

## MURAL AND PRINTING

In the previous lesson, we learnt about drawing and painting with a dry medium. In this lesson, we will learn about Mural and Printing.

Man, thought to be the most intelligent of beings, first began to draw and paint images to communicate his ideas to other human beings when there was no spoken language. The history of art is, in a way, the documentation of the aspirations and values of mankind. As evident from the rock paintings, human beings have been painting for more than 30,000 years. Beginning with primitive themes and techniques, mural art (a **mural** is any artwork painted or applied directly on a wall, ceiling or an other large permanent surface.) developed along with the human race. From the early rock paintings depicting a hunting scene, the ancient murals in Ajanta, Ellora, Bagh, Badami and Sittalavasal (100 CE - 600 CE) to contemporary wall art, mural art has come a long way indeed. Mural art now includes large panels later stuck on a wall or ceiling permanently. Its chief mediums are fresco, tempera, oil colour, watercolour, engraving and glass. Printing is a centuries-old technique which has its roots in folk art.

Common people used rudimentary printing to decorate walls, floors, terracotta ware and even their bodies for certain rituals. They used natural colours and their palms and fingertips to create murals on walls and floors. Gradually they began to use various vegetables, clay, stone and wood for making blocks to create elaborate designs. Over the ages, printing developed into a textile-printing technique using blocks with raised printing surfaces, which were inked and then pressed onto the fabric to create fancy sheets and dress material. The technique was further developed to print documents and books.



### OBJECTIVES

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

- describe the different techniques of printing;

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- describe the materials required and media used for different techniques;
- differentiate the differences between the different techniques;
- use these techniques in their work;
- develop their creative skills;
- appreciate the painting of Ajanta.

### 14.1 MURAL - AJANTA

Dear learner, first, you must know about mural painting.

#### Basic Introduction

The Ajanta caves came to light in 1819 when a British Army officer John Smith accidentally discovered the entrance to Cave No. 10 deep within the tangled



Fig. 14.1: Padmapani Bodhisattva



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undergrowth while hunting a tiger. Within a few decades, the caves became famous for their unique paintings. These caves had been excavated in different periods (2nd century B.C. - 6th century A.D.) in a horse-shoe-shaped bend of rock surface. There are 29 caves in Ajanta, including an unfinished one. Out of these, five (cave no. 9, 10, 19, 26, and 29) are *Chaityagrihas* where religious discourses were conducted, and the rest are *viharas* or living quarters for the monks. Though all the caves had been painted, today, only caves 1, 2, 9, 11, 16 and 17 have discernible murals; the rest have been lost due to neglect and the ravages of time. The general theme of the paintings on the ceilings, walls and pillars of the caves is the depiction of various Jataka stories, the Bodhisattvas (enlightened being/a person who is able to reach nirvana but delays doing so through compassion for suffering beings) and incidents associated with the life of Buddha. The ceiling decoration invariably consists of decorative patterns, geometrical as well as floral. The variety of subjects, the details in the paintings, the dexterity in rock cutting and the architectural finesse suggest that before they renounced it, the monks had known the world and its processes well.

Title	:	<b>Padmapani Bodhisatva</b>
Medium	:	Mud plaster on the wall and natural colours
Size	:	174 cm
Period	:	2nd to 6th CCE
Collection	:	Ajanta Cave no. 1, Aurangabad, Maharashtra
Mural	:	Padmapani Bodhisattva

### General Description

This lifesize mural in Cave 1 is a marvel of Indian painting. The delicate and elegant Bodhisattva is adorned with classic Indian jewellery fit for a man of noble birth. He is adorned with pearls, amethyst, lapis lazuli and other gems. On his head is a magnificent crown, which at some point was very likely coloured in rich detail but has faded now. The crown signifies his royal lineage. The blue lotus blossom in his right hand (and this is why he is named Padmapani, in Sanskrit *Padma* is the lotus blossom and *Pani* is the hand) represents his spiritual awakening. His eyes are lowered in a meditative state. His calm, fine-featured face, his proportionate body, and his stance confirm the ideals of the refined man set by the ideals of the Bodhisattva. The harmonious lines, the combination of jewel and earth tones, the composition of the mural underline the high sophistication of the artist, Hammer and chisel to create a surface for the mural.

The craftsmen first created an almost plane surface on the rockface with a chisel and hammer. Then the surface was prepared with a rough layer of earth mixed with

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rock-grit or sand, vegetable fibres, paddy husk, grass. A second coat of mud mixed with fine rock powder or sand and fine fibrous vegetable material was then applied over it. The surface was finally finished with a thin coat of lime wash. Over this surface, outlines were drawn boldly then the spaces were filled with requisite colours.

The Ajanta painters had a limited range of colours at their disposal. Colours and shades utilised vary from red and yellow ochre, terra verte, to lime, kaolin, gypsum, lamp black and lapis lazuli. Some vegetable colours have also been used.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.1

Choose the most appropriate option.

1. What is the total number of caves at Ajanta?  
(i) 30 caves (ii) 20 caves  
(iii) 10 caves (iv) 5 caves
2. What is the medium of the mural?  
(i) Wash (ii) Tempera  
(iii) Ink (iv) All of these

### 14.2 PRINTING

We have learnt about mural art, now let us know the block printing.

#### Basic Information

Blocks for printing are made with wood, rubber, wax, soap etc. The desired figure is traced on the flat surface, and the superfluous parts are carved away. Normally black or coloured ink is used for printing. Depending on what they are made with, blocks could be used for years. The advantage of the block printing technique is that a large number of copies can be created in a short time. And all copies are uniform.

Block printing could be used for making products like greeting cards, gifts, stationery, paper bags, and lamp shades. The list is endless. This system of printing does not require the images to be finished separately.

Title	:	<b>Linocut</b>
Medium	:	Block print with linocut
Period	:	Contemporary
Artist	:	Unknown
Collection	:	Private



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**Fig. 14.2: Linocut**

### General Description

This print is a harmonious blend of floral motifs and script. There is an inner balance in the combination and juxtaposition of curves and straight lines, floral and geometric shapes. The print gives a feel of being three-dimensional. The use of more than one colour creates an ambience of vibrancy. The design for printing has been engraved on a linoleum block.

The design is carved on a lino block with a knife. Once the carving is finished, colour is spread on a flat surface. The carved surface of the block is brought in contact with the colour and lifted. The block is then gently pressed onto the drawing sheet to create the imprint, and then lifted.

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**INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.2**

1. What are printing blocks made of?
2. How many times could a block use?
3. In printing linocut, how many steps are involved in finishing the print?

**14.3 PRINTING WITH VEGETABLES**

Now, you will learn a very interesting artwork, printing with vegetables.

**Basic Information**

This technique is used when the same shape is repeated repeatedly, but very slight changes in shape are acceptable. Potato/ yam/ sweet potato, okra/ ladyfinger, capsicum/ bell pepper, onion, and lotus stem are cut cross-section-wise to obtain decorative shapes and used as blocks. The figures thus printed are similar but not the same. For example, okra/ladyfinger, capsicum/bell pepper, and lotus stem when cut cross-section-wise, yield pretty floral shapes. Beautiful designs could be created by placing them in different combinations. A large potato/yam/sweet potato cut length- or cross-section-wise could be used for making a block for



**Fig. 14.3: Printing with Vegetables**

printing numerals, letters or simple shapes. Care needs to be taken to carve mirror images of the numerals and letters, so the numerals or letters come out right in print.

Title	:	<b>Print with Vegetable Blocks</b>
Medium	:	Printing with vegetable blocks
Period	:	Contemporary
Artist	:	Unknown
Collection	:	Private

**Notes**

### General Description

The work has been created combining different floral, leaf and animal shapes. The blocks for this have been made using cross sections of okra/ladyfinger, capsicum/bell pepper, lotus stem and potato/ yam/ sweet potato. The flowers and leaves look real, and so do the tortoises printed with capsicum/ bell pepper block. A good model of a simple technique. Okra/ladyfinger, capsicum/ bell pepper, and lotus stem were cut in cross sections to make blocks for printing. The blocks were dipped in colour and gently pressed onto the sheet to create impressions. The leaf print was created with a potato/ yam/ sweet potato block; another potato block was made for printing the script/word. Care was taken to carve the mirror image of the word in reverse so the image would come out right. Paint and brush have been used for turning capsicum/ bell pepper impressions into tortoises and join the floral and leaf shapes to create images of plants.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.3

1. How does this technique make the creation of images easy?
2. Which vegetable is used for making blocks for printing letters/numerals?

### 14.4 PRINTING WITH FINGERS AND THUMB

Now, let us learn to create images of impressions using thumb and finger on the paper.

#### Basic Information

This simple and easy technique uses the thumb and finger impressions for creating images using ink, watercolour, oil colour, poster or acrylic colours. It offers great

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variety and creativity. The tip of the finger or the thumb is smeared with colour and pressed onto the surface to be painted. This leaves a textured image on the surface, which could be given a new form using a few pencil, pen or brush strokes. This technique can be used for painting different kinds of materials to make tasteful utility and decorative products.



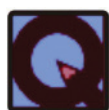
**Fig. 14.4: Bear, Tiger and Birds**

Title : **Bear, Tiger and Birds**  
Medium : Thumbprinting  
Period : Contemporary  
Collection : Private



**General Description**

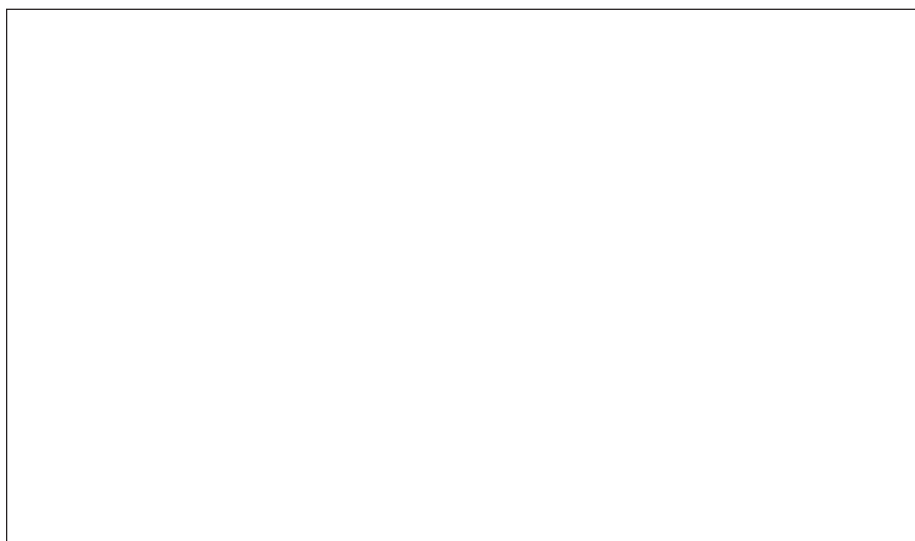
The figures created using thumb, palm, and sole impressions are lively and interesting. The print's texture adds dimension and makes the images life-like. The birds roosting on a tree branch have been created with thumbprints. Judicious brush strokes have turned a few thumb prints into a lively flock of birds in the conference. The bear and tiger have been created using sole and palm impressions, respectively. Brushwork has been used to develop the outline into full-fledged images. The composition and colour combination in work is remarkable. First, thumb and finger impressions were made on the sheet. Then brush strokes were used to turn them into lively birds. A tree branch and leaves painted beneath the birds have made the pretty scene come alive. Similarly, a palm and a sole Impression were turned into a frolicking bear and a startled tiger, respectively.

**Notes****INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.4**

1. Which parts of hand is used in the technique?
2. How is the colour applied in thumb print technique?
3. How is a brush or pen used in print technique?

**ACTIVITY**

Select some vegetables, like lady finger, potato, onion etc. Take an A4 size white art sheet and poster colour. The design for this you will be made using cross sections of lady finger, potato, onion etc. These are dipped in wet colour and gently pressed onto the sheet to create a balanced composition.



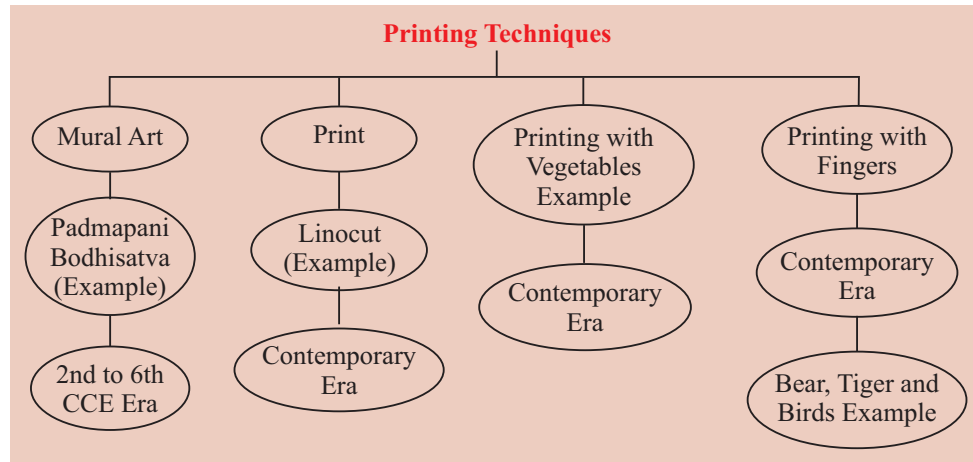
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**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**



**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The learner can

- use the printing technique in their artwork;
- use the block printing techniques to decorate their houses, dresses and other objects.



**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Describe the different techniques and mediums of mural making.
2. Why and how did printing come into existence?
3. Write in detail the different techniques of printing.
4. Explain the vegetables used for block printing.
5. List in detail the uses of printing.
6. Why are letters/numerals carved in reverse?
7. How is printing technique different from other technique?
8. Which cave is the site of the Padmapani Bodhisattva?
9. How were the white, green and yellow colours made for this mural?
10. Why is the particular figure named padmapani Bodhisattva?



## ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

### 14.1

1. (i) 30 caves
2. (ii) Tempera

### 14.2

1. Blocks for printing are made with materials like wood, rubber, wax, soap etc.
2. Depending on what they are made with, blocks could be used for years, and uniform copies could be created in large numbers.
3. The system of printing allows the images to be finished in one go.

### 14.3

1. This technique makes the creation of images easy because the same block can be used for making several copies quickly.
2. Potato/ yam/ sweet potato is used for making blocks for printing letters/ numerals.

### 14.4

1. The thumb and fingers of the hand are used in this technique.
2. In this technique, colour is first applied to fingertips and then pressed onto the surface.
3. In this technique, a brush or pen is used to finish the work.

## GLOSSARY

Jataka	Stories of Buddha's earlier births
Lapis Lazuli	A Glue green rock to use as the pigment of colour
ambience	surrounding
Dexterity	deftness
Finesse	skill, elegance



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