



## Mural Art

### Why in News?

Recently, the Wall of Peace, a **great work of modern mural art on the 700-foot long compound wall** of Government Vocational Higher Secondary School at Cherpulassery (Kerala), was inaugurated.



### What is Special about Mural Painting?

- Indian Mural Paintings are **paintings made on the walls of caves and palaces**.
- The earliest evidence of the murals is the **beautiful frescoes painted on the caves of [Ajanta](#) and [Ellora](#)**, the Bagh caves and Sittanvasal cave.
- In the old scripts and literature, **there was much evidences of mural paintings**.
  - According to Vinaya Pitaka, **the noted courtesan of Vaishali - Amrapali employed painters to paint the kings**, traders and merchants of that time on the walls of her palace.

### What is the Technique of Indian Wall Paintings?

- The **technique and process of making Indian wall paintings has been discussed in the Vishnudharamotaram**, a Sanskrit text of the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> century CE.
- The process of these paintings **appears to have been the same in all the early examples** that have survived with an only exception in the Rajarajeshwara temple at Tanjore which is supposed to be done in a true fresco method over the surface of the rock.
- Most of the colours were locally available.
- Brushes were made up from the hair of animals, such as goat, camel, mongooses, etc.
- The ground was coated with an exceedingly thin layer of lime plaster over which paintings were drawn in water colours.
- In the **true fresco method, the paintings are done when the surface wall is still wet**, so that the pigments go deep inside the wall surface.
- The **other method of painting which was followed in most of the cases of Indian painting is known as tempora**.

- It is a method of painting on the lime plastered surface which has been allowed to dry first and then drenched with fresh lime water.
- On the surface, thus obtained, the artist proceeded to sketch.
- The **principal colours in use were red ochre, vivid red (vermilion), yellow ochre, indigo blue, lapis lazuli, lamp black (Kajjal), chalk white, terraverte and green.**

## What is a Mural?

- A mural is **any piece of artwork that is painted or applied directly on a wall.**
- More broadly, **mural art also appears on ceilings or any other large permanent surface.**
- Mural paintings **usually have the distinguishing characteristic of having the architectural elements** of the space they are painted on being harmoniously incorporated into the picture.
- There are **many techniques used for mural painting, of which the fresco is just one.**
- A mural, therefore, is a general term for a wall painting, whilst a fresco is a specific term.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Q1. The well-known painting “Bani Thani” belongs to the (2018)

- (a) Bundi school
- (b) Jaipur school
- (c) Kangra school
- (d) Kishangarh school

**Ans: (d)**

- **Kishangarh School:**
  - Bani Thani painting belongs to the Kishangarh School. Kishangarh School (18<sup>th</sup> century) of Indian painting emerged in the Princely State of Kishangarh (Central Rajasthan).
- **Kangra School:**
  - Around mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, as forces of Nadir Shah (1739) and Ahmad Shah Abdali (1744-1773) pillaged the Mughal capital of Delhi and surrounding areas, the birth of the Kangra School of painting at Haripur-Guler under the patronage of Raja Govardhan Chand (1744-1773) took place as he provided asylum to refugee artists trained in the Mughal style of painting.
- **Bundi School:**
  - Between 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century, Bundi School of painting developed in the Princely State of Bundi and its neighbouring principality of Kotah (now Kota) both in present-day Rajasthan.
- **Jaipur School:**
  - As the rulers of Jaipur (Amer) Princely State had close affiliation with the Mughals, the art which developed between the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century had syncretic elements of both Rajasthani style (which predominated the art style between 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century) and Mughal style.

### Q2. Kalamkari painting refers to (2015)

- (a) a hand-painted cotton textile in South India
- (b) a handmade drawing on bamboo handicrafts in North-East India
- (c) a block-painted woollen cloth in Western Himalayan region of India
- (d) a hand-painted decorative silk cloth in NorthWestern India

**Ans: (a)**

**Exp:**

- Kalamkari is an ancient style of **hand painting done on cotton or silk fabric** with a tamarind pen using natural dyes in the South Indian States of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- The word Kalamkari is derived from a Persian word where 'Kalam' means pen and 'Kari' refers to craftsmanship.
- This art involves 23 tedious steps of dyeing, bleaching, hand painting, block printing, starching, cleaning and more.
- Motifs drawn in Kalamkari span from flowers, peacock, paisleys to divine characters of Hindu epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata.
- Nowadays, this art is primarily done to create Kalamkari saris. Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.

**Q3. Consider the following historical places: (2013)**

1. Ajanta Caves
2. Lepakshi Temple
3. Sanchi Stupa

**Which of the above places is/are also known for mural paintings?**

- (a) 1 only  
 (b) 1 and 2 only  
 (c) 1, 2 and 3  
 (d) None

**Ans: (b)**

**Exp:**

**Ajanta Caves:**

- The **early mural paintings may be assumed to be the prototypes of the carved and painted picture galleries** of the subsequent periods of the Buddhist art, such as in the painted cave temples of Ajanta in Maharashtra.
- Mural paintings are found in the caves of Ajanta, Bagh, Sittanavasal, Armamalai cave (Tamil Nadu), Ravan Chhaya rock shelter, Kailasanatha temple in Ellora caves. **Hence, 1 is correct.**

**Lepakshi Temple:**

- Located on a low, rocky hill called Kurmasailam (which translates to tortoise hill in Telugu) in southern Andhra Pradesh, the Lepakshi temple was built by the brothers, Virupanna and Veeranna, who were initially in the service of the Vijayanagar rulers in 1583.
- It is famed for its Hanging Column or Pillar, a monolithic Nandi (4.5 m high and 8.23 m long) and **finest specimens of mural paintings.**

**Lepakshi Temple:**

- Commissioned by the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka in 3rd century BC, it is a simple hemispherical brick structure built over the relics of the Buddha with four Torana (ornamental gateways).
- It also has stone reliefs inspired from the life of the Buddha and pillar having central anta capital with many rosettes, beads-and-reels, as well as a central palmette design. **It does not have any mural paintings. Hence, 3 is not correct.**

**Q4. There are only two known examples of cave paintings of the Gupta period in ancient India. One of these is paintings of Ajanta caves. Where is the other surviving example of Gupta paintings? (2010)**

- (a) Bagh caves  
 (b) Ellora caves  
 (c) Lomas Rishi cave

**(d) Nasik caves**

**Ans: (b)**

- Bagh caves are situated in the Vindhya hills of Madhya Pradesh. They are an excellent example of Buddhist art and architecture in India. The caves have both Chaityas and Viharas. The Bagh caves were quarried during the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century AD, which corresponded to the late stages of Buddhism in India.
- The **Gupta period is considered as the golden age of art and architecture in India.** The Gupta rulers were great patrons of arts, literature, and scholars. **The Ajanta and Ellora caves were carved during the reign of the Gupta empire.** They contain paintings of both Hindu and Buddhist themes.
- The Lomas Rishi cave is a man-made cave in the Barabar and Nagarjuni hills of Bihar. It was built during the Ashokan period of the Mauryan Empire in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.
- The Nasik caves are a group of 24 caves carved during the 1st century BC - 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Additions were made during the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD to reflect the ongoing changes in the Hinayana Buddhism.
- The inscriptions on the caves point that the different ruling dynasties have contributed to the construction of the caves apart from the donations made by local merchants and lords. The three ruling dynasties mentioned on the caves are - the Western Kshatrapas, the Satavahanas and the Abhiras. **Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

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