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# PAINTING OF INDIA

## Brief history of Painting in India

- Indian painting has a very long tradition and history in Indian art, though because of the climatic conditions very few early examples survive. The earliest Indian paintings were the rock paintings of pre-historic times, the petroglyphs as found in places like Bhimbetka rock shelters, some of the Stone Age rock paintings found among the Bhimbetka rock shelters are approximately 10,000 years old.
- India's ancient Hindu and Buddhist literature has many mentions of palaces and other buildings decorated with paintings, but the paintings of the Ajanta Caves are the most significant of the few survivals. Smaller scale painting in manuscripts was probably also practiced in this period, though the earliest survivals are from the medieval period.
- A new style was introduced with Mughal painting, representing a fusion of the Persian miniature with older Indian traditions, and from the 17<sup>th</sup> century its style was diffused across Indian princely courts of all religions, each developing a local style.
- Company paintings were made for British clients under the British raj, which from the 19<sup>th</sup> century also introduced art schools along Western lines, leading to modern Indian painting, which is increasingly returning to its Indian roots.
- Indian paintings can be broadly classified as murals, miniatures and paintings on cloth.
  - **Murals** are large works executed on the walls of solid structures, as in the Ajanta Caves and the Kailashnath temple.
  - **Miniature** paintings are executed on a very small scale for books or albums on perishable material such as paper and cloth.



- Traces of murals, in fresco-like techniques, survive in a number of sites with Indian rock-cut architecture, going back at least 2,000 years, but the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>-century remains at the Ajanta Caves are much the most significant.

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## Prehistoric Rock Art

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The pre-historic paintings were generally executed on **rocks** and **these rock engravings were called Petroglyphs**. These paintings generally depict animal like bison, deer and tigers etc. The oldest Indian paintings are rock art in caves which are around 10,000 years old, such as the Bhimbetka cave paintings.



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## Murals

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- The history of Indian murals starts in ancient and early medieval times, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. There are known more than 20 locations around India containing murals from this period, mainly natural caves and rock-cut chambers.
- The highest achievements of this time are the caves of Ajanta, Bagh, Sittanavasal, Armamalai Cave (Tamil Nadu), Ravan Chhaya rock shelter, Kailasanatha temple in Ellora Caves.
- Murals from this period depict mainly religious themes of Buddhist, Jain and Hindu religions. There are though also locations where paintings were made to adorn mundane premises, like the ancient theatre room in Jogimara Cave and possible royal hunting lodge circa 7<sup>th</sup>-century AD – Ravan Chhaya rock shelter.
- The pattern of large scale wall painting which had dominated the scene, witnessed the advent of miniature paintings during the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. This new style figured first in the form of illustrations etched on palm-leaf manuscripts.
- The contents of these manuscripts included literature on Buddhism and Jainism. In eastern India, the principal centres of artistic and intellectual activities of the Buddhist religion were Nalanda, Odantapuri, Vikramshila and Somarpura situated in the Pala kingdom (Bengal and Bihar).

Paintings	Themes
<b>Ajanta Paintings</b>	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.
<b>Ellora Paintings</b>	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.
<b>Bagh Paintings</b>	Paintings are both secular and religious (Buddhism in main inspiration). Painting style is influenced by Ajanta.
<b>Sittanavasal Paintings</b>	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.
<b>Badami Paintings</b>	Patronised by Chalukyas. It was inspired by Vaishnavism. Paintings in this cave depict palace scenes.
<b>Pandya Paintings</b>	Jains texts, female figures, etc.
<b>Pallava Paintings</b>	Beautiful lotus pond and flowers, dancing figures, lilies, fish, geese, buffaloes and elephants.
<b>Chola paintings</b>	The paintings celebrate Lord Shiva.
<b>Vijayanagara Paintings</b>	The paintings about the life and times of the Vijayanagara Court.
<b>Nayaka Paintings</b>	Depicting the story of Muzumdar, a legendary Chola King.

## Painting under the Sultanate of Delhi

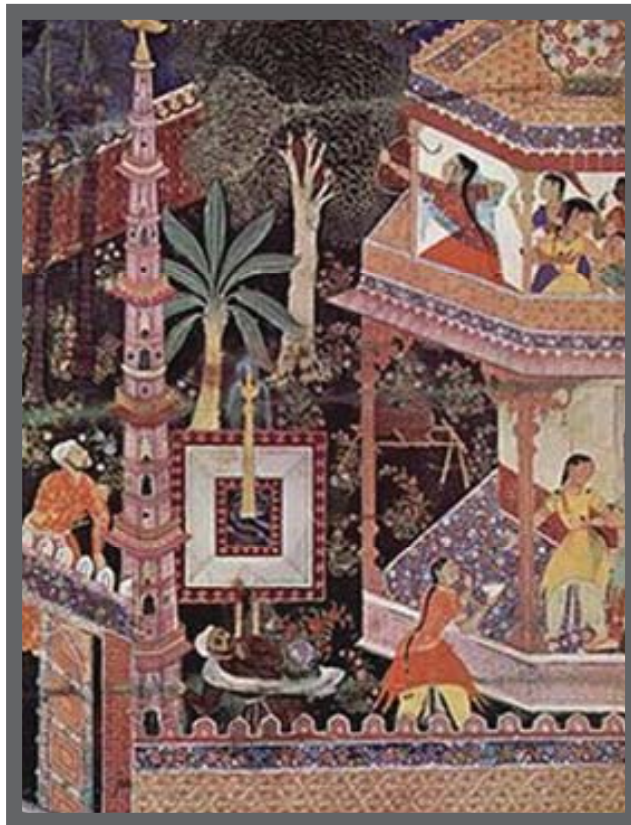
- Despite Islamic injunctions against anthropomorphic figures in art, the Delhi Sultanate patronized vast cannon of painting and artistic work.
- The Delhi Sultanate developed an Indo-Persian style of painting that drew heavily from schools in Iran and Jain paintings.
- Features of Delhi Sultanate paintings that are based on Indian traditions include groups of people standing in rows and identical poses, narrow bands of decoration running across the width of the painting, and bright and unusual colors.
- The paintings of the Delhi Sultanate represent a period of inventiveness that set the stage for the development of the Mughal and Rajput schools of art, which thrived from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### 1. Mughal Painting

- Mughal painting is a style of Indian painting, generally confined to illustrations on the book and done in miniatures, and which emerged, developed and took shape during the period of the Mughal Empire between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Mughal style was heavily influenced by Persian miniatures, and in turn influenced several Indian styles, including the Rajput, Pahari and Deccan styles of painting.
- Mughal paintings were a unique blend of Indian, Persian and Islamic styles. Because the Mughal kings

wanted visual records of their deeds as hunters and conquerors, their artists accompanied them on military expeditions or missions of state, or recorded their prowess as animal slayers, or depicted them in the great dynastic ceremonies of marriages.

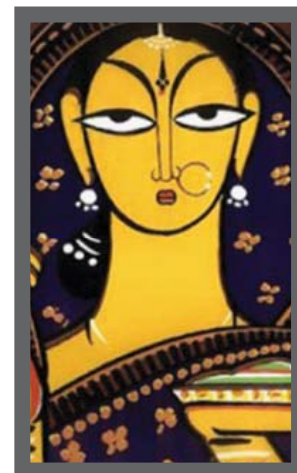
- ▶ **Akbar's reign** (1556–1605) ushered a new era in Indian miniature painting. After he had consolidated his political power, he built a **new capital at Fatehpur Sikri** where he collected artists from India and Persia. He was the first monarch who established in India an atelier under the supervision of two Persian master artists, **Mir Sayyed Ali** and **Abdus Samad**. Earlier, both of them had served under the patronage of Humayun in Kabul and accompanied him to India when he regained his throne in 1555. More than a hundred painters were employed, most of whom were from Gujarat, Gwalior and Kashmir, who gave a birth to a new school of painting, popularly known as the Mughal School of miniature Paintings.
- ▶ After him, **Jahangir** encouraged artists to paint portraits and durbar scenes. His most talented portrait painters were Ustad Mansur, Abul Hasan and Bishandas. Under Jahangir, the Mughal school paintings acquired greater charm, refinement and dignity. The emperor Jahangir had a great fascination for nature and took delight in the portraiture of birds, animals and flowers.
- ▶ **Shah Jahan** (1627–1658) continued the patronage of painting. Some of the famous artists of the period were Mohammad Faqirullah Khan, Mir Hashim, Muhammad Nadir, Bichitr, Chitarman, Anupchatar, Manohar and Honhar.
- ▶ **Aurangzeb** had no taste for fine arts, probably due to his Islamic conservatism. Due to lack of patronage artists migrated to the Deccan and the Hindu courts of Rajputana, greatly influencing the styles in these centres.



## Regional Paintings

### 1. 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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.





## 2. Pala School

- It belongs to the late 8<sup>th</sup> or mid 9<sup>th</sup> 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.



## 3. Deccan painting

- Deccan painting was produced in the Deccan region of Central India, in the various Muslim capitals of the Deccan sultanates that emerged from the break-up of the Bahmani Sultanate by 1520. These were Bijapur, Golkonda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar, and Berar. The main period was between the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and the mid-17<sup>th</sup>, with something of a revival in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, by then centred on Hyderabad.
- Compared to the early Mughal painting evolving at the same time to the north, Deccan painting exceeds in “**the brilliance of their colour, the sophistication and artistry of their composition, and a general air of decadent luxury**”. Other differences include painting faces, not very expertly modelled, in three-quarter view, rather than mostly in profile in the Mughal style, and “tall women with small heads” wearing saris. There are many royal portraits, although they lack the precise likenesses of their Mughal equivalents. Buildings are depicted as “totally flat screen-like panels”.
- **Ragamala paintings**, sets illustrating (by evoking their moods) the various raga musical forms, appear to have been an innovation of the Deccan. Beside the usual portraits and illustrations to literary works, there are sometimes illustrated chronicles, such as the Tuzuk-i-Asafiya. A Deccan speciality (also sometimes found in other media, such as ivory) is the “composite animal” a large animal made up of many smaller



images of other animals.



#### 4. Rajput Painting

- Several different styles of Rajput painting developed from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards in the Hindu royal courts of Rajputana.
- Each Rajput kingdom evolved a distinct style, but with certain common features. Rajput paintings depict a number of themes, events of epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, Krishna's life, beautiful landscapes, and humans.
- Many miniatures were individual album pieces, but there are also illustrated books, and there was at the same time some mural painting on the walls of palaces, forts, and havelis. This especially so in the Shekhawati region, where Marwari businessmen, mainly active in the large cities, competed to have brightly painted exteriors of the houses they maintained in their home region.



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- Rajput painting consists of four principal groupings:
  - ▶ **The Mewar School** that contains the Chavand, Nathdwara, Devgarh, Udaipur and Sawar styles of painting.
  - ▶ **The Marwar School** comprising the Kishangarh, Bikaner style of painting from Bikaner, Jodhpur, Nagaur, Pali and Ghanerao styles
  - ▶ **The Hadoti School** with the Kota, Bundi and Jhalawar styles and
  - ▶ **The Dhundar School** of Amber, Jaipur, Shekhawati painting and Uniara styles of painting.
  - ▶ Pahari painting is the northernmost extension of the Rajput style, but usually treated separately.

## 5. Pahari Painting

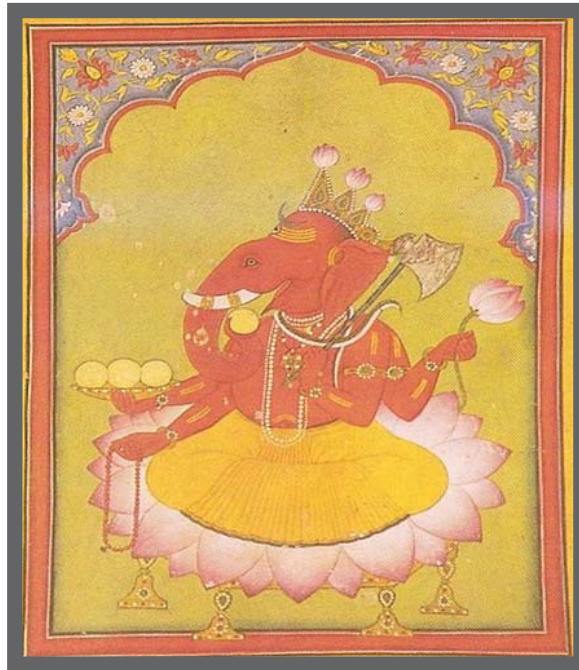
- The Pahari style developed and flourished during 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries stretching from Jammu to Almora and Garhwal, in the sub-Himalayan India, through Himachal Pradesh.
- The Pahari paintings can be grouped into two groups- **Jammu or Dogra School; and Basholi and Kangra School.**
- Each created stark variations within the genre, ranging from bold intense Basohli Painting, originating from Basohli in Jammu and Kashmir, to the delicate and lyrical Kangra paintings, which became synonymous to the style before other schools of paintings developed.



### ■ Basholi

- ▶ Basholi is widely known for its paintings called Basholi paintings, which are considered the first school of Pahari paintings, and which evolved into the much prolific Kangra paintings school by mid-eighteenth century. The painter Nainsukh ended his career in Basholi.
- ▶ Basohli painting was a vigorous, bold and imaginative artistic style, rich, stylish and unconventional. A style of painting characterized by vigorous use of primary colours and a peculiar facial formula prevailed in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in the foothills of the Western Himalayas in the Jammu and Punjab States.





### ■ Kangra Painting

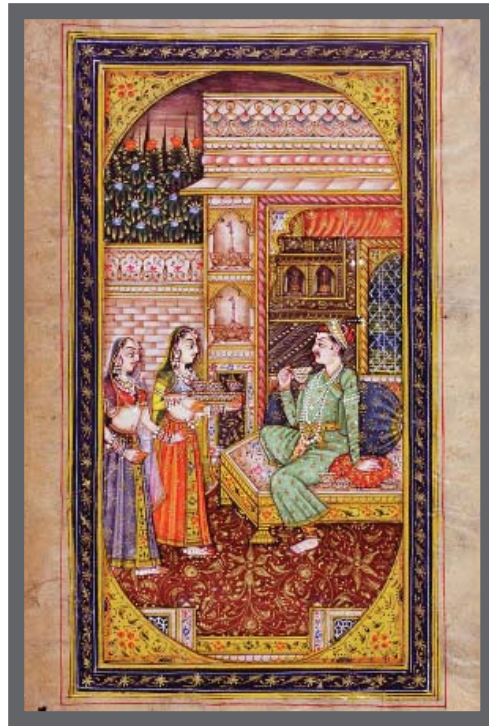
- Kangra painting is the pictorial art of Kangra, named after Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, and a former princely state, which patronized the art. It became prevalent with the fading of Basohli School of painting in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, and soon produced such a magnitude in paintings both in content as well as volume, that the Pahari painting school, came to be known as Kangra paintings.



## 6. Rajasthani Miniature Painting

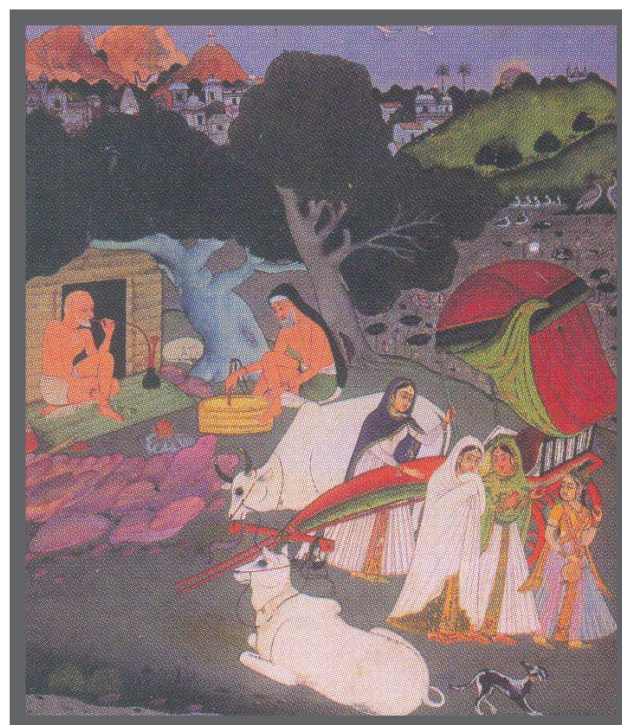
- The art of Miniature painting was introduced to the land of India by the Mughals, who brought the much-revealed art form from Persia. In the sixteenth century, the Mughal ruler Humayun brought artists from Persia, who specialized in miniature painting.

- The succeeding Mughal Emperor, Akbar built an atelier for them to promote the rich art form. These artists, on their part, trained Indian artists who produced paintings in a new distinctive style, inspired by the royal and romantic lives of the Mughals. The particular miniature produced by Indian artists in their own style is known as **Rajput or Rajasthani miniature**. During this time, several schools of painting evolved, such as Mewar (Udaipur), Bundi, Kotah, Marwar (Jodhpur), Bikaner, Jaipur, and Kishangarh.



## ■ Bundi painting

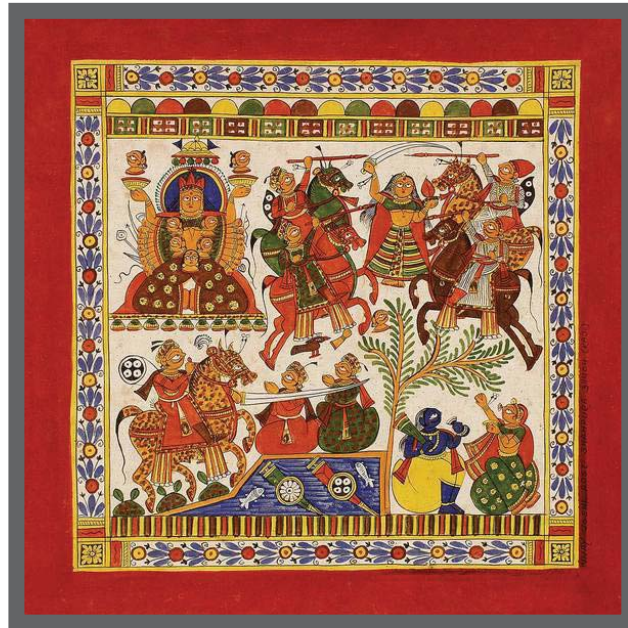
- Bundi painting is an important school of the Rajasthani style of Indian miniature painting that originated in the princely state of Bundi, located between Jaipur and Udaipur.





## ■ Phad painting

- ▶ Phad is the narrative scroll painting tradition from Rajasthan, dating back to a thousand years. Stories of local deities and heroes are painted on horizontal cloth scrolls in hues of red, yellow and orange. The Phad scrolls show depictions of battlefields, adventure stories, legendary romances and the richness of the Indian princely states.
- ▶ The Phad painting style leaves one spellbound at how the folk artists accommodate multiple stories in a single composition, yet maintain the aesthetics of artistic expression.



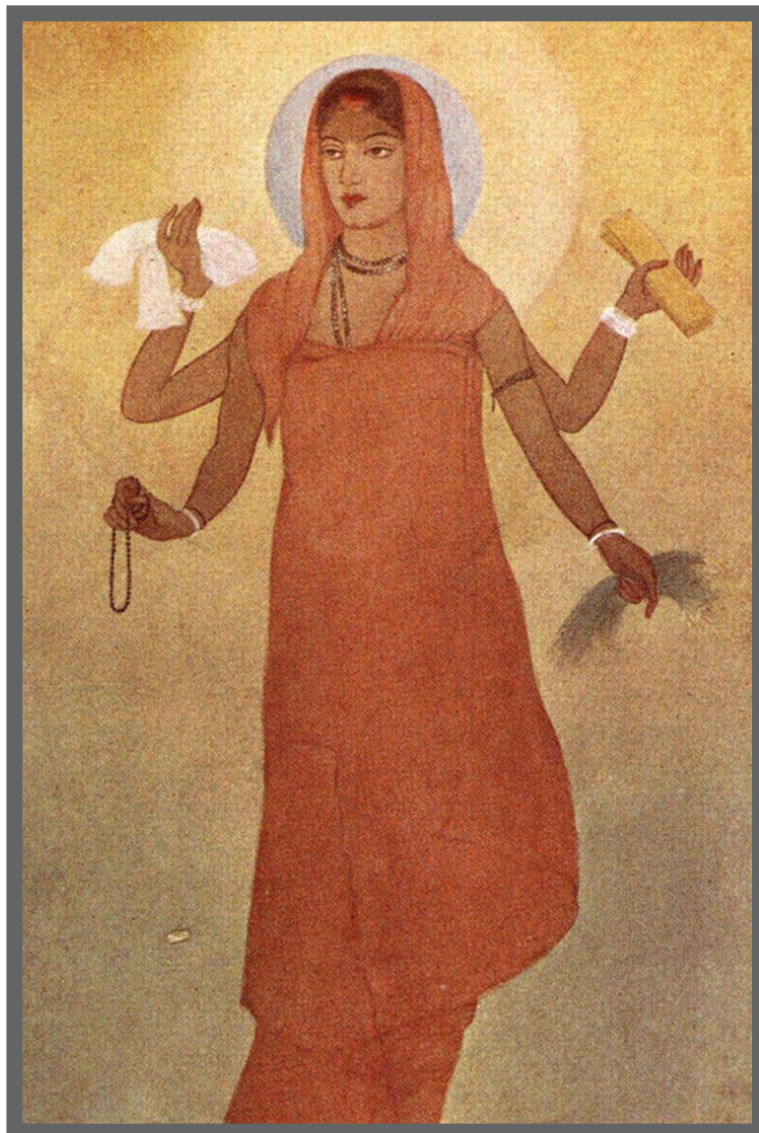
## ■ Pichhwai Painting

- ▶ Pichhwai are large devotional Hindu painted pictures, normally on cloth, which portray Krishna. They are mainly made to hang in Hindu temples of the Pushtimarg devotional tradition, especially the Shrinathji Temple in Nathdwara, Rajasthan, built around 1672.



## 7. Bengal School Painting

- The Bengal School of Art was an influential style of art that flourished in India during the British Raj in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was associated with Indian nationalism, but was also promoted and supported by many British arts administrators.
- Following the widespread influence of Indian spiritual ideas in the West, the British art teacher **Ernest Binfield Havel** attempted to reform the teaching methods at the **Calcutta School of Art** by encouraging students to imitate Mughal miniatures. This caused immense controversy, leading to a strike by students and complaints from the local press, including from nationalists who considered it to be a retrogressive move. Havel was supported by the artist Abanindranath Tagore, a nephew of the poet and artist Rabindranath Tagore.
- Abanindranath painted a number of works influenced by Mughal art, a style that he and Havel believed to be expressive of India's distinct spiritual qualities, as opposed to the "materialism" of the West. His best-known painting, *Bharat Mata* (Mother India), depicted a young woman, portrayed with four arms in the manner of Hindu deities, holding objects symbolic of India's national aspirations.
- Tagore later attempted to develop links with Far-Eastern artists as part of an aspiration to construct a pan-Asianist model of art.





## Other Regional Paintings of India

### 1. Madhubani Paintings

It is the folk painting of Bihar. Jitwarpur village of Madhubani district is the main centre. In this painting, the Kohbar (traditional room of the married couple) in the folklore of Bihar region are drawn as painting. In this style of folk painting, the scenes of Ramayana and the images Hindu God-Goddesses are depicted on the canvas. Mahasundari Devi is the famous artist of the Madhubani painting.



### 2. Warli Painting

- Maharashtra is known for its Warli folk paintings. Warli is the name of the largest tribe found on the northern outskirts of Mumbai, in Western India. While there are no records of the exact origins of this art, its roots may be traced to as early as the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.
- Warli is the vivid expression of daily and social events of the Warli tribe of Maharashtra, used by them to embellish the walls of village houses. This was the only means of transmitting folklore to a populace not acquainted with the written word. This art form is simple in comparison to the vibrant paintings of Madhubani.





### 3. Pattachitra Painting

- Pattachitra style of painting is one of the oldest and most popular art forms of Odisha. The name Pattachitra has evolved from the Sanskrit words patta, meaning canvas, and chitra, meaning picture. Pattachitra is thus a painting done on canvas, and is manifested by rich colourful application, creative motifs and designs, and portrayal of simple themes, mostly mythological in depiction.
- Some of the popular themes represented through this art form are Thia Badhia - depiction of the temple of Jagannath; Krishna Lila - enactment of Jagannath as Lord Krishna displaying his powers as a child; Dasabatara Patti - the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu; Panchamukhi - depiction of Lord Ganesh as a five-headed deity.



### 4. Pithora Painting

It is the folk painting of Rathvas and Bhilalas tribes of Gujarati. It is more than ritual rather than art form.



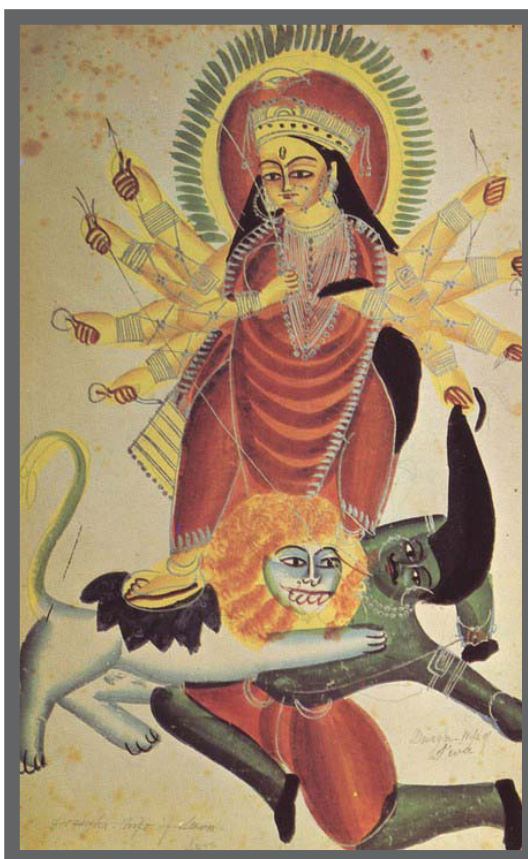
## 5. Kalamkari Paintings

The literal meaning of Kalamkari is ‘**painting made by the use of pen**’. It is very popular in **Machilipatnam of Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh**. It is a type of hand-paints or block-printed cotton textile, produced in parts of India.



## 6. Kalighat Pat Art

It is folk painting of West Bengal. It originated in the vicinity of kalighat Kali Temple (Kolkata). In this art form, various Hindu Gods and other mythological characters are drawn.





## 7. Floor Paintings

It is an ancient and traditional folk art of India. It is drawn mainly in festivals and ceremonies. It is known by different names such as Chawk Purna in Uttar Pradesh; Aipan in Uttarakhand; Mandana in Rajasthan; Muggulu in Andhra Pradesh; Aripa in Bihar; Rangoli in Maharashtra; **Alpana** in West Bengal; Athiya in Gujarat; Rangwalli in Karnataka; Kollam in Tamil Nadu; Arooph in Himachal Pradesh; and Kalma Jattu in Kerala.

## 8. Thangka Paintings

It is Tibetan folk painting. In this art form, images of Buddha paintings are made on the cotton or silk cloth. It is categorised into three types- Tibetan Buddhist wall painting; glimpse of Buddhist lifestyle; and rituals and practices of daily life.



## 9. Thanjavur painting

Thanjavur painting is a classical South Indian painting style, which was inaugurated from the town of Thanjavur (anglicized as Tanjore). The art form draws its immediate resources and inspiration from way back about 1600 AD, a period when the Nayakas of Thanjavur under the suzerainty of the Vijayanagara Rayas encouraged art—chiefly, classical dance and music—as well as literature, both in Telugu and Tamil and painting of chiefly Hindu religious subjects in temples.





## 10. Chola Paintings

Chola Paintings of South Indian have very high significance in the history of art. These paintings have great emotion in the faces, whether it is anger, compassion or any other expression. The era of the royal Cholas was an era of continuous development and enhancement of Dravidian art and architecture.



## 11. Vijayanagara paintings

In addition to architecture and sculpture, the Vijayanagar emperors were enthusiastic patrons of painting. The Vijayanagar School of painting was renowned for its frescoes of Hindu mythological themes on temple walls and ceilings.



## 12. Mysore painting

Mysore painting is an important form of classical South Indian painting that originated in and around the town of Mysore in Karnataka encouraged and nurtured by the Mysore rulers.



### 13. Gond Painting

These vibrant paintings created with a series of intricately arranged dots and dashes were developed by the Gondi tribe of central India. The tribals recreate mythological tales and oral histories to traditional songs, natural surroundings, important events and rituals in with great intricacy, rich detailing, and bright colors.



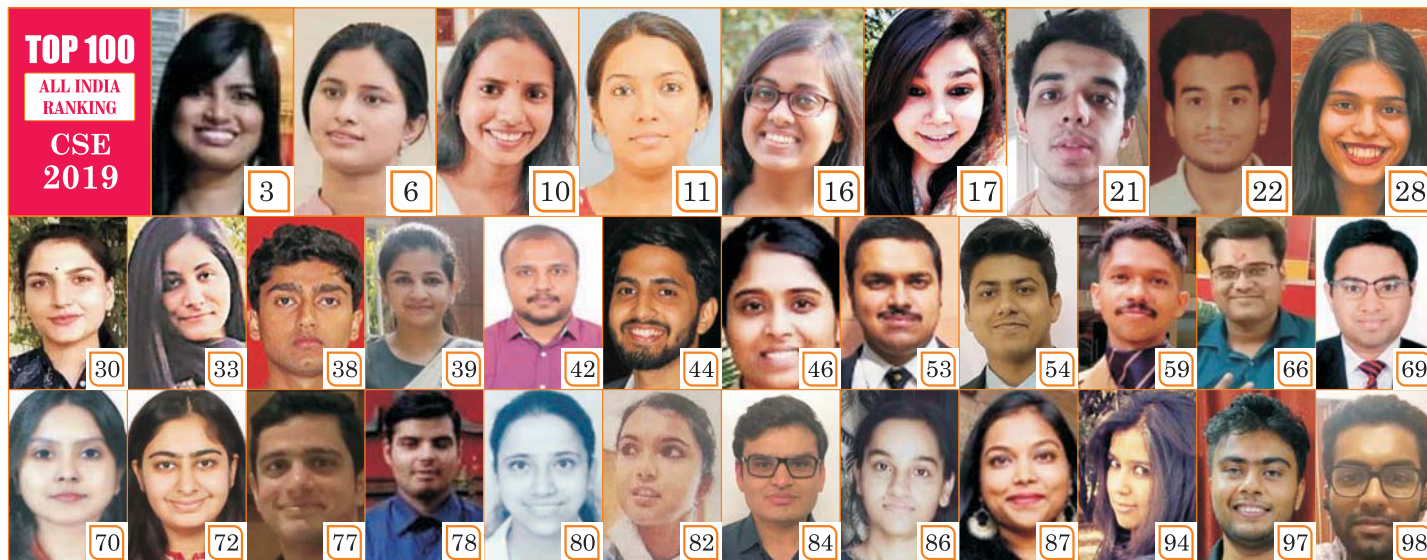
### Company style

- As Company rule in India began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a great number of Europeans migrated to India. The Company style is a term for a hybrid Indo-European style of paintings made in India by Indian and European artists, many of whom worked for European patrons in the British East India Company or other foreign Companies in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- The style blended traditional elements from Rajput and Mughal painting with a more Western treatment of perspective, volume and recession.



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