

Influence on Manuscript Paintings of Assam: A Study on Chitra-Bhagawata

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Abstract

The art and traditions of manuscript paintings of Assam fundamentally developed during the medieval periods (16th century A.D). The art was practised in different sattra institutions and in the courts of the Ahom-Koch kings under their control. The Vaishnavite traditions created by the great social reformer of Bhakti-movement Srimanta Sankardeva (1449- 1568 A.D.). The Vaisnavite traditions locally termed as Sattra, Namghara and Thana institution in Assam.

The Vaishnavite traditions became the hub of the different art forms. The art tradition of manuscript paintings shined under the governance of Vaishnavite institutions. The traditions of manuscript painting flourished as a central upshot to the movement which appreciably focused on worshipping of the sacred Scriptures instead of a deities image. One of the most vital surviving examples of manuscript paintings which focus the visual narratives is the Chitra-Bhagawata of Narowa Bali Sattra. The manuscript has definite characteristics of its own. The major hub of the research paper is to venerate the impact on Manuscript Paintings of Assam with a particular indication to Chitra-Bhagawata.

Key Words: *Influence, Manuscript, Paintings, Assam, Chitra-Bhagawata.*

Introduction:

Manuscript paintings are the noteworthy essentials of cultural heritage. It is the uniqueness of miniature paintings also. The influence on Manuscript paintings are of immense importance. Till date not very much study has been made so far as the Chitra-Bhagawata as a manuscript painting which is a topic of research. Chitra-Bhagawata as a manuscript painting has its gigantic significance in the context of Indian painting. The objectives of the study include i) To investigate the influence of manuscript paintings of Assam; and ii) To emphasize Chitra-Bhagawata as a Manuscript painting.

Research Questions:

1. Is there any influence on manuscript paintings of Assam?

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2. What are the definite characteristics of Chitra-Bhagawata as a Manuscript painting?

Research Methodology:

The paper is based on historical, descriptive and empirical research. Secondary sources are the main sources although two paintings and the preparing image by the author artist covered in the paper.

Growth and Development of Manuscript Paintings:

1. The growth and development of manuscript painting thrived as a indispensable reaction to the *Vaishnavite* movement that considerably highlighted on worshipping of sacred Scriptures instead of a deities icon.
2. Basically, the manuscript paintings are prepared on *sanchipat* or *tulapat*, which holds figures with explanations which have positive features and are cooperatively grouped as The Assam School of Painting.
3. It was the *Sattrra* institution of *Vaishnavite traditions* which fathered this school of thought and activated as stranglehold substantial element in its growth and development.
4. Assam holds an enormous compilation of a variety of illustrative manuscript paintings, specifically *Ananda-Lahari*, *Anadi-Patana*, *Chitra-Bhagawata*, *Hastividyarnava*, *Gita-Goinda*, and so on.

How to Prepare the Manuscript Paintings?

1. The Manuscript Paintings are enormously experienced in the *Sattras institutions* by the *Vaishnavite* monks who have devoted their entire existence in the name of the highest originator.
2. The *Vaishnavite* monks have lived and worked during their lives in the walkway, in group as their abbots. At the same time as constructing the manuscript illustrations normally occupied spaces are left by the scribe for the reason of illustrating it on later.
3. The manuscript painters are basically identified as *Khanikars* and the scribes are recognized as *Lekhaks*.

“Chitra-Bhagawata” A Critical Study:

The initial paradigm of an illustrated manuscript of the *Sattriya Traditionl* is the *Bhagawata Puran*, Book X traditionally recognized as The *Chitra-Bhagawata* from the *Narowa*

Bali Satra, Nagoan, Assam, 17th Century. It is obvious that the *Chitra-Bhagawata* is completed in the *Vaishnavite Sattra (Traditions)* from where it is firstly revealed, while there is an argument and debate concerning to its date. It is finished in *Sattriya* facet. On the subject of this matter, a renowned and distinguished Historiographer and Researcher Dr. Naren Kalita highlight *Chitra-Bhagawata* is *basically extraordinary for its cleanness in communicative talent, subtlety of implementation and confidence in the dynamics of movement of figures endowed with stylishness.* It is demonstrated in *tulapat* or hand-made pressed cotton.

It is important that the figures are full of stylish and animated forms that arises the emotion of vivacity. The position of the facts ensured movement by introducing the figures in a slanting location with dancing posture and the replication of figural forms reduced the illustration repetitiveness.

Occasionally in order to symbolize the sequence of actions a number of dramatic recitations and repetition of a quantity of similar occurrences are highlighted in the same panel. The hand gestures are one kind of main standard which focused the audacity of each nature.

Thematic and Evocative Evaluation of Manuscript Paintings:

1. *Vaishnavite Sattras* and its traditions carried the culture, art and practice of enlightening the Holy Scriptures with illustrations, highlighting the moral and saintly viewpoints.
2. Some *Sattras* we observed the mural painting assembled with wood carving wondering the innate trend of folk art culture.
3. The wonderful illustration of the *Sattra* manuscript paintings explains a variety of the implications of the Deity *Vishnu*, by means of plentiful thematic iconography.
4. Importantly the *Chitra-Bhagawata* manuscript paintings from the *Bhagawata-Purana* in 1949 were an era creating finding by the *Sattriya* School of thought.
5. *Chitra-Bhagawata* is based on the spiritual, legendary demonstrated themes, essentially with a three quarter and outline faces, flat backdrops, figures emerging in groups, *Sattriya* dancers singing and dancing and so on.

Method, Impact and Designs of Manuscript Paintings:

1. The manuscript of *Chitra-Bhagawata* of *Bali Sattra* is measured as one of the prehistoric examples of illuminated manuscript paintings of India's Assam.

2. The system and method in addition to the final touch perspicuously exhibits the Rajput-Mughal impacts. While the Assam School of Painting or the *Sattriya* School's methods and designs are rather echoed.
3. The *Sattriya* School is relatively self-governing in environment, in view of the fact that it is functioned by the *Vaishnavite* traditions called *Sattras*.
4. The method, approaches, skills and designs decorated in dancing and music scenes are rather magnetic in nature.
5. The lyrical-rhythmic idea, proficiency draughtsmanship, straightforward masterpiece, dramatic recitation and graceful colours make the *Chitra-Bhagawata*'s illustrations really exclusive from other comparable *Bhagawata* paintings found in the country.
6. The traditional symbol and depiction of head-dress is created worn by *Sutradhar*, the one who describes the *Vaishnavite* plays. The colours used first and foremost are deep red, blue and yellow.

Conclusion:

The current research is based upon both historical as well as experimental research. The *Vaishnavite* revitalization concealed the socio-cultural, spiritual and religious spheres. Undoubtedly, it has highlighted a great number towards the emergence and development of the entire Assamese society. The *Sattras* and its art structure, the shrine of socio-cultural and spiritual field ought to be cherished.

The art and painting form of the manuscripts are not rationally investigated and there are large numbers of aesthetical, theoretical and idealistic facets of this art which are yet to be obtained and discovered. In actual fact the manuscript painting can be measured as a significant outline of standard that minutes, congregates informations and facts both from the history and contemporary times to its extreme height as a structure of visual description.

Few Photographs:



Manuscript Painting on Sachipat by Artist Aditi Deka



Manuscript Painting on paper by Artist Aditi Deka



Preparing Colour by the Artist at Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra, Guwahati

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