Psychology in Rāgamalā paintings

A critical study of Rāgamalā paintings reveals ample material for secular psychology. In poetry, painting and music various Bhāvas, mental states, are expressed to manifest Rasa, the highest aesthetic experience. Bhāvas mental states are considered primary psychic contents, which help in generating emotional feelings or moods like love, laughter, sorrow, anger, fear, etc. In the Rāgamalā paintings these Bhāvas are very well depicted in the pictures of various Nāyaka - Nāyikābheda.

We know that depiction of Bhāva - psychological state in Indian painting is one of the six limbs described by Yaśodhara, in his commentary named Jayamaṅgalā of the KS\(^1\). Bhāva, psychological state is an important tool of Rasa. Tender emotions and passions of heart are expressed through mental states.

Bharata, the author of the NS has floated the theory of Rasa for the first time not in Indian poetics but in the world poetics. He has devoted two chapters for this theory in the NS. Adhāya 6th deals with Rasavikalpa and Adhīya 7th deals with Bhāvavyaṅjaka.

Bharata raises the question - 'what is the meaning of the word Rasa?' and then replies to his own question - 'It is capable of being tasted - Āsvādyatvat'.

\(^1\) Kāmaśītra, p. 100
He further raises the question, ‘How is Rasa tasted?’ In reply to this subsub-question he says, ‘Just as well disposed persons while eating food cooked with many kinds of spices enjoy its taste, and attain pleasure and satisfaction, so the cultured people taste the durable psychological states while they see them represented by an expression of the various psychological states with words, gestures and the Sattva, and derive pleasure and satisfaction\(^2\). In this chapter he has given a famous dictum about the creation of Rasa. He says, ‘Rasa is produced from a combination of determinants (Vibhāva), consequents (Anubhāva) and complimentary psychological states (Vyabhicāri Bhāva)\(^3\). The eight Rasas with their various psychological states are listed in Appendix-III. It is interesting to note that Bharata has described colours and presiding deities of these Rasas\(^4\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Name of the Rasa</th>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Presiding Deity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Śṛṅgāra-Erotic</td>
<td>Śyāma</td>
<td>Blue-black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hāsya - Comic</td>
<td>Śīta</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Karuṇa-Pathetic</td>
<td>Kapota</td>
<td>Dove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Raudra-Furious</td>
<td>Rakto</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vīrā - Heroic</td>
<td>Gaura</td>
<td>Mahendra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bhayānaka-Terrible</td>
<td>Kṛṣṇa</td>
<td>black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bibhatsa-Odious</td>
<td>Nīla</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Adbhūta-Marvellous</td>
<td>Pīta</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In human anatomy face is considered the best limb, and eyes play an important role in depicting various psychological states. Expression of various


\(^3\) Ibid, p. 31, R. Gnoli translates this Sūtra thus, ‘Out of the combination (Samyoga) of the determinants (Vibhāva), the consequents (Anubhāva) and the transitory states (Vyabhicārin) the birth of Rasa takes place (the aesthetic experience, according to the Abhinavagupta, p. 25.

\(^4\) Ibid, VI.42-45
Rasas depends on the depiction of Rasaḥṛṣṭīs. Bharata in his NS has described thirty six Rasaḥṛṣṭīs, and Bhoja, the author of the SS has described in detail eighteen Rasaḥṛṣṭīs\(^5\). These are Lalita, Ḥṛṣṭa, Vikasita, Vikṛta, Bhrkuti, Vibhrama, etc. According to his opinion the manifestation of Rasas is dependent on the Rasaḥṛṣṭīs.

In Rāgamālā paintings two types of Vibhāvas - determinants are depicted: Ālaṁbana - supporting state and Uddipana - exciting state. Uddipana Vibhāva expresses through various types of Nāyaka and Nāyikās. Ālaṁbana Vibhāva is expressed through the depiction of seasons, periods of day and night. It is also expressed through dress, costumes, ornaments, rosary of flowers, etc.

The secular psychology expressed through various Rasas and Bhāvas, in the Rāgamālā paintings can be classified as follows:

1. Physiological psychology,
2. Behavioural psychology,
3. Ars-amatorial psychology, and
4. Animal psychology

1. Physiological Psychology

It is a branch of psychology, which is connected with the movements of the various limbs of human body. Physiology is the science of bodily functions. The painters of Rāgamālā paintings by depicting the movements of head, eye-balls, hands, legs, etc. have created an everlasting effect of Rasa Sadṛśya and

\(^5\) SS, Adhyāya, 82
Pramâṇa, i.e. likeness and proportion are the two important limbs of Indian painting. Knowingly or unknowingly the painters have maintained them successfully. The artists of these miniature paintings may not have adhered to the measurements of the limbs and sublimbs prescribed in the VDP, SS. AP and other works, however, they have tried to maintain the smile of various limbs of the human body given in the Sanskrit and Hindi literature, e.g. eye should be of the form of a bow or like fish or like petal of the lotus; nose like a parrot’s peak; lips like Bimbafala - momondica coccinia; Kaṭi like waist of a lion, fingers are compared with beans-phaseolus vulgris; long hair like black female serpent, etc. In depicting major and minor limbs the painters of the Rāgamālā paintings have maintained proportion which has a psycholoigical effect. It is worth noting here that all the female characters in the Rāgamālā paintings whether she may be a Nāyika, a companion, or an attendant, are beautifully depicted with their regional dress and costumes. Her depiction in the Rāgamālā paintings gave pleasure to the royal patrons and admirers of these paintings. Similarly royal princes and divine characters with their dress, headgears, ornaments and weapons create a psychological effect.

2. Behavioural Psychology

This is an important branch of psychology, in fact, psychology is a science of behaviour. In Rāgamālā paintings various characters, Nāyaka and Nāyikās are depicted according to their emotions and passions. It is interesting to note that this behaviour varies according to seasons, divisions of day and night. Sweet voices of peacocks and cuckoos give phillip to their

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6 Kāmasūtra, Vol. I, p. 100
behaviour. The natural background of sky, clouds, full of water, lightening, trees, creepers, flowers, rivers, ponds, etc. play an important role in moulding their behaviour. Royal and luxurious architecture of the palaces, beautiful cushions, painted and engraved vessels, beautiful lamps, musical instruments are also to be taken note of. Generally, men and women behave according to their instinct. The painters of Rāgamālā paintings have depicted various sentiments by the behavioural movements of all the characters. In depicting both the types of Śrīngāra, i.e. Saṁbhoga and Vipralaṁba, they have reached the zenith of emotional and passionate expression. Though they have painted Nāyaka and Nāyika involved in the various stages of love, their moderate and modest behaviour, speak of their high taste and culture. They are depicted in their movements expressing deeply their emotions.

In Rāgamālas, in the depiction of Rāgās normally a Nāyaka is depicted surrounded by a number of women who are assumed to be the six or five Rāginīs of the Rāga. Since later there was a sixth Rāginī added to the earlier five, often depicted are five in number.

In Bhairava Rāga, these Nāyakas are either fanning him, playing musical instruments and are very close and in an caressing act. Bhairava normally depicts the Nāyaka who is definitely Śiva relaxed, entertained and attended by these Nāyakas.

Bhairavi Rāginī is depicted praying at the Liṅga (sometimes a statue of Garuḍa) who represents Śiva. The woman praying at the Liṅga is identified as Pārvaṭī and a feeling of love evokes from the expression.
Rāmakali Rāgini usually represents a man holding the feet of a woman and pleading while she turns off her head. The Nayika depicted is Khaṇḍitā Nayika who is extremely angry at the Nāyaka who has spent the night with another woman, he is depicted asking for forgiveness.

Gūnakarī Rāgini depicts a lovesick woman all decked up arranging flowers in pot. Similar kind is the Bilāval Rāgini expecting the arrival of her beloved and getting dressed up with ornaments helped by her attendents. A lady holding a mirror to the Nāyika is the iconography.

The behaviour is peculiar in the Desākh Rāgini where women perform athletic act amongst men. She is often depicted inverted on a pole while men are weightlifting.

The behaviour in Devagaṇḍhār is extremely acceptable but usually not perceivable. The longing wife considered Pārvatī who has been praying for the return of her husband and has performed penance and severe austerities to please Śiva, has turned into an ascetic. The Rāgini is depicted bare chested with large beard and moustache, skeletal body and in a meditating posture.

Vibhāsa Rāgini has a peculiar behaviour. The Nāyaka or the Nāyika is asleep on the bed, depicting early morning. Normally it is the Nāyika asleep and the Nāyaka aims the bow and arrow at the rooster who may disturb her sleep. At times Vibhāsa also depicts the Nāyika aiming the arrow while the Nāyaka is asleep. In Vibhāsa Rāgini Jaipur 18th century A.D. in National Museum, New Delhi, the Nāyaka, Kṛṣṇa, here playing the role of Kāmadeva aims this arrow Padmaśara at the reclining woman to induce love in her.
The Royal Nāyaka and Nāyikās relax on the Verāndāh, enjoy music played by Kiñnaras and Gañdharvas. This kind of royalty is observed in Pañcama Rāginī where a musical troupe performs music while a couple indoor is in amorous dalliance. The reward to the musicians is paid by the attendant, a Chowrie woman.

Āsavarī Rāginī depicts a peculiar Nāyika dressed as a tribal woman in peacock feathered skirt. She charms snakes and is surrounded by birds and animals.

Lalit Rāginī of Mālwā Ca 1650 A.D. [14] (Pl. 20), Bhārat Kalā Bhavan shows the Rāginī asleep. She is a Virahini Nāyika expressing Uddīpanabhāva. She is whisked by her maid. The flow of the whisk symbolises the flame in her. The Nāyaka is shown at the door of the bed chamber.

The behaviour of Virahini Nāyika is different from the rest in Dhanāśri Rāginī in Būndī Ca 1670 A.D. Ehrenfeld collection. There is a painting within a painting. A dark skinned Rāginī paints a portrait of her lover on a tablet while her attendant kneels before her. The two are on a terrace before a pavilion. In the grief of separation and longing, she portrays her lover to content her. The instinct of Kāma is being sublimated by her behaviour.

3. Ars-Amatorial Psychology

Kāma is an important psychological instinct of human mind. It is a stimulating effect of human life. In Indian aesthetics, Kāma i.e. Rati is the Sthāyībhāva, static psychological state of Śṛṅgāra. The painters of Rāgamālā paintings have depicted various Nāyaka - Nāyikābheda, in their treatment of
Srṅgāra of two types viz. Saṁbhoga, the state of union and Vipralaṁbha, the state of separation. They have created a world of love full of tender emotions and passions. However, while depicting Vipralaṁbha Srṅgāra, they have expressed various emotions like anger, surprise, fear, envy, weakness, apprehension, insanity, passion, etc. These depictions of various stages of love are an important source of Ars-Amatorial Psychology. They have depicted Nāyaka and Nāyikās in embracing positions and deep love. The movements of their eyeballs echo their amorous mood and mental state. Ars Amatorial Psychology is closely connected with the behavioural psychology.

In a picture of Mālasṛ̣ī Rāgīṇī (of Mālwa Ca 1640 A.D. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), the Proṣitabharatṛkā Nāyika plucks petals of white lotus, which is a symbol of love. It is stated that even during the daytime she dreams of her lover and passionately feels him. In this picture, application of red colour suggests her ardent longing. She is often depicted either spreading flowers on the bed or breaking petals of the flower.

Lalit Rāgīṇī is always confusing because visually it depicts a man leaving a sleeping lady or approaching her. But as considered a morning Rāga, it could be considered as the Nāyaka leaving the bed chamber after a satisfied night. The Kāntadṛṣṭi of the sleeping Nāyika expresses her beauty and full satisfaction.

In a picture of Malagaudi or Mālavī Rāgīṇī, of Amber School, Ca. 1700 A.D., preserved in the collection of Sangrām Singh, Nāyaka and Nāyika are depicted in embracing posture. The Nāyaka is depicted passionately kissing the lips of his beloved. In the background, wooden bed decorated with white
bedsheet is depicted. In this bed chamber, adjacent to the bed a teapoy with wine cup and wine container is depicted which is a symbol of intoxication. In this picture, two female attendants are depicted involved in some important talk about love. They are extremely close to each other and possibly in an act of love. Depiction of their eyes suggest their concentration on the topic of their talk.

We observe effective amorous atmosphere, in a picture of Megha Malhāra Rāginī of Mewār School, dated 1628 A.D. [12] (Pl. 17), National Museum, New Delhi. Lord Kṛṣṇa is depicted in the form of Megha Malhāra. His right hand is shown touching the breasts of the Nāyika, which is an amorous gesture suggestive of deep passion. In this picture, impact of instrumental music is noteworthy. Two female musicians are depicted playing with Mrḍaṅga and Maṅjira. It is interesting to note that in this picture the four characters are depicted in dancing gay mood, which create intoxicating amorous effect. Similar kind of Megha is observed in Sirohi Ca. 1690 A.D. [20] (Pl. 32) collection Sangrām Singh.

In a picture of a Ramakali Rāginī Gujarat Ca. 1575 A.D. [4], preserved in the Bhārat Kalā Bhavan speaks about the amorous psychology. The Nāyika depicted in this picture is Khaṇḍitā. She has turned her face in anger because her Nāyaka who has spent night in the company of some other woman. She is eagerly awaiting for a long time for the union and is shown suffering from Virahajvara, fire of love. She is depicted fanning him with a fan in one hand and bluntly rejecting him with the mudra of her other hand. In this picture pathetic atmosphere is created, when the Nāyaka pleads to forgive him.
In a picture of Dīpaka Rāga of Mālwā School Ca. 1680 A.D. [17], preserved in the Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, we have interesting material for Ars-amatorial psychology. In this picture Nāyika and Nāyaka are closely seated. Nāyika is shown touching the flame of a lamp. It can be surmised that by this gesture she extinguishes the lamp for sexual union. Fountain of water, painted near the bed chamber is suggestive, cool atmosphere and helps the lovers in supporting their amorous mood.

There is a picture of Varadī Rāgini, a Rāgini of Dīpaka Rāga of Mewār School Ca. 1650 A.D. [16] (Pl. 22), preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi. She is depicted as love-sick Nāyika suffering from Virahajvara. A female attendant fanning her could possibly represent sublimating her anger. Her amorous passion is depicted with her two hands raised in a dancing pose. In this picture, a bed chamber is depicted. The printed tapestry of the bed helps in creating supporting amorous mental state. In this tapestry there is a picture of a male having a sword in one hand and a cup of wine in the other. A picture of a female servant with a disc in her hand and a flying bird adds to the pathetic atmosphere. The Nāyika depicted in this picture is Vāsakasajjā, eagerly awaiting for her lover. This picture in Rāgamālā paintings is considered one of the best pictures depicting Ars-Amatorial psychology.

Desperate longing for passionate love is very well depicted in a picture of Bilāval Rāgini of Mālwā School, Ca. 1640 A.D. [30] (Pl. 18), British Museum. In this picture the Nāyika is depicted plating her hair with the help of a female servant. This female servant is depicted showing a moon-like mirror to the Nāyika. The blue-black complexion of her skin reminds one of the
Kṛṣṇa the Nāyaka. She is depicted sitting in an Ardhapadmasana posture. Application of blue and red colour has an amorous psychological effect of deep passion.

Vasanta and Varsā are two important Indian seasons to evoke erotic sentiments in the minds of lovers. There is a beautiful picture of Vasaṅta Rāgiṇī of Amber School, Ca. 1700 A.D., preserved in the collection of Sangrām Singh. In this picture, Kṛṣṇa is depicted squirting colourful water with Pichkārī. On the left side a group of ladies is depicted playing with musical instruments and squirting coloured waters. The Nāyika is depicted offering flower-pot to Kṛṣṇa. In this picture the natural background of sky and trees with foliage add to the atmosphere. Throwing of Gulāla coloured powder and squirting colourful water on each other is symbolic mark of amorous gesture. This is one of the best pictures of Rāgamālā paintings which supplies more data for the Ars-Amatorial Psychology.

Saṁbhoga Śṛṅgāra is fully depicted in a picture of Bibhāsa Rāgiṇī of Jaipur School Ca. 18th century A.D., preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi. In this beautiful picture Kṛṣṇa is depicted as a Nāyaka, shooting Padmaśara to evoke Kāma in the mind of the Nāyika who is depicted sleeping in a relaxed mood. The female servant is depicted touching her left leg. Two female musicians create an amorous atmosphere with instrumental music. Application of Meḥhdī in the hands and soles of the female characters suggests, part of the grooming. The atmosphere created by the painter in this picture is highly intoxicating and interesting from the Ars-Amatorial psychology viewpoint.

Some important paintings of Rāgamālā concerning with a Saṁbhoga Śṛṅgāra
and Vipralamba Śṛṅgāra are described in chapter on Ars-amatoria and Nayaka-Nāyika bheda.

4. Animal Psychology

Animals, hills and trees are introduced to intensify the landscapes. They also depict Śṛṅgāra and other Rasās in the context of various situations of love and separation. Their sweet voices have a psychological effect. They create a tender and lovely atmosphere, sometimes they symbolise lovers and help in sublimating instincts of the Nāyikās.

Human beings find birds and animals as emotional companions and animals on their behalf seem to understand the pain and happiness of human beings and also express them. In folk and classical literature, paintings, films and various other arts, animals have been depicted as companions of human beings in times of joy and sorrow. In the Rāgamālās, these various animals and birds are depicted according to the situation or as a part of the situation. In expressing both types of Śṛṅgāra - Sambhoga and Vipralamba, they create Ālāmbanabhāva. Some of the sets reveal a deep study of varieties of birds, animals and little creatures like frogs, snakes, scorpions, squirrels, worms, etc.

Peacocks that express beauty are depicted on roofs and trees and around the Nāyika. They are considered semi-tame companions of man. In Madhumādha Rāgiṣṭi ladies are depicted feeding these peacocks, or startled by their shrill voice rushing into the house with the coming of the rain. In Megha Rāga, these peacocks are obviously enjoying the rains. In Sirōhi Ca. 1690 A.D. Sangrām Singh collection, peacocks are depicted with raised heads, beaks
open and the artist has literally depicted drops of rain entering their mouth (Pl. 32). Peacocks have been depicted in Kakubha Rāginī too as a lady with a Viṇā encircled by a number of peacocks or a woman in a forest between peacocks and birds.

The psychology and understanding of these animals are best represented in Rāginī Tōḍī where a lonely or lovesick woman with a Viṇā plays tunes amidst deers, who are attracted towards her to share her grief.

Vāṣaṇṭa Rāginī where the whole atmosphere is in full blooms, women and men are in dance and music and birds, bees are also merrily chirping and flying, while bees hover on the Āmaramaṇḍjarī.

Normally Rāgamālā paintings consist of animals and birds of the common kinds that are friendly and could be tamed, but in the Baṅgāl Rāginī a tamed tiger or leopard is depicted.

Māru Rāginī deals with the legend of Dholā and Māru7 and is a later addition to the series of Rāgamālā. It depicts a couple seated on a camel or with a camel. The story describes the loyal camel and his conversation with the Nāyaka. A camel plays an important role in this story and in this folio it helps in identifying the Rāginī.

A pair of birds often represent joy, happiness and love. They are often depicted in these pictures. Bhairavi of Mālwā Ca. 1680 A.D. Bhārāt Kalā Bhavan depicts two white doves. A pair of Cāṭaka birds are in Rāga Hiṇḍola of Mārwār Ca. 17th century A.D.. Cāṭaka birds desparately wait for the rains.

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7 Sharma, Nirmala - A critical study of Dholā Māru paintings with special reference to Rājasthānī culture, Dr. H.G. Shastri Felicitation Volume, p. 189
with heads upwards and beaks open. Devagandhār Rāginī of Būndī Kōṭā Ca. 1740 A.D. National Museum, New Delhi, depicts two ducks in pairs merrily swimming in a lotus pond. They symbolise love.

In Khambhāvatī, the Hamsa, vehicle of Brahma, is depicted on the ceiling of Rāginī Khambhāvatī of Mālwā or Bundelkhand.

We know that in the cultural tradition of India, psychology is developed around religion and philosophy, but a critical study of Rāgamālā paintings reveal some important branches of secular psychology which are described above. It is interesting to note that the painters of Rāgamālā paintings have created a world of eternal joy by depicting Rāgās and Rāginīs as Nayakas and Nayikās with their passions and emotions. It also reveals modest behaviour of the royal princes, in gallant mood, various types of Nayikās enjoying different stages of love. Auxiliaries serve the purpose of supporting psychological state, Ālambanabhāva. This depiction of secular psychology is unique and very interesting.