



SOME NOTES ON HINDU ARTISTS' ROLE  
IN THE IMPERIAL ATELIER OF MUGHAL EMPEROR  
AKBAR

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In The British Museum Quarterly XX/3, 1956, pp. 62—65, plates XIX—XX, an interesting article was published on the Persian translation of the Mahābhārata, dating from the period of Mughal Emperor Akbar's reign [the transcription being dated A. H. 1007 (A. D. 1598)]. The first part of the article, entitled "A Persian Translation of the Mahābhārata" by G. Meredith-Owens, is concerned with historical remarks about the Persian text and its origin; the second part, "A Note to the Miniatures" deals with artistic illustrations of the manuscript. Its author, R. H. Pinder-Wilson, relates the importance of Hindu painters, who participated considerably in the work of the Akbar's atelier, for the illustration of this Persian text of the classic Indian epic.

I take the opportunity to show, on another manuscript of Akbar's period, how extensively Hindu painters contributed to the illustration of a manuscript, the subject-matter of which was remote to Indian artists<sup>1</sup>) and I will document this by results obtained from the analysis of the selection of 34 miniatures from Rashīdu'd-dīn's Persian manuscript "Jāmi' u't-tavārikh". This manuscript is dated 27th Ramazān A. H. 1004 (A. D. 25th May 1596) and has 304 folios written in a clearly readable nasta'liq and 98 miniatures, the property of the Imperial Library of Teheran.

The selection was made in 1956 and its coloured photographs were taken by W. and B. Forman at the Exhibition of Iranian Miniature, which was held in Prague in April 1956 and where, by courtesy of the Imperial Library of Teheran, Rashīdu'd-dīn's manuscript figured among the many precious exhibits. The purpose of the mentioned selection was to serve as an artistic publication meant for a wider circle of readers.<sup>2)</sup>

The miniatures are a typical example of the way the painters took part in the artistic work of the Imperial atelier. All of these miniatures, with the exception of ill. No. 117 (608)<sup>3)</sup> and 120 (620), are signed by — or, strictly speaking, attributed to various artists, as the miniaturists did not sign them themselves; their names are written in the same handwriting, probably by the scribe of the Court Chamber. The names of the painters and data concerning their contribution to the miniatures are mentioned in the right, sometimes in the left bottom corner, below the illustration itself.

On ill. No. 117 (608) a strip of white paper is pasted over the place where the data about painters are usually given; likewise, the names of the painters have not been preserved on ill. No. 120 (620) which is somewhat larger than the others. It is possible that during a later adaptation of the manuscript, not done by an expert, the text had been clipped off to make the size of the folio correspond to that of the manuscript in its present form. The photographic reproductions of ill. No. (327), 93 (465) and 117 (582) reveal only incomplete data. On ill. No. 60 (327) and 93 (465) the names of the authors of the drawing are not to be found, no data are photographed on ill. No. 114 (582). We find an illegible name on ill. No 109 (544) which is the name of the painter who made the drawing.

The photographic reproductions of the selection of 34 miniatures show, on the whole, 37 names of Mughal artists, whose share in the execution of the miniatures is not equal. Generally three miniaturists performed one subject-matter together [ill. No. 1 (1), 4 (10?), 9 (91), 19 (130), 22 (145), 23 (154), 25 (159), 29 (179), 37 (207), 43 (251), 46 (259), 68 (354), 93 (465), 112 (568), 113 (578), 118 (610), 119 (613)]. One of them made the drawing of the miniature, designed by the Arabian term “ṭarah”, the second did the colouring. For this discipline the Arabian word “‘amal” is used, and in two instances, the Persian term “kār” [ill. No. 9

[91], 10 [99]]. The portrait is designated by the term “chihranāmī” or, inversely “nāmīchihra” or simply “chihra” [ill. No. 6 (77), 10 (99)].

The miniatures No. (3) (the first number is not to be found), 5 (52), 6 (77), 13 (108), 52 (292), 60 (327), 61 (328), 102 (514), 104 (520), 2, 109 (544) are the work of two artists, who did not participate equally. The collaboration “tarah ... °amal” prevails [ill. No. (3)?, 5 (52), 13 (108), 52 (292), 60 (327), 61 (328), 102 (514), 129 (544); as to ill. No. (3) it is possible that a portraitist took part, too, and that his name had been pasted over during an unexpert restoration]. In this case “°amal” means obviously more than mere colouring and includes also the work of the portraitist. The second variation is the division of the work into “tarah va chihra ...” and “°amal ...” [ill. No. 6 (77), 10 (99), 68 (354), 119 (613)] where the creative contribution of the first artist and the mechanical nature of the colourist’s work are quite evident. The last combination of the collective work of two authors, mentioned by the published selection, is the division of work into “°amal” and “chihranāmī” [ill. No. 104 (520):2].<sup>4</sup> In the last case only the portrait painting is made separately, while everything else, the drawing and its colouring is the work of the first artist.

Four of the miniatures are not in the form of artistic cooperation. They bear the term “tarah va °amal” [ill. No. 74 (384)] or simply “°amal” [ill. No. 89 (439), 104 (520):1, 111 (535)]. Here the word “°amal” expresses the whole creative activity of the painter, from the artist’s conception to its realization.

The following table gives the names of the painters in alphabetical order and the number of the miniatures on which the artists had worked.

NAME <sup>5)</sup> of PAINTER	NUMBER <sup>6)</sup> of MINIATURE
°Abdullāh	(3) a <sub>1</sub>
Anant	13 (108) a <sub>1</sub>
Bandī	68 (354) a
Banvārī Khurd	43 (251) a
*Basāvan	1 (1) t; 4 (10?) t; 61 (328) t; 119 (613) t, ch
Bhagavān	37 (207) a

<i>Bhīm Gujarātī</i>	4 (10?) a; 93 (465) a
<i>Dā'ud</i>	52 (292) a <sub>1</sub>
<i>Dhanrāj</i>	113 (578) a
<i>Dhanū</i>	10 (99) a; 102 (514) a <sub>1</sub> ; 111 (553) a <sub>2</sub>
<i>Dharamdās</i>	68 (354) ch; 118 (610) ch
<i>Jaḡjīvan</i>	5 (52) a <sub>1</sub>
<i>Jaḡjīvan Kalān</i>	19 (130) a; 60 (327) a <sub>1</sub>
<i>Jamshīd</i>	112 (568) a
* <i>Farrukh</i>	9 (91) t
<i>Gobind</i>	25 (159) a
<i>Kamāl Chelah</i>	46 (258) ch
<i>Kesū Khurd</i>	118 (610) a
* <i>Kesū Kalān</i>	25 (159) t
<i>Khem</i>	6 (77) a
* <i>Khemkaran</i>	89 (439) a <sub>2</sub> ; 104 (520): 1a <sub>2</sub>
* <i>La<sup>c</sup>l</i>	(3) t; 6 (77) t, ch; 10 (99) t, ch; 19 (130) t; 22 (145) t; 23 (154) t; 37 (207) t; 46 (258) t; 52 (292) t; 112 (568) t; 118 (610) t
* <i>Mādhū</i>	1 (1) ch; 19 (130) ch; 37 (207) ch; 43 (251) ch; 112 (568) ch; 113 (578) ch
* <i>Mahes</i>	25 (159) ch
<i>Mākar</i>	29 (179) a
<i>Mani</i>	9 (91) a
<i>Manohar</i>	4 (10?) ch
* <i>Miskīn</i>	5 (52) t; 13 (108) t; 74 (384) a <sub>2</sub> ; 102 (514) t; 109 (554) t; 113 (578) t
<i>Muḡammad Kashmīrī</i>	46 (258) a
* <i>Mukund</i>	29 (179) t; 43 (251) t; 93 (465) ch
<i>Nanhā</i>	9 (91) ch
<i>Paras</i>	61 (328) a <sub>1</sub>
<i>Rāmdās</i>	22 (145) a

* <i>Sānvlah</i>	23 (154) ch; 29 (179) ch; 104 (520): 2ch
<i>Sūrdās Gujarātī</i>	1 (1) a <sub>1</sub> ; 119 (613) a
* <i>Tārā</i>	22 (145) ch
<i>Tirpāl</i>	104 (520): 2a <sub>3</sub>

Of the 37 names given in the list, 31 are of Indian origin (two of them, *Sūrdās* and *Bhīm*, have the attribute *Gujarātī*, which determines that the miniaturists belong to a region of an older tradition of painting than that of the Mughal). Eleven of these names belong to the most famous artists of the Akbar's atelier.<sup>7)</sup> Considering that the selection was made irrespective of the participation of Indian painters in illustrating these miniatures, the conclusion that proves the enormous share the Hindu painters had in work originating from the Imperial atelier, is the more significant.

The part taken by these painters in the artistic cooperation itself clearly shows that the superiority of the Hindu in creating miniatures is not only quantitative. When taking into account all the illustrations stating data about the authors of the drawing (totally 31 illustrations)<sup>8)</sup> that are most important for the artistic value of the miniature, we find that the share of Hindu painters amounts to as much as three quarters, i. e. 23 out of 31 miniatures.

The great importance which these Hindu painters had had for the history of painting of Akbar's period and for the further development of the Mughal school, is also shown by the fact that many of them took part in the illustration of other famous manuscripts of Akbar's period.<sup>9)</sup>

Notes:

1) The author would like to express her appreciation to Mrs. Věra Kubíčková of the Oriental Institute in Prague for the her ever-ready advice and unstinting support and to Mr. Jan Marek for his kind help in deciphering the names of Mughal artists.

2) This publication will be published in 1963 by Artia Prague.

3) The miniatures are quoted under the number stated in the middle of the top margin of the folio. The first number on the miniature is written in Arabic script and indicates the order of sequence of the miniature in the manuscript. The second number is written in Arabic figures and states the page of the manuscript. For the sake of a better differentiation I state the numbers of pages in brackets.

4) Ill. No. 104 (520) consists of two different miniatures (their lower parts) and has also different authors. For this reason, I indicate the upper part ill. No. 104 (502):1 and the lower part 104 (502):2.

5) Names of Hindu artists are printed in italics.

6) The index of the particular numbers represents the kind of artistic specialization:

t (ṭarah) = drawing of the miniature;

a (ʿamal) = realization, if concerning only colouring;

a<sub>1</sub> (ʿamal) = realization, if portrait-making is included;

a<sub>2</sub> (ʿamal) = realization of miniatures which are the work of one author;

a<sub>3</sub> (ʿamal) = realization of the whole miniature except the portrait;

ch (chihranāmi, nāmichihra, chihra) = portrait.

7) cf. ʿAbu-l Fazl ʿAllami: *The Ain i Akbari*. Translated from the original Persian, by H. Blochmann, Vol. I. Calcutta 1873, pp. 107—108 (in *Bibliotheca Indica*. B. Arab. Ser. X). In our list names marked \*.

8) The amount was obtained by considering ill. No. 104 (520) as two miniatures (two groups of artists are given on this illustration) and by deduction ill. No. 60 (327), 93 (465), 117 (608), 120 (620) where data are missing.

9) cf. Percy Brown: *India Painting under the Mughals*. Appendix A. List of Painters of the Mughal School together with their principal works. Oxford, 1924, pp. 195—198.



III. № 19. (130) — Chingiz Khan suffers thirst in the swamps of Bäljiüne and drinks water pressed out from the mud.

T. 17

Chihranāmi: Mādū  
 'amal: Jagjivan Kalān



داوست بی تو کجا که در آغوش من نهاده باشی  
 و در این آغوش من در کسب من مشغول میشدی  
 و این کسب من بود از پیش من که در این آغوش من  
 بر داشتی و در آغوش من در کسب من مشغول میشدی  
 و این کسب من بود از پیش من که در این آغوش من  
 بر داشتی و در آغوش من در کسب من مشغول میشدی

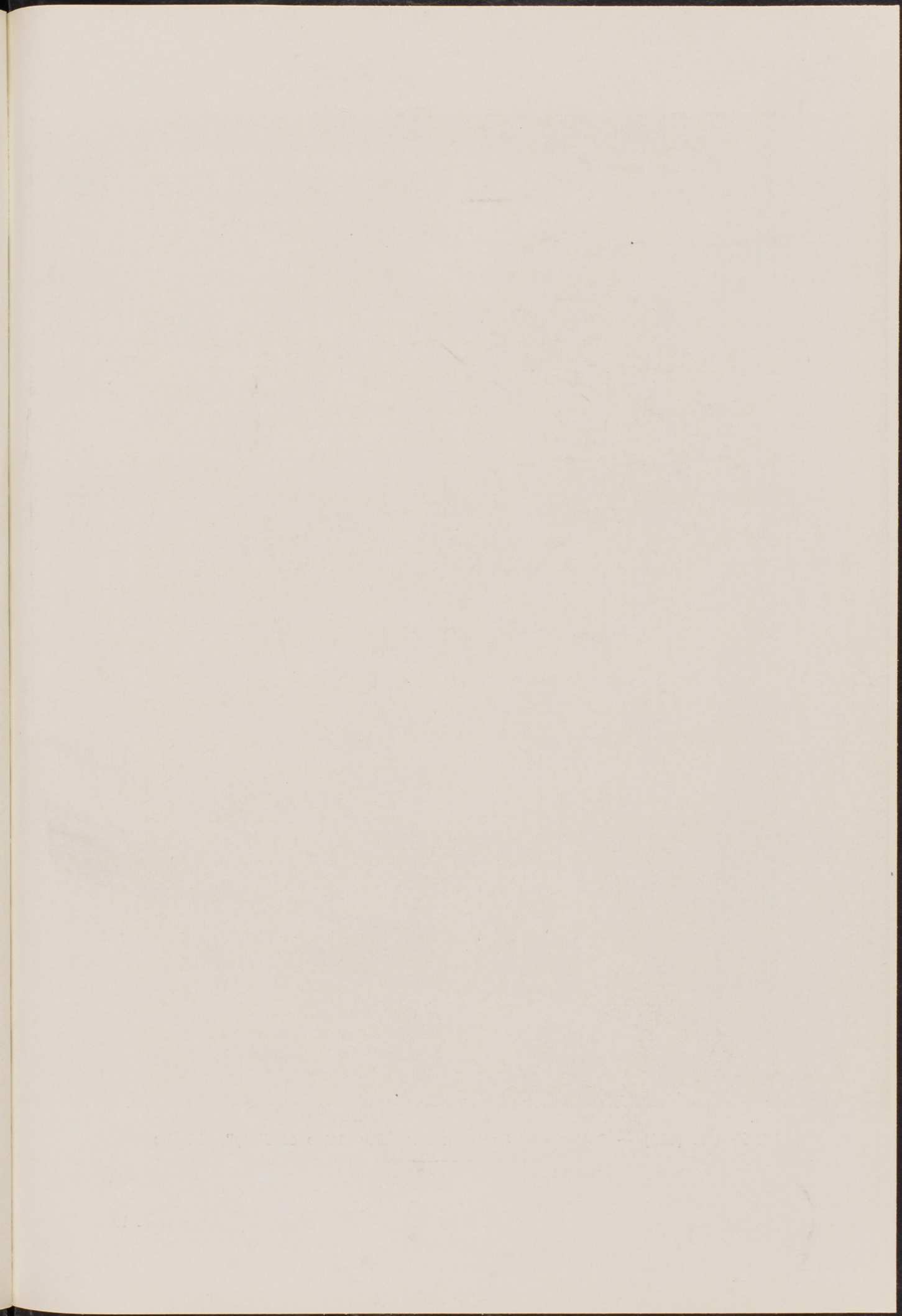


و من آن در وقت و من آن که در کف تو  
 و من آن که در کف تو که در کف تو  
 و من آن که در کف تو که در کف تو  
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مجلس باستان علی اکبر

Chihranāmi: Mādhū ‘amal: Jagjīvan Kalān  
 III. № 61. (328) — Women are crying over the coffin of Mōngke Qā‘ān  
 Taran: Basāvan  
 ‘amal: Paras







III. № 111. (553) — Sultan Ghāzān Khān has “The Gates of Piety” and the charities built in Tabriz  
 ‘amal: Dhanū