



Pakistan

The Making of Art

Akbar Naqvi



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For Sanya and Mariyam, my granddaughters, two years old, but my readers in their time.

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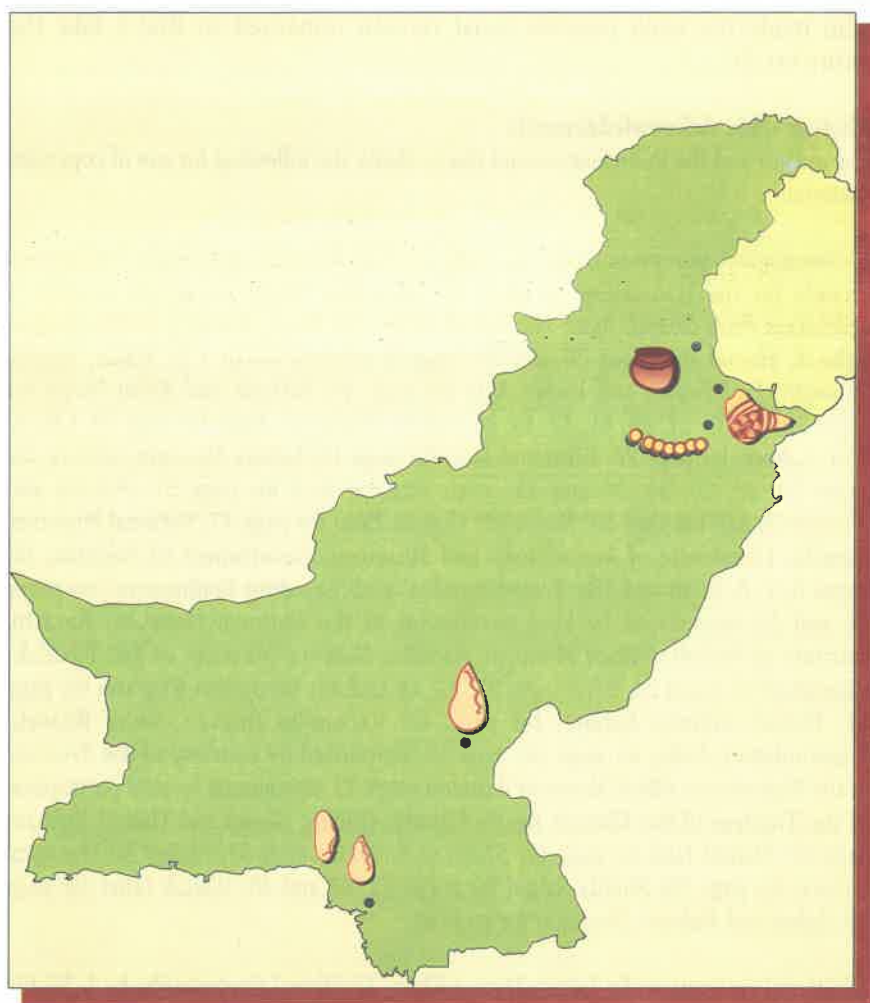


Fig. 1 Prehistoric sites in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.

Introduction

About 600,000 years ago, man was making stone tools in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. Women were also active with men, but we do not know how work was divided between them. In fact, most of the information we have on this period is based on conjecture as there were no written records in the modern sense. This was the early Stone Age when people lived in groups and roamed the Earth for food like berries, roots and the flesh of animals. There would be fights between groups over patches of land which had a better supply of food. People must have fought like animals, but as time passed they found that sticks and stones were much more useful as weapons. It was when human beings began to learn the uses of stone that they ceased to be animals. Historians call this first stage of development the Stone Age.

Tools were made more than 200,000 years ago on the banks of the Soan River near Islamabad. Jhelum District, the Salt Range, Rohri near Sukkur and the Drig Road area in Karachi (Fig.1) were other centres of toolmaking between 100,000 and 50,000 years ago. This industry flourished in the subcontinent from Karachi to the central Indian subcontinent. Hunting and war tools were shaped and polished for speed and accuracy. Stone axe-heads and spearheads were used to kill animals from safer distances. Axes and choppers, made in the subcontinent, were used for carving and skinning animals (Fig. 2). Men and women learned to clothe themselves with skins.

The principle of industrial design, called streamlining, which was used so long ago, has not changed in the manufacture of missiles today. It is also used in designing motor cars, computers and kitchenware.



Fig. 2 Stone tools.

Prehistoric Art

The First Artist

A giant step towards civilization, or the art of survival, occurred when humans became craftsmen, the maker of tools and images. Long before this, they had developed the ability to recognize animal forms in naturally-shaped small pieces of stone. Millions of years passed before they painted the bison. Walking down the beach at Hawksbay or Sandspit, you can also pick up works of art made by the elements—wind, water and the weather—in nature's studio. Prehistoric man became the collector of these 'found objects', which may have led to the carving and painting of objects in imitation of nature. The first human image to be carved on a rock was that of a woman who, scholars believe, was the mother goddess. It was through craft, that is, the skill of making objects of practical use, worship and knowledge, that people gradually came to understand nature and its ways, which could not be seen all the time nor controlled physically. Craft, art and science were the same in those days.

Written Language Evolves



It is believed that about 8,000 years ago, written language evolved from cave painting. In what is called the Neolithic or New Stone Age period, images of animals and men and women were made as signs. Hunters were shown chasing animals. Scenes of the kill were also depicted on cave walls. A woman was shown climbing a tree to steal honey from a beehive. The tree was a straight line and the woman's image a human sign (Fig. 3). The paintings and drawings on the walls were story-books, and people may have

Fig. 3 Woman stealing honey.

found it easier to follow the story through this picture-language. The ancient Egyptian language called hieroglyphics was a picture-language as is the modern Chinese.

Fire Discovered

Human civilization would not have changed from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age without the discovery of fire 300,000 years ago. People saw how lightning struck a tree, burnt forests and roasted animals. The clever man or woman among them saw its uses and learnt to make fire by rubbing dry sticks or pieces of stone against one another. Fire helped people ward off wild animals from their settlement, cook food, make bricks and smelt copper. This advancing technology marked the end of the Stone Age and the beginning of the Bronze Age, to which belonged our own Indus Valley Civilization.

The Wild Bear as Drawing Master

It is believed that the bear may have been the first drawing master. Bears like to sharpen their claws on the thick bark of trees and leave deep marks on them. Some Stone Age men and women tried to make marks with the sharp point of a bone or stone in imitation of the bear. The bear marks were taken to be signs of animal power, and it may have been believed that by doing what the bear did they acquired the secrets of the animal's strength. In due course, the line became the bison on cave walls, and abstract signs similar to that of the English 'V' and 'X' appeared with the picture of the animal. These signs were also carved on bones as decoration. More complex signs like the lozenge, the diamond and the whorl were eventually mastered by our first ancestors (Fig. 4).

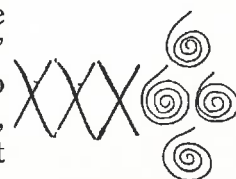


Fig. 4 Diamonds and whorls.

It is interesting that humans learnt to paint realistic pictures of animals from nature at the same time that abstract signs and geometric figures were made from the mind. The pictures were of real things from nature, while the signs indicated ideas which could not be seen. A sheet of musical score will show how the language of music is written in abstract signs (Fig. 5). Both pictures and signs appeared in cave



Fig. 5 A musical score.

paintings and, while the majority of people may have been filled with awe at the pictures of the bison, only a few may have read the other. From the print of a palm found on the clay coating of a cave, it appears that people were also fascinated by the hand which enabled them to do so many wonderful things. Those who made the pictures and signs, and explained them to others, may have been the first artist, priest, magician and scientist rolled into one person.

The Image of the Earth Mother

The first and most significant image of the human being from the Stone Age was that of a woman, symbolizing the Earth's power and fertility. She was very small in size and was carved on a rock face (Fig. 6). Scholars believe that she was worshipped as a mother goddess and may have been looked up to with more respect than man. If we think of the Stone Age tools and the painting of the bison as beautiful, the mother goddess was not. It seems that to the early artist she was the true image of life and this is what impressed him.



Fig. 6 Stone Age relief of a mother goddess.

The Bison as Food for Body and Spirit

The bison is by far the most famous image from the Stone Age. People hunted it for food and at the same time held it in awe. It was in northern Spain that a girl, who was exploring caves with her father, accidentally discovered the Altamira Cave. The cave was a picture gallery of animals which had lain buried for about 40,000 years. The world was

astonished to see that the bison was painted with such accuracy and deep feeling as to be one of the best works of contemporary art (Fig. 7). A similar cave painting of animals was discovered in Balochistan in 1997 (Fig. 8), proving that the age which produced the Altamira bison was



Fig. 7 Altamira bison.



Fig. 8 Balochistan cave painting.

widespread throughout the world. Some idea of the fearful bison can be had by watching a Pakistani bull when it is provoked to charge. It has not changed, nor has its temper, in all these years.

Scholars believe that the Altamira Cave may have been the first temple where people gathered to dance, chant and pray to the spirit of the animal. To this day, the Indian tribes of Canada and America claim animals as their ancestors or divine spirits.

As time passed, these early artists drew and painted group hunting scenes. Interest in fleeing animals and hunters chasing them gave rise to a new style which is very similar to children's art. Animals still looked natural, but their shapes were stretched and simplified to depict speed. Human figures were also simplified to show them in movement. It is obvious that similar pictures were used to say something about people and their environment in the coded language of signs. These pictures could be seen as the first-ever comic strip about people on dangerous and thrilling hunting trips. This led to the invention of the written language and may have taken millions of years.

The Indus Valley Civilization

The First 'Modern' City

The Indus Valley Civilization stretched from Pakistan to Central India. Mohenjo-daro, on the banks of the River Indus, and Harappa, situated on the Ravi, were the two capital cities of this empire (Fig. 9). A third city, as developed as these, was discovered in Kutch in western India about four years ago. The cities were built within huge, protective brick walls and planned like modern cities with efficient garbage collection, sewage, water supply systems and paved brick lanes and roads which crossed at right angles. Wheeled transport was also used for the first time in Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. In Sindhi, the word *Mohenjo-daro* means 'the mound of the dead'. This is how the huge earth mound, under which the city lay buried for thousands of years, was known to the villagers. Mohenjo-daro and Harappa were excavated in 1924. We know very little about the people, society and rulers of the Indus Valley Civilization. The small bust of what is known as the priest-king, found in Mohenjo-daro, suggests that the empire was ruled by someone like him. He wears a *chaddar* which is like the *ajrak* made to this day in the interior of Sindh. Little as we know about the



Fig. 9 Mohenjo-daro ruins with the remains of an ancient stupa.

Indus Valley Civilization, we do know that the people kept the city neat and clean and took ritual baths from wells and a large tank.

Hundreds of small and large cities were built with baked bricks within the empire. The land was thickly forested, and wood was used to fire bricks and other clay items. The soil of the Indus Valley was very fertile and Mohenjo-daro exported cotton to Sumeria and Egypt. It is suspected that the people who ruled Mohenjo-daro may have come from the west.

It has been said that Mohenjo-daro's decline was brought about by the cutting down of trees followed by a change of climate which affected the course of the Indus River. The abundant animals, typical of tropical forests, became extinct. The river also flooded the land from time to time. Mohenjo-daro and Harappa were finally said to have been destroyed any where between 1700 and 1500BC by the Aryans who settled in Punjab.

Clay Toys and Stone Seals

Terracotta figurines of bullocks and other animals, bullock carts and mother goddesses were produced in large numbers in Mohenjo-daro (Fig. 10). A ram made of copper was also found in Mohenjo-daro. But, by far, the major works of art and craft were the stamp-sized polished stone seals which were affixed on bales of cotton shipped abroad. Familiar

animals, or mythological ones, as well as a strange man sitting like a Hindu *sadhu*, were carved on the seals. The man on the seal wore a headgear with two horns on his head, and sat under the sacred *peepul* tree in *dhayana* (Fig. 11). He is thought to be a prototype of Shiva, the ancient hunter-god of the land, whom the Aryans accepted as a powerful divinity. There were the rhinoceros and the tiger, the humped bull and the unicorn, which is a horse with a single horn growing from its forehead (Fig. 12). The animals are very small when compared to the Altamira bison but look as real and vital even in miniature size. The seals also contained strange written characters which ran from right to left like Urdu (Fig. 13). Attempts have been made to read the script in India, Finland, Germany and the United States but without success.



Fig. 10 Terracotta figurines and a mother goddess statuette from Mohenjo-daro.



Fig. 11 Shiva seal.

Fig. 12 Unicorn seal.



Fig. 13 Writing on seals.



The Sculpture of Mohenjo-daro

A stone statuette of the priest-king (Fig. 14) and tiny bronze statues of two women dancers, not more than 7 to 9 inches in length, were excavated in Mohenjo-daro (Fig. 15). We know very little about the priest-king and the dancers. The peasants and the common folk of the land were dark and flat-nosed and the dancers may have been from among them. These people were the original inhabitants of the land, like the Dravidians of south India. The upper classes of Mohenjo-daro kept slaves and the dancers may have been slaves. It has also been said that they were of African origin and their people were brought from Abyssinia with which Mohenjo-daro had contacts. The priest-king, on the contrary, was fair, long-nosed and very superior in his bearing. He clearly came from a different race of people.



Fig. 14 Priest-king from Mohenjo-daro.



Fig. 15 Bronze statue of dancing girl from Mohenjo-daro.

One of the dancers, dug out from the house of a rich merchant, is the international star of Mohenjo-daran sculpture. Several men's heads and torsos in stone were also found in Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. In Egypt and ancient Iraq, statues of famous people were also made besides that of pharaohs and kings, and it is quite possible that these Mohenjo-daran figures were also of prominent people. One of the unique finds in Harappa was a torso of a man in granite without head and limbs (Fig. 16). It is amazing that the torsos of the huge Buddhas and *Mahaviras* made 1,500 years later look like huge enlargements of this tiny torso.



Fig. 16 A torso in stone from Harappa.

Mohenjo-daro: Birthplace of Indian Religion and Art

The Mohenjo-daro dancer belonged to an ancient society in which dance, music and sculpture were a part of religion. The classical dance of India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Far East may have originated in Mohenjo-daro. The Aryans, who came from Central Asia, conquered an older civilization which contributed much to their culture. They adopted the religion of the people whom they had called *dasas* or slaves. The Aryans came with their ancestral gods and goddesses, chariots and horses, warriors and priests, their belief in the superiority of their race, and the caste system. They settled in Punjab where their sacred books, the *Vedas*, were revealed to sages. Whether it was the ritual dance or the worship of Shiva and the *peepul* tree, the humped bull and the mother goddess, bathing before *puja* or eating, the Indus Valley Civilization transformed their original religion to what is now called Hinduism.

Buddhist Art

A Prince Becomes 'God'

It was more than 1,500 years after the destruction of Mohenjo-daro that Buddha began to be worshipped as a divine being. The Aryans prayed to the fire, the Sun, the wind, the dawn and the god of war by personal names. They believed that the god of war protected them and helped them to win their battles. Their priests offered sacrifices to the gods in front of a fire-altar and recited chants from their holy books to win favours from them. Idol worship was common among the ancient people of the subcontinent, and there were 300,000 gods and goddesses to choose from. Buddha rejected idol worship and the caste system and preached a simple message of truth, equality, good conduct and non-violence. He also forbade his followers from worshipping him as a god.

The Mauryan emperor Asoka (d. 232 BC) was converted to Buddhism after a great battle in which thousands of warriors were slaughtered. He took a vow of peace and set about spreading Buddha's message. He had huge stone pillars erected in his empire from Bihar to Afghanistan to announce the supremacy of Buddha's message over the religion of the land. The message of Buddha was also cut into stone boulders which are to be found in Mardan, Mansehra and the Northern Areas. The Asoka columns were modelled on the columns of the royal palace of Persepolis in Iran, which Alexander destroyed in 330 BC. The tall columns, which contained Buddha's message, were crowned by an upside-down lotus flower and topped by animals like the lion and the bull. It is said that Iranian stone masons who fled to India from Alexander's invading army introduced the skill of cutting and polishing stone to the subcontinent. The local craftsmen, who were masters of wood and ivory carving, adopted the new skill.

In the early days, Buddha's followers built earth-filled stone or brick **stupas** as places of pilgrimage (Fig. 17). Buddha was represented in

stone reliefs by his wooden sandals or the wheel. The wheel was the sign of *karma* or the cycle of birth and rebirth from which humans must escape through good conduct in life. The stupa was like the upper half of the globe and stood within four gates representing the four corners of the Earth. On top of the stupa was a stone umbrella which stood for the seven heavens under which a relic of the Buddha was buried. Pilgrims went round and round the stupa praying for release from rebirth.



Fig. 17 The stupa of Sanchi.

Nature into Stone

The heavily carved stone gates of the stupa were decorated with images of tree spirits called *Yakshis*, elephants, birds, fruits and flowers (Fig. 18). Buddha was born in a grove of trees, flowers and fruits while his mother was on her way to her father's kingdom. Buddha lived and preached in the mango grove of Sarnath, near Varanasi in India, where he died. The religion after his name spread throughout the subcontinent, to Sri Lanka, the Far East, Afghanistan, Central Asia and China. Buddha loved animals and in one of his many 'rebirths' he was a white elephant. The animal is still held in reverence in Sri Lanka and Cambodia today. There are special elephant sanctuaries in Sri Lanka where care is taken of the animals.



Fig. 18 Yakshi tree spirit.

Gandhara Buddha

It was after more than two hundred and fifty years of Asoka's reign that Kanishka, the other great Buddhist king, took up the same mission. He ruled the Gandhara empire of north India from Peshawar. Among other things, Gandhara is known for its university at Jaulian, near Taxila, where monks came for higher studies from as far as China. It was in Gandhara that Gautama the prince became the god Buddha. He was deified, or made into the image of a god, partially on the model of the Greek god, Apollo.

The Pakistani part of the subcontinent was ruled by Alexander's generals after his invasion in 327BC. The best remembered among the rulers was Menander (155-130BC) who became famous as the Milinda of Buddhist stories. Statues of Apollo, cast in bronze and made in marble were brought

by traders to Gandhara from Alexandria, the city built at the order of Alexander. The monk sculptors of Taxila and Takht-i-Bhai were familiar with them. While modest statues were made in Gandhara, huge ones like that of the Sassanid kings of ancient Iran were carved from mountains in Bamiyan, Afghanistan.

It was from Apollo that Buddha got his egg-shaped, half-smiling, angelic face. His body was similar to the Harappa torso, and his seated pose was of the Shiva of Mohenjo-daro. He was dressed in the cotton sheet of an Indian *rishi* or sage. His hair was long and tied into a bun to cover the bump of wisdom on top of his head. He had a mark on his forehead which was the sign of his third eye opening into the past and



Fig. 19 The Gandhara Buddha.

future of humankind. He was shown blessing people with his hand in the body language of classical Indian dancers (Fig. 19). Apollo was the god of light, reason and beauty. The Gandhara Buddha was the representation of divine wisdom, truth and peace. His royal birth was important because only a prince or a king could be a god. In one of his incarnations, he was called the Bodhisattva (Fig. 20), an ideal king of Aryan descent. He sported a moustache and wore heavy jewellery like a person of royal birth.

Apart from the statue of the Buddha, the masterpieces of Gandharan sculpture were the stone reliefs in which stories of his birth, transformation into the Buddha under a *peepul* tree in Gaya and death at Sarnath were told. The story is popular to this day and is about a prince named Siddhartha, who left his father, wife and kingdom in search of knowledge about life, death and the cause of suffering. The stories carved in stone were yet another early version of the animated comic strip (Fig. 21). The Buddha, Bodhisattvas and the reliefs are unique contributions to sculpture from Pakistan's Potwar region.

Buddhist art flourished in India from the first to the sixth century BC. Monks carved assembly halls called *chaitya* into the Ajanta Hills in south India. The halls were used for meditation in front of large images of the Buddha. The walls of the Ajanta meditation halls were also painted to tell stories from the Buddhist legends. The paintings depicted lives of noblemen, noblewomen and the common people in the subcontinent of that time. Buddhist art excelled in depicting nature as a grove and the fullness of life in stone and wall paintings. It is surprising that the art of a religion which preaches renunciation should have been so joyful.



Fig. 20 A stone sculpture of the Bodhisattva with moustache and jewellery.



Fig. 21 The story of Buddha's life carved in stone.

Bharatvarsha

The Art of Bharatvarsha

The Aryans settled in the river valleys of Punjab, Jamna and the Ganges, called the *doab* or two waters of northern India. According to an ancient legend, the land was ruled by the divine king Bharata, and the Hindu epic of *Mahabharata* is an account of a great war in the country named after this king. The British gave it the name of India, from *Indica*, the Greek word for the subcontinent which Jawaharlal Nehru retained for his part of the subcontinent after the partition. The Indian National Anthem calls India by its ancient name Bharata. No works of visual and plastic arts and architecture have survived from ancient Bharat. It was Buddhism which introduced a religious art into the subcontinent and in the Gupta period from the fourth to the sixth century, Hinduism evolved its typical idols. The Hindu gods and goddesses entered Urdu language and literature and the Indian regional languages, all of them shared by Hindus and Muslims. It is important to remember this to understand the subcontinent.

Temples as Art Galleries

For over eight hundred years, between the fourth and the fourteenth centuries, great stone temples were built, and their façades were covered with male and female deities, as thick as a jungle. Until the sixteenth century, ornate temples were built by Raja Mansingh of Akbar's court and Raja Bir Singh Dev of Jehangir's court in Mathura. But the Gupta period was the great age of temple-building and sculpture. The temple was like a mountain, and its idol, after whom it was named, was kept inside a dark sanctuary. The Elephanta cave temple on an island near Mumbai, the great Elura temple in Central India and the Mamallapuram temple, on the seashore near Madras, were carved from rocks. The craft of stone masonry was an old tradition by now and temple architecture

took it to fantastic heights. The Ajanta Caves were carved and their sculpture and wall paintings were made in the same period between the fifth and seventh centuries (Fig. 22). A new school of Buddhist sculpture rose in this period and Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were made to look neither Greek nor Indian but like visitors from the world above. For a couple of centuries, Buddhism survived the rise of Hinduism but finally lost its popularity in the subcontinent and became the religion of a very small minority in its own home.

Fantastic Deities

The Hindu idols were very different from the Buddha and the Bodhisattva. The Buddhist icons were human beings who were deified. The Hindu gods were fantastic creatures of some other world. They had several heads and hands joined together to a single body. When the British first saw them they called them monsters. They did not appreciate that the grotesque exaggeration of the images was the replica of what the sculptors saw in their imaginations. We can see how the Hindu artists anticipated the characters of science fiction which children love to see on television. They know the image of aliens from outer space just as thousands of years ago people saw these idols as visitors from the world of their gods. Shiva was a dancer whose divine dance maintained the balance of nature. He was called Nataraja, 'king of the dancers'. He had many hands. He stood still in a dance pose within a circle of flames over the body of an evil dwarf who represented materialism (Fig. 23). This image was first cast in bronze in the thirteenth century Chola kingdom of south India and is popular all over India to this day. Shiva's wife, Parvati, has been cast in bronze and copper since then in India (Fig. 24) as the incarnation of the ancient mother goddess. Other gods like Rama and Krishna appear in Indian art, and so does the mother as Kali, the destroyer of evil, Lakshmi as the goddess of wealth and Saraswati as the patroness of art and literature.



Fig. 22 A figure from the Ajanta Caves.



Fig. 23 Nataraja in bronze.



Fig. 24 Parvati in bronze.

Hindu and Jain Temples in Pakistan



Fig. 25 Barefoot nobleman.

Ruins of the old Hindu temples are found in the hills of Dera Ismail Khan and Dera Ghazi Khan. Multan was famous for its great Sun temple, and King Harshvardhana (AD 606-648) worshipped the Sun god like the Egyptian pharaohs. The temple survived until the eleventh century. We can have some idea of the kind of idols kept in the Hindu temples of Pakistan from a visit to the Lahore and Karachi museums. Some may be old, while others could be of much later date. A stone statue of a barefoot prince or nobleman may give an idea of the sculpture from Sindh and Gujarat in India. He is dressed in an embroidered tunic and wears a turban and heavy jewellery. The statue, which may have been carved in the thirteenth century or later, was dredged from the sea near Karachi in 1993 (Fig. 25). Hindu religious legends appear in Urdu poetry and Pakistani painting.

The Jain temples in Tharparkar suggest that Jainism was once a flourishing religion, but like Buddhism it is now followed by a small minority in the subcontinent. The temples were built with the yellow sandstone of Sindh, and carved ornately by local craftsmen (Fig. 26). Stone masonry is an old craft tradition of Sindh, and it bloomed again in Makli, Thatta and Chowkandi during the Muslim period (Fig. 27). Jainism was founded by Mahavira, a prince of Vaishali near Muzaffarpur



Fig. 26 An old temple in Kafir Kot, Pakistan.



Fig. 27 Tomb from Chowkandi.

in Bihar. He was a contemporary of Buddha and was also deified. The thirteenth century Jain temple of Mount Abu in Rajasthan, made in white marble, is famous for its ornamental carving. It is said to have influenced the marble decoration of Mughal architecture.

Jain and Buddhist Miniature Painting

The followers of Mahavira were rich merchants who traded with the Gulf countries and Iran. They supported miniature painting on subjects from their religion and it thrived in Gujarat in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The history of miniature painting is very old in the subcontinent. Buddhist religious books, written on palm leaves in the now dead Pali language, were illuminated with miniature paintings. Paper came to be used in Gujarat after the Muslim traders introduced it into the subcontinent. Interest in the Jain miniature was revived by the works of one of the pioneers of modern Pakistani art, Shakir Ali.

Art under the Muslim Rulers

Pre-Mughal Art

Arabs had been trading with the west coast of the subcontinent before they converted to Islam. They sailed across the Arabian Sea with the trade winds to Kerala in India, married local women and raised families of Indo-Arab stock. These people were converted to Islam by a *sahabi* of the Prophet (PBUH) in his lifetime. The Hindu raja allowed them to live with their families in separate communities and to practise their religion. Arabs and Persians named what they knew of the subcontinent *Al-Hind*. In Urdu, the undivided subcontinent was called *Hindustan*, and Iqbal wrote his *Taranaye Milli* thus: '*Chino Arab hamara, Hindustan hamara/Muslim hain hum, watan hai sara jehan hamara*'. Even before Mohammad Bin Qasim's invasion of Sindh and southern Punjab, small Muslim settlements existed on the sea coast of Balochistan. The land captured by Mohammad bin Qasim in AD712 was divided into two parts and was ruled from Multan and a new city called Mansura. Arabs built cities, mosques and forts. Art and craft thrived. But little has survived of Mansura, and only a meagre collection of art from the early Muslim presence in Sindh can be found in our museums. Coins, armour, ceramics and a pair of large metal door knockers can be seen in the Karachi Museum (Fig. 28).

The Muslim rulers of India gave magnificent works of architecture to the subcontinent. Hundreds of local artisans and craftsmen, converted to Islam or otherwise, worked on the projects. New styles of calligraphy arose and priceless copies of the Quran (Fig. 29) were penned and ornamented with the light and colour of nature and the heavenly bodies. Muslim artists saw nature and the cosmos as God's *ayat* or signs of His creation. They celebrated



Fig. 28 Bronze door knockers, Mansura.



Fig. 29 Ornamented pages from the Quran.

in their works His attributes as *Al-Musawwir*, the painter, *Al-Latif*, the giver of beautiful shapes and meanings to the objects of creation, *Al-Khaliq*, the creator of the universe and *Al-Noor*, the source of light.

Mughal Miniature

The word 'miniature' stands for anything which is very small, like a computer chip, a transistor, a *bonsai* or a painting. In the past, beautifully handwritten manuscripts were illuminated with pictures painted in minute detail. Miniature painting threw light and colour on what was described in the text and conjured up a world of visual imagination. This is why it was known as the art of illumination, or that of lighting up a scene or situation. The Bible was illuminated in seventh century Ireland so that some of the text could be seen as pictures. This art spread from Europe to Byzantine and the Middle East. In twelfth century Baghdad, handwritten books of medicine, astronomy, horticulture, tales of adventure and popular legends were illuminated. Mani, the Irani religious

reformer of the third century, was a great miniature painter. Buddhists and Jain religious texts were also illuminated for clarity of vision. It may be recalled that miniature carving in stone in Mohenjo-daro and in ivory much later was a truly subcontinental skill. The Arabic version of the fable of the Indian sage Bidpai called *Kalila wa Dimma* was illuminated with miniatures in Baghdad in the thirteenth century. So was the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri, an imaginative account of travel round the world, including India, by the author and his companion. Firdausi's *Shahnama* was illuminated in Iran. New schools of miniature painting developed in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia and in the northern and southern parts of India. These are unique works of Muslim art and are admired for their liveliness and beauty.

Humayun came to the throne of Delhi after Babur's sudden death, but very soon lost his throne to Sher Shah Suri and escaped with his family to Iran. Wandering through Sindh, where his son Akbar was born in Umarkot, he reached Iran and Shah Tamasap of Iran gave him protection. When he regained the throne after the death of Sher Shah Suri, he brought two court artists of the Iranian king, Abdus Samad

and Mir Sayyed Ali, to Delhi. Humayun did not live long, and it was his son who became the patron of a new *qalam* or style of painting. Working together in Akbar's royal studio, Hindu painters of India, who came from the lower caste of society, and Irani painters of noble descent, invented the Mughal miniature. Akbar had Babur's autobiography, the *Baburnama*, illuminated with pictures. His grandfather had loved the simple things of life and wrote about them in a vivid, active and pictorial manner. This was also the quality of the miniatures which came from Akbar's studio showing Babur's keen interest in gardening (Fig. 30).

Akbar had a vast appetite for stories from ancient India and Arabia as well as the history of his family. The legendary stories of Hazrat Hamza, the Prophet's (PBUH) uncle, who was a great hunter and warrior, were painted on paper

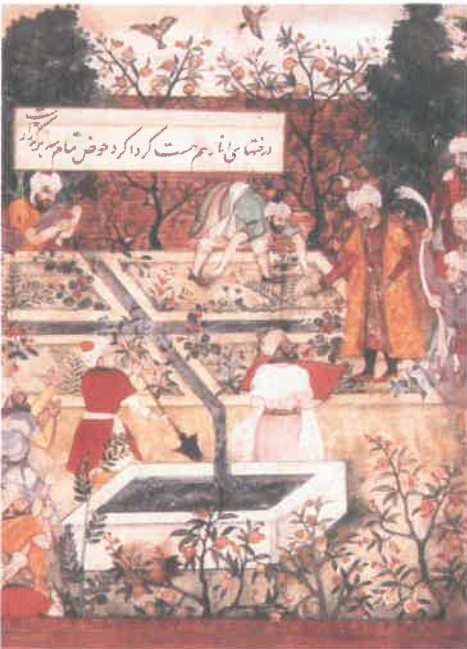


Fig. 30 Babur supervising work in a garden in Agra.

made from cotton waste. Akbar liked hunting scenes, wild animals like cheetahs or leopards, crowded life and court scenes which were painted in the royal studio. The Hindu epic *Mahabharata* was translated into Persian as *Razmnama* and was also illuminated. The history of the family of Timur, and Akbar's own reign, were also painted in the royal studio which moved with the king from Agra to Delhi and Lahore. Most of these priceless paintings are to be found in European and American museums, like the album *Badshahnama*, painted during Shah Jehan's reign, which is now in the personal collection of Queen Elizabeth II of England.

Akbar's successor, Jehangir, loved animals and nature and had both subjects painted in his royal studio. One of the best known paintings is by Ustad Mansur showing a man climbing a *chinar* tree on which squirrels are frisking. Ustad Mansur also painted zebras, vultures, turkeys and other birds with the eye of a scientist and the skill of a great miniature painter. During the reigns of Akbar and Jehangir, *darbar*



Fig. 31 Discussion in Akbar's Hall of worship.



Fig. 32 Three kings – Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jehan.

scenes and portrait painting also rose to great heights (Figs. 31 and 32). Once again, accurate observation and clarity combined to produce some of the greatest portraits in the miniature form. To the single royal portrait were added paintings of noblemen and outdoor activities of the King. By this time, the social position of painters had improved and they were counted among valued courtiers. They began to include themselves in their *darbar* paintings.

The painting of royal portraits raised the position of the king above life as God's shadow on Earth. Jehangir was painted with a huge halo round his head which made the discs of light round the head of Christ, and the Christian saints, look very modest. It may be recalled that the Gandhara Buddha also had a stone disc round his head. European miniature paintings of the Virgin Mary and Christ were first presented to Akbar by Jesuit priests of Goa. Jehangir was presented similar etchings and miniatures by the ambassador of King James I of England. The European miniatures were copied in the royal studios, and painters learnt something about European realism. The great Behzad, from Herat

in present day Afghanistan, had already painted realistic portraits and scenes from life in the fifteenth century. In Turkey, at about the same time, painters had introduced realism into their work under European influence without spoiling the charm of the miniature.

Shah Jehan built the Taj Mahal (Fig. 33), the Red Fort at Delhi and the Delhi Jama Mosque. The small, jewel-like marble mosque in the Lahore Fort was also built by him for family prayers. Even though he was far more interested in architecture, he remained a

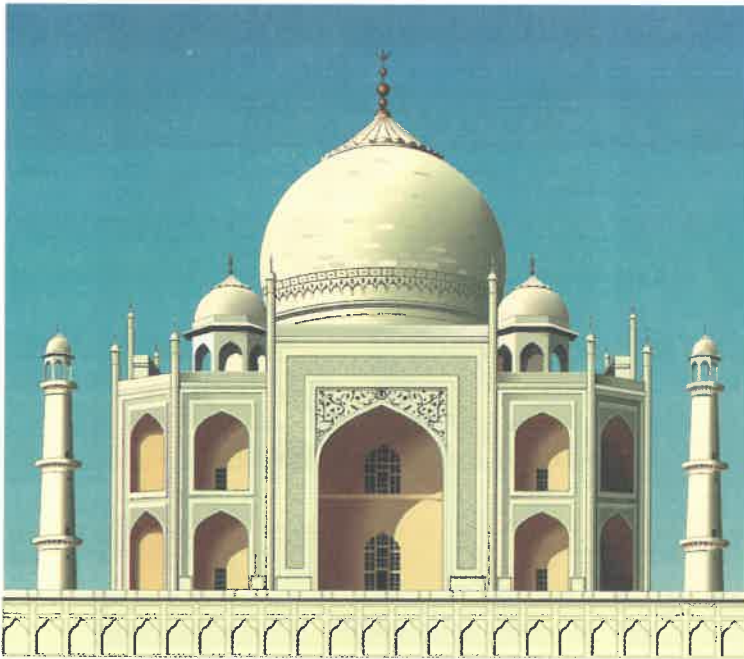


Fig. 33 The Taj Mahal.

patron of painting like his grandfather and father. By this time, portraits and *darbar* scenes had become formal and had lost the animation and freshness of the paintings of Akbar's time. But the picture of the king and his sons sitting with Mian Mir under a banyan tree near Lahore recalls some of the original qualities of Mughal miniature.

During Aurangzeb's reign, Mughal miniature painting lost royal favour even though portraits were painted, including that of the emperor in old age (Fig. 34). His younger son, Akbar, was painted with female ascetics, something his father would not have approved of. As the Mughal empire declined after Aurangzeb, painters left Delhi to work for the independent Muslim rulers of Lucknow, Murshidabad and Hyderabad in Deccan. Several offshoots of the Mughal miniature developed in these places. Painters who went to the courts of the Hindu rajas of Rajasthan and the hill states of Punjab introduced many distinct *qalam* in the eighteenth century.



Fig. 34 Aurangzeb in old age.

Deccani Miniature

Miniature painting was flourishing in the Muslim states of south India before the Mughals. These states were founded between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The ruler presided over the development of another subcontinental *qalam* of miniature painting called 'Deccani', from the Urdu word *Dakkhin*, meaning the south. The court culture of Bijapur, Golconda, Ahmadnagar and Bidar was also Indo-Persian, but it was much more deeply rooted in the popular life and customs of the people. The rulers supported the development of Urdu language and literature as far back as the seventeenth century, and some of them were very able poets of the language. Portraits, paintings of favourite horses and elephants, music and scenes of love attracted them. It was in Golconda that the great Urdu poet, Wali, became famous before moving to Delhi in the eighteenth century. Deccani painting, architecture and poetry were the Muslim contributions to the southern half of the subcontinent.

Pahari Miniature

The Pahari miniature emerged in the hill states of Punjab. Stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were painted for the Hindu rajas by court painters. Akbar, who was interested in Hindu mythology, had incidents from it painted in his studio. We shall see that Abdur Rehman Chughtai and Ustad Allah Bukhsh also painted stories from Hindu religious sources. The abduction of Sita by Ravana, the king of Sri Lanka, was painted in Nurpur (Fig. 35). One of the Pahari schools of painting, called Kangra, is famous for its depiction of the love stories of Radha and Krishna in charming natural backgrounds (Fig. 36). The post-Mughal miniature of India is famous for *Ragamala*, or music-painting. In them, pictures of sad, young ladies standing against ornamental trees with peacocks and gazelles created moods similar to classical *raag* and *raagani*. A knowledge of the school is necessary because modern painters from Chughtai to Shakir Ali recognized the importance of the tradition of miniature painting in their art.



Fig. 35 The abduction of Sita.

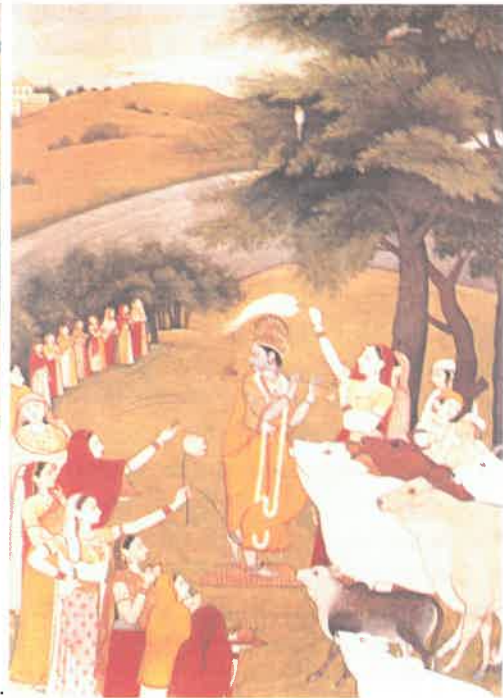


Fig. 36 Radha and Krishna.

Western Influences

Company Painting

A new kind of painting, named after the East India Company, emerged in the eighteenth century. The Company was the ruling power of the land in place of the great Mughals, and its officers and their families became the new patrons of art. Miniature painters adapted their skills to produce yet another *qalam* within the subcontinental tradition. Increasing numbers of unmarried as well as married women, called *memsahibs* by the servant class, were joining their menfolk in India. This was *made* possible by the invention of steamships which *made* sea journeys shorter and safer. These new arrivals were fascinated by India and wanted to be painted in their English-style bungalows with an army of servants, children, *ayahs* and tailors stitching clothes under their eyes. Bazaars, village scenes and religious festivals were also painted for their albums which were sent to dear and near ones in England. They were mementoes like modern photographs and were used for the same purpose.

The *memsahibs* exercised a powerful influence on the Indian miniature painters. One may lament it as a sad fall, but Company



Fig. 37 Portrait of Sir Henry Lawrence.

painting has its own charm. It is an example of how the subcontinent responded yet again to change in an original manner. A number of these expatriate women had been educated at ladies' seminaries, and learnt how to draw and paint in watercolour. They encouraged local painters to use some of their techniques and all of the materials sent from England. Company painting produced men of genius like Sheikh Mohammad Amir of Karraya, Sheikh Zainuddin Ahmed of Patna and Ghulam Ali Khan of Delhi, to name a few. The

first was famous for painting horses, the second for flowers and the third for rural scenes like grain markets. It was said that Sheikh Mohammad Amir painted the horse in miniature as skilfully as George Stubbs, a great British animal painter. The portrait of Sir Henry Lawrence (Fig. 37), the Company officer who ruled Punjab, is an example of Company painting from Lahore.

The Western Style of the Raj

The ancient knowledge of India, its culture, religions and people were studied as a science under Company rule. Watercolour paintings and

prints made from etchings were used to illustrate these studies. Apart from this, British and European painters started arriving in India to make their fortune in the new market of opportunity. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of independent Punjab, engaged one of the European painters to win his place in history. The Maharaja was painted in all his pomp and glory in his *darbar* in the Lahore Fort (Fig. 38). Other examples of European-style painting in oil was the portrait of Prince Dalip Singh as a child. These paintings demonstrated to the native rulers that the art of the west was superior like everything else from there. One of the most famous Indian artists of the western style was Raja Ravi Verma who painted

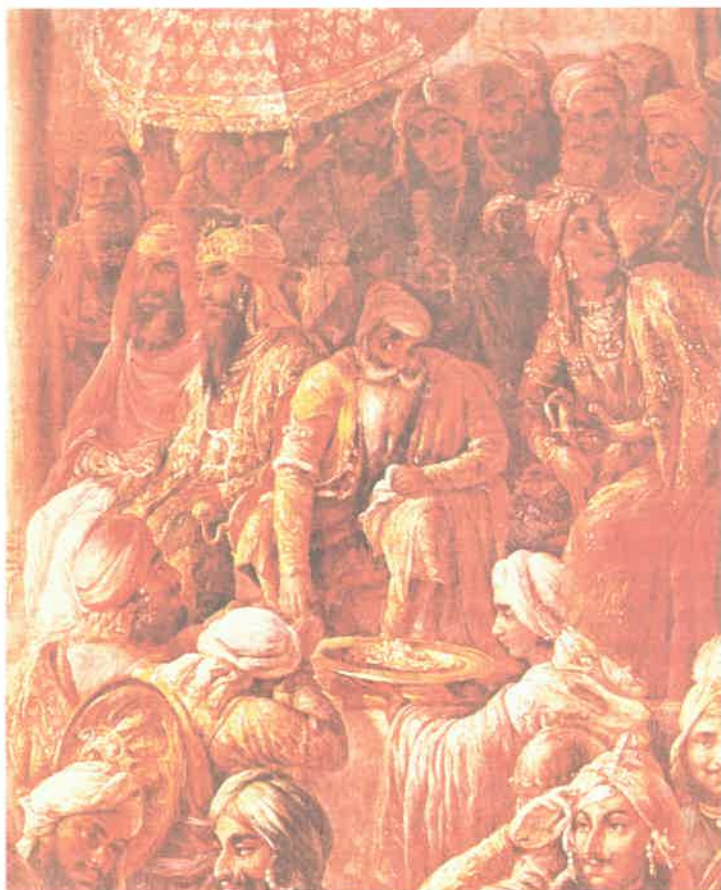


Fig. 38 Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Darbar.

stories from Hindu mythology and portraits of his social circle towards the end of the nineteenth century. Ustad Allah Bukhsh, like many others, also painted in this style which by his time had become 'Indian'.

The British believed that their mission was to 'civilize' the Indians and give them the languages, sciences, laws and arts of the modern world. With this in mind, they set up a number of art schools in the country. The first was founded in Madras in 1850, which was followed by the second in Calcutta in 1854, and the third in Bombay in 1857. The Mayo School of Art in Lahore, now the National College of Arts, was opened in 1875. These schools taught the European style of drawing, painting, print making and sculpture with traditional craft skills like carpentry, textile and metal work. Miniature painting was also taught at the Mayo School of Art. Chughtai was educated at the Mayo School and taught there for a few years.

Painting in Pakistan

The 20th Century Miniature

Many masterpieces of Mughal miniature in the days of Akbar and Jehangir were painted in the royal studio of the Lahore Fort. In addition to this, the home of the Pahari painting was Punjab. The largest and finest collection from this school was housed in the Lahore Museum and was divided after the partition between India and Pakistan. Lahore was also called the western outpost of the Bengal School of painting which attempted to revive the Mughal miniature. Miniature painting had lost its popularity, but it was not dead. Haji Sharif, like his father and grandfather, painted in the Pahari *qalam* (Fig. 39). Another miniature painter, who came to Lahore from Alwar state after partition, was Sheikh Shujaullah, who painted in the Mughal style (Fig. 40). Both



Fig. 39 Haji Sharif's *Prince Salim*.



Fig. 40. Sheikh Shujaullah's *Woman with Sitar*.

taught miniature painting at the National College of Arts and kept its flame alight. Miniature is painted to this day in Lahore and Karachi by painters trained at the National College of Arts. In 1998, the Chowkandi Art Gallery, Karachi, held an exhibition of miniature paintings which attracted a large crowd.

Abdur Rehman Chughtai (1894-1975)

Abdur Rehman Chughtai was a one-man revolution. He revived the prestige of miniature painting, even though his own art was different from traditional miniature painting in the use of material, technique and even style. Even then, his paintings have the family resemblance of the traditional miniature to which they were indebted. He was born in 1894 in Lahore and was acknowledged as a great Muslim painter of India before the partition. Chughtai came from the family of an architect of Shah Jehan's court. He believed that the miniature tradition was capable of adjusting to change from within, against the disruption brought about by European art. He prepared himself for this challenge through training, travel and study. At the Mayo School, he learnt the western way of drawing. It was in Calcutta that he saw the Japanese

watercolour technique which was introduced there by two Japanese painters in the first decade of the century. Chughtai visited Delhi and Agra to study Mughal architecture and photographed the monuments. He also went to the Ajanta Caves in order to have a first-hand knowledge of Buddhist art. Calcutta was then the centre of art in north India. Chughtai visited the city to see the paintings of Abanindranath Tagore (Fig. 41), a painter who also raised the banner of rebellion against the western style in the name of Mughal miniature.



Fig. 41 Abanindranath Tagore's *Buddha*.

Abanindranath Tagore tried to give India a national or *Swadeshi* art of its own. Chughtai painted the Muslim dimension of this freedom movement. Abanindranath was the first Indian principal of the Calcutta School of Art, and founded a movement which was called the Bengal School of Art. It spread as far as Lahore, or wherever his students went to teach. A number of Lahore painters like A.R. Chughtai, Inayatullah, Mohammad Hussain Qadri (Fig. 42) and M.A.R. Asghar as well as the principal of the Mayo School, S.N. Gupta, painted in the style of the Bengal School. Chughtai evolved a unique style of his own which was different from Abanindranath and the Bengal School.

Chughtai rose to fame for his paintings from the poetry of the great Urdu poet, Ghalib. The Muslims of pre-partition India prided themselves on their identity and the poetry of Ghalib. It ought to be noted that both Chughtai and Ghalib were of Mughal descent. Chughtai brought out his book of painting combined with Ghalib's *Divan*, or collected works, under



Fig. 42 Mohammad Hussain Qadri's *Midday Rest*.

the name of *Muraqqai Chughtai* in 1929 (Fig. 43). The poetic figures of the paintings were dressed in the Mughal fashion and the architecture and garden in which they appeared were like the Shalimar Gardens. In each of the paintings, Chughtai showed how proud he was of Mughal culture and the Urdu language.

The verses of the Irani poet, Omar Khayyam, Punjabi folk romances and anecdotes from Hindu legends were also painted by Chughtai. He used his knowledge of Ajanta painting and single-handedly revived the memory of its greatness. As Abanindranath Tagore gave love and respect to the Mughal miniature, so did Chughtai to tales from Hindu mythology and the Buddhist art of Ajanta. The best of Chughtai's paintings before the partition are in Indian collections, while a few paintings of Abanindranath can be seen in the Lahore Museum. Allama Iqbal inspired Chughtai to produce the book, *Amale-Chughtai*, within ten years of partition. Iqbal's heroes and heroines from Muslim history were his great models. He chose Tipu Sultan, Aurangzeb, Haroon Ar-Rashid's wife Zubeida Khanum, poets and musicians for his



Fig. 43 A painting from *Muraqqai Chughtai*.



Fig. 44 Chughtai's *Mughal Artist*.

portrait gallery. The paintings from *Amale-Chughtai* were typical of his style after the partition (Fig. 44). These portraits were not from contemporary life but were visions of history. Chughtai died in January 1975 in Lahore. Pakistani painters moved on to yet another western style, called modern art, to establish the identity of Pakistani art.

The Raj Style of Ustad Allah Bukhsh (1895-1978)

Ustad Allah Bukhsh was a typical product of the popular western style of the subcontinent, even though he did not go to any art school. Raja Ravi Verma, the first great Indian painter in the western style, and Ustad Allah Bukhsh had nothing in common by way of birth or education, except that they were of the same Raj tradition of painting which had struck roots in India. Ustad Allah Bakhsh was born at Wazirabad in 1895, and was trained as a sign painter in the bazaar. At the age of fifteen, he began painting signs on railway carriages. It is said that as a child he saw a large western-style painting and was struck by its size, realism and grand manner. He nursed the ambition to paint in a similar fashion. He went to Calcutta, as artists did to improve their knowledge and find jobs, and was engaged as a scene painter in the popular Urdu theatre of Agha



Fig. 45 Ustad Allah Bukhsh's *Hir and Ranjah*.

Hashar Kashmiri. He shifted to Bombay where he made a name for himself as the 'Krishna painter' for his paintings of the Hindu god from the *Mahabharata*. His fame reached the Maharaja of Patiala who appointed him as a court painter. He returned to Lahore in 1939 and did not leave it till his death in October 1987 at the age of eighty-three.

Ustad Allah Bukhsh painted Punjabi rural scenes and the folk romance of Hir and Ranjah (Fig. 45) after partition. Sometimes he painted romantic landscapes which could be found only in his own imagination. The later paintings of the rural sights and scenes of Punjab were of the real world which he loved. In 1947 he painted two very strange mountains from which bizarre stone faces looked out into space (Fig. 46). No one had done anything like this before in the subcontinent, but children will not find this strange because they love equally bizarre characters of the cartoon world which are made of walking and talking stone and metal. Ustad Allah Bakhsh had always loved to paint hills and rocky landscapes with great skill and in minute detail. Towards the end of his life, he had gone half blind but continued to paint mountains as bands and patches of abstract watercolour. His abstract mountains were as real and solid as the early rocky landscapes painted in the western style. Is it not strange that partial blindness should lead him to abstract art?



Fig. 46 Ustad Allah Bukhsh's *Rocky Landscape*.

Painting in Pakistan

Modern Art

Modern art emerged as the art of independent Pakistan. Painters of pre-partition Lahore, the only art centre of what is Pakistan today, had shown little interest in the modern art of Gaganendranath Tagore, who painted the first modern Indian painting in Calcutta in 1920. He was followed by the poet Rabindranath Tagore who did a number of very strange paintings (Fig. 47) between 1928 and 1930. Amrita Sher Gill, the daughter of a Sikh father and Hungarian mother, who studied in a famous art school in Paris, was the first great modern painter of India. She could have made her name in Lahore if she had lived there. Only two paintings from her numerous works were left in Pakistan, one a portrait found in a junk shop, which has disappeared again, and the other of musicians (Fig. 48) in the Lahore Museum. Zubeida Agha saw



Fig. 47 Rabindranath Tagore's *Bird*.



Fig. 48 Amrita Sher Gill's *Two Musicians*.

a reproduction of one of Amrita Sher Gill's paintings in a newspaper when she was a schoolgirl and thought that she too could become a painter. It was Zubeida Agha who emerged as the first pioneer of modern art in Pakistan. She exhibited her paintings first in a group exhibition in 1948 with Nasir Shamsi in Karachi, the then federal capital of Pakistan. But it was her exclusive exhibition in the same city a year later which created an uproar and she was called mad. A lively controversy followed in the newspapers, but modern art had come to stay in the country.

Modern or abstract art was a revolution in European art. Like all revolutions, it rejected centuries-old traditional techniques. Artists refused to imitate nature and paint pictures which looked real. Instead, they simplified and distorted images from life and nature to invent a new art which would present the artist's own view of reality. Modern art taught people a new way of looking at and thinking about life and nature. Artists also used geometric figures, inchoate shapes and bare painted space to present their own views of reality. This art was abstract because it appealed to the mind and overlooked the appearance of things. A free-hand drawing of a boy of six is a good example of this art (Fig. 49). It is his picture, and this is what he painted without care for rules. A fire-breathing dragon drawn equally freely by another boy of nine (Fig. 50) is yet another example of modern or abstract art. A child is a born artist and knows instinctively the rules of abstract art.



Fig. 49 Zain Umar's *Seascape* (age six).



Fig. 50 Asif Umar's *Fire-breathing Dragon* (age nine).

Zubeida Agha (1922-1997)

Zubeida Agha studied philosophy and political science at Kinnaird College, Lahore, and also took private lessons in painting. She went to England and France for further studies, but it was an Italian painter who introduced her to modern art in 1947. The first ever solo exhibition of modern art was held by Zubeida Agha in Karachi in 1949. It was in the same year that she painted a self-portrait as a confident young girl who knew her mind (Fig. 51). This was the first picture of its kind done in Pakistan, and that too painted by a girl from a respectable Muslim family.



Fig. 51 Zubeida Agha's *Self-Portrait*.

At that time, girls of her age waited patiently for marriage and did embroidery as the only form of art that was allowed to them.

As a child, Zubeida Agha was fascinated by the horse because of its beauty, speed and power. She made a small, abstract metal relief of a galloping horse in the style of her Italian teacher in 1949. It was enlarged, decades later, as a wall relief in her house in Islamabad. She painted toy-size horses in abstract paintings of the 1990s, as if she loved them to graze in pastures of illuminated colour. Images of animals and human beings were very rare in her art and eventually her paintings became abstract designs in which colour and light transformed them into visual music. Zubeida Agha used to say that her paintings were full of movement. Abstract art helped Zubeida Agha to express deep feelings which she could not express in any other way.

Shakir Ali also painted a modern version of the *Ragamala* or music-painting in the *Two Singers* (Fig. 57). In his *Crucifixion*, it was not Jesus Christ but the common man who was on the cross. But the common man's death, even though mourned by the painter in blue colour, did not stop paper-birds and *basant* kites from flying in the sky. In another painting, called *Man*, he showed a helpless creature asking questions from invisible angels without hope of answer. Shakir Ali believed that to die for a cause and to question made us human. In *Dark Moon*, he painted the futility of war and the loss of life.

Yet another belief of Shakir Ali was that the artist was a bird which should be free to fly in the air. He painted toy-like birds in large fields to show how, like the English poet Shelley's skylark, they are creatures of the Earth and sky. He lived in solitude all his life, and soon the emptiness of space filled his paintings. He painted space and for heavenly bodies used circles, triangles, leaves, bottles and, in his last painting, an oriental ewer (Fig. 58). According to Maulana *Rum*, our Prophet (PBUH) was asked about forms which would help a man to understand abstract truths. The Prophet (PBUH) replied, 'See yonder the form of heaven and Earth'. Shakir Ali had just started to see this form when he died suddenly in Lahore where he had gone from Karachi to join Chughtai's *namaze janaza*.



Fig. 57 Shakir Ali's *Two Singers*.



Fig. 58 Shakir Ali's *Oriental Ewer*.



Fig. 59 Shaker Ali's mural in the Punjab Library, Lahore.

Shaker Ali painted some of the finest paintings of our time using calligraphy. A large mural of the *Aitul Kursi* is in the PINSTECH Building of the Atomic Energy Commission in Islamabad. Another mural is in the Punjab Library, Lahore (Fig. 59). Once again, Shaker brought traditional and modern art together. A painting of a couplet of Ghalib, in which the artist paid homage to the great poet and his poetry, was a Pakistani version of European medieval stained glass windows.

Ahmed Parvez (1926-1979)

Ahmed Parvez used to say that it was Shaker Ali who showed him the way to modern art. They would discuss modern art, but Shaker Ali gave Parvez the freedom to paint the way he liked. Parvez had come to Lahore to study painting under his uncle, who was a commercial artist. He was bored and felt trapped until Shaker Ali released him.

Parvez's paintings are made from what looks like a heap of refuse from the dustbin. The painter recycles them as art into objects of light

and beauty. These paintings bring out the hidden values of garbage, as it blooms in Parvez's art. What may have been the bright features of a plucked rooster, its comb and entrails, bits of torn paper, dirty cotton rags, and random blobs of paint, combine higgledy-piggledy to become works of art. This is the way Parvez organized chaos. Look, for example, at this orchard in which fruits are made of abstract forms of light and colour (Fig. 60). We see the merciless face of the Sun in an arid landscape which is made of cotton waste dipped in paint (Fig. 61). There was a personal reason behind Parvez's recycling of waste into art.

His parents divorced when he was young, and Parvez was given away by his mother to the father and stepmother. Ahmed Parvez married three times, but each marriage failed. He was like a lost child who could not live in peace with the adult world. His only connection with life was his painting in which he was himself, and at peace. A man of strong passion, he painted as he spoke with much waving of hands and incoherent speech. When he had no money, he would move in with the *malang* population of the tomb of Abdullah Shah Ghazi in Clifton and share their food from the *mazar*. These derelicts lived under



Fig. 60 Ahmed Parvez's *Orchard*.



Fig. 61 Ahmed Parvez's *Landscape*.



Fig. 62 A *malang*'s drawing

the grove of ancient olive trees which were cut down when the tomb was expanded for commercial purposes. Ahmed Parvez gave them paper and markers and encouraged them to compete with him (Fig. 62).

When he fell ill, and knew that the end was near, he retired to the dingy room of a hotel near the Cantonment railway station. He had nowhere to go and thought that his friends had forsaken him. Laila Shahzada, the painter, found him and friends took him to the Jinnah Post-Graduate Hospital, Karachi, where he breathed his last in October 1979, at the age of fifty-three. A small group of painters and friends buried him at government cost in the PECHS graveyard.

Sadequain (1930-1987)

The four painters, including Sadequain, who established modern art in the country, were as different as persons as they were in styles. This was good because it gave variety to the new painting. However, they had one thing in common, even if they went about it in their different ways. They gave Pakistan a new art which was rooted in their history and culture.

Sadequain's first exhibition was held in the house of Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, who was the prime minister of Pakistan. Sadequain kept bad health and was as thin as a matchstick. He was sent to the dry climate of Gadani to recover his health by the Collector of Customs, Shah Suleman, another connoisseur of art. Sadequain lived and painted in the Customs' rest-house in Gadani, and it was here that he came across the desert cactus. What may have impressed Sadequain was the vitality of the plant. It grew and even flowered in conditions in which other plants would have died. Some kind of telepathic exchange of notes must have taken place between the artist and the plant which gave him the will to live. The plant became, thus, the painter's *hamzad* or 'the double'. Above all, Sadequain saw nature's own form of

calligraphy in the plant. Sadequain used to say that his ancestors were calligraphers, and that calligraphy was in his blood. He had found a blood relation in the plant. According to Maulana Rumi, life on Earth evolved in stages from mineral to vegetable to animal and, finally, to the human. In Sadequain's drawings, the cactus grew from the human head (Fig. 63) as his hands and body grew like the plant beyond control.

Art gave Sadequain the courage to protest against the social and political conditions of the country in the 1960s. A wild plant growing from the human body, as if it was a decaying ruin, showed how the artist saw Pakistan. He believed that he could expose the true condition of society through his own suffering. The human figures in Sadequain's painting, men or women, are always in the image of the artist himself as the witness of his age. Sadequain delighted in painting pain, death and decay because he felt that this was what Pakistan had become under its first martial law. The power of his art was such that he pleased when he should have caused disgust.

What does one make of an artist who draws his own portrait with his head in his hand (Fig. 64)? The images which Sadequain used remind us of the significance of the thorn and the plight of the lover in Urdu and Persian love poetry. The search for true love, or truth, invited punishment and suffering. In our folk stories, the *sur-ba-kaf* or head-in-hand ghost or spirit was a martyr to truth. Sadequain was very fond of this image of the *ghazi* or victorious warrior. The hero of the Urdu *ghazal* also went about his business with his head in his hand, which meant that he too could give his head or die for the love of truth. Sadequain saw the world as a wasteland in which life thrived in the cacti, snakes, rats, scorpions and worms. He believed that the artist was a warner and should paint what he thought to be true. He became a celebrity and made lots of money, which he gave away to his family.

Sadequain's attachment to his own culture was the strongest when he was consciously western in style. Apart from the cactus-man, he invented a new image of abstract man based on the *tughra* of Muslim calligraphy. A *tughra* is a form of picture-



Fig. 63 Sadequain's *Cactus Growing from a Human Head*.



Fig. 64 Sadequain's *Sur-ba-kaf Artist*.

writing in which Arabic alphabets are made to look like birds, beasts and human beings. Sadequain revived the *tughra* and, we can say, contributed it to modern art. The painting of the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, which he saw from his sickbed in a hospital, was also the result of Sadequain's free experiment with calligraphy (Fig. 65). He published a book of *rubai* from the facsimile of the manuscript that he had written with his own hand. Like a traditional Muslim artist, Sadequain believed that calligraphy was the mother of all arts, and that words could be so written as to look like beautiful pictures. He would demonstrate how this was done in front of admiring friends and visitors whom he liked to entertain with his prowess. His own calligraphic works are largely word-pictures. He painted from Ghalib's poetry like Chughtai. But, while Chughtai's paintings were romantic and beautiful, Sadequain's dealt with the suffering and tragedy of the lover. Both believed, however, that it was through poetry that one understands life and its problems. This is why Ghalib and Iqbal were so important to them.

The first exhibition of Sadequain's calligraphy was held at the Karachi Arts Council on the twenty-ninth of Ramadan, some time in the 1960s. Hundreds and thousands of men and *burqa*-clad women, with children

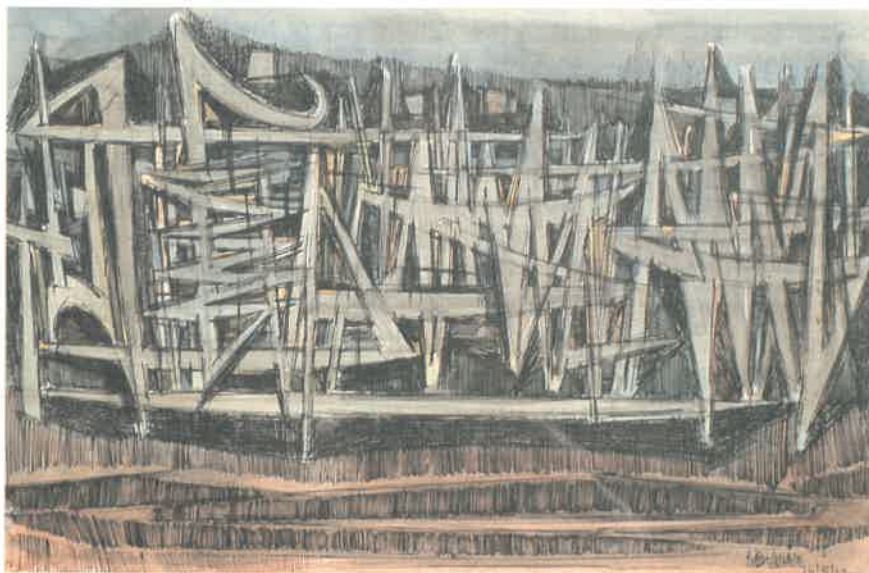


Fig. 65 Sadequain's *Notre-Dame Cathedral*.



Fig. 67 Sadequain's mural in Frere Hall.

in their arms, visited the exhibition from the poorer parts of the city. There were many other exhibitions in Pakistan and abroad, but it was after 1973 that Sadequain concentrated on calligraphy. He made word-pictures of oases, sailing boats, mosques and landscapes. Unlike Shakir Ali's calligraphic paintings of brilliant light and colour, Sadequain's mural in the Punjab Library, Lahore, is dark, lurid and fearful.

Sadequain painted a number of murals all over the world, including Dubai and India. In his Mangla mural, he drew upon Allama Iqbal's sympathy for the struggle of peasants and workers against their exploiters. The *Arzo Saman* or the cosmos (Fig. 66) on the ceiling of the Lahore Museum came from the poet's contemplation of space. He was painting a mural in Karachi's Frere Hall (Fig. 67) when he died in February 1987 at the age of fifty-six.



Fig. 66 Sadequain's *Arzo Saman*.

Anna Molka Ahmed (1917-1995) and Khalid Iqbal (b.1929)

Landscape painting as we know it was brought to the subcontinent by painters from the west. Nature in miniature painting was a garden or a grove which was painted with great care for detail and beauty. Anna Molka Ahmed, who came from England in 1939, painted the Lawrence Garden of Lahore and village scenes in the western style (Fig. 68). She was also a pioneer of art education among the women of Punjab and set up the Fine Arts Department at Punjab University. However, it is Khalid Iqbal who painted truly great landscapes from rural Punjab with obscure villages dozing in the afternoon sun, *kikar* trees standing as sentinels over an irrigation channel (Fig. 69) and wastelands covered with weeds. Scenes and objects otherwise unattractive were painted by him in the light of the morning, the afternoon and the end of the day. *The Kikar Tree in Winter* (Fig. 70) is a poetic vision of the light of an early winter morning. Khalid Iqbal takes pride in the accuracy of his observation and says that he paints what he sees. You can read the exact hour of the day when the paintings were done.



Fig. 68 Anna Molka Ahmed's *Village Scene*.

Khalid Iqbal was born in Simla in 1929, and completed his studies in art from Punjab University. He went to the Slade School of Art in London and later taught painting at Punjab University. He became the head of the Fine Arts Department at the National College of Arts when Shakir Ali was its principal. His villages and rural scenes are earthy, simple and permanent like the Earth itself. Khalid Iqbal loves the wild *kikar* and identifies with it, as Sadequain did with the cactus. Shaikh Ayaz, the great modern Sindhi poet, wrote a poem on the *kikar* called 'Landscape and Rainbow':

*Where the rainbow ends
Look at the kikar over there
Beauty in a row of trees*

*Throwing aside the clouds
The sun peeps out
Beauty in a row of trees*

*Thinking of somebody brings out tears
Filling my heart to brim over
Beauty in a row of trees.*



Fig. 69 Khalid Iqbal's *Kikar Trees over an Irrigation Channel*.



Fig. 70 Khalid Iqbal's
The Kikar Tree in Winter.

Contemporary Artists of Pakistan

Anwar Jalal Shemza (Fig. 71) and Raheel Akbar (Fig. 72), who were Shakir's friends, developed distinctive styles of their own but left little mark on Pakistani art. The first settled in England after studying at the Slade School, London, and the latter migrated to America. Other members of Shakir Ali's group vanished from the scene except Ali Imam (Fig. 73), who opened the Indus Gallery in Karachi. Ismail Gulgee, their contemporary, has been painting in a style in which the physical movement of the hand and the body is imprinted on the canvas as calligraphy (Fig. 74). Their younger contemporary, and a favourite student of Shakir Ali, Zahoorul Akhlaque, founded a new approach, bringing the west and the east together in a different manner from him and the other pioneers. His highly abstract art contained pictures, painted or in collage, from Mughal miniature and the political history of the nation (Fig. 75). Zahoor's contemporary, Bashir Mirza,



Fig. 71 Anwar Jalal Shemza's *Roots*.



Fig. 72 Raheel Akbar's *Twigs in a Vase*.



Fig. 73 Ali Imam's *Mother and Child*.



Fig. 74 Ismail Gulgee's *Al-Mussawir*.



Fig. 75 Zahoorul Akhlaque's *Untitled*.

earned fame for his paintings of *Lonely Girls* (Fig. 76) and, later on, from human heads made with broad and powerful strokes of bright paint. Jamil Naqsh's fame comes from his paintings of pigeons, horses and women (Fig. 77). Bashir Mirza ran the first gallery of modern painting in Karachi in the 1960s, and Ali Imam followed by opening his own Indus Gallery in January 1971. Since then, a number of commercial galleries have come up in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad.

The most important development in the 1970s was an exhibition of fourteen women painters, including Lubna Latif, at the Indus Gallery. Some of these painters were to dominate the Pakistani art scene in subsequent decades. Lubna Latif exhibited abstract landscapes which were painted as if nature was a woman, the mother goddess in a new profile. Her work was influenced by the paintings of Mansoor Rahi, her teacher at the Karachi School of Art. Nahid Raza painted historical images of the woman as the holy



Fig. 76 Bashir Mirza's *Lonely Girl*.



Fig. 77 Jamil Naqsh's *Woman and Pigeons*.

mother and *devadasi* to make the point that in each case she was what the male-dominated society wanted her to be. Musarrat Mirza painted her home town, Sukkur, shimmering through a mist of dust. Mehar Afroz, Qudsia Nisar, Riffat Alvi, Sumaya Durrani and Samina Mansuri have dealt with their own perceptions of nature, life and art as women. When we speak of modern painting in Pakistan, we have to think of its feminine space, and the contribution of our women artists.

While our women artists enriched modern art from their points of view, their male counterparts were not inactive. Ghulam Mustafa was painting the narrow lanes of the Mughal *andaroon shahar*, and Anwar Ajaz was preserving the landmarks of the post-Mughal city in his works. Zulquarnain Haider and Shahid Jalal painted rural scenes on the outskirts of the city under Khalid Iqbal's inspiration. Ijazul Hassan made the flowering bushes and trees of the streets and bungalows of Gulberg, Cantonment, and Lahore Civil Lines, bloom in his large paintings. Others like Quddus Mirza painted grotesque kings, based on original pictures of Mughal emperors, to mock the dictatorship of Zia ul Haque. Later on, he painted abstract but colourful paintings which were inspired by childhood memories of his village. Anwar Saeed's world was visited by the *burqa*, angels and fish, which we see painted on trucks on the national highways.

In contrast to them, in Karachi Unver Shafi painted fields of colour which look like abstract vistas of land and ocean, mapping the terrain of his mind. Shakeel Siddiqui made his name for the photographic realism of his still life. Mashkoor Raza began with abstract landscapes which he painted in the manner of Lubna Agha. He now paints horses, a fascination with the animal which he and Jamil Naqsh share with Zubeida Agha. Zaheen Ahmad is yet another painter who uses water colour to depict the old, decaying city of Thatta with great feeling for its age. Ghalib Baquar is another abstract painter who paints the Karachi sea shore in water colour. Landscape is a thriving genre in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta.

Sculpture in Pakistan: Shahid Sajjad and Others

In the age of television, prohibition against making lifelike human figures has fallen by the way. Shahid Sajjad is a self-taught sculptor of eminence. It was in the Louvre in Paris, which he was visiting while on

a world tour, that he saw some reliefs of the primitive people of Tahiti, an island in the Pacific Ocean which was carved by the French painter Gauguin. The relationship between human beings and their natural environment at the simplest and most basic level interested him, and he felt he could study it best by becoming a sculptor. On his return, Shahid Sajjad went to the most primitive area of Pakistan, the Chittagong Hill Tracts in East Pakistan. He lived there for four years and carved the Rangamati figures in local wood (Fig. 78).

He moved on to bronze casting in Karachi in 1973. The seated woman (Fig. 79) and small reliefs of the Quaid-i-Azam, Allama Iqbal and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto belong to this phase. He cast a bronze relief for the Nowshera Armoured School Mess, which was the largest ever in Pakistan or even in the subcontinent. Almost thirty years after his return from Rangamati, Shahid again carved free standing figures and reliefs from wood that he found in the furniture factory of his friend in Nowshera. Shahid's images are chiselled to reveal the form and shape hidden in the wood as in the *Mother and Child*



Fig. 78 Rangamati statue.



Fig. 79 Shahid Sajjad's
Seated Woman in bronze.



Fig. 80 Shahid Sajjad's
Mother and Child.



Fig. 81 Shahid Sajjad's *Family Group* in the Toolangi Forest, near Melbourne.

(Fig. 80). The two are joined together like a folding *rehal* on which the Quran is kept for recitation. He carved these works when he was half-blind with cataract, and felt his way with his fingers as if they were his eyes. The new images were even more primitive than the Rangamati people. Their flat noses, small, close-set eyes and long hands made them look very much like apes. At the same time, they looked wise and full of sorrow at the fate of humankind. In November 1996, Shahid Sajjad was invited to Australia where he carved a monumental family group in the Toolangi Forest near Melbourne (Fig. 81). The figures of the group are simple and direct like that of children's art and are installed in the forest from where the wood came.

There are other sculptors like Saghir Ahmed, who welds scraps of steel to make them grow like flowering plants. Rabia Zuberi is the first woman sculptor of Pakistan, who also founded the Karachi School of Art. Ismail Gulgee uses calligraphy in metal sculpture. Zahoorul Akhlaque also made abstract outdoor sculpture at Tarbela, for the Indus Valley School and the Maritime Museum in Karachi (Fig. 82). Another steel sculpture by Anjum Ayaz, which looks like a massive, abstract tree with birds, can be seen at the crossroad near Karachi Jail popularly known as 'Murgha Chawk'. Among younger sculptors, Amin Gulgee has made his mark with abstract calligraphic forms and grotesque human heads cast in metal.

It is too early to say who from among the young contemporary artists will make history from the present opportunities and challenges. This will be the story of another book.



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Glossary

A

- abstract:** Essence; idea taken from life and nature; not concrete.
academic: Belonging to a school or a university; scholarly.
action painting: Abstract painting made of the movement of the hand and the body.
ajrak: Block printed colourful cotton sheet.
Andaroone Shahar: The old, Mughal part of the inner city of Lahore.
animation: Lively expression of the face; movement of static people, animals and even lines in a cartoon.
ascetic: One who denies himself/herself life's pleasures.
astronomy: Science of the heavenly bodies.
attribute: Quality of a person.
ayah: Nanny.

B

- bison:** Wild ox.
bizarre: Out of the ordinary; grotesque; fantastic.
bonsai: Dwarf, potted ornamental Japanese tree or plant.
Buraq: The woman-faced horse with wings on which the Prophet (PBUH) rode on his heavenly journey called *meraj*.
burqa: Veil women wear in the Muslim east.

C

- calligraphy:** Beautiful handwriting; fine penmanship; in general, handwriting.
caste system: Division of Aryan society into the noble-born Brahman, the Kshatriya, the low-born Vaisya and the Sudra.
cataract: Eye disease which produces partial or even total blindness.

celebrity:	A famous person.
chaos:	Utter confusion; complete breakdown of order.
chaddar:	A sheet of cotton or other materials used for covering the body.
charisma:	Special gift of inspiration; leadership quality.
chisel:	Tool for carving stone and wood.
cityscape:	An actual or depicted view of a city; city scenery.
civilization:	A stage of human development from a simple to a complex way of life.
civil lines:	The civilian or non-military portion of a town or city during British colonial rule, with residences of government officials etc.
code:	Set of rules; law.
collage:	Work of art made from bits and pieces of paper, wood, cloth, earth, sand etc. put together with drawing and painting.
column:	Long, vertical pillars of a building.
conjure:	Use magic; juggle.
connoisseur:	Person who knows and loves art or other good things of life.
contemplation:	Meditation; deep thinking.
contemporary:	Events, persons of the same date and age.
contrive:	To bring about; invent; manage to do something.
cosmos:	The harmonious order and harmony of the heavenly bodies, including the Earth and everything else in space.
counterpart:	A person or thing which closely resembles another; one who has the same position and responsibility as another.
craftsman:	A person skilled in making useful things.
culture:	Intellectual, artistic and social excellence of a person, people and society.

D

deify:	To make a god of human beings, animals or any other thing.
derelict:	Abandoned house; homeless person.
design:	An outline, sketch or plan; pattern of artistic work.

devadasi:	A female temple dancer; slave girl.
dhayana:	Deep thinking; contemplation.
dimension:	Measure; size as length, breadth, thickness and time.
divinity:	A god or goddess; celestial being.
double:	Persons who look like one another; an actor who plays two roles in one play.
dredge:	To gather objects and materials from the bed of a river, lake or harbour; to bring out with a machine made for the purpose.
darbar:	The court of a ruler.

E

emperor:	A king of a vast kingdom like the ancient Indian and Mughal emperors.
environment:	Surroundings.
epic:	Tale of heroes and heroines.
etching:	Picture printed from an etched (engraved) metal plate.
ewer:	Pitcher with a spout and handle; oriental pitcher.
exaggeration:	A tall tale; to magnify anything beyond the limit of truth.
Exclusive:	Excluding all but what is specified; restricted or limited to; high-class.

F

fable:	Animal stories like the tales of Bidpai and Aesop.
façade:	Face of building toward street or open space; frontal, outward appearance.
facsimile:	Exact copy of writing and printing.
feminine:	Of female sex; of women; womanly.
figurine:	Small statue or toy.
folklore:	Old popular tales of a people, like Hir and Ranjah.
formal:	Outward form, shape, appearance.

G

genre:	A style, especially of art or literature.
granite:	A kind of hard stone.

- grotesque:** Distorted, bizarre; also painting and sculpture with fantastic human and animal forms.
- grove:** Small wood; group of trees; clearing in a forest.

H

- headgear:** Any covering or protection for the head like the cap, turban or helmet.
- hieroglyph:** The ancient Egyptian writing; picture-writing.
- higgledy-piggledy:** In confusion.
- horticulture:** Art of garden cultivation.

I

- icon:** Image; painting or statue of Christ and Mary in the Eastern Church.
- illuminate:** To decorate a manuscript with coloured designs or patterns.
- incarnation:** God born as a human being in many religions of the world.
- inchoate:** Just begun; undeveloped.
- incoherent:** Unintelligent; confused.
- instinctive:** Action, though without conscious design; unconscious response; automatic reaction.

K

- karma:** The life and action of a person which determines how he/she will be born again in the next life; destiny according to Buddhist and Hindu belief.

L

- landscape:** Painting of the land or natural scene.
- landmark:** Fixed, conspicuous object to mark a locality, or its boundary or to guide travellers and ships at sea; an event by which an era or a significant event is remembered.
- legend:** A story of heroes and holy men.

- lozenge:** Diamond figure.
lurid: Light produced by lightning and smoky fire.

M

- Mahavira:** The greatest hero; the name of the founder of the Jain religion.
malang: Beggars found round a saint's tomb.
manufacture: Making of things on a large scale with hand or machine.
masterpiece: Work of the highest quality.
materialism: Tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.
medieval: Relating to the historical period known as the Middle Ages (AD 1000 to 1400).
missile: Object thrown from a distance by hand or machine.
monument: Historical building; structure raised to remember people or events.
mural: Large painting done directly on the wall or on a canvas which is then fixed to the wall.
mythology: Stories of gods and goddesses in Greek literature and Hindu religious books; religious stories.

N

- namaze**
janaza: Muslim funeral prayer.

O

- oriental:** Of the east.

P

- pasture:** Land covered with grass.
patron: One who gives support and protects.
peepul: A tree native to north India.
persecution: Harassment; harm or damage done out of enmity.
Persepolis: The capital of Sassanid Iran destroyed by Alexander.
plight: Sorry condition.
predecessor: One who comes before or precedes.
primitive: Early; ancient; people of early societies; life and thought

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- profile:** before society became complex; original.
puja: Side view of the human face.
 The Hindu prayer.
purification: Washing off pollution; cleansing; ritual act of cleansing like bathing or the *wuzu*.

R

- raag:** Subcontinental classical music.
raagani: The feminine version of subcontinental classical music.
raja: King; ruler.
raj: The British rule over the subcontinent.
realistic: Art, literature true to observation from life and nature.
recycle: Repeat use of waste like paper, glass etc.
rehal: Wooden support on which the Quran is kept for recitation.
relief: Carving on a flat surface of stone or wood.
replica: Copy; duplicate of the original.
ritual: Religious rite.
rubai: A form of Urdu, Persian poetry.
rural: Living in or situated in the country; pastoral or agricultural; plain; simple.

S

- sadhu:** Indian religious mendicant.
sanctuary: Protected place of worship; place of protection.
seascape: A picture or view of the sea.
sentinel: Guard.
smelting: To melt ore to obtain the metal it contains.
space: Extension between objects without reference to them; blank between letters; large region; interval between time.
spirit: Immaterial but intelligent part of the body; a person's mental and moral quality; shadowy figures like ghosts; a kind of liquid used in medical science.
statuette: Tiny statue; figurine.
streamline: Smooth flow; the shape of cars, planes etc. designed for speed and efficiency; to modernize.

- stupa:** A domed building erected as a Buddhist shrine.
Sumeria: An ancient region of south-west Asia in present-day Iraq, comprising the southern part of Mesopotamia.

T

- technology:** The branch of knowledge which deals with industrial arts and sciences; utilization of this knowledge.
telepathy: Communication between one person and another at a distance without any means of communication.
terracotta: Durable clay baked to brown or dull orange colour in a kiln; sculpture or toy made of this clay.
terrain: A tract of land.
torso: Trunk of a statue without head and limbs.

U

- urban:** Living in or situated in a town or city.

V

- Veda:** The holy book of the Aryans.

Y

- yakshi:** The female tree spirit of Buddhist art.

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