



## Company Art

Hello! Everyone welcome to today's episode. Today you will study about the Company School Paintings in India. Here we will discuss about the Paintings which were mainly dedicated towards the documentation of Indian anthropology and its environment. The episode will focus on how these paintings differed from the traditional Indian paintings with respect to their subject matter and techniques employed. The subject expert is Ms. Sonam Chaprana who is active as a painter and printmaker.

### Introduction

**It was during the sixteenth century, when British connections with India begun with a permission to East India Company to trade in the East Indies. The British visitors and Merchants had spread the tales about the Indian luxurious and dazzling palaces with jewels, pearls, ivory and precious stones, the rewards given by the emperors and Nawabs and other alluring elements that attracted many Britishers.**

**The Indian miniature paintings were collected by travellers as souvenirs. These paintings depicting the beauties of Indian environment have attracted many European artists to capture these subjects in their paintings, but following the picturesque which was then practiced by the British artists. Also the Indian artists fulfilled the demand of time by following the European standards for paintings.**



## **Company School**

**During the early eighteenth and nineteenth century India witnessed a new genre of paintings and prints popularly known as 'Company School'.**

It was so named because it emerged primarily under the patronage of the British East India Company. During the second half of the eighteenth century there was no picture available of India to the rest of the world.

**Between 1770 and 1820 nearly sixty British painters had visited India who lived and painted for varied durations.** British men and women who visited India, were fascinated by Indian environment and its anthropology. Virtually everything they had seen provided them subjects for their sketching and drawings: costumes, occupations and methods of transport as well as Indian architecture, deities, religious festivals, the colourful costumes, ruins and antiquities etc.

**Apart from the European artists, Indian artists of that time who were hired or assisted the British artists, with declining traditional patronage, fulfilled the growing demand for paintings of flora and fauna. landscapes, historical monuments, Durbar scenes, images of native rulers, trades**



**and occupations, festivals, ceremonies as well as portraits.** The main centres which were under British influence were Patna, Oudh, Calcutta, Murshidabad, Delhi, Agra, Tanjavur and Trichinopoly. **These local artists were aware of the expanding market for these pictures so they began to produce a set of paintings which they soon traded at different public places for British people.**

The aim of these paintings was documentation of India's culture and people, but with the growing requirement of Indian pictures in the market instead of watercolour and oil paintings, artists had started making prints with the same subjects.

### **Characteristics of Company School**

- **Mainly these paintings targeted to impress the European audiences these works were compiled into album constituted genre as Company Paintings.**
- **The Britishers wanted a souvenir which could capture the Indian environment.**
- **The local artists who were employed by British were the same who worked for the Mughals and other Indian court painters.**
- **The main centres which were under British influence were Patna Oudh, Calcutta, Murshidabad, Delhi, Agra, Tanjavur and Trichinopoly.**



- **These paintings were basically done for the documentation of the Indian architecture, people of different regions, Flora and Fauna etc.**
- **The paintings are generally against a flat background and are in set of paintings compiled as an album.**
- **The Indian painters went on portraying the tradesmen and craftsmen of familiar town and village, men and women wearing the characteristic dresses of their concerned region, scenes from the trades, agriculture, Indian deities, a wedding, and a festival.**
- **The Portrait paintings were influenced by the European prevailing style as these were purposely made for the British clients as a result, there was no Indian element in these works except some.**
- **Familiar Baroque style can be seen with same fall of drapery or curtains, pillars, table and their appearance in the paintings, portrait of judges and civil servants with very less Indian landscape setting can be noticed in these paintings.**
- **Some of the Indian elements which appear in these portrait paintings are a draped curtain is drawn aside to reveal an elephant, a palm tree, a classical mansion with deep verandahs and venetian shutters peculiar to India, a**



**servant standing at the side or holding a horse, etc.**

- **Landscape painting and prints were done considering the picturesque element in them.**
- **Techniques used during Company period are Oil painting**  
**Watercolour, Drawing and pencil shading, Wood Engraving, Metal Engraving, Etching, Aquatint and Lithography.**
- **Camera Obscura was used by the European artist for the preparatory sketches.**

### **Techniques used during Company period**

- **Oil painting:** It is a process of painting with pigments suspended in drying oils. Commonly used oils include Linseed oil, walnut oil and poppy oil, etc.. Opaque, transparent, and translucent paintings, all of these can be achieved with this medium and even textural variations can be created. Oil paints are applied with brushes or palette knife usually on a canvas.
- **Watercolour:** watercolour pigments are bound with a binder called gum Arabic. The pigments are water soluble and are applied with a brush on a



paper. The pigments are ordinarily transparent but can be made opaque by mixing with a whiting and in this form is known as body colour, or gouache.

- **Pen Drawing and pencil shading:** Sketches were prepared with pencils on paper.
- **Metal Engraving:** Lines are directly incised into a copper plate with a sharp pointed tool called a burin. The curls of copper displaced at the sides of the furrows are cleaned away with a scraper, leaving a clear printable surface.
- **Etching:** A metal plate is coated with varnish-like "ground" that is acid resistant. The drawing is made by scratching through this layer with a needle tool, exposing areas of metal. The plate is immersed in acid until the exposed lines are sufficiently bitten, producing grooves in the metal that will retain the ink. The ground is removed, and the plate is ready to be inked and printed.
- **Aquatint:** Fine particles of acid-resistant resin are deposited on the plate and heated so they stick onto the surface. The plate is submerged in acid which bites into the plate around each particle. The tiny depressions retain the ink and when printed to give the effect of a soft grain comparable to watercolour.
- **Lithograph:** The process of printing from a plane surface (as a smooth stone or metal plate) on which the image to be printed is ink-receptive and the blank area ink repelling. A method based on the principle that water and grease repel each



other. The image is drawn on a stone (or certain types of plates) with a greasy crayon or ink. Water adheres to the bare stone and not the greasy areas, while the printing ink rolled on sticks to the greasy areas and not the wet stone-reproducing the image on paper when put through the press with it.

**Company school Paintings were categorized into two types of Painting which were done by European Artist and Indian artists during the colonial rule in India.**

### **Contribution by Indians Artists**

**The Company paintings which were done by the Indian artists were flourished mainly in areas of Calcutta, Patna, Murshidabad, Oudh, Delhi, Agra, Tanjore and Trichinopoly.** These areas were more under the influence of the Britishers who served as clients for the artist families in those areas. **The Britishers who were influenced by the varied flora and fauna, Indian architecture, people of different regions, wanted it captured on papers as tokens and souvenirs of India.** This demand was fulfilled by the Indian artists who served it with great zeal and also moulded themselves according to the taste of their clients.

**The paintings are generally against a flat background and are in set of paintings compiled as an album. The Indian painters went on**



**portraying the tradesmen and craftsmen of the bazaar, blacksmith, water carriers, carpenters, fish sellers, bangle sellers, etc. Familiar town and village sites were also painted elephants, horse cart, bullock carts, pilgrims, milkmen, women in their household, duties or gathering at the temple for worship, men and women wearing the characteristic dresses of their concerned regions.**

**Following are the significant areas where Company school paintings were practiced.**

### **Patna**

During the rule of Aurangzeb many artists had migrated to Patna as a result of his dislike for art and his anti-Hindu policy. These artists had continued to work in the Mughal style, even after that. **Unlike Mughal painting whose subjects were mainly royalty and court scenes, painters of Patna Kalam were deeply influenced by everyday of common masses. Their main subjects were bazaar scenes, local rulers, local festival and ceremonies. Some famous painters of Patna Kalam were Sewak Ram, Hulas Lal, Shiv Lal, Shiva Dayal, Mahadeo Lal and Ishwari Prasad Verma.**

**Much of artist from Murshidabad had migrated to Patna where these were employed by the British for the documentation as well for preparing paintings for them. Soon Patna became the main**



**centre for art and also company paintings are known as 'Patna Kalam'.**

### **Delhi and Agra**

**By about 1825, Documentation of Mughal architecture and other structures were mainly done by artists like Mazhar Ali Khan, Gulam Ali Khan, Faiz Ali Khan, Jivan Ram, Bhawani Das who had also contributed to different subject related to the Delhi and Agra region and its anthropology. Monuments are shown against a plain background which has no similarity to the traditional Indian style of paintings. Apart from the architectural drawings there was one more type of painting which was popular in the form of long scroll paintings showing the procession scenes of rulers.**

### **Madras**

**Madras was one of the earliest centres of the British settlements in India. A long time after the British settlement, it was during early the nineteenth century, many artists were recognized as floweriest. Here also the local artists changed themselves according to the demand of British taste and soon the Images of deities and religious content was missing from the subjects of the Local artists. They started depicting the local trades and castes. During the nineteenth century Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff, Governor of Madras employed an artist known as Rangia Raju,**



**a flower painting artist for two years for preparing an album of Plants Drawings.**

## **Calcutta**

**During the early nineteenth century the British started settling in Calcutta and soon they started employing Indian artists for painting subjects which interest them. Like Natural history subjects which were interest of residents like Sir Elijah and Lady Impey.**

**One of the skilled known local artists was Shaikh Muhammad Amir, who had painted houses, servants, dogs, carriage horses etc. also E. C Das was another artist from Calcutta who specialized with the same subjects as Shaikh Muhammad did. European professional painters began to come to Calcutta in the early nineteenth century.**

## **Murshidabad**

**Company paintings developed in Murshidabad around the late eighteenth century. The paintings done were portraits of Nawabs and Raagmal subjects. The miniature portrait paintings on paper which were done around late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The work was divided into three principal categories: festivities, topography and gentlemen's houses. Subjects like Diwali, Muharram, Ganesh Puja, Kali Puja, weddings and**



**hunting scenes were depicted. Dip Chand and Sita Ram were among the known artists who had executed a large number of social scenes. Use of Lavish white can be seen as well as use of watercolour and sepia tones were adopted to attract the British.**

### **Trichinopoly**

**Company paintings developed on a large scale in South India. Many sketchbooks which are now a part of collections showed that the local Indian artists had associated and had done commission works for the British.** Works like an album of Natural history drawings, collection of William Jackson, registrar of supreme court, Calcutta, Drawings from Nature by a native artist at Trichinopoly in 1785. **Mootoo Kistnath was the first landscape artist at Trichinopoly who had contributed with many paintings.**

### **Oudh**

**Oudh has two Muslim cultural centres: Lucknow and Faizabad.** Faizabad was given emphasis and made capital of Oudh by Nawab Shuja Ud Daula. Many artists and writers from Delhi migrated to Faizabad. **Tilly kettle's who had been working for Nawab Daula, had influenced many Indian painters who**



**have copied his oil paintings. Mihr Chand from Lucknow is known for making at least six miniature works after Kettle.** Many European artists like Renaldi, George Beechey has worked for Shuja's Successors. During the early nineteenth century there were many specimens available for the Indian artists to study or copy. Later, many paintings were done with procession scenes were done, one of these was done by Sah Mukkan Lal. **The Oudh style of paintings were executed in watercolour in pale shades of pink, yellow and green, which were painted by Indian traditional artist. Designs of furniture, documentation of Mughal architecture, costumes and court dancers were painted.**

### **Tanjore**

Company period paintings were widely commissioned by British residents. European artists practiced these paintings into albums containing images. **The ruler of Tanjore, Sarabhoji, has also retained a group of artist to make natural history drawings of birds and animals. The local artists were also trained in the western techniques which were used by the artists during the period. These paintings which were produced according to the taste of the British clients were based on themes like costumes, trades, religion, etc. and also these local artists were hired by the British officials for assisting them in survey works and architectural studies of South India. The portrait paintings of Tanjore were mainly done of popular rulers like**



**Tulsaji, Amar Singh and Sarabhoji over the years. Tanjore Paintings were first influenced by the Hyderabad which depicted rulers, against a plain bright coloured background like green, blue or yellow with turbulent cloud across the top. Images of people of different castes were depicted against a plain background of lime yellow or plain bright blue with shadows on the ground . Towards 19<sup>th</sup> century more realistic approach can be seen.**

### **Works contributed by European Artists**

**The Indian images were sketched in a large number by the British people during their stay and through different channels these sketches of India were turning into subjects of British paintings. Subjects were the same as depicted by the Indian artists, i.e. the Indian ways of living and the environment.**

**With the visit of European professional artists who went on portraying paintings of Indian Nawabs and Raja's and almost all important officials of the East India Company with their environs and sometimes depicting a few of Indian elements were painted. Also the landscapes which were done during this period are known for their Picturesque quality and European standards which were applied to these paintings later, these original paintings were sent back and these were produced in numbers in the form of prints and a collection of albums.**



## Portraits

### Tilly Kettle 1735-1786

**Tilly Kettle was the first portrait painter who came to India and worked in India from 1769 to 1776.** He was born in London 1735 and had training under his father who was a house painter. **He was permitted by the East India Company to go to India as a Painter in 1769.** In stayed and worked for two years in Madras then later moved to Bengal. **He had done portraits of authorities like Captain Peter Mariette, Alexander Davidson, his style suited to the Portraiture of naval officers, merchants, company servants and the military of polished elegance. Towards the end of 1771, he moved to Calcutta where he was invited by Nawab of Oudh ,Shuja ud Daula who employed him for one year.** Notably, he portrayed the leading figures of the region, both British and Indian. He left for England from Calcutta in 1776.

### John Zoffany 1733-1810

**John Zoffany arrived in Calcutta in 1783, at this time he was more mature, confident and was well known than Kettle, Willison and Serton for his Paintings.** He was born near Frankfurt, Germany and he was the court painter of King George III and fellow of Royal Academy who was influenced and inspired by the tales of riches and wealth of Bengal. **He first arrived at Madras and for next six years he travelled between Calcutta to Lucknow. These drawing and sketches that he had done during his**



**stay gives an account of pictorial information of the British rule in India during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.**

### **George Chinnery**

**He worked in India from 1802 to 1825. Among all the other portrait painters who visited India he was the one who dedicated truly to his works to Indian subjects.** He had earned his learning by doing portraits for what he was known for but simultaneously, he had done landscapes of the countryside for his own pleasure and interest. **He is said to be observed the Indian Villages with Microscopic eye, which has captured every little detail like the Bullocks loosed from their yokes graze by the wayside, mud huts with broken thatch, village stony and muddy paths chickens scratch, and the villagers carrying water pots on their heads or washing their clothes etc.** This realism was practiced carefully and faithfully by Chinnery in India, which was practiced by British artist of that time.

### **Landscape paintings and Prints**

#### **William Hodges**

**William Hodges (1744-97) who travelled to India between (1780-83) is known for his Indian views that he had captured in his art works.** Hodges received permission from the East India Company to travel across India as an artist in 1778. **He was a fine observer and was the first professional landscape artist to visit sub-continent. In India, Hodges**



**was fascinated by the Effect of light, and different shapes that he saw around him like those of boats, the climate of India, and architectural forms in different climatic conditions. Hodges depicted many places for the very first time like Jaunpur, Benaras, Fatehpur Sikri and Agra in his works.** Hodges continued to work from his Indian sketches even after his return to England. **His compositions were perfectly expressed the picturesque quality with their exaggerated proportion and foreshortened perspective.**

### **William Daniell and Thomas Daniell**

**Daniell brothers published engravings and etchings on "Views of Calcutta" during 1786 and 1788 employing the newly invented process of aquatint. Thomas Daniell (1749-1840) and William Daniell (1769-1837) were two artists who travelled around the country, making sketches and watercolours which they took back to England where they produced the famous six volume series of aquatints, Oriental Scenery.** They went to the innermost areas of India and studied the culture and environment of eighteenth century India from 1786-1793. The Daniells was trying to capture every little detail that they see around. The Daniells planned to commercially exploit their artistic work in India for which they produced a multiple set of prints. **Their handcoloured aquatint engravings have documented many of India's most famous building sites like the temples at Thanjavur and Gaya, the forts at Rohthasgarh**



and Allahabad, the Taj Mahal and the British residences at Madras and Calcutta, scenic wonders such as waterfalls, forested hills or the distant snows of the Himalayas. They were commissioned to produce Wales's view of Ellora, western Indian rock cut sites. Daniells undoubtedly used the best technology of their time to obtain exact perspective control. They have used the camera Obscura to draw speedy preparatory sketches for their work.

### **Francois Balthazar Solvyns**

The Flemish artist Francois Balthazar Solvyns lived in Calcutta from 1791 to 1803. He got permission from the East India Company to travel across the places and he documented the Indian anthropology with his sketches and drawings. His collection of etchings of the Hindus provides a rich and varied portrait of India from the past two hundred years ago. These remarkable prints, depicted the people of Bengal in their occupations, festivals, and daily life. Unlike the Daniells he adapted to record the native quarter of Calcutta, then referred as Black town. He has also drawn different musical instruments as well as various pipes used for smoking, servants, costumes, musical instruments, means of transportation (carts, palanquins, and boats), fakirs, and festivals in his works. F.B Solvyns left India and he went to France, accompanied by his wife.

### **William Baillie**



William Baillie had followed the Daniells for the choice of his subjects so he also concentrated on white Calcutta. The only extant picture of Military Orphan's School, Howrah, is the only picture of that suburban during those times.

### **James Baillie Fraser**

**James Baillie Fraser Published *his Views of Calcutta and its Environs, 1826*, which were drawn between 1813-17 and were published as aquatints during the year 1824 and 1826.** His subjects varied from the others, mainly the urban sophistication of Calcutta. The whole idea of picturesque was applied to these compositions, making them less Indian and more British type.

### **Sir Charles D'Oyly**

**Sir Charles D'Oyly had served the East India Company during 1798-1837. He was posted in Calcutta, Dacca and in Patna where he had drawn sketches of people and places.** While he was in Dacca (1808 to 1812) he had taken lesson from Chinnery and before arriving at Patna he had published three Books of engraving. He had painted many views of Calcutta, which were published after his death as Views of Calcutta and Environs, 1848. During his post at Patna, **Sir Charles D'Oyly set up Behar Amateur Lithographic press in 1828 where he had published his poems and sketches. The press Published drawings and sketches of the members**



**of the club 'The Behar school of Athens' which was organized by Oily in a Patna periodical known as The Behar Amateur Lithographic scrapbook.** With the help of one of his friends Christopher Webb Smith, who was active as an amateur naturalist both of them contributed to the work produced. **Jairam Das, a local was appointed as a helper and had also transferred D'Oily's sketches to litho stones.**

**There were only few collectors who had seriously collected the Indian work of art practiced under the patronage of Britishers like Richard Johnson, James Fergusson, John Baillie, John Bardoe, Elliott, Jonathan Scott, Robert Clive, Sir Gore and sir William Ousley, Warren Hasting and William Kirk, Patrick.** These collections give an overall account of prevailing situations and conditions of the British Rule in India. A large number of these works are present in Victoria and Albert Museum British Library and Indian office Library.

**The Company school moved gradually towards its end with the arrival of photography in the 1840's which has reduced the demand of paintings among the European admirers. Many of these practicing artists had adapted to photography. The Growing reliability of photography had made the East India Company to replace its draftsmen with photographers. The Mediums which were used for recording the oriental life were now replaced by real looking Images which can be sent and received around the globe.**

