UNIT 17  ARCHITECTURE AND PAINTING*

Structure

17.0  Objectives
17.1  Introduction
17.2  Architecture under the Delhi Sultanate
   17.2.1  New Structural Forms
   17.2.2  Stylistic Evolution
   17.2.3  Public Buildings and Public Works
17.3  Mughal Architecture
   17.3.1  Beginning of Mughal Architecture
   17.3.2  Interregnum: The Sur Architecture
   17.3.3  Architecture under Akbar
   17.3.4  Architecture under Jahangir and Shah Jahan
   17.3.5  The Final Phase
17.4  Paintings under the Delhi Sultanate
   17.4.1  Literary Evidence for Murals
   17.4.2  The Quranic Calligraphy
   17.4.3  Manuscript Illustration
17.5  Mughal Paintings
   17.5.1  Antecedents: Paintings in the Fifteenth Century
   17.5.2  Painting under Early Mughals
   17.5.3  Evolution of the Mughal School under Akbar
   17.5.4  Developments and Jahangir and Shahjahan
   17.5.5  The Final Phase
   17.5.6  European Impact on Mughal Painting
17.6  Summary
17.7  Keywords
17.8  Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
17.9  Suggested Readings
17.10 Instructional Video Recommendations

17.0  OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

• distinguish between the pre-Islamic and Indo-Islamic styles of architecture,
• identify major phases of architectural development during the period,
• understand the traditions of painting prevalent in the Delhi Sultanate,
• learn new structural forms and techniques of Mughal architecture, and
• describe the main elements of Mughal painting.

* Prof. Ravindra Kumar, School of Social Sciences, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi
Art and architecture are true manifestations of the culture of a period as they reflect the ethos and thought of a society. It is here that the ideas and techniques of a society find visual expression. In this context the advent of the Turkish rule in India marks the beginning of a new expression in the realm of art and architecture. The new style is generally identified as the Indo-Islamic style of architecture.

The establishment of Mughal rule in India in 1526 revitalized the Indo-Islamic architecture. The new rulers effected an amalgam of the prevalent architectural forms and techniques with those brought from Central Asia and Persia. The result of their efforts was the emergence of one of the most splendid buildings in India.

Unlike architecture, the art of painting as practiced in the Delhi Sultanate is not adequately documented. We know that calligraphy and book-illumination in the Islamic world had achieved supreme heights by the close of the 12th century. Moreover, there also existed a developed tradition of figural murals in the Ghaznavid kingdom. Possibly the same traditions were carried to Delhi by the early Turkish Sultans. However, the true flourish of these traditions seems to have occurred in the 13th and 14th centuries.

As against the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal developments in art and architecture, the regional states mostly followed a variant course. While they adhered mainly to the technological principles evolved under the Indo-Islamic style, interesting regional variations were introduced in the plans and appearance of buildings built under the patronage of regional kingdoms. Here, we will not go into details pertaining to the regional developments.

In this Unit, we will take into account these developments in the field of architecture and painting under the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal India.

17.2 ARCHITECTURE UNDER THE DELHI SULTANATE

The most important source for the study of architecture are the surviving remains of buildings themselves. They enable us to study architectural techniques and styles peculiar to our period. But little help is offered by these remains in furthering our understanding of other related aspects of architecture such as the role of the architects and the drawings and estimates and accounts of the buildings.

The Turkish Sultans in India brought with them the emergence of a culture which combined elements of both indigenous and Islamic traditions. The most effective and distinct manifestation of this syncretic culture is available in the art and architecture of this period.

17.2.1 New Structural Forms

We begin our study by noticing a distinct feature of this ‘new’ style – a significant increase in the number of masonry buildings from about the 13th century. It seems very likely that the introduction of a new cementing material in the construction of buildings during this period added longer life and greater durability to the masonry structures. How did this happen and which new structural forms provided support to the longer life and greater durability, is going to be detailed by us in the following paragraphs.
i) Arch and Dome

Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, compiled between 1865-77 suggest that the incidence of masonry building – including civilian housing in towns in Northern India – increased significantly after the 13th century. This was primarily possible due to the use of lime-mortar as the basic cementing material and the introduction of a new architectural form i.e. the arch in raising masonry buildings. Additionally, an extended form of arch, called dome, was also applied as a building form to mainly provide the ceiling to the masonry building. These new techniques gave greater stability and therefore longer life to masonry buildings, as noted in the Archaeological Survey Reports. It is therefore important for us to clearly understand the details of these technological and architectural devices to truly appreciate the development of Indo-Islamic architecture.

It must be appreciated that the introduction of a new cementing material and a new architectural form were simultaneous processes as one complimented the other. Let us now examine the two features in detail – lime-mortar as cementing material and arch as an architectural technique.

As you have studied in Unit-14 the building of arch required stones or bricks to be laid as voussoirs in the shape of a curve and bound together firmly by a good binding material. This binding material was lime-mortar (Figure 1).

A major impact of the introduction of the new technique was the replacement of pre-Turkish forms – lintel and beam and corbelling – with true arches and vaults. Similarly, the spired roofs (shikhar) of the pre-Turkish period were now replaced with domes. Arches are made in a variety of shapes, but in India the pointed form of the Islamic world was directly inherited, and sometime in the second quarter of the 14th century, another variant of the pointed form, the four-centered arch, was introduced by the Tughlaqs in their buildings. It remained in general use till the end of the Delhi Sultanate (these forms have been illustrated in Figure 2).
The pointed arch was adopted in the Islamic world quite early due to its durability and ease of construction. The usual method of raising a pointed arch was to erect a light centering and place one layer of bricks over it. This layer supported another thin layer of flat bricks over which radiating voussoirs of the arch were fixed in mortar. These two bottom layers of brick-work would, if needed, act as permanent shuttering for the arch (Figure 3). You will appreciate that the employment of bricks instead of an all-wood centering was a feature typical of regions deficient in reserves of wood such as West Asia and even India.

But the construction of dome demanded specialized techniques. The problem was to find a suitable method for converting the square or rectangular top of the walls of the room into a circular base for raising a spherical dome. The best way to overcome this problem was to convert the square plan into a polygon by the use of squinches across the corners (Figure 3). Later, in the 15th century, stalactite pendentives came to be used for the same purpose. For example, in Bara Gumbad Mosque, New Delhi.

ii) Building Material

It is a curious fact that there are very few instances of early Turkish buildings in India where newly quarried material has been used by the architects. The usual practice was to use richly carved capitals, columns, shafts and lintels from pre-Turkish structures as the building material. In India, it was only towards the beginning of the 14th century, when the supply of such material had exhausted, that buildings were raised by using originally quarried or manufactured material. It is no surprise that, stone, due to its strength, has been used abundantly in the masonry work. The foundations are mostly of rough and small rubble or, wherever it is available, of river boulders, while the superstructure is of dressed stone or roughly shaped coarse stonework. However, in either case, the buildings were plastered all over. Percy Brown (1942) has noted that in the buildings of the Khalji period a new method of stone masonry was used. This consisted of laying stones in two different courses, that is headers and stretchers. This system was retained in subsequent buildings and became a characteristic feature of the building technique of the Mughals.

Buildings of this period were generally plastered with gypsum. Apparently lime-plaster was reserved for places that needed to be secured against the leakage of water, such as roofs, indigo-vats, canals, drains, etc. In the later period, i.e. around 15th century, when highly finished stucco work became common, gypsum mortar was preferred for plaster work on the walls and the ceiling.

iii) Decoration

Decorative art in the Islamic buildings served the purpose of concealing the structure behind motifs rather than revealing it. Since the depiction of living
beings was generally frowned upon, the elements of decoration were, in most cases, limited to:

a) calligraphy,       b) geometry, and       c) foliation.

It was by their manipulation that a rich and sumptuous effect was obtained in the Sultanate buildings. But characteristically enough no one type of decoration was reserved for a particular type of building; on the contrary, these Pan-Islamic decorative principles were used for all kinds of buildings in the Delhi Sultanate.

Calligraphy is an important element of the decorative art in the buildings of this period. The *Quranic* sayings are inscribed on buildings in an angular, sober and monumental script, known as Kufi. They may be found in any part of the building-frames of the doors, ceilings, wall panels, niches etc., and in variety of materials—tone, stucco and painting.

Geometric shapes in abstract form are used in these buildings in a bewildering variety of combinations. The motifs indicate incorporation of visual principles: repetition, symmetry, and generation of continuous patterns. It has been suggested by Dalu Jones (Michael, 1978) that the generating source of these geometric designs is the circle, which could be developed into a square, a triangle or a polygon. These forms are then elaborated by multiplication and subdivision, by rotation and by symmetrical arrangements.

Of the foliations, the dominant form of decoration employed in Sultanate buildings, is the *arabesque*. It is characterized by a continuous stem which splits regularly, producing a series of leafy secondary stems which can in turn split again or reintegrate into the main stem. The repetition of this pattern produces a beautifully balanced design with a three dimensional effect.

**Check Your Progress-1**

1) What was the main reason for a significant increase in masonry buildings after the 13th century?

2) Identify the structural problem in raising a domed roof over a square building.

3) What were the main elements of decoration in the Sultanate architecture?
Religion and Culture

17.2.2 Stylistic Evolution

i) The Early Form

The history of Indo-Islamic architecture proper commences with the occupation of Delhi by the Turks in CE 1192. The Tomar citadel of Lal Kot with its Chauhan extension, called Qila Rai Pithora, was captured by Qutbuddin Aibak. Here he began the construction of a Jami Masjid which was completed in 1198. According to an inscription on the mosque it was known as Quwwatul Islam and was built from the wreckage of twenty-seven Hindu and Jain temples demolished by the conquerors. Again, in 1199, an expansive screen with lofty arches was raised across the entire front of the sanctuary of the mosque. In both these constructions, the hand of the local architect is quite evident. The lintels, carved-columns and slabs, have been used liberally by only turning their carved sides inwards or using them upside down. The arches of the screen have been built by employing the method of corbelling; and the ornamentation of the screen, is emphatically Hindu in conception.

However, the borrowed elements of Hindu architecture were soon discarded and relatively little of this element was retained in the now maturing Indo-Islamic style. In later buildings of this phase, such as Qutb Minar (built 1199-1235), Arhai Din Ka Jhoupra (built c. 1200) and Ilutmish's tomb (completed 1233-4), though corbelling could not be replaced as the principal structural technique, decoration became almost fully Islamic in detail. In this connection, the principles employed in the construction of the domical roof of Ilutmish’s tomb (built 1233-4, not extant now) are also of great interest. Though the domical roof was raised with the help of corbelled courses it was supported on squinches built at the corners of the square chamber. Here perhaps is the earliest attempt, says Percy Brown, of solving the problem of the phase of transition in India.

The culmination of the architectural style designated by us as the Early Form was the mausoleum of Balban built around 1287-88. It is in ruins now but occupies an important place in the development of Indo-Islamic architecture, as it is here that we notice the earliest true arch.

ii) The Khaljis

The Khalji period architecture, as revealed in Alai Darwaza (built 1305) at the Qutb complex, and the Jamat Khana Masjid (built 1325) at Nizamuddin, marks a change in the style. In the evolution of Indo-Islamic architecture, this phase occupies a key position as it exhibits a distinct influence of the Seljuq architectural tradition (a Turkish tribe ruling over Central Asia and Asia Minor in 11th-13th century) as also certain salient features of composition which were adopted in the succeeding styles. The characteristic features of this phase may be listed below:

a) Employment of true arch, pointed horse-shoe in shape.
b) Emergence of true dome with recessed arches under the squinch.
c) Use of red sandstone and decorative marble reliefs as new building materials.
d) Appearance of lotus-bud fringe on the underside of the arch – a Seljuq feature.
e) Emergence of new masonry-facing consisting of a narrow course of headers, alternating with a much wider course of stretchers – again a Seljuq feature.

In addition, the decorative features characterized by calligraphy, geometry and arabesque now became much bolder and profuse.
iii) The Tughlaqs

Another shift in the architectural style came in the buildings of the Tughlaq period. Judging from the remains, only the first three rulers of this house appear to have made important additions in architecture. The architecture of this period can be divided into two main groups. To the first group belong the constructions of Ghiyasuddin and Muhammad Tughlaq, and the other to those of Firuz Tughlaq.

The general features of the Tughlaq style of architecture are listed below:

a) Stone rubble is the principal building material and the walls are in most cases plastered.

b) The walls and bastions are invariably battered, the effect being most marked at the corners.

c) A hesitant and possibly experimental use of a new shape of arch – the four centered arch-necessitating its reinforcement with a supporting beam. This arch-beam combination is a hallmark of the Tughlaq style. The pointed horse-shoe arch of the preceding style was abandoned because of its narrow compass and therefore the inability to span wider spaces.

d) Emergence of a pointed dome with clearly visible neck in contrast with rather stifled dome of the preceding style.

e) Introduction of encaustic tiles as an element of decoration in the panels of the buildings.

f) Emergence of an octagonal plan, in the tombs of this period, which came to be copied and perfected by the Mughals in the 16th-17th century.

An additional feature was the element of reduced ornament, confined mostly to inscribed borders and medallions in spandrels executed in plaster or stucco.

iv) The Final phase

Within a decade of the death of Firuz Shah Tughlaq (1388), the Sultanate became politically unstable, and in 1398 was sacked and plundered by Timur. However, some semblance of central authority remained with the two succeeding dynasties of the Saiyyids and Lodis, although they ruled over a greatly shrunken Sultanate of Delhi between 1414 and 1526. A large number of tombs were built in and around Delhi so much so that over a period of time the area around Delhi looked like a sprawling qabristan (graveyard).

Yet some of these structures are important from architectural point of view and can be considered as heralding a distinct style. The more important of these tomb-buildings took two separate forms, the distinguishing features of which are given below:

a) Mausoleums designed on an octagonal plan incorporating the following elements:
   - main tomb-chamber surrounded by an arched verandah
   - one storey high
   - verandah with projecting eaves supported on brackets

b) The other type was built on square plan. These were characterized by the following elements:
   - absence of verandah around the main tomb-chamber
Religion and Culture

- exterior comprised of two, and sometimes three stories
- absence of eaves and supporting brackets

There is an original treatment of coloured tile decoration in these buildings. It is set sparingly in friezes. In addition, there are intricately incised surfaces of plaster.

The end of the Delhi Sultanate came in 1526 with the defeat of last of the Lodi Sultans at the hands of the Mughal invader, Babur. This also signalled an end of the Sultanate style of architecture, which had begun showing signs of stagnation in the 15th century.

17.2.3 Public Buildings and Public Works

You must have noticed that in our discussion of the development of the Sultanate architecture so far, we made references mostly to royal structures like palace-citadels, tombs or mosques. This, however, is not to suggest that other kinds of buildings were non-existent or that they were insignificant.

Contrary to the popular opinion that the number of structures other than royal buildings was abysmal, we in fact notice that such structures far outnumber royal buildings. The majority of these buildings comprised of sarai, bridges, irrigation-tanks, wells and baolis, dams, kachehri (administrative buildings), prison-houses, kotwali (police-stations), dak-chauki (post-stations), hammam (public baths), and katra (market places), etc. Since almost all these types were intended for public and civic purposes, we group them collectively under public buildings and public works. They were available to the general public regardless of their religious affiliations.

Sarai is perhaps the most conspicuous of these public buildings. It was introduced in India by the Turks in the 13th century. The earliest mention of the existence of sarai is from Balban’s time (1266). Among late rulers both Muhammad Tughlaq and Firuz Tughlaq are known to have built a large number of sarais in Delhi as also along the major land-routes of the Sultanate. The main features of these sarais may be listed thus:

- Square or rectangular disposition, enclosed on all four sides by masonry walls, with entry through one of sometimes two gateways,
- Series of rooms fronted by small vaulted spaces along all the four sides inside the enclosure. Warehouses were in the corners of the enclosure.
- Existence of a small mosque and one or more walls in the open courtyard within the enclosure (These feature may be seen in the plan of a sarai of Sher Shah’s time).

Bridges were another important category of public buildings. However, only small and medium sized rivers were provided with masonry bridges. Major rivers such as the Ganga and the Yamuna were provided with bridges made of boats. We are fortunate in having at least two masonry bridges of this period surviving even today. One is located at Chittorgarh over the Gambheri river. The other was built over Sahibi, a tributary of Yamuna, at Wazirabad Delhi.

Sarais and bridges are only the two most common specimens from a rather rich and miscellaneous order of public buildings of the Sultanate period. Weirs and step-wells, too, are a part of the Delhi Sultanate architecture. For example, gandhak ki baoli built by Iltutmish at Mehrauli (Delhi) is one of the step-wells.

Apart from this Indo-Islamic architectural style, the regional styles of architecture came into vogue usually after these states had thrown off the allegiance to Delhi
and proceeded to develop a form suiting their individual requirements. They were distinct from the Indo-Islamic style practiced at Delhi and often displayed definitely original qualities. In the areas which had a strong indigenous tradition of workmanship in masonry, regional styles of Islamic architecture produced the most elegant structures. On the other hand, where these traditions were not so pronounced, the buildings constructed for the regional states were less distinctive. In some cases, totally novel tendencies – independent of both the indigenous and the imperial Sultanate traditions – are also visible.

Check Your Progress-2

1. Mark (√) or (×):
   i) The arches in the screen of Quwwatul Islam Masjid are corbelled. (  )
   ii) Dome in Iltutmish’s tomb was raised by placing crossbeams at the corners of the tomb-chamber. (  )
   iii) Openings in Balban’s tomb are corbelled. (  )

2) List three main features of the Khalji architecture.
   ......................................................................................................................
   ......................................................................................................................
   ......................................................................................................................

3) Answer each of the following in two lines.
   i) Why was pointed horse-shoe arch abandoned in the Tughlaq period?
   ...............................................................................................................
   ...............................................................................................................
   ii) How are the walls and bastions of Tughlaq period different from the preceding structures?
   ...............................................................................................................
   ...............................................................................................................
   iii) What difference do you notice in the building material of the Tughlaq buildings?
   ...............................................................................................................
   ...............................................................................................................

4) Write a note on the distinctive features of the Saiyyid and Lodi mausoleums.
   ...............................................................................................................
   ...............................................................................................................
   ...............................................................................................................
   ...............................................................................................................

5) Define a public building and list some of the important public buildings of the Delhi Sultanate.
   ...............................................................................................................
   ...............................................................................................................
   ...............................................................................................................
   ...............................................................................................................
   ...............................................................................................................

365
17.3 MUGHAL ARCHITECTURE

The history of architecture during the 16th-18th centuries is in fact an account of the building activities of the Mughal Emperors, except for a brief interregnum of a decade and a half when rulers of the Sur dynasty ruled in Delhi.

17.3.1 Beginning of Mughal Architecture

It is true that the Mughal style of architecture took a concrete form during the reign of Akbar, yet the basic principles of Mughal architecture were provided by Babur and Humayun, the two predecessors of Akbar.

Buildings of Babur

Babur had a short reign of five years, most of which was spent in fighting battles for the consolidation of the newly born Mughal state. He is, however, known to have taken considerable interest in building secular works. It is unfortunate that very little of this work is extant today. The only standing structures of Babur’s reign are two mosques, built in 1526, at Panipat and Sambhal. But both these structures are commonplace, and possess no architectural merit.

Babur’s secular works mainly comprise the laying of gardens and pavilions. In one of the miniatures, he has been depicted inspecting the layout plan of a garden of Dholpur. Today, only the excavated ruins of this garden are visible. Two more gardens, Ram Bagh and Zahra Bagh at Agra, are also attributed to him. But the present layout of these gardens seems to have undergone many alterations. None of Babur’s pavilions have been noticed as surviving today.

Buildings of Humayun

The surviving buildings of Humayun’s reign have the same inconsequential character as that of Babur. The Mughal domination over India was too unsettled for the production of any great work of architecture. Moreover, Humayun had to spend fifteen long years of his life in exile in Persia during the ascendance of the Sur dynasty in Delhi. However, two mosques from among several other buildings erected during the first phase of his reign survive. One of these lies in ruinous condition at Agra. The other is at Fatehabad (Hissar). But both these structures are devoid of any architectural distinctiveness much in the same manner as the mosques of Babur.

Humayun’s return to Delhi in 1555 was short-lived. There are in fact no notable buildings of this time. Mention may, however, be made of Humayun’s tomb as a structure which was inspired by the Persian culture imbibed by Humayun during his exile. This building is in fact a landmark in the development of the Mughal style of architecture. The construction began in 1564 after Humayun’s death under the patronage of his widow, Hamida Bano Begum. The architect of the building was Mirak Mirza Ghiyas, a native of Persia. He brought many Persian craftsmen to Delhi to work on the structure and their skills and techniques were liberally employed. The tomb has, thus, become representative of an Indian rendition of a Persian concept. It may be noted that Humayun’s tomb, strictly speaking, is a building of Akbar’s reign. But because of peculiar features, it has been treated separately.

Humayun’s tomb is one of the earliest specimens of the garden enclosure and is raised high on an arcaded sandstone platform. The tomb is octagonal in plan and is crowned by a high dome, which is actually a double dome. It has two shells, with an appreciable space in between. The inner shell forms the vaulted ceiling.
to the inner chambers, and the outer shell rises like a bulb in a proportion with the elevation of the main building. To the centre of each side of the tomb is a porch with a pointed arch providing entrance to the main chamber. The interior of this building is a group of compartments, the largest in the centre containing the grave of the Emperor. The smaller ones in each angle were meant to house the graves of his family member. Each room is octagonal in plan and they are connected by diagonal passages.

### Double-dome

A double-dome is built of two layers. There is one layer inside which provides ceiling to the interior of the building. The other layer is the outer one which crowns the building. The devices of double dome enable the ceiling inside to be placed lower and in better relation to the interior space it covers. This is done without disturbing the proportions and effect of elevation of the exterior. The method of making double dome was practiced in Western Asia for quite sometime before it was imported into India.

### 17.3.2 Interregnum: The Sur Architecture

The Mughal rule in India was interrupted by Sher Shah Sur in 1540. For the next fifteen years the Empire came under the sway of the Surs who embarked on profound architectural projects. Their buildings, in fact, laid the ground work on which the Mughals built.

The architectural heritage produced under diverse conditions and in two separate localities of the Surs may be divided into two separate and distinct periods. The first phase emerged at Sasaram (Bihar) under Sher Shah between 1530-1540. The second phase lasted from 1540-1545 when Sher Shah had wrested control of the Empire from Humayun. Under his patronage, several architectural innovations were adopted which got reflected in mature form in the consequent Mughal style.

The first phase is represented by a group of tombs, three belonging to the ruling family and one to Aliwal Khan who was the architect of these tombs. The buildings reflect the ambition of Sher Shah to create monuments grander than anything in Delhi. The first project of this scheme was the construction of the tomb of Hasan Khan, Sher Shah’s father, in 1525. But this was a conventional exercise in Lodi design. The major representative of this group was the tomb of Sher Shah (Sasaram), an architectural masterpiece. Here the architect considerably enlarged the normal proportions of the earlier building and set it in a beautiful tank approached by a causeway. In addition to this, he increased the number of stories thus producing a beautiful pyramidal structure in five distinct stages. This monument was constructed of the finest Chunar sandstone.

Sher Shah’s tomb stands on a stepped square plinth on a terrace appreciated through a gateway via a bridge placed across the tank. There is an error in orienting the lower platform of the tomb on the main axis. But it is corrected by skewing the axis of the superstructure built over the lower platform. The main building comprises an octagonal chamber surrounded by an arcade. There are domed canopies in each corner of the platform. The proportions of diminishing stages and the harmonious transition from square to octagon and to sphere are elements which speak highly of the capabilities of the Indian architect.

The second phase of development took place in Delhi. Sher Shah built the Purana Qila intended to be the sixth city of Delhi. Today, only two isolated gateways survive. Far more important, however, was the Qila-i Kuhna Masjid, built about
Religion and Culture

1542 inside the Purana Qila citadel. In the architectural scheme of this mosque, the facade of the prayer hall is divided into five arched bays, the central one larger than the others, each with an open archway recessed within it. The facade is richly carved in black and white marble and red sandstone, and the central arch is flanked by narrow, fluted pilasters. The rear carriers of the mosque have five stair turrets with rich windows carried on brackets.

One notable feature in this building is the shape of the arches – there is a slight drop, or flatness, in the curve towards the crown. It is indicative of the last stage before the development of the four-centered ‘Tudor’ arch of the Mughals.

17.3.3 Architecture under Akbar

Akbar’s reign can be understood as the formative period of Mughal architecture. It represents the finest example of the fusion of Indo-Islamic architecture.

Structural Form

The architecture of the reign of Akbar represents encouragement of the indigenous techniques and a selective use of the experiences of other countries. The chief elements of the style of architecture that evolved under Akbar’s patronage can be listed thus:

a) red sandstone was used as the main building material,
b) widespread use of the trabeate construction,
c) the arches used mainly in decorative form rather than in structural form,
d) the dome was of the ‘Lodi’ type, sometimes built hollow but never technically of the true double order,
e) the shafts of the pillars were multifaceted and the capitals of these pillars invariably took the form of bracket supports, and
f) the decoration comprised of boldly carved or inlaid patterns complemented by brightly coloured patterns on the interiors.

Building Projects

Akbar’s building projects can be divided into two main groups, each representing a different phase. The first group comprised buildings of fort and a few palaces mainly at Agra, Allahabad and Lahore. The second group related basically to the construction of his new capital at Fathpur Sikri.

a) The First Phase

One of the earliest building projects of Akbar’s reign was the construction of a fort at Agra, conceived actually as a fortress-palace. Its massive walls and battlements convey an effect of great power. Inside the fort, Akbar had built many structures in the styles of Bengal and Gujarat. Except the Jahangiri Mahal, however, all the other structures were demolished by Shah Jahan as part of a later phase of remodelling. Today the Delhi Gate of the fort and Jahangiri Mahal are the only representative buildings of Akbar’s reign.

The Delhi Gate of Agra Fort probably represents Akbar’s earliest architectural effort. It formed the principal entrance to the fort. The architecture of the gate shows an originality signifying the start of a new era in the building art of India. The gate follows a simple plan; the different components are:

- a front consisting of two broad octagonal towers by the sides of a central archway,
• a back having arcaded terraces topped by *kiosks* and pinnacles, and
• an ornamentation consisting of patterns in white marble inlaid against the red sandstone background.

The Jahangiri Mahal was built by Akbar and is conceived as a robust building in red sandstone. It is the only surviving example in the fort of the domestic requirements of the ruler and is a fine specimen of fusion of the Hindu and Islamic building designs. It is planned in the form of an asymmetrical range of apartments. The facade on the eastern side has an entrance gateway leading to a domed hall with elaborately carved ceiling. As one crosses this hall one reaches a central open courtyard. On the north side of this courtyard is a pillared hall with a roof supported on *piers* and cross-beams with serpentine brackets. The southern side, too, has a similar hall. This symmetry is, however, broken on the east side by a set of chambers that lead to a portico facing the river Yamuna. The entire construction is mainly in red sandstone with the combination of beam and bracket forming its principal structural system.

The same style is manifested in the other palace-fortresses at Lahore and Allahabad. Only the fort at Ajmer represents a different class. Since it spearheaded the advancing frontier of the Empire, the walls of the fort were thickly doubled.

**b) The Second Phase**

The second phase of Akbar’s architectural scheme coincides with the conception and creation of a ceremonial capital for the Empire at Sikri, nearly 40 kms. west of Agra. The new capital was named Fatehpur. It is one of the most remarkable monuments in India. In its design and layout Fatehpur Sikri is a city where the public areas like the courtyards, *Diwan-i Am* and Jami Masjid form a coherent group around the private palace apartments. The city was built in a very short span of time (1571-1585) and as such does not follow any conscious overall plan. The buildings were sited to relate to each other and to their surroundings. An asymmetry seems to have been deliberately incorporated into the setting-out and design of the complex. All the buildings are in characteristic rich red sandstone, using traditional trabeate construction. The pillars, lintels, brackets, tiles and *posts* were cut from local rocks and assembled without the use of mortar.

The buildings in Fatehpur Sikri may be resolved into two categories: religious and secular character. The religious buildings comprise (a) the Jami Masjid; (b) the Buland Darwaza; and (c) the tomb of Shaikh Salim Chishti. The buildings of secular nature are more varied and thus numerous. These can be grouped under (a) palaces; (b) administrative buildings; and (c) structures of miscellaneous order. It is a curious fact that the religious buildings are invariably built in the arcuate style while in secular buildings dominates the trabeate order.

The Jami Masjid uses the typical plan of a mosque – a central courtyard, arcades on three sides and domed skyline. The western side has the prayer hall with three separate enclosed sanctuaries, each surmounted by a dome and linked by arcades. The usual entrance to the masjid is from the east where stands the structure of a big gateway projected in the form of a half hexagonal porch.

In 1596, the southern gateway was replaced by Akbar with a victory gate, the Buland Darwaza. It is constructed in red and yellow sandstone with white marble inlay outlining the span of the arches. The loftiness of the structure is enhanced by a flight of steps on the outside. The entrance has been formed by a piercing huge central arch which is crowned by an array of domed kiosks. The Buland Darwaza was built to commemorate Akbar’s conquest of Gujarat in 1573.
The tomb of Salim Chishti stands in the courtyard of the Jami Masjid in the north-western quarter. It is an all architectural masterpiece as it exhibits one of the finest specimens of marble work in India. The structure was completed in 1581 and was originally faced only partly in marble. The serpentine brackets supporting the eaves and the carved lattice screens are remarkable features of the structure.

The palace complex in Fathpur Sikri comprises a number of apartments and chambers. The largest of these buildings is known as the Jodh Bai Palace. The palace is massive and austere in character. The wall outside is plain with principal buildings attached to inner side, all facing an interior courtyard. On the north side is an arched passage and a balcony. There are rooms in the upper storey in the north and south wings. They have ribbed roofs covered with bright blue glazed tiles from Multan.

A unique building of the palace complex is the Panch Mahal, a five storeyed structure, located south-east of the Diwan-i Khas. The size of the five storeys successively diminish as one goes upwards. At the top is a small domed kiosk. Some of the sides in this building were originally enclosed by screens of red sandstone. But none remain intact now. An interesting feature is that the columns on which the five stories have been raised are all dissimilar in design.

Of the administrative buildings, undoubtedly the most distinctive is the Diwan-i Khas. The plan of this building is in the form of a rectangle and is in two storeys from outside. It has flat terraced roof with pillared domed kiosks rising above each corner. Inside, there is a magnificent carved column in the center, having a huge bracket capital supporting a circular stone platform. From this platform radiate four railed ‘bridges’ along catch diagonal of the hall to connect the galleries surrounding the upper portion of the hall. The main architectural object in this interior is the central column. The shaft is variously patterned and branches out, at the top, into a series of closely set volute and pendulous brackets which support the central platform.

Another notable building of the same category is the Diwan-i Am. It is a spacious rectangular courtyard surrounded by colonnades. The Emperor’s platform is towards the western end. It is a projecting structure with a pitched stone roof having five equal openings. The platform is in three parts, the center probably used by the Emperor and separated from the other two sides by fine stone screens pierced with geometric patterns.

Buildings of miscellaneous character are scattered all over the city complex:

i) Two caravan sarais, one located inside the Agra Gate, immediately to the right; and the other, the larger structure, is outside the Hathi Pol on the left side;

ii) Karkhana building located between the Diwan-i-Am and Naubat Khana, having a series of brick domes of radiating rather than horizontal courses; and

iii) The water-works, opposite the caravan sarai near Hathi Pol, comprising a single deep baoli flanked by two chambers in which a device was used to raise water for distribution in the city.
Check Your Progress-3

1. Match the following:
   i) Ram Bagh and Zahra Bagh               a) Hamida Bano Begum
   ii) Humayun’s tomb                        b) Tomb of Sher Shah
   iii) Sasaram                               c) Sher Shah
   iv) Purana Qila                          d) Babur

2) Discuss the characteristic features of Humayun’s tomb in 60 words.

3) Tick mark right (✓) and wrong (✗) against the following statements:
   i) Akbar used white marble as the building material in most of his buildings. (✓)
   ii) Akbar’s buildings never used double dome. (✗)
   iii) Akbar’s architecture is a combination of trabeate and arcuate styles. (✓)
   iv) Akbar used corbelling to cover the spaces. (✗)

4) Write a note on the important secular buildings at Fathpur Sikri.

5) Name the last of the religious buildings at Fathpur Sikri.

17.3.4 Architecture under Jahangir and Shah Jahan

Akbar’s death in 1605 did in no way hamper the development of a distinctive Mughal architecture under his successors. A secure empire and enormous wealth in legacy, in fact, permitted both Jahangir and Shah Jahan to pursue interest in the visual arts.

New Features

In the sphere of the building art, Jahangir and Shah Jahan’s reigns were an age of marble. The place of red sandstones was soon taken over by marble in its most refined form. This dictated significant stylistic changes which have been listed below:

a) The arch adopted a distinctive form with foliated curves, usually with nine cusps,
b) Marble arcades of **engrailed arches** became a common feature,

c) The dome developed a bulbous form with stifled neck. Double domes became very common,

d) Inlaid patterns in coloured stones became the dominant decorative form, and

e) In the buildings, from the latter half of the Jahangir’s reign, a new device of inlay decoration called **pietra dura** was adopted. In this method, semi-precious stones such as lapis lazuli, onyx, jasper, topaz and cornelian were embedded in the marble in graceful foliations.

**Major Buildings**

The account of the major buildings of this period begins with a remarkable structure, i.e., the tomb of Akbar, located at Sikandra, eight kilometers from Agra on Delhi road. It was designed by Akbar himself and begun in his own lifetime but remained incomplete at the time of his death. Subsequently, it was completed by Jahangir with modifications in the original design. As it stands today, the entire complex is a curious mix of the architectural schemes of both Akbar and Jahangir.

The scheme of this complex envisages the location of tomb in the midst of an enclosed garden with gateway in the centre of each side of the enclosing wall.

The tomb building in the center is a square structure built up in three storeys. The first storey is in fact an arcaded platform making the basement. Within the platform, vaulted cells surrounded the mortuary chamber and a narrow inclined corridor in the south leads to the grave. The middle portion is in three tiers of red sandstone trabeate pavilions. The second storey, of white marble in contrast to the red sandstone elsewhere, has an open court surrounded by colonnades with screens. The tomb is linked by **causeways** and canals to the gateways in the enclosure wall. But it is the one in the south which provides the only entrance, the other three being false gateways added for symmetry.

The southern gateway is a two-storey structure with circular minarets of white marble rising above the corners. The entire structure of the gateway is ornamented with painted stucco-coloured stone and marble inlay. Interestingly, the decorative motifs include, besides the traditional floral designs, arabesques and calligraphy, *gaja* (the elephant), *hamsa* (the swan), *padma* (the lotus), *swastika*, and *chakra*.

The architectural importance of Akbar’s tomb at Sikandra can be gauged from the fact that several mausoleums built subsequently reflect the influence of this structure to varying degree. Particular mention may be made of the tomb of Jahangir at Shahdara near Lahore and that of Nur Jahan’s father Mirza Ghiyas Beg at Agra.

The tomb of Itimadud Daula, built in 1622-1628 by Nur Jahan on the grave of her father Mirza Ghiyas Beg marks a change in architectural style from Akbar to Jahangir and Shah Jahan. The transition from the robustness of Akbar’s buildings to a more sensuous architecture of the later period is evident in the conception of this structure.

The tomb is a square structure raised on a low platform. There are four octagonal minarets, at each corner, with domed roofs. The central chamber is surrounded by a verandah enclosed with beautiful marble tracery. The main tomb is built in white marble and is **embellished** with mosaics and **pietra dura**. The central chamber contains the yellow marble tomb of Itimadud Daula and his wife. The side rooms are decorated with painted floral motifs. Four red sandstone gateways enclosing a square garden provide a splendid foil for the white marble tomb at its center.
It should be noted here that Jahangir was a much greater patron of the art of painting. His love of flowers and animals, as reflected in the miniature painting of his period, made him a great lover of the art of laying out gardens rather than building huge monuments. Some of the famous Mughal gardens of Kashmir such as the Shalimar Bagh and the Nishat Bagh stand as testimony to Jahangir’s passion.

In contrast to Jahangir, his son and successor Shah Jahan was a prolific builder. His reign was marked by extensive architectural works, in his favorite building material – the marble. Some of these were:

a) the palace-forts, e.g. the Lal Qila at Delhi,
b) the mosques, e.g. the Moti Masjid in the Agra Fort and the Jami Masjid at Delhi, and
c) the garden-tombs, e.g., the Taj Mahal.

We shall describe here only the more important and representative buildings of Shah Jahan’s reign: Lal Qila and Taj Mahal.

The Lal Qila is a regular rectangle with the north wall following the old course of the Yamuna river. There are two gate-ways – the Delhi Gate and Lahore Gate, and massive round bastions at regular intervals along the wall. The gates are flanked by octagonal towers with blind arcades and topped by cupolas. A moat runs all along the fort wall except the river side. Inside, there are several notable buildings of which particular mention may be made of Diwan-i Am, Diwan-i Khas and Rang Mahal. The Diwan-i Am and Rang Mahal are arcaded pavilions with sandstone columns in pairs, plastered with powdered marble. In the eastern wall of the Diwan-i Am is built the throne platform for the Emperor having curved corniced roof in the style of the Bengal architecture. Behind this structure on the eastern side is located the Rang Mahal fronted by an open courtyard. Further north, in alignment with the Rang Mahal is the Diwan-i Khas. All of these buildings have floral decorations on the walls, columns and piers.

In the Moti Masjid in the Agra Fort, Shah Jahan made experiment with an alternative scheme – an open arcaded prayer hall. Moreover, in this mosque the designer has also dispensed with the minarets. In their place, chhatris have been used on all four corners of the prayer hall. There are three bulbous domes rising over a cusped arcade. The entire building has been built in white marble with black marble calligraphy, heightening the elegance of the structure.

The Jami Masjid at Delhi is an extended and larger version of the Jami Masjid at Fathpuri Sikri and this becomes the largest building of its kind in India. It is built on a raised platfrom surrounded by arcades that have been left open on both sides. The building material used here is red sandstone with white marble for revetments and for inlaying the frames of panels.

The Taj Mahal is undoubtedly Shah Jahan’s grandest and most well known project. The construction work began in 1632, and most of it was completed by the year 1643. The plan of the complex is rectangle with high enclosure wall and a lofty entrance gateway in the middle of the southern side. There are octagonal pavilions, six in all, at the corners and one each in the eastern and western sides. The main building of the Taj stands on a high marble platform at the northern end of the enclosure. To the west of this structure is a mosque with a replica on the east side retaining the effect of symmetry.

The Taj Mahal is a square building with deep alcove recesses in each side and its four corners bevelled to form an octagon. Above this structure rises a beautiful
Religion and Culture

bulbous dome topped with an inverted lotus finial and a metallic pinnacle. At the four corners of the platform rise four circular minarets capped with pillared cupolas. The interior resolves itself into a central hall with subsidiary chambers in the angles, all connected by radiating passages. The ceiling of the main hall is a semi-circular vault forming the inner shell of the double dome. The decorative features of the building consist of calligraphy and inlay work in the exterior and pietra dura in the interior. Marble, the main building material, is of the finest quality brought from Makrana quarries near Jodhpur. The garden in front of the main structure is divided into four quadrants with two canals running across, forming the quadrants. The cenotaph in the main hall was enclosed originally with a screen in golden tracery. But it was later replaced by Aurangzeb with a marble screen.

17.3.5 The Final Phase

This section is divided into two Sub-sections. The first one deals with the building activities undertaken during the reign of Aurangzeb; and the second tells us about the buildings of the post-Aurangzeb period.

Buildings of Aurangzeb

Aurangzeb had none of his father’s passion for architecture. Under him, the generous encouragement given by his predecessors to the arts was almost withdrawn. The architectural works during the reign of Aurangzeb were less numerous and of a lower standard than those executed under any previous Mughal emperor. In Delhi itself, the capital city of the empire, very few buildings are associated with his name. The major buildings include the mausoleum of his wife Rabia ud Dauran in Aurangabad, the Badshahi Masjid in Lahore and the Moti Masjid at Lal Qila, Delhi. The Badshahi Masjid is comparable to the Delhi one in size and architectural composition. It has a vast court, a free standing prayer hall and minarets at each comer of the hall. There are four smaller minarets at each angle of the sanctuary. The cloisters run on the both sides with arched entrances at regular intervals. There is only one portal. The building material is red sandstone with the use of white marble as a relief to the red sandstone. Atop the prayer hall, three bulbous domes in white marble rise beautifully.

The other important building of this period is the Moti Masjid in the Lal Qila, Delhi. The marble used in its construction is of a very fine quality. The plan is similar to the Moti Masjid built by Shah Jahan in Agra fort; only the curves are more prominent. The three bulbous domes cover the prayer hall which is designed in the form of three cupolas in same alignment.

The mausoleum of his wife at Aurangabad, is an attempt at emulating the Taj Mahal. But a serious miscalculation on the part of Aurangzeb’s architects in providing the corners of the mausoleum, too, with minarets upsets the harmony of the entire building. These minarets, which are superfluous in the overall scheme of the building, are the only major deviation in copy from the original scheme of the Taj Mahal.

The Safdar Jang’s Tomb

After Aurangzeb’s death in 1707, the collapse of the empire was only a matter of time. The few buildings that were built during the first half of the 18th century amply testify the decadent conditions that ensued.

The Safdar Jang’s tomb at Delhi is the most important building of this period. It is located amidst a large garden and copies the plan of the Taj Mahal in the same manner as was done in the Rabia ud Dauran’s tomb. One major change in the
design, however, is that the minarets rise as an adjunct to the main building and not as independent structures. The main building stands on an arcaded platform. It is double storey and is covered by a large and almost spherical dome. The minarets rise as turrets and are topped by domed kiosks. The building is in red sandstone with marble panelling. The cusps of the arches are less curved, but synchronize well with the overall dimensions of the building.

Check Your Progress-4

1) Mark right (✓) and wrong (✗) against the following statements:

The characteristic feature of Jahangir and Shah Jahan’s architecture is:

i) Red sandstone is replaced by marble as building material. ( ✓ )

ii) Use of multi-foliated curves in arches. (    )

iii) Double dome replaced by the single one. (    )

iv) Inlay work is replaced by fine carvings and geometrical designs. (    )

v) Introduction of pietra dura. (    )

2) Write a note on the architecture of the Taj Mahal.

......................................................................................................................

.....................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................

3) Discuss the architectural activities during Aurangzeb’s reign.

......................................................................................................................

.....................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................

4) Write a note on the Safdar Jang’s tomb.

......................................................................................................................

.....................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................

17.4 Painting Under Delhi Sultanate

In this Section we will discuss the development of different styles of paintings during the Sultanate and the Mughal periods.

The history of painting in the Sultanate period is obscure compared with its architecture. This is primarily due to the non-availability of any surviving specimens for at least the first hundred years of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate.

Equally surprising is the absence of illuminated books, an art carried to supreme height in the Islamic world by 1200. However, the researches during the last 20-25 years have unearthed new and some crucial evidence, forcing the scholars to change their opinion radically. Not only book illumination but murals too were executed during the Sultanate period. The art of painting may thus be divided
into the following three categories each of which will be discussed separately: a) Murals; b) Quranic calligraphy; and c) Manuscript illustration.

17.4.1 Literary Evidence for Murals

The closest view that one may have of the murals as a flourishing art form during the rule of the Delhi Sultanate is through a large number of literary references occurring in the chronicles of this period. These have been compiled and analyzed by Simon Digby (1967).

The earliest reference to murals in the Sultanate period is in a qasida (Tabaqat-i Nasiri) in praise of Iltutmish, on the occasion of the gift of Khila’i from the Caliph in 1228. The verses in this composition make it clear that human or animal figures were depicted upon the spandrels of the main arch raised to welcome the envoy of the Caliph.

The most important single reference to painting in the Delhi Sultanate occurs in the context of un-Islamic observances of earlier rulers inviting a ban by Firuz Tughlaq (Tarikh-i Firuzshahi by Afif). It indicates the existence of a continuous tradition of figural painting on the walls of the palaces of Delhi, which was sought to be banned by Firuz Tughlaq.

This tradition of painting was not confined to the murals alone. In a reference relating to the entertainment parties thrown by Qutbuddin Mubarak Khalji (1316-20), mention is made of a profusely painted open-sided tent: the decorations would therefore appear to be on painted cloth (Nuh Siphrr by Amir Khusrau).

In contrast, there did survive a tradition of wall painting in the houses of the common people, especially the non-Muslims. It is testified by:

- a stanza from a 14th century Hindi poem Chandayan written by Maulana Daud in 1379-80, which describes the painted decoration of the upper rooms of the house where Chanda, the leading lady of this poem, sleeps with her female companions.
- an actual painting from one of the illustrated manuscripts of this poem belonging to the 15th century and showing the bedchamber of Chanda, on the walls of which are painted scenes from the Ramayana.

17.4.2 The Quranic Calligraphy

Calligraphy was the most revered art in the Islamic world and was used as a decorative feature both on stone and on paper. In the hierarchy of craftsmen, a calligrapher was placed above the illuminator and painter. However, the calligraphy of the Quran became one of the foremost forms of book art, where copies of Quran were produced on a majestic and expansive scale.

The earliest known copy of the Quran is dated 1399. It was calligraphed at Gwalior, and has a variety of ornamental motifs, derived both from Iranian and Indian sources. The geometrical frontispiece of this manuscript seems to be in the Sultanate style and suggests the following as prominent features of the Delhi ateliers in the 14th century:

- The work produced here is in line with the Iranian tradition.
- The script used in the headings and inscriptive panels of the Quran is invariably Kufi.
- The illumination of geometrical frontispieces was the speciality of this school.
The state of book-art in the 15th century, under the Saiyyid and Lodi dynasties, remained a sad shadow of its former self as it became incapable of supporting artistic endeavor on a large scale. The initiative seems to have been wrested by provincial dynasties.

17.4.3 Manuscript Illustration

Manuscript illustration in the Sultanate period is a hotly debated and disputed subject. There is very little concurrence among scholars on terminology and provenance. Thus, deciding the traits of Sultanate manuscript illustrations is a cumbersome job. On the contrary, though a good number of illustrated manuscripts in Persian and Awadhi, from the period between 1400 and the advent of the Mughals, are now known some of these manuscripts appear to have been produced at the provincial courts. However, there is a distinct, although small, group of manuscripts which was probably not connected with any court. They seem to have been produced for patrons, presumably independent but located somewhere in the Sultanate. They have sometimes been termed as representing a ‘bourgeois’ group and are attributable to the period 1450-1500. Two of these manuscripts forming the ‘bourgeois’ group are Hamzanama and Chandayan.

Check Your Progress-5

1) Describe the tradition of wall-painting in the Delhi Sultanate.

2) When and where was the earliest known copy of Quran made?

3) Define the ‘bourgeois’ group of paintings.

17.5 MUGHAL PAINTINGS

The 16th century, especially its second half, marks a watershed in the development of the art of painting in India. Akbar gave liberal patronage to the growth of fine arts during his rule. His successors also showed great interest in these arts, so that by the end of the 17th century painting in the Mughal court reached unparalleled height.

Simultaneously, in the Deccan, was evolving another great tradition of painting, somewhat independent of the Mughal influence. Later, in the 18th century, the patronage to painting shifted from the Mughal court to regional kingdoms, such as Rajasthan and Punjab.
In this Section, our focus will be on the pre-Mughal and Mughal developments in the field of painting rather than on the regional styles of painting.

17.5.1 Antecedents: Painting in the Fifteenth Century

In this Section we will discuss the development of painting in the pre-Mughal period.

Until recently it was believed that the art of painting did not flourish during the rule of the Delhi Sultans and that the illuminated manuscripts of the Mughals were, in fact a revival of painting after a lapse of several centuries from the end of the 10th century. Lately, however, enough evidence has come to light suggesting the existence of:

- a lively tradition of murals and painted cloth during the 13th and 14th centuries (Sub-section 17.4.1),
- a simultaneous tradition of the Qur’anic calligraphy, lasting upto the end of the 14th century (Sub-section 17.4.2),
- a tradition of illustrated Persian and Awadhi manuscripts, originating probably at the beginning of the 15th century (Sub-section 17.4.3).

Of this last tradition, a notable number of illustrated manuscripts from the period between the 15th and 16th century have become known. Some of these works were commissioned by independent patrons in the Sultanate located outside the court. From the former category mention may be made of:

a) the Bostan of S’adi, illustrated by the artist Hajji Mahmud, and
b) Ni’mat Nama (a book on cookery)
c) Miftah-al Fuzala by Muhammed Shadiabadi

These manuscripts were illustrated at Mandu (Malwa) during the second half of the 15th century. A fine example of the latter category is the illustrated manuscript of Laur Chanda (in Awadhi) executed for a patron seemingly not related with the court.

It is, thus, evident that at the time of the advent of the Mughals in India there did exist a live tradition of painting focussed mainly on illuminating manuscripts, made possible by the use of paper as the new material.

17.5.2 Painting Under Early Mughals

Babur, the founder of Mughal rule in India (1526), ruled for four years only. He was not able to contribute anything to the growth of painting. His successor Humayun was mostly engaged in containing his rivals till he was forced out of India by Sher Shah in 1540. It was, however, during his refuge at the court of Shah Tahmasp of Persia that Humayun acquired love for the art of painting. Humayun was so influenced by the art practiced there that he commissioned Mir Syed Ali and Khwaja Abdus Samad, two Persian masters, to illustrate manuscripts for him. These two painters joined Humayun’s entourage on his triumphant return to India.

Humayun’s contribution to the evolution of Mughal paintings is very important. There are several important features of the Mughal School which seem to have originated in the paintings done during Humayun’s period. An important painting from Humayun’s period is titled ‘Princes of the House of Timur’ and dated c. 1550. It has been executed on cloth, quite large in size, measuring approximately 1.15metre square. Such a large format is unusual even for paintings in Persia, and it has been suggested that it probably relates to the Mongol tradition of having paintings in their tents.
17.5.3 Evolution of the Mughal School Under Akbar

The emergence of the Mughal School of painting as distinct from all other styles was mainly due to the deep interest Akbar took in the promotion of this art.

**Akbar’s views on the Art of Painting**

Drawing the likeness of anything is called *tasvir*. His majesty, from his earliest youth, has shown a great predilection for this art, and gives it every encouragement, as he looks upon it as a means, both of study and amusement. Hence, the art flourishes and has obtained great reputation. The works of all painters are weekly laid before by the *daroghas* and the clerks; he then confers rewards according to excellence of workmanship, or increases the monthly salaries. Much progress was made in the commodities required for painters, and the correct prices of such articles were carefully ascertained. The mixture of colours has especially been improved. The pictures thus received a hitherto unknown finish. Most excellent painters are now to be found, and masterpieces, worthy of a Bihzad, may be placed at the side of the wonderful works of the European painters who have attained world-wide fame. The minuteness in detail, the general finish, the boldness of execution, etc., now observed in pictures, are incomparable; even inanimate objects look as if they had life. More than a hundred painters have become famous masters of the art, whilst the number of those who approach perfection, or of those who are middling, is very large. This is especially true of the Hindus; their pictures surpass our conception of things. Few, indeed, in the whole world are found equal to them.

*Source: Abul Fazl, Ain-i Akbari*

**Establishment of the Royal Atelier**

The first major project undertaken during Akbar’s regime was that of illustrating the *Hamza Nama*. It began in 1562 for which several artists were employed at the court. The place where the painters worked was known as *Tasvir Khana*. Although Abul Fazl enumerates the names of only seventeen artists, we now know that the number was very large. S.P. Verma (1978) has prepared a list of 225 artists who worked at Akbar’s *atelier*. These artists belonged to different places, but among them the majority were Hindus. Interestingly, several low caste people, due primarily to their artistic skill, were also raised to the status of royal artist. The case of Daswant, who was the son of a Kahar (palki-bearer), may be especially cited. The painters were assisted by a set of *gilders*, line-drawers and pagers. The artists were salaried employees. S.P. Verma opines that the lowest paid worker in the atelier received an amount between 600 to 1200 *dams* (40 *dams* = one *rupaya*).

There are paintings which bear the names of two artists. Sometimes even three artists worked on a single painting. On one painting from *Akbarnama* four artists have worked. The painting was thus a collaborative team work. The *sketching* of figures and colouring were done by a team of two different artists. In cases where three artists have worked the outlining was done by one artist, the other artist coloured the faces and a third one coloured the remaining figure. It is however not known to us as to how was such a complex arrangement worked out. Probably in such a team work the sketching and colouring were done by separate artists.

As has been noted above, the atelier was supervised by *daroghas* with the assistance of clerks. They were responsible for making materials of painting easily available to the artists and to oversee the progress of their work. They also arranged for periodical presentation of the artists’ works before the Emperor.

**Style and Technique**

The illustration done at Akbar’s court are considered as representative works of the Mughal Art. Notably, however, in these paintings, there is evident a gradual
Religion and Culture

Evolution in the style and technique. The illustrations of the early phase are clearly influenced by the Persian tradition, the identifying features of which are listed below:

- symmetrical compositions,
- restricted movement of figures,
- fineness of the lines of drawings,
- flat depiction of architectural columns, and
- profuse embellishment of buildings in the manner of jewels.

Later, the paintings acquired a distinctive character of their own. They assumed a more eclectic character composed mainly of the Persian and Indian traditions with touches of European influence.

**Distinctive Features**

The Mughal style became recognizable within a span of fifteen years since the setting up of royal atelier under Akbar. In the next decade or so, i.e. by about 1590 it acquired a distinctive form which was marked by:

- naturalism and rhythm,
- clothing objects of daily use assuming Indian forms,
- picture space having subsidiary scenes set in background,
- extraordinary vigor of action and violent movement, and
- luxuriant depiction of foliage and brilliant blossoms.

It should be emphasized here that the identity of the Mughal paintings under Akbar was as much made of an original style as a fusion of the Persian and Indian traditions. Specific mention may be made here of the depiction of action and movement which is not to be found in either the pre-Mughal art of India or the art of Persia (Qaisar and Verma, 1993).

Painting under Akbar’s period distinguishes itself as a tradition from Persian painting as well as from Indian styles particularly by the presence of historical subject matter. The two most commonly used themes are:

- daily events of the court, and
- portraits of leading personalities.

While portrait painting was known in Persia, painting as a chronicle of actual events was certainly a new emphasis. Painters used familiar formulas for hunting or battle scenes regardless of the fact that the literacy reference for the scene was historical or purely imaginary. Moreover, specific events illustrated are frequently reworking of scenes recording quite different events in the earliest known historical manuscript of this period, for instance the Timur Nama of about 1580 CE. Possibly, painters conceived scenes according to a repertoire of types e.g. the seize of a fortress, crossing a river, an audience or battle scene. In the working of whole volumes such as the Akbar Nama, the artistst seem to have reworked or adapted these compositional types. Painters usually crated new compositions only when no prototypes existed, and only a few artists were capable of such invention.

We have listed below, in chronological order famous illustrated manuscripts of this period:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Hamzanama</em></td>
<td>c. 1562-1580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Anwar-i Suhaili</em></td>
<td>1570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tutinama</em></td>
<td>c. 1570-1580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tarikh-i Khandan-i Timuriya</em></td>
<td>c. 1570-1590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Baburnama</em></td>
<td>c. 1570-1590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Akbarnama</em></td>
<td>c. 1570-1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tarikh-i Alfi</em></td>
<td>c. 1570-1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Razmnama</em></td>
<td>1582</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check Your Progress-6

1) Write a note in 50 words on the art of painting under the early Mughals.

2) How did the concept of teamwork operate in the Royal Atelier?

3) List four distinctive features of Mughal School of painting.

17.5.4 Developments under Jahangir and Shahjahan

During the reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan, Mughal painting reached its zenith. Jahangir took a deep interest in painting even as a prince. He maintained his own studio apart from Akbar’s large atelier. Jahangir’s preference was for paintings of hunting scenes, birds and flowers. He also continued the tradition of portraiture. Under Shahjahan, the colours of the paintings became more decorative and gold was more frequently used for embellishment. In the following Sub-sections, we shall study the introduction of new styles and thematic variations in Mughal paintings during Jahangir and Shahjahan’s reign.

Introduction of New Styles

In the period of Jahangir’s rule (1605-27), manuscripts became less important than individual pictures. Milo Cleveland Beach (1992) is of the opinion that Jahangir, with his personal involvement, may have functioned effectively as the head of the royal studio. Therefore, artistic decisions were made by the Emperor himself consequently introducing his own stylistic preferences in the paintings. Two important new elements in the style of Mughal painting during the first half of the 17th century have been identified as below:
Jahangir’s paintings seem to **accentuate** a formalist style, i.e., making the work realistic and preferring the precise recording of contemporary reality.

The paintings of this period have broad margins which are gorgeously decorated with the depiction of flora and faces of human figures, and designs from plant motifs.

**Thematic Variations**

Jahangir was a keen naturalist. Whenever he came across a strange animal or bird, his artists painted the same immediately. We have paintings of birds and animals in the most realistic fashion.

Shah Jahan was a great patron of architecture, but he did not neglect painting. Under him, the previous tradition of doing portraits, preparing albums, and, illustrating books was continued. Additionally, we find the paintings depicting charming love scenes and portraits of female members. Another important theme chosen for painting was super imposition of animals and the scenes of performing acrobats.

**17.5.5 The Final Phase**

During Aurangzeb’s regime, who succeeded Shahjahan, the arts were ignored. Painting did not stop altogether, though it lost the patronage of the Emperor and became confined to the studios of the nobles. There exist some commissioned portraits of the nobles and their relations from the courts of the Rajput principalities. Large number of *karkhana* records (on paintings) are located in the Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner. There also exist a few interesting pictures of the emperor himself during his campaigns. The skill of the painters is evident, though the paintings are more formal and seem to have lost their earlier liveliness.

Later, under Muhammed Shah (1719-48), interest got renewed in depicting pleasure loving scenes. But by this time many of the painters of imperial studio had begun migrating to provincial courts. The loss of the Mughals, thus, was the gain of the provincial styles.

**17.5.6 European Impact on Mughal Painting**

In its later phase, specially during the 17th century, the Mughal painting was influenced by the European art. Some of the themes of European art were incorporated by Mughal painters and they also adopted a few of the techniques of European artists. According to A.J. Qaisar (1982) a large number of European paintings were either copied or adapted or even reinterpreted, sometimes, by Mughal painters. At the same time many original prints from Europe were collected and preserved in the albums of Jahangir and Dara Shikoh and several Mughal nobles.

The contact Mughal court painters had with European paintings prompted them initially to make exact copies in their own hands. Such imitations, as noted by contemporary European travellers, were impeccably done. But Mughal painters also made experiments by making new paintings on the subjects chosen from European paintings.

One important feature that becomes noticeable in some Mughal paintings is the attempt to make them three dimensional. Clearly it speaks of the impact of European technique. Another European convention acceptable to the Mughal painters was the effect of light and shade, mostly utilized in night scenes. The depiction of ‘halos’, winged angles and roaring clouds in Mughal paintings was again under the influence of European paintings. One important technique – that
of oil painting from Europe—somewhat did not attract the Mughals. There is no work from this period that was executed in oil.

**Check Your Progress-7**

1) What important thematic variations become noticeable in Mughal painting in the 17th century?

2) Name two members of Mughal ruling class who made collections of European paintings in their albums.

3) Which European motifs were incorporated by Mughal painters?

---

**17.6 SUMMARY**

**Architecture**

On the basis of the features discussed above, it is evident that the development of art and architecture in the Delhi Sultanate followed an uneven pattern. While growth of architecture occupied paramount position, other art forms like painting did not get equal attention. Individual initiative, a full-blooded support for their growth is found missing. Much of the artistic impulse came to be expressed in architecture enriching it both structurally and stylistically. It also gave rise to a rich heritage of civic buildings—public buildings and public works.

Informed interest in these constructions is relatively recent, but they must claim a place in any comprehensive survey of Indo-Islamic architecture.

- Much of this architecture appears within the urban setting, the main building types being mosques (*maṣjid*), tombs (*maqbara*), palace-citadels as well as structures of public utility, such as *sarais*, bridges, step-wells, and water reservoirs.

- There are no specific architectural forms for specific functions. Most can be adopted for a variety of purposes. As an illustration of this feature one could think of the four-cloistered courtyard structure which served equally well as palace, mosque, *sarai* and *madrasa*.

- An important element of this architecture is the emphasis on the enclosed space generally defined by walls, arcades and vault.
The decoration in architecture is mostly of a kind which suggests spaces existing beyond the decorative frames, aectonic in nature. Its chief elements are arabesque, geometry and foliation.

Babur and Humayun were too busy to tackle the political problems to pay much attention to the building activities. However, Babur himself was a deep lover of gardens and he laid out a number of gardens in India during the short span of his reign. The main Mughal architectural activities took place under Akbar. His buildings are mostly of red sandstone. Akbar’s buildings show a fine blend of trabeate and arcuate forms. Jahangir was more interested in paintings rather than architecture. However, his interest in paintings, animals and floral designs affected the contemporary architecture as well and a new decorative style – pietra-dura – was introduced during his reign. During Shah Jahan’s reign the Mughal architecture reached its zenith with the predominant use of marble. Shah Jahan immortalized the Taj Mahal, a pure white marble structure. Its double domes, minarets, multi-foliated arches, etc. – all speak of the perfection and the climax. His successor, Aurangzeb, had little time for building activities, and very few buildings were, therefore, constructed during his reign. The post-Aurangzeb’s period can also be termed as a period of decline. Owing to disturbed political scenario later, the Mughal Emperors could hardly pay any attention to huge building projects. The only monument of note that can be identified is the Safdar Jang’s tomb at Delhi.

**Painting**

A lively tradition of wall-painting deriving inspiration from the Ghazanavid kingdom survived in Delhi Sultanate upto at least 1350. It had a wide repertory, the subjects depicted ranging from the themes of the Mahabharat and Ramayana down to popular folktales. Another important tradition that grew during this period was of illuminated manuscripts. But it was independent of court patronage and for that reason the manuscripts have been termed as ‘bourgeois’. Manuscript illustration and the art of writing the Quran flourished only till Timur’s invasion. The influence of Iranian School was quite prominent. This tradition died soon after 1398 – the year of the sack of Delhi. But it sprouted and flourished in the provincial courts.

- A tradition of figural painting in the form of murals and painted cloth during the 13th and 14th centuries derived mainly from the Ghaznavid kingdom.
- A simultaneous tradition of the Quranic calligraphy in Kufi script which lasted upto 1398 – till Timur’s sack of Delhi. This kind of painting developed with the introduction of paper in India.
- Another tradition was that of illustrated Persian and Awadhi manuscripts originating probably at the beginning of the 15th century and growing independently of the imperial court.

In the last Section of the Unit, we have seen how painting came to prosper under the Mughals. The keyword in this development was eclecticism. Painting assimilated indigenous traditions as well as from Persia. In the 17th century another significant influence, that from Europe, made an impact on Mughal paintings.

### 17.7 KEYWORDS

**Architecture**

**Alcove**

A vaulted recess
| **Arcade** | A range of arches carrying a roof or other superstructure |
| **Arch** | A self-supporting structure made of bricks or of stone blocks and capable of carrying a superimposed load over an opening |
| **Baoli** | Step-well |
| **Batter** | A slight inward inclination of a wall from its base upwards |
| **Bay** | Deep recess |
| **Bevel** | A slopping surface |
| **Bracket** | A support projecting from a wall |
| **Cenotaph** | Commemorative building |
| **Centering** | A temporary support facilitating the construction of an arch |
| **Colonnade** | A row of columns |
| **Causeways** | Passage across water |
| **Cupola** | A domical roof over a polygonal space |
| **Dome** | A convex roof built over a square, octagonal or circular space in building |
| **Eaves** | The lower edge of a sloping roof, overhanging the face of the wall |
| **Engrailed arches** | Foliated arch |
| **Finial** | The top of a pinnacle |
| **Kiosk** | An open pavilion having roof supported by pillars |
| **Pier** | A mass of stone or brick which supports a vertical load |
| **Pietra Dura** | An ornamental mosaic of lapis lazuli, marble, etc. |
| **Post** | Long timber supporting vertical thrust of some part of a building |
| **Portal** | Frontage |
| **Spandrel** | Space between two adjacent arches |
| **Stucco** | Designing in plaster |
| **Trabeate** | An architectural form in which the main openings are made by beams supported on pillars |
| **Turrets** | Side minarets attached with the building |

**Painting**

| **Accentuate** | Intensify |
| **Atelier** | Workshop or studio of artists |
| **Calligraphy** | The art of decorative writing |
| **Embellish** | Beautify |
| **Gilder** | Artist marking with golden colour |
| **Mural** | Wall painting |
17.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1
1) See Section 17.2
2) See Sub-Section 17.2.1
3) See Sub-Section 17.2.1

Check Your Progress-2
1) (i) ✓; (ii) ×; (iii) ×
2) See Sub-section 17.2.2
3) See Sub-section 17.2.2 (i) Because of its inability to cover wide areas; (ii) They are battered; (iii) they use stone-rubble and plaster to cover the surfaces.
4) See Sub-section 17.2.2
5) See Sub-section 17.2.3

Check Your Progress-3
1) i) d; ii) a; iii) b; and iv) c
2) See Sub-section 17.3.1
3) i) ×; ii) ✓; iii) ✓; and iv) ×
4) See Sub-Section 17.3.3
5) See Sub-Section 17.3.3

Check Your Progress-4
1) i) ✓; ii) ✓; iii) ×; iv) ×; and v) ✓
2) See Sub-Section 17.3.4
3) See Sub-Section 17.3.5
4) See Sub-Section 17.3.5

Check Your Progress-5
1) See Sub-Section 17.4.1
2) See Sub-Section 17.4.2
3) See Sub-Section 17.4.3

Check Your Progress-6
1) See Sub-Section 17.5.2
2) See Sub-Section 17.5.3
3) See Sub-Section 17.5.3

Check Your Progress-7
1) See Sub-Section 17.5.4
2) See Sub-Section 17.5.6
3) See Sub-Section 17.5.6
17.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Beach, Milo Cleveland, (1992) Mughal and Rajput Paintings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Brown, Percy, (1942) Indian Architecture: Islamic Period (Bombay: D B Taraporevala Sons & Co.).


17.10 INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

Architecture of the Delhi Sultanate | CEC-UGC
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cv2kz6UaB5E

Mughal Paintings | CEC-UGC
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DEaI4Nearo&list=PLAPZM4wTYedULslZfqTwjRFstp_KjYX2&index=38

Talking History |14| New Delhi: The Capital City| Rajya Sabha TV
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axD6pVOWzD4