




Raja Ravi Varma

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Why in News

29th April is the **birth anniversary** of the famed **Indian painter Raja Ravi Varma** (1848-1906).

He is remembered for giving Indians their western, classical representations of Hindu gods and goddesses.

Key Points

- **Early days and training:**
 - Varma was born into **an aristocratic family in Travancore (Kerala)**.
 - At the age of 14, Varma was **patronised by Ayilyam Thirunal**, the then **ruler of Travancore**, and went on to receive training in **watercolours from Ramaswamy Naidu, the royal painter**.
- **Contributions:**
 - Made around **7,000 paintings**.
 - Apart from painting Hindu mythological figures, Varma also made **portraits of many Indians as well as Europeans**.
 - Varma worked on both **portrait and landscape paintings**, and is considered **among the first Indian artists to use oil paints**.
 - He continues to be regarded as the most important representative of the **Europeanised school of painting in India**.

- **Lithographic press:** He mastered the **reproduction of his work** on the lithographic press– through which his paintings spread far and wide.
 - Lithographic press is a method of printing based on the principle that **oil and water do not mix**.
 - Paintings were earlier sent to Germany and Austria to be lithographed.
 - Varma set up his **own printing press in Maharashtra** — first in Ghatkopar and eventually in Lonavala in 1894.
 - Through his printing press, Varma’s **paintings travelled into the prayer and living rooms of working-class homes**.
- **Famous works:** Damayanti Talking to a Swan, Shakuntala Looking for Dushyanta, Nair Lady Adorning Her Hair, and Shantanu and Matsyagandha.
- **Awards and Honours:**
 - In 1904, the British colonial government awarded Varma with the **Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal**.
 - In 2013, a **crater on the planet Mercury** was named in his honour.



Source: IE