



## Mythological miniature paintings of Orcha-Datia school in 17- 18<sup>th</sup> century

Dr. Kum Kum Mathur<sup>1</sup>, Divya Khare<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor (Painting), K.R.G. College, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India

<sup>2</sup> Research Scholar, K.R.G. College, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India

### Abstract

Miniature paintings emerge out of necessity for illustrating documents; was made on palm leaves, begins during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century. Central India which since the Vedic days excelled in her achievements in the field of art; there developed Orcha - Datia in Bundelkhand, an art school of central India, are known for its excellent and elaborate illustration to Ramayana, Mahabarat, Bhagwat Puran etc. Orcha-Datia painting is a particular style of Bundelkhand paintings, generally confined to illustrations and inscriptions on the page, done in miniatures; and which emerged, developed and took shape during the period of the art lover emperors from 17<sup>th</sup> to till 20<sup>th</sup> century. Paintings on Ramayana series of Datia School were the earliest reported subject for the Datia artist to paint which they adopted from its neighboring city Orcha. Shri Rams life teaches how to maintain different ideal relationships. These paintings are the best and the unique work of the artist, visitor could imagine these painting of Mughal. There are number of paintings and its poetic temperament which make Orcha-Datia miniatures to attain the softness of Kangra School. Its Bhagvat puran series has the same charming face as the Kangra Bhagvat series. After observing the paintings of Datia style, we can say that these paintings are the best sources to understand the historical, mythological paintings.

**Keywords:** miniature paintings, orcha-datia school

### Introduction

Art is what we perceives <sup>[1]</sup> from our nebulous past and see in present. It is an aesthetic value of our soul which an artist concludes on a canvas or a sheet of paper. The first and the foremost use of word art (kala) is found in rigveda <sup>[2]</sup>.

Miniature paintings began out of necessity for illustrating documents and manuscript to aid these readings during a time when many people were not able to read, before printing was not invented. Miniatures help to convey the story and meaning of the written word, the various sized illuminations (picture) were cut out of these books or documents so that they could be carried more easily. The concept of evolution of miniature painting was made on palm leaves manuscripts came into being during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century. Miniature paintings are made same as the wall painting the difference is only that these are made on paper and so the technique is also different. But the color schemes and the characteristics are almost remaining same.

Central India which since the Vedic days excelled in her achievements in the field of literature performing arts sculpture, architecture, music education and religious pursuits was not much behind in paintings; there developed Bundelkhand in central India. Bundeli painting have their own specialties, which make them different from other schools; Bundeli paintings are a boon to Indian paintings; there developed Orcha - Datia in Bundelkhand an art school of India.

Orcha-Datia developed in Bundelkhand are the neighboring cities and the art style of these cities stand in artistic merit of Indian miniature. These cities are known for its excellent and elaborate illustration to Ramayana, Mahabarat, Bhagwat

Purans, and the bulk of portrait paintings of these cities are magnificent. Miniature paintings in here evolved from very ancient time. As by local people were making paintings on papers and walls during festivals or on any special occasion for selling but it came in light during the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the art lover emperors took interest and tried to make them a unique art.

Whenever the Orcha - Datia artist searched for the subjects, they had found a rich treasure in the form of the incidents narrated in mythology. Story of Ram is one of the most popular themes in religious literature of India. The earliest source of Ram-Khata is 'Ramayana' 'the journey of Ram', attributed to sage-poet Valmiki, created around 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.; text is in Sanskrit, consist of around 24,000 shloks (verse – couplets) divided into seven kandas (cantos) <sup>[3]</sup>.

Miniature paintings of Datia were first influenced with its neighboring city Orcha. Painting based on the text Ram Darbar (see plate 1) is very unique painting of Orcha School. Tent scene is painted where lord Ram is seen in various phases at the time when he was send to forest for fourteen years. All the incidents are taken from the epic Ramayana from the second chapter Ayodhya kanda; when after Rama and Sita have been married for twelve years, an elderly Dasharatha expresses his desire to crown Rama, to which the Kosala assembly and his subjects express their support. So Kaikeyi demands Rama to be exiled into the wilderness for fourteen years, while the succession passes to her son Bharata. Rama accepts his father's reluctant decree with absolute submission and calm self-control which characterizes him throughout the story. He is joined by Sita and Lakshmana.

After Rama's departure, King Dasharatha, unable to bear the grief, passes away. Bharata refuses to profit from his mother's wicked scheming and visits Rama in the forest.

In a plate 1, Ram - Lakshman and Bharata with saints are shown sitting in a pavilion, Bharata requests Rama to return and rule. But Rama, determined to carry out his father's orders to the letter, refuses to return before the period of exile. Here Ram is painted embracing Bharata, which is the beautiful part of Ayodhya kanda said as 'Bharata Milap'. Kaushalya Sumitra and Kekayi, which all three are seen discussing in a group wearing white color saree, as in Hindu custom it is said that the ladies whose husband is no more have to wear white dress, where as all other female figures in a picture are painted in colored dresses. Maids are seen preparing food. Different types of animals are seen like camels, cows, black elephant, and horses of different colors in a geometrical shape. Bharata brought these animals chariots and army with him <sup>[4]</sup>. Such type of hoarse are seen painted in Himachal School <sup>[5]</sup>. At right side of a picture river Mandakini <sup>[6]</sup> is flowing with boats and people are seen sited in it. Everywhere in a paintings Ram's face is painted dark blue and all others are fair, male figures those whose are in green color dress clearly resembles the Mughal effect with their big mustache and turban. Very tiny figures are made and there is a lack of space and perspective in this painting. This miniature painting is accumulated in Jhansi museum and in a caption they coded the time 1600 A.D. of Orcha provincial, means during his period evidences of miniature paintings were found in Orcha. This is the earliest examples of Ramayana series found in Orcha – Mughal Provincial. After that in Datia School, there are so many paintings created on themes of Ramayana.

In a miniature painting 2, Ram killing golden Marich in a forest, scene taken from Aranaya kand of Ramayana is beautifully depicted as Lakshman is sitting with Sita in a cottage where she is seen describing something to Lakshman, here Lakshman iconography is painted as hanging the basket of arrows (see plate 2). Although Lakshman at once expressed his doubt and told that deer could be the demon named Maricha who can change his appearance <sup>[7]</sup>, but Sita insisted on bringing the deer to her. Maricha was deputed by Ravana to take away Shri Ram from the cottage, so that in the mean time he could take away Sita from there. Maricha is a guise of deer is painted human like face; and seeing behind at Shri Ram in a running posture. Maricha change the color of his coat like camalion. Some time he disappeared and some time he appeared, in the end Shri Ram shot an arrow. In Datia miniature most significant phase of Vishnu is depicted, in Orcha mughal provincial style. Shri Ram with his bow and arrow is shown shooting the Deer Marich. Condition of this painting is very bad at the side half of part is damaged, but then also work of an artist attracts the visitor. Deep dense forest is created, perspective is also up to accurate, figure study and the dressing sense creates an influence of Kangra School. This was the creation of Ramayana in Orcha School.

Plate 3, is the best exquisite art of Datia painted during the Region of Raja Indrajeet; it is a beautiful painting with the presence of six limbs. According to few scholars it is known that miniature paintings of Datia are seen from the ruling period of emperor Shatrueet. But here by seeing this painting (plate 10) it is now authentically can be said as before emperor

Shatrueet miniatures paintings were also created and that in the effect of european style (see plate 3). The style of this painting is very similar with the style of Orcha painting no. 2. Guha, King of the hunter tribe (Nishadas) helped Rama and his companion while crossing the river; this scene is illustrated from the Ayodhya kanda. On a high throne emperor and queen are sited, dragon shaped animals are painted on a throne. Mustache and beard of those male figures is following the Chinese style, the fan is also made in European style of white feathers. Only the dressing and a body is painted of blue color of an emperor resembles the Datia style, blue color painted on a body indicates Ram or Krishna, which is visible in all the illustration of Ram and Lakshman. Floral canopy and brown architecture is the right copy of Mughal – Rajasthani School. It was not sure that this painting is of Datia, but some influence can be seen, as dragon shape figures on a throne are also painted in the murals of Datia's Bir Singh Dev palace; and such type of crowns are created in Orcha murals and miniatures. This painting is accumulated in Jhansi museum where in caption Datia's name and style has been authenticated, that Datia artist were also influenced by nearby areas of it.

Artist of Datia put up various subjects to paint as paintings on Bhawat puran. Bhāgavata Purāṇa <sup>[8]</sup> is one of eighteen Maha <sup>[9]</sup> Puranic texts of Hinduism <sup>[10]</sup>. Composed in Sanskrit and available in almost all regional Indian languages <sup>[11]</sup>, it promotes Bhakti (emotional loving devotion) to Supreme God Vishnu (Narayana) in the incarnation of Krishna Bhagavata Purana.

Plate 4 describes, sukhdev narrating story of Krishna to Raja Parikshit. Sukhdev was the son of sage Vyas credited as an organizer of the Vedas and purans. Most of the Bhagwat Purans consists of reciting the story of the dying king Parikshit <sup>[12]</sup>. Sukh is depicted as a sannyasi, renouncing the world in pursuit of libration which most narrative asserts that he achieved. In a painting sage sukhdev is painted as naked, due to his complete lack of self consciousness. This painting is accumulated in Delhi museum there in a caption the time period is given 1800 A.D was the ruling period of emperor Shatrueet. Where emperor Paricshit ruled from 1801 to 1839; and the painting is also on emperor Paricshit, where he is seen sitting with sage sukhdev so in scholar view painting must be of paricshit rule from 1801-39

During the ruling period of Parikshit, figures became short and round. Background goes flat and artist put much attention on clearing the subject matter. Though the artist creates the themes in a section but they tried to compose as much as they can make on a single paper. They created drawing of each theme which is used to clear the subject as river, thrones, at places small temples, and the important point is that they wrote what it is as near river it is written 'ganga' (name of a river) and names are coded on each part of the painting. Gold color is used for making ornaments and in dress borders. There are the two borders in painting inner is like the Mughal style, petals formation on yellow color strip is created and at the outer side red color plane border differentiating with white line and touching the inner wall of the border.

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and took shape during the period of the art lover emperors from 17<sup>th</sup> to till 20<sup>th</sup> century. Paintings on Ramayana series were the earliest reported subject for the Datia artist to paint which they adopted from its neighboring city Orcha. Shri Rams life teaches how to maintain different ideal relationships. The earliest painting on Ramyana, see plate 3,s is the best and the unique work of the artist, visitor could imagine this painting of Mughal period but it of Datia made during the Raja Indrjit. There are number of paintings and its poetic temperament which make Datia miniatures to attain the softness of Kangra School. Its Bhagvat puran series has the same charming face as the Kangra Bhagvat. After observing the paintings of Datia style, we can say that these paintings are the best sources to understand the historical, mythological paintings. Datia painting is a lesson for the world that true manhood attains godhood.



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