

FEROZSONS

THE GREAT MASTERS
SERIES

USTAD BASHIR UD DIN

THE LAST MASTER FROM LAHORE SCHOOL OF PAINTERS



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Ferozsons – The Great Masters Series

USTAD BASHIR UD DIN

The last master from Lahore School of Painters

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Front: *While Reading*, water-colour on paper.

Back: *Lady with a Peacock*, water-colour on paper.

Portrait by Amin ur Rehman, Encaustic on paper.

Typeset in 11 on 15 point Palatino

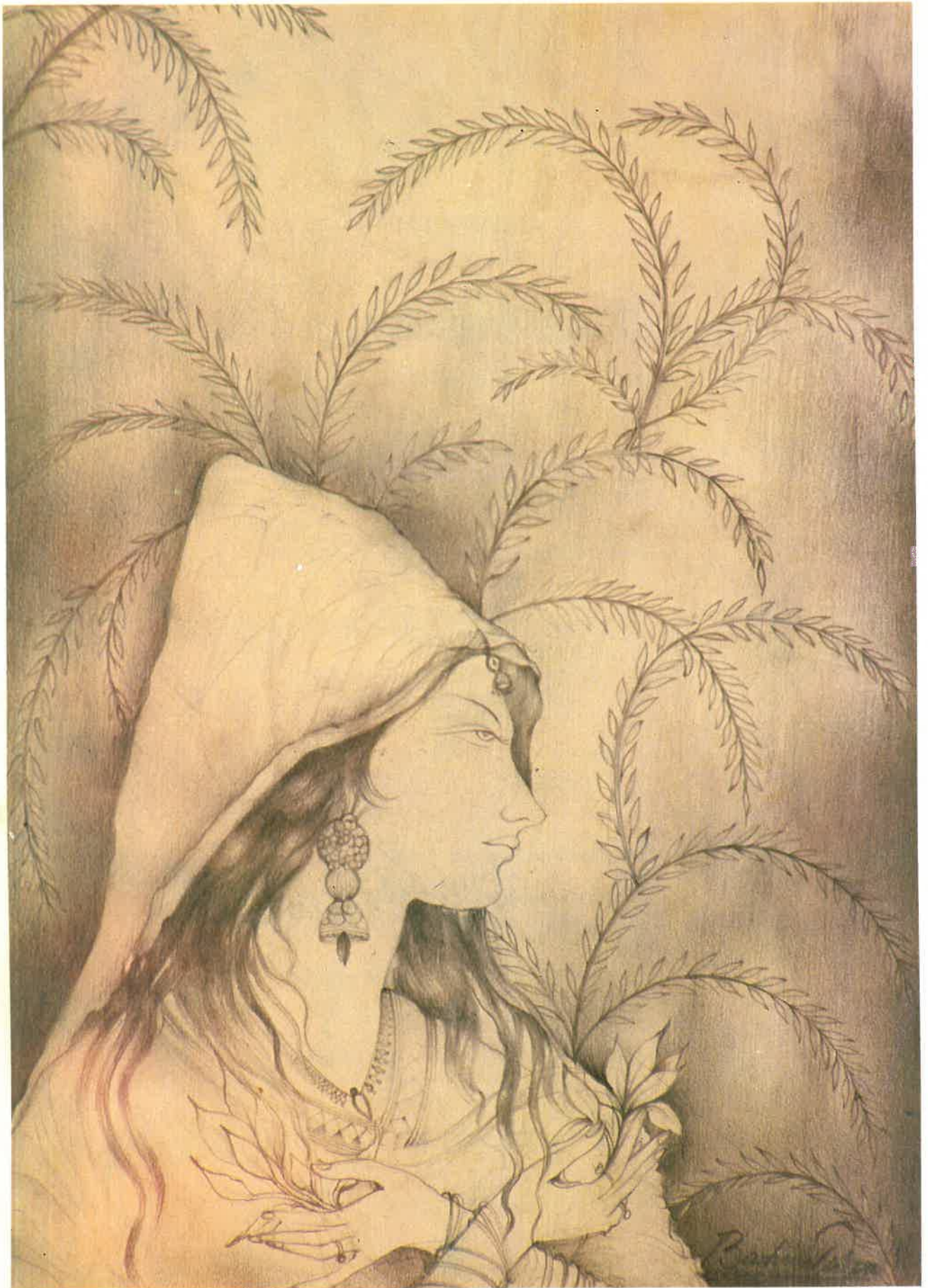
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DEDICATED

TO USTAD BASHIR UD DIN





Pl. 1: A Lady with Flowers, pencil drawing.

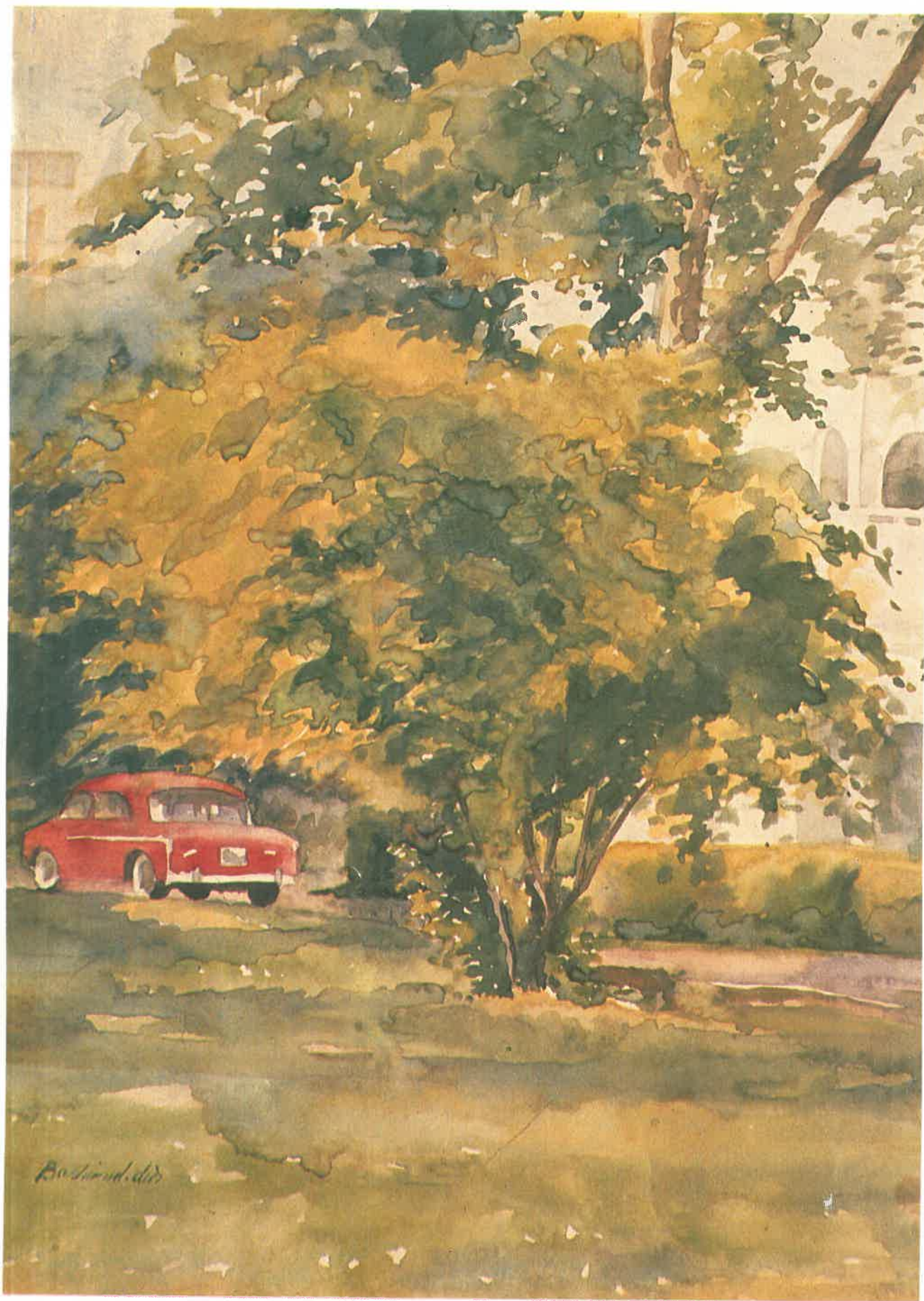
PREFACE

It was in the 1940 that the Lahore School of Painting acquired a flavour that made it distinct from the Bengal School which pioneered the move away from the British colonial artistic vision. The desire to recreate an illusion of nature was replaced by the desire to rediscover the aesthetic history of the subcontinent in defiance of the western norms of beauty. This setting up of a parallel aesthetic which dwelt upon an idealized revival of subcontinental form and content was the romantic artistic accompaniment to the Freedom Movement. Ustad Bashir ud din's work unabashedly celebrates those times. Together with many other artists in Lahore, Ustad Bashir ud din's work incorporates a vision which is sensuous and delicate and alludes to a whole range of historical references. The human figure is inevitably idealized, its movement and form accentuated and defined by undulations of ever moving lines. Lines more with ease into the complexity of pattern, which respects the two-dimensionability of the picture-plane. A narrative is present, but the events are not of a particular moment. The context widens to gain the appearance of a mythical experience. The world is a gentle place in Ustad Bashir ud din's work. It emerges as a refined, poetic place, seductive but only in an undertone.

The Ustad's gentleness was the hallmark of his years as a teacher at the Mayo School of Arts, his alma mater, which later became the National College of Arts. He witnessed and participated in the training of generations of artists and designers. His unobtrusive presence in the classroom, guided students into the use of line as a basic component of their vocabulary. There are obvious links in his draining style with his contemporaries as well as his predecessors like Abdur Rehman Chughtai. The water-colour wash technique as practised by the painters of the Lahore School ensured a subtle and subdued palette, delicately enhanced and accented to ensure the presence of a lively allegiance to pattern and ornamentation. The delight in the tendering of a rich craft tradition was a reoccurring element and provides a fascinating insight into links between the fine and applied arts of the time. The persistence of pattern and motif as an essential ingredient and complement to the figure reveals it as a possible antidote to the popular Victorian genres in painting.

There is little documentation of the painting being done in Lahore at the turn of the century upto 1947. It is most valuable to have the work of Ustad Bashir ud din available under a little known era.

SALIMA HASHMI



Entrance of NCA, Lahore.

USTAD BASHIR UD DIN

LAST MINIATURE PAINTER OF PRE-INDEPENDENCE GENERATION

All the great achievements of Pakistani painting for centuries were in the field of miniatures. It began as manuscript illustration and then single paintings began to be made in the same small size and style which became characteristic of miniature painting. Sometimes, though rarely, the size was large but it was the style that marked it out as a miniature. First of all, they are all coloured drawings, which means that they are first carefully drawn to the last detail and then coloured. Secondly, they are either portraits or face or figure studies or compositions that tell a story. They are always thematic. Thirdly, they are figurative. Landscape or architectural setting may appear in the background but is hardly ever the main subject. Fourthly, the gestures and postures of the figures are highly stylized though this may change from age to age. Fifthly, the medium used is water-colour but applied layer on layer to make it opaque. The pigment is water soluble but mixed with glue or other thickener and binder. Sixthly, the emphasis on detail, such as jewellery is common, and finally, the application of colour in small dots, called *pardakht*, makes it a laborious technique, which today's "artist in haste" will rarely care to pursue. So in many cases, the olden stippling technique has been replaced by the Western wash technique of water-colour painting, though retaining the opaqueness. In the end it may be mentioned that the word miniature comes from the Latin *minium* which means red oxide of lead or the vermilion colour that was used for drawing in

olden times. Only in a secondary sense has it come to mean a small painting but as pointed out above, some miniature paintings can be quite large. Thus the famous earliest series of Mughal paintings illustrating the story of Amir Hamza were 27 x 27 inches (on a folio of 29 x 22 inches).

MINIATURE IN EARLY 20TH CENTURY

The generous patronage of miniature painters by the Mughal rulers is well-known and the museums of the world are full of masterpieces of Mughal miniature painting.

The fall of the Mughals in 1857 marked the end of an era in Delhi and northern India but in the north-west and Punjab, power had already passed to the Sikhs 90 years earlier when Ahmad Shah Abdali went back to Kabul after defeating the Sikh in 1767 but without being able to suppress them. Sikh rule or misrule and anarchy prevailed all over the Punjab until a strong ruler in the person of Ranjit Singh established his sway in 1792 and conquered Lahore in 1799.

Many artists and other master craftsmen took refuge in the courts of the many rajas and nawabs who ruled in nearby regions, especially in Rajasthan and the Kangra hill states. When they found peace and security in Lahore, many of them returned. Ranjit Singh and the other Sikh lords and chieftains were avidly fond of getting their portraits made, especially sitting on a chair or a horse. They were not interested in paintings of any other subject.

The most prominent painter of Ranjit Singh's times was Mian Ahmed Bux Sahhaf who maintained a studio where apprentices learnt miniature painting, arabesque decoration (naqqashi), illumination, calligraphy, paper making and binding. The favourite artist of Ranjit Singh was Mian Mohammed Bux who could dash off a sketch portrait of the Sikh chieftains with incredible speed and fidelity. His son Karim Bux too was equally adept in portraiture and a *mohalla* (quarter) in Lahore is named after him: Haveli Karim Bux. The works of two artists of the Sikh period, Faizullah and Faqirullah have been published in their books "Mughal Art" and "Musulman Art" (respectively) by Vincent Smith and Blochet.

When the British conquered the Punjab in 1849, conditions became more propitious for the practice of the arts of peace. In 1875 the Mayo School of Arts was established in Lahore, where Ustad Bashir ud din studied. The traditional centre of art education, however, was the Wazir Khan Mosque, in whose hujras (rooms around a quadrangle) were occupied by many men of art as well as men of God. Among them was Baba Miran Bux, to whom the famous artist A. R. Chughtai has referred as his teacher. He died in 1920. His son Mian Hayat Bux too was a master of arabesque and painting. There is in the Lahore Museum a set of portraits of the Mughal Emperors in the form of a genealogical table by him. He died in 1960. Chughtai has given a long list of artists who lived in Lahore in recent times, that is in the early years of this century, such as Mohammed Bux Naqqash, Ilahi Bux Musavvir (painter), Nabi Bux Musavvir, Mehru Naqqash, Imamdin Naqqash and Musavvir, Besides many others. When Mayo School of Arts opened in 1875, the Principal, J. L. Kipling, took Master Miran Bux on the teaching staff. But Chughtai has himself described the sad condition of artists in still earlier years by narrating how Mohammed Bux, son of Imamdin, used to hang a sheet of cloth outside the *hammam* of Wazir Khan Mosque, inside Delhi Gate in Lahore, and display on it pictures of popular heroes and heroines, of legend or history, such as Laila-Majnoon, Heer-Ranga, Khwaja Khizr, Sohni-Mahiwal, and even pictures of a horse, an elephant, a lion or a parrot. These were sold for a paisa or two. According to the eminent artist A. R. Chughtai, "the Lahore

School of Painting, of which the last vestige was Mohammed Bux Musavvir, had reached the ultimate decline and degeneration, or rather had come to an end. He was employed in the railways..." This means that he lived sometime towards the end of the 19th century.

NEW ART

With the setting up of the Mayo School of Arts in Lahore in 1875, a new kind of art was introduced and popularized, namely realistic drawing of vases, statue heads and other objects, as also designs and patterns for use on local handicrafts. Painting was not in the curriculum and least of all, miniature painting. The idea was to train better designers for local handicrafts and for this purpose also was started the "Indian Journal of Art and Industry". Architectural drawings and architectural decorations in arabesque style, found on our old buildings, were copied by the Lahore artists connected with the Mayo School of Arts and published in this journal.

At about the same time, a momentous development in art was taking place in Calcutta in the very early years of the 20th century. Here another art school had been set up by the British and on the staff was the eminent Abanandranath Tagore. He first learnt the Western technique of water-colour from British teachers who were on the staff of the school and then developed a new technique of water-colour "wash painting" with the help of some Japanese artists who had been attracted to Calcutta by the nationalist and orientalist ideas of the great Rabindranath Tagore.

When A. R. Tagore introduced the teaching of this style in the Calcutta School, with the encouragement of the Principal E. M. Havel, among the first group to graduate from this class was S. N. Gupta. In 1913 he joined the teaching staff of Mayo School of Arts and, although, painting was not in the regular curriculum of the school, he started holding classes on his own, soon after joining. Among his pupils in this class were Mian Inayatullah, Mian Abdul Rehman Ejaz and Mian Mohammed Hussain. Chughtai was a student in the school from 1911 to 1914 but he did not join the class and preferred to pick up the new technique from his friends who were in the class. The presence of Roop Krishna in Lahore, who was another of the early pupils of A.



Pl. 2: Furrukh Saair, Haji Muhammad Sharif, water-colour.

R. Tagore, further strengthened the trend towards adopting this new technique of miniature painting in preference to the old and more laborious one.

With the new technique, there was also a new range of subjects, especially, idealized and romanticised visions of olden heroes and heroines of legend, mythology and religion, as also dreamy illustrations of poetry or poetical themes, like village maidens at the village well or at the bathing pool or the distraught lover-cowherd playing on his pipe. Whereas, Mughal painting, so far practised by the Lahore artists, was idealized realism, mainly portraiture, the New Bengal School, as it was called, was derived from the more poetical Ajanta Cave paintings and also from the more emotionally charged and more colourfully executed Rajput paintings.

The popularity of this new style was such that it

swept the country from Calcutta to Lahore. A. R. Chughtai was the most eminent practitioner of this technique and style in Lahore, while others were Jalaluddin Chughtai, Latif Chughtai, Inayatullah, Mohammed Hussain Qadri and many more. The movement was at its zenith in the 1920s and 30s but lost popularity in the 40s because it was recognized as being too sentimental, nostalgic, illustrative and contrived. It was a sign of the times that some of the Lahore artists, like Abdur Rehman Ejaz and Mohammed Hussain Qadri turned more and more to Western type oil painting.

BASHIR UD DIN'S EMERGENCE

It is against this background that we have to study the rise and development of Bashir ud din's art. But first, a brief account of his life may be interesting and appropriate.



Pl. 3: Spring Time, water-colour.

He was born on 11 July, 1922, at Qasur, as the youngest of five brothers and five sisters. His father, Mian Fazal Din, worked for the railways and there was no tradition or background of art in the family. His mother died when Bashir ud din was twelve, and this made him still more quiet, thoughtful and aloof, which he was by nature from the beginning.

His father had moved to Lahore after retirement and there Bashir ud din received elementary education in the schools till he was fourteen. In 1936, some family friend suggested that he should join the Mayo School of Arts for the Commercial Design course, as a useful vocational training suitable for one in his circumstances. In those days students used to get stipends for studying in the Mayo School and probably Bashir ud din found it worthwhile to continue here. So he took another course in Fine Arts which he completed from 1940 to 1944.

It seems the atmosphere of the school, the congenial company of art-loving students and the caring attention of the devoted teachers held him down magnetically to his alma mater and he completed another two diploma courses in Textile Design 1944–46 and in Miniature Painting 1946–48. In the last his teacher at Mayo School was the famous Haji

Mohammed Sharif who taught miniature painting here from 1944 to 1966.

Even after spending twelve years in the Mayo School as a student, he resumed his association in 1952 and worked in the Department of Fine Arts till 1982, when he retired at the age of sixty.

As a teacher, he trained many generations of designers and artists who are now famous names.

His alma mater, which was raised to the status of the National College of Arts in 1958, honoured him by making him a Fellow of the College in 1994.

It is reported by his family that even after his retirement, he has not rested for a single day and has diligently pursued his creative work as an artist. The result is that he has given the world a body of work numbering about five hundred paintings, which is his lifelong contribution to art. This has been possible because of his single-minded devotion and his retiring, reclusive style of life. He hardly ever goes out for visits though he occasionally welcomes visits from his small circle of friends or even strangers who might be interested in his art. He neither drinks nor smokes though he sometimes relents in his austerity so far as to enjoy the pleasure of a betel leaf (*paan*).

His modesty is such that in almost sixty years of artistic activity, he never held a solo exhibition till February, 1992. It goes to the credit of the Lahore Gallery that they took the initiative to bring the work of this consummate master before the public in sufficient number and variety to make an impact on the public. He had of course taken part in many group exhibitions but the extraordinary range and variety and sustained mastery could only become evident in a fullscale solo show. For a calm, quiet and contented man, it is for others, the lovers of art, to discover and display and explore the riches and treasures of the art world he has created. Just as the exhibition of 1992 was a pioneering effort in that direction, so too this small book is meant to pay tribute to the master artist and to reveal to the art lovers the beauties of a whole new oeuvre which is the gift of Ustad Bashir ud din to the art world.

Before taking up a discussion of his work, a few words may be appropriated about the artist as a family man. He is happily married to a lady from the famous family of the pioneers of Urdu journalism, the owners of the "Paisa Akhbar" of Lahore.



Pl. 4: Green Valley, Abdur Rehman Chughtai, water-colour.

He has been blessed with five children of whom two are sons. One of them, Amin ur Rehman, is a modern, highly innovative artist, perhaps the only contemporary Pakistani painter experimenting in Encaustic technique. His younger brother, Saleem ur Rehman who has established his name as a creative architect in Lahore, while the youngest daughter, Nasira Bashir is following in the footsteps of her father and is pursuing the difficult vocation of a miniature painter. It is most gratifying that what he learnt and developed himself in this now neglected field is being passed on into the safe hands of his daughter who is carrying the torch of our traditional age old painting in this time and age.

CRITIQUE OF THE ARTIST'S WORK

It must be evident from the variety of courses that he took at the Mayo School of Arts, that he is a manysided artist. He is not only a miniature painter but a master of *naqqashi* or design or arabesque. He can freely and effortlessly scribble those unending interlinked patterns and designs that are the marvel of the beholder. No wonder some of his work was snapped up by textile manufacturers for their fabrics.



Pl. 6: Kathak X, Nasira Bashir – pencil and ink on paper.

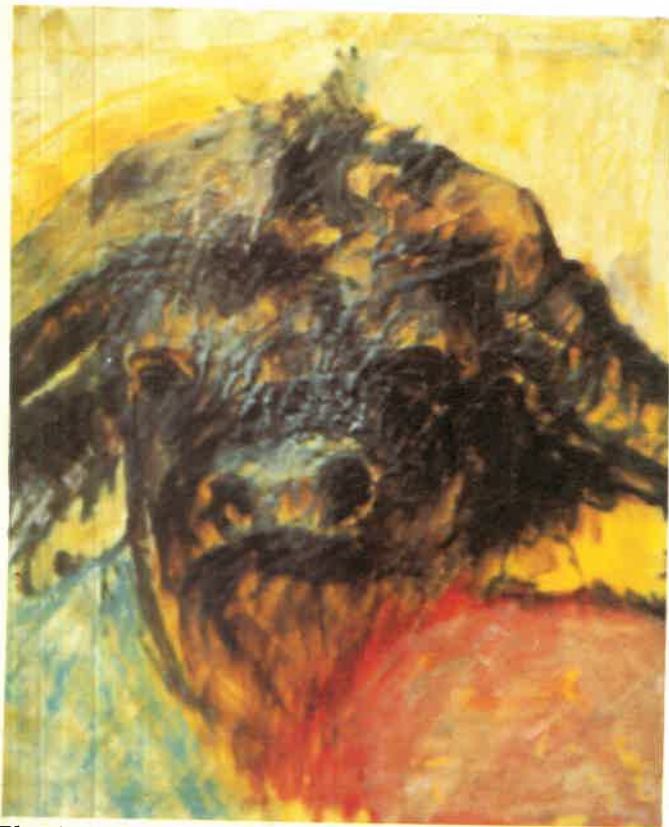
Likewise, he has drawn endless series of ever new designs of vases of different designs and profiles and surface decoration. This is grist for the mills of the ceramics industry.

His command of human figure drawing is such that with pen and ink he can create on paper gaily dressed village women with their skimpy blouses and heavily gathered skirts, swaying forward gracefully, while a water pitcher is balanced on their heads.

There are even sketchily drawn and somewhat realistically executed rural scenes: processions moving through wild country, in the form of lines of camels, richly caparisoned, carrying equally ornate damsels while the menfolk walk along, carrying the inevitable water pitcher.

Then there are even water-colour landscapes in the Western technique of successive washes. These have heavy shadows to create the third dimension and the feeling of ponderousness, the same rough treatment of tree foliage and water, and, above all, the effect of distance and receding planes.

But quite obviously, all this is dated work and no more than a vestige of bygone times.



Pl. 5: Moments of Silence, Amin ur Rehman – Encaustic on paper.



Pl. 7: Lady with Peacock, water-colour.



Pl. 8: Lady with Flowers, water-colour.

MINIATURE PAINTINGS

His real contribution lies in the scores of paintings that he has made in the miniature style of the New Bengal School of the Calcutta artists and also of Chughtai, Inayatullah, M. H. Qadri and many others of Lahore who were active in the 1920s, 30s and even in the 40s.

Here it is necessary to differentiate between technique and style. Technique is the craft side which refers to the nature of the tools and the material employed and to the manner of employing them.

Style is the quality and nature of the distinct image conceived by the mind of the artist – a face or figure or dress peculiar to the artist, and more important than that, the strokes of line and application of colour with which he chooses to render what he had conceived.

Obviously, the technique was invented by the Calcutta artists and adopted by many artists there and in Lahore, as also in Delhi and Lucknow. It consisted in painting a picture, which was almost always, female figures in traditional finery, and then dipping the whole sheet into large dishes of water or even placing them under a stream of water flowing from a tap. The sheet was dried and painted again and then washed. This process was repeated as many times as the artist thought necessary to get the soft, mellow effect of deeply suffused paint so admired by the followers of that school and by the romantically inclined public that came to love these effects.

The initial detailed drawing which forms the basis of all our miniature painting, both the traditional and the "New Bengal" variety, was quite washed away in the process though the whole conception remained linear. Instead of a clear, prominent line there remained only the soft edge of two areas of colour meeting along the contours of the form that is the subject of the painting, – almost always, women.

After this treatment of successive washing and painting was completed to the satisfaction of the artist, he applied some touches of gouach opaque colour for accent and emphasis where required, and even gold and silver was sometimes used to render the jewellery – but not by Ustad Bashir ud din.

This technique was different from that of the traditional Mughal and other painters who built up

layer upon layer of opaque colour and finally put the finishing touches through *pardakht* or stippling so fine that it can be made out only through a magnifying glass. The New Bengal School's technique was not so laborious though it was more time consuming.

THE STYLE

Each technique demands and creates its own style. Though both the Mughal and the Bengali techniques conceive and render the subject flat and two-dimensionally, the latter needs for its best expression large areas of flat or gently graded colour.



Pl. 9: Sohni, Ustad Muhammad Latif, water-colour.

Flowing robes and spreading vistas of background scenes and smooth, even, countenance and neck, arms, breasts are the most suitable. Full nudes too are fit subject for treatment in this style but public opinion and conservative sensibilities force the artist to add a few lines on the upper and lower figure to barely suggest certain garments and thus satisfy the requirements of modesty.

It is in keeping with the smooth, even, mellifluous character of this type of painting that in addition to many areas of soft, suffused colour, there should be gently flowing, rhythmic and sinuous lines or even a network of lines. For this, the gathers and folds of flowing robes or rustic skirts or *ghagras* offer a good excuse for display of virtuoso drawing with a fine brush. The lines are overpainted in the same colour as that of the area covered, but in a deeper tone. In fact, that goes for all linework, like the lightly indicated features of the eye, nose, lips, ears and the rest. There is never the jar or jolt of any contrasting colour. Even the plain background out of which the figure or figures emerge is only a deeper tint of the dominant colour of the main figure, usually a neutral yellowish or orangish brown but in some cases, dusky blues or greenish blues like that of far vistas at late evening. Yes, one contrast that comes naturally in face and figure painting is that of dark locks of hair framing the fair face.

USTAD BASHIR UD DIN'S STYLE

The paintings reproduced in this book are selected from the 30 put up for show in the 1992 exhibition. From these we can try to understand the distinctive quality of his work, all done during the ten preceding years.

The simplest are those in which only the face is depicted, or, shall we say, head and shoulders.

More elaborate are those in which the torso, down to the waist, is shown. Here the artist has more scope for display of skill in drawing and painting dress, jewellery, hands and arms and sometimes a flower held in the hand, or a parrot being touched lovingly with the hand.

A full figure drawing and painting calls for greater skill and offers more opportunities for display of art – both understanding of the human figure and of dresses and their decoration and of the

many folds and gathers that the period costumes of olden times, have, requiring great skill in drawing and composition.

The full figure can be sitting or standing. The full standing figure can catch the personality of the subject better, by the stance, the way the feet are placed, and the hands are held and, above all, by the placement of the head on the shoulders, whether tilted, bowed or upright. Some of the great masterpieces of Mughal art are full length portraits of Akbar, Jahangir, Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khanan, Tansen and others. Of course, there is no attempt at portraiture in any of Ustad Bashir ud din's paintings. Still, a certain personality finds expression in a full standing figure.

When a background is added to the sitting or standing figure, the element of composition becomes important and this is another value added to the painting which is of paramount importance.

Similarly, groups are more difficult to paint and more delightful to contemplate. Bashir ud din has groups of two, three and four figures, mostly busts or waist-length, but there is in this book one painting showing three full length figures dancing in a circle. Naturally, groups offer more scope for composition and the overriding value of this element is known to all students of art.

SINGLE PORTRAITS OR FACE

The largest number of paintings in this book are single faces. They cannot be called portraits because they do not depict any particular person. They are so generalized that one is hardly much different from the other. They are all expressionless, which is a long-honoured tradition of miniature painting. Another tradition of miniature painting is that the figure is never shown close-up. The Bengal School too followed the same tradition. However, once in a while, but rarely, they broke rank and came up with a close-up face painting. There is one by Ustad Bashir ud din also in this book. In this (Pl. No. 10) one can see more clearly the simple formula followed by the artist in the others too that are placed more distant in the picture field. A much larger number is in profile and these have a set pattern: long sharp nose, pointed chin, small lips (as *pistadahan* was one of the attributes of the beautiful), eyes, never too prominent, and indicated merely by



Pl. 10: Portrait of Lady, water-colour.

an arrowhead to make the sideview of the eye, and of course, arched eyebrows. The forehead is half hidden by the head covering or sometimes by thick plaited hair. Needless to say, they are all young and pretty as shown by the clean flow or the line from the chin to the smooth straight neck.

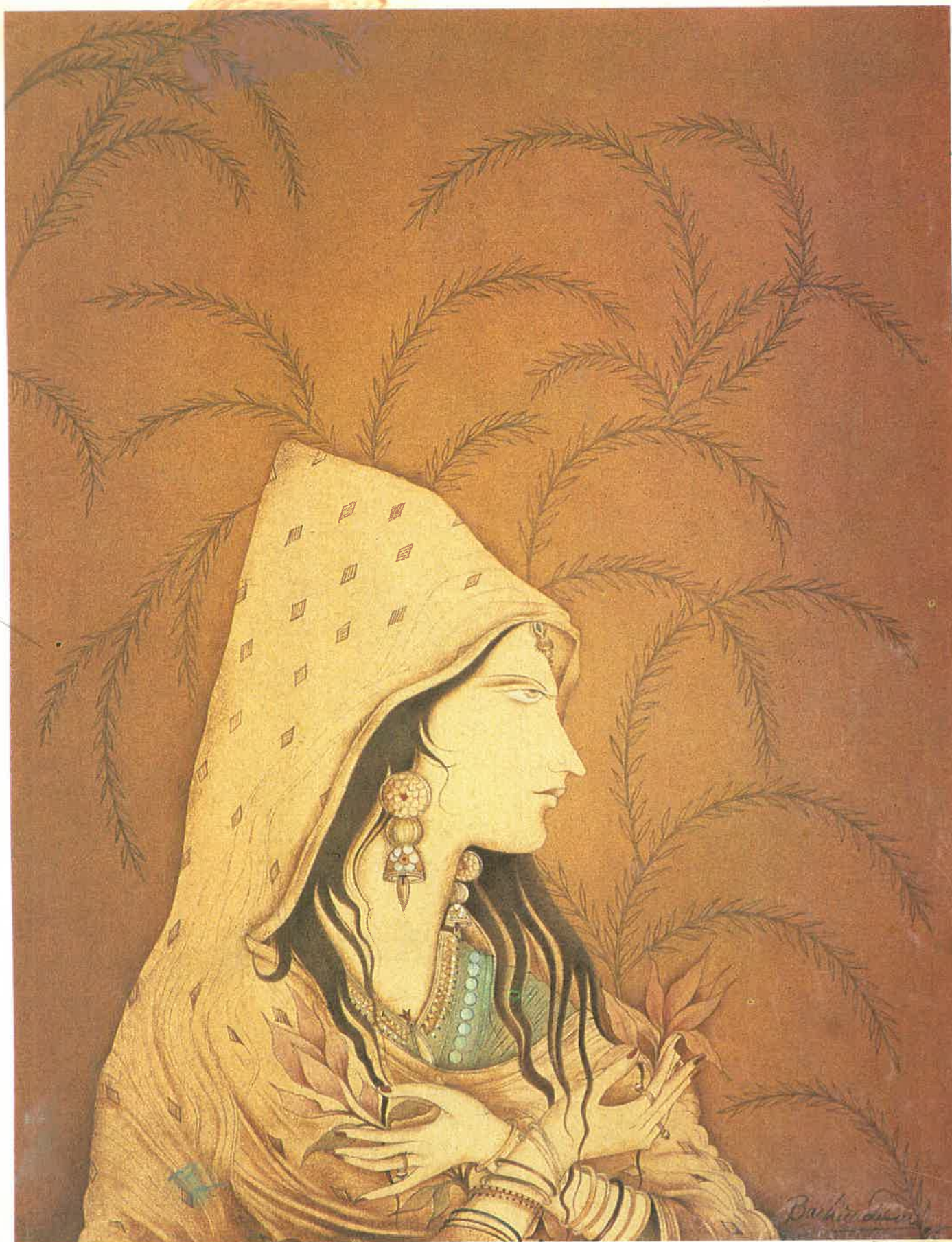
The simple, uncomplicated line of the profile, the brief little signs or symbols of the eyes and lips are not elaborated or overworked. A pretty face has

been lightly and cavalierly indicated and then the artists spends all his labour on the rest of the picture. This is the locks of hair, the earrings, the necklace, bracelets and finger-rings, and the flowers held often in both hands.

The head covering or mantle or *dupatta* also receives some attention though not much. Usually, it is given only a decorated border but sometimes there are scattered flowery designs over all the mantle.



Pl. 11: A Lady with Peacocks, water-colour.



Pl. 14: A Lady with Flowers – III, water-colour.



Pl. 15: Spring Time, water-colour.

dress, the border has been meticulously painted. Noteworthy too is the way in which the knee and foot and the whole lower body is indicated under the loose garment.

The other pious lady (Plate No. 17) is wearing a long loose robe that swathes the bowed figure as she bends low, poring on the pious book. The dress drapes the full figure from neck to foot and even the head covering seems to be a part of it, like the capes of Moroccan dresses. But that would be too

far fetched. It must be a separate mantle which only covers the head and hangs behind, without spreading over the shoulder. The long sleeves hang from the wrists and are decorated with a border and tassels.. Somehow, the same border and tassels cover the breast and therefore there must be a long flap hanging loose over the bosom which has tassels at the free lower end. Very little of the face is visible of this lady absorbed in the study of the Quran, which she holds reverently with both hands, as the book



Pl. 16: While Reading, water-colour.

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rests on a table covered with a long table cloth. So, there is much more drapery in the painting than human figure, with only part of the face, the two hands and one bare foot visible.

An old world look is still more emphasized by showing in the near background a row of tall arches,

beyond which is the parapet of the balcony, overlooking a sylvan scene of tall thin cyress trees.

The background seems to reduce the impact of the figure, unlike the previously discussed painting, in which the background was plain dusky red.



Pl. 17: Meditation - I, water-colour.



Pl. 18: After Prayer, water-colour.

The subject of a person reading the Holy Quran seems to be a favourite one with Bashir ud din. Already discussed above are two paintings showing ladies sitting bowed down over the holy book. Similar in subject and in composition is yet another painting showing in this case an old man poring

over the holy book placed before him on a low table, (Pl. No. 18) This is similar to Pl. No. 17 because in the background of both is a series of arches. Unfortunately, in the case of the old man, perhaps a royal personage, the area within the arches is dark, whereas in the case of the lady, the area is bright.

Both the whitish columns of the arches and the dark space within them happen to come right behind the turbaned head of the engrossed reader. This does not help in acting as a foil to the main picture, and rather confuses the image of the head with the columns, the parapet behind the arches and the intervening dark space between the arches. Thus the head and face of the main figure, the real subject of the painting, gets lost. In the case of the lady, her head happens to have the background of the blank and bright area between the arches and this sets off the head of the main figure. Otherwise too, the arches in the case of the old man are so big and bold and dark that they dominate and submerge the delicately drawn and painted figure of the frail old man.

All the delicately drawn and painted turban, with its plumes and decorations, as also the grand embroidered robe of this high personage is smothered under the weight of the big, bold, bare and strident arches as also by the darkness in between them. Such elegant images as that of the tall ornamental lamp placed near the book-stand and the exotically designed water ewer on the right of the figure are all lost and reduced in importance before the tall looming arches. The figure by itself would have been quite an effective and impressive creation if it were not for the inadequacy of the composition.

Yet another drawing of a sitting maiden (Pl. No. 19) shows the face and figure frontally and there is more visible of the face and the two arms, while the knee upraised and the knee outspread also are clearly indicated under the dress. The dress could be a sari but it is more likely a loose *ghagra*, while the mantle or dupatta covers half the head and falls down and across the front over to the other arm on which it dangles down. The fair waist is barely glimpsed.

In front of the lady is a table on which lie a pen and inkpot and she is holding with both hands a painting or drawing that she has completed.

This is an excellent example of the superb drawing and linework of Ustad Bashir ud din. There is great economy of lines but those that are executed show full confidence and command.

The composition too is very satisfying, for behind the figure is an old-time rectangular building with an arched gateway, well placed on the blank topleft side of the paper, facing the figure but higher up.



Pl. 19: Seated figure II, water-colour.

From the base of the building stretches an enclosing wall that goes behind the head of the figure to the other end. Over it one can see the skyline of a town. The front has been balanced by two panels which are the elevation of the platform on which the lady sits, and between these two are three steps. It is thus well rounded off and neatly balanced.

GROUPS OF FIGURES

Undoubtedly more impressive are paintings of groups of figures and these call for greater artistic acumen.

There are groups of two, three and four village maidens. Perhaps the finest of all is Pl. No. 21 in which two fetching village belles have been shown with the inevitable round water pitcher which they are supposed to fill at the village water well. The



Pl. 24: Three Ladies, water-colour.

A DANCE COMPOSITION

In the end one could discuss the most elaborate and action-filled painting, entitled "Three Ladies" (21 x 16 cm). (Pl. No. 24) Here three full-length female figures are shown dancing in a circle out in the open garden. There is a tree in the foreground at right and an open field beyond the low garden wall.

They are all tall ladies, wearing the traditional Rajasthani dress popular in this school of miniature, namely a *ghagra* or gown with heavy gathers and a very brief half sleeve blouse or *choli* plus a rather ample dupatta or mantle which partly just covers the head and dangles or waves in the wind, each in different colours. The midriff stands revealed despite all the yard-lengths of garments.

The choreography of the dance is attractively devised by the artist. In the front stands the lady

with black *ghagra*, frontally, with the two hands outspread. To right and left, at varying distance, are the two other ladies, shown sideways, "tripping lightly on their toes", with one hand waving in the air and the other spread out lower down. The two raised hands are placed symmetrically over the head of the central lady in front. The poses and the gestures fit together and harmonize excellently. The painting could be called The Three Graces, a subject that has been painted by some artists. It could also be called The Joy of Life, which is the title of a painting by Matisse. It also reminds one of a beautiful relief sculpture entitled "The Dance" by the 19th century French artist Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux, showing three dancers. Altogether, it is a very colourful, delightful and masterly painting.

LIST OF PLATES

1. A LADY WITH FLOWERS. Pencil drawing, 22 cm x 32 cm, collection Rehman, Saleem ur.
2. FURRUKH SAAIR. Sharif, Haji Muhammad – water-colour, 33 cm x 22 cm, courtesy National College of Arts, Lahore.
3. SPRING TIME. Water-colour, 33 cm x 46 cm.
4. GREEN VALLEY. Chughtai, Abdur Rehman – water-colour, 34 cm x 50 cm, courtesy Lahore Arts Council.
5. MOMENTS OF SILENCE. Rehman, Amin ur – encaustic on paper, 30 cm x 44 cm, courtesy National Art Gallery of Pakistan.
6. KATHAK X. Bashir, Nasira – pencil and ink on paper, 15 cm x 23 cm.
7. LADY WITH PEACOCK. Water-colour, 31 cm x 47 cm.
8. LADY WITH FLOWERS. Water-colour, 25 cm x 36 cm, collection Raja, Rubina.
9. SOHNI. Latif, Ustad Muhammad – water-colour, 30 cm x 40 cm, collection Hussain, Mr. Ghulam.
10. PORTRAIT OF LADY. Water-colour, 23 cm x 31 cm.
11. A LADY WITH PEACOCKS. Water-colour, 28 cm x 35 cm.
12. A LADY WITH PARROT. Water-colour, 20 cm x 29 cm.
13. A LADY WITH FLOWERS – I. Water-colour, 25 cm x 36 cm.
14. A LADY WITH FLOWERS – III. Water-colour, 28 cm x 34 cm.
15. SPRING TIME. Water-colour, 33 cm x 46 cm.
16. WHILE READING. Water-colour, 50 cm x 38 cm.
17. MEDITATION – I. Water-colour, 31 cm x 40 cm.
18. AFTER PRAYER. Water-colour, 29 cm x 46 cm.
19. SEATED FIGURE II. Water-colour, 29 cm x 46 cm.
20. WALKING HOME – I. Water-colour, 29 cm x 33 cm.
21. WALKING HOME – II. Water-colour, 30 cm x 28 cm.
22. WALKING HOME – III. Water-colour, 35 cm x 33 cm.
23. LADIES WITH PARROT. Water-colour, 20 cm x 29 cm.
24. THREE LADIES. Water-colour, 21 cm x 16 cm.

