



Unit – II (A) Mughal School of Miniature Painting

Mughal Miniature Painting

Mughal school of Art was not a new style in itself but it was the same Indian School of Art, well-refined and polished by the Persian Artist with the help of Indian Artist. Mughal Art is a mixture of Indian (Rajasthani) Art and Persian Art.

The origin and development of Mughal Art

The beginning, rise and fall of Mughal painting are associated with the beginning, rise and fall of Mughal Empire. A new culture of painting developed under the protection of the Mughal rulers of Timur dynasty. Babar was the founder of the Mughal Empire in India. Babar was not only a brave soldier and an able commander but he also had a great liking for painting. Babar was mostly in the battlefield and his son Humayun had to spend thirteen years in Banish in Iran after pushed out by Sher Shah Suri from India. Humayun was also busy in battles but he got the painting of 'Dastan-E-Amir Hamza' done in his time. Humayun's only son Emperor Akbar was keenly interested in the Art of Painting and Architecture. His era is called the golden period of Mughal Art. A large number of Indian artists from all over India were recruited to work in his court.

There are many manuscripts that were illustrated in his time. They are:

- (1) The Razma Nama (Mahabharat)
- (2) The Ramayana- translated in Persian and painted
- (3) The Akbar Nama
- (4) The Ain-e- Akbari
- (5) The Hamza-Nama, etc.

Jahangir, son of Akbar, was a great lover of Art and Nature. The Mughal miniatures reached a very high level of excellence in this period. Under Jahangir's patronage, painting acquired greater charm, refinement and dignity. He had a great fascination for nature and took delight in the portraits, birds, animals and flowers.

Shahjahan was a lover of Architecture. The Art of painting saw a downfall in the time of Shahjahan. Aurangzeb came as a fanatic Muslim ruler. He was a bitter enemy of painting and music. He did not patronize any Art. Culture lost its vitality and finally declined a rich style of painting;

Aspiring young Artists came to Delhi to learn the art of painting from the Mughal master painters and they together with older Artists from the Mughal court spread the Mughal manner to distant parts of India known as Provincial Mughal Schools where Mughal and local painting styles fused.

The main centres were Oudh, Hyderabad, Faizabad, Murshidabad and Patna where a weakened Mughal style flourished.

Babur ⇒ Humayun ⇒ Akbar ⇒ Jahangir ⇒ Shahjahan ⇒ Aurangzeb ⇒ Bahadur Shah Zafar

Features of Mughal School of Miniature Painting

The Main features of Mughal School of Miniature Painting

- **Historical Scenes:** During Akbar's rule, maximum numbers of historical scenes were made e.g. illustration of the manuscript related to the historical scene namely 'Kissa-Amir Hamza'. Mostly historical scenes were painted during Mughal School.
- **Linear beauty:** When we look at the portrait of Mughal style, we become familiar with the importance of beautiful, thin and thick fine lines. The lines are so fine that even the minutest details are clearly visible.
- **Border Decoration:** All the Mughal paintings are decorated with borders which are ornamented. In some paintings, the borders dominate the painting.
- **Profile Faces:** Profile Faces is the main feature of the Mughal style. Whether the figures are frontal or inside pose, the faces are always in profile.
- **Garments:** The female figures are shown wearing transparent odhani, while the male figures are shown wearing Angarakhas and Churidar Pyjamas along with decorative turbans. Ornamental decoration stories are seen in the garments.
- **Religious Themes:** Depiction of religious themes like The Ramayana, The Mahabharata, The Nala Damyanti themes and Panchtantra stories is there in the paintings.
- **Depiction of Nature:** Nature has been depicted so beautifully that even each leaf has been painted separately. Trees, plants, leaves, rivers, mountains etc. have been depicted gracefully.
- **Colour Scheme:** Mostly natural colours have been beautifully used. Earlier paintings had flat colours, but later on, depth with the help of shading was shown.
- **Calligraphy:** Calligraphy was done in black colour in most of the paintings. Artists wrote their names beautifully also.
- **Depiction of Animals and Birds:** Ustad Mansoor was the main bird painter. 'Falcon on a Bird-Rest' is one of his best paintings. Animals and Birds were depicted beautifully in Mughal Paintings. Camel fights, elephant fights etc. were depicted beautifully. Other animals like goats, horses, tigers, lions etc. were also depicted gracefully.

Salient Features of Mughal School of Miniature Painting

- The art of court, secular and eclectic in its character.
- The use of calligraphy with artist name.
- The portraiture-delineation of fine likeness.
- The representation of minute details.
- The depiction of nature as a special study (fauna and flora).
- The faces are usually painted profile (EK-chasm)
- The use of mineral and natural colours with silver and golden.
- Painted border decoration used in Arabic script.
- The delicacy is maintained in figures and architectural forms.
- The depiction of court scenes, hunting and battle scenes, music and dancing scenes, processions and wedding scenes etc.
- The depiction of foreign and religious stories especially Islamic and Indian epics like The Ramayana, The Mahabharata, Nal- Damyanti etc.
- The Naturalistic treatment of landscape borrowed from European paintings.
- The use of stripling (Pardaz) and delicate shading.