

INDIAN PAINTINGS

The origin of Indian painting goes back to 8000 years and an account of its development is inextricably meshed with the development of Indian civilization. Hunters and gatherers who made primitive tools and lived in the rock shelters of central India, made exaggerated linear figures of wild animals, such as the bison, the elephant and the stag in red and yellow ochre on the rock surfaces of cave walls.

In the prehistoric paintings Rocks were scratched using stone & then natural colors are applied for painting. The natural colours used were ochre red, yellow earth color, soot black, green, white.

Theme of painting: Hunting theme (group Hunting scenes); Figures of animals & birds; Battle Scenes; Dancing Scenes. Example; Bhimbetka Caves (MP).

Prehistoric paintings belong to 3 periods:

- **Upper Paleolithic** : Use of white, dark red & green color to depict huge animals (bison, rhino, elephant, rhino etc.).
- **Mesolithic** : Use of red color, smaller paintings, common theme was group hunting scenes, grazing scenes, dawn scenes.
- **Chalcolithic** : Use of green & yellow color, common them was battle scenes with men riding horses & elephant with sharp weapons in the hands, group Dancing scenes.

Indian Paintings can be broadly classified as the Murals & Miniatures. Murals are huge works executed on the walls of solid structures. Classic examples are the paintings in Ajantha & Kailasantaha temple.

Miniature paintings are those executed on a very small scale on perishable material such as paper, cloth, etc., though this style had been perfected by artisans under the various rules, not many remain today. Prime examples are the Rajasthani & Mughal miniatures.

Mural Paintings

Indian Mural Paintings are paintings made on walls of caves and palaces. These pieces of art are symbolic of the life, culture and traditions of the people of the contemporaneous periods. To us now, they are reminiscent of the great civilisations and empires that flourished in India in the past and of the great kings, warriors and saints who by their efforts glorified this land of ours. The caves of Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta also on the Bagh caves and Sittanvasal are vivid reminders of great art that flourished centuries ago.

Wall Painting through the Ages

- **10,000 - 8000 BCE**

Prehistoric paintings in rock shelters and walls of caves show early life and activities of human society.

• **1-1000**

Buddhist viharas or monasteries and chaitya or prayer halls in Ajanta in Maharashtra, Alchi monastery in Ladakh, and in Bagh in Madhya Pradesh have murals depicting the life of Buddha and other religious stories.

• **1000-1700**

Wall paintings can be found in the temples of Kailashnath Temple of Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu. Recently wall paintings were found in the Brihadesvara Temple of Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. Early examples of Jaina paintings were found in Sittanavasal in Pudukottai District of Tamil Nadu. At Virubhadra Temple in Lepakshi are examples of the Andhra style of mural painting.

• **1600-1900**

Mural paintings also adorned palaces. Excellent examples are found in Bundi, Jaipur and Nagaur and the fortified palace in Patiala in the Punjab.

• **1900-2000**

Mural paintings continue today in many of our village communities especially Bihar, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Artists of today, like Jatin Das and M.F. Husain, have created paintings for contemporary building interiors.

In a wall painting or mural, the ground is the wall or the stone of the cave. Paint is applied on to the wall plaster. To bind the paint to the plaster the colours are often put on wet plaster so that it fuses with it. Different materials were used in different types of paintings. Mention of chitra shalas (art gallery) and Shilpasashtra (technical treatises on art) have been made in literary sources. However, the principal colours used were red ochre (dhaturaga), vivid red (kum kum or sindura), yellow ochre (haritala), indigo (blue) lapis lazuli blue, lampblack (kajjala), chalk white (Khadi Mitti) terra verte (geru mati) and green. All these colours were locally available except lapis lazuli which came from Pakistan. Mixed colours e.g. grey were used on rare occasions. Use of colours were decided by the theme and local atmosphere.

All paintings done on walls are not necessarily called mural paintings. This term is usually reserved for classical styles used for temples, churches and palaces. Sometimes these are called fresco paintings. An example of fresco painting is the mural technique revived from pre-historic cave paintings in Wynad, Kerala. It has religious and historical epics as subjects. The colours and costumes are related to the performing arts. Yellow ochre, red ochre, leaf green, lamp shoot and lime white colours are applied in layers from light to dark. These paintings do not spoil when exposed to natural elements.

Paintings	Themes
• Ajanta paintings	The themes of most of these paintings revolve around the life and teachings of Lord Buddha. This includes the Jataka stories related to the various lives and incarnations of Buddha.
• Ellora Paintings	The rock paintings of Ellora were painted in two different series. The first series, which were done when the caves were carved, revolve around Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi. The second series, painted centuries later, illustrate procession of Shaiva holy men, Apsaras, etc. It also included Jataka tales and Jain text.
• Bagh Paintings	Paintings are both secular and religious (Buddhism is main inspiration). Painting style is influenced by Ajanta.

• Sittanavasal Paintings	The themes of these paintings include animals, fish, ducks, people collecting lotuses from a pond, two dancing figures, etc. Apart from that, one can also find inscriptions dating back to the 9th and 10th century. Jainism is main inspiration.
• Badami Paintings	Petronised by Chalukyas. It was inspired by Vaishnavism. Paintings in this cave depict palace scenes.
• Pandyas paintings	Jains texts, female figures, etc.
• Pallavas paintings	beautiful lotus pond and flowers, dancing figures, lilies, fish, geese, buffaloes and elephants.
• Chola paintings	The paintings celebrate Lord Shiva.
• Vijayanagara Paintings	The paintings about the life and times of the Vijayanagara court.
• Nayaka Paintings	depicting the story of Mucukunda, a legendary Chola king.

Miniature Paintings

Miniature paintings are executed on books and albums, and on perishable material such as paper and cloth. The Palas of Bengal were the pioneers of miniature painting in India. The art reached its zenith during the Mughal period and was pursued by the painters of different Rajasthani Schools of painting, like Bundi, Kishangarh, Jaipur, Marwar and Mewar. The R?gam?la paintings also belong to this school, as do the Company paintings produced during the British Raj.

The different schools of the Miniature paintings of India include:

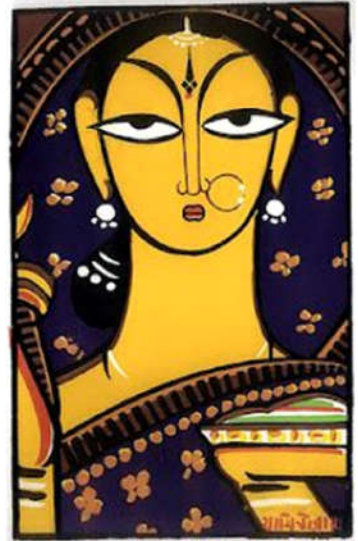
Pala School:

- It belongs to the late 8th or mid 9th century of the Pala period in eastern India.
- They are representations of Buddhist yantras, graphic symbols which were visual aids to the mantras and the dharanis (types of ritual speech).
- These Buddhist miniatures portray Buddhist deities such as Prajñāparamita, who, as the mother of all the Buddhas, was the personification of esoteric knowledge.
- The Buddhist paintings were drawn in red and white, forming colour planes. The inspiration came from the metal images, giving an illusion of relief.
- The Buddhist monasteries (mahaviharas) of Nalanda, Odantapuri, Vikramsila and Somarupa were great centres of Buddhist learning and art.
- The Pala art came to a sudden end after the destruction of the Buddhist monasteries at the hands of Muslim invaders in the first half of the 13th century. Some of the monks and artists escaped and fled to Nepal, which helped in reinforcing the existing art traditions there.



Western Indian School

- The Western Indian style of painting prevailed in the region comprising Gujarat, Rajasthan and Malwa.
- The motivating force for the artistic activity in Western India was Jainism. Jainism was patronised by the Kings of the Chalukya Dynasty who ruled Gujarat and parts of Rajasthan and Malwa from 961 A.D. to the end of the 13th century.
- The human figure was represented in the simplest and most visible manner. Against a background of rich colour stood out thick, boldly drawn figures. The paintings were harmonized with the enclosing script.
- One of the feature of this style is an exaggeration of certain physical traits, eyes, breasts and hips are enlarged.
- The ornamentation was increased to result in heavy stylization.
- The Jain paintings gave rise to the Gujarat School, from where it spread further to Rajasthan and Malwa. This evolved into Rajput painting and the subsequent fusion of the Indian and Persian styles in Mughal art.



Mughal School

- The Mughal School of miniature painting reached its zenith under Akbar and Jehangir. The Ain-i-Akbari shows the importance the art had attained during this period.
- In the beginning of his rule an atelier of painting was established under the supervision of two Persian masters, Mir Sayyed Ali and Abdul Samad Khan, who were originally employed by his father Humayun.
- It is synthesis of the indigenous Indian style of painting and the Safavid school of Persian painting.
- The subjects depicted were scenes of warfare, hunting and trials of strength.
- In Akbar's period, there was a greater attempt to portray reality as well as distance and horizontal perspective.
- The Mughal School saw an amalgamation of many influences: landscape details of Far Eastern art; clouds out of Chinese paintings; mountains and water of Central Asian art.
- It was primarily aristocratic and secular.
- Akbar and Jehangir encouraged the illustration of epics and histories, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Akbarnama and Hamzanama.
- Experiments on rich colour schemes and varied expressions happened during this period
- *Tuti-nama* - first work of the Mughal School.
- *Hamza-nama* (illustrations on cloth)- more developed and refined than *Tuti-nama*.
- Under Jahangir, painting acquired greater charm, refinement and dignity.



- Under Shah Jahan painting maintained its fine quality. Shah Jahan focussed more on architectural grandeur and though the paintings during were further refined from the earlier periods, it was still not the focus.
- Under Aurangzeb painting declined and lost much of its earlier quality. The painters moved to other regions and gave rise to Pahari and Rajasthani School of painting.

Rajasthani School

- Rajasthani paintings were deeply influenced by the Mughal style of painting while some deviated from the archetypal style of Mughal miniature.
- Rajasthani paintings are those works that have been executed in Rajputana, from Bikaner to the border of Gujarat and from Jodhpur to Gwalior and Ujjain.
- The themes of the paintings were mostly *religious and love subjects*, based on Lord Rama and Lord Krishna. Court scenes were depicted as also royal portraits.
- Bold outlines and brilliant colours are characteristic of the Rajasthani paintings.
- The colors used were extracted from the natural elements like minerals, vegetables, precious stones, conch shells, pure gold and silver.
- The romance of Padmavati, penned by the poet Malik Muhammad Jaisi, provided a common theme to the Rajput paintings. Illustrations of Mahabharata, Bana Bhatta's Kadambari, the Panchatantra were painted.
- The Rajput painting developed individual styles in Bundi, Kota, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Kishangarh. Each Rajasthani school of painting has its distinct and unique style whilst representing the hills, colours and palaces of Rajasthan.



Pahari School

- The Pahari region comprises the present State of Himachal Pradesh, some adjoining areas of the Punjab, the area of Jammu in the Jammu and Kashmir State and Garhwal in Uttar Pradesh.
- These States were centres of great artistic activity from the latter half of the 17th to nearly the middle of the 19th century.
- The important centres of the Pahari School were at Basholi, Jammu, Guler and Kangra.
- The Pahari School was lively and romantic, technically superior with



soft tonal shading, exquisitely created backgrounds that merged with the theme, and attitudes and postures highly evocative of the moods they were to convey.

- The Kangra paintings are as romantic as Kalidasa's descriptions of the mountains.
- In the Kangra School, Indian miniature paintings reached the zenith in the depiction of the Krishna and Shiva legends.
- The colours were extracted from minerals, plant sources, conch shells, and even by processing precious stones; gold and silver were also used.

Deccani Schools

- Deccani painting, style of miniature painting that flourished from the late 16th century among the Deccani sultanates in peninsular India.
- Deccani painting developed at Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Golkonda and Hyderabad, the former states that formed the region known as Deccan.
- The style is a sensitive, highly integrated blend of indigenous and foreign art forms.
- In the Bijapur style of painting there was rich colour scheme, the palm trees, animals and men and women all belongs to the Deccani tradition. There was profuse use of gold colour.
- The Hyderabad style of painting is decorative.
- Tanjore paintings are of popular Hindu deities and scenes from Hindu epics. The painting are done on cloth stretched over wood, style is decorative and is marked by the use of bright colours and ornamental details.



Company School of Paintings

- The eighteenth and nineteenth century India witnessed a new genre of painting popularly known as 'Company School of painting developed under Britishers.
- Colonial rule introduced several new art forms, styles, materials and techniques which were creatively adapted by Indian artists for local patrons and markets, in both elite and popular circles.
- European artists brought with them the idea of realism. This was a belief that artists had to observe carefully and depict faithfully what the eye saw.
- European artists also brought with them the technique of oil painting. Oil painting enabled artists to produce images that looked real.



- One popular imperial tradition was that of picturesque landscape painting.
- Another tradition of art that became immensely popular in colonial India was portrait painting. Unlike the existing Indian tradition of painting portraits in miniature, colonial portraits were life-size images that looked lifelike and real. This new style of portraiture also served as an ideal means of displaying the lavish lifestyles, wealth and status that the empire generated.
- There was a third category of imperial art, called "history painting". This tradition sought to dramatise and recreate various episodes of British imperial history, and enjoyed great prestige and popularity during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Modern School of Paintings

- The essential characteristics of the modern or contemporary art are a certain freedom from invention, the acceptance of an eclectic approach which has placed artistic expression in the international perspective as against the regional, a positive elevation of technique which has become both proliferous and supreme, and the emergence of the artist as a distinct individual.
- Oil paintings of Raja Ravi Varma of Travancore depicting mythological and social themes became highly popular at this time. He provided a vital link between the traditional Indian art and the contemporary art.
- Rabindranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore, E.B. Havell and Ananda Kehtish Coomaraswamy played an important role in the emergence of the Bengal school of Art. The Bengal School had a great flowering at Shantiniketan where Rabindranath Tagore set up the Kala Bhavan.
- Talented artists like Nandalal Bose, Binod Behari Mukherjee and Ramkinkar Baij rendered training to aspiring artists.
- Gradually some deeper changes took place in the thinking of the English educated urban middle class which began to be reflected in the expressions of the artists. Increasing awareness about British rule, ideals of nationalism and the desire for a national identity led to creations which were distinct from earlier art traditions.
- Another significant development was the formation of the Progressive Artists Group in Bombay in 1948 under Francis Newton Souza. The group also included S .H. Raza, M.F. Hussain, K.M. Ara, S.K. Bakre and H.A. Gode. This group broke away from Bengal School of Art and represented the modern forceful art of independent India.
- In the 1970s artists began to critically survey their environment. Daily encounters with poverty and corruption, the political morass of the country, the explosive communal tension, and other urban issues became the themes or subject matter of their works.
- The Madras School of Art under Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhury and K.C.S Paniker emerged as an important art centre in post independence period and influenced a new generation of modern artists.
- Some of the artists who made their mark as modern Indian artists are Tyeb Mehta, Satish Gujral, Krishan Khanna, Manjit Bawa, K.G. Subramaniyan Ram Kumari, Anjolie Ela Menon, Akbar Padamsee, Jatin Das, Jehangir Sabavala and A. Ramachandran.

Folk Paintings of India

The folk and tribal arts of India are very ethnic and simple, and yet colorful and vibrant enough to speak volumes about the country's rich heritage. The rural folk paintings of India bear distinctive colorful designs, which are treated with religious and mystical motifs. Some of the most famous folk paintings of India are the

Madhubani paintings of Bihar, Patachitra paintings from the state of Odisha, the Nirmal paintings of Andhra Pradesh, and other such folk art forms.

Some of the Folk paintings are discussed below:

a) Madhubani Painting

- It is practised in the Mithila region of Bihar.
- Themes revolve around Hindu deities and epic tales, especially tales of Lord Krishna, and scenes of social events like weddings.
- No space is left empty: gaps are filled in with paintings of flowers, animals, birds and geometric designs.
- Artists use natural dyes and pigment extracted from leaves, herbs and flowers.

b) Phad: scroll paintings (bhilwada, rajasthan)

- Phad is a painted scroll, which depicts stories of epic dimensions about local deities and legendary heroes.
- Bhopas(local priests) carry these scrolls on their shoulders from village to village for a performance
- It represents the moving shrine of the deity and is an object of worship.
- The most popular and largest Phad belong to local deities Devnarayanji and Pabuji.

c) Warli Paintings

- Warli tribals of Thane district in Maharashtra decorate their house walls with paintings depicting their lives: planting saplings, carrying grain, dancing, travelling to market and other routine activities of their daily lives.
- Symbols of the sun, moon and stars along with plants, animals, insects and birds show their belief in the integration of all forms of life.
- On ritual and ceremonial occasions Warli home walls are plastered with dung. Rice paste is used with red ochre powder to tell stories and to invoke the blessings of their goddess of fertility, Palaghata.

d) Mithila Paintings

- Mithila painting, popularly known as Madhubani art is from the district of the same name in Bihar and is now well-known all over the world.
- Women decorate the nuptial chamber and the inner walls of their homes to celebrate festivals.
- The return of Ram from exile and Krishna playing with gopis are the preferred subject matter.
- Artists often show scenes of nature, an abundant harvest, tantric images of snake worship, and even city scenes if they have visited one.

e) Jharnapatachitra

- The jharnapatachitra of West Bengal is a long vertical paper scroll used to tell stories from religious epics.
- The artists compose songs that they sing while they slowly unroll each scene of the painting.

- Old fabric is pasted on the back of the scroll to make it stronger.
- These village storytellers travelled from village to village listening to news and passing on information much like television today.
- The Gujarat earthquake of 2001 and the tsunami of 2004 inspired such singerartists to present ballads of these natural disasters.

f) Patachitra

- The patachitra of Orissa depicts stories from the famous poem, the Geet Govind, and devotional stanzas by ancient poets, singers and writers.
- Stories are drawn in sections on palm leaf as etchings or as paintings on paper and silk.
- Deep red, ochre, black and rich blue colours from minerals, shell and organic lac are used in these paintings.
- Modern developments have encouraged them to paint on wooden boxes, picture frames etc. for contemporary use.

g) Kalamkari

- Kalamkari or "pen craft" of Srikalahasti, is executed with a kalam or pen, used for free hand drawing of the subject and filling in the colours, entirely by hand. Paintings are usually hand-painted or block-printed on cotton textile.
- This style grew around temples and had a distinctly religious identity - scrolls, temple hangings, deities and scenes from the great Hindu epics.
- The Machilipatnam style tends to have more block printing. However, both use only vegetable colours.

h) Kolam

- Kolam is a ritualistic design drawn at the threshold of households and temples.
- It is drawn everyday at dawn and dusk by women in South India
- Kolam marks festivals, seasons and important events in a woman's life such as birth, first menstruation and marriage.
- Kolam is a free-hand drawing with symmetrical and neat geometrical patterns.

i) Kalighat paintings

- Kalighat painting was a product of the changing urban society of the nineteenth century Calcutta.
- Group of artists evolved a quick method of painting on mill-made paper. Using brush and ink from the lampblack, these artists defined figures of deities, gentry and ordinary people with deft and vigorously flowing lines.
- The figures were located in picturesque landscape settings, with mountains, lakes, rivers and forests.
- There was romantic depiction of women.

- The satirical paintings lampooning the hypocrisies of the newly rich and the changing roles of men and women after the introduction of education for women.
- Many of these Kalighat pictures were printed in large numbers and sold in the market. With the spread of nationalism, popular prints of the early twentieth century began carrying nationalist messages.



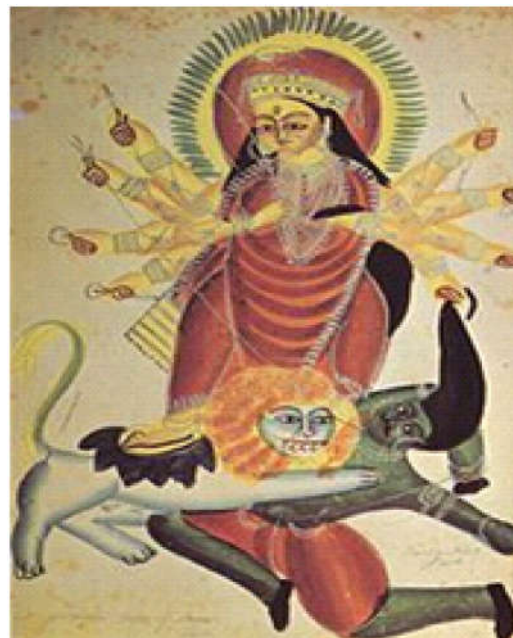
Kalamkari painting



Madhubani Painting



Warli Painting



Kalighat Painting