605 AD. This painting is alternately called as Queen of Sheba. The Yoganis appears as a religious mendicant, her body smeared with ash. She appears as a sorceress, wearing extravagant jewels, secretly communicating with a myna bird, which perches on her hand, and picks at her lips. Here face looks strange and exotic like a European. She seems to be endowed with special powers resulting from severe austerities. The use of gold in the background is a Deccani characteristic. The depiction of lady with Yoganis hairstyle but aristocratic costume and jewelry is a fantasy creation. It was attributed to the time of Muhammad Quli *Qutb Shah's* reign and typical of the various strains that were flowing into this kingdom.

The picture highlights and stresses both Yoganis' magical as well as saintly qualities. Fantastic plants undulate around her, while a strong white palace is cleaning behind her. In this painting, the treatment of the rocks is obviously derived from the Persian Kalam via the Mughals. The Shrubs in the foreground owe something to the realism of the Mughal times. The two bigger plants in the middle owe similar to those which appear on the Chinese vases, which came through the sea ports by Dutch merchants. The castle in the background
enclosed by the trees is synoptic of European renaissance picture. Her gray face suggests that she is an ordinary girl transformed into a dignity of a Muslim princess and a saintly religious person.

The large flowers on either side of the figure study in the painting of the lady with the bird seems to be inspired by the painting on Chinese porcelain. This was very much coveted by the Deccan nobility. The taste for it must have been introduced by Persian guests of the Deccani rulers and Persian merchants. Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah gave one of his daughters in marriage to Shah Abbas of Persia and between 1603 and 1609 kept an embassy of a hundred Persian at his court. Dutch merchants have recorded that there was always a ready sale for Chinese porcelain at Petaboli on account of the number of Persian merchants residing there. Decorative motifs from Chinese porcelains also passed into Golconda cotton hangings as well, as Petaboli was an important center of production.

Another painting of Yogini is dated to 1630 AD. The sources for this painting are the dark mysterious Yoginis of the Bijapur School. Here the Yogini is richly dressed and decorated. She moves around in a forest, playing the musical instrument, ektara. A lion is depicted as enjoying the music played by the Yogini. (PLATE XLII). There is fantastic foliage in the dark background and tiny beautiful birds are seated on a tree like flowers. The costumes and jewelry, which the Yogini wears, are peculiar of Golconda and the palette consists of white green and brown colors, which belong to Golconda style of illustrating miniature paintings.

Another fine Yogini painting belonging to mid 17 Century depicts Yogini wearing a robe - striped pyjamas, white and gold turban, a short of patch work, a long, jama and a long narrow zari scarf tied around her hair arranged upwards. In this miniature a young woman is represented with crossed arms holding a morchhal in her left hand. Her face is in profile and body is in full view turned to left. She has a girdle with a small fruit knife attached to it known as par - e - tuti. Her ornaments consisted of earrings, a necklace with a ruby and other decorations. The dagger being carried by Yogini indicates that
she is most probably a Princess in the garb of a Yogini in search of her beloved, so that her real status is not disclosed and was carrying a dagger for self-protection.

PART-II
TRANSITIONAL PHASE

During transitional phase of early 18\textsuperscript{th} Century, in a painting of nobility listening to music, the lower bottom of the picture, in the right hand corner, two Yoginis are depicted enjoying a ride in a boat in a lake.\textsuperscript{11} They resemble the Yoginis of early 17\textsuperscript{th} Century Bijapur painting. The Yogins observed the sun's reflection in the fish-filled lake. A mixture of green, red and dark blue color produce strong effect in perceiving. An interesting aspect of this painting was that within the painting, three parts of life of nobility and Yogini were depicted. While the nobility was illustrated on the roof of a lakeside pavilion enjoying music of a lady artist, the lower part of the picture depicts his lady seated with in royal court on a cushion enjoying music simultaneously. The Yoginis were depicted in a forest like Deccani landscape with in a lake - the place where generally Yoginis led their part of life involved in spiritual penance for fulfillment of their vow or attainment of happiness. (PLATE XLIII).

Another painting of 1700 AD illustrates a lady leaning on the bough of a tree holding a rose in her left hand and listening to a vina played by a girl dressed in the style of a Yogini.\textsuperscript{12} Their clothes are embroidered with gold and chocolate. It has border of formal flowers in red, green and gold. This page is from a manuscript of Persian poetry written in nastaliq script. The poets included Maulana Bazmi, Sheikh Ali Nagi, Mirza Fasih and Ahmad Ghazali of 17\textsuperscript{th} Century.

A painting of about 1720 AD depicts a girl dressed in the style of Yogini with her hair tied in a bun. She stands on grass besides a terrace holding a pink rose and crook.\textsuperscript{13} The Album leaf was with fawn border and pink blue margin. It was a page of Naskhi calligraphy headed by a 'Bism Allah' signed by Mahbub-al-Alam Ibin Mulla Abd-al-Nabi of 17\textsuperscript{th} Century.
PART-HI

HYDERABAD SCHOOL

At Hyderabad School, in a painting of a Prince with four ladies sits beneath a canopy on a garden-terrace listening to a Yogini with a vina. In another painting an ascetic was depicted with two Yoginis, sitting outside of his dwelling in moonlight. While one Yogini plays the vina, other seems to be dozing. A palace was depicted in the background indicating their situational place with in a forest, where they led their ascetic life. It is dated to 1760 AD of Hyderabad School.

In a painting of 1760 AD, a lady was illustrated with more of Yogini features in a forest area, surrounded by snakes. She was depicted holding a trident in her right hand and a snake in her left hand. Several cranes also look at her magnetic-magical personality. She with hair-knotted has an elegant look with smiling face and her hair is knotted. This painting must have been given title Asavari Ragini due to the poetic-content and atmosphere depicted in the painting. But the features of the lady resemble more of Yogini rather than of Ragini. (PLATE XLIV).

There is lot of perplexity regarding the role of Yoginis and who they are in reality. Hence there is a need to look at the concept of Yoginis and their functions, in order to know why they were represented in the miniature paintings of medieval Deccan,

A glance over the history of Deccan reveals that women played a very significant role in the religious life of the region throughout the medieval era. Both in Hinduism and Islam, the lady ascetics, were known to be in the forefront particularly in the Kamataka and Andhra region. During this time, the Basava cult of Saivism had gained considerable popularity in the Deccan, where in female worshipers, Basavis were also allowed to be initiated. The same Saivite influences are also reflected in the institutions of Jogatis flourished in major parts of Kamataka. The female ascetic of the other Saivite sets, like Nathapanthi, during the medieval period of Deccan history were known as
Joginis. They were given such nomenclature as Jogatis or Joginis on account of their Yogini or ascetic character. These Jogatis entangles their hair upward as Jata (knot) and carried morchhal in their hands. They worshiped the folk - Goddess Yellamma and performed several rites for eradication of diseases and fulfilling worldly desires.

The iconography of the Yogini portraits depicted in these paintings is close with the features of Jogatis and to that of Saivite association like the matted hair - knots and carrying of morchhal. Moreover many of these paintings of Yogini came from Bijapur region in Karnataka, where the tradition of Jogatis existed.

However there are certain problems in equating Yoginis of Deccani miniatures with the Jogatis also known as Devadasis of the Deccan. Matted hair with knots carrying a morchhal was the common characteristic of ascetic of various sects during Medieval India and particular that of Jogatis of Bijapur. The Jogatis hailed from a lower stratum of society and belonged to Hindu families, mostly from uneducated lower castes that believed in myths and superstitions.

On the contrary the Yoginis represented in these paintings had a look of the nobility and were richly dressed with embroidered clothes and ornaments made of costly pearls and studded with gems. Their facial features were very beautiful and sublime, suggesting their high social status. Though Muslim type of dress became popular with the Hindus, it was confined mainly to the aristocratic classes only. Finally, the devadasis did not lead a secluded life as they sang and danced in public and possessed no supernatural powers, which the Yoginis of the miniature paintings are shown to be endowed with.

Hence these charming facial features of Yoginis and the costumes worn associate them with the female ascetics belonging to the Muslim Sufi - order who had also gained popularity in and around Bijapur right from the period of the Sultanate.

A survey of the monuments of Bijapur would also show a large number of memorial tombs of Sufi ladies who lived in 16th and 17th Centuries AD. The book entitled Rauzatul Auliya Bijapur written by Mohammad Ibrahim, deals
with the Sufi - Saints of Bijapur. This treatise presents a vivid account of the Sufi saints of Bijapur, both male and female.

It mentioned that a large number of Muslim ladies belonging to the noble families adopted Sufism and led the life of a recluse. They sometimes lived with the Sufi saints on the outskirts of cities and were greatly admired and respected by the Muslims as well as Hindus because some of them were called as *Sati ma*, Sati as used by the Hindus, meant a holy lady with divine qualities and *ma*, a synonym for mother commanded respect from both Hindus and Muslims.

Some of the famous female Sufi - saints were Bibi Khavandama, the daughter of Shaikh Ainuddin Ganie - Ilm, a well-known Sufi saint of Medieval period, who said to have possessed miraculous powers. Bibi Nayeem, belonged to the period of Ibrahim Adil - II, Bibi Shamsa and others, who possessed spiritual powers. These famous female Sufi saints known for their holiness and divine qualities, lived at Bijapur which had been a seat of Sufis from the 14th Century onwards.

Some of the miniatures paintings of the time must have reflected their spiritual spirit or mystical exuberance by depicting Sufi ladies as Yoginis with floating garments and halo around them, signifying their spiritual powers. Though we have evidence that women were also admitted in the Sufi order and the attributes like *morchhal, sarong* and musical instruments are associated with the Sufi sets also, yet we have no evidence to prove that Sufi women moved in jungles as Islam does not allow ladies to appear in public. Hence it is difficult to accept the Yogini portraits of the Deccani miniatures as Sufi ladies.

These Yogini paints are almost always in fine raiment and bejeweled. At times they carry a *morchhal* or a trident or a musical instrument. And again at times they were seen with an animal or a bird. The carrying of trident and covering of face and body with ashes suggests a Saiva affiliation. These ladies must have belonged to a *lingciyata* Vira Saiva sect or they must be ladies of high estate or from well placed families who have taken a temporary vow namely to
wander as Yoginis forsaking the world for a certain period of time. Hence the fine decoration and jewels are depicted.

In Karnataka it is known that a man or a woman makes a vow to remain standing for a certain period of time and paintings exists showing a Yogini like lady carrying out these vow by remaining standing and resting her hands on a swing - like contraption to avoid falling down in sleep. Attendants feed her while she remains standing for days together to fulfill her vow. Dr. Khare also remarked that this vow being performed amongst lingayats in the Karnataka.

An interesting account regarding the nature of Yoginis is also given by Mathanavi, Sahrul Bayan, written by Mir Hasan Dehlavi. The author mentions that the women of Princely families, who otherwise lived in purdah, went out of their homes in guise of Yoginis of certain saivite sects, who have been popular at that time. They came back and led a normal life again once their specific mission was over. These ladies from aristocratic families disguised themselves as Yoginis only for temporary period and roamed around mostly in search of their beloveds, so that their real identity is not disclosed.

It appears that the Yoginis of Deccani miniatures mostly came from a Muslim background since the dress worn by them consisted of pyjamas, khesa, jama, dupatta and other garments mostly worn by Muslim women. But their other iconographic features associate them with Saivism, the most flourishing sect in the medieval Deccan.

For instance the trident, which they carried as depicted in the miniature paintings is one of the weapons held by Lord Shiva, the morchhal is also found associated with the Saiva sect. The musical instrument ektara was popular with Jogis for playing music to accompany devotional songs in praise of God. The applying of ash vibhuti on the body has been common in India with almost all the Saiva sects. Even the qashqa or the sandal paste applied by the Yoginis on the forehead as tripunda was common with the saiva ascetics.

Hence, we can conclude that the Yoginis in the miniature paintings of the medieval Deccan are mostly princess and other ladies from aristocratic royal families, who dressed up as Yoginis in close association with the Joginis of
Saivite sects as Saivism gained an upper hand. Several Jogis and Joganis seem to have wielded considerable influence and power in Medieval Deccan. Kings and other wealthy persons approached for their blessings, and they in turn performed several miracles, in order to command respect from the people and to create an identity in the society.

It is also interesting to note that the Yoginis of Saiva sects were included in the Mathnavis written by Muslim Sufi saints. This was mainly done because Sufis believed in the idea of spiritual love as the best way of reaching God. In their sense the Yogini or lover, who goes out in search of her beloved or whom she dreams or sees in a picture, in the allegorical sense meant the lover (soul) who moves around in search of the unknown beloved (the God) and hence considered Yogini as a guru, who leads an individual towards God.

The painters of the Deccani miniatures of the medieval era mostly selected these popular themes like Yoginis, Raginis etc from contemporary literature and depicted them as visual imageries and as living beings, mainly for the enjoyment of their wealthy patrons. Such an endeavor also resulted in uniformity between contemporary literature and visual representation of women, making the paintings authentic as well as interesting.

In totality these miniature paintings of Yoginis are reposeful and had special meditative calm, they had a background of wild intensity and colors with Deccani glow. These paintings represent the concept, which is a combination of both philosophical and societal aspect of women.

Few Yogini paintings depicted are heavily modelled. Their starring eyes and multi colored jewels have the electrifying intensity that can be associated mainly with Golconda. The portraits of Yoginis in the company of a lion and other animals and birds either standing or seated in a couchant position, indicates the association of Yoginis with wild beasts or suggests their supernatural powers to tame terrifying animals on one hand and their compassion for all living beings on other hand.

These paintings have a distinct quality of their own in the very unconventional composition, rich landscape, mysterious atmosphere, gem - like
coloring, lavish use of gold, profusion of large plants, flowering shrubs and sweeping rhythmic style and Deccani castles in the background.

On the whole these pictures of Yoginis in Medieval Deccani miniatures resemble an atmosphere of spirituality and romance in combination, where their lives and works constitute the supreme form of self-expression. They consciously departed from their actual life-styles for certain time till their goal was achieved. Feminine virtues of beauty, modesty and gentleness were reflected in these paintings of Yoginis who were respected by both upper and lower echelons of society.

Miniatures illustrating Yoginis indicates that any theme of art must be localized or analyzed so that the real — sense of art is achieved and the term by which it is designated are successfully applied. Such paintings also highlights that a symbolic element is always present in art forms as far as it is subjected to psychological interpretation.

Indeed this art of medieval times was far away from the representation of women as an objective reality towards the expression of subjective status of their feelings. In these endeavor it has become a wholly symbolic element with women portraits in conformity with cultural literate trends and hence these depiction of women as Yoginis derived justification for themselves as reality - themes and of feminine - realms.
References:

It was observed that such miniature paintings were produced for European travelers and merchants, apart from royalty.


4 Basil Gray, *Art of India and Pakistan*, ed, Sir Leigh Aston, London, 1950, p .174, No.808. He has assigned the paintings to 1600 AD and remarked that it belongs to a fully developed School but unusually eclectic, landscape being in the later Akbari style, while the large plants are Chinese. Stella Kramrisch has dated to 1575 AD on the basis of the dated calligraphy, mounted on the reverse of the leaf.


8 Lalit Kala. No.5. April, 1959, p . XI.


12 Toby Falk and Mildred Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*,
Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1981, p. 246. It is in the collection
Johnson Album, 11, No. 1.

13 It is in the collection of Johnson Album 13, No. 14.

Toby Falk and Mildred Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*,

15 Ibid

Jagdish Mittal, *Islamic painting of the North and the Deccan*, Roopalekha, A
Journal of the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society, New Delhi, Vol.
XXXVIII No. 1 and 2, p. 137. It is in the collection of State Museum
Hyderabad.

Delhi, 1988, p.35.

Ibid, The Jogatis worship the Goddess Yellamma, whose shrine is in Belgaum
district. They are offered to the Goddess in marriage by their parents with a
great deal of rejoicing.

pp. 212-213.

Delhi, 1988, p.37.

21 Annemarie Schimmel, *Master pieces of the Deccan Sultanates*, Marg, Vol.37,
No.3. p. 6. The author remarked that the Deccani sufis were among those who
used the vernacular language to preach their teaching of love and trust in
God. At Bijapur they transformed the occupations

22 Karl Khandalvala, *Deccani Painting, A consideration of Mark Zebrowski,

23 Khara belonged to Bharat Itihasa Samshodhaka Mandala, Poona.