

Later Mural Traditions

Even after Ajanta, very few sites with paintings have survived which provide valuable evidences to reconstruct the tradition of paintings.

The tradition of cave excavations continued further at many places where sculpting and painting were done simultaneously.

Badami

- Badami was the capital of the western Chalukyan dynasty which ruled the region from 543 to 598 CE.
- With the decline of the Vakataka rule, the Chalukyas established their power in the Deccan. The Chalukya king, Mangalesha, patronised the excavation of the Badami caves. He was the younger son of the Chalukya king, Pulakesi I, and the brother of Kirtivarman I.
- The inscription in Cave No.4 mentions the date 578–579 CE, describes the beauty of the cave and includes the dedication of the image of Vishnu. Therefore, the cave is popularly known as the Vishnu Cave.
- Paintings in this cave depict palace scenes. One shows Kirtivarman, the son of Pulakesi I and the elder brother of Mangalesha, seated inside the palace with his wife and feudatories watching a dance scene. Towards the corner of the panel are figures of Indra and his retinue.
- These paintings represent extension of the tradition of mural painting from Ajanta to Badami in South India.
- The gracefully drawn faces of the king and the queen remind us of the style of modelling in Ajanta. Their eye-sockets are large, eyes are half-closed, and lips are protruding.

Murals under the Pallava, Pandava and Chola Kings

- The tradition of painting extended further down south in Tamil Nadu in the preceding centuries with regional variations during the regimes of Pallava, Pandya and Chola dynasties.
- The Pallava kings who succeeded the Chalukya kings in parts of South India, were also patrons of arts.
- Mahendravarma I who ruled in the seventh century was responsible for building temples at Panamalai, Mandagapattu and Kanchipuram. The inscription at

Mandagapattu mentions Mahendravarman I with numerous titles such as **Vichitrachitta** (curious-minded), **Chitrakarapuli** (tiger among artists), **Chaityakari** (temple builder), which show his interest in art activities.

- The Panamalai figure of a female divinity is drawn gracefully.
- Paintings at the Kanchipuram temple were patronised by the Pallava king, Rajsimha. Only traces of paintings remain now which depict **Somaskanda**.
- When the Pandyas rose to power, they too patronised art. Tirumalaipuram caves and Jaina caves at Sittanvasal are some of the surviving examples. A few fragmented layers of paintings can be seen in Tirumalaipuram.
- In Sittanvasal, the paintings are visible on the ceilings of shrines, in verandas, and on the brackets. On the pillars of the veranda are seen dancing figures of celestial nymphs.
- Figures are drawn and painted in vermilion red on a lighter background. The body is rendered in yellow with subtle modelling. Their eyes are slightly elongated and at times protrude off the face. This feature is observed in many subsequent paintings in the Deccan and South India.
- The tradition of building temples and embellishing them with carvings and paintings continued during the reign of the **Chola** kings who ruled over the region from the ninth to the thirteenth century.
- But it was in the eleventh century, when the Cholas reached their zenith of power, that masterpieces of Chola art and architecture began to appear. The temples of **Brihadeswara** at **Thanjavur**, **Gangaikonda Cholapuram** and **Darasuram** were built during the reigns of Rajaraja Chola and his son, Rajendra Chola.
- The most important paintings are those in Brihadeswara temple. The paintings were executed on the walls of the narrow passage surrounding the shrine.
- Two layers of paint were found when they were discovered. The upper layer was painted during the Nayak period, in the sixteenth century.
- The paintings show narrations and aspects related to Lord Shiva, Shiva in Kailash, Shiva as **Tripurantaka**, Shiva as **Nataraja**, a portrait of the patron **Rajaraja** and his mentor **Kuruvar**, dancing figures, etc.

Vijayanagara Murals

- With the decline of power of the Chola dynasty in the thirteenth century, the Vijayanagara Dynasty captured and brought under its control the region from Hampi to Trichy with Hampi serving as its capital.
- Many paintings survive in a number of temples. The paintings at **Tiruparakunram**, near Trichy, done in the fourteenth century represent the early phase of the Vijayanagara style.
- In Hampi, the Virupaksha temple has paintings on the ceiling of its mandapa narrating events from dynastic history and episodes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.
- Among the important panels are the ones which show **Vidyaranya**, the spiritual teacher of Bukkaraya Harsha, being carried in a palanquin in a procession and the incarnations of **Vishnu**.
- In Lepakshi, near Hindupur, in present Andhra Pradesh, there are glorious examples of Vijayanagara paintings on the walls of the Shiva temple.
- In keeping with the tradition, the Vijayanagara painters evolved a pictorial language wherein the faces are shown in profile and figures and objects two-dimensionally.

Nayaka Paintings

- Nayaka paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are seen in **Thiruparakunram**, **Sreerangam** and **Tiruvarur**.
- Early paintings depict scenes from the life of Vardhaman Mahavira. The Nayaka paintings depict episodes from the **Mahabharata** and the **Ramayana** and also scenes from **Krishna-leela**.
- In Tiruvarur, there is a panel narrating the story of **Muchukunda**.
- In Chidambaram there are panels of paintings narrating stories related to **Shiva** and **Vishnu**—Shiva as **bhikshatana murti**, Vishnu as **Mohini**, etc.
- In the **Sri Krishna temple** at **Chengam** in Arcot District there are sixty panels narrating the story of the **Ramayana** which represent the late phase of **Nayaka** paintings.
- The examples cited above suggest that Nayaka paintings were more or less an extension of the Vijayanagara style with minor regional modifications and incorporations.

- The artist, as in the previous centuries and following traditions, has tried to infuse movement and make the space dynamic. The painting of Nataraja at Tiruvalanjuli is a good example.

Kerala Murals

- Kerala painters (during the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century) evolved a pictorial language and technique of their own while discriminately adopting certain stylistic elements from Nayaka and Vijayanagara schools.
- The painters evolved a language taking cues from contemporary traditions like **Kathakali** and **kalam ezhuthu** using vibrant and luminous colours, representing human figures in three-dimensionality.
- Most of the paintings are seen on the walls of shrines and cloister walls of temples and some inside palaces.
- Most of the narrations are based on those episodes from **Hindu mythology** which were popular in Kerala.
- The artist seems to have derived sources from oral traditions and local versions of the **Ramayana** and the **Mahabharata** for painted narration.

Present Day Murals

- Even today we observe that mural painting on interior and exterior walls of houses in villages or havelis is prevalent in different parts of the country.
- These paintings are usually made by women either at the time of ceremonies or festivals or as a routine to clean and decorate the walls.
- Some of the traditional forms of murals are **pithoro** in parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat, **Mithila** painting in northern Bihar's Mithila region, **warli** paintings in Maharashtra, or simply paintings on the walls, be it in a village of Odisha or Bengal, Madhya Pradesh or Chhattisgarh.

Bronze Sculpture

Indian sculptors had mastered the bronze medium and the casting process as much as they had mastered terracotta sculpture and carving in stone.

The *cire-perdu* or 'lost-wax' process for casting was learnt as long ago as the Indus Valley Culture.

Along with it was discovered the process of making alloy of metals by mixing copper, zinc and tin which is called bronze.

Bronze sculptures and statuettes of Buddhist, Hindu and Jain icons have been discovered from many regions of India dating from the second century until the sixteenth century.

Most of these were required for ritual worship and are characterised by exquisite beauty and aesthetic appeal.

Indus Valley Bronze Sculptures

- Perhaps the 'Dancing Girl' in tribhanga posture from Mohenjodaro is the earliest bronze sculpture datable to 2500 BCE.
- The limbs and torso of this female figurine are simplified in tubular form.
- A similar group of bronze statuettes have been discovered on archaeological excavation at *Daimabad* (Maharashtra) datable to 1500 BCE. Significant is the 'Chariot', the wheels of which are represented in simple circular shapes while the driver or human rider has been elongated, and the bulls in the forefront are modelled in sturdy forms.

Jaina Bronze Sculptures

- Interesting images of Jain Tirthankaras have been discovered from Chausa, Bihar, belonging to the Kushana Period during second century CE.
- Remarkable is the depiction of *Adinath* or *Vrishabhath*, who is identified with long hairlocks dropping to his shoulders.

Buddha Bronze Sculptures

- Many standing *Buddha* images with right hand in *abhaya mudra* were cast in North India, particularly Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, during the Gupta and Post-Gupta periods.
- The *sanghati* or the *monk's robe* is wrapped to cover the shoulders which turns over the right arm, while the other end of the drapery is wrapped over the left arm.

Eventually the pleats are held by the extended hand of the same arm.

- The drapery falls and spreads into a wide curve at the level of the ankles. The Buddha's figure is modelled in a subtle manner suggesting, at the same time, the thin quality of the cloth.
- The figure appears youthful and proportionate in comparison with the Kushana style.
- In the typical bronze from Dhanesar Khera, Uttar Pradesh, the folds of the drapery are treated as in the Mathura style, i.e., in a series of drooping down curves.
- **Sarnath**-style bronzes have foldless drapery. The outstanding example is that of the Buddha image at Sultanganj, Bihar, which is quite a monumental bronze figure.
- Vakataka bronze images of the Buddha from Phopnhar, Maharashtra, are contemporary with the Gupta period bronzes. They show the influence of the **Amaravati** style of Andhra Pradesh in the third century CE and at the same time there is a significant change in the draping style of the monk's robe. Buddha's right hand in abhaya mudra is free so that the drapery clings to the right side of the body contour.
- The additional importance of the Gupta and Vakataka bronzes is that they were portable and monks carried them from place to place for the purpose of individual worship or to be installed in Buddhist viharas.

Other Examples

- The hoard of bronzes discovered in Akota near Vadodara established that bronze casting was practised in Gujarat or western India between the sixth and ninth centuries. Most of the images represent the Jaina tirthankaras like Mahavira, Parshvanath or Adinath.
- A new format was invented in which tirthankaras are seated on a throne; they can be single or combined in a group of three or in a group of twenty-four tirthankaras. Female images were also cast representing yakshinis or Shasanadevis of some prominent tirthankaras.

Vishnu Bronze Sculptures

- A noteworthy development is the growth of different types of iconography of Vishnu images.
- Four-headed Vishnu, also known as **Chaturanana** or **Vaikuntha** Vishnu, was worshipped in these regions. While the central face represents **Vasudeva**, the other two
- faces are that of **Narasimha** and **Varaha**.

- The *Narasimha* avatar and *Mahishasuramardini Durga* images of Himachal Pradesh are among the very dynamic bronzes from that region.

Nalanda Jaina Bronze Sculptures

- In Buddhist centres like Nalanda, a school of bronze-casting emerged around the ninth century during the rule of the *Pala* Dynasty in Bihar and Bengal regions.
- A remarkable bronze is of a four-armed *Avalokitesvara*, which is a good example of a male figure in graceful tribhanga posture.
- Worship of female goddesses was adopted which is part of the growth of the *Vajrayana* phase in Buddhism.
- Images of *Tara* became very popular. Seated on a throne, she is accompanied by a growing curvilinear lotus stalk and her right hand is in the *abhaya mudra*.

South Indian Jaina Bronze Sculptures

- The bronze casting technique and making of bronze images of traditional icons reached a high stage of development in South India during the medieval period.
- Although bronze images were modelled and cast during the *Pallava* Period in the eighth and ninth centuries, some of the most beautiful and exquisite statues were produced during the *Chola* Period in Tamil Nadu from the tenth to the twelfth century.
- The technique and art of fashioning bronze images is still skillfully practised in South India, particularly in *Kumbakonam*.
- The distinguished patron during the tenth century was the widowed Chola queen, *Sembiyan Maha Devi*.
- Chola bronzes are the most soughtafter collectors' items by art lovers all over the world.
- Among the Pallava Period bronzes of the eighth century is the icon of *Shiva seated in ardhaparyanka asana* (one leg kept dangling).
- The right hand is in the *achamana* mudra gesture, suggesting that he is about to drink poison.
- The well-known dancing figure of Shiva as Nataraja was evolved and fully developed during the Chola Period.

➤ **Nataraja**

- ❖ Shiva is associated with the end of the cosmic world with which this dancing position is associated.
 - ❖ In this Chola period bronze sculpture he has been shown balancing himself on his right leg and suppressing the *apasmara*, the demon of ignorance or forgetfulness, with the foot of the same leg.
 - ❖ At the same time he raises his left leg in *bhujangatrasita* stance, which represents *tirobhava*, that is kicking away the veil of maya or illusion from the devotee's mind.
 - ❖ His four arms are outstretched and the main right hand is posed in *abhaya hasta* or the gesture suggesting.
 - ❖ The upper right holds the *damaru* his favourite musical instrument to keep on the beat tala.
 - ❖ The upper left hand carries a flame while the main left hand is held in *dola hasta* and connects with the *abhaya hasta* of the right hand.
 - ❖ His hair locks fly on both the sides touching the circular *jvala mala* or the garland of flames which surrounds the entire dancing figuration.
- A wide range of Shiva iconography was evolved in the Thanjavur (Tanjore) region of Tamil Nadu.
- The ninth century *kalyanasundara murti* is highly remarkable for the manner in which *Panigrahana* (ceremony of marriage) is represented by two separate statuettes. Shiva with his extended right hand accepts Parvati's (the bride's) right hand, who is depicted with a bashful expression and taking a step forward.
- The union of Shiva and Parvati is very ingeniously represented in the *ardhanarisvara* murti in a single image.
- Beautiful independent figurines of Parvati have also been modelled, standing in graceful tribhanga posture.
- During the sixteenth century, known as the Vijayanagar Period in Andhra Pradesh, the sculptors experimented with portrait sculpture in order to preserve knowledge of the royal patron for posterity.
- At *Tirupati*, life-size standing portrait statues were cast in bronze, depicting *Krishnadevaraya* with his two queens, *Tirumalamba* and *Chinnadevi*.

- The standing king and queens are depicted in praying posture, that is, both hands held in the *namaskara mudra*.

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