Depiction of Male and Female Types

Human anatomy is very well depicted in Rāgamālā paintings. Proportion of main limbs and sublimbs are maintained in some sets and a few do not follow them too. In the canons of Indian iconography, particularly in VDP., SS., AP., AC., SR., measurements and proportions of various human limbs are prescribed. These measurements and proportions knowingly or unknowingly are maintained by the painters of Rāgamālā paintings. It is worth noting that the similes described by the medieval poets of Hindu literature, are very well depicted here. Some of the similes are eyes like the fish or lotus petal, nose like a parrot, lips like a gourd, waist like that of a lion, thighs like a trunk of a Kaḍāli tree etc.

The human figures play the primary role in Rāgamālā paintings. They depict emotions, evoke the aesthetic sentiment and express Uḍḍīpanabhāva, all other paraphernalia surrounds this primary form and helps in expressing the Ālambanabhāva. These figure types differ from earliest to later, from artist to artist and carry regional characteristics with them. Some of the artists can be identified through the male and female types.

The Rāgamālā pictures found in the margins of the Kalpasūtra [1] (Pl. 1) depict deities having the names of the main Rāgās and thirty female Rāginīs arranged in pairs. The text occupies the central portion and is written in golden ink and these pictures are on both sides of the text. Thus
every family occupies two pages. The Rāgās are depicted as Hindu deities, multi-armed and multi-headed and in a seated posture. Their hands hold attributes and perform Muḍras. Śrī Rāga has six heads and eight hands, Vasaṇṭa has eight hands and six heads, Bhairava is depicted with eight hands and a single head, Paṇcama has six heads and eight hands, Megha has only one head and eight hands, Nāṭṭa Nārāyaṇa has one head and six hands. The Rāgās are in seated postures while the Rāginīs are standing and in some places seated on a swing. They are not multi-armed or multi-headed. These Rāga Rāginī figures are in the Western Indian style found in Kalpasūtra paintings. The faces are in three quarter profile, with farther eye protruding in space beyond the facial line, a prominent double chin, pointed nose, broad shoulders, narrow lips, the chests of the men and women are fully developed and look similar in appearance. A feeling of smile on the face appears. The Rāginī appears swift walking or standing at ease (Fig. 25). The U.P. or Delhi Ca. 1525 - 1570 A.D. commonly known as the Sūrī Rāgamālā [2] (Pl. 2), has short figures. The faces are in profile while the body is in frontal or three quarter depiction. There is no depiction of three quarter profile or the farther eye protruding in space here in these face type though the appearance of the face still remains the same. This absence of the farther eye indicates that the set belongs to a transitional period where the three quarter profile was giving place to the strict profile. Healthy round face appearance is observed. The double chin is missing here and the face has a vertical forehead, tiny nose and lips and a smooth bulging curve which ends at the ear to form a chin too. Extreme large eyes are depicted which occupy the major part of the face, they are shaped like a fish (Miṅākṣi).
Men have thin drooping mustaches. The figures have a small neck, broad shoulders and rounded breasts for women drawn as two linear circles. The head is usually larger in proportion to the body. These toy like figures have a characteristic of Gujarat [4] Rāgamālā Ca. 1575 A.D. Bhārat Kalā Bhavan and it belongs more closely to the family of Caurapañcāśikā group in its characteristic of figure types, costumes and other details (Fig. 26).

The single folio of Bhairavi Rāginī [3] (Pl. 3) has the characteristics of Caurapañcāśikā style in the figure type, colour scheme and complete detail, only the format is vertical whereas in the Caurapañcāśikā it is horizontal. The figure has a narrow waist, well curved hips, rounded breasts, strict profile face, large staring eyes, sharp nose, prominent circular double chin and a black spot adds to its beauty. A single bead for the nose ring, large ears, small forehead, small neck. Very large staring eyes right from the nose to the ears are depicted. Rounded shoulder, thin hands in comparison to the torso and tiny waists. The hair is plaited into an extremely long plait reaches below the hips and ends in a tassel. It is decorated with pearls and flowers. (Fig. 27).

The human figures in the Rāgamālā of Gujarat Ca. 1575 A.D. [4] (Pls. 4, 5, 6 and 7) are depicted with sharp noses, double chins, elongated ear lobes, the male figures have curved chest and have a resemblance to the Kalpasūtra manuscript. The female breasts are depicted full as large semicircles. The male figures are clean shaved and when they have a moustache it is a single stroke bending downwards in place of the cheek fold which starts from the side of the nose and touches the edge of the lips. The complexion is yellowish
brown and at times the Lapis Lazuli blue. Large staring eyes, absence of farther eye. The hands are not delicate, suggestive fingers are shown with a few lines (Fig. 28).

The faces in the [5] Gujarat last quarter of 16th century A.D. Rāgamalā of which only few folios are available are in full profile. The head is larger than the body and is close set on the neck (Pl. 8). The male and female types are plump with rounded faces with prominently modelled cheeks (Fig. 29).

In the Rāgamalā of Būndī dated 1590-1 A.D. [6] (Pls. 9, 10 and 10A) painted at Cūnār, the figures are plump with rounded faces and prominently modelled cheeks, the shading near the nose makes the cheeks look exaggeratedly chubby and this characteristic helps in identifying this set. Peaked nose, sharply pencilled eyebrows, prominent double chin which reminds of the Jain Kalpasūtra paintings (especially female types) with a dot in the centre. In profile excess of the other shoulder has been depicted which gives an odd appearance. Though the paintings have been done in great detail a flaw in painting can be clearly observed like in Bhairavi. The eyes depicted are large with blue pupil and in the shape of a fish. The waist and the hands have been painted in the colour of the skirt, though it is clear that it is a part of the skin and not covered with fabric. Bulbous breasts, tiny wrists and thin lips are the characteristics (Fig. 30). At times the proportions have not been maintained like in RāgniKhambāvatī. Brahmā is depicted

larger in comparison to the Rāgini or perhaps it was an intention. In certain folios not all, armpit shadow has been depicted like in Rāgini Pañcama. This is a feature of late Akbar period and Jehāngir period miniatures. It is rarely seen in Shāh Jehān period miniatures. This cliche of shading is seen in the work of provincial centres even after 1650 A.D. It is similar to the unpublished papers of the Tūtināmā MS; the greater part of which is in the library of Sir Chester Beatty, Dublin and the date is generally accepted as Ca. 1580 A.D. These common elements were first noted by Stuart Cary Welch, both compositions and figure types. It is also close to imperial Diwan of Anwari dated 1588 A.D. in the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University and also in selected folios of Rāmāyaṇa MS in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. This was dated by a colophon between 1589 and 1598 A.D. and was made by artists in the employ of 'Abdu-r-Rahim, the Khan-e-Khanan, the leading noble of Akbar’s court². A comparison of the two shows striking similarities. Fattish faces of similar shapes with prominently modelled cheeks, the stance of the figures and their gestures and the balloon-like breasts are similar³.

The Cāwanḍ Rāgamālā of Mewār dated 1605 A.D. [8] (Pl. 12) has large staring eyes, but not as larger as the earlier sets, short figures, though men while seated look proportionate, they have large curved and heavy moustaches in the Well shaped square locks, curved shoulders and small wrists are depicted. The men wear the Atapaṭi turban Chākdār Jāma. The

² Beach, M.C., 'Rajput paintings at Bundi and Kota', p. 7
³ Beach, M.C., Ibid.
women have flat head with a long single plait which reaches below the hips and ends in a tassel, small round breasts and slim waists. The drawing of the feet is not well studied. The women wear small Colī and Ghāgrā with transparent Oḍhaṇi and black pompons and tassels (Fig. 31).

There is a peculiarity in the male and female types in the Manley Rāgamālā [10] and hence they stand away from all the sets. Though beautifully composed with realistic landscapes the figure types are short with large heads but they do not seem so always. The female types have heavy eyebrows, fish shaped tiny eyes with pupils always at the front edge and the eyes closer to the nose. Poor study of ears, extremely short foreheads, flat head and the chin which recedes downwards and then curves upwards to join the ear by a clear straight line. There is no feel of the Oḍhaṇi above the head but a single stroke of line from the ear moving downward is the only indication. Hair is stuck to the head below the hips and extremely thin long plait with a single pompon at the end of the plait is depicted. Small shoulders, small breasts and shadow at the armpit are indicated. The extremely flat head and the eyes close to the nose with pupils ahead identify the set from the rest. Another type of characteristic is observed in the male types, the heads do not appear flat here, possibly because of the turban, neither the eye shape is like the female type. It is not fish shaped with the pupil in the corner but the artist has drawn a prominent upper line of the eye while the lower is lighter or suggestive though the pupil is at the edge always. These kinds of eyes are more studied and natural. The ear study is poor as in the female type. The chin line does not clearly join the ear but is gradually
merged and shaded below the chin. There are two figure types in this set, the women form is less studied while the men appear more perfectly done, exceptions to Pañcama, male at the door (which has the characteristics of the female kind). It could be surmised that possibly two hands were at work here, one a slightly matured and experienced than the other (Pl. 14) (Fig. 32).

The male and female types in the Pāli Rāgamālā of Mewār dated 1623 A.D. [11] (Pl. 15) is of its unique type. It is in the folk style and in a simple method of drawing the outline and filling colours, there is no shading. The figure types are extremely interesting. They have large heads. There is no depth between the forehead and the nose joint and the line takes a curve from the forehead and reaches the nose which is drawn very sharp. Suggestions of lips and the chin are observed. The eyes are fish shaped (Minākṣi) with the pupil always set upwards. The men have extremely tidy recurved moustaches, prominent sidelocks. Study of hands and legs are very poor especially the fingers of the hands which normally fold on the wrong side (Fig. 33).

There is a peculiarity in the posture of the figure of the Mālwā I Rāgamālā Ca. 1640 A.D., Boston Museum, (Pl. 18). The figures are tall and have heavy shoulders in both men and women, large star-ing eyes with pupil set at the front edge, long exposed waist, flabby belly, short Čōlis covering just half the breast. Though the colour scheme is extremely beautiful and also the architecture and the tree types look attractive it lacks the technical skill. Since this is a provincial Mughal set and the artists of this school were
regarded as less skilled which is reflected in this work. These artists worked in many small towns of Rajasthan. There would not have been much scope for them at the more important centres of painting in Rajasthan where only artists skilled in the craft of drawing and painting could flourish⁴ (Fig. 34).

In the Mālāwā II Rāgamālā Ca 1650 Bhārat Kalā Bhavan [14] (Pls. 19 and 20), the figures in the set are not well proportioned. They are short, the limbs are not delicate but due to heavy ornamentation, they look beautiful. The face has a wide forehead, tightly closed lips wide eyes with the pupil in the front end and thick eyebrows. Shading at the sides of the nose, below the chin towards the ears are observed only in the male figures. Large, broad and heavy feet and large hands are depicted (Fig. 35).

In the Gem Palace Rāgamālā of Mēwār Ca. 1600 A.D., [15] (Pls. 21, 22, 23 and 24), the figures are postured gracefully. They have Paḍma shaped eyes, tall as well as short figures are depicted. Slim waist, small breasts and broad feet are depicted. Arms and legs are well studied and the figures look well proportionate. The women have large plaits with tassels at the end, they wear the Ghāghra, Colī and an Oḍhani with plenty of ornaments (Fig. 36).

In the Mālāwā Ca. 1680 A.D., Bhārat Kalā Bhavan [18] (Pls. 26 and 27), the figures are well proportioned. Inspite of the vast changes the human figure continues to preserve their physical charm through their slim torsos and graceful attitudes.

⁴ Khandalawala, K., 'Leaves from Rajasthan', Marg, Vol. IV, No. 3 (1950)
The Sīrohī School [20], [21] (Pl. 32) can be easily pointed out from amongst the various Rājasthānī Schools because of its peculiar characteristics especially the large eyes of which the upper line is straight while the lower curves with a complete round pupil observed in it. Tall figures with sharp long noses, small Colī with waist having a fold of skin. Feet with henna painted, single plait which is the length just till the waist (short) and ends in tassels (Fig. 37).

The Āmer Rāgamāla of Ca. 1709 A.D. [23] has elongated and slim figures. In Bhairava Rāga, frontal view of Śiva is shown which is rare in miniature paintings. The musicians are in three quarter profile on the left side in the foreground. The figures have large foreheads with hair held behind in a tidy manner. These male figures have round faces, slim and long forms, drooping moustache and long side whiskers. The turban has a broad sash with a plume.

In the Mārwār Rāgamāla Ca. 1750 A.D. [26] (Pl. 37), the male and female types are like puppets. The set is in the folk style and heads are larger in proportion to the body. The faces are round with a high curved forehead. The men have a moustache and a flat turban. A peculiar shading below the eyes, nose, chin and ears which gives a round appearance to the cheeks is observed. Even Kṛṣṇa in blue colour is shaded with black (Fig. 38).

The Mālputra set [27] has peculiar tall figures with round heads, extremely large foreheads and delicately drawn eyes. The women have tendril
like curls near their ears in the same shape for every Nayika. Extremely thin hands are depicted. These figure types form a poor study.

The Bundi/Kota Rāgamālā [29] (Pl. 38) has figures though beautifully rendered, not well proportioned. They have larger head, small hands and small wrists. As mentioned earlier that at times rulers wished to have themselves portrayed as the Nayakas in the Rāgamālā paintings is evidenced here in this set where the main figure appears to be Bhōjasirīṁha of Būndī. The male figure have high forehead with a turban, heavy moustaches. The female figures have round face, high forehead (Fig. 39).

In the Radhanpur Rāgamālā [31] the figures are slim for the female while short and well built figures are observed in the male types. Faces are in strict profile. Men have sharp noses and neat moustaches.

These various male and female types belonging to the number of Rāgamālā sets depended upon the skill and talent of the artist - hence are observed the good and the poor anatomical studies. There were talented artists and also the ones who cultivated the craftsmanship and others who endlessly kept drawing with a meagre skill and knowledge, being non-hereditary painters like Dasawanth (a painter at Akbar's atelier) - who was a palanquin bearer's son. The royal atelier sent back the ones who had no aptitude, hence a number of half baked artists returned to their home towns and continued painting. Like Jain manuscript illustrations even these inferior works must be moderate in cost and hence continued to be produced. Spontaneous or rapid careless works in early Rāgamālās are observed possibly too much of
assignments, less skill and overweighted with conventions being the result. The artists that worked in the Mughal atelier produced skilled works and later when the Mughal Period declined and when these artists took shelters in Rājput Courts, they carried their talent and skill in their works and the result was an excellent work. The idea of representing a Rāga or Rāgini by means of an elaborate composition is of much later origin. The earlier ones only depicted the figures.