
UNIT 5 MEDIEVAL INDIA-MUGHAL PAINTINGS, PAINTERS AND ILLUSTRATED TEXTS

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

The present unit is going to discuss Mughal Paintings, Modern Indian Paintings, paintings of Raja Ravi Verma, paintings by Bengal School etc. This unit also elaborated about progressive artists, about Amrita Shergil etc. Unit also mention related painters and their illustrated texts.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Mughal paintings were painted by artists according to a different vision. Mughal art cannot be considered purely as an Islamic Art. Though it was based on Islamic features it was entirely different from Islamic Art of earlier Sultanate and Islamic Rules of deccan. Mughal art depicted India and Islam in an Indian idiom. It was essentially in an Indian tradition and meant to be so. The most powerful emperor Akbar was pioneer of Mughal art style, he initiated the setting up a regular studio at his court. A paper factory was also set up at Sialkot during his regime. His effort was to form an amalgam of best of the Islamic world with the best of India. In the art of Akbar era and his descendants Jahangir and Shahjahan there shows a Persian for Indian traditions and customs.

The origin of Mughal school of paintings was a fine blend of original Indian technique of painting with the Safarid style of Persian painting. Thus, it can be mentioned that the style of Mughal painting was synthesis of the three school of paintings viz. Indian, Islamic and Persian styles. If one had to describe the highlights of Mughal paintings, it can be narrated in the following points-

- Paintings based on landscapes and nature.
- Paintings with beautiful arabesque borders and calligraphic texts with fine and delicate drawings.
- The high aesthetic and ornamental quality of paintings
- Primarily refined, elegant and polished paintings of aristocratic royals
- Paintings were not overtly religious but of secular character

The style of presentation of Mughal Paintings was in the form of illustrations in books, also these paintings were preserved as single sheets in albums.

The four main periods of Mughal art paintings were named after the emperors under whose patronage the art schools developed. Their names are: -

- (i)The Akbar period
- (ii)the Jahangir period,
- (iii) The Shahjahan period
- (iv) the Aurangzeb period.

5.2 ORIGIN

The 16th century was a period of creative ingenuity. Following Mughal conquest in 1526, the practice of miniature painting in India further discarded the high abstraction of the Persian style and began to adopt an added realistic technique of portraiture and of drawing plants and animals.

Humayan, brought along with him two well-known Persian artists- Mir Sayyad Ali and Abd al-Samad. Based on Humanyun's directives, these Persian artists produced various famed paintings, including the 'Khamsa of Nizami'. These paintings deviated from the conventional style of Persian art and thus an innovative style of art form called 'Mughal Painting' was born. Mughal paintings were further developed by successive Mughal emperors.

5.3 MUGHAL PAINTING

Medieval painting is basically represented by the Mughal School, which developed at some stage in the era of the Mughal domain (16th - 19th centuries A.D.). These paintings are known for their

appealing colors, exactness in line drawing, exhaustive realism, sophistication, and diversity of themes- the Mughal paintings were unique and a class by themselves. It was dissimilar from all other styles and techniques of Pre-Mughal and modern art contrary to Delhi Sultanate the Mughal paintings were more admired and extensive. There were numerous factors accountable for it- urbanization, improved executive system, special support by the rulers and aristocracy, blending of cultural values and tradition of central Asia, assimilation of Mughal economy with globe economy, etc. In fact, painting become a well-known source of occupation during the rule of Mughal.

5.3.1 The Akbar period (1556-1605)

The Akbar period (1556-1605) can be termed as the golden period of Mughal painting. After the death of his father Humayan, Akbar took up and extended his father's library.

Akbar himself studied the necessary art and painting under Abd-al-Samad. Akbar had established karkhana for paintings. He initiated the development of many paintings and paid close interest to these paintings. Artists from all parts of India were invited by him to a part of this Atelier. The Atelier he set up was mainly given the task for illustrating books on varied subjects' history, poetry, romance poetry, folklore and fables of both Indian and Persian origin Akbar had an impressive quantity of painters in his court. Two Persian masters, Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd-al-Samad were the supervisors of the Atelier setup. There were around two hundred twenty-five artists in the Atelier, mostly were Hindus. Initially the setup was collaborative but later painters worked in an individual setup also. Abul Fazal's Ain-i-Akbari clearly depicts the passion of Akbar towards painting as it has a detach section on the art of painting. Mir Sayyid Ali, Abd al Samad, Farukh Beg, Khusrau Quli, Jamshed are the names of artists who frequently visited his court. Akbar had a exceptional admiration for Hindu artists like Kesu, Mukund, Lal, Daswanth, Haribans and Basawan.

Illustrations done under Akbar's patronage: - **Tutinama or tales of parrots** (a Persian book of fables).

Between 1560 & 1577 Akbar commissioned several gigantic painting projects. One of the initial projects of painting commissioned under his patronage, was Tutinama. It is an episodic Persian story divided into 52 parts. Akbar commissioned 250 Miniature paintings that narrated 'Tutinama' in a creative manner. Abdus Samad and Mir Sayyad were given the task of completing Tutinama. They took five years to complete it. At present 'Tutinama' is a part of collection at Cleveland Museum of art in Ohio.

Another main characteristic of Mughal paintings was that the painters used various colors and different themes. The themes were mainly based on battlefield, scenes from court life, wildlife, hunting, portraits etc. Precious stones were used for obtaining rich colors, metals like gold & silver were also hallmark of Mughal painting.

5.3.1.1 Hamzanama

The subsequent major project done under Akbar's patronage was 'Hamzanama' which narrated the legend of Amir Hamza. As a child Akbar listened to these stories, so he wanted to recreate

the stories of 'Hamzanama'. The project had 1400 Mughal paintings which were strangely huge for miniatures. 'Hamzanama' was executed by 30 primary artists and was supervised by Mir Sayyad Ali who was afterward replaced by Abd al- Samad.

'Hamzanama' was depicted through 14 volumes, illustrations were sized approx. (25"×16"). Only about 200 of the original illustrations survive today. It took 14 years (1562-1577) to complete it. The paintings were bent towards naturalism and departed from conventional Persian style. Bold colors were used, movement and emotions were displayed vigorously. Each form was distinctive though the figures were inter-related in closely unified compositions. These was a depth in these painting as diagonals were preferred.

Though Mughal painting are acclaimed as a work of art but they bear documentary verification for the medieval period. Depiction of country life, portrayal of men & women of different strata of the society, festival celebrations in illustrations depict evidence to social and cultural practices during that period.

5.3.1.2 Akbarnama

It contains information of up to date history in its most illustrative form and portrayal of different events fully matches textual description. Akbarnamas intricate composition also shows the European sway in particular in dealing of space, light, and shade. Apart from these illustrated manuscripts there are various other individual compositions like portraits, wildlife, landscapes, and other varied topics in the form of Muraqqa (album) paintings.

5.3.2 The period of Jahangir (1605-1627)

The tradition of illustrations in book form contained lesser importance to portraiture during Jahangir's reign because of the emperor's own fondness for portraits. Among the premium works of his rule are detailed court scenes depicting him bordered by his courtiers. Jahangir's artists developed their individual style which was quite dissimilar from the artists of early Mughal period. Muhammad Nadir, Muhammad Murad, Mansur, Abul Hasan, Manohar, Bishandas, Govardhan were some of the important artists of the emperor. Every painter had his own famous for portraits of saints, musician whereas Mansur was renowned for painting birds and animals.

5.3.2.1 Methods & Techniques

Softer colors, harmonious designs and fine brushwork became significant part of the style of painters. Themes were also different then earlier Era of his father Akbar. The school of Jahangir was known for it's adored of nature. Several paintings were based about animals and birds. Though focus was always on naturalism but simultaneously there was a keen desire to expose the innate beauty. He also encouraged paintings depicting events of his own life, individual portraits. Almost every illustration showed Jahangir as a serene & powerful ruler. Divine nature of kingship was also a well-liked theme and was anticipated through symbolic representation in which European motifs like globe and hourglass were depicted. Manuscript illustration were a few like the Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri. Geometrical and floral borders were a regular feature of paintings of his Era.

Portraits, both human and animal though not approved by Islam, fascinated Jahangir the most with his emphasis on portraiture, the techniques of rendering facial expressiveness, body gestures and human and animal anatomy showed significant improvement. He also favored that artist should inscribe their names on their works. The beauty and delicacy of colors reached amazing heights during his Era. Jahangir's also promoted calligraphy and ranked it in high esteem. Further, allegorical portraits were also produced for the first time in his rule.

Floral paintings and the practice of mounting miniatures with decorative borders (i.e., hashiya) were specially developed during his rule. No miniature painting was considered complete unless it was surrounded by a well decorative border. It was during this time the art of margin decoration become a specialized branch of painting. The margins of the albums of Jahangir period, were decorated with gold with a variety of compositions e.g., natural & mythical animals, mainly in fighting and hunting pose, as well as colored birds, foliage in the rocky landscape, flowering plants arranged in regular sequence on the ground.

During Jahangir's reign, the Mughal painting was freed from Iranian influence reaching new heights and paradigms. But at the same time, it mixed the renaissance element of both European and Persian styles.

5.3.3 The Shahjahan Period (1628-1658):

1628-1658 Shahjahan period was more famous for its architecture marvels, but paintings continued to flourish. In the court of Shahjahan, the display of the paintings became more rigid and based on some guidelines. The emperor engaged various painters to commission many paintings for his personal collections. Mostly the paintings of Shahjahan period had themes of gardens and paintings of great aesthetic value were produced. There were other paintings of love making scenes. The art of border making was given great importance, the borders were decorated with rich colors and generous use of gold pigments. Though Mughal paintings developed technically, but they also became more stereotyped and static. Paintings lost the liveliness of Jahangir period. The Paintings of Shahjahan period showed opulence and wealth of rich colors which shone like jewels.

The most important work produced during the reign of Shahjahan was the 'Padshanama'. These paintings were lavish paintings which were all gold plated richly. The 'Padshanama' described the accomplishments of the emperor, had various paintings of royal courtiers and servants of the royalty. The work was done by the painters in such a manner that even minute details of the subjects were depicted, even servants were painted with remarkable finesse to each character. The paintings of emperor and other royal personalities were painted using some rigid rules and regulations of meta-modelling, even servants were painted in a manner depicting the frontal view. Some of the famous painters of Shahjahan period were Mohammed Nadir, Balchand, Payag and Bichitr.

After Shahjahan reign, a steep decline happened in the reign of Aurangzeb (1658 to 1707 A.D.). Aurangzeb was of religious nature, he didn't permit or supported any form of art. But Mughal style of paintings had already established its roots among common people and number of patrons supported this art. Therefore, many of the best paintings of Mughal era were painted during

Aurangzeb's rule which were said to be created by some seasoned painters in the karkhanas(workshops) which were supported or patroned by previous Mughal emperor. The painters of this era were worried about the closure of these workshops by Aurangzeb at some time sooner or later, so they gave their best and painted some of the most exquisite paintings. Most of the paintings were commissioned according to abstract style of Shahjahan period.

Though the art form developed in the Mughal era had established its base firmly and thus was given patronage and support in other courts of all religions i.e., Muslim, Sikhs, and Hindus alike but over the years no other ruler clan was efficient enough to give patronage to these art forms which resulted in the decline of paintings. But during the rule of Muhammad Shah (1719-1748) some development happened in this field, but not that significant. Ultimately Mughal paintings art had its end during the reign of Shah Alam (1759-1806). The artists of the court of Shah Alam began to copy some famous paintings of the Mughal era. Thus, the glorious past of Mughal paintings came to an end.

5.4 MODERN INDIAN PAINTING

The Mughal Empire declined in mid-18th century. East India company of British had a control over north-eastern region of India, thus paving the way for British Raj. The colonial Era influenced every sphere of India whether social, political, economy, and last but not the least the culture of India. Various art societies and art schools were established where various art forms were taught and patronized. Indian art was given a new English fashion outlook. Introduction of acadamecia into art, more stress was given to Victorian art, natural landscapes, oil portraits, etc. Artistic freedom provided the artists with individual approaches as compared to the worthy patronage given during the time of Mughals. Moreover, the new colonial artists were given due respect and enjoyed high social status compared to the modest status of the court artists during the Mughal time.

5.4.1 The Company School :Origin & Relevance

The East India company had established its firm roots during the latter half of 18th century. In the due course many employees of East India company shifted to India. These people came across varied indigenous culture and society of India quite different from their native land in UK. During their service they had to travel across different regions in India, thus, they experienced unusual flora and fauna stunning ancient monument and interesting personalities of the natives of India. British wanted to capture these images and the only medium in that Era was through paintings. They wanted to send these images to be portrayed through paintings, for this they hired Indian painters, in a way, they now had become new supporters of the Indian art. But now they wanted Indian artists to do the paintings according to their suggestion and liking. Thus, a new style was born which was the amalgam of Indian and English style of painting. Indian painters copied the European style of painting. The first region in India to experience this technique was Madras Presidency. The paintings developed in this period by Indian artists was in typical European style and manner, therefore it evolved in a new genre of painting which was a fine blend of Indo-European technique now known as Company style (Kampani Kalam).

Under the British rule this style of painting propagated and flourished. So British established painting schools in major cities of India like Madras, Calcutta and Bombay as they were keenly interested in propagating this new art. In these schools' Indian artists were trained in Western

techniques. After graduating from these art schools, the artists were termed up as Company School Artists.

5.4.1.1 Important Features of Company School

- Company style was synthesis of Indo-European paintings.
- It involved into a combination of best of Rajput & Mughal paintings which were further blended with European techniques.
- Just like Rajput & Mughal paintings, the paintings portraying Indian style of miniature paintings were mostly smaller in size, but the paintings based on nature like on subjects of plants and animals were larger in size.

5.4.1.2 Subject

The subject covered varied aspects of Indian Life.

- Indian people who included Sepoys posted in different regiments, men & woman wearing different costumes and jewels. People they painted belonged to different religion, caste, or social strata, right from the painting of Kings & Queen to peasants, labourers or people practicing different professions.
- Landscapes and views of nature. India is a land of diverse climate and landscapes. They could find Hills & mountains, green vegetations and fields, jungles, wildlife, coastal areas, deserts, and seas all into one country i.e., India.
- Monuments- Old temples, Forts built by Rajput Kings, Mughal monuments, painters had diverse backgrounds to paint. Specially the subject matter of Delhi paintings had Mughal monuments situated here in focus.
- The company school paintings also covered subjects related to different dance forms of India, dances, costumes, traditions, festivals and fairs, images of people of different trades and castes.

5.4.1.2.1 The Architectural Subjects:

More or less paintings were done in architecture draftsman style, the techniques used was in detail and style was frontal. It was unlike any Romanticized technique which was in practice by most of European painters who visited India.

- Paintings were also based on subjects of plants and animals.
- Even some erotic subjects were selected.

5.4.1.3 Techniques

Western water colour technique was mostly used though the technique varied. The technique involved "transparency of texture soft tones and modeling in broad strokes".

- The material used for paintings was mostly paper but sometimes paintings were done on ivory base. Usually, the Paintings were kept in albums or portfolio; the album also called as murraqqa, which was used by Indian collectors to collect and store paintings, the style of calligraphy was also included specially in Muslim examples.

5.4.1.4 Growth & Development

Madras Presidency was the first region to evolve company painting according to the taste or British. Firstly, the Tanjore artists in Madras experimented with this new style of paintings. Over the years the political power of East India Company increased in India. Company style spread to other regions in India as well, but each of them was characteristic of the local traditions of that area.

- In the Eastern region Calcutta became the important Centre of production of Company art. The Governor General Lord Wellesly and Chief Justice of High Court Lord Impey became the main patrons of Company art in Calcutta. The main fascination of these two high ranking officials were paintings based on plant and animal life. Under their patronage many artists were hired to paint animal life and birds, even many species were included from Botanical Garden at Calcutta. After Lord Wellesly retired in 1813, around 2,542 paintings were completed.

5.4.1.5 Major centers

Patna, Banaras and later Delhi were other major centers for these painting. The subjects used in Delhi paintings were mainly Mughal monuments. Delhi company school paintings were special as ivory plates were used for paintings.

5.4.1.6 Prominent Artists:

- Sewak Ram (1770-1830 c). He was one of the most well-known artists of company school based in Patna, Other prominent artists of Patna who practised company school were: - Fakir Chand, Shiv Lal, Jhoomak Lal, Jai Ram Das, Hulas Lal. Patna became a great center of this art as the city was at a prominent location as it housed an important factory and provincial committee, therefore the city hosted many expatriates of the East India company.
- Ghulam Ali Khan- was famous for his paintings of Delhi Genre style of Company school. Ghulam Ali and his colleagues painted subjects on village life. They also became masters in making individual portraits

5.4.1.7 Decline of Company School

Company school art was not a pan-Indian happening. This style only developed in the cities which had historical monuments and foreign officials or tourists or the cities which had expatriates from England. The company school hadn't spread to regions of Rajasthan, Punjab Hills and Hyderabad as the artists still followed local traditions in these states, but the fact cannot be nullified that the persuade of British colonialism had weighty force on Indian arts which actually led to the decline of the above painting styles. During early part of 19th century this art

was at its crest and its creation was a sizeable level with many of the cheaper paintings copied by rote. Around the third & fourth decades of 19th century many artists of company school had established shops to sell the work and workshops to create it.

But the company style paintings deteriorated by the end of 1830s when photography was introduced in India in early 1940, but the style did stay alive till 20th century. Ishwari Prasad from Patna, who died in 1950, was believed to be the last most remarkable painter of Company Style paintings.

Check Your Progress-1

1. What were the methods and techniques of paintings during Jahangir period?
2. Describe the features of Modern Indian paintings.
3. Why company school was declined?

5.5 RAJA RAVI VERMA

Raja Ravi Verma shone like the brightest star in the sky of Indian art. He is most famous for his paintings based on mythological themes of Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Puranas. Ravi Verma used the technique of European academic art and merged it with Indian tradition. Ravi Verma was responsible for giving recognition to Indian art all over world due to his unique art of painting religious Indian texts. At the same time, he took this art to common man for its simplicity value. His portraits of mythological themes of Gods and Goddesses became the subject of worship for majority of common man in India specially belonging to lower castes. They were forbidden for visiting temples, so these paintings gave an idea to them how these deities looked inside the temples. Thus, he became a celebrated painter for the general folk. He was also responsible for taking Indian art to great heights and thus improved the knowledge of nuisance of art and spread the value of importance of art. He took the Indian art, which was considered to be for the privileged, to the common folk of India by making affordable lithographs. Thus, he became a household name, who was popular amongst the rich and poor alike.

He was awarded 'Kaisar-i-Hind' Gold medal by Viceroy Lord Curzon for his contribution to the field of art.

5.5.1 Career

Raja Ravi Verma art career started at an early age & his talent soon spread to far off places. He won many awards for his paintings all over the world. He won award in 1873, in Vienna for his painting. In 1893 his paintings bagged three gold medals in Chicago and were displayed at coveted World's Columbian Exposition. His patron was a British administrator Edgar Thurston who facilitated in sending his paintings to these exhibitions. It was his art, which spoke for his

brilliance. Verma travelled across India to find the subject of his paintings. Ravi Verma's art can be categorized into three categories: -

- i) Portraits
- ii) Compositions in portrait style
- iii) Paintings based on theatrical compositions and myths and legends.

He became renowned for the third categories of paintings. Some of his remarkable paintings under the mythological themes were Nala & Damyanti, paintings based on Ramayana, Arjuna & Subhadra, Damyanti talking to Swan, Rishi-kanya, legend of Jatayu, a woman giving alms at a temple, Shantanu and Matsyagandha.

5.5.2 Lithographic painting press of Ravi Verma

Raja Ravi Verma had established a lithographic printing press at Mumbai. The printing press was shifted to Lonavala later. The printing press churned out in bulk oleographs of pictures of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. After his death in 1906, Varma's brother managed the press. The press was functional for many years, but later the press started running financial loss, due to this the press was sold to a German technician named Fritz Schleicher. The press ran for many years till 1972, but the whole press was burnt into a major fire. It was such a devastating fire that it burnt many of the original lithographic prints of Raja Ravi Verma.

5.5.3 Criticism

Raja Ravi Verma was criticized for his paintings being showy. Some critics criticized him for representing deities and their representation to the level of mortals. It was noticed that mostly the women from Hindu mythologies were painted in fair skin while the lower-class women were painted in dark skin in his paintings.

But it can be said about Ravi Verma that he became a champion of making art accessible to all completing breaking the ideals of 'high and low' art. His images of paintings covered all sorts of spheres right to the form of calendars packaging, street signs, movie posters and book covers. His most formidable contribution is towards bazaar art. Till date many modern printing presses are continuing to keep this culture alive.

5.6 BENGAL SCHOOL

Bengal School originated in Bengal, mainly in Kolkata and Shanti Niketan Thereafter Bengal school progressed throughout India during the early 20th century of the British rule. Bengal School of Art was Indian style of painting which was based on indigenous cultural heritage rather than Western art & culture. A British teacher at Calcutta Art School named Ernest Binfield Havell was pioneer in the formation of Bengal School Instead of promoting British technique

taught in British art schools, he encouraged the students to explore Mughal art technique followed during the reign of Mughal Emperors between 1526 and 1857. But this was protested by the faculty, students, and press.

The pioneer of the Bengal school movement was Abanindranath Tagore. Other prominent artists of this group were, Asit Kumar Haldar, Nandlal Bose, Gagendra Nath Tagore, M.A.R. Chughtai, Kshitindranath Majumdar, Kalipada Ghosal, Sughra Rababi and Sudhir Khastgir. These artists broke through western traditions and infused Nationalism through their paintings by capturing the spiritual essence of India. The artists of Bengal School started new experiments in paintings. They started the following things: -

- They rejected the realistic style of company school artists and Raja Ravi Verma.
- They rejected the tradition of oil paintings instead they followed Indian tradition of Mughal Era miniature paintings and ancient art of Ajanta Caves Mural paintings.
- They also selected the subjects from ancient religious texts like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, Puranas, Omar Khayyam writings and Kalidasa texts.
- The Bengal School artists also were inspired from Japanese artists. The initial artists of this school used the technique of Japanese style colouring, calligraphy from Chinese art and Persian finish in their paintings.

The above-mentioned styles and techniques are "avant garde" This term means some unique and experimental techniques which are different and innovative especially in the field of art, culture & politics.

5.6.1 Prominent Features of Bengal School

- Bengal School movement was a kind of Renaissance movement in the field of Indian art, it can also be termed as the Revivalist School as it revived the ancient Indian and medieval art.
- Bengal School was sometimes criticized for its imitative manner without much creativity as it took art back to the ancient and medieval art. The paintings of Bengal school were based on standard and simple colour scheme technique. These paintings were painted only using subtle colours, bright colour schemes were seldom used.
- The Bengal School paintings had elegant and refined figures and used light and shade technique without any hardness.
- New challenges were gradually accepted by the artists of this school and thus novice techniques and development led to the search for a unique style and content, thus a new blend of European and Indian styles evolved in Bengal school of paintings.

5.6.2 Some of the prominent artists

- Jamini Roy
- Gagendranath Tagore
- Rabindranath Tagore
- Nandlal Bose
- E B Havell
- Abanindranath Tagore
- Asit Kumar Haldar
- Ramkinkar Baij

5.7 AMRITA SHERGILL

Amrita Shergill was the first most important woman artist to become popular outside India in the world art scenario. She became a legendary and attracted interest due to her approach towards life and artistic style. In fact, she became an inspiration for the future generation of young artists to experiment with her style of painting and complete the work, Amrita Shergill left due to her untimely death at the age of 28 years.

Amrita Shergill was born in Budapest, Hungary on January 30, 1913. She lived her early life period in Europe. Amrita Shergill was trained in Paris. After returning to India her art flourished and she did paintings, which became masterpieces. In 1927, Amrita visited Shimla where her uncle Ervin Baktay mentored and supported her by giving an academic foundation for her growth. He advised her to paint live models, in fact as a young girl Amrita would paint servants at her house, this practice of painting live models of her continued lifelong in her career.

Perhaps this was the reason she developed her throughout life affection for the native people of her village Saraya.

For the next five years (1930-34) she learned oil paintings at Beaux-Arts, Paris. Her early paintings showed an influence of western style of paintings.

In 1932, her oil painting, “Young Girls” won many accolades. She won a gold medal and selected as an Associate of the Grand Salon in Paris in 1933. She did several self-portraits, paintings of life in Paris, individual portraits of friends and fellow students, nude portraits and still life paintings. The year 1933 was a successful year in her life, she painted 'Reclining Nude' in this year. She began thinking seriously to return India. In fact, Lucian Simon her distinguished professor in Paris advised her to return to Indian judging her by the richness of her colouring. She then returned to Indian in 1934 and settled in her native place of village Saraya, Sardar Nagar, district Gorakhpur. She painted a lot during these years and in 1936, 20th November she

had an exhibition of paintings at Taj Mahal Hotel at Bombay. Leading Newspapers of that time showered lavish praises of her art after the exhibition and she was adjudged as the shining star among the younger. The media described her paintings as the beginning of a New Era of painting style which showed naturalness of human form and highly extraordinary quality. Some of the exhibits displayed in this exhibition were titled as Hillmen, On the terrace, Studio Courtyard, Group of young girls, Portraits of my father, Hill Women, Villagers.

When the exhibition was over, she travelled across India and observed Indian art. She travelled to the villages of both north and south India, the village life and people of these places inspired her. She was influenced spiritually by Hungarian poet of 20th Century named Endre Ady. Great writers like Tolstoy and Dostavesky also inspired her.

Amrita Shergill throughout her short life lived for art. She always remained stuck to her goals. Her love affairs and married life were controversial, Amrita was married to her first cousin Victor Egan. Her life was very short, she died at a young age of 28 years, in December 1940 after a brief illness. Amrita Shergill can be termed as the most promising artist of pre-colonial Era. Her paintings reflect her sense of colours and understanding of human form and life. She studied rural life of villages in India which reflects through her paintings.

Amrita Shergill paintings were given the status of National Art Treasures by the Government of India. The National Gallery of Modern Art is in possession of many paintings of Amrita. Also, there is a road named after her in Delhi near Lodi Gardens as Amrita Shergill Marg. Post and Telegraph Department of Indian Government in 1978 released a Postage Stamp on her painting titled 'Hill Women'. Amrita was the inspiration behind several contemporary artists. She had left behind an exceptional collection of paintings that establish her as one of the leading artists of the century, her work can be termed as synthesis between the East and the West.

5.8 PROGRESSIVE ARTISTS

PAG or the Progressive Artists group was established by six famous Indian artists, M. F. Hussain, F.N,Souza, H.A.Gade, S.H.Raza, K.H.Ara and S.K.Bakra The PAG wanted to reinvent Indian Art and create an 'Avante -Garde style, they revolutionized Indian art scene by breaking through the nationalist style adopted by the Bengal School of Art . In fact, the group was established five months after India was declared independence on 15 August 1947 and the "partition of India" happened. These artists wanted to create new style of modern art for a free nation which was quite different from the other Art schools followed in India till date. Therefore, it can be said that the origin of PAG is synonymous with the freedom of India. In this group artists from diverse cultural and religious background came under an umbrella called progressive Artist Group in the highly roused scenario of political atmosphere of metropolitan and sophisticated Bombay of 1940's. Though this group lacked any style, it can be termed as amalgam of earlier 20th Century European and American Art styles with Indian Art history

styles. The Progressive Artist Group also followed the concepts of Cubism, Impressionism and Expressionism in Art. The Partition of India in 1947, created a havoc on humanity, millions lost their lives and had to cross borders. The partition of India was the main trigger which inspired this group to do something different and unique and set standards in Art scenario in India.

Later the expansion of this group happened as some other renowned painters and artists like Tyeb Mehta, Manishi Dey and Ram Kumar joined the group. By 1950 many other artists like V.S. Gaitonde, Mohan Samant and Krishan Khanna joined the group.

5.8.1 Different Styles of Progressive Artists Group

PAG cannot be termed under any specific art categories, all PAG members had different and varied styles of paintings. Each artist of this group had a different artistic technique and style.

For e.g., F.N. Souza followed Expressionism, and Cubism and combined it with classical Indian traditions specially Goan folk Art. Hari Ambadas Gade was also a pioneer member of PAG, also known as H.A. Gade., he is the most famous abstract Expressionist Indian painter, he did mostly landscapes, covering the diverse geography of India from Kashmir to Kerala. Krishanji Howlaji Ara also known as K.H. Ara was also a part of PAG. He is famous for his depiction of female form in nude and still life paintings.

But the most renowned and famous artists of PAG till date are M.F. Husain and S.H. Raza. Raza's style created the fluidity of Indian watercolour painting. He became perfect in various art forms in the beginning he adopted an expressionist technique featuring landscapes, but over times his landscapes became increasingly abstract. He advocated the combination of avant-garde style which was the amalgam of Cubist forms, brushwork using Expressionist technique and colour use in Fauvist style. His most famous style was the use of concentric circles or Bindu, which can be related with Tantra ideology of Buddhism and Hinduism. On the other hand, he depicted landscapes and urban life in his painting of both India and France.

M.F. Husain was the most celebrated painter in India. He is renowned for his amazing paintings all over the world. Forbes magazine had given him the title of 'Picasso of India'. He was the pioneer of Indian art scene by modernizing Indian art. Hussain was a multitalented person adapt at photography, printmaking, and filmmaking. He used bright colours mostly depicting urban landscapes and horses. He executed his paintings in narratives using a modified Cubist style.

Sadanand Bakre was the only member of the PAG who was a sculptor and a painter both. He was an innovator and always experimented with different techniques of making sculptures. He won several awards for his sculptures at various exhibitions. Afterwards he gave up sculptures and concentrated more on paintings. He was introduced to the modernist movements in Europe

and America by the leading art critic Rudyvon Leydon. Later, in his career he moved from academic realism to abstraction in his art style His art represented distinct expression and sensitive modelling.

5.8.2 Decline of the PAG

The decline of the groups started by 1951. The three prominent members of PAG shifted abroad. Sadanand Bakre F. N. Souza shifted to London. S.H. Raza landed in Paris. M.F. Hussain too began frequently travelling between Mumbai & Delhi. Therefore, consequently, the group was not able to work together. So, the focus of PAG members channeled to their individual art practice. The PAG members broke around 1956 after some periodic exhibitions.

Later the artists of this group continued their own art individually, doing some very distinctive works.

Progressive Artist Group created a huge impact on Indian Art Scenario which has its immense bearing till today in the modern art scenario. The works & ethics created by PAG members, are considered master pieces till date and are inspiration for scores of artists to follow.

Check Your Progress-2

1. Describe the importance of Raja Ravi Verma's paintings.

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2. Describe prominent features of Bengal School.

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3. Who are the Progressive Artists?

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5.9 LET US SUM UP

The present unit discussed Mughal Paintings, Modern Indian Paintings, paintings of Raja Ravi Verma, paintings by Bengal School etc. This unit elaborated about progressive artists, about Amrita Shergil etc. Learners also learn about related painters and their illustrated texts.

5.10 KEYWORDS

Mughal paintings : Medieval paintings are basically represented by the Mughal School [16th to 19th centuries]

Abd - al- Samad : Persian master

Tutinama: A Persian book of fables

Hamzanama : Hamzanama narrated the legend of Amir Hamza .

Bengal School: Originated in Bengal [Kolkata and Shantiniketan]

5.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress- 1

- 1) See Sub Sec 5.3.2
- 2) See Sec.5.4
- 3) See Sub Sec 5.4.1.7

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) See Sec.5.5
- 2) See Sub Sec.5.6.1
- 3) See Sec.5.8

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