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## **The European Influence on Mughal Art**

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### **Abstract**

*Mughal Empire is one of the most prominent Empire in India. The art&architecture of the Mughal empire is very much influenced by the Persian European art. Mughals adopts many techniques of art from the Europeans. The influence of European art has ever seen in the paintings of Jahangir also. Europeans introduced the art of Pietradura, divinity concept in Mughal paintings, three dimensional techniques, foreshortening, clearly it speaks the impact of European techniques. The effect of light & shade also introduced by the Europeans. The technique of oil painting also adopted from Europe. The study highlights the fact that, how the art of the time of Mughals become rich by the influence of European techniques.*

*Keywords: European Techniques, Mughal Art, Akbar, Pietradura.*

### **Introduction**

Mughals were originally from Central Asia. In the beginning there was no paintings in Central Asia as it was banned in Islam. But a new culture of painting was developed under the patronage of the rulers of Mughal dynasty. Babur was from Turks family who established Mughal rule in India. Mughals were great lovers of art that was well refined & polished by Persian effect. Humayun was the first ruler who brought some Persian artists with him to India who painted in their own style. Two famous Persian painters with him, *Mir Sayid Ali* and *Abdus Samad*. They introduced the art of miniature painting to India. Miniature paintings are small but highly detailed paintings. Mughals have a traditional love for paintings as their ancestor were Mughals who came from Central Asia. Which was the centre of the true culture of China & Europe. During the time of Humayun when Persian artists came the painting of '*Dastan - e - Amir Hamza*' done but a very little portion of the same could be completed in his time. During Akbar's reign first European *Ralph Fitch* visited Akbar court at *Fatehpur Sikri*. Akbar was the first Indian crowned head to show attentiveness in European art. Like his father Jahangir also show interest in European art. European influence played an immensely noteworthy part in expansion of Mughal art. The impact of European art perceived in the Jharoka paintings of Shah Jahan. An understandable effect was the portrayal of angels, birds & stars in wall depiction; these are derived from European art. European art was embraced by Mughal artists & few of the artistry of European artists. The three dimensional concept, divinity concept, foreshortening techniques firstly adopted by Mughals from European art.

### **Evolution of Art during The Reign of Babur and Humayun**

Zahir-ud-din Mohammad Babur, the first Mughal emperor, who established the Mughal rule in India (in 1526). Babur did not live long enough to appreciate the welfare of his new domain, as he governed for four years only. Babur, who was in the words of Lane-Poole "always ferociously observant of the prettiness of nature", patronized the art of painting. In 1530 he passes away and was succeeded by Humayun. He was not able to donate anything to the development of painting. Babur's eldest son Nassir-ud-Mohammad Humayun was the luckless inheritor of the Mughal Empire. Humayun cherished a desire to have a similar gathering of poets, writers, painters, and calligraphers. In Iran he met the master artists *Mir Sayid Ali* and *Khwaja Abd us-samad* who joined him in Kabul in 1549. These artists introduced the Persian style of art to India and Mughal emperors were very much inspired by Persian art.<sup>1</sup> These two foreign artists, working with their as Indian assistants. His predominant illustration of Mughal art was *Datan-I-Amir Hamza*. Introducing art in India, this credit goes to Babur and Humayun who came under this art and introduced it in India.

### **The European Influence in the Reign of Akbar**

Akbar (1556-1605) at the age of thirteen ruled for almost half a century. By 1570 he ruled an extensive and prosperous empire and built a new capital, Fatehpur Sikri, as well as the fortress of Agra. Akbar had a peaceful rule and Akbar was really interested in the development of art. Already prepared by the training received at Kabul, once on the throne he recommended the progress of painting and called a great number of artists to his court. Going by their names, the majority of these appear to be Hindu. The royal cloister gave stable hiring to many artists.<sup>2</sup>

Akbar was an energetic patron of painting. It was during his rule that Persian and Indian art styles fused to form a rich mixed style. During his reign, European influence played a very significant role in the development of Mughal art. In 1580 Akbar received in his court the first Jesuit Priests, who presented him with a copy of a glossator Bible embellished with Flemish impression. The emperors ordered his artists to transcribe or copy them. Soon other European paintings were brought to his court and studied with interest. Colored versions of Durer's engravings were also done. As a result, Mughal artists began to use perspective, to engage light and shade, to lower the horizons in the pictures, and to represent the sky more practically with cloud positioning and blazing sunsets. After 1595 Mughal painting disclosed the assimilation of western techniques: modeling of three-dimensional figures by means of shading and a limited modification of perspective.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Guy, John and Swallow, Deborah (1990), *Arts of India: 1550-1990*, London, the Victoria and Albert Museum, p-59-62

<sup>2</sup>Tomary, Edith (2012), *A History of Fine Arts in India and the West*, New Delhi, Orient Black Swan Private Limited, p- 251-253

<sup>3</sup>Verma, Harish Chandra (1993), *Medieval India part-2 (1540-1761)*, New Delhi, Hindi Medium Karyavan Nirdeshalya, P-521

Another favorite topic of Akbar's atelier, western influence may be seen in the parable. Akbar also builds a fire under the painting of realistic depiction. In spite of western influences in figures and shading, the colors persist enamel-like and do not merge, as seen in Akbar receiving the news of Salem's birth where strong colors adjoin each other. The *Tutinama* and *Anwari Suhaili* show each bird and animal with inclusive pragmatism.

Thus during his reign, European methods such as the element of perspective, which showed distant objects realistically, were introduced. The use of light and shade could also be seen. A great number of artists were appointed by him. Some of the famous artists throughout his supremacy were *Dasawanth* and *Basawan*. Akbar commissioned many illustrated histories like the *Hamaznama*, *Raznama*, *Timurnama*, *Baburnama*, and *Akbrnama*.<sup>4</sup>

### **The European Influence in The Reign of Jahangir**

Salim became emperor on the death of Akbar in 1605, taking a title of Jahangir (1605-27). Jahangir (world seizer) was a man of sensibility and aristocratic tastes. He had a fondness for the art of painting which he well informed than architecture. He continued Akbar's interest in art. "Akbar put the substructure of Mughal miniature painting, but it was in his son Jahangir reached its climax. During his residence at Allahabad as prince Salem, he had already employed a number of artists, notably *Aqa Riza*, whose son *Abul Hassan* later served under Jahangir. Other famous painters of his time included *Bishan Das*, *Anant*, *Manohar* and *Ustad Mansur* through whom Mughal painting reached its zenith. Jahangir's situation on elevation was organic non-identical from their predecessors. The emperor washed himself fully grown and he had a highly refined artistic taste."<sup>5</sup>

During Jahangir's time, the art of painting reached its zenith and with him lamented its spirit. Jahangir was not only focused in painting, he was also its anxious judge. He initiates an exhibition room of painting in his own garden.

European art also attracted Jahangir. Under the influence of European art the Mughal painters introduced perspective and modeling with attained perfection. Some of the landscapes seem to be copied from Flemish small-scale painting. European influence exhibit itself more & more. The colors come to be softer and less enamel-like than in the foregoing interval. They melt tunelessly together, mainly in the more lifelike of landscapes. The tradition of copying European paintings and engravings continued. By that time book illustrations get outdated excluding for the description of fables, for examples *Iyar-i-Danish* and *Anwar-i-Suhaili*.<sup>6</sup>

During his reign he came into direct contact with the English crown. Colors became lighter and brushwork also comes to be finer. During his lifetime the '*Jahangirnama*' was written, which is an autobiography chronicle of Jahangir's reign, has various paintings, counting some uncommon subjects.<sup>7</sup> European influence also maintained in the decorative arts. Jahangir had several painters during his rule. The skill of his painters in his field of art

<sup>4</sup> Commaraswamy, A.K. (1918), *Mughal Painting: Akbar and Jahangir* Museum of fine arts bulletin, P-2

<sup>5</sup> Walia, Jagjiwan Mohan, *Mughal Empire in India*, New Delhi, Enkay Publishers pvt. Ltd. p315-316

<sup>6</sup> *Op.cit*, p-253,254

<sup>7</sup> Beach, Milo Cleveland (1987), *Early Mughal Painting*, Harvard University Press.

described by Sir Thomas Roe, the official ambassador of England.<sup>8</sup>Due to the same policy of *Suleh Kul* that the painting reached its climax in the reign of Jahangir. He was not only a great ruler but also a energetic connoisseur of art.

### **The European Influence in the reign of Shah Jahan**

The reign of Shah Jahan (1628-56) was the climax of the Mughal dynasty and Empire. The arts of drawing and painting reached zenith during his reign. The pictures painted during this period attracted due to their rich colorings and luxurious use of gold. Shah Jahan makes less the number of painters at the court and hold back only most skillful painters.

Artists were greatly have an effect on by the old Hindu tradition and the European styles. Color ceased to be attractive and a small amount of shading was used. The portraits of this period lack of the formality of former ages. They are graceful life-like and adorable. Mughal paintings continued to develop, but they slowly became bitter and stiff because Shah Jahan was more interested in architecture.<sup>9</sup>

### **Decline of art during the reign of Aurangzeb**

Aurangzeb (1658-1707) was a narrow-minded Sunni Muslim and was against the art of painting as he considers this art is against the direction of art. Aurangzeb was bigot Muslim. Aurangzeb was noted to be a more rigid nature than his ancestors. No fine art called a space in his court. Various framework shows that the ruler used art to his interest as and when he desire to. In spite of, many paintings have come down to us which present Aurangzeb busy in many battles. After the decrease of the Mughal Empire, finally Mughal painting & art near to a stop. With the passage of time, other school of Indian painting had developed, including Rajputana art and many more. So there was no influence of European art on Mughal painting & art during the rule of Aurangzeb.<sup>10</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Mughal paintings developed and flourished during the reign of Akbar Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Mughals were the sizeable contributor of painting & art and provide a posterity of permanent attractiveness. As it was declared, India had many artistic relations, throughout history Indian painters very much influenced by Iranian art & culture. Influence of art & painting was not limited.

Humayun's travelling of Iran gave a new way to the world of Indian painting. *Mir Sayid Ali* and *Abdus Sam mad* introduced the Mughal painters a new way of art. To Humayun must go to the credit for the founding of Mughal art.

European influence on art was firstly introduced in the reign of Akbar when First European *Ralf Fitch* reached in Akbar's court. He displays many paintings to Akbar. Akbar was highly impressed with the art of Europeans. In spite of European influence, began to use

<sup>8</sup>*Op.cit*, p-82

<sup>9</sup>*Mughal-Painting*[online][http://en.m. Wikipedia.org/](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/)

<sup>10</sup>Hambly.G(1968), "*Cities of Mughal India*", New York G.P. Putnam's Sons.

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perspective, to light and shade, to lower horizons in the pictures, foreshortening. In the time of Jahangir use of colors became softer and enamel like than in the previous period.

Today we use the art of perspective in painting, shading the figures, present light and shade in the painting, use of horizons, three dimensional, foreshortening all these were the contribution of the European influence in the Mughal art.

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