CHAPTER 6

FINE ARTS

Calligraphy

Calligraphy or the art of beautiful writing was unique among the fine arts and had a sacred character with the Muslims. It was a pursuit of beauty and expression of thought as well as of aesthetic sense. This art of fine penmanship exercised a great influence on other fine arts, specially on painting. The calligraphers occupied a special position in society. Calligraphy was regarded as an aristocratic art. Kings, princes and nobles practised it, and also took pride in it. Prince Khusrau and Sultan Parvez (sons of Jahangir), Emperor Shah Jahan and Prince Dara Shikoh were great masters of calligraphy. Calligraphy began with the *Kufic* style. It was so named because it was first officially used in *Kufa*. From the early times of Islam it was practised there. Gradually these *Kufic* forms were replaced by softer and rounder shapes. These shapes gave the impression of ornaments, and the European artists copied them as ornamental designs without a suspicion that they were writing. The *Kalima* inscribed in Arabic on the gate of St. Peters in Rome bears a testimony to this statement. Calligraphy had seven styles. Muhammad Asghar who served both Humayun and Akbar was a famous calligrapher and poet. He could write in all the seven styles.

In medieval India there was no printing press and hence printed books were not available. All books were manuscripts, written by hand. Sanskrit and Indian vernacular manuscripts were generally composed by ordinary scribes because the Sanskrit alphabet does not easily lend itself to the calligraphic art,
and hence the Hindus had no calligrapher at their service to copy manuscripts. The Arabic alphabet, on the other hand, lends itself gracefully to the calligraphic art. Hence the Muslims developed calligraphy and employed calligraphers for copying manuscripts. Good handwriting was a necessity before the invention of printing. So painting and calligraphy were taught to the students in the houses of individual teachers. Calligraphy as an art was considered superior to the art of painting. The calligrapher (Khashnavis) was a man of greater prestige than the painter (naqqas).

The art of calligraphy flourished in India from the beginning of the Muslim rule. Several buildings of the Sultanate period bear inscriptions of calligraphic value. Sultan Nasir-ud-din Mahmud and Muhammad-bin-Tughluq were themselves good calligraphers. The former used to copy the Quran himself. It was not however, until the advent of Mughal rule that the art of calligraphy attained its highest development in the country. The patronage of the Mughal Emperors who encouraged it both as a sisterly art to painting and for copying books of eminent authors, induced many Persian calligraphers to migrate to India. Calligraphy also formed an important factor in the training of princes. Hence many of the Emperors were themselves good calligraphers.

We hear little of calligraphy under Babur and Humayun. Babur, however, invented a new style of writing in 1504 A.D. known as the Baburi Khat. According to Mr. A.S. Beveridge, the Rampur manuscript of the Babur-nama dated 1530 A.D. may be in this Baburi style. Humayun himself was a good calligrapher.
Along with other arts, calligraphy received great encouragement and patronage from Emperor Akbar. His Majesty showed much regard to this art and took a great interest in the different systems of writing. So a large number of calligraphers received encouragement from him. Famous calligraphers got honourable titles from the Emperor as recognition of their merit. Abul Fazl speaks of eight modes of calligraphy being in vogue in Akbar's reign, of which the nastaliq was a special favourite of the Emperor himself.

Abul Fazl gives the names of the leading calligraphers at Akbar's court. The most famous of them was Muhammad Husain of Kashmir, who was conferred the title of Zarrin-qalam (or, the gold pen). His son Muhammad Ali who wrote as excellently as his father, had a special skill in the Khat-i-jalli. Of the other renowned calligraphers of Akbar's time, Abul Fazl mentions Maulana Baqir, the son of the illustrious Mir Ali of Herat, Muhammad Amin of Mashtag, Mir Husain-i Kulanki, Maulana Abdul Haq, who was an expert in Baburi Khat, Maulana Dawri on whom Akbar conferred, the title of Katib-ul-Mulk and who, according to Badauni, was the best writer of Nastaliq in Hindustan, Maulana Abdur Rahim, Mir Abdulla, Nizami of Quzurin, Alichaman of Kashmir as well as Akbar's private secretary Ashraf Khan who improved the Jaliq very much. Inayatullah Shirzani who was a librarian in the Imperial Library was also a good penman.

The art of penmanship grew as a sequel to the patronage offered by the Mughal Emperor to Persian prose and poetry which necessitated the works of the best authors to be written down with as much elegance and elaboration, as their quality demanded. The huge volumes of poetical works like Firdausi's
Shahnama, Nizami's Khamsa, Amir Khusrau’s Masnavi, Jami’s Yusuf-u-Zulaikha, Faizi’s Naldaman and other simple poems were copied by scribes in elegant hand with profuse illustrations at Akbar’s order. Also sundry works on history and fables like the Tarikh-i-Alfi, the Dastan-i-Amir Hamza, the Tarikh-i-Krishnaji, the Zafarnama and the Darabnama were similarly written in a beautiful hand. Of the 12 to 15 thousand volumes of precious manuscripts in Akbar's library, a good many were caused to be re-written in elegant naskh and nastaliq. Similarly, of the four thousand volumes in Faizi’s library, most of the manuscripts were contemporary productions on which, according to Badauni, he spent a large sum of money from his jagir. The activities at the court of Mirza Abdur Rahim, who was a great patron of learning and a great penman himself and who possessed a good library, can easily be guessed. The Superintendent of his library Mulla Muhammad Kashan who was also a good penman was paid a monthly salary of Rs. 4000/-. Smaller works on romance and love and selected poems were often caused to be written in fine silky paper.

This process naturally led to the creation of a taste among the common people for beautiful handwriting which soon came to be regarded as a fine art and an essential part of a scholarly and cultured gentleman. A good many instances can be quoted of poets and prose-writers who were also good calligraphers. Faizi, Badauni, Abul Fazl, Nishani and others, to quote only a few examples, were expert calligraphers. It is clear, therefore, that Akbar's inability to write himself did not prevent his giving every encouragement to the art of elegant penmanship as an aid to book production and propagation of education through books. Akbar's contemporary Ibrahim Adil Shah of Bijapur
was also a patron of the great calligrapher. Mir Khalilullah Shah who made a beautiful copy of the *Nau Ras* presented it to the king. Ibrahim Adil Shah bestowed on him the title of ‘the king of the pen’, and as a mark of special honour made him sit on the royal throne.\(^\text{10}\)

![Fig. 18. Mughal *Nash* by Ismat Allah](image)

![Fig. 19. Mughal *Shikastah* by Muhammad ‘Ali](image)

Emperor Jahangir was also a great lover of calligraphy. He was a great admirer of Mulla Mir Ali’s calligraphy and in 1610 A.D. received from the Khan-i-Khanan, as an offering, a manuscript of Yusuf Zulaikha in the handwriting of Mulla Mir Ali with illustrations and in a beautiful gilt binding,
worth 1000 muhars. A note by Shah Jahan refers to February 14, 1628, as the date of the receipt of the manuscript at the Imperial Library. Abdur Rahim was the famous calligrapher at the court of Jahangir on whom the Emperor conferred the double titles of Anbarin Qalam and Roohan Qalam. He took part in transcribing the manuscript of Chihar Majlis, a book on Sufism, by Ala-ud-daula Samnavi at Agra in 1611-12 A.D.

Shah Jahan himself was a good calligrapher and his reign was marked by a notable development of the calligraphic art. He very much admired the wonderful nastaliq of Mir Imadul Husain of Qazvin and took particular care to train his sons in calligraphy. Shah Jahan’s court was adorned by a galaxy of noted masters of penmanship.

Aurangzeb’s hobby of copying the Quran is well-known. He appointed Sayyid Ali, Jawahir Ragam as the instructor of his son and superintendent of his library. Aurangzeb himself acquired sufficient proficiency in penmanship. In his reign we find the development of the shikasta style side by side with the nastaliq. Aurangzeb learnt the nastaliq from Sayyid Ali and the naskh from Md. Arif. His sons also became excellent calligraphers. The author of the Halat-i-Khushnawisan writes that he saw illuminated copies of the Quran transcribed excellently by the princes. Muhammad Baqir was another calligrapher of Aurangzeb’s reign, very much appreciated for his writing. Hidayatullah, Zarrin Qalam a pupil of Sayyid Ali, was also a court calligrapher of Aurangzeb. He was appointed Superintendent of the Imperial Library and instructor of the Emperor’s sons. Another calligrapher of Aurangzeb was Abdullah whom he gave the title of Darayat Khan.
Calligraphy continued to flourish under the later Mughals. Murad Khan, a specialist in the *shikasta* style and Mohammad Afzal were two noted calligraphers of the court of Muhammad Shah. Even the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah II, could write several scripts with a special taste for the *naskh*. Like the Emperors and the princes many well-to-do persons also loved to copy books in a most attractive hand and to treasure them in their own private collections.

Calligraphy has long ceased to be recognised as a fine art, but before the invention of the printing press, it was, in fact, a qualification. A person who was found to be wanting in this qualification was considered to be wanting in scholarship itself. Letter-writing as well as penmanship as highly prized in Mughal India.¹³

Specimens of handwriting of the best calligraphers of this age were preserved with utmost care in albums, some of which are existent even today. Calligraphy was so highly valued during the Mughal period, that it formed a special subject of study.¹⁴ Manuscripts were sold and bought at very high prices, especially by those who had a keen desire to make self-improvement through reading and learning. Jahangir was one such lover of learning and he would purchase valuable manuscripts even at ridiculous prices.¹⁵ A calligrapher and a painter were in those days, honoured equally.¹⁶

**Sculptures**

It goes to the credit of the Great Mughals that they emancipated this art from the orthodox restrictions against it, freed it from obsolete taboos and entirely secularized it, again like the contemporary art of painting. It developed
as Court (Darbari) art and, with the disappearance of the count patronage, into 
People's art, as is illustrated by the *guldasta panels* of the Tomb of Firuz Khan 
Khwajasara at Agra.

Fig. 20. Guldasta and Wine-vase compositions with Birds, Western Gate of the 
Akbar Tomb
The age of Mughal sculpture ranges from Babur to Jahangir, roughly from 1526 to 1627 A.D. Some masterpieces were produced during the course of its development. Jahangir’s reign (1605-27) was certainly the golden era of Mughal scripture, when overall emphasis was given on the making of full, round, free-standing scriptures.

Fig. 21. Painting from the Akbar Namah, c. 1590 depicting the Hathi Pol of Fatehpur Sikri
William Finch, who visited Agra in the reign of Jahangir, speaks of the statues of 'two Rajas', created over one of the gates of that city by order of either Akbar or Jahangir. These figures, which we remounted on elephants are supposed to have represented two of the grandson of Raja Bhagwan Das of Jaipur, who were slain in a struggle with some of the nobles of the place, though possibly they were the statues of Jaimal and Patta, erected by Akbar. It is also certain that Jahangir commanded two life size marble statues of the Rana of Chitor and his son to be erected in the place garden at Agra, below the darshanjhorokha, at which he daily appeared before the eyes of his subjects.

Lastly we have the evidence of Bernier that in 1663, during the early years of Aurangzeb's reign, the Delhi Gate of Delhi remarkable for the statues of two men mounted on elephants, who dislike of such effigies may have been aggravated by the fact that in all probability they were originally the handiwork of Hindu scriptors.

Gardens

Gardens doubtless existed in India before the advent of the Mughals. Firuz Shah, indeed, is said to have planted twelve hundred gardens near Delhi at the end of the fourteenth century. But these were probably in the old Hindu style and bore little resemblance to the irrigated pleasaunces associated with the name of the Timurids. Babur, with vivid recollections of his motherland, Farghana, and its 'beautiful gardens of Ush, gay with violates, tulips, and roses in their seasons', laments in his Memoirs the lack of fair gardens in Hindustan; and Abu-1 Fazl in a passage of his Ain-i-Akbari explains that prior to Babur's arrival the Indian garden was planned on no method and possessed no
pavilions nor murmuring fountains. The art of garden-building, which Babur brought with him to India and bequeathed to his successors, had been fully developed in Persia and Turkestan: its main characteristic was artificial irrigation in the form of channels, basins or tanks, and dwarf waterfalls, so built that the water brimmed to the level of the paths on either side; and the plan involved a series of terraces on sloping ground, usually numbering eight to correspond with the eight divisions of the Quranic Paradise, but sometimes seven, to symbolize the seven planets.\textsuperscript{20} The main pavilion, which has been described as the climax of the garden, usually occupied the topmost terrace, giving wide views on all sides; but was sometimes built on the lowest terrace of all, in order to offer the occupant an uninterrupted vista of the fountains and waterfalls, ranging upwards through the garden. The ground-plan of the Persian and Mughal garden was a square or rectangle, divided into a series of smaller squares or parterres, the whole 'being encircled by a high wall with serrated battlements, pierced by a lofty gateway. The larger gardens were usually provided with four gateways, and small octagonal buildings marked the angles of the outer walls.\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Shalamar_Bagh_Lahore.jpg}
\caption{Shalamar Bagh, Lahore. The top terrace, formerly the zenana garden. The balcony of the pavilion at the end of the central canal overlooks the two lower terraces.}
\end{figure}
The Mughal gardens path were generally raised above the flower-beds which bordered them, and the main squares or parterres were sunk below the level of the paths and their flower-borders, and were planted with fruit-trees, rose-bushes, and flowers of tall growth. Sometimes the separate squares composing the garden were each consecrated to a single kind of flower-tulip, rose, violet, etc. occasionally a whole garden 'was devoted to one special bloom.' After the Mughals had become firmly settled in the plains of India, the character of their gardens underwent a certain alteration. Sloping ground was not always to be found; the heat of India rendered a good supply of water vital for bodily coolness. Consequently, by the close of Akbar's reign, the main watercourse of the garden had been much increased in width sometimes to a
breadth of twenty feet or more, as can be seen in the Shalamar Bagh built by Jahangir in Kashmir; a little later, the smaller canals were so widened as to require elaborate stepping-stones, which formed an integral feature of the design; and both the reservoirs and canals were furnished with fountains. A typical Mughal garden of the plains, such as usually, formed the setting of the tombs and mausolea of princes of the imperial line and the nobility, was the garden of Akbar's tomb at Sikandarah. The groundplan is the original fourfold plot (char-bagh) adopted by Babur – a huge square enclosure laid out in the form of a Cosmic cross. In the middle stands the mausoleum, flanked by tanks with central fountains, supplying the narrow watercourses which once ran down the centre of the stone pathways. In many cases the channels and watercourses were paved with one ceramic ware, as at the Shalamar Bagh of Lahore. The cypress, the wild pine, the plane-tree and the areca-nut palm grew in the parterres that bordered the channels of the Sikandarah garden. In most of the gardens built by the nobels of the Mughal age the central baradari served as a summer-house during the owner's lifetime, and on his death became his mausoleum; and the garden was then devoted to religious purposes, its fruit and flowers being distributed to its custodians or to Fakirs and wayfarers. The garden of the Taj Mahal is based on the same fourfold field plot, but differs from other tomb-gardens in having a beautiful marble tank in the centre of the plot instead of the tomb, which in this case stands at the end of the garden, overlooking the river.

All the Mughal Emperors, Jahangir in particular, inherited a love of wandering and camping from their central Asian ancestors. Even Aurangzeb made a royal progress to Kashmir, though most of his tent-life, which lasted
for many years before his death, was due rather to military exigencies than to the *envie d’errer* which characterized his predecessors. Jahangir was ‘the royal stroller *par excellence*’ and time after time his love of Nature and the open country drove him and his Queen to Kashmir, where the Nishat, the Shalamar, the Achebal and the Vernag Gardens bear mute witness to his affection for the Happy Valley. Those pleasure-gardens ‘climbing in superposed platforms the gently ascending hill which sends down upon them in successive falls the mass of its waters, reveal a whole aspect of the pensive, sensuous, pastoral soul of Islam. At the other end of its empire, under the western horn of the crescent, another garden, that of the Alhambra, preserves the fame of one of the most seductive spots on earth. Both are halting places of the Believer, palaces or tombs, retreats of voluptuousness or death, flowering limits placed by ironical fate to mark the will of man and the glory of God’. European travellers of the seventeenth century were not slow to recognize the spell of these imperial gardens. Edward Terry (1616-19) remarked the ‘curious gardens, planted with fruitful trees and delightfull flowers, to which Nature daily lends such a supply as that they seem never to fade. In these places they have pleasant fountaynes to bathe in and other delights by sundries conveyances of water, whose silent murmure helps to lay their senses with the bonds of sleepe in the hot seasons of the day’. Bernier in 1665 gave a graphic description of the Shalamar Gardens of Kashmir, in the summer-tide of their beauty, and spoke with admiration of the pavilions, of which the black marble pillars alone now remain. Yet even now, in the twilight of its glory, with ‘its masses of purple rock seamed with snow, the light green foliage of the plane-trees, the shrubs and lilac blossoms’, the Shalamar Bagh is a pleasant place wherein to dream of the
glory of its founder and the Empress Nur Jahan.

Many passages in Babur’s famous Memoirs portray his close observation and keen interest in Nature, and show that his rude temperament yielded to the subtle influence of flowers. He laid out and improved many of the gardens round Kabul, like the Bagh-i-Kilan and the Bagh-i-Vafa or ‘Garden of Fidelity’. The latter and ‘the Fountain of the Three Friends’ were two of his favourite retreats; and he describes the garden as laid out on an elevated sites, overlooking the river and watered by a perennial stream. There he planted sugar-cane and plantains, and orange-trees around the reservoir in the south-western corner. The ground round the latter – ‘the very eye of the beauty of the garden’ – was a mass of clover. After fixing on Agra as his capital he commenced to lay out the Aram Bagh on the banks of the Jumna – the earliest Mughal garden still existing in India which was chosen later by the Empress Nur Jahan as one of her favourite country retreats. In it he built reservoirs, baths, and private pavilions, and sowed the beds with roses and narcissi. Babur’s pavilions, and sowed the beds with roses and narcissi, Babur’s historical taste and knowledge must have been considerable; for, according to Jahangir’s Memoirs, an avenue of areca-nut palms, which he planted in one of the Agra gardens, had reached a height of 90 feet in the time of his great grandson, while in another garden, which he named the ‘Flower-scatterer’, he obtained hundreds of pine-apples every year and feasted his eyes on a wealth of red-blossomed oleanders, which he had transplanted from Gwalior. Elsewhere he speaks of getting fine grapes from the vines which he planted in
his 'Garden of Eight Paradises'. The other principal garden laid out during Babur’s reign was the Zuhara Bagh, a walled enclosure watered by sixty wells, which lay between the Ram Bagh and the Chini-ka-Rauza, and belonged to one of the Emperor’s daughters: but several of Babur’s courtiers and nobles, spurred by his example, built elegant gardens an reservoirs on the banks of the river at Agra.32

To Humayun's brief reign belongs the garden to round his tomb at Delhi, which still preserves intact its original plan. The fruit and shade-giving trees have vanished, but the restoration in late years of the stone channels and the fountain-basins enables one to realize the character of this early Mughal pleasance. Akbar inherited his grandfather’s love of horticulture. 'His Majesty', writes Abu-I Fazl, 'looks upon plants as one of the greatest gifts of the Creator and pays much attention to them. Horticulturists of Iran and Turan have therefore settled here, and the cultivation of trees is in a flourishing state'. Though less passionately attached to gardens than Jahangir and Shah Jahan, he built ‘paradises’ at Fathpur Sikri and Sikandrah and also planned the Nisim Bagh, the first Mughal garden in Kashmir, on the shores of the Dal.

Before he succeeded to the throne, Jahangir had indulged his passion for gardens by laying out several at Udaipur. The origin of the patterns of the Persian floral carpets can be traced in the flower-beds of these Udaipur gardens which were worked out in bricks covered with fine polished plaster.33 He describes in his Memoirs another which he built at Sarhind, containing a rose bordered avenue, flanked on either side by evergreens, cypresses and plane-trees, which led to a parterre of 'the choicest and most variegated
flowers'. One of his gardens at Ahmadabad contained orange, lemon, peach, pomegranate, and apple-trees, and 'among flowering shrubs, every kind of rose'. Two of the most noteworthy gardens in India, constructed during his reign, were the tomb-garden of Itimad-u-daula at Agra, and the Shahdara, Nur Jahan's 'Garden of Delight', five miles from Lahore, which is built on much the same plan as the garden at Sikandarah and contains a series of raised fountain-tanks, forming eight large chabutras round the mausoleum. It was here that the Emperor Jahangir was buried, despite his dying request to be carried back to the Vernag Bagh in Kashmir-the favourite resort if himself and the Empress, which bears upon the wall of its reservoir his own inscription, 'The King raised this building to the skies: the angel Gabriel gave its date 1609'.

If we except the garden of the Taj Mahal, the Shalamal garden at Lahore, which was commenced in 1634 under the supervision of Ali Mardan Khan, is probably the best-known of the gardens built by Shah Jahan. It consists of two char-baghs, joined by a narrower terrace, which carries at its central point a large raised reservoir. On either side of the reservoir are pavilions, and the whole circumference is laid out in flower-beds. Another Shalamar Bagh was built at Delhi by Azu-n nissa, one of Shah Jahan's wives, and was described by an English officer in 1793 as laid out with admirable taste. It was in this garden that Aurangzeb was first crowned, after the deposition of his father; it was here that he made his first halt on his journey to Lahore and Kashmir in 1664. Both the palaces at Delhi and Agra contained gardens. In the former the two principal retreats were the 'Life-giving garden' and the 'Moon garden'; but connected with the women's apartments were
smaller gardens, one of which is glorified by an inscription on the wall of the Khwabgah:

Like a lamp in an assembly, and this clear canal, whose limpid water is as a mirror for every creature that sees and, for the sage, unveils the mystic world, and these cascades, each of which, one light say, is the whiteness of the morning or else a tablet stolen from the secrets of fate. 36

Fig 24. From the first floor of the entrance gateway. The red sandstone building to the left of the Taj is a mosque, Distinguished pilgrims were made welcome in the building on the right.

The Palace at Agra enshrined the Anguri Bagh or Grape garden, in front of the Khas Mahal – a typical old Mughal garden laid out in geometrical stone-edged parterres, with four terraced walks radiating from a central chabutra, with a raised fountain tank. It must have been from some such scheme of flower-beds as still exists in outline in this garden that the craftsmen obtained the design of the old Firdous ('Paradise') carpets. 37 Other gardens dating from Shah Jahan's reign were the Talkatora Bagh near Delhi, in which the whole
terrace at one end formed a roof-garden, and the garden of the unfortunate Dara Shikoh at Kashmir, now styled the Vazir Bagh.

Aurangzeb denied himself many pleasures naturally belonging to humanity, and the passion for gardens and flowers, which distinguished his predecessors, died at the chill touch of his rigid orthodoxy. Such a thought as that which Jahangir once expressed regarding a perfume - 'it restores hearts that have gone and brings back withered souls' - could never have occurred to Aurangzeb, who wore the plainest clothes, declined to use vessels of silver and gold, and devoted all his leisure thoughts to religion. Nevertheless, the art of garden-building was not wholly in abeyance during his reign. A fair garden was built round the Badshahi mosque at Lahore; the Emperor's foster-brother, Fadai Khan, built a fine garden at Pinjor (Panchpura), which lies off the road from Ambala to Simla; the Emperor's daughter, Zebu-n nissa, laid out the well-known Char Burji garden in Lahore; and Roshanara Begam lies buried in the white pavilion with creeper-clad walls, which stands on the upper terrace of the pleasance that still bears her name. This garden was entered by the usual Mughal gateway, which was linked with the tomb of the princess by a raised canal, bordered by beds of flowers and pricked with a row of small fountains. Time has dealt hardly with the gardens or the Mughal age, and many of those built by the nobility in the reign of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan have vanished entirely. But enough remains of the principal tomb-gardens and 'paradises', as the old English monks styled such retreats, to suggest that their former attractiveness may well have deserved the eulogy inscribed upon the gate of the Shalamar Bagh at Lahore:

Sweet is this garden, through envy of which the tulip is spotted;
The rose of the sun and moon forms its beautiful lamp.

**Jewellery**

The arts of the lapidary and the jeweller benefited from the love of jewels and precious stones which characterized the Mughal Emperors at all times. It was Humayun who first acquired the famous *Koh-i-nur* diamond from the family of Raja Bikramajit, which, after remaining in Persia, with Shah Tahmasp during Humayun's exile, is supposed to have eventually found its way into the treasury of Aurangzeb, as a present from Mir Jumla. Akbar at his death left behind him 'fully forty million pounds sterling in coined money, equivalent in purchasing power to at least two hundred millions now', and an enormous collection of jewels, which he valued highly. Among the latter were a large number of specially fine rubies, which were made into two rosaries, valued at ten lacs of rupees a piece; and many of the fine gems which appear in the list of Jahangir's personal possessions, recorded by William Hawkins (1608-13), as well as some of those which were used in the decoration of the famous Peacock Throne, were originally collected by Akbar. Jahangir's jewels included one and a half maunds of unset diamonds, twelve maunds of pearls, two maunds of rubies, five maunds of emeralds, one maund of jade, besides jeweled sword-hilts, poniards, drums, brooches, aigrettes, saddles, lances, chairs of state, flagons, wine-cups, charms and rings. In Shah Jahan the taste for jewels developed into a passion. His personal jewellery was worth five crores of rupees, besides two crores' worth presented to the imperial princes and others. The jewellery which he ordinarily wore was valued at two crores and was kept in the harem in charge of female servants, while the remaining three crores' worth was in the custody of slaves in the
outer apartments. The *sarpech* or aigrette of large rubies which he wore in his turban was estimated to be worth twelve lacs.\(^{41}\)

![Fig. 25. Gold and enamel necklace, set with rubies, diamonds and emeralds, c. 1620-40](image)

Fig. 25. Gold and enamel necklace, set with rubies, diamonds and emeralds, c. 1620-40

![Fig. 26. Miniature illuminated manuscript of the Qur'an, bound in nephrite jade, inlaid with gold, set with rubies and emeralds,](image)

Fig. 26. Miniature illuminated manuscript of the Qur'an, bound in nephrite jade, inlaid with gold, set with rubies and emeralds,
dated AH 1075 (1674-5), with gold and enamel pendant case set with diamonds, rubies and emeralds (case probably late 17th century)

The crowning example of the union of the jeweller's art with the Mughal love of display was the famous Peacock Throne of Shah Jahan, which was valued by a contemporary French jeweller at 150 million francs, and the materials of which, apart from the wages of the craftsmen employed on it, cost a crore of rupees. The throne was made of pure gold, studded with gems valued at sixteen lacs of rupees; the inner roof was enameled, the outer covered with rubies and other jewels; twelve pillars of emerald supported the roof, which was surmounted by the figures of two peacocks, ablaze with precious stones. Between the peacocks was a tree set with diamonds, rubies, emeralds and pearls; three jewelled steps led to the Emperor's seat, which was surrounded with eleven jewelled panels, of which the middlemost bore as its central gem a splendid ruby presented by Shah Abbas I to Jahangir. In the midst of these splendours the Emperor, clad in white garments covered with priceless gems, appeared as we see him in the old Mughal miniatures, 'his forehead girt with a scarcely imaginary halo, holding a flower to his nostrils'. One has only to read Bernier's description of Aurangzeb's durbar in 1663 to see that the son of Shah Jahan was not prevented by his austere orthodoxy from indulging an inherited taste for barbaric ostentation, at any rate during the first few years of his reign. 'The king', he writes, 'appeared seated upon his throne, at the end of the great hall, in the most magnificent attire. His vest was of white and delicately flowered satin, with a silk and gold embroidery of the first texture. The turban, of gold cloth, had an aigrette-whose base was composed of diamonds 'of an extraordinary size and value, besides an oriental topaz, which may be
pronounced unparalleled, exhibiting a luster like the sun. A necklace of immense pearls, suspended from his neck, reached to the stomach, in the same manner as many of the Gentiles wear their string of beads. The throne was supported by six massy feet, said to be of solid gold, sprinkled over with rubies, emeralds and diamonds.

Beautiful vessels and cups of jade were collected by Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb, when seated on his throne, ‘had brought to him upon a golden saucer, enriched with diamonds, rubies and emeralds, a large cup of rock crystal, all around and smooth, with the same decoration as the saucer; some fine cups of rock crystal, found in the Delhi Palace in 1857, perhaps date back to the age of the Great Mughals.

**Music and Singing**

When Mughal came to power we find a mixed Indo-Muslim system of music and singing. With the exception of Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperors were fond of music and gave encouragement to the art, which at an earlier date had been improved and developed by the famous Amir Khusru. During his sojourn at the Court of Sultan Ghiyasu-d din Balban (1266-86) he had leisure to revise the musical modes originally introduced from central Asia, and thus incidentally influenced the gradual transformation of the character of Hindu music, which in its later form differed little from the Persian ghazal. The Mughal Emperors were not alone in their appreciation of music; for it was cultivated by several Indian rulers, including the Adil Shahi Sultans of Bijapur and Baz Bahadur of Malwa, who was a contemporary of Akbar. Babur is said to have been skilled in the art and to have written a treatise upon it; and although no definite evidence of Humayun’s attitude towards music survives, it
is probable that he shared the family taste for song and dance. Akbar’s courtly biographer leaves us in no doubt regarding his patron’s devotion to the art, declaring that the Emperor ‘pays much attention to music, and is the patron of all who practise this enchanting art. There are numerous musicians at court, Hindus, Iranis, Turanis, Kashmiris, both men and women. The court musicians are arranged in seven divisions, one for each day of the week’. Akbar’s interest in music was not merely that of a cultured listener. He had acquired, according to Abu-l Fazl, such a knowledge of the science of music as trained musicians do not possess’; he was no mean performer on the nakkarah (kettle-drum): he made a special study of Hindu vocalization under Lal Kalawant, who taught him ‘every breathing and sound that appertains to the Hindu language’; he himself harmonized two hundred old Persian tunes. As a result of Akbar’s encouragement of the art, music enjoyed great popularity, and the vocal side of it, with its rags and raginis, was widely cultivated. Throughout the country the nobility and the wealthy classes emulated the ruler’s zeal and exerted themselves to improve the art: skilful singers were often rewarded with costly presents, as for example Ram Das, who received a lac of rupees from Abdur Rahim Mirza, Khan-i-Khanan, and the famous Mian Tansen, to whom Akbar presented a reward of two lacs of rupees. The chief instruments used at this date in instrumental music or to accompany the voice were the sarmandal, bin (veena), nai, karana, tamburah, gbichak, qubuz, surna, and qanun.

Abu-l Fazl gives a list of thirty-six singers and instrumental performers at Akbar’s Court, including Baz Bahadur, mentioned above, who was appointed a ‘mansabdar of 1,000 and is said to have been an unrivalled singer. But by far the most skilful and famous vocalist of the day was Mian Tansen Kalavant, who was originally in the service of the Raja of Rewa and had
commenced his professional career in the school of music founded at Gwalior by Raja Man Singh (1486-1518). Akbar compelled the Raja of Rewa to surrender Tansen in 1562-3; and the first arrival of the signer at the imperial Court has been immortalized by a painting now preserved in the Indian Museum at Calcutta, which, apart from its historical interest, is a valuable example of the transition of the pictorial art from the Persian to the Mughal style and shows in a marked manner the incipient fusion of the former with the indigenous art of Hindustan. Several tales have been woven by the popular imagination to glorify Tansen's musical abilities. He is said to have spent much time listening to the simple melodies of the peasants, as they drew water from their field-wells, and to have adapted these to his more finished vocal art; he is credited with the power of stopping the flow of the Jumna by his singing, just as his rival, Birja Baula, is believed to have split a rock with a single powerful note. Birja Baula who is supposed to have learnt his bass from the noise of the stone grinding-mills, is not mentioned by Abu-l Fazl in his list of eminent musicians, but the story of his rivalry with Tansen is attested by many a legend and folk-tale. It is said that Hindu critics of the musical arts hold Tansen responsible for the deterioration of Hindu music, declaring that he falsified the rags, of which two, bindol and Megh, have disappeared completely since his day. Be this as it may, he achieved an unrivalled reputation, and seems to have fully justified Abu-l Fazl's remark that 'a singer like him has not been in India for the last thousand years'.

It seems probable that Tansen was a native of Gwalior, which appears to have been prolific of singers and musicians in the Mughal age, and that shortly after joining Akbar's' service, he became a Musalman and was granted the title of Mirza. He died in April 1589, and was buried at Gwalior, close to the south-
west corner of the sepulchre of Muhammad Ghaus - a position which indirectly proves his conversion to Islam, as no Hindu could have been buried in such a spot. According to Forbes, Tansen's death actually took place in Lahore, his body being removed to Gwalior by the express command of Akbar, in whose name, it may be added, most of his musical compositions were written. By an artistic anachronism, Tansen appears in a picture of a procession at the Court of Jahangir, painted by Manohar in 1605, which has led to the erroneous statement that Tansen lived to see service under Jahangir as well as under Akbar. There is no doubt whatever that Tansen was not alive when Jahangir came to the throne, having died in the thirty fourth year of Akbar's reign. On the other hand, there was nothing to prevent one of Jahangir's Court artists introducing into a scene at his patron's Court the portrait of a renowned singer, whose features had often been reproduced during his lifetime. The fame of Tansen is not doomed to fade: 'His melodies', as Blochmann writes, 'are even nowadays everywhere repeated by the people of Hindustan'; his tomb at Gwalior has become a place of pilgrimage for those who adopt music as a profession; and a measure of the harmony which he once evoked still dwells in the leaves of the nim tree overshadowing his grave, which are believed, when eaten, to improve the human voice.

His father's taste for music was apparently inherited by Jahangir, who maintained several good singers at his Court. The Iqbal Nama-i-Jahangiri recorded the names of six specialists in the art; and William Finch, in his description of Agra, indicates that Akbar's practice of allotting a separate day of the week for each band of singers was observed during Jahangir's reign. 'Many hundreds [scil, singing and dancing girls]', he writes, attend there day and night, according as their several turns come every seventh day, that they
may be ready when the King or his women shall please to call any of them to
sing or dance in his moholl, he giving to every one of them stipends according
to their unworthy worth. Vocal and instrumental music was the chief feature
of these entertainments and seems to have been of high order of merit for
Tavernier the traveller, who spent sometime in India at this date, declares that
the music played at these imperial receptions was sweet and pleasant, making
so little noise that it did not disturb the thoughts from the serious business in
which the courtiers were engaged. Occasionally the Emperor himself took part
in the performance; for, according to the court chronicler, he was an
accomplished vocalist and had so attractive a voice that 'many pure-souled
Sufis and holy men with hearts withdrawn from the world, who attended these
evening assemblies, lost their senses in the ecstasy produced by his singing'.
After allowing for Oriental hyperbole, it may be assumed that Shah Jahan had
a fine voice and had studied the art of music with as much care as his
grandfather, Akbar. Like his predecessors he was a patron of singers, two of the
chief vocalists at his court being Ram Das and Mahapattra; and on one
occasion he was so delighted with the performance of a mastro named
Jagannath, that he had him weighed against gold and gave him the amount as
his fee.

With the accession of Aurangzeb, music fell upon evil days. Apart from
the active encouragement given to it by the earlier Mughal Emperors, music
had always been popular with all classes, as the Rev. Edward Terry noticed
during his comparatively brief visit to India. Consequently it must have been
with feelings of amazement and dissatisfaction that they learned of the
emperor's orders prohibiting music and that he had actually created a new
department for the express purpose of reducing the number of professional
musicians. The officials of the department did their work only too well. According to Manucci, they entered any house or place whence the sound of music and singing was audible and broke the instruments of the performers,

Fig 27. Kalawant Tansen (?) Late 1580s.

and they generally made matters so unpleasant for the singers and their audience that the professional musicians found themselves in danger of losing their livelihood. The latter determined to try and persuade the Emperor to rescind his order. ‘About one thousand of them’, write Manucci, ‘assembled on a Friday when Aurangzeb was going to the mosque. They came out with over twenty highly-ornamented biers, as is the custom of the country, crying aloud with great grief and many signs of feeling, as if they were escorting to the grave some distinguished defunct. From afar Aurangzeb saw this multitude and heard their great weeping and lamentation, and, wondering, sent to know the cause of so much sorrow. The musicians redoubled their outcry and their tears,
fancying the king would take compassion on them. Lamenting, they replied with sobs that the king's orders had killed Music; therefore they were bearing her to the grave. Report was made to the king, who quite calmly remarked that they should pray for the soul of Music, and see that she was thoroughly well buried.\textsuperscript{61} The Emperor's reply displays a certain grim humour; but his orthodoxy would not allow of any variation of his original order. Notwithstanding the ban which he placed upon music, however, Aurangzeb, according to Manucci's testimony, continued to entertain dancing and singing-girls in the palace, for the diversion of his ladies, and so far unbent as to confer special names on their female superintendents. Bakhtawar Khan states that the Emperor understood music thoroughly and made no attempt to interfere with the art during the first few years of his reign. His subsequent objection to music was based on the teaching of the great Muhammadan Imam, Shafi; and in pursuance of his policy he was prepared even to grant cash allowances or land to musicians who declared themselves to be ashamed of their calling and desirous of relinquishing it.\textsuperscript{62}
Notes and References


15. S.M. Jaffar, op.cit., pp. 95.


22. Ibid., pp. 13, 142.
23. Ibid., pp. 101, 102.
30. S. Lane-Poole. Babur (Rulers of India Series), p. 94.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 68.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., p. 103.
37. C.M. Villiers Stuart. Ibid., pp. 82.
38. Ibid.
40. Foster, *Early Travels*, pp. 102, 103.


44. Bernier quoted by Crooke, *Things Indian*, p. 75.


47. *Memoirs of Jahangir*, Roger and Beveridge, i. 150.


49. P. Brown. *Indian Painting*, BC.


61. Manucci. ii. 346.