

MURAL DECORATIONS IN MUGHAL PERIOD OF INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the art work of successful Mughal Rule in Subcontinent which is a great reality of the history of India. Their long-lasting stay in greater India and their cultural impacts on Indian Society are unforgettable. Zaheer-ud-Din Babur was the originator of Mughal line in Subcontinent. They created very eye-catching architecture in India and innovated beautiful decorations on architectural monuments. This study finds out the reflection of Mughal taste, their concern, intentions and traditions of their aesthetics. Mughal historical buildings are famous in all over the world due to their beautiful wall decorations. This work of art on the walls of the buildings is called mural decorative art. This paper finds out the beauty of mural art with vibrant colors, astute characterizations under the Mughal Reign, which is the special characteristic of Mughal era in Subcontinent.

Keywords: Mughal Rule, History of India, Indian Society, decorations, architectural monuments, Historical Buildings, Mural Art, Mughal Reign.

INTRODUCTION

Leonardo da Vinci says, “Art is the Queen of all sciences communicating knowledge to all the generations of the world.” Work of art indeed reflects the soul of its artist. Art is a visual expression of those forces that push his creator and reflects the cultural development of related society in which it is being created.

Wall painting is an artwork, which is directly applied on the wall, floor, ceiling or any solid surface by the artist. The style is the oldest artwork of Subcontinent. These paintings are the true depiction of local culture and art ethnicities. Invaders of India destroyed temples and mural decorations and thus this art came under the decline in the result of destruction.

In 1526, Mughals started a brilliant period of political power in Subcontinent. Babur was the founder of Mughal Dynasty in Subcontinent. His successors ruled here until 1858 before the British period, which starts after the independence war of 1857. In Mughal period, India progressed in the field of art and architecture successfully. They made a new era of beautiful buildings decorated with bold colors and decorations called mural decorations.

MURAL ART IN MUGHAL PERIOD

Mughal Kings and their powers have gone but their contributions towards art are keeping them alive still. All kind of their art work express the aesthetic sense, deep observation towards nature, delicacy of feelings and the spirit of Mughal kings. The founder, Babur did nothing except two gardens, Bagh-e-Safa in Kabul and Bagh-e-Wafa in Kallar Kahar without any remarkable art work. He also built a mosque about which in Tuzk e Babri mentioned that this mosque was built in Indian and Lodhi style. When Babur visited Heraat, he was captivated by the descriptions of the city.

Major theme on the wall paintings shows courageous actions of Abu Said Mirza. According to Schimmel such kind of depiction on royal as well as general edifices remained one of the characteristics features of wall painting of late Mughal period. (Schimmel, 2004; 24)

Proper period of Mughal Art starts from Hamayun's reign. He was much impressed by the Persian artists when he was staying in Iran as refugee in the court of Shah Tehmasp in 1542. Hamayun took interest in the popular paintings of Behzad who had been died in 1536. His two pupils were brought to India by his order. These two men became royal artists of Mughal Court "In 1550 Hamayun brought with him from Tabriz, Mir Sayyad Ali and Abdus Samad of Shiraz whom he had befriended at the court of Shah Tehmasp." (Hassan, 1991; 21)

In the period of Akbar Mughal Art is somehow an amalgamation of Persian art and Rajput school of Art. In his period, art and architecture both were reached on its height. On the monuments of Akbar's period, mural decorations have both Iranian and Indian artistic flavor in which, leaves of chinar trees have been represented in golden colors but on the other hands, small Iranian peaks were replaced by huge Indian mountains. Akbar was much popular due to his religious tolerance. Therefore, he allowed all sort of artists to work freely in his court. Akbar invaded some Persian artisans who were already residing in Gujrat. The locals were allowed to practice their Art and also free to apply without fear. During the time of Akbar, Mural work of Art can be observed in Jahangiri Mehal of Agra Fort, Buland Darwaza in Fatehpur Sikri and Dehli Gate.



Fig.1 Inlay work on Mughal Jewellery Box and Pen Box



Fig.2 Taj Mehal Agra

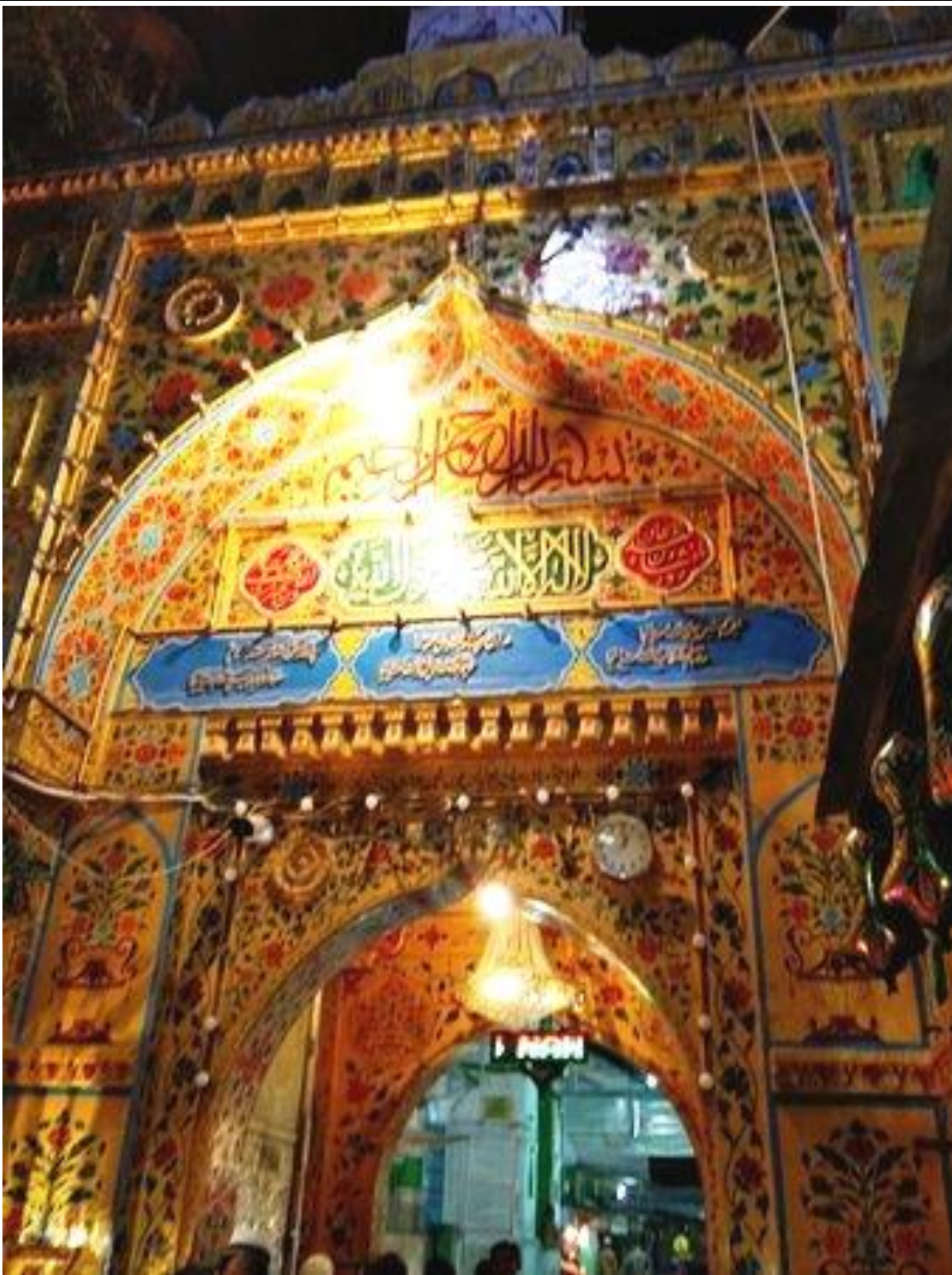


Fig. 3 Mural Artwork on Interior of Taj Mehal

In the time of Jahangir, mural Art touched its peak. He set a beautiful example of mural decoration in the tomb of Itimad-ud-Daullah in Agra. Persian influence is shown in mostly motifs of the tomb. The reason of Persian influence here was the wife of Jahangir, as she belongs to Persia.



Fig.4 Inlay Work in the Tomb of Itimad-ud-Daullah

Jahangir loved art but he was also very fond of drinking wine. Thus, wine vessels, bottles of perfume and vases of flowers were painted in murals.

Shah Jehan was the next Mughal ruler after Jahangir. He was a building lover king. He constructed many buildings in India but his famous Taj Mehal of Agra is a beautiful example of rich mural artwork.



Fig. 5 Mughal Mural Decoration on the walls of Taj Mehal

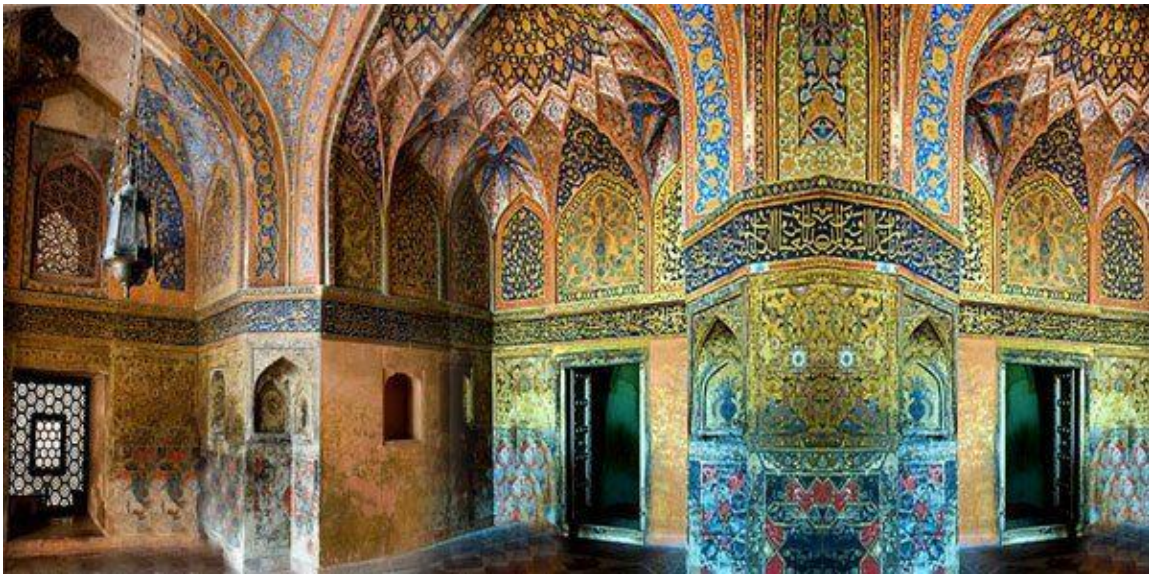


Fig. 6: Mughal Mural Decoration on the walls of Taj Mehal

Precious stones were used in mural decorations frequently in the time of Shah Jehan. He was the ruler who made mural art very expensive due to extensive use of diamonds, garnet and jewels. Use of moldings and borders in the shape of petals and flowers in the demonstration of mural art on the walls of Taj Mehal is really remarkable.



Fig.7: Mughal Precious Jewel Work

Unlike Shah Jehan, Aurangzeb Alamgeer was a different Mughal king and never liked any kind of artwork in his time. He closed the chapter of any kind of mural decorations and artisans met with hunger. Overall, Mughals highlighted, animals, plants, geometrical motifs and different other patterns from local traditions specially Hinduism. Mughals liked flowers and natural images. They loved to wear rich colored embroidered dresses and often ordered to use this embroidery on the walls of Mughal monuments.

CONCLUSION

Mural decoration is an important Artwork in the history of World Art. It is as primitive as humans are. Man used this tool of art in antediluvian caves to express his feelings, fears, and happiness. Mural art is an expression of primeval cultural development and a great specimen of archaic period. Pre Mughal Art and Architecture was entirely colorless in Subcontinent. This credit goes to the Mughals that they brought attractive color and energetic luster in the building technique of Subcontinent. Consequently, a new chapter of mural decorations along with miniature paintings started with the advent of Mughals in subcontinent. They built magnificent buildings in Subcontinent and decorated them with mural decorations.

This Mughal school of Art was under the complete influence of Persians. Floral decorations on the hard surfaces of building walls and stones ornamented with jewels remained as a special feature of Mughal Mural Art. Many tourists love to visit these monumental decorations.

In present era, Mughal Mural Decorations are used in big hotels, restaurants, and resorts to give them a royal touch of Artwork. People love to imitate these Mughal mural decorations in this age Art is a part of our cultural development and Mughal Mural decoration is a great part of Islamic civilization. Muslims feel pride to have the legacy of this mural artwork. Government should make proper arrangements to save this legacy.

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