Chapter VI
Conclusion

and

Critical Evaluation
“Themes and subjects were selected by the imperial masters rather than the artists themselves. The thematic contents of the painting reflect the personal tastes and temperaments, prides and preferences, fashions, pleasures and pastimes of the individual imperial patrons and the nobles of the court”
Mughal art has been one of the most significant and vital schools in the History of Indian art. After a detailed study of the origin and founding of the Mughal school, I strongly tend to agree that early Mughal paintings were the direct influence of the Indian school of Bihzad. Babur was the connoisseur and critic of art and painting and Babur's son, Humayun, was instrumental in establishing an atelier in India and the work of painting seriously began. The Persian artists who highly impressed Humayun by their work, accompanied him to India and became the guiding hand behind the art school. They assisted greatly in the creation of the 'Dastan-i-Amir Hamza' which was the first of the great series which resulted in the reputation of the Mughal school that is everlasting. The form and style of painting, generally known as 'Mughal painting', was indeed and essentially the product and creation of the Mughal court. It is very evident to distinguish the paintings of the courts of the emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan by style, form and content.

Portraiture occupied a very important position in the Mughal painting. Numerous Mughal emperors and nobles were painted during the Mughal period. Akbar had originated a new style of painting with a distinct technique and method. The chief objective, as per my analysis, was to produce illustrated manuscripts which were an elaborate production, requiring the effort and coordination of calligraphers and painters. Mughal artists were exposed to the sophisticated techniques of Persian and European traditions and I am convinced that it reflected an immense increase in the range of colours. The Persian flavour
is extremely strong but the Indian elements too have been evident in the shape of faces and vitality. Akbar's interest in the various religions is magnified by his inclination to the Hindu classics, owing to the fact that he ordered the artists to illustrate the epics, Ramayana and the Mahabharata or Razm Nama.

The majority of painters in the atelier were Indians who produced a school of Persian techniques blended with Indian training, evolving a concept of painting with the synthesis of the two styles. The miniatures became records of the emperor Akbar's activities.

The most outstanding feature of the Mughal artists achievement, as per my study, has been the expertise with which the technique derived from completely varied sources amalgamated into a harmonious whole. The paintings were essentially Persian synthesised with Indian and European styles.

The Mughal painting school was established by Akbar. He personally supervised the work of Indian and Persian artists and lavished wealth and titles on his talented artists. Akbar pioneered manuscript illustration. The most well known being the Hamza Nama, Akbar Nama, Darab Nama, Ain-i-Akbari and Din-i-Ilahi. Several Hindu manuscripts were also illustrated. His interest in Indian literature contributed to the changing of the Mughal school from its Persian beginning into an indigenous tradition.

The atelier was provided with the best of paper and other related material. Colours and pigments were sourced from natural resources and processed. Painting tools were made using the animal hair, guills etc. Gold and silver were also generously used to incorporate a very rich visual approach to the manuscripts.

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The most important and outstanding feature of the Mughal artist's achievement, as per my critical analysis, has been the expertise with which the technique derived from varied sources were fused into a harmonious whole. The paintings were essentially Persian synthesised with Indian and European Renaissance styles.

The styles adopted during Akbar's reign were carried on and further refined and developed under Shah Jahan. The Mughal miniatures does not portray spiritual and emotional matters. This objectivity is the basic parameter of the Mughal miniatures. Interestingly, what I have observed and concluded is that though the Mughal miniatures tried to depict reality and nature at its best, it rarely showed a female figure. The court painters excelled and their delicate miniatures teemed with life with master brush strokes and details.

The Hamza Nama shows a dramatic precedence of the romantic escapeades and adventures in deep expressive colours and a love of landscape and architecture. The Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Timuria is calligraphed in a bold and beautiful scripts. The Gulistan-i-Sadi is known for its lavish gold decoration and treatment of flora and fauna.

Portrait paintings were elevated to its great heights as the Mughal emperors had great interest in portraiture. Even in historical illustrations that depicted crowded court scenes, I can strongly visualize the utmost care and concern with which the individual faces and features were drawn and painted, highlighting the physical and psychological characteristics of the individuals being drawn. The use of shaded lines and colour tonating resulted in a 3-D effect.

I am convinced and could not agree more that Akbar's contribution to the Mughal art has been outstanding with Akbar's
great vision and unique judgement of talent that ensured and elevated the atelier of unsurpassed talent and timeless masterpieces.

A climate of creativity and experimentation prevailed by the introduction of European prints and paintings brought by the Jesuits. Miniature copies of Christian pictures became popular and numerous religious themes were painted by the court atelier. Akbar encouraged European art in all its dominions and even patronized its painters. The Mughal painting was vital and receptive enough to absorb a number of elements of contemporary West European Renaissance painting. The influence of European and Mughal art was mutual. Renaissance painters were greatly impressed by the Indian miniatures. The knowledge of Christianity was embedded in the Mughal myth and symbolism apart from the perspectives and shading techniques.

Akbar was the first monarch to be interested in European art and obtained concrete knowledge of the Christian religious paintings. The work of numerous German and Finnish engravers were known to the Mughal court painters. The master painters in the atelier exhibit an excellent understanding of the Western techniques. I conclude that during Akbar reign, landscapes and motifs were shown as salient features of the composition and two types of European pictorial art was available to the Mughal atelier—engravings and illustrated manuscripts.

The religious manuscript was painted including the Bible yet it did not influence the Mughal artists to a great extent. The European prints were copied by Mughal artists but their Islamic traditions remained contrary. The Mughals used highlighting and shading to mark the forms to exist whereas the Deccanis did it

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to intensify the portrait. In spite of the numerous obligations, the Mughal school maintained its own indigenous qualities.

It is concluded that the Jain style of manuscript illustration influenced the Mughal school and vice-versa. Mughal period being the richest by the persistent uniformity of the shape and form of articles of utility, cultural interest and institution. A careful scrutinization infers that the themes chosen and the technique that followed were certainly of the miniature and that the Persian painting was indeed a miniaturist art. In the Hamza paintings, figures more vigorously and contributed dynamism of the entire composition while the Persian painting do not reflect any emotion. The Akbari painters drew inspiration from Persian sources on the very themes of heroic events and battle fields. Sufis and saints were popular themes too in Persian painting which influenced the Akbari paintings. Persian ethnic types are very common in the Hamza paintings, both in male and female figuration.

The architectural motifs in Akbari paintings are both Persian and Indian prototypes, as is in the case of the rendering of foliage, but the initial decorative aspects disappeared. The Akbari manuscripts are illustrated with beautiful scenes depicting nature by techniques identical to Persian ones. These techniques were also repeated in drawing mountains and hillocks but the Mughal painters seem to have experimented with the motifs. The Persian feature of incorporating certain shapes of animals and human figures was also copied.

The composition of Akbari painting was based on the same format as the Persian ones. A few, however also followed various European geometrical methods.
The use of multiple perspectives in plastic art form was popular in the sub-continent of India and Persia during the medieval period and remained so till the end of the sixteenth century.

Akbar's painters adopted the linear rhythm of the Indian and Persian traditions. The colour palette, called tempera in modern times, was however a purely Indian device.

From their very inception, Akbari paintings were different from contemporary, classical Persian painting and had numerous elements which could not have any Persian reference. Akbar's decision that he was an Indian, aided the acclimatizing of his Persian cultural inheritance with India's. Thus, Akbari paintings happen to be a creative fusion of mainly Persian elements with Indian and European features.

My detailed study of the works and the styles adopted by the Mughal painters leads to the conclusion that though the traditional style of designing illustration was by a singular artist with the help of an assistant, this was later rejected primarily because of the increasing demand of consistency and uniformly high quality in all the projects.

The atelier has numerous top-class painters who progressed to become 'Ustads' or 'Masters'.

Mir Saiyyid Ali is a prime example of one such Tabrizi artist who contributed to various manuscripts of prime importance such as the Darab Nama, Babar Nama, Razm Nama, Timur Nama and many others in his inimitable Safavid style. But beyond Abu'l Fazl's reference to his ability, nothing more is known of his later connection to the Mughal school.

Dasawanth was a Hindu painter who was titled the “first master of his age”. He illustrated numerous important manuscripts though
there is no specimen of his singular effort. He was appointed to the exalted position of the "Master of the Mint" which he served creditably for several years prior to his unfortunate suicide.

Abu’l Fazl was Akbar’s confidant and historian. He was gifted with an extra-ordinary memory and genius and possessed a vision which made him quite ahead of his times.

Aqa Riza was a professionally trained Safavid painter when he arrived at the Mughal court. However, despite adopting a veneer of "Mughalisation", and being influenced by European Rennaissance art, he could not adapt his traditional attitudes of the modern ones and his style became passe’.

Abdus Samad was one of the most important Persian painters who accompanied Humayun to India and helped set up the Mughal atelier along with Mir Saiyyid Ali. He was honoured with the title of 'Shirin Qalam'. The various artists of the atelier worked under these two masters. Abdus Samad acted as a continuous model of technical skill and control. He was also appointed as the Director of the Imperial Mint at Fatehpur Sikri (the capital).

Bishan Das was a brilliant painter chosen to accompany the embassy of Khan Alam to the court of Safavid Shah Abbas at Ishfanan where he painted portraits of various grandees of the royal clan which were greatly appreciated. On his return, he was given due prominence. His style is recognizable, consistent and depicts close proximity to Persian art.

Kesu Das was one of the greatest of Akbar’s artist and is placed first below Basawan in the list of painters given by Abu’l Fazl in the Ain-i-Akbari. He was famed for his copies and adaptation of European prints. He was also a brilliant technician and by the time the first Akbar Nama commenced, the third most brilliant designer.
Basawan was the most important, prestigious and influential painter during the later years of Akbar's reign. His name can be seen in practically the entire list of the major Akbari manuscripts that were collaborations. His figures and character studies were unique. His achievements were crucial to the development of Jahangiri portraiture in the early seventeenth century.

Miskin had rendered the maximum number of miniature and seems to have achieved perfection in animal rendering. In rendering flora and fauna he even surpassed Basawan and became an unrivalled painter of his age during Jahangir's rule.

Mansur had also become the master in rendering animals, having trained under major artists. His specialization in rendering birds, animals and flowers conferred on him the title 'Nadirul-Asr'. His perfection in his art is obvious from the inscription with an ephithet 'Ustad'.

There were numerous painters in the Mughal atelier from which the following names are found repeatedly, Mohammed Alam, Abu Hasan, Farrukh Beg, Manohar, Murad, Muhammad Nadir, Inayat, Pidarath, Kanha, Kesu and Mahesh.

The art of book illustration as found in the Safavid and Timurid styles was adopted by the Mughal artist. The Mughal manuscripts were more detailed and explanatory in content as compared to Jain paintings. The variety in the selection of the books to be illustrated in terms of different languages, subjects and religious became a tradition with the Mughal school.

Unlike Akbar's reign, in which the paintings were collaborations, specialization became the artist's mainstay under Jahangir. Margin painting also developed as a separate branch only under Jahangir. The imperial masters related the themes or subjects.

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The thematic contents of the paintings were a reflection of the personal tastes, pride, pleasure, preferences, hobbies and temperament of the individuals kinds. In every sense, Mughal painting was a court art.

Thus, one concludes that the painters and their illustrations are an extremely important source of the cultural history of the people of those days, then society, and all the related features and elements of their day-to-day lines. The faithful representations seen in the Akbari paintings cannot be ignored or their importance undermined by any historian or research scholar including myself. I hereby accomplish the artistic activities in miniature painting during Akbar's reign with a true sense of purpose and direction, with emphasis on the topics conditioned by the preferences and analysis.