

PAINTING Study Material for class 12th

Based on Ncert

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Abdur Rahman Chughtai

Abdur Rahman Chughtai (21 September 1894 – 17 January 1975) was a painter artist and intellectual from Pakistan, who created his own unique, distinctive painting style influenced by Mughal art, miniature painting, Art Nouveau and Islamic art traditions. He is considered to be 'the first significant modern Muslim artist from Pakistan', and the national artist of Pakistan.

He was given the title of *Khan Bahadur* by the British Empire in India in 1934, awarded Pakistan's Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Crescent of Excellence) Award in 1960, and the Pride of Performance Award in 1958 by the President of Pakistan.

Early life and career

Chughtai was born on 21 Sep 1894 in Lahore, now in Pakistan. He was born in Lahore in the area known as 'Mohalla Chabuk Sawaran', the second

son of Karim Bukhsh, in a family descended from generations of craftsmen, architects, and decorators. Chughtai briefly learned naqqashi from his uncle Baba Miran Shah Naqqash at a local mosque. After completing his education at the Railway Technical School, Lahore, in 1911, Chughtai joined the Mayo School of Arts, Lahore (now called National College of Arts, Lahore), where Samarendranath Gupta, a pupil of Abanindranath Tagore was Vice-Principal. After leaving the school, he made a living for a while as a photographer and drawing teacher. He eventually became the head instructor in chromo-

Chughtai's first painting in a revivalist 'oriental' style appeared in the *Modern Review* magazine. He had his first exhibition in 1920 at the Punjab Fine Art Society. He also exhibited with the Indian School of Oriental Art during the 1920s, by which time he had become quite renowned. His work contributed greatly to Lahore's burgeoning modern art scene. While he predominantly worked with watercolors, Chughtai was also a print-maker, perfecting his etching skills in London during visits in the mid-1930s. His sketches were used in many books in Punjabi poetry by Bhai Vir Singh for illustrating his famous poems like "Kambadi Kalai" and including his famous epic "Rana Surat Singh" . Chughtai offered his

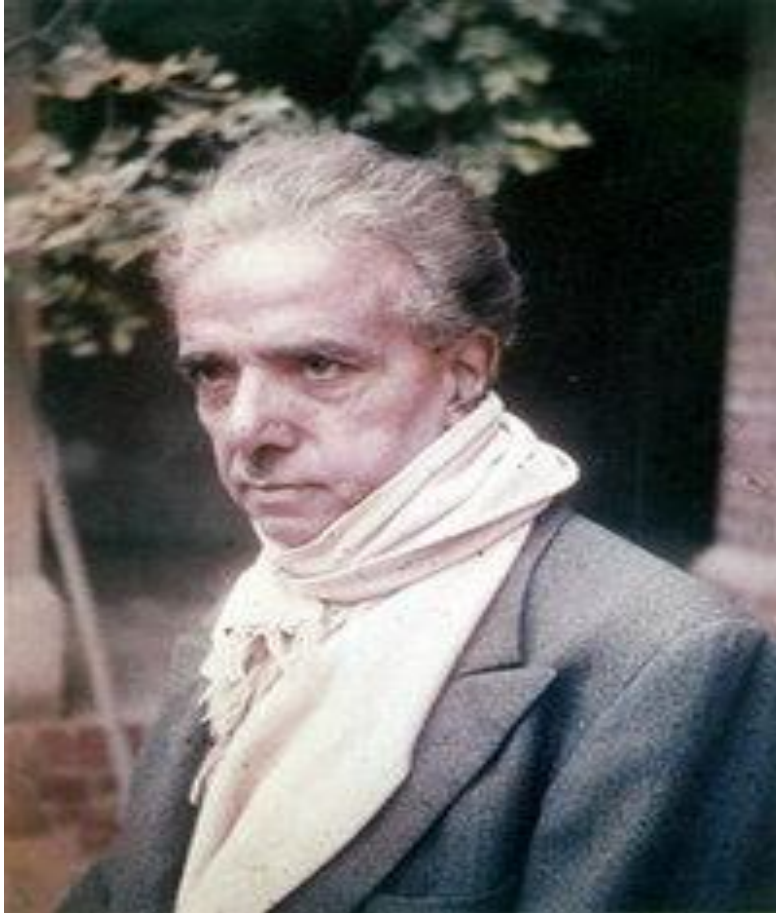
gratitude to Bhai Vir Singh for becoming part of these illustrations as a young artist in his letter to him on 11.04.1929

In his sixty years of artistic creation, Chughtai produced nearly 2000 watercolours, thousands of pencil sketches, and nearly 300 etchings and aquatints. He also wrote short stories, and articles on art. He designed stamps, coins, insignia and book covers. He was also an avid collector of miniatures and other art. He published three books of his own work: the *Muraqqai-i-Chughtai* (1927), *Naqsh-i-Chughtai* (c. 1935) and *Chughtai's Paintings* (1940). The *Muraqqa-i-Chughtai* was a sumptuously illustrated edition of Mirza Ghalib's Urdu poetry, with a foreword by Sir Muhammad Iqbal. It is regarded as the most significant work of Chughtai's career and in its time, was considered the finest achievement in book production in the country.

After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Chughtai came to be regarded as one of the most famous representatives of Pakistan. Chughtai's paintings were given to visiting heads of states. Allama Iqbal, Pablo Picasso, Elizabeth II were amongst his admirers.

Chughtai's closest associate was his younger brother Abdullah Chughtai, a scholar and researcher of Islamic art. Chughtai married twice,

and had two children, a son and daughter. He died in Lahore on 17 January 1975.



Art

Chughtai's early watercolours take off from the revivalism of the Bengal School of Art—his *Jahanara and the Taj*, for instance, shows the influence of Abanindranath's *The Last Moments of Shah Jahan*. By the 1940s, he had created his own style, strongly influenced by Islamic art traditions,

but retaining a feel of Art Nouveau. His subject matter was drawn from the legends, folklore and history of the Indo-Islamic world, as well as Punjab, Persia and the world of the Mughals. Abdur Rahman Chughtai also designed the logo for the Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) at the behest of its first general manager, Ubaidur Rahman. The logo has been tweaked and modified over the years since its inception but remains fundamentally the same. On Pakistan's independence day in 1951, he produced a set of 9 stamps, better known as 'Chughtai Art set'. At that time, this set was considered as the most beautiful stamps of the world. Artist and gallery owner Salima Hashmi deems Chughtai one of South Asia's foremost painters. "He was part of the movement that started in the early part of the 20th century to establish an identity indigenous to the subcontinent", she said. "He rejected the hegemony of the British Colonial aesthetic".¹*citation needed*

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