
UNIT 3B PAINTING AND SCULPTURE OF INDIA

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3.1B INTRODUCTION

In the last unit you have seen how gender is depicted through painting and sculpture of the western world. Now you will learn more about the painting and sculpture of India. India is a country with such an immense heritage of art and creativity that it has drawn a mark on the world of painting and sculpture. From the pre-historic times to the modern period, the history of painting and sculpture has undergone tremendous changes, leaving enough evidence for us to see and comprehend the vast canvas of this country. Innumerable masterpieces, ranging from ancient rock paintings and sculptures to later Hindu, Buddhist, Mughal and traditional art through the ages, are proof of our shared rich cultural heritage. In this unit, we will survey Indian paintings and sculptures through the ages from a gender perspective.

3.2B OBJECTIVES

As you complete this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the history of differences of gender in Indian culture since the primitive times;
- Analyse the way the concept of love is responded to and represented in the paintings and sculptures of India;
- Explain the rise of difference between the ruled and the ruler from Medieval India through paintings and sculptures; and
- Describe the factors that gave rise to nationalism in India.

3.3B PAINTING AND SCULPTURE OF PRE-HISTORIC INDIA

The beginnings of painting and sculpture in India may be traced long back to the Stone Age. **Petroglyphs**, meaning rock carvings, have been discovered at several places in this country and can be traced back to a period as far as 5,500 B.C. It might seem like a surprise that the country you belong to had such a long history of painting and sculpture. One such place is Bhimbhetka, located in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh, where there are rock paintings that can be dated back to 1,00,000 to 30,000 years old. The rock paintings that are discovered in the caves of the Vindhyaachal Mountains of this place, have a relevance to Hinduism and Buddhism.

Although most of the paintings depict nature and its flora and fauna, human life also plays some part in these paintings. Executed mainly on red and white, occasionally green and yellow can also be seen. The themes are varied, with animals ranging from elephants, bison, and tigers, to lizards and crocodiles painted on the rock caves, along with human life. Events in human life such as communal dancing and drinking to childbirth are all depicted in these paintings. For instance, the following painting shows only men riding elephants and horses. This shows us that the primitive society had already divided amongst themselves the work culture according to their gender. Food gathering was the work of men while preparing and distributing the food amongst all was the job of women. Women were also burdened with wood collecting after the discovery of fire. Some of the more physically challenging roles were given to men while women were prescribed roles demanding less vigour and physical power. Many rock paintings of both men and women on these caves of Bhimbhetka, like decorating or adorning oneself, drinking and dancing, and religious rituals, can also be seen.

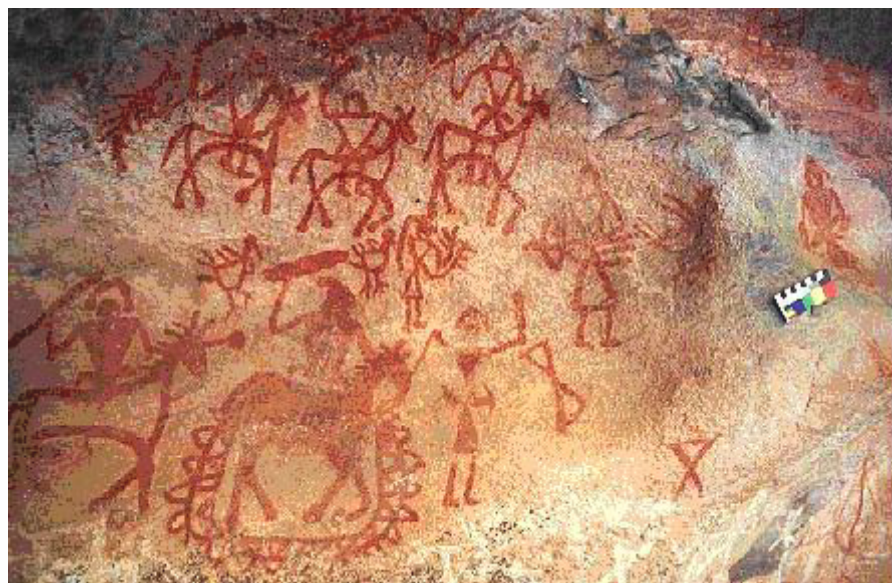


Fig. 3B.1: Bhimbhetka rock painting. Source: @Arthistoryworlds.org

Beside Bhimbhetka, Daraki-Chattan Cave also contains some cave paintings. These caves are located in Indragarh Hills, near village Bhanpura of Madhya Pradesh. The similar patterns of Bhimbhetka can be noted here, and the paintings are more or less of the same nature, depicting animals and human lives. Although some archaeologists hold a view point that these paintings are much older than the Bhimbhetka ones and the dates range between 4,00,000 to 1.8 million years ago, the paintings carry the same depictions of primitive distinction between men and women's work. We may also note here that the Warli paintings of Maharashtra-Gujarat region germinated from here. We will discuss these in a later section of this unit.

The excavations and discoveries of sculptures from the archaeological sites of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa can also be studied from a gender perspective. For example, the bronze statue of the dancing girl which is about 4,500 years old was discovered at Mohenjo-daro in 1926. This statue shows a woman fully confident about herself and her world as shown through her position in which she stands, keeping the right hand akimbo on the waist and the left hand resting upon her left leg, as though following the beat of the music with her position. This sculpture shows that exuberance of the body was a part of culture even in pre-historic India. Different archaeologists hold different views about this sculpture. Some say that it is a sculpture of a dancing girl and that performance was a part of the ancient civilisation, while some argue that this is a common woman exhibiting her jewellery to show her materialistic consciousness.



Fig. 3B.2: Mohenjo-daro *Dancing Girl* Source: @historyfacebook.wikispaces.com

Another discovery during the excavation of the Mohenjo-daro archaeological site in the Indus Valley has drawn attention as a possible male representation of a 'yogi' or 'proto-Shiva' figure, titled as Lord Pashupati, or the God of animals. This seal shows a seated figure, surrounded by animals. The pose is reminiscent of that of Cernunnos, as found, for example, on the Gundestrup Cauldron (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohenjo-daro>). Some observers describe the figure as sitting in a traditional cross-legged yoga pose with its hands resting on its knees.

3.4B PAINTING AND SCULPTURE OF ANCIENT INDIA

The gap between the pre-historic ages to ancient ones was witness to a variety of changes reflected in the painting and sculpture of ancient times. In this section, you will not only learn about indoor paintings like frescoes or murals in the caves, you will also read about outdoor sculptures, like temples, constructed during the ancient period.

3.4.1B Cave Paintings

During the ancient period with the spread of Buddhism and Jainism in India, paintings and sculptures took a different form -very different from and more creative than the pre-historic petroglyphs. Murals came into existence in artistic form. The famous murals can be seen even today in Ajanta, Ellora, Bagh and Sittanavasal caves. Paintings of this period have several colours inscribed on them, and a variety of subjects can be seen.

The Ajanta caves are situated near Jalgaon, in Maharashtra. There are 29 rock-cut caves, mostly depicting the Jataka Tales of the Buddhist philosophies, built around 600 A.D. The frescoes are supposed to be reminiscent of the Sigiriya Paintings of Sri Lanka. Most of the caves were used as viharas by the Buddhist monks during the reign of Harisena of Vakataka dynasty. Therefore the depictions have a very distinctive form which visualises Buddha as a god beyond any gender, like one of the paintings where Buddha is surrounded by women followers, where Buddha is shown as having very feminine features. It distinguishes Buddha more as a common man than as a messenger of god or an enlightened human being with a halo around him. Very interestingly, most of the paintings represent women with expressions of emotional exuberance, and innocence on their face. For instance, the following painting shows two women with two different skin colours depicting diverse castes and creeds with different cultural backgrounds. This painting shows that Buddhism attracted all people beyond the orthodoxy of caste and colour of the skin.

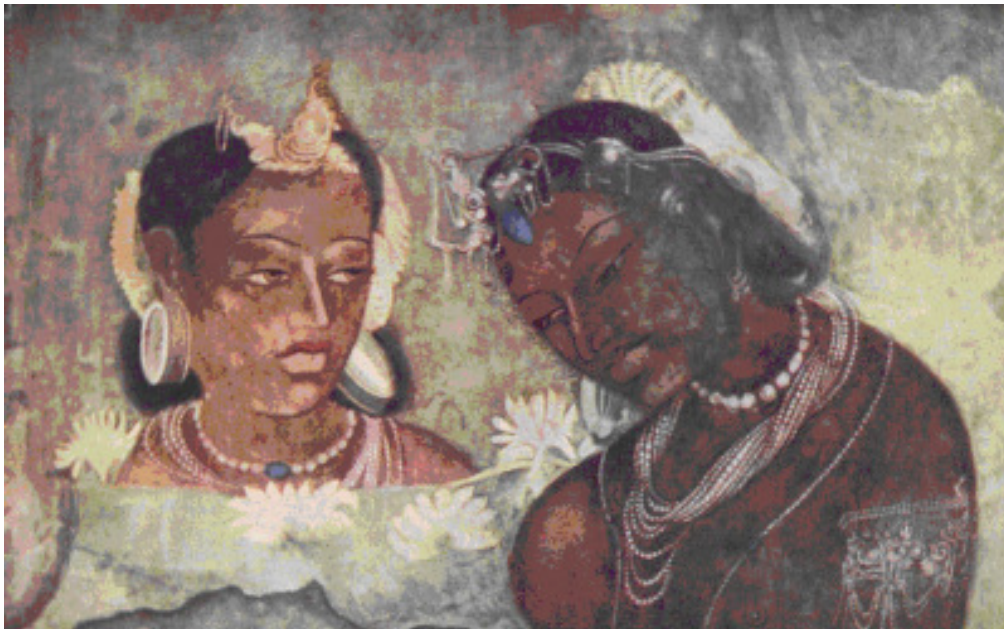


Fig. 3B.3: Ajanta's *Two women*. Source: @viewerspoint.com

Another painting of the Ajanta caves shows a feminine figurine attracting other women towards her enchanting beauty. This signifies that the beauty myth has always been adored with compassion beyond consideration of gender.

As Ajanta caves were famous for their paintings, the Ellora caves derived their fame and reputation from the incredible and intricate sculptures across all of the caves. Unlike Ajanta, Ellora caves have a different history altogether. Although the caves were constructed by the Rashtrakuta dynasty during the Kalachuri Empire in the Charanandri Hills near Aurangabad in Maharashtra, the fascinating characteristics of these caves are that they encompass aspects of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. The caves were built during 5th to 7th century A.D. For instance, one of the caves begin with the sculpture of Vishwakarama, or Sutar ki Jhopda, simply meaning 'carpenter's hut'. It is dedicated to Lord Buddha and is supposed to be only the Chaitya Griha of all Buddhist caves. The chaitya once had a high screen wall, which is in a ruined condition now. The whole hall has a touch of Buddhist perspective that goes beyond gender. There are other Buddhist sculptures also through the different caves.



Fig. 3B.4: Ellora's *Sleeping Buddha*. Source:@lensnlight.com

This sculpture is the Sleeping Buddha and is located in Cave no. 26. The Lord is sculpted with several followers trying to have a glimpse of him for developing a sense of moksha. The disciples, both men and women, are sculpted in one direction in a clockwise manner, to represent the Lord beyond the temporal space of mortal existence.

The Ellora caves also included several Hindu deities and the sculptures are as incredible as the Buddhist ones. It would be foolishness to compare them in their unique beauty. Amongst the Hindu deities, Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu hold the most significant artistic forms. The Kailashnath, or Lord Shiva, in Cave no. 16, is built in a multi-storeyed temple complex. As you can see in the following image, the Lord is shown with ten hands, each carrying one weapon and his famous *dumro*, or a small drum, and the other is sculpted to caress Goddess Parvati, shown in a very small size in comparison to the colossal structure of Lord Kailashnath. One can notice several other figurines in the same temple sculpture:



Fig. 3B.5: Kailashnath Temple's *Lord Shiva*. Source:@indiatravelogue.com

Take note of the fact that none of his hands is giving blessings; rather his right leg has been carved to show the Lord giving blessings to others. His divine masculine prowess is depicted in this sculpture.

The other very important sculpture of Lord Shiva is that of Nataraja, or the God of Dance, which can be viewed on the following hyperlink <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/india/images/ellora-caves/resized/cave29-shiva-cc-pichenettes.jpg>. The sculpture is carved at the entrance of the cave, and is in a dilapidated condition today. It is strange that when we think of dances we consider that all classical dances are for women only. But being the God of dance, the Lord breaks all such inhibitions. Amongst

all of these sculptures, one of the most fascinating ones is the sculpture of Shiva-Parvati in a seated posture (supposed is on Mount Kailash) while Lord Ravana of the Ramayana epic is trying to lift the mountain. The sculpture shows other deities and regardless of their gender, depicts the Lord in a more powerful position, as in the other one of Lord Nataraja you read about. Ravana, one of the main protagonists of the epic Ramayana, is shown here with six hands and ten heads.

Apart from the Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu is also there carved in his ten forms, the Dasavatara form, in Cave no. 10. Another fascinating image is that of Lord Vishnu with goddess Lakshmi on his right. Both the God and Goddess are carved with a halo at the back of their heads and sitting upon a lotus.

Among the discoveries of the Jaina caves, the significant features are the sabhas of Lord Indra, Chhote Kailash, and the Jagannath Sabha. In cave no. 32, the Indra sabha is sculpted very aesthetically. The **yakshas** and **yakshanis** or **yakshis** are depicted in the Indra Sabha, spirits of nature who take care of the natural world, especially resources and treasures hidden inside the tree roots and earth. Several yakshas and yakshinis are represented surrounding the Lord Indra, who is considered mythologically the God of war, storms and rainfall.

The other significant Jaina cave is Cave no. 33 depicting the Jagannath sabha. This also depicts the yaksha and yakshinis surrounding the god who is sitting in a very composed position under a tree.

The Bagh caves are located in Kukshi village of Dhar district of the southern slopes of Vindhya mountains. As the name suggests, one of the caves is sculpted in a mountain whose outlook has the appearance of a tiger. There are nine caves altogether, mostly carrying murals and paintings. Amongst all of them, the Rang Mahal, or the Palace of Colours depicts a fascinating and almost incredible artistic masterpiece. Most of the paintings have men and women taking part in a forum, either religious or courtly. These paintings are related to the Buddhist period according to historians. For example, in one painting, you can see several men and women together participating in a game where the woman is playing against the men, and being observed by several men and women.



Fig. 3B.6: Bagh Cave *Playing Game*. Source: @benoykbehl.com

Sittanavasal caves are also representations of our historical heritage and have a great relevance in studying gender in painting and sculptures. Sittanavasal is a distorted form of Siddhanivasan, which means abode of Siddhas or Jain Gods. These caves together represent a Jain temple complex, situated in a small village near Trichy in Pudukottai district of Tamil Nadu. The most famous monument is a rock-cut monastery of the Jains which contains remnants of beautiful frescoes from the 7th century. Many of them are typical of the 9th century Pandyan period and include detailed pictures of animals, fish, ducks, masculine figures gathering lotuses from a pond and dancing girls. There are also inscriptions dating back to the 9th and 10th centuries.



Fig. 3B.7: Sittanavasal's *Man with a Lotus*. Source: wondermondo.com

The above image represents the most significant painting from Sittanavasal Caves. It depicts a man, barely dressed with a piece of artistic jewellery. He is collecting lotuses in both his hands and is surrounded by lotuses. His facial expression depicts him as being enchanted by the natural beauty. His involvement in nature simply represents the affect of mesmerising nature. His smile depicts ephemeral satisfaction which can only be achieved through one's involvement with nature.

3.4.2B Sculptural complex

Amongst the most significant paintings and sculptures of the 10-11th century is the Khajuraho temple complex. The temple complex is located in a town Khajuraho, in Chhatarpur District of Madhya Pradesh. Khajuraho has the largest group of medieval Hindu and Jain temples, famous for their erotic

sculpture. The name Khajuraho, ancient “Kharjuravâhaka”, is derived from the Sanskrit words *kharjura* and *vâhaka*, meaning one who carries date palms. These 10th-11th century temples have a very interesting legend behind them that connects them to the origin of the Chandela dynasty. There are several myths regarding the origin of this temple complex. Whatever the myths may be, the truth is that it was built during the rule of the Chandela dynasty. Some people also believe that the erotic art forms of the temple are simply visual depiction of Kamasutra, the art of sex between the Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati.

If all these temples are taken together, we can divide the entire complex into three major groups comprising different religious temples. The Eastern Group consists of three Brahmanical temples, devoted to Brahma, Vamana and Javari, and three Jain deities’ temples, devoted to Ghantai, Adinath and Parsvnath. The Western group can be subdivided into two parts -one consisting of Lakshmana, Matangesvara and Varaha temples, and the other consisting of Chitragupta, Jagadambi, Chausanth Yogini, Vishwanath and the Kandariya Mahadeo temples. The last temple complex is called the Southern Group that comprises the Duladeo and Chaturbhuj temples.

As mentioned earlier, these temples might have several myths surrounding them, but the temple complex is famous for its erotic sculptures. There are temples which show gods and goddesses in human figurines in all erotic postures. For example one in the Vamana temple of the Eastern group shows three women and a man in an erotic posture, depicting one of the Kamasutra positions, showing women and men indulging in group sensual activity. Another temple from the western complex, Lakshmana temple has a depiction of bestiality between a horse and two men. It also shows another man depicting a sense of embarrassment, by covering his face with two hands. Another temple from the southern complex, the Duladeo temple depicts the sculptures where eroticism is equalised with sensuality rather than sexual performance. Besides the erotic sculptures of man, a woman and beast, there are sculptures which also depict sex between two men. These sculptures establish the fact that homosexual activities between men were an accepted practice during those days. Khajuraho temple complex overall represents eroticism as a socio-cultural aspect of the society of that time.

Another significant sculptural heritage which can be examined from a gender perspective is the Konark temple in Puri of Orissa. The word Konark literally means ‘essence of the corners’. The temple is dedicated to the Sun god or Arka, popularly and is called as Biranchi-Narayan temple, while the area is named as Arka-kshetra or Padma-kshetra. It was constructed in black granite in a Dravidian style in the 13th century by King Narasimhadeva I of the Eastern Ganga dynasty, and so it is sometimes referred to by historians as Black Pagoda. The temple is in the shape of a chariot, or arka of the god,

with twelve pairs of wheels, drawn by seven horses. At the entrance of the temple, there is a Nata Mandir, which has numerous sculptures depicting human, divine and semi-divine figures in sensuous and amorous poses. This Nata Mandir was once used by the Devadasis for dance performances to satisfy the Sun god. There is a Gopurum, or the sanctum, the Audience Hall and the Bhoga Mandir or the Dining hall.

The most fascinating part of this temple are the minute sensuous sculptures that surround the entire temple. Some historians also believe that these are basically the Kamasutra positions, like those of Khajuraho. For instance there is a sculpture depicts copulation with a woman shown seated on top of a man. There is another sculpture which exquisitely like the Khajuraho sculpture, depicts a Kamasutra position involving three human beings. It is not just individuals who are shown in sensual postures. A semi-divine figure with a human body and the wings of a bird, is carved out in a sensual position. Today this is in a dilapidated condition.

Beside Khajuraho and Konark, the ruins of Kamadeva temple in the North-east offer another relevant example. This temple is located at Baihati Chariali, near Guwahati of Assam. The temple is dedicated to Lord Madan Kamdev and his wife, Goddess Rati, considered to be the God of Carnal Love. The Archaeological Survey of India dates these ruins to be as old as 10th to 12th centuries when the Pala dynasty ruled Kamrupa, or the modern Assam. One of the ruins of this temple depicts very clearly the Kamasutra postures.

3.4.3B Other Paintings

Beside these sculptures, paintings also became a part of the art produced in later centuries. Let us begin with the Mysore paintings. Although their origins can be traced back when the Ajanta or Bagh paintings flourished, these paintings acquired a position of fame and recognition during the time of the Vijayanagar dynasty in the 14th to 16th century. Mysore, a city in Karnataka today, developed a unique style of painting which emerge as a School of Painting, like the Tanjore paintings. We will discuss about the Tanjore paintings in the next section.

Mysore paintings are known for their elegance, muted colours and detailed descriptions, making the scenes appear almost real. The themes of these paintings are Hindu gods and goddesses and scenes from Hindu Mythology, for instance this painting of Laxmi, the Goddess of Wealth. If you observe it very closely, you will notice the detailing lines and brush strokes represent the Goddess being worshipped by two elephants, symbolising prosperity. Beyond the aesthetic beauty of the Goddess, if you look at the original painting you can see that this painting uses colour that soothes the naked eyes as the colours are not too bright but subtle and used with complacence.



Fig. 3B.8: Goddess Laxmi Source: @nammamysore.com

Another example of such aesthetic artistic beauty, is a love scene between Lord Krishna and his beloved, Radha, on the swing, (<http://www.mahakali.com/store/images/uploads/photo4.jpg>). This painting carries a unique touch of a sense of pride in Krishna's gaze and a sense of vanity in Radha's face. Very interestingly, these paintings have been created using vegetable dyes and other organic colours, made from leaves, stones and flowers. They are usually drawn on paper, wood, cloth or walls. It was the last ruler of the Vijayanagar kingdom, Raja Krishnaraja Woodeyar, who rehabilitated many families of painters in a small town near Mysore, Srirangapatna. Till today on the walls of Jagan Mohan Palace of Mysore, these magnificent paintings are preserved very well.

Earlier in this unit, you came across a reference to the Warli paintings. Now, we will discuss these in greater details. Warli paintings are made by Warlis or Varlis, who are adivasis or indigenous tribes who live in the mountainous region of Sahyadri or Western Ghats, along Maharashtra and Gujarat region. Therefore they are found in Jawhar, Dahanu and Talasari talukas of the northern Thane district, parts of Nashik and Dhule districts of Maharashtra, Valsad, Dangs, Navsari and Surat districts of Gujarat, and the union territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. They are made in geometrical shapes, either circle triangle or square, and are usually monosyllabic, using their own language, which is a mixture of Khandeshi Bhili, Gujarati and Marathi. The circles represent sun or moon, triangles are resemblances of mountains or trees, and squares represent lands, or called as 'chauk' or 'chaukat'. There are two kinds of 'chauk' - Devchauk and Lagnachauk. Devchauk resembles Nature or Mother goddess and fertility, and lagnachauk represents all rituals encompassing the Mother goddess. You may be surprised to hear that male gods are unusual amongst their rituals and traditions. The rituals that they believed and painted were basically hunting, fishing, farming, dancing, festivals, trees and animals.

The Pattachitra of Odisha has a very old history. It is believed to have originated back in the 5th century B.C. It mainly developed around religious places like, Puri, Konark, Bhubaneswar, although the main work came from Raghurajapur. It gave a life to the local artistic creativity of people living there. These pattachitra developed more vigorously during the medieval period, emphasising on the Hindu mythologies, but other religious stories and folk lore were also depicted. These pattachitra showed gods and goddesses in different forms never seen before, also note here that there were no landscapes, perspectives and distant views, except flowers and foliage to decorate the images. Emphasis was more on its narrative styles and its decorative borders. The oldest classical marble paintings of Sitabanji at Keonjhar and the wooden statues of the three deities of Lord Jagannath and Lord Balabhadra with their sister, Goddess Subhadra, do not conform to the present style of Patta painting wholly. There was a tremendous change with the invasion of Mughals and other rulers and their impact on the paintings. Today we see wide range of pattachitras, but still it carries their ancient tradition of mythological gods and goddesses. They were painted only with four limited colours of red, yellow, white and black, prepared from different sources, like white from couch-shells, 'Hingula', a mineral colour, is used for red, 'Haritala', king of stone ingredients, for yellow, pure lamp-black or black prepared from the burning of coconut shells, and later 'Ramaraja' a sort of indigo for blue. But with the emergence of Bhakti movement, the pattachitra was painted in vibrant shades of orange, red and yellow. There are typical scenes and figures like Krishna, Gopis, elephants, trees and other creatures are seen in these paintings. Krishna is always painted in blue and Gopis in light pink, purple or brown colours. Tala Pattachitra or 'palm leaf' paintings were drawn especially upon dried palm leaves, this is one form of traditional pattachitras other than marble and wooden paintings.

Like Odisha, West Bengal also had these kinds of folk paintings dating back thousands of years, and is known as 'Patachitra'. Unlike Odisha, it was always made on clothes and scrolls of different materials used by bards and story-tellers, later with discovery of tasar silk cloth, it started to be painted with creative skills. Very interestingly, the brushes are crude in form that were and still are used for paintings, are made out of hairs of domesticated animals, like mongoose or rats, and sometimes buffalo for coarser brush in nature. In the next section, we will discuss Tanjore paintings also developed simultaneously during this period.

Check Your Progress

What are the differences between paintings and sculptures of pre-historic and ancient India?

3.5B PAINTING AND SCULPTURE: MEDIEVAL INDIA

Let us begin with the Mughal Period. The Muslim invasion brought vast changes into the artistic forms of India, which are especially relevant from a gender perspective.

The most significant feature of Mughal painting is that it is an amalgamation of Persian paintings and Hindu, Jain and Buddhist paintings. As obvious, it reached the pinnacle of artistic beauty during the Mughal period, ranging from 16th to 19th centuries. Some historians hold a strong viewpoint that the credit of emergence of miniature paintings that developed during the Mughal rule, can be given to the Sultanate period. Being more powerful, the Mughal phased out the Sultanate miniature paintings during the rule of Emperor Humayun. When Humayun was in exile in Tabriz in the Safavid court of Shah Tahmasp I of Persia, he was exposed to Persian miniature painting, and commissioned at least one work there, an unusually large painting of *Princes of the House of Timur*, now in the British Museum. When Humayun returned to India, he brought with him two accomplished Persian artists, Abdus Samad and Mir Sayyid Ali. His usurping brother Kamran Mirza had maintained a workshop in Kabul, which Humayan perhaps took over into his own. One of his paintings shows an amorous scene of a prince serenading his love in front of a palace of princess. Similarly, Mir Sayyid Ali's paintings also depicts a sense of beauty, as in the painting, which shows a princess fondly caressing two peacocks. This painting is useful in tracing the socio-cultural history under the Mughal period.

Humayun's son, Akbar, also was very fond of paintings. He himself had studied painting in his youth under Abd us-Samad. Two famous artists who belonged to his kingdom were Sa'di and Jami. Sa'di's *Gulistan* is a masterpiece that brings the touch of not only Persian and Indian paintings together but a tinge of Chinese paintings can also be traced especially in this painting. The painting depicts a rose garden, where feasting is going on and the men are shown attending to various errands. Similarly Jami's *Baharistan* is another exquisite painting. Other famous Muslim artists were Mushfiq, Kamal, and Fazl. The Muslim artists rarely show women in the court or even in outdoor activities. It seems that the ancient culture of women being portrayed with aestheticism and beauty had undergone a drastic change. Eroticism was rarely used, instead of them sensuality and romantic elements were prevalent.

Apart from these Muslim artists, there were many Hindu artists also during the Mughal period who had earned their reputation through exquisite artistic masterpieces, like Basawan, Lal, Miskin, Kesu Das, Daswanth and Govardhan. One of the famous paintings of Kesu Das shows Akbar during his session in the court. Amongst the Hindu painters, Bhawanidas and his son, Dalchand, left the Mughal courts to work for the Rajput courts. One of the famous

paintings of Bhawanaidas and his son depicts Shah Jahan's courtly session in a very explicit manner, where the Mughal emperor is portrayed as a very composed and serene king.

It is not that only Mughal paintings flourished during that period, the Hindu kingdoms of India also had their own traditional paintings, like those of Thanjavur, which are known as Tanjore paintings. These paintings date back to the 17th century, when Tanjore was under the Nayaka dynasty. Similarly like the Mysore paintings that you read about in the last section, these Tanjore paintings also portray both Hindu gods and goddesses, despite the influence of Mughal miniature paintings. Thus goddesses also got enough space, like the gods in the paintings had. Unlike the Mysore ones, these are only embossed on solid wooden planks with different colours, so they are also referred as *palagai padam*, meaning 'pictures in wooden plank', in the local parlance. In a classical finish, bold colours and striking backgrounds are amalgamated with gold foil. Sometimes for decoration semi-precious stones, or Jaipur stones, are used in these paintings.

Apart from these, the other Hindu kingdoms that followed their own traditional paintings showed the influence of the Mughal miniature paintings. The Rajput paintings, also known as Rajasthani paintings, have their own style. The themes were mainly from Hindu epic scenes of Ramayana or Mahabharata to Lord Krishna's life, and varied from beautiful landscapes to human figures. The paintings are either done on the walls of forts and havelis or on paper. The colours were extracted from certain minerals, plant sources, conch shells, and were even derived by processing precious stones, sometimes even gold and silver were used. Paintings are seen upon the walls of Bala Kila fort, near Jhunjhunu of Rajasthan, built by Thakur Newal Singh Ji Bahadur (Shekhawat), who ruled Nawalgarh and Mandawa region. The painting portrays a Rajput prince combing his long hair. For example, one such painting that decorates Samode Palace near Jaipur, exhibits the divine figures of Krishna and Radha, exchanging amorous glances. The intricacies of the bright colours convey the flamboyancy of the Rajasthani culture. Although Mughal paintings had influenced its artistic presentation, romantic elements and women were seen in different contexts, unlike in Mughal paintings.

Similarly another Hindu kingdom of North India also developed its own traditional style of paintings having been greatly influenced by the Mughal miniature paintings. The Kangra Painting also known as Pahadi paintings originated in Guler of Himachal Pradesh in the first half of the 18th century at the court of Raja Dalip Singh of Guler. But the style of painting reached its zenith under Maharaja Sansar Chand Katoch. The paintings had a striking feature of verdant greenery, by using multiple shades of green to depict flowering plants and creepers, leafless trees, rivulets and brooks. For instance, the painters used light pink for Upper hills to indicate distance.

The theme was mostly depiction of Shringar rasa, or the erotic sentiment of decorating oneself. The Kangra Paintings showed a tremendous influence of the Bhakti cult. Most of the Kangra paintings revolved around Bhagvata Purana and Gita Govinda of Jaidev. They show Krishna and his beloved Radha in love and trying to sense each other through their amorous glances.

Like these Rajput and Kangra paintings, Madhubani paintings also flourished during this period. Although many historians consider it to have originated much before this medieval period, but this traditional form also follows the same pattern of vibrant colours and intricate details that flourished during the Medieval period. Madhubani paintings belong to the Mithila region of Bihar, and adjoining parts of Terai region of Nepal. Literally the word Madhubani means 'forest of honey', and paintings are made by women only. Traditionally they were done on freshly plastered mud walls of huts. Madhubani paintings used organic colours derived from plants and flowers. Ochre and lampblack are also used for reddish brown and black respectively. Generally within one frame, no space is left empty, the gaps are filled by paintings of flowers, animals, birds, and even geometric designs. Sexuality and gender were common themes of these paintings. Even natural objects like the sun, the moon, and religious plants like tulsi are painted. There is also a painting on Ardhanarishwara, the amalgamation of Lord Shiva and Parvati together. It is considered to be the god of the hijras of this country. Scenes from the royal court, social events like the birth of a child, upanayanam or the festival of sacred thread amongst the Brahmins, weddings, and religious festivals and events are depicted. Apart from all these themes, very interestingly, the paintings on the walls of kohabari ghar, where newly wed couples see each other in the first night, symbolise sensual pleasure and procreation. The paintings represent procreation through the images of fish in the womb of a newly married woman.

You can now see that before the British ruled India, the country had a rich history of painting and sculpture. The British influence did bring a slowdown in its growth, but the colonialists couldn't eradicate this fervour of artistic creativity amongst the Indians. However, painting and sculpture took a different turn during the colonial period, which we will look at it in detail in the next section.

3.6B PAINTING AND SCULPTURE: COLONIAL INDIA

Amidst the colonial ethos of the country, an artist with a distinctive style was born in the princely state of Travancore (Thiruvithankur) in Kerala -Ravi Varma Koil Thampuran. He was given the title of 'Raja' by the erstwhile king of Kilimanoor palace. Soon he became famous as Raja Ravi Verma at the end of the 19th century through his paintings of Hindu gods and goddesses and common South Indian women, whom he saw in everyday life in the streets of his town. His painting portrays Hindu gods and goddesses of

wealth in the form of a common woman. Raja Ravi Verma gave Indian paintings a different texture and style that became unique in its own way during the British regime. At the time of his demise on 2nd October, 1906, colonial India was already burning with the spirit of revolution of the freedom struggle.

During the freedom struggle movement, the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore also evolved as a painter. Most of his paintings are considered surrealistic. The themes of his paintings were mostly women with very few men. The hues and colours of his paintings exhibit the surrealist silhouettes of his artistic mind. Besides self-portraits, some of his paintings are also depictions of nature.

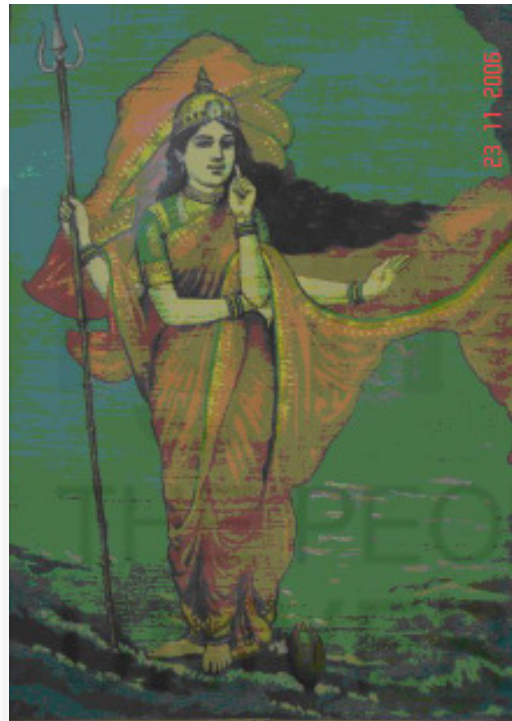


Fig. 3B.9: Bharat Mata in 1920s-30s. Source:@amuliram.blogspot.com

In India the colonial experience that produced the idea of a unified nation also furnished a female personification of the nation in the form of 'Bharat Mata' or Mother India. She is represented as a goddess, clad in a saffron sari, holding a flag and is sometimes accompanied by a lion. Abanindranath Tagore portrayed Bharat Mata as a four-armed Hindu goddess wearing saffron-coloured robes, holding a book, sheaves of rice, a mala, and a white cloth. The image shows the mother goddess as an icon intended to create nationalist feeling in Indians during the freedom struggle. The feminisation of the nation turned the nation into an entity that needed to be protected and nurtured by its heroic, nationalistic sons. Fighting for one's 'Mother-land', thus, became a familial, moral and patriarchal responsibility. When the woman's body becomes a stand-in and substitute for national territory striving for 'her' honour and security becomes every man's duty (Ramasway, 2001, p. 97-114).



Fig. 3B.10: Message of Love. Source: Ravi Verma Press, Trivandrum.

The figure of Bharat Mata has undergone multiple transformations since the late nineteenth century. We might argue that these changes are a visual sign of India's evolving political-religious vision and ideology. For instance, a depiction of Bharat Mata from the 1930s shows her surrounded by the iconic mythological and historical men of India's history: Gandhi, Christ, Subhash Chandra Bose, Nehru, Lord Ram, Ambedkar, Vivekanand. They are all sons of the soil, protectors of the mother and therefore given representational space on the metaphorical map-body of the nation.

3.7B PAINTING AND SCULPTURE: POST-COLONIAL INDIA

During the post-colonial phase, artists continued to paint the Bharat Mata in different hues and contexts. Now the fervour of nationalism and patriotism was being used as the main theme, as in the following painting is discussed in an article by Sadan Jha:

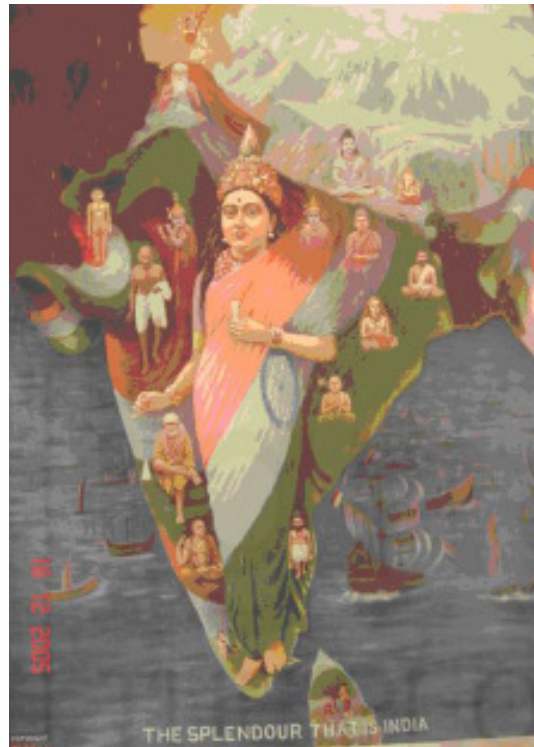


Fig. 3B.11: Bharat Mata in 1970s. Source: *Manushi*, No. 142, May-June, 2004

According to Jha, this figure of Bharat Mata is surrounded by comparatively miniature men. Interestingly, all the men, barring Gandhi, are religious, spiritual figures (sadhus, ascetics, yogis and gods). Even more fascinatingly, there is no non-Hindu figure in the painting. Clearly, then, only the religiously inclined Hindu men and Hindu gods can be considered the true devotees and sons of the Mother (Jha, 2004, 34-38).

The feminisation of the nation's cartography seems to become an excuse for the elimination of all other real women citizens. The new post-colonial nation is envisaged as female. And yet, her citizenry is conspicuously male. The depiction of the nation as Bharat Mata has continued even after independence.

3.8B LET US SUM UP

After Independence, several art schools were established around the country, like Visva Bharati University of Santiniketan in West Bengal, Benaras Hindu University in Varanasi of Uttar Pradesh, Mayo School of Arts set up in Lahore

(now in Pakistan, but after partition of India a similar institute was established in Shimla as School of Art, now known as Government College of Art in Chandigarh), and several others throughout the country. This produced several renowned artists decade after decade. Different epochs brought along different strokes in paintings and sculptures. Gods and goddesses were no longer dealt with, except by a few artists like M. F. Hussain, who loved to give a contemporary tinge to the gods and goddesses. With the emergence of feminist movements, many reputed women artists got their due and the space that they deserved. Gay artists like Bhupen Khakar also helped to create a social space for other gay artists. One can draw the conclusion that paintings and sculptures in India saw many changes from the pre-historic times to the present and that the history of painting and sculpture offers a rich repository of cultural artefacts which can provide a wealth of information about gender roles through the ages.

3.9B GLOSSARY

- Petroglyphs** : It means pictures or pictograms or images on walls. The word comes from the Greek words *petro-*, theme of the word “petra”, meaning “stone”, and *glyphein* meaning “to carve”.
- Yakhas and Yakshanis or Yakshis** : These are elves or fairies in Hindu and Buddhist mythologies. Yaksha is a male and Yakshani is a female.

3.10B UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Discuss some differences between the pre-historic and ancient Indian art.
- 2) Do you think that India has seen drastic changes after the Mughal invasion in their traditional paintings and sculptures? Explain with suitable examples from what you have read.
- 3) Discuss the reasons for sculpture losing in its relevance in medieval India.
- 4) Folk paintings have been relatively less affected by the rulers of the country. Justify the reasons behind the statement.
- 5) Discuss the feminisation of the nation during post-colonial period with the help of examples that you have read about.

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