INTRODUCTION

Decorative motif is a special branch of fine arts which has great aesthetic expression power. Different decorative motifs were used in different times as per personal whims of artists and the prevailing conditions. They have many elements like geometric patterns, floral motifs or simple patterns of Islamic art. But geometric patterns dominate because of their meaningful expression and outward beauty. Icons and motifs reveal sensuous, formal or stylistic values of metaphysics, religion and existing spiritual experiences. These motifs and forms are very popular in paintings of Islamic period and are developed considerably well by Muslim artists. This does not mean that their works were based on religious themes. These paintings displayed muslim cultures and were subject to rules and spirit of Islam. We are aware that Islam prohibits painting of living beings and therefore geometric patterns and floral motifs have been used by artists to connect their works with Islamic philosophy preached by Holy Quran. Sometimes they very aptly depict diametrically opposite situations, the word Islam in Arabic means submission and is derived from peace. The believers (Muslims) always prefer to submit to will of God (Allah). The cardinal principles and teachings of Islam lay down a comprehensive way of life for the Muslims. It prescribes legal system and religious code for their guidance. Earlier western scholars associated Islam with Middle East only but today Muslims are in majority in Indonesia, and Malaysia and out number Iran, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.

The tenets of Islam were revealed to Prophet Mohammad in the 6th century A.D. It is the youngest and strictly monotheistic religion in the world. Islam lays great emphasis on relations between the creatures and creator and
asks all its followers to keep them intact and active. Mohammad PBH is his
servant and messenger and is a perfect model for his followers. Allah is
MERCIFUL, TRAN Scender and Awesome and Muslims in their prayers praise
AIM and seek HIS mercy, guidance and blessings. Islam says that all human
being will be put to life on Day of judgement and Allah will take account of
every one and award rewards and punishment as per their deeds.

Allah's revelation to Mohammad PBH are contained in Holy Quran
which forms the most essential part of Islamic faith. Unlike old or new
testament, Quran is not a narrative of Prophet's life or repetition of his sayings.
It is actual words of Allah revealed through angel gibrail to Prophet
Mohammad. The word Quran means 'recitation' and in most lucid, chaste and
impressive language explains and lays down principle of faith. The Quran has
been revealed in the prestigious Arabic language. It script and words have been
displayed in excellent specimens of calligraphy. The next sacred and important
source of Islam is Hadith. Hadith gives most reliable and vivid account of the
deeds, words and practices of the Holy Prophet. These have been collected and
completed with great care and symmetry and come next to Holy

Here we are discussing the bases of Islamic art because Islam stands for
peace and visualizes truth in an easy and balancing form in life. It encourages
spread of culture and art within bounds of decency and morality.

Though no particular framework of religious nature has been prescribed
yet Muslim artists has used and displayed religious symbols more forcefully
than their Christian counterparts. We find that both religious and secular arts
have flourished under Muslim rulers. The most important outlets for artistic
expression in Islamic world have been architecture, calligraphy, illumination of manuscripts, book binding, ceramic, metal works, glass and textile works and designs. In all these arts Muslim artists excelled in decoration with the help of calligraphy arabesque, scrolling pattern, geometrical designs and floral motifs. The truth is that Islam does not permit slatues or sketches of living beings at it aimst at sharing power of creation with Allah.

The prophet has warned that severe punishment would be inflicted upon picture makers of living beings. In the early days of Islam there were no figures or picture in mosques, schools and residential houses and this type of arts was not encouraged. However the passage of time and growth of cultural integration led to use of decorated wall paintings and portraits of natural scenes and illumination of manuscripts and textiles. Later on Islamic art became varied and rich specially become of contacts with Christians and decoration of their churches. With the spread of Muslim rule in Egypt, Syria, Persia and India new designs and ideas were developed by Muslim artists in paintings and figurative arts. Floral motifs, geometric patterns and illuminations of books, textiles and buildings became very popular and received patrange from affluent sections of the society.

Islamic arts got much impetus from translation of books of other languages and dialogues between muslim artists and their non Muslim contemporaries. Efforts were made to preserve historical events and cultural characteristics. More attention was paid to study and development of physical sciences, medicine, astronomy and religious treatises and a congenial atmosphere resulted in spread of knowledge and formation of a powerful cult
of research and scholarship. All these factors also helped in expansion of arts. Muslim rule was established in India in thirteenth century after invasions of Mohammad Ghaznavi and Mohammad Ghauri and rulers of Sultanat period, Khilji, Taghlak, Lodi, Sayyaid, and great Moghal dynasties lavishly patronized arts. The Indo-Persian traits in domain of drawing, colouring and flight of imagination made great progress in paintings, architecture and decoration. In Deccan states also arts flourished under Adilshahi, Qutubshahi, Nizam Shahi dynasties and produced excellent works. The Mughal empire founded by Babur in early sixteenth century gave great fillip to painting, architecture and calligraphy. The Mughal school of painting is undoubtedly the most beautiful part of Indian culture and heritage. It represents mixed traits of Persian delicacy, Arabic simplicity and Hindu traditions Persian was court language at that time but other Indian languages also influenced the literature and culture of the rulers and enriched the Islamic arts. The intermixture of foreign ideas with Indian traditions and customs led to birth of new class of artisans and craftsman and introduction of novel designs and beautiful display of patterns, figures and illumination. The Mughal emperors and their nobles were good critics and patrons of these arts. Paintings with floral motifs and colourful borders were commonly used as symbols of religious messages and themes.

Muslim artists depicted concepts of harmony, unity amidst diversity, principles of Islam specially unity of God by using geometric patterns and floral designs. At religious places muslim arts have very skillfully used geometric euclids (patterns based on circle). This pattern in Islamic art owes its name to famous Greek mathematician Euclidos. Geometrical symbol have been
used in other cultures to explain some philosophical issues specially in ancient Egyptian civilization.

The Muslim artists of India have used patterns based on principles of mathematics to explain certain philosophical problems or to add to the grandeur and beauty of architecture. Similarly they have used floral motifs and decorative designs to depict natural scenes, philosophical situations and religious themes. We came across numerous specimens of decoration pieces in which in scrolling and repeated colourful forms, plants, bounties of nature and odd happenings in the universe have been depicted. They are true and faithful manifestation of eternal laws of nature.

One has to marvel at the aesthetic taste and superb imagination of Indian Muslim artists displayed in their paintings and illuminations. Indian flowers no doubt occupy a place of distinction in influencing Islamic paintings and calligraphy but still they have retained their Arab and Persian traits and philosophical and metaphysical backgrounds.

Some reputed writers like – Heather Marshall in his book ‘Art in Islamic period’, Guy and Reborah swallow in his book ‘Art of India’ and Jamila and Brijbhushan in their book ‘Indian Miniatures’ and other writers like Douglas Barrett, Basil Gray, Karl Khandalavala, Pramod Chandra, Daniel J. Ehnborn, Moti Chandra, Anand Krishna, Milo C. Beach, Jeremiah P. Losty, Michael Brand and Glenn, D. Lowry in their own way have referred to geometrical patterns and floral motifs used in Islamic paintings, but it is also a fact that only cursory mention of these delicate innovation has been made in these books. Accordingly I chose topic of my research “geometrical and floral motifs in
Indian Islamic paintings" and divided it into four chapters to discuss and clarify these concepts in details captioned as under:

I. Clear vision of Islamic paintings

II. Islamic painting in Indian subcontinent

III. Concept of Geometrical patterns in Indian Islamic paintings

IV. Concept of floral patterns in Indian Islamic paintings

In the first chapter I have given a brief introduction of principles and teachings of Islam because they form the base of all Islamic arts and painting is a very interesting part of Islamic art. Then I have traced the development and spread of Islamic paintings which cover a vast field. I have attempted to bring various aspects and subject under the focus of my study.

The second chapter deals with the advent of Islamic painting in India. The attitude of Muslim rulers, artists and intelligentsia historical perceptive and technique adopted in the development of painting have been discussed in detail. The interesting experiments made by Indian Muslim artists specially in the field of decorative and illumination motifs have been highlighted.

In the third chapter the concept of geometrical patterns as a comprehensive addition to the beauty and elegance of paintings has been explained amply. Its importance as an Islamic symbol to blend a happy mixture of philosophy, artistic imagery and beautiful designs has been stressed.

Floral motifs have been discussed in the fourth chapter. As Islam lays emphasis an beauty, these motifs play important and common role in Islamic paintings. Muslim artists used these patterns extensively to depict different
philosophical and artistic themes. I have attempted to highlight their beauty and depth.

In concluding observations the importance and elegance of expressions and thoughts of Muslim artists in their paintings have been explained and tributes have been paid to their services.