

Miniature Paintings: MUGHAL SCHOOL (1560-1800 A.D.)

The origin of the Mughal School of Painting is considered to be a landmark in the history of painting in India. With the establishment of the Mughal empire, the Mughal School of painting originated in the reign of Akbar in 1560 A.D. Emperor Akbar was keenly interested in the art of painting and architecture. While a boy he had taken lessons in drawing. In the beginning of his rule an atelier of painting was established under the supervision of two Persian masters, Mir Sayyed Ali and Abdul Samad Khan, who were originally employed by his father Humayun. A large number of Indian artists from all over India were recruited to work under the Persian masters.

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

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

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

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

The other important manuscripts illustrated during the period of Akbar are the *Gulistan* of Sadi dated 1567 in the British Museum, London, the *Anwari-Suhavli* (a book of fables) dated 1570 in the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, another *Gulistan* of Sadi in the Royal Asiatic Society Library copied at Fatehpur Sikri in 1581 by Muhammad Hussain al-Kashmiri, a *Diwan* of the poet Amir Shahi in the Bibliotheque Nationale, of the *Diwan* of Hafiz, one divided between the British Museum and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin and the second in the Persian section of the Chester Beatty Library, another manuscript of the *Tuti-nama* in the same Library, the *Razm-nama* (Persian translation of the Mahabharata) in the Maharaja of Jaipur Museum, Jaipur, the *Baharistan* of Jami dated 1595 in the Bodleian Library, the *Darab-nama* in the British Museum, the *Akbar-nama* (circa 1600) in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the *Tarikh-i-Alfi* dated 1596 A.D. in the Gulistan Library in Tehran, a number of the *Babar-nama*, a manuscript executed in the last decade of the 16th century, the *Twarikh-e-Khandane* Taimuria in the Khuda Baksh Library, Patna, the *Jog Vashisht* dated 1602 in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin etc. Moreover, a number of paintings of court and hunting scenes and portraits were also executed during the period of Akbar.

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

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

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

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

Under Shah Jahan the Mughal painting maintained its fine quality. But the style, however, became over-ripe during the later period of his rule. Portraiture was given considerable attention by his painters. The well-known artists of his period are Bichiter, Chaitaraman, Anup Chattar, Mohammed Nadir of Samarquand, Inayat and Makr. Apart from portraiture, other paintings showing groups of ascetics and mystics and a number of illustrated manuscripts were also executed during his

period. Some noteworthy examples of such manuscripts are the *Gulistan* and the *Bustan of Sadi*, copied for the emperor in the first and second years of his reign and the *Shah Jahan Nama 1657*, at Windsor Castle.

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

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

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

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

Ajanta Paintings

These early mural paintings may be assumed to be the prototypes of the carved and painted picture galleries of the subsequent periods of the Buddhist art, such as in the painted cave temples of Ajanta situated in Maharashtra State near Aurangabad. There are 30 caves chiseled out of the rock in a semicircular fashion. Their execution covers a period of about eight centuries. The earliest of them is probably out in the 2nd century B.C. and the latest is sometime in the 7th century A.D.

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

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

The earliest paintings at Ajanta are in cave No. IX and X of which the only surviving one is a group on the left wall of cave X. This portrays a king with attendants in front of a tree decked with flags. The King has come to the sacred Bodhi tree for fulfilling some vow connected with the prince who

is attending close to the king. This painting, though a fragmentary one shows a well developed art both in composition and execution which must have taken many centuries to reach this stage of maturity. There is a close resemblance in the representation of human figures with regard to their dress, ornaments and ethnical features between this painting and the sculptures of Amaravati and Karle of early Satavahana rules of circa 2nd century B.C.

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

We have little evidence of paintings of the next two to three centuries though it is certain that a good amount must have once existed. The next surviving and the most important series of Ajanta paintings are in cave No.XVI, XVII, II and I executed between the 5th and 7th century A.D.

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

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

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

The consecration ceremony scene where the Prince is shown being bathed by two jars over his head. On the left side of the scene, a maid with a toilet tray is approaching the canopy. This shows

the royal harem where king Mahajanaka is sitting majestically while queen Sivali is beaming gracefully towards her beloved. They are enjoying dance and music.

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

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

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

Below, by the side of the door the figures of Yashodhara and Rahula are painted, the latter looking up towards his father with affection mixed with astonishment since he was only seven days old when Gautama renounced the world. Yashodhara has been shown with all charm of natural beauty and outward adornments of costume and jewellery but

far more striking is the appealing manner in which she is looking towards Buddha, more with a feeling of love than reverence. The rhythmic treatment, of the different parts of her body, the graceful pose and the fine brush work shown in the curls above her temples and in the locks spread over her shoulders all portray an art of an high order and makes this painting one of the finest portrayals of feminine elegance and beauty.

A beautiful depiction of a feminine beauty as conceived by an Ajanta artist is apparently recognized as Maya Devi, the mother of the Buddha whose beauty the artist wanted to delineate without the restriction imposed by the incident of any story. The princess is depicted with all bodily charm which the painter had skilfully exhibited. The painter has chosen a standing pose for the princess and to add naturalness and grace he has made her lean against a pillar so that the beauty of her slender and slim limbs may be best appreciated. By an inclination of her head the artist has shown very cleverly the charm of the dark coils of her hair adorned with flowers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The paintings of Ajanta, Bagh and Badami represent the classical tradition of the North and the Deccan at its best. Sittannavasal and other centres of paintings show the extent of its penetration in the South. The paintings of Sittannavasal are intimately connected with Jain themes and symbology, but enjoy the same norm and technique as that of Ajanta. The contours of these

paintings are firmly drawn dark on a light red ground. On the ceiling of the Verandah is painted a large decorative scene of great beauty, a lotus pool with birds, elephants, buffaloes and a young man plucking flowers.

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

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

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

The most important wall paintings in South India are from Tanjore, Tamil Nadu. The dancing figures from Rajarajeswara temples of Tanjore belonging to early 11th century A.D. are beautiful examples of medieval paintings. The wide open eyes of all the figures are a clear negation of Ajanta tradition of half closed drooping eyes. But the figures are no less sensitive than the Ajanta figures, they are full of movement and throbbing with vitality.

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

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

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

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

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

TECHNIQUE-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A beautiful depiction of a feminine beauty as conceived by an Ajanta artist is apparently recognized as Maya Devi, the mother of the Buddha whose beauty the artist wanted to delineate without the restriction imposed by the incident of any story. The princess is depicted with all bodily charm which the painter had skilfully exhibited. The painter has chosen a standing pose for the princess and to add naturalness and grace he has made her lean against a pillar so that the beauty of her slender and slim limbs may be best appreciated. By an inclination of her head the artist has shown very cleverly the charm of the dark coils of her hair adorned with flowers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The most important wall paintings in South India are from Tanjore, Tamil Nadu. The dancing figures from Rajarajeswara temples of Tanjore belonging to early 11th century A.D. are beautiful examples of medieval paintings. The wide open eyes of all the figures are a clear negation of Ajanta tradition of half closed drooping eyes. But the figures are no less sensitive than the Ajanta figures, they are full of movement and throbbing with vitality.

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

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

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

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

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

TECHNIQUE-

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

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

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