

Indian
Miniature
Paintings





Documentation of

Indian Miniature Paintings

Documented by

Resource Centre for Traditional Paintings



National Institute For Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (ni-msme)

(An organization of the Ministry of MSME Govt. of India)

Yousufguda, Hyderabad - 500045 (India).



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Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

New Delhi (India)

Acknowledgements

We are indebted to the Development Commissioner for Handicrafts, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, New Delhi for the support given to The Resource Centre for Traditional Paintings of **ni-msme** and encourage in preparing this document.

We are equally thankful to Shri. M. Chandrasekhar Reddy, Director General, **ni-msme** and Dr. G.U.K. Rao, Director (School of Enterprise Development), **ni-msme** for their continuous advise and guidance in execution of the study.

We also extend our appreciation to Shri. Vivek Kumar and Ms. Lavanya, Consultants at School of Enterprise Development, **ni-msme** who supported us in various stages of documentation. We are grateful to all our Miniature Painting artists for their warm cooperation and providing valuable information needed for the work.

K. Surya Prakash Goud, Associate Faculty, **ni-msme**
Mr. Gopal Lal Sharma Miniature Painting Artist

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Introduction

Miniature word is derived from Latin word “minium” meaning red oxide (lead oxide). Earlier minium was used as miniating or delineating pigment in manuscripts, hence its name miniature. Sometimes people confuse miniature with small size paintings equal to the size of grain of rice or mustard seed etc. but it has to do nothing with size. Prior to miniature paintings only wall paintings (frescos and murals) were drawn. With the advent of manuscripts, need of paintings to elaborate the text was felt. Hence a new style was developed and mastered across the globe.

Miniatures were preferred over murals as they were having advantage of being handy, portable, light, and easy to carry and store. Hence art of pictorial representation increased many folds across the globe. Indian art is no different from the world and paintings started to be drawn on different materials for manuscript like palm leaves, paper, cloth etc.

Paintings started from Caves in India and later from Pala and Apbhramsha School to Mordern Indian art via Mughal miniature, Tanjore School, Bengal School and oriental paintings. In this book advent of miniature art in India has been focused with its comparison with each other and other schools of art.



“ Krishna riding elephant made of human female bodies”

Chronology of Art

Origin and Early cave paintings

Origin of paintings in Indian mythology is related to Brahma when he taught a king to make portrait of his dead son to bring back his senses. Vishvakarma is the divine architecture and presiding genius of art and culture.

In India, paintings started with "Bhimbetka caves" near Bhopal, M.P. There oldest collections of rock painting are available. It depicts neolithic age's everyday lives. Dated frescoes (paintings done on wall) are found in Jogimara Caves of Ramgarh hills in Sirguja, Nagpur, Maharashtra. It is presumed of first century before Christian era.

Numerous references to paintings are found in Brahmanical and Buddhist literature dating back to pre Christian period. Lepya Chitra



Frescos of Bhimbetka caves

(representation of legendary lore in line and colour on textiles), Lekhya chitra (line drawing or sketches), dhuli chitra etc are few forms of art practiced.

Traditionally art and knowledge is divided in 64 (chausath) Kalas which a human can master. Among these 64 Kalas, "Alekhya vidya" is art of painting. Six principles form the essence of any painting, namely:

1. **Rupabheda** - knowledge of appearance
2. **Pramanam** - Correct perception, measure and structure
3. **Bhava** - action of feelings on forms
4. **Lavanya yoganam** - infusion of grace, artistic representation
5. **Sadrisyam** - similitude
6. **Varnikabhanga** - artistic manner of using the brush and colour

Art on perishable material has not survived. Paintings of that age can be seen in Bhembetka or Ajanta Caves.



Early Miniature Paintings

As a reaction to large scale rock painting, miniature painting developed in 9th to 11th century in Western and Eastern India. "Pala School" in Eastern India and "Apabhramsa School" in Western India were two main school of art practiced.

Apabhramsha School:

Illustrations were painted on palm leaf and paper manuscript and on their wooden cover. Of these illustrations, almost all were inspired by Vajrayana Buddhism. This era paintings resemble contemporary plastic art of Pala and Senas.

Unique feature : Sinuous lines, subdued tones and simple composition.



Bodhisattva Maitreya

Apabhramsa School

It is the counter part of Pala School which developed in Western India. This school is divided in two phases,

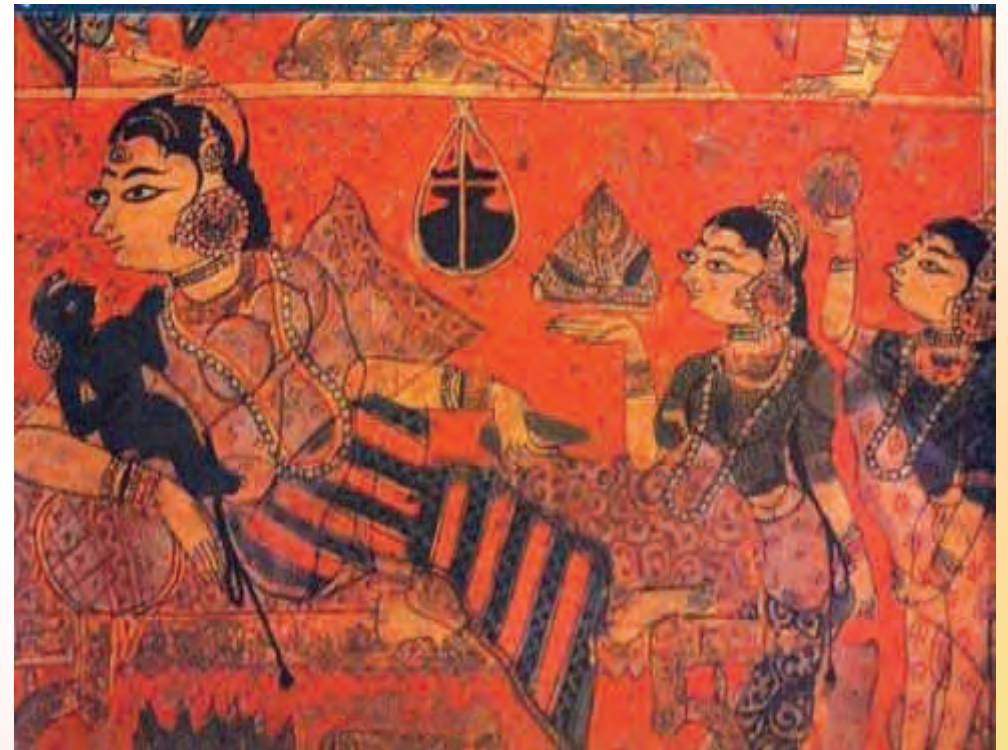
- i. Illustrations made on palm leaf
- ii. Illustrations made on paper

Among Apabhramsa school's painting best paintings are of transition period when base was changed from palm leaf to paper (1350-1450 A.D.).

Unique feature : Figure paintings have three fourth profile with pointed nose, eyes protruding out of facial line, abundance of accessory details and careful ornamentation. Subject matter depicted in three fold in Jains and later in Vaishnav paintings like Gita Govinda.

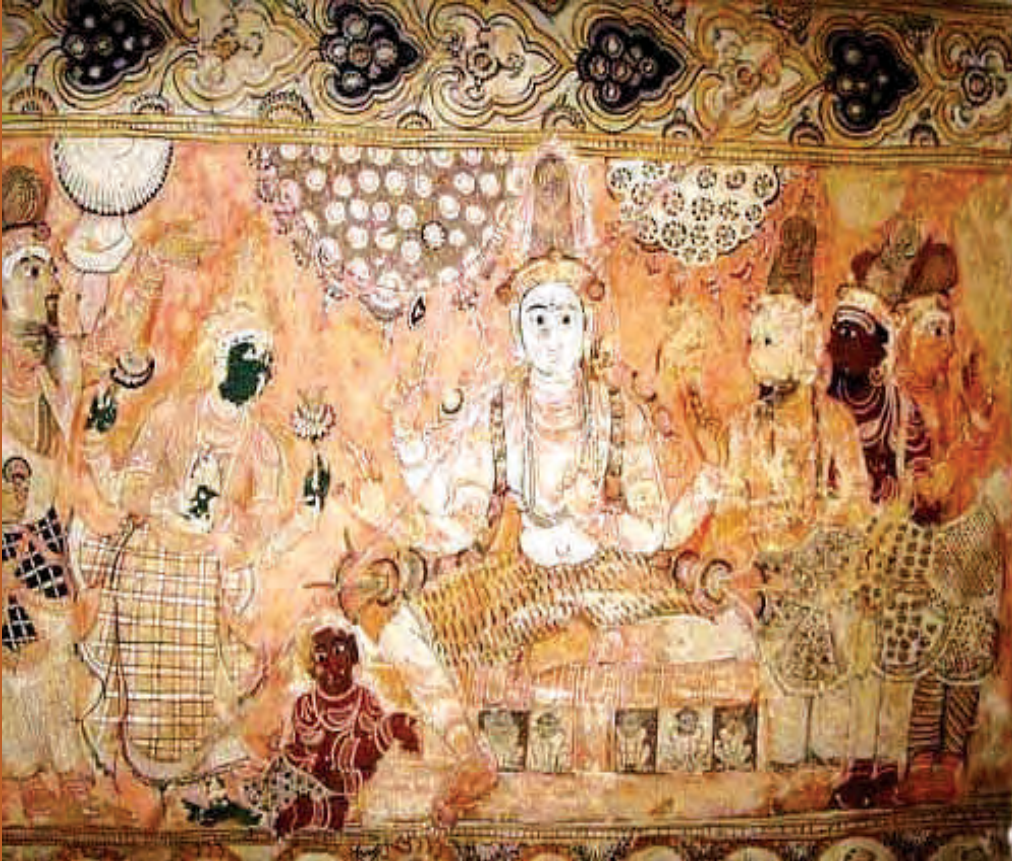


"The infant Jina Mahavira, from Kalpasutra manuscript"



Mother Trishala with son Mahavira, from Kalpasutra manuscript

Lepakshi Paintings



Siva preparing for marriage procession

The painting style of the Vijaynagar Period forms the root of painting style developed in Deccan India. Lepakshi paintings are characterized by earth tones. Generally primary colours are avoided and there is complete absence of blue colour. Figures and costumes are outlined by black. It has a resemblance to textile design where tree, stones and other natural elements are placed like that. There was no concern of resemblance to the real world.

Specialty: patched work, with certain characteristic to identify living being or object and almost no use of primary colour.

In 14th century, India saw advent of Muslims in India. This marks the transition period and era of cultural renaissance. The traditional art of painting survived in Western India.

This later forms the basis of Rajasthani School paintings.

Sultanate Paintings

With the advent of Mohammed Ghori of Persia in India and establishment of Sultanate / Slave dynasty, came to India the art of Persian paintings. Across Western and Northern India new art were being practiced, which were a fusion of Indian and Persian style.

Ni'mat Namah, is a fine example from that period with the fusion of Persian and Jain style.

Specialty : Bright colours with well defined dark outlines. Faces have sharp and pointed.

After the decline of Sultanate paintings three styles emerged almost simultaneously in 1550's namely: Mughal, Rajasthani and Deccani.



Ironsmiths making guns from furnace

Mughal Miniature Painting



Mumtaz riding camel made of different creatures, presenting wine to Shah Jahan riding elephant

In Babur's and Humayun's court, Timurid (Timur the lame) style of Persian paintings continued.

During Akbar's reign a new style developed which was Indian in character and influenced by Persian style. This new art was guided by 2 Persian masters - Mir Syed Ali and Khwaja Abdus Samad. Hindu painters were also prominent in Akbar's court like Basawan, Daswanth and Kesudasa.

Akbarnama written by Abul Fazal had many paragraphs illustrated by paintings.

Paintings of Akbarnama as told by Abul Fazal were considered among the best masterpiece during that time.

Akbar even promotes his artists to learn delicacies and rarities of European art from Portuguese settled in Goa.

During Jahangir's reign, development of wildlife painting was patronized. Masur did a tremendous job by painting exotic animals, birds and plants found in India during that period.

Specialty

Realistic paintings with life portraying the life in court, war scene, social festival, nature, hunting etc were painted. Tinged background to show the depth was used in later paintings, style inspired by European art. Book illustration style of Persian school can be seen.

With the decline of Mughal dynasty (in early 16th century) and unstable central government patronage for artists reduced and they started moving towards kingdoms of Rajputana (present Rajasthan) and kingdoms of Lower Himalayan (Kangra Valley) where kings were powerful, and rich and rule stable.



Emperor Jahangir

Flowers

Rajasthani Paintings

Rajasthani or Rajput paintings developed under patronage of different kingdoms of Rajputana area in western India. This art form evolved here in Marwar-Mewar region as textual illustrations to the Jain text Kalpa-Sutras. Each kingdom developed its own art school. Though all schools are different but have basic similarities which correspond to generic Rajasthani paintings.

Rajasthani painting consists of four principal schools that have within them several artistic styles and sub styles that can be traced to the various princely states that patronised these artists. The four principal schools are as follows:

1. The Mewar School
2. The Marwar school
3. The Hadoti school
4. The Dhundar school

Mewar school

Substyles: Shahpura, Pratapgarh, Deogarh and Nathdwara styles

The bulk of miniature paintings that depicts the initial art style of Rajasthan, in its most undiluted form, is reported from Mewar. Illustrations to Dhola Maru rendered at Aghatpur, Gita-Gobinda and Rasa Manjari are amongst the earliest known examples of Mewar style. Texts like Rasikapriya, Surasagara, Ramayana, Bihari-Satsai, despite intrusion of Mughal elements, were the dominant themes of Mewar. Painters like Sahibdin and Manohar, using Mughals' stylistic perfection and the themes of Indian origin, created several timeless masterpieces. Traditional folk stories have also been an integral part like Dhola Maru, Bhakti-ro-patra, Panchakhyano-ro-patra, Bana-bheda-ro-patra, Ragamala etc.

Shahpura and Pratapgarh excelled in royal portraits, Deogarh in variety of themes and Nathdwara in representations of Shrinathji. Nathdwara used a variety of mediums but it surpassed all in its large size cotton cloth wall-hangings, known as 'Pichhawais'.

Specialty : Bold lines, emotionally charged faces, sharp features, robust figures and basic bright colours are its distinctive features.



Mewar painting depicting Ganesha with his wives



Pichwai of Shrinathji of nathdwara style

Comparison with other Art

S. No.	Mughal Miniature	Rajasthani Art	Tanjore	Persian
1	Influenced by Persian and Sultanate Paintings	Influenced by Sultanate and Apabhramsa paintings	Influenced by Sultanate and Lepakshi paintings.	Influenced by Mongolian, Western and Byzantine traditions
2	Book illustration painting	Wall decoration and book illustration type	Wall decoration type paintings	Book illustration painting
3	Realistic paintings of Durbar and city life	Mostly centered around Krishna and his adventures	Centered around Gods and Goddesses	Centered around life and human figures which could not be drawn on walls
4	Detailing of background and ornaments with utmost care	Bold lines and sharp features	Heavy ornamentation but colour mixing missing	Heavy detailing of the background with undulating horizon

Design



marble lamp with Meenakari work

Miniatures are used to depict life of the era in which they are painted. They are used as illustrations in books to exemplify the scene talked about in the paragraph. These illustrations show the majesty of the king in whose reign they were painted. They were also used to portray battle scenes, forts and army strengths.

In Rajasthani and Tanjore paintings illustrations of God and goddess are main theme around which all paintings have evolved. In Rajasthan Jain paintings and paintings of Radha Krishna are most painted subjects.

Tanjore subjects also range from deities to patron rulers.

In the British period most of the patrons of the miniature paintings perished or were not rich enough to patronize art. Hence the art declined and most of the artists switched to agriculture or other sectors.

The art revived with the efforts of Abanindranath Tagore and others.

They promoted Indian style of painting. Later artists started painting replicas of old miniature paintings. Gradually they are incorporating new subjects but the era represented is mostly of pre British India or mythological subjects.



palm leaf etching (Pala Art)

Few artists are also trying to blend Tanjore with it. They are trying to impart Mughal delicacies and austerity with Tanjore's emboss and stone work.

Process of painting

For paper paintings:

For painting handmade paper is used. These handmade papers are specially designed for paintings and are made from rice stalk or bamboo. If paintings are made not for book than it is painted on special paper called wasli. These are paper made by pasting layers of papers to make it thick.

On paper figure is sketched out and base colour is filled. Then fine detailing is done with “one hair brush” made of squirrel tail hair. Paintings are also rubbed on smooth stones to give smoothness to colour and shine to painting. Finally decoration with crushed gold and silver colour is done to give royalness to paintings.

For Silk / cotton paintings:

Only difference is silk or cotton cloth is used as base material on which painting is painted.

Cloth is dipped in starch solution which tightens the cloth and removes wrinkles. It also imparts straightness to cloth as well. Rest process is same as paper painting.

For marble paintings:

Unpolished marble plate or articles are used as base material. Rest process is same as paper painting.





“ first outline on blank paper is drawn using soft stone or pencil, then it is permanently inked with colour



base of light colour is applied



shading with dark colours is given on paintings



finally border is prepared and painting is complete



Raw material



Silk, Paper, Wood, canvas, water, colours, brushes

To make brushes hairs are needed, which are obtained from small animals like squirrel etc.

As children they were taught how to make balanced finger-fitting paintbrushes of birds quills, set with fine hairs plucked from kittens or baby squirrels. They also learnt how to grind mineral pigments, such as, green and blue, in a mortar, how to sort them grain by grain for acquiring purity and brilliance and how to prepare the aqueous binding medium of a glue.

Other pigments were made from earth, insects and animal matter and metals. To make metallic pigments, gold, silver and copper were pounded into foil between sheets of leather, after which the foil was ground with rough salt in a mortar. The salt was then washed out leaving behind the pure metal powder. This technique and process is still used by contemporary artists.

Colours Sources

S.No.	Colour	Source
1	White (dull)	Khadiya stone
2	White (fast)	Zinc powder
3	Blue	Opium
4	Red	Hingula Stone
5	Brown	Geru Stone
6	Yellow	Pevadi stone
7	Red (fast)	Hansraj
8	Black	Kajal
9	Orange	Mercury Sindoor
10	Green (fast)	Sheelu stone
11	Gogilli	



List of Awarded Artist

Padam Shri Late Ram Gopal Vijayvargiya



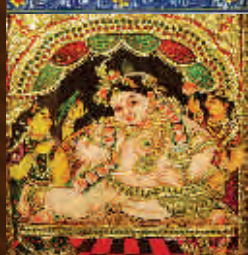
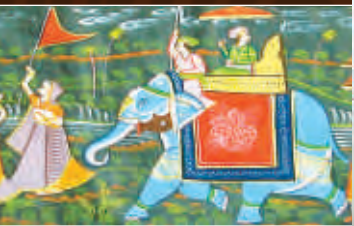
He was born in 1905 at Baler Sawai Madhopur district in Rajasthan state in India. He was Principal of Rajasthan Kala Mandir and Rajasthan School of Art from 1945 to 1966. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1984.

The young Ramgopal, was fortunate to get a guru of the stature of Shailendra Nath Dey. Shailen Babu was so much impressed with the talent and fondness of the line and colour of the young chap that he was given a direct entry to the final year of the five year diploma course which the budding youth completed within a short span of only eight months.

His first exhibition was held in 1928 at Fine Arts & Crafts Society, Calcutta and thereafter many in other major cities of India.

Vijayvargiya was the product of Bengal School of painting. But he did not stick to it and his thirst to evolve his own style inspired him to do Rajsthani miniature.

Awards : Maharaja Patiala, 1934; Rajasthan Lalit Kala Akademi, 1958; Padmasri, 1984. Fellow, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1988. In 1998 he received the honour of 'Sahitya Vachaspati' from Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Prayag.





Late Ved Pal Sharma

Ved Pal Sharma, popularly known as Bannuji. Son of Mahipalji, who was the son of the last royal artist Mohanlalji, he hailed from a family of legends, and was trained by the best that one could get. Initially he worked on restoring old Indian miniature paintings and became a formidable authority in restoration, given his unique personal style and expertise in a variety of styles of Indian schools of paintings.



Padam Shri S. Shakir Ali

He is an acclaimed miniature painter who specializes in the Mughal style of painting. S. Shakir Ali was born in 1956. He completed his bachelor's degree in Arts from Rajasthan University, Jaipur. His grandfather Syed Hamid Ali was a court artist, his father S. Sabir Ali (Chunnu Mian) was an art collector. Inspired by both of them Shakir Ali started learning miniature painting under the guidance of Late Padama Shri Ram Gopal Vijaiverigiya and Shri Ved Pal Sharma (Bannu Ji) he learned different kinds of Indian traditional schools of paintings and specialized in Mughal & Company schools of painting.

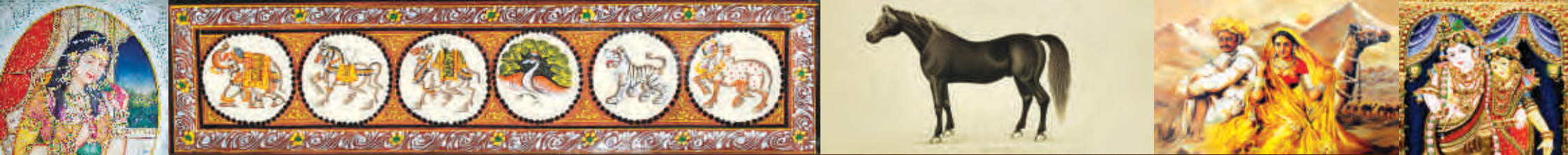
In 1981 he started showcasing his art in the exhibitions and demonstrations. His first demonstration and exhibition was at craft museum, Delhi followed by AWA-American Embassy, UK Embassy, DCWA, Ashoka & Taj Hotels, etc. His paintings got selected by Ministry of external affairs for presentation to various dignitaries and foreign VVIPs.

He represented India in SAARC 10th Folk festival at Islamabad in 1992 where he won first prize in art competition. He also held solo exhibitions all over the world.

Address:

Plot # 7 "Ashiyana" Colony fo billochian,
Bans Badanpura, Jaipur-302002
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Shakir - 9828193033





Padam Shri – Shree Lal Joshi

He hails from a family of Phad artists who were once the sole keepers of the art of Phad painting. Phad painting is an art linked to the lively tradition of storytelling, music and performance. Shree Lal Joshi is credited with reviving this colourful art. More than 50 years ago he founded Chitrashala a pioneer institute for training different styles of paintings of Rajasthan and especially committed to Phad painting (Mewar Style). More than 2000 students & many research scholars have been skilled so far. Many of them are working professionally. Chitrashala has produced many national and international artists, who have been honored with prestigious awards.

The Government of India has issued a postal stamp featuring Shree Lal Joshi's famous painting, the Phad of Shri Devnarayan.

International Awards

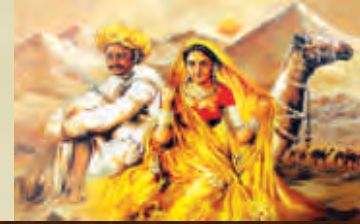
- 1) SAARC International Award Islamabad
- 2) Black Magician Award German Festival Stuttgart



Address

Shree Lal Joshi
Chitrashala (Phad Painting Training & Research Institute)
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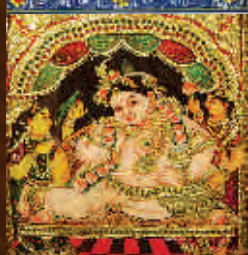
Gopal Lal Sharma

He specializes in Mughal miniature paintings. He learnt this art from his guru Padam shri Ram Gopal Vijayvargiya.

He is practicing this art since 1979. He has been awarded by the state government for his effort to revive this form of art, and maintain the tradition. He has participated in many exhibitions across India, where he has been appreciated for his art. He is having 14 students under him who work in his studio.

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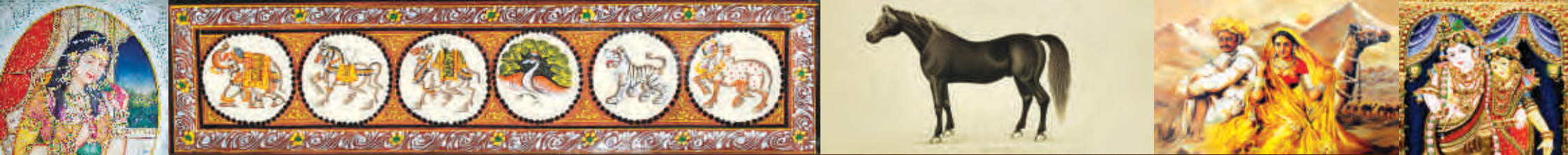


Chandrasekhar Das

Palm Leaf Itching

He won the National award in 1993 for excellence in Palm Leaf engraving, Chandrasekhar Das hails from the Das clan of weavers in Orissa. He was also a State Award winner in 1987. As a teenager, he abandoned school and impatiently asked to join his father as a weaver at the looms. When 27 years old, he was drawn to the art of palm leaf engraving and sought a guru to perfect the skill. It took him thirteen years before he perfected the art and was recognised as a Master in his State of Orissa.

Address
C/O P.K. Samantray
At Sarbodoya Nagar (Saw Mill Lane) ,
Gundrcha Vihar , Puri-752 002 .,
Orissa .
Res - 06752-232011/274582
Workshop - 06572-274782



Saroj Sharma

She has been a bright student at school and loved history. She learnt about art and culture of Indian society and the world. It gave her a basic knowledge of how society gets represented by its culture. While graduating she developed a taste in art.

She was married to "Shri Gopal Lal Sharma", from whom she learnt intricacies of miniature paintings. They worked together and started their own studio. She found her path and followed it in this man dominated area.

She has done numerous exhibitions and organized demo classes. She has also participated in numerous hobby classes as a faculty for paintings and has many students who love her way of teaching. Her students vary in terms of age, culture, education like 8-70 yrs; Indian, Malaysian, American etc.; no formal education to doctors, engineers etc.



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Artist address and their work



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 Rajasthan
 res - 0141-2503332
 cell - 09829069101

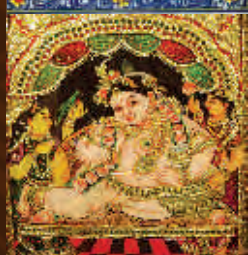
Satyanarayan Das
 Pal leaf painting
 c/o P.K. Samantray
 at Sarbodoya Nagar
 (saw mill lane)
 Gundrcha Vihar
 Puri-752 002
 Orissa
 09437210965

Durgesh Kumar Joshi
 Phad painting
 Joshi Kala Mandir
 Bhilwara (Rajasthan)

Tilak Gitai
 Ivory Painting
 E-5, Gokhle Marg, C-Scheme, Jaipur
 Rajasthan

Vitthal Das
 Pichwai Painting
 Artist Street
 Nathdwara

Narottam Narain Sharma
 Pichwai Painting
 Nai Havelli
 Nathdwara
 Rajasthan





Artist address and their work



Dwarka Lal Jangid
Pichwai Painting
Artist street
Nai Havelli
Nathdwara
Rajasthan

Badri Lal Chitrakar
Miniature painting
Behiond Bada mandir
Naya Bazaar
Bhilwara
Rajasthan

Parvati Devi Joshi
Phad Painting
Near Meera Temple
Narsingh Colony, Amber
Jaipur
Rajasthan

B. G. Sharma
Ivory Painting
48, Ashok Nagar
Udaipur

Smt. Himanshi Sharma
Phad painting
Nathuvas, Nathdwara
Rajsamand
Rajasthan

Mahesh Kumar Chitrakar
3. Behind jail, Meena Colony
Man Town, Sawai Madhopur,
Rajasthan

Kishan Sharma
On mustard seed
Raita Village, Bengu Tehsil
Chittorgarh
Rajasthan

Sunder Lal Saini
Sultanate painting
16, Radha swami Bhavan
Brahmapuri Road
Jaipur
0141-2410020

Govind Soni
Miniature painting paper
Subzi Mandi
Sawai Madhopur

Neeru Chabada
Miniature writing on Rice
2, New Colony, Panch batti
Jaipur
Rajasthan



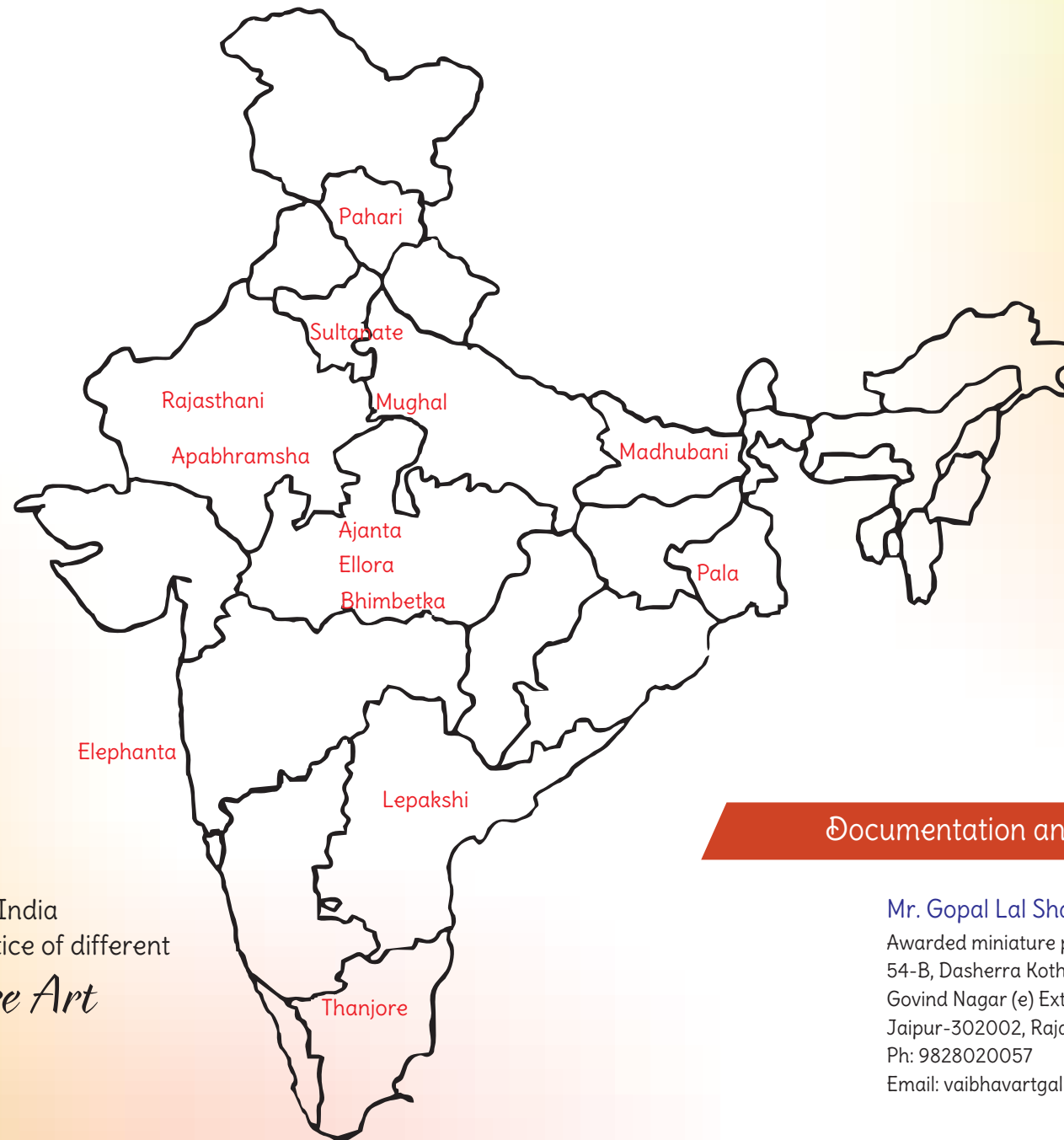


Effects of development of miniature painting

The magic of Indian painting consists in the strange contrast in the size of its canvas, hardly a few inches in length and width, and the enormity of its theme, the land that it represents, its vastness, spiritualism, cosmological vision, idea of the Divine, traditions, ethos, various streams, indigenous and extraneous, its men, women, their lifestyle and the fragrance of its soil. The truest idiom the Indian mind resorts to, this mini canvas is unique in its strength to transform into its lines and colours legends of ages, faith of generations, eternal yearnings of those in love, glow of youthful faces, serenity of soul, sublimation of temporal desires, dimensions of tiny human efforts, emotions of pain and pleasure, disappointments and aspirations, and all such attitudes of mind that scripts and lingual media would take volumes to reveal. The essence of an Indian miniature lies in its strange power to generate transcendental delight and elevate thereby the view from material to one of aesthetic abstraction and spiritual realization.

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- <http://www.paramparikkarigar.com/>



The map of India
showing area of practice of different

Miniature Art

Documentation and Field work by:

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