



# GEOMETRICAL AND FLORAL MOTIFS IN INDIAN ISLAMIC PAINTINGS

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BY

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## **ABSTRACT**

Decorative motif is a special branch of fine arts which has great aesthetic expression power. Different decorative motifs were used in different times as per personal whims of artists and the prevailing conditions. They have many elements like geometric patterns, floral motifs or simple patterns of Islamic art. But geometric patterns dominate because of their meaningful expression and outward beauty. Icons and motifs reveal sensuous, formal or stylistic values of metaphysics, religion and existing spiritual experiences. These motifs and forms are very popular in paintings of Islamic period and are developed considerably well by Muslim artists. This does not mean that their works were based on religious themes. These paintings displayed muslim cultures and were subject to rules and spirit of Islam.

Here we are discussing the bases of Islamic art because Islam stands for peace and visualizes truth in an easy and balancing form in life. It encourages spread of culture and art within bounds of decency and morality. In the early days of Islam there were no figures or picture in mosques, schools and residential houses and this type of arts was not encouraged. However the passage of time and growth of cultural integration led to use of decorated wall paintings and portraits of natural scenes and illumination of manuscripts and textiles. Later on Islamic art became varied and rich specially because of contacts with Christians and decoration of their churches. With the spread of Muslim rule in Egypt, Syria, Persia and India new designs and ideas were developed by Muslim artists in paintings and figurative arts. Floral motifs,

geometric patterns and illuminations of books, textiles and buildings became very popular and received patronage from affluent sections of the society. Muslim artists depicted concepts of harmony, unity amidst diversity, principles of Egyptian civilization.

The Muslim artists of India have used patterns based on principles of mathematics to explain certain philosophical problems or to add to the grandeur and beauty of architecture. Similarly they have used floral motifs and decorative designs to depict natural scenes, philosophical situations and religious themes. Indian flowers no doubt occupy a place of distinction in influencing Islamic paintings and calligraphy but still they have retained their Arab and Persian traits and philosophical and metaphysical backgrounds of my research “geometrical and floral motifs in Indian Islamic paintings” and divided it into four chapters to discuss and clarify these concepts in details captioned as under :

- I. Clear vision of Islamic paintings
- II. Islamic painting in Indian subcontinent
- III. Concept of Geometrical patterns in Indian Islamic paintings
- IV. Concept of floral patterns in Indian Islamic paintings

In the first chapter I have given a brief introduction of principles and teachings of Islam because they form the base of all Islamic arts and painting is a very interesting part of Islamic art. The story begins when Muhammad (P.B.H) was born in a noble Qureshi Family of Arabia. He declared that human beings should believe in one God. His followers are called Muslims. Islam tells about

manifold powers and qualities of Allah, specially creation of universe, human beings, animals, trees, mountains and all worldly things, His blessings, mercy and control on everything. Islam maintains that life has to be spent with care, balance and peace. The teaching of Tauhid and other moral values prescribed by Islam are amply reflected in various Islamic civilizations specially in activities of art and culture and spirit of Islam is fully visible. Art is mirror of a culture and forms its world view. Before advent of Islam in Arabia only few arts flourished like poetry. But under Islamic rule contacts with other developed countries and their culture helped in the evolvement of a rich Islamic culture having several types of arts. These 'Islamic arts emerged and developed along with the rise and advance of Islam. 'However Islamic art is in favour of symbolic representation and does not aim at portrayal of Supreme Reality in any form object or model as prevalent in other reigns. Tauhid is the essence of Islam and as per this principle of unity void is the only goal and soul of Islamic art.

It has been clearly stated that Islam does not permit any figural art i.e. statue, picture or sketch of any living being. In seventh century Arab muslims came in contact with alien cultures possessing artistic traditions and features in countries like Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, North Africa and Spain. . After rise of Islam Arabs came in contact with new cultures and were influenced by their development. Many artists of pictorial art continued their profession after embracing Islam. No doubt muslims made very rich contributions in the field of architecture. The decorative art in which Muslim artists used geometry and astronomy in making new patterns gave inspiring and naval messages in the

buildings constructed in that period. Muslim artists discharged their duties well by depicting historical events and social activities of their times through their paintings and rendered great service to their culture. The beautiful backgrounds and attractive patterns have given them a dignified identity of their own in the field of fine arts.

In the second chapter deals with the advent of Islamic painting in India. When Muslim civilization came to India, it was fully advanced in literature, architecture and other fine arts. 'The sultanate period monarchs and Mughal emperors patronized many arts and they tried to expand and develop them. Among the many innovations introduced by the Mughals in the art of painting perhaps the most important one was the idea of Karkhana or workshop. In these workshops diverse type of artists worked together under one roof and thereby fostered better communication among them. The purpose and social environment prevailing in the imperial Mughal Karkhanas was to expose minds and eyes of artists to fresh and lively experiences. Indian Muslim paintings throughout the country had common feature of beautiful decoration. Decorative patterns of immense beauty were very skillfully displayed in backgrounds of these paintings. Indian Muslim artists were faithful followers of Persian artists and copied their works but still they displayed some artistic deviations which transformed from father to son. We find that through floral designs and various patterns, Indian Muslim painters have retained fine balance and quality of impressive decoration in their paintings.

In the third chapter the concept of geometrical patterns as a comprehensive addition to the beauty and elegance of paintings has been explained amply. In Islamic tradition Geometry is being used as a communicative symbol from the very beginning. Finally it became a part and parcel of Islamic culture and all over muslim countries it was used as a message to display art. With the development of painting Geometry found an important place in it and after crossing borders of cultural exchange reached India. This glorious art displayed an abstract or intellectual beauty based on depth of knowledge compiled with delicate imagination and faithful expression of the motif. Islamic artists have used Geometry as a symbol to give their personal expressions about God and His eternal powers. They used these patterns to express religious point of view about universal order in a very logical manner.

Floral motifs have been discussed in the fourth chapter. As Islam lays emphasis on beauty, these motifs play important and common role in Islamic paintings. Muslim artists have used this Islamic aesthetic symbol in abstract form and made their art interesting and beautiful. Their products impress the viewers with their peaceful expression. Indian Islamic Paintings are full of fragrance of decorative elements. The muslim artists were faithful followers of Islamic culture and maintained the underlying spirit of Islam at every stage. In other words they used Islamic painting to reflect the beauty and splendour of their culture and used symbolic forms and elements with perfect aesthetic sense. 'Muslim artists have used floral patterns to denote deep and highly mystic meanings or explanations. However certain pieces of Islamic art appear

to the ambiguous. Generally speaking they look beautiful and at the same time represent Islamic spirit or philosophy in a comprehensive aesthetic sense. These flowers are messengers of peace and point out the most real and eternal place paradise after the final decay of this mortal world.

This extraordinary consistency of style and artistic preferences in the Islamic world helped to build a congenial, social consistency in social and cultural order. All Muslims hold the same basic beliefs, all are familiar with the customary religious observations, and this strong and uniform sense of identity and continuity led towards a high degree of social, and artistic, conservatism. As a result, many forms and artistic concepts remained unchanged over the last many centuries in the Muslim world.

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## Certificate

This is to certify that the research work embodied in this thesis entitled '*Geometrical and Floral Motifs in Indian Islamic Paintings*' has been carried out by *Ms. Farah Khan* under my supervision.

As far as my knowledge is concerned, the work is original and has not been submitted for any other degree in this or any other University. She is allowed to submit the work for the award of the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* in Fine Arts of the Department of Fine Arts, Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh.

  
**Dr. Talat Shakeel**  
(Supervisor)

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## INTRODUCTION

Decorative motif is a special branch of fine arts which has great aesthetic expression power. Different decorative motifs were used in different times as per personal whims of artists and the prevailing conditions. They have many elements like geometric patterns, floral motifs or simple patterns of Islamic art. But geometric patterns dominate because of their meaningful expression and outward beauty. Icons and motifs reveal sensuous, formal or stylistic values of metaphysics, religion and existing spiritual experiences. These motifs and forms are very popular in paintings of Islamic period and are developed considerably well by Muslim artists. This does not mean that their works were based on religious themes. These paintings displayed muslim cultures and were subject to rules and spirit of Islam. We are aware that Islam prohibits painting of living beings and therefore geometric patterns and floral motifs have been used by artists to connect their works with Islamic philosophy preached by Holy Quran. Sometimes they very aptly depict diametrically opposite situations, the word Islam in Arabic means submission and is derived from peace. The believers (Muslims) always prefer to submit to will of God (Allah). The cardinal principles and teachings of Islam lay down a comprehensive way of life for the Muslims. It prescribes legal system and religious code for their guidance. Earlier western scholars associated Islam with Middle East only but today Muslims are in majority in Indonesia, and Malaysia and out number Iran, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.

The tenets of Islam were revealed to Prophet Mohammad in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It is the youngest and strictly monotheistic religion in the world. Islam lays great emphasis on relations between the creatures and creator and

asks all its followers to keep them intact and active. Mohammad PBH is his servant and messenger and is a perfect model for his followers. Allah is MERCIFUL, TRAN Scender and Awesome and Muslims in their prayers praise AIM and seek HIS mercy, guidance and blessings. Islam says that all human being will be put to life on Day of judgement and Allah will take account of every one and award rewards and punishment as per their deeds.

Allah's revelation to Mohammad PBH are contained in Holy Quran which forms the most essential part of Islamic faith. Unlike old or new testament, Quran is not a narrative of Prophet's life or repetition of his sayings. It is actual words of Allah revealed through angel gibrail to Prophet Mohammad. The word Quran means 'recitation' and in most lucid, chaste and impressive language explains and lays down principle of faith. The Quran has been revealed in the prestigious Arabic language. Its script and words have been displayed in excellent specimens of calligraphy. The next sacred and important source of Islam is Hadith. Hadith gives most reliable and vivid account of the deeds, words and practices of the Holy Prophet. These have been collected and completed with great care and symmetry and come next to Holy

Here we are discussing the bases of Islamic art because Islam stands for peace and visualizes truth in an easy and balancing form in life. It encourages spread of culture and art within bounds of decency and morality.

Though no particular framework of religious nature has been prescribed yet Muslim artists have used and displayed religious symbols more forcefully than their Christian counterparts. We find that both religious and secular arts have flourished under Muslim rulers. The most important outlets for artistic

expression in Islamic world have been architecture, calligraphy, illumination of manuscripts, book binding, ceramic, metal works, glass and textile works and designs. In all these arts Muslim artists excelled in decoration with the help of calligraphy arabesque, scrolling pattern, geometrical designs and floral motifs. The truth is that Islam does not permit statues or sketches of living beings at aimst at sharing power of creation with Allah.

The prophet has warned that severe punishment would be inflicted upon picture makers of living beings. In the early days of Islam there were no figures or picture in mosques, schools and residential houses and this type of arts was not encouraged. However the passage of time and growth of cultural integration led to use of decorated wall paintings and portraits of natural scenes and illumination of manuscripts and textiles. Later on Islamic art became varied and rich specially become of contacts with Christians and decoration of their churches. With the spread of Muslim rule in Egypt, Syria, Persia and India new designs and ideas were developed by Muslim artists in paintings and figurative arts. Floral motifs, geometric patterns and illuminations of books, textiles and buildings became very popular and received patrange from affluent sections of the society.

Islamic arts got much impetus from translation of books of other languages and dialogues between muslim artists and their non Muslim contemporaries. Efforts were made to preserve historical events and cultural characteristics. More attention was paid to study and development of physical sciences, medicine, astronomy and religious treatises and a congenial atmosphere resulted in spread of knowledge and formation of a powerful cult

of research and scholarship. All these factors also helped in expansion of arts. Muslim rule was established in India in thirteenth century after invasions of Mohammad Ghaznavi and Mohammad Ghauri and rulers of Sultanat period, Khilji, Taghlak, Lodi, Sayyaid, and great Moghal dynasties lavishly patronized arts. The Indo-Persian traits in domain of drawing, colouring and flight of imagination made great progress in paintings, architecture and decoration. In Deccan states also arts flourished under Adilshahi, Qutubshahi, Nizam Shahi dynasties and produced excellent works. The Mughal empire founded by Babur in early sixteenth century gave great fillip to painting, architecture and calligraphy. The Mughal school of painting is undoubtedly the most beautiful part of Indian culture and heritage. It represents mixed traits of Persian delicacy, Arabic simplicity and Hindu traditions Persian was court language at that time but other Indian languages also influenced the literature and culture of the rulers and enriched the Islamic arts. The intermixture of foreign ideas with Indian traditions and customs led to birth of new class of artisans and craftsman and introduction of novel designs and beautiful display of patterns, figures and illumination. The Mughal emperors and their nobles were good critics and patrons of these arts. Paintings with floral motifs and colourful borders were commonly used as symbols of religious messages and themes.

Muslim artists depicted concepts of harmony, unity amidst diversity, principles of Islam specially unity of God by using geometric patterns and floral designs. At religious places muslim arts have very skillfully used geometric euclids (patterns based on circle). This pattern in Islamic art owes its name to famous Greek mathematician Euclidos. Geometrical symbol have been

used in other cultures to explain some philosophical issues specially in ancient Egyptian civilization.

The Muslim artists of India have used patterns based on principles of mathematics to explain certain philosophical problems or to add to the grandeur and beauty of architecture. Similarly they have used floral motifs and decorative designs to depict natural scenes, philosophical situations and religious themes. We came across numerous specimens of decoration pieces in which in scrolling and repeated colourful forms, plants, bounties of nature and odd happenings in the universe have been depicted. They are true and faithful manifestation of eternal laws of nature.

One has to marvel at the aesthetic taste and superb imagination of Indian Muslim artists displayed in their paintings and illuminations. Indian flowers no doubt occupy a place of distinction in influencing Islamic paintings and calligraphy but still they have retained their Arab and Persian traits and philosophical and metaphysical backgrounds.

Some reputed writers like – Heather Marshall in his book ‘Art in Islamic period’, Guy and Reborah swallow in his book ‘Art of India’ and Jamila and Brijbhushan in their book ‘Indian Miniatures’ and other writers like Douglas Barrett, Basil Gray, Karl Khandalavala, Pramod Chandra, Daniel J. Ehnborn, Moti Chandra, Anand Krishna, Milo C. Beach, Jeremiah P. Losty, Michael Brand and Glenn, D. Lowry in their own way have referred to geometrical patterns and floral motifs used in Islamic paintings, but it is also a fact that only cursory mention of these delicate innovation has been made in these books. Accordingly I chose topic of my research “geometrical and floral motifs in

Indian Islamic paintings” and divided it into four chapters to discuss and clarify these concepts in details captioned as under :

- I. Clear vision of Islamic paintings
- II. Islamic painting in Indian subcontinent
- III. Concept of Geometrical patterns in Indian Islamic paintings
- IV. Concept of floral patterns in Indian Islamic paintings

In the first chapter I have given a brief introduction of principles and teachings of Islam because they form the base of all Islamic arts and painting is a very interesting part of Islamic art. Then I have traced the development and spread of Islamic paintings which cover a vast field. I have attempted to bring various aspects and subject under the focus of my study.

The second chapter deals with the advent of Islamic painting in India. The attitude of Muslim rulers, artists and intelligentsia historical perspective and technique adopted in the development of painting have been discussed in detail. The interesting experiments made by Indian Muslim artists specially in the field of decorative and illumination motifs have been highlighted.

In the third chapter the concept of geometrical patterns as a comprehensive addition to the beauty and elegance of paintings has been explained amply. Its importance as an Islamic symbol to blend a happy mixture of philosophy, artistic imagery and beautiful designs has been stressed.

Floral motifs have been discussed in the fourth chapter. As Islam lays emphasis on beauty, these motifs play important and common role in Islamic paintings. Muslim artists used these patterns extensively to depict different

philosophical and artistic themes. I have attempted to highlight their beauty and depth.

In concluding observations the importance and elegance of expressions and thoughts of Muslim artists in their paintings have been explained and tributes have been paid to their services.

# *Chapter- 1*

*Towards a clear vision about  
Islamic Painting*



## CHAPTER – I

### TOWARDS A CLEAR VISION ABOUT ISLAMIC PAINTING

Muslim artists have contributed to rich development of painting because they wanted to preserve and glorify their religion as well as their culture. Their paintings in general do not violate religious rules and restrictions. But they have distinct existence and everlasting traditions.

#### **A. Islam : Faith and a Way of Life**

To assess the richness of Islamic Art it is necessary to understand Islam as a living faith and a way of life. It will enable us to appreciate the value of expressions found in Islamic art. The story begins when Muhammad (PBH) was born in a noble Qureshi Family of Arabia in 569 AD Muslims believe that he is the last apostle and messenger of God sent to guide the humanity and propagate the doctrine of unity of God (MONOTHEISM) in the World. He declared that human beings should believe in one God and worship HIM only and that he was his messenger. His followers are called Muslims. They believe in Tauhid (Unity of God) and do not worship any one except *Allah*. At the age of 40 years Holy Quran (word of God) was revealed to Muhammad and he as a prophet taught this to the believers 'Quran' literally means 'Recitation'. According to Muslims Holy Quran was revealed to Muhammad through an angel Gibrael in parts (Wahi). In Quran this angel has been referred to as Ruhulamin (spirit of Faith and Truth) and about itself, it states 'These are the verses of Allah, we recite them to you (O Muhammad) in true form and surely you are one of the Messengers (of Allah).<sup>1</sup>

Besides Quran, the teachings, sayings and actions (SUNNAH) of Mohammad covering different aspects of life have been collected and codified by his followers and is known as Hadith. Quran and Hadith are the most important primary sources of Islam, The word Islam has been used by Allah in the Holy Quran as a distinct stipulation to convey Allah's command that any other alternative name or religion is totally unacceptable to Him. The Quran states 'Truly, the religion with Allah is Islam'.<sup>2</sup> Literally Islam means total obedience or SUBMISSION.

Muslims all over the world follow their faith firmly and it has formed a common and distinct muslim culture. This unique and unbreakable unity is based upon the cardinal principles of Islam and is testified by Holy Quran in these words.

'The believers are but one single brotherhood'. The Holy book provides clear guidelines for the believers. The Muslim faith is based on five principles called pillars of Islam,

Unity of God (Allah) or TAUHID and

Prophet hood of Muhammad (PBH) (Risalat)

Prayers (Salath)

Fasting (Ramzan)

Zakat (Charity)

Haj (Pilgrimage)

The basic premises<sup>3</sup> of Islamic Faith is Monotheism and total renunciation of deities, idols, and all man made ways of worship. Allah alone is the Lord Creator, sustainer and destroyer of life. In Arabic Islam means

submission before the single entity of Allah. It is obligatory on all Muslims to accept and respect all prophets and messengers of Allah and their Books and believe that Muhammad is His last prophet.<sup>4</sup>

Islam tells about manifold powers and qualities of Allah, specially creation of universe, human beings, animals, trees, mountains and all worldly things. His blessings, mercy and control on everything. It prescribes a noble and comprehensive code of life based on equity, justice and brotherhood for its followers and lays great stress on tolerance and ways to lead a good social life.

Here are some extracts from Holy Quran highlighting these noble ideals.

‘And your Allah (God) is one Allah (God – Allah) (La ilaha illa lillah) (there is none who has the right to be worshipped but He), the most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Verily! In the creation of the heavens and earth, and in the alternation of night and day, and the ships which sail through the sea with that which is of use to mankind, and the water (rain) which Allah sends down from the sky and makes the earth alive therewith after is death, and the moving (living) creatures of all kinds that have been scattered therein and in the veering of winds and clouds which are held between the sky and the earth, are indeed Ayat (Proofs, evidences, signs, etc.) for people of understanding.<sup>5</sup>

Holy Quran tells us that Allah is most merciful and compassionate and has created whole universe for man and there is no other god except HIM Human Beings are told repeatedly to repent on their misdeeds and sins and to purify themselves so that may could be blessed in this mortal life as well as in

hereafter (AKHIRAT). The Holy book prescribes and explains the duties owed by human beings to their Creator and their brother fellows.

Thus we can say that Islam means belief in unity of God and HIS attributes of glory, compassion and all pervading powers. Islam maintains that life has to be spent with care, balance and peace. The teaching of Tauhid and other moral values prescribed by Islam are amply reflected in various Islamic civilizations specially in activities of art and culture and spirit of Islam is fully visible.

### **B. Defining : Islamic Art**

Art is mirror of a culture and forms its world view. The fine arts developed in Islamic world reflect its cultural values and explain Muslim view point regarding Universe and spiritual realm Islamic art does not imply that it has been created by Muslims without any purpose. It displays spirit of elevation and fundamentals of divine law advocated by Islam and abides by its injunctions and regulation. It is neither a technique nor an outcome of some movement or philosophical thought. It denotes humane features of civilization and culture and stands for decency and restraint. According to Komaroff art has rendered specific services to Islam but at the same time it also developed secular art produced in lands under Islamic rule or influences, depending upon artist's or the patron's religious affiliations.

Before advent of Islam in Arabia only few arts flourished like poetry. But under Islamic rule contacts with other developed countries and their culture helped in the evolvement of a rich Islamic culture having several types of arts. These 'Islamic arts emerged and developed along with the rise and advance of Islam.

These arts imbibed, assimilated and modified certain traditions and characteristics prevailing in the countries conquered by Islam. In the beginning the Muslims took interest in arts like architecture, calligraphy and literature. They provided some entertainment and offered good past time. There was a felt need for such deviation because in foreign lands Muslims came across with certain problems.<sup>6</sup> Here it is worth while to quote some verses from Holy Quran and a Hadith of prophet Mohammad (PBH) endorsing the view that certain arts are inherent and permitted in Islam.

‘We have adorned the near heavens with the stars (for beauty).<sup>7</sup> And indeed, we have put the big stars in the heaven and we beautified them for the beholders.<sup>8</sup>

‘God likes that whenever anyone of you perform any work, he should do it in a beautiful manner.’<sup>9</sup>

‘God is beautiful and likes beauty’<sup>10</sup>. The idea is that Islam forms an integral part of every Muslim’s life and therefore Islamic arts should be used to make every day life beautiful.

For Muslims truth begins with God and they believe that only Allah deserves their worship and devotion. According to Muslims everything is bound and dependent on His command and will. Only Allah creates and sustains His creation and everyone has to bow before His will and has to return to Him for ultimate reckoning and judgement. Therefore every Muslim has to maintain balance and harmony in all spheres of his life and try to avoid imbalances, contradictions and sins with the help of his meager knowledge and understanding.<sup>11</sup>

Islamic art lays focus on spiritual representation and explains meaning of every object and action and is not confined to physical qualities only. A muslim artist does not attempt to replicate or interfere with nature but tries to interpret and explain its meaning and versions. In this way he gets closer to Allah and persuades viewers to follow him.<sup>12</sup> An Islamic artist is always deeply inspired by religious perception and regards art and culture with devotion.

It is a fact that Islamic artists showed more initiative and attention towards architecture specially in mosques and places of worship, palaces, markets, gardens, and other socially useful institutions. They also produced beautiful products in textile, metal works, pottery glassware, wooden and Ivory carvings and book illuminations and calligraphy. We find excellent masterpieces showing great skill, enviable imagination, brilliant technique and excellent designs and colours. They illustrated beautifully all aspects of every day life.<sup>13</sup> They used mostly floral motifs and also drew in abstract style. These artists developed attractive designs of decoration such as winding stems, abstract leaves, blooming flowers and buds. Geometric patterns introduced remarkable sophistication in art. They denoted mystical significance and were used as high quality symbols.<sup>14</sup>

A common feature of Islamic art is covering and designing of surface with exquisite geometrical figures and patterns. Use of Geometry to explain and unfold mysteries of nature helped the believers to uphold greatness of creator and the true meaning of life. In Islamic art these patterns explained physical, material and above all spiritual qualities of objects and blessings of nature. Introduction of flower and plant motifs, arabesque style and use of

Arabic letters made art of painting rich and within the reach of commoners. In traditional Islamic world arts and crafts were beautifully integrated and mingled with human life.<sup>15</sup>

Muslims also believed that Allah was the one and only creator of universe and human beings. They desisted from painting or drawing human beings or any life like thing because it amounted to trespassing on Allah's position as the sole creator. Islamic theologians hold the view that artists who depict pictures, paintings or drawings of any living being will be condemned to hell fire. Generally muslims followed Islamic laws in their religious and public life but in some private quarters these laws were not strictly obeyed. 'Though in Muslim world photography, statue making and making images of living beings was prohibited yet in some countries some progressive or so called liberal artists defied it under garb of creative art. They put forward an argument that man being viceregent of Allah has been empowered to do so to fulfill his inner creative urges.<sup>16</sup> In their paintings they designed living models and tried to symbolize their works.

'However Islamic art is in favour of symbolic representation and does not aim at portrayal of Supreme Reality in any form object or model as prevalent in other reigns. Tauhid is the essence of Islam and as per this principle of unity void is the only goal and soul of Islamic art.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the history of Islam its art has adopted various forms in different parts of muslim world. Nasr suggests that 'without the two factors or sources of the Quran and the Prophetic brakah [blessing] there would be no Islamic art"<sup>18</sup>. He defines Islamic art as "the result of the manifestation of unity

upon the plane of multiplicity".<sup>19</sup> Nasr has pointed to a clear connection between Islamic art and Islamic spirituality through the Divine Revelation.

The motive of Islamic art is to detect and depict beauty of smallest object and present it nicely. This is the inherent characteristic of Islamic culture that it emphasizes the use of balance and care in all these matters and at the same time covers all objects and impressions within these limits.

It may be concluded that Islamic art has decorated civilization beautifully with its balancing form.

### **C. Development of Islamic Painting**

It has been clearly stated that Islam does not permit any figural art i.e. statue, picture or sketch of any living being. In accordance with this injunction we do not find any evidence of this artistic activity in the Arab countries situated in Muslim world since early centuries. But before the advent of Islam Arabs knew and appreciated this art because they practiced idolatry. 'The pre Islamic artists displayed their artistic style and imagery in depiction of divinities, deities and idols and made figurative representation on rough stone blocks and they were commonly used as religious symbols. Sometimes they carved certain figures or sketches of deities which displayed impressive artistic representation in form of sculptures.'<sup>20</sup>

'In seventh century Arab muslims came in contact with alien cultures possessing artistic traditions and features in countries like Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia, North Africa and Spain. They found them attractive and interesting but could not accept or copy them because of teachings of Islam and their devotion to the path shown by the prophet. However decorative paintings and frescoes'<sup>21</sup>

found place in the buildings owned and constructed by affluent classes. In 8<sup>th</sup> century the courtyard of KAABA was decorated and designed with mosaic floors. Attractive artistic designs were introduced in mosques of Egypt and Syria.<sup>22</sup> Actually at that time muslim Society was divided in two groups. One group was a bit liberal and patronized arts specially painting but the other which was in majority held staunch views and did not permit painting of living objects. It however encouraged and patronized architectural activities and muslim artists displayed brilliant representation of their talents in this line. They made exclusive use of geometric designs and floral motifs. 'In this period Christian artists also made great contribution in decorating buildings by displaying spiritual thoughts. Their paintings and wall decoration in churches were praised by all. They made beautiful paintings on bronze also.'<sup>23</sup>

A new style of miniature painting quite distinct from bare excavated walls came into existence. 'This type of painting on excavated walls not only decorated the buildings but also reflected the grandeur and aesthetic taste of the rulers. At the same time miniature painting translated text and stories of old legends and manuscripts into pleasant and novel visual expression of immense educational and recreational values. It illuminated beautifully Holy Quran and other books of general interest'. There is no doubt that illumination and decoration of the sacred book made miniature painting very popular. 'According to muslim belief Quran was revealed to illuminate mankind and as such it needed external decoration and beautification also. Besides Quran other literary manuscripts and inscriptions were illuminated because of their educational value. Originally they were in Arabic but were subsequently translated into Persian, Turkish and other regional languages. In book

illumination line of Islamic paintings we find some Christian influences but it remained purely secular. Despite condemnation pronounced in Hadith about painting specially of living objects, it developed in latest Muslim period and made remarkable achievements in the field of fine arts’.

However in the process of development of arts non-Muslim figurative subjects crept in the art of painting. The muslim rulers liked all sorts of decorative subject matters in their buildings and household objects carved on ivory, ceramics, metals, textiles and carpets. Thus royal patronage in fields of painting and sculpture helped them to flourish extensively.

‘The first visible process of Islamization of arts started during the reign of powerful Umayyad caliph Abdul Malik who made Arabic state language. He introduced coins which incorporated the words Bismillah along with the name of caliph and were decorated with traditional ornamental motifs’.<sup>24</sup> In early Islamic rule (Ummayds) painting was limited to mosaic and fresco works in buildings only. This can be amply seen in the two famous buildings – ‘The Dome of the Rock’ and Jama Masjid of Damascus built jointly by caliph Abdul Malik and his son Waleed. Both these caliphs made rich contribution in development of arts’.<sup>25</sup>

‘The other fine example of frescoe painting is seen in ‘Qasar ul Umra’ a palace of an Ummayad ruler. The figures of Arabs and non Arabs, of white and black origins have been depicted there. The most important iconographical marks inscribed in Arabic and Creek languages identify them as kings of Spain, Abyssinnia, Persia and Turkish rulers. At that time two important types of Christian churches ‘Nestorian’ and ‘jacobites’ flourished and a number of

artists were engaged to decorate them. As at that time Arab artists possessed quite meagre traditions hence it is quite possible that fresco paintings of Qasar ul Umra were copied from designs of Nestorian or Jacobite church artists.<sup>26</sup>

‘Persia (Modern Iran) had its distinct artistic traditions since old times and developed them. It had cultural contacts with Buddhism in Central Asia before the advent of Islam. When Arabs came into contact with these cultures they were influenced by them and Islamic arts were also affected.’<sup>27</sup>

‘In thirteenth century some painters made beautiful illustrations in manuscripts of ‘Kalila wa Damna’ and ‘Maqamat ul Hariri’. They were adopted and developed by other Muslim painters.<sup>28</sup> These illustrations and decorative designs had some Christian influences also. The style of Maqamat ul Hariri resembled considerably with the features of service books used in Nestorian and Jacobite churches. Since these churches were located in Muslim countries, their artistic designs were probably liked and patronized by their rulers.

‘Some artists painted scenes around Makkah like Hira etc. but orthodox Muslims raised their voices against this sort of pictures. But still muslim artists continued with such exercises.’<sup>29</sup>

Manichaen religion is closely connected with pictorial paintings similar to designs and patterns used in Persian paintings. It played important role in development of this art in central Asia and Persia. Here mention is to be made of famous collection of pictures composed by famous artist *Mani*. There are frequent references to the Persian literature and history in them. It led to development of painting art in Muslim world.<sup>30</sup> Fresco paintings and figures

are found in Ummayyad palaces 'Qasar ul Hyrat al Gharbi in Syria and in the ruins of Abbasid city of Samarra. The scenes and figures depicted in these paintings showed Hellenistic, Persian and Turkish characteristics. In Algharbi Palace abstract floral design probably of Melleristic origin with abstract tendril shoots derived from Sasanian art appear in the Hashiya (Border)'.<sup>31</sup> This design suits perfectly to the spirit of Islamic faith. The combination of these designs with geometric patterns and occasional entwining with Arabic letters (arabesque) at later stage made very rich contribution to the history and development of art of paintings. This Islamic style was used as a special iconography in architecture paintings, sculpture and other allied arts and became quite common.

However Islamic paintings remained confined to illumination and painting of manuscripts till the end of eighth century. The influence of Persian paintings starts with the manuscripts of the Abbasid period. Abbasid or Mesopotamian school is the name given to the whole bulk of illuminated manuscripts produced while the Abbasid caliphs reigned in their luxurious capital at Baghdad.<sup>32</sup> The Abbasid Caliphs generously patronized all branches of knowledge and got thousands of books from other literatures translated into Arabic. Probably they followed very zealously the command of prophet Mohammad 'Go to China to seek knowledge'. These translations covered subjects of physical sciences, medicine, agriculture, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy and literature'.

To some extent Muslim paintings were also influenced by Chinese painting which was admired and copied by Persian artists. We find special

mention of Chinese art in early Persian literature. 'Nizami the famous Persian poet has narrated comparison of characteristics of rival schools of painting. In Nizami's 'Makhzan al-Asrar' and 'Khusrou and Shirin' composed in form of Khamsahs or QUINS (five verses) there are illuminated introductory pages which are highly ornate and beautiful. The floral and geometrical designs and gold lettering of poetic verses are excellent. According to Dr. Valentiver: 'These miniature paintings with a single brush by an artist is not only example of great refinement, but shows vitality and entertaining variety. Some of the designs show Chinese influences of the fourteenth century. The colours appear at first profuse and appealing in their vividness, but a closer study reveals them to be a nice expression of the artists temperament and their brilliant ideas and imagination.'<sup>33</sup> The classical period of Islamic painting began after contacts with Persian culture and different types of people, Mangols, Turks, Arabs following nomadic, pastoral and urban traits. Painters and artists were influenced by different civilizations and religions like Buddhism, manichaenism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity and their outlook became more liberal and wide. After embracing Islam they formed themselves into a strong community and continued with their art.<sup>34</sup> The existence and prevalence of cosmopolitan culture brought about new awakening in the spheres of architecture, inscriptions and decoration. In Arab paintings architecture occupies a symbolic place only but in Persian art it appears more powerful and impressive in the form of domes and minarets which testify to great Islamic architectural achievements. 'Persian painting left tremendous impact on contemporary pictorial art of India and Ottoman Turkey. The sultans and Mughal kings of India welcomed the Persian way of life and accepted its

cultural dominance. Mughal painting reached its zenith mainly because of individual portrait drawings within a Hashiya of floral and arabesques designs. They were the main symbols of Islamic decorative art'.<sup>35</sup>

Thus Islamic paintings were influenced by Christian, Sasanian, Manichaeism and Chinese schools of Art. After rise of Islam Arabs came in contact with new cultures and were influenced by their development. Many artists of pictorial art continued their profession after embracing Islam. No doubt Muslims made very rich contributions in the field of architecture. The decorative art in which Muslim artists used geometry and astronomy in making new patterns gave inspiring and novel messages in the buildings constructed in that period. Muslim artists used geometric patterns in a symbolic way to explain and preserve various intellectual cultural and philosophical traits. But in their endeavours they paid more attention to pictorial art and carved a new path for themselves. They formed their painting schools which contained new concepts of arts, culture and architecture but followed spirit of Islam.

#### **D. Subject Matter in Islamic Painting**

After development of pictorial Art, a number of new subjects based on new ideas were undertaken and painting was not confined to few particular or traditional themes only. In earlier days paintings concentrated on palaces of nobles. But later on they took up new ideas and designs and no doubt it proved very useful for historical and cultural studies. Earlier only translation and copying contributed to exchange of ideas and cultural contacts between the ruler and his subjects. But now artists depicted and explained the social conditions, traditions and cultural traits more vividly. 'During Muslim period

paintings on the walls depicted hunters, kings and other allegorical figures and beautiful places. Before Islamic paintings period painting of nude figures of males and females derived from Hellenistic proto types was quite common. Figures of plump women reflected the Arab ideal of female beauty coupled by obscene verses composed by *Iahili* (Pre-Islamic) Poets.<sup>36</sup> With the development of muslim painting, painting of natural scenes was introduced in palaces of in Samarra and Baghdad.<sup>37</sup> This was due to predominance of Mesopotamian influence. It showed audience in decorated chambers in palaces known as Jawsaqal Kharqani of Abbasid caliph Al-Mutasim. The subject matter of the painting revolved round two dancing girls whose faces were devoid of make up and their dazzling garments were markedly accentuated fold. Their figures were almost frontally posed.<sup>38</sup>

In earlier days artist's works in form of illustrations were found in 'manuscripts only and contained historical materials only. But muslim painters in their manuscripts gave detailed discussions on scientific subjects and useful topics such as medicine, astronomy and mechanics.<sup>39</sup> Since that was age of translation, in Baghdad hundreds of Greek manuscripts mostly treatises on medicine were translated like Book of Antidotes. It was interesting to note that magical astrological and hermitic dialogues and scenes went hand in hand in study of science, philosophy and other branches of knowledge.<sup>40</sup> Some translations dealt with preparation of medicines, their use, cultivation of herbs, and gave detailed account of physicians, chemists and agricultural labourers<sup>41</sup> and respect was shown to physicians.<sup>42</sup> Qazwini's prose work containing pictures was a treatise on cosmology in different languages. Subjects like

natural science of Astronomy, Physics, Zoology, and geology were discussed in it.<sup>43</sup>

Kitab ul Ajaib ul Makhluqat (The book of wonderful creations) was also composed by Qazwini and in it some miniatures were included for artistic reasons to depict certain creatures described in the book. Imaginary treemen or men having multiple heads or people living in distant and unknown islands were painted. They were not personal fancies of any artist but was simple faithful illustration of tales narrated in the text.<sup>44</sup>

Jaziri's treatise on Automatics included a water clock and showed remarkable state of knowledge in 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>45</sup> Aristotle exercised considerable influence on Muslim philosophy, science and Theology Muslim thinkers like Al Kindi, Farabi in the east and Ibn-Tufail and his disciple in Spain<sup>46</sup> represented views of Aristotle on nature, Psychology, physiology and Ethics. They were included in various encyclopedias and were in common circulation. The book of animals composed by Aljahiz had recourse to history of Aristotle translated by IBN al Batriq<sup>47</sup> The book called Kalila-wa-Damma was composed under Christian influence but was later revised and edited by Muslim scholars and contained some specimen of Muslim art. Since the book relates to stories of animals only the artists also confined themselves to the animals.<sup>48</sup>

Another important book is Maqamat or Assemblies written by Hariri a great scholar known for its precise style and nice expressions.<sup>49</sup> The book has a satirical approach and has been written in a lucid style. Its hero Abuzayd Al Saruji travels to various regions and faces strange and diverse situations e.g. he

meets a half naked old man who always talks in verse<sup>50</sup>. The book gives an account of social life and social systems of many countries with stories told in fluent language giving interesting details. It occupies an important position in Arab literature.

Muslims have always shown keen interest in history. In accordance with spirit of Quran they loved and liked to know about Prophets and kings of earlier days in conformity with their religion and literature Artists also try to preserve their history through their works e.g. Firdausi the famous Persian poet has composed Shahnama and paid tributes to old Persian kings for their chivalry and marvellous achievements. It has been illuminated by fine illustrations by artists and these illustrated copies of Shahnama are readily available<sup>51</sup>. In an illustration Bahram is shown killing Iskander. The illustrations of Shahnama made by Baysunghur Mirza deserve special mention because of its beautiful background decorated with nice geometrical pattern. Besides Shahnama. Khamsas or Quinters of poet Nizami are excellent specimens of Persian literature.<sup>52</sup>

In a manuscript of Shanama discovered during Safavid period there is an illustration in which Sohrab enquires his mother about his father Rustom. It is decorated with a heavy but beautiful pattern.<sup>53</sup> Some artists have shown certain religious events through pictorial art despite the fact that religious divines condemned it. This is a case of artist's self expression which defied the verdict of clergymen.

Another artist Rashid ul din depicted on illustration called 'Muslim embassy' in which it has been shown that Muslim embassy arranges for

extradition of certain converts from Islam<sup>54</sup> The theme of another illustration made by him is about a Prophet who doubted about Almighty's power to restore the glory of Jerusalem after its destruction. As a result he along with his donkey was kept in state of death for one hundred years and then put to life again.<sup>55</sup>

In Twelfth century in a manuscript of Khamsa (Quintent) composed by mystic poet Nizami there is an illustration showing Prophet MUHAMMAD'S journey over to heavens (MERAJ).<sup>56</sup>

Persian culture had rich varieties of literature and artistic activities and in addition it borrowed and adopted many artistic styles from other cultures. Romance is a popular and interesting subject in Persian Painting. Two famous romantic paintings are well known (i) The HAFT Paykar (Seven Portraits)<sup>57</sup> and (ii) Khusro and Shirin' A manuscript of Khamsa-e-Nizami found during Timurid period shows a painting in which Khusro is carrying a bunch of flowers to Shirin's palace. The buildings of the painting is well decorated by floral and geometrical patterns.<sup>58</sup> Nizami has thus provided good material for other painters to illustrate in pictures. Another eminent Persian Poet Shaikh SAADI's books "Gulistan" and "Bostan", have been extensively illustrated by many artists.<sup>59</sup> Romantic and fairy tales are quite common in later Persian and Indian literature and they have given ample opportunity to the artists to produce interesting and erotic illustrations like Laila Majnoon.<sup>60</sup> Islamic poetry from Abu-Nawas onwards has been full of love songs and lyrics addressed to their beloveds. It was a wide spread fashion in those times followed by cultured youth.<sup>61</sup> Abul Faraj al-Isfahani's "Kitabul Aghani" or Book of Songs presents a

number of mounted figures in which great attention has been paid to textile patterns and the book has become very decorative and monumental. Albairuni was a great geographer of Muslim world and has written a chronology of Ancient people. In a miniature illustration of this book a scene of temptation between the first male and female of the world has been shown.<sup>62</sup>

Muslim artists discharged their duties well by depicting historical events and social activities of their times through their paintings and rendered great service to their culture. It goes to their credit that they did not lose sight of the spirit of Islam during the performance of their duty. Their work on religious themes in SPAIN was though for a short spell yet it got appreciation from people. The main characteristic of Muslim artists was their decorative approach based on geometry and architecture. The beautiful backgrounds and attractive patterns have given them a dignified identity of their own in the field of fine arts.

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# *Chapter-2*

## *Islamic Painting in Indian Sub-continent*



## CHAPTER – II

### ISLAMIC PAINTING IN INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT

History tells us that whenever any civilization invades and annexes another civilization it influences its political, social, economic and cultural traits, specially fine Arts, and leaves its powerful impressions on them. When Muslim civilization came to India, it was fully advanced in literature, architecture and other fine arts. It can not be denied that during Muslim rule in India, fine arts achieved remarkable glory. ‘The sultanate period monarchs and Mughal emperors patronized many arts and skills such as textiles, carpet weaving, architecture, tent covering, regal costume, metallic and decorative tile work, jewellery, ornament and paintings and tried to expand and develop them. The illustrated manuscripts, painting and calligraphic designs were very popular because of their excellence. These arts were lavishly developed and patronized by Mughal courts and very fine and artistic styles came into existence.<sup>1</sup>

The Indian subcontinent<sup>2</sup> has produced some of the finest expressions of Islamic Art known to intellectual and artistic vigour. Mutual exchange and interaction with other artists at all levels was quite common. Non-Muslims ideas and motifs were used to create a unique dimension in the Islamic visual Arts.<sup>3</sup>

#### **A. Sultanat Period**

In the year 712 AD the armies of a new faith carried the standards of Islam in India when the Arabs invaded Sindh.<sup>4</sup> It was followed by repeated

onslaughts of Mahmud of Ghazni<sup>5</sup>. In 1181 AD Shahabuddin Ghauri replaced the Ghaznavid rule and began a series of drastic conquests which brought ultimately Hindustan under Muslims rule. Shahabuddin died in 1206 AD but before that he established a state in India separate from Ghazna and Khorasan, which later on became known as Sultanate of Delhi. His successors specially Iltutmish established a truly independent and powerful state. The Sultanate of Delhi comprised of five successive dynasties, the Khiljis, the Tughlaqs, the Sayyids, the Lodis and the Suries and consolidated muslim rule in India.<sup>6</sup> These political developments helped various muslim arts to flourish in India.

Muslim paintings in India between the fifteenth and early seventeenth century were confined to manuscript illustration or illumination only as per eastern Islamic artistic literary fashion. Initial pictorial style was borrowed from indigenous Indian sources and muslim artists added new elements in it. But the structural composition and bright colour scheme were inherited from mature Islamic traditions.

In Persian empire despite the barbaric destructions inflicted by Timur and Mangols miniature painting flourished in the fifteenth century. Then the ruthless Timur and his successors completely changed themselves and established settled courts of elegance, refinement and sophistication. This also led to patronage and development of fine arts. In India Tughluq sultans and their provincial governors of Malwa, Gujrat and Jaunpur executed their patronage to fine arts specially paintings in the fifteenth century specially Gujarat became famous for its talented artists. Traders and painters brought

inspiring manuscripts to India from the cultural centers of Persia. They were welcomed in this region and their trading flourished. The painters borrowed certain features found in Jain paintings of Gujrat specially the vivid and attractive colour combination. Their projections and innovate designs pleased the viewers. Conceptual bias apart they admired works of arts which existed there before advance of Islam.<sup>7</sup>

Contemporary literature encouraged elaborate wall paintings in the time of Muhammad bin Tughluq and the poet Amir Khusrao referred to his patron's love for manuscripts and paintings. During Firoz Sha'a reign a mystical poet of his court praised these products specially painted images.<sup>8</sup> These manuscripts based on the Islamic literary traditions narrated various texts and subjects borrowed from Indian indigenous sources. But in style of execution these manuscripts showed predominance of Persian influence.

The early sixteen century introduced a change in Muslim paintings viz rejection of west Indian style and ideas. Due to Uzback attack on Heart in 1507 many artists and craftsman of Persia fled to India for settlement. Further more trading relations with Persian city of Shiraz which was an important center for extensive commercial miniature production gave much impetus to paintings. This art got much fillip because the embassies of Persia and India encouraged exchange of gifts and trade items and also increased the availability of artistic manuscripts. Persian culture was held in high esteem in India specially Mandu the capital of Malwa excelled in copying Persian culture in language, food, costumes and arts.

The emphasis of Turkman Shirazi artists on simplicity in figure and decoration influenced Indian artists to introduce treatment of grass and natural vegetation in their production. This is reflected in a Malwa cookery book, the *nimatnama* which was written for the Sultan Ghiyath ud-din at Mandu and illustrated for his son Nasir-ud-din. Another Persian manuscript made for Nasir ud din on the style of the *Nimatnama* contained a beautiful illustration partly derived from contemporary paintings in Iran.<sup>9</sup>

There has been a recent discovery of a manuscript called *Sikandarnama* compiled in 1531-32 A.D. under Nusrat Shah ruler of Bengal. It reflects the Persian influences along with Indian elements.<sup>10</sup> Other notable miniature painting of later fifteenth century is a compilation during Firoz shah Tughlaq's time called *laur chanda* relating to a love story in Avadhi and it got wide popularity. This manuscript shows Persian inspiration but actually is a combination of both Indian and Persian features. Persian influence is visible in the colour scheme and decoration.<sup>11</sup> The central authority of the Delhi sultanate was weakened in 16<sup>th</sup> century under the inefficient rule of the lodi Afghan rulers. In 1526 the opponents of Ibrahim lodi invited Babur to invade India. Babur defeated both Ibrahim Lodi and Rana Sanga and made himself ruler of Delhi. After this event art started its wonderful journey of glory and magnificence under Moghul empire.

## **B. Mughal Period**

Babur was a highly talented person. He was a poet, scholar, soldier and collector of books and art. He wrote a manuscript of Holy Quran and sent it to

Mecca. Babur wrote his memoirs which contains beautiful and honest information. He has referred to abundance of artists and craftsmen in India, but unfortunately no illustrated manuscript is available which can be attributed to his patronage.<sup>12</sup>

Babur's son Humayun ascended the throne after his father's death. He was a gentle and scholarly person deeply interested in books and paintings and had set up a good library and collection of paintings. 'According to Mughal historian Abul Fazl, Humayun was so fond of manuscripts that he took with him his favourite volumes in military campaigns and an artist accompanied him during his long exile<sup>13</sup>, when he took refuge with Shah Tahmasp, the Safavid ruler of Iran. After returning to India he hired several artists who had formerly worked for Shah Tahmasp. Two Iranian painters, Mir Syed Ali and Abdus Samad joined Humayun at Kabul in 1550 and they were soon followed by two more painters Mir Musavir and Dost Muhammad. These talented men brought the latest Persian techniques and style to the Mughal court. A portrait of a young scholar by Mir Syed Ali shows his Safavid masters.<sup>14</sup> Here mention is made of a painting of Humayun's era portraying royal hunting of Nilgai. It displays Persian influence and is a good specimen of art.<sup>15</sup>

Humayun was succeeded by young Akbar. Akbar developed a good taste of painting and tried to expand royal collections. To accomplish this purpose he turned to Humayun's Persian painters – 'Mir Syed Ali and Abdus Samad. These two masters hired local artists trained in various styles and made beautiful paintings of Indianized versions of Persian art and some of them

included the chosen pieces of art of pre-Mughal sultans. Some paintings were derived from various Indian languages, and few of them showed specimens of Jain art practiced in Gujrat and Rajasthan. *Tutinama* is a significant example of this period.<sup>16</sup>

*Hamzanama* was Akbar's first major manuscript project. It originally consisted of fourteen volumes, each contained 100 illustrations drawn on large sheets of cloth. The studio work was supervised by Mir Sayyid Ali, and later on by Abdus Samad. Paintings in the *Hamzanama*, showed Akbar's conquests and presented nice explanation of some Persian and indigenous South Asian idioms with better, consistency and refinement than *Tutinama*. Though Individual motifs and intricately patterned surfaces were derived from Persian paintings but appropriate colours, lively composition, emphatic gestures, and overall intensity of feelings showed their perfect Indian origin and style.

Hamzanama, Timurnama and Baburnama were reputed and exquisite specimens which showed grandeur of Mughals and established them as the legitimate heirs of Timurids and most outstanding rulers of India. Many of their pictures narrated beautiful description of battle scenes, hunting, expeditions and military sieges.<sup>17</sup> *Tarikh-i-Alfi* (History of a thousand years), compiled in Akbar's rule gives factual account of the history of Islam's first millennium. Akbar also ordered translations of important Hindu texts in Persian. One of them known as *Harivamsa* is the geneology of Vishnu an important deity of Hindu trimoorti.

In 1580, Akbar invited Jesuit priests from Goa<sup>18</sup> to his court where they participated in theological discussions and debates and presented to emperor many illustrations, European prints, paintings, and drawings. These gifts were studied with interest by the participants. Some Mughal artists made faithful and good copies of certain art pieces. Further divan (collection) of poet Anvari, the BAHAMISTAN, the Khamsa of Nizami, the Khamsa of Amir Khusrau Dehlvi, and Anvar-i-suhayli and some other luxurious manuscripts of eloquent Persian poetical anthologies were illustrated by painters of Akbar's court.<sup>19</sup> A Mughal noble KULAGU KHAN discovered in a fort a copy of Chingiznama prepared by BASAWAN and coloured by Nand Gwaliari<sup>20</sup>, and another famous painting captioned "Dervish Rebuked from the Baharistan". These paintings were placed in Akbar's studio in 1590. In second volume of Akbarnama reference was made to natural drawings and paintings.<sup>21</sup>

Akbar's son Jahangir had great interest in painting, and established a studio in Allahabad. The artists of this studio worked on two distinct modes or models. The first model was a simplified one with more focus on Akbari style of painting, while the second comprised of a precise, flat and highly decorative style inspired by Safavid Persian paintings, especially those of Aqa Riza.<sup>22</sup> Jahangir encouraged his artists to develop their own particular ideas and talents. A painter named Abul Hasan concentrated upon depicting court scenes and making official portraits, Mansur specialized in natural history subjects, Daulat created general portraits and so forth. The ability of Jahangiri painters to penetrate deep into the heart of reality was made possible by their extraordinary skill and steady hard work to display the natural qualities of human character

and psychological interrelationship.<sup>23</sup> A picture called “Jahangir embracing Shah Abbas”, shows the mighty mughal ruler standing on a throne and affectionately embracing submissive Shah Abbas king of Iran.<sup>24</sup>

Such a conscious use of painting for political purposes continued to dominate the imperial studio under the next emperor Shahjahan. Then royal attention probably shifted towards architecture. However paintings following traits of Jahangir’s style continued to draw popular attention and applause.<sup>25</sup>

The formal characteristics of Abul Hasan’s portraits were liked by Shahjahan and he made many more portraits during his reign.<sup>26</sup> “Padshahnama” composed by Abdul Hamid Lahori covered extensively the principal aspects and activities of Shahjahan’s highly ritualized public life.<sup>27</sup>

The love of Shahjahani painters for idealized real physical situations and their preference for lush colours and their opulent effects extended towards depictions of pictures of birds, animals, and flowers and excelled to display glimpses of imperial power and glory.

The quantity, quality and coverage of Mughal paintings declined considerably during Aurangzeb’s reign. The imperial studio could only flourish under enlightened and continuous patronage of certain nobles while the emperor paid very little attention to it.

But this decline of the Mughal studio does not mean that imperial Mughal paintings ceased to exist under Aurangzeb. Portraits, more useful than illustrations to explain and analyse poetic texts or romantic pieces of literature continued to be produced especially in the early years of Aurangzebs reign.

“The Durbar of the emperor Aurangzeb of 1658”, for example, maintains the ideal qualities and tendencies of Shahjahani paintings.<sup>28</sup> Chitaraman, Muhammad Afzal and Govardhan were some prominent artists attached to king Muhammad Shah when decline of Mughal rule had started.<sup>29</sup>

The influence of the imperial patronage of art of painting led to its spread in far and wide corners of the country. It combined local tendencies and foreign influences of varying intensity with admirable degree of adaptability and acceptability. Rajasthani style came into being in the 16 century side by side with Mughal school. Its abstract character, as opposed to the naturalistic tendencies cultivated by the Mughal artists retained essentially Hindu style. “Ragamala” and RASI RAPRIYA are some notable illustrations of this period. Painters of Rajasthani style developed a distinct school of their own. They belonged to several states of Rajasthan, namely Mewar, Bundi, Kotah, Marwar, Bikaner, Kishangarh and Jaipur. The Mughal and Rajasthan styles interacted with each other. Some Rajput states lying at the foot of western Himalayas stretching roughly from Jammu to Garhwal also followed Rajasthani school.<sup>30</sup> A further sub-division between painters of Basohli and the Kangra was developed. No doubt this school offered some opposition to the hegemonical style of Islamic art professed by muslim painters of India. During declining period of Mughal authority besides Mughal art the Rajput and Sikh schools represented Hindu art and constituted the upsurge of Indian creativity. With advent of British rule and the domination of foreign fashions, techniques, and colour schemes, the whole of India apparently forgot her glorious past. In fact Indian artists did not offer any competition to the fermenting western art and

accepted the onslaught of European current of thought without any resistance. However during British period an ardent lover of Indian art E.B. Havell, Principal of Calcutta school of Art and his leading disciple Rabindranath Tagore established Bengal School of Art to reshape contemporary taste and to make Indian artists aware of their rich heritage. During mid 20<sup>th</sup> century Indian painting occupied some place in the International scene. Havell, Tagore, Nandalal Bose and some other talented painters tried to stick to Mughal traditions and made efforts to revive it.

### **C. Paintings in Deccan**

Painting in the Deccan under Muslim patronage remained confined to a private manuscripts illustrating classical Persian literary books and gave emphasis on portraits and realistic natural scenes. 'Deccan had become independent of the Delhi sultanate in the mid fourteenth century and was further split up into five separate kingdoms. Ahmadnagar Bijapur, Golconda, Berar and Bider<sup>31</sup>. Muslim rulers of Deccan states defeated the powerful Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar which gave patronage to artists specially painters. After fall of this kingdom some of the artists with their talents were attached to Deccan courts.<sup>32</sup>

*Tarikh-e-Husayn Shahi* contains illustrated pictures of Hindu rajas of Ahmadnagar in the northern Deccan. Some rajas of Ahmadnagar patronized 'Ragmala', executed in a fresh unsophisticated style. It was naturally linked with Hindu ideas than Islamic style.<sup>33</sup>

In the field of arts taste of Bijapur rulers was quite different from Ahmadnagar. The artists of Bijapur displayed combined delicate exuberance in their paintings. The style patronized by Sultan of Bijapur Ibrahim Adil Shah II, famous for his love of music was peculiarly distinguished one. Some magnificent portraits of him conveyed highly aesthetic concept and were comparable with the contemporary Mughal portraits.<sup>34</sup>

Painting of Golconda depicted complicated situations and trends. The Sultans of Golconda welcomed artists from all over the Islamic world and gave them free hand to work in accordance with subtle variations of their original style. In their works there is remarkable combination of floral and arabesque designs and they conveyed profound human emotions in addition to their decorative appearances.

Nizams of Hyderabad continued to patronize painter artists in their regime.<sup>35</sup> The south Indian paintings are liked for attractive shapes and animated surface and background decorations.

#### **D. Enactment of Mughal Painting**

Among the many innovations introduced by the Mughals in the art of painting perhaps the most important one was the idea of Karkhana or workshop. In these workshops diverse type of artists worked together under one roof and thereby fostered better communication among them. It was an ideal place where the artists could experiment with new ideas and techniques. These experiments contributed significantly to the visual revolution of the Mughal art. In this respect the Mughal emperors followed the practice common

at the Persian courts. In '1522 Shah Ismail, the Persian Emperor setup a workshop consisting of copyists, painters, gilders, colour grinders, goldmixers and other artists and appointed the celebrated artists Bihzad its chief.<sup>36</sup> Akbar's Karkhana in his newly built capital Fatehpur Sikri was similar to it as reported by both Abul Fazl and Anthony Monserrate, the Jesuit clergyman who visited the Fatehpur Sikri between 1580 and 1582. This Karkhana or workshop continued to exist even in the gloomy days under Aurangzeb's rule in the mid seventeenth century. According to Bernier's version: "large halls are seen in many places, called Karkhana or workshops for the artisans. In one hall embroiderers are busily employed, supervised by a master. In another you can see goldsmiths, in the third hall, painters in the fourth, varnishers doing lacquer-work and in the fifth hall, Joiners, turners, tailors and shoemakers were busy in their work. In the sixth hall from silk, brocade, fine muslin of turbans, girdles with golden flowers and Hashiyas, and drawers and delicate night dresses for females were delicately prepared and finished."<sup>37</sup>

However, it would not be correct to assume that Akbar wanted to introduce a new style of painting through these Karkhanas. The main purpose was to produce illuminated manuscripts, which involved elaborate production on a large scale with elegant cooperation of calligraphers, painters and skilfull preparators of various accessories like colour grinders, goldworkers, leatherworkers, bookbinders, and many more workers. The books to be copied and illustrated were often very long, and required full cooperation and concentration of all these different types of craftsmen and artists. Some of these artists were certainly prima donnas and produced beautiful works in little time.

It may be asserted that illustration of a copy of Akbarnama was something similar to the production of a drama of repute and the finalization of decorated "Hamzanama" could be compared with a musical extravagance. Over a hundred artists including calligraphers, burnishers and others who were involved in this exercise solely worked together in the imperial studio. It is also stated that in preparation of Hamzanama 1400 passages from the epic were artistically illustrated'.<sup>38</sup> An efficient supervision or effective control over men and materials could not possibly be achieved along with good results without existence of Karkhana.

Some of the achievements of Mughal artists were due to new and more sophisticated techniques learnt from Persian and European traditions. They made extensive experimentation with pigments and palette, various types of brushes, binding materials and, of course, with paper, which was the principal material used in Mughal paintings. Although all paintings were made in the same basic style yet, their expressions and appearances were influenced to some extent by the materials used. This is clearly demonstrated by a comparison of 'Hamzanama', painted on cloth, with 'Akbarnama', which is rendered on paper. The larger size as well as the materials used in Hamzanama required bolder and broader brush strokes and more expansive compositions, but lesser concern was shown to other minute and wider details of colour, which made the painting somewhat less refined but more spirited than smaller pictures of the Baburnama or the Akbarnama.<sup>39</sup> In these paintings the artist had to work on a much smaller surface and his brush strokes were much finer, and the colours were applied more carefully and with greater economy and control.

‘The pictures made on paper were burnished more effectively, resulting in an obvious difference between the tone of the colours in the Hamzanama and the paintings executed on paper’.<sup>40</sup>

In the royal art of muslim culture, colours are usually visible more strong and bold. The Muslim painting enriched with bright colours, especially red and brilliant blue deserve special mention for their brilliance. Further use of softer and subtler colours like jade were very much appreciated. Colours in patterns of these paintings were combinations of rich floral and Geometric designs and were speciality of Mughal art. ‘Colours used in miniature painting were very fanciful like jewels, blue rocks, and lavender houses in pursuance of Persian court style. In Muslim paintings, colours became increasingly naturalistic and artists used them to depict detailed scenes of nature, court crowds, battles and hunting places and other favourite objects of Mughals.’<sup>41</sup>

Arabic gum was used as a binding material in Indian pictures. Earlier animal glue was used for the purpose. Although the pigments have an opaque quality yet, ‘Mughal and Rajput pictures were painted neither by tempera nor by gouache techniques. No traces of egg for tempera or zinc white for gouache have been found anywhere and pure pigments or their mixtures were ground in plain water to which Arabic gum was added as a binder. Basically, these pictures were made of pure water colours and their opacity was “due to the method of application rather than to the inherent character of the medium”’.<sup>42</sup>

Under Akbar and Jahangir the Mughal artists assiduously copied European prints and engravings. It is also well known that certain artists were

specialists in making outlines and some others in drawing figures or in colouring. Thus often a picture was a result of composite work of several artists. Master drawings, especially of popular subjects, were kept in the family of artists and they were repeatedly used with slight modifications. Knowing the reputation of Mansur painter, one is not surprised that his pictures relating to studies of animals were repeatedly copied by generations of ordinary artists who tried to sell them on as original works of the great master.

The purpose and social environment prevailing in the imperial Mughal Karkhanas was to expose minds and eyes of artists to fresh and lively experiences. The Mughal artists succeeded in creating a new style and a different aesthetic taste from their experiences and dwelling in these Karkhanas.

#### **(i) Decoration in Muslim Paintings**

Indian Muslim paintings throughout the country had common feature of beautiful decoration. Decorative patterns of immense beauty were very skillfully displayed in backgrounds of these paintings. Muslim paintings were amazingly ornamental evolving on marvelous geometrical and floral motifs and displayed excellent taste and wonderful combination of ideas and colours.

Floral motifs specially made from decorative, versatile and popular forms were too common. This practice was known in ancient India also but in Muslim period art of decoration of painting reached at its full zenith. It derived extensively from sophisticated Persian traditions and made wonderful and delicate improvements. This can be seen very well if a comparison is made

between Persian and Mughal paintings of similar background. In Mughal paintings use of decorative patterns and bright colours in heavy quantity make them more attractive. The Mughal artists artistically used leaf pattern in a brilliant style and variation of popular classical plants and their curving leaves was very much appreciated. They depicted vegetation on a flat background without light or shadow and in some other paintings they displayed beautiful imaginary plants made of elements borrowed from different types of floral patterns. The Iranian decorative art of using leaf scroll was adopted by Indian artists and it became a most versatile and decorative motif used by them.<sup>43</sup>

These paintings show a decorative combination of rich background and attractive borders. In Akbar's reign we came across repetition of floral patterns on Shamiyanas and carpets depicted in arabesque ornamental style. 'In Bahadur Shah II's rule a remarkable natural illustration in muslim style was depicted in a painting called 'Scales of Justice'. The most notable features of the painting were variation in form and placement of floral motifs and ornamentation of specific design of the balance'.<sup>44</sup>

Geometry has been a very important ingredient in Islamic art and its figures and construction have been extensively used by Muslim artists as meaningful symbols. In different Islamic designs geometrical patterns have played significant role to convey harmony balance and importance of religion. Thus geometry has become one of main characteristics of various Islamic arts. 'Geometrical designs are basically very simple and they may be constructed with only a compass and a ruler and only a little knowledge of certain procedures to draw triangles, squares, hexagons, stars, etc. is required. The

designs may be reduced and enlarged with great ease....'.<sup>45</sup> Like painting in architecture and calligraphy their use as background measures has been very common, and geometric patterns are freely used as symbols to denote various relations and combination. They make paintings interesting, rich, and beautiful. 'During Sultanate period in Nimatnama a hexagonal manuscript having a dominant form in the background and beautiful floral pattern in upper space became a rare specimen of excellence<sup>46</sup>. Some others paintings of Sultanate period, showing floral background with borders dominated by scrolling flowers are quite famous and their smooth materialistic feelings infatuate the viewers.

Floral as well as geometric patterns occupy a distinct place in Muslim order of decoration because all decorations and visual beauty lie in them. These patterns are spread on books covers, albums and borders and catch the eyes because they in a symbolic way convey or depict the beauty and grandeous of God.

Indian Muslim artists were faithful followers of Persian artists and copied their works but still they displayed some artistic deviations which transformed from father to son. These artists used superior quality of paper and colourful pigments and followed old as well as new styles and designs. Their new ideas and experiments were appreciated by the court as well as the masses. In domain of decorative form very little change has taken place and it still remains a distinct feature of rich Muslim paintings. We find that through floral designs and various patterns, Indian Muslim painters have retained fine balance and quality of impressive decoration in their paintings.

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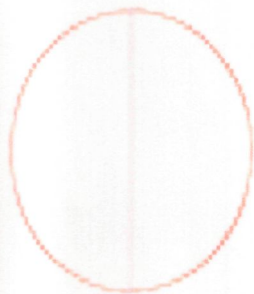
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# *Chapter-3*



## *The Concept of Geometric Patterns in Indian Islamic Painting*



## **CHAPTER – III**

### **THE CONCEPT OF GEOMETRIC PATTERN IN INDIAN ISLAMIC PAINTINGS**

In psychological treatment mental faculties and traits of an artist's personality is judged through paintings because he paints what he thinks or feels. He expresses his views clearly with the help of various colours, brush strokes and symbols. This is an established fact that paintings of each era make us understand easily the views of the people and their life style.

After their arrival in India Muslims were influenced by the local arts of the country so much that even in their new pattern of geometric patterns we find reflections of old Indian traditions and culture. Some of their paintings specially architectural scenes are beautiful specimens of old craftsmanship and art.

#### **A. Geometry in Decoration**

'The use of geometric patterns for decoration purposes started after advent of Islam in Arabia. Islam strictly prohibits figural representation because it leads to idolatry i.e. worship of images of human or animal figures'.<sup>1</sup> Keeping in view this strong injunction the Islamic artists introduced geometrical patterns as symbols to show their artistic creativity and produced beautiful designs in paintings and architecture. In Islamic arts these patterns revolve round all beautiful things created by God in the Universe. These patterns either single or in combined form display all types of surfaces showing intricate and complex arrangements. With the passage of time demand for these patterns grew manifold and they were extensively used in the fields of painting

and architecture. Variety and ingenuity made these patterns meaningful and lively. They no longer remained formal symbols and each pattern conveyed its special significance and meaning.

### **(i) Symbol**

Symbol means an element of communication to depict any object, person, group, process or idea. It represents some meaning, impact or significance. There are several kinds or types of symbols. For example graphic symbols like red cross and crescent are used by worldwide humanitarian agencies and traditional symbols like lion represent courage. It may be in the form of letters also such as 'c' stands for chemical element or carbon. Sometimes instead of referring to any element or reason a symbol denotes an action, decision or rule such as use of mathematical symbol ' $\infty$ ' for infinity.<sup>2</sup> Symbol is also a communication of ideas to display glimpses of common culture to be shared and enjoyed by masses.

Each society uses a symbol system of its own which reflects its specific cultural traits. This symbolism supplies abundant information about culture to viewers within the frame work of social traditions and contains many delicate hints and hidden allusions.

### **(ii) Symbolism in Islam :**

Though the scope and range of symbols is very wide yet certain symbols commonly used by Muslim artists are explained and discussed here. "New moon (crescent) combined with a star" is regarded as a symbol of displaying Islamic Society. During Muslim period this was commonly used by Turk Caliphs and Muslim rulers. Similarly 'green colour' bears a long

association with Islam and is regarded as a Islamic colour or symbol.<sup>3</sup> Prophet Muhammad (PBH) had a ring 'Khatam-e-Mohmmadi' engraved with a eight point star. He used it as a seal and a symbol.<sup>4</sup> After him star was used as an Islamic symbol. More details will be discussed later on.

'A renounced muslim mystic (sufi)' scholar Ibn-al-Arabi' had drawn certain diagrams concerning spirituality and these patterns were subsequently used in different orders of Sufism. Eight point star is also used as a symbol in Sufism. According to Ernest scroll it is the seal or design to reach the inner most secrets of man and implies wholeness, power and perfection<sup>5</sup>. It is stated that in a ring used by Prophet Hazrat Suleman: "Khatam-e-Sulemani" a six pointed star was engraved. He used it as a seal in his daily transactions.<sup>6</sup>

By using these Islamic symbols as designs various artists of repute have drawn beautiful patterns and communicated their views and expressions.

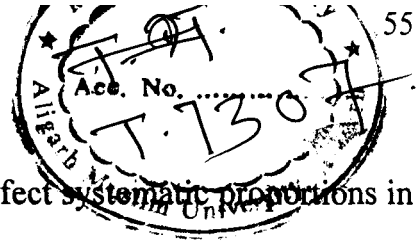
Symbols are useful to explain expressions and ideas and make people understand their meaning. But only verbal explanation of a symbol is not enough. It has to be depicted in a form which remains permanent and impressive. It is therefore necessary that an artist should develop a pattern to express his views.

In Islamic tradition Geometry is being used as a communicative symbol from the very beginning. Finally it became a part and parcel of Islamic culture and all over muslim countries it was used as a message to display art. With the development of painting Geometry found an important place in it and after crossing borders of cultural exchange reached India.

### **(iii) Connection between Art and Geometry**

In this universe things move exactly in accordance with the current of human thoughts. An analysis of human thinking makes us to believe that man does not continue to think in similar fashion for long and changes frequently occur during the process of thinking. When he starts thinking he feels all of a sudden that some figures have been added to zero or some development has pricked his mind. This point is visualized as a symbol and when he thinks further he gets another point and in this way thinking continues to pick speed and all these points take the form of symbols from time to time. Thus 'human thoughts move in different directions in different forms just like lines formed by points take different shapes shown in Geometry.'<sup>7</sup>

'Muslim intellectuals were deeply interested with research and quest for learning. Very soon they collected treasures of knowledge from Greek Philosophy, Mathematics and other sciences and translated them into Arabic for the benefit of their successors. They went through the works of eminent Greek Philosophers and scholars like Pythagoras and Euclid'<sup>8</sup>. 'They expounded mathematical analysis and connected it with spirituality. Their studies and analysis built reliable methodology to visualize and prove Unity of God or 'Al-Tauheed'. The religious scholars of Islam used Geometry as a Unifying intermediary between materialism and spiritualism. 'In this period study of Geometry and Astronomy (Science of stars) reached an advanced stage. Traditionally Arabs used constellations for navigation in deserts and seas and to find Qibla (Direction to Mecca for their prayers) 'Islamic scientists became expert astronomers and used geometrical skills to measure heavenly bodies.'<sup>9</sup> Geometric patterns and construction of these people showed their skillful



powers of creativity and imagination. We find perfect systematic proportions in their patterns and combination of different types of forms and designs. This geometric method or approach provided ample choice and variety of designs and established a new system of composition and execution of aesthetic construction and expression.<sup>10</sup> The most important salient feature of the system was that it was based only on human expression without any mechanical assistance or interference.<sup>11</sup> Detailed knowledge was collected on this subject and remarkable skill and expertise was achieved. 'This glorious art displayed an abstract or intellectual beauty based on depth of knowledge compiled with delicate imagination and faithful expression of the motif.

Islamic artists have served as curators and promoters of Geometry and used it as a vestige or symbol to preserve sanctity and unity of God in painting. Due to their efforts Geometry displayed attributes of God and their multiple influences on universal order of things. In others cultures we find similar use of Geometry e.g. among Hindus in Yantras and mandalas among Buddhists and Tibetans in pieces of arts and even in native sand paintings of north Americans. The earliest known users of Geometry were Egyptians who embedded secrets of nature in ground plans of their temples, frescoes and pyramids. Their single handed exercises followed most of the fundamental Universal laws<sup>12</sup>. Though these enlightened people used Geometry in other types of terrestrial applications also yet main emphasis of Geometry was focussed on metaphysical worth or measure visible in nature.

Geometry is called sacred because it reflects pure form of Godhood and its dynamic equilibrium points out towards a particular aim or spirituality. On the other hand man thinks as per dictates of his inner self and achievement

of Spirituality may be an outcome of this process. 'While geometric designs may have reached their zenith in Islamic world, their basic shapes and intricate designs existed much before during days of Byzantine and Sasanian empires. Muslim artists borrowed key elements from the classical traditions and elaborated them to invent a new decorative form that stressed the importance of unity of God, logic and order'.<sup>13</sup>

## **B. Structure of Pattern**

In Islamic arts Geometry is commonly used and its transformation in painting is really an imaginative and wonderful artistic addition. The skill of Muslim artists demonstrate their full command over Geometrical pattern specially their balancing effects and a nice combination of colour scheme and tone values. They fill background of their paintings with geometric designs of different patterns full of visual and symmetric beauty. They show that artists have taken special care in construction method and designed philosophy of every pattern separately. Use of Geometry by Islamic artists showed their strong intuition towards a universe based on logic and order. Their geometric patterns possess five basic characteristics –

1. They are not designed to fit within any particular frame or Radiation form. There are more repeating elements in outward from center but they are limited by edges of decorated space. They show remarkable degree of flexibility and freedom. Complex arrangements and combination of several elements are infinitely expandable. The frame surroundings and the pattern appears to be arbitrary and the basic

arrangement sometimes provides clues to predict the project and its designs.<sup>14</sup>

2. They radiate symmetrically from a certain point – The Geometric points constructed with a compass suggest different meaning and implications. Any polygon in a design can be chosen as a central point from which the pattern radiates symmetrically. Some patterns can be seen as radiating from a star surrounded by three stars. Either of these combinations provides a Unit or measure from which the rest of the pattern can be predicted.<sup>15</sup>
3. They are constructed from patterns of circle – The complex geometrical patterns of Islamic art are all elaborations of simplex construction of circles and every pattern is based on circles.
4. They are made up from a small number of repeated geometric elements<sup>16</sup> – The characteristic of repetition is fundamental to Islamic geometric art. The making of a whole complex by repetition of few elements fulfills two desires of the artist viz (i) to visualize art through the pattern and secondly to prove and (ii) visualize the Islamic concept of Islamic Unity (Tauhid).
5. ‘They are mostly two dimensional – Persian painting used three dimensional space in which human figures could interact with others but this practice is not followed in Islamic art generally. Even in some three dimensional paintings made by muslim artists the characteristics of two dimensional paintings dominate<sup>17</sup>. The placement of pattern against pattern alone tends to flatten the pictures. Figures seen on sides of the

frame like perspective diagonal lines do not appear to relate concretely to any vanishing point.

So all patterns in paintings are based on these characteristics. Geometrical treasure full of different patterns or designs may be classified in several groups according to different forms used as their base or key or main motif of design. Different patterns are based on different pointed or radiated form in the circle.

But in paintings only few patterns are used. Most common patterns are hexagonal and star shaped divided in equal parts of a circle. The star pattern as principal motif may contain a maximum up to 24 pointed stars.

In some basic patterns like four, five, six, seven and eight pointed, figures geometrical designs are commonly used for decoration in Muslim paintings.

#### **(i) Four Pointed Star**

Four Point (Plate 1) Geometry is one of the easiest geometries to set out. It is used as a counter point with circular geometries. It is constructed by raising a perpendicular from the center point of a horizontal line to the point where it cuts a circle described from that point and joining the four points of intersection. Further sub-division upto eight points can be geometrically constructed by sub-dividing the side of squares.<sup>18</sup> In a painting named 'Saleem with scholars and companions in a Mughal garden in 1625'<sup>19</sup> (Plate 2) a four pointed star below eight pointed star is shown in Jali behind the human figures. The whole design of the painting is very beautiful. This geometric design leaves its novel impressions delicately.

### **(ii) Five Pointed Star :**

Draw a circle whose centre is 'O'. Around it a figure of a star is to be drawn. Select a point A at its radius and then join it with 'O' with an angle of  $72^\circ$  and then draw a triangle OAB. Beginning from A and keeping triangle 'O' B by the line of AB, divide the circle in five equal parts named A, B, C, D and E. They should be joined by intersection of lines (Plate 3).

In 'Rustam and Mehar Afroz converse in a garden pavilion' (Plate 4) it is shown in a painting in Hamzanama. There is another painting from Hamzanama where 'the fairies call on Hamza to kill the dragon'<sup>20</sup> (Plate 5). They have architectural form in the background and the design of dome is shown by five pointed stars along with other stars.

### **(iii) Six Pointed Star**

For six pointed star (Plate 6) use a compass and draw a circle and mark the center point. Now using a protractor divide the circle into 30 degree equal sections and mark each section with a dot – Make sure that the top point is in line with center point. Create an upside down equilateral triangle using a ruler and make a dashed line by joining the points. Using the same method draw another equilateral triangle with the help of a ruler and make a dashed line by joining points shown on opposite side. Now six points are shown on opposite side and make six pointed star complete by overlapping of the two.<sup>21</sup> In a painting 'Night time in a Palace' a six pointed star has been drawn on the dome and on the side wall below another six pointed star decorates the painting<sup>22</sup> (Plate 7).

#### **(iv) Seven Pointed Star**

For making a seven pointed star a circle is to be drawn on a horizontal line. With the centres on their intersection with same radius describe two arcs which cut the circle. Now draw two vertical lines from the points of intersection and construct a third vertical line bisecting the circle from the points of intersection with the circle. Further draw a line which meets the junction of the horizontal line and circle. This line will be at angle  $45^\circ$  to the horizontal line.

With its centre on the intersection of the first arc within the circle, draw an arc from the point where the line to going  $45^\circ$  line cuts one of the two vertical lines. The length of one of the sides of the heptagon will be from the point where this arc cuts the circle to the heptagon and can be located by describing arc with radius of the length of this line (Plate 8).

Use of seven pointed star along with five pointed star and six pointed stars can be seen in the painting 'Faires call on Hamza to kill the dragon'<sup>23</sup> (see Plate 5) on the dome and it has been made for decoration purposes.

#### **(v) Eight Pointed Star**

Draw a circle using a compass then divide the circle into 45 degree sections. Drawing should end up into 8 equal sections. Using a compass draw a smaller circle with about half radius of the first inside the longer circle. Draw a square joining the points shown. Create another square by joining the other points shown. Mark the points where the dividing lines meet the smaller circle. Also mark the squares overlapping and join the marked points to create an eight pointed star. We should create two eight point stars in side each other. If

we join the inside points of small triangles then we see the two squares have overlapped on the outside.<sup>24</sup> (Plate 9) In a painting named 'Humayun Surprising his parents' in background flooring eight pointed star wholly dominates the design.<sup>25</sup> (Plate 10).

#### **(vi) Hexagon**

This has been used in a painting "The Sultan tests sample of milk"<sup>26</sup> (Plate 11) included in Nimatnama manuscript of Mandu Sultanat. In the background the whole design is made of hexagon without any gap and looks like beehive.

'Method of constructing this Geometrical design is by making seven mutually touching circles and simple way of illustrating this is to have seven circles touching each other. This Geometry can be simplified or developed into three point or twelve point Geometry respectively. However as it requires solids to draw the circles, diameter of each circle is drawn in order to fix the points of each corner of the hexagon<sup>27</sup> (Plate 12).

The hexagon is one of the more important forms in Islamic Geometry. It is simple to construct and has the capability of having repetition.

#### **(vii) Repeat Unit<sup>28</sup>**

Here different types of patterns are assembled together and transformed into a new shape (Plate 13). In this pattern the part which is intended for decoration is combined again with different patterns or by overlapping with the similar pattern and a new design is prepared. In two ways the rule of construction of Geometric patterns provides a visual analogy of

unity in patterns and presents a special behaviour of patterns and novel ideas of artists. We find a beautiful specimen of repeated unit in a painting named 'Young Prince and His wife on a Terrace'. Patterns quite different from each other enhance the beauty of the repeated unit.<sup>29</sup> (Plate 14)

Thus we see that circle is the main part of every pattern because it wholly depends on it. The circle helps in transformation of triangle, square, hexagon, and star patterns.

'Even though the geometric patterns consisted of or generated from simple forms like circle and square yet they were combined, duplicated, interlaced and arranged in intricate combinations to become the distinguishing features of Islamic art.

However these complex patterns seem to embody a refusal to adhere strictly to the rules of geometry. As a matter of fact geometric designs in Islamic paintings suggest a remarkable amount of freedom in repetition and complexity and it offers the possibility of infinite growth.<sup>30</sup>

Though patterns are constructed in accordance with mathematical rules yet they play a philosophical role without losing expression of sophistication and maintaining their balancing effects in paintings.

### **C. Philosophy of Patterns**

Islamic patterns are quite unique forms of Art. They perform their functions and fulfill their aims collectively and always succeed in conveying their desired message.

The colourful Geometric patterns forming the background of Islamic paintings have not been developed haphazardly or out of their own. These patterns have their own languages and they are beautiful specimens of fine imagery and full of wisdom and philosophy. Many patterns look similar but they differ in minute details and possess their individual identity.

‘Circle is most important part of construction of all geometrical patterns<sup>31</sup>. The circle has several meanings or aspects. It begins from a point and develops into a form having depth like a river. It does not have any space for accommodating any other figure. It is complete in itself and does not allow drawing of any other figure or form in it. This shows its solidarity and wholeness. ‘Artists acknowledge its unity and consider it a symbol of Al-Tauheed. It reminds and refers to KALMA. “There is no god but only one God’<sup>32</sup> Artist wants to stress on Tauhid by displaying central point of the circle. When he expands this point it is transformed into a circle and in his view it spreads over all the four directions around itself at the same time. This is display of God’s power, glory and justice. According to Muslim scholars all points are one and same in the eyes of God. To Him there is nothing small or big and no difference exists in the whole universe and He treats everything equally. The appearance of a circle remains same in different directions as a complete circle. This sort of equality and uniformity is its main characteristics. If we look at a circle after its completion, we feel a sense of continuous development and do not stipulate any end of it. Similarly God does not have any end. He is single, unique and is complete in Himself in all respects. He does not have any relative or connection and this never ending glory and power will continue forever ‘The Circle’s role also emphasizes the significance of

Makkah. Muslims all over the world have been ordered to turn their faces towards Makkah while performing their prayers. This ensures equality and unity among them. Since Kaaba is the house of God, all devotees offer their prayers towards it from all directions.<sup>33</sup> This also denotes equality of unity. Circle symbolizes unity and equality in all Islamic patterns. It contains many figures in itself and each of them convey different meanings 'Circle offers three fundamental figures in Islamic designs', Triangle, square and Hexagon. Besides another important figure star shape is also based on circle.<sup>34</sup>

### **(i) Triangle**

Islamic artists consider triangle as a symbol of human consciousness and principles of harmony.<sup>35</sup> To understand the concept of this consciousness, translation a dOHA (couplet) of Sant Kabir is worth quoting: (Constant labour in the field makes Root & Plants strong : Frequent friction with ropes leaves permanent impressions on stones).

It means through regular practice and labour one can overcome all difficulties or hurdles and get success. Just see that continuous friction of rope leaves permanent impressions on stone. If one gets repeated lectures or pieces of advice he can understand and learn everything easily. Human nature retains anything after learning it three times. It is necessary to distinguish between good and bad and only then one can take right decision in life. It is said Holy Quran has been divided into three parts for seeking knowledge. The first set of its verses or Ayats is called Ayat-e-Mohkamat (Basic or clear verses), second part is called Mutasha-behat (resembling verses) and the third relates to Ayat Muqattat' (letters or words). "It is He who has sent down to you (Muhammad

SAW) the Book (this Quran). In it are verses that are entirely clear and they are the foundations of the Book [and they relate to verses giving Al-Ahkam (commandments) Al-Fara'id (obligatory duties) and Al-Hudud (legal laws for the punishment of wrong doers); and others are not entirely clear. So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation (from the truth) they follow that which is not entirely clear thereof, seeking Al-Fitnah (Polytheism and trials), and seeking for its hidden meanings, but none knows its hidden meanings save Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge, say: 'we believe in it; the whole of it (clear and unclear verses) are from our lord (Tafsir Al-Tabari)'.<sup>36</sup> The first type of Ayats are very simple and meant for guidance. They give us direction in lucid language to know and follow truth and lay instructions how to lead good life based on faith. In second set of Ayats God has explained the good and bad things to us, pointed out his blessings of Rahmat and Maghfirat, showed love to his slaves and his vigilance over their actions and conduct and threatened them with His displeasure and torment to the wrong doers and evil makers. The third type of verses 'which are readily in form of broken letters like Alif-lam-Mim, Sâd, Nûn, Qâf etc. are miracles of the Quran, and none but Allah (Alone) knows their meanings'. Thus Quran imports consciousness among human being through three types of Ayats. Islamic artists have used figures made of three lines as a symbol of human consciousness. They have also accepted it as a symbol of harmony because all three sides of triangle are equal and it looks the same from all directions. Thus interpretation of a figure constructed by three equal lines as a symbol of unity of thought or harmony is an ample proof of the wisdom and greatness of muslim artists. If human consciousness and harmony are combined together it

would lead to a clear cut distinction between good and bad and make humanity on guard against bad or evil things. Thus these artists have very skillfully used triangle as an effective symbol to awaken human beings and enable them to draw clear line between virtue and vice.

## **(ii) Square**

Islamic artists regard square as a physically acceptable social symbol.<sup>37</sup> It is surprising that here instead of circle square has been used to show earth. But it may be due to reason that circle because of its appearance only could be accepted as a symbol to represent earth but on the basis of outward resemblance it could not be accepted as a suitable symbol in artistic patterns. Islamic artists have applied the test of logic in determination of this symbol. They have selected square as a symbol for physical world because it has got four corners like four corners of the world. 'Further Islamic artists take into consideration four constituent elements of world, viz earth, fire, water and wind.<sup>38</sup> (Plate 15) Thus their choice of this symbol fits in. They apply another logic and state that from religious point of view many points reflect upon the physical world. All of us know that our world exists physically but artists think beyond this simple truth. They believe that four corners can be resembled with the four important arguments in favour of Islam. 'The first thing that Islam stands for is giving correct divine guidance to the people of earth. It says four celestial books have been revealed to the world, (Zubur, Taurat, Injeel and Quran)<sup>39</sup> and with their help man can lead a good life of virtue. Second thing is that there are four prominent angels (Plate 16) 'Jibraeel, who acts as a messenger of God.<sup>40</sup> He conveys messages of God (Wahi) to the prophets who

propagate commands of Allah to their people and tell them to follow a life of piety. 'The other angel is Mikaeel who looks after rainfall, wind, water and agriculture etc.'<sup>41</sup> Mikaeel has been entrusted to look after the necessities of life to mankind. The third angel is Israfeel who on the Day of judgement will signal to the end of the world. In religious books that signal has been named as soor-e-Israfeel.<sup>42</sup> On the day of judgement people will be punished for their sins and the physical world would come to an end. This proves that physical world is mortal and will not last forever. The fourth angel happens to be Izraeel who is called angel of death.<sup>43</sup> His task is to draw out life from human bodies. Every one's days in this physical world are numbered and he has to return his life to the Creator at the expiry of his age and Izraeel is sent to him by God for this purpose. This shows that life in this world is confined to a limited time and man is not immortal and has come here as a temporary visit and has to return. Thus human life is a journey which should be spent in doing acts of piety.

A look at a square gives us a feeling that we are surrounded from all the four sides. This world is like a school from which no human being can absent himself or run away. His body can not travel beyond its four walls. It has been stated in Holy Quran 'And to Allah belong the east and the west, so wherever you turn (yourselves or your faces) there is the face of Allah (and He is high above, over His throne). Surely! Allah is All sufficient for his creatures 'needs Allah knowing'.<sup>44</sup> It means that God is seeing us from all directions and He has made this physical world bounded by four directions.

In man's sub conscience this feeling persists and that is why in his general life he uses all the four directions. For example when a man is put to

grief he utters these words “Oh I have been subjected to troubles from all four sides”. According to Holy Quran when God commanded man to build a house for him. ‘And (remember) when we made the House (the Kabah at Makkah) a place of resort for mankind and a place of safety. And gave you (people) the Maqam (place) of Ibrahim (Abraham) [or the stone on which Ibrahim stood while he was building the Kabah] as a place of prayer (for saying of your prayer, e.g. two Rak’at after the tawaf of the Kabah at Makkah), and we commanded Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) that they should purify My House (the Kabah at Makkah) for those who are circumambulating it, or staying (I’tikaf), there or bowing or prostrating themselves (in prayer).<sup>45</sup> In their mind only shape of a square emerged and they built Kaaba in square shape and used equal proportion in all four sides. Similarly from amongst twelve months of the year only four months were notified in which fighting and bloodshed in and around Kaaba was prohibited irrespective of legal formalities. In these holy months Muslims have been advised to perform Tawaf (rounds) of Kaaba at least once. In Quran the description of Nur (light) of Allah has been stated.

‘Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. This light has been stated in the form of a parable. There is a niche and within it is a lamp filled in a glass. It is burning like a glittering star. It is lit from a blessed tree (an olive) neither from the east (i.e. neither it gets sun-rays only in the morning) nor from the west (i.e. nor it gets sun rays only in the afternoon, but it is full of light all the time and whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself), though no fire touched it. Light upon light! Allah guides to His light to whom He wills. And Allah sets forth parables for mankind, and Allah is All knower of everything.<sup>46</sup>

Thus we see that in our physical world square has been beautifully used on spiritual level. This figure explains the external form of world and tells us that some one is watching us from all the four sides and man has to bear trials and tests within the four walls of this world. His body cannot escape or runaway from this boundary of four walls. At the close of his life time his soul is detached from his body. Atleast one day this whole world will come to an end and all people will have to give account of their deeds to Almighty. Thus His world made of four elements does not provide a permanent place for anyone and is only a transitory place of stay.

### **(iii) Hexagon**

‘According to Islamic artists this six pointed pattern is a heavenly symbol. Hexagon is close in shape to circle and is associated with the perfection of the circle<sup>47</sup>. Along with its perfection and sound resemblance with circle it makes us feel its sweet serenity. This six cornered hexagon is based on seven circles. There is a circle in the middle and six circles are constructed around its four sides. About number seven associated with it has been mentioned in Holy Quran. ‘It is Allah who has created seven heavens and of the earth like there of (i.e. seven) His command descends between them (heavens and earth) that you may know that Allah surrounds all things (in His knowledge).<sup>48</sup>

This verse clearly tells us that Allah created seven heavens and earth and it is Who really knows almost all things. Similarly in another verse Quran says ‘Indeed your lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then He rose over (Istawa) the Throne (actually in a matter that suits Him

and His majesty). He brings the night as a cover over the day following it rapidly and (the created) the sun, the moon and stars. They are subjected to His commands. Blessed is Allah the lord of both worlds (Aalamin).<sup>49</sup> This verse states that God made earth and heaven in six days. Therefore Islamic artists have used six sides of a Hexagon as a symbol for six days of creation and Seventh side to depict the arrangement of heavens. As per concepts of Islam individuals will be placed in different sections of heaven in accordance with their deeds and heaven has been arranged like wise. The artists have developed the underlying ideas of human deeds in the world and their assessment and show that every individual would get reward or punishment as per his performance.

#### **(iv) Star**

Star in the eyes of Islamic artists means spread or advancement of Islam.<sup>50</sup> It is a beautiful pattern in Islamic designs. Its wide spread points on its four sides beautifully strike a wonderful balance. Its shape from all sides is uniform and emit rays proportionality. In paintings 4,8,6,5 and 7. Painted sprays have been used.

#### **(a) Four Pointed Star**

Four pointed star is known as 'Breath of compassionate' which is quality of God and it signifies the overall majesty and power of God manifested in the universe. It confirms His existence and makes others feel HIM. 'According to Ibn-e-Arabi 'breath of the compassionate' (Al Nafsa Al Rahmani) means that every object purified by creator from evil can be transferred to this material world. 'Breath' denotes the process of life in this

world and it also explains its reality and purpose. The natural process of creation<sup>51</sup> is the most astounding proof of creator's existence. It proclaims that there does exist some authority or super power who has created this universe and is governing it. Actually utility or importance of anything is realized in the context of its contrasting or opposing situation e.g. pleasure is felt after suffering pain, similarly importance of life is realized in contrast to death and significance of breathing is understood when we see the after effects of its discontinuation and realize that it is dependent entirely on HIS will. Creation possesses two distinct phases. 'The first phase relates to self disclosures ('al Tajall ul dhani) then its light leads to disclosure of the reality and existence of other objects (Al Tajall al Assamil) and explains the outer or external truth. However inward realities entirely remain with God and do not reveal anything except the true reality. Thus Divine light possesses knowledge of characteristics of all internal and external objects. This points out to compassionate vapour (Al Bokhar Al Rahmani).<sup>52</sup> The sole power who knows everything is the most merciful. When this vapour is transcends in natural forms then it manifests its other characteristics.

Ibn-e-Arabi gives an explanation of these processes related to the universe. He says that feeling of pain and worries attract our attention and show external impressions. The sufis of sixteenth century have argued that initial or first breath is withheld because of painful feelings growing tension and pressure. When this breath comes out the feelings of tension and congestion come to an end.

'According to Al Qashani breath of compassionate comprises of two processes. One is to inhale the breath and second relates to its expulsion under

some pressure. But he does not attach any importance to these things and declares that they are distresses of the compassionate (Karb al-Rahmani) and accrue because of tension and pressure built up in life system. An important feature of creation is that it takes a form through medium of breath of compassionate (Al-nafas al Rahmani).<sup>53</sup> Then he raises two questions about creation. The Creator knows fully inner and outer situation but keeps something hidden with Him. Why it is so? Again when something is created what is the reason of its creation.

Breathing involves repetitive act – one inhaling the breath and then to expel it out. Sufis call it metaphorically ‘renewed creation’. They say continuation of breathing shows divine form of creation and renewal of creation along with the breathing process. Alphabetic symbolism is the basic concept of explaining divine breath. ‘According to Al-qasimi the continuation of breathing shows will of God and therefore all breathes are involved with Him (Al-nafas) and HE is the blower of soul’.<sup>54</sup>

To visualize concept of breath of compassionate one has to see both its positive and negative side. It signifies that God is creator of Universe and all objects. He knows inner and outer aspects, He is sustainer of life and allows us to breathe. He is most merciful and compassionate.

#### **(b) Five Pointed Star**

‘Five pointed stars were used as symbols on the coins of Umayyad caliphs. In Mamluk period use of five star as a defence symbol was quite popular.’<sup>55</sup> In some other Muslim countries five pointed star along with moon was displayed at religious places. Islamic artists in their geometric patterns

used it on religious grounds specially because of its conformity to five pillars of Islam followed strictly by Muslims all over the world. They are as under –

1. 'Pronouncing the KALMA, chanting an affirmation of the existence of one God i.e. Allah and prophethood of MUHAMMAD (PBH).
2. Praying in precisely defined words and motions five times a day.
3. Giving alms
4. Fasting during the month of Ramzan (The month varies according to lunar calendar).
5. Pilgrimage to MAKKAH at least once during life time.<sup>56</sup>

Sometimes visual analogy of these basic rules are provided by construction of Geometric patterns. They depict style of religious behaviour through their wonderful expression in an exquisite manner.

### **(C) Six Pointed Star**

Looking at it we find that it has been constructed by overlapping of two triangles and its inner part is in the form of a hexagon. According to tenets of Islam creation was completed in six days.<sup>57</sup> Many theories have been put forward about 6 pointed star. It is stated that 'Jewish people believed that the two opposite facing triangles of the star represent God and SATAN.<sup>58</sup> According to another theory it is called star of David and also seal of Solomon (Arabic pronunciation Suleman). 'Star of David (in Arabic Daood) (Plate 17) refers to major star in sky and is not Jewish in Origin.

David (Daood) was father of Hazrat Suleman Alaihs Salam<sup>59</sup> Suleman got a ring from his father in which this star was carved. This ring carried

mysterious powers and suleman had full control over Jinns, all living things in air and water. He could understand the languages of all creatures. It is also said that he possessed hidden and magical powers. Religion tells us that all these powers were bestowed on him by God who chooses persons and allocates them power and work as per HIS will.

#### **(d) Seven Pointed Star**

The number 'seven' finds place in many Islamic building. For instance in the 'Hall of Ambassador's in Al Hamra Palace Granada (Spain) this number seven along with number four is seen at many places. This hall in Alhamra Palace was designed for contemplation and quiet devotion. It was a place supposed to bring a man closer to His creator through spiritual concentration and devotion. It is quite significant to note the use of this number to integrate and decorate this important place.<sup>60</sup>

There are many significant coincidences of use of number seven in Holy Quran as pointed out by commentators and Muslim scholars. Some instances are given here –

1. The first surah of Quran 'Alfatiha' comprises of seven verses.
2. Seven is the first number mentioned in the Quran.
3. The total number of words used in first surah Alfatiha is 49 which is a square of seven.<sup>61</sup>

These coincidences show some special significance of this number. Further we find many references to this number in Holy Quran not only

showing its numeric value but also convey some important symbolic or hidden meaning of this number.

Quran declares that these are seven skies among the stars. We can see seven heavenly bodies (stars) with naked eyes.<sup>62</sup> Their names are (1) Saturn, (2) Jupiter, (3) Mars, (4) Sun, (5) Venus, (6) Mercury, (7) Moon.

They are perceived to be stationary or moving round the earth. They may be regarded unalaid set of geometric ceilings supported by invisible columns and vast number of millions of stars and planets.

According to a Hadith quoted from Prophet at the time of ascension (Meraj Sharif) Prophet Mohammad was escorted and guided by angel Gabriel and passed through seven phases or stages.<sup>63</sup> This shows the importance and significance of this number in Islam and its history.

In mathematics seven is an odd number and is not divisible by any other number except seven. Thus it has resemblance with divine quality of creation viz. that nobody except God can create or destroy anything. In this respect this number points out toward power and glory of God.

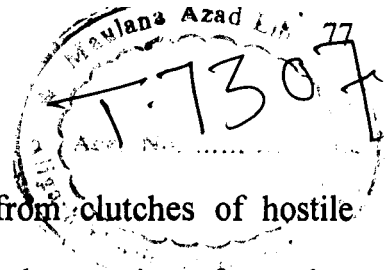
#### **(e) Eight Pointed star**

‘There is universal symbolism found in 8 pointed star. This symbol denotes harmony, balance and cosmic order. At the same time it has been used both as a religious and mystic (Sufianaa) symbol<sup>64</sup>. Since early ages this star was meant to show the everlasting unity and order of universe and rules of nature. It is said that in early Astronomy this star was used as its base or root and is constructed by overlapping of two squares. Its four corners are symbol to

represent four sides of the space viz. North, South, East and West and the other square symbolizes Time. The existence of this star points out that in every year two times sun touches highest and lowest point in the sky and makes longest and shortest day. It indicates summer and winter and also points to two times when sun becomes brightest and sends straight rays on equator night and day become equal (Plate 18).<sup>65</sup> If we refer to Islamic history we find that 'on prophets ring a 8 pointed star was carved. He used it as his seal.'<sup>66</sup> It proves that 8 pointed star was used as a symbol by prophet Muhammad to spread Islam. The ring and its star was a whole time symbol to cover the universe and if we ignore it nothing would be left in the universe. Accordingly Islamic scholars respected it as a symbol and conveyed to the world that Prophet Muhammad was deputed to this world for guidance and eight pointed star can be regarded as a symbol for his leadership.

#### **(f) Repeated Unit**

Repeated pattern means similarity between inner and outer designs of the pattern. According to El-said 'Repeated pattern is a design to display repetition of prayers.'<sup>67</sup> Just like prayer is offered in same rhythm repeatedly the pattern's repetition in form designs imbibes same feelings and impression. Thick designs in setting different patterns infuse thoughts in minds of viewers similar to what they rhythematically repeat in different words on seeing certain things Islamic artists have made repeated designs to depict certain events of Islamic history for example 'The thick design spider web' of star pattern refers to migration of Prophet (PBH) from Makkah to Madina due to inhuman treatment of infidels of Makkah. He stayed hiding in a cave for three days and

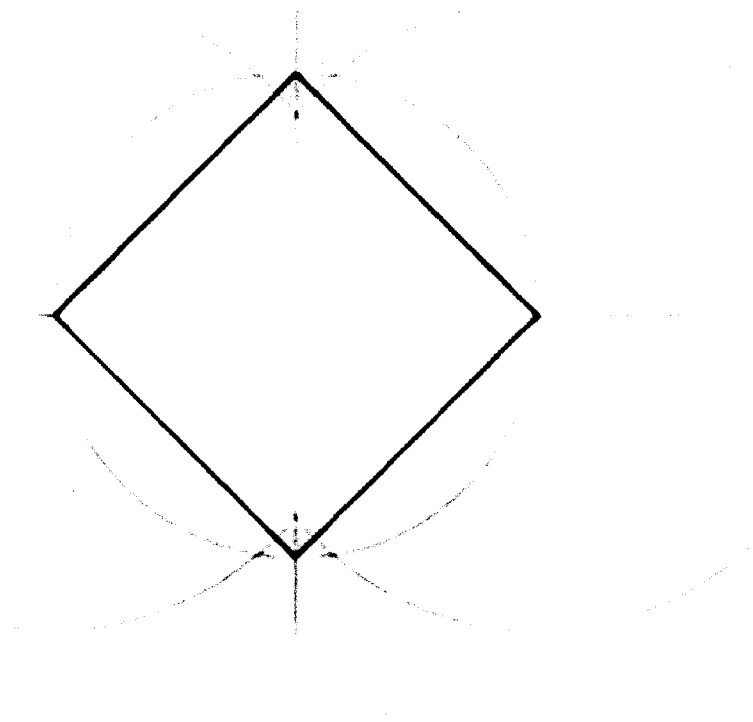


nights with his companion Abu Baker to escape from clutches of hostile Makkans. One morning some infidels almost reached the opening of cave but by that time a spider set up a web on it and a dove laid eggs on its side and a wild rose bush spread its branches over it. All these things and marks forced them to believe that there was nobody inside the abandoned cave.<sup>68</sup> This geometric pattern made by Muslim artists shows that they conceived all these things very minutely. The repeated motif always evokes strongly the Islamic idea of unity in everything. This piece of evidence affirms that God has planned everything, how it will be done, who will do it and this order never changes. It is He alone who protects as per His will. All these things are very beautifully depicted in such patterns.

In a philosophical set up Geometry decorated in artistic form shows very nicely the expressions of muslim artists and puts them before us. We have seen many brilliant embodiments of Islamic concepts. The use of hexagon, star and triangle and circle in patterns and overlapping of figures and repetitive patterns point out towards laws of God and explain them. The artists within religious framework have set up these patterns logically to express their feelings to the viewers.

It is fully established that the Islamic Geometrical art is directly connected with study of mathematics, science and philosophy developed by Islam. Islamic artists have used Geometry as a symbol to give their personal expressions about God and His eternal powers. They have tried to affirm the glory and beauty of worldly objects through their imagination and ability Geometrical patterns based on mathematical rules have served very impressive

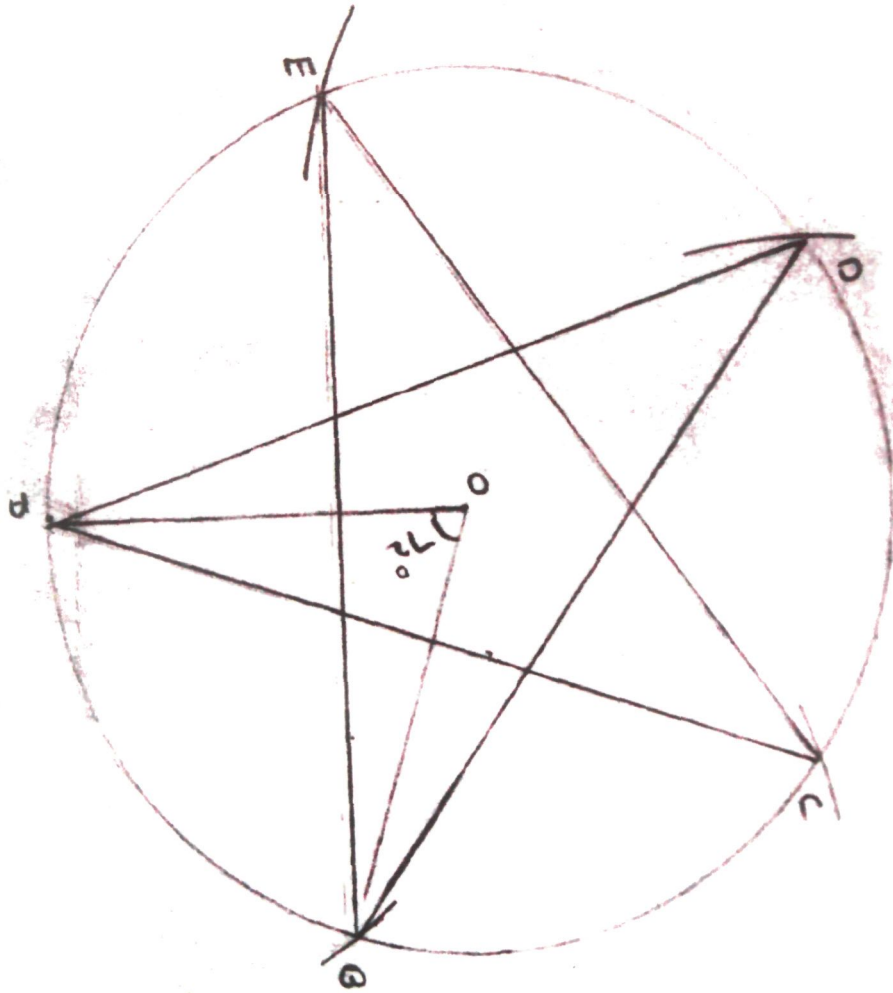
medium to these artists to explain convincingly the eternal powers of Allah. They used these patterns to express religious point of view about universal order in a very logical manner. Their repetition of pattern, balance of views and continuous efforts of communication show that they conveyed to the community honestly the messages of religion and truth through their art. They deserve appreciation for their devotion and hard work.



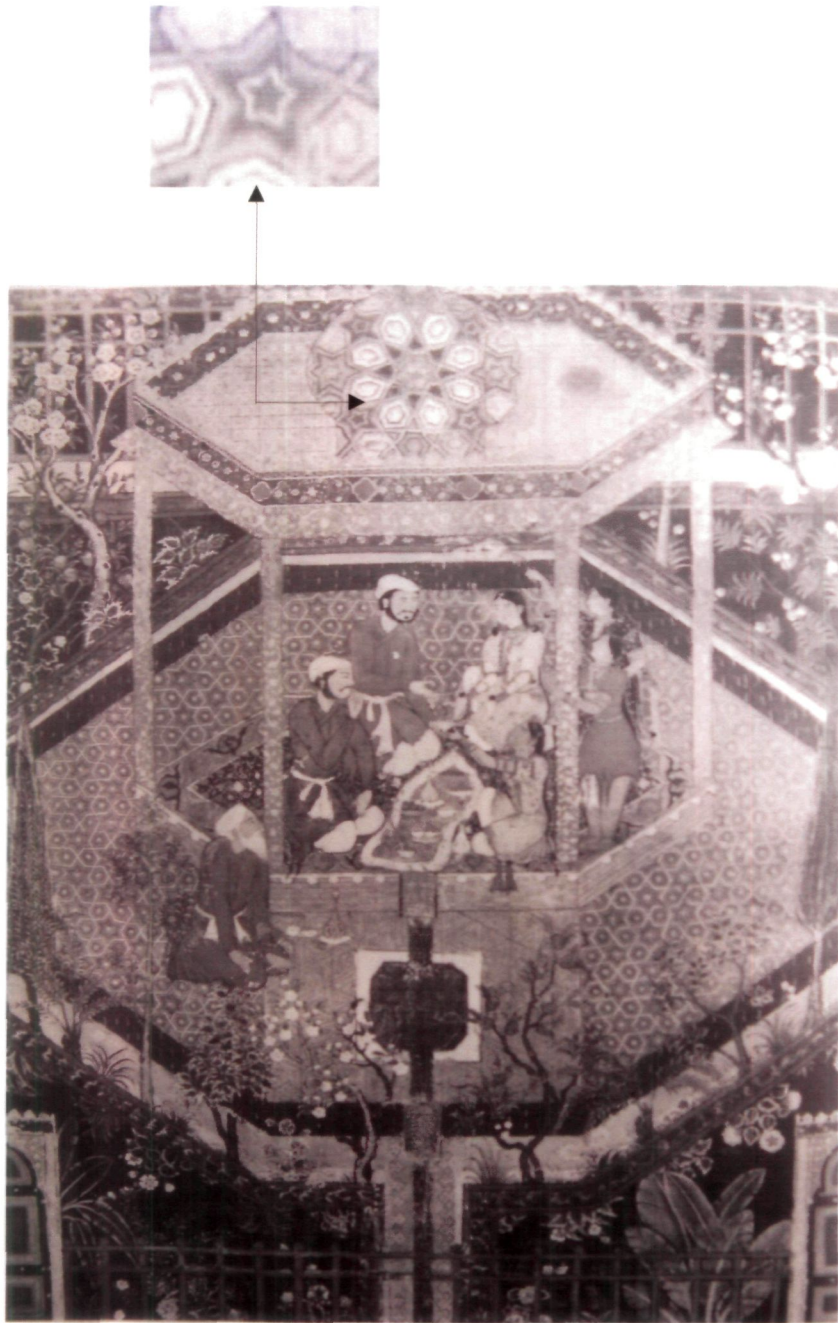
**Plate - 1: Structure of Four Pointed Star**



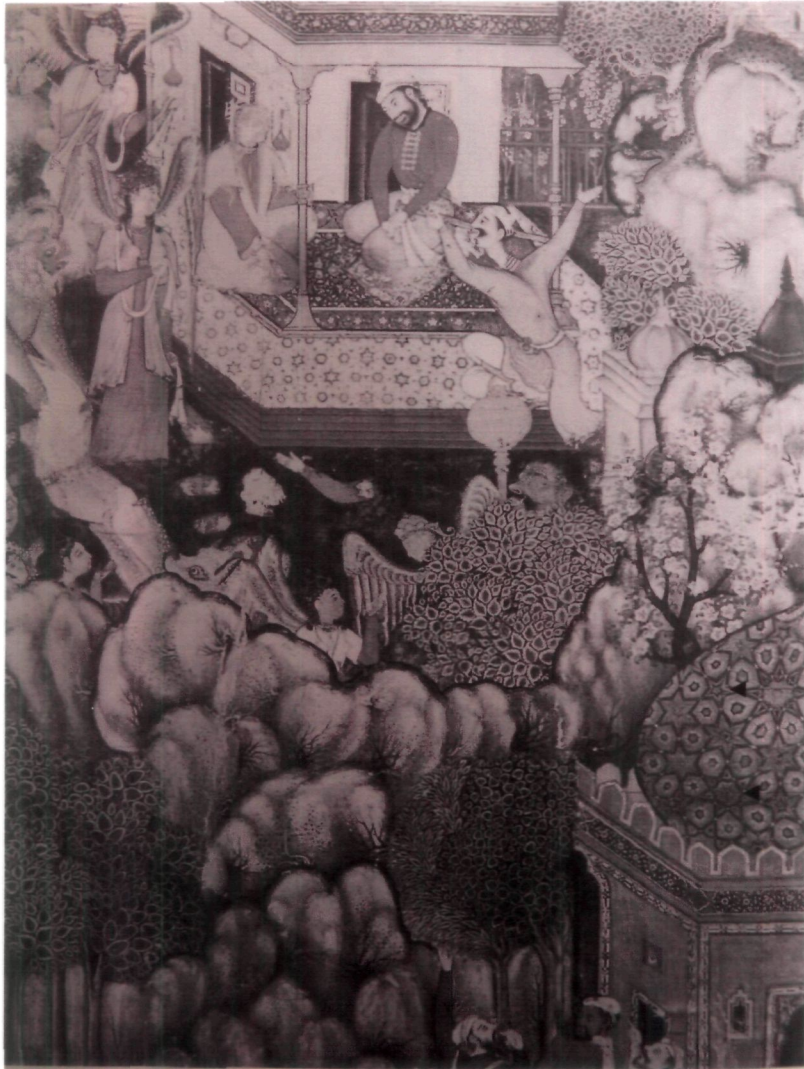
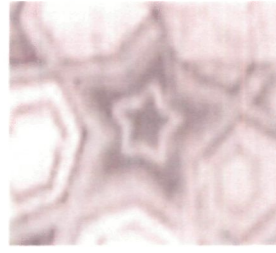
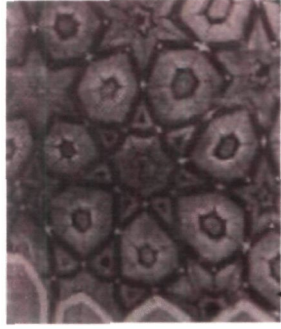
**Plate - 2 Saleem with Scholars and Companions in a Garden**



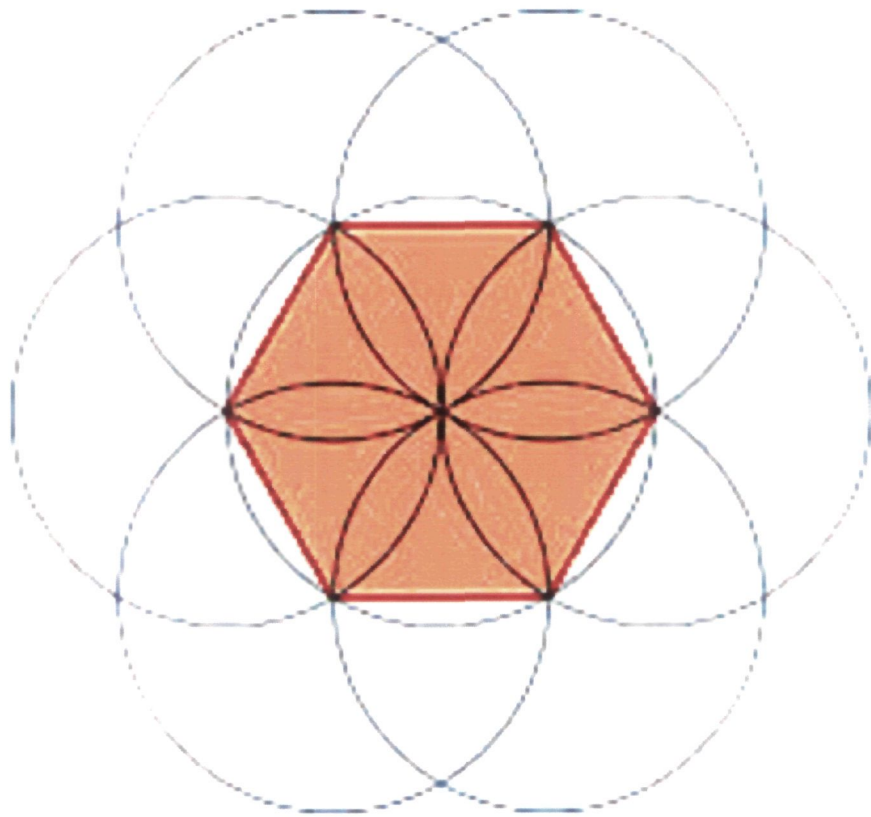
**Plate 3 - Structure of Five Pointed Star**



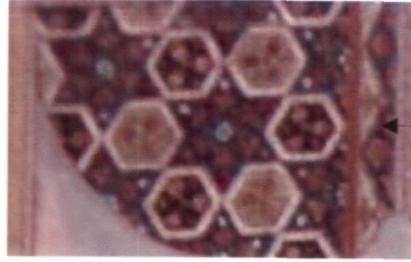
**Plate - 4: Rustam and Mehar Afroz  
Converse in a Garden Pavilion**



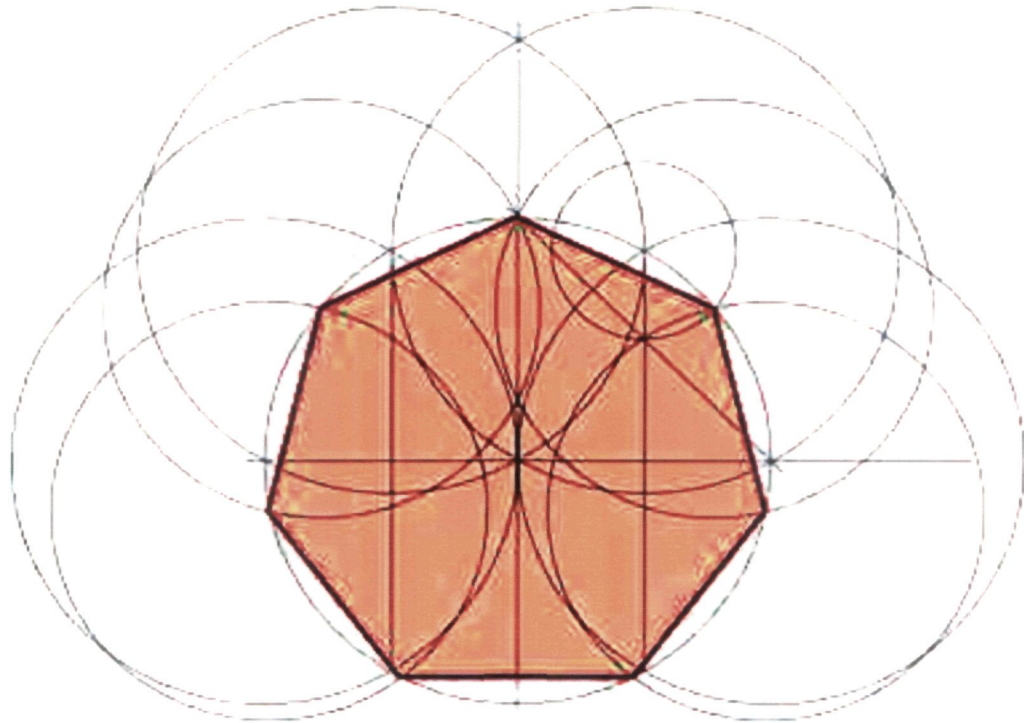
**Plate - 5: The Fairies call or Hamza to kill the Dragon**



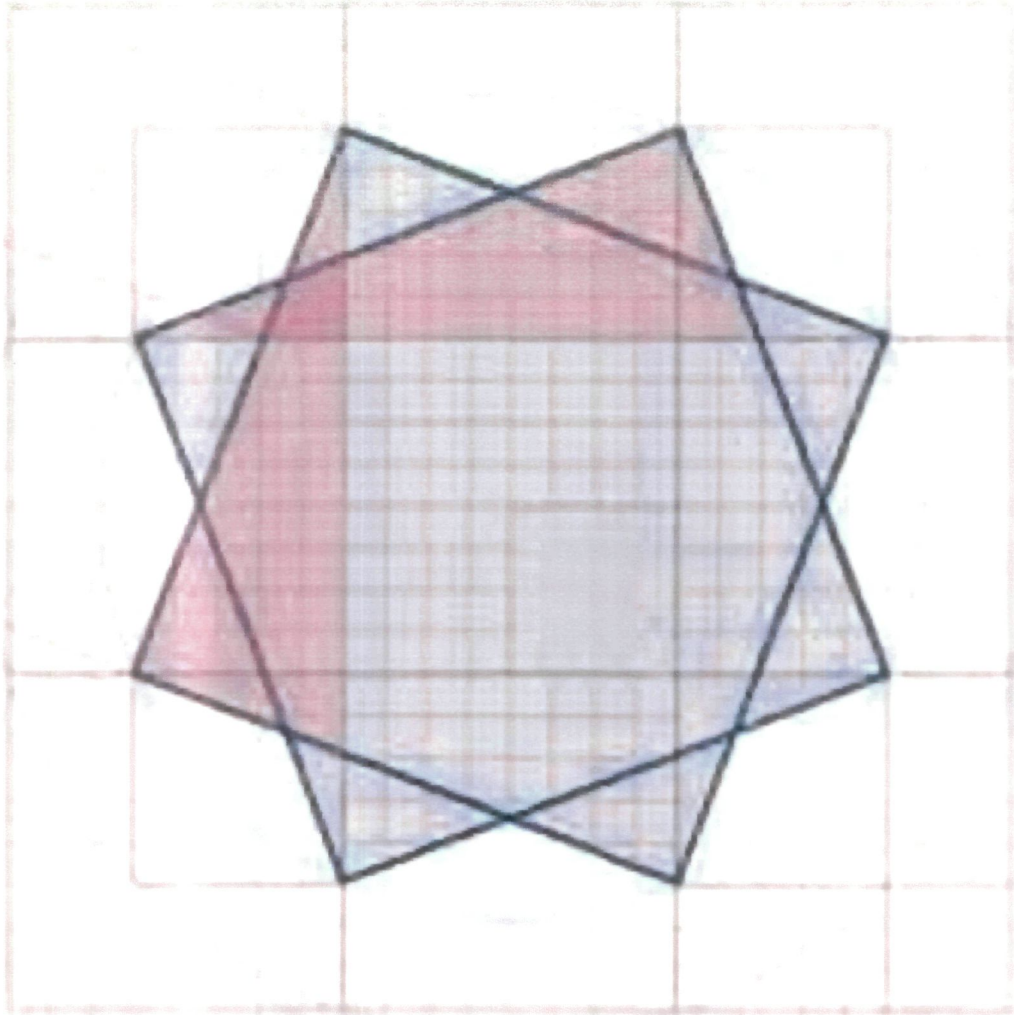
**Plate - 6: Structure of Six Pointed Star**



**Plate - 7: Night Time in a Palace**



**Plate -8: Structure of Seven Pointed Star**



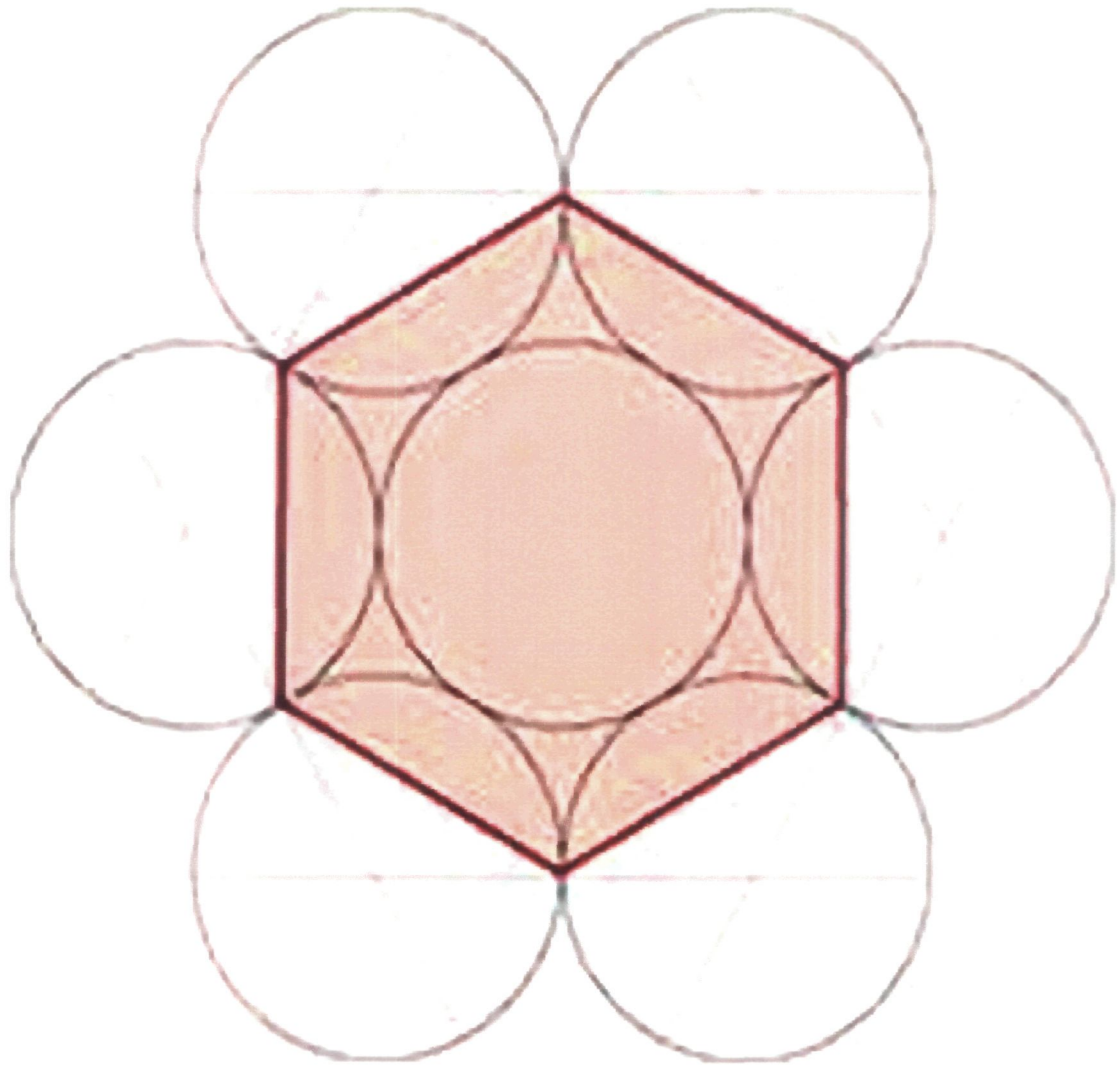
**Plate - 9: Structure of Eight Pointed Star**



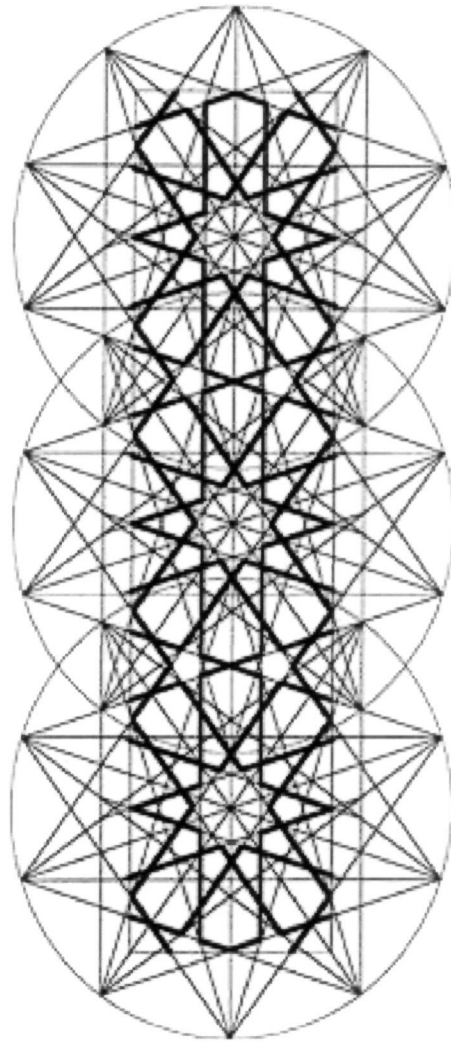
Plate - 10: Humayun Surprising his Parents



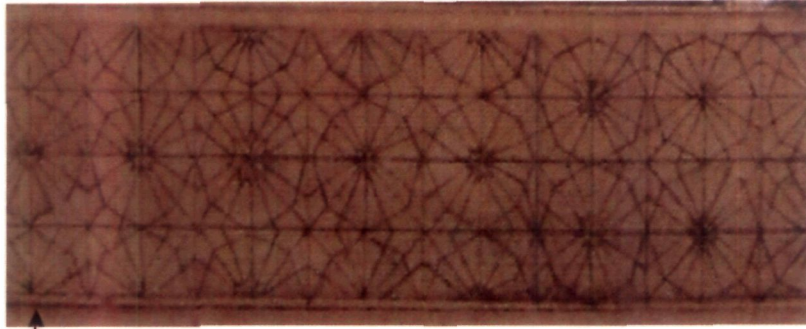
**Plate - 11: Sultan Tests Sample of Milk  
 Hexagon in Background**



**Plate - 12: Structure of Hexagon**



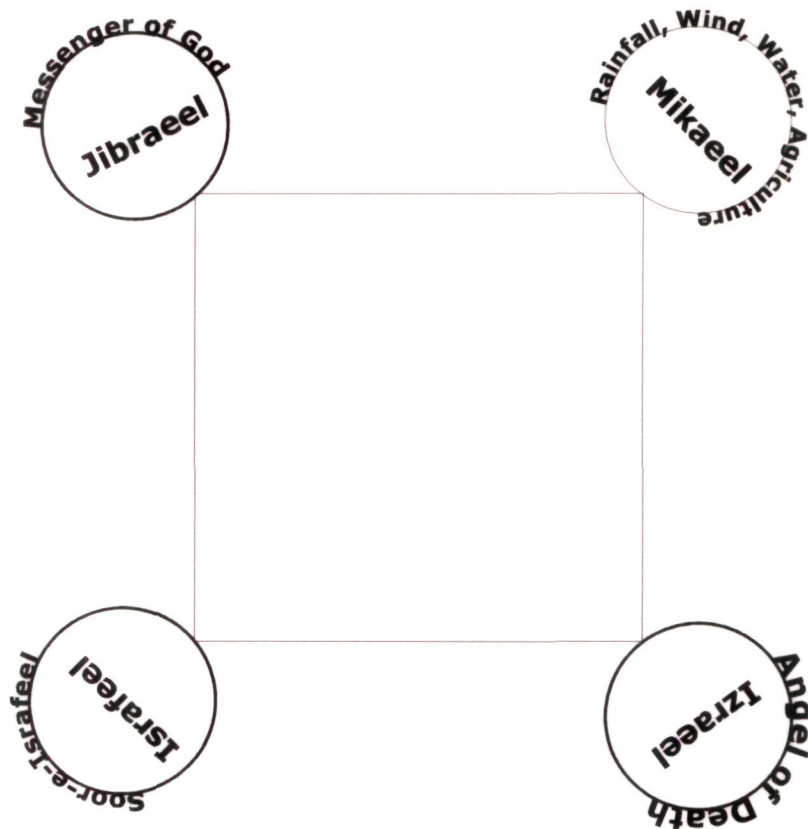
**Plate - 13: Structure of Repeated Unit**



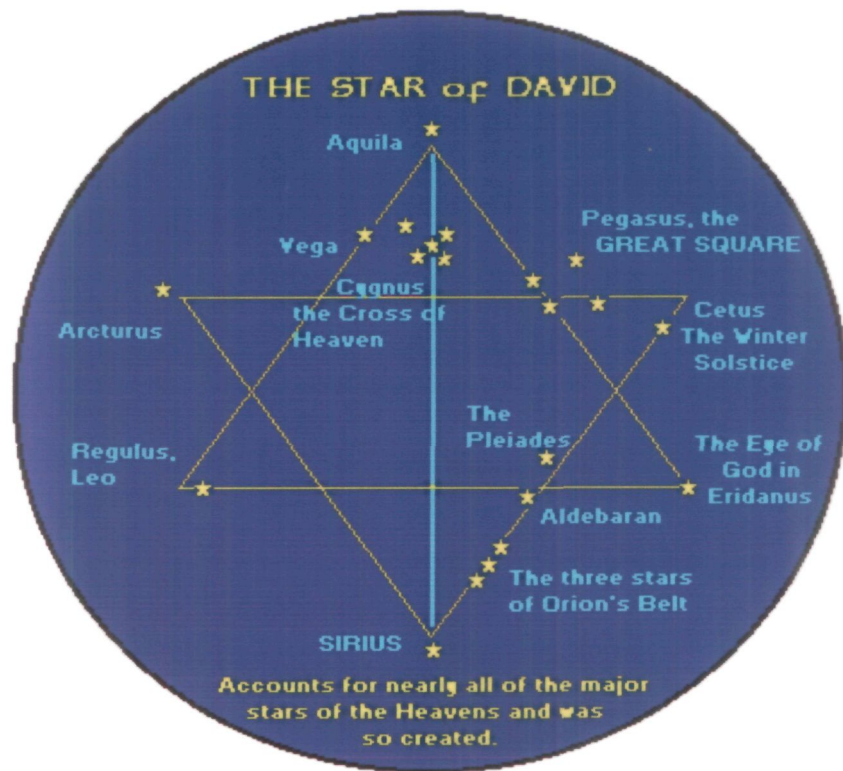
**Plate - 14: Young Prince and His Wife  
on a Terrace**



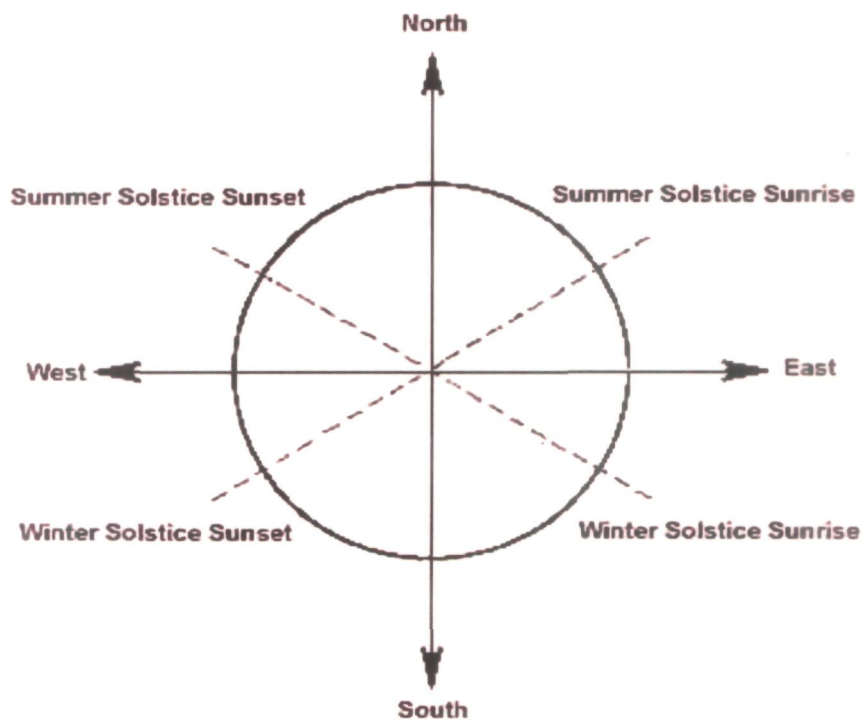
**Plate - 15: Diagram of four elements**



**Plate - 16: Four Prominent Angels**



**Plate - 17: Star of David**



**Plate 18 - Four Sides of Space**

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# *Chapter-4*

## *The concept of Floral Motifs in Indian Islamic Paintings*



## CHAPTER – IV

### THE CONCEPT OF FLORAL MOTIFS IN INDIAN ISLAMIC PAINTINGS

Flowers are natural and divine sources of decoration in the universe. They denote soft and innocent expressions. Muslim artists have used this Islamic aesthetic symbol in abstract form and made their art interesting and beautiful. Their products impress the viewers with their peaceful expression.

#### A. Floral Motifs

Floral motifs were part of ornamental art and were used as common designs in ancient art. They were used in architectural ornamentation, and decoration of houses and public places. Floral and vegetation motifs were considered suitable for anticonic expression, repetitive patterns and for filling space. Plant motifs were either borrowed from earlier oriental designs or were imitations of local floral designs.<sup>1</sup>

Floral motifs actually belong to the flower's family. They include presentation of flowers in their abstract form as well as to make artistic design or ornamental setting of flowers. These motifs are repeated to make patterns more decorative and appealing. Artists use their imagination to make diverse patterns in various shapes from floral motifs. Sometimes these patterns appear to be imaginary or far from reality but still they are liked because of their elegance. They receive admiration and attention because of their beautiful form which look real and impressive.

Indian Islamic Paintings are full of fragrance of decorative elements. This decoration may either form the theme or subject matter of a painting or depict some other description. But in both cases it remains dominant and beautiful. The muslim artists were faithful followers of Islamic culture and maintained the underlying spirit of Islam at every stage. In other words they used Islamic painting to reflect the beauty and splendour of their culture and used symbolic forms and elements with perfect aesthetic sense.

### **B. Floral Patterns with Scrolling and Repeated Forms**

The history of Indian Muslim painting has undergone rapid and clearly defined changes with advance of time. It started with following of Iranian traditions and adopted numerous additions and alterations. From Persian courts this art reached India and under different dynasties, it developed into an important Islamic art. 'Floral patterns, geometric designs and calligraphy gave beauty novelty, strength and popularity to these paintings. With the help of these elements Muslim artists evolved many combinations by using a number of materials and produced excellent decoration items such as illuminated manuscripts of the Quran, polychrome ceramic tiles, exterior and interior surfaces of religious buildings, gardens, palaces and residential houses.<sup>2</sup> Different types of background and glimpses of local customs and event added to the beauty and popularity of these paintings.

'Floral motifs were used for illuminating manuscripts of holy Quran in ninth century in Muslims world.<sup>3</sup> It was quite common to decorate the sacred book with external beauty and beautiful designs. Such books were very much

in demand because of holy text its meaningful teachings and attractive decorations.

‘The ornamentation of title and decoration of pages of manuscripts and books, royal decrees and epithets written in Persian were, also quite popular. The artists and calligraphers produced excellent decorations and developed novel ideas and imagination. In Muslim period such experiments were successfully made and liberally patronized by the kings and feudal lords. This led to abundant supplies of arabesques and palmettos with repeated and innovative forms and designs.<sup>4</sup>

‘Floral patterns were based on minute observation of natural objects as well as presented wonderful specimens of flight of imagination. They revealed masterly ideas and extra ordinary powers of expression possessed and displayed by the Muslim artists. They used their brush and colour scheme so skillfully and vividly that their creations won applause from all sections of the society.<sup>5</sup>, The Muslim artists faithfully reproduced natural objects and interpreted them with great accuracy and indulgence. An elevated taste of real naturalism became integral part of painting during muslim rule. This art flourished and got lavish patronage from ottoman, Saljuq, Safavid and above all mighty Mughal Kings. Flowers, trees, plants and insects were admirably depicted in manuscripts and paintings as most reliable and faithful replicas of their botanical structure.<sup>6</sup> Beautiful lines, shapes and designs added exquisite beauty and grace to the original or traditional motifs.<sup>7</sup> Muslim artists were emotionally attached to nature and its objects and, therefore, their paintings of

natural objects ornamented by floral motifs and elegant geometric patterns became excellent specimens of workmanship. These decorated paintings were commonly hung on walls and carpets and all types of background suited them and added to their brilliance. Painted carpets were very much in demand in muslim world. Actually they were derivatives belonging to miniature art of painting. But Muslim artists elevated their quality and appearance by using various forms and display of their skill. A comparison between classical miniatures and carpets decorated with floral forms shows that floral forms were rarely used in miniatures because it was not easy to put dense pattern within small space of miniatures.<sup>8</sup> It is also interesting to note that floral forms led to diffusion of artistic patterns in the art of painting. 'A particular type or group of floral forms were commonly used on rugs but in miniature paintings their experiment met with little success.'<sup>9</sup>

Scrolling patterns of plants and floral motifs were part of tradition of painting since early days of Byzantine and Sasanian kings.<sup>10</sup> Muslim artists brought excellence and elegance to this art and in India they borrowed some ideas from Hindu school of painting also. Floral elements or designs can be selected in various ranges from natural objects and scenes and arduous reproduction of plants and flowers. From 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards artists used symmetrical and repetitive schemes of flower and plant designs which formed diaper patterns.<sup>11</sup> These repetitive and scrolling forms are called Arabesque which means Arab patterns on miniatures used in carpets. The Arabesque has been defined as a particular and exclusively Islamic form of denaturalized ornamentation consisting of split or bifurcated leaves and inorganic tendrils.

The leaves may be flat or curved or pointed or round or rolled, smooth or rough or pierced but are never isolated and are always joined with the stalk called terminal. The stalk may be of spiral form or interlaced through the leaves or using them again from there.<sup>12</sup>

‘A floral motif may be symmetrical or asymmetrical; simple or complex. It is repeated on the surface either in a planned way or sometimes freely dispersed. There are endless opportunities to arrange or organize these motifs.’<sup>13</sup> In Muslim paintings floral designs having few flowers or bunch of flowers can be seen. There are set rules which are observed in decoration of these motifs.

**(i) Symmetry<sup>14</sup>** : Symmetry implies a balance of proportions in respect of size, shape and position of motifs in the painting. All paintings use symmetry in individual motifs or group of motifs as per the pattern followed in the painting.

**(ii) Radial symmetry<sup>15</sup>** : In the middle of radial symmetry there is a separate design which has its own importance and an all four corners designs are spread. They may be simple or complicated. Gourdhan in a painting has shown ‘Timur handing imperial crown to Babur (Plate 1).’<sup>16</sup> It is heavily decorated and there is radial symmetry on Shamiyana and carpet. There are separate designs in the centre and different designs are spread on the four corners of the carpet.

**(iii) Bilateral symmetry<sup>17</sup>** : Here same designs are set on both sides parallel to each other. If a mirror is placed before the object one can see exactly the same picture from both sides. In bilateral symmetry at a selected point a balancing form can be designed. In the painting ‘Shahjahan in Darbar’ (Plate 2).<sup>18</sup> On the back wall same designs have been made to have balancing effect. It has been

divided in two parts by a middle door which has exactly same designs on its both sides.

**(iv) Asymmetry<sup>19</sup>** : In this design there is no centre point and like bilateral symmetry there are no two equal divisions. A painting captioned “Jahangir seated on an allegorical throne” made by Bichiter (Plate 3)<sup>20</sup> is best example of this design. In this paintings there are very dense and thick designs on the carpet but there is no centre or balancing form. It is continuation of serolling form without any break made by frequent use of patterns. Similarly there is another painting of Deccani Golkunda School named ‘Sufi Sant’ (Plate 4).<sup>21</sup> In this painting repeated pattern of similar design has been used on the whole carpet.

**(v) Raw** : In Muslim paintings flowers are arranged in a single line, for example, in a painting named ‘Sultan Samples Milk used for Pastry’ included in Nimatnama manuscript (Plate 5).<sup>22</sup> In this painting floral motif has been arranged in a line in the upper portion of the painting. Similarly in another painting ‘Shahjahan in Darbar’ (Plate 6)<sup>23</sup> floral pattern in the middle line has been set and small plant are equally arranged in rooms.

The use of patterns in two equal parts is quite common in Muslim paintings. (1) inside the painting and (ii) on the borders or Hahsiya. But in border all patterns are used in scrolling and repeated forms. In some paintings enough space in width has been left on all four sides. In same cases patterns in group form have been used in borders. But in majority of paintings these group patterns have been used to depict different types of background and zigzag,

simple, repeated shapes and wavy floral scrolls have been employed for the purpose. While on Borders and Hashias open floral patterns have been commonly used and bare flowers and plants have been shown for decorative purposes. Here mention is made of a painting of Sultanate period named 'A Royal Horse and Groom' (Plate 7).<sup>24</sup> In Sultanate period double hashia (Borders) was introduced in paintings. The inner border was divided into boxes and was decorated in various ways and on external Hashiya (border) scrolling form was used.

Similarly in a Moghul painting 'Timur and Shahjahan(Plate 8)'<sup>25</sup> heavy floral decoration with delicate wavy design forms show the mastery and skill of its artist.

In plates 9, 10 & 11 some borders in paintings contain gold edged flower plants, formally arranged in rows and occasionally geometric shapes and designs composed of floral scrolls and abstract arabesques are also depicted. In some other paintings hybrid combination of flowering plants, scrolls and arabesque is found.<sup>26</sup>

These patterns are important feature of Islamic art of painting and are full of aesthetic charm and zeal. They dominate the paintings and make them lively and beautiful. Categorisation of these patterns speaks of the fine skill and imagery of the artist and shows how successfully he has decorated his paintings with a number of floral designs. These designs helped in creating cheerful and cordial atmosphere and showed the insight of the artists.

### **(vi) Some floral paintings**

The Indian Muslims artists extensively used flowers in scattered as well as full forms to show natural beauty in their paintings. Though these flowers were used within reasonable limits yet they produced dramatical effects to depict various moods and situations elegantly.

Floral painting was at its zenith when Jahangir was the Mughal emperor. He was a great connoisseur of fine arts specially painting. He had a very keen eye and natural instinct<sup>27</sup> to judge the beauty of art and possessed unrivalled knowledge about Persian art of painting. In his court there was a galaxy of talented artists like Abul Hasan Nadiruzzaman, Farrokh Beg, Nadirulsar, Bishan Das, Mansur, Manohar, Gobar Dhan, Daulat and Mohd.- Nadir, Mansur excelled in his natural, floral and animal paintings. He used to inscribe his name as Mansur Naqqah (designer) on his paintings. He made beautiful designs and patterns which were copied on marble, mosaic and other materials.

The emperor liked and patronized these painter artists. He himself often made drawings of beautiful natural objects and coloured them skillfully before them. He gave them new ideas and designs and suggested improvement to their paintings.<sup>28</sup> Mansur's floral designs specially 'blue lilies' (Plate 12) is ranked as a masterpiece of draughtsmanship and combination of colours.<sup>29</sup> In this painting two flowers are shown hanging on a branch of tree along with leaves. One flower is transformed in a plant with its leaves going upwards and there is one raw bud also. The scene presents positive feeling of natural beauty for the viewers.

Earlier 'in Akbar's rule some paintings depicted Darweshs (saints) and in Dara Shikoh's album we find few beautiful pictures of various birds and flowers. But generally flower pictures do not appear first hand or accurate and probably are adoptions of botanical illustrations or copies of contemporary European flowers<sup>30</sup>. However some paintings of Mansur were highly appreciated, viz. 'A night heron'<sup>31</sup> (Plate 13) There a SARAS is standing in water and is looking towards a pink lily at its left side and behind it there are three flowers and four buds. One flower is fully developed and two flowers are bending below and are surrounded by leaves. This type of focus painting makes it very charming, but the expressions in the eyes of saras and blooming flowers do not reflect enough positive feeling or mood.

Other floral painting of Mughal era –

We come across certain paintings of butterflies sitting on exotic pink flowers with plants, insects. One of such same painting deserve special mention captioned '*Two butterflies on pink flowers*'<sup>32</sup>. In this painting on a branch of a tree there is one pink flower with two or three stems, some buds and big and broad leaves. This makes it more appealing and attractive. Display of active butterflies moving on flowery plants denotes natural feelings and delicates balance. The plants, flowers and this circular branches make it more charming and real.

In another painting "plants and insects" there are three different types of flowers. One in the middle is fully blooming in the shape of long leave and on its side there are small plants into different shapes of elves. Some insects surround the flowers and add to the beauty of the painting.<sup>33</sup>

In another painting ‘an exotic plant and butterflies’<sup>34</sup> the flowers are shown blooming beautifully alongwith whole plant with scrolling form is also visible. But bending of flowers appears to be somewhat a gloomy background.

“Exotic flowers”<sup>35</sup> (Plate 14) in this painting different flowers have been drawn in a natural way but circular and scattered leaves do not conform to natural depiction. In “Exotic flower” two different flowers in one plant have been shown with two circular types of leaves. The fully grown flowers, however, show some restlessness. Similar restlessness is evident in the painting called “exotic flowers and insects”. Here flowers are bent downwards and Persian type cloud has been shown in the background.

All these floral paintings are surrounded by repetition of floral motifs and it gives them somewhat dreamy form. Such motifs in a painting named ‘plants with single flower’ and have been used by artist in the form of a pattern. ‘Group of servants’<sup>36</sup> (Plate 15). Another painting in Jahangir’s album “single flower and plants” has been shown through broad designs. In Ahmadabad in a painting called ‘young prince Riding’<sup>37</sup> (Plate 16) floral plants have been used as motif in the background and simple borders have also been repeated as motifs. These things make the painting very rich and beautiful. Thus floral motifs and natural form make paintings good pieces of decoration. Use of flowers in border have been a popular pattern used by artists. The dramatic and natural touches given by flowers and floral motifs enable the paintings to give better frame work of expression. Artists have used them to depict charming as well gloomy or dull situations as per their satisfaction. But every flower has its own identity and is not dependent on another as can be seen in arabesque patterns.

### **C. Connection of Beauty in Islam**

In Quran, creation of the universe has been described an example of aesthetic taste. One will notice a very elegant pattern of beauty and harmony in the way all things were put in order by the supreme creator. This is confirmed in these words of Quran :

“who hath created seven heavens in harmony. Thou (Muhammad) can see no fault in the Beneficent one’s creation. Then look again, Can thou see any deficiency or rift? Look again and again yet thy sight will return unto thee weakened and dimmer’.<sup>38</sup>

It says further “Verily We have adorned this heaven with the stars (for beauty).<sup>39</sup>

‘And the things created for your use are adorned with beauty. (It is) for you to behold and ponder’.

“And the cattle, He has them for you, in them there is warmth created, (warm clothing) and numerous benefits and of them you eat, and wherein is beauty for you, when ye bring them home, in the evening, and as you lead them forth to pasture in the morning”.<sup>40</sup>

Even on the day of judgment, beauty will have its role to play as it radiates from the faces of the people of paradise showing their happiness and full satisfaction :

“Some faces, that Day, shall be Nadirah shining and radiant”.<sup>41</sup>

So in the light of all these and many other verses in the Quran, it is clear that beauty is reckoned with in Islam. In addition to this, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing be upon him) said that :

A verse in Holy quran proclaims “Almighty Allah is Beautiful and loves beauty’. It explains the term beauty and its significance in the world. If the form is beautiful it will make everything appear beautiful and its every influence will look beautiful. Thus beauty is an eternal element of physical as well as metaphysical world”. The Hadith quoted from prophet confirms that though nobody has seen Allah, yet all His creations are so beautiful and subtle that we have to believe that He is embodiment of perfect beauty. Thus beauty has been used to define and describe beautiful things in a beautiful manner.

‘Sura-al-Naml, which describes the story of the visit of a Queen to soloman is a very good specimen of aesthetic narration.

King Soloman invites the queen to enter his palace. Its floor is made of fine glass or crystal: Mistaking it for water, the queen lifts up her dress to avoid getting it wet. Soloman corrects her mistake and declares that the palace floor is made of glass.<sup>42</sup>

Thus textual analysis proves that Soloman’s palace with glass floor was beautifully decorated with “works of art”. This is ample evidence to show that the aesthetic expression of the verse yields a truly practical application.

This experience consists of a mistaken visual perception by the queen of the mysterious glass device in Soloman’s palace. Quranic text lays down an aesthetic example of visual forms in domain of art and architecture. The

specific appearance and qualities of transparency and flatness of the material, its white or green colour, the apparent presence of living sea creatures, the real water beneath it and so on reveals the deep aesthetic atmosphere prevailing in Solomon's palace.

Actually, this Quranic depiction of story has given rise to various aesthetic principles that are widely applied in artistic forms and architecture in Islam. The glass pattern shared with ceramic, stone or marble arrangements in monuments, especially in geometrical decoration and organization corresponds with what we usually call "ornamentation" forms an "overall" decoration of combined and repeated elements that adorn a wall, floor arch or other parts of the building.

Such ornamentations do present a concrete theme inspired by nature in the form of various types of flower motifs found in Islamic ceramics or textiles. Nevertheless, in many cases, the composition and decorative arrangement is a result of free and fine imagination.

These aesthetics contained in the Islamic scriptural sources and the existing works of art help us to arrive at a better understanding of artistic patterns.

#### **(i) Beauty according to Islamic Thinkers**

"Aesthetics" in the framework of Islamic civilization is a branch of philosophy that examines the nature of art and combines experiment of art within natural environment...<sup>43</sup>

Aesthetics, and particularly aesthetic phenomenology, forms a specific and new field, which has been still not taken into account seriously in the realm of Islamic studies although it is fully integrated into contemporary analytical works on art and its theory. Two obstacles appear to be a responsible for this situation. ‘The first is the general belief of calling aesthetics a branch of science and a mode of thought which seems to emanate from the philosophical tradition of the modern western world.<sup>44</sup> Thus it is considered intrinsically linked to the rules, principles and logic of western traditions and consequently is not regarded truly adaptable to the thinking and the arts of other civilizations. ‘The second is related to the Islamic concept about the practice of the arts. This concept puts some normative constraints (against the depiction and representation of living things in visual forms) and, on the other hand, it has no clearly defined rules or doctrines outlined in Islamic texts and treatises, like the western world.<sup>45</sup>

Attempts to study aesthetics, as a specialized branch of thought and to find aesthetic elements in Islamic written sources lead to two paths. One aims towards understanding of aesthetics through the study of texts specially about definition and scope of the concept of beauty. The second way is to apply the doctrine of the creation of art and make direct observation of artistic forms as meaningful objects and get experiences of the line.

#### **(a) Hazm’s Approach to Beauty**

Study of medieval Arabic aesthetics, characterized by a strong reliance upon other fields of knowledge, manifests itself in particular in a complicated

dual problem of making distinction between physical beauty and divine beauty, and between sensory perceptions and inner perceptions. Observable beauty refers to, or is necessarily understood in relation to the concept of God's beauty. As a result, the visual experience of the beautiful implies, in some way, a spiritual resonance through a poetic perception of a metaphysical nature. Ibn Hazm an eminent muslim thinker dealt with this subject in detail.

The concept of Beauty in Ibn Hazm's thought possesses several dimensions, material, spiritual and ethical. 'However, it appears to be mainly developed in relation to his theories of human attitude on the one hand and moral behaviour, on the other. God's beauty is a pure abstraction. Ibn Hazm attempts to classify and organize the attributes and qualities assigned to perceptible beauty, like sweetness, gentleness or righteousness, into a three tiered hierarchy.<sup>46</sup>

According to Ibn Hazm, a beautiful person is endowed with all the best properties of beauty. 'A highly poetic and vivid passage in "the Necklace of the Dove" explains vividly the characteristic of Ibn Hazm's approach to beauty:

"Neither the leaves and the plants flourishing after the rain, nor the brightness of the flowers after the clouds pass over with the showers of the temperate season, nor the whisper of the spring tides between the branches in bloom, nor the beauty of white palaces (ta'annug al-qusur al baid) surrounded by green gardens, are better than union with the beloved (Wasl habib). When his qualities (akhlaquhu) satisfy you and you appreciate his innate gifts (Jara iza-hu) then you find that both correspond (to each other) in terms of beauty

(taqabalat fil-husn). This is a fact that neither the rhetoricians can express nor the orators of the best eloquency can describe”.<sup>47</sup>

However intimately linking the concept of beauty with earthly existence, gives birth to a deep human characteristic, viz. the motivation of the union of love is understood as the ultimate aesthetic goal possible through God’s grace. Full and fair enjoyment of the beautiful behaviour, most intellectually and spiritually inclined and linked to the inner perception of the ultimate beauty, namely divine beauty is final goal.

These ideas form the main axis upon which the theory of Beauty turns within the “Zahri” philosophy of Ibn Hazm.

#### **(b) Ibn Rushd’s Views about Beauty**

The nature of Beauty was addressed and analysed by Islamic philosophers in the course of discussions about God and His attributes in relation to His creation.

The concept of beauty according to Ibn Rushd does not lead to an authentic theory of aesthetics, because the beautiful is not to be understood either having a value or quality, but has to be dealt with a systematic analytical approach of perceptible reality - conceived as a coherent and ordered whole viz. that is nature created by God.<sup>48</sup>

Ibn Rushd insists on the necessity of applying logic through syllogism and demonstrations in general in order to understand the world.

Ibn Rushd argues that the beautiful identities itself not with a transcendental and sacred value of perfection, but with objective and

observable notions of order (tartib), structural cohesiveness and physical harmony (nizam)<sup>49</sup>:

According to Ibn Rushd, Art is more limited than nature (tabi'a). Thus art generates, within the quantities of colours that exist in the internal logos (al-nutqal-batin), and what the external logos (al-nutq al-kharij) are capable of producing. Meanwhile, nature introduces all things that exists in the immaterial internal logos (al-nutq al-batin al-ruhani), and therefore nature is nobler than art (ashraf min al-Sina'a) and the nobility (sharaf) of the artist will depend on the degree of excellence (jawda) with which he imitates nature within the possible boundaries.<sup>50</sup>

In the absence of any set criterion of beauty for judging works of art, Ibn Rushd says hierarchic value of nobility in accordance with the rational vision of decides about their quality.

### **(c) Ibn al Haytham's Approach to Beauty**

Ibn al-haytham says things are considered beautiful on two principles. 'The first is that the generic visual properties or concepts which he listed and counted for determining the corporal constitution of things decide intrinsic beauty for example, light the first in the list of the twenty two generic notions produces beauty (al-daw' yafal al-husn) through sun, moon and star. There exists nothing to show them beautiful or provide them with a pleasant shape except their light and brightness.<sup>51</sup>

The second principle is the modulator or the shaping principle of beauty conveyed by the generic visual concepts into a particular object. It is a measurable and quantifiable and therefore detects beauty easily.<sup>52</sup>

This modulation process of the beauty operates through the specific combination of one, or several generic visual concepts found in the shape or form of each thing or each type of things. We can specifically identify object and classify them in particular category with the help of sight and perception. Each particular category depends upon specific quality of beauty.<sup>53</sup>

According to Ibn al Haytham's theory beauty existing in things must be perceived by the individual in full complexity, variation and subtlety. Classical Arabic thought divides beauty into various categories such as (a) the sublimely beauty found in the human being (b) yoked with ethics in Ibn Hazm's theory, (c) phenomenologically modulated and classified beauty of Ibn al Haytham, (d) diametrically opposite versions of luminescent and intellectual beauty emerging from the divine sources advocated by Ibn Sina and (e) the beautiful structural order of the material world mentioned by al Ibn Rushd. In a sense all kinds of beauty – logical, metaphysical, physical and ethical find a place in medieval Islam.

Islamic culture is full of aesthetic sense whether it may refer to logical beauty or to metaphysical, physical or ethical one and the subject because of beautiful expression make us pleased and refreshed.

The story of Hazrat Suleman (King and Prophet Solomon) possesses a strong aesthetic sense. He built beautiful glass flooring in his place which looked like beautiful real water. Islamic artists have profusely used beautiful patterns, ideas and forms to make mosques, palaces and picturesque and beautiful gardens. In Muslim world beautiful geometric and floral patterns have

been used to make mosques the places of worship more beautiful and attractive.

Quran itself is a beautiful work and contains strong aesthetic sense in its verses. The words and phrases infatuate people's mind and enhance respect of the holy Book. Beautiful patterns and designs have been made by Muslim artists to decorate and illuminate copies of Holy Quran very nicely. This decorative illumination later on became an integral part of painting art. Even now efforts are being made to make paintings more beautiful by using elegant brilliant and beautiful floral patterns.

#### **D. Unity of Life and Peace**

'Islamic works of art specially paintings have a common symbolic quality. They convey the message irrespective of ultimate religious or philosophical status of forms and patterns of different floral or arabesque combination. They represent true models and reflections of nature experienced by human beings.<sup>54</sup>

'The artists makes several experiments to understand and to explain the themes on which he works faithfully. The underlying principle of this exercise is that the artist himself must fully understand the subject which he wants to place before viewers and realizes his duty and functions amply. In Islamic paintings the subject matter or theme fully collaborates its nature with philosophy or logic.

'Muslim artists have used floral patterns to denote deep and highly mystic meanings or explanations. However certain pieces of Islamic art appear

to the ambiguous. Generally speaking they look beautiful and at the same time represent Islamic spirit or philosophy in a comprehensive aesthetic sense.<sup>55</sup> Of course floral motifs help us in understanding nature of truth because flowers are symbols of beauty and represent true feelings of human beings. They are being extensively used for keeping environment peaceful and beautiful. Man always takes support from flowers to get some relief or satisfaction and regards them as suitable measure to judge and explain beauty. In this respect flowers play model role of a patent. They affirm that world is a garden of love, peace and beauty created by God. The divine message is evident every where viz. 'blessed are those who love my creatures'.

Usually flowers blossom during spring and they are regarded symbol of spring or rejuvenation. Change of seasons indicate uniform rhythms of nature and fragrance of flowers draw our attention to free rhythm which is a symbol of life and its cycle.

We see blossoming and decay of flowers and the same life cycle is seen among human beings. One is born and the other dies and this is the law of nature, but unity and continuity of life never comes to an end. Flowers are true symbol of process of life. 'When we see some beautiful things we recall the essence and roots of life and realize true humanity<sup>56</sup>. Flowers are embodiment of beauty and give pleasure and peace to their viewers within their short span of life. They bring smile on lips of a man and revive positive feeling of hope and pleasure in him. They teach us the lesson that death and decay are inevitable in this world. But life is also a truth and it continues alongwith death

without any break. In the hub-hub and intensity of life flowers with their fragrance make us happy and content but they themselves do not smell or enjoy it.

.... Current research lays emphasis on the close link between Mughal gardens and agriculture. It says that the gardens, though, usually interpreted in aesthetic sense as symbol or part of paradise, yet have vitally significant productive dimension in their basis<sup>57</sup>. It is understood that the gardens are full of many different flowers, and according to Muslim artists, these images of paradise reflect a lush world full of flowers and their fragrance. Paradise is the ultimate end of this world and is really a place of perfection and beauty. This mortal life is transitory and full of fallacies. It is really like a mirage where sand particles look like fake water. Whole life is full of fluctuations, ups and downs and is not eternal. Paradise is ever lasting and eternal and is free from all deficiencies of mortal life.

Floral motifs play an important role in display and explanation of divine laws. The scrolling and repetitive motifs draw our attention towards everlasting and unchanged laws of God specially, blossoming of fresh flowers and their decay. Change of season and other universal laws which pervade the whole universe explain the philosophy of life. The beautiful patterns and their repetitive forms joined with each other leave impressions of peace and positive feeling on their viewers.

Floral motifs look more beautiful than natural objects. They are apparently the hand decorated simple paintings but on the other hand convey

certain hidden mystical meanings also. According to Islamic aesthetic sense they reflect internal beauty. The blossoming and decay of flowers give positive expression and explanation of philosophy of life. These flowers are messengers of peace and point out the most real and eternal place paradise after the final decay of this mortal world.

The abstract form of these flowers has not changed its wonderful meaning and their scrolling and repetitive forms help in a wonderful presentation and explanation of unchanging law of universe.



**Plate - 1: Timur Handing The Imperial Crown to Babur (Radial Symmetric Balance)**



**Plate - 2: Shajahan in Darbar  
(Bilateral Symmetric Balance)**



**Plate - 3: Jahangir Seated on an Allegorical Throne (Asymmetric Design)**



**Plate - 4: Sufi Sant (Asymmetric Design)**

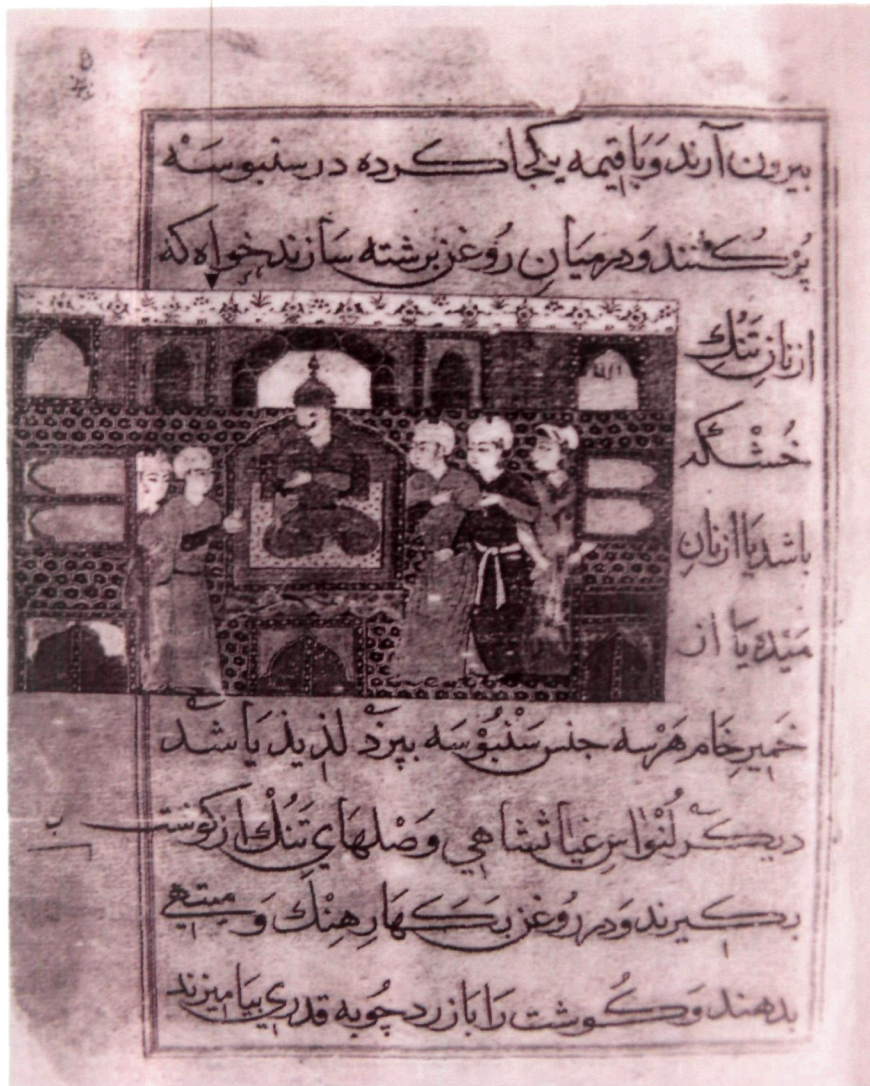


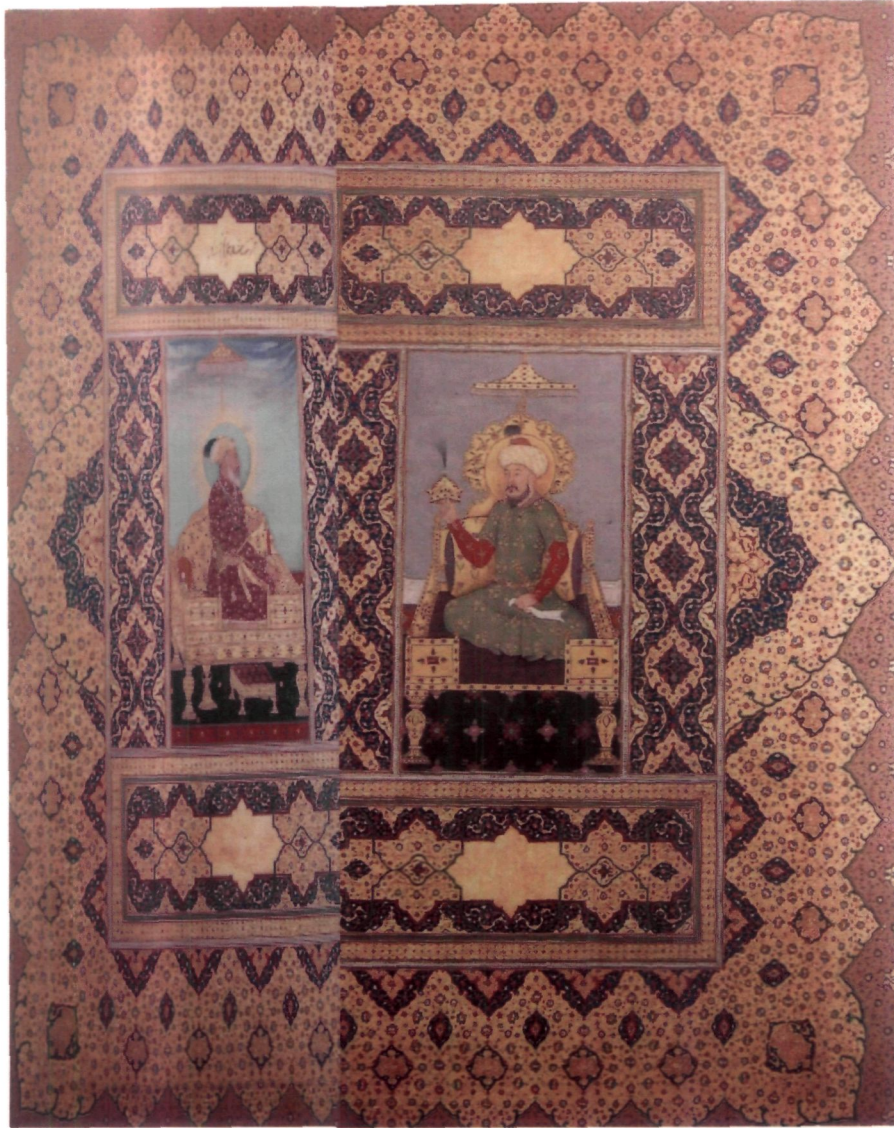
Plate - 5: Sultan Samples Milk Used for Pastry Nimathama (Raw Design)



**Plate - 6: Shahjahan in Darbar (Raw Design)**



**Plate - 7: A Royal Horse and Groom  
(Floral Design in Hashiya)**



**Plate - 8: Taimur and Shahjahan  
(Floral Design in Hashiya)**



**Plate - 9: The Birth of a Prince, Page from Jahangir Nama  
(Floral Design in Hashiya)**



**Plate - 10: Calligraphy from Shahjahan Album  
(Floral Design in Hashiya)**



**Plate - 11: Shah Jahan examining the Royal Seal (Floral Design in Hashiya)**



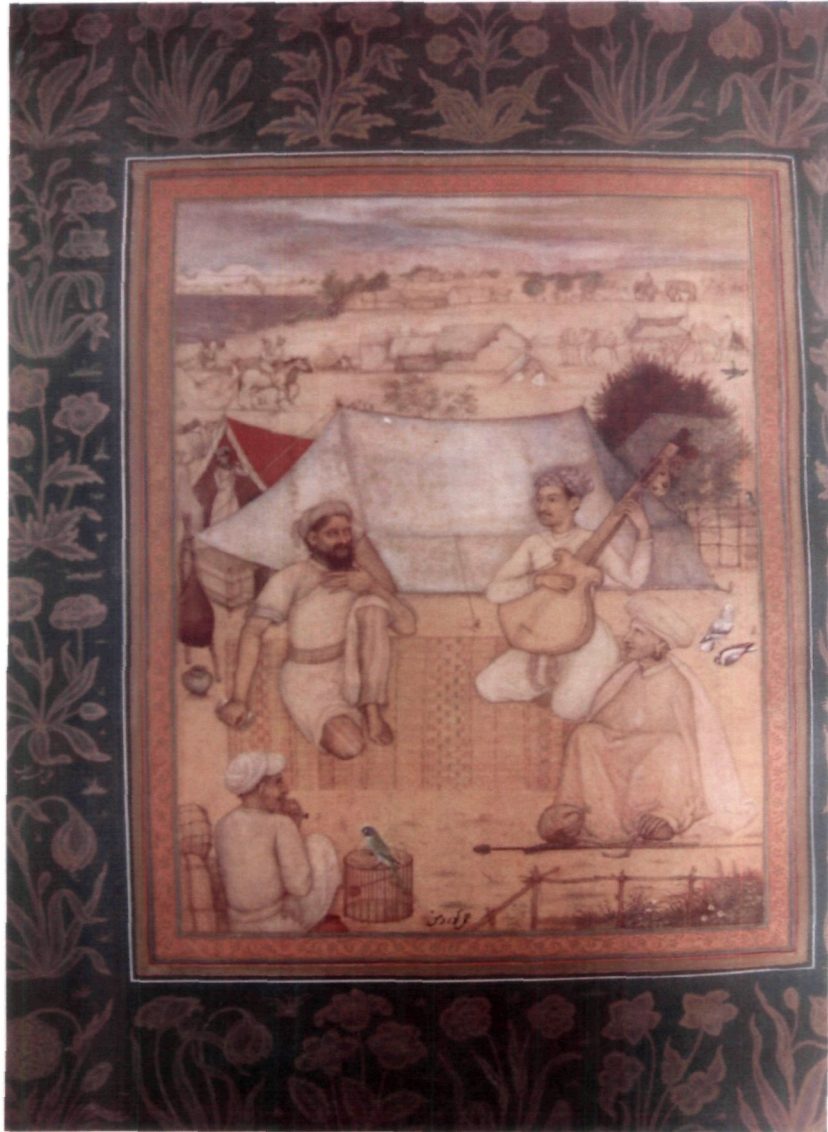
**Plate - 12: Blue Lilies**



**Plate - 13: A Night Heron**



**Plate - 14: Exotic Flowers**



**Plate - 15: Group of Servants**



**Plate - 16: Young Prince Riding**

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## CONCLUSION

Geometric and floral patterns are most important part of Islamic painting. They serve as its identification before looking into the details of these decorative elements one has to go through the teachings of Islam because they form base of these elements. During Muslims period this art flourished because of patronage of Muslim monarchs who were followers of Islam.

Unity of God (At Tauhid) is the corner stone or most important principle of Islam. It says that only one God Allah controls life and death of all beings. Teachings of Islam tell us the most balanced rules of spending a good life. The followers of Islam must believe in one God, His messengers and Holy Quran and observe rules enforced after the spread of Islam (SHARIAT) till all times to follow.

Islamic art is also governed by Islamic rules. It presents every form in a very sophisticated and decorated manner. It is not confined to painting ONLY and aims at decoration of all aspects of civilization as per Islamic rules. The whole sphere of art stands united and reflects its decorative patterns.

Art of painting was developed among muslims due to Christian, SASANI and Hellenistic impact and cultural contacts and interactions with other cultures and civilizations specially through translations. Muslim artists having command over mathematics, science and geometry made innovate use of geometric patterns and figures. In order to preserve and maintain historical materials and cultural identity Muslim artists started use of these symbols in their pictorial art. The artists who ardently loved nature and greenery tried to depict abstract and real forms of nature. In their painting social activities and developments were also reflected.

Indian muslim artists were benefitted much from Persian art which was quite rich and possessed many fine points. They followed its spirit and developed their art in India on hereditary basis. They made new experiments after coming in contact with local skill and arts but continued to use their patterns. Muslim civilization preserved its identity in the field of painting through geometric figures and floral designs. The paintings displaying numerous symbolic and scrolling forms made of floral patterns are brilliant specimens of artistic beauty mingled with elegant decoration. These patterns conveyed deep insight and unfolded various meanings. They combined in themselves principles of mathematics physical science and Islamic concepts of ethics and philosophy. The muslim artists did not use these patterns to fulfil their personal interests or to give expression to outmoded or unnatural objects. They used their imagination and talents bestowed by God to present elegant expression of beautiful objects. Their art hovers around the teachings of Islam and unveils the mysteries of universe to mankind. These patterns also basically followed the Islamic spirit, stuck to orderly, and symmetrical arrangements in general and for purely preferred geometrical decorative forms in particular geometrical designs and figures convey a general aura of spirituality and display events of Islamic history, lessons drawn from Islamic teachings, qualities and powers of God and explain perfect symmetry and uniformity prevailing in the universe. While floral patterns and designs manifest the sophisticated outcome of God's unchanging laws, artists have very skillfully depicted the philosophy of life through sweet fragrance of flowers and floral motifs.

These patterns leave different types of impressions on their viewers. Geometric patterns explain religions point of view and convey the message of Islamic rules through their lines and figures. On the other hand the artist with its excellent imagery coupled with bright colour scheme and suggestive patterns make his viewer spell bound. These patterns depict the reactions of their viewers in a mysterious way like their structure.

Floral patterns place before the viewer soft soothing and direct impressions and expression of the art. Through these motifs artist connects physical world with metaphysical abstract.

Flowers introduce and explain the concept of paradise laid down by Islam and other religions of the world. Islamic patterns possess a distinct aesthetic style which somehow manages to express itself across entire range of production. The “language” of this art, once established, was readily assimilated and accepted by different countries and cultural societies that were brought under Islamic rule or in influence. Thus the outcome of this language became natural expression of inner psychological forces prevailing there.

This extraordinary consistency of style and artistic preferences in the Islamic world helped to build a congenial, social consistency in social and cultural order. All Muslims hold the same basic beliefs, all are familiar with the customary religious observations, and this strong and uniform sense of identity and continuity led towards a high degree of social, and artistic, conservatism. As a result, many forms and artistic concepts remained unchanged over the last many centuries in the Muslim world.

Artists have successfully produced best specimens of their art by using these patterns and designs. They have helped them to demonstrate perfect relationship between the part and the whole irrespective of mode form or style of expression. Thus in domain of painting artists of muslim world followed the cardinal principle of Islamic faith that all creations are harmoniously interrelated and are perfect in all respects.

Paintings reflect changing trends in collective and individual thinking on social matters from time to time. Muslims ruled over India for a long time, their power, policies and approach to life can be seen in the paintings drawn in their time. These paintings in a symbolic way reflect upon peace, unity equality and prevalence of Islamic spirit in the whole society.

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