

## A STUDY OF HISTORICAL PAINTINGS INSPIRED BY INDIAN REGIONS

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**Abstract** - *Our cultural heritage would be severely lacking without paintings. Historians and archaeologists provide crucial data, shedding light on how people's daily lives varied depending on where they were located and when they lived. This paper aims to examine the various styles of Indian painting from various eras, using examples from well-known temples, monuments, caves, Etc., which are popular tourist destinations thanks to their artistic and cultural significance. Along the way, we will learn to appreciate the time-tested methods used to create these works of art while exploring the shared and unique themes they all explore.*

**Key Words:** *Cave Paintings, Mughal Paintings, Miniature Paintings, Pre-Historic Paintings, Temple Paintings.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the country's climate, only a small number of the country's earliest paintings have survived to the present day. However, petroglyphs and other rock paintings from India's prehistoric era can be seen in places like the Bhimbetka rock shelters[1]. The Bhimbetka rock shelters house approximately 10,000-year-old rock paintings from the Stone Age. Ancient Hindu and Buddhist texts from India mention various palaces and other buildings with elaborate mural paintings (Chitra)[2]. Of the few paintings that have survived, those at Ajanta are the most important. Although the earliest surviving examples of miniature painting in manuscripts dating back to the Middle Ages, the practice was likely widespread during this time. In the Mughal period, a new aesthetic was born out of the collision of the Persian miniature with established Indian practices[3]. During the British Raj, the company painted portraits of British clients. A Patua singing some Patua Sangeet from the 19th century, with a pattachitra scroll depicting Kolkata's culture as an accompaniment. Murals, miniatures, and paintings on fabric are the three most common forms of Indian art. Murals, like those in the Ajanta Caves and the Kailashnath temple, are monumental works of art[4]. Miniature paintings are typically painted on delicate materials like paper or fabric and displayed in books or albums: several locations with Indian rock-cut architecture date back at least 2,000 years and feature fresco-like murals[5]. However, the 1st and 5th century remains at the Ajanta Caves are by far the most significant.

Stories carved into the walls of the caves where an early man once lived provide insight into his very existence and the way of life he led[6]. These images have faded with time, but they still give us a good idea of how our ancestors lived. Since then, technology has advanced, but communication has remained the same. Many historians and archaeologists rely heavily on these paintings because they are the primary source of information about ancient Indian culture[7]. They can be found on the walls of our nation's most prominent buildings, temples, caves, and other sites of historical significance. Each painting is unique and has stories to share with the world. By referencing paintings in a variety of styles, this paper aims to highlight some recurring motifs employed by our forebears[8]. In doing so, we will also discuss the skill and technique of creating these masterpieces. We will examine prehistoric art, cave art, temple art, Mughal art, and paintings influenced by Indian regions throughout this paper.

### 2. PRE-HISTORIC PAINTINGS

The evolution of Indian history can be thought of as occurring in distinct stages. Typically, we can learn about a period of history from the inscriptions, manuscripts, and monuments erected during that time[9]. Also, paintings are added to the mix. However, there is a chunk of Indian history for which we have no written records. This time frame is known as the Prehistoric era. In this respect, wall paintings become indispensable for elucidating everyday life in the ancient world[10]. The ancient artists used the cave walls as their canvas. We want to highlight the Upper Palaeolithic, the Mesolithic, and the Chalcolithic eras of the prehistoric era. Roughly between 40 thousand and 10 thousand years old are the Upper Palaeolithic paintings[11]. Most of them depicted forest-related themes, such as elephants, bison, and other large mammals. Simple stick figures represented the people. During the Mesolithic Era, hunting was a common pastime. The themes depicted in these paintings are reflective of everyday life during that era[12]. Since hunting was essential to survival, we learn more about the tools and animals used for that activity than any other. The artworks of the Copper Age are depicted in the Chalcolithic period. Agricultural production increased at this time as well. Again, themes illustrating interactions between people are present[13]. It is important to remember that the period we are discussing is one in which paintings served as the primary means of communication and are all that historians have to work with

to piece together a picture of people's daily lives at the time. It is also essential to note that the paints and emulsions used to create these works of art are not the same as those used today[14]. These were likely crafted from animal fat or tree parts and locally available rocks like limestone, haematite, Chalcedony, Etc. There were also no fancy modern brushes, to speak. These artworks, however, have stood the test of time[15]. Ancestors have provided a window into their lives for their descendants to enjoy. Some of the caves with these paintings are located in Madhya Pradesh. An example of such a cave is Bhimbetka Shelters[16]. It has been designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO[17]. It was in 1957–58 that V.S. Wakankar uncovered the caves. Here we will find paintings that explore the topics discussed above. Supposedly, the chemical reaction between the paint and the Oxide on the cave walls allowed the paintings to survive for thousands of years. New caves may have also contained paintings, suggesting they served as warnings[18]. There are other caves with prehistoric paintings, such as those in the Garhwal-Kumaon Range, which feature galleries named Lakhudiyar and Dalband and depictions of human group dances. Hunting scenes and other daily activities are depicted in the cave paintings of the Mahadeva Hills in the Panchmarhi Area of Madhya Pradesh (also known as the Bazar Caves and the Mahadeva Caves). Prehistoric caves with depictions of animals can be found in even southern Indian hubs like Kurnool, Hasan Parti, Kazipet, Etc[19].

### 3. CAVE PAINTINGS

Although most prehistoric art is found in caves, this section will elaborate on paintings from the later prehistoric period, when we began to have other sources besides paintings to account for historical events[20]. The Ajanta and Ellora Cave paintings are number one on the list. Furthermore, these caves are also recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The caves can be found in Maharashtra, in the vicinity of Aurangabad. Between the 2nd century B.C. and the 6th century A.D., various groups of people excavated the Ajanta Caves. Buddha, his tenets, and the Jataka tales are the primary subjects of the Ajanta Caves' wall paintings[21]. There are nearly 30 caves, 5 of which were used as chaityagrihas (prayer halls) and the rest as viharas, indicating that they were inhabited by Buddhist monks and disciples (monastery). The Frescoes in the Ajanta Caves are so named because they were painted directly onto the wet plaster of the cave walls. The walls and ceilings of the Ajanta Caves are covered with these paintings[22]. The paintings at Ajanta caves, created around 500 CE, use an optical effect called "outward projections." As a result, the lines have excellent rhythm and shape. The overall color scheme and the contouring of the outer line work together to give the impression of depth. The Ellora Caves are up next on the itinerary[23].

Between 600 and 1000 A.D., the caves were home to 34 monasteries and temples. Prominent Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain concepts are represented in the caves. As mentioned earlier, the caves were excavated in three distinct phases,

each corresponding to one of the faiths[24]. Images from Buddha's life are depicted on the walls of the caves where Buddhism was practiced. In the twelve caves, worshippers can find statues of Vajrayana Buddhist deities like Tara, Mahamayuri, Akshobhya, Avalokiteshwara, Maitrya, and Amitabha. Plants, nature, gods, and goddesses are frequently depicted in Hindu paintings, all connected to Hindu mythology[25]. Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi, with clouds in the background, are depicted in the most well-known painting. The single-rock cut Kailash Temple is nearby, along with many paintings honoring Deities Vishnu and Shiva. The Jain Caves follow, featuring mural paintings, decorative walls, and ceilings with images of Jinas and yaksa-yaksis[26].

Now let us head to Tamil Nadu to explore the Sittanavasal Caves. In other words, the caves have been around since the second century. It is believed that Jain priests from the country's east lived in the caves with ducks, fish, dancing figures, and inscriptions from the 9th and 10th centuries[27]. It is speculated that vegetable dyes were used in their creation. Excellent work went into making the borders that run along the walls and the roof. Saspol Caves in Leh District, in the far north of India, feature a blend of Buddhist and Tibetan art. The use of vivid colors in these works of art, created between the 14th and 15th centuries, has made them famous[28]. There are depictions of various deities, including the enlightened healer Hevajra and the protective deity Samvara. The Elephanta Caves in Maharashtra, the Jogimara Caves in Chhattisgarh, the Badami Caves in Karnataka, Etc. are just a few of the many caves in India that are renowned for the exquisite artwork they contain[29].

### 4. TEMPLE PAINTINGS

Images of nature, gods, and goddesses are often painted or carved into the pillars, walls, and ceilings of Indian temples to create a mystical atmosphere. In particular, the South Indian temples have historical examples of unique temple art. Siva was depicted in the temples of Panamalai and Kailashanatar in Kancheepuram by the Pallava kings of Tamil Nadu in the 7th century[30]. The magnificent Kailashnath temple at Ellora was hewn out of a mountain in the eighth century. The walls and ceiling of this temple were once painted with murals. Elegant and high-quality art can be seen in the pieces that have survived. In Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, the Chola Fresco Paintings were discovered in a corridor of the Brihadisvara Temple. Natural organic pigments were used to create these massive canvases relatively quickly[31]. We have found some of the best if we are looking for paintings with a Siva theme. Well-preserved examples of Kerala mural painting can be seen on the temple walls of Pundarikapuram, Ettumanoor, and Aymanam. Kacheris, or Hindu temples, to the gods Siva and Vishnu can be found in the Lalitpur region of Uttar Pradesh. The Choti Kacheri has the remnants of some genuinely magnificent paintings from the 13th century adorning its

ceiling[32]. These are the oldest paintings of India's northern plains, making them highly significant. The ceiling of Virupaksha Temple in Hampi is painted with murals from the 15th century. The history of the Vijaynagar Empire is recounted, along with depictions of deities and enlightened leaders. Some of the world's finest mural paintings can be found inside Andhra Pradesh's Lepakshi Temple. Stunning examples of Vijaynagar art[33].

## 5. MUGHAL PAINTINGS

Paintings from the Mughal era combine elements of Indian, Persian, and Islamic styles. The subjects of Mughal paintings from India typically included battles, court scenes, legendary tales, hunting scenes, wildlife, and portraits. In the time of Emperor Humayun, two Persian artists, Mir Sayyid 'Ali and Khwaja 'Abd al-samad, traveled to India and became the cornerstones of the Mughal Art movement. Historiographers believe that Akbar appreciated art because he had studied painting with Abd as-Samad[34]. During Akbar's rule, a collection of large miniature paintings was compiled; titled "Dastn-e Amr amzeh," it featured an unusual size of 22 by 28 inches and contained some 1400 illustrations. Many works of art from this period depict scenes from legendary tales like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Persian epics[35]. The "Tutinama Painting: Tales of a Parrot" was also an influential work from that era. Artists such as Abu al-Hasan, known as the "Wonder of the Age," Bishands, known for his portraiture paintings, and Ustad Mansur, who excelled in animal studies, flourished during Jahangir's reign because he appreciated the arts. The events from Jahangir's life were prominent during this time, and many of them are depicted in Jahangir-Nama, the official biography of Emperor Jahangir[36]. Jahangir's knowledge of painting is highlighted in his writings "Tusukh-i-Jahangiri," where he boasts, "For me, my love for painting and practice has reached a stage. It has brought dead artists before." We can also figure out who painted which face in a picture with multiple portraits if each individual depicted is the product of a different master[37]. We can tell whose work a face is by looking at the eye and eyebrow, and we can tell who painted them if they were not originally there "Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri. At the height of their craft during Jahangir's reign, teams of five or six artists, all experts in their respective fields, would collaborate on a single painting. Moreover, Jahangir's patronage of the arts meant that European works entered the period in the form of gifts[38].

## 6. Paintings Inspired by Indian Regions

Throughout India's many regions, we can find historical paintings that reflect the country's deep well of artistic tradition. Throughout our travels through the kingdoms, the ship has developed its flavor. For example, Mithila, a city in Bihar, is home to many world-famous Madhubani paintings[39]. Women traditionally painted on plastered mud walls to decorate homes and celebrate life's

milestones like weddings, new babies, festivals, and more. The sun, the moon, sacred plants, and other natural phenomena appear in the painting as deities. Miniature Paintings were miniature works of art painted by hand that was brightly hued but relatively small[40]. The earliest examples date back to the Bengal Palas period in the seventh century AD when Buddhist-themed palm leaf displays were popular. Religious texts such as the Kalpa Sutra and the Kalkacharya Katha were depicted in miniature paintings by the Jaina school of miniature painting, which rose to prominence in the 11th century. The paintings also included precious stones, natural gold, and silver. Mewar, Marwar, Kangra, Etc. were all subschools of the Rajasthan School of Miniature Paintings that depicted distinctive aspects of Rajputana culture[41]. Several works of art were influenced by stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, two of the most popular Hindu epics. Then there were the miniature paintings of the Orissa School, which often portrayed stories from Hindu mythology, such as "Krishna Leela" and "Gita Govind." The picturesque and ethereal beauty of the Himalayas was captured in the miniature paintings of the Pahari School, which originated in the hills of northern India. Other topics included those influenced by the Mughal and Rajasthani Schools of Miniature Painting[42].

## 7. CONCLUSION:

The history of paintings, perhaps, traces back to the period when the term "History" was not even coined, i.e., the "Pre-Historic Era." These paintings play an important part in studying the lives of the people belonging to each period in history and are an essential part of the country's cultural heritage. These paintings have adorned the walls and ceilings of famous historically relevant tourist sites. However, they have also truly beaten the test of time, thanks to historical artists and their innovative techniques. In studying various types of paintings, we also saw that though these paintings vary across time and space and, thus, make one type apart from the other, there are themes that integrate them and intertwine them in a thread of time and space. Religious themes and depictions of flora and fauna are some of the themes that can be commonly seen across all periods. Thus, we can easily say that paintings mirror the past and retell the story of our ancestors' lives and beliefs.

## DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Each author contributed evenly to this paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

## AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

The primary and secondary datasets are not publicly available due to privacy reasons but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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