

DICTIONARY OF INDIAN ART AND ARTISTS

We are thankful to Pratima Sheth and Mapins for bringing out the Dictionary of Indian Art & Artists which is really a great effort and has added one more dimension to literature on Indian Art. The 1300 entries in the Dictionary cover a vast span from Ajanta to Yatra reflected in various art forms such as Paintings, Drawings, Prints, Sculptures as well as Galleries & Institutions that describe in detail their contribution. The Dictionary is the first of its kind in India. The book covers the development of Indian Art tradition through 600 different entries that also throw light on techniques and styles of Indian Artists. Let us now examine how useful the book is and what the nature of entries it covers.

Artists who have held minimum five exhibitions in prestigious art galleries are covered. In the entry, description is given about their technique and style. Later more artists were added.

For example, the dictionary defines words like Abhisharika, Aabhushan etc. in context of Indian Art. While writing about temples of Dilwara in Mount Abu, care has been taken to describe the history behind its principal architects. This aspect is most welcome. Detailed descriptions are given about 28 caves of Ajanta. Describing Apsara, the author goes on to talk about Sundari, Nartaki, Menaka and Vishwamitra as well. Life stories of Artists envelopes their art. Picture of Padmasan of Tirthankaras is used as an example while explaining Asanas. Dashavatar exemplifies Avataras' though not connected with art.

When we go more in detail, the book lucidly describes Babarnama, Backhops, Back Glass Paining, Background, Baisakh, Balance, Bandhani, Baarmaas, Basauli, Battik, Bezaar painting etc. Among artists are covered names like N.S. Bendre, Manchersha Pithavala, Pило Pochkhanawala, Ravishankar Rawal, Kanu Desai, Somalal Shah, Shantilal Shah, Manubhai Pancholi (Darshak). Difficult words like Shankh, Shakti, Stencil, Stained Glass, Spiritual, Still Life, Steel, Stoop, Stone, Stone Carving have been well described.

The book explains how Raja Ravi Verma learnt to paint all by himself, the Eklavya style. He was a pioneer artist using oil colours on canvas. His compositions encompassed the most classical literature like Ramayana, Mahabharata and Poet Kaalidasa. In later life, he painted iconic gods & goddesses such as Lakshmi, Saraswati, Krishna etc. He also painted for theater sets.