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## History of Indian art

### Deccan painting

*Deccani painting is the form of Indian miniature painting produced in the Deccan region of Central India, in the various Muslim capitals of the Deccan sultanates Ahmadnagar that emerged from the break-up of the Bahmani Sultanate by 1520. These were Bijapur, , Golkonda, Ahmadnagar , Bidar, and Berar. The main period was between the late 16th century and the mid-17th, with something of a revival in the mid-18th century, by then centred on Hyderabad.*

*The high quality of early miniatures suggests that there was already a local tradition, probably at least partly of murals, in which artists had trained. Compared to the early Mughal painting evolving at the same time to the north, Deccan painting exceeds in "the brilliance of their colour, the sophistication and artistry of their composition, and a general air of decadent luxury".Deccani painting was less interested in realism than the Mughals, instead pursuing "a more inward journey, with mystic and fantastic overtones".*

*Other differences include painting faces, not very expertly modelled, in three-quarter view, rather than mostly in profile in the Mughal style, and "tall women with small heads" wearing saris. There are many royal portraits, and although they lack the precise likenesses of their Mughal equivalents, they often convey*

*a vivid impression of their rather bulky subjects. Buildings are depicted as "totally flat screen-like panels". The paintings are relatively rare, and few are signed or dated, or indeed inscribed at all; very few names are known compared to the generally well-documented Mughal imperial workshops.*

*The Muslim rulers of the Deccan, many of them Shia, had their own links with the Persianate world, rather than having to rely on those of the imperial Mughal court. In the same way, contacts through the large textile trade, and nearby Goa, led to some identifiable borrowings from European images, which perhaps had a more general stylistic influence as well. There also appear to have been Hindu artists who moved north to the Deccan after the sultans combined to heavily defeat the Vijayanagara Empire in 1565, and sack the capital, Hampi.*

## *Subjects and style*



*Composite Buraq, National Museum, New Delhi, Hyderabad, 1770–75.*

*Beside the usual portraits and illustrations to literary works, there are sometimes illustrated chronicles, such as the Tuzuk-i-Asafiya. A Deccan speciality (also sometimes found in other media, such as ivory) is the "composite animal" a large animal made up of many smaller images of other animals. A composite Buraq and an elephant are illustrated here. Rulers are often given large haloes, following Mughal precedent. Servants fan their masters or mistresses with cloths, rather than the*

*chowris or peacock-feather fans seen elsewhere, and swords usually have the straight Deccan form.*

*Elephants were very popular in both the life and art of the Deccani courts, and artists revelled in depicting them behaving badly during the periodic musth hormonal overloads affecting bull elephants. There was also a genre of drawings with some colour using marbling effects in the bodies of horses and elephants. Apart from elephants, studies of animals or plants were less common in the Deccan than in Mughal painting, and when they occur they often have a less realistic style, with a "fanciful palette of intense colors".*

*Unusually for India, there was a significant imported population of Africans in the Deccan, a few of whom rose to high positions as soldiers, ministers or courtiers. Malik Ambar of Ahmadnagar and Ikhlas Khan of Bijapur were the most famous of these; a number of portraits survive of both, as well as others of unidentified figures.*

*One of the most important patrons of the style was Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur (d. 1627), himself a very accomplished painter, as well as a musician and poet. He died the same year as Jahangir, the last Mughal emperor to be an enthusiastic patron of painting other than imperial portraits. The portrait from c. 1590 illustrated above, which comes from the same period as Akbar's artists at the Mughal court were developing the Mughal portrait style, shows a confident but very different style. The extreme close-up view was to remain most unusual in Indian portraiture, and it has been suggested it was directly influenced by European prints, especially those of Lucas Cranach the Elder, with which it shares a number of features.*



*Sultan Abdullah Qutub Shah of Golconda, enthroned with dancers and attendants, c. 1630*

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**P.G.T FINE ART**