

Chapter VI

Painters, Artists and Musicians

[VI] Painters, Artists and Musicians

Much impetus was provided to the performing arts under the Mughals. It was during the reign of Akbar that two important fields – painting and music – were given a new meaning and import. It is important to note that although there were a number of master craftsmen and professionals in the Mughal *karkhanas*, it is only the painters, musicians and calligraphers who are mentioned by name. The painters not only signed their work but would also include their self-portraits in some of their compositions. These professions thus appear to have enjoyed a high status in the Mughal society.

Although nothing is known about the presence or absence of painters under Babur, it was during the reign of Humayun that attention started being paid to recruiting accomplished painters to the Mughal Court.¹¹⁸⁴ From the account of Jauhar Aftabchi it is evident that the imperial atelier existed even during the reign of Humayun when he was wandering in the wilderness:

Soon after the Rana had retired, the king [Humayun] undressed and ordered his clothes to be washed, and in the meanwhile he wore his dressing gown; while thus sitting, a beautiful bird flew into the tent, the doors of which were immediately closed, and the bird caught; his Majesty then took a pair of scissors and cut some of the feathers of the animal, he then sent for a painter, and had taken a picture of the bird, and afterwards ordered it to be released.¹¹⁸⁵

For his reign we get the names of six painters. During Akbar's reign, the number rose steeply to about 260,¹¹⁸⁶ of whom 56 % were Hindus (See Table I below). In the subsequent reigns, the total number of the members of this class

¹¹⁸⁴ Bayazid Bayat, *Bayazid Bayat, Tazkira-i Humayun wa Akbar*, ed. Hidayat Hosain, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1941, pp. 67 – 69, 176 - 87

¹¹⁸⁵ Jauhar Aftabchi, *Tazkiratul Waqi'at*, tr. Charles Stewart, 1832, p.43

¹¹⁸⁶ See SP Verma, *Mughal Painters and their work A Biographical Survey and Comprehensive Catalogue*, Delhi, 1994, p. 24.

recruited by the Mughal state kept on declining. This in no way would mean a decline in the members of this professional group in the Mughal Society. However the percentage of the Hindu painters declined only marginally.

Table I

Reign	Total Painters	Total Hindus	Percentage of Hindus	Total Muslims	Percentage Of Muslim
Humayun	6	-	-	6	100%
Akbar	260	145	55.7%	115	44.2%
Jahangir	84	43	51.0%	41	48.8%
Shahjahan	35	17	48.6%	18	51.4%
Aurangzeb	12	8	66%	4	33.3%

From the 400 or so names of the painters serving the Imperial atelier¹¹⁸⁷ from the reign of Humayun onwards, it appears to have been quite cosmopolitan in its composition. As is apparent from Table I and II, the selection and appointment to the atelier was not confined to only one religion or ethnic group. The selections were based more on their professional ability.

It is pertinent to note that most of the painters who were recruited to the Imperial atelier by Akbar when he commissioned his first major project, the illustration of *Hamzanama*, were Indian in origin. Praising their professional skill Abul Fazl in fact mentions:

¹¹⁸⁷ SP Verma, *Mughal Painters and their work*, op.cit.,

...their pictures surpass our conception of things. Few indeed in the whole world are found equal to them.¹¹⁸⁸

It appears that till the reign of Shahjahan, the Imperial atelier had only a few having a Central Asian or Persian origin. Of the known foreigners in the Mughal atelier only eight painters are mentioned in our sources or their works along with their places of origin. (See Table II)

Table II

Place of Origin	Total Number	Humayun	Akbar	Jahangir	Shahjahan
Herat	3	-	-	2	1
Shiraz	1	1	1	-	-
Tabrez	1	-	1	-	-
Central Asia / Samarqand	2	-	1	1	1
Kabul	1	-	1	-	--
Abbyssinia	1	-	1	-	-
Gujarat	12	-	12	-	-
Kashmir	12	-	11	2	-
Gwalior	1	-	1	-	-

Thus we hear of Aqa Riza Herati who joined service of Prince Salim. His son Abul Hasan, like his father served Jahangir. Another of his sons, Muhammad Abid served the Mughal atelier under Shahjahan. Abdus Samad of Shiraz, Mir Saiyid Ali of Tabrez, Farrukh Qalmaq, Muhammad Nadir of Samarqand and a painter identified

¹¹⁸⁸ Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, .H.Blochmann, Calcutta, 1872, vol.I, p.117

only as Habshi (Abbyssinian) were some of the other non-Indian painters serving the Mughal court.

Among the Indians a sizeable chunk of Painters appear to have hailed from Gujarat and Kashmir. The suffix Gujarati has been used along with the names of Bhim, Surdas, Shankar, Sheodas, Kesav, Madhav, , Sheoraj, Suraj and Surya. The suffix Jiv along with Devjiv, Surjiv, Premjiv also point towards Gujarati origins. Similarly the names Ahmad, Dilram Pandit, Ibrahim, Kamal, Muhammad, Muhammad Pandit, Salih, Yaqub, Haider, Ismail, and Ahmad Naqqash have the suffix Kaskmiri added to their names. Similarly Nand is mentioned as Gwaliyari. But then these suffixes could also be to differentiate these individuals from the general group of painters who probably hailed from North and the areas around Agra, Delhi and Rajasthan. One should remember that the total names mentioned of the painters serving the Mughal atelier is around 400.

A sizeable number of this group of professional painters earned their livelihood in the private ateliers established by the by the Mughal nobles. These painters would attract clients to their place of work to have their portraits drawn. Thus a miniature preserved in State Library, Berlin, which dates to the reign of Akbar, depicts two anonymous painters at work and an old man of high birth walking away after being provided with his portrait made by these painters.¹¹⁸⁹

The social origin of the painters in Imperial and noble men's service, like their ethnic and geographic origins, was quite varied. Caste appears to have been no bar for recruitment to the state service, at least in this profession. Thus we find Bahbud and Maulana Mushfiq who were recruited during the reign of Akbar. They were slaves by origin. Bahbud was basically a slave of Mir Baqir, a calligraphist, before becoming a

¹¹⁸⁹ "Artists at Work", Berlin Album, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, cf. SC Welch, *India: Art and Culture*, Ahmadabad, 1988, pl. 105. See also Ch.IX infra.

personal slave (*khasa khail*) of Abdur Rahim Khan-i Khanan. He remained in the service of the Khan-i Khanan and was unparalleled in his art.¹¹⁹⁰ Mushfiq on the other hand, was born as a slave in the household of Khan-i Khanan, and served in the said noble's *kitabkhana* and passed a comfortable life.¹¹⁹¹

There are 12 other painters who are distinguished by the suffix *chela*, which probably signifies a slave origin. The term *chela* however could also mean an apprentice. However a perusal of the works of these painters belies this assumption. In all likelihood they were all slaves who had been recruited to the Mughal atelier.

Quite significantly we also hear of four painters, one Muslim and three Hindu, who were *kahhārs* (palanquin bearers), a caste quite low in social hierarchy. It is only regarding one, Daswant, that we get some details in our sources. The way Abul Fazl mentions the induction of Daswant in the Imperial service shows the cosmopolitan character and the professional approach of the Mughals towards the management of the Imperial Atelier:

He [Daswant] is the son of a palanquin-bearer. He devoted his whole life to the art, and used, from love of his profession, to draw and paint figures even on walls. One day the eye of His Majesty fell on him; his talent was discovered, and he himself handed him over to the Khwaja ['Abdus Samad]. In a short time he surpassed all painters, and became the first master of the age...¹¹⁹²

The other three palanquin bearers were Ibrahim, Kesav and Para, all during the reign of Akbar. A stone-cutter (*sangtarāsh*) is also found as a member of Akbar's atelier.

¹¹⁹⁰ Abdul Baqi Nahawandi, *Ma'asir -i Rahimi*, ed. Hidayat Hasain, Bib.Ind., Calcutta, 1910-13, III, p.1681-82.

¹¹⁹¹ Ibid., III, 1682

¹¹⁹² Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, op.cit., i, 117; see also Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, ed. Ahmad Ali and Abdur Rahim, Bib.Ind., Calcutta, 1873-87, III, p. 434.

On the other side of the social spectrum, one finds painters like Abdus Samad *Shirīn Qalam*, his son Muhammad Sharif, Aqa Riza and Abul Hasan amongst others.

Khwaja Abdus Samad, a native of Shiraz joined the Mughal service during the reign of Humayun¹¹⁹³ and attained high position under Akbar.¹¹⁹⁴ During the reign of Akbar he attained a *mansab* of 400 *zat*¹¹⁹⁵ and given a number of administrative responsibilities. Thus in the 22nd Regnal Year (that is 1578) he was appointed as the *darogha-i dār uz zarb* (Superintendent of the mint) at Fathpur Sikri.¹¹⁹⁶ In 1583 he was given the charge of 'leather articles' due to his honest dealings.¹¹⁹⁷ The very next year, that is 28th Regnal Year, when the charge of the Imperial household was given to Murad, Abdus Samad was appointed as one of his deputies.¹¹⁹⁸ His son Muhammad Sharif, a painter in the Imperial atelier under Akbar and Jahangir, rose to the position of a very high *mansabdar* and was given the title of *Amirul Umara*.¹¹⁹⁹ In Akbar's reign he enjoyed the rank of 200 *zat*¹²⁰⁰ which was enhanced by Jahangir soon after his accession to 5000 / 5000. He was also awarded the title of *Amir ul Umara*.¹²⁰¹ During this reign he was not only enjoying a high position in the court but was also sent to command an army to the Deccan.¹²⁰²

Aqa Riza of Herat, who joined the atelier of Prince Salim when the prince was at Allahabad was another such painter enjoying imperial offices. According to an inscription, apart from his painting assignments, Aqa Riza *Musawwir* was also appointed as the *darogha-i imarat* (superintendent of construction) of the mausoleum

¹¹⁹³ Bayazid Bayat, *Tazkira-i Humayun wa Akbar* op.cit, pp. 67-69, 177; *Akbarnama*, op.cit., I, p.220; Shahnawaz Khan, *Ma'āsir ul 'Umara*, ed. Abdur Rahim and Ashraf Ali, Bib. Ind., Calcutta, 1888-91, II, p.625

¹¹⁹⁴ For a detailed biographical note see S.P.Verma, *Mughal Painters and their Work*, op.cit., pp.40-44.

¹¹⁹⁵ Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, op.cit, I, 228

¹¹⁹⁶ *Akbarnama*, op.cit., III, p.227

¹¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, III, p. 396

¹¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* III, p.404

¹¹⁹⁹ *Ma'asir ul Umara*, op.cit., II, pp.626-29.

¹²⁰⁰ *Ain-i Akbari*, op.cit., I, p. 230

¹²⁰¹ Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, ed. Saiyid Ahmad, Ghazipur & Aligarh, 1863-64, p.6.

¹²⁰² *Ibid.*, p.112.

complex of Khuldabad (Khusraubagh, Allahabad).¹²⁰³ His son Abul Hasan, according to Jahangir, far excelled his father and was awarded the title of *Nādir ul 'asr* (unique of the age).¹²⁰⁴

Generally, the painters who were recruited by the Mughal state were paid regular monthly salaries. What was the actual amount of salary given to the painters recruited in the Mughal service, we do not know. However, according to Abul Fazl:

The work of all painters is weekly laid before His Majesty by the *Daroghas* and the clerks; he then confers rewards according to excellence of workmanship, or increases the monthly salaries.¹²⁰⁵

The pay of an ordinary painter in the imperial service probably equalled that of an *ahadi* (an independent cavalry man) or a foot soldier. Abul Fazl in fact is quite explicit when he says that:

...many *mansabdars*, *ahadis*, and other soldiers hold appointments in this department (atelier). The pay of foot soldiers varies from 1200 to 600 *dams*.¹²⁰⁶

Thus if the lower staff of the atelier, the apprentice, the pagers, line-drawers, *hashiya* (margin) decorators, etc were drawing a salary of 1200 to 600 *dams* (Rs.30/- to Rs.15/- per month, the master painters would have had a respectable income which could further rise depending on their quality of work.

An idea of the rewards which came the way of these court painters can be had from the reign of Jahangir. For example, Bishandas was awarded an elephant for the portrait of the Persian ruler which he had drawn and presented to Jahangir on his

¹²⁰³ M. Abdullah Chaghtai, "Aqa Riza, Ali Riza, Riza-i Abbasi" *Islamic Culture*, 1938, no.12, pp. 437-38.

¹²⁰⁴ *Tuzuk*, op.cit., p. 235.

¹²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 116

¹²⁰⁶ *Ain-i Akbari*, op.cit., i, p.117

return from Persia.¹²⁰⁷ But the most telling example of the painters being awarded for good work is provided by Thomas Roe. He writes:

...but saith he [Jahangir], what will you give the Painter? I answered, seeing he had so farre excelled in my opinion of him, I would double my liberality, and that if he came to my house, I would give him one hundred Rupies to buy a Nagge, which the Kinge took kindly, but answered, he should accept no money, but some other gift; which I promised: the King asked what? I said it was referable to my discretion: so he answered it was true, yet desired I would name it. I replyed, a good Sword, a Pistall, a Picture; whereat the King answered, You confesse hee is a good work-man: send for him home, and shew him such toyes as you have, and let him choose one in requital whereof you shall choose any of these Copies to shew in England.¹²⁰⁸

However we do not know whether these painters and artists were penalised or dismissed for jobs done badly.¹²⁰⁹ We get an interesting example of Madhav who served the imperial atelier as a leading painter under Akbar.¹²¹⁰ During the reign of Jahangir, he finds mention as a painter serving the atelier of Abdur Rahim Khan-i Khanan. Was he dismissed from imperial service? The author of *Ma'asir – Rahimi*, refers to him as if he was a painter of a high order:

Madhav the *naqqash* (painter) is a Hindu. Verily, in portraiture, drawing, painting and ornamental work (*tarrāhī*) he is the Mānī (Manichaeus) and Bihzad of his age. He has painted many (in) many of the books of this

¹²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 275

¹²⁰⁸ Sir Thomas Roe, *The Journal of Sir Thomas Roe*, ed. T. Wheeler, New Delhi, reprint, 1993, pp.38-39

¹²⁰⁹ For an assertion to this fact, see Norah M. Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting*, The British Library, London, 1983, p.193 wherein he cites the case of Ibrahim Lahori and argues that this painter after making two substandard *Darabnama* miniatures is not subsequently heard of as probably he was dismissed by Akbar who himself was 'a pupil of both Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd al-Samad'.

¹²¹⁰ *Ain i Akbari*, op.cit.,i, p.117

establishment (Khan-i Khanan's library and atelier) the scenes of noble assemblies and unique portraits. He is in (the Khana-i Khanan's) employ in this library, and is favoured with a (cash) allowance and *jagir*. He renders service in the best manner...¹²¹¹

These salaried state painters, apart from illustrating books commissioned by their benefactors, were also required to be present in private gatherings to record the events visually for posterity.¹²¹² The importance of this class can be gauged from the fact that they were sometimes ordered by the Emperor to include their self-portraits on the colophon.¹²¹³ Sometimes, the painters could also be allowed to enter the *haram*.¹²¹⁴ The art of painting was not an exclusive male profession. Nadira Banu, Sahifa Banu and Ruqaiya Banu are known to have painted during the reigns of Akbar and Jahangir. Accordingly, a folio from *Khamsa-i Nizami* depicts a woman painter busy making a self portrait.¹²¹⁵

It is interesting to note that although the percentage of Hindu painters fell from 56% under Akbar to 51% under Jahangir, the number of portraits of Hindu nobles rose to 6 out of 9 from 2 out of 11 paintings. In the reign of Shahjahan the strength of the Hindu painters was about half (48.6%). Yet all the four painters depicted were Hindus.¹²¹⁶ No portrait of a Muslim painter from the reign of Shajahan survives or been so identified.

¹²¹¹ *Ma'asir-i Rahimi*, op.cit., III, 1682

¹²¹² "Zafar Khan with poets and scholars while artist takes their likeness", *Masnawi* of Zafar Khan, Royal Asiatic Society, London, MS. Pers. 310 (dtd. AD 1662 - 63), ff. 19 (b) & 20 (a), cf. Amina Okada, op.cit., pl.194.

¹²¹³ See inscription on the miniature, "Daulat Painting the portrait of the Calligraphist Abdur Rahim *Ambarin Qalam*", *Khamsa-i Nizami*, Dyson-Perrins Collection, Malvern, BM. Or. 12208, f. 325 (b), cf. Amina Okada, op.cit., pl. 2; See also "Manohar & Muhammad Husain Kashmiri", *Gulistan-i Sa'di*, Royal Asiatic Society, London, No. 258, f. 128, cf. Amina Okada, op.cit., pl. 155.

¹²¹⁴ "A Princess examines a Portrait", (Akbari), Bodlein Library, Pers. 61, f. 23 (b) cf. Ivan Stchoukine, *A L'Epoque des Moghols*, op.cit., pl. VII

¹²¹⁵ "The Lady Paints a Self-Portrait while her attendant faces her holding the Mirror", (Akbari), *Khamsa-i Nizami*, BM. Or. 12208, f. 206 (a), cf. AJ Qaisar, *The Indian Response*, op.cit., pl. 7 (a).

¹²¹⁶ See Table IV in Chapter IX, infra.

As we shall see in Chapter IX, there was not much marked difference between the dress of the Hindu and Muslim painters. Almost all of them wore *dastars*, long *jamias*, full trousers, a *patka*, which could be single or embroidered, and a shawl. It is only in the case of one painter that the dress is irregular. He is shown wearing a *dhota* and a shawl draping his naked shoulders and torso.¹²¹⁷ He was, we are informed, a *kahar* by birth.

These Mughal painters were recruited not just to illustrate the books and paint the court scenes and important occasions, but would also execute wall paintings. A large number of Akbari and Jahangiri wall paintings survive on the walls of Fathpur Sikri, Aram Bagh (Agra), and the Lahore Fort. At least two Mughal painters, Abdus Samad¹²¹⁸ and Daswant¹²¹⁹ were accomplished in painting on the walls. A miniature preserved in Clive Album records this fact for us.¹²²⁰ By the latter half of the 17th Century, the *bazar* painters who were self-employed, and sold their art in the market, begin to be noticed.¹²²¹ Sir Thomas Roe is quite explicit when he records one of his conversations with Jahangir and says:

I showed him a Picture I had of his Majesties, farre inferior to the worke I
Now saw [of the Imperial atelier], which caused me to judge of all other by
that which he delivered me as the best. He asked me where I had it; I told him.
*Why, said he, doe you buy such things? Have I not the best?*¹²²²

¹²¹⁷ "Akbar, a noble and the Painter himself", signed Kesavdas, *Jahangir's Album*, State Library, Berlin, f. 25 (a), cf. SP Verma, *Mughal Painters*, op.cit., pl. xxxv.

¹²¹⁸ Farid Bhakkari, *Zakhirat ul Khawanin*, ed. Moinul Haq, Karachi, 1961, vol.I, p.87; Shahnawaz Khan, *Ma'asir-ul Umara*, ed. Abdur Rahim & Ashraf Ali, Calcutta, 1891, vol.II, 628; Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, op.cit.,i, p. 117.

¹²¹⁹ Abu'l Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, op.cit.,i, p. 117.

¹²²⁰ "Mughal Painter executing a wall painting", *Clive Album*, V & A, IS-48-1956, cf. AJ Qaisar, *Building Construction*, op.cit., pl. 9.

¹²²¹ Thevenot, *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri*, ed. S. Sen, New Delhi, 1949, pp. 55, 65; Bernier, *Travels in the Mughal Empire, 1656 – 58*, tr. A. Constable & Smith, London, 1968, pp. 254 – 55.

¹²²² Sir Thomas Roe, op.cit, p.39

Similar information is provided by Bernier who refers to the ‘artists’ of the *bazaar*:

When an *Omrah* or *Mansabdar* requires the services of an artisan, he sends to the *bazar* for him, employing force, if necessary, to make the poor man work...¹²²³

At another place, referring to the *bazars* of Agra and Delhi, Bernier further elaborates:

One may see a great many Pictures in the *Indies* upon Paper and Past-board, but generally they are dull pieces, and none are esteemed but those of *Agra* and *Dehli*....¹²²⁴

The Mughal painter was helped in his endeavour by paper makers, scribes, and a number of apprentices.¹²²⁵ It is interesting to note that among a host of such professionals, it is only the painters, calligraphers, poets and some musicians who are mentioned by name. This point to the relatively high status enjoyed by these groups in the Mughal society. Irrespective of their origins, the painters in the Mughal society could reach a high status of an administrator and a person worthy to be included in the official miniatures. They find place in the company of the kings, his entourage and assemblies. Thus in two separate miniatures we find Mirar and Payag standing not far from the emperor who sits in his *diwan-i am*, holding an assembly.¹²²⁶ In yet another remarkable painting, the court painter Nanha is depicted sitting while Prince Khurram

¹²²³ Bernier, *op.cit.*, p.256

¹²²⁴ *Ibid*, p.55

¹²²⁵ “Akbar’s Atelier”, *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, MS. 39, f. 19 (a), Prince Sadruddin Agha Khan Collection, Rietzberg Museum, Zurich, cf. Brand & Lowry, *Akbar’s India*, *op.cit.*, pl. 19

¹²²⁶ See for example, *Padshahnama*, MS. Royal Library, Windsor Castle, no. 773, ff. 48 b & 195 a.

receives the submission of Rana Amar Singh of Mewar.¹²²⁷ The fact that he sits in the presence of a prince shows the status he enjoyed at the court.

*

As has already been pointed out, musicians, like painters, were also an integral part of the Mughal court and society, and were amongst the few who have been mentioned by the court historians by name. About the musicians themselves, with the exception of Tansen and Baz Bahadur, even less is known about them than about the painters of the imperial atelier working similarly in the fort, about whom as we have seen, not a whole lot is known either. Apart from the place of origin of the most prominent musicians and their musical instruments, little else is known. Abu'l Fazl lists the name of thirty six of the 'numerous of those who make music (*khuniyagarān*) and were experts (*nādira-kārān*) from amongst Hindus, Iranis, Turanis, Kashmiris, both men and women.'¹²²⁸

Musicians had been a part of the Mughal courts even prior to Akbar. Discussing the court of Sultan Husain Mirza, Babur first describes the scholars, poets, artists (calligraphers, painters, then musicians, followed by wrestlers.¹²²⁹ Abu'l Fazl too tries to follow the same scheme: men of arms, scholars, poets, artists (painters, musicians). In the third section he first deals with *sur* followed by *sangeet* and ultimately *naghma sarayān* followed by wrestlers.¹²³⁰

¹²²⁷ 'Rana Amar Singh submits to Khurram' *Jahangirnama*, MS. IS. 185-1984, V&A Museum, London, cf. Susan Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor: The Art of Book 1560-1660*, Victoria & Albert pubn., London, 2002

¹²²⁸ *Ain*, op.cit., i, p. 183

¹²²⁹ *Baburnama*, ed. A.S. Beveridge, London, 1971, I, pp.291-92

¹²³⁰ *Ain*, op.cit, iii, pp.98-113

Like the painters, these singers (*goyinda*) and musicians who played various instruments, were men derived from varied backgrounds.¹²³¹ It is interesting to note that only 33 % of these court musicians were of foreign origin (see Table III).

Table III

	Indian	Foreigners	Hindus	Muslims
Total	24	12	11	25
Percentage	66.7	33.3	30.6	69.4

It is interesting to note that amongst the indigenous musicians and singers, a sizeable number (i.e. 14 or 58.33 %) were from Gwalior. The musicians from Gwalior were both Hindu and Muslim. Thus we find Miyan Tansen (a Hindu, and according to Abul Fazl, a 'singer like whom had not been in India for the last one thousand years') mentioned along with Subhan Khan and Shihab Khan who were all from Gwalior. Where apart from Kashmir, a place specifically mentioned by Abul Fazl, the other indigenous musicians of Akbar's court belonged to, we are not told. One only finds the mention of Rangsen who hailed from Agra. Baz Bahadur, a singer without rival, had been the ruler of Malwa.

A majority of the foreign musicians and singers (66.67 %), in the court of Akbar, hailed from Persia, while only 33.33 % came from Central Asia. Thus we find the mention of Usta Dost, Mir Saiyid Ali, and Sultan Hashim, all from Mashhad; as well as Qasim Kohbar and Tash Beg Qipchaq both Central Asians, amongst the others in the list provided by Abul Fazl.

¹²³¹ *Ain*, op.cit., i, p. 183

Surprisingly Abul Fazl does not mention Naik Bakhshu (Baiju) as a court musician, who was as famous as Miyan Tansen. He mentions Naik Bakhshu only as 'the most distinguished musician of his day' who was in the service of Man Singh Tonwar, the ruler of Gwalior.¹²³² Asad Beg Qazwini, on the other hand mentions Baiju as *kalawant-i badshahi*.¹²³³

Nayak Bakhshu, originally of the Gwalior court appears to have migrated to Kalinjar, where Sultan Bahadur the Gujarati ruler is said to have found him. Abul Fazl in his *Ain* narrates:

It is said that Raja Kirat Singh, the governor of the fort possessed six precious treasures, a learned Brahman of saintly life, a youth of great beauty and amiable disposition, a parrot that answers any questions put to it and some say, remembered everything that it heard, *a musician named Bakhshu unequalled in the knowledge and practice of his art*, and two handmaidens lovely to behold and skilled in song. Sultan Bahadur Gujarati having formed a friendship with the Raja asked him for one of these. *The Rajah generously with a provident wisdom sent him Bakshu*.¹²³⁴

Nayak Bakhshu is credited to have been the creator of *dhrupad*, which was further developed and refined by Miyan Tansen Gwaliari, who adorned the court of Akbar.¹²³⁵ According to Faqirullah who compiled a treatise on music and musicians during the reign of Aurangzeb, the invention of *dhrupad* was brought about by Raja

¹²³² *Ain*, op.cit., iii, p. 108

¹²³³ Asad Beg, Waqa'i Asad Beg, MS. Or. 1996, Oriental and India Office Collection, London, Rotograph, Deptt. Of History Library, f.24a

¹²³⁴ *Ain-i Akbari*, II, 170-71; see also Lahori, op.cit.,II, pp.5-7

¹²³⁵ Faqirullah Nawab Saif Khan, *Tarjuma-i Manakutuhala wa Risala-i Ragdarpan*, ed.Shahab Sarmadi, INCA,New Delhi,1996, p.11; LalKhan Kalawant, *Majmu 'al-Afkar*, ed. Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, pp.17-21.

Man Gwaliyari with the coordination of Nayak Bakhshu, and Nayak Bhinnu.¹²³⁶ At another place Faqirullah mentions that:

Nayaka Bakhshu, God's overwhelming mercy be upon him, has three definitely important innovations to his credit: He mixed *Todi* with *Deskara* and named it as *Bahaduri (Todi)* after Sultan Bahadur Gujrati. Besides this, he created *kanhra* by letting *syama* and *khambayachi* mingle with each other. Another novel creation of his has been a *kalyana* based on *hamir*, *kalyana* and *jayanti-kalyana*. This *kalyana*, like *kanhra* is directly associated with him and called *nayaki-kalyana*. In succession to him comes Miyan Tansen....¹²³⁷

While nothing is mentioned in the written sources on their salaries, occasional mention is made in the written sources of gifts and prizes for individual musicians, which revealingly only those who performed for entertainment are mentioned specifically as receiving from the emperor. Tansen upon his arrival at Akbar's court in 1562 received two hundred thousand rupees, and during the same reign, Badauni writes of an impromptu singing competition at court where the winner was awarded with 1,000 rupees.¹²³⁸ Jahangir in his memoirs mentions honouring a flutist, Ustad Muhammad by giving him his weight in rupees.¹²³⁹

Although not much information is forthcoming on the musicians and singers, a reading of Abul Fazl's *Ain-i Akbari* however hints at some hierarchical status of the this professional class. Firstly there were some who were simply 'singers', probably those specialized in their voice modulation to effect melody. They were the *goyinda*, the *Khwānandgān* and the *dhār ī*. Thus according to Abul Fazl, the *goyinda* included

¹²³⁶ Faqirullah, p.97

¹²³⁷ *Ibid.* p.67

¹²³⁸ Badauni, *Muntakhab*, Vol. II, p. 273

¹²³⁹ Wade, *Music in India*, p. 108

Tansen, his son Tantarang Khan, Baba Ramdas Gwaliyari, Subhan Khan Gwaliyari, his brother Bichitr Khan, Sri Gyan Khan Gwaliyari, Miyan Chand (or is it Junaid?), Sarod Khan Gwaliyari, Miyan La'l Gwaliyari, Nanak Jarju Gwaliyari, Surdas, Chand Khan Gwaliyari, Rangsen and Rahmatullah. Prirzada was both a *goyinda* and *khwānda* (chanter).¹²⁴⁰

Amongst the Indians, the chanters of the ancient hymns were the *Vaikars* and their teachers were the *Sahkārs*. Among the vocalists, the most numerous were the *Kalāwants*, the singers of *Dhurpad*. The second category of vocalists was the *dhār īs*, who according to Abul Fazl were the Punjabi singers who chanted the odes to heroes on the battlefield. The *Qawwāls* belonged to this class (*giroh*). They in turn were generally either in Delhi or Jaunpur style (*tarz*).¹²⁴¹ *Hurkiya*, were both men and women who also sang *dhrupad* and chanted *karkha*.¹²⁴²

Then there were the *khuniyagarān*, the players of various musical instruments. The *Ain* further reveals something about the status of different musicians and their instruments which Abul Fazl includes and excludes from his list of musicians in the court. It appears that there was a difference in the status between those musicians who comprised the ensemble of *naqqarkhana* and played outdoors¹²⁴³, and those who played music for entertainment inside the court such as Tansen, Baba Ramdas and Baz Bahadur and others.¹²⁴⁴ When Abul Fazl discusses the *naqqārkhana*, he mentions only the name of the instruments and the tunes to be played. Among the prominent musical instruments to be played at the *naqqarkhana* mention is made of *surna*, *nafir*, *kuwargah* and the *naqqārah*; while amongst the tunes we find the mention of *mursali*, *badshahi*, *ikhlati*, *ibtidā'ī*, *shirazi*, *qalandari*

¹²⁴⁰ *Ibid*

¹²⁴¹ *Ain*, iii, p.111

¹²⁴² *Ibid*.

¹²⁴³ *Ain*, i, pp.52-53

¹²⁴⁴ *Ain*, i, p. 183

amongst others. It appears as if these tunes and instruments are more important than those who play them. Even in their depiction, these musicians are never individualised but just clustered together in the corner where they produce music.

This difference is explicitly brought out in two miniatures from the *Padshahnama* of Shah Jahan's reign. Both are of Dara Shikoh's wedding procession which depicts both groups of musicians. Musicians who performed for entertainment within the court, with their string and percussion instruments, seem to have pride of place at the head of the procession atop horse-drawn carriages, flanked by a few musicians of the *naqqarkhana*, while the bulk of the *naqqarkhana* follow at the rear of the procession.¹²⁴⁵

Amongst those musicians who played for entertainment, there appears to have been a further division in status. Despite the frequent depictions of the Persian *daf* (a one-sided drum in the shape of the western tambourine, and sometimes with metal discs on the side as well) which based on the miniatures appears to have been the main percussion instrument of the music of entertainment throughout the period, it does not rate a mention in Abu l-Fazl's list. This omission of *daf* players by Abu l-Fazl was probably because it was not a solo instrument but the percussion accompaniment to other instruments, in particular string instruments, which, with vocals dominate the list.

The instruments mentioned by Abul Fazl which were played by the musicians mentioned by him are stringed instruments like *surmandal*, *bīn*, *ghichak*, *qubuz*, and *rubāb*. Also mentioned are instruments like *qānūn*, *surna* and *tambour*.¹²⁴⁶ Thus Bir Mandal Khan Gwaliyari was a *surmandal nawāz* (player of *surmandal*), Shihab Khan

¹²⁴⁵ See 'The Delivery of Presents for Dara Shukoh's wedding', f 120 B and 121 A cf. Milo Cleveland Beach and Ebba Koch, *King of the World: The Padshahnama*, London, 1997.

¹²⁴⁶ *Ain*, i, p. 183; for other musical instruments mentioned by Abul Fazl see *Ain*, op.cit., iii, 105-111 where divides Indian musical instruments into four kinds..

and his son Purbin Khan were *bīn nawaz*, Usta Dost Mashhadi was a *nai* (player of flute), Mir Saiyid Ali and Shaikh Dawan Dhari was a *ghichaki* while Tash Beg Qipchak was a *qubuzi*, and Mir Abdullah played a *qanun* (zither) while Usta Yusuf Harvi and Usta Muhammad Husain played *tambura*.

As in the imperial court, musicians were also employed in the mansions and *karkhanas* of the nobility and the wealthy to provide regular entertainment. The author of *Ma'asir-i Rahimi* mentions a number of musicians in the employ of Abdur Rahim Khan-i Khanan. Similarly, a 17th Century miniature of a noble in his *diwankhana* hosting an assembly of poets depicts five musicians seated along with the poets, and playing a flute, *kamancha*, *tambura*, *daf*, and *qanun*.¹²⁴⁷ It is interesting that all the instruments here are Persian and that the *tambura* is even held in its original manner as a melody instrument. This suggests that simultaneous the regular practice of recruiting musicians in the service of the nobles. It also suggests a synthesis of Indian and Persian musical traditions at court, foreign music in its original form was still performed in the households of nobles of foreign origin like Zafar Khan even late into the reign of Shah Jahan.

Musical *mehfils* (assemblies) seem to have become quite popular by 18th Century. In Delhi we learn that in these gatherings both instrumental and vocal music was performed. Even noblemen were quite adept to sing *raags* and play musical instruments.¹²⁴⁸

Like the *bazar* painters, we find that there were *bazar* musicians. The first reference to them is got from the *A'in* itself. Among the types of musicians (*shumāra-i naghma sarayān*) thus Abul Fazl mentions *dafzan*, the tambourine

¹²⁴⁷ 'Zafar Khan in the Company of Poets, scholars and musicians', *Masnawi of Zafar Khan*, MS., India Office Library, f. 26 r, cf. Amina Okada, *Indian Pictures of the Mughal Court*, New York, 1992.

¹²⁴⁸ Dargah Quli Khan, *Muraqqa-i Dehli*, tr. Chandra Shekhar & Shama Mitra Chenoy, Delhi, 1989, p.40

player, the *dhari* women who apart from singing *dhruwad*, played *daf* and *dhol*. The *Sizzah tāli* were men who played large drums and women who played upon thirteen pairs of *tāla* while they sang. They were generally from Gujarat and Malwa. The *Natwas* were another class who were graceful dancers and players of *pakhāwaj*, *rubāb* and *tāla*.¹²⁴⁹ The *Kirtaniyas* were those who sang the odes to Lord Krishna on their musical instruments roaming from place to place. They were Brahmins by caste. The *bhagatiyya*, were similarly those religious singers in the Indian society who generally performed during the nights and were great mimics. The third class of religious singers and artists were the *bhanvayya*, who sang religious songs while sitting in a copper dish, *thāli*. The *bhānd* were those musical performers who played *dhol* and *tāla*. They also sang and mimicked animals. The *kanjari* were players of *pakhawaj*, *rubab* and *tāla*. Their women were the dancing girls known as *kanchanis*. Another class of artists mentioned by Abul Fazl in his description of the singers in the Indian society were the *nats* (rope dancers) and the *bahu rupias* (mimics).¹²⁵⁰

In addition to the setting of the *diwankhana*, music, and singing and dance, also accompanied banquets in the mansions of the elite. In fact, Peter Mundy who sketched dancers and singers and instrumentalists on the *duhul*, *daf*, and small cymbals performing at a banquet was of the opinion that 'there is scarce any meetinge of freinds without them'.¹²⁵¹ According to Mundy these entertainers were hired and the style of music they provided depended on their caste. Some it seems, could afford to have them permanently around. Abul Fazl in the *A'in-i Akbari*, describes the 'akhara' as:

¹²⁴⁹ *Ain*, iii, p.112

¹²⁵⁰ *Ibid*, iii, p. 112-13

¹²⁵¹ Mundy, *The Travels*, Vol. II, p. 216; for depiction see Peter Mundy, *Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-67*, Halduyt Society, London, 1914, fig.137

an entertainment held at night by the nobles of this country, some of whose [female] domestic servants are taught to sing and play... It is more common for a band of these *natwas* [dancers] to be retained in service who teach the young slave-girls to perform. Occasionally they instruct their own girls and take them to the nobles and profit largely by commerce.¹²⁵²

For others who did not employ musicians on a regular basis, let alone have them stationed permanently at home, celebratory occasions might still call for music. Mundy observed in Agra that:

[Khattri women] doe Cellebrate their Nuptialls with Drummes, beateing with their hands and singing to it for many dayes and nights together, both att home in the Topps of their howses and in the streets even though 'att other tymes they are scarce to bee scene or heard'.¹²⁵³

A very interesting reference to *bazar* musicians is made by Banarasidas who in his description of his business visit to the mansion of Sahu Sabal Singh, a wealthy Agra merchant, saw such musicians. According to Banarsidas, Sahu Sabal Singh could not be bothered concerning himself with Banarsidas' requests until a mutual acquaintance interceded on his behalf. Our author observed while he patiently waited, musicians performing for the merchant in his house. He describes this affluent merchant as being entertained in the fashion of nobles by 'kalawants' (*dhrupad* singers) and stringed instruments and the *pakhawaj*, an Indian drum (*dhurai pakhawaj bājai tān ti*).¹²⁵⁴

Within the context of religious devotion, was a regular way in which people, rich and poor, came into contact with music in the capital cities. Music was a

¹²⁵² *A in, iii*, p. 113

¹²⁵³ Mundy, *The Travels*, Vol. II, p. 221

¹²⁵⁴ Banarasidas, Banarsi Das, *Ardhakathanaka*, tr. & annotated as *Half A Tale*, ed., & tr., Mukund Lath, Jaipur, 1981, p. 79; (text), p. 266

part of devotion amongst one of the dominant Sufi orders in India, the Chishtis,¹²⁵⁵ disapproved of by some orthodox Muslims like Shaikh 'Abd un-Nabi, the *Sadr*.¹²⁵⁶ A miniature from the reign of Shahjahan shows dancing Sufis, two whirling and two that have already collapsed in ecstasy to the ground, in response to the *sama*¹²⁵⁷. The *sama*' was poetry sung to a musical accompaniment performed by an ensemble known as the *qawwal*. Although this miniature is unusual with its European pillars in the background copied by the painter from a European engraving or painting, and *Bhakti* saints in the foreground, worshippers ecstatic to the sound of singing and clapping, and the *rubab* and *daf* shown played here, and other instruments, would not have been an unusual sight in the Chishti shrines in the capital cities.

Badauni tells us of this Chishti practice while mentioning the visit of Akbar to the shrine of Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti at Ajmer. He says:

At the beginning of the blessed month of Ramazan he [Akbar] arrived with 7 *coses* of Ajmir, and dismounting in his accustomed manner made a pilgrimage to the shrine, and presented a pair of kettledrums of Daud's, which he had vowed to the music gallery of his reverence Khwajah Mu'in (God sanctify his glorious tomb). And daily according to his custom held in that sacred shrine by night intercourse with holy, learned, and sincere men, and *seances* for dancing and Sufism took place. And the musicians and singers, each one of whom was a paragon without rival, striking their nails into the

¹²⁵⁵ Music is not permitted by all Sufi *tariqas* (orders). The Naqshbandi and the Suhrawardi prohibit it altogether, and some only permitted it if unaccompanied by musical instruments. Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995, p. 82.

¹²⁵⁶ According to Badauni upon the Shaikh's return from Mecca and Medina he objected to 'the ecstasies and vocal music' of the Sufis. Badauni *Muntakhab*. Vol. III. p. 118

¹²⁵⁷ Cf. Pratapaditya Pal, ed., *Dancing to the Flute*, Sydney, 1997

veins of the heart used to rend the soul with their mournful cries. And *dirhams* and *dinars* were showered down like raindrops.¹²⁵⁸

Not only that, but it appears that Akbar himself participated in Sufi music, the *sama'* and the *qawwālī*. To quote Abul Fazl:

At this time, Bakhshu *qawwāl* recited before him [Akbar] two heart ravishing stanzas in a pleasant manner. The Syllabus of the roll of recognition (of God) displayed a countenance flashing with Divine lights. Those whose vision did not extend beyond the plain outward appearance received spiritual delight (from the singing)...¹²⁵⁹

It is also interesting to note that till 18th century, we seldom come across any reference to *marsia khwāns* or the recitors of elegies of Karbala.

Music was also a part of devotion at Hindu temples, and as mentioned, *dhrupad*, the dominant vocal style at the Mughal court, had its origins here. Peter Mundy provides a useful sketch of worshippers in a Hindu temple showing a kettledrum, a gong and a *shankh* (conch shell) being played.¹²⁶⁰

Christian devotional music was also to be heard, introduced during the period under review. Based on the letters of Father Jerome Xavier who was in Agra and Lahore from during Jahangir's reign, Father Fernao Guerreiro writes that during Easter in Lahore in 1607:

In the early morning [Easter Sunday] there was another grand procession, headed by a cross adorned with roses and other flowers, and accompanied by musicians with hautboys, which they had learnt to play in Goa, having been sent there for that purpose; and as these instruments had never been heard or seen in the country before they attracted many people and caused much

¹²⁵⁸ Badauni *Muntakhab*, Vol. II, p. 188

¹²⁵⁹ Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, III, p.378

¹²⁶⁰ See note 1241 supra

astonishment. ...These feasts were followed by that of Corpus Christi, on which occasion one of the Fathers carried through the streets the holy Sacrament enclosed in a glazed tabernacle - under a canopy. A band of Christians surrounded him bearing torches and candles, while others followed, some playing on pipes and some singing, as they went in procession to the church.¹²⁶¹

Inside the Jesuit churches in Agra and Lahore there may have been organs as well. Guerreiro writes of two runaway African slaves who had sought sanctuary in the house of the Jesuit priests in Lahore being brought to the attention of a Mughal officer by 'a native of Goa... saying that they were very clever fellows, and that one of them could play the organ and sing Portuguese music'.¹²⁶²

There are also miniatures of wandering minstrels performing in the open air with audiences made up of common people. One such miniature from Jahangir's reign by Govardhan depicts a singer and a *rubab* player performing in a camp possibly of travelling merchants.¹²⁶³ Another miniature from Shahjahan's reign shows a man who looks to be a porter seated on the bare ground listening to a singer (a mirror copy of the singer in the Govardhan painting) and a player on an unidentifiable lute.¹²⁶⁴ Admittedly, none of these miniatures look as though they are in an urban setting, but they can be taken as indicative of the prevalence of music among the common people.

In the Mughal capital cities, painting and music was by no means the monopoly of the Mughal court, or nobles and rich merchants who alone could afford

¹²⁶¹ Guerreiro, *Jahangir*, pp. 33-4

¹²⁶² *ibid.*, p. 27

¹²⁶³ 'Group of men listening to a singer and a musician', Minto Album, Ms.7, no.11, Chester Beatty Museum, Dublin, cf. S.C.Welch, *Imperial Mughal Painting*, London, 1978, pl. 28

¹²⁶⁴ 'Rubab player, his companion and a peasant', Bichitr, Minto Album, Victoria & Albert Museum, IM, 27 & A-1925 cf. Krishna Chaitanya, *A History of Indian Painting: Manuscript, Mughal and Deccan Traditions*, New Delhi, 1979, fig. 57

to employ painters or musicians to perform regularly in their mansions. The services of these men of art, the painters and musicians, was enjoyed by the nobility and common people alike, and even for those without the means of hiring their services, the services of the professor of the painting and the music could be enjoyed by all.