

## Indian Art till the 19<sup>th</sup> Century



Tanjore painting

Indian art is a collective term for several different schools of art which have existed in the Indian subcontinent. Indian paintings historically have revolved around religious deities and kings. Paintings have varied from large frescoes of Ellora to intricate Mughal miniature paintings to the metal-embellished works from the Tanjore school. The paintings from Gandhar-Taxila are influenced by Persian works in the west. The eastern style of a painting was first developed around the Nalanda school of art. The works are inspired by various scenes from Indian mythology

The earliest Indian paintings were the rock paintings of prehistoric times, the petroglyphs as found in places like the Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka, some of which are older than 5500 BC. Such works continued, and after several millennia, in the 7th century, carved pillars of Ajanta, Maharashtra, present a fine example of Indian paintings. The colors, mostly various shades of red and orange, were derived from minerals. Ajanta Caves in Maharashtra, India are rock-cut cave monuments dating back to the second century BCE and containing paintings and sculpture considered to be masterpieces of both Buddhist religious art and universal pictorial art



The Bengal school of Art

Madhubani painting is a style of Indian painting, practiced in the Mithila region of Bihar state, India. The origins of Madhubani painting are shrouded in antiquity, and a tradition states that this style of painting originated at the time of the Ramayana, when King Janak commissioned artists to do paintings at the time of marriage of his daughter, Sita, with Sri Rama who is considered to be an incarnation of the Hindu god lord Vishnu.

Rajput painting, a style of Indian painting, evolved and flourished, during the 18th century, in the royal courts of Rajputana, India. Each Rajput kingdom evolved a distinct style, but with certain common features. Rajput paintings depict a number of themes, events of epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, Krishna's life, beautiful landscapes, and humans. Miniatures were the preferred medium of Rajput painting, but several manuscripts also contain Rajput paintings, and paintings were even done on the walls of palaces, inner chambers of the forts, havelies, particularly, the havelis of Shekhawait.



Mughal painting

The colors extracted from certain minerals, plant sources, conch shells, and even derived by processing precious stones, gold and silver were used. The preparation of desired colors was a lengthy process, sometimes taking weeks. Brushes used were very fine.



Pithoro painting

Mughal painting is a particularly famous style of Indian painting. Mughal painting was rich in variety and included portraits, events and scenes from court life, wild life and hunting scenes, and illustrations of battles. It developed and flourished during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

During the reign of Akbar (1556-1605), the imperial court, apart from being the centre of administrative authority to manage and rule the vast Mughal empire, also emerged as a centre of cultural excellence. Mughal painting thrived and hundreds of painters created innumerable paintings depicting scenes from various Hindu epics including the Ramayana and the Mahabharata; themes with animal fables; individual portraits; and paintings on scores of different themes. Mughal style

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## Cultural Calendar for June 2007

### June 8

Hindustani Vocal Music Recital by Mr. Asith Attapattu, Bhatkhande Music Institute, University, Lucknow  
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

### June 12

Bharatha Natyam Recital By Mr. Hari Padman, Faculty Member of Kalakshetra  
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

### June 15

Classical Kathak Dance Recital By Roshani Ratnayake, Bhatkhande Music Institute, University, Lucknow  
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.

(Admission to all programmes is free on first come first served basis)

### June 19, 21, 25 & 26

## Sangeetha Saagaram

An introduction to Carnatic classical music .

A 4 part lecture series in English on Carnatic music appreciation with live displays and selected audio recordings by renowned vocalist & musicologist Deshanethru Kalasuri Arunthathy Sri Ranganathan will present the series with accompanying musicians and her students.  
Venue & Time: ICC 6.00 p.m.



Bhimbetka rock painting

during this period continued to refine itself with elements of realism and naturalism coming to the fore.



Kalamkari painting

Jahangir (1605-27) had an artistic inclination and during his reign Mughal painting developed further. Brushwork became finer and the colors lighter. He particularly encouraged paintings depicting events of his own life, individual portraits, and studies of birds, flowers and animals. The Jahangirnama, written during his lifetime, which is a biographical account of Jahangir, has several paintings, including some unusual subjects such as the sexual union of a saint with a tigress, and fights between spiders. During the reign of Shah Jahan (1628-58), Mughal paintings continued to develop, but they gradually became cold and rigid. Themes including musical parties; lovers on terraces and gardens; and ascetics gathered around a fire, abound in the Mughal paintings of this period.

Tanjore painting is an important form of classical South Indian painting native to the town of Tanjore in Tamil Nadu. The art form dates back to the early 9th Century, a period dominated by the Chola rulers, who encouraged art and literature. These paintings are known for their elegance, rich colors, and attention to detail. The themes for most of these paintings are Hindu Gods and Goddesses and scenes from Hindu mythology. In modern times, these paintings have become a much sought after souvenir during festive occasions in South India.

During British rule in India, the crown found that Madras had some of the most talented and intellectual artistic minds in the world. As the British had also established a huge settlement in and around Madras, Georgetown was chosen to establish an institute that would cater to the artistic expectations of the royals in London. This has come to be known as the Madras School. At first traditional artists were employed to produce exquisite varieties of furniture, metal work, and curios and their work was sent to the royal palaces of the Queen.

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SANDESH

The monthly newsletter of the Indian Cultural Centre, Colombo

June 2007

● **Sangeetha Saagaram**  
An introduction to Carnatic classical music .  
A 4 part lecture series in English on Carnatic music appreciation with live displays....  
details inside

ICCR

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The miniature painting personifies Ragini Gulari, wife of Raga Dipaka mesmerizing a pair of gazelles with the music of her veena

## Past Events

### April 9 "Isai Vadya Pravagam"

The staff members of the Pragadeeshwaralaya Academy of Fine Arts presented a captivating instrumental recital at the Centre. The programme commenced with a veena recital followed by a fusion instrumental and vocal piece.



### April 11 "Guru Upahara" – A programme dedicated to Sangeeth Visharadha Sunil Shantha by his senior pupils.

"Guru Upahara" a programme dedicated to Sangeeth Visharadha Sunil Shantha was presented by his senior pupils. 12 songs of Sunil Shantha was presented including few folk dance items.



### April 26 Bharatha Natyam Recital by Ms. Ganga Thambi

Ms. Ganga Thambi, lecturer from the Kalakshetra, India mesmerized the audience at the Centre with her beautiful performances. Ms. Ganga is disciple of Smt. Sarada Hoffman and Smt. Krishnaveni Lakshman. Among the items she performed was a captivating Thillana



## NEW COURSES

### BHARATHA NATYAM

Course will commence	:	1st June 2007
Class days	:	Tuesday & Friday
Age limit	:	Over 7 years
Course fee	:	Registration fee Rs.250/= + Monthly fee Rs.500/=
Registration	:	Commenced from 1st May 2007

### KATHAK

Course will commence	:	1st June 2007
Class days	:	Monday & Thursday
Age limit	:	Over 6 years
Course fee	:	Registration fee Rs.250/= + Monthly fee Rs.500/=
Registration	:	Commenced from 1st May 2007

## LIBRARY

### Recent Library Accessions

### I SEE NO STRANGER EARLY SIKH ART AND DEVOTION

#### No one is a Hindu; no one a Muslim.

With these radical words Guru Nanak (1469-1539) founded the Sikh religion, calling for the recognition of one God, by whatever Name devotees chose to call him, and the rejection of superstition, avarice, Meaningless ritual, and social oppression. In his embrace of all religions, Guru Nanak Envisioned a loving God that was outside the bounds of any one religion. He upheld The truth of equality among all beings and practiced the quiet heroics of holding up a Mirror to foolishness. Meditation and devotion were identified as the work of the private Domain and charity, honest work, and service to humanity as the obligation to the social domain.

The goal of this catalogue and the exhibition it documents is to bring together and illuminate works of art that identify these core Sikh beliefs

in the period of their early development by the ten historical Gurus (16th-17th century). Through them, we are taken behind the external signs that identify Sikhs, who constitute the world's fifth largest organized religion, to its founding principles.



The works of art, from the sixteenth through the nineteenth century, include paintings, drawings, textiles, and metalwork. They are drawn from museum collections in India and the United Kingdom, and the United States. The essay and object texts by B.N. Goswamy and Caron Smith provide keen insight into early Sikh devotion and examine the works of art in the context of the North Indian cultural mix in which they were created.

With 124 colour illustrations

#### Cuisines

Pant, Pushpesh  
New Delhi, MEA, 2007, 100p.  
002801  
641.5 PAN

#### Mohandas : A True Story of a man his People and an Empire

Gandhi, Rajmohan  
New Delhi, Penguin, 2006, 745p.  
002802  
GAN

#### Collected Poems 1970-2005

Daruwalla, Keki N.  
New Delhi, Penguin, 2006, 355p.  
002803  
808.81DAR

#### Yoga : Path to holistic health

Iyengar, B.K.S.  
New Delhi, Dorling Kindersley, 2001, 416p.  
002804  
613.7IYE

#### Trekking in the Himalayas : A guide to finest routes

Ardito, Stefano  
New Delhi, Timeless Books, 2001, 167p.  
002805  
796.52ARD

#### SATYA GRAHA : Collection of Essays and Catalogue

New Delhi, Afrikhadi India, 2006, 200p.  
002806  
GAN

## Indian art.. Contd.

Unlike the Bengal School where 'copying' is the norm of teaching, the Madras School flourishes on 'creating' new styles, arguments and trends.

Kalamkari literally means Kalam - pen & kari - work, i.e., art work done using a pen. Vegetable dyes were used to colour the designs applied on cloth. The art of painting using organic dyes on cloth was popular in several parts of India, but this style of Kalamkari flourished at Kalahasti (80 miles north of Chennai) and at Masulipatnam (200 miles east of Hyderabad).

The Kalamkari tradition chiefly consists of scenes from Hindu mythology. Figures of deities with rich border embellishments were created for the temples. In Masulipatnam, the weavers were involved in the block printing art, while at Kalahasti, the Balojas (a caste involved in making bangles) took to this art.

Pithoro paintings of Gujarat by the tribals depict Babo Pithoro one of the many deities worshipped in the region. Pithoro style of folk painting is a way of appeasing the Gods and not a decorative art. The walls of the houses are painted by professional artists belonging to the Rathawa caste. The owner of the house prays for deliverance from evil and bad times (be it illness, lack of rains, low harvest yields) with the promise of getting a pithoro painted. Since the painting is done only by professionals, it is an expensive affair and the owner gets it done when it suits him. If a pithoro painting is already done on a wall, it is redone.

Raja Ravi varma (1848 - 1906) is famous for his paintings based on Indian mythology & epics. He was born in Kilimanoor Palace as the son of Umamba Thampuratti and Neelakandan Bhattachiripad. Even at a young age his talent was spotted by his uncle Raja Raja Varma, (Ravi Varma used to draw on the walls) and gave him initial training in painting. Later he learnt water colour painting from the palace artist Rama Swamy Naidu. He learnt oil painting from the British artist Theodor Jenson.

Towards the end of the 19th century, when there was a lack of vitality in Indian painting, he was one of the few artists who re-introduced Indian subjects in his works.

The Bengal School of Art was an influential style of art that flourished in India during the British Raj in the early 20th century. It was associated with Indian nationalism, but was also promoted and supported by many British arts administrators.

The Bengal School arose as an avant garde and nationalist movement reacting against the academic art styles previously promoted in India, both by Indian artists such as Ravi Varma and in British art schools. Following the widespread influence of Indian spiritual ideas in the West, the British art teacher Ernest Binfield Havel attempted to reform the teaching methods at the Calcutta School of Art by encouraging students to imitate Mughal miniatures. This caused immense controversy, leading to a strike by students and complaints from the local press, including from nationalists who considered it to be a retrogressive move. Havel was supported by the artist Abanindranath Tagore, a nephew of the poet Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore painted a number of works influenced by Mughal art, a style that he and Havel believed to be expressive of India's distinct spiritual qualities, as opposed to the "materialism" of the West. Tagore's best-known painting, Bharat Mata (Mother India), depicted a young woman, portrayed with four arms in the manner of Hindu deities, holding objects symbolic of India's national aspirations. Tagore later attempted to develop links with Japanese artists as part of an aspiration to construct a pan-Asianist model of art.

The Bengal School's influence in India declined with the spread of modernist ideas in the 1920s. The development of Indian art in the 20th century, including the efflorescence of the Progressive Artists Movement, will be considered in the next issue of Sandesh.

Source: Web