



# SIX LIMBS OF INDIAN PAINTING



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# INTRODUCTION



- Painting (*Alekhyam*) occupies the fourth place among the 64 Arts enumerated by Vatsyayana in his Kama Sutra. While concluding, Vatsyayana has written a Shloka which amply indicated that painting was fully developed during that period and the six limbs of Painting (Shadangas) enumerated in the Kama Sutra were already in vogue.
- The Shadanga and Chitrasutra traditions are two important frameworks in ancient Indian art that are connected to ancient Indian paintings. They provide guidelines and principles for the creation and appreciation of paintings.

# SHADANGA TRADITION



- The Shadanga tradition, also known as the Six Limbs or Six Canons of Indian Painting, is a set of six components or aspects that define the holistic approach to the creation and appreciation of paintings. These components are mentioned in the ancient treatise on Indian painting, the Vishnudharmottara Purana.
- The word “SADANGA” consists of two words, one is “Shad” means “Six” & the other is “Anga” means “Part”.
- ‘***Shadang***’ or the six limbs of **Indian Art** find their first mention in *Vatsyayana’s* celebrated text *Kama Sutra*. *Shadang* weaves the language of an art work. It defines the principles of creation of an artwork. It mirrors the limbs of art, without which an art work is deficient.



**“Roopabhedah pramanani bhava-lavanya-yojanam |  
Sadrishyam varnakabhangam iti chitramn shadakam ||”**

This Shloka enumerates the six limbs of Indian Art

- Rupa-bheda (secrets of form),
- Pramanani (proportion),
- Bhava (emotional Disposition),
- Lavanya-yojanam (gracefulness in composition),
- Sadrisyam (‘similitude’)
- Varnika-bhanga (colourdifferentiation).

# *Rupa-bheda (Secrets of Form)*



- Rupa – bheda presupposes accurate draughtsmanship and the importance of Form. It stresses on the Physical typologies of form.
- It not only stresses on the knowledge of form (Rupa) but also on the subtle and stark difference of forms.
- For instance a work must be articulate enough to let the ordinary eye decipher between a dead man and a sleeping man.

# *Pramanani (Proportion)*



- The manifestation of form must be guarded by the power of Pramanani (proportion).
- It emphasises on perception, measurement and structure.
- It provides an insight into the structural anatomy of objects.

# *Bhava (Emotional Disposition)*



- Bhava- yojana speaks about the emotion, a feeling or an intention.
- It eulogizes the expression of emotions; the formless.
- Bhava are of two types, covert i.e. the hidden emotions and overt i.e. revealed emotions.

# *Lavanya-yojanam (Gracefulness in Composition)*



- Lavanya, an extremely essential limb of Indian art stands for 'Grace'. Its importance can be illustrated through the example of a meal/curry rich in all flavours and spices save the salt. Just as the curry loses its charm without the salt, so does a painting without lavanya.
- The Indian Yakshi sculptures at Kajorao and Konark are a hallmark of Lavanya. Here the Yakshi of Didarganj deserves a special mention for its unparalleled beauty and poise. This life size statue is one of the most remarkable pieces of Mauryan art. It is an ideal example where its creator has truly infused grace in her beauty.



# *Sadrishyam (Similitude)*



- Sadrishyam means Similitude. An artist strives to achieve similitude in his creation. Sometimes he derives this similitude from the forms, sometimes from the attributes and sometimes from the virtues.
- In Chitrasutra of Vishnudharmottara purana there is a mention of 5 types of eyes that have sadrishyam in the forms like fish, conch, lotus petals etc. In Indian poetry, just as in Indian painting, the black lustrous curly locks of a woman are compared with the snake or dark clouds.
- Even in the asanas like the bhujang asana, mayur asana and lotus asana one finds sadrishyam of certain animal postures.

# *Varnika-bhanga (Colour Differentiation)*



- This limb pertains to ‘colour’ that lends soul to an artwork. The beauty of colour is not in the colour but in its application. A master painter magnifies the splendour of different shades on the surface with the strength of the stroke of his brush.
- The myriad hues are not only an aspect of appearance but are the expression of inner character. In the hands of a versatile artist even ordinary colours pronounces extraordinary exuberance.

# CONCLUSION



- These six cannons of art do not curtail artistic freedom rather aids it. The Chitrasutra of Vishnudharmottara purana mentions that the artist needs to experience the mysteries beyond cognitive intellect. He mustn't restrict himself to understanding the work, but also experience it directly. That is where the real rasa is. It states that, valuable as these various instructions are, they are derived from and subservient to practice. The artist has the freedom to work according to his own intellect.



**THANK YOU**