

# Wall Paintings of India

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## WALL PAINTINGS OF INDIA

Painting is one of the most delicate forms of art giving expression to human thoughts and feelings through the media of line and colour. Many thousands of years before the dawn of history, when man was only a cave dweller, he painted his rock shelters to satisfy his aesthetic sensitivity and creative urge.



Wall painting of a dancer, Bhimbetka, Madhya Pradesh

Among Indians, the love of colour and design is so deeply ingrained that from the earliest times they created paintings and drawings even during the periods of history for which we have no direct evidence.

The earliest examples of Indian painting, that we find evidence of, are on the walls of some of the caves in the Kaimur Range of Central India, Vindhya Hills and some places in Uttar Pradesh.

The paintings are primitive records of wild animals, war processions and hunting scenes. They are crudely but most realistically drawn. All these drawings bear a remarkable resemblance to the famous rock shelter paintings in Spain, which are presumed to be the work of Neolithic man.

Leaving aside the wealth of materials of the Harappan Culture, the art of India, as a whole disappears from our sight for



Painting : Cave I, Ajanta cave, Maharashtra

many years. This gap in Indian art cannot be filled satisfactorily as yet. However, we can learn a little of this dark epoch by reference to some of our old literatures belonging to the centuries before and after the birth of Christ. The Vinayapithak, a Buddhist text of circa 3rd - 4th century B.C. refers in many places to the pleasure houses containing picture halls which were adorned with painted figures and decorative patterns. Painted halls are also described in the Mahabharata and Ramayana, the composition of which in their original form is acknowledged to be of great antiquity. These early mural paintings may be assumed to be the prototypes of the carved and painted picture galleries of the subsequent periods of the Buddhist art, such as in the painted cave temples of Ajanta situated in Maharashtra State near Aurangabad. There are 30 caves chiseled out of the rock in a semicircular fashion. Their execution covers a period of about eight centuries. The earliest of them is probably out in the 2nd century B.C. and the latest is sometime in the 7th century A.D.

The subject matter of these paintings is almost exclusively Buddhist, excepting decorative patterns on the ceilings and the pillars. They are mostly associated with the Jatakas, collection of stories, recording the previous births of the Lord Buddha. The compositions of these paintings are large in extent but the majority of the figures are smaller than life size. Principal characters in most of the designs are in heroic proportions.



Painting : Cave 2, Design on the Ceiling, Ajanta caves, Maharashtra

Centrality is one of the main features of the composition so that attention is at once drawn to the most important person in each scene. The contours of Ajanta figures are superb and reveal a keen perception of beauty and form. There is no undue striving after anatomical exactitude, for the drawing is spontaneous and unrestrained. The painters of Ajanta had realised the true glory of the Buddha, the story of whose life was employed here by them as a motif to explain the eternal pattern of human life. The stories illustrated here are continuous and elaborate presenting the drama of Ancient India enacted in the palaces of the Kings and in the hamlets of the common people equally engaged in the quest for the beautiful and spiritual values of life.

The earliest paintings at Ajanta are in cave No. IX and X of which the only surviving one is a group on the left wall of cave X. This portrays a king with attendants in front of a tree decked with flags. The King has come to the sacred Bodhi tree for fulfilling some vow connected with the prince who is attending close to the king. This painting, though a fragmentary one shows a well developed art both in composition and execution which must have taken many centuries to reach this stage of maturity. There is a close resemblance in the representation of human figures with regard to their dress, ornaments and ethnical features between this painting and the sculptures of Amaravati and Karle of early Satavahana rules of circa 2nd century B.C.

Another surviving painting at Ajanta, the enormously long continuous composition of Shaddanta Jataka along the right wall of the same cave (cave No.X) belonging to circa 1st century A.D. is one of the most beautiful but unfortunately one of the worst damaged and can only be appreciated at the site.

We have little evidence of paintings of the next two to three centuries though it is certain that a good amount must have once existed. The next surviving and the most important series of Ajanta paintings are in cave

No.XVI, XVII, II and I executed between the 5th and 7th century A.D.

A beautiful example of this period is the painting which illustrates a scene of Jataka and commonly called 'the dying princess' in cave No.XVI painted in the early part of the 5th century A.D. The story tells how Nanda who was passionately in love with this girl was tricked away from her by the Buddha and carried up to heaven. Overwhelmed by the beauty of the Apsaras, Nanda forgot his earthly love and consented to enter the Buddhist order as a shortcut to heaven. In time, he came to see the vanity of his purely physical aim and became a Buddhist but the Princess, his beloved, was cruelly left to her fate without any such consolation. 'It is one of the most remarkable paintings of Ajanta as the movement of the line is sure and firm. This adaptation of line is the chief character of all oriental paintings and one of the greatest achievements of the Ajanta artists. Emotion and pathos are expressed here by the controlled turn and poise of the body and the eloquent gestures of the hands.

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There are flying apsaras in the cave No. X belonging to the late 6th century A.D. The rich ornamentation which was the characteristic of the period is beautifully portrayed in her turban decked with pearls and flowers. The

backward movement of the necklace suggests the flight of the *apsara* which is painted in a masterly way.

The later paintings at Ajanta by far the larger part of what survives was done between the mid 6th and 7th century A.D. and are in cave No.II and I. They also illustrate the Jataka stories with greater details and ornamental designs.

The scenes of Mahajanaka Jataka in cave No.1 are the best surviving examples of Ajanta paintings belonging to this period.

In a scene Prince Mahajanaka - the future Buddha, discusses the problems of the kingdom with his mother, the queen who is shown in an extremely graceful pose and is surrounded by maids. A few of them with fly whisks are seen standing behind the king. In their discourse, the Prince probably is seeking his mother's advice before beginning his march to reconquer his kingdom which has been usurped by his uncle.

A detailed scene of the Prince shows the graceful gesture of his right hand. The next scene of the story represents the journey of the prince on a horse back with all his retinue. The firm determination is beautifully suggested by his highly spirited horse while the prince himself is shown as a true embodiment of tenderness as if melting in Karuna (kindness). These three maids belong to the royal house. One is wearing a white robe with a beautiful ornamental design of ducks.

The Prince arriving in his uncle's capital discovers that his uncle had just died and had designated as his successor the person who would win the hand of his daughter, Sivali. The latter fell in love with the Prince and the omens destined him to occupy the throne. He was, therefore, enthroned and a great rejoicing followed.

The consecration ceremony scene where the Prince is shown being bathed by two jars over his head. On the left side of the scene, a maid with a toilet tray is approaching the canopy. This shows the royal harem where king Mahajanaka is sitting majestically while queen Sivali is beaming gracefully towards her beloved. They are enjoying dance and music.

The next scene portrays a sumptuously dressed girl dancer wearing a beautiful diadem, her hair is adorned with flowers and she is dancing to the

accompaniment of an orchestra. On the left, two women are playing the flute and on the right are several women musicians with various instruments including two drums and cymbals. The dancer and the musicians have been invited by queen Sivali to please and divert the king and to dissuade him from renouncing the world. The king, however, decided to live an austere life on the roof of his palace and he goes to hear the sermon of a hermit who will strengthen him in his resolution. His journey on an elephant's back is a representation of a royal procession just passing through the royal gateway. The last scene of the story depicts a courtyard of a hermitage where the king is listening to the discourses of the hermit.



Painting, Cave I,  
Bodhisattva, Ajanta  
caves, Maharashtra

The painting of Bodhisattva Padmapani from cave I is one of the masterpieces of Ajanta Painting executed in the late 6th century A.D. In princely fashion he is wearing a crown adorned with sapphires, his long black hair falling gracefully. This beautifully ornamented figure is more than life size and is shown stopping slightly and holding in his right hand a lotus flower. In the words of one of the contemporary art critics: "It is in its expression of sorrow, in its feeling of profound pity, that this great art excels; and in studying it, we would realize that we are face to face with a noble being under the weight of a tragic decision, the bitterness of renouncing forever a life of bliss is blended with yearning, sense of hope in the happiness of the future". The strong direct drawing of the shoulder and arms is masterly in its unaffected simplicity. The eyebrows upon which depends much of the facial expression are drawn by simple lines. The way of holding the lotus 'and the gestures of the hand, as shown here, is the greatest achievement of the Ajanta artists.



Painting, Cave I,  
Buddha visiting wife  
and son, Ajanta  
caves, Maharashtra

The representation of one of the memorable events of Buddha's life after enlightenment and which ranks among the best of the paintings at Ajanta, is in cave No.XVII painted probably in circa 6th century A.D. This represents Buddha's visit to the door of Yashodhara's abode in the city of Kapilavastu while she herself has come out with her son Rahula to meet the Great King. The artist had drawn the figure of the Buddha on a large scale, apparently to indicate his spiritual greatness as compared with ordinary beings for instance the representation of Yashodhara and Rahula looks very small by comparison. The head of Buddha is significantly inclined towards Yashodhara, showing compassion and love. The features of the face are obliterated but the eyes are clear and the meditative gaze suggests an absorption of mind in the spiritual. There is a halo around the Great King's head and above it, a Vidhyaduri is holding an umbrella as a symbol of his sovereignty over the earth and heaven.

Below, by the side of the door the figures of Yashodhara and Rahula are painted, the latter looking up towards his father with affection mixed with astonishment since he was only seven days old when Gautama renounced the world. Yashodhara has been shown with all charm of natural beauty and outward adornments of costume and jewellery but far more striking is the appealing manner in which she is looking towards Buddha, more with a feeling of love than reverence. The rhythmic treatment, of the different parts of her body, the graceful pose and the fine brush work shown in the curls above her temples and in the locks spread over her shoulders all portray an art of an high order and makes this painting one of the finest portrayals of feminine elegance and beauty.

A beautiful depiction of a feminine beauty as conceived by an Ajanta artist is apparently recognized as Maya Devi, the mother of the Buddha whose beauty the artist wanted to delineate without the restriction imposed by the incident of any story. The princess is depicted with all bodily charm which

the painter had skilfully exhibited. The painter has chosen a standing pose for the princess and to add naturalness and grace he has made her lean against a pillar so that the beauty of her slender and slim limbs may be best appreciated. By an inclination of her head the artist has shown very cleverly the charm of the dark coils of her hair adorned with flowers.

Along-side these Buddhist paintings there are also a few Brahmanical figures of iconographic interest.

Indra, a Hindu divinity, is depicted flying amid clouds together with celestial nymphs holding musical instruments. Indra is wearing a royal crown, pearl necklaces and in his girdle a sword and a dagger. The speed of his flight is suggested by the backward movement of pearl necklaces. This is from cave No.XVII and belongs to circa 6th century A.D.

Besides these religious paintings there are decorative designs on ceilings and pillars of these cave temples. Unlike the epics and continuous Jataka paintings there are complete designs within their squares. The whole flora and fauna in and around the artists world are faithfully portrayed but never do we find any repetition of form and colour. The artists of Ajanta, as if here suddenly emancipated from the dictum of the Jataka text, have given free reign to their perception, emotion and imagination.

An example of ceiling decoration is from cave No.XVII and belongs to circa 6th century A.D. The pink elephant is from the same decorative painting and can be seen in detail. This striking elephant represents a fine delineation of living flesh natural to that animal along with a dignified movement and linear rhythm and can be termed, perhaps, as one of the finest works of art.

The paintings from Bagh caves in Madhya Pradesh correspond to those paintings of Ajanta in cave No.I and II. Stylistically both belong to the same form, but Bagh figures are more tightly modelled, and are stronger in outline. They are more earthly and human than those at Ajanta. Unfortunately, their condition is now such that they can only be appreciated at the site.

The earliest Brahmanical paintings so far known, are the fragments found in Badami caves, in cave No.III belonging to circa 6th century A.D. The so called Siva and Parvati is found somewhat well preserved. Though the technique follows that of Ajanta and Bagh, the modelling is much more sensitive in texture and expression and the outline soft and elastic.

The paintings of Ajanta, Bagh and Badami represent the classical tradition of the North and the Deccan at its best. Sittannavasal and other centres of paintings show the extent of its penetration in the South. The paintings of Sittannavasal are intimately connected with Jain themes and symbology, but enjoy the same norm and technique as that of Ajanta. The contours of these paintings are firmly drawn dark on a light red ground. On the ceiling of the Verandah is painted a large decorative scene of great beauty, a lotus pool with birds, elephants, buffaloes and a young man plucking flowers.

The next series of wall-painting to survive are at Ellora, a site of great importance and sanctity. A number of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain temples were excavated between the 8th and 10th centuries A.D. from the living rock. The most impressive of these, the Kailashnath temple is a free standing structure which is in fact a monolith. There are several fragments of painting on the ceiling of the different parts of this temple and on the walls of some associated Jain cave temple.

The composition of the paintings at Ellora is measured out in rectangular panels with thick borders. They have thus been conceived within the given limits of frames that hold the paintings. The space, in the sense of Ajanta, therefore, does not exist at Ellora. So far as the style is concerned, Ellora painting is a departure from the classical norm of Ajanta paintings. Of course the classical tradition of modelling of the mass and rounded soft outline as well as the illusion of the coming forward from the depth is not altogether ignored. But the most important characteristic features of Ellora painting are the sharp twist of the head, painted angular bents of the arms, the concave curve of the close limbs, the sharp projected nose and the long drawn open eyes, which can very well be considered as the medieval character of Indian paintings.

The flying figures from cave temple No.XXXII at Ellora belonging to mid-ninth century A.D. are beautiful examples of swift movement through clouds. Both the characteristics, the rounded plasticity of Ajanta modelling of classical period on the faces and the angular bents of the arms of medieval tendencies are well marked here. It is perhaps a product of the transitional period.

The most important wall paintings in South India are from Tanjore, Tamil Nadu. The dancing figures from Rajarajeswara temples of Tanjore belonging to early 11th century A.D. are beautiful examples of medieval paintings. The

wide open eyes of all the figures are a clear negation of Ajanta tradition of half closed drooping eyes. But the figures are no less sensitive than the Ajanta figures, they are full of movement and throbbing with vitality.

Another example of a dancing girl from Brihadeshwara temple of Tanjore belonging to the same period is a unique representation of swift movement and twisted form. The back and the hips of the figure are vividly and realistically shown with the left leg firm on the base and right thrown in space. The face is shown in profile with pointed nose and chin while the eye is wide open. The hands are outstretched like a sharp line swinging in balance. The rapturous figure of a dedicated temple dancer with vibrating contours is a true embodiment of sophistication in art and presents a charming, endearing and lovable feast to the eyes.

The last series of wall painting in India are from Lepakshi temple near Hindupur belonging to 16th century A.D. The paintings are pressed within broad friezes and illustrate Saivaite and secular themes.

A scene with three standing women in spite of their well built forms and contours has in this style become somewhat stiff. The figures are shown in profile rather in an unusual fashion, specially the treatment of the faces where the second eye is drawn projecting horizontally in space. The colour scheme and the ornamentation of these figures are very pleasing and prove the highly sophisticated taste of Indian artists.

The Boar hunt from the same temple, is also an example of two-dimensional painting which almost becomes characteristic of late medieval paintings either on wall or on palm leaf or paper. Thereafter a decline of Indian wall paintings began. The art continued into 18th-19th century A.D. in a very limited scale. During the period from 11th century A.D. onward, a new method of expression in painting known as miniature on palm leaves and paper; perhaps much easier and more economical had already begun.

Some of the wall paintings of this declining period in the reign of Prince of Travancore in Kerala, in the palaces of Jaipur in Rajasthan and in the Rangmahal of the Chamba palace in Himachal Pradesh are worth mentioning. The Rangmahal paintings of Chamba deserve a special note in this connection as the National Museum is in possession of these early 19th century paintings in the original.

## TECHNIQUE

It would be interesting and perhaps necessary to discuss the technique and process of making Indian wall paintings which has been discussed in a special chapter of the Vishnudharamotaram, a Sanskrit text of the 5th/6th century A.D. The process of these paintings appears to have been the same in all the early examples that have survived with an only exception in the Rajarajeshwara temple at Tanjore which is supposed to be done in a true fresco method over the surface of the rock.

Most of the colours were locally available. Brushes were made up from the hair of animals, such as goat, camel, mongoose, etc.

The ground was coated with an exceedingly thin layer of lime plaster over which paintings were drawn in water colours. In true fresco method the paintings are done when the surface wall is still wet so that the pigments go deep inside the wall surface. Whereas the other method of painting which was followed in most of the cases of Indian painting is known as tempora or fresco-secco. It is a method of painting on the lime plastered surface which has been allowed to dry first and then drenched with fresh lime water. On the surface thus obtained the artist proceeded to sketch out his composition. This first sketch was drawn by an experienced hand and subsequently corrected in many places with a strong black or deep brown line when the final drawing was added. After the painter had drawn out his first scheme in red, he proceeded to apply on this a semi-transparent terraverte monochrome, through which his outline could be seen. Over this preliminary glaze the artist worked in his local colours. The principal colours in use were red ochre, vivid red (vermilion), yellow ochre, indigo blue, lapis lazuli, lamp black (Kajjal), chalk white, terraverte and green.

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# MINIATURE PAINTING

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## MINIATURE PAINTING

### 1. THE PALA SCHOOL (11th to 12th centuries)

The earliest examples of miniature painting in India exist in the form of illustrations to the religious texts on Buddhism executed under the Palas of the eastern India and the Jain texts executed in western India during the 11th-12th centuries A.D. The Pala period (750 A.D. to the middle of the 12th century) witnessed the last great phase of Buddhism and of the Buddhist art in India. The Buddhist monasteries (*mahaviharas*) of Nalanda, Odantapuri, Vikramsila and Somarupa were great centres of Buddhist learning and art. A large number of manuscripts on palm-leaf relating to the Buddhist themes were written and illustrated with the images of Buddhist deities at these centres which also had workshops for the casting of bronze images. Students and pilgrims from all over South-East Asia gathered there for education and religious instruction. They took back to their countries examples of Pala Buddhist art, in the form of bronzes and manuscripts which helped to carry the Pala style to Nepal, Tibet, Burma, Sri Lanka and Java etc. The surviving examples of the Pala illustrated



The stupa of Sariputta at Nalanda, Bihar

manuscripts mostly belong to the Vajrayana School of Buddhism.

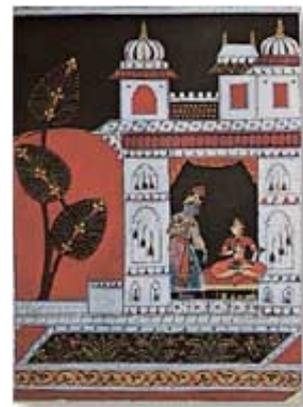
The Pala painting is characterised by sinuous line and subdued tones of colour. It is a naturalistic style which resembles the ideal forms of contemporary bronze and stone sculpture, and reflects some feeling of the classical art of Ajanta. A fine example of the typical Buddhist palm-leaf manuscript illustrated in the Pala style exists in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, England. It is a manuscript of the *Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita*, or the perfection of Wisdom written in eight thousand lines. It was executed at the monastery of Nalanda in the fifteenth year of the reign of the Pala King, Ramapala, in the last quarter of the eleventh century. The manuscript has illustrations of six pages and also on the insides of both wooden covers.

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.

## 2. THE WESTERN INDIAN SCHOOL (12th - 16th centuries).

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 just as it was Buddhism in case of the Ajanta and the Pala arts. 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. An enormous number of Jain religious manuscripts were commissioned from 12th to 16th centuries by the princes, their ministers and the rich Jain merchants for earning religious merit. Many such manuscripts are available in the Jain libraries (*bhandaras*) which are found at many places in Western India.

The illustrations on these manuscripts are in a style of vigorous distortion. One finds in this style an



Malwa painting,  
Rajasthan School of  
painting

exaggeration of certain physical traits, eyes, breasts and hips are enlarged. Figures are flat with angularity of features and the further eye protruding into space. This is an art of primitive vitality vigorous line and forceful colours. From about 1100 to 1400 A.D., palm-leaf was used for the manuscripts and later on paper was introduced for the purpose. The *Kalpasutra* and the *Kalakacharya-Katha*, the two very popular Jain texts were repeatedly written and illustrated with paintings. Some notable examples are the manuscripts of the *Kalpasutra* in the Devasano pado Bhandar at Ahmedabad, the *Kalpasutra* and *Kalakacharya-Katha* of about 1400 A.D. in the Prince of Wales Museum. Bombay and the *Kalpasutra* dated 1439 A.D. executed in Mandu, now in the National Museum, New Delhi and the *Kalpasutra* written and painted in Jaunpur in 1465 A.D.

### 3. OTHER ISOLATED STYLES (1500-1550 A.D.)

During the 15th century the Persian style of painting started influencing the Western Indian style of painting as is evident from the Persian facial types and hunting scenes appearing on the border's of some of the illustrated manuscripts of the *Kalpasutra*. Introduction of the use of ultramarine blue and gold colour in the Western Indian manuscripts is also believed to be due to the influence of the Persian painting. These Persian paintings, which came to India, were in the form of illustrated manuscripts. A number of such manuscripts were copied in India. Some colours used in these types of copies can be seen in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington and an illustrated manuscript of *Bustan* of Sadi in the National Museum, New Delhi. The *Bustan* was executed for Sultan Nadir Shah Khilji of Malwa (1500-1510 A.D.), by one Hajji Mahmud (painter) Shahsuwar (scribe).



Persian painting

An illustrated manuscript of the *Nimat Nama*

(Cookery Book) which exists in the Indian Office Library, London is marked by a new trend of painting at Malwa. The manuscript was started in the time of Ghiyasaldin Khilji of Malwa (1469-1500 A.D.). A left of this manuscript is illustrated here. It shows Ghiyasaldin Khilji supervising cooking being done by maids. In the *Nimat Nama* style the Persian influence is visible in the scroll like clouds, flowering trees, grassy tufts and flowering plants in the background, female figures and costumes. Indian elements are noticeable in some female types and their costumes and ornaments and colours. In this manuscript one can notice the first attempt towards the evolution of new styles of painting by the fusion of the Persian style of Shiraz with the indigenous Indian style.



Gita - Govinda, Mewar,  
Rajasthan School of Painting

The finest examples of painting belonging to the first half of the 16th century are, however, represented by a group of miniatures generally designated as the "Kulhadar Group". This group includes illustrations of the 'Chaurapanchasika' - "Fifty Verses of the Thief by Bilhan, the *Gita Govinda*, the *Bhagavata Purana* and *Ragamala*. The style of these miniatures is marked by the use of brilliant contrasting colours, vigorous and angular drawing, transparent drapery and the appearance of conical caps 'Kulha' on which turbans are worn by the male figures.

An example of the *Chaurapanchasika* miniature shows Champavati standing near a lotus pond. This miniature belongs to the N.C. Mehta collection, Bombay. It was executed in the first quarter of the 6th century, probably in Mewar. The style of the painting is purely indigenous derived from the earlier tradition of the Western Indian art

and does not show any influence of either the Persian or the Mughal style of painting.

Two manuscripts of the *Laur Chanda*, an Avadhi romance by Mulla Daud, one in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay and the other in John Rylands Library, Manchester seem to have been painted at Muslim courts between 1530 to 1540 A.D. They show a mixture of Persian and Indian styles like the *Nimat Nama* of Malwa. The other two important manuscripts of this period are the *Mrigavati* and the Mahapurana, a Jain text. They are executed in a style related to *Chaurapanchasika* style.

## II. THE MUGHAL SCHOOL (1560-1800 A.D.)

The origin of the Mughal School of Painting is considered to be a landmark in the history of painting in India. With the establishment of the Mughal empire, the Mughal School of painting originated in the reign of Akbar in 1560 A.D. Emperor Akbar was keenly interested in the art of painting and architecture. While a boy he had taken lessons in drawing. 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. A large number of Indian artists from all over India were recruited to work under the Persian masters.

The Mughal style evolved as a result of a happy synthesis of the indigenous Indian style of painting and the Safavid school of Persian painting. The Mughal style is marked by supple naturalism based on close observation of nature and fine and delicate drawing. It is of an high aesthetic merit. It is primarily aristocratic and secular.



Akbar's return,  
Mughal painting  
from Ain-i-Akbari

An illustrated manuscript of the *Tuti-nama* in the Cleveland Museum of Art (USA) appears to be the first work of the Mughal School. The style of painting in this manuscript shows the Mughal style in its formative stage. Shortly after that, between 1564-69 A.D. was completed a very ambitious project in the form of *Hamza-nama* illustrations on cloth, originally consisting of 1400 leaves in seventeen volumes. Each leaf measured about 27"x20". The style of *Hamza-nama* is more developed and refined than that of the *Tuti-nama*.



Hamza - nama illustration on cloth, Mughal School of Painting

The *Hamza-nama* illustrations are in a private collection in Switzerland. It shows Mihrdukht shooting arrows at the bird on a multi-staged minaret, from the upper storey of a pavilion. In this miniature one can observe that the architecture is Indo-Persian, the tree types are mainly derived from the Deccani painting and female types are adapted from the earlier Rajasthani paintings, Women are wearing four cornered pointed skirts and transparent muslim veils. Turbans worn by men are small and tight, typical of the Akbar period.

The Mughal style was further influenced by the European paintings which came in the Mughal court, and absorbed some of the Western techniques like shading and perspective.

The other important manuscripts illustrated during the period of Akbar are the *Gulistan* of Sadi dated 1567 in the British Museum, London, the *Anwari-Suhavli* (a book of fables) dated 1570 in the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, another *Gulistan* of Sadi in the Royal Asiatic Society Library copied at Fatehpur Sikri in 1581 by Muhammad Hussain al-Kashmiri, a *Diwan* of the poet Amir Shahi in the Bibliotheque Nationale, of the *Diwan* of Hafiz, one divided between the British Museum and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin and the second in the Persian section of the Chester



Peacocks, Mughal School of painting

Beatty Library, another manuscript of the *Tuti-nama* in the same Library, the *Razm-nama* (Persian translation of the Mahabharata) in the Maharaja of Jaipur Museum, Jaipur, the *Baharistan* of Jami dated 1595 in the Bodleian Library, the *Darab-nama* in the British Museum, the *Akbar-nama* (circa 1600) in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the *Tarikh-i-Alfi* dated 1596 A.D. in the Gulistan Library in Tehran, a number of the *Babar-nama*, a manuscript executed in the last decade of the 16th century, the *Twarikh-e-Khandane Taimuria* in the Khuda Baksh Library, Patna, the *Jog Vashisht* dated 1602 in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin etc. Moreover, a number of paintings of court and hunting scenes and portraits were also executed during the period of Akbar.



Portrait of Jahangir, Miniature painting, Mughal School of painting

The list of Akbar's court painters includes a large number of names. Some of the famous painters other than the two Persian masters already mentioned are Dasvanth, Miskina, Nanha, Knha, Basawan, Manohar, Doulat, Mansur, Kesu, Bhim Gujarati, Dharam Das, Madhu, Surdas, Lal, Shankar Goverdhan and Inayat.

Under Jahangir, painting acquired greater charm, refinement and dignity. He had great fascination for nature and took delight in the portraiture of birds, animals and flowers. Some important manuscripts illustrated during his period are, an animal fable book called *Ayar-i-Danish*, the leaves of which are in the Cowasji Jahangir collection, Bombay and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, and the *Anwar-i-sunavli*, another fable book in the British Museum, London, both executed between 1603-10, some miniatures in the Gulistan and a Diwan of Hafiz both in the British Museum. Besides a number of durbar scenes, portraits, bird, animal and flower studies were also executed during his period. The famous painters of Jahangir are Aqa Riza, Abul Hasan, Mansur, Bishan Das, Manohar, Goverdhan, Balchand, Daulat, Mukhlis, Bhim and Inayat.

The portrait of Jahangir illustrated is a typical example of miniature executed during the period of Jahangir. This miniature is in the collection of the National Museum, New Delhi. It shows Jahangir holding a picture of the Virgin Mary in his right hand. The portrait is remarkable for its superb drawing and fine modelling and realism. There is liberal use of gold colour on the borders which are decorated with floral designs. Text in Persian appears along the border. The portrait is assigned to 1615-20 A.D. Following the example of the Mughal Emperor the courtiers and the provincial officers also patronised painting. They engaged artists trained in the Mughal technique of painting. But the artists available to them were of inferior merit, those who could not seek employment in the Imperial Atelier which required only first-rate artists. The works of such painters are styled as "Popular Mughal" or 'Provincial Mughal' painting. This style of painting has all important characteristics of the Imperial Mughal painting but is inferior in quality. Some notable examples of the Popular Mughal painting are a series of the *Razm-nama* dated 1616 A.D., a series of the *Rasikapriya* (1610-1615) and a series of the *Ramayana* of circa 1610 A.D., in several Indian and foreign museums.

An example from a series of the *Ramayana* of the early 17th century in the typical popular Mughal style, from the collection of the National Museum, New Delhi. It shows a fight between the armies of Rama and Ravana in Lanka. Rama with his brother Lakshmana is seen in the foreground to the left while Ravana is seen in his court conversing with the demon chiefs inside the golden fort. The drawing is fine but not as refined as observed in the Imperial Mughal painting. The human facial type, demons, the tree types and the treatment of rocks are all in the Mughal manner. The miniature is marked by the spirit of action and dramatic movement created in the fighting scene.



Shahjahan on a globe, Mughal School of painting

Under Shah Jahan the Mughal painting maintained

its fine quality. But the style, however, became over-ripe during the later period of his rule. Portraiture was given considerable attention by his painters. The well-known artists of his period are Bichiter, Chaitaraman, Anup Chattar, Mohammed Nadir of Samarquand, Inayat and Makr. Apart from portraiture, other paintings showing groups of ascetics and mystics and a number of illustrated manuscripts were also executed during his period. Some noteworthy examples of such manuscripts are the *Gulistan* and the *Bustan of Sadi*, copied for the emperor in the first and second years of his reign and the *Shah Jahan Nama 1657*, at Windsor Castle.

A miniature in the collection of the National Museum depicts a gathering of *Sufis* (Muslim divines) who are seen seated in an open space and engaged in discussion. It displays subtle naturalism of the Mughal style of the Shah Jahan period. The drawing is refined and the colours have subdued tones. The background is green and the sky is in golden colour. The borders show floral designs in golden colour. The miniature is assigned to circa 1650 A.D.

Aurangzeb was a puritan and therefore did not encourage art. Painting declined during his period and lost much of its earlier quality. A large number of court painters migrated to the provincial courts.

During the period of Bahadur Shah, there was a revival of the Mughal painting after the neglect shown by Aurangzeb. The style shows an improvement in quality.

After 1712 A.D. the Mughal painting again started deteriorating under the later Mughals. Though retaining the outer form it became lifeless and lost inherent quality of the earlier Mughal art.

### **III.. THE DECCANI SCHOOLS (CIRCA 1560-1800 A.D.)**

Though no pre-Mughal painting from the Deccan are so far known to exist, yet it can safely be presumed that

sophisticated schools of painting flourished there, making a significant contribution to the development of the Mughal style in North India. Early centres of painting in the Deccan, during the 16th and 17th centuries were Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda. In the Deccan, painting continued to develop independently of the Mughal style in the beginning. However, later in the 17th and 18th centuries it was increasingly influenced by the Mughal style.

## 1. AHMEDNAGAR

The earliest examples of the Ahmednagar painting are contained in a volume of poems written in praise of Hussain Nizam Shah I of Ahmednagar (1553-1565) and his queen. This manuscript known as the '*Tarif-in-Hussain Shahi*' and assigned to a period 1565-69 is preserved in the Bharat Itihas Samshodaka Mandala, Poona. One of the illustrations depicts the king sitting on the throne and attended by a number of women. The female type appearing in the painting belongs to the northern tradition of Malwa. The *Choli* (bodice) and long pigtails braided and ending in a tassel are the northern costume. But the long scarf passing round the body is in the southern fashion. The colours used in the painting being rich and brilliant are different from those used in the northern paintings. The Persian influence can be seen in the high horizon, gold sky and the landscape.

Some other fine examples of the Ahmednagar painting are the "Hindola Raga" of about 1590 A.D. and portraits of Burhan Nizam Shah II of Ahmednagar (1591-96 A.D.) and of Malik Amber of about 1605 A.D. existing in the National Museum, New Delhi and other museums.

## 2. BIJAPUR

In Bijapur, painting was patronised by Ali Adil Shah I (1558-80 A.D.) and his successor Ibrahim II (1580-



Pahari, Kangra  
School, Hindola  
Raga, 1790-1800  
A. D



Prince of Bijapur .,  
Deccani School of  
painting

1627 A.D.). An encyclopaedia known as the *Najum-ul-ulum* (Stars of Sciences), preserved in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, was illustrated in 1570 A.D. in the reign of Ali Adil Shah I. This manuscript contains 876 miniatures. The ladies appearing in the illustrations are tall and slender and are wearing the South Indian dress. One of the miniatures illustrated here shows the "Throne of Prosperity". There is influence of the Lepakshi mural painting on the female types. The rich colour scheme, the palm trees, animals and men and women all belong, to the Deccani tradition. The profuse use of gold colour, some flowering plants and arabesques on the top of the throne are derived from the Persian tradition.

Ibrahim II (1580-1627 A.D.) was a musician and author of a book, the *Naurasnama.*, on the subject. It is believed that a number of the Ragamala paintings were commissioned in various museums and private collections. A few contemporary portraits of Ibrahim II are also available in several museums.

### 3. GOLCONDA

The earliest paintings identified as Golconda work are a group of five charming paintings of about 1590 A.D. in the British Museum, London, painted in the period of Muhammad Quli Quta Shah (1580-1611) Golconda. They show dancing girls entertaining the company. One of the miniatures illustrated shows the king in his court watching a dance performance. He wears the white muslim coat with embroidered vertical band, a typical costume associated with the Golconda court. Gold colour has been lavishly used in painting the architecture, costume, jewellery and vessels etc.



Lady smokingHooka,  
Golconda painting

Other outstanding examples of the Golconda

painting are "Lady with the Myna bird", about 1605 A.D. in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, an illustrated manuscript of a Sufi poem (1605-15 A.D.) in the British Museum, London and a couple of portraits showing a poet in a garden and an elegantly dressed young man seated on a golden stool and reading a book, both signed by a certain artist Muhammad Ali in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Early Deccani painting absorbed influences of the northern tradition of the pre-Mughal painting which was flourishing in Malwa, and of the southern tradition of the Vijayanagar murals as evident in the treatment of female types and costumes. Influence of the Persian painting is also observed in the treatment of the horizon gold sky and landscape. The colours are rich and brilliant and are different from those of the northern painting. Tradition of the early Deccani painting continued long after the extinction of the Deccan Sultanates of Ahmednagar, Bijapur and Golconda.



A lady with made, Vilaval Ragini, 18th century A.D.

#### 4. HYDERABAD

Painting in Hyderabad started with the foundation of the Asafjhi dynasty by Mir Qamruddin Khan (Chin Qulick Khan) Nizam-ul-Mulk in 1724 A.D. Influence of the Mughal style of painting on the already existing early styles of Deccani paintings, introduced by several Mughal painters who migrated to the Deccan during the period of Aurangzeb and sought patronage there, was responsible for the development of various styles of painting in the Deccan at Hyderabad and other centres. Distinctive features of the Deccani paintings of the 18th and 19th centuries are observed in the treatment of the ethnic types, costumes, jewellery, flora, fauna, landscape and colours.

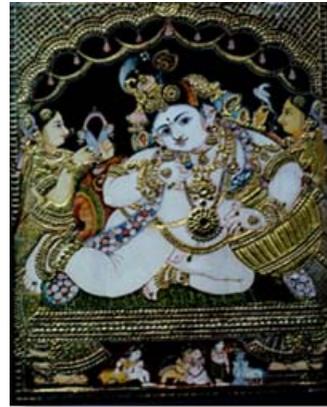
A miniature showing a princess in the company of

maids is a typical example of the Hyderabad school of painting. The princess is reclining on richly furnished terrace covered with a canopy. The style of the painting is decorative. Typical characteristics of the Hyderabad painting like the rich colours, the Deccani facial types and costumes can be observed in the miniature. It belongs to the third quarter of the 18th century.

## 5. TANJORE

A style of painting characterised by bold drawing, techniques of shading and the use of pure and brilliant colours flourished at Tanjore in South India during the late 18th and 19th centuries.

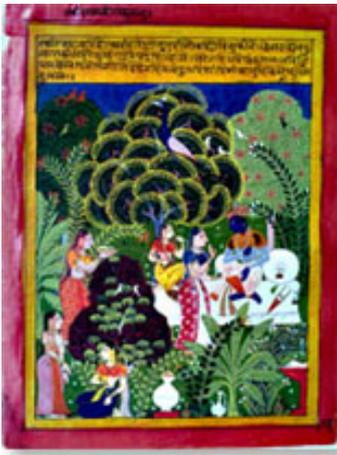
A typical example of the Tanjore painting, in the collection of the National Museum, is an illustrated wooden panel of early 19th century showing the coronation of Rama. The scene is laid under elaborately decorated arches. In the middle Rama and Sita are seated on the throne, attended by his brothers and a lady; In the left and right panels are seen *rishis*, courtiers and princes. In the foreground are Hanuman, Sugriva who is being honoured and two other *vanaras* opening a box probably containing gifts. The style is decorative and is marked by the use of bright colours and ornamental details. The conical crown appearing in the miniature is a typical feature of the Tanjore painting.



Krishana, Tanjore painting, 18th century A.D

## IV. THE CENTRAL INDIAN AND RAJASTHANI SCHOOLS (17TH-19TH CENTURIES)

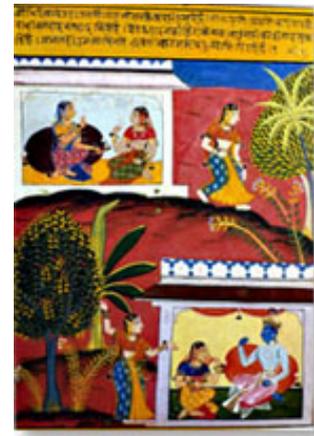
Unlike Mughal painting which is primarily secular, the art of painting in Central India, Rajasthani and the Pahari region etc. is deeply rooted in the Indian traditions, taking inspiration from Indian epics, religious texts like the Puranas, love poems in



Gita - Govinda, Mewar,  
Rajasthan School of  
Painting

Sanskrit and other Indian languages, Indian folklore and works on musical themes. The cults of *Vaishnavism*, *Saivism* and *Sakti* exercised tremendous influence on the pictorial art of these places. Among these the cult of Krishna was the most popular one which inspired the patrons and artists. The themes from the *Ramayana*., the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavata*, the *Siva Purana*, the *Naishadacarita*, the *Usha Aniruddha*, the *Gita Govinda* of Jayadeva, the *Rasamanjari* of Bhanudatta, the *Amaru Sataka*, the *Rasikapriya* of Kesavadasa, the *Bihari Satasayee* and the *Ragamala* etc., provided a very rich field to the painter who with his artistic skill and devotion made a significant contribution to the development of Indian painting.

In the 16th century there already existed in Central India and Rajasthan the primitive art traditions in the form of the 'Western Indian' and the 'Chaurapanchasika' styles which served as a base for the origin and growth of various schools of painting during the 17th century. Peaceful conditions prevailed in Rajasthan in the later half of the 16th and the 17th centuries. The Rajput rulers had gradually accepted the Mughal supremacy and many among them occupied important positions in the Mughal court. Some of the rulers also entered into matrimonial alliances with the Mughals. The Rajput rulers following the example set by the Mughal Emperors employed artists to work at their courts. Some of the Mughal artists of inferior merit who were no longer required by the Mughal Emperors, migrated to Rajasthan and other places and found employment at the local courts. It is believed that the popular version of the Mughal style which these painters carried to various places influenced the already existing styles of paintings there with the consequence that a number of new schools of painting originated in Rajasthan and Central India in the 17th and 18th centuries. Among these the



Miniature Painting,  
Mewar, Rajasthan  
School of Painting

important schools of paintings are Malwa, Mewar, Bundi- Kotah, AmberJaipur, Bikaner, Marwar and Kishengarh.

The Rajasthani style of painting including that of Malwa, is marked by bold drawing, strong and contrasting colours. The treatment of figures is flat without any attempt to show perspective in a naturalistic manner. Sometimes the surface of the painting is divided into several compartments of different colours in order to separate one scene from another. Mughal influence is seen in the refining of drawing and some element of naturalism introduced in figures and trees. Each school of painting has its distinct facial type, costume, landscape and colour scheme.



Ravana begging sita for Alm, Malwa, Rajasthan School of painting

## 1. MALWA

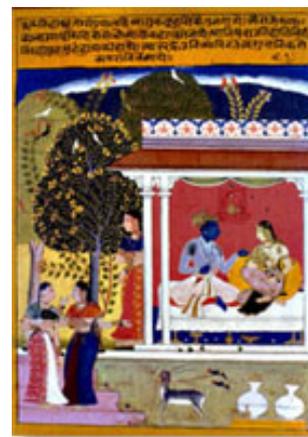
Some of the important paintings executed in the Malwa style are a series of the *Rasikapriya* dated 1634 A.D., a series of the *Amaru Sataka* painted in 1652 A.D. at a place called Nasratgarh and a series of the *Ragamala* painted in 1680 A.D. by an artist named Madhau Das, at Narsyanga Shah, some of them available in the National Museum, New Delhi, another *Amaru-Sataka* of the same period in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay and a *Ragamala* series of about 1650 A.D. in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras. The art of painting in Malwa continued till the end of the 17th century A.D.

An example from a series of the *Ragamala* of 1680 A.D. represents the *Megha Raga*. The miniature shows the blue-complexioned *Raga* dancing with a lady to the accompaniment of music played by three

female musicians. The scene is laid against a blue background. The sky is overcast with dark clouds with a streak of lightening and rain is indicated by white dotted lines. Four swans flying in a row, against a dark background of clouds, enhance the pictorial effect to the miniature. The text is written in Nagari on the top. The typical characteristics of the painting are the use of contrasting colours, refinement of drawing due to the influence of the Mughal painting and ornaments and costumes consisting of black tassels and striped skirts.

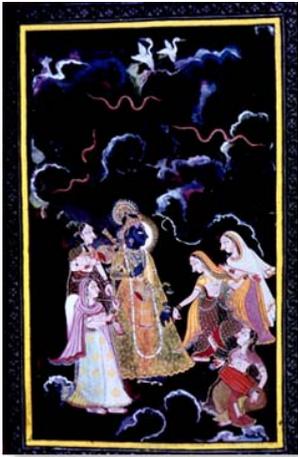
## 2. MEWAR

The earliest example of Mewar painting is a series of the *Ragamala* painted in 1605 A.D. at Chawand, a small place near Udaipur, by Misardi. Most of the paintings of this series are in the collection of shri Gopi Krishna Kanoria. Another important series of the *Ragamala* was painted by Sahibdin in 1628 A.D. Some paintings of this series which previously belonged to the Khajanchi collection, are now in the National Museum, New Delhi. Other examples of the Mewar painting are the illustration to the third book (*Aranya Kanda*) of the Ramayana dated 1651 A.D., in the Saraswati Bhandar, Udaipur, the seventh book (*Uttara Kanda*) of the Ramayana dated 1653 A.D. in the British Museum, London and a series of the Ragamala miniature of almost the same period in the National Museum, New Delhi. An example from the *Ragamala* series painted by Sahibdin in 1628 A.D. which is now in the National Museum, is the miniature that shows the *Lalita Ragini*. The heroine is lying on a bed with her eyes closed under a painted pavilion with a door, while a maid presses her feet. Outside, the hero is seen carrying a garland in either hand. In the foreground is a caparisoned horse with a groom sitting near the steps of the pavilion. The



Mewar, Rajasthan  
School of Painting

drawing is bold and the colours are bright and contrasting. The text of the painting is written in black on the top against the yellow ground.



Raga Megha Malhar,  
Bundi, Rajasthan  
School of painting

### 3. BUNDI

The Bundi style of painting is very close to the Mewar style, but the former excels the latter in quality.

Painting in Bundi started as early as circa 1625 A.D. A painting showing Bhairavi Ragini, in the Allahabad Museum is one of the earliest examples of Bundi painting. Some examples are, an illustrated manuscript of the *Bhagawata. Purana* in the Kotah Museum and a series of the *Rasikapriya* in the National Museum, New Delhi.

A series of the *Rasikapriya* of the late 17th century, has a scene which represents Krishna trying to collect butter from a *Gopi*, but finding that the pot contains a piece of cloth and some other objects and no butter he realises that he has been duped by the *Gopi*. In the background are trees and in the foreground is a river indicated with wavy lines. In the river are seen flowers and a pair of aquatic birds. The painting has a border in brilliant red colour. The peculiar characteristics of the Bundi painting, as evident in this miniature, are the rich and glowing colours, the rising sun in golden colour, crimson-red horizon, overlapping and semi-naturalistic trees. The Mughal influence is visible in the refined drawing of the faces and an element of naturalism in the treatment of the trees. The text is written in black against yellow background on the top.

### 4. KOTAH

A style of painting very much akin to the Bundi style also prevailed in Kotah a place near Bundi, during the late 18th and 19th centuries. Themes of tiger and bear hunt were very popular at Kotah. In Kotah paintings, most of the space is occupied by the hilly jungle which

has been rendered with a unique charm.



Ragin Vasanta,  
Kotah painting,  
Rajasthan School  
of painting



Jaipur painting,  
Rajasthani school of  
painting,

## 5. AMBER - JAIPUR

The State of Amber had the closest relations with the Mughal Emperors. It is generally believed that a school of painting originated at Amber, the old capital of the Amber State, in early 17th century. Later on in the 18th century, the centre of artistic activity shifted to Jaipur, the new capital. There is a fairly large number of portraits of the Jaipur rulers and miniatures on other subjects which can definitely be assigned to the Jaipur School.



Marwar painting,  
Rajasthan School of  
painting

## 6. MARWAR

One of the earliest examples of painting in Marwar is a series of the *Ragamala* in the collection of Kumar Sangram Singh, painted by an artist named Virji in 1623 A.D. at Pali in Marwar. The miniatures are executed in a primitive and vigorous folk style and are completely uninfluenced by the Mughal style.

A large number of miniatures comprising portraits, court scenes, series of the *Ragamala* and the *Baramasa*, etc. were executed from the 17th to 19th centuries at

several centres of painting like Pali, Jodhpur and Nagour etc. in Marwar.

## 7. BIKANER

Bikaner was one of the States which had close relations with the Mughals. Some of the Mughal artists during the later half of the 17th century were given patronage by the Bikaner court and were responsible for the introduction of a new style of painting having much similarity with the Mughal and the Deccani styles. One important artist Ali Raza "the Ustad (master) of Delhi", was employed by Raja Karan Singh of Bikaner in about 1650 A.D. Some other noteworthy artists who worked at the Bikaner court were Ruknuddin and his son Shahadin.



Krishna & Radha, Bikaner, Rajasthan School of painting, 18th century A.D



Radha and Krishna, Kishengarh, Rajasthan School of painting

## 8. KISHENGARH

During the second quarter of the 18th century, there developed the most charming school of Rajasthani painting in Kishengarh under the patronage of Raja Savant Singh (1748-1757 A.D.) who wrote devotional poetry in praise of Krishna, under the assumed name of Nagari Das. Unfortunately only a small number of Kishengarh miniatures are available. Most of them are believed to have been done by the master painter Nihal Chand who, in his works, has been able to create visual images of his master's lyrical compositions. The artist has executed types of human figures, delicately drawn, with slender bodies and uptilted eyes.

A beautiful miniature of the Kishengarh School, from the National Museum collection is illustrated here. It portrays a lovely pastoral scene of the return of Krishna with *gopas* and cows to Gokula in the evening.

The painting is marked by delicate drawing, fine modelling of the human figures and cows and the broad vista of landscape showing a stream, rows of overlapping trees, and architecture. The artist has displayed a masterly skill in the grouping of many figures in the miniature. The painting has a golden inner border. It is ascribed to the middle of the 18th century and may be the work of Nihal Chand the famous artist of Kishengarh.

## V. THE PAHARI SCHOOLS (17TH TO 19TH CENTURIES)

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. The whole of this area was divided into small States ruled by the Rajput princes and were often engaged in warfare. These States were centres of great artistic activity from the latter half of the 17th to nearly the middle of the 19th century.



Devi rides on a Chariot, Basohli, Pahari School of Painting

### 1. BASOHLI

The earliest centre of painting in the Pahari region was Basohli where under the patronage of Raja Kripal Pal, an artist named Devidasa executed miniatures in the form of the *Rasamanjari* illustrations in 1694 A.D. There is one more series of the *Rasamanjari* miniatures painted in the same style and almost of the same period but appears to be in a different hand. The illustrations of the two *Rasamanjari* series are scattered in a number of Indian and foreign museums. The Basohli style of painting is characterised by vigorous and

bold line and strong glowing colours. The Basohli style spread to the various neighbouring states and continued till the middle of the 18th century.

An illustration from a series of Gita Govinda painted by artist Manaku in 1730 A.D. shows further development of the Basohli style. The miniature which is in the collection of the National Museum, depicts Krishna in the company of gopis in a grove on the bank of a river.

There is a change in the facial type which becomes a little heavier and also in the tree forms which assume a somewhat naturalistic character, which may be due to the influence of the Mughal painting. Otherwise, the general features of the Basohli style like the use of strong and contrasting colours, monochrome background, large eyes, bold drawing, use of beetles wings for showing diamonds in ornaments, narrow sky and the red border are observable in this miniature also.



Portrait of Raja Bishen Singh of Guler, Pahari School of Painting

## 2. GULER

The last phase of the Basohli style was closely followed by the Jammu group. of paintings mainly consisting of portraits of Raja Balwant Singh of Jasrota (a small place near Jammu) by Nainsukh, an artist who originally belonged to Guler but had settled at Jasrota. He worked both at Jasrota and at Guler. These paintings are in a new naturalistic and delicate style marking a change from the earlier traditions of the Basohli art. The colours used are soft and cool. The style appears to have been inspired by the naturalistic style of the Mughal painting of the Muhammad Shah period.

At Guler, another State in the Pahari region, a number of portraits of Raja Goverdhan Chand of Guler were executed in circa 1750 A.D. in a style having close affinity with the portraits of Balwant Singh of Jasrota. They are drawn delicately and have a bright and rich palette.

The finest group of miniatures done in the Pahari region is represented by the famous series of the *Bhagavata*, the *Gita Govinda*, the *Bihari Satasai*, the *Baramasa* and the *Ragamala*, painted in 1760-70 A.D. The exact place of origin of these series of painting is not known. They might have been painted either at Guler or Kangra or any other nearby centre. The Guler portraits together with the *Bhagavata* and the other series have been grouped under a common title of "Guler Style" on the basis of the style of the Guler portraits. The style of these paintings is naturalistic, delicate and lyrical. The female type in these paintings is particularly delicate with well-modelled faces, small and slightly upturned nose and the hair done minutely. It is very likely that these paintings are in the hand of the master-artist Nainsukh himself or by one of his competent associates.

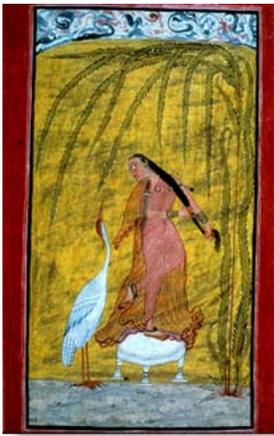
### 3. KANGRA

The Guler style was followed by another style of painting termed as the "Kangra style", representing the third phase of the Pahari painting in the last quarter of the 18th century. The Kangra style developed out of the Guler style. It possesses the main characteristics of the latter style, like the delicacy of drawing and quality of naturalism. The name Kangra style is given to this group of painting for the reason that they are identical in style to the portraits of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra. In these paintings, the faces of women in profile have the nose almost in line with the



Kangra, Pahari School of Painting

forehead, the eyes are long and narrow and the chin is sharp. There is, however, no modelling of figures and hair is treated as a flat mass. The Kangra style continued to flourish at various places namely Kangra, Guler, Basohli, Chamba, Jammu, Nurpur and Garhwal etc. Paintings of the Kangra style are attributed mainly to the Nainsukh family. Some of the Pahari painters found patronage in the Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the Sikh nobility in the beginning of the 19th century and executed portraits and other miniatures in a modified version of the Kangra style which continued till the middle of the 19th century.



The lady and the crane, Kulu-Mandi, Rajasthan school of painting.

#### 4. KULU - MANDI

Along with the naturalistic Kangra style in the Pahari region, there also flourished a folk style of painting in the Kulu-Mandi area, mainly inspired by the local tradition. The style is marked by bold drawing and the use of dark and dull colours. Though influence of the Kangra style is observed in certain cases yet the style maintains its distinct folkish character. A large number of portraits of the Kulu and Mandi rulers and miniatures on other themes are available in this style.

A miniature from the series of the *Bhagavata* in the collection of the National Museum was painted by Shri Bhagwan in 1794 A.D. Illustrations show Krishna lifting the Govardhana mountain on his little finger to save the people of Gokula from the wrath of Indra who has let loose heavy rains. The dark clouds and rain in the form of white dotted lines are shown in the background. The drawing of figures is bold though rather stiff. The painting has a yellow floral border.

Another example of the Kulu painting is of two girls flying kites. The miniature is in the folk style of the late

18th century and is marked by bold drawing and dark and dull colour scheme. The background colour is dull blue. The girls are wearing the typical costumes and ornaments which prevailed in the Kulu region in that period. Two flying parrots indicate sky in a symbolic manner. The miniature belongs to the collection of the National Museum.

## VI. ORISSA

The earliest surviving examples of miniature painting in Orissa appear to belong to the 17th century A.D. Some good examples of the paintings of this period are a court scene and four illustrated leaves of a manuscript of the *Gita Govinda* in the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta and an illustrated palmleaf manuscript of the *Ramayana* in the National Museum.. An illustrated palm-leaf manuscript of the *Bhagavata* in the Asutosh Museum and a paper manuscript of the *Gita Govinda* in the National Museum are examples of the 18th century Orissa painting. In Orissa, palm-leaf continued to be used even upto the 19th century. The outline drawing was rendered with a stylus on the palm-leaf and then charcoal or ink was rubbed on the drawing. A few colours were sparingly used to fill in the designs. The technique of painting on paper was, however, different and was like the one used in other schools of painting. The early manuscripts display a neatness in drawing. Later on in the 18th century the line becomes bold and a little crude but the style in general is very decorative and ornamental.



Gita Govinda, Palm Leaf painting, Orissa

An illustration from a series of the *Gita Govinda* of circa 1800 A.D. in the collection of the National Museum depicts Krishna and Radha. They stand face to face under the drooping branches of a slender tree, against a red background. The style is very decorative and is marked by bold drawing, stylisation of the tree, heavy ornamentation of figures and use of rich colour schemes. The Sanskrit text is given on the top.

## TECHNIQUE

Paintings were executed in the traditional tempera technique. After mixing colours in water along with a binding medium they were applied on the drawing. First, the sketch was freely drawn in red or black over which a white priming was given. The surface was thoroughly burnished till the outline showed clearly through it. Then a second outline was drawn with a fine brush. First the background was coloured and then the sky, buildings and trees, etc. Figures were painted last of all after which a final outline was drawn. When copies were made from perforated sketches by rubbing-charcoal powder, the dotted outline took the place of the first drawing. Colours used in paintings were obtained from minerals and ochres. Indigo was the vegetable colour. Lac-dye and red carmine were obtained from insects. Burnt conch shell and zinc white (*safeda*) were used as white colour. Lamp black and burnt ivory (*Kajal*) were used as black colour. Red ochre (*geru*), red lead (*sindhura*), lac-dye and red carmine were used as red colour, indigo and ultramarine were used for blue. Yellow ochre, orpiment and *peori* (extracted from urine of cows fed on mango-leaves) were used for yellow. Silver and gold were also used. Terraverte, malachite and verdigris (*Zangal*) were used as green colour which was also obtained by mixing other colours. Gum arabic and *neem* gum were used as binding media in colours. Brushes were made of animal's hair. Fine brushes were made from squirrel's hair, the finest being of a single hair. Apart from palm leaf and paper, wood and cloth were also often used as materials for painting.

The traditional Indian painting started deteriorating after the first half of the 18th century and by the end of the century it lost most of its vitality and charm. However, in the Pahari region the art of painting maintained its

quality till the end of the first quarter of the 19th century. Under the impact of the Western colours and technique of painting the traditional styles of Indian painting finally died out in the second half of the 19th century.

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# MODERN INDIAN PAINTING

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## MODERN INDIAN PAINTING

Nomenclatures are not always irrelevant, for example, the term 'modern'. It may mean many things to many persons. So also the term 'contemporary'. Even in the field of the fine arts there is confusion and unnecessary controversy among artists, art historians, and critics. In fact, they all really have the same thing in mind and the arguments hover round terminological implications only. It is not necessary here to indulge in this semantic exercise. Roughly, many consider that the modern period in Indian art began around 1857 or so. This is a historical premise. The National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi covers its collection from about this period. In the west, the modern period starts conveniently with the Impressionists. However, when we talk of modern Indian Art, we generally start with the Bengal School of Painting. Both in the matter of precedence and importance, we have to follow the course of art in the order of painting, sculpture, and the graphics, the last being comparatively a very recent development.

Broadly speaking, 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.

Many people consider modern art as a forbidding, if not forbidden, territory. It is not, and no field of human achievement is. The best way of dealing with the unfamiliar is to face it squarely. All that is necessary is will, perseverance and reasonable constant exposure or confrontation.

Towards the close of the nineteenth century,



Painting : 'Lady in The Moon Light' by Raja Ravi Varma

Indian painting, as an extension of the Indian miniature painting, snapped and fell on the decline and degenerated into feeble and unfelt imitation largely due to historical reasons, both political and sociological, resulting in the creation of a lacuna which was not filled until the early years of the twentieth century, and even then not truly. There was only some minor artistic expression in the intervening period by way of the 'Bazar' and 'Company' styles of painting, apart from the more substantial folk forms which were alive in many parts of the country. Then followed the newly ushered Western concept of naturalism, the foremost exponent of which was Raja Ravi Verma. This was without parallel in the entire annals of Indian Art notwithstanding some occasional references in Indian literature of the idea of 'likeness'.

An attempt to stem this cultural morass was made by Abanindranath Tagore under whose inspired leadership came into being a new school of painting which was distinctly nostalgic and romantic to start with. It held its way for well over three decades as the Bengal School of Painting, also called the Renaissance School or the Revivalist School - it was both. Despite its country-wide influence in the early years, the importance of the School declined by the 'forties' and now it is as good as dead. While the contribution of the Renaissance School served *Painting* as an inspired and well intentioned if not wholly successful link with the past, it has had little consequence even as a 'take off ground for the subsequent modern movement in art. The origins of modern Indian art lie elsewhere.

The period at the end of the Second World War released unprecedented and altogether new forces and situations, political as well as cultural, which confronted the artist, as much as all of us, with an experience and exposure of great consequence. The period significantly coincided with the independence of the country. With freedom also came unprecedented opportunity. The artist was set upon a general course of modernization and confrontation with the big, wide world, especially with the Western World, with far-reaching consequences. Too far removed as he was from Indian

tradition and heritage and emotionally estranged from its true spirit, he absorbed the new experience eagerly too fast and too much. The situation is as valid even to this day and has a ring of historical inevitability. This is just as true of Modern Indian literature and the theatre. In dance the process of modernization is marginal and in music even less. While the artist learnt much from this experience, he had unconsciously entered the race towards a new international concept in art. One might regard this as a typical characteristic of a new-born old nation and part of its initial predicament. Our attitude to life in general, the various approaches to solve an infinite variety of problems are similarly oriented.

A major characteristic of contemporary Indian Painting is that the technique and method have acquired a new significance. Form came to be regarded as separate entity and with its increasing emphasis it subordinated the content in a work of art. This was wholly true until recently and is true somewhat even now. Form was not regarded as a vehicle for content. In fact the position was reverse. And the means, inspired and developed on extraneous elements, rendered technique very complex and brought in its train a new aesthetique. The painter has gained a great deal on the visual and sensory level: particularly in regard to the use of colour, in the concept of design and structure, texture, and in the employment, of unconventional materials. A painting stood or fell in terms of colour, compositional contrivance or sheer texture. Art on the whole acquired an autonomy of its own and the artist an individual status as never before.

On the other hand, we have lost the time-honoured unified concept of art, the modern artistic manifestation having clearly taken a turn where any one of the elements that once made art a wholesome entity now claimed extraordinary attention to the partial or total exclusion of the rest. With the rise of individualism and the consequent isolation of the artist ideologically, there is the new problem of the lack of a real rapport of the artist with the people. The predicament is aggravated by the absence of any appreciable and specific inter-relation between the artist and society. While it may be argued up to a degree that this characteristic predicament of contemporary art is the result of a sociological compulsion, and that present day art is reflective of the chaotic conditions of contemporary society, one cannot but notice the unfortunate hiatus between the artist and society. The impact of horizons beyond one's own has its salutary aspects and singular validity in the light of increasing international spirit of the present times. The easy transport with other peoples and ideas is salutary particularly in respect of technique and

material, in the sharing of new ideologies and in investing art and artists with a new status.

Once more, at the end of quarter century of eclecticism and experimentation, there is some evidence of a pent up feeling and of an attempt to retrace and take stock of things. The experience and knowledge, invaluable as it is, is being shifted and assessed. As against the over-bearing, non-descript anomaly of internationalism, there is an attempt to look for an alternative source of inspiration which, while it has to be contemporary may well spring from one's own soil and be in tune with one's environment.

Contemporary Indian art has travelled a long way since the days of Ravi Verma, Abanindranath Tagore and his followers and even Amrita Sher-Gil. Broadly, the pattern followed is this. Almost every artist of note began with one kind of representational or figurative art or the other tinged with impressionism, expressionism or post-expressionism. The irksome relationship of form and content was generally kept at a complementary level. Then through various stages of elimination and simplifications, through cubism, abstraction and a variety of expressionistic trends, the artists reached near non-figurative and totally non-figurative levels. The 'pop' and the 'op', the minimal and anti-art have really not caught the fancy of our artists, except for very minor aberrations. And, having reached the dead and cold abstraction, the only way open is to sit back and reflect. This copy-book pattern has been followed by a great number of artists, including senior and established ones. As a reaction to this journey into nothing, there are three new major trends: projection of the disturbed social unrest and instability with the predicament of man as the main theme; an interest in Indian thought and metaphysics, manifested in the so called 'tantric' paintings and in paintings with symbolical import: and more than these two trends is the new interest in vague surrealist approaches and in fantasy. More important than all this, is the fact that nobody now talks of the conflict between form



Painting : 'Three Women' by Amrita Shergil

and content or technique and expression. In fact, and in contradiction to the earlier avowal, almost everybody is certain that technique and form are only important prerequisites to that mysterious something of an idea, message or spirit, that spark of the unfathomable entity that makes such man a little different from the other.

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