

## COMPANY SCHOOL OF PAINTING

In the previous lesson, we learnt about south Indian painting. In this lesson, we will learn about company painting. The British East India Company expanded its preview in South Asia during the late 18th Century. Many of its employees moved from England to discover new lives in India. The artists, poets, writers, dancers and musicians who were patronized by the royalty also drifted away in search of fresh opportunities to work for their survival. The British people were fascinated and attracted towards the diversity of India's people, its magnificent monuments and its beautiful landscapes, flora and fauna. They wished to capture these images and were keen to collect them as mementoes and souvenirs for their friends and relatives in England, but not all of them could afford to buy the works of noted British artists. As a result, they started commissioning local Indian artists to create paintings of their chosen subject. Indian artists welcomed the opportunity to work for their new British patrons. British patrons began to realize that their favourite Indian subjects could be depicted far more accurately by native artists who were familiar with them. The works produced by these artists are known collectively as "Company" paintings because they primarily emerged under the patronage of the British East India Company.

It dominated the art scene of India between the 18th and 19th Centuries. These paintings blended with traditional elements from Rajput and Mughal paintings with a more western treatment of perspective, volume and recession. Thus the painting neither had the accuracy of a photograph nor the freedom of a miniature painting.

Company paintings were first produced in Madras Presidency and soon in other parts of India such as Murshidabad, Patna, Banaras, Lucknow, Agra, Delhi, Punjab and other centres in Western India. Indian artists started fulfilling the demand for paintings of landscapes, flora and fauna, images of native rulers, court scenes, historical monuments, festivals, ceremonies, trades and occupations, and portraits.

These subject matters for western patrons were often documentary rather than imaginative. These works were done in the medium of watercolour. Paintings were mostly painted on paper but sometimes were also painted on ivory.



## OBJECTIVES

After studying the lesson, the learner will be able to:

- write about the origin and development of Company painting;
- write about the main characteristics of Company paintings;
- mention the methods and materials used, and plane style of the paintings enlisted;
- explain the importance of the subject matter of the company paintings; and
- describe the meaning of the term “Company” painting.

### 10.1 A COMMON INDIAN NIGHTJAR BIRD

Dear learner, we will learn about the painting of a common Indian Nightjar Bird.

#### Basic Information

Paintings of birds, animals and flowers had been an important genre in Indian art from the time of the Mughal emperor Jahangir and the continuation of such



Fig. 10.1: A Common Indian Nightjar Bird



Notes



### Notes

subjects under British patronage was a natural extension of that established tradition. However, the result was quite different stylistically. In this painting, a common Indian nightjar bird is painted with great accuracy and detail, which makes the bird stand out against the vast landscape. This is one of the famous paintings from an album by Claude Martin, a French soldier.

Title	:	<b>A common Indian Nightjar Bird'</b>
Period	:	18th Century AD
Artists	:	Unknown
Medium	:	Watercolor on paper (handmade paper)
Style	:	Lucknow, Company school
Collection	:	Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

### General Description

The classic works of the company school of painting were the studies of plant and animal life, of which the depiction of the nightjar bird is one. The bird is executed with great attention to detail. Each feather has been outlined and painted with a subtle gradation of colours, and several shades of brown, and black are used to delineate its body markings. The eye has a bright ring around it and the legs are textured with parallel line markings. The landscape in which the bird stands is only sparingly indicated and is in a smaller scale than the bird. This feature is common in company school paintings of this kind, as the main purpose of the painting was to record species new to British observers. This painting comes from an album made for Claude Martin, the French soldier and patron of art who settled in Lucknow in the 18th century. This painting was done in watercolour on paper. The artist used a typical western watercolour techniques with bold strokes and soft tones to capture the accuracy of the bird. These paintings were small, intended to keep in albums. Beautiful tonal gradation created depth in the background.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.1

**Match the following:**

- |               |                                    |
|---------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Style      | (i) brown                          |
| 2. Colour     | (ii) Watercolour                   |
| 3. Medium     | (iii) Company                      |
| 4. Technique  | (iv) Metropolitan Museum, New York |
| 5. Collection | (v) Typical western watercolour    |

**10.2 MARKET SCENE**

Now, let us learn a composition, market scene.

**Basic Information**

This painting depicts the traditional and market scene of Patna in which two women are selling vegetables, fruits and grains. Artist Shiv Dayal Lal beautifully depicts the detail and accuracy of the types of vegetables, fruits and grains and has been able to capture the natural environment of the market. The fine details of the clothes are meticulously done. As usual, the background of this painting was not given much emphasis like other company paintings. This painting was painted in opaque watercolour on paper. The treatment of background is very different from the foreground. It has a gradual tonal gradation in the background. This painting is very beautiful, bright and colourful because of the opacity of watercolour.

**Notes**

**Fig. 10.2: Market Scene**

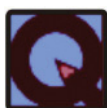
Title	:	<b>Market Scene</b>
Period	:	1850
Artist	:	Shiv Dayal Lal
Medium	:	Opaque watercolour on paper
Style	:	Patna, Company School
Collection	:	Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Notes

General Description

The British people, wanted an image of everyday scenes such as the vendors at the market selling grains, fruits and vegetables. This painting shows that the markets of 1850 were very similar to the market in India today. In this painting, we see four women. Two of them are shopkeepers, and the other two are customers buying grains and fruits from them. The details of the fruits, vegetables and grains were done in great detail, and also, the naturalistic colours are used to define the particular fruit, vegetable and grain. All four women are wearing sarees and ornaments. The depiction of the folds of the sarees is beautifully done. The background is treated very well by a gradual gradation of colour. There are clouds in the sky, but overall, the painting creates a beautiful environment and reflects the contemporary life-style of that period.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.2

Choose the most appropriate option.

- 1. What is the name of the artist of the painting 'Market Scene'?
(i) Shiv Dyal Lal (ii) Manku
(iii) Nanda Lal Bose (iv) Amrita Shergil
2. What products are the two women selling in the painting 'Market Scene'.
(i) Potato, tomato (ii) Kurta dhoti and turban
(iii) Vegetables and grains (iv) Two different types of vegetables
3. Name the medium used to paint the painting 'Market Scene'.
(i) Watercolour on paper (ii) Poster colour on paper
(iii) Mix media on handmade paper (iv) Opaque watercolour on paper



ACTIVITY

You will visit the library and collect some information regarding company style. Now express your feelings about the form, colour used and style of the company painting in brief.

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### 10.3 PALANQUIN

We have a very interesting painting titled Palanquin. So learners let us learn about composition.

#### Basic Information

This painting is one of the famous paintings from forty-two paintings on modes of conveyance and occupations. This painting shows four palanquin bearers and a 'Miyana' box palanquin with a noble person sitting inside. The dresses of the bearers are identical and depict the clothing style of that period. The overall emphasis was only on the bearers and palanquin, so the background was left alone with only a suggestion of shadows of the bearers and Miyana. This painting was painted during 1815-20 in Varanasi.



**Fig. 10.3: Palanquin**

Title	:	<b>Palanquin</b>
Period	:	1815-20
Artist	:	Unknown
Medium	:	Watercolor on paper
Style	:	Varanasi, Company School
Collection	:	Victoria and Albert Museum, London

#### General Description

This painting is one of the artwork from the set of forty-two paintings that illustrate conveyance, occupation and shows a 'Miyana' or box palanquin. In this painting,

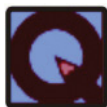


Notes



**Notes**

there are four palanquin bearers wearing white kurtas, yellow and brown dhoti and blue turbans. The details of their dress are well rendered, and they have wrapped a red coloured cloth around their waist. Their movement suggests that they are walking (rhythmically) carrying the load of the palanquin. The palanquin was beautifully done, and more emphasis was given to the details of the dress and design of the nobleman sitting inside the palanquin resting against a cushion. No importance was given to the background of the painting, but the shadow of the bearers and palanquin suggests the ground itself. This painting reflects the Indo-European watercolour technique on paper. Realistic representation of human figures and stylization of clothes, a beautiful tonal variation on the muscles of the legs and the folds of the clothes are characteristics of company painting. The geometrical drawing of the palanquin was accurately done with the help of fine lines. Every minute detail is taken care of.

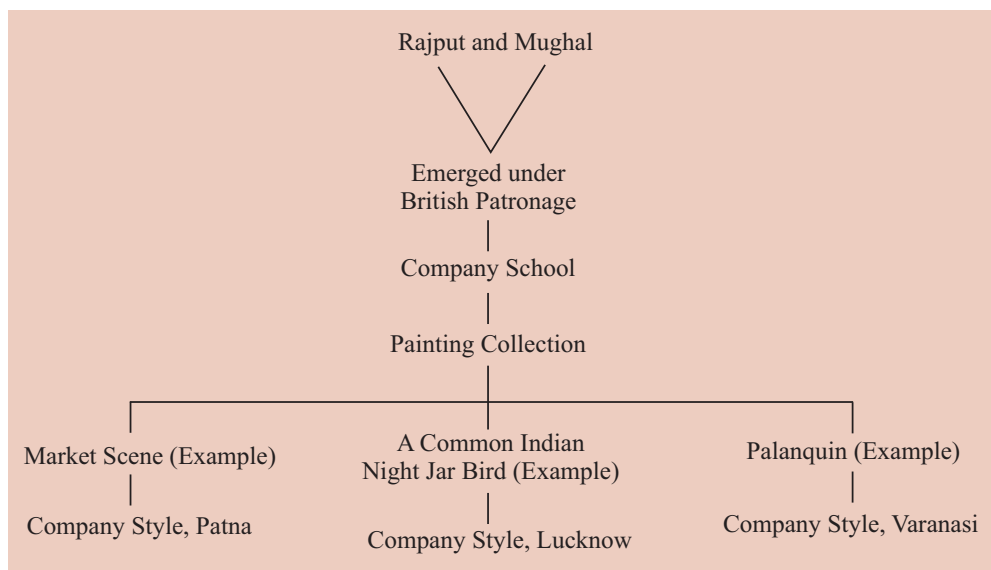


**INTEXT QUESTIONS 10.3**

1. What do you understand by the term ‘Palanquin’?
2. Write the name of the school of this painting?
3. What kind of dress are these palanquin bearers wearing?
4. Palanquin painting is famous for which album or portfolio?



**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**



## LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learner can

- use the traditional western watercolour technique with bold strokes in their own artwork.
- treat; their illustration in opaque water colour on paper.



Notes



## TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Why were Indian artists hired by the Europeans? Explain.
2. What are the subjects of the Company School of Paintings?
3. Describe the characteristics of the Company School of Painting.
4. Name the cities where Company Painting emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries?
5. Write in detail about the origin of the Company Painting
6. Describe the famous painting 'Market Scene' from Patna.
7. Write in detail about the painting from your syllabus, which was mainly done to record the different species of birds and animals new to the British observer.
8. Describe the characteristics of the painting 'Palanquin Bearer' from Varanasi School of Company painting.
9. Write a note on the treatment of colour by Shiv Dayal Lal in his paintings.
10. Write the name of the school of the painting, 'Market Scene'.
11. Write the name of the school of this painting.
12. What medium is used to paint this painting?
13. Name the colors used in the detailing of the bird.
14. Name the person from whose album this painting is taken.
15. Which Mughal Emperor has given a lot of importance to creating an album of flora and fauna?
16. Mention the period of this painting.



## ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

## 10.1

1. Style – Company School.
2. Color – Brown



## MODULE - 2

Historical Appreciation of  
Indian Contemporary and  
Miniature Art



### Notes

3. Medium – Watercolour
4. Technique – Typical watercolour
5. Collection – Metropolitan Museum, New York

### 10.2

1. (i) Shiv Dayal Lal.
2. (iii) Vegetables and grains.
3. (iv) Opaque watercolour on paper.

### 10.3

1. Miyana means Palanquin.
2. Varanasi Company School.
3. Kurta, Dhoti and turban.
4. This painting is taken from the set of forty-two paintings on modes of conveyance and occupation.

### GLOSSARY

Purview	The scope of influence.
Carve	Establish or create.
Dwindle	Diminish in size and strength.
Oblivion	Extinction.
Patronize	Give financial and other support.
Souvenir	Memento.
Recession	Temporary economic decline.
Genre	Style or category.
Miniature	In small format.
Vastness	Immense space.
Subtle	Delicately complex and understated.
Delineate	Describe or portray.
Meticulous	Very careful and precise
Palanquin	A carriage carried by human
Persistent	Continuing firmly or obstinately