

# MURAL DESIGN 1

BAFA (P) - 106 DS2



Directorate of Distance Education

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**1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

After reading this unit, you will

- Describe about the Mural Design.
- Explain about the forms of Mural Designs..
- Define about the Mural Paintings in India.
- Describe about the Mural Making Process.

**1.2 INTRODUCTION**

In this we will learn about the basics of mural designing. A mural is any piece of artwork painted or applied directly on a wall, ceiling or other permanent surfaces. A distinguishing characteristic of mural painting is that the architectural elements of the given space are harmoniously incorporated into the picture. Some wall paintings are painted on large canvases, which are then attached to the wall (e.g., with marouflage). This technique has been in common use since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. **murals** have been around

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as long as people, as a form of valuable testimony of life from the prehistoric time to today. From the **cave paintings at Lascaux Grottoes** in southern France to the **street art murals of today**, people have been leaving signs of their own existence in many places around the world. It is because of the earliest scratchings, carvings, etchings and paintings that we now have priceless knowledge of our history and predecessors, and these murals hold great significance for mankind, as they depicted life activities, everyday scenery and usually religious traditions of the time they were created in, giving us a priceless look of the diversity of our cultures during different periods.

Over the course of time, murals have covered the interiors and exteriors of many public buildings, such as palaces, temples, tombs, museums, libraries, churches and the houses of rich art patrons, spreading onto the streets and architectural elements more recently, all the while keeping their initial meaning and purpose: **to paint a picture of society, created from stories, values, dreams, change.**

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### 1.3 WHAT IS MURAL DESIGN

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A mural is any piece of artwork painted or applied directly on a wall, ceiling or other permanent surfaces. A distinguishing characteristic of mural painting is that the architectural elements of the given space are harmoniously incorporated into the picture. Some wall paintings are painted on large canvases, which are then attached to the wall . This technique has been in common use since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.



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Mural is derived from the Latin word murus, which means wall. The paintings carried out on the walls are known as mural paintings. It is done on a specially prepared plastered surface. In olden days, royal palaces, houses of noblemen and the temples were all decorated with mural paintings. The earliest paintings in India had been found in primitive caves and rock shelters such as Bhimbetka (Madhya Pradesh) and Ajantha & Ellora caves (Maharashtra). A study of the evolution of mural paintings in India shows its development from Ajanta to Kerala. The mural tradition of Ajanta, spanning a whole millennium lasting up to the 8th century, occupies the walls of 27 caves. There are similarities between the styles of Kerala and the murals of Sittanavasan, Badami, Lepakshi, Tanjavur and Vijayanagar. Mural paintings of Kerala are known for the succulence of its colours and the vibrancy of its active compositions.

The tradition of painting on walls began in Kerala with the pre-historic rock paintings found in the Anjanad valley of Idukki district. Archaeologists presume that these paintings belong to different periods from upper Paleolithic period to early historic period. Rock engravings dating to the Mesolithic period have also been discovered in two regions, at Edakkal in Wayanad district and at Perimkadavila in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. The tradition of painting on walls began in Kerala with the pre-historic rock paintings found in the Anjanad valley of Idukki district. Archaeologists presume that these paintings belong to different periods from upper Paleolithic period to early historic period. Rock engravings dating to the Mesolithic period have also been discovered in two regions, at Edakkal in Wayanad district and at Perimkadavila in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala.



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**Kerala murals**

The earliest of the Kerala murals were located by the side of a rock and a shrine at Thirunandikkara way back in 8th century, which is now in the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. Ancient temples, churches and palaces in Kerala display an abounding tradition of mural mostly dating back between the 9th to 12th centuries AD when this form of art enjoyed Royal patronage. Black and white mural paintings are also seen in Cheerumpakavu temple of Muzhappilangad in Kannur district. The tradition and practice of Kalamezhuthu, which is the pioneer form of Dravida art, has very much influenced the growth of mural paintings of Kerala like Kalamezhuthu five natural colours are also used in murals. The temple architecture of Kerala warranted elaborate decoration in the form of mural painting and wood carving. The stages of mural paintings of Kerala are connected with that of architecture, especially the regional temple constructions, the beginning of which is considered to be from the 9th century onwards. In the brahminical hegemony, the temple and other associated arts had flourished. But this situation did not last long because of the changes occur then which resulted in the downfall of feudalism. This has a concomitant effect and the temples became weak which affected the murals too, especially in the 20th century. The traditional four fold Varna system has produced so many mixed groups. The Indian caste system is characterized by traditional occupation and it functioned in a closed system. It is found that the mural painting flourished in temple settings through the traditional gurukula pattern. Attempt has been made to detail the indigenous preparation techniques of pigments for the traditional mural paintings of Kerala.

The word mural originates from the Latin word “murus”, meaning wall. Today, we can define mural art as any piece of artwork painted or applied directly onto a wall, ceiling or other larger permanent surfaces, flat, concave or convex, to be precise. A favorite technique of many artists,



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including masters like Leonardo Da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti, the art of muralism flourished during the 1920s, after the Mexican revolution. It is during Mexican Muralism that murals got a new dimension as a powerful visual communication tool, meant to promote the opinion of the people and to transmit social and political messages towards unity. Through the large paintings of “the great three”: Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros, mural painting became the most important form of expression, often the subject of controversy and always a symbol of solidarity, freedom and hope. The Mexican mural art inspired the creation of many other similar movements around the world, the biggest being the Chicano art movement in the 1960s.



**The Driller (Mural, Rikers Island,) 1937.**

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Murals also represent one of the most important features of Northern Ireland, depicting the region's past and present political and religious divisions. Since the 1970s, the country has seen almost 2,000 mural paintings dedicated to the fight against racism and environmentalism, among many other issues. Another famous place charged with political murals was the Berlin Wall, whose Western side saw many murals between its creation in 1961 and its destruction in 1989, including the works by artists Keith Haring and Thierry Noir.

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## 1.4 HISTORY

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Mural, a painting applied to and made integral with the surface of a wall or ceiling. The term may properly include painting on fired tiles but ordinarily does not refer to mosaic decoration unless the mosaic forms part of the overall scheme of the painting. Murals of sorts date to Upper Paleolithic times such as the cave paintings in the Lubang Jeriji Saléh cave in Borneo (40,000-52,000 BP), Chauvet Cave in Ardèche department of southern France (around 32,000 BP). Many ancient murals have been found within ancient Egyptian tombs (around 3150 BC), the Minoan palaces (Middle period III of the Neopalatial period, 1700–1600 BC), the Oxtotitlán cave and Juxtlahuaca in Mexico (around 1200-900 BC) and in Pompeii (around 100 BC – AD 79).



**Prehistoric Egyptian mural painted on a Nekhen tomb wall c. 3,500 B.C. with aspects in the Gerzeh culture style**

During the Middle Ages murals were usually executed on dry plaster (*secco*). The huge collection of Kerala mural painting dating from the 14th century are examples of *fresco secco*. In Italy, circa 1300, the technique of painting of frescos on wet plaster was reintroduced and led to a significant increase in the quality of mural painting. In modern times, the term became better known with the Mexican muralism art movement (Diego Rivera, David Siqueiros and José Orozco). There are many different styles and techniques. The best-known is probably *fresco*, which uses water-soluble paints with a damp lime wash, rapid use of the resulting mixture over a large surface, and often in parts (but with a sense of the whole). The colors lighten as they dry. The *marouflage* method has also been used for millennia.

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**Jataka tales from the Ajanta Caves, present-day Maharashtra, India, 7<sup>th</sup> century CE.**

Murals today are painted in a variety of ways, using oil or water-based media. The styles can vary from abstract to trompe-l'œil (a French term for "fool" or "trick the eye"). Initiated by the works of mural artists like Graham Rust or Rainer Maria Latzke in the 1980s, trompe-l'œil painting has experienced a renaissance in private and public buildings in Europe. Today, the beauty of a wall mural has become much more widely available with a technique whereby a painting or photographic image is transferred to poster paper or canvas which is then pasted to a wall surface (see wallpaper, Frescography) to give the effect of either a hand-painted mural or realistic scene.

A special type of mural painting is Lüftlmalerei, still practised today in the villages of the Alpine valleys. Well-known examples of such façade designs from the 18th and 19th centuries can be found in Mittenwald, Garmisch, Unter- and Oberammergau.

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## 1.5 NATURE AND TECHNIQUE

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Mural painting is inherently different from all other forms of pictorial art in that it is organically connected with architecture. The use of colour, design, and thematic treatment can radically alter the sensation of spatial proportions of the building. In this sense, mural is the only form of painting that is truly three-dimensional, since it modifies and partakes of a given space. Byzantine mosaic decoration evinced the greatest respect for organic

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architectural form. The great artists of the Renaissance, on the other hand, attempted to create an illusionistic feeling for space, and the masters of the subsequent Baroque period obtained such radical effects as to seem to dissolve almost entirely the walls or ceilings. Apart from its organic relation to architecture, a second characteristic of mural painting is its broad public significance. The mural artist must conceive pictorially a social, religious, or patriotic theme on the appropriate scale in reference both to the structural exigencies of the wall and to the idea expressed.

In the history of mural painting, many techniques have been used: encaustic painting, tempera painting, fresco painting, ceramics, oil paint on canvas, and, more recently, liquid silicate and fired porcelain enamel. In Classical Greco-Roman times, the most common medium was encaustic, in which colours are ground in a molten beeswax binder (or resin binder) and applied to the painting surface while hot. Tempera painting was also practiced from the earliest known times; the binder was an albuminous medium such as egg yolk or egg white diluted in water.

In 16th-century Europe, oil paint on canvas came into general use for murals. The fact that it could be completed in the artist's studio and later transported to its destination and attached to the wall was of practical convenience. Yet oil paint is the least-satisfactory medium for murals: it lacks both brilliance of colour and surface texture, many pigments are yellowed by the binder or are affected by atmospheric conditions, and the canvas itself is subject to rapid deterioration.

In the history of mural several methods have been used:

1. A fresco painting, from the Italian word *affresco* which derives from the adjective *fresco* ("fresh"), describes a method in which the paint is applied on plaster on walls or ceilings.
2. The *buon fresco* technique consists of painting in pigment mixed with water on a thin layer of wet, fresh, lime mortar or plaster. The pigment is then absorbed by the wet plaster; after a number of hours, the plaster dries and reacts with the air: it is this chemical reaction which fixes the pigment particles in the plaster. After this the painting stays for a long time up to centuries in fresh and brilliant colors.
3. *Fresco-secco* painting is done on dry plaster (*secco* is "dry" in Italian). The pigments thus require a binding medium, such as egg (tempera), glue or oil to attach the pigment to the wall.
4. *Mezzo-fresco* is painted on nearly-dry plaster, and was defined by the sixteenth-century author Ignazio Pozzo as "firm enough not to take a thumb-print" so that the pigment only penetrates slightly into the plaster. By the end of the sixteenth century this had largely displaced the *buon fresco* method, and was used by painters such as Gianbattista Tiepolo or

Michelangelo. This technique had, in reduced form, the advantages of a secco work.

## Early Manifestations And The Early Renaissance

The Romans used mural painting to an extraordinary extent. In Pompeii and Ostia the walls and ceilings of almost all buildings, public and private, were painted in unified, inventive decorative schemes that encompassed a wide range of pictures, including landscape, still life, and figured scenes. However, at no other time before or since has mural decoration received a higher degree of creative concentration by artist and patron than in Europe during the Renaissance.

A continuously inventive spirit and inquiring mind, a wealth of support from patrons, and an ever-awakening attitude toward new creative possibilities are characteristics of this remarkable age. One speaks by and large of an Early Renaissance (15th century), a High Renaissance (1500–30), and a Late Renaissance, or Mannerist, style (second and third quarters of the 16th century). The centres of activity were the various cities and the rival personalities and families who dominated each area as political and cultural leaders.

In Florence, undoubtedly the most important centre, the development reveals an emphasis on specific problems of form almost to the point of obsession. It began with the concentration on the monumental figure by Masaccio, whereby the solidly built forms in a three-dimensional space are closely integrated by gesture and light and shade to produce a dramatic unity. The skill seems to have been recognized and developed by succeeding artists such as Paolo Uccello, Piero della Francesca, and Melozzo da Forlì. The grandiose frescoes of Luca Signorelli (chapel of San Brizio, Orvieto) reveal the concentration on anatomy and the well-modeled structure of many nude figures to achieve greater strength and articulation. This then becomes the point of departure for the great art of Michelangelo in the next century.

A second tradition is the more conservative and Gothic one exemplified by the pure and mystic expression of Fra Angelico (San Marco, Florence). A third tradition is a kind of romantic realism to be found in the frescoes by Fra Filippo Lippi (the cathedral at Prato) and Benozzo Gozzoli (Medici Palace chapel, Florence). Both Lippi's and Gozzoli's murals reveal an awareness of the artistic problems of Masaccio but also a new interest in nature and its recognizable and realistic representation. Finally, these heterogeneous elements are combined into a highly sensitive and decorative style during the last quarter of the 15th century, particularly in the frescoes of Domenico Ghirlandaio and Sandro Botticelli.

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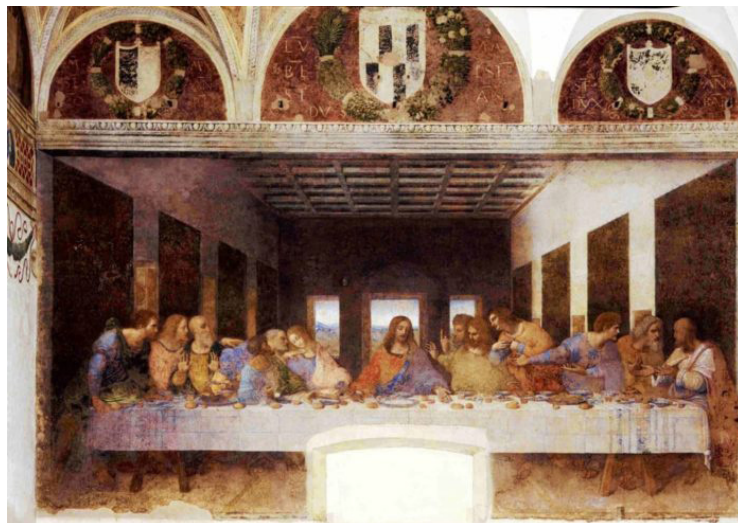
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**The Annunciation, fresco by Fra Angelico, 1438–45**

### **The High Renaissance**

The High Renaissance is dominated by great individuals whose spectacular projects were often left unfinished or were completed by others. Leonardo da Vinci's rich and universal genius is best demonstrated in the dramatic movement of figures and tensely psychological interpretation of content shown in his two most important mural projects: the Battle of Anghiari (1503–06) in the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence (destroyed but known through partial copies) and the famous Last Supper (1495–98) in the Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan.



**Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1495–98**

Michelangelo, more intense and deeply religious than the scientifically

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minded Leonardo, sought to channel his expression through the human figure alone. Thus, the dramatic movement of the figure carries the total design of his first mural, the Battle of Cascina (c. 1504) for the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence (lost but known through drawings and engravings).

The stupendous project for the decoration of the Sistine Chapel ceiling for Pope Julius II followed the same method with increasing concentration on the figure, and the later Last Judgment (1534–41) on the end wall in the same room shows greater interest in the movement of larger figure masses in space with considerable dramatic freedom and intensity.

Raphael represents the most perfect balance and integration of all the problems of form, space, and decorative unity that had been experimented with through the preceding century. Perfection of form is identified with the juxtaposition of the Disputation of the Holy Sacrament (1510–11; called Disputa) and the School of Athens (1509–11) in the Stanza della Segnatura at the Vatican. The later historical murals of the Stanzas reveal an increasing interest in movement.

Correggio is the last of the High Renaissance mural painters. His frescoes in the cathedral and the church of San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma reflect the transition to the new concept of Mannerism.

### **Baroque And Beyond**

Two factors condition the development of mural decoration in the Baroque style of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. One is the enormous building enthusiasm engendered by the Counter-Reformation, particularly through the Jesuit order. The other is the importance given to palaces and homes of the ruling aristocracy throughout Europe as the centres of society's cultural life. The roots of the style are to be found again in the work of the Renaissance masters but as interpreted and taught by the new institution of the Academy (e.g., that of the Carracci at Bologna, Italy, and the French Academy, founded in 1648).

Its development can be followed from the allegorical decoration of the Palazzo Farnese in Rome by Annibale Carracci to the increasingly elaborate wall and ceiling frescoes of Domenichino, Pietro da Cortona, and Andrea Pozzo whereby the dramatic movement of foreshortened figures and perspective blends with the architecture to achieve a total unified and endless illusion of space.

The most prolific and indeed most important single Baroque artist from the decorative point of view is Peter Paul Rubens, whose designs for tapestries, historical paintings (the Marie de Médicis series in the Luxembourg Palace, now in the Louvre), and decorations for the Jesuit churches in Antwerp and the Banqueting House, Whitehall, London, as well as his own home

in Antwerp, reflect both the universality of his productive genius and his international acceptance.

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In late 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, there was hardly any further development in style or technique. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, mural decoration reemerged strongly in three major phases. One is the more abstract and expressionistic form stemming from the experimental easel painting of the Cubist and Fauvist groups in Paris and developing into the large projects of Pablo Picasso (UNESCO, Paris), Henri Matisse (chapel at Vence, France), Fernand Léger, Joan Miró, and Marc Chagall (decorations of the Paris Opéra and Lincoln Center, New York City). The second phase developed out of the revolutionary movement in Mexico with the remarkable series of frescoes by José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Rufino Tamayo. With the ensuing acceptance of 20<sup>th</sup>-century concepts of design and structure in architecture, the new large-scale use of mosaics became a distinctive feature (e.g., the National Autonomous University of Mexico).

A third phase was the short-lived American mural movement of the 1930s developed under U.S. federal sponsorship, the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project. The wide geographic distribution of the work in U.S. public buildings and the freedom given to both individual and experimental modes of expression as well as to the interpretation of social and political problems provided an artistic impetus to mural decoration. Examples are murals of Ben Shahn, Boardman Robinson, Thomas Hart Benton, Reginald Marsh, and John Steuart Curry. The murals painted by numerous artists at Coit Memorial Tower in San Francisco were created under the auspices of the federal government during that period and have been preserved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Characteristics of Mural Painting**



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It is an oldest human art form, as cave paintings at numerous ancient human settlements suggest, and can be found all over globe. The characteristics of the Mural Painting are given below:

1. It depict the activities of a particular civilization's people, encapsulating a moment in time, and range from scenes of hunting, gathering, and family life, to religious and funerary scenes.
2. It is a combination of wide variety of artistic style, Realism with a dramatic sense of scale and amazing depth.
3. Artwork depicts the expression of emotions through hand postures.
4. It played an important role in reflecting changes in the political culture through the depiction of subjects ranging from religion to sex.
5. It often served the role of creating public awareness of certain issues and in decisive ways performed the function of socio-political critique, as well as reinforcing political and community identities.
6. It acts as a mediator between the public, the government, and artists. This relationship is complex and very prickly at times, especially when, as is so often the case in Iran, art is politicized and politics is aestheticized.
7. It is three-dimensional form of artwork.

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## 1.6 FORMS OF MURAL DESIGNS

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There are as many types of murals as there are surfaces. Mural painting on canvas, art board, walls of brick, cement, wood, all requiring a different technique of application. Outdoor murals need a special heat & water resistant paint as well as a protective clear coat. Inside murals can include fresco, ceramic and other less sturdy paints.

Murals of sorts date to Upper Paleolithic times such as the paintings in the Chauvet Cave in Ardeche department of southern France (around 30,000 BC). Many ancient murals have been found within ancient Egyptian tombs (around 3150 BC), the Minoan palaces (Middle period III of the Neopalatial period, 1700-1600 BC) and in Pompeii (around 100 BC - AD 79).

During the Middle Ages murals were usually executed on dry plaster (secco). The huge collection of Kerala mural painting dating from the 14th century are examples of fresco secco. In Italy, circa 1300, the technique of painting of frescos on wet plaster was reintroduced and led to a significant increase in the quality of mural painting.

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In modern times, the term became more well-known with the Mexican muralism art movement (Diego Rivera, David Siqueiros and Jose Orozco). There are many different styles and techniques. The best-known is probably fresco, which uses water-soluble paints with a damp lime wash, a rapid use of the resulting mixture over a large surface, and often in parts (but with a sense of the whole). The colors lighten as they dry. The marouflage method has also been used for millennia.

Murals today are painted in a variety of ways, using oil or water-based media. The styles can vary from abstract to trompe-l'ceil (a French term for "fool" or "trick the eye"). Initiated by the works of mural artists like Graham Rust or Rainer Maria Latzke in the 1980s, trompe-l'oeil painting has experienced a renaissance in private and public buildings in Europe. Today, the beauty of a wall mural has become much more widely available with a technique whereby a painting or photographic image is transferred to poster paper or canvas which is then pasted to a wall surface (see wallpaper, Frescography) to give the effect of either a hand-painted mural or realistic scene.

The word mural starts from the Latin word "murus", signifying "divider". Today, we can characterize mural art as any bit of work of art painted or connected specifically onto a divider, roof or other bigger perpetual surfaces, leveled, inward or curved, to be exact. The most admired work of mural art was by numerous artists, including experts like Leonardo Da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti. The specialty of mural-ism prospered amid the 1920s, after the Mexican unrest.

Mural paintings are a trend as old as people, these mural paintings were admired in ancient times and now this form of art is claiming another level of popularity. In early times mural paintings were only the sketching, paintings and etchings but now it carries a stronger message with cultural connotations and elaborate art techniques. The mural art is different from other artwork because of its priceless presentations of variety of cultures. Many years ago mural art was an art that covers churches, museums, palaces and temples. But now mural art is on another level that is taking artist to show their internal feelings through mural art. These paintings hold incredible importance for humankind, as they portrayed life exercises, ordinary view and typically religious conventions of the time they were made in, giving us an extremely valuable look of the assorted variety of our societies amid various periods.

Mural art is the art which demonstrates the emotions and feelings of the artist. When we look at the murals done by Suzi Nassif, her feelings are noticeable. Her murals carry the same effect as her canvas paintings. She has painted the portrait of Dali on one of the walls in Coxa Dubai that show her skills as an artist. Suzi Nassif is the known artist who is admired for her hand painted wall murals. Her second mural is in her home in Lebanon and

portrays a young boy in traditional attire.

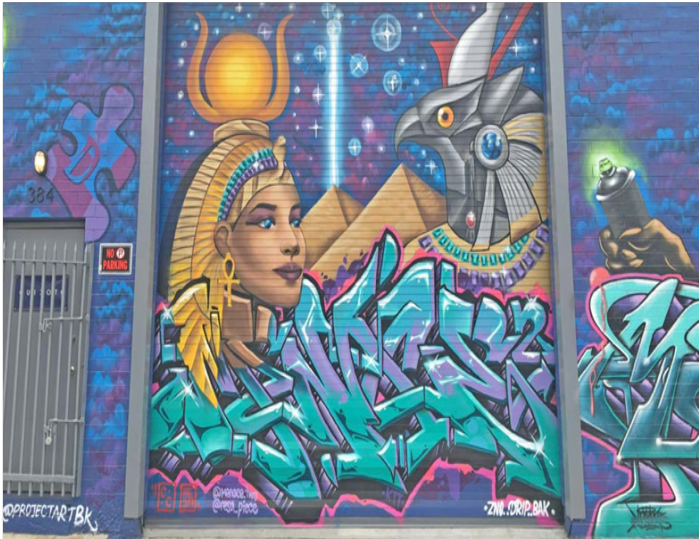
### Painted mural:

Mural paintings are quite common. Often artists use acrylics to paint wall forms to express their ideas. Suzi Nassif's murals are not abstracts. They are the human portraits and carry a powerful message for the audience. They are painted in acrylics. Suzi Nassif paintings are the level of inspiration and her artistic mural (wall painting) is loved by the audience. She expresses her thoughts and feelings through these murals which is perfect and impressive.

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## Abstract murals:

These pieces can either be on giant canvas or can be partitioned into different areas. These abstracts presents figures and shapes to convey a message to the viewers. They might make use of shapes and forms that are non-conventional.

Basic Of Mural  
Design

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## Ceramic Murals:

These are the principal sort of custom size paintings and they are comprised of mirrors, mosaic and artistic pieces. This sort of paintings speak to brilliant depictions of high class creative impulses and in addition masterful aptitudes. The fired wall paintings are first made with the assistance of dirt and afterward they are heated. The span of the fired paintings is not quite the same as other sort of paintings and you can utilize them on crossing and in addition climbing dividers.

Basic Of Mural  
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### 1.7 MATERIAL

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In Greco-Roman times, mostly encaustic colors applied in a cold state were used. Tempera painting is one of the oldest known methods in mural painting. In tempera, the pigments are bound in an albuminous medium such as egg yolk or egg white diluted in water.

In 16<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, oil painting on canvas arose as an easier method for mural painting. The advantage was that the artwork could be completed in the artist's studio and later transported to its destination and there attached to the wall or ceiling. Oil paint may be a less satisfactory medium for murals because of its lack of brilliance in colour. Also, the pigments are yellowed by the binder or are more easily affected by atmospheric conditions.

Different muralists tend to become experts in their preferred medium and application, whether that be oil paints, emulsion or acrylic paints applied by brush, roller or airbrush/aerosols. Clients will often ask for a

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particular style and the artist may adjust to the appropriate technique. A consultation usually leads to detailed design and layout of the proposed mural with a price quote that the client approves before the muralist starts on the work. The area to be painted can be gridded to match the design allowing the image to be scaled accurately step by step. In some cases, the design is projected straight onto the wall and traced with pencil before painting begins. Some muralists will paint directly without any prior sketching, preferring the spontaneous technique. Once completed the mural can be given coats of varnish or protective acrylic glaze to protect the work from UV rays and surface damage.

In modern, quick form of muralling, young enthusiasts also use POP clay mixed with glue or bond to give desired models on canvas board. The canvas is later set aside to let the clay dry. Once dried, the canvas and the shape can be painted with your choice of colors and later coated with varnish. As an alternative to a hand-painted or airbrushed mural, digitally printed murals can also be applied to surfaces. Already existing murals can be photographed and then be reproduced in near-to-original quality.

The disadvantages of pre-fabricated murals and decals are that they are often mass-produced and lack the allure and exclusivity of original artwork. They are often not fitted to the individual wall sizes of the client and their personal ideas or wishes cannot be added to the mural as it progresses. The Frescography technique, a digital manufacturing method (CAM) invented by Rainer Maria Latzke addresses some of the personalisation and size restrictions. Digital techniques are commonly used in advertisements. A "wallscape" is a large advertisement on or attached to the outside wall of a building. Wallscape can be painted directly on the wall as a mural, or printed on vinyl and securely attached to the wall in the manner of a billboard. Although not strictly classed as murals, large scale printed media are often referred to as such. Advertising murals were traditionally painted onto buildings and shops by sign-writers, later as large scale poster billboards.

Over the centuries, different materials have been in use for wall painting and the evolution of the techniques has also seen to the change in the materials. The earliest known is the tempera painting which then gave way to oil painting in the 16th century. Paintings once complete in the old days did not have any protection from sun rays. As the materials and times change, the application of varnish and protective acrylic has taken shape to guard the murals against UV sun rays. The use of POP clay is what young muralists are using. They mix it with glue to make them even more durable. When the clay dries, you then paint with the colors you want and even apply varnish for protection. Technology has taken its place in the mural painting. Digital techniques are now taking shape in a mural painting like wall scape.

Mural painting has been in constant evolution over the years, and it continues to evolve to incorporate the use of modern materials and pictures.

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### **Advantages of murals**

Murals are imperative in the world of art and the contemporary world because they bring art to the public and make people more aware of art. Murals are expensive and take a significant amount of time that is why for a painting to be put up, there has to be a sponsor who is funding the project. Murals are also a communication tool. You can use a wall painting to communicate the message that you wish the public to know. The size of the painting will attract the attention of the public which makes it an effective way of communicating a message.

Murals affect the attitudes of the people passing by them. Everyone gets their understanding of the painting, and they therefore add aesthetic value to the areas that they are put up. They can be a tourist attraction that brings improvement to the areas.

Murals can also be used as landscapes, especially because they are vast and hard to miss paintings. Every painting is unique, and it's hard to mistake one for the other. Murals are a way of expression for the muralists. It is their way of speaking to people and the world. They command the attention of the people and leave their mark in the area for centuries to come

Murals are continually coming up, and most people are now aware of the existence of paintings, their artistic value and their significance in the community. They take time and patience to put up and with modern technology taking over, the evolution of muralism is even faster than before.

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## **1.8 ANCIENT ART AS MURAL FORM**

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Mural painting has its roots in the primeval instincts of people to decorate their surroundings and to use wall surfaces as a form for expressing ideas, emotions, and beliefs. In their universal manifestation in graffiti and in ancient murals, such as cave paintings and protodynastic Egyptian frescoes, symbols and representational images have been spread freely and indiscriminately across walls, ceilings, and floors. But, in more disciplined attempts to symbolize the importance and function of particular buildings through their interior decoration, murals have been designed for the restricted framework of specific surface areas.

They therefore have to be painted in close relationship to the scale, style, and mood of the interior and with regard to such siting considerations as light sources, eye levels, the spectators' lines of sight and means of

approach, and the emotive scale relationship between spectators and the painted images.



**murals in the Tomb of Sennedjem**

## NOTES

Early mural decorations for tombs, temples, sanctuaries, and catacombs were generally designed in horizontal divisions and vertical axes. These grid patterns were in harmony with the austere character of the interiors, and their geometrical plan enabled the artist to depict clearly the various episodes and symbols of a narrative subject. In these early traditions of mural design, in China, India, Mexico, Egypt, Crete, and Byzantium, no illusionary devices were used to deny the true flatness of the wall surface; images were silhouetted against a flatly painted ground framed by decorative dados (the decoration adorning the lower part of an interior wall) of stylized motifs in repeat patterns. By the early Renaissance, however, innovators such as Giotto, Masaccio, and Fra Angelico were placing figures within architectural and landscape settings, painted as if extensions to the real dimensions of the interior.

The peak of technical skill and artistic expression was reached in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries with the frescoes of Piero della Francesca, Michelangelo, and Raphael. The irregular shapes of wall areas and the distortions produced by convex surfaces were inventively exploited in the design. Intruding doors and windows, for example, were skillfully circumvented by sweeping pattern rhythms or were incorporated as features in the painting, and figures were foreshortened so as to appear to float

## NOTES

across or to rise into cupolas (rounded vaults that form ceilings), lunettes (rounded spaces over doors or windows), and apses (domed projections of a church, usually at the east end or altar), the curving surfaces of which might be painted to simulate celestial skies. Existing structural wall features provided the divisions between narrative episodes. These were often supplemented by trompe l'oeil ("deceive the eye") columns, pilasters, arcading, balustrading, steps, and other architectural forms that also served to fuse the painted setting with the real interior.



**The Annunciation, fresco by Fra Angelico, 1438–45**

With the increasing dependence upon tapestry hangings and stained glass as primary forms of interior decoration, mural painting suffered a decline in the Western world. Except for those given to Rubens, Tiepolo, Delacroix, and Puvis de Chavannes, there were relatively few important mural commissions in the period following the High Renaissance.

In the 20th century, however, enlightened patronage occasionally enabled leading modern artists to execute paintings for specific sites: Monet's *Water-Lilies* series for the Paris Orangerie, for example, and other murals in France by Vuillard, Matisse, Léger, Chagall, and Picasso; in Mexico and the United States by Orozco, Rivera, Tamayo, and David Siqueiros, and also in the United States by Matisse, Shahn, Keith Haring, and Willem de Kooning; in Britain by Sir Stanley Spencer and Bawden; in Norway by Edvard Munch; in the Netherlands by Karel Appel; and in Italy by Afro Basaldella.

**NOTES**



**Detail of The Grand Tenochtitlan, mural**

### **Easel and panel painting**

The easel, or studio, picture was a form developed during the Renaissance with the establishment of the painter as an individual artist. Its scale and portability enabled European artists to extend the range of themes, previously restricted to those suitable to mural decoration. Easel and panel forms include still life, portraiture, landscape, and genre subjects and permit the representation of ephemeral effects of light and atmosphere that the more intimate forms of Asian art had already allowed the painters of scrolls, screens, and fans to express. Although easel paintings are occasionally commissioned for a special purpose, they are generally bought as independent art objects and used as focal features in private homes. They are also collected as financial investment, for social prestige, or purely for the aesthetic pleasure they afford.

Panel paintings, by strict definition, are small pictures designed for specific sacred or secular purposes or as part of a functional object. Among the functions they originally served were as predellas (the facings to altar-step risers); devotional and ceremonial icons; portable, folding diptych and triptych altarpieces; shop and tavern signboards; mummy cases; and panel decorations of carriages, musical instruments, and cassoni. Many of them were painted by acknowledged masters, such as Fra Angelico, Paolo Uccello, and Antoine Watteau, as well as by anonymous folk artists.

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## **1.9 MURAL PAINTINGS IN INDIA**

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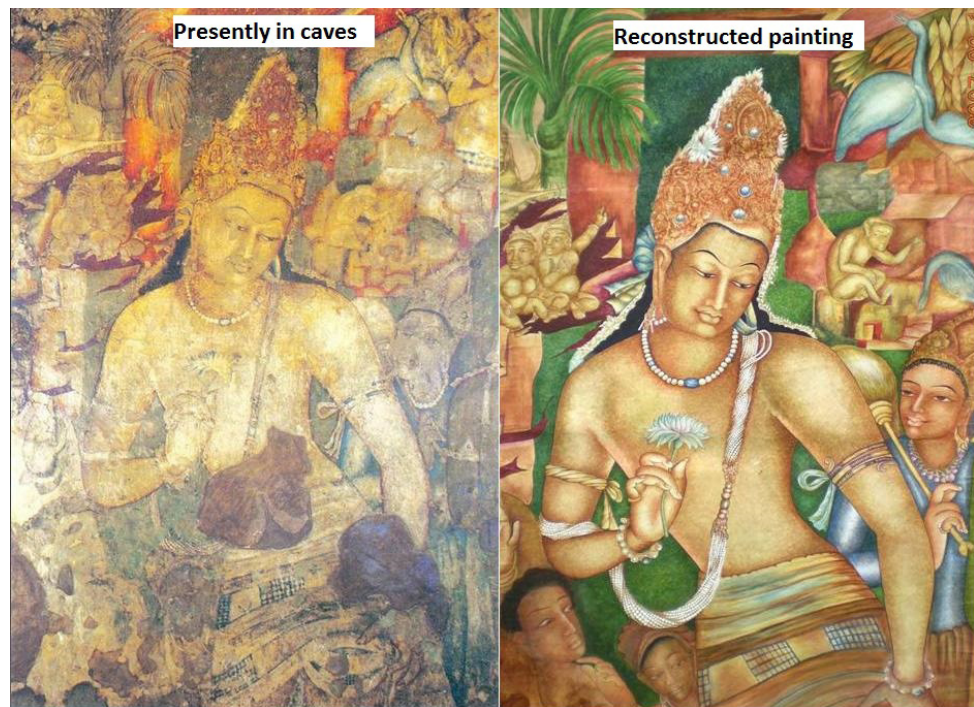
India has a rich tradition of mural wealth. The treatises such as

Vishnudharmottara, Silpashastra, Manasollasa, Shilparatna, Narada-shilpa-shastra and Kashyapa-shilpa, discuss at length all aspects of painting, including murals.

## NOTES

The history of Indian murals starts in ancient and early medieval times, from the 2nd century BC to 8th – 10th 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.

INDIA has one of the greatest traditions of painting of the ancient world. A high degree of technical excellence was achieved even in very early times, and the art, born out of the deep philosophy of the land, was graceful and sublime.



Visvantara Jataka, Cave 17, Ajanta, Maharashtra, 5<sup>th</sup> century. The painters' understanding of perspective is seen in the receding pillars and in the elliptical mouth of the pitcher. The curving strings of the purse that Princess Madri dangles are a marvellous depiction of movement.-

The earliest surviving paintings in the Indian subcontinent are those of Ajanta. The paintings here were made in two phases. The oldest date to around the 2nd century B.C. The marvellous latter phase was around the 5th century A.D., under the patronage of the Vakatakas who ruled the Deccan. The subjects are scenes from the life of the Buddha and the



## NOTES

Jatakas, stories of his previous births. These paintings bring to us great beauty of form, with extremely fine rendering which imparts a sense of volume and roundedness. Yet, amidst the tender and elegant beauty of the world, these paintings constantly take us to that which is within. The great Bodhisattvas (seekers of truth) who are painted upon the walls of Ajanta, always look within. It is this life of the spirit which pervades the entire world of these paintings.

Ajanta is known to be the fountainhead and inspiration of Buddhist paintings across the whole of Asia.

The sophisticated ancient tradition of painting, which was inherited by the artists of Ajanta, was documented as the Chitrasutra of the Vishnudharmottara Purana. This was a verbal tradition, which would have come over many centuries, passed on through guilds of painters. It was penned on paper by perhaps the 5th or 6th century A.D. This ancient treatise places a sophisticated grammar in the hands of the painter. However, he is informed that rules do not make the painting. It has to be given a life of its own by the painter.

Contrary to what is generally known, there are several remnants of ancient paintings found in all corners of the subcontinent, belonging to practically every century of the last 1,500 years and more. These display the fact of a great and unified tradition of painting in ancient India.

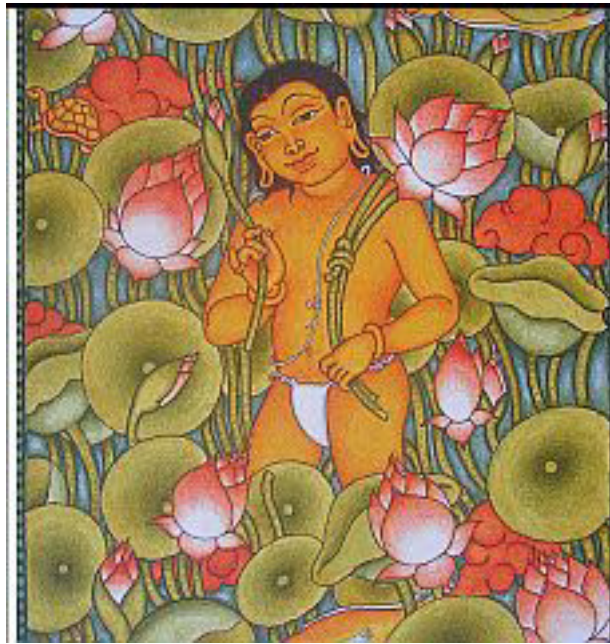
There are fragments of paintings of the time of Ajanta which survive at many Buddhist cave sites, including Pitalkhora near Ellora, in Maharashtra.

Nine caves were excavated on the slopes of the Vindhya hills above the Bagh river during the reign of the Guptas, between the 4th and 6th centuries A.D. Unfortunately the paintings on the walls of these caves have been practically lost to the ravages of time. Reproductions of earlier times show that, as at Ajanta, the Buddhist paintings of Bagh present a sense of stillness. There is all the activity of life and yet a profound sense of peace upon the faces of the painted figures.

Very little of the paintings survive in the 6th century Hindu caves of Badami in Karnataka. As at Bagh, what remains evokes the magic of a world of painted splendour when all the walls and ceilings were covered with murals.

In the meantime, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Pallava kings of what is now Tamil Nadu gave exuberant and glorious expression to themes relating to Siva in the paintings in the temples of Panamalai and Kailashanatar in Kancheepuram.

## NOTES



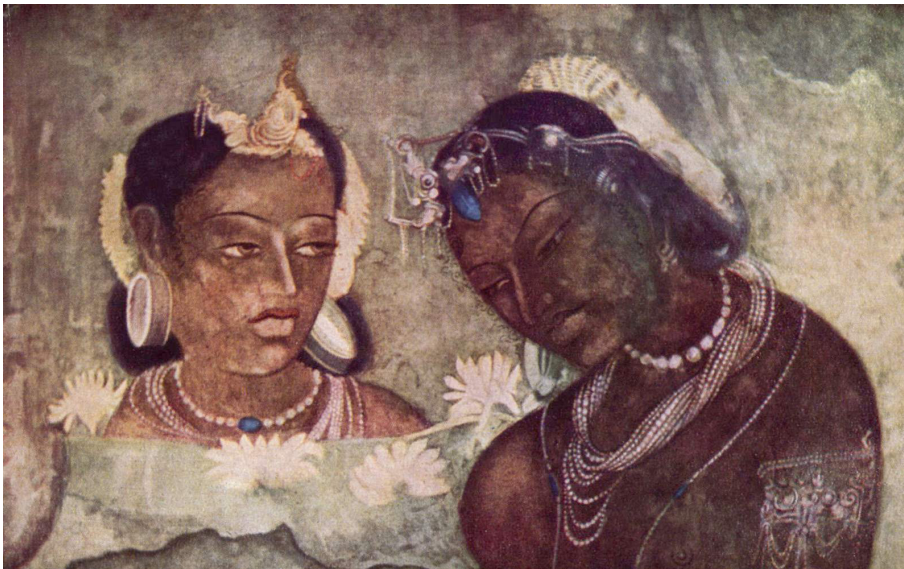
Worshipper gathering lotuses, Sittannavasal, Tamil Nadu, 9<sup>th</sup> century. The figure is made with a lilting grace, like the stalks of the lotuses he gathers. The flowers are painted with a great sense of tenderness and beauty and are as large as the humans and animals in the painting.-The niches in the outer ambulatory path of the Kailashanatar temple were once covered with paintings in brilliant colours. Traces of these are still discernible. In these paintings, we see the beginnings of a sense of imperial grandeur represented through art, in the emphasis on the depiction of lavish crowns and jewellery.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> century Jain cave of Sittannavasal in Tamil Nadu, there is a marvellous lotus pond painted on the ceiling. It is a scene of the faithful gathering lotuses to place upon the resting place of a Tirthankara, a Jain saint. Elephants, buffalos, geese and fish frolic in the water, which is overflowing with beautiful lotuses. The painter has used the occasion to present a joyous world. He brings to us a sense of sublime happiness; as fish swim in the waters, an elephant appears to smile, and gentle men gather lotuses larger than themselves.

In the meantime, the magnificent Kailashnath temple had been hewn out of a mountain at Ellora in the 8th century. The walls and ceilings of this temple were once covered with murals. Fragments of these, which remain, show the beauty and quality of the art. There are also paintings of the late 9<sup>th</sup> century in the Jain caves at Ellora. The painters here continue the older tradition but with contributions of their own. Besides the naturalism and grace inherited from Ajanta, the figures painted here are stylised and elongated. These are significant changes, which, in later years, are reflected in paintings over the whole of India. In the heart of the Brihadeeswara

## NOTES

temple in Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, protected by massive walls of stone, are the finest paintings of the theme of Siva ever painted. Towards the end of the 10th century, King Rajaraja Chola expressed his devotion and also his power and grandeur by commissioning murals on a spectacular scale. The colours in the paintings are soft and subdued, the lines firm and sinuous and the expressions true to life. More than ever before, we see the artists' lavish use of embellishments of crowns and jewellery, portraying the royal splendour of the times.



King Rajaraja Chola and Guru Karuvurar Brihadeeswara temple, Tamil Nadu, 11<sup>th</sup> century. This is the earliest royal portrait in Indian painting. In keeping with ancient traditions, the guru is given importance and the king is shown standing behind him. -At an altitude of over 3,000 metres, the barren desert plateau of Ladakh is a fascinating crucible of cultures. In days gone by, this was not an isolated place; it was an active centre of trade. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, King Yeshe Od of Guge built 108 monasteries across his kingdom in Ladakh, western Tibet, Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti. Craftsmen and artists from Kashmir were invited by Yeshe Od and they constructed and painted these monasteries, which were to become the backbone of trans-Himalayan Buddhism. The philosophy of Vajrayana Buddhism offers a new path towards attaining enlightenment. The worshipper meditates upon images of the deity and, by absorbing the qualities personified in the image, he becomes the deity himself. Thus, paintings are very important for Vajrayana Buddhists as an essential part of religious practice. The monastery of Alchi is an oasis of beauty and colour in the midst of the vast and barren landscape of Ladakh. The dhoti of an Avalokitesvara statue in the three-storeyed temple of Alchi has some of the most gorgeous paintings. These are the only surviving visual representations of the culture and architecture of ancient Kashmir.

One of the masterpieces of the Alchi paintings is the Green Tara. We see here the marvellous shaping of the form with skilful shading. There is also the depiction of the protruding eye which extends beyond the line of the face. This is a convention in Indian painting, which was first seen in the murals of Ellora.

## NOTES

The Kashmiri artists present a lively world, with the grace and beauty of form coming to them from the classical Indian tradition. The rich textiles and decorative elements of these paintings are remarkable and they show that the artists had assimilated the traditions coming to them from Gandhara and Central Asia.



Goddess Tara, Alchi, Ladakh, 11<sup>th</sup> century. This is a depiction of the Goddess as a saviour. She is surrounded by representations of many fears and the figures turn to her for protection. There is a sense of animated movement caught in these tiny figures, as the goddess stands in dignified majesty.-The Kashmiri style was mainly responsible for the lovely wall paintings still seen in the beautiful monasteries at Alchi, Mangyu and Sumda in Ladakh, in the Tabo monastery in the Spiti valley and in the Nako monastery in Kinnaur district, Himachal Pradesh. On the western edge of the trans-Himalayan plateau in Spiti is the monastery complex of Tabo. This appears to be one of the first among the 108 monasteries built by Yeshe Od. It is dated around A.D. 996.

The paintings here show close similarity to Alchi. The sinuous and even exaggerated body forms and the supple lines show a form of painting which is uniquely Kashmiri.

The monastery of Nako, in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh,

comprises four temples within an enclosure of mud walls. The wall paintings at Nako display a considerable delicacy of execution and an inner grace.

Basic Of Mural  
Design

The traditions of Vajrayana Buddhist paintings, which were laid at the time of the grand conception of King Yeshe Od's 108 monasteries, continued in the centuries to come. From Ladakh in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east, across the highest mountains of the world, is the one region which has an unbroken tradition of Indian mural painting.

## NOTES



Parvati with her companions, Lepakshi, Andhra Pradesh, 16<sup>th</sup> century. This lively painting reflects the cosmopolitan culture of the Vijayanagar empire. The rich and varied textiles are remarkable. The angular features and protruding eye exhibit the pan-Indian medieval traditions of painting.

Deep in the heart of the plains, in the Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh, stand the Siva and Vishnu temples, which are known as the Kacheris. The Choti Kacheri has on the ceiling the remains of exquisite paintings of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. These are extremely valuable as, after the fragmentary remains at Nalanda and Satdhara, these are the oldest surviving paintings of the northern plains in India.

After the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the art of painting came to prominence again during the rule of the Vijayanagar kings from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Hampi and other sites, we see fine examples of mural paintings.

The ceiling of the Virupaksha temple in Hampi is covered with paintings of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. There is simplicity and vigour in the style of the paintings. A sense of movement and energy is caught in the painted figures.

In these paintings, there is a deep intertwining of the story of the

Vijayanagar empire and its kings with the stories of the gods they believed in. There is also a painting of the procession of the revered sage Vidyaranya, who was the spiritual mentor of the founders of the Empire.

## NOTES

The temple at Lepakshi was built in the 16th century by the Nayaka brothers, Virupanna and Viranna, at a centre of trade and pilgrimage in the Vijayanagar empire. The paintings on the ceiling of the mandapa here are some of the finest mural paintings of the medieval period in India.

Lepakshi presents the richness and colour of a great cosmopolitan society. It presents one of the great moments in Indian painting. There is a sense of liveliness here, which is enhanced by the depiction of the protruding eye. The liveliness is also conveyed by angular features and by the peaked corners of clothes.



Flautist, Fatephur Sikri, 16th century. Though Mughal miniatures are well known and celebrated, few know that murals were also commissioned by the Mughal emperors. This painting is in the interior of Mariam's Palace and depicts a Western lady playing the flute.-

Legends associated with Siva and Parvati, Krishna and Rama were painted on the walls of palaces and temples in Kerala from the 16th to the 19th century.

There is a new sense of power and majesty which one sees in the painted gods of Kerala. The manner of shading to depict volume reminds us of Ajanta and Alchi. Each figure here is larger than life. Their limbs are strong and their bodies are full and firm. The gods painted are proud, vigorous and protective. The idiom of Kerala is unique. Its close relationship to the ancient dance dramas of the land are seen in the elaborate headgear

and the heavy forms.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, under the Mughal emperor Akbar, the art of painting was revived in northern India after many centuries. The finest miniatures were made in the court of Akbar and the emperors who succeeded him. At Fatehpur Sikri, the capital city built by Akbar, we have the remnants of mural paintings. These are fine paintings and are very similar to the miniatures of that period. There are representations of busy marketplaces, elephants and horse riders and a depiction of a flautist.

The Bundelas, who were powerful in central India, founded the city of Orcha in 1531. Mural paintings were made on the walls of all the palaces within the magnificent Orcha fort. The Raj Mahal was completely adorned with mural paintings of the 17th century. What remains of these exhibits a blend of the two most significant styles of painting in India at that time - the Mughal and the Rajput. The expressions are often gentle. Exposure to the Mughal court has also led to a sense of courtly sophistication.

There are surviving mural paintings from the 17th century onwards in Rajasthan. They present a varied tapestry, with the constant interaction of the indigenous idiom of mural painting and the influences coming from the imperial Mughal court.



Krishna with a Gaja, Bhojanshala, Amer Palace, Rajasthan, c. 17th century. These simple yet sophisticated drawings have an easy natural sense, which is reminiscent of ancient Indian art. The twinkle in the eye of the elephant is in keeping with the Indian artist's sensitivity towards all forms of life.-

The finest wall paintings of Rajasthan are found in the Bhojanshala of the Amer Palace near Jaipur. These are exquisite drawings of the 17th century, on Vaishnava themes. In depicting the divine images, the artist

## NOTES

appears to transcend himself. The drawings are made in panels upon the wall and are small in scale for murals. However, the painter's sensitivity and honest depiction creates an intimacy between the viewer and the painting.

## NOTES

Rajasthan was on the major trade routes of days gone by. The area of Shekhawati has a concentration of 19th and 20th century havelis which are profusely painted. The paintings here reflect the opulence of the flourishing trading community, the Marwaris.

The cultural impact of the sudden exposure to European influences is reflected in the varied and indiscriminate depiction of a wide array of subjects. These range from the eternal religious themes to the new inventions which the traders would have seen in their visits to the major port cities.

The verdant Pahari hills saw the finest continuation of the tradition of murals in India. The 18th and 19th century paintings on the walls of the Rang Mahal in Chamba are among the best surviving examples of Pahari murals.

The themes are mostly religious and the styles are closely related to those of the miniature paintings of the region. We see fine expressions, the refinement of Pahari miniatures, and an exuberant and joyous sense of life.



Siva, Shividwala temple, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, c. 18<sup>th</sup> century. The paintings of the temple reveal a world of beauty and innocence. Siva is depicted with great tenderness as a gentle and loving god.-



## NOTES

Orissa, in the eastern plains of India, is a land of the rich continuation of ancient culture. The 18th century paintings on the walls of the Viranchinarayan Temple at Buguda are some of the finest surviving murals of that period in India.

These are a rare instance of the continuation of the ancient Indian mural tradition. These are not like miniatures made upon the walls. The themes are from the Ramayana. The sense of humanity and humility in these paintings remind one of the finest of ancient Indian paintings.

The murals of Punjab perhaps represent the last phase of wall paintings in India. We see here shades of realism from the tradition of Mughal miniatures and yet faces that are distinctly of the Punjab. The themes and the manner are deeply rooted in the local culture. There is a quiet sense of dignity, which emerges in the best of these paintings. Mural paintings are found hidden away in temples in the midst of busy market places in Amritsar, in temples in villages such as Kishankot, and in Qila Mubarak and Qila Androon in the Patiala fort.

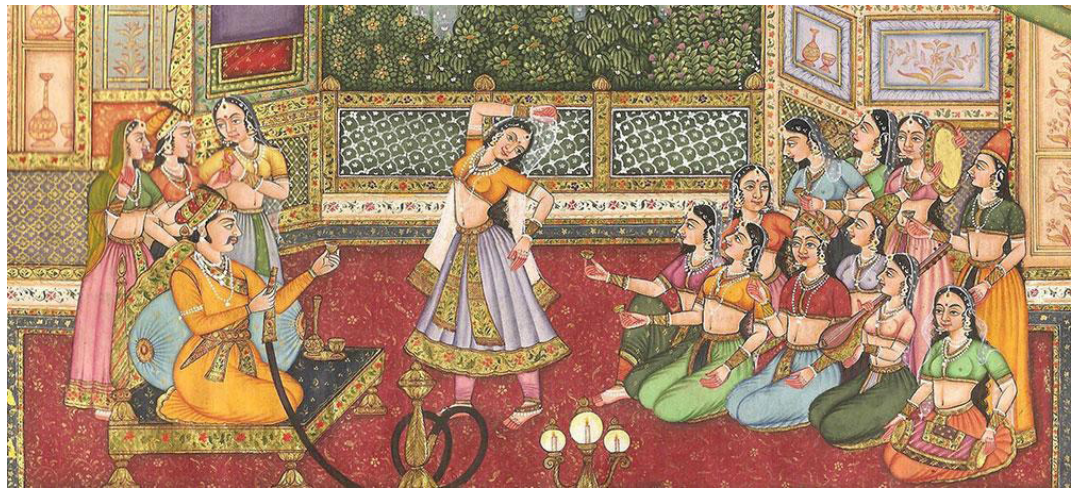
In ancient times, the philosophical ideas of Hinduism and Buddhism spread from India to practically every corner of Asia. As art was an integral part of life and religion, the concepts of Indian art spread far and wide, along with philosophy.



Lakshmana, Viranchinarayan temple, Orissa, c. 18th century. While Lakshmana sharpens his arrow, monkeys and other animals are engaged in playful activity. The angular and stylised idiom of painting, seen here and in the manuscripts of Orissa, travelled to Bali in Indonesia where it is seen till today.-

## NOTES

In 1930, Laurence Binyon, Director of the British Museum, wrote: "Whoever studies the art of China and Japan, at whatever point he begins, starts on a long road which will lead him ultimately to Ajanta." Scholars in all Asian countries trace the roots of their classic paintings to the murals of India.



The paintings of the 5th century of Sigiriya and of the 12th century of Polonnaruva in Sri Lanka; mural paintings of the 12th-13th century pagodas of Bagan in Myanmar and the classic paintings of the Horyuji temple in Japan closely reflect the traditions of Indian paintings.

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### 1.10 MURAL MAKING PROCESS

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Creating a mural takes time, talent, and research. From the conceptual design stage to the selection process and creation, read about how a mural is made from beginning to end. When designing a mural, students need to keep an eye out for some important elements. Mural painting is not like easel painting, the design will be very large and reflect the community it is placed in.

#### STEP 1: INVESTIGATE

- Look at how the place for the mural works compositionally with the environment
- Consider the community demographics, and the multiplicity of aesthetics and perspectives of the neighborhood

- Talk with community members to get a sense of what is important to them
- Investigate the social, political, and historical contexts of the community

## STEP 2: DESIGN

- Keep in mind how the mural will be viewed. Will it be seen from the side or straight on? How will it look from each perspective? How will it be seen from a moving car?
- Consider the team of artists and students you will be working with, and incorporate design elements that multiple levels of artists can accommodate.
- Take into account the scale of the objects in your design. What should be seen from far away, and what can be seen up close?

## NOTES

## MURAL SELECTION

After the conceptual designs are made, they are presented for selection. In class, students will present a final rationale and five designs that depict the compositional strategy for critique.

The designs are then presented to the mayor and city council members. Students must visually and verbally present their work in a logical, interesting sequence which the audience can follow, demonstrate full knowledge of what they have made, and be accountable for the imagery presented. Students may then adjust the design based on any feedback from the community leaders.

Finally the mural designs are presented to the community, and individual citizens are invited to vote for the design they believe best reflects their community and neighborhoods.

## CREATING THE MURAL

After the mural is selected we can now begin the glaze painting process. It starts by applying a gesso layer to prime the area to be painted. The area is then chalked out with a numbered grid, which is used to translate the scaled down image design to the mural site. Finally the mural is painted using the glaze painting technique, which uses multiple layers of paint to create the image. The first layer is darkest color, and each successive layer then adds the lighter colors in the design.

### Step 1: Preparing the Surface

A gesso layer serves as a base for the mural, on which a numbered grid is chalked out. The grid is used to translate the mural design from the scaled-down image of the mural site.

## NOTES



### Step 2: Enlarging the Design

Using the gridding system, drawing can be done with large playground chalk, and then tightened up with a paintbrush and thinned acrylic paint.



### Step 3: Underpainting

An undercoat is applied first using a color that contrasts or harmonizes with the layers of paint that will be applied on top. This top layer of color may be applied in such a way that aspects of the lower layer show through, creating a mixed-colored or vibrating affect.

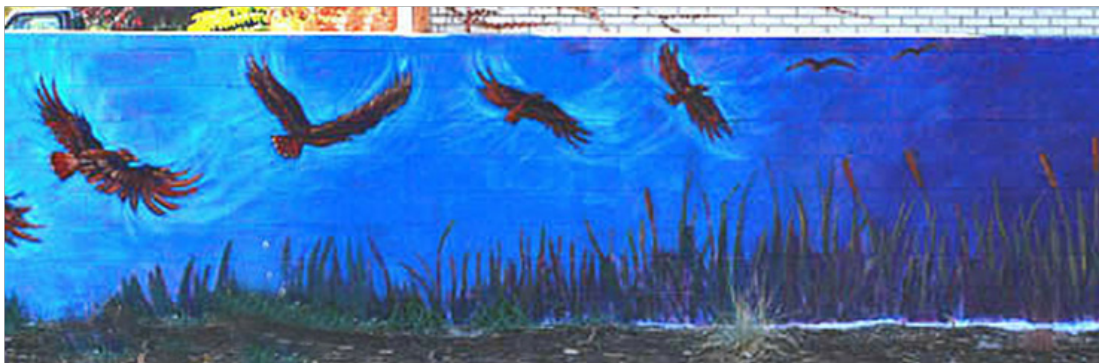
## NOTES



### Step 4: Painting

Most collaborative murals are painted with good quality acrylic paint, sold in jars. These are suitable for indoor and outdoor use. Enamel and oil paints are not recommended for outdoor use because they are moisture impermeable and do not allow the wall to breathe.

When selecting paints and colors, the artist must be careful to select colors that have good light fastness ratings by consulting paint charts for the brand of paint that is being used. Earth tones and black are most stable. Unfortunately, most blues and violets are somewhat fleeting and have a tendency to fade after five to ten years in direct outdoor sunlight.



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## 1.11 SIGNIFICANCE

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Murals are important in that they bring art into the public sphere. Due to the size, cost, and work involved in creating a mural, muralists must often be commissioned by a sponsor. Often it is the local government or a business, but many murals have been paid for with grants of patronage. For artists, their work gets a wide audience who otherwise might not set foot in an art gallery. A city benefits by the beauty of a work of art.

Murals can be a relatively effective tool of social emancipation or

**NOTES**

achieving a political goal.[10] Murals have sometimes been created against the law, or have been commissioned by local bars and coffee shops. Often, the visual effects are an enticement to attract public attention to social issues. State-sponsored public art expressions, particularly murals, are often used by totalitarian regimes as a tool of propaganda. However, despite the propagandist character of that works, some of them still have an artistic value. Murals can have a dramatic impact whether consciously or subconsciously on the attitudes of passers-by, when they are added to areas where people live and work. It can also be argued that the presence of large, public murals can add aesthetic improvement to the daily lives of residents or that of employees at a corporate venue. Large-format hand-painted murals were the norm for advertisements in cities across America, before the introduction of vinyl and digital posters. It was an expensive form of advertising with strict signage laws but gained attention and improved local aesthetics.

Other world-famous murals can be found in Mexico, New York City, Philadelphia, Belfast, Derry, Los Angeles, Nicaragua, Cuba, the Philippines, and in India. They have functioned as an important means of communication for members of socially, ethnically and racially divided communities in times of conflict. They also proved to be an effective tool in establishing a dialogue and hence solving the cleavage in the long run. The Indian state Kerala has exclusive murals. These Kerala mural painting are on walls of Hindu temples. They can be dated from 9th century AD. The San Bartolo murals of the Maya civilization in Guatemala, are the oldest example of this art in Mesoamerica and are dated at 300 BC. Many rural towns have begun using murals to create tourist attractions in order to boost economic income. Colquitt, Georgia was chosen to host the 2010 Global Mural Conference. The town had more than twelve murals completed, and hosted the Conference along with Dothan, Alabama, and Blakely, Georgia.

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**1.12 SOME MURALS DESIGNS**

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**NOTES**

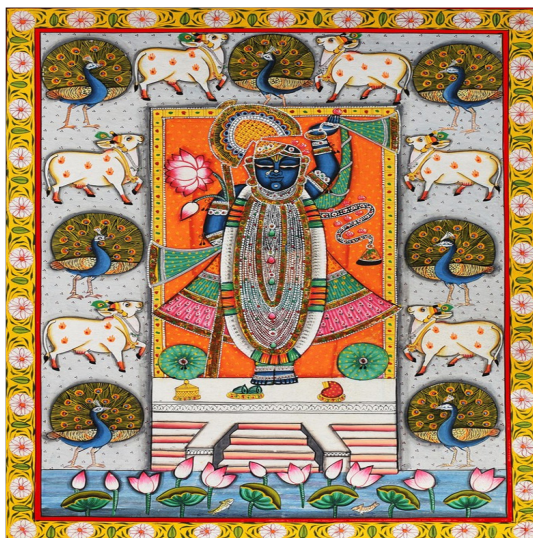
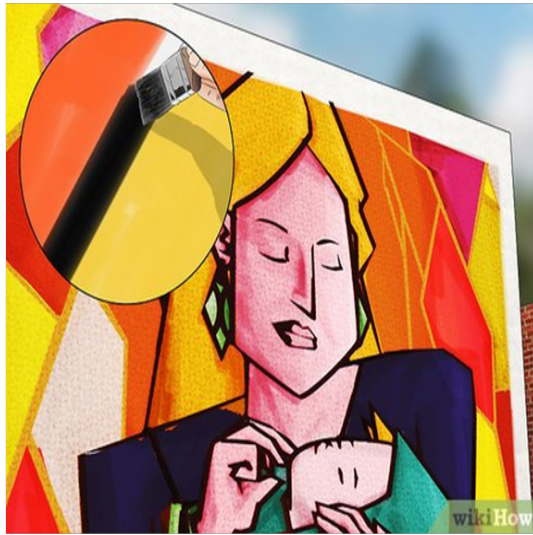


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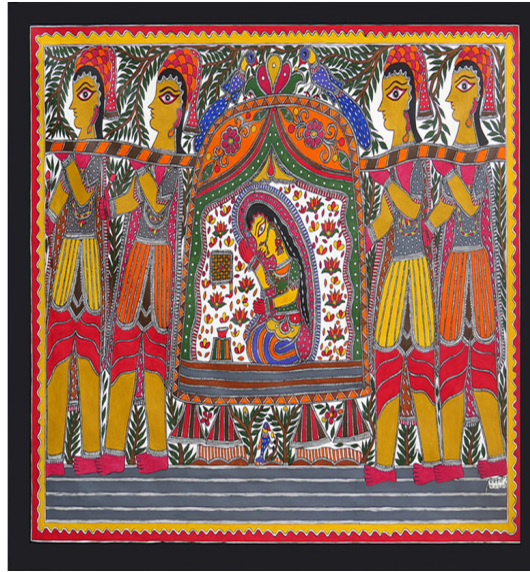




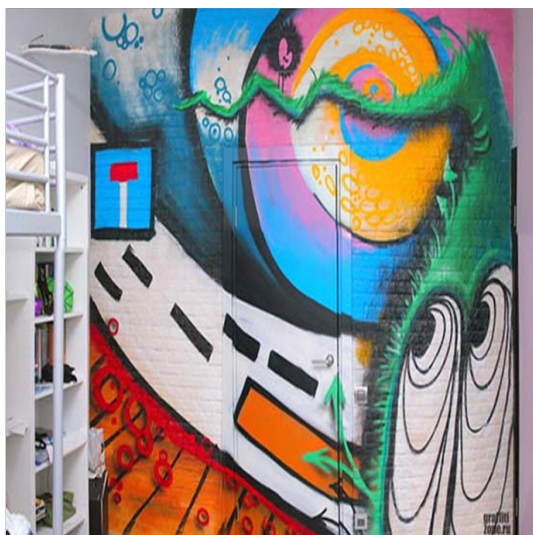
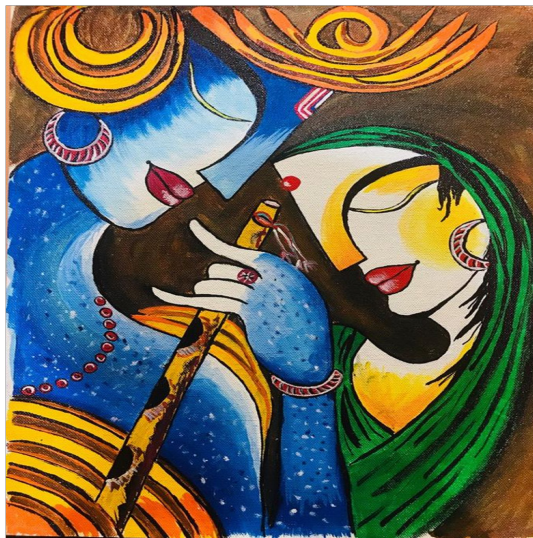
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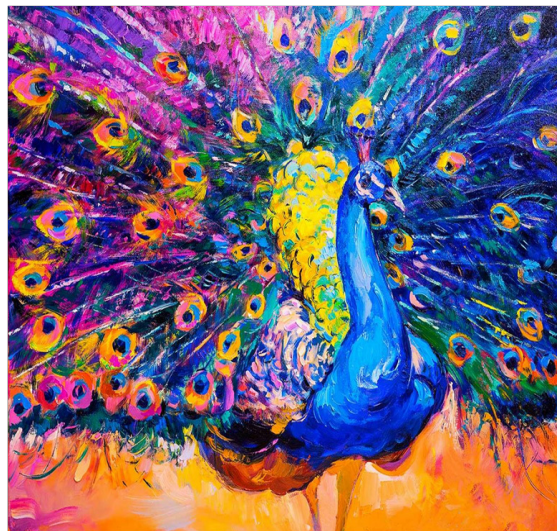
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## 1.13 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### NOTES

Q1. What is mural design?

Q2. Write a short note on history of murals.

Q3. Explain forms of murals designs.

**2****TRADITIONAL MURAL DESIGN****STRUCTURE**

- 2.1 Learning Objective
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Traditional Murals of India
- 2.4 Badami Murals
- 2.5 Murals Under Pandava And Chola Kings
- 2.6 Vijayanagara Murals
- 2.7 Kerela Murals
- 2.8 Other Traditional Murals
- 2.9 Check Your Progress

**2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

After reading this unit, you will

- Describe about the mural design.
- Describe about the Traditional Murals of India.
- Define about the Badami Murals of India.
- Describe about the Vijayanagara Murals and Kerela Murals.
- Expalin about the Other Traditional Murals.

**2.2 INTRODUCTION**

In this we will learn about the traditional mural and various designs. A mural is any piece of artwork painted or applied directly on a wall, ceiling or other permanent surfaces. A distinguishing characteristic of mural painting is that the architectural elements of the given space are harmoniously incorporated into the picture. Some wall paintings are painted on large canvases, which are then attached to the wall. This technique has been in common use since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. murals have been around as long as people, as a form of valuable testimony of life from the prehistoric time to today. From the cave paintings at Lascaux Grottoes in southern France

**NOTES**

to the street art murals of today , people have been leaving signs of their own existence in many places around the world. It is because of the earliest scratchings, carvings, etchings and paintings that we now have priceless knowledge of our history and predecessors, and these murals hold great significance for mankind, as they depicted life activities, everyday scenery and usually religious traditions of the time they were created in, giving us a priceless look of the diversity of our cultures during different periods.

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### **2.3 TRADITIONAL MURALS OF INDIA**

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Mural is derived from the Latin word murus, which means wall. The paintings carried out on the walls are known as mural paintings. It is done on a specially prepared plastered surface. In olden days, royal palaces, houses of noblemen and the temples were all decorated with mural paintings. The earliest paintings in India had been found in primitive caves and rock shelters such as Bhimbetka (Madhya Pradesh) and Ajantha & Ellora caves (Maharashtra). A study of the evolution of mural paintings in India shows its development from Ajanta to Kerala. The mural tradition of Ajanta, spanning a whole millennium lasting up to the 8th century, occupies the walls of 27 caves. There are similarities between the styles of Kerala and the murals of Sittanavasan, Badami, Lepakshi, Tanjavur and Vijayanagar. Mural paintings of Kerala are known for the succulence of its colours and the vibrancy of its active compositions. The tradition of painting on walls began in Kerala with the pre-historic rock paintings found in the Anjanad valley of Idukki district. Archaeologists presume that these paintings belong to different periods from upper Paleolithic period to early historic period. Rock engravings dating to the Mesolithic period have also been discovered in two regions, at Edakkal in Wayanad district and at Perimkadavila in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. The earliest of the Kerala murals were located by the side of a rock and a shrine at Thirunandikkara way back in 8th century, which is now in the Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. Ancient temples, churches and palaces in Kerala display an abounding tradition of mural mostly dating back between the 9th to 12th centuries AD when this form of art enjoyed Royal patronage. Black and white mural paintings are also seen in Cheerumpakavu temple of Muzhappilangad in Kannur district. The tradition and practice of Kalamezhuthu, which is the pioneer form of Dravida art, has very much influenced the growth of mural paintings of Kerala like Kalamezhuthu five natural colours are also used in murals. The temple architecture of Kerala warranted elaborate decoration in the form of mural painting and wood carving. The stages of mural paintings of Kerala are connected with that of architecture, especially the regional temple constructions, the beginning of which is considered to be from the 9th century onwards. In the brahminical hegemony, the temple and other associated arts had flourished. But this situation did not last long because of the changes occur then which resulted in the downfall of feudalism. This



## NOTES

has a concomitant effect and the temples became weak which affected the murals too, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The traditional four fold Varna system has produced so many mixed groups. The Indian caste system is characterized by traditional occupation and it functioned in a closed system. It is found that the mural painting flourished in temple settings through the traditional gurukula pattern. Attempt has been made to detail the indigenous preparation techniques of pigments for the traditional mural paintings of Kerala.

INDIA has one of the greatest traditions of painting of the ancient world. A high degree of technical excellence was achieved even in very early times, and the art, born out of the deep philosophy of the land, was graceful and sublime.



Visvantara Jataka, Cave 17, Ajanta, Maharashtra, 5th century. The painters' understanding of perspective is seen in the receding pillars and in the elliptical mouth of the pitcher. The curving strings of the purse that Princess Madri dangles are a marvellous depiction of movement. The earliest surviving paintings in the Indian subcontinent are those of Ajanta. The paintings here were made in two phases. The oldest date to around the 2nd century B.C. The marvellous latter phase was around the 5th century A.D., under the patronage of the Vakatakas who ruled the Deccan.

The subjects are scenes from the life of the Buddha and the Jatakas, stories of his previous births. These paintings bring to us great beauty of form, with extremely fine rendering which imparts a sense of volume and roundedness. Yet, amidst the tender and elegant beauty of the world, these paintings constantly take us to that which is within. The great Bodhisattvas (seekers of truth) who are painted upon the walls of Ajanta, always look within. It is this life of the spirit which pervades the entire world of these paintings.

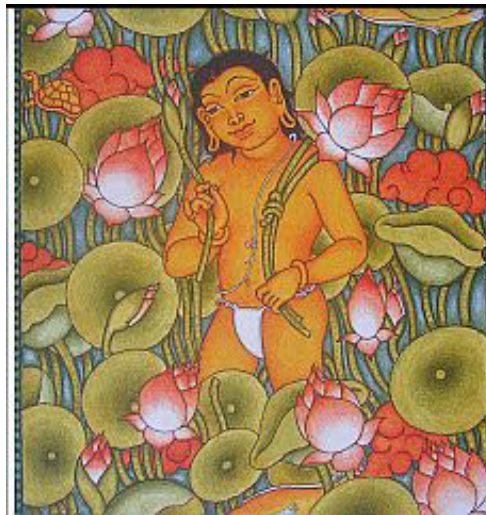
## NOTES

Ajanta is known to be the fountainhead and inspiration of Buddhist paintings across the whole of Asia. The sophisticated ancient tradition of painting, which was inherited by the artists of Ajanta, was documented as the Chitrasutra of the Vishnudharmottara Purana. This was a verbal tradition, which would have come over many centuries, passed on through guilds of painters. It was penned on paper by perhaps the 5th or 6th century A.D. This ancient treatise places a sophisticated grammar in the hands of the painter. However, he is informed that rules do not make the painting. It has to be given a life of its own by the painter.

Contrary to what is generally known, there are several remnants of ancient paintings found in all corners of the subcontinent, belonging to practically every century of the last 1,500 years and more. These display the fact of a great and unified tradition of painting in ancient India. There are fragments of paintings of the time of Ajanta which survive at many Buddhist cave sites, including Pitalkhora near Ellora, in Maharashtra.

Nine caves were excavated on the slopes of the Vindhya hills above the Bagh river during the reign of the Guptas, between the 4th and 6th centuries A.D. Unfortunately the paintings on the walls of these caves have been practically lost to the ravages of time. Reproductions of earlier times show that, as at Ajanta, the Buddhist paintings of Bagh present a sense of stillness. There is all the activity of life and yet a profound sense of peace upon the faces of the painted figures.

Very little of the paintings survive in the 6th century Hindu caves of Badami in Karnataka. As at Bagh, what remains evokes the magic of a world of painted splendour when all the walls and ceilings were covered with murals. In the meantime, in the 7th century, the Pallava kings of what is now Tamil Nadu gave exuberant and glorious expression to themes relating to Siva in the paintings in the temples of Panamalai and Kailashanatar in Kancheepuram.



## NOTES

Worshipper gathering lotuses, Sittannaval, Tamil Nadu, 9<sup>th</sup> century. The figure is made with a lilting grace, like the stalks of the lotuses he gathers. The flowers are painted with a great sense of tenderness and beauty and are as large as the humans and animals in the painting. The niches in the outer ambulatory path of the Kailashanatar temple were once covered with paintings in brilliant colours. Traces of these are still discernible. In these paintings, we see the beginnings of a sense of imperial grandeur represented through art, in the emphasis on the depiction of lavish crowns and jewellery.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> century Jain cave of Sittannaval in Tamil Nadu, there is a marvellous lotus pond painted on the ceiling. It is a scene of the faithful gathering lotuses to place upon the resting place of a Tirthankara, a Jain saint. Elephants, buffalos, geese and fish frolic in the water, which is overflowing with beautiful lotuses. The painter has used the occasion to present a joyous world. He brings to us a sense of sublime happiness; as fish swim in the waters, an elephant appears to smile, and gentle men gather lotuses larger than themselves.

In the meantime, the magnificent Kailashnath temple had been hewn out of a mountain at Ellora in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The walls and ceilings of this temple were once covered with murals. Fragments of these, which remain, show the beauty and quality of the art. There are also paintings of the late 9<sup>th</sup> century in the Jain caves at Ellora. The painters here continue the older tradition but with contributions of their own. Besides the naturalism and grace inherited from Ajanta, the figures painted here are stylised and elongated. These are significant changes, which, in later years, are reflected in paintings over the whole of India.



## NOTES

In the heart of the Brihadeeswara temple in Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, protected by massive walls of stone, are the finest paintings of the theme of Siva ever painted. Towards the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, King Rajaraja Chola expressed his devotion and also his power and grandeur by commissioning murals on a spectacular scale.

The colours in the paintings are soft and subdued, the lines firm and sinuous and the expressions true to life. More than ever before, we see the artists' lavish use of embellishments of crowns and jewellery, portraying the royal splendour of the times.

King Rajaraja Chola and Guru Karuvurar Brihadeeswara temple, Tamil Nadu, 11<sup>th</sup> century. This is the earliest royal portrait in Indian painting. In keeping with ancient traditions, the guru is given importance and the king is shown standing behind him.-

At an altitude of over 3,000 metres, the barren desert plateau of Ladakh is a fascinating crucible of cultures. In days gone by, this was not an isolated place; it was an active centre of trade.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, King Yeshe Od of Guge built 108 monasteries across his kingdom in Ladakh, western Tibet, Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti. Craftsmen and artists from Kashmir were invited by Yeshe Od and they constructed and painted these monasteries, which were to become the backbone of trans-Himalayan Buddhism.

The philosophy of Vajrayana Buddhism offers a new path towards attaining enlightenment. The worshipper meditates upon images of the deity and, by absorbing the qualities personified in the image, he becomes the deity himself. Thus, paintings are very important for Vajrayana Buddhists as an essential part of religious practice.

The monastery of Alchi is an oasis of beauty and colour in the midst of the vast and barren landscape of Ladakh. The dhoti of an Avalokitesvara statue in the three-storeyed temple of Alchi has some of the most gorgeous paintings. These are the only surviving visual representations of the culture and architecture of ancient Kashmir.

One of the masterpieces of the Alchi paintings is the Green Tara. We see here the marvellous shaping of the form with skilful shading. There is also the depiction of the protruding eye which extends beyond the line of the face. This is a convention in Indian painting, which was first seen in the murals of Ellora.

The Kashmiri artists present a lively world, with the grace and beauty of form coming to them from the classical Indian tradition. The rich textiles and decorative elements of these paintings are remarkable and they show that the artists had assimilated the traditions coming to them

from Gandhara and Central Asia.

Traditional Mural  
Design



## NOTES

Goddess Tara, Alchi, Ladakh, 11<sup>th</sup> century. This is a depiction of the Goddess as a saviour. She is surrounded by representations of many fears and the figures turn to her for protection. There is a sense of animated movement caught in these tiny figures, as the goddess stands in dignified majesty.-

The Kashmiri style was mainly responsible for the lovely wall paintings still seen in the beautiful monasteries at Alchi, Mangyu and Sumda in Ladakh, in the Tabo monastery in the Spiti valley and in the Nako monastery in Kinnaur district, Himachal Pradesh.

On the western edge of the trans-Himalayan plateau in Spiti is the monastery complex of Tabo. This appears to be one of the first among the 108 monasteries built by Yeshe Od. It is dated around A.D. 996.

The paintings here show close similarity to Alchi. The sinuous and even exaggerated body forms and the supple lines show a form of painting which is uniquely Kashmiri.

The monastery of Nako, in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh, comprises four temples within an enclosure of mud walls. The wall paintings at Nako display a considerable delicacy of execution and an inner grace.

The traditions of Vajrayana Buddhist paintings, which were laid at the time of the grand conception of King Yeshe Od's 108 monasteries, continued in the centuries to come. From Ladakh in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east, across the highest mountains of the world, is the one region which has an unbroken tradition of Indian mural painting.

## NOTES



Parvati with her companions, Lepakshi, Andhra Pradesh, 16<sup>th</sup> century. This lively painting reflects the cosmopolitan culture of the Vijayanagar empire. The rich and varied textiles are remarkable. The angular features and protruding eye exhibit the pan-Indian medieval traditions of painting.

Deep in the heart of the plains, in the Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh, stand the Siva and Vishnu temples, which are known as the Kacheris. The Choti Kacheri has on the ceiling the remains of exquisite paintings of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. These are extremely valuable as, after the fragmentary remains at Nalanda and Satdhara, these are the oldest surviving paintings of the northern plains in India.

After the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the art of painting came to prominence again during the rule of the Vijayanagar kings from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Hampi and other sites, we see fine examples of mural paintings.

The ceiling of the Virupaksha temple in Hampi is covered with paintings of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. There is simplicity and vigour in the style of the paintings. A sense of movement and energy is caught in the painted figures.

In these paintings, there is a deep intertwining of the story of the Vijayanagar empire and its kings with the stories of the gods they believed in. There is also a painting of the procession of the revered sage Vidyananya, who was the spiritual mentor of the founders of the Empire.

The temple at Lepakshi was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the Nayaka brothers, Virupanna and Viranna, at a centre of trade and pilgrimage in the Vijayanagar empire. The paintings on the ceiling of the mandapa here are some of the finest mural paintings of the medieval period in India.

## NOTES

Lepakshi presents the richness and colour of a great cosmopolitan society. It presents one of the great moments in Indian painting. There is a sense of liveliness here, which is enhanced by the depiction of the protruding eye. The liveliness is also conveyed by angular features and by the peaked corners of clothes.



Flautist, Fatehpur Sikri, 16th century. Though Mughal miniatures are well known and celebrated, few know that murals were also commissioned by the Mughal emperors. This painting is in the interior of Mariam's Palace and depicts a Western lady playing the flute.-

Legends associated with Siva and Parvati, Krishna and Rama were painted on the walls of palaces and temples in Kerala from the 16th to the 19th century.

There is a new sense of power and majesty which one sees in the painted gods of Kerala. The manner of shading to depict volume reminds us of Ajanta and Alchi. Each figure here is larger than life. Their limbs are strong and their bodies are full and firm. The gods painted are proud, vigorous and protective. The idiom of Kerala is unique. Its close relationship to the ancient dance dramas of the land are seen in the elaborate headgear and the heavy forms.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, under the Mughal emperor Akbar, the art of painting was revived in northern India after many centuries. The finest miniatures were made in the court of Akbar and the emperors who succeeded him. At Fatehpur Sikri, the capital city built by Akbar, we have the remnants of mural paintings. These are fine paintings and are very similar to the miniatures of that period. There are representations of busy marketplaces, elephants and horse riders and a depiction of a flautist.

The Bundelas, who were powerful in central India, founded the city

## NOTES

of Orcha in 1531. Mural paintings were made on the walls of all the palaces within the magnificent Orcha fort. The Raj Mahal was completely adorned with mural paintings of the 17th century. What remains of these exhibits a blend of the two most significant styles of painting in India at that time - the Mughal and the Rajput. The expressions are often gentle. Exposure to the Mughal court has also led to a sense of courtly sophistication.

There are surviving mural paintings from the 17th century onwards in Rajasthan. They present a varied tapestry, with the constant interaction of the indigenous idiom of mural painting and the influences coming from the imperial Mughal court.



Krishna with a Gaja, Bhojanshala, Amer Palace, Rajasthan, c. 17th century. These simple yet sophisticated drawings have an easy natural sense, which is reminiscent of ancient Indian art. The twinkle in the eye of the elephant is in keeping with the Indian artist's sensitivity towards all forms of life.-

The finest wall paintings of Rajasthan are found in the Bhojanshala of the Amer Palace near Jaipur. These are exquisite drawings of the 17th century, on Vaishnava themes. In depicting the divine images, the artist appears to transcend himself. The drawings are made in panels upon the wall and are small in scale for murals. However, the painter's sensitivity and honest depiction creates an intimacy between the viewer and the painting.

Rajasthan was on the major trade routes of days gone by. The area of Shekhawati has a concentration of 19th and 20th century havelis which are profusely painted. The paintings here reflect the opulence of the flourishing trading community, the Marwaris.

The cultural impact of the sudden exposure to European influences is reflected in the varied and indiscriminate depiction of a wide array



of subjects. These range from the eternal religious themes to the new inventions which the traders would have seen in their visits to the major port cities.

The verdant Pahari hills saw the finest continuation of the tradition of murals in India. The 18th and 19th century paintings on the walls of the Rang Mahal in Chamba are among the best surviving examples of Pahari murals.

The themes are mostly religious and the styles are closely related to those of the miniature paintings of the region. We see fine expressions, the refinement of Pahari miniatures, and an exuberant and joyous sense of life.

## NOTES

### Features and Techniques of traditional Indian Mural Paintings

1. The Mural Paintings are comparatively different from all other forms of illustrative art. The two major characteristics which make them significant are their organic relation to architecture and broad public importance. The Indian murals are rich in expressive practicality.
2. The utilization of colour, design, and thematic treatment in mural paintings has the capability to bring about an extreme change in the sensation of spatial proportions of the building. Mural Paintings are the only form of artwork which is truly three-dimensional, since it modifies and shares a given space.
3. The colour materials on the mural paintings in ancient India were derived from the natural materials like terracotta, chalk, red ochre and yellow ochre mixed with animal fat. The subjects included the figures of human beings and animals, hunting, family scenes, court life, deities and stories from Buddhist 'Jataka'. The ancient painters did the murals with expert hands and observant eyes. This is evident from the cave paintings of Ajanta, which were made during second century BC and continued till the 5th-6th century AD by the decorative motifs, crowded compositions, figure types and details of costumes. The other significant mural paintings of this period are found at Bagh in Madhya Pradesh, caves of Badami in Karnataka, Sittannavasal in Tamil Nadu and the Kailashanatha temple in Ellora, Maharashtra of 8th century AD and known for their linear styles.
4. Mud plaster had been applied in two coats – the first was rough in order to fill in the pores of the rocks and then a final coat of lime plaster is applied over it. The Mural painting took place in stages. The line is drawn in red ochre the colours are applied & the contours are renewed in brown, deep red or black. The pigments that were required for the paints were from local volcanic rocks with the exception of lamp black. Animal glue and vegetable gums were also used. The facial expressions were highlighted

by patches of light colours. In order to create illusion of depth various methods were used.

## NOTES

### Popular Indian Mural Paintings

1. In Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura sublime mural works have been found. Ladakh is known for its wall paintings in Alchi and Hemis monasteries, made on 11th-12th century and the Spiti Valley in Himachal Pradesh is known for its Buddhist paintings in the gomphas of Tabo Monastery.
2. North India has a rich heritage of mural paintings even before the Mughal period. The murals at the Vishnu Temple located at Madanpur in Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh of 12th century AD reveals the skilful hands of the painters. Though the Mughal era is known mostly for the miniatures, the enthralling murals embellished on the walls of forts and palaces of Akbar and Jahangir quietly speaks of the influence of Persian styles. The Mughal painting traditions influenced the Rajput painting. The wall paintings in Deeg, Bundi, Jaipur, Ajmer, Jodhpur and other places in Rajasthan are quite convincing.
3. South India also got rich tradition of mural paintings. In the reign of Cholas, Vijayanagaras and Nayakas, this art reached the climax. The Deccan art of Bijapur, Hyderabad, and Golconda schools were influenced by the Mughal traditions and later by European idiom. Maratha murals are also shaped under the Mogul traditions and employed oil as medium. The mural art of Kerala vividly depicted on the walls of temples and monuments show traces of European affinity.

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### 2.4 BADAMI MURALS

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One of the examples of later Mural tradition is Badami, Karnataka. It was the capital of the western Chalukyan dynasty, which ruled the region from 543 to 598 CE. With the decline of the Vakataka rule, the Chalukyas established their power in the Deccan. The Chalukya king, Mangalesha, patronized the excavations of Badami caves. He was the younger son of the Chalukya king, Pulikeshi I, and the brother of Kirtivarman-I. The cave No. 4 is popularly known as Vishnu cave and in the inscriptions patron (Mangalesha) records his Vaishnava affiliation. One of the paintings shows Kirtivarman, the son of Pulikeshi I and the elder brother Mangalesha, seated inside the palace with his wife and feudatories watching a dance scene.

Stylistically the painting represents an extension of the tradition of mural paintings from Ajanta to Badami in south India. The sinuously drawn lines, fluid forms and compact composition exemplify the proficiency

## NOTES

and maturity the artist had achieved in the 6th century CE. The gracefully drawn faces remind us of the style of modelling in Ajanta. Their eye sockets are large, eyes are half closed, and the lips are protruding. Located in the State of Karnataka Capital of the Western Chalukyan Dynasty Mangalesha patronized the excavation of the Badami Caves Cave No. 4 is popularly known as Vishnu cave Court scene and royal family watching dances Eye sockets are large, eyes are half-closed, and the lips are protruding One of the earliest surviving Hindu paintings.



**Queen and attendants, Badami mural**

Paintings in this cave depict palace scenes. One shows Kirtivarman, the son of Pulakesi I and the elder brother of Mangalesha, seated inside the palace with his wife and feudatories watching a dance scene. Towards the corner of the panel are figures of Indra and his retinue. Stylistically speaking, the painting represents an extension of the tradition of mural painting from Ajanta to Badami in South India. The sinuously drawn lines, fluid forms and compact composition exemplify the proficiency and maturity the artists had achieved in the sixth century CE. The gracefully drawn faces of the king and the queen remind us of the style of modelling in Ajanta.

Their eyesockets are large, eyes are half-closed, and lips are protruding. It is noteworthy to observe that the contours of different parts of the face create protruding structures of the face itself. Thus, with simple line treatment artists could create volume.

## NOTES



Siva, Shivdwala temple, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, c. 18<sup>th</sup> century. The paintings of the temple reveal a world of beauty and innocence. Siva is depicted with great tenderness as a gentle and loving god.-

Orissa, in the eastern plains of India, is a land of the rich continuation of ancient culture. The 18<sup>th</sup> century paintings on the walls of the Viranchinarayan Temple at Buguda are some of the finest surviving murals of that period in India.

These are a rare instance of the continuation of the ancient Indian mural tradition. These are not like miniatures made upon the walls. The themes are from the Ramayana. The sense of humanity and humility in these paintings remind one of the finest of ancient Indian paintings.

The murals of Punjab perhaps represent the last phase of wall paintings in India. We see here shades of realism from the tradition of Mughal miniatures and yet faces that are distinctly of the Punjab. The themes and the manner are deeply rooted in the local culture. There is a quiet sense of dignity, which emerges in the best of these paintings. Mural paintings are found hidden away in temples in the midst of busy market places in Amritsar, in temples in villages such as Kishankot, and in Qila Mubarak and Qila Androon in the Patiala fort.

In ancient times, the philosophical ideas of Hinduism and Buddhism

spread from India to practically every corner of Asia. As art was an integral part of life and religion, the concepts of Indian art spread far and wide, along with philosophy.

Traditional Mural  
Design



## NOTES

Lakshmana, Viranchinarayan temple, Orissa, c. 18th century. While Lakshmana sharpens his arrow, monkeys and other animals are engaged in playful activity. The angular and stylised idiom of painting, seen here and in the manuscripts of Orissa, travelled to Bali in Indonesia where it is seen till today. In 1930, Laurence Binyon, Director of the British Museum, wrote: "Whoever studies the art of China and Japan, at whatever point he begins, starts on a long road which will lead him ultimately to Ajanta." Scholars in all Asian countries trace the roots of their classic paintings to the murals of India. The paintings of the 5th century of Sigiriya and of the 12th century of Polonnaruva in Sri Lanka; mural paintings of the 12th-13th century pagodas of Bagan in Myanmar and the classic paintings of the Horyuji temple in Japan closely reflect the traditions of Indian paintings.

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## 2.5 MURALS UNDER PANDAVA AND CHOLA KINGS

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The tradition of painting extended further down south in Tamil Nadu in the preceding centuries with regional variations during the regime of Pallava, Pandya and Chola dynasties. The Pallava kings, who succeeded

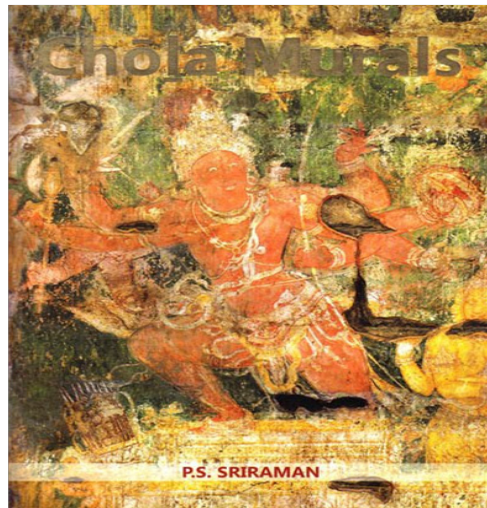
## NOTES

the Chalukyas in parts of the south India, were also patrons of the arts. Mahendravarman (Pallava) who ruled the 7th century CE was responsible for building temples at Panamalai, Mandagapattu, and Kanchipuram. The inscriptions at Mandagapattu mentions Mahendravarman I with numerous titles such as Vichitrachitta (curious minded), Chitrakarapuli (tiger among artists), Chaityakari (temple builder), which shows his interests in art activities. Paintings in Kanchipuram temple were patronized by the Pallava king, Rajasimha. Increased ornamentation was a notable feature of these paintings when compared with the paintings of the earlier period. When the Pandyas rose to power, they too patronized art.

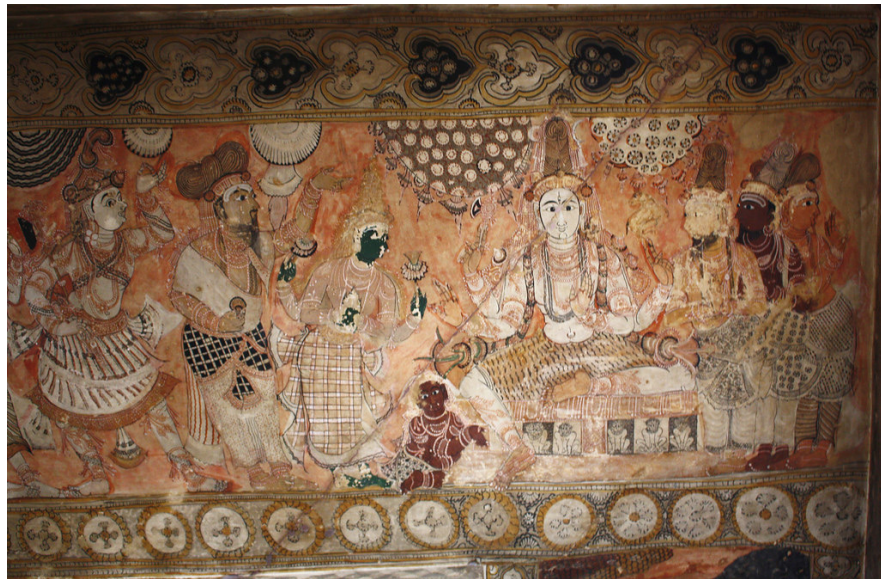
Tirumalaipuram caves and Jaina caves at Sittanvasal are some of the surviving examples. The tradition of building temples and embellishing them with carvings and paintings continued during the reign of the Chola kings who ruled over the region from 9th to the 13th But it was in the 11th century, when the Cholas reached their zenith of power, the masterpieces of Chola art and architecture began to appear. The temples of Brihadeswara at Tanjore, Gangaikonda Cholapuram and Darasuram were built during the reign of Rajaraja Chola and Rajendra Chola. The important paintings of Chola period can be seen at Nartamalai and Brihadeswara temples. In Brihadeswara temple, the paintings were executed on the walls of the narrow passage surrounding the shrine. Two layers of paints were found when they were discovered. The upper/outer layer was painted during the Nayaka period, in the 16th century. The Chola paintings at Brihadeswara are showing the aspects related to the Lord Shiva, Shiva in Kailash, Shiva as Tripuranartaka, Shiva as Nataraja, a portrait of Rajaraja and his mentor Kuruvar, dancing figures, etc.



**NOTES**



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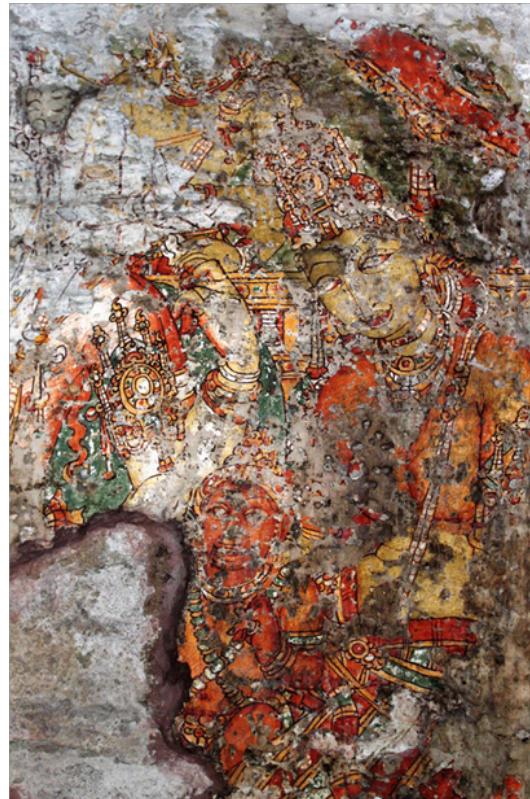
**Murals under Pandava and Chola kings**

### **2.5.1 Murals under Pallava**

Pallavas were great patrons of the arts. Mahendravarma I – 7th century AD built temples in Panamalai + Mandagapattu + Kanchipuram. The inscription at Mandagapattu mentions the king Mahendravarma I with several titles such as – Vichitrachitta (curious-minded), Chaityakari (temple-builder) Chitrakarapuli (tiger among artists) Paintings at the Kanchipuram temple: patronised by the Pallava king Rajasimha. Painting of Somaskanda: large, round face (only traces have remained) Increased ornamentation in this period as compared to the previous.



**NOTES**



**Pallava Murals**

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**2.6 VIJAYANAGARA MURALS**

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With the decline of the Chola dynasty in the 13th century, the Vijayanagara dynasty captured and brought under its control the reign from Hampi to Trichy with Hampi serving as its capital.

**NOTES**



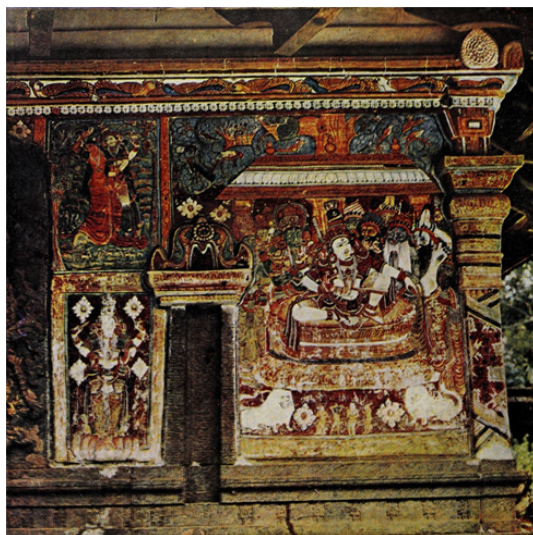
The paintings at Tiruparakunram, near Trichy, done in the 14th century represent the early phase of the Vijayanagara style. In Hampi (Karnataka), the Virupaksha temple has paintings on the ceiling of its mandapa narrating vents from dynastic history and episodes from the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Among the important panels are the one which shows Vidyaranya, the spiritual teacher of Bukkaraya Harsha. In Lepakshi, near Hindupur, in present Andhra Pradesh, there are glorious examples of Vijayanagara paintings on the walls of the Shiva temple. The stylistic conventions of the proceeding centuries were adopted by artists in various centres in south India as can be seen in the paintings of the Nayaka period. Nayaka paintings in the 17th and 18th centuries are seen in Thiruparakuram, Sreerangam, and Tiruvarur (all in Tamil Nadu). In Tiruparakunram, paintings are found of two different periods – of the 14th and 17th Earlier paintings depict scenes from the life of Vardhamana Mahavira. The Nayaka paintings depict episodes from the Mahabharata and Ramayana and also scenes from Krishna Leela.

In Tiruvarur, there is a panel narrating the story of Machukunda. In the Srikrishna temple at Ehengam in Arcot District there are 26 panels narrating the story of the Ramayana, which represents the late phase of the Nayaka paintings. From the examples, it suggests that Nayaka paintings were more or less an extension of Vijayanagara style with minor regional modifications and incorporations. The figures are mostly set against a flat background and the male figures are shown with slim waist but with less heavy abdomen as compared to those in Vijayanagara.

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**NOTES**



**Vijayanagara Mural**

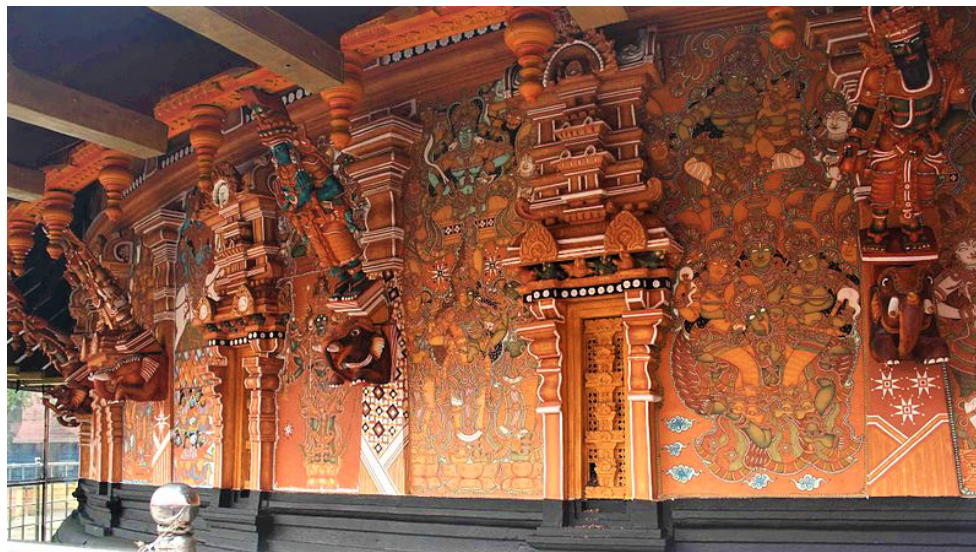
## 2.7 KERALA MURALS

### NOTES

Kerala mural paintings are the frescos depicting Hindu mythology in Kerala. Ancient temples and palaces in Kerala, [India], display an abounding tradition of mural paintings mostly dating back between the 9th to 12th centuries CE when this form of art enjoyed royal patronage.

The scriptural basis of these paintings can be found in the Sanskrit texts, 'Chithrasoothram - (Chitrasutra is a part of the Vishnu Dharmottara Purana, a book written in Sanskrit about 1500 years ago. It contains 287 short verses in nine chapters and a few prose in the second chapter. There is no other book on painting as detailed as the Chitrasutra.

This book answers hundreds of questions about what a painting is, why, its purpose, role, relationship with the painter, connoisseurs, and other arts. Chitrasutra will be useful to understand the true Indian painting.) Tantrasamuchaya, the fifteenth century text authored by Narayanan, Abhilashitartha Chintamani of the twelfth century and Silparatna by Sreekumaran of the sixteenth century. Iconography of the mythological character in murals are based on the Dhyanaslokas.



### Mural paintings in the Vaikom Temple

The murals of Thirunadhikkara Cave Temple (now ceded to Tamil Nadu) and Tiruvanchikulam are considered the oldest relics of Kerala's own style of murals. The masterpieces of Kerala mural art include: the Shiva Temple in Ettumanoor, the Ramayana murals of Mattancherry Palace and Vadakkumnatha kshetram. Although the traditional mural artisans were under the patronage of various rulers in Kerala, under British administration the art form suffered enormously, even at the danger of

extinction. After India's independence in 1947, a revival of mural tradition in Kerala took place as major temples in Kerala. The Centre for Study of Mural Paintings, a school established by Guruvayur Dewaswom Board in the Thrissur district of Kerala under the chief instructorship of Mammiyoor Krishnan Kutty Nair, represents this revival phase,[1] as does the Sree Sankara Sanskrit College in Kalady.

Traditional Mural  
Design

## NOTES



### **Thodeekkalam (Thodikalam) Shiva Temple, Kannur district**

Other fine mural paintings are depicted in temples at Trikodithanam, Vaikom Temple, Pundarikapuram, Udayanapuram, Triprangode, Guruvayoor, Kumaranalloor, Aymanam, the Vadakkunathan temple in Trichur, the Thodeekkalam temple in Kannur and the Sri Padmanabhaswamy temple at Thiruvananthapuram. Other mural sites are in the churches at Ollur, Chalakkudy, Kanjoor, Edappally, Vechur, and Mulanthuruthy, and at palaces such as the Krishnapuram Palace near Kayamkulam and the Padmanabhapuram Palace.

#### **2.7.1 Technique used in kerala murals**

**Traditionally the painting involves four different processes,**

1. Preparation of the ground
2. Sketching of the outline
3. Application of colours and
4. Addition of decorative details

Sanskrit texts discuss in detail the style, effectiveness of different colours, desirable combinations that could be brought out by mixing various pigments and methodology of preparing the base for application of colors and for preparation of colors from different natural sources in general terms.[1]

#### **Wall preparation**

Preparing a wall involves three stages of plastering the wall with different

substances.

## NOTES

1. Plaster of a mixture of lime and clean sand in the ratio 1:2.
2. Plaster of a mixture of lime and sand in the ratio 1:2, and cotton. Cotton is used to give a gleaming white texture to the wall.
3. 25-30 washes of a mixture of quick lime and the juice of very tender coconut.

### Colour preparation

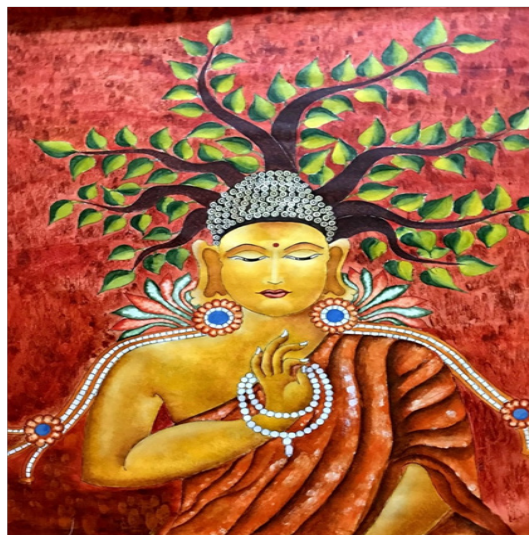
Traditional murals used panchavarana exclusively i.e. red, yellow, green, black and white, white being the colour of the wall itself. Colours are prepared from vegetable and mineral pigments. Red is derived from red laterite, yellow is derived from yellow laterite, white from lime, and black from oil-lamp soot. Leaves of Neelamari for obtaining the green pigment. Wooden utensils are used for mixing the colours and the binding media used is derived from tender coconut water and extracts from the Neem tree.

The characters in the murals are coloured according to their characteristics as illustrated in the relevant Hindu mythological scriptures. Spiritual, divine and dharmic characters (satwika) are depicted in shades of green. Those influenced towards power & materialistic wealth (rajasic) are painted in shades of red to golden yellow. Evil, wicked and mean characters (tamasic) are generally painted in white or black.





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**NOTES**



**Kerala mural**

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## 2.8 OTHER TRADITIONAL MURALS

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### 2.8.1 Pithora

Pithora is a ritualistic painting done on the walls by the Rathwa and Bhilala tribes who live in central Madhya Pradesh. Pithora paintings are executed on three inner walls of their houses. These paintings have significance in their lives and executing the Pithora paintings in their homes brings peace, prosperity and happiness. There is never an attempt to imitate nature: a horse or a bull, which might be a vision of a god, impresses him with only one central quality.

Pithora paintings are more of a ritual than an art form. These rituals are performed either to thank God or for a wish or a boon to be granted. The Bhadwa or the head priest of the tribe is summoned and the problems are narrated. These problems can vary from dying cattle, to unwell children in the family. The concerned person is given a solution and is asked, by the Bhadwa, to perform the ritual and the painting. The presence of Pithora Baba is considered as a solution to all the problems. A Pithora is always located at the threshold, or the Osari, outside the first front wall or inside on the walls of the first room as one enters a house. The painting usually floods the entire wall with figures. Three walls are prepared for the painting, the front wall and the two on either side of it. The front or central wall is very large, twice the size of each of the sidewalls. These walls are treated with two layers of cow dung paste and one layer of white chalk powder. Unmarried girls bring in these materials. This procedure is called Lipna. The main wall of the verandah that divides it from the kitchen is considered sacred to the Pithoro. The wall paintings related to the legends of creation and Pithoro, are done on this wall. The two sidewalls of the veranda are also painted with figures of minor deities, ghosts and ancestors.

Even in the cave paintings of thousands of years older to us in history, roots of Pithora paints are available. Rathwa community of Central Gujarat's art tradition also seems pre historical in nature. The very crudity of the nature of Pithora paintings forms the basis of its beauty and appeal. The fact that only men are allowed to paint these Pithora murals is a historical anachronism. We can conclude that Pithora painting is a wall painting traditionally practiced by the Rathwa tribe. Pithora dev, ancestors, ghosts and other minor deities are generally made on the walls of tribal houses on auspicious occasions followed by ritual performances and sometimes by a sacrifice performed by bhuvans-the priests. These lakhara-painters traditionally trained and developed the form and painting style after adequate practice. Chhota Udepur district in Gujarat, has several villages such as Tejgadh, Kawat, Baroj, Chorvana, Malaja etc where the tribes continue to live and perform rituals, alongwith Pithora baba's wall

### NOTES

paintings to fulfil their wishes. The walls of the verandah are dedicated to Pithora painting.

## NOTES

Usually, the girl-child or unmarried girls apply the mixture of mud and cow-dung on the walls. Afterwards whitening powder or white clay is applied with the help of a piece of rag dipped into the mixture of white clay and water for the final coat. Generally orange, green, blue, red, yellow colours are used for painting. While looking at the painting, we can find not only rituals but also narratives of myths and legends associated with their culture – this is important to understand the intricacy and detailing.

### Motifs in Pithora Painting

The motifs in the Pithora painting represent the mythology of the community along with exclusive depiction of the most essential aspects of the daily life. The protagonists of the entire painting are horses of the gods and goddesses and ancestors in vibrant colours. The painting is adorned with motifs from nature, daily human activities, animals, farming, trade, important members of the community, along with several new elements, which symbolically represent modernity. The chief deities that appear in the Pithora painting are Baba Ganesh, Baba Ind, Baba Pithora, Pithori Rani, Rani Kajal, Baar Matha no Dhani Raja Bhoj, Abho KunbiNakti Bhuten, Lakhari & Jokhari and Purvaj na Panch Ghoda.

Baba Ganesh is the first motif, drawn customarily on the right side of the painting. He is usually painted in blue and carries a 'hukka'. Important festivals and occasions commence with the worship of Baba Ganesh among the Rathva. Rathvas also worship Baba Ganesh as Ganpati Dada who always has an elephant's trunk. In the Pithora painting, Baba Ganesh is characterized as a father figure.



## NOTES

A folk song first narrates the story behind the worship of Baba Ganesh. Once upon a time, Baba Ind called for a grand congregation of all gods in his court. En route to the court, the chariot of the gods got stuck. Despite all efforts, the chariot couldn't be moved. The gods concluded that Baba Ganesh was behind this event. They called upon him for help and thereafter invited him to Baba Ind's court. From that day on, it is mandated that before every ceremony Baba Ganesh's name will be taken.

Baba Ind is the lord of rain and protector of all animals. He is the brother of Rani Kajal, Rani Kali Koyal and maternal uncle of Baba Pithora. In the Pithora painting, he is portrayed as strong, young and brave with a parrot in his hand.



The Rathvas undertake a vow to Baba Ind to seek a boon for better health of family members and livestock, good yield of crops, and most importantly a boon for a child. In Chhota Udepur and Panchmahal districts of Gujarat, every five years the celebration of a festival of Baba Ind takes place in several villages, where traditional songs are sung, dances are performed to the music of the dhol and pehi, while Badva performs rituals.

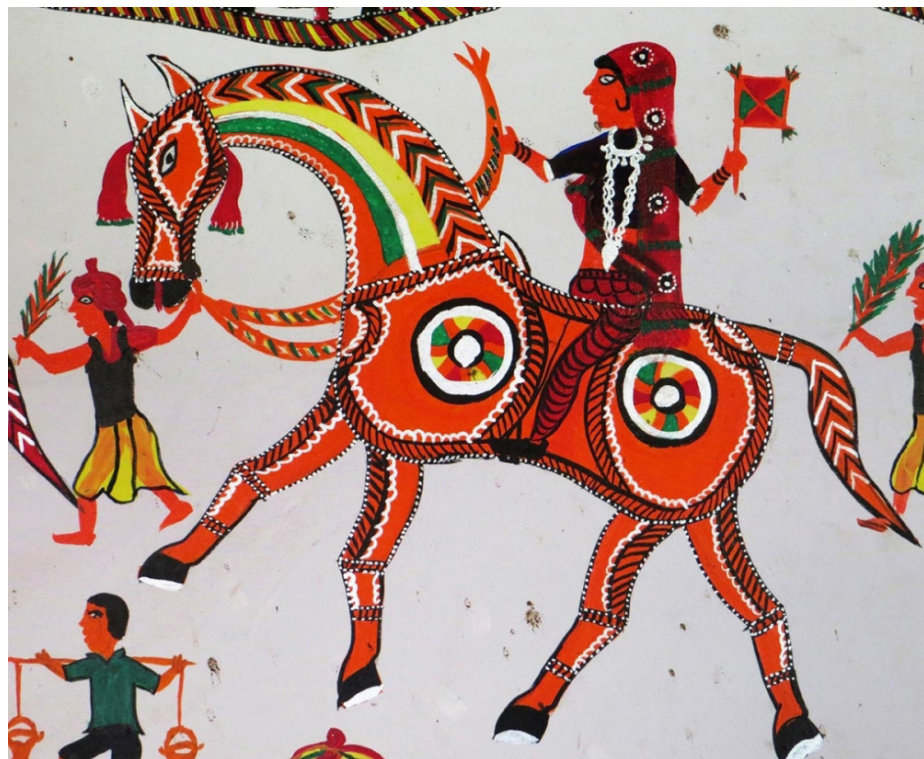
Baba Pithora is the primary god of the Rathva. He is the son of Rani Kali Koyal and Kandu Raja. Rani Kajal brought him up. In his childhood, he hid himself in the wall and selected the wall as his seat, which is why his painting is installed on the wall.

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In Pithora painting, he is portrayed as young, strong and manly with a parrot and a flower in his hand. Baba Pithora for the Rathva is a conglomeration of different gods, animals, nature, and all creations of the universe.

**Pithori Rani** is the wife of Baba Pithora and daughter of Abho Kunbi.



In the Pithora painting, she carries a fan in her hand. She is worshipped during times of erratic monsoons. In the painting, she is portrayed as celestial and a devoted wife ready to aid her husband in all his endeavors.

Traditional Mural Design

**Rani Kajal** is the sister of Baba Ind and foster mother of Baba Pithora. She rescued Pithora as a child from the sea and looked after him. In the Pithora painting, she is painted on the left side and has a very important status as a mother.

## NOTES



She is also worshipped as Kuldevi or the goddess of the clan. She carries a comb in her hand, which symbolizes her ability to cleanse the world. The temple of Rani Kajal is on a mountain near Mathvad village near river Narmada along the borders of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

Baar Matha no Dhani ('The Enlightened One with 12 Heads') protects the Adivasi from all 12 directions. He possesses knowledge of the universe, and protects living organisms and nature, and is a very brave deity.



In Pithora painting, he is portrayed holding Nagdevta ('Lord of Snakes') in his hands along with swords. Baar Matha no Dhani offered protection to Rani Kali Koyal, when she was in labour, which is why he is an essential and recurring character in most of the Pithora paintings. Several scholars compare this Rathva deity with Ravana from Ramayana, but the Rathva claim that they are not the same and are decisively different.

## NOTES

**Raja Bhoj** and his elephant: Raja Bhoj was a great, rich and generous king who was very benevolent to his subjects. He would organize a grand celebration of the Dussehra festival, and would himself join the procession on his elephant.



## Some Pithora Paintings





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**NOTES****2.8.2 Mithila**

Madhubani art or Mithila painting is a style of Indian painting, practiced in the Mithila region of the Indian subcontinent. This painting is done with a variety of tools, including fingers, twigs, brushes, nib-pens, and matchsticks and using natural dyes and pigments. It is characterised by its eye-catching geometrical patterns. There is ritual content for particular occasions, such as birth or marriage, and festivals, such as Holi, Surya Shasti, Kali Puja, Upanayana, and Durga Puja. Madhubani painting (Mithila painting) was traditionally created by the women of various communities in the Mithila region of the Indian subcontinent. It originated from Madhubani district of the Mithila region of Bihar. Madhubani is also a major export center of these paintings. This painting as a form of wall art was practiced widely throughout the region; the more recent development of painting on paper and canvas mainly originated among the villages around Madhubani, and it is these latter developments that led to the term "Madhubani art" being used alongside "Mithila Painting."

The paintings were traditionally done on freshly plastered mud walls and floors of huts, but now they are also done on cloth, handmade paper and canvas. Madhubani paintings are made from the paste of powdered rice. Madhubani painting has remained confined to a compact geographical area and the skills have been passed on through centuries, the content and the style have largely remained the same. Thus, Madhubani painting has received Geographical Indication status. Madhubani paintings use two-dimensional imagery, and the colors used are derived from plants. Ochre, Lampblack and Red are used for reddish-brown and black, respectively.

Mithila paintings have been created since at least the 14th century by women in the villages of the central Bihar region of India. For centuries these large, wall paintings were made by women to commemorate marriages and decorated the khobars or wedding chambers. These village artists painted scenes from Hindu mythology, and especially the great epic, the Ramayana. Mithila paintings on the walls of homes are usually large and prominently displayed; characteristically the entire surface area of the picture is filled. The combination of figures and designs are outlined and filled with vibrant colors. Vegetation, animals and geometric patterns are placed freely in the "open" areas. Blank space is avoided. Traditionally, as a woman worked on her painting, she did so in prayer and meditation, believing that the deity was drawn into the work.

Mithila paintings are named after the legendary setting of the Ramayana, the kingdom where Rama earned the right to marry Sita. Mithila is located in fertile plains at the foothills of the Himalaya. Today the village of Madhubani ("Forest of Honey") near the border of Nepal, and other villages in the region, are experiencing a renewal of this ancient artistic tradition. Since the 1960s, local artists have been doing their work

on paper, practicing the skills passed from generation to generation. With government and nonprofit foundation support, these vibrant paintings are now reaching an international audience.

## NOTES

Indian and foreign scholars, as well as some Mithila artists, have associated certain stylistic differences with the caste of the artists. Images in black and /or red inks have been associated with artists of the Kayastha caste. Paintings by Brahmin artists, also typically executed for weddings, were done in brilliant colors. Conversely, agricultural laborers (sometimes referred to by the caste-designation Dusadh), used a mixture of cow dung and water as drawing ink to produce dark, earthy tones. When the brown lines dried, these artists would apply black ink dots to the lines. In terms of subject matter, paintings that referenced the Ramayana, Vishnu, Brahma, and Shiva were generally associated with higher-caste artists. This association of caste with painting style and subject matter is quite political and needs to be understood in context. (See David Szanton's article, "The Politics of Mithila Painting" for a very helpful explanation).

In the mid-1960s, in response to a devastating drought, several women began doing their paintings on paper; they were encouraged by national cultural and development leaders to sell their works to generate badly-needed income. By the 1970s their paintings had become nationally and internationally recognized. In 2003 the Ethnic Arts Foundation established the Mithila Art Institute to train local painters. Since about that time, various distinctive styles have developed and several men have become accomplished painters. At the same time, the images have expanded to include scenes from everyday village life and local legends, along with the aforementioned Ramayana.

Artists also use their painting to express feminist ideas and commentary on other social issues, as well as national and international events. Paints made with natural pigments and vegetable colors are increasingly replaced by ready-made paints and markers. Madhubani paintings mostly depict people and their association with nature and scenes and deities from the ancient epics. Natural objects like the sun, the moon, and religious plants like tulsi are also widely painted, along with scenes from the royal court and social events like weddings. Generally, no space is left empty; the gaps are filled by paintings of flowers, animals, birds, and even geometric designs. Traditionally, painting was one of the skills that was passed down from generation to generation in the families of the Mithila Region, mainly by women.

It is still practiced and kept alive in institutions spread across the Mithila region. Kalakriti in Darbhanga, Vaidehi in Madhubani, Benipatti in Madhubani district and Gram Vikas Parishad in Ranti are some of the major centres of Madhubani painting which have kept this ancient art form alive

**NOTES****Styles**

Madhubani art has five distinctive styles: Bharni, Kachni, Tantrik, Godna and Kohbar. In the 1960s Bharni, Kachni and Tantrik styles were mainly done by Brahman and Kayashth women, who are 'upper caste' women in India and Nepal. Their themes were mainly religious and they depicted Gods and Goddesses paintings. People of lower castes included aspects of their daily life and symbols, the story of Raja Shailesh [guard of the village] and much more, in their paintings. Nowadays Madhubani art has become a globalised art form, so there is no difference in the work on the basis of the caste system. They work in all five styles. Madhubani art has received worldwide attention.

Perhaps the best known genre of Indian folk paintings are the Mithila (also called Madhubani) paintings from the Mithila region of Bihar state. For centuries the women of Mithila have decorated the walls of their houses with intricate, linear designs on the occasion of marriages and other ceremonies, Painting is a key part of the education of Mithila women, culminating in the painting of the walls of the kohbar, or nuptial chamber on the occasion of a wedding. The kohbar ghar paintings are based on mythological, folk themes and tantric symbolism, though the central theme is invariably love and fertility.

The contemporary art of mithila painting was born in the early 1960's, following the terrible Bihar famine. The women of Mithila were encouraged to apply their painting skills to paper as a means of supplementing their meager incomes. Once applied to a portable and thus more visible medium, the skills of the Mithila women were quickly recognized. The work was enthusiastically bought by tourists and folk art collectors alike. As with the wall paintings, these individual works are still painted with natural plant and mineral-derived colors, using bamboo twigs in lieu of brush or pen.

Over the ensuing forty years a wide range of styles and qualities of Mithila art have evolved, with styles differentiated by region and caste - particularly the Brahmin, Kayastha and Harijan castes. Many individual artists have emerged with distinctive individual styles. Among the best known early Brahmin artists have been the late Ganga Devi, Baua Devi, Sita Devi, and Karpoori Devi. Today's leading artists, working in the kayastha style, include Pushpa Kumari and her grandmother, Mahasundari Devi. Other painters in their family include Pradyumna Kumar and Pushpa's younger sister Mala Karn. Works by several of these Mithila artists (Baua Devi, Sita Devi and Mahasundari Devi), along with Santhal jadupatua paintings and old Bengali scrolls, were included in the show *Stories, Ceremonies and Souvenirs: Popular Paintings from Eastern India* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Among the current generation of Mithila artists, Pushpa Kumari, and

**NOTES**

younger artists such as Mahalaxmi Karn and Shalini Karn have expanded the canon to embrace contemporary issues of education, technology, women's rights and marriage equality. The Madhubani painting tradition played a key role in the conservation efforts in India in 2012, where there was frequent deforestation in the state of Bihar. Shashthi Nath Jha, who runs the Gram Vikas Parishad, an NGO, started the initiative as an attempt to protect local trees that were being cut down in the name of expanding roads and development.

The main reason behind this was that the trees were traditionally adorned with forms of gods and other religious and spiritual images such as those of Radha-Krishna, Rama-Sita, scenes from Ramayana and Mahabharata and other mythologies.

### **How Did The Art Form Come Into Existence?**

The origin of this art form is traced to the mythological time of Ramayana when Lord Ram was the King of Ayodhya in North India. Lord Ram and Goddess Sita, if legends are to be believed, saw each other for the first time in the forest of 'Madhuban' (forest of honey) — from which the word Madhubani is said to have been derived. Upon breaking Lord Shiva's bow, which was a precondition for the wedding, Janaka — the erstwhile king of Mithila — married his daughter Sita to Lord Ram. A group of artists was tasked with decorating the wedding venue with beautiful paintings to create an indelible impression of the rich culture of Mithila on guests.

### **The 'Tantric' Connection Of Mithila Painting**

Mithila paintings have two 'gharanas' — the Ranti Gharana and the Jitwarpur Gharana (two localities in Madhubani districts) — with five famous styles Kohbar, Godna, Tantric, Bharni, Kachani and Harijan. Bharni, Kachani and Tantric paintings are based on religious themes. The Mithila region of Bihar has been a seat of tantric practices for the Saiva and Sakti communities. References to the tantric connection of Madhubani Painting are found in the literary work of the poet Vidyapati who belonged to the 12th century. However, today, Madhubani paintings have travelled around the world and have transcended beyond the boundary of caste. Godna Painting is tattooing, which is an age-old tradition of India. Modernisation has influenced the Godna art and artists to a great extent.

Tattooing has shifted from body to paper, cloth and canvas. Female tattooists have played an important role in the dissemination of Godna painting in the country. Kohbar Painting is done in a room for a newly wed couple. Artists in the bygone times used to paint signs and symbols of sexual pleasure on the walls of the rooms. Of late, this style has witnessed several transformations and modernisation.

## Themes & Colours

Traditional Mural  
Design

Essentially, the paintings are of religious motives. The central theme of all paintings is love and fertility. They are made in special rooms in the house, as in the room for prayer, the ritual area, the bridal room, or the main walls of the village to welcome visitors, etc. The drawings of nature and mythology are adapted and versioned according to the style of each region, as well as the individual artist. The most-painted themes and designs are the worshipping of Hindu deities and episodes of their sacred writings, such as the episode of Radha and Krishna, Rama, Shiva, Ganesha, Laxmi, Saraswati, the monkey, the sun, the moon, the plant of Tulasi, the Deep (it is a traditional lamp – made of soil, a symbol of a happy life), wedding scenes and other social events.

## NOTES



**Ten Mahavidyas, Shiva and Sakti Madhubani Painting**

Before starting the painting, women usually do a prayer to the deities so that their favour accompanies them in their objectives or rituals. For its elaboration, the cotton wrapped on a bamboo stick is used as a brush. The colours that are applied are prepared manually by the artists. The black colour is prepared by mixing blight with cow dung; yellow is prepared based on turmeric and Banyan leaf milk; blue is extracted from indigo; the red of the Kusum flower; the green leaf of the applewood tree; the white of rice powder; and orange of the Palash flower. The main exponents of Madhubani paintings are the Maithil Brahmin style and the Kayasthas style, characteristics of the villages of Jitwarpur and Ranti, very close to

## NOTES

the city of Madhubani. There, Madhubani paintings have become a centre of commercial activity. Every day, you can see young people busy in arranging and making the papers by hand and looking for the colours. The uniqueness of this art form is selectiveness in its artistic expression. In antiquity, this art was made on mud-walls or soil-ground on certain auspicious occasions and was erased the very next day. And this is why there has been no preservation of these works. In a sense, the artworks were natural and momentary. Nevertheless, this popular art used to pass easily from one generation to another without the help of any technical tools. The very nature of such transformation of knowledge from one generation to another led to its expansion based on experiment and creativity.

The artworks on mud-walls were not a symbolic depiction of the stories of the epics; rather they were directly related to, and a true representation of, Hindu mythology. The incessancy of this art was due to the natural and live depiction of social life in which there was a strong interconnectedness among the people. The use of colours also had strong connections with the religious beliefs and hope of their well-being. Some art scholars also suggest that Madhubani Paintings were associated with the tantric culture of ancient India, though this notion is still debated among art historians. The Mithila region has been a centre of tantric practices for both the Saiva and Sakti communities. Historical references to the tantric connection of Madhubani Painting are found in the literary work of the poet Vidyapati who belonged to the 12th century CE. Though the origin of this art form dates back to Ramayana period (ancient India) as the popular oral tradition suggests, it went through various phases of history during the medieval period and very little history is known of this period. Nevertheless, it was W.G. Archer, a British collector of this region (during the British colonial period of India) who was greatly attracted to this art and he named it Mithila Art in the 1940s CE.

### Notable Madhubani Artists

This amazing art form is still kept alive because of the efforts of many artists who continue to practice Madhubani art. Many notable Madhubani artists have received national and international recognition. Some of them are mentioned below:

- **Sita Devi** – Though Madhubani paintings were being practiced many years ago by the womenfolk of Mithila, it was Sita Devi who brought this art form under the limelight. Sita Devi was honored with the State Award by the government of Bihar in the year 1969 and that is when this art form received national recognition. Sita Devi was born in the Jitwarpur village in the Madhubani district of Bihar. She was exposed to this age old painting right from her childhood. But it wasn't until she received the State Award that the art form was recognized all over the country. In 1975, she was once again honored when the National Award was bestowed upon her by the President of India.



In 1981, Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award of India, was conferred on Sita Devi. The government of Bihar then honored her with the prestigious Bihar Ratna in 1984. In 2006, the government of India conferred on her the title, Shilp Guru.

- **Ganga Devi** – Ganga Devi is another artist who is credited for popularizing Madhubani painting. Not just in India, but Ganga Devi popularized this ancient art form in foreign countries as well. Like Sita Devi, Ganga Devi too was exposed to Madhubani painting right from her childhood as she was born in Mithila, Bihar. She was born into the Kayastha community and practiced the Katchni style of painting. She then travelled to various countries in an attempt to popularize the art form all over the world. She even participated in ‘Festival of India,’ an event organized in the United States of America. In the event, she displayed her paintings and was appreciated by many international artists. For her efforts, the government of India honored her with the National Award for Crafts. In the year 1984, Ganga Devi was awarded Padma Shri by the President of India.
- **Mahasundari Devi** – Also born in Madhubani, Bihar, Mahasundari Devi was a renowned Madhubani artist. She started learning the art form from her aunt at a very young age. Mahasundari Devi played a key role in supporting and developing not just Madhubani painting but also various other art forms of Bihar by creating a cooperative society. She was considered a living legend and was honored with various prestigious awards. In 1982, the President of India honored her with the National Award. The Government of Madhya Pradesh then bestowed on her the prestigious Tulsi Samman in 1995. In 2011, she was honored with the Padma Shri by the Government of India. Mahasundari Devi breathed her last on 4 July 2013, but left behind a great legacy. Bibha Das, her daughter-in-law, is an award-winning Madhubani painter as well.
- **Bharti Dayal** – Born in Samastipur, Bihar, Bharti Dayal learnt the traditional art form from her mother and her grandmother. Bharti strived to take the art form to the world stage and played a key role in the popularization of these paintings. In order to popularize the art form and propagate it throughout the world, she started using present day techniques and thereby contemporized the art form. She then displayed her works in various exhibitions throughout the world. In June 2016, her paintings were displayed at the Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA), Belgium. The director of MOSA, Martin Gurvich, appreciated her works and called her the ambassador of Madhubani painting in the modern world. In 1995, a documentary aired on a French television channel displayed her Madhubani paintings. In 2006, Bharti Dayal won the National Award for excellence in the art form. She has also been honored with various other awards like AIFACS and National Merit awards. She has also won many state awards.
- **Jagdamba Devi** - Jagdamba Devi is another important exponent of Madhubani paintings. She was given the Padma Shri award in 1975 for her contributions towards the art form. Other Madhubani painters like Shashi Kala Devi, Leela Devi, Bauwa Devi, Yamuna Devi, Bindeshwari Devi, Chandrakala Devi, Shanti Devi, Chano Devi, Godavari Dutta, Ambika Devi, Manisha Jha and

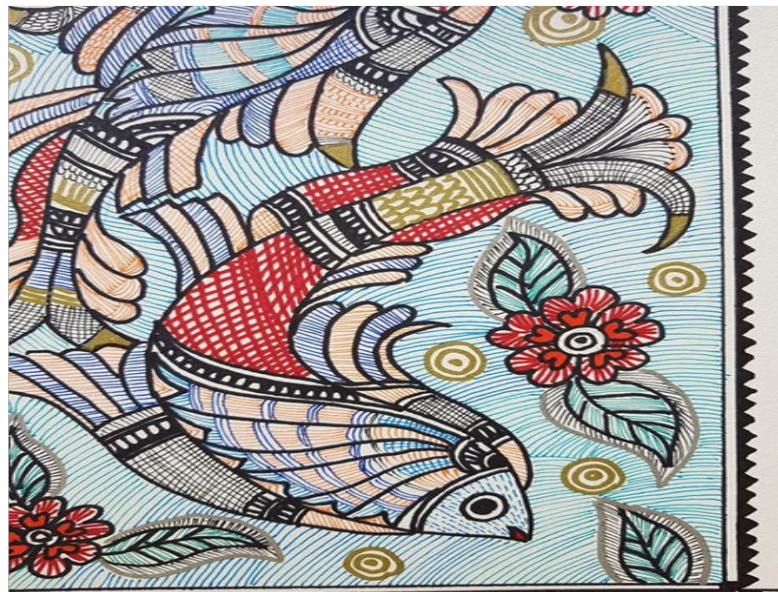
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### Madhubani Painting in Modern Times

Madhubani art is an important part of the life of people in a village called Ranti in present day Bihar. The women who practice this art form in the village use it as an opportunity to create awareness on social issues and to empower women. Artists like Karpuri Devi, Mahalaxmi and Dulari are playing key roles in teaching other women the importance of Madhubani painting. Their works are displayed in a museum in Japan. Also, there are several institutions near Mithila that teach Madhubani paintings to young artists. Some of the major centers that teach this art form are Benipatti in Madhubani district, Gram Vikas Parishad in Ranti and Vaidehi in Madhubani. Artist Bharti Dayal owns a studio in New Delhi.



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Mithila murals painting

### 2.8.3 Warli

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Warli murals painting is a form of tribal art mostly created by the tribal people from the North Sahyadri Range in Maharashtra, India. This range encompasses cities such as Dahanu, Talasari, Jawhar, Palghar, Mokhada, and Vikramgad of Palghar district. This tribal art was originated in Maharashtra, where it is still practiced today. The Warli Painting tradition in Maharashtra are among the finest examples of the folk style of paintings. The Warli tribe is one of the largest in India, located outside of Mumbai. Despite being close to one of the largest cities in India, the Warli reject much of contemporary culture. The style of Warli painting was not recognised until the 1970s, even though the tribal style of art is thought to date back as early as 10th century A.D. The Warli culture is centered on the concept of Mother Nature and elements of nature are often focal points depicted in Warli painting. Farming is their main way of life and a large source of food for the tribe. They greatly respect nature and wildlife for the resources that they provide for life. Warli artists use their clay huts as the backdrop for their paintings, similar to how ancient people used cave walls as their canvases.

Jivya Soma Mashe, the artist in Thane district has played a great role in making the Warli paintings more popular. He has been honoured with a number of national and central level awards for his paintings. In the year 2011, he was awarded Padmashree.

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. Despite being in such close proximity of the largest metropolis in India, Warli tribesmen shun all influences of modern urbanization. Warli Art was first discovered in the early seventies. While there are no records of the exact origins of this art, its roots may be traced to as early as the 10th 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.

Warli painting is a tribal art mostly done by Adivasi from North Sahyadri Range in India, i.e. in western India . Warli is the name of the largest tribe found on the northern outskirts of Mumbai, in Western India. Despite being in such close proximity of the largest metropolis in India, Warli tribesmen shun all influences of modern urbanization. Warli Art was first discovered in the early seventies. While there are no records of the exact origins of this art, its roots may be traced to as early as the 10th century A.D.

Their extremely rudimentary wall paintings use a very basic graphic

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vocabulary: a circle, a triangle and a square. Their paintings were monosyllabic. The circle and triangle come from their observation of nature, the circle representing the sun and the moon, the triangle derived from mountains and pointed trees. Only the square seems to obey a different logic and seems to be a human invention, indicating a sacred enclosure or a piece of land. So the central motive in each ritual painting is the square, known as the “chauk” or “chaukat”, mostly of two types: Devchauk and Lagnachauk. Inside a Devchauk, we find Palaghata, the mother goddess, symbolising fertility. Significantly, male gods are unusual among the Warli and are frequently related to spirits which have taken human shape. The central motif in these ritual paintings is surrounded by scenes portraying hunting, fishing and farming, festivals and dances, trees and animals. Human and animal bodies are represented by two triangles joined at the tip; the upper triangle depicts the trunk and the lower triangle the pelvis. Their precarious equilibrium symbolises the balance of the universe, and of the couple, and has the practical and amusing advantage of animating the bodies. Apart from ritualistic paintings, other warli paintings covered day-to-day activities of the village folks. One of the central striking aspect of many warli painting is the “Tarpa dance”- the tarpa, a trumpet like instrument, is played in turns by different men. Men and women entwine their hands and move in a circle around the tarpa player. The dancers follow the tarpa player, turning and moving as he turns, never turning their back to the tarpa. The circle formation of the dancers is also said to be a resemble the circle of life.

Women are mainly engaged in the creation of these paintings. These paintings do not depict mythological characters or images of deities, but depict social life. Images of human beings and animals, along with scenes from daily life are created in a loose rhythmic pattern. These tribal paintings of Maharashtra are traditionally done in the homes of the Warlis. Painted white on mud walls, they are pretty close to pre-historic cave paintings in execution and usually depict scenes of human figures engaged in activities like hunting, dancing, sowing and harvesting.

Stylistically, they can be recognized by the fact that they are painted on an austere mud base using one color, white, with occasional dots in red and yellow. This colour is obtained from grounding rice into white powder. This sobriety is offset by the ebullience of their content. These themes are highly repetitive and symbolic. Many of the Warli paintings that represent Palghat, the marriage god, often include a horse used by the bride and groom. The painting is sacred and without it, the marriage cannot take place. These paintings also serve social and religious aspirations of the local people. It is believed that these paintings invoke powers of the Gods.

In Warli paintings it is rare to see a straight line. A series of dots and dashes make one line. The artists have recently started to draw straight

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lines in their paintings. These days, even men have taken to painting and they are often done on paper incorporating traditional decorative Warli motifs with modern elements such as the bicycle, etc. Warli paintings on paper have become very popular and are now sold all over India. Today, small paintings are done on cloth and paper but they look best on the walls or in the form of huge murals that bring out the vast and magical world of the Warlis. For the Warlis, tradition is still adhered to but at the same time new ideas have been allowed to seep in which helps them face new challenges from the market.

### The Art Of Warli Painting

- **Dots & Dashes – The Art of Warli Painting**

Warli is not just an art form, but a way of life. This has been true for the Warlis or Varlis, one of India's largest tribes, since the early 10th century. The Warlis hail from the Warli village in the Thane district of Maharashtra. Originally done by women, the paintings depicted the social life of the tribes and not just mythological characters or deities – a significant departure from several other Indian painting traditions. In these scenes, you see the daily life of the humans eked out in harmony with animals and other elements of nature. The humans are engaged in various activities like dancing, sowing, harvesting or hunting. The art form lacked official recognition until the 1970s when Warli painting was considered an inalienable part of Indian artistic heritage.





## How to read a Warli painting

The symbolism in Warli art represents the circle of life. The triangle symbolizes mountain and trees. The square indicates a sacred enclosure for the mother goddess, symbolizing fertility, while the circle represents the sun and the moon. The upward facing triangle in a Warli painting represents the male while the downward facing triangle represents the female.

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## How to paint a Warli

The Warli paintings are done on mud walls with white paste. This white paste is a mixture of rice paste and water with gum as a binding. They use a bamboo stick chewed at the end to make it as supple as a paintbrush. Warli paintings are part of the Indian tradition of wall art, otherwise known as 'Bhitti Chitra' originally practiced by women. The Warli paintings also carry a close resemblance to pre-historic cave paintings. You would never see a straight line in Warli art. They usually consist a series of dots and dashes arranged linearly. Human and animal bodies are represented by two triangles joined at the tip. One of the central aspects depicted in many Warli paintings is the tarpa dance. The Tarpa, a trumpet-like instrument, is played in turns by different village men. Men and women entwine their hands and move in a circle around the Tarpa player.

## Evolution of Warli art

Nowadays even men have taken to Warli. Also, the medium has changed over the years. The paintings which were done on mud walls for decorating the homes of the Warli tribe are now also done on paper, cloth, fabrics and canvas. In today's time Warli paintings on paper have become very popular and are now sold all over India. Warli paintings look best on the walls or in the form of huge murals that bring out the actual magical of the Warlis. Artists also make small paintings on cloth and paper.



## Why we could all use a Warli painting

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Warli art teaches us one or two things about life apart from being a marked as departure from the hustle and bustle of today's daily lives. Warli paintings teach us to find beauty and happiness in our daily lives, in the simple things. The art gives out a very strong message of how to preserve and nurture art and pass it down across generations without compromising on authenticity.

### Painting technique

These rudimentary wall paintings use a set of basic geometric shapes: a circle, a triangle, and a square. These shapes are symbolic of different elements of nature. The circle and the triangle come from their observation of nature. The circle represents the sun and the moon, while the triangle depicts mountains and conical trees. In contrast, the square renders to be a human invention, indicating a sacred enclosure or a piece of land. The central motif in each ritual painting is the square, known as the "chauk" or "chaukat", mostly of two types known as Devchauk and Lagnachauk. Inside a Devchauk is usually a depiction of Palaghata, the mother goddess, symbolizing fertility.

Male gods are unusual among the Warli and are frequently related to spirits which have taken human shape. The central motif in the ritual painting is surrounded by scenes portraying hunting, fishing, and farming, and trees and animals. Festivals and dances are common scenes depicted in the ritual paintings. People and animals are represented by two inverse triangles joined at their tips: the upper triangle depicts the torso and the lower triangle the pelvis. Their precarious equilibrium symbolizes the balance of the universe. The representation also has the practical and amusing advantage of animating the bodies. Another main theme of Warli art is the denotation of a triangle that is larger at the top, representing a man; and a triangle which is wider at the bottom, representing a woman. Apart from ritualistic paintings, other Warli paintings covered day-to-day activities of the village people. One of the central aspects depicted in many Warli paintings is the tarpa dance.

The tarpa, a trumpet-like instrument, is played in turns by different village men. Men and women entwine their hands and move in a circle around the tarpa player. The dancers then follow him, turning and moving as he turns, never turning their backs to the tarpa. The musician plays two different notes, which direct the head dancer to either move clockwise or counterclockwise. The tarpa player assumes a role similar to that of a snake charmer, and the dancers become the figurative snake. The dancers take a long turn in the audience and try to encircle them for entertainment. The circle formation of the dancers is also said to resemble the circle of life.

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**Warli painting**

### **Materials used**

The simple pictorial language of Warli painting is matched by a rudimentary technique. The ritual paintings are usually created on the inside walls of village huts. The walls are made of a mixture of branches, earth and red brick that make a red ochre background for the paintings. The Warli only paint with a white pigment made from a mixture of rice flour and water, with gum as a binder. A bamboo stick is chewed at the end to give it the texture of a paintbrush. Walls are painted only to mark special occasions such as weddings, festivals or harvests.

The walls are made of a mixture of branches, earth and red brick that make a red ochre background for the paintings. The Warli only paint with a white pigment made from a mixture of rice paste and water, with gum as a binder. The paintbrush is made out of bamboo sticks whose ends have been chewed to give it a texture ideal for painting.

### **The Themes of Warli Art**

The Warlis live around the mountainous and coastal region around the Gujrat & Maharashtra border in Western India. While much of their lives have been changed with the advent of modernisation, they still retain their unique propensity for recording the passage of time through the lens of art. There is evidence of the art finding its origins in cave painting from Neolithic times.

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When we look at Warli painting, the first thing that jumps out at you are the rudimentary shapes - circles, triangles and squares. The circle and triangle comes from their observation of Nature. The circles represent the sun & moon and the triangle represent mountains and pointed trees. The square seems to be a man-made construct, representing a sacred enclosure of a piece of land. This square is called "chauk" or "chaukat" and is usually painted by married women on the walls of the house on the occasion of marriages. A "Devchauk" is a square frame with the sun, moon, a comb, a ladder & a tarpa around it. It is ornately decorated and depicts Palaghata, the goddess of fertility in the centre.

Another important theme in Warli painting is the harvest in the village. Warlis were traditionally dependent on the land for subsistence and this love for nature is reflected in the way it is depicted in the paintings. Trees seem to be swaying in the breeze, birds chirp overhead and the Warlis are depicted hard at work in the fields. The triangular figures can be seen bending in the fields, making bundles, piling them, cooking food, chasing away animals and much more. The village scenes in warli painting are full of life and seem to celebrate the seemingly mundane. The most iconic theme in Warli painting is the Tarpa dance. The spiral design is made of up of men and women with a Tarpa player in the centre. This motif is based on the Tarpa Dance performed by the tribe. In this dance, the Tarpa player directs the dance with his Tarpa, a trumpet-like instruments like a snake charmer. The men and women sway back and forth rhythmically in a concentric spiral, never turning their backs to the Tarpa player and moving clockwise or anti-clockwise depending on the notes being played. This unique shape is also said to symbolize the circle of life and death.

The tree of life is another symbolic element in Warli painting. The tree represents human dependence on nature and the delicate balance of life. The tree of life is usually depicted as a central motif, towering over all the other elements in the painting and acting as an anchor to all the activities happening around it. The tree of life is also sometimes depicted as a singular object, with meticulously drawn leaves providing movement and a mesmerizing quality to it.

Finally, traditional motifs have given way to more modern themes. It was only in the 70's that Warli painting ceased to be done only for ritualistic purposes and its artistic merit was recognized. Since then, Warli painting has incorporated depictions of modern life like vehicles, buildings and more.

### **Contemporary culture and current scenario of the art form:**

In the 1970s, Warli artists, Jivya Soma Mashe and his son Balu Mashe started to bring to the world their creations, they were the first ones to start doing it for artistic expression rather than just ritualistic paintings. Jivya

is known as the modern father of Warli painting. Since the 1970s, Warli painting has moved onto paper and canvas, the motifs and designs are a favourite with many designers, who use them on various handlooms. The art can now be seen done on many commercial items, like curtains, coffee mugs, handbags to name a few. Warli painting is now registered with a geographical indication under the intellectual property rights act, because of its value as cultural knowledge and tradition of India.

Traditional Mural  
Design

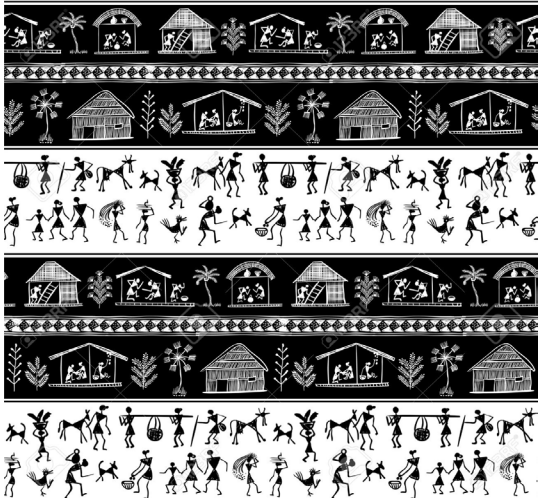
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**Warli murals painting**

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**2.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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- Q1. Write a note on traditional murals and the technique used.
- Q2. Explain about the traditional Kerala murals designs
- Q3. Describe about traditional Warli and Mithila murals designs.