WORK AND STYLE OF PAINTING OF VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Mughal school was not a new style in itself but it was the same Rajasthani school well refined and polished by the Persian effect. The Mughal's were the great lovers of art. First of all Humayun brought some
Persian artists with him who painted in their own style. Mughals were very much impressed by the Rajasthani school. Thus a new style of painting was developed by the mixture of Rajasthani and Persian style which was known as the Mughal school. As a matter of fact it was an Indian style but the general ornamentation and border decoration was of Persian style. Mughals had a traditional love for painting as their ancestors were Mangols who came from Central Asia which was the centre of the cultures of China and Europe. The Chinese effect is visible in their art. In the beginning there was no painting in Central Asia as it was banned in Islam, but some big cities of Persia, some art effected by Byzantine art was prevalent. Upto 13th century the Chinese art reached Persia and Tehran with the Mangol invaders and for some times Chinese art dominated these places. But in 1335 A.D this art saw a new dawn with Taimur's coming to power and the end of Mangole rule.

A new culture and painting developed under the patronage of the rulers of Taimur dynasty in Bukhara and Samarkand and it reached its peak during the 15th century. The ruler's of Taimur's family gave due regard and importance to the artists in their courts. Bihzad was the best among all the painters of that time. He is known as the 'Raphael of the East'. He was the greatest painter in the court of Sultan Hussain Mirza. After the death of this Sultan, Bihzad took the job in the court of Safavid Shah Ishmael. In this court the painting developed a new style of decoration and independent composition.

Babur was from Taimurs family who eastablished Mughal rule in India. He had a great linking for Bihzad as he has praised him in his autobiography 'Babarnama'. It proves that Babur had a great liking for painting. Humayun, the son of Babur, also had a great liking for painting. He lived with Shah Tahmashp of Tabrez for one year where he was introduced to two, painters of Bihzad school, namely Mir Sayyed Ali of Tabrez
and Khwaja Abdus Samad of Shiraz. Later on both these artists came to Kabul in the court of Humayun. Through these artists, Humayun got the painting of 'Dastan-e-Amir Hamza' done, but a very little portion of the same could be completed in his life time. He died in 1555 A.D. after having achieved the throne of Delhi and left his son Akbar, then only a child, as his successor to the same.

The painting of Dastan-e-Amir Hamza continued in the reign of Akbar, as he also does encouraged this venture with great enthusiasm in it. According to the 'Ain-e-Akbari' of Abul Fazl, during the period, about 1400 event had been painted out of which few are available now. The Suleh Kul policy of Akbar and his compromising intellect based on secular idealism added further charm to the painting and due to the same policy the painting reached its climax in the reign of Jahangir. As Shahjahan was more interested in architecture, consequently painting saw a down fall in his reign. The Mughal school of painting came to a stop in the reign of Aurangzeb as he was fanatic muslim. No fine art could find a place in his court.

According to Ain-e-Akbari, Akbar never liked those fanatic muslims who took paintings as against the islamic religion. He was of the opinion that through painting only one can realise the existence of God, and the person who hates painting can never achieve the realisation of God. We see God in a painter because both create, one through paintings and the other through living beings creates the world.

Akbar was fond of portrait painting. He himself used to sit for his own portrait paintings and got several portraits of his courtiers painted.

Akbar got several Persian books painted. Dastan-e-Amir Hamza was completed in 12 volumes. Some books like Changeznama, Razmnama (translation of Mahabharat), Ramayan, Nala Daman (Nala-Damayanti), Kalila
Daman (Panchtantra) and Ayar Danish (Panchtantra) etc. were also translated and painted.

According to Shri Rai Krishna Das the Mughal style of Akbar's time can be divided into four parts, which are as follows:

1. Painting of non-Indian stories like Amir Hamza, Shahnama etc.
2. Paintings on Indian stories like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Panchtantra etc.
3. Historical paintings based on Tawarikh-e-Khandan-e-Taimuria and Akbarnama etc.
4. Portrait painting - under which the portraits of Emperors were painted.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MUGHAL PAINTING IN AKBAR'S REIGN

1. For the first time we find free and unrestrained paintings during Akbar's reign. The paintings on Indian and Persian stories, on literature and Akbar's life are original and rudimentary.

2. The second characteristic of the paintings of this period is the brightness of colours like enamel. According to Abu'l Fazl, different types of colours were prepared during that period. Mostly three types of colours are supposed to have been used at that time. They are bright colours, slaked colours and white colour.

Among the bright colours pyodi, vermillion, lajvardi, red, blood red, and green are important. Among the slaked colours are geru (ochre), hironji, chalk, hara dhaba (a green colour), lamp black and blue. White colour has been made out lime. Generally direct plane colours have been used without making them, thus creating a bright effect.
3. The third characteristic is that in Akbar's reign Mughal style becomes fully Indian inspite of its being effected by Persian and Rajasthani styles. The painting of Razmnama and Akbarnama are lively with Indian soul.

4. Mostly the faces are in profile which is the general style of Mughal school. The engraving and the use of borders is taken from Persian style but the main paintings do not let them dominate. The nature has also been beautifully depicted.

5. Mostly manuscripts were painted in Akbar's time.

6. Most of the paintings are of big illustrations and crowdy where in several faces, figures, birds and animals have been painted.

    The Royal libraries of Akbar were situated at Agra, Delhi and Lahore. Several manuscripts from these libraries have gone to British Museum, London, Kesington South Museum, Chester Betty Collection, London, Royal Asiatic Society, London and to America also. In India also we find the volumes of these books at Delhi, Patna, Varanasi and Hyderabad etc. There were 24000 manuscripts in the Pothi Khana of Akbar, several were painted. Even a single book was worth Rs.1,00,000 (one lakh). One painting was completed by three painters of that time. One painted the border, the other drew line work and the third one filled the colours.

    Akbar gave lands and high ranks to the artists as rewards. This was the reason why the painters put their maximum efforts, infused their soul in the art of painting and led the art to the climax.

    While most of the major manuscripts of the 1580s has illustrations designed by one artist and executed by an assistant, that system became less satisfactory in the 1509s when imperial taste was more sophisticated,
demanding uniformly high quality. There does not seem to have been any rationale, other than a demand for general consistency within each individual project, for the assignment of joint, rather than unassisted workmenship, the major designers were the men listed first in Abu'l Fazl important discussion of painters, he says.

More than a hundred painters have become famous masters of art, while the number of those who approached perfection, as of those who are middling, is very large. This is specially true of the Hindus, their pictures surpass our conception of things. Few, indeed in the world are found equal to them. Among the forerunners on the high road of art are:

MIR SAYED ALI

He learned the art from his father. From the time of his introduction at court, the ray of royal favours shone upon him. He has made himself famous in his art, and has met with much success.

Painting begun by the Tabrizi artist Mir Sayed Ali about the year 1550 in Kabul, at the latter emperor's order, it was probably not finished until twenty-five years later, at Agra, under Akbar's reign. Inspite of the long period it took to complete the manuscript, and the great political changes that occured while it was in progress the same style of work was maintained throughout the whole series of 1375 paintings which form its illustrative portion. As would be expected the style in fundamentally Persian, although there is much in it which shows an atmosphere and environment different from the production of either the Taimurid or Safavid schools. One of the pages is reproduced on Plate VII and illustrates the general character of the painting on the reverse of each folio is a written description of the incident depicted, the whole comprising the story or 'Romance of Hamza'. Hamza
was the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, a date 'Romance' is a fantastic narrative founded on the original adventures of this here. As records of the life and customs of the early Mughals the pictures are unique. Unfortunately in many of the painting the faces have been clumsily obliterated by a later zealot, but except for this they are in an excellent state of preservation. They display quite plainly the circumstances in which they were produced, the general scope of the work being devised by Mir Sayed Ali in his inimitable Safavid style, but in the actual painting he was assisted by others, either Persians or Indians. Apart from any other qualities, that it may possess the Amir Hamza is of importance in providing that definite connecting link between the Persian and Indian schools.¹

The pictures of Amir Hamza, however, stand in a class by themselves, they are too obvious of Persian extraction to be considered a belonging to the Mughal school proper. It is to the other manuscripts in the list of illustrated books prepared under Akbar's order that we must turn for representative specimens of the work of this school. These resolve themselves into groups in the order in which it was presumed they were executed. In the earliest group may be placed the two British Museum manuscripts, the Darabnama and the Baburnama. The next to be produced were no doubt the Jaipur Razmnama and the Bankipur Taimurnama, which constituted the second group. Following these come the Bodleian Baharistan and Mr. Dyson Perrins's Khamsah, forming the third group, while last of all and placed in a class by itself, for reasons which will be explained hereafter, is the South Kensington Akbarnama. Many illustrated manuscript produced in this time, in only three, the Jaipur Razmnama, the Bankipur Taimurnama and the South Kensington Akbarnama.

¹ Percy Brown, Indian Painting under the Mughal, A.D.1550 to 1750 Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1924
A general survey of all the paintings contained in these manuscripts reveals the fact that as a whole they illustrate a style of work different from that executed at any other period of the Mughal school. The dominant note is undoubtedly their Indian character, while they owed something of the productions of the Persian, notably for their small size and effect, in every other particular they reflect plainly the temperament of the indigenous artist.

Mir Sayed Ali, the other members of the Safavid school, does not appear to have attained to the high official position of his colleague Abdus Samad although he was probably the better artist. Abu'l Fazl certainly honours him with the first place in his list, and alludes to him in flowing terms, 'from the time of his introduction at court the ray of royal favour shone upon him'. He had made himself famous in his art, and has met with much success. But beyond the historians reference to his ability we know nothing further of the Sayed's life or his later connection with the Mughal school.

**DASWANTH**

He was the son of a palkee bearer. He devoted his whole life to the art, and used from love of his profession, to draw and paint figure even on walls.

The famous Hindu artist Daswanth who, having been handed over to the Khwaja, in a short time surpassed all painters, and became the first master of the age. Afterwards his services seem to have become so valuable that he was withdrawn from the school, and promoted about the year 1577 to the appointment of Master of the mint, which distinguished

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1. Ibid
position he filled with great credit for several years. The result of his association with this department may be observed in the high character of the Mughal coinage of the period, which is not only remarkable for the purity of its metal and fullness of weight, but for its very fine artistic appearance. It is not difficult to see how such perfection was attained. In its production the leading poet was commissioned to compose the couplet, the most skillful calligraphist inscribed it, the ablest sculptor modelled it and the best engraver fashioned the die and over all was placed the first artist of the state so that the coin should be the most finished artist production of its kind. Under such unique conditions it is not surprising that the work of Akbar's mint is considered superior to that of any other country of the period. The action of the Mughal emperor in this connection is significant of his attitude generally towards the subject of art and his application of it to such practical purposes. Abdus Samad completed his career by becoming Diwan or Revenue Commissioner of Multan, apparently an honour given to him in his old age.

Daswanth are not uncommon, there is no specimen of his painting which is the sole product of his own hand. In all his designs some portion of the work, either the drawing or the painting was entrusted to other exponents, whose names included with Daswanth's are written on the margin. The Razmnama is an illustrated adaptation of the Hindu epic the Mahabharat and as its story continued much that was foreign to the Mohammedans, the pictorial part is with few exceptions, the work of Hindu artist. Akbar showed an active interest in the ancient Sanskrit literature of India, which was manifested in his demand for the preparation of Persian translations of several Hindu classics, among these being as Abu'l Fazl states, the Razmnama and the Ramayan. Several copies of both works with illustrations appear to have been produced at this time, as Akbar in his zeal required some of his nobles to order them for their own use.
Daswanth, Basawan and Lal were the three experts who were concerned in the majority of the paintings but in each case they collaborated with the another artists so that the work as a whole occupied a large staff. In the two manuscripts comprising this group the method of employing more than one painter on the same composition is most pronounced, very few of the pictures in either being the work of one individual. From the nature of its contents it is unreal and fantastic and some of the scenes must have tried severely the ingenuity of the artists in representing them on paper with any degree of success.

At least four of the Akbar's artists were of the Kahar or Palki bearer caste, including the famous Daswanth, but Daswanth rose superior to his humble birth and by sheer genius came to be regarded as the ablest painter of his time. His artistic gift displayed itself early in life and in his efforts to find expression he used to draw and paint figures even on walls. By accident his natural ability was first revealed to the emperor himself for one day the eye of His Majesty fell on him, his talent was discovered¹ and he was handed over to Abdus Samad for training. In a short space of time he surpassed all other painters and became the first master of the age. Unhappily he was subject to fits of depression and finally his mind became unhinged. One day he stabbed himself with a dagger and died two days later. This tragic circumstance apparently took place in the year 1584, although he barely attained to his middle age, yet he left many masterpieces. It is to be regarded that no works by the hand of his artist alone have survived, but there are many in which he has collaborated with others. In Jaipur Razmnama at least twentyfour pictures bear his name and there is also one in the Bankipur Taimurnama (fol. 2) in which he combined with Jagjiwan, but none of these is a convincing example of his art. Daswanth's

¹. Ibid
caste fellows all distinguished themselves in their profession, as the Kesho, father and son are both mentioned in the Ain, while Paras and Ibrahim, also did good work, their pictures may be studied in the Baburnama and Darabnama in the British Museum and in the Bankipur Taimurnama. An artist who completed with Daswanth for the premier place in the school was his co-religionist Basawan.

**ABU'L FAZI.**

It's against this interest in historical documentation that we view Abu'l Fazl's entry on the stage, and more specifically his or as a historian. Born in 1551 as the second son of Shaikh Mubark, he is reported to have been gifted from birth with an extraordinary memory. The intellectual climate in his father's house certainly influenced him to acquire information and by the time he was fifteen he had mastered the subjects known as 'Manqul' by twenty he confesses to have been bored with the limitations of Islam, and he longed for the esoteric knowledge of the Lamas of Tibet and Padrees of Portugal. Writing in retrospect of this period, he seems to recognize the need to develop a wider vision.

By the machinations of my extraordinary soul, the picture of ambition had been erased from the porch of my mind and longing for asceticism exhibited its power. I was on the point of treading the desert of frenzy with bare head and foot, breaking to pieces the enclosing walls of my environment and taking the path of liberation.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

In certain cases the chronicle is written in such a way as though he were supplying visual notes for the artists. The author focussed on the imagery in creating a 'Pictorial Environment' rather than on narrating the causes for such and such a happening. In the battle waged between two groups of Sanyasis at Thanesar, he reports every detail on the field of massacre, beginning with works that could be considered as addressed to the artist.

All the details of this drama are depicted by the master Basawan in one of the most unforgettable double compositions in the manuscript. Moving from the imperial encampment, the ritual bathing of pilgrims in the tank, to the alms giving, the banyan tree and ghat under dispute, the picture gradually builds up to the blowing of conch shells as the yogis prepare for battle.

In many such masterpieces e.g. in the celebrated painting on the punishment of Adham Khan, the close correspondence between the narrative text and the illustration can only be explained by the fact that the artist at the same time, the painting possesses an extraordinary power and immediately that give its advantage over the text, summing up four or five pages of prose and introducing the locale and 'Dramatis Personae' of the tragedy in one comprehensive statement. The masterful treatment of the subject by Muskin was certainly recognized since the painting served as the model for a drawing done at least fifteen year later and now preserved in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin.

The importance which Abu'l Fazl attached to painting and his admiration for the royal studio of painters is attested in the tribute he pays to them in chapter 34 of the Ain-i-Akbari. It will be observed late in this volume
that a remarkable coincidence occurs between the names of the master artists mentioned in the A'in and those assigned to the major share of work in the Akbarnama paintings. The masters recommended by Abu'l Fazl in the Ain-i-Akbari monopolise four fifths of the work in the royal manuscript since Abu'l Fazl is the author of both the Akbarnama and the Ain-i-Akbari. It seems possible to infer that he may have preferred the work of those masters and so employed their talents in the illustration of his chronicle.

Finally our further point would hold to establish this hypothesis. From Abu'l Fazl's own statements it appears that his chronicle was presented daily to the emperor for his scrutiny and encouragement, when Abu'l Fazl concludes writing the history of thirty years of Akbar's life and first seventeen yers of the reign he provides us with a date to this first volume of the Akbarnama.

**AQA RIZA**

Jahangir referred very briefly to Aqa Riza, during his discussion of Abul Hasan in the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri.

His (Abul Hasan's) father, Aqa Riza of Herat (or Merv) at the tie when I was a prince, joined my service. There is, however, no comparison between his work and that of his father.

The statement is more in praise of Abul Hasan than purposely derogatory to Aqa Riza, but it established the elder man as an important personality, what ever our view of the visual rewards of his work.¹ He brought

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¹ M.C. Beach, Grand Mughal Imperial Painting in India (1600-1660). Contributions by Stuart Ary Weleh and Gienn D. Lowry Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, William Stowns, Massachusetts Asia House Gallery New York City between April 19, June 10, 1979.

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to India direct knowledge of the most current Iranian artistic styles, he served as a painter for Prince Salim and is, therefore, important to an investigation of Salim's taste and patronage before the imperial workshops came under his control, of course he was enormously influential as the father and presumably early teacher of Abul Hasan and as various inscriptions inform us of Abid.

We know that Aqa Riza was in India by the time Abul Hasan's birth in 1588-89 and his earliest known work are probably two pages in the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan which are almost purely Iranian. They indicate that Aqa Riza was a thoroughly trained Safavid (Iranian) painter at the time his arrival at the Mughal court, and it is informative to see what happens to his style under the Mughal impact.

Jahangir's memoirs state that he came from Herat or Merv but, inscriptions on two paintings refer to Abul Hasan as 'Al-Mashhadi' (of Meshhed). As one of these inscriptions is by Abul Hasan himself the other by Abid, the Meshhed affiliation of the family seems unquestionable, and indeed the great Haft Aurang of Jami manuscript, made at Meshhed between 1556 and 1565, is a perfect stylistic source for Muraqqa-e-Gulshan pages by Aqa Riza referred to above.

We have no definite information on the painters activities before his appearance in India, however, nor do we know why he left Iran.

It seems that he is not to be identified with either Maulana Muhammad Riza of Meshhed, the pupil of Mir Sayed Ahmad, both known from contemporary texts. That he is also distinct from the late sixteenth century Iranian court painter Aqa Riza has long been accepted, although the seeming commonness of the name has caused considerable confusion.
Aqa Riza's Iranian origins are also clear in the "Portrait of a Courtier", for the pose, such details as the bench, and the languorous mood are duplicated in innumerable Safavid illustrations. What defines the work as Mughal is the degree of modelling in the face and of course the inspiration. This refers to Aqa Riza as mureed1 (disciple) a term found in inscriptions by both Aqa Riza and the young Abul Hasan and used by Mughal courtiers to indicate their subsevience to the wisdom of the emperor (or in this case, the prince). Above this the name sultan Salim appears in gold, so there can be no doubt to whom the painter is paying homage.

That Salim is titled sultan allows us to date the illustration before 1599-1600 at which point the rebellious prince took the title 'Shah'.

The major paintings by Aqa Riza are in an 'Anwar-i-Suhaili' manuscript in the British Library which has an inscription stating that it was finished in 1610. Two of Aqa Riza illustrations, however, are independently inscribed with the date 1604. The book which was thus begun for Jahangir before his ascension, has two types of illustration works of a very Iranian character by Aqa Riza and painters under his influence (e.g. Abul Hasan & Mirza Ghulam); and paintings of a more typically Mughal type by Bishan Das, Anant, Nanha etc. The first group is distinguished by brilliant mineral colours, frequent use of gold, carefully organized surface patterns, general spatial flatness and a detailed, miniaturistic technique the others tend to show softer earth colours and looser brushwork traits current in imperial Mughal works.

This same stylistic range is found in other major manuscripts made at the same time and serves to emphasize Aqa Riza a distance from mainstream, Mughal tradition. It may have been this inability to adapt, even

1. Ibid.
more than the quality of individual's illustrations, that caused Jahangir's comments on the painter's work.

The margins of a page from one of Jahangir's albums show this phase of Aqa Riza's style, for while unsigned, the figures are identical to those in the Anwar-i-Suhaili. It is a superbly decorative border and shows episodes that can occurred during a hunt. Individual faces are defined and modelled far more smoothly than in portrait of a courtiers and the overall action has an immediately that was not present in Aqa Riza's earliest work. This development came about through the painters increasing familiarity with Mughal attitudes and through his study of European prints of the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan, e.g. signed by Aqa Riza uses European motifs in the margins.

Nonetheless, despite the surface 'Mughalization' of the painter's work, the figures lack individuality or interior life. A comparison with the marginal figures by Goverdhan (no. 5 verso) makes clear the degree to which Aqa Riza was unable to go beyond traditional attitudes to human form. This is no judgement on the paintings per se, it is simply that the meaning of the figures does not accord with contemporary Mughal imperial ideas.

The Iranian orientation of Aqa Riza's style was an important ingredient in the evolution of Prince Salims' taste, it may be found on imperial manuscripts of the mid 1590s as well as on the earliest Jahangir album pages were due to ideas introduced by Aqa Riza his specific influene, however, is not found about 1605 and it seems that his style went quickly out of date once Jahangir has the full imperial workshops at his command that Aqa Riza's activity was not confined simply to painting is shown by his reported responsibility for the design of Khusran Bagh, the garden at Allahabad in which Salim's wife, Shah Begum, was burried in 1604.
ABDUS SAMAD

Abdus Samad was one of a group of major Iranian painters that either accompanied or followed Humayun to India after his visit to Tabrez in 1544 and whose activity and prestige were important elements in evolving Mughal style. Reference in the Akbarnama provide us with a summary of his career of the year 1544 for example, when Humayun was in exile and seeking help from the Iranian Shah Tahmasp, Abu'l Fazl wrote:

"His majesty Humayun first proceeded to view Tabrez, and when he came near it the governors and grandees came out to welcome him. The exquisite and magical Khawaja Abdus Samad, Shirin Qalam (Sweet pen) also entered into service in this city and was much esteemed by that connoisseur of excellence. But from the hinderances of fate he could not accompany him".

Humayun eventually setup an interim capital at Kabul where in 1550 'Khwaja Abdus Samad and Mir Sayed Ali who were celebrated for their skill, in painting came and were graciously received'. In 1556 Humayun returned to Delhi with young Akbar. The skillful artists such as Mir Sayed Ali and Khwaja Abdus Samad who were among the matchless one of this art were in his service and were instructing him.

The Hamzanama manuscript was begun about 1562 and Abdus Samad served as supervisor of that project in 1577, the year of its probable completion.

Abdus Samad was made director of the imperial mint at the capital,

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1. M.C. Beach, Imperial Image Painting for the Mughal Court Freer Gallery of Art, 1981.
Fatehpur Sikri, and in 1582, he was appointed an overseer. Abdus Samad was a man of considerable administrative talent. His painting during these years in India were few and highly conservative or so it would seem from the remaining works known to us.

Abdus Samad was a conservative. It would seem from the remaining works known to us. Jamshid writing on a rock, for example, shows none of the interest in liveliness of colour, originality of composition or European technique of modelling and perspective that were embedded in the general vocabulary of Mughal painting by the 1580s, 'His compositions are flat and decorative superbly composed and filled with flawlessly executed minute detail human figures are relatively expressionless, carefully framed and set off by landscape elements. He tends to use densely packed mountain forms of a dark tonality.

Abdus Samad served as a continuous model of technical skill and control. In fact it is the combination of sheer energy found in such painters as or in the Hamzanama manuscript and the control and technical refinement of Abdus Samad that produced the great manuscript illustration of the 1590s.

Additional works with the inscriptions of Abdus Samad during his year in India:

1. **Two young men in a Garden** - From the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan dated 1551, former Imperial Library, Tehran.
2. **Akbar Presenting a painting to Humayun** - From the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan, former Imperial Library, Tehran.
3. **A Horse and Groom** - From the Muraqqa-e-Gulshan, former Imperial Library, Tehran.

BISHAN DAS

Bishan Das career's inevitably divides itself into two parts. In 1613 he was chosen to accompany the embassy of Khan Alam to the court of the Safavid Shah Abbas of Isfahan. Jahangir, anxious to persuade his Iranian rival of the wealth and power of the Mughals, arranged for the mission to be ostentatiously grand and its success, in this regard is related in a contemporary Iranian account.

The highly placed king Salim Shah, ruler of Hindustan, sent Mirza Barkhurdar entitled Khan Alam, who was a great noble of that court and is styled 'bhai' or brother by the Shah, as ambassador. The day when Khan Alam entered Qazvin, the writer was present in the city and himself be held the great magnificence of the ambassador's train. He also made enquiries of the old men, who had beheld other embassies in the days gone by and all were agreed that from the beginning of this divine dynasty, no ambassador ever came from India or Rum with such splendid and lavish equipments.

He had with him 1000 royal servants, his own private servants and 200 falconers and hunters. He also had mighty elephants with golden ornaments and turrets of innumerable kinds and Indian animals, many singing birds and beautiful palkis.

Khan Alam remained until A.H.1029 = A.D.1620, and upon his return was lavished with honours. Jahangir mentions this event in a passage of interest to us:
"At that time when I sent Khan Alam to Persia, I had sent with him a painter of the name Bishan Das, who was unequalled in his age for taking likenesses to take the portraits of the Shah and the chiefmen of his state and bring them. He had drawn the likenesses of most of them and had especially taken that of my brother, the Shah exceedingly well, so that when I showed it to any of his servants, they said it was exceedingly well drawn".\(^1\)

The emperor further notes of the events of the embassy's return that "Bishan Das, the painter was rewarded with the gift of an elephant". What is important at this point, however, is simply to realize that Bishan Das was absent from India during the middle artistically rich year of Jahangir's reign. A famous group of pictures, attributed traditionally and by inscription of Bishan Das, relates to this trip, for it includes paintings of the meeting of Khan Alam and Shah Abbas as well as portraits of the Shah and members of his family. One such illustration from the late Shahjahan's album, is included here. None of these works seems to be of sufficient quality or immediacy to guarantee Bishan Das actual authorship, neither figures nor the landscape, shows the vitality and aliveness that distinguishes. The Birth of Jahangir, one of the artist's greatest works. Certainly, many copies of this Iranian subject matter would have been made at the emperor's behest to distribute in celebration of the success of the embassy.

An inscription in the borders of the 'Muraqqa-e-Gulshan' tells us that Bishan Das was nephew of the painter Nanha whose work is also included here. His earliest known commissions were included in two imperial manuscripts of the 1590s, and during the first decade of the seventeenth century he had attained sufficient eminence to be included among the portraits of painters found in the margins of the Gulshan Album. There is

\(^1\) ibid.
really only one painting presently known that can explain the basis for this reputation at such an early date, however, this is 'The House of Sheikh Phul' a signed work that in gentleness of colour simplicity of composition and intensity relates to other paintings of about 1605. Together with his relatively modest contribution to the 1604-10 'Anwar-i-Suhaili' this is the basis for understanding Bishan Das style, for there are few other major signed works. His style is sufficiently recognizable and consistent, however, to assure confidence in further attributions.

Such an attributed page from the Jahangirnama showing 'The Birth of Jahangir' is seen here. The painter used a palette of dark earth colours and draws with a free and seemingly unselfconscious line (unlike Mansur of Hashim) that gives his figures warmth and animation. The variety of personalities he depicts is extraordinary, confirming Jahangir's praise of his portraits. This is particularly notable among the harem women in the top-half, for stock formulas were more customary when showing groups of female figures. Court ladies were in rigid seclusion (purdha) and visible only to members of their immediate families and consequently there was little chance for true portraiture, compare the difference in treatment of the women here and by an anonymous artist for example Bishan Das is also far less concerned with the use of space generally or shading to give physical bulk to his forms, than Abul Hasan for example Govardhan. It is characterization and gesture, not modelling, that gives his figures life. The painter's work specially his illustrations are occasionally even specially inconsistent, as can be seen in another Jahangirnama page, a processional scene which exhibits Bishan Das's characteristic colour, brushwork and character types. Here, however, his tendency to cluster figures is more pronounced and the line work is harder. The extreme contrasts in the proportions of both these miniatures may be studied together.

*These miniatures are significant also for the study of the costumes of*
the female musicians and their instruments; as also for the costumes of men of different strata the fountain with four spouts may be a interest in any study of 'water-works' in 16th century.

**KESU**

Kesu Das was one of the greatest of Akbar's artists and is placed just following Basawan in the list of painters that Abu'l Fazl gives in the Ain-i-Akbari. He is best known for his copies and adaptations of European prints and this interest in turn affected his work on the major Akbari manuscripts in the Darabnama for example is a scene in identified by Norah Titley as the water maiden's husband tearing their children's bodies apart in which a frontal male nude is modeled in such way that the figure has a weight and mass unparallel in other work of period.

At the time of Razmnama, Kesu was already an important artist. He worked unassisted on three illustrations and designed four others "three of which were completed by the young Muskin" "he also executed a design by Daswanth. Akbar's greatest painters while hardly rivaling in quality the thirty eight illustrations designed by Lal for the manuscript, his talent was clearly acknowledged in the Jaipur Ramayan which followed immediately. The Razmnama project, Kesu's assignment were increased and by the time of the first Akbarnama he was the third most important designer only two illustrations in the Tehran section of this Jamial-Tawarikh one innovative adaptor of European ideas are recent article on his career and on European influence in particular, a discussion Kesu is a brilliant technician.

Manuscript with inscriptions to Kesu.

1. **Darabnama**, Circa 1580 British Library, London, Beach Mughal Painter
Kesu Das.

2. Razmnama, Circa 1582-86, City Palace Museum, Jaipur, Beach Mughal Painter Kesu Das.


5. Diwan of Shahi, Circa 1595, Private collection, "Mughal Painter Kesu Das".

**BASAWAN**

Basawan is listed in the Ain-i-Akbari as the greatest of Akbar's painters after Mir Saiyid Ali, Abdus Samad and Daswanth. Basawan, therefore, was the most important, prestigious and influential painter active during the later years of Akbar's reign. The list of his work given below is virtually a complete list of major Akbar's manuscript for illustrations that were collaboration, his assignment were as outliner-designer as befitting his status. Two other artists (Lal and Muskin) were usually given more pages probably as a result of Basawan's slow and painstaking technique. Basawan studied and learned profoundly from the European prints that circulated in the Mughal empire and consequently his figures are defined by weight and mass and his character studies are unrivaled. Basawan's achievement was crucial to the development of Jahangir portraiture in the early seventeenth century an astonishing attainment, since he was also instrumental in the formation of the quite different early Mughal style.

"There are also significant evidence for the availability of European works as models well before the arrival of the first Jesuit mission in 1580". ¹

¹. M.C.Beach, Imperial Image Painting for the Mughal Court Freer Gallery of Art, 1981.
The progress of Basawan's style shows a continually evolving understanding and adaptation of European principles, unlike such a painter as Kesu Das. In Kesu Das's work we sense a barrier of full comprehension, for while he dealt inventively with space and modelling, he was an indifferent portraitist, his figures seldom transcending general types, Basawan inevitably used very subdued colours whereas Kesu, Mahesh or Muskin preferred bright, flat tones that tended to reinforce surface rather than spatial values.

The Tutinama, Hamzanama, Darabnama pages are the best and most comparable example for understanding the progression of Basawan early development. By the 1580 he was fully a mature painter and his later works were essentially refinements of the Darabnama style.

Manuscript with inscription to Basawan:
1. Tutinama, Circa 1560, Cleveland Museum of Art, Re- Pramod Chandra Tutinama, pp 77-78.
3. Razamnana, Circa 1582-86, City Palace Museum, Jaipur.
4. Taimunama, Circa 1584, Khuda Baksh Public Library, Bankipore.
5. Ramayana, Circa 1584-88, City Palace Museum, Jaipur.

MUSKIN

Muskin who had worked on the largest number of miniatures seems to
have attained perfection in animal drawings. Animal figures represented in
vigorouss and violent rythm ascribed to Muskin (sketch only) are hardly seen
in any other miniature of the sixteenth century Mughal school. Here he has
excelled Basawan who has sketched elephants crossing bridge. A hunting
scene sketched by Muskin represents animals in a variety of postures and
actions, there Muskin has done the work of colouring. The latter achieved
great perfection in bird, animal, flower painting and became unrivalled painter
of his age during Jahangir's reign (1605-1628).

Animal figures drawn by Farrukh chela are represented in the painter's
individual style where their shape appear sutherland and attenuated. This
tendency has survived from the very begining of his work viz. on folio 116 of
the Diwan-i-Hafiz\(^1\) (Rampur), folio 30 of the Anwar-i-Suhaili (Varanasi).

**MANSUR**

Mansur's known career began in the late 1580s when he was assigned
the painting. His designer and collaborator (and immediate superior) was
Kanha who with Muskin must have been considered the major animal
painters of the time (these two senior artists contributed the largest portion
of the natural history section of the first Baburnama). At about the same
time, Mansur works on two pages of the Victoria and Albert Akbarnama.

The first was an elaborate hunting scene designed by Basawan the
greatest figural painter of the period. Mansur was being trained by the
major talent in the workshop. In about 1591 he was given sole responsibility
for five animal studies in the British Library. Baburnama, an obvious

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1. M.C. Beach, Imperial Image Painting for the Mughal Court Freer Gallary of Art, 1981
recognition of his quickly established proficiency with animal subjects.

His work as a portraitist or a painter of figural composition was indifferent, as attested by his pages in the second Akbarnama. The basic characteristics of the design - the simple background, with a few typical plants placed in a way that rhythmically enlivens the surface or the use of plain, uncolour paper to concentrate attention on the animals are probably elements contributed here by Kanha but they continue in Mansur's later natural history works as well the slow careful drawing and thinly applied paint, however, seem especially distinctive to Mansur. Akbar period's manuscript with inscription to Mansur.

Out of hundreds of painters who worked at the Mughal atelier, only a few are known for specialisation in one or the other aspects of paintings. Among them Abu Hasan, Bichitr, Bishan Das, Goverdhan, Manohar, Mansur and Payag are notable. Mansur seems to have specialised in drawing bird and animal figures, as well as flowers. This earned him fame in 16-17 century India. Jahangir wrote in 1618, "Also Ustad Mansur had become such a master in painting that he has the title of Nadirul-Asr, and in the art of drawing is unique in his generation. In the time of my father's (Akbar) reign and my own these two (Abu Hasan and Mansur) have had no third". However, the exact date when Mansur was awarded this title, that is 'Nadirul-Asr', is not clear from Jahangir's memoirs. Most probably, Mansur got this title around 1612 when he portrayed the Turkey cock which has been described in the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri (account of the year 1912). This painting bears an inscription,"Amal-i-Banda-i-Dargah Mansur Nadirul-Asr, Jahangirshahi" (work of the servant of the court of the emperor Jahangir, Mansur 'unique of the age').

No information of Mansur's life is traceable. Perhaps he belonged to the family of a 'designer' (ornamental artist) or 'engraver' as may be gleaned
from some inscriptions, that is, Mansur naqqash. We also know that Mansur did illumination work, a rare specimen of which is in Khamsa, contemporary to his earlier work in Baburnama.

Mansur seems to have joined to Mughal atelier after 1595. Numerous manuscripts illustrated earlier to this date Razmnama (State Museum, Jaipur), Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria (Oriental Public Library, Rampur), Darabnama (British Museum, Or. 4615) etc. do not contain miniatures ascribed to him. Perhaps the earliest specimen of his work are the illustrations executed by him in the copies of Baburnama (B.M Or. 3714) circa 1598-1600; National Museum, Delhi, No.50.326); Jami-ut-Tawarikh (Imperial Library, Tehran, dated 1598); and Akbarnama (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Circa 1600-05; British Museum, Or. 12988); 'Antelopes' and 'Water buffalos', illustrations from a dispersed copy of Baburnama (Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, No. 54.29a and 655 A.E) may be taken as one of the earliest examples of his art. On these folios, Mansur has worked as a co-artist and has done the work of colouring only. The sketching has been done by Kanha - an established painter of Akbar's court. It may be pointed out that the painters, while in the learning stage, worked in general, first as co-artist, and only laid pigments in the drawings outlined by master-painters. But it was not a rule.

Mansur, whose active period as a painter may be fixed after 1597-98 has not been referred to in the Ain-i-Akbari by Abu'l Fazl because he rose to the status of a 'master' (ustad) painter only towards the end of Akbar's reign, 1600-1605, by which period the Ain had already been compiled. The fact that Mansur had attained perfection in a short time is evident from the inscription given on folio 110b in Akbarnama (B.M Or. 12988), where the painter's name is given with an epithet 'Ustad' (Ustad Mansur). The term ustad was not a title conferred by the Mughal sovereigns. It was a customary epithet employed by the disciples of an artist or his colleagues.
which in itself testifies to Mansur's greatness. Other contemporary painters referred to with this epithet are Ustad Hussain and Ustad Muskin. Mansur emerges as a co-artist in the illustrated manuscripts of Jami-ut-Tawarikh and Akbarnama where he did the colouring only, while sketches were done by Nanha, Muskin and Basawan. Miniature on the folios of Baburnama (Or. 3714) are his independent works. This manuscript contains five folios representing bird and animal drawings ascribed to Mansur Naqqash. These pictures are the testimony of the distinguished quality of the painter, depiction of details, realistic representation, truthful depiction of colour etc. Bird and animal drawings executed by other sixteenth century Mughal painters, Dhanraj, Shivdas, Jagannath, Makra, Shyam, Surya Gujrat in the same manuscript look inferior from this point of view.¹

Jahangir, who was greatly fascinated by rare birds and animals, insisted on maintaining pictorial records of them besides giving descriptive notes on their behaviour, life and other details in his memoirs. The task of portraying them seems to have been largely entrusted to Mansur. We come across atleast two such occasions in Jahangir's memoirs when Jahangir commissioned Mansur to paint the likenesses of some birds presented to the Emperor or noticed by him in nature. In 1619 Jahangir ordered Mansur to draw the likeness of falcon presented to him by the king to Persia. In the following year, during his visit to Kashmir he asked Mansur to portray the bird dipper (called saj). Many other birds and animals minutely described by Jahangir in his memoirs were drawn by Mansur probably at the Emperor's command namely, Turkey-cock, Pheasant zebra. This suggests that Mansur had attained a distinct and unrivalled position amongst court painters for animal drawings. Mention may be made here of other painters - Abu Hassan, Farrukh Beg, Inayat, Manohar, Muskin, Murad and Pidarath,

¹ Roop Lekha, All India Fine Art and Crafts Society, New Delhi, vol. 57, 1979-80.
who also painted animal life, but in a casual manner. Mansur's contribution to the treasure of the portrayal of the birds and animals in unique and unsurpassed. Besides the large number of such drawings, his work is distinct for truthful representation, depiction of minute details, realism and accuracy in form and naturalistic distribution of pigments.

Mansur's drawings drawn from life are the best specimens of realism in the history of art in India. This novel attempt at realism affected the earlier oriental approach of stylized, decorative and symbolic representation of birds and animals. Bird and animal drawings executed as portraits was the mainstay of the painters at Jahangir's atelier. Earlier, in sixteenth century Mughal art, birds and animals appear in connection with an event or fable or as illustrations in the manuscripts of Baburnama. The later in a limited sense, may however, be taken as portraits. Besides Mansur, Muhammad Alam, Abu Hasan, Farrukh Beg, Goverdhan, Manohar, Muhammad Nadir, Murad and other equally contributed to the new trend of realism in art. These realistic pictures exhibiting accuracy of form, colour, minute details and natural surroundings could have assisted in the development of the study of natural science in those times if proper thought and directions had been given to it.

During Jahangir's period, in the treatment of the main figure as portrait, the landscape in its background too had a vital role to play. From this point of view, Mansur's drawings (pheasant, dipper, vulture, hornbill and crane) are the most powerful compositions to enliven the subject. Sometimes, Mansur preferred a plain, flat background where it suited the subject, as in the picture of the zebra. Here the background painted in a tinge of red but with a suggestion of its shade all around the main figure appears in contrast with the rhythmic patterns of stripes on the zebra's skin. It makes the subject more effective and distinct, but the overall effect produced is more of an illustration rather than of a painting.
Mansur's expertise is in the depiction of the nature of animals. The most rhythmic, powerful lines drawn with shaded, bold strokes in accordance with the external anatomy of the figure 'Salt-water fish' reveal the swift and smoothly curved movement of the aquatic animal. The movement is further emphasised here by leaving a large space for aerial perspective and by composing the figure from end to end horizontally with a slight diagonal bent in the picture planes. It is the most powerfully conceived realistic picture of an aquatic animal, a parallel example of which we do not come across the Mughal school.

The art of book illustration as developed in the Safavid and Taimurid traditions was adopted by the Mughal artist. Mughal book-illustrations are more descriptive and detailed in content as compared with Jain paintings, here, a Mughal artist appears as a story teller close association of calligraphy and painting - a trend of Persian art - is another conspicuous feature of the Mughal book illustrations. Pre-Mughal Indian art, broadly speaking is confined to the illustrations of the religious books, whereas in Persian and Mughal art both secular and religious books are equally preferred. The latter includes the historical books viz. Baburnama, Akbarnama, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, Jami-ut-Tawarikh, Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria, Badshahnama; literary books viz Khamsa of Nizami, Khamsa of Amir Khusru, Diwan of Anvari, Diwan of Hafiz, sacred books from Sanskrit and Hindi literatures and legendary books viz Mahabharat, Ramayan, Harivansh, Kathasaritsagar, Rajkumar, Nal Daman, Ityar-i-Danish. Mughal emperors had a wider range of selection as compared to the rulers of Persia. Akbar, who attempted to synthesize the cultures of different peoples of the Indian subcontinent ordered for the translation of Hindu sacred books into Persian language and also got them further illuminated in pictures. But

this practice seems to have been discarded by the later Mughal emperors. Variety in the selection of books for the purpose of illustration i.e. from different languages, subject and religions as observed during Akbar's reign, illustrate books of history seems to have become a conventional practice of the Mughal school. It was also done to make them more popular and attractive through the pictorial representation of important events.

Akbarnama compiled by Abu'l Fazl is a detailed history of Akbar's reign, and all includes an account of his predecessor. It is compiled in three volumes (daftars), the first ends with the account of the middle of the 17th reignal year of Akbar. Abu'l Fazl was murdered in 1602, as a result of which Sheikh Faizi Sarhandi undertook to write the account of the years 1602-05.

The third volume known as Ain-i-Akbari was completed in 1596-97 and an addition was made to it in 1597-98. It is important to mention that Abu'l Fazl in Ain-i-Akbari has given a list of the manuscripts illustrated at Akbar's ateliers but it does not include Akbarnama. Since Akbarnama was not completed by the time of compilation of Ain-i-Akbari, the question of its reference in the above mentioned list did not arise.

The investigations show that Abu'l Fazl's Akbarnama was not illustrated in its full form. For this purpose, only the section dealing with the history of Akbar's reign (1556-1605) was taken up. That too appears incomplete in known illustrated manuscripts of the Akbarnama. Chester Beatty manuscript of Akbarnama begins with the accession date of Akbar (1556) and ends with the account of 35th reignal year of Akbar i.e. 1580-81. Arnold and Wilkinson have reproduced 31 out of 61 illustrations of this copy.

The artists who composed objects in diagonal setting. Miniatures from the present manuscripts viz. "Building of fort at Agra", "Bullocks dragging cannon". Execution of Khan Zaman's followers attributed to Muskin (where
he had done the work of sketch only) are the best examples. Basawan is another painter who has preferred diagonal compositions "Elephants Crossing Bridge". Naturally in diagonal composition the scope for the effective expression of the violent force and the rythm becomes immensely increased.

During Akbar's reign, joint work by artists i.e. sketch by one painter, colouring by another and sometimes portrait or figure by a third painter was in vogue. Besides the miniatures of Akbarnama, Razmnama¹, Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria², Jami-ut-Tawarikh³, are the best known manuscripts, of which illustrations are generally the production of joint work. However, it was not an universal system and a great number of miniatures already in the manuscripts mentioned above and specially in Anwar-i-Suhail (Varanasi), Baburnama, Iyar-i-Danish, Diwan-i-Hafiz are the works of individual painters under Jahangir, this practice went out of vogue since specialization in a particular branch of painting had become an artist's mainstay. Under the joint work system, generally the characteristics of individual painters blurred and merged in at common characteristics. But the works of distinguished painters like Basawan, Farrukh Chela, Lal, Muskin still remain distinct.

Farrukh Beg's work has a strong Persian note more akin to 1580 Safavid are tradition. In all the miniatures ascribed to this painter, earliest of which is in Diwan-i-Hafiz (Rampur) his style remains distinct and isolated in the Mughal School.

Females have been represented in no less than 12 illustrations. These include royal ladies, maids, musicians and dancers and woman of the

¹. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
². City Palace Museum, Jaipur.
³. British Museum.
commoner's class. Their faces are drawn on set lines and hardly appears as their portraits. Nevertheless rarely in the representation of women of the commoner's class faces appear to have been treated as portraits.

Male faces are more characterized and varied in expression. Emperor's face i.e of Akbar appears identical. His portrait in profile is great favoured a trend of pre-Mughal Indian art which lately replaced the Persian tradition.

In other instance, faces of nobles and chieftains are distinguished. Attention was paid to represent contours of face drawing and portrait painting in the miniature executed by lesser skilled painters.

Male figures also below the waist is stereotype and neutral in attitude with the action reported in figure. For the display of rhythm female figures of dancers and musicians are remarkable.

Margins (Hashiyas) of Akbarnama illustrations are invariably plain similar to those observed in the manuscripts Razmnama (Jaipur), Tarikh-i-Khandan-i-Taimuria (Patna), Jami-ut-Tawarikh (Imperial Library, Tehran), Anwar-i-Suhailli (Varanasi) etc. In them only the bands of lines termed as 'Khat' drawn in different pigments are employed to close either side of the illustrations. Nevertheless, margin paintings was in practice but was secondary in importance. Margins decorated with floral patterns, viz. in the Baburnama (British Museum) and in its most embellished from in the Khamsa of Nizami (British Museum) set with hunting scenes and wild life etc. painted by the artists of Akbar's court are an outstanding example of margin painting from sixteenth century Mughal art later under Jahangir importance was attached to Margin painting and it seems to have developed as a separate branch.
Akbarnama miniatures are equally important for the study of sixteenth century Indian society. From this point of view miniatures representing feast and festivities, construction of buildings and outdoor scenes are important. In them masons, labourers, water-carriers, bullock cart drivers, saints, dancers, musicians, elephant drivers, boatmen, palanquin bearers, cooks, stone cutters, shopkeepers are depicted. In the miniatures, ornaments tools, habits and social life are depicted which makes a source of cultural history of the people those days. Besides a variety of cultural items viz. arms and armour, costumes, musical instruments, utensils, furniture, water transport, road journey animals carrying loads etc. are faithfully represented by the artists of Akbarnama, which a historian of medieval India can ill afford to pass.¹

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