

Unit -3 (A)

Winds of Change

Summary of Winds of Change

1. Origin and Meaning of Pankha

The word *pankha* comes from the Hindi word *pankh*, meaning a bird's feather. In ancient India, the term referred to different types of hand fans used for cooling and ceremonial purposes. A smaller version called *pankhi* was also popular. Historical evidence of these fans can be seen in the Buddhist wall paintings at **Ajanta Caves**, which date back to the 2nd century CE. These paintings, along with sculptures and carvings, show that pankhas were widely used in temples to fan deities and in royal courts to fan kings. They ranged in size from tiny decorative pieces to large fans requiring significant effort to operate.

2. Cultural Importance and Trade

Over time, pankhas became important cultural items and were traded across regions. They were considered stylish and exotic. Although their basic purpose remained the same, different regions of India developed their own styles and materials for making them. Craftsmen used bamboo, cane, palm leaves, silk, brass, leather, and even silver. Many fans were decorated with beads, stones, and intricate patterns that reflected local traditions and cultural practices.

3. Regional Variations of Pankhas

Different parts of **India** created unique types of pankhas. In **Rajasthan**, appliqué hand fans were made from colourful fabric pieces stitched together, while zardozi fans featured rich gold threadwork. Gujarat produced cotton-based fans decorated with mirror work and bead craft, especially in the region of **Kutch**, where leather fans with decorative stitching were also common. In **West Bengal**, artisans crafted delicate fans from sola (a soft plant material) and palm leaves known as *Tal Patar Pankha*. Other regions like **Uttar Pradesh**, **Odisha**, and **Bihar** also developed their own traditional fan designs using bamboo, zari, silk, and palm leaves.

4. Modern Changes and Challenges

With the advancement of technology and electric fans, traditional pankhas are now mostly used as decorative craft items. However, they still provide livelihood opportunities for many artisans. To preserve this cultural heritage, people are encouraged to appreciate and promote these handcrafted fans. Workshops and exhibitions help spread awareness about their artistic value and support the artisans who continue to keep this beautiful tradition alive.