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Address:-Ashok Yakkaldevi 258/34, Raviwar Peth, Solapur - 413 005 Maharashtra, India
Cell : 9595 359 435, Ph No: 02172372010 Email: ayisrj@yahoo.in Website: www.isrj.net



CULTURAL CONTRIBUTION OF MUGHALS

Manik M.Shinde

Post Doctoral Fellow Dept of History Gulbarga University, Gulbarga.

Abstract:- The greatness of the Mughal achievement in the political unification of India was matched by the splendor and beauty of the work of the architects, poets, historians, painters, and musicians who flourished in the period. The resemblances of the Mughal empire to the Bourbon monarchy in France during the same period have often been noted, and in India, as in France, a literate and refined court gave a recognizable style and manner to a wide variety of arts.

Keywords: Cultural Contribution , achievement , philosophy, scholastic theology.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education

Before turning to the arts themselves, something must be said of the vigorous educational activity at the capitals—both Delhi and Agra—and in such great provincial cities as Sialkot, Lahore, Ahmadabad, and Burhanpur. Without these centers, the cultural achievements of the Mughal period would scarcely have been possible. During Akbar's reign the "mental sciences"—logic, philosophy, and scholastic theology—had taken on new importance. About the same time, we notice a very considerable improvement in the teaching of the religious sciences. Akbar's conquest of Gujarat opened up ports like Cambay and Surat to those scholars from northern India who wished to go to the great religious center of Hejaz for further study. That the standard of learning in these subjects rose as a consequence is evidenced by the career of scholars like Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis (1551–1642). The extensive study of hadith, in which Indian scholars were to distinguish themselves in the eighteenth century, began because of this contact with Arabia.

Bernier, the French traveler who was in India during Aurangzeb's reign, deplored the deficiencies of the educational system. To prove his point, he quoted Aurangzeb's reproaches against his tutor for having wasted time on grammar and metaphysics, while ignoring geography, history, and politics. No attempt was made to control education, even though the state gave large grants of rent-free lands to ulama for setting up madrasas. There were no regular examinations, and no organization for maintaining standards. Yet Mughal education had its special values, for Muslim education did not decay in the eighteenth century with the decline of Muslim political authority. The reduced calls made by the state employment on Muslim manpower left more men free to devote themselves to academic and literary work. A number of educational institutions and foundations, including the colleges established by Ghazi-ud-din Khan Firuz Jang, Sharaf-ud-daulah, and Raushan-ud-daulah in Delhi belong to this period.

The standardization of the educational curriculum was accomplished in the eighteenth century. The Dars-i-Nizamiya, named after Mulla Nizam-ud-din (d. 1748) provided instruction in grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, logic, scholasticism, tafsir (commentary on the Quran), fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), hadith, and mathematics.

This curriculum has been criticized for containing too many books on grammar and logic and in general for devoting too much attention to formal subjects, and too little to useful secular subjects like history and natural sciences or even religious subjects like tafsir and hadith. But it provided good mental discipline, and its general adoption was responsible for the widespread interest in intellectual and philosophical matters. In the period in which it was systematized it was perhaps reasonably adequate for the average student. Those wishing to specialize or pursue a particular branch of knowledge went to the experts in that subject. The needs of the students specially interested in religious subjects were better served at institutions like Madrasa-i-Rahimiya, the forerunner of the modern seminary of Deoband, where tafsir and hadith were the principal subjects of study, but for those needing a general education to qualify for the posts of munshis, qazis, or religious preachers, Dars-i-Nizamiya provided a satisfactory basis until modern times.

Bernier, despite his criticism of the educational system, has left evidence that at least two intellectuals of the Mughal court tried to learn about Western philosophy. One of them was Fazil Khan, the prime minister, whom Bernier taught "the principal languages of Europe, after he had translated for him the whole philosophy of Gassendi in Latin, and whose leave [to depart] he could not obtain, until he had copied for him a select number of best European books, thereby to supply the loss he should suffer of his person." The other was Danishmand Khan, who supported Bernier for a number of years. "My Nawab, Agha Danishmand Khan, expects my arrival with much impatience," Bernier wrote. "He can no more dispense with his philosophical studies in the afternoon than avoid devoting the morning to his weighty duties as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Grand Master of the Horse. Astronomy, geography, and anatomy are his favorite pursuits, and he reads with avidity the works of Gassendy and Descartes." Colonel Sleeman, who knew India in the first half of the nineteenth century better than almost any other Englishman, paid high tribute to the quality of Muslim education in India. He wrote:

Perhaps there are few communities in the world among whom education is more generally diffused than among Mohammadans in India. He who holds an office worth twenty rupees a month commonly gives his sons an education equal to that of a Prime Minister. They learn, through the medium of Arabic and Persian languages, what young men in our colleges learn through those of Greek and Latin—that is, grammar, rhetoric, and logic. After his seven years of study, the young Mohammadan binds his turban upon a head almost as well filled with the things which appertain to these branches of knowledge as the young man raw from Oxford—he will talk as fluently about Socrates and Aristotle, Plato and Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna (alias Sokrat, Aristotalis, Aflatun, Bukrat, Jalinus, and Sina).

Nor was education confined only to men. Many Muslim women were patrons of literature and themselves writers. The memoirs of Gulbadan Begum, Akbar's aunt, are well known, and his foster-mother, Maham Anga, endowed a college at Delhi. Akbar's wife Salima Sultana, the famous Empress Mumtaz Mahal, and Aurangzeb's sister, the Princess Jahan Ara Begum, were poetesses of note, as was his daughter, Zeb-un-Nissa.

The spread of knowledge and intellectual development is linked up with the growth of libraries. Printing was not introduced in northern India till after the end of the Muslim rule, but hundreds of katibs (calligraphists) were available in every big city, and no Muslim noble would be considered cultured, unless he possessed a good library. The royal palaces contained immense libraries. According to Father Manrique, the library of Agra in 1641 contained 24,000 volumes, valued at six and a half million rupees.

Literature

Persian was the language of Mughal intellectual life. Since the Ghaznavid occupation of Lahore in the beginning of the eleventh century, Persian had been the official language of the Muslim government and the literary language of the higher classes, but with the advent of the Mughals it entered a new era. Hitherto Persian had reached India mainly from Afghanistan, Turkistan, and Khorasan, and had many common features with Tajik. With the establishment of closer relations between India and Iran after Humayun's visit to that country, and the arrival of a large number of distinguished Iranis in the reign of Jahangir and later Mughal rulers, the linguistic and literary currents began to flow from Iran itself. Shiraz and Isfahan now replaced Ghazni and Bukhara in literary inspiration, with considerable refining of the language as a result.

A large number of prominent Irani poets, including Urfi, Naziri, Talib, and Kalim, migrated to India, and at times the level of Persian literature was higher in Mughal India than in Iran. Unluckily the style of poetry, which was popular in both countries at this time, was the subtle and involved type made popular by Fighani of Shiraz. This school of poetry culminated in Bedil, the best known poet of Aurangzeb's reign. His similes and metaphors are often obscure, but his poetry is marked by great originality and profundity of thought. From love, the traditional preoccupation of Persian poets, he turned to the problems of life and human behavior, and in certain circles (particularly in Afghanistan and Tajikistan) he ranks high as a philosophical poet. But the two poets who outshone all others in a distinguished group were Faizi and Ghalib. Faizi (1547–1595), whose genius matured before the large-scale immigration of poets from Iran and the introduction of the "new" school of poetry, was the brother of Abul Fazl. As Akbar's poet-laureate, his poetry mirrors a triumphant age. Ghalib (1796–1869), who was attached to the court of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah, began in the style of Bedil, but soon outgrew it and came under the spell of the immigrant Irani poets—Urfi, Naziri, Zahuri, and Hazin. His maturer work epitomizes all that is best in the different schools of Mughal poetry—the profundity and originality of Bedil's thought, combined with the polished diction of Urfi and Naziri. He wrote largely of love and life, but the deep, melancholy note in his poetry reflects the sad end to which the Mughal empire was drawing in his day.

Next to poetry, history and biography were most extensively cultivated during the Mughal period. Historians include Abul Fazl (1551–1602), whose comprehensive Akbar Nama is one of the most important historical works produced in India; Badauni (1540–1615), who wrote with bias and even venom, yet who was a consummate artist, a master of the telling phrase, and capable of evoking a living picture with a few deft strokes; the intelligent and orderly Firishta; Khafi Khan; and the author of Siyar-ul-Mutakhhirin, the last of the great Mughal historical works. Among biographical works, Babur's autobiography, originally written in Turkish, but soon translated into elegant Persian by Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, is the best. There were, however, other biographical works, including the comprehensive Ma'asir'ul-umara dealing with the Mughal nobility, and numerous biographies of saints, poets, and statesmen. A very interesting historical work written during Aurangzeb's reign is Dabistan-i-Mazahib, which has been translated into English under the misleading title "School of Manners," but which is really a "History of Religions." The author, who belonged to the band of the writers and thinkers around Dara Shukoh, gives

considerable first-hand information about non-Muslim sects.

The Persian literature produced in India is of interest not only for its intrinsic worth, but also for the influence it exercised on the formation and shaping of regional literatures, especially those cultivated by the Muslims. In addition to vocabulary and general influence on thought, it contributed a number of literary genres to the regional languages, provided models for the writers, and supplied themes for many major literary works. Indeed, apart from Islam itself, the Persian literary heritage has been the most important basis of the cultural unity of Muslim India.

It is characteristic of the Mughals that, next to Persian, the language which received the greatest patronage at court was Hindi. The practice started in Akbar's day of having a Hindi kavi rai (poet-laureate) along with the Persian malik-ul-shuara. Already Muslim poets such as Jaisi and Kabir had enriched the Hindi language. Among Hindus, the greatest Hindi poet of Akbar's days was the famous Tulasidas, whose career was spent far from the worldly courts. There were, however, well-known Hindi poets amongst Akbar's courtiers. Raja Birbal (1528–1583) was the kavi rai, but the works of Akbar's famous general Abdul Rahim have been better preserved. A skillful writer in Hindi, Abdul Rahim furthered the development of the language by extending his patronage to a number of other poets who used it. The title of kavi rai continued to be conferred even in Aurangzeb's time, and two of his sons, Azam and Muazzam, who ascended the throne as Bahadur Shah, were known to be patrons of Hindi literature. It is interesting to observe that during the later Mughal period Hindi poets like Bihari followed the same ornate style which was popular with the contemporary Persian poets.

Until the decline of the empire Urdu literature received scarcely any encouragement at the Mughal courts, but it was systematically nourished in the south by the Sufi saints and the Deccani kings. Nusrati, a poet attached to the court of Bijapur, wrote masnavis (or narrative poems) in a language remote from modern Urdu but within its tradition. The first collection of Urdu lyrics was written by Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutab Shah (r.1581–1611), the king of Golkunda and founder of the city of Hyderabad. Modern Urdu poetry really began, however, with Wali (1667–1741), who came in contact with the spoken Urdu of the Mughal camp during the long campaigns of Aurangzeb in the Deccan. He blended the Deccani and Gujarati idioms with the polite and more sophisticated language of the north, and following the traditions of standard Persian literature, he produced poetry which set a literary fashion in Delhi. He transferred to Urdu poetry ideas and images with which readers of Persian poetry were familiar; and thus enriched, Urdu could replace Persian poetry. Although a proportion of Wali's verse is in Deccani idiom, a good proportion is in polished Urdu.

Once Urdu was adopted as the medium of literary expression by the writers of the metropolis, its development was rapid, and it soon replaced Persian as the court language and principal literary language of Muslim India. The process of change-over to the new literary language was facilitated by certain other factors. The invasion of Delhi by the Persian monarch Nadir Shah in 1739 and the massacres perpetrated by his army must have led to a revulsion of feeling against everything Persian—including the language. An acute literary controversy of the period further hastened the process. Hazin, a major Persian poet who came to India to escape Nadir Shah, was subjected to great hardship in the unsettled conditions prevailing at that time, and in a controversy with Arzu, the foremost local writer of Persian verses, expressed his contempt for the Persian poetry written in India. Some local writers sided with him, but the general effect of the controversy must have been to set people thinking about the advisability of writing in Persian.

Thus the ground was prepared for literary change-over. What was needed was the appearance of talented writers in the new language to give it a literary status. This was provided by Mazhar (1699–1781), Sauda (1717–1780), the Sufi poet Dard (1719–1785), and above all Mir (1724–1808)—popularly known as the four pillars of classical Urdu poetry. Both Sauda and Mir had been trained by Arzu to write in Urdu rather than in Persian.

The encouragement which the growth of regional languages and literatures received in the regional Muslim kingdoms has already been outlined. Muslim rulers, unhampered by any religious devotion to Sanskrit, freely patronized Bengali, Kashmiri, Hindi, Deccani, and other languages of the people. This trend was most powerful in the regional kingdoms which grew up after the weakening of the Delhi Sultanate. Persian continued as the court language in these kingdoms; but local languages were freely patronized, and became respectable vehicles of literary expression.

The literary trend under Mughal rule was not exactly in the same direction. The establishment of a well-organized central government at Delhi, with cohesive control over the outlying regions, resulted in greater linguistic unification, and the influence of Persian became far more dominant. Mughal rule, however, indirectly assisted the regional literatures. Apart from the direct patronage of Hindi at the Delhi court, the conditions in the country helped the regional literatures. The general peace and tranquillity; greater prosperity, particularly in urban areas; the more general diffusion of education; and the patronage of literature by the Mughal emperors and the nobility, led to extensive literary activity, from which the regional literatures benefited. By now they had developed so much that they could not wither away by want of direct court patronage, and the general prosperity in the country was enough to sustain them. The result was that a marked literary activity in the regional languages continued along with the cultivation of Persian, and particularly in the later part of Mughal rule there was a great outburst of literary activity in Bengali, Deccani, Hindi, Sindhi, Pushto, Kashmiri, and other regional languages.

Architecture

Architecture, which had already achieved a high level of development under the sultanate, reached the pinnacle of its glory under the Mughals. Although Babur's stay in India was brief, and he was preoccupied with the conquest of the country, he found time to summon from Constantinople pupils of the great Ottoman architect Sinan, to whom he entrusted the

construction of mosques and other buildings. Time has dealt harshly with buildings constructed in his reign and that of Humayun, and only four minor ones have survived. These buildings exhibit no trace of local influence and are distinctly foreign.

Akbar's most ambitious project was his new capital and the numerous buildings at Fathpur Sikri, the seat of the imperial court from 1569 to 1584. Some of the buildings there are dominated by the Hindu style of architecture, reflecting the emperor's regard for the Hindu tradition. But Persian influences were equally strong in his day, as can be seen in the magnificent tomb for Humayun built early in 1569 at Delhi. Akbar's efforts were not confined to tombs, mosques, and palaces, but included fortresses, villas, towers, sarais, schools, and reservoirs or tanks. He built two major fortresses at Agra and Lahore. The Lahore fort, which was built on the banks of the Ravi, at about the same time as that at Agra, was planned and constructed on practically the same grand scale. The buildings within the Lahore fort were greatly altered by Shah Jahan and later by the Sikhs, but much remains in the original form. A striking feature of the fort is the carved decoration, representing living things. This may indicate merely the predominance of Hindu craftsmen, and a lax overseer, but more likely it can be ascribed to Akbar's own predilections.

Akbar's death in 1605 was followed by a pause in building activities of the Mughals. His successor, Jahangir, was interested less in architecture than in painting and gardens. Akbar's tomb at Sikandar and some other buildings were constructed during his reign, but Jahangir's greatest contribution was in laying out the large formal gardens which adorn many cities of Kashmir and the Punjab. The Mughal garden is a regular arrangement of squares, usually in the form of terraces placed on a slope (for easy distribution of water), with pavilions at the center. Artificial pools with numerous fountains form an important part of the plan, and the flagged causeways are shadowed by avenues of trees. Babur and Akbar had made a beginning in this direction, but during Jahangir's reign a number of lovely gardens came into existence, such as the Shalamar Bagh and the Nishat in Kashmir. Jahangir's beautiful mausoleum at Shahdara near Lahore was probably planned by the emperor himself, but it was completed in the next reign, by his widow Nur Jahan. It suffered serious damage in the reign of Ranjit Singh, when the marble pavilion in front of the building, which offered a central point of interest, was removed. It cannot be fairly judged after the spoliation by the Sikhs, and in any case it lacks many noble features of the Taj Mahal, but even now it is a beautiful building, decorated by inlaid marbles, glazed tiles, and painted patterns. Not far from Jahangir's resting place Nur Jahan lies buried in a very unpretentious tomb.

Shah Jahan was the greatest builder amongst the Mughals. One secret of his success was the liberal use of marble. He replaced many sandstone structures of his predecessors in the forts of Agra and Lahore and other places with marble palaces. This change in the material itself facilitated a corresponding change in architectural treatment. Rectangular forms gave way to curved lines, and the art of the marble cutter gave a new grace and lightness to the decoration. The style of Shah Jahan's principal edifices is basically Persian, but is distinguished by the lavish use of white marble, minute and tasteful decoration—particularly the open-work tracery which ornaments the finest buildings, giving them their distinctive elegance. Among the more famous of his buildings are the Pearl Mosque and the Taj Mahal at Agra, the Red Fort and Jama Masjid at Delhi, palaces and gardens at Lahore, a beautiful mosque at Thatta in Sind, a fort, palace, and mosque at Kabul, royal buildings in Kashmir, and many edifices at Ajmer and Ahmadabad.

Aurangzeb was not a great builder, but among buildings of merit erected in his reign is the great Badshahi Mosque of Lahore, completed in 1674. Its construction was supervised by Fidai Khan Kuka, Master of Ordnance, whose engineering skill and experience enabled him to design and erect a building of great size and stability. It is one of the largest mosques in the subcontinent, if not in the world. There is a great dignity in its broad quadrangle leading up to the facade of the sanctuary. Its ornamentation is boldly conceived, but perhaps representing Aurangzeb's puritanical taste, this is sparingly introduced. For this reason the building suffers in comparison with the Great Mosque at Delhi.

After Shah Jahan Mughal architecture declined even at the capital, although some interesting buildings were erected from time to time. The tomb of Safdar Jang at Delhi, built in 1783, is indicative of the decline in the architectural standards, which was to become more manifest in the hybrid structures exhibiting European and Mughal influences at Lucknow.

Painting

As patrons of painting the Mughals gave the world a legacy of enduring beauty. The particular styles of painting which developed in India had their origin in the courts of the relatives of the Mughals at Herat and elsewhere. Babur himself, although he had some painters in his service, made no efforts to foster the art in his newly won empire.

To Humayun must go the credit for the founding of the Mughal school of painting. During his wanderings in Persia and what is now Afghanistan he came across painters who had studied under Behzad, and persuaded Khwaja Abdul Samad and Mir Sayyid Ali, the pupil of Behzad, to join his court at Kabul in 1550. They accompanied him to Delhi, forming the nucleus of the Mughal school.

This school was properly developed under Akbar, who organized it with his usual zeal. It was under his direct supervision, and the more prominent of the hundred or so painters were granted ranks in the governmental structure as mansabdars or ahadis. The painters worked in a large building at Fathpur Sikri, and, according to Abul Fazl, "the works of all painters are weekly laid before His Majesty by the daroghas (supervisors) and the clerks; he then confers rewards according to the excellence of workmanship or increases the monthly salaries."

Khwaja Abdul Samad was the head of the establishment and was known by the title of shirin qalam (or "sweet pen"), referring to his skill in calligraphy. Later he became master of the mint (1577) and subsequently was appointed diwan at Multan.

There was a small number of Persian artists, and, in course of time, a preponderance of Hindus. They had had previous training in wall-painting, and joined with the Persian painters between 1570 and 1585 in decorating the walls of Akbar's new capital. They were quick to learn the principles and techniques of Persian art, and the joint efforts of Persian and Indian artists soon led to the rise of the distinct style of Mughal painting. The foreign artists included Khwaja Abdul Samad, Farrukh Beg, and Khusrau Quli. Among the Hindus Basawan Lal and Daswant were preeminent. Occasionally many artists collaborated in the painting of a single picture, the leading artists sketching the composition and other painters putting in the parts at which they were expert.

Akbar's artists specialized in portraiture and book illustration. The emperor's album containing likenesses not only of Akbar and the royal family but of all the grandees of the realm has been lost, but many examples of book illustrations of the period have survived: Razm Nama at Jaipur, Babur Nama in the British Museum, and the Akbar Nama in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Akbar's traditions were maintained by Jahangir, who was proud both of his artists and his own critical judgment. "As regards myself," he wrote in his Memoirs, "my liking for painting and my practice in judging it have arrived at such a point that when any work is brought before me, either of deceased artists or those of the present day, without the names being told me, I say on the spur of the moment that it is the work of such and such a man. And if there be a picture containing many portraits, and each face be the work of a different master, I can discover which face is the work of each of them. If any other person has put in the eye and eyebrow of a face, I can perceive whose work the original face is, and who has painted the eye and eyebrows." The main remnants of Jahangir's principal picture albums are in the State Library of Berlin, while another album, which was taken away by Nadir Shah during his sack of Delhi, is in the Imperial Library at Tehran.

A special skill developed by Indian painters in Jahangir's time was the production of extremely faithful copies of paintings. The emperor appreciated gifts of paintings from foreign visitors, and Sir Thomas Roe records that once when he presented a painting in the morning, by the evening several copies had been prepared by the native artists. They were such accurate copies that Roe had some difficulty in spotting the original. Jahangir's best known painters were Agha Raza of Herat and his son Abul Hasan; the Kalmuck artist, Farrukh Beg; Muhammad Nadir and Muhammad Murad, both of Samarkand; Ustad Mansur, the leading animal painter; Bishan Das; Manohar; and Govardhan. These and many others were constantly in attendance on the emperor at the capital and during his travels. They were commissioned to paint any incident or scene that struck the emperor's fancy. When a Mughal embassy visited Persia it was accompanied by the painter Bishan Das, who painted for Jahangir the likenesses of the Safavid king and his courtiers. The court painters have left a record of the public men of note that is probably unequalled for fidelity and artistry. It is regrettable that these portraits have not yet been utilized as a source material for social history.

Under Shah Jahan painting, like all the other arts, continued to flourish. He reduced the number of court painters, keeping only the very best and forcing others to seek the patronage of the princes and the nobles; but the art did not suffer by this. Dara Shukoh was a patron of painting, and nobles like Zafar Khan, the governor of Kashmir, who had a beautiful anthology of the works of the living poets prepared, illustrated with their paintings, employed many artists. Other painters set up studios in the bazaars. An interesting feature of the period, typical of the general predominance of the indigenous elements in various spheres—in the secretariat, literature, and music—was that only one Persian artist was employed by Shah Jahan. The preponderance of the Hindus among court painters is indicative of the emancipation of the local school from dependence on Iran, as well as the importance of Hindus in all spheres of life. The excellence of Mughal painting depended not only on the taste of individual ruler but on his prosperity, and with the disintegration of the empire, the artists migrated from the capital to other centers like Oudh and Hyderabad, where artistic standards quickly declined.

Music

Mughals patronized music lavishly, and in this Akbar led the way. Abul Fazl gives the names of nearly forty prominent musicians and instrumentalists who flourished at Akbar's court. The principal artists came from Gwalior, Malwa, Tabriz (in Iran), and Kashmir.

The most famous musician of the period was Tansen. According to some Muslim chroniclers, he was brought up in the hospice of Shaikh Mohammad Ghaus of Gwalior, but Hindu tradition describes him as a disciple of Swami Haridas. It is not certain whether he formally adopted Islam, but his son, Bilas Khan, was certainly a Muslim. "A singer like him," wrote Abul Fazl, "has not been in India for the last two thousand years." He was not very popular with conservative Hindu musicians, who held him responsible for the deterioration of Hindu music. He is said to have falsified the ragas.

Although Tansen made some changes, the variety of music most extensively cultivated at Akbar's court was the ancient dhrupad. The same tradition was continued by Bilas Khan, the inventor of bilas todi. Music received great encouragement under Shah Jahan. He had thirty prominent musicians and instrumentalists at his court, who were generously rewarded for good performances. The stately dhrupad continued its sway, though there was a marked tendency towards beautification and ornamentation. The khiyal, or ornate, school of music was beginning to assert itself.

Aurangzeb had himself studied music, but his deepening puritanism led him to abandon it on religious grounds. In 1688, he disbanded the large band of musicians attached to the royal court. A famous story is told of how the court musicians, seeking to draw the emperor's attention to their distressing condition, filed past his balcony carrying a gaily dressed corpse upon a bier and chanting mournful funeral songs. When the emperor asked what it was, they told him that music had died from

neglect and that they were taking its corpse to the burial ground. He replied at once: "Very well, make the grave deep, so that neither voice nor echo may issue from it."

While during Aurangzeb's reign music ceased to enjoy royal patronage, its popularity with the upper classes was firmly established, and a number of books on the history and theory of Indo-Muslim music were written during this period. One of the most famous was the Rag-darpan (The Mirror of Music), written by Fakirullah (Saif Khan), who was at one time governor of Kashmir. It purports to be a translation of Man-Kauthal, written at the court of Raja Man Singh of Gwalior, but contains much additional information derived from other sources. With the reaction against Aurangzeb's puritanism under his grandson Jahandar Shah and his great-grandson Muhammad Shah Rangila, music had an unprecedented vogue. In conformity with court tastes, the khiyal came into its own. The khiyal developed slowly, and drew from many sources. Literally the term means, "thought, imagination, phantasy," and technically it stands for imaginative or romantic music. As the Arabic origin of the word signifies, this music developed after the advent of the Muslims, but traditionally its themes echo the Hindu legends of Krishna and his Gopis. Probably the court musicians, catering to the interest of their patrons, found it expedient to adapt the legends and treatment which had been developed by musicians and Bhagats of the Krishna cult. This variety of music did not gain a firm footing at the Delhi court until the decline of the Mughal empire, and is closely associated with the court of Muhammad Shah Rangila (r.1719–1748).

With the weakening of the Mughal empire and the setting up of provincial governments, music was encouraged in provincial capitals, and just as Lucknow became the refuge of Urdu poets, musicians in northern India flocked to the court of the nawab-wazirs of Oudh. At Lucknow, music underwent some important changes. With the breakup of the empire and the loss of the patronage of a formal court, the musicians had to cater to popular tastes. As a result, the quality and the variety of music underwent a subtle change, with two forms of popular music originating in Lucknow. One of these was thumri, love music that makes a sensuous appeal through repetition of words and musical phrases. The theme is human love, not a symbolic representation of divine longing as in the older music. The other form, tappa, found inspiration in folk music, a source that had previously been ignored by court musicians.⁹ Through such developments as these, the music of the courts became part of the life of the ordinary people of North India.

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Manik M. Shinde
Post Doctoral Fellow Dept of History Gulbarga University, Gulbarga.

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