Chapter IV

Oriental Effect In Chughtai's Woman Painting
ORIENTAL EFFECT IN CHUGHTAI’S WOMAN PAINTINGS

As he is known as the artist of the East M.A.R. Chughtai has adopted Oriental speciality in his paintings which is prominent in every article he paints in his compositions and at once the viewer recognizes his work. One of the critics weltkunst, Berlin, 1929, wrote about the artist chughtai:

"Places before us in a charming volume a selection out of the production of Rahman chughtai. It deals with works that have created a sensation in India and Europe. An oriental fragrance full of sweetness wafts to us out of these works, most of which have been reproduced in colour".¹ And in another paper’s article “The Artist, London, 1931”.

"His draughtsmanship is exquisite; he uses the pencil with the delicacy of a silvery point, in a style, if less calligraphic than is usual for an Oriental, still sinuous in live, flowing and gracious, sublly expressive, full of invention. Being an Orientalist, he dispenses with
shadows, and what perspective he uses is lineal...
Chaughtai's outlook is romantic; he works, as most Orientals, by rule of thumb, rather than observation; he sees through the spectacles of his ancestors, rather than with his own unaided eyes. But try as may be suppress it, his individuality will out. Everything he touches is a superb piece of craftsmanship. The European student can learn much from his remarkable economy of means and materials".²

In an another article written by Bazil Grey in "Art of Chughtai" says,

"...being a sensitive person he understood that an artists art can survive only in his oriental tradition. Chughtai knew that in the case of his art the roots go deep in the Mughal Darbars where the Persian art was flourishing i.e., in the court of Sultan Husain Mir Baqar of Hirat a great Master Artist Ustad Kamal uddin Behzad was busy painting Persian book art illustration...".³
The customs of the olden times specially in muslim society, the way of wearing dresses by females was particularly to cover whole body because of the purdah system. But with all the restrictions of the religion the artist has very gracefully painted woman in full dresses beautifully rapped following the prevalent customs in the society. "Fragrance" (see plate 29)

Chughtai was well aware of this ever progressing forwarding, world, he was bent to move onward step by step with a firm decision of his own, giving no importance to ever changing world of art. Chughtai chooses to draw in oriental way to meet the needs of his country.

The picture "Fragrance", has an unusual peculiarity of its own. The whole effect is, technically too perfect and realistic to be entirely oriental in style. It is only when you look at the lady that you become conscious of the mystic orientalism of the picture. Chughtai selected water colour medium
not because it was the popular medium of the day but because oriental artists have always preferred to use water colour. He himself was interested in water colour and he had the ability to display colours in their specific background. It is perhaps the "Oriental" character of chughtai's pictures that will win admirers for them outside Asia. There amazing technical skill is acceptable to all who are sensitive to excellence achieved. But the remoteness from so-called realism which chughtai has deliberately cultivated will be specially acceptable to those who are now feeling the pull away from an alleged truth fullness to eye-sight, towards the truth of the imagination. This has been the mission of the oriental art for ages and a study of a set of persian paintings (of which good reproductions can now be readily obtained) side by side with those of chughtai, will show where they are at one in their mood of gentle repose, in their pictorial lyricism, and where
chuughtai, with the impulse of, the creative artist who has the sense of tradition, has made his wholly delightful and individual contribution. Thus, we can say that chuughtai was one of the most important oriental artist in modern times because of the fact that he has incorporated the techniques and styles of Persian and Mughal paintings in his artistic creative impulse. As we know, Iranian and Mughal artists used to paint in decorative style, chuughtai also paints in decorative and geometrical designs in his paintings.

**Sharfun-Nisa** (see pl. 30)

The most striking pose of a super personality, seems to be the highest scale of being in the evolution of human ego. The mood, and the majestic sitting of the figure can be regarded a characteristic study. The artist knows the tendencies of the subject and produces a significant expression of historical fact. Sharfun-
Nisa revolts against the National life and thus transforms human outlook.

Chughtai depicts the principles of political solidarity along with a calm depth of faith in a beautiful and glorious colour scheme. He also depicts immortality presenting sharfun-Nisa's character.  

Designs can be seen in the back ground and also style of the figure is similar to that of Mughal paintings, especially the sitting posture of the female figure and whole background.

Chughtai learnt his basic drawing under the guidance of his uncle Baba Miran Bakhsh, a Naqqash who laid the foundation of oriental essentials in him which echoed through out his painting career. This foundation proved to be instrumental in achieving the goal of fine draftsmanship. The process of learning the oriental drawing is not an easy one. It requires lots of patience and control
over body and mind. Only devotion make drawing effective:

What was regarded as the highest artistic qualification was not talent or the faculty for understanding beauty, form, color, or an appreciation of nature, but trained craftsmanship, perfect control of the hand and eye, and to acquire the technical ability, the artist was quite prepared to repeat the same series of exercise day after day and for several years with that deadly persistency in which the oriental alone excels.\textsuperscript{10}

A vital force of chughtai's art lies in the strength and beauty of his line, which had been the main tradition of oriental art. It is in its lines, non-plastic conception that the pictorial statements and utterances of the orient have excelled as compared with the western pictorialism. And most of the modern art of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent expecting a few artists has been woefully lacking in our traditional linear qualities and has been accused and rightly so, of
weak drawing and indistinct outline. But chughtai a master draughtsman whose sure and firm line is endowed with spontaneity and fluidity. It is continuous and facile. The mastery of brush strokes in his superb line drawings yields linear patterns combination and arrangement of flowing lines beautiful in themselves irrespective of the subjects delineated.

His lines are free, not geometrically schematic. And yet they create rhythmic and emotional effect.11 Chughtai's uniqueness lies in the fact that he can very successful bring out the emotional aspect of woman through his flowing lines.

Chughtai's paintings reflect the characteristics of oriental draftsmanship so he liked to be called an oriental artist. In this connection, M.D. Taseer writes:

   His sensuous lines have the quality, the flow and flexibility of a soft badger hair brush and the coppery medium does not
retard the liquidity of line for which chughtai is rightly famous ... The lines flow torrently, as if a stream has left the meadows and entered a ravine which ever medium he uses, he remains what he is, an oriental painter.\textsuperscript{12}

For studying the oriental style of painting of chughtai we must observe, how the artist has decorated the figures in his paintings, such as hair style, head dress, jewelry, dresses, foot wears and music instruments etc. All these things are the symbol of a culture by which one can judge the time and situation.\textsuperscript{13}
References

1. The exhibition entitled, "The unknown Chuigta" a brochure sent to me, courtesy, Arif Rahman Chuigta, Director, chuigta Museum Trust Lahore.


4. From the book "Iqbal-The Poet of the East".


7. Ibid.


9. Iqbal, “Poet of the East”

11. Exhibition entitled "Unknown chughtai", op-cit., p.5.


13. Syed Durdana, op-cit., p.34