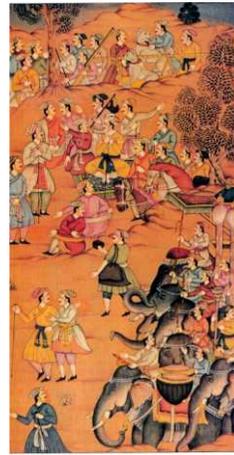


Mughal Miniatures

Synthesis of Persian & Indian styles



The Mughal school of painting represents one of the most significant phases of Indian art. It evolved as a result of a synthesis between the indigenous Indian style of painting and the Safavid School of Persian painting under the Mughal Emperors. Mughal miniatures are marked by realism, careful and refined drawing, mastery of composition and a rich palette of delicate shades. An important feature which distinguishes it from any other style of Indian painting is its calligraphic character.

Developed and nurtured under the patronage of Akbar, the art style reached its zenith under Jahangir. In the reign of his successor, Shahjahan, it became over-ripe. Under the rule of his son, Aurangzeb, it suffered a setback and steadily declined under the later Mughals. However, it lingered on as a decadent art under the Nawabs of Oudh until the end of the eighteenth century and practically ceased to exist with the advent of the British rule.

In their ideas and execution the Mughal miniatures show exceptional features and their lasting effect reverberated throughout the Deccan, Rajasthan, the Punjab hills and Northern India long after the "Grand Mughals" vanished. Humayun laid the foundations of Mughal painting

during the years of his exile in Persia and Afghanistan. While in Persia, he came into contact with two master painters, Mir Sayyid Ali and Abdus Samad, who were hired by Humayun and followed him to Delhi when he regained his lost throne. In India, they organized a flourishing art centre for Humayun's son and successor, Akbar, and recruited a large number of talented painters from all over the country.

The art of painting reached perfection during Akbar's reign. Mir Sayyid Ali of Tabriz, Khwaja Abdus Samad, Daswanth and Basawan were the most renowned artists of his court. Besides these four masters, there were thirteen other first rate painters at Akbar's court who turned out works of exceptional quality.

The Persian tradition 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 palette, brilliant and enamel-like. The Indian painters who were put under training of the Persian masters soon surpassed the finesse and technical excellence of Persian painting, both of line and colour. The Persian school of painting gave an initial stimulus to the Mughal style. But soon thereafter, Mughal painting started developing along independent lines. The diverse outlook of the Indian artists became evident in their works in course of time. The artists represented different regions of India and brought with them not only skills in painting but also their expertise in drawing, use of colour and composition. Akbar had left the painters very much to their own devices and the art of painting, as it developed in the Mughal ateliers, gradually lost purely Persian characteristics and became increasingly Indian. By the middle of Akbar's reign, the stylised quality of the Persian painting was replaced by the sweeping, invigorating movement of men and animals.



The most important work produced in the early years by the Mughal studio was the unusual, illustrated manuscript Dastan-i-Amir Hamza, better known as the Hamzanama. These are adventure stories and illustrations pertaining to the life of Amir Hamza, an uncle of Prophet Muhammad. Akbar was especially fond of Amir Hamza and entrusted the job of compiling this major work to the renowned Persian painter, Mir Sayyid Ali. The completed work consists of over 1200 paintings drawn in bold and vivid colours on linen pasted on one side of large folios which are twenty-seven inches by twenty inches in size. These pictures were painted between 1550

and 1560 A.D. Unfortunately, only a small fragment of the work has survived, and that too is scattered amongst various collectors in Europe and America. Only three or four folios are to be found in India.

Contd.

Cultural Calendar for December 2007

December 7

Film: 1942 A Love story
Language: Hindi
Directed by: Veer Chopra
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration : 3 hrs

December 12

Film: Chal Mere Bhai
Language: Hindi
Directed by: Davi Dhawan
Venue & Time: ICC 5.30 p.m. Duration : 3 hrs

December 14

"The Indian Experience" – A cookery demonstration of unusual Indian dishes by Chef Manohar Arya of Taj Samudra Hotel
Venue & Time: ICC 10.30 a.m.

(Admission to all programmes is free and on first come first served basis expect December 14th - Admission on registration. Contact the Centre at 2500014)

The paintings of the Hamzanama are executed in the Persian style. The compositions are intricate and consist of architectural details, interiors of palaces, forts or pavilions, and armies of attendants, soldiers and women. Their portrayal in vivid and intense action show a remarkable grasp of treatment and technique. The colours used are brilliant - red, blue, yellow and green being predominant. Use of exotic plants with colourful flowers and foliage is another characteristic feature of paintings of the Hamzanama. These are all reminiscent of Persia and Indian tones began to appear much later when Indian artists joined hands with the Persian master painters.



Akbar's deep interest in religion and his insatiable desire to go into the depth of various religions inclined him towards the Hindu Classics. In 1582 A.D. he ordered his artists to illustrate the Hindu epics. This led to the creation of the illustrated Mahabharata in Persian called Razmnama, now in the Palace Museum at Jaipur. It contains 169 full page paintings and was completed in 1589 AD. The chief artist was Daswanath.

Abul Fazl, Akbar's chronicler, gives a list of important manuscripts including books on history, biography, Persian classics, poetry, theology, etc. which were composed during Akbar's reign by leading calligraphers and illustrated by the painters of the imperial atelier.

Some of the manuscripts illustrated during Akbar's period are the Gulistan of Sadi (567 AD) now in the British Museum, London; Deval Rani 0568 AD; the Anwar-i-Suhayli (a book of fables) dated 1570 AD now in the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Another Gulistan of Sadi is in the Royal Asiatic Society Library, a Diwan of the poet Amir Shahi is in the Bibliothique Nationale, Paris; Diwan-i-Hafiz, the Tutinama, the Tarikh-i-Aifi (A History of the World) circa 1590 A.D. the jami-al-Tawarikh dated 1596 AD in the Gulistan Library in Tehran; a number of Babarnama manuscripts

Contd.

SANDEESH

The monthly newsletter of the Indian Cultural Centre, Colombo

December 2007

Emperor Jahangir with his consort. Photo courtesy - Art Gallery of Cottage Emporium, New Delhi

ICCR

Indian Cultural Centre

133, Baudhdhaloka Mawatha,
Colombo 4, Sri Lanka
Telephone: 2500014, Fax: 2598674
E-mail: icc@sltnet.lk
ICCR Website: www.iccrindia.org

Past Events

October 3

Celebration to commemorate the 138th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi



To commemorate the 138th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi the Indian Cultural Centre presented an evening of music, a violin recital by Visharad Somasiri Illesinghe. He commenced his recital with a bhajan "Vaishanva Janatho". His recital also included several other bhajans beloved to Gandhiji and a composition based on raag "Shudha Kalyani." The evening was greatly enjoyed by the music lovers and the followers of Gandhiji who gathered at the Centre to mark this great event.

October 4

Hindi Certificate Distribution Ceremony



At a function organized by the High Commission of India on 4th October 2007, 157 students learning Hindi at the Indian Cultural Centre in Colombo received certificates for successfully clearing examinations, held in February 2007 for various courses of the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha.

At present, some 175 students are learning Hindi at the Indian Cultural Centre, under the guidance of four teachers. The popularity of Hindi in Sri Lanka is on the upswing, with more and more people beginning to understand the language on account of, inter alia, watching Hindi films and popular Hindi serials. Sri Lankan nationals are also going to India for studies, as well as for taking up employment, and knowledge of Hindi would clearly stand them in good stead.

October 12

Bharatha Natyam Recital

By Ms. Suriyakala Chandrika Jeevananthan



Ms. Suriyakala Chandrika Jeevananthan, Director of Shri Ram Shrishti school of dance captivated the audience with her brilliant Bharatha Natyam performance. Among the items she performed was a brisk Thillana.

October 26

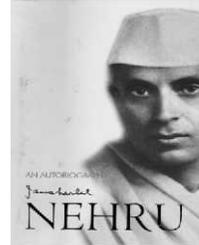
Sangeet Bhavana – A musical meditation By Mr. Anil Mihiripenne



Sangeet Shasthrapathi Anil Mihiripenne presented a captivating flute recital at the Centre. He commenced his recital with raag "Ahir Bhairavi" and continued with raag "Kafi", "Suha", "Shivaranjani" and concluded with a folk melody based on raag "Pahadi". The performance was greatly appreciated by the audience comprising eminent musicians, classical music lovers, teachers and students.

LIBRARY

Recent Library Accessions



AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY - JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
Penguin Books Ltd, 2004, pp 655

Through all its details there runs a deep Current of humanity which overpasses the Tangles of facts and leads us to the person Who is greater than his deeds and truer Than his surroundings'

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Jawaharlal Nehru's life was closely intertwined with the history and destiny of modern India. His Autobiography, written between 1934 and 1935 when he was in prison, is more than the personal story of an individual-it is also an account of the political awakening of a nation, its struggle for freedom from British rule, and its search to reshape itself as a modern society, rid of the cultural and economic shackles of the past.

Through this narrative, written with extraordinary eloquence and honesty, and illuminated with vibrant descriptions of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders of the national movement, emerges the portrait of the author himself-a complex and introspective personality with a brilliant and questing mind, a deep love of nature, an engaging zest for life and, above all, a passionate commitment to democracy and secularism.

Films in December

1942 A Love story



In 1942 the British ruled India, a time when people were either working for the British or rallying for underground meetings and protests against them. Amidst this background, Narendra alias Naren Singh, dared to be different, as he did not fall in either of those categories - he is in love with Rajeshwari Pathak. But their romance is not an easy one, for Naren comes from a wealthy family, and Rajeshwari is poor. Then there is the fact that while Naren's dad, Diwan Hari Singh, is a supporter of the British, awaiting a higher title, Rajeshwari's dad is actively involved against the British. Now Naren has to choose between his dad's hatred for the revolutionaries and his love for Rajeshwari - which may make him a revolutionary himself, and set him up against his very own father.

Language: Hindi **Starring:** Anil Kapoor, Manisha Koirala & Jackie Shroff
Directed by: Veer Chopra

Chal Mere Bhai



Another love-triangle, Chal Mere Bhai is the story of two brothers Vicky and Prem who are close by heart. Chal Mere Bhai is sheer entertainment with some belly-churning comedy. Producer Nitin Mannohan says, "It is not a typical David Dhawan film. Although it has some slick editing just like other David Dhawan films, there is a considerable difference as far as the content of the movie goes".

Language: Hindi **Starring:** Sanjay Dutt, Salman Khan & Karishma Kapoor
Directed by: David Dhawan

Mughal Miniatures ... Contd.

executed in the last decade of the 16th century; the Twarikhe-Khandan-e-Taimuria in the Khuda Baksh Library, Patna; Akbarnama of circa 1600 A.D. now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the jog Vashisht dated 1602 in the Chester Library, Dublin. The classical Persian literature -Khamsa by Nizami, the romantic love poem of Laila and Majnu, the collections of moral tales by Sadi and Jami, were also illustrated.

Akbar took a keen personal interest in the works of his artists, examined their weekly output, assessed their merit and rewarded them accordingly. Costly painting materials were made available to the artists and every facility provided to them to work under ideal conditions. The atelier of Akbar thus created a distinct Mughal style of painting. The Mughal paintings portray a three dimensional effect in contrast to the Persian art which was two-dimensional. These paintings are realistic and authentic - the portraits are lifelike as is the detailing of architectural intricacies and the depiction of flora, fauna and landscape. The paintings also reveal a superb blending of heterogeneous Persian, pre-Mughal Islamic, indigenous, Deccanese and European artistic elements into a concerted and well-blended style which became typical of the highly developed Akbari idiom.

Jehangir (1603-1627 AD.), the son and successor of Akbar, showed an equally keen interest in the art of painting like his father. Under him, painting acquired greater charm, refinement and dignity. The beauty of line and delicacy of colours reached perfection not known before. Many of Akbar's court painters, such as Abu Hasan, Bishandas, Farrukh Beg, Daulat, Govardhan, Anand, Manohar and others continued to work for Jahangir. He was particularly enthusiastic about Abu Hasan, son of the Persian painter, Aka Riza, of Herat.

Like his father, Jahangir liked European paintings with religious subjects. During this period, European influence manifested itself more and more in painting. The colours were no longer hard and enamel-like as in the previous period but were softer and blended harmoniously together. The naturalistic influence is best seen in the representation of landscapes. The closer acquaintance with the Western paintings led to acceptance in Mughal miniature paintings of many elements like European furniture, objects of art, costumes and poses, treatment of sky, clouds, winged angels, cherubs, drapery folds and curtains.

The important manuscripts illustrated during this period are - an animal fable book called Ayar-i-Danish, the leaves of which are now in the Cowasji Jahangir Collection, Bombay (Mumbai), and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, and the Anwar-i-Suhayli; another fable book in the British Museum, London, both executed between 1605 - 10 A.D. The paintings from the illustrated manuscript of the Tuzuk-i-jahangiri or the memoirs of Jahangir show the skill of the Mughal artist in handling crowded compositions in dramatic situations.

Natural scenes, especially hunting scenes and portraits, were the favourite of Jahangir's paintings. These were painted with vivid realism. Jahangir was keen to maintain an authentic record of his activities and the important events of his reign. He therefore directed his painters to prepare pictorial records of important festivals, assemblies, as well as of unusual and interesting flora and fauna. Many delightful paintings depicting Jahangir's coronation and assemblies held during religious festivals like bali, ab-pasbi, formal receptions, travels, hunting expeditions, etc., were composed and are preserved in Indian and foreign collections.

With Jahangir's death, however, the real spirit of Mughal art died and Percy Brown rightly observed, "with his (Jahangir's) passing, the soul of Mughal painting also departed". Mughal painting lost much of its grandeur and refinement within a few years following Jahangir's death. As a prince, Shah Jahan had been interested in miniatures and illustrated manuscripts. This interest continued for a while after he ascended the throne but later he became more inclined towards architecture and jewellery. Aurangzeb, the last of the great Mughals, was so orthodox and antagonistic to painting and other fine arts that the highly evolved art of miniature painting headed for a steady decline. The once sprawling and active ateliers of Mughal art were virtually disbanded and the painters were forced to either cease practising their craft or migrate to the newly emerging regional courts and look for favourable patrons.

Source: Dr. Harinder Sekhon, India Perspectives