

# Khawaja Abdus Samad(Shirin Qalam ) & Mir Sayyed Ali (A diamond of Akbar's court)

**DR. Farha Deeba**

Associate professor

Teerthanker Mahaveer University , N.H.24, Moradabad, U.P

## “ABSTRACT”

The Mughal emperors were not only known for their military campaigns but also as great patrons of the arts. These emperors pioneered a grand tradition of Mughal miniature paintings and reached its height which continues to be the center of attraction all over the world even today. Besides miniatures, Mughal emperors constructed grand architecture (such as the Taj Mahal, Humayun's Tomb) as well as well-organized gardens such as (Shalimar bagh & Nishat bagh, etc.), and were often depicted in miniatures. Although the founder of the Mughal Empire was Emperor Zahiruddin Mohammed Babur, and it was reached its height by Emperor Akbar, Jahangir, and Shahjahan.

Akbar's father Humayun, had spent fifteen years of exile in the court of Shah Tahmasp of Iran. Shah Tahmasp helped him to establish his kingdom by giving him a lot of money and an army. While Humayun was returning from Shah Tahmasp's court he received two great Persian artists Mir Sayyed Ali and Abdus Samad as a gift. The two artists reached India and established the first art studio in Kabul, producing extraordinary works under Mughal patronage. Khawaja Abdus Samad, apart from the Persian-style paintings, also made calligraphy with delicate and fine lines. Akbar awarded him the title “Sweet pen” (Shirin Qalam) for his beautiful and splendid calligraphy. The subjects of his paintings were generally secular and included a variety of subjects like court scenes, battle scenes, and hunting scenes. The paintings were adorned with rich borders and impeccable calligraphy. The contribution of Khawaja Abdus Samad and Mir Sayyed Ali to Mughal painting is unforgettable, they trained many artists and with their cooperation, a mixture of Indian and Persian styles developed new styles, which were called a Mughal painting. **KEY WORDS:** karkhana , Shrin Qalam, Miniature, Safavid.

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## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper has been prepared after studying many books on Mughal miniatures, journals, manuscripts and translation of emperors' biographies.

### Introduction

Mughal emperors were known not only for their beautiful architecture but also left a unique mark in the world in the field of painting. They maintained the splendor of culture and art by following a secular policy and giving a new direction to the people. Mughal emperors invited Persian and Hindu artists to work together with them. In this way, the thus Indian and Persian elements emerged together and developed a new style known as the Mughal miniature style. The founder of the Mughal Empire was Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur. Although no painting of his reign is available in India it is clear that he was a good painter. *According to historian Mirza Haider Doulat, --"Babur was ingrained in the arts since childhood. Writing poetry, digging seals, writing calligraphy, and making pictures were of prominent interest. In his library, he had a lot of hand-written manuscripts on display. "Shahnama" composed by Firdoshi and Zafarnama composed by Safiyuddin Yazdi are prominent among those. These manuscripts were decorated with the paintings of Behzad Ali and Muzaffar Ali.*<sup>1</sup> Babur has admitted in his autobiography that he was a painter and used to give shelter to many painters, writers, and poets. In his memoirs, Babur mentioned the love of painting in many places and also criticized the painting style of Bahizad *that he is a skilled artist but could not make faces without a beard, properly.*<sup>2</sup> This statement confirms the fact that he had seen and understood the paintings of Bahizad, which evidences the ability of his art. *About another artist Muzaffar Ali he writes that Muzaffer Ali did not live long and died at the time when he was starting to get fame.*<sup>3</sup> Babur's memoirs proved that he was an accomplished writer with artistic interest, but this art-loving emperor did not get time for the advancement of his interest in painting.

Babur got fame in the world due to his invaluable autobiography Tuzuk e Babri, it is considered one of the world's finest autobiographies, which is a sign of his intellectual abilities. Emperor Babur better known for his autobiography than his victories

was well versed in Arabic and Persian languages. He had full command over his native language Turkey. Babur Nama reveals the personality of Babur, in which he describes his activities like difficulties of life, victory in wars, civil life of Samarkand, Kabul, and India, the beauty of nature, and many types of trees, flowers, and birds, and his religious feelings.

***Babur's autobiography is considered to be more beautiful than Rousseau's, Gibbon's, Newton's, and Augustine's autobiography*** It has a special place in history. After the death of Babur, his eldest son Abul Fatah Nasiruddin Muhammad Humayun becomes Emperor from 1530–39 and 1541–55. Humayun is known as the father of Mughal painting. After ruling for nine years and then being defeated by Sher Shah Suri in the battle of Chausa in 1539, Humayun left India and went back to Iran. He got shelter in the court of Shah Tahmasp. Persia was the great center of art and culture at that time and many great artists were present in Shah Tahmasp's Court. The time of January 1544 to 1545 is of special importance in the development of Mughal painting. This was the time when Humayun came in contact with Persian artists and his art interest was revived, once he visited the Shah Tahmasp's court. At that time, a desire arose in his heart that he should also have such a court and he could also paint the paintings in the same way. Shah Tahmasp advised Humayun to go back to India and helped him with money and the army.

At the time of departure, Humayun requested Shah Tahmasp to give two artists as gifts, who should come to Hindustan with him. This was an extraordinary request which unwillingly Safavid ruler accepted and gave him two artists KhwajaAbdus Samad and Mir Sayyed Ali as a gift. ***According to Ba yazid Bayat -Besides these artists, four other artists - Dost-e-Deewana, Molana Darvesh, Molana Yusuf, and Dost-e Muhammad also came to India from Persia.***<sup>4</sup>

***, Bayazid Bayat, also mentioned that "Humayun issued the Farman to Mir Sayyid Ali and Abdus Samad, by receiving it both the painters, who were at that time in Qandahar, moved to Kabul and joined Humayun's court. <sup>5</sup> Qazi Ahmed mentions that "Mir Musavvir who was the father of Mir Sayyed Ali came to India with his son." In 1554, these two artists together established the first artist studio which was called "Karkhana". With the efforts of these skilled painters Mughal Style paintings were started <sup>6</sup>***

After a great struggle, Humayun got the throne of Delhi back in July 1555. ***According to Ain e Akbari - Mir Sayyid Ali and Khwaja Abdus Samad gave teaching of painting to Humayun and the child Akbar.***<sup>7</sup> ***Jahangir has also confirmed this fact in his autobiography Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri.*** When Humayun obtained the throne of Delhi in 1555, he transferred Karkhana from Kabul to Delhi. ***According to Bayazid Bayat- There were seven artists with Humayun at that time – Mir Sayyed Ali, Khwaja Abdus Samad, Doast e deewana ,Molana Yusuf, Molana dervish ,Dost e Mohammad. Apart from these superintendent***

***( darogha) of the royal library Hasim Hani (Daroga-e-KatibKhana) also reached Delhi.***<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, no painting with the signatures of these two artists is available in India, but innumerable paintings are found in Persia. The name of these two painters is found again and again in history. Many Indian artists consider themselves to be the disciples of two great masters. In this context, it can be said that many Indian and foreign great artists were present in the Mughal court. It is not possible to mention all of these artists, but some prominent among them were Basavan, Farrukh Chela, Dharamdas, Mukund, Miskin, Mahesh, Jagannath, Sawnlal, Manohar Lal, Sankar, Laxman, Madhav, Annat, Banwari, Bhagwan, Khemkaran, Mahesh, Muhammad Kashmiri, Gujrat, Khemkaran, many artists influence these artists. In which Basavan's name is prominent. Probably Khawaja Abdus Samad and mir Sayyed Ali were busy training Indian artists as well.

It was a sad coincidence that Humayun died soon after establishing the Tasweer Khana. After him, this was patronized by his son Emperor Akbar. ***During the reign of Akbar, the Mono-Trait (a European traveler who came to Akbar's court in 1580) said that "He established a factory near the palace to promote the fine arts.***<sup>9</sup>

***Khwaja Abdus Samad was a skilled artist and a good calligrapher. According to Ain-Akbari - He taught painting to Humayun and Akbar. Later, Akbar recognized his talent and honored him with the title Shirin Qalam.(sweet pen)***<sup>10</sup>

In the beginning, Abdus Samad was greatly influenced by the paintings of Bahizad. From 1549 to 1555 he was busy doing illustration work in Humayun's court, most of which are preserved in the Imperial Library, Tehran. Abdus Samad painted several paintings. ***In 1555 painted a picture of the celebration of Navroz. In another painting child Akbar standing in a high place and showing a picture to his father Humayun. In one painting Khawaja Abdus Samad gives art lessons to Emperor Akbar.*** In this picture, a young man Mir Syed Ali standing wearing a Safavid-style cap. In those days the high cap was prevalent in Homerun's court. In this painting, the name of Khwaja Abdu Samad is written in the corner. He tried to make Mir Syed Ali stand out from other figures by wearing it in Safavid Style. Another important artist Mir Sayyed Ali, probably born in Tabrez in the second quarter of the 16th century, was a well-known artist of the Safavid School and a great pillar of the Mughal court. He joined Humayun's court with Khawaja Abdussamad and raised the Mughal miniature art at his height. After reaching Delhi, he trained Indian artists and painted ***Dastaan e Amir Hamza***, in which he composed 1400 stories related to the life of Amir Hamza. Besides this, ***Khamsa of Nizami and Laila Majnu*** are the main paintings of Mir Sayyed Ali.



**PORTRAIT OF SHAH ABDUL MALI,**

**PORTRAIT OF SHAH ABDUL MALI,**

*Portrait of Shah Abdul Mali,*

*Painted by Ab du samad,*

*Exhibited in Bowling Library, Oxford.\*

#### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

Although Shah Abdul Mali was one of Humayun's closest relatives, he had refused to accept Akbar's court, which angered Akbar and ordered him to arrest by Kuchi Khan.

#### **PAINTING DESCRIPTION:**

In this picture, the figure of Shah Abdul Mali has been depicted in bold lines. The date of this painting has been given as 1555 but historians believe that date does not match with this painting because it was the time when Illustration work was at its peak and the characteristic features of his paintings have been lost somewhere. Historians also believed that this painting was probably made by another artist in the 16th century because Abdus Samad was busy creating a very famous painting of that time "House of Timur" in Kabul's studio.

Both great artists gave a new dimension to the Akbar's court and trained many artists. Khwaja Abdus Samad started the use of the Perspective by modeling although he only depicted the composition containing Persian style and included various elements in it. He created 30 manuscript paintings of Akbar's period.





**THE PRINCES OF THE HOUSE OF TIMURE**

*The Princes of the House of Timur*

**Materials:** Cotton

**Period** -Humayun , Mughal court

**Artist** –khawaja Abdus Samad

### **THE PRINCES OF THE HOUSE OF TIMUR**

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND---** This is the earliest and most important example of Mughal painting. Due to its large size and date, it is considered to be the earliest painting of the Mughal Empire which is created on cloth. Besides this, the Hamza Nama was also done on cloth. In the history of the entire Mughal painting, these are the only two examples that were created on cloth. Many great historians express their views about this painting *According to M. J. Rogers - 'A variety of Islamic paintings was prevalent in India, mainly in the 16th and 17th centuries.'*<sup>11</sup>

*H.C. Welch also agrees with Rogers's point of view and said that a miniature much earlier Shah Tahmasp's Shah Nama.*<sup>12</sup>

Mughal Empire was established by Mughal Emperor Zahiruddin Mohammad Babur and maintained its dominance for many centuries. In this painting, an attempt has been made to pay tribute to the descendants of Emperor Timur by showing them together in one place.

### **PAINTING DESCRIPTION**

In this painting feast scene has been depicted in the garden. Persian-style landscape, sky, trees, and birds are depicted in golden color. In the center second emperor, Humayun is sitting; Jahangir and Shah Jahan have been shown in front of him. In the foreground are probably dancers and musicians performing courtly entertainment

The feast was given at night so the artist shows the darkness in the background. Figures are in action and a joyful atmosphere can be seen. At the center, octagonal panel architecture has been depicted where emperor Humayun and other princes are sitting. A small umbrella on the roof can be seen from the bottom of the painting which means the artist was unable to create perspective. In the entire picture brown and ultramarine blue colors have been used.

According to the inscription of the painting 'Mirza Kamran', 'HumayunBadsha', 'Barbar Shah', 'Sheikh Umar', Sultan, Sultan Abus Sayed Muhammad' and 'Miran Shah' have shown on the left. On the garment of Abu Sayeed Artist Bichitar's name has written, 'Govardhan' is written on the garment of the Barbar and Umar Sheikh Mirza's garment Daulat has written. on the purple color garment of Sultan Muhammad's on the knee of Monan has written.' While on Miran Shah's sleeve Nanha has written. 'AbubakrMirza'and 'Mirza Shahrulkh' has seated on the right and Sultan Pervez is standing outside the pavilion. Whenever inside the pavilion Jahangir and Shahjahan have sat with Humayun. According to the inscription, on the back of two human figures' clothes, Heeranand&' Inayat has written. Balchand has written on the orange clothes of a servant who carrying a plate. Most of the artist's name has been written on the clothes of the emperors. Many of the Mughal rulers' faces were repainted for creating a genealogy scene.



### PRINCE AKBAR AND NOBLEMEN HAWKING

*Prince Akbar and noblemen Hawkin*

*Mughal court at Delhi, ca. 1555-58*

*Inscribed: (mis)ascribed as "the work of Mir Sayyed 'Ali the artist"*

*Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection*

### PRINCE AKBAR AND NOBLEMEN HAWKING

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1555, Humayun defeated Sher Shah Suri and re-established his empire. After reaching India, both artists established a studio in Lahore, called Karkhana. Many paintings were made during Humayun's reign. For example, Akbar gave a painting to his father, and the House of Timur, etc. in this painting Mir Sayyed Ali depicted Akbar as a young boy. Unfortunately, after one-year prince's father died and the prince become emperor. This is a rare painting of Humayun's period in Delhi court during 1555-58.

**PAINTING DESCRIPTION:** In this painting young Emperor Akbar is depicted hunting with his guardian Bairam Khan. Akbar called him Ghazi Baba affectionately. The painting is influenced by the Persian style and was painted in the early period of the Humayun reign. In the foreground, Bairam Khan, Akbar, and two horse riders running on the ground, the artist got success in depicting the excitement of hunting. There are Persian-styled hills in the background, whose contour lines have been made in brown color.



In the lower part of the painting depicts the courtiers riding, black and brown colored horses and a falcon are sitting on their hands. This was a Persian tradition adopted by the Mughal artists. All the figures wore Persian-style turbans. It a worn and all have side faces. The right side shows a hunter aiming at a bird and the other man cutting it with a knife. Stiffness can be seen in the figures. Because this is the initial picture, the horses are shown with small faces and slim bodies. The picture has been made full of color.



**AKBAR AS DARVESH**

**AKBAR AS DERVISH**

*Mughal court at Fatehpur sikri*

*Artist --Khawaja Abdussamad*

*Shreenqalam.1580-90*

*Watercolor on paper*

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND;**

This painting was painted by (ShirinQalam) Khawaja Abdussamad between 1580-and 90 at FatehpurSikri's studio during the Akbar period. Presently it is preserved in the Agha Khan Trust Museum, Geneva. Khawaja Abdussamad showed the excellent form of his technique. The drawing of this picture is influenced by the European artist Grilse.

### **PAINTING DESCRIPTION;**

In the middle ground of the painting emperor, Akbar is meeting with the saint. This was the popular theme of Persian painting. In this painting emperor, Akbar is shown as a young boy sitting under a poplar tree taking a pillow on his back. A dervish is standing in front of the emperor in a prayer posture with outstretched hands, who is wearing the skin of an animal and the bighorn of a Nathan salt animal is placed on the waist. On the left two courtiers are standing holding scrolls in their hands and wearing patkas in their waists.

In the upper part of the painting, the poplar tree and the birds sitting on it have been depicted according to the Persian style.

In the background hills and wild animals like deer, and rabbits are depicted. The lower part of the picture depicts two courtiers.

A courtier holding a dog in one hand and a falcon is sitting on the other hand . This is a Persian influence that was adopted by the Mughal artists. On the right side, a man holding a horse rope seems to be in hurry in a dramatic posture. His body is frontal and the neck is made twisted which does not look right. The face of the horse is small in comparison to the huge body depicted according to the Persian manner. The saddle has shown on the horseback with a drum on it. The entire picture has strong Persian elements.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mir Sayyid Ali and Khwaja Abdus Samad were such great pillars of the Mughal court, who gave a new dimension to Mughal miniature painting in India and entire Mughal history revolves around these two great artists. These two artists Unveiled many more paintings. Due to the interest and deep approach and dedication of these artists toward art, the Mughal painting reached its height. It was possible by only these two artists' keen eye and their dedication to artwork. Even in the present times, many modern miniature artists make their ideals these two great masters. Indian Mughal history will always be grateful for the cooperation and hard work of these two artists.

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