

11

Company School

11.0 INTRODUCTION

The British traders reached India in the last decade of the sixteenth century and this trade was put on a strong footing. Other companies from United Netherlands and France followed the British. In time, the British became the major power in India by defeating the rival French at Plassy in 1757. In 1765 Lord Clive was granted authority by the Emperor of England to collect taxes in the eastern provinces through the East India Company bypassing the Nawab of Bengal.

The term '**Company painting**' has come to be used by art historians for a special type of Indian painting which was produced for Europeans and was heavily influenced by European taste. Although many different Company styles developed in different parts of India, the term covers a single phenomenon: an attempt by Indian artists to work in a mixed Indo-European style which would appeal to the Europeans who were employed by the various East India companies; hence the name.

This was the time when the art of the Mughals and Rajput miniatures had become exhausted. Indian artists were recruited by the East India Company for drawings blue prints for railway projects, and natural history surveys or freelancing for British civilians who wanted to take home souvenirs.

Apart from the merchants and officials of these companies, various other European travellers, adventurers made their way to India. The British soon found that the Indian subjects could be depicted far more accurately by Indian artists, to whom these subjects were familiar than by themselves and hired Indian artists to paint for them. The direct influence of Europeans produced a new style of watercolour painting including western perspective and shading.

Many painters from Murshidabad migrated to Patna (now the capital of Bihar) around 1760. By the end of the century, this city became the headquarters of one of eleven areas of art centres into which the British East India Company divided Bengal. This is known as the Company school of painting from the fact that its patrons belonged to the East India Company. This style is also known as Patna school.

Inspired by the trends, artist families in places such as Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Delhi, Murshidabad, Patna, Calcutta, Banaras and Lucknow, all produced paintings of subjects of local interest in distinctive local styles. They began to work in water colour rather than gouache; they often modified their colour range, and preferred more muted colours of the European engravings. Both subject-matter and style were influenced by the English watercolours and prints which the artists saw around them in increasing numbers.

The portraits produced at the end of the eighteenth century show sharp features and the use of very thick lines to define the eyes. Other miniatures show small, squat figures, whose faces are modelled with brown wash instead of the earlier stipple.

11.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying this module the learner will be able to:

- explain the influence of colonial art and culture on Indian paintings;
- write the name of colours used in paintings of the period;
- identify the artist of enlisted paintings of Company school;
- mention the main characteristics of Company school paintings;
- describe method and materials used, place, and style of enlisted paintings;
- describe the details of paintings of the periods.



11.2 A GROUP OF KASHMIRI ARTISANS

Title	-	<i>A Group of Kashmiri artisans</i>
Period	-	<i>Mid 18th century (1850)</i>
Artist	-	<i>Unknown</i>
Medium	-	<i>Water colour</i>
Style	-	<i>Company school</i>
Technique	-	<i>Tempera</i>
Collection	-	<i>National Museum, New Delhi</i>
Material	-	<i>Paper (hand made)</i>

General Description

During this period many paintings were done but very few examples are available, sometimes their artists are not known. One painting "A group of Kashmiri Artisans" has a mention. This painting is done on paper with water colour. A group consisting of eight men, two women and three children are painted in the painting. The men in the painting are engrossed in embroidering colourful shawls. The women are admiring the craftsmanship of their men. The whole group is sitting on a carpet in a house which has a wooden roof. An old man is enjoying his *hukka*. The roof and floor is leading to well defined perspective. The colours used are sober deep sepia ochre and red, and contrast strongly with the white clothes of the figure. The figure have pointed noses, heavy eyebrows, deep-seated staring eyes and thin faces. Very little shading was used and modelling with stippling is frequent.

INTEXT QUESTIONS (11.2)

1. Choose the right answer-
 - (a) Medium of this painting is
 - (i) tempera
 - (ii) Oil colour
 - (iii) Water colour
 - (b) Indian artists are inspired by
 - (i) Rajput miniature
 - (ii) Mughal
 - (iii) Western art.
 - (c) The painter of this painting used
 - (i) Stippling
 - (ii) Line shading
 - (iii) Flat colour



11.3 THE BIRD

<i>Title</i>	-	<i>Untitled</i>
<i>Period</i>	-	<i>Circa 19th C.A.D.</i>
<i>Name of the artist</i>	-	<i>Unknown</i>
<i>Medium</i>	-	<i>Black Ink</i>
<i>Style</i>	-	<i>Company school</i>
<i>Collection</i>	-	<i>National Museum, New Delhi.</i>

General Description

The technique of painting, where the picture was painted with a brush without a pencil drawing, was known as Kajli (kali) syahi, syah kalam or black ink. This untitled painting is done in black ink on paper. The unknown artist has managed to catch the sense of the surprised bird. The wing feathers are minutely depicted, like ornamental looped curtains. Earlier pictures were drawn on paper produced locally or imported from Nepal, but later, European machine-made paper was used.

INTEXT QUESTIONS (11.3)

1. Fill up the blanks:-

- (a) The technique of the painting is
 - (b) The picture is drawn on the paper imported from
 - (c) This painting is done in style.
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11.4 SUMMARY

The decline of Mughal art and Rajasthan schools of paintings occurred when the British joined the Mughal aristocracy as patrons. The Indian sympathy for birds and animals coincided with the need of the new masters for scientific studies of India's flora and fauna. The British, who had come to India as merchants during Akbar's reign became the major power. The term 'Company painting' also known as Patna school has come to be used for a special type of Indian painting which was produced for Europeans and was heavily influenced by Europeans taste. Although many different idioms of the Company style developed in different parts of India, the term covers a single phenomenon: an attempt by Indian artists to work in a mixed Indo-European style which would appeal to the Europeans who were employed by the various East India companies.

11.5 ANSWERS OF INTEXT QUESTIONS

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|------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 11.2 | (a) Water colour | (b) Western art | (c) Stippling |
| 11.3 | (a) Kajli Syahi | (b) Nepal | (c) Company |
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11.6 MODEL QUESTIONS

Give brief description of the following:

1. Why Company school is also known as Patna school?
 2. Why Indian artists were hired by the Europeans?
 3. Describe the subjects of Company School paintings.
 4. Describe the characteristics of Company School paintings.
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11.7 GLOSSARY:

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| Stippling | - | Drawing by means of dots or small touches |
| Engraving | - | the art of forming designs by cutting, corrosion by acid on the surface of metal plate for the purpose of taking impressions or print of the design. |