

Mughal Miniature Painting

Mughal painting is the miniature painting style that grew in north India from the sixteenth century. It continued till the mid nineteenth century.

It is known for fine technique, clear portraits, manuscript illustration, royal albums, and close study of nature.

Core identity

- A court art supported by Mughal emperors and nobles.
- A blend of Indian, Persian, and later European visual ideas.
- Made mainly for manuscripts, albums, and royal viewing.
- Famous for portraiture, court scenes, flora, fauna, and history.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q4 asks Indian, Persian and European elements.

Correction cue : do not call it only Persian art. It became an Indian court style.

Influences and Synthesis

The Mughal style did not grow in isolation. It developed through contact between Indian painting traditions and Persian court art.

Later, European prints and Christian themes entered the atelier. Artists did not copy them blindly. They absorbed useful ideas.

Three strands

- Indian: strong line, flat perspective, vivid colour, bold modelling.
- Persian: neat surface, ornate detail, garden settings, manuscript discipline.
- European: naturalism, depth, halos, angels, Madonna themes, realism.

Answer frame

Influence → feature → painting example

Use this frame in 4 or 6 mark answers.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q4 directly tests this influence comparison.

Mughal Atelier

The atelier was a royal workshop. It included calligraphers, painters, gilders, binders, colour makers, and supervisors.

Paintings recorded emperors, wars, hunts, ceremonies, rare animals, and literary stories. Many works were meant only for the royal family.

Division of work

- *Tark*: planning and composition of the page.
- *Chikaranama*: making faces and portraits.
- *Rangamizi*: colouring and finishing details.
- *Burnishing*: polishing with agate for radiance.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q3 uses this atelier and artist list.

Babur and Humayun

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Babur brought Central Asian and Persian taste with him. His Baburnama shows his love for writing, nature, gardens, and portraiture.

Humayun spent time at the Safavid court. There he saw refined miniature painting and invited Persian masters to work for him.

Key names

- Bihzad: Persian master admired by Babur.
- Mir Sayyid Ali: invited by Humayun.
- Abd us Samad: invited by Humayun, linked with early Mughal works.
- Nigâr Khana: Humayun's painting workshop and library space.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q1 asks for the two artists invited by Humayun.

Early Mughal Works

Princes of the House of Timur is linked with the early Mughal period. It shows the dynasty through historical portraits.

The format, colour, open-air setting, trees, blossoms, and royal gathering show a strong Persian base.

Why it matters

- It was a prized imperial possession.
- Later portraits of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan were added.
- It shows dynasty, legitimacy, and memory.

One-line answer

Early Mughal painting first leaned Persian, then slowly gained a distinct imperial taste.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q1 can use Princes of Timur as an early example.

Akbar's Atelier

Akbar gave Mughal painting a large organised form. Abul Fazl records that more than a hundred artists worked in the royal atelier.

Akbar used paintings to support storytelling, history, religion, and translation projects. He supervised and judged works personally.

Akbar period features

- Large manuscript projects and illustrated narratives.
- Indian and Persian artists worked together.
- Strong action, crowded space, bright colours, and bold lines.
- Hindu, Persian, Islamic, and secular themes appeared together.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q2 can use Akbar's Hamza Nama or Razm Nama project.

Hamza Nama

Hamza Nama was an illustrated account of the heroic deeds of Hamza. Akbar enjoyed both recitation and painted narrative.

The paintings were large because the narrator showed the painted folio while the story was read aloud.

Facts to remember

- Suggested date: 1567 to 1582.
- It had 14 volumes and about 1400 illustrations.
- Supervised by Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd us Samad.
- Used cloth base with paper on the back for text.

Visual reference

Spies of Hamza: diagonal action blocks
Look for bright reds, browns and strong outlines.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q2 can discuss this Akbar project.

Translation Projects

Akbar wanted cultural integration. He commissioned Persian translations and illustrations of important Sanskrit texts.

Main projects

- Razm Nama: Persian translation of the Mahabharata.
- Razm Nama was completed in 1589 under Daswant's supervision.
- Ramayana was also translated and illustrated.
- Akbar Nama recorded Akbar's political and personal life.

Artists such as Govardhan and Miskin were admired for court scenes and strong visual storytelling.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q2 accepts Razm Nama or Ramayana as favourite projects.

European Contact

European art reached the Mughal court through prints, gifts, missionaries, and trade contact.

The theme Madonna and Child shows how a Christian subject could be changed inside the Mughal atelier.

What changed

- Classical drapery and mother-child emotion entered the visual language.
- Indian details such as jewellery and fan made the image local.
- Depth, modelling, and natural observation gained more importance.

Visual reference

Madonna and Child: European theme
Indian jewellery and fan localise the image.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q4 uses this for European influence.

Jahangir's Taste

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Jahangir preferred refined single paintings, albums, natural studies, and realistic portraits. Quality mattered more than quantity.

His memoir *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* shows his curiosity^{*} about plants, animals, people, and rare objects.

Jahangir period features

- Scientific accuracy in flora and fauna.
- Muragga albums became popular.
- Illuminated margins with gold, plants, animals, and human figures.
- Single master artists became more visible.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q3 can use Abul Hasan, Bichitra and Ustad Mansur.

Jahangir Case Studies

Jahangir in Darbar is attributed to Abul Hasan and Manohar. It shows rank, identity, ceremony, and perfect portraiture.

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Jahangir's Dream by Abul Hasan presents political fantasy. Jahangir embraces Shah Abbas while standing over a symbolic globe.

Symbols

- Lion under Jahangir suggests power.
- * Sheep under Shah Abbas suggests weakness.
- Sun and moon halo with angels shows European inspiration.
- The dream image turns politics into visual symbolism.

Visual reference

Jahangir's Dream: lion + sheep + globe
Darbar: ranked courtiers and realistic portraits.

NCERT Exercise anchor: Q3 can use these two Jahangir examples.

Jahangir on an Hourglass

Jahangir enthroned on an Hourglass was painted by Bichitra. The painter includes himself in the lower corner with an offering.

The painting uses symbols instead of a normal court scene. It says that Jahangir values spiritual figures above worldly kings.

Visible ideas

- Hourglass: passing time and imperial control over time.
- Dervish: spiritual preference.
- Ottoman Sultan and King James I: global royal contact.
- Persian calligraphy: poetic explanation of the scene.

Visual reference

Hourglass: time passing below the throne
Bichitra appears with his small painted offering.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q3 can use Bichitra's Hourglass painting.

Ustad Mansur

Ustad Mansur received the title Nadir ul Asr. He is closely linked with Jahangir's love for birds, animals, and exact observation.

Falcon on a Bird Rest

- A falcon sent from Persia was painted to preserve its memory.
- The work shows close study of body, feathers, perch, and pose.

Zebra

- The zebra came from Ethiopia and was presented to Jahangir.
- Jahangir checked whether the stripes were natural or painted.
- The image later entered Shah Jahan's royal album.

Visual reference

Falcon: exact feather and perch study

Zebra: stripe study from a rare Ethiopian animal.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q3 can use Ustad Mansur's animal studies.

Shah Jahan's Style

Shah Jahan inherited a stable empire and a strong atelier. His period valued beauty, polish, formal order, and jewel-like finish.

Artists moved from Jahangir's intense naturalism toward idealisation and courtly splendour.

Style words

- Jewel-like colour and delicate fine line.
- Idealised imperial portraits.
- Sublime beauty, symmetry, and refined surfaces.
- Royal, historical, and mystical subjects.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q3 can use Shah Jahan works in the artist list.

Dara Shikoh

Dara Shikoh was Shah Jahan's eldest son. He was a scholar, poet, connoisseur, and student of Sufi and Vedantic thought.

Dara Shikoh with Sages in a Garden presents him as a thoughtful and inclusive prince.

Answer angles

- His personality was liberal and philosophical.
- He knew many languages, including Sanskrit.
- He commissioned a special album for his wife.
- His defeat by Aurangzeb changed the future of Mughal patronage.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q3 can use Bichitra's Dara Shikoh garden work.

Aurangzeb and Decline

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Aurangzeb focused more on political expansion than on raising the status of the atelier.

The royal workshop did not stop immediately. It continued to produce paintings, but patronage gradually weakened.

Later Mughal painting

- Skilled artists moved to provincial courts.
- Provincial rulers copied Mughal court taste.
- Muhammad Shah Rangila, Shah Alam II, and Bahadur Shah Zafar saw late works.
- The style merged into Provincial and Company School painting.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q3 can contrast late patronage with earlier ateliers.

Painting Process

Most Mughal miniatures were part of manuscripts or albums. Text and image were planned inside one page format.

Step-by-step

- ① Handmade paper was prepared and cut.
- ② Space was left for the visual composition.
- ③ Text area was ruled and filled by calligraphers.
- ④ The artist planned the tarh, or composition.
- ⑤ Faces and portraits were completed in chiharanama.
- ⑥ Colouring and finish were done in rangamizi.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q3 can add process terms to any artist answer.

Colours and Technique

Mughal painters made opaque colours from natural materials. The colours were ground, mixed, and applied with fine brushes.

Pigment notes

- Vermilion came from cinnabar.
- Ultramarine came from lapis lazuli. *
- Bright yellow came from orpiment.
- White came from ground shells.
- Lampblack came from charcoal.
- Gold and silver powder added luxury.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q3 can use technique terms for 100-word painting notes.

Important Paintings

Painting	Artist	Use in answer
Princes of Timur	Abd us Samad	early dynasty memory
Hamza spies	Akbar atelier	action narrative
Madonna and Child	Basawan	European theme adapted
Jahangir in Darbar	Abul Hasan + Manohar	rank portrait
Jahangir's Dream	Abul Hasan	political symbolism
Hourglass	Bichitra	time and spiritual power
Falcon	Ustad Mansur	natural study

Visual cue

Artist + painting + one visual detail

Use this table as a 100-word answer planner.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q3 asks for artists and one painting each.

Painting Study Pages

NCERT ends this chapter with painting-study pages. These are short artwork notes that help in appreciation answers.

Three more works

- Noah's Ark: Miskin, subdued colours, dramatic water and vertical perspective.
- Krishna Lifts Mount Govardhan: Miskin, Harivamsa Purana theme translated into Persian.
- Marriage Procession of Dara Shikoh: Haji Madni, Shah Jahan period, music, gifts and fireworks. *

Visual reference

Noah: ark + animals + flood drama

Krishna: mountain like umbrella

Dara Shikoh: sehra, horses, procession

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q3 can use any one of these as the 100-word painting note. *

Compare the Emperors

Babur and Humayun

- Babur gave memoir, taste, and nature writing.
- Humayun brought Persian masters and began workshop culture.

Akbar and Jahangir

- Akbar gave scale, teamwork, translation, and narrative energy.
- Jahangir gave album taste, realism, animals, and perfect portraits.

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Shah Jahan and later period

- Shah Jahan gave polish, ideal beauty, and imperial splendour.
- Later decline pushed artists toward provincial and Company styles.

NCERT Exercise anchor: Q3 benefits from this emperor-wise comparison.

Common Mistakes

- Writing only Persian influence and missing Indian plus European strands.
- Confusing Hamza Nama with Razm Nama.
- Forgetting Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd us Samad in Humayun-Akbar answers.
- Calling Jahangir's art just decorative, without naturalism and accuracy.
- Not naming examples when asked for style features.
- Writing Aurangzeb closed all painting at once. The decline was gradual.

NCERT Exercise anchor : Q1 to Q4 all need exact names plus examples.

Correction cue : Mughal art had court, history, nature and literature themes.

Quick Revision Sheet

- Main idea: Mughal miniature painting blends Indian, Persian, and European traditions.
- Best Akbar example: Hamza Nama, large illustrated narrative.
- Best Jahangir examples: Falcon, Zebra, Darbar, Dream, Hourglass.
- Best Shah Jahan keyword: jewel-like polish and idealisation.
- Technique words: tarh, chiharanama, rangamizi, burnishing.
- Pigments: cinnabar, lapis lazuli, orpiment, shells, lampblack.

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Visual revision

Akbar: Hamza action and translation projects

Jahangir: animals, albums and symbolic portraits.

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NCERT Exercise anchor : Q1 to Q4 cover artists, projects and visual elements.