



# A Review on the Flora Floral Paintings of India

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## Abstract

Art and Paintings of ancient India depicted the Culture, tradition and rich heritage of India. They were also the best modes of expression recreating the environment and era of the past. Various types of Indian Paintings like Cave paintings, Moghul Paintings, Himanchali Paintings, Madhubani Paintings and Rajasthani Paintings, all displayed a wide variety of flowers, plants, vegetation and Flora. However they all had unique styles, colours variation and specific manner of representation that made each one of them strikingly different from others. The following paper discusses these variations in detail and also specifies their characteristic features. The paper also discusses the highlights of various paintings and their significance in the life of common man during their own period.

Key Words- Flora, Paintings, Flowers, Vegetation, Moghul, Cave, Madhubani, Rajasthani, Himanchali

Art is the best expression of Man since ages. Through Art, the artist exhibits his inner feelings and perception about a topic. He tries to portray and discuss through images, the various issues of contemporary times. The artist shares his whole experience through the framework of paintings.

The Early Man when began with agriculture (after shifting from nomadic life to a settled life in caves and after the primary shift from Hunting to agriculture in occupation) (Singh, 2010), he depicted plants in terms of lines drawn on the walls and were known as Cave Paintings. He probably carved the plant figures out of sharpened stones or perhaps used vegetable dyes and pigments to paint strokes of leaves. Vermillion obtained from *Bixa orellana* L. plant was perhaps used to paint red while turmeric was used for the yellow pigment. Green plants yield Chlorophyll which was used for green colour. Another striking point of importance is that he generally used dark pigments for colouring his paintings. The first few plants ever to be used as food were Rice, Jowar, Wheat (Zimmer, 2015). The early ancient man respected Nature and was largely dependent on mother Earth for food, livelihood, shelter and clothing. This is absolutely evident in his paintings also. His day to day life is brought alive through the Cave Paintings. The plants and Florals depicted in Cave paintings are quite different from those drawn during the Mughal times or later period.

In the Moghul paintings, the flowers used to be depicted in their miniature form, as in miniature paintings, where in florals were seen as part of gardens, prints of textiles and clothings of the royals and the general public. However, it is only in Monographs that a complete flower along with the entire plant is drawn in entirety. It is brilliant to see that even the minutest details of the plant has been covered in monographic drawings. During

the Mughal regime, particularly in the time of Jahangir and Shahjahan, when artisans were encouraged, complete Journals with series of Drawings were dedicated to single Plants as a whole. It was as if to study the plants in complete entirety. The Florals, folded petals various coloured green leaves, the Complete tree with waded off leaves and the entire Landscape was drawn and paintings dedicated to Nature seem to pay respect to Goddess Earth. The profound beauty, and the complete look of the drawings revealed the acute observation of the artists and exhibited the finess and touch of glory as seen through the choice of colours, backgrounds, paints, etc. that they painted. The paintings actually brought alive the complete scenario of the gardens and transponded the viewers to the actual garden scene. Such was the beauty of the paintings of the Moghul Period. Some painters like Mansur and Muran had a flair for painting so much so that they were hired by the royal kings to patronize art and painting (Singhania, 2016). Mansur has painted monologues on Lilies. He by and large had also drawn monologues on animals like Deer, Antelope, Peacock, Cocks, etc. amongst the animals while in plants the most commonly drawn ones are the Roses, Lotuses, Lilies, Banana, Palms, Grasses, Deciduous trees, all Bell Shaped Flowers, etc.

In the Cave Paintings of Ajanta and Ellora, Lord Buddha is compared to the Flower Lotus (Huntington & Huntington, 2014). He was painted as holding the Lotus flower. This is considered equivalent to Lord Buddha who is the epitome of Wisdom, Beauty and Simplicity. The colours used generally are red, yellow, orange and black.

In the Himanchali Paintings, the flowers are generally depicted as twigs. Himanchali paintings were made using vibrant colours and dark shades.

In Madhubani Paintings, mostly the lines and stripes are used to draw flowers and plants. Some common plants drawn are Lotus, Tulsi, Banana Plantain, and Coconuts. Generally the white and Black shades are commonly used to draw lines and stripes. At times, orange and red are used to fill in colours.

The Rajasthani paintings and their Murals too are a bliss to watch. Most of the times, their themes revolved around Lord Krishna and Radha, the Hunt, the Court Rooms or the Portraits of the Kings. The florals are used as prints for textiles and fabrics. The flowers are used to depict the vibrancy and continuity in life. Variety of colours are employed in Rajasthani Miniatures. Greens, Browns, Reds, Yellows, Oranges, Pink, White and Black are the common shades used in Miniatures. The trees are painted green but the leaves are made with contrast colours of white or black. They are shown as spots or patches spread against a background of green. The eyes of the figures in Rajasthani Paintings are enlarged and compared to the flowers of Lotus which are pink and have pointed and sharp edged petals. These petals are compared to the eyes and a parallel is drawn from them with regard to beauty and colour.

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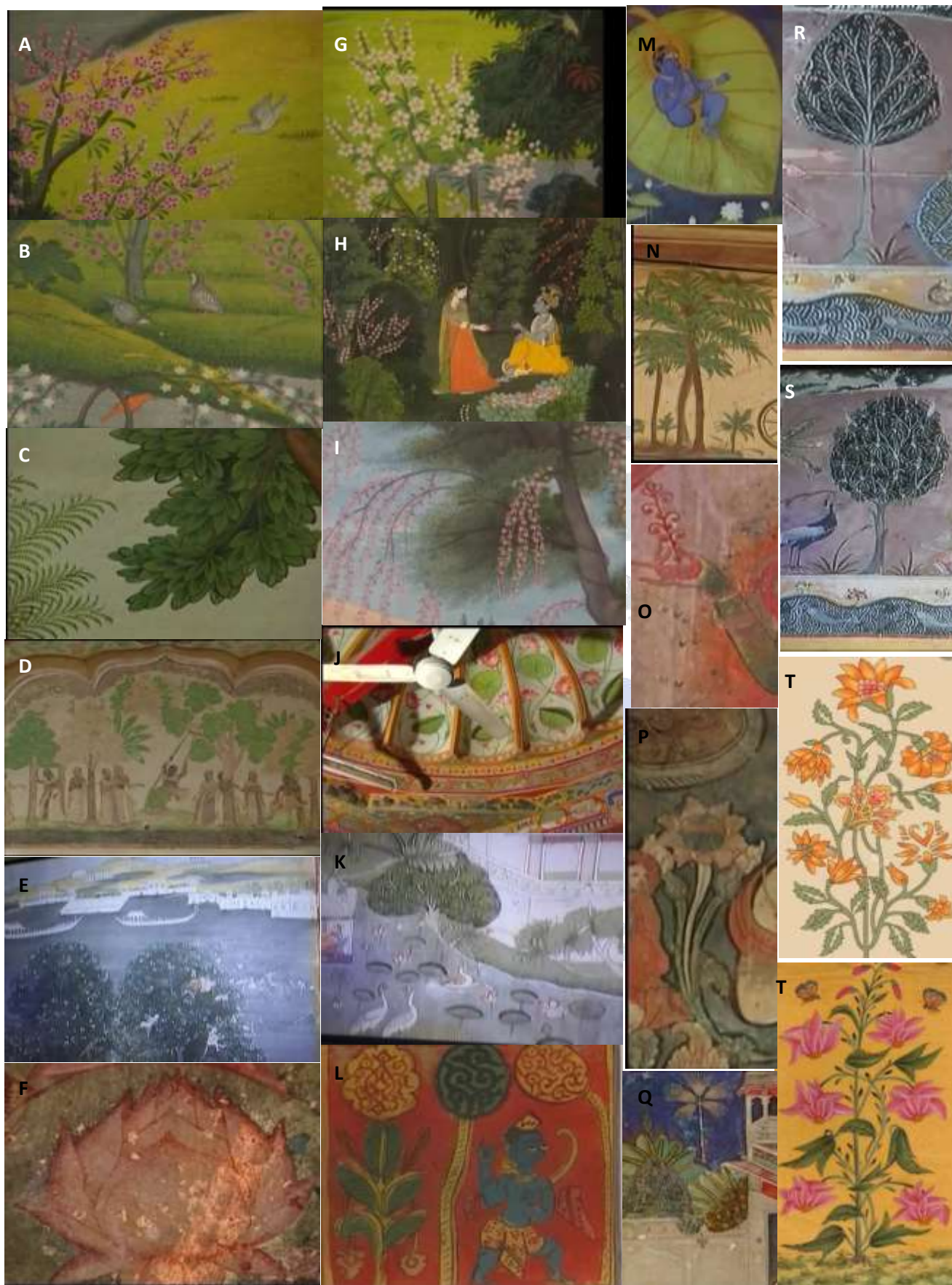


FIG 1 Flowers and Flora In Indian Paintings