

Analysis of Indian Paintings



Indian paintings have always been attention grabbers. Its intriguing nature, explicit voluptuousness, connection to religion, and ornate style, has drawn art critics to view Indian paintings

from different perspectives.

As and when you go through this section on Analysis of Indian Paintings, you will realize that Indian Art has many forms. India being a diverse nation, boasts of different culture and traditions. As a result, Indian Paintings originating from different states exhibit their own unique characteristic. The mode of an Indian artist's expression might differ according to the traditions and customs of his region, but the underlying concept of these paintings is closely associated with life and time it is made in.

If we look at old and classical Indian paintings we can easily say that they very much exist in time. Like Western art, classical Indian art cannot be explained as timeless. While we discuss the evolution of Indian paintings through different eras we will know how the artworks of each era depicted the time and space it was created.

Folk paintings that are the essence of Indian rural art speak eloquently of the rich vibrancy that Indian society speaks of. The use of natural colors and handmade dyes by Indian painters speak of their close association with mother earth.

In order to have an end to end understanding of Indian Paintings we need to know the history and origin of paintings in India. History of Indian paintings is very old. Pre-historic rock paintings were the earliest specimen of paintings in India. In places like Bhimbetka some belong to the period even before 5500 BC. Buddhist literature described palaces to be adorned with paintings. Among the few paintings that have been existed all through the years, the frescos of Ajanta Caves are the most noteworthy. In this period, painting in manuscripts on small scale was possibly practiced. Initial survivals belong to the medieval period.

Indian paintings provide an artistic gamut which extends from early civilization to the present day and age. In initial stages, Indian painting was religious in nature. Throughout the years, it turned into a synthesis of several traditions and cultures. More about paintings of India is harmonized in the piece of writing that follows.

Sadanga of Indian Painting

While we analyze the paintings of India, it is very important to understand the concept of Sadanga, or Six Limbs of Indian Painting developed around 1st BCE. Sadanga was a canon series that presented chief principles of art. Vatsyayana, who belonged to the 3rd century A.D, details these in his Kamasutra after hauling them out from more primeval works.

The Sadanga has been translated as under-

- Rupabheda- The information of appearances
- Pramanam- Accurate insight, measure and arrangement
- Bhava Action of emotions on forms.
- Lavanya Yojanam- Concoction of elegance and imaginative depiction.
- Sadrisyam- Semblance.
- Varnikabhanga- Creative way of using colors and brush

The successive progress of painting by the Buddhists specifies that Indian artists put these Six Limbs or Sadanga into practice. They are the fundamental principles which were the basic of foundation of their art.

The Genres of Indian Paintings

Indian Paintings can largely be categorized as miniatures and murals. Murals are big works carried out on walls of solid structures, for instance, in Ajanta Caves and the Kailashnath temple. Miniature paintings are drawn on a small scale for albums on delicate material like cloth and paper. Pioneers of miniatures were Palas of Bengal. During Mughals, miniatures reached the glory. Various Rajasthani Schools of painting gave impetus to miniature paintings like Kishangarh, Mewar, Bundi and Marwar. Ragamala paintings belonged to this school.

Various Styles of Indian Painting

India's diverse culture inspired artists to adopt different styles. The paintings of India are greatly influenced by various empires that ruled the country from one era to another. Here is a brief discussion on a few prominent styles of Indian

painting. Later in this section there is an elaborate analysis of each style and their characteristics.

Mughal Painting

This is a meticulous style of Indian painting, normally confined to depictions on album and done in miniatures. It appeared, progressed and fashioned during the period of the Mughal Empire. Mughal paintings were an exclusive intermingle of Indian, Persian and Islamic styles. Akbar and Jahangir took painting to new horizons. Renowned painters of this period included Mir Sayyad Ali, Abdus Samad, Miskin, Daswant, Lal, Basawan, Govardhan, Bishandas and Ustad Mansur.

Rajput Painting

It flourished, during the 18th century, in Rajputana courts. Apart from the variety of themes especially religious, Miniatures were the favorite means of Rajput painting. Numerous manuscripts also hold Rajput paintings.

Tanjore Painting

It belongs to the early 9th century in Tamil Nadu, when the Chola rulers dominated the scene. Charm, selection of brilliant colors and details of these paintings make them celebrated. The themes generally are Hindu mythology and religion.

Mysore Painting

These paintings are renowned for their stylishness, soft colors, and concentration on specifications. The themes for maximum of these paintings include Hinduism and Hindu mythology.

Pattachitra Painting

It is the folk painting of Orissa. In Sanskrit 'Patta' means- 'Vastra' or 'clothes' and 'Chitra' stands for painting. The custom of Pattachitra is intimately associated with the reverence to Lord Jagannath. Its themes are chiefly religious tales, mythology and folk lore.

Warli Painting

This is a folk art belongs to Maharashtra and is a custom of painting existed in India since prehistoric times. These themes are incredibly cyclic and symbolic.

Madhubani Painting

This style of painting is practiced in the Mithila, Bihar. Themes gyrate around Hindu religion and mythology, along with royal court scenes and societal events such as weddings. no gap is generally left unfilled; the spaces are packed by paintings of birds, flowers, animals and even geometric patterns.

Bengal School of Painting

This school was a powerful style of art which thrived in India during the British Rule in early part of 20th century. It was connected to Indian nationalism, but a number of British arts administrators also backed and encouraged it. Ravi Varma and Abanindranath Tagore were notable painters of this school.

Company Painting

It was created for British clients under the British Raj. From the 19th century, it also initiated art schools on Western lines. It lead to modern Indian painting.

Modern Indian Painting

This painting gave birth to several artists like MF Husain, Gaitonde, Jamini Roy and FN Souza. With the development of economy the variety and styles of art went through several changes.

Contemporary Painting

Since the 1990s, Indian artists started increasing the forms employed in their work. Painting and sculpture were significant. Far-reaching new directions are illustrated in works of prominent artists like Vivan Sundaram, Narayanan Ramachandran, Shreya Chaturvedi, Vagaram Choudhary, Subodh Gupta, Jitish Kallat, Anju Dodiya, Bhupat Dudi. Their works went for auction in worldwide markets. The contemporary Indian painters are more open to experimenting with new genres and using individualistic style rather than specific to time and age.

Indian paintings are not just a subject of beauty to look upon and admire. They have been always a means to express feelings and are very meaningful. Mostly colors used were natural and brushes were fine but now from the point of view of preserving them, some artificial colors and mediums are also used. In a nut shell, paintings of India have always been a source of attraction to people all over the globe and are continuing to be the same.