Chapter III
European Influence

In

mughal Miniature

During

Akbar's Reign
"More than a hundred painters have become famous master of the art, while the number of those who approach perfection or those who are middling is very large. This is especially true of the Hindus, their pictures surpass our conception. Few indeed in the whole world are equal to them"
During the 14th century, the Persian style of painting started influencing the western Indian style, which is obvious from the Persian facial type and hunting scenes seen on the border of some of the Jain Kalpsutra manuscript. The introduction of Persian painting in India was the factor responsible for the development of a new style of painting during the reign of Emperor Akbar.

The artefacts at the exhibition to learn from one another, says Bailey, an assistant professor of Renaissance and Baroque art of Clark University in Massachusetts, the Jesuits introduced the Mughal court to a wide spectrum of Renaissance art and culture... (and) they also encountered the Mughals own renaissance—a climate of creativity, experimentation and tolerance artists were fascinated by the perspective and modelling of the European prints and paintings brought by the Jesuits. They quickly mastered the renaissance style and eventually adapted western conventions to mainstream Mughal art, says Bailey. “The result, especially under Jahangir, was an extremely refined naturalism, an enthusiasm for psychological portraiture and a taste for the dramatic gesture”.

It is estimated that 25 percent of the artists—most of whom were Hindu—in the Mughal emperor’s ateliers did works with christian themes. Christianity of course, was scarcely as alien to India as the European renaissance: it had flourished in Kerala since at least AD 52.

However, the emperor and their painters were interested in more than art lessons from the Jesuits. The paintings also reflect the emperor’s fascination with world religions, he says. “The most famous result of their spiritual leanings were the imperial interfaith debates (1570-1608) held at the royal palaces on Thursday nights, in which the Jesuits debated with Shia, Sunni and Brahmin theologists”.

1. The Sunday Times.
2. Ibid.
"The Mughal cross cultural paintings, says Bailey, have often been relegated to the footnotes of art history texts, because people do not know what to do with hybrid art." However, the Harvard educated scholar was motivated to write his Ph.D. thesis on the works because they show how art was central to the formulation of imperial mughal propaganda as the emperors sought to assign Indian and Islamic meaning to the images and thus convert them into manifestations of their divine right to rule.

Both Jesus and Mary play an important role in the Koran and Islamic literature. In Islamic tradition Jesus will descend on the days of Judgement and rule as the sovereign in Jerusalem. Bailey suggests that this particular attribute...was of prime importance to the ideology of the Mughal emperors who promoted themselves as "mursahs".4

Several paintings have Jesus and Mary as a pair, with Jesus on the left and Mary on the right. "The prominence of this couple—directly over imperial thrones, on the emperor's Jewellery and even on his royal seal—strongly implied a direct reference to the monarchy or to the actual person of the emperor, says Bailey. These works were neither exotic coprices or capitulations5 to western art... They demonstrate how India has always been able to tolerate and absorb other cultures".

The 11th century marked the birth of manuscript illustration in India with the illumination of the palm-leaf Jain and Buddhist manuscripts. In the later part of the 14th century paper began to be used.

In around 1560, Akbar set up his atelier and recruited painters from all the local provinces who worked under Mir Saiyyid Ali and Abdus Samad, the Persian masters. This led to the development of the "Mughal School", which was the synthesis of the Safavid Persian style and provincial Indian styles. The mughal painting was secular and autocratic in character. It is marked by fine draughtsmanship and a simple naturalism based on close

3. Blend of two different styles/traditions.
4. Epic poem.
5. Statement of main parts of the subject.
6. A mix of Persian and Indian Styles.
observation of nature. "Illustrations of the Hamza Nama' showing the exploits of Amir Hamza, uncle of Prophet Mohammad represent an ambitious project which was undertaken and completed during the early period of Akbar's rule."

Akbar's painters embibed several western painting characteristics from the European Rennaissance paintings. Miniature copies of sacred christian pictures which began under Akbar's kingship became more popular under Jahangir. These can be seen in numerous collection of Indian paintings, a noteworthy specimen, now in the British Museum is the "scoffing of christ", is a superbly executed copy of an European original.

By the end of the sixteenth century numerous paintings of European religious themes and of the secular order were painted by the court atelier. In a copy of the Shah Nama illustrated by Akbar's artists is a picture of "Humayun watching a number of women dancing". A miniature also depicts a frieze in the Fatehpur Sikri Palace with a series of panels depicting European pictures of supposedly Portuguese origin. This was followed by arrival of Portuguese and Indian picture who did not travel beyond Goa.

In 1596, a painter of a Jesuit Mission presented himself at Akbar's court and gifted a copy of a picture of the Virgin Mary which Akbar promptly had copied. In his zeal for pictures of all kinds, Akbar encouraged European art in all his dominions and even patronized its painters. This, however, did not lead to much difference in the Mughal style of painting. The handiwork of the painters was more assimilative of the Hindu artists who had frozen some characteristics of European art and confidently placed them in their pictures.

While Akbar showed a decided proclivity for European pictures, his son was even more interested and when he became the Emperor, appears to have developed into a whole-hearted admirer of all forms of "occidental art".

Portraiture was practiced in post-christian Hellinistic Stacco work of India and Central Asia. However, we do not have enough proof to denote that such practices were known and available to the Mughal artists. They were

7. Epic tales in Persian.
8. Natives of Portugal.
influenced by Flemish and perhaps Dutch art prints of which were freely sold in South-East Asian markets and were available in Delhi and Agra markets also. Historical facts of gifts of paintings to the Mughal monarchs can also be seen on records and are well known. That Rembrandt used to copy modes and manner, may be a bit unsuccessfully, of Mughal court painters, especially portraiture is also widely known.

Another fact, which we have been acquainted with for the past 50 years but not referred to often is the long series of typical, courtly Mughal paintings framed in Baroque frames on walls and ceilings of two large rooms of the "Schonbran Palace", near Vienna.

In spite of close contact with the west European Renaissance art and despite their acclimatization in India, from Akbar onwards, the Mughal court and aristocracy remained truly Indian till its very end. The consequence of this is that Mughal miniatures can't be scaled by similar parameters as those used for the elevation of European pictorial art.

"Basawan and Daswanth, won fame and glory, and were highly skilled in the representation of perspective, in drawing, and in the use of colour and portrait he contested with his unfortunate revival for the first place in the time of Akbar. Both artists opened the way for a progressive transformation of Mughal art into a purely Indian art".10

It was only during a later period, that copies and good quality prints of European art reached India. European elements could be seen specially in landscapes of the Mughal miniatures and reading perspectives by and different visual techniques, especially Italian techniques, which resulted in a stark contrast with the vertically rendered perspectives of the Gujarat school.

In the "Indo-Persian" phase of miniature painting, landscapes details were taken from Chinese and Central Asian paintings.

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In 1580, the mission led by the Neopolitan Jesuit Rodolpho Acquaviva gifted Akbar a copy of the Royal Polygot Bible of king Philip II of Spain and a few other art items too. The illumination of the Bible and its fine frontispieces were greatly appreciated in the court. Numerous Indian painters became experts in the precise appraisal of the technical level and quality of European works. The artists favoured an Indian-European specially Italian synthesis. This appreciation was reciprocated by western painters like Rembrandt, Sir Joshua Reynolds, William Schellincks who were impressed and influenced by the Mughal miniatures.

The Mughal style of painting was not only influenced by the western engravings and illumination but they also served as models for preparing copies for the royal albums by the Imperial atelier.

The Mughal painting was termed as "Indo-Persian" by early scholars who considered Mughal paintings as colonial offshoots of the 15th and 16th century Persian paintings.

They are quite incorrect since the Mughal empire was never a Persian colony nor did the Mughal court painting depend solely on Persian sources. On the contrary, the Mughal emperors made free and independent choices conditioned by their ethnic and cultural origins affiliations and contacts.

Percy Brown has authored a very interesting book on a unique phase of Indian painting. Despite sumptuously printed book on Mughal schools, they have been largely neglected by the British connoisseurs and public.

In 1977, Sir Joshua Reynolds himself recorded his appreciation for the beauties of Mughal painting, but his tribute was a solitary one.

Prior to Akbar, there existed a vital and dynamic school of painting, both in book illustrations and portfolio pictures and there existed more than one guild or shreni of the practitioners whom Akbar brought together and consolidated. "The British connoisseur wholly misses the significance of this tribute, and fails to draw the obvious and legitimate conclusion as to the state

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11. A blend of Persian and Indian Styles.
The Mughal school’s development was a landmark in the history of Indian painting. In the Hamza painting, we can actually see Mughal paintings in the making. Their real importance is available from an analysis of their internal evidence, in numerous details have been quite overshadowed by the belief that they were all works of imported Kalmuch painters.

The Mughal style was further influenced by the European painting which made its way to the Mughal court in about 1580 and adopted some of the western techniques like shading and perspective.

Another feature of European art which interested the Mughals was its christian identity, knowledge of christianity was embedded in the Mughal myth and symbolism long before, the arrival of European and models. The great significance attached to the Mughal style of painting was the exposure of Akbar’s atelier with European art and art-forms, Hindu painters learnt 3-D landscape and new colour schemes unknown to Persian painters. Some of the miniatures depicting episodes from Persian poems show Portuguese figures and even Christian saints.

Very few of Akbar’s painters show an individual style. Amongst the most famous in Basawan, whose style was often independent from Persian conventions and colour schemes. His colour palette and dileneation etc. exhibited the European influence.

Akbar was the first monarch to display interest in the handiwork of the European craftsmen. He even appears to have retained a Portuguese official in his service to gather information about them. The scattered knowledge that Akbar had crystallized into concrete information through appointment of an agent sent to Goa to investigate.

The agent, Haji-Habibullah performed his job well. But the results of his efforts have been meagrely recorded. One article which received special

appreciation was a church organ. A court artist, Madho Khanazad, later introduced this instrument in a painting of ‘a musician charming a large concourse of wild beasts who lie helplessly around him’.

Akbar’s desires for productions of the west increased and seemed he began to devise other methods of securing what he coveted. This included extending hospitality for long periods to Jesuit missionaries. In one of the suites of the "House of Miriam" in Akbar’s Fatehpur Sikri, one can see the facted remains of a massive mural the subject of which is supposed to be "the announcement". The missionaries came prepared with numerous painting of saints and religious topics, which seem to have been greatly appreciated. The result of the study of these is evident in a number of miniatures.

As per Mughal tradition, numerous painters were commissioned a single manuscript. Copying them the courtiers and provincial officials also employed artists well versed in the Mughal technique of painting. They could, however afford only artists of inferior merit. Their work of these painters is known as the "Popular Mughal".

Illuminated historical manuscripts are very many, especially of Akbar’s period. The most outstanding in Islamic art is the Akbar Nama containing 17 folios which are extremely compelling though non-uniform in quality. Basawan, however has surpassed all painters and ever himself in his renderings.

The works of several German and Finnish engravers was known to them Durer, H.S. Beham, Haerten Van Heemskerck, Sadeler, Wieircx and Pieter Vander Heyden are represented by original or superb copies in the Mughal imperial albums. These copies were made by Kesu, Kesava Das, Nadira Banu, Abu'l Hasan and others. All copies, except the one depicting the figure of St. John, which is only slighting tinted, are fully coloured as per the western colour schemes thus confirming that the artists had free access to the European paintings or to the advice of Europeans.

13. Bible, the sister of Moses and Aaron.
Akbar's interest in other western art is also undeniable. In 1581, he was fascinated by a European organ which can be seen in one of the margin pictures of Jahangir's albums leaves. In 1582, he hung what we believe to be tapestries in his palace. In the same year the Mughal painters made copies of the lord and the virgin Mary and in 1602 copied a replica of the 'Madonna del Topolo'.

In twenty years from 1595 to 1615, one observes numerous instances of a thorough assimilation of the western pictorial science.

During Akbar's reign, Daswanth was amongst the nine Hindu painters who rendered oblong miniature to this manuscript aligned with the spine of the book. Similar to early, Deccani and pre-Mughal paintings.

Basawan, was another Hindu of unknown origin who became a leading light of the atelier and was next to Daswanth in this achievement in the Jaipur 'Razm Nama'. Daswanth was Abdus Samad's pupil and Basawan's competitor. Though these painters adopted certain European techniques and elements of European art, the character and basic presentation of three drawing skills were truly Indian.

A few painters whose names are written below the miniature of the Darab Nama belonged to Lahore, the imperial seat after the abandonment of Fatehpur Sikri in 1585. The drawing is vigorous and strong, sometimes even coarse and colours and even crude, quite different from the soft tones of the Safavi school—all except one leaf which carries the unexpected name of Abdus Samad. The more forward looking painters who also participated are Miskin, Nanha, Bhurah, Sarwan and Kanha also depict Deccani costumes, thus revealing a wider horizon. These are a minority of the illustration, these artists are represented by only one picture apiece. Miskin and Basawan were to become two of the leading painters in the last year of Akbar's reign and Kanha and Sarwan also flourished till the end of that period.

15. Epic tales in Persian.
The *Darab Nama* is thus most significant for its promise for the future and it’s evidence of the vigour of the school at this time. The bulk of the miniatures are dominated by the Harsh reds and greens which seem to characterise the palette of Lahore.

The imitation of European pictures and techniques began during Akbar’s reign (after 1582) and carried on till the late seventeenth century. Any influence observed in the Mughal painting must be due to the first mission. Internal proof indicates that engraving and illustrated manuscript were available in the atelier. Their elements influenced the artistic expression of the country.

The direct contact due to the Jesuit priests led to the introduction of European art in the Mughal court. It’s said that the fathers also presented a copy of the Bible to Akbar who received it with great reverence and also commanded his artists to copy pictures of christ and the virgin which the fathers had with them and directed a gala reliquary to be made. Records of such painting prove that the adaptations from European paintings did not influence the artists to any visible extent, they retained their Indian traditions, and worked under instructions to satisfy their patron’s fancy than learn anything new.

Both Deccani and Mughal artists invited European prints but their interests greatly varied and allow us to distinguish between these two contemporary Islamic traditions, working with Indian artists. We note that the Mughal artist used cloth to enhance the bright and mass of the bodies by highlighting and shading its thesis and was close to the identified European source. Conversely, the Deccan artists renders a rich pattern of drapery folds and shading was used not to increase the sense of physical existence, but to intensify.

Mr. Percy Brown excuses the British neglect of the Mughal school by saying that it was on occasional and that now its chance of scaling a fairly high peak in the sphere of pictorial art seems assured. Few agree with his
remarks. Before Mr. Havell noted his admiration, the Mughal miniatures were neglected on the assumption that they were a decadent branch of Persian painting.

"To, Dr. Coomaraswamy, the students of this school are indebted in numerous respects, but Dr. Brown must be credited for attempting a pioneering monograph on the subject with sufficient materials. His selection from various collections for the very first lead to new information being documented. This included the hitherto unknown coloured plates from the Rampur State Library". The most valuable of these materials is a page in Mongolian style from the history of the Mongols. Apart from the painting being of an unsurpassable quality, its an important document for the history and development of Persian painting. But, despite its numerous obligations to the Central Asian Schools, especially the Timurid, the Mughal school had its own indigenous quality.

Mr. Brown has been completely unsuccessful in drawing the legitimate conclusions as to the state and temper of the surviving indigenous school on which Akbar founded the Mughal school. Mr. Brown further confuses the issue by his somewhat confusing remark: "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 factor ignored by Mr. Brown is that the indigenous picture tradition in its Rajput existed and flourished simultaneously with the Mughal tradition of painting.

Thus we can conclude the discussion on the foundation of the Mughal school by Abu’l Fazl’s remarks: “when the Moghul 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 they had in contemplation might be most surely founded”.

Abu’l Fazl proudly claimed that the masterpieces produced at the Imperial atelier were comparable to the works of the master painters of Persia (such

18. Ibid.
as Bihzad), and of Europe. He specifically observed that the miniatures now exhibited greater realism and commended the painters’ command of fine detail, clarity of line, firmness of hand, freshness.

Mughal miniature painting also gained recognition outside India among contemporary European painters. It most celebrated European admirer was undoubtedly Rembrandt (1606–69). He not only had Mughal miniatures in his collection, but also tried his hand at working in the Mughal style.

Akbar’s history manuscripts were the great exhibitionist texts of the reign. In the short period of twenty year from 1555, when Bairam Khan had reconquered Delhi for Humayun to 1575, when Akbar ruled over a vast territory the Mughals had moved from failure to success and from insecurity to relative stability.

Akbar thus commissioned an illustrated account of his ancestor Timur about 1584. In order to stress the greatness of Mughal victory, imperial artist recreated in vishal terms the sensations of explosions, assaults and marches with an immediacy previously unknown. The style employed for the fabulous tales of the Hamza Nama were smoothly altered as these men experimented with ever more sophisticated naturalistic devices. The highly-trained miniatures, some of whom travelled as observers of Akbar’s battles, organized scenes so that new panoramic views of cities, impenetrable hill fortresses, and tortuous rivers became possible.

The Beatty collection includes a battle scene from a Babur Nama, a scene of Akbar’s childhood taken from the first great copy of the biographical Akbar Nama, nearly the last of the emperor’s extensive histories which describes his Mongol ancestors.

Several of the last miniatures reflect Akbar’s curiosity about remote European cultures. The emperor’s most extensive contacts with Europeans were those with portuguese christians, including the Jesuit missionaries invited to his court. Akbar first met a portuguese delegation from Goa in 1573 when he was besieging the western port city of Surat.
European prints and probably paintings came from other sources also. Their influence is discernible in miniatures, such as ones from the Cleveland Tuti Nama completed before Akbar's introduction to the Portuguese in 1573, and it therefore appears that from the early years of the reign prints were available as a result of sea trade. The predominance of religious subjects in the copies and paraphrases made by Akbari artists indicates, however, that the Jesuits were the major contacts in the letter part of the period. Among the miniatures belonging to the libraries are two that typical the chief kinds of imitation found at the Mughal court. 'Joseph Telling His Dream', is a close copy of a European print that contrasts with belonged to Prince Salim.

Akbar had rejected Persian culture in order to develop a strong indigenous style. Writing of the imperial atelier, Abu'l Fazl repudiates the idea ways in which native artists had come to excel. Akbar had deliberately forged a style with which Indian could identify and take pride in. The radically different views of life held by the emperor and his heir Salim resulted in quarrels and estrangement in Akbar's last year.

MY FINDING AND CRITICAL EVALUATION

The illustration of Buddhist and Jain manuscripts in 11th century AD marked the birth of miniature painting in India.

During the 14th century the Persian style of painting influenced the western India style but it was the 16th century that the Mughal school was born under Emperor Akbar.

Akbar and his painters were introduced to European Rennaissance painting through the Jesuit priests who presented pictures and books of religious art. Akbar was deeply interested in European art and ordered his painters to make copies of them. Several excellent copies of pictures like "the scoffing of christ", "virgin Mary and Child" etc can be seen.

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Even the painting depicting various parts of the palace at Fatehpur Sikri show friezes on the walls which consisted of series of panels depicting European pictures of supposedly Portuguese origins. Several Portuguese and European artists stayed in Goa and painted religious art in the several churches built by the Portuguese. In his zeal for pictures of all kinds, Akbar encouraged European art in all its dominions and even patronized its painters, but by and large, the paintings of Akbar's time depict only in a modified degree, the western influence.

Portraiture was known and practiced in post-christian Hellenistic Stucco work of India and Central Asia, clearly in imitation of graeco-Roman portraiture and may be Ajanta frescoes. The European Renaissance portraiture and prints were freely sold in the South-Asian markets and made their way to the Mughal court. The Mughal painting was vital and receptive enough to absorb a number of elements of contemporary west European Renaissance painting. But the result is that the activity of the Mughal miniatures cannot be measured by the same parameters as those used for the elevation of European pictorial art.

Basawan and Daswanth were brilliant perspectivists who paved the way for the transformation of Mughal art into a purely Indian one though it was only later that copies and good quality prints reached India, however, the Italian techniques were specially adopted for landscapes and perspectives. These techniques were superimposed with other rendering techniques taken from Chinese and Central Asian painting.

The influence of European and Mughal art was mutual. Renaissance painters like Rembrandt and Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dutch master-William Schellenks were greatly impressed by the Indian miniatures and Rembrandt specially even imitated the Mughal miniatures brush-strokes but in a different medium-oil...
In the context of the Mughal schools, practically cartloads of pictures have rested in the British Archives for nearly half a century before it could be stated that they evoked any interest in English connoisseurship.

Apart from the perspectives and shading techniques, another characteristic which interested the Mughals was its "christian identity". The knowledge of christianity was embedded in the Mughal myth and symbolism since a very long time. Some of the miniatures depicting episodes from Persian poems show Portuguese figures and even christian saints.

Akbar was the first monarch to be interested in European art and craftsmanship. He obtained concrete knowledge about the christian religious paintings by sending agents to do so and even by retaining Portuguese officers in his service. He sent his agent on one such mission to Goa. Among other recording, one article which received special appreciation was a "church again" which was later introduced in a painting by a court artist, Madho Khanazad.

Akbar's desires for productions of the west increased and soon he began to devices new methods of scouring what he coveted. This included inviting Jesuit priests, and offering them long term hospitality and establishing contact with the merchant adventures from the west. They in turn, gifted him illuminated copies of the Bible, illustrations and engravings.

The work of numerous German and Finnish engravers were known to the Mughal court painters. Durer, H.S. Beham, Maerten Van Heemskeeck and Sadeler, Wiericx and Preter vander Heyder are represented by original or superb copies in the Mughal albums. Copies by Kesu and Kesava Das are known. Copies of other European prints by Nadira Banu, Abul Hasan are also known.

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The western colour schemes of a majority of them indicate that the artists had free access to European paintings or to the advance of Europeans.

The ateliers master painters, Daswanth and Basawan exhibit excellent understanding of the western techniques. This is evident from the miniatures of the Jaipur 'Razm Nama', the Anwar-i-Suhaili. The other forward looking others who participated in painting the Darabnama are Miskin, Nanha, Bhurah Sarwan, Kanha along with the unexpected name of Abdus Samad. In this however, the harsh pallette of Lahore was mainly used.

Thus, during Akbar's reign (after 1582) began the assimilation of European pictures and figures. Landscapes and motifs were now shown as salient features of the composition. This tradition contained till the late seventeenth century internal proof indicates that two types of European pictorial art was available to the Mughal atelier - engravings and illustrated manuscripts. We observe here that the characteristics of European art impressed upon the artistic expression of the country.

The direct contact between India and England commenced in the later part of the 16th century. Pictures and religious manuscript, included a copy of the Bible was presented to the Emperor who promptly got them painted. However, this did not influence the Mughal artists to a great extent, since very few paintings, rendered while European art copies were made, depict European influence during the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir.

The European prints were copied by both Deccani and Mughal artists but their Islamic traditions were quite contrary. The European techniques were used differently by both the schools. The mughals used highlighting and shading to mark the forms to exist whereas the Deccanis did it to intensify the portrait or picture painted.
Mr. Percy Brown has stated that since Sir Joshua Reynolds had recorded his admiration for a few Mughal miniatures in the British Miniature albums, with only occasional periods of neglect. Few, however agree with this statement.

Prior to Mr. Havell recording his admiration the Mughal miniatures were neglected on the assumption that they were a decadent branch of Persian painting and very not given due attention by the British.

Mr. Brown must however be credited for his attempt to write a monograph on the subject, armed with sufficient materials. His choice from the various collections led to, for the very first time, new information being documented, which included the laudable discovering of material, till now unknown, from the Rampur State Library. Inspite of its numerous obligations to the Central Asian Schools, the Mughal school had its own indigenous qualities.

Mr. Brown has completely failed to draw the obvious and legitimate conclusion as to the state and temper of the surviving indigenous school on which Akbar had based his foundation. He also missed another view that simultaneous with the Mughal school, the indigenous Rajput school flourished which was completely based on the folk psychology and culture of the Hindu population.

We thus conclude that the later Mughal paintings were not only an enchanting synthesis of the Persian and provincial Indian styles, but also had embibed the real life depiction of the western Renaissance styles. The amalgamation of these styles, which began under Akbar's able guidance, culminated in the Mughal school which we know today.