



Development of tourism by preserving and promoting cultural heritage of Western Himalaya- Arki fresco

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Abstract

The Himalaya embraces some ancient and rare cultures which have remained geographically and culturally distinct for anywhere in the world. These different cultures are expressed in their vernacular sense. This Himalayan region is one of the world's richest areas. Distinct cultural groups settled long ago in the mountains where access to the outside world has not been easy. Although the culture within the Himalaya have ancient roots and have existed for ages but it remain distinct from each other even today. The paintings of the Himachal hills are the work of hardly more than two centuries. Arki the capital of Baghal State in Shimla hills was also a centre of painting. J. C. French paid a visit to Arki in October 1929, and he described the frescoes in the Diwankhana, the hall of public audience in the Raja's palace. From the mid seventeenth to the mid nineteenth century thousand of them preserved. But with the passing time these are losing their elegance. In Arki fort large numbers of paintings were drawn in the primitive style hill known as Basholi style. Present study is focused on the development of special interest tourism in/and around Arki by preserving and promoting these Pahari Paintings.

Keyword: Arki, Pahari Paintings, Schools of Pahari Paintings, Tourism Development.

Introduction

Himachal Pradesh came into existence by a series of migration that continued for centuries. The people of the entire cultural group enjoy perfect freedom to pursue their own way of life, custom, conventions and belief. Powerful people from the Indian plains made the Himachal their home and home to Hindu culture too. It is a land of fascination, mysteries, tradition and culture, which commands deep interest and respect

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in the heart of the people. It evolved as a unique complex of art and culture, made up of many strains both native and foreign, in which indigenous religion and belief predominated. It spread far and wide in the valleys and in the hills and became very difficult for the vanquished people to remain in isolation from the impact of visitors for a long time. They made new comers to speak their language. A new picture appeared as a result of the fusion of the ideals of their old indigenous religious system, Buddhism and Hinduism. It was not only Indian civilization and culture that influenced the cultural life of the people of Himachal Pradesh but also the culture of neighboring states like Kashmir, Tibet, Central Asia, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh. Of these influences the Indian influence was the strongest, because there was a steady contact between the people of the hills, the plains on the sub continent and central Indian plains (Wikipedia, 2021).

Pahari Paintings

Pahari paintings, meaning paintings from the hills, come from the mountainous regions of northern India once known as the Punjab Hills but which now form the present day UT of Jammu and Kashmir, states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. They include some of the most brilliant as well as the most lyrically beautiful of all Indian painting styles.

In the 17th and 18th centuries this area was divided into over 30 kingdoms, some of moderate size, but others very small. The kingdoms were established in the fertile valleys of the rivers that eventually flowed into the plains – the Ravi, Beas, Sutlej, and the Yamuna and Ganges and their tributaries – and divided from each other by high mountains. The Himalayas to the north-east formed the almost impenetrable barrier between these little kingdoms and Tibet.

Its rulers and ruling class were Rajputs, like those of Rajasthan, whose stories of their origin often suggested that they were descendants of the ruling Hindu dynasties of the north Indian plains who had taken refuge in the hills after their displacement by Muslim invaders after 1193. Although the Mughals had established their rule over the whole of northern India by the second half of the 16th century, and controlled key fortresses such as that of Kangra, their political influence in the hill states remained slight, especially with the weakening of the Mughal empire in the 18th century. In the mid-late 17th century the hill rajas from Mandi and Bilaspur patronised artists who had been influenced by work from the Mughal court. This brief flirtation

with Mughal naturalism did not last long, and by the end of the century those artists as well as others at centers such as Bahu and Basohli, now in Jammu, and Chamba had returned to their non-naturalistic Rajput roots and were illustrating traditional Hindu texts such as the Ramayana the Rasamanjari and Ragamalas in brilliantly assured fashion, dependent again on line and colour with their figures set against conceptual renderings of architecture and landscape. Such a style had spread throughout most of the Pahari region in the early 18th century.

With the weakening of Mughal power in the early 18th century Mughal artists sought patronage elsewhere, some presumably seeking work at the hill courts, because, by about 1730, Pahari painting began to change. It moved towards a more naturalistic style, assimilating some of the canons of Mughal painting, in which the depiction of volume, space and landscape became progressively more important for the expression of poetical moods.

This phase of Pahari painting is especially associated with the Guler artists Pandit Seu and his sons Manaku and Nainsukh, who were especially influenced by the contemporary Mughal style and may indeed have visited Delhi. Nainsukh, the most famous name in Pahari painting, is renowned for his portrayal of his patron Raja Balwant Singh of Jasrota (reg. 1743-63) in all of his many moods. This familial style was continued by their sons and grandsons who influenced the whole Pahari area but especially the large state of Kangra ruled by Raja Sansar Chand. Incursions from the Gurkhas of Nepal in the early 19th century brought instability to much of the hills, only relieved when the Sikhs under Maharaja Ranjit Singh expelled the Gurkhas from the western hills and brought those states under Sikh dominance in 1809. Later, the British drove the Gurkhas out of the eastern Pahari region and back to Nepal in 1814-15. The Kangra style gradually stiffened throughout the mid and later 19th century under this new regime, and many Pahari artists migrated to Lahore and Amritsar which became important centres for Sikh painting. (Francesca Galloway, 2017). Dr. G. Archer, Dr. M.S. Randhawa, Karl Khandalavala and Dr. B.N.Goswamy have done a great service to the Pahari paintings by tracing the family of historians and different style of many unknown painters of this tiny Himalayan region. Earliest known painter who was famous in hilly painting was Pandit Seu, who was settled in Guler. He was a painter in the Darbar of Raja Dalip Singh (1695-1745). He was from Lahore. He had two sons Manaku and Nain Sukh. Pandit Sen painted the portraits of Raja Balwant Singh with full party of their musicians in 1748. Nain Sukh firstly worked for Guler state and then he moved to Jammu. 1760 Nain Sukh

with his sons were back in the court of Raja Goverdhan Chand (1745-1773) of Guler. Manaku went to Basohli. Manaku had two sons, Khushala and Fattu. Manaku and his son Khushala later resided first at Guler and then at Kangra. When in 1775 Sansar Chand ascended Kangra that time this family divided. Manaku and his son Khusahala moved to Kangar and Nain Sukh stayed at Guler. When the courts of Guler and Kangra became full of artists, some of them moved to neighboring states. A painter from Guler Dandidas went to Chamba and worked there in the Rang Mahal with local artists Magnu and Durga. Painter from Sansar Chand court named as Sanju went to Kullu and then 1808 Mandi where he painted Hamir Hath for Rage Ishwari Sen in 1810. Raja Amar Chand of Bilaspur was himself a good painter. There were two painters form Nalagarh as Hari Singh and Nar Singh das. They worked in Nalagarh during the period 1788-1855. Mian Basant Singh, cousin of Arki raja was an amateur painter (M.G.Singh, 1983).

Review of literature

According to different scholars the place of origin of Pahari School is supposed to be Guler. When 1780 the Guler school was at its youth, it entered Kangra and since then it is known as Kangra Kalam. In the beginning Hamirpur, the capital of Guler, was the centre of art. In the beginning Pahari school came up as folk art, but afterwards got the patronage of the kings of that place because of the kings of that place of their being religious mind. Thus after a definite improvement and refinement it flourished by the name of Pahari Kalam. The designs derived from the Hindu religion, dominates the paintings of Himachal Pradesh, Garhwal and Nepal Himalaya. The worship and adoration of personal deity which is common among the Hindus form the inspiration for paintings, which symbolize the mutual longing of God and human Soul (Kaushal 1965). One principal theme of the Hindu artists has been the love story of Radha and Krishna as representing God and individual soul, in union and separation. The Hindu artists also desired the religious truths to appeal the society and they drew their imagery from everyday life (Randhawa 1964). The Hindu Himalayan paintings are a visualization of the life of common people, their work and play, joy and sorrows, custom and beliefs, home and field life in the backgrounds of their religious faith. It is an immediate expression of Hindu view of life and the product of whole civilization (Comaraswami 1916).

Paintings of the Himalayan hill states such as Kullu, Guler, Chamba, Mandi, Bilaspur, Kangra and Arki are given the generic name, 'Pahari Art' (Sahay 1974). The portrayal of love in Pahari paintings was sublimated and passion were enabled and suggested with great tenderness. Sex was not allowed to lose the quality and

refinement, incidental objects like clouds, rain, lightning, storm, trees, flowers, pictures, birds and animals were used to suggest a crisis (Archer 1952). Other themes in Hindu Himalayan paintings also came from the vast range of Hindu religious thought. Among the artists of Gharwal Himalaya and Nepal Himalaya, the Ramayan of Tulsidas, the Bhagwata Puran dealing with life of Krishna and Gita Govinda, the symbolical love songs for Krishna were popular themes of paintings (Randhawa 1954). The Pahari paintings, with their cradle in the Punjab Himalaya (now Himachal Himalaya), belongs to an artistic tradition quite different from the Mughal picture art. There are certain characteristics which are particular to this school of art and distinguish the Pahari School work, from other parts of India (Archer 1952). The paintings of Himachal originated between the mid seventeenth to the mid of nineteenth century, in about thirty independent princely states of western Himalaya. Most of them are preserved as miniature art. The quality of the paintings perished and they ceased to be produced (Archer, 1975).

Arki paintings

Arki paintings portray a magnificent history of Indian art. It is hard to believe, that a small region in the Shiwalik range of Himalayas, 'Arki,' is home to a glorious past. Arki, the capital of Baghal state in Shimla hills was also a centre of Pahari paintings. The Bashloli School of paintings exercised influence over Arki School too. But soon Kangra style was adopted. The paintings of Arki deal with the legends of Lord Krishan, Shiv Parvati strips and Nayak-nayika themes of Rasikpriya or Keshavda (Balkhora 2004). The literature reveals that one of the earliest accounts of Arki paintings was made by J.C. French in his work on the Himalayan art (1931). He visited Arki in October, 1929 and described the beauty of the Diwankhana (audience hall). He saw a collection of paintings of Mian Basant Singh, a cousin of the raja of Arki and described him as - "Mian Basant Singh paints in Kangra valley style. His work is very interesting, as a modern rendering of the old art." Dr. M.S. Randhawa, visited Arki in 1958 and 1962 and published an article "The paintings from Arki" in Roop Lekha, no.1 (1961) and one another article "Eight Nayikas from Arki" in the Times of India in 1962. He also traced the development of Arki school paintings in 'Travels in the Western Himalayas.' The paintings of the eight Nayikas are the most refined in collection of the Raja of Arki. They differ from all known Kangra paintings both in their style and in their color. The borders of these paintings are slate-blue and the vegetation is painted in grey-green tones. The hills in background are curved and clouds depicted in the form of spirals on the horizon. The figures of women are tall and graceful. Their

faces are round and delicate and their dress consists of a dupatta, a bodice which covers only the breast, and a ghahra like skirt which in most cases is painted magenta red. The colour, in fact, is used in the dress of most of the figures.



The frescoes in the Diwankhana were painted during the rule of Kishan Chand near about 1850 A.D. They are in Kangra style and are in a fairly good state of preservation. The roof has a floral design in which parrots are interspersed with leaves and flowers. On the walls are paintings of Puranic themes and contemporary life. Sikh soldiers on elephants, on horseback, on foot figure prominently. A procession is led by a Sikh carrying a flag followed by prancing horses and a nimble dog. Below it is Krishna subduing the serpent kaliya. In another mural a battle between the Sikhs and Mughals is shown. The battle of the Mahabharata with the Kauravas and Pandwas is shown in one another panel. There is also a delightful representation of Kalidasa's Kumarasambhava. Shiva is in penance and Kamadeva, the God of love, is shooting an arrow at him from a tree. As he appears on the scene he shoots his love-arrows everywhere. Numerous couple are shown making love. Even animals and Rakshasas feel the urge for procreation, pairs of snakes are coiled like ropes, and a black buck is seem mating with a doe. Even hermits in their cells feel the pangs of love. Ascetic Shiva, though he reduced Kamdeva to ashes by the ray of light emanating from his third eye is also affected and he marries Parvati.

Another panel shows a scene from Ramayna, viz., the monkey's crossing over to Lanka by a bridge of stones. On the top of this panel, the British army with a General and his wife seated on an elephant ahead of troops and guns is shown. It is impossible that it represents David Ochterlony who liberated Arki from Gurkha. The king of China, (in one of the pieces of art) is represented as a grotesque with the neck of a horse and the face of a tiger, followed by his females and leading a nude baby of similar type. The artist may have got his impression of Chinese from Mangolian kanauras of the Tibetan border land who have large feline faces. Contemporary life is depicted in an interesting manner. Gaddi shepherds laden with their

belongings are followings their goats carrying panniers of salt, while the Gaddi dog follows the flock of goat. Below are acrobats giving a demonstration of their skills, rope-walking and a woman balancing three pitchers on her head.

There are familiar scenes from the late nineteenth century rural life in the bills and are depicted with considerable verve and animation. Above the acrobats is a panel showing Krishna killing Bakasura and lifting the mountain Govardhana. A panel shows the famous Sindhi lover Punnu leading a camel and meeting his beloved Sassi in the town at Bhambor. Below it, is a Ramyana panel depicting the abduction scene of Sita. Ravana in the garb of a mendicant is asking for alms from Sita and on the opposite side is Jatayu, the giant bird and Rama and Lakshmana with Hanuman.



The holy cities of the Hindus also figure among the Arki murals. The city of Ayodhya is shown with Rama seated on a terrace, and Shiva, Brahma, and Hanuman standing in foreground. In another painting we see Varanasi with its familiar Ghats. With the rise of the Sikh powers in the Punjab and extension of Sikh influence in the hill states, we find a change in the style of painting. This influence is clear from the portrait of Raja Dhian Singh (1878-1904A.D.), in which he had an untrimmed flowing beard in the Sikh fashion. This portrait is the in the collection of Raja Rajinder Singh of Arki (M.G.Singh, 1983).

Conclusion

The creative power of the people of Himachal Pradesh is brilliantly expressed in their art and architecture. Backed by the old traditions of culture and art Himachali art can be found in different museums of the world. Himachal the Dev Bhumi as known to ancient lies in the Western Himalaya. The culture of Himachal Pradesh is distinct and unique, maintaining its diversity. In itself this region may seem insignificant and located in one of the most interior regions of the Western Himalaya and Kashmir. Arki the capital of Baghal was once the centre of rare Pahari Paintings. But today due to the poor governance and negligence these

paintings are almost dead. Diwankhana (audience hall) of Arki fort, which was the canvas of different painting, is near to fall. This part of the fort needs too much care and attention. These painting needs regular care and check. If these fresco marketed well, definitely it will going to boost the heritage and cultural tourism in and around Arki.

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