

*According to the Latest Syllabus Prescribed by  
Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education*

**Sanjiv**

*Refresher*

**DRAWING**



**Class-XII**

**An Introduction to Indian Art  
Part-II**

**For English Medium Students**

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**SANJIV PRAKASHAN**

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## Drawing–Class XII

### An Introduction to Indian Art (Part-II)

# 1

## The Manuscript Painting Tradition

### Introduction to the Chapter

**‘Chitrasutra’ Chapter of Vishnudharmottara Purana Source of Indian Painting :** In the third volume of the fifth century text *Vishnudharmottara Purana*, there is a chapter called *Chitrasutra*, which should be considered as the source of Indian art in general and painting in particular. This chapter talks about the art of painting under *pratima lakshana*, which are canons of painting. This *Khanda* discusses the three-dimensionality (extension, length, breadth), perspective, technique, equipment, material, surface (wall) and feeling of the human figure. It is the various parts of the picture, such as *roopbheda* or looks and appearance; *pramana* or measurements, proportion and structure; *bhava* or expressions; *lavanya yojana* or aesthetic composition; *sadrishya* or resemblance; and *varnikabhanga* or use of brush and colours have been explained at length with examples. Each of these has several sub-sections. These canons were read and understood by artists and followed for centuries. In this way it has formed the basis of all the styles and schools of painting in India.

**Manuscript Painting :** That large part of the paintings is rightly called a manuscript painting when the poet’s poetry or songs, which are taken from epics, various theories, literary poems or musical handwritten texts, are translated as pictures with verses handwritten on the topmost portion of the painting in clearly demarcated box-like space. Sometimes this written terminology was written not on the front of the art work but on the back side as well.

Manuscript paintings are considered in principle as a group of subject matter (each group contains many different pictures or texts of different types). Each page of the picture has its own corresponding text that is engraved either on the top of the picture or at a specific place in its page. Accordingly, one would have sets of the *Ramayana* paintings, or *Bhagavata Purana*, or *Mahabharata*, or *Gita Govinda*, *Ragamala*, etc. Each group is wrapped in a piece of cloth and stored as a bundle in the library of the king or patron.

**Colophon Page :** The most important folio-page of the set was the colophon page, which provided information on the patron, artist or scribe, the date and place of the commission or completion of the work, and other important details.

However, due to the wrath of time the colophon-pages are often lost and at the behest of their expertise the art scholars have made up the lost details on their own merits.

**Miniatures :** From the medieval era, painting acquired a common name, for example—miniature. Because of their concise shape, they are called miniature paintings.

These miniature paintings were hand-held and observed from a closer distance due to their minutiae. The walls of the patron's mansions were decorated with murals. There was never any intention to put these miniatures on the wall.

Being a vulnerable part of the art, these miniature paintings were at risk of being destroyed by fire, moisture or other types of obstructions if placed incorrectly. As a result, miniature paintings were considered as a valuable and precious form of art and it was also easy to carry them from one place to another. Hence these paintings were gifted to the princesses as dowry at the time of their marriage. These were also exchanged as gifts between kings and courtiers as a token of gratitude and were traded at distant places. These pictures were taken by pilgrims, sages, adventure travellers, merchants and those who worked as speakers on a commercial scale as well as in remote areas. Thus, for example, one could get the pictures of Mewar with the King of Bundi or similarly the pictures of Bundi with the King of Mewar.

**Reconstructing the History of Paintings :** Reconstructing the history of paintings is an unprecedented task. There are a few date wise pictures to compare with pictures without date. If all of these are arranged chronologically, some gaps are left between them where one can only guess the type of movement of the paintings, which flourished at that time. If these subjects are looked at separately, then the pictures that are not part of the original-volume are distributed in various museums or private collections. The paintings which have retained the surface of time i.e. those on which the date rests are again challenging the prescribed time limit and they compel the scholars to revise and redefine the order of history. In this light, undated sets of paintings are ascribed a hypothetical timeframe on the basis of style and other circumstantial evidence.

### Western Indian School of Painting

Among the works of painting that flourished extensively in the western part of India constitutes the Western Indian School of Painting. Gujarat is the main centre of the Western Indian painting style, with other centres also in the southern part of Rajasthan and the western part of central India. With the presence of some major ports in Gujarat, there is a network of trade routes passing through these regions in which the local powerful chieftains, merchants and traders became patrons of the arts due to their wealth and prosperity earned from trade. The merchant class was mainly represented by the Jain community, who remained important patrons of the art of subject matter belonging to the Jainism.

**Jain School of Painting :** The parts of Western Indian painting that depicted Jain themes and manuscripts are known as Jain School of Painting.

Jain paintings were also encouraged as it was supported by the concept of *shaastradaan* (donation of books) prevalent in this community, where the work of donating the quoted images to monastery's libraries called *bhandars* (repositories). It was glorified as a gesture of generosity, gratitude and empowerment.

The following are the main texts of Jain tradition in which pictures of Jain style have been depicted—

**(1) Kalpasutra :** In the Jain tradition, the Kalpasutra is considered to be the most authentic book of pictures. One part of it narrates the life events of 24 Tirthankaras from their birth to their salvation, providing material for artists to draw on their life story. Most of the Kalpasutra describes the lives of the Tirthankaras and the five major events led by them and that happened around them, they are conception, birth, renunciation, enlightenment and the first sermon and salvation.

**(2) Kalakacharyakatha :** The main among other picture-texts are the Kalakacharyakatha and Sangrahi Sutra. Kalakacharyakatha narrates the story of Acharya Kalaka, who is on a mission to rescue his abducted sister (a Jain nun) from an evil king. It narrates some of the most shocking and daring events of Kalaka, such as him scouring the land to locate his missing sister, demonstrating his magical powers, forging alliances with other kings and lastly, battling the evil king.

**(3) Uttaradhyana Sutra :** The teachings of Mahavir Swami are written in the Uttaradhyana Sutra which tells about code of conduct that monks should follow.

**(4) Sangrahi Sutra :** Sangrahi Sutra is a cosmological text which was written in the 12th century. It contains the concepts of the structure of the universe and the mapping of space. Jains got these texts written in numerous copies. They were either sparsely or profusely illustrated with paintings. A specific picture or page is divided into several parts to provide space for writing the original text and depicting what is written. A small hole was made in the centre to tie all the pages together with thread.

**Patlis :** For the purpose of securing the paintings, they were covered with a wooden covering called 'Patlis' which was placed at the top and bottom of the manuscript.

**Jain paintings painted on palm leaves :** Early Jain paintings were traditionally made on palm leaves before the advent of paper. The paper dates back to the 14th century and the oldest preserved palm leaf manuscript from the western region of India dates back to the 11th century. Before drawing on palm leaves, they were adequately treated and words were written with a sharp calligraphic pen.

Due to the narrow and small space of the palm leaves, initially the paintings were confined to 'patlis', on which the images of gods and goddesses were liberally painted in bright colours and events related to the life of Jain acharyas were depicted.

**Various features of Jain painting style :** Jain paintings developed a simple and schematic language of painting. Often the available space was divided into different sections to accommodate different types of events. One observes a penchant for bright colours and deep interest in depiction of textile patterns. Thin lines already dominate the composition and an additional eye has been added to the front in an attempt to make the face appear three-dimensional. The architectural elements of the place where these paintings have been made, such as the domes and arches of the Sultan's period, indicate the political presence of the Sultanate in Gujarat, Mandu, Jaunpur, Patan as well as in other areas. Textile canopies and wall hangings show many indigenous features and influences from local cultural lifestyles. Similarly, this effect is also visible in furniture, costumes and other useful items. The characteristics of the landscape are only suggestive and are generally not shown in detail. The period of a hundred years from about 1350-1450 of the Jain painting style seems to be the most creative. The main event's interlace margins have changed from representational figures to attractively painted terrain, dancing artists and musicians playing various instruments.

In these paintings, the precious lapis lazuli and gold has been used extensively, which indicates the wealth and social prestige of its patrons. Over and above these canonical texts, Tirthipatas, Mandalas and secular, non-canonical stories were also painted for the Jain community. Apart from merchants, there has been a parallel tradition of paintings among the feudal lords, wealthy citizens and other such people. During the latter half of the 15th and 16th centuries, it covered paintings on secular, religious and literary themes. This style represents the indigenous tradition of painting before the formulation of court styles of Rajasthan and intermingling of Mughal influences.

**Indigenous Painting Style :** A large group of works of the same period, portraying Hindu and Jain subjects, such as the *Mahapurana*, *Chaurpanchashika*, *Aranyaka Parvan* of the *Mahabharata*, *Bhagvata Purana*, *Gita Govinda*, and few others are representative of this indigenous style of painting. The style of paintings of this period has also been described as pre-Mughal or pre-Rajasthani painting style, which is largely synonymous with the term 'indigenous style'.

**Distinctive Stylistic Features :** It was during this phase the distinctive stylistic features evolved and with this group of paintings. A particular figure type evolved with an interest in depicting transparency of fabrics—odhnis 'ballooned' over the head of heroines and draped with stiff and standing edges. The architecture was contextual and suggestive. Various types of hatchings were adopted to depict water creatures and to represent the horizon, flora, fauna, etc. in specific ways. All these formal elements found their place in the early 17th century Rajasthani paintings.

Several sultanate dynasties from Central Asia ruled several regions in the north, east and west until the end of the 20th century, with another flow of influence extending from Persia, Turkey and Afghanistan to the mainland. This influence was visible in the preserved paintings of Malwa, Gujarat, Jaunpur and other centres. Some Central Asian artists who worked in these courts with local artists, as a result of this, the characteristics of Persian art mixed with the style of indigenous art and a new art emerged called the Sultanate School of Painting.

It represents more of a painting style than a school of painting, in which the indigenous painting style is influenced by a hybrid Persian art. Along with the indigenous characteristic, it has got the Parsi element or the characteristics mentioned earlier. These features include a palette of colours, shape of the face, simplified landscape with decorating details, etc.

**Illustrations depicted in the book 'Nimatnama' :** *Nimatnama* (Book of Delicacies) the most representative example of this school was painted at Mandu during the reign of Nasir Shah Khalji (1500-1510 CE). It is a book of recipes with a section on hunting, and also has methods for preparation of medicines, cosmetics, perfumes and directions on their use. Stories of Sufi ideas and paintings of Lurchanda were appreciated by the people in this style.

### Pala School of Painting

Like the Jain books and paintings, the Palas of Eastern India from the 11th and 12th centuries are examples of forms of early paintings. The Pala period (750 CE to mid 12th century) saw the final period of Buddhist art in India. The Nalanda and Vikramsila monasteries have been monasteries of Buddhist learning and art and have yielded innumerable manuscripts containing Buddhist themes on palm leaves and images of Vajrayana Buddhist deities.

These centres also had workshops for casting of bronze images. Students and pilgrims from South-East Asia came to these monasteries for education and learning of religion and took with them specimens of Pala Buddhist art in the form of bronze figures or elaborately manuscripts. With this practice the art of Pala spread to Nepal, Tibet, Burma, Sri Lanka and Java.

Unlike the terse lines of Jain painting, a flowing and sinuous line in subdued colour tones characterises Pala paintings. Like at Ajanta, the Pala sculpture style of these monasteries and the figures created by the artists share the same language. A classic example of Pala Buddhist palm manuscript painting is the *Astahasrika Prajnaparamita* (Bodleian Library, Oxford) or the 'Perfection of Wisdom' written in eight thousand lines.

Painted at the monastery of Nalanda in the fifteenth year of the reign of the Pala King, Ramapala, in the last quarter of the eleventh century, it has six pages of illustrations and wooden covers painted on both sides. Pala dynasty weakened with the coming of Muslim invaders. Pala art came to an end in the first half of the thirteenth century when the Muslim invaders attacked and caused destruction to the monasteries.

## TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS

**Q. 1. What are manuscript paintings? Name two places, where the tradition of manuscript painting was prevalent?**

**Ans. Manuscript painting :** That large part of the paintings is rightly called a manuscript painting when the poet's poetry or songs, which are taken from epics, various theories, literary poems or musical handwritten texts, are translated as pictures with verses handwritten on the topmost portion of the painting in clearly demarcated box-like space. Sometimes this written terminology was written not on the front of the art work but on the back side as well.

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The tradition of this art existed in (1) the western region of Gujarat, the southern part of Rajasthan and the western part of central India and (2) the Pala rulers in the eastern region and Nalanda University and Vikramsila monasteries.

**Q. 2. Take a chapter from any one of our language textbooks and make an illustrated folio with selected text (in minimum five pages).**

**Ans.** Students should do this on their own with the help of their teacher.

## OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

### ■ Multiple Choice Questions

- Which chapter of *Vishnudharmottara Purana* text is considered to be the source of painting?
  - Reincarnation
  - Chitrasutra*
  - Mythological Rituals
  - None of these
- A common name that Indian painting acquired from the medieval age is :
  - Murals
  - Male portraits
  - Painting
  - Miniature
- When a poem of a poet is translated in the form of a picture and that poem is also shown in the upper part, that picture is called :
  - Translated Picture
  - Poetry
  - Manuscript-Pictures
  - None of these
- The main centre of Western Indian painting style is :
  - Maharashtra
  - Rajasthan
  - Punjab
  - Gujarat