

Mughal Arts (Paintings)

For M.A Sem – 2

By

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Humayun's Period (1530 – 1556)

Mughal emperors introduced their own style of painting with Persian inspirations and added new themes, colours and forms. Court scenes were depicted in grandeur. The background was usually hilly landscapes. Flowers and animals were also vastly depicted and in these the Indian artists applied their own skills to develop on the Persian ideas. The **Mughal** paintings are characterized by their subtleness and naturalism and often depict historical events or court life. Mir Sayyid Ali and **Abdus Samad** were the two great artists in the court of **Humayun** (1530-1556 AD). These two artists also remained active during Akbar's reign and **Abus Samad** earned the nickname "**Shirinqalam**".



A Mughal Painting by Abdus Samad

Akbar's Period (1556 – 1605)

Akbar (1556-1605 AD) can be considered as the real founder of the Mughal painting. Akbar had employed more than hundred painters from different parts of the country and lavishly conferred honours on works of great excellence. He had special admiration for the work of Hindu artists, notably **Daswanth** and **Basawan**. **Mughal** painting was a cooperative work in which numerous artists and craftsmen participated. Several noteworthy works were completed during Akbar's period, which include the illustrated stories of **Hamza nama**; illustrated Mahabharata called **Razm-Nama** and the illustrated Ramayana and **Timur nama**, Babur nama and **Akbar-Nama**. The **Razm-Nama** contained 169 paintings and was completed in 1589 AD. The paintings of the Akbar-Nama are unsurpassed for their meticulous finish, their bold execution and their use of color.

Akbar's Period (Continued...)

By the early 17th century, the Mughal painting had come under the western influence in such devices as the use of light and shade to capture space and volume, aerial perspective and the use of atmospheric effects to indicate spatial recession. The Jesuit missions to Mughal courts resulted in the synthesis of two diverse cultures. The fusion profoundly influenced the Mughal art and constituted one of the most flourishing of artistic exchanges. Akbar's leading court artists – Kesu Das, Manohar, Basawan and Kesu Khurd—were fascinated by the Christian paintings and integrated these themes in their own compositions. Basawan's Madonna and child Manohar's Christ Slavator Mundi are one of the masterpieces of that period.

Jahangir's Period (1605 – 1627)

Jahangir (1605 – 1627 AD) was the most enthusiastic patron of the Mughal painting. The beauty of nature in the form of plants, animals and birds became an important subject of the Mughal paintings during Jahangir's time. Jahangir promoted calligraphy which was considered to be the foremost art in the Islamic world. Portrait painting also came into vogue during this period. Mansur, Abdul Hasan and Bishandas were the great painters in the court of Jahangir. Jahangir has bestowed the title of Nadir-ul-Asr on Mansur. During this period, the influence of western painting on the Mughal painters became more pronounced.



Mughal painting of Emperor Jahangir
By Manohar



Mughal painting of Emperor Jahangir
By Abdul Hassan 7

Jahangir's Period (Continued...)

One of the contributions was the use of *aroma* behind the heads of the Mughal emperors in paintings. This practice, which was originally adopted by the Mahayana Buddhist artists, was extensively utilized in the Christian art of the middle Ages which finally came to the Mughal courts as a result of the interaction with the west. Jahangir's reign was a period during which Indian, Persian and European elements underwent a fusion and emerged into a distinct and novel style. Another important development of Jahangir's time was the popularity of the albums of paintings.

Shah Jahan's Period (1628 – 1658)

Painting achieved a new delicacy and romantic flavour during the reign of Shah Jahan. Love, romance, portraits and durban scenes became the common themes. The artists portrayed the romances of **Laila-Majnu**, **Shirin-Farhad** , **Kamrup-Kamlata** and **Baz Bahadur-Rupmati**. Elephant fights and men controlling mast elephants with fireworks and spears are also shown in a number of paintings. Another common theme with the Mughal artists from the last quarter of the 17th century and early 18th century is that of a young lady standing under a willow tree holding a branch. The chief artists of Shah Jahan's period were Muhammad Faqirullah Khan, Mir Hashim, Muhammad Nadir, **Bichitr**, **Chitarman**, **Anupchatar**, **Manohar** and **Honhar**.



A Mughal Era Painting of Nilgai By Mansoor



A Mughal Era Painting of Shahjahan
By Mir Hashim



A Mughal Era Painting of Aurangzeb
By Bichitra

Painting Under Aurangzeb and Other Mughal Rulers

Aurangzeb's indifference to painting compelled mainly a great artist to shift their bases to other kingdoms in Punjab, Rajasthan and other parts of the country, precipitating a decline in the **Mughal** painting. **Bahadur** Shah I (1707-1712 AD) tried to restore the court patronage of painting. The magnificent work of painting, **Shahjahan-nama**, was produced during his period. **Farruksiyar** (1713-1718 AD) continued the royal patronage of painting and so did Muhammad Shah Rangila (1719-1748 AD). With the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1739 AD, the en masse exodus of **artists** from Delhi began and the **Mughal** painting gradually went into oblivion.

References

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Thank You

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