CHAPTER

I
HISTORICAL SURVEY OF MUGHAL PAINTING
WITH IT'S SOCIAL POLITICAL & CULTURAL ASPECTS

The founder of the so-called Mughal empire was Zahir u'd-din Muhammad, surnamed Babur (Tiger), a Barlas Turk who claimed descent from Taimur on his father's side and Changez Khan on his mother's. His
early life and adventures are graphically described in his inimitable Memoirs. Born in the little central Asian state of Ferghana in 1482, he set out at the age of fifteen with a handful of followers to capture Samarkand, which had been the capital of his ancestors. But he was expelled by a rival faction, and after wandering 'like a king on chessboard', in 1504 he finally made himself master of Kabul. But even Kabul did not satisfy him. Inspired by tales of Taimur's exploits, he determined to invade India. A quarrel had broken out between Ibrahim Lodi, the Sultan of Delhi, and the governor of the Punjab, which provided him with a pretext for intervening, and in 1525 he marched against Delhi with a tiny force of 12,000 men. The Sultan, a rash and inexperienced young man, awaited him on the plain of Panipat, on April 26th, 1526.

Babur made a lager of wagons lashed together, with cannon and matchlocks mounted on tripods in the gaps. When the Delhi troops attacked, Babur employed the usual Turki manoeuvre of enveloping the enemy's flanks by means of mounted archers. It was completely successful, and the Sultan and 15,000 of his men were left dead on the field. The following day, Delhi and Agra opened their gates and the khutba or bidding prayer was recited in the mosques in the name of Zahir u'd-din Muhammad, the first of the Great Mughals.

But fresh perils awaited Babur. He was isolated in the midst of a hostile country, far from home, and his men, who disliked the heat and dust of the Indian plains, were showing signs of disaffection. The Rajputs, who thought that the conflict between the rival powers had weakened the Muslim hold on the country, gathered a mighty host to drive out the intruder. It was led by Rana Sanga of Mewar, the hero of countless fights, who had lost an eye and an arm in battle, and was said to bear on his body the scars of over

1. H.G.Robinson & Others, Faber & Faber, Page No. 39
2. Ibid - 43
eighty wounds. Babur told his men that this was a jihad or Holy War, and they must conquer or die. Many of them had been in the habit of drinking wine, contrary to the precepts of their religion, but now they poured out their wine on the ground, and breaking their drinking vessels, swore an oath on the Koran that, if they survived, they would never offend again. The two armies met at Kanua, outside Agra. Babur repeated his previous tactics, with the same result as before. The battle raged all day, but at nightfall the Hindu army broke and fled, and for many miles the ground was strewn with countless bodies, jewelled head dresses, silk scarves and richly inlaid weapons. In three more battles, Babur reduced all northern India to submission. He was now the master of an empire stretching from the Oxus to the Ganges. It was divided into provinces, each under an officer responsible for law and order and the collection of revenue, and for supplying troops when called upon. The Hindu nobles who submitted were left undisturbed.

Babur hated India. Its people, he said, were ugly and devoid of refinement and artistic sense, and the country was no better. There were no good horses, no good flesh-meat, no grapes or melons, no ice or cold water, no good food or bread, no baths or colleges. He spent his remaining years in trying to make Agra resemble his beloved Samarkand, with marble baths, pavilions and watercourses. He died in December 1530, at the age of forty-eight, but he had packed into his few short years the adventures of a long life. He had been fighting since the age of twelve, 'a king for thirty-six years crowded with hardship, tumult and strenuous energy'. He was a born leader, brave and chivalrous, and a lover of beauty in nature and art. His body was taken for burial to Kabul, where it lies in a garden on a hill outside the city, surrounded by streams and under the shadow of the delectable mountains. His grave was marked a century later by a delicate marble tomb, erected by the orders of his descendant, the emperor Shah Jahan.
Babur's son and heir, Humayun, was a drug addict, and quite incapable of maintaining order. The Afghan nobles began to throw off the yoke, and in 1540, he was driven into exile by Sher Shah, the governor of Bihar. While he was a fugitive in Sind, his wife gave birth to a son, the future emperor Akbar, at the fortress of Amarkot. He afterwards took refuge in Persia, where he was hospitably received by Shah Tamasp.

Sher Shah proved to be an excellent ruler, and during his short reign of five years, he introduced many reforms. The nobles were reduced to obedience, and excellent roads were built, which greatly strengthened the power of the central government. Hindus were freely employed, and were allowed to practise their religion. The land was surveyed, and the amount of revenue to be paid by the peasants was laid down. Village officers were made responsible for maintaining order, and it was said that 'an old woman with a pot of gold might securely lay herself down beside her burden, even in the desert'.

Sher Shah was unfortunately killed in 1545 in an explosion of gunpowder, and was buried beneath a stupendous mausoleum at Sahasram in Bihar; Humayun then returned from Persia, only to die as the result of a fall in the following year.

At the time of his father's death, Jalal u'd-din Akbar was only thirteen years old, and his guardian Bairam Khan hastily arranged for his enthronement before rival claimants should arise. The only resistance came from a Hindu named Hemu, who seized Agra and Delhi and tried to restore the Hindu Raj. He was defeated on the field of Panipat and put to death. In 1560 Akbar, now eighteen years old, determined to shake off the interference of the regent, Bairam Khan, and the other courtiers who kept

him in leading strings. He found himself, however, almost alone, and the Afghan nobles, who hated the Mughals, were seeking an opportunity to rise. By a masterly stroke of policy, he decided to enlist the support of the Rajputs, who had been treated by the Delhi Sultans as a conquered race. For this purpose, in 1562, he married a Rajput princess, the daughter of Raja Bihar Mal of Jaipur, and abolished the hated Jizza, or poll-tax on Hindus. The Rana of Mewar, who refused to submit, was defeated, and his great stronghold, the fortress of Chittor, was captured. Gujrat was conquered in 1672, and Bengal two years later.

In 1586, Kashmir was annexed and became the summer resort of the Mughal court. In 1600, the Decan was invaded and Ahmadnagar submitted. This left Akbar master of a stupendous empire, stretching from the Oxus to the Godaveri river. It was divided into fifteen subas or provinces, each under a Subadar or Viceroy, a great noble and a member of the imperial family. But no office was allowed to become hereditary. The Suba was divided into Sarkars or districts, administered by Mansabars, who were both military and civil officers. For revenue purposes, Akbar employed a clever Hindu of the name of Todar Mal, who completed the work begun by Sher Shah. The Mughal system of government instituted by Akbar was substantially that followed by the British when they conquered India.

The sixteenth century was an age of religious ferment all over the world, and Akbar, like Henry VIII in England, was determined to free himself from ecclesiastical influence and be head of the Church (Imam-i-‘adil). He had doubtless learnt something about Hinduism from his Hindu wives and friends, and he fell under the influence of Shaikh Mubarak, who was a Sufi, and his two sons, Abu’l-Fazal and Shaikh Faizi. Abu’l-Fazl was the most learned man of his age, and the author of the Akbar Nama, or History of the Reign of Akbar. Abu’l-Fazl’s religious views may be gathered from a verse of one of his poems:
'O God, in every temple I see people that seek Thee: in every language that I hear spoken, people praise Thee!

If it be a mosque, people murmur the holy prayer: if it be a Christian Church, they ring the bell for love of Thee!

Sometimes I frequent the Christian cloister, and sometimes the mosque;

But it is Thou whom I seek from temple to temple.'

In 1579, Akbar issued his Infallibility Edict, in which he claimed the sole right to decide any religious question about which there was doubt, and ascending the pulpit in the Great Mosque, he himself recited the khutba or bidding prayer composed for him by his friend Faizi, now poet laureate.

Akbar's great ambition was to find a common religion which would unite India, and for this end he built his famous Hall of Worship (Ibadat Khana) for the purpose of holding religious discussions, in which he took a keen interest. He invited Hindus, Jains, Muslims, Zoroastrians and Christians to take part in them. For this purpose, he induced a party of Jesuit missionaries from Goa to visit his court; they came in 1580, bringing with them copies of Italian religious paintings, which delighted the Emperor. They were received with great distinction, and were allowed to build a chapel at Agra. Finally, Akbar, dissatisfied with all creeds, determined to establish an eclectic one of his own, which he named the Din Ilahi or Divine Faith. It found, however, few adherents outside his personal circle, and did not survive him.

Akbar's later years were clouded with sorrow, caused by the unfilial conduct of his sons. Two of them, Murad and Daniyal, were vicious and worthless, and died of drink. Salim, the son of the Rajput princess and his father's favourite, lived in open rebellion at Allahabad, and hired an assassin to waylay and murder Akbar's beloved friend and counsellor, Abu'l-Fazl, who died in October 1605.
Akbar lived in an age of great monarchs - Elizabeth of England, Philip II of Spain, Henry IV of France and Shah Tamasp of Persia - and in many respects he transcended them all. 'One could recognize even at first glance that he is a king,' wrote one of the Jesuit Fathers. 'His expression is tranquil, serene and open, full of dignity, and when he is angry, of awful majesty.' His religious tolerance was in striking contrast to the bigotry of contemporary Europe. Though formally illiterate, he was a great patron of poetry, and had a library of 34,000 volumes. He caused Hindu religious books such as the Bhagavad Gita to be translated into Persian. He was a patron of painting and music, and liberally encouraged Hindu as well as Muslim artists. Like all the Mughals, he had a passion for architecture, and built Fatehpur Sikri, the City of Victory, which was the residence of the court from 1570 to 1585.

Akbar was succeeded by Prince Salim, who took the title of Jahangir or World Grasper. He was very unpopular, and a rising of the younger nobles to place his son Khusru on the throne was barbarously suppressed. Khusru was thrown into prison, where he died, probably of poison. Jahangir married Nur Jahan, the widow of a Persian nobleman. The Empress completely dominated her husband, who was addicted to drink and drugs, and she appeared openly in the Hall of Audience, transacting the business of government in his name. During this reign, William Hawkins visited Agra and obtained from the Emperor permission for the English to open a trading factory at Surat. Jahangir was a despicable character, weak, indolent and cruel, but his Memoirs show him to have been intensely artistic and a poet of no mean order. He was especially fond of gardens, and constructed the Shalimar Gardens at Lahore and the Shalimar and Nishat Bagh at Kashmir, to which the Court regularly moved to avoid the heat of the Indian summer.

Jahangir died on his way from Kashmir in 1627 and was succeeded by his son Khurram who took the title of shah Jahan or Lord of the World. Shah
Jahan started the policy of trying to reduce the independent kingdoms of the Deccan, which was ultimately to prove the ruin of the Mughal empire. Vast sums of money were also spent on magnificent buildings; the Taj Mahal, the splendid mausoleum which Shah Jahan built for his empress, took twenty years to erect, and cost four million pounds sterling. Even larger sums were lavished upon the Jama Masjid at Delhi, on the huge marble palace, with its lavish inlaid work, and the famous Peacock Throne, its golden pillars encrusted with jewels. This brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy. 'The whole country is ruined', says the French traveller Bernier, 'by the necessity of defraying the enormous charges required to maintain the splendour of the numerous court, and to pay a large army maintained for the purpose of keeping the country in subjection. No adequate idea can be conveyed of the sufferings of that people. The cudgel and the whip compel them to incessant labour for the benefit of others, and driven to despair by every kind of cruel treatment, their revolt and flight is only prevented by the presence of military power'. A terrible famine broke out in Gujarat, and the starving peasantry were reduced to devouring dogs and cats and even human corpses.

Shah Jahan's sons were, in accordance with the usual practice, made viceroy of the various provinces. In 1657, a war of succession broke out among them. In the end, the victor was Prince Aurangzeb, who made away with his rivals, threw his father into prison, and caused himself to be enthroned in 1659 with the title Alamgir.

Unlike his predecessors, Aurangzeb was a religious fanatic. His sole aim in life was to purify India of idol worship and make it a 'land fit for Islam'. Temples were destroyed, and the hated poll-tax re-imposed on the Hindus. The Rajputs, whom Akbar had looked on as the 'sword-arm of the Empire', were deliberately provoked.
Aurangzeb then plunged into a fresh war in the Deccan. He was a strict Sunni, and was determined to reduce to submission the heretical ruler of Bijapur. This he did, but came to blows with fresh opponents, the Marathas, who had risen to power under their ruler Shivaji. The Marathas were hillmen, and experts at guerrilla warfare. They refused to be drawn into a pitched battle, but hung on the flanks of the unwieldy imperial armies, ceaselessly harassing them. At last the old Emperor, worn out by his exertions died in the field in 1707. He was eighty-nine.

The Empire now rapidly disintegrated. In the north-west, Afghans, Sikhs and Jats were in open revolt. The viceroys of Oudh and Bengal became virtually independent, and a great noble, the Nizam-ul-Mulk, carved out for himself a kingdom at Hyderabad in the Deccan. The English and French began to establish themselves on the Bombay and Coromandel coasts, and at the mouth of the Hugli. In 1739, Nadir Shah of Persia ransacked Delhi, and carried off the Peacock Throne. In 1803, the poor blind emperor Shah' Alam, seated under a tattered canopy in his ruined capital, gladly accepted the protection of Lord Lake. The last of the line, Bahadur Shah, was tried for complicity in the mutiny of 1857 and banished to Rangoon, where he died. India then came under the rule of the British Crown.

The Mughal art is a combination of Indo-Persian style of painting which developed in India. Mughal School of painting was not a new style introduced without, but a combination of the Indian Rajput School refined of the strong Persian influence.

Mughal painting has evoked considerable interest among the Connoisseurs of art all over the world. Babar was the founder the Mughal Empire in India. He seems to have developed a great taste for the art of painting of which he was a connoisseur. Mughal paintings are a class by
themselves, distinct from all other styles and techniques of pre-Mughal or Contemporary Indian art. Akbar was the first Mughal monarch who took a deep interest in the promotion of painting and following the Mongol and Taimurid example he commissioned the work of illustrating number our manuscript. When he was a child at Kabul with his father Humayun, he had the opportunity to study Persian painting in the company of the Persian painters Khawaja Abdus Samad and Mir Sayed Ali.

The artist of Akbar's court were drawn from within the country and also from Iran. The style that developed was the best of Bihzad School and pre-Mughal Indian art.

The Mughal art of painting may well be known understood in the light of Abu'l Fazl definition. Abu'l Fazl suggests further standard for evaluating the best execution.1 Basically, these included the depiction of minutes details, boldness of expression, frankness of lines, the truthful representation of form and colour, and lastly, the general finish. It combined the skills of laying the pigments shading and lining and ornamenting the object. These very standards are the basic elements which shaped the style of miniature painting under the Mughal. The Persian tradition makes itself emphatically felt in the aerial perspective deep blue skies flat in tone occasionally sprayed with a flight of bird or stars, figure imposed on one another, a group of figures over a landscape background the representation of object following continously rising view point; the method of dividing up the picture plane into small spaces; bright colour elaborate embellishment of costumes. Mughal artist draw inspiration from the Iranian stylistic peculiarities, accompanied by a very modest our Indian tinge on the whole.

The method of shading employed is similar to that in Ajanta painting

though the European technique also begins to show with deep and thick shading Mughal art during Akbar’s time experience the most significant of which is the introduction of perspective. On this smooth surface the artist sketched the theme. The primary sketch was drawn in softlines suggesting the outer form of the figure; the ground colour used are not necessarily light but are lighter than those to be applied in subsequent filling.

The outline of individual figure receive utmost care from the artist. The painting is begun with a sketch defining the limits of the object within which the brush must move after colouring and shading these lines are finally confirmed in a darker tone and the figure given a defined form. In the matter of colouring it is possible to discern a certain produce the human figure being the main object of representation were treated first, animal figure came next and the background was coloured last of all. This shows that the artist began work without any definite colour scheme in mind.

The art flourished under Akbar did not entirely stem from painters such as Mir Sayed Ali and Khawaja Abdus Samad Shirazi. Akbar created a new synthesis of art with the combination of Indian Chinese’s European art. Hamza paintings belonged to tradition of tent hanging. It was mainly the work of Mir Sayed Ali and Khwaja Abdus Samad, assisted by several other artists.

The representation of building and landscape is similar to that in the Hamza painting. The drawing of animal and birds blended with a more distinctly Indian feel indicate the emergence of the Mughal school art. Under Akbar, painting seems to have been confined to the illustration of manuscript. Abu’l Fazl has mention only a few of the illustrated manuscript though several volumes of such manuscript and stray folios have survived to this day.

Several Artist were employed at the court to paint the great treasure of Mughal miniature, Abu’l Fazl has given a brief list of only 17 Artists. Among
the artists Hindu were in a greater number. Abu’l Fazl has specially praised
the work of the Hindu artist. He says, “Their picture surpass our conception
of things; few indeed, in the whole world are found equal to them”. The
Hindu painter laid much emphasis on the representation of human
character. He excelled in the painting of the background, the drawing of
feature, the distribution of colour and portraiture miniature are the example
of the contemporary nature of the work of both Daswanth and Basawan.
Basawan shows greater interest in decoration of the scenes, heavy fold in
the flowing costumes and a thick shade which appear occasionally in
Daswanth miniatures though his works represent a greater sense of depth
and the background is mostly drawn with a hazy landscape.

Mughal period is the richest in the respect, while turning, over the leaves
of Mughal album, one is struck by the persistent uniformity of the shape and
form of articles of utility, cultural interest and institution, which analyzed and
put together, enable us to comprehend medieval life more intimately. They
are representative to a certain degree of the level of culture. The work is
broadly divided into part dealing with the art and technique, on the one hand
and the historical aspect, on the other. Akbar gave rise to new form of art;
the famous painting of Akbar can be divided into four parts:

1. Illustration of Persian subjects such as "Hamzanama" etc.
2. Illustration of Indian epics and romance such as Ramayana, Mahabharata,
   etc.
3. Illustration of historical interest such as Tarikh-i-Alfi etc.
4. Portraits - In the work of Abu’l Fazl his majesty got himself portrayal and
   ordered that portrait of all the noble men should be prepared. The Mughal
   painting of Akbar period comes before in the shape of painted manuscript.
   The main illustrated manuscripts of akbar’s period are Dastan Amir Hamza,
   Ramayan, Akbar Nama, Katha Sarit Sagar.

"It has long been recognized that the form and style of painting known generally as Mughal paintings was essentially a product of the Mughal Court".

Mughal painting, in form and content, happens to be a departure from this collective community tradition, just as Maurya art was more than a millennium and a half before".¹

It is true, therefore that in Mughal Court painting, it is not difficult for a pair of discerning eyes to distinguish an Akbari painting from a Jahangir one, or the latter from a Shah Jahan one, but what is more interesting and perhaps more important is the fact that a strong common denominator remains throughout to distinguish the form and style from earlier and later ones as well as from those of contemporary times which originated elsewhere than in the Mughal Court, for instance, in the Court of the Sultans of the Deccan or in those of the contemporary and later Rajput kings and princes.

There are other instances as well, and from amongst the Indian artists recruited and patronized by Akbar. The upper right corner of this relatively large painted textile piece is occupied by the composition of an inconsequential rural scene which must have been and even more is very common anywhere in northern India, but which has nothing to do, thematically or otherwise, with the larger composition which covers roughly speaking, five-sixth of the painted surface. The small corner piece is altogether different in form and style not only from those of the rest of the particular piece but also from those of all to other pieces of Hamza known to us so far, here was a style and form that was current in contemporary India, evidently this small corner composition was drawn and painted by an artist of the court of Akbar, but this was not the style and form that was favoured, and adopted and made current at the court.
Portraiture occupies a significant position in the Mughal painting. A large number of portrait of the Mughal Emperors and the nobilities etc, were executed during the Mughal period.

The Portrait three quarter profile represents an intimate study of a Mughal noble standing with his left hand stretched out making a gesture which the other hand rests on the hilt of a dagger turked to his sash light green background.

Although very little is known about individual artists in Mughal India, there is considerable information about their techniques and methods. Akbar started a karkhana to originate a new style of painting. The main purpose was to produce illuminated manuscripts which was an elaborate production, refining the cooperation of calligraphers, painters, preparators for various accessories such as colour grinder, gold workers, leather workers, book binders and many more. The book to be copied and illustrated were often very long and only by the strictest cooperation among all these different craftsmen and artists some of whom were certainly Prima donnas could a beautiful work be produced in time.

"Mughal artists were due to new and more sophisticated techniques, learned both from the Persian and European traditions while some research has been done on the technique of Mughal paintings very little is known about the technical aspects of Rajput pictures. Pigments too can contribute significantly to the distinctiveness of a style." In contrast to pre-Mughal painting, those of the Mughal and Rajput school reflect an enormous increase in the range of colours.

This is easily confirmed by the frequent copies of the compositions of the masters and the large quantity of Rajput drawings and pattern that have

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survived. We also know that under Akbar and Jahangir the Mughal artists arsiduously copied European prints and engravings.

The brief discussion of the techniques and practices of the Mughal Rajput artist is meant simply to indicate the need of further work in this area and also to contribute somewhat to the better appreciation of this particular tradition.

The foundation of the Mughal empire was laid by Babur in 1556 when he defeated the pathan king Ibrahim Lodi. He was also accomplished in the arts of peace. He was a talented poet in Turki and Persian, and "his battles as well as his orgies were humanised by a breath of poetry".¹

Babur was succeeded by his son Humayun (1530-1556). Who, though charming and cultured, lacked the vigour, administrative ability of his father. At the court of Shah Tamasp of Persia, he came in touch with the paintings of the persian artists Aga Mirak, Sultan Muhammad and Muzaffar Ali. These were pupils of the legendary Bihzad who has also been called "Raphael of the East".²

Later at Tabrez he met the poet and painter Mir Sayed Ali who had distinguished himself as one of the illustors of Nizami's Khamsah. Then, in 1550 at Kabul, Mir Sayed Ali and Abdus Samad from Shiraz joined Humayun. He and his son Akbar, took lessons in drawing from the artists, and the two royal wanderers had their interest in painting confirmed. When Humayun regained his throne, both the artists accompanied him to India.

Akbar (1556-1605) is the real founder of Mughal painting. Akbar was a discerning judge of men, and in recruitment, ignored consideration of caste, colour and creed.

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² Ibid.
More than a hundred painters were employed in the royal atelier at Fatehpur Sikri. Most of these were Hindus from Gujarat, Gwalior and Kashmir. They worked, in turn, under the two Persian master artists, Abdus Samad and Mir Sayed Ali but they were encouraged and inspired by Akbar. Abdus Samad was styled shiringalam, or sweet pen, of him Abu'l Fazl "his perfection was mainly due to the wonderful effect of a look of his majesty, which caused him to turn from that which is form to that which is spirit".  

Abu'l Fazl tells also that the works of the painters were laid before Akbar weekly and he used to confer rewards according to the excellence of workmanship. Akbar had special admiration for the work of Hindu artists, notably Daswanth and Basawan. "Their pictures" Abu'l Fazl said, "Surpass our conception of things, few indeed in the whole world are found equal to them".

Akbar was very fond of the stories of Amir Hamza, an uncle of the prophet. The illustration of these stories, the Hamza-nama was the first work entrusted to the Persian master Mir Sayed Ali plans called for 1400 pictures in volumes and the task was completed in 15 years. The pictures are of large size 20 x 27 inches and unlike other Mughal paintings, are painted on cloth. They are in Persian safavi style brilliant red and green colour predominate; the pink eroded rocks and the vegetation planes and blossoming pum and peach trees are reminiscent of Persia. However, Indian tones appear in later work as Indian artists were trained. Akbar's religious interests led him to the Hindu classics and he ordered his artists to illustrate the epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. This led to one of the greatest creations of his period, the illustrated Razm-nama.

It contains 169 full page paintings and was completed in 1589: It is

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
said that 4 lakh rupees were paid to the artists.

Much of the painting of the Akbar period show a restless energy. The painters in their work reflected the exuberant activity of their patron, figure are shown in hurried movement and the composition are crowded. This is particularly so in the Taimur-nama and Akbar-nama, the great pictorial sagas of the Mughal rulers.

The two Persian artists were the guiding spirit for the Dastan-i-Amir Hamza, the first of the great series of paintings which gave the Mughal school its name and reputation. This was produced in the reign of Humayun's Son, Akbar (1556-1605). The majority of painters in the atelier were Indian who had been trained in the existing school of painting in India.

Other works that were illustrated in Akbar's reign included the khamsa of Nizami, a classic of Persian literature the romantic tale of Laila and Majnu Shahnama, the great epic of ancient Persia.

"The works of all painters according to Abu'l Fazl are weekly laid before his majesty by the Darogah (supervisor and the clerk)".  \(^1\)

As painting developed in the Mughal atelier it lost its purely Persian characteristics and became increasingly Indian by the middle of Akbar's reign, the skies lost their gold and lapis-Lazuli tones to break out into brilliant sunset colours.

Basawan, Daswanth and Bishan Das were some of the most famous painters of Akbar's court among the names mentioned in the Ain-i-Akbari are Kesu Lal, Mukund Muskin etc.  \(^2\) Early Mughal art is purely masculine

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2. Ibid.
from this it can be presumed that scenes of pleasure and alliance with the ladies, which abound in later Mughal painting were also imaginary, the women portrayed being not the princesses themselves but the lesser attendants who worked freely in and out of palaces and whose looks where no mystery to anyone.

Akbar created a separate department of painting with Khwaja Abdus Samad as its head. More than a hundred painters, both Hindus and Muslims, mostly from Kashmir, Punjab, Gwalior, Rajasthan and Gujrat were recruited to work under the Persian master. Akbar's patronage attracted the best painters to his court, some of whom immortalised themselves through their paintings. "His Majesty, writes Abu'l Fazl "from his earliest youth has shown a great predilection for this art and gives it encouragement, as he looks upon it as a means, both of study and amusement hence the art flourishes, and many painters have obtained great reputation".\(^1\) The work of all painters are weekly laid before his majesty by the daroghas and the clerks, he then conferes rewards, according to excellence of workmanship, increases the monthly salaries.

The art of painting in its general finish and boldness of execution reached perfection during Akbar's reign. Mir Sayed Ali of Tabriz, Kwaja Abdus Samad, Daswanth and Basawan were the most renowned artists. Besides these four masters, there were thirteen other first rate painters at Akbar's court, mostly Hindus.

The Persian tradition as it had developed particularly under Bihzad in the later years of the 15th Century, was notable for its decorative qualities and its lively sense of colour. The miniatures were usually book illustrations and were two dimensional. The line was calligraphic and the pallet, brilliant and enamel like. The Indian painters who were put under training, under

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\(^1\) Dr. N.L. Mathur, Indian Miniatures, Published by Dr. N.L. Mathur, National Museum, Janpath, New Delhi, Printed at the Caxton Press Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
the Persian masters soon mastered the finesse and technical excellence of Persian paintings, both of line and colour. The Persian school of painting gave an initial stimulus to the Mughal style. Mughal Painting started developing on independent line.

The artists representing the different regions of India had brought with them not only the skill in painting but also their conventions in regard to drawings, use of colour and composition, Akbar had left the painter very much to their own devices.

Akbar was very fond of the stories and of adventures of Amir Hamza, an uncle of the prophet. Illustration of these stories Hamzanama was the first work entrusted to the Persian master, Mir Sayed Ali, in all, 1400 pictures were painted by him from 1550 to 1560 A.D. They are in the Persian style in which brilliant red, blue and green colours predominate. Akbar's deep interest in religion inclined him towards the Hindu classics and he ordered his artists in 1582 A.D to illustrate the epics of the Hindus.

The other important manuscripts illustrated during the period of Akbar are the Gulistan of Sadi dated 1567 A.D. Anwar-i-Suhaili (a book of fables) dated 1570 A.D.¹ in the school of oriental and African studies, university of London; another 'Gulistan of Sadi', a Diwan of the poet Amir Shahi in the Bibliotheque Nationale; Diwan-i-Hafiz, the Tutinama, the Baharistan of Jami dated 1595 A.D, in the Bodolian library; the Darab-nama ² the Tarikh-i-Alfi (a history of the world) circa 1590 A.D., the Jami-al-Tawarikh dated 1596 A.D. A number of the Babar-nama manuscripts executed in the last decade of the 16th century; the Twarikh-e-Khandane Taimuria in the Khuda Baksh library, Patna, Akbar-nama of circa 1600 A.D. now in Victoria and Albert museum, London and the Jog Vaishist dated 1602.³ The classical Persian literature - Khamsa by Nizami, the romantic love poem of Laila and Majnu,
the collections of moral tales by Sadi & Jami, were also illustrated. The atelier of Akbar thus created the mughal style of painting. Certain conventions and types of figures were developed and these principles continued to be followed thereafter. Plate IV is an illustration from the Baburnama. It shows a happy synthesis of the indigenous style of painting and the persian art. The mughal paintings exhibit three dimensional effect in contrast to the persian one which was two dimensional.

Jahangir (1605-1627 A.D) Akbar's son had an advantage over his fathers in so far as he was left with a stable empire and could safely indulge in his favourite pastimes. Jahangir possessed an insatiable curiosity and had records made of all unusual objects and happenings his painters, who accompanied him every where made drawings of birds and animals which caught the emperor's eye. Under him, the beauty of line and delicacy of colours reached perfection not known before.

Mansur was the painter who excelled in animal subjects in Jahangir's time. The emperor's own knowledge, not only of painting but also of the technical excellence of his painter, was so great that he could tell who had done the eyes, the hands, the landscape, and so on. This was a time of specialization, and Mansur was the specialist for birds and animals and Farrukh Beg for traditional persian motifs so other also had their specialties. In Jahangir's time miniature came to be done for preservation in folios rather than merely as book illustration. Portraits became increasingly popular and Jahangir presented his portrait to all those he wished to honour.

The great love of the Mughal for creating gardens gave the painter a chance to study and paint various species of flowers. To these paintings he brings botanical expertise as well as an elevating sense of colour and rhythm. These flower studies were made in large number during the reign of Jahangir and Shahjahan.
Akbar's pictures reflects his achievements as well as moods and interests. Here, the spies and their party are entertained by strange men probably based upon people, Akbar encountered on some, expedition. They resemble exponents of tantric religion, perhaps from Nepal or Tibet. One sporting a white plume, has slanted eyes and a flattened Mongol nose. A Tibetan horn is among the weapons and musical instruments strung in an arcade behind the figures. In the background, at the right, other extremists strain bhang, a concoction of marijuana often used by holy men. Surrounded by their mysterious bowls, the busy pair sits beneath a writhing tree, with branches and bark suggestive of hallucinations to come.

Like the other paintings of the Hamza series, this one was designed to be effective across a room or courtyard. The colours are high in saturation and contrast. Whites are dead-white, oranges and yellows leap at us. Similarly, the patterns of tiles, stone work, and ornamental foliage are daringly bold. Nevertheless, close inspection is rewarding. The characterizations were painted for a man who could size up his fellows at a glance, and wherever we look, whether at the host's coral and turquoise belt, also typical of Nepal and Tibet, or at the outlandish gilt-bronze incense burner on the foreground, there is something to surprise and delight. It is no wonder that of all the loot carried off from Delhi by Nadir Shah in 1739 (including the peacock throne), it was only the Hamza-nama, "painted with images that defy the imagination, that emperor Muhammad Shah pleaded to have returned.

Under the patronage of Jahangir, the art of portraiture attained great excellence. The portraits were painted by the court artist with great care love of detail and fineness of drawings and modelling. Like his father, Jahangir liked European paintings with religious subjects - Sir Thomas Roe, the English ambassador, who spent four years (1615 - 1619 A.D.) at the court, had many interesting conversations with the emperor far into the night
on paintings and art in general.

During this period, European influence manifested itself more and more in paintings. The colours were no longer hard and enamel like as in the previous period but were softer and melted harmoniously together. This naturalistic influence is best seen in the representation of landscapes.

The important manuscript illustrated during this period are: an animal fable book called Ayar-i-Danish,¹ the leaves of which are more in the Cowasji Jahangir collection, Bombay and the Anwar-i-Suhaili.² During Jahangir reign the number of artists had increased beyond the needs of the imperial atelier and Mughal trained painters of inferior merit were driven to seek a livelihood as commercial frelancers without regular patrons.

Shahjahan (1627-1658 A.D.) son of Jahangir, was more interested in architecture and Jewellery than paintings. The reign of Shahjahan was marked by a dazzling magnificence. The artists worked in the tradition of the earlier reign, but their work is distinguished by far greater use of gold and colour. The miniatures showing slightly over elaborate court scenes. Together with the lavishness of the court is the ever present mystic element. The splendour of the mughal court and with it the mughal portraiture reached its height under him. The tendency to idealize continued and achieved the highest finesse. Many portraits of Shahjahan were painted. Paintings of the members of the royal family and courtiers gorgeously dressed were produced. Harem scenes and beautiful ladies drinking or serving wine were popular themes.

It was probably considered a more fitting medium for depicting certain movements and mood than the more opulent painting style. Work in this

1. Dr. N.L. Mathur, Indian Miniatures, Published by Dr. N.L. Mathur, National Museum, Janpath, New Delhi, Printed at the Caxton Press Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.
2. Ibid.
medium can be distinguished from more sketches by the attention paid to
detail, and the finished quality of the works. Shahjahan's own love for
architecture; beauty of his time are an index of his taste. There is no record
of the frank delight in art that his father found. It was inevitable, therefore,
that from this time mughal painting should show a definite decline.

Aurangzeb (1658-1707 A.D.) the youngest son of Shahjahan was little
interested in arts in general. The splendour and luxuries of the court of
Shahjahan were abolished and the palace was stripped of all its rich
furniture. Paintings too suffered a setback due to his puritanical outlook, as
he regarded its patronage opposed to the precepts of sacred Islamic law.
His portrait in many situations were also painted. In battles and seiges, he
is shown in a prominent position but almost as an old man.

Mughal painting declined during the rule of emperor Aurangzeb 1658-
1707 who was a puritan and therefore had no liking for fine art. A large
number of court painters therefore migrated to provincial courts and
continued to practise art under new patronage.

All facts and situations known so far have established beyond doubt
that the mughal painting was essentially a product of the mughal court,
organised and patronized from beginning to end by the emperors rather
than the artists themselves. The thematic contents of the paintings reflect
the personal tastes and temperaments, preferences, prides, pleasures,
fashion and pastimes etc. of the individual imperial patrons. In every sense,
Mughal painting was a court art.

In Mughal court painting, what is more interesting and perhaps more
important is the fact that a strong common denominator remains throughout
to distinguish the form and style from earlier and later ones. The mughal
court presents the articulation of artistic activities in the field of painting, of a
unified and integrated form and style with a sense of purpose and direction.
This implication is by and large upheld by an analysis of the paintings themselves, despite relative variations in style and emphasis on themes conditioned by the tastes and predilections of individual monarchs from Akbar to Aurangzeb.

By and large the narrative, descriptive, dramatic and true to appearance aim and purpose remain constant throughout; so do the respective compositional schemes for different themes with but slight variations. The colour schemes also maintain throughout a common denominator as does the character of design and draughtsmanship. It is therefore not very difficult even for one who is not an expert, to be able to look at a given painting and say that it does or does not belong to the form and style of the mughal court. The stamp of the form and style and the general character of the exercise is too clear and distinct to be missed.