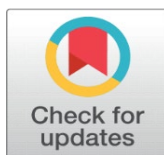
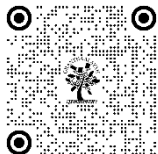


# A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF SIKH ART IN PUNJAB

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## ABSTRACT

Punjab is one of the paramount states in the history of India from its artistic, literary, and historical significance of view, in which Indian culture and sophistication first came to the forefront. Punjab has always been the motherland of sages, incarnations, Gurus, martyrs, and freedom fighters. The contribution of these Sikh Divine master's to the society cannot be summed up in a few words. However, many writers endowed the principles about the life of these Gurus in their terms as they penned their spiritual, social, and religious perspectives. Hence, art was not deprived of this touch either; many artistic movements made the Sikh religion the subject of their work. Sikh art has been, at its zenith, among the vast arts prospering in the land of Punjab, which brought the unique religious, social, and historical facets of Sikhism with tremendous sincerity and vividness in the exquisite touch of colours. In this paper, an attempt has been made for sharing some of the essential aspects of Sikh art from its birth to its development, which led to some significant sources of Sikh art in the form of Sikh murals, illustrated manuscripts, and portraits of Sikh Gurus, and so on.

**Keywords:** Sikh Art, Punjab, Religion, Murals, Manuscripts, Paintings

## 1. INTRODUCTION

To bring forth a creative form of art, it requires a pleasant environment that enables it to prosper. Whenever a dominant concept of art is observed in a province, there is undoubtedly a centuries long struggle and a noteworthy tribulation in its backdrop. Over the centuries, Punjab's background has endured many battles, rebellions, and foreign invasions, due to which the art of Punjab could not thrive as it should have. A glance at the history of Punjab reveals that its social and political system has contributed immensely to the blossoming of art. Numerous visitors or hostile raiders brought with them the finest elements of art, due to which Punjab

has been a confluence of different art streams since its inception. Along with the changing times in Punjab, art also had to endure many modifications and adaptations. Therefore, the artists of Punjab have abided by every internal and foreign influence to enhance and embellish the field of art.

“The art of painting developed in Punjab under the patronage of Iltumash and Khilji dynasty, which is confirmed by a reference in ‘Tarikh-I-Ferozeshi’”. [Chawla \(2013\)](#) Before proceeding into the brief about Sikh art, one must elucidate its substance and basis in the context of Sikh art, which has been explained differently by considerable art analysts and historians. According to the renowned writer [McLeod \(1991\)](#), several prevailing assumptions shaping the essence of Sikh art enclose the statements that it describes only Sikh subject matter or may express an identifiable style found in works created by Sikhs.

The ten Gurus of Sikhism incarnated on the sacred land of Punjab, founded the Khalsa Panth on this land, and Maharaja Ranjit Singh established the first Sikh empire on this ground. Before the Sikh Missals and the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, three main branches of art were prevalent in India: Mughal Art, Rajputana Art, and Kangra Art. From the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, art got a big boost, through which a golden age of Sikh court art in Punjab can be traced. Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered the Kangra district, bringing Guler and Sujampur Tira, significant centers of Kangra-style painting, under Khalsa rule. The self-sustaining atmosphere of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign attracted Pahari masters. Many painters from here came to Lahore and Amritsar, who got royal patronage. Both these cities became the center of art activities. Kotla, Guler, and other hill Rajputs were under Sikh rule, which led to a smooth mingling of hill painters and Sikh rulers, resulting in an emerging form of art in Sikhism.

The growth and development of Sikh painting is traced according to the following stages-

### **1) Illustrated Manuscripts**

The Sikh scripture, the Adi Guru Granth Sahib, perhaps has enormous Manuscript copies. Sikhs considered Sri Guru Granth Sahib as their living Guru. In those times, there was no technology like the printing press, due to which devotees prepared manuscripts of Guru Granth Sahib ji after working for months and years. Some devotees engaged in imitation work depicting their artistic skill in letter-making and yielding exquisite examples of calligraphy. Some artists were skilled in art adornment shown in the drawing lines, and some worked on or beyond the margin line on each page. Some of them even painted images of Sikh Gurus on various pages such that the manuscripts copies that provides material for art historical analysis. Latterly, Sikh Painting has been analyzed in its representations and expanding intricacy. The growing vogue and patronage of Sikhism led to the fact of multiple illuminated documents of the sacred scriptures. “Sikh interest in the art of painting first appeared in the scriptural texts”. [Malhotra \(2016\)](#) It is worth remarking that under the influence of Islamic tradition around the early 17th century, illustrations in geometric design uncovered in the folios of scriptural manuscripts are authentic evidence of Sikh interest in Painting. “Most notable of the early examples is the Pothi compiled by Guru Arjan in 1604, with its opening folio extensively illuminated in blue and gold”. [Malhotra \(2016\)](#) By the end of the seventeenth century, geometric design had been replaced by floral arrangements, which persisted into the eighteenth century. Someplace illuminated, Hukamnamas and Nissans were seen, embellished with geometric and floral designs. A significant contribution to Sikh artworks on the pattern and production of illustration and illuminated texts in the Kashmiri style that were prevalent in Punjab in the late 18th

Century. Most illuminated manuscripts in the mid to late 18th century revealed Kashmiri's luminous work's vine and floral adornment characteristic.

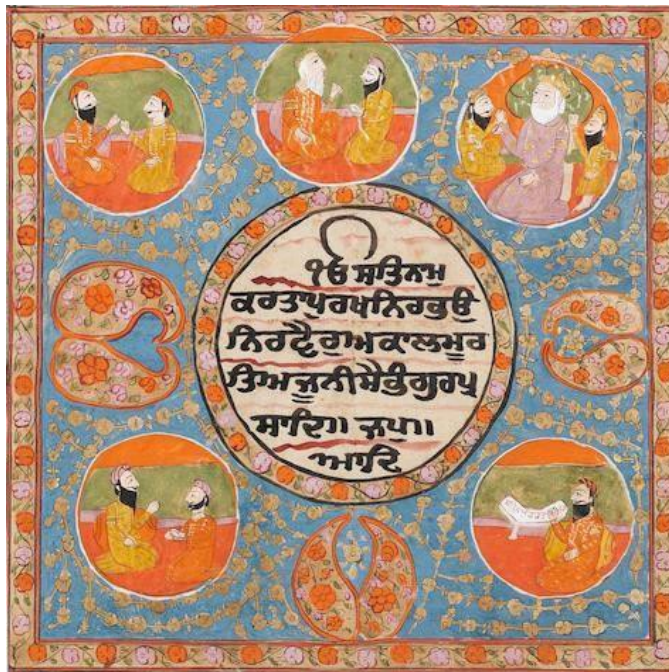
**Figure 1**



**Figure 1** A Decorated Page from Guru Granth Sahib.

**Source** Kaur & Nirankari (2005). Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts Section (Gurmukhi) Government-Museum Ad Art Gallery, Chadigarh. Chandigarh: Azad Hind Stores (P) LTD.

**Figure 2**



**Figure 2** An Illustrated Preface Page to a Manuscript of the Japji Sahib, the Opening Book of the Guru Granth, The Sikh Holy Book, North India, Mid-19th Century.

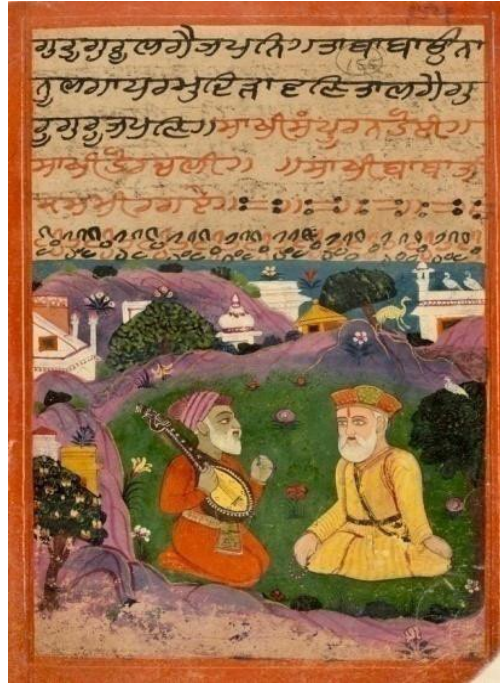
**Source** <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/17854/lot/354/>

In another folio (Figure 2) from northern India, the Japji Sahib is written in six lines with black ink. The five small roundels have portraits of the first five Sikh Gurus, all painted on a blue background, and the border is embellished with the flower-patterned theme on a gold ground. "The opening folio of a manuscript from Patna, which bears the Nishan of the tenth Guru, differs from most of the seventeenth-century examples: it has a floral decoration in Yellow, gold, and blue instead of the usual Islamic blue and gold geometric patterns of illumination". Malhotra (2016) The Sikh leaders kept excellently illustrated manuscripts of Adi Guru Granth, which performed as a piece of art and an article of faith. One such manuscript of the Adi Granth was exhibited in the National Gallery, New Delhi. The manuscripts copies of the Adi Granth available in the Gurudwaras, located at different places are mainly classified into three prominent categories: the Kiratpur Wali Birh, Bhai Banno's Birh, and Damdami Birh. Besides, the upper terrace of Sachkhand Harimadir Sahib is called Bala Khana, where an old Bir is preserved. Sri Hazur Sahib has a remarkable honour among the Sikhs as the Sikh Takhats because Dasmesh Guru Ji renounced his body here, and Sri Adi Grath was given the Guruship here. Being a centre of Sikhs activities, it was necessary to have copies of Guru Granth Sahib and other ancient Sikh literature scrolls. Other than this, many other handwritten copies of Guru Granth Sahib Ji are adorned in various Gurudwaras and art museums, which provide valuable information about Sikh art and history.

Apart from these illuminated and illustrated scriptural manuscripts, Janam Sakhis was also significant in Sikh art. In the 17th and 18th centuries, considerable Janam Sakhis were composed, most of which were written in the Gurmukhi script, which provided important information about the lives of Sikh Gurus. "The janam-sakhis are hagiographic accounts of the life of Guru Nanak, popular narratives that have enjoyed a considerable popularity throughout of the Sikh Panth". McLeod (1991) According to famous author Dr. Pyar Singh, "Janam Sakhi of 1588 is the oldest documented Janam Sakhi" Singh (1971). "While well-known scholar Dr. W.H. McLeod has considered Bhai Bala Ji's Janam Sakhi the most ancient and prominent". McLeod (1991) Bhai Bala wrote this Janam Sakhi in the presence of Sri Guru Angad Dev Ji comprised of twenty-nine paintings. The influence of the Sufi tradition abiding in the Punjab was evidently seen in the paintings accomplished in Bhai Bala Ji's Janam Sakhi.

Out of all the prominent illustrated Janamsakhis of the early eighteenth century, B-40 is regarded as an authentic Janam-Sakhi. "It was completed in 1733, another Janamsakhi in a Pahari-derived style, now in the Prince of Wales Library, bears a slightly earlier date: 1724. It is considered one of the most adequate as it mentions the name of the writer, painter and even the time of its creation. The India Office Library, London acquired it from Lahore, and the Guru Nanak Dev University published it under the editorship of Dr. Surjit Hans. Alam Chand Raj, a renowned painter, painted the images of B-40 Janam Sakhi. Alam Chand is declared to have had a profound acquaintance with Sikhism and had specialized on how to articulate the Sikh ideology through his paintings. "The painter Alam Chand 'Raj' is referred to as a distinguished forbear in terms of the professional skill of the masons, included later in the Ramgarhia 'caste' who made a distinctive contribution as artists and interior decorators of gurdwaras" McLeod (1991), p. 260. The Iconography in B-40 Janamsakhi associated with Guru Nanak is skilfully accomplished in appealing colours making it distinctive to Sikh Art. It contains 231 folios with fifty-seven illustrations.

Figure 3



**Figure 3** Guru Nanak with Bhai Mardana, a Folio from B-40 Janam Sakhi, c. 1733.

**Source**

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a2/1733\\_CE\\_Janamsakhi\\_British\\_Library\\_MS\\_Panj\\_B\\_40%2C\\_Guru\\_Nanak\\_hagiography\\_1%2C\\_Bhai\\_Sangu\\_Mal.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a2/1733_CE_Janamsakhi_British_Library_MS_Panj_B_40%2C_Guru_Nanak_hagiography_1%2C_Bhai_Sangu_Mal.jpg)

In this painting (Figure 3), Guru Nanak Dev Ji is shown with Bhai Mardana playing the harp. The surroundings of the background have been shown a very spiritual ambience. The painters of the Janam Sakhi drew images influenced by the already prevalent Sufi style. Guru Nanak dev Ji is revealed in miscellaneous religious attires in these sacred scriptures. Still, this fact is also apparent that along with his mixed Hindu and Muslim garb, he was also known for his devotional songs and teachings, which assembled the basis of verses recorded in Guru Granth, the holy book of Sikhism.

## 2) Mural Painting

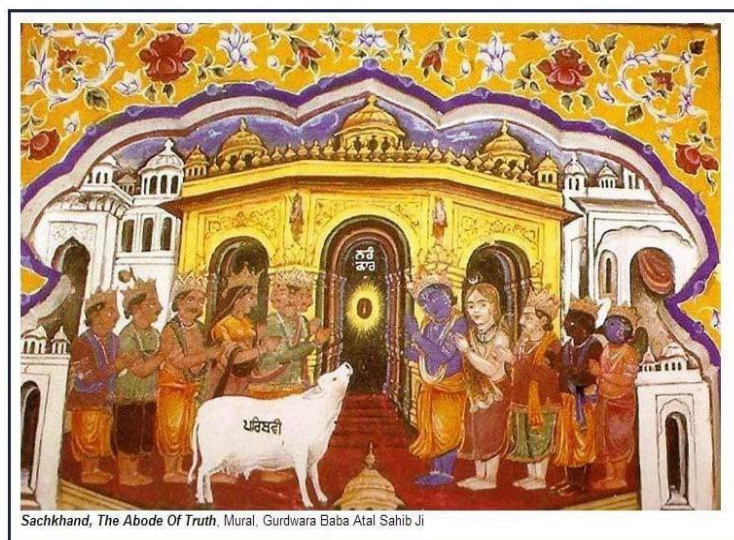
The practice of mural painting in India is very ancient, as evidenced by the centuries-old murals of Ajanta. But no direct proof exists to substantiate mural painting practice in the old Punjab. The remains of mural paintings of the Lahore Fort are considered to be the foremost examples of the blossoming of painting in the Punjab region. "They were commissioned in the time of Akbar and were elaborate with themes of secular and Mughal court scenes." [Srivastava \(1983\)](#) Despite Islam's Prohibition of creating idols, many Muslim rulers in northern India encouraged the art of idolatry. Srivastva states that, "Even many Muslim emperors who ruled in North India encouraged mural painting despite their disdain for painting in the Muslim religion mural paintings continued to receive patronage in Punjab during the Muslim rule, and although flower patterned embellishment prevailed in these artworks, figurative painting maintained its place". [Srivastava \(1983\)](#) Depiction of captivating patterns influenced by Mughal art became an integral part of Several Sikh personalities, including Hari Singh Nalua, Attari wale and additional Sikh Misal

Sardars, patronized and contributed to fueling the expansion of Sikh murals. People adorned their houses with portraits of gurus, Sikh chieftains and historical events plastered with lime plaster over the bricks of the houses.

The traditional mural painting in Punjab first came into vogue in the Amritsar city which was a religious and commercial center. Due to British contacts, the western influence can also be seen in the Punjab murals. The amicable affinity of Sikhs with the Hindus has also been a significant factor in the development of murals, which we can see in the subjects of murals on various prominent buildings and religious places in Punjab. "The Sikhs, Hindus and Muslim were equally fond of architectural decoration". Kipling (1988) "It became a popular mode of embellishment in the first quarter of the 19th century and flourished during the rule of Sikhs". Archer (1966) It is also momentous to ascribe that idol worship is prohibited in the Sikh religion. However, the portraits of Sikh Gurus started to be depicted on both walls and paper. In many Gurudwaras and Janamsakhis, handwritten scrolls began to be illustrated with images of the Sikh Gurus. The Golden temple Amritsar, Gurudwara Pothimala Ferozpur, Akal Takhat Amritsar, Baba Atal Amritsar, Gurudwara Lohgarh Sahib Faridkot, Gurudwara Baba Veer Singh Amritsar are some of the chief buildings displaying the sikh murals.

The Golden Temple in Amritsar occupies an invaluable place in the art domain from every aspect of art. To embellish the Walls of the Golden Temple, Amritsar, Maharaja Ranjit Singh commissioned Muslim Mohraqqashs of Faizabad, which became another stunning specimen of Sikh murals. When one resembles the background of Amritsar murals with Pahari school, it is seen that the landscape, which is a central segment of Pahari School, is omitted from Amritsar murals. At junctures, murals are diverged into panels, each illustrating a particular theme, as in Chamba wall paintings. Rich flower-patterned designs and animal motifs like peacocks, tigers, deer etc., accentuate the substantial regional essence of the painting. The regular use of ultramarine, Indian red, and vital white added to the luxuriant gardens lends mysticism to the entirety of the paintings. Entrenched with tiny mirrors, the ceiling lends extra appeal to the surroundings, which are washed in superficial and sparingly used pigments, gauging the artists' aesthetic accomplishment.

**Figure 4**



**Figure 4** Sachkhanda, Mural Painting from Gurudwara Baba Atal at Amrtsar, 19th Century.

**Source** <https://www.sikhnet.com/files/news/2014/03-March/Sachkhand.jpg>

Near the Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar is an octagonal and eight-storied 130 feet tall building, which is built in memory of Baba Atal Rai, the son of the Sixth Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji. The walls of its second floor are illustrated with murals taken from the Janamsakhis. The murals here demonstrate the life of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, in which all the events from his birth to his enthronement to Guru Angad Dev Ji are depicted. "The work also dates from the nineteenth century and is in bold style, reminiscent of so much mural work that was done around that time in the Punjab". [Goswamy & Smith \(2006\)](#).

Along with it, right in front of the Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar is the Akal Takht building, painted in the 19th century with purely religious theme. The second floor of Pothimala Gurudwara, located in Guru Harshai, also has paintings on all the walls related to religious and non-religious subjects. Due to the prosperity in the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the artists painted murals making their religious sites magnificent and stupendous. So, the mural painters in Punjab have faithfully represented its history and had taken every dimension where Sikh Gurus have been given an honorable place.

**Figure 5**



**Figure 5** A Mural Painting from Akal Takht Sahib, Amritsar, 19th Century.

**Source** [Kang \(1995\)](#). Punjab De Kandh Chittar (Punjabi). Patiala: Punjabi University Patiala.

Another prominent building in Amritsar is the Akhara Bala Nand near the Golden Temple, whose walls are decorated with paintings related to religious subjects. It was where the Udasis, an ascetic sect founded by Guru Nanak Dev's eldest son, Sri Chand, preached the concept of holiness. The most recognized and large-scale mural panel here illustrates the Ten Sikh Gurus. In the middle, Guru Nanak is seated meditatively beneath a tree, holding a rosary in his right hand and his back backed by a rounded pillow. Other Gurus pictured sitting near Guru Nanak. Also, Bhai Bala and Bhai Mardana, a chauri-bearer and a rebeck musician to the Guru were traced in this panel.

Figure 6



Figure 6 A Mural Painting at Akhara ala Nand, Amritsar.

Source

[https://cmsimages.tribuneindia.com/gallery\\_content/2021/1/2021\\_1\\$largeimg\\_746693883.jpg](https://cmsimages.tribuneindia.com/gallery_content/2021/1/2021_1$largeimg_746693883.jpg)

“In the 19th century, there used to be a street named Naquash in the Mughal Bazaar of Amritsar, also known as 'Gali Naquash,' where traditional artists like Puran Singh Mussavar and Amir Singh used to reside”. Kaur (2016) Here, it is appropriate to mention Bhayi Gyan Singh Naquash, who elegantly embellished the fences of the Golden Temple, Amritsar. Apart from this, Hari Singh was also an accomplished artist in Mohrakashi. His outstanding work at Amritsar was destroyed in the communal riots of 1947.

Wall painting in Punjab remained popular till the end of the 19th century and even after that. This practice was also prevalent in the princely capitals of Punjab, namely Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Faridkot and Kapurthala and the like. “There are approximately 175 buildings in presentday Punjab, the walls of which were painted in the 19th century”. Kang (1985) The walls of such buildings, conveying the impression of sanctity, grandeur, and embellishment. So, the mural painters in Punjab have carefully depicted its history and taken every aspect as a subject matter where Sikh Gurus have been given a special place.

### Court Painters of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

When art comes under the supervision of the decisive class, it becomes the servant of the king's court in which the social picture of that time is reflected. They have instructed the artist to create a meticulous transcription of the full magnificence of the bright colors, the interplay of forms, and the radiant ambiance of their enchanting worlds. Portraits painting seem to have commenced with Guru Hargobind. This practice continued until Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Allah Bakhsh, a famous Lahore painter, produced significant works depicting subjects from the Krishna saga. His works were shrouded in a mist of mysticism, and his colour schemes and exquisite craftsmanship remain unsurpassed today. The growing significance of the Guru's court counted as a further dimension to the appeal in the art of Painting.

The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century marked a turning point in the art field of Punjab. By this time, the last gleam of the



Kangra Kalam had utterly disappeared, and a new kind of painting called Bazaar School appeared, identical to western and folk art.

It is noteworthy that Maharaja Ranjit Singh also sheltered European artists to strengthen reliable relations with the British. Due to this, Western European art customs enrolled the patio of the traditional art of Punjab. The works of these European painters inspired the regional painters, and some commenced working in their style. They introduced more affordable ways of portrait painting to the regional artists, and the style eventually became bazaar portraiture.

Some well-known European artists are August Theodore Schoefft, Emily Eden, Baron Hugel, Helen, and William Carpenter. “Although Ranjit Singh had a strong aversion to being portrayed, still, many of his portraiture executed by the Delhi, Jodhpuri and Pahari, as well as by some European painters, survive”. [Aryan \(1977\)](#) At that point, a considerable number of artists focused on portrait painting.

“A survey of paintings in Punjab of 1842-1850 shows that Schoefft’s influence on their medium was slight”. [Aryan \(1977\)](#) His massive artworks painted in oil quickly impacted the painting tendency in Punjab. In these paintings, he revived the royal atmosphere of the Lahore palace of that time. The recognition for the realistic portrayal of the glory of Lahore and Punjab in Sikh subjects goes to Schoefft. He came to India during the reign of Sher Singh of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and painted Sikh portraits for more than a year. Local artists and rulers of Punjab got in touch with western art through Schoefft's works for the first time, and his colossal canvas impacted Punjab's painting tendency.

**Figure 7**



**Figure 7** August Schoefft, *The Court of Lahore*, Oil on Canvas, 487\*254 cm, Princess Bamba Collection.

**Source** <http://www.sikhmuseum.com/schoefft/artist.html>

“Emily Eden (1797–1869), was an amateur artist and the sister of the Governor General, Lord Auckland. She was a prominent figure among amateur artists and produced many drawings of the people of the Punjab”. [Ikeda \(2019\)](#) Emily Eden drawn a portrait of Maharaja Ranjit Singh which is very similar to the traditional style of Sikh painting. Later, it was painted by L. Dickinson. It portrayed the Maharaja seated on a European chair, with one of his legs on the ground and crossed over the other. He wears yellow headgear and a crimson gown and bears a sword at his waist, revealing his royal majesty. An another portrait of Sher Singh created by Emily Eden is also a fine example of Sikh Court art.

**Figure 8**

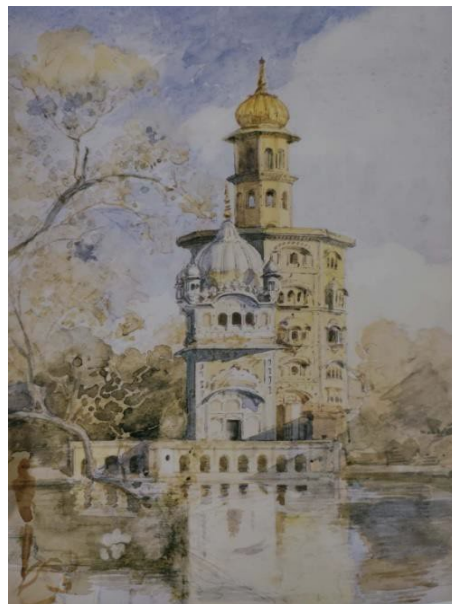


**Figure 8** Drawing by-Emily Eden, Printer: L. Dickenson, A Portrait of Ranjit Singh, Chromo Lithograph Sketched, 1780- 1839, London, 1844, Kapany Collection.

**Source** <https://www.alamy.com/english-a-portrait-of-ranjit-singh-maharaja-of-the-punjab-1780-1839-by-emily-eden-london-1844-1844-emily-eden-21-a-portrait-of-ranjit-singhimage184829881.html>

This indicates that throughout the sovereignty of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Punjabi painting was an amalgamation of various provincial and foreign art styles. It will be essential to remark here on another artist named William Carpenter, who was famous for watercolors.

**Figure 9**



**Figure 9** William Carpenter, The Akalis' Tower at Amritsar, Watercolour on Paper, 24.5\*17 cm, 1854.

**Source** Stronge (1999). The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms. New Delhi: Prakash Books.

Western painters' early oil paintings profoundly concerned Punjabi painters' innovative process. "Oils were introduced here, perhaps in the 1830s, by Jeevan Ram and Hasn-al-din, both of which were on the entourage of Lord William Bentinck". [Kessar \(2003\)](#) After that, they preferred large-size oil paintings to miniature ones. The content of these paintings is also theological retellings and historical events.

Renowned regional painters from the 19th Century, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's courtiers, were Imam Bakhsh, Kishan Singh, and Bishan Singh. These artists adopted paintings with the Kangra Sikh style. Kishan Singh was exceptionally proficient in illustration magnifying designs, while his brother Bishan Singh painted mostly Darbar Scenes (court scenes). In addition to this comes artist Kehar Singh, who has no other contemporary painter, and he was honored as a Maharaja Ranjit Singh court painter. Kehar Singh and Kapoor Singh provided some paintings regarding everyday life, such as the people, craftspersons and trade. Kehar Singh sincerely used the effect of light and shade in his artworks, his style reflecting the mark of local western-style painters.

**Figure 10**

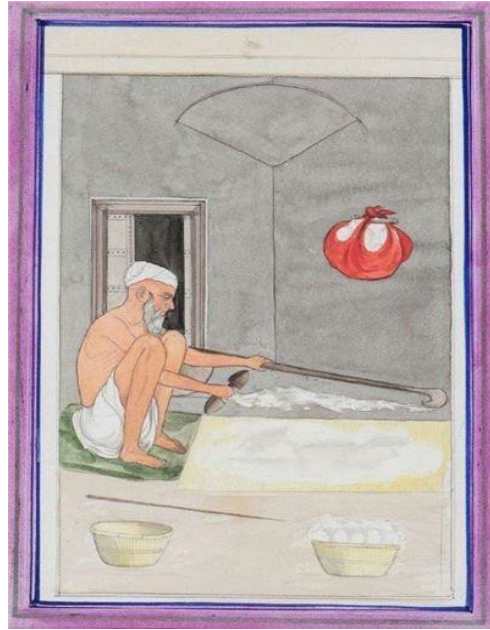


**Figure 10** Kehar Singh, Portrait of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Lahore. Ca.1849. Gouche on Glass. 50.8×40.6 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum.

**Source** [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Portrait-of-Maharaja-Ranjit-SinghNimbate-By-Kehar-Singh-Lahore-Ca1849-Gouche-on\\_fig3\\_338790661](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Portrait-of-Maharaja-Ranjit-SinghNimbate-By-Kehar-Singh-Lahore-Ca1849-Gouche-on_fig3_338790661)

As cited already, it is remarkable that Kapur Singh was a genius artist in the Lahore court. He belonged to an artist family of Amritsar who served as a court artist in Maharaja Ranjit Singh and had a sharp aesthetic vision. His father, Kishan Singh, was also a proficient artist who graced the royal courts of Amritsar and Kapurthala along with Lahore; with his creative glimmers and being a royal neighbor, considerable artists immigrated to Lahore through his references. Kapur Singh kept a close eye on the art of European artists who came to Kapurthala court for painting and observed the oil paintings and techniques they used. After that, he achieved so much proficiency in this technique that he created successful oil and watercolor paintings. Kapur Singh also painted many paintings in miniature size showing the artist's mastery in drawing and watercolours in which he reflected the daily life scenes.

**Figure 11**



**Figure 11** Artist- Kapoor Singh, Study of a Glass Blower, Gouache on Paper, 16.2\*11.2 cm, 19th Century.

Source <https://www.mutualart.com/Artist/Kapur-Singh-of-Amritsar/D771E21442453804>

In addition, many painters working in the bazaar style devoted themselves to rendering Indian mythological and historical subjects in calendar art. The twentieth-century artists of Punjab performed multiple works on different aspects of life with their aesthetic insight. Their subjects were ordinarily regional landscapes, mythological epics, and legends. The sellers of popular Sikh pictorial art used both lithography and woodcut techniques. In this way, the printing press played an essential role in popularizing Sikh art and paintings limited to only the wealthy class could also be purchased by familiar people.

## 2. CONCLUSION

Eventually, the growth of art depends on the kind of environment it gets to flourish. Sikh art had to go through many upheavals, and during this phase of turbulence, it embraced many art forms that are briefly discussed above. Due to foreign and inclusive movements, Sikh art had also proclaimed the social, economic, religious, and political aspects of all time. As per the above details, the art of Punjab has been given a brief introduction to the advancement of art through various mediums. The primitive phase of Sikh art was recorded in the form of pictorial manuscripts, which evolved from geometric designs under Islamic influence on more intricate and delicate designs. Also, Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered the Kangra district, along with other areas which bought Guler and Sujampur Tira, the significant centers of Kangra-style painting, under the Khalsa rule. Many painters from here came to Lahore and Amritsar, who received royal patronage and both these cities became the eminent center of art activities. In the second phase, came the wall paintings of Punjab that can be seen on the walls of Gurudwaras of Punjab. During this period, golden letters were offered to Sri Harmandir Sahib, golden images on inner and outer walls, roofs, moharakshi, Naquash, jatrakari are the paradigms of their artistry. The specialty of this art is that it is not an imitation of

Hindu or Muslim art and craftsmanship but an entirely different and exquisite form of art. Bhai Kehar Singh's name comes first in this work. He had two nephews, Bhai Kishan Singh, and Bhai Bisan Singh, who continued to work under his guidance. Bhai Bishan Singh's sons, Bhai Nihal Singh and Bhai Jawahar Singh continued in his footsteps. Bhai Gyan Singh Naquash, the mentor of Bhai Nihal Singh, also did a lot of Mohrakashi and painting work inside Sri Harmandir Sahib. After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the state of Punjab went through another juncture of disruption, and finally, in 1849, Punjab was included in the English states. Western art came to Punjab along with the British, which greatly influenced the painters here. Some well-known European artists like August Theodore Schoefft, Emily Eden, Baron Hugel, Helen, and William Carpenter, significantly contributed to Sikh art. It developed on new lines under the influence of western art. Lahore, Amritsar, Patiala, Kapurthala, and Shimla became centers of artistic activity. In the early twentieth century, Lahore and Amritsar emerged as the chief centers of art, with many painters working in commercial or fine art. Amongst them are Hussain Baksh, Mohammad Alam, K.C. Aryan, Abdul Rahman Chughtai, Mala Ram, Sri Ram, Allah, Bakhsh, S.G. Thakar Singh, Sobha Singh, Hari Singh, Ishwar Singh, Master Gurdit Singh, Kirpal Singh, Jaswant Singh, G.S. Bansal, who made name for themselves. In 1947, the country became independent, but at the same time, this Punjab was divided into two parts. Due to this, lakhs of Punjabis were killed and made homeless in the communal riots. The literature, art, and cultural activities of Punjab suffered a great loss. Many Hindu and Sikh painters migrated to India from Lahore and visited Delhi or Bombay. Besides all this, the glimpse of the rich history of Punjab inspires artists even today, due to which Sikh art has made its distinctive identity in the world.

### **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

None.

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