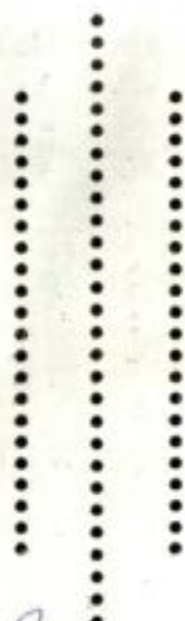


**CHHATRAPATI SHAHUJI MAHARAJ  
UNIVERSITY, KANPUR**

Thesis submitted for  
Ph.D Degree in Drawing & Painting

**"WESTERN INFLUENCE IN MUGHAL  
PAINTING  
DURING AKBAR'S PERIOD"**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

During the completion of my post-graduate degree in Drawing and painting, I happened to have some glimpses of the paintings representing christian themes in Mughal Style in various remarkable books on painting and also came across many paintings on the same themes. It aroused a curiosity in me to continue search in this field. I revealed my ambition to respected Dr. Ram Kanwar, Head of the Painting Department, D.A.V.College, Kanpur, who not only encouraged me but also provided me his illuminated guidance in my research work. He also took keen interest in my work and found time to go through the chapters inspite of his multifarious responsibilities. So I indeed lack the expression to offer my deepest sense of gratitude and highest sense of regards to him.

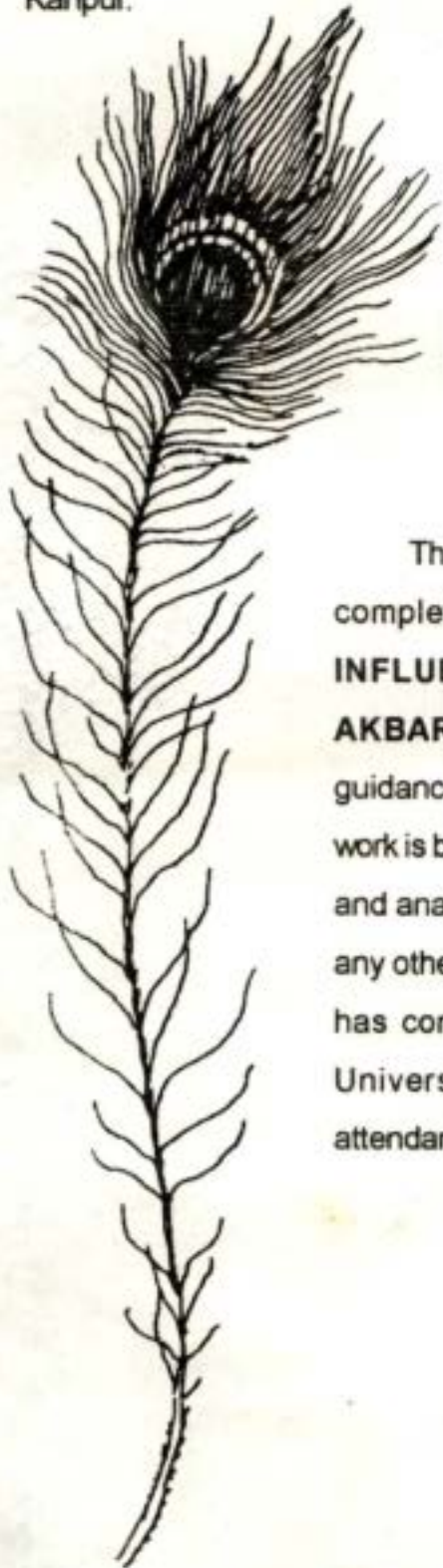
My loving parents for promoting the interest and reinforcing the spirit for this research has proved a mile stone for me. Side by side my husband and inlaws have co-operated me in all respect, by which this work has taken final shape.

To all the noble art critics, art lovers and scholars who have contributed to me to inspire for this work is a base on which I have done this job. Directly or indirectly there are many persons came accross to me those who have helped me for it. My sincere thanks to all of them.

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### CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Mrs. Shagufta Parveen has completed her Ph.D thesis entitled "**WESTERN INFLUENCE IN MUGHAL PAINTING DURING AKBAR'S PERIOD**" under my supervision and guidance. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the work is based on the investigations made, data collected and analysed by her and it has not been submitted in any other University or Institution for any degree. She has completed all the formalities required by the University and attended 200 days as required attendance for the submission of the thesis.

Handwritten signature of Dr. Ram Kanwar in blue ink.

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# WESTERN INFLUENCE IN MUGHAL PAINTING DURING AKBAR'S PERIOD

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# CHAPTER

# I

**HISTORICAL SURVEY OF MUGHAL PAINTING  
WITH IT'S SOCIAL POLITICAL & CULTURAL  
ASPECTS**

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**T**he founder of the so-called Mughal empire was Zahir u'd-din Muhammad, surnamed Babur (Tiger), a Barlas Turk who claimed descent from Taimur on his father's side and Changez Khan on his mother's. His

early life and adventures are graphically described in his inimitable *Memoirs*. Born in the little central Asian state of Ferghana in 1482, he set out at the age of fifteen with a handful of followers to capture Samarkand, which had been the capital of his ancestors. But he was expelled by a rival faction, and after wandering 'like a king on chessboard', in 1504 he finally made himself master of Kabul.<sup>1</sup> But even Kabul did not satisfy him. Inspired by tales of Taimur's exploits, he determined to invade India. A quarrel had broken out between Ibrahim Lodi, the Sultan of Delhi, and the governor of the Punjab, which provided him with a pretext for intervening, and in 1525 he marched against Delhi with a tiny force of 12,000 men. The Sultan, a rash and inexperienced young man, awaited him on the plain of Panipat, on April 26th, 1526.

Babur made a lager of wagons lashed together, with cannon and matchlocks mounted on tripods in the gaps. When the Delhi troops attacked, Babur employed the usual Turki manoeuvre of enveloping the enemy's flanks by means of mounted archers. It was completely successful, and the Sultan and 15,000 of his men were left dead on the field. The following day, Delhi and Agra opened their gates and the *khutba* or bidding prayer was recited in the mosques in the name of Zahir u'd-din Muhammad, the first of the Great Mughals.<sup>2</sup>

But fresh perils awaited Babur. He was isolated in the midst of a hostile country, far from home, and his men, who disliked the heat and dust of the Indian plains, were showing signs of disaffection. The Rajputs, who thought that the conflict between the rival powers had weakened the Muslim hold on the country, gathered a mighty host to drive out the intruder. It was led by Rana Sanga of Mewar, the hero of countless fights, who had lost an eye and an arm in battle, and was said to bear on his body the scars of over

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1. H.G. Robinson & Others, Faber & Faber, Page No. 39

2. Ibid - 43

eighty wounds. Babur told his men that this was a *jihad* or Holy War, and they must conquer or die. Many of them had been in the habit of drinking wine, contrary to the procepts of their religion, but now they poured out their wine on the ground, and breaking their drinking vessels, swore an oath on the Koran that, if they survived, they would never offend again. The two armies met at Kanua, outside Agra. Babur repeated his previous tactics, with the same result as before. The battle raged all day, but at nightfall the Hindu army broke and fled, and for many miles the ground was strewn with countless bodies, jewelled head dresses, silk scarves and richly inlaid weapons. In three more battles, Babur reduced all northern India to submission. He was now the master of an empire stretching from the Oxus to the Ganges. It was divided into provinces, each under an officer responsible for law and order and the collection of revenue, and for supplying troops when called upon. The Hindu nobles who submitted were left undisturbed.

Babur hated India. Its people, he said, were ugly and devoid of refinement and artistic sense, and the country was no better. There were no good horses, no good flesh-meat, no grapes or melons, no ice or cold water, no good food or bread, no baths or colleges. He spent his remaining years in trying to make Agra resemble his beloved Samarkand, with marble baths, pavilions and watercourses. He died in December 1530, at the age of forty-eight, but he had packed into his few short years the adventures of a long life. He had been fighting since the age of twelve, 'a king for thirty-six years crowded with hardship, tumult and strenuous energy'. He was a born leader, brave and chivalrous, and a lover of beauty in nature and art. His body was taken for burial to Kabul, where it lies in a garden on a hill outside the city, surrounded by streams and under the shadow of the delectable mountains. His grave was marked a century later by a delicate marble tomb, erected by the orders of his descendant, the emperor Shah Jahan.

Babur's son and heir, Humayun, was a drug addict, and quite incapable of maintaining order. The Afghan nobles began to throw off the yoke, and in 1540, he was driven into exile by Sher Shah, the governor of Bihar. While he was a fugitive in Sind, his wife gave birth to a son, the future emperor Akbar, at the fortress of Amarkot. He afterwards took refuge in Persia, where he was hospitably received by Shah Tamasp.

Sher Shah proved to be an excellent ruler, and during his short reign of five years, he introduced many reforms. The nobles were reduced to obedience, and excellent roads were built, which greatly strengthened the power of the central government. Hindus were freely employed, and were allowed to practise their religion. The land was surveyed, and the amount of revenue to be paid by the peasants was laid down. Village officers were made responsible for maintaining order, and it was said that 'an old woman with a pot of gold might securely lay herself down beside her burden, even in the desert'.

Sher Shah was unfortunately killed in 1545 in an explosion of gunpowder, and was buried beneath a stupendous mausoleum at Sahasram in Bihar; Humayun then returned from Persia, only to die as the result of a fall in the following year.

At the time of his father's death, Jalal u'd-din Akbar was only thirteen years old, and his guardian Bairam Khan hastily arranged for his enthronement before rival claimants should arise. The only resistance came from a Hindu named Hemu, who seized Agra and Delhi and tried to restore the Hindu Raj. He was defeated on the field of Panipat and put to death. In 1560 Akbar, now eighteen years old, determined to shake off the interference of the regent, Bairam Khan, and the other courtiers who kept

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1. Encyclopedia of painting, Hutchinson, London, 252 - 253

him in leading strings. He found himself, however, almost alone, and the Afghan nobles, who hated the Mughals, were seeking an opportunity to rise.<sup>1</sup> By a masterly stroke of policy, he decided to enlist the support of the Rajputs, who had been treated by the Delhi Sultans as a conquered race. For this purpose, in 1562, he married a Rajput princess, the daughter of Raja Bihar Mal of Jaipur, and abolished the hated Jizza, or poll-tax on Hindus. The Rana of Mewar, who refused to submit, was defeated, and his great stronghold, the fortress of Chittor, was captured. Gujrat was conquered in 1672, and Bengal two years later.

In 1586, Kashmir was annexed and became the summer resort of the Mughal court. In 1600, the Decan was invaded and Ahmadnagar submitted. This left Akbar master of a stupendous empire, stretching from the Oxus to the Godaverri river. It was divided into fifteen *subas* or provinces, each under a Subadar or Viceroy, a great noble and a member of the imperial family. But no office was allowed to become hereditary. The Suba was divided into Sarkars or districts, administered by Mansabars, who were both military and civil officers. For revenue purposes, Akbar employed a clever Hindu of the name of Todar Mal, who completed the work begun by Sher Shah. The Mughal system of government instituted by Akbar was substantially that followed by the British when they conquered India.

The sixteenth century was an age of religious ferment all over the world, and Akbar, like Henry VIII in England, was determined to free himself from ecclesiastical influence and be head of the Church (*Imam-i-'adil*). He had doubtless learnt something about Hinduism from his Hindu wives and friends, and he fell under the influence of Shaikh Mubarak, who was a Sufi, and his two sons, Abu'l-Fazal and Shaikh Faizi. Abu'l-Fazl was the most learned man of his age, and the author of the *Akbar Nama*, or History of the Reign of Akbar. Abu'l-Fazl's religious views may be gathered from a verse of one of his poems :

'O God, in every temple I see people that seek Thee: in every  
language that I hear spoken, people praise Thee !  
If it be a mosque, people murmur the holy prayer: if it be a  
Christian Church, they ring the bell for love of Thee !  
Sometimes I frequent the Christian cloister, and sometimes the mosque;  
But it is Thou whom I seek from temple to temple'.

In 1579, Akbar issued his Infallibility Edict, in which he claimed the sole right to decide any religious question about which there was doubt, and ascending the pulpit in the Great Mosque, he himself recited the *khutba* or bidding prayer composed for him by his friend Faizi, now poet laureate.

Akbar's great ambition was to find a common religion which would unite India, and for this end he built his famous Hall of Worship (*Ibadat Khana*) for the purpose of holding religious discussions, in which he took a keen interest. He invited Hindus, Jains, Muslims, Zoroastrians and Christians to take part in them. For this purpose, he induced a party of Jesuit missionaries from Goa to visit his court; they came in 1580, bringing with them copies of Italian religious paintings, which delighted the Emperor. They were received with great distinction, and were allowed to build a chapel at Agra. Finally, Akbar, dissatisfied with all creeds, determined to establish an eclectic one of his own, which he named the *Din Ilahi* or Divine Faith. It found, however, few adherents outside his personal circle, and did not survive him.

Akbar's later years were clouded with sorrow, caused by the unfilial conduct of his sons. Two of them, Murad and Daniyal, were vicious and worthless, and died of drink. Salim, the son of the Rajput princess and his father's favourite, lived in open rebellion at Allahabad, and hired an assassin to waylay and murder Akbar's beloved friend and counsellor, Abu'l-Fazl, who died in October 1605.

Akbar lived in an age of great monarchs - Elizabeth of England, Philip II of Spain, Henry IV of France and Shah Tamasp of Persia - and in many respects he transcended them all. 'One could recognize even at first glance that he is a king,' wrote one of the Jesuit Fathers. 'His expression is tranquil, serene and open, full of dignity, and when he is angry, of awful majesty.' His religious tolerance was in striking contrast to the bigotry of contemporary Europe. Though formally illiterate, he was a great patron of poetry, and had a library of 34,000 volumes. He caused Hindu religious books such as the *Bhagavad Gita* to be translated into Persian. He was a patron of painting and music, and liberally encouraged Hindu as well as Muslim artists. Like all the Mughals, he had a passion for architecture, and built Fatehpur Sikri, the City of Victory, which was the residence of the court from 1570 to 1585.

Akbar was succeeded by Prince Salim, who took the title of Jahangir or World Grasper. He was very unpopular, and a rising of the younger nobles to place his son Khusru on the throne was barbarously suppressed. Khusru was thrown into prison, where he died, probably of poison. Jahangir married Nur Jahan, the widow of a Persian nobleman. The Empress completely dominated her husband, who was addicted to drink and drugs, and she appeared openly in the Hall of Audience, transacting the business of government in his name. During this reign, William Hawkins visited Agra and obtained from the Emperor permission for the English to open a trading factory at Surat. Jahangir was a despicable character, weak, indolent and cruel, but his Memoirs show him to have been intensely artistic and a poet of no mean order. He was especially fond of gardens, and constructed the Shalimar Gardens at Lahore and the Shalimar and Nishat Bagh at Kashmir, to which the Court regularly moved to avoid the heat of the Indian summer.

Jahangir died on his way from Kashmir in 1627 and was succeeded by his son Khurram who took the title of Shah Jahan or Lord of the World. Shah

Jahan started the policy of trying to reduce the independent kingdoms of the Deccan, which was ultimately to prove the ruin of the Mughal empire. Vast sums of money were also spent on magnificent buildings ; the Taj Mahal, the splendid mausoleum which Shah Jahan built for his empress, took twenty years to erect, and cost four million pounds sterling. Even larger sums were lavished upon the Jama Masjid at Delhi, on the huge marble palace, with its lavish inlaid work, and the famous Peacock Throne, its golden pillars encrusted with jewels. This brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy. 'The whole country is ruined', says the French traveller Bernier, 'by the necessity of defraying the enormous charges required to maintain the splendour of the numerous court, and to pay a large army maintained for the purpose of keeping the country in subjection. No adequate idea can be conveyed of the sufferings of that people. The cudgel and the whip compel them to incessant labour for the benefit of others, and driven to despair by every kind of cruel treatment, their revolt and flight is only prevented by the presence of military power'. A terrible famine broke out in Gujarat, and the starving peasantry were reduced to devouring dogs and cats and even human corpses.

Shah Jahan's sons were, in accordance with the usual practice, made viceroys of the various provinces. In 1657, a war of succession broke out among them. In the end, the victor was Prince Aurangzeb, who made away with his rivals, threw his father into prison, and caused himself to be enthroned in 1659 with the title Alamgir.

Unlike his predecessors, Aurangzeb was a religious fanatic. His sole aim in life was to purify India of idolworship and make it a 'land fit for Islam'. Temples were destroyed, and the hated poll-tax re-imposed on the Hindus. The Rajputs, whom Akbar had looked on as the 'sword-arm of the Empire', were deliberately provoked.

Aurangzeb then plunged into a fresh war in the Deccan. He was a strict Sunni, and was determined to reduce to submission the heretical ruler of Bijapur. This he did, but came to blows with fresh opponents, the Marathas, who had risen to power under their ruler Shivaji. The Marathas were hillmen, and experts at guerrilla warfare. They refused to be drawn into a pitched battle, but hung on the flanks of the unwieldy imperial armies, ceaselessly harassing them. At last the old Emperor, worn out by his exertions died in the field in 1707. He was eighty-nine.

The Empire now rapidly disintegrated. In the north-west, Afghans, Sikhs and Jats were in open revolt. The viceroys of Oudh and Bengal became virtually independent, and a great noble, the Nizam-u'l-Mulk, carved out for himself a kingdom at Hyderabad in the Deccan. The English and French began to establish themselves on the Bombay and Coromandel coasts, and at the mouth of the Hugli. In 1739, Nadir Shah of Persia ransacked Delhi, and carried off the Peacock Throne. In 1803, the poor blind emperor Shah' Alam, seated under a tattered canopy in his ruined capital, gladly accepted the protection of Lord Lake. The last of the line, Bahadur Shah, was tried for complicity in the mutiny of 1857 and banished to Rangoon, where he died. India then came under the rule of the British Crown.

The Mughal art is a combination of Indo-Persian style of painting which developed in India. Mughal School of painting was not a new style introduced without, but a combination of the Indian Rajput School refined of the strong Persian influence.

Mughal painting has evoked considerable interest among the Connoisseurs of art all over the world. Babar was the founder the Mughal Empire in India. He seems to have developed a great taste for the art of painting of which he was a connoisseur. Mughal paintings are a class by

themselves, distinct from all other styles and techniques of pre-Mughal or Contemporary Indian art. Akbar was the first Mughal monarch who took a deep interest in the promotion of painting and following the Mongol and Taimurid example he commissioned the work of illustrating number our manuscript. When he was a child at Kabul with his father Humayun, he had the opportunity to study Persian painting in the company of the Persian painters Khawaja Abdus Samad and Mir Sayed Ali.

The artist of Akbar's court were drawn from within the country and also from Iran. The style that developed was the best of Bihzad School and pre-Mughal Indian art.

The Mughal art of painting may well be known understood in the light of Abu'l Fazl definition. Abu'l Fazl suggests further standard for evaluating the best execution.<sup>1</sup> Basically, these included the depiction of minutes details, boldness of expression, frankness of lines, the truthful representation of form and colour, and lastly, the general finish. It combined the skills of laying the pigments shading and lining and ornamenting the object. These very standards are the basic elements which shaped the style of miniature painting under the Mughal. The Persian tradition makes itself emphatically felt in the aerial perspective deep blue skies flat in tone occasionally sprayed with a flight of bird or stars, figure impased on one another, a group of figures over a landscape background the representation of object following continously rising view point; the method of dividing up the picture plane into small spaces; bright colour elaborate embellishment of costumes. Mughal artist draw inspiration from the Iranian stylistic peculiarities, accompanied by a very modest our Indian tinge on the whole.

The method of shading employed is similar to that in Ajanta painting

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1. S.P.Verma, Art and Material Culture in the painting of Akbar's court, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi.

though the European technique also begins to show with deep and thick shading Mughal art during Akbar's time experience the most significant of which is the introduction of perspective. On this smooth surface the artist sketched the theme. The primary sketch was drawn in softlines suggesting the outer form of the figure; the ground colour used are not necessarily light but are lighter than those to be applied in subsequent filling.

The outline of individual figure receive utmost care from the artist. The painting is begun with a sketch defining the limits of the object within which the brush must move after colouring and shading these lines are finally confirmed in a darker tone and the figure given a defined form. In the matter of colouring it is possible to discern a certain produce the human figure being the main object of representation were treated first, animal figure came next and the background was coloured last of all. This shows that the artist began work without any definite colour scheme in mind.

The art flourished under Akbar did not entirely stem from painters such as Mir Sayed Ali and Khawaja Abdus Samad Shirazi. Akbar created a new synthesis of art with the combination of Indian Chinese's European art. Hamza paintings belonged to tradition of tent hanging. It was mainly the work of Mir Sayed Ali and Khwaja Abdus Samad, assisted by several other artists.

The representation of building and landscape is similar to that in the Hamza painting. The drawing of animal and birds blended with a more distinctly Indian feel indicate the emergence of the Mughal school art. Under Akbar, painting seems to have been confined to the illustration of manuscript. Abu'l Fazl has mention only a few of the illustrated manuscript though several volumes of such manuscript and stray folios have survived to this day.

Several Artist were employed at the court to paint the great treasure of Mughal miniature, Abu'l Fazl has given a brief list of only 17 Artists. Among

the artists Hindu were in a greater number. Abu'l Fazl has specially praised the work of the Hindu artist. He says, "Their picture surpass our conception of things; few indeed, in the whole world are found equal to them". The Hindu painter laid much emphasis on the representation of human character. He excelled in the painting of the background, the drawing of feature, the distribution of colour and portraiture miniature are the example of the contemporary nature of the work of both Daswanth and Basawan. Basawan shows greater interest in decoration of the scenes, heavy fold in the flowing costumes and a thick shade which appear occasionally in Daswanth miniatures though his works represent a greater sense of depth and the background is mostly drawn with a hazy landscape.

Mughal period is the richest in the respect, while turning, over the leaves of Mughal album, one is struck by the persistent uniformity of the shape and form of articles of utility, cultural interest and institution, which analyzed and put together, enable us to comprehend medieval life more intimately. They are representative to a certain degree of the level of culture. The work is broadly divided into part dealing with the art and technique, on the one hand and the historical aspect, on the other. Akbar gave rise to new form of art; the famous painting of Akbar can be divided into four parts :

1. Illustration of Persian subjects such as "Hamzanama" etc.
2. Illustration of Indian epics and romance such as Ramayana, Mahabharata, etc.
3. Illustration of historical interest such as Tarikh-i-Alfi etc.
4. Portraits - In the work of Abu'l Fazl his majesty got himself portrayal and ordered that portrait of all the noble men should be prepared. The Mughal painting of Akbar period comes before in the shape of painted manuscript. The main illustrated manuscripts of akbar's period are Dastan Amir Hamza, Ramayan, Akbar Nama, Katha Sarit Sagar.

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1. N.R.Ray, Mughal Court Painting, Indian Museum, Calcutta, 1975.

"It has long been recognized that the form and style of painting known generally as Mughal paintings was essentially a product of the Mughal Court".

Mughal painting, in form and content, happens to be a departure from this collective community tradition, just as Maurya art was more than a millennium and a half before".<sup>1</sup>

It is true, therefore that in Mughal Court painting, it is not difficult for a pair of discerning eyes to distinguish an Akbari painting from a Jahangir one, or the latter from a Shah Jahan one, but what is more interesting and perhaps more important is the fact that a strong common denominator remains throughout to distinguish the form and style from earlier and later ones as well as from those of contemporary times which originated elsewhere than in the Mughal Court, for instance, in the Court of the Sultans of the Deccan or in those of the contemporary and later Rajput kings and princes.

There are other instances as well, and from amongst the Indian artists recruited and patronized by Akbar. The upper right corner of this relatively large painted textile piece is occupied by the composition of an inconsequential rural scene which must have been and even more is very common anywhere in northern India, but which has nothing to do, thematically or otherwise, with the larger composition which covers roughly speaking, five-sixth of the painted surface. The small corner piece is altogether different in form and style not only from those of the rest of the particular piece but also from those of all to other pieces of Hamza known to us so far, here was a style and form that was current in contemporary India, evidently this small corner composition was drawn and painted by an artist of the court of Akbar, but this was not the style and form that was favoured, and adopted and made current at the court.

*Portraiture occupies a significant position in the Mughal painting. A large number of portrait of the Mughal Emperors and the nobilities etc, were executed during the Mughal period.*

*The Portrait three quarter profile represents an intimate study of a Mughal noble standing with his left hand stretched out making a gesture which the other hand rests on the hilt of a dagger turked to his sash light green background.*

Although very little is known about individual artists in Mughal India, there is considerable information about their techniques and methods. Akbar started a karkhana to originate a new style of painting. The main purpose was to produce illuminated manuscripts which was an elaborate production, refining the cooperation of calligraphers, painters, preparators for various accessories such as colour grinder, gold workers, leather workers, book binders and many more. The book to be copied and illustrated were often very long and only by the strictest cooperation among all these different craftsmen and artists some of whom were certainly Prima donnas could a beautiful work be produced in time.

"Mughal artists were due to new and more sophisticated techniques, learned both from the Persian and European traditions while some research has been done on the technique of Mughal paintings very little is known about the technical aspects of Rajput pictures. Pigments too can contribute significantly to the distinctiveness of a style.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to pre-Mughal painting, those of the Mughal and Rajput school reflect an enormous increase in the range of colours.

This is easily confirmed by the frequent copies of the compositions of the masters and the large quantity of Rajput drawings and pattern that have

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1. Prata paditya Pal, Techniques of Mughal Art Journal of All India Fine Arts and Craft Society Vol. 1, 2 April 1987.

survived. We also know that under Akbar and Jahangir the Mughal artists arsiduously copied European prints and engravings.

The brief discussion of the techniques and practices of the Mughal Rajput aritst is meant simply to indicate the need of further work in this area and also to contribute somewhat to the better appreciation of this particular tradition.

The foundation of the Mughal empire was laid by Babur in 1556 when he defeated the pathan king Ibrahim Lodi. He was also accomplished in the arts of peace. He was a talented poet in Turki and Persian, and "his battles as well as his orgies were humanised by a breath of poetry".<sup>1</sup>

Babur was succeeded by his son Humayun (1530-1556). Who, though charming and cultured, lacked the vigour, administrative ability of his father. At the court of Shah Tamasp of Persia, he came in touch with the paintings of the persian artists Aga Mirak, Sultan Muhammad and Muzaffar Ali. These were pupils of the lengendary Bihzad who has also been called "Raphael of the East".<sup>2</sup>

Later at Tabrez he met the poet and painter Mir Sayed Ali who had distinguished himself as one of the illustors of Nizami's Khamsah. Then, in 1550 at Kabul, Mir Sayed Aji and Abdus Samad from Shiraz joined Humayun. He and his son Akbar, took lessons in drawing from the artists, and the two royal wanderers had their interest in painting confirmed. When Humayun regained his throne, both the artists accompanied him to India.

Akbar (1556-1605) is the real founder of Mughal painting. Akbar was a discerning judge of men, and in recruitment, ignored consideration of caste, colour and creed.

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1. M.S.Randhawa, John Kemeth Galbraith, Indian Painting, The scene themes and legends, Printed Published by A.F. Shaikh 1982. Vakils Feffer & Simons Limited.

2. Ibid.

More than a hundred painters were employed in the royal atelier at Fatehpur Sikri. Most of these were Hindus from Gujarat, Gwalior and Kashmir. They worked, in turn, under the two Persian master artists, Abdus Samad and Mir Sayed Ali but they were encouraged and inspired by Akbar. Abdus Samad was styled shiringalam, or sweet pen, of him Abu'l Fazl "his perfection was mainly due to the wonderful effect of a look of his majesty, which caused him to turn from that which is form to that which is spirit".<sup>1</sup>

Abu'l Fazl tells also that the works of the painters were laid before Akbar weekly and he used to confer rewards according to the excellence of workmanship. Akbar had special admiration for the work of Hindu artists, notably Daswanth and Basawan. "Their pictures" Abu'l Fazl said, "Surpass our conception of things, few indeed in the whole world are found equal to them".<sup>2</sup>

Akbar was very fond of the stories of Amir Hamza, an uncle of the prophet. The illustration of these stories, the Hamza-nama was the first work entrusted to the Persian master Mir Sayed Ali plans called for 1400 pictures in volumes and the task was completed in 15 years. The pictures are of large size 20 x 27 inches and unlike other Mughal paintings, are painted on cloth. They are in Persian safavi style brilliant red and green colour predominate; the pink eroded rocks and the vegetation planes and blossoming pum and peach trees are reminiscent of Persia. However, Indian tones appear in later work as Indian artists were trained. Akbar's religious interests led him to the Hindu classics and he ordered his artists to illustrate the epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. This led to one of the greatest creations of his period, the illustrated Razm-nama.<sup>3</sup>

It contains 169 full page paintings and was completed in 1589: It is

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Palace Museum at Jaipur.

said that 4 lakh rupees were paid to the artists.

Much of the painting of the Akbar period show a restless energy. The painters in their work reflected the exuberant activity of their patron, figure are shown in hurried movement and the composition are crowded. This is particularly so in the Taimur-nama and Akbar-nama, the great pictorial sagas of the Mughal rulers.

The two Persian artists were the guiding spirit for the Dastan-i-Amir Hamza, the first of the great series of paintings which gave the Mughal school its name and reputation. This was produced in the reign of Humayun's Son, Akbar (1556-1605). The majority of painters in the atelier were Indian who had been trained in the existing school of painting in India.

Other works that were illustrated in Akbar's reign included the khamsa of Nizami, a classic of Persian literature the romantic tale of Laila and Majnu Shahnama, the great epic of ancient Persia.

"The works of all painters according to Abu'l Fazl are weekly laid before his majesty by the Darogah (supervisor and the clerk)".<sup>1</sup>

As painting developed in the Mughal atelier it lost its purely Persian characteristics and became increasingly Indian by the middle of Akbar's reign, the skies lost their gold and lapis-Lazuli tones to break out into brilliant sunset colours.

Basawan, Daswanth and Bishan Das were some of the most famous painters of Akbar's court among the names mentioned in the Ain-i-Akbari are Kesu Lal, Mukund Muskin etc.<sup>2</sup> Early Mughal art is purely masculine

1. Brij Bhushan Jamila, *The world of Indian Miniatures*, Tokyo, New York & San Francisco, Kodansha International Ltd.

2. Ibid.

from this it can be presumed that scenes of pleasure and alliance with the ladies, which abound in later Mughal painting were also imaginary, the women portrayed being not the princesses themselves but the lesser attendants who worked freely in and out of palaces and whose looks were no mystery to anyone.

Akbar created a separate department of painting with Khwaja Abdus Samad as its head. More than a hundred painters, both Hindus and Muslims, mostly from Kashmir, Punjab, Gwalior, Rajasthan and Gujrat were recruited to work under the Persian master. Akbar's patronage attracted the best painters to his court, some of whom immortalised themselves through their paintings. "His Majesty, writes Abu'l Fazl "from his earliest youth has shown a great predilection for this art and gives it encouragement, as he looks upon it as a means, both of study and amusement hence the art flourishes, and many painters have obtained great reputation".<sup>1</sup> The work of all painters are weekly laid before his majesty by the daroghas and the clerks, he then confers rewards, according to excellence of workmanship, increases the monthly salaries.

The art of painting in its general finish and boldness of execution reached perfection during Akbar's reign. Mir Sayed Ali of Tabriz, Kwaja Abdus Samad, Daswanth and Basawan were the most renowned artists. Besides these four masters, there were thirteen other first rate painters at Akbar's court, mostly Hindus.

The Persian tradition as it had developed particularly under Bihzad in the later years of the 15th Century, was notable for its decorative qualities and its lively sense of colour. The miniatures were usually book illustrations and were two dimensional. The line was calligraphic and the pallet, brilliant and enamel like. The Indian painters who were put under training, under

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1. Dr. N.L.Mathur, Indian Miniatures, Published by Dr. N.L.Mathur, National Museum, Janpath, New Delhi, Printed at the Caxton Press Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.

the Persian masters soon mastered the finesse and technical excellence of Persian paintings, both of line and colour. The Persian school of painting gave an initial stimulus to the Mughal style. Mughal Painting started developing on independent line.

The artists representing the different regions of India had brought with them not only the skill in painting but also their conventions in regard to drawings, use of colour and composition, Akbar had left the painter very much to their own devices.

Akbar was very fond of the stories and of adventures of Amir Hamza, an uncle of the prophet. Illustration of these stories Hamzanama was the first work entrusted to the Persian master, Mir Sayed Ali, in all, 1400 pictures were painted by him from 1550 to 1560 A.D. They are in the Persian style in which brilliant red, blue and green colours predominate. Akbar's deep interest in religion inclined him towards the Hindu classics and he ordered his artists in 1582 A.D to illustrate the epics of the Hindus.

The other important manuscripts illustrated during the period of Akbar are the Gulistan of Sadi dated 1567 A.D. Anwar-i-Suhaili (a book of fables) dated 1570 A.D.<sup>1</sup> in the school of oriental and African studies, university of London; another 'Gulistan of Sadi', a Diwan of the poet Amir Shahi in the Bibliothique Nationale; Diwan-i-Hafiz, the Tutinama, the Baharistan of Jami dated 1595 A.D, in the Bodolian library; the Darab-nama<sup>2</sup> the Tarikh-i-Alfi (a history of the world) circa 1590 A.D., the Jami-al-Tawarikh dated 1596 A.D. A number of the Babar-nama manuscripts executed in the last decade of the 16th century; the Twarikh-e-Khandane Taimuria in the Khuda Baksh library, Patna, Akbar-nama of circa 1600 A.D. now in Victoria and Albert museum, London and the Jog Vaishist dated 1602.<sup>3</sup> The classical Persian literature - Khamsa by Nizami, the romantic love poem of Laila and Majnu,

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

the collections of moral tales by Sadi & Jami, were also illustrated. The atelier of Akbar thus created the mughal style of painting. Certain conventions and types of figures were developed and these principles continued to be followed thereafter. Plate IV is an illustration from the Baburnama. It shows a happy synthesis of the indigenous style of painting and the persian art. The mughal paintings exhibit three dimensional effect in contrast to the persian one which was two dimensional.

Jahangir (1605-1627 A.D) Akbar's son had an advantage over his fathers in so far as he was left with a stable empire and could safely indulge in his favourite pastimes. Jahangir possessed an insatiable curiosity and had records made of all unusual objects and happenings his painters, who accompanied him every where made drawings of birds and animals which caught the emperor's eye. Under him, the beauty of line and delicacy of colours reached perfection not known before.

Mansur was the painter who excelled in animal subjects in Jahangir's time. The emperor's own knowledge, not only of painting but also of the technical excellence of his painter, was so great that he could tell who had done the eyes, the hands, the landscape, and so on. This was a time of specialization, and Mansur was the specialist for birds and animals and Farrukh Beg for traditional persian motifs so other also had their specialties. In Jahangir's time miniature came to be done for preservation in folios rather than merely as book illustration. Portraits became increasingly popular and Jahangir presented his portrait to all those he wished to honour.

The great love of the Mughal for creating gardens gave the painter a chance to study and paint various species of flowers. To these paintings he brings botanical expertise as well as an elevating sense of colour and rhythm. These flower studies were made in large number during the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan.

*Akbar's pictures reflects his achievements as well as moods and interests. Here, the spies and their party are entertained by strange men probably based upon people, Akbar encountered on some, expedition. They resemble exponents of tantric religion, perhaps from Nepal or Tibet. One sporting a white plume, has slanted eyes and a flattened Mongol nose. A Tibetan horn is among the weapons and musical instruments strung in an arcade behind the figures. In the background, at the right, other extremists strain bhang, a concoction of marijuana often used by holy men. Surrounded by their mysterious bowls, the busy pair sits beneath a writhing tree, with branches and bark suggestive of hallucinations to come.*

*Like the other paintings of the Hamza series, this one was designed to be effective across a room or courtyard. The colours are high in saturation and contrast. Whites are dead-white, oranges and yellows leap at us. Similarly, the patterns of tiles, stone work, and ornamentally disposed foliage are daringly bold. Nevertheless, close inspection is rewarding. The characterizations were painted for a man who could size up his fellows at a glance, and wherever we look, whether at the host's coral and turquoise belt, also typical of Nepal and Tibet, or at the outlandish filt-bronzei incense burnering the foreground, there is something to surprise and delight. It is no wonder that of all the loot carried off from Delhi by Nadir Shah in 1739 (including the peacock throne), it was only the Hamza-nama, "painted with images that defy the imagination, that emperor Muhammad Shah pleaded to have returned.*

Under the patronage of Jahangir, the art of portraiture attained great excellence. The portraits were painted by the court artist with great care love of detail and fineness of drawings and modelling. Like his father, Jahangir liked European paintings with religious subjects - Sir Thomas Roe, the English ambassador, who spent four years (1615 - 1619 A.D.) at the court, had many interesting conversations with the emperor far into the night

on paintings and art in general.

During this period, European influence manifested itself more and more in paintings. The colours were no longer hard and enamel like as in the previous period but were softer and melted harmoniously together. This naturalistic influence is best seen in the representation of landscapes.

The important manuscript illustrated during this period are : an animal fable book called *Ayar-i-Danish*,<sup>1</sup> the leaves of which are more in the Cowasji Jahangir collection, Bombay and the *Anwar-i-Suhaili*.<sup>2</sup> During Jahangir reign the number of artists had increased beyond the needs of the imperial atelier and Mughal trained painters of inferior merit were driven to seek a livelihood as commercial free lancers without regular patrons.

Shahjahan (1627-1658 A.D.) son of Jahangir, was more interested in architecture and Jewellery than paintings. The reign of Shahjahan was marked by a dazzling magnificence. The artists worked in the tradition of the earlier reign, but their work is distinguished by far greater use of gold and colour. The miniatures showing slightly over elaborate court scenes. Together with the lavishness of the court is the ever present mystic element. The splendour of the mughal court and with it the mughal portraiture reached its height under him. The tendency to idealize continued and achieved the highest finesse. Many portraits of Shahjahan were painted. Paintings of the members of the royal family and courtiers gorgeously dressed were produced. Harem scenes and beautiful ladies drinking or serving wine were popular themes.

It was probably considered a more fitting medium for depicting certain movements and mood than the more opulent painting style. Work in this

1. Dr. N.L.Mathur, *Indian Miniatures*, Published by Dr. N.L.Mathur, National Museum, Janpath, New Delhi, Printed at the Caxton Press Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.

2. *Ibid.*

medium can be distinguished from more sketches by the attention paid to detail, and the finished quality of the works. Shahjahan's own love for architecture; beauty of his time are an index of his taste. There is no record of the frank delight in art that his father found. It was inevitable, therefore, that from this time mughal painting should show a definite decline.

Aurangzeb (1658-1707 A.D.) the youngest son of Shahjahan was little interested in arts in general. The splendour and luxuries of the court of Shahjahan were abolished and the palace was stripped of all its rich furniture. Paintings too suffered a setback due to his puritanical outlook, as he regarded its patronage opposed to the precepts of sacred Islamic law. His portrait in many situations were also painted. In battles and sieges, he is shown in a prominent position but almost as an old man.

Mughal painting declined during the rule of emperor Aurangzeb 1658-1707 who was a puritan and therefore had no liking for fine art. A large number of court painters therefore migrated to provincial courts and continued to practise art under new patronage.

All facts and situations known so far have established beyond doubt that the mughal painting was essentially a product of the mughal court, organised and patronized from beginning to end by the emperors rather than the artists themselves. The thematic contents of the paintings reflect the personal tastes and temperaments, preferences, prides, pleasures, fashion and pastimes etc. of the individual imperial patrons. In every sense, Mughal painting was a court art.

In Mughal court painting, what is more interesting and perhaps more important is the fact that a strong common denominator remains throughout to distinguish the form and style from earlier and later ones. The mughal court presents the articulation of artistic activities in the field of painting, of a unified and integrated form and style with a sense of purpose and direction.

This implication is by and large upheld by an analysis of the paintings themselves, despite relative variations in style and emphasis on themes conditioned by the tastes and predilections of individual monarchs from Akbar to Aurangzeb.

By and large the narrative, descriptive, dramatic and true to appearance aim and purpose remain constant throughout; so do the respective compositional schemes for different themes with but slight variations. The colour schemes also maintain throughout a common denominator as does the character of design and draughtsmanship. It is therefore not very difficult even for one who is not an expert, to be able to look at a given painting and say that it does or does not belong to the form and style of the mughal court. The stamp of the form and style and the general character of the exercise is too clear and distinct to be missed.

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# CHAPTER

## II

**AKBAR AS CONNOISSEUR OF ART & ITS IMPACT  
ON  
ART OF PAINTING**

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**A**kbar was hardly 13 when he came to the throne in 1556. After some difficulties in the beginning he could establish his rule. He was a very intelligent and liberal king. He was not a fanatic like other rulers of his clan. He took

delight in learning good things of different religions and followed them. He started a new religion Deen-i-Ilahi, the aim of which was to compromise or 'Suleh Kul'. He became very popular in a very short time because of his greatness and generosity. He married Jodhabai, the sister of Raja Man Singh, and followed the Vaishnava cult to some extent. He, often used to put sandal paste on his forehead like rajputs, wore a mala round his neck and offered water to sun in the early morning. In this way we find that he had a great sense of compromise. Salim, the son of Jodhabai, inherited the throne and assumed the name of Jahangir. With the same compromising attitude Akbar combined the Persian and Rajasthani art into one which became the famous Akbar style of Mughal school.

Akbar was interested in painting since his very childhood. In 'Ain-i-Akbari' it has been written that Akbar gave a great regard to the painters. Good compositions were rewarded. That this is the reason why the paintings of this time were almost parallel to those of Bihzad. At this time the painting was of a very high order one can feel life blooming therein, colour scheme also improved.

In the court of Akbar the artists were both the Hindus and the Muslims. Among them the Hindus were more in number. According to Abul Fazal, the Hindus were better painters of emotions than the Muslim ones.

Mughal painting has elicited considerable interest from connoisseurs of art all over the world. Mughal paintings make a class by themselves, distinct from all other styles and techniques of the pre Mughal or contemporary Indian art. Akbar was the first Mughal monarch who paid special attention to the promotion of the art of painting manuscripts following Mongol and Taimurid examples. Akbar has an opportunity of studying the linear grace of the Persian art while he was at Kabul, with his father Humayun accompanied by the Persian painter Khawaja Abdus Samad and Mir Sayed Ali. He had independent views and indeed he considered painting as one of the means to

recognise God. Similarly the line written about the perfection of Abdus Samad's skill in the Ain-i-Akbari "Mainly due to turn from that which is from to that which is spirit"<sup>1</sup> reflect Akbar's view on art in general. Broadly speaking Akbar, did not prefer the formal decorative style of Persia. From the very beginning the consideration of Mughal painters to the Persian qualm evidents on the page of the Dastan-i-Amir Hamza.

These illuminated pages are the first example of Akbar art and form the ground of training of the Mughal painters.

The present work was mainly done by the two artists Mir Sayed Ali and Khawaja Abdus Samad assisted by side artists. It seems that a few creation also belonged to Basawan. The fusion of the Persian and Indian styles may also be seen in the illustrations of the manuscript, Tutinama, newly discovered manuscript. Though it is a undated manuscript but can be safely presumed not to be later than 1560. In the illustrations of the Tutinama artist trained in the different tradition have contributed their pieces of art. Subsequently a few miniatures have associated the Hamza style and other have striking feature of pre Mughal Indian art.

Under Akbar the art of painting seems confined to the illustration work of manuscripts, for which the fable books were equally preferred.

An early dated manuscripts of the Diwan of Anwari-A.D. 1588 is embellished in pocket size represented with birds, animals and flowers etc. The miniature of this manuscript have also combined the styles of Persian and western Indian art. The identity of different styles have survived distinctly where the painters have worked separately on folios.

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1. S.P.Verma, Art and Material Culture in the Paintings of Akbar's court. Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta.

The other books "Diwan of Shahi Khamsa of Amir Khusru of Dihlvi and Anwar-i-Suhaili dated A.D. 1996-97".

Abu'l Fazl has referred only a few names of the illustrated manuscript though several volumes of such manuscript and astray folios have survived to this day. The most illustrious of them may be noted as the Hamzanama, Tutinama, Diwan of Anwari, Anwari-i-Suhaili, Laila-e-Majnun, Diwan-i-Hafiz, Rajkumar, Ayar-e-Danish, Razmnama, Akbarnama, Tarikh-i- Khandani, Darabnama.

Hindu themes were equally favoured by Akbar for illustration work and consequently the treat books of Hindus were translated into Persian language.

Several copies of these manuscript contained with illustration have survived which evident that a number of copies were prepared of a manuscript to meet the demand of the royal libary, haram, bobles etc. The manuscripts were adorned with rich bindings and miniatures. A lot of money must have been incurred in the work illuminating these manuscripts.

The manuscripts of Diwan-i-Hafiz in the collection Sir Chester Beatty is the earliest dated manuscript known to us.

Akbar was the real founder of the Mughal school of Painting. Akbarnama or atelier was opened where painters and decorators were employed for the illustration of the manuscripts and no pain was spared by the emperor in giving constant supervision and encouragement to bring the art of painting to a higher level.

In the matter of colouring the painters of Akbar period showed great preference for bright colours the liking for which they got for their brother painters of Persia. Thus bright blue especially ultramarine was profusely used.

The faces of the human figures represented in the painting of this period are either in three quarter view or in profile.

Another remarkable feature of early Mughal Painting is lack of proportion in the delineation of human figures.<sup>1</sup> In the early period however influenced by which he drew human figures and the unproportionate figures it must be admitted that many features of Persian school such as round head etc.

In the representation of the human figures greater attention is paid to proportion, we have already seen the painter of the school of Akbar, who drew much of their inspiration from the school of Herat, were not so much adept in the science of proportion.

The quarter view of Akbar school persists but figure in profile and portraiture become a common feature.

It has yet to be shown whether "Popular Mughal"<sup>2</sup> painting were produced earlier than the period of Jahangir. This is not the case however with Mughal painting made for court circles.

There is evidence that private establishment were already at work in the last years of Akbar. We are particularly well informed by contemporary writers about the library establishment of Abd-al-Rahim-i-khana (1556-1627) son of Akbar for and guardian, Bairam Khan. Moreover, there still exists a manuscript of the Persian translation of the Ramay and made for him from Akbar's own copy between A.H. 996 (1587-88) and 1007 (1598-99). At least fifteen artists contributed the one hundred and thirty surviving miniatures.

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1. Moti Chandra, *Technique of Mughal Painting*, Lucknow, 1946.

2. See Karl Khandalawala, Moti Chandra and Pramod Chandra, *Miniature Painting*, a catalogue of the exhibition of the Shri Moti Chand Khajanchi collection held by the Lalit Kala Akademi 1960, New Delhi 1960, P.P. 14ff and Pramod Chandra, *Ustad Salivahana and the development of "Popular Mughal Art"*, Lalit Kala, 1960.

The Mughal school of painting owed its origin and development to the enthusiastic patronage of the Emperor Akbar. The imperial library set the standard for the lesser establishments of the great Mughal officers. Since these could not command the resources of the emperor their production lack the inspiration and finish of the great imperial books. It was through these more modest works that the canons of Mughal taste and style came to be disseminated in the provinces where painting were executed which have been characterised in recent years as "Popular Mughal".

It was under Akbar a recognizable Mughal style was formed. The work that emerged were in a new and different style which mixed Hindu Rajput and Muslim Indian elements with those of imperial safavid Iran, all these ingredients seemed to be on equal footing. Indian traits of course reflected the attitudes and taste with which the Mughal were most familiar the Indian style, however, appealed because of their novelty they formed a contrast to the ultrasophistication and subtlety of Iranian works, in which colours were set onto the page like Jewels in mounts and high drama conveyed by the raising of an eyebrow. His Invention of portraiture and the shift of subject away from the religious and poetic texts common to both Hindu and Muslim traditions and towards historical scenes and natural history subjects are major innovations of Akbar painting from the sixteenth century into the mid-seventeenth. Mughal Painting concentrated on naturalisation and in particular, on portraitures.<sup>1</sup>

In the reign of Akbar (1556-1605) the majority of painters in the atelier were Indians who had been trained in the existing school of painting in India, even though the masters guided these apprentices to produce works using purely Persian technique, their basic Indian training soon asserted itself and a synthesis of the two styles emerged in their works producing a school of

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1. M.C.Beach, *Grand Mughal Imperial Painting in India*. Contributions by Stuart Cary Welch and Glend, Lowry Sterling and Francine Clack Art Institute, William Stown, Asia House Gallery, New York City, between April 19 - June 10, 1979.

painting which has been the subject of unlimited praise by all critics and connoisseurs.

The artists worked together on a sort of assembly line basis, where each developed his own speciality. The first outline sketch the filling in of colour landscape. When the picture was finished the superintendent would write the names of all the painters responsible on it so the earliest Mughal painting were far from being anonymous.

Akbar himself surprisingly enough could neither read nor write. How this was possible in a man of superb intellect can only be explained by the fact that quite early in life he had consciously blocked out all book learning.

Akbar defended the painter by saying that he had special opportunities for the recognition of God, for the exercise of his art teaches him humility.

Even though he can draw the perfect likeness of human being, he knows that his work must remain without life and so his thoughts turn to God the given of life Akbar had various work illustrated.

The Dastan-i-Amir Hamza a massive work comprising 1,400 painting took fifteen years to complete. The canvas team with life recounting episode in which Amir Hamza battles against various enemies and evil spirits to complete his mission. The Persian flavour is extremely strong but Indian elements are evident in the shape of faces or the vitality and majesty of an elephant.

Other work that were illustrated in Akbar's reign included the Khamsa of Nizami, a classic of Persian Literature. The romantic tale of Laila and Majnu,

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1. Brij Bhusan Jamila, The world of Indian Miniature, Kodansha International Ltd., Tokyo, New York and San Francisco.

the great epic of ancient Persia. "The work of all painter according to Abu'l Fazl are weekly laid before his majesty by the supervisor and the clerks".<sup>1</sup> Much progress was made in the commodities required by painter and the correct prices of such articles were carefully ascertained the mixing of colours has especially been improved.

The miniature of detail the general finish and the boldness of execution now observed in picture are incomparable even inanimate object look as if they have life more than a hundred painters have become famous masters of the art, while the numbers of those who approach perfection, or those who are middling is very large.

As painting developed in the Mughal ateliers it lost its purely Persian characteristics and became increasingly Indian by the middle of Akbar's reign. The skies lost their gold and lapis-lozli tones to break out into brilliant sunset colours. The stylized quality of Persian painting is replaced by movement and vigor, and the human figure becomes more and more Indian in feature and expression. Miniatures become records of the emperors activities. Akbar supervising the building of his dream city, Fatehpur Sikri, receiving the submission of a rebel, hunting tigers. Basawan and Daswanth and Bishan Das were some of the most famous painters of Akbar's court. Among the names, mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari* are Kesu Lal, Mukund, Muskin, Tara, Sahwiah, etc.

No wonder therefore, that life in the Mughal court from Akbar onwards, was Iranian in its external appearance and behaviour pattern as much as in its inner psyche and will, nature and character. Seated on a raised platform, apart and all of, in all regalia of pomp and power in the *Diwan-i-Aam*, and the *Diwan-i-Khas*, with the nobles and others arranged below in the strict order of their given grades, almost as in the army formation, the Mughal monarch derived his authority from a theology of kingship that was as much Achaemenian as scythian,

and hence Irano-Central Asian in its origin. They lived in palaces and apartments and reared-up-gardens that were modelled on those of Irano and South Central Asia the ranking of their nobles and their army, their art of warfare, their tents and trappings their carpets and hangings, the their harems and their routine of retainers, servants and slaves, their dress and food were all either modelled on or reminiscent of their Iran-Central Asian origins and cultural affiliations. Like their Irano-Central ancestors, the Mughals too, came to maintain Karkhanas or workshops for a number of crafts and industries including those for painting and the allied arts and crafts. All these and similar others provided the thematic contents of the Mughal painting along with those usual courtly contents of palace, and court scenes, scenes of hunt, of war and sieges etc. For those who were mystically inclined, assemblages of Sufi saints and mystic Derushes had a special attraction. Mughal paintings records very faithfully this attachment which characterized the list of more than a couple of Mughal monarchs.

There was, however, one theme which was unknown to and unpractised in contemporary Iran-Central Asian tradition, namely, portraiture of individual human-beings, bird and animals, in the sense of definitely identifiable individualization of external features and inner nature and character not that portraiture as a genre of plastic art was altogether "unknown in traditional and contemporary Iran and Central Asia or in Traditional India, but such art was mainly concerned with types"<sup>1</sup> and abstraction than with individuals characterized by their respective features.

The Mughal emperor Akbar (1556-1605) was an energetic domineering and creative Political figure. As a patron of the arts, the works he commissioned attest to his involvement with artistic production and his

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1. N.R.Ray, *Mughal Court Painting*, Indian Museum, Calcutta, 1975

2. Milo Cleveland, *Early Mughal Painting*, Published for the Asia society by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, London, England, 1987.

developing respect of technical and aesthetic quality. Akbar was the third Mughal emperor of India is the founder of the Mughal School.

Many memorable works have been written about Akbar's importance to the arts India. One recent account described the emperors relation to his painters by saying that he was their creative mind. "Akbar inspired the painters who gave form to his vision".<sup>2</sup> His genius worked through their sensitivity and craftsmanship. In another instance, the greatest of the manuscripts the emperor commissioned, the physically large and visually turbulent Dastan-i-Amir Hamza or Hamzanama, was characterized as "A vision of the world through the eyes of a lion and the lion of course, was Akbar".<sup>1</sup> The first series of painting executed for Akbar are those of Hamzanama. They were painted by Persian master Mir Sayed from 1550 to 1560.

During the emperor's life time, he commissioned an official biography the Akbarnama, to be written by his friend and confident Abu'l Fazl the author described the greatness of the Iranian artist Abdus Samad, who had come to India with Humayun.

He discussed the artist Daswanth, whom Akbar considered the greatest of his Indian Painters. "One day the eye of his Majesty feel as him; his talent was discovered in a short time he surpassed all painter, and became the first master of the age".<sup>2</sup>

Abu'l Fazl, no less than for twentieth-century art historians, the greatness of Mughal painter was a direct result of the greatness of their patronage.

Forms are organised to create a rich surface patterns which the colours

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1. Stuart Cary Welch, *The art of Mughal India and Precious object* (New York Asia Society 1963).

2. *Ibid.*

balance and enliven the skilful artists such a Mir Sayed Ali and Khawaja Abdus Samad Shirinqalam (Abdus Samad), who were among the matchless ones of this art were in his service and were instructing him.

The scene may allude to this relationship between prince Akbar and Abdus Samad, furthermore, the painting being presented is a minute copy of this very work, as an extraordinary technical tour de force. It well embodies the taste of the time.

The earliest major manuscript attributable to Akbar's patronage is the Dastan-i-Amir Hamza, Hamzanama a project directed in turn by Mir Sayed Ali and Abdus Samad. The great paintings from the manuscript are of a very different character from any known work by the two Indian artists date able to the years before their move to India.

The comparison of a Hamza illustration with a work done by Mir Sayed Ali in Iran, provides an excellent means to define those innovations with which Akbar is credited the work of Mir Sayed Ali is one of the most familiar and often exhibited of all Persian paintings.<sup>1</sup>

*Akbar's vital power, harmoniously attuned to nature's force, was never better expressed than in the illustrations to his Hamzanama. According to Abu'l Fazl, he met with his artists once each week. If this is accurate, and we suspect that it refers to his later, less intense years rather than to the period of Hamza, enough time was provided for him to so inspire his painters that he virtually painted through them, in much the same way Abu'l Fazl was his literary genius. Abdus Samad, the second director of the project, had been a somewhat conventional artists prior to the time when, according to Abu'l Fazl,*

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1. Milo Cleveland, *Early Mughal Painting*, Published for the Asia society by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, London, England, 1987. S.C. Welch, *Imperial Mughal Painting, Mirdukht's Escape from Dangerous Men*.

*"he was stirred to new heights by the alchemy of Akbar's vision, and he turned from outer form to inner meaning".*

*Few pictures are more inspired than Mirdukht's escape with its whiplash division of land and water, dashing figures, and dramatic gesticulations, worthy of the grandest opera. The water is in sinuous madstorm of leaping fish and other aquatic life, pondering it imaginatively released yet other, wilder forms, converting its turbulence; ape like faces, the profile heads of a ram and ibex, a lion bellowing at a fish, and numerous other grotesqueries. Such hidden images abound in the rocks, water, and tree stumps of early Akbari painting, but become scarces towards the end of the sixteenth century, when increasing orthodoxy discouraged all that was so earthy, intuitive and "Supersitions".*

Several illustration from the Hamzanama one derived from a quite different Iranian tradition. The first four books done under the superintendence of Mir Sayed Ali contain several scenes obviously painted by artists from Bokhara. Mir Sayed Ali and Abdus Samad had both worked for Shah Thmasp whose Safavid dynasty centered at Tanroz had replaced the Taimurids, Akbar's ancestors in 1502.

The fourth volume of the Hamzanama painting that is otherwise of little artistic interest. An in the court scene from the filzwilliam Album (figure)<sup>1</sup> the composition is flat and broken into clearly defined, self contained and often rectangular compartments. The illustration though not typical of the majority of the ones in the Hamzanama is nevertheless important as evidence of the continuing presence of Bakharan aritist and the ideas at the Mughal Court.

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1. Milo Cleveland, *Early Mughal Painting*. Published for the Asia society by Harvard University Press, Cambridge, London, England, 1987. 29. Court scene from the Fit William Album, Iran Bukhara, figure court scene from a Deval Devi Khidr khan manuscript, Mughal dated 1567 - 1568.

."The earliest Akbari manuscript with an inscription giving its date of execution is the Deval Devi Khidr Khan of 1567-68".

A second dated manuscript the Anwar-i-Suhaili (Light of canopus) of 1570, contains twenty seven illustrations for a Persian translation of the sanskrit Indian tales from which Aesop's Fables were derived, format is small and thus far more intimate than that of the Hamzanama, yet this volume is considerably more innovative than the Deval Devi Khidr Khan.

The several Folios of the Anwar-i-Suhaili, and the forms are sometimes set against blank, unpainted paper.

Anwar-i-Suhaili, is scarcely less vital and energetic than the Hamzanama even for these illustrations however, the artist often drew on a general repertoire of forms, a painting of man with a trumpet.

Individual Mughal painters had subjects for which they were particularly well suited, and Daswanth was most often assigned illustrations of horrific unearthy events or of the intense key in conflict with the realistic.

Ten birds, page from a natural history manuscript Mughal art, late 16th century, Musee Guimet paris. The miniature is signed by Muskin and was made to satisfy Akbar's curiosity concerning animals and various forms of life. With his usual skill, the artist has combined real life birds with other's that appear to belong to fantasy. The work is executed in water colours.

*Mughal art British Museum, London. The most salient characteristic of the portrait is the contrast between the dignified immobility of the figure and the undulating flow and wide, sinuous fold, of the draperies. The two birds with outstretched wings in the top of the miniature are extraordinarily effective.*

*Mughal art 1610. British Museum, London. Illustration from a copy of the Diwan by Hafiz, the dervishes (from the Persian darvish : A pauper or mendicant were as order of vagrant mystics who attained a form of ecstasy in their dances). In this picture, two old dervishes are executing a whirling dance in a state of acute exaltation while a third sings to the accompaniment of his guitar. In the sky, spirits resembling the cherubs have appeared, drawn by the magical power of the dance.*

This desire to confront traditional Islamic attitude (whether artistic, religious, or political) with new challenging concepts is basic to understanding Akbar's early years and the developments of the Mughal Style in both painting and architecture.

Akbar first met Europeans in 1572. These encounters were important for the arts, for Akbar saw and was intrigued by European prints and paintings, which his artists studied and copied.

The most important event and culmination of this period of experimentation and questioning occurred, however, during a game (hunt) Both Abu'l, and his contemporary Abdu'l Qadir, Ibn-i-Muluk Saleh, Al-Badaoni (who is quoted here), refer to it rather obliquely.

It is no surprise, therefore that a painter named Daswanth was particularly important to Akbar at this time, although he is a difficult artist for us to understand.

Very few works are known that can be attributed solely to his authorship, these are early and immature. His greatest contribution was the

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I. M.C. Beach, *The Imperial Images Paintings for the Mughal Court*, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 1981.

series of powerful designs he made for the imperial Razmnama manuscript begun in 1582. There his sense of the irrational and visionary must have perfectly complemented Akbar's similar sensibilities as shown by mystical jazaba during the late 1570's and early 1580's. He certainly was dominating influence in the Hamzanama. In 1585 however he committed suicide.

Daswanth, a son of Kahar (palki bearer). The acuteness and appreciativeness of the world's lord brought his great artistic talents to notice. His paintings were not behind of those of Bihzad (famous Iranian artist).

With his death and the establishment of the "Din-i-Ilahi", Akbar's own attitude changes for the quieter, the more rational.

The year 1580 initiated a decade of intense activity. In 1582 Akbar commissioned a new history of the Muslim world. During its first millennium which would end in A.H. 1000 (A.D. 1391-92). The was the Tarikh-i-Alfi (History of Thousand).

In the same year, Akbar ordered a translation into Persian of the Sanskrit (Hindu) epic Mahabharata (great India), which become known as Razmnama (Book of wars) which was followed by translation of the Ramayana. Badaoni who worked on the preparation of both texts.

"The record office established in 1574 was equally important. Every event in the emperor's life was noted down by 14 clerks".<sup>1</sup>

*Although undated and bearing neither the name of the scribe nor the place of origin, the Darbnama with its 155 miniatures can be assigned to*

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1. Ibid.

Lahore, shortly after Akbar moved there in 1585. Many of the miniatures are inscribed by the clerk in charge of the project with the names of notable court artists, including Miskin, Basawan, Farrukh chela, and Abdus-Samad. Several pictures, an old-fashioned Persiannate style almost union influenced by the court idiom bear names such as Ibrahim of Lahore, leading one to further conclude that their style lingered from the days of Lahore's pre Mughal rulers.

The paper for this volume is relatively coarse, and its calligraphy is inelegant, perhaps because it was created before the imperial workshops were fully settled in the new capital. Nevertheless, it contains many exciting pictures, painted somewhat thinly but with enlivening inventiveness. "This painting shows Shah Aradashir, who, while riding in the mountains was surprised from behind by a dragon and devoured in a glup, when the news of his terrible fate spread all princes of the world went into deep mourning for three months. His son went off to Hindustan and never returned".<sup>1</sup>

Although the artist's name is illegible, he rivalled Basawan for originality and power of design, with its all-encompassing landscape, the painting seizes the two blocks of text like a dragon, as fiercely as the monster gobbled up Shah Aradashir. Through his total conviction and such subtleties as Ardashir's almost blank expression, a response showed by the utter horror of circumstance, the artist makes us believe a fantastic tale.

Both emperor's and Abu'l Fazl also encouraged the writings of memoirs and on one occasion supplied a scribe to take dictation from the superintendent of the Imperial kitchen, who was paralyzed unable to write himself.

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1. Plate: Shah Ardashir's, S.C. Welsh, Imperial Mughal Painting, Chatto & Windus, London, 1978.

These texts were kept in the record office, as were important chronicles, including the Baburnama, Quanan-i-Humayuni of Khawandamir, Tazkiratu'l Wazi of Jauhar in 1590.

Akbar commissioned Abu'l Fazl to use these materials to write an official chronicle of his life, the Akbarnama.

These later manuscript projects slowly, develop a quite different character from those of early years of Akbar's rule. Where in the Tutinama, Hamzanama or Darbanama, the emperor is clearly interested in the legendary and fantastic.

The new interest in the rational and historically verifiable can be partly attributable to Akbar's greater maturity in the 1580s, but as well, the Jazaba and the establishment of the Din-i-Ilahi, relieved and formally channelled much of the turmoil of Akbar's youth, and therefore, freed him for new and different concerns.

Paralleling the interest in historical events was a new preoccupation with historical personalities and thus the development of portraiture starts.

Akbar wished his artists to capture the specific appearance of personalities of the subjects. In this he went completely against traditional islamic attitudes, which held that –

"The painting of a picture of any living thing is strictly forbidden and is one of the greatest because it implies a likeness to the creative activity of God".<sup>1</sup>

A yoga posture Mughal art late 16th early 17 Century chester Beattys

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1. Mario Bussagli, Indian Miniatures. Edition 1969, The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited.

Library, Dublin, miniature from a yoga text translated into Persian : Bahar-al-Hayat. The work is far removed from the schematic representations of the same theme in Hindu art, for it is naturalistic not in the body but in the surrounding, landscape.

Official portrait of Jahangir holding his father Akbar's portrait Mughal art, C. 1599, Musee Guimet Paris. In large part the miniature is the work of Abu Hasan (Who signed himself Nadir-al-Zaman). It was retouched in about 1605. In the portrait within the portrait Akbar is offering exploited in order to establish a link of cordial continuity between the two emperor's.

One day at a private party of friends his majesty remarked, "there are many that hate paintings, but such men, dislike. It appears to me as if a painter had quite peculiar means of recognizing God; painter in sketching anything that has life, and in devising its limbs, one after the other, must come to feel that he cannot bestow individuality upon his work, and is thus forced to think of God, the giver of life, and will this increase in knowledge".<sup>1</sup>

The earliest greater manuscript is the Hamzanama. Which was worked on over 15 years period, between 1562-1577. The text is a lively adventure story, based loosely and in part on the life of an uncle of prophet Muhammed and his attempts to convert the world to Islam its kidnappings, seduction, murders chases, magical journeys, dragons, giants were immensely appealing to the young Akbar.

In the Maath'r-ul-Umra we read that he was very fond of the story of Amir Hamza, which contained 360 tales. So much so that he in the female apartments used to recite them like a story teller.

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1. M.C.Beach, The Imperial Image Painting for the Mughal Court, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington.D.C. 1981.

2. S.C.Welch, Imperial Mughal Painting, Chatto and Winus, London 1978.

*During such a hunt near Bhera when he was thirtysix in 1578, Akbar was disquested by the slaughter and ordered his men to cease. The carnage had so disturbed him that it spatked a religious experience. In the world of Abu'l Fazl, "A subline joy overtook his bodily frame. The attraction of cognition of God cast its ray".<sup>2</sup>*

*Hunting was an ancient royal activity, perhaps traceable to the need of villagers for protection against lions and tigers. In time it became ritualized and took an symbolic meaning.*

*Muskin was aware of both the symbolic and worldly significance of his miniature, which ranks artistically with alamgir hunting Nilgai to which it offers many comparisons.*

*According to Muslim tradition, Noah's Ark was threatened by Iblis the devil, who was thrown overboard as here by his sons. This delightful retelling of the story can be ascribed to Muskin, one of Akbar's greatest artists whose sleek, often humourous animals are unmistakable, as usual in his work, some of the animals here were studied from life, while others such as the crazy lioness staring at us from the crowded hole emerged from Muskin's inner zoo. Muskin was happiest with a subdued palette, as here to which he added a few bright accents. His compositions are organic bringing to mind such natural patterns as the roots of trees or veins of leaves.*

Akbar who had great interest in painting, following Mongol and Taimurid tradition, specially encouraged the art of book-illustration, as a result of which numerous manuscripts belonging to different subjects were translated into Persian language and illuminated. The Diwan-i-Hafiz is a collection of qasidas (odes) and ghazals (songs) composed by Muhammad Shamsul-Din, usually known by his title 'Hafiz'. Its several illustrated copies are known belonging to Akbar's and Jahagir's reigns. The Rampur manuscript of the Diwan-i-Hafiz,

which is the subject of this paper, was scribed during Akbar's reign and illustrated by his court-painters. The name of the scribe is not given in its introduction which runs into seven leaves (folios 2-8). It is in good condition, though incomplete towards the end. The contains 414 folios including 31 full page miniatures.

The manuscript is written in nastaliq calligraphic style. Head-lines are not given in the text but spaces are left blank at the end of each qasida or ghazal. Paper used for calligraphy is smooth, well processed, light buff in shade, sprinkled with gold dust and uniform in size. Generally the written surface measures 16 cm x 17 cm. lines (Khat) drawn in green, blue, red, black and gold pigment are employed in the border (hashiya) of each folio. Sometimes floral patterns are painted to decorate the bands. The thickness of the border is from 1 to 14 cm. The present copy is remargined and its format is 19.7 cm x 36.3 cm. Generally, the painting covers a full page. Two or three lines of the text are composed with illustrations on the top or below, on both places. Thus, the length of the miniatures varies from 8.2 cm to 21.3 cm and the width from 7.8 cm to 9.8 cm.

The colophon of the manuscript is missing but it may be ascribed to 1585. The distinct similarities in the setting of the text, in two columns divided from each other by two narrow gold lines, the casual use of red ink in the text, the decoration of margins with conventional motifs of animals and flowers represented in line drawing and painted in gold pigment lying in both the copies of the Diwan-i-Hafiz (Chester Beatty and Rampur) indicate that most probably both belonged to the same era. The decoration of margins has appeared almost indentially in them. It would not be out of place to mention that the opening of the present manuscript is done with the term, "Allah-o-Akbar". It leads us to think that this copy was scribed after the introduction of the Din-i-Ilahi, the short-lived syncretic religion, at Akbar's court. Further, Farrukh Beg to whom the miniature on folio 314 is attributed, joined Akbar's court in 1585.

Keeping in view the above facts the miniatures of this copy may safely be assumed as belonging to 1585.

The whereabouts of the manuscript from the date of its completion are not known. It was purchased in 1273 Hijri Era, corresponding to 31st January, 1857, by Muhammad Kalbe Ali Wali Ahad, Rampur, from Muhammad Akram, grandson of Hafiz Khurshid Khusnavis Lakhnavi. Besides the autograph and the seal of Wali Ahad, Rampur, there are the impressions of other autographs and seals on the first fly-leaf, but these are faded and are illegible. These faded impressions indicate that the manuscript, before passing into the hands of Muhammad Akram was preserved in some Imperial Library, as the tradition goes up to the close of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In miniatures greater fascination for thick shaded lines and drapery represented with heavy folds as observed in Kanha's early work is seen here as well. Upper part of the composition is typically drawn from bird's eye view and in the lower panel the artist seems positioned on a level with the scene depicted. Ornamentation of the carpets and floors, octagonal form of tank, long cypresses in the background are typically Persian.

Darveshes dancing here again, the architectural designs are characteristically Persian in character. They divide the picture plane into parts a trend borrowed by the Mughal painter from Persian art. Movement represented in the dancing figures, rhythmic flow in their costumes, gestures of hands, etc. and lastly the growth of trees with dense of foliage are the elements which drew its art close to the pre mughal Indian tradition. Receding landscape, greatly diminished trees and deep lines are other conspicuous features related to the Western method of producing depth in the painting.

Sanwala seems greatly inspired by the Persian concept of landscape

where the rocks dominate the scene and are invariably drawn with sparse vegetations and a steam. Modulated contours of the rocks composed one upon the other and painted in varied pigments are reminiscent of fifteenth and sixteenth century Persian painting. Abu'l Fazl mentions Sanwala among the leading painters of Akbar's court. Other known examples of his work are in the Miniatures Razmanama (Jaipur), Baburnama (Br.Mus.Or.3714), Anwar-i-Suhaili (Varanasi) and Akbarnama (Vie.albv.Mus.) etc.

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# CHAPTER

# III

**THEMATIC REPRESENTATION AND  
CLASSIFICATION OF MINIATURE PAINTING  
DURING AKBAR'S REIGN**

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**N**o longer is it necessary to explain the origins of the Mughal school by reference to an accidental contact of Humayun with the Safavid court painters of Iran, though the deep impact of contemporary Iranian painting

on Mughal painting need not at all be ignored or denied. It is now increasingly becoming clear that Mughal painting was the resultant effect in the hands of a highly cultured and sophisticated imperial dynasty and their court, of a close cultural communication that had been going on for centuries between Indian and those areas of Central Asia that now constitute the Eastern republics of the U.S.S.R., Iran serving obviously as one of the most important transmitting stations functioning actively and creatively. Indian Sultanate painting which preceded the Mughal school, is a more or less direct product of this large scale inter Asian commerce in ideas, forms and fashions and inevitably made its own part of contribution to the origin and evolution of Mughal court and bazar painting, at its early stages at any rate.<sup>1</sup>

So it did to the Rajasthani as well which had imbibed some of the forms and fashions of earlier West India, mainly Gujarati, manuscript illustrations and since Rajasthani painting ran a parallel course with the more free, less inhibited and more powerful Mughal, and since there was some amount of social mobility in the community of artists, the former could not escape the heavy and overall pressure of the latter, at least from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards. This escape was not possible indeed during those centuries when the Mughal imperial court set the pattern of tastes and fashions, prides and preferences etc., of the big and small feudal courts as well as of the commercial bourgeois irrespective of their being Hindu or Muslim.

Rajasthani painting is thus the complex but creative end product of a continuous trade and cultural movement in a large segment of Asia, in which, roughly from about the 12th to about the 17th century, the west Indian, the

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1. Dr. N.Ray, Indian Painting, Bhavan's journal, Page no. 47 - 48.

Indian Sultanate and the Mughal, each contributed the water of its stream. This international movement, be it noted, did not take into account the respective religions of the lands and peoples that came to be touched and affected by it.

The art forms, their styles and idioms etc., were the products of the international cultural commerce I have been referring to, and it was these forms and fashions, styles and idioms that came to serve as receptacles of the myths, symbols images and themes of the respective peoples and places wherein they found themselves. In the process of acclimatisation, these forms came inevitably to be conditioned and transformed in their turn as much by indigenous and traditional forms as by the ideas, images, tastes and preferences obtaining among those who came to employ them.

**ABD AL-SAMAD** (Abdus Samad, Sayed or Khwajah Abdul Samal) (fl. c.1525 -1600). A mohammedan, native of Shiraz, he went to India to serve under Emperor Humayun (1530-1556) who called him "Sweet-pen". He took over supervision of the *Amir-Hamza* from Mir Sayed Ali (Humayun period). In 1577 Akbar appointed him Master of the Mint and in 1587 Revenue Commissioner. He gave Akbar lessons in drawing when the emperor was a boy and remained his confidant and advisor. Besides being influential in Akbar's court, he was an expert calligrapher and designed the beautiful coins the Emperor issued around 1577. He was famous for teaching Akbar, but he is perhaps most celebrated as the instructor of the Hindu painter Daswanth. It is said that he excelled in portraiture, notably in delineating the features and expression of the Emperor. Besides the *Amir-Hamza* we have a copy he made of a painting by the Persian artist Bihzad (c.1500) whose works were greatly valued in India at this time, and an illustration from the 1593 *Khamsa*. As a teacher he had the responsibility of training the more than one hundred Hindu and Muslim artists who collaborated on the great *Hamza-nama*, the romance of a Muslim hero, Amir

Hamza, who was related to Prophet Muhammed. Nearly 2,000 very large illustration (22 x 28.5 inches) painted on cotton were turned out by painters recruited for the task from every section of India. With a group from such different backgrounds, it was natural that the final result should reflect a certain amount of confusion. The composition were elaborate, with many of them full of action. The costumes, weapons, trees and strong colour were of indigenous inspiration, architectural ornament, most of the conventions of perspective, and the love of detail stemmed from Persia and European influence is obvious in the use of shading to suggest volume and depth and in some figure groups copied from Biblical illustrations. In later years these three strong currents would be blended in paintings of greater clarity and in true Mughal taste, this was the first rather awkward and ambitious step in that direction.<sup>1</sup>

**AMAL** (Amal-i-Muhammad 'Ali) (fl. c.1600). A Mohammedan painter in the Court of Akbar. The magnificent Poet in a Garden, generally attributed to him (although this has been questioned) reflects Persian style in many respects but uses the large, true flowers that delighted the Mughals. It thus represents a singularly successful blend of Persian and Indian modes.

The sixteenth century is an exciting period in Indian history. The old order was disintegrating fast and the new order had not yet been established by the conquering Mughals. It is however, significant that though the Sultans spent most of their time in internecine war, architecture, music and literature flourished and some of the provincial courts like Jaunpur, Ahmedabad and Mandu became important centre of Islamic culture. In 1526 however an event of far reaching importance occurred in Indian history. Babur, who was a descendent of Changhez Khan and Taimur defeated Ibrahim

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1. Encyclopedic of Painting, Britanica, Page no. 248 - 249.

Lodi in the battle of Panipat, Mughal India had begun on the date. Battles followed and by 1530 Babur was in a position to establish an extensive empire.

Humayun who succeeded Babur after his victory in Gujrat settled at Agra and spent his time in composing mystical verses, listening to music and enjoying life. He was impressed by achievements of the Safavi painters and invited at least one of them to join his entourage. Prince Akbar joined him there and the painter Mir Sayed Ali and Abdus Samad in 1549.

Babur was a man of literary taste and an aesthete who admired the beauties of nature, music, painting and architecture.

After the death of Humayun the reins of the government passed into the hands of Akbar who by his bravery, strength of character, reformer's zeal spirit of religious tolerance, wise administration and love for art and literature became one of the greatest rulers India had ever seen. Akbar in his boyhood had learnt to enjoy the linear grace and brilliant colours of Persian painting. In brief Akbar did not consider the formal decorative style of Persian art well suited to the genius of Indian artists.

To give fullest expression to his views on painting, Akbar ordered in 1567 the illustration of the Hamzanama which described the adventures of Hamza, uncle of the prophet, in twelve volumes from which about two hundred illustrations have survived, "The illustration of the Hamza show a dramatic procedence of the event, broad handling, deep expressive colours and love for landscape and architecture.<sup>1</sup>

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1. M.S.Randhawa, Mughal Painting. Panorama of Indian Painting, Publication Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, May 1968.

2. Cleveland Museum.

The illustration of the Tutinama painted in 1566<sup>2</sup> now in the Cleveland museum, throw fresh light on the assimilative spirit of Mughal school.

Akbar personally supervised their work. Improvement in their technique was recognised by awards and promotions. The individual style of the Akbar period became more pronounced with the advancement of time and Farrukh Beg and the Hindu artists Daswanth, Basawan, to mention only a few names became great stylists of the age. Akbar's sympathetic understanding of Hindustan is well known.

Abu'l Fazl, the historian, also informs us that Akbar commissioned an immense portrait album "whereby those who have passed away received new life and those who are still alive have immortality".<sup>1</sup>

The delicate miniature paintings in which humans and animals, flora and fauna were compressed into an incredibly small canvas teemed with life without ever appearing cluttered. So fine was the brush stroke and painstaking the detail that a good deal was not visible to the naked eye and the viewer is always surprised to see how a startlingly good miniature springs to life when viewed under glass.

To produce this mirror of life within a strictly limited space, the Indian painter used only the most rudimentary materials with which he was completely familiar and which were easily procurable.<sup>2</sup>

The earliest known miniature paintings found in India are those on palm leaf, which were used as illustrations for Jain scriptures and date from around the eleventh century. Paper came into use in the early fourteenth

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1. Ibid.

2. Brij Bhushan Jamila, Material and Technique used in Miniature painting, All India Fine Art and Crafts Society, Roop Lekha vol. 33 - 92.

century and by the sixteenth century was being extensively produced in India, every quality identified by its place of manufacture. Thus, Daulatabadi came from Daulatabad and Nizamshahi from Nizamabad. It was also classified according to the material from which it was made e.g. sannī (from flax), manajal (from old fish nets) and nukhayyar (watered paper). Other materials from which paper was made were bamboo, jute and waste silk cocoons.

To make for smoothness, the paper was burnished by being dipped in a solution of alum and allowed to become partly dry, after which it was rubbed with an agate or touch stone burnisher. Two or more layers of paper were pasted together to provide the required thickness for painting.

An iron low pen, with pointed brushlike projections on both sides, was used for drawing straight lines on borders and for making geometric patterns. Circles were drawn with the help of a compass. While a flat ruler was used for drawing lines on borders.

The Manasollas, a medieval text, lays down rules for the making of painters pens. To the tip of a small bamboo style was attached to a small nail with only the tip protruding, the rest being embedded in the handle. This was probably used for outlining designs on palm leaf.

Pencils used for drawing preliminary sketches were made from a mixture of cow dung, old powdered slag and water, pounded to thick paste in stone mill. When the right consistency was reached it was modeled into pencils of two to four inches in lengths. The colour was light and mistakes could be erased by wiping with a piece of clean cloth. Other sorts of pencils were made of a mixture of lampblack and boiled rice.

Brushes came in a variety of sizes and thicknesses. They were made

from the soft hairs from the ears of bullocks, calves and donkeys, and the fibres and barks of certain trees. The finest brushes were made from the tail hairs of cats, muskrats, squirrels and goats. The test to determine which hairs were suitable was that the hairs should draw together when dipped in water, and should be neither too hard nor too soft.

The animal's hair was cut, then wetted and inserted through one end of a feather quill and pulled out from the other. The tips were tied to the quill and strengthened with melted shellac. Quills from the feathers of pigeons and peacock were used depending on whether the brush required was thin or thick. For painting pearls and dots, a brush, sometimes with a single hair, was used. It is interesting to note that most of these items are still manufactured and used in India in almost the same form as they were in those times.

## **COLOUR PREPARATIONS**

Pigments were obtained from minerals and ochres, and different shades were obtained from a mixture of the two. Vegetable colours included indigo, lac dye and carmine, while carbon from various sources produced black. Gold and silver powders and black and red ink were used for both writing and painting. Visually the writing was done in black and the borders in red, but certain manuscripts were written entirely in gold and silver. Reading them in a strain on the eyes and one can only conclude that they were not meant for reading but were objects of devotion and served as a measure of the wealth of the patrons who commissioned them.

According to the *Silparatna*, a sixteenth century sanskrit treatise, white was obtained from burnt conch shell or white earth, white elephant apple (*Seronia elephantum*) juice and gum from the neem tree (*Margosa indica*)

served as binding media. The same treatise gives the following receipt for obtaining black pigment. In an earthen cup filled with oil, the wick is saturated with oil and lit. Then a globular earthen pot, with the inside besmeared with dried cow dung is placed over the flames. The lampblack sticking on the inside of the pot should then be scraped, kneaded in an earthen pot and allowed to dry. It should be mixed with neem water (gum and pure water) and then dried. Another recipe is to take a barley sized grain of element, possibly antimony, grind it to a fine power, mix it with kapitha (elephant apple) juice and let it dry.

The various shades of red and described as soft red, medium red and deep red. These can be obtained from red lead, red ochre and shellac dye. Red ochre was extensively used in ancient paintings, and red lead was a favourite with Jain painters of western India. To get the colour, white lead was roasted in an open fire until it turned a deep colour. The red coloured bead was then ground for half day in water and the process repeated for twenty four hours after five days. Gum from the neem tree was added to it as a binding medium.

For vermilion, crude cinnabar was thoroughly levigated in a mortar with the help of sugared water or lime juice. It was allowed to settle and the yellowish water drained off. To obtain the purest colour the process was repeated fifteen times or more after which it was again levigated with sugared water or lime juice and gum. After being thoroughly mixed it was shaped into tablets and left to dry. To ensure that the right amount of gum had been added, the powder was examined several times during the preparation. As a test, a piece of paper was sprinkled with this cinnabar solution, folded and kept in a damp place, if the ends did not stick immediately, the preparation was right. If, after drying, the cinnabar spots on the paper flaked off when touched with the fingernails, more gum was required.

Shellac dye was used for red and was also mixed with other colours to obtain various shades. To prepare it, water was boiled while the powder of lac resin was mixed in gradually and stirred all the times to prevent the resin from solidifying. Then the temperature of the water was raised and lode and borax powders added every few minutes. Dipping a pen in the solution and drawing a few lines on paper was a simple test to see if the colour was right. If the ink did not crack, the colour was ready. The mixture was taken off the fire, and after the water had evaporated the residue was the colour. The following proportions were used : 1/4 seer (1 seer is 2.18 lbs) of water, 1 tola (80 tolas make a seer) of good dry resin of the pipal tree known as lakhdana, 1/2 tola pathani lode and one anna (1/16 of a tola) borax. If the shellac dye was to be used on palm leaf, then 1/4 tola of madder, a climbing plant with yellow flowers was added to deepen the shade.

For blue, the main materials used was indigo, mixed with other colours to produce various shades. Blue was also extracted from lapis-Lazuli, although this was difficult since the stone contains calcite which is white and iron pyrites which has a golden sheen. Methods for extracting blue from lapis-lazuli were not known before the thirteenth century.

Orpiment was one of the minerals from which yellow was extracted. It was thoroughly levigated to the consistency of fine, white flour and shifted. This was again levigated with a solution of gum arabic. Another method was to boil the urine of a cow that had been fed on mango leaves for a few days. After the water had evaporated the sediment was rolled into balls which were dried first on a charcoal fire and then in the sun.

Gold, as a colouring agent, was used in India from very early time. Gold leaf was first reduced to very small pieces and then mixed with sand and water and thoroughly levigated in a smooth stone mortar. When the gold was reduced to powder, it was put in a glass cup and the sand and dust

were removed by washing after the gold was free to impurities, it was mixed with glue and was ready to use. After the application of gold the surface of the painting was burnished with a boar's tusk to impart gloss. Another method was to first draw the design that required the application of gold and then cut a similar design from gold leaf. This was applied to the surface and rubbed down with cotton wool.

To prepare gold and silver powders, gold or silver leaf was put in a hard stone mortar and levigated with a dhan (*Anogeiss latifolia*) gum solution. After the powder was ready, it was dissolved in a sugared water and thoroughly stirred. When the gold powder had settled to the bottom of the solution, the water was slowly drained.<sup>1</sup> This process was repeated several times until no trace of gum remained. After drying the powder was ready for use.

For small quantities, a glass dish was smeared with gum and the gold or silver leaf pasted on it and reduced to a powder with the fingers. It was then dissolved in sugared water and the same process repeated. The Mughal painter used honey instead of dhuna gum. After the gold leaf was ground, water was added and the mixture strained through a finely woven cloth, being constantly stirred so that no particles settled on the strainer. The mixture was allowed to stand for fifteen hours and the waste water was then drained off slowly. The mouth of the basin was the basin was covered with a cloth to keep of the dust particles. Size was added to this as a binding medium. The exact quantity of size required was added at one time for if it was less, it would not stick to the painting and if it was more, it could not be burnished and the gold would loose its lustre.

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

For making the size, the Vishnudharmottara Purana states : "Pieces of buffalo hide are boiled in water until they become as soft as butter. The water is then evaporated and the paste is shaped into stick and dried in sunshine.<sup>2</sup> When required, a stick is boiled with water in a mud vessel. It fixes and tempers colours and stops them flaking. "Gum from the sirdura tree (*carislea tomentosa*) is recommended as an astringent for the tempering of colours. In addition to the size, neem gum is suggested as an astringent for conch shell and oyster shell powders. In paper manuscripts, gum arabic was used for all colours, except zinc, white and yellow pepri, for which dhan gum was used as the binding medium.

Formulae are laid down to obtain different shades by mixing colours. For example, orpiment mixed with deep brown yields the colour of parrot feather, yellow mixed with lampblack in a proportion of two to one would produce the skin colour of common people, lampblack mixed with shellac dye yields deep purple; lampblack mixed with indigo yields the colour of hair, red ochre mixed with conch shell lime powder yields the shade of smoke as does lampblack yields the colour of flames, zinc white and shellac dye will produce a rose colour. Jatilinga dye, white and vermilion mixed in equal quantities yield the skin colours of members of higher castes.

"Akbar had independent views and indeed he considered painting to be one of the means to recognize God. Similarly the lines written about the perfection of Abdus Samad's skill in the *Ain-i-Akbari*.<sup>1</sup>

The veneration which Mughal painters had for the Persian was evident on the pages of the *Pastami-Amir-Hazma*.<sup>2</sup> These illustrations are the first known example of Akbari art form from the ground of the Mughal painter.

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1. S.P.Verma, *Art and Material Culture in the Painting of Akbar's Court*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd., New Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Calcutta, Kanpur.

2. *Ibid*.

The miniatures of the Anwar-i-Suhaili (hereafter Anwar) dated 1570. Preserved in the School of Oriental and African Studies are more acclimatized to Indian realism where the animals are portrayed comparatively more naturally and with a greater sense of movement. The trees also vary and Indian species banyans, palm appear frequently. The placement of figures, the depiction of landscape the sky painted deep blue generally with tinge a of orange and gold remain identical with the Persian conventions. Action is portrayed in the Hamza paintings, but it is violent whereas in the Anwar it is natural, of the Mughal manuscripts this one is to the most extraordinary no less than 200 folios of it are known to have been preserved in the various collection at Brooklyn B.M.V.A.Vienna C.B. and Varanasi.

Rhythmic and vital by 1510 the tendency for similarity is very apparent in the works of Mughal artists. Under Akbar, painting seems to have been confined to the illustration of manuscripts though several volumes of such manuscripts and stray folios have survived to this day. The best known may be noted Hamza, Diwan, Gulistan. There are also the Darabnama, Khamsa of Amir Khusru etc. As a result of Akbar's sympathy for Hinduism and under the policy of encouraging understanding among the people of his kingdom, Hindu themes were equally favoured and consequently the great gazals and qasidas composed by Muhammed Shamsuddin commonly known by his title Hafiz. The colophon of the manuscript belonging to the C.B. collection given on folio 53 as A.H 990 = A.D. 1582 and the name of copyist as Abdus Samad miniature painting of the Razm state Museum Jaipur (here after Jaipur) the Tarikh Oriental Public Library, Patna (hereafter Patna) the Anwar Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi (Varanasi National Museum, Delhi) from the second group of Akbari Illustrations. Most of illustrated manuscript belong to the period ranging from 1580 to 1600. The Akbar miniatures came in the last group, Akbar himself.

The Geet Govinda is a Sanskrit poem written in the twelfth century by Jayadeva a poet at the court of Lakshmanasena the last of the Sena kings of Bengal. Court painters of the Grand Mughals summed up the position when admirably he said - If Mughal art is less interesting from the aesthetic point of view it has a fascinating human interest of its own and real charm.

One of the factors that contributed towards the metamorphosis of the Mughal school from its Persian beginnings into indigenous character was the interest of the emperor Akbar in Indian literature, the miniatures of the *Razmnama*, *Ramayana*, *Harivamsa* etc. The large number of the Hindu artists employed in illustrating the Persian translations of these Sanskrit texts would importunate into their concept of each miniature an essentially Indian vision with the result that though in technique and composition the Persian influence was marked, the physical type, the handling of Indian costume and drapery, the trees and atmosphere and spirit of the picture all showed the dominance of an Indian tradition coming to life again under the invigorating patronage of an enlightened ruler.

There is no record either in the *Ain-i-Akbari* of Abu'l Fazl or in the *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* of Badaoni of Akbar having ordered any translation illustrated or otherwise of the *Geet Govinda*.

*Geet Govinda* was extremely popular all over the country and that it has been illustrated in the Gujrati style, *Basholi kalam*, late Rajput Mughal style etc. is well known to all students of Indian painting. The miniatures probably belong to the 1st decade of the 16th century (1590 - 1600 A.D.) though the page on which each is painted is severely plain and the calligraphy somewhat unrefined the miniature themselves are daintily executed.

The colour like in the majority of Akbar period miniature is strong and

variegated in effect and yet a mellowness pervades the pictures due to the harmony of the colour scheme and colour proportions. As DR. Coomaraswamy point devoted primarily to the analysis of emotional situation the dramatis personae are three in numbers the hero, heroine and the sakhi. The Sakhi not only bears messages between the lovers and discusses situation with them, but also speaks for the heroine in many places.

The miniature art which flourished under the Mughal emperor Akbar and his successor is essentially an eclectic form. Its main roots lie in Persian miniature painting for it was Persian masters who first taught the artists of Akbar's court. But many of these court artists were themselves Indian and thus the inheritors of art traditions which had been manifested in such varied forms as the exquisite Ajanta frescoes and the highly formalized miniature of the medieval Gujarati school. "The modifications which this background imposed on the Persian idiom are conspicuous throughout the history of the Mughal school. In addition we find superimposed on this blend, influences derived from a close study of the European paintings which were brought to Akbar's court by missionaries and other visitors. The most astonishing feature of the Mughal artists' achievement is the mastery with which the techniques derived from these extremely varied sources were assimilated and fused into a harmonious whole the subjects of the present booklet belong in the main to the period of Akbar (reigned 1556 - 1605) the accession of Shahjahan, however, in 1627 does not constitute a marked break in the development of the Mughal style and some of the productions of his reign still retain much of the feeling of earlier period.

"Feast scene in the open", Amal-i-Bhagwati (work of Bhagwati) and "Camping in a hilly country", Amal-i-Bhagwati (work of Bhagwati). Both these

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I. S.P.Verma, Some unnoticed Mughal Miniatures at the Royal Library, Windsor. All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society, New Delhi, Roop Lekha vol. 57, 1985.

miniatures with similar themes and similar in style may be studied together. The central figure shown in the middle top row depicting three men in both the example is that of the same man. Bhagwati's available work are quite a few and these two painting are therefore a most welcome addition to his known work, Bhagwati has here drawn his figures in varied postures, he gives them expressions and gestures that indicate at the artists accomplishment, facial drawings by him are characterised by flat long noses. "The composition is animated with human figures and the artist relies heavily upon for effect.<sup>1</sup>

"Music party in the garden", inscription "Amal-i-Bundi Musauwir" (work of Bundi, the painter) has minute lines and thin shading employed to execute the miniature are in sharp contrast to the flat, wild strokes (irregular and unmanageable drawn boldly to model the foliage, ground and costumes etc. The latter seem to have been introduced or rather inflicted on the picture much later. Such strokes are rare and one does not come across them elsewhere in the sixteenth century. Mughal miniatures with the exception of one miniature in the *Anwar-i-Suhaili*<sup>1</sup> were these appear to suggest shadow. In the present picture the strokes were probably executed in the eighteenth century. One should therefore ignore them if one wishes to study Bundi's original miniature. The painting shows the water ducts used in irrigating the garden, a stank with a fountain, musical instruments, and utensils (serving-pots and containers).

The miniatures of the *Anwari-i-Suhaili* hereafter *Anwar*, dated 1570, preserved in the school of oriental and african studies (hereafter so AS) are more acclimatized to Indian realism where the animals are portrayed comparatively more naturally and with a greater sense of movement plate V

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1. S.P.Verma, *Art and Material Culture in the Painting of Akbar's Court*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd., New Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Calcutta, Kanpur.

the trees also vary and Indian species banyans plantains, mangoes and plums appear frequently. Nevertheless, the placement figures, the depiction of landscape the sky painted deep blue, generally with a tinge of orange and gold remain identical with the Persian Conventions.

Under Akbar, painting seems have been confined to the illustration of manuscript - Abu'l Fazl has mentioned only a few of the illustrated manuscripts through several volumes of such manuscripts and stray folio have survived to this day the best known may be noted :

Hamza, Diwan, Gulistan, Diwan Asand, Anwar. There are also the Baburnama, Akbarnama, Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria, Harivansha and Khamsa-i-Nizami,"hereafter Darab, Iylar, Khamsa Razm, Ram, Baba Akb, Tarikh, Hari and khamsan respectively".

As a result of Akbar's sympathy for Hinduism and under the policy of encouraging understanding among the people of his kingdom Hindu themes were equally favoured and consequently, the great books of the Hindu were translated into Persian.

In the present study a few selected manuscripts belonging to different periods and varying in their themes-fables literary and historical works like the Diwan, Razm Tarikh, Babur and Akbar have been especially referred to, beside many other useful works. Several copies of these manuscripts, embellished with paintings, have survived because many copies of a manuscript were prepared to meet the demand of the royal library, harem nobels, etc. subsequently, the dates of their completion varied. Extensive libraries were established at Agra, Delhi and other places picture of the manuscript on p. 177, painted by Fraukh Chela, depicts a background comprising hills, trees and plans and the human figure drawn with three quarter face, a style associated with the Persian qalam the tendency to use

off shades and slithering shapes, specially in the representation of animal figures observed in the present example has also survived in the later works of the artist similarly, the profuse decoration the sky painted in gold.

Objects drawn from bird's eye view, three quarter faces and two dimensional shapes etc., displayed on p 314, by Farrukh Beg, drew the art of Diwan close to that of the Persian miniatures (PI VI). The painters mostly preferred three quarter faces, long loose costumes reminiscent of the Persian tradition and profuse decoration of the floor-carpet, etc. In the representation of landscape, too, the artist was mostly inspired by the Persian style.

The painters of the Diwan of Anwari, "here after Diwan-a-Am Dated 1588" have shown further change. There the traits of Pre-Mughal Indian art, find their place with faces in profile, elongated eyes, deep lines, thin shading human figures engaged in a variety of actions more defined trees and crowded animation (PI VIII). The depiction of architecture and landscape remain identical with the Persian qalam. The miniature painting of the Razm.

The Tarikh<sup>1</sup>, the Anwar<sup>2</sup> and the Babur<sup>3</sup>, from the second group of Akbari illustrations. Most of the illustrated manuscripts belong to the period ranging from 1580 to 1600. The Akbar miniatures come in the last group only three copies of the Razm, illustrated by the painters of Akbar's Court are known to exist in Jaipur, the Baroda state Museum hereafter Baroda" and BM. It is a Persian abridgement of the Maha. Badauni mentions that the learned Hindus were engaged in writing an explanation of the Maha to assist Persian translators. He further writes that Akbar himself explained a

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1-3. S.P.Verma, Art and Material Culture in the Painting of Akbar's Court, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd., New Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Calcutta, Kanpur.

4. Tubor Hajek, The Aesthetic of the Indian Miniatures of the Mughal School, AIFACS vol. 1 & 2.

few passages to Naqib Khan, a translator. Abdul' Fazl clearly states that the translations was made from Hindi into Persian.

The artist must first of all, select from the whole range subjective and objective reality those elements that he intends to use in his work. This initial act of choice however, is in itself a distortion, for it implies that what is selected has significance. The choice of subject matter therefore is in effect the first interpretative function of an art.

It is this first choice already that differentiates the Mughal miniatures from the rest of the Indian painting. In Indian art generally possibly because of its predominantly religious character, the symbolic level is always very strongly implies some general statement.

The Mughal miniature, however, runs counter to this general trend in Indian art. It is non symbolic; It does not imply any reality that it does not ortray spiritual and emotional matter never occupied the first place in the Mughal scheme of things.<sup>4</sup>

This objectivity is the basic aesthetic standard of the Mughal miniature. It is only contravened in works outside the mainstream of the art or in those of same particularly creative artist.

Another stage in the deformation of reality unavoidable for the printer is the reduction of three dimensional reqlity to the two dimensions of his medium.

The Mughal method of reproducing volume and mass is also similar to that used in the Ajanta cave painting. In both cases a thin shading along the outline is used in some Mughal paintings this shading goes deeper probably as a result of European, influence Colour contrasts frequently used to give

relief specially in the case of the head pushed into relife by the darker line of the background. The Mughal miniature is always a folio whereas the medieval illustrations were either in the form of a horizontal oblong or of a square cut from a palm leaf.

The development of the miniature of course brought about changes in the stylization of individual feature and forms such as the nose, the eye and scarf.

Mughal painter never use colour in such a way as to reduce the picture to mere colour tapestry or mosaic as do the Persian painters do. They beat out the robust rhythm of large coloured areas, so characteristics of some of the local Indian schools. All the rules of artistic deformation and stylization and perhaps even some others, form the main distinctive characteristics of the Mughal miniature.

Akbar was the first Mughal emperor who paid attention to the promotion of the art of painting and commissioned court painters to illustrate manuscripts. Manuscripts chosen included memories, historical monographs, poetry and legends from the persian and sanskrit languages. Books selected for painting included the Razmnama, Ramayana, Nal-Daman, Harivansa, Laila-e-Majnun and Anwar-i-Suhaili etc. The Anwar-i-Suhaili is the subject of this article. At least four copies of this manuscript, decorated with paintings are known to exist in the various art-collections of the world. These are as follows :

Anwar-i-Suhaili School of Oriental and African Studies, London (dated 1570), Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi (1596 - 97), Collection of Sir Cowasji

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1. Ibid.

Jehangir, Bombay (c.1606) and British Museum, Add. 1857-79 (1605-10).

"The Anwar-i-Suhaili is a Persian abridgement of the Panchtantra originally written in Sanskrit. Only a few books in the world have achieved so great a success as the Panchtantra or have been translated into so many languages.<sup>1</sup> The Panchtantra may be dated not later than the fourth century as it is known to us that on the command of the Sassanian king, Khusro Anushirvan (531-579). This work was translated into Pahlavi by a Persian physician named Barzoi. Hence, we may assume that a considerable time must have elapsed before it became so famous that a foreign king desired its translation. The work was entitled Kalig and Dimna and was illustrated with miniatures. A Syriac version was made about 570 A.D. and called Kalilag and Damnag.

An Arabic version from Pahlavi entitled Kalilah Dimnah or 'Fables of Piplay' was made in eighth century and again the Arab versions were richly decorated with paintings. Arabic translation of Panchtantra is of great importance as it provided a source of versions in Syriac, Greek, Persian, Spanish, Hebrew, German, Latin and Italian.

Earliest of the Persian versions of the Kalilah Dimnah (Arabic) was made by the poet Rudargi under the command of Samavid ruler Nasr II (913 - 942) who, it is said, had invited painters from China to illustrate it. Next comes the translation made by Nizamuddin Abu'l Madali Nasrullah in the twelfth century of an Arabic version of the book Kalilah Dimnah done by Abdu'llah Inbu'l Muqaffa in the eighth century. However, the best known Persian version that was made by Husayn Naidh-i-Kashifi about the end of fifteenth century is entitled Anwar-i-Suhaili. Abu'l Fazl court historian of the Akbar ostensibly aimed at simplifying the language as the originals were in bombastic language full of rhetoric and metaphors. Abu'l Fazl's version entitled Ayar-i-Danish begins with a preface in which he explains the

reasons why Akbar wished a new Persian version to be prepared. He mentions that the original purpose was to present the version in simple style so that the look may be comprehensible to a large number of readers. It seems that for the compilation of his book Abu'l Fazl used the Persian versions made by Nasru'llah and Husyan Waidh-i-Kashifi.

Abu'l Fazl has mentioned *Ayar-i-Danish* in the list of the manuscripts illustrated with paintings in *Ain-i-Akbari*. It may be mentioned that the manuscript of *Anwar-i-Suhaili* taken up for this study is an abridgement of Husyan's version, copied by Abdur Rahim-al-Harayi at Lahore, several other copies of the *Anwar-i-Suhaili* illustrated by the painters of the Mughal court are known to exist whereas only two illustrated copies of *Ayar-i-Danish* are known to us. Husyan's version, though florid in style, was in vogue at the Mughal court.

In Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi the manuscript *Anwar-i-Suhaili* bears the accession no. 9069. It contains 239 folios and 26 paintings which display names of 15 painters of Akbar's court. These are given below alphabetically Anant, Basawan, Dharamdas, Farrukh Chela, Jagannath, Lachhman, Pictorial Colophon of the manuscript is dated 1005 A.H (1596 - 7 A.D). It appears on folio 242 painted by the artist Anant representing the scribe with a helper. The text of the colophon reads thus; "finished at the hand of the humble and the sinnes Abdu'r Rahim a Harari. May God conceal his defects and forgive his sins. Written in the metropolis Lahore, 1005 H, Finish', the tradition of pictorial colophon in the Mughal manuscripts is an innovation of the painters of Akbar's court. Other instances are in the *Gulistan* of Sadi (1581) and *Khamsa* by Nizami. The former contains a painted colophon representing the scribe of the manuscript. Mohammad Husain Zarrin qalam, and the self-portrait of the painter Manohar (son of Basawan). The *khamsa* manuscripts' colophon also includes portraits of the calligrapher and the painter himself (Daulat). Location of the

manuscript from the date of its colophon is difficult. The records show that previously it was preserved at Oudh state library from where maharaja Digvijay Singh of Balrampur (U.P) acquired it and in 1958 gave it to Dr. Bhagwati Prasad who sold it to Bhart Kala Bhawan, Varanasi, unfortunately, the manuscript does not bear any library mark or an authograph. The first painting which is a double page illustration seems a later insertion. It is an unsigned work depicting a musical party in the garden.

It is not the work of a Mughal court painter and apparently seems a belong to the Abbasid school of art. Long flowing costumes, massive head gears, musical instruments, utensils represented in the painting all belong to Persia.

Woman figure rarely in Mughal miniatures. Even when they are assigned any place, conspicuous or otherwise, the authenticity of their features is seldom beyond dispute. Art critics have invariably been faced with the problem of identifying the actual representation from the faked ones.

Portraits of likenesses of women are far conspicuous by their absence in the earlier period upto the end of Akbar's reign. While subjects such as these mentioned above form by far the longest part in any Mughal miniature collection. One seldom comes across a painting showing or mirroring the literary or artistic activities of women in Mughal Indian. The light colours scheme of the miniature is well suited to the treatment of such a subject.

The miniature is in many ways a unique specimen of Mughal art a subject possessed of great charm and distinction. The sheer delicacy and fineness of brushwork, combined with the rarity of such a subject in the development of Mughal painting world easily assign to the miniature an important place in any art gallery.

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# CHAPTER

# IV

## WESTERN INFLUENCE IN MUGHAL PAINTING DURING AKBAR'S PERIOD

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**T**he renaissance reformation and counter reformation movements in Europe urged the Jesuits to seek new fields for preaching the message of Christ, Goa became a centre for the Jesuit missionaries backed up by the

Portuguese king. Already there had been attempts to convert the great Mughals in Central Asia, but they generally failed and now in the sixteenth century a fresh urge seized the Jesuits to try once more the lost cause, and circumstances favoured them in the reign of Akbar.

In 1510 the island of Goa was occupied by the Portuguese, under Albuquerque and in a short time the Portuguese power was established in part of the adjoining main land and at several points upon the coast.

Sixteen years after the occupation of Goa by the Portuguese the north of India was invaded by an army from Afghanistan and Central Asia, led by the Turk, Babur who founded the dynasty known as that of the Mughals and the Mughal conquest became consolidated under the celebrated Akbar (1556-1605).

In Europe the society of Jesus had been established in 1539 by St. Ignatius of Loyola and it gained its first hold on India with the arrival in 1542 of St. Francis Xavier. In India it was no means the only order interested in missionary effort, but the zeal and ability of its members soon gave it a predominant position in the field.

Akbar succeeded to the Mughal throne in 1556, and for many years occupied in consolidating his power in North India. In 1572, however, he turned his attention to Gujarat and while he was engaged in the seizure of Surat during the early part of 1573, he came in contact with the Portuguese Christian Priest and in his inquisitiveness he sent a farman to the principal, at Goa to send some Missionaries.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The Din-i-Ilahi, Chapter V, Page no. 170 - 166

The ambassador and his interpreter having arrived delivered the letter (Farman) of the king to the priest of the said company dwelling at the college of St. Paul, who rejoiced greatly at the good news, believing that it was the will of our Lord of manifest to this great prince.

The three Jesuit fathers reached the imperial court at Fatehpur in 1580. As soon as the emperor heard of their arrival he received them with many marks of friendship and entertained them in various ways until far into the night. A large quantity of gold and silver was brought to be presented to them. The father thanked him very respectfully, but would not take any of the money. The king was very much impressed by their refusal of the money.

Three or four days later the fathers again visited the king who received them cordially as on the first occasion. As he had asked to be shown the books of the law of the Creator, Holy Scripture the father took with them and presented to him all the volumes of the Royal Bible in five languages, sumptuously bound. The king received these holy books with great reverence and kissed them and one after another he placed them on his head. The Father also presented him two beautiful portraits, one representing the saviour of the world, and the other the glorious virgin Mary, His holy Mother. The king took the portrait of our Saviour in his hands with great reverence, and kissed it and made his children, and several of his courtiers do the same.

Sometimes afterwards, he again sent for the father's summoning, at the sametime, his mullas and qaziz, in order that they might dispute together in his presence, so that he might discover which were in truth the holy scriptures on which to place his faith.<sup>1</sup> The fathers clearly established

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1. This dispute was referred to by Abu'l Fazl in Akbarnama.

the authenticity and truth of the scriptures contained in the old and New Testaments. The first dispute ended in the complete discomfort of the fathers, took refuge in silence.

After many sittings of discussions the father's were ascertained that the king is at the brink of embracing Christianity the king had to leave for Kabul.

It is not known about the further of Akbar's relations towards Christianity till 1590 when his court was at Lahore.

In 1590 Akbar who had not wanted the fathers of the first mission to leave again wrote to Goa seeking father's for his court for further instructions in Christianity. This request was sent with the Greek sub deacon, Leo Grimon who had recently come to his court. The parwana ordered that supplies and transport and due escort should be provided for the father's and laid down their route in it. Of the two letters carried by Leo Grimon, there have been a translation of these addressed to the father's of the Society.<sup>1</sup>

The fathers at Goa were assured by Grimon that the prospects of a mission were favourable. The king was less of a Muslim than ever and has shown signs of a marked respect for Christianity. He had celebrated the day of assumption of the virgin in 1590, by bringing out and paying respect to his picture of our lady. Akbar's proposal was accordingly accepted with enthusiasm. In the end two father's, Duarte-lai-Tao and Christoval-de-Vega and a lay brother called Estevao Rebeiro were selected and left for Lahore.

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I. Payne, C.H., tr. Akbar and Jesuits, Page no. 48

The members of the Mission were well received and they were given a house in Palace. As school was started under their direction which was attended by the sons of nobles as well and by the king's own son and grandson, and pupils were taught and read and write Portuguese.

The father's, however, found themselves strongly opposed by a faction at the court and soon perceived that the king had no intention of becoming a Christian. They accordingly decided to withdraw without delay. Vega left for Goa, but two provincial wished to send him back, as he was understood to be great favourite with Akbar; and in any case Lai-tao was instructed to remain where he was. The mission, however, came shortly afterwards to an abrupt conclusion for reasons which have not come down to us and both missionaries return to Portuguese India.

There was obviously some dissatisfaction at Goa, if not at Rome itself, at the hasty dissolution of the second mission. It was still thought by many that Akbar had been on the point of becoming a Christian. Akbar himself was greatly dissatisfied and once again for the third and last time in 1594, he renewed his entreaties for instruction in the Christian religion, and begged the viceroy at Goa to send him learned priests and brother Benedict-de-Goes, the Marinenian who had been in attendance of Aqua viva at the time of first Mission was again sent with them as interpreter. Father Jerome had already done Evangelistic work for many years in India.

On being informed that the father's (third time) had reached Lahore, the king sent one of his captain to welcome them on his behalf, shortly afterwards they went to pay their respect to him and met with a courteous reception. Akbar assigned to them a pleasant residence near the rivers. He paid the father's extraordinary personal honour not only he allowed them to sit in his presence but to occupy part of the cushion on which he himself and the heir to the throne sat.

It seems to the missionaries that the conversion of Akbar was possible even than they witnessed his reverential treatment of their sacred images and his devoted participation in their services. He used to place images of our Lord and the blessed virgin Mary and keep them for long time in his arms inspite of their heavy weight. One day he attended a religious service with bended knees and with clasped hands like a Christian devotee. On the festival of assumption of the virgin he sent costly silken and golden hangings for the adornment of the chapel. Both Akbar and Prince Salim exhibited special devotion to the european books and handed it over to them for their own use. He allowed them to start a school which attracted the sons of some of the feudatory princes. The site for church of Lahore was demarcated and a church was ultimately built. The heir apparent himself, Prince Salim became the firm friend and protector of the mission. A Portuguese artist who had come with the father's was directed to copy a portrait of the virgin Mary which they possessed, images of the infant Jesus and a crucifix were likewise copied by the court craftsmen.

Regular religious debates were no longer in vogue but disputes occasionally took place. Both Akbar's and Prince Salim's attitude towards Christianity was not quite definite. In Lahore there was no mosque and no copy of the Quran. Whatever King's actual faith was, it was not Islam but his own invented sect Din-i-Ilahi.

A series of letters is for the period of 1595-1600 and most of these were published in Europe shortly after they were written and another series of letters covers the years 1604-1685; these are in manuscripts in the British Museum.<sup>1</sup> For the intermediate period 1600-1604, which is not covered by those letters in question. We have to rely almost entirely on

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Extract translations of these letters published in 1896 - Histories of Guzman and Guerreiro, See Maclagan E.D. The Jesuits and the Great Mughals Chapter IV.

Guerreiro and have not the original documents on which he based his narrative.

In 1598 Akbar left to invade the Deccan taking with him Father Jerome Xavier and brother Goes. Father Pinheiro left behind alone in Lahore turned his attention towards Evangelism. In a trouble that inevitably followed Pinheiro succeeded obtaining the pardon of prisoners condemned to death with the help of a local Subedar or Viceroy. After the death of Viceroy (Khwaja Shamsuddin) and the appointment of his successor's (Zain Khan Koka) effort were made to divert the mission and a great crowd assembled outside the church, but the only result was that the maligners of the mission were imprisoned. Some valued relics were stolen but the Kotwal gave what assistance they could do to him. Towards the end of sixteenth century father Pinheiro received the assistance of father Corsi. Then father Pinheiro set out to visit father Xavier at the king's camp in the Deccan.

Jery soon after this interview, Akbar marched to the Deccan. His immediate object was to over come the Sultanates of Ahmad Nagar and Khandesh, but his ultimate aim was the extinction of the Portugese settlements in India. The position of the jesuit father in the camp become accordingly a difficult one. Akbar returned to Agra with father Xavier and Pinherio.

Akbar gave christians a permission to purchase lands and to build a Church<sup>1</sup> and they built one in 1599. In the same year the Lahore chapel was completed to which Akbar sent costly silk cloths and gold for its adornment.<sup>2</sup> He also sent from his own collection a picture of Mary for the Chapal.<sup>3</sup> Another chruch was built in 1597 and the governor of Lahore, with the

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1. Agra Deocesces Calendar 1907, Page no. 201

2. J.A.S.B. LXV. 1896, Page no. 66

3. Memories, A.S.B. 1916, Page no. 174

consultation of Akbar, was personally present at the opening ceremony of the church. Lands were granted for their residence and for building churches, chapals and cemetries. Another church was built in 1604 at Agra which was patronised by Prince Salim. This church was sometimes referred to as Akbar Badshah Ka Girja.<sup>1</sup>

Like his father Jahangir was also very much liberal towards christians, the liberty of Prince Salim was interpreted as his love for Christ and they expected that he would be converted to the religion of Christ. On the whole Jahangir was kind to the christians, if not christianity. At Agra he paid an allowance of five to seven rupees per day for the maintenance to each christian and occasional grants were made for their festivals. Jahangir granted six bighas of land for an Armonian in the name of the Lord Jesus which originally belonged to Hindu.

A church was built for the Jesuits at Jaipur through the courtesy of Raja Jai Singh. The Portuguese built a portable church in imitation of Akbar's portable mosque. In 1926, Jahangir confirmed the purchase of a piece of land by the Christian and made it a rent free inam (gift).<sup>2</sup>

Since his childhood Jahangir had an special liking for Christian paintings. He himself supervised the artist when they paint in the Mughal atelier. He ordered his painters to prepare the copies of christian painting, presented to him by foreigners. Sir Thomas Roe, an English, and as director of East Indian Company presented him a great number of Christian paintings and the emperor ordered to his artists to make their copies as they are.

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1. Maclagan, op. cit. Page no. 198 - 199

2. Monserrate, Commentaries, fol.85 (a) Bloachman, op. cit. i. 46

Shahjahan was succeeded on the throne. He was an orthodox muslim and he had neither sympathy nor any positive disliking for either the christians or the Portuguese. He confirmed the purchase of lands by the christian at Lahore which were resold by Oliveira.<sup>1</sup> After the Bengal fracas he officially prosecuted the christians, and closed their churches at Agra and Lahore. The attitude of the common people was very hostile to the christians, the converts were always pelted in the street, their services were Jeered at and sometimes social stigma was attached to converts. Asaf Khan was probably the only noble who was more or less sympathetic towards the Christians.

Shahjahan's prosecution of the Christians and Jesuits was to some extent mitigated by the friendly sympathies of his son Darashikoh. He attended their parties and used to make friendly visits to them as Jahangir had done. The liberal attitude of Dara once more lit up the hope of the christians and they expected his conversion in no time. Manucci says that Dara died all but Christian. According to him, Dara died praying for the safety of his son Dara Shikoh, he attended their parties and used to make friendly visits to them as Jahagir had done. The liberal attitude of Dara once more lit up the hope of the Christian and they expected his conversion in no time. Manucci says that Dara died all but Christian. According to him, Dara died praying for the safety of his soul :-

"Muhammad has taken my life  
Oh, the son of God, grant me my life".

Aurangzeb's relation with the Christians is mysterious. Aurangzeb, who presented the shias and hindus was not unnecessarily hard on the christians. Soon after his ascension, he wished father Busi to accompany

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1. J.A.S.B. XXI, 1925. Page no. 58

him to Kashmir.<sup>1</sup> In 1671 he confirmed the grant of a piece of land granted by Jahangir.<sup>2</sup> He asked for a Persian translation of the Gospel, but it is not known whether he read it or not.<sup>3</sup> During the reign of Aurangzeb, there was hardly any official interference with the christian method of worship. When the jазiah was imposed on the non-muslims the christians were not exempted. Except three noble men, all the governors were inimicably disposed towards the Christians. Qadis particularly took the cue from Aurangzeb and seized the slightest occasion to make searches, to impose fines on them to send them to jail when unable to harm them, at least to insult them.<sup>4</sup>

Position of the Europeans and christians in the later Mughal period did not depend on the grace of the officials but on their own capacity. The christianity in India was no longer needed patronage of the officers of the central government, the Europeans, English, Dutch, French etc. had strengthened their position sometimes by bribe and by tact. Within 50 years of the death of Aurangzeb, they gathered strength enough to consolidate their political position and ultimately to supplant the Mughal supremacy by their own.

Inspite of the existence of an excellent and flourishing 'school of indigenous paintings in royal atelier the courts artists of Akbar and Jahangir looked on European art as an ideal, as the fashion of the time, to which Indian talent should strive to attain. Abu'l faz'l, in describing the progress of painting under Akbar, alluded to the masterpieces recently produced in India and spoke of them as worthy to be compared with the wonderful works of European painters who have attained worldwide fame.

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1. Manucci Nicholas, *Stories do Mogor II*, Page no. 154 (tr. W.Irvine, Vol.II, London 1907 - 1908).  
2. J.P.R.S.V. 1916 Page no. 24  
3. *Annual Report*, 1670 - 78  
4. *Indian Antiquary* XXXV,1906, Page no. 205 - 206

As early as 1580 we find Akbar having copies made of pictures of the Virgin and of Christ which the father's had with them<sup>1</sup> and in 1597 the Prince Salim is reported to have begged for the loan of the picture of St. Ignatius Loyola that he might have it copied in royal atelier by his painters.<sup>2</sup> Nor did the practice of copying European pictures cease with the death of Jahangir, and it is indeed alleged by some authorities that the rage for copying European pictures in the royal atelier reached its height towards the end of the reign of his successor. The emperor Shahjahan being, so desirous of these copies as to have every European painting which he could obtain copied by the artists of his court.<sup>3</sup>

In latter Mughal period the rage for copying European pictures continued and the painters of Sultanates of Deccan were also copying European pictures as well.

Akbar gave the stamp of her ardoxy to the Mughal school of painting much against the thinking of his time. For him painting was not only an art but means to realize God, and art cut across narrow sectarianism that divided men and men. His thinking came into full play at the conclaves of religious leaders (Father) at Fatehpur Sikri. The Portuguese merchants, he came across and the three jesuit missions he had invited to his deliberations brought about a new awareness, both for the emperor and his court, of the world at large. This new awareness of the emperor in turn, reinforced his attitude towards God realisation through painting.

The jesuits knew well in time their royal host's love for Christian paintings. The rich collection of European paintings which the jesuit missionaries brought as present already mentioned in details, aroused in

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1. J.A.S.B, LXV, 1896, Page no. 50

2. Xavier's letter of July 26th 1598, J.A.S.B, LXV, 1896, Page no. 76

3. F.R.Martin, The Miniature painting and painters of Persia, India and Turkey, 1912, Page no. 85

Akbar a deep interest in this genre. Plantyn's polyglot Bible and a fine copy of the Borghese Madonna among these presents impressed the Akbar most. The engraved like illustrations in the Bible by Flemish artist of the St. of Quantin Matsys were a feast for the royal eyes.

A large number of European specimens available in India in this period were prints published by the Plantyn's firm at Antwerp for religious propaganda.<sup>1</sup> Besides these prints, books, woodcuts and engravings, silken and woolen tapestries worked with stories from Old Testament were also brought here.

Themes from the Old Testament - "Adam" line-by-line copies by an unknown court artist is nearer to European style. But the court artist tried to bring about an Indian atmosphere by painting bird and animal. It is in Gulshan album and its European sources are unknown. It is one of the rich collection in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. No. 332 (1965). Noah's ark is enhancing the beauty of the collecting of miniature in Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi, possibly the painting from the Diwan of Hafiz attributed to Muskin an eminent court artist circa 1590. A verse of Quran is devoted to Noah, and he figures in such poetical text as the Diwan of Hafiz and Qasis-al-Anbya. It has been suggested that this illustration comes from an otherwise lost volume of Hafiz to which a known illustration of King Solomon may also belong. An immediate comparison to this composition is found in the 1595. Anwar-i-Suhaili, where a very similar boat scene is inscribed to Muskin while not of Noah's ark, that work too shows a figure over boards. It may be a stock motif added for dramatic interest.

Solomon and the queen of Shieba, enthroned was catalogued as

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1. Beach, M.C. 'The Gulshan Album and its European sources' (Arnold and Walk son, iii) in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin, Vol. LXIII

being of the Shahjahan period, c.1630 in the Sotheby auction catalogue<sup>1</sup> and has always been exhibited with that dating; when it was on display at Los Angeles in connection with the symposium on Indian art in October 1970, it was seen by Robert Skelton of the Victoria and Albert Museum, who credited it to Mir Kalan Khan, one of the major painters of Muhammad Shah. This attribution was confirmed by Cary Welch in Feb.1972. European subject matter still tempted the Indian artists, and this unlikely composition often produced work of marvellous artistic quality, several Mughal copies and adaptations of an engraving by George Pencz, "Joseph telling his dreams to his father", dated 1544, are known. The present work Joseph telling his dreams to his father as the latter of two versions copied by Kesheo Das, the earlier being in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, it may be that this is an illustration copied specially for Salim, who is known to have requested copies of paintings owned by his father. Here Kesheo retained the original arrangement of the figures, although the rather intricate modelling of the clothing in the print is simplified. Moreover, the background has been opened up to include the favourite Mughal device of distant mountains. The birds at the top were added to lengthen the proportion of the illustration so that it would match the facing page. The verse calligraphy is done and signed by Mir Ali.

Several Mughal style miniatures, all of them presenting a strong look of Persian influence, have been catalogued late 17th or 18th century in sale catalogues. At Sotheby's (July 10, 1968, lot 98), this miniature was described as painted in India under strong Persian influence, probably by an artist of Persian origin. "Robert Skelton of the Victoria and Albert Museum has attributed it to the artist Mohammad Nadar Samarqandi, a court painter of Jahangir and Shahjahan, dating it 1651 and has existed on its'

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1. Sotheby auction catalogue (Dec.10th 1962 pt. 28)

Kashmir origin (A miniature with similar attribution was sold at Sotheby's March 7, 1973 lot 243). It is also a subject from the Yusuf and Zulai Khan. The story of Yusuf's love for the Potiphar's wife was written by the Persian poet named as Yusufwa Zuli Khan. Yusuf the Biblical Joseph, would normally be portrayed with a flaming halo just like any other muslim saint. A manuscript of this text in the Chester Beauty Library, Dublin (MS 31) contains other miniature by Mohammad Nadar Samarqandi.

A painting of Yusuf in the salve market is also painted in the seventeenth century and other paintings on the christian themes from the Old Testament, as Moses<sup>1</sup>, Sarah (wife of Abraham)<sup>2</sup>, David in the lion's Den<sup>3</sup>, Expulsion from the Paradise<sup>4</sup> and Angels of Tobias could easily be traced, but others such as Creation of Adam and Eve only in one composition appear to be very rare. On the other hand, legends from the New Testament from the bulk of the European paintings, available to theMughal court artists. The spectrum of such themes was very broad.

There are a few miniatures on christian themes which show little or no western influence. They tend to show Jesus as a traditional religious leader or as a Jesuit (that is a traditional christian religious leader as seen in the Mughal empire) and to show his disciples and the people around Him as Jesuits or as Portuguese or as some of each. Frequently one of the Three Magi is shown as Portuguese, General Maclagan<sup>5</sup> and scholars before and since right down to the Reverend John Butler in 1974 are inclined to attribute a fair number of these as illustrations for father Jesome Xavier's, "Persian Life of Christ" and particularly to a copy of this book said

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1. Voyage of Dewnton, Page no. 8, also Leigh Ashton, The Art of India and Pakistan no. 751 (i)
  2. C.F. VXA, Clive Album, f. 76
  3. Robinson B. W. etal, Islamic Painting and the Art of the Book (The Keir collection (pt.122)
  4. Beach.M.C., The Gulshan Album and its European Sources BBMF, Vol. XIII, no.3321965, fig.12a.
  5. Edward D. Maclagan, 'Mughal Painting on Christian subjects in Muslim World', Vol.23 (1933), Page no. 351

to be in the Lahore Museum. Since the preface to Xavier's book is dated (Agra), 1602. It is found difficult to think that the use would not have been made of European prototypes for its illustrations since they abounded by them and the Jesuits were making constant use of them as was the court. In order to save this attribution Butler made the perverse suggestion that "If it would seem that the copy of Jerome Xavier "Persian Life of Christ" presented to Akbar was illustrated, with pictures made without European models but with oral instructions from the fathers. We find it beyond belief that the learned fathers would permit such iconographically wrong ( not to mention historically wrong) portrayals of Jesus as a Jesuit or of His followers as Jesuits or Portuguese.

We are inclined to guess that none of these Lahore pictures was ever a part of any book of father Xavier's. Father Hosten visited the Lahore museum prior to 1922 and reports of this manuscript:

"The label above it said, "New Testament pictures as drawn for the emperor Akbar".... The book bore Akbar's seal and the subject of it was the life of our Lord in Persian by father Xavier, Date: 1602. Size: 10 inches X 6 inches. It contained 79 leaves with 15 lines per page and was interleaved with 11 pictures. Many pages of the life of our Lord are missing, and it looks as if most of the pages belong to another treatise.<sup>1</sup>

Robert Skelton who has visited the Lahore museum and who has examined many of the paintings we are here concerned with feels, on the basis of some hasty manuscript comparison, that the Lahore text to which they are related and the rubrics on the pictures themselves do not seem related, to any version of Jerome Xavier's Life of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Nosten, op. cit., Page no. 181

2. Robert, W. Skelton's record.

We venture to suggest that many, perhaps all, of these pictures were painted to illustrate some earlier Persian version of the Gospels and that they were painted before the flood of European christian pictures. We know that Persian Gospels existed.<sup>1</sup> We also know that Akbar ordered the translation into Persian of Hindu and other religious texts, including the Gospels which he asked Abu'l Fazal to translate and that the Hindu texts, at least were illustrated.<sup>2</sup> The Jaipur Razmnama, the Persian translation of the Mahabharatha made and illustrated for Akbar around 1585-87 before the first Jesuit mission has some picture that are equally unachronistic. One of these is "The white horse is being taken carefully to the zenana, that the family of Krishna may see it, when Anusal takes it forcibly away" which shows the Krishna scene very like a Mughal court scene in almost every respect, even to a saintly picture painted on a Mughal canopy.<sup>3</sup> If Krishna could be put in a Mughal court. We guess that Christ could easily have been put in the robes of one of his priests and that His followers could easily have been portrayed like the only christians then known priests (most Jesuits) and Portuguese laymen. Some what similar unachronism, of putting a leading follower of Christ in the clothes of a Jesuit Priest which he would never have worn, occurred as recently as the late 1950 when a popular Bengali film of the early Baptist missionary and Bengali folk hero William Carey constantly shows him in the white robes of a "Park Street Jesuit" which, we have to say, he would have shunned.<sup>4</sup> To dress Christ and christians in this way really makes considerably sense it has a certain logic. But once European christian pictures arrived at the Mughal court its logic would be lost.

The ascension of Jesus who is dressed as a Jesuit is described above.

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1. Camps, op. cit. Page no. 26 ff.

2. Ain-i-Akbari, op. cit., vol.1, passim in

3. Hendley, T.H. Razmnama, London 1886, Vol. Pt. LXXXVI shown in detail in Maharaj Sawai Man Singh 11, Museum Photo 17/2.

4. This film, carry Sahiber Munshi, from a book of the same title by Pramatha Nath Bishi, is a perennial favourite in Bengal.

It is a very Mughalish painting but all of the people in it are dressed as Jesuits or as Portuguese. It has been attributed to father Xavier's Life of Christ.<sup>1</sup> One of the Portuguese in the painting is lying on his back, with one, hand under his head, and his knees raised, watching the ascension. Maclagan reports what may be a somewhat similar figure, In the State Museum at Berlin there is a curious seventeenth century picture in which a woman with an Indian type of face and wearing a cross on her necklace is seated on a chair with a child. A man who resembles a saint from an Italian picture is standing by with a book in his hand, but in the foreground are two Europeans, one pouring out wine and one lying back in a helpless attitude. The seat on which the woman is sitting is tilted back at an unsteady angle.<sup>2</sup>

The emperor Akbar placed the Iranian artists, Mir Sayed Ali and Abdus Samad in charge of the Mughal studies, the works that emerged were in a new and different style which mixed hindu (Rajput) and muslim Indian elements with those of imperial Safavid Iran.<sup>3</sup> Thus a recognizable Mughal style was formed under his reign, and when this highly Persianized early Akbari style was under going a process of transformation by synthesis with indigenous stylistic elements, the European (religious) works, through Jesuits came as a boon to inspire the Mughal artists on their attempts to solve many of their technical problems. This interest of the emperor and the court artist in European religious art is evident in the interesting pictures copied and coloured by Kesheo Das from European engravings or drawings.<sup>4</sup> Similar studies made by such leading Akbari painters as Basawan, Sanwala and Muskin also testifying to their serious interest in European works.<sup>5</sup> Gradually, their works began to show a considerable improvement on the

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1. In the Catalogue when the collection of Adwin Binney 3rd was exhibited in Ann Arbor, Maclagan.

2. Maclagan, *The Jesuit and the Great Mughal*, op. cit., Page no. 252.

3. L.P.I. Pl. XIX; Bull-MFA, No.332 fig.1 and 1A; IBP, Pl. 42 Unsigned picture of Madonna on the same folio of the Berlin Album.

4. A. Weber, *Indian Antiquary*, VI London, 1877, pp 353-4 and IBP, Pl. 42.

5. For Basawan, *Supra*, Chapt. 7; for Sanwala cat. CB, III, Pl. 81; Muskin: J.G.M. Plate facing p. 23.

technique of shadowing, depiction of perspectives and effective modelling. In Jahangir's atelier the impact of European art became even more apparent.

This art of painting as practiced in Akbar's art atelier, Abul Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, making specific mention of the branch or branches of art in which they specialized.<sup>1</sup> However, it is not impossible to trace the special characteristics, individual style and quality of a number of leading painters of the time as Abul Hasan Daulat, Manohar Bishan Das, Mansur, Farrukh Beg, Nanha, Bichitra and Goverdhan.

The leading painters enjoyed a better status in Jahangir's time in the Mughal hierarchy. From the evident of Roe it appears that the painters enjoyed an exalted position in the Mughal court.<sup>2</sup> Some of these leading painters copied European (christian) pictures in their own style and setting or they used them as models or used their symbols in their non-religious paintings.

### **ABU'L HASAN**

Abu'l Hasan was the son of a painter Aqua Raza, who entered Jahangir's employ by atleast 1588 A.D. A series of marginal drawings in *Muraqqa-e-Gulshan* or *Gulshan Album*, signed as well as dated 1599, proves that the artist was then copying European prints as were of course, many other Mughal painters of the time.

Abu'l Hasan's first major work found in the British museum *Anwar-i-*

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1. Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari* (tr), H.Blechnann and H.S.Jarret (3rd) Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal 1873-1894, vol. I

2. Roe, pp 189, 190, 199 - 200.

Suhaili manuscript. The copy of Durer's St. John painted in 1599-1600 is claimed to have been painted by him when he was only thirteen. His early acquaintance with European materials certainly helped him to develop his individual style. His portrait studies are accurate and lively that can be seen in a number of copies prepared from European engravings which are associated with Abu'l Hasan. Of these the fully coloured miniature of the youthful Christ underneath the portrait of Jahangir in the Chester Beatty collection deserves special attention.<sup>1</sup> Another fine copy of Holy Family with St. John signed by Abu'l Hasan can be seen in the Berlin Album.<sup>2</sup> Abu'l Hasan's name, but this should not prevent us from attributing many of the European details painted on the hashiyas to Abu'l Hasan as most of the hashiyas details are unsigned. The hashiya showing some figure of St. John, though drawn in reverse may have been decorated by him.

Abu'l Hasan's familiarity with Christian pictures since his childhood provided him with a wide use of iconographic symbols prevalent in European religious art, such as the halo, cherubs, cupid, angels, globe, orb, the gestures of the hands, the animals, the sun and the moon and so on. The most remarkable picture in the iconographic series is found in the Chester Beatty Library attributed to Abu'l Hasan in which symbolic elements are combined with many new ones. In an early example of symbolic pictures exalting the kingship of Jahangir. Abu'l Hasan's miniature showing Jahangir setting out for hunting shows an interesting feature, a winged angel modelled as a European original kissing an attendant of the emperor. In another picture, Jahangir shooting the arrow on the head of a dark complexioned man and he balances his feet on the back of a lion sitting with a goat in a globe and the globe is resting on an enormous fish. The western inspired cupid is supplying arrows and another hanging golden bells from

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1. Cat. CB, I, 30 No.12 unpublished

2. I.B.P. Pt. 41.

above and the two cupids are also bringing a crown of gold from above too. In an attempt to portrait and imagining meeting of the emperor visualized in a dream. Abu'l Hasan depicts the scenes set against an immense halo composed of the resplendent sun and a fantastic crescent moon in the blue sky. Jahangir profoundly stands on a huge globe and embraces the bending figure of the dark complexioned Shah. The figure of Jhangir is bigger in size than the Shah is made to stand on a meek lamb. A pair of winged cherubs. In the same way Abu'l Hasan painted many protraits of Mughal emperor Jahangir, used christian symbols according to the situation and the setting to exalt the dignity of the emperors and he also continued this practice of iconographical symbols to paint for a good many years during Shahjahan's reign and later on, this practice was used abundantly by the painters, taken from European religious painting complete the compositon. The Freer Gallery of Art has another miniature of interesting iconographic content, painted by Abu'l Hasan. One of the numerous assembly scenes with Jahangir as the presiding figure. Jahangir is shown seated on a throne under a red canopy and he rests his feet on a globe placed on a golden stand. The globe has a key hole. On the red canopy are painted a pair of winged cherubs in gold who hold an arabesque in their hands on which the name of the emperor is written. Above it is another canopy painted in green, violet and purple where a western type crown is held by a golden winged cherub indicating divine authority of Jahangir's sovereignty. Emperor Jahangir conferred the title of Nadir-uz-Zaman on Abu'l Hasan but Jahangir did not mention anywhere in Tuzuk the date and the occasion of it, as many as fine versions of picture.

### **BICHITRE**

Another leading painter of Jahangir's court studios who further developed the iconographical drawing. We are not aware of his earlier

activities. His few works were associated with Jahangir. Although his main works were drawn in Shahjahan's time, Bichitre in modelling through the use of shadow and iconographical symbols derives from his interest in European prints and paintings for he is known to have copied motifs from Durer. There is a remarkable picture by Bichitre portraying a conversation between Shahjahan and an old courtier. In this picture there are two angels, representing christian symbolic art. In the clouds, one of whom plays a musical instrument and the other pours rose leaves on the head of the emperor. The Holy Dove and the Padre Eterno with both hands raised in benediction are shown. In another painting Shah Shuja enthroned with Maharaja Gaj Singh who ruled Mewar (Nasli and Alice Heeramanek Collection L, 69. 24. 246)<sup>1</sup>, representing an event of 1638. The painting seems to be a commemoration of Raja's association with the Mughal prince who was his cousin. In this painting two European (Christian) type of Cherubs shown holding a canopy over the emperor and the Maharaja Gaj Singh. A further symbolic drawing of Bichitre is in the Chester Beatty Library, shows Jahangir is standing holding an orb in his right hand. As Arnold and Wilinon point out this the right part of a double page composition, the other part showing an old darvesh clad in pure white.<sup>2</sup> The Sheikh is shown as symbolically presenting the emperor a globe on which is written, "The same world occur on the picture of the emperor". In these pictures the iconographical symbolism is restricted to the globe and the orb, which are adopted from christian engravings. Bichitre continued painting into the 1640s.

### **KESHOE DAS**

The painter whose name is closely associated with coloured copies of

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1. S.C. Welch, AMI, no. 44 (colour); Beach Heeranmanek no. 216.

2. Cat. CB, 30-1; 1, frontispiece (colour).

European (religious) works is Keshoe Das. There are no definite means to connect him with the Salim studio, though a number of his works occur in Jahangir's Murraqqas. When Jesuit priests brought religious pictures and the illustrated books with christian pictures of the court of Akbar as gifts, Keshoe Das, the court artist of emperor Akbar, prepared a series of miniature copied from European original of these christian pictures he had bounded up in a Murraqqa (Album) and presented to the emperor Akbar in 1588. There are two versions of Joseph telling his dream to his father by Keshoe Das with little variation in presentation. A picture of Virgin Mary, almost European in its composition which is stated to be the work of the painter Keshoe Das and it is an interesting study of an Indian painter who is occupying in drawing a picture of Madonna.<sup>1</sup> Another picture which is also a copy of St. Matthews and an Angel with its much European in contents can be seen at the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It has a sign date of the artist Keshoe Das. He was famous for copying christian picture from the European engravings among the court artists of Akbar.

## **BASAWAN**

Our knowledge of Basawan's life is also helplessly limited. W. Slaude and S. C. Welch devoted considerable attention to the study of this great Mughal master and the style of his painting put no definite information of his life or ancestry could be supplied by them. From a signed folio of the Cleveland Tutinama, it is apparent that Baswan worked in the Akbar studio from the early days. He achieved considerable fame as he probably took charge of the atelier after Daswant's death in 1585. The list of his qualities as a painter as given by Abu'l Faz'l is formidable. A supremely elegant

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1. Maclagan, op. Cit., Page.no. 226

miniature showing the Madonna and Child placed within a wholly Mughal setting has been attributed to Basawan by S. C. Welch (a flower from Every Meadow, p.99) who also noted that its borders are identical with those of the Berlin Jahangir album. The unidentified couplet set into gold floral arabesques at the top and bottom of the page.

## **MANOHAR**

Many of the Jahangirnama's illustrations, portrait studies of the emperor and his leading courtiers and picture of royal assemblies are painted by him. But Manohar is not mentioned in Abu'l Fazl's admittedly shortlist of the principal Akbari painters presumably he was then only a rising young artist. He was the son of an Akbari painter Baswan. Manohar must have been sufficiently at home with the European engravings. He studied them and carefully copied them as exercise in modelling and perspective.<sup>1</sup> European elements can be noticed in two Jahangirnama miniature, a state procession and Jahangir's visit to Akbar's Tomb. The European (Christian) elements are prominently developed in his painting of Solomon holds court<sup>2</sup> seated in a domed octagonal throne near chinar tree. Two christian type angels are presenting him vessels of gold. Other figures and the angels surrounded the throne. In the foreground are various animals paying homage and the birds perch on the canopy of the throne.

It seems that he might have stopped working in the last year of Jahangir's reign or at the beginning of Shahjahan's reign, soon after the fine study of Dara Shikoh's wife horse called Dil Pasand was painted.<sup>3</sup>

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1. S.C.Welch, attributes as tinted drawing showing a presentation scene, copied one or more European engravings to Manohar; AO 111, 226, fig. 11.

2 B.W.Robinson (ed) Islamic Painting and the Art of the Book, pl. 120.

3. India Office Library, Johnson, 111 f, I: HFA, 1911 ed., Pl. CXXV.

## MUSKIN AND OTHER COURT PAINTERS

There is a beautiful coloured painting of Noah's Ark which is considered one of the best collection of Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi. Probably this painting from Diwan of Hafiz must have been attributed to Muskin. In the Johnson collection, India Office Library, there is a painting of a good shepherd. Muskin is clearly written on it. There were also many artists who contributed paintings christian themes, but these painters did a very little work in the field. Nini a court artists of the reign of Jahangir evidently copied the martyrdom of St. Cielia from an Italian print by Jerome Wierix, Madonna and Child fig. 372, BM No.88 painted by slave of Shah Salim named Gulam Mirza. Unsigned picture of Christ, the virgin Mary and St. Anns a fully coloured copy of Tobias and a coloured version of a European picture showing a visit painted by Sanwala, a court painter. One of the Painters of Mohammad Shah painted Solomon and queen of Shieba. Under his patronage a coloured copy of the virgin Mary, Child and Angel, signed by an unknown painter named Mohabat Khan. Many other painters of the court of Mughal emperor's paintings using Christian symbols to an end of the later Mughal period.

Akbar and Jahangir used European paintings either in original or as copies for the adornment of their palaces and other buildings, some time as frescos or framed as hangings or wall paintings. We have a record telling of the existence of this class of pictures at Fatehpur Sikri, at Sikandra, at Agra, at Lahore and at Delhi.

It is said that before the arrival of the first Jesuit Mission, Akbar had christian paintings in his palace at Fatehpur Sikri. The fathers when they arrived, were told that he had in his dinning room pictures hung up (Imagines Suspensus) of Christ, Mary, Moses and Mohammed and he treated that of Mohammed with less respect than the rest. Traces of Christian themes

in the paintings can be seen at Maryams House (Maryam Ki Kothi), Fatehpur Sikri in the remains of a Hall said to have been the offertory of the Jesuit Chapel in the palace complex.<sup>1</sup> These frescos of the Akbar period are said to represent the "Annuciation" and the Fall rendered in Mughal style.<sup>2</sup>

When Francis Sebastian was at Agra in 1641, the interior of the portico of the Akbar's tomb at Sikandra was, he states, covered from the summit of the dome to the base with "cunning paintings", the most remarkable being one of the virgins. Father Batelho who was at Agra between 1648 and 1654 writes about figures painted by skillful hands. Tavernier who saw the tomb in 1665 speaks that there was at the gate of the garden, a painting representing the tomb covered by a black pall with many torches of wax and two Jesuit fathers at the ends<sup>3</sup> and Manucci writing later states that the figures on the principal gateway of the garden were a crucifix the virgin Mary and St. Ignatius Loyols. According to Catrou, the crucifixion was by Aurangzeb's orders covered over with a hanging of gold brocade which Manucci had to lift in order to see the forbidden art below.

But in Cartous story the representation of the virgin Mary and St. Ignatius were status so it is all confusing and ambiguous but it is definite that there were some sacred figures on the tomb and the principal gateway of the garden but, somehow, all these figures were entirely destroyed for there are now no trace of them left.

During Akbar's life time we have no record of European wall paintings at the palace at Agra, but his successors, Jahangir ordered to adorn the various portions of the palace with the pictures, representing christian or European subjects. Father Xavier gives an interesting account of these in

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1. Monserrate, Commentries in Mem. A.S.B. 111, 1914, fol. 21(a) Holy land and Bannerjee's translation, 1922, Page no. 29.

2. Reproduced in Edmund Smith's Mughal's Architecture of Fatehpur Sikri.

3. Tavernier (Crooke), 1925, 1, Page no. 91

a letter of September 24, 1608.<sup>1</sup> In Agra, on the wall of one of his halls he had lifesize picture painted of the Pope, the Emperor, the King Philip and the Duke of Savoy, all on their knees adoring the Holy Cross which was in their midst. A copy of a print which he had of this subject<sup>2</sup> but even the traces of these paintings are also not available.

Finch, an English traveller, who was at Lahore in 1611 gives a minute account of a picture to be seen on the walls of the Dewan-i-Khas, known as Bari Khwabgah. In this painting there is a scene of the Darbar of Jahangir with portrait of many of his nobles, but there was also in the same room a picture of our saviour over the door on the right of the king's picture as you entered, and a picture of the virgin Mary opposite it on the left hand.<sup>3</sup>

Through the writing of father Andrads in 1623, it is known that Jahangir his principal hall (Sua Sala Principal) with a copy of a picture of the virgin Mary and he also relates how Jahangir had a picture of Christ copied on the roof of Varandah in his palace at Lahore. One of the painters of Jahangir earlier was thrashed and scolded by him because he painted an owl over the head of Christ in place of a dove in a painting and he was also strictly told to paint it correctly.<sup>4</sup> The picture of adorning the building of Lahore with christian themes was not confined to the king's palace, but similar paintings were to be seen in the mansions of the great Minister, Asaf Khan. Father Sebastian Manriques had seen the paintings of the Ark of Noah and the life of John, the Baptist on the walls of a building in a garden of the minister Asaf Khan when he visited him in 1641.<sup>5</sup>

When Delhi was inaugurated as the Capital in 1648, the practice of

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1. Substance of this reproduced by the Chronicler Guerreiro in the last volume of his *Ralacam* which is translated in C.H.Paynes, op. cit., 1930, Page no. 63-65.

2. Wessel, *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia*, Page no. 289

3. Finch in *Foster's Early Travels in India*, 1921, Page no. 153

4. Andrade's letter of August 14th, 1623; *Maclagan op. cit.*, Page no. 240

5. *J.P.H.S.*, 1911, 1. Page no. 99

painting christian themes was not discontinued. Under the rule of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb, most of the wall paintings on subjects seems to have gradually died out in all the Mughal palaces and buildings but their existence in some instances can be confirmed by their representation in portfolio pictures which reproduced the architectural features of the Mughal palaces. In a copy of Nizam's Khamsa prepared for Akbar in 1593, painted by muslim depicts an incident on the walls of which there are three paintings of European type, one of them a man (probably St. Matthew) written under the supervision of an angel.<sup>1</sup> Another painting, represents the Empress Noorjahan entering Jahangir and one of the princes in the year 1617, and in its background on the two panels of which are shown Madonna and an Ecce Homo.<sup>2</sup>

In a further picture in the Badleian Library, Oxford, painted in C. 1628, Ouseley Add.173, No.13, in which Emperor Shahjahan receiving a Persian ambassador in Diwan-i-Am or Hall of Public Audiences and behind the emperor's throne has a frieze of Europeanised Cherubs.<sup>3</sup>

The recent discovery of the remnants of christian paintings in Akbar-ki-Sarai in South Delhi, adjacent to the royal tomb of Hamanyun, is considered by experts to "represent" the themes of the Holy Family and the Annunciation.<sup>4</sup>

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1. G. Warner, Descriptive Catalogue of the Illuminated MSS, in the library of C.W.Dyson Parm 1920 I, Page no. 315 and II plate CXXII.
  2. Stanley Clarks, Mughal Painting, the period of the Emperor Jahangir and Shahjahan 1922, Pl. 9.
  3. Reproduced in Binyon and Arnold's court, Painter's of the Grand Mughals, 1921, Pl. XXXVI.
  4. German News (Magazine), March 30th, 1978, Article on Christian Themes in Mughal Art by A.K.Thomas, Page no. 8-9

CHAPTER

VI

## WORK AND STYLE OF PAINTING OF VARIOUS ARTISTS

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**T**he Mughal school was not a new style in itself but it was the same Rajasthani school well refined and polished by the Persian effect. The Mughal's were the great lovers of art. First of all Humayun brought some

Persian artists with him who painted in their own style. Mughals were very much impressed by the Rajasthani school. Thus a new style of painting was developed by the mixture of Rajasthani and Persian style which was known as the Mughal school. As a matter of fact it was an Indian style but the general ornamentation and border decoration was of Persian style. Mughals had a traditional love for painting as their ancestors were Mangols who came from Central Asia which was the centre of the cultures of China and Europe. The Chinese effect is visible in their art. In the beginning there was no painting in Central Asia as it was banned in Islam, but some big cities of Persia, some art effected by Byzantine art was prevalent. Upto 13th century the Chinese art reached Persia and Tehran with the Mangol invaders and for some times Chinese art dominated these places. But in 1335 A.D this art saw a new dawn with Taimur's coming to power and the end of Mangole rule.

A new culture and painting developed under the patronage of the rulers of Taimur dynasty in Bukhara and Samarkand and it reached its peak during the 15th century. The ruler's of Taimur's family gave due regard and importance to the artists in their courts. Bihzad was the best among all the painters of that time. He is known as the 'Raphel of the East'. He was the greatest painter in the court of Sultan Hussain Mirza. After the death of this Sultan, Bihzad took the job in the court of Safavid Shah Ismail. In this court the painting developed a new style of decoration and independent composition.

Babur was from Taimur's family who established Mughal rule in India. He had a great liking for Bihzad as he has praised him in his autobiography 'Babarnama'. It proves that Babur had a great liking for painting. Humayun, the son of Babur, also had a great liking for painting. He lived with Shah Tahmasp of Tabrez for one year where he was introduced to two, painters of Bihzad school, namely Mir Sayyed Ali of Tabrez

and Khwaja Abdus Samad of Shiraz. Later on both these artists came to Kabul in the court of Humayun. Through these artists Humayun got the painting of 'Dastan-E-Amir Hamza' done, but a very little portion of the same could be completed in his life time. He died in 1555 A.D. after having achieved the throne of Delhi and left his son Akbar, then only a child, as his successor to the same.

The painting of Dastan-e-Amir Hamza continued in the reign of Akbar, as he also does encouraged this venture with great enthusiasm in it. According to the 'Ain-e-Akbari' of Abul Fazl, during the period, about 1400 event had been painted out of which few are available now. The Suleh Kul policy of Akbar and his compromising intellect based on secular idealism added further charm to the painting and due to the same policy the painting reached its climax in the reign of Jahangir. As Shahjahan was more interested in architecture, consequently painting saw a down fall in his reign. The Mughal school of painting came to a stop in the reign of Aurangzeb as he was fanatic muslim. No fine art could find a place in his court.

According to Ain-e-Akbari, Akbar never liked those fanatic muslims who took paintings as against the islamic religion. He was of the opinion that through painting only one can realise the existence of God, and the person who hates painting can never achieve the realisation of God. We see God in a painter because both create, one through paintings and the other through living beings creates the world.

Akbar was fond of portrait painting. He himself used to sit for his own portrait paintings and got several portraits of his courtiers painted.

Akbar got several Persian books painted. Dastan-e-Amir Hamza was completed in 12 volumes. Some books like Changeznama, Razmnama (translation of Mahabharat), Ramayan, Nala Daman (Nala-Damayanti), Kalila

Daman (Panchtantra) and Ayar Danish (Panchtantra) etc. were also translated and painted.

According to Shri Rai Krishna Das the Mughal style of Akbar's time can be divided into four parts, which are as follows :

1. Painting of non-Indian stories like Amir Hamza, Shahnama etc.
2. Paintings on Indian stories like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Panchtantra etc.
3. Historical paintings based on Tawarikh-e-Khandan-e-Taimuria and Akbarnama etc.
4. Portrait painting - under which the portraits of Emperors were painted.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF MUGHAL PAINTING IN AKBAR'S REIGN**

1. For the first time we find free and unrestrained paintings during Akbar's reign. The paintings on Indian and Persian stories, on literature and Akbar's life are original and rudimentary.
2. The second characteristic of the paintings of this period is the brightness of colours like enamel. According to Abu'l Fazl, different types of colours were prepared during that period. Mostly three types of colours are supposed to have been used at that time. They are bright colours, slaked colours and white colour.

Among the bright colours pyodi, vermillion, lajvardi, red, blood red, and green are important. Among the slaked colours are geru (ochre), hironji, chalk, hara dhaba (a green colour), lamp black and blue. White colour has been made out lime. Generally direct plane colours have been used without making them, thus creating a bright effect.

3. The third characteristic is that in Akbar's reign Mughal style becomes fully Indian inspite of its being effected by Persian and Rajasthani styles. The painting of Razmnama and Akbarnama are lively with Indian soul.

4. Mostly the faces are in profile which is the general style of Mughal school. The engraving and the use of borders is taken from Persian style but the main paintings do not let them dominate. The nature has also been beautifully depicted.

5. Mostly manuscripts were painted in Akbar's time.

6. Most of the paintings are of big illustrations and crowdy where in several faces, figures, birds and animals have been painted.

The Royal libraries of Akbar were situated at Agra, Delhi and Lahore. Several manuscripts from these libraries have gone to British Museum, London, Kesington South Museum, Chester Betty Collection, London, Royal Asiatic Society, London and to America also. In India also we find the volumes of these books at Delhi, Patna, Varanasi and Hyderabad etc. There were 24000 manuscripts in the Pothi Khana of Akbar, several were painted. Even a single book was worth Rs.1,00,000 (one lakh). One painting was completed by three painters of that time. One painted the border, the other drew line work and the third one filled the colours.

Akbar gave lands and high ranks to the artists as rewards. This was the reason why the painters put their maximum efforts, infused their soul in the art of painting and led the art to the climax.

While most of the major manuscripts of the 1580s has illustrations designed by one artist and executed by an assistant, that system became less satisfactory in the 1590s when imperial taste was more sophisticated,

demanding uniformly high quality. There does not seem to have been any rationale, other than a demand for general consistency within each individual project, for the assignment of joint, rather than unassisted workmanship, the major designers were the men listed first in Abu'l Fazl important discussion of painters, he says.

More than a hundred painters have become famous masters of art, while the number of those who approached perfection, as of those who are middling, is very large. This is specially true of the Hindus, their pictures surpass our conception of things. Few, indeed in the world are found equal to them. Among the forerunners on the high road of art are:

### **MIR SAYED ALI**

He learned the art from his father. From the time of his introduction at court, the ray of royal favours shone upon him. He has made himself famous in his art, and has met with much success.

Painting begun by the Tabrizi artist Mir Sayed Ali about the year 1550 in Kabul, at the latter emperor's order, it was probably not finished until twenty-five years later, at Agra, under Akbar's reign. In spite of the long period it took to complete the manuscript, and the great political changes that occurred while it was in progress the same style of work was maintained throughout the whole series of 1375 paintings which form its illustrative portion. As would be expected the style is fundamentally Persian, although there is much in it which shows an atmosphere and environment different from the production of either the Taimurid or Safavid schools. One of the pages is reproduced on Plate VII and illustrates the general character of the painting on the reverse of each folio is a written description of the incident depicted, the whole comprising the story or 'Romance of Hamza'. Hamza

was the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, a date 'Romance' is a fantastic narrative founded on the original adventures of this hero. As records of the life and customs of the early Mughals the pictures are unique. Unfortunately in many of the paintings the faces have been clumsily obliterated by a later zealot, but except for this they are in an excellent state of preservation. They display quite plainly the circumstances in which they were produced, the general scope of the work being devised by Mir Sayed Ali in his inimitable Safavid style, but in the actual painting he was assisted by others, either Persians or Indians. Apart from any other qualities, that it may possess the Amir Hamza is of importance in providing that definite connecting link between the Persian and Indian schools.<sup>1</sup>

The pictures of Amir Hamza, however, stand in a class by themselves, they are too obviously of Persian extraction to be considered as belonging to the Mughal school proper. It is to the other manuscripts in the list of illustrated books prepared under Akbar's order that we must turn for representative specimens of the work of this school. These resolve themselves into groups in the order in which it was presumed they were executed. In the earliest group may be placed the two British Museum manuscripts, the Darabnama and the Baburnama. The next to be produced were no doubt the Jaipur Razmnama and the Bankipur Taimurnama, which constituted the second group. Following these come the Bodleian Baharistan and Mr. Dyson Perrins's Khamsah, forming the third group, while last of all and placed in a class by itself, for reasons which will be explained hereafter, is the South Kensington Akbarnama. Many illustrated manuscripts produced in this time, in only three, the Jaipur Razmnama, the Bankipur Taimurnama and the South Kensington Akbarnama.

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1. Percy Brown, *Indian Painting under the Mughal, A.D. 1550 to 1750* Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1924

A general survey of all the paintings contained in these manuscripts reveals the fact that as a whole they illustrate a style of work different from that executed at any other period of the Mughal school. The dominant note is undoubtedly their Indian character, while they owed something of the productions of the Persian, notably for their small size and effect, in every other particular they reflect plainly the temperament of the indigenous artist.

Mir Sayed Ali, the other members of the Safavid school, does not appear to have attained to the high official position of his colleague Abdus Samad although he was probably the better artist. Abu'l Fazl certainly honours him with the first place in his list, and alludes to him in flowing terms, 'from the time of his introduction at court the ray of royal favour shone upon him'. He had made himself famous in his art, and has met with much success.<sup>1</sup> But beyond the historians reference to his ability we know nothing further of the Sayed's life or his later connection with the Mughal school.

### **DASWANTH**

He was the son of a palkee bearer. He devoted his whole life to the art, and used from love of his profession, to draw and paint figure even on walls.

The famous Hindu artist Daswanth who, having been handed over to the Khwaja, in a short time surpassed all painters, and became the first master of the age. Afterwards his services seem to have become so valuable that he was withdrawn from the school, and promoted about the year 1577 to the appointment of Master of the mint, which distinguished

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1. Ibid

position he filled with great credit for several years. The result of his association with this department may be observed in the high character of the Mughal coinage of the period, which is not only remarkable for the purity of its metal and fullness of weight, but for its very fine artistic appearance. It is not difficult to see how such perfection was attained. In its production the leading poet was commissioned to compose the couplet, the most skillful calligraphist inscribed it, the ablest sculptor modelled it and the best engraver fashioned the die and over all was placed the first artist of the state so that the coin should be the most finished artist production of its kind. Under such unique conditions it is not surprising that the work of Akbar's mint is considered superior to that of any other country of the period. The action of the Mughal emperor in this connection is significant of his attitude generally towards the subject of art and his application of it to such practical purposes. Abdus Samad completed his career by becoming Diwan or Revenue Commissioner of Multan, apparently an honour given to him in his old age.

Daswanth are not uncommon, there is no specimen of his painting which is the sole product of his own hand. In all his designs some portion of the work, either the drawing or the painting was entrusted to other exponents, whose names included with Daswanth's are written on the margin. The Razmnama is an illustrated adaptation of the Hindu epic the Mahabharat and as its story continued much that was foreign to the Mohammedans, the pictorial part is with few exceptions, the work of Hindu artist. Akbar showed an active interest in the ancient Sanskrit literature of India, which was manifested in his demand for the preparation of Persian translations of several Hindu classics, among these being as Abu'l Fazl states, the Razmnama and the Ramayan. Several copies of both works with illustrations appear to have been produced at this time, as Akbar in his zeal required some of his nobles to order them for their own use.

Daswanth, Basawan and Lal were the three experts who were concerned in the majority of the paintings but in each case they collaborated with the another artists so that the work as a whole occupied a large staff. In the two manuscripts comprising this group the method of employing more than one painter on the same composition is most pronounced, very few of the pictures in either being the work of one individual. From the nature of its contents it is unreal and fantastic and some of the scenes must have tried severely the ingenuity of the artists in representing them on paper with any degree of success.

At least four of the Akbar's artists were of the Kahar or Palki bearer caste, including the famous Daswanth, but Daswanth rose superior to his humble birth and by sheer genius came to be regarded as the ablest painter of his time. His artistic gift displayed itself early in life and in his efforts to find expression he used to draw and paint figures even on walls. By accident his natural ability was first revealed to the emperor himself for one day the eye of His Majesty fell on him, his talent was discovered<sup>1</sup> and he was handed over to Abdus Samad for training. In a short space of time he surpassed all other painters and became the first master of the age. Unhappily he was subject to fits of depression and finally his mind became unhinged. One day he stabbed himself with a dagger and died two days later. This tragic circumstance apparently took place in the year 1584, although he barely attained to his middle age, yet he left many masterpieces. It is to be regarded that no works by the hand of his artist alone have survived, but there are many in which he has collaborated with others. In Jaipur Razmnama at least twentyfour pictures bear his name and there is also one in the Bankipur Taimurnama (fol. 2) in which he combined with Jagjiwan, but none of these is a convincing example of his art. Daswanth's

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1. Ibid

caste fellows all distinguished themselves in their profession, as the Kesho, father and son are both mentioned in the Ain, while Paras and Ibrahim, also did good work, their pictures may be studied in the Baburnama and Darabnama in the British Museum and in the Bankipur Taimurnama. An artist who completed with Daswanth for the premier place in the school was his co-religionist Basawan.

### **ABU'L FAZL**

Its against this interest in historical documentation that we view Abu'l Fazl's entry on the stage, and more specifically his or as a historian. Born in 1551 as the second son of Shaikh Mubark, he is reported to have been gifted from birth with an extraordinary memory. The intellectual climate in his father's house certainly influenced him to acquire information and by the time he was fifteen he had mastered the subjects known as 'Manqul'<sup>1</sup> by twenty he confesses to have been bored with the limitations of Islam, and he longed for the esoteric knowledge of the Lamas of Tibet and Padrees of Portugal. Writing in retrospect of this period, he seems to recognize the need to develop a wider vision.

By the machinations of my extraordinary soul, the picture of ambition had been erased from the porch of my mind and longing for asceticism exhibited its power. I was on the point of treading the desert of frenzy with bare head and foot, breaking to pieces the enclosing walls of my environment and taking the path of liberation.

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1. Geepi Sen, Paintings from the Akbarnama by Roopa Company, Patiala House.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

In certain cases the chronicle is written in such a way as though he were supplying visual notes for the artists. The author focussed on the imagery in creating a 'Pictorial Environment' rather than on narrating the causes for such and such a happening. In the battle waged between two groups of Sanyasis at Thanesar, he reports every detail on the field of massacre, beginning with works that could be considered as addressed to the artist.

All the details of this drama are depicted by the master Basawan in one of the most unforgettable double compositions in the manuscript. Moving from the imperial encampment, the ritual bathing of pilgrims in the tank, to the alms giving, the banyan tree and ghat under dispute, the picture gradually builds up to the blowing of conch shells as the yogis prepare for battle.

In many such masterpieces e.g. in the celebrated painting on the punishment of Adham Khan, the close correspondence between the narrative text and the illustration can only be explained by the fact that the artist at the same time, the painting possesses an extraordinary power and immediately that give its advantage over the text, summing up four or five pages of prose and introducing the locale and 'Dramatis Personae' of the tragedy in one comprehensive statement. The masterful treatment of the subject by Muskin was certainly recognized since the painting served as the model for a drawing done at least fifteen year later and now preserved in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin.

The importance which Abu'l Fazl attached to painting and his admiration for the royal studio of painters is attested in the tribute he pays to them in chapter 34 of the Ain-i-Akbari. It will be observed later in this volume

that a remarkable coincidence occurs between the names of the master artists mentioned in the A'in and those assigned to the major share of work in the Akbarnama paintings. The masters recommended by Abu'l Fazl in the Ain-i-Akbari monopolise four fifths of the work in the royal manuscript since Abu'l Fazl is the author of both the Akbarnama and the Ain-i-Akbari. It seems possible to infer that he may have preferred the work of those masters and so employed their talents in the illustration of his chronicle.

Finally our further point would held to establish this hypothesis. From Abu'l Fazl's own statements it appears that his chronicle was presented daily to the emperor for his scrutiny and encouragement, when Abu'l Fazl concludes writing the history of thirty years of Akbar's life and first seventeen years of the reign he provides us with a date to this first volume of the Akbarnama.

### **AQA RIZA**

Jahangir referred very briefly to Aqa Riza, during his discussion of Abul Hasan in the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri.

His (Abul Hasan's) father, Aqa Riza of Herat (or Merv) at the time when I was a prince, joined my service. There is, however, no comparison between his work and that of his father.

The statement is more in praise of Abul Hasan than purposely derogatory to Aqa Riza, but it established the elder man as an important personality, whatever our view of the visual rewards of his work.<sup>1</sup> He brought

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1. M.C. Beach, *Grand Mughal Imperial Painting in India (1600-1660)*. Contributions by Stuart Ary Welch and Glenn D. Lowry Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, William Stowns, Massachusetts Asia House Gallery New York City between April 19, June 10, 1979.

to India direct knowledge of the most current Iranian artistic styles, he served as a painter for Prince Salim and is, therefore, important to an investigation of Salim's taste and patronage before the imperial workshops came under his control, of course he was enormously influential as the father and presumably early teacher of Abul Hasan and as various inscriptions inform us of Abid.

We know that Aqa Riza was in India by the time Abul Hasan's birth in 1588-89 and his earliest known work are probably two pages in the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan which are almost purely Iranian. They indicate that Aqa Riza was a thoroughly trained Safavid (Iranian) painter at the time his arrival at the Mughal court, and it is informative to see what happens to his style under the Mughal impact.

Jahangir's memoirs state that he came from Herat or Merv but, inscriptions on two paintings refer to Abul Hasan as 'Al-Mashhadi'(of Meshhed). As one of these inscriptions is by Abul Hasan himself the other by Abid, the Meshhed affiliation of the family seems unquestionable, and indeed the great Haft Aurang of Jami manuscript, made at Meshhed between 1556 and 1565, is a perfect stylistic source for Muraqqa-e-Gulshan pages by Aqa Riza referred to above.

We have no definite information on the painter's activities before his appearance in India, however, nor do we know why he left Iran.

It seems that he is not to be identified with either Maulana Muhammad Riza of Meshhed, the pupil of Mir Sayed Ahmad, both known from contemporary texts. That he is also distinct from the late sixteenth century Iranian court painter Aqa Riza has long been accepted, although the seeming commonness of the name has caused considerable confusion.

Aqa Riza's Iranian origins are also clear in the "Portrait of a Courtier", for the pose, such details as the bench, and the languorous mood are duplicated in innumerable Safavid illustrations. What defines the work as Mughal is the degree of modelling in the face and of course the inspiration. This letter refers to Aqa Riza as *mureed*<sup>1</sup> (disciple) a term found in inscriptions by both Aqa Riza and the young Abul Hasan and used by Mughal courtiers to indicate their subseivence to the wisdom of the emperor (or in this case, the prince). Above this the name sultan Salim appears in gold, so there can be no doubt to whom the painter is paying homage.

That Salim is titled sultan allows us to date the illustration before 1599-1600 at which point the rebellious prince took the title 'Shah'.

The major paintings by Aqa Riza are in an 'Anwar-i-Suhaili' manuscript in the British Library which has an inscription stating that it was finished in 1610. Two of Aqa Riza illustrations, however, are independently inscribed with the date 1604. The book which was thus begun for Jahangir before his ascession, has two types of illustration works of a very Iranian character by Aqa Riza and painters under his influence (e.g. Abul Hasan & Mirza Ghulam); and paintings of a more typically Mughal type by Bishan Das, Anant, Nanha etc. The first group is distinguished by brilliant mineral colours, frequent use of gold, carefully organized surface patterns, general spatial flatness and a detailed, miniaturistic technique the others tend to show softer earth colours and looser brushwork traits current in imperial Mughal works.

This same stylistic range is found in other major manuscripts made at the same time and serves to emphasize Aqa Riza a distance from mainstream, Mughal tradition. It may have been this inability to adapt, even

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1. Ibid.

more than the quality of individual's illustrations, that caused Jahangir's comments on the painter's work.

The margins of a page from one of Jahangir's albums show this phase of Aqa Riza's style, for while unsigned, the figures are identical to those in the Anwar-i-Suhaili. It is a superbly decorative border and shows episodes that can occur during a hunt. Individual faces are defined and modelled far more smoothly than in portrait of a courtier and the overall action has an immediacy that was not present in Aqa Riza's earliest work. This development came about through the painter's increasing familiarity with Mughal attitudes and through his study of European prints of the *Muraqqa-e-Gulshan*, e.g. signed by Aqa Riza uses European motifs in the margins.

Nonetheless, despite the surface 'Mughalization' of the painter's work, the figures lack individuality or interior life. A comparison with the marginal figures by Govardhan (no. 5 verso) makes clear the degree to which Aqa Riza was unable to go beyond traditional attitudes to human form. This is no judgement on the paintings per se, it is simply that the meaning of the figures does not accord with contemporary Mughal imperial ideas.

The Iranian orientation of Aqa Riza's style was an important ingredient in the evolution of Prince Salim's taste, it may be found on imperial manuscripts of the mid 1590s as well as on the earliest Jahangir album pages were due to ideas introduced by Aqa Riza his specific influence, however, is not found about 1605 and it seems that his style went quickly out of date once Jahangir has the full imperial workshops at his command that Aqa Riza's activity was not confined simply to painting is shown by his reported responsibility for the design of Khusran Bagh, the garden at Allahabad in which Salim's wife, Shah Begum, was buried in 1604.

## ABDUS SAMAD

Abdus Samad was one of a group of major Iranian painters that either accompanied or followed Humayun to India after his visit to Tabrez in 1544 and whose activity and prestige were important elements in evolving Mughal style. Reference in the Akbarnama provide us with a summary of his career of the year 1544 for example, when Humayun was in exile and seeking help from the Iranian Shah Tahmasp, Abu'l Fazl wrote:

"His majesty Humayun first proceeded to view Tabrez, and when he came near it the governors and grandees came out to welcome him. The exquisite and magical Khawaja Abdus Samad, Shirin Qalam (Sweet pen) also entered into service in this city and was much esteemed by that connoisseur of excellence. But from the hinderances of fate he could not accompany him".<sup>1</sup>

Humayun eventually setup an interim capital at Kabul where in 1550 'Khwaja Abdus Samad and Mir Sayed Ali who were celebrated for their skill, in painting came and were graciously received'. In 1556 Humayun returned to Delhi with young Akbar. The skillful artists such as Mir Sayed Ali and Khwaja Abdus Samad who were among the matchless one of this art were in his service and were instructing him.

The Hamzanama manuscript was begun about 1562 and Abdus Samad served as supervisor of that project in 1577, the year of its probable completion.

Abdus Samad was made director of the imperial mint at the capital,

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1. M.C.Beach, Imperial Image Painting for the Mughal Court Freer Gallery of Art, 1981.

Fatehpur Sikri, and in 1582, he was appointed an overseer. Abdus Samad was a man of considerable administrative talent. His painting during these years in India were few and highly conservative or so it would seem from the remaining works known to us.

Abdus Samad was a conservative. It would seem from the remaining works known to us. Jamshid writing on a rock, for example, shows none of the interest in liveliness of colour, originality of composition or European technique of modelling and perspective that were embedded in the general vocabulary of Mughal painting by the 1580s, 'His compositions are flat and decorative superbly composed and filled with flawlessly executed minute detail human figures are relatively expressionless, carefully framed and set off by landscape elements. He tends to use densely packed mountain forms of a dark tonality.

Abdus Samad served as a continuous model of technical skill and control. In fact it is the combination of sheer energy found in such painters as or in the Hamzanama manuscript and the control and technical refinement of Abdus Samad that produced the great manuscript illustration of the 1590s.

Additional works with the inscriptions of Abdus Samad during his year in India :

1. **Two young men in a Garden** - From the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan dated 1551, former Imperial Library, Tehran.
2. **Akbar Presenting a painting to Humayun** - From the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan, former Imperial Library, Tehran.
3. **A Horse and Groom** - From the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan, former Imperial Librabry, Tehran.
4. **The Arrest of Shab Abu'l Maali** - Bodleian Library, Oxford.
5. **Darabnama** - Circa 1580, British Library, London.

6. **Razmnama** - Circa 1582-86, City Palace Museum, Jaipur.

7. **Hunting Scene** - from an album of Jahangir, Los Angeles Country Museum of Art.

### **BISHAN DAS**

Bishan Das career's inevitably divides itself into two parts. In 1613 he was chosen to accompany the embassy of Khan Alam to the court of the Safavid Shah Abbas of Isfahan. Jahangir, anxious to persuade his Iranian rival of the wealth and power of the Mughals, arranged for the mission to be ostentatiously grand and its success, in this regard is related in a contemporary Iranian account.

The highly placed king Salim Shah, ruler of Hindustan, sent Mirza Barkhurdar entitled Khan Alam, who was a great noble of that court and is styled 'bhai' or brother by the Shah, as ambassador. The day when Khan Alam entered Qazvin, the writer was present in the city and himself beheld the great magnificence of the ambassador's train. He also made enquiries of the old men, who had beheld other embassies in the days gone by and all were agreed that from the beginning of this divine dynasty, no ambassador ever came from India or Rum with such splendid and lavish equipments.

He had with him 1000 royal servants, his own private servants and 200 falconers and hunters. He also had mighty elephants with golden ornaments and turrets of innumerable kinds and Indian animals, many singing birds and beautiful palkis.

Khan Alam remained until A.H.1029 = A.D.1620, and upon his return was lavished with honours. Jahangir mentions this event in a passage of interest to us :

"At that time when I sent Khan Alam to Persia, I had sent with him a painter of the name Bishan Das, who was unequalled in his age for taking likenesses to take the portraits of the Shah and the chiefmen of his state and bring them. He had drawn the likenesses of most of them and had especially taken that of my brother, the Shah exceedingly well, so that when I showed it to any of his servants, they said it was exceedingly well drawn".<sup>1</sup>

The emperor further notes of the events of the embassy's return that "Bishan Das, the painter was rewarded with the gift of an elephant". What is important at this point, however, is simply to realize that Bishan Das was absent from India during the middle artistically rich year of Jahangir's reign. A famous group of pictures, attributed traditionally and by inscription of Bishan Das, relates to this trip, for it includes paintings of the meeting of Khan Alam and Shah Abbas as well as portraits of the Shah and members of his family. One such illustration from the late Shahjahan's album, is included here. None of these works seems to be of sufficient quality or immediacy to guarantee Bishan Das actual authorship, neither figures nor the landscape, shows the vitality and aliveness that distinguishes. The Birth of Jahangir, one of the artists greatest works. Certainly, many copies of this Iranian subject matter would have been made at the emperor's behest to distribute in celebration of the success of the embassy.

An inscription in the borders of the 'Muraqqa-e-Gulshan' tells us that Bishan Das was nephew of the painter Nanha whose work is also included here. His earliest known commissions were included in two imperial manuscripts of the 1590s, and during the first decade of the seventeenth century he had attained sufficient eminence to be included among the portraits of painters found in the margins of the Gulshan Album. There is

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1. Ibid.

really only one painting presently known that can explain the basis for this reputation at such an early date, however, this is 'The House of Sheikh Phul' a signed work that in gentleness of colour simplicity of composition and intensity relates to other paintings of about 1605. Together with his relatively modest contribution to the 1604-10 'Anwar-i-Suhaili' this is the basis for understanding Bishan Das style, for there are few other major signed works. His style is sufficiently recognizable and consistent, however, to assure confidence in further attributions.

Such an attributed page from the Jahangirnama showing 'The Birth of Jahangir' is seen here. The painter used a palette of dark earth colours and draws with a free and seemingly unselfconscious line (unlike Mansur of Hashim) that gives his figures warmth and animation. The variety of personalities he depicts is extraordinary, confirming Jahangir's praise of his portraits. This is particularly notable among the harem women in the top-half, for stock formulas were more customary when showing groups of female figures. Court ladies were in rigid seclusion (purdha) and visible only to members of their immediate families and consequently there was little chance for true portraiture, compare the difference in treatment of the women here and by an anonymous artist for example Bishan Das is also far less concerned with the use of space generally or shading to give physical bulk to his forms, than Abul Hasan for example Govardhan. It is characterization and gesture, not modelling, that gives his figures life. The painter's work specially his illustrations are occasionally even specially inconsistent, as can be seen in another Jahangirnama page, a processional scene which exhibits Bishan Das's characteristic colour, brushwork and character types. Here, however, his tendency to cluster figures is more pronounced and the line work is harder. The extreme contrasts in the proportions of both these miniatures may be studied together.

*These miniatures are significant also for the study of the costumes of*

*the female musicians and their instruments; as also for the costumes of men of different strata the fountain with four spouts may be a interest in any study of 'water-works' in 16th century.*

## **KESU**

Kesu Das was one of the greatest of Akbar's artists and is placed just following Basawan in the list of painters that Abu'l Fazl gives in the Ain-i-Akbari. He is best known for his copies and adaptations of European prints and this interest in turn affected his work on the major Akbari manuscripts in the Darabnama for example is a scene in identified by Norah Titley as the water maiden's husband tearing their children's bodies apart in which a frontal male nude is modeled in such way that the figure has a weight and mass unparallel in other work of period.

At the time of Razmnama, Kesu was already an important artist. He worked unassisted on three illustrations and designed four others "three of which were completed by the young Muskin" "he also executed a design by Daswanth. Akbar's greatest painters while hardly rivaling in quality the thirty eight illustrations designed by Lal for the manuscript, his talent was clearly acknowledged in the Jaipur Ramayan which followed immediately. The Razmnama project, Kesu's assignment were increased and by the time of the first Akbarnama he was the third most important designer only two illustrations in the Tehran section of this Jamial-Tawarikh one innovative adaptor of European ideas are recent article on his career and on European influence in particular, a discussion Kesu is a brilliant technician.

Manuscript with inscriptions to Kesu.

1. **Darabnama**, Circa 1580 British Library, London, Beach Mughal Painter

Kesu Das.

2. **Razmnama**, Circa 1582-86, City Palace Museum, Jaipur, Beach Mughal Painter Kesu Das.

3. **Ramayana**, Circa 1584-89 City Palace Museum, Jaipur.

4. **Akbarnama**, Circa 1590 or earlier Victoria and Albert Museum, London, P- B.M 1976, no. 44

5. **Diwan of Shahi**, Circa 1595, Private collection, "Mughal Painter Kesu Das".

### **BASAWAN**

Basawan is listed in the Ain-i-Akbari as the greatest of Akbar's painters after Mir Saiyid Ali, Abdus Samad and Daswanth. Basawan, therefore, was the most important, prestigious and influential painter active during the later years of Akbar's reign. The list of his work given below is virtually a complete list of major Akbar's manuscript for illustrations that were collaboration, his assignment were as outliner-designer as befitting his status. Two other artists (Lal and Muskin) were usually given more pages probably as a result of Basawan's slow and painstaking technique. Basawan studied and learned profoundly from the European prints that circulated in the Mughal empire and consequently his figures are defined by weight and mass and his character studies are unrivaled. Basawan's achievement was crucial to the development of Jahangir portraiture in the early seventeenth century an astonishing attainment, since he was also instrumental in the formation of the quite different early Mughal style.

"There are also significant evidence for the availability of European works as models well before the arrival of the first Jesuit mission in 1580".<sup>1</sup>

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1. M.C.Beach, Imperial Image Painting for the Mughal Court Freer Gallery of Art, 1981.

The progress of Basawan's style shows a continually evolving understanding and adaptation of European principles, unlike such a painter as Kesu Das. In Kesu Das's work we sense a barrier of full comprehension, for while he dealt inventively with space and modelling, he was an indifferent portraitist, his figures seldom transcending general types, Basawan inevitably used very subdued colours whereas Kesu, Mahesh or Muskin preferred bright, flat tones that tended to reinforce surface rather than spatial values.

The Tutinama, Hamzanama, Darabnama pages are the best and most comparable example for understanding the progression of Basawan early development. By the 1580 he was fully a mature painter and his later works were essentially refinements of the Darabnama style.

Manuscript with inscription to Basawan:

1. **Tutinama**, Circa 1560, Cleveland Museum of Art, Re- Pramod Chandra Tutinama, pp 77-78.
2. **Darabnama**, Circa 1580, British Library, London, P- welch "Painting of Baswan".
3. **Razamnama**, Circa 1582-86, City Palace Museum, Jaipur.
4. **Taimurnama**, Circa 1584, Khuda Baksh Public Library, Bankipore.
5. **Ramayana**, Circa 1584-88, City Palace Museum, Jaipur.
6. **Baburnama**, Circa 1589 or earlier, Victoria Albert Museum, London.
7. **Akbarnama**, Circa 1596 or earlier, Victoria Albert Museum, London.
8. **Anwar-i-Suhaili**, dated 1596-97, Bharat Kala Bhawn, Varanasi.
9. **Hamzanama**, Circa 1562-77, Museum for Angewandte Kust, Vienna.

## MUSKIN

Muskin who had worked on the largest number of miniatures seems to

have attained perfection in animal drawings. Animal figures represented in vigorous and violent rhythm ascribed to Muskin (sketch only) are hardly seen in any other miniature of the sixteenth century Mughal school. Here he has excelled Basawan who has sketched elephants crossing bridge. A hunting scene sketched by Muskin represents animals in a variety of postures and actions, there Muskin has done the work of colouring. The latter achieved great perfection in bird, animal, flower painting and became unrivalled painter of his age during Jahangir's reign (1605-1628).

Animal figures drawn by Farrukh chela are represented in the painter's individual style where their shape appear suthering and attenuated. This tendency has survived from the very beginning of his work viz. on folio 116 of the Diwan-i-Hafiz<sup>1</sup> (Rampur), folio 30 of the Anwar-i-Suhaili (Varanasi).

### **MANSUR**

Mansur's known career began in the late 1580s when he was assigned the painting. His designer and collaborator (and immediate superior) was Kanha who with Muskin must have been considered the major animal painters of the time (these two senior artists contributed the largest portion of the natural history section of the first Baburnama). At about the same time, Mansur works on two pages of the Victoria and Albert Akbarnama.

The first was an elaborate hunting scene designed by Basawan the greatest figural painter of the period. Mansur was being trained by the major talent in the workshop. In about 1591 he was given sole responsibility for five animal studies in the British Library. Baburnama, an obvious

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1. M.C. Beach, Imperial Image Painting for the Mughal Court Freer Gallery of Art, 1981

recognition of his quickly established proficiency with animal subjects.

His work as a portraitist or a painter of figural composition was indifferent, as attested by his pages in the second Akbarnama. The basic characteristics of the design - the simple background, with a few typical plants placed in a way that rhythmically enlivens the surface or the use of plain, uncoloured paper to concentrate attention on the animals are probably elements contributed here by Kanha but they continue in Mansur's later natural history works as well the slow careful drawing and thinly applied paint, however, seem especially distinctive to Mansur. Akbar period's manuscript with inscription to Mansur.

Out of hundreds of painters who worked at the Mughal atelier, only a few are known for specialisation in one or the other aspects of paintings. Among them Abu Hasan, Bichitr, Bishan Das, Goverdhan, Manohar, Mansur and Payag are notable. Mansur seems to have specialised in drawing bird and animal figures, as well as flowers. This earned him fame in 16-17 century India. Jahangir wrote in 1618, "Also Ustad Mansur had become such a master in painting that he has the title of Nadirul-Asr, and in the art of drawing is unique in his generation. In the time of my father's (Akbar) reign and my own these two (Abu Hasan and Mansur) have had no third". However, the exact date when Mansur was awarded this title, that is 'Nadirul-Asr', is not clear from Jahangir's memoirs. Most probably, Mansur got this title around 1612 when he portrayed the Turkey cock which has been described in the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri (account of the year 1612). This painting bears an inscription, "Amal-i-Banda-i-Dargah Mansur Nadirul-Asr, Jahangirshahi" (work of the servant of the court of the emperor Jahangir, Mansur 'unique of the age').

No information of Mansur's life is traceable. Perhaps he belonged to the family of a 'designer' (ornamental artist) or 'engraver' as may be gleaned

from some inscriptions, that is, Mansur naqqash. We also know that Mansur did illumination work, a rare specimen of which is in *Khamsa*, contemporary to his earlier work in *Baburnama*.

Mansur seems to have joined to Mughal atelier after 1595. Numerous manuscripts illustrated earlier to this date *Razmnama* (State Museum, Jaipur), *Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria* (Oriental Public Library, Rampur), *Darabnama* (British Museum, Or. 4615) etc. do not contain miniatures ascribed to him. Perhaps the earliest specimen of his work are the illustrations executed by him in the copies of *Baburnama* (B.M Or. 3714) circa 1598-1600; National Museum, Delhi, No.50.326); *Jami-ut-Tawarikh* (Imperial Library, Tehran, dated 1598); and *Akbarnama* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Circa 1600-05; British Museum, Or. 12988); 'Antelopes' and 'Water buffalos', illustrations from a dispersed copy of *Baburnama* (Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, No. 54.29a and 655 A.E) may be taken as one of the earliest examples of his art. On these folios, Mansur has worked as a co-artist and has done the work of colouring only. The sketching has been done by Kanha - an established painter of Akbar's court. It may be pointed out that the painters, while in the learning stage, worked in general, first as co-artist, and only laid pigments in the drawings outlined by master-painters. But it was not a rule.

Mansur, whose active period as a painter may be fixed after 1597-98 has not been referred to in the *Ain-i-Akbari* by Abu'l Fazl because he rose to the status of a 'master' (ustad) painter only towards the end of Akbar's reign, 1600-1605, by which period the *Ain* had already been compiled. The fact that Mansur had attained perfection in a short time is evident from the inscription given on folio 110b in *Akbarnama* (B.M Or. 12988), where the painter's name is given with an epithet 'Ustad' (Ustad Mansur). The term ustad was not a title conferred by the Mughal sovereigns. It was a customary epithet employed by the disciples of an artist or his colleagues

which in itself testifies to Mansur's greatness. Other contemporary painters referred to with this epithet are Ustad Hussain and Ustad Muskin. Mansur emerges as a co-artist in the illustrated manuscripts of Jami-ut-Tawarikh and Akbarnama where he did the colouring only, while sketches were done by Nanha, Muskin and Basawan. Miniature on the folios of Baburnama (Or. 3714) are his independent works. This manuscript contains five folios representing bird and animal drawings ascribed to Mansur Naqqash. These pictures are the testimony of the distinguished quality of the painter, depiction of details, realistic representation, truthful depiction of colour etc. Bird and animal drawings executed by other sixteenth century Mughal painters, Dhanraj, Shivdas, Jagannath, Makra, Shyam, Surya Gujrat in the same manuscript look inferior from this point of view.<sup>1</sup>

Jahangir, who was greatly fascinated by rare birds and animals, insisted on maintaining pictorial records of them besides giving descriptive notes on their behaviour, life and other details in his memoirs. The task of portraying them seems to have been largely entrusted to Mansur. We come across atleast two such occasions in Jahangir's memoirs when Jahangir commissioned Mansur to paint the likenesses of some birds presented to the Emperor or noticed by him in nature. In 1619 Jahangir ordered Mansur to draw the likeness of falcon presented to him by the king to Persia. In the following year, during his visit to Kashmir he asked Mansur to portray the bird dipper (called saj). Many other birds and animals minutely described by Jahangir in his memoirs were drawn by Mansur probably at the Emperor's command namely, Turkey-cock, Pheasant zebra. This suggests that Mansur had attained a distinct and unrivalled position amongst court painters for animal drawings. Mention may be made here of other painters - Abu Hassan, Farrukh Beg, Inayat, Manohar, Muskin, Murad and Pidarath,

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1. Roop Lekha, All India Fine Art and Crafts Society, New Delhi, vol. 57, 1979-80.

who also painted animal life, but in a casual manner. Mansur's contribution to the treasure of the portrayal of the birds and animals in unique and unsurpassed. Besides the large number of such drawings, his work is distinct for truthful representation, depiction of minute details, realism and accuracy in form and naturalistic distribution of pigments.

Mansur's drawings drawn from life are the best specimens of realism in the history of art in India. This novel attempt at realism affected the earlier oriental approach of stylized, decorative and symbolic representation of birds and animals. Bird and animal drawings executed as portraits was the mainstay of the painters at Jahangir's atelier. Earlier, in sixteenth century Mughal art, birds and animals appear in connection with an event or fable or as illustrations in the manuscripts of Baburnama. The later in a limited sense, may however, be taken as portraits. Besides Mansur, Muhammad Alam, Abu Hasan, Farrukh Beg, Goverdhan, Manohar, Muhammad Nadir, Murad and other equally contributed to the new trend of realism in art. These realistic pictures exhibiting accuracy of form, colour, minute details and natural surroundings could have assisted in the development of the study of natural science in those times if proper thought and directions had been given to it.

*During Jahangir's period, in the treatment of the main figure as portrait, the landscape in its background too had a vital role to play. From this point of view, Mansur's drawings (pheasant, dipper, vulture, hornbill and crane) are the most powerful compositions to enliven the subject. Sometimes, Mansur preferred a plain, flat background where it suited the subject, as in the picture of the zebra. Here the background painted in a tinge of red but with a suggestion of its shade all around the main figure appears in contrast with the rhythmic patterns of stripes on the zebra's skin. It makes the subject more effective and distinct, but the overall effect produced is more of an illustration rather than of a painting.*

*Mansur's expertise is in the depiction of the nature of animals. The most rhythmic, powerful lines drawn with shaded, bold strokes in accordance with the external anatomy of the figure 'Salt-water fish' reveal the swift and smoothly curved movement of the aquatic animal. The movement is further emphasised here by leaving a large space for aerial perspective and by composing the figure from end to end horizontally with a slight diagonal bent in the picture planes. It is the most powerfully conceived realistic picture of an aquatic animal, a parallel example of which we do not come across the Mughal school.*

The art of book illustration as developed in the Safavid and Taimurid traditions was adopted by the Mughal artist. Mughal book-illustrations are more descriptive and detailed in content as compared with Jain paintings, here, a Mughal artist appears as a story teller close association of calligraphy and painting - a trend of Persian art - is another conspicuous feature of the Mughal book illustrations. Pre-Mughal Indian art, broadly speaking is confined to the illustrations of the religious books, whereas in Persian and Mughal art both secular and religious books are equally preferred. The latter includes the historical books viz. Baburnama, Akbarnama, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, Jami-ut-Tawarikh, Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria, Badshahnama; literary books viz Khamsa of Nizami, Khamsa of Amir Khusru, Diwan of Anwari, Diwan of Hafiz, sacred books from Sanskrit and Hindi literatures and legendary books viz Mahabharat, Ramayan, Harivansh, Kathasaritsagar, Rajkumar, Nal Daman, Ityar-i-Danish. Mughal emperors had a wider range of selection as compared to the rulers of Persia. Akbar, who attempted to synthesize the cultures of different peoples of the Indian subcontinent ordered for the translation of Hindu sacred books into Persian language and also got them further illuminated in pictures. But

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1. S.P.Verma, Mansur : The Master Painter of Jahangir's Epoch, Roop Lekha vol. 53, 1982. All India Fine Art and Crafts Society, New Delhi.

this practice seems to have been discarded by the later Mughal emperors. Variety in the selection of books for the purpose of illustration i.e. from different languages, subject and religions as observed during Akbar's reign, illustrate books of history seems to have become a conventional practice of the Mughal school. It was also done to make them more popular and attractive through the pictorial representation of important events.

Akbarnama compiled by Abu'l Fazl is a detailed history of Akbar's reign, and all includes an account of his predecessor. It is compiled in three volumes (daftars), the first ends with the account of the middle of the 17th reign year of Akbar. Abu'l Fazl was murdered in 1602, as a result of which Sheikh Faizi Sarhandi undertook to write the account of the years 1602-05.

The third volume known as Ain-i-Akbari was completed in 1596-97 and an addition was made to it in 1597-98. It is important to mention that Abu'l Fazl in Ain-i-Akbari has given a list of the manuscripts illustrated at Akbar's ateliers but it does not include Akbarnama. Since Akbarnama was not completed by the time of compilation of Ain-i-Akbari, the question of its reference in the above mentioned list did not arise.

The investigations show that Abu'l Fazl's Akbarnama was not illustrated in its full form. For this purpose, only the section dealing with the history of Akbar's reign (1556-1605) was taken up. That too appears incomplete in known illustrated manuscripts of the Akbarnama. Chester Beatty manuscript of Akbarnama begins with the accession date of Akbar (1556) and ends with the account of 35th reign year of Akbar i.e. 1580-81. Arnold and Wilkinson have reproduced 31 out of 61 illustrations of this copy.

The artists who composed objects in diagonal setting. Miniatures from the present manuscripts viz. "Building of fort at Agra", "Bullocks dragging cannon". Execution of Khan Zaman's followers attributed to Muskin (where

he had done the work of sketch only) are the best examples. Basawan is another painter who has preferred diagonal compositions "Elephants Crossing Bridge". Naturally in diagonal composition the scope for the effective expression of the violent force and the rhythm becomes immensely increased.

During Akbar's reign, joint work by artists i.e. sketch by one painter, colouring by another and sometimes portrait or figure by a third painter was in vogue. Besides the miniatures of Akbarnama, Razmnama<sup>1</sup>, Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria<sup>2</sup>, Jami-ut-Tawarikh<sup>3</sup>, are the best known manuscript, of which illustrations are generally the production of joint work. However, it was not an universal system and a great number of miniatures already in the manuscripts mentioned above and specially in Anwar-i-Suhail (Varanasi), Baburnama, Iyar-i-Danish, Diwan-i-Hafiz are the works of individual painters under Jahangir, this practice went out of vogue since specialization in a particular branch of painting had become an artist's mainstay. Under the joint work system, generally the characteristics of individual painters blurred and merged in at common characteristics. But the works of distinguished painters like Basawan, Farrukh Chela, Lal, Muskin still remain distinct.

Farrukh Beg's work has a strong Persian note more akin to 1580 Safavid are tradition. In all the miniatures ascribed to this painter, earliest of which is in Diwan-i-Hafiz (Rampur) his style remains distinct and isolated in the Mughal School.

Females have been represented in no less than 12 illustrations. These include royal ladies, maids, musicians and dancers and woman of the

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1. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.  
2. City Palace Museum, Jaipur.  
3. British Museum.

commoner's class. Their faces are drawn on set lines and hardly appears as their portraits. Nevertheless rarely in the representation of women of the commoner's class faces appear to have been treated as portraits.

Male faces are more characterized and varied in expression. Emperor's face i.e of Akbar appears identical. His portrait in profile is great favoured a trend of pre-Mughal Indian art which lately replaced the Persian tradition.

In other instance, faces of nobles and chieftains are distinguished. Attention was paid to represent contours of face drawing and portrait painting in the miniature executed by lesser skilled painters.

Male figures also below the waist is stereotype and neutral in attitude with the action reported in figure. For the display of rhythm female figures of dancers and musicians are remarkable.

Margins (Hashiyas) of Akbarnama illustrations are invariably plain similar to those observed in the manuscripts Razmnama (Jaipur), Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria (Patna), Jami-ut-Tawarikh (Imperial Library, Tehran), Anwar-i-Suhaili (Varanasi) etc. In them only the bands of lines termed as 'Khat' drawn in different pigments are employed to close either side of the illustrations. Nevertheless, margin paintings was in practice but was secondary in importance. Margins decorated with floral patterns, viz. in the Baburnama (British Museum) and in its most embellished form in the Khamsa of Nizami (British Museum) set with hunting scenes and wild life etc. painted by the artists of Akbar's court are an outstanding example of margin painting from sixteenth century Mughal art later under Jahangir importance was attached to Margin painting and it seems to have developed as a separate branch.

Akbarnama miniatures are equally important for the study of sixteenth century Indian society. From this point of view miniatures representing feast and festivities, construction of buildings and outdoor scenes are important. In them masons, labourers, water-carriers, bullock cart drivers, saints, dancers, musicians, elephant drivers, boatmen, palanquin bearers, cooks, stone cutters, shopkeepers are depicted. In the miniatures, ornaments tools, habits and social life are depicted which makes a source of cultural history of the people those days. Besides a variety of cultural items viz. arms and armour, costumes, musical instruments, utencils, furniture, water transport, road journey animals carrying loads etc. are faithfully represented by the artists of Akbarnama, which a historian of medieval India can ill afford to pass.<sup>1</sup>

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1. S.P.Verma, Illustration of Akbarnama, Roop Lekha, vol. 51, 1979-86, Journals All India Fine Art and Crafts Society, New Delhi.

# CHAPTER

# V

**EUROPEAN ELEMENTS IN MUGHAL MINIATURE  
DURING AKBAR'S REIGN**

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**P**ercy Brown has written a very interesting book on a very interesting phase of Indian painting. The Mughal school appeals easily to European connoisseurs of art and the fact that too sumptuously produced

on the same subject have come out of the Oxford press in the course out of the three years focussed much attention on the part of English critics, although the materials and opportunity for the study have been abundant both in the private and public collection in England.

As early as 1777 Sir Joshua Reynolds himself recorded his appreciation of the beauties of Mughal paintings but his tribute was an isolated one, for inspite of the admiration of the great English artist, the important collection of Mughal paintings in England continued to be ignored and until recently, the products of this school held no place in English connoisseurship.

In the case of Indian paintings at least the Mughal School, something like cartloads of pictures have rested in the archives of the English collections for nearly a century before it can be said to have drawn any attention of English connoisseurship in art.

Before Akbar sat on the Mughal throne there was a living school of Indian paintings, both in the realm of book illustration and portfolio pictures and there were more than one guilds or shrenis of the practicers of the craft of painting whom Akbar brought together and consolidated. It is not as though, Akbar by the magic wand of patronage brought to existence an art that did not exist but that his patronage and active interest changed the direction and motive of the native school which was surviving in various parts of the country. 'Wholly misses the significance of this tribute, and fails to draw the obvious and legitimate conclusion as to the state and temper of the surviving indigenous school, on which Akbar based his foundation'.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Rupam, All illustrated quarterly Journal of Oriental Art, 1921, vol. 5

The Mughal development was a brilliant pose and an episode in the history of Indian paintings. In the Hamza paintings we actually see Mughal paintings in the making. Their true significances, available from a study of their internal evidence, in many details, have been somewhat overshadowed by the belief that they were all the works of imported kalmuck artists. Abu'l Fazl's rather loose statement has been taken as an authoritative evidence and has thrown students off their scents. There is much in the Hamza paintings which speak of the brushes of Hindu painters. It is well known that the Mughal artists freely borrowed many means of expression from European painting, the most important debts being the use of shadows, night effect and aerial perspective. In later Mughal paintings these are very evident. The flat and sometimes decorative cloud effects of the earlier miniatures gave way to solid realistic treatment of landscape, with a sense of depth.

The Mughal style was further influenced by the European paintings which came in the Mughal court in about 1580 and absorbed some of the western techniques like shading and perspective. A large number of illustrated manuscripts, court scenes, hunting series and portrait were executed during the period of Akbar.

'Another aspect of European art of interest to the Mughal was its christian identity knowledge of christianity was entrenched in the Mughal myth and symbolism long before the arrival of European work of art example are Mughal style work.' 'Such excellent artists have assembled here that a fine match has been created to the world renowned unique art of Bihad and the magic making of the Europeans'.<sup>1</sup>

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I. O.P.Sharma, *Indian Miniature Painting*, exhibition compiled from the collection of the National Museum, New Delhi, 5-26th October 1974.

Percy Brown, *Indian painting under the Mughal*, A.D. 1550 to A.D. 1750.

The great importance for the formation of the Mughal style of the painting was the contact of Akbar's court painters with European art from European painting. Hindu painters learned about perspective and modelling. They introduced three dimensional landscape and new colour schemes unknown to Persian painters. Some of the miniatures illustrating episodes from Persian poem the Mughal introduced Portuguese figures and even Christian saints. The formation of the Mughal style was the creation of the Mughal style was the creation of all the artists working for Akbar. Few of the painters of the Akbar School show an individual style, among the best known ones is Basawan, a pupil of Abdus Samad whose style is often free from Persian conventions and colour schemes. His miniatures often show a palette of pastel colours, softness of delineation and shading which reflect the European influence. On the north-west frontier were the Mughals under Babur, whose progress and whose influences on the art of the country have been already dealt with in the preceding chapter. On the south-west sea board the Portuguese navigator Vasco-Da-Gama, has landed, and with his arrival India's direct intercourse with Europe began. The effects that such contact had on the arts of India, and specifically on the paintings of the Mughals is a necessary portion of the present study.

'The first monarch to display an interest in the handiwork of the European craftsman was the Mughal emperor Akbar'.<sup>1</sup> Comparatively early in his reign in 1572, he had spent a year in the conquest of Gujarat, in close proximity to some of the western seaports, where he made the acquaintance of the Portuguese officer in his service, Europeans were not, however, unknown in the cities of Mughals, for there was a fair sprinkling of wandering Poles and Muscovites. Greeks and Levantines, in the bazars of Agra and Delhi even at this time. In the south of India but outside the

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1. Ibid

sphere of Mughal influence, many more were beginning to arrive, as not only trade but the Christian religion brought by the Jesuit priests was making steady progress. With the extension of these missions appear the first known examples of western art in India. In 1570 one of the priests at Goa was brother of Aranha of Lisbon, a skilled artist and versatile craftsman, who designed and built many of the original Christian churches in the locality, decorating them with religious pictures painted by his own hands. Akbar seems to have obtained certain vague information, which speedily grew into a desire for more definite knowledge. In 1578, therefore, he specially deputed an agent of his court by the name of Haji Habibullah to proceed to Goa for the express purpose of making investigations.

When the company arrived back at the court after their expedition, the emperor was much gratified with the manner in which the Haji had carried out his mission. He had actually engaged a number of Europeans to come and carry on their trades at the court of the great Mughals. Unfortunately, the details that have survived of the results of Akbar's enterprise are meagre, although it is recorded that one article which received the special admiration of the church organ "like a great box the size of a man, played by a European sitting inside. One of the court artists Madho Khanazad, subsequently introduced the instrument into a picture he painted of a musician (Plato) charming a large concourse of wild beasts who lie helpless around him".

Mughal emperor's desire for the productions of the west and he soon began to cast about for other methods of securing what he coveted, whether Akbar in professing an interest in Christianity, was in earnest or merely using religion as a means to an end, will never be known, but that he favoured it at one time in order to get into closer touch with the European in India, and learn from them as much as possible about western culture, is quite clear. The experience of the three priests who made up the party at

the Mughal capital, where they remained for some three years, is as fascinating narrative, most of which lies outside the subject of painting. It was, however, through their presence that Akbar made his first acquaintance with European pictures.

In one of the apartments of the 'House of Mariam'<sup>1</sup> in Akbar's now deserted capital, there used to be the much faded remains of a large wall painting, the subject of which was said to be the announcement. The support of the Mughal emperor was to bring with them many examples of European pictorial art. They came prepared, therefore, with a considerable number of paintings of saints and religious subjects, which seem to have been very well received, these also eventually led to much discussion between the members of the mission, Akbar and his priests. Akbar accepted the gift with evident signs of pleasure and placed it in his imperial library, where it remained for fifteen years. It was then handed back to a later Jesuit mission which came to the court of Mughal. There is little doubt that during the period that it was in the emperor's keeping the artists studied the illustrations in this book just as carefully as they did those of the Persian schools and the result of their study is plainly observable in some of their miniatures. "Among its engravings were some pictorial maps displaying galleys and other medieval ships sailing through sea in which aquatic monsters disport themselves".

Akbar was intrigued by the exotic merchant adventurers from the west. He first encountered them at Caubay in 1572. A year later during the siege of Surat a large party of Christian came for an audience with him and was asked to guarantee the safety from pirates of Muslim pilgrims to Arabia. In 1576 Akbar met two Jesuit priests in Bengal with whom he discussed

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1. Ibid

religion one of his favourite topics.

*Daswanth was a painter of Akbar's court who learnt the art under the guidance of Khwaja Abdus Samad. He is described as a rival of Baswan and is known for his paintings in the Razmnama, Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria and in the Ardeshir collection (Bombay). The present miniature is a rare and may belong to the last phase of his career. "A noticeable feature of the miniature is a spaciousness in which the viewer can indentify animation, which is contrary to the trend of crowded animation, a trait of the sixteenth century Mughal manuscript paintings which is observed in the same painter's other works. The deep shaded outlines, the suggestive shading striving for a three dimensional effect, mounds of earth and simpler contours of the hills. "A trend towards Indianisation of the early Mughal paintings, rhythmic heavy folds in the costumes and a hazy distant landscape borrowed from European technique of painting" all these declare a maturer development of Daswanth's art. The realistic depiction of the saints gives us an important documentation of the sixteenth century ascetics life. As such this piece may be studied along with other illustration containing the depiction of the ascetics, seen in the Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria, Baburnama and Akbarnama.*

The Hamzanama illustration on cloth originally consisted of 1400 leaves bound in seventeen volumes. Each leaf measured about 27 x 20 inches. The Mughal style was further influenced by the European painting which came in the Mughal court in about 1580 and absorbed some of the western techniques like shading and perspective. A large number of illustrated manusripts, court scenes, hunting scenes and portraits were executed during the period of Akbar. According to the Mughal practice a number of painters were commissioned to illustrate a single manuscript, "following the example of the Mughal Emperor the courtiers and the provincial officers also patronized painting. They engaged artists trained the Mughal

technique of paintings, but the artists available to them were of inferior merit, those who could not seek employment in the imperial atelier which required only first rate artists. The work of such painter are styled as popular Mughal or provincial Mughal painting.

Akbar's illustrated historical manuscripts are many. The most vivid in Islamic art and his Akbarnama of which "17 folios" certainly the most compelling among them, although it is uneven in quality.<sup>1</sup> An artist such as Basawan however possessed such a creative imagination that he could envision episodes such as this making every gesture and expression convincing. There he had painted elephants seldom equalled in Indian art, a great achievement considering that elephants were a speciality of Indian artist.

"Although this manuscript of the Akbarnama probably completed in about 1590. It is likely that the projet began at least five years earlier probably as Abu'l Fazl completed writing his accounts of the episodes".<sup>2</sup> Akbar assigned the subjects to the artists best qualified to depict them. In this picture, Basawan's boatman with his expressive distortions of Cannon marks back stylistically to the Hazmanama.

The work of several German and Flemish engravers was known to them, Durer and H. S. Beham, Maerten van Heemskerck and Sadeler, Wiericx and Peter Vander Heyden are represented by originals or by close copies in the Mughal imperial albums. The earliest signed and dated copy is by Kesu, after an engraving by Heemskerck of St. Matthew, dated 1587. Two other copies of Christian subjects by this artist signing Kesava Das are known. J. Sadeler's plate of St. Jerome engraved in 1576, was copied by a lady, Nadira

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1. D.Berret, *Painting of India*, Assistant Cursor and Curator of Oriental Antiquities of the British Museum.

2. O.P.Sharma, *Indian Miniature Painting*, exhibition compiled from the collection of the National Museum, New Delhi, 5-26th October 1974.

Banu at an unknown date but in the correct colouring, while the figure of St. John from Durer's engraving of the crucifixion of 1511 was copied with great skill by the young artist Abu'l Hasan in his thirteenth year in 1600 by Durer's Virgin and child engraved in 1513 was copied by an anonymous hand in the Mughal court about the same date. This is now in the Royal Library at Windsor. All but the St. John which is only slightly tinted, are fully coloured in western taste thus proving that the artists had access to western paintings or to advice from Europeans.

Akbar's interest in western art is also undeniable but we do not have such detailed information about it. In 1581 he was fascinated by a European organ, we learn from Bada'oni and an organ is represented in one of the margin pictures of Jehangir's album leaves. In 1582 Akbar had European curtains hung in his palace and these were probably tapestries. At Fatehpur Sikri, in 1582 also copies of pictures of our Lord and the Virgin Mary in the Jesuits oratory were made by Mughal painters and in 1602 at Agra they copied a replica of the Madonna del Topolo, which Akbar caused to be carried into the palace for the purpose.

The third Jesuit mission conducted by father Jerome Xavier a nephew of St. Francis Xavier reached the court at Lahore in 1595, and he stayed on for twenty two years.

Mughal painting of these twenty years from 1595 to 1615, we can find many instances of a thorough assimilation of Western Pictorial Science.

In the reign of Akbar, Daswanth was one of the nine painters, all Hindus, who contributed oblong miniatures to this manuscript aligned with the spine of the book, a shape which obviously, derives from the palm leaf and early paper manuscripts of western India which developed from it. In other pages, six of them, he seems to show Deccani influence. One of

these, which fills a double page opening of the manuscript, show an army in formation the ranks arranged like a maze, as indeed is required by the text. The only comparable miniature is in the Bijapur manuscript of Najum-al-Uloom of 1570 which is reproduced and discussed below. It is possible that this convention was more widespread in pre Mughal India than we can now know.

Daswanth illustrates the salvation of type of all living things from the great universal flood in a boat constructed by the Prophet Manu who is represented in the act of securing it to the peak of the northern mountain, while it is supported below by a great fish which is an incarnation of Vishnu. The extension of the flood to the four corners of the picture is characteristic of the composition in this manuscript, linking them with the later Hamzanama pages. Next to Daswanth in this achievement in the Jaipur Razmnama comes Basawan another of the Hindus of unknown origin who became the leading court painter. Abu'l Fazl account of the Imperial library in about 1595 this style at that time is known from his picture of the Mulla rebuking the Darvesh for pride in his patched dress in the Baharistan of Jami in the Bodlein library dated 1595, he shows his interest in European figure and drapery drawing and his mastery of Chiaroscuro. That he was one of the first to show a knowledge of western technique of picture making is seen in several pages of the Darabnama manuscript in the British museum. A lavishly illustrated manuscript from the Imperial library. Although undated this must surely be almost contemporary with the Jaipur Razmnama, but it contains no work by Daswanth, while Basawan in the latter manuscript is less advance and more purely Indian even when he is the sole author of a manuscript. This illustration of the death of Balarama, showing the huge cobra proceeding from his mouth as he lies under a tree, does indeed reveal obviously westernized drapery folds, but the landscape is little changed from the early Mughal form of the 1570, Anwar-i-Suhaili manuscript. In this only miniature in the Darabnama illustrating princess and the shade, the background, here

architecture is much more ambitious in attempting a complete perspective view of a city with the help of a panel of text. Basawan has avoided the difficult transition from the foreground pavilion built on piles over water to the domes and towers of the background.

Some of the painters whose names are written below the miniatures of the Darabnama are of Lahore, which became the principal imperial seat after the abandonment of Fatehpur Sikri in 1585. The drawing is vigorous and strong sometimes even coarse, and the colours vivid and even crude far removed from the quiet tones of the Safavi school all except one leaf which bears the unexpected name of Abdus Samad. The more forward looking artists who participated are Muskin, Nanha and Bhurah, Sarwan and Kanha also depict Deccani costumes, thus revealing a wider horizon. These are a minority of the illustration and these artists are mostly represented by only one miniature a piece. Muskin and Basawan were to become two of the leading painters in the last years of Akbar's reign and Kanha and Sarwan also flourished until the end of that period.<sup>1</sup> The Darabnama is thus most significant for its promise for the future and its evidence of the vigour of the school at this time. The bulk of the miniatures are dominated by the harsh red and greens which seem to characterize the palette of Lahore.<sup>2</sup>

Here too as in miniature from European prototypes placed within an essentially Mughal landscape we have a distant view of building perched against the hills, seen through an arch gate of Mughal style. A hexagonal tank with a fountain in the centre and an ewer in the foreground sprigged with flowering plants are shown. Ornamentation of the head gear and the style of the hair of the ladies in the present example is identical with those in

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1-2. D.Barret, *Painting of India*. Assistant Curator and Curator of Oriental Antiquities of the British Museum.

S.P.Verma, *Some unnoticed Mughal miniature at the Royal Library Windsor* Roop Lekha vol. 57, 1985. All India Fine Arts and Crafts society, New Delhi.

Lal's work (miniature no. 3A), the European examples from which these figures are derived are probably the same. It is the only example of Mukund's work which has European figures. During Akbar's time (after 1582) began imitation of European pictures, European figures, landscape and motifs being to form the part of the composition. This trend continued in the Mughal school of painting till the late seventeenth century.

It was in 1580 that the first christian mission arrived at the court of Akbar. This was not the emperor's first direct contact with Europeans, for in 1573 and again in 1578 a Portuguese embassy led by Antonio Cabral had been sent to the emperor by the Viceroy of India, the first to Surat and the second to Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar's new capital, "on the first occasion the emperor was campaigning and the visit was short but in 1578 there would have been opportunity for the emperor and his court to learn something of western painting. In the same year a Portuguese merchant named Tavares came to the court from the Bengal Port of Satigam, and a secular priest, Guiliara Perera was also received by the emperor. It was in the same year i.e. 1578 that Akbar experienced a conversion through an ecstasy of some kind which he suffered in the course of a hunting expedition.

Any influence detected in the work of the Mughal painters during the 1580 must have come through the first mission. Internal evidence reveals that two kinds of European pictorial art must have been available to them, engraving and illuminated manuscripts were find that elements of European painting have effected the indigenous artistic expression of this country. In order to understand that this influence has been and how it has been brought about, one has to study the conditions out of which they have grown.

The direct intercourse between India and England began in the latter part of the 16th century when the Jesuit fathers visited the court of Akbar. Whatever may have been the pretence or motive of the Mughal emperor

regarding the acrimonious debates on different religious beliefs, we find that the visit of the missionaries directly led to the introduction of European paintings in the Mughal courts. We are told that when the fathers presented the emperor with a copy of the Bible, he received it with great reverence and "also commanded his artists to copy picture of Christ and the Virgin which the father has with them, and directed a gold reliquary to be made"<sup>1</sup> here we have the earliest evidence of Indian artists being led to copy European paintings. It is quite clear that his order was given not because the painting were worthy of imitation, but because it would demonstrate the respect which the emperor had or pretended or entertain for pictures. Records of such paintings prove that the copying of or adaption from European paintings did not influence the early Mughal artists to any visible extent at least they do not seem to have lost sight of their own traditions while engaged in copying or imitating works of European art. On the other hand their works relating to Biblical or other European subjects plainly show that they worked under instructions rather to satisfy their patron's fancy than to acquire anything new. This is very clearly demonstrated by the fact that very few of the paintings of the period of Akbar and Jehangir, when most of the copies of or adoption from European paintings were made, show the influence of European painting.

Percy Brown remarks that since Sir Jeshua Reynolds recorded his admiration for some of the Mughal miniature in the British museum albums, with occasional interludes of neglect, Indian miniatures have received their need of estimation from neglect, Indian miniatures have received their need of estimation from artists, connoisseurs, and students of oriental learning while at the present time the prospect of their attaining a fairly high pace in the sphere of pictorial are seems assured. While there seems to be some

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1. Rupam, All illustrated quaterly Journal of Oriental Art Chiefly Indian, vol. 5 for the Indian Society of Oriental Art.

grounds for the last observation, few will be able to endorse Mr. Brown's remark that with occasional neglect, Indian miniatures have received its tribute of praise from English critics.

Mr. Havell began to sing their praises, the Mughal miniatures neglected on the assumption that they represented a decadent branch of Persian painting had not received any serious attention on the part of the English critics. Mr. Brown is apparently inclined to slur over this piece of neglect, although as enthusiastic connoisseur and an educated critic of Mughal paintings he must have left that the neglect was indefensible. In some sense Mr. Brown's attitude is right, for rather than reproach his fellow critics, in the aggressive fashion of Mr. Havell, he has preferred to allow his own enthusiasm and the excellent illustrative material which he has collected in his book, to cast their contagious charm over his friends that home. It is not possible to gauge to what extent Mr. Brown's book is winning admiration for Mughal paintings in England. The review published in the Times was certainly a little lukewarm in its appreciation. The publication of the Indian Society, edited by M/s. Binyon and Arnold, with many sumptuously produced collo-type and coloured illustrations, was designed to evoke the serious attention of the English public. But unfortunately in all matters relating to Indian that recalcitrant public is very slow to respond and Mr. Brown must have himself felt that in the form that Mr. Binyon's book was presented sufficient justice was not done to the claims of Mughal paintings.

Dr. Coomaraswamy, the students of his school are, indeed, heavily indebted in many respects but to Mr. Brown must be given the credit for an attempt to write a monograph on the subject with ample materials. The fact that he comes with greater claims invites a more critical examination. It is a pioneer work and for the first time initiates a proper survey of the subject, and for that consideration alone he deserves generous indulgence for the imperfections of his works. We should like, therefore, to emphasize the

positive contributions of his works, rather than its imperfections. Although he has not been able to lay under contribution all the available collections, the materials that he has actually put forward are of considerable value. It is curious that Mr. Brown draws more on the collections outside England than on the materials near his hand. He is likely to give very pleasant surprises in the illustration that he cites from the collections of Rothschild, Demotte, Cartier, and Vever. For though the collection of the latter is known to a few Mr. Brown's selection from the other collections, for the first time, brings forth new materials but the most important of his discoveries is the selection from the valuable materials hitherto unknown, from the Rampur State library. The most valuable of these materials is offered by a page in the Mongolian style from a History of Mongols. Apart from being a picture of exceptional quality, it is an important document for the history and development of Persian painting, a short, but brilliant sketch of which Mr. Brown has introduced in chapter I of his historical survey. This was a very relevant introduction for it is impossible to realise the exact position and the contribution of Mughal paintings without an accurate appreciation of its relation to the Persian schools. For in spite of its many debts to the schools of Central Asia, particularly through the examples of the Taimurid school, which the Mughals sought to transplant in India, the Mughal school stands on its own indigenous qualities.

Mr. Brown wholly misses the significance of this tribute, and fails to draw the obvious and legitimate conclusions as to the state and temper of the surviving indigenous school on which Akbar based his foundation. Mr. Brown confuses the issue by his somewhat vague and innocuous remarks, "Undoubtedly the natural genius of these Indian painters, the result of centuries of experience only required Akbar's patronage and the Persian's guidance to bring it again to a high state of efficiency. Another face which Mr. Brown very unhappily misses is that the indigenous pictorial tradition in its Rajput phase existed side by side one flourishing round the throne at

Delhi and the other living in the inspiration of the folk psychology and the culture of the Hindu population far away from the pomp glory of the Mughal court.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Goetz has been able to show on a very careful examination of the fashion of the models, costumes and dresses that figure in many Rajput painting, that a large number of very characteristic pictures of the Rajput school were actually contemporaneous with the Mughal schools, though diametrically opposite and fundamentally different in their technique, subject matter and temper. It must have been on the basis of these contemporary Rajput pictures that Abu'l Fazl made his remark quoted as above. As Mr. Brown himself remarks (p 48), "When the Mughals began to turn their attention to the revival of painting in India, there still survived a strong living tradition among the people of the country on which the movement that they had in contemplation might be most surely founded".

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1. Rupam, All illustrated quaterly Journal of Oriental Art Chiefly Indian, vol. 5 for the Indian Society of Oriental Art.

CHAPTER

VI

## WORK AND STYLE OF PAINTING OF VARIOUS ARTISTS

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**T**he Mughal school was not a new style in itself but it was the same Rajasthani school well refined and polished by the Persian effect. The Mughal's were the great lovers of art. First of all Humayun brought some

Persian artists with him who painted in their own style. Mughals were very much impressed by the Rajasthani school. Thus a new style of painting was developed by the mixture of Rajasthani and Persian style which was known as the Mughal school. As a matter of fact it was an Indian style but the general ornamentation and border decoration was of Persian style. Mughals had a traditional love for painting as their ancestors were Mangols who came from Central Asia which was the centre of the cultures of China and Europe. The Chinese effect is visible in their art. In the beginning there was no painting in Central Asia as it was banned in Islam, but some big cities of Persia, some art effected by Byzantine art was prevalent. Upto 13th century the Chinese art reached Persia and Tehran with the Mangol invaders and for some times Chinese art dominated these places. But in 1335 A.D this art saw a new dawn with Taimur's coming to power and the end of Mangole rule.

A new culture and painting developed under the patronage of the rulers of Taimur dynasty in Bukhara and Samarkand and it reached its peak during the 15th century. The ruler's of Taimur's family gave due regard and importance to the artists in their courts. Bihzad was the best among all the painters of that time. He is known as the 'Raphel of the East'. He was the greatest painter in the court of Sultan Hussain Mirza. After the death of this Sultan, Bihzad took the job in the court of Safavid Shah Ismail. In this court the painting developed a new style of decoration and independent composition.

Babur was from Taimur's family who established Mughal rule in India. He had a great liking for Bihzad as he has praised him in his autobiography 'Babarnama'. It proves that Babur had a great liking for painting. Humayun, the son of Babur, also had a great liking for painting. He lived with Shah Tahmasp of Tabrez for one year where he was introduced to two, painters of Bihzad school, namely Mir Sayyed Ali of Tabrez

and Khwaja Abdus Samad of Shiraz. Later on both these artists came to Kabul in the court of Humayun. Through these artists Humayun got the painting of 'Dastan-E-Amir Hamza' done, but a very little portion of the same could be completed in his life time. He died in 1555 A.D. after having achieved the throne of Delhi and left his son Akbar, then only a child, as his successor to the same.

The painting of Dastan-e-Amir Hamza continued in the reign of Akbar, as he also does encouraged this venture with great enthusiasm in it. According to the 'Ain-e-Akbari' of Abul Fazl, during the period, about 1400 event had been painted out of which few are available now. The Suleh Kul policy of Akbar and his compromising intellect based on secular idealism added further charm to the painting and due to the same policy the painting reached its climax in the reign of Jahangir. As Shahjahan was more interested in architecture, consequently painting saw a down fall in his reign. The Mughal school of painting came to a stop in the reign of Aurangzeb as he was fanatic muslim. No fine art could find a place in his court.

According to Ain-e-Akbari, Akbar never liked those fanatic muslims who took paintings as against the islamic religion. He was of the opinion that through painting only one can realise the existence of God, and the person who hates painting can never achieve the realisation of God. We see God in a painter because both create, one through paintings and the other through living beings creates the world.

Akbar was fond of portrait painting. He himself used to sit for his own portrait paintings and got several portraits of his courtiers painted.

Akbar got several Persian books painted. Dastan-e-Amir Hamza was completed in 12 volumes. Some books like Changeznama, Razmnama (translation of Mahabharat), Ramayan, Nala Daman (Nala-Damayanti), Kalila

Daman (Panchtantra) and Ayar Danish (Panchtantra) etc. were also translated and painted.

According to Shri Rai Krishna Das the Mughal style of Akbar's time can be divided into four parts, which are as follows :

1. Painting of non-Indian stories like Amir Hamza, Shahnama etc.
2. Paintings on Indian stories like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Panchtantra etc.
3. Historical paintings based on Tawarikh-e-Khandan-e-Taimuria and Akbarnama etc.
4. Portrait painting - under which the portraits of Emperors were painted.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF MUGHAL PAINTING IN AKBAR'S REIGN**

1. For the first time we find free and unrestrained paintings during Akbar's reign. The paintings on Indian and Persian stories, on literature and Akbar's life are original and rudimentary.
2. The second characteristic of the paintings of this period is the brightness of colours like enamel. According to Abu'l Fazl, different types of colours were prepared during that period. Mostly three types of colours are supposed to have been used at that time. They are bright colours, slaked colours and white colour.

Among the bright colours pyodi, vermillion, lajvardi, red, blood red, and green are important. Among the slaked colours are geru (ochre), hironji, chalk, hara dhaba (a green colour), lamp black and blue. White colour has been made out lime. Generally direct plane colours have been used without making them, thus creating a bright effect.

3. The third characteristic is that in Akbar's reign Mughal style becomes fully Indian inspite of its being effected by Persian and Rajasthani styles. The painting of Razmnama and Akbarnama are lively with Indian soul.

4. Mostly the faces are in profile which is the general style of Mughal school. The engraving and the use of borders is taken from Persian style but the main paintings do not let them dominate. The nature has also been beautifully depicted.

5. Mostly manuscripts were painted in Akbar's time.

6. Most of the paintings are of big illustrations and crowdly where in several faces, figures, birds and animals have been painted.

The Royal libraries of Akbar were situated at Agra, Delhi and Lahore. Several manuscripts from these libraries have gone to British Museum, London, Kesington South Museum, Chester Betty Collection, London, Royal Asiatic Society, London and to America also. In India also we find the volumes of these books at Delhi, Patna, Varanasi and Hyderabad etc. There were 24000 manuscripts in the Pothi Khana of Akbar, several were painted. Even a single book was worth Rs.1,00,000 (one lakh). One painting was completed by three painters of that time. One painted the border, the other drew line work and the third one filled the colours.

Akbar gave lands and high ranks to the artists as rewards. This was the reason why the painters put their maximum efforts, infused their soul in the art of painting and led the art to the climax.

While most of the major manuscripts of the 1580s has illustrations designed by one artist and executed by an assistant, that system became less satisfactory in the 1590s when imperial taste was more sophisticated,

demanding uniformly high quality. There does not seem to have been any rationale, other than a demand for general consistency within each individual project, for the assignment of joint, rather than unassisted workmanship, the major designers were the men listed first in Abu'l Fazl important discussion of painters, he says.

More than a hundred painters have become famous masters of art, while the number of those who approached perfection, as of those who are middling, is very large. This is specially true of the Hindus, their pictures surpass our conception of things. Few, indeed in the world are found equal to them. Among the forerunners on the high road of art are:

### **MIR SAYED ALI**

He learned the art from his father. From the time of his introduction at court, the ray of royal favours shone upon him. He has made himself famous in his art, and has met with much success.

Painting begun by the Tabrizi artist Mir Sayed Ali about the year 1550 in Kabul, at the latter emperor's order, it was probably not finished until twenty-five years later, at Agra, under Akbar's reign. In spite of the long period it took to complete the manuscript, and the great political changes that occurred while it was in progress the same style of work was maintained throughout the whole series of 1375 paintings which form its illustrative portion. As would be expected the style is fundamentally Persian, although there is much in it which shows an atmosphere and environment different from the production of either the Taimurid or Safavid schools. One of the pages is reproduced on Plate VII and illustrates the general character of the painting on the reverse of each folio is a written description of the incident depicted, the whole comprising the story or 'Romance of Hamza'. Hamza

was the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, a date 'Romance' is a fantastic narrative founded on the original adventures of this hero. As records of the life and customs of the early Mughals the pictures are unique. Unfortunately in many of the paintings the faces have been clumsily obliterated by a later zealot, but except for this they are in an excellent state of preservation. They display quite plainly the circumstances in which they were produced, the general scope of the work being devised by Mir Sayed Ali in his inimitable Safavid style, but in the actual painting he was assisted by others, either Persians or Indians. Apart from any other qualities, that it may possess the Amir Hamza is of importance in providing that definite connecting link between the Persian and Indian schools.<sup>1</sup>

The pictures of Amir Hamza, however, stand in a class by themselves, they are too obviously of Persian extraction to be considered as belonging to the Mughal school proper. It is to the other manuscripts in the list of illustrated books prepared under Akbar's order that we must turn for representative specimens of the work of this school. These resolve themselves into groups in the order in which it was presumed they were executed. In the earliest group may be placed the two British Museum manuscripts, the Darabnama and the Baburnama. The next to be produced were no doubt the Jaipur Razmnama and the Bankipur Taimurnama, which constituted the second group. Following these come the Bodleian Baharistan and Mr. Dyson Perrins's Khamsah, forming the third group, while last of all and placed in a class by itself, for reasons which will be explained hereafter, is the South Kensington Akbarnama. Many illustrated manuscripts produced in this time, in only three, the Jaipur Razmnama, the Bankipur Taimurnama and the South Kensington Akbarnama.

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1. Percy Brown, *Indian Painting under the Mughal, A.D. 1550 to 1750* Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1924

A general survey of all the paintings contained in these manuscripts reveals the fact that as a whole they illustrate a style of work different from that executed at any other period of the Mughal school. The dominant note is undoubtedly their Indian character, while they owed something of the productions of the Persian, notably for their small size and effect, in every other particular they reflect plainly the temperament of the indigenous artist.

Mir Sayed Ali, the other members of the Safavid school, does not appear to have attained to the high official position of his colleague Abdus Samad although he was probably the better artist. Abu'l Fazl certainly honours him with the first place in his list, and alludes to him in flowing terms, 'from the time of his introduction at court the ray of royal favour shone upon him'. He had made himself famous in his art, and has met with much success.<sup>1</sup> But beyond the historians reference to his ability we know nothing further of the Sayed's life or his later connection with the Mughal school.

### **DASWANTH**

He was the son of a palkee bearer. He devoted his whole life to the art, and used from love of his profession, to draw and paint figure even on walls.

The famous Hindu artist Daswanth who, having been handed over to the Khwaja, in a short time surpassed all painters, and became the first master of the age. Afterwards his services seem to have become so valuable that he was withdrawn from the school, and promoted about the year 1577 to the appointment of Master of the mint, which distinguished

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1. Ibid

position he filled with great credit for several years. The result of his association with this department may be observed in the high character of the Mughal coinage of the period, which is not only remarkable for the purity of its metal and fullness of weight, but for its very fine artistic appearance. It is not difficult to see how such perfection was attained. In its production the leading poet was commissioned to compose the couplet, the most skillful calligraphist inscribed it, the ablest sculptor modelled it and the best engraver fashioned the die and over all was placed the first artist of the state so that the coin should be the most finished artist production of its kind. Under such unique conditions it is not surprising that the work of Akbar's mint is considered superior to that of any other country of the period. The action of the Mughal emperor in this connection is significant of his attitude generally towards the subject of art and his application of it to such practical purposes. Abdus Samad completed his career by becoming Diwan or Revenue Commissioner of Multan, apparently an honour given to him in his old age.

Daswanth are not uncommon, there is no specimen of his painting which is the sole product of his own hand. In all his designs some portion of the work, either the drawing or the painting was entrusted to other exponents, whose names included with Daswanth's are written on the margin. The Razmnama is an illustrated adaptation of the Hindu epic the Mahabharat and as its story continued much that was foreign to the Mohammedans, the pictorial part is with few exceptions, the work of Hindu artist. Akbar showed an active interest in the ancient Sanskrit literature of India, which was manifested in his demand for the preparation of Persian translations of several Hindu classics, among these being as Abu'l Fazl states, the Razmnama and the Ramayan. Several copies of both works with illustrations appear to have been produced at this time, as Akbar in his zeal required some of his nobles to order them for their own use.

Daswanth, Basawan and Lal were the three experts who were concerned in the majority of the paintings but in each case they collaborated with the another artists so that the work as a whole occupied a large staff. In the two manuscripts comprising this group the method of employing more than one painter on the same composition is most pronounced, very few of the pictures in either being the work of one individual. From the nature of its contents it is unreal and fantastic and some of the scenes must have tried severely the ingenuity of the artists in representing them on paper with any degree of success.

At least four of the Akbar's artists were of the Kahar or Palki bearer caste, including the famous Daswanth, but Daswanth rose superior to his humble birth and by sheer genius came to be regarded as the ablest painter of his time. His artistic gift displayed itself early in life and in his efforts to find expression he used to draw and paint figures even on walls. By accident his natural ability was first revealed to the emperor himself for one day the eye of His Majesty fell on him, his talent was discovered<sup>1</sup> and he was handed over to Abdus Samad for training. In a short space of time he surpassed all other painters and became the first master of the age. Unhappily he was subject to fits of depression and finally his mind became unhinged. One day he stabbed himself with a dagger and died two days later. This tragic circumstance apparently took place in the year 1584, although he barely attained to his middle age, yet he left many masterpieces. It is to be regarded that no works by the hand of his artist alone have survived, but there are many in which he has collaborated with others. In Jaipur Razmnama at least twentyfour pictures bear his name and there is also one in the Bankipur Taimurnama (fol. 2) in which he combined with Jagjiwan, but none of these is a convincing example of his art. Daswanth's

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1. Ibid

caste fellows all distinguished themselves in their profession, as the Kesho, father and son are both mentioned in the Ain, while Paras and Ibrahim, also did good work, their pictures may be studied in the Baburnama and Darabnama in the British Museum and in the Bankipur Taimurnama. An artist who completed with Daswanth for the premier place in the school was his co-religionist Basawan.

### **ABU'L FAZL**

Its against this interest in historical documentation that we view Abu'l Fazl's entry on the stage, and more specifically his or as a historian. Born in 1551 as the second son of Shaikh Mubark, he is reported to have been gifted from birth with an extraordinary memory. The intellectual climate in his father's house certainly influenced him to acquire information and by the time he was fifteen he had mastered the subjects known as 'Manqul'<sup>1</sup> by twenty he confesses to have been bored with the limitations of Islam, and he longed for the esoteric knowledge of the Lamas of Tibet and Padrees of Portugal. Writing in retrospect of this period, he seems to recognize the need to develop a wider vision.

By the machinations of my extraordinary soul, the picture of ambition had been erased from the porch of my mind and longing for asceticism exhibited its power. I was on the point of treading the desert of frenzy with bare head and foot, breaking to pieces the enclosing walls of my environment and taking the path of liberation.

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1. Geepi Sen, Paintings from the Akbarnama by Roopa Company, Patiala House.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

In certain cases the chronicle is written in such a way as though he were supplying visual notes for the artists. The author focussed on the imagery in creating a 'Pictorial Environment' rather than on narrating the causes for such and such a happening. In the battle waged between two groups of Sanyasis at Thanesar, he reports every detail on the field of massacre, beginning with works that could be considered as addressed to the artist.

All the details of this drama are depicted by the master Basawan in one of the most unforgettable double compositions in the manuscript. Moving from the imperial encampment, the ritual bathing of pilgrims in the tank, to the alms giving, the banyan tree and ghat under dispute, the picture gradually builds up to the blowing of conch shells as the yogis prepare for battle.

In many such masterpieces e.g. in the celebrated painting on the punishment of Adham Khan, the close correspondence between the narrative text and the illustration can only be explained by the fact that the artist at the same time, the painting possesses an extraordinary power and immediately that give its advantage over the text, summing up four or five pages of prose and introducing the locale and 'Dramatis Personae' of the tragedy in one comprehensive statement. The masterful treatment of the subject by Muskin was certainly recognized since the painting served as the model for a drawing done at least fifteen years later and now preserved in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin.

The importance which Abu'l Fazl attached to painting and his admiration for the royal studio of painters is attested in the tribute he pays to them in chapter 34 of the Ain-i-Akbari. It will be observed later in this volume

that a remarkable coincidence occurs between the names of the master artists mentioned in the A'in and those assigned to the major share of work in the Akbarnama paintings. The masters recommended by Abu'l Fazl in the Ain-i-Akbari monopolise four fifths of the work in the royal manuscript since Abu'l Fazl is the author of both the Akbarnama and the Ain-i-Akbari. It seems possible to infer that he may have preferred the work of those masters and so employed their talents in the illustration of his chronicle.

Finally our further point would held to establish this hypothesis. From Abu'l Fazl's own statements it appears that his chronicle was presented daily to the emperor for his scrutiny and encouragement, when Abu'l Fazl concludes writing the history of thirty years of Akbar's life and first seventeen years of the reign he provides us with a date to this first volume of the Akbarnama.

### **AQA RIZA**

Jahangir referred very briefly to Aqa Riza, during his discussion of Abul Hasan in the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri.

His (Abul Hasan's) father, Aqa Riza of Herat (or Merv) at the time when I was a prince, joined my service. There is, however, no comparison between his work and that of his father.

The statement is more in praise of Abul Hasan than purposely derogatory to Aqa Riza, but it established the elder man as an important personality, whatever our view of the visual rewards of his work.<sup>1</sup> He brought

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1. M.C. Beach, *Grand Mughal Imperial Painting in India (1600-1660)*. Contributions by Stuart Ary Welch and Glenn D. Lowry Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, William Stowns, Massachusetts Asia House Gallery New York City between April 19, June 10, 1979.

to India direct knowledge of the most current Iranian artistic styles, he served as a painter for Prince Salim and is, therefore, important to an investigation of Salim's taste and patronage before the imperial workshops came under his control, of course he was enormously influential as the father and presumably early teacher of Abul Hasan and as various inscriptions inform us of Abid.

We know that Aqa Riza was in India by the time Abul Hasan's birth in 1588-89 and his earliest known work are probably two pages in the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan which are almost purely Iranian. They indicate that Aqa Riza was a thoroughly trained Safavid (Iranian) painter at the time his arrival at the Mughal court, and it is informative to see what happens to his style under the Mughal impact.

Jahangir's memoirs state that he came from Herat or Merv but, inscriptions on two paintings refer to Abul Hasan as 'Al-Mashhadi'(of Meshhed). As one of these inscriptions is by Abul Hasan himself the other by Abid, the Meshhed affiliation of the family seems unquestionable, and indeed the great Haft Aurang of Jami manuscript, made at Meshhed between 1556 and 1565, is a perfect stylistic source for Muraqqa-e-Gulshan pages by Aqa Riza referred to above.

We have no definite information on the painter's activities before his appearance in India, however, nor do we know why he left Iran.

It seems that he is not to be identified with either Maulana Muhammad Riza of Meshhed, the pupil of Mir Sayed Ahmad, both known from contemporary texts. That he is also distinct from the late sixteenth century Iranian court painter Aqa Riza has long been accepted, although the seeming commonness of the name has caused considerable confusion.

Aqa Riza's Iranian origins are also clear in the "Portrait of a Courtier", for the pose, such details as the bench, and the languorous mood are duplicated in innumerable Safavid illustrations. What defines the work as Mughal is the degree of modelling in the face and of course the inspiration. This letter refers to Aqa Riza as *mureed*<sup>1</sup> (disciple) a term found in inscriptions by both Aqa Riza and the young Abul Hasan and used by Mughal courtiers to indicate their subseivence to the wisdom of the emperor (or in this case, the prince). Above this the name sultan Salim appears in gold, so there can be no doubt to whom the painter is paying homage.

That Salim is titled sultan allows us to date the illustration before 1599-1600 at which point the rebellious prince took the title 'Shah'.

The major paintings by Aqa Riza are in an 'Anwar-i-Suhaili' manuscript in the British Library which has an inscription stating that it was finished in 1610. Two of Aqa Riza illustrations, however, are independently inscribed with the date 1604. The book which was thus begun for Jahangir before his ascession, has two types of illustration works of a very Iranian character by Aqa Riza and painters under his influence (e.g. Abul Hasan & Mirza Ghulam); and paintings of a more typically Mughal type by Bishan Das, Anant, Nanha etc. The first group is distinguished by brilliant mineral colours, frequent use of gold, carefully organized surface patterns, general spatial flatness and a detailed, miniaturistic technique the others tend to show softer earth colours and looser brushwork traits current in imperial Mughal works.

This same stylistic range is found in other major manuscripts made at the same time and serves to emphasize Aqa Riza a distance from mainstream, Mughal tradition. It may have been this inability to adapt, even

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1. Ibid.

more than the quality of individual's illustrations, that caused Jahangir's comments on the painter's work.

The margins of a page from one of Jahangir's albums show this phase of Aqa Riza's style, for while unsigned, the figures are identical to those in the Anwar-i-Suhaili. It is a superbly decorative border and shows episodes that can occur during a hunt. Individual faces are defined and modelled far more smoothly than in portrait of a courtier and the overall action has an immediacy that was not present in Aqa Riza's earliest work. This development came about through the painter's increasing familiarity with Mughal attitudes and through his study of European prints of the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan, e.g. signed by Aqa Riza uses European motifs in the margins.

Nonetheless, despite the surface 'Mughalization' of the painter's work, the figures lack individuality or interior life. A comparison with the marginal figures by Govardhan (no. 5 verso) makes clear the degree to which Aqa Riza was unable to go beyond traditional attitudes to human form. This is no judgement on the paintings per se, it is simply that the meaning of the figures does not accord with contemporary Mughal imperial ideas.

The Iranian orientation of Aqa Riza's style was an important ingredient in the evolution of Prince Salim's taste, it may be found on imperial manuscripts of the mid 1590s as well as on the earliest Jahangir album pages were due to ideas introduced by Aqa Riza his specific influence, however, is not found about 1605 and it seems that his style went quickly out of date once Jahangir has the full imperial workshops at his command that Aqa Riza's activity was not confined simply to painting is shown by his reported responsibility for the design of Khusran Bagh, the garden at Allahabad in which Salim's wife, Shah Begum, was buried in 1604.

## **ABDUS SAMAD**

Abdus Samad was one of a group of major Iranian painters that either accompanied or followed Humayun to India after his visit to Tabrez in 1544 and whose activity and prestige were important elements in evolving Mughal style. Reference in the Akbarnama provide us with a summary of his career of the year 1544 for example, when Humayun was in exile and seeking help from the Iranian Shah Tahmasp, Abu'l Fazl wrote:

"His majesty Humayun first proceeded to view Tabrez, and when he came near it the governors and grandees came out to welcome him. The exquisite and magical Khawaja Abdus Samad, Shirin Qalam (Sweet pen) also entered into service in this city and was much esteemed by that connoisseur of excellence. But from the hinderances of fate he could not accompany him".<sup>1</sup>

Humayun eventually setup an interim capital at Kabul where in 1550 'Khwaja Abdus Samad and Mir Sayed Ali who were celebrated for their skill, in painting came and were graciously received'. In 1556 Humayun returned to Delhi with young Akbar. The skillful artists such as Mir Sayed Ali and Khwaja Abdus Samad who were among the matchless one of this art were in his service and were instructing him.

The Hamzanama manuscript was begun about 1562 and Abdus Samad served as supervisor of that project in 1577, the year of its probable completion.

Abdus Samad was made director of the imperial mint at the capital,

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1. M.C.Beach, Imperial Image Painting for the Mughal Court Freer Gallery of Art, 1981.

Fatehpur Sikri, and in 1582, he was appointed an overseer. Abdus Samad was a man of considerable administrative talent. His painting during these years in India were few and highly conservative or so it would seem from the remaining works known to us.

Abdus Samad was a conservative. It would seem from the remaining works known to us. Jamshid writing on a rock, for example, shows none of the interest in liveliness of colour, originality of composition or European technique of modelling and perspective that were embedded in the general vocabulary of Mughal painting by the 1580s, 'His compositions are flat and decorative superbly composed and filled with flawlessly executed minute detail human figures are relatively expressionless, carefully framed and set off by landscape elements. He tends to use densely packed mountain forms of a dark tonality.

Abdus Samad served as a continuous model of technical skill and control. In fact it is the combination of sheer energy found in such painters as or in the Hamzanama manuscript and the control and technical refinement of Abdus Samad that produced the great manuscript illustration of the 1590s.

Additional works with the inscriptions of Abdus Samad during his year in India :

1. **Two young men in a Garden** - From the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan dated 1551, former Imperial Library, Tehran.
2. **Akbar Presenting a painting to Humayun** - From the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan, former Imperial Library, Tehran.
3. **A Horse and Groom** - From the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan, former Imperial Librabry, Tehran.
4. **The Arrest of Shab Abu'l Maali** - Bodleian Library, Oxford.
5. **Darabnama** - Circa 1580, British Library, London.

6. **Razmnama** - Circa 1582-86, City Palace Museum, Jaipur.

7. **Hunting Scene** - from an album of Jahangir, Los Angeles Country Museum of Art.

### **BISHAN DAS**

Bishan Das career's inevitably divides itself into two parts. In 1613 he was chosen to accompany the embassy of Khan Alam to the court of the Safavid Shah Abbas of Isfahan. Jahangir, anxious to persuade his Iranian rival of the wealth and power of the Mughals, arranged for the mission to be ostentatiously grand and its success, in this regard is related in a contemporary Iranian account.

The highly placed king Salim Shah, ruler of Hindustan, sent Mirza Barkhurdar entitled Khan Alam, who was a great noble of that court and is styled 'bhai' or brother by the Shah, as ambassador. The day when Khan Alam entered Qazvin, the writer was present in the city and himself beheld the great magnificence of the ambassador's train. He also made enquiries of the old men, who had beheld other embassies in the days gone by and all were agreed that from the beginning of this divine dynasty, no ambassador ever came from India or Rum with such splendid and lavish equipments.

He had with him 1000 royal servants, his own private servants and 200 falconers and hunters. He also had mighty elephants with golden ornaments and turrets of innumerable kinds and Indian animals, many singing birds and beautiful palkis.

Khan Alam remained until A.H.1029 = A.D.1620, and upon his return was lavished with honours. Jahangir mentions this event in a passage of interest to us :

"At that time when I sent Khan Alam to Persia, I had sent with him a painter of the name Bishan Das, who was unequalled in his age for taking likenesses to take the portraits of the Shah and the chiefmen of his state and bring them. He had drawn the likenesses of most of them and had especially taken that of my brother, the Shah exceedingly well, so that when I showed it to any of his servants, they said it was exceedingly well drawn".<sup>1</sup>

The emperor further notes of the events of the embassy's return that "Bishan Das, the painter was rewarded with the gift of an elephant". What is important at this point, however, is simply to realize that Bishan Das was absent from India during the middle artistically rich year of Jahangir's reign. A famous group of pictures, attributed traditionally and by inscription of Bishan Das, relates to this trip, for it includes paintings of the meeting of Khan Alam and Shah Abbas as well as portraits of the Shah and members of his family. One such illustration from the late Shahjahan's album, is included here. None of these works seems to be of sufficient quality or immediacy to guarantee Bishan Das actual authorship, neither figures nor the landscape, shows the vitality and aliveness that distinguishes. The Birth of Jahangir, one of the artists greatest works. Certainly, many copies of this Iranian subject matter would have been made at the emperor's behest to distribute in celebration of the success of the embassy.

An inscription in the borders of the 'Muraqqa-e-Gulshan' tells us that Bishan Das was nephew of the painter Nanha whose work is also included here. His earliest known commissions were included in two imperial manuscripts of the 1590s, and during the first decade of the seventeenth century he had attained sufficient eminence to be included among the portraits of painters found in the margins of the Gulshan Album. There is

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1. Ibid.

really only one painting presently known that can explain the basis for this reputation at such an early date, however, this is 'The House of Sheikh Phul' a signed work that in gentleness of colour simplicity of composition and intensity relates to other paintings of about 1605. Together with his relatively modest contribution to the 1604-10 'Anwar-i-Suhaili' this is the basis for understanding Bishan Das style, for there are few other major signed works. His style is sufficiently recognizable and consistent, however, to assure confidence in further attributions.

Such an attributed page from the Jahangirnama showing 'The Birth of Jahangir' is seen here. The painter used a palette of dark earth colours and draws with a free and seemingly unselfconscious line (unlike Mansur of Hashim) that gives his figures warmth and animation. The variety of personalities he depicts is extraordinary, confirming Jahangir's praise of his portraits. This is particularly notable among the harem women in the top-half, for stock formulas were more customary when showing groups of female figures. Court ladies were in rigid seclusion (purdha) and visible only to members of their immediate families and consequently there was little chance for true portraiture, compare the difference in treatment of the women here and by an anonymous artist for example Bishan Das is also far less concerned with the use of space generally or shading to give physical bulk to his forms, than Abul Hasan for example Govardhan. It is characterization and gesture, not modelling, that gives his figures life. The painter's work specially his illustrations are occasionally even specially inconsistent, as can be seen in another Jahangirnama page, a processional scene which exhibits Bishan Das's characteristic colour, brushwork and character types. Here, however, his tendency to cluster figures is more pronounced and the line work is harder. The extreme contrasts in the proportions of both these miniatures may be studied together.

*These miniatures are significant also for the study of the costumes of*

*the female musicians and their instruments; as also for the costumes of men of different strata the fountain with four spouts may be a interest in any study of 'water-works' in 16th century.*

## **KESU**

Kesu Das was one of the greatest of Akbar's artists and is placed just following Basawan in the list of painters that Abu'l Fazl gives in the Ain-i-Akbari. He is best known for his copies and adaptations of European prints and this interest in turn affected his work on the major Akbari manuscripts in the Darabnama for example is a scene in identified by Norah Titley as the water maiden's husband tearing their children's bodies apart in which a frontal male nude is modeled in such way that the figure has a weight and mass unparallel in other work of period.

At the time of Razmnama, Kesu was already an important artist. He worked unassisted on three illustrations and designed four others "three of which were completed by the young Muskin" "he also executed a design by Daswanth. Akbar's greatest painters while hardly rivaling in quality the thirty eight illustrations designed by Lal for the manuscript, his talent was clearly acknowledged in the Jaipur Ramayan which followed immediately. The Razmnama project, Kesu's assignment were increased and by the time of the first Akbarnama he was the third most important designer only two illustrations in the Tehran section of this Jamial-Tawarikh one innovative adaptor of European ideas are recent article on his career and on European influence in particular, a discussion Kesu is a brilliant technician.

Manuscript with inscriptions to Kesu.

1. **Darabnama**, Circa 1580 British Library, London, Beach Mughal Painter

Kesu Das.

2. **Razmnama**, Circa 1582-86, City Palace Museum, Jaipur, Beach Mughal Painter Kesu Das.

3. **Ramayana**, Circa 1584-89 City Palace Museum, Jaipur.

4. **Akbarnama**, Circa 1590 or earlier Victoria and Albert Museum, London, P- B.M 1976, no. 44

5. **Diwan of Shahi**, Circa 1595, Private collection, "Mughal Painter Kesu Das".

### **BASAWAN**

Basawan is listed in the Ain-i-Akbari as the greatest of Akbar's painters after Mir Saiyid Ali, Abdus Samad and Daswanth. Basawan, therefore, was the most important, prestigious and influential painter active during the later years of Akbar's reign. The list of his work given below is virtually a complete list of major Akbar's manuscript for illustrations that were collaboration, his assignment were as outliner-designer as befitting his status. Two other artists (Lal and Muskin) were usually given more pages probably as a result of Basawan's slow and painstaking technique. Basawan studied and learned profoundly from the European prints that circulated in the Mughal empire and consequently his figures are defined by weight and mass and his character studies are unrivaled. Basawan's achievement was crucial to the development of Jahangir portraiture in the early seventeenth century an astonishing attainment, since he was also instrumental in the formation of the quite different early Mughal style.

"There are also significant evidence for the availability of European works as models well before the arrival of the first Jesuit mission in 1580".<sup>1</sup>

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1. M.C.Beach, Imperial Image Painting for the Mughal Court Freer Gallery of Art, 1981.

The progress of Basawan's style shows a continually evolving understanding and adaptation of European principles, unlike such a painter as Kesu Das. In Kesu Das's work we sense a barrier of full comprehension, for while he dealt inventively with space and modelling, he was an indifferent portraitist, his figures seldom transcending general types, Basawan inevitably used very subdued colours whereas Kesu, Mahesh or Muskin preferred bright, flat tones that tended to reinforce surface rather than spatial values.

The Tutinama, Hamzanama, Darabnama pages are the best and most comparable example for understanding the progression of Basawan early development. By the 1580 he was fully a mature painter and his later works were essentially refinements of the Darabnama style.

Manuscript with inscription to Basawan:

1. **Tutinama**, Circa 1560, Cleveland Museum of Art, Re- Pramod Chandra Tutinama, pp 77-78.
2. **Darabnama**, Circa 1580, British Library, London, P- welch "Painting of Baswan".
3. **Razamnama**, Circa 1582-86, City Palace Museum, Jaipur.
4. **Taimurnama**, Circa 1584, Khuda Baksh Public Library, Bankipore.
5. **Ramayana**, Circa 1584-88, City Palace Museum, Jaipur.
6. **Baburnama**, Circa 1589 or earlier, Victoria Albert Museum, London.
7. **Akbarnama**, Circa 1596 or earlier, Victoria Albert Museum, London.
8. **Anwar-i-Suhaili**, dated 1596-97, Bharat Kala Bhawn, Varanasi.
9. **Hamzanama**, Circa 1562-77, Museum for Angewandte Kust, Vienna.

## **MUSKIN**

Muskin who had worked on the largest number of miniatures seems to

have attained perfection in animal drawings. Animal figures represented in vigorous and violent rhythm ascribed to Muskin (sketch only) are hardly seen in any other miniature of the sixteenth century Mughal school. Here he has excelled Basawan who has sketched elephants crossing bridge. A hunting scene sketched by Muskin represents animals in a variety of postures and actions, there Muskin has done the work of colouring. The latter achieved great perfection in bird, animal, flower painting and became unrivalled painter of his age during Jahangir's reign (1605-1628).

Animal figures drawn by Farrukh chela are represented in the painter's individual style where their shape appear suthering and attenuated. This tendency has survived from the very beginning of his work viz. on folio 116 of the Diwan-i-Hafiz<sup>1</sup> (Rampur), folio 30 of the Anwar-i-Suhaili (Varanasi).

### **MANSUR**

Mansur's known career began in the late 1580s when he was assigned the painting. His designer and collaborator (and immediate superior) was Kanha who with Muskin must have been considered the major animal painters of the time (these two senior artists contributed the largest portion of the natural history section of the first Baburnama). At about the same time, Mansur works on two pages of the Victoria and Albert Akbarnama.

The first was an elaborate hunting scene designed by Basawan the greatest figural painter of the period. Mansur was being trained by the major talent in the workshop. In about 1591 he was given sole responsibility for five animal studies in the British Library. Baburnama, an obvious

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1. M.C. Beach, Imperial Image Painting for the Mughal Court Freer Gallery of Art, 1981

recognition of his quickly established proficiency with animal subjects.

His work as a portraitist or a painter of figural composition was indifferent, as attested by his pages in the second Akbarnama. The basic characteristics of the design - the simple background, with a few typical plants placed in a way that rhythmically enlivens the surface or the use of plain, uncoloured paper to concentrate attention on the animals are probably elements contributed here by Kanha but they continue in Mansur's later natural history works as well. The slow careful drawing and thinly applied paint, however, seem especially distinctive to Mansur. Akbar period's manuscript with inscription to Mansur.

Out of hundreds of painters who worked at the Mughal atelier, only a few are known for specialisation in one or the other aspects of paintings. Among them Abu Hasan, Bichitr, Bishan Das, Goverdhan, Manohar, Mansur and Payag are notable. Mansur seems to have specialised in drawing bird and animal figures, as well as flowers. This earned him fame in 16-17 century India. Jahangir wrote in 1618, "Also Ustad Mansur had become such a master in painting that he has the title of Nadirul-Asr, and in the art of drawing is unique in his generation. In the time of my father's (Akbar) reign and my own these two (Abu Hasan and Mansur) have had no third". However, the exact date when Mansur was awarded this title, that is 'Nadirul-Asr', is not clear from Jahangir's memoirs. Most probably, Mansur got this title around 1612 when he portrayed the Turkey cock which has been described in the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri (account of the year 1612). This painting bears an inscription, "Amal-i-Banda-i-Dargah Mansur Nadirul-Asr, Jahangirshahi" (work of the servant of the court of the emperor Jahangir, Mansur 'unique of the age').

No information of Mansur's life is traceable. Perhaps he belonged to the family of a 'designer' (ornamental artist) or 'engraver' as may be gleaned

from some inscriptions, that is, Mansur naqqash. We also know that Mansur did illumination work, a rare specimen of which is in *Khamsa*, contemporary to his earlier work in *Baburnama*.

Mansur seems to have joined to Mughal atelier after 1595. Numerous manuscripts illustrated earlier to this date *Razmnama* (State Museum, Jaipur), *Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria* (Oriental Public Library, Rampur), *Darabnama* (British Museum, Or. 4615) etc. do not contain miniatures ascribed to him. Perhaps the earliest specimen of his work are the illustrations executed by him in the copies of *Baburnama* (B.M Or. 3714) circa 1598-1600; National Museum, Delhi, No.50.326); *Jami-ut-Tawarikh* (Imperial Library, Tehran, dated 1598); and *Akbarnama* (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Circa 1600-05; British Museum, Or. 12988); 'Antelopes' and 'Water buffalos', illustrations from a dispersed copy of *Baburnama* (Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, No. 54.29a and 655 A.E) may be taken as one of the earliest examples of his art. On these folios, Mansur has worked as a co-artist and has done the work of colouring only. The sketching has been done by Kanha - an established painter of Akbar's court. It may be pointed out that the painters, while in the learning stage, worked in general, first as co-artist, and only laid pigments in the drawings outlined by master-painters. But it was not a rule.

Mansur, whose active period as a painter may be fixed after 1597-98 has not been referred to in the *Ain-i-Akbari* by Abu'l Fazl because he rose to the status of a 'master' (ustad) painter only towards the end of Akbar's reign, 1600-1605, by which period the *Ain* had already been compiled. The fact that Mansur had attained perfection in a short time is evident from the inscription given on folio 110b in *Akbarnama* (B.M Or. 12988), where the painter's name is given with an epithet 'Ustad' (Ustad Mansur). The term ustad was not a title conferred by the Mughal sovereigns. It was a customary epithet employed by the disciples of an artist or his colleagues

which in itself testifies to Mansur's greatness. Other contemporary painters referred to with this epithet are Ustad Hussain and Ustad Muskin. Mansur emerges as a co-artist in the illustrated manuscripts of Jami-ut-Tawarikh and Akbarnama where he did the colouring only, while sketches were done by Nanha, Muskin and Basawan. Miniature on the folios of Baburnama (Or. 3714) are his independent works. This manuscript contains five folios representing bird and animal drawings ascribed to Mansur Naqqash. These pictures are the testimony of the distinguished quality of the painter, depiction of details, realistic representation, truthful depiction of colour etc. Bird and animal drawings executed by other sixteenth century Mughal painters, Dhanraj, Shivdas, Jagannath, Makra, Shyam, Surya Gujrat in the same manuscript look inferior from this point of view.<sup>1</sup>

Jahangir, who was greatly fascinated by rare birds and animals, insisted on maintaining pictorial records of them besides giving descriptive notes on their behaviour, life and other details in his memoirs. The task of portraying them seems to have been largely entrusted to Mansur. We come across atleast two such occasions in Jahangir's memoirs when Jahangir commissioned Mansur to paint the likenesses of some birds presented to the Emperor or noticed by him in nature. In 1619 Jahangir ordered Mansur to draw the likeness of falcon presented to him by the king to Persia. In the following year, during his visit to Kashmir he asked Mansur to portray the bird dipper (called saj). Many other birds and animals minutely described by Jahangir in his memoirs were drawn by Mansur probably at the Emperor's command namely, Turkey-cock, Pheasant zebra. This suggests that Mansur had attained a distinct and unrivalled position amongst court painters for animal drawings. Mention may be made here of other painters - Abu Hassan, Farrukh Beg, Inayat, Manohar, Muskin, Murad and Pidarath,

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1. Roop Lekha, All India Fine Art and Crafts Society, New Delhi, vol. 57, 1979-80.

who also painted animal life, but in a casual manner. Mansur's contribution to the treasure of the portrayal of the birds and animals in unique and unsurpassed. Besides the large number of such drawings, his work is distinct for truthful representation, depiction of minute details, realism and accuracy in form and naturalistic distribution of pigments.

Mansur's drawings drawn from life are the best specimens of realism in the history of art in India. This novel attempt at realism affected the earlier oriental approach of stylized, decorative and symbolic representation of birds and animals. Bird and animal drawings executed as portraits was the mainstay of the painters at Jahangir's atelier. Earlier, in sixteenth century Mughal art, birds and animals appear in connection with an event or fable or as illustrations in the manuscripts of Baburnama. The later in a limited sense, may however, be taken as portraits. Besides Mansur, Muhammad Alam, Abu Hasan, Farrukh Beg, Goverdhan, Manohar, Muhammad Nadir, Murad and other equally contributed to the new trend of realism in art. These realistic pictures exhibiting accuracy of form, colour, minute details and natural surroundings could have assisted in the development of the study of natural science in those times if proper thought and directions had been given to it.

*During Jahangir's period, in the treatment of the main figure as portrait, the landscape in its background too had a vital role to play. From this point of view, Mansur's drawings (pheasant, dipper, vulture, hornbill and crane) are the most powerful compositions to enliven the subject. Sometimes, Mansur preferred a plain, flat background where it suited the subject, as in the picture of the zebra. Here the background painted in a tinge of red but with a suggestion of its shade all around the main figure appears in contrast with the rhythmic patterns of stripes on the zebra's skin. It makes the subject more effective and distinct, but the overall effect produced is more of an illustration rather than of a painting.*

*Mansur's expertise is in the depiction of the nature of animals. The most rhythmic, powerful lines drawn with shaded, bold strokes in accordance with the external anatomy of the figure 'Salt-water fish' reveal the swift and smoothly curved movement of the aquatic animal. The movement is further emphasised here by leaving a large space for aerial perspective and by composing the figure from end to end horizontally with a slight diagonal bent in the picture planes. It is the most powerfully conceived realistic picture of an aquatic animal, a parallel example of which we do not come across the Mughal school.*

The art of book illustration as developed in the Safavid and Taimurid traditions was adopted by the Mughal artist. Mughal book-illustrations are more descriptive and detailed in content as compared with Jain paintings, here, a Mughal artist appears as a story teller close association of calligraphy and painting - a trend of Persian art - is another conspicuous feature of the Mughal book illustrations. Pre-Mughal Indian art, broadly speaking is confined to the illustrations of the religious books, whereas in Persian and Mughal art both secular and religious books are equally preferred. The latter includes the historical books viz. Baburnama, Akbarnama, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, Jami-ut-Tawarikh, Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria, Badshahnama; literary books viz Khamsa of Nizami, Khamsa of Amir Khusru, Diwan of Anwari, Diwan of Hafiz, sacred books from Sanskrit and Hindi literatures and legendary books viz Mahabharat, Ramayan, Harivansh, Kathasaritsagar, Rajkumar, Nal Daman, Ityar-i-Danish. Mughal emperors had a wider range of selection as compared to the rulers of Persia. Akbar, who attempted to synthesize the cultures of different peoples of the Indian subcontinent ordered for the translation of Hindu sacred books into Persian language and also got them further illuminated in pictures. But

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1. S.P.Verma, Mansur : The Master Painter of Jahangir's Epoch, Roop Lekha vol. 53, 1982. All India Fine Art and Crafts Society, New Delhi.

this practice seems to have been discarded by the later Mughal emperors. Variety in the selection of books for the purpose of illustration i.e. from different languages, subject and religions as observed during Akbar's reign, illustrate books of history seems to have become a conventional practice of the Mughal school. It was also done to make them more popular and attractive through the pictorial representation of important events.

Akbarnama compiled by Abu'l Fazl is a detailed history of Akbar's reign, and all includes an account of his predecessor. It is compiled in three volumes (daftars), the first ends with the account of the middle of the 17th reign year of Akbar. Abu'l Fazl was murdered in 1602, as a result of which Sheikh Faizi Sarhandi undertook to write the account of the years 1602-05.

The third volume known as Ain-i-Akbari was completed in 1596-97 and an addition was made to it in 1597-98. It is important to mention that Abu'l Fazl in Ain-i-Akbari has given a list of the manuscripts illustrated at Akbar's ateliers but it does not include Akbarnama. Since Akbarnama was not completed by the time of compilation of Ain-i-Akbari, the question of its reference in the above mentioned list did not arise.

The investigations show that Abu'l Fazl's Akbarnama was not illustrated in its full form. For this purpose, only the section dealing with the history of Akbar's reign (1556-1605) was taken up. That too appears incomplete in known illustrated manuscripts of the Akbarnama. Chester Beatty manuscript of Akbarnama begins with the accession date of Akbar (1556) and ends with the account of 35th reign year of Akbar i.e. 1580-81. Arnold and Wilkinson have reproduced 31 out of 61 illustrations of this copy.

The artists who composed objects in diagonal setting. Miniatures from the present manuscripts viz. "Building of fort at Agra", "Bullocks dragging cannon". Execution of Khan Zaman's followers attributed to Muskin (where

he had done the work of sketch only) are the best examples. Basawan is another painter who has preferred diagonal compositions "Elephants Crossing Bridge". Naturally in diagonal composition the scope for the effective expression of the violent force and the rhythm becomes immensely increased.

During Akbar's reign, joint work by artists i.e. sketch by one painter, colouring by another and sometimes portrait or figure by a third painter was in vogue. Besides the miniatures of Akbarnama, Razmnama<sup>1</sup>, Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria<sup>2</sup>, Jami-ut-Tawarikh<sup>3</sup>, are the best known manuscript, of which illustrations are generally the production of joint work. However, it was not an universal system and a great number of miniatures already in the manuscripts mentioned above and specially in Anwar-i-Suhail (Varanasi), Baburnama, Iyar-i-Danish, Diwan-i-Hafiz are the works of individual painters under Jahangir, this practice went out of vogue since specialization in a particular branch of painting had become an artist's mainstay. Under the joint work system, generally the characteristics of individual painters blurred and merged in at common characteristics. But the works of distinguished painters like Basawan, Farrukh Chela, Lal, Muskin still remain distinct.

Farrukh Beg's work has a strong Persian note more akin to 1580 Safavid are tradition. In all the miniatures ascribed to this painter, earliest of which is in Diwan-i-Hafiz (Rampur) his style remains distinct and isolated in the Mughal School.

Females have been represented in no less than 12 illustrations. These include royal ladies, maids, musicians and dancers and woman of the

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1. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.  
2. City Palace Museum, Jaipur.  
3. British Museum.

commoner's class. Their faces are drawn on set lines and hardly appears as their portraits. Nevertheless rarely in the representation of women of the commoner's class faces appear to have been treated as portraits.

Male faces are more characterized and varied in expression. Emperor's face i.e of Akbar appears identical. His portrait in profile is great favoured a trend of pre-Mughal Indian art which lately replaced the Persian tradition.

In other instance, faces of nobles and chieftains are distinguished. Attention was paid to represent contours of face drawing and portrait painting in the miniature executed by lesser skilled painters.

Male figures also below the waist is stereotype and neutral in attitude with the action reported in figure. For the display of rhythm female figures of dancers and musicians are remarkable.

Margins (Hashiyas) of Akbarnama illustrations are invariably plain similar to those observed in the manuscripts Razmnama (Jaipur), Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria (Patna), Jami-ut-Tawarikh (Imperial Library, Tehran), Anwar-i-Suhaili (Varanasi) etc. In them only the bands of lines termed as 'Khat' drawn in different pigments are employed to close either side of the illustrations. Nevertheless, margin paintings was in practice but was secondary in importance. Margins decorated with floral patterns, viz. in the Baburnama (British Museum) and in its most embellished form in the Khamsa of Nizami (British Museum) set with hunting scenes and wild life etc. painted by the artists of Akbar's court are an outstanding example of margin painting from sixteenth century Mughal art later under Jahangir importance was attached to Margin painting and it seems to have developed as a separate branch.

Akbarnama miniatures are equally important for the study of sixteenth century Indian society. From this point of view miniatures representing feast and festivities, construction of buildings and outdoor scenes are important. In them masons, labourers, water-carriers, bullock cart drivers, saints, dancers, musicians, elephant drivers, boatmen, palanquin bearers, cooks, stone cutters, shopkeepers are depicted. In the miniatures, ornaments tools, habits and social life are depicted which makes a source of cultural history of the people those days. Besides a variety of cultural items viz. arms and armour, costumes, musical instruments, utensils, furniture, water transport, road journey animals carrying loads etc. are faithfully represented by the artists of Akbarnama, which a historian of medieval India can ill afford to pass.<sup>1</sup>

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1. S.P.Verma, Illustration of Akbarnama, Roop Lekha, vol. 51, 1979-86, Journals All India Fine Art and Crafts Society, New Delhi.

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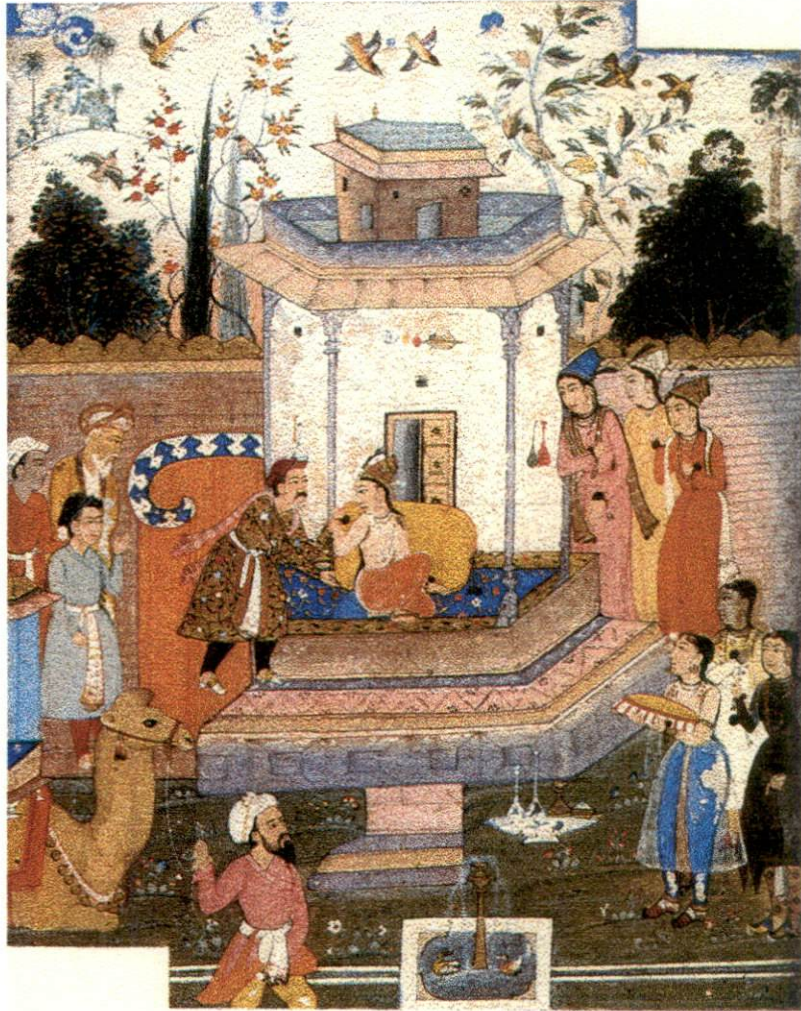
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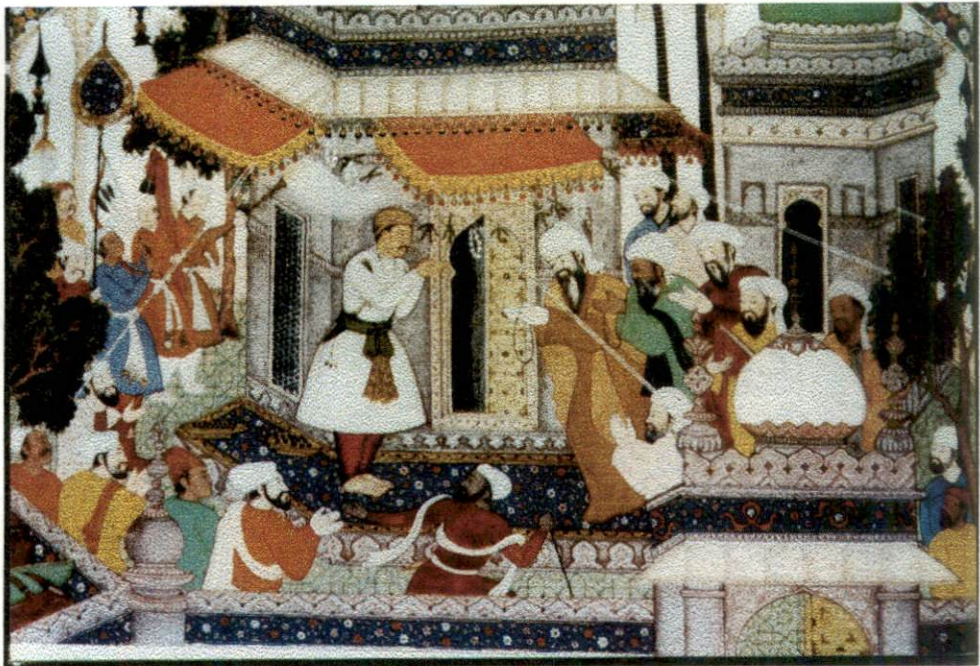
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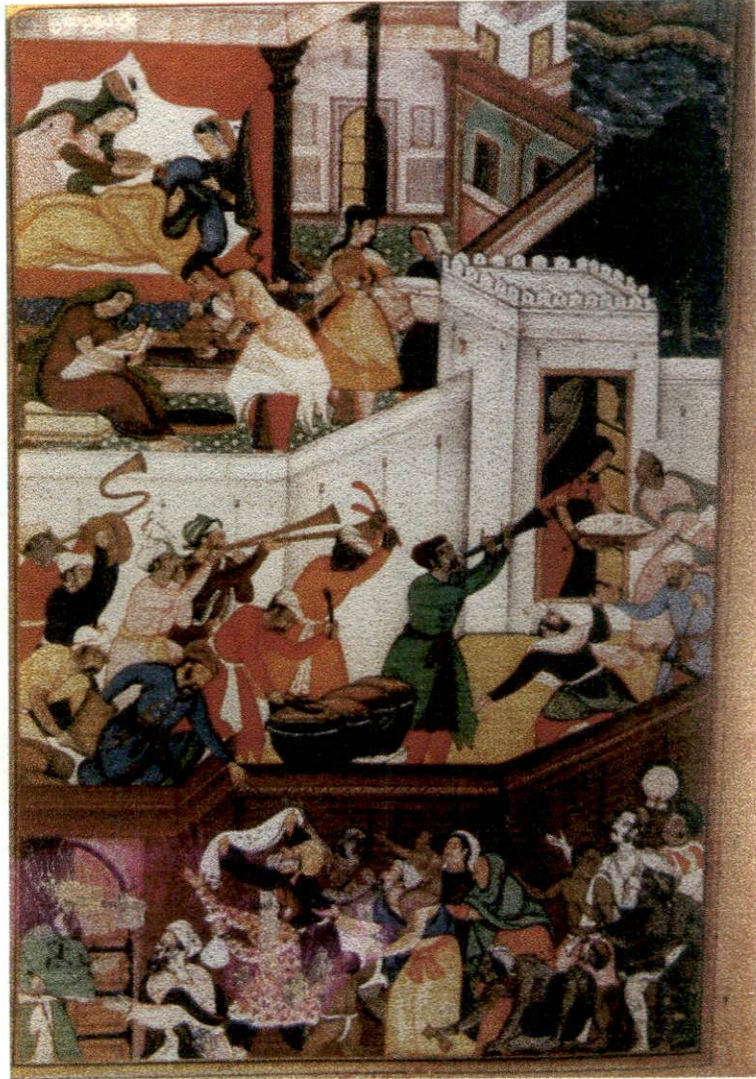
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4. Celebrations of Salim's birth, Akbarnama. A.C.C no. - 79 / 117.
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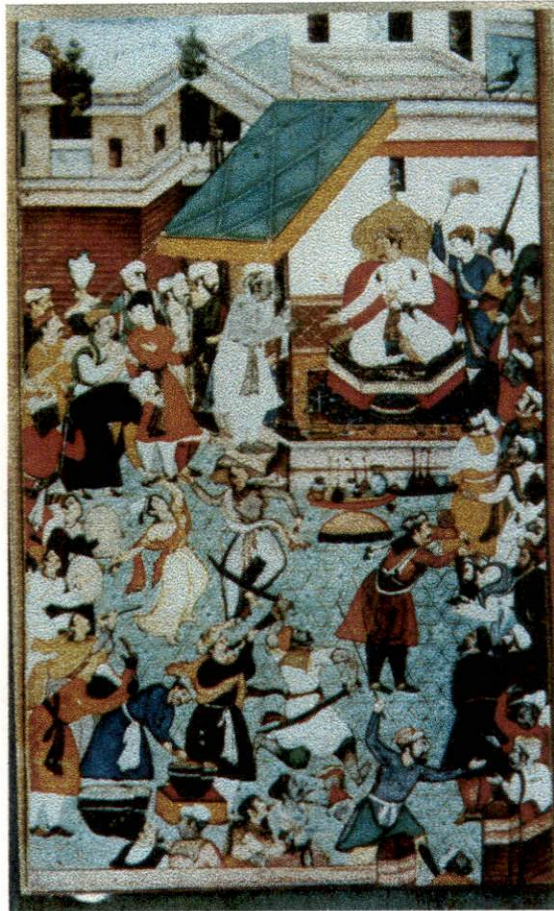
1. Marriage ceremony.



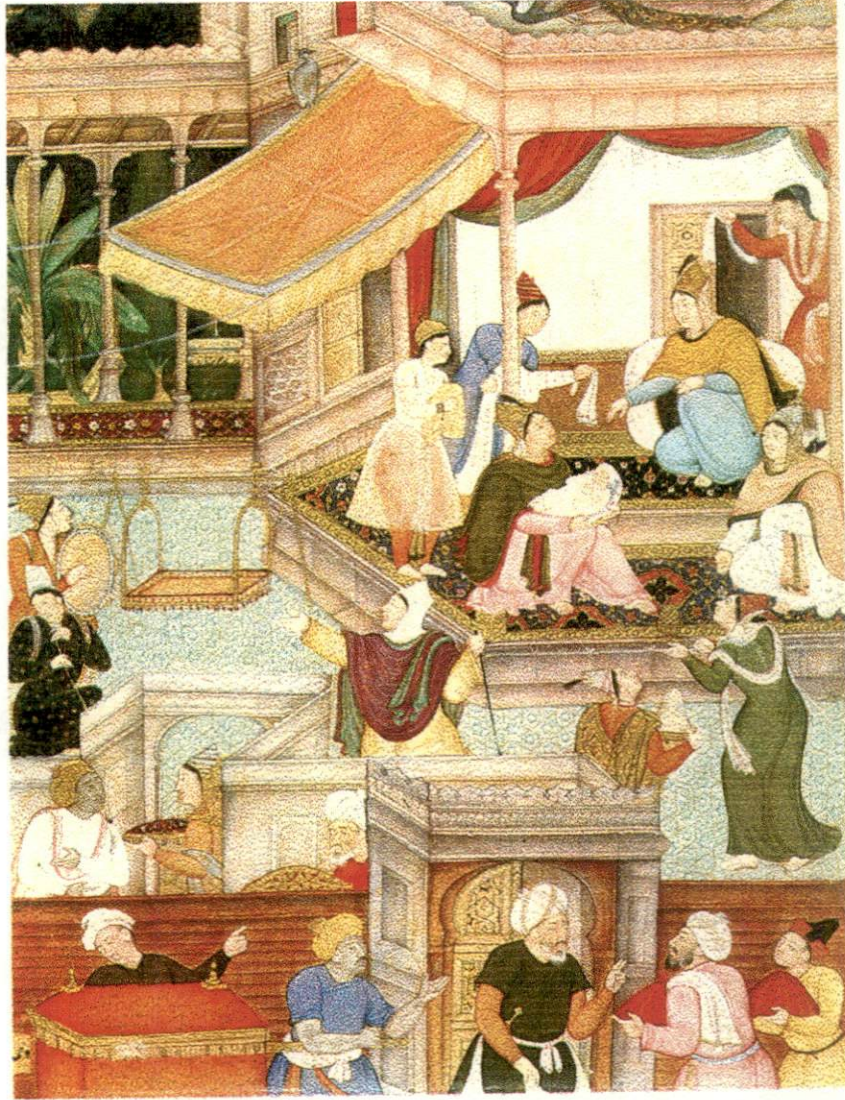
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3. Salim's birth.



4. Celebrations of Salim's birth.



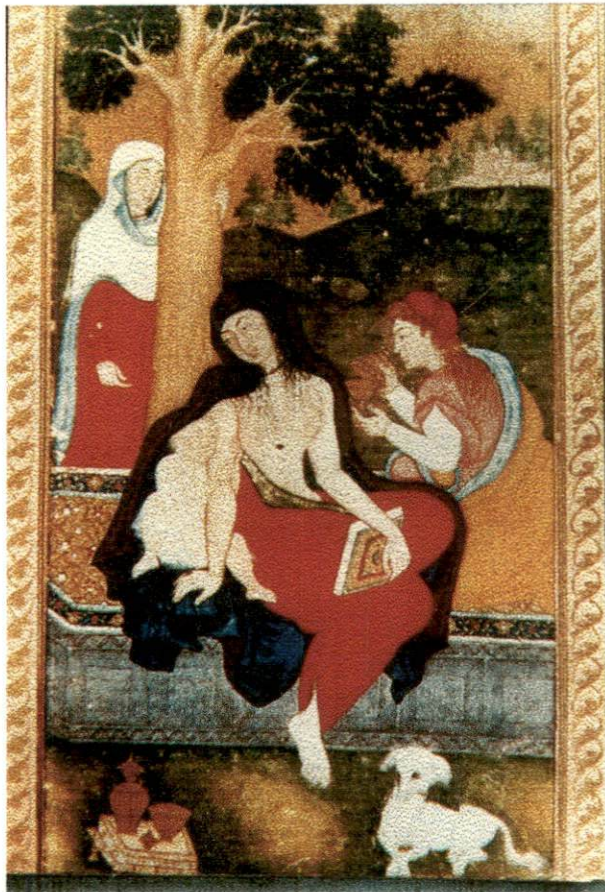
5. Baby Akbar in maids supervision.



6. Child Akbar learning shooting.



7. Rambha and Vishvamitra.



8. Madonna and Child.



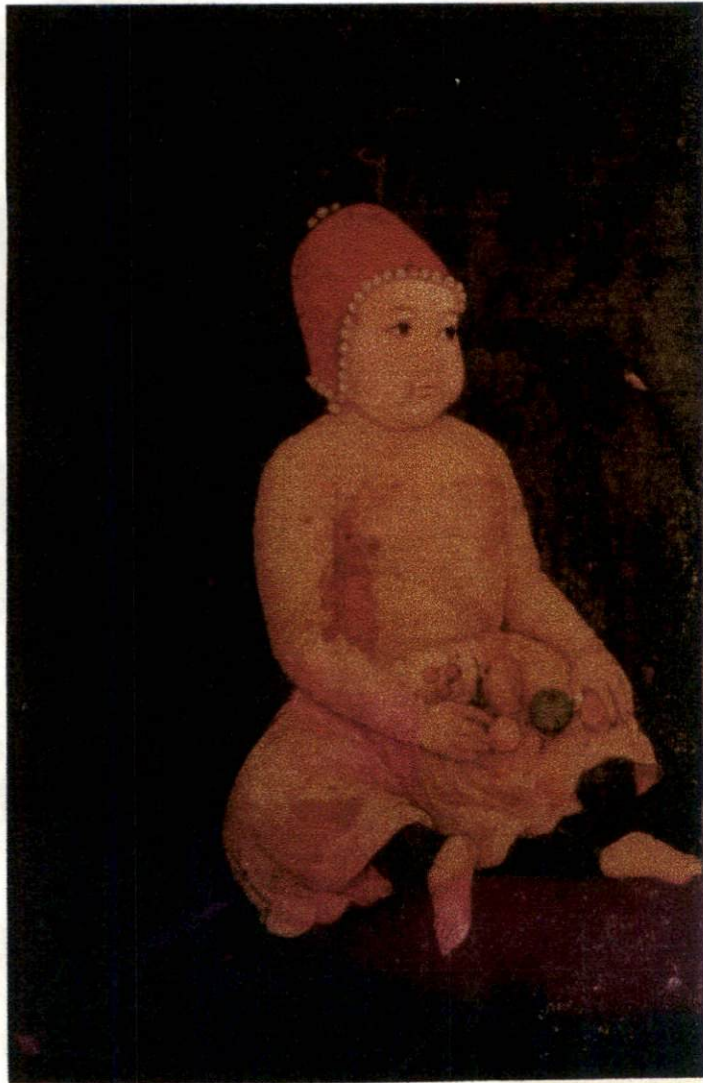
9. Madonna and Child.



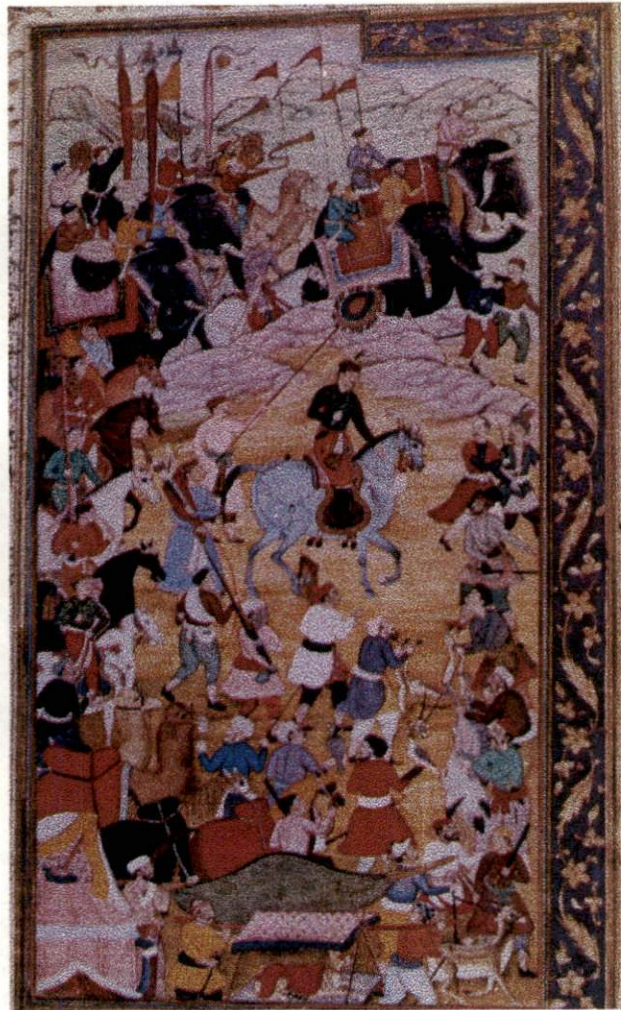
10. Madonna and Child.



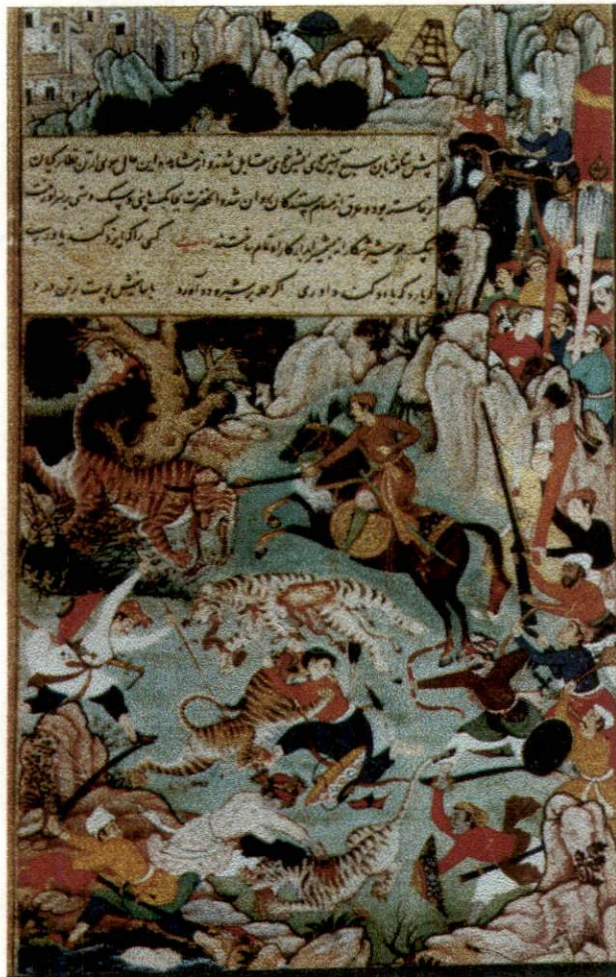
11. European subject.



12. Baby Prince Abul Hasan.



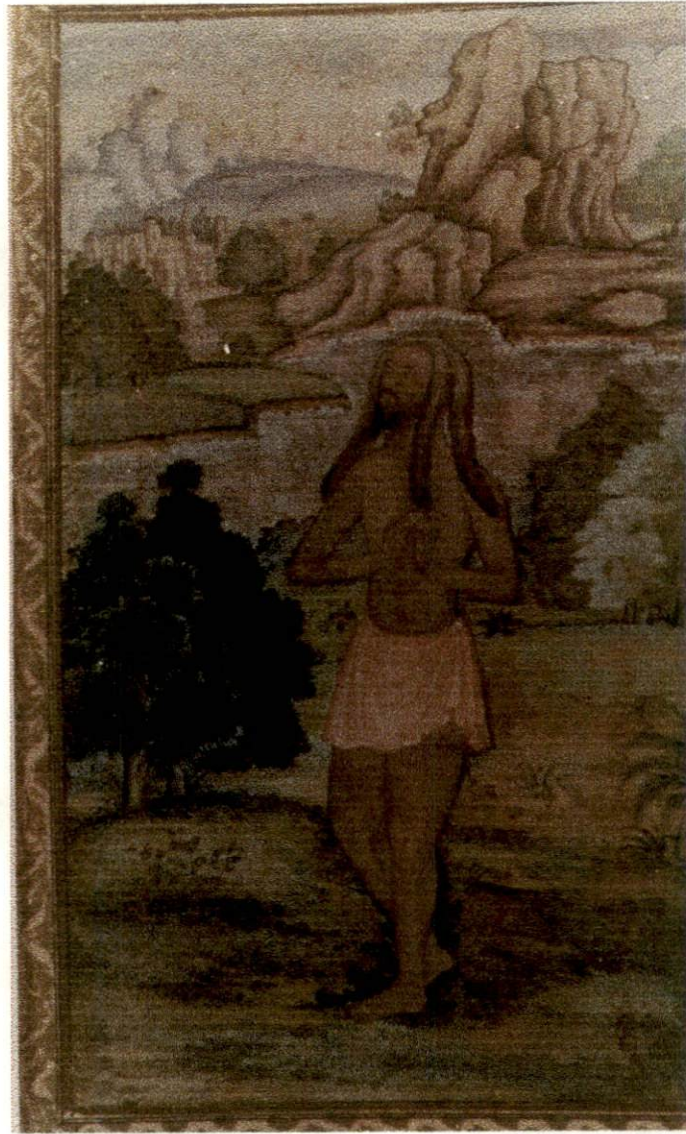
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14. Akbar slays a tigress which attacked the royal cavalcade.



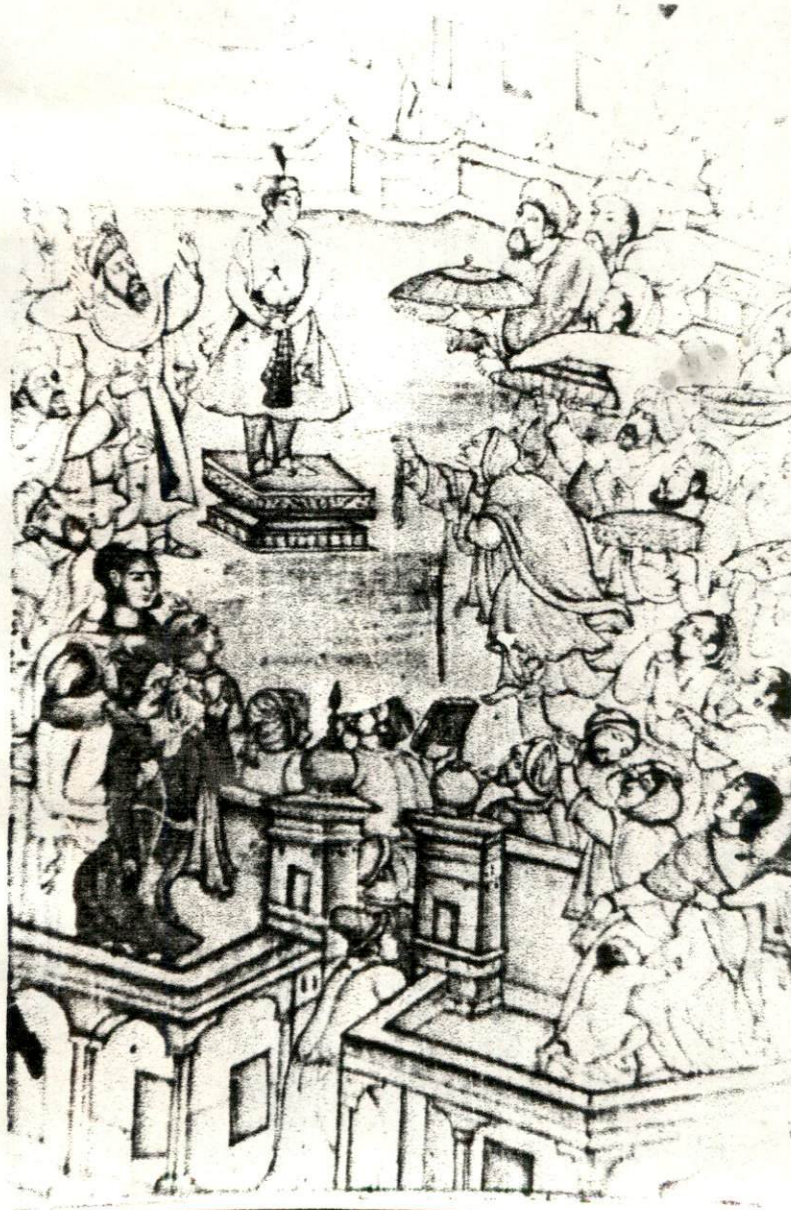
15. Nafahat al Unas, Poet and Darvesh.



16. Sanyasi.



17. Roaming Sanyasi.



18. Gulamo Ka Bazar.

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