

# **BIODIVERSITY OF MEDIEVAL INDIA ON THE LIGHT OF MUGHAL PAINTINGS: AN INVESTIGATIVE VIEWPOINT**

Written by **Sandip Manna**

M.Phil Scholar, Vidyasagar University, Midnapore (West Bengal), India

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## **ABSTRACT**

Several pictures of various Mughal painters presented a beautiful biodiversity perspective of Mughal India, creating an opportunity to know about different types of plants, animals, climber-bush. Very few numbers of animal, vegetation pictures were seen in the Mughal painting in a distinct context. Indeed, these are appearances on the aspects of individual picture, hunting, during the raids. Various images are drawn during the reign of Akbar's, such as deer, ox, cat, rabbit, parrots, hawk, vultures, babul tree, etc. Pictures were created during Jahangir's reign, North American turkey, peacock, goat, fish, mountainous buffalo, hawk, zebra, lion, hornbill, cranes, chicken, etc. Shahjahan's dominion painters made many biotic elements, such as deer, elephants, daffodil, nilgai, rabbit, mallard, etc. Very few paintings were drawn during Aurangzeb's reign nilgai, egret. Cat, camel pictures are drawn in later periods. Medieval India was enriched by various flora and fauna. In Today's, Mughal's epoch colossal biodiversity is decreasing due to present modernization and industrialization. The huge context of biodiversity in the Mughal period creates an environment protective affirmative mentality in the present and future generation- this is the main hope and instinct of this article. Within 50 years, 68% of biodiversity was lost in India. Suppose we are looking after our previous richness picture of Mughal biodiversity and based on psychological motive, we are taken several steps to protect our environment. In that case, it will be a great matter to our mother earth.

**Keywords:** Mughal India, biodiversity, environment movement, painting, natural elements, modernization.

## MAIN DISCUSSION

The environment movement was originated in the U.S.A. between the north pacific and north Atlantic Ocean America in 1960<sup>th</sup> and 1970<sup>th</sup> centuries. Based on the environment movement, a new branch of history writing was born: an environmental history. This wave reached the biggest peninsula (India) of the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal within one decade.<sup>i</sup> At the end of 1960<sup>th</sup> consciousness about the environment increased rapidly in USA.<sup>ii</sup> Ramchandra Guha called the environment movement "Children of 1960<sup>th</sup> decade".<sup>iii</sup> some prominent environmental history writers such as Mahesh Rangarajan, Madhav Gadgil, Ramchandra Guha, K. Shivaram Krishna, Vinita Damodaran, Ranjan Chakraborty. They are new outlooks that increase our interest and aptitude towards environmental history. In the context of Indian history writing, several environments concerned research work create a novelty. The primary aim of the article is to know about the environmental history of India, especially the environmental history of medieval India. According to Michel Fisher, in India, the environment regarding research and writing undergoes a progressive way, rapidly analysing various perspectives of dual relation between men, plant, faunal and natural world.<sup>iv</sup>

For the investigation of the history of Mughal India, various kinds of elements are needed; among them, painting is one unique element. Which we are called the "Album of Mughal period." One by one leaf of the album is a source of contemporary society, economy, politics, and especially the natural environment. Contemporary Mughal painters' attractive painting brings out a creative and beautiful feeling; it also overwatches the Mughal period biodiversity and ecosystem context, which is a medium to know about several elements of the Mughal period environment. The benefit of using painting as a resource is that it has less chance of distortion. That's why it is a reliable source for the investigation of truth.

Generally, biodiversity means one large area; various plants, fauna, and microbiological components are observed within the area. S.V.S. Rana is definite that biodiversity is an inter-relative system between several species (plant, fauna, microbiological) in a specified habitation. It is the total sum of genes, species, and ecosystem.<sup>v</sup> According to N. Arumugam, biodiversity is the degree of variety in nature. It is the totality of genes, species, and ecosystem in a region. It indicates all inherited variations of living organisms living in a broad area.<sup>vi</sup> U.S. Rawal and N.K. Agarwal is definite that biodiversity references a variety of genes and species

within one area, biome, or earth.<sup>vii</sup> Convention of Rio-di-Janeiro (1992 C.E., Brazil) adopted 'Agenda 21'. Its second part deals with the conservation of biodiversity.<sup>viii</sup> Now, we are looking at what types of animals, plants, and pest pictures are found in Mughal paintings. Thus, we can learn about Mughal period biodiversity and the ecosystem's structure, classification, and class bond. Therefore, we can taste the beauty of the environment during the Mughal era. This discussible question or idea is the allurement of the essay.

By the patronage of Mughal rulers, a colossal painting depository was built. The list of the painters was so lengthy. Some famous painters were Mir Sayyid Ali, Abd Al-Samad, Farrukh Beg, Daswanth, Basawan, Abu Al-Hasan, Bishan Das, Govardhan, Ustad Mansur, Mir Hasan, Anupchitra, Mahammad Nadir, Chitramoni, Daulat etc. They are famous paintings that were conserved in the museum of India cum several world museums. In this regard, some examples are Maharaja Sawai Man Singh Museum (Jaipur, Rajasthan), Victoria and Albert Museum (London, England), Boston Museum, etc. Painting style of Persia, Indian, European influences on Mughal painting. In 'Babur Nama' mentioned that Babur's hand is not bad in painting.<sup>ix</sup> Mughal paintings reached their highest peak at the rule of Jahangir. According to Satish Chandra, with panting of battle, hunting, and court view, under Jahangir, special advancement was made in portrait painting and paintings of animals, flowers, etc. In this field, Mansur was a famous painter.<sup>x</sup> Irfan Habib states that Jahangir was especially interested in portrait painting of individuals, fur trappers, creatures, trees, and flowers.<sup>xi</sup>

Indeed, Mughal painting started from under the patronage of Akbar (1556-1605 C.E.). Tutinama (1580-1585 CE) book is preserved in Chester Beaty Library (Dublin). In this book, we see one woman and a parrot (*Psittaciformes*) within a cage. This means that the parrot was a domestic bard. European influenced, one of the famous titled works of Basawan was "Madonna and Child," here a cat (*Felis catus*) and deer (*Cervidae*) were observed. It was preserved in San Diego Museum (U.S.A.). Akbar Nama (1598-1602) cited one picture where ox (*Bos taurus*) was used for mansion house construction in Fatehpur Sikri.<sup>xii</sup> In this book mentioned one of Akbar's hunting raids, where cited a hunting picture of leopard (*Panthera pardus*) and deer near Agars Forest. 'Siege of Ranthambore' titled (mentioned in Akbar Nama) painting presented bullocks are dragging guns up the hill. Conservated in Chester Beaty Library (Dublin), Surjan painting (including Ayyar-i- Danish, 1605 C.E.) given a scenario, where hare (*Lepus*) was crushed by elephants (*Loxodonta africana*).<sup>xiii</sup> Daswanth painted a picture (1565-

1585 C.E.), where parrot alert to his breeds to play with the fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) is formidable thinks.<sup>xiv</sup> Akbar's hunting raids scene published in 'Loan Exhibition of Antiquities.' Here Akbar seated on an elephant with his son, a parrot seated on the hand

of Akbar.<sup>xv</sup> Mentioned in 'Akbar Nama,' a wonderful scenario of fishing (Vertebrata) at the front of Akbar was drawn by Kesukalen, and Chatar Muni.<sup>xvi</sup> 'Emperor Akbar and Birbal' (published from Delhi Museum of Archaeology, 1911 C.E) titled painting presented Birbal stand the backside of Akbar and Akbar seated under an umbrella and a parrot sitting on the Akbar's hand, two joyful vulture birds (*Cathartes aura*) flying over his head.<sup>xvii</sup> A painting of an acacia tree was drawn (1600 C.E.) by Sarwan during the reign of Akbar.<sup>xviii</sup> A Darbar picture was drawn by Manohar (1602-04 C.E.), where we saw Akbar receiving Murtaza khan (conserved in Cincinnati Art Museum, U.S.A.). In this picture, we noticed that a dog (*Canis lupus familiaris*) was laid on the ground, and a peacock was sitting at the podium's roof.<sup>xix</sup>

More verity and massive development have taken place in the reign of Jahangir in the context of painting. Abu'l-Hasan painted a (1618 C.E.) picture of Jahangir, where he metaphorically killed a thin poor people, and he stands over a lion (*Panthera leo*), and rams (*Ovis aries*) and a study mood sage stay over a fish in a recumbent posture on the bottom of the picture.<sup>xx</sup> A conserved (at Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai) Mughal painting (1610 C.E.) presented a fight between two camels.<sup>xxi</sup> During Jahangir's period, hunting pictures, rare images of flowers and animals attractive our eyes. Within the hunting picture, so many lions founded.<sup>xxii</sup> Ustad Mansur painted a western tulip flower (*Tulipa*) (preserved in Aligarh Muslim University) in 1620 C.E.<sup>xxiii</sup> Mansur also painted an antelope (Bovidae) (kept in Terence McInerney, New York) in 1625 C.E.<sup>xxiv</sup> Painter Padarath painting hillsides buffalos (*Syncerus caffer nanus*) preservative in Chester Beatty Library (Dublin).<sup>xxv</sup> One Jahangir's court painting was conserved in 'National Library of Russia', where the emperor held a parrot in his hand and seated with his courtier.<sup>xxvi</sup> Painter Manohar painting (1612 C.E.) North American turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) preserved in 'Victoria and Albert Museum (London, England).<sup>xxvii</sup> Conserved in 'The Prince of Wales of Western India,' one painting (1620 C.E.) presented Jahangir's distributed food in Ajmer, where a peacock (*Pavo cristatus*) picture also depicted.<sup>xxviii</sup> Few numbers of goat (*Capra aegagrus hircus*) diagram (1610 C.E.) found in Jahangirnama.<sup>xxix</sup> Mansur painted two peacock paintings (1625 C.E.), preserved in Baron Maurice Rothschild (Paris).<sup>xxx</sup> One figurative painting drawn by Abu'l-Hasan, where Jahangir was lobbing bows

to Ahmednagar's administrator Malik Ambar. In this picture, Jahangir stands on a world sphere; below the sphere, one goat stand, and the goat also stands upon a big fish.<sup>xxxii</sup> Abu'l-Hasan and Manohar were painting a picture, where Jahangir stood with one parrot in his hand.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Mansur drew one zebra picture in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; zebra (*Equus quagga*) was brought from Africa.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Abu'l-Hasan painting (1618 C.E.) presented emperor Jahangir and Safavid ruler (Persia) first Shah Abbas hug each other, here first Shah Abbas stand over a sheep and Jahangir stand over a lion, both animals lying down over a world sphere.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Though sheep and lions naturally relationship as food-consumer, but here both coexistences convey a good and peaceful environment during the reign of Jahangir. Hornbill (*Bucerotidae*) named bird picture was drawn by Mansur.<sup>xxxv</sup> Mansur also drew two storks (*Ciconiidae*) bird picture during the reign of Jahangir.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Within Waqiat-i- Bahari (B. M or 3714), 8 picture is located, within two images was drawn by Mansur such as cock (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) and quail (*Coturnix coturnix*).<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Shahjahan was not a naturalist like Jahangir, and few numbers animal and environmental pictures were drawn during the period of Shahjahan.<sup>xxxviii</sup> 'Durbar of Shahjahan' (conserved in Bodleian Library, U.K.) titled painting presented two elephants greeting toward the emperor<sup>xxxix</sup>, which may uphold the scenario of the daily Mughal court. Inayat painted painting presented a scene of nightly hunting, here one prince and two associate hunting deer by the bow and arrow.<sup>xl</sup> Portray in Shahjahan Nama (1657 C.E.), a painting is conserved in Windsor castle library (U.K.), where Shahjahan hunted a lion.<sup>xli</sup> A painted picture of 1635 C.E. profound a view of one Irish tree and one butterfly (*Rhopalocera*), conserved in India Office Library (London).<sup>xlii</sup> A picture of two fighting elephants (*Loxodonta*) is conserved in Metropolitan Museum (collected from Padshahnama), where emperor Shahjahan personally enjoyed the fight.<sup>xliii</sup>

The main patronage of Mughal painting during the reign of Shahjahan was Dara-Shikha (elder son of Shahjahan). Jonquil (*Narcissus*) flower found in Dara-Shikha album, painted in 1630 C.E, conserved in India Office Library.<sup>xliv</sup> During the reign of Shahjahan, one standing picture of emperor Akbar was drawn (1650 C.E) under the direction of Muhammad Faqirullah Khan (head artist at the court of Shahjahan), three deer picture was depicted at the bottom of panting and so many flower picture displayed at the border side.<sup>xlv</sup> On the environment of



spinaches, painter Payag, has drawn a hunting picture of Nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) by Dara-Shikha (1640C.E) and Shah Shuja (1655 C.E.). In Dara-Shikha's hunting picture (1640 C.E.) rabbit (*Orytolagus cuniculus*) is seen behind the spinaches.<sup>xlvi</sup> A painting uphold an image of Shahjahan and his son and his co-operator hunting black, deer, which was painted at Padshahnama, which is conserved in Royal Library, Windsor Castle.<sup>xlvii</sup> Muhammad Khan painted (1630-35 C.E.) a picture of a tulip and butterfly, which was conserved in the British Library.<sup>xlviii</sup> Several unknown painter paintings are found from Dara Shikoh's album, such as brown bird (plate, CXX, Fol.08) and wild duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*), (plate, CXXI, Fol. 10), etc.<sup>xlix</sup>

The growth of the Mughal painting become decrease during the reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707C.E). Mughal court painters spread to various contemporary provincial states because of Aurangzeb's less interest in painting. As a result, very much development took at the painting of Rajasthan and Punjab (especially hill areas).<sup>l</sup> Few numbers paintings were found during the period of Aurangzeb. Painter Hashim drew a painting in 1660 C.E., where Aurangzeb was hunting nilgai by gun upon the shoulder of two people.<sup>li</sup> Smithsonian Institution preserved a hunting painting (1660 C.E.) of Game-Birds (*Ardeidae*) by a Mughal prince.<sup>lii</sup> Later on, some examples of other paintings are camel (*Camelus*) and her breed (album- B.M. add. 22363), cat (*Felis catus*), (unknown painter, Johnson collection, fol.5), etc.<sup>liii</sup>

Among the whole Mughal painting, we are discussed a few of them. In this discussion, we are looking at the biodiversity of the Mughal period through several paintings. Along with Satish Chandra's viewpoint, we can say that despite very lively studies of animals and birds, the Mughal painters had little interest in the study of nature independently. However, trees, birds, streams of water, hillocks often formed the background of many hunting and war scenes.<sup>liv</sup> Except few instances (tulip, daffodil), the flower picture does not see independently, but the tree, creeper-bush is indirectly found in several pictures. Ustad Mansur painted more than 100 flower painting over Kashmir's flower during the summer season.<sup>lv</sup> Using various therapeutic elements such as watercolour, golden colour direct mention towards the biodiversity. We look after that within in birds' parrot was usually present in so many pictures. On the other way, in the context of animals' presence, the picture of the lion was most fluently used in so many paintings. But the presence of the tiger was not seen fluently. Some herbivores animals (those who usually eat plants) of the Mughal period were goat, deer, ox, buffalos, rabbit, zebra, parrot,

chicken, nilgai, etc. Cat, lion, mallard, vultures, etc., were carnivorous (those generally feed animal products). Some omnivorous (those who eat both plants and animals) animals were hornbills, cranes, etc. Among them, the number of herbivores was more than carnivorous and omnivorous.

At the end of our discussion, we can say that the biodiversity of Mughal India was so much rich. It is understood that the charm of the biodiversity of Mughal India has become decreased due to the pressure of modern-day industrialization, urbanization, global warming, climate change, and degradation of forests, etc. These have a negative and permanent impact on biodiversity. But Mughal India did not suffer from these types of difficulties. It is also true that Mughal rural and his courtier do not take any future steps to protect the environment. Even hunting program for the display of bravery and happiness of Mughal ruler was a measure reason behind the death of animals. But it had less impact on the environment compared to the modern-day (through industrialization and urbanization) effect on nature. Despite the 'Biological Diversity Act' (2002 C.E.), the protection of the environment has become a marginal subject in India. Enrichment of Mughal India's biological diversity encourages us to conserve our contemporary biodiversity and environment- this is an expectation to present and future generations.

On the Centre for Science and Environment report, India has lost 90% of the area of its four biodiversity hotspots, with the Indo-Burma hotspot taking the worst hit.<sup>lvi</sup> According to the W.W.F. report, 68% of biodiversity was lost in 5 decades in India.<sup>lvii</sup> It means the biodiversity of India is presently becomes under threat. Enrich biodiversity of Mughal India nowadays is hard-hit. Generally, several reasons, such as economic, political, social, and psychological, are behind the success of one magnificent work. Richness picture of Mughal's period biodiversity is a psychological motivation to protect our present-day biodiversity. There is also a vast time difference between Mughal India (1526-1857 C.E.) and present-day India. That's why the status of biodiversity is uncommon between the two periods. But present days, India felt into the crisis of biodiversity. If we memorize our past richness picture of Mughal's period biodiversity, it will be a psychological inspiration to protect our present-day biodiversity and the environment. Based on this psychological inspiration, if we take several steps to conserve our biodiversity, it will be great for our society and our mother earth.

## ENDNOTES

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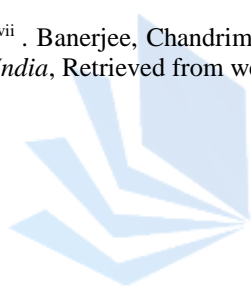
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