Chapter V

5.1 Importance of monumental painting in Indian History

India has a vast history and it is old too. There are lots of mysteries and controversial stories. It would take life-long to reveal some of them. It is through pre-historic articles, sculpture, menu-scripts and historical monuments which helped us understanding the history through arts, architectural-art etc from pre-historic period to Mughal period.

We came to know about various types and different forms of art through Indian history. “Sthaptya” art is one of them. It was basically started with the construction of Temples, Forts, Mosques and Monuments by Hindu & Mughal rulers. Looking at the historical monuments, mosques and Forts we can still see the culture and discipline during those times. Architecture continues to amaze us and influence our lives. Unlike other art forms, architecture combines both a necessity as well as a flair for creativity. Architecture has influenced our lives for thousands of years and is still evolving. There are many researches still going on the cultures and discipline.

These historical structures are still the attraction for most of the discoverers, be in national or international. They keep coming back to explore more, not only the researchers but common man is also keen to know more on these mysteries. Though these historical buildings are maintained by archeological departments but there are many such monuments which are damaged and are not in proper condition. But we can see these monuments in the paintings and drawings by various Indian and international artists.

These painting and drawings are very precious to us, and these are very old paintings even there are many such paintings are painted even before the invention of the camera. As foremost recorders of Indian scenes, Artist’s sketches are the only documentation of some of the monuments which have
been disappeared as consequences of the ravages of time and the rigors of Indian climate. These paintings are the only available proofs of the surroundings of the monuments and the historical buildings which are now either damaged or reconstructed. Few of such examples are described as below.

There is a painting in the Taj Mahal museum which is made in company style by artists from Delhi and Agra. It basically depicts that there were two pavements from North-East and West-North minarets surmounted by two big gates. This was first disclosed or explored by Professor Evan T. Williams from City University of New York Bruklin College. Even he has taken few samples of woods from those two big gates and later it was published in a history magazine that those wood samples were 1359 years old approximately (±89 years).¹ Later it was discovered that those gates were either removed or demolished but it is still a mystery that who had done it, i.e. who had ordered to close or demolish those gates.

There is one more interesting story which talks about the second Taj Mahal “The Black Taj Mahal” which ruler Shahjahan intended to build in black marble just opposite to the present mausoleum. It goes back to Jean

¹. Denik Jagran (News paper) page no. 1, date 20 october 2010
Baptiste Tanvernier who, when at Agra in 1665 reported that ‘Shahjahan began to built his own tomb on the other side of the river. But the war with his own son interrupted his plan, and Aurangzeb, who reigns at present, as not disposed to complete it.’¹ Though there is no historical evidence to support this claim, it became the most enduring of the Legends of Taj. Even it led to excavation of the Mehtab Bagh in the early 1990’s but there were no foundation of a mausoleum.

It is also said that there was a painting of Taj which if seen very carefully the scholar found that a gate of the Minaret was green colored, and it is told that it connect to some underground area. But at present there is no such gate and maybe it was also closed alike the one mentioned above, but there is evidence of such a gate as the painting which has depicted it is also not available.

Daniell’s Brother came to Agra in 1789 and made painting of various monuments in Agra, one such sketch was of Sikandra. They have shown military camp, the camp with which he came to Agra, just in front of the Sikandra. But at present there are lots of residential colonies surrounding of Sikandra.

The Chini-ka-Roza is one of the few monuments in Agra which was seen by Tyralene Jesuite geographer Joseph Tieffenthaler in the 1740’s, and commented “tagulis sinensi more incrustatis” it inlay in the Chinese manner. When Britisher took over Agra in 1803, the Chini-ka-Roza was of noted as a building of architectural merit, so it appears as a subject of “Company Drawing” – watercolor done with great attention to detail by Indian artists for British patrons. When Warren Hastings came to Agra in 1815, his artist Sita Ram painted Chini-Ka-Roza in two views, one was soft and loose brushwork and other one was the aerial perspective. When I saw that painting then only I

¹ W. E. Bagley and Z. A. Desai, Taj Mahal, the illumined tomb, page no. 249
could come to know that the tiles those were on the walls of the monuments are now demolished or destructed.

There are lots of paintings of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur which were even before the invention of the camera. These painting depicts that there were neither population nor agricultural up to miles from these monuments. Now there areas are highly populated.

The paintings of the Northern Golden Triangle, procession scenes were shown opposite to the lots of monuments, especially Hawa Mahal, Amber Fort, City Palace in Jaipur and Jama Masjid, Red Fort in Delhi. Primarily procession consists of Horses, Elephants, and Soldiers etc. This is also important in terms of Indian History, not only the Indian artists but international artistes were impressed by these monuments.

Primarily British artist William Hodge started making painting on the monuments in India during 1780’s and later there were many renowned international artist made paintings on Indian monuments. Even Indian artistes also started making beautiful landscapes making them as their prime subject. They captured glory and beauty of the architecture in photographic details with perfect light, shades and colors. Even we can say that even the finest camera cannot take pictures of these artistic excellences.

On the basis of my research I can say that as foremost recorders of the Indian scene artists sketches are the only authentic documentation of the same monument which has been disappeared as a consequences of ravages of time and the rigors of Indian climate.
Conclusion

Art is a language to express our feelings and emotions. Under it a man or person presents his emotions and thoughts. Art is created when an artist creates a beautiful object, or produces a stimulating experience that is considered by his audience to have artistic merit. Artists express their feelings, their emotions through art in many ways. Music, dance, painting, sculpture and architecture are the forms of fine arts and through these five fine arts, artist shows his creativity and he creates something new and extraordinary. Architecture is an art, it contains shapes and sizes that make the buildings look like a piece of art. Buildings with arches and columns tend to be very beautiful. Architectural art was basically started with the construction of Temples, Forts, Mosques and Monuments by Hindu & Mughal rulers. Architecture continues to amaze us and influence our lives. Unlike other art forms, architecture combines both a necessity as well as a flair for creativity.

India is the country which is famous for huge and enchanting beautiful monuments, mosques and Forts. There is hardly anyone in this world that is not attracted towards the beauty of these paramount pieces of work.

In India three cities Delhi, Agra and Jaipur have incomparable, incredible, inimitable and impressive monuments. These three beautiful cities forms out the shape of a triangle which then come to be known Golden Triangle and the combination of all the three cities presents the potpourri of India. The famous Golden Triangle of India covers three most beautiful and captivating cities of the country Delhi (the capital of India), Agra (the city of Taj Mahal) and Jaipur (the land of Rajput kings). These monuments of three cities serve as the repository of its rich past and legacy.

The golden triangle, formed by three of the most important historical and cultural centres of northern India, has long been at the top of every visitors itinerary. Delhi with its ancient monuments and modern skyscrapers is a rich repository of the country’s diverse cultural products. Agra and its
environs enable the visitors to experience the highest achievements of Indo Islamic art with the world – famous Taj Mahal at its very pinnacle. Jaipur with its places and fortresses, its living arts and colourful handicrafts offers the visitor the authentic flavours of feudal India. There are many approaches to golden triangle. We can travel by air, by train, by bus and by taxi also. Department of tourism provide many facilities to their tourists to make their tour more interesting or exiting.

Every person or human being wants to see the golden triangle and the monuments of northern golden triangle. The beauty of these world heritage monuments like Taj Mahal, Red Fort, Qutub Minar, Old Fort, Fatehpur Sikri, Jantar-Mantar and Amber Fort attract us. These historical monuments have rich past and they have a lot importance in history. These monuments attract Indians as well as foreigners also. People of different field come from all over the world and want to see the monuments of Golden triangle. From the past years many of the artists made paintings of the monuments of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur. These silent and quite monuments reveal the untold and unrolled mysteries of the past which affects the artists according to their own field and these artists convey their thought and feelings in their paintings.

On the basis of my research I can say that Firstly Indian monuments were painted by British artist and Indian painters had no tradition of applying their talent for monumental painting. Until the arrival of British professional artist in the late 18th century there was no visual record of the Indian landscape and its magnificent historic monument. The first British professional artist to paint the Indian scene was William Hodges in 1780s. He was dazzled by the grandeur of Indian monuments and brought out his ‘Selected views of India’ with 48 picture depicting for the first time many places and buildings in India that were later to become famous. Hodges were followed by the legendary uncle-nephew duo of Thomas and William Daniell who spent over seven years travelling all over the country and produced a colossal publication Oriental Scenery with 144 drawings providing the most comprehensive view.
of India. They reached Calcutta early in 1786, and for about seven years explored the country as no foreigner, and indeed very few Indian, had ever done before, covering almost the entire length and breadth of the country. The work of these British artists played an important part in creating a new vision of India as a country of ancient picturesque beauty and rich historical tradition and culture as revealed in the superb marvels of its architecture and sculpture. Their paintings were expensive, large and not easily available but the engravings had a ready market. The popularity of the Daniells’ Oriental Scenery prints of Mughal Monuments prompted Indian painters to compose theirs pictures in Western style. There is no doubt that the popularity of the paintings of western artists aided Indian artists in composing their pictures in European manner.

The capture of Delhi and Agra in 1803 brought in its wake not only a number of company officials and soldiers but also turned the famous Mughal Imperial Capital of Delhi into a favourite tourist spot for European visitors. They came to explore the fabled city, its majestic monuments and the dilapidated ruins of past grandeur. This led to a great demand for the pictures of these historic cities.

If we see then we will find that after the visit of Hodges and Daniell’s brother many foreign and Indian artists took great interest to paint Indian monuments. In India the best known and popular artist who produced beautiful pictures of monuments was Mazhar Ali Khan who specialised in this domain and a set by him acquired by Sir Thomas Metcalf, British Resident and Agent to the Governor General and Member of the Supreme Council (1827-38) is now well known through its publication in the reminiscences of his daughter Lady Clive Bayley The Golden Calm, 1980.

If Hodges and the Daniells were the first to present first hand views and information about the fabled Indian forts and palaces, temples and mosques, tombs and mausoleums, sacred spots and sculptures, it was only a few years later that another source appeared on the scene. That was the Company School
native artists who made drawings of the Indian archaeological assets for British residents in India. It may be noted that the treatment of subject by Indian Artists was strikingly different from the English views of Indian Buildings. Indian paintings did reflect the British influence on their technique and style but they remained unaffected by the cult of the picturesque and presented a different interpretation of the architecture.

Delhi and Agra were the only centres where Indian artists developed architectural drawings on a wide commercial scale. After 19th century Jaipur also became the centre of the attraction of many artists. But these artists are mostly those who are leaving in Jaipur city. Those are very few foreign artists who painted monuments of Jaipur.

In short we can say that all artists Foreign or Indian have keen interest to paint Mughal architecture and these paintings of Mughal monuments became so popular among the foreign and Indian visitors.

The monuments of Golden Triangle were painted by many foreign and Indian artists. There are many names in Indian history who painted monuments of Delhi like William Daniell and his nephew Thomas daniell, Robert Elliot, William Simpson, Lieutenant George Francis White, Colonal Robert Smith, William Carpentar, Edwin Lord Weeks, Thomas Bacon, C.S.H. Jhabwala, Mazhar Ali Khan, Mohammad Akbar Ali Khan and many more Delhi and Company artists.

Artists of Agra Monuments are firstly William Hodges was the first British artist who had paint Taj Mahal and after him daniell’s brothers, Albert Goodwin, William Congdon, Edward Lear, Lockwood de Forest, Cambell Cooper, Hiroshi Yoshida, Charles W. Bartlett, Sita Ram, Abnindra Nath Tagore, Shivendra Singh, Dr, Chitralekha Singh, Suresh Kumar Sethi and many more Delhi and Company artists.

The monuments of Jaipur painted by those who belong to the city like sumahendra ji, Nathulal Sharma, Santosh kumar Sharma, Pawan Bhandari,
Samdar Singh Khangarot and Jaipur artist. They have their gallery and studio in City Palace.

These paintings took so much importance in Indian history. These painting become the source of many research works. These painting and drawings are very precious to us, and these are very old paintings even there are many such paintings are painted even before the invention of the camera. As foremost recorders of Indian scenes, Artist’s sketches are the only documentation of some of the monuments which have been disappeared as consequences of the ravages of time and the rigors of Indian climate. These paintings are the only available proofs of the surroundings of the monuments and the historical buildings which are now either damaged or reconstructed.

On the basis of my research we can say that these monuments of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur, A Golden Triangle become principal attraction of all visitors to India with an interest in the country’s culture, but thanks to a numbers of artists who flocked to the land of the nabobs in search of their fortunes, it would become the best known of all Indian buildings. Thus the images of these monuments were largely a creation of the foreign and Indians in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. These paintings of the monuments are at once a profound study for the architect or antiquary and a new source of delight to the lover of the picturesque.

Through my research many new artists and researchers can know the importance of these paintings of the monuments of Golden Triangle and they can inspire them to paint Indian heritage.