Chapter I
INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Since times immemorial art has been recognised as a medium of expression, as well as a means to satisfy aesthetic appetite of all human beings. Ancient rulers too patronized art and they spared time to enjoy and appreciate it. They invited foreign renowned and reputed artists and painters and appointed them permanently in their courts. In India art in its numerous forms flourished mainly during the reign of Mughal emperors, and their senior courtiers. It is the art of painting & portraiture which considerably flourished during the period of great Mughals. The roots of Mughal art mainly painting can be traced from the days of Babur, 'the founder of the Mughal Dynasty rule in India'.

Although Babur (1526-1530) had to pass much of his time in tents and could not lead a peaceful & leisurely imperial life like some of his descendants, yet his love for natural beauty and landscape is undisputed. 'The Mughal dynasty as a whole was so keenly interested in the arts, that each emperor',

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when he sat on the throne put something of himself into the painting's done during his reign. Babur who contributed a lot to the artistic development in India, was not admired for it in his life. All his efforts in that direction were appreciated after his death. Babur a man of aesthetic spirit, outstanding ability and high ideals bequeathed a culture which inspired love & appreciation for art and learning in all his descendants.

The Memoir's of Babur is a gearing proof of his love for scenery, flowers and natural effects. He had an expert artists eye which inspired him to write about the beauty of the campfires twinkling below him. It is also a fact that 'Babur was a learned philosopher, mightily hunter, an enthusiastic traveller, an unstable sight-seen, an eager student of the habits and appearances of animals and birds. He was keenly devoted to flowers and gardens and beauties of nature'. Babur nama illustrates the main events of his life. 'He died in (1530 A.D.) at the early age of forty seven. He was succeeded by his son Humayun'.

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Humayun was not an able administrator like his father. As against this he was graced by good manners, which he adhered to even in the darkest hours of his chequered career. He had all the social but few qualities of a king. Due to this weakness he had to surrender before Sher Shah, an Afghan warrior and for fifteen years he remained in exile. Shah Tahmasp of Persia entertained him in his court. Humayun was deeply impressed by the aesthetic taste of his host. During his sojourn in Persia Humayun visited historic cities and talked to their scholars, listened to the musicians and poets. He also visited the studios of famous Persian artists. When Humayun regained his empire, a through of servants and artists surrounded him and they were generously patronised. He started a separate school for painting under the charge of talented masters. 'At Tabriz he met a young painter Mir Syed Ali' who was held in high esteem by the Shah and his people. He followed the style of 'his father Mir Mansoor, a native of Badakhshan'. Both these artists were impressed with Behzad, a top
ranking artist at Tabriz. 'Like Michelangelo and Rossetti Syed Ali was a poet as well as a painter'. At Tabriz another famous artist and calligrapher was Khwaja Abdus Samad. These two shining painters were supported by Humayun and were appointed as instructors for his young son Akbar.

Mir Syed Ali, who was a court painter, was ordered to make 'a large & fully illustrated copy of the persian classic, Dastan Amir Hamza'. With the help of Abdus Samad Mir Syed could illustrate only four volumes. Humayun could not see the whole illustrated classic and died in 1556.

After the sudden death of Humayun, Akbar his minor son was enthroned promptly. He had to face insubordination and was also beset by hazardous events. He sternly suppressed the rebellion of Shah Abdul Maali. This incident finds place in 'Akbar nama and it forms the subject of a spirited sketch by the Persian painter Abdus Samad (Plate VIII Fig. 2)', who was probably present at the scene. After his
coronation Akbar had to pass a period of political and military activity, which kept him busy with the affairs of the state and did not allow him to see and supervise the art of those artists who were invited and patronised by his late majestic father. Mir Syed Ali continued his work on the illustrations of *Amir Hamza*. The pictures in *Amir Hamza* show the character of the art of painting under early stage of Mughal rule. A small group of young painters from Persia were also attached to the Mughal Court-Hindu painters had specialized themselves in wall decoration, but they were not honoured like Persian Painters. It reflected the lack of sympathy towards Indians as shown by Babur and Humayun, who did not appreciate their genius and held them without skill or knowledge in design or architecture. For emergent works related to Art foreign artists were preferred. Akbar realised the harsh attitude of his forefathers and tried to appease the neglected Indians. *'He evolved an administrative policy which directed to utilize the natural resources of his empire and the local institutions of his people'*. Thus Akbar
healded an era of peace coupled with literary, artistic activities of his people. The artistic genius of Akbar is vividly manifested in his imperial capital Fatehpur Sikri. The art of mural decoration was the imperial choice to decorate palace halls & living room at Fatehpur Sikri, where both Indian and Persian artists were employed, and they worked on parallel lines. Akbar was interested in pictures and he disliked those who decried painting. He did his best towards the preservation and development of the art of painting. He held that painting, for a well regulated mind, is a source of wisdom and an antidote against the poison of ignorance. 'Aine Akbari deals with every aspect of Great Mughals administration'.

Farrukh Beg a noted Persian artist in his court had a style which was not only reminiscent of Mangolia and China, but also showed a separate identity. His work impressed the art of painting as a whole. As Akbar was very close to
Hindus he ordered his artists to illustrate their epics. The illustrated *Mahabharat* called *Razm-nama* is still safe in the palace museum in Jaipur. Some important events of *Ramayan* were also depicted. The art of painting was at its height during the reign of Akbar.

*In 1605 Jahangir succeeded Akbar as the emperor of India*. He inherited a politically sound and stable empire and never bothered to enlarge it. He was contented with existing fortunes. He was a lazy man, slow and languorous. Keenly interested in good food, easy life with wine, woman, poetry and sports. He was an aristocrat with an eye of naturalist, the vision of poet and heart of a saint and treated all religious equally. He was a great patron of all kinds of creative art. The Mughal School of painting which was in a progressing state was handled with care and Jahangir infused new meaning, denieious and refinement in it. His critical mind and refined taste, love for details helped in improving the quality of painting. The pictures produced in his atelier express
his mood and temperament. The *Muraqqas* (Album) show Jahangir taste and they preserve different materials fancied and collected by him. He had special interest in precious stones, unusual animals, and birds. He was interested in all arts alike, but painting was his favourite. All his period is notable for its superb drawing and special colours and earlier Mughal tradition were defused. School combining Rajput and Mughal traditions was set up. Mughal painting could not escape from European influence, specially in blending of colours. During Jahangir's reign portraiture was at its great height. *Ayar-e-Danish* an animal fable book and *Anwar-i-Suhaili* are two notable illustrated manuscripts of this period. The *Tuzuk* is a complete manifesto of Jahangir, depicts all aspects of his life. Aqa Riza a Persian painter was the director of Saleem Studio. He had miniatures in the Persian Safavid tradition to his credit. His son Abul Hasan and another painter Mansur were conferred titles of *Nadiruzzaman* and *Nadirul-Asr* respectively.
During the period of Shah Jehan Mughal painting lost its charm and glory and the painters were selectively honoured. He preferred architecture to painting. In other words Mughal painting was decentralized and was out of imperial monopoly, and conditions prevailing in the previous regime completely vanished. Art hitherto being a princely monopoly, became commercial and the royal painters lost prestige.

In 1658 Shah Jehan was deposed by his son Aurangzeb. The glorious past of Mughal school of painting faded into eternity. Now painting was not patronized imperially and the edifice of Mughal school of painting entirely collapsed. Aurangzeb, a puritan hated painting and so old paintings were despised and destroyed by his orders. The drawings of human figures were white washed and changed beyond recognition. There is ample record that in his old age Aurangzeb became soft for portrait painting with the death of Aurangzeb the chapter of Mughal painting completely closed. His successors, who were politically weak could not do anything for the survival of their
ancestral art and allowed it to perish sink into optician. I hope that any lapse in this meagre attempt will be excused by the readers.

REFERENCES
2. Ibid, p. 49.
5. Ibid, p. 53.
8. Ibid, p. 54.